# A Guide to **UNDERSTANDING** and **SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR**

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Supporting positive behavior is a challenge many educators face at one time or another. Although instructional focus is often on academic goals and objectives, challenging behavior can impact an educator's ability to teach students the skills they need to learn and grow. Unfortunately, human behavior is complex and there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to supporting behavior. It requires understanding behavior principles, the environment, and individual students to know what to address and how to address it. The research on addressing behavior is constantly expanding, but the basic principles of behavior management remain the same. This paper provides a guide to understanding behavior and includes strategies for implementing meaningful behavioral change for successful student outcomes.

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# What Is Behavior?

Behavior is an observable action, or anything a person says or does. It manifests in desired, prosocial behaviors as well as in problematic or interfering behaviors.

**Prosocial behaviors** are expected, desired overt behaviors that assist us in accessing our wants and needs in a way that is acceptable to others and helps form and keep relationships.[1] Prosocial behaviors may range from expected school/classroom behaviors and social interactions to functional skills and are the behaviors educators want to see increase. They are also the most impactful for an individual to build for meaningful, lasting change.

**Interfering behaviors** are overt behaviors that assist us in accessing our wants and needs, but in a way that is socially unacceptable and/or potentially dangerous.

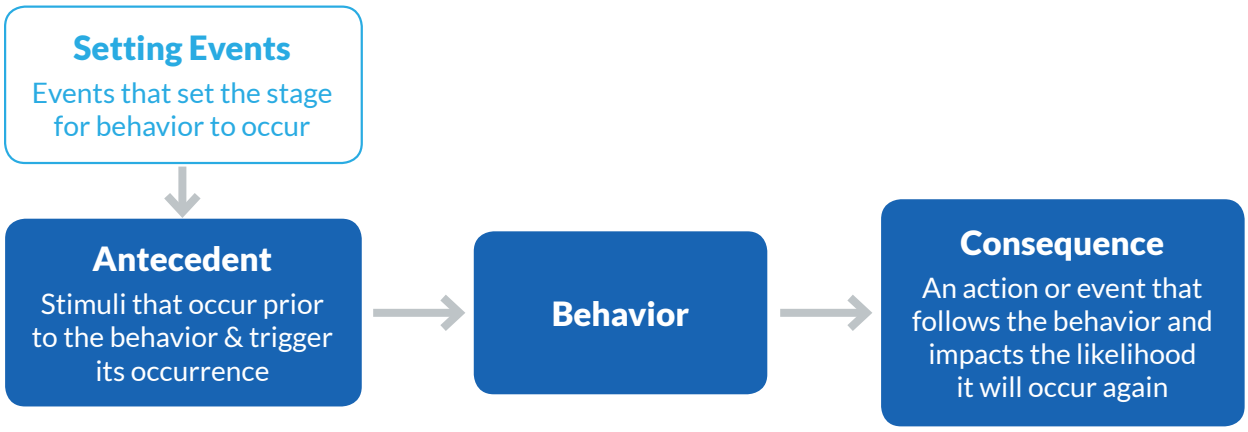
These behaviors may be referred to as challenging behaviors, problem behaviors, or negative behaviors, but in the end, they all mean the same thing. Interfering behaviors can be challenging to those around the individual, can harm social relationships, and isolate individuals from others. They also can limit access to instruction and potentially affect the quality of life for individuals.

By understanding behavior, educators can work to teach individuals socially appropriate ways to meet their wants and needs and ultimately improve long-term outcomes academically, functionally, and socially.

1 Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2004

# Understanding the Basics of Behavior

Behavior is learned. From talking to brushing teeth to doing multiple-digit multiplication, behavior is a result of learning from the environment. Surrounding those behaviors are the cues to engage in the behavior (antecedent) and the action that happens after the behavior (consequence). This Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence chain, or the ABCs, is used to analyze how an individual is learning a behavior and how to teach the individual new behavior(s). This pattern of learning is different for every behavior and every individual, but the basic principles behind each pattern remain the same.




## The components of behavior include:

**Setting Event:** locations, activities, and people that set the stage for a behavior to occur

While setting events are not why a behavior occurs, they increase or decrease the likelihood that when a trigger or an antecedent happens, the individual will engage in an identified behavior. Often when teachers make comments such as, "you can tell when they get off the bus it is going to be a hard day" or "some days this activity is motivating and other days it is not," the inconsistency in behavior is being driven by one or more setting events.

Setting events work by temporarily altering the desire or need to engage in a behavior in the moment. For example, giving Clarence a piece of candy for staying seated may be more valuable before lunch when he is hungry than after he has eaten lunch. Other examples of setting events may include a mismatch of instructional materials or curriculum level, environments that are too noisy or too hot, the presence of a specific staff member, medical conditions such as constipation or having a headache, missed medication, or not sleeping well.

The challenge with setting events is that educators often do not have any control over how they impact an individual or when/if they occur. The more team members know about potential setting events influencing an individual, the more they can design a plan that decreases their impact and helps position the individual for success.

**Antecedent:** an action or change in the environment that occurs immediately before the identified behavior and triggers or "cues" the behavior to occur

An antecedent signals to the individual, "hey, this is a great time to engage in X behavior because good things will happen" or "hey, this is a bad time to engage in X behavior because good things don't happen, so do something different".[2]

*Example: Every time the teacher turns to help another student, Janice bangs her fist on the desk. The teacher turning to help another student is the antecedent to Janice's fist-banging behavior.*

Common antecedents may include placing a demand or request, removing attention, or requiring an individual to stop an activity. Antecedents aren't always easy to observe, and not all antecedents make sense, but they are important to identify. When it is possible to modify or stop an antecedent from occurring, it is then possible to stop the identified behavior from occurring and allow for more opportunity for the individual to practice a new, more socially appropriate behavior.[3]

**Consequence:** the action or change in the environment that occurs after the identified behavior occurs. That behavior/consequence pattern makes an impact on the individual.

*Example: Every time the teacher turns to help another student, Janice bangs her fist on the desk. When Janice bangs her fist on the desk, her teacher turns and says, "Janice, quiet hands." Janice stops banging her fist. The attention from Janice's teacher in the form of redirection is the consequence. Janice has learned that if her teacher removes her attention, she can easily get it back by banging her fist on her desk.*

If the consequence of an action is beneficial, the individual is likely to repeat the action again. This is known as reinforcement, a type of consequence that increases or strengthens the behavior.

2 Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Glasberg & LaRue, 2015

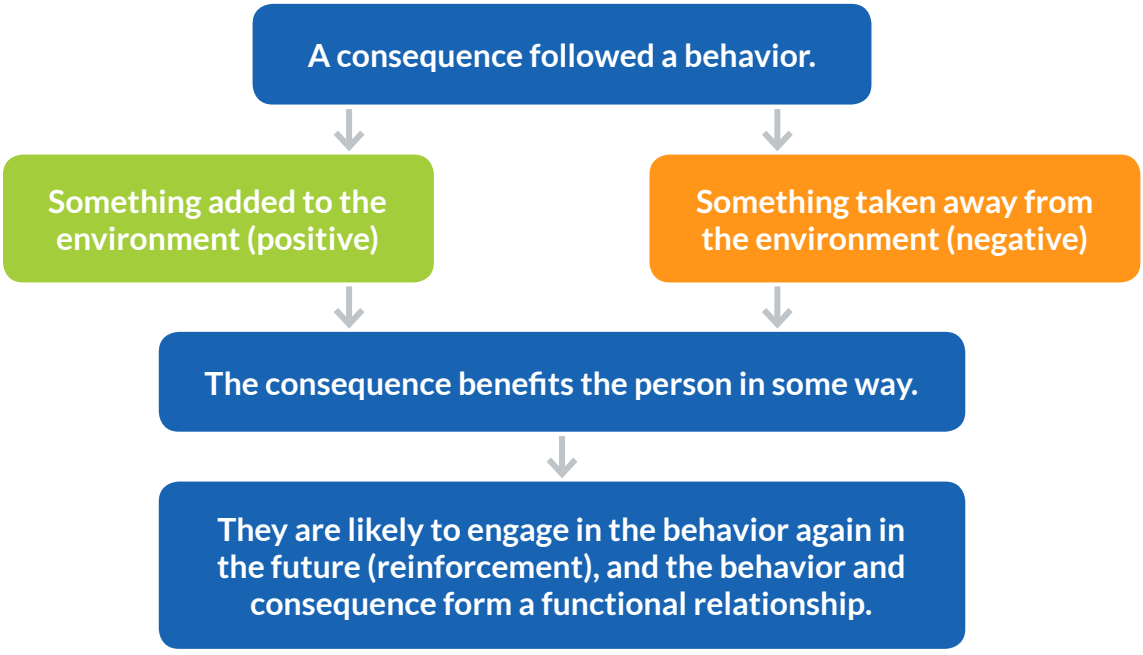
3 Steege & Watson, 2009

## There are two types of reinforcement

**Positive Reinforcement** occurs when something is added to the environment following a behavior (such as attention or a tangible) and it increases or strengthens a behavior.

**Negative Reinforcement** occurs when something is removed from the environment following a behavior (such as a work demand or social request) and it increases or strengthens a behavior.

Positive and negative reinforcement can occur for both prosocial behaviors and interfering behaviors.




If a consequence does not benefit the individual in any way, it decreases the likelihood that they will engage in this behavior again. This is known as punishment, or a decrease or weakening of the behavior. It is important not to confuse negative reinforcement with punishment. Punishment decreases a behavior, whereas negative reinforcement is the removal of something in the environment that increases behavior.

**Note:** If a behavior consequence is only in the form of punishment, the result is only a decrease in the identified behavior. The teaching and reinforcement of prosocial behaviors is a must for individuals to gain and maintain desired skills.

When analyzing consequences, it is easy to get caught up in personal opinions of the situation. Whether a consequence increases or decreases future behavior has nothing to do with how someone on the outside perceives the consequence. It only depends on how the consequence did or did not benefit the individual and how it impacts their future behavior. It may not always make sense, but that is the beauty of consequences— they just have to work!

## Connecting Consequences to Functions of Behavior

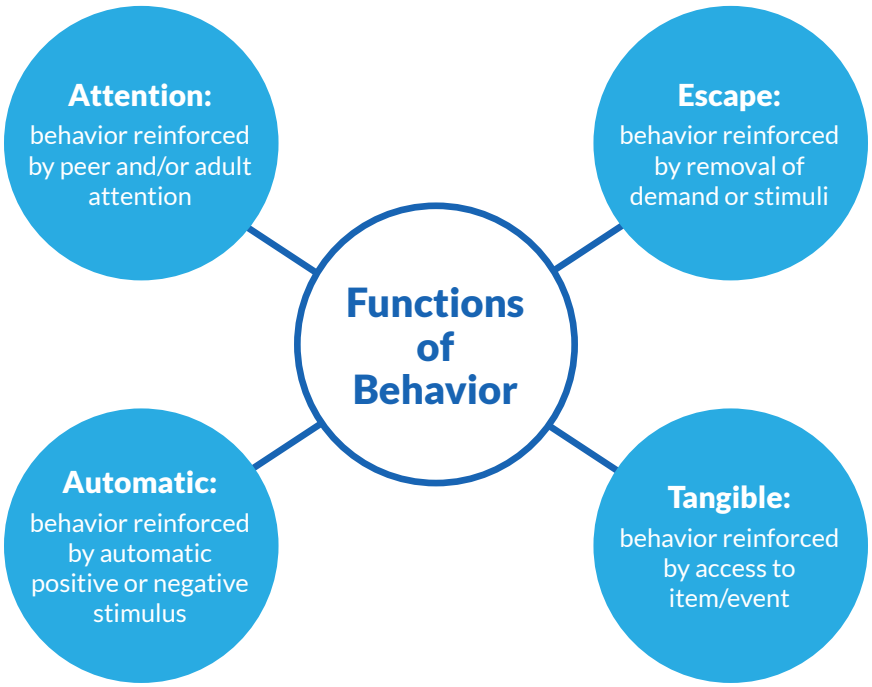
Behavior continues to occur because it continues to work. Every time a consequence occurs following a behavior, the consequence becomes more predictable for the individual. That predictability means that when the individual needs to gain or escape something, someplace, or someone, demonstration of the behavior can make it happen.

This continued relationship is said to be the function of a behavior, or the purpose for engaging in a behavior to make a desired change in the environment. It identifies whether the individual is trying to gain or escape through their behavior and allows for more targeted interventions to be developed .[4]

4 Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011

# Four Functions of Behavior

There are four functions of behavior: escape, attention, tangible, and automatic.[5]




## ATTENTION

When an individual receives attention (e.g., praise, redirection, physical contact such as high five, conversation) following the behavior and it increases the rate of seeing the behavior again, it is known as an attention function.

## TANGIBLE

When an individual receives a tangible (e.g., object, activity, or event) as a result of the behavior and it increases the rate of seeing the behavior again, it is known as a tangible function.

## ESCAPE

When something is removed from the environment that an individual finds aversive or does not enjoy (e.g., demand/request, activity, or social interaction) following the behavior and it increases the rate of seeing the behavior again, it is known as an escape function.

5 Steege & Watson, 2009

## AUTOMATIC

When the function is used to describe behavior that is reinforced internally, rather than with social changes that occur externally from the individual, it is said to be automatic. With automatic reinforcement, something is added (positive) or removed (negative) from the individual's internal state and the individual will continue to engage in the identified behavior (reinforcement) because they gain something pleasurable or escape something unpleasurable in their internal environment.[6] For example, adding salt to food may be automatically reinforcing for some individuals because it makes their food taste better, or scratching an itch may be automatically reinforcing because it removes the painful sensation caused from a bug bite. These behaviors reinforce an individual's future actions only because of how the individual personally benefits from the behavior.

Attention, tangible, and escape are referred to as social functions, because they require social interaction from the environment (such as an adult to provide the tangible or a peer leaving a conversation after the individual displays an interfering behavior). Automatic functions are nonsocial functions because these behaviors are automatically reinforced by the internal self, rather than relying on a social variable. A review of functional analyses in the school setting (Functional analysis is an experimental manipulation of the environment to test the function of a behavior) by Meuller et al.[7] found that approximately 4 percent of behaviors reviewed were found to have an automatic function, which suggests that a majority of the behaviors occurring in the school setting are social in nature.


6 Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011

7 Mueller, Nkosi, & Hine, 2011

# Analyzing Behavior to Inform Intervention Plans

One of the goals of analyzing behavior is to determine what consequence(s) is reinforcing the interfering behavior so an educator can stop reinforcing interfering behavior and start reinforcing prosocial behavior as part of a behavior intervention plan.
In combination with the consequences, setting events and antecedents also provide valuable information when determining the function of the behavior.

## The following charts provide examples in action.

### ATTENTION FUNCTION

| Setting Event | Antecedent | Behavior | Consequence | Reinforcement/ Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No known setting events | Diverted attention | Fall out of chair | Ask if okay, prompt to get back in chair | Positive Reinforcement / Attention |

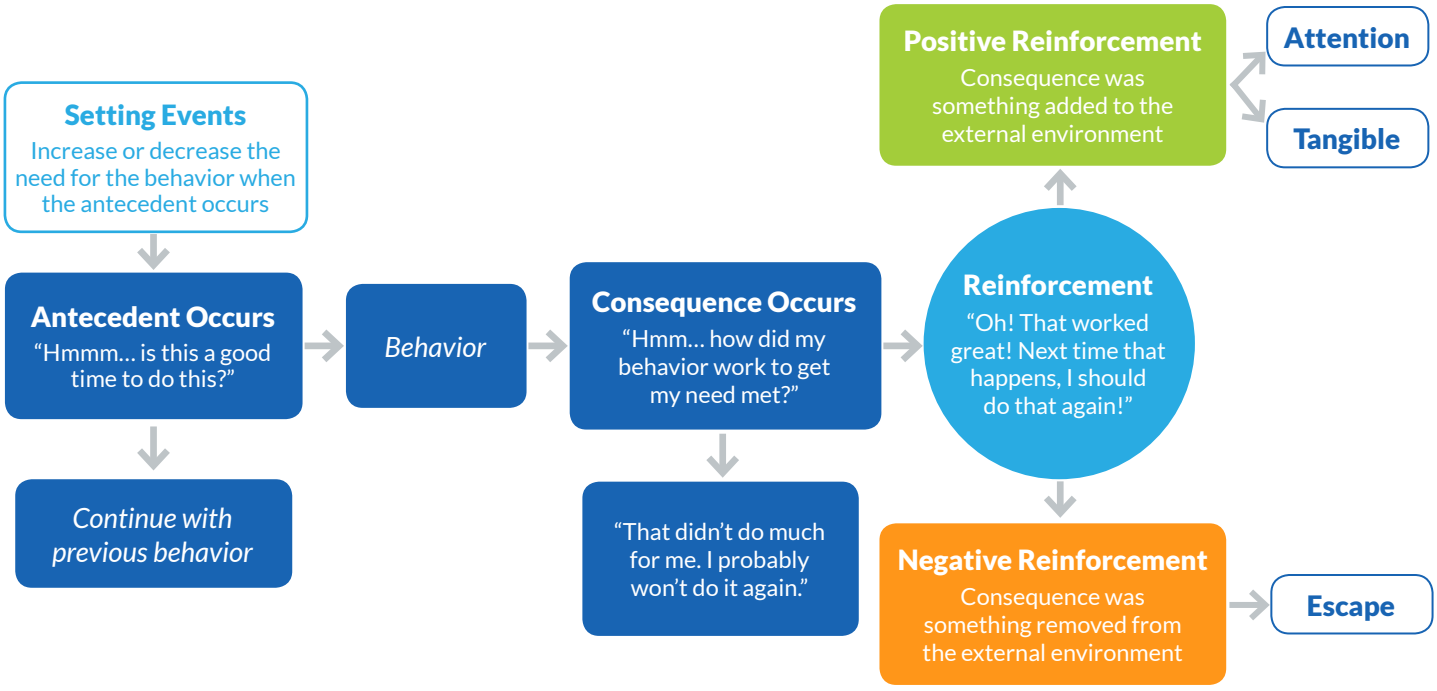
### ESCAPE FUNCTION

| Setting Event | Antecedent | Behavior | Consequence | Reinforcement/ Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| More likely to happen if didn't check in with math tutor in AM | Asked to start math work | Yell, swipe materials | Send out of room | Negative Reinforcement / Escape |

## What Is a Functional Behavior Assessment?

These behavior ABCs are the foundation for addressing behavior. Once it is clear what is happening in the individual's environment, team members know what to modify to support behavior change. A functional behavior assessment (FBA) "...is a set of assessment procedures that results in the identification and description of the relationships between the unique characteristics of the individual and the contextual variables that trigger, motivate, and reinforce behavior".[8] Functional behavior assessments are a way to understand the process of how a behavior has been learned, so that it can be determined how individuals can "unlearn" it and learn new, more socially appropriate behaviors.[9]

The FBA goes beyond what a behavior looks like and digs deeper into what happens in the environment that may cue the behavior to occur and what happens after the behavior to make the behavior more likely to occur in the future. Every individual has a unique genetic makeup and learning history, so the analysis of the environmental conditions that trigger and reinforce behavior is truly individualized for each person.[10] The FBA process may be a formal process (especially for more challenging behavior) or simply a framework to assess behavior while working to address individual needs.




8 Steege & Watson, 2009

9 Glasberg & LaRue, 2015

10 Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011

Every behavior can be looked at by examining the parts of the environment that play a role in how an individual learns a variety of behaviors, but sometimes a more detailed approach is needed to answer all the questions a team may have about a behavior.

## When Is an FBA Required by Law?

FBAs are a vital tool that should be used anytime it becomes necessary to understand an individual's behavior challenges. While an FBA can be used anytime it is necessary to better understand an individual's behavior, there are also times when an FBA is required. The federal government requires a functional behavior assessment to be conducted and a behavior intervention plan (BIP) implemented when a student with a disability has an educational change of placement for disciplinary reasons for the following cases:[11]

1. When a child is removed from school for more than 10 consecutive days for behavior that is a manifestation of the student's disability
2. When a student is removed for more than 10 school days for conduct that is not a manifestation of the disability but the IEP team determines that an FBA is necessary
3. When a child is placed in an interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days for behavior involving a dangerous weapon, illegal drugs, or infliction of serious bodily injury

If the student already has a BIP in place, it should be revised to better meet the individual's needs and address the behavior. Conducting an FBA is also recommended in situations in which a student with a disability is exhibiting problem behaviors that interfere with their ability or the ability of others to learn, despite consistently implemented interventions.

11 IDEA, 2004; 2015

## Gathering and Analyzing Data for Effective Intervention

To determine the function of an individual's behavior, teams will want to gather information that helps them understand the behavior principles that are playing a role for the interfering behavior that has been identified. Teams should use both indirect data (such as record reviews, behavior rating scales, and interviews) and direct data (such as direct observation of antecedent-behavior-consequence patterns) to help determine how individuals are "learning" problem behavior. Each data source should be analyzed for the most common antecedents and consequences that are observed with the behavior. After reviewing all of the data and observing patterns, the team develops a hypothesis about what type of reinforcement is most likely maintaining the behavior.

Functional behavior assessments should summarize the data collected and include:

- Description/definition of the interfering behavior(s)
- Current occurrences of the interfering behavior(s) (baseline data)
- Setting events (if any)
- Antecedents to the interfering behavior(s)
- Consequences that maintain the interfering behavior(s)
- Hypothesized function(s) of the interfering behavior(s) based on the collected data

It is important to remember that the results of the FBA are only as valid as the data that is collected. The goal of the FBA is that the hypothesis should lead not only to understanding and being able to predict the behavior, but to putting meaningful, effective interventions in place.[12]

It is important to remember that the results of the FBA are only as valid as the data that is collected.

12 Steege & Watson, 2009

# The Intervention Process

Once there is a good understanding of behavior, the team can take the following steps to target specific behaviors for improvement through the intervention process.

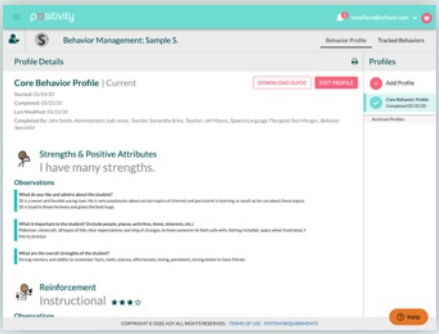
## STEP 1
## Identifying Behavior(s) to Target

Rarely does a student have one isolated behavior that is interfering with the ability to learn and grow both socially or academically. Individuals often have multiple challenges that stand out as needing support above and beyond what is typically provided. Ultimately, prioritizing and targeting behaviors for intervention should be highly individualized and done by a team. The team may include family members; the student (as appropriate); professionals including teachers, related service providers, school psychologists and instructional assistants; and any other individuals who may be able to objectively speak to the individual and their behaviors.[13] It is important to have members on the team who are able to make decisions regarding resources as well as understand behavior principles, help analyze data, and guide the team in making decisions.

### The following questions can help guide the team in prioritizing behaviors to target:

**Does this behavior pose any danger to the individual or others?**

If behaviors pose a threat to self, others, or property, those behaviors should be addressed before less threatening behaviors.[14] The team may want to consider the use of a crisis plan so safety can be maintained while collecting data and determining what intervention(s) to put in place.[15]




### POSITIVITY CORE BEHAVIOR PROFILE

Online solutions such as n2y's Positivity® can support teams with real-time data collection key to successful intervention planning. The Core Behavior Profile in Positivity is a tool that provides a present level of performance for individuals in key social, emotional, and behavioral skill areas that are essential to success in a variety of settings. In addition, the Core Behavior Profile also assists teams in identifying behaviors that may warrant additional intervention and support, along with strategies to consider when creating an intervention plan.

13 Glasberg & LaRue, 2015
14 Glasberg & LaRue, 2015
15 Sprick & Garrison, 2019

**What behaviors are interfering the most with the individual's success at this time?**

Is there a behavior that the team feels is the biggest barrier to the individual—one that if reduced, would make the day easier?

**What behaviors are the most important to the individual at this time?**

Taking the individual's goals into consideration might increase motivation and help the individual experience success. For example, if the individual wants a specific job but their loud vocalizations get in the way of complying with directions (such as directives from a boss), the individual may be more motivated to work on that behavior to reach the desired outcome.

**What is the individual's current level of functioning?**

Are there critical skills the individual needs in order to get wants and needs met or to reach other goals?

**Is there a behavior that will make the biggest impact not only at school but also at home and/or the community?**

Consider what behavior(s) can be addressed that will impact the individual outside of school as well. Although the environmental conditions may be different, interfering behaviors can often be found not only at school but in the home and/or in the community.

The collecting and analyzing of data as well as the development, implementation, and monitoring of a behavior intervention plan can be a significant amount of work. By focusing on one behavior at a time, the team is less likely to get overwhelmed and better able to implement all components with high fidelity. Focusing on one behavior may also help the team, and the individual, experience more success from their efforts. Some teams will choose to still collect and track data on other behaviors and may provide an intervention to address one behavior that may also result in desired change to others.

## STEP 2
# Defining Behavior(s)

Once a team has identified a behavior to target for intervention, it's time to define the behavior so that it's readily understood by all.

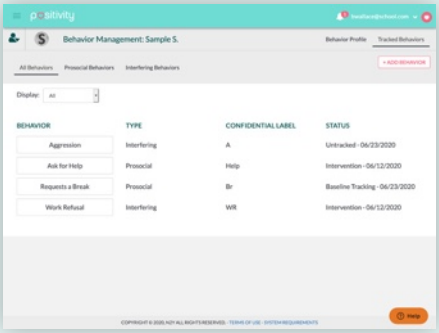
## Following are key steps and tips for creating an operational definition of the targeted behavior:

1. **Identify Target Behavior Name.** Choose a name for the behavior or group of behaviors that are being defined.
   *Example: Aggression = hitting, kicking, and pinching behaviors*

2. **Write an Operational Definition.** Write a thorough and specific description, a.k.a. operational definition of the interfering or prosocial behavior. How well the behavior is defined is vital so that all individuals observing, documenting, and discussing data are focusing on the same thing and can each agree that the target behavior did or did not occur.[16]

   **WHEN CREATING AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:**

   a. **Is the behavior definition objective and measurable?** Definitions should be free of opinion or suggested intent of the behavior and focused on observable actions of the students.[17] Two individuals should be able to observe a behavior and say, "yes, it happened" or "no, it did not."
   *Example: "student hits with an open fist" instead of "student is angry"*




### TRACKING BEHAVIOR IN POSITIVITY

When tracking the behavior in Positivity, a behavior name as well as a confidentiality label for the behavior needs to be created. This shorter code will display when recording data digitally to help maintain student confidentiality.

*Example: A = Aggression; E = Eloping; Br = Requests a Break*

16 Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011, Steege & Watson, 2009
17 Alberto & Troutman, 2013)

**b** **Is the behavior definition complete?**

An operational behavior definition should include specific examples of the behavior as well as examples of what may look like the target behavior but should not be counted as such.[18]

*Example: Leaving an area may be counted if the student leaves the classroom, but not if they leave their seat but stay in the classroom.*

**c** **Is the behavior an action?**

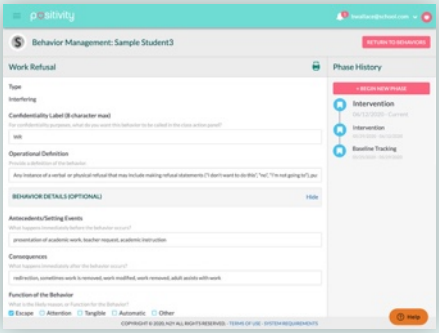
Ask if this behavior can be performed by others without explanation. If yes, then it is a clear definition. If not, it is likely a description of how the team is interpreting the behavior.[19]

*Example. The team defines Layla's behavior as being noncompliant. However, noncompliance may look different in different individuals. Redefine the behavior by identifying what the individual is doing that shows they are being noncompliant, such as putting their head down, saying 'no', or turning away from an adult. Those are the observable actions for this definition.*

**d** **Does the behavior definition pass the "stranger test"?**

Definitions should be clear and easily observed by all individuals.[20]

*Example: Ms. Smith asks the school psychologist to come and observe her student's tantrum behavior. The school psychologist observes the student tell the teacher, "no" and put her head on her desk but no tantrum behavior. At the end of the observation, the teacher says, "Did you see all of those tantrums from the student? All she did was pout and say 'no'!" The teacher and school psychologist clearly have different versions of what a tantrum is and when it does or does not occur. Without a consistent definition, the team will not have an accurate picture of what is happening or how often/how long it is occurring.*




## BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IN POSITIVITY

The Behavior Management section of Positivity lets teams quickly add behaviors for tracking, allowing for ease of data collection as well as initiation of the intervention process. When adding a target behavior in the Behavior Management section of Positivity, teams must select if the behavior is interfering or prosocial. Once a behavior is added for tracking, a Behavior Details page is created that houses all information related to the tracked behavior. This step also allows for data to be collected that is specific to the tracked behavior.

18 Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011

19 Lindsley, 1991

20 Steege & Watson, 2009; Alberto & Troutman, 2013

## STEP 3
# Gathering Baseline Data

Baseline data refers to the information recorded about the current level of a behavior before an intervention, or prior to the change(s) put in place to increase or decrease behavior.[21] Without data, decisions are often driven by opinion and emotions, which can be skewed by a particularly challenging day, misinterpretation of an event, or recent good news. Baseline data is important as it provides a starting point for tracking the behavior. Once an intervention has been put in place, the same data will continue to be taken and compared to the baseline data to determine if the individual is making progress.

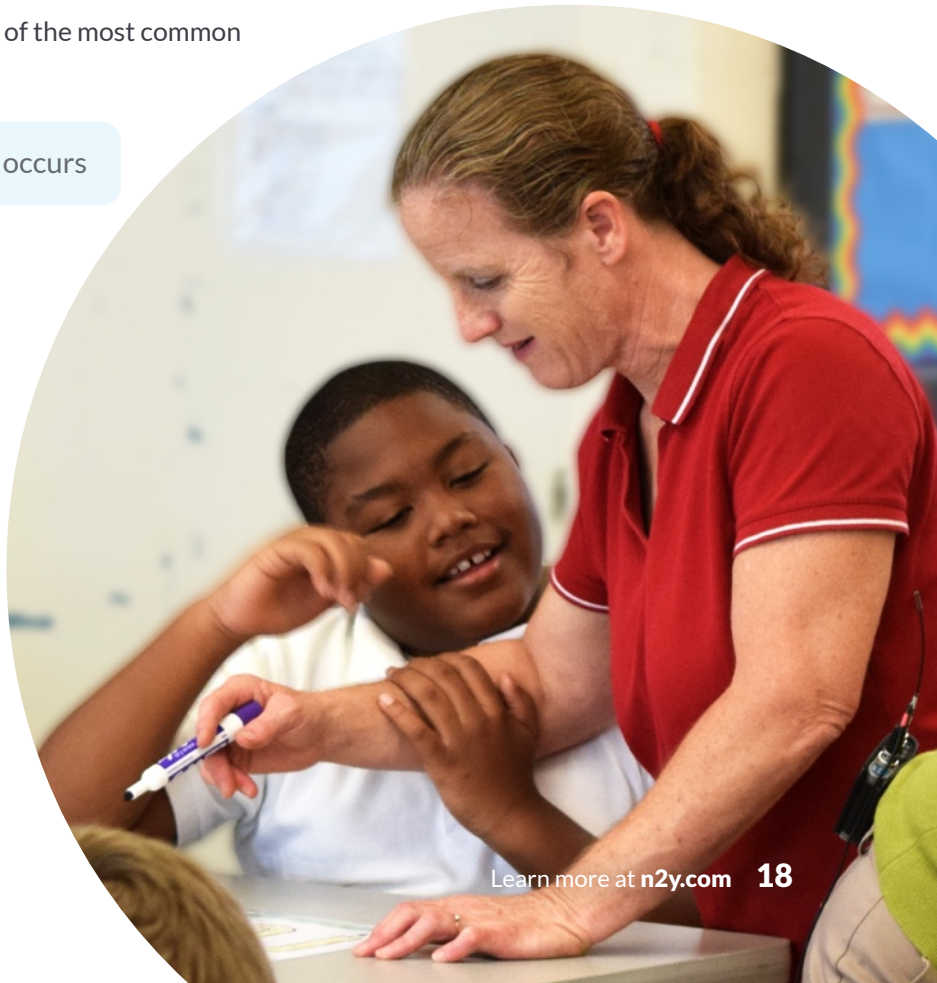
In establishing a baseline, it is key to collect information and data surrounding the behavior that will further assist in intervention planning. An FBA is an effective way to collect and analyze behavior data to know what components of the environment may need to be modified in the intervention process.

The data collected for baseline should reflect why the behavior is a concern and what change the team hopes to see in the behavior. There are many types of data that may be collected in this process. Some of the most common include the following:

**Frequency:** the number of times a behavior occurs

*Example: John does not raise his hand much during the day to ask for help or gain attention. The team begins to track the number of times John raises his hand to gain a baseline of how often the behavior occurs.*

Frequency data collection is an appropriate measure of data when concerned about how many times a behavior occurs throughout the data collection period.[22]



21 Alberto & Troutman, 2013

22 Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011

**Duration:** the length of time an individual spends from the start to the stop of the behavior

*Example: Francis sometimes elopes (leaves) from the classroom and runs around the building. Duration data helps the team gather a baseline of how long she runs around the building.*

Duration is appropriate when the team is concerned about how long the individual is spending engaged in the behavior.[23]

**Interval Recording:** whether a behavior is present or absent during a particular period of time

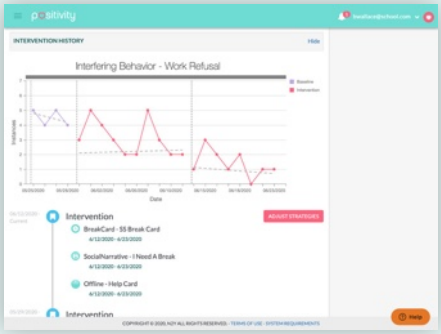
Interval recording is useful when trying to estimate the duration or number of instances of behaviors. For whole interval recording, the behavior must occur throughout the entire interval. For partial interval recording, the behavior occurs during some portion of the interval

*Example: The team may document whether Darius interrupted the teacher during five-minute intervals using partial interval recording. An estimate of the number of intervals that he did not interrupt the teacher can be calculated.*

**Anecdotal Notes:** notes recorded related to a behavioral incident

While the frequency and/or duration data should also be taken, sometimes there is other important information about a behavior that cannot be captured with a number, such as the setting events, antecedents, and consequences that occurred with a behavior.[24]

At least three data points should be collected for a baseline, and data should be clustered together and/or moving in the opposite direction of the goal before putting an intervention in place.[25] All of this data collection is of very little use (and a poor use of resources), however, if the data is not used to help make decisions regarding interventions.




## GRAPHING DATA IN POSITIVITY

Positivity's Behavior Management provides a platform not only to collect data, but also to graph data, and use the graphs to guide decisions about interventions. Initiating a baseline phase of intervention on the Behavior Details page allows real-time data to be visually represented in a graph to provide a trend in behavior as well as to represent a baseline for future reference.

23 Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011
24 Steege and Watson, 2009
25 Alberto & Troutman, 2013

## STEP 4

# Creating an Intervention Plan

Once all of the data has been analyzed and the likely function of the behavior determined, a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) should be developed and implemented. A BIP is a support plan developed using the results of the functional behavior assessment to drive interventions that are most likely to "lead to *socially significant behavioral outcomes.*"[26] Rather than putting in place reactive plans that focus on what to do after the behavior occurs, function-based behavior plans consider the *why* behind the behavior and implement changes to the individual's environment to keep the behavior from occurring. In this way, "FBAs empower us" [27] by telling what is working for the individual and narrow the focus to interventions that are most likely to be effective for behavior change.

*Example: The function of Gian's yelling is to escape social interactions. If the team decides to prompt Gian to take a break when he yells, Gian's behavior will successfully allow him to escape (e.g., it will work for him). This intervention is likely to increase, or reinforce, Gian's new replacement behavior of asking for a break instead of yelling.*

An intervention refers to the change put in place to increase or decrease a behavior. It is planning in advance and focuses on altering the environment to change a behavior in a specific way.[28] Interventions can be put in place to address all skills, including academic skills such as math and reading, as well as behavior and social communication. This may be an antecedent intervention, a consequence intervention, or a change in the instruction provided. Although behavior may be severe and call for a number of changes, it is best to resist making too many changes at a time. If too many interventions are put in place at one time, it is difficult to determine what is working and what is not working.

The baseline data collected and analyzed helps the team narrow the focus and match intervention strategies so the student can get the function met in a more socially appropriate way. If the intervention does not allow the student to meet the function of their behavior, the intervention is not likely to be successful.[29]

26 Steege & Watson, 2009

27 Glasberg, 2008

28 Sprick & Garrison, 2019

29 Steege and Watson, 2009

## TYPES OF INTERVENTION

There are three main types of interventions to consider when developing an intervention plan: Antecedent Interventions, Skill-Based Interventions, and Consequence-Based Interventions.

### Antecedent Interventions

Antecedent interventions are changes made to the environment in advance to reduce the likelihood that the environment will cue the interfering behavior (or make it less aversive) and increase the likelihood the environment will cue to replacement and/or desired prosocial behavior. The benefit to antecedent strategies is that when the environment no longer cues interfering behavior, a response to that behavior is no longer required.[30]


30 Glasberg, 2008

The following chart includes intervention considerations[31] as well as links to proactive strategy guides from n2y's Positivity that are designed to help students regulate their behaviors.

| Intervention Considerations | Antecedent Intervention Examples | Positivity Strategies |
|---|---|---|
| Change or modify setting events so antecedents cannot/ do not occur. | Give a class job so time between check-ins with an adult is reduced.<br>Have a morning check-in to reduce the effects of a difficult transition from home in the mornings.<br>Pre-teach/provide precorrection of a skill.<br>Practice taking a deep breath before trying something new.<br>Provide noncontingent access to attention. | Breath Strategy<br>Decision Tree<br>Incentive Chart<br>Social Narrative<br>Video Modeling<br>Visual Schedule |
| Alter or eliminate the antecedent so the individual will no longer need to use problem behavior. | Modify or change the way a task looks when presenting.<br>Use timers or alarms to cue transitions.<br>Integrate interests into work.<br>Provide choices.<br>Present an incentive chart.<br>Use a visual schedule to help student understand what's next | Alarms<br>Decision Tree<br>Incentive Chart<br>Social Narrative<br>Video Modeling<br>Visual Schedule |
| Structure the environment so antecedents are less likely to cue behavior and the student is more likely to use the taught replacement behavior(s). | Provide break cards.<br>Change the instructional location.<br>Create a "safe place" for tangibles to be stored.<br>Increase or decrease proximity to adults/peers.<br>Create specific instructional routines—use visual supports to model behaviors.<br>Provide verbal and/or nonverbal cues<br>Use of noncontingent access to attention, tangibles, or escape throughout the day | Break Cards<br>Breath Strategy<br>Decision Tree/Workflow<br>Social Narrative<br>Video Modeling<br>Visual Schedule |

31 Glasberg, 2008; Sprick & Garrison, 2019; Alberto & Troutman, 2013

It is important to know that even if the environment is modified to keep from cueing the interfering behavior, the antecedent is likely to never be fully removed from the individual's environment. The individual must be taught a new, prosocial behavior that will also get the individual's need met when the original antecedent occurs or is reintroduced.[32]

### Skill-Based Interventions

Instead of engaging in the interfering behavior, individuals should be taught a new, more socially appropriate way to get the function of their behavior met. This way, when the antecedent found in the functional behavior assessment does occur, the individual has a different behavior that will also meet their needs.[33] This behavior should be more efficient than the interfering behavior, require less effort, and meet the same function.[34]

This is applied with the earlier example of Janice. Every time the teacher turns to help another student, Janice bangs her fist on the desk. When Janice bangs her fist on the desk, her teacher turns and says, "Janice, quiet hands." Janice stops banging her fist. Instead of banging her fist on the desk to gain her teacher's attention, Janice should be taught a new behavior such as tapping her teacher on her shoulder.

The Positivity strategies included in the chart on the previous page can be used to introduce and practice replacement behaviors with students.

#### WHEN DETERMINING A REPLACEMENT BEHAVIOR, IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER:

**Does the replacement behavior meet the same function as the interfering behavior?**
In the example above, teaching Janice to request a break is less likely to be effective than teaching her to request attention from her teacher.

**What skill is already in the individual's repertoire?**
If this is a skill the individual already has, it may be possible to spend more time reinforcing the skill. If not, it is ideal to capitalize on the strengths of the individual to teach the new skill, such as their communication modality.

32 Glasberg & LaRue, 2015; Steege & Watson, 2009
33 Sprick & Garrison, 2019; Fisher, Piazza, & Roane, 2011
34 Glasberg, 2008; O'Neill, et. al., 1990

**Is the replacement behavior easier to demonstrate than the interfering behavior?**

If the individual has to work harder to demonstrate the replacement behavior than the interfering behavior, they will continue to demonstrate the interfering behavior. For example, Janice (in the example above) gains the teachers attention quickly and efficiently by banging her fist. If her teacher instead ignored the banging and redirected Janice to "tap me on the shoulder when you need me" the teacher would make the shoulder tapping the easiest way for Janice to get her attention.[35]

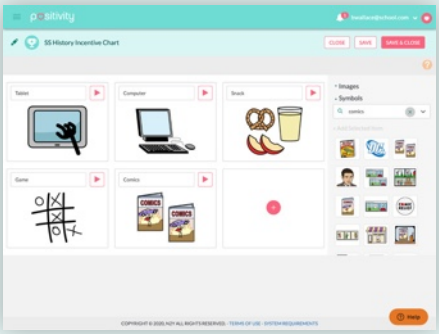
In addition to a replacement behavior, it is important for the team to consider the behaviors that need to be taught to facilitate long-term success. Initially, an individual may be taught to ask for a break (to meet an escape function). Once independent in requesting a break, the instructional focus may shift to social skills, classroom behaviors, etc. to increase independent participation and engagement over time.

### Consequence/Response Intervention

#### RESPONDING TO PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Once the environment has been set up to reduce or eliminate the antecedent and new behavior skills have been taught, it is important to ensure the replacement prosocial behaviors are reinforced. When planning reinforcement of the desired, prosocial behaviors, the reinforcement should match with the function found during the FBA.[36]

For example, if the individual's interfering behavior is found to be maintained by an escape function (negative reinforcement), escape should be provided for the prosocial behavior as well. This could include removing work tasks or providing a new/alternative task. Providing praise for prosocial behavior in that context is likely to have little to no effect on increasing the likelihood of the individual demonstrating that prosocial behavior in the future.



## INCENTIVE CHART IN POSITIVITY

Incentive charts in Positivity may be customized for the classroom or individual students to reinforce desired behaviors.

35 Sprick & Garrison, 2019; Steege & Watson, 2009; Glasberg, 2008

36 Steege & Watson, 2009

### RESPONDING TO INTERFERING BEHAVIOR

It is essential that consequence-based interventions address how to respond to the interfering behavior. Even with the best intervention plans, individuals may still engage in interfering behavior every now and then. For the intervention to be effective, when interfering behavior does occur, it must also no longer be reinforced.[37] For example, it does not matter how hard Janice bangs on the desk, her teacher will never provide her with attention. Instead, attention is only provided when Janice demonstrates prosocial behavior such as raising her hand or tapping the teacher on the shoulder to gain her attention.

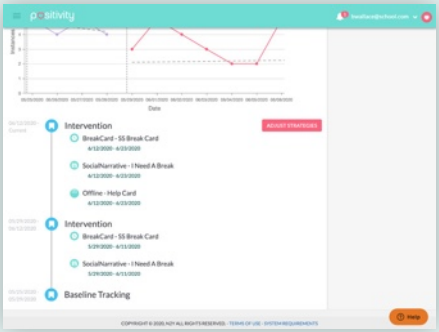
If behavior does escalate, it is important to have a plan to redirect the student back to the behavior the educator wants to see. This redirection may come in the form of a visual, a nonverbal signal, or a verbal cue. It is best to redirect the student at the earliest signs of a more significant behavior occurring in order to interrupt the problem behavior and engage the student in the expected behavior. This serves as a precorrection for demonstrating the behavior in the future as well as avoids escalating the situation to more serious behavior.[38]

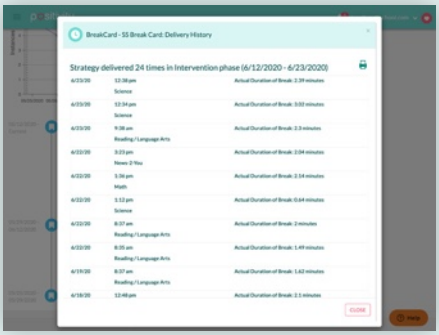
A note of caution. Planning to ignore a behavior when it occurs is a response strategy frequently used in the hopes of no longer providing reinforcement to a behavior. While this may seem simple on paper, it can be very difficult to implement. In the example with Janice, if she has not yet learned or become automatic in requesting attention, she is likely to begin banging harder, louder, and/or engage in new, more severe behavior to gain the attention she is seeking. This is known as an extinction burst. When an extinction burst occurs, teams often end up responding to this new, more intense behavior, which teaches individuals a new, faster way to gain reinforcement (rather than the prosocial behavior they are trying to teach). If the team is unable to tolerate the behavior through that burst, extinction should not be considered as a response strategy.[39]

37 Alberto & Troutman 2013; Glasberg, 2008

38 Colvin, 2010

39 Steege & Watson, 2009




## DOCUMENTING STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS IN POSITIVITY

Once the interventions that will be implemented to support a student's behavior have been identified, Positivity's Behavior Management can be used to start an intervention phase and document the strategies and interventions. Once the strategies are set up for the student, Positivity will deliver the strategies as planned and document every time they are delivered or used supporting fidelity of the intervention plan. If additional interventions are being used offline, Positivity allows teams to document that usage during distinct phases of intervention.

## STEP 5
# Monitoring Interventions

By now the team has assessed and chosen a target behavior (or behaviors), defined the behavior, determined the antecedents and consequences surrounding the behavior, and developed an intervention based on the data collected. The plan that has been written is a plan for the adults to know how to change the individual's environment and teach new, more positive behaviors. This is not a quick or simple process, so once the intervention is implemented it is important to monitor progress to see how the intervention is working. The baseline data gathered earlier is the starting point, and the team members will keep collecting that data to see if the intervention is working.

To be sure that instructional change happens, plans should also be monitored for their implementation fidelity, or how closely the plan is being implemented to the way the team intended for it to be implemented.[40] Even the best data-informed plan is only as good as how it is delivered.[41] When making decisions about individual progress, implementation fidelity should be the first thing to consider. If the plan is not implemented the way it was designed, teams cannot expect individual progress to be made.

Teams can make their intervention plan into a checklist and conduct an observation to see if all components are in place. As interventions begin to work and individuals make progress, it is also easy for teams to stop implementing with the same fidelity as when they started. Continued fidelity checks help ensure all individuals responsible for plan implementation maintain consistency day after day.


### TRACKING BEHAVIOR CHANGES IN INTERACTIVE GRAPHS

Positivity's Behavior Management allows educators to track changes in behavior they want to increase as well as behaviors they want to decrease through an interactive graph. Changes in phases are clearly defined allowing teams to analyze trends in the tracked behavior and make data-informed decisions about progress while tracking the implementation of interventions. Additional data on the delivery and usage of Positivity strategies can be found in My Reports.

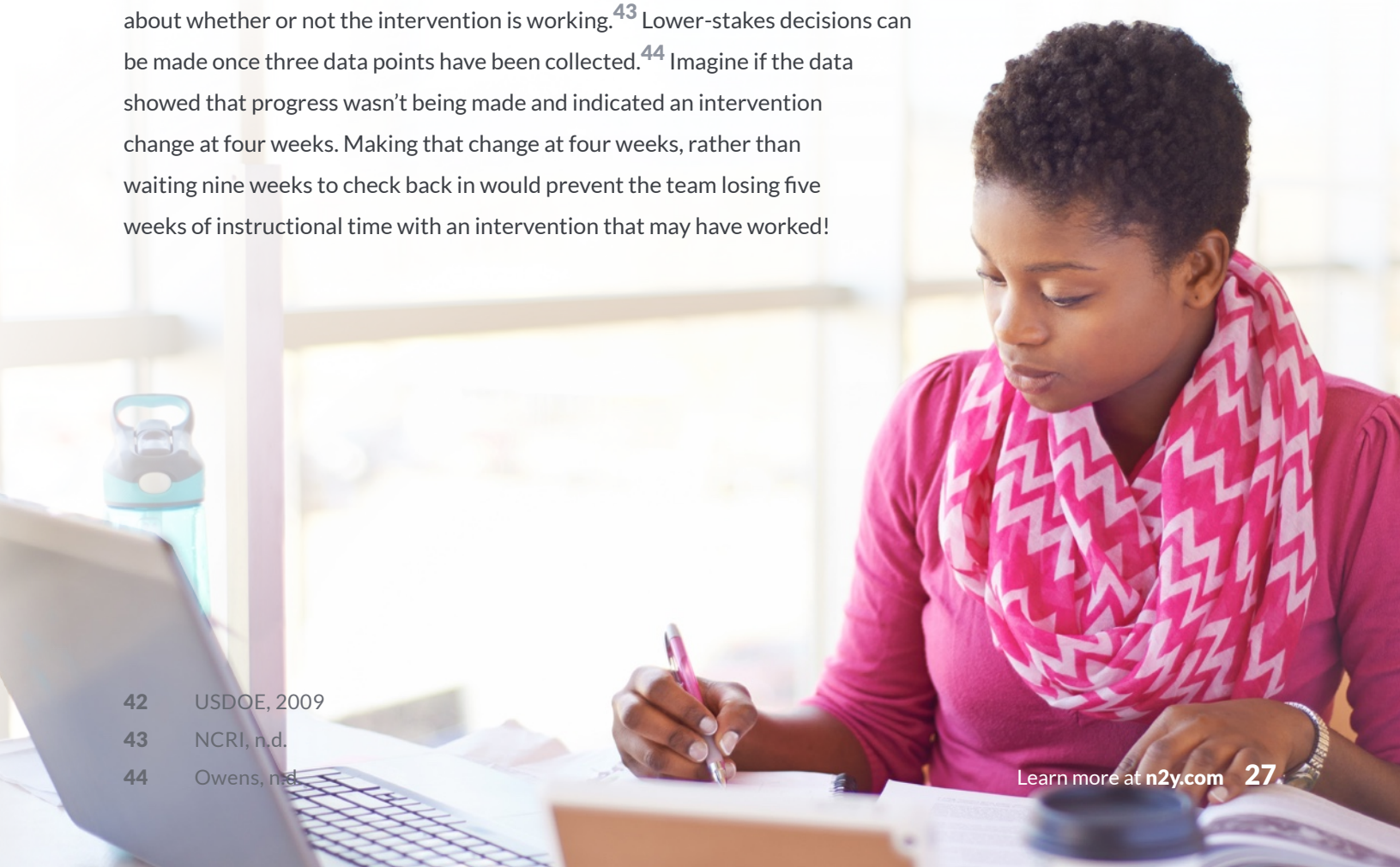
40 Carroll et. al, 2007

41 Mihalic et. al., 2004

## STEP 6
# Making Data-Informed Decisions

Just as with functional behavior assessment data, thoughts can be skewed by all kinds of setting events from a lesson not going well to hearing exciting news, so it is important to use data, rather than opinions, when deciding how an intervention is going. At the same time, educators know that data is only one piece of the puzzle, so decisions should be considerations and not requirements. This is being data-informed.[42]

So how does this work? First, baseline data needs to be entered. Then the team sets a goal for where they want the individual to be. This may be a short-term or long-term goal. Next, the intervention phase begins with input of the intervention strategy. Once the intervention is implemented, data collection continues. Data collected should match the kind of data gathered during baseline. When enough data has been collected, the graph can be analyzed. Different research has slightly different recommendations for ways to analyze data, but generally, the intervention needs to be delivered for at least two to three weeks, and there need to be six to nine data points collected before making a decision about whether or not the intervention is working.[43] Lower-stakes decisions can be made once three data points have been collected.[44] Imagine if the data showed that progress wasn't being made and indicated an intervention change at four weeks. Making that change at four weeks, rather than waiting nine weeks to check back in would prevent the team losing five weeks of instructional time with an intervention that may have worked!

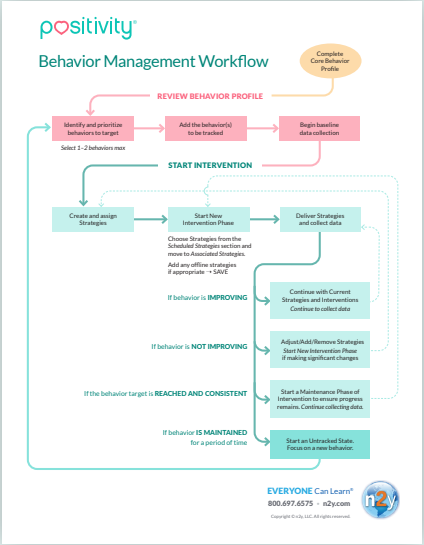


42 USDOE, 2009
43 NCRI, n.d.
44 Owens, n.d.

## Basic decision-making rules to follow for interventions:

- Visually compare baseline data to intervention data to determine if the student has made progress toward the goal.
- Meet as a team to decide if the goal should be increased or, if the frequency or intensity of intervention should be decreased.
  - If the student has made progress, keep up with implementation fidelity.
  - If the student has not made progress, meet as a team and discuss potential intervention changes. This may be increased antecedent strategies, further instruction, or reinforcement of the prosocial behavior.

This process (assess, set goals, intervene, take data, analyze and revise as necessary) continues for an individual until the team has addressed all of the areas for desired growth. Some teams may decide to continue tracking behaviors to ensure the individual maintains their level of progress. Once teams are satisfied with the individual's progress, maintenance, and behaviors, behavior tracking is no longer needed.




Positivity can assist teams in the intervention process from beginning to end. The Behavior Management Workflow (found on page 32) helps teams make data-driven decisions along the way to ensure student progress.

# Conclusion

Human behavior is complex and there is no simple, easy fix to support behavior change. This guide provides an overview of steps to consider when it comes to understanding and addressing interfering and prosocial behavior. Taking the time to establish behavior definitions and common language will help effectively guide the process for a team to collect relevant, objective data. This will make a significant difference in helping to make meaningful change for individuals. An analysis of this data will guide the decision-making process to create and progress monitor functionally relevant interventions and ultimately meaningful change for individuals across settings.

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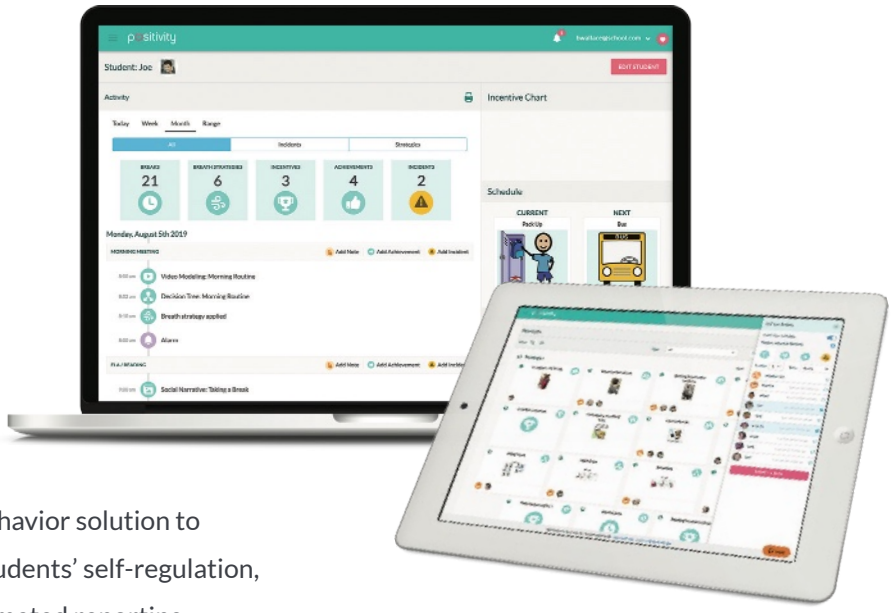


Positivity is the first comprehensive online behavior solution to support classroom management, empower students' self-regulation, collect behavior-related data and create automated reporting. Easily integrated into daily classroom routines, Positivity delivers proactive, evidence-based strategies that support emotional control and executive functioning, enabling students to actively participate in learning and achieve independence.

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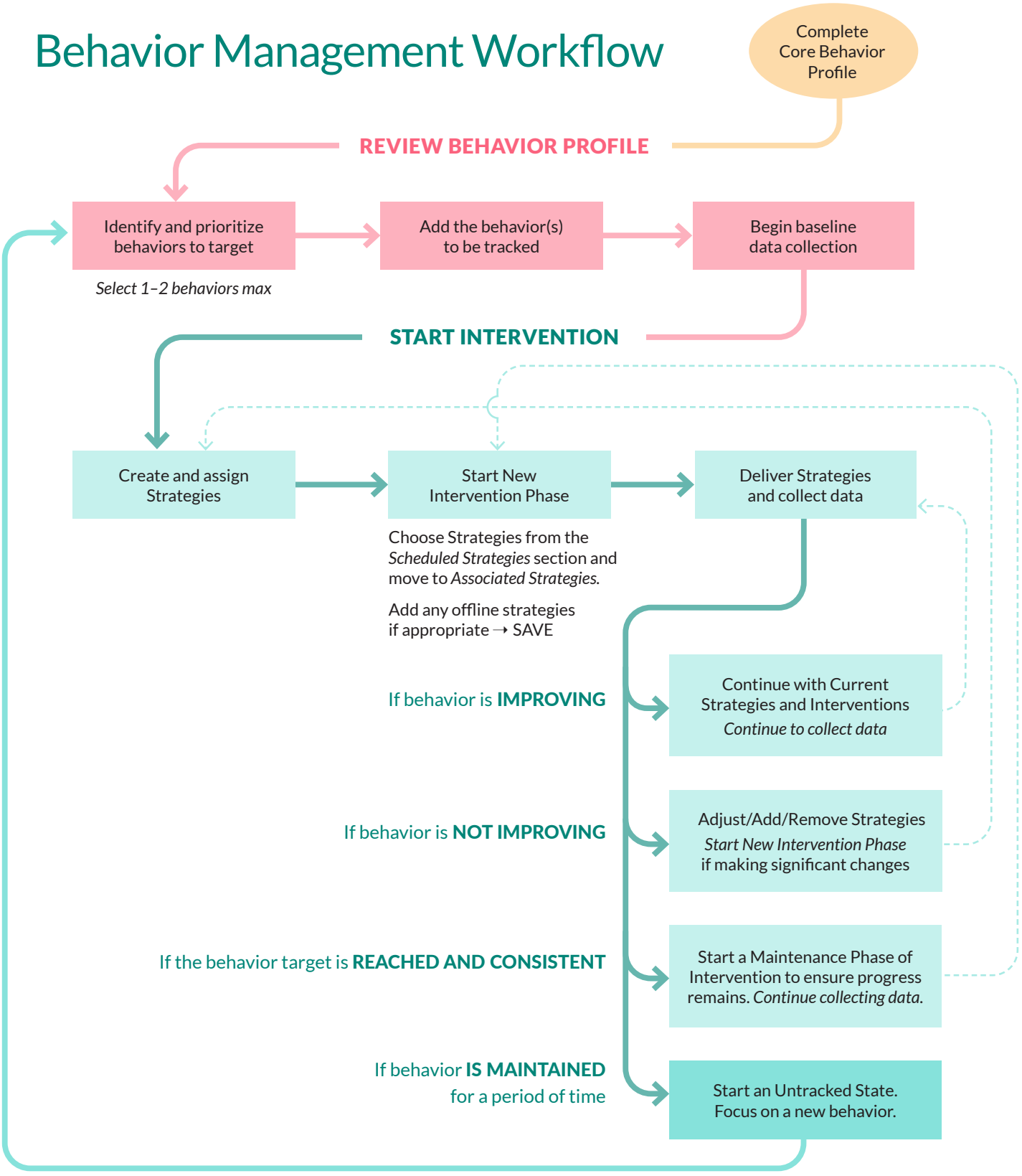
# Behavior Management Workflow



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