

Understanding ESSA Evidence



In 2015, as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Congress passed and the President enacted the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind. ESSA encourages local and state educational agencies and schools to place a strong emphasis on evidence-based interventions, strategies, or approaches when purchasing and adopting solutions and services.

Within the law, evidence-based solutions are described as programs showing evidence of producing positive results on student outcomes. Specifically, the type of evidence backed by formal research and studies.

ESSA defines four tiers of evidence:

Tier 1—Strong:

Supported by one or more experimental studies.

Tier 2—Moderate:

Supported by one or more quasi-experimental studies.

Tier 3—Promising:

Supported by one or more correlational studies.

Tier 4—Demonstrates a Rationale:

Practices that have a logic model, are supported by research, and have some effort of study underway.

Stepping Stones to Literacy

Stepping Stones to Literacy is an effective, research-based program for early learners who have been identified as at risk for reading failure. **Stepping Stones to Literacy's** proven, research-based principles help below-benchmark readers in PreK, 1st and 2nd grades learn foundational skills for reading fluency and build basic phonemic awareness skills through listening, letter naming, phonological awareness, and serial processing. Students learn the crucial skills necessary for reading fluency and come away with a framework for reading comprehension that can be applied to all content areas.

TIER
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STRONG Criteria as Defined by ESSA

- Based on strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study
- Demonstrates a strong and measured impact on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes

How Stepping Stones to Literacy Meets the Strong Criteria

- ✓ What Works Clearinghouse confirmed statistically significant positive effects of **Stepping Stones to Literacy** on all outcomes.
- ✓ The Nelson, Benner, & Gonzalez (2005) study* findings are based on the performance of **Stepping Stones to Literacy** students and comparison students on the following outcome measures:
 - Three measures of phonological awareness (Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP); Phonological Awareness subtest and *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS®); Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Initial Sound Fluency subtests).
 - One measure of letter knowledge (DIBELS: Letter Naming Fluency subtest).
 - One measure of phonics (DIBELS: Nonsense Words Fluency subtest).



RESEARCH EVIDENCE & RESULTS

Published Studies: Nelson, J. R., Benner, G. J., & Gonzalez, J. (2005). An investigation of the effects of a prereading intervention on the early literacy skills of children at risk of emotional disturbance and reading problems. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 13(1), 3–12.

Research Reviews: [What Works Clearinghouse](#)



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