Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

Brief Introduction
Functional behavior assessment (FBA) is a systematic set of strategies used to determine the underlying function or purpose of a behavior so that an effective intervention plan can be developed.

Description
FBA consists of describing the interfering or problem behavior, identifying antecedent or consequent events that control the behavior, developing a hypothesis regarding the behavior, and testing that hypothesis. Data collection is an important part of the FBA process. FBA is typically used to identify the causes of interfering behaviors such as self-injury, aggression towards others, or destructive behaviors and is usually followed by the creation and implementation of a behavior package to address the interfering behavior described. Often, teachers/practitioners use functional communication training (FCT), differential reinforcement, response interruption/redirection, extinction, and stimulus control/environmental modification to address these behaviors in learners with ASD.

FBA meets evidence-based criteria with 10 single-case design studies. According to the evidence-based studies, this intervention has been effective for preschoolers (3–5 years) to elementary and secondary school-age learners (6–22 years) with ASD. FBA can be used effectively to address communication, behavior, school-readiness, academic, and adaptive skills.

Brief Adapted from


Matrix of FBA by Outcome and Age (years)
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**Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) Research Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Skills/Intervention Goals</th>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6, 8, 11 years</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>EBP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The information found in the Research Summary table is updated yearly following a literature review of new research and this age range reflects information from this review.*

**Research**


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References


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**Steps for Implementation**

**Step 1. Establishing a Team**

A. A multidisciplinary team is formed, which should include:
   i. the learner’s teacher(s),
   ii. any related service personnel (e.g., speech-language therapist, occupational therapist),
   iii. paraprofessional(s) who work directly with the learner with ASD,
   iv. the learner’s parents, and
   v. the learner (if developmentally appropriate).

B. Team members identify the FBA coordinator.

**Step 2. Identifying the Interfering Behavior**

A. Identify the interfering behavior that is most problematic for the learner; this will be the focus of the FBA.

B. After identifying the interfering behavior, the team members determine:
   i. How long the behavior has been interfering with the learner’s development and/or learning,
   ii. If the behavior involves aggression or damage to property,
   iii. If the behavior is the result of environmental factors (e.g., lighting, noise level),
   iv. If the interfering is occurring because the learner is being asked to demonstrate a skill that he/she cannot perform,
   v. When and where the behavior occurs,
   vi. Other behaviors the learner exhibits immediately before the behavior occurs, and
   vii. What happens immediately after the interfering behavior occurs

**Step 3. Collecting Baseline Data**

A. Prior to designing and implementing an intervention, use indirect assessment methods that include:
   i. reviewing previous and current records and
   ii. conducting formal and informal interviews with school staff, family members, and the learner with ASD.

B. Clearly describe the interfering behavior and identify data collection measures that will be used to assess the interfering behavior prior to designing and implementing the intervention.

C. Determine how long baseline data should be collected and who will collect it.

D. Use direct observation methods that generally include:
   i. Using A-B-C data charts,
   ii. Using scatterplots,
   iii. Using standardized behavior rating scales,
   iv. Conducting learner motivation assessments, and/or
   v. Conducting learner reinforcer preference assessments.

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E. Use indirect and direct assessment results to identify:
   i. Where the behavior happens,
   ii. With whom the behavior occurs,
   iii. When the behavior happens,
   iv. Activities during which the behavior occurs,
   v. What other students are doing when the behavior starts,
   vi. What teachers/adults are doing when the behavior starts,
   vii. Proximity of other students, teachers, and/or adults,
   viii. The noise level in the environment,
   ix. The number of individuals in the area,
   x. Other environmental conditions (e.g., lighting, door open/closed, noise in the hall), and
   xi. The function of the behavior (i.e., get/obtain, escape/avoid).

F. Identify other variables that might be influencing the interfering behavior (e.g., medication, family/home variables, health status of learner).

Step 4. Developing a Hypothesis Statement

G. Develop a hypothesis statement for the interfering behavior that includes:
   i. the setting events, the immediate antecedents, and immediate consequences that surround the interfering behavior,
   ii. a restatement or refinement of the description of the interfering behavior that is occurring, and
   iii. the function the behavior serves (i.e., attention, escape, tangible/edibles, automatic/sensory).

Step 5. Testing the Hypothesis

A. Test the hypothesis by modifying the setting/activity to increase the probability that the behavior will occur.

Step 6. Developing Interventions

A. Identify appropriate evidence-based practices that address the function of a learner’s interfering behavior.

B. Develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP) that matches the function of the interfering behavior and is agreed upon by all members of the team.
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C. Include the following in the BIP:
   i. A definition of the interfering behavior
   ii. Evidence-based practices used to decrease the interfering behavior
   iii. Objectives that can be used to indicate progress
   iv. Additional materials that may be needed (e.g., data sheet, timer, quiet space, additional staff)
   v. Environmental modifications (e.g., changing class/activity setting, physical attributes of instructional location, change in instructional strategies/practices)
   vi. Response(s) from staff and others to the interfering behavior (e.g., consequences)
   vii. Strategies for improving skill deficit areas
   viii. Strategies for enhancing learner motivation
   ix. The data collection plan

Step 7. Monitoring Intervention Effectiveness

A. Develop a system to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention that outlines when, where, by whom, and how data are collected.

B. Collect data that focus on:
   i. the frequency of the interfering behavior,
   ii. the frequency of use of replacement behavior(s), and
   iii. how long the interfering behavior lasts when it occurs.

C. Collect data in the setting where the behavior occurs and in other settings as well.

D. Collect data in the setting in which the behavior occurs at least once a week to monitor the frequency of the interfering behavior(s) and the replacement behavior(s).

E. Compare intervention data to baseline data to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

F. Summarize the data to make decisions about program planning.