

Book Review:

It's Time for School: Building Quality ABA Educational Programs For Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders (Ron Leaf, Ph.D., John McEachin, Ph.D., & Mitchell Taubman, Ph.D., 2008, DRL Books) (Reviewed by Beth Curry)

An ever growing number of school districts acknowledge the need to provide their students on the autism spectrum with comprehensive ABA services. Often this commitment is sparked by parents who insist that an “appropriate” education for their child must be based on teaching methods that have been validated by outcome research.

Districts sometimes start out by contracting with an outside ABA consultant. Many soon realize that it would be more cost effective to develop their own in-house professional services than to hire temporary outside consultants. But it's not easy to find ABA consultants who have the skills and experience needed to design and implement a system-wide personnel training program.

If the school is located in a state like Connecticut, which has no college or university academic track to certification in ABA, it may be especially hard to find the training resources. And that scarcity certainly makes the training more expensive.

Of course, many school districts claim they are competent to provide ABA based educational programs without having met the training standards articulated by the ABA profession. But make no mistake about it: absent very specific levels of staff training, it's not possible to provide bona fide ABA services to children on the autism spectrum.

So what does it take to provide authentic ABA based intervention in public school classrooms? In their new book, *It's Time For School: Building Quality ABA Educational Programs for Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders*, the directors of Autism Partnership provide a detailed framework which spells out exactly what is required.

Authors Leaf, McEachin and Taubman are psychologists with many decades of experience treating autism. The book draws extensively upon their own pioneering work during this past decade in developing an ABA classroom model that has been used in some of the largest school districts in the United States. In fact, the book reads as if it might be the training manual that Autism Partnership uses when it consults with a district.

The chapter titles provide an excellent overview of the material covered: 1) *Advantages of School Settings*; 2) *Establishing ABA Classrooms*; 3) *What Makes A Good School District?* 4) *What Makes a Good Classroom?* 5) *What Makes a Good Teacher?* 6) *Determining the Best Placement and Making it Work* 7) *Consultation: What It Is and What We Do*; 8) *Coaches Primer*; 9) *Data Can and Should Be Your Friend* and 10) *Functional Behavior Assessment*. There also are appendices describing *Course Content for Training ABA Personnel*, *Discrete Trial Teaching* and a *Classroom Checklist*.

The book is addressed primarily to school personnel and comes with strong endorsements by various administrators who have implemented the model. But it also should be of great interest to parents wondering about the adequacy or legitimacy of their own school's "ABA" services.