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An Activity-Based Approach to Developing Young Children's Social Emotional Competence

By Jane Squires Ph.D., Diane Bricker Ph.D.



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From the creators of ASQ and ASQ:SE, this practical guidebook gives non-mental health professionals exactly what they need: a ready-to-use, start-to-finish linked system for identifying concerns and improving young children's social-emotional health. This book walks readers through the five-step intervention process called Activity-Based Intervention: Social Emotional (ABI:SE):

1. **Screening.** Get guidance on the best screening tools available, and evaluate the family environment with Environmental Screening Questionnaire (ESQ), the photocopiable, 30-question caregiver questionnaire included in the book.
2. **Assessment.** Capture detailed information on children's social and emotional competence and caregiver competence using the photocopiable Social Emotional Assessment Measure (SEAM), a more in-depth assessment questionnaire for each of three age ranges—infant, toddler, and preschool.
3. **Goal development.** Review strengths and needs of the child and family, and work with the parent to identify meaningful goals.
4. **Intervention.** Help the family embed learning opportunities into everyday routines and activities.
5. **Evaluation.** Monitor child and family progress and assess the program's overall success.

With this step-by-step process, easily integrated into existing programs, non-mental health experts will go beyond the screening stage and answer the critical question "what do we do next?" Complete with suggested intervention activities and case studies, this book is just what interventionists, educators, and other professionals need to support social-emotional development and improve outcomes for children and families.

See which domain of school readiness in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Outcomes Framework this book addresses.



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Editorial Review

Review

"If you are a practicing early childhood educator or are in training to become one, it is very important that you master the material in this book. Its content has everything to do with becoming a successful professional."
(Hill M. Walker, Ph.D.)

About the Author

Dr. Squires is Professor of Special Education, focusing on the field of early intervention/early childhood special education. She oversees research and outreach projects in the areas of developmental screening, implementation of screening systems, early identification of developmental delays, and the involvement of parents in monitoring their young children's development. She is lead author of the *Ages & Stages Questionnaires®*, Third Edition (ASQ-3™; with D. Bricker; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2009), and the *Social-Emotional Assessment/Evaluation Measure (SEAM™)*, Research Edition (with D. Bricker, M. Waddell, K. Funk, J. Clifford, & R. Hoselton; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2014), and she has authored or coauthored more than 90 books, chapters, assessments, videotapes, and articles on developmental screening and early childhood disabilities. In 2013, she coauthored the book *Developmental Screening in Your Community: An Integrated Approach for Connecting Children with Services* (Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2013). Dr. Squires currently teaches doctoral-level courses in early intervention/special education and conducts research on comprehensive early identification and referral systems for preschool children.

Dr. Bricker served as Director of the Early Intervention Program at the Center on Human Development, University of Oregon, from 1978 to 2004. She was a professor of special education, focusing on the fields of early intervention and social-communication.

Her professional interests have addressed three major areas: early intervention service delivery approaches, curricula-based assessment and evaluation, and developmental-behavioral screening. Dr. Bricker's work in early intervention approaches has been summarized in two volumes: *An Activity-Based Approach to Early Intervention, Fourth Edition* (with J. Johnson & N. Rahn; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2015) and *An Activity-Based Approach to Developing Young Children's Social Emotional Competence* (with J. Squires; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2007). Her work in curricula-based assessment/evaluation has focused on the development of the *Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Children, Second Edition* (AEPS®; with B. Capt, K. Pretti- Frontczak, J. Johnson, K. Slentz, E. Straka, & M. Waddell; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2004). This measure and curricula provides intervention personnel with a system for the comprehensive assessment of young children with results that link directly to curricular content and subsequent evaluation of child progress.

Dr. Bricker has been a primary author of the *Ages & Stages Questionnaires®* (ASQ; with J. Squires; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1995, 1999, 2009) and directed research activities on the ASQ system starting in

1980. *Developmental Screening in Your Community: An Integrated Approach for Connecting Children with Services* (Bricker, Macy, Squires, & Marks; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2013) offers a comprehensive system for creating and operating community-wide developmental-behavioral screening programs for young children.

Dr. Bricker's distinctions include the Division of Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children Service to the Field Award, December 1992, and the Peabody College Distinguished Alumna Award, May 1995.

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FRAMEWORK FOR THE APPROACH

The ABI:SE Approach is situated in the larger linked system framework that has been described in detail elsewhere (e.g., Bricker & Cripe, 1992; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004). The linked system is presented in Figure 4.1 and is composed of five distinct processes: screening, assessment, goal development, intervention, and evaluation. Although the processes are distinct, the information generated by each process is directly related or relevant to the subsequent process. That is, screening outcomes are directly relevant to assessment and the outcomes from assessment are directly relevant to goal development, whereas goal development, in turn, drives intervention efforts. Finally, the evaluation process is critical to determining the effectiveness of the previous assessment, goal development, and intervention processes. The relationship between processes is depicted in Figure 4.1 by the connecting arrows. These five processes provide a comprehensive context that should help to ensure an efficient and effective approach.

The linked system shown in Figure 4.1 provides a broad framework for the ABI:SE Approach that requires further expansion and refinement to make it applicable to the area of social emotional development. Figure 4.2 illustrates how the linked systems framework has been adapted to guide the ABI:SE Approach. The screening, assessment, goal development, intervention, and evaluation processes that compose the linked system framework appear in Figure 4.2 with arrows showing the relationship between the linked system processes and the processes that compose the ABI:SE Approach. As dictated by the linked system framework, each process in the ABI:SE Approach is directly related to the subsequent process. The ABI:SE processes shown at the bottom of Figure 4.2 include:

- Screen for social emotional problems or potential problems
- Assess to determine social emotional competence
- Develop and select social emotional goals
- Intervene using daily activities
- Evaluate progress toward selected goals

Screening

As shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, screening is the initial step or process of the ABI:SE Approach as well as for the broader linked system framework. In the ABI:SE Approach, screening can be thought of as taking a quick snapshot of the child to determine if further, more comprehensive evaluation is necessary. Children whose performance suggests a delay or problem are referred for more indepth assessment designed to generate information directly relevant to goal development (e.g., the Social Emotional Assessment/Evaluation Measure (SEAM), described later in this volume).

Once social emotional goals are formulated, intervention efforts can begin, followed by periodic evaluation of children's and caregiver's progress toward selected goals.

Assessment

In both the linked system framework and the ABI:SE Approach, the second process is assessment directed toward gathering information that is relevant to goal development and intervention efforts. In most cases this requires administering a curriculum-based measure. The assessment process associated with the ABI:SE Approach entails the use of a curriculum-based measure that was developed specifically for this approach and is described in Chapter 6. The content of the assessment measure was chosen specifically to focus on the area of social emotional development. Having outcomes from a curriculum-based measure is essential to developing functional, appropriate, and important developmental goals and intervention targets that can be integrated into daily activities (Neisworth Bagnato, 2004; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004).

Goal Development

Parents or other primary caregivers should be intimately involved in goal development, the third process, to ensure that family desires and values are addressed. Selected social emotional goals should drive intervention efforts. Goals that are unimportant, inappropriate, nonfunctional, or that violate family values will lead intervention efforts astray and will likely result in little progress. It is, therefore, imperative to administer an assessment that will yield outcomes that can be used directly to develop functional goals and objectives.

Intervention

Intervention is the fourth process in the ABI:SE Approach and refers to activities offered to caregivers and children that address the selected social emotional goals developed during the previous goal development process. In the ABI:SE Approach, intervention efforts are mapped onto the many daily activities that occur in the lives of children and their caregivers. For example, if a selected goal is to increase the dyadic interaction between a mother and her infant, intervention efforts can focus on helping the mother learn to use diapering, feeding, bathing, and travel time activities to initiate interactions with her infant.

Evaluation

The final process, evaluation, is essential to understanding if intervention efforts are producing desired outcomes. For example, caregivers and child responses are measured on selected social emotional goals prior to intervention, and then are monitored consistently throughout intervention. The information gleaned from evaluating the targeted caregiver and child responses is used to adjust, as necessary, the assessment, goal development, and intervention processes. The following section discusses the target populations for whom the ABI:SE Approach is intended. These groups include children with disabilities and children who are at risk for acquiring social emotional problems.

THE TARGET POPULATION OF THE APPROACH

As we noted in earlier chapters, the ABI:SE Approach is appropriate for use with two different (but often overlapping) populations of young children and their families. The first group is composed of children who are eligible to receive Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 (PL 105–17) services either under Part B or C. Before receiving services, state agencies require, for the most part, that children participate in a formal assessment process to determine if they meet established criteria for early intervention or early childhood special education services (Danaher & Armijo, 2004). This group of children is targeted because a number of studies have reported that the prevalence of young children with disabilities who also have social emotional problems is significantly higher than for typically developing children (Bricker et al., 2004; Squires, Bricker, Heo, & Twombly, 2001).

The second target population is children considered to be at risk for developing serious social emotional problems (e.g., children in foster care). Some of the children in this group show early signs that indicate potential social emotional problems if action (i.e., change or intervention) is not taken. A toddler who is excessively shy or the preschooler who bites or hits other children on occasion are examples of children who may develop more serious problems if timely change or intervention does not occur. The other children who compose the risk group are those who live in environments that do not provide adequate safety, nurturing, and/or stimulation. For example, children who live in homes with domestic violence or who suffer neglect may also develop serious social emotional problems if change or intervention is not forthcoming. This group is also targeted because they show a higher prevalence of social emotional problems than children from nonrisk groups.

Young children for whom the ABI:SE Approach is NOT appropriate are those who have serious social emotional or behavioral problems such as children with autism or psychiatric disorders, or those who commit serious acts of aggression (e.g., setting fires, inflicting bodily harm). Children with serious social emotional problems require mental health experts to diagnosis the problem and develop and deliver therapeutic interventions. The ABI:SE Approach was developed for use by early interventionists, early childhood teachers, caregivers, and other personnel who do not have extensive training in mental health or counseling. Therefore, this approach should only be used with children who show mild problems or the potential to develop social emotional problems.

For the disability and risk groups, screening is an essential first step to determine which of the children require more comprehensive social emotional assessment. Given the prevalence levels of social emotional problems in young children with disabilities, we recommend that all of these children undergo social emotional screening. Risk groups tend to include large numbers of children and most agencies or programs have limited resources that may require that screening is provided only to children who meet preset criteria (e.g., exposure to abuse, teen parent, depressed parent).

The assessment process is also essential for the disability and risk groups. In most cases, children who are assigned to the disability group must qualify for services. Qualification usually requires that children undergo a formal diagnostic assessment to ascertain if they meet eligibility guidelines for IDEA services. Assessing to determine a diagnosis of eligibility is undertaken separately from the ABI:SE Approach and is not part of its assessment process. Rather, the ABI:SE assessment process is focused on administering a curriculum-based measure that produces information that is directly relevant to developing quality social emotional goals and intervention content.

Paying attention to situational context and/or recent traumatic events occurring in the life of the child is critical in deciding the utility of the ABI:SE Approach. For example, if a toddler or preschooler has just witnessed a violent crime in their neighborhood, their behavior following that will most likely display signs of this intense experience. The child may be clingier, highly sensitive to loud noises, and possibly agitated if other children or adults get too close to her. These behaviors may be manifestations of the recent trauma and

it is key to pay close attention and provide a safe and secure environment for this child to process her emotional turmoil. It is important that the caregiver and interventionists involved in the child's life discuss this event and pay careful attention to see whether these behaviors change and lessen as time goes on or if more intensive intervention is necessary. Paying attention to factors of duration and intensity of behaviors and observing the child in both the school and home environments will provide an important view into the emotional world of that child. If symptoms do not seem to change within a reasonable amount of time, the caregiver and staff may decide to make a referral for additional, more intensive services.

Sometimes, however, it is necessary to refer a child for mental health services immediately and not wait to see if symptoms will change or lessen. Such characteristics of conditions that would require intervention by a mental health expert include behaviors that present a danger to the child and/or those around him. Another example may be a parent-child relationship issue. If a parent is unable to read her infant's cues and, as a result, does not attend to the child's needs of comfort and care, and the child is at risk for physical and emotional problems, additional expertise would be necessary. If a depressed parent repeatedly seeks comfort from her infant, actively seeking out caregiving behavior from her child, again a referral may be in order (DC: 0–3, Zero to Three, 1995).

In addition, it is crucial to be aware that if more mild, commonly occurring social emotional behaviors occur in young children, and the ABI:SE Approach is followed with little improvement in the child's ability to function and properly develop, consulting with a mental health expert may be the logical next step. Often, issues or concerns in a child's social emotional development and/or the child's relationship with primary caregivers can be identified and ameliorated through using the ABI:SE Approach. It is critical, though, to pay close attention to and engage in ongoing assessment and observation of the child and the parent-child relationship to see if further, more intense intervention is needed.

Becoming aware of and building connections with local mental health providers in the community, especially those with expertise and knowledge in early childhood development, is an important activity for early childhood professionals. Building collaboration and partnerships with key mental health experts is critical for professionals' ongoing growth and also for the benefit of the children and families being served.

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The actual book *An Activity-Based Approach to Developing Young Children's Social Emotional Competence* will bring you to definitely the new experience of reading any book. The author style to clarify the idea is very unique. In the event you try to find new book to learn, this book very suitable to you. The book *An Activity-Based Approach to Developing Young Children's Social Emotional Competence* is much recommended to you to learn. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can quickly to read the book.

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