



Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Positive Behaviour Supports (PBS)



WHAT IS ABA?

ABA is a set of principles, rather than a specific program, derived from scientific behavioural research. It identifies the underlying “why” of the behaviour and utilizes a preventative approach to set students up for success. It supports the learning of new skills and development of positive behaviours, increased use of positive behaviours, decreased use of inappropriate behaviours, and the transferring of skills across environments. ABA also outlines the behaviour you wish to change and measures the changes in one’s behavior through the comparison of baseline and post implementation data.

BEHAVIOUR

Behaviour can be learned through modelling of others, by accident, or by the condition in which the behaviour is displayed. Behaviour is also dependent on the environment in which it occurs. A behaviour continues because it has worked in the past and provided some form of functionality.

The function of behaviour may be one or more of the following:

- Gain peer /adult attention
- Gain/obtain item/activity
- Gain sensory stimulation
- Escape peer(s)/adult(s)
- Escape task/event
- Escape sensory stimulation

Strategies chosen to support a student need to be individualized and should be chosen appropriately based on the function of the student’s behaviour.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“If a child doesn’t know how to read, we teach.”

“If a child doesn’t know how to swim, we teach.”

“If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, we teach.”

“If a child doesn’t know how to drive, we teach.”

“If a child doesn’t know how to behave, we... punish?”

- Tom Herner

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Pairing: Build a positive relationship with the student

- Identify items that the individual enjoys and associate yourself with those things
- It's easier to teach skills when you yourself are reinforcing
- Ongoing process and may be reintroduced anytime the relationship has weakened

Environment modifications

- Ensure that the environment is conducive to the student's learning by altering the classroom environment when possible (minimize sensory distractions, modify language of instruction/curriculum, set up schedules, strategic seating/classroom layout, teacher proximity)

Clearly outline instructions and expectations: What do you want to see vs. not see

- Provide students with clear and specific positive instructions and expectations
- Focus on the expected behaviour (positive) rather than the misbehavior
- Use single step vs. multi step instructions
- Allow for adequate processing time before prompting student (3-5 seconds)
- If you are to repeat the instruction, use the same language

Priming: Set the student up for success

- Previews activities or information with a student before the student participates in that activity and provide opportunity to reinforce student
- Don't assume that the students know what is expected of them
- Rules should be clearly outlined and posted within classroom
- Ensure the rules are clear and not worded to generally
- Avoid punishing students for their failure to exhibit a behaviour that they don't know how to perform

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Visual supports

- The use of visual supports help clarify information for students and clearly outline classroom expectations
- Allow important information to remain accessible in the individual's environment and can greatly reduce stress levels and inappropriate behaviours for students who may not understand the expectations of the environment.
- Provide structure and support by remaining a static and fixed source of information as verbal language can be transient and fleeting
- Visuals should be posted in easy-to-see places, close to where the targeted activities will take place so they can be referred to as often as needed

Positive reinforcement: Acknowledge and correct behaviour through redirection

- The presentation of something pleasant or rewarding immediately following a behavior (verbal praise or tangible)
- Increases the likelihood that the behaviour will occur in the future
- One of the most powerful tools for shaping or changing behavior
- Focuses on the positive behaviours while minimizing attention received for any inappropriate behaviours (especially important for attention seeking behaviours)
- Should encourage, support, and empower students to achieve positive outcomes, promoting a growth mindset

Thoughtfully apply and evaluate consequences: Review the why/function of the behavior

- Reinforcement is considered best practice
- Should inappropriate behaviour occur, minimize attention received for the inappropriate behaviour and redirect to appropriate behaviour; reinforce once student displays appropriate behaviour
- *Attention should not be minimized if the behaviour is demonstrating a danger to self or others
- Punishment is considered a 'last resort' after trying positive behaviour support strategies first

Progress monitoring

- Ongoing progress monitoring is essential and should be completed in same manner as baseline
- Ensure a consistent implementation period of 2-3 weeks before determining strategy effectiveness