

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A NEW MODEL FOR FUNCTIONAL  
BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENTS INCORPORATING POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL  
SUPPORTS AT A NATIVE AMERICAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of  
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in School Psychology.

By

Hillary Jane Bailey

Director: Dr. John Habel  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Psychology Department

Committee Members: Dr. Lori Unruh, School Psychology  
Dr. Lisa Bloom, Education

July 2009

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Literature Review.....	6
Functional Behavioral Assessment.....	7
Elements of a Functional Behavioral Assessment.....	9
Positive Behavioral Support.....	10
Limitations of FBA and PBS Based on a Behaviorist Approach.....	13
Ecological Model.....	14
The Constructivist Approach.....	15
Constructivism and the Functional Behavioral Assessment.....	17
Native American Culture.....	18
Qualitative Research.....	20
Interviews.....	21
Participant Observations.....	22
Case Study.....	23
Participatory Action Research.....	23
Statement of the Problem.....	24
Method.....	25
Participants.....	25
Procedure.....	26
Participatory Action Research.....	26
Interviews.....	26
Designing of New Model.....	29
Results.....	36
Assessment Phase.....	36
Teacher Interviews (Exploratory).....	36
Intervention Phase.....	39
Selection of Student Participants.....	40
Interviews with the Student Participants' Teachers.....	40
Interviews with the Seventh Grade Student Participants' Teachers.....	41
Interviews with the Eighth Grade Student Participants' Teachers.....	43
Observations of the Student Participants.....	45
Observations of the Seventh Grade Student Participant.....	45
Observations of the Eighth Grade Student Participant.....	53
Interviews with the Student Participants.....	61
Interview with the Seventh Grade Student Participant.....	62
Interview with the Eighth Grade Student Participant.....	63
Designing of the New FBA Form.....	64
Staff-Development with Teachers.....	65
Training of Special Education Teachers.....	68
Discussion.....	71

Current Research in FBA.....	71
Current Study.....	72
Limitations of the Current Study and Implications for the Future.....	76
References.....	79
Appendices.....	84
Appendix A: Informed Consent for Teachers.....	84
Appendix B: Informed Consent for Parents.....	85
Appendix C: Assent Form for Students.....	86
Appendix D: New FBA Form.....	87
Appendix E: Agenda for Presentation to Teachers.....	89
Appendix F: FBA Form for Seventh Grade Student Participant.....	90
Appendix G: FBA Form for Eighth Grade Student Participant.....	92
Appendix H: Interventions for the Seventh Grade Student Based.....	94
Appendix I: Interventions for the Eighth Grade Student Based on the FBA.....	96

## ABSTRACT

Designing and Implementing a New Model for Functional Behavior Assessments

Incorporating Positive Behavioral Supports at a Native American Middle School

Hillary Jane Bailey

Western Carolina University (July 2009)

Director: Dr. John Habel

The 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have mandated the use of functional behavioral assessments and recommended the implementation of positive behavioral supports when developing behavior intervention plans for students exhibiting problem behaviors. However, functional behavioral assessments are traditionally based primarily on a behaviorist perspective, which overlooks the internal or cognitive processes operating within the student. The current study was conducted in order to design and implement a new model for conducting functional behavioral assessments based on a constructivist approach, which is derived from the ecological model of viewing student behavior and takes into account external as well as internal processes when assessing student behavior. In order to design behavior intervention plans incorporating positive behavioral supports, it is necessary to assess student behavior using a constructivist approach as well as a behaviorist approach. The study was conducted in a Native American Middle School in the South Eastern United States. The constructivist approach is more aligned with the cultural beliefs of the Native Americans than is the behaviorist approach.

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study was to incorporate a constructivist approach into a model for dealing with student problem behaviors. This report begins with an exploration of the literature in this area. First a discussion of federal regulations is presented with information on the context of the study, which is in a Native American middle school. Next, functional behavioral assessments and positive behavioral supports are described including information regarding the procedures that are used in schools for conducting functional behavioral assessments and implementing positive behavioral supports. Following this is a discussion of an expanded model for conducting these procedures that incorporates a constructivist approach. Also, the rationale for the use of a constructivist approach for conducting functional behavioral assessments in the Native American culture is presented, which includes information about Native America culture and how constructivism is compatible with the beliefs and values of that culture. Qualitative methodology is briefly discussed at the conclusion of the literature review.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The common practice of controlling student behaviors through the use of punitive measures does not seem to be very effective in reducing student problem behaviors (Butchart, 1998). Using only punishment-oriented strategies has “been ineffective in creating more sustained positive school climates that prevent the development and occurrence of antisocial behavior in schools” (Sugai & Horner, 2002). “In the long term, reactive and punishment-based responses create a false sense of security, environments of authoritarian control are established, antisocial behavior events are inadvertently reinforced, and most importantly, the school’s primary function to provide opportunities for teaching and academic engagement is decreased” (Sugai & Horner, 2002). This could be because these methods are overused, so students who continually exhibit problem behaviors become gradually unaffected by the punishments (Butchart, 1998). Also, in order for a behavior change to occur, the changes must be internalized by students, which does not happen when using only external controls (Jenkins, 1996). For example, the use of only punishment or reinforcement techniques without the consideration of students’ internal thought processes will likely not cause a change in behaviors; and if it does, it is probable that the change will not be permanent. As a result of this lack of effectiveness using punishments, an approach to dealing with difficult behaviors focusing on decreasing problem behaviors and replacing them with pro-social behaviors is becoming more widely used in schools (National Association of School Psychologists, 2001). This

approach incorporates the use of functional behavioral assessments and positive behavioral supports (PBS).

The 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) first introduced and the 2004 IDEA reauthorization continued the requirement that the individualized education plan (IEP) team must develop a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) for any student with behavioral problems that interfere with his or her learning (Klotz & Nealis, 2005). Also, the BIP must be based on findings from a functional behavioral assessment so as to meet the individual needs of the student and to increase the likelihood that the intervention is successful in decreasing the problem behaviors (Klotz & Nealis, 2005). The BIP could incorporate punishment strategies, such as loss of privileges, verbal reprimands, or physical restraints in order to decrease the problem behaviors, or the BIP could involve the use of strategies designed to increase the use of more socially acceptable behaviors by the student (Gable, Quinn, Rutherford, & Howell, 1998). The latter of these strategies is the use of positive behavioral supports. The IEP team must at least consider the use of positive behavioral support strategies in the designing of the BIP for the student. However, the team is not required to use positive behavioral supports when this strategy is deemed inappropriate for the presenting problems (Klotz & Nealis, 2005). Therefore, while federal guidelines do not require the use of positive behavioral supports, they recommend this strategy be used if at all possible within school systems (Turnbull, Wilcox, Stowe, & Turnbull, 2001).

#### *Functional Behavioral Assessment*

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is used to gather information about antecedents, behaviors, and consequences to determine the function a problem behavior

serves (Barnhill, 2005). Indirect and direct methods such as interviews, direct observations, archival records, and behavior rating scales are used to collect this information (Watson, Gresham, & Skinner, 2001). The ultimate objective of a FBA is to understand the purpose of problem behaviors for a student and then develop an effective intervention to decrease or eliminate problem behaviors in order to replace them with more pro-social behaviors (Barnhill, 2005). The FBA focuses on environmental stimuli or conditions that serve to maintain problem behaviors and these environmental factors are altered in order to decrease or eliminate the incidence of problem behaviors (Watson, Gresham, & Skinner, 2001). Therefore, the focus of a FBA is in the context in which a behavior does or does not occur, not the behavior itself (Watson, Gresham, & Skinner, 2001). For example, if a student was continually displaying outbursts in class while the teacher was instructing, then a FBA would be conducted in order to determine what variables in the student's environment are working to create and/or maintain this behavior. It may be found through observations that he or she is receiving positive reinforcement from other students or that the teacher gives the student attention when he or she engages in the outbursts during class. Once the environmental factors have been identified, then an intervention would be designed that addresses these external stimuli by changing the student's environment, which would in turn lead to the decrease or elimination of these problem behaviors.

Functional behavioral assessment is derived from applied behavior analysis (ABA), which is rooted in behaviorism (Watson, Gresham, & Skinner, 2001). Applied behavior analysis is based on the assumption that behavior is influenced by consequences (Jackson & Panyan, 2002). These consequences of behavior serve either as reinforcers or

punishers. Reinforcers, when presented or removed after a behavior has occurred, increase the likelihood of a particular behavior occurring again. Punishers, when presented after a behavior, decrease the likelihood of that behavior in the future (Barnhill, 2005). Applied behavior analysis views behaviors as learned; therefore problem behaviors can be unlearned and replaced with more adaptive behaviors (Jackson & Panyan, 2002). Thus, the frequency of particular behaviors can be increased or decreased through the use of reinforcers and punishers.

According to the behaviorist perspective, a student's behavior is reinforced by elements present in his or her environment, such as his or her teacher or other students in the classroom (Barnhill, 2005). The function or purpose of a behavior often falls into one of three categories: to get attention from others; to obtain a desired outcome, such as tantrumming until a certain toy is obtained; or to escape from an undesirable academic or social situation. The function of the behavior must be determined, next the reinforcement of the behavior must be extinguished, and lastly, when the behavior becomes problematic, it must be replaced with a more pro-social behavior that performs the same function as the problem behavior (Barnhill, 2005). This process must be followed in order to increase the likelihood that the problem behavior will be extinguished. The more systematic the approach taken to end the problem behavior, the greater the likelihood the problem will be accurately assessed and an effective intervention devised to decrease or eliminate the problem behavior.

*Elements of a functional behavioral assessment.* A functional behavioral assessment consists of a collection of procedures designed to determine the function of a student's problem behaviors in order to develop an effective intervention (Witt, Daly, &

Noell, 2000). There are several elements used: interviews, archival data, direct observations, and behavior checklists. Teachers, parents and the student are interviewed in order to gain background information to be used in the development of an intervention. Archival data also are obtained in order to get insight into background information, such as when the problem behavior started, if there have been any former services given, and if there are any health problems that could be linked to the occurrence of the problem behavior. Direct behavioral observations are then done in the student's environment in which the problem behavior is occurring (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). For example, a student's behavior can be observed in such areas as the classroom and playground areas. During these observation sessions, the antecedents and consequences are recorded along with the student's problem behavior. A behavioral checklist also can be completed in order to determine the frequency and duration of the problem behavior. The results of these procedures are then compiled and interpreted in order to develop an appropriate intervention (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). The intervention incorporates the positive behavioral support approach, which focuses on replacing problem behaviors with more pro-social behaviors (NASP, 2001).

### *Positive Behavioral Support*

Positive behavioral support (PBS) is an approach used after completing a FBA. Positive behavioral support, like FBA, also is based on behaviorist theory. Once the function or purpose of a problem behavior is identified, PBS is used to eliminate or reduce the problem behavior by decreasing the functionality of that problem behavior and increasing the functionality of a more adaptive or positive behavior (NASP, 2001). This is done by altering the environmental stimuli of the student (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000).

Positive behavioral support emphasizes changing environmental conditions, such as physical setting, reinforcements, task demands, instructional rates, and the curriculum. This is done instead of implementing punitive measures for dealing with problem behaviors, such as suspension. Moreover, aversive punishments have been found to be ineffective for decreasing problem behaviors and unsuccessful in keeping students out of the juvenile justice system (NASP, 2001). The PBS approach, on the other hand, has been shown to help decrease problem behaviors and promote positive behaviors (NASP, 2001; Tobin, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 2002). By determining the function problem behaviors are serving for these students, these behaviors can be replaced with more socially appropriate behaviors, which can be used to serve the same purpose for the students (NASP, 2001). PBS interventions are proactive, are an attempt to prevent problem behaviors by altering a situation before problems escalate, and to teach appropriate alternatives to engaging in the problem behaviors (Carr, Horner, Turnbull, Marquis, McLaughlin, McAree, Smith, Ryan, Ruef, Doolabh, & Braddock, 1999 as cited in Safran & Oswald, 2003).

Positive behavioral support is usually divided into four different levels in the school setting (Safran & Oswald, 2003). First, is the school-wide level which involves programs for all students such as an anti-bullying program initiated throughout an entire school. The next level involves programs designed specific, non-classroom areas of a school such as the gymnasium or the cafeteria. The third level involves classroom-level intervention programs such as behavior management in individual classrooms. The final level involves interventions with individual students who have continual behavior problems. This individual level of PBS intervention will be the focus of the current study.

Student problem behaviors can result from skill deficits, lack of motivation, or simply environmental factors such as classroom management or consequences of their behaviors (Gable et al., 1998). The FBA may determine that a student's problem behavior is the result of a skills deficit. The student could be engaging in the problem behaviors in order to escape or avoid certain situations in which these skills are needed to perform a task such as reading aloud or working in a group (Gable et al., 1998). An example of this could be that a student yells at or fights with other students at lunch and as a result is required to eat lunch alone. The student could be using his or her problem behaviors to avoid having to interact with other students as he or she lacks social skills. Positive behavioral support strategies would be used to increase the student's ability to engage in the skills in which he or she is lacking, such as helping the student to acquire social skills (Gable et al., 1998). Once the student's deficit in social skills has been addressed, he or she should no longer engage in yelling and fighting in order to avoid social situations.

The FBA also could also determine that a student's problem behavior is the result of a lack of motivation (Gable et al., 1998). Students sometimes engage in problem behaviors, such as refusing to complete academic work or sleeping through class, because they see no reason to not to do so (Gable et al., 1998). An example of this could be that a student refuses to complete his or her assignments, not because he or she is unable to do the work, but because he or she is not motivated to do it. A PBS plan for this student could involve the use of a rewards system for completing the assignments or the plan could help the student to see the importance of finishing his or her assignments (Gable et al., 1998).

An FBA also could find that a student engages in problem behaviors due to environmental factors, such as the classroom management strategies of the teacher or the workload put onto a student (Gable et al., 1998). For example, a student could be seated in the classroom beside a window to the playground which causes the student to become distracted during class. Or a student might not be able to complete the amount of work the teacher has assigned. In this case, these factors could be eliminated or altered in order to decrease the student's engagement in problem behaviors (Gable et al., 1998). For example, if a student were looking out of the window while he or she is supposed to be concentrating on an assignment, then certain changes in the classroom environment could be made in order to eliminate this problem behavior. The student's desk could be moved away from the window and pointed toward the board so he or she is more likely to concentrate on assignments (Gable et al., 1998).

#### *Limitations of FBA and PBS Based on a Behaviorist Approach*

The focus of a behaviorist approach to decreasing problem behavior is on the environmental or external causes of problem behaviors. This view largely overlooks the internal processes, the thoughts and cognitions, influencing a student's behavior. Kohn (1993) has raised some criticisms of the behaviorist approach to dealing with problem behaviors. He contends that students have difficulties generalizing from one situation to another when only external control of behavior is used. In school, students will not always have people to impose consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Students must, therefore, learn why they should exhibit appropriate behaviors. For example, a student who consistently gets into fights with other students may be punished by the school, but the student must learn why fighting is not a good way to resolve conflict. Also, the

student needs to learn more socially appropriate ways to handle disagreements. While punishment (external) may temporarily stop the inappropriate behavior, teaching the student more pro-social behaviors will cause an internal change which in turn increases the likelihood of the change being long-term. In order to thrive in the world, students must learn to engage in internal control of their behaviors. Furthermore, Kohn (1993) states that in the behavioral approach the changes made in behavior could be short-term because there could be little or no internal change within the student, just a change in the student's external environment. While a change in the student's behavior may occur in the changed environment, the student would be likely to engage in the same problem behavior in other environments the future as no permanent change has been made within the student's thought process. Also, Kohn (1993) discusses the issue of students becoming dependent on reinforcement for their engagement in pro-social behaviors. When a student receives rewards, such as a piece of candy for staying in his or her seat in class, then the student becomes accustomed to getting the candy in that classroom. However, in another classroom, where the student does not receive candy, he or she continues to get up from his or her seat. Therefore, processes or cognitions within the student also need to be addressed and altered if long-term behavior change and cognitive change are to occur. The ecological model of behavior provides an expanded framework from which to view a student's behavior that takes into account internal as well as external factors that influence behavior (Jackson & Panyan, 2002).

### *Ecological Model*

According to the ecological model of behavior, an individual's behavior cannot be viewed out of context (Macht, 1990). Each individual's behavior is influenced by his or

her own past and present experiences, his or her environment, and his or her view of the environment (Macht, 1990). These factors must be taken into account when assessing problem behaviors exhibited by students. The problem behaviors are valuable to the student and they serve some purpose within his or her environment (Macht, 1990). Therefore, observing and assessing the problem behaviors alone will not paint a complete picture of what function the behaviors are serving for the student (Macht, 1990). Internal factors such as the student's view of school and level of academic knowledge and skills, as well as external factors such as the student's home environment and parental values must be taken into account when assessing problem behaviors. Changing the external factors influencing the student's problem behavior is often the main focus when using this model (D'Amato et al., 2005). For example, if a student were exhibiting problem behaviors, such as being inattentive during class or not completing assignments, environmental factors may need to be addressed. The student may need to be moved to the front of the classroom or may need some extra instruction in how to complete the assignments. The constructivist approach to assessing student behaviors is derived from the Ecological Model view of student behaviors.

### *The Constructivist Approach*

According to the behaviorist view, student behavior should be managed by rewarding positive behavior and punishing negative or problem behaviors (Barnhill, 2005). However, this approach to externally controlling student behavior does not seem to be operating efficiently in curbing problem behaviors in schools (Butchart, 1998). In fact, the contrary is occurring within school systems today (NASP, 2001). Problem behaviors are increasing within school systems (NASP, 2001). In contrast to the

behaviorist approach, used in the behavior management of students in most schools today, which focuses strictly on external factors as determinants of behavior, the constructivist approach takes into account a cognitive view of behavior. Constructivists accept the fact that there also are unseen stimuli or events that influence student behaviors in addition to seen stimuli, which influence behavior. The student's interpretation of stimuli or events directly affects how he or she will respond to the situation. Each student responds in a unique way to a given situation as each student is interpreting the event using his or her own unique past knowledge, attitudes, and values (Jenkins, 1996). Therefore, if students are to learn how to change their behavior, internal cognitive processes of the student must be taken into account. Using external controls of student behavior solely does not adequately motivate a student to make permanent change in his or her behavior (Kohn, 1993). The views of the constructivist theorists go "beyond the behaviorists' perspective and acknowledge the contributions of the school curriculum, the classroom and school environments, and the broader culture and community in forming the perceptions of students with behavior disorders" (Habel, Bloom, Ray, & Bacon, 1999). Whereas the behavioral theorist focuses on the prediction and control of events in the immediate environment, a constructivist examines the entire sociocultural context of a student's life (Habel et al., 1999).

Constructivists hold the belief that students learn to control their behaviors through active participation in the learning process. They view the student as an active participant who is able to consciously reflect on his or her behavior in order to promote self-discipline. Constructivists help students to become more informed as to how to behave as reflective and conscientious contributors to their learning environment

(Butchart, 1998). According to Connell & Wellborn (1990), it is important to take into account a student's cognitive viewpoint in order to understand his or her motivation for engaging in behaviors (as cited in Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Therefore, it is important to teach students to how to engage in self-reflection of their behaviors in order for them to understand and adjust their behaviors to be more pro social (Butchart, 1998).

### *Constructivism and the Functional Behavior Assessment*

The purpose of gathering information for a FBA is to improve the effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency of behavior support plans (Sugai, Horner, & Sprague, (1999). It is important to take constructivist approach in the assessment of student problem behaviors in order to develop an effective BIP incorporating PBS. The constructivist approach takes into account external as well as internal factors when conducting the FBA (Kohn, 1993). Kennedy, Long, Jolivettel, Cox, Tang, and Thompson (2001) found that behavior plans for students with behavior problems were more effective if many aspects of the students' lives were assessed rather than only focusing on the problem behaviors. For example, in the assessment phase the researchers took into account the students' likes, dislikes, ability levels, interests, as well as environmental factors of the classrooms. This information was then used to create behavior plans that addressed the problem behaviors and incorporated PBS. Furthermore, Crone, Hawken, and Bergstrom (2007) found that a FBA conducted in a more systematic, multi-perspective approach produced a more effective BIP in reducing problem behavior and increasing time engaged in academic areas. The use of culturally appropriate interventions also is emphasized in the PBS approach. Culturally appropriate describes interventions that consider the unique

and individualized learning histories (social, community, historical, familial, racial, gender, etc.) of all individuals (children with problem behaviors, families, teachers, community agents, etc.) who participate in the PBS process and approach (Sugai, Horner, Dunlap, Hieneman, Lewis, Nelson, Scott, Liaupsin, Sailor, Turnbull, Turnbull III, Wickham, Wilcox, & Ruef, 2000). Conducting the FBA using a constructivist approach, which takes into account all aspects of a student's life, rather than only examining the behavior itself, will lead to a BIP that incorporates PBS (Kohn, 1993; Kennedy et al., 2001).

### *Native American Culture*

Native American culture emphasizes a strong sense of community (F. Owle, personal communication, February 27, 2006). According to Freeman Owle, a member of a Native American tribe, "putting the group before the individual is a key component of this culture." "Children are encouraged to use a group point of view rather than a self-centered view of the world." "Children also are more independent in this group of people." "Personal space is much wider, so parents give children more personal space." According to Kallam and Coser (1994), it is believed in Native American culture that every person should be able to do as he or she wants as long as the actions do not interfere with the group goals. Therefore, highly controlling tactics, such as telling people what they can and cannot do, can actually be counterproductive within the Native American culture (as cited in Scalone, 1997). Individual freedom is very important in the Native American culture (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998). Parents give children the opportunity to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for the success or failure of their actions (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998). Values and models

are provided to the children by the parents, but the child is given the chance to make the decisions (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998). The purpose of this is to teach the child internal discipline and self-control, rather than to force the child to comply with external controls such strict rules and guidelines (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998). In Native American culture children are viewed as masters of their own destiny, therefore, the emphasis is on allowing the child to learn how to make decisions (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998). Children typically are not given rewards, but instead are taught to view the success of a decision made as a reward in itself (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998). They also are not subjected to harsh punishment for behavior that is considered inappropriate, but are corrected in a positive, supportive manner (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998).

Parents often live by the principle of non-interference. According to Goodtracks (1973), the principle of noninterference is a belief among Native Americans that no one has the right to interfere with the actions of another (as cited in Scalone, 1997). Therefore, when parents have a problem with a child's behavior, they do not say "no," but rather tell the child "no one should do that" (F. Owle, personal communication, February 27, 2006). For example, if a child were engaging in an inappropriate behavior at home, such as hitting a sibling or talking back to his or her parents, the child would not be reprimanded but would be told that others do not engaged in these behaviors. The children often are left to govern their own behaviors at home. Therefore, children in the Native American culture often are not subjected to external controls of behavior at home.

External controls of the behavior of Native American children may not be sufficient for dealing with problem behaviors in school as children are accustomed to a

different approach at home. The approach used at home gives the children more freedom to make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes. “Children are used to having much greater independence at home, which allows them to adjust their own behaviors without much parental interference” (F. Owle, personal communication, February 27, 2006). However, at school a behaviorist approach may often be used to address problem behaviors, which focuses on external control of behavior (Butchart, 1998). “Children are not used to constraints at home, so they often become angry at school when they are not allowed to do what they want” (F. Owle, personal communication, February 27, 2006). Incorporating a constructivist approach, which emphasizes internal processes of the child, such as cognitions (Jenkins, 1996), into the model for conducting FBA and PBS is more compatible with the Native American culture. “The Native American culture emphasizes a child’s independence and non-interference” (F. Owle, personal communication, February 27, 2006), which is not well-matched to the behaviorist approach to controlling behavior, but is more compatible with the constructivist approach.

“At home, children’s behaviors are often not managed by means of external control” (F. Owle, personal communication, February 27, 2006). “Children are expected to regulate their own behaviors” through the use of internal controls (F. Owle, personal communication, February 27, 2006). Internal control of behavior, rather than a strict external control of behavior is important to Native American parents in teaching their children how to behave in society (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1998). The goal of the parents is to have their children learn to be productive members of the group, and this goal is attained by teaching the children how to regulate their behavior, rather than imposing stringent punishment for negative behaviors (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van

Bockern, 1998). The constructivist approach incorporates the idea of internal processes influencing problem behaviors, which is more compatible with Native American culture.

### *Qualitative Research*

Qualitative methods were used in the design and implementation of the new model for FBA. Qualitative research takes a naturalistic and an interpretive view of human behavior (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This type of research often is done in the participants' natural settings, and those who conduct this type of research are interested in the way participants view and interpret certain phenomena in the world (Denzin & Lincoln). Focus is placed on the individual perspectives and experiences of the participants and how participants assign meaning to their surroundings and experiences (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). This means that an important emphasis of qualitative research is on how people perceive and understand their environment and events they experience (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). Many methods of gathering data are used in qualitative research; depending on what type of information is needed and how detailed this information is needed to be (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). Common methods include: interviews, participant observation, and archival analysis of data (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). All three methods were utilized in the current study and a description of each is below.

*Interviews.* Interviews are used in qualitative research to obtain information from participants for the purpose of understanding the thoughts and experiences of these participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000). There are several types of interviewing techniques and the type selected depends on the type of information needed by the researcher (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Individual interviews are conducted one-on-one and seek to

obtain information about the perspective of individual participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000). An individual interview would be used when information is wanted from one person without being influenced by other perspectives. In group interviews, several participants are questioned, which allows for a more efficient means of interviewing a large number of participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Interviews also can be structured or unstructured in nature. Structured interviews consist of the researcher asking all participants the same questions in the same order (Fontana & Frey, 2000). These questions often are close-ended, which means there are a pre-established set of responses from which the participants can choose (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The structured interview technique allows for little flexibility in the questioning of the participants or their responses (Fontana & Frey, 2000). In the semi-structured interview, the questions are more open-ended in that participant responses guide the direction of the interview. Questions are typically established in advance. However, some questions are based on answers given to previous questions (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The semi-structured interview often is used for exploratory purposes, in that it provides a greater variety of information about a topic. Since the questions are not specific, they provide a large amount of general information about a topic (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Group and individual interviews, exploratory and semi-structured interviews were utilized in the current study. Exploratory interviews commonly are used when one does not know much about a topic and wants general information. Semi-structured are used when one wants more specific information on a topic. Exploratory interviews commonly often used in the initial phases of a study, whereas semi-structured interviews are utilized after the general knowledge has been obtained in the exploratory interviews.

*Participant observation.* Participant observation is conducted in the participant's natural setting (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). The participant is observed and his or her target behaviors are recorded as well as the preceding events and events following the target behavior (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). This technique is used to assess the environment and the events in which the target behaviors are occurring in order to determine what factors in the environment are initiating, maintaining or influencing the occurrence of the target behavior (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). Participant observation can be used in the beginning stages of a study in order to collect information about the environmental factors influencing the target behaviors and it can also be used after the implementation of an intervention in order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). Participant observation techniques were utilized in the current study in order to obtain information about target students.

*Case study.* The type of design used for this study is a case study. A case study is conducted when there is a defined topic or issue within a subject, such as a person, family, or an institution, such as a school (Flick, 2004). The setting of this case study was seventh and eighth grades at a middle school in a Native American community, and the issue was that the procedure for conducting FBA and implementing PBS was not effective for reducing problem behaviors. Therefore, the procedure for conducting FBA and implementing PBS was to be expanded to incorporate the external as well as the internal factors influencing student problem behaviors. Through methodologies such as interviewing, observations, and the collection of archival data, information was gathered for the design of a new model to be implemented that addresses the problem.

*Participatory action research.* Participatory action research was used throughout the study. Action research is characterized by the development of responses to problems as they arise throughout the research study (Karlsen, 1991). This type of research is used to involve the participants in each stage of the research study (Karlsen, 1991). It is important to include the participants who use the new model in the development and design of the model as this increases the effectiveness of the new model. The participants would be more likely to utilize the new model if their opinions and concerns were taken into account in the development and design of the new model (Karlsen, 1991). Therefore, collaboration with the teachers and other school staff at the middle school occurred throughout the study.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Functional behavioral assessment procedures are based on behaviorist theory in which environmental stimuli are viewed as the chief influences of behaviors. The problem is that there are indications in the literature that a more constructivist approach may be more effective when designing behavior intervention plans incorporating PBS. The goal of the study was to develop a new model for conducting FBA to include a more constructivist approach to assessing student behaviors.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The middle school where this study was completed consists of two grades, seventh and eighth. There are about 29 staff members in the middle school: a principal, an administrative assistant, a counselor, 15 general education teachers, five special education teachers, and six special area teachers (band, library, and physical education) (Cherokee Central Schools). While informational meetings were conducted with the principal and all faculty members at the beginning of the study, most were not active participants in the study. Two special education teachers, five regular education teachers, and two students were active participants in the current study. The special education teachers were selected to participate in the study because they are traditionally the school personnel who conduct functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans, even though the two special education teachers had completed just one FBA and BIP between the two of them. The two students were suggested by the two special education teachers. The seventh grade student was selected because she was engaging in negative behaviors in her regular education classrooms. The eighth grade student was selected because he was experiencing a lack of motivation in both his regular and special education classrooms. The five general education teachers were selected because they

taught one of the two students chosen for participation and they were willing to contribute to the study. Also, the Exceptional Children's Coordinator and Assistant Exceptional Children's Coordinator for the school system were involved throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all active participants. An example of the teacher consent form is presented in Appendix A. An example of the parent consent form is presented in Appendix B and an example of the student assent form is presented in Appendix C.

### *Procedure*

*Participatory action research.* The researcher worked closely with the two special education teachers in the development of the new FBA model. This helped to enhance the effectiveness of the FBA process in decreasing negative behaviors, but it also increased the likelihood that the process would be used by the school. Both the examiner and the special education teachers provided input to improve the FBA process; the examiner offered expertise in FBA development and the special education teachers gave information about the usability and practicality of the FBA process.

Another key feature of participatory action research is that the study was conducted in order to actually make a change in the current system (Karlsen, 1991). Other forms of research are conducted simply to explore the reasons for certain phenomena, but with participatory action research, the focus is to change an existing system (Karlsen, 1991). Participatory action research involves exploration, but the primary aim is to change the way the system is functioning in order to make it better (Karlsen, 1991). The focus of this study was to make changes within the system for conducting functional behavioral assessments at the Native American middle school.

*Interviews.* Interviews with the special education teachers were conducted at the beginning of the study in order to determine the difficulties they were having with the functional behavioral assessments (FBA) and to obtain suggestions for improving the process. The technique of interviewing provides the researcher with a rich, in-depth account of a person's experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2000). In the needs assessment phase of the study, group interviews were conducted. The format of the interviews was exploratory, so the questions asked by the interviewer were somewhat open-ended (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Exploratory interviewing was used in order to increase familiarity with the problems occurring with the process of completing functional behavioral assessments (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interviewer provided a topic of discussion and the teachers responded. The direction of the discussion was determined by the teachers' responses (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The topics of discussion included: the teachers' knowledge of and previous experience using FBA's and BIP's; how FBA's and BIP's were developed and implemented at their school; who was responsible for these processes; their opinions about the process; ease of implementation and effectiveness of current process for completing FBA's and BIP's; and how the process can be improved. This type of interviewing provided a flexible format and produced rich in-depth data (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The researcher interviewed three separate groups; one group consisted of two special education teachers and each of the other two groups was comprised of three general education teachers. The group interview format allowed for the interaction of participant inputs and ideas which led to a more well-rounded view of the problems

occurring with the process of conducting functional behavioral assessments and implementing behavior intervention plans (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The interview groups were formed by placing the seventh grade general education teachers in a group and the eighth grade general education teachers in another group. The two special education teachers formed the third interview group. The interviews were conducted during the teachers' grade-level planning periods because this was the most convenient time in which to meet.

The small group format was used in this stage of the study to interview the teachers more efficiently and to have the teachers interact when giving their answers to the interview questions (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). This format led to a more well-rounded needs assessment than individual interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). These interviews were used to establish collaboration with the teachers and also to determine the problems the teachers were having with the FBA and PBS procedures. The specific questions were developed based on the information the researcher wanted to obtain. Since the researcher did not know the extent to which the special education and regular education teachers had been exposed to conducting FBA and BIP, more open-ended questions were developed (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Following is the list of questions presented to the special education teachers:

Tell me what you know about functional behavior assessments.

Tell me about your knowledge of behavior intervention plans.

How often do you use FBA and BIP?

Who is responsible for conducting FBA and developing BIP?

How effective is the current process for conducting FBA and developing BIP at your school?

Do you believe there is a need for a new process for conducting FBA and BIP at your school?

How do you think the process for FBA and BIP can be improved at your school?

The following is the list of questions presented to the regular education teachers:

Tell me what you know about functional behavior assessments.

Tell me about your knowledge of behavior intervention plans.

How often do you use FBA and BIP?

Who is responsible for conducting FBA and developing BIP?

How do you feel about the process for conducting FBA and developing BIP?

What can be done to improve the FBA and BIP process at your school?

The findings of these interviews were examined in order to explore any themes, which may have arisen in the teacher's concerns about the FBA process. The researcher compiled all of the teacher responses from the exploratory interviews to develop a list of common themes discussed by the teachers. This was conducted by systematically reading the notes from the interview sessions and grouping the common themes into similar categories (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Then this list of common themes was discussed with the teachers to ascertain that the list contained the major concerns the teachers had with the current FBA and BIP process. Collaboration with the teachers was important in this phase of the study as they had insight into the difficulties they were experiencing. Any themes or patterns that were found were addressed in the intervention stage of the study.

*Designing of new model.* This was driven by what was found in the needs assessment phase. The problems brought forth by the teachers were addressed and a new model for conducting functional behavioral assessments that incorporated positive behavioral supports was developed.

Qualitative methods were used to assess the effectiveness of the new model in completing functional behavioral assessments incorporating positive behavioral supports. Semi-structured, individual interviews and also naturalistic observations were used in order to obtain information for completing the functional behavioral assessments for each student as well as developing a new general FBA and BIP process to be used at the school.

Individual interviews with the student participants' teachers were conducted immediately following the selection of the two students for the study. During these interviews, the researcher asked the teachers questions about the students' behaviors, their academic abilities, their academic performances, the teachers' expectations in the classroom, their discipline procedures, how the student participants respond to consequences in the classroom, and which discipline procedures seem to have worked to decrease negative behaviors and which have seemed to be less effective. These interviews were conducted on one school day during each of the teachers' planning period. Semi-structured interview questions were developed by the researcher in order to obtain more information about how the student participants' teachers viewed their behaviors in the classroom. Semi-structured questions were used because the researcher already had information about the process used to intervene in student problem behaviors at the middle school from the exploratory interviews, but the researcher now wanted to

obtain more specific information about the student participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The researcher used information from current research in FBA as a guide in developing the specific questions (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). The goal of the questions is to obtain information about the negative behaviors the student is exhibiting, background information about the student, classroom expectations, consequences of the student's negative behaviors, and what interventions have and have not been effective in decreasing the problem behavior (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). The following are the questions presented to the teachers:

Tell me about the behaviors the student exhibits in the classroom.

Which behaviors are you most concerned about? Why?

Tell me about the student's academic ability? Is it consistent with his or her grades and test scores?

Describe a typical class period. What are the expectations placed on the students?

If a student misbehaves, such as talking out of turn, what are your discipline procedures? What are your discipline procedures for repeat offenses or more severe offenses?

What does the student do or say when he or she is given consequences for misbehavior?

Which consequences seem to be effective in decreasing the behaviors? Which consequences have you found not be so effective?

Observations were used to assess student behavior. A specific type of observation, naturalistic observation, was used (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). Naturalistic observation is when behavioral events are observed and recorded in the person's natural

setting (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). No inferences are made as to why the behavior is occurring; however, events preceding and directly following the behavior are recorded (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). The two students were observed in several classes by the researcher. The seventh grade student was observed in two English classes, two math classes, and one lunch period. The eighth grade student was observed in two English classes, two math classes, and one science class. The researcher conducted the observations over two consecutive school days. These observations were conducted before the researcher performed the semi-structured interview with each of the students. This was done so that it would be less likely the students would know they were the subjects of the researcher's observations in the classroom. Therefore, it was more likely that the students would display the behaviors in which they usually engage in the classrooms. During the observations, the researcher entered the classrooms before the students and took a seat at the back of the classroom. The researcher took notes about the environment of the classroom, the number of students in each class, the tasks the students were asked to complete, the participant's response to teacher directives, and how often the student engaged in a negative behavior as well as what type of behavior the student displayed. Antecedents and consequences of the students' behaviors also were noted (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002).

During the semi-structured interviews with each of the student participants, the researcher's goal was to obtain information about each of the students. For example, the researcher asked questions about their likes and dislikes; how they felt about school; what they believed would make the school a better place to be; how often they were reprimanded and for what behaviors; and also about their family life. The researcher did

not probe very deeply into their family life so as not to offend the participants. General questions were asked about their family life such as who they lived with and how many siblings each had living in their home. The interview questions were developed by the researcher in a way as not to criticize the student for the negative behaviors each is exhibiting in the classroom, but to obtain information in a non-judgmental fashion (Goldman, Stein, & Guerry, 1983). This was accomplished by asking the student more open-ended questions at the beginning of the interview session and then leading into more specific questions (Goldman, Stein, & Guerry, 1983). The following are the interview questions presented to the student participants:

What do you enjoy doing? What do you not enjoy doing?

Tell me about a typical day at your school.

Tell me about your likes and dislikes about school.

Tell me about a “bad” day you have had at school.

What are some things you have done at school to get “into trouble?” Do those things happen often?

Tell me about what happens when you get into trouble. What are the consequences for your actions?

How does it make you feel when you have done something wrong?

Who do you live with at home?

How many sisters and brothers do you have?

According to D’Amato et al. (2005), internal factors such as the student’s view of school and level of academic knowledge and skills, as well as external factors such as the student’s home environment and parental values must be taken into account when

assessing problem behaviors. It was important to understand the cognitive processes and family background when completing an FBA for the students; therefore, individual interviews with the students were conducted. Information obtained from these interviews was used in the development of the BIP for the students.

The information obtained from these semi-structured interviews was used in conjunction with information from the exploratory interviews with teachers (Needs Assessment Phase), the semi-structured individual interviews with the teachers of the student participants and the observations of the two student participants, in order to develop a new general FBA form for the teachers to use.

The information from the observations of the students and the interviews with the students and their teachers was used to develop specific FBA's for the two student participants. The FBA for each participant was used to develop a BIP for each student. The researcher developed the FBA and BIP for each of the student participants and then presented the material to the two special education teachers. The researcher explained to the special education teachers the process that was used to develop the FBA and BIP. Time constraints did not allow for the general education teachers to be trained in this process for conducting FBA's and developing BIP's. However, the special education teachers were to train the general education teachers at a later date after the completion of the current study. Also, a staff-development day was conducted for teachers of students grades kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the Native American school district. Teachers were able to select different-topic staff-development sessions to attend. The researcher, along with another researcher, developed a presentation to inform teachers of the background of the current study. The presentation provided teachers with information

about the need for conducting functional behavioral assessments using positive behavioral supports. This staff-development presentation was completed near the end of the study.

After the development of the new model, a training session was conducted with the special education teachers. The researcher met with the two special education teachers to discuss the new FBA form and to instruct them on how to use the information gathered on the FBA form to develop a BIP. This was done by showing them the completed FBA forms for the two student participants. The researcher discussed each item on the FBA and how the item was answered based on the interviews and observations with the student participants and their teachers. After the researcher discussed how each item on the FBA was completed, the special education teachers were shown how a BIP is developed based on the FBA information. The special education teachers were given examples of interventions for each of the students based on the assessment information on the FBA.

Also, the researcher suggested a new process for conducting the FBA and BIP at the middle school. This process was a collaborative approach to dealing with behavioral problems. For example, if a student is exhibiting behavioral problems, then each of his or her teachers must complete an FBA form. Also, an outside source such as a special education teacher or another certified school personnel could complete an FBA form in order to obtain the perspective of someone who is not responsible for teaching the student. Once all of the FBA forms are complete, then all of the information gathered on the forms can be compiled in order to develop the BIP. This process not only allows for a multi-perspective of the student, but it also increases the ownership of each teacher in the

FBA and BIP process. Therefore, it is more likely the BIP will be implemented as designed in the development phase.

## RESULTS

In this section, the results of the research study are presented. First, the data from the exploratory interviews with the general and special education teachers are presented, examined, and discussed. Next, the portions of the intervention phase are discussed, including; the selection of student participants, interviews with the teachers of the student participants, and observations of the student participants. Also, the process used to develop the new FBA is discussed. This includes information gathered from previous research in FBA, teacher concerns gathered from the exploratory interviews in the assessment phase, and information collected from the two student participants and their teachers. Finally, the follow-up phase is discussed; including the staff-development session presented to teachers from across the school district and the final meeting with the two special education teachers from the middle school to discuss the new FBA form and its future use in the school district.

### *Assessment Phase*

*Teacher interviews (exploratory).* The researcher systematically grouped the interviewee responses obtained during the exploratory interviews by common themes.

This was conducted by systematically reading the notes from the interview sessions and grouping the common themes into similar categories (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Two common themes emerged during this process. The first common theme discussed by both the regular and special education teachers was the lack of use of any type of formal FBA and BIP process except in extreme behavior situations such as repeated fighting or other situations in which a student is a threat to themselves or others. Neither the regular education nor the special education teachers were knowledgeable or experienced in completing FBA's and BIP's. One of the special education teachers indicated that, "I have looked at the FBA and BIP forms used by the school district but I have never completed the forms because they are intimidating and I have not been trained." One of the regular education teachers who teaches seventh grade English, indicated that she "has heard of behavior intervention plans but I am not knowledgeable about functional behavioral assessments." The eighth grade math teacher reported that he "knows nothing about behavior intervention plans or who is responsible for doing them in the school."

Of all the teachers interviewed, only one special education teacher had used the current forms. This lack of use of the forms seemed to be caused by what the teachers considered to be the excessive length and multiple response requirements on the forms. The special education teachers did not like the repetitive nature of the forms and also were discouraged because the forms did not offer a variety of ways to respond to the questions. For example, one of the special education teachers indicated that he "prefers checklists and rating scales as opposed to writing full narrative responses." However, the other special education teacher indicated that she "prefers the option of writing her responses in narrative form." Both of the special education teachers liked the idea of

having several different response options provided on the FBA form. Furthermore, the special education teachers felt that they did not know what to do with the information on the FBA once completed because they had not been trained to use the FBA and BIP process. The regular education teachers as well as the special education teachers were concerned that forms would just increase the amount of paperwork the regular education teachers had to complete and that the paperwork would not increase the effectiveness of a BIP. One of the special education teachers indicated that, “the regular education teachers already have to complete a great deal of paperwork, so they will be less likely to want to complete more forms.” The eighth grade math teacher indicated that, “he does not want the amount of paperwork they are asked to complete to increase; especially if the process does not work in helping with the problem behaviors.” So, they felt that they would just be adding to their paperwork and not seeing any results.

Another reason for the lack of use of any type of FBA or BIP process at the school may be the confusion about who is responsible for the implementation of the BIP. The seventh grade English teacher reported that she “feels that a problem could occur with the consistency of the intervention because the students change classes and have several teachers throughout the school day.” The seventh grade math teacher agreed and indicated that, “there are teachers that would not enforce the behavior plan so, it would not work.” One special education teacher also said, “the process is very informal and is usually not very effective in reducing the problem behaviors because no one really takes ownership in their part of the intervention.” This confusion of responsibility in the development and implementation of the BIP causes a lack of intervention fidelity of the

BIP, which decreases the likelihood of the BIP being effective in reducing problem behaviors.

The second common theme that arose from the exploratory interviews was the belief that some type of behavioral intervention process needed to be put into place at the middle school. Both the regular education and special education teachers felt that behaviors needed to be addressed in the classroom as soon as the initial behavior was exhibited by the students instead of waiting until the behaviors became too severe. The general education teachers were concerned that their instructional time was being negatively effected because they were constantly dealing with behavior problems in their classrooms. The seventh grade English teacher said, "I spend most of my class time telling certain students no and constantly reminding them about what they should be doing. It gets old after a while." The seventh grade math teacher added, "Yes, it sounds bad, but could get a lot more done if some of the students were not in the classroom. They keep the other students from learning." Some of the teachers also indicated that they had attempted interventions in their classrooms but they had not been effective in reducing problem behaviors. The eighth grade English teacher reported that she, "does try to give positive reinforcement to students in her classroom and they can earn things like extra time in the library or time on the computer in the classroom but this does not work and the kids do not care." The seventh grade English teacher said that she, "does try interventions, but she does not write them down." She indicated, "she and special education teacher have discussed particular students, but no formal meeting took place." All of the teachers agreed that there was a definite need for a formal system for

intervening in behavior problems and were willing to be active participants in creating a formal system conducting FBA and BIP.

### *Intervention Phase*

The next phase of the study was the intervention phase, which focused on developing a new form for completing FBA's for the teachers to use at the middle school. The new form was developed based on the concerns of the regular and special education teachers that arose in the needs assessment phase of the study. The new form also took into account research that has shown that FBA's should be completed based on a constructivist approach that comes from the ecological model.

The goal of the current study is to develop and implement a new model for completing FBA's taking into account teacher concerns, to increase the likelihood of use of the forms; as well as current research, to increase the effectiveness of the BIP's in decreasing problem behaviors. The first step in developing the FBA was to interview the teachers of the student participants to get their perspectives of the problem behaviors.

*Selection of student participants.* Two student participants were selected to participate in the development of the new model for completing FBA's and developing BIP's. Each was recommended by one of his or her teachers. One student was a seventh grade student who usually performed above her peers academically but exhibited some anger issues that caused academic performance to decline. The other student is an eighth grade student who was referred by his special education teacher for his lack of motivation in the classroom. He rarely completed his class work and was failing almost every subject. Both students were Native American.

*Interviews with the student participants' teachers.* During these interviews, the researcher asked the teachers questions about the student participants' behaviors, their academic abilities, their academic performances, the teachers' expectations in the classroom, their discipline procedures, how the student participants responded to consequences in the classroom, and which discipline procedures seemed to have worked to decrease negative behaviors and which have seemed to be less effective. These interviews occurred during the fall semester and took place over two consecutive school days. The teachers were selected because they taught one or the other of the student participants and agreed to participate in the study. Each of the teachers was interviewed individually. Unlike the exploratory interviews conducted in the needs assessment phase of the study, these individual interviews were conducted in order to obtain specific information about the students. Since there was only one teacher in the students' classrooms at a time, it was necessary to interview the teachers individually in order to gain insight into that one teacher's perspective of the student.

*Interviews with the seventh grade student participants' teachers.* Two of the seventh grade student's teachers were interviewed separately. One teacher taught the student English and one taught her math. The first teacher interviewed was the English teacher. According to her, the student "seems to be very capable of completing the academic assignments, but the student is choosing not to finish her work." The student did have straight A's and B's until about two months prior to this study when her grades began to fall. The teacher indicated that the student "constantly disrupts the class by making inappropriate comments, turns in partially completed assignments, and does not complete her homework." She had been in three fights in the past month and had been

suspended twice. Her teacher also reported that the student “used to be cooperative and seemed very happy, but now she seems unhappy most of the time.” The teacher indicated that she does not understand why the student was behaving in this manner, but “maybe there is something going on at the student’s home.” The teacher reported that she has attempted to talk to the student to find out what was wrong, but the student refused any type of help.

The student constantly teased other girls in the classroom and seemed to pick fights with all the other students. Her teacher reported that the student “does have one good friend who she sits with in the cafeteria at lunch.” Her teacher also indicated that the student “appears to have little respect for authority at the school. She had yelled in several of her teachers’ faces and ignored her teachers’ requests.” The teacher indicated that she has attempted several strategies with the student but had little success. The teacher attempted to be firm with the student and often raised her voice if the student raised her voice, but that seemed to make the student even more angry and upset. The teacher had taken away the student’s free time during lunch and had made her have silent lunch in her classroom for being disrespectful towards authority figures. The teacher also stated, she “attempts to move the student’s desk away from her peers so that the student is less likely to tease other students.” The teacher indicated that currently she just ignores her in the classroom so as not to make her angry because if she has an outburst, it will disrupt the entire classroom and instructional time will be lost. Overall, the teacher was concerned about this student because her behavior had deteriorated rapidly over the last two months and she needed insight as to how to help the student “get back on track.”

The student's math teacher also was interviewed concerning the student's behaviors. He also had seen many of the same behaviors in his classroom as the English teacher had seen in her classroom. He indicated that "the student's grades had dropped drastically over the last two months and that he felt she was much more capable academically than she was showing in my classroom." He reported that the student was very disrespectful and often "talked back" when asked to stop yelling out in class or when asked to complete an assignment she did not want to complete. He indicated that "she was mean to the other students in the classroom and makes snide and hurtful comments to the other students." Whenever another student retaliated, she became even more angry and aggressive. He had to send her out of his classroom on several occasions to calm herself down in the principal's office or in another classroom. The teacher reported that he has tried not to intervene very much, but just ignores the problem since she is only in his classroom for about 50 minutes each day. However, he did indicate that "the anger and the outbursts seem to be getting worse and I am scared that the student may hurt herself or someone else."

*Interviews with the eighth grade student participant's teachers.* Three of the eighth grade student's teachers were interviewed individually concerning the student's behavior. The first teacher interviewed was his special education teacher, the next teacher interviewed was his math teacher, and the final teacher interviewed was his science teacher. The student's special education teacher taught him English each day in a resource classroom. The special education teacher also implemented an inclusion-type model in which she went into his general education math classroom each day to assist all of the students being served by special education in the area of math. The special

education teacher indicated that the student “rarely completes his class work and never completes homework.” The special education teacher also reported that the student “sits at his desk with his head on his desk until the teacher tells him to get started on his work.” However, after a few minutes, the student “puts his head on the desk again and usually goes to sleep.” If the teacher did not provide one-on-one assistance with his class work, the student slept for the entire class period. The special education teacher also indicated that these negative behaviors seemed to occur less in the resource classroom because it is a smaller class size and the teacher is able to provide the one-on-one attention the student required in order to complete his class work. The special education teacher felt that the student “struggles academically and the curriculum has become too difficult for him to complete on his own, so he just doesn’t attempt his work unless he is made to do so by an adult prompting him to complete his work.” The special education teacher reported that she tried to give him as much one-on-one assistance as she could in the resource room and in his regular education math class but she cannot be with him at all times and when she is not working with him, he did not attempt any of his class work.

The second teacher interviewed was the student’s mathematics teacher. He reported many of the same behaviors as the special education teacher. He indicated that the student “often sleeps through my math class and when I try to wake him to do his class work, he falls back to sleep when I walk away to assist other students.” The teacher indicated that the student was failing his class, but that the student did not seem to be concerned about his grades. The teacher felt that the student was able to do more than he showed in the classroom, but the teacher did realize that the student may struggle academically more so than an average student in the classroom. The teacher had offered

to tutor the student during the afternoon but the student's parents had not allowed the student to stay after school. The teacher was concerned about the student, but he indicated: "I am not sure what it will take in order to get him motivated to do his work."

The third teacher interviewed was the student's science teacher. She reported that the student "rarely completes any work in her classroom unless I am standing over him." She also indicated that she feels the student is capable of completing more work independently than he did in the classroom. She reported that she "always tries to make sure he understands the class work before I have the students work independently, but after a few minutes he puts his head on his desk and sleeps." She also indicated that the student "frequently asks to go to the bathroom, the nurse, or the library just to get out of completing his class work." She, like his other two teachers, reported that the student needs a behavior intervention but she did not know exactly what would be effective in increasing his motivation.

*Observations of the student participants.* After completing the interviews with each of the teachers, the researcher observed each of the students in his or her classroom environments. The seventh grade student was observed during two math periods, two English periods, and also during one lunch period. The eighth grade student was observed during two English periods, two math periods, and one science period. The observations were conducted over a span of two days during the fall semester of the school year. During the observations, the researcher entered the classrooms before the students and took a seat at the back of the classroom. The researcher took notes about the environment of the classroom, the number of students in each class, the tasks the students were asked to complete, the subject's response to teacher directives, and how often the student

engaged in a negative behavior as well as what type of behavior the student displayed. Antecedents and consequences of the students' behaviors also were noted (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002).

*Observations of the seventh grade student participant.* The first observation of the seventh grade student participant was conducted in her English classroom. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> class period of seven of the school day. During the observation, the researcher was seated at the back of the classroom; about four feet behind the desk of the student participant. The students came into the classroom after the researcher was seated. As the students entered the classroom, several glanced at the researcher but no comments were made about the researcher's presence in the classroom. The students stood and talked amongst themselves in several small groups of two to three students. The seventh grade student participant was sitting in her desk and was talking to another female student seated in the desk directly in front of her desk. The class was comprised of 12 males and 7 females.

The teacher was standing at the doorway until all the students had entered the classroom and the bell chimed to signal the beginning of class time. As the teacher closed the classroom door, the students made their way to their assigned desks. The teacher went back to her desk at the back of the classroom adjacent to where the researcher was seated. The teacher began to take the class roll by calling out each student's name. During this time, the students continued to talk to each other and the teacher had to tell the class to stop talking twice during the roll call. However, the students continued to talk while the teacher finished calling the roll and as she walked to the front of the classroom. It took about 15 minutes for the teacher to call the roll. The seventh grade student participant

was talking to the same female student who she had been talking to since she had entered the classroom.

The teacher stood at the front of the classroom and asked the students to take out their homework so she could come around the room to check to make sure each student had completed the work. Most of the class had stopped talking and were complying with the teacher's request. However, the student participant had to be told directly to stop talking and take out her homework sheet. The student rolled her eyes as she reached into her book bag and retrieved the homework. After the teacher began to walk around the classroom to check the homework, the student participant began to talk to the same female student seated directly in front of her desk. Several of the other students also began to have conversations with each other and the teacher again had to remind the class to stop talking. The student participant complied with the directive, but laid her head on the desk. As the teacher came by the student participant's desk to check her homework, the student has to be told to lift her head up so she could see the student's homework sheet. The teacher asked the student why she had not completed the entire worksheet and the student shrugged her shoulders with a scowl on her face. It took about 5 minutes for the teacher to walk around the entire classroom to check homework completion.

The teacher then returned to the front of the classroom and told the class that she would call on individual students to tell the answers to the homework aloud to the entire class. Each student had an opportunity to give an answer; including the student participant. When she was called to tell an answer to a question, she read the question but said, "I don't know," when it was time to give the answer. The teacher then moved to another student. During this time, the student participant had her head on her desk, but

appeared to be listening to the other students give their answers. It took about 10 minutes for the class to go over the homework sheet.

With about 20 minutes left in the class period, the teacher had the students take out their reading books. The student participant complied with the teacher's request, but was the last student to have the book out on her desk and opened to the correct page. She laid her head on her book, but followed along while the teacher read a poem from the book. When the teacher finished reading the poem, she asked individual students to answer questions aloud for the class. During this time, the student began to tap her fingernails on the desk loud enough to disturb the instruction. When the teacher asked her to stop tapping her fingernails, the student rolled her eyes and sighed. The student also mumbled under her breath, "This sucks." The teacher ignored the student's comment and the sigh. For the remainder of the class, the student put her head down on her desk. When the bell rang to signal the end of the current class, the student shoved her materials into her book bag and left the classroom with a scowl on her face.

The second observation was conducted later in the school day during the student's seventh period math class. Again, the researcher was seated at the back of the classroom before the students entered. The teacher was seated at his desk at the back of the classroom as the students came through the classroom doorway. The teacher had a "daily warm-up" assignment written on an overhead. This assignment consisted of six-multi-step multiplication and division problems. Although conversations were occurring between students in the classroom, all of the students opened their notebooks and began to work on the assignment. The teacher called the roll as the students worked on the assignment. The teacher never told the students they should be working on the

assignment; the students seem to know exactly what was expected of them. It took about five minutes for the teacher complete the roll.

During roll-call the seventh grade student participant was talking to a female student who was seated beside her. However, she was actively engaged in completing the assignment and her behavior was similar that of her peers. The teacher did not tell the students to stop talking. After the roll was taken, the teacher walked to the front of the classroom. He called on six individual students to complete the warm-up problems on the board. The student participant was one of the chosen six to complete the problems on the board. When the teacher called her name to go to the board, her reaction was similar to her reaction in the previous English class in that she rolled her eyes and sighed. However, her reaction seemed to be more for attention rather than out of true hostility. She complied with the request and went to the board to complete her given problem. She correctly completed her given multiplication problem. As she was walking back to her desk from the board, she stopped at another female student's desk for a brief conversation. When the last student completed his problem on the board, the student participant walked back to her desk. The student participant listened as the teacher corrected the problems on the board. It took about 15 minutes for the students to complete the problems on the board and for the teacher to correct them.

Next, the teacher began his introduction of the objective for the day which consisted of a lesson about simplifying equations. The teacher modeled several examples on the board and had the students write these down in their notebooks. Although the student participant listened to the lesson, she did not write down any of the problems in her notebook. The teacher did not comment on the student's refusal to write down the

problems. Then the teacher had the class assist him in simplifying an equation on the board. The students volunteered the answers during this time by shouting out the answers. The student participant did not volunteer any answers. After the teacher completed the guided practice of the lesson, he assigned the students three equations from their math book to complete independently. He instructed the students not to talk during this time. The student participant slowly pulled out her math book from her book bag and placed it on her desk. She had to ask the teacher a second time which pages the problems came from. All of the other students had begun to work on the assigned problems. The student participant slowly turned to the correct page in the math book and began to work on the problems. She had a disgusted facial expression during this time. The teacher walked around the classroom as the students were working on the assignment and he stopped to assist several students. When the teacher's back was to the student, she attempted to get the attention of the students seated around her desk by whispering and tapping with desks with her pencil. The other students looked up at her, but quickly returned their attention to their assignment. When the teacher walked up to her desk, the student acted as if she was completing the assignment. At the end of the class, the teacher assigned ten equations from the math text book. When the bell rang to signal the end of class, the student again shoved her materials into her book bag and hastily left the classroom.

The student participant was observed again the following school day in her second period English classroom. Like the previous day, the researcher was seated at the back of the classroom before the students entered and the teacher stood at the doorway as the students entered the classroom. As the students came into the classroom they were

conversing with one another as they each walked to their desks. The teacher called the class roll as the students were seated in their desks. This process again took about 15 minutes to complete as the students had to be constantly reminded to stop talking. Then the teacher asked the students to take out notebook paper for a writing assignment. The teacher then put a prompt on the board and told the students they were responsible for writing a five-paragraph essay on the prompt given. The students had the remainder of the class period to complete the rough draft of the assignment.

The student participant entered the classroom and went straight to her desk. She then began to talk to the female student seated directly in front of her in the classroom. She continued to talk throughout the roll call even though the teacher repeatedly told the class not to talk. However, most of the other students continued to talk as well. When the teacher gave the writing assignment, the student participant rolled her eyes and slammed her hand on the desk. She put her head on the desk and started mumbling, "This is so stupid." The teacher ignored the negative behaviors and instructed the student participant to take out her notebook paper and "Get to work." The student participant slowly pulled out some notebook paper from her book bag and placed it on her desk. However, she laid her head on the paper and gazed at the wall for about five minutes before the teacher came over to her desk and asked her if she had any questions. The student participant told the teacher, "No," with scowl on her face. The teacher then asked the student participant why she had not started to on the assignment and the student said she did not know what to write about. The teacher then had the student participant think about the different topics and to put them into a list on her paper from which she could choose. The student wrote down about five topics on her paper and the teacher prompted her to choose one.

After choosing the topic, the teacher told the student participant to write down ideas about the topic and that would help her to get started. The teacher then walked away. The student sat at her desk with a scowl on her face until the teacher told the entire class that she would be coming around to check on everyone's progress before the end of the class. The student participant still had a glare on her face, but she began to work on the assignment. The student did begin to write the draft and she had five paragraphs by the end of the period.

The student was observed later in the school day in her seventh period math class. Like the previous school day, the researcher was seated in the classroom before the students entered. The teacher had the warm-up math assignment on the overhead. This assignment consisted of two word problems. Like the previous school day, the students worked on the warm-up assignment as the teacher took the roll. The teacher then went over the warm-up assignment with the entire class. Then the teacher walked around the classroom to check the students' homework assignments. Next the teacher had individual students complete the homework problems on the board and then the teacher went over the correct answers. The teacher then introduced the lesson for the day, which consisted of plugging in variables into equations and he showed the students some examples that the students were to write down in their notebooks. After showing the class several equations, the bell signaling the end of the class period rang and the teacher told the class that they would finish the lesson on the following school day.

The student participant came into the classroom and immediately began talking to the student seated in the desk beside her. The teacher had to tell the student participant to get out her notebook to complete the warm-up problems. The student participant rolled

her eyes and smirked at the student seated beside her as she slowly pulled out her notebook. She completed the two word problems, but did not volunteer to answer the questions as the teacher went over the warm-up assignment answers. The student participant did not complete her homework from the night before. The teacher told the class that anyone who did not complete the homework could do the problems as the class went over them and could receive half-credit for completing the assignment. However, the student subject chose to put her head on her desk and look around the room as the teacher went over the correct answers on the homework. When the teacher instructed the class to turn their math textbook page to the current lesson, the student participant turned to the correct page but then put her head back onto the desk. She listened as the teacher went over the current lesson, but she refused to write the examples in her notebook. When the bell rang, the student shoved her materials into her book bag and was the first student out of the classroom.

The student participant was also observed during one of her lunch periods. This observation was conducted on the second day of the previously described observations in her English and math classes. The observation was conducted from the balcony in the lunchroom area, so as not to disturb the student participant. The student was only observed for about 20 minutes. The student was seated with one other female student. She did not interact with any other students during the observation. The student was observed exhibiting the same behaviors as her peers.

*Observations of the eighth grade student participant.* The first observation of the eighth grade student was conducted in his 1<sup>st</sup> period English class, held in the resource classroom. The researcher was seated at the back of the classroom. The class consisted of

six eighth grade students; one female and five males. The teacher had did not have desks in the classroom, but one large rectangle table at which all the students completed their work. As the students entered the classroom, they walked over to the table and sat down. They were conversing with each other until the teacher asked them to stop talking and get out the worksheets they were to have completed for homework. Each student complied with the request. The homework assignment consisted of a worksheet practicing grammar skills. The teacher walked around the table to check to see if the students completed the assignment. Next, the teacher selected individual students to provide the answers to the homework questions. After going over the homework, the teacher instructed the students to take out their reading textbooks. The teacher had each student take a turn to read one page of the story. After each page, the teacher had the students stop and the teacher asked the entire class comprehension questions about that page of the story. At the end of the story, the teacher assigned the students to complete the questions about the story from the textbook for homework.

The student participant entered the classroom and walked directly to his seat at the table. He rested his head on the table, but was carrying on a conversation with two other male students. He continued with this conversation until the teacher instructed the class to get out their homework assignment from the previous night. He immediately removed the worksheet from his book bag and placed it on the table. However, he had not completed any of the questions. The teacher asked him why he had not completed the assignment and he just shrugged his shoulders and said, "I didn't feel like it." The teacher shook her head and told the student he would be getting a "zero." However, he did not seem to be affected by the grade. As the class went over the worksheet, the student

participant listened to the answers but did not write anything down on the paper. The student did not volunteer to answer any of the questions. However, the teacher called on the student participant to give the answer to one of the questions on the homework assignment. At first he said he did not know the answer but after some prompting by the teacher, the student was able to correctly answer the question.

The student complied with the teacher's request to take out his reading textbook. However, he did not follow along with the class as each student read, so when it was his turn to read he was not ready. The teacher had to show him where to start. The student also did not volunteer any answers as the teacher asked comprehension questions at the end of each page. The student seemed to be just staring at the desk. When it was his turn to read, he read very slowly and stumbled over many of the words. The teacher had to prompt the student when he came to words he did not know because he would just sit there without attempting to read the word. The student was not able to answer any of the comprehension questions the teacher asked about the section the student had just read for the class. When the bell rang signaling the end of the class, the student packed up his materials. As he walked out of the room, the teacher had to stop him and make him get out his notebook in order to write down his homework assignment.

The second observation was conducted in the eighth grade student participant's third period math class. This class was a regular education classroom, but the resource teacher came into the classroom to assist the students being served in special education in the area of math. The researcher was seated in the classroom before the students entered the class. The regular education teacher was at the front of the classroom writing on the board while the special education teacher was at the back of the classroom grading

papers. Before the students entered the classroom, the special education teacher showed the researcher the grade book. Of about twenty assignments; including class work, homework, and tests, the student participant had about fifteen incomplete grades. The special education teacher indicated that these were assignments that the student participant had not completed.

As the students entered the classroom, they were loudly talking to one another. Most of the students did not go directly to their desks. Some stood around talking to each other in small groups of two to three students, while other students ran after each other and performed dance moves. The general education teacher had to yell to get everyone to stop talking and walk to their seats. While the students complied with the request for them to return to their seats, most of them continued to talk amongst each other as the teacher called the roll. After finishing roll call, the teacher instructed the students to take out their math text books and notebooks. The teacher then completed examples of graphing short equations on the board for the students. Next, the teacher instructed the students to independently complete several similar problems from the textbook. As the students worked on the problems independently, the teacher played loud hip-hop music on the radio. The teacher walked around the classroom as the students worked on the assignment and assisted any students who had questions about the problems. The special education teacher also assisted any students who were struggling.

The student participant entered the classroom while conversing with two other male students. They put their belongings down at their desks and then stood together while laughing and talking with each other. When the teacher instructed the class to stop talking and sit down in their desks, the student participant walked to his desk and sat

down. He sat at his desk quietly until the teacher instructed the class to take out their math text books and notebook. He complied with the request. However, he turned to the incorrect page and did not realize it until the special education teacher came over to help him with the independent practice and she turned his book to the correct page. During the instructional time in which the regular education teacher provided examples for the class, the student participant rested his head on his book until the special education teacher told him to sit up. However, when she turned her back to assist another student, the student would again put his head down on the book.

The special education teacher finally pulled a chair up to the student participant's desk in order to help him with the independent practice problems. The student was able to complete the problems as long as the special education teacher was providing prompts. However, it was extremely noisy in the classroom with the hip-hop music and the other students who had completed the assignment were talking with each other. The student seemed to be distracted by the noise level in the classroom. As the bell rang signally the end of the class period, the special education teacher instructed the student participant to complete the assignment for homework and bring it in to class tomorrow. The special education teacher made the student write down the assignment in his notebook.

The eighth grade student participant was observed again the following day in his first period English class. Again, the researcher was seated at the back of the classroom as the students entered. The special education teacher was standing at the doorway greeting the students. All of the students went directly to their seats at the table. The teacher instructed the students to take out their homework from the previous night so she could check to make sure they at least attempted to complete the assignment. The

students had been assigned to answer comprehension questions from the story the class read the previous school day. After checking the homework, the teacher began to call on students to give their answers. After going over the correct answers for the homework, the teacher passed out a vocabulary worksheet for the students to complete. The teacher instructed the students to work on the worksheets individually. As the bell rang to signal the end of the class period, the teacher told the students to finish the worksheet for homework.

The student participant entered the classroom and walked directly to his seat at the table. He rested his head on the table but continued to look around the room at the other students. The student participant occasionally commented to the other students, but he remained quiet most of the time until the teacher began class. The student complied with the teacher's request for the students to take out their homework from the previous night. However, the student did not have his homework completed, nor had he attempted to complete the questions. The student sat in silence and did not volunteer any answers when the teacher asked students to give their answers from the homework. When the teacher instructed the class to complete the vocabulary worksheet independently, the student participant began to complete the worksheet but stopped and gazed around the classroom at the other students. The teacher walked over to the student participant and told him to continue working and he complied. However, he would stop work on the worksheet each time the teacher was assisting another student. He had to be constantly reminded to continue working on the assignment. Again, the teacher had to remind the student participant to write down the homework assignment in his notebook before he left the classroom.

A second observation was conducted in the eighth grade student's third period math class. This observation revealed the same environment and student behaviors as the previous observation in the class. The researcher was seated at the back of the classroom and the regular education teacher was at the front of the classroom as the students entered. The special education teacher was seated at a desk at the back of the classroom. As the students entered the classroom, many were talking and laughing loudly to each other. The regular education teacher told the class to sit in their desks and then he called the roll. However, many of the students continued to talk and laugh. After the completion of roll call, the regular education teacher instructed the students to take out their math textbooks and notebooks. The regular education teacher continued the graph equation lesson from the previous school day. The regular education teacher had individual students write the problems and the answers on the board and then they discussed the correct answers as a class. Next, the regular education teacher instructed the students to complete the test review at the end of the textbook chapter as they would be having a test the following day. The regular education teacher then turned on the hip-hop music for the students to listen to while they were completing the test review worksheet.

The student participant entered the classroom and went directly to his desk. He watched the other students as they were talking and laughing, but he did not participate. The student participant complied with the teacher's request to take out the math textbook and notebook. The special education teacher went over to his desk to check his homework, but he had not completed the problems. The special education teacher assisted the student in completing two of the problems and then instructed him to attempt the last problem independently. When the special education teacher walked away from

the student's desk to assist another student, the student participant became distracted by the other students talking and the loud music. The special education teacher went back over to the student participant's desk in order to check on his progress with the problem, but he had not even begun to work out the problem. The special education teacher prompted the student and he was able to complete the problem with the special education teacher's assistance. After the student completed this problem, the special education teacher remained with the student participant for the rest of the class period assisting him with the test review worksheet. She also had the student participant write down in his homework notebook that he has a test the following day and he has a review sheet he must complete.

Another observation was conducted in the student's 6<sup>th</sup> period science class. This observation was conducted on the first day of the previous observations in the student's English and math classes. The researcher was seated at the back of the classroom before the students entered the classroom. The teacher was standing in the doorway as the students entered the classroom. The students went directly to their seats, but many of the students were talking loudly amongst each other. The classroom did not have desks, but had tables which two students shared. There were 19 students in the class; seven females and 12 males. The teacher called the roll at the beginning of the class during which the students continued to talk loudly to one another. After roll call, the teacher instructed the students to open their science textbooks and read a section independently. The students complied. After the students had finished reading the passage, the teacher instructed them to answer the questions at the end of the section on a sheet of notebook paper and then turn in their answers to be graded. After the students had finished, the teacher began a

science lesson during which the students were going to be able to look at pond water through microscopes. The students seemed to be excited about the activity and listened intently as the teacher gave them instructions. The class did not finish the lesson, so the teacher told the class that they would complete the activity the following day.

The student participant entered the classroom and went directly to his seat at the table. As he sat down, he picked up a pen and began to write on his arm. He continued writing on his arm until he was instructed to take out his science book. Immediately after the teacher gave the instructions to read the passage, the student participant asked to go to the bathroom to wash the ink off of his arms. However, the teacher told him he could not go until he completed the assignment because he should not have been writing on his arm. The student rushed through the assignment and copied the questions to turn in for a grade. However, he did not attempt to answer the questions. The teacher allowed him to go to the restroom.

The teacher began to lesson while the student participant was in the restroom. He was in the restroom for about 10 minutes. When he returned to the classroom, the student participant sat at his table and put his hood over his head. He pulled the strings in his hood as tight as possible so there was just a small hole for him to be able to see. The teacher ignored this behavior and the student began to play with the strings on the hood. The teacher told him to stop playing with the strings and to take the hood off of his head. He complied with the directive, but rested his head on the table and gazed at the other students. As the students began the activity, the teacher went over to the student participant's table and assisted him in setting up the microscope and equipment. As the teacher went to assist other students, the student subject played with the pond water and

talked to the student with whom he shared a table until the bell rang to go to the next class.

*Interviews with the student participants.* Individual interviews with the student participants were conducted consecutively during one school day in the fall semester of the school year. It was important to understand the cognitive processes and family background when completing an FBA for the students; therefore, individual interviews with the students were conducted. Information obtained from these interviews was used in the development of the BIP for the students.

These interviews were done a week after the completion of the student participant observations. The seventh grade student was interviewed first and the eighth grade student's interview followed. Both interviews took place in the school's library. The following are the interview questions presented to the student participants:

What do you enjoy doing? What do you not enjoy doing?

Tell me about a typical day at your school.

Tell me about your likes and dislikes about school.

Tell me about a "bad" day you have had at school.

What are some things you have done at school to get "into trouble?" Do those things happen often?

Tell me about what happens when you get into trouble. What are the consequences for your actions?

How does it make you feel when you have done something wrong?

Who do you live with at home?

How many sisters and brothers do you have?

*Interview with the seventh grade student participant.* The student participant was interviewed by the researcher during the student's study hall period. The student willingly came with the researcher to the library. The researcher introduced herself to the student and told the student that she would be asked some questions about herself in order to assist in the current study. The student was also told by the researcher that the information obtained would be used to develop a new process for helping students to become more successful in school. The student indicated that she understood and she did not have any questions for the researcher. Therefore, the researcher began asking the pre-determined questions.

The session began with general questions. The student participant was asked to tell the researcher what she enjoys and also what she does not enjoy. According to her, "I enjoy being with my friends, talking on the phone, watching television, playing with my dogs." She said she "hates school." When asked what about school she does not enjoy, she said that she hates getting up early in the morning and the teachers at school are really annoying. She indicated that, "I don't understand what they want me to do and what they want from me." She said that a typical day is, "very boring and I get annoyed because the teachers want me to do stupid things." The researcher asked the student what types of things the teachers ask her to do and her response was that, "they want me to do pointless things like a bunch of writing." The student also said she, "can't stand the people at the school because they talk about me and when I say something back I always get in trouble." She indicated that she has been suspended for punching another girl because she girl was "running her mouth." The student was asked how she feels after getting into trouble and she indicated that she "really does not care." The researcher also

asked the student about her home life. The student reported that her parents are divorced and she lives with her father. She rarely sees her mother because she lives in another state. She has one younger brother who currently lives with her mother.

*Interview with the eighth grade student participant.* The student participant was interviewed by the researcher during the student's study hall period. The student willingly came with the researcher to the library. The researcher introduced herself to the student and told the student that she would be asked some questions about himself in order to assist in the current study. The student was also told by the researcher that the information obtained would be used to develop a new process for helping students to become more successful in school. The student indicated that he understood and he did not have any questions for the researcher. Therefore, the researcher began asking the pre-determined questions.

The student was asked what he enjoyed doing and he indicated that he liked skateboarding, watching television, and playing Medal of Honor, which is a videogame. He also said he enjoys drawing and sketching cartoons. He said, "I do not like reading books and I hate going to church." The student also indicated that his favorite school subject is math, while his least favorite is "English or anything having to do with reading." He said that he sometimes gets into trouble for not doing his work. He indicated that he does not do his work "because it's hard and boring." He usually loses his lunch privileges or recess if he does not do his homework. When asked about his current grades, he said that he is "failing pretty much everything," but he did not care because he wants to be an artist when he gets older. He indicated that he currently lives with his mother and father and 2-year-old sister.

*Designing the new FBA form.* Current research on FBA, information obtained from the teachers in the exploratory interviews, and information gathered from the student participants and their teachers was used in designing the new FBA form. The information gathered from the student participants and their teachers was also used to provide examples in the training of the special education teachers on the new FBA form and the process for completing FBA. The new FBA form is in Appendix D.

#### *Staff-Development with Teachers*

A staff-development presentation was conducted on a teacher workday during the latter portion of spring semester. This presentation was done by the researcher in conjunction with a co-researcher who is conducting a similar study in an elementary school in the same district. The staff-development was available for all teachers in the district to attend. About 40 teachers were in attendance of about 140 teachers in the district. The two special education teachers from the middle school with whom the researcher worked most closely were in attendance, but the regular education teachers who worked with the two student participants were not present. Most of the teachers in attendance taught at the elementary school level, but a few teachers taught at the middle and high school levels.

The co-researchers prepared a PowerPoint presentation during which an overview of the study was discussed and then several case studies were presented to the audience as examples. The first portion of the presentation was dedicated to the description of an FBA. This description included possible elements an FBA and why each of the elements might be important when assessing student behaviors. Such elements include: a clear description of the behavior, typical routines when the behavior occurs, why the behavior

is seen as a problem, strength and needs of the student, student likes and dislikes, the student's motivation for engaging in the behavior, etc. Then the co-researchers indicated that traditionally FBA only are completed when a student has been referred or suspended for repeated severe behavior problems such as fighting. However, FBA can be used for any student who has behavior problems. The use of an FBA can lead to more effective BIP for students with behavior problems, which increases the likelihood that the problem behaviors will be reduced or eliminated. The co-researchers then gave the audience examples of students who are exhibiting a negative behavior- not completing assignments in class. However, while students' behavior might appear similar, the causes and motivations for engaging in these behaviors could vary greatly. Therefore, the intervention for each student must be differentiated in order to cause effective change in the students' behaviors. An FBA is used to determine these causes and motivations so an effective BIP can be developed for each student.

The next portion of the presentation focused on positive behavioral supports (PBS). The audience was told that PBS are used to eliminate or reduce the problem behavior by replacing it with a more pro-social or adaptive behavior. The emphasis is on changing environmental conditions rather than using punitive discipline measures. Also, it is necessary to use the student's strengths and needs to develop an appropriate support plan for them. However, the purpose of a behavior must be understood in order to develop an effective BIP incorporating PBS. Therefore, an FBA is completed to obtain this information.

The next portion of the presentation discussed the traditional means of addressing problem behaviors in schools, which focuses primarily on observable behaviors. It is

based on the belief that behavior can be managed by controlling the environment and this environmental control is often done through zero tolerance policies and other punishment practices (i.e.- suspension, detention) (Horner, 2000 as cited in Safran & Oswald, 2003). Research has shown that students who are continually punished become gradually unaffected by these punishments (short-term effect on behavior) (Kohn, 1993). Punishment may suppress behavior in a particular environment; however, this usually fails to generalize across settings and situations (Kohn, 1993). Positive behavior supports (PBS) typically use behavior modification approaches in addressing student behaviors (e.g.- token economy). While using behaviorist-based PBS is useful for changing observable classroom behaviors, another method is needed to change the student's thinking.

The constructivist view of student behavior was then presented to the audience as an expanded model for assessing and intervening in student problem behaviors. Constructivism explores the entire socio-cultural context of a student's life to gain insight into a student's perceived experiences. This view focuses not only on observable behavior, but also emphasizes the student's thoughts and cognitions in relation to his or her past experiences. The goal is on developing learners who are self-disciplined and supportive of the learning community. In addition to assessing the student's observable behavior, other areas such as the student's home life, classroom environment, physiological factors, curriculum, and social context are examined. The goal is for students to develop an intrinsic motivation for not engaging in problem behaviors. These plans are meant to effect long-term change in students, rather than just immediate reduction of a behavior.

The final portion of the presentation included case studies of students exhibiting problem behaviors. The audience reads the case study and then gives ideas about possible causes and motivations for the student to engage in the negative behaviors. The audience was guided by the presenters to ask questions about the students' home life, classroom environment, physiological factors, curriculum, and social context when assessing the problem behaviors. Then, the audience suggested possible interventions that could be put into place based on the information obtained in the assessment. This portion of the presentation was an informal discussion. An agenda of this presentation is in Appendix E.

#### *Training of Special Education Teachers*

The new FBA form and the new suggested FBA and BIP procedures address many of the teachers' concerns. The new form does not have repetitive items, so it is only two pages in length. Also, the items have a variety of response types. For example, there are some items requiring a narrative response while other items are presented in checklist form. Time constraints did not allow for all of the teachers to be trained in the use of the new FBA form and the new process. However, the two special education teachers were trained in completing the FBA form and in using the information gathered on the FBA form to develop a BIP. The student participant data were used during this training in order to give the special education teachers an example of how to complete the form.

The seventh grade student was referred for the study because she had become very defiant, teased other students, appeared increasingly angry, failed to complete her school work, and had failing grades. The eighth grade student was referred for the study because he did not complete his school work, had failing grades, needed constant prompts and one-on-one assistance, and seemed to lack motivation to be successful in

school. After interviewing the seventh grade and eighth grade student participants, their teachers, and conducting several observations of each student, an FBA form for each student was completed based on this information. The FBA forms completed on the two students are located in the Appendixes. Appendix F is the FBA completed for the seventh grade student and Appendix G is the FBA completed for the eighth grade student.

From these FBA, interventions were developed for each of the students. The special education teachers were shown how the information on the FBA is used to develop interventions for the development of a BIP. Specific interventions were developed for each student in order to address factors which may have been contributing to the cause of the problem behaviors. The interventions developed for each student are listed in the Appendixes. Appendix H contains the interventions developed for the seventh grade student and Appendix I contains the interventions developed for the eighth grade student. This information was presented to the special education teachers during the training in order to illustrate the process for conducting an FBA and BIP using student participants.

Also, during this training, a suggested process for completing the FBA form and developing BIP was discussed. This process addresses the concerns the teachers had about the confusion of responsibility in implementing the BIP and the need for a formal process for dealing with student problem behaviors. The suggested new process is collaborative in nature and involves each teacher of a student exhibiting problem behaviors complete an FBA. Also, one or more educators could be involved in completing an FBA in order to have a perspective of someone other than the teachers when developing the BIP. Once the FBA forms are completed, the information from the

forms could be combined and a BIP could be developed at a collaborative meeting. This process could increase each teacher's involvement and ownership in the process, which could decrease the amount of role confusion when implementing the BIP. Therefore it could increase the likelihood that the BIP's fidelity would be maintained because each member of the team would have a clear and defined role. Also, this process could provide a formal step-by-step approach to intervening in student problem behaviors.

In addition, the new FBA form and process could be used for general education students as well as special education students. Therefore, the process could be initiated as soon as the problem behaviors occurred in the classroom. The effective use of this process also could decrease the likelihood that a student would be placed into special education for his or her behaviors as the process would focus more on a preventative approach to behavior problems than a reactive approach.

## DISCUSSION

### *Current Research in FBA*

The practice of controlling student behaviors through the use of punitive measures does not seem to be very effective in reducing these problem behaviors (Butchart, 1998). The cause of this lack of effectiveness in altering student behaviors could be that there has been little internal change in the student because only external controls of the student's behavior have been utilized (Jenkins, 1996). As a result of this lack of effectiveness using punishments, an approach to dealing with difficult behaviors is becoming more widely used in schools (National Association of School Psychologists, 2001). The approach incorporates the use of functional behavioral assessments and positive behavioral supports.

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is used to gather information about antecedents, behaviors, and consequences to determine the function a problem behavior serves (Barnhill, 2005). The ultimate objective of an FBA is to understand the purpose of problem behaviors for a student and then develop an effective intervention to decrease or eliminate problem behaviors in order to replace them with more pro-social behaviors (Barnhill, 2005). Positive behavioral supports is an approach used after completing an

FBA when the behavior intervention plan is being developed (National Association of School Psychologists, 2001).

A typical FBA is based on a behaviorist approach (Kohn, 1993). However, this approach largely overlooks the internal processes, the thoughts and cognitions, influencing a student's behavior (Kohn, 1993). Kohn (1993) has raised some criticisms of the behaviorist approach to dealing with problem behaviors. He contends that students have difficulties generalizing from one situation to another and also making permanent behavior changes when only external control, such as rewards and punishments, are used (Kohn, 1993). Therefore, processes or cognitions within the student also need to be addressed and altered if long-term behavior change and cognitive change are to occur (Kohn, 1993; Deci et al., 1991).

According to the ecological model of behavior, a student's behavior cannot be viewed out of context (Macht, 1990). Each student's behavior is influenced by his or her own past experiences, his or her environment, and his or her view of the environment (Macht, 1990). These factors must be taken into account when assessing problem behaviors exhibited by students (Macht, 1990). The constructivist approach to dealing with student problem behaviors is based on the on the ecological model. According to this approach, a student's perception of the world is not solely impacted by observable events, but also by the way in which he or she processes the event (Jenkins, 1996). Each student responds in a unique way to a given situation as each student is interpreting the event using his or her own unique past knowledge, attitudes, and values (Jenkins, 1996). Therefore, if student problem behavior is to be altered, internal cognitive processes of the student must be taken into account when assessing the problem behaviors.

### *Current Study*

The purpose of the current study is to implement an expanded model for conducting functional behavioral assessments based on a constructivist approach. By creating an FBA form that incorporates elements from a constructivist approach, it would be more aligned with Native American culture and ideals than the strictly behaviorist approach to dealing with problem behaviors which focuses largely on punishment-based interventions. Also the use of a constructivist approach in the assessment of problem behaviors would lead to BIP that incorporate PBS.

The new FBA form that was developed was based on the current research described above and on information obtained from the teachers at the middle school. The new FBA form includes elements from traditional FBA forms focusing on observable behaviors such as a description of the problem behavior, why the behavior is considered a problem and why it needs to be changed, when and where the behavior typically occurs, who is present when the behavior typically occurs, whether or not there are times and places which the behavior does not occur, and what activities/interactions usually occur immediately before the behavior and which occur after. These items were found on the current forms available for use in the school district. These elements are key components in a behaviorist approach (Barnhill, 2005). However, the new FBA form has been expanded to include components from a constructivist approach. These elements are used to explore the internal processes and cognitions of the student exhibiting the behavioral problems. The items on the new FBA form that are used to explore the internal processes and cognitions are divided into five categories; physiological, classroom environment, home life, curriculum, and social context. An example of this form is located in

Appendix D. Each of these areas taps into the student's internal processes and cognitions that could affect the student's negative behaviors (Jenkins, 1996).

The physiological category explores possible medication side effects, fatigue, hunger, thirst, tiredness, irregular sleep patterns, sickness, or allergies, as possibly contributing to the student's negative behaviors. This information can be obtained from interviews with the student or the teacher may be knowledgeable about the student's physiological needs.

Information about the student's home life is also included on the form. This includes information about the ideals valued by the student's family, the family structure, and recent family stress such as divorce or death. This information can be obtained from the interviews with the student as well as from information provided by the teacher.

The classroom environment category is used to obtain information concerning possible environmental factors in the classroom that may contribute to the student's negative behaviors. These include schedule unpredictability, high noise levels, uncomfortable temperature, poor eating arrangement, and frequent disruptions or distractions. These factors can be assessed through observations in the classroom. These observations can be conducted by the teacher or by an external source such as the special education teacher or other school personnel. The student can also provide insight into classroom environmental factors which are causing or contributing to the problem behaviors.

The demands of the curriculum are another area that should be assessed when exploring possible causes of a student's negative behaviors (Jenkins, 1996). Factors such as unclear task directions, inadequate assistance, opportunities to make choices, the

difficulty of the task, how well the student's ability level is matched to the task demands, opportunities for communication, and the length of the assignment or task, are important to explore when evaluating the causes of a student's negative behaviors. This is included on the new FBA form and can be completed by the teacher, with input from the student.

The student's social ability and interactions also are key elements to include in an assessment of the student's negative behaviors (Jenkins, 1993). Elements included in the social context category of the form are: the number of meaningful friendships, the treatment of the student by his or her peers, and the student's sense of belongingness to the classroom. This information can be obtained from the teacher's perspective but also from the student's perspective.

The new FBA form also was based on the concerns of the teachers at the middle school about the current FBA forms and processes used to deal with student behaviors. At the beginning of the study, several concerns of the teachers were brought to light during an interview process. One of the concerns was the lack of use of any type of formal FBA and BIP process except in extreme situations such as repeated fighting offenses. The teachers indicated several reasons for this lack of use of a formal process including: the need for training in how to complete an FBA and BIP, the extensive length of the current FBA forms available in the district, the lack of variety in the responses to the items on the forms, and the confusion as to which teachers are responsible for implementing the BIP. These concerns were addressed in the designing of the new FBA form as well as in the training of the special education teachers. The new FBA form is not over two pages in length and provides opportunities for narrative responses as well as responses in checklist form. Also, in the training with the special education teachers the

researcher showed how to use the information gathered on the FBA to develop interventions for each of the student participants that incorporated elements of PBS.

Another theme that arose from the interviews with the teachers concerning the FBA process is that all of the teachers indicated that there is a need for a formal process for intervening in student problem behaviors. Several of the teachers were concerned that their instructional time is being negatively affected by the students who are exhibiting these problem behaviors because the teachers constantly have to stop teaching to intervene. These concerns were also addressed during the training session with the special education teachers. The researcher proposed a multi-perspective process for conducting FBA and developing BIP. This process involved each teacher of a student with behavior problems as well as school personnel who are not directly involved in teaching the student. Each of the teachers and the other school personnel would be involved in the assessment of the student's problem behaviors and in the development of the BIP. This would provide a systematic approach and would give each person a role in the assessment and intervention into student problem behaviors.

#### *Limitations of the Current Study and Implications for the Future*

The time constraints resulted in several limitations of the current study. First, it was difficult for an outside individual to enter into a system in order to make a change in such a limited amount of time. It is usually necessary to earn trust and form relationships with a group of people before any type of changes can be made. Many of the teachers and faculty were not open to changing the system and chose not to participate in the current study, so the researcher had to work with a small number of participants. In order to make a systems change in the model for conducting FBA in the middle school, most likely it is

necessary to have all parties who will be using the model to also be engaged in the development and designing of the model. The small number of participants for the current study may hinder the systems change that must occur in order for the new FBA model to be implemented at the middle school.

The time constraints also did not allow for the development of completed BIP based on the new FBA forms prepared for each of the student participants. While the researcher did use the new FBA forms to develop possible behavioral interventions during the training session with the special education teachers for each of the student participants, time did not allow for the completion of BIP for each student participant. For example, both of the student participants were engaging in similar problem behaviors (e.g.- not completing assignments, failing grades, etc.). By using the information gathered on the new FBA form, it was found that they were exhibiting these problem behaviors for different reasons. The seventh grade student participant was found to be capable of completing the school assignments, but chose not to do so most likely because she was bored and she did not have many opportunities for choices in her classroom. Whereas the eighth grade student had some academic skill deficits, especially in reading, which have lead to his feeling overwhelmed by his academic classes. Interventions developed for the student participants were developed based on this information gathered from the new FBA form. Since the reasons for the students' engagement in the behaviors are different, so are the behavior interventions developed in order to intervene. The interventions developed incorporate PBS which assists the students to engage in more pro-social behaviors in order to be more successful in school. Gathering the information on the new FBA form by using observations and interviews with the student participants and their

teachers allowed for the assessment of external behavior, but also revealed information about unseen factors which could be affecting the student participants' behaviors. By gaining a greater understanding of the reasons for the students' behaviors, more effective interventions could be developed to address the problem behaviors. However, time line also did not allow for the collection of follow-up data on the effectiveness of the new FBA in changing the behaviors of the two student participants. However, the results and the new FBA form have been shared with the educators on the system in which the current study was conducted.

## REFERENCES

- Barnhill, G. P. (2005). Functional behavioral assessment in schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 40*, 131-143.
- Brendtro, L. K., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1998). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Butchart, R. E. (1998). Introduction. In R. E. Butchart & B. McEwan (Eds.), *Classroom discipline in American schools: Problems and possibilities for democratic education* (pp. 1-16). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Carr, E. G., Horner, R. H., Turnbull, A. P., Marquis, J. G., McLaughlin, D. M., McAree, M. L., Smith, C. E., Ryan, K. A., Ruef, M. B., Doolabh, A., & Braddock, D. (1999). *Positive behavior support for people with developmental disabilities: A research synthesis*. Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.
- Cherokee Central Schools. (n.d.). Welcome to Cherokee central schools. Retrieved June 22, 2006, from <http://ccsweb.ccs.bia.edu/ccs/ccs1.htm>.
- Connell, J. P., & Wellborn, J. G. (1990). Competence, autonomy and relatedness: A motivational analysis of self-system processes. In M. Gunnar & A. Sroufe (Eds.), *Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology* (Vol. 23, pp. 43-77). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Crone, D. A., Hawken, L. S., & Bergstrom, M. K. (2007). A demonstration of training, implementing, and using functional behavioral assessment in 10 elementary and middle school settings. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 9*(1), 15-29.

- D'Amato, R. C., Crepeau-Hobson, F., Huang, L. V., & Geil, M. (2005). Ecological neuropsychology: An alternative to the deficit model for conceptualizing and serving students with learning disabilities. *Neuropsychology Review, 15*, 97- 103.
- Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist, 26*(3&4), 325-246.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (pp.1-28), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Flick, U., Kardorff, E. V., & Steinke, I. (2004). What is qualitative research? An Introduction to the field. In U. Flick, E. V. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp.3-11), London, England: Sage Publications.
- Flick, U. (2004). Design and process in qualitative research. In U. Flick, E. V. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 146-152), London, England:Sage Publications.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (pp. 645- 672), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gable, R. A., Quinn, M. M., Rutherford, R. B., & Howell, K. (1998). Addressing Problem behaviors in schools: Use of functional behavioral assessments and behavior intervention plans. *Preventing School Failure, 42*, 106-120.
- Goldman, J., Stein, C. L., & Guerry, S. (1983). *Psychological Methods of Child*

*Assessment*. New York, New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers.

Habel, J., Bloom, L. A., Ray, M. S., & Bacon, E. (1999). Consumer reports: What students with behavior disorders say about school. *Remedial and Special Education, 20*, 93-105.

Hintze, J. M., Volpe, R. J., & Shapiro, E. S. (2002). Best practices in the systematic direct observation of student behavior. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Vol. Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology IV* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 993- 1006). Bethesda, MD: NASP Publications.

Holstein, J.A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). Multivocality and multiple respondents. In M. L. Miller, P. K. Manning, & J. V. Maanen (Series Eds.), *Qualitative research methods series: Vol. 37. The active interview* (pp. 66-84). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Jackson, L., & Panyan, M. V. (2002). *Positive behavioral support in the classroom: Principles and practices*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co.

Jenkins, J. M. (1996). *Transforming high schools: A constructivist agenda*. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Company.

Karlsen, J. I. (1991). Action research as a method. In W. F. Whyte (Ed.), *Participatory action research* (pp. 143-158). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Kennedy, C. H., Long, T., Jolivettel, K., Cox, J., Tang, J., & Thompson, T. (2001). Facilitating general education participation for students with behavior problems by linking positive behavior supports and person-centered planning. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 9*(3), 161-171.

Klotz, M. B., & Nealis, L. (2005). The new IDEA: A summary of significant reforms.

Retrieved July 10, 2009, from

<http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/IDEAfinalsummary.pdf>.

Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Macht, J. (1990). *Managing classroom behavior: An ecological approach to academic and social learning*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

National Association of School Psychologists. (2001). Positive Behavioral Supports: Information for educators. Retrieved February 12, 2006, from [http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/pbs\\_fs.html](http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/pbs_fs.html).

Safran, S. P., & Oswald, K. (2003). Positive behavior supports: Can schools reshape disciplinary practices? *Exceptional Children, 69*, 361-373.

Scalone, L. (1997). The peacekeepers: A qualitative study of an intervention program for children who are at-risk for school failure. Unpublished master's thesis, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2002). The evolution of discipline practices: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy, 24*, 23-50.

Sugai, G., Horner, R. H., Dunlap, G., Hieneman, M., Lewis, T. J., Nelson, C. M., Scott, T., Liaupsin, C., Sailor, W., Turnbull, A. P., Turnbull, H. R. III, Wickham, D., Wilcox, B., & Ruef, M. (2000). Applying positive behavior support and functional behavioral assessment in schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 2*(3), 131-143.

Sugai, G., Horner, R. H., & Sprague, J. (1999). Functional assessment-based behavior support planning: Research-to-practice-to-research. *Behavioral Disorders, 24*,

223-227.

- Tobin, T. J., Lewis-Palmer, T., & Sugai, G. (2002). Schoolwide and individualized effective behavior support: An explanation and an example. *Behavior Analysis Today, 3*(1), 51–75.
- Turnbull, H. R., Wilcox, B. L., Stowe, M., & Turnbull, A. P. (2001). IDEA requirements for use of PBS: Guidelines for responsible agencies. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions, 3*, 11-18.
- Watson, T. S., Gresham, F. M., & Skinner, C. H. (2001). Introduction to the mini-series: Issues and procedures for implementing functional behavior assessments in schools. *School Psychology Review, 30*, 153-155.
- Witt, J. C., Daly, E. M., & Noell, G. (2000). *Functional assessments: A step-by-step guide to solving academic and behavior problems*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

## Appendix A

## Informed Consent for Teachers

As a graduate student in School Psychology at Western Carolina University, I am participating in a study that involves gathering information from teachers through interviews. The purpose of this study is to work with teachers in developing a revised model for evaluating student problem behaviors. I would like your participation in completing this study.

Teachers are valuable resources for identifying issues and concerns regarding teaching and learning in school, and they can provide useful suggestions for improving teaching and learning. I would like to interview teachers who are willing to participate in my study and record the interviews on audio tape. Participation is strictly voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. I will use the information I collect from these interviews to work to improve the model used for evaluating student problem behaviors at ----- Middle School. Only teachers' comments and other demographic information—age, gender, race/ethnicity, grade taught — will reported in the paper I write for the study.

I will adhere to the following procedures when working with you:

- I will use neither your name nor any personal identifying information in any written or oral reports of the individual or group interviews
- Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.
- You may choose not to participate and there will be no consequences for you if you make this choice.
- Audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of this study.

Sincerely,

Hillary Bailey, School Psychology Graduate Student

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent for Parents

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As a graduate student in School Psychology at Western Carolina University, I am participating in a study that involves gathering information from students and parents through interviews and questionnaires. The purpose of this study is to work with teachers in developing a revised model for evaluating student problem behaviors. I would like you and your child's help in completing this study.

Parents and students are valuable resources for identifying issues and concerns regarding teaching and learning in school, and they can provide useful suggestions for improving teaching and learning. I would like to interview parents and students who are willing to participate in the study and record their interviews on audio tape. The questionnaires will be filled out by the parent and student and then will be returned to me at the middle school in a provided envelope. These questionnaires will be kept confidential. Participation is strictly voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. I will use the information I collect from these interviews to work to improve the model used for evaluating student problem behaviors at ----- Middle School. Only parent and student comments and other demographic information—age, gender, race/ethnicity, grade—will be reported in the paper I write about the study.

I will adhere to the following procedures when working with you and your child.

- I will use neither your or your child's name nor any personal identifying information in any written or oral reports of the interviews and questionnaires.
- You and your child's participation is voluntary and either of you may withdraw from the study at any time.
- You and your child may choose not to participate and there will be no consequences for either of you if you make this choice.
- Audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of this study.

Sincerely,

Hillary Bailey, School Psychology Graduate Student

## Appendix C

### Assent Form for Students

As a graduate student in School Psychology at Western Carolina University, I am participating in a study that involves gathering information from students through interviews and questionnaires. The purpose of this study is to develop a revised model for evaluating student problem behaviors at ----- Middle School. I would like your help in completing this study.

Students are valuable resources for identifying issues and concerns regarding teaching and learning in school and can provide useful suggestions for improving teaching and learning. I would like to interview students who are willing to participate in the study and record their interviews on audiotape. I would also like to give participating students a questionnaire to fill out and return to me in a provided envelope. Participation is strictly voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. I will use the information I collect from these interviews to improve the model used for evaluating student problem behaviors at ----- Middle School. Only your comments and other demographic information—age, gender, race/ethnicity, grade—will be reported in the paper I write for my class study.

- Your name will not be used in any written or oral reports of the individual or group interviews.
- Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.
- You may choose not to participate. There will be no consequences for you.
- Audiotapes will be destroyed at the end of this study.

Sincerely,

Hillary Bailey, School Psychology Graduate Student



## Appendix D

## New FBA Form

**Functional Behavioral Assessment**

Description of the behavior:

---

---

---

---

Why does the behavior need to be changed? Why is the behavior considered a problem?:

---

---

---

When/where does the behavior typically occur (ie.-certain classroom, hallway, during lunch, etc.) and who is present when the behavior occurs?

---

---

---

Are there places or times when the behavior does not occur?

---

---

---

What activities/interactions take place just prior to the behavior and what usually happens immediately after the behavior?

---

---

---

---

---

What is the student's motivation to engage in the behavior? (i.e. attention, avoidance of a task, etc.):

---

---

---

---

---

Other factors to consider that could be influencing the student's behavior (check all that apply):

Physiological:  Medication side effects

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Fatigue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hunger/Thirst \_\_\_\_\_

Tiredness/ Irregular Sleep \_\_\_\_\_  
 Patterns \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Sickness/Allergies \_\_\_\_\_

Home life:  Ideals Valued by the Student's Family \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family Structure (single-parent, foster home, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Recent Family Stress (divorce, death, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom environment:  Schedule Unpredictability \_\_\_\_\_

High Noise \_\_\_\_\_  
 Levels \_\_\_\_\_

Uncomfortable \_\_\_\_\_  
 Temperature \_\_\_\_\_

Poor Seating \_\_\_\_\_  
 Arrangement \_\_\_\_\_

Frequent Disruptions or \_\_\_\_\_  
 Distractions \_\_\_\_\_

Curriculum:  Unclear Task \_\_\_\_\_  
 Directions/Instructions \_\_\_\_\_

Inadequate Assistance \_\_\_\_\_  
 Few Opportunities to Make

Choices \_\_\_\_\_  
 Difficulty of the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Task/Activity \_\_\_\_\_

Match of Student Ability Level and Task \_\_\_\_\_  
 Demands \_\_\_\_\_

Lack of Communication \_\_\_\_\_  
 Opportunities \_\_\_\_\_

Length of  
Task \_\_\_\_\_

Social Context:  Meaningful  
Friendships \_\_\_\_\_

Treatment of the Student by  
Peers \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student's Sense of Belongingness to  
Classroom \_\_\_\_\_

Student's  
Likes: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's  
Dislikes: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's  
Strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's  
Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Interventions that have been successful/not successful in the  
past: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person of Person Completing the  
Form: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the  
Student: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### Agenda for Presentation to Teachers

- Background of presenters
- Description of functional behavioral assessment
  - Examples of students who are exhibiting negative behaviors
- Description of Positive Behavioral Supports
- Discussion of traditional means of addressing problem behaviors in schools
- Discussion of the Constructivist view of addressing problem behaviors in schools
- Discussion of case studies

## Appendix F

## FBA Form for Seventh Grade Student Participant

**Functional Behavioral Assessment**

Description of the behavior:

defiance towards authority figures (eye-rolling, sighing) when given directives; teasing other students; yelling at teachers; increase in anger over past two months; failing to complete school work and homework; failing grades across all subjects, fighting.

Why does the behavior need to be changed? Why is the behavior considered a problem?:

the student's behaviors are affecting her academic performance as well as the overall classroom environment

When/where does the behavior typically occur (ie. certain classroom, hallway, during lunch, etc.) and who is present when the behavior occurs?:

the behaviors have been observed as occurring across all settings

Are there places or times when the behavior does not occur?

the defiance towards authority figures and the yelling at teachers seems to occur less during unstructured times (hallway, lunch, study hall)

What activities/interactions take place just prior to the behavior and what usually happens immediately after the behavior?

Prior to the behavior (defiance/yelling/teasing) → student has been told a directive by a teacher in a structured setting. After the behavior → student complies with directive from teacher

What is the student's motivation to engage in the behavior? (i.e. attention, avoidance of a task,

etc.): The motivation seems to be to get attention from other students because the student seems to eventually comply with directives

Other factors to consider that could be influencing the student's behavior (check all that apply):

Physiological:  Medication side effects  
 Fatigue  
 Hunger/Thirst  
 Tiredness/ Irregular Sleep Patterns  
 Sickness/Allergies

Home life:  Ideals Valued by the Student's Family  
 Family Structure (single-parent, foster home, etc.) lives with father → mother lives out-of-state  
 Recent Family Stress (divorce, death, etc.)

Classroom environment:  Schedule Unpredictability  
 High Noise Levels  
 Uncomfortable Temperature  
 Poor Seating Arrangement  
 Frequent Disruptions or Distractions

Curriculum:  Unclear Task Directions/Instructions  
 Inadequate Assistance  
 Few Opportunities to Make Choices does not seem to have any choices in classroom  
 Difficulty of the Task/Activity may be bored w/ material in class or the way it is presented  
 Match of Student Ability Level and Task Demands

- Lack of Communication Opportunities \_\_\_\_\_  
 Length of Task \_\_\_\_\_

Social Context:  Meaningful Friendships seemed to only have 1 friend  
 Treatment of the Student by Peers other students don't seem to interact w/ her  
 Student's Sense of Belongingness to Classroom doesn't contribute many positive comments

Student's Likes: being with friends, talking on phone, watching TV, playing w/ dogs.  
 Student's Dislikes: school → getting up early, teachers are annoying (boring)

Student's Strengths: very intelligent and capable of completing school work  
 Student's Needs: socially deficit, motivation to complete school & homework, emotional needs

Interventions that have been successful/not successful in the past: moving student away from other students in the classroom to decrease classroom disruptions (not successful)

Name of Person of Person Completing the Form: Hillary Bailey → in conjunction with 2 special ed. teachers  
 Relationship to the Student: observers

## Appendix G

## FBA Form for Eighth Grade Student Participant

**Functional Behavioral Assessment**

Description of the behavior:

seems to lack motivation to complete school work and homework; he has failing grades across all subjects; needs constant one-on-one assistance from teachers to attempt school work. He lays his head on desk, sleeps, does not pay attention to teacher.

Why does the behavior need to be changed? Why is the behavior considered a problem?:

the student's lack of motivation affects his academic performance

When/where does the behavior typically occur (ie. certain classroom, hallway, during lunch, etc.) and who is present when the behavior occurs?:

the behavior typically occurs in his academic classes → math, English, social studies, science. Any environment in which he struggles in completing the assignments.

Are there places or times when the behavior does not occur?

the behavior seems to occur less in non-academic classes such as lunch, PE, and study hall.

What activities/interactions take place just prior to the behavior and what usually happens immediately after the behavior?

the following usually occurs prior to the behavior → student is asked by teacher to perform an academic task and then is expected to complete the task independently. After the behavior → the student is prompted by the teacher to complete the task.

What is the student's motivation to engage in the behavior? (i.e. attention, avoidance of a task,

etc.): the reason for the student's behavior seems to be to avoid the academic tasks assigned by the teachers. The student struggles to complete academic tasks, so he seems to "give up" unless a teacher prompts him and assists him in completing the assignment.

Other factors to consider that could be influencing the student's behavior (check all that apply):

Physiological:  Medication side effects \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fatigue \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hunger/Thirst \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tiredness/ Irregular Sleep Patterns the student may not be getting enough quality sleep  
 Sickness/Allergies \_\_\_\_\_

Home life:  Ideals Valued by the Student's Family \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family Structure (single-parent, foster home, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Recent Family Stress (divorce, death, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom environment:  Schedule Unpredictability \_\_\_\_\_  
 High Noise Levels this may be a factor in some classrooms  
 Uncomfortable Temperature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Poor Seating Arrangement \_\_\_\_\_  
 Frequent Disruptions or Distractions this may be a factor in some classrooms

Curriculum:  Unclear Task Directions/Instructions \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inadequate Assistance student seems to require assistance to complete academic tasks  
 Few Opportunities to Make Choices \_\_\_\_\_  
 Difficulty of the Task/Activity level of tasks may be too difficult for student to complete independent  
 Match of Student Ability Level and Task Demands " " " " " "

- Lack of Communication Opportunities \_\_\_\_\_  
 Length of Task some tasks may be too long + may overwhelm student

- Social Context:  Meaningful Friendships \_\_\_\_\_  
 Treatment of the Student by Peers \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student's Sense of Belongingness to Classroom does not seem to be included in some  
classroom

Student's Likes: skateboarding, watching TV, playing the videogame Medal of Honor, drawing,  
 Student's Dislikes: reading, going to church, English class sketching  
cartoon

Student's Strengths: artistic, social with others

Student's Needs: struggles academically across all subjects

Interventions that have been successful/not successful in the past: Not successful → moving student to front of classroom closer to teacher

Name of Person of Person Completing the Form: Hillary Bailey + two special education teachers  
 Relationship to the Student: One teaches student and the other two are observers

## Appendix H

### Interventions for the Seventh Grade Student Based on the FBA

- The student seems to have difficulty interacting in a socially appropriate manner with her peers. She teases other students and has been suspended from school for fighting. Therefore, the student can receive social skills training. This training can be completed by the guidance counselor or the school psychologist. The training can be conducted in a group setting with other females from her school.
- The student also seems to have some emotional needs. She seems to be angry and lashes out at teachers and other students. These emotional needs could stem from her family situation in which she does not have her mother for emotional support during this critical period in her life. In order to address the emotional needs, the student could receive counseling from the school's guidance counselor or she could possibly be assigned a female mentor from the school or from an outside agency.
- The student seems to be capable of completing the school work assigned to her in class. However, she is currently not completing her assignments and she becomes defiant (eye-rolling, sighing, making negative comments) when asked by her teachers to complete the assignments. These behaviors may be caused by the student's boredom with the material or the presentation of the material in her classrooms. She does not seem to have any opportunities to make choices in her

classrooms which may also lead to her angry outbursts. In order to give her a role in the classroom and to give her opportunities to positively contribute to the classroom, the student can be given a leadership role. She can be paired with students who may be struggling with classroom material in order to assist the students in learning the material. This gives her an opportunity to use her knowledge in a socially appropriate manner, which will also help her in practicing her social skills.

## Appendix I

### Interventions for the Eighth Grade Student Based on the FBA

- The student struggles with the academic tasks he is asked to complete in his classrooms, therefore he has begun to “give up,” unless provided with constant one-on-one assistance from the teacher. In order to increase his independence, his assignments can be modified in order to be more on his instructional level. Also, instead of having the teacher constantly be assisting him, a knowledgeable peer can be assigned to assist him in completing the independent assignments. This will also help the student feel a greater belongingness to the classroom because another student is helping him instead of the teacher. The peer tutor may also be able to explain academic concepts on the student’s level. The student can also be given shorter assignments so as not to overwhelm him.
- In some of his classes, the noise level and distractions seemed to contribute to the student’s inability to complete the assignments. Even when a teacher was sitting beside him, he seemed to have difficulty concentrating on his work. This seemed to occur when other students had completed the independent assignment and began to converse with one another. In order to address these concerns, it may be necessary to adjust the environment of the classroom. For example, students

should be given a longer assignment or have another assignment to complete when they finish so they are not tempted to converse with one another.

- The student's artistic ability can also be used in order to boost his self-esteem. He struggles in academic areas, but he excels and enjoys drawing and sketching. He can be given the opportunity to design a mural for a wall in the school or he can enter local art contests. This will give him an opportunity to display his talents which are not readily noticed in the academic classroom.