# ADE Logo Evidence-Based Improvement and Decision Making

# ESSA Guidance to Arizona LEAs

# Definition:

Evidence-based improvement, as outlined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, requires states, LEAs, and schools to base improvement efforts on those strategies, programs, and interventions which have a solid evidence-base. Four levels of evidence comprise this concept:

1. Strong evidence – demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented study.
2. Moderate evidence – demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, based on at least on well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study.
3. Promising evidence – demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias.
4. Demonstrates a rationale – demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of the intervention.

The movement to evidenced-based improvement from scientifically-based research allows states and schools more flexibility in choosing interventions; however, it also brings more local responsibility. It becomes the combined responsibility of the state and the school to ensure that they align intervention efforts, at all tiers of instruction, to solid evidence.[[1]](#footnote-1) Additionally, when strong evidence does not exist, it becomes imperative that the state, LEA, and school gather evidence to demonstrate that the intervention adds to the achievement of student outcomes.

# Funding Stream Requirements:

Different funding streams and programs require different levels of evidence-based interventions. Some allow all levels while others are limited.

1. Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Schools and Targeted Support and improvement (TSI) Schools must chose interventions which show strong, moderate, or promising evidence. “Demonstrating a Rationale” is not an allowable evidence base for our schools in school improvement.
2. Title I, Title II, and Title IV allow for all four levels of evidence.
3. Title III does not mention evidence-based interventions; rather, interventions chosen for our ELs must be “effective.” Though evidence-based interventions are not required, as a best practice, the State encourages all schools to find interventions which align to evidence-based requirements.

All LEAs and schools, when choosing interventions at the Demonstrates a Rationale level, should do so if they are likely to lead to improved student outcomes and with the understanding that they will be required to gather evidence during the first year of implementation with the intent to move the intervention into one of the higher levels. LEAs and schools should not plan on using interventions in the lowest tier for multiple years. If the intervention is effective, then gathering evidence, via at minimum a well-designed correlational study, on its effectiveness will validate the intervention and allow the state to share the practices with other LEAs and schools across the state.

1. In ESSA, the term “intervention” is used broadly to encompass strategies, activities, programs, and interventions at all tiers of instruction. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)