

# **Behavior Support Plan**

## Module 12

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*Susan, a fourth grade student, has difficulty completing her math assignments in Ms. Hewett's class. She begins to engage in off-task behavior during fourth period in her general math class every day. She sits right next to Billy, who is great in math and finishes his math worksheet assignments way before everyone else does. Susan takes time to finish her work. Once she notices Billy is done, she starts talking out loud or starts walking around the room. As a result of her behavior, she has been given detention. Her IEP mentions that she would be sent for detention if she is off-task and fails to complete her work. Ms. Hewett discussed this issue with her colleagues who advised her to conduct an Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) to see what triggered Susan's off-task behavior. Based upon the information from the ABC analysis, the team determined that Susan's noncompliance and off-task behaviors in general math were related to her desire to avoid math work. To test this assumption, Ms. Hewett asked the resource teacher, Ms. Nelson to conduct a math test with Susan on math objectives she had already mastered. Ms. Nelson found that when given the test on objectives already mastered, Susan was not only successful in completing the math task, but also on task most of the time. Ms. Hewett and intervention team members decided to revise her behavioral support plan (BSP). The team members decided that, in addition to compliance with teacher request, Susan needs to learn another replacement behavior of raising her hand to ask for help which was added to her BSP. When new math objectives were introduced, Ms. Nelson was asked to be in the general education math class with Susan to provide additional supports and instruction. Billy was asked to become her math buddy in order to assist Susan when she needed help. The BSP team agreed that Susan would work toward the following objective; she would complete 6 out of 10 math problem work sheets per day with 80 % accuracy (with additional instruction from Ms. Nelson and buddy support from Billy) with no instances of noncompliance for 3 consecutive days. After*

*Susan masters the objective at 100 % accuracy, she will move on to the next objective.*

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## **Behavior Support Plans**

The Behavior Support Plan (BSP) is based upon a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and includes antecedent control strategies, interventions for teaching replacement behaviors, and reinforcement strategies (Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, & Lane, 2007). Accurate identification of the functions of behavior, that is, why the student engages in the behavior, coupled with proactive behavioral management, more positive outcomes for students who demonstrate more intensive behavioral needs (Kutash, Duchnowski, & Lynne, 2006; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Understanding the function of behavior and behavioral patterns within an environment is vital for planning an intervention. The FBA yields information on the function of behavior which helps in determining behavioral goals. Understanding environmental events that come before and that follow behaviors help to determine the function of the problem behavior. Modifying the environment by recognizing triggers is an important component of any BSP, (e.g., simplifying an academic task, giving students' a choice). Comprehensive BSPs consist of information gathered from FBAs, operational definition of target behavior (in measurable, observable, and objective terms), antecedent and setting events (e.g., student grouping for instruction), strategies for teaching replacement behavior, and positive and negative consequences for student behavior. Once the plan is implemented, continuous data collection provides evaluation of progress toward the positive behavioral goals and the effectiveness of the plan (Fad, Patton, & Polloway, 2000).

## **Documentation**

Making learning environments safe and healthy is a difficult task while concurrently addressing the complexities present in public schools. Increasing concerns about violence have prompted schools to seek out school-wide alternatives to decreasing problem behaviors and increasing positive behaviors (Cushing, Horner, & Barrier, 2003). However, many schools continue to react to serious problem behavior with the use of containment and exclusionary forms of discipline, rather than data driven planning and prevention approaches (Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2007; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999). Nevertheless, emerging, robust, systemic, preventative models have emerged for supporting behavioral development that have great promise (Sandomierski, Kincaid, & Algozzine, 2007).

A closer look at traditional practices reveals that negative consequences or punishment have failed largely to reduce problem behaviors (Civil Rights Project, 2000; McFadden & Marsh, 1992). The national shift in school policy toward accountability has emphasized using data-based decision making approaches in order to improve both behavior and academics (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). This shift toward more preventative efforts was first noted in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, as well as in the introduction of The Positive Behavior for Safe and Effective Schools Act that allows schools to

allocate school improvement funds to prevention-based early intervention for all students, such as positive behavior planning.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorizations have brought about encouraging revisions in policy regarding student behavior improvement planning that includes the use of FBAs and BSPs (Glenn et al., 2000). School personnel must implement behavioral interventions based on knowledge of the function of the problem behavior and do so with fidelity and consistency (Lane, Menzies, Bruhn, & Crnabori, 2011).

To ensure appropriate needs are being met for all students, IDEA requires schools to develop an FBA and BSP for students whose behavior may be impeding their academic performance. Behavior problems can best be addressed when the function of behavior is known, which can facilitate positive intervention strategies that are more effective in changing problem behavior, more so than traditional punitive strategies (Wagner et al., 2006).

BSPs are individualized to each student's needs, based on his or her learning and functional behavioral profile. Data collected on the student in the classroom or other areas of the school and student responses are essential to designing interventions that are function-based (Scott, McIntyre, Liaupsin, Nelson, Conroy, & Payne, 2005).

### **Circumstances for Consideration**

**BSP should be function-based.** An effective BSP is designed to address information gathered from the FBA. Trained school personnel must conduct a FBA and develop an individualized behavioral plan for students with disability who exhibit negative behavior that affects their performance and also for those who pose serious and/or chronic disciplinary problems. The FBA begins with obtaining background information on the student and the behaviors in question. Background information is vital for planning and clarifying essential components required for behavioral intervention planning. After gathering anecdotal or objective data regarding the behavior, an effective and comprehensive plan can be developed to prescriptively address the student's needs. The information obtained should reflect the student's strengths in addition to the areas of identified need or difficulty (Sugai, et. al., 2000).

**BSP should be preventative.** A BSP should be preventative and educationally based. Effective BSPs consist of previously tried interventions or strategies and progress monitoring data regarding the student's responsiveness. It includes changes and supports to the learning environment, antecedent control strategies, and consequences that would eliminate the inappropriate behavior. Educators change the environment to increase the likelihood the student will engage in appropriate behavior and modifications are made to reduce the likelihood the problem behavior will occur.

**BSP should include teaching of replacement behaviors.** BSPs are designed to increase the acquisition of positive skills, while simultaneously decreasing problem behavior. Sugai and Horner (2009) suggest that "good instruction is one of the best behavior management tools, and positive and preventive behavior management are some of our best instructional strategies" (p. 68). The intent of the BSP is to improve skills by selecting and teaching alternative appropriate

behaviors. It is designed to teach skills that students need to be academically and behaviorally successful in school. The systematic use of reinforcement in building and teaching an alternative new behavior is essential. A plan must include reinforcement strategies designed to maintain newly learned prosocial skills. Teachers may create opportunities for the student to keep practicing the replacement behavior until it becomes more effective, more efficient, and more relevant than the problem behavior. The overall goal of the BSP is to systematically implement interventions and supports so that a student would learn a prosocial behavior and will be able to maintain and generalize the behavior across different settings (e.g., other classrooms or school settings).

**BSP are developed, implemented, and evaluated by a team.** The BSP team works together to make sure the components of the BSP are acceptable to teachers, resources are available for implementation, and training is also provided. The team provides the structure and action planning with specific tasks, persons responsible for various aspects of the plan, timelines, and planning guidance. Once the BSP is implemented, the team evaluates changes in student behavior and determines whether the plan is working or needs revisions.

**BSP are evaluated using data-based decision-making.** BSPs must include baseline data on the frequency and/or severity of the target behavior, the goals for intervention, and the specific steps for its implementation (Fad, Patton, & Polloway 2000). Adjustments are made based on the progress (or lack of progress) in student behavior. The team monitors if the BSP is being implemented as designed and if the teacher and staff are consistent in the follow through.

## Summary

The legal mandate to develop positive behavioral intervention plans that address chronic and/or severe behavior problems is fundamental to BSP implementation for individual students with disabilities. This represents a shift toward a more preventive approach to addressing behavioral concerns and emphasizes change through education instead of reaction.

In reference to Susan's situation, Ms. Hewett did a great job of working with colleagues to identify the reason of Susan's avoidance of math. After collecting various kinds of data (e.g., antecedent – behavior – consequence assessment, faculty interviews) the team was able to decide that they needed to revise the BSP due to Susan's specific situation. In her behavioral goals, the team decided to include the replacement behavior of Susan raising her hand to ask for help instead of sending Susan to detention. This revised BSP allowed Susan to stay in class, receive instruction, and to improve her behavior.

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