

Every Student Succeeds Act Evidence Requirements Across Federal Programs



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The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) specifies four tiers of evidence related to the effects of educational interventions, programs, strategies, and practices on educational outcomes.

Criteria for the ESSA Tiers of Evidence			
Strong Evidence (Tier 1)	Moderate Evidence (Tier 2)	Promising Evidence (Tier 3)	Demonstrates a Rationale (Tier 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-designed and implemented experimental study Significant favorable effect on relevant outcome No overriding negative effects from causal studies Large, multisite sample^a Overlaps with student population and setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-designed and implemented quasi-experimental design (QED) or randomized controlled trial (RCT) with high attrition Significant favorable effect on relevant outcome No overriding negative effects from causal studies Large, multisite sample Overlaps with student population or setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-designed and implemented correlational study or well-designed and implemented RCT or QED without a large/multisite sample Statistical controls for selection bias Significant favorable effect on relevant outcome No overriding negative effects from causal studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-specified logic model An effort to study the effects currently or soon to be under way

^a A large sample is 350 or more students. A multisite sample is more than one school. Multiple studies can be combined to meet the large and multisite sample requirements as long as all studies meet the other requirements and examine the effects of an intervention on the same outcome domain.

The federal Department of Education includes these evidence tiers in the criteria for several federal title and grant programs that qualify for federal funds. The following table provides detailed ESSA evidence requirements for these programs.

Federal Program	Evidence Requirement(s)
Title I, Section 1003: School Improvement	Minimum of 1 intervention meets Tier I, II, or III
Title I, Part A: Schoolwide/Targeted Assistance	External providers must have expertise in using evidence-based practices (EBPs) (Tiers I, II, III IV)
Title II, Part A: Effective Instruction	Some requirements for Tier I, II, III, or IV, where evidence is reasonably available (e.g., professional development, induction, and mentoring)
Title IV, Part A: Student Support Grant	Some requirements for Tier I, II, III, or IV, where evidence is reasonably available
Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers	Tier I, II, III, or IV evidence, when deemed appropriate
Title IV, Part D: Magnet School Assistance	Competitive preference is given for proposals with evidence-based activities (Tier I, II, III, or IV)
Title IV, Part F: Education Innovation	Includes program-specific evidence requirements
Title IV, Part F: National Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promise Neighborhoods: Some requirements and competitive preference for (Tier I, II, III, or IV) • Full-Service Community Schools: Competitive preference for Tiers I to IV
Perkins V (Perkins ACT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development for career and technical education (CTE) must be EBPs • Title I Innovation for CTE proposal must include EBPs