The Evidence in Education Lab (Ed Lab)

A New Opportunity
While educators face big challenges in helping all students learn, grow, and prepare for success in college and careers after graduation, the bipartisan [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA), signed into law in December 2015, gives states, school districts, and schools more opportunities to design their own educational systems. At the same time, ESSA also requires, allows, and encourages the use of evidence-based approaches that can help improve student outcomes.

[Results for America](#) (RFA) estimates that the evidence provisions in ESSA could help shift up to $2 billion worth of federal education funds in each of the next four years (FY17-FY20) toward evidence-based, results-driven solutions.

Seizing the Moment: The Evidence in Education Lab
RFA is launching the Evidence in Education Lab (Ed Lab) to help states, school districts, and schools build and use evidence of what works in education to improve student outcomes in the following three ways:

Key Evidence Provisions in ESSA

Defines "evidence-based" to include four levels of evidence based on the relative strength of the underlying research.

Requires all school improvement plans to include evidence-based interventions.

Focuses some allowable uses on evidence-based approaches (e.g., class size reductions and LEA-funded professional development).

Creates a new Education Innovation & Research grant program (similar to i3).

1.) Work in Select States and Districts
In early 2017, RFA will select 2-4 states and 2-4 of their school districts that want to solve big education problems by more effectively and efficiently using data and evidence. RFA and selected sites will co-design a two-year project (March 2017–March 2019) that will—
- identify 1-2 of their most pressing challenges;
- determine how the evidence provisions in ESSA can help them address their specific challenges;
- identify and implement evidence-based practices, policies, and programs that can help them meet their goals; and
- provide a team of technical assistance and support partners, including a partner with research and evaluation expertise, to help execute the project and build long-term capacity.

Project Activities: A Menu of Options
All selected states and districts will implement at least one evidence-based policy-making effort described below, as part of their Title I school improvement plans:

- **Develop a user-friendly tool** for district and school leaders to select and implement evidence-based programs in low-performing schools, train school leaders in how to select and implement programs, and create processes for regularly reviewing data and evidence to improve outcomes.
- **Implement and frequently evaluate school improvement strategies** (e.g., through low-cost randomized controlled trials) in order to *build* the evidence base of what works and to *use* that information to continuously improve.
- **Create school demonstration sites** to model the implementation of evidence-based approaches so that other district and school leaders can observe and learn from them.
- **Blue sky**. Participants can customize their own option by answering these questions: "What problem are you facing in low-performing schools? How can Ed Lab help address that problem and, in the process, build your capacity?"

RFA may also help selected states and districts, at their request, implement other evidence-based policy-making efforts, including but not limited to those described here:

- **Arrange a state/district data sharing project** through which the state frequently provides state longitudinal data system (SLDS) information to districts to generate frequent outcome data on new initiatives and establishing regular performance reviews for examining that data.
- **Integrate education and other data systems** to better track student outcomes and to better evaluate the effectiveness of programs across your city, district, and state.
- **Create a state innovation and evaluation program**, modeled on the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3), to test, replicate, and scale evidence-based solutions in districts.
- **Pay for outcomes (not inputs)**. Study and create a Pay for Success initiative in the areas allowed under ESSA: dropout prevention; improving school climate, safety, and discipline; or addressing the educational needs of youth in correctional facilities.
- **Blue sky**. Participants can design their own option by answering these questions: "What problems of practice or policy do you want to address using a more evidence-based approach? How can Ed Lab help address that problem and, in the process, build your capacity?"

Fall 2016	Invite states/districts to apply for participation in Ed Lab
Winter 2016	Select 8-10 semi-finalists
Early 2017	Host a "bootcamp" for semi-finalists and make final selection
Spring 2017	Begin engagement with selected states/districts including needs assessment and co-construction of strategic plans
Fall 2017	Launch learning community among participants; support execution and continuous improvement of projects
Summer 2019	Conclude first cohort of selected states/districts

2.) Support for All States and School Districts
RFA will also host several in-person and online briefings and develop numerous written materials designed to help all states and school districts use ESSA's evidence provisions to help them solve their biggest challenges. Lessons learned from work in select states and districts will inform the creation of additional materials that help all states and districts implement ESSA across the country.

3.) Federal Advocacy
RFA will also continue to educate Members of Congress and the Administration on the importance of issuing robust regulations and guidance related to the evidence provisions in ESSA to states, school districts, and schools and on the progress being made at the school, district, and state level in implementing these same provisions.

"The Every Student Succeeds Act changes how education is carried out in this country, including shifting funds toward what works, so that we get better results for our students."
Michele Jolin, CEO and Co-Founder of Results for America

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