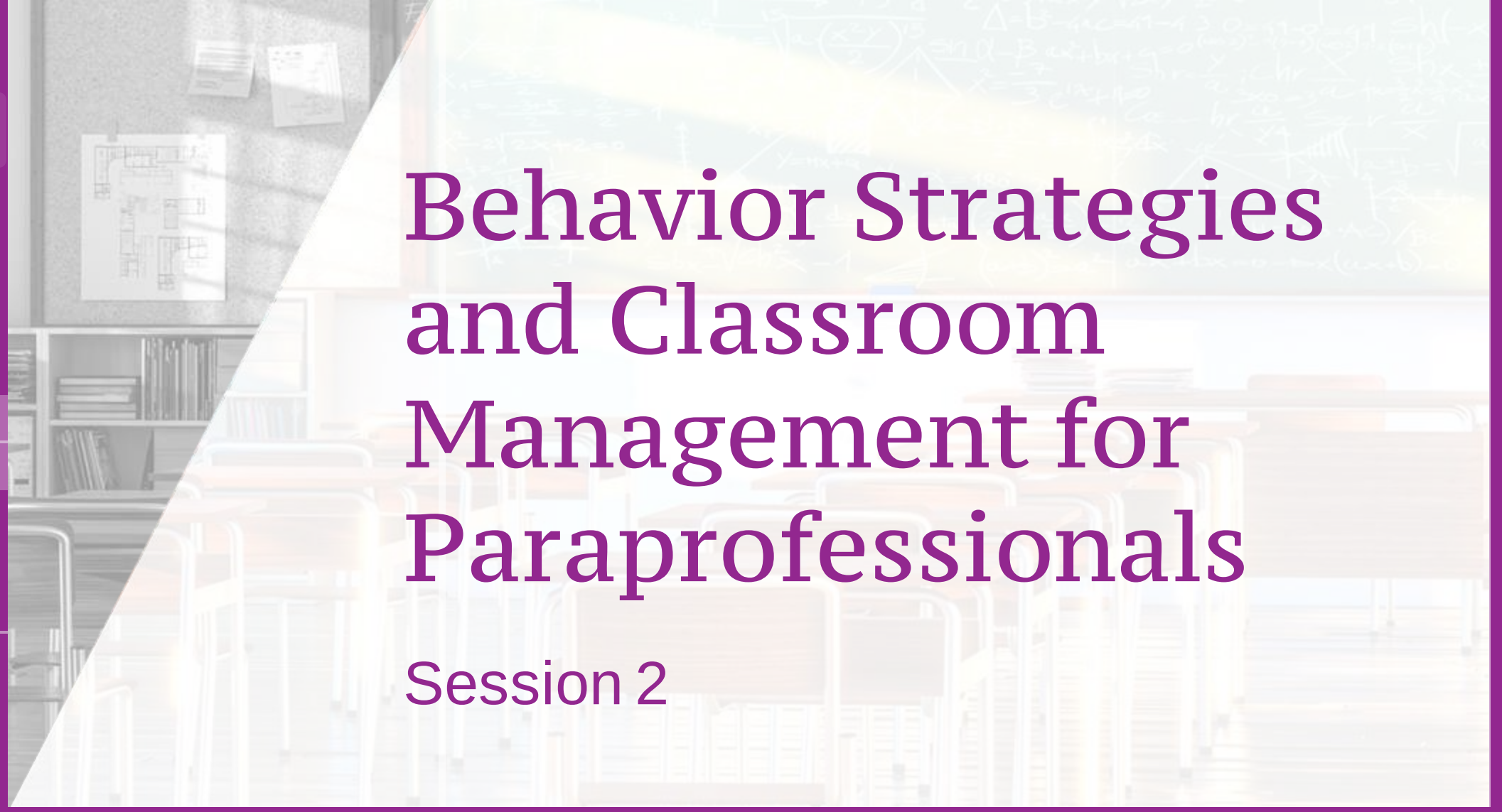


Behavior Strategies and Classroom Management for Paraprofessionals

Session 2

PUBLIC CONSULTING GROUP

ALABAMA Achieves
ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Who We Are:
Public Consulting Group

Mary Baker-Boudissa, Public Consulting Group

Agenda

- Welcome and Overview
- Functions of Student Behavior
- Proactive Behavior Support Strategies
- Responding to Challenging Behavior
- Collecting Behavior Data
- Wrap Up and Next Steps

Session Objectives

- Understand and describe potential functions of student behavior.
- Identify strategies to proactively support student behavior.
- Review methods for responding to challenging student behavior.

Engagement Guide

- A personal place to think and reflect.
- Used throughout the session.

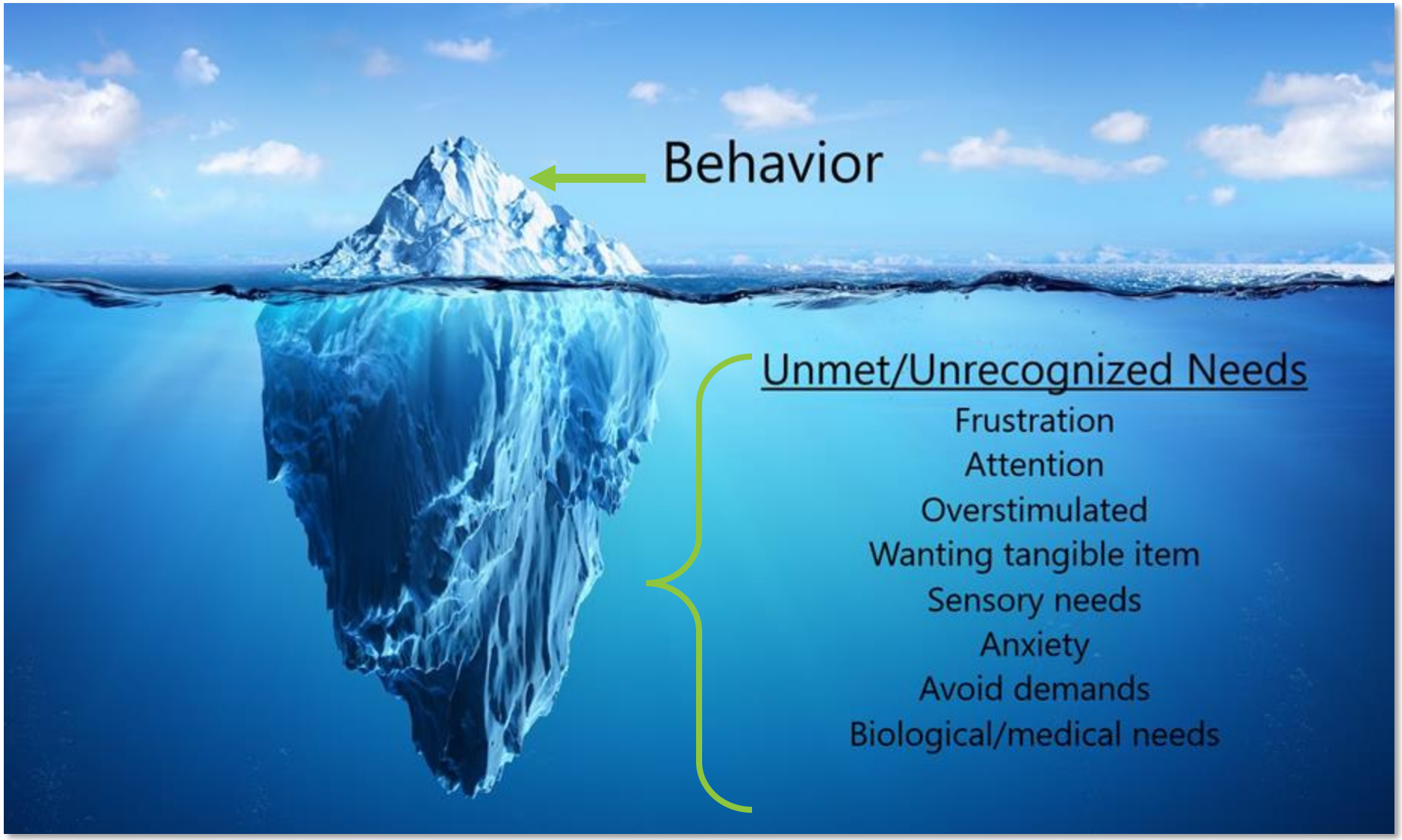
Note: While this content reflects general best practices, paraprofessionals should always operate under the direction of their supervising teacher(s).

Ross Greene says:

“Kids do well if they can.”

At the heart of every challenging behavior is a skill deficit.

All behavior, including challenging behavior, is a form of communication.


Behavior
Unmet/Unrecognized Needs
Frustration
Attention
Overstimulated
Wanting tangible item
Sensory needs
Anxiety
Avoid demands
Biological/medical needs

Types of Behavior and Common Responses

Appropriate/Expected Behavior	▪ Acknowledge behavior by telling student what they did and how it aligns to expectations. ▪ Be as specific as possible, and always try to use the student's name.
Infrequent, Nondisruptive/Minor Behavior	▪ Try to draw as little attention as possible. ▪ Remind student what is expected; model and practice expectations.
Repeated and/or Disruptive Behavior	▪ Let students know what you expect upfront; take time to model and practice appropriate responses. ▪ Collect data to help establish patterns about why behaviors are occurring.

General Considerations

Understanding Myself	Understanding the Student	Understanding the Context (Setting/Function)
▪ What are my own values about the challenging behavior? ▪ Is this behavior actually a problem, or is it just annoying? ▪ What is my range of tolerance regarding this behavior? What are “hot buttons” I should be aware of? ▪ How can I manage my own emotions before attempting to support a student?	▪ What is happening around the student? ▪ Are other students a factor in the escalation of the behavior? ▪ What sensory needs or previous experiences could be contributing to the behavior? ▪ Read, review frequently, ask questions, and follow student’s behavior intervention plan (BIP), if applicable.	▪ What triggers does the student have? ▪ What prompts/motivators are more likely to be successful with the student? ▪ How can I make sure to understand and follow behavior plans already in place for the student?

Pause and Reflect

When I feel escalated, what strategies do I use to remain calm and regulate my emotions?

Functions of Student Behavior

When you determine the function of a challenging behavior (i.e., what the behavior is communicating)…

…you can then provide ***proactive supports*** and ***aligned strategies*** to minimize the behavior and increase methods of communicating.

Avoid

Obtain

Escape: environment, situation, task, person

Sensory input: sounds, smells, tactile sensations

Attention: peers, adults

Tangible: preferred item or activity

* **Medical:** allergies, change in medication, etc.

The "What" of Behavior Functions

	Avoid	Obtain
Attention	To avoid interacting with a particular peer or adult; to avoid potential embarrassment	To elicit a reaction from others, seeking connection
Sensory Input	To escape unpleasant smells, sounds, and/or tactile sensations	Seeking out pleasant sounds, smells, and/or tactile sensations
Tangible	To get away from an unpleasant or undesired item/object	To acquire or control a pleasant or desired item/object
Task/ Setting	To escape an unpleasant or undesired task demand, activity, person, and/or environment	To gain access to a pleasant or preferred task, activity, person, and/or environment

* **Medical:** allergies, change in medication, etc.

Response to Behaviors

	Avoidance-Focused Behaviors	Obtaining-Focused Behaviors
Attention	Teach the student to request a break when needed.	Teach how to request and receive positive attention through engaging in desirable behaviors.
Sensory Input	Be proactive about removing sensory irritants in the student's environment. Teach the student to use strategies to compensate, such as requesting a new location or quiet area to complete work.	Teach a functional replacement behavior that provides compatible sensory input.
Tangible	Teach the student to request for the item/object to be moved or put away.	Teach the student to ask for, wait, and/or exhibit a specific behavior prior to granting access to the item.
Task/Setting	Teach the student to request a break when needed. Divide tasks into small parts or give structured choices within activities.	Include preferred tasks/settings in daily routines and/or incorporate desired tasks/settings in student behavior plans.

Response to Behavior: Examples

	Avoidance-Focused Behaviors	Obtaining-Focused Behaviors
Attention	If a student consistently asks to use the restroom when it's his or her turn to answer a question, allow them to write his or her answer on a whiteboard to share with you privately.	If a student screams to gain attention, ignore it (if possible), and be intentional about providing praise when his or her voice is quiet.
Sensory Input	If a student is sensitive to sounds, allow noise-canceling headphones or earbuds with music playing.	If a student consistently puts non-edible items in his or her mouth, provide access to gum or chewelry.
Tangible		If a student begs to use the iPad, provide access following the completion of a task or assignment (e.g., First-Then strategy).
Task/Setting	If a student wanders around the room rather than completing a task at his or her desk, prompt them to use a break card.	If a student frequently leaves his or her assigned area to go to the gym, consider scheduling proactive visits to the gym or including a gym visit as a reward that can be earned.

*Functions of Behavior: Medical

Why/When	Allergies, illness, changes in medication, etc.
How to Respond	In partnership with your cooperating teacher, work with the student's parent/guardian and school nurse to address or regulate the issue; potentially collect data with family and cooperating teacher feedback.
Example	If a student misses a dose of medication, they may exhibit side effects such as lack of impulse control or sleepiness.

The “Shaken Soda” Effect

1. The “shaking” (stressor) might not have a noticeable effect *in the moment*.
2. That doesn’t mean it hasn’t had an effect *at all*.

Pause and Reflect: “Shaken Soda” Effect

Reflect on a time you’ve experienced the “shaken soda” effect.

Looking back, is there a time when you believe this could have been a factor in a student’s challenging behavior?

How could you consider the potential function of the behavior alongside information from the student's behavior intervention plan to proactively decrease stressors in the student's environment?

Understanding the ABCs of Behavior

A	B	C
Antecedent	**Behavior**	**Consequence***
The event, action, or circumstance that occurs **before** a behavior	Student action that hinders learning and potentially causes harm to self or others	The action or response (*intended or unintended*) that **follows** a behavior

** "Consequence" does not mean "punishment"; rather, it refers to the result or outcome of the student's behavior.*

Understanding the ABCs of Behavior

S	A	B	C
Setting Event	**Antecedent**	**Behavior**	**Consequence***
An event that temporarily changes the value of reinforcers and consequences	The event, action, or circumstance that occurs **before** a behavior	Student action that hinders learning and potentially causes harm to self or others	The action or response (*intended or unintended*) that **follows** a behavior

** "Consequence" does not mean "punishment"; rather, it refers to the result or outcome of the student's behavior.*

Pause and Reflect: Student Behavior

What challenging student behaviors do you encounter most often in your role as paraprofessional?

Potential Challenging Behaviors

- Refusing to work
- Arguing with adults
- Calling out during instruction
- Physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, spitting)
- Eloping (leaving assigned area, classroom, or school building)
- Crawling under tables
- Argument with peer

Potential Antecedents

- Sensory overstimulation (sounds, textures, smells, etc.)
- Too much unstructured time
- Too many (or disorganized/unclear) transitions
- Certain people
- Nonpreferred activities
- Specific topics of conversation
- Time of day
- Content is too easy, too difficult, or too boring

Potential Setting Events

- Lack of sleep
- Hunger
- Missing a dose of medication
- Illness
- Change in routine
- “Bad mood”
- Substitute teacher
- Getting in a fight with a friend
- Situation on the bus or at breakfast
- Transitioning from home to bus, bus to hallway, hallway to classroom, etc.

Potential Consequences

- Reprimanded by the teacher *(adult attention obtained)*
- Run out of time to complete task *(task avoided)*
- Allowed to have preferred item to avoid escalating behavior *(tangible item obtained)*

Challenging behavior works for the child 100% of the time ***unless*** we (1) teach the more appropriate skill and (2) reinforce it at a higher frequency than the challenging behavior is being reinforced.

So, what can we do?

Behavior Supports Should …

1. Match the function or purpose of the behavior (refer to slides 15–16)

2. Be designed to:
   - **Neutralize** or eliminate the effect of setting events
   - **Prevent** the problem behavior from occurring
   - **Teach** alternative/desired behaviors
   - **Increase** alternative/desired behaviors AND **decrease** problem behaviors

Proactive Behavior Support Strategies

Antecedent Considerations

Consideration	Strategy
Adjust the environment so the antecedent is *less likely to occur*.	▪ Prompting/ precorrection ▪ Modification of activities or schedules
Adjust the environment so the antecedent is *less aversive/unpleasant*.	▪ Providing choice
Eliminate the antecedent so the student does not need the challenging behavior to get the same reinforcement.	▪ Non-contingent reinforcement

Strategy: Prompting and Precorrection

Description	Elementary Examples	Secondary Examples	Non-Examples
Provide visual and/or verbal reminders of desired behavior that: ▪ Occur **before** the behavior should take place ▪ **Describe** what is expected ▪ Are **understood** by the student	▪ Before students begin working, remind them where they can find the necessary materials and how to ask for help if needed. ▪ Point to a student's desk as they walk in the room as a reminder that they should sit rather than walk around.	▪ Prior to beginning a group activity, review the participation rubric to remind students of expectations. ▪ As independent work time gets started, point to a visual on the board that reminds students this is a silent time.	▪ Providing only reminders that begin with "no" (e.g., "no running" or "no talking") instead of describing the expected behavior (e.g., "walking feet" or "quiet mouth"). ▪ Providing the prompt after the behavior has already happened.

Strategy: Providing Choice

Description	Elementary Examples	Secondary Examples	Non-Examples
When possible, allow the student to make choices throughout his or her day. Offer choices that are each acceptable in the given situation. Use visual supports when possible. Provide adequate time for students to process the choices being offered.	▪ "You can sit in your seat or at the back table. Which do you prefer?" ▪ "You can finish this after lunch or after art. Which do you prefer?"	▪ "You can choose to work by yourself or with a partner. Which do you prefer? ▪ "You can get started now or read for 10 minutes and then get started. Which do you prefer?"	▪ "You can sit on a beanbag or in the hall." (Hall is likely distracting and might not be an acceptable option.) ▪ "You can read the text on your own or you can listen to a recording." (A recording might not be an acceptable option if the student doesn't have headphones.)

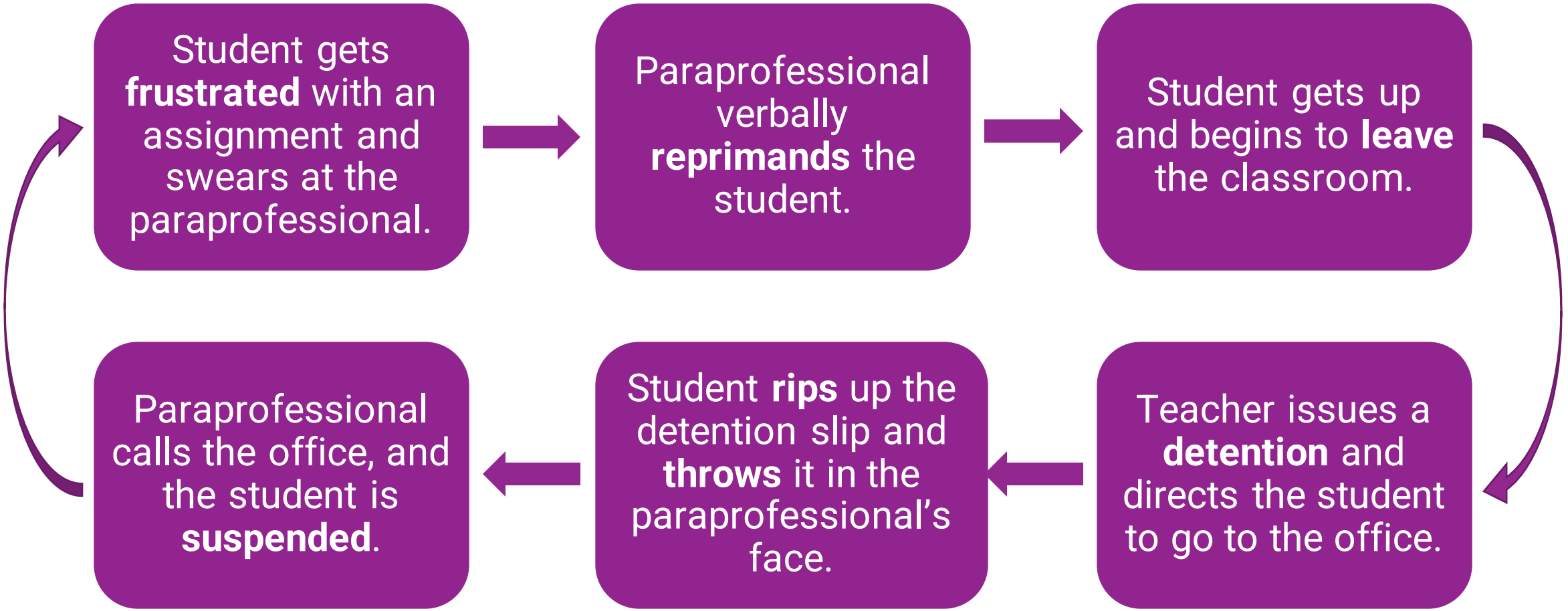
Pause and Reflect: Providing Choice

How do you (and your cooperating teacher) provide choice to students?

Proactive Function-Based Strategies

Function	Rather than …	Address proactively by …
Attention / Connection	Adult inadvertently providing attention by increasing proximity to monitor student's behavior	Plan frequent adult check-ins (more frequent than the behavior occurs) when student is demonstrating appropriate behavior
Escape	Getting out of a work demand by hitting the teacher	Chunk work tasks so less work is presented and required to be completed at one time
Tangible	Ignoring directions to get additional free time	Set visual timer so student knows how much time they have left

Scenario 1


Student gets **frustrated** with an assignment and swears at the paraprofessional.
Paraprofessional verbally **reprimands** the student.
Student gets up and begins to **leave** the classroom.
Teacher issues a **detention** and directs the student to go to the office.
Student **rips** up the detention slip and **throws** it in the paraprofessional's face.
Paraprofessional calls the office, and the student is **suspended**.

Scenario 2

Teacher has **proactively chunked** the content of the lesson, providing short snippets of information followed by time to process and reflect.

Paraprofessional **checks in** with the student during independent work time and verbally **reinforces** his or her effort.

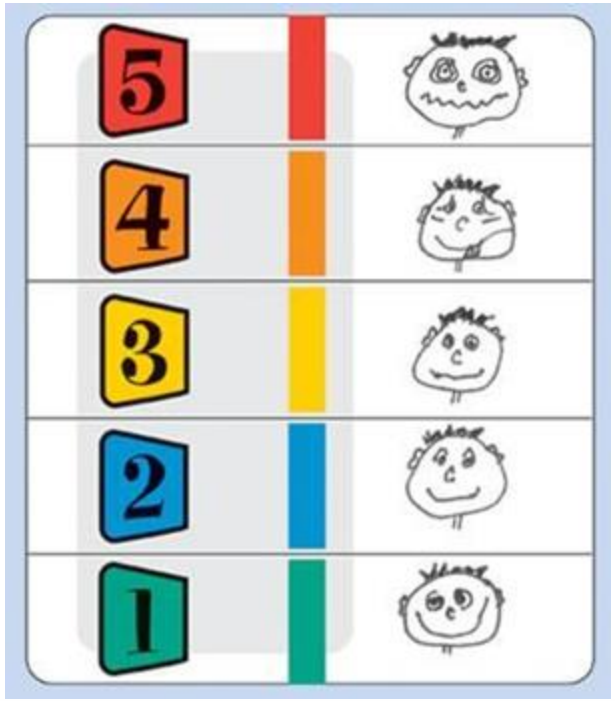
Student begins to show frustration and stops working.

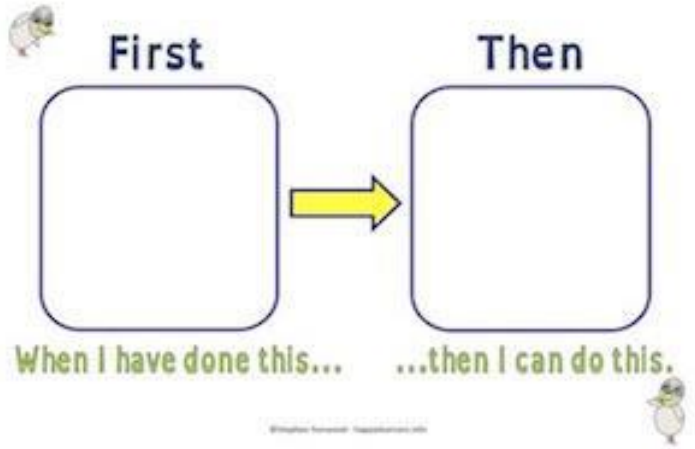
Paraprofessional **offers** additional instruction and **reminds** student about a favorite activity coming up when the current task is completed.

Student **completes** the assignment, and efforts are **praised** by the paraprofessional.

Visual Supports for Behavior

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6:00 AM	wake up, Devotions	wake up, Devotions	wake up, Devotions	wake up, Devotions	wake up, Devotions
7:00 AM	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:00 AM	School	School	School	School	School
9:00 AM	English	Mathematics	Reading	English	Social
10:00 AM	Silent Reading	Silent Reading	English grammar	History	Science
11:00 AM	Latin	Mathematics	Social	Silent Reading	Latin
12:00 PM	English grammar	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
2:00 PM	Lunch	History	Geography	Studying	Mathematics
3:00 PM	Geography	Latin	Studying	English	Latin
4:00 PM	Mathematics	Geography	Silent Reading	Latin	Silent Reading
5:00 PM	Sports	Swimming	Dancing	Swimming	Reading





Strategies for Smoother Transitions

Get Attention	Preview	Use Praise
Make eye contact, use physical proximity, or ask them to repeat back what you've said.	Give students a "heads up" about what will be happening next, before it actually happens. Provide a visual of schedule changes or adjustments.	Be enthusiastic about acknowledging expected behavior – this makes it more likely a student will repeat it in the future.

More Strategies for Smoother Transitions

Use Visual Cues

Use gestures or visual supports to remind the student what is expected of them.

Example: Point to the board where the daily agenda is written.

Count Down

Provide reminders of how much time is left before a transition will take place.

Example: Use a visual timer to show time remaining before lunch or until the current activity is finished.

Ignore Stalling

Redirect students who try to avoid non-preferred activities by bringing up unrelated issues.

Example: Student begins telling you about his or her weekend just as it's time to move to a non-preferred activity.

Pause and Reflect: Transitions

What other strategies do you use (or have you seen used) to make classroom transitions easier?

Responding to Challenging Behavior

General Approaches to Addressing Challenging Behavior

- Ensure student safety while providing minimal attention to the challenging behavior. Follow safety plan laid out by cooperating teacher.
- Interrupt the challenging behavior and redirect to an appropriate alternative behavior using minimal attention, discussion, and emotion (“surface management”).
- Reinforce the nearest student who is engaging in the appropriate, alternative behavior.
- Make it F.A.S.T. (functional, accurate, specific, timely).

Surface Management Strategies

Redirecting. Refocusing the student's attention by asking them to do an unrelated task.

- **Related Strategy: Antiseptic Bouncing.** Temporarily removing a student from the setting (e.g., letting them get a drink of water or deliver a message to another teacher) to allow time for regaining composure. *Important: This strategy is not meant to punish the student.*

Planned Ignoring. Intentionally not acknowledging a student's behavior, assuming the behavior (e.g., tapping a pencil) will run its course without significantly disrupting others.

More Surface Management Strategies

Signaling. Using nonverbal signals (e.g., establishing eye contact, clearing your throat) to communicate disapproval of a behavior.
Proximity Control. Remaining within a close distance to help a student with impulse control. Elementary Example | High School Example
Hurdle Help. Assisting a frustrated, overwhelmed, or unmotivated student (e.g., by working the first two or three division problems together) to help them get started and become invested in the task.

Reflection

Which surface management strategy do you tend to use most often?

A – Redirecting

B – Planned Ignoring

C – Signaling

D – Proximity Control

E – Hurdle Help

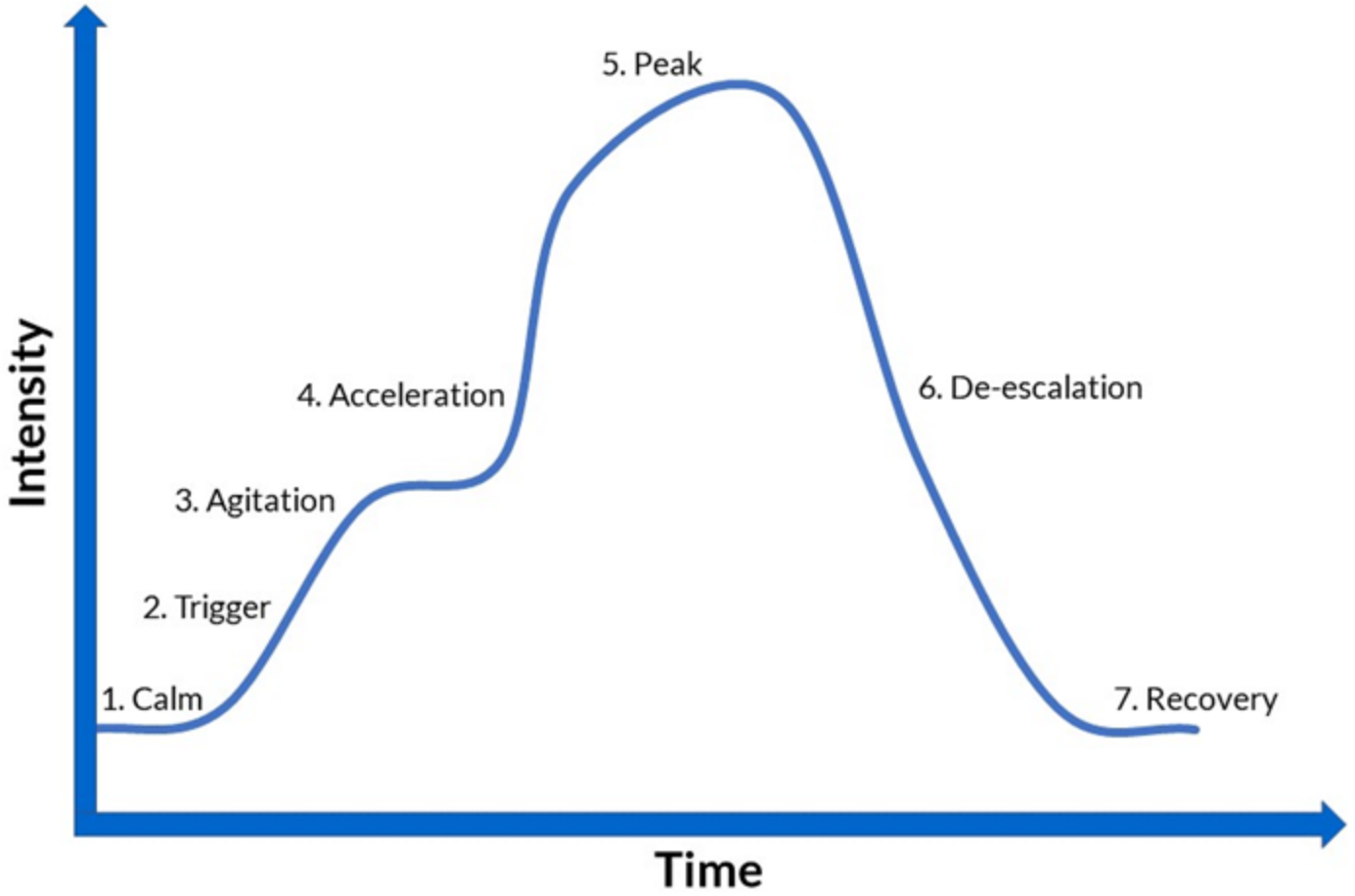
Respond to Behaviors – *FAST!*

F	A	S	T
Functional	**Accurate**	**Specific**	**Timely**
Make sure your response addresses the *function* or *purpose* of the behavior.	Respond *accurately* (i.e., don't make assumptions) and *consistently*.	Use the student's name and be as specific as possible when describing the behavior and the reason for your response.	Responding as soon as possible will make the response more impactful.

In the Moment

- Follow the individual behavior/safety plan.
- Display neutral facial expression; use calm tone of voice.
- Avoid power struggles.
- Minimize verbal comments; avoid lecturing.
- Maintain personal space.
- Remember that your behavior can impact the student's behavior.
- After the behavior, take a moment to make sure your own emotions are regulated.

De-Escalation



Adapted from *Appropriate Responses to the Seven Phases of the Escalation Cycle* (Colvin 2004)

Phases of De-Escalation

	Prevention	Escalation	Crisis	Recovery and Restoration
Student Behavior	Occasionally engaging in minor challenging behavior	Displaying low level (*agitation*) or high level (*acceleration*) behaviors	Needs support to regulate behavior and emotions	Able to regulate and re-integrate into the classroom
Staff Actions	**Encourage Appropriate Behavior** ▪ Teach regulation routines ▪ Maintain positive relationships ▪ Model calming strategies	**Use Continuum of Strategies** ▪ Offer choice ▪ Show empathy ▪ Redirect ▪ Model self-regulation ▪ Provide space	**Provide Crisis Support** ▪ Maintain safety for all; call for support ▪ Use few words and make minimal demands	**Implement Recovery Practices** ▪ Debrief with student ▪ Record data ▪ Reconnect student with classroom activity

Pause and Reflect: Behavior Strategies

In the Engagement Guide, summarize some strategies you plan to implement when behaviors arise.

What questions do you need to ask your cooperating teacher?

Collecting Behavior Data

Measurable and Observable

Examples:

- Child hits with open hand, causing red mark.
- Child bites self on the arm, breaking skin.
- Students says “no” and puts head on desk.
- Student responds to staff with profanity.

Non-Examples:

- Tantrum
- Hyperactive
- Angry
- Poor impulse control
- Being aggressive
- Frustrated
- Non-compliant

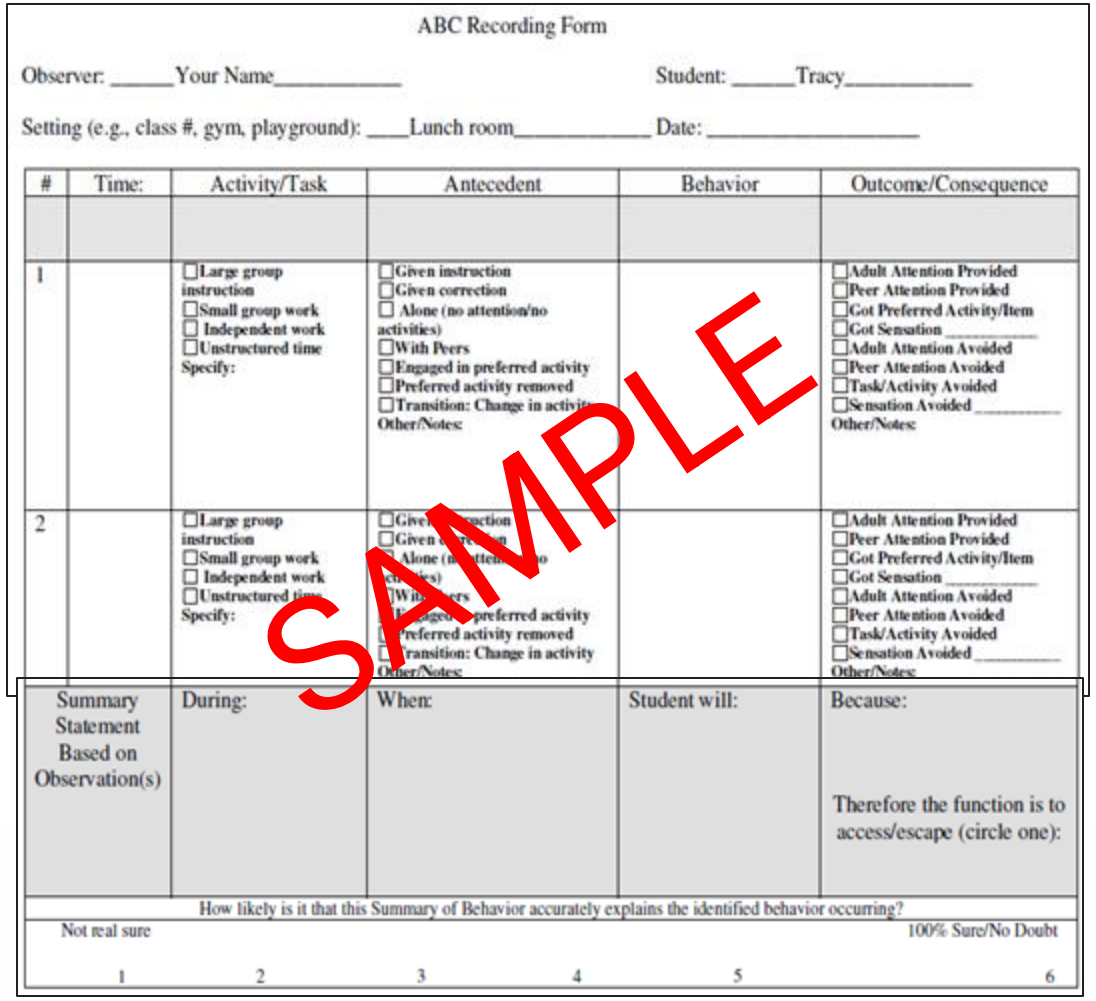
A-B-C Data Collection

A	B	C
Antecedent	**Behavior**	**Consequence***
The event, action, or circumstance that occurs **before** a behavior	Student action that hinders learning and potentially causes harm to self or others	The action or response (*intended or unintended*) that **follows** a behavior

Paraprofessionals and Data Collection

- Take data under the guidance of a cooperating teacher.
- Ask for time to learn the data collection methods.
- Stay in communication with the teacher to ensure the data you capture meets his or her expectations.

ABC Data Collection Form Example



ABC Recording Form

Observer: _____Your Name_____ Student: _____Tracy_____

Setting (e.g., class #, gym, playground): ____Lunch room_____ Date: _____

#	Time:	Activity/Task	Antecedent	Behavior	Outcome/Consequence
1		☐Large group instruction ☐Small group work ☐ Independent work ☐Unstructured time Specify:	☐Given instruction ☐Given correction ☐ Alone (no attention/no activities) ☐With Peers ☐Engaged in preferred activity ☐Preferred activity removed ☐Transition: Change in activity Other/Notes:		☐Adult Attention Provided ☐Peer Attention Provided ☐Got Preferred Activity/Item ☐Got Sensation _____ ☐Adult Attention Avoided ☐Peer Attention Avoided ☐Task/Activity Avoided ☐Sensation Avoided _____ Other/Notes:
2		☐Large group instruction ☐Small group work ☐ Independent work ☐Unstructured time Specify:	☐Given instruction ☐Given correction ☐ Alone (no attention/no activities) ☐With Peers ☐Engaged in preferred activity ☐Preferred activity removed ☐Transition: Change in activity Other/Notes:		☐Adult Attention Provided ☐Peer Attention Provided ☐Got Preferred Activity/Item ☐Got Sensation _____ ☐Adult Attention Avoided ☐Peer Attention Avoided ☐Task/Activity Avoided ☐Sensation Avoided _____ Other/Notes:

SAMPLE

Summary Statement Based on Observation(s)	During:	When:	Student will:	Because: Therefore the function is to access/escape (circle one):

How likely is it that this Summary of Behavior accurately explains the identified behavior occurring?

Not real sure 1 2 3 4 5 6 100% Sure/No Doubt

Other Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Strategy	Tools and Resources	Conditions and Examples	Non-Examples
Frequency Count	▪ Moving paper clips from one pocket to the other ▪ Paper/pencil tally ▪ Using a click counter ▪ App on a smartphone	Behaviors that have a clear beginning and end *Example: Number of "shout-outs" vs hand raises during a lesson*	Behaviors that cannot be directly observed or clearly counted *Non-Example: Number of times "off task"*
Timing	▪ Clock or timer (recorded with paper/pencil or electronic method like Google Forms)	Behaviors that have a clear beginning and end *Example: How long a student spends out of his or her seat*	Behaviors that cannot be directly observed or are too difficult to time *Non-Example: Length of time a student screams*

Pause and Reflect: Data Collection

- What data collection do you complete the most?
- What questions do you have for your cooperating teacher regarding data collection?

Summary

- Students and behaviors are not “bad.” Instead, students engage in behaviors that are inappropriate or problematic for a given situation.
- Students engage in behaviors that “work” for them (e.g., result in desired outcomes or reinforcement of behavior).
- Paraprofessionals should respond to challenging behaviors in a calm, neutral tone.
- Paraprofessionals should connect with their cooperating teacher regularly to determine best strategies, review the behavior intervention plan (BIP) (if applicable), and ask questions.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Reflection and Session Takeaway

- What are your biggest takeaways from today's session?
- What questions do you still have?
- What is one next step you will take as a result of today's session?
- Who can support you in moving forward?

Thank You, Alabama!