Connecting ESSA to School Libraries

California State Board of Education and California School Library Association ESSA Information Packet

Saturday, October 8, 2016
California School Library Association (CSLA)
California School Library Association believes that all California students should have equitable access to an effective school library program to ensure increased academic achievement, literacy and information literacy skills, and preparation for higher education. The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) provides an opportunity for California school districts to make this a reality. This federal law provides for highly effective school library programs as essential elements in the education of our nation’s children.

Effective school library programs, as defined by the American Association of School Librarians, meet the following criteria:
• the school library is staffed by a state certified school librarian;
• has up-to-date resources that include technology; and
• includes collaboration between content teachers and librarians.

We urge the Department of Education to set the above definition as the appropriate standard for all California schools. In California, state certified school librarians are identified by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing as "Teacher Librarians." Throughout this document, all references to school librarians and librarians indicate such state certified teacher librarians.

Summary of ESSA, Implications for California, and Recommendations

Title I, Part A - Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Education Agencies

Under this provision of ESSA, the CDE and local school districts will develop plans to implement federally-funded educational activities.

ESSA includes that states and local school districts must develop their plans with timely and meaningful consultation with teachers, principals and other stakeholders, including “specialized instructional support personnel” which is defined under ESSA as specifically including librarians.
ESSA authorizes school districts to include in their plans how they will develop effective school library programs to provide students an opportunity to improve digital literacy skills and improve academic achievement.

**Recommendations for the Department of Education:**

1. Collaborate with CSLA and partners to ensure librarians have a place in statewide planning sessions dedicated to implementing federally-funded activities.

2. Strongly encourage districts to include in their local plans the importance of implementing, developing and maintaining effective school library programs that empower the development of digital literacy skills and academic achievement.

**Title II, Part A – Supporting Effective Instruction**

ESSA includes new provisions that authorize states and districts to use grant and subgrant funds to support instructional services provided by school library programs.

**Recommendation for the Department of Education:**

3. Inform school districts that Title II funds may now be used for professional development for librarians.

**Rationale:**

Under No Child Left Behind, Title II funds were to be used primarily for classroom teachers to participate in professional development activities. ESSA specifically authorizes funds to be used to support instructional services provided by effective school library programs. Teacher Librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to design curriculum, instruct and engage students. Therefore, both classroom teachers and librarians must have high quality professional development on effective instruction and collaboration.

**Title II, Part B, Subpart 2 – Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN)**

This is a new program under ESSA that provides support to states to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy instruction plans. States award competitive subgrants to districts for activities that focus on K-5 and 6-12. ESSA specifically authorizes school librarians to participate in required grant activities for both K-5 and 6-12.

Local grants can be used to:
- provide high quality professional development opportunities for school staff, as appropriate, including librarians;
- allocate time for teachers, librarians, and other literacy staff to meet to plan comprehensive literacy instruction.
Recommendations for the Department of Education:

4. Ensure librarians, administrators, instructional support professionals, and teachers, are aware of these grants for comprehensive literacy instruction.

5. Support, encourage, and provide technical assistance to districts and school personnel in applying for grants and subgrants.

Title II, Part B, Subpart 2, Section 2226 – Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL)

ESSA specifically authorizes funds to be used for implementing, developing and enhancing effective school library programs including professional development for librarians, books, and up-to-date materials for high needs students.

Recommendations for the Department of Education:

6. Ensure librarians, administrators, instructional support professionals, and teachers are aware of these grants for low income communities to support high needs students in literacy instruction.

7. Support, encourage, and provide technical assistance to districts and school personnel in applying for grants and subgrants.

Rationale:
Those students in the most need often have the fewest school library resources to draw on. An examination of the school library access gap (Pribesh, Gavigan, & Dickinson, 2011) examined the differences in school library characteristics (staffing, books added to the collection, schedule, and number of days closed) in schools with various concentrations of students living in poverty. Findings suggest that if we hope to close achievement gaps between high and low socioeconomic groups, we must close the access gap in school libraries between high and low poverty schools.

Title IV, Part A – Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (Block Grant)

ESSA authorizes a new program to provide Student Support and Academic Enrichment activities (commonly referred to as the “Block Grant” under ESSA) to help states and school districts target federal resources on locally-designed priorities.

ESSA authorizes states to use funds to assist school districts in providing school librarians and other school personnel with the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively, including effective integration of technology, to improve instruction and student achievement.
ESSA requires that school districts conduct a “needs assessment” prior to receiving funds from the State (conducted every 3 years). The needs assessment should include access to personalized learning experiences which may include access to school libraries.

**Recommendation for the Department of Education:**

8. Inform and encourage local school districts to target these funds to support student access to school libraries staffed by certificated librarians in every school.

**Rationale:**

An educated, information-literate citizenry is the foundation of our democratic society, and outcomes from multi-state research studies, brought together by the 2016 edition of Scholastic's publication School Libraries Work! (Scholastic, 2016), indicate several positive impacts on student learning as a result of having a full-time certificated librarian, such as:

- scores on standardized achievement tests improve in schools,
- librarians collaborate with teachers and lead students to develop 21st century learning skills,
- resources are varied and are more likely to have electronic connections to other school collections and the public library,
- secure more federal funding, provide more frequent instruction in the use of electronic resources, and maintain a website linking to current and relevant academic and professional resources.

**Conclusion**

On June 24, 2016, the Alliance for Excellent Education and the U.S. Department of Education announced Future Ready Librarians as part of the Future Ready Schools Initiative.

“Acknowledging that the current state of school libraries and librarians ranges widely from state to state and even from school to school, these principles are predicated on a core belief that in a Future Ready school, all students have equitable access to qualified librarians, digital tools, resources and books.” (Future Ready Librarians, 2016)

CSLA believes that ESSA provides a critical opportunity to create a framework for Future Ready Schools with effective school library programs across California. We look forward to working with the CDE to make this opportunity a reality for all of California’s students.
References


Focus Questions

1. What overall policy directions drive ESSA planning?
2. What significant statewide programmatic opportunities/priorities should the ESSA plan drive?
3. How will the planning and approval process further these priorities?

Plan Development Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Plan Development Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 29</td>
<td>California Practitioners Advisory Group (CPAG) provides feedback on options</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2-3</td>
<td>State Board of Education (SBE) provides feedback on draft plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 18</td>
<td>Draft plan posted for public review and comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>CPAG provides feedback on draft plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 11-12</td>
<td>SBE responds to CPAG feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Public comment period ends</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>CPAG reviews public comment, makes recommendations</td>
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<td>March 6</td>
<td>First opportunity to submit plans to U.S. Department of Education (ED)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 8-9</td>
<td>SBE acts on CPAG recommendations, provisionally approves plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 3</td>
<td>Second opportunity to submit plans to ED</td>
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*Timeline is subject to change pending SBE feedback and regulations from ED.

Proposed Regulations Update

- Accountability, Data Reporting, and Submission of State Plans: Proposed regulations available May 31; public comment period closed August 1
- Assessment and Innovative Assessment Pilots: Proposed regulations available July 7; public comment period closed September 9
- Supplement not Supplant: Proposed regulations available September 6; public comment period closed November 7

More information and links available on the CDE ESSA Web page at http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/es/
Item Objectives

- The item is designed to provide:
  - Information regarding Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) consolidated state plan requirements and where California stands relative to these requirements
  - Starting points for SBE discussion regarding how ESSA programs and funding can supplement the work underway in California
  - Opportunities for the SBE to provide direction regarding plan contents and next steps

What is ESEA?

President Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) on April 11, 1965.

“No measure I have signed, or will ever sign, means more to the future of America...”

- President Lyndon B. Johnson

The Original ESEA

- Focus on equity and making sure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in America’s schools
  - Grants to districts serving low-income students
  - Grants for libraries and textbooks
  - Funds for research centers
  - Federal grants to state educational agencies to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education
  - Funds for education of students with disabilities (1966)
  - Funds for bilingual education and to reduce dropouts and provide technical assistance to rural schools (1967)

ESEA Reauthorizations

- 1974: President Ford
- 1978: President Carter
  - Concentrates Title I funds in districts with high numbers of low-income students
- 1981: President Reagan
  - Requires states to define levels of academic achievement
- 1994: President Clinton: Improving America’s Schools Act
  - More money to school districts with high numbers of low-income students
  - Standards, assessment, teacher professional development, curriculum, and accountability
- 2001: President Bush: No Child Left Behind Act
  - Testing required in reading and math, grades 3-8
  - Adequate Yearly Progress
ESEA Reauthorized!
President Obama signed the ESSA on December 10, 2015.

"With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal—that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will."
— President Barack Obama

What is New in ESSA?
• Much more authority to states
  • States determine best ways to identify schools and districts in need of support and how to support them
  • Opportunity to create one local, state, and federal accountability and continuous improvement system
• Requires career and college ready standards
• New opportunities to enhance school leadership
• More support for early education
• Renewed focus on well-rounded educational opportunities and safe and healthy schools
• Maintains focus on equitable access for disadvantaged students

ESSA State Plan Programs
Consolidated State Plans include the following ESSA programs:
• Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies
• Title I, Part B: State Assessment Grants
• Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children
• Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
• Title II, Part A: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders
• Title III, Part A: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students
• Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
• Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers
• Title V: Rural Education Initiative
• Title IX, Part A: Education for Homeless Children and Youth

State Plan Requirements
• Part 299 Subpart G of the proposed regulations outlines State Plan requirements:
  • Long term goals and measurements of interim progress
  • Consultation and coordination
  • Challenging academic standards and academic assessments
  • Accountability, support, and improvement for schools
  • Supporting excellent educators
  • Supporting all students
Federal Funds are Supplemental

Each state is responsible for educating its children. The 2016 California State Budget includes approximately $88.3 billion for K—12 education.

ESSA funds are intended to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students, in addition to, not in place of, state investments. We anticipate that California will receive approximately $2 billion in ESSA funds each year.

“Braiding” of Funds

• From the proposed regulations:
  - We seek to improve teaching and learning by encouraging greater cross-program coordination, planning, and service delivery; provide greater flexibility to State and local authorities through consolidated plans and reporting; and enhance the integration of programs under the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, with State and local programs.

• ESSA provides California with an opportunity to improve coherence by:
  - Leveraging funding across included programs
  - Removing “silos” between funding streams
  - Supporting collaboration and efficiency across multiple programs
Stakeholder Engagement – Phase I

ESSA Stakeholder Survey
- June 2–July 8, 2016
- Collected recommendations about what should be included in California’s ESSA State Plan
- 276 responses

Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School, District, or County Office Administrator</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Board Member</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Faculty or Administrator</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Based or Advocacy Organization</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Public</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (included district level staff, education consultants, non-profit organizations, STEM industry, and cross stakeholder group identification)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>276</td>
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School Improvement

Section 6303: Title I: Seven Percent Required Set-Aside
- Funds to LEAs to support schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities or targeted support and improvement activities
- May be distributed by formula or competitive process
- May be awarded to a consortium of LEAs
- SEA distributes funds, monitors and provides supports to schools implementing comprehensive or targeted support and improvement activities

Based on estimate of $1.803 billion=$124,947,900
- Not less than 95% to identified LEAs=$118,700,505
- Remainder for administration and support=$6,247,395

State Educational Agency Opportunities

- Within ESSA, the State Educational Agency (SEA) has several opportunities to leverage state priorities:
  - Title I: School Improvement
  - Title I: Direct Student Services
  - Title II: Supporting Principals and Other School Leaders
  - State-Level Activity Funds: Titles II-IV
  - Approval of Local Educational Agency (LEA) Plans
  - ESSA-related guidance

Direct Student Services

Section 6303(b): Title I: Three Percent Allowable Set-Aside
- Each SEA, after meaningful consultation with LEAs, may reserve not more than 3 percent of the LEA subgrant allocation for direct student services.
- SEA must award grants to geographically diverse LEAs serving the highest percentage of schools for comprehensive support and improvement or implementing targeted support and improvement plans.
- SEA must ensure LEAs offer sufficient options and create and maintain a list of State-approved tutoring providers.

Based on estimate of $1.803 billion=$53,549,100
- 99% to LEAs=$53,013,609
- 1% for administration=$535,491
Section 6611(c)(3): Title II: Three Percent Allowable Set-Aside

- SEA may reserve not more than 3 percent of the LEA subgrant allocation for one or more activities for principals or other school leaders consistent with allowable state activities.

Based on estimate of $252 million = $7,182,000

LEA Plans

- All California LEAs receiving funds under the ESEA are required to develop and implement an LEA Plan.
- Each LEA Plan should describe an integrated, coherent set of actions designed to meet program requirements.
- Within the ESSA State Plan, the SEA is required to describe how it will support the development, review, and approval of LEA Plans.

State-Level Activity Funds

Title II, Part A

- Estimated 2017-18 funding: $252 million
  - 95% to LEAs = $239.4 million
  - 5% for administration and state-level activities = $12.6 million

Title III, Part A

- Estimated 2017-18 funding: $167.6 million
  - 95% to LEAs = $159,220,000
  - 5% for administration and state-level activities = $8,380,000

Title IV, Part A

- Estimated 2017-18 funding: $58 million
  - 95% to LEAs = $55.1 million
  - 5% for administration and state-level activities = $2.9 million

Use of Funds: Starting Point California Support Network

- Stakeholders indicated that California’s network of county offices of education (COEs) are well-positioned to provide locally-determined supports tailored to meet the unique needs of LEAs.
- California could use Title I school improvement funds and Title III state-level activity funds to develop the California Support Network, a new network designed to build COE capacity to support LEAs and schools.
- The network could work in collaboration with the CDE, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, and other existing regional networks to provide integrated supports to LEAs and schools, based on local needs with a focus on state priorities.
Use of Funds: Starting Point
California Leadership Initiative

- Stakeholders indicated that school leaders would benefit from additional professional learning and support.
- California could use the Title II, Part A optional three percent set-aside to establish the California Leadership Initiative, a new statewide regional network that would:
  - Provide professional learning for principals and other school leaders
  - Promote high-quality instruction and instructional leadership
- The initiative could focus initially on principals and school leaders in schools identified for comprehensive or targeted supports with potential to expand once established.

Use of Funds: Starting Point
Implementation of Standards

- Stakeholders indicated that they would like to see a broadening of the “core” curriculum and more support for professional learning.
- California could use state-level activity funds to:
  - Provide professional learning based upon the SBE-adopted curriculum frameworks
  - Identify and disseminate resources and promising evidence-based practices related to standards implementation

Use of Funds: Starting Point
Collaboration in Common

- Stakeholders indicated that they would like improved access to trusted resources and additional supports for educator professional learning.
- California could use state-level activity funds to further develop Collaboration in Common, an online platform that will assist educators and agencies to:
  - Access the resources they need
  - Share resources
  - Use research-based professional learning community practices to collaborate

Use of Funds: Starting Point
Supporting the Whole Child

- Stakeholders indicated that they would like the State to focus on the non-academic needs of students and families.
- California could use state-level activity funds to:
  - Develop and implement guidance regarding supporting the whole child
  - Conduct training for educators
  - Identify and disseminate resources and promising evidence-based practices related to supporting the non-academic needs of students and families
Next Steps

- Meeting on September 19 with representatives from:
  - State Board of Education
  - California Collaborative for Educational Excellence
  - California County Superintendents Educational Services Association
  - California Subject Matter Project
  - California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
  - California Department of Education
- This group will use the starting points and SBE input to develop a set of options for inclusion in the draft ESSA State Plan.
- CPAG Meeting on September 29

Questions

- What overall policy directions drive ESSA planning?
- What significant statewide programmatic opportunities/priorities should the ESSA plan drive?
- How will the planning and approval process further these priorities?
- Where would you like the CPAG to focus during its September 29 meeting?
Ms. Jessica McKinney  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Room 3W107  
Washington, DC 20202-2800  

Docket ID: ED-2016-OESE-0053  

Dear Ms. McKinney:

The California Department of Education (CDE) and the California State Board of Education (SBE) appreciate the hard work of the U.S. Department of Education’s staff and the participants in the negotiated rulemaking process in crafting the proposed Title I, Part B - Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged - Academic Assessments regulations. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into these regulations, which are important to the ongoing development of our assessment system that meets California’s needs in assessing the progress of our 6.2 million public school students.

English Language Proficiency (ELP) Assessment

California assesses the English language proficiency (ELP) of 1.4 million students annually. At present, California is transitioning from its current ELP assessment, the California English Language Development Test, to the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), which will occur in 2018. The ELPAC will be aligned with the 2012 California English Language Development Standards. Given the critical importance of identifying and assessing the progress of English learners (ELs), California seeks further clarification on issues related to the proposed ELP assessment regulations.
Proposed Section 200.6(f)(3)(B) indicates that a state must require each local education agency (LEA) to assess annually the ELP, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, of all English learners in schools served by each LEA.

- **California recommends specifying that the requirement applies only to students in kindergarten through grade twelve.** LEAs often serve students outside of these grade ranges, including children as young as three in the California State Preschool Program. LEAs are currently required to administer developmentally appropriate formative assessments for those children and we would not want to impose additional assessment requirements for such young children.

**Inclusion of all Students – One Percent State Cap on Alternate Assessments: Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities**

Proposed Section 200.6 specifies that if a state needs to request a waiver for exceeding the state cap on the share of students taking an alternate assessment aligned with alternative academic achievement standards, the request needs to include specified information. Section 200.6 (c)(4)(i) in the proposed regulations would limit such a waiver request to one year and requires it to be submitted at least 90 days before the start of the state’s first testing window.

In addition, such a waiver request must also include a number of assurances regarding how the state is working with LEAs to limit the number of students taking the alternative assessment, including the plan and timeline for coming into compliance.

- California has concerns with the prescriptive requirements for receiving a waiver despite the clear congressional intent in section 8401 of the ESSA to make the presumption in favor of granting waivers, provided that requests demonstrate the need for and putative benefit of the waiver, without any additional requirements. We recommend that these additional requirements for plans and assurances be eliminated in the final regulations.

- Furthermore, California has concerns that requiring the waiver to be submitted 90 days before the state’s first testing window would require individualized education program (IEP) teams to make final decisions (gather data and evaluate) about students within the first two months of the academic school year; adding to the administrative burden of the LEA and the collective burden of the state educational agency. In addition, because students’ needs and skills are subject to change, an IEP team, in consultation with a student’s parents or guardians, may determine that an eligible student’s needs have changed during the year, including what the appropriate accommodation or testing mechanism should be. Should this section remain, we recommend that the 90-day timeline be removed.

California appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback, as these regulations will have a significant impact on our state’s ongoing work to support LEAs, schools, and all of California’s students in utilizing assessments to improve teaching and learning.

If you have any questions regarding the content of this letter, please contact Debra Brown, Director, Governmental Relations, California Department of Education, by phone at 916-319-0561 or by e-mail at dbrown@cde.ca.gov.
Sincerely,

TOM TORLAKSON
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education

MICHAEL W. KIRST
President
California State Board of Education

TT/MK:db

Last Reviewed: Thursday, September 15, 2016
Non-Regulatory Guidance:
Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments

September 16, 2016
Purpose of the Guidance


The Department is issuing this guidance to provide State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, educators, and partner organizations with information to assist them in selecting and using “evidence-based” activities, strategies, and interventions, as defined in Title VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). If you are interested in commenting on this guidance, please email us your comment at OESEGuidanceDocument@ed.gov or write to us at the following address:

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

For further information about the Department’s guidance processes, please visit www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/significant-guidance.html.

The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities in this non-regulatory guidance document. This guidance contains examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by other public and private organizations. This information, informed by research and gathered in part from practitioners, is provided for the reader’s convenience and is included here to offer examples of the many resources that educators, parents, advocates, administrators, and other concerned parties may find helpful and use at their discretion. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. Further, the inclusion of links to items and examples do not reflect their importance, nor are they intended to represent or be an endorsement by the Department of any views expressed, or materials provided.

Introduction

Using, generating, and sharing evidence about effective strategies to support students gives stakeholders an important tool to accelerate student learning. ESEA\(^1\) emphasizes the use of evidence-based activities, strategies, and interventions (collectively referred to as “interventions”). This guidance is designed to help SEAs, LEAs, schools, educators, partner organizations and other stakeholders successfully choose and implement interventions that improve outcomes for students. Part I of this guidance reviews steps for effective decision-making and Part II of this guidance recommends considerations, resources, and criteria for identifying “evidence-based” interventions based on each of ESSA’s four evidence levels in Section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA.

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\(^1\) Throughout this document, unless otherwise indicated, citations to the ESEA refer to the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA.
Part I: Strengthening the Effectiveness of ESEA Investments

Ways to strengthen the effectiveness of ESEA investments include identifying local needs, selecting evidence-based interventions that SEAs, LEAs, and schools have the capacity to implement, planning for and then supporting the intervention, and examining and reflecting upon how the intervention is working. These steps, when taken together, promote continuous improvement and can support better outcomes for students. Links to resources, definitions for italicized words, and other relevant information are included in endnotes.

Step 1. IDENTIFY LOCAL NEEDS

SEAs and LEAs should engage in timely and meaningful consultation with a broad range of stakeholders (e.g., families, students, educators, community partners) and examine relevant data to understand the most pressing needs of students, schools, and/or educators and the potential root causes of those needs. Interviews, focus groups, and surveys as well as additional information on students (e.g., assessment results, graduation rates), schools (e.g., resources, climate) and educators (e.g., effectiveness, retention rates) provide insights into local needs. Some questions to consider:

- Which stakeholders can help identify local needs and/or root causes?
- What data are needed to best understand local needs and/or root causes?
- How do student outcomes compare to identified performance goals? Are there inequities in student resources or outcomes within the State or district?
What are the potential root causes of gaps with performance goals or inequities?
How should needs be prioritized when several are identified?

Step 2. SELECT RELEVANT, EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

Once needs have been identified, SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other stakeholders will determine the interventions that will best serve their needs. By using rigorous and relevant evidence and assessing the local capacity to implement the intervention (e.g., funding, staff, staff skills, stakeholder support), SEAs and LEAs are more likely to implement interventions successfully. Those concepts are briefly discussed below (also see Part II of this guidance for more information on evidence-based interventions):

- While ESEA requires “at least one study” on an intervention to provide strong evidence, moderate evidence, or promising evidence, SEAs, LEAs, and other stakeholders should consider the entire body of relevant evidence.
- Interventions supported by higher levels of evidence, specifically strong evidence or moderate evidence, are more likely to improve student outcomes because they have been proven to be effective. When strong evidence or moderate evidence is not available, promising evidence may suggest that an intervention is worth exploring. Interventions with little to no evidence should at least demonstrate a rationale for how they will achieve their intended goals and be examined to understand how they are working.
- The relevance of the evidence – specifically the setting (e.g., elementary school) and/or population (e.g., students with disabilities, English Learners) of the evidence – may predict how well an evidence-based intervention will work in a local context (for more information, also see Part II and endnotes). SEAs and LEAs should look for interventions supported by strong evidence or moderate evidence in a similar setting and/or population to the ones being served. The What Works Clearinghouse™ (WWC) uses rigorous standards to review evidence of effectiveness on a wide range of interventions and also summarizes the settings and populations in the studies.
- Local capacity also helps predict the success of an intervention, so the available funding, staff resources, staff skills, and support for interventions should be considered when selecting an evidence-based intervention. SEAs can work with individual and/or groups of LEAs to improve their capacity to implement evidence-based interventions.

Some questions to consider about using evidence:
- Are there any interventions supported by strong evidence or moderate evidence?
- What do the majority of studies on this intervention find? Does the intervention have positive and statistically significant effects on important student or other relevant outcomes, or are there null, negative, or not statistically significant findings?
- Were studies conducted in settings and with populations relevant to the local context (e.g., students with disabilities, English Learners)?
- If strong evidence or moderate evidence is not available, is there promising evidence?
Does the intervention *demonstrate a rationale* that suggests it may work (e.g., it is represented in a *logic model* supported by research)?

How can the success of the intervention be measured?

Some questions to consider about local capacity:

- What resources are required to implement this intervention?
- Will the potential impact of this intervention justify the costs, or are there more cost-effective interventions that will accomplish the same outcomes?
- What is the local capacity to implement this intervention? Are there available funds? Do staff have the needed skills? Is there buy-in for the intervention?
- How does this intervention fit into larger strategic goals and other existing efforts?
- How will this intervention be sustained over time?

**Step 3. PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

An implementation plan, developed with input from stakeholders, sets up SEAs, LEAs and schools for successful implementation. Implementation plans may include the following components:

- A *logic model* that is informed by research or an evaluation that suggests how the intervention is likely to improve *relevant outcomes* (also see Part II of guidance for more information on logic models);
- Well-defined, measurable goals;
- Clearly outlined roles and responsibilities for people involved, including those implementing the intervention on the ground, those with a deep understanding of the intervention, and those ultimately responsible for its success;
- Implementation timelines for successful execution;
- Resources required to support the intervention; and
- Strategies to monitor performance and ensure continuous improvement, including plans for data collection, analysis and/or an evaluation (also see Step 5 in this guidance).

**Step 4. IMPLEMENT**

Implementation will impact the ultimate success of an intervention, so SEAs, LEAs, and schools should have ways to collect information about how the implementation is working and make necessary changes along the way. Some questions to consider:

- What information will be collected to monitor the quality of implementation? Is additional information needed to understand how the implementation is working?
- Is the implementation plan being followed? If not, why not? Are changes needed?
- Are more resources required? Do resources need to be realigned or timelines adjusted? Are stakeholders being engaged?
- What are unforeseen barriers to successful implementation?
- How is implementation working with other existing efforts?
What does the information being collected suggest about the success of the implementation?
Are changes needed to improve the implementation?
Is the intervention ready to be scaled to more students or educators?

Step 5. EXAMINE AND REFLECT

As part of implementation and decision-making, there are different ways to examine how interventions are working. Performance monitoring involves tracking data about an intervention to see how performance compares to identified targets and goals. Rigorous evaluations measure the effectiveness of an intervention, answering questions about the impact of a specific intervention on relevant outcomes. These types of information are most valuable when shared with key stakeholders for decision-making. Both concepts are briefly described below (also see Part II of this guidance for information on the different levels of evidence):

- Performance monitoring involves regularly collecting and analyzing data in order to track progress against targets and goals. Performance monitoring can help identify whether key elements of a logic model are being implemented as planned and whether the intervention is meeting interim goals and milestones, and suggest ways the intervention could be changed for continuous improvement. Performance information can also provide insight into whether the expected outcomes are being achieved. This constitutes examining the effects of an intervention, as mentioned in evidence that demonstrates a rationale.
- Evaluations of effectiveness may be appropriate when SEAs and/or LEAs want to know if an intervention affected the intended student or educator outcomes. These types of evaluations may meet strong evidence or moderate evidence levels, as defined in ESEA section 8101(21) and clarified in Part II of this guidance.

Some questions to consider:
- What are reasonable expectations of success and how can success be measured?
- What are interim progress and performance milestones that can be tracked?
- What have participants (i.e., students and educators) in the intervention shared about their experience and how the intervention was implemented?
- Is there the need and capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention through a study that could produce strong evidence or moderate evidence, or would promising evidence from a correlational study or performance data that demonstrates a rationale suffice?
- How could knowledge about this intervention be shared with others and incorporated into decision-making going forward?
- Based on information, should this intervention continue as is, be modified, or be discontinued?
Part II: Guidance on the Definition of “Evidence-Based”

Evidence is a powerful tool to identify ways to address education problems and build knowledge on what works. ESEA emphasizes the use of evidence-based activities, strategies, and interventions (collectively referred to as “interventions”). Section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA defines an evidence-based intervention as being supported by strong evidence, moderate evidence, promising evidence, or evidence that demonstrates a rationale (see text box below). Some ESEA programs encourage the use of “evidence-based” interventions while others, including several competitive grant programs and Title I, section 1003 funds, require the use of “evidence-based” interventions that meet higher levels of evidence.

In order to help SEAs, LEAs, schools, educators, and partner organizations (collectively referred to as “stakeholders”) understand and identify the rigor of evidence associated with various interventions, below are the recommended considerations, resources, and criteria for each of ESSA’s four evidence levels. These recommendations are applicable to all programs in ESSA. This guidance does not address the specific role of evidence in each ESSA program and therefore should be used in conjunction with program-specific guidance. *Italicized* words are defined in the endnotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT IS AN “EVIDENCE-BASED” INTERVENTION?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(from section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>“…the term ‘evidence-based,’ when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that –</td>
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<td>(i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on –</td>
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<tr>
<td>(I) <em>strong evidence</em> from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;</td>
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<td>(II) <em>moderate evidence</em> from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or</td>
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<tr>
<td>(III) <em>promising evidence</em> from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or</td>
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<tr>
<td>(ii) (I) <em>demonstrates a rationale</em> based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>(II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.</td>
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Evidence Considerations, Resources, and Criteria for Levels

While the ESEA definition of “evidence-based” states that “at least one study” is needed to provide strong evidence, moderate evidence, or promising evidence for an intervention, SEAs, LEAs, and other stakeholders should consider the entire body of relevant evidence. Additionally, when available, interventions supported by higher levels of evidence, specifically strong evidence and moderate evidence, which describe the effectiveness of an intervention\textsuperscript{vii} through causal inference,\textsuperscript{vii} should be prioritized. Stakeholders should also consider whether there is evidence that an intervention has substantially improved an important education outcome (e.g., credit accumulation and high school graduation). The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an initiative of ED’s Institute of Education Sciences, is a helpful resource for locating the evidence on various education interventions.\textsuperscript{viii} For a longer discussion of key steps and considerations for decision-making, including but not limited to the use of evidence-based interventions, see Part I of this guidance.

The criteria below represent the Department’s recommendations for identifying evidence at each of the four levels in ESEA (also summarized in Table 1 on page 12).

\textbf{Strong Evidence.} To be supported by strong evidence, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (e.g., a randomized control trial\textsuperscript{ix}) on the intervention. The Department considers an experimental study to be “well-designed and well-implemented” if it meets WWC Evidence Standards without reservations\textsuperscript{x} or is of the equivalent quality for making causal inferences. Additionally, to provide strong evidence, the study should:

1) Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome;\textsuperscript{xii}

2) Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on the same intervention in other studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations\textsuperscript{xii} or are the equivalent quality for making causal inferences;

3) Have a large sample\textsuperscript{xiii} and a multi-site sample\textsuperscript{xiv}; and

4) Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served)\textsuperscript{xv} AND settings (e.g., rural, urban) proposed to receive the intervention.

\textbf{Moderate Evidence.} To be supported by moderate evidence, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study\textsuperscript{xvi} on the intervention. The Department considers a quasi-experimental study to be “well-designed and well-implemented” if it meets WWC Evidence Standards with reservations or is of the
equivalent quality for making causal inferences. Additionally, to provide moderate evidence, the study should:

1) Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome;
2) Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on that intervention from other findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations or are the equivalent quality for making causal inferences;
3) Have a large sample and a multi-site sample; and
4) Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served) OR settings (e.g., rural, urban) proposed to receive the intervention.

Promising Evidence. To be supported by promising evidence, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias\textsuperscript{xvii} on the intervention. The Department considers a correlational study to be “well-designed and well-implemented” if it uses sampling and/or analytic methods to reduce or account for differences between the intervention group and a comparison group. Additionally, to provide promising evidence, the study should:

1) Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome; and
2) Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on that intervention from findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations or are the equivalent quality for making causal inferences.

Demonstrates a Rationale. To demonstrate a rationale, the intervention should include:

1) A well-specified logic model\textsuperscript{xviii} that is informed by research or an evaluation that suggests how the intervention is likely to improve relevant outcomes; and
2) An effort to study the effects of the intervention, ideally producing promising evidence or higher, that will happen as part of the intervention or is underway elsewhere (e.g., this could mean another SEA, LEA, or research organization is studying the intervention elsewhere), to inform stakeholders about the success of that intervention.

\textsuperscript{i} These steps largely draw from existing decision-making frameworks and take place as part of a continuous cycle. \textsuperscript{ii} See here for the Department’s policy letter on stakeholder engagement and here for a communication and engagement rubric for information on how they can be engaged in meaningful ways.
In addition to the WWC, evidence resources like the Department’s Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) and other federally-funded technical assistance centers may provide summaries of the evidence on various interventions and guidance on how existing research aligns to the ESEA evidence levels discussed in the Part II of this guidance.

See here for an implementation planning and monitoring tool.

In order to ensure these evaluations of effectiveness produce credible results, SEAs or LEAs can leverage Department of Education technical assistance, including working with local RELs to plan, implement, and conduct evaluations and/or by using supporting resources like this free software to simplify analysis and reporting of evaluation results.

The effectiveness of the intervention is measured in a rigorous study (e.g. one that allows for causal inference) as the difference between the average outcomes for the two groups in the study.

Causal inference is the process of drawing a conclusion that an activity or intervention was likely to have affected an outcome.

WWC is available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/.

An experimental study is designed to compare outcomes between two groups of individuals that are otherwise equivalent except for their assignment to either the intervention group or the control group. A common type of experimental study is a randomized control trial or RCT. A randomized controlled trial, as defined by Part 77.1 of the Education Department General Administration Regulations (EDGAR), is a study that employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, schools, or districts to receive the intervention being evaluated (the treatment group) or not to receive the intervention (the control group). The estimated effectiveness of the intervention is the difference between the average outcomes for the treatment group and for the control group. These studies, depending on design and implementation, can meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. An RCT, for example, may look at the impact of participation in a magnet program that relies on a lottery system for admissions. The treatment group could be made up of applicants admitted to the magnet program by lottery and the control group could be made up of applicants that were not admitted to the magnet program by lottery. If an RCT is well-designed and well-implemented, then students in the treatment and control groups are expected to have similar outcomes, on average, except to the extent that the outcomes are affected by program admission. The comparability of the two groups could be compromised if there are problems with design or implementation, which may include problems with sample attrition, changes in group status after randomization, and investigator manipulation.

WWC Evidence Standards without reservations is the highest possible rating for a group design study reviewed by the WWC. Studies receiving this rating provide the highest degree of confidence that an observed effect was caused by the intervention. Well-implemented randomized controlled trials (i.e., RCTs that are not compromised by problems like attrition) may receive this highest rating. These standards are described in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, which can be accessed at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/documentsum.aspx?sid=19.

A relevant outcome, as defined by Part 77.1 of EDGAR, means the student outcome(s) (or the ultimate outcome if not related to students) the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice is designed to improve; consistent with the specific goals of a program.

WWC Evidence Standards with reservations is the middle possible rating for a group design study reviewed by the WWC. Studies receiving this rating provide a lower degree of confidence that an observed effect was caused by the intervention. RCTs that are not as well implemented or have problems with attrition, along with strong quasi-experimental designs, may receive this rating. These standards are described in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, which can be assessed at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/documentsum.aspx?sid=19.

A large sample, as defined by Part 77.1 of EDGAR, is an analytic sample of 350 or more students (or other single analysis units), or 50 or more groups (such as classrooms or schools) that contain 10 or more students (or other single analysis units). As EDGAR provides, multiple studies can cumulatively meet the large sample requirement and the multi-site sample requirement, as long as each study meets the other requirements corresponding with the specific level of evidence.

A multi-site sample, as defined by Part 77.1 of EDGAR, consists of more than one site, where site can be defined as an LEA, locality, or State. As EDGAR provides, multiple studies can cumulatively meet the large sample requirement and the multi-site sample requirement, as long as each study meets the other requirements corresponding with the specific level of evidence.
In order to demonstrate overlap with the population, the study or studies should show that the intervention has a statistically significant and positive effect on the specific population and/or subgroup of interest being served by the intervention.

A quasi-experimental study (as known as a quasi-experimental design study or QED), as defined by Part 77.1 of EDGAR, means a study using a design that attempts to approximate an experimental design by identifying a comparison group that is similar to the treatment group in important respects. These studies, depending on design and implementation, can meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards. An example of a QED is a study comparing outcomes for two groups of classrooms matched closely on the basis of student demographics and prior mathematics achievement, half of which are served by teachers who participated in a new mathematics professional development (PD) program, and half of which are served by other teachers. This study uses a nonequivalent group design by attempting to match or statistically control differences between the two groups. Another type of QED is a regression discontinuity design (RDD), which uses a cutoff or threshold above or below which an intervention is assigned to individuals.

A correlative study with statistical controls for selection bias is designed to examine the strength of the relationship (not the causal relationship) between an intervention and a student outcome by comparing two similar groups. In an example correlational study, researchers may look at how two classrooms with similar characteristics perform on a reading assessment after one of the classes (the treatment group) participates in a new reading program. While the researcher is looking at outcomes in classrooms that look similar, there may be other important differences between the classrooms (e.g. previous reading assessment scores) that are not accounted for, but would be in more rigorous studies like experimental studies or QEDs. These types of studies cannot meet WWC standards.

A logic model (also known as a theory of action), as defined by Part 77.1 of EDGAR, means a well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the relationships among the key components and outcomes, theoretically and operationally. More information on logic models can be found at [http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL2015057](http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL2015057).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Summary of Recommended Study Criteria for Each Evidence Level</th>
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<td><strong>Study Design</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WWC Standard</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Favorable Effects</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Other Effects</strong></td>
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