

RISEING TOGETHER

 Guiding Every Student Higher 

2026 Federal Programs Institute

Every Tier Counts: How To Use ESSA Evidence To Guide Student Success

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Agenda

- Differentiate between research-based vs. evidence-based evidence.
- Understand the tiered levels of evidence for district and school impact.
- Preview resources to locate quality ESSA research.

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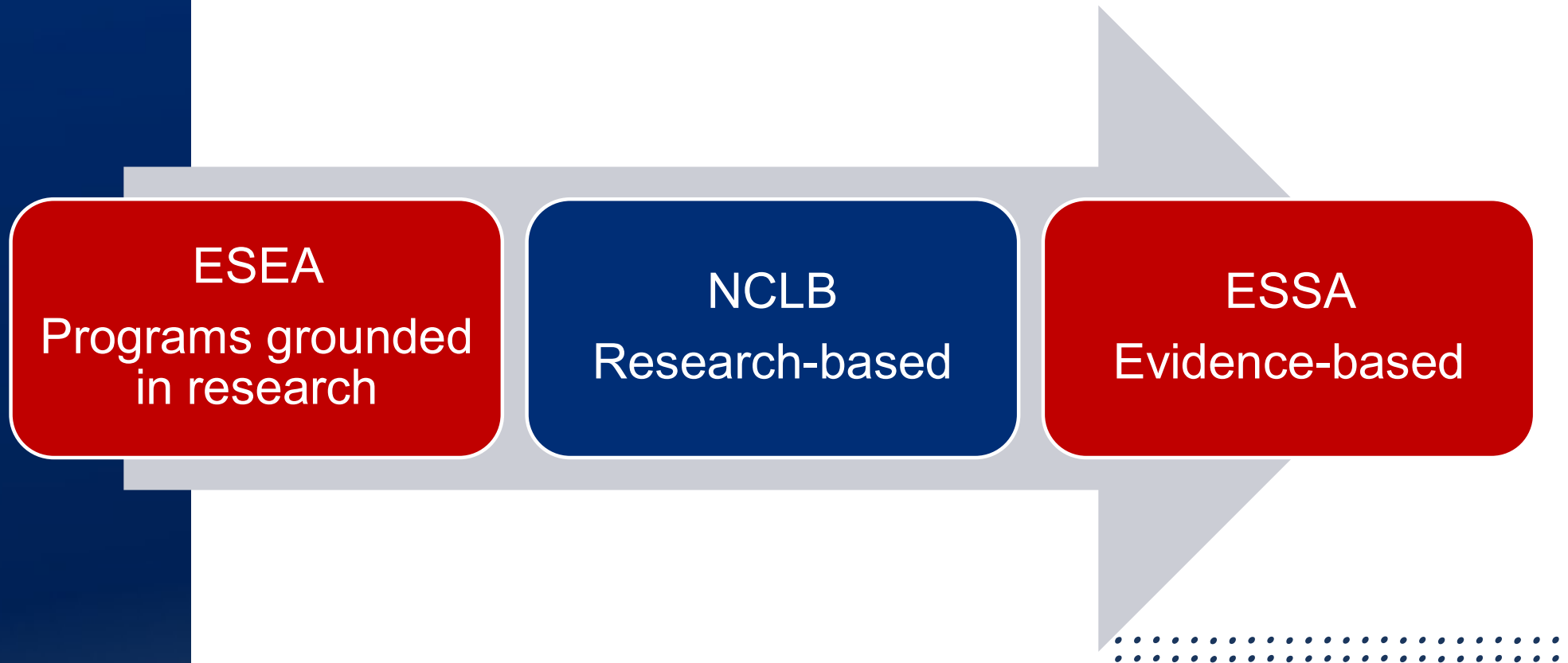
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Research-Based vs. Evidence-Based

How did we get to “evidence-based” evidence in the first place?



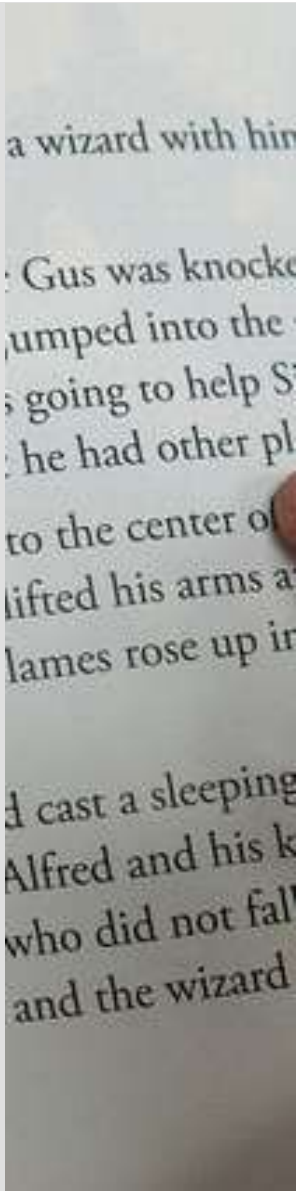
The Evidence Provisions of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- A key aspect of ESSA is its commitment to using evidence to improve student outcomes.
- If implemented well, evidence-based provisions can both improve student outcomes and increase the return on education investments, as more resources are spent on programs and practices likely to have a positive impact on student achievement and growth.



- ESSA offers the flexibility for states and local education agencies to choose the best evidence-based programs to support student achievement and growth.





Two Different Kinds of Evidence

- **Research-Based:**

- Good feedback and supportive arguments
- Testimonials and case studies could be referenced when making purchasing decisions
- Did not require proven evidence that the program works

- **Evidence-Based:**

- Requires testing and systemic evaluation (research design)
 - Requires that the intervention studied yield significant positive outcomes (effectiveness)
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ESSA: Tiers of Evidence

ESSA: Evidence of Effectiveness

- **Tier 1 - Strong:**
 - At least one randomized, well-conducted study showing significant positive student outcomes.
- **Tier 2 - Moderate:**
 - At least one quasi-experimental (i.e., matched), well-conducted study showing significant positive student outcomes.
- **Tier 3 - Promising:**
 - At least one correlational, well-conducted study with controls for inputs showing significant positive student outcomes.
- **Tier 4 - Demonstrates a Rationale:**
 - Practices that have a well-defined logic method or theory of action, are supported by research and have some effort underway by an SEA, LEA, or outside research organization to determine their effectiveness.

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The Evidence Provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Federal Program	Tier Level of Evidence
Title I, Section 1003: School Improvement	▪ Minimum of 1 intervention must meet Tiers I, II, or III in CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools
Title I, Part A: Basic Programs for Schoolwide and Targeted Assistance	▪ All four levels (Tiers I, II, III, IV) of the evidence-based definition apply, where evidence is reasonably available ▪ External providers must have expertise in using evidence-based practices.
Title II: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-quality Teachers, Principals, and Other School Leaders	▪ All four levels (Tiers I, II, III, IV) of the evidence-based definition apply, where evidence is reasonably available
Title III: Instruction For English Learners and Immigrant Students	▪ All four levels (Tiers I, II, III, IV) of the evidence-based definition apply, where evidence is reasonably available
Title IV, part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants	▪ All four levels (Tiers I, II, III, IV) of the evidence-based definition apply, where evidence is reasonably available
Title V, part B: Rural Education Initiative	▪ All four levels (Tiers I, II, III, IV) of the evidence-based definition apply, where evidence is reasonably available

	Tier 1 - Strong Evidence	Tier 2 - Moderate Evidence	Tier 3 - Promising Evidence	Tier 4 - Demonstrates a Rationale
Study Design	Supported by at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study	Supported by at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study	Supported by at least one well-designed and well-implemented Correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias	Supported by a specified logic model informed research or evaluation
WWC Standardⁱ	Meets WWC Evidence Standards without reservations (or is the equivalent quality)	Meets WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or is the equivalent quality)	N/A	N/A
Favorable Effects	Shows a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome	Shows a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome	Shows a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome	Relevant research or an evaluation that suggests that the intervention is likely to improve a student outcome or other relevant outcome
Other Effects	Is not overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence from other findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or are the equivalent quality)	Is not overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence from other findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or are the equivalent quality)	Is not overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence from other findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or are the equivalent quality)	An effort to study the effects of the intervention, ideally producing promising evidence or higher, will happen as part of the intervention or is underway elsewhere
Sample Size	Includes a large sample (at least 350 students) and a multi-site sample (at least two educational sites)	Includes a large sample (at least 350 students) and a multi-site sample (at least two educational sites)	N/A	N/A
Overlap	Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served) AND settings	Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served) OR	N/A	N/A

Slide 12

KS3 Do we have a text version of this table to insert?

Kate Smitheal, 9/8/2021

LD [2]3 Ms. Kate, this is the only version I know of. I tried to find the chart again on WWC and came up empty. We could remove it if Ms. Brinn and Ms. Heather are okay with doing that.

Lynn Dotson, 9/8/2021

KS4 Let's just run with it.

Kate Smitheal, 9/8/2021

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Preview of Resources

What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)

- The [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#) is an investment of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education, established in 2002.
 - WWC reviews research, determines which studies meet rigorous standards, and summarizes the findings.
 - WWC focuses on high-quality research to answer the question, “What works in education?”



ESSA for Evidence

- ESSA for Evidence identifies the following:
 - The level of evidence under ESSA that is associated with a given program.
 - Provides a snapshot of the program's cost and implementation.
 - Program categories include reading, math, social-emotional, attendance, science, and writing.



ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center)

- ERIC provides a wide variety of educational research from journals and non-journal sources (i.e. centers, institutes, and foundations).
 - Sponsored by IES of the US Department of Education.
 - Individual research oriented.



ESEA Evidence in the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA)

- ESEA Requirements
- ESEA Evidence location in CFA
 - 4 question narratives to complete
 - New in FY27 CFA

Question 1

- How do you identify and select evidence-based strategies or programs for ESSA programs and activities?



Question 2

- How do you determine the level of evidence associated with selected activities?



Question 3

- What systems or tools do you use to document, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of evidence-based practices?



Question 4

- How do you support staff and stakeholders in understanding and applying evidence-based requirements?



Resources

- [Department of Education Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#)
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
- [REL Midwest Regional Education Laboratory](#)
- [Evidence for ESSA](#)
- [Guide to Evidence-Based Clearinghouses](#)
- [ERIC: an online library of education research and information](#)
- [American Institute for Research ESSA Key Resources](#)
- [American Institute for Research ESSA Action Guide](#)



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Questions?



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**Please share your
feedback from this
session.**

You may also find complete the
feedback survey at this link.

[2026 Federal Programs Institute Session
Feedback Form](#)



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What's Next | 1:00 – 2:10 p.m.

- Common ESSA Findings & Strategies for Success (Room 3)
- Strategic Funding for Student Success (Room 4)
- ESL Rule in Real-World Contexts (Room 5)
- The Path to Better ESSA Data (Room 6)
- Meaningful Consultation & Equitable Services (Room 9/10)



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Thank you!