High-Leverage PRACTICES

Across Learning Environments

How High-Leverage Practices in Special Education Helped Teachers Overcome Barriers for All Students During Emergency Remote Teaching

The story begins years before the pandemic. In 2014, a group of educational leaders came together to answer a growing problem in the field of teaching: **the lack of clarity and consensus across teacher preparation programs about what teachers need to know in order to effectively educate students with disabilities, particularly in inclusive classrooms.**

Within a year, the team was hard at work conducting focus groups with teachers and studying volumes of educational research with one main goal in mind: identifying "practices that could make a positive difference with students who were struggling to find success in school because of learning and behavioral complexities."

HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES IN *Special Education*

In 2017, two of the organizations that led this work – the Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center – published their findings in *High-Leverage Practices in Special Education*. **In the book, they describe these high-leverage practices (HLPs) as**

"a set of practices that are fundamental to support K–12 student learning, and that can be taught, learned, and implemented by those entering the profession."

The practices they identified are for all teachers, both general education and special education, and are focused directly on the work of teaching, particularly in inclusive classrooms. **They identified 22 HLPs and grouped them into four categories directly related to teaching:**

① COLLABORATION	② ASSESSMENT	③ SOCIAL EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS	④ INSTRUCTION

In order for a practice to be deemed high-leverage, it needed to meet all of the following criteria:

- ✓ Focus directly on instructional practices
- ✓ Occur with high frequency in teaching in any setting
- ✓ Be research-based and known to foster student engagement and learning
- ✓ Be broadly applicable and usable in any content area or approach to teaching
- ✓ Be fundamental to effective teaching when executed skillfully

HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES IN *Special Education*

COLLABORATION

1) Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.
2) Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families.
3) Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services.

ASSESSMENT

4) Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs.
5) Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs.
6) Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL /BEHAVIORAL

7) Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment.
8) Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.
9) Teach social behaviors.
10) Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans.

INSTRUCTION

11) Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals.
12) Systematically design instruction toward specific learning goals.
13) Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals.
14) Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence.
15) Provide scaffolded supports.
16) Use explicit instruction.
17) Use flexible grouping.
18) Use strategies to promote active student engagement.
19) Use assistive and instructional technologies.
20) Provide intensive instruction.
21) Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.
22) Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.

Adapted from the CEEDAR Center's *High Leverage Practices in Special Education (HLPs) Flyer*

FLEXIBILITY & PROBLEM SOLVING

Fast forward to 2020 and emergency remote teaching (ERT). The CEEDAR Center and other leading educational organizations that include the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) recognized that the **two greatest assets of teachers trained in the HLPs are flexibility and problem-solving.** If ever there was a time when teachers needed to be flexible problem-solvers, it was during the rapid shift to ERT!

So the creators of the 22 HLPs reconsidered how the practices could be used to help teachers during remote teaching. They identified six common barriers to effective remote teaching – barriers that impact learning for all students regardless of ability – and crosswalked the HLPs that most directly addressed the barrier.

BARRIER	CONNECTING HLPs
Barrier 1: Struggling to keep students focused and engaged	• **HLP 16:** Use explicit instruction. • **HLP 14:** Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence.
Barrier 2: Ensuring students feel connected and that their social and emotional needs are addressed	• **HLP 7:** Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment. • **HLP 9:** Teach social behaviors.
Barrier 3: Helping students manage their workload and avoid being overwhelmed	• **HLP 13:** Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals. • **HLP 15:** Provide scaffolded supports.
Barrier 4: Supporting students' learning so they can process and retain new content	• **HLP 8 and 22:** Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior. • **HLP 21:** Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.
Barrier 5: Addressing students' wide range of skills and experiences using technology for learning	• **HLP 4:** Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs. • **HLP 19:** Use assistive and instructional technologies.
Barrier 6: Facilitating family engagement	• **HLP 2:** Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families. • **HLP 3:** Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services.

Source: The CEEDAR Center at the University of Florida

FROM ERT TO TALE

From Overcoming Barriers to Opening Up Opportunities

Fast forward again to the end of emergency remote teaching (ERT). In the TALE Academy, we are taking lessons learned from ERT and looking at how they can help us rethink the future.

Specifically, we are rethinking how we

① teach effectively when we have to shift across learning environments (in-person, remote, hybrid) and

② integrate effective practices across different learning environments and modalities to improve our practices overall. In other words, now that we can plan, prepare, and train, what practices from ERT should we continue, develop, and refine?

When it comes to the HLPs for special education, we now need to move beyond overcoming barriers and look at how implementing HLPs across learning environments can open up new opportunities for teaching and learning. In other words, we need to take what the experts have provided (frameworks and guidance) and learn how the expert practitioners – teachers – made those HLPs a reality in remote, hybrid, and in-person classrooms.

For example, HLP 16 recommends that teachers use explicit instruction. The CEEDAR Center describes explicit instruction this way:

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. Teachers use explicit instruction when students are learning new material and complex concepts and skills. They strategically choose examples and non-examples and language to facilitate student understanding, anticipate common misconceptions, highlight essential content, and remove distracting information. They model and scaffold steps or processes needed to understand content and concepts, apply skills, and complete tasks successfully and independently.

While we will dive into using explicit instruction across learning environments in Session 5, **let's consider the first sentence of the description:**

"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."

The work of "showing and telling students" is complex and can be time consuming. During ERT, teachers used a number of digital strategies to "show and tell," even though they weren't physically present:

- Providing directions with hyperlinks that guide learners through steps and processes
- Using pop-ups when learners roll over particular words, phrases, or images to provide tips, reminders, or context
- Using videos that model a skill, task, practices, etc. that students could watch, pause, and return to as they worked to enact what the teacher is modeling
- Using interactive graphic organizers that support visual and spatial thinking and much more to help guide students through remote lessons

In the post-ERT world, these practices prove to be extremely helpful in at least two ways. First, they save time during live instruction. And second, they provide students with multiple modes of engagement (reading, watching, interacting) that address learner variability.

Making HLPs Portable Across Learning Environments

In the next three sessions, we will take a deeper dive into three of the HLPs and explore strategies to make those HLPs portable across learning environments. The HLPs we have chosen to focus on in this module are those that specifically relate to teachers' instructional practices in inclusive classrooms.

HLP 15. Provide scaffolded supports.
HLP 16. Use explicit instruction.
HLP 17. Use flexible grouping.

By learning about and beginning to apply these HLPs across learning environments, both special education teachers and general education teachers will be able to improve outcomes for all students, regardless of ability or learning environment. Note that we address all 22 of the HLPs across the seven core modules of the TALE Academy. Check out the crosswalk on the next page to discover where you can go to dig deeper with other HLPs.

HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICE	TALE MODULE
1. Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.	M-5 and M-7
2. Organize and facilitate effective meetings with professionals and families.	M-5 and M-7
3. Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services.	M-5
4. Use multiple sources of information to develop a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths and needs.	M-1 and M-2
5. Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs.	M-1 and M-2
6. Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments that improve student outcomes.	M-1
7. Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment.	M-1, M-2, and M-6
8. Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.	M-1, M-2, and M-6
9. Teach social behaviors.	M-6
10. Conduct functional behavioral assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans.	M-6
11. Identify and prioritize long- and short-term learning goals.	M-1
12. Systematically design instruction toward specific learning goals.	M-1
13. Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals.	M-1
14. Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence.	M-6
15. Provide scaffolded supports.	**M-3**
16. Use explicit instruction.	**M-3**
17. Use flexible grouping	**M-3**
18. Use strategies to promote active student engagement.	M-1
19. Use assistive and instructional technologies.	M-1 and M-3
20. Provide intensive instruction.	M-3
21. Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.	M-3
22. Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.	M-1 and M-2

Now it's your turn!

Keep handy the six common barriers to effective remote teaching that impact learning for all students and the HLPs that address each barrier (page 5).

In your workbook, for each potential barrier to effective remote teaching, you will make a connection to some of your instructional strategies and high-leverage practices that serve all students.

Works Cited

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About Us

The TALE Academy

The TALE Academy is a series of virtual learning experiences available to all New York State educators and offers a rich array of resources on topics related to teaching across learning environments (TALE). The TALE Academy is built upon the work New York State educators carried out during emergency remote teaching (ERT) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and extends it toward the future. TALE invites educators to think beyond online learning to consider a broader perspective on teaching and learning that encompasses teaching across multiple environments (in-person, remote, and hybrid).

The Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE) Project

The TALE Academy is part of a broader New York State Education Department (NYSED) initiative known as Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE). In July 2020, NYSED was awarded funding through the United States Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund-Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant to implement TRLE – a three-year project to build the capacity of teachers and educational leaders to effectively implement remote/hybrid learning for all students. Launched in the depths of the pandemic, the first phase of the TRLE project focused on getting resources to the field through partnerships with Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts across the state. The second phase, which began in February 2022, focused on aggregating lessons learned and emerging teaching and learning strategies to address a broader field of practice: teaching across learning environments.

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