Defining Evidence-Based Programs and Practices

Several evidence registries sponsored by federal agencies or other research organizations exist and highlight different programs and practices that have been found to be evidence-based (See list below). Specific criteria for what constitutes an evidence-based program or practice varies across these registries. Some common elements of evidence-based programs and practices include a solid theoretical foundation, high quality of research evidence (e.g., highest quality being evidence from experimental studies published in peer reviewed journals), and evidence of producing significant positive outcomes.

- [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
- [National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices](#)
- [Blueprints for Violence Prevention](#)
- [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#)
- [Find Youth Info](#)
- [Promising Practices Network for Children, Families, and Communities](#)
- [Evidence-Based Prevention and Intervention Support Center](#)
- [The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)](#)
- [ChildTrends – What Works](#)

ESSA and Evidence-Based Programs and Practices

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) established a tiered system to determine which programs and practices should be considered evidence-based.

Tier 1 *Strong Evidence*	**The program or practice has been shown to be effective by one or more well designed and well implemented experimental studies (e.g., randomized control experimental studies).**
Tier 2 *Moderate Evidence*	The program or practice has been shown to be effective by one or more well designed and well implemented quasi-experimental studies
Tier 3 *Promising Evidence*	The program or practice has been shown to be effective by one or more well designed and well implemented correlational studies (with statistical controls for selection bias).
Tier 4 *Demonstrates a Rationale*	The program or practice has a well-defined logic model or theory of action, is supported by research, and has some effort underway to determine its effectiveness.

Note: To be considered well designed and well implemented, a study must meet the [What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards](#).

Questions to Consider When Selecting a Program or Practice

If a program or practice is not listed in an evidence registry, below are some questions to consider to help determine whether the program or practice may be evidence-based:

1. Is the program or practice theoretically based?

2. Are there published peer reviewed research studies that support the effectiveness of this program or practice?

3. What was the rigor of the research studies on this program or practice (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational)?

4. Do the research findings repeatedly show a statistically significant and positive effect on relevant outcomes?

5. Are the research findings from large and multi-site samples?

6. Are the research findings from similar populations proposed to receive the intervention?

7. Are there conflicting studies that found statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence?

References

Ebbole, T. (2007). Evidence-Based Programs and Practices: What Does It All Mean? Retrieved from http://cache.trustedpartner.com/docs/library/000238/pubresearchreview.pdf.

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).

Puddy, R. W. & Wilkins, N. (2011). Understanding Evidence Part 1: Best Available Research Evidence. A Guide to the Continuum of Evidence of Effectiveness. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Pring, R., & Thomas, G. (2004). Evidence-based practice in education. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).