ASSESSMENT: THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING A CHILD'S CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

A preschool child's behavior is a means of communication with other people, and these include behaviors which are considered to challenging. Challenging behavior in preschool children is defined as persistent actions which disrupts learning, or has the potential to cause harm to the child, or other people. Tier 3 of the Teaching Pyramid provides guidance to teachers on how to assess children who have challenging behavior.

The primary purpose underlying an assessment of a child who has challenging behaviors is to discover what the child is trying to communicate, and this is best uncovered using observation. Observation is a powerful tool for teachers to use to help them understand what a child's behavior is meant to communicate, and is most effective when it is both, conducted and analyzed, systematically. A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a systematic observation, and analysis which helps the observer (teacher) understand why a child has an unwanted behavior. Information collected during an FBA can help identify patterns of behavior, by uncovering the specific 'triggers', or antecedent events, that lead to the child's use of the unwanted behavior.

Data from an FBA provides a description of the behavior, a description of what happened prior to the behavior, and a description of what happened immediately after the behavior. This type of data collection is called antecedent, behavior, and consequence (ABC) data.

ABC data provides us with a behavior chain, which we can analyze in order to understand what a child is trying to communicate when they use a challenging behavior. What the child is communicating can be found by looking at both the antecedent, which is the 'trigger', and the consequence, which is the outcome of the behavior. The consequence of the behavior is what motivates the child to persist in using the unwanted behavior. What is usually discovered during an FBA, is that the unwanted behavior is working for the child as a means of communication. In the first example above, the child who went into the block area got to play with the blocks, so the hitting worked as a means of requesting blocks. In the second example, the child who is told to clean up, did not have to put the block on the shelf, so the behavior worked as a means of protesting about cleaning up.

FEATURED ARTICLE

Use of Positive Behavior Support to Address the Challenging Behavior of Young Children Within a Community Early Childhood Program http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0271121410372676
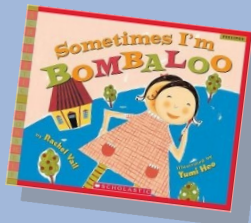
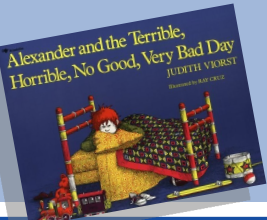## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The Very Lonely Firefly
By Eric Carle

Sometimes I'm Bonbaloo
By Rachel Vail

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
By Judith Viorst

26 Big Things Small Hands Do
By Coleen Paratore

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Example ABC data collection sheet:

Setting:	Antecedent: *What happens immediately before the behavior.*	Behavior: *What is the behavior observed ?*	Consequence: *What happens immediately after the start of behavior.*
Block Center	The child goes into the block area where a peer is playing with blocks.	The child hits the peer.	The peer runs away and the child begins to play with the blocks.
Transition to Clean Up	The teacher tells the child to clean up.	Child says no and throws the block.	Teacher takes the child to the calming corner and cleans up the blocks

TRICKS OF IMPLEMENTATION

How to collect ABC data
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxcIM8klHuY&index=2&list=PLoBtDlIa_RvzsF8JDgphec1_fokNZr7HX

PARENT RESOURCES

- Teachable Moments: How to Help Your Child Avoid Meltdowns http://cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/materials/family/bkpk_teachable_moments.pdf

- Positive Behavior Support: An Individualized Approach for Addressing Challenging Behavior http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb10.pdf