Jennifer R.: [00:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=agT6lpAxgxasE11IVlTtD5uKoa-P4B5kpToZCxF9vXbdly8dYQuAwyf690GTN_rrybHBC3zTgfrjRa39uHnVzcZ62JM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2.4) Hey everybody, you're listening to Life Skills Radio. I'm your host, Jennifer Russell, and today we're going to be spending a little bit of time talking about some evidence based practices or EBPs that can transform your classroom. So what are evidenced based practices and why do we use them?

Jennifer R.: [00:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GQj-bHn5vjmDZzG18igTlvOmnU_jiWyx5KBDbcpreYDpO-QjKni-PETimFxO8cG8ZuMXmH4X-5t-OKeoEPdpLGv-pAU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=17.52) Well, first let's talk about the why. We need to use EBPs because we're mandated. The Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, calls for the use of evidence based interventions as the foundation for classroom instruction. Okay, great. Got It. Now we know why. But what are evidenced based practices? Here's a definition that I think does a pretty good job of explaining what an EBP is and isn't and bear with me because I'm about to lay some pretty dry content on you. ASHA, or the American Speech Language Hearing Association, states that the goal of an evidence based practice or EBP is to integrate clinical expertise or expert opinion with external scientific evidence and client/patient or caregiver perspectives to provide high quality service.

Jennifer R.: [01:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iPt0_23BUv4Kl8E9NmORLgnxKNedARriEf3Afshp2Xzpiceh0E7nXCoVrzSAp70GNPs6YT35Btypom8NIpcHWkNw7ZQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=63.58) Confused? Visualize an EBP as a three legged stool. The seat part of the stool is the evidence based practice or strategy. And what holds up the seat? The three legs. One leg represents clinical or teacher expertise. Another leg represents external scientific evidence or data. And the third leg represent student and family perspectives. If one of the legs is weak or missing, the stool won't stand up. In other words, the strategy might not be an EBP for that student. For example, using sign language to increase communication might be an evidenced based practice that a teacher wants to use with one of her students. The teacher has taken some data on effectiveness. She's read up on research. She's well trained on implementation. So the two legs that address scientific evidence and teacher expertise are strong. But what if parents feel that they don't want to implement sign language at home?

Jennifer R.: [01:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=talC_ZffoujpNWPvDoiNoI_-nXWNvAr0NIwz9rJ_tm86ZLdi57Fa234chgHWh0W6mEVCftp2b2QxGXdfDe6MyqWbyVY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=118.16) What if they feel like their child would do better with a core vocabulary board or a device? If the teacher fails to consider the parent's perspective, using sign language to increase communication might not be an EBP for that student. We need all three legs of the stool to be able to truly say that an EBP is effective for an individual student. Make sense?

Jennifer R.: [02:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CHw801U8JWugcS7hEa4JaWqptV_DNGzX0muyyO1rMfeJI_OeFYsxzT7qb0xwZZ9w7W2sHeclledQaI7cmp0PPwVHSHo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=139.18) But how do we determine which ones to learn about and use first? There's so many. The National Professional Development Center on Autism has identified 27 EBPs that have been shown to be effective in educating students with autism. And the council for exceptional children, together with the Collaboration For Effective Educator Development Accountability And Reform known as CEEDAR, developed and published a set of 22 high leverage practices for special educators. That's great information but also a tad overwhelming when you're just starting out. My partner Darcy likes to use the analogy of her husband working on projects in the garage to illustrate the process of choosing which EBPs to focus on implementing and mastering first.

Jennifer R.: [03:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=c216Ed6gWsu0dOF1tATMiog6rQ-HzY2l4AgcUrRGPv3LAFYLny4XpDwM-0Gw315ABhtzQ6zNhVrrdveOoqpJjJaiNL0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=182.59) She says that her husband has a garage full of tools. He has lots of big complicated tools such as his air compressor, his pressure washer, and lots of others that she told me about, but I can't remember because I'm the very opposite of handy. Anyway, she says that no matter what project he's working on, he uses the same five to seven tools that he carries on his tool belt, his hammer, his screwdrivers, pliers, wrench, and a tape measure. He uses these tools most often for the most jobs and uses them along with the other tools in the garage which make them high leverage tools.

Jennifer R.: [03:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=O3oH9teeCrIYvOV6CT3XeKW3Qc32JrTByGo2MXuVwmFjU6uhF-87NO2GKV9u9NZksySwwe2S6YDZ9qSxYimqZjF-1uQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=219.43) So as educators we have our toolbox, which is full of wonderful strategies, and from that toolbox we take out the five to seven tools or EBPs that we know are going to work most often for the most students in the most settings for the most outcomes. And those are the ones that go on our tool belt.

Jennifer R.: [03:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EsfSsLSWD9BvmZZ0zIsU57fgru5TNNHI0HKQwb6kKbKg6yShePKGWFlEMrHR4JzVyusdAdp3jI_GihimxeWwVf1xVyc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=238.66) So what are they? Of the 27 EBPs identified by the NPDC, the ones that I'm going to talk about today, are reinforcement, prompting, modeling, task analysis, and visual supports. And it's worth noting that these strategies aren't just effective for students with autism. These strategies can work for students with other disabilities as well, from intellectual disabilities to speech and language impairments and more.

Jennifer R.: [04:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3O41nggzhnb9TpN92J47MBtxgQH1ohRruMUXQlExwY0BIcVLy4U9i2xbz1_ApvGtlegS5Tmr5jUQSjPlG0JwrscS98s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=263.82) The fact is when we go into classrooms where teachers and students are feeling successful and happy, we continually find that these same EBPs are being implemented with consistency and fidelity. So let's take some time to explore these five EBPs on our tool belt. Now we're not going to have time to go through each of these in depth, but what I'd like to do is walk you through some examples from my classroom where I used these EBPs in combination for effective outcomes, because the truth is we almost never use them in isolation. They work together. And in my experience when trying to get buy in from students to learn a new skill or practice a new behavior, reinforcement has been the foundation or the hook. And then the other EBPs have been layered on during instruction. So I'm going to spend a little more time talking about reinforcement than any of the others, but at the end of the podcast I'll give you a place to go where you can increase and continue your learning on the others as well.

Jennifer R.: [05:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YxqGWJa6M2EjxVerjDBeb07g7wypK4lkq6r8FaeLOKgbYZ6djAeSFfQCm6-vlwdxWvZbl-ziaZJ493BISLBRwtwKPiw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=328.62) Reinforcement is often referred to as the most important element of most behavior change. Essentially, reinforcement is an event, an activity or other circumstance that follows after a student engages in a desired behavior, which then leads to an increased occurrence of that behavior in the future. Now there are opposing views out there on reward systems and of course we want our students to get to a place where they're intrinsically motivated and we definitely want to get to a place in our practice where our lessons are so engaging that the work itself is inherently reinforcing.

Jennifer R.: [06:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FjZsS2NK0Msr38Sz47cyg6NKPwpmobP0OFkqbzKPVOQvsIEyY5fwPr3Lk2PCG5yGiAhvF0ccxjSTKmB41dA8q1jZfMI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=364.73) But many of our students, especially young ones, come to us in the learning how to learn stage. They might not have any experience with school ready behaviors. They might not understand that completing a developmentally appropriate task will result in them getting access to that thing that they so desperately want. Appropriately using reinforcement is one of the most powerful ways we can shape behavior and help our students build new skills. And the fact is that reinforcement is a part of all our lives.

Jennifer R.: [06:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=oV7tcwGG4qugovatPFo1V0sfD7PUCwBOiuAa_5rnQIY0ZUc8q0vcdJpl0E2Gbh4guR5vqUiPaZJR7fUdM31gw-bQX5o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=399) I love the work I do. I also love getting paid for the work I do. That's reinforcing. When I get a paycheck, I'm much more likely to go back to work. I've started to wake up early a few days a week and exercise. It's really hard to get out of bed some days. It's painful. It's not always fun, but then I treat myself to that bowl of ice cream and I know that I'm going to wake up early and do it again.

Jennifer R.: [07:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4ZulD5I4afMJfFgeBGXopJ_-PQRD1cDI8XAeiqbQLtrPUG6D9__65tEkXdgOC70z745ZpD-sCSTD8sVYe7AF08H9cj8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=424.1) So let's explore some of the different types of reinforcement using examples from my time in the classroom, and you'll see that in addition to reinforcement, I used other EBPs from our tool belt during instruction to teach the skills.

Jennifer R.: [07:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2rMHmQ7IVIuOxRkihofWUoNEtv37gLBW89THwYV7TH8AhQ7H59Pde3TeUdSnH1r6ImucyzlOOutOXZFtVMEGqtrHtjE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=437.73) I had a student who was learning how to play appropriately with peers. We were working with Magnatiles there, those fabulous magnetic blocks that stick together and you can build all sorts of great things. So my student, a peer, and I were all working with the Magnatiles to build something together. Now my student was a hoarder of Magnatiles. It was very difficult for him to share. But when he did share, he got to keep playing with the Magnatiles. That's an example of natural or direct reinforcement. So natural or direct reinforcement results directly from an appropriate behavior. Make sense?

Jennifer R.: [07:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=tU2GCUPyz-qQ0K13HvLsy7q3fALRrJ4nNaSU0pPAyNjs_1t9x_npEswvrRknq6e6ZQXe-mf5BZ2kafYUs3DWbA1_zAw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=476.72) And I should say that he didn't just magically learn how to share through the use of reinforcement alone. I modeled sharing. I had a visual support that showed a student sharing with another student that I directed him to with a verbal prompt. So I simultaneously used visual supports, prompting, and modeling to teach him how to share with the end result being the natural reinforcement of being able to continue playing with the Magnatiles.

Jennifer R.: [08:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xsh-EYfdI_kYkc1UIAFZkvwAwQVdMfUsrt0JVEBgXRBRneQU1SZ8aVuUgpXV7GQOVzpGW_rV8sSBxsWYxPh4HMZLhCA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=505.52) Next, let's talk about social reinforcement. High fives way to go, smiling, nodding your head in approval. That feedback can be very reinforcing for our students. One of my students loved high fives, but he wasn't really into standing in line, had no interest whatsoever. But when he did stand in line, he got lots of high fives. Over time, standing in line wasn't so challenging and lo and behold, he didn't need as many high fives. And again, in addition to reinforcement, I used the EBPs of prompting along with the visual support of students standing in line to teach him the expectation.

Jennifer R.: [09:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=70lXisQCqC_BzLNgmLrwvVGGADbo8T64KEoeb4zg4kokJWW9wUJsDGkKrAWYA16dGLoqUbc0H1FhJJFB2SZ0kPXgd3M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=543.89) Another student of mine loved tickles so much that he was able to learn how to use a choice board to request them. Now a choice board is a visual support that displays pictures or words of things that are reinforcing to the student. I had been using the EBP of modeling for weeks to demonstrate requesting on the choice board and eventually something clicked and he began to use it. Would he have been motivated to use the choice board if the social reinforcer of tickles hadn't been on it? Maybe not.

Jennifer R.: [09:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CgnXE-3WlWjavEyDRp9rPeuHTlBHde82FsrGA3RCLB4Z4bQjeb1C78b3ttO7iBZ36bYvRvX8qrrokRpYA3CDRf332hs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=573.36) Some students are reinforced by getting access to a preferred activity such as a game, computer time, or music. One student of mine loved to particular Halloween song that he called spooky. Now he had a hard time understanding that his positive behaviors would directly result in him getting access to the spooky song. He also had a really low stamina for work. So how did I teach the behavior expectations of work time, support him in successfully completing his task and create a positive association between doing work and getting access to his favorite song?

Jennifer R.: [10:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=mMcJQK9s8ZgF2IOvI4UXl4RYQmNE_Qr6j5pCPTH16hZmQJfJA22CIlNeLEwwqcFSYguUife6YxekIOSdf76SFIjUMuM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=611.74) Well, stand back. I combined all five of my tool belt EBPs. I used a combination of visual supports, modeling, prompting, task analysis, and reinforcement. Let me tell you about the lesson and walk you through what I did. The lesson was a fine motor activity that needed to be completed in a sequential order, so I had a visual task analysis that showed him the sequence of steps in the activity. The steps were color, than cut, than glue. So this support was not only a task analysis because it showed the sequence of steps, but also a visual support. And I used other visual supports as well. I had a visual timer set so that he could see that eventually work time would end and he would get access to his favorite song.

Jennifer R.: [11:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=rSceMnFoMq9WLFNG0924dgdVtp4hMxlL6IqwQstDwadZBKgzib5SEDNekw5LCmXOlzMZurWjNhhf1as6dwcbidSGku0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=664.29) I had a visual support posted with pictures of behavior expectations during work time. This showed him what his body should look like when we were doing work together. Sitting, listening with safe hands or hands down. Do not take for granted that your students know what their bodies should look like during instruction. Periodically throughout the lesson, when I noticed my friend sitting and listening, I gave him social reinforcement. I gave him a high five and said good sitting while I pointed to the picture of the students sitting in his chair. And I was modeling these behavior expectations myself.

Jennifer R.: [11:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=8YSyroaHFJVDFdeJBN4G0v1TTx1XMTpA8FcflQxhHDEeP1ct4OAWwAPnSykykwjfGQqChCX0CeJRBK2zK3iy4roeDB8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=699.27) Finally I had a visual support in the form of a first/then board, if you're not familiar with this type of support, a first then board shows students what they're working on now. That's the first part. And the then part shows the reinforcing item or activity that they'll get after they finish. In my friend's case, his first/then board showed visual representations of first work, then spooky.

Jennifer R.: [12:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Bpob5AD6xSmQcEFrxTOS7WiVq1sGYVxGhsraHbx9o9oxvZfQdZOCToUu37afbYs7UZ24VMpPPqOwj7BUWMw6ZVwIzek&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=724.73) Now sometimes I hear teachers say I'm using the first/then visual support and it's not working. If the first/then visual support isn't working, one of two things could be happening. It could be that the thing the student is working for isn't actually reinforcing. Maybe it was last week, but this week, nope, this week he wants to pop bubble wrap all day. You might think that's weird. That doesn't sound like very much fun, but it doesn't matter what you think. What matters is that the activity is reinforcing to the student.

Jennifer R.: [12:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=tTPdHuAWUICb5bzN4S6_Fy9jjV9gitdasFzOUtlIu-jgSzZgDeXsH0hkQ07HC7vsqW8_d4kfa2hEC8spO_4qoOZXw6I&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=758.56) The other thing that could be happening is that the task you're asking the student to do is too hard and no amount of bubble wrap is worth the undertaking. Maybe you're asking him to work for too long or maybe the task isn't developmentally appropriate. So for the first/then visual support to work, you have to have a developmentally appropriate task followed by an activity that's truly reinforcing.

Jennifer R.: [13:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=OV4cDfAIYh9oRDZ1p-fw9VJ7kG5UO3H-RAbqQmA18wEys3kmcn_XiE8JNqC99WPYyJCnDhh4MvgPO-Kto2qbB481nZc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=783.93) Okay. Back to our lesson. During the actual lesson we were working on, I used the EBP of prompting to guide the student to the point where he was able to independently do some of the work himself. I started him off with some hand over hand prompts to get them into the action of cutting with his adapted scissors. I modeled putting glue on one of the pieces of paper he cut and I gave him a gesture prompt to indicate where the glue was supposed to go on his piece of paper. By the end of the activity, he was able to put the glue on the rest of the pieces by himself. He was really proud of himself and then he got to hear his spooky song.

Jennifer R.: [13:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ET9Yv0-TtpPjZbPME3uYNL9nwJYaJSQ7-Cztt5X9JAKQTiagDeBTqotivJwv2nfGgeHTAtlsPLqL5cky1nPS0s1Xz4M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=820.17) A little more about prompting. One of the most powerful things to know and remember about prompting is that we don't use prompting to make students comply. We can't force children to do anything right? Prompting is a strategy you use to teach and to support students on the way to being able to independently demonstrate a skill or behavior. And there's a prompting hierarchy, meaning some prompts are more intrusive, like a hand over hand physical prompt, and some prompts or less intrusive like a gesture prompt. Knowing which prompt to use depends on how independent your student is when learning or practicing a new skill. In most cases, the less independent they are, the heavier or more intrusive the prompt you'll need to use to teach the student the skill. So it's important to learn the prompting hierarchy so that you know which prompts to use and how to fade them out so that your student is eventually able to be independent.

Jennifer R.: [14:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9TbAjfIfZuwyy0Pq0xL1etTFvPNsmpTLmeyREq-KMd_Wn3MgkgV4tOyGLLW5FYh52YclX-YoweKR2wn4CYUCInSfBc4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=876.04) Some of our students are motivated by tangible reinforcements such as stickers, toys, awards, certificates, or in some cases, favorite foods. I use tangible reinforcers in many different ways in my classroom. Early in the school year when students were how to transition to group time and sit ready for instruction, I discovered that many of them were motivated by stickers. Some kids go bananas for stickers. So when students check their schedules and successfully transition to group time and sat down with support through prompting initially, I immediately gave them a sticker. Over time as they had more practice with that behavior of transitioning and sitting during group time, we were able to fade out the prompts and I was able to delay giving them their sticker until the end of group time and give them more social reinforcement like high fives instead.

Jennifer R.: [15:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CKLR1WC7w55QVKrTF4F4LtGlpH4hiSDaIDFgPwm7-lnt_MrdMfO4r0NQam60qoQFGBh15HRxG6tMS1s3BBkEycFjf0E&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=928.45) Food is often a controversial, tangible reinforcer to use with students. I should state that a lot of districts have policies and guidelines around using food as reinforcement, so be sure to know what those are and of course always check with parents to ensure that a student doesn't have a restricted diet or a medical condition that would make using food as reinforcement inadvisable.

Jennifer R.: [15:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zhED-AAE3hj_waFuPVQrR9_6MZtbe3dDGGpBOP862A3hz4kDpULYZPZ1inFt4jrmS4kzVHnA8_pb0o1diGErm1IA1k4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=952.52) In most cases, I've used food with students when I haven't succeeded in finding another tangible reinforcer for them. For example, I've had students with severe autism who are in that learning to learn stage who have responded really well to food as the hook or buy in when I was trying to teach them a new behavior or get them interested in a new activity or just build rapport.

Jennifer R.: [16:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=wBYoVhoJLel6s7_BJBiKi2E7SAujGH8l7gGLNMLUQZK9Wu8LbHPBAOFOhnvUN7nXeDMrkpK1EoICjiy2nw0OM59J50s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=977.73) Over time, as these students grew to trust me and have a positive association between myself and the activities we were doing, they became less dependent on the food as a reinforcement and I was able to discover new reinforcers for them because of our experiences together.

Jennifer R.: [16:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Y3zeORB6fY6zgdKa4tYApg5D27rSJmKYUdLDN2lLUGUgaEf16nAUwK1t1Slg6kvHw_uAQND7yBH9qPo94JKMJbivVc0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=993.77) If you're unsure about what's reinforcing to your students, you can do a formal or informal preference assessment. Watch your students. What do they like to do when you're not interfering? Play with your students. What objects do they like to interact with? What sensations do they appear to enjoy? Who do they gravitate towards? As long as it's safe and appropriate, put it on the list. Work with your para educators to observe and record at least five things that are reinforcing to each of your students. Write them down in a notebook or record them on chart paper next to student initials.

Jennifer R.: [17:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qXejYClcQEEo_mX9h0Wt6_U0FOPRwj7p-BkDXRSCLmxHygDY5gnSTGmRXZugPLgZMto7jSua4pO18FHcJSzaiFZXcLw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1031.62) So we've covered a lot of ground. We've talked about some of the tools on the evidence based practice tool belt, reinforcement, visual supports, modeling task analysis, and prompting. And you've hopefully learned that these EBPs are rarely used in isolation and much more effective when used in combination.

Jennifer R.: [17:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FzhHNZ5lciSn_A0QbwuyOMAj4o6MMnnCs_-n6KiSbeQmyeFjsDDeLvYLIrSJjmrlneevBkAZSb7YxctWb3c35KTdbIg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1051.13) And I would like to end by saying that as powerful as these evidence based practices can be when implemented consistently, they won't take you far unless you develop authentic relationships with your students. The relationships that you form with your students are the foundation for learning.

Jennifer R.: [17:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qfyC9J5umjDnosczXm-V8iBSWejStxEDiMgOP0cvqdgjogxCMiXtazWdLquabe80IAInL_sLWzv1Q0HHyf-S1v4RiCY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1067.55) If you'd like more information on EBPs, visit txautism.net. Under the training tab, you'll find online courses. From there, you'll see that there's a series of webinars on all 27 EBPs identified by the NPDC. All of the webinars in this series are under 45 minutes, free, and offer continuing education credits. So load up your tool belt and happy teaching. Thanks for listening.