Preface

We have conducted workshops, university courses, and in-service training in functional assessment for more than 30 years. We also have extensive experience conducting functional assessment in a variety of settings, across a variety of ages of students, and with students with and without disabilities. We wrote this text because we needed a practical and easily understood model of functional assessment that dealt specifically with school-age populations and settings. When we conducted workshops and taught courses in functional assessment, students and participants often asked if there was something published that they could give to other educators, parents, or administrators or that they could read as they tried to apply functional assessment. This is a result of their requests: it turns theory and research into practical applications in school settings and situations.

We present a comprehensive and positive approach to the prevention and remediation of challenging behavior using functional assessment. The text is written for teams that are charged with preventing and addressing challenging behavior. This may include special and general educators, administrators, school psychologists, social workers, therapists, consultants who work in school settings, and families.

NEW TO THIS EDITION
• A section addressing classroom management and effective instructional strategies including universal design for learning and adaptations to address student needs.
• A review of the strategies that will help to prevent challenging behavior and increase appropriate academic and social emotional behavior.
• An overview of the multitiered Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, the laws that support the use of RtI, the critical features of RtI, and how functional assessment fits within the RtI framework.
• Additional information about Positive Behavior Support and school-wide applications to prevent and address challenging behavior, including information about how RtI and school-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) frameworks work together, critical features that make these frameworks effective, and the role of functional assessment in SWPBS.
• An expanded focus on strategies to prevent the development or occurrence of challenging behavior including self-management and mediation strategies.
• Additional strategies to address the various functions of challenging behavior and descriptions of recent research to support those strategies.

This text is divided into four sections that take the reader through the process of conducting functional assessment and implementing interventions based on the function of behavior:
• Part One (Chapters 1 and 2) provides an introduction to challenging behavior and functional assessment. It presents the rationale for addressing challenging
behavior, presents common misconceptions about the causes of challenging behavior, provides a rationale for using functional assessment, and describes the assumptions and goals of functional assessment. Chapter 2 provides information about classroom management and instructional strategies.

- Part Two (Chapters 3 and 4) describes the process of conducting functional assessment in school settings and identifying the function of behavior.

- Part Three (Chapters 5 through 10) presents suggestions and tips for selecting and implementing function-based interventions. It also presents specific intervention strategies by behavior function: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and sensory regulation/sensory stimulation increase and decrease. It discusses the importance of actively promoting generalization and maintenance of behavior across situations and settings and evidence-based strategies to do this. Finally, it provides suggestions for implementing strategies to prevent the development of challenging behavior and to prevent continued occurrences of challenging behavior.

- Part Four (Chapter 11) provides guidelines for program implementation and consultation. It discusses common problems encountered in conducting functional assessments and in providing consultation to educators. It then provides strategies to prevent and remediate those problems. This section discusses the rationale for involving families as part of the team and provides strategies for doing this. It also provides information about Response to Intervention and school-wide Positive Behavior Support programs and how they relate to functional assessment.

This text contains numerous examples of functional assessment as it is employed in school settings. Examples cover all ages of students (preschool through high school), both regular and self-contained special education settings as well as other school and home settings, a variety of challenging behaviors, and students with and without disabilities. The examples also include a variety of team members who conduct the assessments and implement intervention strategies. Some of the examples are based on our experience in working with students and school-based teams. Other examples are from published research. Each chapter also includes case studies and activities that allow the reader to practice functional assessment and to develop intervention plans to address challenging behavior, or they include activities or questions related to the topics presented in the chapter.

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Preface

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Part One

Introduction to Challenging Behavior and the Functional Assessment and Intervention Model

CHAPTER 1  The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior and Identifying Why Challenging Behavior Occurs

CHAPTER 2  Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior and Identifying Why Challenging Behavior Occurs

OBJECTIVES
1. Describe how to determine if a behavior should be identified as challenging behavior and, if so, if it should be changed using functional assessment.
2. Identify the criteria used to define challenging behavior.
3. Describe the negative effects of challenging behavior on students and other individuals.
4. Identify common misbeliefs or faulty explanations concerning why challenging behavior occurs.
5. Describe each misbelief and explain why it is not an appropriate or productive explanation of why challenging behavior occurs.
6. Describe alternative functional assessment perspectives for each misbelief, and explain why they are productive explanations of why challenging behavior occurs.
7. Summarize the functional assessment perspectives regarding the causes of behavior and strategies to address challenging behavior.
Chapter 1

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS
Challenging Behavior
Functional Assessment
Impact of Challenging Behavior
Incidence of Challenging Behavior
Negative Effects of Challenging Behavior
Challenging Behavior Produces a Desirable Outcome
Current Supports of Challenging Behavior
Environmental Variables
Faulty Explanations
Functional Assessment Perspective
Misbeliefs

This chapter is divided into two sections that address the importance of identifying challenging behavior and why it occurs. The first section provides an overview of how to define challenging behavior and determine if that behavior warrants functional assessment and intervention. It also discusses the incidence of challenging behavior among individuals with disabilities and among school-age students with and without disabilities and the negative effects of challenging behavior on students, peers, educators, and families. This section ends with an overview of the federal special education legislation the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, and the requirements related to challenging behavior for students with disabilities. This second section of this chapter describes common misbeliefs concerning the causes of challenging behavior and alternative functional assessment perspectives regarding why challenging behavior occurs and strategies to address it.

SECTION ONE: IDENTIFYING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND ITS NEGATIVE EFFECTS

IDENTIFYING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND DETERMINING IF IT SHOULD BE CHANGED

One of the first decisions the educational team will need to make is whether a student’s behavior should be identified as challenging and whether that behavior requires functional assessment and intervention. At least two perspectives should be considered when dealing with challenging behavior. The first is that of the student who is engaging in the behavior. The team should recognize that, even if the behavior is identified as challenging, for the student the behavior is in fact very functional and effective; it produces an outcome that is desirable to the student or that meets the needs of the student (Carr, Langdon, & Yarbrough, 1999; Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993; Weiss & Knoster, 2008). For example, when 12-year-old Ronald uses profanity, his peers look at him and laugh; his profanity produces desired attention from peers. Likewise, when 16-year-old Sarah rips her math worksheet, she is sent to the principal’s office. Sarah’s behavior of destroying her worksheet results in her leaving the math instructional period and not having to complete the worksheet. The challenging behaviors that Ronald and Sarah exhibit produce desirable outcomes for each of them. Ronald receives peer attention, and Sarah escapes or delays math work. When we consider the impact of the behaviors for each student (i.e., consider the students’ perspectives), the behaviors are very logical and very effective (O’Neill, Horner, Albin, Storey, & Sprague, 1990; O’Neill et al., 1997). Unfortunately, many of the behaviors that produce desirable
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior

outcomes for students such as Ronald and Sarah are identified as challenging behaviors by educators, peers, and family members. This leads to the second perspective that we should consider when identifying challenging behavior: that of those individuals who identify the behavior as challenging.

When we say that a student engages in appropriate behavior, we usually mean that the student’s behavior is acceptable and conforms to our expectations or to the requirements of the setting. When we say that a student engages in challenging behavior, we usually mean that the student’s behavior does not conform to our expectations or to the requirements of the setting and that we would like his or her behavior to change. From our perspective, the behavior is challenging and should be changed. One of the problems with this second perspective is that there is considerable variability across individuals’ perspectives and different settings concerning which behaviors to identify as appropriate and which to identify as challenging (Sanchez Fowler, Banks, Anhalt, Hinrichs Der, & Kalis, 2008). Therefore, some guidelines might help us identify when a behavior is challenging and should be changed.

Definition of Challenging Behavior

When we identify behavior as challenging, we should consider issues that directly affect the student as well as peers, adults, and family members. Three factors are important to examine when identifying challenging behavior: learning, social relationships, and safety. These factors are included in our definition of challenging behavior. We define challenging behavior as behavior that (a) interferes with the student’s learning or the learning of other individuals, (b) hinders social-emotional development and positive social interactions and relationships, or (c) harms the student, peers, adults, or family members (Bailey & Wolery, 1992; Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, & Marsh, 2008; Muscott et al., 2008).

In the fields of special education, applied behavior analysis, and developmental disabilities, many terms are commonly used to identify the behavior that we wish to change. These include inappropriate behavior, maladaptive behavior, interfering behavior, misbehavior, and aberrant behavior. We use the term challenging behavior because we find it descriptive. Challenging behavior presents a challenge to learning and development. This relates back to our definition of challenging behavior and consideration of the impact of that behavior on the student and others in the classroom. Behavior that serves as a barrier to optimal learning and development or that may harm the student or others may be identified as challenging.

Students may engage in many types of challenging behavior, ranging from mild to severe. Severe challenging behaviors often are very disruptive, destructive, or dangerous. Severe challenging behaviors also often result in harm to the student or to other individuals. This may include behaviors such as throwing chairs, self-injurious behavior, hitting peers, throwing a tantrum, and running from the classroom. Severe challenging behaviors are fairly easy to identify and often are the behaviors that result in referral for intervention, change of placement, suspension, and expulsion (Crimmins, Farrell, Smith, & Bailey, 2007). In addition to considering severity as a means of identifying challenging behavior, we also often focus on the type of behavior employed, such as aggression. Or we focus on the topography or the physical features of behavior (e.g., hitting or kicking) (Berkson & Tupa, 2000; Derby et al., 2000; Horner, Carr, Strain, Todd, & Reed, 2002; Neilsen, Olive, Donovan, & McEvoy, 1998). The danger in doing this is that we may ignore the more mild challenging behaviors that, although they are not disruptive or dangerous, also have a detrimental effect on learning and development.
Mild and moderate challenging behaviors can be more difficult to identify or may be overlooked because they may not be unduly destructive, disruptive, dangerous, or harmful. Mild and moderate challenging behaviors may include behaviors such as sleeping, refusing to participate, inattentiveness or being off task, tardiness, refusing to complete worksheets or homework, and passive noncompliance. Mild and moderate behaviors such as these may not always result in a referral for intervention, yet they also can interfere with learning, social development, and relationships. For example, Brown and Mirenda (2006) conducted a study to reduce prompt dependent behavior of a student with autism. They identified prompt-dependent behavior as failure to (a) initiate work and (b) conduct a work completion routine within an acceptable period of time. The authors indicated that while prompt-dependent behavior might not be considered a severe challenging behavior, for this student, the behavior had “severely limited both his independence and his ability to fully participate in school activities for years” (p. 162). In this example, a relatively mild behavior greatly interfered with the student’s learning. Thus, it meets our definition of challenging behavior.

Examine the Impact of Behavior on the Student and Other Individuals

A more useful strategy to use when determining whether a behavior is challenging is to examine the impact of the behavior on the student and other individuals. Here we refer to our definition of challenging behavior. Behaviors that harm other individuals or the student or that interfere with learning and social-emotional development and relationships should be identified as challenging behaviors, regardless of the severity of the behavior. For example, a student who is throwing chairs in the classroom clearly is not learning appropriate behavior or academic skills and may harm other individuals. Obviously, this severe challenging behavior must be addressed. Consider, however, a student who wanders about the classroom during seatwork activities. This student, like the student who throws chairs, also is not learning appropriate behavior or academic skills and may distract other students. Behaviors such as this that fall within the mild end of the continuum also must be addressed to maximize this student’s and other students’ learning opportunities. It is our responsibility as educators to identify and address challenging behaviors across the continuum (mild–moderate–severe) that have a negative impact on the student and on others.

Another variable to consider in identifying behavior as challenging is the frequency of behavior. Many infrequent behaviors, such as yelling, pushing, tardiness, or tantrums, may not need to be addressed through functional assessment and behavior management plans (Alberto & Troutman, 1999, 2013). For instance, all students occasionally have bad days in which they may refuse to participate or they yell at their peers. In these types of situations, you can probably address the student’s behavior using strategies that are already part of your classroom management tactics (e.g., remind the student to use her words instead of having a tantrum or hitting, or redirect the student’s behavior). However, behaviors that occur frequently (e.g., Naomi hits peers several times each day) or behaviors that occur infrequently but predictably (e.g., Scott is disruptive and aggressive on the Monday following his monthly visit to his father in jail) should be addressed through functional assessment—provided they are behaviors that interfere with learning and social relationships or that harm the student or other individuals.
Educators must also consider the developmental or age appropriateness of the student's behavior (Heineman, Childs, & Seray, 2006). Many mild and moderate behaviors that are appropriate for the student's age probably should not be considered challenging behaviors that warrant functional assessment. The majority of these behaviors will change through learning experiences and maturation. For example, most infants engage in behaviors such as mild head banging and body rocking during the first year or two of life. These behaviors naturally decrease across time and are absent in most children by age 3 (Berkson & Tupa, 2000). These behaviors are not considered challenging in very young children. Likewise, it is developmentally appropriate for a 3-year-old child to take toys from peers and to refuse to share with peers or for a 5-year-old child to solve peer disagreements through aggression. However, if a 7-year-old engages in head banging during morning circle, a 10-year-old consistently experiences problems with sharing art materials, or a 15-year-old consistently resolves disagreements through aggression, we should consider the behavior of these students to be challenging and conduct a functional assessment to develop interventions to address their behaviors.

Finally, before identifying a behavior as challenging, we need to think about behaviors that are annoying or that “just drive us crazy.” This is a difficult issue. Great variability is seen in the tolerance of behavior across educators, across subject-specific environments (e.g., science versus physical education), and across family members (Strain & Hemmeter, 1997). One educator may identify a behavior as acceptable, whereas another identifies it as challenging. Consider the following example. During the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meeting, Ms. Crutchfield, the language arts teacher, requests behavioral consultation to deal with Lloyd's poor seatwork behavior. She says that during individual work activities, Lloyd sits at his desk on one leg, moves his body constantly in his seat, waves his pencil in the air, and wiggles his fingers. Even though Lloyd finishes his work on time and gets good grades, Ms. Crutchfield says that this behavior is “driving her crazy.” She requires students to sit still when they work. She thinks that Lloyd’s behavior is disrespectful, and she defines his behavior as challenging. Mr. Boyd, the science teacher, has a different opinion. He is not bothered by Lloyd’s behavior and does not think it should be addressed. In fact, he thinks Lloyd is one of the best-behaved students in his class.

In this example, it is helpful to return to our definition of challenging behavior. Sitting on one leg, moving in his seat, and wiggling his fingers does not interfere with Lloyd’s learning. In fact, as is true for many students, movement may facilitate learning for Lloyd (Colby Trott, Laurel, & Windeck, 1993; Murray-Slutsky & Paris, 2005). Lloyd’s behavior also is not disruptive to the other students. The other students are used to Lloyd doing this and are not distracted by his behavior; his behavior does not interfere with their learning. In this example, Lloyd’s behavior should not be considered a challenging behavior and does not warrant intervention, even though Ms. Crutchfield finds it annoying. In fact, if we were to implement interventions to restrict Lloyd’s movement, we might reduce his ability to learn during seatwork time.

Now consider the case of Karl and his family. Three-year-old Karl frequently pokes his teenage sister, Jody, with his fork during dinner. When he does this, Jody yells and screams at him. In a loud voice, Ron, the father, tells Jody to stop yelling at her brother and tells Karl to stop poking his sister. Betsy, the children’s stepmother, tells Ron not to shout at the children. Ron tells Betsy that he will discipline his children as he sees fit. Meanwhile, Karl continues to poke Jody and
Chapter 1

TABLE 1–1
Questions to consider before identifying behavior as challenging

1. Does the behavior interfere with the student’s learning?
2. Does the behavior interfere with other students’ learning?
3. Does the behavior interfere with or impede social relationships?
4. Does the behavior have a negative impact on the student’s self-esteem?
5. Is the behavior harmful or dangerous to the student?
6. Is the behavior harmful or dangerous to other individuals?
7. Does the behavior occur frequently or infrequently?
8. Is the behavior age appropriate?

Jody continues to yell at Karl. Eventually Ron sends Jody to her room and scolds Karl. None of the family members have finished their dinner. Karl’s behavior fits within our definition of challenging behavior. Although Karl is not really harming Jody by poking her with his fork, his behavior disrupts dinner night after night and reduces opportunities for positive social interactions between all family members. Karl’s behavior is very annoying to his sister, father, and stepmother. His behavior is considered challenging because of the negative impact on social relationships. Karl’s challenging behavior should be, and can easily be, addressed through functional assessment.

For example, assessment indicated that Karl poked his sister because this resulted in attention from his sister and his parents. When Karl ate quietly, he received little to no attention from his family. This assessment led to an intervention in which Jody, Ron, and Betsy turned away from Karl when he poked Jody with his fork. They did not make eye contact with Karl nor talk to him when they were turned away from him. However, when Karl ate appropriately or engaged in appropriate behavior during dinner, his family interacted with him frequently. Karl’s fork-poking behavior decreased to zero after 3 days of intervention.

In summary, the determination that behavior is challenging and must be changed should not be made arbitrarily. As educators, we must consider the impact of behavior on the student and others in terms of safety, social relationships, and learning. Table 1–1 provides a list of questions that should be considered when deciding if a behavior should be identified as challenging and if functional assessment is warranted.

After identifying a behavior as challenging, it is important to address that behavior to decrease its detrimental impact on the student and other individuals and to reduce the prevalence of challenging behavior within school settings. We next discuss the incidence of challenging behavior and its negative effects on all involved.

INCIDENCE OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Researchers have documented the prevalence and incidence of challenging behaviors among individuals with disabilities for many years. They have reported that individuals with disabilities of all ages exhibit challenging behaviors at a higher rate and intensity than do typically developing individuals. However, considerable variability exists across studies based on the characteristics of the population reviewed (e.g., age, severity, and type of disability), the behaviors examined (e.g., self-abuse, noncompliance, or off-task behaviors), and the settings selected for study (e.g., clinics, schools, and institutions) (Berkson & Tupa, 2000; Hemmeter,
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior

Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2007; Horner et al., 2002; Kern & Dunlap, 1999). For example, prevalence studies have indicated that in the United States 14% to 38% of individuals with disabilities engage in destructive or aggressive behaviors such as hitting, throwing furniture, or biting; 40% to 60% engage in stereotypical behaviors such as hand flapping, repetitive vocalizations, or rocking; 6% to 40% engage in self-abusive behaviors such as head banging, and eye gouging; 47% of individuals living in institutions exhibit severe behavior problems; and an estimated 25,000 individuals with disabilities exhibit severe forms of self-injurious challenging behavior (Borthwick, Meyers, & Eyman, 1981; Borthwick-Duffy, Eyman, & White, 1987; Corbett & Campbell, 1981; Fidura, Lindsey, & Walker, 1987; Griffen, Williams, Stark, Altmeyer, & Mason, 1986; Hill & Bruniks, 1984; Mace & Mauk, 1999; Oliver, Murphy, & Corbett, 1987; Paisey, Whitney, & Hislop, 1990; Repp & Barton, 1980; Sprague & Horner, 1999). One study reported that estimates of challenging behavior increased from a low of 1% for infants and toddlers to a high of 50% to 70% for teenage students (Berkson, McQuiston, Jacobson, Eyman, & Borthwick, 1985). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2001) estimated that 12% to 16% of children from 0 to 3 years of age exhibit challenging behaviors, and other studies have estimated rates of challenging behavior during early childhood from 10% to 18% (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000; Campbell, 2002).

The higher prevalence and incidence of challenging behavior for individuals with disabilities also has been documented for school-age students (Benner, Beaudoin, Chen, Davis, & Ralston, 2010; Kern & Dunlap, 1999; McGee & Daly, 1999; Shores, Wehby, & Jack, 1999; Tobin & Sugai, 1999; Zirpoli, 2012), and there is some evidence that the incidence of challenging behavior is increasing (Franzen & Kamps, 2008). Although students with disabilities are at greater risk for exhibiting challenging behavior, it is not just a special education problem (Crimmins et al., 2007). In fact, the majority of violent acts in schools are not committed by students who receive special education services (Council for Exceptional Children, 1999). Brandenberg, Friedman, and Silver (1990) estimated that 14% to 20% of typically developing students exhibit challenging behavior. Other estimates of the prevalence of challenging behavior for typically developing school-age students range from 2% to 30% (Guevremont, 1991; Reichle et al., 1996; Rhode, Jenson, & Reavis, 1993, 2010; Walker & Bullis, 1991). Children and youth are engaging in violent behaviors at younger and younger ages (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). In one school district with which the authors are affiliated, 26% of the yearly referrals for behavioral intervention were for typically developing students attending general education classrooms. Rhode and her colleagues (1993) stated that educators in general education classes (which include students with or without disabilities) should expect to have a minimum of two students per classroom per year who exhibit frequent challenging behavior and that 2% to 5% of the students in classrooms will exhibit challenging behavior (Rhode et al., 2010).

Students with and without disabilities display challenging behavior in school settings. Challenging behaviors occur across all grade levels (beginning with preschool) and types of classrooms (general and special education classrooms) (GiIliam, 2005; Rhode et al., 2010). They also occur across gender and all ability levels (gifted to severe disabilities), socioeconomic status (low to high income), and family demographics (e.g., age of parents, number of parents, ability level of parents, etc.) (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Lucyshyn, Dunlap, & Albin, 2002; Repp, 1999; Rhode et al., 2010; Walker & Walker, 1991).

Many educators have a low tolerance for challenging behavior and have insufficient training in its prevention and remediation (Cangelosi, 1993; Crimmins...
et al., 2007; Rhode, Jenson, & Morgan, 2009). Some educators feel that their efforts to address challenging behavior will not be successful or they are skeptical about the possibility of change and the “latest fad in behavior strategies” (Blair, Umbreit, & Bos, 1999; Soodak & Podell, 1993). As a result they often resort to intensive punishment procedures, manual and chemical restraints, and referral for more restrictive placement (Kern, Childs, Dunlap, Clarke, & Falk, 1994; Kurtz et al., 2003; Rhode et al., 2010; Schloss, Miller, Sedlacek, & White, 1983; Scott et al., 2005; Strain & Hemmeter, 1997; Walker et al., 1995). The most frequent reason cited for referral for special education services, behavioral interventions, and more restrictive placement (in both schools and homes) is challenging behavior (Carta et al., 1994; Soodak & Podell, 1993; Sprague & Horner, 1999).

General educators and special educators, as well as other members of the educational team, should have the skills necessary to prevent and remediate the challenging behavior of all students. Special education and general education teachers identify challenging behavior as one of their primary sources of stress and as a critical factor that influences decisions to leave the teaching profession (Hemmeter et al., 2007; Reynaud, 1999; Rhode et al., 1993, 2010). The need for educators who have the skills necessary to address challenging behavior is recognized by administrators and educators who have identified challenging behavior within school-based settings as a priority area for training and in-class consultation (Levine, 2006; Stephenson, Linfoot, & Martin, 2000; Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, & Collins, 2010). Meeting this need is critical if we are to reduce the prevalence of challenging behavior and decrease its negative effects on those students who engage in challenging behavior and on other individuals within school settings.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Challenging behavior can produce both short-term and long-term negative outcomes for the students who engage in it. Challenging behavior also often has corresponding negative effects on peers, educators, and family members.

Students who exhibit challenging behavior often do not obtain maximum or optimal benefits from educational placements (Crimmins et al., 2007; Rhode et al., 2010; Will, 1984). This is because challenging behavior often is incompatible with engagement and academic learning. Students often cannot engage in appropriate behavior and challenging behaviors simultaneously (Paisey et al., 1990; Polsgrove & Reith, 1983; Repp & Karsh, 1990; Scheuermann & Hall, 2012). For example, throwing spitballs is incompatible with taking a test or copying lecture notes; throwing a tantrum is incompatible with listening to a story. The student who is throwing spitballs or who is displaying a tantrum is not benefiting from his or her educational setting. Likewise, students exhibiting challenging behavior also miss learning opportunities when they are not in the classroom. Students in self-contained special education classes, especially those with social-emotional disorders, who exhibit challenging behavior have been expelled or suspended at higher rates than students in general education (Tobin & Sugai, 1999). Unexcused absences from school range from 1% to 22% per year (Guevremont, 1991). Rhode and others (2010) estimated that as many as 65% of students with severe and frequent challenging behavior drop out of high school. Clearly students who drop out of school, who are truant or absent, or who are expelled and suspended also are not obtaining maximal benefits from their educational setting.

In addition to not benefiting from the educational environment, students who exhibit challenging behavior often are avoided or rejected by peers (Abrams &
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior

Segal, 1998; Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2005; Kurtz et al., 2003; Walker, 1998; Wehby, Symons, & Shores, 1995). As a result they have fewer opportunities to learn from peers during group work and leisure activities (e.g., recess, lunch). Lost opportunities for learning also occur when interventions result in exclusion from classroom activities, such as when students are placed in time-out, sent to the principal’s office, or physically restrained (Buschbacher & Fox, 2003; Horner et al., 2002; Kern, Childs, et al., 1994; McGee & Daly, 1999; Repp & Karsh, 1990).

Our goal as educators is to provide quality education to all students. This goal is compromised when challenging behavior disrupts or prevents learning within the classroom (Conroy et al., 2008; Guardino & Fullerton, 2010; Reynaud, 1999). Peers may have decreased opportunities for learning if (a) a student’s challenging behavior is disruptive or distracting, (b) they reciprocate with aggression or other forms of challenging behavior (e.g., yelling at or hitting the student who displayed challenging behavior), or (c) they imitate the challenging behavior that they observe. For example, Peter uses a superhero’s voice when asked to read a passage from the textbook. As he begins to read, the other students laugh instead of listening to the reading and they also use the superhero’s voice when they are called on to read. Peter’s challenging behavior interferes with reading practice for him and also has collateral negative effects on peers as they attend to him instead of the lesson and when they imitate his challenging behavior.

In school settings, challenging behavior often requires excessive time and effort for educators as they react to challenging behavior when it occurs and as they develop and implement interventions to remediate well-established challenging behavior. This results in decreased time and effort devoted to teaching academic skills and promoting appropriate behavior for all students (Chandler, Dahlquist, Repp, & Feltz, 1999; Conroy et al., 2008; Crimmins et al., 2007; Hains, Fowler, & Chandler, 1988; McGee & Daly, 1999; Murphy, Theodore, Aloisio, Alric-Edwards, & Hughes, 2007; Polsgrove & Reith, 1983). Students with challenging behavior often have poor relationships with educators who avoid, blame, or are afraid of the student. Teachers interact less often with students who engage in challenging behavior and spend less time focused on academic lessons when students are engaged in challenging behavior (Carr, Taylor, & Robinson, 1991; Rhode et al., 2010).

Challenging behavior also may result in negative outcomes for students and their families (Boulware, Schwartz, & McBride, 1999; Muscott et al., 2008; Timm, 1993). Challenging behavior often interferes with the development of positive social relationships and interactions with family members. Parents, siblings, and caregivers may avoid or reject the child with challenging behavior, reciprocate with aggression or aversive interactions, employ punishment procedures, place the child on medications to control challenging behavior, or refer the child for more restrictive or less naturalistic living arrangements such as foster care and institutionalization (Munk & Karsh, 1999; Soodak & Podell, 1993). This is especially probable when self-injurious and aggressive behaviors physically harm the child and others through bleeding, bruising, tissue damage, and so on (Kurtz et al., 2003; Repp & Karsh, 1990).

The effects of challenging behavior can be lifelong. Without intervention, challenging behavior usually does not improve, nor does it disappear with age (Chen & Weikert, 2008; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Research has indicated that adolescents identified as having emotional disturbance and challenging behaviors often have long histories of challenging behavior, some as early as preschool (e.g., Campbell, 1995, 2002; Campbell & Ewing, 1990). Berg and Sasso
(1993) estimated that children who were referred to their clinic for behavioral interventions had engaged in challenging behavior for an average of 10 years prior to referral. Challenging behavior that is not addressed, including that observed in young children, typically will become more severe and frequent with age (Berkson et al., 1985; Horner et al., 2002; Kern & Dunlap, 1999; McClure, 2007; Reid & Patterson, 1991; Tillery et al., 2010). For example, the preschooler who throws toys and hits his mother may become the teenager who throws his desk out the window and attacks his teacher. Challenging behavior also may continue into and have a negative effect on adulthood. Oppositional, defiant, and aggressive child behaviors are strong predictors of subsequent criminal behavior and recidivism, substance abuse, unemployment, referral to state institutions, and psychiatric disorder diagnosis (Mehas et al., 1998; Reid & Patterson, 1991).

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

The importance of identifying and addressing challenging behavior and doing so in a proactive manner is specifically addressed through federal and state laws and regulations. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal law that addresses the education of students with disabilities from 0 to 21 years of age, was initially passed in 1975 (then titled the Education for All Handicapped Act). This law identifies the educational rights of students with disabilities and their families and describes the responsibilities and requirements of states in providing special education services. Federal laws, such as IDEA, are scheduled for reauthorization every 5 years, although it may take several years for reauthorization to be finalized. During reauthorization, Congress must determine and approve the level of funding that states will receive to implement the law, and it has the opportunity to make changes to the law (Chandler & Loncola, 2008). In 2004 the name of the law was changed to reflect person-first language. Person-first language is based on the philosophy that individuals with disabilities are not defined by their disabilities (Chandler, Miller Young, & Cirincione Ulezi, 2011). We refer to the person first and the disability second, and we refer to the disability only if it is relevant (Snow, 2009). So we would say “a student with Down syndrome, not “a Down syndrome student.” Person-first language also applies when referring to groups of individuals. So you should say, “people with disabilities,” not “the disabled.” The revised name to the federal law emphasized person-first language: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In 1997 Congress added specific provisions related to challenging behavior and discipline for students who receive special education services (Armstrong & Kauffman, 1999; Bateman & Linden, 1998; Egnor, 2003; Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998; Maloney, 1997; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1997; Turnbull & Cilley, 1999; Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wilcox, 2002). These disciplinary provisions were amended in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).

The 2004 IDEIA promotes a proactive approach to addressing challenging behavior that interferes with the student’s learning or the learning of other students. The law encourages teams to add goals and positive behavioral intervention strategies and supports to address challenging behavior to the child’s Individualized Education Plan (Bradley, 2007). It identifies functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and positive behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) as tools for the team to use as they develop plans to address a student’s challenging behavior (Ingram, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 2005). The 2004 amendments also describe procedures to be followed when a student engages in severe challenging behavior, criminal behavior, or behavior...
that violates the school’s code of conduct leading to possible suspension, expulsion, and/or change of placement (McCarthy & Soodak, 2007). It also requires parent notification of their procedural rights, including the opportunity to participate in meetings in which identification, evaluation, free and appropriate education, educational placement, disciplinary actions, and behavioral interventions are discussed (Friend & Bursuck, 2012).

When a student violates the school’s code of conduct, school personnel may remove that student from his or her current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting or other setting, or they may suspend the student for not more than 10 consecutive school days. The law points out that this can be done only to the extent that the same procedures are used with children without disabilities and that if educational services are not provided to students without disabilities who are similarly removed, then they need not be provided for students with disabilities (Bradley, 2007; Council for Exceptional Children, 2004, 2006).

Removal from the current placement for more than 10 consecutive school days is considered a change in placement. The student’s IEP team also can determine on a case-by-case basis whether multiple removals during the school year constitute a change of placement. If the team determines that there is a change in placement, the school must provide educational services and supports to allow the student to participate in the general education curriculum and make progress on his or her IEP goals (Zirpoli, 2008, 2012). In addition, if appropriate, the school must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement behavior intervention plans to address the student’s challenging behavior. If the team decided that multiple removals do not constitute a change in placement, the team determines the extent to which education and FBA/BIP services are needed.

Another requirement of the IEP team when there has been a change of placement is to conduct a manifestation determination within 10 days of the decision to change the student’s placement. Manifestation determination is an evaluation by a team to determine (a) if there is a relationship or link between the student’s behavior and his or her disability or (b) if the challenging behavior was a direct result of the school’s failure to implement, or adequately implement, the student’s IEP (Friend & Bursuck, 2012). McCarthy and Soodak (2007) note that manifestation determination outcomes can create tension as schools try to balance the rights of students with disabilities and the need to provide safe schools. They recommend that manifestation determinations should be made “by a collaborative team of trained teachers, parents, and school and district administrators” (p. 472). In conducting the manifestation determination, the team may review the student’s file, including the IEP and assessment evaluations, classroom observations, and other relevant information provided by members of the team. If the team determines that the student’s behavior was a manifestation of the child’s disability, they must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavior intervention plan to address the challenging behavior. They also must return the student to his or her original placement unless the team, including parents, agrees that a change of placement is appropriate as part of the behavior intervention plan (Bradley, 2007; Zirpoli, 2008, 2012). If a behavior intervention plan is already in place, the team must review it and make necessary adaptations to address the student’s behavior.

For example, Walter is a kindergartener who has autism and is enrolled in an inclusive classroom. Walter engages in loud, disruptive tantrums and becomes aggressive, often hurting peers and adults in his classroom. He has been moved to an interim alternative educational placement for more than 10 days. As a result, the team meets to conduct a manifestation determination. Review of his IEP, teacher
and family information, and classroom observations indicate that most of Walter’s tantrums occur when there are unplanned changes in the classroom environment or daily schedule, such as fire drills, rearrangement of classroom furniture, a substitute teacher, or changes in the order of activities. The team understands that one of the characteristics of many children with autism is that they prefer predictable environments and schedules. As a result, the team determines that there is a link between Walter’s disability and his challenging behavior. They complete a functional assessment and develop a positive behavior intervention plan to help Walter use appropriate alternative behaviors when he is upset. In addition, the team identifies strategies that they can use to reduce unplanned changes and strategies to prepare Walter for unplanned changes within the classroom setting and schedule.

If the team determines that the challenging behavior was not a manifestation of the disability, they can implement disciplinary procedures that are established for students without disabilities. However, they must continue to provide educational services to allow the student to participate in the general education curriculum and make progress on IEP goals. The team also may conduct an FBA and implement a BIP to address the challenging behavior.

Finally, school personnel can consider unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change of placement is appropriate for a student who violates the school’s code of conduct. They also can move a student to an alternate interim setting for not more than 45 school days without conducting a manifestation determination if the student carries or possesses a weapon; knowingly possesses, uses, or sells illegal drugs; or has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another individual while at school, on school premises, or at school functions (Council for Exceptional Children, 2004, 2006).

SECTION TWO: IDENTIFYING WHY CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR OCCURS

After we identify a behavior as challenging, we then need to address the challenging behavior to reduce its adverse effects on the students and other individuals and to prevent its future occurrence. The first step in addressing challenging behavior is to identify why the behavior occurs. This section discusses many of the myths or misguided beliefs about why challenging behavior occurs and provides alternative explanations regarding the causes of challenging behavior.

The question “Why does challenging behavior occur?” is one that educators and parents often seek, and should seek, to answer. This should be the first step in functional assessment (Repp, 1999). Unfortunately the answers to this question or the explanations that we provide often are based on myths or misguided beliefs regarding the causes of behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Skinner, 1953, 1971; Strain & Hemmeter, 1997; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1991; Zuni & McDougall, 2004). These faulty explanations are not productive and do not help us identify why the challenging behavior occurs. Instead, they often encourage us to blame someone or something for causing the challenging behavior instead of identifying strategies to address it. Faulty explanations do not help us identify the current supports for challenging behavior (i.e., variables that trigger and strengthen or maintain challenging behavior), and they seldom lead to effective positive intervention strategies. This is because our beliefs about why behavior occurs determine the interventions we select (Kauffman, Mostert, Trent, & Hallahan, 1993; Walker & Shea, 1999). If our
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior

1. Challenging behavior occurs because of the child’s personality (i.e., the bad child).
2. Challenging behavior is caused by the disability.
3. Challenging behavior is caused by the child’s family and their poor parenting and discipline practices.
4. Challenging behavior occurs because of poor home circumstances (i.e., the bad home situation).
5. Challenging behavior is a result of previous trauma or bad experiences.

In our experience, the most common misbeliefs about the causes of challenging behavior can be divided into the following categories: (a) the bad child, (b) the disability, (c) the bad family or poor parenting and discipline practices, (d) the bad home situation, and (e) previous trauma or bad experiences. We will discuss each of these misguided beliefs or faulty explanations, identify why each belief is not helpful and indeed may be harmful, and present an alternative behavioral perspective about why challenging behavior occurs. Tables 1–2 and 1–3 provide a summary of faulty explanations and alternative functional assessment perspectives regarding challenging behavior and strategies to address challenging behavior.

THE BAD CHILD

Sometimes when a student engages in challenging behavior, we assume he or she is doing the behavior on purpose (i.e., that the student deliberately chooses to engage in challenging behavior), that the challenging behavior is the student’s fault, or that the student is the problem (Adams, 2011; Council for Exceptional Children, 1999; Zuni & McDougall, 2004). When we make this assumption, we believe that the problem resides within the (bad) child (Alberto & Troutman, 1999, 2013; Cangelosi, 1993; Epstein & Skinner, 1982; Skinner, 1989; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1991; Walker & Shea, 1999). You may hear teachers or parents who believe this explanation make statements such as “She does it just to make me mad,” “She could make a different choice if she wanted to,” “He’s been this way all his life; he’s got a mean streak,” or “It’s just part of his personality.”

TABLE 1–3
Functional assessment perspectives regarding the causes of challenging behavior and strategies to address challenging behavior

1. The student’s behavior is challenging (not the student).
2. Challenging behavior produces a desired outcome for the student.
3. Challenging behavior can be changed.
4. The most important place to address challenging behavior is the classroom or environments in which it occurs.
5. Challenging behavior can be addressed by changing variables within the current environment that trigger and support the behavior.
This myth or explanation assumes that the child is bad or that the child has a bad personality trait; in other words, something within the student is the cause of the challenging behavior (Powers & Osborne, 1975). In some cases, blaming the student allows us to be angry with the student, to retaliate against the student, or to ignore the student. In other cases, when we assume that the student is inherently bad or has a bad personality trait, we will not even try to address the student’s challenging behavior because “You cannot change a bad child or a child’s personality.” Or we may employ intensive punishment techniques in an attempt to make the student stop the behavior. We also may seek to remove the student from our classroom (i.e., to a more restrictive placement), again because of the belief that we cannot change a bad student or his or her personality or because we believe that the student is deliberately choosing to engage in challenging behavior (Kern, Childs, et al., 1994; Soodak & Podell, 1993; Sprague & Horner, 1999; Strain & Hemmeter, 1997). None of these outcomes is desirable or productive. A functional assessment perspective would argue that the student is not inherently bad and that there is no reason to blame the student or the student’s personality. Rather, the student’s behavior is challenging and challenging behavior can be changed by altering the environmental variables that support it.

Consider the example of Henry, who often slept or stared out the window when students were asked to complete math worksheets and never completed his math homework. Henry’s teacher, Mr. Maxie, described him as a lazy student (i.e., he had a lazy personality trait) and said that if Henry was too lazy to do his work, then he could just fail the class. Mr. Maxie attributed Henry’s challenging behavior to his personality and gave up on him. Yet observations of Henry in other subjects and during recess and after school showed a student who played football, talked in class, joked with peers, and so forth. In other words, Henry was very active in some situations. In this example it is not helpful to attribute Henry’s math-related behavior to a “lazy” personality. He sometimes displayed the behaviors that Mr. Maxie termed “lazy,” but he displayed those behaviors in only certain situations. Therefore, he does not have a lazy personality. Rather, he exhibits challenging behavior when instructed to complete math assignments.

Using the functional assessment perspective, our first step would be to identify the behaviors that led Mr. Maxie to describe Henry as lazy, such as sleeping, staring, and not completing math homework. Then we would directly address those behaviors, not his personality. Through functional assessment, we would identify the triggers and supports for his challenging behaviors and use that information to develop interventions to change those behaviors. For example, we might find through conversations with Henry and his family that Henry stays up late each night, which accounts for his fatigue during math (the first period of the day). We also find that when asked, Henry tells his parents that he does not have homework. Observations of Henry in the classroom might indicate that Henry is delayed in math skills and that he does not complete worksheets that are too difficult for him to do. This information allows us to develop an intervention that addresses the real reasons for Henry’s challenging behaviors. For example, we might develop a homework notebook that is signed daily by the teacher and Henry’s parents. Or like some schools, we might post homework assignments on the school’s website. Henry’s parents also could impose a sleep schedule so Henry goes to bed at a reasonable time. In school, Mr. Maxie could provide assistance during math or pair Henry with a peer so Henry is able to complete the activity successfully. Intervention strategies such as these directly address Henry’s
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior

challenging behaviors—sleeping, staring, and incomplete homework assignments. Nothing is gained by referring to his personality as the cause of his challenging behaviors.

THE DISABILITY

Students who have disabilities are at high risk for also exhibiting challenging behavior. When this happens, we often assume that the challenging behavior occurs because of the disability (Powers & Osborne, 1975). In other words, we make the assumption that the challenging behavior is a characteristic of the disability or that it is directly caused by the disability. We frequently attribute challenging behavior to disabilities such as autism, social-emotional or behavior disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or learning disabilities. For example, Hank repeatedly runs in the room and often knocks over the projects of his peers. When Hank’s teacher was asked to speculate why he did this, she said it was because he had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The disability explanation for the cause of challenging behavior, just like the bad child explanation, is not useful. If we attribute challenging behavior to a disability or a syndrome, we will have little reason to intervene because we cannot change the fact that the student has a particular disability (Tillery et al., 2010). Individuals who attribute challenging behavior to a disability assume that behavior cannot be changed, so they often do not attempt to address challenging behavior, thus allowing it to continue (Blair et al., 1999).

A functional assessment perspective would assume that the disability does not cause the challenging behavior. Even though a particular disability may be identified, it does not follow that any specific form of challenging behavior is a direct result of that disability (Alberto & Troutman, 1999, 2013).* Rather, a functional assessment perspective proposes that challenging behavior for students with and without disabilities occurs because it produces a desirable outcome for the student. In Hank’s case, running around the room may provide movement and knocking over peer projects may result in stimulating attention from peers or teachers. We have no reason to assume that ADHD caused him to run around the room and knock over peers’ projects; in other words, we should not attribute his challenging behavior to his disability. This does not mean, however, that knowing that a student has a disability is not important. In some cases it can be very helpful.

When dealing with challenging behavior, knowledge that a child has a disability is relevant only to the extent that it allows us to identify characteristics associated with the disability. Knowing that a student has a particular disability does not tell you how to address that student’s challenging behavior (Martin & Pear, 1999, 2011). Indeed, Horner and others (2002) reported that the diagnosis is not related to the particular form of behavior exhibited, the type of intervention strategies selected, or the success of intervention. However, knowing that a student has a particular disability may help us understand variables that will trigger and maintain challenging behavior. For example, if we know that Hank has ADHD, then we know that, like many students with ADHD, he may need increased sensory input through movement, touch, vocalizations, and so forth. How he obtains that increased sensory input, however, is not part of his disability. The topography of his challenging behavior is relevant only to the extent that it allows us to identify characteristics associated with his disability. This does not mean, however, that knowing that a student has a particular disability is not important. In some cases it can be very helpful.

* A small number of syndromes are specifically associated with self-injurious behavior or obsessions or compulsions, such as Leach-Nyhan, Cordelia de Lange, and Riley-Day and obsessive compulsive disorder (Adams, 2011; Shore & Iwata, 1999).
behavior is not caused by his disability. Not all students with ADHD will run in the classroom and knock down peers’ projects. A functional assessment view would assume that Hank could learn other more appropriate means of obtaining sensory input such as taking a note to the principal’s office, moving in his seat like Lloyd in the earlier example, or assisting the teacher during a lesson.

One question that we might ask when we find out that a child has a particular disability is, “What do I know about this disability that may be helpful to consider as we identify why his or her challenging behavior occurs?” For instance, Mr. Gains referred Joey, who has autism, for behavioral intervention because Joey exhibited severe tantrums several times each week. It was helpful for Karen, a behavior specialist on the instructional strategies team, to know that Joey had autism because she knew that children with autism often have problems with changes in schedules or routines. This knowledge guided her initial observations so she examined whether his tantrums were related to unexpected changes in the classroom setting and routines. Karen’s observations during transition did indicate that Joey threw a tantrum every time the class visited the library and gym and when the bus was late. She then developed interventions to teach Joey more appropriate ways to communicate to others his discomfort or apprehension and to alert Joey, when possible, of upcoming changes in the schedule. In this example, it is also important to point out that Joey’s tantrums might easily have occurred for other reasons that have nothing to do with the characteristics often associated with autism. Thus, Karen must do more than simply observe during schedule changes. For example, Karen also found that Joey had a tantrum when asked to do tasks that he disliked and when peers took his toys. In this example, Karen did not assume that autism caused Joey’s tantrums. Rather, she observed Joey when he engaged in challenging behavior, and she identified variables that were the trigger for it.

Knowing that a student has a particular disability can be helpful in guiding our observations, but we need to remember that it is just one piece of information about the student and that it is not the cause of the student’s challenging behavior. Regardless of the diagnostic label or disability, it is the challenging behavior that causes concern, and it is that behavior that needs to be addressed (Martin & Pear, 1999, 2011).

THE BAD FAMILY OR POOR PARENTING AND DISCIPLINE PRACTICES

Another misbelief that many people have about the causes of challenging behavior is that students engage in challenging behavior in schools because their parents (or primary caregivers) have poor parenting skills and do not use effective discipline. In this case, we are blaming challenging behavior on extraneous variables such as the child’s family (McGee & Daly, 1999). This assumption is based on a belief that if the student’s parents were doing a better job at home, then the student would not engage in challenging behavior at school. We have often heard team members exclaim, “Those parents need to set some limits,” or “His parents need to teach him to respect others,” or “No wonder she hits at school; look at her parents, and you know where she learned it.” This attitude causes the team to blame the parents, to be angry with the parents, and to assume that the parents’ behavior must change before the student’s behavior will change. Clearly this is not an effective approach because it does not focus
on the behavior in the classroom setting, and it also allows the challenging behavior to continue.

A functional assessment view would acknowledge that many students do live in dysfunctional homes and have parents with poor parenting skills. In fact, many children have learned challenging behaviors at home and are reinforced for using them by their parents and other family members (Patterson, 1982; Wahler & Dumas, 1986; Wahler & Fox, 1981; Walker & Sylwester, 1998). From a functional assessment perspective, however, the student’s challenging behavior occurs at school because it produces a desirable outcome at school. Regardless of where or how a challenging behavior was initially learned, it would not continue to be exhibited at school if it did not “work” at school (Kazdin, 2008). For example, a student who learned to hit at home through parent example now hits at school because hitting is effective at school.

This does not mean that we should ignore poor parenting or other family-related variables. In fact, family variables can and do affect student behavior, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters. When we can, we should address family variables. For instance, we may provide parenting classes, make referrals for counseling, work with parents to change morning routines, and so on (Wielkiewicz, 1986). Families can be the school’s greatest allies in addressing challenging behavior, but they alone are not the solution to changing it. We also need to address the challenging behavior in the setting in which it occurs, that is, in the classroom, lunchroom, playground, and so forth.

To illustrate this point, consider three potential outcomes of addressing family variables for the student who hits at school. First, we refer the family for counseling and parent education classes. The family refuses these services. The student still hits at school. Or we refer a family for counseling and parent education classes and they begin services. In the meantime, while they are receiving services, the student hits at school. Finally, a student’s family has completed parent education classes. They have stopped using physical punishment at home and now use more positive discipline strategies. The student also stops hitting at home and yet continues to hit at school.

In each of these scenarios, we assume something is wrong with the family and that the family needs to change. We attempt to address the student’s behavior by changing the family’s behavior. One family refuses to change, one is in the process of change, and one has changed. Yet in each example, the student’s behavior continues at school. We should not be surprised by this outcome; the student’s behavior continues at school because it is effective at producing an outcome at school. We also should not be surprised if the student stops hitting at home after the parents have completed their classes and begin to use positive discipline strategies at home while the student continues to hit at school. Students learn to behave differently in different situations (Zirpoli, 2005, 2012; Zirpoli & Melloy, 2001). Even if hitting is no longer effective at home, we must assume that it still is effective at school if it continues to be used in that setting. Intervention must address behavior in the settings in which it occurs (Kazdin, 2008). Even in cases where parents refuse to be involved in implementing home-based interventions, intervention should still be implemented at school (Wielkiewicz, 1986). A functional assessment approach would focus on the student’s behavior at school by identifying the supports for the challenging behavior at school (and at home if the behavior occurred at home) and developing interventions to change those supports (Walker & Sylwester, 1998).
Chapter 1

THE BAD HOME SITUATION
In addition to looking at the family when challenging behavior occurs, we sometimes attribute challenging behavior to a student’s home or living circumstances. We frequently attribute challenging behavior to the home environment when students are from low-income settings, live in chaotic environments, have parents who are divorcing or fighting, or are experiencing multiple and changing family members and/or friends in the home. We also do this when the home includes individuals who abuse drugs and alcohol and when students are homeless.

This explanation, like the bad family explanation, causes us to look for solutions to challenging behavior outside the current environment in which the behavior occurs, in this case, within the student’s home. We assume that the home situation must change before the student’s behavior can change. An obvious problem with this is that we cannot effectively or quickly change many of the serious home-related variables such as divorce, drug abuse, or homelessness.

Another problem with the bad home explanation for challenging behavior is that we often automatically assume that students who live in disadvantaged environments will engage in challenging behavior. This may cause us to have lower or different expectations for the academic skills and behavior of these students. Cangelosi (1993) cautions educators to “not apply the aggregate results from demographic studies in judging individuals” (p. 9). Not all children who live in disadvantaged home environments or who have parents with poor parenting skills will engage in challenging behavior. Cangelosi suggests that our expectations for these students (academically and behaviorally) should reflect the students’ abilities rather than the type of environment from which they come.

This is not to disregard the profound impact that homelessness, poverty, and other risk factors can have on students and their families. Increasingly children come to school from poor home environments and circumstances (Addy, Engelhardt, & Skinner, 2013; Ensher & Clark, 2011a, b; Fusaro, Bassuk, & Vaulton, 2010; Gargiulo, 2006; Kellog, Huber, & Bassuk, 2012; Reynaud, 1999). For example, Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) reported that children are the fastest growing group among homeless individuals. The National Center on Family Homelessness (2011) reports that 1 in 45 children experience homelessness each year; that is more than 1.6 million per year. In addition, the National Center for Children in Poverty states that approximately 45% of children under the age of 18 are identified as living in low-income households or in poverty and that this percentage continues to rise (Addy et al., 2013; Wight, Chau, & Aratani, 2011). Both sites further report that children who are homeless and who experience poverty often are exposed to violence, have higher rates of physical illness and social-emotional and behavior problems, and delayed academic and preacademic development (APA Task Force on Childhood Poverty, 2013; Streever, Ensher, & Clark, 2011). When possible and welcomed by the family, we should offer resources and address home situations through the provision of resources such as wraparound and integrated services that address family needs in addition to student academic and social-emotional needs; parent education and parent support groups; and referrals and linkages to community, state, and federal supports and resources (APA Task Force on Childhood Poverty, 2013; Crimmins et al., 2007; Eber, Breen, Rose, Unizycki, & London, 2008; Ensher & Clark, 2011a; Fusaro
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior

et al., 2010). These family-based supports and resources would work hand in hand with interventions to address challenging behavior in school settings. So we return to the importance of considering the current environments in which challenging behavior occurs. This is illustrated in the example of Johnny, his mother, and his school. Johnny was diagnosed with autism, mental retardation, and ADHD. Johnny was referred to the instructional strategies team because he displayed severely aggressive and disruptive tantrums when instructed to begin academic tasks. Johnny lived in a low-income household with his mother, Judy, a single parent. Judy had been diagnosed when she was in school as having a learning disability and being socially and emotionally delayed. Home visits indicated a very chaotic home environment including inconsistent discipline, cluttered and dirty rooms, multiple safety hazards, and unpredictable daily routines. Judy indicated that Johnny “ruled the household” and could do whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted. Efforts to assist Judy in addressing Johnny’s behavior at home were only mildly successful. Judy did not follow through with suggestions related to discipline, establishing daily routines, safety-proofing and cleaning the home, or referral for assistance to public agencies. Fortunately efforts to address Johnny’s behavior at school were more successful. Johnny learned to follow directions, to complete academic tasks, and to communicate his desires to his teacher and other adults. Even though Johnny continued to live in a less-than-optimal home situation, his behavior at school changed because the variables that supported it changed.

Although we must address challenging behavior in the settings in which it occurs, it is helpful to know when there are home circumstances that may be affecting a student’s behavior. One reason for this is that it may guide our interventions. For example, we may be able to mitigate the effects of home-related factors on behavior by altering our expectations for students (when appropriate) and providing additional individualized support to help these students in the classroom or other school settings. Two examples illustrate this point. First, one teacher told us that to address the problem of a large number of incomplete homework assignments, her school opens one classroom an hour before school starts and closes that classroom an hour after classes end. This provides space to complete homework for those students who are not able to work at home (e.g., students who are homeless or who live in crowded, noisy homes). Teachers in this school volunteer to work in the homework room on a rotating schedule.

Second, several preschools in our area have food available throughout the day (not only during a preset snack time) because many of their students are from very-low-income homes and do not receive proper nutrition at home. These preschool teachers reported a decrease in tantrums and peer aggression following implementation of this strategy. In both of these examples, students come from adverse home situations that are not easily changed through our educational system. The school-based interventions, however, were able to decrease challenging behavior at school (incomplete homework, aggression, and tantrums) by reducing the effect of the home-related factors on the students.

PREVIOUS TRAUMA AND BAD EXPERIENCES

The final misguided explanation we often ascribe to challenging behavior is the belief that current challenging behavior is caused by something traumatic or distressing that occurred in the student’s past such as sexual, emotional, or
physical abuse. Or we assume that challenging behavior is a result of unconscious variables (e.g., id and ego) or a fixation at an early stage of psychological development (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Epstein & Skinner, 1982; Malott, Malott, & Trojan, 2000; Skinner, 1989; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1991; Zirpoli, 2008, 2012). For example, 7-year-old Elizabeth displayed severe self-abuse and aggression each time her teacher tried to provide one-to-one instruction. The team knew that Elizabeth had been sexually abused by her uncle when she was 3 years old. They assumed that her aggression and self-abuse occurred because of the previous sexual abuse. They speculated that she must be afraid of adults. They referred Elizabeth to the school counselor and stopped trying to provide individualized instruction.

The problem with attributing current challenging behavior to previous trauma, as was done with Elizabeth, is that we do not directly address the challenging behavior; we assume that we cannot change the previous trauma, so the challenging behavior is allowed to continue to occur. We often attempt to indirectly address the challenging behavior by referring students for counseling or other similar services. The hope is that counseling will help the student adjust to previous traumatic experiences and, through that adjustment, the student will change his or her current challenging behavior. Referral for therapeutic counseling is a good first step and should not be ignored. However, most educators want the behavior to change now and, considering the negative impact of challenging behavior on the student (e.g., lost learning opportunities, rejection from peers), it may not be reasonable to wait for counseling therapy to work. A functional assessment perspective would acknowledge that counseling could be very beneficial for students who have experienced trauma. However, the behavior that the student displays now serves a purpose that is maintained in the current setting, regardless of the initial causes of the behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Skinner, 1953).

Kazdin (2008) refers to early problems or trauma as original causes or influences on behavior, and he notes the importance of finding out about original causes. However, he also points out that the primary question in determining intervention is “What are the current influences on behavior and how can they be changed in order to change behavior?” The original conditions that led to the acquisition of the challenging behavior probably are not the conditions that maintain it today. Kazdin states, “The years of factors that influenced the current problem cannot be erased, but something can be done now” (p. 5). In Elizabeth’s case, observation revealed that when she was self-abusive and aggressive, the teacher stopped working with her. She then was allowed to select her own tasks and did not have to work on teacher-directed tasks. Although Elizabeth’s behavior may have been acquired when she was sexually abused at 3 years of age, the original cause was not the current maintaining variable. Escape from teacher-directed tasks maintained her behavior in the current environment. The possibility exists that Elizabeth may successfully complete counseling to deal with her previous trauma yet continue to be self-abusive and aggressive in the classroom. Functional assessment that focuses on the current supports for her challenging behavior is necessary to reduce her challenging behavior in the classroom. In this example, the team hypothesized that Elizabeth continued to display self-abuse and aggression because when she engaged in these behaviors, staff stopped providing instructions and one-to-one assistance. In other words, Elizabeth engaged in aggression and self-abuse because staff left her alone and she was then able to do
activities that she selected. This led to an intervention in which staff continued to provide instructions and physical prompting to help Elizabeth comply with instructions. However, after she completed (with physical prompting) a small part of the activity, they praised her for working and provided a brief break in which she was allowed to do something she preferred. Eventually Elizabeth complied with instructions independently.

Please note that we are not saying that knowledge of original causes is not important. For example, knowledge of original causes such as abuse or neglect can be used to prevent future occurrences of abuse and neglect (Kazdin, 2008). Please note that we also are not saying that services such as counseling, play therapy, peer group therapy, and family counseling are not warranted and would not be helpful for these students. For many students and families, such services are very appropriate. But they should not be done in lieu of functional assessment, and they should not delay or prevent the implementation of positive behavioral interventions. Functional assessment and counseling services should be implemented simultaneously.

**SUMMARY**

As stated by Don Baer (1970), “Not to rescue a person from an unhappy organization of his behavior is to punish him, in that it leaves him in a state of recurrent punishment” (p. 246). Although challenging behavior produces an immediate preferred or desired outcome for the student (e.g., when Jerry is sent to time-out for being disruptive, he does not have to participate in the activity), it also produces both short- and long-term negative outcomes that may include punishment, avoidance by others, poor social competence and relationships with others, low self-esteem, lost opportunities for learning, termination of employment, administration of medication and restraint, and more restrictive placements. As we decide whether a student’s behavior should be identified as challenging behavior that needs to be changed, we should consider the impact of the behavior on the student and other individuals in terms of opportunities for learning, social relationships, and issues of safety. After we identify a behavior as challenging, we need to ask why the challenging behavior occurs. This is the first step in functional assessment. The answer to this question is determined by our assumptions about the causes of challenging behavior. There are many misleading explanations such as those discussed in this text. These explanations do not help us understand why challenging behavior is occurring now, they do not help us develop intervention plans to address challenging behavior, and in some cases they may prevent us from trying to address challenging behavior. They also can cause us to blame the student, other individuals, or family and home situations and, thus, interfere with developing timely, proactive interventions to address challenging behaviors.

A functional assessment approach assumes that most challenging behavior is learned and continues to occur because it produces a desirable outcome for the student. The focus is on identifying the current variables that support the behavior, not on determining why the behavior originally developed. The present circumstances, not the past, are considered in developing interventions to address challenging behavior. A functional assessment approach identifies the variables that are present in the current setting(s) in which the challenging behavior occurs. Intervention then changes the variables that directly influence challenging behavior in those settings.
Chapter 1

**CASE STUDIES: Is This Challenging Behavior? Should This Behavior Be Changed?**

Your job for these two case studies is to identify whether the student’s behavior should be labeled as challenging and if it should be changed using the functional assessment and intervention model described in this text. To make this decision, you should review the discussion concerning the identification of behavior as challenging and the definition of challenging behavior.

**Cheeri**

Cheeri is a fifth grader attending a classroom for gifted students in her school district. Cheeri really likes school. She gets along well with peers, generally complies with teacher instructions, and works hard on academic assignments and cooperative group activities. Cheeri’s favorite subject is physical education, and her least preferred subject is music. Cheeri gets excellent grades in all subjects.

In addition to being gifted, Cheeri has several disability diagnoses. She has been diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and attention deficit disorder. Cheeri takes medication for these disorders and receives private and in-school counseling. Cheeri is concerned that other students will reject or ridicule her if they become aware of her disabilities. As a result, she and her parents have requested privacy concerning her diagnoses.

There is one teacher, Ms. Ruder, and 25 students in Cheeri’s classroom. Ms. Ruder has requested behavioral consultation to deal with Cheeri’s disruptive behaviors. Ms. Ruder indicates that Cheeri displays the following challenging behaviors at various times throughout the day:

- Taps the desk or paper with her pen or pencil.
- Rubs her legs.
- Rocks in her chair.
- Manipulates Silly Putty into shapes.
- Blurs out answers or questions without raising her hand.
- Blows air from her mouth and clears her throat.
- Takes apart her pens and other manipulatives.

Ms. Ruder worries about the effect of these behaviors on Cheeri’s peers and about Cheeri’s ability to attend to lessons and complete work when she is displaying behaviors such as these. She further feels that Cheeri should have more self-control and more respect for her peers and for Ms. Ruder. She wants these behaviors to stop.

The behavioral consultant observed Cheeri in her classroom and was able to detect several of the behaviors identified by her teacher. The consultant also observed several examples of appropriate behavior and noted the contexts in which Cheeri’s behavior occurred and potential consequences for those behaviors. These are described on the following ABC recording chart. This chart lists the events that occurred prior to Cheeri’s behavior (antecedents and setting events) and the consequences that follow her behavior (Antecedent–Behavior–Consequence):
Ms. Ruder is requesting that the behavioral consultant develop interventions to stop Cheeri’s behavior. Based on the initial observations by the behavioral consultant:

1. Should Cheeri’s behavior be considered challenging? Why or why not? To answer this question, you should look at the eight questions in Table 1–1.

2. Should Cheeri’s behavior be changed through the functional assessment and intervention model described in this book? Why or why not?

**Leonard**

Leonard is a third-grade student enrolled in regular education class with 27 other students. There is one teacher and one teaching assistant in his class.
Leonard really likes school as well as his teacher and the teaching assistant. His teacher describes Leonard as a polite and compliant student who responds well to positive feedback. However, he does not do well in school. In fact, he receives poor grades in most subjects. His favorite times of the day are physical education, lunch, and recess. His least favorite and least successful areas are writing and math.

Leonard’s desk has been placed at the rear of the classroom because of his frequent fidgety and out-of-seat behavior. His teacher, Ms. Allison, has recommended that Leonard be tested for ADHD and evaluated for special education services, but his parents have refused to consent to both of these recommendations. Ms. Allison made the recommendations for diagnostic testing and evaluation because Leonard rarely completes his work during the day, does not turn in homework assignments, often leaves his seat during work periods, and frequently walks away from adults when they are providing assistance with schoolwork.

Ms. Allison’s referral included a list of behaviors that she observed during a 20-minute period during which students received large-group instructions followed by individual seatwork:

Alternates sitting on his feet and sitting on the end of the chair.
Alternates sitting at his desk and standing at his desk.
Rocks his chair, balances on his chair legs, climbs on his chair.
Repeatedly drops and picks up his pencil.
Rubs his limbs and whole body against his desk.
Taps his pencil; hits his books.
Bites his pencil; bites his fingers.
Repeatedly sharpens his pencil.
Repeatedly asks questions.
Leaves his seat and wanders in the classroom repeatedly.
Yawns loudly.

The special education consultant observed Leonard and recorded the following information concerning his behavior:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual seatwork, teacher at her desk with another student, assistant rotating among students providing help</td>
<td>Leaves seat, skips to back of room, plays with manipulatives</td>
<td>Teacher tells him to return to his seat and work, movement, tactile stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher tells him to return to his seat and work</td>
<td>Begins to return to seat but stops to chat with peer</td>
<td>Peer stops working and talks with him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher instruction to whole class</td>
<td>Standing at desk, walks to pencil sharpener, sharpens pencil</td>
<td>Teacher tells him to sit down, movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher tells him to sit</td>
<td>Continues to sharpen pencil</td>
<td>Teacher tells him to sit again</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Importance of Identifying and Addressing Challenging Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher tells him to sit again</td>
<td>Returns to seat, sits on edge of chair, bites fingers</td>
<td>Teacher continues lecture, assistant moves to desk and takes fingers out of his mouth each time he bites them, tactile stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditorium, waiting for school presentation</td>
<td>Kneeling on seat, rocking, chatting with peers, falls out of seat</td>
<td>Teacher tells him to sit in his chair, movement, peer interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told to sit in seat</td>
<td>Returns to seat, chats with peers, walks to aisle to pick up paper</td>
<td>Teacher tells him to sit in his seat, peer interaction, movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told to sit in seat, presentation begins</td>
<td>Returns to seat, bites fingers, bounces up and down in his seat</td>
<td>Peers tell him to sit down so they can see, assistant sits next to him, repeats instructions to sit, movement, tactile stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation ends</td>
<td>Jumps out of seat, runs back to classroom, trips over peers</td>
<td>Teacher runs after him, reprimands for running, peers push him off of their bodies and yell, movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with teacher on worksheet</td>
<td>Walks away from desk</td>
<td>Told to return to desk and work, movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal arrives, teacher leaves to talk to principal</td>
<td>Runs to plants and waters them</td>
<td>Told to do three problems, then can help carry objects to principal’s office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told to do three problems, then he can help carry objects to principal’s office</td>
<td>Returns to desk, does three problems, runs to teacher, turns in worksheet (Note: worksheet very messy, not complete, most problems done incorrectly)</td>
<td>Allowed to carry objects to principal’s office, movement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ms. Allison looked at the ABC recording sheet and said that it was typical of Leonard’s behavior on most days. She said he behaved liked this in almost all daily activities and routines. Ms. Allison is requesting that the special education consultant develop interventions to stop Leonard’s behavior. Based on the initial observations by the special education consultant:

1. Should Leonard’s behavior be considered challenging? Why or why not? To answer this question, you should look at the eight questions in Table 1–1.
2. Should Leonard’s behavior be changed through the functional assessment and intervention model described in this book? Why or why not?
CASE STUDY: Identify Faulty Assumptions About Why Challenging Behavior Occurs

Case Study Provided by Catherine McLain

Dakota

Dakota is a 6-year-old boy attending a full-day kindergarten program. In kindergarten, Dakota is very active, unfocused, and impulsive. He often is aggressive to others, confrontational, noncompliant, and argumentative. He does not participate in group activities and does not share with peers. He does not easily understand the perspectives of other children and is inwardly focused much of the time. Dakota does enjoy attention from adults, loves to work on art projects, and likes recess and other activities and tasks that allow movement. Dakota has threatened adults verbally and with raised fists. Standard discipline procedures included visits to the office, time-out, denial of privileges, and consistent reminders of classroom rules and expectations for behavior. He often spends so much time in the office and time-out that he does not complete work that must then be sent home with him at the end of the day.

Dakota’s teacher requested behavioral support to address his classroom behavior because other parents of children in the class were writing letters about Dakota’s aggressive and disruptive behavior. During the first conversation between the teacher and school psychologist, the psychologist asked the teacher what she thought might be contributing to Dakota’s behavior. The teacher provided the following information.

Dakota lives with his mother, two brothers, his grandmother, and his uncles. He sees his father on an inconsistent basis. Dakota’s home life tends to be inconsistent and somewhat chaotic. Discipline tends to focus on threats, yelling, harsh verbalizations, and physical punishment. Dakota often appears to have a sense of mistrust concerning adults and often can become quite argumentative as he tries to make his needs and wants known. Definitions of what are acceptable parameters or activities for boys also are suspect. For example, the uncles often rent and watch videos that contain violent themes.

Ms. Thomas has been employed in various jobs over the past several years. She has a high school diploma, which she earned through an alternative high school program. She expresses some value in the importance of education; however, she has stated that school was tough for her and if her son needs special placement for children with behavior disorders that this would be all right with her. She is very resistant to trying medication for Dakota.

Dakota attended the district’s early childhood program for two years. Goals included all areas of development but focused mostly on speech and language and behavior. The district provided outside psychological services and evaluation. Two visits were made, but Ms. Thomas did not continue beyond the first two visits. Ms. Thomas also sought counseling for the family. The focus of counseling was on parenting skills and learning more appropriate ways to communicate with her boys. Participation in these sessions has been inconsistent over the past several years.

Dakota has a dual diagnosis of behavior disorder and learning disability. His older brother is doing well in school; however, his younger brother, who is enrolled in the early childhood program, exhibits some of the same difficulties as does Dakota. Dakota also presents with soft neurological signs characteristic of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, although no diagnosis has been made.
Dakota can state the classroom rules for behavior, which are posted on the wall along with a clear schedule of the day’s activities. The teacher reinforces appropriate behavior and uses the Character Counts program in her classroom. She is genuinely interested in helping Dakota but, given the other things going on in his life and the large number of students that she has, is not sure that her classroom is the best placement for him.

1. This teacher, while very caring, has made some faulty assumptions about the causes of Dakota’s behavior. Identify the misbeliefs or faulty assumptions she is making about the causes of his behavior.

2. For each faulty assumption that you identified, describe the problems that might arise in making the assumption.

3. Describe alternative explanations based on the functional assessment approach regarding why Dakota’s challenging behaviors are occurring.
Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment

OBJECTIVES
1. Identify the variables that trigger and support challenging behavior.
2. Explain the concept of function.
3. Define positive reinforcement.
4. Define negative reinforcement.
5. Define sensory regulation/sensory stimulation.
6. Describe the rationale for employing positive intervention strategies and strategies that address the function of behavior.
7. Identify problems associated with punishment.
8. Provide rationale for using a team-based approach.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS
- Antecedents
- Consequences
- Function
- Negative Reinforcement
- Escape or Avoidance
- Positive Intervention Strategies
- Positive Reinforcement
- Punishment
- Sensory Regulation/Sensory Stimulation
ASSUMPTIONS OF FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

The functional assessment and intervention model is built on a core set of assumptions concerning the development and maintenance of both appropriate and challenging behaviors. These assumptions guide the identification of the supports for challenging behavior and the interventions that are developed to address challenging behavior. These assumptions are as follows (Chandler, 1998; Chandler & Dahlquist, 1999a, 1999b; Repp, 1999; Repp & Karsh, 1994; Repp et al., 1995):

1. Challenging behavior and appropriate behavior are supported by the current environment.
2. Behavior serves a function.
3. Challenging behavior can be changed using positive intervention strategies that address the function of behavior.
4. Functional assessment should be a team-based process.

ASSUMPTION 1: CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR AND APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR ARE SUPPORTED BY THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

The first assumption is based on a belief that challenging and appropriate behaviors are developed and maintained through the same processes. Both challenging and appropriate behaviors are learned and maintained by the current environment (Arndorfer & Miltenberger, 1993; Cangelosi, 1993). A functional assessment perspective assumes that most behaviors are triggered by current environmental events and are strengthened or weakened by the current consequences that follow behavior (Kazdin, 2008; Repp, 1999; Zirpoli, 2005, 2012). Behaviors that produce positive outcomes are strengthened and continue to occur, while behaviors that produce aversive or punishing outcomes are weakened and do not continue to occur. This is an important assumption. Regardless of when challenging behavior began, why it began, or how long it has been occurring, we are interested in why the behavior occurs now. Functional assessment seeks to identify the current variables that trigger and support behavior (Steege & Watson, 2008). Those are the variables that we can address in our intervention plans.

When we wish to change challenging behavior, we must examine the current environment within which the behavior is occurring to first identify variables that occur prior to or are concurrent with the challenging behavior (Darch & Kame‘enui, 2004). These variables are identified as antecedents (Carr, Langdon, et al., 1999; Repp, 1999). Antecedents set the occasion for behavior and affect the probability of its occurrence. We often describe antecedents as triggers for behavior (Chandler & Dahlquist, 1999a, b). Another type of variable that occurs prior to challenging behavior is termed setting events or establishing operations. These variables influence a student’s response to antecedents and consequences; they are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The next step is to identify the consequences that follow the behavior (Iwata, Dorsey, Slifer, Bauman, & Richman, 1982/1994). Intervention should not be developed until an assessment of antecedents and consequences is completed (Carr, 1977; Repp, 1994). This is because the interventions that will be developed will focus on changing the variables that trigger the challenging behavior and/or changing the consequences for the behavior. Intervention also will focus on introducing and/or altering antecedents that will trigger appropriate behavior and providing consequences to support appropriate behavior.
Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment

When we wish to change challenging behavior, we must examine the environment that supports appropriate as well as challenging behaviors (Heineman et al., 2006; Kazdin, 2008; Zuni & McDougall, 2004). This often will result in the identification of a different set of antecedent triggers and/or consequences for each type of behavior. The example of Suzanne illustrates this point. When the teacher attends to other students (antecedent trigger), Suzanne uses profanity (challenging behavior). The teacher then scolds Suzanne for using inappropriate language (consequence). Suzanne’s challenging behavior is different under different environmental conditions. When the teacher is working one-to-one with Suzanne (antecedent trigger), Suzanne interacts appropriately and does her work (appropriate behavior). The teacher then praises Suzanne for working (consequence). In this example, from Suzanne’s perspective, similar consequences occur for both challenging and appropriate behaviors (i.e., interaction with the teacher). However, the antecedent triggers are different for appropriate behavior (attending to Suzanne) and challenging behavior (attending to peers and not attending to Suzanne). This information can be used to develop interventions to reduce challenging behavior. For example, the teacher might arrange to attend to Suzanne more frequently, thereby reducing the antecedent trigger for challenging behavior (no or infrequent attention) and, at the same time, increasing the trigger for appropriate behavior (frequent attention). The teacher also may stop providing a positive consequence following challenging behavior (i.e., reprimand) by ignoring Suzanne when she uses profanity and interacting with her only when she behaves appropriately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher attends to peers</td>
<td>Uses profanity</td>
<td>Reprimand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one instruction, frequent attention</td>
<td>Works on tasks</td>
<td>Praise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we attempt to answer the question “Why does challenging behavior occur?” we must examine the current environment within which the behavior occurs and identify the variables that occur prior to the behavior and consequences that follow behavior. Intervention then must focus on altering these environmental variables so they no longer trigger and support challenging behavior. Examination of variables in the current environment is often referred to as the ABC assessment or three-term contingency. Through this assessment, we identify the antecedents (and setting events) that occur prior to behavior and the consequences that follow behavior (Bijou, Peterson, & Ault, 1968; Kauffman et al., 1993; Kazdin, 2008; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1991). This descriptive ABC assessment provides critical information about the conditions in which challenging and appropriate behaviors occur. However, in our experience, the ABC assessment alone does not provide sufficient information from which to develop effective intervention plans. The framework that comes from the second and third assumptions underlying functional assessment is critical to developing individualized, effective, and positive interventions.

ASSUMPTION 2: BEHAVIOR SERVES A FUNCTION
The second assumption builds on the first assumption. The first assumption—that challenging and appropriate behaviors are supported by the current environment—directs us to describe the environmental conditions that are present prior to and
Box 2–1
The three functions of behavior

1. Positive reinforcement
2. Negative reinforcement
3. Sensory regulation/sensory stimulation

following behavior. The second assumption—that behavior serves a function—directs us to identify why behavior occurs. We use the information obtained through the ABC descriptive assessment of the current environment to make a hypothesis. Functional assessment assumes that challenging behavior occurs because it produces an environmental or internal change that is a desired outcome for the student. In other words, it serves a function (Carr, 1977; Carr, Robinson, & Palumbo, 1990; Dunlap, Foster-Johnson, & Robbins, 1990; Repp & Horner, 1999). In answering the question “Why does challenging behavior occur?” we make a hypothesis about what the student obtains as a result of the antecedent-behavior-consequence sequences. In other words, we identify the function of the behavior. The answer to this question guides the development of positive intervention strategies to prevent and remediate behavior (March, 2002). We find it helpful to identify three basic functions of behavior (Box 2–1). Each of the three functions of behavior is discussed briefly here and in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Positive Reinforcement Function

The first function, based on positive reinforcement, is that challenging behavior functions to produce an outcome that is positive or desired from the child’s perspective (Carr, Langdon, et al., 1999; Iwata et al., 1982/1994; Repp & Karsh, 1990). This might include attention, control, materials, and so forth. In the example given earlier, Suzanne received attention from the teacher when she used profanity. The function of her behavior was positive reinforcement; she obtained teacher attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher attends to peers</td>
<td>Uses profanity</td>
<td>Reprimand</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement: obtains attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one instruction, frequent attention</td>
<td>Works on tasks</td>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement: obtains attention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two points about the positive reinforcement function are important to remember. First, when we identify the function of behavior, it is critical that we consider the student’s perspective of, or response to, variables rather than our own perspectives. Suzanne’s teacher thought that she was punishing Suzanne by reprimanding her. But for Suzanne, the reprimand was a positive outcome, not a punishing outcome. From Suzanne’s perspective, the reprimand functioned as a form of teacher attention; for Suzanne, negative attention from the teacher was better than no attention from the teacher. Suzanne continued to swear when she was not receiving teacher attention because swearing immediately and consistently resulted in some form of teacher attention.
Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment

To identify whether an outcome is a positive or desired outcome for the student, we need to examine the outcome’s impact on the student’s behavior or how the student responds to the variables. If the student continues to engage in challenging behavior that produced a particular outcome, it is reasonable to assume that the outcome is positive or desired by the student.

The second point is that even though we are recommending that you consider the student’s perspective when identifying an outcome as positive (or aversive), we are not saying that the student is actively planning to engage in behavior that will produce a particular outcome. For example, Suzanne is not thinking, “Hey, my teacher isn’t paying attention to me; I bet if I swear, she will yell at me, and I’d rather have her yell at me than ignore me.” Rather, Suzanne is reacting to the current events occurring in her environment (i.e., no teacher attention). She is doing behavior that has worked in the past at producing the desired outcome of teacher attention.

Negative Reinforcement Function

The second function, based on negative reinforcement, is that challenging behavior results in escape or avoidance of something that is aversive from the child’s perspective (Carr, Newsom, & Binkoff, 1980; Iwata et al., 1982/1994; Repp et al., 1995). Students may avoid tasks, activities, places, people, materials, participation, and so forth. For example, Pat complains of a stomachache during physical education whenever the teacher announces that they are to run laps around the track. Pat then is allowed to go to the nurse’s office to rest for the remainder of the period. Pat’s behavior produces a consequence (going to the nurse’s office) that results in avoidance of running laps. The function of her behavior is negative reinforcement: she avoids running laps. Pat’s behavior will continue to occur every time the class is to run laps because it is effective in achieving the avoid/escape function.

We must also consider the student’s perspective when identifying the avoid/escape function by examining the outcome’s impact on the student’s behavior. Often students engage in challenging behavior that results in being sent to time-out, the principal’s office, or even suspension. These usually are considered punishment procedures. But if the student escapes or avoids an aversive task by going to the principal’s office, for example, then this consequence actually is desirable and the behavior that results in being sent to the principal’s office will continue (Nelson & Rutherford, 1983).

We also must consider the student’s perspective of what is aversive. This can be difficult, especially if the student is escaping from or avoiding a task that we have developed. For example, teachers of young children often spend much time and effort developing stimulating opening circle sessions. For most children, circle time is fun and exciting and they readily participate. Yolanda, however, finds it difficult to understand the activity, answer group-directed questions, and sing along with her peers because she does not speak or understand English well. During circle, Yolanda fidgets, screams, and hits peers until she is sent to time-out, where she sits quietly and looks out the window. From Yolanda’s perspective, circle was aversive and her behavior allowed her to escape it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circle in English (aversive activity)</td>
<td>Fidgets, hits, screams</td>
<td>Time-out</td>
<td>Negative reinforcement: escape circle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sensory Regulation/Sensory Stimulation Function

The third function of behavior is termed *sensory regulation/sensory stimulation*. Within this function, challenging or appropriate behavior functions to regulate (increase or decrease) the level or type of sensory input in the environment or it produces sensory stimulation. We recognize that some individuals prefer to discuss only positive and negative reinforcement as functions of behavior; they do not separate behavior that is related to sensory regulation/sensory stimulation into a third function. For example, if a student’s behavior produces an increase in movement that is a desired or positive outcome, they would identify the positive reinforcement function. Or if a student’s behavior produces a decrease in tactile input, they would identify the negative reinforcement function in that the child escapes aversive sensory input. We find it useful to discuss sensory regulation/sensory stimulation as a third function of behavior because often the child’s behavior produces an internal change that is not directly observable. These unobservable events may be ignored or not considered when categorizing behavior within positive or negative reinforcement functions. We include the sensory function because it prompts us to consider sensory-related challenging behaviors and, when they are identified, to develop interventions that address and respect the child’s sensory needs (Baranek, 2002). We will further discuss our rationale for adopting these three functions in Chapter 9.

Within this function, the effects of behavior may be related to (a) *sensory regulation*, (b) *sensory stimulation*, or (c) specific *biological or neurological outcomes*. One unique aspect of the sensory regulation/sensory stimulation function is that challenging behaviors are maintained by *nonsocial outcomes* (Shore & Iwata, 1999). The three categories of the sensory regulation/sensory stimulation function are described briefly in this chapter and in more detail in subsequent chapters. Our view of the sensory regulation/sensory stimulation function is somewhat broader than that of some educators and researchers who often refer primarily to automatic reinforcement (Iwata, Pace, Dorsey, et al., 1994; Iwata, Vollmer, & Zarcone, 1990). We have adopted this broader view to incorporate research related to sensory regulation (Repp et al., 1995).

**Sensory Regulation**

This category, sometimes referred to as homeostasis or arousal modulation, is based on the optimal stimulation theory described by Zentall and Zentall (1983). Optimal stimulation theory postulates that the level of stimulation that is most appropriate (or optimal) for each individual is biologically determined and that the amount of stimulation that is most appropriate varies across individuals ranging from high to low levels of stimulation. It further states that individuals will seek to maintain stimulation at their optimal level (Berkson & Tupa, 2000; Crimmins et al., 2007; Guess & Carr, 1991; Repp, 1999; Repp & Karsh, 1990; Repp, Karsh, Deitz, & Singh, 1992; Repp et al., 1995).

Stimulation may occur within each of the *sensory systems*: *auditory* (hearing), *visual* (vision), *olfactory* (smell), *tactile* (touch), *gustatory* (taste), *vestibular* (sense of movement, body in space, and gravity), and *proprioceptive* (sensation in muscles, tendons, and joints). When the level of sensory stimulation is too low, students will engage in behavior that increases stimulation. When the level of stimulation is too high, students will engage in behavior that decreases sensory stimulation (Repp & Karsh, 1992). For example, Rodney was able to sit quietly during the first 10 minutes of lecture. After 10 minutes, however, he began to tap his pencil and kick the leg of his desk. These behaviors increased stimulation (i.e.,

...
Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment

they provided movement and auditory and tactile stimulation) in an environment that for him was not sufficiently stimulating. For Rodney, there was a mismatch between the type and amount of stimulation provided during lecture and his optimal level of stimulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long lecture, limited movement</td>
<td>Taps pencil, kicks desk</td>
<td>Movement, noise</td>
<td>Increased sensory stimulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students whose behavior is maintained by the sensory regulation category of this function also may experience difficulty when transitioning between highly stimulating activities or environments and passive activities or environments. This is because they are not able to modulate their level of stimulation across different environmental conditions (Fouse & Wheeler, 1997; Guess & Carr, 1991). When the level of stimulation is high and students are overaroused, some students may find it difficult to transition to more passive activities. Or when the level of stimulation is low and students are underaroused, some students will find it difficult to transition to or begin highly stimulating activities. For instance, Inez was not able to alter her behavior to match the level of stimulation required by the task or activity. Inez did not transition well from highly stimulating activities to quiet, passive activities such as reading. When reading class followed recess (a very stimulating activity), Inez often left her seat and talked to peers or her teachers. As a result, she was reprimanded, did not complete her reading assignments, and received after-school detention. Inez was able to stay in her seat and remain on task, however, if reading class followed less-stimulating tasks such as art or lecture. When this happened, she remained on task and completed her reading assignments. Inez’s behavior in reading was influenced by the level of stimulation in previous activities. When the stimulation level was high, she was not able to transition to quiet, passive activities. When the stimulation level was low to moderate, she easily made the transition to quiet, passive activities.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>Runs, talks, participates</td>
<td>Interaction, movement</td>
<td>Sensory regulation/ sensory stimulation: high stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading follows recess</td>
<td>Talks to peers, out of seat</td>
<td>Interaction, movement, detention</td>
<td>Sensory regulation/ sensory stimulation: maintain high stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art or lecture</td>
<td>On-task, takes notes, listens</td>
<td>Praise, completes task</td>
<td>Sensory regulation/ sensory stimulation: low to moderate stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading follows art or lecture</td>
<td>Reads book, in seat, quiet</td>
<td>Praise, completes assignment</td>
<td>Sensory regulation/ sensory stimulation: low to moderate stimulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sensory Stimulation or Automatic Reinforcement

Challenging behavior within this category is thought to occur because it generates sensory/perceptual stimulation that is automatically reinforcing (Shore & Iwata, 1999). In other words, the behavior itself produces a positive outcome. Sensory stimulation may occur within the visual, tactile, auditory, gustatory, and vestibular systems. For example, eye gouging may stimulate the retina and result in visual stimulation for students who are blind or visually impaired (Berkson & Tupa, 2000; Mace & Mauk, 1999). Or hand mouthing may produce tactile and gustatory stimulation for a student with sensory integration problems.

Neurological Outcome

This category most often refers to the most severe forms of self-injurious and self-stimulatory behavior. The neurological theory postulates that some challenging behavior is related to neurodevelopmental dysfunction or biochemical imbalances (Lewis, Baumeister, & Mailman, 1987; Mace & Mauk, 1999; Shore & Iwata, 1999; Steege & Watson, 2008). For example, researchers have proposed that some individuals may engage in self-injurious behavior because it produces endogenous opiates or endorphins, which are reinforcing and become addictive (Carr, Landon, et al., 1999). They also have speculated that severe self-injurious behavior and excessive forms of stereotypy may be related to neurochemical imbalances such as the production of dopamine, or they may be associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder (Mace & Mauk, 1999). Interventions for individuals whose behavior stems from neurological dysfunction typically involve medication in addition to behavior management strategies.

Before moving to the third assumption of functional assessment, we should point out that not all forms of challenging behavior that might be characterized as self-injurious, self-stimulating (e.g., running or shouting in the classroom), or stereotypical on the basis of their topography are related to the sensory regulation/sensory stimulation function (Carr, 1977; Iwata et al., 1982/1994; McEvoy & Reiche, 2000). It is not possible to determine the function of behavior on the basis of the type of disability or topography of behavior (Hanley, Iwata, & McCord, 2003; Horner et al., 2002). Indeed, behaviors such as head banging, rocking, and running may occur because they produce a different function. For instance, they may produce a desired outcome such as parental attention (i.e., the positive reinforcement function). Or they may result in escape or avoidance of an aversive task such as sitting through opening circle (i.e., negative reinforcement) (Iwata, Pace, Dorsey, et al., 1994; Pace, Iwata, Cowdery, Andree, & McIntyre, 1993; Zarcone, Iwata, Smith, Mazaleski, & Lerman, 1994). Functional assessment will help educators determine whether the function of behavior is positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, or sensory regulation/sensory stimulation.

In summary, when we identify why challenging behavior occurs, we should first identify the triggers and supports for the behavior in the current environment. Second, we should use that information to identify the function of the behavior: (a) The student obtains something positive (positive reinforcement), (b) the student escapes or avoids something aversive (negative reinforcement), or (c) the level of sensory stimulation is increased or decreased (sensory regulation/sensory stimulation). This information then will guide the development of interventions to address that behavior. This leads to the third assumption underlying functional assessment.
ASSUMPTION 3: CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR CAN BE CHANGED USING POSITIVE INTERVENTION STRATEGIES THAT ADDRESS THE FUNCTION OF BEHAVIOR

If we know the antecedent triggers and consequences that are related to the challenging behavior and the function of the challenging behavior, then we can design positive interventions that allow the student to achieve the same function by using appropriate behavior, rather than challenging behavior (Carr, 1997; Carr et al., 1990; Donnellan & LaVigna, 1990; Horner, 1997; McEvoy & Reichle, 2000; Repp, 1999; Scott et al., 2005; Steege & Watson, 2008; Zuni & McDougall, 2004). In a review of research from 1988 to 2000, Horner, Carr, Strain, et al. (2002) reported that intervention plans that were based on information obtained from functional behavioral assessment were more positive than punitive and more effective at reducing challenging behavior than studies that did not employ functional assessment (Pelios, Morren, Tesch, & Axelrod, 1999).

There is little need to use punishment-based interventions within the functional assessment and intervention model (Chandler et al., 1999; Repp, 1999; Stahr, Cushing, Lane, & Fox, 2006). Punishment teaches a student what not to do; it does not teach a student what to do instead of challenging behavior. When we use punishment procedures, we often see an immediate decrease in challenging behavior. However, the results often are short term. This is because our punishment strategies have not addressed the function of challenging behavior and, in failing to do so, they have left a void (Carr, 1977; Mace, 1994). When this occurs, another form of behavior will fill the void and will achieve the same function as the original challenging behavior. More often than not, the replacement behavior will be another challenging behavior. For instance, Miguel, who was very difficult to understand, frequently yelled at his peers when they ignored his initiations. A response-cost procedure was added to his token economy so he lost points when he yelled at peers. After 2 days, the frequency of yelling decreased to near zero. However, within 1 week of initiation of the response-cost procedure, Miguel began to hit peers when they ignored his initiations. Although Miguel had learned not to yell at his peers, he had not learned an appropriate way to recruit peer attention.

Intervention strategies must address the function of the challenging behavior. In doing this, we change the current supports for challenging behavior and provide environmental supports for appropriate behaviors that will achieve the same function (Carr, 1994; Carr et al., 1990; Luiselli, 1990; Mace, 1994; McIntosh et al., 2008; Stahr et al., 2006). For Miguel, who hits his peers, rather than punish his behavior, we might teach him to tap peers on the shoulder and use picture cues to communicate with his peers. This would allow him to recruit peer attention using an appropriate behavior. Thus, Miguel achieves the same function without the challenging behavior. For Yolanda, who did not speak English and who escaped circle when she fidgeted, screamed, and hit peers, intervention should teach a more appropriate way for her to indicate that she wished to leave circle such as saying, “Termino.” The questions to ask when designing interventions to address challenging behavior within each of the functions are “What should the student do instead? What is an appropriate replacement behavior that will achieve the same function?”

Sometimes, however, the team will not want to teach behaviors that will achieve the same function. This often occurs when the function of challenging behavior is negative reinforcement and the team does not want the student to escape or avoid activities and tasks. This is because escape from school-based activities often reduces opportunities to learn academic skills and to engage in
appropriate social behavior. For example, Yolanda’s teacher said that she didn’t want to teach Yolanda an appropriate way to leave circle. She indicated that escape from circle was not an appropriate outcome and that it was important for Yolanda to sit in circle and to participate in the activity. When the team does not want the student to escape or avoid activities, tasks, and so on, the goal of intervention should be to decrease support for challenging behavior that is maintained by escape and avoidance and also to increase support for appropriate behavior that will be maintained by positive reinforcement.

When we seek to decrease behavior that is maintained by escape or avoidance we must evaluate why the task or activity is aversive for the student. Intervention should alter the aversive aspects of the activity and increase positive outcomes for participation. For example, Yolanda found circle aversive because she could not understand the activity, answer group questions, or sing with her peers. An intervention to immediately reduce the aversive aspects of the circle activity would be to repeat key words in Spanish, ask Yolanda individual questions in Spanish, and build movement into group singing so Yolanda would be able to participate (even though she did not sing). The teacher also might teach Yolanda some of the group songs in English and teach other students some songs in Spanish and use both types of songs during circle. Intervention also should provide praise for Yolanda when she participates and remains in circle without screaming and hitting peers.

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<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
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<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circle in English (aversive activity)</td>
<td>Fidgets, hits, screams</td>
<td>Time-out</td>
<td>Negative reinforcement: escapes circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle in Spanish plus movement</td>
<td>Participates, remains in circle</td>
<td>Praise, interacts with peers</td>
<td>Positive reinforcement: obtains praise, fun, peer interaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal of Intervention:** Teach appropriate behavior that achieves the same function

**Goal of Intervention:** Decrease support for challenging behavior that is maintained by negative reinforcement and increase support for appropriate replacement behavior that is maintained by positive reinforcement

ASSUMPTION 4: FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE A TEAM-BASED PROCESS

The final assumption related to functional assessment is that functional assessment is most effective when it is a team-based process. Functional assessment will be most effective if all individuals who will work with a student who engages in challenging behavior understand the assumptions underlying functional assessment and the reasons for implementing selected interventions. This leads to a shared understanding of the variables that support behavior and common language and approach to use when addressing challenging behavior (Kazdin, 2008).
Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment

It also increases consistency and acceptance among team members in responding to challenging behavior and implementing interventions (Chandler et al., 1999; Crimmins et al., 2007; Crone, Hawken, & Bergstrom, 2007; Freer & Watson, 1999; Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998).

Educators need to understand that adoption of the functional assessment and intervention model to address challenging behavior does not negate the philosophies or practices of other professions (e.g., counseling, social work, occupational therapy). For example, a counseling member of a team may believe that play therapy is needed to help a student deal with emotions related to a previous trauma. This is not incompatible with functional assessment. One form of intervention (functional assessment) addresses the variables supporting behavior in the current environment in which it occurs, and the other form of intervention (play therapy) addresses the impact of previous experiences on behavior and emotions (Kazdin, 2008). In our experience, both types of interventions can be implemented without arguing about which philosophical viewpoint is correct, and both types of interventions can be helpful.

In another example, an occupational therapist who works with a student who has sensory integrative disorder and engages in stereotypical behavior may have a brain-based perspective about why this student seeks increased sensory input. He may believe that sensory integration therapy is critical to address this student’s problems. The adoption of sensory integration therapy is not incompatible with conducting functional assessment to identify the environmental variables related to challenging behavior in the classroom. Again, in our experience, there is no need to debate which approach is correct. The occupational therapist would provide sensory integration therapy to the student. At the same time, the functional assessment team would identify appropriate behaviors that would provide the student with sensory stimulation in the classroom and at home. In this case, the occupational therapist, as a member of the team, would be extremely helpful in identifying developmentally appropriate replacement behaviors that would achieve the same type and level of sensory stimulation for the student and could provide suggestions for incorporating sensory-based activities into the curriculum.

In our opinion and practice, the responsibility for addressing challenging behavior should not be assigned to one individual. It should not be the responsibility of only the school psychologist, social worker, behavior analyst, or classroom teacher. Although functional assessment can be conducted and intervention strategies implemented by individual staff members, we recommend that it be conducted by an interdisciplinary team. Contributions from multiple professionals and parents or other family members can greatly increase the skills and knowledge of the team as a whole. All individuals who work with a student have unique areas of professional expertise and focus as well as knowledge of the student (Friend & Cook, 2006, 2012). The team-based process incorporates the expertise of individual team members to change the current supports for challenging behavior and to promote the development of appropriate replacement behavior. It also promotes consistency among individuals who interact with the student in applying intervention strategies that withdraw the support for challenging behavior and that teach and support appropriate replacement behavior. Crimmins and his colleagues (2007) identified additional benefits from adopting a team approach, including collective advocacy for resources needed to conduct functional assessment and implement interventions, shared work, and additional individuals to provide feedback and reinforcement.
Chapter 2

THE GOALS OF FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

When the authors of this text are brought into classrooms, it usually is to address existing problem behaviors. Often teachers are at the end of their rope because a student’s behavior is well established and may be escalating. When this occurs, our job is to remediate the student’s challenging behavior and to replace that behavior with more appropriate behavior. This obviously is an important goal of functional assessment. We remediate challenging behavior by first identifying the antecedent variables that trigger challenging and appropriate behavior and the consequences that follow. We then alter these to withdraw support for challenging behavior and provide support for appropriate replacement behavior that will achieve the same function (Dunlap, Iovannone, Wilson, Kincaid, & Strain, 2010).

An equally and some would argue more important goal of functional assessment is to anticipate and prevent the development and occurrence of challenging behavior rather than reacting to challenging behavior after it occurs (Carr et al., 2002; Carr, Langdon, et al., 1999; Munk & Karsh, 1999; Repp, 1999). If we are able to prevent challenging behavior from developing or from occurring once it is part of a student’s repertoire, we will not need to remediate. Conners (2008) suggests that as we think about prevention, we consider what we can do for the child prior to the behavior instead of what we do to the child after the behavior has occurred. The functional assessment and intervention model can be used to predict environmental conditions that will lead to challenging behavior. These then can be altered before challenging behavior occurs (Carr et al., 1994; McGee & Daly, 1999; Neilsen et al., 1998). This can be done for individual students and for the class as a whole (Chandler et al., 1999).

Often educators can anticipate when and where challenging behavior will occur. For example, teachers indicate that challenging behavior usually increases prior to and following holidays, school breaks (e.g., spring break), and recess, and during disliked and very difficult activities. For individual students, increases in challenging behavior may occur during specific tasks (e.g., writing, reading), types of activities (e.g., group or individual work), or during specific times of the day (e.g., after lunch or when they must go home).

One very predictable event that leads to increased challenging behaviors at a class-wide level is the transition between activities. This is often referred to as “downtime.” Students may run, shout, throw materials, fight, swear, and so on during transition. When we examine transitions in the classroom, we note that they often are unstructured, with little supervision and instruction, and they involve relatively long periods of waiting (Lawry, Danko, & Strain, 2000; Strain & Hemmeter, 1997). There are few antecedent triggers or consequences for appropriate behavior because teachers are helping other students or are preparing for the next activity. When challenging behavior does occur, teachers often use reactive measures such as reprimanding students or taking away privileges or points.

Rather than reacting to challenging behavior during transition, our goal should be to prevent challenging behavior from occurring during transition. To do this, we need to alter our transition practices. For example, we might provide structure by establishing rules and signals for appropriate transition behavior (Crimmins et al., 2007). Or we might employ transition-based teaching by providing opportunities for students to demonstrate or practice skills such as naming letters, counting items, and so on (Wolery, Doyle, Gast, Ault, &
Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment

Lichtenberg, 1991). We might assign students to specific jobs to reduce unstructured time during transition, or we might have students transition at different times (e.g., line up in pairs versus as a whole group). We also might have materials ready for the subsequent activity to reduce the amount of time involved in transition. These changes to the transition routine will prevent the occurrence of challenging behavior, thereby preventing the need to remediate established challenging behavior.

Prevention involves anticipating the development or occurrence of challenging behavior, manipulating the antecedents that will trigger challenging behavior, and providing antecedents to trigger appropriate behavior. Remediation, the second goal of functional assessment, involves developing strategies to address challenging behavior after it is well established. This also involves manipulating antecedents related to appropriate and challenging behavior and changing the consequences that currently support challenging behavior so they now support appropriate replacement behaviors (March, 2002).

Preventing Challenging Behavior Through Positive Classroom Management, Supports, and Effective Teaching

As stated earlier, the current environment has a strong influence on the occurrence of challenging and appropriate behaviors. In addition to anticipating the occurrence of challenging behavior, another prevention strategy is to develop a classroom environment (and other school settings) that includes positive classroom management and support strategies, a positive and safe classroom climate, and positive student-teacher and peer relationships (Wheeler & Richey, 2014). Poor classroom management results in reduced time for instruction (Sugai, Simonsen, & Horner, 2008) and interferes with student learning (Guardino & Fullerton, 2010; Murphy et al., 2007). It also can increase challenging behavior, increase teacher and student stress, and decrease teacher self-confidence and satisfaction with teaching (Sayeski & Brown, 2011). On the other hand, well-managed classrooms increase instructional time and lead to higher student outcomes and fewer office discipline referrals. Proactive classroom management strategies should be a first step in preventing challenging behavior and supporting appropriate behavior. Individualized interventions and supports build on classroom management strategies (Crimmins et al., 2007). Unfortunately beginning and experienced teachers often indicate that they do not have sufficient classroom and behavior management knowledge and skills (Levine, 2006; Rhode et al., 2009; Sebag, 2010) and that many of the strategies they use to manage the classroom were gained from trial and error rather than formal preservice and inservice training (Tillery et al., 2010). We will provide a brief review of common classroom management strategies. Additional strategies are discussed throughout the chapters in Part 3 of this book.

1. Develop rules for appropriate behavior.

   Rules identify expectations for behavior for all students (Rhode et al., 2010). Effective rules help prevent challenging behavior, especially when they are used at the beginning of the school year, because students understand what to do and how to behave, and they understand the consequences for following and violating rules. What makes a set of rules effective? First, there should be a small number of rules for students to learn and follow. Rules may not be effective when there are too many for students to remem-
ber. A common recommendation is for classrooms to have 3 to 5 rules that all students are expected to follow (Rhode et al., 2010; Scott, Anderson, & Alter, 2012).

Second, effective classroom rules are worded clearly, so all students understand and can do the behavior that is expected (Babkie, 2006; Vaughn & Bos, 2012). For example, a rule such as “Be a good friend” is not very clear and could mean different things to different people. It would be better to identify what students should do to be a good friend such as “Ask your friend to share materials.” Some classrooms and schools do use rather broad or general rules such as “Be respectful.” However, they then define what it means. For example, respectful behaviors might be “Ask your friend to share materials,” “Work quietly at your own desk,” and “listen when others talk.” In this example, while the general rule is vague, the three subrules are worded clearly.

Third, effective rules are stated positively, meaning that they should identify what the students are expected to do rather than what they should not do (Scheuermann & Hall, 2012). For example, “Raise your hand when you want to talk” versus “Don’t shout” and “Stay in your seat” versus “Don’t run out of the classroom.” “Don’t” rules are not helpful because they do not tell students what appropriate behavior to do instead of the challenging behavior. In the examples above, “Don’t shout” and “Don’t run out of the classroom” do not tell the student what to do instead of these behaviors, and it is likely that another challenging behavior will occur in its place. For example, the child may run about the classroom rather than staying in his seat. The more we identify what students should do, the more likely they are to do it. There may be some instances, however, in which a “stop” or “don’t” rule is more logical, as pointed out by Rhode and colleagues (2009) and Alberto & Troutman (2013); a “don’t spit” rule makes more sense than “keep your saliva in your mouth.”

Fourth, rules need to be systematically taught. Steps that may be used to teach students about rules and expectations for behavior are presented in Table 2–1 (Conroy et al., 2008; Rhode et al., 2009; Rhode et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2012; Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2–1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps to teach rules and expectations for behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. State the rule and identify the routine and/or setting in which the behavior identified in the rule is expected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Provide a definition and description of the behavior identified in the rule and a rationale for why the rule is important. Provide examples of following the rule and not following the rule. Ask students to provide examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Model the behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Provide opportunities for practice through role-play as well as practice in the natural setting (i.e., in the setting or routine in which the behavior is expected).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Provide visual and verbal prompts for following rules such as posting rules, posting pictures of rule-following behavior, and reminding students of rules.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Provide feedback and positive reinforcement for following rules and consequences for not following rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Assess acquisition and fluency. Reteach if necessary.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Finally, rules are most effective when students can identify (and experience) the consequences for following and violating each rule (Crimmins et al., 2007; Scott et al., 2012). It is important to be consistent in applying consequences. Rules will have little meaning if they are not enforced consistently and fairly. This includes providing praise and other forms of positive reinforcement when students follow rules (e.g., high five, points awarded, praise, or positive note sent home) and providing consequences that have been identified for not following rules (e.g., loss of points, reprimand, or office discipline referral). Students should have opportunities to receive or earn reinforcement for following rules as well as receive negative consequences for violating rules. If a student only receives negative consequences, there may be little motivation to follow rules. Consider the classroom rules points program that a teacher recently shared with the first author. The teacher indicated that she gave each student 20 points at the beginning of the week. Students lost points when they violated classroom rules. There was no system in place for earning points back or for earning additional points for following rules. The teacher indicated that while most students lost only a few points, there were a few students who consistently violated classroom rules and consistently lost all 20 points. She also indicated that these students’ challenging behavior escalated after they lost all 20 points. She revised her rule-following-points program so students could both earn and lose points. This increased the rule-following behavior of not only the few students who had consistently lost points but of all the students in the classroom.

Babkie (2006) recommends involving students in developing classroom rules as a way to obtain student buy-in and sense of ownership, although Rhode and colleagues (2010) recommend that teachers define rules and consequences and introduce them at the beginning of the school year. They point out that student-developed rules may be unclear and not related to classroom management, and the consequences identified by students may be too punitive. They state that there is no empirical research that indicates that student-generated rules are more effective than teacher-generated rules. Therefore, it is up to each teacher to determine the best strategies for developing rules. Teachers who develop rules with students will need to guide students throughout the process so effective rules and consequences are developed.

2. Provide predictable and organized schedules and routines.

There is a strong link between the amount of time students are engaged in learning and the amount of learning that takes place (Fisher, 2009; Rhode et al, 2009), so one of the goals of classroom management is to maximize the amount of time students are engaged in academic learning (Simonsen et al., 2008). The majority of the daily schedule should be devoted to academic learning time in which students have access to effective instruction across content areas or developmental domains and opportunities to experience success in completing work and meeting goals. Yet the amount of scheduled academic time varies considerably across classrooms and schools. Scheuermann & Hall (2012) provided a review of research on instructional time, which documented the often low and varying amounts of instructional time employed in classroom settings ranging from an average of 17% to 79% of the school day.

Students tend to be less engaged in learning activities and display more challenging behavior in chaotic and poorly planned classrooms in which
Chapter 2

routines are unorganized, expectations for behavior are not identified or change from day to day, there are periods of “down” or unscheduled time, and predictable daily schedules and procedures are not followed. Predictable and organized schedules and routines provide structure for the students and increase engagement, but they require planning and teaching. Think about what routines need to occur during the day and identify in what order they will occur, the duration of each activity and routine, how students will transition from one activity or routine to another, what academic and social behaviors you expect of students during routines, and how students will learn about and follow daily routines. Examples of daily routines include morning arrival, turning in homework, individual work, group work, reading aloud, doing work on the interactive whiteboard, using the computer, cleaning up, lunch, and recess. The strategies for teaching rules also apply to teaching students about the daily schedule and routines. Students need to be able to follow the daily schedule and routines, practice behaviors that are expected within routines, and access visual reminders (i.e., posted schedules, pictured steps of behaviors within routines) regarding the daily schedule and routines. The more specific a teacher is regarding expectations during routines, the more likely it is that the desired behavior will occur (Vaughn & Bos, 2012).

Organization within activities and routines also includes having materials ready for activities, beginning activities on time, and using signals to designate the start and end of an activity including presignals to let students know when an activity will end so they can finish ongoing tasks. For example, Ms. Gonzalez reminds her students that they have 10 minutes to complete their science project before math begins, and she moves about the classroom, helping individual students bring closure to their projects. Organization also includes thoughtful arrangement of seating and space within the classroom. There should be sufficient room for the teacher and students to move about the classroom without disrupting others and space for students to keep personal items (e.g., desks, cubbies, and lockers). In additions, challenging behavior can be prevented by moving the seats of students who engage in mutual challenging behavior to different areas of the classroom and moving students who tend to be off task or engage in challenging behavior closer to the teacher (Simonsen et al., 2008).

3. Provide enthusiastic and stimulating instruction matched to the learning and developmental needs of students.

Many students do not learn well from lengthy lectures, slow-paced instruction, passive activities, and protracted activities. It is difficult to maintain student attention, enthusiasm, and engagement during these types of instructional situations, and they often are associated with increases in challenging behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2013; Scheuermann & Hall, 2012). Fisher (2009) observed three students across 15 high school classrooms and reported that they spent most of the school day in passive listening (48%) and waiting (17%). Clearly, there is ample time in this schedule in which challenging behavior is likely occur, and these instructional practices are not optimal for learning. Fisher concluded, “If our goal as educators is to encourage thinking and improve academic achievement, we have to create learning environments that facilitate engagement and time on task” (p. 175). Stimulating instruction may include varying instructional strategies
so students have opportunities to work together in dyads or small groups, use technology such as interactive whiteboards or tablet computers to complete work, engage in peer tutoring, and multiple opportunities to respond during instruction.

Frequent opportunities to respond (OTR) is an evidenced-based strategy for increasing the pace of instruction (Conroy et al., 2008; Scheuermann & Hall, 2012). OTR can be varied across large- or small-group or individual responses and can include (a) vocal, (b) gestural (e.g., thumbs up or down), (c) movement (“If you think the answer is A, go to the side of the room, and if you think it is B, go to the back of the room”), (d) materials manipulation (e.g., “Hold up the green or red card”), or (e) completed with clickers (“Click 1 if you agree and 2 if you disagree”) (Blood, 2010; Blood & Gluchak, 2013). Frequent OTR not only increases active listening and engagement, it allows the teacher to gauge learning and make adjustments based on student responses. Additional strategies for providing stimulating instruction for individual students are discussed in Part 3.

4. Provide scaffolding, prompting, and feedback.

Scaffolding is a term used to describe temporary structures to support people or materials in construction. It also is a term that is commonly used in early childhood education; however, the concept is applicable to all grades (Instructional Scaffolding, 2013; Lewis, n.d.). Teachers use scaffolding strategies to provide the type and amount of assistance needed to guide and support learning for each student. Scaffolding can include questions, assistance, prompting and modeling, review, directions and instruction, cooperative learning and peer support, and feedback (Chandler et al., 2011). Examples of scaffolding are graphic organizers that provide a visual framework, a model of how to solve math problems at the top of a worksheet, mnemonics such as ROY G. BIV to remember the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet), activating prior knowledge by relating a new concept to prior lessons or personal experience, checklists of steps to follow in a task, written instructions left on the board, and visual prompts for behavior such as social stories or consequence maps. Three particularly useful scaffolding strategies are asking questions, providing antecedent prompts, and providing feedback.

Questions help students consider ideas and alternatives, problem-solve, explain and describe, try new things, make connections between experiences, and make connections to past events. The level of difficulty of questions should be related to the stage of learning: knowledge, comprehension, application, synthesis, and evaluation (Chandler, 2011). Examples of questions include: What would happen if ____? How did you make that ____? What should we do next? How are these alike? How are these different? Can you tell me about your picture? Have you seen one of these before? When? What was the problem in this story? Questions can be used before, during, or at the end of activities. Questions not only provide scaffolding for students; they also give information for teachers about student learning that can be used to increase scaffolding. For example, a teacher may learn that one student cannot answer key questions, so she provides additional instruction for this student. Another teacher finds that the student is able to answer comprehension questions, so he continues his conversation with the student by posing application and synthesis questions.
Antecedent prompts should be delivered before challenging behavior occurs and before mistakes are made on academic work. Antecedent prompts can be used to remind students about expectations for appropriate behavior in situations in which the challenging behavior is likely to occur. For instance, Ms. Bell noticed that Riley accidentally pushed Hal into the lockers. In this case, Ms. Bell could show Hal the picture card for talking to a friend when you are angry, ask Hal what he should do when he is angry, or restate the first step in the strategy for what to do when you are angry. Prompts also can provide information about expectations for academic tasks (e.g., "remember that you need to describe three factors related to global warming") and the daily schedule ("after everyone lines up, we will move to the lunchroom"; "remember today we are going to the library for reading"). Prompts can be visual, verbal, gestural, and so forth and are most effective when they are stated positively, that is, they specifically identify what students should do rather than what they should not do, or they help students identify what they are expected to do. Precorrection is a specific type of antecedent prompt in which the teacher provides a prompt for appropriate behavior prior to the antecedent for challenging behavior (Colvin, Sugai, & Patching, 1993; Scheuermann & Hall, 2012). For instance, when used to promote academic skills, precorrection involves providing a prompt, followed by a behavior request (Scott et al., 2012).

Feedback provides information to students about their responses and behavior. The primary purpose of feedback is to help students learn to perform a task or behavior correctly. Feedback should not be used to simply inform students that they are wrong or made a mistake. For example, telling a student that she spelled the word wrong does not help the student learn how to spell it correctly. On the other hand, providing feedback such as “Look at the word again and remember our rule: i before e except after c” helps the student correct her spelling. The danger in not providing corrective or helpful feedback is that students may continue to make the same mistakes or exhibit the same behavior repeatedly. Feedback should help students identify and practice the correct response or behavior. In addition to helping students learn correct responses and behavior, feedback serves as a prevention strategy by reducing or preventing frustration that can occur when tasks are difficult or associated with failure.

Scaffolding is not a new concept. We use scaffolding constantly as educators, but we often do not plan the type or intensity of scaffolding to use with individual students. We also often do not plan scaffolding based on specific goals or the type of learning (acquisition, practice for fluency, generalization and maintenance). Steps in planning scaffolding include identifying

- the child’s strengths and needs,
- the child’s learning style,
- a specific activity or lesson in which the student will benefit from scaffolding,
- the expectations for academic work and/or behavior during this activity,
- the type of scaffolding the student will need to perform the task and exhibit appropriate behavior, and
- how to reduce the amount and type of scaffolding provided.

Our goal is to provide the least amount of support and the most helpful type of support the student needs to learn a skill or behavior during the early stages of
acquisition. For instance, if a student needs only a brief prompt, there is no need to provide extensive modeling and explanation. If a student can use a checklist, there is no need for the teacher to provide frequent verbal prompts and instructions. Then, as the student is able to do the task or skill independently, the teacher gradually reduces the amount and type of scaffolding he or she provides (Chandler, 2011). For example, in teaching the mnemonic ROY G. BIV, the teacher initially provided a verbal explanation of the mnemonic along with a color icon placed below the respective letters. As students were able to identify the colors, she removed the colored icon and placed the written word for each color with each letter. The teacher then removed the written words and placed only the mnemonic stimulus on the board. Finally the teacher removed the mnemonic stimulus and simply asked students to identify the colors of the rainbow.

Scaffolding is an important strategy for helping students acquire and practice a new skill or perform a task at a higher level. Scheuermann & Hall (2012) point out that the purpose of scaffolding is not to make the content easier but rather to use strategies to make the content easier to learn and to then fade those strategies as students become independent or master a new skill. The key to making scaffolding successful, like most instructional strategies, is planning. Scaffolding strategies for the whole class should be identified on lesson and unit plans, and specific strategies for individual students should be included in these as well or documented on individual student plans.

5. Use universal design for learning and provide adaptations, accommodations, and modifications.

No doubt, whatever type of classroom you have or grade you teach, you will have students with a variety of ability levels, interests, learning styles, and needs. Universal design for learning (UDL) is a proactive approach that promotes access to and participation in the general education curriculum by considering the diverse abilities, interests, learning styles, and needs of all students. UDL is adapted from the field of architecture in which the diverse needs of individuals are considered in the planning, design, and construction of products, buildings, and settings so they are accessible to all individuals. Examples of universal design include ramps for wheelchairs, braille writing in elevators, and auditory signals at streetlights.

Universal design for learning is the opposite of a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. Rather, the UDL approach recognizes and embraces diversity by adjusting the curricula, goals, and teaching and assessment strategies to meet the unique needs of each student (CAST, 2008; Center for Community Inclusion & Disability Studies, 2007; Chandler et al., 2011; Kame’enui & Simmons, 1999; Lee, Wehmeyer, Soukup, & Palmer, 2010; Orkwis, 2003). The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) website provides guidelines for UDL planning through the PALS process (Planning for All Learners). The PALS steps include the following:

- Establish goals for lesson and unit plans that are aligned to standards.
- Identify materials and methods for teaching and assessing learning outcomes.
- Develop a classroom profile that identifies
  - students’ qualities: strengths, learning style, needs, and interests and
  - how student qualities may be related to or affected by teaching materials and methods.
• Identify potential barriers to learning that might result in missed opportunities for learning.
• Identify solutions to barriers. (Adaptation, accommodation, and modification strategies are discussed in the next section.)
• Blend these into lesson and unit plans.
• Teach, evaluate, and revise as needed.

UDL allows teachers to respond to the learning needs of increasingly diverse classrooms of children by providing multiple and alternative paths to learning. Additional information about UDL is available from the following websites:

http://www.cast.org/
http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/toolkits/tk_procedures.cfm?tk_id=21
http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/
http://www.udlcenter.org/
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDvKnY0g6e4

Adaptation strategies are often used for students with disabilities, but they also may help some students without disabilities, especially in programs that implement UDL, multitiered systems of support (MTSS), or response to intervention. These strategies may be employed in general education, inclusive classrooms, resource room instruction, and self-contained classrooms and can be used during instruction and assessment. Many people use the terms adaptations, accommodations, and modification interchangeably, while others define accommodations and modifications as two distinct types of adaptation strategies. Adaptations is an umbrella term that refers to changes in the environment, instructional strategies, activities and routines, materials, and expectations that maximizes access and participation and allows students the opportunity to access educational content and achieve the same outcomes and benefits as peers who do not have disabilities (Chandler et al., 2011). The IRIS Center Module on Accommodations (n.d.) states that accommodations help a student overcome the effects of a disability while still meeting the same expectations/standards as other students. For example, a student with visual impairments could use a magnifier to read the small print in books or read a braille book. Modifications are changes in what is being taught and expected outcomes for the student. (See also Fennell, 2013; National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, n.d.) For example, a student with visual impairments may be expected to read fewer pages of a textbook and answer fewer questions than peers. Various types of adaptations are presented in Table 2–2 and are described below (Chandler et al., 2008; Yell, 2013a, b, c).

A. Amount of work the student is expected to do.
For example, Sarina names fewer pictures in a book than her peers. Davis is expected to answer four questions on his worksheet then is allowed to take a short break before completing the rest of the questions. Ben has additional enrichment activities to work on after he has completed his work.
Assumptions and Goals of Functional Assessment

B. Learning goals for activities, assignments, units plans, etc.
   For example, the general education goal for the class is to write a 15-page report on an assigned topic. The adapted goal for Sonya is to answer five specific questions about the assigned topic.

C. Amount of time the student is expected to attend, work, participate, etc. and the amount of time the student has to complete work.
   For instance, Sheldon is expected to sit in morning circle for only 5 minutes. Sam has time later in the day to finish his art project. Kelsy is given 5 additional days to complete her report.

D. Difficulty of assignments and tasks.
   For example, a teacher could simplify questions based on a child’s receptive language skills or academic skills by providing choice (e.g., Is the capital of California Sacramento or San Francisco?) versus open-ended or more difficult questions (e.g., What is the capital of California?). In another example, Sabiha, who is identified as gifted, has assignments that address her advanced level in math.

E. How instruction is delivered or how students access content.
   Strategies for altering how instruction is delivered or content accessed include the following:
   (a) Change the pace of instruction. Students who are struggling might benefit from a slower pace, while students who have mastered content or students who have problems attending might benefit from a faster pace of instruction.
   (b) Break instructions into small steps. Cali’s teacher gives multistep instructions for the assignment to the entire class. She then gives Cali a checklist that identifies each step of the instructions. Many preschool programs provide pictures that depict individual steps to follow in hand washing.
   (c) Match a student’s learning style, receptive skills, and English language skills. Ms. Wilcox pairs English and Spanish words for students who are English-language learners. Mr. Sanchez pairs pictures and words for younger children who are learning vocabulary.
   (d) Provide preteaching: Ms. Sonja reads Dora’s Eggs with Tess and Vinny before reading the book to the whole class. Mr. Grider reviews the new vocabulary words that will be included in the next theme-based unit with Lonny the day before the unit is introduced.
   (e) Adapt the level and type of assistance or scaffolding: Saul has a visual schedule to let him know what happens during the day. Kim uses

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**TABLE 2–2**

Types of adaptations

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Amount of work the student is expected to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Learning goals for activities, assignments, units plans, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Amount of time the student is expected to attend, work, participate, etc. and the amount of time the student has to complete work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Difficulty of assignments and tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>How instruction is delivered or how students access content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>Alternate means to demonstrate learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a social story to help learn how to share with peers. Zoey and Wanda work together to make signs for the doctor’s office.

F. Alternate means to demonstrate learning (bypass strategies).
Bypass strategies allow students to demonstrate learning and mastery in different ways. For instance, Sammy is allowed to record answers to test questions rather than writing the answers. Julia puts together a slide show instead of writing a book report. It is important to identify the skill that the student is expected to learn. Bypass strategies cannot be used if the skill that would be bypassed is the primary skill of instruction. For instance, a student with fine-motor delays tells a teacher the letters in her name. The teacher writes her name. This is an appropriate bypass strategy because the skill being assessed is spelling her name. It would not be appropriate if the skill being assessed were being able to write her name. Another example of a bypass strategy is allowing a student to listen to a recorded story then retell the story. This is appropriate if the skill is story comprehension, sequencing, etc. It is not appropriate if reading is the skill that is being targeted.

6. Praise and reinforce appropriate behavior and academic responses.
We discuss positive reinforcement in depth in Chapter 7 so we will only briefly discuss it in this section. This prevention strategy builds on the earlier assumption #2, which states that behavior serves a function. In the positive reinforcement function, behavior produces an outcome that is positive or desirable for the student. When this occurs, behavior that is followed by a positive outcome will continue to occur. It stands to reason, then, that if we want appropriate behavior to occur, we need to provide positive consequences following appropriate behavior (and not provide positive consequences following challenging behavior). Unfortunately this does not happen in classrooms as often as it should. For example, compliance and following instructions are often identified by teachers as important behaviors for classroom settings. Yet Rhode and colleagues (2010) state that students receive praise for following instructions only about 15% of the time.

7. Provide monitoring and supervision.
The amount of time teachers spend sitting at their desks and not attending to what students are doing is directly related to the occurrence of challenging behavior. This issue has been addressed in many early childhood education programs by placing teacher desks outside of the classroom. Effective and caring teachers move about the classroom, providing prompts, assistance, and reinforcement for appropriate social and academic behavior (Rhode et al., 2010; Conroy et al., 2008; Simonsen et al., 2008).

8. Establish a positive classroom climate and relationships with students.
Another classroom management strategy to prevent the development or occurrence of challenging behavior is to establish a positive classroom climate in which students feel included, safe, and cared for and experience success and positive student-teacher and student-student relationships (Babkie, 2006; Crimmins et al., 2007; Meadows, 2013). Can you remember a teacher who made a difference in your life or whom you still visit or talk to when possible? What characteristics did that teacher possess? What type of relationship did you have with that teacher? Often people indicate that the teachers they remember were caring, firm but fair, respectful, enthusiastic, accessible, and
helpful, and the teachers took an interest in their learning. These are the types of characteristics that lead to positive and supportive student-teacher relationships and positive peer interactions in school settings.

Effective, caring teachers understand the characteristics, learning style, strengths, and needs of each student and use these to individualize instruction and supports (Wheeler & Richey, 2014). Individualization can occur in whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction as well as in homework assignments and student goals. For instance, Mr. Vargas pairs Therese and Lawanda together during math so Lawanda can provide peer tutoring to Therese. He also reduces the number of math problems on Therese’s homework sheet, and he provides manipulatives for Therese (and other students as needed) to use to solve math problems. On the other hand, Mr. Vargas knows that one of Therese’s strengths is writing, so he assigns her to be the note taker during a small-group activity. In another example, during end-of-unit testing, Mr. Vargas allows Kyle, who has a learning disability, to use the computer (instead of the paper/pencil test the rest of the class is completing) and provides additional time for Kyle to complete the test.

In addition to using information about students to design individualized instruction and supports, effective teachers are aware of and respect the diverse beliefs, values, experiences, and needs among students and their families. Today, more than ever, teachers must be prepared to teach and care for all students including those who present linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, religious, gender, ability, and other forms of diversity. Students, especially those at younger ages, often adopt the attitudes and responses to diversity that they learn about and see in the classroom. Effective teachers model and teach respect for diversity, emphasizing the similarities among students while celebrating (as appropriate) the unique features of students.

The Importance of Planning

All of the prevention and recommended teaching strategies discussed in this section require planning. Epstein (2007) emphasizes the need for systematic planning in her description of intentional teaching. To paraphrase Epstein, intentional teachers identify goals and standards for lesson plans, unit plans, and so forth, arrange the classroom environment, select curricula, select and arrange lesson materials, select group size, plan when to work on specific content and goals, and identify teaching strategies and adaptations that will enable students to achieve goals. The intentional teacher also continually assesses student progress and makes adjustments based on assessment outcomes.

There is a clear relationship between classroom management, student behavior, and student-teacher relationships. Poor classroom management and instructional strategies can lead to challenging behavior, and challenging behavior can have a negative impact on positive student-teacher relationships (Meadows, 2013). For example, Sanchez Fowler, Banks, Anhalt, Hinrichs Der, and Kalis (2008) examined the relationship between elementary education teachers’ ratings of student social/behavior functioning and academic performance and the quality of teacher-student relationships. They reported that higher ratings of challenging behavior were associated with lower quality student-teacher relationships and lower ratings of academic performance. Therefore, strategies to prevent and reduce the occurrence of challenging behavior may be critical to establishing high-quality student-teacher relationships.
The classroom management and teaching strategies in this section complement intervention plans based on functional assessment for individual students. For example, Trussell, Lewis, and Stichter (2008) reported that targeted classroom management interventions reduced challenging behavior for three students in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th/5th grades. They reported additional decreases in challenging behavior for each student when they introduced positive intervention strategies based on information gained from functional assessment. Lee and colleagues (2010) also reported higher levels of engagement and fewer challenging behaviors for 45 high school students when classroom management and curricular modifications were provided. Positive classroom management strategies should be a first step used in all classrooms to prevent challenging behavior and provide support for appropriate behavior (Meadows, 2013; Sayeski & Brown, 2011; Vaughn & Bos, 2012).

FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT APPROACH

Although this is not an assumption of our functional assessment and intervention model, we feel it is important to point out that we support the goals of the relatively recent, expanded approach for addressing challenging behavior called Positive Behavior Support (PBS). We see the functional assessment and positive, function-based intervention approach discussed in this text as congruent with much of the PBS philosophy and practices but also recognize that PBS is broader than the functional assessment and intervention model presented here. The Association for PBS describes the PBS approach. The PBS approach uses information from social, behavioral, and biomedical science to prevent and reduce challenging behavior and improve the quality of life. Positive Behavior Support can be used to address the needs of individual students or it may be applied class-wide, school-wide, or systems-wide. The effectiveness of the PBS approach has been documented for individual and class, school, and systems-wide levels (APBS, 2011). The key here is that PBS seeks to not only reduce challenging behavior but to improve the quality of life for individuals and their families and other stakeholders such as teachers and peers (Carr, 2002, 2007; Lucyshyn, Horner, Dunlap, Albin, & Ben, 2002; Thompson, 2007). As such, families and stakeholders, as well as the person with challenging behavior, are all important members of the team and the focus of planning is on “addressing multiple dimensions that define quality of life” (Thompson, 2007, p. 131). Intervention plans must address challenging behavior in a proactive, positive, and effective manner using evidence-based strategies; respect the dignity and values of all team members; promote the person’s capabilities and the capabilities of those who participate in intervention; and expand the person’s opportunities to participate in school, home, and community life (Koegel, Koegel, & Dunlap, 1996). A thorough description of PBS is beyond the scope and focus of this book, but additional information can be obtained from the Association for PBS website (www.apbs.org) and the Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions. Chapter 12 provides information about a system-focused PBS model. In this model, PBS is developed and implemented school-wide and consists of multilayered levels of prevention designed to meet the needs of students, families, and school personnel. School-wide PBS programs have been employed in numerous school districts throughout the United States, and there is a growing body of research documenting their effectiveness in preventing and addressing challenging behavior.
SUMMARY

When teams employ the functional assessment and intervention model to address challenging behavior, they should understand and adopt the assumptions and goals that are essential to this model. Functional assessment is built on four assumptions concerning the development and maintenance of appropriate and challenging behaviors. These assumptions are that behavior is supported by the current environment, behavior serves a function, challenging behavior can be changed with positive interventions that address the function of the behavior, and functional assessment should be a team-based endeavor. These assumptions direct the focus of assessment and intervention. They lead to an assessment and intervention model that focuses on the settings in which challenging behavior currently occurs and a model that identifies and addresses the function of behavior.

The two goals of functional assessment also are fundamental to understanding and addressing challenging behavior. The first goal of functional assessment should be to anticipate and prevent challenging behavior by arranging environments that support appropriate behavior and employing positive classroom management, support, and effective teaching strategies. We do recognize, however, that not all challenging behavior can be anticipated and prevented. When this occurs, the goal of functional assessment is to remediate challenging behavior through positive strategies. We do this by (a) removing support for challenging behavior and providing support for appropriate replacement behavior that achieves the same function (i.e., positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, or sensory regulation/sensory stimulation) or by (b) decreasing support for challenging behavior that is maintained by negative reinforcement (i.e., escape or avoidance) and increasing support for appropriate replacement behavior that is maintained by positive reinforcement.

CASE STUDY: Identify the Function of Behavior and Analyze Intervention Strategies

Case Study Provided by Catherine McLain

Jada

Jada is a young African American girl with a primary diagnosis of mental retardation and a secondary diagnosis of speech and language delay. She was also diagnosed with a vision impairment. Jada was enrolled in a full-day regular education kindergarten program with a full-time teaching assistant. She receives services from the special education facilitator, speech and language pathologist, itinerant vision teacher, and social worker. Jada’s skills were very low across all domains. Socially she exhibited poor interaction skills with peers and adults. She could be very argumentative; she talked back to adults and called them derogatory names. She talked a lot about not liking boys, and there was some sexual acting out with dolls (these issues were addressed by the social worker).

Jada’s favorite activities were playing with dolls or in the housekeeping area, playing with games and electronic toys, and eating. In fact, Jada only wanted to play at school. She resisted any type of tasks that were academically or preacademically oriented or teacher directed. She would throw tantrums, cry, hit, refuse to participate, and run from the teacher when requests were made. Prior to functional assessment, the teacher placed Jada in time-out when she engaged in these
behaviors. Jada usually sat quietly in time-out, and the teacher noted that it seemed to have no impact on Jada’s behavior.

Jada also had difficulty transitioning from home to school and starting school work. She spent a good part of each morning crying, running away, hitting others, name calling, and refusing to participate in activities or begin work. She exhibited the same types of behaviors when working with the special educator, itinerant vision teacher, and speech pathologist. Her teacher, teaching assistant, and others noted that they were exhausted trying to deal with Jada’s behavior. Jada was not progressing socially, academically, or behaviorally. The kindergarten inclusion team made the referral for behavioral support.

The ABC chart for Jada supported their reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents and Setting Events</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE class, told to take a turn</td>
<td>Screams, lies on floor</td>
<td>Teacher moves to different child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request to participate in</td>
<td>Runs away</td>
<td>Teaching assistant runs after her, brings her to circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calendar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assistant brings</td>
<td>Hits teaching assistant</td>
<td>Put in time-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her to circle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-out</td>
<td>Sits quietly</td>
<td>No interaction, no instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers play, free choice</td>
<td>Plays with dolls</td>
<td>Left alone, has fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story time, told to come to</td>
<td>Refuses, calls teacher</td>
<td>Ignored, told she could not come to story time if she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>names</td>
<td>was going to use bad language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Sits quietly and eats</td>
<td>Praise, conversation with teaching assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request to do school work</td>
<td>Crawls under table</td>
<td>Told to sit in time-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-out</td>
<td>Sits quietly</td>
<td>No interaction, no instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>Plays on swing, talks</td>
<td>Peer interaction, has fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to teacher and peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech therapy, asked to</td>
<td>Tantrum, hits speech</td>
<td>Speech therapy ends early, return to classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name pictures</td>
<td>pathologist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A team of service providers working with Jada implemented the following intervention strategies. First, they decided that an appropriate replacement behavior would be for Jada to participate in teacher-directed or academic activities. They initially reduced the amount of time Jada was expected to participate in activities to between 2 and 5 minutes. Second, the team developed a break card to indicate to Jada that she would get a break, during which she could choose an activity, after participating for the short period of time. The break picture was placed on Jada’s visual schedule next to the activity that she was being asked to complete. In addition, the team developed a simple tab system that was numbered with covers attached with hook-and-loop fasteners. This was used to
indicate the number of minutes Jada was expected to participate before she earned a break. Each minute tab was covered after it had passed.

| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Jada was able to earn pennies for each covered tab; these were traded at the end of the short activity for the break card. The team also developed picture cues using a digital camera to indicate appropriate behavior that was expected during PE activities, and they used three Boardmaker pictures (no hitting, sit, and work time) that provided a visual system to remind Jada of expectations during academic and preacademic activities. Finally, all team members provided praise for appropriate behavior. As Jada’s behavior improved and she was able to remain on task for short periods of time, the amount of on-task time that was required before earning a break was increased.

These strategies increased appropriate on-task behavior and participation and decreased Jada’s challenging behavior.

1. Both challenging and appropriate behaviors are triggered and supported by the current environment. Provide a summary statement to describe the antecedent triggers and consequences for Jada’s appropriate behavior before functional assessment and intervention.

2. Provide a summary statement to describe the antecedent triggers and consequences for Jada’s challenging behavior.

3. What is the function of Jada’s challenging behavior?

4. Explain how the intervention strategies employed provided antecedent triggers and consequences for appropriate behavior and how they were changed to address her challenging behavior.