



Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) comes from behavioral science using proven methods to teach new skills and change behavior. Behavior principles are involved in our daily lives and interactions with others. However, many people think of ABA as being only a treatment for young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ABA is used as a medical treatment for autism and other disabilities. Principles of ABA are also used in education, police forensics, marketing and advertising, weight management and exercise programs, smoking cessation, traumatic brain injury (TBI) rehabilitation, organizational behavior management, animal training, and more. ABA can help people with and without disabilities live a higher quality of life.

Purpose of ABA

Teaching New Skills

Many think Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT) is ABA. However, DTT is just one procedure used within a larger ABA program. DTT involves teaching one-on-one in structured steps. Skills are broken down and as they are learned the next level of skill is taught. There are actually many ways to teach skills using ABA principles in one-on-one or group settings. Some of the procedures used to teach skills include prompting, reinforcement, shaping, fading, modeling, rehearsal, generalization, and other procedures.

Changing Behaviors

Sometimes behaviors cause problems with a person's daily life or learning, and ABA principles can help the person learn more useful behaviors. Examples include using meaningful communication (instead of blurting out when something is wanted or needed), staying on task, and interacting with peers. A functional behavior assessment (FBA) may be needed to learn the cause of the behavior. When the cause of the behavior is better understood, a plan can be put in place to change the behavior to something more appropriate.

ABA in Practice

Many practitioners and educators practice behavior principles and ABA as part of their teaching. An individual who obtains in-depth training and knowledge in ABA and behavior principles can receive professional certification and licensure as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA®).

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(OSE information line)

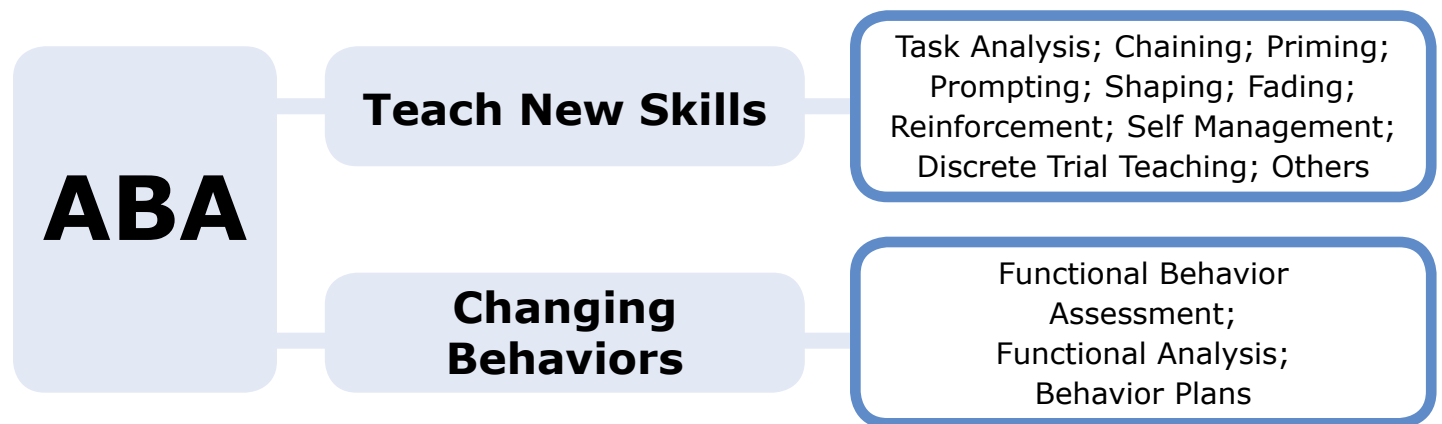


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Family Matters fact sheets are intended to enhance public understanding of Michigan's special education system and are not a substitute for official laws and regulations.



ABA and Schools

Many schools use [positive behavioral interventions and supports \(PBIS\)](#) which is based on many principles and practices from the science of behavior. ABA principles used in schools are considered evidence based practices and include setting behavior expectations, visual supports, self-management systems, task analysis, functional behavior assessments (FBAs), behavior intervention plans (BIPs), reinforcement, token systems, peer support programs, data-based decision making, and others.

ABA can be effective for changing behaviors and developing skills in both children and adults. Some families may want their children to be in an ABA program during the school day. However, research shows that spending time with peers and being a part of the school community is a great benefit to the student. Additionally, if a student has an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP), being in an ABA program during the school day may violate their right to a [free appropriate public education \(FAPE\)](#) in the [least restrictive environment \(LRE\)](#) according to the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#).

Resources



[Michigan Alliance for Families](#)

- [American Psychological Association \(APA\): Applied Behavior Analysis](#)
- [Center for Parent Information and Resources: What is Applied Behavior Analysis](#)
- [Kennedy Krieger Institute: Myths & Facts About Applied Behavior Analysis](#)
- [Michigan Department of Education \(MDE\): Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#)
- [Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#)