

## A Practical Guide to Writing Behavior Intervention Plans for Young Children

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Early childhood special education (ECSE) teachers support children who qualify for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). ECSEs generally serve children under the age of five and are often asked to guide the development of a plan to decrease persistent challenging behaviors of children in classrooms. IDEA indicates that a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), based on the results of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), be developed, written, and implemented when a child engages in behaviors preventing him/her or children in the classroom from learning. This article is designed to guide ECSEs and other team members to write quality BIPs for young children receiving special education services. The importance of BIPs, effective strategies teams can use to develop BIPs, key components of BIPs, and recommendations for teachers are provided. A hypothetical case study weaved through this article shares the experiences of Marco, a young child with autism, his family, and ECSE teacher as she leads the BIP development process in collaboration with her team.

*Keywords:* early childhood special education teacher, behavior intervention plan, young children, challenging behaviors

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*Marco is a three-year-old identified with autism. He recently transitioned from Early Intervention (Part C) in his home to Early Childhood Special Education (Part B 619) services in an inclusive preschool classroom. He attends five mornings a week from 8:30 – 11:30 AM. Recently, he has had some challenges. Marco has started running out of the classroom down the hallway. When he runs, Leanne, the early childhood special educator (ECSE) assigned to support him usually follows. This requires her to leave the classroom and sometimes, there is not enough staff to maintain an appropriate child-to-adult ratio. Marco usually runs to the end of the hallway and falls to the ground. He lies there while Leanne repeats directions to “get up and come back to the classroom.” After what might be as long as 15-minutes she usually picks him up and carries him back to the room. Some days he leaves the classroom more than twenty times, and it is disrupting his participation in learning activities. Leanne has two paraprofessionals with her throughout the day, but believes she needs more support to provide meaningful activities for the other eighteen students.*

Early childhood special education (ECSE) teachers, like Leanne, support children who qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). This law mandates that providers complete functional behavior assessments (FBAs), write behavior intervention plans (BIPs), and implement strategies throughout the day when a child engages in behaviors that prevent him or her from participating in classroom activities. FBAs/BIPs are also required when other children are impacted, or the child needs intensive individualized interventions. In the case study, Marco’s elopement is preventing him from participating, and it is disruptive to the other students. Other examples of challenging behaviors in young children that may prompt a professional to schedule a team meeting may include throwing toys forcefully towards peers across several weeks, biting others often, or engaging in lengthy tantrums.

An estimated 70,000 preschoolers are suspended or expelled in the United States every year (Malik, 2017). It is difficult to obtain exact data as to why these young children are removed from their classroom environments due to factors including teacher perceptions and bias, race, and program quality (Giordano et al., 2021). ECSE teachers are often required to lead the

FBA/BIP process because they are identified as a professional on the team who should have behavioral expertise. Specific aspects of support are needed for ECSEs to successfully guide young children, so when challenging behaviors do occur, they can continue to participate in natural environments such as the classroom. Teachers need to know the expectations of their school, district, or community agency related to FBA/BIPs. They also need to have the knowledge of IDEA, and the case law related to identifying when a FBA/BIP is needed. Additionally, they need skills to conduct FBAs and write function based BIPs or they may miss components needed for positive outcomes. This may lead to situations where children engage in behaviors and are subsequently removed from early childhood settings (Perry et al., 2011).

The purpose of this article is to guide ECSEs and other team members as they collaboratively write quality BIPs for children that engage in persistent challenging behavior and are receiving special education services. After an assessment, the logical next step is to write a plan based on the analyzed and reported results. In the delivery of ECSE services, the plan derived from an assessment of challenging behaviors is defined as a “behavior intervention plan.” The BIP is a document that lists information and strategies team members intend to use to decrease challenging behaviors and increase positive ones throughout the child’s daily activities and routines.

The authors of this article establish a foundation for this topic by sharing the importance of BIPs in early childhood settings. Then, collaborative strategies that team members can use to effectively develop BIPs are discussed. Key components of a “quality BIP” are defined and supported by the hypothetical case study of Marco, his family, and the ECSE teacher. Finally, this article provides recommendations to consider when developing and implementing BIPs. The authors recognize that this content is not “new” information. They believe it may be a helpful guide for teachers that need to enhance their knowledge and skill competencies related to behavior support in early childhood.

### **BIPs in Early Childhood**

There are several reasons why this article focuses on the development of BIPs for young children. First, while there is a plethora of literature and resources to guide K-12 teachers as

they conduct FBAs and write/implement BIPs (Oakes et al., 2018; Robertson et al., 2020; Vostal & Mrachko, 2019), less research has focused on the nuances of addressing the behavioral needs of children in early childhood settings. A few studies have shown that implementation of BIPs reduced problem behavior and increased alternative behavior within the daily routines and activities of young children, including circle time (Cho Blair et al., 2011; Sears et al., 2017). Although these studies reported using plans, only a few provided detailed descriptions of the exact documentation. One such example (Stockall & Dennis, 2016) provided a sample BIP designed for a young child. The plan included: a summary statement of problem behavior, target behavior(s), proactive strategies, instructional intervention for teaching replacement behavior, data collection methods, consequence interventions, and strategies for crisis intervention. More studies and resources that document plan components are needed to support composing and implementation of BIPs by early childhood teachers and team members.

BIPs used in early childhood settings serve several key functions. The BIP orients the team and lays the foundation for implementing intervention strategies. BIPs can also include a list of the members of the team, goals they plan to achieve, or the hypothesized function of the behavior. It can support planning for accommodations or adaptations within daily activities, routines, or transitions (e.g., the use of a verbal reminder and visual support to prepare a child). Additionally, the plan can be an information-sharing tool to keep team members, including the family, on the same page regarding planned and implemented interventions. In early childhood settings, it is critical to consistently share the plan with caregivers so they can carry over support strategies in the home and community settings.

The BIP can be used to create a checklist or monitoring tool. This tool lists the interventions included on the plan and provides a space for team members to record their own performance or the use of strategies by others. A tool such as this may increase the likelihood of team members using interventions, accurately (i.e., with fidelity), across the day (Sears et al., 2018). Wahman et al. (2022) recommends an Intervention Implementation Fidelity Tool for professionals serving young children with delays and disabilities to share responsibility for developing and implementing the plan. The authors describe the parts of this tool and provide

examples of how it may be used in practice. The tool lists intervention steps that prepare professionals for using a strategy (e.g., prior to morning circle, a teacher reminds Joey how he can request a break), implementing a strategy (e.g., “Joey, remember when you want a break during morning circle you can let me know you are all finished”), and what should occur after the strategy is implemented (e.g., Joey’s teachers praise him for returning to morning circle calmly). On the tool described by Wahman and colleagues, implementation can be monitored by circling “Yes” or “No” indicating whether the step was completed.

This article is a helpful contribution to the field of early childhood because it expands on recommendations from experts to use function-based interventions and document support for young children with delays and disabilities. Recently, Practice-Based Preparation Standards for Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSEs; CEC, 2020) were developed to guide the field. The Standards direct faculty in EI/ECSE and blended (i.e., EI/ECSE and general education early childhood) teacher preparation programs to include course content related to function-based interventions and support. Additionally, all professionals serving young children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), regardless of their profession, are guided by the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices (RPs; DEC, 2014) and Position Statement of Challenging Behavior and Young Children (DEC, 2017). These practices and position statement recommend the use of function-based interventions and support for children with challenging behaviors. We believe this article may be useful for faculty or professional development providers training individuals that support young children with IEPs.

### **The Role of the FBA in This Article**

The FBA is well-documented in the literature as an evidence-based practice (EBP) that leads to the identification of interventions to decrease challenging behaviors and increase functionally equivalent skills such as social interactions and communication (Sugai et al., 1999–2000). There are four functions that maintain challenging behavior in young children including (a) escaping a task demand, (b) gaining a tangible item or activity, (c) gaining attention, and (d) accessing automatic reinforcement (Alberto & Troutman, 2013). While FBAs and the plan that proceeds are integrally connected, this article is meant to be a practical guide focused on the

BIP. The authors assume that readers have a general understanding of the FBA; however, they recommend exploring resources listed in Table 1 if more guidance is needed about the assessment process.

**Table 1***Functional Behavior Assessment Resources for Early Childhood Team Members*

Author(s)	Type of resource	Title	Link to resource
Fettig, A. & Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Toddler Initiative	Learning module	Functional behavior assessment	<a href="https://asdtoddler.fpg.unc.edu/book/export/html/309.html">https://asdtoddler.fpg.unc.edu/book/export/html/309.html</a>
Dunlap et al.	Textbook	Prevent teach reinforce for young children: The early childhood model of individualized positive behavior support	<a href="https://products.brookespublishing.com/Prevent-Teach-Reinforce-for-Young-Children-P1328.aspx">https://products.brookespublishing.com/Prevent-Teach-Reinforce-for-Young-Children-P1328.aspx</a>
Ostrosky & Sandall	Monograph	Addressing young children's challenging behaviors (Young Exceptional Children Monograph Series No. 15).	<a href="https://www.dec-sped.org/product-page/young-exceptional-children-monograph-no-15-addressing-young-children-s">https://www.dec-sped.org/product-page/young-exceptional-children-monograph-no-15-addressing-young-children-s</a>
National Center for Pyramid Model Interventions	Website	The Positive Behavior Support Process: Six Steps for Implementing PBS	<a href="https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/">https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/</a>
Sam, A. & Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules (AFIRM) Team	Brief information packet	Functional behavior assessment	<a href="https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595335.pdf">https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595335.pdf</a>

### **Teaming and Collaboration in BIP Development**

Teaming and collaboration are critical for success, especially when addressing challenging behaviors in young children. After a child is identified as having behaviors of concern, a team should be gathered to identify the next steps (e.g., FBA/BIP process). While the ECSE plays an important role, when working with young children that qualify for services, it is never just one teacher who makes all the decisions.

*Leanne, Marco's teacher, is new to the district. She discovered that the school that hired her has a strong early childhood team that meets regularly to discuss issues and challenges. The team includes a speech-language pathologist (SLP), occupational therapist (OT), and supervisor (the principal). Leanne emailed her supervisor and asked to add a discussion related to Marco's behaviors to the agenda. At this meeting, Leanne shares her struggles with Marco's behavior. She shared that he often runs out of the classroom when she conducts group activities. He is barely participating independently in daily routines and Leanne is not sure he has made any progress since the beginning of the school year. The SLP and OT agree that they are having similar challenges. The meeting concluded by all members agreeing that modifications needed to be made to Marco's services and support. Specifically, they may need to modify the IEP document by checking the "behavior" box. When this box is checked the team agrees that the student exhibits behavior requiring individually designed support. They also need to create new IEP goals focused on decreasing running and increasing his participation. Additionally, the team determined it may be beneficial to conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) followed by a written Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). They discussed that the inclusive classroom might not be the best fit for Marco. According to IDEA, to modify his placement, an FBA would need to be completed if the team decided a change was appropriate. After they met, Leanne called Marco's parents and scheduled an IEP meeting to gather their input.*

Many preschool-age children, like Marco, are just learning to engage in a more structured, classroom environment; therefore, families play an important part on the team. Especially at the beginning of the year, families are a valuable source that can provide information about the child's behavior in home and community settings. Other members of the team should be those

who interact with the child regularly and are listed on the IEP. This may include SLPs, OTs, or other related personnel (e.g., paraprofessionals, school psychologists). The team may also include professionals who have served (or are currently serving) the child and family, such as Part C Early Intervention providers, childcare providers, extended relatives or behavioral experts (e.g., Board Certified Behavior Analysts). Collaborating with these professionals and reviewing documentation, such as the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), may provide team members with past goals, influences on the development of social-emotional behavior, and/or strategies that have been used with success.

Strong organizational structures can help teachers support the implementation of BIPs (Crone & Horner, 2003). It is important to establish membership and agree on how the team will function (Sears et al., 2013; Dunlap et al., 2015). One person, most likely the ECSE, should be established as the leader of the group who invites members to join the team, identifies times professionals can meet consistently to discuss progress, creates agendas for meetings, guides the meeting structure, and completes paperwork (including writing the functional assessment report and BIP). The identified leader should also drive initial conversations towards discussing communication across members including when, how often, and what method they will use to communicate (e.g., summary email sent by the ECSE on Fridays) The leader may also consider determining the content that will be communicated (e.g., progress on goals). While this leader guides the team, Wahman et al. (2022) suggests all members should share responsibility for writing and implementing the BIP. They also identified three other strategies to improve collaboration on behavior support teams in early childhood. These included developing a shared language, using a shared data collection process, and displaying results in an understandable way that can be shared with all team members, including the family.

### **Evidence-based BIP Components**

To identify BIP components that were supported by research for this article, the authors reviewed studies published in peer-review journals that focused on the use of BIPs in early childhood settings. After review, they discussed their clinical knowledge and skills related to BIPs and the practices they use to train ECSE teachers to design plans. All three authors were



doctoral-level professionals with expertise in behavior analysis and EI/ECSE. Two authors were board certified behavior analysts (BCBAs) and one author had written a book on positive behavior interventions and supports for children in preschool and kindergarten (Lohman, 2021).

Collectively, they identified the following 11 components of a “quality BIP” to be included in this article (see Figure 1 for examples):

1. Introductory section
2. Target behavior
3. Hypothesized function and statement(s)
4. Goals
5. Antecedents
6. Antecedent interventions
7. Replacement behaviors
8. Teach interventions
9. Consequences
10. Consequence interventions
11. Data collection methods

Several of these components (e.g., hypothesized function and statements) are necessary when documenting the results of a FBA and are included in the BIP here because intervention strategies should be linked directly with the results of the assessment. For example, if the function of behavior was hypothesized as attention seeking, then strategies on the plan should include decreasing/eliminating adult or peer attention when the behavior occurs. If the BIP were to state that adults provide attention contingent on the behavior occurring, this would not be considered a function-based plan (O’Neill et al., 2015). There are several important aspects of behavior support not included in the plan. These include a focus on generalization and maintenance of skills and crisis plan. The authors recommend that these two areas be addressed in separate protocols that are added to the BIP, when deemed appropriate, and suggest exploring Pennington et al. (2018) and the IRIS Center Modules on behavior management (Iris Center, 2022) literature and examples on these topics.

**Component 1: Introductory Section**

Before documentation of other BIP components, it can be helpful to identify key information to orient the team to the child, family, and plan. This may include the child's name, date of birth, age, caregivers, professionals responsible for writing the plan, and team members that participate in plan implementation.

**Component 2: Target Behavior**

After key information, an operational definition and examples of the behavior(s) should be written. The definition should be identified as part of the FBA process and describes the topography of the behavior (i.e., what it looks like) so that it can be easily measured.

*In Marco's case, the target behavior was identified as "running down the hallway." Leanne elaborated to write an operational definition. First, she identified his running as "elopement," the technical term for this behavior. Then, she described the behavior as Marco running out of the classroom down the school hallway and sitting/laying on the steps or floor for more than five seconds.*

**Component 3: Hypothesized Function and Statement**

Next, a hypothesized function and statement developed as part of the FBA should be written on the plan.

*In the case of Marco, it was hypothesized that his behavior served two functions. First, Marco escaped from demands by eloping. Then, his behavior was maintained by adult attention after he left the classroom and sat/laid on the steps or floor. Attention was also provided when Leanne carried him back to the classroom or stood next to him providing a demand to return.*

**Component 4: Goals**

It is critical that the BIP goals are specific and can be measured by all team members. The FBA supports IDEA requirements related to goals because the process identifies the current behavior and individual needs of the child (Yell, 2019). There should also be a direct connection between goals and the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFPs; More & Hart Barnett, 2014).

To provide a full picture of the child's progress over time, the authors of this paper recommend including at least three goals: one decreasing the challenging behavior, one increasing functionally equivalent replacement behaviors, and one increasing other appropriate behavior. The use of the SMART goal format is also recommended to ensure high-quality instruction (Jung, 2007) and improved outcomes for children (Ruble & McGrew, 2013). SMART goals are described as: (a) specific, (b) measurable, (c) using an action verb, (d) realistic, and (e) time-limited (Hedin & DeSpain, 2018). In addition to these criteria, goals written by team members serving young children should also be contextually appropriate and correspond with when target behaviors occur throughout daily routines and activities (McLaren & Nelson, 2009).

Specific goals may also include a description of the conditions under which the child will engage in the desired behavior (Hedin & DeSpain, 2018). This might include information about prompting to complete the action or the location or situation in which the action will be performed. In early childhood settings, such as inclusive classrooms, conditions may include daily activities and routines the child is meant to participate in alongside same-age peers. Secondly, goals must include a quantifiable measure of child performance on the desired behavior (More & Hart Barnett, 2014). To meet the criteria for an action verb, goals must include an explicit description of the desired behavior (More & Hart Barnett, 2014). Next, goals must be realistically based on the child's current functioning (Elder et al., 2018; Jung, 2007) and developmentally appropriate (Hancock & Carter, 2016). Finally, goals should include the time frame to achieve the desired behavior (Jung, 2007). Although the IEP document, including goals, must be reviewed one time per year, behavioral goals should be reviewed more frequently by the team.

*When Leanne conducted the FBA, the data showed that elopement occurred at a much higher frequency during free time and group activities when more than three peers were present. Leanne considered the assessment data and what Marco may reasonably achieve within four months (the next time the BIP document will be reviewed) and developed the goals below in collaboration with the team. To provide data on how frequently the challenging behaviors occur across the day, the team developed one goal focused on his behavior across all school activities.*

*Then, the team developed one goal to capture his progress within daily routines and two goals that focused on increasing functionally equivalent behavior (e.g., requesting to leave the classroom) and participation behaviors (e.g., standing or sitting close to peers). To make sure she developed time-limited, SMART goals that the team can focus on within routines and activities she broke them down into parts (see Table 2).*

#### **Component 5: Antecedents**

Then, antecedents identified through the FBA should be listed (i.e., an event or request that occurs right before the targeted behavior) that may serve as triggers for the behavior. Once the antecedents are identified that maintain the challenging behavior then they can be modified to make those behaviors less efficient and effective (McKeena et al., 2017).

*In Marco's case, the team determined that when a paraprofessional was absent, Leanne's attention is distributed across more children; therefore, he was more likely to elope. Additionally, it was identified that when he was provided with a demand (e.g., time to transition, clean up), Marco elopes more frequently. The team discussed that sometimes professionals ask Marco a question instead of providing a demand (e.g., are you ready to clean up?).*

#### **Component 6: Antecedent Interventions**

Addressing and managing challenging behaviors is an area that many early childhood teachers feel underprepared in handling (Wood et al., 2018). One strategy that helps teachers stop challenging behaviors before they start is antecedent interventions. These are interventions that are implemented before and independently of the target behavior's occurrence and include modifications to the environment and/or accommodations made by adults. They are identified after review of antecedents identified through the FBA process (Cooper et al., 2020).

*Leanne had learned about positive behavior support and its importance with young children in the past; therefore, she felt more comfortable identifying antecedent strategies. These included using Marco's preferences and scheduling time when he could engage with items and activities he enjoyed throughout the day, increasing access to adult attention, and providing effective instructions.*

**Table 2***Formula to Develop Early Childhood Behavior Goals and SMART Examples*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Specific including routines and activities (S)</b>	<b>Measurable (M)</b>	<b>Action (A)</b>	<b>Realistic and relevant (R)</b>	<b>Time-limited (T)</b>
Description	Conditions under which the desired behavior will occur	Quantifiable measure of child performance of the desired behavior	Includes a description of the desired behavior	Developmentally appropriate and based on the child's current functioning	Time frame to achieve the desired behavior
Goal #1: Within 4-months, Marco will elope (run from) out of the classroom less than two times per week and maintain for two weeks across all daily routines and activities.	The early childhood classroom across all daily routines and activities	Less than two times per week and maintain for two weeks	Elope (run from)	<p>This goal is realistic because baseline data indicated Marco eloped from the classroom an average of 12 times per day with a range of 3 to 20. Elopement lasts an average of 2 hours and 10 minutes in duration with a range of 30 seconds to 3 hours and 15 minutes. Some days he only eloped 3 times, making 2 per week a realistic target for success.</p> <p>This goal is relevant because when he meets this goal his participation will improve across all routines.</p>	Within 4-months

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<p>Goal #2: Within 4- months, Marco will sit or stand within one foot of other children for at least five minutes per day, during at least two group activities in the classroom, across three consecutive days and will maintain for two weeks.</p>	<p>During at least two group activities in the early childhood classroom</p>	<p>For at least five minutes per day during at least two group activities, and will maintain for two weeks</p>	<p>Sit or stand within one foot of other children</p>	<p>This goal is realistic because this skill is already emerging. Baseline data indicated he stays with the group for an average of 30- seconds</p> <p>This goal is relevant because it will promote Marco's participation in adult- led group activities with peers.</p>	<p>Within 4- months</p>
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### ***Component 7: Replacement Behaviors***

When teachers and other providers are creating a BIP, it is important to come up with a replacement behavior for the targeted challenging behavior that is to be changed. The replacement behavior should still serve the same function as the challenging behavior (McKeena et al., 2017). Once data has been collected and there is a hypothesis of the function that the behavior serves then a replacement behavior can be chosen that serves that same function but is more appropriate (Gresham, 2015). An example of a replacement behavior is teaching a child to request to leave the classroom to replace problematic elopement from the same environment (see Figure 1). Teachers will need to determine if the child can perform the identified replacement behavior independently (Reeves et al., 2017).

*The team identified that Marco has items and activities that he prefers over others. One of these is being pulled in a wheelbarrow through the school hallways. When in the wheelbarrow, he leaves the classroom appropriately and he has access to adult attention. Leanne writes on his BIP that they will focus on teaching him to request to exit the classroom for*

*a wheelbarrow ride. Leanne is hopeful access to these preferred activities will replace the elopement.*

### **Component 8: Teach Interventions**

The next step after identifying antecedent interventions and replacement behavior(s) to the targeted challenging behavior is to use strategies to teach the child more appropriate skills. For young children, this may include teaching them to communicate effectively, participate in daily routines (e.g., hand washing), or interact with peers. One EBP that has been shown to teach young children with delays or disabilities in preschool classrooms is the use of embedded learning opportunities (ELOs). ELOs are meant to seamlessly integrate instruction into daily routines, activities, or transitions of young children with a focus on contexts that are motivating and meaningful to them (Head Start Center for Inclusion, 2019). ELOs are grounded in applied behavior analysis (ABA) or the application of the science of learning (Cooper et al., 2020). ELOs are comprised of three components:

1. Antecedent/cue that occurs immediately before the desired behavior
2. Desired behavior itself
3. Consequence that occurs immediately after desired behavior

*In Marco's case, Leanne and the team decide to use ELOs to teach him to request to leave the classroom throughout the day. Within these ELOs, they decide to implement Functional Communication Training (FCT), or a specific approach to teaching a child to engage in functionally equivalent, more appropriate behaviors. Requesting to leave the classroom served the same function of elopement: to escape. The team decides to integrate ELOs before outdoor play times and transition to the gym. During these ELOs an adult will show him a picture of the wheelbarrow. The adult, at first, will use a full physical prompt, to support Marco with taking the picture off and giving it to the adult to communicate his desire to access the wheelbarrow in the hallway. After the picture exchange, he will be pulled by an adult in the wheelbarrow to the playground or gym. Additionally, the team decides to use ELOs during free play, choice time, and center-based activities which will provide him with more practice with requesting. When Marco approaches a preferred item/activity during center an adult will provide a prompt for him to request using a single word (e.g., truck).*

**Component 9: Consequences**

Then, consequences identified through the FBA should be listed (i.e., an event or request that occurs immediately after the targeted behavior). These consequences bring attention to how team members are currently responding to the behavior and prompt changes that need to take place. Often, a team may determine that members are each responding differently which is why the behavior has maintained over time.

**Component 10: Consequence Interventions**

The team needs to then determine how everyone will use EBPs to respond consistently to the behavior when it occurs. This may include ignoring the behavior, but not the child, or in the case of elopement blocking access to areas outside of the classroom.

*In Marco's case, Leanne identified several consequence interventions that will be implemented after he attempts to elope or elopes from the classroom. These include blocking Marco's body (by standing in the way) from leaving the classroom, following him, removing preferred items (when applicable), and providing minimal attention and directives in a neutral tone to go back to the classroom. Then, when he returns, an adult will provide him with the same direction given or he should be told to participate in the same activity that occurred before he eloped.*

Additionally, the team needs to identify how replacement and/or other functional behaviors will be positively reinforced. This may include systematically reinforcing behaviors they want to see occur more frequently throughout daily routines.

*Reinforcement was a difficult concept for Leanne, so she consulted her school textbooks and identified that differential reinforcement was an effective strategy for decreasing challenging behaviors. She suggested the team use differential reinforcement of other behaviors (DRO) by providing Marco with a preferred item every 10-minutes, increasing the likelihood he would access reinforcers throughout the day in the classroom environment.*

**Component 11: Data Collection Methods**

Lastly, data on target behaviors must be collected consistently to determine if the intervention was effective or needs to be adjusted (Cooper et al., 2020). Continual progress monitoring is essential and should be collected until it has remained stable over a few weeks.



The data collection method used should (a) be clear and simple, (b) reliably capture the information, and (c) be reasonable for teachers and other professionals who have multiple responsibilities (Fronapfel et al., 2018). There should also be clear communication among the team of teachers and other providers who will be collecting the data and when. If the intervention is changed based on the data, ECSE teachers and other team members should note when and what change was made and continue collecting data to evaluate the child's behavior after the change (Wood et al., 2018). Data should be collected before the intervention, during, and after to determine if there has been a change in the targeted behavior. The BIP should include how data will be collected, how frequently it will be collected, and who will collect it.

**Figure 1***Sample Behavior Intervention Plan*

Child Information	Team Information
<b>Name:</b> Marco Olivera	<b>Caregivers:</b> Sandra and Tomas Olivera
<b>Date of Birth:</b> 4/2/17	<b>ECSE Teacher Responsible for Plan:</b> Leanne Servillo
<b>Age:</b> 3.0 years	<b>Team Members Responsible for Plan Implementation:</b> Leanne Connors (Early Childhood Special Education Teacher), Justin Choi (SLP), Melody Nelson (Paraprofessional)
Target Challenging Behavior	
<p><b>Elopement definition:</b> Marco runs out of the classroom down the school hallway and sits/lays on the steps or floor for more than five seconds.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Running down the hallway, laying with his stomach on the ground flat on the floor, or sitting on the stairs.</p> <p><b>Non-example:</b> Marco runs out of the classroom and returns quickly within one second and continues to participate in a group activity at the tables.</p>	
Hypothesized Function and Statement	
<p><b>Hypothesized function(s):</b> <u>Escape and attention.</u></p> <p><b>Hypothesis statement:</b> It is hypothesized the behavior of elopement serves two functions. First, Marco <u>escapes from adult demands</u> by eloping from the classroom. Then, the behavior is maintained by the <u>attention</u> provided by adults after he leaves the classroom sits/lays on the steps or floor. The attention is often provided when the teacher carries him back to the classroom or stands next to him and provides a vocal-verbal demand to return to the classroom.</p>	
Goals to Decrease Challenging Behaviors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marco will elope from the classroom less than two times per week and maintain for two weeks across all daily routines and activities.</li> <li>• Marco will elope from the classroom less than one time per day across three consecutive days and maintain for two weeks during free time and group activities including more than three children.</li> </ul>	

<b>Goals to Increase Appropriate Behaviors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marco will independently request to leave the classroom three times per day for three consecutive days and will maintain for two weeks while participating in free time and group activities including more than three children.</li> <li>● Marco will sit or stand within one foot of other children during group activities for at least five minutes per day across three consecutive days and will maintain for two weeks.</li> </ul>
<b>Antecedents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marco receives minimal one-to-one attention and support (e.g., due to paraprofessional being absent).</li> <li>● A task demand is presented by an adult (e.g., “it’s time to clean up”).</li> <li>● The classroom door is open, and Marco is near the door.</li> </ul>
<b>Antecedent Interventions</b>
<p><b>Increase opportunities to access escape from the classroom appropriately:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Push Marco on rides in a wheelbarrow (identified as a preferred activity) in the hallway one time per hour for 10-minutes.</li> <li>● Provide Marco with access to the playground or gym area to play at least three times per day for 10-minutes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Pair preferred items and activities with the classroom environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schedule five times per day (for a minimum of 15-minutes) for Marco to engage with preferred items. Embed into play and choice time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Increase access to positive 1:1 adult attention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assign an adult to be with Marco throughout the entire day. Rotate staff as needed.</li> <li>● Use child-directed, responsive interactions during free play (e.g., follow the child’s lead).</li> </ul> <p><b>Provide effective instructions + pair with a gesture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide clear, concise instructions (e.g., go to the sink) without asking a question. Pair your direction with a gesture (e.g., pointing) when appropriate.</li> </ul> <p><b>Rearrange the furniture in the room to slow access to the door</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Move the retractable wall to 3-5 ft in front of the door area (the door must still be accessible and adhere to safety standards).</li> </ul>
<b>Replacement Behaviors</b>
<p><b>Request to exit the classroom:</b> Teach Marco to take a picture (located by the door) and hand it to a provider in the classroom to access a ride in the wheelbarrow outside of the classroom.</p>
<b>Teach Interventions</b>
<p><b>Targeted functional communication training (FCT):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teach Marco to exchange pictures to access a wheelbarrow ride in the school hallways during free play and choice time. <i>See FCT protocol.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Request training:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide Marco with more opportunities to request items/activities and attention he desires during free play, choice time, and center activities. <i>See request training protocol.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Consequences</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marco accesses the hallway of the school.</li> <li>● An adult follows Marco the area he has eloped to and asks him to come back to the classroom (e.g., “Marco, are you ready to come back yet?”).</li> </ul>
<b>Consequence Interventions</b>
<p><b>Use when the challenging behavior occurs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When possible, block Marco’s body from leaving the classroom, but do not touch him for more than 3-seconds.</li> <li>● Follow Marco into the area he has eloped to, stand near, and block him from accessing preferred items (e.g., water fountain).</li> <li>● In a neutral tone provide a directive to go back into the classroom (“Time to go in”) one time every minute.</li> </ul> <p><b>Use to reinforce replacement and/or appropriate behaviors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Differential reinforcement of other behaviors (DRO): Provide Marco with preferred reinforcer one time every 10-minutes (e.g., cracker) paired with verbalization directed towards Marco (e.g., hi Marco). Fade reinforcement over time. <i>See DRO protocol.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Data Collection Methods</b>
<p><b>Who will collect data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ECSE teacher will collect data on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Paraprofessionals will collect data on Tuesday and Thursday.</li> </ul> <p><b>What type of data will be collected:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frequency count and duration of elopement</li> <li>● Frequency count and duration of elopement within identified routines</li> <li>● Frequency count per day of independent and prompted requests</li> </ul> <p><b>How often will data be collected:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Daily on all behaviors and within goal identified routines (e.g., free play)</li> </ul> <p><b>When will data be reviewed and shared with the team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Friday afternoon by the ECSE teacher or more frequently as needed.</li> </ul>

### BIP Development Checklist

To support team members as they develop BIPs the authors of this article have created a detailed task list of procedural steps (see Figure 2). Depending on school, district, or agency guidelines team members may modify this checklist to include additional components.

### BIP Implementation

After the BIP is written and reviewed with all team members, implementation should occur. The ECSE team must implement the plan as written as fidelity is a critical factor in the success of a BIP (Pinkelman & Horner, 2016). In some cases, protocols (examples listed in Figure 1) are needed for the team to implement interventions listed on the plan. These protocols provide professionals with a task analysis breaking down interventions into multiple steps. They

can also be helpful in the development of fidelity monitoring checklists and an evaluation plan that dictates when data and feedback from team members will be reviewed (Jolivet et al., 2000).

**Figure 2**

*Behavior Intervention Plan Development Task List*

#	Procedural steps	Completed
1	Current FBA in place*	Y or N
2	Gather team members for a meeting to discuss the results of the FBA and next steps to develop the BIP. <i>Include new team members if appropriate.</i>	Y or N
3	Determine responsibilities of each team member related to the BIP. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who will be the primary writer for the BIP?</li> <li>• Who will gather recommendations, input, and feedback from all team members?</li> <li>• How will the caregivers share input and participate in joint decision making?</li> </ul>	Y or N
4	Copy FBA components into the BIP that are part of both documents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Information</li> <li>• Hypothesized function and statement</li> <li>• Goals</li> <li>• Antecedents</li> <li>• Consequences</li> </ul>	Y or N
5	Determine antecedent interventions that align with the antecedents and document on the plan.	Y or N
6	Determine replacement behaviors and document on the plan.	Y or N
7	Determine teach interventions and document on the plan	Y or N
8	Determine consequence interventions that align with the consequences and document on the plan.	Y or N
9	Determine data collection methods and document on the plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify who will collect data</li> <li>• Identify what type of data will be collected</li> <li>• Identify how often data will be collected</li> <li>• Identify when data will be reviewed and shared with the team</li> </ul>	Y or N
10	Complete written Behavior Intervention Plan by deadline: ___/___/___ <i>Recommended deadline of two weeks from the date of the team meeting.</i>	Y or N

Additionally, it may be helpful to create a simple checklist of the BIP components and responsibilities of each team member. Each day, the adults in the room should evaluate how

well they followed the plan and weekly or at team meetings, adults should consider discussing how well the plan has been implemented.

The authors recommend that the team meets again after the plan has been in place for two to three weeks. By that time, there should be initial data to indicate if the plan is working. If the data indicates desired behaviors are increasing, the team should continue the intervention as designed. However, if the data indicates the behavior is occurring at the same frequency as before or if challenging behaviors are occurring more frequently, the team should modify the BIP. It is also important to assess the occurrence of the behavior across daily routines in the classroom. Through this type of analysis, team members may identify changes to the plan that need to occur in specific activities. Regardless of whether the plan continues as initially designed or is modified, the team should plan to meet again after another two to three-week period and should continue meeting regularly for the duration of the intervention.

### **Recommendations for ECSE Teachers**

The authors provide several recommendations so that ECSE teachers can be as effective as possible with BIP implementation. Ethical guidance suggests that teachers assess their knowledge and skills related to conducting FBAs and writing BIPs. In some cases, teams may determine they have not been trained in these areas and determine that additional support is needed. It is recommended that in these cases, teams seek out consultation and support from individuals trained in applied behavior analysis (e.g., Board Certified Behavior Analysts). Additionally, before accepting positions of employment, ECSE teachers should have conversations with administrators regarding the FBA/BIP process for the students that they serve as well as the components required in plans. Also, because ECSE teachers are often the professionals identified to train other team members, they must be trained to implement behavioral interventions listed on the plan with fidelity. ECSE teachers should plan to seek out professional development and training if they do not feel confident in training others. ECSE teachers should be leaders in the field and advocate for BIPs to be in place when children with IEPs engage in challenging behaviors that disrupt their learning or the learning of others. Finally, and most importantly, families must be engaged in the development and implementation of the BIP. They should be active team members and an effort should be made to support the

carryover of the plan into the home and community, leading to generalization across environments.

### **Conclusion**

To address challenging behaviors of young children on IEPs in the preschool classrooms it is critical that ECSE teachers, like Leanne, are provided with guidance on the importance of BIPs and the components that should be included in the plan. While the requirements for BIPs across different schools or districts may vary, the components discussed in this article can support teachers as they learn to craft meaningful, well-designed plans. ECSE teachers also need to recognize that the success of their students relies heavily on teaming and collaboration, the composition of the BIP itself, the fidelity of implementation, and the consistent monitoring of progress. Additionally, ECSE teachers should always assess their training and expertise and learn the structure and support provided in their educational setting.

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