

Introduction to the What Works Clearinghouse’s Reviews of Individual Studies Database: How to Find Evidence on the Effectiveness of Education Programs, Policies, and Practices

Are you searching for a study to see if it has been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse? The What Works Clearinghouse, also known as the WWC, maintains a database of education studies that have been reviewed, and provides information about the study ratings and findings.

It serves as a running reference list of all studies assessed by the WWC. This brief tutorial will show you how to use the database.

An initiative of the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, the WWC reviews research studies that look at the effectiveness of education programs, products, policies, and practices. The WWC has reviewed thousands of studies, and the Reviews of Individual Studies page can help you learn more about them and locate ones that are particularly helpful to you.

The Reviews of Individual Studies page contains useful information about the studies the WWC has reviewed such as the WWC rating, the study design, the relevant topic areas, and whether they have statistically significant positive findings.

This database can help you:

- Determine whether a specific study has been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse.
- Learn more about a particular study and its WWC rating. Search for studies reviewed by the WWC in a particular topic area, such as Literacy, Math, or English Learners.
- Locate studies you can use as evidence in a grant application to the U.S. Department of Education or to satisfy evidence requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- Or, look for a specific educational program, product, practice, or policy and see whether there is evidence of its effectiveness.

You can access information on studies in the Reviews of Individual Studies database in several ways. You can search the name of a particular program, product, policy, or practice by using the Search Box on the “Reviews of Individual Studies” landing page – for example, Teach for America.

You can search for studies by the names of their authors, for example, Rittle-Johnson. You can search for a subject, like Algebra. Or, you can search by key words associated with a strategy or practice, such as procedural flexibility or college coaching.

Any time you get a lot of results, you can narrow the search by study rating, study design, or topic area. You can also limit the results to show only those studies with one or more statistically significant positive findings by clicking here.

Here’s an example of what you can learn about the studies the WWC has reviewed, like the Clark and colleagues 2013 study of Teach for America.

From the Reviews of Individual Studies page you can find:

- The full citation for the study.
- The study design, which in this case was a randomized controlled trial.
- The size and grade range of the study sample.
- And, the WWC rating for the study if it has been reviewed. This study was rated Meets WWC standards without reservations.

You also learn whether there were statistically significant positive findings. By clicking the “Select a WWC Review” dropdown box, you will get a list of the WWC Products associated with the study. These products may include Intervention Reports, Single Study Reviews, Reviews Conducted for Grant Competitions, and Practice Guides.

In this case, the study was reviewed for an Intervention Report summarizing evidence on the effectiveness of Teach for America. But, it also was the subject of two Single Study Reviews and for a grant competition.

Finally, you see the protocol and the version of the Review Standards that were used. The standards found in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook guide all reviews. If you go one step further and click on the Tabs, you will learn even more. For example, on the landing page for the Clark and colleagues 2013 Teach for America study you find:

- A summary of the study findings.
- A summary of the characteristics of the study sample.

Then, a fuller description of the study, including:

- The study setting.
- The study sample.
- The characteristics of participants in the intervention and comparison groups.
- And details, when available, about the support required to implement the intervention.

By clicking the “print” button at the top of the study landing page, you can see all the information in the tabs related to the selected Review of the study and more. For example, you will see the details of other WWC Products that included this study.

Finally, from the review details tab, you can:

- View the Evidence Snapshot for this and other studies of the intervention that have been reviewed by the WWC.
- And download a copy of the intervention report.

Here are a few other things you might discover if you are searching for individual studies. For example, this Carroll 2013 study does not meet WWC standards and you learn the reason why. You also might come across a study, like this Cabalo study of Cognitive Tutor Algebra I that

meets standards without reservations, but has no statistically significant positive findings.

Or you might look for a study and discover that it was ineligible for WWC review. For example, this 2013 study by Booth and colleagues of Cognitive Tutor was not eligible for WWC review because the sample in the study did not meet the requirements specified in the review protocol.

A companion video, “Searching for WWC Reviews of Individual Studies”, can help you learn how to use the database to find specific information you want about studies.

There are many other useful resources on the WWC Website. For example,

- Intervention Reports.
- Practice Guides.
- And Find What Works from Systematic Reviews.

The What Works Clearinghouse continually adds new products and updates existing ones. You can keep up to date by following us on twitter @whatworksed or visit whatworksclearinghouse on Facebook.