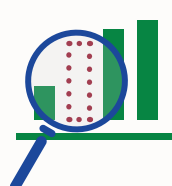


# More Evidence Needed on Distance Learning

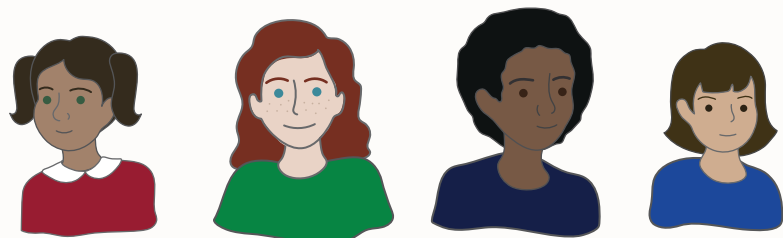
During the COVID-19 pandemic, educators and school administrators needed to understand the variety of available distance learning models and programs. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) conducted a rapid evidence review to report on what works in distance learning programming.



The WWC reviewed **36** distance learning studies<sup>1</sup> that ranged from kindergarten to postsecondary. The results revealed that three distance learning programs met the ESSA Tier 1 rating. Despite this promising finding, the WWC observed several evidence gaps in the literature.



The results of the rapid evidence review suggest that there are **evidence gaps** in these areas:

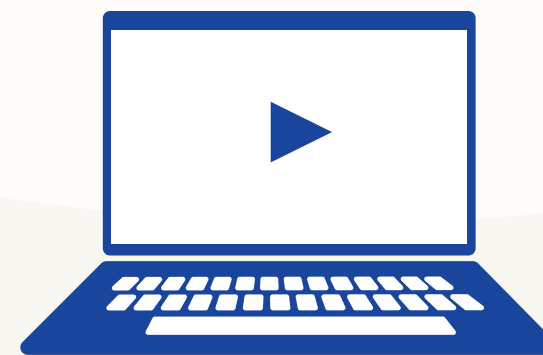


## Secondary and postsecondary students

68% of eligible studies examined programming for kindergarten through 8th grade students.

## Measures of social and emotional learning

68% of eligible studies examined English language arts or mathematics; only one study examined social and emotional learning outcomes. Social and emotional health may be a bigger concern when distance learning needs to be implemented.



## Adaptive and gamified delivery models for secondary and postsecondary students

All instructional programs adapted to meet the needs of individual students were kindergarten through 8th-grade programs, as were the three gamified distance learning programs.

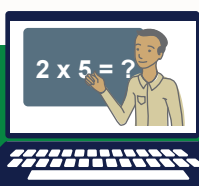
## Full curriculum distance learning programs

84% of eligible studies examined supplemental programs.



Beyond these specific research areas, more high-quality, rigorous research about distance learning is needed. During the pandemic, these programs have expanded across the country to levels never seen previously. Research can help educators understand how these programs can be most effective when implemented at a large scale to diverse groups of students.

<sup>1</sup> The evaluations reviewed were conducted before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Citations and abstracts were screened according to the standard WWC eligibility criteria, as well as supplemental criteria identified specifically for this review. Only randomized controlled trials of programs with at least one positive and statistically significant finding were retained following the screening.



For more information on distance learning, visit <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/DistanceLearningStudy>.

Sahni, S.D., Polanin, J.R., Zhang, Q., Michaelson, L.E., Caverly, S., Polese, M.L., & Yang, J. (2021a). *A What Works Clearinghouse rapid evidence review of distance learning programs* (WWC 2021-005REV). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/DistanceLearningStudy>.