

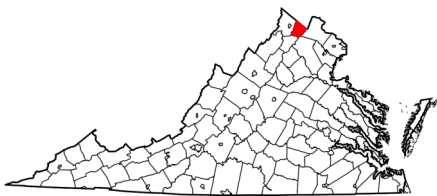


VABA presents . . .

# ABA and Public Schools— Clarke County, VA

Throughout the last 9 years, Clarke County Public Schools has increased the use of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) throughout their division. They began their journey in 2009 when they contracted with Commonwealth Autism and had one Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) provide guidance and support one day a week to various classrooms. Since that time, they have developed their own teachers into BCBA's, created two internal BCBA positions, employed graduate students pursuing a degree in ABA, and hired self-contained classroom teachers that have also been certified as BCBA's.

## BACKGROUND



Clarke County Public Schools (CCPS) is a small school division located in the Northwestern region of Virginia. While Clarke County can be considered a rural region within the state, it sits between two larger counties, Frederick and Loudon. CCPS includes two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high

school. It serves approximately 2,000 students.

CCPS currently employs one part-time BCBA, one full-time BCBA, and two self-contained classroom teachers who are also certified as Behavior Analysts. In 2016, CCPS hired their first internal Behavior Analyst, **Mrs. Chrissy Welgan, BCBA, LBA**. She has since been promoted to "Supervisor of Behavior Analytic Services," and she was interviewed for this paper. For the 2018-2019 school year, CCPS added a second full-time position, which they are referring to as, "Behavior Analyst." In addition to the four BCBA's, CCPS employs interns from Shenandoah University (SU).

## PROCESS & STRATEGY

Prior to CCPS hiring their own BCBA's, they began implementing a behavior analytic model referred to as "Competent Learner Model" or "CLM" in several of their self-contained and inclusion classrooms. Throughout the implementation, BCBA's from their former partner, Commonwealth Autism, provided oversight and coaching to teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. As CCPS began to expand the model into more classrooms, observe the positive effects on both staff and

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student performance, and bring students from more restrictive settings back into their home schools, the leadership team began to truly value the abilities of a behavior analyst and see a need for having their own BCBA to support the model.

For CCPS, it wasn't too difficult to find their first BCBA as Mrs. Welgan had been working closely with their division for a number of years and possessed their desired qualifications. Since Mrs. Welgan's initial start date, her duties and responsibilities have grown tremendously. Therefore, in the spring of 2018, she presented a second position for a full-time behavior analyst. Once the position and budget were approved, CCPS began recruiting for a BCBA with previous experience with CLM required and with a Virginia Teaching License preferred. The division hired Mrs. Anay Beck, BCBA, LBA.

## DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

In the 2018-2019 school year, Mrs. Welgan and Mrs. Beck will become certified trainers in

Safety-Care™ and will oversee crisis prevention training for all of the staff across the division. Mrs. Welgan will supervise and oversee the implementation of two new programs, referred to as the *TAP (Talk, Act, Participate) System* and the *Intensive Behavior Program*, as well as one division wide initiative, referred to as *Behavior Response Teams*.

The *TAP (Talk, Act, Participate) System* is a classroom wide token economy that was first piloted in two elementary school classrooms in the 2017-2018 school year. Based on the success and results of the system, implementation will be expanded into more classroom in the 2018-2019 school year.

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***The main goal of the Intensive Behavior Program will be to integrate students back into the general education setting successfully.***

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The *Intensive Behavior Program* will look similar to an alternative or private school but will be embedded within one of the elementary schools. It will include Direct Instruction math and reading programs for remediation, the CLM participator curriculum, a social skills curriculum, and behavioral intervention to work on skill deficits and challenging behavior. The program will also use a behavioral skills training (BST) model for training receiving classroom staff. The main goal of this program will be to integrate students back into the general education setting successfully.

The Behavior Response Teams will also launch in the 2018-2019 school year. Within this initiative, CCPS BCBA's will standardize the Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) process and provide specific teams at each school with systematic training. The main goal of this initiative is to increase the fidelity of the FBA process and the effectiveness of tier two interventions by providing teachers with guidance and support through ongoing collaboration and discussion.

### **BARRIERS & CHALLENGES**

Mrs. Welgan and her administration have noted that the needs of the division outpace the services that two BCBA's can deliver. Mrs. Welgan indicated that while she is involved in a few of the assessments and plans each year, she focuses more of her time on staff training on behavior analytic curriculum and techniques so that staff can independently provide services when she is not there. While this is a preventative and beneficial model, it limits her ability to oversee training for FBAs and BIPs predicating the need for the Behavior Response Teams.

### **OUTCOMES**

With the addition and expansion of ABA within CCPS, administration has seen incredible success first-hand. There has been a significant decrease in the number of students placed in more restrictive settings and as of this report, they have successfully integrated most of their students from private placements back into their home schools. CCPS

has demonstrated an increase in the accuracy of behavior analytic techniques implemented by teachers and paraprofessionals and in return they have observed an increase in the number of goals mastered within students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). While CCPS attributes this outcome to an increase in the accuracy of programming, they also recognize training conducted by BCBA's around writing observable and measurable IEP goals.

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In the 2017-2018 school year, CCPS surveyed teachers and paraprofessionals who were implementing the TAP System and receiving ongoing coaching and support from Mrs. Welgan. Results indicated that after staff began implementing the TAP System and receiving ongoing coaching, teachers and paraprofessionals reported an increase in job satisfaction ratings and a decrease in stress index scores. As a result, CCPS is hopeful that they will demonstrate a reduction in the staff turnover rate in the years ahead of them.

It is undeniable that this small division has made several large notable differences in the lives of both students and staff. While they are small, they are fierce, and their dedication to evidence-based practices and better services for their students is a distinctly advantageous culture and philosophy.