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## Assessing and Treating Elopement in a School Setting

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### Abstract

Elopement, or running away from supervised areas, is a dangerous and problematic behavior that compromises the safety of people with disabilities at disproportionately high rates. As such, it is paramount that teachers know how to respond to elopement during school to ensure student safety. Although general safety strategies may be helpful in preventing elopement, they fail to address the factors that trigger elopement. Recent advances in the assessment and treatment of elopement offer strategies that teachers can use to help treat elopement by first understanding why it occurs. We describe the common reasons elopement may occur, outline a systematic approach for assessment and treatment of elopement that teachers can use in school settings, and provide a strategy for maintaining treatment effects over time.

### Keywords

autism; delay tolerance; elopement; functional behavior assessment; functional communication training; trial-based functional analysis

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A wave of panic washed over Ms. Montrose as she realized her student Don was gone; she could not find him anywhere on the playground. Don had run away from supervised areas before; however, he only ever ran away from the classroom or the group when walking through the hallway. In these situations, he could typically be found rifling through the candy jar in the main office, taking snacks from the cafeteria snack bar, or helping himself to a treat from the treasure box in Mr. Todd's classroom. Ms. Montrose sent her two classroom aides to check those locations while she quickly ran the perimeter of the fenced-in playground area. When she reached the far end of the playground, she spotted Don. He had scaled the playground fence, crossed a busy street, and was walking into a nearby convenience store. Although finding Don relieved Ms. Montrose's immediate distress, she

remained extremely concerned about her ability to safely supervise him during his school day. She brought this concern to the school administration, and they warned that if she could not predict or control his running off, they would have no choice but to recommend a more restrictive placement. Ms. Montrose was determined to get a handle on Don's elopement; she did not want to risk losing all the progress they had made in the classroom. However, Ms. Montrose did not know where to begin. If only she understood why Don eloped, maybe she could develop a plan that would decrease this dangerous behavior.

The purpose of this article is to clearly describe goal-directed elopement (also called "bolting," "fleeing," or "running away") and the unique challenge it presents for teachers in classroom settings. In this article, we will introduce emergency-response strategies that teachers can use to help prevent instances of elopement and we will outline general steps a teacher might take when assessing and treating goal-directed elopement within a school setting.

## What is Elopement and Why is it a Challenge?

Elopement is when an individual runs away from or leaves a supervised area (Boyle & Adamson, 2017), which can be a dangerous and challenging problem. Elopement occurs in about 34% of individuals diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities and in about 49% of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (Anderson et al., 2012; Kiely, Migdal, Vettam, & Adesman, 2016). Elopement is dangerous because when an individual elopes from a supervised area, they are more likely to be involved in traffic-related injuries, drowning incidents, and become unable to be located by parents or teachers (Mouridsen, Brønnum-Hansen, Rich, & Isager, 2008; Neidert, Iwata, Dempsey, & Thomason-Sassi, 2013; Piazza, Hanley, Bowman, Ruyter, Lindauer, & Saiontz, 1997; Shavelle, Strauss, & Pickett, 2001). Elopement can be separated into two forms—wandering and goal-directed elopement (i.e., "bolting"). Wandering is moving away from a supervised area at a slow pace without clear direction, whereas goal-directed elopement is running or darting either away from a non-preferred setting or toward a preferred setting. Due to the inherent risks related to the latter, the focus of this article will be on addressing goal-directed elopement (which we refer to as *elopement* for the remainder of the article).

## Preventive Methods

Although our article focuses on strategies for assessing and treating elopement, this intervention process may take several days or several weeks to complete. In the meantime, teachers should coordinate with parents and with school administrators to implement a few methods for preventing elopement. The following strategies are intended to be used as a short-term response to elopement.

One common method of preventing elopement is to secure exits with locks that are out of reach of the student or with locks that are difficult to manipulate (Fisher, Rodriguez, Luczynski, & Kelley, 2013). Teachers may close classroom doors, position their desk near the door, or place the desk of the student who elopes across the classroom from the door. It may be prudent to place alarms on doors and other points of exit that can notify teachers

when a child has eloped. Alternatively, children at risk for elopement may wear a location-signaling device that can facilitate the quick and safe retrieval of the child should elopement occur. Teachers may also place bells or other notification devices on their classroom door or may assign a classroom paraprofessional to be within a few feet of the student (or, of the door) at all times. It is important for teachers to work closely with parents and with school administrators when considering these and other methods for preventing elopement. Although each of the aforementioned strategies can help prevent elopement, fire code and practical concerns (e.g., not wanting an alarm to sound each time the classroom door is opened) may render some of these methods impractical for some classrooms, and parents may not agree to have their child wear a location-signaling device. Additionally, preventive strategies may not reduce how often a student will try to elope (Fisher et al., 2013).

## Importance of Understanding Why Elopement Occurs

In order to develop an effective treatment for a student's elopement, it is necessary to understand the reason for its occurrence. In order to do so, the teacher must identify the reinforcer(s) maintaining this problematic behavior, which will allow for better prediction of when elopement is and is not likely to occur. Decades of research in the field of applied behavior analysis demonstrates that functional behavior assessments (FBAs; including functional analyses [FAs]) can identify the functional relations responsible for maintaining problematic behavior (e.g., elopement), thus increasing the likelihood of prescribing an effective, function-based intervention (for an overview of FBAs, see Lewis, Hatton, Jorgenson, & Maynard, 2017).

Elopement typically occurs for one or more of the following reasons, including (a) gaining access to preferred items or activities (e.g., a student eloping to a playground), (b) gaining access to preferred types of attention (e.g., a student eloping to get a teacher to chase her), (c) escaping or avoiding non-preferred activities or instructions (e.g., a student eloping from desk to get away from work), or (d) for sensory stimulation (e.g., student eloping produces tactile and visual stimuli; see Table 1 for a summary of the reasons why a student might elope). Recently, Boyle and Adamson (2017) conducted a systematic review of the assessment and treatment of elopement literature and identified 12 studies including a total of 27 FAs of elopement. The authors found that over half of the cases of elopement proved sensitive to positive reinforcement in the form of either access to tangible items (60%) or access to attention (55%). In the remainder of the cases, FBAs found elopement to be reinforced by either negative reinforcement in the form of escape (25%) or by automatic reinforcement (10%). One interesting finding of the study by Boyle and Adamson is that in 45% of the cases more than one source of reinforcement maintained elopement (i.e., multiply maintained elopement). Because elopement is typically maintained by social reinforcement, we will focus on assessing and developing interventions for elopement reinforced by the social environment. Additionally, teachers are important contributors to the social environment, and as such, are in a unique position to alter this environment in ways that decrease the occurrence of elopement and other forms of problematic behavior.

## Keys to Assessing Elopement

Functional-assessment procedures for elopement have evolved over the years as research continues to improve the efficiency of accurately identifying the reinforcers responsible for maintaining elopement (Lambert, Finley, & Caruthers, 2017; Lang et al., 2009; Neidert et al., 2013). We describe the steps for developing, conducting, and reviewing the results of an assessment of elopement below.

### Step 1: Developing a data-collection system.

In order to assess elopement, it is important to first define it in observable and measurable terms (e.g., “exiting the classroom door without permission” or “stepping two or more feet away from the line during group transitions”). Once the educational team selects a clear definition of elopement, they can begin the FBA. Some aspects of FBAs include indirect assessments (e.g., rating scales, parent or teacher interviews) and structured observations (e.g., antecedent-behavior-consequence data collection). The results of these assessments provide some preliminary information regarding the conditions under which elopement might (and might not) occur. This information is useful in that it can identify situations (e.g., leaving the playground, walking past the cafeteria) or types of reinforcers (e.g., certain toys and types of attention) to include in an FA. Indirect assessments and structured observations can also be useful when treating other, less problematic behaviors (e.g., talking out of turn). Although the results of indirect assessments and structured observations often suggest inaccurate functions of problem behavior due to their poor reliability and poor validity (Kelley, LaRue, Roane, & Gadaire, 2011; Thompson & Iwata, 2007), indirect assessments (e.g., the Questions About Behavioral Function [QABF] scale; Matson & Vollmer, 1995) can be helpful when used to inform the conditions of an FA. The QABF is a 25-item questionnaire designed to identify the variables maintaining problem behavior (i.e., social attention, escape, tangible reinforcement, physical discomfort, nonsocial reinforcement). Those who work with the student most often (e.g., teacher or paraprofessional) should complete the QABF (see Matson & Vollmer, 1995 for a full-page version of the QABF). Once completed, the teacher scores the QABF by summing the number of item endorsements in each subscale (max = 5) and summing the severity of the endorsements for each of the subscales (max = 15) to arrive at 5 subscale scores (item endorsement and severity). Any subscale score that receives at least a 6 or higher in the total severity score should be included in the student’s FA. Please see the Concluding Remarks section below if the “physical discomfort” or “nonsocial reinforcement” category of the QABF receives similar scores in item endorsement or total severity score as described above, as consulting with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA®) may be necessary.

After reading through the 25 questions on the QABF and scoring each question on a 4-point Likert scale from “0 (never)” to “3 (often)” or an “N/A” if a question does not apply to the behavior, Ms. Montrose quickly totaled the items endorsed (questions with a score) for Don’s elopement and summed the severity of the endorsements for each of the subscales to arrive at 5 subscale scores (item endorsement and severity) and identified that attention had been endorsed for 4/5 questions with a severity score of 8, escape had been endorsed for 1/5 questions with a severity score of 1, tangible had been endorsed for 5/5 questions with a

severity score of 12, and non-social and physical pain were not endorsed at all. Therefore, Ms. Montrose decided that she would include trials for attention and tangible items because that was the only subscales that received at least a 6 or higher in the total severity score. Next, Ms. Montrose needed to figure out (a) how these trials would be arranged, (b) where they would be conducted, and (c) when she would have time to implement them.

### Step 2: Conducting a trial-based FA.

Recent research on FA methodology suggests that trial-based FAs are ideal for school settings because they are efficient and allow for flexibility (Kodak, Grow, & Northup, 2004; Lambert et al., 2017; Neidert et al., 2013). Each trial in a trial-based FA lasts between 30 s and 4 min and can be imbedded within naturally occurring activities. These features make it manageable for teachers to conduct the assessment without requiring much assistance. When elopement occurs, the trial-based format of a trial-based FA eliminates the requirement to retrieve and reset the student multiple times, which reduces the likelihood of attention confounding the assessment results (Piazza et al., 1997).

To start a trial-based FA, the teacher will set up different types of trials based on the results of the QABF. Each trial starts with the *control period* wherein the teacher will arrange the environment to minimize motivation for elopement, which is not expected to occur. Following a pre-specified amount of time (i.e., 2 min), the teacher then initiates the *test period* by arranging the environment to maximize motivation for elopement, which should trigger elopement if the QABF has accurately identified the reinforcing consequence(s). The teacher will complete each trial type identified in the QABF at least three times but will continue with a given trial type until the student does not elope in the control period of the trial for three consecutive trials.

For the *tangible trial*, the teacher provides the student with free access to preferred items or activities for 2 min during the *control period* and restricts these items by placing them away from the child during the *test period*. If the student attempts to elope to the area with the preferred items or activities, the teacher allows the student to do so and will score this as an occurrence of elopement (+) on the data sheet (see Appendix A for a sample data sheet). If the student does not attempt to elope, the teacher continues with the transition and scores this as a non-occurrence of elopement (-).

For the *attention trial*, the teacher provides the student with free access to high-quality attention for 2 min during the *control period* and removes the high-quality attention during the *test period*. If the student attempts to elope from the teacher, the teacher allows the student to do so while chasing after the child to catch them and scores this as an occurrence of elopement (+) on the data sheet. If the student does not attempt to elope, the teacher continues with the transition and scores this as a non-occurrence of elopement (-).

For the *escape trial*, the teacher provides the student with free access to a break from an instructional context for 2 min during the *control period* and requests that the student transition back to the instructional context to work during the *test period*. If the student attempts to elope from the teacher, the teacher allows the student to do so and scores this as an occurrence of elopement (+) on the data sheet. If the student does not attempt to elope,

the teacher continues with the transition back to the instructional context, delivers instructions for 2 min, and scores this as a non-occurrence of elopement (-).

When assessing elopement, it is paramount to ensure that the variables you are arranging during the test and control periods are available when and only at the specified times. When assessing whether elopement is sensitive to a given reinforcer (e.g., access to preferred tangible items), elopement should produce the programmed reinforcer (i.e., tangible items) in the test period of the corresponding trial, and only the programmed reinforcer. For example, when assessing whether attention reinforces elopement, it is important to ensure the individual does not contact preferred tangible items during the test trials. In addition, when assessing whether access to preferred tangible items reinforces elopement, it is important to ensure the individual does not contact preferred forms of attention. Finally, when assessing whether escape from instructions reinforces elopement, it is important to ensure the individual does not contact either preferred tangible items or attention.

Ensuring adequate control over these variables can be difficult to control in a naturalistic setting (e.g., a school). Therefore, here are some additional tactics to consider when assessing and treating elopement in a school setting. First, safety should always be of the utmost concern. Strategically arranging the environment to prevent elopement into unsafe areas can be accomplished by restricting access to unnecessary pathways, placing individuals at designated exits, or using two-way radios to facilitate communication. Second, teachers should balance the above concerns and recommendations without compromising the integrity of the assessment and treatment process (e.g., limiting unnecessary attention from other individuals). Additional recommendations include preventing access to temporarily restricted and perhaps highly preferred areas of the school (e.g., playground) and materials (e.g., arts and crafts supplies). When elopement is reinforced by escape from non-preferred instructions, we suggest using instructional materials that can be easily transported (e.g., worksheets on a clipboard).

Ms. Montrose decided that a great time to conduct one of the tangible trials would be during snack time in the cafeteria. Therefore, she brought Don to the cafeteria, let him pick out a small snack, and gave him time to consume it (i.e., control period). Following 2 min of consuming the snack, Ms. Montrose recorded that Don did not attempt to elope and scored this as a non-occurrence during the control period (-). Next, Ms. Montrose walked over to Don, removed his snack and placed it away from Don on the table, took his hand, and said, "It's time to leave; walk with me" to initiate the tangible-test period. Ms. Montrose and Don started to walk from the snack bar to her classroom (from Location 1 to Location 2 on the diagram in Figure 1). During this test period, Don eloped back to his unfinished snack in the cafeteria (Location 1), and Ms. Montrose allowed him to finish his snack and scored an occurrence of elopement during the test period (+). Ms. Montrose conducted two more trials, transitioning from the candy jar in main office (Location 3) to the hallway (Location 4), and from the treasure box in Mr. Todd's classroom (Location 5) to the hallway (Location 6) and observed occurrences of elopement during each test period and zero occurrences during the control period (see data and graph presented in Figure 2).

When conducting the attention trials, Ms. Montrose arranged the attention control period by providing Don with access to her undivided attention (e.g., she could sing, skip, or talk with him continuously) for 2 min while walking from one end of the hallway to the midpoint of the hallway (from Location 6 to Location 4). Once they arrived at the midpoint (Location 4), Ms. Montrose continued walking to the other end of the hallway (Location 7); however, she stopped interacting with Don, pretended to be “busy” with work on a clipboard, and said “I need to do a little work, keep walking with me” for the attention-test period (from Location 4 to Location 7). During the first trial, Don actually engaged in an occurrence of elopement during the control period and did not engage in any elopement during the subsequent test period. When this occurred, Ms. Montrose did not comment or run after him, but scored this as an occurrence of elopement during the control (+) and scored a non-occurrence during the test (-). Ms. Montrose conducted three more trials transitioning from the front entrance of the school (Location 7) to Ms. Garcia’s classroom (Location 8) and twice from the gymnasium (Location 9) to the other end of the hallway (Location 7). During the second test period in the hallway (from Location 9 to Location 7), Don engaged in an occurrence of elopement, and Ms. Montrose immediately chased after him and said, “That’s not safe, Don! You need to walk with me,” and provided him with high-quality attention for the remainder of the test period. However, when Ms. Montrose conducted this trial again in an attempt to replicate the previous effect, Don did not engage in elopement. After Ms. Montrose finished conducting the attention trials and recoding Don’s responses on the data sheet (see Figure 2), she needed to review her data to determine why Don was engaging in elopement.

### **Step 3: Analyzing the trial-based FA data.**

The teacher graphs the total number (i.e., frequency) of trials with problem behavior from the trial-based FA control and test periods. These data are typically displayed in a bar graph to allow for easy visual inspection. Specifically, the trial types for which the frequency of elopement is higher during the test as compared to the control will indicate a function of elopement. In order to compare frequency, it is important to ensure that the teacher conducts an equal number of control and test trials for each trial type (e.g., three tangible control and test conditions; four attention control and test conditions).

After Ms. Montrose calculated the total frequency of the data that she collected, she input these results into a bar graph. Overall, Don eloped during 3 of the 3 tangible-test periods as compared to 0 of the 3 tangible-control periods and 1 of the 4 attention-test periods as compared to 1 of the 4 attention-control periods (see Figure 2). These data suggest that Don engages in elopement to access preferred tangible items. Ms. Montrose will now use these results to inform her intervention selection.

### **Importance of Assessment-Informed Intervention**

It is important that the intervention for each student’s elopement matches the reason they are engaging in elopement, which is called a “function-based treatment.” If we use a treatment that does not match the reason why the student engages in elopement, we not only waste time on an ineffective treatment, we also risk the possibility of making elopement worse.

Therefore, we use the results from the trial-based FA to inform our intervention. Steps for identifying and then implementing an appropriate intervention are described below.

### **Step 1: Identifying an appropriate intervention.**

Once we know the reason for elopement, we will teach the student a more appropriate alternative response for accessing the functional reinforcer, and we will be able to better prevent future instances of elopement from producing reinforcement (i.e., extinction). If the assessment produces unclear results (e.g., elopement across all test and control periods), or you did not conduct the assessment because the QABF suggested that elopement was maintained by non-social reinforcement or physical discomfort, developing an intervention will likely be time consuming and challenging to complete in a classroom setting. Under these circumstances, we recommend seeking assistance from a BCBA<sup>®</sup> who has experience in conducting FAs and developing interventions for problematic behavior maintained by automatic reinforcement.

Because Ms. Montrose determined that Don elopes to gain access to preferred tangible items, she intends to teach him an appropriate way to request those items. In addition, Ms. Montrose plans to program multiple opportunities throughout each day for Don to request and access these items. If Don attempts to elope to access these items at other times, she and her paraprofessional teachers will do their best to prevent these attempts from producing access to Don's preferred tangible items. In order to make sure all of the paraprofessionals are on the same page and that the procedures are implemented consistently, Ms. Montrose plans on writing a protocol and preparing materials necessary for successfully implementing the intervention.

### **Step 2: Implementing the intervention.**

Functional communication training (FCT) is a commonly used intervention that focuses on teaching the student to request the reinforcer that is responsible for elopement while no longer allowing elopement to produce its reinforcer (i.e., the functional reinforcer). FCT reduces the rates of socially reinforced problem behavior by an average of 96% (Greer, Fisher, Saini, Owen, & Jones, 2016). Results of the assessment will determine whether to teach the student to request (a) access to preferred items, (b) access to preferred forms of attention, or (c) escape from non-preferred activities.

Prior to conducting a teaching session, the teacher creates a communication card that the student can easily exchange, which will immediately result in access to the functional reinforcer (refer to Appendix B for examples of various communication cards). Teachers can use any one of a number of available strategies to create these cards; however, we are going to share our preferred method. First, the teacher takes a picture of the student engaging in or with the functional reinforcer. That is, our preferred communication card includes a picture of the child gaining access to (a) a preferred tangible item, (b) a preferred form of attention, or (c) a break from a non-preferred activity depending on which one of these events reinforces their elopement. Second, these photos should be printed out (preferably in color) and pasted to a small index card (e.g., 7.6 cm by 12.7 cm). Third, the word describing the reinforcer depicted on the card should be included (e.g., "Snacks, please," "Play, please," or



“Break, please”). Fourth, the communication card should be laminated to make it durable. Finally, multiple copies should be created in case they are lost, damaged, or become worn. Picture cards are recommended over vocal speech for the initial stages of FCT because the teacher can physically guide the student to communicate, whereas vocal speech cannot be guided, and the student may choose to elope instead of requesting what he or she wants (DeRosa, Fisher, & Steege, 2015; Fisher et al., in press). The teacher will conduct training under conditions that are similar to the test period for the identified function from the trial-based FA.

Ms. Montrose began her teaching session by offering Don a small snack. Following 30-s access, she told him, “Snack is all done, it’s time to leave,” took his hand, and stood up. However, at the same time, Ms. Montrose also guided Don’s hand to exchange the communication card, and immediately let him re-access his unfinished snack, while saying, “Great handing me the card, you can finish your snack.” Ms. Montrose continued to implement trials in this fashion; however, because Don seemed to pick up on it quickly and did not engage in elopement, Ms. Montrose began to wait several seconds before she prompted Don to exchange the card. After just a few trials, Don independently and efficiently exchanged the card each time Ms. Montrose indicated it was time to leave. Once Don demonstrated that he could independently exchange the communication card for 20 trials across several days and contexts (e.g., classroom, main office), Ms. Montrose was ready to work on teaching delay tolerance.

### **Step 3: Teaching delay tolerance.**

Once the appropriate alternative response is taught and occurs regularly, the goal will be to maintain low levels of elopement while making the intervention more manageable by decreasing how often the reinforcer is delivered for the communication response. Specifically, the teacher will begin to program situations in which the student must wait a predetermined (and signaled) amount of time before he or she can request the functional reinforcer, which will also be signaled to the student. Once the student can tolerate the initial delay (i.e., 2 s), the teacher will systematically increase the delays (see Table 2 for a list of progressively increasing delay intervals). The teacher will ensure that increases to the delays follow at least two trials without elopement but with independent communication when the functional reinforcer is available and is signaled as such. In order to teach delay tolerance, the teacher will continue to establish motivation for the reinforcer, as she did in the test period of the relevant trial type in the trial-based FA. However, the teacher will promote appropriate communication by having the communication card present and will teach delay tolerance with the use of a colored signal to let the student know when he or she can request and when he or she needs to wait. A laminated two-sided card (e.g., one side red [wait signal], the other side green [request signal]) at least the size of an index card can be used (note: the teacher should select signals based on individual student needs). The teacher will prevent the student from eloping during the wait period and will ensure that the student does not contact the functional reinforcer for elopement (i.e., extinction). When extinction entails preventing the student from accessing preferred tangible items or from accessing preferred types of attention, it is critical to ensure those preferred stimuli are withheld. Alternatively, when extinction entails preventing the student from eloping during instructional activities, it

is critical to ensure the student never contacts a break from instruction following elopement. If the student exchanges the card, the teacher will not honor the request; rather, the teacher will reset the card and continue to prevent the student from eloping, and will prevent the student from accessing the functional reinforcer for elopement or for any other response during the wait period. The teacher will add 3 s to the required wait time for each instance in which the student attempts to elope. The teacher will repeat this schedule until the student has been successful (i.e., student does not attempt to elope during the wait time and requests his preferred item or activity, attention, or break once the wait time elapses) for three trials at the current wait time. Once these criteria are met, the teacher will increase the scheduled wait period according to the schedule of delays indicated in Table 2.

Ms. Montrose started the trial on green while Don had access to his snacks. After providing 30-s access to snack, she flipped the card to red and simultaneously removed his snacks. Ms. Montrose said, “You’re on red, you need to wait” while holding the card in front of Don’s eyes so he could clearly see the signal. Don sometimes attempted to hand Ms. Montrose his snack card when his signal was on red. When this happened, Ms. Montrose did not say anything while setting the card down and re-presenting the red card to Don. Sometimes Don attempted to elope to other areas with snacks when the signal was on red. However, Ms. Montrose did not allow Don to elope, did not comment on his elopement, and guided him back to the spot he eloped from using as little physical guidance as possible. Ms. Montrose discretely added 3 s to the amount of time Don had to wait each time he tried to elope, but she did not tell Don this. After the student successfully waited for the desired wait time, Ms. Montrose said, “nice waiting,” immediately flipped the signal to green, and prominently showed it to Don. This time, when Don exchanged the communication card, Ms. Montrose immediately gave him access to his snack. This continued until Don successfully waited three consecutive times with the red signal displayed for 2 s at a time without attempting to elope and without attempting to hand Ms. Montrose his communication card during the wait period. When he met this goal, Ms. Montrose increased his wait time with the red signal to 4 s. After a few weeks of practicing many times each day, Ms. Montrose taught Don to wait for up to 10 min (and work while he was waiting) before earning a small snack.

## Some Parting Remarks

We attempted to provide a relatively straight-forward method that teachers can follow to assess and treat goal-directed elopement in a school setting. Specifically, we offered clear, simple instructions for progressing through this process and included supplemental materials that can be used to accomplish this. Of course, if you encounter any questions or are unsure about what to do next at any step throughout the process, please solicit assistance from a BCBA<sup>®</sup> who is proficient in conducting assessments of and developing treatments for elopement (select *Find a Certificant* at [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com)) or feel free to contact the corresponding author of this article.

Ms. Montrose quickly scanned the playground and could not locate Don. “Not again!” she thought. Just then, she felt a tug on the back of her jacket. It was Don, and he had been standing behind her waiting patiently with his communication card in hand. Ms. Montrose was wearing the red signal; however, the alarm on her watch went off to indicate that it had

been 10 min. Therefore, she switched from the red signal to the green signal, and Don immediately extended his arm to exchange the communication card. Ms. Montrose accepted the card with a smile, took Don's hand and said, "Sure, bud. You can have a snack," and they headed back into the school together.

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## Appendix A

Trial	Attention		Escape		Tangible	
	Control	Test	Control	Test	Control	Test
1	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
2	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
3	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
4	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
5	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
6	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
7	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
8	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
9	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
10	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -	+ -
Frequency of Elopement:						

## Appendix B



I want to play with you, please.



I want to listen to music, please.



I want a break from work, please.

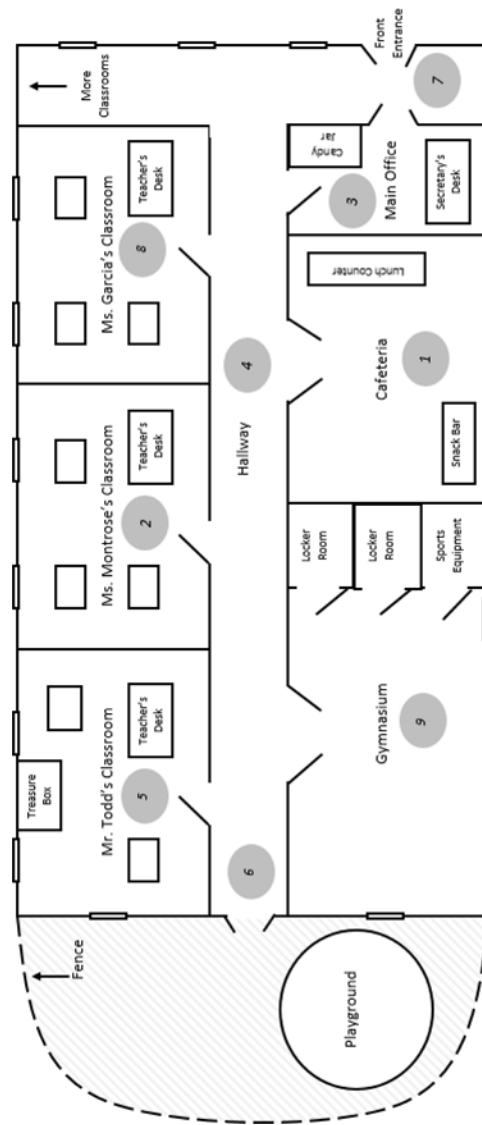


I want a snack, please.

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**Figure 1.** Sample diagram for how to set up and conduct functional analyses in a school.

Trial	Tangible		Attention	
	Control	Test	Control	Test
1	-	+	+	-
2	-	+	-	+
3	-	+	-	-
4	N/A	N/A	-	-
<b>Frequency of Elopement:</b>	0 (of 3)	3 (of 3)	1 (of 4)	1 (of 4)

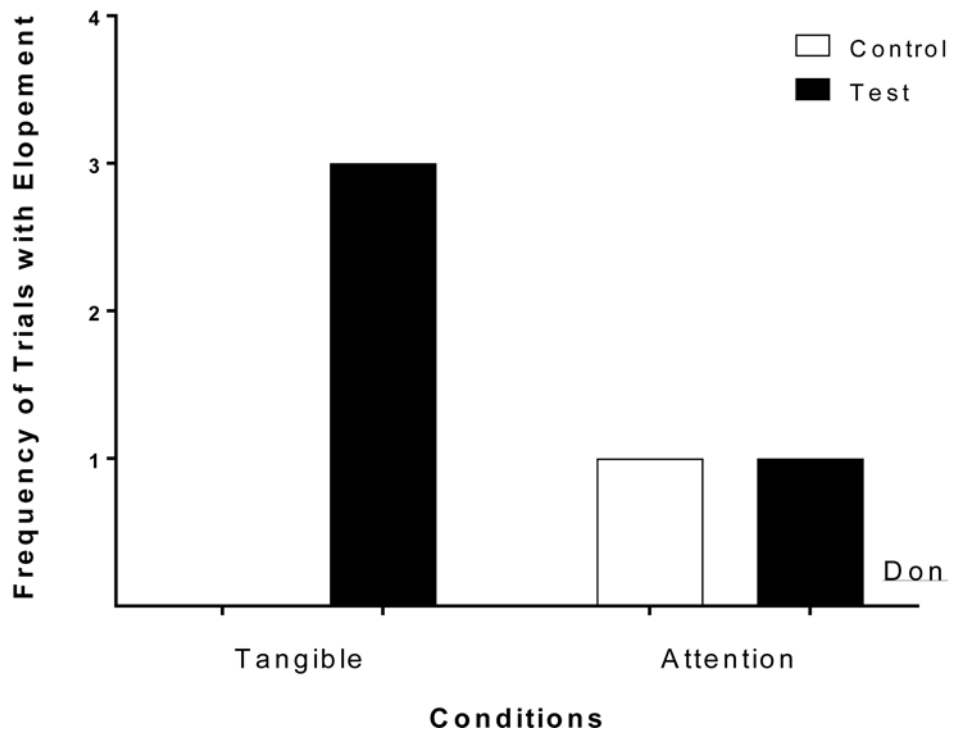


Figure 2. Hypothetical functional-analysis data and graph for Don.

**Table 1.**

## Potential Functions of Elopement with Examples

<b>Reason for Elopement (function)</b>	<b>Example</b>
Accessing preferred items/activities (social-positive reinforcement)	The student elopes to the computer or runs to the snack counter whenever passing the lunchroom
Accessing preferred types of attention (social-positive reinforcement)	The student elopes when his favorite paraprofessional enters the room; The student elopes from teacher to initiate a chase
Escape from or avoidance of non-preferred activities/instructions (social-negative reinforcement)	The student elopes from desk when working on difficult tasks
Sensory stimulation or pain attenuation (automatic reinforcement)	The student continues to elope regardless of whether it results in preferred items, attention, or escape from non-preferred activities.

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**Table 2.**

## Schedule for Increasing Delays

<b>Wait Interval</b> (Wait for preferred items/attention or for a break from instructions)	<b>Reinforcement Interval</b> (Access to preferred items/attention or a break from instructions)
2 s	30 s
4 s	30 s
8 s	30 s
15 s	30 s
30 s	30 s
60 s	60 s
90 s	60 s
120 s	60 s
150 s	60 s
180 s	60 s
210 s	60 s
240 s	60 s
300 s	75 s

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