



***Evidence-Based School Leadership
Interventions & ESSA: What Qualifies
and Where is More Research Needed?***

Dr. Erika Hunt
Center for the Study of Education Policy

Bradford White
Illinois Education Research Council

2016 IERC Symposium
September 29, 2016
Bloomington, IL



School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act

Volume I—A Review of the Evidence Base, Initial Findings

Rebecca Herman, Susan M. Gates, Emilio R. Chavez-Herrerias, Mark Harris

Key findings

- School leadership can be a powerful driver of improved education outcomes.
- Activities designed to improve school leadership demonstrate positive impact on student and teacher outcomes, based on research that is consistent with ESSA evidence tiers.
- ESSA expands opportunities for states and districts to use federal funding for initiatives that strive to improve the quality of school leaders.
- Current ESSA framing of evidence tiers is problematic for implementation.

The U.S. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)¹ acknowledges the importance of school principals to school improvement and effective instruction. The act allows states and districts to use federal funds for activities targeting school principals and other school leaders.

ESSA repeatedly calls for the use of *evidence-based* activities, strategies, and interventions.² The rationale is clear: Investments in education must produce results. Students' efforts, teachers' time, and scarce financial resources are more likely to be well spent when education-improvement activities are selected because there is evidence that they are effective. To select education-

improvement activities without considering their prior, proven impact may be seen as an irresponsible use of limited resources.

In many areas, such as English-language learning or literacy, there is a strong existing research base (such as the Institute of Science Education's What Works Clearinghouse [WWC] review) to inform which interventions might qualify as evidence-based. However, the language used in ESSA to define the term *evidence-based* differs in important ways from prior legislation, leaving open questions about which school-leadership practices, activities, strategies, and interventions might qualify as evidence-based. In the face of such ambiguity, states and districts might hesitate to take advantage of the opportunities that ESSA provides to support activities and interventions targeting school leaders. Additional guidance or clarification about what is allowable under the law could facilitate school-improvement activities that are consistent with the intent of the law.

The RAND Corporation conducted a synthesis of the evidence base on school-leadership interventions to better inform the rollout of school-leadership interventions under ESSA. This report is intended to help federal, state, and district education policymakers understand and implement school-leadership-improvement efforts that are consistent with ESSA.



Opportunities to Utilize ESSA to Fund District and University Leadership Opportunities



Better Evidence, Better Choices, Better Schools

State Supports for Evidence-Based School Improvement and the Every Student Succeeds Act

By Steve Fleischman, Caitlin Scott, and Scott Sargrad August 2016

WWW.AMERICANPROGRESS.ORG

ESSA Funding Streams for School Leadership Activities

- Title I (school improvement)
- Title II Part A (supporting effective instruction)
 - Up to 5% set aside for statewide initiatives to improve the teacher and leader pipeline, including: certification, evaluation, and support; preparation; training and PD; recruitment; induction and mentoring; and differential pay
 - Remaining 95% goes to districts (and is subject to local bargaining)
 - (Optional) State can reserve up to 3% of this for targeted supports to principals or other school leaders
- Title II Part B (national programs)
 - Includes competitive programs, such as: the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund; the School Leader Recruitment and Support fund; the Supporting Effective Educator Development fund; and the Education Innovation and Research fund
- Parts of ESEA have traditionally allowed funding to go towards both teachers and leaders, but leadership is often neglected in federal policy and rarely at the core of state and district strategies (Manna, 2015)
- **All initiatives funded by Title I or Title II of ESSA must be “evidence-based” and states are encouraged to consider evidence in decision-making**

ESSA Evidence Tiers

| | |
|--|--|
| Tier I (Strong Evidence) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (RCT) found a statistically significant favorable impact on student (or other relevant) outcomes |
| Tier II (Moderate Evidence) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study found a statistically significant favorable impact on student (or other relevant) outcomes |
| Tier III (Promising Evidence) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least one well-designed correlational study controlling for selection bias showing a statistically significant favorable association between a component of the intervention and student (or other relevant) outcomes |
| Tier IV | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Based on high-quality research or positive evaluation suggesting intervention is likely to improve student (or other relevant) outcomes• Includes ongoing efforts to examine effects |

Outstanding Questions

- Tier IV *might* mean:
 - Evidence-based, but not proven
 - Causal chain effectiveness
 - Implementation effectiveness
- Tier IV probably doesn't include:
 - Purposefully selected anecdotes
 - Analysis of untested, irrelevant, or not-validated outcomes (e.g. opinion surveys)
 - Theory without any outcome analysis
- What are “other relevant outcomes”?
 - Intermediate outcomes known to improve student outcomes? (e.g. greater use of more effective instructional practices or increased retention of highly effective teachers)
- Some of this ambiguity might be intentional, to allow states flexibility

Evidence Requirements for ESSA Activities

Title I

- Tier I, II, or III evidence **required**

Title II, Part A (Supporting Effective Instruction)

- Tier I, II, III, or IV evidence required (for some components of some programs, sometimes)
- Tier I, II, or III evidence *encouraged*

RAND's Evidence Review (Vol. 1)

| Intervention | Tier I, II, or III | Tier IV |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Evaluation Models | None | VAL-ED, Marzano, CALL |
| Principal Preparation Programs | Research or Doctoral programs, specific programs (New Leaders, NYC Aspiring Principals, UVA School Turnaround) | <i>Pending Review</i> |
| Strategic HR Management | Principal turnover (negative) | Charlotte Mecklenberg's Strategic Staffing Initiative |
| Professional Learning | NISL (and maybe McREL's Balanced Leadership) | Numerous district initiatives, learning communities, mentoring & internship, improved supervision |
| Working Conditions | Principal Autonomy | Financial incentives |
| Reform Models | KIPP | <i>Pending Review</i> |

Other Leadership Activities Associated with Student Success

- Not “interventions” *per se* but might help guide districts toward effective strategies
- **Conditions influenced by school leaders:**
 - Developing and communicating a vision and establishing culture of high expectations
 - Monitoring and supporting instruction
 - Teacher hiring, evaluation, development, and retention
- Leadership actions:
 - Supporting curriculum, instruction, and assessment
 - Building shared culture of achievement, establishing goals and expectations
- **Leadership competencies :**
 - Experience (as principal, as AP, or as teacher in same school)
 - Organizational management skills
 - Time spent coaching and evaluating teachers
- Other resources for evidence-based practice:
 - What Works Clearinghouse
 - Results First Clearinghouse Database
 - Best Evidence Encyclopedia

ISBE ESSA Calendar

| Date | Activity |
|------------------------|---|
| Week of Aug. 22, 2016 | ISBE releases Draft 1 of state plan |
| Sept. 6 – Oct. 5, 2016 | ISBE conducts Listening Tour 2 |
| Oct. 7, 2016 | Deadline to submit comments to Draft 1 |
| Mid Oct. 2016 | ISBE receives compiled report from Listening Tour 2 |
| Early Dec. 2016 | ISBE releases Draft 3 of state plan |
| Jan. 2017 | ISBE sends full draft of state plan to Governor's Office |
| Jan. 2017 | Governor's Office reviews and sends back to ISBE |
| Winter 2017 | ISBE Board approves |
| March 6, 2017 | Deadline to submit state plan to US Department of Education |
| 2017 and beyond | Subsequent processes to refine plan and implementation |

Priority issues identified by ISBE

- **Professional development**
 - **Micro-credentialing**
- **Data on how districts are currently using Title II funding**
- **Teacher and leadership preparation innovations**
- **Teacher leadership/career advancement efforts**
- **Diversity of teacher workforce**
- **Equity plan and ineffective teacher definition**

Discussion Questions



Illinois Education Research Council

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Bradford R. White, Associate Director

brawhit@siue.edu

866-799-IERC (4372)

<http://ierc.education>

