



Scholarship Case Study

Ethan's Journey
*A snapshot of early intervention
ABA in practice*

Introduction

Ethan's story represents the real-world complexity, creativity, and compassion required in Applied Behavior Analysis. This case study is part of the Bierman Rising Clinician Scholarship and serves as the foundation for the accompanying reflection prompt.

You are not expected to diagnose, design a treatment plan, or arrive at a "correct" answer. Instead, this case is meant to help you reflect on your personal motivation, developing clinical curiosity, and your future path in ABA.

How to use this case study

- Review Ethan's profile and current areas of focus
- Consider what stands out to you as a future clinician
- Respond thoughtfully to the essay prompt at the end

Focus on reflection, not perfection.



Client Profile

Name: Ethan M.

Age: 5 years, 3 months

Diagnosis: Autism Spectrum Disorder (Level 2 – requiring substantial support)

Setting: Early intervention ABA clinic

This case study is a fictionalized composite created for educational purposes and does not represent a real individual.

Language & Learning Assessment

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

How to use this case study

- **Milestones:** 62 out of 170 (Approximate developmental level: 18–24 months)
- **Barriers:** 12 significant barriers identified Including prompt dependency, limited motivation for social interaction, and escape-maintained problem behavior
- **Transition Assessment:** Early Level 2 Not yet ready for group instruction without



Skill Profile

Strengths

- Strong visual-motor imitation, including copying gross motor actions
- High engagement with songs and rhythmic activities; responds positively to musical play
- Demonstrates receptive identification of familiar items when visual prompts are available

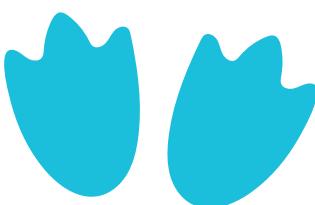
Areas for Growth

- Low tolerance for transitions; tantrum behavior when preferred activities end
- Difficulty sustaining attention to non-preferred tasks for longer than 30 seconds
- Limited generalization of mastered skills across instructors or settings
- Narrow reinforcer repertoire; strong motivation for iPad and snacks, with limited social reinforcement value

Behavioral Considerations

Ethan displays several behavioral excesses that appear to function primarily as escape from non-preferred demands or transitions.

- Escape-maintained tantrums, including crying, dropping to the floor, and pushing materials away
- Vocal protesting and self-stimulatory scripting during transitions
- Occasional aggression, such as slapping at an instructor's hand when physical prompts are introduced
- Response latency often exceeds five seconds for known targets, suggesting possible prompt dependency and/or motivational factors





Current Program Goals

Ethan's current programming focuses on building functional communication, increasing independence, and improving transitions while reducing interfering behaviors.

Communication

- Expand manding repertoire to 100+ functional requests using spoken words and sign approximations

Instructional Skills

- Increase fluency and consistency with one-step directions

Transitions

- Increase independent transitions between three preferred and non-preferred activities with 80% success

Behavior Reduction

- Reduce tantrum frequency to fewer than two occurrences per hour through differential reinforcement and transition supports

Social Engagement

- Introduce peer play opportunities for three to five minutes with minimal adult prompting



Scholarship Essay Prompt

Why I Chose ABA

Working with learners like Ethan often requires creativity, persistence, and compassion. Consider how this case connects to your own journey into the field of Applied Behavior Analysis.

In your essay, reflect on the following:

- What aspects of Ethan's strengths and challenges resonate most with your personal motivation for pursuing ABA?
- Which behavioral principles or teaching strategies would you be most interested in applying or developing further in a case like this, and why?
- How does supporting learners like Ethan align with your vision for your future role as a clinician (e.g., RBT, BCABA, BCBA, or related path)?

Suggested length: 1,000-1,500 words

Format: PDF or DOCX

Submission details: Please submit your essay and transcript through the **Bierman Rising Clinician Scholarship application page**.

Link:

<https://www.biermanautism.com/rising-clinician-scholarship/ethans-journey/>



Questions? Contact: scholarshipinfo@biermanautism.com

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