

The Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)
Mary E. Samples, Assistant Superintendent

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Special Education Expert Verification Process



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Introduction to Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

The Ventura County SELPA supports the philosophical tenets of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) as described extensively in the professional literature. Some typical definitions are:

“Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is a systematic process of studying and modifying observable behavior through a manipulation of the environment.”

Prizant, Barry M, PhD, CCC-SLP,
Center for the Study of Human Development, Brown University, RI

“ABA is the science in which tactics derived from the principles of behavior are applied systematically to improve socially significant behavior, and experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for change.”

Cooper, JO, Heron, TE, Heward, WL, (2007). *Applied Behavior Analysis*, 2nd ed., Prentice-Hall.

The SELPA recognizes that in the school setting ABA is considered to be “good teaching” and very effective for some learners with disabilities. Colleges and universities incorporate the practices of ABA into their basic Special Education teacher training programs.

A recent study by the California Department of Developmental Services, (Odom, et al) has shown that ABA can be very effective as a methodology for working with learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). However, the National Academy of Sciences, in Educating Children with Autism (NRC, 2001) concluded that “Studies have reported **substantial changes** in large numbers of children in intervention studies and longitudinal studies in which children received a **variety** of interventions.” (*emphasis added*)

The techniques of ABA can be used in the schools for these outcomes:

- Teaching new behaviors that exist in the student’s repertoire and are not used efficiently, or do not exist at all. Teaching of pre-academic and functional life skills.
- Changing behaviors that are considered to be non-desirable in the school setting.

Many of the instructional methodologies used by our Special Education staff fit within the philosophy of ABA. Following is a chart of how they can be used for teaching new skills” as well as “changing non-desired behaviors.”

This handbook will provide a process in which the Ventura County SELPA can recognize and verify the expertise of our Special Education teachers in the use of ABA strategies.

Fran Arner-Costello
Director, Programs and Services

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) Philosophical Construct

Applied Behavior Analysis is a scientific approach to studying challenging behavior patterns in order to understand and change them. It includes analysis of the ecology surrounding a behavior. It can be used to teach new skills or to change behavior. The following methods, strategies and guidelines all utilize these tenets.

Teaching New Skills

“Instructional Methodologies”

Methods

- PECS – (Bondi) – *Child Directed*
- Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT) (Lovaas)-*Instructor Directed*
- Pivotal Response Teaching (PRT) (Koegel)-*Child Directed*
- Task Analysis-*Instructor Directed*
- Floortime (Greenspan)-*Child Directed*
- TEACCH (Mesibov) – *Instructor Directed*

Strategies:

- Incidental Teaching- *Child Directed*
- Shaping-*Instructor Directed*
- Chaining (Backward & Forward)-*Instructor Directed*
- Video Modeling

(ongoing analysis of skill acquisition via data collection)

Changing Non-Desired Behaviors

“Behavior Interventions”

Legal Guidelines

- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 300.530 “Functional Behavior Analysis”
- CA code of Regulations (CCR)-Title 5, Section 3052 “Functional Analysis Assessment” (FAA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Strategies

- Positive Behavior Support Plans (PBSPs)(Lavigna, Mesaros, Browning-Wright)
- Non-violent Crisis Intervention Strategies – (Crisis Prevention Institute)
- Behavior Contracts
- Social Stories
- “First...then” sequences (Premack Principle)

(ongoing analysis of behavioral change via data collection)

Ventura County SELPA
ABA Special Education Teacher
Verification Process

Verification Process

This process is designed for Special Education teachers with a strong background in the use of techniques of Applied Behavior Analysis in the classroom. It will provide evidence of implementation of ABA and verify that the teacher is competent in the skills and expertise.

To become “ABA Verified” the Special Education teacher must:

- 1) Hold a valid special education credential
- 2) Submit evidence of training in the principles of ABA in both eliciting new skills as well as changing non-desired behaviors. Requirements:
 - At least one college course or two days of inservice training in Positive Behavior Supports
 - At least one college course or two days of inservice training in the principles of ABA to assist students in acquiring new skills
- 3) Achieve a score of 80 or better from an observer on the ABA Instructional Strategies Checklist
- 4) Achieve an average score of at least 2.5 on the Changing or Eliminating Non-Desired Behaviors Worksheet, completed by an observer.

Submit evidence of all three above to the SELPA ABA Verification Review Committee for approval.

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Observer

Observers should hold expertise in the principles of ABA used as an instructional strategy as well as in implementation of Positive Behavior Supports. Examples of observers might be a Program Specialist, Psychologist or expert Special Education Teacher.

Each school district will decide on a case-by-case basis if they would like the observer to be from within district, or an impartial observer from outside district.

If the observer is from within district, the observer should make every effort to make the observation as objective as possible. If the observer is familiar with the classroom and teacher, they may be able to rate certain items without new observation.

An impartial observer would be from a different district than the teacher being observed. The observer would have to schedule one or more opportunities to observe in the teacher's classroom, discuss procedures with him or her and review products and materials.

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Ventura County SELPA
Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
Special Education Teacher Verification Process

Teacher Name _____

District _____

Basic Special Education Credential _____ Expiration _____

Observer Name _____ Title _____ District _____

- 1) College course(s) or inservice(s) attended on the principles of Positive Behavior Supports.
(Attach copy of transcript or course certificate)

Title _____

Date(s) _____

Title _____

Date(s) _____

- 2) College course(s) or inservice(s) attended on ABA Instructional Strategies. (Attach copy of transcript or course certificate)

Title _____

Date(s) _____

Title _____

Date(s) _____

- 3) Attach copies of Ventura County SELPA ABA Verification Process Checklists:

- ABA Instructional Strategies (Must have score of 80 or higher)
- Changing or Eliminating Non-Desired Behaviors (Must have average of 2.5 or higher)

Ventura County SELPA
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Verification Process

Total checks in column

During Instruction:

	Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A
1. Instructor presents directions in ways that are understandable to the students.				
2. If appropriate, instructor models successful performance of task.				
3. If appropriate, instructor directs student thorough successful task completion enough times to promote learning and retention.				
4. When presenting the stimulus, instructor gives only as much information as needed, using the prompt hierarchy (going from least to most intrusive prompt) (Eg, verbal only, gestures only if needed)				
5. Instructor gives student enough “wait time” to respond to stimulus.				
6. If student does not respond, instructor gives stimulus again.				
7. If student correctly responds, the instructor gives immediate positive feedback in a way that is understandable to the student (Eg, verbal, “pat on the back” or “high five”, brief presentation of preferred manipulative or toy)				
8. Reinforcement is selected based on student preferences.				
9. The level of reinforcement is varied and contingent upon student’s response (Eg, an A+ response gets an A+ reinforcer)				
10. If student responds incorrectly, instructor gives feedback, then prompts to successful completion.				
11. Instructor collects data according to the parameters specified in the goal. (Eg, Data on number of prompts, type of prompts, number of correct responses, etc.)				
12. If student is not actively participating in instruction, a brief break is given and instruction re-introduced at a later time.				

Total checks in column

Ventura County SELPA
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After Instruction:

1. Data is analyzed for patterns of learning.
2. If student is showing increased success, instructor plans to fade the number and type of prompts given for instruction of the same task.
3. If student is showing increased success, instructors are changed to ensure generalization
4. If student is showing increased success, student is allowed to practice using the skill in more than one environment, including "real" community environments, to ensure generalization
5. If skill is mastered, the team meets to discuss next steps, whether increasing the complexity of the skill, or teaching a higher skill.
6. If student is not showing progress in attaining a skill, different instructional strategies are attempted, including changing reinforcers or motivating factors, as well as types or level of prompting.
7. If student shows continued lack of progress, team is convened to discuss a plan. Goal(s) may be changed.

Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A

Column Totals: ___x1= ___x2= ___x3=

Overall Total: _____

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Teacher Name: _____

Observer: _____ Title: _____ District: _____

Dates of observation/verification: _____

Observer – You may verify the following by either observing the skills or asking the teacher, i.e., “how do you...?”

Check the column which applies (Put “N/A” if not appropriate)

Changing or Eliminating Non-Desired Behaviors

1. All staff are well-versed in the details of the Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A

To increase use of the replacement behavior:

2. Student is taught the replacement behavior (s).
3. Staff intentionally model the replacement behavior to allow the student to practice to ensure learning.
4. Student is instructed to practice using the replacement behavior in non-stressful times and settings.
5. At the beginning of the instructional period, student is reminded to use the replacement behavior to get his/her needs met, if appropriate.
6. Student is reminded at the beginning of instructional period of reinforcers to be earned for appropriate use of replacement behavior (Eg, verbal, pictures), if appropriate.
7. If student begins to show signs of using the non-desired behavior, student may be prompted to use the replacement behavior. (Verbal, pictures, modeling)
8. Staff ensure that tools or supports the student may need for replacement behavior (Eg, communication boards or cards, weighted vest, access to calming area) are readily available.

Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A

Total checks in column _____

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To decrease use of the non-desired behavior:

1. Student is reminded, as appropriate, at the beginning of the instructional period to use the replacement behavior to get his/her needs met, rather than the non-desired one. (Pictures, modeling, verbally, etc as above).
2. Student is reminded, as appropriate, of the reinforcers to be earned for lack (or reduction of) non-desired behavior, if specified in the plan.
3. At the beginning of the instructional period in which a non-desired behavior is likely to occur, staff ensure that all necessary accommodations and supports are in place, as specified in the plan. (Eg, appropriate materials, environment, level of instruction, people, etc).
4. If student shows signs of using the non-desired behavior (escalation), student may be prompted (or reminded) to use the replacement behavior. Student may also be reminded of potential reinforcers, according to the plan.
5. Staff redirect student to another place or activity or change the stimulus as necessary to reduce use of non-desired behavior
6. If student completes a specified amount of time without the use of the non-desired behavior, student is immediately reinforced as specified in the plan.
7. Staff collect data on the use of interventions to reduce the non-desired behaviors as specified in the plan.
8. Staff collect data on the incidence of the non-desired behavior.

Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A

Total checks in column

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- 9. Staff collect data on the incidence of reinforcement earned for reducing or eliminating the use of the non-desired behavior.
- 10. Team meets regularly to analyze the data.
- 11. If student is improving in reduction of the non-desired behavior, fading may begin to reduce the level of prompting and/or reinforcement needed.
- 12. If student is improving in the reduction of the non-desired behavior, staff may be rotated to assure generalization.
- 13. If the behavior increases again, the interventions and reinforcement may be increased to readdress.

Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A

Column Totals:

___x1=

___x2=

___x3=

Total _____

Average _____

(divide total by number of items scored, do not include "N/A's")

Ventura County SELPA
Mary E. Samples, Assistant Superintendent

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Verification

This certificate recognizes

meets standards for implementation of ABA strategies
in the educational setting.

Fran Arner-Costello
Director, Programs & Services

Date

