

# The **A B C**s of Evidence-Based Practice for Teachers

Allison G. Kretlow and Sharon L. Blatz

*Celeste is a first-year special education teacher at Wyatt Elementary School. She completed 2 weeks of intensive professional development just before school started, learning about the materials to be used for the school's new reading program for kindergarten and first grade. She then spent 2 days of professional development on writing strategies and another on inclusion strategies. While setting up her new classroom, she also found a bookshelf full of workbooks, reading materials, manipulatives, computer programs, and textbooks. Almost all of the materials she received in training and the programs on the shelf in her room are prominently labeled as "research-based." Celeste is not sure which materials to use with her new students.*

*Gerard has been teaching special education for 8 years at Jefferson High School and is in his second year as department chair. At the beginning of the school year, Gerard's administration informed the faculty that using evidence-based practices was a priority, and teachers would need to develop a way to document this in lesson plans. As the special education department chair, it will be Gerard's job to ensure that the practices he and his colleagues are using are "evidence-based." Gerard*

*has always believed the methods he uses with his students are effective, as most of his students perform well on classroom tests and end-of-year standardized exams. Gerard is unsure how he will find research that supports the practices and programs he is using, let alone assist his colleagues in the special education department to do this as well.*

Both Celeste and Gerard are overwhelmed about how to be certain the programs, materials, and strategies they use with their students are evidence-based. In her preservice program, Celeste learned how to use some evidence-based programs and strategies, such as peer-assisted learning, direct instruction, and strategic instruction; however, she doesn't have those programs in her classroom, and must make decisions about the materials she has. Gerard, on the other hand, has been using a set of strategies for the last 8 years, but isn't sure how to verify that they are evidence-based.

Gerard and Celeste are facing the same situation as many other teachers trying to make decisions about how to select the most effective instructional practices. So, how do teachers make sense of evidence-based practice?

