SCREENING FOR UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR:

An Initial Line of Inquiry

(3rd Edition: 2007)

by

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INTRODUCTION

Providing effective educational programs for students who exhibit problem behavior requires practical assessment tools and time efficient procedures that directly translate into intervention plans. Whether the assessment of concern is within the context of conducting a full and individual evaluation relevant to student eligibility and need for special education as denoted under IDEIA(2004), conducting a functional behavior assessment in concert with an inter-agency wrap around approach in partnership with a family concerning a child with significant levels of need, or pre-referral interventions within the general education classroom; it is imperative that assessment results in useful information in a time efficient manner.

In response to this need, the assessment tool known as Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior: An Initial Line of Inquiry (ILI) was originally published in 1997. The second edition of the ILI was subsequently published in 1999. Over the years the ILI (in its various forms) has been extensively used by school based teams to design and deliver effective educational services and programs to students. Implementation of the ILI has been reported in various regions of the continental United States as well as in Hawaii. The ILI has been employed in elementary, middle, and high school settings.

To further support school-based teams in conducting time efficient functional behavior assessments, the ILI (third edition: 2007) has been developed. This third edition incorporates refinements and enhancements to earlier versions of this team-based interview process.

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior:
An Initial Line of Inquiry
(Third Edition: 2007)

Overview:

Many educators find themselves challenged by student problem behavior. Most educators generally agree that they can effectively teach students whose behavioral incidents are viewed as minor or infrequent. However, teachers generally speak in a unified voice when they report loss of valuable instructional time managing frequent and/or significant student problem behavior. This loss of instructional time is not only detrimental to the student with behavioral challenges, but also to other students and staff. This is particularly the case in this era of federal mandates including No Child Left Behind and high stakes testing.

Effective classroom management requires a preventive approach. In particular, a comprehensive preventive approach places greatest emphasis on 1) proactive rapport building strategies, 2) clearly defining behavioral expectations, and 3) teaching and reinforcing student performance of established behavioral expectations. In addition to these preventive strategies, teachers will also need to effectively employ intervention strategies when student behavioral errors occur. Effective interventions include 1) planned ignoring of inconsequential nuisance level behavior, 2) use of stop—re-direct—provide positive consequence procedures in response to problem behavior, and 3) behavioral contracting when students demonstrate re-occurring problem behavior. Most students will likely respond favorably to classroom management procedures that are preventive in nature that also employ intervention procedures as noted above. However, there will likely be a few students for whom the general procedures noted above, by themselves will be insufficient. It is in such instances where functional behavior assessment (FBA) can be utilized in tandem with preventive classroom management procedures to design a more student-centered behavior intervention plan.

The process of coming to an understanding as to why a particular student engages in persistent problem behavior and how that student's behavior relates to the environment is referred to as functional behavior assessment. The FBA process helps an educational team gather broad and specific information in order to better understand the specific reasons for the student's problem behavior. In the instance where a student with disabilities presents serious problem behavior, this type of assessment can provide an IEP team with useful insight into: (1) why the student engages in problem behavior; (2) when the student is most likely to engage in the behavior of concern; and (3) under what conditions the student is less likely to engage in the problem behavior. At the end of the FBA the educational team develops hypothesis statements that summarize the results of the assessment process. Hypothesis statements serve a number of purposes including: (1) to summarize assessment results; (2) to offer explanations for the student's problem behavior; and (3) to guide development of a student-centered behavior intervention plan.

There are two common approaches to gather information when conducting an FBA in school-based programs. The first relies on indirect measures and/or "informant methods" which involves talking with the student of concern and to those people who have direct contact with and knowledge about the student. The second approach is "direct observation" which requires systematic observation of the student within typical daily routines across settings over time. Typically, student-centered teams that employ these approaches when conducting an FBA can derive useful information from which to formulate hypotheses.

The first stage of an FBA is to gather broad information about the student's strengths, skills (including skills deficits), abilities, interests, preferences, general health, and well-being. This information is essential to design effective behavior intervention plans. Intervention plans should help the student achieve outcomes that positively influence his or her quality of life as well as reduce problem behavior. This type of information typically is gathered through review of existing information and evaluation data, team discussions and interviews, use of behavior rating scales, and person-centered planning processes.

In the second stage of an FBA, the team gathers context specific information that pinpoints the circumstances/situations regularly associated with the occurrence of problem behavior and the function of the student's problem behavior. Basic questions asked during this stage are addressed by decoding the Antecedent- Behavior-Consequence (ABC) chain concerning student behavior (see Figure 1).

Antecedents & Setting Events	Problem Behavior	Consequence
A →	**B** →	**C**
Who is the student with when s/he engages in the problem behavior? **When** is the student most likely to engage in problem behavior? **When** is the student most successful, and therefore less likely to engage in the problem behavior? **Where** does the student engage in the problem behavior…and are there other factors that might be contributing to the student's problem behavior?	**What** does the problem behavior look and sound like?	**Why** does the student engage in the problem behavior..to 1) escape or avoid something or someone and/or 2) to get something…what is the student saying (communicating) through problem behavior?

In general, the ILI is a team-based interview (indirect measure/informant method) that can occur within one hour. Within this time frame an educational team can systematically link student and teacher behaviors to environmental factors that influence the student's behavior in school settings (e.g., classroom directions and feedback, instructional design, curriculum match). As a result, teams position themselves to more logically link interventions of choice to the particular student's needs and to the specific environment and lifestyle variables that have been identified as adversely influencing the student's behavior.

The ILI is formatted for use by a Facilitator with student-centered teams. The Facilitator can be an external consultant or internal resource staff. The left-hand column of the ILI provides a general script of questions (Questions to Ask). The right-hand column outlines general thoughts (Guiding Thoughts) the Facilitator should be cognizant of throughout the assessment process. Facilitators are encouraged to preview both the left and right hand columns of the ILI prior to facilitating the team meeting. Further guidance for facilitators can be found in both the left and right hand columns on the following pages.

Contact Information: To obtain further information and/or copy of the Initial Line of Inquiry (3rd Edition) contact Tim Knoster at tknoster@bloomu.edu or Greg Llewellyn at gllewellyn@yahoo.com. or gllewellyn@ciu20.org

Special thanks to Lauren Day for her valuable assistance in preparing ILI (3rd Edition).

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask

Introduction of the Team Interview Process

State: "What we are going to do is go through a process that is designed to help you gain a better understanding of (student's name) behavior. The outcome of this process is that you will gain insights into his/her behavior and you will therefore be in a better position to develop some useful hypotheses about what is influencing his/her behavior. From these hypotheses you can begin to develop strategies that will help you and (student's name) have greater success at school within the near future. The process should also help identify skill deficits and lifestyle issues to address over the longer term. By the end of the meeting, we should also have begun to look at ways we can help the (student's name) learn new, socially acceptable alternative skills that he or she needs to learn for use over the longer term.

If you are ready to begin, I'll get us started by simply recording what you see as the student's greatest strengths as well as your greatest concerns in terms of problem behavior. The next thing we will talk about are things that appear to set off (student's name) problem behavior. We will refer to these things as Fast Triggers. Fast Triggers are specific things that are going on as the problem occurs. (Facilitator's Note: We suggest using the term "Fast Triggers" when speaking about Antecedent conditions. We encourage you to label that column on the flip chart as such and not as Antecedents. The same holds true for Setting Events being referred to as "Slow Triggers.") Next we will talk about Slow Triggers. These are setting events that adversely influence (student's name) from a distance in space/time. These are things that often influence (student's name) quality of life such as lack of opportunity, issues of effective communication, issues of general health and well-being, and things that tend to reduce the (student's name) coping mechanisms or impede his/her performance. Next we will talk about what happens to (student's name) when s/he engages in the problem behavior. Lastly, we will talk about why the (student's name) might be acting the way s/he is acting".

Guiding Thoughts

The ILI provides specific examples of initial guiding questions for Facilitators to use with student-centered teams in an effort to more systematically decode student problem behavior. While useful as an initial screening tool, the ILI may not always yield sufficiently comprehensive information in all situations and therefore should not be mistaken as a comprehensive functional behavior assessment for all students who present problem behavior. The Initial Line of Inquiry (3rd edition) is an informant methodology and therefore does not incorporate direct observational procedures. Most teams across student populations will more than likely find that responses to these questions will sufficiently help the team to gain new insights into potentially useful interventions and supports in a time-efficient manner. It is recommended, however, that the team perform a comprehensive functional behavioral assessment involving direct observational procedures when any of the following adapted criteria from Willis, LaVigna, and Donnellan (1996) are present after intervention based on hypotheses generated through the Initial Line of Inquiry (3rd edition):

- The child's challenging behavior persists despite consistently implemented support plans,
- The child's behavior places the child or others at increasing risk of 1) harm or injury, and/or 2) exclusion and devaluation,
- The local team is considering more intrusive and restrictive procedures, and/or a more restrictive placement for the child.

- The process of the interview will be greatly aided if the Facilitator uses a flip chart (as opposed to a small piece of paper at the table) to record salient information from the team. This helps the team both see and hear emerging patterns of behavior and environmental influences as the student's performance is discussed.

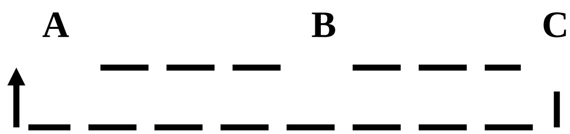
  You should set your top page on the flip chart in the following format to parallel the line of inquiry:

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask

Guiding Thoughts

Strengths of the Student:				
Slow Triggers (Setting Events)	**Fast Triggers (Antecedents)**	**Problem Behavior**	**Perceived Function**	**Actual Consequence**



- The chart is designed to assist the team in its task of analyzing and decoding the **Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence** chain. It is arranged so that the team can easily understand the relationship between Slow Triggers, Fast Triggers, the Behavior that follows and the Perceived (motivating) Function for the Behavior.

- In order for the interview to flow correctly, the Facilitator must debrief the team in the following sequence: Strengths of the Student, Problem Behavior, Fast Triggers, Slow Triggers, Actual Consequences, and Perceived Function.

- Wherever possible, the process should include family members, others who know the child well, and the child him/herself (where appropriate) in addition to school staff. Also, where appropriate, other agency staff should be recruited to participate.

- Primary emphasis throughout the process is to facilitate the team to reach consensus on relevant factors that are pertinent to the student's behavior.

- It is important to (generally) adhere to the line of inquiry as presented as it should help keep the team focused on relevant program issues as opposed to the meeting serving only as an outlet to vent frustration with/or at the student and/or his/her family.

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts
	• Facilitators are encouraged to establish ground rules for interactions between participants at the on-set of the meeting. In particular, a mechanism should be pro-actively established between the Facilitator and student/parents in the instance where a break from the process is needed (e.g., instances where frustration is accruing in a counter-productive fashion). One approach to establishing such a mechanism for preparing students (and parents) for participation in Initial Line of Inquiry is provided here as a script: "I want to take a few minutes privately with you before we start as a team to give you some idea of what the meeting will be like. We're meeting today because there are problems in school. (Secure some acknowledgment from student that this is indeed the case.) The people meeting today are here because they care enough about you and your success in school that they are willing to meet and see if things can be made better. You're here because this meeting is about you and what is happening in school and I think that nobody knows you better than you do. So you're here to make sure that what we talk about and decide today makes sense for you. (secure some acknowledgement that this is of value to the student.) I'd like you to do two things while you are in the meeting today. First, I want you to make sure that everything we write on the chart is accurate or the truth. (Secure acknowledgment from the student that s/he understands that we are talking about accuracy of the information and not things s/he may not want to talk about.) Would you be willing to do that? The second thing I'd like you to do is to let me know if the things we are talking about begin to bother you. Would you be willing to do that? As I said a minute ago we are going to be talking about problems for part of the meeting and then we are going to talk about how to solve some of those problems. Listening to people talking about some of your problem behavior can be hard to listen and I'd like you to let me know if this becomes too much of a problem for you. You can say it any way that you like. You can just say, "This is starting to bug me." or any other way that you like. My best guess is that the part of the meeting that will focus on the most uncomfortable stuff for you will last about 15 minutes and then I think you will find the rest of the meeting pretty interesting. Would you be able to do those two things during the meeting?"

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts
	• This script is best done alone with the student and parents but does not have to be in a separate room necessarily. This script has worked well with many students and can alleviate concerns and anxiety for both students and parents about blame. This script accomplishes two goals. First, it tells students and their parents what the meeting will look like and sound like. More importantly, it provides the student with a high degree of power and control within the meeting. This is particularly important in the instance where the student of concern has experienced some type of abuse at some point in their life. Providing a level of power/control to the student may prove very productive across a variety of situations. • While it is ideal to start by discussing student strengths and interests, it is likely that the team you are facilitating agreed to meet in light of what they feel are problems concerning this particular student's behavior. Therefore, it is prudent to acknowledge the team's current mindset, and to subsequently start by focusing on either strengths and interests or the student's problem behavior based on each team's orientation or predisposition. • In instances where a team starts by addressing the student's problem behavior, it is important to help the team identify not only what the problems are, but also positive attributes of the student that can be further developed and built upon. (List the positive attributes in the "Strengths and Interests" section.) Strengths and interests should be documented on an ongoing basis throughout the entire team meeting as they emerge. • Try to help the team operationally focus on Fast Triggers at this point in the process. It is not uncommon for the Facilitator to need to be assertive at this point in the process and guide the team members back to refocus on Fast Triggers as issues start to emerge through discussion.

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts
	• During the interview, we recommend separating Fast Triggers (Antecedents) from Slow Triggers (Setting Events) on the chart paper. Setting Events tend to emerge naturally throughout the interview. The Facilitator should listen for evidence of life stressors, general health issues, coping skills, (or lack thereof) etc. These should be recorded on the chart as Slow Triggers. In the event that these issues do not emerge, the Facilitator should make specific inquiries into these areas. Also, some teams may be predisposed to focusing exclusively on Slow Triggers as these tend to be most removed from the immediacy of influence by teachers (e.g. outside of school factors such as family and/or peer group issues). While it is important to document such factors, it is essential to also document Fast Triggers as these typically are most within the sphere of immediate influence of teachers (e.g., curriculum and instructional design, daily routines and teacher/student interactions). • It is critical that the Facilitator attend to the "process" of the meeting while serving as a note taker on the publicly posted chart. Facilitation works best if Facilitator is not an active team member who works with the student or staff on a regular basis. The Facilitator's role is to help the team to accurately and efficiently fill in the columns of the chart. As the team interview progresses, the Facilitator should focus on specific tasks associated with the successful completion of the interview.

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask

"Having overviewed the process, what are (student's name) greatest strengths and interests as well as what does s/he do that you see as a significant problem?"

Identifying Student Strengths and Interests:

- Ask: - "What does s/he do that is helpful to others?"
  - "How does s/he show respect?"
  - "What are his/her greatest attributes?"
  - "What types of things does s/he like to do?"
  - "What is s/he good at?"
  - "Does s/he have influence and, if so, where and with whom?"

Identifying Problem Behaviors:

- Ask: "What does s/he specifically do that is a problem?"
- Ask questions that operationalize the behaviors. For example:
  - "What does s/he do that aggravates other students?"
  - "How does s/he show disrespect?"
  - "What does his/her problem behavior look like? Sound like?"

Guiding Thoughts

FACILITATOR TASKS

Strengths and Interests

-Completely debrief the team. Spend as much time as the schedule will allow on this task.
-Use the sharing of strengths and interests to build rapport with student and parents and among team members.
-If appropriate, make comments that may "re-frame" the student's behavior for school staff, e.g., "Given all that you've said it seems that it could be very easy to become friends with ______________. This can have the effect of increasing the confidence of the team to solve complex problems.
-At the end of this portion of the team interview, highlight the importance of the student's strengths and interests, (i.e., that the team will use these ideas later when it will be time to prioritize interventions and supports pertaining to the student's problem behaviors).

Problem Behaviors

-It is especially important that the team be **sufficiently debriefed** during this phase of the interview. During this phase of the interview the team is identifying the concerns that have brought them to the meeting.
-Whenever possible use the exact language of the team. Do not translate what they say. This is important for many reasons including team ownership.
-Avoid the temptation to determine severity, intensity or frequency of the problem behavior at this time. The Facilitator's role is to simply identify that a particular problem behavior is a concern to a member of the team. This serves two purposes. First, by simply listing what each team member says you build rapport rapidly within the team. Second, the "matter of fact" way of listing concerns seems to help to block assertions or assumptions of blame and allows the rapport established in your preparation of the student and parents to continue to grow. The growing perception that the team is operating in a safe and respectful manor builds the impetus toward working as a cohesive, problem solving team.

Questions to Ask

Identifying Fast and Slow Triggers:

- Ask: "What sets his/her problem behavior off?"
- Ask: "What is going on when s/he does these things?"
- Ask: "What else is going on when the problem behavior occurs?"
- Clarify and re-label. For example:
  - Ask questions like: "Does getting started on all assignments create difficulty, or only certain types of assignments?"
  - Follow up by asking questions like: "If written tasks are the primary problem, are they a problem across all subject areas?"
- General Discovery:
  - Ask: "Are there problems with transitions?"
  - Ask: "Are there problems with specific kids?"
  - Ask: "Are there problems with specific adults?"
  - Ask: "Are there problems with other general routines/settings during the day?"

Interviewer Note: Problem behaviors are added as they are identified throughout the team interview process.

Guiding Thoughts

FACILITATOR TASKS

-Insure that all concerns listed are operationalized, (i.e., written in observable and measurable terms.) Questions such as, "How does he show disrespect?", "What does she do that leads you to believe she is defiant?", "What does his work refusal look like? Sound like?" Facilitators should be actively listening for behavior concerns that are stated as an abstraction, such as, disrespect, defiance, inattentive, work refusal, depressed, etc. and encourage operational (look like/sound like) statements.

-Block attempts to apply blame. Allowing blame to surface during the interview process risks breaking rapport among team members, inhibits trust and could negatively impact the ability of the team to collaborate.

Fast Triggers

-Establish the connection between Fast Triggers and Problem Behaviors.

-While it was important at an earlier stage in the process to operationalize answers to questions about problem behavior it can be useful for both clarity and time efficiency to summarize a category of Fast Triggers. While trying to develop the team's understanding of the student's circumstances there is little advantage to listing many examples of the same type of Fast Trigger. If team members are providing multiple examples of situations where work refusal takes place the facilitator could summarize those Fast Triggers as "when asked to do work." If multiple examples of transitions are identified as being problematic then they could simply be summarized as "transitions."

-It is important for the Facilitator to inquire about common Fast Triggers in the event that such common Fast Triggers (such as transitions and work demands) have not been listed. Facilitators should also inquire as to whether any particular persons presence (student or adult) has become a Fast Trigger for the student.

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Questions to Ask

Identifying Consequences of Problem Behaviors:

- Ask: "What do you do when the problem behaviors occur?"
- Ask: "What happens immediately after the problem behavior occurs?"

Ask questions that will elicit both imposed (structural) consequences (e.g., loss of points and privileges/choices) as well as more naturally occurring environmental (functional) consequences (e.g., reactions of others or termination of the task at hand).

For example, ask:

- "What do you do immediately when s/he engages in the problem behavior?"
- "What do the other students do immediately when s/he engages in the problem behavior?"
- "What happens to the task or assignment at hand when s/he engages in the problem behavior?"

Guiding Thoughts

FACILITATOR TASKS

Slow Triggers

-Information about Slow Triggers frequently emerges throughout the interview. The Facilitator should actively listen for examples of Slow Triggers in the student's life and record them as they are revealed.

-It is important that the team gain a clear understanding of the Slow Trigger's in the student's life as they frequently form the basis for what the team identifies as Perceived Function for problem behaviors.

-Help the team make the connection that, "Given these circumstances in the student's life...from his/her perspective (Slow Triggers)….When (Fast Trigger) happens…S/he does ------------ .

-Sometimes it is unclear whether a Trigger is a Slow Trigger or Fast Trigger. Facilitators should not get bogged down with the distinction between the two. The important thing is to get the trigger listed on the chart. You could also decide just to list a given trigger as both Fast and Slow!

Actual Consequences

-The purpose of this portion of the interview is to list the consequences that have been **imposed** on the student as a result of problem behavior. By their nature these consequences will typically have the intent of reducing the problem behavior. The task of the Facilitator is to list all consequences that have been employed in an effort to stop inappropriate behavior.

-Facilitators should help the team make the connection that, despite all the "punishment" that has been imposed, the student continues to engage in problem behavior. In other words, these consequences have not had the derived effect.

-Occasionally a team member will state that many positive approaches have been used in the past to improve student behavior. After acknowledging this fact, the Facilitator should redirect the teams focus to the consequences imposed on the student following inappropriate behavior.

-As with the other portions of the interview, the Facilitator should attempt to debrief the team at the end of this segment in the process.

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask

Identify Perceived Function:

- Ask: "What do you think s/he gets by behaving this way?"
- Ask: "What might s/he get out of, or avoid?"
- Ask: "What else does s/he either get or avoid?"
- General Discovery. Specifically:
  - Ask: "Does his/her behavior result in a power struggle?"
  - Ask: "Does his/her behavior help him/her clarify the behavioral expectations?"
  - Ask: "Does his/her behavior help him/her to have power/ influence?"

When the team has brainstormed all their ideas the Facilitator may probe for other areas that have not been mentioned. The following questions can be helpful in clarifying commonly identified functions:

"Does his/her behavior result in a power struggle?"
"Does his/her behavior help to clarify the rules or consequences?"
"Does his/her behavior help him to clarify the parental (family) system?" In other words, "Will his/her parents work together with his/her teachers or will they side with him/her against the school?"
"Does s/he avoid unpleasant circumstances (work, person, place, activity, etc)?"
"Does s/he gain access or connection with others?"
"Does s/he get access to preferences?"
"Does s/he gain a sense of power and control through the behavior?"
"Does the behavior reduce anxiety or release tension?"
"Does the behavior provide sensory feedback (feels good)?"
"Does the behavior enable the student to escape feelings of Inadequacy...Feelings associated with failure?"

Guiding Thoughts

FACILITATOR TASKS

Perceived Function

-The primary task of the Facilitator is to help the team make the connection that, despite all the corrective consequences that have been imposed to date, the student continues to engage in problem behavior. The focus of the interview at this time becomes, "What does the student **get or avoid** by doing the problem behavior that is so important to them that they keep on doing the problem behavior despite all the punishment they have received?"
-Facilitators can suggest possible functions if the team is struggling with this question.

Facilitator Note: Most teams will identify one or some combination of the following perceived functions:

- Gain access or connection with others
- Get access to preferences
- Obtain a sense of power and control
- Clarify parental/teacher/staff roles
- Sensory feedback (it feels good)
- Avoid unpleasant circumstances (work, person, place, activity, etc.)
- Reduce anxiety or release tension
- Escape feeling of inadequacy and/or embarrassment
- Avoid what the student sees as aversive stimuli

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts
<u>Summarizing Perceived Functions</u>: Say: - "These are things s/he is trying to get or to avoid." (Verbally list them for added impact.) - "Getting access to things we like, or avoiding things or situations we do not enjoy, are things that most children (in general) need!" (Get agreement from team.) - "However, most kids get these types of needs met through (less disruptive socially acceptable) means." - "The problem is that s/he is getting (perceived function) by (student's problem behavior) at an unacceptable frequency, intensity, duration, or at inappropriate times instead of using more acceptable ways to obtain the same result."	

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts

Interpreting the Initial Line of Inquiry to Develop the Hypothesis Statements

Prior to the development of hypotheses, the Facilitator should organize (i.e., simplify) the anecdotal information that has been collected. This is best done column by column.

Behavior

Ask/summarize as follows:

> "It would appear that any of these Fast and/or Slow Triggers (verbally list them again for impact/review) could trigger any of these problem behaviors. Do you agree?"

Most teams will pretty readily agree with this statement based on discussion thus far. In essence, this allows you to shift the team's understanding of the list of problem behaviors from a list of discrete behaviors (hitting, cursing, dumping desk) to simply a list of examples of what could simply be referred to as "the problem." This new understanding presents the team with the idea that problem behaviors are logically related with the identified triggers. The problem behaviors can also be understood as the student's best attempt to access the pay off from the problem behavior (function). The team can now consider all the items listed in the Behavior column, not as discrete problems that need to be solved individually, but as a cluster of responses the student is making to specific situations in an attempt to access critical functions in life. As the team intervenes with prevention and teaching strategies it would be expected that problem behaviors will decrease as they are replaced with more effective behavior and therefore, increasingly problem behavior is no longer necessary in order for the student to access function.

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts

Guiding Thoughts

Antecedents (Fast Triggers)

- The Facilitator should be specifically analyzing Antecedent Events (Fast Triggers) in order to cluster into categories such as “interactions with others.” “schoolwork,” “transitions,” etc. Typically, Fast Triggers can be clustered into several groups that are powerful predictors of problem behavior. We have developed an acronym to assist teams with this analysis.

  A Academic Demands
  C Confrontation with Adults
  T Transitions
  S Social Interaction with Peers

Please note that for the purposes of this analysis C (confrontation with adults) refers to interactions with adults only. It includes reprimands and redirections. S (social interaction) refers to any interaction with peers. Thus, a confrontation with a peer would be coded “S”.

It is recommended that the Facilitator do this analysis prior to the development of hypotheses. The Facilitator should simply code each Fast Trigger using **ACTS.** It is helpful if different colored markers are used so that the team can visually cluster and analyze the Fast Triggers. This should be done very quickly. It is not necessary to have discussion as the categories are typically fairly obvious.

Function

- In generating specific hypotheses it may be helpful to formally introduce the team to the Competing Path Analysis (O’Neill, Horner, Albin, Sprague, Storey, and Newton (1997). If the circumstances at this particular juncture do not lend themselves to a formal introduction you may choose to follow up with (at a minimum) key team members following the meeting. In either case, you can incorporate your understanding of the Competing Path Analysis into your facilitation of the team.

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Questions to Ask

Specific Hypothesis Formation:

- Summarize as follows:
  "It would appear that any of these Fast and/or Slow Triggers (verbally list them again for impact/review) could trigger any of these problem behaviors. Do you agree?"
- Ask/summarize as follows:
  "When this occurs" (write a description of the fast and slow triggers),
  "The student does" (write a description of problem behavior),
  "In order to" (write a description of the perceived function).

  The chart should look like this:

WHEN	DOES	IN ORDER TO:

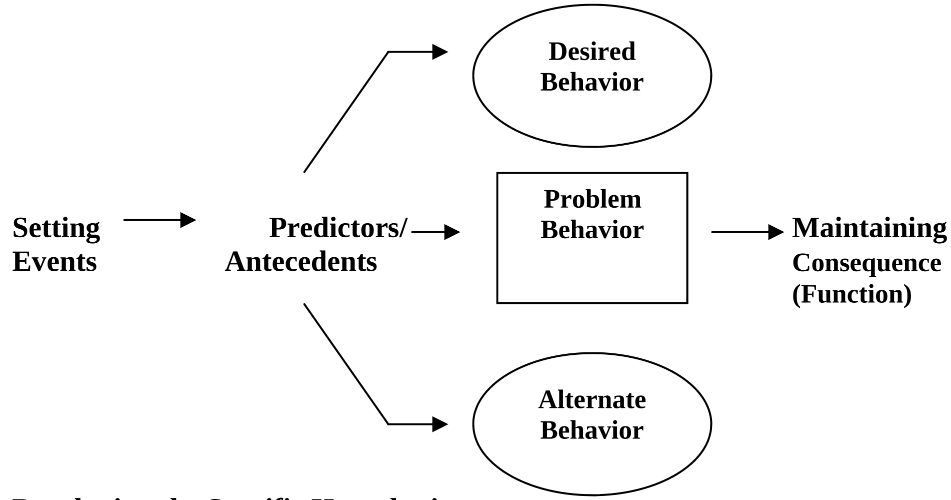
EXAMPLES:

When :	**Does:**	**In order to:**
-Not engaged with others -Activities last for more than 15 minutes -Did not get to sleep before 11 p.m.	Screams Slaps face Pull hair	Get her teacher's attention

"When Karen is not engaged with others or activities last for 15 minutes or longer (especially during lunch or free time), or when she did not get to sleep before 11 p.m. the previous evening or does not feel well, she screams, slaps her face, and pulls her hair to gain access to teacher attention."

Guiding Thoughts

Completing Path Analysis: Identify the "desired behavior" and an "alternative behavior"



Developing the Specific Hypothesis

- The Facilitator leads the team to the specific hypothesis by selecting any Fast and Slow Trigger and pairing it with any problem behavior, and then inviting the team to supply the function (in order to...). This serves the dual purpose of teaching the structure of writing specific hypothesis statements in the A-B-C format and identifying any idiosyncratic antecedent/problem behavior relationships. At this point, teams are generally opening up their perspective to new relationships and possibilities and may become energized for brainstorming solutions.

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask

When :	Does:	In order to:
-Presented with academic work -In large or small group -Requiring writing or multiple worksheets -Perceived to be difficult	-Mumbles derogatory comments to teacher -Refuses to complete work -Destroys assignment sheet -Pushes/Kicks desk/chair	-Avoid academic failure in front of peers

"When David is presented with academic work in a large or small group setting requiring writing, multiple worksheets, or work that he perceives to be too difficult he will mumble derogatory comments about the teacher, refuse to complete his work, destroy his assignment sheet, and/or push/kick his desk or chair in order to be removed from class in order to avoid academic failure in front of his peers."

- Repeat this process until all viable specific hypotheses emerge and are documented. Then verify the accuracy of plausible specific hypotheses, weed out redundancies, and cluster the problem behaviors by function and context with the team.

Global Hypothesis Formation:

- Ask the team to summarize broad (big picture) information that has emerged during the meeting. In other words, what are the student's strengths and interests as well as the larger contributing factors that appear to adversely influence the student's behavior (i.e., Slow Triggers including social and academic skill deficits). Specifically, what is the state of the student's: 1) ability to use strengths and/or pursue interests; 2) communication skills; 3) academic skills; 4) relationships with others; 5) opportunities for choice and age appropriate self-determination; and 6) general health and well being?

Guiding Thoughts

Developing the Global Hypothesis

- While specific hypotheses are essential to build effective intervention plans, they alone cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of the student nor the complexity of conditions that might negatively influence behavior. Therefore, the team should next develop a global hypothesis statement. A global hypothesis attends to broad influences in the student's life in and outside of school such as the student's skills and interests, health, preferences, daily routines, relationships, and general quality of life. This type of statement provides a description of the team's understanding about the student and his or her quality of life as it relates to the problem behavior. This type of information can positively influence both short and long term prevention strategies developed by the team.

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts
Examples: **Karen** "Karen enjoys interacting with others and keeping busy with activities. She seems happiest when she is interacting one-to-one with an adult (e.g., teacher) or participating in adult-led activities. She will occasionally sit alone for up to 15 minutes when listening to music of her choice, although she seems to grow bored in such situations. Karen currently has limited means of functional communication. While she enjoys interacting with others, she has never been observed to initiate appropriate interactions with her teacher or other students. Her independent initiation skills appear very limited. Karen has limited access to non-disabled peers during her day at school (e.g., only during afternoon recess) and has a history of colds and viral infections which, in turn, adversely affect her sleep patterns. Karen's self-injury appears to signal her desire for social interaction, something to do, teacher assistance, or comfort when she is tired and/or not feeling well. Given her current situation, Karen's self-injury appears to be her most efficient means to communicate these basic needs as her teachers typically respond immediately to her problem behavior." **David** "David is a third grader who receives itinerant emotional support within the regular third grade classroom. He has developed appropriate independent school work habits and is able to keep up with the general curriculum with accommodations. David has established some minimal relationships (acquaintances) with a few classmates at school and appears to be interested in video games and computers. His interactions however, typically are limited to peripheral activities such as brief conversations during group events. For example, David never has been observed to lead a group of peers or to be at the center of a group's related activities. It has been noted that David plays with a few of the other kids from the neighbor hood outside school in a similar manner, (however, none of these kids are in the same third grade classroom as David). David's mumbling of derogatory comments, work refusal, destruction of materials, and or pushing/kicking his desk or chair appear to signal a lack of comfort when placed in group s situations where he is expected to achieve outcomes in the presence of his peers. His problem behavior typically results in being sent into "timeout" or out of the room." His problem behavior typically results in being sent into "timeout" or out of the room."	• The intent here is to help the team see the "big picture" with the student. Specifically, the goal is for the team to create brief summary statements (usually 1 paragraph) about the relationship between strengths and interests along with the Slow Triggers (e.g. skill deficits) and the student's problem behavior. • Be sure to use the flip chart with team notes to re-focus the team on an ongoing basis. This should also serve to reinforce the team for their work throughout the process.

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask

<u>Developing Interventions and Supports</u>:

- Ask the team to: "Look at the list of consequences both structural and functional and decide if the child is meeting his/her needs (function) by engaging in use of the problem behavior (e.g., student is trying to avoid doing a difficult task by acting out and the consequence for misbehavior is termination of the task as a result of being sent to the office). The first step in planning interventions is to identify ways for the student to meet his/her needs in a way that is more socially acceptable while achieving the same function (i.e., one-for-one replacement behavior which is sometimes referred to as or equivalence training)."

- Describe how: "1) we as a team can influence, and in some instances, change antecedent and setting event conditions, 2) that the team can teach (and reinforce) acquisition and use of new skills to the student in order to help him or her a) learn a replacement behavior, b) improve general skills, and c) improve self-control, and 3) that consequence strategies need to stress reinforcement to increase use of alternative behaviors as well as reflect re-direction and de-escalation procedures concerning problem behavior when it does occur!"

- In light of the specific and global hypotheses, guide the team in structured brainstorming and selection of interventions across each of the following areas by asking the noted questions.

<u>Short-term Prevention (AKA: Antecedent/Setting Event Strategies)</u>:
"What can we do to positively change or alter the situations or circumstances (i.e. environmental factors) which appear to trigger (student's name) use of (student's problem behavior)?"
"What can we do to remove, block, or neutralize the effect of (particularly) the fast triggers to problem behavior?"
"Can we intersperse easier with more difficult tasks?"
"How can we prevent the triggers we discussed from acting like triggers?"

Guiding Thoughts

<u>Developing Interventions and Supports</u>

- Where warranted, the team can develop a more complete understanding of slow triggers in the form of skill deficits by doing an instructional assessment and analyzing the Instructional, Curricular and Environmental Variables which may adversely affect the student's performance. Manipulation of these variables can provide the basis for powerful preventative interventions.

- When formulating interventions be sure to consistently link (through statements) the relationship between the team's hypotheses and their interventions of choice. Be sure to initially place greatest emphasis on: 1) Short-term Prevention (antecedent/setting event strategies to engineer environments to minimize the likelihood to the greatest extent possible of the student's needs to use the problem behavior) and, 2) the teaching and subsequent learning of new alternative skills. At this point in the process it is worthwhile to explain that redirection of problem behavior will ultimately/eventually (over time) become a secondary concern once the child learns/uses the socially acceptable alternative skills on a consistent basis. Also, be sure to emphasize the importance of the team reinforcing/honoring the student's use of alternative skills (particularly functional equivalents to the problem behavior) so that the problem behavior becomes ineffective, inefficient, and irrelevant.

- The intent is for the team to develop a multi-component support plan for the student. A comprehensive behavior support plan is hypotheses driven and consists of:
  1) Short-term Prevention (Antecedent and Setting Event Strategies)
  2) Teaching socially acceptable alternative skills
  3) Consequence strategies
  4) Long-term prevention.

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask	Guiding Thoughts
Teaching Alternative Skills: "What can we teach (student's name) to use as a replacement behavior that is more socially acceptable AND will serve the same function as the problem behavior?" "What general skills can we emphasize through instruction that will positively influence success with (student's name)?" - "What general communication skills should be taught?" - "What general methods of communication need to be addressed?" - "What academic skills could be taught to help ameliorate the fast triggers?" "What coping, stress reduction, or self-management skills do we need to teach (student's name)?" **Instructional Consequence Strategies:** "In light of the alternative skills we will teach, how will we reinforce the acquisition and use of those alternative skills?" "What interests of (student's name) could we use to reward or acknowledge him/her when s/he begins to perform the new alternative skills?" **Reduction Oriented Consequences Strategies:** "Before we begin to talk about reduction oriented strategies we should first take a few minutes to analyze the reduction consequences that have been used up to this point. First, do any of the Actual Consequences actually turn into Fast Triggers (antecedents) for problem behavior? Second, do any of the Actual Consequences inadvertently provide the desired function (i.e., serves as a reward for problem behavior)?" "Now that we have considered the nature of both function and context, and in light of the hypotheses, what would be reasonable re-direction and de-escalation procedures to use when (student's name) engages in the problem behavior that will make the problem less effective and efficient over time?" "Do we need a crisis management plan?"	

Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….
An Initial Line of Inquiry

Questions to Ask

Long-Term Prevention:
"How do we help (student's name) maintain and generalize use of socially acceptable alternative skills over time and across settings?"
"What can we do to support (student's name) in being viewed more positively by his/her peers?"
"What can we do to increase age-appropriate opportunities for choice and self-determination by (student's name)?"
"How can we provide opportunities for (student's name) to make a meaningful contribution to his/her school and community, and how can we provide meaningful, genuine recognition for those contributions?"

Support for Team Members:
"What additional help, training, materials, etc. do you need, as a team or individually, in order to implement the agreed upon interventions and supports?"
"How often do you think you need to meet in order to monitor effectiveness of the plan (in the form of student progress)?"
"Is that time available to you or does it need to be created in your schedule?"
"What data do you think is important to collect to demonstrate the effectiveness of your plan?"
"What assistance will you need to collect this data?"

Guiding Thoughts

In addition, the Facilitator will need to help team members to identify and document relevant supports that they may need in order to implement the support plan.

- It is recommended that the Facilitator first overview (in total) the multi-component aspects of effective behavior support plans at this point in the process. This should be followed by taking each strategy area as listed, in turn, and processing the team as follows:

  1) brainstorm possible support strategies;
  2) discuss the brainstormed ideas in light of reality, constraints, and other relevant contextual factors;
  3) select and document the three to five best fit strategies in the area;
  4) identify and document the necessary supports for team members associated with the selected strategies; and
  5) review the team's decision and move on to the next component part until all components have been addressed.

- Finally, it is recommended that the process of intervention design follow the sequence as noted above (e.g., starting with Short-term Prevention (Antecedent and Setting Event strategies) and culminating with Long-term Prevention). The identification of supports team members will likely emerge throughout each of the four multi-component stages.

Functional Behavior Assessment Questions at a Glance:
Screening for an Understanding of Student Problem Behavior….

Questions to Ask	An Initial Line of Inquiry	Guiding Thoughts

Student Strengths:

What are some of his/her strengths?
Describe his/her good parts?
What does he do that is helpful to other students and to you?
How does he show respect?
What are his interests and hobbies?

Identifying Problem Behaviors:

What does he do that is a problem?
What else does he do?
How does he show disrespect?
What does his withdrawal look like/sound like?
Is there anything else he does that is a problem for you?
How does he "be angry"?

Identifying Antecedents and Setting Events:

What sets off the problem behavior?
What is going on when the student does the problem?
What else sets off the problem?
Are there problems with transitions?
Are there problems with specific peers?
Does the behavior occur more often with specific adults? Academic subjects?
Are there specific life stressors in his life that may be contributing to the problem?

Identifying Consequences of Problem Behaviors:

What do you do when the problem behavior occurs?
What happens immediately after the problem behavior occurs?
What else has been done to him as a result of doing the problem behavior?

Identifying the Perceived Function:

What do you think he gets or avoids by doing the problem?
What do you think he gets or avoids by doing the problem that is <u>so important to him</u> that he is willing to pay these consequences (refer to Actual Consequences column) in order to have it?
What does he get out of or avoid?
What else does he get or avoid?