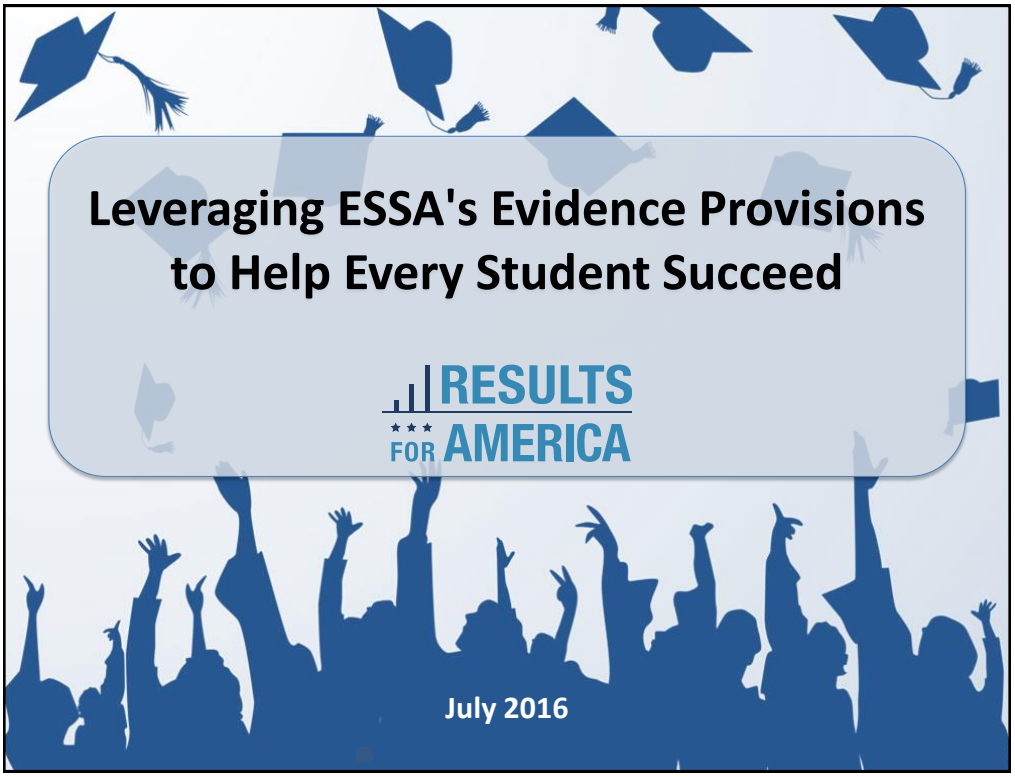

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Results for America is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, improving outcomes for young people, their families, and communities by shifting public resources toward practices, policies, and programs that use evidence and data to improve quality and get better results.

Through its *Evidence in Education Lab*, Results for America (RFA) will help states, districts, and schools better understand how the evidence provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) can be a **game changer** that helps them solve problems and improve student outcomes.

The question should be

"How can evidence help us improve student outcomes?"

not

"How do we comply with ESSA's evidence provisions?"

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Table of Contents

PART ONE: Seeing the Forest

- Review how evidence can help improve student outcomes and ESSA's overall approach to the use of evidence

PART TWO: Examining the Trees

- Unpack ESSA's definition of "evidence-based" and how it is applied across various parts of the law

PART THREE: Navigating the Path

- Explore how states, districts, and schools can use ESSA's evidence provisions to help improve student outcomes

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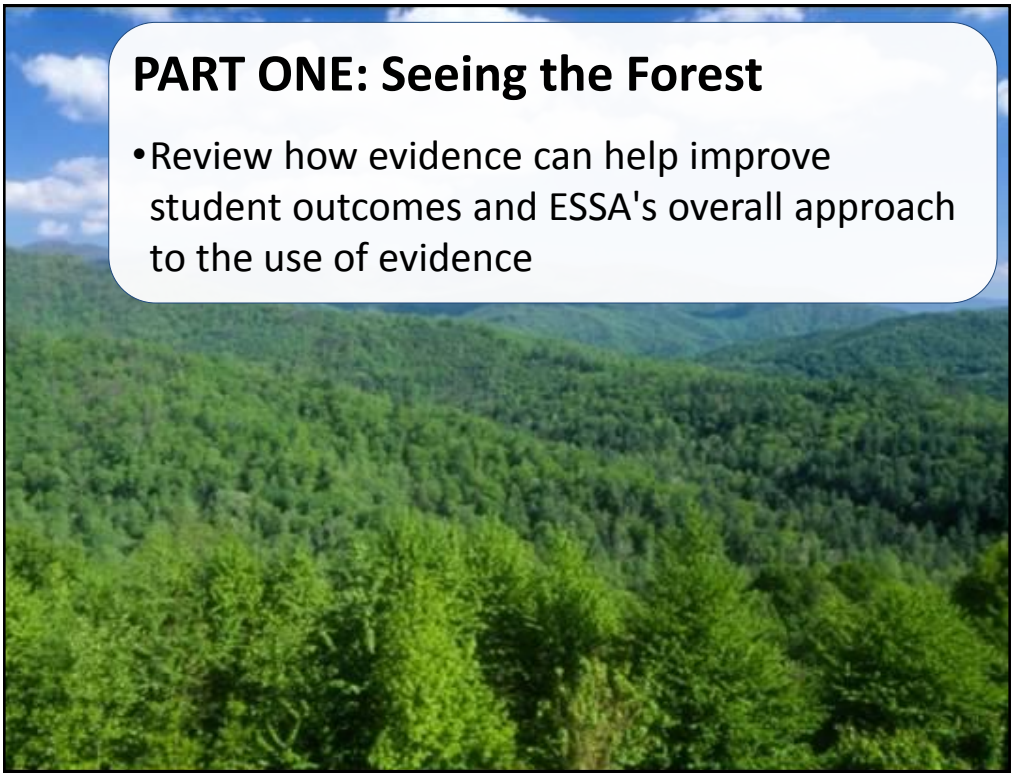

Why Does Evidence-Based Decision Making Matter?

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

The more we use proven approaches, the more we can **improve student outcomes**.

State and local leaders can increase the return on their investments of **limited public funds**.

Investing in robust evaluations and transparently sharing results can increase **trust and buy-in**.

Leaders are **more likely to sustain a strategy** if they can point to strong evidence of impact.

It promotes **continuous improvement**, builds **bodies of evidence** & develops **learning systems**.

6

Why Does Evidence-Based Decision Making Matter?

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

The more we use proven approaches, the more we can **improve student outcomes**.

Early college high schools combine high school and college in a rigorous, supportive environment that enables struggling students to graduate with college credit and the tools for postsecondary success. With robust evaluations validating the model's impact (see below), early college schools are now driving better secondary and postsecondary outcomes in over 280 schools.

Early College Designs
JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

- 90% graduate high school vs. 78% of students nationally
- 94% earn free college credit while in high school
- 30% earn an Associate's degree or other postsecondary credential while in high school

Jobs for the Future. (n.d.). Reinventing High Schools for Postsecondary Success. Retrieved from http://www.jff.org/initiatives/early-college-designs.

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Why Does Evidence-Based Decision Making Matter?

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

State and local leaders can increase the return on their investments of **limited public funds**.

Match/SAGA's intensive individualized academic instruction for Chicago Public Schools students is dramatically improving low-income adolescents' math achievement, at a relatively low cost.

SAGA Innovations
Transform a student. Transform a life.

According to a 2015 study, the tutoring intervention closed the white/black test score gap by 30% in one year. Further, "these impacts on a per-dollar basis—with a cost per participant of around $3,800, or $2,500 if delivered at larger scale—are as large as those of almost any other educational intervention whose effectiveness has been rigorously studied."

SAGA Innovations. (n.d.). The Results. Retrieved from http://sagainnovations.org/approach/the-results/.

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Why Does Evidence-Based Decision Making Matter?

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Investing in robust evaluations and transparently sharing results can increase **trust and buy-in**.

Iredell-Statesville Schools (I-SS) built widespread buy-in among educators and students for its COMPASS initiative that organized cross-functional teams to support the districts' high-needs students.

I-SS evaluated both the implementation and impact of COMPASS, finding positive impacts on its target population's reading achievement.

Iredell - Statesville Schools

Igniting A Passion for Learning

Iredell-Statesville Schools. (2015). 2015 Final COMPASS/i3 Report from Research Associates. Retrieved from http://www.iss.k12.nc.us/Page/1405.

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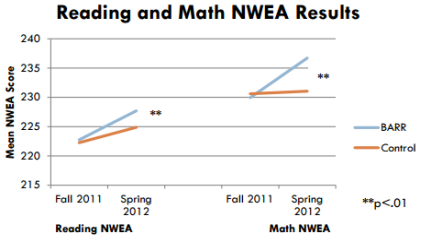
Why Does Evidence-Based Decision Making Matter?

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Leaders are **more likely to sustain a strategy** if they can point to strong evidence of impact.

With a rigorous evaluation in hand confirming positive impacts on student outcomes (see sample outcomes below), the BARR (Building Assets, Reducing Risks) Model for supporting secondary students not only sustained implementation in its original schools but also expanded across the country, picking up new funders and partners along the way.



Corsello, M., & Sharma, A. (2015). The Building Assets-Reducing Risks Program: Replication and Expansion of an Effective Strategy to Turn Around Low-Achieving Schools. Retrieved from http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5613cb59e4b009e45cc5c677/t/56fee985b6aa6038541b7c36/1459546503250/Final+report+for+BARR+i3+Development+grant+-+ERIC+upload.pdf.

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Why Does Evidence-Based Decision Making Matter?

It promotes **continuous improvement**, builds **bodies of evidence** & develops **learning systems**.

Wake County (NC) Public School System embraces evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement as part of its core beliefs. Among other efforts, the district (i) conducts low-cost randomized controlled trials (RCT) when rolling out new initiatives before deciding to go district-wide; (ii) offers professional development on selecting evidence-based initiatives and monitoring progress; and (iii) requires supporting evidence in programmatic budget requests.

WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Board of Education, superintendent, and all staff, while sustaining best practices, will promote and support a culture of continuous improvement, risk-taking, and innovation that results in a high-performing organization focused on student achievement.

4

Strategic Plan
VISION 2020

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And…Perhaps the Most Important Answer to "Why Evidence?"

Evidence-based decision-making can **help you solve problems that are important to you**, regardless of your problem-solving approach.

For example, Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles can use and build evidence in multiple ways.

- What changes should we make?
- Have our needs changed since we began addressing this?
- What can others learn from our experience?

- What is our goal?
- What is our challenge?
- What does the strongest available evidence recommend for *our* context?

- How will we address issues throughout implementation?
- What do the data tell us?
- What explains our successes and setbacks?

- What can we learn from studies about prior implementations?
- How will we know how we're doing along the way?
- How will we evaluate our impact?

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Overview of ESSA

ESSA was mostly designed to "fix" the No Child Left Behind Act, but the law also shifts significant authority to states (and districts) while setting important federal parameters, including:

1. High expectations for all students
2. Transparent reporting of robust data
3. Use of evidence, evaluation & continuous improvement

→ **92** Evidence Provisions in ESSA

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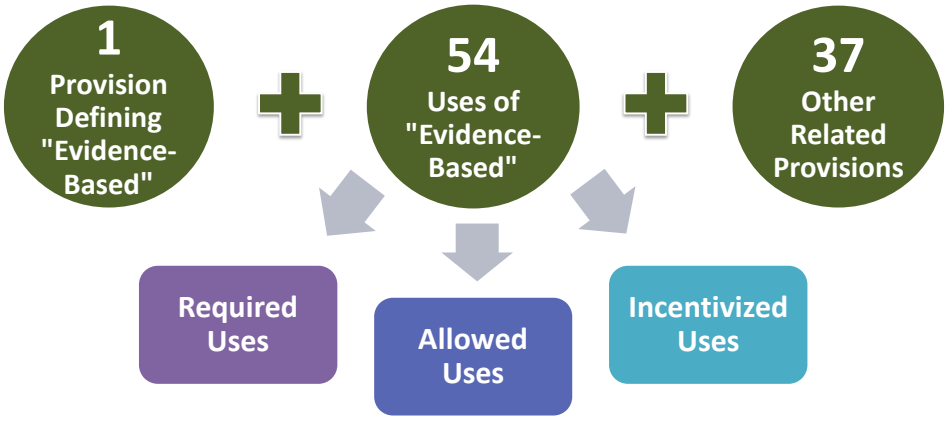
Overview of ESSA's Evidence Provisions

ESSA defines "evidence-based" in 1 provision and then applies that term 54 times, ranging from required uses (e.g., school improvement interventions) to allowable uses (e.g., class size reduction) to incentives in several competitive grants (e.g., preference points for evidence-based proposals). Furthermore, ESSA includes 37 other provisions that have the potential to promote better use of evidence, data, and evaluation (e.g., Pay for Success; evaluation funds).



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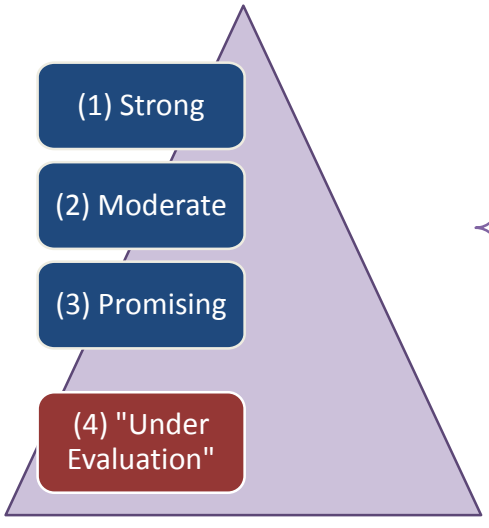
Unpacking the Definition of "Evidence-Based" in ESSA: Overview

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

ESSA's definition of "evidence-based" includes 4 levels of evidence. Together, they create a structure of an increasingly rigorous evidence base.



Context matters a great deal here. Although there are areas already supported by a robust body of evidence, there are other challenges where the education field is still testing new ideas.

ESSA's different levels of evidence acknowledge this important variation.

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Unpacking the Definition of "Evidence-Based" in ESSA: Levels 1-3

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

The top 3 levels require findings of a **statistically significant effect** on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on:

(1) Strong	• At least 1 well-designed and well-implemented **experimental** study
(2) Moderate	• At least 1 well-designed and well-implemented **quasi-experimental** study
(3) Promising	• At least 1 well-designed and well-implemented **correlational** study with statistical controls for selection bias

Issues to Consider

- ESSA does not define all the terms in its definition of "evidence-based" (e.g., "well-implemented" or "correlational").
- States and districts may consider other aspects of evidence beyond what is in the definition (e.g., effect size considering sample size and type of study).

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Unpacking the Definition of "Evidence-Based" in ESSA: Level 4

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

The 4th level of evidence in the definition is designed for ideas that do not yet have an evidence base qualifying for the top 3 levels. Given the second requirement, to examine the effects of these ideas, this evidence-*building* level can thus be referred to as "under evaluation."

(4) Under Evaluation	• **Demonstrates rationale** based on high-quality research or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes • Includes **ongoing efforts to examine the effects** of such activity, strategy, or intervention

Issues to Consider

- ESSA does not define all the terms in its definition of "evidence-based" (e.g., "high-quality research," "is likely to," or "ongoing efforts to examine the effects").
- States must decide if they will define these terms, and if so, how high to set the bar on both requirements included in the 4th level of evidence.

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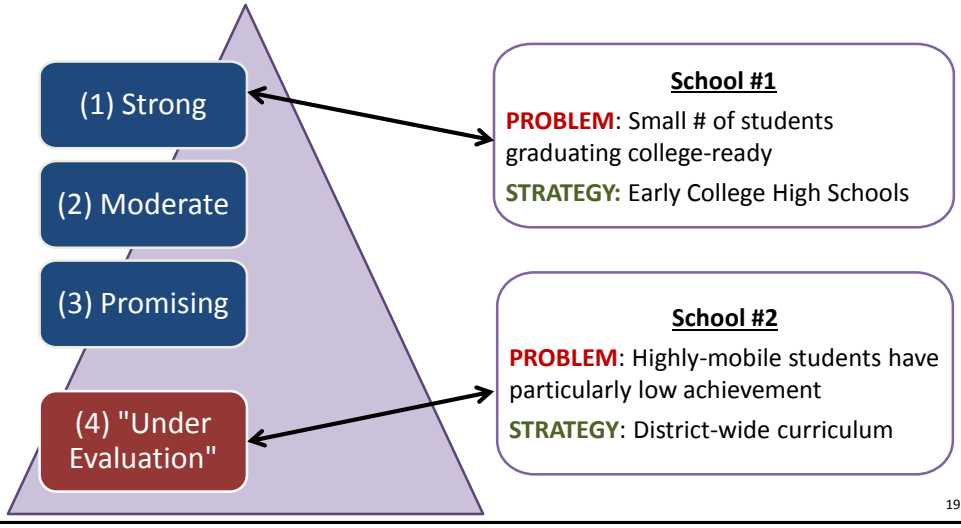
Unpacking the Definition of "Evidence-Based" in ESSA: Application

They key is understanding your problem and formulating the best possible hypothesis to address it. Below, School #1 implements a strategy supported by available and relevant *strong* evidence. Meanwhile, School #2 finds that existing evidence does not address its particular challenge, so it tries a new strategy and commits to studying its implementation and impact.



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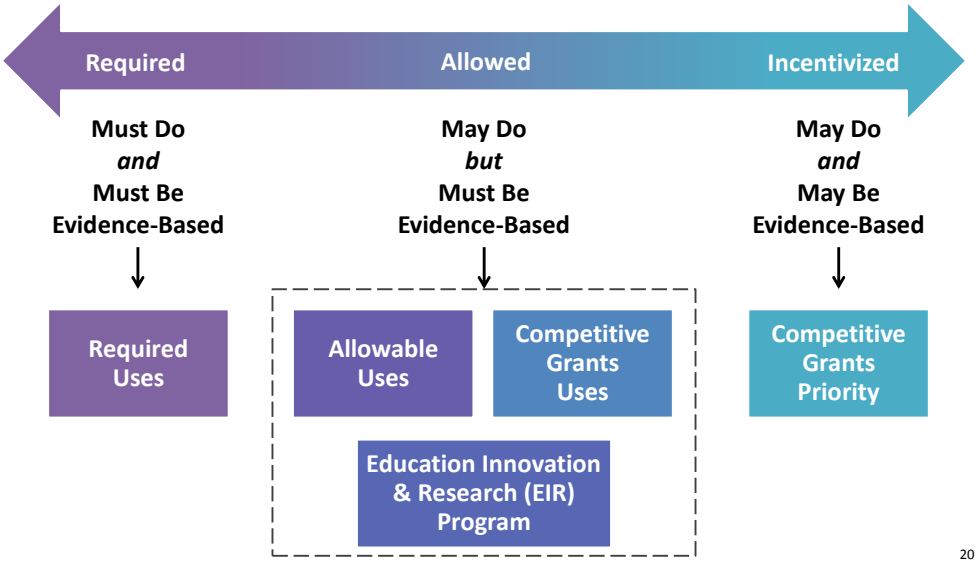
Unpacking the Evidence Provisions in ESSA

As previously noted, ESSA applies its "evidence-based" definition in different ways across 54 provisions. These evidence provisions fall along a continuum from required uses of evidence to allowed uses to incentivized uses.



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Unpacking the Evidence Provisions in ESSA

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Required | Allowed | Incentivized

Must Do *and* Must Be Evidence-Based

Required Uses (Title I)

- All Title I school improvement plans (comprehensive and targeted) must include evidence-based interventions, aligned with results of schools' needs assessments. Schools receiving Section 1003 funds (i.e., Title I 7% set-aside) must include interventions in the top 3 levels of the definition.
- Title I parent & family engagement provisions also require evidence-based strategies
  - All 4 levels of evidence apply
  - Requirement applies after annual evaluation of current strategies, so implementation timeline may differ across localities

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Unpacking the Evidence Provisions in ESSA

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Required | Allowed | Incentivized

May Do *but* Must Be Evidence-Based

Allowable Uses (in formula grant programs) (1 of 3)

- States and districts choose how they will spend their federal formula funds, but under ESSA many key allowable uses must be evidence-based
  - E.g., district-funded professional development; class size reductions; Pay for Success initiatives
- Of these, most apply only if the state first determines that evidence for that use is "reasonably available"
  - All 4 levels of evidence apply; "reasonably available" is not defined

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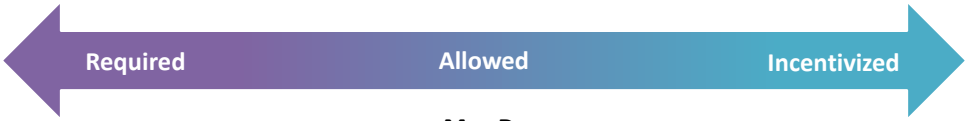
Unpacking the Evidence Provisions in ESSA

RESULTS FOR AMERICA



May Do
but
Must Be
Evidence-Based

↓

Education Innovation & Research (EIR) Program (2 of 3)

- Applying for an EIR grant is optional, but all proposals must be evidence-based
- USED's implementation of this tiered-evidence program will clarify what level of evidence is required to qualify for each of the 3 tiers of EIR grants

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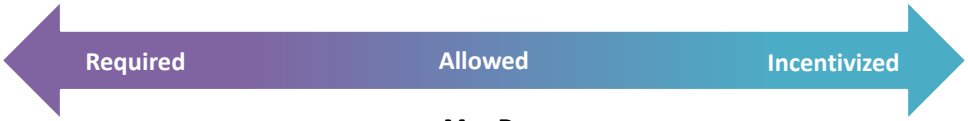
Unpacking the Evidence Provisions in ESSA

RESULTS FOR AMERICA



May Do
but
Must Be
Evidence-Based

↓

Competitive Grants Uses in SEED and Family Engagement (3 of 3)

- Applying for ESSA's competitive grants is optional, but 2 grant programs (SEED and Statewide Family Engagement Centers) apply an evidence-based requirement to some allowable uses of the grants' funds
  - All 4 levels of evidence apply
- Applicants can also receive competitive preference points in these 2 grant programs if their evidence falls within the top 3 levels (see next slide)

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Unpacking the Evidence Provisions in ESSA

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Required → Allowed → Incentivized

May Do *and* May Be Evidence-Based

Competitive Grants Priority

- In 7 competitive grant programs under ESSA, evidence-based applications will receive competitive preference points
  - Top 3 levels of evidence apply
  - The 7 programs include: SEED; Statewide Family Engagement Centers; LEARN; School Leader Recruitment and Support; Full-Service Community Schools; Promise Neighborhoods; and Supporting High-Ability Learners and Learning

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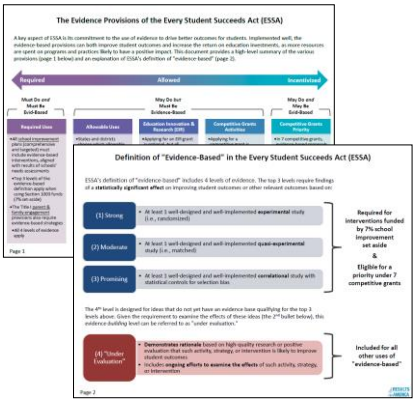
Available Resources on ESSA's Evidence Provisions

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

RFA has developed a variety of materials to help states and school districts better understand and successfully implement the ESSA evidence provisions. You can find these here.



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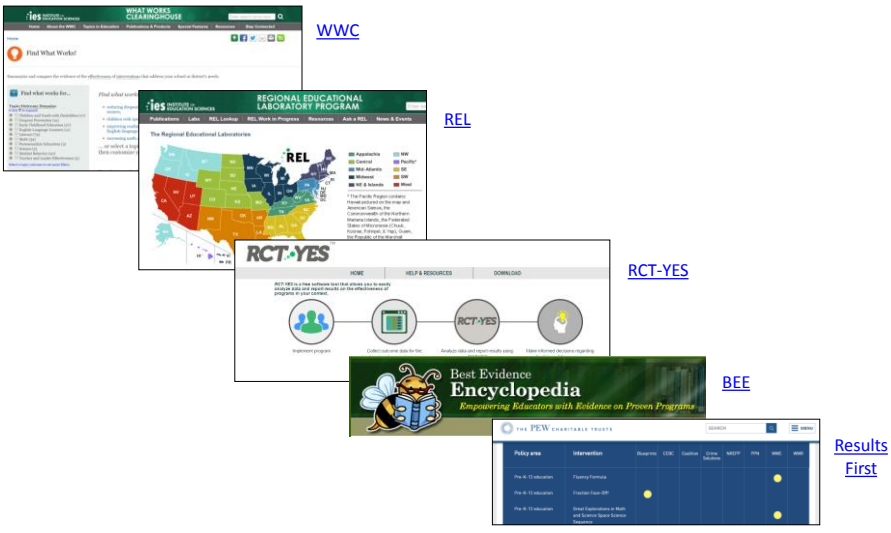
Available Resources on ESSA's Evidence Provisions

There are also a host of other resources to support educators and leaders in using evidence to help solve problems.



WWC

REL

RCT-YES

BEE

Results First

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PART THREE: Navigating the Path

- Explore how states, districts, and schools can use ESSA's evidence provisions to help improve student outcomes

Opportunities in 2016-17 for State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to Implement Evidence Provisions

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

- Establish a learning agenda and a vision for using evidence in state and local **plans**
- Clarify the role of evidence in **school improvement** policies and plans
- Determine the state's approach to "**reasonably available**" determinations
- Determine the state's approach to "**ongoing efforts to examine the effects**" of 4th level approaches
- Prepare for **competitive grant** applications
- Identify existing **capacity** (e.g., people, processes, data), gaps, and sustainability plans

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Opportunities in 2017-18 and Beyond for SEAs/LEAs to Implement Evidence Provisions

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

- Monitor and periodically review state and local **plans**
- Implement, improve, and intervene in **school improvement** plans
- Revisit the state's "**reasonably available**" determinations as evidence base grows
- Address results of "**ongoing efforts to examine the effects**" of 4th level approaches
- Build evidence through evaluations of **competitive grant** activities
- Grow **capacity** through continuous improvement

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Approaches for Implementing ESSA's Evidence Provisions

SEAs, LEAs, and schools should consider the following approaches as they seek to take advantage of the opportunities presented by ESSA.

- (1) Develop Demand
- (2) Build Supply
- (3) Drive toward the Best Evidence
- (4) Leverage Partnerships
- (5) Advance Learning Systems

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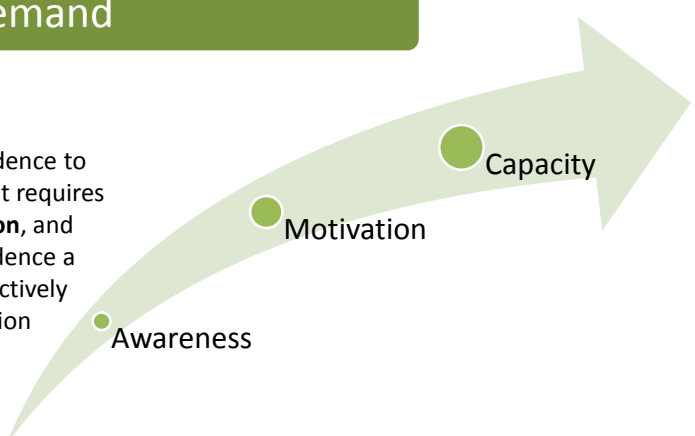
(1) Develop Demand

Key Considerations

- Everyone is using evidence to varying degrees, but it requires **awareness**, **motivation**, and **capacity** to make evidence a priority and then effectively integrate it into decision making.



- High-quality and sufficient **technical assistance** will be key to increasing capacity to use evidence well, including but not limited to support from Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) or RFA's Ed Lab.
- Everyone should **avoid *over*-promising** what evidence means. Although prior positive findings increase the odds of future success, they don't guarantee it.
- Practitioners need to ask the **right questions** of "evidence-based" programs.

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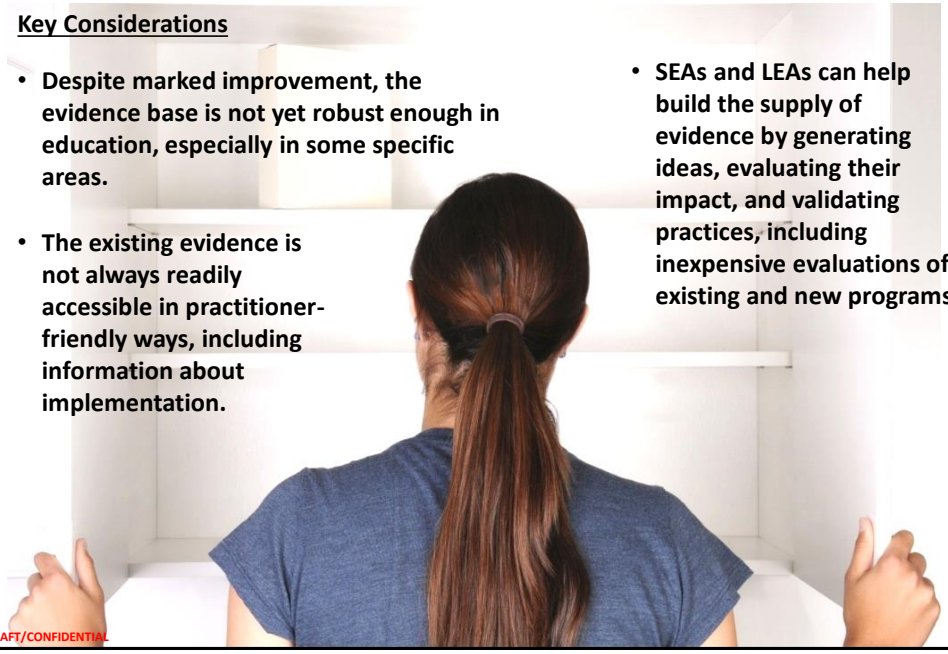
(2) Build Supply

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Key Considerations

- **Despite marked improvement, the evidence base is not yet robust enough in education, especially in some specific areas.**
- **The existing evidence is not always readily accessible in practitioner-friendly ways, including information about implementation.**
- **SEAs and LEAs can help build the supply of evidence by generating ideas, evaluating their impact, and validating practices, including inexpensive evaluations of existing and new programs.**



DRAFT/CONFIDENTIAL

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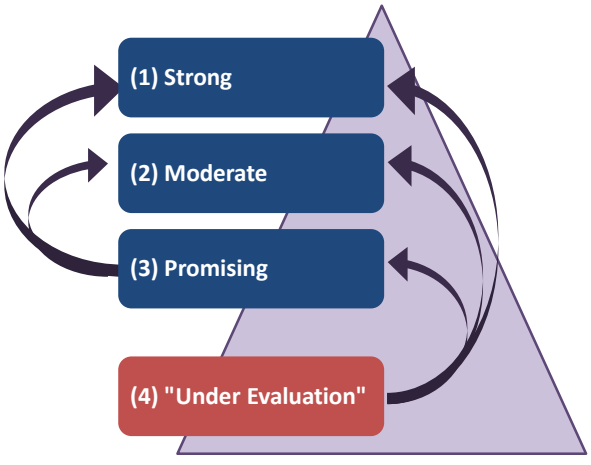
(3) Drive toward the Best Evidence

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Key Considerations

- The stronger the evidence, the more confidence we can have of improving student outcomes. The *body of evidence* should grow and strengthen over time.
- Level 4 innovations should ultimately lead to evidence at the top 3 levels.
- Although the levels represent progressively stronger evidence, interventions do not necessarily need to climb each rung in the ladder in order.
  - For example, a randomized controlled trial of a Level 4 innovation could produce Level 1 evidence.



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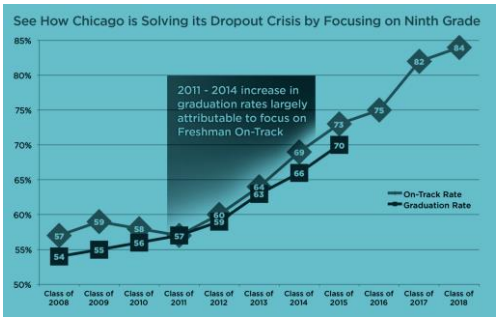
(4) Leverage Partnerships

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Key Considerations

- Consider entering a Research-Practice Partnership with a local **university** (e.g., the Chicago Consortium on School Research and Chicago Public Schools collaborate in various ways, including the On-Track project highlighted below).
- **Foundation** partners are increasingly committed to evidence-based approaches and supporting the evaluations needed to build the evidence base.
- Take full advantage of available resources offered by both **public** (e.g., Institute of Education Sciences (IES) grants; RELs) and **private** partners such as RFA's Ed Lab.



University of Chicago. (n.d.). See How Chicago is Solving its Dropout Crisis by Focusing on Ninth Grade [chart on webpage]. Retrieved from http://ontrack.uchicago.edu/.

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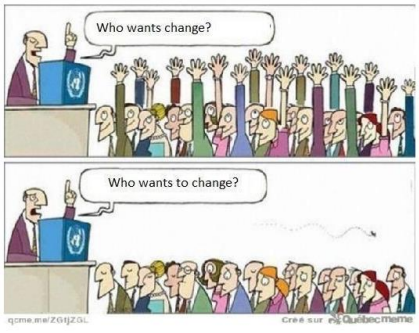
(5) Advance Learning Systems

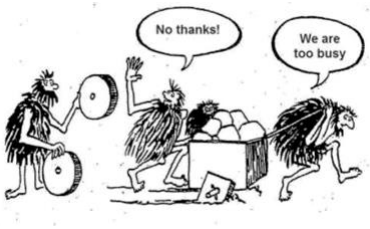
RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Key Considerations

- Shift individual mindsets and organizational culture from compliance to learning.



- Embrace policies and practices that support continuous improvement.



- Learn by doing and see failure as an opportunity to learn more.

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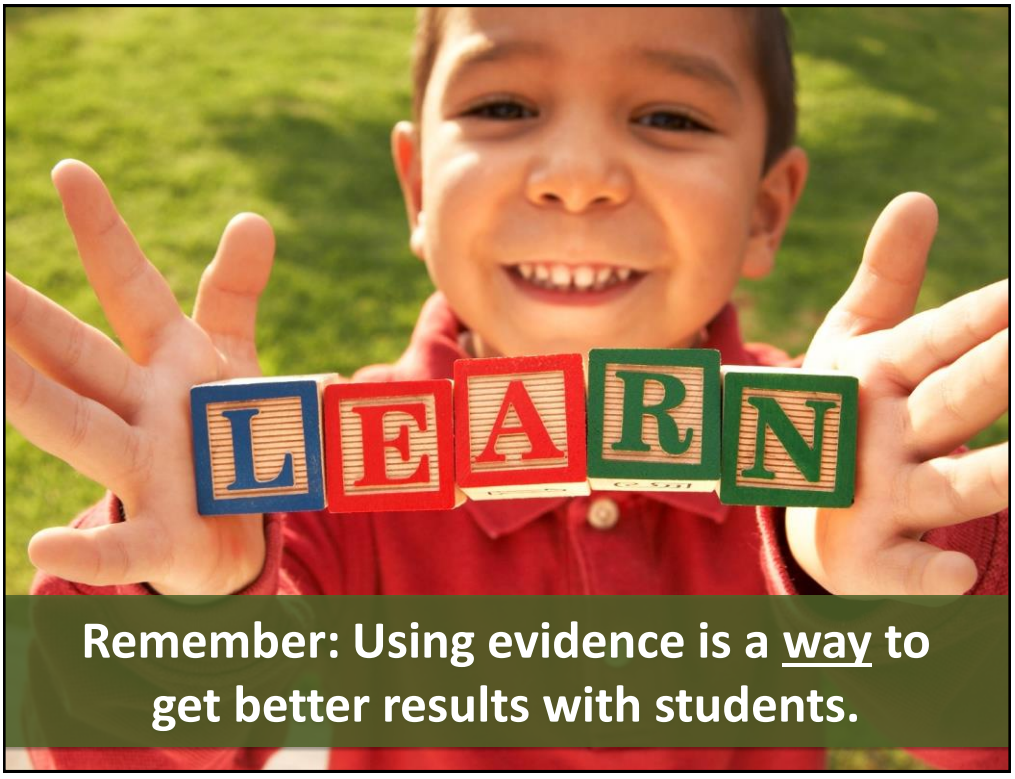
LEARN
Remember: Using evidence is a way to get better results with students.


For more information, please contact:
Jeremy Ayers
jeremy@results4america.org
RESULTS FOR AMERICA

APPENDIX: Glossary of Terms

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

The following definitions are from the What Works Clearinghouse glossary and are provided here to help translate some of the technical terms used in this document.

Effect size

- A standardized measure of the magnitude of an effect. The effect size represents the change (measured in standard deviations) in an average student's outcome that can be expected if that student is given the intervention. Because effect sizes are standardized, they can be compared across outcomes and studies.

Quasi-experimental design

- A design in which groups are created through a process that is not random. For a quasi-experimental design to be rigorous, the intervention and comparison groups must be similar, demonstrating baseline equivalence on observed characteristics, before the intervention is started.

Randomized controlled trial

- A design in which groups are created through a process that is random. Carried out correctly, random assignment results in groups that are similar on average in both observable and unobservable characteristics, and any differences in outcomes between the groups are due to the intervention alone.

Statistical significance

- The likelihood that a finding is due to chance rather than a real difference. The WWC labels a finding statistically significant if the likelihood that the difference is due to chance is less than 5% (p = 0.05)

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