Evidence-based practice: What does it really mean?
Evidence based practice / Informed Practice

“it’s the vibe”

- **Very** widely used term
- Used in all sorts of contexts, not just education
- Wide application means that a precise meaning is sometimes hard to grasp
- Differing uses of the word can be confusing
- We have a duty to develop an understanding with our stakeholders
In the **broadest** sense of the term:

*Evidence based practice is a blanket term for a way of thinking and working*

There are four ways of looking at it:

1. It’s about using research findings to inform policy and practices *(knowledge mobilisation (Levin) or the gap between research and what is actually practised)*

2. Its about choosing practices that are MORE LIKELY to work because they have been proven to be effective elsewhere *(best practice)*

3. It’s about structuring enquiry into your own situation using proven methodologies *(structured evaluation, internal review, progressive monitoring)*

4. It’s a change of thinking from where assessment information *informs teachers about students*, to where assessment information *informs teachers about the impact of their teaching on learning* *(effect size, impact, action research, teacher as researcher)*

- Inquiry Habit of Mind *(Timperley)*
Key concept
Knowledge Mobilisation (Levin)
- The contribution of research to policy and practice (and the gap)

Opportunities
- Professional networks are critically important in the use and dissemination of research in policy making and classroom practice.
- The impact of research in the classroom is likely to be greater if findings are ‘transformed’ into practical strategies that acknowledge teachers’ professional knowledge.

Challenges
- To bridge the gap between research and policy
- Educators are interested in research…. But rely on intermediaries as their knowledge sources (Levin)
- Weight of evidence is rarely sufficient to change educational practice – claims must also resonate with prior beliefs and experience.

Examples and reflection
- Repetition
- Teaching reading

1. It’s about using research findings to inform policy and practices (knowledge mobilisation)
Key Concept:
- The argument for using evidence based practice is its potential to improve student learning outcomes (Levin)

Opportunities:
Promote the development and sharing of a strong evidence base for those teaching and school leadership strategies that have the greatest impact on improving student outcomes (McIntyre) (NPLSES evaluation reports)

Three questions (Fleischman):
- What works? (most likely to get results)
- How do you know? (demand compelling evidence)
- So what? (significance; or….. even if it does deliver, will I be better off?)

Evidence must intersect with context requiring professional judgement

Challenges:
- Teachers do not normally use the rigorous and systematic methods they expect of research in evaluating their own practice
- All professions have an uphill battle in embracing evidence based practice (hand washing)
- We must not only adopt effective models, but reject ineffective models
- Examples: state programs eg Best Start, L3, etc

2. Its about choosing practices that are MORE LIKELY to work because they have been proven to be effective elsewhere (best practice)
### Challenges
- Embedding the practice
- Keeping the momentum
- Developing plans and evaluation strategies concurrently
- Moving this mindset from the whole school level to the classroom level

### Key concepts:

3. It’s about structuring enquiry into your own situation using proven methodologies (structured evaluation, internal review, progressive monitoring)
Key Concepts
Effect size, impact, assessment, moving the evidence based mindset to the classroom

Opportunities
- The most important considerations when using effect size are the questions it raises. It invites educators to reflect on:
- “How well is what I am doing working for different groups of students each year and why?”
- “What possible reasons could there be for some students or groups of students progressing more or less?” (Hattie)

Challenges
- One of the powerful ideas in evidence-based models of teaching and learning is that teachers need to move away from considering achievement data as saying something about the student, and start considering achievement data as saying something about their teaching. If students do not know something, or cannot process the information, this should be a cue for teacher action. (Timperley)
- Flying blind through large amounts of data does not work (O’Donnell)
Evidence based practice
A natural evolution

- Research into education
- Best practice
- Structured inquiry driving whole school planning
- Assessment informs teachers about their students and their TEACHING