

Evidence-Based Interventions Under the ESSA

ESEA emphasizes the use of evidence-based activities, strategies, and interventions. Section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA defines an evidence-based intervention as being supported by strong evidence, moderate evidence, promising evidence, or evidence that demonstrates a rationale. Some ESEA programs encourage the use of “evidence-based” interventions and others require the use of “evidence-based” interventions that meet higher levels of evidence.

This guidance was developed to assist schools selected for School Support to choose and implement evidence-based interventions that improve student outcomes. It is important to develop a process to use, generate, and share evidence about effective strategies to support students and accelerate student learning.

Definition of Evidence-Based and Levels of Evidence

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has consistently directed educators to implement interventions grounded in research. Under the new ESSA law, there is a shift to “evidence-based interventions”. This change is designed to help increase the impact of educational investments and effectively implement evidence-based interventions, which lead to desired outcomes, specifically an increase in academic achievement.

Evidence-based interventions are practices or programs that have evidence to show they are effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented. The kind of evidence described in ESSA has generally been produced through formal studies and research. Under ESSA, there are four tiers, or levels, of evidence:

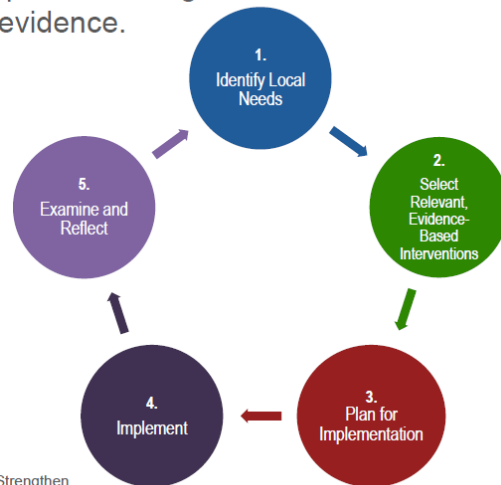
- ❖ **Tier 1 – Strong Evidence:** highest level of evidence
 - supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental studies
 - intervention leads to favorable results
- ❖ **Tier 2 – Moderate Evidence:**
 - supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies
 - controlled experiment was conducted with a treatment group
 - intervention shows statistically significant and positive effect on the outcome
- ❖ **Tier 3 – Promising Evidence:** not as strong as evidence in an experiment
 - supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented correlational studies (with statistical controls for selection bias).
 - formal study if a relationship exists between intervention and a given outcome
 - intervention shows a statistically significant and positive effect on the outcome
- ❖ **Tier 4 – Demonstrates a Rationale:**
 - practices that have a well-defined logic model or theory of action
 - supported by research in the field
 - some efforts are underway by a state, district, or outside research organization to determine the effectiveness
 - no formal evidence exists to prove interventions are successful

Interventions applied under Title I, Section 1003 (School Improvement) are required to have strong, moderate, or promising evidence (Tiers 1–3) to support them. All other programs under Titles I–IV can rely on Tiers 1–4.

Using Evidence Under ESSA

Ways to strengthen the effectiveness of ESEA investments include identifying local needs, selecting evidence-based interventions that districts and schools have the capacity to implement, planning for and then supporting the intervention, and examining and reflecting upon how the intervention is working. These steps, when taken together, promote continuous improvement and can support better outcomes for students.

- **Step 1:** Identify local needs by consulting with stakeholders, collecting and analyzing data, and identifying root causes.
- **Step 2:** Select interventions that are supported by evidence relevant to local needs, and that can be implemented successfully. At least one study on an intervention should provide strong evidence, moderate evidence, or promising evidence.
- **Step 3:** Develop a plan for implementation.
- **Step 4:** Implement the intervention and monitor quality.
- **Step 5:** Examine outcomes and reflect on goals, then use what you learn to make decisions.



* Source: U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>.

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Evidence-Based Resources

ESSA requires states to develop a process to approve, monitor, and review improvement plans for schools selected for comprehensive support and targeted support. The NDDPI will offer a variety of additional supports to schools including on-site technical assistance, off-site networking sessions, embedded professional development, virtual learning experiences, guidance documents, and templates to support improvement planning and monitoring. The NDDPI will work with LEAs and REAs to support schools with implementing evidence-based strategies. In addition, NDDPI will assist LEAs in exploring and identifying appropriate resources within the various national clearinghouses.

- What Works Clearinghouse is a central source of scientific evidence for what works in education. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>
- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guides are subjected to rigorous external peer review and consist of recommendations, strategies, and indications of the strength of evidence supporting each recommendation. <https://eric.ed.gov/>
- Florida Center for Reading Research provides information about research-based practices related to literacy instruction and assessment for children preschool through 12th grade, as well as a variety of evidence-based interventions for use by educators. <http://www.fcrr.org/>
- Best Evidence Encyclopedia offers information to improve learning for students in grades K-12 and particularly targets students in mathematics, special needs/diverse learners, and English language learners. <http://www.bestevidence.org/>

- The Center on Instruction offers information to improve learning in reading, mathematics, science, Special Education, and English Learning (EL) instruction.
<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/>
- Evidence for ESSA, a free website designed to provide education leaders with information on programs that meet the evidence standards included in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
<https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

In addition, NDDPI supports evidence-based interventions in the following areas:

- NDDPI is working with the North Central Comprehensive Center (NCCC) and the Regional Education Laboratory at Marzano Research to review and update interventions for at-risk student populations to include evidence-based strategies and interventions. Schools selected for comprehensive and targeted support can select interventions from this resource or select other interventions of their choice. These schools will outline their selected interventions in their improvement plan, Consolidated Application for Federal Title Funding, and in the School Support Application for additional funds.
- The guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) seeks to help SEAs, LEAs, schools, educators, partner organizations, and other stakeholders understand the four levels of evidence and recommends a step-by-step process for choosing and implementing interventions that improve outcomes for students. The guidance *Using ESSA to Strengthen Education Investments* is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>.