

Evidence-Based Practices Guide

Published 11/24/25

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Selecting Evidence-Based Practices and Interventions

The quality of teaching delivered to students is the most impactful factor within an education setting that can improve student outcomes, particularly for those who are most marginalized and disadvantaged. High-impact teaching results from **evidence-based practices**, skills, techniques, and strategies supported by high-quality, rigorous research studies across multiple settings.

The purpose of seeking evidence-based practices is to ensure that teaching strategies are grounded in research and have been proven effective in improving student outcomes. In an educational landscape with limited time and resources, relying on well-tested methods helps educators make informed decisions that benefit their students. The search typically begins by identifying a specific instructional challenge or area of interest, such as improving literacy, enhancing classroom behavior, or boosting student engagement, and then consulting reputable sources, such as the *What Works Clearinghouse*, the *Institute of Education Sciences*, peer-reviewed journals, or professional education organizations. Starting with clear goals and trusted sources enables educators to confidently and purposefully navigate various strategies.

This document includes:

- key definitions
- federally recognized evidence levels
- resource links for identifying acceptable evidence
- examples of other states' curriculum materials
- a guiding checklist

The development of this document was primarily informed by the **USDOE Guidance Document** [USDOE Guidance Document](#)

Purpose of Evidence-Based Practices

Empowering stakeholders with the knowledge to use, generate, and share evidence about effective strategies to support student learners is a powerful tool. It instills confidence and a sense of capability, enabling them to improve academic and non-academic outcomes. This guidance aims to further enhance this empowerment by helping schools successfully choose and implement *evidence-based project components* designed to improve learners' outcomes.

Statutory Requirements

Per [ESSA Section 1111 \(d\)](#), schools identified for support and improvement by their State must develop school improvement plans to improve student outcomes based on the indicators in the statewide accountability system that include evidence-based interventions.

Evidence-based practice <i>(Required for Federal Funding)</i>	● It has been shown to have a positive effect on student outcomes ● The research design allows one to infer that the practice led to child or student improvement ● Multiple high-quality studies have been conducted ● Reviewed by a reputable organization (e.g., What Works Clearinghouse)
Research-based practice <i>(Not acceptable for federally funded Projects)</i>	● Some research studies have demonstrated positive effects on student outcomes, while other studies have not. ● Based on research that may or may not demonstrate that the practice led to improved child or student outcomes ● Multiple studies have been conducted.

Evidence-Based Practice vs. Research-Based Practice

Per [EDGAR: The Education Department of General Administrative Regulations \(34 CFR 77.1\)](#) is a key set of federal regulations that govern all federal grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Levels of Evidence

Evidence Requirement	Levels of Evidence			
	<u>Strong Evidence</u> (1)	<u>Moderate Evidence</u> (2)	<u>Promising Evidence</u> (Not acceptable) (3)	<u>Demonstrates a Rationale</u> (Not acceptable) (4)
Outcomes	At least one statistically significant and positive effect on a relevant outcome; no statistically significant and negative impact on a relevant outcome	At least one statistically significant and positive effect on a relevant outcome; no statistically significant and negative impact on a relevant outcome	At least one statistically significant and positive effect on a relevant outcome	Not Applicable
Study Design	Experimental Study	Experimental study or quasi-experimental design study	Experimental study, quasi-experimental design study, or correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias	Logic Model informed by research or evaluation findings
WWC Evidence Rating	Meets WWC without reservations	Meets WWC with or without reservations	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Sample Size	A large sample (n=350+) and a multisite sample	A large sample (n=350+) and a multisite sample	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Resources

Resources with Levels of Evidence:

[What Works Clearinghouse*](#)
[EdReports–Explore Reports](#)
[Best Evidence Encyclopedia](#)
[Evidence for ESSA](#)
[IXL Math/ELA](#)
[Visible Learning](#)
[IRIS Center-Evidence for Evidence-Based Practice Summaries](#)
[National Center for Education Research](#)
[ADI website/resources*](#)
[Comprehensive Center Network](#)
[ERIC](#)

Support Resources:

[Count Me In](#)
[Maine Math Science Alliance](#)

[Evidence for ESSA \(IXL Math\)](#)

[Intensive Intervention](#)

[NWEA-Achievement Level Explorer](#): A resource for educators to analyze student progress and identify target standards for growth. Learning progressions are determined by proficiency levels aligned with Maine State Standards.

[The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk](#)

Curriculum Resources from other states: Listed below are curriculum resources that are neither endorsed nor recommended by MDOE, but have been vetted and approved by other states as meeting the criteria for evidence-based:

- **Virginia** - <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/english-reading-literacy/literacy/approved-core-instructional-programs-for-grades-k-5>
- **Connecticut** - <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/academic-office/center-for-literacy-research-and-reading-success/connecticut-approved-k-3-reading-curricula-programs>
- **Mississippi** - <https://msinstructionalmaterials.org/adopted-materials/ela/>
- **Oklahoma**-
<https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/SOR%20PD%202022%20Approved%20List%20for%20Districts.pdf>
- **Oregon** Department of Education: Adopted Instructional Materials: High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM): State of Oregon Adopted Instructional Materials - <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/teachingcontent/instructional-materials/pages/adopted-instructional-materials.aspx>

USING THE WWC TO FIND ESSA TIERS OF EVIDENCE

Educators search for high-quality research for many reasons, and the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) can be a valuable tool for locating studies that meet the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** requirements.



Educators search for high-quality research and evidence-based interventions to strengthen grant applications, to support comprehensive and targeted schools, or to implement new programming in their schools. ESSA evidence tiers are designed to ensure that states, districts, and schools can identify programs, practices, products, and policies that work across various populations.

The WWC has valuable tools for locating studies that meet the ESSA requirements. Here are the other pieces of the puzzle, including logos that can be seen throughout the [WWC website](#) to identify studies that meet ESSA requirements.

**ESSA
TIER
1**

AT LEAST ONE FINDING
SHOWS STRONG EVIDENCE
OF EFFECTIVENESS

STRONG evidence of effectiveness under ESSA is defined as



Meets WWC Standards
Without Reservations under
version 2.1 or later to meet
Tier 1¹



Statistically significant positive
effect to meet Tier 1



At least 350 students to meet
Tier 1



At least two educational sites
to meet Tier 1

**ESSA
TIER
2**

AT LEAST ONE FINDING
SHOWS MODERATE
EVIDENCE OF
EFFECTIVENESS

MODERATE evidence of effectiveness
under ESSA is defined as



Meets WWC Standards
With or Without Reservations
under version 2.1 or later to
meet Tier 2²



Statistically significant
positive effect to meet Tier 2



At least 350 students to meet
Tier 2



At least two educational sites
to meet Tier 2

¹ **Meets WWC Standards Without Reservations** means in most cases that a study was a randomized controlled trial (RCT) that was deemed by experts to be well-designed and well-implemented and that did not have problems with attrition (that is, participants dropping out or otherwise leaving the study).

² **Meets WWC Standards With Reservations** means that a study has some potential issues that require caution. It may be a strong quasi-experimental study (meaning that it did not have random selection and/or assignment of participants) with comparison groups that are similar at the baseline. It may also be an RCT that is not as well implemented, or has issues with attrition.

**NOTE: Under ESSA, for a state/district/school to consider an intervention as a Tier 1 evidence-based practice, the setting AND samples from the studies used to determine the evidence tier need to overlap with the population AND setting of the state/district/school interested in implementing the intervention.*

For a state/district/school to consider an intervention as a Tier 2 evidence-based practice, the setting OR the samples from the studies used to determine the evidence tier need to overlap with setting OR population.

Access ESSA-related resources at the [What Works Clearinghouse website](#).

This infographic was prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse through a contract to American Institutes for Research (919900180019), in partnership with Quality Information Partners.

