EVIDENCE-BASED IMPROVEMENT

A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA

TOOL 6:   
COMPARING EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

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Suggested citation: Hale, S., Dunn, L., Filby, N, Rice, J., & Van Houten, L. (2017). *Evidence-based improvement: A guide for states to strengthen their frameworks and supports aligned to the evidence requirements of ESSA—Tool 6: Comparing evidence-based interventions*. San Francisco: WestEd

## Feedback

We welcome your feedback. This tool and the related guide are a first generation set of materials to help states and districts implement ESSA; we hope to revise and improve them based on use in the field. Suggestions of other resources are welcome, as are requests to develop new tools to fill gaps in the field. Access the full guide at: [http://www.wested.org/resources/evidence-based-improvement-essa-guide-for-states](http://www.wested.org/resources/evidence-based-improvement-essa-guide-for-states%20)

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# **Tool 6:** Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions

### Purpose

This tool is to be used to compare how well different evidence-based interventions, strategies, policies, practices, or programs (collectively referred to, in this tool, as interventions) that target the same problem or issue are aligned with the context of a specific state, district, or school.

**This tool can be used after completing tool 5, or without completing tool 5 if users already have sufficient information about the levels of evidence for specific interventions under consideration for selection.**

### Outcome

Completing the tool provides an indication of the degree to which a given intervention aligns with the state’s, district’s, or school’s specific context. Reviewing this information will help in the selection of an evidence-based intervention.

### Materials

Gather the results from tool 5 (Intervention Evidence Review), as well as information about each intervention’s training and implementation requirements and costs. Also, gather any information about the context of your educational setting (e.g., the nature of any currently implemented school-improvement interventions; numbers of district or school staff).

### Who Should Be Involved

Staff who are charged with selecting evidence-based interventions for districts or schools should work together to use this tool. Those involved should have substantive knowledge of the issues and outcomes that potential interventions are intended to address, including the educational setting(s) where the interventions would be implemented (e.g., knowledge of the targeted grade levels and student populations). Staff, consultants, or technical assistance providers who have a background in quantitative research methods should assist with completion of the tool. Ideally, those who participated in reviewing the research studies on the interventions (using tool 5) should participate in this discussion.

### Time

If the user is comparing three different interventions, set aside at least 2 hours for an individual or a small group to complete the tool for a given intervention. Provide an additional 3 to 4 hours for the full group to discuss and compare the different interventions, based on their completion of the tool. The time required for both the individual intervention reviews and the group discussion will increase if more than three interventions are being compared.

### Instructions Overview (detailed instructions are provided with each step)

* Step 1: Get organized, including identifying roles and responsibilities, gathering materials, establishing a schedule, and reviewing documentation.
* Step 2: Take stock of the most pressing problems or issues in your education setting, the outcomes that you would like to achieve, and possible interventions to help achieve those outcomes.
* Step 3: Review available information to better understand how well each evidence-based intervention under consideration would fit into the context of your educational setting
* Step 4: Review available information to determine the costs of implementing the interventions under consideration in your educational setting.
* Step 5: Discuss the feasibility of selecting and implementing each intervention in your educational setting, and the advantages and disadvantages of each intervention as it pertains to your educational context.

### Leading the Conversation

* The conversation among stakeholders using this tool should revolve around which evidence-based interventions best fit the contexts of their particular education environments. After the tool is completed, the group may not yet have decided on which intervention(s) to implement, but it should have narrowed down the options.

### Modifications or Variations

* If your team has used tool 5, it may be possible to skip parts of steps 1 and 2. Review these steps carefully to see what should be repeated, reviewed, or possibly skipped.
* In certain cases, there may be a large number of interventions that target the outcome of interest, whereas, in other cases, there may be fewer such interventions. In situation where there are many interventions, users of this tool may want to first group the interventions into different categories (e.g., classroom-focused versus whole-school, or delivered by an instructor versus delivered online) in order to facilitate decision-making.
* Questions in this tool are designed to be appropriate for a broad array of educational contexts. Some may be skipped or refined, or questions may be added, to fit a specific context.
* It may not be practical or appropriate for all team members to participate in each step or in all parts of a step. In step 1, for example, the organizers or facilitators might determine who will be involved and develop the meeting schedule, but the entire team might work together on gathering and reviewing documentation. Organizers and facilitators will have to determine what works best for their participants in their setting.

STEP 1: Get Organized

Take time to get organized and build your knowledge base by gathering necessary materials and building a well-informed team to complete subsequent steps. Things to consider:

**Who is involved?** Identify which departments or programs should be represented; then identify the individuals who will participate in this work. What are their respective roles and responsibilities in the group (e.g., note taker, facilitator)? The team should include individuals who have input into selecting the evidence-based interventions, and stakeholders who have knowledge of the problems, issues, and context of the educational setting; other interventions being implemented in the educational setting; the current professional development requirements placed on the staff in the educational setting; and any funding available for (where applicable) purchasing and implementing a new intervention. The team should also include one or more experts in quantitative research methods.

| Department  or Program | Name | Contact Information | Role/Responsibility |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**What do we need to know?** Gather and organize documents and other materials that provide data about or describe the most pressing problems or issues in your state, district, or school. These materials could include results from completed needs assessments or gap analyses and from logic models, as well as graphics that depict problems or issues along with their effects and possible causes. Also, include documentation that summarizes other interventions that are currently being implemented in the educational setting and the current professional development requirements placed on staff. Reviewing this documentation will ensure that all participants have strong foundational knowledge of the problems, desired outcomes, and interventions under consideration.

| Document or Material  (title, description, source) | Why It Is Important  (what everyone should know) |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Attend to logistics.** What will the meeting schedule be? Where will you meet? What materials do you need (e.g., chart paper, sticky notes)?

Notes

STEP 2: Take Stock of Problems or Issues

Convene the entire team, review the materials, and decide what the most pressing problems in your education setting are, in relation to the program or funding stream under consideration; the outcomes that you would like to achieve; and possible interventions to help achieve those outcomes.

**Question 1.** Think about your educational setting (state, district, or school). Based on a needs assessment or other analysis, what are the two or three most pressing problems, issues, or questions that you would like addressed in relation to the program or funding stream under consideration?

**Question 2.** Based on the pressing problems, issues, or questions that you would like addressed (e.g., improving school engagement among middle school students), what specific outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve, and for whom?

**Question 3.** What are some of the interventions currently in place in your state or district, and/or that you might consider for implementation, that focus on improving the specific outcome(s) that you are hoping to change for your population?

Select one or more possible interventions that attempt to address the problem or issue and to achieve the targeted outcomes, and write the intervention(s) in the space below. Transfer the interventions to the table in step 3

STEP 3: Determine Level of Evidence and Alignment with Context

Convene the entire team to assess the similarity of your educational setting, and of the population(s) of interest, to those used in the research on the intervention(s) selected in step 2. Also, consider if the intervention(s) have already been adapted to your setting. If the team has completed tool 5, the team should refer to the completed tool as well as any other documentation on the interventions.

Convene members of the team who have the most knowledge about the context of the state, district, or school where the intervention(s) would be adopted. Contextual factors include the nature of any other interventions currently being implemented in the state, district, or school, and staff capacity (in terms of both knowledge and time). In this step, address as many questions as possible that are relevant to the interventions under consideration and to your educational setting. You may not be able to address all of the questions with the information that you have at this point. The importance of the questions in this section may vary across states, districts, or schools. Individual questions in this section may be skipped or refined as needed, or questions may be added, to fit each context.

| Question | In each column, address the question for each intervention, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed. | Intervention 1 | Intervention 2 | Intervention 3 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4 | **Name of intervention** |  |  |  |
| 5 | **Which of the following designations best describes the cumulative evidence for this intervention?** (Information from tool 5 can be used to answer this question.)  Response options: Strong, Moderate, Promising, or Demonstrates a rationale |  |  |  |
| 6 | **Which of the following designations best describes the cumulative evidence across studies for this intervention *for settings and populations that are similar to yours***? (Information from tool 5 can be used to answer this question.)  Response options: Strong, Moderate, Promising, or Demonstrates a rationale |  |  |  |
| 7 | **Given the information you have, has the intervention already been adapted for your population and/or setting?**  Response options: Yes or No  If “Yes,” go to question 9 in step 4.  If “No,” go to question 8. |  |  |  |
| 8 | **Do you have staff or consultants who will be able to adapt the intervention while preserving the core components?**  Response options: Yes or No |  |  |  |
| 9 | **What existing interventions might the proposed intervention be in direct conflict with or need to be integrated with (e.g., in terms of staffing, resources, facilities, scheduling)?** |  |  |  |
| 10 | **To what extent would the intervention fit within the known climate or culture of the state, district, or school?**  Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little |  |  |  |
| 11 | **To what extent would there be leadership support at the district or school level to ensure that the intervention would be implemented with fidelity?**  Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little |  |  |  |
| 12 | **To what extent would there be buy-in from the necessary constituents (e.g., staff, community, students, and parents) for the intervention to be implemented with fidelity?**  Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little |  |  |  |
| 13 | **To what extent does the state, district, or school have the physical infrastructure (e.g., space, technology, data systems) to fully implement, support, and sustain the intervention after funding ends?**  Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little |  |  |  |
| 14 | **To what extent does the state, district, or school have the organizational structure to fully implement, support, and sustain the intervention after funding ends?**  Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little |  |  |  |
| 15 | **To what extent would staff have the capacity and time required to successfully deliver and implement the intervention?**  Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little |  |  |  |
| 16 | **To what extent would staff have the time required and capacity to continually monitor and collect data on implementation and outcomes of the intervention?**  Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little |  |  |  |
| 17 | **If applicable, will the partners or other outside supports that are necessary for implementation of the intervention be committed and available for the duration?**  Response options: Yes, No, N/A |  |  |  |

STEP 4: Estimate Needed Resources

Convene members of the team who have the most knowledge about the costs of the given intervention(s) as well as knowledge of the time required to implement the intervention(s)—both in the start-up phase and in the long term, including requirements for staff training. In this step, address as many questions as possible that are relevant to the intervention(s) under consideration and to your educational setting. You may not be able to address all of the questions with the information that you have at this point. The importance of the questions in this section may vary across states, districts, or schools. Individual questions in this section may be skipped or refined as needed, or questions may be added, to fit each context.

| Question | In each column, address the question for each intervention, make notes in the columns if needed. | Intervention 1 | Intervention 2 | Intervention 3 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 18 | **How much time would be required for staff training, in terms of hours or days?** |  |  |  |
| 19 | **What is the cost (in dollars) of start-up materials?** |  |  |  |
| 20 | **What is the cost (in dollars) of start-up equipment?** |  |  |  |
| 21 | **What is the cost (in dollars) of start-up (initial) training?** |  |  |  |
| 22 | **What are other start-up (initial) implementation costs (in dollars)?** |  |  |  |
| 23 | **Add values in rows 19 through 22. These are the total start-up implementation costs.** |  |  |  |
| 24 | **What are the estimated annual costs of the intervention** **after start-up?** |  |  |  |

STEP 5: Summarize

Convene the entire team and discuss the feasibility of selecting and implementing each intervention in your educational setting. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each intervention? What have you learned about the targeted interventions, based on the use of this tool? The response can include summarizing the evidence base and the degree to which the interventions align with the specific context of your state, district, or school.

Notes