



TRANSCRIPT

Video: Defining Your Approach to Implementing ESSA Evidence Standards

March 2019

NARRATOR

Welcome to the REL West video “Defining Your Approach to Implementing ESSA Evidence Standards.” This video is designed to help state education agencies and their educational partners reflect on and begin to design their contact-specific approach to supporting local education agencies in their selection and implementation of interventions based on the evidence provisions in ESSA.

Sylvie Hale, a senior project director in Innovation Studies at WestEd, and Lenay Dunn, a senior research associate with the Regional Educational Laboratory West, or REL West, also at WestEd, will share what they've learned about this topic and their work with SEA teams across the country.

This video is a self-guided workshop. A brief facilitation guide with tips for leading discussions while watching the video is available at the link below. Watch for this signal on the screen. It means it is time to pause the video for a discussion.

LENAY DUNN

ESSA, The Every Student Succeeds Act, began implementation in 2018-19. State education agencies, or SEAs, are tasked with creating plans that support local decisionmaking, and build local education agencies', or LEAs', capacity to use data and evidence to select appropriate strategies and interventions.

SYLVIE HALE

There are four evidence levels in ESSA: “strong,” “moderate,” “promising,” and “demonstrates a rationale.” These are defined by the study design and the strength of the evidence that an intervention improves the outcome of interest, which is most often student achievement.

While there are these four levels, ESSA provides quite a bit of flexibility in how SEAs approach guiding their LEAs in addressing the evidence levels.

LENAY DUNN

In 2017, REL West created the Evidence-Based Improvement Guide to help SEAs and LEAs strengthen their continuous improvement processes and supports to implement ESSA evidence provisions. The evidence-based improvement framework in the guide demonstrates a continuous improvement cycle to inform, select, plan, implement, and analyze evidence-based strategies. The video today will focus on the Select step, helping states and districts articulate their approach to identifying, examining, and selecting evidence-based interventions.



LENAY DUNN

ESSA has specific evidence requirements for different funding streams, but overall, the evidence provisions offer SEAs an opportunity to help LEAs use evidence to improve student outcomes. Pause the video and discuss the roles and responsibilities your division, department, or organization has in supporting evidence-based decisionmaking in LEAs. Restart the video at the conclusion of your discussion.

SYLVIE HALE

This continuum of SEA approaches describes different approaches to, and support for, LEAs in selecting evidence-based interventions. The approaches become more prescriptive as you move from left to right, as indicated by the dials. There are four levels in this continuum: Reviewer, Guider, Vetter, Definer.

Before I describe the continuum, I wanted to give a few caveats. First, no one approach is necessarily better than another. Depending on statute, funding sources, and roles and responsibilities of SEA staff, there may be reasons for being more or less prescriptive.

SYLVIE HALE

Second, for similar reasons, not all departments in an SEA may have the same approach, or they may take different approaches with LEAs or schools at different performance levels.

The Reviewer approach is the least prescriptive. With this approach, SEA staff will review LEA plans with evidence-based interventions, and provide feedback as needed. For example, an SEA may include a portion on the LEA plan where LEAs must list evidence-based strategies and reference the supporting research. The SEA would review the plans and contact the LEA if there were questions or issues.

LENAY DUNN

The Guider approach includes the SEA providing some upfront guidance to LEAs to inform LEA plan development. After plans are submitted, the SEA will review LEA plans and provide feedback as needed. For example, the SEA may assist LEAs by providing guidance on appropriate interventions, or by providing resources and assistance to inform the selection of evidence-based strategies before and during LEA plan development. The SEA would then review the submitted plans and follow up with LEAs if there were questions or issues.

SYLVIE HALE

The Vetter approach guides the development of LEA plans using a set of criteria to vet plans. After plans are submitted, the SEA will provide feedback to LEAs based on a set of criteria. For example, the SEA may identify a set of priorities, such as effective instruction or student supports, or a set of criteria for the type of evidence, such as multiple studies or applicability to the context, and share those criteria with LEAs for plan submission. The SEA would then review the submitted plans against those defined criteria.

LENAY DUNN

The Definer approach is the most prescriptive. In this approach, the SEA develops a list of approved interventions LEAs can choose from. After plans are submitted, the SEA is looking for those particular interventions or, if the LEA submits an alternative intervention, they would assess it. For example, an SEA



may invite providers to submit evidence that their services are evidence-based, and select a set of approved providers that LEAs can partner with.

Pause the video and discuss the following questions. “How prescriptive do we want to be as a state agency or a representative of a state agency?” “What authority does our SEA have under state laws, policies and regulations?” “What have our past approaches to providing guidance to LEAs and other programs or funding streams been?” “What would we like to keep or change about how we approach providing guidance to LEAs?” “What changes do we need to make to align with ESSA requirements?”

Now we want you to discuss a scenario and consider how you would respond based on the approach your team most identified with on the continuum.

NARRATOR

A Title I school-wide plan indicated the school had purchased computers. The evidence listed was “the SEA promotes computers and digital teaching and learning.” The school has been a historically underperforming school and is on the list of schools in need of comprehensive support and improvement, or CSI. The plan included other strategies aligned to the identified needs in the needs assessment with established evidence bases at the strong, moderate, and promising evidence levels.

SYLVIE HALE

From the approach you identified previously, how would you respond?

Now that you have had a chance to discuss this with your SEA team, discuss some next steps and implications for your SEA's processes, policy, training, and communication around LEA evidence use. For example, how might you check if your SEA has the internal capacity to carry out your selected approach? What needs to be in place to carry out this approach?

LENAY DUNN

Be sure to check out other tools in the evidence guide to help inform your next steps. There are tools for SEAs and LEAs to map their current improvement processes; determine their approach and supports for selecting evidence-based strategies; and assessing the body of research of interventions, engaging their fit with the local context.

NARRATOR

For more information, download the WestEd guide at the link below. Thanks for watching this video. For more information about this topic, please email REL West at relwest@wested.org.