In December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act as the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. A major component of ESSA, in ensuring students eligible for Title I services receive high quality instruction and the opportunity to raise their academic achievement, is that schools leverage evidence-based practices.

The purpose of this guidance document is to define evidence-based practice, support schools in choosing appropriate practices that meet the needs of their students, and to provide resources related to evidence-based practices being implemented in Title I schools across the country.

Section 8101(21)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act defines “evidence-based” as an activity, strategy or intervention that:

1. demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on –
   a. strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;
   b. moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or
   c. promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or
2. 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
3. includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

ESSA has defined four levels of evidence-based practices. For Title I Schools, practices that meet the standards of any of the four levels may be used. For schools identified for Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement (formerly Priority or Focus Schools), all practices being incorporated must fall within the strong, moderate or promising levels.
The four levels of evidence are defined as:

**Strong Evidence** - To be supported by strong evidence, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (e.g., a randomized control trial) on the intervention. To provide strong evidence, the study should:

1. Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome;
2. Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on the same intervention in other studies;
3. Have a large sample and a multi-site sample; and
4. Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served) AND settings (e.g., rural, urban) proposed to receive the intervention.

**Moderate Evidence** - To be supported by moderate evidence, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study on the intervention. A study is considered quasi-experimental if it estimates the causal impact of an intervention on a target population. Quasi-experimental studies lack random assignment to treatment or control groups. Additionally, to provide moderate evidence, the study should:

1. Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome;
2. Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on that intervention from other findings in studies with the equivalent quality for making causal inferences;
3. Have a large sample and a multi-site sample; and
4. Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served) OR settings (e.g., rural, urban) proposed to receive the intervention.

**Promising Evidence** - To be supported by promising evidence, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias on the intervention. A correlational study is considered to be “well-designed and well-implemented” if it uses sampling and/or analytic methods to reduce or account for differences between the intervention group and a comparison group. Additionally, to provide promising evidence, the study should:

1. Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome; and
2. Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on that intervention from findings in studies with the equivalent quality for making causal inferences.
**New Hampshire State Guidance on Evidence-Based Practice**

**Demonstrates a Rationale** - To demonstrate a rationale, the intervention should include:

1) A well-specified logic model that is informed by research or an evaluation that suggests how the intervention is likely to improve relevant outcomes; and
2) An effort to study the effects of the intervention, ideally producing promising evidence or higher, that will happen as part of the intervention or is underway elsewhere (e.g., this could mean another SEA, LEA, or research organization is studying the intervention elsewhere), to inform stakeholders about the success of that intervention.

**Relevance for the Field**

The New Hampshire Department of Education is creating a non-exhaustive list of evidence-based practices in order to support schools as they utilize their needs assessments, draft their Title I Plans, and prepare to implement practices that will best support increases in student achievement. This list will be forthcoming and we ask that in partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Education, LEAs provide any relevant information related to the practices you are implementing with fidelity. Specifically, we are looking for evidence-based practices that you have implemented that may be included in the non-exhaustive list.

**Vetting Local Practices**

New Hampshire has a strong tradition of innovating in education. It is also a belief that local educators and communities know their students best and know which practices will be most effective in supporting increased student achievement. Consequently, the non-exhaustive list of evidence-based practices is just that, non-exhaustive. Because local initiatives and innovations are important, a process has been devised to vet local practices to assist LEA's in determining if the practices meet the standards set forth in ESSA.

Any LEA or school implementing a practice that is not included in the state’s non-exhaustive list of evidence-based practices may go through the following process:

- Step 1 – Complete the “Local Practices Vetting Form” (Appendix A), and submit it to your Title I Education Consultant.

- Step 2 – Receive technical assistance from the Title I office regarding the practice and additional support in understanding the levels of evidence.

**Demonstrating a Rationale**

A practice that *demonstrates a rationale* has the weakest threshold from a scientific standpoint, but the New Hampshire Department of Education believes that local innovations are a key to living our “First in the Nation” vision. After all, if an educator or leader has a great idea, is able to present a logic model for an educational improvement that will increase achievement, and has the will to conduct a study about the use of a practice in their LEA/school, then that local innovation should be honored.
It is important to note, however, that according to ESSA, schools who are identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement, or for Targeted Support and Improvement, are not allowed to use practices that fall into this category.

Fortunately, as LEAs and schools go through the process of studying such practices and in building an evidence base that is scientifically proven to improve student achievement, such practices may eventually be added to the state’s non-exhaustive list of evidence-based practices.

**Resources**

The New Hampshire Department of Education believes that the following resources will provide further guidance to LEAs and schools as they begin to study and implement the use of evidence-based practices in their own local context.

- Evidence for ESSA – [www.evidenceforessa.org](http://www.evidenceforessa.org)
- Best Evidence Encyclopedia – [https://bestevidence.org](https://bestevidence.org)
- American Institute of Research (AIR) –
  - [http://www.intensiveintervention.org/](http://www.intensiveintervention.org/)
- New Hampshire Department of Education – Non-Exhaustive List of Evidence-Based Practices – (under construction)