Behavior Assessment: Conduct an A-B-C Analysis
Est. Time: 15 Minutes

Objective

Gain experience conducting an A-B-C analysis and determining the function of a problem behavior.

Overview

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is an evaluation technique used to determine the function of a student's behavior and the factors that maintain it. It helps teachers to understand the reason(s) (i.e., the function or functions) for a student's behavior and then to use this information to design an intervention that will help the student learn a new, more acceptable method of getting what he or she wants. The process of conducting an FBA consists of seven steps.

- Determine the Behavior's Function

  - Step 1: Identify and define problem and replacement behaviors
  - Step 2: Collect data
  - Step 3: Identify the function of the behavior

- Develop and Implement a Function-Based Intervention

  - Step 4: Design a function-based intervention
  - Step 5: Maximize intervention success
  - Step 6: Implement the intervention

- Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Intervention

  - Step 7: Evaluate the intervention

Because this activity will focus on how to determine the behavior's function, let's explore Steps 1-3:

1. **Identify and define problem and replacement behavior**. As a teacher works to eliminate a problem behavior, he or she should simultaneously reinforce a more acceptable alternative. Consider the examples below.

Problem behavior	The student refuses to do her work.
Replacement behavior	The student begins her work quietly.

2. **Collect data**. In addition to the information gathered from interviews and rating scales, an observer can conduct an A-B-C analysis to help ascertain the function or functions of a student's problem behavior. The ABC model is used to identify the:

  - Antecedent: Any situation, action, or event that immediately precedes a behavior
  - Behavior: An observable or measurable act
  - Consequence: A response, action, or event that immediately follows a behavior

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The ABC model is used to identify the antecedents (A) that set the stage for the problem ehavior (B) to occur and the consequences (C) that appear to be maintaining the problem behavior. An observer might collect data over several sessions before obtaining enough information for a clear ABC pattern to emerge. This usually requires eight to ten occurrences of the problem behavior (except in cases of extreme behaviors, such as fighting or self-injurious actions). In addition to recording the ABC events, the observer should note the setting and the time of day in which the behavior took place, as well as the persons involved.

3. **Identify the function of the behavior**. Once an ABC analysis has been completed, the team can develop a hypothesis about the function of the behavior. In many cases, challenging behaviors are an inappropriate way for a student to either obtain something desired (e.g., attention, a tangible item) or avoid something not preferred (e.g., a task or activity).

Activity

View the YouTube video at http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/mcontent/behavior-abc-video/. Use the attached form to conduct an A-B-C analysis of the child's tantrums. As you collect data, be sure to note occurrences of the behavior in question (B), the antecedents immediately preceding the behavior (A), and the consequences immediately following the behavior (C). Once several instances of the behavior have occurred, you may have enough information to propose a possible function of the behavior.

Questions

1. How many instances of the problem behavior (tantrums) did you observe?

2. What were the antecedents to this behavior?

3. What were the consequences for this behavior?

4. What is your hypothesis regarding the function of this behavior?