

Evidence-Based Interventions

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

Tier 1 – Strong Evidence: supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental studies.

Tier 2 – Moderate Evidence: supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies.

Tier 3 – Promising Evidence: supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented correlational studies (with statistical controls for selection bias).

Tier 4 – Demonstrates a Rationale: practices that have a well-defined logic model or theory of action, are supported by research, and have some effort underway by an SEA, LEA, or outside research organization to determine their effectiveness.

Select Relevant Evidence-Based Interventions

(The following excerpt is taken from U.S. Department of Education’s [Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Investments](#), page 4-5.)

Once needs have been identified, SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other stakeholders will determine the interventions that will best serve their needs. By using rigorous and relevant evidence and assessing the local capacity to implement the intervention (e.g., funding, staff, staff skills, stakeholder support), SEAs and LEAs are more likely to implement interventions successfully. Those concepts are briefly discussed below (also see Part II of this guidance for more information on evidence-based interventions):

- While ESSA requires “at least one study” on an intervention to provide strong evidence, moderate evidence, or promising evidence, SEAs, LEAs, and other stakeholders should consider the entire body of relevant evidence.
- Interventions supported by higher levels of evidence, specifically strong evidence or moderate evidence, are more likely to improve student outcomes because they have

been proven to be effective. When strong evidence or moderate evidence is not available, promising evidence may suggest that an intervention is worth exploring. Interventions with little to no evidence should at least demonstrate a rationale for how they will achieve their intended goals and be examined to understand how they are working.

- The relevance of the evidence – specifically the setting (e.g., elementary school) and/or population (e.g., students with disabilities, English Learners) of the evidence – may predict how well an evidence-based intervention will work in a local context (for more information, also see Part II and endnotes). SEAs and LEAs should look for interventions supported by strong evidence or moderate evidence in a similar setting and/or population to the ones being served. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) uses rigorous standards to review evidence of effectiveness on a wide range of interventions as well as summarizes the settings and populations in the studies.
- Local capacity also helps predict the success of an intervention, so the available funding, staff resources, staff skills, and support for interventions should be considered when selecting an evidence-based intervention. SEAs can work with individual and/or groups of LEAs to improve their capacity to implement evidence-based interventions.

Some questions to consider about using evidence:

- Are there any interventions supported by strong evidence or moderate evidence?
- What do the majority of studies on this intervention find? Does the intervention have positive and statistically significant effects on important student or other relevant outcomes, or are there null, negative, or not statistically significant findings?
- Were studies conducted in settings and with populations relevant to the local context (e.g., students with disabilities, English Learners)?
- If strong evidence or moderate evidence is not available, is there promising evidence?
- Does the intervention demonstrate a rationale that suggests it may work (e.g., it is represented in a logic model supported by research)?
- How can the success of the intervention be measured?

Some questions to consider about local capacity:

- What resources are required to implement this intervention?
- Will the potential impact of this intervention justify the costs, or are there more cost-effective interventions that will accomplish the same outcomes?

- What is the local capacity to implement this intervention? Are there available funds? Do staff have the needed skills? Is there buy-in for the intervention?
- How does this intervention fit into larger strategic goals and other existing efforts?
- How will this intervention be sustained over time?

Resources for Exploring Evidence-Based Interventions

The following websites can be useful in finding evidence-based educational interventions and exploring interventions that have been successful in addressing identified needs. These sites use varying criteria for determining which interventions are supported by evidence and distinguish between randomized controlled trials and other types of supporting evidence.

- [Doing What Works](#) by West Ed
- [Intervention Central](#)
- [RTI Action Network](#) by the National Center for Learning Disabilities
- [National Center for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports](#)
- [Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) by the American Institutes for Research
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#) by the USDOE Institute of Education Sciences
- [Social Programs That Work](#) by the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy
- [Practical Intervention in the Schools Series](#) Book Series
- [Results First Clearinghouse Database](#) by Pew Charitable Trusts as rated by eight national databases
- [Roadmap to Evidence Based Reform for Low Graduation Rate High Schools](#) by the Every Student Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University