

Understanding Core ABA Assessment Tools - VB-MAPP, AFLS, BASC-3, CARS-2, and SSIS: A Comprehensive Overview

Authors:

- **VB-MAPP:** Barnes, C. S., Mellor, J. R., & Rehfeldt, R. A. (2014).
- **AFLS:** McGinn, C., & Nulty, E., C. (2021).
- **BASC-3:** DiStefano, C., Greer, F. W., & Dowdy, E. (2019).
- **CARS-2:** Vaughan, C. A. (2011).
- **SSIS:** Gresham, F.M., Elliot, S.N., Cook, R., Vance, M.J., & Kettler, R. (2010).

Overview of ABA Assessment Tools

(Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2020). *Applied Behavior Analysis* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education).

Purpose: ABA assessment tools help identify individual strengths, skill deficits, and behavioral needs.

Why Use Multiple Tools?:

- **Comprehensive Understanding:** Each tool targets unique areas like language, social skills, adaptive behavior, and emotional regulation.
- **Personalized Interventions:** Tailored strategies based on specific skill and behavior assessments.

Key Assessments Covered:

- VB-MAPP
- AFLS
- BASC-3
- CARS-2
- SSIS

VB-MAPP (Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program)

Key Points:

Purpose: Assesses verbal and social skills in children with developmental disabilities.

Components: Milestones Assessment, Barriers Assessment, Transition Assessment.

Benefits:

Individualized programming based on unique strengths.

Regular progress monitoring to track skill acquisition.

Limitations:

Requires trained professionals for administration.

Primarily focuses on verbal behavior, which may not cover all developmental areas.

VB-MAPP Milestones Overview Chart

Assessment Component	Milestone Range	Description	Focus Areas
Milestones Assessment	1-170	Comprehensive assessment of language, social, and early academic skills.	Language Acquisition, Social Behavior, Early Academic Skills
	Level 1: Milestones 1-36	Basic language and social skills (e.g., mands, tacts, simple social exchanges).	Early Communication and Interaction
	Level 2: Milestones 37-89	Intermediate skills (e.g., complex mands, intraverbals, cooperative play).	Language Development and Social Skills
	Level 3: Milestones 90-170	Advanced skills (e.g., conversation skills, academic readiness).	Academic Skills and Higher-level Interactions
Barriers Assessment	N/A	Identifies barriers to learning and skill acquisition.	Behavioral Challenges, Skill Gaps
Transition Assessment	N/A	Evaluates readiness for transition to school or community settings.	Functional Skills, Community Integration.

AFLS (Assessment of Functional Living Skills)

Key Points

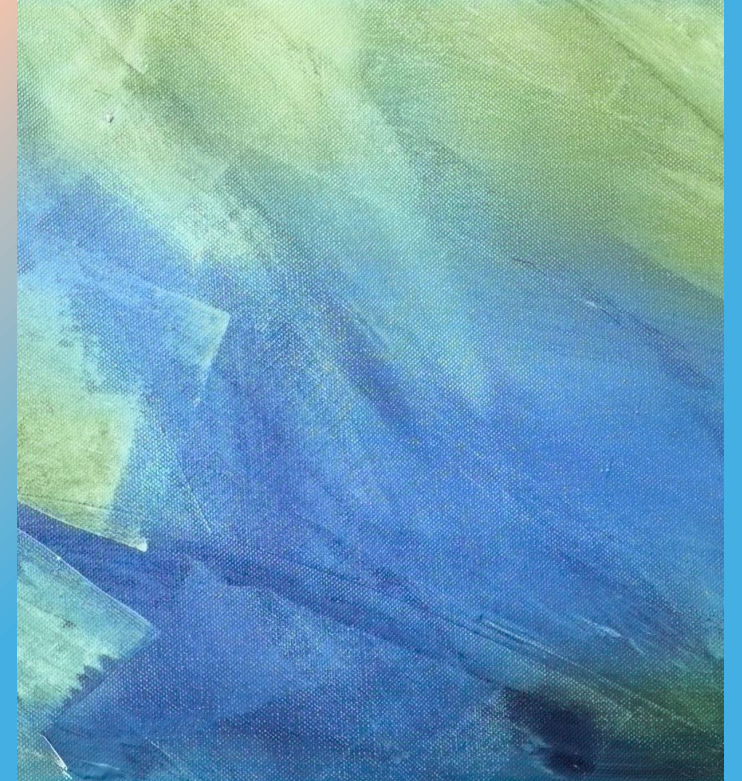
- Purpose: Assesses functional skills necessary for independence in adults and adolescents with developmental disabilities.
- Components: Seven modules covering different life skills:

Benefits:

- Comprehensive coverage of daily living skills.
- Facilitates planning for functional skill development.

Limitations:

- May require extensive training to interpret results effectively.
- Focuses more on daily living skills than academic or social skills.



AFLS Domains Overview Chart

Domain	Description	Focus Areas	Example Skills
Basic Living Skills	Assesses essential self-care and daily living skills.	Personal Hygiene, Meal Preparation, Household Tasks	Brushing Teeth, Cooking Simple Meals, Cleaning
Home Skills	Evaluates skills needed for home and personal independence.	Safety, Household Chores, Organization	Locking Doors, Laundry, Home Safety
Community Participation Skills	Evaluates skills needed for effective engagement in community activities.	Public Transportation, Shopping, Community Awareness	Using a Bus Schedule, Grocery Shopping, Following Directions
School Skills	Focuses on skills necessary for success in a school environment.	Academic Skills, Classroom Behavior, Social Interactions	Following Classroom Rules, Completing Assignments, Asking for Help
Vocational Skills	Measures job-related skills for obtaining and maintaining employment.	Job Skills, Work Habits, Interpersonal Skills	Job Application Process, Time Management, Teamwork
Recreational Skills	Evaluates participation in leisure activities and hobbies.	Social Play, Sports Participation, Arts and Crafts	Playing Team Sports, Engaging in Creative Activities
Functional Skills	Assesses practical academic skills for daily life.	Reading, Writing, Mathematics	Reading a Recipe, Filling Out Forms, Budgeting

BASC-3 (Behavior Assessment System for Children, 3rd Edition)

Key Point:

Purpose: Assesses behavior and emotions in children and adolescents.
Components: Parent, teacher, and self-report forms.

Benefits:

Comprehensive evaluation of behavioral and emotional issues.
Multi-informant approach provides a holistic view.

Limitations:

May be influenced by the respondent's perspective.
Requires proper understanding for accurate interpretation.

BASC-3 Domains Overview Chart

Domain	Description	Focus Areas	Example Subscales
Externalizing Problems	Measures outward-directed behaviors that may be disruptive.	Aggression, Hyperactivity, Conduct Issues	Aggression, Hyperactivity
Internalizing Problems	Assesses inward-directed behaviors, often associated with mood.	Anxiety, Depression, Somatization	Anxiety, Depression, Somatic Complaints
Adaptive Skills	Evaluates positive social and academic behaviors.	Adaptability, Social Skills, Leadership	Adaptability, Social Skills, Leadership
School Problems	Examines difficulties in learning and school-related behaviors.	Attention Problems, Learning Problems	Attention Problems, Learning Problems
Behavioral Symptoms Index	An overarching measure of problem behaviors, combining multiple scales.	Emotional Control, Behavioral Regulation	Hyperactivity, Aggression, Anxiety, Depression
Emotional Symptoms Index (Self-Report)	Focuses on emotional well-being based on self-reported data.	Emotional Self-Concept, Personal Adjustment	Self-Esteem, Sense of Inadequacy, Self-Reliance

The Childhood Autism Rating Scale-Second Edition (CARS-2)

Key Points:

- Ages 2+; measures autism severity across 15 domains.
- Combines observation with caregiver input.
- Scored 15-60, higher scores indicate more severe symptoms.

Benefits:

- Quick, easy to use.
- Effective for autism diagnosis across age groups.

Limitations:

- No intervention guidance.
- Subjectivity in scoring.

CARS-2 Domain Overview Chart

Domain	Description
1. Relating to People	Measures quality of social interactions and interest in people.
2. Imitation	Assesses ability to imitate movements and actions.
3. Emotional Response	Evaluates range and appropriateness of emotional reactions.
4. Body Use	Observes body movements and control, including unusual body use.
5. Object Use	Examines how the individual interacts with and uses objects.
6. Adaptation to Change	Looks at reactions to change or disruptions in routines.
7. Visual Response	Assesses responses to visual stimuli.
8. Listening Response	Measures reactions to sounds and verbal communication.
9. Taste, Smell, and Touch Response	Observes sensory responses in taste, smell, and touch.
10. Fear or Nervousness	Evaluates presence of anxiety, fear, or nervousness in various situations.
11. Verbal Communication	Assesses clarity, appropriateness, and quality of verbal responses.
12. Non-Verbal Communication	Looks at gestures, eye contact, and other non-verbal cues.
13. Activity Level	Observes energy levels, from hypoactivity to hyperactivity.
14. Level and Consistency of Intellectual Response	Measures cognitive engagement and response accuracy.
15. General Impressions	Provides a global assessment based on overall behaviors and symptoms.

SSIS (Social Skills Improvement System)

Key Points:

Purpose: Measure social skills, problem behaviors, and academic competence in children and adolescents.

Components: Rating scales for parents, teachers, and students.

Benefits:

Comprehensive assessment of social skills.

Identifies areas for improvement and intervention.

Limitations:

Subject to bias from respondents.

Requires proper training for accurate interpretation.

SSIS Domains Overview Chart

Domain	Description	Focus Areas	Focus Areas
Social Skills	Assesses positive social behaviors that facilitate interaction and relationships.	Communication, Cooperation, Responsibility	Empathy, Assertion, Engagement
Problem Behaviors	Measures behaviors that may interfere with social and academic success.	Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems	Hyperactivity, Aggression, Self-Control
Academic Competence	Evaluates skills and attitudes that contribute to academic performance and engagement.	Academic Engagement, Motivation, Classroom Behavior	Reading Skills, Math Skills, Motivation to Learn

Comparison of Assessment Tools

TOOL	FOCUS	STRENGTH	LIMITATION
VB-MAPP	Language & social skills (0-48 months)	Tracks verbal behavior milestones	Limited to verbal behavior
AFLS	Daily living & independence (adolescents/adults)	Wide range of functional skills	No focus on academic or social skills
BASC-3	Behavior & emotional functioning (2-21 years)	Multi-informant reports (parents, teachers, self)	Informant bias possible
CARS-2	Diagnostic tool for autism based on observation and rating.	Quick and easy to administer; helps identify severity levels of autism.	Potentially lacks sensitivity to subtle differences in autism spectrum.
SSIS	Social skills & academic competence (3-18 years)	Measures both social and academic performance	Less focus on functional, adaptive skills

Conclusion

In conclusion, these core ABA assessment tools—VB-MAPP, AFLS, BASC-3, CARS-2, and SSIS—each play a crucial role in building a comprehensive picture of an individual's strengths and areas for growth.

VB-MAPP

AFLS

References for Chart

References for the Charts

VB-MAPP Chart

Montallana, K. L., Gard, B. M., Lotfizadeh, A. D., & Poling, A. (2019). Inter-Rater Agreement for the Milestones and Barriers Assessments of the Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 49(5), 2015-2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-03879-4>

AFLS Chart

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BASC-3 Chart

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CARS-2 Chart

Vaughan, C. A. (2011). Test Review: E. Schopler, M. E. Van Bourgondien, G. J. Wellman, & S. R. Love Childhood Autism Rating Scale (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services, 2010. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 29(5), 489-493. <https://doi-org.library.capella.edu/10.1177/0734282911400873>

SSIS Chart

Gresham, F. M., Elliott, S. N., Cook, C. R., Vance, M. J., & Kettler, R. (2010). Cross-informant agreement for ratings for social skill and problem behavior ratings: An investigation of the social skills improvement system-rating scales. *Psychological Assessment*, 22(1), 157-166. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018124>

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