The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) aims to be a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education. The WWC identifies existing research on education interventions, assesses the quality of this research, and summarizes and disseminates the evidence from studies that meet WWC design standards. In 2019, the WWC updated the standards and procedures that guide its work, and the WWC now seeks public comment on these proposed changes. This document describes the changes between the Version 4.0 and the proposed Version 4.1 standards and procedures.

The WWC Standards Handbook, Version 4.1, provides a detailed description of the standards that the WWC uses to review studies (Step 4 of the graphic below). The WWC Procedures Handbook, Version 4.1, provides a detailed description of the procedures the WWC uses in the systematic review process—specifically, Steps 1–3 and 5 of the graphic below.

Collaborating to update the standards and procedures
The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) consulted with the WWC’s Statistical, Technical, and Analysis Team (STAT)—which includes outside consultants as well as key staff from different WWC contractors—on the development of the proposed WWC Standards Handbook and WWC Procedures Handbook, Version 4.1.

Experts consulted to revise WWC procedures and standards
WWC’s STAT and Key Contractor Staff: Mike Garet, Fran Harmon, Larry Hedges, Rebecca Maynard, Terri Pigott, Joshua Polanin, Allan Porowski, David Rindskopf, Jessaca Spybrook, Emily Tanner-Smith, Elizabeth Tipton, Jeffrey Valentine, Elias Walsh, and Vivian Wong
What’s new in the proposed Version 4.1 of the WWC Procedures Handbook and WWC Standards Handbook?
The approaches that researchers use to measure and communicate the impacts of interventions are constantly evolving with new advances in methodological research. The proposed updates to WWC procedures and standards in Version 4.1 are designed to keep pace with those changes and provide additional clarity for readers. These updates include the following:

- **New approach to characterizing evidence in intervention reports.**
  - Previously, the WWC used a vote-counting approach to determine how studies in intervention reports informed an evidence rating. Now, the WWC will use the result of a fixed-effect meta-analysis to characterize evidence from multiple studies in intervention reports.

- **New calculation of effect sizes for single-case design studies.**
  - The WWC will calculate a design-comparable effect size for many of the single-case design studies that the WWC reviews. Language and formulas for these calculations have been added to the handbooks.

- **Removal of the “pilot” designation for single-case design standards.**
  - The single-case design standards have been fully incorporated into a section of the proposed WWC Standards Handbook.

- **New proposed Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER) principles.**
  - The proposed WWC Standards Handbook now includes information about the WWC’s proposed SEER principles. These principles are meant to complement the WWC’s focus on internal validity by supporting a distinct, IES-wide effort that emphasizes additional factors that can make research transformative.

- **Clarification of existing standards and procedures.**
  - Guidance on which manuscript takes precedence in WWC reviews when multiple manuscripts are available.
  - The inclusion of master’s theses in literature searches.
  - Examples of confounding factors in single-case design studies.
  - Additional clarifications and examples throughout both handbooks.