



A Look at Social/ Emotional/ Behavioral

Effective special education teachers establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment to support student success. They recognize that academic and behavioral support strategies are more effective when delivered within the context of positive and caring teacher-student relationships, in a respectful and culturally responsive manner.

High-leverage practices 7–10 are related to the social/emotional/behavioral area. A brief description of each follows. [Note: The practices are applicable to *all* teachers who work with students with disabilities.]

- **Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment** (HLP7). 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 throughout 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.

- **Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior** (HLP8). 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 delivered strategically and be 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 the task and phase of learning (i.e., acquisition, fluency, maintenance). Teachers should provide ongoing feedback until learners reach their established learning goals.
- **Teach social behaviors** (HLP9). Teachers should explicitly teach appropriate interpersonal skills, including communication, and

High-Leverage Practices

The twenty-two high-leverage practices for special education are designed to serve as a road map for guiding teacher preparation, professional development, and/or current self-assessment. To make the practices more understandable and easier to use, they are organized around four intertwined areas of practice—collaboration, assessment, social/emotional/behavioral, and instruction.



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 that the “appropriate” behavior accesses the same or a similar outcome (i.e., is reinforcing to the student) as the problem behavior.

- **Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans (HLP10).** Creating individual behavior plans is a central role of all special educators. A major part of developing such plans is to conduct a functional behavioral assessment any time behavior is chronic, intense, or impedes learning. A comprehensive functional behavioral assessment 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 teaches the student a pro-social replacement behavior that will serve the same or similar function; alters the environment to make the replacement behavior more efficient and effective than the problem behavior; alters the environment to no longer allow the problem behavior to access the previous outcome; and includes ongoing data collection to monitor progress.



Academic and behavioral support strategies are more effective when delivered within the context of positive and caring teacher-student relationships.

Deepen Your Knowledge of Social/Emotional/Behavioral High-Leverage Practices

Effective special education teachers ensure that students with disabilities have the academic and behavioral supports they need to achieve success in school. The Council for Exceptional Children has resources to extend your understanding of social/emotional/behavioral high-leverage practices and help you apply that understanding to educational settings.



The High-Leverage Practice in Special Education— Social/Emotional/Behavioral Research Syntheses

<https://highleveragepractices.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/SEBfinal.pdf>

The document reviews research for each of the social/emotional/behavioral high-leverage practices. Learn more about what research and policy tell us about the social/emotional/behavioral practices, such as the following examples:

- Just like academic skill mastery, if teachers want students to build social behavior skill mastery, they must provide specific, contingent feedback.
- Social skill instruction paired with generalization strategies can lead to improved social-emotional functioning of students with disabilities.
- Interventions that are based on a functional behavioral assessment have been found to be more efficient and effective in reducing challenging behavior among students with disabilities and those at high risk than interventions that are nonfunctional based.



High-Leverage Practices in Special Education

www.pubs.cec.sped.org/p6255/

This book (2017) provides evidence-based information about the twenty-two high-leverage practices—including those for social/emotional/behavioral—which can be used to understand the practices more fully and the rationale for using them. For each practice area, there is an



“Learning environments that are consistent, organized, and respectful can serve as a strong platform to successfully implement all the other high-leverage practices.”



overview and research synthesis, including reference lists and a glossary, for each area practice.

Educators will find it helpful to have all of the practices in one book when learning and planning next steps for implementation.



High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Classrooms

www.pubs.cec.sped.org/p6298/

High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Classrooms (2019) delves deep into the set of practices that are essential to effective teaching and fundamental to supporting student learning. The book focuses primarily on Tiers 1 and 2 in a multi-tiered system of support, or work that occurs mostly with students in grades K–12 with mild disabilities in general education classrooms. For each high-leverage practice area there is an overall introduction, followed by a chapter for each of the high-leverage practices found in that area. The goal of the book was to discuss selected critical practice applications that would be most useful to teachers.

Four chapters provide educators with insights into what the high-leverage social/emotional/behavioral practices look like in action. Vignettes and tips show how the practices can enhance teaching and learning. The social/emotional/behavioral chapters address the following topics:

- “Consistent, Organized, Respectful Learning Environment.” The chapter reviews several strategies that teachers can use in establishing positive learning environments, including how to develop clear classroom procedures that cover critical times of the day, and how to create classroom expectations and rules that target multiple behaviors.
- “Using Feedback to Improve Student Outcomes.” The chapter focuses on how teacher-provided feedback can reinforce pro-social skills. It reviews strategies that teachers can use to implement high rates of specific, positive feedback throughout the school day.
- “Teaching Social Skills.” The chapter outlines a process for developing an instructional logic, using engagement strategies for students during instruction, and facilitating practice to mastery. It also identifies special considerations for teachers when teaching social skills in the classroom, such as monitoring progress, including students in all aspects of instruction and practice, and promoting home-school collaboration.
- “Conducting Functional Behavior Assessments to Develop Individualized Behavior Support Plans.” The chapter discusses beginning special education teachers’ roles and responsibilities related to students who need individualized behavior support. It focuses specifically on the essential components of functional behavioral assessments and individual behavior support plans.



Effective teachers provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.



TEACHING Exceptional Children

www.highleveragepractices.org/resources/

This special issue (volume 50, number 4), "Putting High-Leverage Practices Into Special Education," features nine articles that reflect and embody selected high-leverage practices. Kristin Sayeski, the issue editor, points out that while many articles published in *TEACHING Exceptional Children* could have been selected, the intent was to provide a sample of articles that serve as a springboard for discussion and instruction related to "how-to" guidance. For the social/emotional/behavioral practice area, two articles were selected.

The first article, "Teacher-Provided Positive Attending to Improve Student Behavior: A Brief Guide," looks at how to deliver effective positive attending strategies that help teachers be specific, immediate, consistent, frequent, and preventive when attending to students.

The second article, "Designing and Implementing Group Contingencies in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide," provides guidance for putting group contingencies into place.

High-Leverage Practices in Special Education: Reference Guides

Order from the Council for Exceptional Children
www.highleveragepractices.org/resources/

From National Professional Resources, these laminated quick-reference guides fold out to present strategies, tips, and resources. The guides cover the areas of high-leverage practices—collaboration, assessment, social/emotional/behavioral, and instruction. School leaders will find these excellent tools for helping teachers generalize their understanding of high-leverage practices with students.

Videos

High-Leverage Practice Video Series

www.highleveragepractices.org/videos/

This video series is designed to introduce and define the practices. Each video includes a brief review of the research along with several brief segments showing general education and special education teachers implementing the practice.

Currently, there are three available videos for the social/emotional/behavioral area.

- *Welcome to Our New Series on High-Leverage Practices* (6:28 minutes) (includes a discussion of the social/emotional/behavioral area)
- *High-Leverage Practices #8 and #22: Provide Positive and Constructive Feedback to Guide Students' Learning and Behavior* (20:04 minutes)
- *High-Leverage Practice #7: Establish a Consistent, Organized, and Respectful Learning Environment* (20:14 minutes).

[Future videos are being developed that address specific high-leverage practices in the different areas, so check back often.]



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