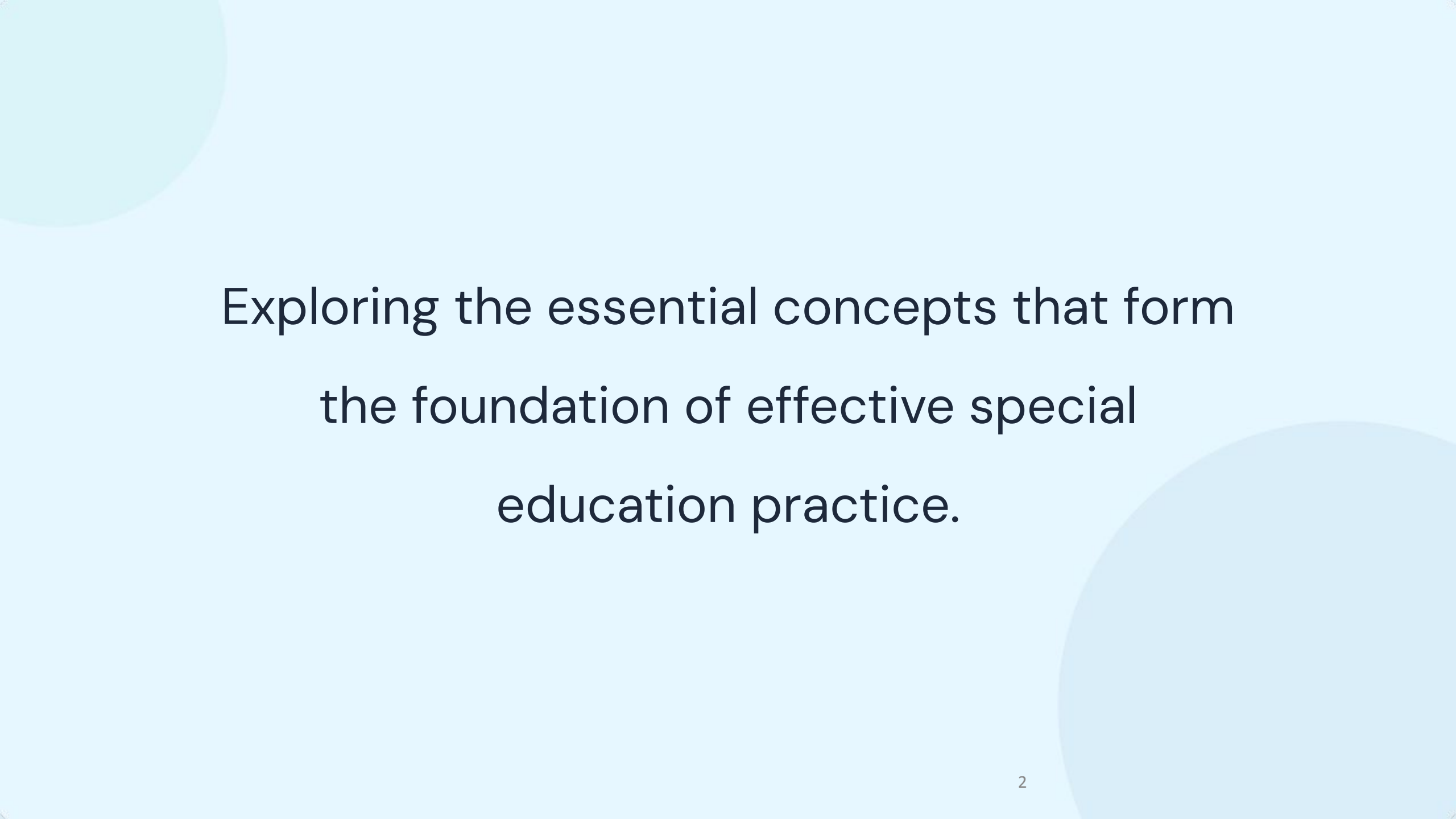


# **The Top 5 Critical Practices That Every Special Educator Needs to Master**



Exploring the essential concepts that form  
the foundation of effective special  
education practice.

# #1: Behavior is Communication

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Every behavior, verbal or non-verbal, serves a function. Understanding this is the first step to meaningful intervention.

# The 4 General Functions of Behavior



## Escape

To get away from something (a task, a person, a place).



## Attention

To get a reaction or engagement from others (positive or negative).



## Tangible

To get a specific item or activity (e.g., a toy, food, or iPad).



## Sensory

To get an internal feeling that is stimulating, calming (e.g., rocking, humming) or painful.

# Reframe Your Thinking, Replace the Skill



**How you respond impacts behavior.** Your reaction can either reinforce or extinguish the behavior.



**How you reframe impacts your strategy.** Change your perspective to find the solution.



**Instead of:** "This student is manipulative."



**Try:** "This student is highly skilled at getting their needs met."



**The Goal:** Understand what the student is communicating, then teach a replacement skill. It's skill-based!

# #2: The Discipline Framework

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Discipline is not punishment; it is a "course correct" to guide student behavior.

# Philosophy of Student Discipline



**Tied to the Handbook:** All disciplinary actions must align with the established student handbook.



**Needs to be Progressive:** Responses should escalate appropriately and systematically.



**It's a "Course Correct":** The goal is to teach and correct, not to punish.

# #3: The Compliance Mandate

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Compliance is the legal foundation of our programming. If timelines are missed, the program is at risk. It's a denial of FAPE.



# Compliance is Non-Negotiable



**NOTICE is Key:** This is how parents participate and how you document all district actions.



**Timelines & Notice are Everything:** It doesn't matter how strong your programming is. If your paperwork and/or timelines are not met, you are out of compliance.



**Know Your Laws:** They are different in every state. What applies in one may not apply in another.

# #4: Data Matters

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Move from opinions to objective facts. Data drives decisions, demonstrates progress, and protects all parties.

# Data: Make it Count

## Words vs. Numbers

"He had a good day" is an opinion. "He completed 4/5 tasks with one prompt" is data.

Quantitative data and visual representations (charts, graphs) make a big difference in communicating progress clearly.

## Know What You're Measuring

Be precise. Are you measuring the student's ability to "cook a grilled cheese" (a complex, multi-step skill)?

Or are you measuring their ability to "follow a 2-step visual direction"? Your goal defines your data.

# #5: Parent Relationships

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Build a long-term partnership founded on trust, transparency, and a shared, student-centered goal.

# Building the Partnership



**It's a Marathon:** You are in a relationship with families from age 3 to 22 in most states.



**Conflict is Inevitable:** Don't fear it; plan for it. Keep the student at the center of all discussions.



**Avoid Power Struggles:** The vision for the student will evolve over time, and you must adapt with it.



**Communicate Proactively:** Transparent and proactive communication is your most powerful tool.



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# Questions?