Selecting Evidenced-Based Interventions

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Guidance

Revised 12-18-2018

Alignment to *Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement*

Through its approved state plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) adopted *Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement* framework to align work, foster collaboration, and create a common language and approach for improvement. This framework is provided to districts and schools as an optional improvement framework.

All districts and schools should have some systematic framework; this is one option. The GaDOE recognizes and respects that districts and schools have developed/adopted their own robust continuous improvement frameworks. All effective improvement frameworks utilize evidence-based interventions throughout.

The identification and implementation of evidence-based interventions are an integral part of *Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement*. The center of this framework is the Whole Child.

The 'Why' of improvement is to ensure that all students in Georgia graduate ready to learn, ready to live, and ready to lead. The Whole Child alludes to this holistic perspective on the shared goal for education in Georgia.

Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement

The 'What' of improvement includes five systems:

- Coherent Instruction
- Professional Capacity
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Family and Community Engagement
- Effective Leadership

The 'How' of the improvement contains the components of a problem-solving cycle:

- Identify Needs
- Select Interventions
- Plan Implementation
- Implement Plan
- Examine Progress

Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement: Problem-Solving Cycle

Working together, the shared goal, cycle, and systems form an aligned and coherent improvement process that can address unique strengths and needs of each district and school while also increasing the achievement of Georgia's students.

In Georgia's ESSA State Plan, the GaDOE made the commitment to develop and implement a "toolbox" for LEAs and schools with effective practices, processes, and supports that are mapped onto the *Systems of Continuous Improvement* framework. While currently in its infancy, this toolbox will eventually become a robust repository of aligned programs, initiatives, tools, and resources managed by the GaDOE to support the framework. Evidence-based practices and interventions will be included.

Supporting Resources
- Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement: An Overview (GaDOE)
- LEA Inventory of Current Practice (West Ed)

The Shift to Evidence-Based Interventions

Broadly, evidence-based interventions are those which have research evidence supporting their success.

Georgia's efforts to improve student outcomes relies on evidence-based interventions. This effort represents a timely shift from the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind (NLCB) to the state-developed ESSA plan for Georgia. NCLB focused strictly on 'scientifically based research' (i.e., quasi-experimental and randomized-controlled experimental) in order to drive federal funds to support activities with proven results; however, since 2001 educational research has expanded to many more methodological designs. Thus, the ESSA provides broader categories of evidence and recognizes additional interventions that show promising evidence. Additionally, the ESSA includes more specific definitions and expectations for each category.

The definition of "evidence-based" is given in section 8101(21) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA (United States Congress, 2015). The ESSA delineates "evidence-based" actions according to four categories that reflect strength of evidence:

> EVIDENCE-BASED. —
> (A) IN GENERAL. —Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term 'evidence-based', when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that—
> (i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on—
>
> > (I)   **strong evidence** from at least 1 well-designed and well- implemented experimental study;
> > (II)   **moderate evidence** from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or
> > (III)   **promising evidence** from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or
> (ii)   (I) demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and
> (II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.
>
> (B) DEFINITION FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES FUNDED UNDER THIS ACT. —When used with respect to interventions or improvement activities or strategies funded under section 1003, the term 'evidence-based' means a State, local educational agency, or school activity, strategy, or intervention that meets the requirements of subclause (I), (II), or (III) of subparagraph (A)(i).

The fourth category above, **demonstrates a rationale**, is supported by (a) high-quality research; or (b) a positive evaluation that the intervention is likely to improve student outcomes; or (c) other relevant outcomes that are undergoing evaluation and supported by a logic model.

The ESSA and U.S. Department of Education (ED) regulations require districts and schools to spend federal funds in support of evidence-based interventions:

Federal Funding Source	Level of Evidence Required
Title I, Part A 1003 funds	Interventions applied under Title I, Part A Section 1003 (School Improvement) are required to have strong, moderate, or promising evidence to support them.
IDEA*	Interventions can fall into any of the four categories.
All other federal programs under Titles I–V; Homeless Education	Interventions can fall into any of the four categories.
Federal programs being **consolidated** with other federal, state, and local funds in a Title I **school level** schoolwide program	Federal funds consolidated in this manner at the school level lose their identity and, therefore, interventions will not *require* documentation of an evidence-based intervention.

*Also applies to entities that LEAs support with federal funds (N&D residential facilities with schools onsite, GNETS, private school equitable services, etc.)

Supporting Resources
- ESSA and Evidence: Why It Matters (*Chiefs for Change* policy brief)
- Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments (ED Non-Regulatory Guidance)
- What Works Clearinghouse (IES)
- Evidence for ESSA (Center for Research and Reform in Education)
- Child Trends (Child Trends non-profit research organization)
- GaDOE State Board Rule – Student Support Teams 160-4-2-.32
- GaDOE State Board Rule - Child Find Procedures 160-4-7-.03

Alignment to the LEA Consolidated Application

Evidence-based interventions are integral to the LEA Consolidated Application in that *Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement* provide the framework for the consolidated LEA improvement plan (CLIP) and the accompanying program budgets. The LEA Consolidated Application follows the continuous improvement model by incorporating the following elements:

- identification of local needs;
- goals and related actions (selection of evidence-based interventions);
- implementation processes (planning, budgeting, implementing);
- examining progress for effectiveness; and
- how the LEA effort will be coordinated among the federal programs.

Supporting Resources
- LEA Consolidated Application (GaDOE)

Step 1 | Identify Needs

Through *Georgia's Systems for Continuous Improvement* process, districts and schools consult with a wide-range of education stakeholders (e.g., families, students, educators, early learning and post-secondary education, including P-20 and community partners). This is a good opportunity for districts and schools to engage with advisory councils, P-20 partners, and/or governance teams. Together, they can examine relevant data for the system to bolster strengths and identify the most pressing needs.

Georgia's state ESSA plan references and reinforces the need to be responsive to the community and to recognize the value of effective professional educators. Engaging the community and educators in a meaningful way is a key component in ensuring broad-based support of evidence-based interventions.

When identifying needs, leaders and stakeholders should consider a broad view of data, including both summative and formative results, local and state data sets, academic and non-academic factors, equity gaps and equity data, as well as qualitative and qualitative information (ex: interviews, surveys, focus groups). Support for the Whole Child requires multiple data sets to paint a holistic picture of local strengths and true root causes that create barriers to student achievement.

Strategic priorities should be identified to address local challenges. Only a few system-wide priorities should be taken on by a system at one time, no more than four or five. These priorities should bolster local strengths and respond to the root causes for local challenges. The GaDOE has aligned the CLIP, District Improvement Plans, and School Improvement Plans. This aligned process ensures that all local teams analyze local data, identify strengths and root causes, set priorities, and develop implementation plans to address those priorities. This alignment empowers districts and schools to leverage federal funds to support identified needs in a more streamlined and effective way.

> **Questions to Consider**
> - *Which stakeholders can help identify local strengths, needs, and/or root causes?*
> - *Are we engaging with stakeholders in a meaningful and timely manner?*
> - *How do we build trust with stakeholders so that authentic conversations can be held, and true root causes identified?*
> - *Are all subgroups of students performing at the optimal level?*
> - *What data sources are needed to best understand our local context?*
> - *What data gaps exist? How do we fill those gaps?*
> - *What systems are in place to support success? What system changes are needed?*

> **Supporting Resources**
> *Overview*
> - [Identify Needs Webinar](#) (GaDOE)
> - [Problem Solving Process Webinar](#) (GaDOE)
> - [Stakeholder Engagement Quick Guide](#) (GaDOE)
> - [Needs Assessment Guidebook](#) (State Support Network)

Supporting Resources *(cont.)*
Data
- [School Climate and Milestones dashboards](#) (GaDOE)
- [Census and state agency community data](#) (Neighborhood Nexus)
- [Kids Count community data](#) (Family Connections)
- [Policy Map](#) (Get Georgia Reading) -- use this helpful [how-to guide](#)
- [Early Childhood Readiness Radar](#) (GEEARS)
- [Kids Birth-5 and their families data](#) (CACDS)
- [Community health data](#) (DPH)

Engaging Stakeholders
- [Family & Community Engagement Webinar](#) (GaDOE)
- [Community Action Toolkit](#) (Get Georgia Reading)
- [Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA](#) (CCSSO)

Conducting a Root Cause Analysis
- [Identifying Need and Root Causes](#) (GaDOE)

Step 2 | Select Interventions

Once local strengths and needs are identified, evidence-based interventions should be selected to meet those needs. The ESSA and ED regulations/guidance lay out four categories of interventions:

Types of Evidence-based Interventions			
Strong Evidence	**Moderate Evidence**	**Promising Evidence**	**Demonstrates a Rationale**
Supported by at least one randomized study	Supported by at least one quasi-experimental study	Supported by at least one correlational study	Supported by programs with a rationale based on high-quality research or a positive evaluation that are likely to improve student or other relevant outcomes and that are undergoing evaluation; supported by a logic model

Several online databases have been developed to assist LEAs with identifying evidence-based interventions. Below is a list of common databases:

- [Evidence for ESSA](#) from the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University, in collaboration with a distinguished Technical Work Group focuses on math and reading programs.
- [Best Evidence Encyclopedia](#) provides summaries of scientific reviews produced by many authors and organizations, as well as links to the full texts of each review on a variety of programs available for students in grades K-12.
- [Child Trends](#) provides program evaluations and research syntheses on child development topics, including language and learning in early childhood and for parents and families, and addresses issues affecting disadvantaged students, such as poverty and inequality.
- The [Doing What Works Library (DWW)](#) aims to connect research to action, to help educators implement research-based practices more effectively. The library resources are based on the research recommendations from particular IES practice guides.
- The [National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE) and Regional Assistance](#) is one of four centers in the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). IES/NCEE aims to provide quick and easy access to evidence-based information to help educators and policy makers make informed decisions about education programs.
- [Results First Clearinghouse Database](#) includes numerous searchable databases and provides ratings.
- The [What Works Clearinghouse](#) reviews the existing research on different *programs*, *products*, *practices*, and *policies* in education with the *goal* of providing educators with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions. WWC focuses on the results from *high-quality research* to answer the question "What works in education?"

[Ask a Regional Educational Laboratory](#) is a free reference desk service for LEAs and schools; provides references and summaries of research tailored for topics requested.

Note: This is not an exhaustive list. LEAs can utilize other reputable databases and identify other practices that are supported by studies/research.

Fostering Innovation

Georgia is unique in that school districts are provided with flexibility from state mandates in exchange for greater accountability through performance contracts. This flexibility affords districts the opportunity to innovate and develop practices to increase student achievement.

The ESSA allows for this innovation by demonstrating a rationale. Districts and schools are allowed to utilize federal funds – except for 1003 funding – to support practices that are not proven but based on a strong rationale via a logic model and data set that can be tracked to show gains over time.

Questions to Consider
- *What evidence support the identified interventions?*
- *If 1003 funds are used, do the interventions meet the strong, moderate, or promising evidence federal thresholds for being evidence-based?*
- *Are you using research to select your intervention instead of preselecting an intervention and looking for evidence to justify?*
- *If an intervention is identified as "Demonstrating Rationale," what is your logic model and what data points will you use to track its effectiveness?*

Supporting Resources
- [Overview of the Four Categories of Evidence](#) (CA DOE)
- [Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence](#) (ED)
- [The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Content](#) (National Implementation Research Network)
- [LEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions](#)*(West Ed)*
- [Intervention Evidence Review](#) *(West Ed)*
- [Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions](#) (West Ed)

Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement's Problem-Solving Cycle

Steps 3 & 4 | Plan Implementation & Implement Plan

Just because an intervention is supported by research does not mean it will automatically impact achievement at the local district or school level. Implementing interventions with fidelity is critical.

To achieve this, develop a team to plan and carry out the implementation:

- Identify roles and responsibilities of those implementing the intervention;
- Develop a team who will understand deeply the intervention and of best ways to implement it;
- Develop the implementation timeline;
- Identify resources and supports needed for the implementation of the intervention; and
- Develop a set of information to be regularly reviewed to track the implementation.

Carry out the plan to implement the promising solutions, making real-time adjustments where/when needed:

- Collect information to monitor the quality of supports being provided for the intervention;
- Consider what additional information is needed to determine if intervention is working;
- Assess the degree to which the implementation plan is being followed;
- Identify ways to break down barriers; and
- Build capacity of others to facilitate the improvement process now and in the future.

Questions to Consider
- *Do interventions selected align to identified local needs and strategic priorities?*
- *Have goals for successful implementation been established?*
- *Do stakeholders understand the purpose of the intervention and what you are trying to achieve? Is there buy-in?*
- *What will good implementation look like?*
- *Are action steps clearly defined?*
- *How will implementation be locally monitored?*
- *Do staff have the training, support, and resources to be successful?*
- *What's the local communication plan and feedback loop?*

Supporting Resources
- [Evidence-Based Improvement: A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA](#) (WestEd) This guide provides an initial set of tools to help school districts understand and plan for implementing evidence-based improvement strategies.
- [National Implementation Research Network AI Hub](#) (SISEP)

Step 5 | Examine Progress

Determine whether the implementation of the promising solutions is meeting the originally identified needs of the school:

- Determine if the staff can formally study the effects of the intervention to share with others in the field;
- Monitor implementation and progress against defined goals;
- Assess the degree to which the implementation plan is being followed;
- Identify and track progress and performance;
- Develop a plan for how knowledge about the intervention will be shared with others; and
- Use the evidence to determine whether the intervention should continue as is, be modified, or be discontinued.

Questions to Consider
- *What data will we use to track trends to see if specific interventions are working?*
- *How often will progress be measured or examined?*
- *What barriers are impeding the success of intervention? How can those be addressed?*
- *How will successful interventions be supported and sustain? How do you build capacity?*
- *How will you modify or discontinue a struggling intervention?*

Supporting Resources
- RTI Action Network: Treatment Integrity Protocols
- RTI Action Network: Create Your Implementation Blueprint, Stage 4: Full Implementation

Utilizing Higher Education Institutions

Georgia's P-20 Collaboratives exist to strengthen the partnership between higher education and K-12 education. These regional groups meet regularly basis and can provide a conduit to support the selection, implementation and action research of evidence-based practices.

Specifically, P-20s focus on fostering:

- **Research-practitioner partnerships**: Study practices by collecting and analyzing data during the implementation of evidence-based interventions.
- **Professional learning:** Unite theory, research, and practice through collaborative professional learning communities that come together to review ideas about how to improve schools and student learning opportunities.

Questions to Consider
- *How can local institutes of higher education be involved in the selection and support of evidence-based practices?*
- *How can ESSA be an opportunity to form stronger partnerships with higher education?*
- *How can professors be invited into the district to provide direct support to teachers and leaders?*
- *How can the connection between theory and practice be strengthened?*

Supporting Resources
- [List of local P-20 Collaboratives and their contacts](#)

Requirements for Federal Programs | ESSA & IDEA

1.) When will the GaDOE review the evidence-base of our interventions?

With support and input from its Federal Programs Workgroup, new tools and resources to document LEAs' evidence-based interventions will continue to be developed by the GaDOE within the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and the Consolidated Applications.   Until the GaDOE builds these supports, which should be established and operational for FY20, LEAs should anticipate their required evidence-based interventions to be documented for review during FY19 in the following ways:

- In the Consolidated Application, the general assurances that each LEA acknowledges will include a specific reference to the required use of evidence-based interventions.
- LEAs must specify in the budget line item description whether the strategy/intervention is supported by a strong, moderate, or promising evidence base or demonstrates a rationale that is documented by a logic model on file with the LEA. This requirement applies to these budget function codes: 1000, 2100, 2210, 2213, 2400, 2900.
- Documentation of the evidence base of interventions must be on file at the LEA and will be reviewed during the cross-functional monitoring process. The GaDOE has provided an optional set of templates that LEAs may use to collect and maintain their evidence-base documentation (see 'Supporting Resources' below).
- Additionally, LEAs may provide specific detail in budget line item descriptions to cite the evidence base for the funded interventions.
- In reviewing the evidence base of an intervention, the GaDOE federal programs will consistently look to the LEAs' reference and support for the evidence base through the following sources:
    - ESSA Definition of Evidence-Based
    - Program Specific Non-Regulatory Guidance
    - US ED Non-Regulatory Guidance: Strengthening Education Investments

2.) Must all purchases with federal funds be evidence-based?

Yes, both the ESSA and the IDEA state that interventions supported with federal funds must be evidence-based. The earlier chart, presented again here, shares the level of evidence required by program.

Federal Funding Source	Level of Evidence Required
Title I, Part A 1003 funds	Interventions applied under Title I, Part A Section 1003 (School Improvement) are required to have strong, moderate, or promising evidence to support them.
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All other federal programs under Titles I–V; Homeless Education	Interventions can fall into any of the four categories.

Federal programs being **consolidated** with other federal, state, and local funds in a Title I **school level** schoolwide program	Federal funds consolidated in this manner at the school level lose their identity and, therefore, interventions will not *require* documentation of an evidence-based intervention.

*Also applies to entities that LEAs support with federal funds (N&D residential facilities with schools onsite, GNETS, private school equitable services, etc.)

The GaDOE also realizes that certain expenditures do not require an evidence base (program administration, recruitment, personnel benefits, etc.)

Establishing an evidence-based Intervention often applies to strategies and interventions (software, class size reduction, reading programs, instructional coaches, professional learning, etc.).

3.) *Is a logic model required for each intervention selected for implementation that does not have a strong, moderate, or promising evidence-base?*

Yes, and the GaDOE has created a sample logic model template that LEAs may use to guide and document their decision-making and intervention implementation plans for this level of intervention.

Supporting Resources
- Sample Logic Model (GaDOE)
- Sample Optional Planning Template (GaDOE)

Committed to Service & Support

For questions or comments about this guidance, reach out to us at: federalprograms@doe.k12.ga.us