Behavioral Observation

Cindy Pirani
IDEAL Consulting
Goals for Today

- What does it mean to define a problem?
- Present the big ideas of learning to think functionally
  - Setting Events
  - Antecedents
  - Behavior
  - Consequences
- Briefly review basic elements of functional assessment and observation
- Understand how behavioral observation relates to BIP progress monitoring and outcome assessment
What is Problem Behavior?

- Problem behavior is a discrepancy between student behavior and expected performance.
- Therefore . . . We must not only identify what the problem behavior is but also the desired or expected behavior.
How is a problem behavior identified?

- Teacher Report
- Parent Report
- Student Report
- Direct/Indirect Observation
- Academic Performance Data
When looking at problems functionally, what do they entail?

**Setting Events**
Setting Events are ecological conditions in place at the time of problem occurrence.

**Antecedents**
Antecedents are events that set the stage for the occurrence of the problem.

**Behaviors**
The Problem Behavior.

**Consequences**
Consequences that serve to reinforce or maintain the problem behavior.
THE PROBLEM SOLVING MODEL
Problem Identification

- Pinpointing current behavior problem
- Entails objectifying and quantifying the problem so it is
  - Observable
  - Measurable
  - Repeatable
- Having a reasonable understanding of the ABC’s of the problem behavior
Reasons for collecting data

- To certify and further understand a problem
- To determine the efficacy of a particular instructional strategy or intervention
- Allows for ongoing and outcome evaluation of instruction or intervention
- Collecting and reporting of data is the ultimate tool of accountability
- Data assists in defining our goals
What is wrong with these identified problems? What additional data is needed

1. Billy refuses to sit down and is constantly out of his seat!
2. Sally is very poor at math!
3. Sandra is always off task!
4. Andy is disruptive in class.
5. Carrie throws tantrums all day long!
6. Jose is lazy!
What information is imperative in appropriately identifying and intervening with problem behavior?

- Student past and projected rate of development
- Student physical and communicative capabilities
- Skills needed to appropriately function in the educational environment.
- Does this child have skills needed?
- Prerequisites required for obtaining identified skills
- Functional utility of skills
How to get additional data to solidify a problem:

- Interviews with teachers, students, and parents
- Functional Assessment Interview
- Direct Observation
  - Frequency Count
  - Scatter Plot
  - Narrative Recording / Sequence Analysis
  - Duration Recording
  - Latency Recording
  - The B.O.S.S.
- Indirect Observation
  - Permanent Products
The Problem Identification

- A discrepancy between expectations and student performance is first identified.

- Attempts are made at this time to objectify the identified problem by utilizing data and clearly identifying the discrepancy between expectations and actual student performance.
If enough information has been gathered to produce a viable intervention, the following will have been identified:

- A observable and measureable target behavior
- Potential events related to behaviors
- A hypothesis for why the behavior is occurring
- Occurrence of behavior
- Non occurrence
- Antecedents
- Consequences
DIRECT OBSERVATION

- Information guided by interview
- Use of direct observation of behavior
  - Narrative recording / Sequence analysis
  - Frequency counts
  - The classroom behavior report card
  - Latency and duration recordings
- Importance of behavioral descriptors
  - Avoid higher order inferences – no feelings!!!
- Guidelines for number & length of observations
  - Minimum of 10 minutes, over 2-3 days, different settings
Observation

- Should be representative of student’s behavior
- There should be observations of a minimum of 3 occurrences of target behavior
- Information regarding the time of day should be included as well as the setting of target behavior occurrence
- Information on non-occurrence
- Record of antecedents and consequence
DIRECT OBSERVATION: Frequency Count

- A frequency count documents the occurrence of specific episodes of behavior

- Examples:
  - Making tally marks every time a student gets up out of their seat without permission
  - Putting paperclips from one pocket to another to document the number of times a student talks out without permission
DIRECT OBSERVATION: Frequency Count

- Advantages:
  - Ease of data collection
  - Accuracy
  - No need to interrupt lessons
  - Can be used for many behaviors

- Not appropriate for
  - VERY high frequency behavior
  - Continuous behavior
Which one of the following situations would you use a frequency count?

1. Betsy is extremely disruptive in class?
2. Joseph is off task frequently
3. Sally relies too much on teacher support in her frequent asking of questions
4. Boris throws tantrums several times a day
5. Billy talks out without raising his hand

What is your answer??
DIRECT OBSERVATION: Scatter Plott

- Designed to be utilized with frequency counts intended to help identify those times of day/setting that may be more problematic for students
- Scatter plot form
- Easy to administer and can be completed by teachers
- Assets and costs similar to frequency counts
- However; your target behavior must be observable and measurable!!!!!!
Classroom Behavior Report Card

- Similar to Check-in system with a well defined behaviors and a rating scale for various times of day
- A ruberic to qualify each of the indicators
- Can be utilized to both define problematic behavior but also to set goals and monitor progress
DIRECT OBSERVATION:
Narrative Recording / Sequence Analysis

- Observation of student in a setting identified as problematic (Could be a setting identified though scatter plot)
- Recording everything the targeted student says and does and to whom or what for approximately 10-15 minutes.
- Clearly differentiate between fact and interpretation of what is being observed
- Provide temporal indicators so as to be able to judge duration
- Clearly identify setting events, activities, etc.
DIRECT OBSERVATION:
Narrative Recording / Sequence Analysis

Questions following observation:

- What are the behaviors that can be described as inappropriate?
- Is this behavior occurring frequently, or has a unique occurrence been identified?
- Can reinforcement or punishment of the behavior be identified?
- Is there a pattern to these consequences?
- Can antecedents to the behavior(s) be identified?
DIRECT OBSERVATION: Narrative Recording / Sequence Analysis

- Questions following observation:
  - Is there a pattern that can be identified for certain events or stimuli that consistently precede the behavior’s occurrence
  - Are there recurrent chains of certain antecedents, behaviors and consequences/
  - Given the identified inappropriate behavior(s), of the student and the patterns of antecedents and consequences, what behavior really needs to be modified, and who is engaging in the behavior?
Narrative Recording Example:

The children enter the classroom and get in line to wash their hands meanwhile Billy walks around the classroom and finally sits on the rug. Ms. L asks Billy if he has washed his hands. Billy replies no. Ms. L directs Billy to wash his hands. Billy gets up and gets into line. Billy touches a student in front of him. The student touches Billy back and smiles.

Billy waits in line. When his turn arrives, Billy takes some soap with another child and washes his hands. Billy then takes a towel from the dispenser, dries his hands then throws it away.

Billy then returns to the rug where the majority of other students are sitting in a circle facing the teacher. Billy then tells the teacher that they had fun in gym today. The teacher responds “What did you play”. Another student pipes in stating that they had played with a parachute. Ms. L then directs Billy to move closer to her pointing to a spot to the left of her on the rug. Billy moves. Another student in the class continues to discuss the activity in p.e. class. Billy then adds additional information about the activity. The teacher responds by stating yes and nodding and then Billy continues talking.
Sequence Analysis Example:

- See form
DIRECT OBSERVATION:
Uses of Narrative Recording & Sequence Analysis

- Helpful for when the antecedents, consequences and function of behaviors are not well understood
- Helpful for when a more detailed topography (description) of the behavior is necessary to establish a working definition of problem behavior
- Helps establish the most appropriate way to observe the behavior in the future – establish baseline and monitor progress
DIRECT OBSERVATION: Duration Recording

- Recording (timing) the length of time a student engages in a behavior.
- Used to quantify or measure
  - The amount of time a student is off task
  - Talking to a neighbor
  - Engaging in math homework
DIRECT OBSERVATION:
In which one of these instances would you use duration recording?

1. Billy is frequently talking to his neighbors and not doing his school work
2. Sally is frequently looking out of the window and not paying attention to lessons
3. Pablo yells to students across the room when he wants someone’s attention
4. Jorge takes an inordinate amount of time to engage in requested activities when provided with a direction.

What is your answer??
DIRECT OBSERVATION: Latency Recording

- Recording (timing) the length of time it takes a student to engage in a behavior following a direction.
- Used to quantify or measure:
  - The amount of time it takes a student to start his homework once provided with a direction.
  - The amount of time it takes a student to engage in class-work once provided with a direction.
DIRECT OBSERVATION:
In which one of these situations would you use a latency procedure?

1. Betsy is extremely interrupts class by calling out without permission
2. Joseph is off task frequently
3. Sally relies too much on teacher support in her frequently asking the teacher questions
4. Boris throws tantrums several times a day
5. Billy takes too long to put away his coat in the morning

What is your answer?
INDIRECT OBSERVATION: Permanent Product

- A permanent product is something tangible that can help to establish the occurrence or non-occurrence of a behavior.

- Examples:
  - Number of spelling words completed
  - Homework completed
  - Class-work completed
What is wrong with these identified problems? For the refined problems what data collection tools would you use?

1. Billy refuses to sit down and is constantly out of his seat!
2. Sally is very poor at math!
3. Sandra is always off task!
4. Andy is disruptive in class.
5. Carrie throws tantrums all day long!
6. Jose is lazy!
THE NEXT STEP:

- In some instances you can use the data to identify the problem
- Utilize gathered data as baseline to compare future performance against
- Establish reasonable goals keeping in mind both the problem and long term expected performance
- Develop appropriate intervention considering the ABC’s and setting events.
- Monitor progress
Disclaimer !!!

- While these tools are very valuable they should not be utilized alone to make high stakes decisions about students – Convergent data is a must!!!!

- One observation is frequently not enough!!!

- Ask how typical the class and the student behavior was on that day -