

# Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior



Project funded by the Child Care and Head Start Bureaus in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



## What Works Brief Training Kit #11



Center on the Social and Emotional  
Foundations for Early Learning  
[www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/)

July 2008

The **What Works Brief Training Kits** were developed to help in-service and pre-service providers conduct staff development activities. Each kit is based on one *What Works Brief* and contains the following items: presenter's PowerPoint note pages, participant handouts, activity ideas, pre-training survey, demographic form, training evaluation, and training certificate.

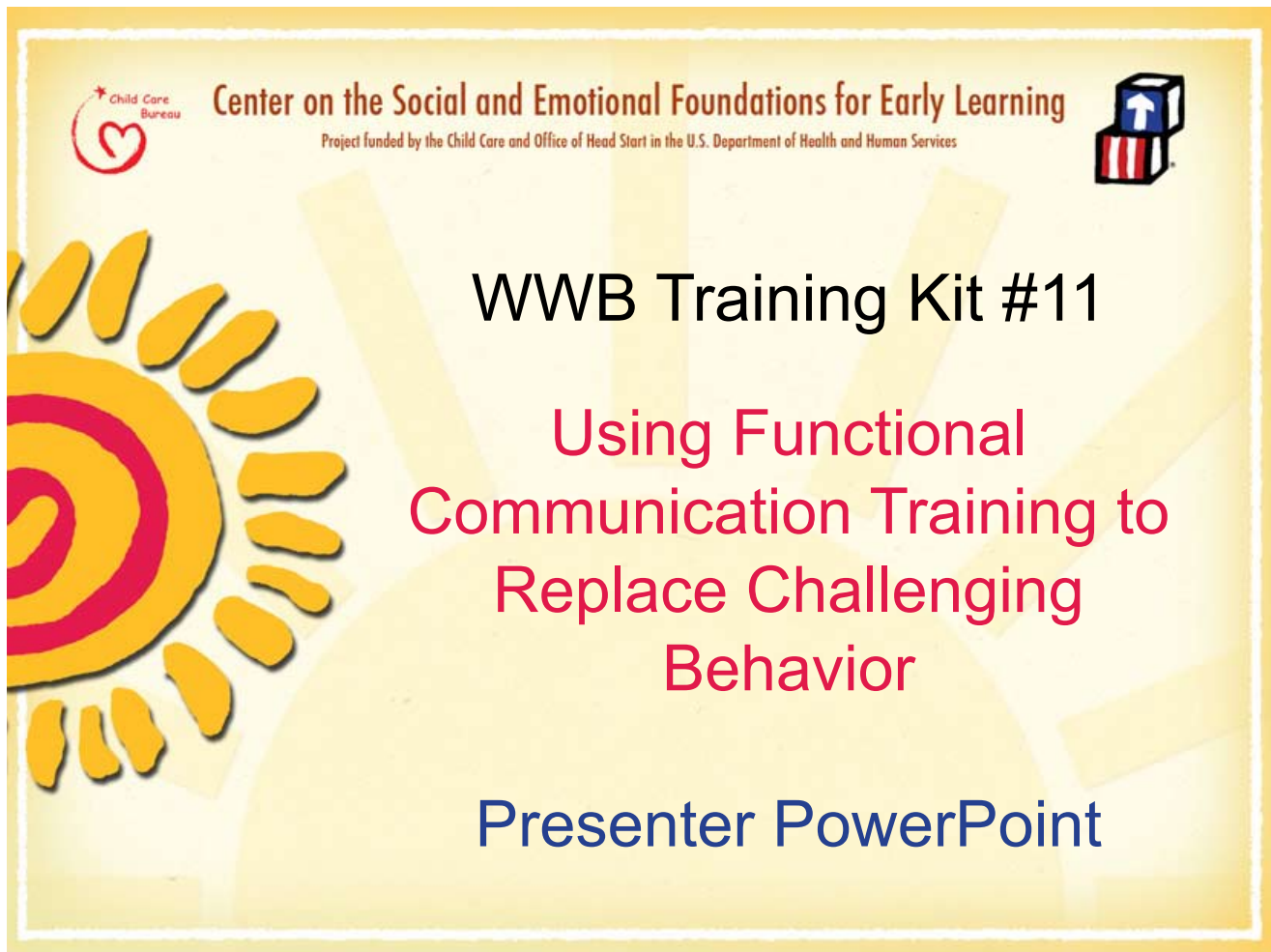
The *What Works Brief Training Kits* are grounded in the Pyramid model depicted below, which provides a framework for describing the four interrelated levels of practice that address the social and emotional development of all children. The Pyramid is designed to guide practitioners in understanding the importance of children's social-emotional competence in terms of school readiness and the prevention of challenging behavior. This *What Works Brief Training Kit* relates to the "Individualized Interventions" level of the Pyramid.



We welcome your feedback as you provide professional development activities with these materials.

Special thanks to the Meginnis Endowment at UIUC for funding to help support this effort and to the following individuals who developed the *What Works Brief Training Kits* materials: Micki Ostrosky, Hedda Meadan, Greg Cheatham, Monique Mills, Sallee Beneke, Nancy Gaumer, Amy Hayden, Elenor Rentschler, and Angel Fettig.

## Presenter Notes



### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Presenter should be familiar with the content in *What Works Brief #11* (available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel>).
- Consider using the *What Works Brief #11* handout as a supplemental resource.
- Welcome participants.
- Take care of any logistics (e.g, length of time for session, break, handouts, etc.).
- Pass out pre-training survey for all participants to complete and turn in, if desired.
- As you present the workshop:
  - Remind participants to take the culture and background of children into consideration and to work hand-in-hand with parents when they select target behaviors, since some behaviors may be part of the child's culture.

# Defining Functional Communication Training (FCT)

FCT is a strategy for use with children who:

- Require more individualized intervention
- Are unresponsive to classroom-wide prevention strategies



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## ***Speaker Notes:***

Classroom-wide prevention strategies may include:

- Classroom rules
- Consistent schedules
- Predictable routines

## Defining Functional Communication Training (FCT)

- FCT involves identifying the function or purpose of the child's **challenging behavior**.
- FCT involves teaching an appropriate **replacement behavior** that will serve the same purpose for the child.



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### ***Speaker Notes:***

Functional Behavioral Assessment is used to identify the purpose of the child's challenging behavior (see *What Works Brief #9*).

Some purposes for challenging behavior are to get attention, to escape from an activity, or to avoid sharing.

Challenging behaviors include hitting, scratching, screaming, taking toys away from others, and failing to make eye contact.\*

Examples of replacement behaviors include using words to request or comment, raising one's hand to ask a question, and signing "more" to access materials.

\*It is important to note that what may be a "challenging behavior" in one culture may be socially acceptable in another culture. Collaboration and consultation with familial/community members is imperative to ensure that best practices are implemented.

## How FCT Works Step 1

- A functional behavioral assessment is conducted to identify the purpose of the child's challenging behavior.



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### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Functional Behavioral Assessment is used to determine why the child is engaging in challenging behavior.
- Refer to *WWB #9* and Module 3a for additional information on Functional Assessment.
- <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/preschool.html>

## How FCT Works Step 2

- A more desirable or acceptable form of communication for the child to use as a replacement for the challenging behavior is identified.



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### ***Speaker Notes:***

A replacement behavior is something that:

1. The child is capable of doing
2. Can be taught very easily
3. Will be easily noticed and acknowledged whenever the child uses it
4. Works quickly for the child

Replacement behaviors can involve:

- Speech—The child uses words to request (e.g., “May I have some juice?”).
- Gestures—The child points to request a desired object.
- Signs—The child signs to indicate his/her wants and needs (e.g., more).
- Pictures—The child holds up a picture with a sleeping head to indicate that he/she is tired.

Tell participants that if they do not use pictures but would like to implement them into the FCT, then they should consider collaborating with professionals who do, such as speech-language pathologists, psychologists, and special educators.

## How FCT Works

### Step 3

- Challenging behaviors are ignored and only replacement behaviors are acknowledged and prompted.



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### ***Speaker Notes:***

- It is important for adults to be sensitive to what triggers a child's challenging behaviors so that prompting of replacement behaviors can occur BEFORE the meltdown!
- Prompting of the replacement behavior is critical because the child needs to know that the replacement behavior works better than the challenging behavior.
- When prompting replacement behaviors, be sure to:
  - Encourage and acknowledge replacement behaviors made by the child.
  - Honor all new communicative requests.
  - Provide plenty of opportunities for the child to use the new replacement behaviors.
  - Regularly reward the replacement behaviors.



## Pair-Think-Share

- **Pair** with a partner.
- **Think** about challenging behaviors that children in your center/school exhibit. Why is the child presenting with challenging behaviors? What replacement behaviors will you teach?
- **Share** your thoughts with the large group.



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### *Speaker Notes:*

- **Assign** partners.
- **Pairs** should think about the challenging behaviors that children in their centers/schools present with and some replacement behaviors to teach.
- Pairs should complete the Activity 1 chart.
- **Share** thoughts with the large group.

## Activity 1

Challenging Behavior	Purpose of Challenging Behavior	Replacement Behavior
Child does not respond to instruction and appears aloof	Child has difficulty understanding what people say and/or mean	Asking for clarification Asking speaker to slow down



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### ***Speaker Notes:***

Have participants complete chart in pairs. Participants should first write in a child's challenging behavior. Next, determine a possible purpose of the challenging behavior. Third, decide on a behavior that can replace the challenging behavior.

## Resources Needed to Use FCT

- Functional Behavioral Assessment
  - Identify challenging behavior
  - Identify purpose of challenging behavior
  - Recognize the child's strengths and weaknesses
- Time to implement



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***Speaker Notes:***

## Resources Needed to Use FCT

- Family members
  - Identify most rewarding activities or objects for the child
  - Identify culturally appropriate communicative skills
- Additional staff in some cases
  - Identify age-appropriate communicative skills (e.g., speech language pathologist, psychologist)



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***Speaker Notes:***

## Additional Resources

- <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/modules/module4/handout9.pdf>—Handout 4.9: Leadership Strategies
- <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/modules/module4/handout5.pdf>—Handout 4.5: Leadership Strategies



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### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Go to CSEFEL website and Module 4 to retrieve Handout 4.9. This article provides assistance with identifying challenging behaviors and taking a multidisciplinary and family-centered approach to intervention. Handout 4.5 discusses evidence-based practices for addressing challenging behaviors.
- Thank the participants for participating and have them complete the evaluation form, if appropriate.
- Distribute the certificate of attendance if appropriate.

# Pre-training Survey

WWBTK #11: Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior

☀️ **What is functional communication training (FCT)?**

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**CSEFEL**



☀️ **What are the steps involved in implementing FCT?**

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☀️ **What are two resources you will need to implement FCT?**

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☀️ **What are the three most pressing issues you face as an early childhood professional?**

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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# Pre-training Survey

WWBTK #11: Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior

## Demographic Information

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Describe yourself (check the boxes that best describe you):

Your gender:  Female  Male

Your age:  under 30  31 to 40  41 to 50  
 51-60  61 and above

Your ethnicity:  European American  Asian-Pacific  Hispanic  
 African-American  American Indian  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Check your current teaching certificates:

- Early Childhood Education
- Elementary Education
- Special Education
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Check the one that best describes your education:

- High school or GED
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Your teaching experience:

How many year(s) have you taught preschoolers? \_\_\_\_\_

How many year(s) have you taught preschoolers with IEPs? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing this survey.

# Participant Notes



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## WWB Training Kit #11

### Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior

#### Participant PowerPoint

## Notes

### Defining Functional Communication Training (FCT)

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### Defining Functional Communication Training (FCT)

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## How FCT Works Step 1

- A functional behavioral assessment is conducted to identify the purpose of the child's challenging behavior.



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## How FCT Works Step 2

- A more desirable or acceptable form of communication for the child to use as a replacement for the challenging behavior is identified.



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## How FCT Works Step 3

- Challenging behaviors are ignored and only replacement behaviors are acknowledged and prompted.



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# Notes

## Resources Needed to Use FCT

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  - Identify purpose of challenging behavior
  - Recognize the child's strengths and weaknesses
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## Resources Needed to Use FCT

- Family members
  - Identify most rewarding activities or objects for the child
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- Additional staff in some cases
  - Identify age-appropriate communicative skills (e.g., speech language pathologist, psychologist)



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## Additional Resources

- <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/modules/module4/handout9.pdf>—Handout 4.9: Leadership Strategies
- <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/modules/module4/handout5.pdf>—Handout 4.5: Leadership Strategies



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## Notes

# Activity 1

## Developing a Hypothesis Statement

WWBTK #11: Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior

*Directions:* Pair with a partner. Think about challenging behaviors that children in your center/school exhibit. Why is the child presenting with challenging behaviors? What replacement behaviors will you teach? Share your thoughts with the large group.

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Challenging Behavior	Purpose of Challenging Behavior	Replacement Behavior
Child does not respond to instruction and appears aloof	Child has difficulty understanding what people say and/or mean	Asking for clarification Asking speaker to slow down

# CSEFEL Training Workshop Evaluation

WWBTK #11: Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaker(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Your position: \_\_\_\_\_

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☀ Circle the number that best expresses your reaction to each of the following items:

- |  |                       |   |   |   |   |                        |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| 1. This topic is important to me.            | (Extremely Important) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not Important at All) |
| 2. The amount of information covered was     | (Just Right)          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Inadequate)           |
| 3. The information covered was clear.        | (Very Clear)          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Vague)                |
| 4. The activities conducted were beneficial. | (Very)                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not at All)           |
| 5. The handouts provided were useful.        | (Very)                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not at All)           |
| 6. Overall, this presentation was            | (Very Useful)         | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not Useful)           |

☀ Things I liked about this presentation:

☀ Things I would change about this presentation:

☀ Additional information I would like on this topic:

☀ New things I am going to try as a result of this workshop:

☀ Additional comments:

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## *Certificate of Training*

Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior

This is to certify that

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successfully completed the above training

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*Trainer*

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*Trainer*



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*Participant*

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*Date and Location*