

Behavioral Objective Sequence

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Abstract

Accurate assessment of behavioral skills is essential in developing effective intervention programs for students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). Assessment is the foundation for determining individually relevant intervention goals, objectives and plans, as well as for monitoring intervention outcomes. Several criteria for effective assessment have been identified in the literature. Among them are use of multiple sources (i.e., teachers and other professionals, parents, and students themselves) as well as use of culturally appropriate types of measurement instruments (intellectual, achievement and behavioral) and procedures (observations and interviews). Behavioral assessment traditionally focuses on identifying problem behaviors; however, it is important to determine students' existing strengths upon which new prosocial skills can be built. Few instruments focus upon student strengths.

Recently there has been an increasing emphasis on strength-based or competency-based assessment (Epstein, 1999). Some benefits of competency-based assessments are that they (a) yield information that can actually be used for individualized education program (IEP) planning; (b) provide a positive view of the student by specifying student strengths, and (c) delineate prosocial behaviors not yet mastered that require instruction and differential reinforcement. Epstein's Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS), Gresham and Elliott's Social Skills Rating System (SSRS), and the Walker-McConnell Scale are examples of other strength-based rating scales. DuPaul and Eckerts' (1994) review of seven studies of social skills training programs found that efficacious curricula emphasize student competencies as opposed to performance deficits.

Behavioral assessment instruments should present prosocial skills within an appropriate developmental sequence. Youth will have behavioral difficulties and skills that vary according to their progression through the developmental levels (Vernon, 1993). A delicate task of assessment is to distinguish between problems of children and youth that are considered "normal" at various developmental levels and problems outside of the "normal" range, and to determine intervention goals that are developmentally relevant rather than simply satisfying adults' expectations.

One instrument that is both strength-based and developmentally sequenced is the *Behavioral Objective Sequence* (Braaten, 1998). While it was developed and refined over a 20 year period and has been used for several years, little research has been conducted to investigate the validity of BOS ratings for students with EBD (Bloomberg & Braaten, 1989). The *Behavioral Objective Sequence* (BOS) consists of 233 developmentally sequenced and measurable social competencies that may be assessed through structured observation and/or by ratings of multiple sources. The BOS is a skill or strength-based tool rather than a problem or deficit-based instrument. Further, it provides goals and objectives for the development and implementation of intervention curriculum derived directly from a current performance assessment

Braaten, S. (1998). *Behavioral Objective Sequence*. Champaign, IL: Research Press