EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Nebraska Department of Education

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) seeks to provide educators and administrators with a tool to help them understand evidence-based practices, particularly with regard to students with disabilities. Data from Nebraska's accountability system, AQuESTT, demonstrates the need for purposeful instructional practices to move learning forward. As such, NDE has partnered with Hanover Research (Hanover) to create this infographic overviewing the research supporting evidence-based teaching practices in special education.

Evidence-Based Practices for Quality Instruction

WHAT ARE EBPs?

When districts and schools choose and design their curriculum, instruction, interventions, and assessments, it is important to use **Evidence-Based Practices** — methods that have been tested and proven to work. To be considered an Evidence-Based Practice, a practice must have multiple demonstrations of effectiveness from high-quality experimental studies.

WHY USE EBPs?

The benefits of implementing EBPs for educators and students include:

- An increased likelihood of **positive child or student outcomes**
- Increased **accountability**
- **Less wasted time** and fewer wasted resources
- An increased likelihood of being **responsive to learners' needs**

SELECTING AN EBP

Teachers should consider the three following factors when selecting an EBP:

- Students & Setting
- Available Resources
- Quality of Evidence

High-Leverage Practices

High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) in special education are evidence-based practices that can leverage student learning across different content areas, grade levels, and student abilities. In Nebraska, schools select and monitor the implementation of these practices as part of their Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP). Below are a few examples of HLPs specifically helpful for instructing students with disabilities.

Use explicit instruction.

Teachers make content, skills, and concepts explicit by showing and **telling students what to do or think while solving problems, enacting strategies, completing tasks, and classifying concepts.** Teachers use explicit instruction when students learn new material and complex concepts and skills.

Use strategies to promote active student engagement.

Teachers **promote student engagement** by connecting learning to students' lives and using various peer-assisted, teacher-led, student-regulated, and technology supported strategies shown empirically to increase student engagement.

Use flexible grouping.

Teachers **assign students to groups based on learning goals,** monitor peer interactions, and provide positive and corrective feedback. Teachers use small learning groups **to accommodate learning differences,** promote in-depth interactions, and teach students to work collaboratively.

Sources: [1] "What Are Evidence-Based Practices?" Special Education Resource Project, Vanderbilt University, https://my.vanderbilt.edu/spedteacherresources/what-are-evidence-based-practices/ [2] "High-Leverage Practices in Special Education," Council for Exceptional Children & The CEEDAR Center, January 2017 https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CEC-HLP-Web.pdf [3] McCray, Erica, Margaret Kamman, Mary Brownell, "High-Leverage Practices and Evidence-Based Practices: a Promising Pair," The CEEDAR Center, October 2017, https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/HLPs-and-EBPs-A-Promising-Pair.pdf

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HIGH LEVERAGE PRACTICES CONTINUED...

Provide scaffolded supports.

Scaffolded supports provide temporary assistance to students so they can successfully complete tasks that they cannot yet do independently or with a high success rate. **Teachers select powerful visual, verbal, and written supports** and remove them once they are no longer needed.

Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals.

Teachers **assess individual student needs** and adapt curriculum materials and tasks so that students can meet instructional goals. Teachers select materials and tasks based on student needs.

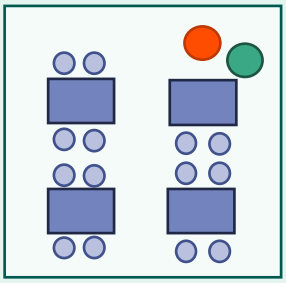
Identify long- and short-term learning goals

Teachers **prioritize** what is most important for students to learn by **providing meaningful access** to and success in general education and other contextually relevant curricula.

Best Practices for Integrated Co-Teaching

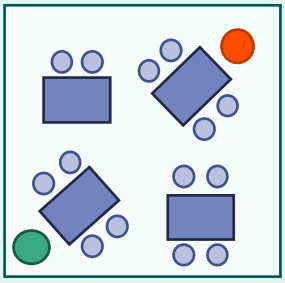
Integrated Co-teaching is an evidence-based special education service-delivery model in which two certified teachers, one general educator, and one special educator share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for diverse students, including students with disabilities. There are six research-based models of co-teaching instruction, each with unique advantages. The figures below illustrate two examples of co-teaching instruction models.

Team Teaching



In a Team Teaching model, two teachers share instruction, each taking part in the delivery of the content as they interact with each other and the students. The partnership models collaboration and communication.

Station Teaching



In a Station Teaching Model, students circulate among various learning stations around the classroom. Each of the two teachers leads a learning station with a specific focus, like skill reinforcement, hands-on concept exploration, or enrichment.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Co-teaching improves the active participation of ALL students.

Students in co-taught classes experience higher achievement than those in classrooms with just one teacher.

Co-taught class settings produce positive social outcomes for students with and without disabilities.

Sources: [1] McCaw, Jordan, "Special Education Administrative Supervision of Integrated Co-Teaching," Journal for Leadership and Instruction, v19, Fall 2020, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1282963.pdf [2] Marilyn Friend and Lynne Cook, "Six Approaches to Co-Teaching," State Education Resource Center, https://ctserc.org/component/k2/item/50-six-approaches-to-co-teaching [3] Sparks, Sarah, "Co-Teaching: Valuable But Hard to Get Right," Education Week, July 2022, https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/co-teaching-valuable-but-hard-to-get-right/2022/07 [4] "Benefits of Co-Teaching," State Education Resource Center, https://ctserc.org/documents/resources/benefits.pdf [5] Nutt, Janet, "Co-Teaching Strategies: Improving Student Engagement by Increasing Opportunities to Respond," Kentucky Teacher Education Journal: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Kentucky Council for Exceptional Children: Vol. 8 : Iss. 2 , Article 3, 2021, https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1035&context=ktej

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Role of Administrators & Continuous Improvement

In order to be successful, evidence-based practices and their use must be supported by school and district administrators. Continuous Improvement teams can support the implementation and fidelity of practices by writing goals that include instructional strategies, planning for professional development, and monitoring outcomes as set checkpoints. Below are some examples of researched-based best practices for how administrators can support evidence-based practices in their schools.

Administrators can support co-teaching by...

- Ensuring teachers have **no scheduling conflicts** during co-teaching times.
- Providing **ample collaborative planning time** for co-teaching teams.
- Guide teacher teams on how to **share duties and target instruction.**
- Create **ongoing professional development** for teacher teams.

Administrators can collaborate with educators by...

- **Working together** to monitor students' progress through **periodic diagnostic assessments.**
- **Attending** teacher training sessions or completing related trainings.
- **Making evidence-based practices in the classroom a priority** for both teachers and the administration.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Teachers can better implement evidence-based practices when they have time to prepare.

Program fidelity improves when teachers and administrators receive necessary training.

A safe, secure professional environment will help to ensure high-quality implementation of evidence-based programs.

Additional Resources

- *Six Approaches to Co-Teaching,* State Education Resource Center.
- *Evidence-Based Practices: Identifying and Selecting a Practice or Program,* IRIS Center.
- *Evidence-Based Practice Summaries Database,* IRIS Center.
- *What is an EBP?* IRIS Center.
- *Program Comparison Tool,* Nebraska Department of Education.
- *Evidence-Based Practice Guide Database,* What Works Clearinghouse.
- *High Leverage Practices and Evidence-Based Practices: A Promising Pair,* CEEDAR Center.
- *High Leverage Practices in Special Education,* CEEDAR Center.

Source: "Evidence-Based Programs: Ensure Quality Implementation," Education World, https://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/evidence-based-quality-implementation-fidelity.shtml