

Accessing & Assessing Research and Evidence



Regional Educational
Laboratory at WestEd

FEBRUARY 2020

This document provides a select list of resources related to accessing and assessing evidence and research, in alignment with the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The materials are organized around the six questions presented below. Each question is “clickable,” linking you directly to its related resources.

Some resources are related to more than one question so will appear more than one time. For easy access, the resource descriptions themselves also have a direct link to their source. Contact your Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) for more information or to request assistance with ESSA evidence requirements.

1

What are the ESSA evidence tiers and what research study designs are associated with each ESSA evidence tier?

2

How can I use the What Works Clearinghouse to determine ESSA evidence tiers of an intervention?

3

What are some sources for accessing evidence-based practices aligned to ESSA evidence tiers?

4

What tools are available to support state and local education agencies with ESSA evidence use?

5

How do the ESSA evidence requirements fit within an improvement framework?

6

What are some examples of how states and districts are addressing the ESSA evidence use requirements?



Question 1. What are the ESSA evidence tiers and what research study designs are associated with each ESSA evidence tier?

ESSA Evidence Levels

Kentucky Department of Education

- This one-page description of ESSA evidence tiers is adapted from the United States Department of Education's *Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments*. The table describes elements of each evidence tier, including study design, favorable effects, other effects, What Works Clearinghouse standards, and sample size and overlap with the targeted population and setting.

Available at: <https://education.ky.gov/school/evidence/Documents/ESSA%20Evidence%20Levels.pdf>

Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

- This guidance is intended to help state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), schools, and other stakeholders choose and implement evidence-based practices (EBPs) that improve outcomes for students. Part I of this guidance reviews steps for effective evidence-based decision-making and Part II recommends considerations, resources, and criteria for identifying EBPs based on each of ESSA's four evidence tiers.

Available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>

Observing Evidence that Demonstrates a Rationale

REL Southeast

- This infographic shows three common ways a study can demonstrate a rationale that it is likely to improve its targeted outcomes. It also includes considerations about logic models and collecting and reporting data.

Available at: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SE_Demonstrates_a_Rationale.pdf

Observing Moderate Evidence: Quasi-Experimental Designs

REL Southeast

- This infographic defines quasi-experimental designs, describes group formation, and includes other considerations such as selection and baseline equivalence.

Available at: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SE_Moderate_Evidence.pdf

Observing Promising Evidence: Correlational Studies

REL Southeast

- This infographic defines correlational studies and provides an example of a correlational study. The infographic also includes considerations about control variables and causal inference.

Available at: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SE_Promising_Evidence.pdf



Observing Strong Evidence: Experimental Designs

REL Southeast

- This infographic explains key terms related to research using experimental design, such as intervention group, control group, and random assignment and study attrition.

Available at: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SE_Experimental_studies.pdf

Selecting Evidence-Based Practices for Low-Performing Schools | ESSA Action Guide

REL Southwest

- This action guide focuses on the selection of EBPs, with the goal of helping state-, district-, and school-level leaders select interventions that can support school improvement. The guide walks leaders through the EBP selection process using three actions to integrate ESSA requirements with local needs and contexts.

Available at: <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Selecting-Evidence-Based-Practices-for-Low-Performing-Schools-April-2019-rev.pdf>

Understanding ESSA Levels of Evidence

REL Southeast

- This PowerPoint presentation explains key terms and characteristics of studies that qualify for each ESSA evidence tier.

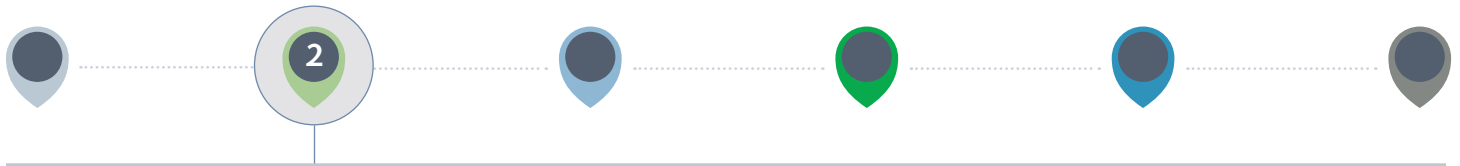
Available at: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/essa_understanding.asp

Understanding the ESSA Tiers of Evidence

REL Midwest

- This video explains ESSA's four tiers of evidence and how to use them to rate an intervention's potential effectiveness for improving student outcomes.

Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/blogs/essa-evidence-tiers-video.aspx>



Question 2. How can I use the What Works Clearinghouse to determine ESSA evidence tiers of an intervention?

What Works Clearinghouse

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences

- What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews the existing research on different education programs, products, practices, and policies. It aims to inform educators' evidence-based decisions with high-quality research to answer the question, "What works in education?"

Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

Aligning Evidence-Based Clearinghouses with ESSA Tiers of Evidence

REL Midwest

- This matrix describes the characteristics of five clearinghouses, citing focus areas, types of studies included, and criteria for ratings in each one. A separate table aligns each clearinghouse with ESSA evidence tiers.

Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/eventhandout/ESSA-Clearinghouse-Crosswalk-Jan2018-508.pdf>

Using the What Works Clearinghouse to Find ESSA Tiers of Evidence

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences

- This website features tools and resources to help educators locate WWC studies that meet ESSA Evidence Standards. It explains some of the logos used on the WWC website to identify studies that meet ESSA requirements.

Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/essa>

Using What Works Clearinghouse to Find Evidence-Based Interventions

Kentucky Department of Education

- This user manual embeds screen shots and step-by-step instructions to help educators learn how to use WWC to identify interventions, verify evidence tiers, and review studies to select appropriate evidence-based interventions.

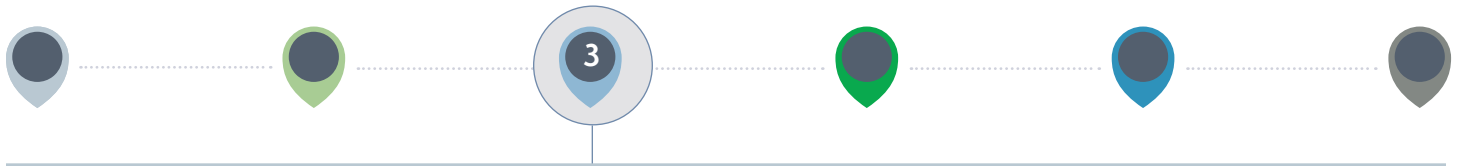
Available at: <https://education.ky.gov/school/evidence/Documents/What%20Works%20Clearinghouse%20User%20Manual.pdf>

Using the What Works Clearinghouse to Identify ESSA Evidence Ratings

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences

- This animated video shows how educators can use WWC to find research that aligns with ESSA Tier 1 and Tier 2 evidence ratings. The video first describes the criteria used by WWC to define research evidence in these two tiers. The video then walks viewers through the process for using WWC's Reviews of Individual Studies tool to identify studies and evidence that meet their needs.

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hu4XnpyiKxw&feature=youtu.be>



Question 3. What are some sources for accessing evidence-based practices aligned to ESSA evidence tiers?

Aligning Evidence-Based Clearinghouses with ESSA Tiers of Evidence

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Elevating Evidence Resources: Clearinghouses and Databases

Kentucky Department of Education

- This document lists clearinghouses and databases to identify evidence-based activities, strategies, and interventions. The list categorizes resource sites by topic: general education; career and workforce education; social and emotional development; physical health; juvenile justice, delinquency, and substance abuse; parent, family, and community engagement; and data use, collection, and maintenance.

Available at: <https://education.ky.gov/school/evidence/Documents/Elevating Evidence Resources Clearinghouses and Databases.pdf>

Evidence-Based Practice Guides

Connecticut State Department of Education

- These guides provide lists of instructional practices and rates them according to ESSA's evidence tiers. Guide topics are climate and culture, early learning, English language proficiency, mathematics, on-track graduation, reading, and student/family/community engagement.

Available at: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Connecticut-State-Department-of-Education-Evidence-Based-Practice-Guides>

Evidence for ESSA

Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE), at Johns Hopkins University

- This database reviews mathematics and reading programs that align to the ESSA evidence standards and meet local needs. Programs are rated as *strong*, *moderate*, or *promising*, with additional search parameters based on grade, community, student demographics, program features, and instructional group size.

Available at: <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

How the Every Student Succeeds Act Can Support Social and Emotional Learning

RAND Corporation

- This brief provides a thumbnail sketch of the findings from the *Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Interventions under the ESSA: Evidence Review*, which highlights 60 SEL interventions that meet ESSA evidence tiers. The brief includes recommendations for educators and policymakers, as well as key findings from the original review.

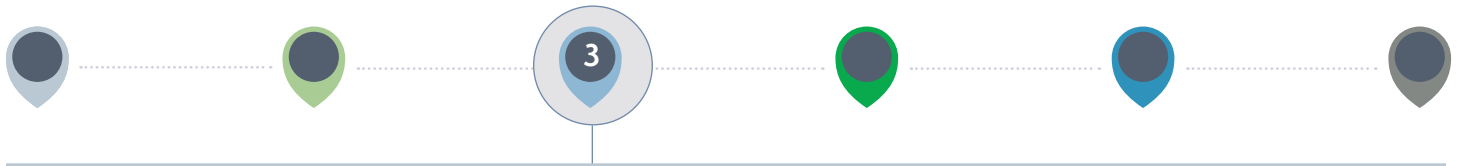
Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9988.html

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review

RAND Corporation

- This report reviews recent evidence on US-based SEL interventions for K–12 students, identifies SEL interventions that meet ESSA evidence requirements, and describes opportunities for supporting SEL under ESSA.

Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2133.html



School Leadership Intervention Evaluation Toolkit

RAND Corporation

- This toolkit helps state and local educators evaluate school leadership improvement interventions. It provides guidance and tools for building an intervention logic model, selecting program evaluation designs and measures, organizing and analyzing data, and using data to improve the intervention. The toolkit is a companion to the *School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review*.

Available at: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL239.html>

School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review, Updated and Expanded

RAND Corporation

- This report reviews the evidence on school leadership, identifies school leadership improvement interventions that meet ESSA evidence tiers, and describes opportunities for supporting school leadership under ESSA.

Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1550-3.html



Question 4. What tools are available to support SEAs/LEAs with ESSA evidence use?

Defining Your Approach to Implementing ESSA Evidence Standards: A Self-Guided Video Workshop

REL West

- This interactive video aims to help SEAs and their education partners reflect on and begin to design their context-specific approach to supporting LEAs in the selection and implementation of interventions based on ESSA's evidence requirements. The video draws from *Evidence-Based Improvement: A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA*. Linked materials include facilitator guidance for the three discussion points in the video, along with a video transcript.

Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/Publications/Details/264>

Discussion Tree Tool

REL Northeast and Islands

- This tool is intended to help districts use the findings from studies based on district- or state-specific data. Districts can use and adapt the Discussion Tree Tool to help make sense of study results in relation to their own context.

Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/Publications/Details/264>

Empowered by Evidence: Reviewing Evidence Under ESSA

Kentucky Department of Education

- This instrument helps educators determine the suitability of an intervention and the ESSA evidence tier with which it aligns. It provides prompts for educators to consider an intervention's study design, analytic sample, delivery, and results.

Available at: [https://education.ky.gov/school/evidence/Documents/Empowered by Evidence.docx](https://education.ky.gov/school/evidence/Documents/Empowered%20by%20Evidence.docx)

ESSA Implementation: Evidence on Supporting School Leaders

REL West

- This video shows excerpts from a presentation that introduces participants to the *Logic Models for Selecting, Designing, and Implementing Evidence-Based Leadership Interventions* guide. The guide helps state and district leaders to understand the theory underlying individual interventions and supports for principals, and to identify the key components of evidence-based programs that can, in turn, inform the design, adoption, or refinement of their own leadership initiatives.

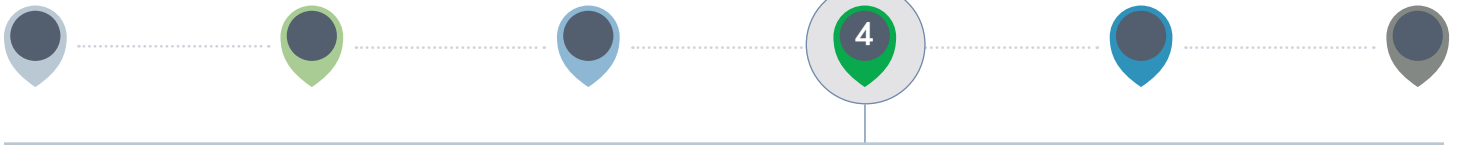
Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxwh7b1U2kQ>

Evidence-Based Improvement: A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA

WestEd

- This guide is intended to build the capacity of SEAs and LEAs in understanding ESSA's evidence-related requirements and, consequently, in selecting and implementing interventions that are based in evidence and that have strong potential to improve student outcomes. The guide includes discussion of the context and requirements of ESSA in relation to evidence-based decision-making, and a framework for a continuous improvement process grounded in evidence-based decision-making. It also includes a set of six tools to help states and school districts understand and plan for implementing evidence-based improvement strategies, including facilitation strategies.

Available at: <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Evidence-Based-Improvement-Guide-FINAL-122116.pdf>



SEA and LEA Guides for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement

Florida State University, Florida Center for Reading Research

- This set of guides for SEAs and LEAs helps educators conduct studies to identify interventions that are most relevant and appropriate based on need and that have the strongest evidence-base possible. The guides provide study tools (e.g., a scoring template and guide). They also explain the role of having a theory of action and provide a sample logic model. For those who want an overview of the self-study process along with the tools to begin right away, quick-start guides are available.

Available at: <http://www.fcrr.org/essa/index.html>

Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions According to ESSA

REL Southeast

- This PowerPoint presentation reviews requirements of ESSA, tiers of evidence, and how to use the *LEA Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement* to conduct a self-study of potential interventions.

Available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/essa.asp>

Logic Models for Selecting, Designing, and Implementing Evidence-Based Leadership Interventions

RAND Corporation

- This guide describes six types of school leadership interventions: principal preparation programs, strategic staff management (recruitment, selection, and placement), professional learning, leader evaluation systems, working conditions, and school improvement. It summarizes common components of evidence-based interventions and unpacks the relationships between the intervention activities and student outcomes. It also provides guidance on creating logic models.

The guide expands on and is a companion to *School Leadership Interventions under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review, Updated and Expanded*.

Available at: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL274.html>

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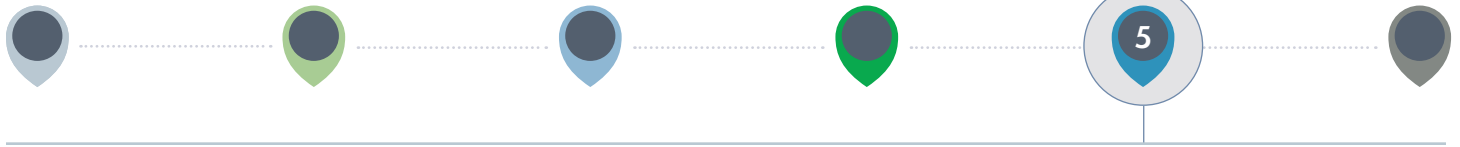
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Question 5. How do the ESSA evidence requirements fit within an improvement framework?

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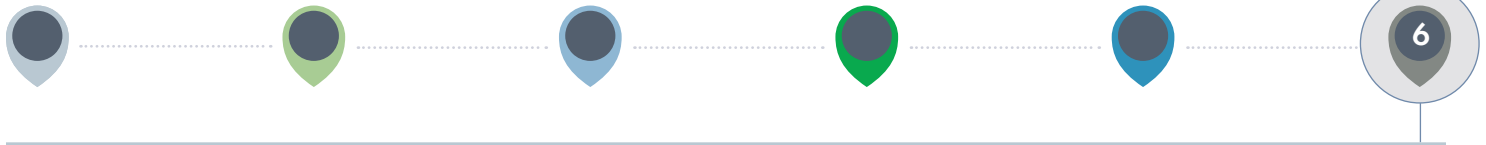
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State Responsibilities and Opportunities for School Improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Policy Studies Associates

- This report shares information on how state leaders are working to implement their vision for school improvement under ESSA. The report is organized by seven domains of SEA responsibility related to school improvement under ESSA. Each section describes responsibilities and opportunities along with state examples and resources. Curated resources also appear in an appendix.

Available at: https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/SEA_School_Improvement_Under_ESSA_Mar_2019_PSA_CCSO_Final_3.22.19.pdf



Question 6. What are some examples of how states/districts are addressing the ESSA evidence use requirements?

Accountability in the ESSA Era Research Alliance

REL Mid-Atlantic

- This video summarizes the work of the REL Mid-Atlantic *Accountability in the ESSA Era* research alliance. It describes how the alliance is working with stakeholders to help schools support students' success and meet ESSA requirements. It includes a discussion with a state agency leader about the state's work with the REL to develop surveys on school climate to be used for both accountability and school improvement.

Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=TdE_KfDdv_Q

ESSA Leverage Points: 50-State Report on Promising Practices Using Evidence to Improve Student Outcomes

Results for America

- This report reviews ESSA state plans on the degree to which the plans integrated 13 "leverage points" or key opportunities to advance the use of evidence through ESSA implementation. It summarizes trends across states for each leverage point and spotlights those states whose plans reflected the most promising approaches for planning, monitoring, allocating funds, areas of technical assistance, and support for the lowest performing schools.

Available at: https://results4america.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/RFA-ESSA-50-State-Report_final.pdf

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