

# Center for Applied Behavior Analysis (CABA)

Sage Graduate School

Newsletter

December 2011

## Jessica Bensimon



### Elected! ABAI Student Rep

What interested you in being the ABAI student rep for Sage's ABA program?

First and foremost, having the opportunity to represent such a fine program as Sage's ABA program is such an honor. ABAI is the most sought out behavior analysis association in the country, so the thought of attending their conference while representing Sage's ABA program is what made me make the decision to run for student representative. Also, I figured that being student representative would give me the opportunity to meet the people who have made behavior analysis what it is today and the people whose work I have read and learned so much from.

What is your current role with ABAI? What tasks are you working on?

Unfortunately, since the elections were the day before the deadline to submit a panel for the Professional Development Series, I am currently waiting for more direction to be a part of another student's organization of a panel. I am, however, with the assistance of Mary Knowles (a co-worker and a Sage graduate student also in the ABA program) researching venues in Seattle, WA. to organize a gathering for all of the Sage students attending the ABAI 2012 conference.

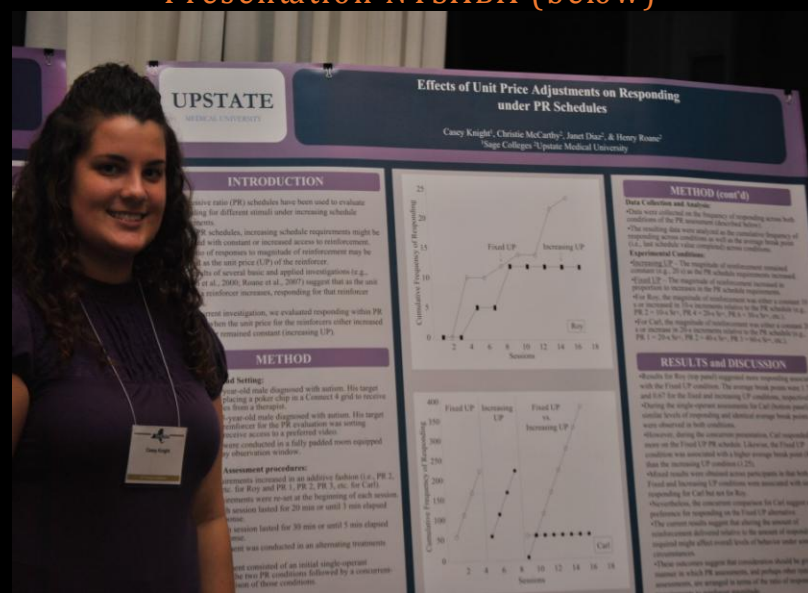
What do you think CABA can bring to ABAI in the future?

From my short experience in Sage's ABA program, I have seen a pattern of empathy and care for implementing ABA with children with autism. I think that the Center for Applied Behavior Analysis can bring a lot of that to ABAI now and in the future.

Cnt'd beside...

## In the News!

Casey Knight -  
Presentation NYSABA (below)



Alyson Beytien- community presentation

Puberty and sexuality for individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

<http://www.nwpa-asa.org/AutisminOurCommunityEvent.asp>

What area of ABA are you most interested in right now?

Having a cousin with autism, what drew me to ABA was its effects on the individuals with autism. I am currently working for Florida Autism Treatment Centers where we provide Verbal Behavior Therapy mainly to children with autism. This is a very rewarding job and it is the reason my passion for ABA exists.

What role do you think CABA students can play in ABAI now and in the future?

I think it's important for CABA students to engage in conversation with the individuals at the ABAI conference in order to enhance credibility of the school as well as foster networking. This will not only aid in promoting Sage's ABA program, but this will also act as a learning experience for the students engaging with other ABAI members.

Is there any way that other students could help you in your role as the ABAI student rep?

Definitely! I think that by attending the ABAI conference and as I mentioned above, being an active member of the conference will definitely help me represent Sage's ABA program.

## Professional Development

### Upcoming Events

**2012 Autism Conference:**  
Science-Based Social and Communication Strategies in Autism

January 27-29, 2012

**Location:**  
Philadelphia Marriott  
Downtown  
Philadelphia, PA

### 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention

May 25 – May 29, 2012

**Location:**  
Washington State Convention  
Center  
Seattle, Washington.

### Student feedback on conference attendance:

"I loved the NYSABA conference. It was the first conference I have ever attended and I cannot wait to go to more and more. I learned so much in one day. Hearing different stories and scenarios was very helpful because I could relate them to not only my coursework and what I have learned from being in this program, but also to what happens daily at my practicum site. It was one of the best experiences I have had. There was never a dull moment. I would recommend that everyone attend this conference if they are able to, or any conference for that matter, because it is an experience I wish I had tried out sooner."

Kyra Pinn

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*Did you know that you can be connected?*

*By Dr. Dana Reinecke*

Are you a member of your state ABA organization? If not, you might be missing out on a rich source of support and information, and you might not be supporting ABA in the best possible way. Check this link to see if your state or region has an ABA chapter: <http://www.abainternational.org/Chapters/USAchapters.asp>  
Click this link if you are not in the United States: <http://www.abainternational.org/Chapters/NonUSAchapters.asp>  
Depending on where you live, there might be a local resource for conferences, networking, and legislative activity that could be very important to you. At this time in history, the BCBA is on the verge of becoming an important credential that is recognized by insurance companies, state education departments, and government agencies. It is crucial that all ABA organizations – from the international to the local – be strongly supported as they work for us all to have the right to do the work that we do best. The best way to do this is to increase our numbers, so join as many ABA organizations as you can, starting with your local chapter! Many organizations offer free or discounted membership for students. Contact the CABA office if you need a letter verifying your student status.

In addition to your local chapter, there are advantages to joining the national and international organizations that support ABA. Here is the link:

<http://www.abainternational.org/index.asp>

## Spotlight on: Dr. Dana Reinecke


**What do you consider to be your “area of passion” in behavior analysis?**

I really enjoy anything to do with reinforcement. My dissertation was on increasing the range of reinforcers for students with autism through exposure and pairing. I love any research that looks at the basic process of developing more reinforcers for people. One of the things that I emphasize most in parent and teacher training is the importance of constantly building new, age-appropriate reinforcers.

**Was there ever an area of behaviour analysis with which you struggled? What was it and how did you overcome?**

In graduate school, I had more difficulty with the experimental analysis of behavior than with applied behavior analysis. I got more comfortable with the EAB material by working with rats and pigeons in the labs. By manipulating some of those experimental protocols myself, I found it much easier to understand what I was reading.

**What do you see as the future for CABA graduates?**

I look forward to hearing about many wonderful things from our CABA graduates! I expect that all of our graduates will pass the BACB exam, for one thing. I'm sure that some of our graduates will go on to open agencies or programs, or work as consultants or directors. Others will continue to make a huge impact as teachers and direct therapists. Some of our graduates have presented and published original research, and I really hope that we will continue to hear from graduates about these accomplishments as well.

**What would you most like your students to know about you?**

I would want them to know that what I love best about online teaching is the level of individual interaction that is available. When I taught at Queens College in a traditional classroom, the same three or four people would participate in every class. I wouldn't be able to assess how everyone was doing with the material until I gave a midterm or had them hand in a paper. Online, students need to participate every week and I can give them direct, individual feedback. It's more work than teaching in a traditional classroom, but I know that the students are working harder online, too.

**At an ABA conference, who would be on your list of “must-see” speakers?**

I always enjoy listening to Richard Foxx, Sandra Harris, and Brian Iwata. I usually pick events by topic rather than speaker, but these presenters are always worth seeing.

**What do you listen to when driving in your car?**

Pink and Bon Jovi!!

**What do you consider to be a fun evening out?**

I really enjoy live music and shows. We have a great outdoor theater at nearby Jones Beach, so an evening concert in the summer is always nice.

**What would you order at a Starbucks?**

I don't like coffee! At Starbucks or any place else, I order black tea. I wouldn't refuse a scone or muffin with my tea, either :)

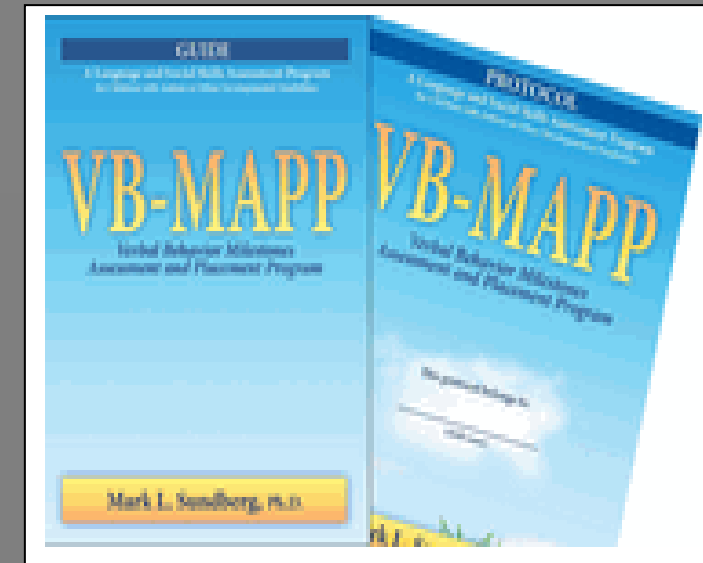
**What do you consider to be one of the most important world issues at this present moment?**

I think that health care is one of the most important issues worldwide. Having had and recovered from a serious illness myself, I have a deep appreciation for the excellent insurance coverage and health care that I had when I needed it. Not everyone has those advantages, and I think it needs to become a global priority.

On November 10 and 11, 2011, Mark Sundberg presented “A Behavioral Approach to Language Assessment and Intervention for Children with Autism,” discussing the importance of Skinner’s groundbreaking work *Verbal Behavior*, the importance of the Mand, and the direction of assessment including his most recently published work, *The Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program* (VB-MAPP). This two-day workshop presented an analysis of the development of language, the importance of language development and training, and the emphasis of treatment programs in the future of Applied Behavior Analysis.

The VB-MAPP is unlike any other assessment that has been published thus far, with the programs primary focus on language and social behavior as well as the barriers that may be preventing appropriate development and skill acquisition. The role of language and communication is a benchmark for overall growth and development in nearly all skill areas. Rather than creating an assessment that resembled more of a task analysis, Dr. Sundberg researched what skills develop at what ages as a means to effectively determine where the emphasis in treatment needs to be to address areas that are developmentally appropriate as well as areas of deficit, with data from field tests coming from nearly 75 typically developing children and 200 children with autism.

The VB-MAPP is a true assessment that evaluates verbal behavior milestones, transitions, and barriers to learning. It provides any professional with an accurate and clear picture of the current skill level of an individual child. Each area focuses on different aspects of development and learning,



with the barriers section indicating areas that may be prohibiting or slowing individual progress. What makes this assessment unique is the analysis of the development of the different verbal operants at different stages of development, allowing the professional to program more appropriate treatment goals based upon the chronological age of the student and their own deficit areas and barriers to learning.

The mand is essential to any and all humans, and is the first verbal operant to develop (infants learn to cry gain access to needed items). In many children with autism and other developmental disabilities, verbal behavior, specifically the mand, is either not developed or may be defective. This inability to communicate basic wants and needs may increase inappropriate behaviors as children learn to use alternative methods as communicative responses. If an intervention is not addressing the issues

present in a child (problem behaviors, no communication) than the intervention is ineffective. Dr. Sundberg explained that many programs emphasize language development through discrete teaching trials, but the mand will only develop if the emission of the response gains access to those wants and needs, which is only illustrated in circumstances of naturally occurring motivating and establishing operations. For the client to learn the context in which to use a response there must be an opportunity for motivation to be increased, which can only be seen in the natural context. Rather than notating a specified time during a treatment program to teach “manding,” mand training should instead be done all day, every day, to achieve maximum learning opportunities and maximum exposure.

Dr. Sundberg also emphasized the need to evaluate the developmental appropriateness of current targets in a treatment program, and understand the progression of a word through the verbal operants.

A “cup” can be matched, receptively identified, labeled, filled into a sentence, and have many features and functions surrounding it, but the development of the word needs to occur systematically.

It is inappropriate to teach a child to fill in the word “cup” if he can yet match or receptively identify it, and should not be learning attributes about the cup if he cannot state the many forms of a cup (multiple pictures, multiple forms). Children should learn to identify the form of the object and not memorize a stimulus, and learn to scan and select from messy arrays with many forms rather than neatly lines rows with the same picture or object.

The goal of treatment programs is to teach a concept, not teach to a mastery criterion of a skill. We, as practitioners, need to be consciously aware of the role that memorization and rote responses have with our clientele and be proactive to ensure that clients are generally learning the stimulus and the many forms that it takes, and not just the prompted response at the presentation of a stimulus. Attending, scanning, and discriminating verbal and non-verbal behavior is essential to the overall growth and development of many children with autism.

The presentation provided an overview of verbal behavior, and a synthesis for increased use of the VB-MAPP. It provided a systematic process for language program implementation and proved to be a useful tool in the future for all children with a developmental disability.

## School Tips

Leave at least 30 minutes a day for personal time to relax and de-stress. This can help clear your mind and perform better in school and at work. Being stressed causes much harm to your mind and body, so it is vital you take some time to wind down. Exercise is an excellent way to help decrease your stress level and improve your health at the same time!

“The way positive reinforcement is carried out is more important than the amount.”

B. F. Skinner



# Dr. Jerry Shook

By Danielle Wiegand

On November 11, 2001, Dr. Gerald “Jerry” Shook, CEO and founder of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), lost his life to lung cancer. Born on August 13, 1948, Jerry received his Master’s in Experimental Psychology from Western Michigan University in 1975. He later went on to receive his Ph.D. in Psychology, Applied Behavior Analysis in 1981. He devoted his life to bettering the lives, education, and treatments for individuals with developmental disabilities and autism. His perseverance resulted in the development of the BACB in 1996, which drastically changed the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA) for the better. Once a board examination was enforced, behavior analysts became known as credible professionals and were taken more seriously in the field. Over 10,000 behavior analysts have been certified as Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA), Doctoral level (BACB-D), and Board Certified assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA) worldwide. Without this brilliant advocate, the field of ABA will be changed forever.

## Baby News

**Chris Borak and partner welcome a baby boy!!**

**Jackson Bruno Borak**  
was born 12/12/11  
12:33pm. 20” 6 lbs 6  
ounces!

**“He is amazing!”**

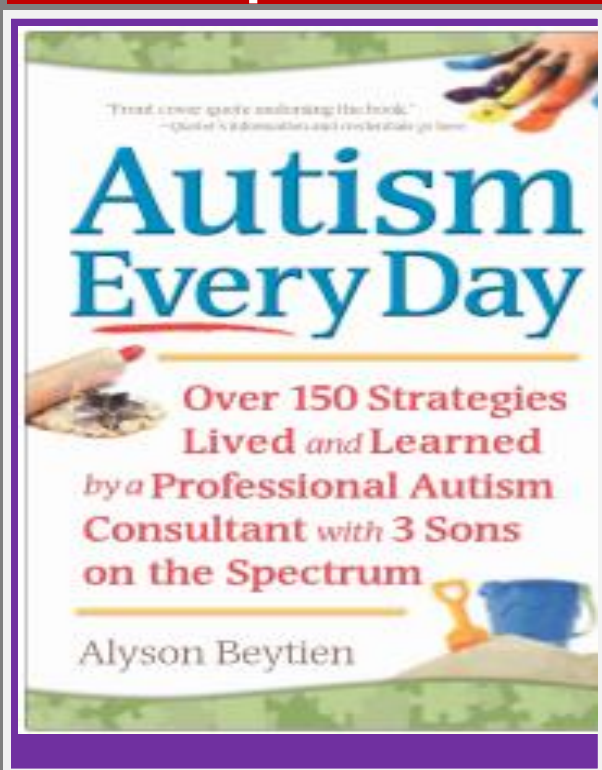
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**George Jennings and partner welcome a baby girl!**

**Kenna Alise Jennings**  
born 11/22/11 12:57am  
19” 6lbs 4.8oz  
“I have a bundle of  
joy”



## student publications



“Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.”

B. F. Skinner

*Please submit your news, events, student spotlight and publication announcements to the editorial team of Sage Newsletter...*

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*Also we are recruiting more members for the newsletter team. Please email your interest to [turanm@sage.edu](mailto:turanm@sage.edu)*

**REMEMBER!!** It looks good on your resume!