

# Measuring Up! The Case for Precision Teaching

Kevin S. Cauley, B.A., BCABA

Although there are many reasons for educational failure, at the core of the problem is a misunderstanding of what it means to be good at something and how we measure it (Binder, 2003). Formulated by Ogden Lindsley and his colleagues in the 1960s (Lindsley, 1990), Precision Teaching provides a unique method for measuring performance that goes over and above traditional approaches. Upon hearing the term Precision Teaching, one tends not to make an immediate association with 'measurement'. Measurement, however, is the fundamental feature of precision teaching. Specifically, Precision Teaching refers to a set of measurement procedures that allow an instructor to precisely evaluate the effectiveness of instructional tactics and curriculum through student performance (McGreevy 1983). These procedures were founded on the premise that the 'learner knows best'. If the learner's performance is improving, the program is 'right', however, if the learner's performance begins to falter, then an immediate instructional or program change is needed. Emphasizing frequency or rate as a measure of student performance, precision teaching is a measurement procedure that can be used with the Standard Celeration Chart (McGreevy, 1983). Unlike the more traditional accuracy graphs, the Standard Celeration Chart provides a record of two dimensions common to all observable behavior: count of the behavior and passage of time (i.e., rate; Koorland & Martin, 1975).

Early on, precision teachers developed the instructional principle that competence on a given composite skill is more likely if one achieves both accuracy and speed on its components (Binder, 1993). Incorporating the dimension of time to the meaning of mastery, several other terms and descriptions have been developed to define competent or fluent performance. These include: quality plus pace, automaticity, true mastery, and the ability to perform a skill or behavior without hesitation. Research in education and related fields has demonstrated that fluent behavior is associated with the following outcomes: (1) the skill is easily executed following a period of no practice

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The Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis

An Affiliate Chapter of The Association for Behavior Analysis International

Caroll Drummond  
Editor/Production Manager  
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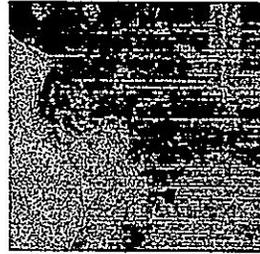
## INSERTS:

*Call For Papers- ONTABA Conference 2004  
Pamphlet: 3-Day Workshop with Dr. Vincent J. Carbone*

## From the President's Desk

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Rosemary Condillac  
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It is my distinct pleasure to announce the formation of the ONTABA Transitional Certification Panel, who will carry out the second phase of the certification process.

The members have elected, Nancy Brennan, BST, Maurice Feldman, Ph.D., C.Psych., Peter Wyngaarden, M.A., and The board of Directors has appointed Ken Hbranchuk, Ph.D., C.Psych., and Andrew McNamara, Ph.D., from the previous certification committee, and James Porter, Ph.D., and Nancy Warren, B.A., from the current Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is extremely pleased with the clinical, geographic, and educational diversity of the panel, and is confident in the panel's ability to carry out this challenging task. We will be looking for community members to join this panel, please see information in the Transitional Certification Panel section of the newsletter for more information.

The ONTABA Board has recently been approached by individuals, agencies and government representatives who are interested in our standards of practice, our membership demographics, and our certification plans. This is great news for ONTABA, and demonstrates an unprecedented interest in applied behaviour analysis. We are working to communicate with interested parties and have offered our expertise and assistance. I would ask members who are involved in discussions with the various Ministries to suggest that a representative from ONTABA be invited to sit on working groups, committees, and task forces. This type of involvement we permit ONTABA to have the greatest influence on the future of ABA service delivery in the Province.

Individual members can contribute to our efforts by encouraging their colleagues to join ONTABA, or to renew their memberships right away. It would be in our best interest to have strong membership numbers to report as we prepare information regarding the demographics of behavior analysts in the Province. We need to capitalize on the current interest in our field. We have a new recruitment committee that will be working on expanding our membership base, please help them by forwarding recruitment leads/ideas.

The board will be working on the ONTABA vision and mission statement at our next meeting on June 19. If you have any ideas or contributions, please send these to me directly, and I will be sure to pass them on to the board.

Rosemary Condillac

## ONTABA

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## ONTABA Committee Updates

### ONTABA COMMITTEE UPDATES:

#### Conference Committee:

Conference Chair: Shiri Bartman

The Call for Papers for Conference 2004 is an insert in this edition. Anyone wishing to help with the conference please contact Shiri at 416-925-5141 or [shiri.bartman@surreyplace.on.ca](mailto:shiri.bartman@surreyplace.on.ca)

#### Elections Committee Update:

Board Liaison: Dorothy Wemer

For this year's elections (2004) we will be looking for nominations for Treasurer, 3 member-at-large positions, and 1 student representative. Please start thinking about running for a position, or about who you would like to nominate to your board of directors.

We are currently seeking members to sit on the Elections Committee to do succession planning. This committee can meet by e-mail and conference calls so representation from across the province is encouraged and enabled. Please contact Dorothy to volunteer.

#### Membership Committee:

Board Liaison: Mary McMillan

Chairperson: Amy Barker

Total Members for 2004 to date are 188. There are 38 new Members, 136 renewing Members and 14 returning Members.

Of these Members there are 23 Sustaining Members, 134 Full Members, 24 Student Members, 6 Affiliate Members and 1 Member Emeritus (Dr. Larry Williams).

Please note that if your contact information changes, please let us know so that we can forward your ONTABA materials to you.

A reminder: if you are asked by a colleague about membership forms, these are now available on the ONTABA website at [www.sl.on.ca/ONTABA](http://www.sl.on.ca/ONTABA)

#### Recruitment Committee:

Board Liaison: Lianne Tackaberry

This committee's activities will focus on attracting new ONTABA members. It would benefit all members to have representation on this committee from across the province. To enhance this effort, meetings will be held via e-mail and conference calls. Please contact Lianne to get involved.

#### Newsletter Committee:

Board Liaison: James Porter

Editor: Carol Drummond

The educational opportunity series featuring schools in Ontario that offer programs in ABA are continued in this issue of the Analyst. Thanks to Andrew McNamara, Coordinator of the Behavioural Science Technology Program at George Brown College. Thanks also to Kevin Cauley for his article "Measuring Up! The Case for Precision Teaching."

As always, we encourage you to send in your article submissions and hope to see more authors of posters and presentations from the 2003 ONTABA Conference share their work in the ANALYST in the upcoming year.

#### Webpage Task Force

Board Liaison: Katrina MacDonald

Chair: Janet Valcourt

The ONTABA Website Committee would like to update the website including giving it a new look and possibly a new logo.

There are currently three volunteers willing to help out with this project and Katrina McDonald (ONTABA Board Member at Large) will act as board liaison. More volunteers are welcome.

Please e-mail [mcdonak2@pccchealth.org](mailto:mcdonak2@pccchealth.org) if you would like to be involved in the design of the new website. It is hoped that much of our work can be done via e-mail so geographical area is not an issue.

Contact information for Committees and the Task Force are on the back cover page of each issue of the ONTABA Analyst.

## Transitional Certification Panel

The new Transitional Certification Panel has been formed. The members are: Nancy Brennan, BA., BST., Maurice Feldman, Ph.D., C.Psych., and Peter Wyngaarden, MSc. who were elected by the membership; Ken Hrachuk, Ph.D., C.Psych., and Andrew McNamara, Ph.D. appointed from the previous certification committee; and James Porter, Ph.D., and Nancy Warren, B.A., appointed from the current board of directors.

We are pleased with the diverse composition of the panel, and are thrilled to get the next phase of the certification process underway. Additional appointments to the TCP will be made (community members), with the hopes that they can join the panel in the early fall (September), once terms of reference, timelines, etc. have been clarified between the panel and the board. Please contact the board of directors if you know anyone who would be suitable to fill the community member roles.

The Transitional Certification Panel is charged with the task of developing a detailed implementation plan and corresponding budget/business plan for certification of behaviour analysts in Ontario.

The Board of Directors wishes to thank all individuals who agreed to stand for nomination to the Transitional Certification Panel.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY



# Shining Through

CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

### Clinical Coordinator Required

Shining Through Centre for Children with Autism in Woodbridge is seeking a Clinical Coordinator. The candidate must have several years experience working with children with Autism providing intervention based on the principles of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) in addition to holding or working towards a Master's Degree in Psychology or a related field. All interested parties please fax your resume to the attention of "President, Board of Directors" at the Shining Through Centre at (905) 851-1132.

**2004 ONTABA Board Bios****Betina Clancy****ONTABA Student Representative**

I have recently completed the Behavioural Science Technology program at St. Lawrence College. I will be graduating with distinction this coming June. During my time at St. Lawrence College I have completed over one thousand placement hours, at various agencies, including Community Living Kingston, Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre, and Counselling Services of Belleville and District. I have experience working with adults and children with developmental and intellectual disabilities. I am focusing primarily on consultation, mediator training, and IBI for autism.

I am currently employed with Quinte Children's Homes as a consultant/respite provider. I am interested in pursuing work with children, as I believe early intervention is the key to people reaching their full potential. I am planning to continue my education in psychology after graduation and would like to obtain a teaching position at the college level in the future.

I am a strong advocate for college-trained staff, as college graduates have gained not only theory through classes, but practical front line experiences through placements. This makes us a valuable asset to the human service field.

**Katrina McDonald, B.A., BST****ONTABA Member at Large**

Katrina received her Honours Bachelor Of Arts Degree in Psychology from the University of Ottawa in 1997 and graduated from the B.A Option of the Behaviour Science Technology Program with Distinction in 1999.

Katrina worked for the Correctional Service of Canada delivering sex-offender treatment programs for 2 years prior to accepting her current position as a Psychometrist/ Behaviour Therapist in the Adult Rehabilitation Service of Providence Continuing Care Centre - Mental Health Services site.

Katrina's interests include mental health issues, mental health-forensic interface, de-institutionalization and community integration. She also supports the education of Behaviour Science Technology students by offering student placements.

Recognizing the efficacy of behavioural treatment, Katrina is working to expand the use of behaviourally trained experts as part of multi-disciplinary rehabilitation teams in institutional settings. Katrina advocates strongly that college-trained staff with the necessary skills in Applied Behaviour Analysis are critical to the rehabilitation process.

**Mary McMillan****ONTABA Member at Large**

Mary completed her Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology at York University in 1974 and her Master of Arts Degree in Special Education at O.I.S.E. in 1985. She worked in the field of developmental disabilities since 1970 as a Residential Counsellor at Rideau Regional Hospital School and Surrey Place Centre. In 1975, she worked as a Research Assistant at the Rotary School Autism Program and then at the autism Program at Thistletown Regional Centre prior to becoming a Regional Manager for TRE-ADD (Treatment, Research, and Education for Autism and Developmental Disabilities) at Thistletown in the early 1980's. From 1987 until December 2003, she was the Manager of Durham Behaviour Management Services in Durham Region. Mary's main interest has been in the provision of behavioural consultation services to parents and child care centres regarding children with and without developmental disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviour. In addition, her program has been the service provider for the Central East Preschool Autism Service in Durham Region since 1999.

**Nancy Warren****ONTABA Member at Large**

I earned my BA from McGill University in Montreal. In addition to psychology, I enjoyed studying economics and geography. I am currently pursuing an MA through U of Nevada, specializing in Behavior Analysis. My primary interest is in applied work. I continue to enjoy my practical development within the TPAS Division of Surrey Place Centre. I am pleased to be working with the Transitional Certification Panel.

**Educational Opportunities****George Brown College Behavioural Science Technology (BST) Program**

The Behavioural Science Technology (BST) program at George Brown College is set to celebrate the completion of its second year! The students and the faculty have worked hard and are looking forward to a well-deserved break...except for summer jobs and courses that have to be prepared!

As you are aware, Behavioural Science Technology is a three-year program designed to provide students with an opportunity to study and apply behavioural theory in a variety of settings. The students receive training in behavioral assessment, designing behavioural interventions, behavioural techniques and applications, specialized instructional methods, statistics and research design, and courses on the application of applied behaviour analysis to specific populations (e.g., individuals with intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injury).

To date, the Behavioural Science Technology program has established nearly 70 placement sites. Upon completion of placements, the students will be able to:

1. Describe and demonstrate the identification and operational definitions of target behaviours.
2. Describe and demonstrate the ability to set goals and objectives collaboratively with the consumer (i.e., the client and/or the agency).
3. Describe and demonstrate the ability to develop and complete a comprehensive behavioural assessment (including functional analysis, descriptive analysis, etc. and the ability to train others to assist with assessment data collection).
4. Critically analyze and evaluate different treatment alternatives and develop a rationale for treatment choice(s).
5. Describe and demonstrate the ability to develop and complete a behavioural intervention.
6. Develop and implement mediator training strategies to promote generalization.
7. Describe and demonstrate the ability to present and interpret behavioural data.
8. Describe and demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with the consumer and other relevant caregivers and/or service providers.
9. Identify and critically evaluate appropriate resources and information.
10. Discuss and demonstrate integration of theoretical knowledge in the clinical setting.

The response to the Behavioural Science Technology program has been very encouraging. With over 250 applicants per year, we have accepted 80 students into the first two years of the program to date. In response to increased funding for children with autism, George Brown College will be offering an Intensive (Fast Track) version of the program beginning in August 2004! Applicants for this program are required to have a B.A. or B.Sc. in Psychology.

Andrew McNamara Ph.D.  
Coordinator, Behavioural Science Technology Program

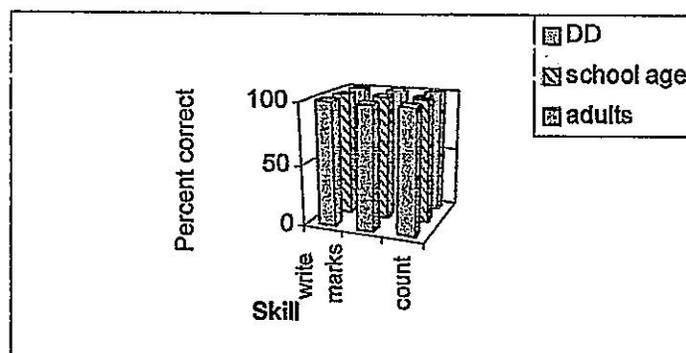
*This is the second in a series featuring Educational Opportunities in ABA in Ontario*

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(Retention), (2) the behavior can be performed for as long as necessary (Endurance), (3) it is resistant to distraction (Stability), and the skill or behavior is easily applied to new situations (Application) (Binder, 1993). Some empirically supported examples of fluent performance include oral reading at a rate of 200 words per minute, responding to instructors' mands at 48 responses per minute, and imitating gross motor movements at 30-50 actions per minute. It is important to emphasize that these rates are not arbitrarily determined; rather the ability to perform at these rates increases the likelihood that the behavior will be retained, endured for longer periods of time, stable in the face of distractions, and applied in the real world. Indeed, these four outcomes (known as RESA) form the hallmark of an ecologically valid instructional approach.

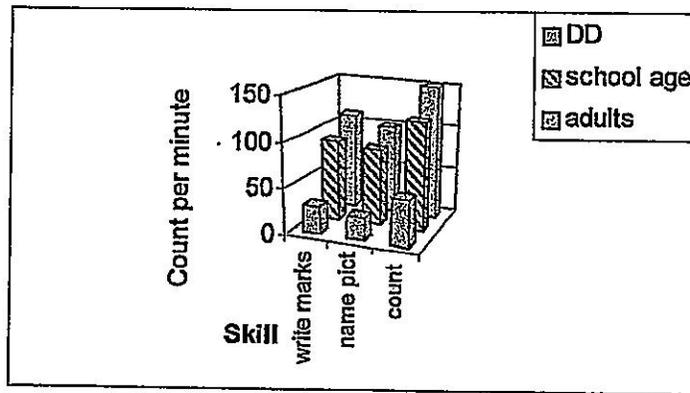
Unfortunately, in the education world, the bias has been toward measuring performance using only accuracy (e.g., percent correct) rather than fluency. In other words, the number of correct or "unprompted" responses divided by the total number of opportunities to respond is used much more often than frequency or rate. While accuracy does provide useful information about one dimension of the behavior, it certainly does not tell the whole story. As demonstrated by Binder (2003), the exclusive use of percent correct imposes an artificial limitation or ceiling on measurement. For example, a graph showing that a learner is performing a skill at 100% accuracy could erroneously imply that there is no more room for improvement. Educators who use percent correct would refer to any further practice after this point as 'overlearning'. Interestingly, such educators do acknowledge that this 'overlearning' improves both retention and application. The failure to measure behavior in time severely restricts the information that can be obtained during this 'overlearning' period. Specifically, "percent-correct evaluations, during and immediately after instruction cannot detect increases in response probability that result in these important learning outcomes" (Binder, 2003, p.16). On the other hand, the only limitations or ceilings imposed by time-based measurement are physiological or environmental. That is, time-based measurement procedures allow us to track changes in performance that occur during the so-called 'overlearning' phase. To illustrate the discrepancy between measures of accuracy and time-based measurement procedures, hypothetical data are presented in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 depicts three groups of learners, individuals with developmental disabilities (DD), typically developing school age children, and typical adults, all of whom are performing at 100% accuracy on three basic tasks. Because this graph only depicts percent correct, there appears to be no difference in performance across groups. This apparent lack of difference may be surprising to the clinician who observes these three groups performing at levels of proficiency that do not appear equal. When the time dimension is added (Figure 2), the expected discrepancies do in fact emerge. Despite performing at a level of 100% accuracy, the DD group is performing at a considerably slower rate. One of the main implications of this illustration is that learning goes far beyond the 100% accuracy mark. Data-based instructional decisions using information from Figure 1 would not necessarily prescribe the additional practice required for learners to reach proficient or fluent levels of performance. Conversely, information from Figure 2 clearly indicates that the DD group would benefit from additional opportunities to practice.

Figure 1. Accuracy Data



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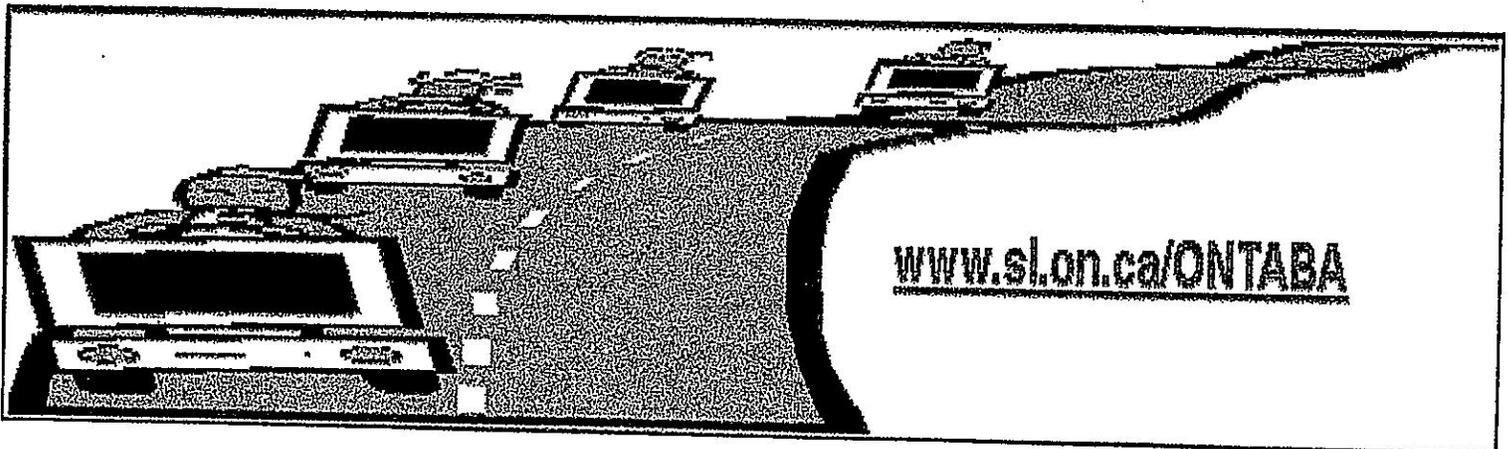
Figure 2. Fluency Data



In summary, Precision Teaching allows us to measure real dimensions of behavior, provides methods for precisely and systematically evaluating student performance, and allows us to make efficient data-based instructional decisions. In short, Precision Teaching reminds us that time is of the essence. It is this author's strong belief that better teaching can only be realized with the implementation of better measurement procedures that fully embrace the important dimension of time. In the immortal words of the late Dr. Eric Haughton, "You can take behavior out of time, but you can't take the time out of behavior" (Binder, 2003, p.15).

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**Getting connected**

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**ONTABA Analyst Submissions**

**Your newsletter is only as good as your contributions.**

The *ONTABA Analyst* is a forum for us to stay connected in many ways. All members are encouraged to submit articles on topics related to behaviour analysis; theoretical, practical or topical issues, perspectives from different regions of the province, jobs or schools, research accounts, news, announcements, your biography, reviews, student practicums, etc.

**Article submissions:**

We reserve the right to edit without changing the intent of an article, request further editing by the author, publish articles relative to the content of the current Analyst, publish them at a later date with due respect to the timeliness of a given article, or refuse an article. You will be informed of acceptance, rewrite or refusal of an article. Announcements will be published at the discretion of the editor. *ONTABA* will not be held responsible for the views and opinions of *ONTABA Analyst* contributors.

Advertising in the *ONTABA Analyst* is available for a fee payable to *ONTABA* (\$100.00 1/4 pg., \$200.00 1/2 pg., \$300.00 full pg.). Job ads may be posted on the *ONTABA* website for up to 30 days.

Submissions for the next *ONTABA ANALYST, Fall Issue* must arrive to **Caroll Drummond** at [carolld@sympatico.ca](mailto:carolld@sympatico.ca) by **July 16, 2004** for the **August 3, 2004** issue.

**Upcoming Conferences and Workshops**

**International Conferences**

- ABA International Conference: May 28-June 1, 2004. Boston, Mass.  
[www.abainternational.org/convention/](http://www.abainternational.org/convention/)
- 2nd International ABA Conference: August 12-15, 2004. Campinas, Brazil  
[www.abainternational.org/brazil](http://www.abainternational.org/brazil)
- Seventh International Congress on Behavioural Studies: June 22-26, 2004. Engelberg, Switzerland -  
[http://frontpage.auburn.edu/international\\_congress\\_on\\_behaviorism](http://frontpage.auburn.edu/international_congress_on_behaviorism)
- 3rd International ABA Conference: November 25-27, 2005. Beijing, China

**Ontario Conferences/Workshops**

- Surrey Place Centre/TPAS and Shining Through Centre presents **Dr. Vincent J. Carbone**, Ed.D. Board Certified Behavioural Analyst on September 7, 8 & 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Workshop registration and information: Gerry Bernicky, Surrey Place Centre, **Ph. 416-925-5141 ext 442**
- Autism Society Ontario's Annual ASD Conference and AGM presents **Dr. Margaret Bauman**, guest speaker, on Friday, June 18, 2004, Windsor, Ontario.  
<http://www.autismsociety.on.ca/WindsorRegistration.doc>

**Events**

- Shining Through Centre presents its annual "Swinging for Autism" Fundraising Golf Tournament on Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at the Kleinberg Golf Club in Kleinberg, Ontario. Dinner at the Venetian Banquet that evening. Registration and information call: 905-851-7955.

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**ONTABA, the Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis,**  
is an affiliate Chapter of the Association for Behavior Analysis International.  
ONTABA currently has members from professions such as  
education, nursing, health care, and psychology.  
The objectives of ONTABA are to promote behaviour analysis in the province of Ontario,  
to facilitate interactions between professionals engaged in behavioural activities,  
to monitor and participate in legal and professional issues related to behaviour analysis,  
and to initiate standardized practices and certification of Behaviour Analysts.

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