

Q: What does ESSA recognize as evidence?

A: The law acknowledges that evidence comes in multiple forms and that highly rigorous studies are not available for all types of interventions. As a result, it specifies four levels of evidence and encourages states and districts to use the most rigorous type of evidence available.

The top three levels require findings of a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes:

- Level 1 – Strong evidence: At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental (i.e. randomized) study.
- Level 2 – Moderate evidence: At least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental (i.e. matched control group) study.
- Level 3 – Promising evidence: At least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias.

The fourth level is useful when the research base on a particular type of intervention is not well-developed and few or no rigorous studies are available. It consists of interventions that are developing and promising but do not yet have evidence qualifying for the top three levels.

- **Level 4 – Evidence-building and under evaluation:**
 - o Demonstrates rationale based on high-quality research or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes;
 - o Includes **ongoing efforts to examine the effects** of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

Additionally, the What Works Clearinghouse has curriculum etc. that meets the ESSA tiers of evidence: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/essa>

Wallace published report in 2019 on how afterschool and summer programs meet the evidence based requirements:

- <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/afterschool-programs-a-review-of-evidence-under-the-every-student-succeeds-act.aspx>
- <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/investing-in-successful-summer-programs-essa-review.aspx>