

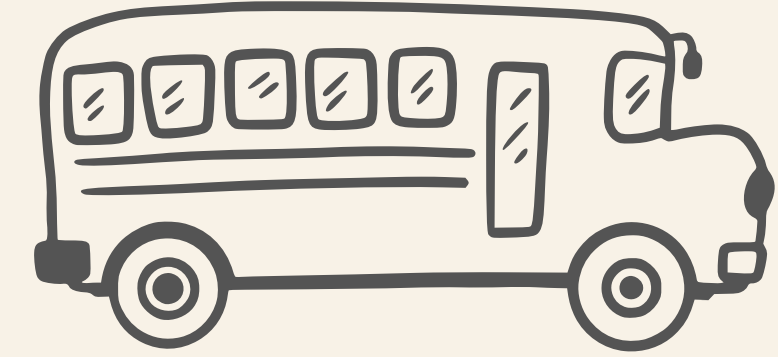
Behavioral Supports in School Settings:

Building from an
Ethical and Empirical Base

Brh Design &
Strategic Behavioral Solutions



Behavior Intervention in Schools



The most commonly used behavior intervention system in schools is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

PBIS systems are derived from ABA principles and foundational strategies.

PBIS that is implemented with fidelity results in:

- Improved school climates
- Effective management of a variety of maladaptive behaviors
- Improved academic achievement
- An overall decrease in the number of suspensions and office referrals.

PBIS that is not implemented with fidelity results in:

- More exclusion from typical instruction and peer interaction.

The biggest factors influencing sustained and effective implementation of PBIS are **overall acceptance of PBIS strategies and foundational beliefs, lack of support in training, lack of consultation and coaching, lack of fidelity monitoring, and lack of administrative support in terms of consistent professional development.**

Paraprofessional Roles

Paraeducators often assume the role of behavior interventionist, but lack the training and expertise needed to do so in an effective manner.

An increased focus on specific behavior intervention training is not only needed, but also largely desired among paraeducators (Jenkins 2025, Sobeck 2016).

Many staff members in schools are not proficiently trained to deal with violence, aggression, and other situations that involve crisis responding (Robinson et. al 2025)





Google search of top
10 listings and Indeed
search of 40 current
job postings.

Currently, there is no
standard to compare
one job title, duties,
or roles against
another.

Behavior Specialist	Behavior Support Specialist
Behavior Interventionist	Behavior Interventions Specialist
Behavior Analyst	Postitive Support Specialist
Student Support Specialist	Behavior Therapist
Intervention Specialist	Behaviorist
Classroom Behavior and Intervention Specialist	Behavior Intervention Program Specialist
Child and Family Support Behavior Specialist	Behavior Management Specialist
Behavior Intervention Teacher	Behavior and Intervention Specialist
Behavior Resource Specialist	And more...

FBA in Schools



Under subpart E, IDEA requires that local education agencies use a behavior analytic process, the functional behavior assessment (FBA), to gather information about events that predict and maintain a student's behavior under certain circumstances. The concept of functional behavior assessment is rooted in the theories and practices of applied behavior analysis (ABA) (Cooper et al., 2020).

School psychologists, social workers, and even special education teachers are often in charge of writing FBAs for students in school settings.

An impressive body of literature supports the efficacy of FBAs when technically adequate functional assessments are conducted and appropriate behavioral intervention plans are implemented.

Quality of FBAs in Schools



Fischer et. al (2021) - There is no standard protocol used to conduct FBAs in schools, creating large discrepancies in the procedures implemented in schools. Considering these limitations, results from any school-based FBA alone may be incorrect and lead to interventions based on an incorrect evaluation of the function of the problem behavior.

Iovannone et. al (2024) - When looking at the technical adequacy of FBAs/BIPs written by educational staff, research shows that interventions that describe teaching replacement or alternate appropriate behaviors, using the hypothesized function as a reinforcement for the performance of the replacement behavior, and changing responses to target behaviors so that they are no longer inadvertently reinforced continue to be areas of weakness. These reports had relatively low-rated scores for (a) identification of a functionally similar replacement or alternate behavior and a teaching strategy that provides the student with an alternate pathway to obtaining the hypothesized function by performing the appropriate behavior, (b) providing reinforcement when the student engages in appropriate behavior, and (c) strategies to refrain from inadvertently continuing to reinforce or maintain the occurrence of target behaviors by providing the same function (i.e., escape, access to attention). These continued patterns are alarming, as students are likely not receiving explicit instruction for appropriate replacement behaviors that serve the same function as the target behavior.

Who is Trained to Conduct FBAs?



McCahill et. al (2014)- Teachers and other educational staff are typically inadequately prepared/lack the necessary skills to conduct effective FBAs, often resulting in subjective definitions of target behaviors, aversive procedures used by default, and a frequent failure to use FBA data in interventions. Although the training protocols used in this study were successful, it was not demonstrated that teachers could conduct informant, observational and experimental functional behavior analysis methods and develop a behavior support plan based on those findings.

Sideriadis (2010) - Little has been written regarding the extent to which school social workers are utilizing FBA/BIPs, their perceptions of the effectiveness or practicality of this process for students with problem behaviors, and/or the unique contributions school social workers can offer. While social workers typically always conduct indirect assessments, less than half of them report conducting observations and direct assessment, and less than 30% report using data to verify function or proposing a testable hypothesis. Approximately one out of every ten SSWs (11%) indicated that they conduct FBA/BIPs with no prior training at all.

Examples of Non-Functions Found in Educational FBAs...

Control - Student's physically aggressive behaviors appear to serve the purpose of control. These behaviors also serve the purpose of emotional release.

Power and Control Attention and care

Feeling stressed and overwhelmed from an academic, or needing to take a mental break.

Function: *Gain or maintain a sense of power or control



Who is Trained to Conduct FBAs?



Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA®s) are extensively trained to conduct Functional Behavior Assessments. BCBA®s must complete a master's level program which is often focused around FBA, in addition to 2000 fieldwork hours and passing a board exam.

Runyon et. al (2018) - The amount of ABA training provided to school psychologists throughout their education is low. Only 8% of the sample reported taking 2+ PD training on ABA, and less than 3% were also certified behavior analysts. Only 53% reported having ABA techniques modeled for them during internship.

Yu (2022) - Findings, discussed within the context of meeting the training needs of school psychology students, indicated that the majority (77%) of programs offered only one or no course focused on ABA knowledge and skills. When comparing the expected amount of training required for behavior analysts to begin independent practice, what school psychology students receive may seem rather scant.

Behavioral Training & Support for Paraprofessionals



When paraprofessionals are trained using a competency-based model that aligns with the BACB's RBT® requirements, they show a significant increase in the use of proactive strategies, and their students show increases in cooperative behaviors and decreases in maladaptive behaviors (Narang, 2022).

Having a trained behavior specialist at a school to help support students with challenging behaviors is beneficial, not only to identify behaviors of concern, but to implement consistent support for both students and staff. Interventions and strategies are much more likely to be sustained with the presence of a behavior specialist to support. A behavior specialist can help foster a positive environment where attitudes about challenging behaviors are shifted in a positive way (Colum & Cullen 2025).

40 Hour RBT® 2026 Training Requirements

Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis: 2 hours

Preparing for Service Delivery: 1 hour

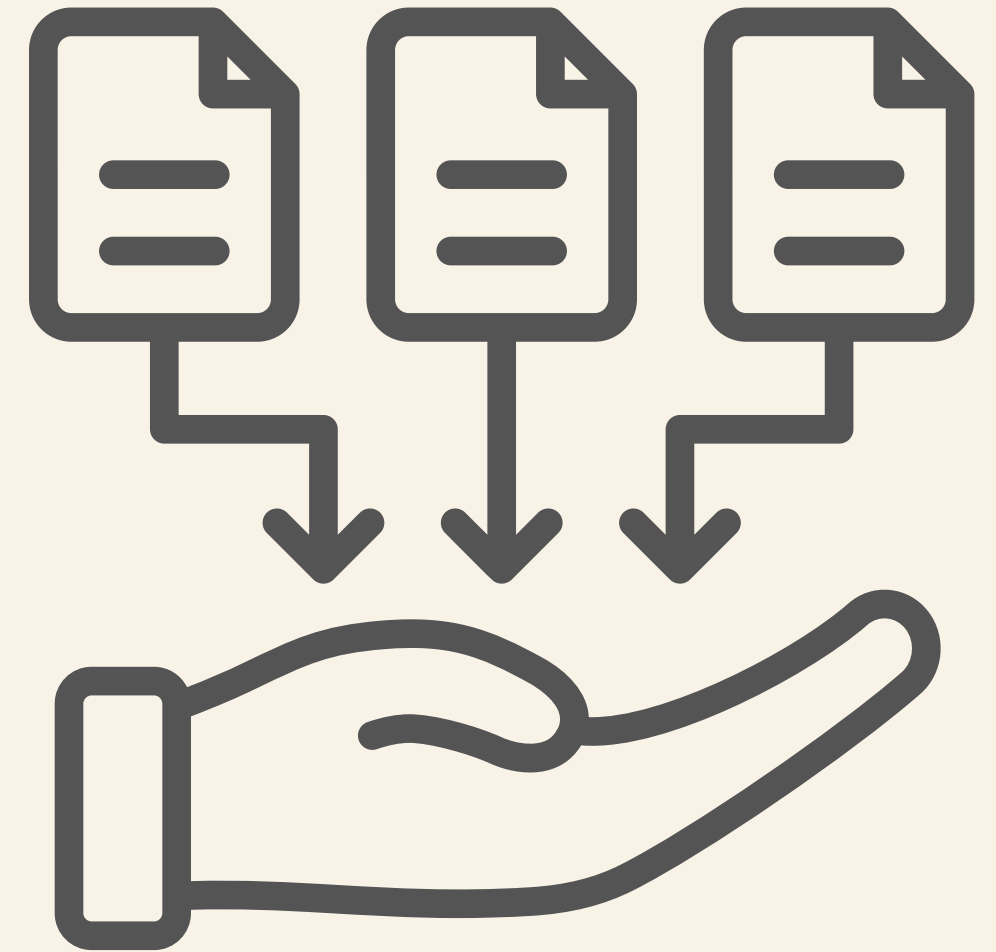
Data Collection and Graphing: 3 hours

Assisting with Behavior Assessments: 3 hours

Behavior-Change Interventions: 20 hours

Service Delivery Documentation and Reporting: 3 hours

Ethics and Professionalism: 5 hours



Ethics and Professionalism



Training includes:

- Describe Role of the RBT® in the Educational System
- Respond Appropriately to Feedback and Maintain or Improve Performance Accordingly
- How to Communicate with Stakeholders (e.g., Teachers, Administrators, Family, Caregivers, Others Professionals as Authorized)
- Identify Methods to Maintain Client Dignity and Responsibility to the Client
- Identify Responsible Conduct

Behavior Change Interventions

Training includes:

- **Proactive strategies**
 - Approaches and antecedent interventions
- **Preventative measures**
 - Planning, awareness and strategies
- **Skill(s) Building**
 - Skill acquisition plans, reinforcement application, contingency management
- **Reactive strategies**
 - Behavior reduction, and crisis management



Training Outcomes Measured

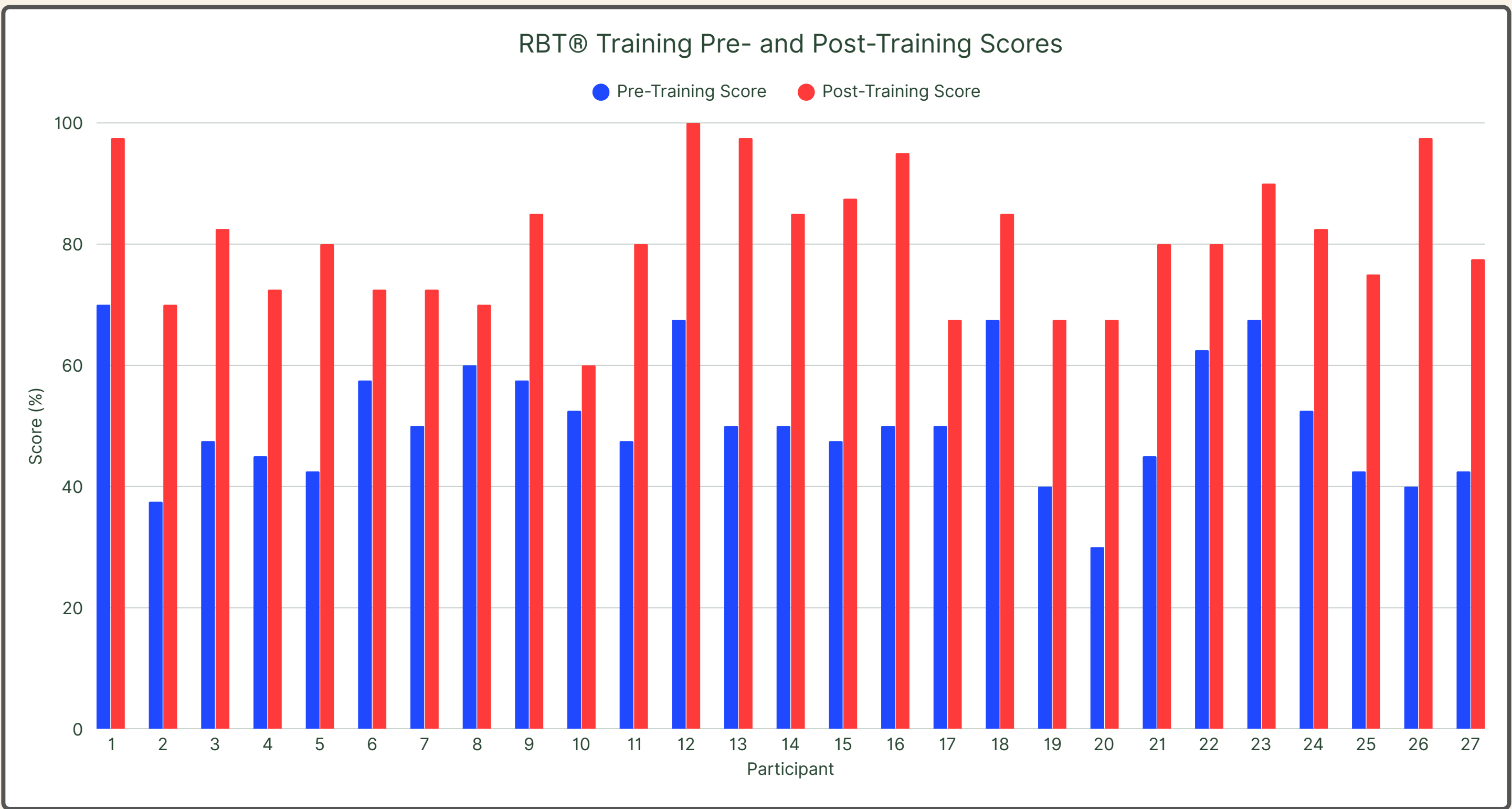


*Learning to
'see' behavior
through a
functional lens*

Training Participants take a Pre and Post test of training content

We have gathered some fidelity data on specific 'foundational' strategies and approaches

RBT® Training Pre- & Post-Training Scores



Average Pre-training score: 50.83%
Average Post-training score: 80.65%

Rating:	1	2	3	NA
Responded with behavior specific praise and/or offered tangible/token rewards to any positive behaviors demonstrated				
Used first, then language in addition to visual duration in response to time sensitive requests				
Remained neutral in facial expression and tone in response to undesired behaviors- i.e. refraining from eye contact and verbal interaction				
Referenced visuals when discussing daily schedule - i.e. visual schedule, visual duration map, to-do list				
Prompted functional communication in response to inappropriate requests - i.e. using words instead of tugging and grabbing, using break card instead of running				
Co-participated and engaged in activities with client – games, work, reading				

Fidelity Checklist Items

The 6 items included on the fidelity checklist cover many foundational RBT® strategies. These strategies are covered extensively during the 40-hour RBT® Training.

A score of **1** indicates the staff member did not use this skill, despite having one or more opportunities.

2 indicates the skill was used part of the time, but some opportunities were missed.

3 indicates then skill was used in all possible opportunities.

NA was used to indicate that there were no observed opportunities to utilize the given skill.

Fidelity Checklist Scores

**Fidelity Checklist Average Scores -
RBT Trained vs. Untrained Staff**



Fidelity checklists were used to determine how proficiently staff were able to use specific skills taught during RBT® training.

Both staff members observed worked with the same student and were scored using the same checklist.

Average RBT® Trained Staff Fidelity Score: 3
Average Non-RBT® Trained Staff Fidelity Score: 1.84

Feedback

RBT® Training Participants

“I’ve been a para for 20 years and [RBT® Training] is the best training I have ever been a part of. I think every para should take this training.”

“Trainers opened up the skills and information exuberantly, constantly wanting us to integrate the material into our daily work. Multiple times, we were given the opportunity to raise actual head-scratcher scenarios relevant to the current topic. The consequent discussion afforded us the ability to fully appreciate the concepts and its power for behavior modification.”

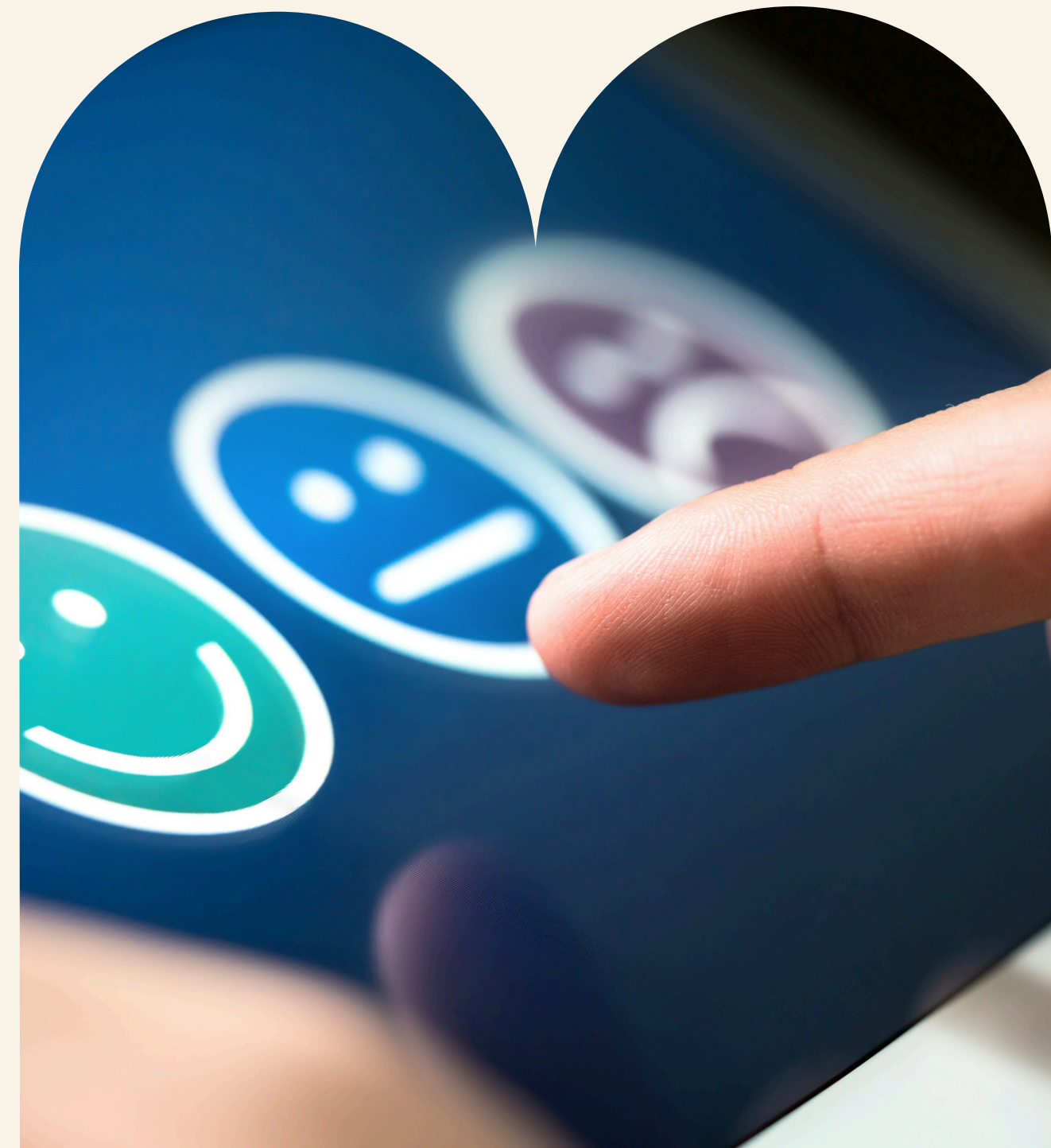


Feedback

RBT Training Participant

“Benefits of RBT® training with Behavior Assistance Roles in schools:

- Working directly with a BCBA®, who was formerly an RBT®, gives me on-site support from a certified professional
- I get to understand the research behind behavior analysis
- Practice and understand the methods used in the role BEFORE working on-site
- The 40-hour training gives a thorough overview of the role
- Regular data collection allows the RBT® to understand and identify the different components of why and when behaviors are happening
- Behavior management vs. reduction”



Feedback

Directors of Special Services

Director 1: “We need to continue to find ways to support our students. The RBT® training is a way to invest in our paraeducator team by giving them best practice strategies to meet the needs of our students.”

Director 2: “Since implementing the RBT® training... our team has witnessed remarkable improvements in our ability to support and manage challenging student behaviors. The strategies and techniques taught in the training have proven to be invaluable in fostering a positive learning environment and enhancing the overall well-being of our students.”



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Thanks



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