Welcome to our special video to explain the relationship between the high-leverage practices for special education and evidence-based practices.

There are a range of sources for content in this video including the IRIS Center, the What Works Clearinghouse, the Council for Exceptional Children, and peer-reviewed journal articles included in the reference list.

This video is split into two parts. In part 1, we discuss how High-Leverage Practices which we refer to as HLPs and Evidence-Based Practices, or EBPs, can be used in a complementary way to improve special and general education teachers’ instruction for students with disabilities. In part 2, we show video clips of real teachers in schools using HLPs and EBPs in a complementary manner.

Part 1: What are EBPs & HLPs, and how do they work together?

Effective instruction involves educators using the best available research – in combination with other considerations, such as students’ individual needs and goals, the particular instructional context, and teachers’ wisdom of practice – to guide decisions about what and how to teach (Spencer et al., 2012). An important component of evidence-based education is instructional practices shown to improve outcomes for specific populations of learners by multiple, high-quality experimental studies (Cook et al., 2020). We often refer to these as evidence-based practices or EBPs. Various educational organizations (e.g., WWC, CEC) have developed standards for identifying the amount of evidence from rigorous and methodologically sound studies needed for an educational practice to be labeled as an EBP. Despite some differences in their standards, these organizations seek to identify practices shown by a body of sound research to result in improved academic or behavioral outcomes. In sum, when evidence-based practices are established, available, and are a good fit for the student and instructional context, they should be prioritized.

HLPs are instructional and professional practices special and general educators may employ alone, or in collaboration, to implement EBPs, to make needed adjustments to instruction, as well as when a specific EBP isn’t available for a particular situation. They may also help ensure that students with disabilities are supported according to the tenets of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Most of the HLPs are broader than specific EBPs, but are still critical touchstones of practice for designing and delivering an evidence-based education. It is important to note some HLPs have more evidence than others.

The HLPs were written by a multidisciplinary team of experts to be applicable across all students and grade levels. In addition, the HLPs complement EBPs by offering skills and actions necessary for the successful implementation of specific practices and programs, as well as to make appropriate adjustments in EBPs to improve their effectiveness with individual students. Simply put, using HLPs in combination with EBPs may contribute to a more effective and individualized education for all students with disabilities.

For example, HLPs like explicit instruction, providing high-quality feedback, and using flexible student groupings are necessary to the successful implementation of many EPBs. For example, each would be used to implement the evidence-based practice of schema instruction to solve word problems in mathematics. Other HLPs are critical for designing and delivering effective instruction for students with disabilities. To illustrate, HLP # 1-6 are about collaboration, assessment, and data-based decision making. These HLPs are necessary for developing student goals for instruction, planning instruction, and evaluating its effectiveness.

In sum, EBPs and HLPs do not exist in a vacuum. They are both necessary to ensure that general and special education teachers can design and deliver an effective education for each student. Research exists to support some HLPs, but others are too broad to lend themselves to being studied within controlled environments. This should not suggest some HLPs are more important than others; rather, each teacher should carefully select appropriate practices based on students’ unique needs. In many instances, this will mean prioritizing specific evidence-based practices complimented by select HLPs.

Part 2: Examples of EBPs and HLPs being used within lessons

Now that we described the importance of HLPs and EBPs and how they might be used together, let’s take a look at some examples of teachers using them together to provide effective instruction.

In this 1st clip, Ms. Bree Barns is reviewing class procedures for lining up at the door. The explicit review/reteaching of class procedures is an evidence-based practice in the domain of classroom management (Simonsen et al., 2015). The procedures are predictable, and promote the smooth operation of the classroom given the clear steps. This procedure has been explicitly taught, Ms. Barnes is taking time to review and rehearse the procedure, and this is a routine for a problematic area in the classroom. She also provides students with multiple opportunities to respond (Sutherland, Alder, & Gunter, 2003; Sutherland & Wehby, 2001), and has students model examples and non-examples of the expected behavior with corresponding discussion/confirmation of learning. For more information about EBPs for classroom management, please visit [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

Now consider the same clip through the lens of the HLPs. HLP 7 is all about creating a positive, organized, and respectful learning environment. Explicitly teaching and reteaching classroom expectations, routines, and procedures are included within this broad HLP. In addition, Ms. Barns utilizes HLP 16 -- using explicit instruction to review and reteach class procedures by including examples and non-examples. She uses HLP 18, engaging students, by providing numerous OTRs, and involving students in the modeling of examples and non-examples. Additionally, Mrs. Barnes used data during her lesson planning to arrive at the decision that she needed to reteach the procedures (HLP 6).

In this 2nd example, Ms. Iesha Samuels is leading a small group mathematics lesson online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence-based practice she is using is the use of manipulatives to help students practice solving story problems with counting skills in a real-world context. Lesson adapted from <https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/counting-5-12-using-story-problem?fbclid=IwAR1dsDx6MGZLnDFAjMk470QRQyQXMHuy6cD-BI-4rHH4b3UheTnBhSkpu28>

Now consider the same clip through the lens of the HLPs. First, she uses HLP 16, use explicit instruction. Ms. Samuels used several components of this practice, including clear language, modeling, guided practice, and lots of OTRs. She provides the student with specific and positive feedback on the students’ effort and performance (HLP 22). Ms. Samuels provides this instruction to a small group (HLP 17) and provides students with scaffolded supports (HLP 15) through use of the counting blocks during all phases of the lesson.

Although not shown, it is clear Ms. Samuels worked with colleagues and the family, informed by data, to identify the most effective instruction for the target students. Various formal and informal data were gathered to inform decision making before, during, and after individual lessons. Finally, Ms. Samuels is working towards addressing specific learning goals for her students by providing needed adaptations, and systematically designed lessons towards those goals.

In conclusion for this special video: HLPs and EBPs are both necessary to provide students with an evidence-based education. EBPs are specific strategies teachers can use for specific content and learners’ needs. They should be prioritized whenever possible so students receive specially-designed instruction to address their individual goals. Whereas HLPs are the strategies teachers can use to support effective implementation, adapt instruction for individual students, and design and implement instruction when EBPs are not available. Teachers can implement HLPs to make appropriate adjustments to their instruction, thereby enhancing students learning and behavior as intended.

Thanks for watching, and please continue using resources from [www.highleveragepractices.org](http://www.highleveragepractices.org), and other high-quality resources sponsored by OSEP and CEC.