

# What Are Children Trying to Tell Us?: Assessing the Function of Their Behavior

## HANDOUT

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### **Functional Behavioral Assessment is important because:**

- ✓ It provides a clear description of problem behaviors.
- ✓ It identifies variables that predict the occurrence of a problem behavior.
- ✓ It helps identify the purpose of the child’s problem behavior.
- ✓ It helps identify and expand the child’s strengths.
- ✓ It helps identify interventions that match the identified purpose of the problem behavior.
- ✓ It helps parents and teachers “step back”— by removing themselves from the situation, teachers and parents are better able to objectively observe the child’s behavior.
- ✓ Interventions developed using FBA have resulted in meaningful reductions in problem behavior.
- ✓ Interventions developed using FBA can result in higher rates of engagement and can promote positive social interactions.



### **Remember:**

- ✓ The more clearly a behavior is defined, the easier it is to study and understand.
- ✓ It may be important to consider events that occurred earlier in the child’s day as well as those that occurred immediately before the problem behavior. Events such as breakfast, the bus ride to school, and the amount of sleep a child had can influence behavior.
- ✓ Behavior depends on the context—the reason a child engages in a problem behavior in one setting may be different in another.
- ✓ One way to better understand why problem behavior occurs is to identify features of the child’s environment that are present (e.g., people, activities, and objects) when the problem behavior does not occur.
- ✓ Always consider the child’s strengths. The more the child’s strengths are identified and incorporated into interventions, the greater likelihood of success.
- ✓ FBA is based on the idea that children engage in problem behavior because “it works” for them. The key is to identify the purpose of the behavior and then design interventions that support children in getting their needs met by using appropriate and socially acceptable behavior.