Aligning Evidence-Based Practices in the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guides With the Every Student Succeeds Act Tiers of Evidence

A Step-by-Step Guide for Ohio Striving Readers Subgrant Applicants

This guide is intended for Ohio districts applying for 2018 Striving Readers subgrants. Before using this guide, it is expected that districts will have conducted a needs assessment and are ready to choose evidence-based practices that meet their needs based on the data.

Table of Contents

Step 1. Identify a What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide .......................................................... 2
Step 2. Search Recommendations .................................................................................................. 3
Step 3. Investigate Recommendations for Alignment With Every Student Succeeds Act Evidence Tiers ............................................................................................................................................ 3
   Step 3.1. Alignment With Moderate Evidence .................................................................................. 3
      Step 3.1.1. Investigating whether there are negative outcomes associated with a recommendation ................................................................. 4
      Step 3.1.2. Determining large/multisite sample criteria ......................................................... 5
   Step 3.2. Alignment With Strong Evidence ...................................................................................... 8
Step 4. Context.................................................................................................................................. 8
Step 1. Identify a What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) provides several practice guides that include recommended practices with strong, moderate, or minimal evidence. There are eight guides with a specific focus on literacy. For the purposes of Striving Readers subgrants, applicants can align these levels of evidence with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) evidence tiers by following a few extra steps.

Visit [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Publication#/ContentTypeId:3](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Publication#/ContentTypeId:3) to search for practice guides. This will bring you to the following search page:

Choose “Literacy” from the left-hand-side drop-down menu.

This will filter your results to the following practice guides that may be particularly useful for meeting your needs:

- *Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades*
- *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*
Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices
Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade
Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School
Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers
Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively
Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making

Step 2. Search Recommendations
Clicking on a practice guide brings you to a page like this:

Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Step 3. Investigate Recommendations for Alignment With Every Student Succeeds Act Evidence Tiers
The information that applicants will need to align the recommendations differs depending on the level of evidence cited by the practice guide. The following steps show what information is needed to align with the ESSA evidence tiers in the practice guides for moderate (Step 3.1) and strong (Step 3.2) evidence.

Step 3.1. Alignment With Moderate Evidence
Practices with a moderate evidence base are based on studies that either lack in generalizability or causality. It also is possible to have studies supporting this recommendation that show countervailing negative evidence. Therefore, applicants will first need to provide evidence that there is no countervailing negative evidence.
Step 3.1.1. Investigating whether there are negative outcomes associated with a recommendation

For each recommendation that has moderate evidence, read the summary of evidence section of the practice guide. First, click on the link for the full pdf file.

Within the practice guides, each recommendation will have a summary of evidence, like this:

**Summary of evidence: Moderate Evidence**

Twenty-two studies that examined the effectiveness of interventions with connected text meet WWC group design standards and include a relevant outcome (see Appendix D). Although 18 studies showed positive effects on word reading, oral reading accuracy, oral reading fluency, and/or reading comprehension outcomes, eight of these studies also reported no discernible effects on other outcomes in these areas. In addition, three studies found no discernible effects for any outcome, and one study found a negative effect for one outcome. Because of this inconsistent pattern of positive effects, the panel and staff did not assign a strong evidence rating to this recommendation.

The 18 studies that found positive effects contributed to the moderate level of evidence; the remainder of this paragraph focuses on those studies. Nine of these studies had interventions that included all three components of Recommendation 4, and the interventions in an additional five studies aligned with two components of Recommendation 4. Fifteen studies meet WWC group design standards without reservations. The studies collectively included diverse students in kindergarten through grade 3; 11 studies examined students at risk for reading difficulties, and the other seven studies examined general education students. The interventions in 11 studies were delivered one-on-one, while six studies examined interventions implemented with small groups of students, and one intervention used a combination of small groups and whole-class instruction. Sixteen studies occurred in the United States, and two studies occurred in the United Kingdom. Overall, the 18 studies related to Recommendation 4 found an inconsistent pattern of positive effects. Therefore, the panel and staff assigned a moderate level of evidence to Recommendation 4.
Applicants should read the summary of evidence to determine whether the studies supporting the recommendation showed any negative countervailing evidence. Each summary will list whether there were negative effects found from any of the studies. For example:

- In *Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades*, Recommendation 1 (moderate evidence) was based on evidence from five correlational studies, which would fall under Tier 3, or promising evidence (p. 11).

- In *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*, Recommendation 2 (moderate evidence) had no countervailing negative effects (p. 18), and Recommendation 5 (moderate evidence) was based on studies with countervailing negative effects (pp. 34–35).

- In *Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers*, Recommendation 3 (moderate evidence) found mixed effects on outcomes (pp. 27–28).

- In *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School*, Recommendation 4 (moderate evidence) had no negative effects, but included some studies with no discernable evidence (p. 60).

If a practice is supported by studies with countervailing negative evidence (a negative effect on an outcome, where the control group’s outcomes are more positive than the treatment group), that outcome does not align with ESSA Tiers 1–3. If there is no countervailing negative evidence, applicants can move on to determining the sample size.

**Step 3.1.2. Determining large/multisite sample criteria**

If there is no countervailing negative evidence, applicants then need to show whether the studies contributing to the ratings for the *outcomes* they are looking to improve meet the large/multisite sample criteria. This information can be found in Appendix D of the practice guides.

---

**Appendix D**

*Rationale for Evidence Ratings*[^97]

The level of evidence is based on the findings of studies that examined the effectiveness of recommended practices and meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) group design standards. The studies were primarily identified through a keyword search of several databases. The search focused on studies published between 1995 and 2015 that examined practices for teaching writing to students in grades 6–12. This search was supplemented with additional studies recommended by the expert panel.

From here, applicants will need to identify the table that corresponds to their recommendation.
For each outcome (for example, sentence structure), applicants can add up the analytic sample sizes in the second column. The **sample size should add up to 350 to meet the large sample size criteria.**

**Note:** Most practice guides focusing on literacy do not distinguish between studies that meet WWC standards with and without reservations, which would be needed to determine whether a practice aligns with strong or moderate evidence under ESSA. If it is not possible to distinguish between these two WWC ratings, applicants should state that the practice meets at least moderate evidence, or Tier 2, under ESSA.

For practice guides that do make this distinction, the table will be laid out similar to this:
Studies that meet WWC standards without reservations (one criteria for strong evidence, or Tier 1, under ESSA) are listed first. To determine whether a practice meets strong evidence, all the studies that meet standards without reservations need to add up to a sample size of 350. So, there are three possible scenarios here:

1. Sample sizes for the outcome of interest do not add up to 350. In this case, the practice meets promising evidence, or Tier 3, under ESSA.

2. Sample sizes for studies that meet WWC standards without reservations do not add up to 350, but including sample sizes from the other studies (the ones that meet WWC standards with reservations) adds up to at least 350. In this case, the practice meets moderate evidence, or Tier 2, under ESSA.

3. Sample sizes for studies that meet WWC standards without reservations add up to at least 350. In this case, the practice meets strong evidence, or Tier 1, under ESSA.
Step 3.2. Alignment With Strong Evidence

Recommendations with a strong evidence base in the WWC practice guides are supported by several studies that meet WWC standards with and without reservations, have been replicated by multiple studies, and have consistent positive effects with no countervailing negative evidence. Therefore, to align these recommendations with the ESSA tiers, applicants only need to investigate the sample size. This process is outlined in detail in step 3.1.2 above.

Step 4. Context

Finally, applicants will need to align their populations with the students in the sample. Each practice guide provides this information in a different way, but can generally be found in the same tables in Appendix D where applicants determine sample size. Some examples include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study and design</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Intervention condition as implemented in the study</th>
<th>Comparison condition as implemented in the study</th>
<th>Outcome domain and effect size</th>
<th>Related recommendation components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torgesen et al. (2006)</td>
<td>3rd-graders near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Teachers implemented 140 lessons from the decoding strand of the Corrective Reading curriculum for groups of 3 students. The lessons focused on word identification and oral reading fluency. The intervention involved 55-minute sessions daily over 7 months.</td>
<td>Teachers taught their regular lessons.</td>
<td>Word reading = 0.22</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim et al. (2011)</td>
<td>2nd-4th to 12th-grade students</td>
<td>Teachers received professional development through the Pathway Project on reading and writing strategy instruction. They modeled the strategies in class and gave students time to practice and reflect on their use of writing strategies. They used an on-demand writing assessment to gauge student needs and progress. The intervention was implemented for 2 school years with effect measured.</td>
<td>Teachers received professional development that emphasized interpreting test data, using test data to improve state standardized test scores.</td>
<td>Overall writing quality = 0.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applicants will need to show that the characteristics of the samples, as provided by the practice guides, align with their populations of students.