

THE READING HORIZONS ROAD TO ESSA APPROVAL

by Sarah McMullin, J.D.

WHAT IS ESSA?

In 2015, the era of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) officially ended, replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA is a reauthorization of the decades-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA.)¹ Approving ESSA was the congressional response to schools and educators bucking the prescriptive requirements and heavy focus on standardized testing of NCLB.²

ESSA reduces the role of the federal government in education policy and hands much of that responsibility back to the individual states. This return to state-centric education funding distribution gives states the broad ability to decide how to rate school performance and how to best spend federal money to help struggling schools.

The act was approved by both chambers of Congress with overwhelming support from both political parties.³

ESSA RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

An important shift in ESSA legislation is the requirement that states use “evidence-based interventions,” replacing the NCLB requirement of “scientifically-based research” in choosing curriculum.⁴ The Department of Education defines “evidence-based” in section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA as:

an activity, strategy, or intervention that –

(i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on –

- (I) strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;
- (II) moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasiexperimental study; or
- (III) promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or

(ii)

- (I) 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
- (II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

¹ Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). (n.d.). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <https://www.ed.gov/esea>

² With Passage of Every Student Succeeds Act, Life After NCLB Begins. (2016, February 16). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <http://neatoday.org/2015/12/09/every-student-succeeds-act/>

³ FINAL VOTE RESULTS FOR ROLL CALL 665. (2015, December 02). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2015/roll665.xml>

⁴ Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments. (2016, September 16). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceusesinvestment.pdf>

EVIDENCE-BASED AT THE STATE LEVEL

ESSA approval of evidence intended to help states, districts, and schools adopt curriculum quickly without the need for an on-site research team combing through complicated studies. In practice, curriculum adoption and research evaluation remain complex.

The individual ESSA plans for each state have variations on how the “evidence-based” requirement will be met. For example, Arizona is choosing a localized approach, focusing on research that best aligns with the identified needs of their students.⁵ Ohio’s approved ESSA plan calls for a state-run research clearinghouse which will evaluate research studies based on state needs, best practices, and ESSA guidelines.⁶ The Indiana Department of Education will only accept research demonstrating efficacy for students in Indiana.⁷

READING HORIZONS AND ESSA

Reading Horizons is committed to providing the best possible reading instruction and intervention for every student. As states continue to work through implementation of their approved ESSA plans, Reading Horizons will continue to build on the research that clearly demonstrates the efficacy of the method.

The state office of education in Utah funded one of the company’s most robust studies. It was conducted at Iron Springs Elementary School by a neutral third-party research entity. This multi-site study tracked the progress of hundreds of students and the fidelity of program implementation over the course of three years. Students who received Reading Horizons instruction performed higher than those who did not. To read the full study, visit <https://www.readinghorizons.com/research/iron-springs-elementary-school>

ESSA research is broken into four tiers: Strong Evidence, Moderate Evidence, Promising Evidence, and Demonstrates a Rationale. Each tier represents a different level of substantiation regarding the design, implementation, and type of study. Reading Horizons has a well-developed plan to submit appropriate research for each of the four tiers.

The company is grateful to see a focus on research and scientific evidence for efficacy on a national level, especially as it relates to implementation. Better data leads to better decision making and a better educational experience for students nationwide.

To review our existing studies, visit www.readinghorizons.com/research.

⁵ Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, Arizona Submission. (2017, March). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=591c753c3217e120c012fda7>

⁶ Revised State Template for the Consolidated State Plan The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, Ohio Submission. (2018, January 16). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-ESSA/OH_ESSA_SUBMISSION.pdf.aspx

⁷ State Template for the Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, Indiana Submission. (2017, September 08). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/essa/essa-plan-revisions.pdf>