Introduction to
The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills - Revised
(The ABLLS-R®)

A Presentation by
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Introduction to
The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills- Revised:
The ABLLS-R

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Autism

Qualitative Differences in 3 areas:

★ Language

★ Social interactions

★ Restricted/“highly focused” range of interest/activities

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Main Issue

★ Happy children

★ Acquisition of as many skills as possible

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The Goal

Teaching should result in the acquisition of generalized skills that allow the learner to learn from his everyday experiences

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Research


- Cost-Benefit Estimates for Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention ... (Jacobson, Mulick, & Green) Published in Behavioral Interventions (1998)

Research Cont.

- A Comparison of Intensive ABA Treatment & Eclectic... (Howard, et al.) Research in Developmental Disabilities (2005)


Contributions from Behavior Analysis Research

- How to teach

- How to capture motivation

- What to teach (including language!)

Receptive & Expressive

- Insufficient analysis of variables

- Blends useful distinctions

- “Expressive” describes several different types of language behavior
Verbal Behavior

* Skinner used the tools of Behavior Analysis to analyze language
* Language is behavior
* Can observe & empirically study the function of a response by looking at the environmental factors

Behavior Analysis - ABC

A    B    C
Antecedent  Behavior  Consequence

“Expressive” Responses

A    B    C
Want Book  “book”  Receive Book
See Book  “book”  Praise (tact)
Hear “Book”  “book”  Praise (echoic)
“Can Read”  “book”  Praise (intraverbal)

Verbal Behavior

* Echoics (Vocal Imitation)
* Mands (Requests)
* Tacts (Labeling)
* Intraverbals (conversation -/+)

* Also:
  * Spontaneous Verbal Behavior
  * Syntax & Grammar
“Expressive” Responses

A ➞ B ➞ C

Want Book ➞ “book” ➞ Receive Book
See Book ➞ “book” ➞ Praise (tact)
Hear “Book” ➞ “book” ➞ Praise (echoic)
“Can Read” ➞ “book” ➞ Praise (intraverbal)

Basic Learner Skills

★ Cooperation & Reinforcer Effectiveness
★ Visual Performance
★ Receptive Skills
★ Imitation
★ Verbal Behavior
★ Play & Leisure Skills
★ Social Interaction
★ Group Instruction
★ Follow Classroom Routines
★ Generalized Responding

Verbal Behavior

★ Echoics (Vocal Imitation)
★ Mands (Requests)
★ Tacts (Labeling)
★ Intraverbals (conversation -/+)
★ Also:
  ★ Spontaneous Verbal Behavior
  ★ Syntax & Grammar

Academic, Self-Help, & Motor Skills

Reading ➞ Dressing ➞ Gross Motor
Math ➞ Eating ➞ Fine Motor
Writing ➞ Grooming
Spelling ➞ Toileting
Curriculum Issues

- Must Emphasize the development of skills the student currently needs to learn
- Must allow for changes in instruction as the learner’s needs change

Multiple Pay-offs

Teach a child to mand for reinforcers & you get:

- Attending
- Cooperation
- Imitation
- Social interaction
- Language

Critical Factors

- Language
- Motivation
- Fluency
- Generalization
- Spontaneity
- Joint Attention
- Complex Stimuli
- Skills Tracking (including emerging skills)

The ABLLS-R®

- Criterion Referenced Assessment
- Basis for a Curriculum
- Skills Tracking System
- List of specific skills in Appendices
Limitations

- Not an exhaustive list of skills
- (544 from 25 areas)
- Arranged in a “somewhat” developmental sequence
- Doesn’t provide exact age norms
- Doesn’t assess disruptive behaviors

Skills Tracking Grids

- Visual display of skill levels
- Tracks skill acquisition
- Provides feedback to parents and staff regarding the results of intervention efforts
## Sample Item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Task Name</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4</td>
<td>Labels common objects</td>
<td>If you ask &quot;What is that?&quot; with a common item present, will the student identify the item?</td>
<td>4= 100 or more labels of items and can identify several different examples (including novel examples) of most of those items, 3= 50 labels of at least one example of the item, 2= 10 labels, 1= 5 labels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Special Features
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>QUESTION</th>
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Labeling Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>TASK OBJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 1</td>
<td>Labels reinforcers</td>
<td>The student will label reinforcers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 2</td>
<td>Labels common objects</td>
<td>The student will label at least 100 objects which are commonly found in the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 3</td>
<td>Labels common people (actual individuals, not professions)</td>
<td>The student will label people in his environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 4</td>
<td>Labels pictures of common items</td>
<td>The student will label at least 100 pictures of items which are commonly found in the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 5</td>
<td>Labels body parts</td>
<td>The student will label common body parts on himself or others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 6</td>
<td>Labels pieces of clothing</td>
<td>The student will be able to label clothing items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 7</td>
<td>Labels common ongoing actions</td>
<td>The student will label common actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>TASK OBJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 8</td>
<td>Labels pictures of common actions</td>
<td>The student will label pictures of common actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 9</td>
<td>Fluent labeling</td>
<td>The student will be able to label known items in quick succession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 10</td>
<td>Acquires novel labels without intensive training</td>
<td>The student will be able to acquire labels for many new common items or pictures of items after only hearing the names of those items used by others (no visual model).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 11</td>
<td>Labels items using a carrier phrase</td>
<td>The student will be able to use a variety of carrier phrases when labeling items, and will frequently use those carrier phrases without prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 12</td>
<td>Labels parts or features of objects</td>
<td>The student will be able to label the parts or features of objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 13</td>
<td>Labels adjectives</td>
<td>The student will be able to use adjectives that describe objects.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>TASK OBJECTIVE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 14</td>
<td>Label associated pictures</td>
<td>When presented with an array of items or pictures and then shown another item or picture and asked, &quot;What goes with this?&quot;, the student will be able to select the item or picture that is associated with the item being shown (e.g., save &quot;shirt&quot; when shown picture of a table and a set of pictures including a chair, shoe, and a set of keys).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 15</td>
<td>Labels item when told its function</td>
<td>The student will be able to label items when only told the function of the item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 16</td>
<td>Labels item when told one of its features</td>
<td>The student will be able to label items when only told the feature of the item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 17</td>
<td>Labels item when told its class</td>
<td>The student will be able to label items when only told the class of the item.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TASK</td>
<td>TASK NAME</td>
<td>TASK OBJECTIVE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 18</td>
<td>Two-component labels (noun) with objects</td>
<td>The student will be able to label a set of items given to him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 19</td>
<td>Two-component labels (noun) with pictures</td>
<td>The student will be able to label more than one item presented on a picture card.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>TASK OBJECTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 20</td>
<td>Labels two-component with no common phrases</td>
<td>The student will be able to use a variety of common phrases when labeling multiple items, and will frequently use those common phrases without prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 21</td>
<td>Two-component labels (noun verb)</td>
<td>The student will be able to label a noun and a verb in combination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 22</td>
<td>Two-component labels (noun adjective)</td>
<td>The student will be able to label an adjective and a noun in combination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 23</td>
<td>Labels by indicating Yes/No</td>
<td>The student will be able to answer &quot;Yes&quot; or &quot;No&quot; or move his head to indicate &quot;Yes&quot; or &quot;No&quot; to identify the name of an item or to identify if an item or activity meets a pre-specified criterion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 24</td>
<td>Labels function of an item</td>
<td>The student will be able to label the function of items when asked &quot;What do you do with them?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 25</td>
<td>Labels class of an individual item</td>
<td>The student will be able to label the class of an individual item.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>TASK OBJECTIVE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 25</td>
<td>Disambiguator of question</td>
<td>The student will be able to determine whether he is being asked to label the name, function, color or ownership of an item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 26</td>
<td>Labels the class of a set of items</td>
<td>The student will be able to look at a picture of set of actual items and label the class of the set of items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 27</td>
<td>Labels features of items which are missing or incorrect</td>
<td>The student will be able to label parts of items, which are either missing or obviously incorrect (e.g., a car without wheels).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 28</td>
<td>Labels exclusion from a category (negation)</td>
<td>When presented with a set of items in which all except one of the items belongs to a specified category of items (can be based on function, feature or class), the student will be able to name the item which does not belong with that particular set of items.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>TASK OBJECTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 30</td>
<td>Identifies obvious problems</td>
<td>The student will be able to identify an obvious problem or emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 31</td>
<td>Labels community helpers</td>
<td>The student will be able to label pictures of common community helpers in his environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 32</td>
<td>Labels items at a distance when others point to it</td>
<td>The student will be able to label significant objects located at a distance when others point to the item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 33</td>
<td>Labels common environmental sounds</td>
<td>The student will be able to label common sounds in his environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 34</td>
<td>Uses carrier phrase when labeling nouns with verbs or adjectives</td>
<td>The student will use a carrier phrase when labeling combinations of nouns with verbs or adjectives and will frequently use those carrier phrases without prompting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TASK</td>
<td>TASK NAME</td>
<td>TASK OBJECTIVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>G 35</td>
<td>Labels propositions</td>
<td>The student will be able to label the position of an item in relation to other items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 36</td>
<td>Uses center phrases when using prepositions</td>
<td>The student will be able to use a center phrase when using prepositions and will frequently use those center phrases without prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 37</td>
<td>Labels pronouns</td>
<td>The student will be able to label pronouns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 38</td>
<td>Uses center phrases when using pronouns</td>
<td>The student will be able to use a center phrase when using pronouns and will frequently use those center phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 39</td>
<td>Labels and describes events or items presented in a picture</td>
<td>When shown a picture of a scene or an activity, the student will be able to tell me about the picture. The student will also be able to label and describe the event, item, and activities presented in the scene.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TASK NAME</th>
<th>TASK OBJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 40</td>
<td>Naming specified parts of scenes</td>
<td>When provided with information regarding a certain part of a scene, the student will be able to label specified parts of pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 41</td>
<td>Labels ads</td>
<td>The student will label a variety of ads.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G 42</td>
<td>Labels emotions of others</td>
<td>The student will be able to label ongoing facial and behavioral examples of emotions and pictures of faces depicting various emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 43</td>
<td>Internal events and emotions</td>
<td>The student will be able to label internal events and emotions which are not directly observable by others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 44</td>
<td>Multiple component naming (three component)</td>
<td>The student will label objects containing at least three separate components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 45</td>
<td>Labels three component with center phrase</td>
<td>The student will be able to use a variety of center phrases when using objects containing at least three separate components and will frequently use those center phrases without prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 46</td>
<td>Labels social interaction behavior</td>
<td>The student will be able to label the nature of ongoing social interactions, e.g., playing, helping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 47</td>
<td>Spontaneous labeling</td>
<td>The student will spontaneously label items and events throughout the day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring**

- Observe the child
- Interview the parent
- Interview the teacher, Speech therapist, etc
- Score all “known can do skills”
- Score all “known can’t do”
- Assess the remaining skills
Developing an IEP

Skill Discrepancies

Problems with Typical IEP’s

★ Lack of emphasis on Language & Basic Learner Skills
★ Failure to prioritize objectives
★ Non-measurable objectives
★ Failure to write objectives prior to the IEP meeting

Goal of the IEP

★ Emphasis on skills that allow student to learn without us
★ Extend existing skills
★ Develop new skills
★ Develop skills to allow student to move to a less structured learning environment
### Number of Objectives

- Usually 20 to 30
- Too few - can’t address enough skills
- Too many - reduces time to work on critical skills
- Want to leave time for incidental teaching & generalization
- Add new ones when others are mastered

### Guidelines for Content of IEP

- Each child is unique & requires a unique set of objectives
- Most of the objectives & teaching time should be devoted to Basic Learner Skills

### Cooperation & Reinforcers

- Usually don’t need a specific objective -- need good teaching
- May include an objective to thin the schedule of reinforcement
- May include learner readiness

### Visual Performance

- Usually 1 to 3 objectives
- Often an area of strength
- Can facilitate:
  - Cooperation
  - Task completion
  - Attention to complex stimuli
  - Unprompted responses
  - Fine motor development
Receptive Language

- Usually 1 or more objectives
- Follow simple directions
- Discriminations
  - simple
  - complex
  - RFFC
- Specify total number rather than increase by a number

Motor Imitation

- Includes an objective unless has well-developed & well-generalized skills
  - gross motor
  - fine motor
  - speed, sequence
  - head & mouth
- May put imitation of peers in social or play skills section

Vocal Imitation

- Usually appropriate if child doesn’t have clear speech
  - simple sounds or words
  - phrases
  - volume, speed, tone

Requests (Mands)

- Usually 1 or more objectives - very critical
  - number of items can request
  - frequency of requests
  - requests for information
- May put requests made to peers in social skills section
Labeling

★ Usually 1 or more objectives

★ Label
- objects or pictures
- complex stimuli

★ Specify total number rather than increase by a number

Intraverbals

★ Usually 1 or more objectives if child can request a few items, and has some labeling and receptive skills

★ Critical for conversational speech & social interaction
- describe sequences
- functions, features, class
- answer a variety of questions

Spontaneous Vocals

★ Usually don’t need a specific objective -- need good teaching

★ May include an objective to ensure people focus on the development of spontaneous language

Syntax & Grammar

★ May be appropriate when the child has developed requesting, labeling, & intraverbal skills

★ Emphasize FUNCTION before FORM

★ Formal aspects are often acquired via modeling as acquiring functional language
Play & Leisure Skills

- Usually 1 or more objectives
- Increase variety of play activities
- Increase amount of time engaged in play
- Develop play with peers

Social Interaction

- At least 1 or more objectives
  - return/initiate greetings
  - turn-taking
  - request from peers
  - offers to share
  - converse with others
  - peers likes/dislikes
- May include with play skills

Group Instruction

- Usually at least 1 objective unless the child isn’t under instructional control or he hurts others
- Minimally use known skills in a 1:2 group
- More advanced - acquire new skills in group
- Specify size of group & types of responses

4 Years- 9 Months

Inclusion

- SPED
  - 6 months

Assessment of Basic Language Learning Skills Based on Revised Early Training System

4 Years- 9 Months

Inclusion

- SPED
  - 6 months

Assessment of Basic Language Learning Skills Based on Revised Early Training System
Classroom Routines

★ Often include at least 1 objective
★ Can help develop basic receptive skills
★ Can help reduce disruptive behaviors and teach expectations/compliance
★ Often necessary for movement to less restrictive classroom
Generalized Responding

★ Usually don’t need a specific objective -- need good teaching

★ May include an objective to ensure people focus on the generalization skills

Academic Skills

★ Not as critical as the BASIC LEARNER SKILLS

★ For a child who has most of the Basic Learner Skills may want to include 1 or 2 from appropriate area (math, reading, etc.)

★ May be appropriate if has some skills and special interest in an area

Self-Help Skills

★ Often appropriate to include 1 or 2 objectives

★ Often best to teach these skills in context of daily activities rather than devoting much instructional time to teaching these skills

Gross Motor Skills

★ If has motor skills deficits include 1 or 2 objectives

★ Can facilitate cooperation and receptive language skills

★ Can be incorporated into social interaction skill development
Fine Motor Skills

★ May include 1 or 2 objectives
★ Many of these skills can be acquired in the visual performance tasks
★ Some advanced skills can be acquired with academics (writing letters or numbers)

Behavioral Issues

★ Although not an ABLLS area, can be extremely important
★ Can help to ensure that desired behaviors are reinforced
★ If disruptive behavior has been reduced, can serve as a reminder to use effective strategies

Input From Others

★ Parents
★ Educators
★ Speech & Language Pathologists
★ Behavior Analysts
★ Psychologists
★ Developmental Pediatricians
★ Occupational Therapists

Regarding “Criteria”

★ All involved must agree what the student must be able to do (80% vs 8/10)
★ When people agree what constitutes acceptable performance - “Teacher observation” can be OK
★ Let effective specialists set their own measures
Sample Criteria

# Objective

Criteria

Visual Performance

1. Jim will be able to match blocks to a design card for up to 8 blocks with extras.

Fine Motor

20. Jim will be able to finish zipping and unzip zippers on his coat.

As measured by:

- Teacher Observation
- Work Samples
- Data Collection
- 80% Accuracy Criterion

NEW

CONTINUE

DELETE

As measured by:

Teacher Observation
Work Samples
Data Collection
Accuracy Criterion
NEW
CONTINUE
DELETE

Early Learner
Early Learner Profile
Objectives

# OBJECTIVE
Visual Performance
1. Sarah will be able to match blocks to a design card for up to 5 blocks with no errors. (80)
2. Sarah will be able to complete at least 5 interlocking puzzles in a frame with 5 pieces or more. (89/10)
3. When presented with an array of three or more objects and given an object that matches one of those in the display, Sarah will match the object to the appropriate object. (83)
4. When presented with an array of three or more pictures and given an object that is in one of the pictures, Sarah will match the object to the appropriate picture for any picture/object combination. (86)

Receptive Language
5. Sarah will follow instructions to do at least 5 simple motor tasks (e.g., clap, turn around, arms up). (79)
6. Sarah will be able to receptively identify at least 10 items. (C12 & 13)
7. Sarah will be able to imitate 15 actions with objects when they are modeled and when instructed to "Do this." (21)
8. Sarah will be able to imitate at least 20 gross motor actions (e.g., clap hands, touch tummy, etc. when they are modeled and when instructed to "Do this.") (21)
9. Sarah will be able to imitate at least 5 head, mouth, and/or tongue movements upon request. (39 & 10)

Vocal Imitation
10. Sarah will imitate at least 6 different sounds upon request. (E1)

Requesting
11. Sarah will request desired items by signs or voices at least 10 times per day. (F20)

Labeling
12. Sarah will be able to request at least 10 different items through the use of sign or voices. (F2, 4, & 5)
13. Sarah will be able to label at least 10 items using signs or voices. (D1 & 2) Note: This objective to be started once Sarah can request and receptively identify at least 10 objects.

Spontaneous Vocalizations
14. Sarah will increase her spontaneous vocalizations that include speech sounds by 50% over baseline levels. (11)
Early Learner Profile

Objectives

Play & Social Skills
15. Sarah will be able to play with at least 5 different toys as designed for at least 2 minutes with no more than 2 physical prompts. (R6 & 7)
16. Sarah will roll a ball to another peer or adult for at least three exchanges. (K12, & 4, 6, & 12)

Classroom Routines
17. Sarah will complete her morning routine e.g., hang up her coat, put lunch box in cabinet, put away backpack, with no more than two verbal prompts. (K1)

Self-Help Skills
18. Sarah will be able to put on her pants without assistance for toileting. (J1)
19. Sarah will be able to wash & dry her hands without assistance. (NY 1 & 2)

Fine Motor Skills
20. Sarah will be able to trace straight lines. (GG)

Advanced Learner
Priorities