

Moneyball for Education

Given the urgent need to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, increase economic mobility, and ensure racial justice, it is more important than ever for education leaders at all levels of the PK-12 education system to embrace evidence and data to inform their day-to-day decision-making. In RFA's new report — Moneyball for Education Policy Recommendations — we outline a series of recommendations to advance the use of data, evidence, and evaluation that are ripe for the Administration and/or Congress to take now as well as some initial thoughts on larger policy changes to begin working toward later:

1. Revise and Align the Definition of "Evidence-Based"

- NOW: ED should strengthen existing guidance to clarify the current definition and encourage SEAs, LEAs, and schools to more deeply consult the evidence base as they select and implement evidence-based interventions.
- LATER: Congress should move toward a streamlined definition of "evidence-based" that more directly promotes innovation, continuous improvement, and scaling of proven K-12 interventions.

2. Shift Additional Competitive and Formula Funding to Evidence-Based Approaches

- NOW: ED should prioritize evidence of effectiveness in all of its competitive grant programs—including those in ESSA, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and Title III of the Higher Education Act—through tiered-evidence frameworks, evidence preference points, and other evidence-driven strategies.
- NOW: ED should use available tools such as conducting research and providing technical assistance to help SEAs and LEAs increase their use of evidence-based approaches in school improvement plans.
- NOW: ED should fund an independent study or Congress should ask for a US Government Accountability Office (GAO) study of how the evidence-based allowable-use provisions have been implemented since ESSA's enactment in 2015.
- NOW: IES should publish a biannual determination of the state of the evidence base—beyond what clears the bar for inclusion in IES's What Works Clearinghouse—for each of the 15 reasonably available provisions that SEAs can rely on in the absence of conducting their own literature reviews.

- LATER: Congress should expand the allowable-use and reasonably available provisions in ESSA to change them from an exception to the default rule.
- LATER: Congress should incentivize SEAs and LEAs to shift more formula funds to evidence-based approaches.

3. Invest 1% of Federal Education Program Funds in Evaluations

- NOW: ED should allocate 0.5% of its discretionary program funding to evaluate the effectiveness of its grant programs.
- LATER: Congress should require the secretary of education to set aside at least 1% of discretionary program funds for evaluation.

4. Build a Larger and More-Effective Evaluation, Research, and Development Infrastructure

- NOW: Congress should increase the Education Innovation and Research Program appropriation from \$190 million in FY20 to \$500 million in FY21.
- LATER: Congress should double the IES budget from \$623 million to \$1.25 billion.

5. Produce More-Relevant, More-Meaningful, and More-Accessible Data to Support States, Districts, and Schools

- NOW: ED should support SEAs in making sure new school-level spending data reports are effectively communicated to the public.
- NOW: ED should fully implement the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.
- LATER: ED should help SEAs improve state longitudinal data systems to better link data sources across the pre-kindergarten through workforce (P-20) continuum.