



October 24, 2023

Kimberly Jarvis  
TOPS, Inc. and Associates  
Dbas On Purpose Academy and Mentoring Center  
51 Best Street  
Dayton, OH 45405

Dear Dayton Development Coalition:

I am writing this letter to wholeheartedly recommend TOPS, Inc. for the Dayton Development Coalition. It is with great pleasure that I offer my enthusiastic support for TOPS's application, as I firmly believe they are outstanding candidates for this opportunity.

I have had the privilege of working closely with the Executive Director, Kimberly Jarvis, for over 4 years during which time I have had the opportunity to witness her unwavering dedication, passion, and remarkable abilities. Ms. Jarvis has consistently demonstrated the qualities that make TOPS, Inc. an exceptional organization for the Dayton Development Coalition.

One of the standout qualities of Ms. Jarvis is her unwavering commitment to the field of Early Childhood Education. She has shown a deep understanding of the issues and challenges faced by students, parents and teachers as well as the needs of the community for high quality services in this space. Her work in education is a testament to her ability to take on substantial responsibilities and drive successful outcomes.

In addition to her dedication, Kim possesses an impressive set of skills and attributes such as problem-solving, collaborative leadership, and strategic planning. She has consistently impressed those who have had the privilege to work with her. These qualities will undoubtedly contribute significantly to the success of the project and, more importantly, benefit the City of Dayton.

Moreover, Ms. Jarvis's leadership and big picture thinking allows her the exceptional ability to work collaboratively and communicate effectively with diverse groups of individuals. This quality is not only crucial for the project's success but also aligns perfectly with the collaborative spirit of the Dayton Community. I have full confidence that TOPS, Inc., led by Kimberly Jarvis, will make the most of the opportunities provided by the Dayton Development Coalition.

Thank you for your consideration. I wholeheartedly endorse their application and believe that they have the potential to make a lasting and positive impact through this grant.

Sincerely,

Marcus Goodwin  
Owner – Toledo Early Learning Coalition

October 25, 2023



Dear Dayton Development Coalition:

I am writing this letter to provide a strong and unequivocal recommendation for Kimberly Jarvis and TOPS Inc. As the Administrative Director of Aspire Church, I represent their Landlord, Aspire Church. We have had the pleasure of serving as their landlord for the past 8 years, and during this time, I have had the opportunity to observe their commitment to maintaining an excellent relationship with our organization and the Dayton community.

Kimberly Jarvis, in her capacity as Executive Director of TOPS Inc., has consistently demonstrated the qualities that make her and her organization exceptional tenants. Throughout our landlord-tenant relationship, Kimberly has exhibited a high level of professionalism, responsibility, and integrity. Her communication with our property management team has always been clear and prompt, and she has consistently adhered to the terms of our lease agreement.

TOPS Inc. has also proven to be an excellent tenant, showing respect and care for the property they occupy. They have maintained their leased premises in excellent condition, addressing any maintenance or repair needs promptly and efficiently. Their proactive approach to property upkeep has been greatly appreciated, and it reflects their dedication to being responsible tenants and contributors to the local community.

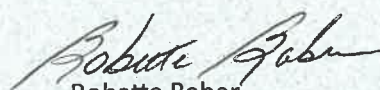
Furthermore, I would like to highlight the positive impact that TOPS Inc. has had on the Dayton community. Their engagement in various community initiatives and programs has showcased their commitment to social responsibility and community betterment. It is clear that they prioritize being good neighbors and active participants in the local area.

In summary, our experience as the landlord for TOPS Inc. and Kimberly Jarvis over the past 8 years has been overwhelmingly positive. I have found them to be responsible, reliable, and highly ethical in their business dealings. I am confident that they will continue to be exemplary tenants and valuable members of any community they are a part of.

If you have any specific questions or require additional information regarding my recommendation of Kimberly Jarvis and TOPS Inc., please feel free to contact me at 937-307-5146.

I wholeheartedly endorse Kimberly Jarvis and TOPS Inc., and I am confident that they will bring the same level of dedication and professionalism to any future endeavors.

Sincerely,

  
Bobette Baber  
Administrative Director

[www.aspirechurch.tv](http://www.aspirechurch.tv)

Dr. Leon and Connie Stutzman, Founding Pastors p 937.223.8505 f 937.223.8638 PO Box 1413, Dayton, OH 45401



Be it known that the  
Board of County Commissioners  
of Montgomery County, Ohio

**PROCLAMATION**

**WHEREAS**, Preschool Promise celebrates the contributions of early educators in our community who support young children; and

**WHEREAS**, Preschool Promise believes that young children are the greatest asset a community has and hold the community's future in their hands, and

**WHEREAS**, Preschool Promise believes these greatest assets deserve and require the support of the entire community to develop to their greatest potential, and

**WHEREAS**, Preschool Promise is celebrating April 2023 as Excellence in Early Education Month with a range of activities, including highlighting the contributions of important community partners; and

**WHEREAS**, Kim Jarvis of On Purpose Academy has been chosen by Preschool Promise to receive the Equity Champion Award in recognition of her support of early education and young learners.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of County Commissioners of Montgomery County, Ohio, does hereby congratulate Kim Jarvis for her contribution to the support of Preschool Promise, Excellence in Early Education Month, and young children in the entire community.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
Montgomery County, Ohio

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Deborah A. Lieberman, President

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Carolyn Rice

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Judy Dodge





**AERIAL FROM SOUTHWEST**





# Applied Behavior Analysis in Early Childhood Education: An Overview of Policies, Research, Blended Practices, and the Curriculum Framework

Collin Shepley<sup>1</sup> · Jennifer Grisham-Brown<sup>1</sup>

Published online: 27 February 2018  
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## Abstract

In this manuscript we attempt to provide a narrative history of the relationship between applied behavior analysis and early childhood education by examining the policies and research that have collaboratively shaped both fields. In addition, given the rapid pace at which early childhood education has changed in the last 25 years, we provide an overview of a recommended model for delivering early childhood education services, to illustrate its congruence with the practices and principles of applied behavior analysis. Lastly, we hope that this manuscript may be used as a bridge between the fields of early childhood education and applied behavior analysis given their similarities and shared purpose, to improve the lives of all recipients of their services.

**Keywords** Early childhood education · Applied behavior analysis · Blended practices · Curriculum framework

## Applied Behavior Analysis in Education

The relationship between the fields of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and education extends across decades with recent federal policy recognizing the benefits of this relationship and bringing guiding principles of ABA to the forefront of teacher responsibilities. For example, the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required teachers to assess functions of challenging behavior (i.e., functional behavior assessments), and the 2004 reauthorization stressed that teachers use positive behavior interventions and supports to address the needs of children with disabilities. For teachers of students without identified disabilities, IDEA 2006 permitted states to use Response to Intervention (RTI), a multi-tiered problem solving approach to address behavior across domains while emphasizing core-principles of ABA such as (a) consistent formative progress monitoring, (b) data-based decision making, (c) instruction *and* prevention, and (d) matching intervention intensity with student-specific

needs (Ardoin, Wagner, & Bangs, 2016; Barnett, Daly, Jones, & Lentz, 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). In addition, IDEA 2004 mandated that teachers use “research-based intervention, curriculum, and practices” (p. 2787). These policies support a notion that research should guide practice in federally funded schools and classrooms.

In their seminal work on ABA, Baer, Wolf, and Risley (1968) embedded the notion that research-guide practice by stating that the study of applied behavior be analytic, technological, and conceptually systematic. Present-day standards for behavior analysts extend this notion, dictating that the use of non-scientifically based interventions may result in removal of an analyst’s certification or licensure (Bailey & Burch, 2016). These standards and other factors (e.g., professional competencies, billing requirements) governing behavior analysts have been a critical component in retaining the profession’s focus on research rather than trends, fads, and pseudoscience (e.g., Leaf et al., 2016). For example, the ethical compliance code for behavior analysts indicates that practitioners should not provide services outside their boundaries of competence. Therefore, if a behavior analyst with no experience or training working with children with feeding problems is asked to work with a 3-year-old diagnosed with pediatric feeding disorder, the behavior analyst may choose to refer that child to a more appropriate provider (Bailey & Burch, 2016). In addition, if environmental conditions interfere with the implementation of an intervention (e.g., lack of

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personnel to follow through with procedures), then the behavior analyst may recommend changing the focus of services or helping the client identify new services from another professional (Bailey & Burch, 2016). For classroom teachers, there are different factors that affect their ability to provide research-based practices as mandated by federal law. For example, teachers are trained to work with relatively heterogeneous populations of students, while behavior analysts may choose to specialize in more specific populations. Teachers are also required to provide a free and appropriate public education, for which the term *appropriate* is continually changing based on case law (Katsiyannis, Yell, & Bradley, 2001). Therefore, teachers may find themselves constrained by the amount resources deemed to be appropriate to meet their students' needs. Although both behavior analysts and teachers are required to provide research-based practices of instruction, it is clear that there are factors that affect each's ability to provide such services.

With regards to the impact of these factors on teachers, some researchers suggested that the use of function-based interventions in school settings put forth in IDEA 1997 extended beyond the school-based research of that time (Nelson, Roberts, Mathur, & Rutherford Jr, 1999). More recently, researchers and practitioners have repeated similar refrains identifying significant gaps between research and practice (Cook & Odom, 2013). To address these issues, the Institute of Education Sciences and the Office of Special Education Programs provided funding to research new practices using methodologies rooted in implementation science and train new school-based service providers with backgrounds in ABA-related evidence-based practices (see also Institute of Education Sciences, 2017; Office of Special Education Programs, n.d.). To date, researchers and higher education programs have made substantial gains. Research-based and ecologically valid procedures have been established for assessing challenging behavior in school classrooms (e.g., structural analyses, trial-based analyses) and providing access to positive behavior supports through RTI for students with and without disabilities. Of the programs preparing individuals to become behavior analysts, the majority are housed in education-related departments (e.g., special education, school counseling; Shepley et al., 2017), with most working behavior analysts primarily serving school-aged populations (i.e., children, adolescents; Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2011). In addition, the education-related jobs seeking behavior analysts are not limited to teachers, but also include teaching assistants, counselors, and school psychologists. Furthermore, data indicate that the field of education accounts for more than a quarter of the demand for all behavior analysts with only the healthcare industry accounting for a larger percentage (Burning Glass Technologies, 2015).

## Applied Behavior Analysis in Early Childhood Education

The demand for behavior analysts by the field of education should not be viewed as a new trend given that school-based practitioners have been using ABA-based interventions for quite some time (Hursh, 1991). A more appropriate characterization of the current trend may be that schools are seeking behavior analysts that are board certified (i.e., BCBA®) (see also Burning Glass Technologies, 2015), a classification that did not exist until 1998 (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, n.d.). For years prior to 1998, researchers and instructors training future teachers wrote textbooks (Heward, Heron, Hill, & Trap-Porter, 1984; Wolery, Bailey, & Sugai, 1988), published across journal disciplines (Shabani, Carr, Petursdottir, Esch, & Gillett, 2004) and received federal grants to research the use of ABA-based interventions in school-based settings (Wolery, Ault, Doyle, & Gast, 1986).

The emphasis on applied behavior analysis was particularly prominent within early childhood special education (ECSE), where the beginnings of a behavioral approach to early intervention can be traced back to Hart and Risley (1968, 1995) seminal work on incidental teaching. In response to Hart and Risley's research, the work of other behavior analysts, and the 1986 Amendments to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 99-457), the field of ECSE developed rapidly. By the 1980s, assessment, curricula, and instruction were rooted in a behavioral approach to service provision (Carta, Schwartz, Atwater, & McConnell, 1991). Reasons for this alignment were evident in the field's focus on (a) single-case research allowing for the development and monitoring of individualized programs to meet the distinct needs of families and children, (b) procedural fidelity to increase reliability that an intervention was responsible for changes in behavior, (c) research-based decision making when selecting interventions, and (d) social validity to ensure that measurable changes in behavior were also of importance to families and children (Strain et al., 1992). These ABA-based foundations of ECSE were challenged in 1987 when the field of early childhood education (ECE) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) disseminated a position statement providing guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987). The guidelines were in response to a push for increased accountability associated with academic curricula in early childhood settings, and specified "types of activities [NAYCE] deemed appropriate for children between birth and age 8" (Carta, 1995, p.1). Although well intentioned, the all-encompassing nature of the guidelines struck many researchers in the field of ECSE as insufficient to meet the needs of children with special needs and those from culturally diverse backgrounds (Carta, Atwater, Schwartz, & McConnell, 1993).

Around the time of NAEYC's guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice, policy began playing a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of early intervention. In 1986, the amendments to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 99-457) required states to provide a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to children with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 5 years old, and offered grants to states to provide services to children with disabilities ages 0–2 years old. In addition, the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act mandated that child care centers could not refuse services to children with disabilities. These policies pushed for inclusion of children with disabilities in public and private early childhood settings. As noted by Carta (1995), these acts “mean[t] that full inclusion of young children with special needs will become a reality” (p. 9). In some states, this was already the case. The 1990 Kentucky Reform Act made Kentucky the first state to have inclusive public early childhood classrooms statewide, with no self-contained preschool programs.

In response to policies pushing for greater inclusion in early childhood and to better understand the philosophies and practices of each other's field, NAEYC and the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood (DEC), the professional organization for individuals working with young children with special needs, began a dialogue to clarify position statements (Bredenkamp, 1993), find common ground (Carta, 1995; Wolery & Bredenkamp, 1994), and make a plan to move forward with the purpose of improving the education of young children (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997). Through their collaboration, an idea emerged that children with *and without* disabilities should receive individualized instruction aligned with each child's needs, preferences, and learning histories (Grisham-Brown, Hemmeter, & Pretti-Frontczak, 2005). This idea is referred to as a blended practices approach to ECE.

## Blended Practices

Blended practices encompass a range of research-based practices from the fields of ECE and ECSE, which benefit all children and include authentic assessment strategies, responsive interactions, engaging environments, small group instruction, and systematic instruction (Grisham-Brown & Hemmeter, 2017). Embedded instruction is a practice that perhaps best typifies blended practices. To the fullest extent possible embedded instruction takes advantage of naturally occurring (a) discriminative stimuli, (b) motivating operations, (c) prompts, and (d) contingencies present throughout early childhood activities and environments. For example, a child working on using a pincer grasp to open food items may receive targeted instruction during meal times. The presence of an unopened bag of food (i.e., discriminative stimulus)

signals the availability of food (i.e., reinforcement), and the deprivation of food that builds between snacks and meals functions as an establishing operation increasing the value of food as a reinforcer. Upon presentation of the unopened bag, a practitioner can engage in a response prompting strategy, such as graduated guidance or most to least prompting (Wolery, Ault, & Doyle, 1992), to help the child perform the target behavior. After multiple trials occurring across meal times, other routines, materials, presence of varying peers, and days, the practitioner should begin to see a transfer of stimulus control in which the child begins independently using a pincer grasp to open food items and access other materials requiring a pincer grasp. Understanding the dynamic, yet consistent interactions between a child and an early learning environment allow a practitioner to embed systematic instruction within activities that require meaningful target behaviors (Snyder et al., 2015). These activities should be based on a child's preferences, and likewise, a practitioner's instructional strategy should be based on the child's past learning history.

Blended practices are not specific to any type of child; rather, blended practices should be individualized for all children in any early childhood environment, thereby making their implementation challenging to early childhood personnel. Some children will require additional trials planned throughout the day in order to learn certain skills. For children with restricted or limited interests, there may be difficulty identifying naturally occurring reinforcers, and more arbitrary reinforcers may be needed before naturally occurring contingencies function as reinforcement. In addition, for children lacking foundational skills such as object manipulation, play, attending, and imitation, there may be limited activities in which meaningful behaviors can be targeted. For these children, it may be necessary to supplement embedded instruction with brief direct instructional sessions that offer more structure and fewer distractions (Wolery & Hemmeter, 2011); this may be of particular need when targeting the initial establishment of stimulus control and other related learning-to-learn behaviors (Green, 2001).

As the above examples highlight, planning for the individualized needs of all children across all early childhood activities can be an onerous endeavor, especially when working in classrooms with 20 children. The continuum of needs can extend from those who benefit simply from an enriched and interesting environment, to those who require tens of trials a day with systematic instructional procedures across a variety of foundational skills. To guide instructional decisions regarding type of instruction, intensity of instruction, and amount of data collection needed, Grisham-Brown et al. (2005) proposed a curriculum framework for answering these and other decision-making questions related to serving young children in blended programs.



# VOICES: Dayton region, like all of Ohio, needs to make behavioral health an ARPA priority

## IDEAS & VOICES

By China Darrington and Josh Munoz

May 20, 2022

Substance use disorders and mental illness have become a serious public health emergency in Ohio. A [recent report](#) outlined the growing and destructive scourge playing out in Clark and Champaign counties, and the numbers in Montgomery County are grim as well.

This worsening problem is nothing short of an epidemic. Fortunately, moneys available from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) can be used to aid every county's efforts in improving behavioral health. But this unique funding opportunity will only come to pass if we have the foresight to seize it. The federal recommendation is that 37% of ARPA dollars be targeted toward behavioral health issues.

Western Ohio certainly is not alone. Ohioans are suffering from addiction and mental illness in unprecedented numbers, affecting residents of all ages and ethnicities in cities, suburbs and rural areas. Consider these sobering statistics:

Approximately

[2.3 million Ohioans](#) (1 in 5) suffer from mental illness.

Substance use addictions have hit Ohio, especially in rural areas, according to the Ohio Health Policy Institute.

The Centers for Disease Control ranks Ohio among the top 5 states for residents with various addictions.

[Federal data](#) released in the fall of 2021 said overdose deaths in Ohio set a record at 5,083 lives lost.

[17.7% of Ohioans](#) report they drink excessively.

There is obviously an alarming and increased demand for substance use and mental health treatment throughout the state. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of providers. In Clark County for example, there are 570 residents for every one mental health provider. In Champaign County, 1 for every 930 residents. And in Montgomery County, one provider per 310 residents.

Addressing the need for more mental health providers in our county is not an easy fix, as some of the jobs they do require years of study and training. But part of fix is something that grew out of necessity during the pandemic, the growth of telehealth mental health services, which are literally providing a lifeline to thousands of Ohioans.

For example, Thrive Peer Recovery Services in Springfield offers proven services to guide those with mental illness and to put those with substance use issues on the road to recovery.

The peer support model uses trained professionals who have been successful in their own personal recovery to help others experiencing similar situations. Peer supporters are certified by the state and backed by a team of clinical experts.

Peer supporters provide support and guidance based on their real-life experience to provide support and guidance and work with medical professionals to develop counseling and rehabilitation strategies. The unique power of peer support is extending rehab beyond the clinical setting into the everyday environment and after completion of initial treatment. Peers remain engaged and provide ongoing accountability that helps to prevent relapse. And they help provide life-skills support so that patients can live economically independent.

Thrive works in partnership with our partners at area agencies including the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties, Madison Health and Soin Medical Center. Locally we also work with Woodhaven Residential, MedMark, Brightview, Spero Health and the Montgomery County Public Defender's office.

Thrive services are also available to any of the 3.5 million Ohioans enrolled in the State's Medicaid program as well as Ohioans who have Anthem health insurance.

We encourage area leaders to allocate ARPA dollars to address mental health issues in the region and strive to reach the federal government's recommendation of 37% earmarked toward behavioral health needs.

It's the right thing - and the smart thing - to do. We all pay the costs of poor behavioral health. By improving it, there will be less strain on our police, fire and justice systems. Our residents will be healthier and our economic vitality will be stronger.

*China Darrington is the Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for Thrive Peer Recovery Services. Josh Munoz is the Assistant Community Manager of Springfield.*