FACT SHEET

Importance of Evidence-based Interventions

When your child's IEP team proposes a particular program or intervention, how can you know if it will be effective? Beyond setting up a trial period or asking the school for more information, parents and other members of the team can also look to research to see whether studies have found the intervention to be effective for children with needs similar to those of your child. Sometimes understanding research studies can be complicated. If you have questions about the information you find, ask your child's IEP team for more information or contact your local Partners Resource Network Regional Coordinator.

What does *evidence-based instruction* mean? – If a program is evidence-based, it means there is research to support its use in certain situations. In order to be considered research-based, the studies done on an intervention need to meet a certain standard. When possible, studies should use **experimental designs**, which compare randomly selected **treatment groups**, who receive the intervention in question, and **control groups**, or comparison groups. Sometimes, the team might also consider information from **quasi-experimental design**. This type of study takes a similar approach to the experimental design, but does not compare randomly selected groups. Data collected should be **valid** and **reliable** over multiple studies. This means that the studies must test what they claim to test, and multiple studies of the same intervention should produce similar results. To establish the trustworthiness of a source, the research should also have been published in a peer reviewed journal or approved by a panel of experts.

Evidence-based instruction and IEPs – When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004, new language was included to support the use of research-based instruction for students with disabilities. In fact, the law now states that the services page of the IEP must include "special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable." Not only must services be research-based, IDEA now requires teacher training in the provision of scientifically-based instruction. There is specific focus on teacher training in evidence-based educational practices as they relate to early intervention services.

Along with IDEA, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and now Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), place a strong emphasis on research-based instruction. In response to findings that suggested that a majority of fourth graders in the US were not proficient in reading, NCLB focused on research-based reading interventions for students in grades K-3 and professional development for the teachers who implement these programs. For more information on Research-Based Instruction visit: *www.wrightslaw.com/nclb/rbi.htm*.

As a member of your child's IEP team, it is important to look not only at whether the intervention is supported by scientifically-based research, but also that it fits with your child's individualized needs. Just because a particular program has been proven to effectively serve a particular group of students does not mean it will apply similarly to your child. When looking at research findings, pay attention to the specifics of the studies. Were the children in question similar in age to your child? Did the test include children with your child's disability? Was the setting for the tests similar to the classroom setting at your child's school? Will your child's teacher have an adequate level of training on implementing the program? If you have any questions about how an evidence-based intervention might apply to your child, as the IEP team for more information.

How can I find research on specific programs or interventions? – Essential to the use of evidence-based education practices is making research findings available to parents and educators. The following websites are a few examples of where you might find information on education practices used at your child's school:

- If you or a member of your child's IEP team is looking for more information about a proposed program, a good place to start is the What Works Clearinghouse, a website from the US Department of Education. The What Works Clearinghouse gathers and presents research on educational programs, and has a search function that allows you to look for information on particular interventions or search by intervention type to find which programs might best address your child's needs. The What Works Clearinghouse also provides practice guides with recommendations for educator; *http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc*

- The Promising Practices Network provides research findings for programs that have been proven to be effective. While educational programs are included, this site also includes information on a variety of other topics related to the health and well-being of young people; *www.promisingpractices.net*

- Doing What Works is another US Department of Education website. This site uses the information found on the What Works Clearinghouse, but provides examples for a more in-depth look at how educators might apply the research-based interventions in their classrooms; *www2.ed.gov/nclb/methods/whatworks/ edpicks.jhtml*

- For additional research summaries, trainings, and examples of evidence-based instruction, visit the Center on Instruction; *www.centeroninstruction.org*

If you have questions about the research supporting your child's education program, ask the members of the IEP team about the evidence supporting the interventions that they suggest. You can also use these websites to gather information in preparation for a meeting.

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