



PBISApps Community

Function of Behavior Through the Tiers

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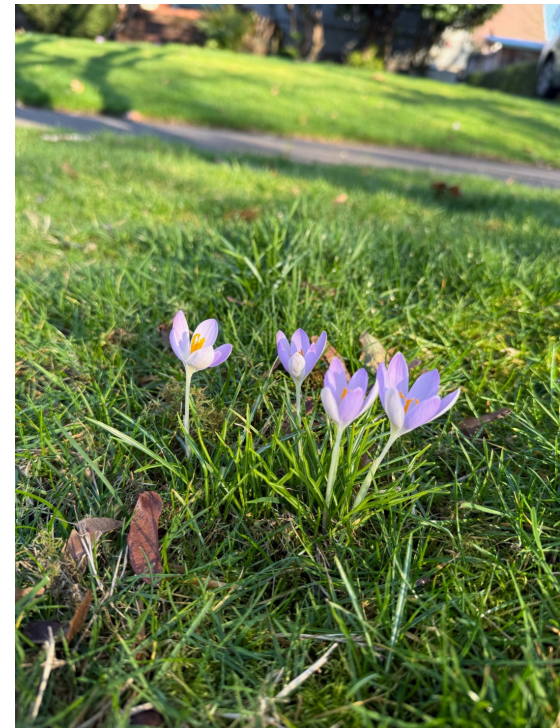
Welcome!

What are your expectations
for today's community of
practice session?



Function of Behavior Through the Tiers

1. Function-based thinking: Understanding why we do what we do
2. Basic FBAs and support plans
3. Discussion, questions, and problem solving



Portland, Oregon

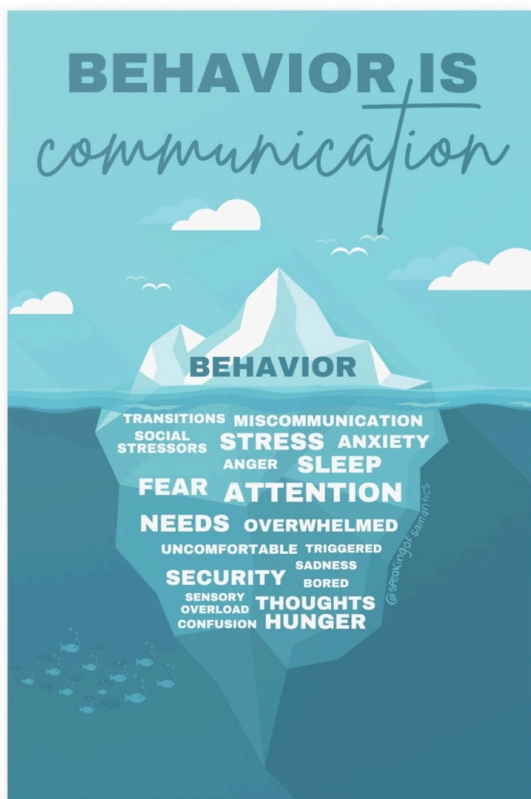
What's Missing From Your Behavior Data? The Why



One referral does not create an entire intervention or plan...but each referral adds a piece of information necessary for understanding the function of a student's behavior. It's better to take your best guess than it is to leave that information out.

By Megan Cave | February 10, 2026

Understanding Behavior



Motivation tells our story, our lived experience

Behavior is communication

All of our communication skills are on a continuum

We can only expect what we teach

Ask “what is this child trying to tell me” or “what do you need?”

Always LAST!



Always assess motivation AFTER you have defined:
Who? What? When? Where?

WHY are students misbehaving in this context?

Are there multiple motivations suspected?

Look for the “primary” motivation

Perceived Motivation (Why?)

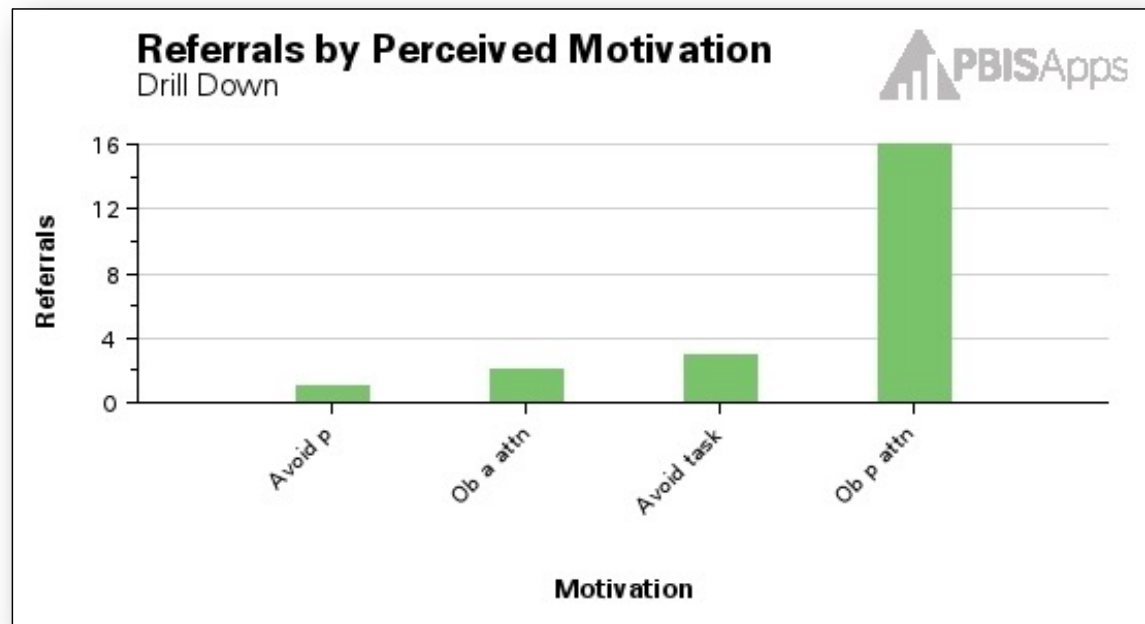
“What is perceived as maintaining the problem behavior?”

Perceived Motivation falls into these two categories:

Obtain	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention (adults or peers)• Tangible (items, activities, sensory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention (adults or peers)• Tangible (items, activities, sensory)

Referrals by Motivation

Motivation for many elementary students engaging in disruption in the classroom



Motivation Practice

Student Behavior	Possible Motivation
Student refused to take off his hood.	Student was cold.
Student was side talking when teacher was talking.	Student needed materials and was asking a classmate to borrow something.
Discussing organisms in class; student said a word that is very similar.	Student didn't know how to pronounce it.

How do we Respond to Behavior?



Calm and respectful

Assum

When

Discre

Instruc

on teaching and reconnecting

Graduated discipline that addresses the function of the behavior

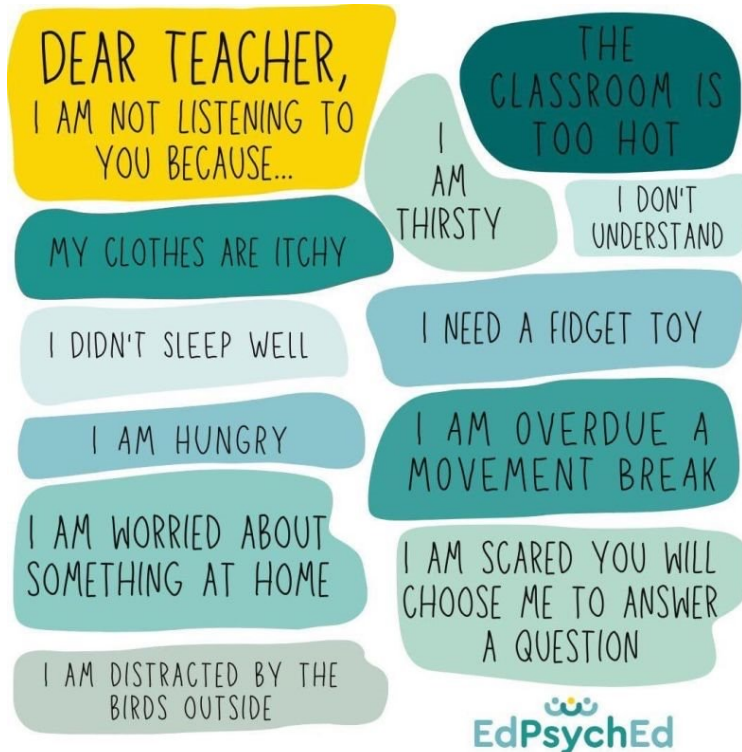
**BECAUSE YOU CAN'T PUNISH
SKILLS INTO A KID**

focused

Responding to Behavior

Student Behavior	Possible Motivation	Ineffective Response
Student refused to take off his hood.	Student was cold.	<i>Allow the student autonomy over what clothes they choose for themselves!!</i>
Student was side talking when teacher was talking.	Student needed materials and was asking a classmate to borrow something.	<i>Discreetly talk to the student about keeping voice down. Ask if they have the materials they need & help them get started.</i>
Discussing organisms in class; student said a word that is very similar.	Student didn't know how to pronounce it.	<i>Laugh it off and teach how to pronounce it and what it means.</i>

Discuss and Share



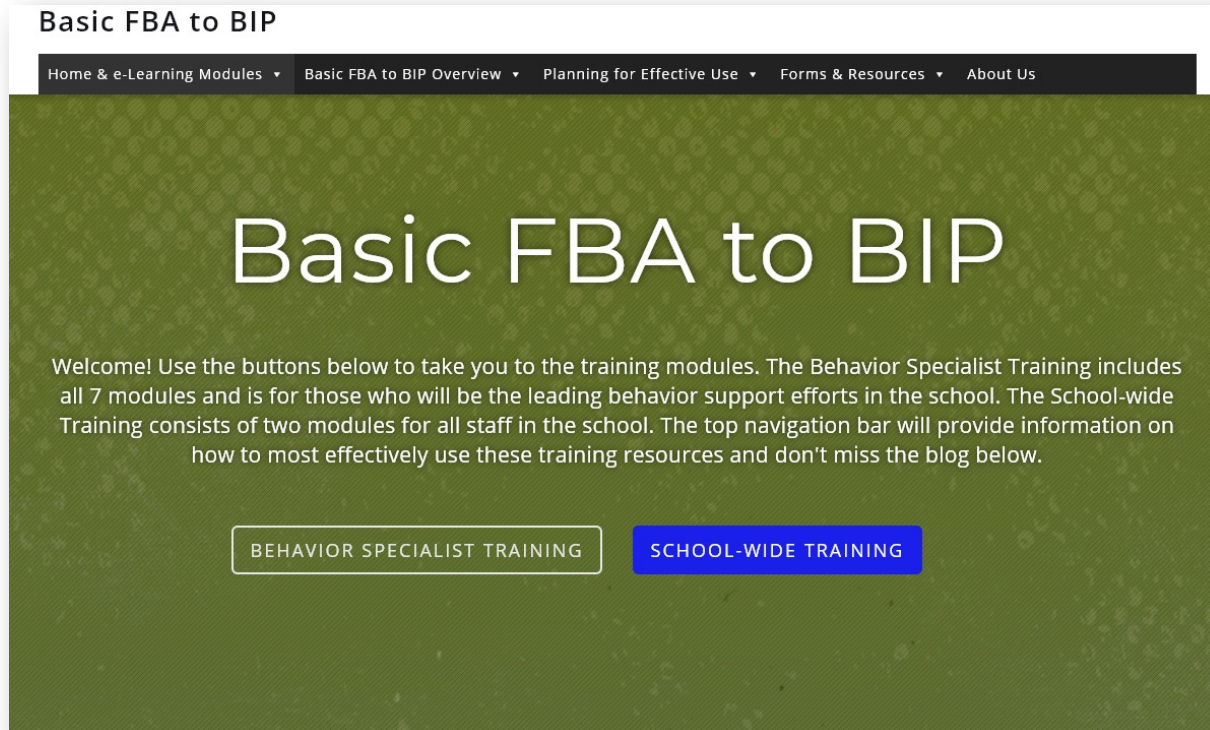
- Why is understanding the WHY someone is behaving important information?
- How can you support the adults you work with in responding instructionally to behavior?
- What barriers do you need to overcome in moving this forward?

Ep. 57: Mythbusters - Functional Behavioral Assessment is Only for Special Education

Functional behavioral assessment might be a bigger process than you're ready to tackle, but function-based thinking is something you can take schoolwide now.

The idea was to be more proactive and to say 'if we have kids heading in that direction, why don't we do a positive behavior support plan based on functional behavioral assessment and prevent the kids from getting into a place of legal compliance?'

-Chris Borgmeier Ph.D.



The screenshot shows the landing page for 'Basic FBA to BIP'. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the following items: 'Home & e-Learning Modules', 'Basic FBA to BIP Overview', 'Planning for Effective Use', 'Forms & Resources', and 'About Us'. The main content area has a green background with the title 'Basic FBA to BIP' in large white text. Below the title is a welcome message: 'Welcome! Use the buttons below to take you to the training modules. The Behavior Specialist Training includes all 7 modules and is for those who will be the leading behavior support efforts in the school. The School-wide Training consists of two modules for all staff in the school. The top navigation bar will provide information on how to most effectively use these training resources and don't miss the blog below.' At the bottom of the main content area, there are two buttons: 'BEHAVIOR SPECIALIST TRAINING' (white with a grey border) and 'SCHOOL-WIDE TRAINING' (solid blue).

Basic FBA to BSP eLearning Modules

<https://basicfba.com/>

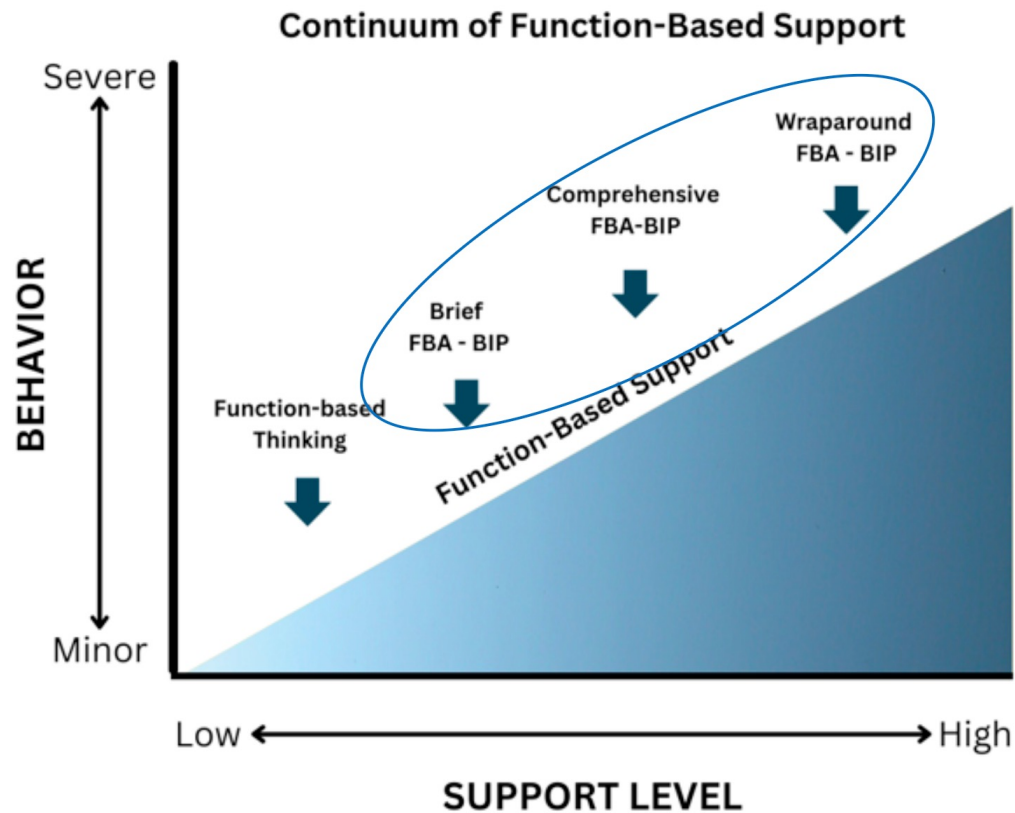
Where did FBAs come from?



1997 IDEA law as a safeguard for students in special education

- Intended to disrupt the cycle that punished or removed students from their learning environment and put supports in place for kids who needed it
- FBA and PBIS both introduced into the law at this time
 - ▲ Prevention and early intervention
- FBAs were the best way to understand what was best for kids and prevent behaviors from escalating
- Legal protection for students receiving special education

Continuum of Function-Based Support



Adapted from Hirsch, S. E., Elfner, K. E., Rufe, S. A., & Depa, A. (2023). Function-Based Thinking: Cultivating Proactive and Student-Centered Behavior Supports. [www. BehaviorAlliance.org](http://www.BehaviorAlliance.org)

Behavioral Function

The purpose or reason why a specific behavior occurs and how it maintains over time

Understanding and identifying function is crucial for selecting effective interventions and designing behavior support plans

(Strickland-Cohen, Iovannone, & Olson, 2025)

The ABCs of Behavior



Antecedent

What happened before the behavior?

(Was there a demand, a transition, a loud noise?)



Behavior

What exactly did the child do?

(Cried, screamed, hit, walked away, repeated a phrase?)



Consequence

What happened after the behavior?

(Did they escape a task? Get attention? Receive a toy?)

By tracking the ABC pattern, you can:

- ✓ Identify triggers
- ✓ Spot patterns
- ✓ Respond more effectively
- ✓ Teach positive alternatives

Behavior is not random — it's a message.
Learning your ABCs helps you listen.

Matching Interventions to Function



Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) Targeted Interventions Reference Guide and Map

Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Targeted Interventions Reference Guide Map

This Reference Guide is designed to be used as a map when discussing function based support needs for students. Use this Reference Guide when trying to determine intervention options for individual students.

School: _____ Date: _____

Targeted Intervention					
Access to Adult Attention					
Access to Peer Attention					
Access to Choice of Alternatives/Activities					

Matching Interventions to Function



Targeted Interventions Reference Guide-EXAMPLE

This Reference Guide is designed to be used as a map when discussing function-based support needs for students. Use this Reference Guide when trying to determine intervention options for students.

Targeted Intervention	Check-In Check-Out (CICO)	Second Step	Coping Cat	Student Success Skills Group	Social Academic Instructional Group	Trails to Wellness
Access to Adult Attention	X	X	X	X	X	X
Access to Peer Attention	X	X	X	X	X	X
Access to Choice of Alternatives/Activities	X	X	X	X	X	X
Option for Avoiding Aversive Activities	X	X	X	X	X	X
Option for Avoiding Aversive Social Peer/Adult Attention	X					
Structural Prompts for “What to do” Throughout the Day	X	X	X	X	X	X
At Least 5 Times During the Day When Positive Feedback is Set Up	X	*	*	*	X	*
A School-Home Communication System	X	*	*	*	X	X
Opportunity for Adaptation into a Self-Management System	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Daily Progress Reports (DPRs) can be incorporated into most Tier 2 skills groups

*Olsen, J. (2026). *Evidence-based and research informed tier 2 supports*. California State University Long Beach. Adapted from Algozzine, B., Barrett, S., Eber, L., George, H., Horner, R., Lewis, T., Putnam, B., Swain-Bradway, J., McIntosh, K., & Sugai, G (2019). School-wide PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. www.pbis.org.

Discussion and Problem Solving

The goal is function-based thinking across the tiers. What is in place in your setting? What would it take to get closer to this goal?

What is a gen ed FBA and support plan compared to a sped FBA and plan?

How have you matched students to function-based supports with success?



Resources: Training and PD



pbis.org



pbisapps.org

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Facilitator Training Events

SWIS Certification

CICO-SWIS Certification

I-SWIS Certification

EC-SWIS Endorsement

Upcoming Events

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PBISApps Community

SWIS Facilitator and Data Coach Training

Tiered Fidelity Inventory 3.0 Overview

SWIS Equity Reports and the Data Drill Down Process

Resources: Training and PD



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Rooted in Relationships: Building Community for Sustainable PBIS

Strong connections, strong systems, strong futures.

April 29 – May 1, 2026 | Spokane Convention Center

About the Conference

The Northwest PBIS 2026 Conference brings together educators, school leaders, family partners, and community members to explore how positive relationships form the foundation for thriving PBIS systems. This year's theme, *Rooted in Relationships*, highlights the critical role of trust, collaboration, and shared purpose in building strong school communities that support every learner.

pbisnetwork.org



NEPBIS

Northeast Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Mark Your Calendars!

The 2026 NEPBIS Leadership Forum will be held
May 14th and 15th, 2026 in Mystic, CT

Registration and access to a discounted hotel room block
will open in January, 2026

Registration for the full 2026 conference: \$395

Pre-conference workshops: \$275

nepbis.org

Resources: Training and PD



ISTE LIVE 26

Designing the future of learning

**JUNE 28–JULY 1
ORLANDO, FL**

REGISTER NOW

Co-located with ASCD Annual—two amazing events, one registration.

The banner features a blue background with decorative elements: a large orange sunburst in the top right, a white square with a smaller orange square inside in the middle right, and blue wavy lines at the bottom right.

2026

CALIFORNIA MTSS PLI

From Innovation to Transformation: Empowering Every Learner

JULY 14–16, 2026 • • • ANAHEIM, CA

Register Now

[Already registered?](#)

The banner features a white background with a decorative border at the top consisting of overlapping orange, purple, and blue shapes. The text is centered and includes a logo for California MTSS PLI with a colorful umbrella icon.

Wrap up with Intention



What stuck with
you the most
from today's
session?

Contact info:
training@pbisapps.org

Bonus Time!



11:00-11:15 open for questions, problem solving, resource sharing, etc.