The 6 Common Functions

**Obtain Attention from Peers/Adults** — Behaviors that are a result of the student wanting to obtain a reaction from either peers or adults, regardless of the interaction being positive or negative

**May look like:** Calling out, physical touch, constant asking of questions or hand-raising

**Avoid Attention from Peers/Adults** — Behaviors that are a result of the student wanting to avoid both positive and/or negative interaction with peers/adults

**May look like:** Leaving the room, arguing/temper-tantrums, non-verbal refusal

**Task/Activity Avoidance** — Behaviors that are a result of the student not wanting to participate in the task/activity or follow the direction given

**May look like:** Excessive visits to bathroom/nurse, verbal refusal, attempts to be removed from task/activity

**Obtain Preferential Activity/Item** — Behaviors that are a result of the student preferring to obtain or continue a desirable task or specific item/reward

**May look like:** Arguing/temper-tantrums, refusal to move on/transition, manipulating/bargaining with adults

**Sensory Seeking/Sensory Avoidance** — Behaviors that are a result of the student’s need for sensory input or sensory deprivation, often as a result of internal physiological and/or psychological factors i.e. ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder

**Sensory Seeking may look like:** Loud behaviors, hands-on, excessive fidgeting/gross-motor movement

**Sensory Avoidance may look like:** shutting down, especially in loud/crowded environments, refusal to transition into specific environments that may be overwhelming, avoidance of touch, attempts to be removed from the environment

---

**FAQs Regarding Behavior**

**Why is it important to keep students in the classroom as much as possible?** Students will gain more instruction by sitting in the classroom, even if they are not participating, than they ever will when they are out. In addition, keeping a student in the classroom reinforces that the teacher is in control and allows the teacher to assign appropriate consequences.

**When is it appropriate to send my student out of my class?** Short answer—when it is no longer possible for other students to learn or for the teacher to teach. Depending on the function of the behavior, sending a student out of the classroom may actually reinforce the behavior and cause it to increase.

**How is ignoring the behavior an effective intervention?** It helps avoid bringing attention to the student, which may be their goal, and avoids the teacher and student potentially getting into a power struggle. Not all behaviors need to be addressed immediately. Ignoring the behavior allows all parties to calm down and process through the issue and how to avoid it at a later time, in a one-on-one situation.

**Why should we reward students with problem behaviors just for following expectations that other students do not have difficulty with?** These rewards are to reinforce the desired behaviors until the student has built an intrinsic motivation or habit of following those expectations, at which point the rewards can begin to decrease to a more appropriate level.

**Why is “wanting the control/power” not a function?** Even when a student “wants the control/power,” it is because they are trying to gain or avoid something else. They may be trying to gain a specific task, want attention from peers, or want to avoid a menial task. At times, having the control just makes them feel good/important.

**At what point should a student have a Functional Behavior Assessment/Behavior Intervention Plan created for them?** This is generally a building level/team decision. In general, a FBA/BIP should not be created until all other possible interventions have been tried.

**How do I continue to reinforce my behavioral expectations throughout the year?** Expectations should be posted prominently in the classroom and students should be reminded of them daily. In the event of a behavior, this makes it easy to refer back to the posted expectations and reinforce what students should be doing.

**When is it a good time to contact parents regarding behaviors?** Whenever a referral is warranted. Parents can often be a school’s biggest ally in modifying/managing a student’s behavior. It is also important to contact parents when a child, especially one with many behaviors, has a good day—this builds rapport with parents and helps reinforce desired behaviors.

---

**There Are Behavior Problems in My Classroom and I Don’t Know What to Do!**

The purpose of this pamphlet is to help school staff have a quick reference guide to possible interventions for students who present behavior concerns. This pamphlet is to help school staff come up with possible interventions that they have not thought of before.

It takes three primary attributes to effectively manage behaviors. First it takes **consistency** in regards to each individual student. Students act out in different ways to get specific responses from adults. Second, it takes **patience**. Remember that the student has developed his or her behaviors over several years and the habit of acting that way will not change overnight. Lastly, it takes the **ability to not take the student’s behaviors personally**. It is important to remain objective. Very rarely is the student not doing their homework, talking out in class, or even calling you names because they personally don’t like you. Kids usually want to please the adults around them and make them happy. They act this way because they have very few tools to tell you exactly how they feel and what is bothering them. With these attributes, interventions are more effective and more likely to influence a change in behavior.

**Behavior Management is different than Behavior Modification.** Many interventions may be used to manage behaviors. Ultimately though, if you want to change a student’s behavior, you have to teach the student new and more efficient skills to achieve the same goal that their original behavior was achieving. To do this effectively, it is essential that the intervention being used relates to the function of that behavior. **EVERY BEHAVIOR IS DONE FOR A REASON!** There are actually some interventions that if implemented for the wrong function, will increase the frequency and/or intensity of the behavior, like sending a student out of class to sit in hall when student is behaving to get out of assigned task. **Remember, interventions should be individualized just as educational plans are individualized!**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Obtain Attention**   | **Calling Out**                               | Use Planned Ignoring - visit www.pbisworld.com for a great lesson plan on Planned Ignoring  
                                  Acknowledge the student when he/she has raised hand and shown desired behavior  
                                  Publicly acknowledge students that are showing desired behavior (this is a great way to give positive attention to students showing desired behavior while cuing students that are off task and looking for attention) |
|                        | **Physical Touch/Invasion of Space**          | Provide student with frequent verbal recognition and attention to prevent the need for physical interaction.  
                                  Use Natural Consequences when the student is touching other students (i.e. move student, remove student from activity for a period of time).  
                                  Teach student proper ways of gaining attention and reinforce this by giving attention at the appropriate times. |
|                        | **Constant Asking of Questions/Raising of Hand** | Planned ignoring of inappropriate or excessive questions  
                                  Engage student in the activity - give the student a job/role in the lesson  
                                  Use of non-verbal cues (see www.pbisworld.com) |
| **Avoid Attention**    | **Refusal to Participate - May Avoid Eye Contact and Appear Withdrawn** | Assign another student to work with this student as a partner  
                                  Work out a signal or cue with the student for him/her to communicate his/her need to take a break  
                                  Allow brief breaks to appropriately meet the function of avoidance before rejoining the group |
|                        | **Shut Down, Head Down, Pretend to Sleep**   | Discussion about student needs and teacher needs and agree on what the problem is (game on the table)  
                                  Opportunity to use a classroom quiet space to take a break (have parameters for time)  
                                  Reminder of what the student has to gain and lose, have incentives in place to motivate student |
|                        | **Become Agitated or Upset When Asked to Volunteer or Participate** | Have clear expectations, consequences, and rewards in place for appropriate participation  
                                  Preset the student for situations that will involve participation and review expectations  
                                  Quiet recognition when student remains calm during periods of expected participation |
| **Task Avoidance**     | **Excessive Trips to the Bathroom/Nurse**     | Provide limits to the bathroom within certain periods of time . Provide bathroom trips during explicit times within the day for the whole class.  
                                  Contact nurse before sending to see if previous trips have been made within the day.  
                                  Give a requirement for a specific amount of task to be done prior to being allowed to go to bathroom/nurse i.e. "Do these 5 problems then you can go” |
|                        | **Verbal Refusal**                            | Provide frequent checks for understanding - make sure student is capable and confident in the task being asked - reduce anxiety  
                                  Avoid power struggle and have a consistent plan to make up missed work  
                                  Alternate preferable activities with non-desirable activities |
|                        | **Disruptive/Arguing Behavior in Attempt to Avoid and Be Removed** | Use Planned Ignoring - visit www.pbisworld.com for a great lesson plan on Planned Ignoring  
                                  Use natural consequences - if student needs to be removed make sure there is a plan for task completion  
                                  Use proximity and check-in’s for understanding |
| **Gain/Preferential Task/Item** | **Arguing/Temper Tantrum**                   | Ignore undesirable behavior (unless there is a safety concern)  
                                  Teach and reinforce alternative acceptable behavior to gain access  
                                  Clear consistent directions and consequences |
|                        | **Refusal to Transition**                     | Pre-set using timer or frequent verbal reminders  
                                  Clear consistent directions  
                                  Clear consistent consequences i.e loss of preferred activity. |
|                        | **Manipulation/ Bargaining**                  | Avoid power struggle/planned ignoring  
                                  Clear, consistent directions  
                                  Teach and reinforce alternative acceptable behavior to gain access |
| **Gain/Avoid Sensory Stimulation** | **Shutting Down (Sensory Avoidance)**          | Provide study carrel or separate work space away from distractions  
                                  Allow student to request breaks in a cool-down space  
                                  Give student access to headphones to cancel out noise |
|                        | **Excessive Fidgeting (Sensory Seeking)**    | Give student access to fidget item(s) to hold while working  
                                  Allow student to work standing up  
                                  Provide alternative seating, such as a T-stool or ball seat |
|                        | **(Non-Aggressive) Hands-on Behaviors (Sensory Seeking)** | Allow student to use a weighted vest or blanket while working  
                                  Provide student with a small stuffed animal to pet or hug  
                                  Use a social story to teach personal space and asking before touching |