

## Supporting a consistent model of autism support across all grade levels: Applied behavior analysis and staff support

### ALTOONA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT VERBAL BEHAVIOR CLASSROOM TEAMS



## Staff Introductions

- Special Education Supervisor
  - Dr. Carol Hewitt
- Speech Language Therapists/Internal Coaches
  - Maureen Butterbaugh
  - Amy Foor
  - Jaime Baker
- Classroom teachers
  - Carla Swartz
  - Melissa Huber
  - Amy Banks
  - Jason Lloyd
  - Travis Young

## Demographics

- With nearly 8,000 students, Altoona Area School District (AASD) is one of Pennsylvania's largest school districts.
- AASD has 10 elementary schools, 1 Jr. high school, 1 Sr. high school, a secondary alternative education school, and community education center.
- The Learning Express is the district's early intervention pre-school program that services over 450 students in a variety of early childhood settings.

## History of VB in the AASD

- Involvement with the VB Project began with the 2004-2005 school year.
- Learning Express Preschool – Tom Kattouf, Cheryl Tyler, Shelby Lenhart, and Mary Ann Pleva
- Presentation by James Partington on the ABLLS
- At that time, each autistic support classroom in our district was using a different blend of curriculum.
- No continuity of instruction from one class to another...there had to be a better way!

## Initial Year Student Data (2004-2005)

- One preschool classroom (1/2 day) with 6 students
- Current placements
  - 4 students in regular education
    - 2 of which are receiving itinerant autistic supports
  - 1 student in a life skills support placement with itinerant autistic supports
  - 1 student in full-time autistic support/VB Project

## History of VB in the AASD (continued)

- 2005-2006
  - 2 classrooms total (added Melissa Huber's elementary classroom)
- 2006-2007
  - 3 classrooms total (added Amy Banks' elementary classroom)
    - Mary Ann Pleva's preschool classroom awarded Model Site Status.
- 2007-2008
  - 4 classrooms total (added Jason Lloyd's Jr. High classroom)

### History of VB in the AASD (continued)

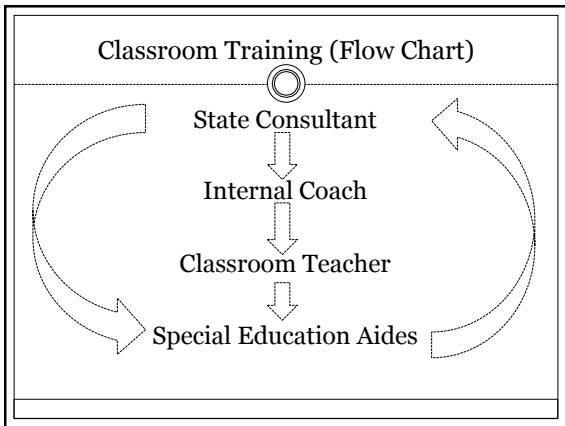
- **2008-2009**
  - 5 classrooms total (added Stacy Mattas' elementary classroom as well as Shannon Davis' independent initiative at the Learning Express Preschool)
- **2009-2010**
  - 7 classrooms total (added Carla Swartz's elementary classroom as well as Travis Young's Sr. High classroom)
- **2010-2011**
  - Melissa Huber, Amy Banks, Stacy Mattas, and Jason Lloyd classrooms were awarded Model Site Status

### Current VB classroom stats

- **Preschool**
  - District Initiative Preschool Classroom has 6 students
  - Verbal Behavior classroom has 16 students (2 sessions)
- **Elementary**
  - Carla Swartz has 5 students
  - Melissa Huber has 8 students
  - Amy Banks has 8 students
  - Stacy Mattas has 7 students
- **Secondary**
  - Jason Lloyd has 6 students
  - Travis Young has 7 students

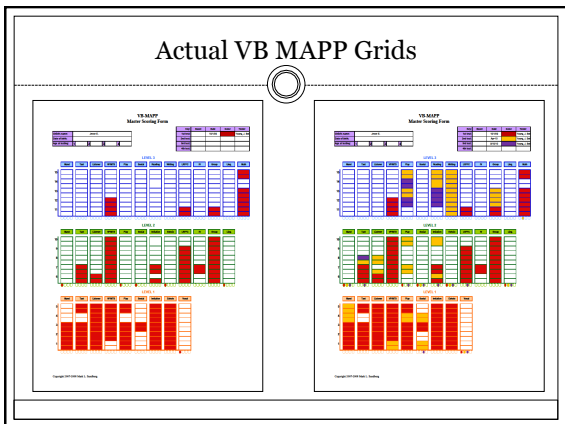
### Program Administration and Organization

- **Competency Based Approach**
  - Consultants and classroom staff are trained and their skill knowledge is assessed using competencies
  - Consultants- assessed by competency checklist and ABA/VB conceptual knowledge via written test
  - Internal Coaches - when possible should be a Speech Language Pathologist. Assessed via written and verbal competencies
  - Teacher (staff) competencies - checklist measuring skills in classroom management, instructional design and delivery, and managing problem behavior
  - Special Education Aides- Assessed via observation and verbal competencies within the classroom



### The Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program

- **The VB MAPP is the current assessment used in all VB classrooms district wide**
  - The VB-MAPP is a criterion-referenced assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skill tracking system that is designed for children with autism, and other individuals who demonstrate language delays (Sundberg, 2009).
  - The VB-MAPP is based on B.F. Skinner's (1957) analysis of verbal behavior, established developmental milestones, and research from the field of behavior analysis (Sundberg, 2009).



### Classroom Organization

- **Program Books**
  - Copy of VB MAPP
  - Behavior plans
  - Organized according to VB MAPP sections and currently running programs
- **Carts**
  - Drawers labeled (targets, reinforcers, maintenance skills, etc.)
- **Color Coded Cards**
  - Color sorted by verbal operant

### Data Systems and Forms

- **Data Collection**
  - Skills tracking sheets
  - Graphs
  - Organization of Program Books
  - Classroom schedules are consistent
- **Teaching Procedures**
  - Teaching Protocols (Autism Initiative Resource Disc)
  - Basic Principles of ABA and terminology posted throughout classroom in each classroom
- **Training**
  - Treatment Integrity
  - District Inservices
  - State Trainings

### Preschool Referral Process

- Students aged 3-5 years
- Referrals come from early intervention, parents, other Daycare/Head Start providers
- Students receive a developmental and speech evaluation and possibly occupational and physical therapy evaluations, as well as parent input and teacher observations to determine placement
- Classrooms are special education classrooms, with 8 students maximum in these classrooms

### Preschool-Ebner Elementary

- Sessions held either 5 mornings or afternoons a week
- Students aged 3-5 years old
- Follow same classroom schedule/curriculum
- Students can be moved back to Learning Express 5 day a week classroom-if determined appropriate
- Students participate with reading time with 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and attend school wide assemblies

### Preschool-The Learning Express

- Sessions held 3 mornings a week (M, W, F)
- Students are usually 3 years old
- Follow same classroom schedule/curriculum
- Students can be moved into regular education classrooms in the building or special education classroom at Ebner Elementary
- Students participate in whole school assemblies

### Kindergarten Referral Process

- Students receive evaluations from school psychologist, speech/occupational/physical therapist, as well as parent input and teacher observations to determine classroom placement
- Parents have option of retention of preschool services
- Program books & VB MAPP transitions with students to Juniata Elementary

### Elementary Classrooms

- VB MAPP
- Direct Instruction Curriculum
  - Language for Learning
  - Reading Mastery
  - Distar Arithmetic
- Inclusion
  - Specials
  - Regular education classroom
  - Life skills classroom

### Secondary Classrooms

- Students aged 12- 21 years
- Activities for Daily Living
- Hygiene
- Circle of Friends
- Community Based Instruction
- Reverse Inclusion
- Continued work on targets from VB MAPP assessment
- Direct Instruction (when appropriate)

### Successful Model Equation

- Team Work + Evidence Based Practices =  
A Consistent Model for Student Success



### References

- Skinner, B.F. (1957). *Verbal Behavior*. New York: Appleton-Century.
- Sundberg, Mark (2009). *Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment for Program Planning*. California: AVB-Press.