



Evidence-Based Practices

What Are Evidence-Based Practices?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) defines “evidence-based,” when used with respect to a school activity, as “an activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on strong evidence, moderate evidence, or promising evidence from research studies.”

Research has identified key components of evidence-based practices (EBPs) specifically for literacy instruction.

For [kindergarten through third grade](#):

- An emphasis on developing phonemic awareness
- Instruction on and frequent practice with decoding words, analyzing word parts, and writing and recognizing words
- Daily opportunities to read both narrative and informational “connected text” (multiple related sentences)

For [fourth through ninth grade](#):

- Continued attention to decoding skills
- Purposeful fluency-building activities
- Routine use of a set of comprehension-building practices
- Regular engagement with challenging text

Why Use Evidence-Based Practices?

The Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) program requires grantees, when awarding subgrants, to prioritize subgrant applications that propose activities that are supported by strong, moderate, and/or promising levels of evidence.

Benefits of EBPs include:

- Improved student outcomes, including academic performance, classroom behavior, high school graduation rates, college-going, income, health, and incarceration rates
- Reduced achievement gaps between disadvantaged student populations and their peers
- More efficient use of time and financial resources

Where Can I Find Evidence-Based Practices?



To find EBPs that best fit student needs, explore databases from:

[What Works Clearinghouse](#)

[Institute of Education Sciences](#)

[Evidence for ESSA \(Johns Hopkins University\)](#)

[Comprehensive Literacy State Development
National Literacy Center](#)

How Should I Select Evidence-Based Practices?

ESEA lays out [tiers of evidence](#) to help education leaders decide which practices are likely to be most effective in their context:

Tier 1	Strong evidence from at least one well designed and well-implemented experimental study
Tier 2	Moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well implemented quasi-experimental study
Tier 3	Promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias
Tier 4	Demonstrates a rationale (<i>This tier is not included in the definition of “evidence-based” for the CLSD program in the ESEA.</i>)

In selecting EBPs, consider:

- 1. What are the population’s literacy needs?** How has the student population performed on recent literacy assessments? Do your data indicate score disparities by student subgroups and/or in different aspects of reading? Are there additional data points that could provide insight into students’ literacy needs? Has the EBP been shown to be effective with student populations similar to those in your district or state (e.g., English learners, students with disabilities, low-income students)?
- 2. Which tools or products meet Tier 1, 2, or 3 standards of evidence?** Does the tool or product provide support in an instructional area of high need and/or to a student population in need of greater literacy support? Does the selected tool or product directly address the specific literacy challenges identified in the literacy assessments, particularly for student subgroups with the greatest needs?

- 3. Which practices or interventions meet Tier 1, 2, or 3 standards of evidence?** Does the practice or intervention provide support in an instructional area of high need and/or to a student population in need of greater literacy support? Does the selected EBP directly address the specific literacy challenges identified in the literacy assessments, particularly for student subgroups with the greatest needs?





How Can I Implement Evidence-Based Practices?

- 1. Form an implementation team.** An implementation team ideally comprised of administrators and practitioners should lead the process throughout the implementation and adaptation of new EBPs. As the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) has noted, the implementation team [should be diverse and represent multiple stakeholders](#).
- 2. Specify the plan.** An [implementation plan](#) should include a timeline and consider both inputs (available resources, planned activities) and outputs (number of tutoring hours received, test scores). One recommended planning tool is a [logic model](#).
- 3. Determine and respond to professional development needs.** What professional development is needed to ensure that teachers and staff are prepared to implement EBPs effectively? Are there ongoing supports in place for educators after the initial training?
- 4. Ensure implementation fidelity.** Even the best-designed activity or material cannot make an impact if it is not properly implemented. To maximize fidelity, literacy leaders can establish clear, written guidelines; provide training and ongoing support for educators and administrators; ensure access to essential resources; make decisions informed by data and continual monitoring; and build community buy-in.
- 5. Plan for evaluation, continuous improvement, and sustainability.** How will the EBP be evaluated over time? What process will be in place for ongoing evaluation and refinement based on data collected during implementation? Can the practice be sustained over time? What mechanisms are in place to maintain its use beyond the initial implementation phase?

Where Can I Learn More?



Want a deeper dive into...

- **Evidence-based practices to support literacy?** See our professional learning module.
- **ESEA tiers of evidence?** See [this Regional Educational Laboratory guide](#).
- **Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education?** [Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#)
- **Accessing and assessing evidence?** See [this Regional Educational Laboratory resource](#).
- **Supporting implementation?** See [this Regional Educational Laboratory roadmap](#) or [this National Implementation Research Network practice guide](#).