

## World Behavior Analysis Day (March 20<sup>th</sup>)

**Jarrold McEntarfer:** *I started my career as a teacher at thirty and went on to teach another eighteen years before starting my career as a behavior analyst. My reasons were a few, but primarily family. One of my three children was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. After finally making it through some of the many hurdles to get support, he was able to get services in applied behavior analysis. I was immediately impressed with its success and my child's progress. It was then that I decided to start taking classes in behavior analysis, not necessarily for a career change at the time, but to provide more support to him. I continued to teach after becoming a board-certified behavior analyst because I enjoyed teaching, it was/is part of my passion for life, my identity, my culture. I didn't want to leave the students and friends I worked alongside. Behavior analysts conducted research in labs and trained pigeons to do their taxes; they did teach, but from what I understood at the time, not so much in schools and at a more limited capacity in homes and clinics. Becoming a behavior specialist at BOCES was exactly what I needed to explore this new horizon as a career. I could continue to work in schools with students and educators, while teaching something that fascinates me; behavior analysis.*



**Brenna Litwinski:** *I got into the behavior analysis field when I was working one on one in the home environment with a child with behavioral needs and immediately fell in love with the field after I saw the success the individuals had. Through behavior analysis I was able to get one of my students to speak their first words, I was able to help a family develop a treatment plan so they could go out into the community when challenging behaviors previously prevented them from doing so, I was able to help an individual independently wash their hands, and many more! Being able to teach individuals anything from washing their hands to learning to functionally communicate was very rewarding for me!*

*I wanted to pursue a career in behavior analysis because I saw the difference it made in the lives of the individuals I worked with and I wanted to continue making a difference. I have been able to see the smile and excitement on my students' faces when they accomplish a task that took them so long to learn! There are not enough words to explain the joy and excitement I get from seeing what the field of behavioral analysis can do for individuals!*

**Mikayla Poniatowski:** *I got into the field of ABA because I'm passionate about creating positive, lasting changes in individuals' lives. As a behavior specialist I am able to advocate for and implement programs that help kids achieve their full potential. It is my goal to promote social inclusion and empower the students I work with to be as independent as possible. It's not just about the interventions in ABA —it's about contributing to a wider societal shift towards more supportive, inclusive environments.*

**Heather Eckstrom:** *While in college originally for teaching, I interned in a behavioral classroom. From there I found that while challenging, I greatly enjoyed the students I was working with. I then started taking graduate behavior analysis courses, and changed my major to Behavioral Analysis. I worked in the behavior field as a registered behavior technician, an agency positive support professional, and a behavior consultant. I am dedicated to helping children grow and reach their goals, despite challenging behaviors.*

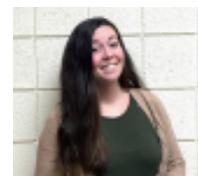




**Brianna Betker:** *In an attempt to gain more in-school experience for future teaching jobs I took a job as an aide in a self-contained classroom at the Summit Center in Getzville, NY. I was assigned a 16-year old male student who engaged in unsafe behaviors towards others but also self-injurious behaviors to himself. Myself and another staff were assigned as 2:1 student support aide to help him throughout the day, this included following a very specific and detailed behavior plan (BIP) that used aspects of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Elements of the BIP helped to manage behaviors, decrease the occurrences of maladaptive behaviors and increase functionally appropriate replacement/alternative behavior to get his needs met. Essentially, we needed to use ABA to teach him other ways to communicate, cope and function without engaging in unsafe behaviors.*

*I was interested in ABA from the start of working with my 2:1 student, because I had seen first-hand how applying ABA could positively change the life of an individual with ASD. I saw how my 2:1 learned to tap my shoulder to ask for my attention rather than engaging in a maladaptive behavior to do so. I knew at that moment that working in ABA would help me to teach skills to more students than I could ever in a general education setting. This is the moment I decided that this would be the work I did for the rest of my life. Sometimes ABA is seen in a poor light by outsiders, this is simply because they do not understand how ABA is utilized to positively influence the lives of the individuals we serve. ABA strategies are meant to assist an individual in decreasing maladaptive behaviors in order to allow for the teaching of replacement skills or remedy skill deficits. ABA is not about suppressing who an individual is, it is about enhancing who they already are and making them more prepared to live in our world.*

**Jessica Hovey:** *I originally went to college for education and at the time, teaching positions were hard to find. I subbed for a year and then took a job as an aide for a little boy who had two 1:1 aides. I worked my way to special education teacher within that same organization and through that I was introduced to ABA. While teaching I started to pursue certification in Behavior Analysis.*



*ABA is a vast field and focuses on Socially Significant outcomes for individuals. The focus of social significance provided a different outlook as to why we recommend certain programs or why we fade support in a specific way that is all individualized for the person receiving services. ABA is client focused which is why I love the field and wanted to pursue my career as a BCBA outside of teaching.*



**Melissa Errington:** *I wanted to make a difference in children's lives. To share the things I learned as a parent of a child on the Autism Spectrum, and share stories to encourage and inspire staff. As an aide I saw the impact I had on students, and with the encouragement and support of co-workers, friends and family, I started my journey to becoming a Behavior Specialist.*

*My son motivated me to pursue a career in behavior analysis. He struggled so badly the first 8 years of his life with misdiagnosis, behaviors and constant medication changes. I met some fantastic providers along the way. I wanted to make a difference in children's lives, just like the providers my son had done for us.*