

Function Identification Quick Guide

A Summer Refresher on the Four Functions of Behavior

The Fundamental Question

"What is this behavior doing FOR the student?"

Behavior that persists is behavior that works. Understanding what it achieves helps us teach appropriate alternatives.

The Four Functions

1. ATTENTION (Social Positive)

What it achieves: Produces attention from others - positive or negative

- Occurs when attention is low
- Student looks at adults during/after behavior
- Stops when attention is given
- Any reaction seems satisfying, even reprimands

2. ESCAPE (Social Negative)

What it achieves: Removes or delays demands, tasks, or situations

- Occurs during demands or non-preferred activities
- Stops when demand is removed
- Student shows relief when task is withdrawn
- Rare during preferred activities

3. TANGIBLE (Access)

What it achieves: Produces access to items, activities, or privileges

- Occurs when desired item is restricted
- Stops when item is provided
- Specific to certain items or activities
- Student clearly indicates what they want

4. SENSORY (Automatic)

What it achieves: Produces internal reinforcement regardless of environment

- Occurs across all settings
- Consistent even when alone
- Provides sensory input (visual, auditory, tactile)
- Not dependent on social consequences

Hypothesis Statement Template

"When [antecedent/trigger], [student] engages in [behavior] in order to [function/consequence]."

Matching Intervention to Function

Function	Intervention Focus
Attention	Teach appropriate attention-seeking; reinforce positive behavior
Escape	Teach break requests; modify task difficulty; scheduled breaks
Tangible	Teach appropriate requesting; establish earning systems
Sensory	Provide appropriate alternatives; enrich environment

