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Voices From the Field: A Critical Incident Study of Teachers' Perspectives on What Helps and Hinders the Implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans in the Classroom

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on What Helps and Hinders the Implementation of Behavior

Intervention Plans in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

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Student problem behavior continues to be a major issue in schools for both teachers and students. Teachers often feel they are not provided with enough resources to help them manage this problem behavior. Students who engage in problem behavior tend to struggle socially and academically. When classified with an emotional disturbance, students are especially at risk due to the severity of the problem behavior they exhibit (Brauner & Stephens, 2006).

This study examined how function-based interventions can help both teachers and students better manage the effects of problem behavior. There are several factors believed to hinder the effectiveness of function-based interventions, including time available, training, parental involvement, and fidelity of implementation (Ingram et al., 2005).

The study used the critical incident technique (CIT) qualitative methodology to identify helping and hindering factors in the implementation of behavior intervention programs (BIP). Participants of the study include BIP implementers, defined as any school personnel who directly participates in the implementation of an effective BIP with a student. Using the CIT qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews, the research team determined which events are most prevalent in the hindering and helping of BIP implementation. Research concluded that ongoing collaboration with colleagues, in- and out-of-class support, consistent data tracking, reward systems, calming down strategies, and relationships were the most helpful factors reported by teachers. Unexpected events, severity of behaviors, inconsistent reward systems, differing opinions amongst team members, inconsistent communication, and insufficient training were factors that hindered BIP efficacy based on the results of this study. The findings suggest that the implementation of BIPs can be improved with greater consistency in consequences, clear communication among stakeholders, and building meaningful relationships of trust.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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DESCRIPTION OF THESIS STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This thesis: *Voices From the Field: A Critical Incident Study of Teachers' Perspectives on What Helps and Hinders the Implementation of Behavior Intervention Plans in the Classroom*, is written in a hybrid format. The hybrid format brings together traditional thesis requirements with journal publication formats. To submit this manuscript to the Journal of Behavior Science, it must be double spaced with 1-inch margins on all sides and include a title page, affiliation, abstract, 5 key words and references.

The preliminary pages of the thesis reflect requirements for submission to the university. The thesis report is presented as a journal article and conforms to length and style requirements for submitting research reports to the Journal of Behavioral Education.

The literature review is included in Appendix A. In this thesis, Appendix B contains the consent forms and Institutional Review Board approval letter. Appendix C contains the survey used to prequalify participants. Appendix D contains the main data collection (interview) measure.

This thesis format contains two reference lists. The first reference list contains references included in the journal-ready article. The second list includes all citations used in the Appendix entitled "Review of the Literature."

Introduction

Problem behavior is a major issue in schools for both teachers and students. When students exhibit problem behavior, they face greater risk of being removed from the classroom, which limits their likelihood of academic success. Academic failure and behavior problems often go hand in hand. Problem behavior also places a strain on teachers' emotional and physical wellbeing, which could contribute to teachers leaving the profession when the behavior becomes severe enough (Culkin, 2016). When problem behavior is severe, students can be classified as having an emotional disturbance. Students classified as having an emotional disturbance are eligible to receive special education services because they pose a greater risk for academic failure and problems later in life (Pereira & Lavoie, 2017).

Functional behavior assessments (FBAs) help identify the reason for a given problem behavior, collect data, and develop a hypothesis about the function of the problem behavior. There are four common functions of behavior: to attain attention, escape an activity or assignment, gain access to an item or activity (tangible), and sensory stimulation (Cooper et al., 2014). The information gathered from the FBA is then tested using a function-based intervention designed to meet students' specific function of behavior, whether that be attention, escape, tangibility, or stimulation.

To increase the use of function-based interventions in schools, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 mandated the use of behavior intervention programs (BIPs) and FBAs for all students with disabilities whose behavior was impeding his or her education (Drasgow et al., 1999). Despite these changes, problem behavior remained a major issue in schools and educators continued to address the issue with old methods. In 2004, the IDEA added to the amendment suggesting the proactive use of FBAs and BIPs for all students with behavioral problems impeding their education, as determined by the IEP team. Although

there is strong evidence that function-based interventions are effective in the classroom,

educators, educators do not utilize them as often as required and when they are implemented,

they are not as effective (Hirsch et al., 2017). Research suggests several reasons for

underutilization and ineffectiveness including insufficient teacher training, implementation

fidelity and lack of parent collaboration (Blood & Neel, 2007).

When teachers are undertrained, they don't know how to implement the plan as intended,

which can lead to an ineffective intervention. Another potential factor of why interventions

aren't working is the lack of collaboration with parents and other educators involved in the

students' life. Both factors contribute to the even larger concern, which is implementation

fidelity, meaning that the interventions are not being conducted the way they were designed to be

implemented (Blood & Neel, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

BIPs and FBAs are not being implemented with fidelity. The problem is, we don't know

what the perceptions of teachers are as to why they're not being implemented with fidelity.

When BIPs are unable to be implemented with fidelity, students are not being helped and

problem behavior isn't decreasing. Persistence of problem behavior leads to teachers feeling

overwhelmed and frustrated as well as academic failure. Functional behavior assessments and

behavior intervention plans have the potential to be more effective. When educators,

administrators, and parents can access training, resources, and time necessary for implementing

these plans with fidelity, maladaptive behavior will significantly decrease.

Statement of the Purpose

There have been many studies investigating solutions to this challenge, but none of these

studies have looked at teachers' perspectives on the helping and hindering events of

implementation function-based interventions (Hirsch et al., 2017). This study will help shed a

light on what teachers believe to be most important when conducting FBAs and BIPs. Gaining their perspectives will allow us to create recommendations on what are the most effective ways of implementing function-based interventions

Research Questions or Research Hypotheses

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What do teachers perceive as the events that were helpful in consistently implementing a BIP to improve student behavior?

2. What do teachers perceive as the hindering events that made it more challenging to consistently implement a BIP?

3. What do teachers wish could happen to enhance their ability to consistently implement BIPs?

Method

This study used the critical incident technique (CIT) qualitative methodology, which was originally created by Dr. John C. Flanagan (1954). It is an exploratory, qualitative methodology that is primarily used to help identify helping and hindering factors in little-understood transitions or achievements (Butterfield et al., 2009). The CIT methodology was chosen for this study due to several factors. The first factor was that is a relatively efficient qualitative methodology. Teachers and other educators are likely to be very busy individuals that may be reluctant to participate in research if it is too taxing on them. The CIT methodology requires only that teachers to participate in a single brief interview.

Another factor in our decision to use CIT was that it is a systematic way to gather data that would be well-received by a primarily quantitative-oriented audience. Most research on BIPs and other similar interventions are quantitative, and it is rare for qualitative studies to be published and accepted into behavior journals. The CIT methodology is qualitative; however, it

is very systematic and structured in its approach to identify helping and hindering events and closely resembles quantitative data (Flanagan, 1954).

Additionally, the CIT methodology has been used in previous articles that were published in behavior-based journals (Andreou et al., 2014) The CIT methodology was the best methodology for our exploratory research into the helping and hindering incidents that lead to BIP implementation.

Participants

The participants for this study were BIP (behavior intervention plan) implementers who reported a successful BIP implementation in the last six months. For the purpose of this study, a BIP implementer was defined as any school personnel who directly participated in the implementation of a BIP for a student. Recruitment for this study was done by contacting three district liaisons from the state of Utah to help obtain referrals of potential participants. Additionally, researchers attended several in-service meetings where we distributed a sign-up sheet to potential participants who could express personal interest or refer colleagues they believed were fit for the study. During the referral process, educators were told they needed to have had success implementing a BIP in the past year. Of the 16 referrals received, 7 agreed to participate and qualified for the study, comprising the full number of study participants. Participants began the process by first completing an online survey. The survey included informed consent questions, twelve demographics questions (educator role, district of employment, age, gender, race, certification status, highest level of education, major area of study), and a section on implementation fidelity which asked participants the amount of time they were the main person implementing the BIP. The survey then asked if the teacher had success implementing a BIP in the past year. Success for the purpose of this study was defined as a BIP that improved student behavior. All BIP implementers who completed the survey qualified

to participate, meaning they had a successful BIP implementation in the past year. The researcher then contacted qualifying BIP implementers via email to discuss the study and present the letter of informed consent. Of the 7 educators, all were female, 4 being special education teachers and 3 being elementary general education teachers. Four of the educators involved had 5 to 20+ years of experience and the other three had less than 5 years of experience.

Settings

Five of the interviews were conducted in-person and two via teleconference; all were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The in-person interviews took place in various settings at teachers' schools; most teachers chose to meet in their classrooms, while one interview was conducted in the faculty lounge. Teleconference interviews were conducted using Zoom. Table 1 describes participants.

Measures

Prior to beginning this research study, we submitted an approval request to the Institutional Review Board for Brigham Young University. This letter of approval can be found contains the preliminary, prequalifying survey we conducted with participants who were interested in participating in the study. The survey included informed consent questions, demographic questions, and a section on implementation fidelity. A semi-structured interview script was used. The interview questions asked the participant to keep the same successful BIP in mind while answering questions. There were three main questions that were used to assess helping, hindering and wish list items. After completing the survey and interview, participants received a $25 gift card.

Procedure

After participants were prequalified to participate in the study, researchers contacted them via email to discuss the study and present the letter of informed consent. Once participants

agreed to participate, they were contacted by the primary researcher to discuss the logistics of conducting the interview (e.g., time, technology).

During the interviews, researchers used a semi-structured scripted interview with participants. The interviewer began each interview by verifying that the BIP implementer personally had been successful with implementing a BIP. Interviewers then asked brief demographic questions. After all preliminary questions were asked, the interviewer asked the participant to share events that helped and hindered their implementation of the BIP along with any events they wished would have happened.

After each participant's response, researchers typed their responses into the interview template. To check for understanding, researchers tried to repeat back their responses and asked if they wanted to add to or clarify any items. In the case that participants wanted any additions or changes, researchers immediately noted these changes on the interview form. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed to ensure the accuracy of the collected data.

Researchers continued this process of interviewing new participants until interview content saturation was achieved. Names and schools were redacted and replaced with numbers to ensure confidentiality.

Research Design

Critical incident technique was used to collect and analyze data. This study required qualitative data collection and the CIT method is ideal for collecting and analyzing data in a time efficient way. This methodology also permits the categorization of qualitative data, which allowed researchers to study data based on specific BIP helping and hindering categories.

Data Analysis

After completing and transcribing all interviews, researchers randomly selected three interviews to categorize. Researchers reviewed the identified helping and hindering critical

incidents and the wish list items from all three interviews. They then looked for commonalities among the incidents in order to sort each helping and hindering incident into initial categories. Once all critical incidents and wish list items were sorted, researchers produced an operational definition for each category and verified them by going back and checking the definition against items placed in each category. One additional interview was randomly selected, and the associated incidents were sorted into the existing categories. As this process continued, new categories were made for novel incidents that did not fit with the existing category sets. This process was repeated until all the critical incidents and wish list items from the interviews were categorized, and saturation was achieved. Saturation occurred when no new categories emerged from new interviews.

Credibility and Trustworthiness Checks

The incidents and categorization of said incidents underwent four credibility checks that helped ensure trustworthiness of this study: extraction, category, member, and expert (Bowen, 2008).

Extraction Check

A member of the research team who did not conduct the interview reviewed the transcription notes while listening to the recording of the interview and independently extracted the critical incidents. There was over 80% agreement between the primary researcher and the research assistant conducting the secondary extraction.

Category Check

After creating the categories, the identified critical incidents, category titles, and operational definitions were sent to an undergraduate special education student. The undergraduate assistant independently organized critical incidents into categories using the provided operational definitions. After her analysis, we checked for sorting and category

agreement between the original interviewer and the reviewer. An agreement is defined as any instance in which the reviewer places a critical incident into the same category as the original researcher. Any disagreements discovered were reviewed by the entire research team until a consensus was met. This category check ensured the trustworthiness of the categories and incidents selected, because of the congruency found.

Member Check

After organizing the categories and incidents, participants were sent the incidents that were extracted from their interview along with the categories those incidents were assigned. Members were asked to check the results to ensure the data reported matched what they had intended. All reporting members indicated that our extraction and categorization efforts were consistent with their intent and experience.

Expert Check

After the categories were created and checked for correctness, they were put through an expert check. The various categories created were sent to an expert in the field with knowledge of the Critical Incident Technique used in the categorization process. They reviewed the categories in order to assess their accuracy. The expert had a doctoral degree in special education and nearly 10 years working in school-based applications of Behavior Analysis. He indicated that the categories were consistent with his understanding of the research literature and his own work in this area.

Results

In this study, seven educators from two different school districts were interviewed to share their perspectives on how to successfully implement behavior intervention plans. A total of 52 critical incidents were extracted from these interviews. The incidents were then categorized into helping and hindering incidents. A total of 32 (62%) helping critical incidents were

identified and a total of 20 (38%) hindering critical incidents were selected and put into twelve

unique helping and hindering categories. Also extracted from the interviews, wish list items are

mentioned and recorded, but not included in the analysis of this results section.

Helping Incidents

Helping critical incidents were sorted into the following categories: (a) ongoing

collaboration with colleagues and parents, (b) in- and out-of-classroom support from parents,

paraeducators, or specialists on the behavior intervention team, (c) consistent data tracking, (d)

reward system and consequences, calming down strategies, (f) relationship with students. The

category names and operational definitions are included alongside summary statistics for the

extracted critical incidents in Table 2.

Ongoing Collaboration With Colleagues and Parents

Ongoing collaboration with colleagues and parents was mentioned six times (19%) as a

critical helping incident by four different participants. Collaboration often included team

meetings conducted on a regular basis to make changes to the BIP as needed. Key team members

in such meetings could involve the school psychologist, behavior intervention team,

administration, parent, teacher, and student. The following quotes elaborate on the implications

of this critical incident.

> Participant #1: Everybody had to be on the same page: office staff, counselor, mom and
>
> dad, school psychologist, we all had to understand what language to use with her. We had
>
> to make sure she had choice in her day, so when she came to me, she got to choose what
>
> to do. She had to work on either reading writing or math. So, for the first hour she reads,
>
> and can't do it anymore.

This quote highlights the importance of all members of the team being involved in collaboration,

including office staff. This BIP also indicates the importance of involving the student in the

collaboration process; making sure the student feels like they have some sort of control or choice in the process seems to be important based on what this participant reported. The next selected quote discusses how behavior meetings were conducted and the frequency of this direct collaboration.

> Participant #2: I feel like there's a lot of things. But every couple of weeks we have a behavior meeting with my school psychologist. The district behavior intervention team is helping me, so we meet with them every couple of weeks so that helps us stay on top. Taking data every day consistently keeps us on top of the BIP.

Behavior meetings happen roughly two times per month. According to this quote, involving the district intervention team helps meetings be consistent.

Support From Parents and the Behavior Intervention Team

In-class support was mentioned six times (19%) by four participants. In-class support could include paraeducators, specialists on the behavior intervention team, technicians, or the school psychologist apart from the teacher. These supports would often provide individualized supports and instruction specific to the behavior intervention plan. Out-of-class support could include outside counseling services or parent involvement. Involved parents sometimes volunteer to provide rewards for students on behavior plans and try to keep the plan consistent at home. When students qualify for help from the behavior intervention team, the teacher usually receives a behavior technician who comes in once a day for an hour or so, depending on the students' needs. This technician often collects data and helps keep the student on task and involved. These quotes demonstrate the importance of these supports:

> Participant #2: So they send an aide to me a couple of hours in the mornings to me to help with his behaviors…Just because I can't get any teaching done because I would

spend the whole time keeping him in the swing room, or blocking him, so they help with the behaviors that we can't do while we're teaching.

Participant #2 is referencing an aide from the behavior intervention team. Aides are often used at the beginning of behavior intervention plans to help teachers manage behavior in an appropriate way. Teachers don't always have the resources to handle challenging behaviors without this added support, which this participant feels helped the BIP to be successful.

Several quotes illustrated the importance of having a technician keep everyone working with the student on track. Technicians have more time to help because they are assigned to only one student, whereas teachers have a harder time managing all students and students on BIPs without help.

Participant #3: Well, I think we have a lot of people in the school, working with him. I've got, you know, my technician, we've got skills people, there's just a lot of people that are trying to help him be successful. . . .And everybody needs to understand the goal and what we're working towards; sometimes that's a little difficult getting everybody on board because we have so many people but I think since we've got the technician from the behavior unit, she seems to remind each one of us what it is that we're supposed to be doing, and being specific in our praise and that he gets it right then when he exhibits good behavior, that we're specific on [sic] our praise to this little guy.

Consistent Data Tracking

Participants also felt like consistent data tracking helped BIPs be successful. Data tracking involved documenting the progress of the student. These data were used to reward or discipline the student. Data would often be used at behavior meetings with the team. Teachers reported that they would try to review the plan often in order to determine if any changes or

adjustments needed to be made. The student could also be involved in self-monitoring data tracking, but the implementor was always involved. Several quotes demonstrate what their data tracking entailed:

> Participant #2: Yeah, it's all of us, whoever kind of has him at that time. It's mostly the behavior aide from the district helps keep a lot of the data, but I'll keep data too. . . . We put it on a big graph chart, and we graph it so we can kind of see the trend and everything. . . .We put it on a big graph chart, and we graph it so we can kind of see the trend and everything. And that seems to really help him. Well, it's a white board sheet that we draw smiley faces on. Stickers would be more of a pain.

> Participant #4: Well, consistency for sure. So, every time he transitioned into my classroom, he had kind of a little survey, he had to do a zones of regulation things when he came into my class classroom, he had his own paper, so he had to say if he was blue, green, yellow or red. Are you familiar with zones of regulation? Interviewer: No. Participant: Okay, so he had to track where he was and if he was anything but green then he needed to choose a coping strategy so that he could get into the green. . . .We as teachers need to go over and help facilitate him making a choice so that he could get back to work. [W]e had that just every time he had a transition when he was coming into my classroom, when he was leaving my classroom, when we were transitioning within the classroom, he would track that. And so, if we weren't consistent with that, then he didn't think it was a big deal, right? Or if we weren't consistent with, there were a few times we were like "ah, whatever," I'm like, I need you to do this really quick before we jump in, I'm glad you want to start working but can you please let me know how you're doing right now before we start working. And sometimes it's easy to just let that slide, but the

consistency of following through and making sure they know that you know that this is important, it's good.

Reward System and Consequences

A reward system is focused on a clear plan that identifies specific rewards and consequences that are preferred for the student to help reinforce good behavior and reduce the target behavior. Rewards can be provided by school personnel or parents. Reward systems can involve charts or graphs that the student or teacher fills out. Rewards can be tangible, escape related (breaks, etc.), sensory, or attention based. Participants shared some different yet effective reward systems they used in their classrooms:

Participant #1: If she was having a really bad day I could see it coming. She wanted my attention. I kept taking it away and telling her that if she throws it in my face again, I'm going to throw it away. But then once I said it, I thought, oh shoot, now I have to do it. We had to like follow through with her so when she shoved it in my face again I threw it away. Oh and she just wailed on me, she's little so it didn't hurt but then I was right by the classroom door so I just kind of scooped her right outside so that she could throw her fit out in the hall. Part of her intervention that really helped is that she could earn money when she did what she was supposed to do when she was supposed to do it. It was really good for her. And the mom was really good to supply prizes that she could earn.

This quote illustrates how important having a reward system is and how critical implementation consistency is to the success of such system. The consequence in the above example is that throwing items would result in the teacher throwing away those items. Although the student wasn't happy to have her item thrown away, this experience helped reinforce the rule of no throwing. Although all reward and consequence systems work the same, they can be

uniquely catered to fit the needs of the student. Most reward and consequence systems usually involve rewarding good behavior and punishing bad behavior.

> Participant #3: With this student in particular, the punch card?...I just think explaining it to him and having a reward. And the reward is given frequently you know you get two lines. If he gets three punches in a line and there's 12 on a card. If he got a row of it he got like a small treat, he likes a skittle or something. That's kind of been an immediate reward for him, he likes that.

> The above quote illustrates a different type of reward system, a punch card. This student needed rewards more frequently and visible. The immediacy and consistency of the rewards for this student helped him be successful, but each student will differ.

Calming Down Strategies

Calming down strategies were used to help the student recognize and regulate his or her emotions. Some systems mentioned include: The Incredible 5-Point Scale (5-Point Scale; Buron & Curtis, 2021), color zones, Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2011) and picture charts. Calming down strategies were helpful in preventing and maintaining behavior changes. The quotes below give further explanation:

> Participant #4: Mhm, well because you don't want to reward bad behavior, right? And from the plan our whole thing, the purpose was to help him not be frustrated or angry. And so, he first needed to realize that he's frustrated before he could make a choice. So, we were rewarding him being able to make a choice because he had realized he was frustrated.

Calming down strategies work as both preventative and reductive tactics for problem behavior. It's hard to manage emotional students who are exhibiting heightened emotions. Before teaching behavior, Participant #4 would make sure the student recognized his emotion.

After recognizing the emotion, the student was instructed to pick an activity that would help him cope with that emotion in a healthy way.

> Participant #3: So she took a picture of him smiling happy, and then gradually going up to when you're really agitated, what does that look like. She took a picture of him, it's real cute, and then he drew a picture of himself to match those pictures, and then she helped him through what does it look like, how can you come back to a one or a two? What are some things that help make you calm? And when you're at a five, what does that look like? What are you doing? Here are somethings that could help you calm down. . . . Sometimes when he's on that escalated moment; he's going up in that scale. He has a hard time probably communicating what's going on, how he's feeling, what will turn it around. . . .I have some putty with beads in it that has worked in the past, he likes doing squishy things. A lot of times it's just giving him a moment to calm down, sometimes you have to put him separate from the group and let him calm down. Sometimes it takes a while.

This quote illustrates how the 5-Point Scale was used. Depending on how escalated the students' emotions were, there would be different activities he could choose from in order to calm down. The 5-Point Scale is like the Zones of Regulation, just in a different format. Both systems involve emotional awareness and responsibility. Teaching students the skills to deal with their emotions is key in both strategies.

Relationships

Teachers indicated that having a good relationship with the student was key in implementing the plan successfully. A good relationship is defined as a student who feels involved and valued during the behavior plan. Among participants, 43% mentioned relationships as a critical incident. The quotes bellow illustrate why relationship helped these participants be successful.

Participant #7: I think learning to listen to him and what he needed and what he needed to communicate and finding out just finding him out, understanding him, and realizing at first, we were kind of butting heads on things, and he wasn't necessarily following his plan and doing these things and he struggled. And finding out that for him, something that he needed to have been understanding of why we were doing things and why we needed to do things a certain way. And so, learning to take those few extra minutes for him to explain things, that was something that I think was helpful on my part. Something as simple as explaining his pictures on there, why we raise our hand, why I need him, why when he raises his hand, I won't always call on him. Because he is like I'm raising my hand, why aren't--and I said I know and I gave you a star for that, but I can't always call on you because I have twenty other students in class who want to share their answers too. And it was like oh, ok so I don't need to shout out my answers, sometimes Ms. Loloo can't call on me, because. . . I think a big thing was learning to understand him and what he needed in order for this plan to work. And with him, it was just wanting to know the why. Why we do things and why I have to do this and why I can't do this right now instead. And so, I think that was something helpful and then noticing when he was working on those things with people. And now it's at a point where I can look at him and say, "one minute, someone has been raising their hand for a minute," I have to go over here first and then I'll come right over and he's okay with that. I think trying to reinforce his positive behaviors that we were working on really hard right at first. and then being able to kind of like pull back to a "Hey, this person had their hand raised first, I'm going to come here, then I'll come to you, but I recognize that you're raising your hand and doing what you're supposed to be doing." I think that is something that also helped on my part as a teacher.

This student had been struggling to follow directions because of some attention issues. When his teacher took time to get to know him, she learned that he didn't enjoy being defiant, he just didn't understand everything that she expected from him. She didn't lower her expectations but began to explain to this student why she needed him to work hard and raise his hand instead of yelling out. Explaining how these actions affected her and other students helped the student gain more self-awareness and trust with the teacher. Understanding the student also helped the teacher feel more empathetic towards him.

> Participant #1: And she's doing really good at using those so I would say it's important that she realize that we all love her no matter what. Like that day she kind of wailed on me I still sent her mom an email saying, "Will you still tell her I love her and I forgive her and that we'll see her tomorrow." She just needs to know that she has a safe place to go.

Students with behavior issues are often in trouble which can contribute to them feeling alone and unsafe. Participant #1 noticed that reassuring love for the student after having to correct them, can make a big difference on that students' self-esteem and relationship.

Hindering Incidents

Hindering critical incidents were sorted into the following categories: (a) unexpected events, (b) severity of problem behavior, (c) consistency with reward system, (d) differing opinions of team members, (f) inconsistent communication between team members, (g) insufficient training and support from colleagues. The category names and operational definitions are included alongside summary statistics for the extracted critical incidents in Table 3.

Unexpected Events

Participants reported that unexpected events such as schedule alterations (assemblies) or behavior issues involving other students (bullying, etc.) were a hinderance to the plan. In the quote below, a participant talks about how challenging implementing the BIP was, when schedule alterations occurred. Since they were so challenging, the student would not attend assemblies.

Participant #1: Like school parties, anything that was out of the norm and made the schedule not consistent. So yeah, assemblies we learned that she just doesn't go to assemblies. We think there's something to do with the wintertime, she's worst in the winter. Not sure why. This year we found out, and we think this might have been part of the problem. We have cameras recording outside of our bathroom for a different reason, but we caught some kids on camera taunting her. So we had a big meeting with those kids. And ever since that big meeting, things have been really good, so we're like, were they causing a lot of the problems? I don't know.

Participant #1 explains that unexpected events, such as bullying could hinder behavior plans unbeknownst to the teachers. These types of events need to be considered when addressing effectiveness of the plan, even though they aren't always recurring issues.

Participant #2: This is a daily thing, as far as meeting and reviewing, that's not usually a problem. For some students, and this doesn't have to do with the one you want me to think about, but attendance is an issue. So that it's hard to get a flow of things and see if it's effective or not.

Severity of Problem Behavior

Educators reported that students with more severe behavior concerns needed more supportive BIPs, which could make having success more difficult. Severity of the problem

behavior could range anywhere from talking back, swearing, violence, to needing restraint. Severity of the problem behavior also impacted the relationship educators were able to develop between the student and implementor.

> Participant #2: Just the behaviors themselves make it hard. We do a lot of just blocking, we don't do any restraint on him, just because it's not in his behavior plan to do restraint, but if we needed to we would, but we haven't done it.

Students who require restraint often exhibit problems with their restrainer or teacher. Participant #2 wasn't required to do restraining but explains that using blocking has been hard on her relationship with the student.

> Participant #3: We'll see the behavior sometimes is a little different, because he might be sort of agitated with me in the morning compared with when he goes to the next person who is really agitated. So just being on board of [sic] the individual who walks through that door.

Students with severe problem behavior escalate and de-escalate throughout the day, which makes it challenging for teachers to prepare for behaviors. Participant #3 discusses how challenging it can be to keep track of the student's emotional state.

Consistency With Reward System

Being consistent with the reward system was challenging because of the time, energy, and effort it took to be consistent. Reward systems could include checklists filled out by educator, student, or both. Part of consistency could include providing rewards for the student, checking in with the student each day and making sure rewards were given in all settings. Educators' ability to consistently implement the reward system embedded in the behavior intervention was found to be a hindering incident to the plan.

Participant #2: It's just hard to be consistent, sometimes when he has a hard day, it's hard

to keep going back to his reward chart because he's not even listening. It's just hard to

stay on top of when you're just getting beat up like crazy, so that can be difficult. And the

days he is good, sometimes it's hard to remember to go back and mark stuff on his chart,

even though it's little, to remember to go back and use his chart if we don't need it.

The quote above illustrates how challenging it can be to implement reward systems with

consistency, when the plan doesn't feel like it's working. She explains that some days teachers

are just exhausted from having to deal with behaviors that it's hard to find motivation to

discipline or reward students who are on behavior intervention plans. The time and commitment

it takes to be successful with reward systems can be overwhelmingly draining on teachers

according to the quote above.

Participant #5: But that's one of the issues, and just the time it takes in class. You have to

remember at the end to have a little 30-second conference, sometimes that's hard to pull

off, so that's probably the hardest thing.

Teachers have the challenge of having multiple students with behavior issues, in class at

a time. Participant #5 feels like there's not always enough time to reward or discipline students

on BIPs, especially without letting the other students know what's happening.

Differing Opinions of Team Members

Teachers indicated that although they participated in collaboration, team members could

leave meetings with differing ideas of how to carry out the BIP. These differing opinions could

lead to inconsistency in implementation.

Participant #3: Okay, and so it's hard because everyone kind of is on different pages,

especially because it's hard to communicate with them because you don't see them maybe

every day. . . . I think sometimes everyone having a little bit different idea of the

direction to go. Even though we collaborate, we can come out of that meeting still with a little bit different point of view, so I just think it's just constantly communicating with one another; this is what I'm seeing, this is what I'm doing, is that how you see it or whatever. We just all need to continue to collaborate, even though we've had our meeting with the behavior people. . . . They're frequent, like every two weeks, three weeks. So, it would be the regular ed teacher, and anyone who works with him, all of the special ed people, psychologist, principal, all of the key people.

When a student has multiple classes with different teachers throughout the day, it is difficult for them to effectively communicate. A key feature of BIP implementation is consistency, a feature that is hard to maintain with so many differing opinions and a lack of effective communication options. This next quote illustrates an issue between team members that leads to a less successful BIP.

> Participant #6: In the setup, no, because I felt like I had the support from the district, and they were very supportive in me following the plan. I did have an issue with a technician of mine last year that didn't feel like there were times when his behavior was such that-- she was interpreting his behavior in a certain way and so she wanted to do things differently, and that was difficult for me because I felt like I needed all my team members to be on board with how we handled the behavior. Sometimes, she felt like she could talk him through the behavior and sometimes you kind of can, to a point, but I felt like she took that on her own without clearing it with me first, I felt like that was kind of a breach in authority. I don't know if that's the right word or not. So that was kind of a struggle. He came with a one-on-one technician, so they hired a technician just to be--and it was termed a one-on-one--you would be with this particular student. Then, he got so attached to her that he wouldn't receive reinforcement from anybody else. So that created a

problem and we had to rearrange her role in my classroom and so that created a little bit
of conflict. Not necessarily with him, a little bit with him because he wasn't allowing
other people to reinforce him, but also with her having an unclear expectation now. She
started the job with this idea in mind and now she's going to this, and it created a little bit
of a problem.

The participant above mentions one technician in particular who hindered the success of
the plan. This technician had her own way of dealing with the student, which was not consistent
with the plan. Due to the lack of consistency and dedication to the plan, the student had a hard
time following the plan when this technician wasn't around.

Inconsistent Communication Between Team Members

Teachers reported that it was hard to keep everyone informed of the changes being made
to the BIP. Teachers said there was sometimes not enough time to spend on one specific student
who needed it. Often, special education and general education teachers would be collaborating,
and there isn't a lot of time built into the school day for such collaboration, except possibly
during lunch time.

Participant #4: Yeah, I remember sharing what I was doing with the other teachers, but I
don't remember making them copies of what I was doing. And maybe that falls on me
because I was the file holder.

Participant #4 explains that communication between team members was challenging
because no one knew their exact role. This quote represents a larger issue, which is related to
insufficient training. Communication was challenging, and especially when teachers didn't know
what to communicate.

Participant #5: Yes, so that's where I think that communication is key in most success is
just making sure that everyone is working together. And that includes the administration,

because when I was formulating behavior plans, you don't know what's been happening in the classroom. If I don't know that, it's hard to pull one together that I would use in all classes. And so, I've let them know that this is what we're doing in this class. Please let me know if other classes have concerns too. And I emailed out to teachers saying: if you have any concerns with this student, this is what we're doing, you may want to try it in your class. And it got to the point that it was a school-wide thing, not just in math, then maybe it is an IEP thing and not just an individual BIP in a classroom. Because it could go both ways.

Participant #5 illustrates how important involving all members of the team in the communication process. When administration or other members of the team aren't aware of the specific behaviors and issues the student is having, they can't fully support the plan as intended.

Insufficient Training and Support From Colleagues

Insufficient training was mentioned several times as a major concern for teachers. School psychologists receive a limited amount of training on implementing BIPs and although information exists on BIPs, special and general education teachers have no official trainings prior to implementation. Teachers expound on this issue in the following quotes:

Participant #4: Admin wasn't, I'm not going to try and throw people under the bus, but I don't remember admin really being--I mean they might've been with the development of it at some point, but I wasn't part of that process. I was just given a student with a BIP and told to go; I wasn't part of anything that happened before then.

This teacher didn't even know what had happened with the student before being handed over a BIP, which made it challenging to implement it. Participant #4 wasn't given the resources to handle what was being required of her and explains how unprofessional it is to demand this from teachers

Participant #4: And I'm glad that I was given the freedom to make it, to own it a little to make how I wanted to track the data or work that, that was really nice, but I didn't have-- and I talked it through with the psych a little bit--but I didn't have like a working model, and I didn't know the student from before so that makes it really hard to understand where you're supposed to go. So, we probably lost a few weeks of growth or progress because I am just trying to figure out what it looks like.

Participant #4 wishes she would have known more about BIPs, because she wasted a lot of time trying to figure out how to implement a BIP before beginning the process for the student. Without training, teachers are required to do their own research, which can be difficult with such busy schedules as teachers usually have.

Wish List Items

Out of the seven participants in this study, six shared wish list items. The majority of wish list items can be sorted into the helping and hindering categories previously established, however there was one wish list item unique to said categories. Three of the items reiterated the importance of collaboration and how they wished their teams would have communicated more frequently.

Participant #5: I just think that's probably one thing in the future, to be a little more consistent sharing it. Something in the past I wish we'd done is maybe had a formal meeting, but at the time we didn't recognize how the behavior was really holding him back from success. And so now that we've been working on this for a term, I think we're close to getting to what it really takes, so, part of it is just adjusting to junior high. That's a big one for a lot of seventh graders . . . More like, you know, a couple times a month or at least once a month go say, "Hey do you realize you've gotten this many rewards?" You know, just to talk about and adjust as needed because maybe it's too overwhelming

because there's too many things, or maybe there's all four in one so we say hey we don't need to watch this, but it doesn't mean that you stop doing it. You know or let them decide. Because some of them like checklists and this is more of a checklist. So that's the kind of thing I'm talking about. I'm kind of just looking at it together.

This participant wishes she could have reviewed the BIP more frequently with the team and involve the student in these reviews too. Another participant explained how frustrating it was, when the student she was working with had a schedule change without her knowledge. This made it hard for her to train a new teacher half-way into implementing the BIP. In addition, BIPs coming from different schools are often given to teachers without formal explanations. Teachers receiving these BIPs have never observed the student or collaborated with the student's past teachers. If teachers do want more information, they make the contacts themselves.

Another three participants' wish list items related to training and how they wished they would have known ahead of time what a BIP should look like. The quote below illustrates this item.

> Participant #2: This is impossible, but I wish a behavior plan would just appear with the perfect goal that they need, because sometimes it's really hard, like when I come up with my behavior intervention plans, knowing if it's a good goal that will help us see progress. Like his goal right now is that when he's given a task to do, he'll do it without any aggression (in a short way to put it), but it's hard to take data on every time we give him a command, that he's doing it positively, so our data doesn't exactly match my goals sometimes, because we're just counting how many times he's aggressive, during different parts of the day. So writing good goals that match exactly what you want to see would be awesome.

Participant two was never trained on how to write behavior goals, which made it challenging for her to write appropriate goals. In her opinion, this waisted valuable time that could have been used more efficiently, were they targeting the right behavior from the beginning of the plan.

Another participant wishes she would have had a working model BIP or any other training resources.

Participant #2: I kind of wish she would have learned to trust us sooner too, but that takes time. When she would talk to us and tell us what was going on, then we could help her, but sometimes she wouldn't talk about it because it made her so mad. Like if we would have known about these kids who have been bullying her all of this time, it would have been helpful to know sooner. Really, I think the biggest thing is just that behavior code process, it's been amazing.

This wish list item fits into the Relationship category that was previously listed as a helping incident. Participants found that students were more willing to open and change when they felt trust in their relationships.

The last wish list item is an anomaly that doesn't fit into the previously identified categories. The participant wished that administration could have been more involved in the implementation process.

Participant #5: I think something that would help in the future is to have consistent little reviews with the student. And also share the data that I've collected with the psychologist or with the school admin. So--because it's really nice, not only to be rewarded by a teacher but the admin knows about it, good or bad because if something else happens, they could bring it up. And I definitely share it with parents, good or bad. (Sharing with the administrator.)

This is an interesting and unique item she brought up, that could be considered in future studies. She said in this quote that it would have helped her to feel supported and appreciated by the administration, if she would have been able to share her results with them. She also said they could have helped in other ways if they would have known about the student, their progress and the data that was being collected.

Discussion

Currently, there are some studies examining the helping and hindering factors in successful behavior intervention plans, based on teacher perspectives. Research has shown behavior intervention plans can be successful, when implemented with fidelity; however, BIPs are often not as successful in practice as proven they can be (Robertson et al., 2020; Epstein et al., 2008). To understand why BIPs aren't as successful as they can be and what helps them be successful, this study focuses on the perspectives of general and special education teachers.

The findings of this study shed light on six critical helping incidents and six critical hindering incidents involved in creating a successful BIP. These incidents include: (a) ongoing collaboration with colleagues and parents, (b) in-class support either from paraeducators or specialists in the behavior intervention team, (c) consistent data tracking, (d) an effective reward system, (e) calming down strategies, and (f) relationship building.

What do Teachers Perceive as Helpful Events? (RQ1)

The events identified as helping with implementation in this study were organized into seven helping categories. Collaboration is essential to the success of a BIP. Specifically, participants in the current research study indicated that frequent collaboration between parents, school psychologist, teachers, administrators and the student for whom the BIP was made helped BIPs be successful. The findings from this current study are consistent with previous research conducted that also found parent collaboration in school and home settings to be a key factor in

success (Park et al., 2010). Participants in this current study also explained how regular collaboration meetings with key team members helped everyone stay informed as to what was working and what needed to be changed with the BIP process.

Along with data collection, using frequent reinforcements to encourage behavior change proved helpful for the majority of participants. In a study conducted by Cook et al. (2010), it was found that reinforcements were most effective when given frequently at first. Reinforcement systems mentioned in the study involve but are not limited to charts, prizes, money, or punch cards. One participant described a reinforcement system in the following way:

> Participant #2: Using his reinforcement chart keeps us on top of it. He earns smiley faces, there's three boxes, and then he earns a smiley face for each, depending on how fast we need to reinforce and then he earns whatever he picked. We write it on there, and there's pictures of him on it. So there's a picture of him smiling with a quiet voice with his hands on the desk nicely, his feet nicely, and then a picture of him doing all of his work. So he has to do those four things to get a smiley.

The quote above involves both a reinforcement system and a calming down strategy which were both critical helping incidents identified by five out of the seven participants. What Works Clearinghouse (Epstein et al., 2008) suggests data collection is an efficient way to track BIP progress and make changes as needed, which aligns with the findings in this study as well.

Although reinforcement systems have been shown by research to be effective (Cook et al., 2010), calming down strategies were not originally identified in the literature review. Participants felt like calming down strategies were an essential part of BIPs because they helped students regulate their emotions before making choices. Another example of a type of calming down strategy is illustrated by the quote below:

Participant #2: We also use the color zones, the Zones of Regulation. Have you heard of those. So he uses that, it goes blue, green, yellow, red. So when blue means your sad green means your happy yellow means you're frustrated and red means you're angry, so he jumps between green and red. So when we put him in the swing room when he's angry we move his name to the red poster, so he knows he's in the red zone and he to calm down and regulate himself. It's pretty cool, I highly recommend it. Our school psych uses it with others in the school too, but I've had to use it on a bigger basis in my classes, where everyone has a name and they can move their names around and regulate themselves, but right now he's my only one on it, because he's the only one who needs it right now. Well maybe my other student, but that's another story, the one that just popped up.

In-class support is another unique critical helping incident found in this study. Although in-class support seems like it would be best practice for supporting BIPs, there aren't many studies examining the impact in-class support has on BIP fidelity.

The last helping category identified that aligns with previous research, is the importance of teacher-student relationship in the implementation of BIPs. According to Cooper et al. (2014), problem behavior needs to be objectively defined before creating the behavior intervention plan. This research study also found that defining the problem behavior to team members and especially to the student was helpful. When everyone knew what they were working towards changing, it was easier to track plan progress. Involving the student in the process was also something several participants mentioned as helpful, because that in turn helped build the relationship between the student and teacher. Positive teacher-student interactions play a large role in behavior and academic performance (Sabey et al., 2018).

What Barriers or Hindering Incidents Did Teacher's Identify? (RQ2)

There were various incidents participants reported as hinderances to the BIP process that aligned with what was found in the literature review. These hindrances also correlate with categories found in the helping categories. The consistency of communication greatly impacted the outcome of the behavior intervention plans. Differing opinions amongst team members also effected the plans' ability to be implemented with consistency because many participants reported team members not following the plan as written. Breitenstein et al. (2010) found that implementation fidelity is "the degree to which an intervention is delivered as intended" (p 164). Poor implementation fidelity is also one of the main explanations of why BIPs aren't working (Blood & Neel, 2007).

Unexpected events and severity of problem behavior were categorized separately although they fall under the same umbrella term of unpredicted incidents. Participants mentioned hitting, violence, bullying, attendance, assemblies etc. as unpredicted incidents. Research also considers incidents like these as limitations to studies with behavior intervention plans. In a study, which included a national sample of school-going adolescents, researchers found that roughly two in five adolescents missed school over the past month (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2019).

Reward systems were mentioned as being helpful in the implementation process. However, they weren't as effective when the reinforcements weren't readily available. These conclusions align with results found in other research studies about using inaccessible reinforcements. For reinforcement to be effective, the student must be able to access the reinforcement very frequently at first and then slowly tapper off the need for constant reinforcement. This makes it much easier for the student to develop the alternate behavior (Cook et al., 2010). Many participants expressed how difficult consistency and availability of reinforcements is, due to the restraints they have on time and resources.

Another parallel this research study found in previous studies was the impact formal training had on BIP efficacy. In 2010, Little found that severe behaviors (those requiring BIPs) were likely to persist without formal teacher training to handle such behaviors. Myers and Holland (2000) surveyed general and special education teachers to measure the percentage of teachers using function-based assessments. Only 12% of general and special education teachers who had heard of FBAs had been given training on how to conduct them. Many teachers in this current study said they felt unprepared to implement a successful BIP with the resources and time they were provided. Hardly any of the interviews mentioned function-based assessments which coincides with what past-research has found.

Although each BIP is unique to the student for whom it was developed, all BIPs should contain antecedent modifications, consequence manipulations, teaching procedures for a functionally equivalent replacement behavior, generalization programming, and an emergency safety plan (Collins & Zirkel, 2017; Utah State Board of Education, 2015). Technically adequate BIPs contain content in each of these areas that is comprehensive, detailed and clear (Cook et al., 2010).

Limitations

To meet the saturation requirement with a limited number of participants, we conducted the first three interviews and slowly added interviews until by the seventh interview, we had reached saturation. It is possible that additional interviews may have produced a novel incident that was not consistent with our categories. An independent research assistant was involved in the extraction and categorization checks. Both checks yielded an approximately 82% agreement between the research assistant and the first author. More training and support may have increased this agreement rate and provided a more sensitive assessment of our procedural rigor. Another limitation was the combination of general education and special education teacher

perspectives. In this study we did not consider the differentiation of perspectives that could have occurred depending on the role of the educator. As a result, the conclusions of this study could impact the effectiveness of applying these results in practice.

The participants in this research study were aware what this study would entail and were eager to contribute to the research of BIP implementation. However, it is appropriate to conclude that although hindering incidents reported by participants were perceived to affect BIP implementation, these incidents didn't cause the BIP to be unsuccessful and are therefore not as reliable as the helping incidents listed. It would have been insightful to include unsuccessful and successful BIP experiences per participant however, this study wanted participants to have specific answers without ambiguity of the BIP they had in mind.

Implications for Future Research

This study combined perspectives of general education and special education teachers; however, future researchers could consider investigating these perspectives independently. Some of the results in this study could have been viewed differently, had we not combined the two perspectives. The majority of participants were special education teachers, which could have impacted the results of the study.

Future researchers might also want to consider administrators' role in the implementation process. This was an incident mentioned that was unable to be categorized in this current study, however, it would be interesting to understand how impactful involving administration could be. The participant felt like involving the administration would have helped her feel more support and appreciated.

Implications for Practitioners

The results of this study emphasize the importance of collaboration. Several comments led our team to conclude that practitioners within schools had limited knowledge of function-

based supports. We would recommend that pre-service programs and in- service professional development activities emphasize function-based interventions and strategies to enhance implementation. Participant 4 shared her experience implementing her first BIP. She said she received a student on a BIP from a different school, who she had never observed or been trained on how to manage. There were no guidelines or working model for her to refer to, which made it hard to know what to do. For this reason, she felt like progress was delayed because of the lack of training that was given to her. This quote illustrates how unprepared and incompetent participants felt when trying to implement BIPs. If teachers were given more training and the importance of function-based behaviors, it could help the success rate of BIPs and confidence of the implementers. As part of this training, it could be helpful to explicitly teach calming down strategies, such as the ones mentioned by participants in this study (Zones of Regulation, 5-Point Scale). Several participants appreciated when the behavior intervention team was involved, because they were able to teach students calming down strategies, a significant helping incident identified in this study.

Conclusions

This study contributed guidelines to follow during BIP implementation. The helpful and hindering critical incidents illustrate what teachers believe impacts BIP success. Following these guidelines could help educators feel confident in themselves and these plans. More research is needed on other critical incidents, some of that research should be done in collaboration with practitioners. Intentional efforts by researchers and practitioners in this area has potential to improve services for many of the most-at-risk students.

BIPs were found to be most effective when educators had ongoing collaboration with stake holders, in-class or out-of-class support from specialists (on behavior intervention team or out of school), consistent data tracking, reward system and consequences, calming down

strategies and a good relationship with the student. Educators can use these guidelines, to success

rates of BIPs.

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Tables

Table 1

Participant Interview and Demographic Summary

Participant	Helping Incidents	Hindering Incidents	Wish List Items	Assignment	Experience
1	6	4	2	Elementary general education	< 5 years
2	6	3	1	Special education	>5 years
3	5	3	1	Special education	< 5 years
4	6	4	2	Special education	< 5 years
5	4	3	2	Special education	< 5 years
6	3	1	0	Elementary general education	<20 years
7	2	2	1	Elementary general education	>5 years

Table 2

Helping Category Names and Number of Critical Incidents

Category Names	Number of Critical Incidents	% of Participants
Reward System/Consequences	8	86
Calming down Strategies	6	71
Ongoing Collaboration	6	71
In-class Support	6	57
Relationship	4	43
Consistent Data Tracking	3	28

Note. Some incidents were mentioned multiple times by the same participant. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

Table 3

Hindering Category Names and Number of Critical Incidents

Category Names	Number of Critical Incidents	% of Participants
Unexpected Events	7	57
Severity of Behavior	2	29
Consistent Reward System	3	43
Differing Opinions	2	29
Inconsistent Communication	3	43
Insufficient Training	1	14

Note. Some incidents were mentioned multiple times by the same participant. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

APPENDIX A

Review of the Literature

Problem behavior continues to be a major issue in schools for both teachers and students. According to Morgan and Sideridis (2017), between 10-30% of students in schools in the United States exhibit problem behavior and over 90% of educators reported an increase in problem behavior during their careers. Beyond its prevalence, problem behavior has expansive that slows academic performance and/or restricts social opportunities.

Problem behavior places a large strain on teachers' emotional and physical wellbeing affecting their ability to teach. More persistent and severe problem behavior is also a significant predictor of teachers' likelihood to leave the profession (Morgan & Sideridis, 2017). These issues are likely to persist given the lack of formal training teachers receive to handle this type of behavior (Little, 2010).

Researchers looking to quantify the impact of problem behavior on teachers' wellbeing found interesting insights. One U.S. study involving 1,129 teachers found that when teachers believe themselves to be incapable of dealing with children's problem behaviors, they tend to feel more emotionally drained from their jobs (Buettner et al., 2016). Challenging behaviors were deemed to be one of the largest stressors on teachers' emotional and physical well-being (Buettner et al., 2016). The same study suggested that teacher's psychological well-being is often associated with the potential success a student can have in their class.

When investigating secondary school teachers' perceptions of students' problem behaviors, researchers learned that 68% of teachers reported spending more time than they believed they should on issues of order and control in the classroom (Little, 2010). The study also found that the majority of problem behaviors were minor but disruptive. Another study found that when teachers reported low disciplinary efficacy, they also reported feeling more

exhausted and stressed (Özen & Yıldırım, 2020). Considering the evidence above, it is clear that teachers need more resources to alleviate the impact of problem behavior on their personal and professional well-being.

Persistent and severe problem behavior can also impact a teachers' likelihood to leave the profession. Because problems behaviors require attention from teachers who are trying to manage the academic success of all their students, managing challenging behavior can prevent teachers from focusing on the things they enjoy the most in the classroom. Culkin (2016) indicated that depending on the type of behavior, entire lesson plans can be derailed, negatively impacting both student and teacher performance. In a longitudinal study conducted over 25 years, Ingersoll et al. (2012) found that the teacher attrition rate rose from 6.4% to 9%. The study also revealed that an estimated 40-50% of new teachers left their jobs within the first five years.

Finally, studies assessing teacher's perception of classroom management have revealed that teacher's lack professional skills to manage behavior. One study included interviews of 15 teachers from different branches of teaching and various public schools (Özen & Yildirim, 2020). The majority of these teachers reported that they used outdated classroom management methods and struggled to access professional development and other supports to adopt new, effective intervention strategies. Teachers classified as unsuccessful at classroom management, usually didn't know how to use punishment and reward systems to increase good behavior and reduce problem behavior. As stated in the article "Teachers have the inability to think quantitively and could not think to establish cause and effect relationships" (Özen & Yildirim, 2020, p. 105). This study illustrates how under-trained the majority of teachers are in preparation for dealing with the problem behaviors they are faced with. From a study conducted in 2019, which included a national sample of school-going adolescents, it was concluded that roughly two in five adolescents missed school over the past month (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2019).

Effects of Problem Behavior on Students

Empirical research confirms a strong relationship between academic success and problem behavior; students who emit high rates of problem behavior are much more likely to struggle academically than their peers (Mundy et al., 2017). This relationship has also been reported in international studies examining challenging behavior at school (Morgan & Sideridis, 2017). However, it is uncertain why this relationship exists, although the speculation is that when academics become overwhelmingly difficult, students may begin to emit problem behavior to avoid academic challenge and ultimately failure. One study attempted to quantify this association between behavioral problems and academic performance (Mundy et al., 2017). In the study, students classified with behavioral problems consistently scored lower in all domains. To highlight the magnitude of impact, researchers found that boys with behavioral and emotional problems were approximately 12 months behind their peers.

Academic failure and behavior problems often go hand in hand. Morgan and Sideridis (2017) hypothesized several factors that could explain the phenomenon, one such factor being that students go to school with a preestablished set of negative behaviors that impact their learning. Morgan and Sideridis also suggested that the farther behind a student fell, the harder it is to catch up, driving academic failure and causing the student to continue manifesting problem behavior as a coping mechanism. Not only does problem behavior impact short-term academic success, it has also been found to affect student outcomes later on in life. One longitudinal study, using first- and second-grade students, measured the long-term effects of childhood bullying (Kim et al., 2011). The study wanted to determine whether or not bullying was a significant predictor of violence, heavy drinking, and marijuana use at age 21. The results found that approximately 78% of the sample reported involvement in bullying acts in the past year. At the age of 21, over two-thirds reported drinking heavily at least once along with 42% having used

marijuana at least once. This is one of many studies indicating the long-term effects of problem behavior in schools, further explaining why addressing problem behaviors early is a key factor in future academic success.

Early behavioral problems also increase the risk for socioemotional maladjustment, delinquency, school dropout, gang membership, later substance abuse, and need for mental health services (Morgan & Sideridis, 2017).

High Risk for Students With Emotional Disturbance

Research confirms that students with problem behavior exhibit a wide range of behaviors associated with social and emotional maladjustment, along with academic failure. These students with escalated behavioral problems, including physical and verbal aggression, are often at risk for an emotional disturbance (ED). As many as 26% of children are likely to struggle with serious social and emotional problems. "An estimated 5% to 26% of children demonstrate serious social, emotional, and behavioral learning challenges" (Brauner & Stephens, 2006, p. 303). Students in this population pose unique challenges to educators, and face a higher rate of suspension, expulsion, and dropouts, in addition to a "substantial risk of academic failure" (Collins & Zirkel, 2017, p.180). Problem behavior directly decreases the likelihood of learning for the student and other students in the class he or she is disrupting.

A study examining the efficacy of using function-based interventions, specifically for students classified with emotional disturbances (Nahgahgwon et al., 2010) found that function-based interventions were very effective in reducing target behavior. The study included three students classified with ED. All of the students' target behaviors improved, but two of the students had substantial results from the function-based interventions going from one office referral a week to only one per month.

Even though the research suggests that early behavior prevention is the most effective form of treatment, teachers and administrators usually do not treat problem behavior until it has manifested itself or has led to a classification of ED. Pereira and Lavoie (2017) conducted a study where they interviewed and investigated the lives of six youth who struggled with emotional, social, and behavioral problems at school. All of the students struggled in some way academically and behaviorally. They had difficulty fitting in at school and communicating with their teachers. Without knowing what to do and without proper resources to help these students, teachers attempted to "fix" the problem by placing students in alternative schools and programs. As deduced from interviews with the students, it was determined that the participants did not think the programs were helpful (Pereira & Lavoie, 2018).

These alternative programs were intended to create a safe, structured environment to help teach students the emotional, behavioral, and social skills that will allow them to eventually be brought back into mainstream classes. Although ideal, that didn't often happen because if the program was ineffective, the student was simply passed from one school to the next until the problems disappeared or the student graduated (Pereira & Lavoie, 2018).

The above study illustrates the current situation teachers, administrators, parents, and school psychologists are dealing with and the lack of resources there are available to them to help students with behavioral problems, especially those in the category of ED. Without proper resources and training, educators are unable to aid students who are most at risk academically, leaving them vulnerable to stunted progress.

Effectiveness of FBAs and BIPs

To support teachers and administrators dealing with severe behavior problems, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires schools to complete BIPs based on FBAs for each student with a disability who also has severe behavior problems, and these

behavior problems are impeding their learning (IDEA, 2004). This mandated the use of BIPs for students with behavioral problems, making special education services more accessible to students with an Emotional Disturbance.

A BIP can either be derived from a functional based assessment (FBA) or be non-function based. When a BIP is based on an FBA, Ingram et al. (2005) found that student positive behavior increases noticeably more than other interventions such as non-function-based interventions. Function-based intervention plans focus on the reason or function (escape, attention, gain access) behind the maladaptive behavior, whereas non-function-based interventions do not take the function into consideration and simply make assumptions as to what will eliminate the problem behavior.

One of the participants in this study was given a function-based intervention planned to focus on the problem behavior of not being engaged. The participant's teacher hypothesized that the reason for his poor engagement during class was due to his desire to escape unwanted or difficult tasks. Implementation of the functional behavior intervention quickly resulted in a decrease in the problem behavior. However, when the non-function based BIP was introduced, the problem behavior returned in full force, meaning that the intervention that didn't focus on the function of the participant's behavior failed. When the function-based intervention was implemented for the second time, the behavior's frequency decreased yet again. Thus, we see that intervention plans are rendered inefficient when function-based intervention is not used.

Functional Behavior Assessment

As mentioned above, function-based interventions are effective ways to correct challenging behavior that is interfering with a student's education. All function-based interventions originate with a functional behavior assessment or functional analysis. The purpose of a functional behavior assessment is to determine the function, or reason, the target behavior is

occurring. The term target behavior refers to the problem behavior that is impeding the student's education. Compliance, aggression (verbal/physical), truancy, inappropriate statements, disruptiveness and hyperactivity (Blood & Neel, 2007) are all possible examples of target behavior. To conduct a functional assessment, the Practice Guide for Reducing Behavior Problems, (Epstein et al., 2008) suggests the following steps: identify the target behavior, collect indirect data, conduct direct observations, write a summary of the data collected, and develop a hypothesis to explain why the target behavior is occurring.

To identify the target behavior, it needs to be objectively defined. It's easiest if the definition only refers to observable characteristics of the problem behavior, giving examples and nonexamples where appropriate. Practitioners should be able to understand from the definition when the target behavior begins and ends in order to track whether or not the intervention is working (Cooper et al., 2014). Nahgahgwon et al. (2010) examined the efficacy of function-based interventions. Their study included a participant named Zane, a five-year old in full-day Kindergarten. Zane's problem behavior was defined as: lying on the floor crying, refusing to follow an adult direction (e.g., saying, "No" and continuing with a different activity), calling out during instruction, talking with his peers, talking without raising his hand, and playing with objects.

Once the target behavior is identified and properly defined, the practitioner uses indirect methods to collect baseline data from a cumulative file review and interviews (Epstein et al., 2008). The comprehensive file review should include behavioral records, school attendance history, and informal and formal academic assessment results (Nahgahgwon et al., 2010). In the indirect assessment for Zane, the researchers reviewed his grades, office discipline referrals, and the frequency of problem behavior noted in the classroom. This information is helpful because It provides how often he is being referred to the office for behavior concerns.

The other part of indirect assessments is conducting interviews with the teacher, parent, or student, if developmentally appropriate. Gaining all of these different perspectives allows practitioners to understand what is triggering the problem behavior across a range of settings. An open-ended FBA interview asks questions that include his or her language ability, favorite leisure activity, other preferences, and the problem behaviors. After general information has been gathered, the interviewer asks more specific behavioral questions such as the top three behavioral concerns, the intensity of the behavior, if other behaviors trigger the problem behavior, and under what circumstances the behavior is most likely to occur (Hanley, 2002).

During Zane's teacher interview, she explained that carpet time is most difficult for Zane even though the problem behavior also occurs at other times. She also reported that if Zane didn't get a turn right away his behavior escalated. After getting a turn, his behavior usually improved. In the student interview, Zane indicated he wanted to make good choices but couldn't explain what was easy or hard for him. He repeated he "didn't know" when asked specific questions. When he was asked what types of prizes he would like for good behavior, his answers revolved around family activities. Doing interviews in this way helps gain insight into what the student is experiencing and why they are exhibiting problem behavior. From the information obtained from the interview, Zane's reason for engaging in problem behavior is for attention.

Function-based interventions are successful because they target the student's core purpose (or function) behind their maladaptive behavior which in Zane's case was attention. Four common functions are to attain attention, escape an activity or assignment, gain access to an item or activity (tangible), and sensory stimulation (automatic; Scott & Cooper, 2017). If the function is attention, the child is exhibiting problem behavior to achieve attention. A couple of examples of this function could be a child who speaks out during class or who throws tantrums during class. If attention has been identified as the function, the intervention plan would include

positive ways to give the child attention (teacher praise, etc.) or by stopping reinforcing the problem behavior by ignoring the tantrums and call outs. Escape is when a child needs a break and does whatever he or she can do to get out of an assignment to have that break or escape from school.

A tangible function is one that seeks to get a physical reward out of exhibiting problem behavior and an automatic function is something a child does that is self-stimulating, such as tapping a pencil on the desk. "Knowing the operant function of aberrant behavior opens the door for applied researchers to conceptualize related environment-behavior interactions as basic operant processes. Research that isolates the variables influencing these processes may then prove to be relevant to applied work," (Mace, 1994, p. 385)

To confirm that attention was the function of Zane's problem behavior, researchers conducted a direct assessment. The direct assessment involves direct observation of the behavior in the student's natural environment. The purpose of the observation should be to document what conditions precede the behavior (i.e., antecedents) and what consequences follow the behavior (i.e., possible reinforcers). Identifying antecedents and possible reinforcers is an essential part of the FBA (Oakes et al., 2018). Two different types of antecedents should be evaluated during the direct assessment: Discriminative stimuli and motivating operations. The presence of a discriminative stimulus is what reinforces the behavior, when present, it increases the likelihood that the behavior will continue to occur (Cooper et al., 2014). Motivating operations refers to an environmental variable that increases or decreases the effectiveness of a stimulus and alters the frequency of all of the behavior that has been reinforced or punished by the stimulus. The circumstances or events that prompt or reinforce the target behavior are referred to as antecedents and the setting event. To track this data, a tool called an ABC observation form is filled out. This form includes A, which refers to antecedents, B, the behavior and C, the

consequences of the behavior. It's a form of direct, continuous observation which sequences all behaviors of concern and what happens before and after those behaviors take place.

Structured ABC observations were done for Zane during whole-group carpet time, his most challenging part of the day. These observations confirmed what information the teacher had provided during her interview. Zane was off task significantly more time than similar age peers. Also, the longer between opportunities to participate, the more disruptive his behavior would get. From his disruptive behavior, it seemed that Zane was getting social attention from his teacher.

When there were many opportunities to participate, Zane behaved, but if he didn't have enough opportunities, his behavior was more disruptive. During observations of Zane, carpet time appeared to be the most likely time for problem behavior to occur. If during carpet time he didn't get a turn right away or didn't get a turn at all, he lied down, cried, and called outs during other children's turns. This behavior gradually escalated into yelling and rolling on the floor. Based on these data, the researchers determined that not being called on was the likely antecedent and attention is the most likely function of Zane's problem behavior. After practitioners have completed the indirect and direct components of the FBA, the collected data is used to create a hypothesis statement about why problem behavior is occurring. The hypothesis is based on analyzed patterns of behavior and environmental events that contribute to the problem behavior. Hypothesis statements are written in ABC format including the antecedent(s), the topography of problem behavior (when the behavior occurs), and the maintaining consequence (Cooper et al., 2014). By looking at all of the data on Zane, it was hypothesized that his disruptive behaviors gained social attention from the teacher. His target behavior worsened when opportunities to be "chosen" were few; however, he maintained on-task behavior when he had a lot of opportunities to respond.

After developing the hypothesis statement, the team develops a summary statement to inform what should be done for the behavior intervention plan. It's recommended that these statements include a definition of the target behavior, a hypothesis about the function of the target behavior, factors that precede and come after the target behavior (Epstein et al., 2008). This information is strongly encouraged by researchers in the field.

Behavior Intervention Plans

IDEA requires the development of a BIP when the behavior of a student impedes his or her academic success (Utah State Board of Education, 2015). The BIP is an individualized treatment plan based on the results of the FBA. Although each BIP is unique to the student for whom it was developed, all BIPs should contain antecedent modifications, consequence manipulations, teaching procedures for a functionally equivalent replacement behavior, generalization programming, and an emergency safety plan (Collins & Zirkel, 2017; USBE, 2015). Technically adequate BIPs contain content in each of these areas that is comprehensive, detailed and clear (Cook et al., 2010).

Positive behavioral supports refer to the universal preventative practices used to create a proactive learning environment for all students in the classroom. Although the description of these supports is not typically included in the write up of the BIP, considering classroom supports when developing the BIP can maximize the likelihood that the plan is implemented with fidelity and improves student outcomes (USBE, 2015). There are four supports teachers are encouraged to provide: expectations and rules, explicit instruction of rules and expectations, reinforcement of expectations and rules, and behavioral corrections. From the study introduced in the previous section, Zane's classroom was found to be providing appropriate instructional practices for a typical kindergarten classroom. For example, Zane's teacher taught students to wait to be called on and provided reinforcement by only calling on students who raised their

hands. She also provided clear consequences for problem behavior by reprimanding students who failed to wait to be called on before speaking during instruction and, in some cases, sending students to the office if they were out of instructional control. These strategies were verified before creating a plan, and current instructional practices were confirmed to be appropriate for a typical kindergarten level classroom (Nahgahgwon et al., 2010).

An antecedent is a stimulus or event that precedes target behavior (USBE, 2015). Because functionally relevant antecedents can evoke or occasion problem behavior identifying these stimuli can help practitioners develop interventions to reduce the frequency of problem behavior. Antecedent modifications are environmental changes focused in removing discriminative stimuli for problem behavior, altering establishing operations, or changing response effort (Epstein et al., 2008; Ellingson, 2000; USBE, 2015). As identified during the FBA for Zane, carpet time was the most challenging classroom activity for Zane. During carpet time, Zane engaged in higher rates of problem behavior with more significant instances of problem behavior. To modify the environment during carpet time, Zane's teacher decided to add a reminder for the entire class at the beginning of carpet time to sit quietly, raise their hands, and wait to be called on. The teacher would also use whole-group reminders of expectations throughout the lesson to ensure students understood expectations throughout the activity. These prompts were intended to prevent the behavior from occurring by clarifying expectations and reminding students of their goals during carpet time.

Next, BIPs must include consequence manipulations. Behavior is a function of its consequences (Cooper et al., 2014), so increasing appropriate behavior requires contacting reinforcement for that behavior. A consequence is a stimulus or event that occurs after a target behavior and can reinforce or punish the behavior it follows (Epstein et al., 2008). Positive reinforcement refers to consequences that increase the frequency of the behavior they follow

whereas punishment refers to consequences that decrease the future likelihood of the behavior they follow (USBE, 2015). In the example of Zane (Nahgahgwon et al., 2010), his teacher would call on him the first time he raised his hand and waited patiently to be called on. Being acknowledged by his teacher was perceived as a positive consequence by Zane, a relationship supported by an increase in waiting to be called on over time. To help Zane contact reinforcement for appropriate behavior, Zane's teacher called on him one to three additional times when he raises his hand and sits quietly.

By calling on Zane multiple times when he was quietly waiting, the attention Zane is seeking, or reinforcement, is made contingent upon appropriate behavior in the classroom. Conversely, Zane's inappropriate behavior, calling out was not attended to or reinforced. A condition often referred to as extinction. This combination of reinforcement for appropriate behavior and extinction for inappropriate behavior is referred to as differential reinforcement (Cooper et al., 2014). Negative consequences were not used in Zane's case most likely because studies have found that positive consequences are more effective along with ethical arguments that support the use of positive reinforcement over punishment (Epstein et al., 2008).

After collecting data looking at the antecedents and consequences to the problem behavior, a functionally equivalent intervention is created. In order to be functionally equivalent, the intervention must satisfy the same function, or demand, of the problem behavior (Cooper et al., 2014). For Zane, the function of his target behavior was identified to be attention, so the replacement behavior's goal was to match the attention he received when exhibiting problem behavior (yelling out instead of waiting to be called on). One way behavior can be changed is by altering the antecedents and consequences. The intervention plan is put into place and more data is collected to determine whether the intervention is effective. If it is not effective, more interventions are tested until the problem behavior decreases.

Zane's teacher noted that after implementing these changes, Zane began to exhibit high accuracy, sustained attention, and appropriate behavior during choral responding time at the carpet. He was able to sit and wait patiently when he knew his turn was coming soon. (Nahgahgwon et al., 2010). Access to reinforcement for the replacement behavior changed the future likelihood of waiting for his turn. His teacher reinforced the behavior by calling on Zane (i.e., providing attention) the first time he answered a question appropriately, and one to three other times during the instruction period. The BIP should specifically describe what is required by staff in order to implement the replacement behavior effectively (Blood & Neel, 2007). To ensure the replacement behavior occurs in all settings, teachers and practitioners need to work together to determine what and how to implement the procedures identified in the BIP in all contexts. If practitioners determine behavior change does not maintain after the BIP is faded or withdrawn, they can reinstate the BIP and modify it with strategies likely to produce maintenance.

Generalization strategies for the BIP should be considered when first developing a plan. In the words of Baer et al. (1968): "In general, generalization should be programmed, rather than expected or lamented" (p. 97). Generalization occurs when a behavior occurs in a context different from the one in which it was first developed. Generalization can occur across settings (e.g., general education classroom, special education classroom, lunch, recess), responses, and time (Cooper et al., 2014). For generalization in these settings to occur, practitioners must consider the contingencies in each environment the student is likely to have problem behavior in. This will help them determine, by measurement of behavior, whether or not the BIP needs to be implemented in multiple settings or if addressing the problem behavior in one setting will allow for generalization across all settings (Lloyd et al., 2019). Additionally, practitioners should try withdrawing or fading the BIP after achieving behavior change to evaluate whether maintenance

occurs after the BIP is no longer in place. For Zane, this would be not calling on him as frequently.

Finally, all comprehensive BIPs include a clear crisis plan in the case that the students' problem behavior escalates to the point of putting the student or others in danger (USBE, 2015). Crisis plans should be developed before implementing the intervention in order to prevent potentially dangerous situations. Teachers and other faculty working with the student should be informed about the crisis plan and taught de-escalation strategies. Crisis plans also indicate when a BIP should be terminated in favor of more protective procedures such as in school suspension or an office referral. Some interventions can be implemented in the office or in a designated school suspension room where they can be better tailored to the individual than a classroom BIP. These BIPs often focused on de-escalating behavior that has become too dangerous for the classroom (USBE, 2015).

How BIPs are Implemented

In 1997, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA) initially required that FBAs and BIPs be conducted for students with behavior problems, with the administrations of services exclusively to students with disabilities (Drasgow et al., 1999). More specifically, students who were classified as having an Emotional Disturbance could receive these interventions. The classification for students with emotional and behavioral challenges is called emotional disturbance. Brauner and Stephens (2006) found that many parents are hesitant to refer their children to special education under the ED classification, thus rendering these students incompatible with the IDEAs mandate for treatment. Less than 1% of students enrolled at public schools are classified with Emotional Disturbance even though there up to 25% of students have an emotional or behavioral disorder at some point during their school careers (Forness et al., 2012). After this mandate, researchers conducted many studies describing how to implement

such methods for students classified under Emotional Disturbance. Rasheed et al. (2012) found that problem behavior significantly decreased when teachers used function-based interventions for students with Emotional Disturbance.

After the mandate in 1997, schools attempted to implement these function-based interventions with students who had a disability, however, this mandate may have led educators to focus an imbalanced amount of time on problem behaviors demonstrated by children with disabilities, possibly ignoring problem behaviors by other children. To correct this imbalance, the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 made an amendment requiring an FBA and BIP be used when severe problem behavior interferes with academic performance, regardless of the presence of disability. Since the amendment to the IDEA, research has found function-based interventions to be excellent resources in helping all students with behavioral problems succeed (Ingram et al., 2005).

Challenge of Implementing BIPs

Although research has shown that combining functional behavior analysis with a BIP is the most effective method (Ingram et al., 2005), many teachers choose not to conduct FBAs prior to an intervention, due to their effortful and complicated natures; which is why the introduction of FBAs and BIPs has not been very effective in reducing problem behavior (Robertson et al., 2020; Epstein et al., 2008). Research suggests this ineffectiveness and view on function-based interventions, is attributed to poor implementation fidelity or the "degree to which an intervention is delivered as intended" (Breitenstein et al., 2010).

According to Breitenstein et al. (2010), implementation fidelity is being able to apply evidence-based practices in a school setting; where there is poor implementation fidelity, function-based interventions do not work as intended. "It is one problem to not have the knowledge and skills to develop a high-quality BIP, but it is another one to develop a high-

quality BIP that is likely to result in positive student outcomes but does not get implemented accurately or consistently (Hirsch et al., 2017). In their study looking at 13 different BIPs, only 50% were implemented with fidelity.

Research suggests poor implementation fidelity is related to four distinct factors: inadequate professional training, persistent communication issues with parents and others involved, and a lack of both contextual fit and confidence in the strategies contained within the BIP (Blood & Neel, 2007; Cook et al., 2010).

One possible explanation for poor implementation fidelity is that they are under-trained in this field. Since the IDEA's mandate to implement BIPs and FBAs, guidelines on best practice and how to implement these plans in schools are still unclear and ambiguous. Researchers do not agree with what is best practice for conducting FBAs (Ingram et al., 2005). IDEA does not provide much detail on how to conduct an FBA. The guidelines only list specific contextual factors to consider when conducting FBAs and BIPs for students. These factors include: the presence of a disability, if the child is removed for more than ten school days, or if misconduct occurs that involves weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury (regardless of the outcome of the manifestation review; IDEA, 2004). Although this list helps educators know when to use function-based interventions, further research is being conducted to determine how to use these interventions which would help make the process more efficient and less daunting.

However, some teachers aren't even aware of what FBAs and BIPs are. Myers and Holland (2000) surveyed general and special education professionals to measure the percentage of educators who knew of, and or were using FBAs. Additionally, 75% of special education teachers had heard of FBAs but only 42% of them were using them, and only 17% of general education teachers had heard of FBAs and only 12% of them had received training on how to conduct them.

The findings of the study suggest that the majority of special education and general education teachers either do not know about FBAs and BIPs, or don't feel sufficiently trained to perform them. Without this training, even the best professionals conducting intervention plans may not necessarily implement them correctly (Wood et al., 2013).

Current methods for training and conducting FBAs and BIPs are inefficient and often complicated, as illustrated by a recent study where researchers conducted an experiment to improve the implementation of BIPs in a school. In the study, administrators enrolled their staff in a behavior skill training to see if this would help. They used the teaching procedure Behavioral, Emotional, Social Training (BST), which included a model, rehearsal, and feedback phase targeting students at risk for Emotional Disturbances. Research concluded that the BST training was efficient and effective. All the staff who participated in the study were able to achieve a mastery level implementation by time of completion. The training took between 45 minutes to 2.5 hours. The study concluded that use of the BST training long term would save money and improve implementation of BIPs (Hogan et al., 2014).

Teacher and parent collaboration plays an important role creating lasting effective behavior intervention plans. A study focusing on this collaboration confirmed that behavior change is most sustainable when the BIP is implemented in school and additionally in the natural setting of the student's home (Park et al., 2010). This more complete implementation at both home and school dramatically increases the success of a BIP. Parental involvement wasn't recommended when BIPs were first introduced, but studies such as this one suggests that it is good practice to involve as many people in the student's plan as possible. For parents to apply the plan in the home, they need the proper training from a professional. This training will help the plan be followed consistently, whether that be at school or at home.

Implementations Across all Domains

Along with under-trained educators and lack of parental support, implementation fidelity has been shown to be another downfall of behavior intervention plans. The first pitfall of implementation fidelity is a mismatch of the function of a behavior to the actual behavior (Hirsch et al., 2017). Knowing the true function of the behavior will help determine what kind of reinforcement to be using. If the student's function for maladaptive behavior is escape, giving them a break would be a good reinforcement for positive behavior. Teacher attention or praise, however, would not be an effective reinforcement because it would not give the student what they need or want.

The second pitfall of fidelity is determining if the maladaptive behavior is the result of a skill deficit or a performance issue. A skill deficit would involve first teaching the student the proper skill and then incorporating a reinforcement for using that skill. An example of a performance issue would be that of a student who knows how to behave appropriately but chooses not to do so. In this type of intervention, the function of the behavior would be determined and followed by an intervention plan reinforcing good behavior (Hirsch et al., 2017).

The third pitfall of BIP fidelity discussed in the article the absence of critical environmental variables in certain BIPs. It's important to understand what in the environment is triggering the problem behavior. If the environmental factors are not considered and, in some cases, altered, the implementation of the plan can be much more difficult (Hirsch et al., 2017).

The last pitfall is using inaccessible reinforcements. This basically means that in order for the reinforcement to be effective, the student must be able to access the reinforcement very frequently at first and then slowly taper off the need for constant reinforcement. This makes it much easier for the student to develop the alternate behavior (Hirsch et al., 2017).

As mentioned earlier, implementation fidelity is based on how well behavior plans are implemented as written (Cook et al., 2010). There still appears to be a knowledge-behavior gap between research that's been conducted and the actual implementation of the data in a real-life setting (Conroy et al., 2018).

In 2007, Blood and Neel conducted a study to determine whether or not FBAs and BIPs were being implemented with fidelity in elementary through high school students labeled with emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD). The majority of information was gained through interviews with all of the teachers across the districts containing EBD self-contained classrooms. Before conducting interviews, a file review was done on each student to determine demographics, presenting behaviors, presence of an FBA or BIP, and the individuality of the plans. The interviews were taped and reviewed to record the BIP in place, if it was successful, and how it was implemented.

From these interviews Blood and Neel (2007) found that the majority of the students labeled as having an Emotional Disturbance or EBD had never had a functional behavior assessment and the FBAs that were conducted didn't include the required parts, specifically a hypothesis statement and options of replacement behaviors were omitted. The rare behavior intervention plans that were created were essentially general lists of responses to behavior, missing the personalization necessary to meet the individual needs of students.

Current Problem

There have been specific studies focused on how to improve function-based interventions, as explained in an article by Killu (2008). Function-based assessments help determine why behaviors are happening. When practitioners know the reason behind behavior, they are better equipped to implement interventions. Another important argument this article makes is the importance of consistency during implementation. Having function-based

intervention helps plan consistency by giving purpose and data to support behaviors. Plans that are not properly defined can be much harder to implement. Cook et al. (2010) suggests that function-based plans lack consistency due to their lack of proven social validity. Social validity is defined in the study as, "judgements concerning the social importance of intervention programs" (Finn & Sladeczek, 2001, p. 177) Having proper feedback and training, along with strong social validity, is another factor that shouldn't be overlooked.

Functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans have the potential to be more effective than they currently are. If educators, administrators, and parents could access the training, resources, and time needed to implement these plans with fidelity, maladaptive behavior would cease to be as large of an issue as it is today. Making best practices more readily available to educators is going to be key to their success.

This study is persuasive because it gives recommendations to educators based on other teachers' experiences in the field, from perspectives of both special and general education teachers. Teachers found that having consistent communication between all team members, special supports in and out of the classroom, consistent data tracking, reward systems, calming down strategies and relationships were key incidents that helped BIPs be successful in practice. Teachers also suggested that more training on how to implement BIPs is needed, because so many teachers feel unsupported from colleagues.

There is still research that needs to be done in order to solidify what helps and hinders BIP implementation, however this study adds new insights from teacher's perspectives which is beneficial to all practitioners trying to implement BIPs in practice.

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APPENDIX B

Consent/Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Cade Charlton and Ellie Young at Brigham Young University to determine the helping and hindering events that lead to Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) implementation. You were invited to participate because you have had success implementing a BIP within the last school year.

Procedures
If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- You will be asked to fill out a brief demographic survey (around 5 minutes)

- You will be interviewed for approximately 30-60 minutes about BIP implementation.

- The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in data collection.

- The interview will take place over the phone at a time convenient for you.

- The researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers for approximately fifteen (15) minutes.

Risks/Discomforts
You may experience difficulties associated with allocating time to participate in this research to alleviate this the researchers will ensure that the interviews will be conducted at a time and date that is most convenient for the participant. You may experience some emotional distress as you recall their experiences working with challenging students. Emotional supports will be made available to any participants who may experience distress. You may also experience a loss of confidentiality by disclosing the details of a behavior intervention plan to the researchers. In order to ensure confidentiality, we will remind participants to not disclose any identifying information about their students during the interview.

Benefits
There will be no direct benefit to you. You may gain some insight into what will help you better implement BIPs in the future, but this is not guaranteed. Your insight will contribute to the

current discussion in the literature, which will help to fill the gap in the literature regarding the discrepancy between BIP creation and implementation.

Confidentiality
Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality. We also will ensure that data collected about sensitive issues will not be shared with others without permission. Additionally, all data from this study will be saved on a secure, password protected, online file sharing website.

Compensation
After completing the interview, you will be compensated with a $25 amazon gift card or $25 in material goods (e.g., classroom supplies, movie tickets, or gift basket) depending on your district's policies regarding out-of-contract incentives. For those subjects who take the survey and indicated they did not have an experience of implementing a successful BIP within the last year will not be invited to participate in a structured interview and will not receive compensation.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Cade Charlton at cade_charlton@byu.edu for further information.

Questions about Your Rights as Research Participants
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; irb@byu.edu.

Statement of Consent
I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Name (Printed): Signature Date:

IRB NUMBER: IRB2020-168
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/04/2020

Memorandum

To: Cade Charlton
Department: BYU - EDUC - Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
From: Sandee Aina, MPA, HRPP Associate Director

Wayne Larsen, MAcc, IRB Administrator Date:

November 02, 2021 IRB#: E2020-168
Title: Perspectives from the Classroom: A Qualitative Analysis of the Helping and
Hindering Incidents Associated with Implementing Behavior Intervention Plans

Brigham Young University's IRB has reviewed the amendment submitted to
change the study title, add study personnel, make a change in enrollment,
modify the consent form to emphasize the broadened focus on classroom
management (along with a modification to the consent form to reflect this
change), and including the addition of a new survey that includes the level
system (effective classroom management) along with the BIP survey. The
IRB determined that the amendment does not increase risks to the research
subject and the aims of the study remain as originally approved. The
amendment has been approved. The revised consent statement and recruiting
script have been approved and stamped for your files.

All conditions for a continued approval period remain in effect. Any modifications to the
approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications
are incorporated in the study.

INFORMED CONSENT

Introduction

      This research study is being conducted by Cade Charlton and Ellie Young at Brigham Young University to determine the helping and hindering events that influence Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) implementation that affect student outcomes. You were invited to participate because your administrator indicated that you have had experienced improvement in student's behavior through implementing a BIP in the last 6 months of your working school year.

Procedures

      If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

1. You will fill out a brief survey regarding your professional experiences (< 5 min).

2. You will be interviewed about your experiences implementing a BIP. The interview will be conducted in your classroom or remotely (i.e., Skype, Zoom, telephone) and recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting (30-60 min).

3. You will receive an email from the research team asking you to confirm the accuracy of our analysis of your interview. The researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers (< 5 min).

Risks/Discomforts

      You may experience discomfort associated with finding time to participate in this research or recalling your experiences working with challenging students while implementing a BIP. In addition, there is a possibility that you could experience a loss of confidential information.

Benefits

      You will not directly benefit from participation. We believe the information you share will inform future educators; however, this information is unlikely to directly benefit you.

Confidentiality

Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality in all disseminated findings from this study. All recordings and data will be saved on a secure, password protected, online server.

Compensation

You will receive a $25 amazon gift card after completing this survey, the interview, and responding to the final email confirmation of our analysis from your interview.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely. If you decide not to participate in the study you will not receive a gift card.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Cade Charlton at cade_charlton@byu.edu for further information.

Questions about Your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; irb@byu.edu.

Statement of Consent

Please select "yes" to indicate that you have read, understood, and have access to the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

▼ Yes, I agree to participate (1) ... No, I DO NOT agree to participate (2)

APPENDIX C

Survey

Add **Demographic Block**

Q1 What is your email?

_____

Q2 Select the role that best describes your primary professional responsibility:

◯ Special Educator (1)

◯ General Educator (2)

◯ School Psychologist (3)

◯ Social Worker (4)

◯ Behavior Specialist (5)

Q3 In which school district do you primarily work?

▼ Alpine (1) ... Cache (8)

Q4 My age (as of your last birthday)

_____

Q5 I am

◯　　　　　Male (1)

◯　　　　　Female (2)

◯　　　　　Prefer not to answer (3)

Q6 I am of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ethnicity

○   Yes (1)

○   No (2)

Q7 Please check all categories that best describe your race:

☐   American Indian / Alaska Native (1)

☐   Asian (2)

☐   Pacific Islander (3)

☐   Black (4)

☐   White (5)

☐   Other (specify) (6) _____

☐   Decline to answer (7)

Q8 If you are a teacher, are you certified in the areas / subjects you currently teach?

○   No (1)

○   Yes (2)

○   I am not a teacher (4)

Q9 What is the highest degree you have earned (select one)?

○   High school diploma (1)

○   Associate's degree / technical (2)

○   Bachelor's degree (3)

○   Master's degree (4)

○   Master's degree +30 (5)

○   Doctoral, Educational Specialist, J.D. degree (6)

Q10 What was your major area of study (highest degree only)?

_____

Q11 Have you received training on any of these topics related to BIPs from anyone in

your district or school?

(Select all that apply)

☐   Conducting a FBA (1)

☐   Writing a BIP (2)

☐   Implementation of BIPs (3)

☐   Evaluation of implementation (4)

I'd like you to think of one specific BIP that you were able to implement successfully. This means that you were able to implement the plan as intended and were able to see behavioral change in the student. Please only think about that particular BIP when answering the following questions.
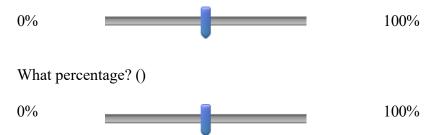
Q12 Have you had success implementing a BIP in the past 6 working months (excluding school breaks)?

○　　　Yes (1)

○　　　Maybe (2)

○　　　No (3)

End of Block: Demographic Block

Start of Block: Implementation Fidelity Block

Q14 What percentage of the time were you the primary person implementing this BIP?

0%　　　　　　━━━━━━━━━━━━　　　　　100%

What percentage? ()

0%　　　　　　━━━━━━━━━━━━　　　　　100%

APPENDIX D

Instruments

Interview Script (plan implementer/plan developer)
(estimated duration = 30 minutes)

Date _____

Interviewer _____

Participant # _____

"Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your time is important to us so we will do our best to complete this interview in under 30 min. As you know, our purpose in conducting this study is to identify what helps and hinders your efforts to use the procedures identified in the BIP. .You were selected for this study because you have had success with BIPs in the past 6 months of your working school year.

"I'd like you to think of one specific BIP that you were able to implement successfully. This means that you were able to implement the plan as intended and were able to see behavioral change in the student"

1. Do you have a specific BIP in mind? (Yes/No)

2. Tell me what an impactful BIP looked like in your experience.

I'll be taking notes while you are talking, so please feel free to continue talking even if I'm typing.

"Thank you. Next, I'd like to ask you several questions about this particular BIP. Please, reflect carefully on the specific events, observable behaviors, and examples that come to

mind with each question. These events should be things that you, members of your team, or other professionals did."

3. "What were the important *events* that **helped** to consistently implement this BIP in your classroom? Please describe each incident in as much detail as possible."

➢ Probe to avoid non-specific events like (e.g., greater support, etc.).

▪ What specifically did you or other professionals do.

▪ What observable events did you notice when ___ happened?

▪ What happened as a result of ____?

HELPFUL FACTORS

"Let me briefly summarize the helpful factors you mentioned. .I noted [List Helping Factors]."

4. "What were the specific events that **hindered** your efforts to consistently implement (create) this BIP?"

➢ Probe to avoid non-specific events like (e.g., greater support, etc.).

▪ What specifically did you or other professionals do.

▪ What observable events did you notice when ___ happened?

▪ What happened as a result of ____?

HINDERING FACTORS

"Let me briefly summarize the factors you mentioned that hindered implementation. .I

noted [List Hindering Factors]."

5. "Looking back, are there other things that would have helped? Things you wished

    had happened or even could happen in the future."

➢ Probe to avoid non-specific events like (e.g., greater support, etc.).

    ▪ What specifically did you or other professionals do.

    ▪ What observable events did you notice when ___ happened?

    ▪ What happened as a result of ____?

WISH LIST ITEMS

"Let me briefly summarize the items you mentioned that could have helped implementation. .I noted the following items [List Wish List Items]."

"Thank you so much for your time. We will be conducting other interviews and then will work on analyzing these data. We will share our results with the district as soon as possible."

Length of the interview (min:sec)

_____