

Building Sustainable ABA Programming in the Public School Setting

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Introductions

Cherie LaFlamme

- ❖ Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Special Education Teacher
- ❖ Worked in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis since 2000
 - 12years in special purpose private schools and 4 years in the public school setting
- ❖ Coach for Maine Autism Leadership Teams (MALT)
- ❖ Have provided trainings for CDS and MAIER
- ❖ Vice President of AMeBA

Matthew McKenney, MS, BCBA

- ❖ Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- ❖ Have worked in Adult Residential Programs where ABA was used to monitor behavior
- ❖ Worked as a School-Based BHP for Margaret Murphy Center for Children for 8 years while working towards BCBA certification.
- ❖ Began in the LPS's RISE program in July of 2015

Overview

- ❖ Why develop ABA programs in the public schools?
 - The successes and challenges of developing intensive special education services within the public school.
 - Implementing services in community schools using public school staff and resources is a cost effective and tremendously beneficial.

- ❖ Evaluating current needs and establishing an effective and manageable plan for program development.

- ❖ Barriers and Potential Solutions

- ❖ Next Steps

Development of the RISE Program

- ❖ 2013-14 Lewiston hired a BCBA and started one ABA classroom with 5 students, 3 ed techs and a special ed teacher
 - Expanded to 7 students and 5 ed techs by the end of the year
 - began working with a consultant from CCSN to help assess the needs and build a sustainable model for serving children with intensive special needs
- ❖ 2014-15: 2 Elementary classrooms and one middle school classroom with 8 students each
 - Named our program RISE: Reaching Independence through Systematic Education
 - Began to return students from special purpose schools (SPPS)
 - Able to program for students who would previously have been outplaced for kindergarten

Continued...

❖ 2016-17: Continued growth

- 5 Elementary classrooms across 2 schools, 1 middle school classroom, 1 high school classroom
- Serving approximately 56 students with intensive special needs
- Staffed by 46 ed
- Currently contra



BCBA's

increased need for BCBA services

Next Steps for Lewiston

Continued growth helps to establish continuity of services from K-12

Expansion of District-wide ABA training and programming to non-RISE staff to implement evidenced based and effective supports in the most inclusive settings will keep students in their LRE who would otherwise be at-risk of being out-placed.



Why an ABA program in the public school?

❖ 1st, what is ABA?

- **Applied Behavior Analysis** is a type of intensive therapy that focuses on the principles and techniques of learning theory to help **improve social behavior**. ABA therapy helps to:
 - (1) develop new skills,
 - (2) shape and refine previously learned skills, and
 - (3) decrease socially significant problem behaviors.
- ABA is a **scientifically validated approach** to understanding learning and behavior by looking at the function of the behavior and the environment in which it occurs. Anything a person does is a behavior (talking, eating, coloring, tying shoes, etc.) and ABA looks at the purpose behind those actions and under what circumstances they occur, in order to change them or teach new, more functional ways of doing something. For example, if a child screams when eating lunch, ABA would look at the environment around him to determine why he is screaming and then determine what would be a more appropriate way of getting that same thing.

<http://lighthouseautismcenter.com/aba-explained/>

- ABA is not the Skittles thing



Why an ABA program in the public school?

- ❖ ABA is NOT just for autism
 - Science of learning
 - Social teaching
- ❖ Legal mandate to educate students in the least restrictive environment
- ❖ Importance of inclusion
 - For the special needs student
 - For the typically developing peers
- ❖ Financial benefit
 - Tuition
 - Transportation



Main Objectives of the RISE Program

The RISE model establishes a process for supporting the learning of students with highly complex profiles that is

Sustainable

Evidence-based

Integrated (with full meaning and purpose)

Student and family centered

Multi-disciplinary

Comprehensive

Core Features of RISE

Core Features

Highly individualized

addresses needs in all areas of development (academic, social, communication, motor, mental health, daily living, behavior regulation)

Multi-disciplinary approach

Team which includes the family, special educator, general educators, OT, SLP, BCBA, special ed and building administrators, education technicians, etc.
Evidence based instructional frameworks for all instruction

Training

All staff working with the ABA program engage in training before program implementation and throughout the year
In-vivo training and performance feedback (behavioral skills-training for staff)

Core Features

Teaming and schedules

- Weekly team meetings: gen ed, spec ed, multi-disciplinary team

- Weekly consultation with the BCBA

- Parent meetings

- All meetings organized with agendas and meeting minutes

Administrative support and engagement is crucial

Systematic instruction

- Each student has his/her own program book with lesson plans (academic, functional, social) that staff are taught how to implement

Core Features

Comprehensive structured learning environments

Each student receives instruction in an environment that is best suited for them, in their LRE

Instruction in social and communication skills

Challenging behavior is seen as a skill deficit

Instruction in skills that will increase independence

With the the use of Task Analysis and Embedded Instruction, we are capable of teaching skills that will enhance the ability of the student to independently navigate their school day.

Functional approach to problem behavior

Challenging behavior is seen as a means of communication. We use assessments such as FBA to investigate what the function (reason) of the behavior is and match an intervention to the function of the behavior.

Supported Inclusion Model

Integrated within existing systems

Assessment of individual student needs

Rolled out in a series of steps

Ensure a successful start

Gradual independence and faded
supports

Some of the challenges we face:

❖ Staff Requirements:

- Education Technicians / BHPs: Due to the demands of teaching, behavioral management, data collection an effective ABA program is staffed at a near 1:1 ratio depending on student needs
- Training, lots of it!
 - We make use of (almost) every opportunity we have for training (ex. Holiday breaks, the gap between the end of school and beginning of ESY) for didactic training
 - En-vivo training is a constant time management conflict

❖ Getting district and building administrator buy-in

- A successful ABA program will bring with it elements of culture change, it will demand it, it will be unavoidable unless you have a truly inclusive culture already

❖ Getting buy-in from the classroom teachers, building administration and others who have had no experience or a bad experience with an ABA program

- Buy-in from classroom teachers will be imperative for the success of each student as s/he progresses through the school year.

Tangible needs of an ABA program

❖ Space

- Will any space do? Well no.

❖ Equipment, Supplies, and Materials

- There are many items that are needed just to get you started. Binders, timers, clipboards, regular access to technology, desks, dividers, reinforcers, laminators and sheets, paper, just to name a few.

❖ Curriculum

- Not just any curriculum will do.

❖ Reinforcers

- Decisions need to be made regarding what are acceptable reinforcers to be used (ex. Will it be ok to use candy and/or other food items)

❖ Funding

- Yes, it takes a lot of money.

\$\$\$ Speaking of money \$\$\$

❖ SPPS tuition vs. teacher and ed tech salaries

- SPPS tuition (\$64-100K/year depending on the program and Mainecare eligibility)
- Ed tech salary (including benefits) + a portion of salaries for special education teacher, related service providers & BCBA

❖ Figures presented to the Lewiston school board last year estimated the savings at approximately:

- \$30,000 per student or,
- \$240,000 per classroom of 8 students, 7 ed techs, and 1 special ed teacher.

❖ Transportation cost

- \$\$\$
- Time on the road
- Risk of increased travel time

Why spend so much money?

A 1998 study by Jacobson, Mulick, and Green performed in Pennsylvania suggested that a student receiving effective ABA services, even if they don't enter the general education classroom, will save the taxpayer \$187,000 to \$203,000 per student, per year from age 3 - 21.

Chasson, Harris, Neely (2007), corroborated the above study in the state of Texas. They found that early intervention programming could save an average of \$84,000 per student. They went on to suggest that the cost of effective ABA programming could be recovered within 5 years!

A study by Ganz (2007) suggested the average lifetime cost caring for an adult without intervention to be \$3.2 million. He explains that adult care is the most expensive time in the life span. He states if these costs are expended during childhood, adult costs may be avoided, at least reduced.

What does the success of an ABA program look like???

- ❖ Tremendous Social Benefits, including
 - Typical peer models
 - Inclusion at the pace that is best for the student
 - Benefit to the typical peers
- ❖ Ability to program for our already identified incoming kindergarteners
 - 20 kindergarteners over 3 years have stayed in district because of our ABA programming
- ❖ Transition students back from more restrictive placements
 - 7 students across grade levels have transitioned back over the past 3 years
- ❖ Provide an appropriate program for students who have moved to Lewiston
 - At least 7 students with intensive needs who moved into the district were able to be served in district because of our RISE program

What does the success of an ABA program look like???

- ❖ More than 50% of RISE students have increased inclusion in the gen ed setting by 50% or more
 - Most of our middle and high school students are in the general education setting 70-100% of their day
 - Many of our elementary students spend 30-50% of their day with typically developing peers
- ❖ Inclusion time is meaningful and individualized and can be adjusted in the moment if needed
- ❖ With an ABA program in your district, you have a built in system to integrate out-placed students back into your public school(s).

The role of the BCBA

Any ABA program requires the presence of a BCBA. The BCBA will:

Take a vital role in training staff.

Be an integral part of each student's' team.

Develop and monitor programming

Be able to complete Functional Behavior Assessments

Be an advocate for the program

May serve many additional duties as assigned and agreed upon

ANY
QUESTIONS
?

