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*Focusing on individuals with autism, intellectual disability, and related disabilities*

## Evidence-based Practices for Individuals with Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Related Disabilities

### Putting the Pieces Together: Using EBP Tools to Support Teacher Self-Reflection of Practice

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The premise of *evidence-based practice* (EBP) is to identify and use practices and instructional strategies that have been shown, across multiple rigorous research studies, to positively affect student outcomes (Hsiao & Peterson, 2019). Over the past decade several useful, valid, and free resources and tools have been developed by research centers (e.g., Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform [CEEDAR]; Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute [FPGI]) to support teacher preparation and classroom application of identified EBPs. Despite the development of critical supports and resources, educators often fail to utilize EBPs (Cook, Smith, & Tankersley, 2012). Even when aware these resources exist, educators may struggle to put the pieces (i.e., literature reviews, fidelity checklists, professional teaching standards) into use as professional development (PD) tools. Commonly the PD provided is not specific to “whom” and “what” a teacher is teaching nor interconnected to how to identify EBPs useful to them (Courtade, Test, & Cook, 2015).

#### Teacher-Driven Professional Learning

A vital component of improving student outcomes is high-quality PD, involving a strong focus on the development of a learner (e.g., teacher, teaching assistant) within the classroom (McLesky, 2011). One key quality of learner-centered PD is the identification of teacher needs that are consistent with a teacher’s beliefs, values, and knowledge (Jimenez & Barron, 2019). Allowing teachers to self-identify professional goals increases teacher “buy-in” for continued growth (Jimenez & Barron, 2019); increasing sustainability for continuous improvement (Shurr, Hirth, Jasper, McCollow, & Heroux, 2014).

One issue that may arise within teacher-directed professional development is whether educators know what is and is not supported by research (Hsiao & Peterson, 2019). While

educators report frequently using one or more evidence-based practices, less than 10% could accurately identify EBPs when given a list to select practices (Stormont, Reinke, & Herman, 2011). When special educators do report using evidence-based practices, they often also report feeling unprepared to use them within instructional areas (e.g., science, communication; Knight, Huber, Kuntz, Carter, & Juarez, 2019). Therefore, having a growth mindset is not enough if educators are not aware of the “heavy-hitting” practices within their field and/or how to implement them with fidelity.

#### Putting the Pieces Together

Reflective practice provides educators momentum to build their practice and close the research-to-practice gap. One model of PD that supports feasibility, sustainability, and effectiveness is ongoing coaching/mentoring focused on teacher reflection of their own practice, while providing the resources they need in order to “know what they don’t know.” The tool in Figure 1 (Jimenez, 2017) utilizes two resources (Browder, Wood, Thompson, & Ribuffo, 2014; Wong et al., 2013) to help in identifying EBPs for students with moderate to severe intellectual disability and autism. The EBPs are listed in the middle column, then cross-walked with *high leverage practices* (McLesky et al., 2017) to illustrate how specific explicit practices align with what we know to be high-impact strategies (e.g., time delay, explicit teaching). Next, these “how to teach” strategies are aligned with teacher standards, allowing educators to see how these explicit practices align to their teaching requirements.

Finally, the teacher reflection tool in Figure 1 (see page 4) uses the four stages of learning (Shurr, Jimenez, & Bouck, 2019) to support teacher self-identification of current knowledge and implementation. Teachers must also self-reflect upon how they will build their own practice. All too often PD efforts over-focus

Professional Standards for Teachers	Research and EBPs for Special Education	EBPs for population	Learning Stages of Implementation <sup>5</sup> I am . . .				
			Acquisition	Fluency	Maintenance	Generalization	
AITSL <sup>1</sup> (based on those chosen by Teacher development and performance feedback)	High Leverage Practices in Special Education <sup>2</sup>	Based on Innovation Configurations of EBPs <sup>3</sup> & EBPs from for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder <sup>4</sup>	Not currently aware of/or using practice	Using practice; However, I may not be consistent or I am unsure of my fidelity of implementation	Using practice; my fidelity is sound; However, I would like to be able to use with greater ease, as part of my every day practice to support a learning goal/student	Using practice with ease and fidelity; However, when presented with a new unit/student; I may need additional support to use efficiently	Using practice with ease, fidelity, and can problem-solve usage across multiple setting/ contexts.
3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs 3.3 Using teaching strategies 3.4 Select and use resources 3.5 Use effective classroom communication 4.1 Support student participation 4.2 Manage classroom activities	HLP 8 Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behaviour. HLP 12 Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal. HLP 15 Provide scaffolded supports. HLP 16 Use explicit instruction	<b>1.0 How to Teach -Systematic Instruction</b> 1. Prompting & fading • Least Intrusive Prompting • Simultaneous Prompting • Stimulus Prompts • Constant Time Delay 1.2 - Reinforcement • Individual R assessments • Fading of 1.3 - Task analysis; discrete trial 1.4 – Generalization					
3.1 Establishing challenging learning goals 5.2 Provide feedback to students on their learning	HLP 14 Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence.	<b>2.0 How to Teach - Self-Directed Instruction</b> 2.1 - SDLMI 2.2 - Pictorial self-instruction 2.3 - Directed inquiry <b>8.0 What to Teach - Self-Determination</b> (can embed with academic instruction) 8.1- Choice making 8.2 - Self-management 8.3 - Problem solving					

Figure 1. Teacher Self-Reflection on Evidence-based Practice (EBP) Implementation.

on adding new knowledge rather than honing existing practices into sustainable, everyday routines. The development and use of self-reflection, teacher-directed PD, and EBPs allow educators to identify clear and explicit learning goals, and to then develop a systematic plan to reach these professional goals.

## Conclusion

The research has frequently indicated that “one-shot PD” is ineffective in changing teacher behavior (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Additionally, the research also emphasizes the impact of high-leverage and evidence-based practices on student outcomes. School systems, schools, and educators alike must develop and utilize tools that work for them, meet their own needs, and provide feasible support, making professional learning both meaningful and an everyday occurrence. Rather than expecting teachers to “add” something to what they are doing, the growth mindset becomes a culture cultivated by the reciprocal nature of adult learning and ease of teaching students. ■

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