Trauma-Informed Functional Behavior Assessments Case Study:

Anne is a 12 year old girl who is on an IEP for emotional/behavioral disturbance. She has difficulty with relationships and often becomes aggressive when asked to focus on academic tasks. While the expectation is that students raise their hands when they have an answer to a question, Anne often blurts out responses – sometimes not related to the questions. When given directives regarding her behavior, she often yells at the teacher saying “I hate you.” She appears oppositional in that she often refuses to do what is asked of her and will tell the adults or students what she is going to do. She lives in a family where there has been and continues to be considerable domestic violence. Her parents often blame Anne for problems when they attend school meetings but at home blame the school. Her mother is often passive in the face of Anne’s difficult behaviors. Her primary teacher has expressed considerable frustration with Anne’s behavior and feels she should be held accountable through detention and suspension. Often, when Anne is struggling with behavior, she is sent to the planning room where she processes incidents that have occurred. The EST team reviewed the SWIS data and information presented to them by the teacher and, consequently, an FBA was developed by the school behavior specialist. It was determined the primary function of Anne’s behavior was to seek adult attention. In addition, in doing a preference assessment, it was determined that Anne loves unicorns and reported wanting a stuffed, pink plush unicorn. The plan consists of a reward system that allows Anne to earn points throughout the day and if she achieves a score of 80%, she will get 5 minutes of time with her primary teacher. If at 80% for four out of five days, she can have an extra 10 minutes with the teacher. If at the end of the month, she has achieved an 80% average, she will earn the unicorn. The plan has been distributed to all teachers who work with Anne. However, several teachers are not in support of the plan so are responding to her behaviors based on their own classroom practices.