

RSE-TASC REPORTER

LOWER HUDSON REGIONAL SPECIAL EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT CENTER

Figuring Out What Works in Education Through Evidence-Based Practices

By John Boniello, RSE-TASC Bilingual Special Education Specialist

These days the education market is being flooded with products that claim to be “research-based” or “evidence-based”. For educators who are always looking for a program, product, or practice that will help students, it is easy to become overwhelmed by all the hype. How do we sift through the claims made by the creators and sellers of products or practices to truly distinguish the good from the bad??

We need to improve our ability to think about research critically and draw our own conclusions, just as we teach our students to do. At the RSE-TASC, we are exploring ways to help educators in our region critically read research in order to identify effective instructional practices. One of the first steps is to make sure we have a common vocabulary for the discussion.

“Research-based” vs. “evidence-based”: What is really the difference?

As stated above, the education market has been flooded with products and practices that claim to have research behind them. This is probably true, but all that means is that someone did some research on



either the practice or the underlying principles. “Research-based” does not mean that the practice has been proven to be effective because it says nothing about the quality or outcomes of the research conducted on the practice. What we should be looking for are evidence-based practices or interventions (EBPs).

In their article *Unraveling Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education*, Cook and Cook (2011) define EBPs as those that are supported by multiple studies with acceptable research designs, i.e. experimental, quasi-experimental, or single-subject studies, and that demonstrate meaningful

effects on student outcomes as determined by effect size (more on this below).

When a practice is repeatedly shown to be effective by these standards, it can be called “evidence-based”. So how do we know if there is a meaningful effect?

Effect Size? What’s That?

An effect size tells you not only if a practice or intervention is effective, but how effective. If you are trying to determine if a study shows that a practice will improve your student outcomes, search the article or webpage for the effect size. It will usually be a number between - 3.0 to + 3.0. A

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What's Coming Up in Spring 2016? Lower Hudson RSE-TASC Regional Trainings *What Works for Students with Disabilities*

Mark Your Calendar

School-Wide Systems Transition

April

- CAN*DO Consortium—Career Exploration for Students, 4/18
- Transition Assessment and Planning for Students who have Multiple Disabilities, 4/26

May

- Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential, 5/3
- The Forum: Adult Agencies that Serve Individuals with Multiple Disabilities, 5/12

Behavior & Discipline Supports

April

- Developing and Monitoring Social and Behavioral Goals for Preschoolers, 4/19 *WAIT LIST*
- PBIS Coaches' Forum for Special Topics, 4/25

May

- PBIS Booster: Data-Based Decision Making, 5/3
- PBIS Regional Forum—Restorative Relationships with Students Who Display Challenging Behavior, 5/17
- PBIS Coaches' Forum, 5/24

Leadership

April

- CSE Roundtable, 4/20

May

- Special Education for Principals, 5/17

Individualized Educational Planning and the CSE Process

April

- Testing Accommodations, 4/18
WAIT LIST

May

- New CPSE/CSE Chairperson Training (3-Day workshop), 5/2, 5/9 and 5/16 *WAIT LIST*
- Developing Quality IEPs that Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities (2-Day), 5/23 and 6/6 *WAIT LIST*

June

- Development and Measurement of Effective IEP Goals (2-Day), 6/10 and 6/15 *WAIT LIST*

Instructional Practices

April

- Explicit Direct Instruction: Study Hall, 4/18
- Explicit Instruction: Providing Access to Curriculum for Struggling Students (2-Day), 4/20 and 5/11
- Understanding Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, 4/21
- Specially Designed Instruction for ELL's (3-Day), 4/27, 5/11, and 5/18

May

- Literacy for English Language Learners: What's Different?, 5/4
- Literacy for English Language Learners: What's Different?, 5/20

SUMMER 2016

The RSE-TASC is pleased to announce that, at the request of many of you, we will be offering some of our more popular workshops during the upcoming summer months.

Some of the workshops we will be offering include:

- Preparing Students for Employment
- Administrators Workshop: Developing Core Instructional and Behavior Supports
- Language Acquisition vs. Learning Disability
- Literacy for ELLs: What's Different?
- Graduation Options for Students with IEPs
- Developing Quality IEPs that Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities
- Specially Designed Instruction for ELLs (3-Day)
- Explicit Instruction: Providing Access to Curriculum for Struggling Students (3-Day)

Keep an eye out for an email later this month with full details, including dates and locations.

To Register for our Regional Workshops

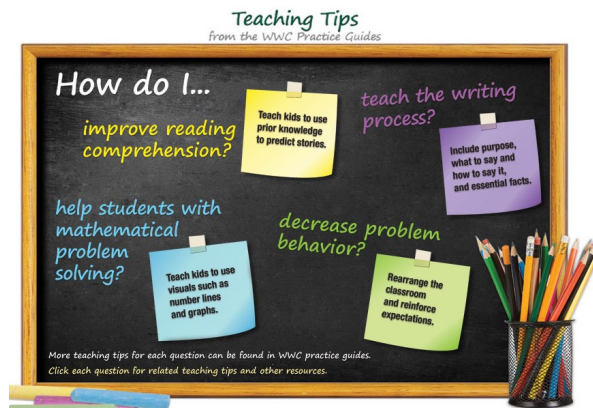
Please go to www.pnwbores.org/catalog to register online. Click on the down arrow next to the box that says "Click one or more options...", then select RSE-TASC and click "Search". Scroll down the webpage until you see the workshop in which you are interested and then click on its name to see details and enroll.

Community Events

- **Research-Based Practices for Increasing Attention and Motivation in Students with ASD;** 4/1/16, NYSRCASD, <http://www.albany.edu/autism/pdps.php>
- **AHA's Spring Conference: Issues in Independent Living for Adolescents & Adults on the Autism Spectrum;** 4/2/16, Adelphi University, www.ahany.org/events/aha-conferences/
- **Prevention, De-escalation and Behavior Support Techniques: Stop the Power Struggle;** begins 4/6/16, Rockland BOCES, www.rocklandbooces.org
- **Integrated Co-Teaching for English Language Learners** at SW BOCES, 4/6/16, HVRBE-RN, [www.swboeces.org/support.cfm](http://www.swbooces.org/support.cfm)
- **CPSE/CSE Parent Member Training;** 4/11/16 OR 4/19/16, HVSEPC and WIHD, www.wihd.org or lbencosme@wihd.org
- **Preparing for the Transition to College,** 4/12/16, HVSEPC and WIHD, www.wihd.org or jhawke@wihd.org
- **Resource and Transition Fair;** 4/15/16, Rockland BOCES and the Rockland Transition Consortium, dkitz@rbooces.org
- **Developing Emotionally Intelligent Schools—Leadership Symposium Series;** 4/15/16, Manhattanville College and the Center for Educational Leadership at PNW BOCES, www.pnwbooces.org/catalog
- **New Special Education Regulations and Updates;** 4/19/16, HVSEPC and WIHD, www.wihd.org or lbencosme@wihd.org
- **All Things Social—Early Childhood Transitions Conference;** 4/21/16, Rockland BOCES, www.rocklandbooces.org
- **Cultural Bridges Between Schools and Families/Communities;** 4/22/16, The Guidance and Child Study Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwbooces.org/catalog
- **Multilingual Learner Institute: Culturally Responsive Academic Learning;** begins 4/25/16, HVRBE-RN, www.swboeces.org/support.cfm
- **Foundations Level 1;** 4/27/16, The Hudson River Teacher Center at PNW BOCES, www.pnwbooces.org/catalog
- **3rd Annual Spring Conference;** 4/29/16, Hudson Valley Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders, rcasd@wihd.org
- **Addressing Disproportionate Suspension Rates: Taking Action to Support our Students;** 5/3/16, TAC-D at NYU, rw81@nyu.edu or visit their [website](#).
- **An Overview of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Skills and Strategies Conference;** 5/5/16, Rockland County Department of Mental Health, (845) 364-2382
- **NYSABE 2016 Conference—Changing Policies, New Directions: Bilingual Education Paving the Way to Every Student's Success;** 5/21/16, NYC, www.nysabe.net

School Tool: What Works Clearinghouse

When searching for EBPs there are many ways to go. You can read through thousands of articles, calculate effectiveness, and decide for yourself if the research is high quality; you can search for a meta-analysis, as described in the lead article; OR you can use this month's School Tool: the What Works Clearinghouse. The WWC



does the work for you in finding evidenced-based practices and rating the effectiveness of educational practices in six categories: Positive, Potentially Positive, Mixed, No Discernible, Potentially Negative, and Negative. There are over 11,000 practices on this site covering many different needs. Check it out today! <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

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negative effect size means the performance of students receiving the intervention actually decreased and a positive effect means performance increased; while an effect size of zero means that the intervention had no

effect on student performance. As readers we always want to look for an effect size of +0.3 or higher. General guidelines accepted in the field are that an effect size of +0.8 is a large effect, +0.5 a moderate effect and +0.2 a small.

Help! I Don't Have Time to Read and Interpret all the Research!

There are many websites that have sifted through the research for you. One example of a high quality website is shown in the School Tool

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on Page 3. For educators who want to make their own judgements, the best way to find evidence-based practices or to check on a practice that you have been using, is through reading meta-analyses.

A meta-analysis is a “study of studies” where the authors collate all of the published research on a practice and determine the effectiveness of a practice across multiple studies. A high quality meta-analysis will include the

standards of inclusion, an analysis of the data resulting in an overall effect size based on the outcomes of all of the studies, and a discussion of the effectiveness of the practice.

As educators our job is to ensure that we provide our students with the best instruction possible, so we must become more astute readers of research. When you are presented with a practice that is advertised as “evidence-based”, ask yourself, and

the vendor, about the quality of the research and the effect size. Finding a meta-analysis of the practices behind the program is a great way to start.

References

Cook, G.G. & Cook, S.C. (2011). Unraveling evidence-based practices in special education. *Journal of Special Education*, 47 (2), 71.82.

Bright Spot!

Our Bright Spot this month comes from Fayga Ringel, a resource room teacher in a school in East Ramapo.

What student outcome was achieved?

Using strategies gleaned from two RSE-TASC regional trainings, Explicit Direct Instruction and Improving the Sentence, Fayga accelerated progress in her students' reading and writing skills. She has noticed an increase in their reading fluency, reading comprehension and written expression. Students are also more willing to attempt more challenging academic tasks and are being rewarded with greater success.



What instructional practice or systemic change supported this student success?

After having students read a NewsELA article, Fayga wrote sentences and fragments on sentence strips and had students classify them as either a sentence or a fragment by recording their responses on sheet "wipe-boards". This activity allowed for meaningful repetition of segments of the text in isolation, while simultaneously encouraging students to frequently reference to the text for evidence to complete the fragments.

What can we learn from this?

As Fayga said, it is “Amazing how one well-structured activity can impact reading fluency, comprehension, and written expression at the same time!”

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