David Mitchell’s second edition of *What Really Works in Special Education and Inclusive Education: Using Evidence Based Teaching Strategies* provides 27 teaching strategies, which begins in Chapter 3 and continues throughout the rest of the book. The strategies are grouped into four major categories which include context of learning (e.g., cooperative learning), cognitive strategies (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy), behavioral strategies (e.g., direct instruction) and school-wide strategies and inter-agency cooperation. Other areas are covered including assistive technology, assessment, and feedback. According to Mitchell, based on feedback from his first edition of *What Really Works in Special Education and Inclusive Education Using Evidence Based Teaching Strategies*, he includes information on universal design for learning (UDL), Response to Intervention (RTI), Inter-agency Cooperation, and Finnish education.

Mitchell recognizes the nomenclature confusion with using terms such as student, versus children versus learners or disabilities versus special education need, and teachers versus educators and...
provides a strong rationale for which term he uses and why. Perhaps, an overlooked confusion of terms is evidence based which is used throughout the book, including the title.

Terms such as best practices, recommended practices, research-based practices which are supported by scientifically based research and Evidence Based Practices (Cook & Cook, 2011) have been used synonymously to identify what educators believe are the most effective practices. However, as Cook and Cook note, these terms have distinct meanings and imply different standards of rigor for empirical support. Mitchell appears to be using the term evidence-based synonymously with research-based practices since he selects the research based teaching strategies from reviewing over 2,000 research studies, adding 350 new references in this edition and updating previous research cited in his first edition. It should be noted that his citations are limited in each chapter to 10 to 15 per strategy due to space. While this is true, it would be helpful to see these research studies on the website resource page which accompanies the book.

In addition, Mitchell indicates that he bases his selection of teaching strategies on his personal experiences and research. While educators have selected teaching strategies based on their own personal teaching experience or research to determine what works in the classroom; the caveat is that “while this has produced many insights and effective practices, it is also prone to Type I and Type II errors (i.e., determining that ineffective practices are effective and that effective practices are ineffective, respectively)” (Cook & Cook, 2011, p, 71). According to Cook and Cook (2011) Evidence based Practices (EBP) are “instructional techniques with meaningful research supporting their effectiveness that represent critical tools in bridging the research-to-practice gap and improving student outcomes” (p. 71).

To support consideration of changing terms from evidence-based to research-based teaching strategies, Mitchell provides a strong case for including various types of research when selecting teaching strategies, such as qualitative research designs. I agree with Mitchell’s (p. 9) assertion that
qualitative research designs have merit in education, especially in special education. The United States What Works Clearing House, only uses studies that have randomized controlled trials to identify Evidence Based Practices and Cook and Cook (2011) found that no practices were identified as having positive effect for students with special needs. In a similar vein, Siri and Lyons (2010) promote practices for children having Autism Spectrum Disorder that are considered unconventional but prove promising in treatments and have shown positive outcomes. Lack of evidence-based practices for students with disabilities in What Works Clearinghouse supports Mitchell's assertion that other research studies, which show positive impact on students with disabilities, should be considered by educators when selecting a teaching strategy. This assertion necessitates Mitchell's consideration for using "research based" teaching strategies rather than "evidence-based teaching strategies."

The majority of Mitchell’s research is taken from the United States and United Kingdom and 14 other countries such as Australia, Canada, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. Mitchell acknowledges that these research based teaching strategies may not be transferrable to developing countries; however in the preface, he indicates that the premise for the book is international in scope (p. xiv) and emphasis is placed on using evidence-based practices on all children and in most countries. This may be considered a limitation, particularly for developing countries that may be at a beginning stage of inclusion.

Despite the nomenclature confusion of terms such as evidence based practice verses research based practices, this book is an excellent resource for educators who deal with learners with disabilities. The resources that are available on the website are helpful since there are additional links to additional readings, Youtube videos, interactive quizzes that test your knowledge of the teaching strategies, and available case studies. Even though the YouTube videos appear to be carefully selected, the caveat is that the videos tend to be long and “talk about strategies” rather than demonstrate “how
to” implement the strategies. More “how to” videos would be in alignment with intervention fidelity (one of Mitchell’s criteria used to determine and select evidence based teaching strategies).

In Chapter 2, Mitchell postulates a learning and teaching model, which undergirds his rationale for selecting evidence based teaching strategies. He introduces “Joseph” a student with learning disability and provides examples of how the teaching and learning model applies to Joseph. Using a vignette, such as Joseph, allows the reader to truly gain an understanding of the application of theory to practice. Unfortunately, as a reader, it was disappointing to see that this practical, real-class application was not weaved throughout the entire book. Despite this set back, there are ideas presented that are practical and research based that educators can use. Overall, this book is a helpful resource tool for educators who work with learners having disabilities.

References


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Before receiving her doctorate at the University of South Florida, Denise Skarbek worked as a special education teacher for children with mild disabilities. Her research interests include teacher education and special education with a focus on school violence/peace. She recently co-edited *Professional Teacher Dispositions: Additions to the Mainstream* from Rowman & Littlefield Education.