

Curriculum 1 – VB MAPP

The Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP) is an assessment tool and curriculum guide designed to identify the existing communication level and developmental skills for children with autism and developmental disabilities and what skills are needed for intervention for the individual to lead a full and rewarding life. The VB MAPP has been developed by a host of professionals such as BCBAs, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, teachers, psychologists and parents of children with autism and special needs to create a curriculum that can be individualised and utilised with evidence-based practices for lifelong outcomes for pupils. The VB-MAPP can be used for any individual with significant language delays, regardless of age. This may mean that some areas will need to be modified, however, the core language and social skills of the curriculum will stay the same as they are the building blocks needed for more advanced developmental skills.

Once a comprehensive assessment has been carried out, testing the current baseline skill level of the individual, a BCBA or teacher in collaboration with other professionals and parents, can build a comprehensive programme focusing on the skills that need to be the focus of intervention, highlighted in the assessment.

The VB-MAPP incorporates 5 main components, the milestones, the barriers assessment, transition assessment, VB-MAPP task analysis and supporting skills and the VB-MAPP placement and IEP goals.

VB-MAPP Milestones

The milestone section of the VB-MAPP is the core of the curriculum consisting of 170 measurable learning and language milestones balanced across three language development age levels, 0-18months, 18-30 months and 30-48 months comparable to typically developing children. The milestones are spread across 16 skills areas consisting of requesting, labelling, early conversation skills, echoics, motor imitation, listener skills, independent play, social skills, visual and scanning skills, linguistic structure, group and classroom skills and early academics. Included in the milestones is an early echoic skills assessment which will highlight areas of speech sounds, blends, words and phrases that may need intervention as part of the programme.

VB-MAPP Barriers Assessment

The barriers assessment assesses and highlights 24 common learning and language barriers faced by individuals with autism and developmental disabilities. These barriers include: behaviours that challenge, cooperation, impaired requesting impaired labelling, impaired echoics, impaired early conversational skills, impaired imitation, impaired visual skills, impaired listener skills, impaired social skills, prompt dependency, scrolling, impaired scanning, failure to generalise across environments and people, weak motivators, lack of responses, self-stimulation, impaired articulation, obsessive-compulsive behaviours, hyperactive behaviour and sensory defensiveness. By identifying these barriers to effective learning, an intervention can be programmed to ensure the best possible outcomes for the individual.

VB-MAPP Transition Assessment

The transition assessment is a useful tool to assess the readiness of the individual to move to a less intensive teaching environment. It contains 18 assessment areas including

measures of the overall scores of the VB-MAPP milestones, the barrier assessment, negative behaviours, classroom routines and group skills, social skills, academic independence, generalisation, variation of reinforcers, rate of skill acquisition, retention, natural environment learning, the transfer of skills, adaptability to change, spontaneity, independent play, general self-help, toileting and eating skills. The transition assessment is a way of measuring meaningful progress across significant areas of life and make decisions regarding targets for EHCP's and set priorities when setting goals.

VB-MAPP Task analysis and supporting skills

The VB-MAPP task analysis and supporting skills provide a further breakdown of the milestones and serve as a complete and ongoing language and learning guide when adding appropriate goals and targets to a programme. There are approximately 750 skills covering the 14 areas of the milestones discussed above. The primary use of the task analysis is to complement the milestones assessment and provide a breakdown of a milestone into smaller steps that may be more achievable to the child and can be set as short-term targets. The supporting skills section of this section of the VB-MAPP contains a large number of language, learning, and social skills that a child needs in addition to the specific milestones. These skills may not be significant enough to be considered a milestone or a smaller goal towards achieving the milestone; however, these are important in moving the individual's repertoire towards that of a typically developing child. They also help to programme for generalisation, the development of functional language and retention of skills.

VB-MAPP Placement and IEP Goals

The VB-MAPP and IEP goals section of the VB-MAPP corresponds with the four sections discussed above. It provides specific direction for each of the 170 milestones and example EHCP goals that can be adapted to each individual. This part of the VB-MAPP can provide recommendations for long and short-term targets so professionals can produce a balanced programme and ensure that all relevant elements of the necessary interventions are included and explained.

Overall the VB-MAPP is a comprehensive assessment tool designed to highlight and identify the existing language and related skills for individuals with autism and other disabilities. The results of the assessment will suggest the short and long term priorities and the focus for interventions that will be the building blocks the individual needs to live a full and happy life.

Curriculum 2- Essentials for living

The Essentials for Living (EFL) is a communication, behaviour and life skills curriculum and assessment protocol. It was produced with a desire to provide children and adults with autism and developmental disabilities, a comprehensive curriculum that with the use of evidenced based teaching procedures will result in the dignity and quality of life they deserve. The EFL is unlike any other curriculum as it is tailored for individuals who have very little spoken language or are preverbal. It also is one of the only life skills curriculums that includes a range of skills specifically for individuals with severe, multiple disabilities and severe aggressive and self-injurious behaviour.

The EFL includes over three thousand skills sorted into the sections, communication, language, daily living skills, social skills, functional academic and tolerating skills. Severe challenging behaviour has its own chapter which includes the main barriers and difficulties associated with autism and many other developmental disabilities. The skills within each

section are sequenced from 'must have', 'should have', 'good to have' and 'nice to have' and will be taught systematically through the sequence.

The 'must have' skills are considered the Essential Eight factors that individuals need to have to be a fulfilled and happy member of society. The Essential Eight include

- Making requests
- Waiting
- Accepting the removals of preferred items and activities, transitioning and turn taking
- Completing brief, known tasks
- Accepting 'No'
- Following directions related to health and safety
- Completing daily living skills related to health and safety
- Tolerating situations related to health and safety.

During assessment, if the individual does not have the Essential Eight skills, these will be prioritised, and a plan put in place that will teach these to fluency. The Essential Eight assessment will provide the professional undertaking the assessment with the appropriate goals in relation to the skill level assessed. Examples of the 'must have' skills include 'makes a request for highly preferred snack foods, drinks, non-food items or activities that can be made frequently and immediately available' or 'Waits after making requests for gradually increasing periods of time'.

The mastery criteria within the EFL ensures that when the skills are taught, they must be essential for effective living, the skill occurs effortlessly and with fluency, must occur without problem behaviour and reduce the need for environmental supports and accommodations hence promoting independence from the very start. This stringent criteria ensures that the repertoires of the individual may make small progression, however these are hugely significant to the independence and fulfilment of the individual and most importantly, they last a lifetime.

One important section of the EFL is devoted to helping professionals determine if a preverbal or minimally verbal individual needs an alternative method of communication and guides as to which one may be most appropriate to them dependent on their current sensory, skill and behaviour repertoires. The EFL suggests that for communication methods to be effective, it must follow the **CAFE** criteria, meaning that it is **C**ontinuously **A**vailable to them and would give the opportunity for the individual to **F**requently and **E**ffortlessly say what he wants and needs. Using this theory, the EFL advocates that these methods of communication will last a lifetime.

As the EFL is a functional assessment, compared to the VB-MAPP which is a developmental assessment, its focus is on skills and behaviours that are required in different settings and in the absence of these skills and behaviours, the learner would require assistance of other people and in addition to these behaviours and skills, the learner will have increased access to preferred items, activities, places and people.

6.9 Choosing a curriculum

When an individual starts at the school, they will go through an assessment process to determine what their current skill level is and what needs to be worked on. Which assessment used will be dependent on the following criteria:

VB-MAPP

Children from 4 to 8

- Who have delays primarily in language and social skills
- Have acquired some skills such as dressing, eating, group skills etc.
- Who have a form of communication, even if limited
- Have mild to moderate challenging behaviour

Essentials for Living

Children 8 and older

- Who have not acquired skills up to a key stage 2 level
- Have limited language or communication
- Have difficulty answering questions or participating in conversations
- Engage in severe challenging behaviour to self, others and properties
- Has not acquired self-help and tolerating skills regarding health and safety

This list is a broad overview and not inclusive of every individual. There may be times where a child may fit in to both categories, In this instance, both a VB-MAPP and a EFL assessment would be undertaken and the priority skills from each would be used to make an individualised programme of targets for that child.