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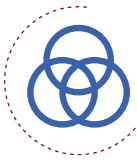
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TIER 3 BRIEF FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT (FBA) GUIDE

CENTER ON PBIS

January 2022



Tier 3 Brief Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) Guide

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs
and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

January 2022

www.pbis.org

This document was supported from funds provided by the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports cooperative grant supported by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) of the U.S. Department of Education (H326S180001). Dr. Renee Bradley serves as the project officer. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, or enterprise mentioned in this document is intended or should be inferred.

Kathleen Strickland-Cohen and Chris Borgmeier led the development of this guide.

Suggested Citation for this Publication

Center on PBIS. (2022). Tier 3 Brief Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) Guide. Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.



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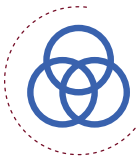


Introduction

Function based interventions are designed to change behavior by addressing the specific purpose or “function” the behavior serves. Within schools implementing PBIS, staff are encouraged to use a function-based approach to preventing and addressing challenging behavior across all tiers of support. At Tier 1 function-based thinking can be used to anticipate common challenges and select classwide behavior support strategies that take student motivation into account. At Tier 2 function-based problem solving can be used to enhance the effectiveness of targeted supports for students who struggle to meet schoolwide expectations. For students with more persistent and intensive challenges, function-based Tier 3 interventions are based on a formal Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) process used to: (a) define and prioritize challenging behavior, (b) understand aspects of the environment that occasion and maintain the behavior, and (c) create an individualized multi-component behavior support plan (BSP) designed to address the function of student behavior. The focus of this guide will be on providing function-based support at Tier 3.

The purpose of this guide is to describe how school-based personnel can build and implement a continuum of function-based supports at Tier 3 that are designed to more effectively meet the needs of a broader range of students who struggle with persistent challenging behavior. This guide is intended to be a resource for individuals and teams with a working knowledge of Tier 3 who regularly design and implement supports for students with intensive needs.

The positive effects of function-based interventions based on FBA data have been well documented for over 20 years for students with Tier 3 needs. However, districts and schools continue to struggle to implement effective individualized interventions within typical school systems (Robertson et al., 2020). One barrier to effective Tier 3 implementation that schools face is the misperception that functional behavior assessment (FBA) is only for students with IEPs or is a “last resort” to be used by district-level behavior specialists or outside experts to create comprehensive, time-intensive behavior support plans (BSPs) only when problem behavior has begun to significantly impact educational success (Borgmeier, Loman, & Strickland-Cohen, 2017). For students who demonstrate less severe challenging behavior or who do not require special education services, valuable time and resources are often underutilized by implementing less effective interventions that do not address the function of the problem behavior. If individualized supports based on a FBA are only used as a response to the most intensive challenging behavior, schools: a) perpetuate the perception of FBA/BSP as a labor-intensive set of procedures that are infeasible for use by typical school personnel, and b) lose the opportunity to use function-based interventions earlier within a continuum of MTSS to address less severe persistent challenging behaviors and prevent them from developing into more serious problems (Strickland-Cohen, Loman, & Horner, 2015).



Brief Versus Comprehensive FBA/BSP

Within a multi-tiered approach, students with persistent challenging behavior (i.e., behavior that has not been sufficiently addressed by intervention at Tiers 1 and 2) should receive behavior support that is designed to directly address the function of their behavior. At Tier 3, information about the student, their behavior, and the learning context is gathered through the FBA process to better understand what purpose the challenging behavior serves for the student and to design an individualized Behavior Support Plan or BSP (sometimes referred to as a Behavior Intervention Plan/BIP or Behavior Education Plan/BEP).

At a minimum, BSPs should include behavior support strategies designed to:

- Prevent challenging behavior by prompting desired behavior and addressing antecedent events that act as triggers for undesired behavior;
- Teach replacement skills to increase student success and allow students to express their needs without engaging in challenging behavior;
- Reinforce new replacement and desired skills and minimize reinforcement following challenging behavior.

The core concepts of function, prevention, teaching, and reinforcement should remain the same across all Tier 3 behavior support planning; however, the way function-based supports are designed and implemented can vary depending on the nature of the challenging behavior and the intensity of student need (Scott, Alter, & McQuillan, 2010). One way that district and schools can meet the needs of all students

who require individualized behavior support, while maximizing the efficient use of valuable time and resources, is by developing and providing a continuum of Tier 3 supports and defining FBA/BSP as a process that can vary in complexity based on student need.

Comprehensive FBA/BSP

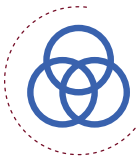
For the most intensive student behaviors (such as aggression or self-injury), the comprehensive FBA process is likely to include

1. an initial extensive review of student records, multiple interviews (e.g., teachers, staff, student, parents) and direct observations;
2. ongoing data collection across various settings, days, and times; and
3. when warranted in some cases, functional analysis (i.e., systematic manipulation of environmental triggers and consequences that follow challenging behavior).

The goal of this comprehensive FBA process is to create a comprehensive individualized BSP (often as part of an Individualized Education Plan; IEP) that

1. includes antecedent, behavior, and consequence strategies;
2. identifies safety/crisis responses if the student engages in behaviors that present a serious and imminent risk to self or others; and
3. integrates mental health and wrap-around supports that can extend to home and community settings.

Comprehensive plan development should be led by an individual with extensive training and expertise in



addressing severe behavioral challenges and involve a team of: (a) staff members who work most closely with the student, (b) the student, (c) members of the student's family, (d) school and district support staff, and (e) any relevant community members. For more information on the comprehensive FBA/BSP process see these resources:

- [Tier 3 Student-level Systems Guide](#)¹
- [Tier 3 Comprehensive Functional Behavior Assessment \(FBA\) Guide](#)²

Brief FBA/BSP

Students who engage in persistent non-dangerous challenging behavior (such as talk-outs, work avoidance, or out-of-seat behavior) have been shown to benefit from streamlined, less resource intensive FBA and BSP processes (Loman & Horner, 2014; Strickland-Cohen & Horner, 2015). The goal of a streamlined or "brief" FBA is to prioritize 1 or 2 of the most concerning student behaviors to be addressed and identify the school routine(s) (e.g., independent seatwork, less structured times such as lunch or recess) in which the behavior is most likely to occur. After receiving parent/family member consent for evaluation FBA/BSP process includes:

- A focused (30-45 min) guided interview with staff who work most closely with the student using a form such as the [Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff \(FACTS\)](#)³

- A direct observation of student behavior during the routine prioritized in the brief FBA and/or a review of existing student data (e.g., ODR data) to identify common behavior patterns and get a clear picture of the behavior within typical school routines.

Once the brief FBA/BSP team lead feels confident they have collected enough information to understand the purpose the challenging behavior serves for the student, they meet with the individual student team members (e.g., classroom teacher, family member) to collaboratively design the BSP. The brief BSP specifies a replacement behavior that allows the student to communicate their needs without engaging in challenging behavior, along with small number of individualized strategies designed to:

- Prevent challenging behavior by modifying triggering antecedents and prompting desired behavior,
- Teach and reinforce replacement skills that allow the student to communicate their needs and experience success, and
- Redirect the student to use desired skills and minimize reinforcement, or the "payoff" following challenging behavior.

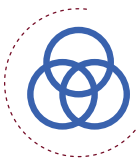
Table 1 provides an overview of the brief vs. comprehensive behavior support planning process (it is important to note this is a continuum rather than two distinct processes).



Table 1. Brief vs. Comprehensive FBA/BSP Support Planning

Aspect	Brief FBA/BSP	Comprehensive FBA/BSP
Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of high frequency behaviors that are NOT dangerous (e.g., talking out, out-of-seat behavior, work refusal), for which universal and/or group-level targeted interventions have not been effective Patterns of behavior that staff are able to easily identify using a simple interview format Behaviors that occur in 1 to 2 school routines (e.g., specific classrooms/activities, lunch, recess) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic high-intensity or dangerous behaviors (e.g., hitting, throwing objects, property destruction, self-injurious behaviors) Behaviors that serve multiple functions (e.g., problem behaviors that are multiply controlled by both escape and social attention) Behaviors that occur in 3 or more school routines or across the entire school day
FBA Process and Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FBA interview (30-45 min) with staff most familiar with student Observation of student/individual in prioritized setting/routine and/or brief review of existing data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FBA Interviews with multiple staff members, parents and student Archival Records Review Direct observations of multiple instances of student problem behavior across various school settings Additional data collection and assessments to understand student skill deficits and influences on behavior outside of the school context
BSP Intervention Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionally equivalent replacement behavior that allows the student to communicate their needs Practical strategies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prevent challenging behavior teach and reinforce alternative skills, and minimize the pay-off for challenging behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionally equivalent replacement behavior(s) (may require multiple replacement behaviors to address multiple functions of problem behavior across settings and routines) Multiple component plan including antecedent strategies to prevent challenging behavior, explicitly teaching and reinforcing replacement behaviors (short-term goal), shaping toward desired behaviors (long-term goal), and changing responses to challenging behavior Crisis response planning (as appropriate) Person-centered planning and wraparound interventions that include family and community supports (as appropriate)
Suggested skills/training to lead process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of district trainings in brief FBA/BSP methods Ongoing on-site coaching support from personnel with extensive knowledge of and experience implementing Tier 3 behavior support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate degree in fields such as behavior analysis, special education, or school psychology Training in FBA and experimental functional analysis Training and experience in crisis response management Experience implementing function-based interventions for students with severe challenging behavior Training and experience in facilitating person-centered planning and wraparound supports
Team Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff member(s) most familiar with the student (e.g., classroom teacher) The student Family member(s) School-based professional trained in brief FBA/BSP process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff most familiar with priority student The student Relevant district and school support staff Family member(s) Representatives from community agencies (e.g., mental health, social work) Behavioral expert trained to develop and implement intensive interventions for students with severe problem behaviors (e.g., school-psychologists, behavior specialist, behavior analyst)

Adapted from Loman, Strickland-Cohen, Borgmeier, & Horner (2013)



BRIEF FBA/BSP INDIVIDUAL STUDENT TEAMS

When a student is referred for Tier 3 support, an individual student team is formed to design, facilitate implementation, and progress monitor a function-based student BSP. For students with special education services, this team should include members from and/or closely consult with the IEP team to ensure consistency in services provided. Within the brief FBA/BSP process the individual student team is often led by a school-based team lead (i.e., a school professional who has been trained in brief FBA/BSP), as opposed to a district behavior specialist, and can be relatively small (e.g., team lead and classroom teacher). In addition to designing the function-based student BSP, the individual student team meets regularly (i.e., every other week initially) to:

- Coordinate plan implementation and coaching schedules
- Create data collection protocols and evaluation plans
- Monitor fidelity of plan implementation and individual student outcome data
- Adapt the BSP to enhance effectiveness and contextual fit for staff and the student
- Assist with transitioning to less intensive interventions when appropriate

REGULARLY EVALUATING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Regardless of the level of complexity, individualized BSPs must include a plan for evaluating the fidelity of implementation of the strategies in the plan (“Did we do what we said we would do?”) and student response

to those strategies (“Does the plan work?”). A brief BSP evaluation plan should contain the following elements:

- Reasonable, measurable, and valued short- and long-term goals for student progress,
- Procedures and timelines for collecting and evaluating fidelity and student outcome data,
- Procedures for summarizing data in an understandable way (e.g., graphs),
- Decision rules to guide team-based decision making about plan fidelity and effectiveness,
- A schedule for regular team meetings to evaluate data,
- A process for regularly sharing data with family members.

To streamline and enhance the feasibility of the brief FBA/BSP process, we recommend modifying existing data collection tools that school staff are already familiar with to collect student data whenever possible. For example, behavior ratings scales used as part of Tier 2 interventions might be modified to collect data on more specific individualized goals. Plan implementers should be given checklists to regularly rate their implementation of BSP strategies. It is also recommended that the team lead/coach work with implementers to arrange regular (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly) observations of the BSP being implemented and to collect behavioral data (e.g., frequency and duration of challenging behavior) during the typical school day, particularly during the first few weeks of plan implementation.



Brief FBA/BSP Tools and Resources

- [Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff \(FACTS\) FBA Interview Tool⁴](#)
- [Functional Assessment Student Interview Tool⁵](#)
- [ABC Tracker⁶](#) (for classroom data collection by the teacher)
- [Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence \(ABC\) Observation Data Collection Form⁷](#)
- [Behavior Intervention Plan Template Form⁸](#)
- [Contextual Fit Questions to ask Team Members Table Tent⁹](#)
- [Implementation Plan Template¹⁰](#)
- [Evaluation Plan Template¹¹](#)
- [Daily Student Point Card w/Fidelity Checks¹²](#)
- [Behavior Support Plan Review Meeting Form¹³](#)

Building District and School Capacity for Brief FBA/BSP

When schools use brief FBA/BSP procedures for students with persistent, but less intense challenging behaviors, they improve their ability to individualize supports to match student needs. This provides an efficient next step in the continuum of support when students are not responding to standard Tier 2 interventions and can improve equitable student access to effective interventions and, ultimately, decrease the number of cases for which more comprehensive and resource intensive supports are necessary.

Brief FBA/BSP Professional Development and Training

To feasibly implement a continuum of brief to comprehensive function-based supports at Tier 3 districts and schools can invest in a strong foundation by training school-based personnel in brief FBA/BSP methods and procedures. The district should identify a District Level Leadership Team for **coordinating and evaluating Tier 3 systems**. To maximize efficiency and staff buy-in, district leadership teams should identify local personnel (i.e., an individual or small group of individuals who work at the district or regional level) with expertise in designing and delivering comprehensive behavior supports who can act as trainers and coaches for school-based staff. Trainers should have expertise and experience in the following areas:

- Conducting FBAs for students with intense behavioral challenges
- Designing and implementing comprehensive BSPs
- Leading inter-disciplinary teams in the development of function-based support
- Implementing individualized supports in special and general education settings
- Coaching general and special education staff who support students with Tier 3 needs
- Collecting and analyzing behavioral data for decision making

To create a sustainable model, district-level personnel with behavioral expertise and the responsibility for



consulting with school teams when students require comprehensive supports should have a portion (e.g., one quarter to one third) of their time allocated for training and supporting school personnel in brief FBA/BSP methods. Beyond providing initial staff trainings, this time will allow for on-going coaching and quarterly or bi-annual trainings as a way to: a) provide “boosters” for continuing school-based behavior specialists and b) buffer against the negative impact of staff turnover (Strickland-Cohen, Loman, & Horner, 2015).

TRAINING BRIEF FBA/BSP TEAM LEADERS

District-level behavior support specialists can build school-based capacity at Tier 3 by ensuring that at least 2-3 individuals per school are provided with the training, tools, and resources, needed to conduct brief FBAs and to lead individual student teams in designing streamlined BSPs. It is critical that school-based staff selected for this role have enough flexibility and time allocated within their position to regularly conduct FBA interviews and classroom observations, facilitate student support team meetings, and support plan implementers (Borgmeier, Strickland-Cohen, Loman, & Horner, 2019). Staff in this role are often school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, or special educators. It is not recommended that classroom teachers who oversee students for the entire school day be selected for this role because they do not have the role flexibility to regularly carry out related responsibilities.

School-based staff tasked with leading the FBA/BSP process will require training and on-going coaching *support* related to:

- Understanding behavioral theory
- Conducting FBA (e.g., staff interviews, records reviews)
- Collecting direct observation data in school settings
- Identifying individualized interventions that are function-based and contextually appropriate
- Leading a team in using assessment information to design individualized behavior/academic supports
- Implementing individualized BSPs
- Training and coaching plan implementers
- Designing, collecting, and using fidelity and outcome data for progress monitoring and to inform changes to BSP over time

TRAINING ALL SCHOOL STAFF IN FUNCTION-BASED THINKING

It is not unusual for most, if not all, teachers to have one or more students with individualized behavior support needs in their classroom within any given school year. Once the BSP has been created, classroom staff are responsible for carrying out the strategies and supports included in that plan on a daily basis. At a minimum all educational staff in the school should receive training to understand:

- How Tier 3 systems and supports are integrated within their school’s multi-tiered PBIS approach,
- The process for nominating or referring a student who is having behavioral challenges for Tier 3 supports, and
- Their potential role as a member of an individual student support team.



To facilitate the Tier 3 process and ensure that individualized BSPs are successfully implemented, it is also strongly recommended that all school staff receive professional development related to:

- Understanding why challenging behavior occurs (i.e., antecedents, consequences and function)
- Teaching replacement skills so students have alternative ways to express their needs
- Considering function when selecting preventive, teaching, and consequence strategies
- Monitoring BSP implementation and student outcomes

While it is not necessary for all educational staff to have the skills needed to independently conduct FBA or build BSPs, ensuring all staff have a basic understanding of behavioral function and what is meant by a function-based approach to addressing challenging behavior can help to:

- Reduce the number of referrals for individualized supports received by school behavior support teams,
- Facilitate the design and implementation of individualized support BSPs, and
- Create a school climate that is more likely to support and maintain changes in individual student behavior that result from the implementation of function-based interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2008).

TRAINING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Because school-based staff have limited time and multiple responsibilities, it is critical that training materials for school-based behavior specialists and all school staff: a) allow for quick and thorough delivery

of all necessary content, and b) provide staff with tools and strategies that are practical, user-friendly, and do not require extensive training to implement. Visit [Basic FBA to BIP¹⁴](#) website to find FREE evidence-based training resources on brief FBA/BSP methods including:

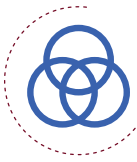
- [Basic FBA to BIP District Planning & Implementation Guide¹⁵](#)
- [Basic FBA to BIP: Behavior Specialist Training¹⁶](#)
- [Basic FBA to BIP: School-wide Training for all Staff¹⁷](#)

A Brief FBA/BSP Coaching Model

Without continued follow-up coaching support professional development training is not likely to lead to the meaningful and long-term change in staff behavior that are necessary to produce positive student outcomes (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). For this reason, it is necessary for districts and schools supporting students with Tier 3 needs to design and implement a systematic plan for providing staff at multiple levels with on-going coaching support following training.

COACHING SUPPORT FOR BRIEF FBA/BSP TEAM LEADERS

Beyond initial training, it is recommended that school-based team leads continue to receive direct coaching support from a district-level specialist on the first 3 to 5 brief FBA/BSPs they lead to build fluency with the skills needed to lead the process independently. Additionally, school behavior specialists leading the brief FBA/BSP process will need time built into their schedules to provide coaching support for individual student team members and BSP implementers.



COACHING SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENT TEAMS

Once a BSP has been created, Individual Student Team members are encouraged to meet regularly (i.e., every two weeks initially, and at least monthly once the student is making acceptable progress) to review and monitor plan implementation and student outcomes.

Coaching support for student team members is focused on helping to effectively design, monitor, and adapt Tier 3 support for individual students. Specific skills a coach would support include:

- Using multiple sources of data to identify BSP strategies that are function-based as well as contextually and culturally relevant,
- Designing BSP implementation and evaluation plans,
- Making decisions based on BSP implementation and student progress-monitoring data,
- Creating decision rules and data-driven processes for determining when and how to intensify, adapt or systematically fade Tier 3 student support.

COACHING SUPPORT FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTERS

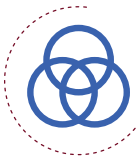
Beyond working with other members of the Individual Student Team to create a BSP, classroom staff need ongoing opportunities to receive in-situ coaching support on how to effectively implement the plan. Specifically, plan implementers should receive coaching on how and when to:

- Use each of the BSP strategies in typical school contexts,
- Collect and record direct-observation behavioral data,
- Problem-solve unanticipated barriers, and
- Adapt the plan as necessary in response to student need and contextual factors.

Coaching support at the individual/instructional level should be tailored to the unique interventions being implemented, implementer(s) skills, and phase of BSP implementation (e.g., initial implementation vs. ongoing support for an established plan). For example, a teacher who is implementing new behavior support strategies may need more direct coaching support in the classroom setting prior to and during the first few (e.g., 2-3) days of implementation that includes role-play and/or modeling, prompting, and opportunities to receive immediate feedback (Freeman, Sugai, Simonsen, & Everett, 2017). As staff become more comfortable implementing the plan over time, coaching support may decrease in frequency and shift more to using behavioral data to evaluate plan implementation and student response.

COACHING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

[Basic FBA to BIP coaching checklists](#)¹⁸



Evaluating Tier 3 Systems

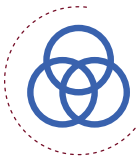
A critical feature of PBIS is team-led data-based decision making. The goal of teaming at Tier 3 is to ensure that students who require support beyond Tiers 1 and 2 receive behavior support that meets their individual needs and that those supports result in positive student outcomes. It is common for schools implementing PBIS to have two types of teams for supporting students with intensive needs. In addition to the Individual Student Team previously described, a Tier 3 Systems Team (or combined Tier 2/3 Systems Team) meets regularly (e.g., every two weeks) to examine the systems that support implementation at the advanced PBIS tiers.

Systems teams use schoolwide, group-level, and individual student data to monitor the fidelity of Tier 3 systems, identify students who need individualized support, and assess overall student response to targeted and intensive supports. For example, the school systems team may use data regularly track:

- Number of basic and comprehensive FBA/BSPs completed and in process,
- Number of students who are students making progress and/or meeting mastery criteria as measured by their BSP,
- Length of time between referrals for FBA and the beginning of the FBA/BSP process,

- Type (or severity) of problem behaviors for which FBA is being conducted,
- Number of student receiving individualized support who do not have IEPs (e.g., prior to/in an effort to prevent special education referral), and
- The number of discipline referrals or suspensions a student has received prior to starting the FBA/BSP process.

In schools implementing varying levels of FBA/BSP, it is recommended that school systems team members work with district- and school-level behavior support personnel (and student IEP team, as appropriate) to document the different types of FBA/BSP protocols used in their school and decision rules related to the circumstances under which each is recommended. Upon receiving a Tier 3 referral, team members should consider the nature and severity of the problem behavior being referred (i.e., whether or not the problem behavior presents an immediate danger to the student or others, the pervasiveness of or number of school routines in which the behavior occurs) to decide if the student is more likely to require a brief or comprehensive FBA/BSP. For cases that are more complex, the team might choose to include a district level behavior specialist on the FBA-BSP team.



In addition to monthly meetings to evaluate implementation and student response to support at advanced tiers, it is important for school teams to regularly (at least annually) examine the data systems and team processes that guide consistent enduring implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports in the schools. The [Tiered Fidelity Inventory \(TFI\)](#) is a measure specifically designed to support school teams in assessing implementation of behavior supports systems and guiding development of Tier 2 and Tier 3 systems in schools. It is recommended that school teams work with an external coach to develop an action plan using TFI results to guide implementation efforts, and design and document a specific plan for regularly entering, analyzing, and presenting data to school and district-level decision-makers.

SYSTEMS-LEVEL TEAMING RESOURCES

- [Tier 3 School-level Systems Guide](#)¹⁹
- [I-PBS Meeting template](#)²⁰
- [Tiered Fidelity Inventory \(TFI\)](#)²¹



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Embedded Hyperlinks

1. <http://www.pbis.org/resource/tier-3-student-level-systems-guide>
2. <http://www.pbis.org/resource/tier-3-comprehensive-functional-behavior-assessment-fba-guide>
3. <https://basicfba.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2021/04/FBA-Interview-for-Teachers-and-Staff.doc>
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