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## THE FUNCTION HUB: A MODEL TO INVITE CURIOSITY ABOUT BEHAVIOUR

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*The function hub is a model to encourage curiosity about what a behaviour might be communicating. It is a tool that invites teams to align supports with the needs beneath the behaviour. The function hub offers a way to support conversations with families, staff and care teams.*

The function hub (Vanderaa, 2015) grew from the traditions of Positive Behaviour Support and research on Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA). It's therefore helpful to consider the function hub within a broader context of person-centred values and beliefs which are at the heart of FBA.

As Crone & Horner remind us,

before implementing function-based behaviour support, it is important to appreciate three assumptions that serve as a foundation for FBA systems: 1. human behaviour is functional, 2. human behaviour is predictable, 3. human behaviour is changeable. (2003, p.11)

A further premise of FBA is that problem behaviour arises when there is a mismatch between an individual's needs and her environment. Yet we often "talk and operate as if people 'have' behaviours" (O'Neill, 1997). On such a view, "it is logical to try to change people" (ibid). But if "we consider problem behaviours as occurring in contexts, it becomes logical to change the context" (ibid).

In educational settings, contextual change could include cultural, physical, relational or academic environments. As O'Neill et al. put it, "Behaviour change occurs by changing environments, not trying to change people" (1997).

### **Tips for using the function hub**

The function hub might be helpful to use when:

- each member of the staff/care team is within their own window of tolerance, so they can be open, curious and thoughtful.
- there is a sense of empathy for the child and advocacy for the child's unmet needs.
- the team around the child know the child well and have had direct experience of the child, not just when the problem behaviour occurred, but most importantly, when the behaviour was least likely to occur.
- the team has some foundational knowledge about Positive Behaviour Support at each level of intervention (especially, intensive, individual support).
- the team needs a simple plan which can be developed in one meeting.
- the team needs something simple (like person centred planning and the function hub), before beginning a simple FBA or full FBA.
- a diagram is the best way to gather information or to communicate with others.

The function hub might not be helpful to use when:

- *safety is an issue. A more thorough assessment would be required.*
- key adults are unable to be present. The people who will implement the support plan need to be part of the conversation. Ideally, the people who develop the support plan also implement the plan.
- the team feels totally stumped by the behaviour and can't yet generate any possible hypotheses.

- when the team around the child don't know the child well enough yet.

Examples of the function hub are given below, followed by a blank template. Please note that the boxes in the template can be re-arranged to suit your purpose. Sometimes you might need fewer boxes, sometimes you might need more.

**BEHAVIOUR:**

What do you see and hear?

**POSSIBLE FUNCTION:**

What might the person be getting/avoiding/communicating?

**APPROACHES TO CONSIDER:**

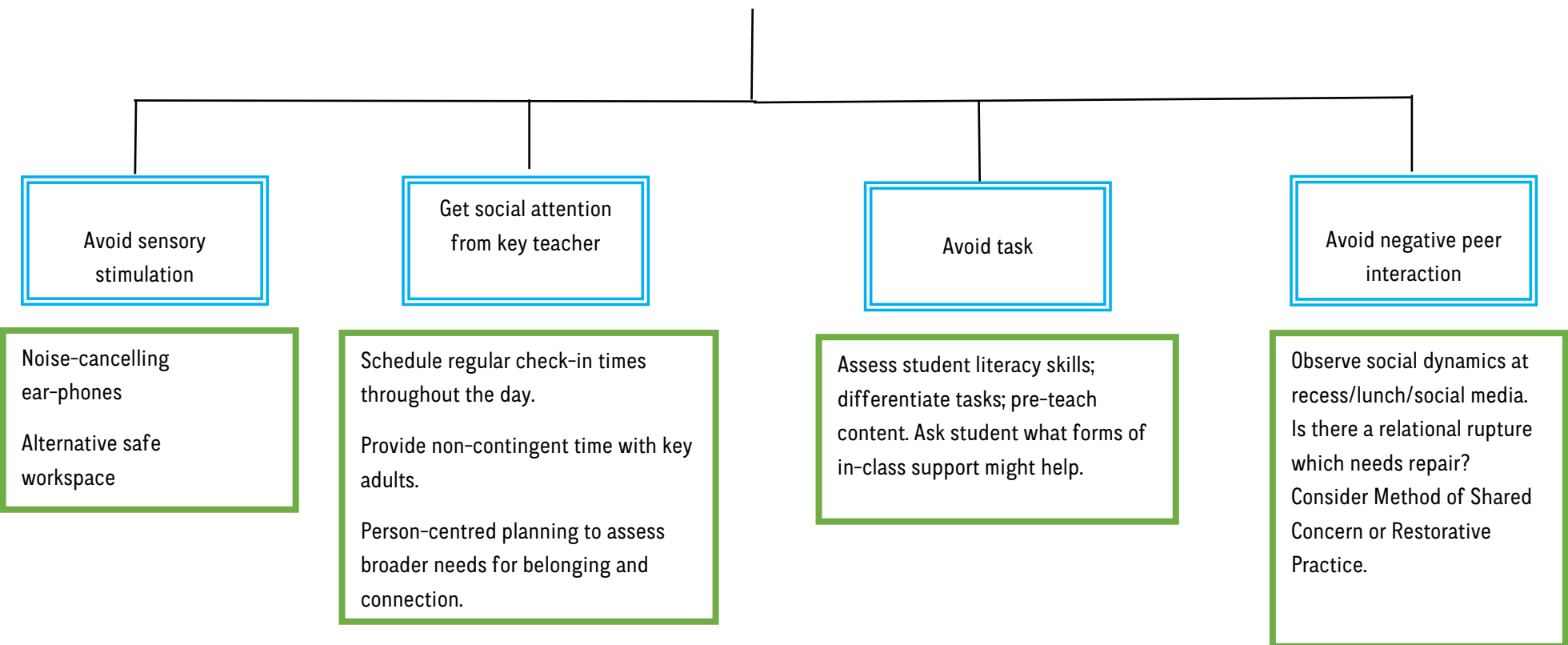
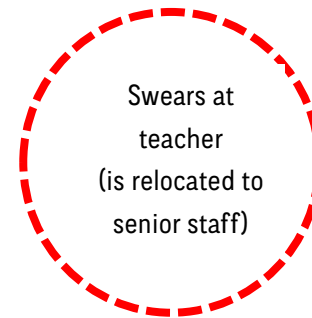
Based on this possible communicative function, what might we do?

DATE: 29/10/20

STUDENT NAME: "Adam"

GRADE: 9

TEAM MEMBERS: ...



**BEHAVIOUR:**

What do you see and hear?

**FUNCTION:**

What might the person be getting/avoiding/communicating?

**APPROACHES TO CONSIDER:**

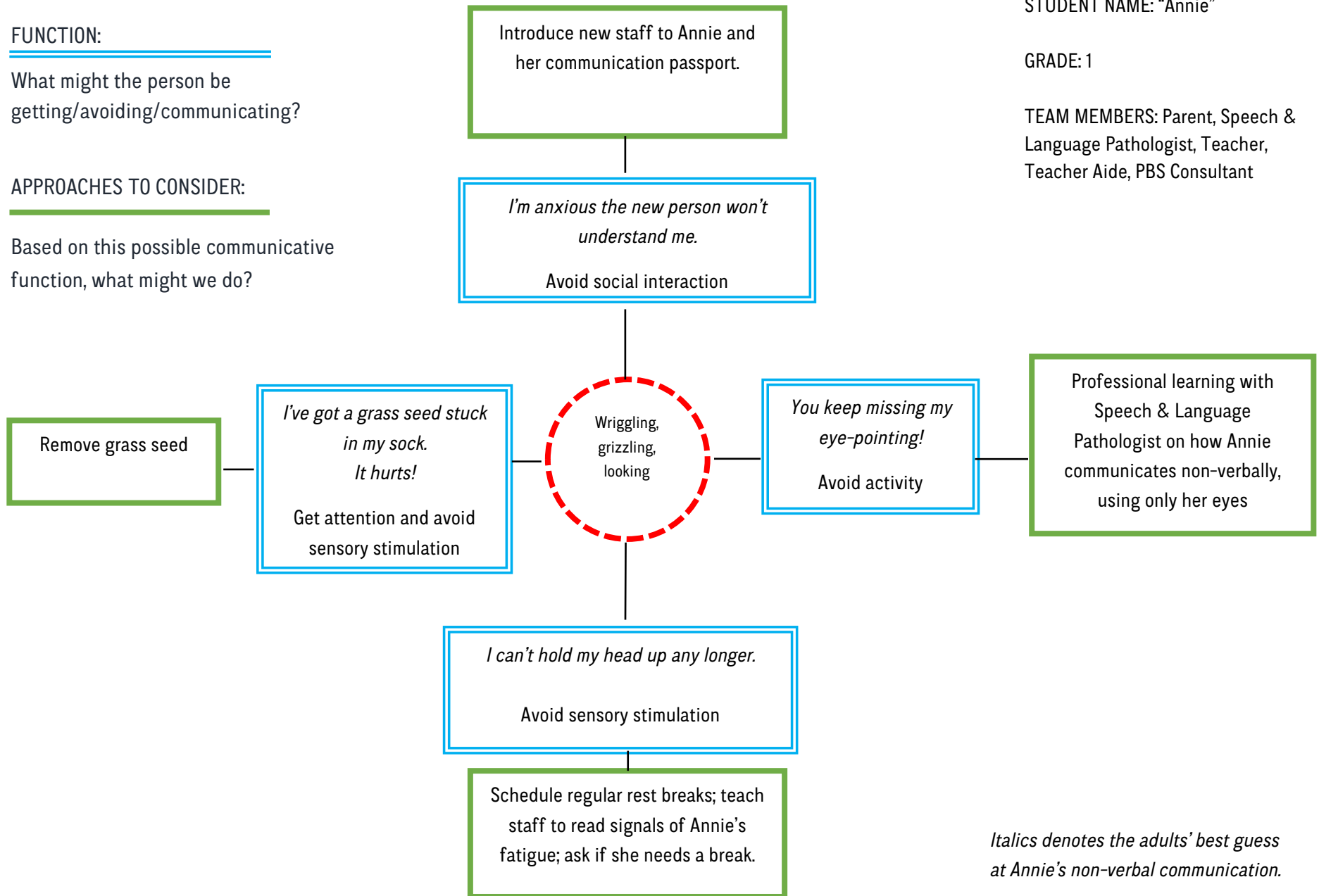
Based on this possible communicative function, what might we do?

DATE: 16/10/20

STUDENT NAME: "Annie"

GRADE: 1

TEAM MEMBERS: Parent, Speech & Language Pathologist, Teacher, Teacher Aide, PBS Consultant



*Italics denotes the adults' best guess at Annie's non-verbal communication.*

**BEHAVIOUR:**

What do you see and hear?

**FUNCTION:**

What might the person be getting/avoiding/communicating?

**APPROACHES TO CONSIDER:**

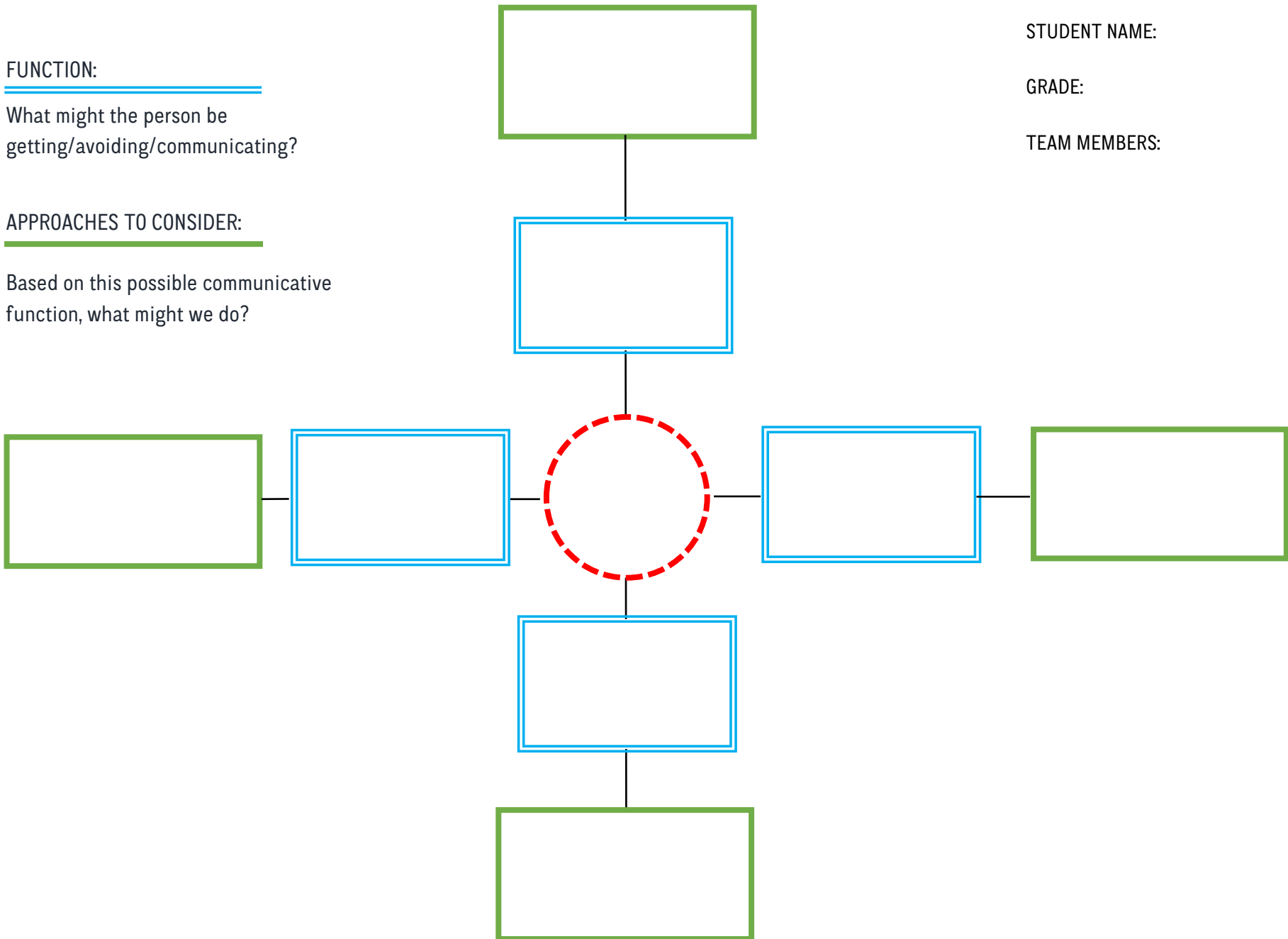
Based on this possible communicative function, what might we do?

DATE:

STUDENT NAME:

GRADE:

TEAM MEMBERS:



## References

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Crone, D., & Horner, R. H. (2003). *Building positive behaviour support systems in schools: Functional behavioural assessment*. New York: Guilford Press.

O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Storey, K., & Newton, S. J. (1997). *Functional assessment and program development for problem behaviour: A practical handbook* (2nd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Vanderaa, S. (2015). *Towards Openness: A Reflection on Functional Behaviour Assessment in Schools*. [Unpublished PhD thesis]. Curtin University.

## Helpful resources

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Bambara, L. M., & Kern, L. (Eds.). (2005). *Individualized supports for students with problem behaviours: Designing positive behaviour plans*. New York: Guilford Press.

Dunlap, G., Iovannone, R., Kincaid, D., Wilson, K., Christiansen, K., Strain, P., & English, C. (2010). *Prevent-Teach-Reinforce: The School-Based Model of Individualized Positive Behaviour Support*. CA: Brookes.

## Would you like more information?

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If you have any questions about the function hub, or you're interested in professional learning about FBA, or you'd like support with an FBA, please email [sonja@sonjavanderaa.com.au](mailto:sonja@sonjavanderaa.com.au)