

# **Positive Behavior Support Stories**

Student, Young Adult, and  
Adult Examples

## **PBS Stories**

### **Young Adult and Older Adult PBS Plans**



#### **About Alex**

Alex is a sophomore at Red Rock High School. He is a student with high functioning autism. He uses sign language, the computer, and a Dynavox augmentative communication device to communicate. His current schedule is:

Language Arts 10  
World History  
Physical Education  
Health  
Biology  
Algebra  
Graphics Technology

Alex does well in school much of the time. He is expected to pursue college or community college after he finishes high school. A major concern for the team is that Alex struggles to remain calm when he feels his work will not be completed on time. When he is upset, he tips over desks, yells, and leaves school grounds. He is currently completing 50 % of the work in Language Arts.

#### **Alex's High School**

Red Rock High School is in the second year of school-wide positive behavior support implementation. The school's three school-wide rules are: "Respect ourselves and others," "Education comes first," and "Dedication to our goals is paramount". Other universal supports available to all students include homework posted on the school website, tutoring before school, and social work/counseling support, as needed.

In addition to these general supports, there are also more targeted supports in place for Alex. He has a circle of friends that is supported by the social worker. This group gets together twice a week at lunch independently with the social worker engaging the group once every six weeks. Alex also has drop in meetings with the one of the vice principals to discuss social concerns he has. This has been very effective in the past in mediating confusion about social situations. Recently, Alex has been referred for individual social work support for depression. This has been going well.

To address the specific behavioral concerns that Alex exhibits when he feels his work will not be completed on time, Alex's IEP team (including the parents and Alex) agree that he needs a positive behavior support plan in addition to the school-wide supports available to him.

### **Understanding Alex's Behavior**

Alex's special education teacher and the parents took the lead in suggesting that the team complete a PATH for Alex. As a part of this planning process, Alex indicated he would head for college at age 21, taking advantage of the transition process available at the high school. He would like to take computer tech classes in college. Alex's parents stated that he was likely to either continue to live with them or receive live-in support in his own apartment during the rest of high school and into college. Through the discussion of Alex's dream for his future and goals generated in the PATH process, the staff supporting Alex in the high school reported that they understood him better and felt more unified in what they were doing.

A functional behavior assessment was conducted to determine the stressors associated with Alex's outbursts. One interesting finding was that Alex's degree of concern and level of discomfort varied depending on the class. It also appeared that Alex acted out for attention as opposed to acting out to escape the situation. The team hypothesized that the pressure was increased for Alex in subjects that he took pride in (Science and Language Arts), rather than for math or electives. A competing pathways model was used to determine setting events, antecedents, replacement behaviors, and alternate behaviors for Alex. Based on this information, a multi-component plan was developed to address Alex's stress around deadlines.

### **Designing Strategies for Alex**

The replacement behavior for tipping desks, yelling and leaving school grounds was to inform a trusted person (to be identified by Alex) and develop a plan for extending the timeline for the assignment. During this process, it became clear to the team that Alex would need some skills development in order to accomplish this. Alternate behaviors that resulted in the same outcome (increased attention to Alex, so that he could vent and plan) were also developed. Alex can use a break card when he realizes he is stressed out. He can also go to the counseling office and talk with someone about what is bothering him.

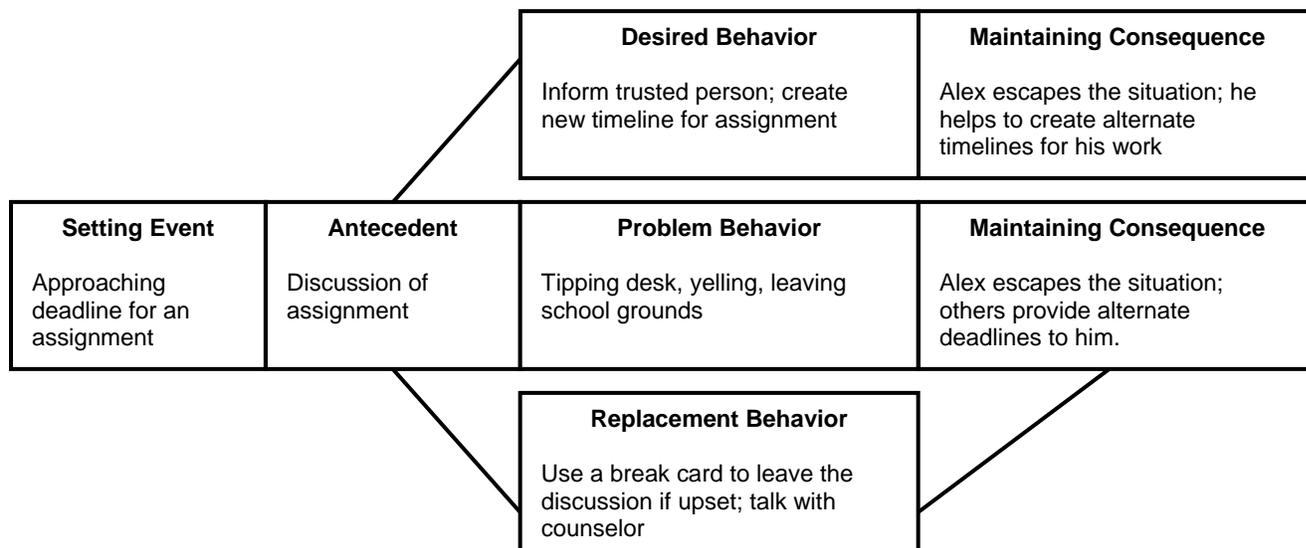
The team then realized that Alex may not recognize all of the signals that his body sends that he is stressed. By having his support person and teachers learn these signals, the staff can cue Alex as he is learning them himself. In addition, the team also addressed the setting events and antecedents that precede problem behavior.

### **Is the Plan Working?**

After one month of taking data on the support plan, Alex was having significantly more time in class without leaving because he was upset. After three months, the Language Arts teacher reported that he was completing 25 % more of his assignments and was maintaining a passing grade. In addition, Alex's parents reported at the plan evaluation meeting that Alex was also less stressed at home and more able to complete his assignments.

**[Click Here to See an Example of Alex's Brainstorming Session](#)**

### Alex's PBS Brainstorming Session Process



Setting Event	Antecedent	Problem Behavior	Consequence
Approaching deadline for an assignment	Discussion of assignment	Tipping desk, yelling, leaving school grounds	Alex escapes the situation; others provide alternate deadlines to him.
Setting Event Interventions	Antecedent Interventions	Replacement Behavior & Other Related Social and Communication Skills	Consequence Interventions
Reminders of assignment deadlines  Teacher check in the week before assignment is due	Learn body signals of stress  Create and teach break card use	Inform trusted person; create new timeline for assignment  Alex can take a break if stressed by the conversation  Identify trusted person  Create timeline adjustment process with teachers	Alex knows when he is upset and needs to seek support  Alex chooses to take a break when he needs one  Alex chooses his new timelines  Alex can complete his work and see himself as capable

Adapted from O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Storey, K., & Newton, J. S. (1997). Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior.

## Individual Support Examples in the Community



### About Gil

Gil is an adult with Down syndrome. He lives with his mother and her sister, his Aunt Georgia. He has a twenty-five hour a week job at the local supermarket as a stocker and bagger. He also makes and sells beads at his aunt's booth at the flea market. When Gil does not understand what is being asked of him, he will run and hide under objects or furniture. Earlier this year, there was a bomb threat at the supermarket. Gil hid under a car in the parking lot. Since that time, when asked to do things outside the typical routine of the day, Gil repeats this behavior. Gil's Aunt Georgia has suggested a PBS plan to his mother. They requested PBS from Gil's case manager.

### Understanding Gil's Behavior

Gil's case manager brought together Gil's mother and aunt, his supervisor and a co-worker, and friends of Gil's from the flea market to conduct a person centered plan and a functional behavior assessment as part of the PBS process. The person centered plan revealed that Gil's life has been consistently structured and oriented to routines. In the part of the plan that addressed Gil's dreams and fears for the future, he made it clear that he was very afraid of losing his job. He became upset when the topic of the meeting shifted to his need to hide and asked everyone to leave. He and the team agreed to reconvene the next week. Gil also agreed that team members could observe at the job site and talk with each other and with him before the next meeting. When the team reconvened they completed the person-centered plan as well as began discussing the functional behavior assessment.

The functional behavior assessment indicated that Gil left the store and hid in the parking lot more often on days when his break was in the afternoon than when his break was at 10:30 in the morning. The team suggested a set time of 10:30 for Gil's break. He also had less difficulty when Stan is the manager than when Collette was the manager. When discussing this observation from the functional behavior assessment, Collette explained that she writes down changes in the routine that affect Gil and discusses this with him after the meeting. The team agreed that this could assist Gil. The functional behavior assessment also indicated that Gil feels safe when he hides. The team agreed that if Gil could let the staff know he was leaving the meeting and why, he could wait in the staff lounge and get information on changes that affected him after the meeting.

### Designing Strategies for Gil

In addition to the ideas discussed as a part of the functional behavior assessment, the team also discussed the past use and success of transition objects. Gil's mother bought some small pocket items for the managers and employees to give to Gil to hold on to when changes in routine were discussed. This has assisted in Gil being able to listen to directions longer and here full descriptions of what is happening. In addition, the team brainstormed ways to teach Gil to ask for

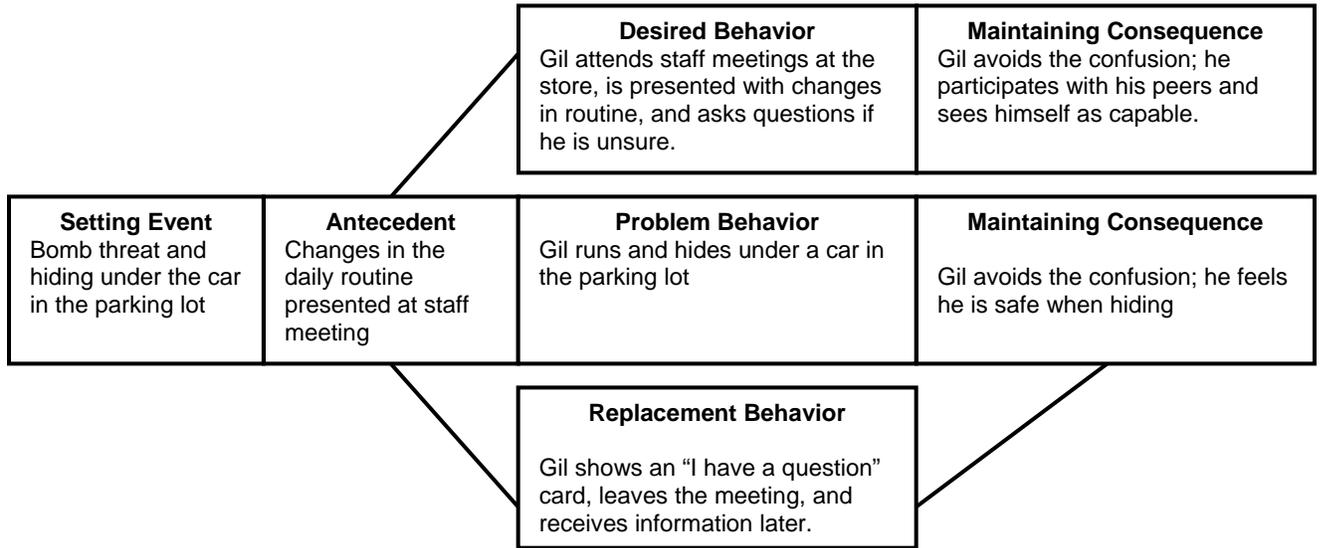
clarification. Gil suggested an “I have a question” card that he could show to the managers in meetings before he leaves. Gil can then take a break and the rest of the information is shared with him one-on-one. In situations when he feels very uncomfortable, Gil uses a cell phone to call his mother or aunt.

**Is the Plan Working?**

Since these strategies have been in use, Gil has hidden in the break room one time and gone into the parking lot only twice. Both times, Gil has been able to come back into the store without going underneath cars. The team is currently satisfied with the progress seen from the plan.

**[Click Here to See an Example of Gil’s Brainstorming Session Results](#)**

## Gil's Brainstorming Session Results



Setting Event	Antecedent	Problem Behavior	Consequence
Bomb threat and hiding under the car in the parking lot	Changes in the routine of the day presented at staff meeting	Gil runs and hides under a car in the parking lot	Gil avoids the confusion; he feels he is safe when hiding
Setting Event Interventions	Antecedent Interventions	Replacement Behavior & Other Related Social and Communication Skills	Consequence Interventions
Reassure Gil that the bomb threat was a very unusual event and that it is over	Notify Gil of changes before the staff meeting  Create "I have a question" card  Teach Gil how his body indicates stress  Write down changes and present them to Gil outside the staff meeting	Gil shows the "I have a question" card and leaves the meeting to be in the staff lounge, and receives his information later one-on-one	Gil avoids the confusion; he participates with his peers and sees himself as capable.

Adapted from O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Storey, K., & Newton, J. S. (1997). Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior.

## **PBS Stories**

### **School Examples of PBS Plans**

#### **Selena**



#### **About Selena**

Selena is a second grader at Feather Plume Elementary School. She has a seizure disorder, cerebral palsy, and a shunt. She had a stroke at birth, in addition to the anoxia that contributed to her Cerebral Palsy. She uses speech to communicate, but often depends on scripted language to communicate effectively. She does not like to be touched and is resistant to eating. In the cafeteria, Selena screams loudly if people try to encourage her to eat. She spits and hits people if offered food is near her. She also takes a long time to eat. Her educational team is concerned because she has continued to lose weight over the past year. When presented with schoolwork, Selena tantrums and continues to tantrum until she is removed from the activity. In addition, she is perceived to be disruptive by her peers. As a result of these concerns, the team created a PBS plan to address Selena's needs.

#### **Selena's Elementary School**

The school is implementing a school-wide PBS model. Feather Plume's schoolwide expectations are: Fairness, Pride, Education, and Service; Fairness for all, Pride in what we do, Education for everyone, and Service to each other. Since the inception of school-wide positive behavior support at Feather Plume Elementary, office discipline referrals have dropped from 60 per month to 22 per month and teachers report a greater sense of satisfaction with the school. Selena has just started attending the school's after-hours program as a part of more tailored school-based interventions. She seems to enjoy the activity.

#### **Understanding Selena's Behavior**

Selena's educational team conducted a person-centered plan and a functional behavior assessment as part of the PBS process. During the person-centered plan, Selena's mother stated she felt that Selena's lack of desire to eat was rooted in her need to control her environment. She believes that choosing not to eat is the one way Selena can consistently exert control. Her mother also explained that early in her life Selena had had extensive one-on-one therapy that resulted in her becoming resistant to doing work. Her classroom teacher is worried that removing Selena from the classroom (and the activity) when she tantrums might be rewarding her for negative behavior.

The functional behavior assessment supported the discussion that occurred during the person centered plan. The staff and her family have been very concerned about Selena eating and lunchtime feels pressured. Selena sits with a staff member and is presented with individual bites

of food. Selena is also isolated from her peers. During lunch time, Selena refused any presentation of food by saying, “No, no, no,” or “All done.” Selena consistently screamed and hit herself and her wheelchair to avoid any work activity. She also appeared to be sensitive to going near desks or tables and began to say “No, no, no” when placed near either her desk or the table in the lunchroom. Based on this information, the team agreed that there were two main behaviors of concern and developed competing pathways to address each of them.

### **Designing Strategies for Selena**

The first behavior of concern identified by the team during the functional behavior assessment was Selena’s refusal to eat at school. A setting event for this behavior is that Selena does not have many opportunities to make choices during the day. By increasing Selena’s opportunities to choose activities, she gains a greater sense of control. This may reduce the need for her to refuse food over time.

An antecedent to the behavior is that eating is presented as a task, rather than as a pleasant activity. One of the activities suggested during the person centered plan is that Selena really enjoys telling stories and jokes. The team created a Joke club that included her. The Joke club meets at lunchtime every day. The expectation is that, initially, Selena would come and listen to jokes. She could choose whether to eat or not, and the cafeteria would become a more pleasant place to go. As she is comfortable in the cafeteria at the table with her peers, then food would be presented in the hope that she would eat while participating with her peers (Her sister reported success with this strategy at home.)

In order to address the Selena’s refusal to work, the team agreed that Selena needed reassurance that school was a good place to be. With respect to the antecedent or trigger of being placed near a desk or table, the team agreed that work production was the priority and that the location where Selena did her work was flexible. Selena could choose to work in the library where there are more creative seating options (tipi, bathtub, bean ban chairs). The team also believes that Selena is inadvertently rewarded by being removed from the classroom when she tantrums. In order to help her sustain in the classroom, the team suggested the use of a break card, so that Selena can escape work while continuing to stay in the class with her peers. In addition, Selena’s desk was moved close to the window so that she can look out if she is feeling anxious about being in the room.

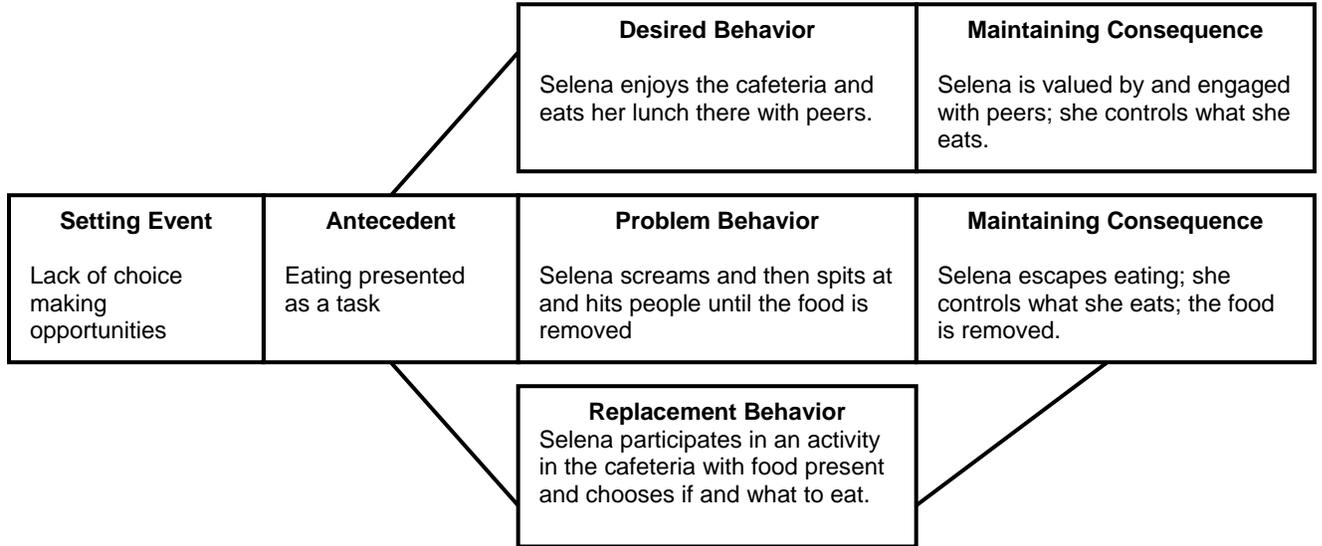
### **Is the Plan Working?**

After one week of the Joke Club, Selena asked a fellow student for a potato chip and ate it. One month after Selena was going to the cafeteria daily, drinking milk there daily during Joke Club and eating at least one time a week. After one semester, Selena was eating between 2 and 3 times a week in the cafeteria, but going happily every day.

After one month, Selena was choosing daily to work in the library. She resisted completing work about one half of the time. She used the break card the other half of the time. After one semester, Selena was completing about 66 percent of her work and does about half of that in the library. The team will continue to monitor the plan to ensure Selena continues to make progress completing her work.

**[Click Here to See an Example of Selena’s Brainstorming Session Results for Both Behaviors of Concern](#)**

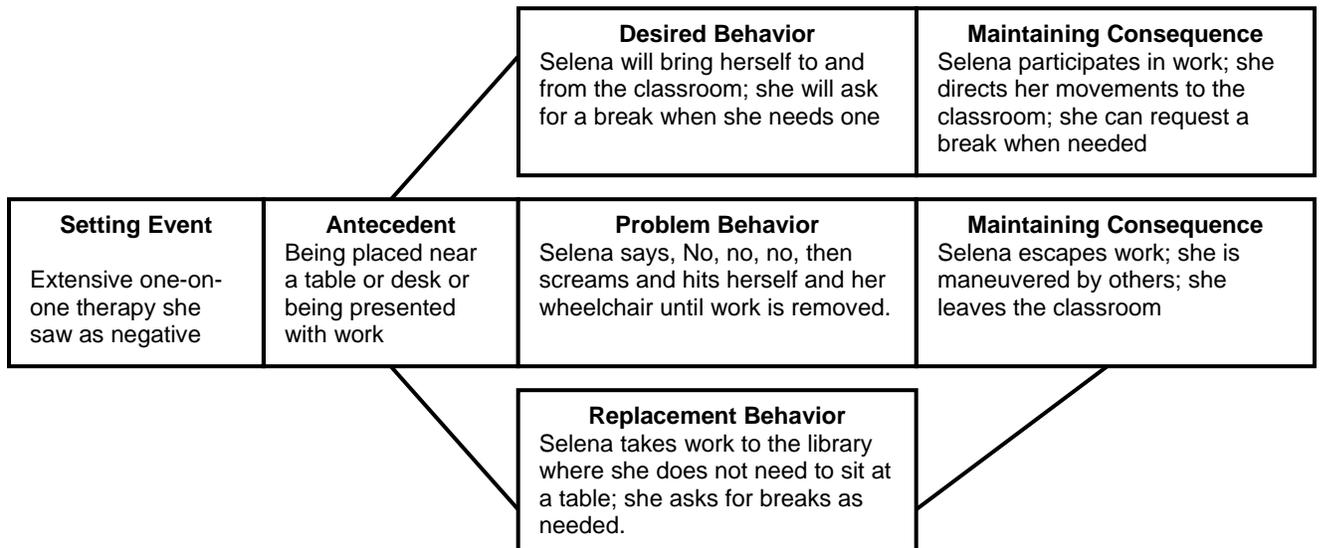
## Selena's First Brainstorming Session Results



Setting Event	Antecedent	Problem Behavior	Consequence
Lack of choice making opportunities	Eating presented as a task	Selena screams, spits at, and hits people until the food is removed	Selena escapes eating; she controls what she eats; the food is removed.
Setting Event Interventions	Antecedent Interventions	Replacement Behavior & Other Related Social and Communication Skills	Consequence Interventions
Increase opportunities for Selena to choose activities and modes of work production in settings outside of eating environment	<p>The cafeteria is presented as a fun place to be.</p> <p>Selena is not expected to eat.</p> <p>Selena spends time with peers rather than with staff</p> <p>A social activity is the basis of Selena's presence in the cafeteria; eating is incidental.</p>	Selena participates in an activity in the cafeteria with food present and chooses if and what to eat.	Selena controls whether or not she eats.

Adapted from O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Storey, K., & Newton, J. S. (1997). Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior.

## Selena's Second Brainstorming Session Results



Setting Event	Antecedent	Problem Behavior	Consequence
Extensive one-on-one therapy she saw as negative	Being placed near a table or desk or being presented with work	Selena says, No, no, no, then screams and hits herself and her wheelchair until work is removed	Selena escapes work; she is maneuvered by others; she leaves the classroom
Setting Event Interventions	Antecedent Interventions	Replacement Behavior & Other Related Social and Communication Skills	Consequence Interventions
<p>Present school as a positive place; reassure Selena that school is not like therapy</p> <p>Provide alternate ways to show work than showing compliance</p>	<p>Selena will direct her wheelchair. Staff will not place her near tables or desk without her direction.</p> <p>Selena selects where she would like to work; the classroom or the library.</p> <p>Selena will organize work tasks in the order she wishes to perform them.</p>	<p>Teach Selena to use a break card to ask to stop work.</p> <p>Selena will move her wheelchair away from the table and engage in a favored activity in the classroom</p> <p>She directs her own movements in the classroom</p>	<p>Selena organizes her work schedule and work location</p> <p>She takes breaks as needed when she asks for a break</p> <p>Avoid allowing escape when Selena self injures. Protect Selena from injury by blocking self injury and prompt request for break (next time prompt Selena to request a break before self injury whenever possible)</p>

Adapted from O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Storey, K., & Newton, J. S. (1997). Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior.

## Sabrina



### About Sabrina

Sabrina is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Junction Forks Middle School. When she was four years old, she was placed in foster care due to severe abuse and neglect. Since that time, she has lived with the same foster family. The family is now pursuing adoption. When Sabrina feels threatened, she bites herself and others. When she does not know what is expected in a situation, she feels threatened.

Sabrina's school schedule is:

M, W, F      1<sup>st</sup> block -- Language Arts/Choir  
T, Th                      -- Homeroom/Computer

M,W,F        2<sup>nd</sup> block – PE/Art/Health  
T, Th                      -- Science/ Social Studies

M-F            3<sup>rd</sup> block – Lunch/Learning Lab

M, W, F      4<sup>th</sup> block – Mathematics  
T,Th                      Electives

Her favorite subjects are Science and Math. Her least favorite class, she says, is lunch. The team believes it is because she does less well with unstructured time.

### Understanding Sabrina's Behavior

The team conducted a MAPS planning process and a functional behavior assessment as a part of the PBS process. Sabrina's MAPS indicated that her nightmare is that she would have no friends and that no one who really cares for her. She is both excited and nervous about being adopted. The functional behavior assessment revealed that Sabrina bites herself or others when she perceives a threat. Biting never occurs in Choir or Science. She consistently bites in every class other than Science at second block.

### Designing Strategies for Sabrina

To reassure Sabrina that she is cared for, the team designed a scrapbook and photo albums of her friends and foster family that Sabrina can review. The team also identified feeling threatened as an antecedent to Sabrina's acting out. The team arranged for Sabrina to leave any environment she feels is threatening and to go to the counseling office, an environment Sabrina identifies as safe. The positive behavior support plan focused on changing Sabrina's activities at second block and at lunchtime. The team reduced the number of classes that Sabrina takes at second block. She is taking only PE or Art at this time now. At lunch time, she is a counseling office helper and eats her lunch in the counseling office with a small group while doing other activities.

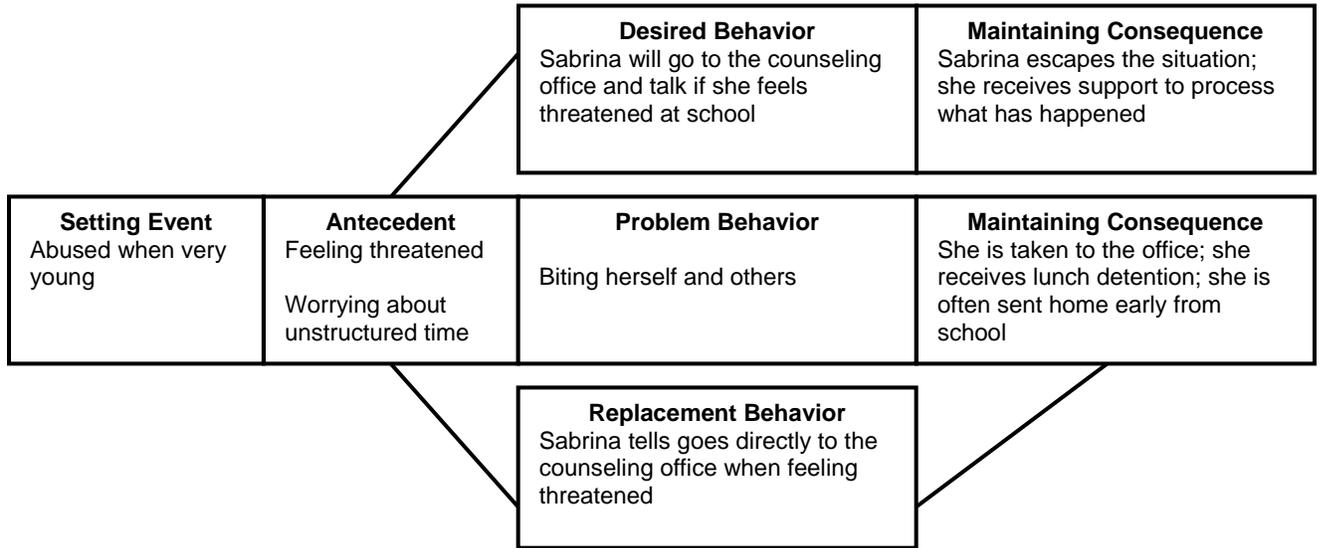
In addition to working, she also has the opportunity to touch base with counselors if she needs to throughout the day.

**Is the Plan Working?**

Her foster mother reports that since the plan has been in effect (eight months), the calls from the school to pick up Sabrina have decreased from one time a week to one time a month. Sabrina has not been to the emergency room for bites in four months. Sabrina told her grandmother that middle school is better than it was last year. The team feels that they have a better understanding of Sabrina and her emotional needs.

**[Click here to see an example of Sabrina's Brainstorming Session Results](#)**

## Sabrina's Brainstorming Session Results



Setting Event	Antecedent	Problem Behavior	Consequence
Abused when very young	Feeling threatened  Worrying about unstructured time	Biting herself and others	She is taken to the office; she receives lunch detention; she is often sent home early from school
Setting Event Interventions	Antecedent Interventions	Replacement Behavior & Other Related Social and Communication Skills	Consequence Interventions
Sabrina reviews photo book of her history with her foster family.	Sabrina has permission to leave any environment that feels threatening to go to the counseling office  Sabrina has a job in the counseling office over lunch (avoiding the chaos of the cafeteria).  Sabrina has a reduced course load at the peak time of the day	Sabrina works as a counseling office aide, establishing both routine and relationships with counseling staff  Sabrina learns to identify when she is feeling threatened and goes to the counseling office  Sabrina develops a trusting relationship with counseling staff  Sabrina learns problem solving skills	Sabrina still receives access to the office, but as a worker; she avoids lunch time without detention; she does not need to leave school for medical attention

Adapted from O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Storey, K., & Newton, J. S. (1997). Functional assessment and program development for problem behavior.