THE FIRST STEP TO BEHAVIOR CHANGE: SELECT AND DEFINE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR(S)

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LEARNER OBJECTIVES

1. Participant will know why professionals collect data.
2. Participant will know how to gather information before selecting and defining the problem behavior.
3. Participant will be able to write a measurable behavior definition.
4. Participant will be able to use the definition to collect data.
**Why Do People Collect Data?**

Think of three different ways these professionals collect data:

- doctors
- contractors
- football coaches
- meteorologists

Now, why do we, who work with children in education, collect data?

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**Why Do We Collect Data?**

As Educators, we collect data to determine

*if there is a problem either with behavior or skill acquisition, *the scope of the problem, *how to intervene, *and if our intervention is working!

*This gives us credibility as professionals and makes us accountable.*
**Why Do We Collect Data?**

So we can describe behavior under current conditions

(www.kidslovelyn.com)  (www.mentalhealthy.co.uk)

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**Why Do We Collect Data?**

To learn more about the behavior such as frequency or severity

(www.ocean.edu)  (www.garnetvalleyschools.com)
WHY DO WE COLLECT DATA?

To determine the antecedents and consequences (ABC's)

Don’t eat all those cookies!

That’s ok! You can stay home, honey.

I’m sick!

(www.seacoastonline.com)  (www.elgin-eagles.org)

So we can make comparisons and predictions about behavior

(www.wereadbetter.com)
Think of a child you know who is experiencing significant behavioral problems in school. You have been asked to assist the team in developing interventions.

Where do you start?

**Steps in the Data-Collecting Process**

Step 1: Select and define the behavior(s)
Step 2: Obtain a baseline measure and assess eco-behavioral variables
Step 3: Evaluate data to guide choice of intervention
Step 4: Continue to gather data during intervention to determine progress
IF YOU WANT CHANGE

You need to know what you are changing!

WHAT ARE YOU CHANGING?

Select and define the behavior
SELECTING THE BEHAVIOR TO CHANGE

- Interview significant others
- Interview the student
- Ask for anecdotal notes and other forms of data from the teacher
- Use checklists or standardized tests
- Observe directly
- Use Antecedent Behavior Consequence (ABC) form

SELECTING THE BEHAVIOR TO CHANGE

- Choose behaviors to change that have the most impact on the student's well being
- Choose behaviors that can be addressed at school
- Think of the terminal behaviors or long term goal
- Think of intermediate steps to the long term goal
- Both need to be selected and defined

Remember: Clarity at this step will make each of the following steps much easier to implement
DEFINING THE BEHAVIOR TO CHANGE

Use Objective and Measurable Terms

Are these terms objective and measurable?

Hyperactive  Impulsive
Aggressive  Lazy
Angry  Oppositional

(www.huffingtonpost.co.uk)  (www.dailymail.co.uk)

DEFINING THE BEHAVIOR TO CHANGE

Specify the Onset and Offset

Every behavior has a clear beginning, middle and end. We refer to the beginning and end of a behavior as the onset and offset. In order to accurately record the behavior, we often need to specify the onset and the offset.

For example, when collecting data on how long it takes a student to start a task once the teacher has given instructions, we must first define when the behavior "starting a task" begins. Is it when the student orients their head toward the materials, uses their hands to manipulate the assigned activity in the way it was meant to be or both?
**Defining the Behavior to Change**

Should the Behavior be Defined as an Episode?

If a definition includes multiple behaviors (e.g. tantrum) or describes a "rapid-fire" behavior (e.g., head banging) it is better to define the behavior as an episode. The onset and offset of episodes can be specified by putting a time variable on it.

Disruptive behavior: licking her hand and attempting to or wiping of saliva on others, licking others, taking off clothes, and running in the classroom or hallways. These behaviors will be counted as one episode until a period of 30 seconds passes with no problem behaviors. Any new instance after 30 seconds of no disruption will be counted as a new episode.

**Ogden Lindsley’s “Dead Man’s Test”...**

*If a dead man can do it, it ain't behavior. And if a dead man can't do it, then it is behavior.*
NON-EXAMPLES OF DEFINITIONS

“Failing to respond to teacher’s request to get up from the floor.”

"Susan repeats everything you say to her."

"Maggie bothers her neighbor especially if it is a boy."

"Alisha has sloppy handwriting."

"Bobby acts grumpy when you ask him to do something he doesn't want to do."

“Jim is noncompliant during math time.”

LET'S PRACTICE STEP 1! VIDEO ACTIVITY: WRITING A DEFINITION

STEPS:
1. Decide what you will include in definition.
2. Compose a written draft.
3. Try out the draft definition by measuring the behavior
4. Complete an inter-observer agreement if possible
5. Modify as necessary and measure again.
WATCH VIDEO TO CHOOSE AND DEFINE BEHAVIOR

WATCH VIDEO AND TAKE DATA ON BEHAVIOR
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