



High-Leverage Practices in Special Education

Social/Emotional/ Behavioral Practices

Effective special education teachers establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment to support student success. To do this, they employ several practices that are critical in promoting student social and emotional well-being. First, effective teachers focus on increasing appropriate behavior by adopting an instructional approach that incorporates the explicit teaching of social skills and offers students multiple opportunities to practice appropriate social behaviors throughout the school day followed by positive specific feedback. Second, they implement evidence-based practices to prevent social, emotional, and

behavioral challenges and provide early intervention at the first sign of risk. Third, effective teachers provide increasingly comprehensive supports through a team-based problem-solving strategy, to match the intensity of student challenges guided by behavioral assessment. Finally, they implement all behavioral supports—even those in response to significant problem behavior—in a caring, respectful, and culturally relevant manner. Effective teachers recognize that academic and behavioral support strategies are more effective when delivered within the context of positive and caring teacher-student relationships.

HLP7	Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment.
To build and foster positive relationships, teachers should establish age-appropriate and culturally responsive expectations, routines, and procedures within their classrooms that are positively stated and explicitly taught and practiced across the school year. When students demonstrate mastery and follow established rules and routines, teachers should provide age-appropriate specific performance feedback in meaningful and caring ways. By establishing, following, and reinforcing expectations of all students within the classroom, teachers will reduce the potential for challenging behavior and increase student engagement. When establishing learning environments, teachers should build mutually respectful relationships with students and engage them in setting the classroom climate (e.g., rules and routines); be respectful; and value ethnic, cultural, contextual, and linguistic diversity to foster student engagement across learning environments.	



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HLP8	Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.
<p>The purpose of feedback is to guide student learning and behavior and increase student motivation, engagement, and independence, leading to improved student learning and behavior. Effective feedback must be strategically delivered and goal directed; feedback is most effective when the learner has a goal and the feedback informs the learner regarding areas needing improvement and ways to improve performance. Feedback may be verbal, nonverbal, or written, and should be timely, contingent, genuine, meaningful, age appropriate, and at rates commensurate with task and phase of learning (i.e., acquisition, fluency, maintenance). Teachers should provide ongoing feedback until learners reach their established learning goals.</p>	

HLP9	Teach social behaviors.
<p>Teachers should explicitly teach appropriate interpersonal skills, including communication, and self-management, aligning lessons with classroom and schoolwide expectations for student behavior. Prior to teaching, teachers should determine the nature of the social skill challenge. If students do not know how to perform a targeted social skill, direct social skill instruction should be provided until mastery is achieved. If students display performance problems, the appropriate social skill should initially be taught, then emphasis should shift to prompting the student to use the skill and ensuring the "appropriate" behavior accesses the same or a similar outcome (i.e., is reinforcing to the student) as the problem behavior.</p>	



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HLP10	Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans.
<p>Creating individual behavior plans is a central role of all special educators. Key to successful plans is to conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) any time behavior is chronic, intense, or impedes learning. A comprehensive FBA results in a hypothesis about the function of the student's problem behavior. Once the function is determined, a behavior intervention plan is developed that (a) teaches the student a pro-social replacement behavior that will serve the same or similar function, (b) alters the environment to make the replacement behavior more efficient and effective than the problem behavior, (c) alters the environment to no longer allow the problem behavior to access the previous outcome, and (d) includes ongoing data collection to monitor progress.</p>	