### The Evidence Provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

A key aspect of ESSA is its commitment to the use of evidence to drive better outcomes for students. Implemented well, the evidence-based provisions can both improve student outcomes and increase the return on education investments, as more resources are spent on programs and practices likely to have a positive impact. This document provides a high-level summary of the various provisions (below) and an explanation of ESSA's definition of "evidence-based" (page 2).

Required Allowed Incentivized

Must Do and May Do but May Do and Must Be May Be

#### **Required Uses**

**Evidence-Based** 

- •All school improvement plans (comprehensive and targeted) must include evidence-based interventions, aligned with results of schools' needs assessments
- •Top 3 levels of the evidence-based definition apply when using Section 1003 funds (7% set-aside)
- •The Title I <u>parent &</u>
  <u>family engagement</u>
  provisions also require
  evidence-based strategies
- •All 4 levels of evidence apply

#### **Allowable Uses**

- •States and districts choose which allowable uses they will spend their federal funds on, but under ESSA many key allowable uses must be evidence-based
- Of those, most apply only if the SEA first determines that evidence for that use is "reasonably available"
- •All 4 levels of evidence apply
- E.g., school districtfunded professional development; class size reductions; Pay for Success initiatives

# Education Innovation & Research (EIR)

Evidence-Based

- Applying for an EIR grant is optional, but all proposals must be evidence-based
- •US Dept. of Education's implementation of this tiered-evidence program will clarify what level of evidence is required to qualify for each of the 3 tiers of EIR grants

## Competitive Grants Activities

- •Applying for a competitive grant is optional, but 2 grant programs (SEED and Statewide Family Engagement Centers) apply an evidence-based requirement to some allowable uses of those grants' funds
- All 4 levels of evidence apply
- Applicants can also receive competitive preference points if their evidence falls within the top 3 levels (see box to the right)

# Evidence-Based Competitive Grants

**Priority** 

- •In 7 competitive grants, evidence-based proposals will receive competitive preference points
- Top 3 levels of evidence apply
- •The 7 grants include SEED and Statewide Family Engagement Centers and the following 5: LEARN; School Leader Recruitment and Support; Full-Service Community Schools; Promise Neighborhoods; and Supporting High-Ability Learners and Learning



### Definition of "Evidence-Based" in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ESSA's definition of "evidence-based" includes 4 levels of evidence. The top 3 levels require findings of a **statistically significant effect** on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on:

(1) Strong

 At least 1 well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (i.e., randomized)

(2) Moderate

• At least 1 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (i.e., matched)

(3) Promising

 At least 1 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias Required for school improvement plans funded by 7% set aside (Section 1003)

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Eligible for a priority under 7 competitive grants

The 4<sup>th</sup> level is designed for ideas that do not yet have an evidence base qualifying for the top 3 levels above. Given the requirement in the second bullet below to examine the effects of these ideas, this evidence-building level can be referred to as "under evaluation."

(4) "Under Evaluation"

- **Demonstrates rationale** based on high-quality research or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes
- Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention

Included for all other uses of "evidence-based"

