

Knowing Your ABCs

Your work with MO SW-PBS is grounded in the science of behavior or applied behavior analysis (ABA). Applied behavior analysis is the design, implementation, and evaluation of environmental modifications to produce socially significant improvement in behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2012; Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968; Sulzer-Azaroff, B. & Mayer, R., 1991). This is based on the understanding that individuals' behavior is determined by past and current environmental events. In short, the science of behavior focuses on changes to the environment to result in changed behavior. ABA shows us that we can't change a person, but we can influence the way they behave by shaping the environment they function within. Thus in SW-PBS, we are focusing on changing the behavior of the adults to change the environment that will, in turn, encourage change in student behavior.

Central to understanding applied behavior analysis is knowing your ABCs—an acronym for the contingency *Antecedent–Behavior–Consequence*. That is, something happens preceding the behavior (the *Antecedent*), which in effect causes the *Behavior*, which then results in *Consequences*. **Antecedents are events that occur before the behavior and trigger the behavior. Antecedents include cues, prompts, signals, questions or commands from the teacher, as well as reactions from peers that influence student behavior; they are what happens right before the behavior occurs** (Crone, Hawken, & Horner, 2015; Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010). This includes the physical setting, the time of the day, the materials, person or people present, as well as how and what directions are given. Antecedents produce the behavior that follows. When we ensure a well-managed classroom setting, provide appropriate materials, establish clear expectations and give specific directions, we can increase the likelihood of appropriate student behavior. An example of an antecedent is the teacher signals by raising her hand and verbally reminds students to raise their hand during an upcoming discussion.

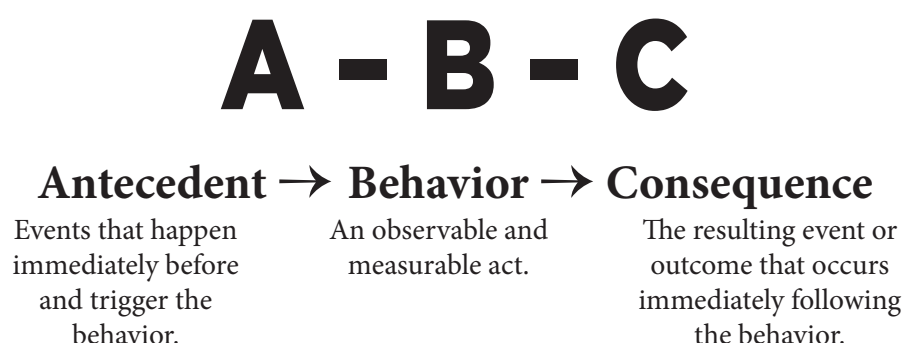


Figure 1.4

Behavior is any observable and measurable act that the student does—the actions or reactions of the student to the environment or antecedents. Simply stated, this is the response from the student to the antecedent conditions. It is visible action. In the classroom it might include performing or doing what is instructed, noncompliant behavior or no response at all. In the example started above, after the teacher's reminder to raise their hands to get permission to speak (Antecedent), Jerry raises his hand and waits to be called on (Behavior).

Consequences are the resulting event or outcomes that occur immediately following the behavior. In the classroom this includes the reaction of the teacher and peers, which might include attention,

specific positive feedback, or correction. **Consequences may increase (reinforce), maintain or decrease (punish) the likelihood of future behavior** (Alberto & Troutman, 2012). In the example above, when the teacher prompted the class to raise their hands during discussion time (Antecedent), Jerry raises his hand and waits (Behavior), and the teacher praises Jerry for raising his hand and calls on him to share (Consequence). The effect is that Jerry continues to raise his hand and wait to be called on. As you can see, past consequences become antecedents for future behavior. The praise and being recognized (the consequence) serves to increase the likelihood of future hand raising. In this example, the teacher intervened with antecedents and consequences to obtain the desired behavior.

Additionally, there are sometimes **Setting Events which are conditions or events that influence behavior by temporarily changing the value or effectiveness of reinforcers**. Events that happen outside of the immediate routine that commonly make the problem behavior more likely (Loman, Strickland-Cohen, Borgmeier, & Horner, 2013). For the entire class a substitute, fire drill, or assembly can be a Setting Event. For an individual student or group of students a Setting Event can be lack of sleep or food, missing the bus or a fight on the bus on the way to school, etc. Because setting events are typically outside the control of the Tier 1 team they are not typically the primary focus for schoolwide planning in the first year of implementation. As your team gains experience with SW-PBS your team will learn to plan for Setting Events and provide supports accordingly.

Earlier in this chapter, we talked about the traditional approach to discipline. In these traditional or punitive approaches to discipline, the emphasis is on Consequences or what is done following the behavior to punish or suppress behavior. **In SW-PBS we will focus heavily on Antecedents, the things that we can do to set students up to behave in socially appropriate ways.** Chapters 3 and 4 will assist you to: 1) clarify your expectations so all students understand what they are expected to do, and then 2) teach those expectations to students in an ongoing way as a means to ensure students know how to behave successfully. These antecedent strategies will go a long way to create well-behaved students and a positive school climate.

In Chapter 5 and 6, we will also learn how to effectively use consequences in response to behavior—appropriate or inappropriate—so as to shape the behavior we seek. Essentially, we will be using antecedents and consequences to produce practical change in behavior.

DISCUSSION



Think about how the A-B-Cs operate in your classroom every day in both academics and behavior. How do you manage antecedents to get the academic learning or behavior you desire? How are you using consequences to help students learn and use appropriate behavior? What are you looking forward to learning in your SW-PBS training?