

The Importance of Implementing Evidence-Based Practices within the Educational Setting

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On April 26, 2018, the CDC issued a report on the prevalence of children diagnosed with autism and found a 15% increase in the diagnostic prevalence since the last report published in 2016. The report found that 1 in 59 children by the age of 8, had a diagnosis of autism, which is an increase from the 2016 report of 1 in 68 children (Biao, et al., 2018). This rise in diagnoses has increased the importance and necessity of implementing empirically supported interventions (ESI) across the lifespan of individuals diagnosed with autism. Arguably, one of the most influential settings for individuals across the lifespan (with or without a disability), is in school, where learning is fostered by our educational leaders.

“Education is perhaps the most important branch of scientific technology. It deeply affects all of us.” - B.F. Skinner (1968)

The Department of Education stated that educational leaders should be “using, generating, and sharing evidence about effective strategies to support students”. Sharing the evidence with other instructional leaders “gives stakeholders an important tool to accelerate student learning”. (Department of Education, 2016, p. 2)

How do our educational leaders prescribe empirically supported interventions (ESI) to our students with autism? When choosing what ESI to use, the decision-making process should involve assessing the best available evidence, your clinical expertise, the student’s values, and the context for learning (Slocum, et.al., 2014). It is important to take into account the values of our learner because their values can determine the immediate impact the ESI has on the individual’s quality of life (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968).

Educators can access a variety of online resources to assist in choosing the most effective practice intervention at the following sites:



Both interactive websites have over 20 different ESI modules that you can access for free. These interventions should not limit providers but should provide a foundation to build upon. B. F. Skinner stated, “Man is a machine in the sense that he is a complex system behaving in lawful ways, but the complexity is extraordinary” (Skinner, 1971, p. 197). Because of our student’s complexities, when choosing an ESI, we must use a set of standard-based procedures when choosing evidence-based practices for the ever-changing learner.



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