

The College Access Evidence Matrix

Interventions to Support Postsecondary Transitions

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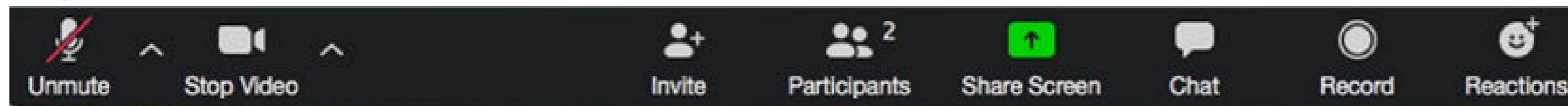
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Quick tour of Zoom features

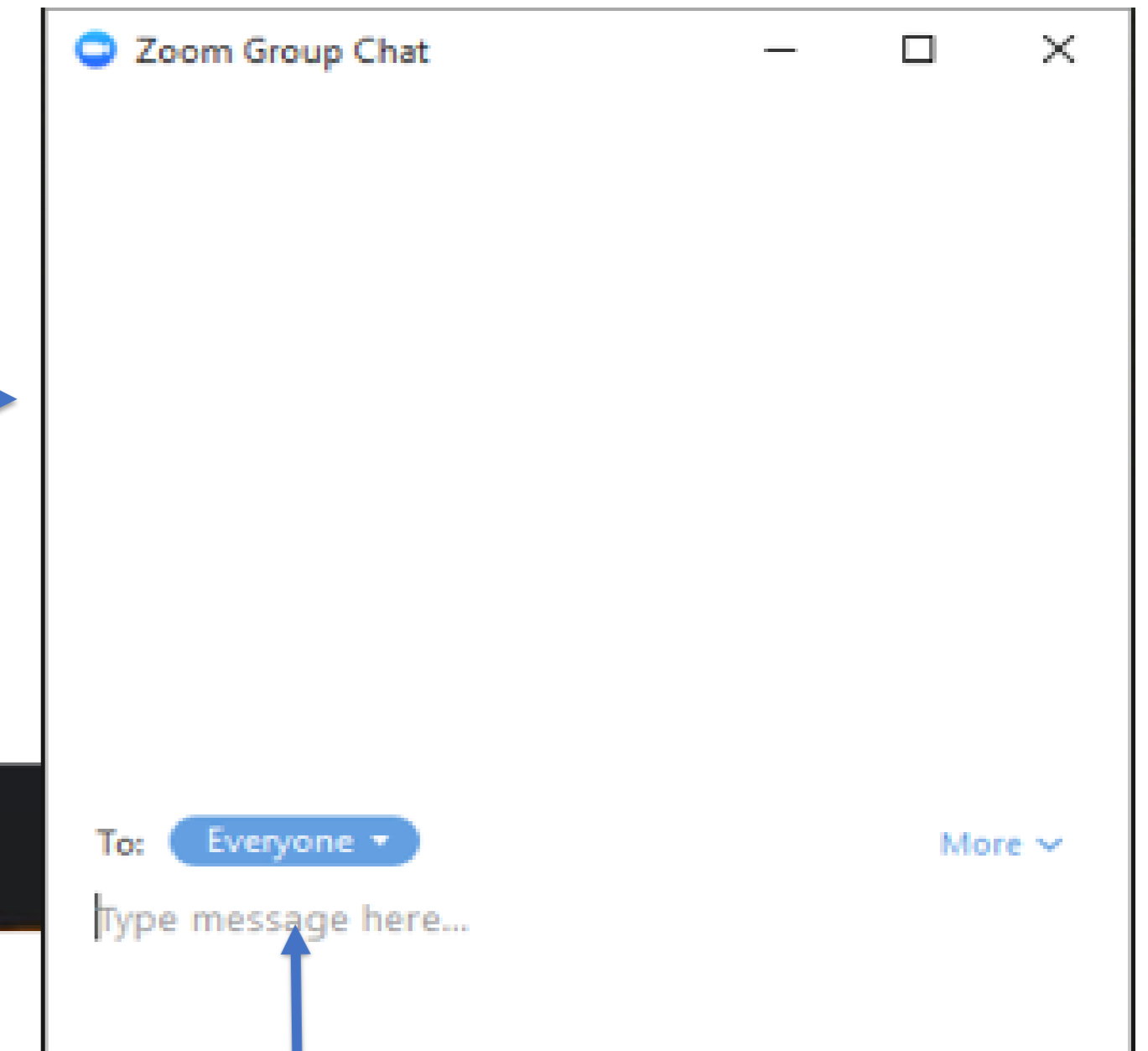
Mute/unmute
microphone

Pro Tip: Mute your mic unless speaking to limit background noise.

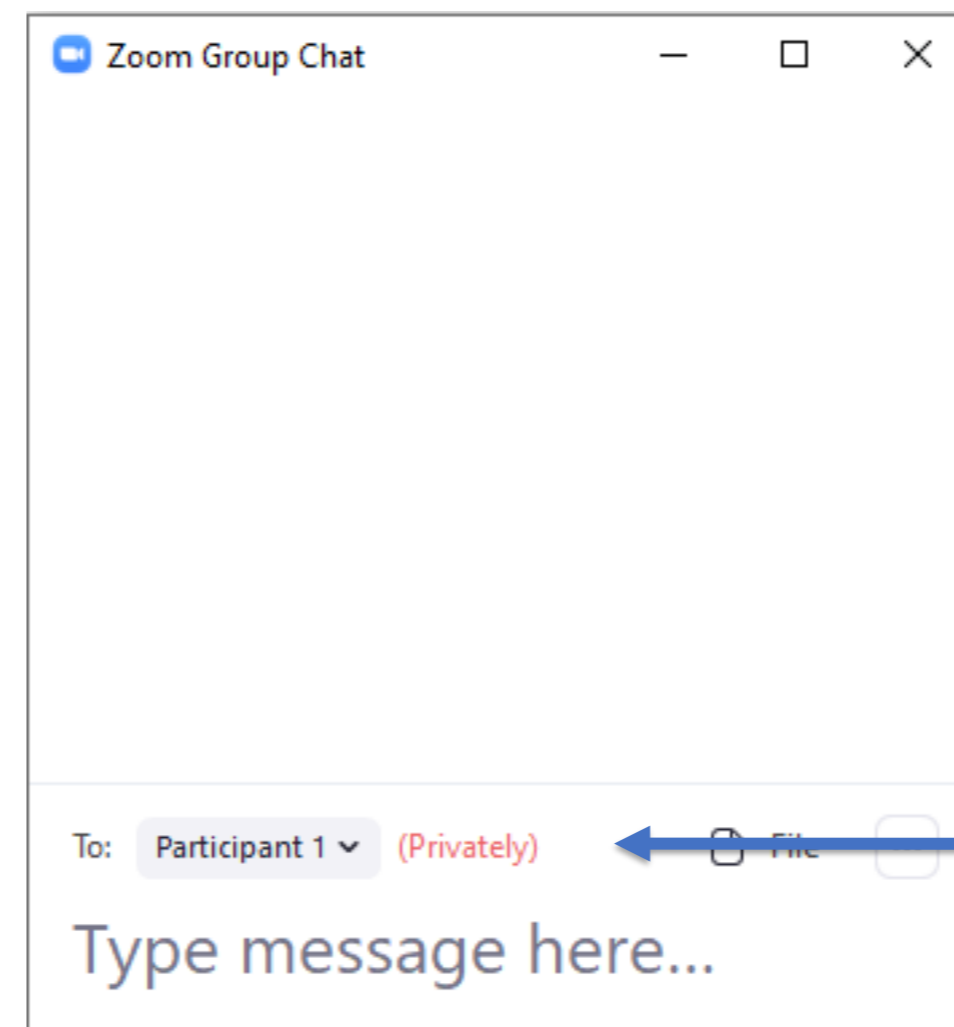
To view and use **Chat**



Pro Tip: Turn video off if you are experiencing low bandwidth.



You can send a **Chat** message to Everyone in the meeting or select a specific person from the dropdown.



Welcome and introductions

Poll: What is your role?

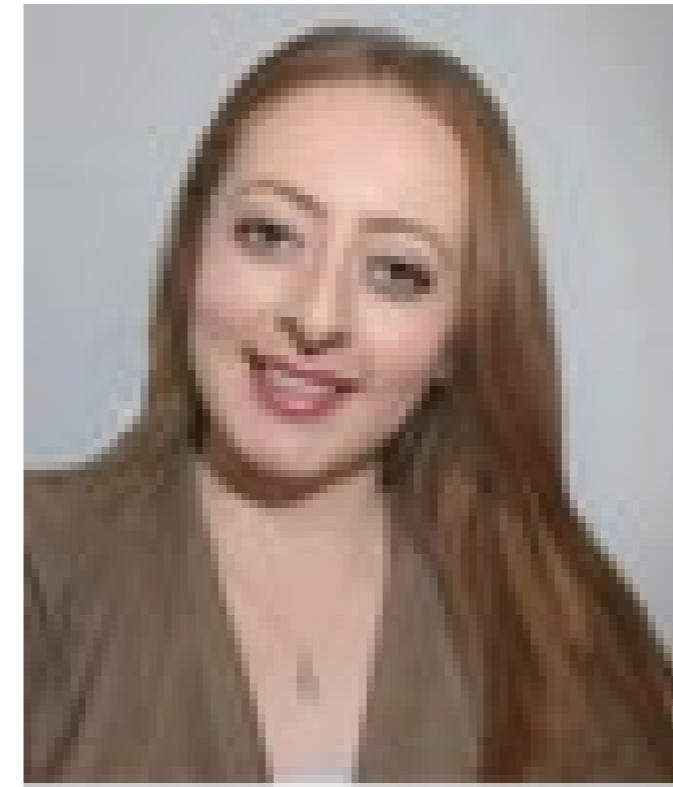
- Educator
- School or district leader
- Institution of higher education staff
- College access provider
- College access program director
- Other



Meet the facilitators



Jessica Mislevy
REL Appalachia
SRI International



Stephanie Suarez
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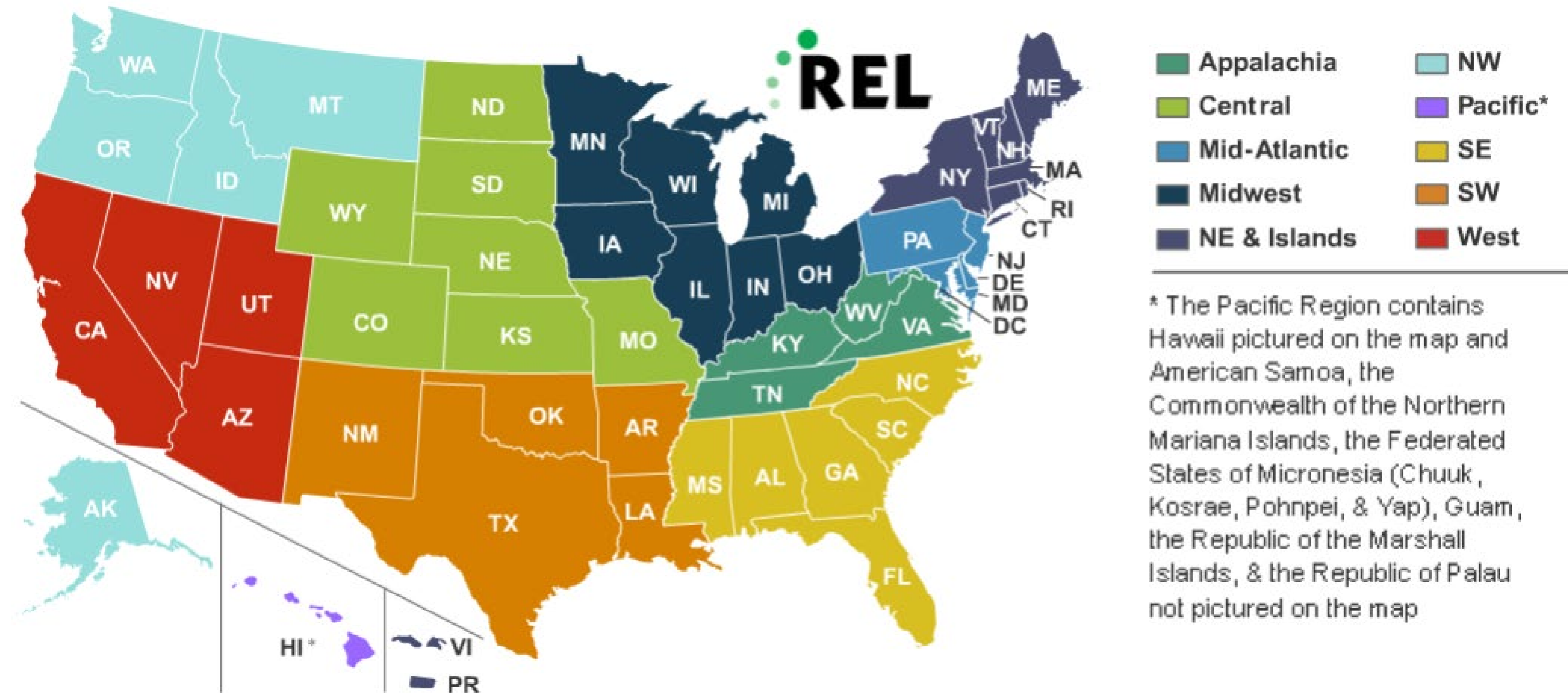


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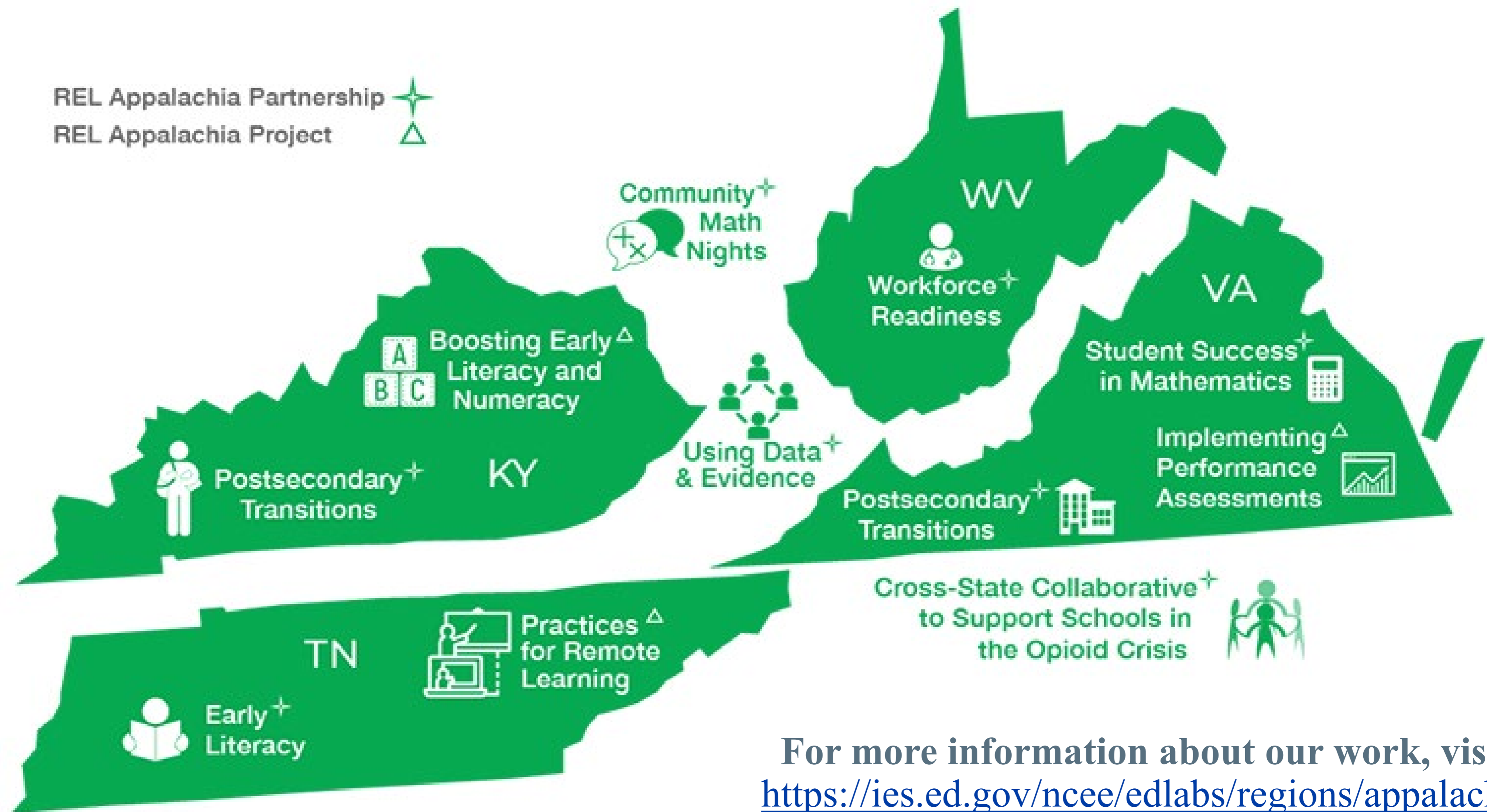
The Regional Educational Laboratories



The **10 RELs** work in partnership with stakeholders to **support a more evidence-based education system.**

Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

Find us on the web! <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/>



For more information about our work, visit:
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/>

Agenda

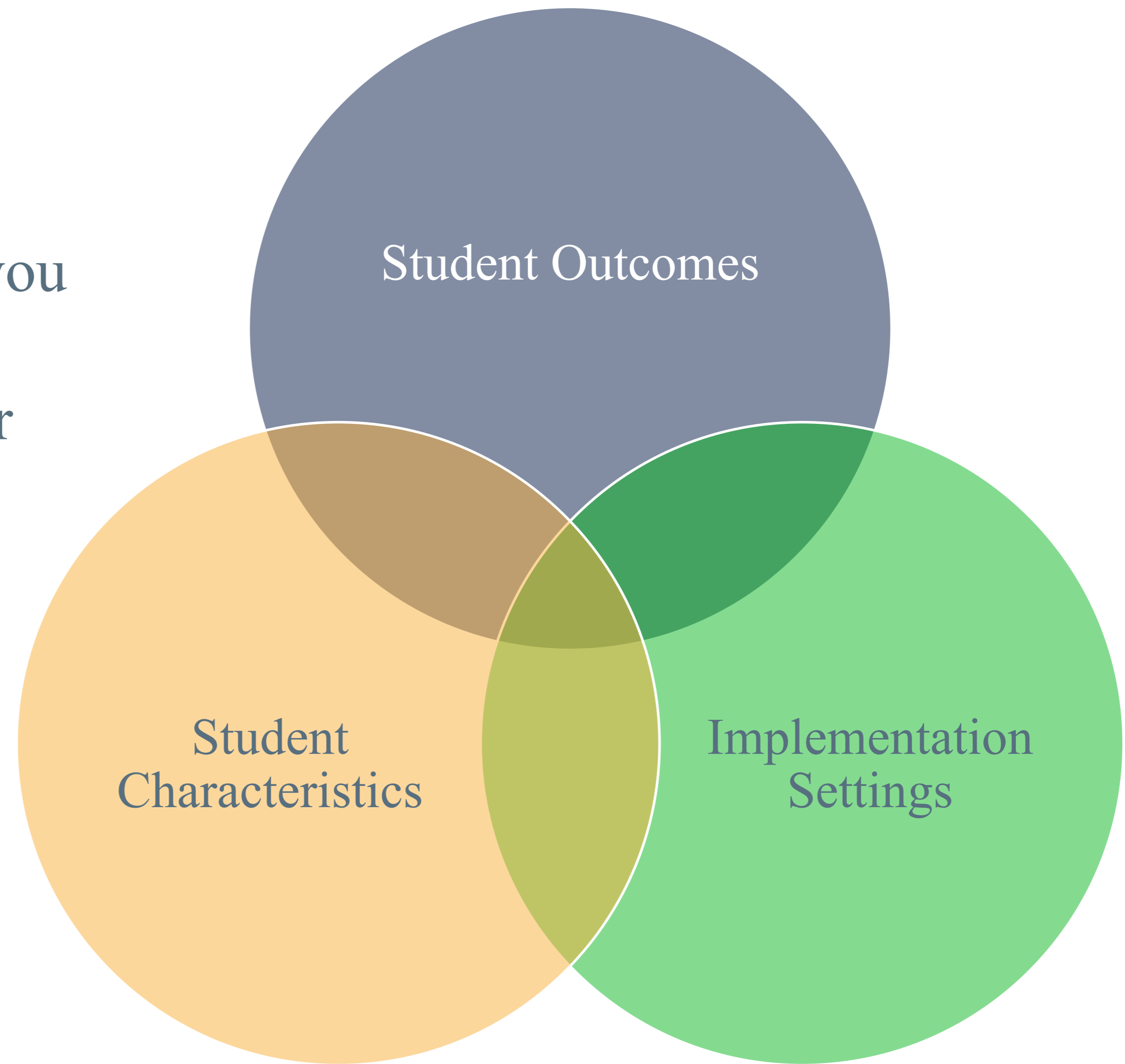
- Welcome and introductions
- Orientation to the College Access Evidence Matrix
- Using the College Access Evidence Matrix
- Checking for overlap of population and setting
- Your Turn! Breakout activity
- Additional resources
- Wrap-up and thank you



Orientation to the College Access Evidence Matrix

Why does evidence matter?

Before you adopt a program or practice, you want to know whether it has worked, for whom, and in what settings—and whether it's likely to work for your students too.



When to be cautious about “evidence” claims: Some potential red flags



Anecdotal evidence



**Source does not verify quality
of evidence**



**Potential ulterior motives for
recommending an
intervention**

Evidence under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- The 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's educational law governing K–12 public education.
- Emphasizes the use of “evidence-based interventions.”
- Ties categories of federal funding to evidence.



The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) defines evidence-based interventions as **“Practices or programs that have evidence to show that they are effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented.”**

For full description of ESSA evidence standards, see <https://ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceuseinvestment.pdf>

ESSA tiers of evidence

There are four tiers of evidence in ESSA that identify the strength of the evidence associated with various interventions.

Tier 1 – strong evidence: supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented **randomized control experimental studies**

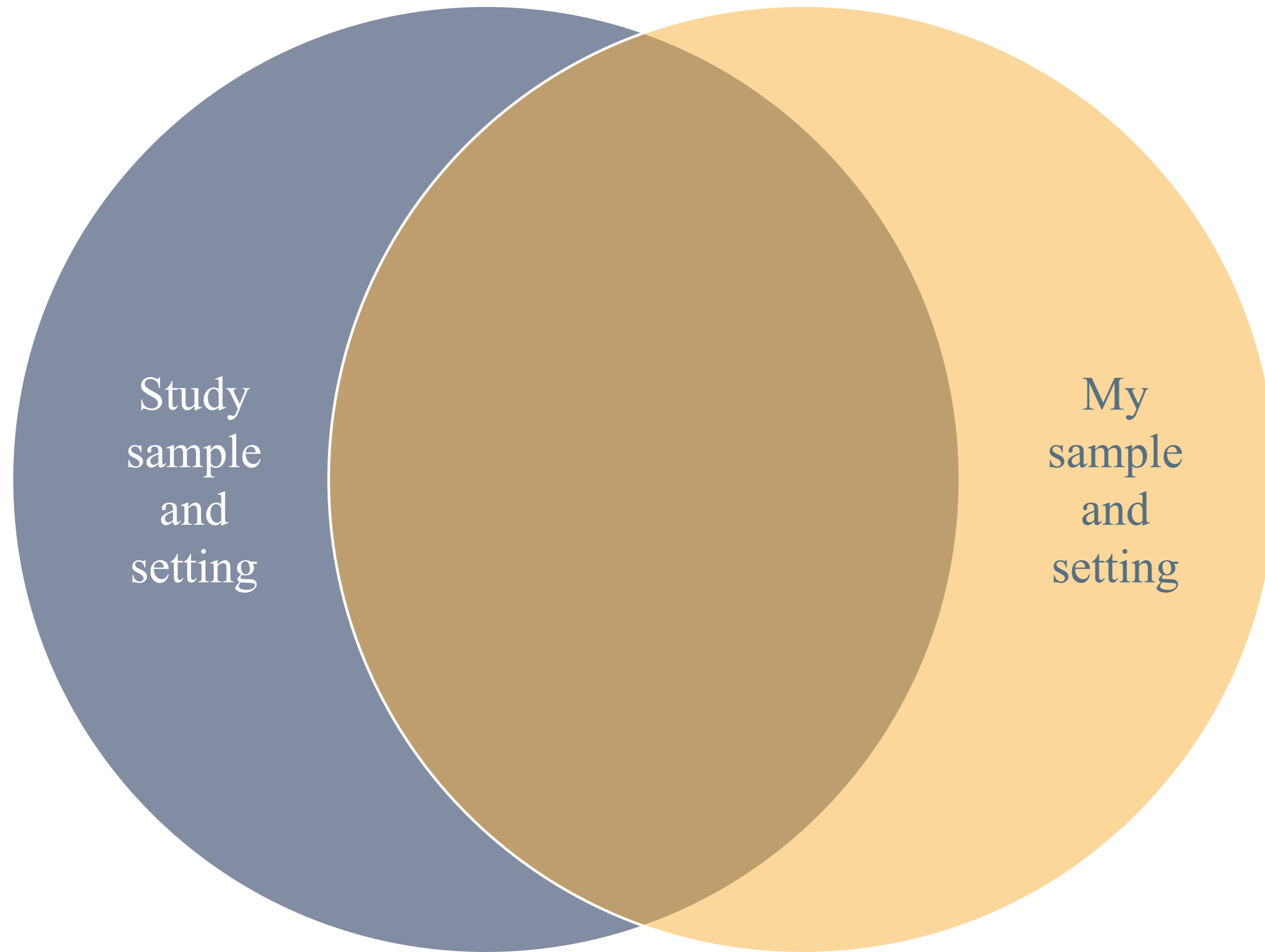
Tier 2 – moderate evidence: supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented **quasi-experimental studies**

Tier 3 – promising evidence: supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented **correlational studies**

Tier 4 – demonstrates a rationale: has a **well-defined logic model**, is **supported by research**, and **efforts to evaluate** are under way

For full description of ESSA evidence standards, see <https://ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>

ESSA ratings depend on overlap in population and setting too



ESSA Tier 1 requires overlap in the sample AND setting.

ESSA Tier 2 requires overlap in sample OR setting.

For full description of ESSA evidence standards, see <https://ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceuseinvestment.pdf>

The College Access Evidence Matrix

- Summarizes and organizes information from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC; <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>).
- Is an easy-to-use, topically focused resource for college-access providers and education leaders to select relevant, evidence-based interventions for postsecondary transitions.



Adapted from:

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

The matrix can be used to answer question about what the research says about:

- The effectiveness of particular interventions
- The kinds of interventions shown to have an impact on the outcomes that interest you

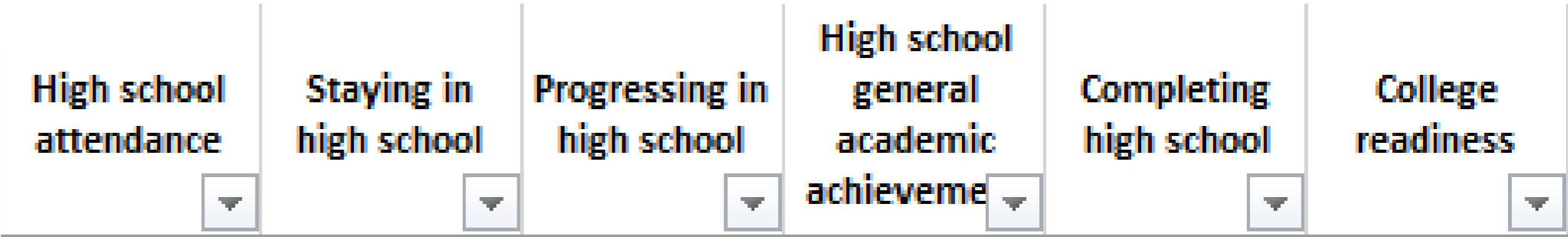
Intervention	WWC Intervention Description	Middle school general academic achievement	High school attendance	Staying in high school	Progressing in high school	High school general academic achievement	Completing high school	College readiness	College access and enrollment
Accelerated Pathways	The California Accelerati								
Accelerated Study in Associate Programs	ASAP is a three-year prog							Tier 1	Tier 1
Adult Education	Several programs that pr								Tier 1
Advancing Careers and Training for Health Care	ACT for Healthcare provid								
Automated text messaging	Text message interventio								Tier 1
Boston Charter Schools	Boston charter schools u					Tier 1		Tier 1	
Bottom Line	The Bottom Line college								Tier 1
Career Academies	Career Academies are sc			Tier 1			Tier 1		
Charter schools	Charter schools are publ						Tier 2		Tier 2
College counseling after high school	College-bound students								Tier 1
CUNY Start	CUNY Start prepares stud					Tier 1			
Dana Center Mathematics Pathways	Dana Center Mathematic							Tier 1	
Detroit Promise Path	A scholarship program th								
Dual Enrollment Programs	Dual enrollment program		Tier 1	Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
Early College High Schools	Early Colleges provide st				Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
First Year Experience Courses	First year experience cou								
Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program	The Florida Tax Credit pr								Tier 2
Free Application for Federal Student Aid	Tax professionals provid							Tier 2	

Zooming in...

Interventions proven to improve one or more postsecondary transition outcomes

Intervention
Accelerated Pathways
Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)
Adult Education
Advancing Careers and Training for Healthcare (ACT for Healthcare)
Automated text messaging
Boston Charter Schools
Bottom Line
Career Academies
Charter schools
College counseling after high school
CUNY Start
Dana Center Mathematics Pathways
Detroit Promise Path
Dual Enrollment Programs

Outcome domains relevant to postsecondary transitions



Intervention	WWC Intervention Description	Middle school general academic achievement	High school attendance	Staying in high school	Progressing in high school	High school general academic achievement	Completing high school	College readiness	College access and enrollment
Accelerated Pathways	The California Accelerated Pathways program is a three-year program that allows students to earn college credit while still in high school.								
Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)	ASAP is a three-year program that allows students to earn college credit while still in high school.							Tier 1	Tier 1
Adult Education	Several programs that provide adult education services to students who are not yet ready for college-level work.								Tier 1
Advancing Careers and Training for Healthcare (ACT for Healthcare)	ACT for Healthcare provides students with the skills and knowledge needed to enter the healthcare workforce.								
Automated text messaging	Text message interventions that provide students with reminders and encouragement to attend school and complete assignments.								Tier 1
Boston Charter Schools	Boston charter schools use a variety of strategies to improve student outcomes, including small class sizes and personalized learning.					Tier 1		Tier 1	
Bottom Line	The Bottom Line college preparation program provides students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college.								Tier 1
Career Academies	Career Academies are schools that provide students with a focused curriculum and hands-on learning experiences in a specific career field.			Tier 1			Tier 1		
Charter schools	Charter schools are public schools that are operated by private organizations or individuals.						Tier 2		Tier 2
College counseling after high school	College-bound students receive counseling and support from college counselors to help them choose a college and complete the application process.								Tier 1
CUNY Start	CUNY Start prepares students for college by providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college.					Tier 1			
Dana Center Mathematics Pathways	Dana Center Mathematics Pathways provides students with a rigorous mathematics curriculum that prepares them for college-level work.							Tier 1	
Detroit Promise Path	A scholarship program that provides students with financial support to attend college.								
Dual Enrollment Programs	Dual enrollment programs allow students to earn college credit while still in high school.		Tier 1	Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
Early College High Schools	Early Colleges provide students with a rigorous curriculum that includes college-level coursework.				Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
First Year Experience Courses	First year experience courses provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college.								
Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program	The Florida Tax Credit program provides students with financial support to attend college.								Tier 2
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	Tax professionals provide students with information about the FAFSA and how to complete it.							Tier 2	

Zooming in...

Highest ESSA evidence level
(Tier 1 or Tier 2) demonstrated
by an intervention in an
outcome domain

Intervention	WWC Intervention Description	Middle school general academic achievement	High school attendance	Staying in high school	Progressing in high school	High school general academic achievement	Completing high school	College readiness	College access and enrollment
Accelerated Pathways	The California Accelerati								
Accelerated Study in Associate Programs	ASAP is a three-year prog							Tier 1	Tier 1
Adult Education	Several programs that pr								Tier 1
Advancing Careers and Training for Health Care	ACT for Healthcare provid								
Automated text messaging	Text message interventio								
Boston Charter Schools	Boston charter schools u					Tier 1		Tier 1	
Bottom Line	The Bottom Line college								Tier 1
Career Academies	Career Academies are sc			Tier 1			Tier 1		
Charter schools	Charter schools are publ						Tier 2		Tier 2
College counseling after high school	College-bound students								Tier 1
CUNY Start	CUNY Start prepares stud					Tier 1			
Dana Center Mathematics Pathways	Dana Center Mathematic							Tier 1	
Detroit Promise Path	A scholarship program th								
Dual Enrollment Programs	Dual enrollment program		Tier 1	Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
Early College High Schools	Early Colleges provide st				Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
First Year Experience Courses	First year experience cou								
Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program	The Florida Tax Credit pr								Tier 2
Free Application for Federal Student Aid	Tax professionals provid							Tier 2	



Completing high school	College readiness	College access and enrollment
	Tier 1	Tier 1
		Tier 1
		Tier 1
	Tier 1	
		Tier 1
Tier 1		
Tier 2		Tier 2
		Tier 1

Possible uses

The evidence matrix is designed for three types of users:

1. College access program developers seeking new evidence-based strategies to try.
2. Program directors needing to demonstrate the evidence base for their approach.
3. Educational leaders making decisions about programs to offer their students.



College access program developers might use the matrix to find out:



- Are there any studies that show that parent engagement activities increase college access and enrollment?
- What interventions have been studied and shown to be effective for increasing college access and enrollment?

Program directors might use the matrix to find out:



- Is there any evidence to show that summer counseling increases college readiness?
- What interventions for high school students have been studied and shown to be effective for increasing college academic achievement?

Education leaders might use the matrix to find out:



- Are there any postsecondary transition interventions that have been shown to have a positive impact on high school academic achievement?
- Have dual enrollment programs been shown to be effective for dropout prevention?

Activity: What questions do you have that you might use the matrix for?

Intervention examples include:

- Automated text messaging
- Career academies
- Dual enrollment programs
- First year experience courses
- Linked learning communities
- Parent engagement project
- Summer counseling

Outcome domains include:

- Middle school academic achievement
- Staying in high school
- Completing high school
- College readiness
- College access and enrollment
- College degree attainment
- Employment and labor market

Using the College Access Evidence Matrix to Answer Questions

Scenario 1

Scenario 1:

You are a college advisor looking for programs that can help students succeed in college. Some colleagues mention that they have heard good things about a college advising program called “Bottom Line.” Before looking into it further, you want to know whether there is **evidence that Bottom Line is effective at improving college outcomes for students.**

Scenario 1

Intervention	WWC Intervention Description	Middle school general academic achievement	High school attendance	Staying in high school	Progressing in high school	High school general academic achievement	Completing high school	College readiness	College access and enrollment	College credit accumulation and persistence	College general academic achievement	College degree attainment	Employment and labor market	WWC Study Review Link
Accelerated Pathways	The California Accelerati									Tier 2				WWC Revi
Accelerated Study in Associate Programs	ASAP is a three-year prog							Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1		Tier 1		WWC Revi
Adult Education	Several programs that pr								Tier 1			Tier 1	Tier 1	WWC Revi
Advancing Careers and Training for Healthcare	ACT for Healthcare provid												Tier 2	WWC Revi
Automated text messaging	Text message interventio								Tier 1					WWC Revi
Boston Charter Schools	Boston charter schools u					Tier 1		Tier 1						WWC Revi
Bottom Line	The Bottom Line college								Tier 1	Tier 1				WWC Revi
Career Academies	Career Academies are sc			Tier 1			Tier 1						Tier 1	WWC Revi
Charter schools	Charter schools are publ						Tier 2		Tier 2	Tier 2				WWC Revi
College counseling after high school	College-bound students								Tier 1					WWC Revi
CUNY Start	CUNY Start prepares stud					Tier 1				Tier 1				WWC Revi
Dana Center Mathematics Pathways	Dana Center Mathematic							Tier 1		Tier 1				WWC Revi
Detroit Promise Path	A scholarship program th									Tier 1				WWC Revi
Dual Enrollment Programs	Dual enrollment program		Tier 1	Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2		Tier 1		WWC Revi
Early College High Schools	Early Colleges provide st				Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1			Tier 1		WWC Revi
First Year Experience Courses	First year experience cou									Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 2		WWC Revi
Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program	The Florida Tax Credit pr								Tier 2					WWC Revi
Free Application for Federal Student Aid	Tax professionals provid							Tier 2						WWC Revi

Bottom Line has demonstrated ESSA Tier 1 evidence for the outcome domain of college access and enrollment as well as college credit accumulation and persistence.

It has not demonstrated ESSA Tier 1 or Tier 2 evidence on college general academic achievement or degree attainment in studies reviewed by the WWC as of July 2021.

Scenario 2

Scenario 2:

You are a college access program developer who works with urban high schools, and you want to see what kinds of interventions have strong (Tier 1) or moderate (Tier 2) evidence of effectiveness for **college access and enrollment** for students like yours.

Scenario 2

There are 15 interventions with Tier 1 evidence of effectiveness, and three with Tier 2 evidence of effectiveness in the outcome domain of college access and enrollment.

Intervention	WWC Intervention Description	Middle school general academic achievement	High school attendance	Staying in high school	Progressing in high school	High school general academic achievement	Completing high school	College readiness	College access and enrollment	College credit accumulation and persistence
Accelerated Pathways	The California Accelerati									Tier 2
Accelerated Study in Associate Progr	ASAP is a three-year prog							Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
Adult Education	Several programs that pr								Tier 1	
Advancing Careers and Training for H	ACT for Healthcare provid									
Automated text messaging	Text message interventio								Tier 1	
Boston Charter Schools	Boston charter schools u					Tier 1		Tier 1		
Bottom Line	The Bottom Line college								Tier 1	Tier 1
Charter schools	Charter schools are publ						Tier 2		Tier 2	Tier 2
College counseling after high school	College-bound students								Tier 1	
CUNY Start	CUNY Start prepares stud					Tier 1				Tier 1
Dana Center Mathematics Pathways	Dana Center Mathematic							Tier 1		Tier 1
Detroit Promise Path	A scholarship program th									Tier 1
Dual Enrollment Programs	Dual enrollment program		Tier 1	Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 2
Early College High Schools	Early Colleges provide st				Tier 1		Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	
Florida Tax Credit (FTC) program	The Florida Tax Credit pr								Tier 2	
Free Application for Federal Student	Tax professionals provid							Tier 2		
Green Dot Public Schools	Green Dot Public Schools		Tier 2		Tier 2	Tier 2				
First Year Experience Courses	First year experience cou									Tier 2
InsideTrack Coaching	InsideTrack® Coaching p									Tier 1
Green Jobs and Health Care (GJ-HC)	GJ-HC is an eight-week c									
Interactive Learning Online	Instruction delivered thro									
Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)	KIPP is a non-profit netw					Tier 2				
Linked Learning Communities	Linked learning commun							Tier 1	Tier 1	

Scenario 2

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Intervention	WWC Intervention Description	Middle school general academic achievement	High school attendance	Staying in high school	Progressing in high school	High school general academic achievement	Completing high school	College readiness	College access and enrollment	College credit accumulation and persistence	College general academic achievement	College degree attainment	Employment and labor market	WWC Study Review Link 1	WWC Study Review Link 2
Advancing Careers and Training for Health	ACT for Healthcare provides												Tier 2	WWC Review of	
Automated text messaging	Text message intervention c								Tier 1					WWC Review of	
Boston Charter Schools	Boston charter schools use					Tier 1		Tier 1						WWC Review of	
Bottom Line	The Bottom Line college adv								Tier 1	Tier 1				WWC Review of	
Charter schools	Charter schools publicl						Tier 2		Tier 2	Tier 2				WWC Review of	

The Bottom Line college advising model provides counselors for high school juniors and seniors, as well as students who attend a target college.

WWC Review of Barr & Castleman (2017)

WWC REVIEW OF THIS STUDY
Export Print

The bottom line on college counseling

Barr, A., & Castleman, B. (2017). Boston, MA: Bottom Line. Retrieved from https://www.bottomline.org/sites/default/files/The%20Bottom%20Line%20on%20College%20Counseling%20RCTPaper_10_2017.pdf

RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL EXAMINING 2,422 STUDENTS, GRADES 11-PS

Select a WWC Review **Single Study Review (findings for Bottom Line), 9/2019**

Review Details
Findings
Sample Characteristics
Study Details

Reviewed: September 2019

MEETS WWC STANDARDS WITHOUT RESERVATIONS
AT LEAST ONE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE FINDING
ESSA TIER 1
AT LEAST ONE FINDING SHOWS STRONG EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

For:
Single Study Review (findings for Bottom Line)

Using:
Supporting Postsecondary Success Review Protocol 3.0
Review Standards 3.0

Rating:
Meets WWC standards without reservations because it is a randomized controlled trial with low attrition.

This review may not reflect the full body of research evidence for this intervention.

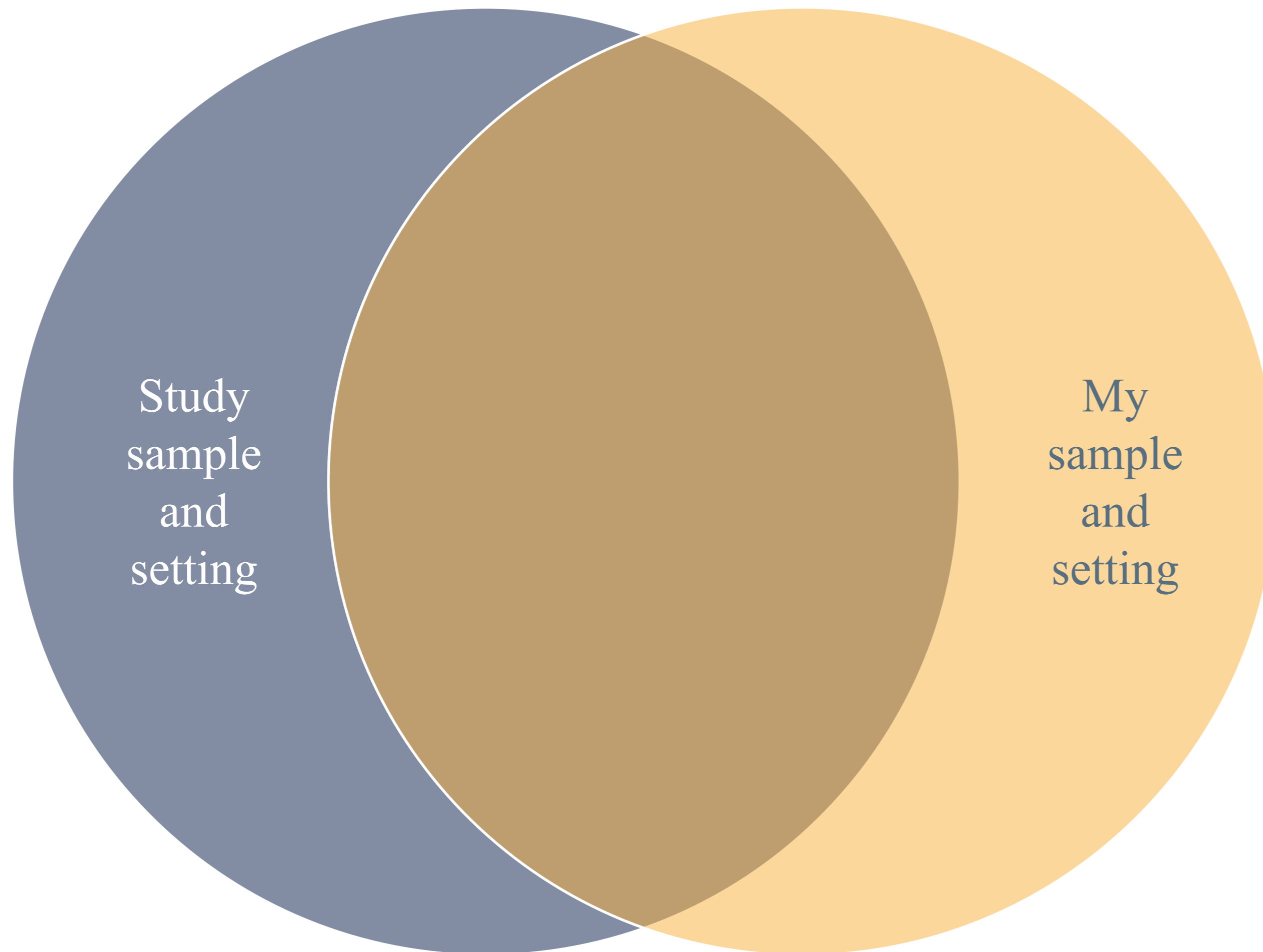
Supporting tabs



- **Legend** – Definitions for the evidence level ratings.
- **FAQs** – Answers to common questions about the matrix and how to use it such as:
 - What does it mean to be evidence-based?
 - What if the intervention I am interested in is not listed in the matrix?
 - What limitations are important to keep in mind while using the matrix?
- **References** – Full citations for and links to each study that provided evidence, along with information about the purpose of the review, review date, version of review standards, and the review protocol and version.
- **Procedures** – Details on how we identified and compiled the evidence from the WWC.

Checking for Overlap of Population and Setting

Important: Check for overlap in population and setting



ESSA Tier 1
requires overlap
in the sample
AND setting.

ESSA Tier 2
requires overlap
in sample OR
setting.

Determine overlap

IES WWC What Works Clearinghouse

MENU

Search Go

WWC REVIEW OF THIS STUDY

Export Print

The bottom line on college counseling

Barr, A., & Castleman, B. (2017). Boston, MA: Bottom Line. Retrieved from https://www.bottomline.org/sites/default/files/The%20Bottom%20Line%20on%20College%20Counseling%20RCTPaper_10_2017.pdf

RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL EXAMINING 2,422 STUDENTS, GRADES 11-PS

Select a WWC Review Single Study Review (findings for Bottom Line), 9/2019

Review Details

Findings

Sample Characteristics

Study Details

Reviewed: September 2019

MEETS WWC STANDARDS WITHOUT RESERVATIONS

AT LEAST ONE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE FINDING

ESSA TIER 1

AT LEAST ONE FINDING SHOWS STRONG EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

For:

Single Study Review (findings for Bottom Line)

Using:

Supporting Postsecondary Success Review Protocol 3.0

Review Standards 3.0

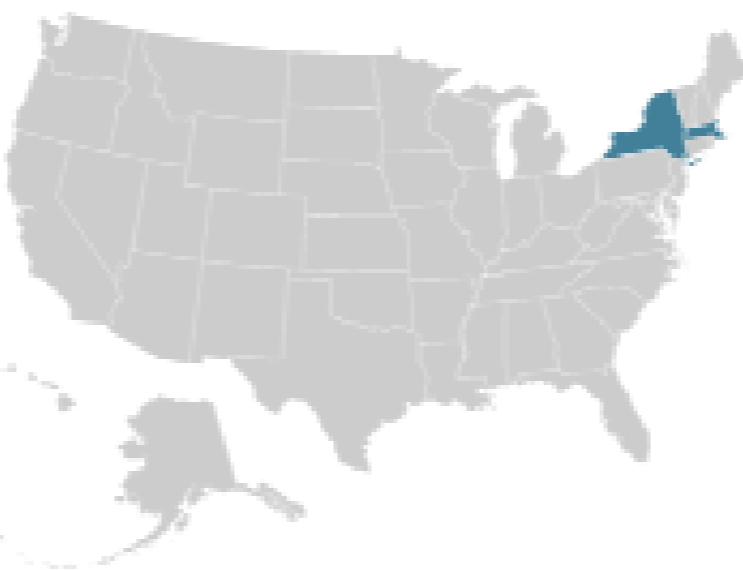
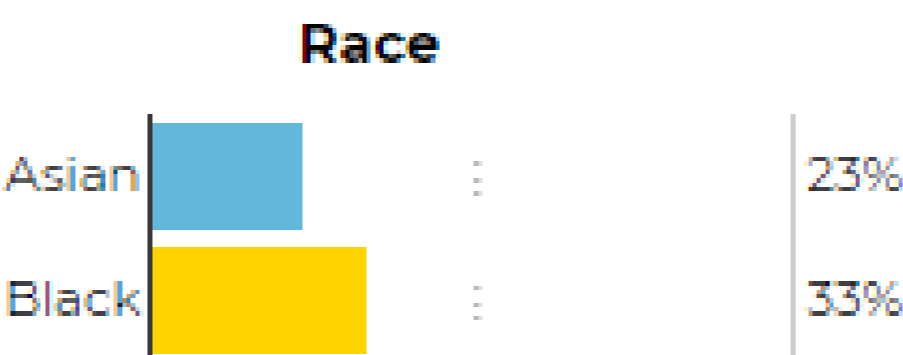
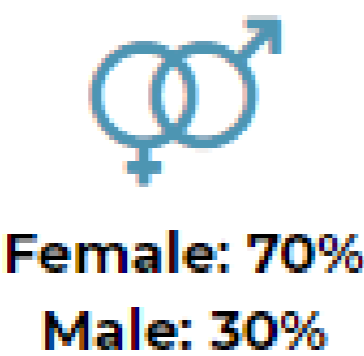
Rating:

Meets WWC standards without reservations because it is a randomized controlled trial with low attrition.

This review may not reflect the full body of research evidence for this intervention.

Determine overlap

Characteristics of study sample as reported by study author.



Massachusetts, New York

Determine overlap

Review Details

Findings

Sample Characteristics

Study Details

Setting

The study was conducted with two cohorts of high school students (graduating classes of 2015 and 2016) in Boston and Worcester, MA, and New York City. Students who received the intervention were encouraged to attend a Bottom Line Counseling target college where they could continue the program; approximately 50 percent of students in the intervention group did so. There are about 30 of these target colleges and they are described in the study as ones that offer an optimal combination of quality and affordability. These institutions operate within the geographic region; examples include Boston University, the State University of New York at Albany, and target campuses in the City University of New York and University of Massachusetts systems.

Study sample

The high school students in the sample are from families that make less than 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Program eligibility required that students have earned at least a 2.5 GPA. In terms of demographic information, about 80% of the sample were first generation college students; approximately 70% were female, 33% Black, 32% Hispanic, and 23% were Asian.

Your Turn! Breakout Activity

Scenarios A and B

Scenario A:

You are the principal of an urban high school that serves a large percentage of students of color and are considering offering your seniors additional summer counseling supports to increase their likelihood of applying to and enrolling in college. You would like to know if **summer counseling interventions** have **strong evidence (ESSA Tier 1)** for college access and enrollment.

Scenario B:

You are a college access program developer operating in a northeastern city who is seeking new evidence-based strategies with **strong (ESSA Tier 1) evidence** to improve **college access and enrollment** for your students, most of whom are facing socioeconomic barriers.

Your turn! Scenario A



Scenario A:

You are the principal of an urban high school that serves a large percentage of students of color and are considering offering your seniors additional **summer counseling supports** to increase their likelihood of applying to and enrolling in college. You would like to know if summer counseling interventions have **strong evidence (ESSA Tier 1)** for **college access and enrollment**.

Q1: What level of evidence is there for summer counseling's effectiveness for college access and enrollment?

Q2: What can you find out about the setting and population that was studied?

Q3: How would you justify whether the ESSA evidence rating for this intervention applies in your context?

Your turn! Scenario B



Scenario B:

You are a college access program developer operating in a southeastern city who is seeking new evidence-based strategies with **strong (ESSA Tier 1) evidence** to improve **college access and enrollment** for your students, most of whom are facing socioeconomic barriers.

Q1: What is the first intervention that has ESSA Tier 1 evidence for college access and enrollment?
(Note: The matrix should be sorted in alphabetical order on the intervention name in column A.)

Q2: What is the title of the third study for this intervention (column Q)?

Q3: What can you say about the population and setting of that study?

Q4: How would you justify whether the Tier 1 ESSA rating from this study applies in your context?

Questions?




Additional Resources

For our growth...

We appreciate your feedback as we continue to improve our work to meet your needs!






ESSA Tiers of Evidence

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This handout accompanies the REL Midwest video *Understanding the ESSA tiers of evidence*.

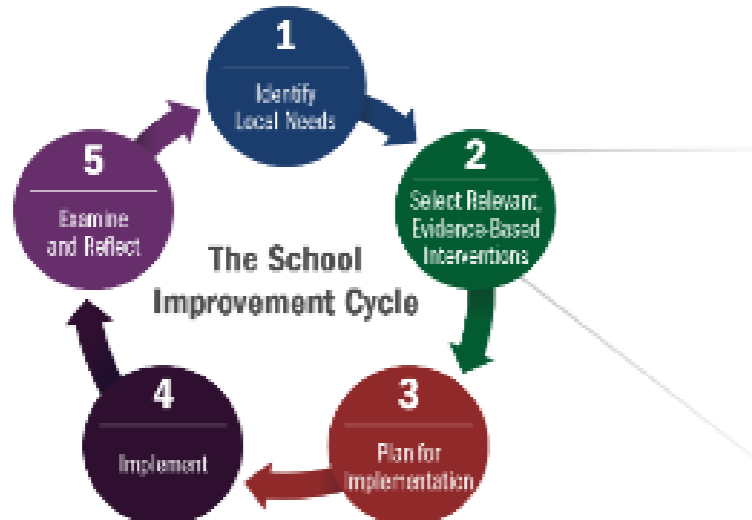


VISIT REL MIDWEST'S WEBSITE to watch our video on the ESSA tiers of evidence and to learn how we are partnering with stakeholders across the region to encourage the utilization of evidence in policy planning and practice.



Scan QR code

THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA), the 2015 national education law that replaced No Child Left Behind, is focused on state and district decisionmaking. The law encourages state and local education agencies to utilize the school improvement cycle, moving from identifying needs to choosing and implementing interventions to examining the outcomes.



Under the ESSA, districts and schools have flexibility to choose interventions to improve student outcomes. District and school leaders are encouraged to choose evidence-based interventions that have been shown to improve student outcomes. By selecting interventions that have been rigorously studied and have improved student learning, district and school leaders increase the likelihood that student achievement will improve.




THE ESSA TIERS OF EVIDENCE

provide districts and schools with a framework for determining which programs, practices, strategies, and interventions work in which contexts and for which students.

DETERMINING TIERS OF EVIDENCE

Five factors determine an intervention's evidence rating: study design, results of a study, findings from related studies, sample size and setting, and how the students and setting in the study overlap with those in the district or school considering the intervention.


Tiers of evidence are determined by the following five factors:

 Study Design
 Results of the Study
 Findings From Related Studies
 Sample Size & Setting
 Match


The effect of a program on student outcomes can be studied several ways. Under ESSA, how a program is studied determines the evidence tier. Programs need to be studied in a systematic way and have a suitable sample size. Additionally, the study must find that students who receive the intervention have better outcomes than students who do not receive the intervention, and similar studies must have similar results.

Keep in mind, evidence tier ratings are not static. As new evidence on a program's impacts becomes available, the rating can change.


UNDERSTANDING THE ESSA TIERS OF EVIDENCE




TIER 1
Strong Evidence








TIER 2
Moderate Evidence



TIER 3
Promising Evidence



TIER 4
Demonstrates a Rationale

	TIER 1 Strong Evidence	TIER 2 Moderate Evidence	TIER 3 Promising Evidence	TIER 4 Demonstrates a Rationale
 Study Design	Well-designed and implemented experimental study, meets WWC standards without reservations	Well-designed and implemented quasi-experimental study, meets WWC standards with reservations	Well-designed and implemented correlational study, statistically controls for selection bias ^a	Well-defined logic model based on rigorous research
 Results of the Study	Statistically significant positive effect on a relevant outcome	Statistically significant positive effect on a relevant outcome	Statistically significant positive effect on a relevant outcome	An effort to study the effects of the intervention is planned or currently under way
 Findings From Related Studies	No strong negative findings from experimental or quasi-experimental studies	No strong negative findings from experimental or quasi-experimental studies	No strong negative findings from experimental or quasi-experimental studies	N/A
 Sample Size & Setting	At least 350 participants, conducted in more than one district or school	At least 350 participants, conducted in more than one district or school	N/A	N/A
 Match	Similar population and setting to your setting	Similar population or setting to your setting	N/A	N/A

a. Findings from experimental and quasi-experimental studies that either (a) meet the first three criteria for Tiers 1 and 2 but not the sample size, setting, or match requirements, or (b) do not meet WWC standards but statistically control for selection bias between the treatment and comparison groups are also eligible to meet Tier 3 Promising Evidence.


TIER 4 ENCOURAGES INNOVATION and new research on promising practices. A Tier 4 intervention must have a well-specified logic model that is based on rigorous research. In addition, an effort to study the effects of the program must already be planned or under way. Check with your state about its policies on Tier 4 evidence.

WHAT CAN YOU DO NEXT?

- Parents can engage with other parents through their school-parent organizations and be informed on the programs in place in their schools.
- Teachers can engage with other teachers in the school to identify which programs are effective and report back to their administrators.
- District and school administrators can read their state's ESSA plan for their specific guidance on district accountability expectations and ask for support with identifying programs that meet the standards.

LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS?

Check out the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) at whatworks.ed.gov and watch a video on using WWC to identify ESSA evidence ratings available on [YouTube](#).



<https://twitter.com/RELMidwest>

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Video: Understanding the ESSA tiers of evidence



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

APPLICABILITY OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS



MARCH 2020

PURPOSE

You have identified an evidence-based intervention¹ that may meet your needs, but you are not sure if it will fit your context. When determining if an evidence-based intervention is worth further review, state and local education agencies can find it useful to think through how contextual factors may influence its fit. To help in that process, this document identifies seven contextual factors, each with related questions. Considering these factors helps decision-makers assess how a particular intervention might meet their needs, regardless of where the evidence of its effectiveness was generated and helps inform further investigation into the feasibility of its implementation in your context.

INTENDED USE

This document may be especially useful for districts and schools that tend not to see themselves represented in the research literature related to the effectiveness of interventions. This group of districts and schools includes, for example, those in rural communities and those serving indigenous populations.

This tool assumes that, prior to using it, you have engaged in a comprehensive analysis of needs, identified interventions to address those needs, and would like to further narrow the promising options for more intensive review (see the additional resources at the end of this document).

It is likely that as you examine interventions, there will be pluses and minuses to each one. This tool is designed to frame conversations about considerations of fit, but does not provide a formula to weigh those pluses and minuses. Instead, this tool helps you identify which interventions you would like to further examine for potential use in your setting.

Contextual Factors

Considerations and Questions

Research alignment to outcome of interest and student population

KEY CONSIDERATION: In research studies of the intervention, was the intervention successful in schools that are similar to the schools you seek to assist?

- How closely aligned is the outcome that was studied with your outcome of interest?
- Is the evidence supporting the effectiveness of the intervention based on research that was conducted with a student population similar to yours (e.g., grade level, family income level, race/ethnicity, English learner students, students with disabilities)?
- If your student demographics are dissimilar from those in the study, how might that difference influence implementation of the intervention?

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Contextual Factors

Considerations and Questions

Staffing availability

KEY CONSIDERATION: Is the intervention feasible given the staffing availability in your schools?

- Does anything about the intervention require a particular staff-to-student ratio, number of staff, or time commitment for staff?
- How does the staff-to-student ratio, staff number, or staff time commitment called for in the intervention compare to the staffing in your schools?
- Given what you know about the intervention and the role of staff in its implementation, do you think you have the staffing availability to carry it out?

Access to technology and connectivity

KEY CONSIDERATION: Is the intervention feasible given the current or planned technology and connectivity in your schools?

- Does the intervention require technology and connectivity? Would lack of this technology or connectivity make the intervention unworkable?
- How does the technology and connectivity required compare to what is available in your schools? Would you have the budget for any necessary upgrades?
- Is there adequate staffing support for maintenance and troubleshooting of the technology?

Potential for family engagement

KEY CONSIDERATION: Does the intervention reflect the type of family involvement that is feasible/desired in your schools?

- How much does the intervention depend on family involvement, at home and/or at school? Does the intervention honor and reflect family structures in the community?
- To what extent are families able to be involved in the intervention?

2

Wrap-up

Recap



- ❑ Evidence matters when making decisions about whether to adopt a program or practice.
- ❑ ESSA evidence ratings indicate how much confidence you can have that an intervention improved student outcomes.
- ❑ The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) catalogs existing research on educational interventions.
- ❑ The College Access Evidence Matrix organizes and consolidates evidence information from the WWC that is specific to postsecondary transitions.
- ❑ It is important to check for overlap between your population and setting and those that were studied to determine if the ESSA evidence rating applies in your context.

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Thank you!



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