

Contact Your Local Parent Center:

Evidence-Based Practices at School: A Guide for Parents

Information for families and Parent Centers

All parents want their children to receive the best education possible. One way to help your child succeed is to know if the school is using effective teaching and intervention practices. But how can schools and parents know if a practice is effective? One method is to see if there is any research or “evidence” to prove that the practice works. This handout explains the meaning of “evidence-based practices” and why they are important. It also lists resources where parents can learn more.

What is an Evidence-Based Practice?

Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) require that schools use programs, curricula, and practices based on “scientifically-based research” “to the extent practicable.” This means that whenever possible, the educational interventions being used must be strongly supported by evidence from well-conducted research studies. Educational research may be said to be scientific when it:

- Uses a sound research design. The outcomes of students receiving a tested teaching strategy or intervention are compared to similar students who do not receive the intervention.
- Is based on high quality data analysis. Researchers must be sure to carefully collect, store and examine the data.
- Involves other researchers to review the results. The study should be reported in a journal so other researchers can review the methods used and repeat the research in other settings.

Under IDEA, instruction is individualized based on the student’s needs. That’s why it is especially important that the knowledge and experience of professionals and parents are also considered when deciding how to teach a student with disabilities. Professionals and parents should know about instructional practices and interventions that have been shown by research to be most effective. These research-based practices should then be matched with a student’s unique needs and skills when developing a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). It is important to record what works so that evidence can emerge over time that offers new insights into teaching and learning for students with disabilities.

ALL-68

Developed by the National Parent Technical Assistance Center in collaboration with the Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers
ParentCenterNetwork.org

National and Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers

parentcenternetwork.org

National

PACER Center, MN

Regional

Region 1 –
Statewide Parent
Advocacy Network, NJ

Region 2 –

Exceptional Parents
Assistance Center, NC

Region 3 –

Partners Resource Network,
TX

Region 4 –

Wisconsin FACETS, WI

Region 5 –

PEAK Parent Center, CO

Region 6 –

Matrix Parent Network and
Resource Center, CA

For additional copies, contact:

National Parent Technical Assistance Center
PACER Center

8161 Normandale Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

952.838.9000 | 952.838.0199 (Fax) | 888.248.0822 (Toll Free)

alliance@taalliance.org | www.parentcenternetwork.org

©2011, PACER Center

How Do I Help Ensure My Child is Receiving Evidence-Based Instruction?

If you have questions about an educational practice that is being used with your child, you can ask the teacher or other school staff about the research supporting the practice. As part of the discussion at your child's IEP meeting, it is important to ask whether there is evidence that supports the academic, social and behavioral practices or interventions that are being proposed.

You can also review the websites below when preparing for Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to find information about different practices being considered.

Where Do I Find Information on Evidence-Based Practices?

The U.S. Department of Education and other agencies and organizations maintain websites and databases with information on evidence-based practices in the field of education:

What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

The What Works Clearinghouse is housed at the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. What Works Clearinghouse produces practice guides and reports with recommendations for schools on interventions in various topical areas.

Promising Practices Network: <http://www.promisingpractices.net/>

The Promising Practices Network provides research-based information on programs and practices that have been shown to be effective in improving the lives of children, including educational outcomes.

The Center for Evidence-Based Practices: <http://www.evidencebasedpractices.org/>

The Center for Evidence-Based Practices' goal is to bridge the research-to-practice gap in the areas of early childhood education and family support.

Research Basics: <http://www.nichcy.org/Research/Basics/Pages/Default.aspx>

Research Basics is a collection of articles and resources on understanding educational research and statistics from the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY).

References:

Beghetto, R. (2003). Scientifically Based Research. *ERIC Digest*. Accessed online February 9, 2011 at: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED474304.pdf>.

Cook, B.G., Tankersley, M., & Landrum, T.J. (2009). Determining evidence-based practices in special education. *Council for Exceptional Children*, 75(3), 365-383.

Gersten, R. (2009). *Types of research and their roles in improvement of practice*. National Center for Learning Disabilities. Accessed online February 9, 2011 at: <http://www.nclld.org/at-school/especially-for-teachers/effective-teaching-practices/types-of-research-and-their-roles-in-improvement-of-practice>.

Turnbull, A., et al. (2010). Knowledge to action guides: Preparing families to be partners in making educational decisions. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 42(3), 42-53.

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (2003). Prepared by the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. *Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User-Friendly Guide*. Accessed online February 9, 2011 at: <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorousvid/index.html>.



A special thanks to those who reviewed and provided input on this document, including Don Deshler (Kansas University), Carl Dunst (Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute), Judy Smith-Davis (IRIS Center), and Elizabeth Kozleski (Arizona State University), and the Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers.

This document was supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs Cooperative Agreement H328R080012. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of other organizations imply endorsement by those organizations or the U.S. Government.

On request, this publication is available in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print or audiotape. There are no copyright restrictions on this document. However, please credit the source and support of federal funds when copying all or part of this document. This document is also available on the ALLIANCE National Parent Technical Assistance Center's website at: <http://parentcenternetwork.org/national>.