

SEL Best Practices

The path to equity & access

The purpose of this section is to provide teachers with an understanding of High Leverage Practices for Special Education (HLPs) and Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) for social, emotional learning . When used concurrently, they are powerful tools for providing intensive instruction and intervention for students who receive special education services. (Resource: [High-Leverage Practices and Evidence-Based Practices: A Promising Pair](#))

You will find connections to:

[SSD Research-Based Practices Selection Framework](#)

This document is organized into two sections:

[Section 1:](#) Section 1 is aimed at providing an understanding of High Leverage Practices for Special Education (HLPs) and the tools to get started. The High-Leverage Practice guidance document was collaboratively developed by the CEEDAR Center and the Council for Exceptional Children.

[Section 2:](#) Section 2 references the effective instructional steps that are evidence best practices for teaching SE skills. These practices were identified through a ¹meta-analysis supported by an examination of data from a number of independent studies on the subject of teaching SE skills and changing behavior. Executing these steps in conjunction with high leverage practices will yield greater skill attainment and behavioral changes.

Section I:

High Leverage Practices for Special Education (HLPs) can provide infrastructure to support effective teaching and consistent learning for every student to succeed. The [instructional HLP's](#), listed below, should be applied when teaching social and emotional content. In addition, there are specific [social, emotional, behavioral HLPs](#) that are meant to increase appropriate behavior.

Instructional HLPs

High Leverage Practice for Special Education (HLP) - Instruction	Definition: What it is	What it does	What it looks like in practice	Tools / Resources to Use
HLP11: Identify & prioritize long- and short-term learning goals	Teachers use a variety of sources (standards, data, IEP goals, etc) and understand essential curriculum components to make decisions about what is most crucial to emphasize.	Helps the teacher make decisions about what is crucial and develop long and short term goals accordingly.	Teacher looks at a variety of sources, makes decisions about what is crucial for that grade level or subject, and creates a scope and sequence of skills and outcomes.	MAP Blueprints, Learning Progressions
HLP12: Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal	Teachers sequence lessons that 'fit' together to reach a learning goal.	Helps the teacher develop important concepts and skills that provide the foundation for more complex learning, activate students' prior knowledge, and allow for flexibility of time allocation based on student performance.	Teacher uses backwards design to plan lessons to reach the goal. Each lesson is taught in order, but not necessarily at the same pace, since the pace of the lesson and series of lessons to reach the goal is based on student performance.	Learning Progressions
HLP13: Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals	Teachers assess individual student needs and consider the learning goal to adapt/modify curriculum materials.	Helps the teacher make strategic decisions on content and skills while accounting for student needs and personal goals.	Teacher selects materials and tasks based on student needs; uses relevant technology; makes modifications or intentional decisions about content coverage for each student relative to the goal.	Learning Progressions, Form F
HLP14: Teach	Teachers explicitly teach	Helps the teacher prioritize	Teacher integrates	Executive

cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence	(meta)cognitive strategies to support memory, attention, and self-regulation of learning.	cognitive processes to solve problems, regulate attention, organize thoughts and materials, and monitor one's own thinking as well as understanding academic content.	(meta)cognitive strategies into lessons on academic content through modeling and explicit instruction, such as think alouds through problem solving or using an organizational tool to complete a task or write.	Functioning
HLP 15: Provide scaffolded supports	Teachers provide temporary assistance to students so they can successfully complete tasks they cannot do independently and with a high rate of success.	Helps the teacher to anticipate or respond to student needs during instruction.	Teachers select visual, verbal and written supports and calibrate them to students' performance and understanding in relation to the learning tasks. Teachers will evaluate their effectiveness and gradually remove them when they are no longer needed.	Gradual Release Model
HLP 16: 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.	Helps the teacher teach new material, complex concepts and skills.	Teachers model and scaffold steps or processes needed to understand content and concepts, apply skills, and complete tasks successfully and independently.	Anita Archer
HLP 17: Use flexible grouping	Teachers use homogeneous and heterogeneous groups based on explicit learning goals, monitor peer interaction, and provide positive and corrective feedback to support productive learning.	Helps the teacher accommodate learning differences, promote in-depth academic-related interactions, and teach students to work collaboratively.	Teachers choose tasks that require collaboration, issue directives that promote productive and autonomous group interactions, and embed strategies that maximize learning opportunities and equalize participation to promote individual and group accountability.	Kagan, Tomlinson
HLP: 18 Use strategies to promote active student engagement	Teachers use a variety of teacher-led (choral response, response cards), peer-assisted (cooperative learning, peer tutoring), student-regulated (self-management), and technology supported strategies to increase student engagement.	Helps the teacher connect learning to students' lives to foster engagement and motivate reluctant learners.	Teachers build positive relationships with their students and intentionally choose instructional strategies that result in active student response, considering instructional outcomes. They monitor student engagement and provide positive and constructive feedback to	TPTs, Kagan

			sustain performance.	
HLP19: Use assistive and instructional technologies	Teachers evaluate technology options given student needs so they can make informed decisions that are grounded in evidence, professional wisdom, and students' IEP goals. So they can select and implement assistive and instructional technologies to support the needs of students with disabilities.	Helps the teacher make informed instructional decisions and advocate for support in technology implementation.	Teachers select and use augmentative and alternative communication devices and assistive and instructional technology products to promote student learning and independence.	AT selection tool on SSD life
HLP20: Provide intensive intervention	Teachers work with students who have similar needs on a small number of high priority, clearly defined skills or concepts critical to academic success.	Helps the teacher match the intensity of the instruction to the intensity of the student's learning and behavior challenges.	Teachers group students based on common learning needs, clearly define goals, use systematic, explicit, and well-paced instruction, monitor student progress and give immediate corrective feedback to students when they practice what they are learning.	Programs, Resource Guide
HLP21: Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings	Teachers use specific techniques to teach students to generalize and maintain newly acquired knowledge and skills.	Helps the teacher to think beyond their classroom for instruction and application as well as set up a system for reviewing prior learnings.	Teachers systematically use schedules of reinforcement, provide frequent material reviews, teach skills that are reinforced by the natural environment beyond the classrooms. They use numerous examples in instruction that require students to apply that they have learned in other settings.	Do Nows; Exit Tickets
HLP 22: Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior	Teachers provide ongoing feedback to guide student learning and behavior and increase motivation, engagement, and independence until learners reach their established learning goals.	Helps the teacher give feedback that is timely, contingent, genuine, meaningful, age appropriate and at rates commensurate with task and phase of learning (ie. acquisition, fluency, maintenance).	Teacher gives verbal, nonverbal, or written feedback that is strategically delivered and goal directed that informs the learner regarding the areas needing improvement and ways to improve performance.	Student Data Folders

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral HLPs

[See more details here](#)

High Leverage Practice for Special Education (HLP) - SEB	Definition: What it is	What it does	What it looks like in practice	Tools / Resources to Use
HLP7: Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment.	Teacher creates a learning environment that is enriched, engaging, and meets the needs of all students by implementing best practices that create a consistent, organized, and respectful classroom.	Creates a learning environment that makes all students feel emotionally safe and connected	Teachers 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.	Tier 1 checklist
HLP 8: Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students'	Teacher provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students'	Reinforces positive behavior	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	Providing effective feedback

learning and behavior	learning and behavior.		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.	
HLP9: Teach Social Behaviors	Teacher uses evidence based practices to explicitly teach social behaviors and incorporate SEL instruction into every subject and service.	Helps students use more adaptive behaviors to get needs met and learn social and emotional skills.	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.	HLP 9 checklist
HLP 10: Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans.	Teachers and IEP teams develop an individual student behavior plan based on data obtained from a functional behavioral assessment.	Assures that all prevention, teaching, and reinforcement strategies are in place	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	SSD FBA and BIP Overview

			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.	
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Source: [CEEDAR High-Leverage Practices for K-12 Special Education Teachers](#)

Section II:

Evidence based practices are skills, techniques and strategies that are backed by research and are often content focused. The checklist Linked below outlines an individualized evidence based practice to increase positive social and emotional behaviors in children.

[Teaching Social and Emotional Skills](#)

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Next Section:

[Assessments & Tools Identifying Skill Deficit](#)

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