

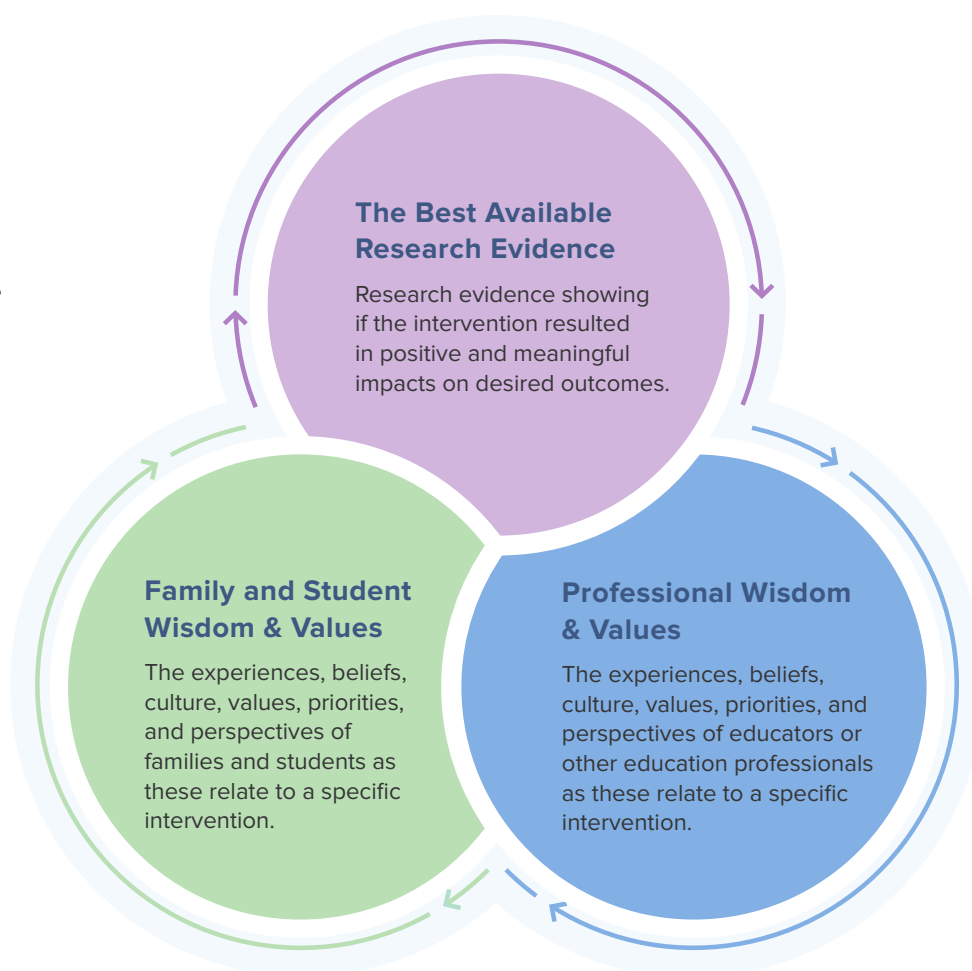
Three Circles of Evidence-Based Decision Making to Support Students with Disabilities

A collective goal in education is focusing on “what works”—finding and using interventions backed by evidence to achieve desired results for students with disabilities. This resource¹ presents steps in an evidence-based decision-making process to collect and integrate information from multiple sources, make decisions based on that information, and plan for implementation and evaluation.

This decision-making framework can be used when considering the selection or evaluation of an intervention for an individual student or group of students. In this document we define an intervention as a strategy, practice, or program that is clearly defined. These interventions may be implemented in a tiered framework such as multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) or positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).²

THREE CIRCLES OF EVIDENCE

Consider information from three primary sources to determine whether specific interventions are evidence-based: best available research evidence, family and student wisdom and values, and professional wisdom and values. Using all three circles to question how evidence applies to a given subgroup or individual helps support equitable practice.



- 1 This resource is based on “The Three Circles of Evidence-Based Decision Making in Early Childhood,” which was developed by the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), including Monica Mathur-Kalluri (WestEd), Talettha Derrington (American Institutes for Research), Angela McGuire (WestEd), and Virginia Buyse (American Institutes for Research).
- 2 For more information on these frameworks, see the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (<https://mtss4success.org/>) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (<https://www.pbis.org/>).

STEPS OF EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

The following steps offer a process for integrating multiple perspectives and sources of evidence.

1

Define your Question

Include the following elements in your question:

a) **Characteristics of the focus population and subpopulations** (e.g., disability, age, educational placement, language, race/culture)

b) **Type of intervention** (e.g., delivery method, group size, content or skills addressed, strategies for teaching and practicing content)

c) **Desired outcomes** (statement of the intended result or improvement for the student)


Formulate the question like this:

For students with (a) characteristics, will (b) intervention be effective in achieving (c) outcomes?

2


Consider the Evidence

Gather information from all three circles of evidence (See Resources List).




Best Available Research Evidence

- Search websites that provide intervention effectiveness summaries to identify potential interventions.
- Judge the research evidence for these interventions in terms of the quality of the study or studies and the impacts on outcomes of interest and relevance for students that would participate in this intervention.
- Examine any biases or assumptions that may have influenced the research questions or methods.



Family and Student Wisdom & Values

- Consider consensus documents, such as position statements and practice guides, to tap into families' and students' collective wisdom and values.
- Consider the culture, values, experiences, and priorities of the families and students with whom you work who would be participating in this intervention.



Professional Wisdom & Values

- Consider consensus documents, such as position statements, program and professional standards, and practice guides, to tap into the field's collective wisdom and values.
- Consider the culture, values, experiences, and priorities of those working to support the student and implement the intervention to tap into professional wisdom and values.

3

Determine if an Intervention meets the FAIR Test

The sum of evidence from the Three Circles may point to one or more strong interventions. Examine each candidate intervention to determine if it is FAIR: Feasible to implement, Acceptable to families/students/professionals, effective in producing a positive Impact, and Relevant for your identified context. If an intervention does not meet all the FAIR criteria, you may need to revisit one or more of the circles to look for new evidence or to consider different practices/strategies/programs.

For more information about the FAIR test, see our companion resource:

<https://ncsi-library.wested.org/resources/732>

THREE CIRCLES OF EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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4

Make an Evidence-Based Decision

Once you have identified one or more interventions that meet the FAIR test, combine and consider all the information you have gathered, make a decision, and begin planning for implementation and evaluation.

EXAMPLE RESOURCES

The following sections list example resources that can support decision-making, organized by the circles of evidence. These lists are not comprehensive. Within a category, resources are listed alphabetically (order does not reflect rank or preference).

Sites Supporting Use of Best Available Research Evidence

Where Can I Find Education Research?

This site indexes education research.

- **Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)**
<https://eric.ed.gov/>

Intervention Review Sites

These sites use rigorous standards to review intervention study quality and effects. Some sites include tools for filtering by student subgroups.

- **Best Evidence Encyclopedia**
<http://www.bestevidence.org/index.cfm>
- **Evidence for ESSA**
<https://www.evidencefoessa.org/>
- **National Center on Intensive Intervention: Academic Intervention Tools Chart**
<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/aintervention>
- **National Center on Intensive Intervention: Behavioral Intervention Tools Chart**
<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/bintervention>
- **What Works Clearinghouse**
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Topical Sites

These sites compile evidence-based and promising practices and related resources for specific student groups or content areas.

- **Florida Center for Reading Research**
<https://www.fcrr.org/resource-database>
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Trauma Treatments**
<https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/trauma-treatments>
- **National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder: Evidence-Based Practices**
<https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/evidence-based-practices>
- **National Technical Assistance Center on Transition the Collaborative (NTACT:C): Effective Practices and Predictors**
<https://transitionta.org/effectivepractices>
- **Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Report 3: A Comprehensive Review of Self-Regulation Interventions from Birth through Young Adulthood.**
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/self-regulation-and-toxic-stress-report-3-comprehensive-review-self-regulation>

Family and Student Wisdom and Values Websites

These are examples of sites that share broad information about evidence-based practices from a family or student perspective that may be helpful in understanding families' and students' collective wisdom and values. It is still important to consider the unique experiences and perspectives of individual families and students as part of the decision making process.

- **Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)**
www.parentcenterhub.org/resourcelibrary/index
- **Family Voices**
<https://familyvoices.org/resources/>
- **Hands and Voices**
www.handsandvoices.org/resources/docs.htm

Professional Wisdom and Values Websites

These are examples of sites that share information about evidence-based practices from the perspectives of professionals. Note that this is not a comprehensive list of all professional perspectives.

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/collection/%20council-children-disabilities>
- **American Occupational Therapy Association**
<https://www.aota.org/Practice/Children-Youth/Evidence-based.aspx>
- **American Physical Therapy Association**
<https://www.apta.org/patient-care/evidence-based-practice-resources>
- **American Psychological Association**
<https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/evidence-based-statement>
- **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**
<https://www.asha.org/Research/EBP/>
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
<https://www.cdc.gov/DiseasesConditions/>
- **Council for Administrators of Special Education**
<https://www.casecec.org/>
- **Council for Exceptional Children**
<https://exceptionalchildren.org/topics>
- **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements>
- **National Association of Elementary School Principals**
<https://www.naesp.org/nprc>
- **National Association of School Psychologists**
<https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/nasp-practice-model>
- **National Association of Secondary School Principals**
<https://www.nassp.org/top-issues-in-education/position-statements/>
- **National Association of Social Workers**
<https://www.socialworkers.org/News/Research-Data/Social-Work-Policy-Research/Evidence-Based-Practice>

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