The Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)
Emily Mostovoy-Luna, 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.

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders has recognized Applied Behavior Analysis as an "Evidence Based Practice," which means that the approach has been shown to be effective through rigorous scientific research.

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.

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.

Yanka Ricklefs
Director, Personnel Development

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.

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.

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)

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…?"

Instructional Strategies

Before Instruction:

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

	Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A
1. Staff check to see/assist student with checking if the student's regulatory state is appropriate for the task. (Not too passive, not too active).				
2. Activities and materials are readily available for student to attain appropriate regulatory alertness (e.g., swings, mats, weighted vests).				
3. An "anticipatory set" is provided to the student to understand the expectations and scope of the task. (Verbal, pictorial).				
4. When possible, new learning is specifically linked to prior knowledge.				
5. When possible and appropriate, student is given choice of activity, tools, peers or order of required tasks.				
6. If appropriate, student is notified of the specific requirements of the task to be completed (e.g., picture chart, checklist, "if….then" chart, etc).				
7. If appropriate, student is reminded of reinforcers to follow successful task completion (e.g., object in view, pictures, symbols, verbal reminder).				
8. Staff ensure that instruction is at the student's appropriate level, (e.g., not too dull, not too hard, not too boring, not too easy).				
9. When appropriate, materials are designed to be meaningful and interesting to the student. (e.g., real objects, pictures of interest).				
10. Instruction takes into account the child's disability (e.g., student in wheelchair has opportunity to participate in games, student with autism has visual supports).				

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) (e.g., 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 (e.g., 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 (e.g., 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. (e.g., 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 ___ ___ ___ ___

After Instruction:

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

Column Totals: ___x1=   ___x2=   ___x3=

Overall Total:_____

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

	Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A
1. All staff are well-versed in the details of the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) (PBIP or CBIP).				

To increase use of the replacement behavior:

	Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A
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 (e.g., 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 (e.g., communication boards or cards, weighted vest, access to calming area) are readily available.				

Total checks in column   ___   ___   ___   ___

	Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A
9. If student attempts to use the replacement behavior, staff immediately reinforces, prompts or encourages according to the plan.				
10. If student uses the replacement behavior, reinforcement is given exactly as specified in the plan.				
11. Staff chart incidence of prompting and interventions to increase the replacement behavior, as specified in the plan.				
12. Staff chart incidence of the use of the replacement behavior, as specified in the plan.				
13. Staff chart incidence of reinforcement given for use of the replacement behavior, as specified in the plan.				
14. Team continues to evaluate effectiveness of the reinforcer (to ensure that student continues to be motivated by that reinforcer).				
15. Team meets regularly to review progress toward use of the replacement behavior.				
16. If student is increasing in successful use of the replacement behavior, a plan is made for fading the number of interventions and/or reinforcement.				

Total checks in column ___   ___   ___   ___

To decrease use of the non-desired behavior:

	Not Evident 1	Somewhat Evident 2	Full Implementation 3	N/A
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. (e.g., 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 necessaryy 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.				

Total checks in column   ___   ___   ___   ___

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

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.

_____   _____
Yanka Ricklefs   Date

Director, Personnel Development