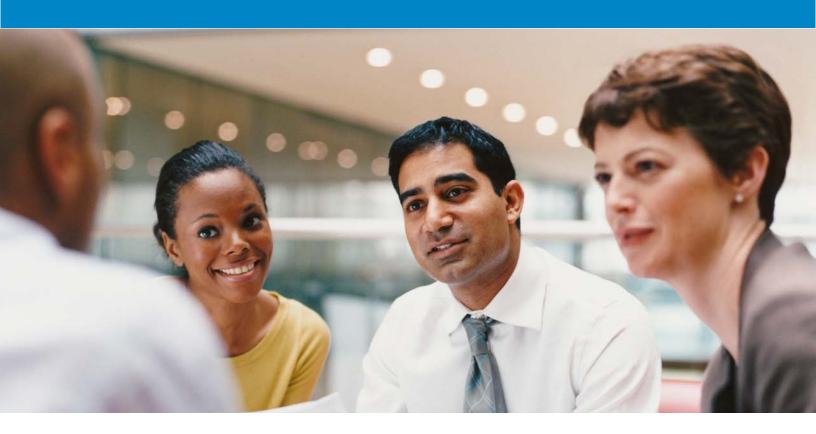# An SEA Quick-Start Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement

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Introduction

Purpose of the Self-Study Guide

The Quick-Start Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement is intended to help State Education Agencies (SEAs) begin the self-study process quickly. It is derived from the more in-depth SEA Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement which may be accessed at http://fcrr.org/essa. The name of each tool in this document, necessary for conducting the self-study and extracted from the full guide, is also linked to the tool itself for easy access. In addition, a list of individual links to the tools may be accessed at http://fcrr.org/essa. Pages referenced throughout the quick-start guide pertain to the full guide. Facilitators of the self-study process will need to familiarize themselves with the complete SEA Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement In order to effectively guide the team through the self-study process. The purpose of the guide is to help SEAs:
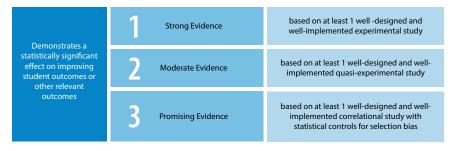
- evaluate the evidence base for interventions as they identify those to be included in the state plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as options for schools in need of comprehensive or targeted support,

- determine the interventions that have strong evidence, and are relevant and appropriate to meeting the needs of the Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and

- plan to provide resources for LEAs to help them choose the best evidence-based option(s) for schools in need of comprehensive or targeted support to include in school improvement plans.

ESSA Levels of Evidence

ESSA recognizes four levels of evidence as depicted below:

Figure 1. ESSA Levels of Evidence

Category One

Demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes	**1** Strong Evidence	based on at least 1 well -designed and well-implemented experimental study
	2 Moderate Evidence	based on at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study
	3 Promising Evidence	based on at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias

Category Two

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	**4** Demostrates a Rationale	includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention

Source: Source: Adapted from Chiefs for Change, 2016.

Conducting the Self-Study

Self-study is a process that facilitates thoughtful investigation and discussion of an issue or topic so that decisions can be made through the collaboration of a variety of stakeholders. The steps of the self-study process are below:

Figure 2. The Self-Study Process: Conducting the Self-Study

Step 1: Preparation

Select the Self-Study Team (pg. 3)	Identify team members with a variety of backgrounds and expertise	Identify a knowledgeable facilitator
Present Overview & Review Guide (pgs.11, T-2, T-3, T-10, T-1, T-15)	Facilitator explains process to team	Team reviews guide and asks questions before proceeding to ratings
Collecting and Evaluating Research (pgs. 12-18, T-3, T-4, T-11, T-15)	Team members identify an evidence-based intervention and complete *SEA Scoring Template*	Facilitator distributes completed *SEA Scoring Templates* to team
Individual Rating (pgs. 11, T-4, T-11, T-15, T-19, T-20)	Team reviews relevant data and sources of evidence to help determine ratings	Team independently rates interventions submitted by team members and those provided in the *SEA Scoring Guide*

Step 2: Discussion

Consensus Rating (pgs. T-7, T-12, T-16, T-47)	Facilitator guides the consensus rating process	Record recommendation of intervention as agreed upon by the team

Step 3: Planning

Documenting Next Steps (pgs. T-7, T-12, T-16, T-50)	Team identifies 2-3 areas where support and resources for LEAs should be developed	Complete a detailed plan for next steps based on urgency, feasibility

Quick-Start Self-Study Guide Tools

SEA Self-Study Guide Checklist – allows the facilitator and team members to track tasks to be completed in the self-study process (see pg. T-1).

SEA Self-Study Guide Checklist

Self-Study Guide Checklist - Preparation		
Task	Recruit team members which could include researchers, content area specialists, exceptional student education and English learner specialists, senior leadership, and representatives from LEAs such as district administrators, teachers and principals.	
Person Responsible	**Due Date**	**Date Completed**
State Education Agency Leadership		
Follow-up Notes/Tasks		
Task	Choose a knowledgeable facilitator such as a School Improvement Director or ESSA state plan project manager.	

SEA Facilitator's Checklist – allows the facilitator to track tasks that he/she needs to complete in the self-study process (see pg. T-10).

SEA Facilitator's Checklist

Facilitator's Checklist - Preparation		
Task	Review materials for self-study process and gather all pertinent data and evidence pertaining to the strategies and interventions.	
Due Date		**Date Completed**
Follow-up Notes/Tasks		
Task	Distribute a blank *SEA Scoring Template*, *SEA Scoring Guide*, *Appendix A*, and *Appendix B*, as well as any other relevant data or evidence to each team member. Provide a timeline for team members to review the materials.	

SEA Team Member's Checklist – allows the team members to track tasks that they need to complete in the self-study process (see pg. T-15).

SEA Team Member's Checklist

Team Member's Checklist - Preparation	
Task	Review all materials received from the facilitator.
Due Date	**Date Completed**
Follow-up Notes/Tasks	
Task	Attend team meeting and ask any questions to be sure the process is clear.
Due Date	**Date Completed**

SEA Scoring Template – allows team members to collect and evaluate evidence pertaining to an intervention, present the intervention to the team for consideration, and rate interventions that have been presented to the team for potential recommendation in the state (see pg. T-19).

SEA Scoring Template

Area (choose an area from the SEA Scoring Guide, or select your own):

Select the rating that reflects whether or not you feel this option should be included in the menu for selection by comprehensive or targeted support schools.	
Intervention:	Select the Rating:
	1 Not recommended
	2 Recommended
	3 Strongly recommended

Evidence Level:

Summary of Research:

SEA Scoring Guide – allows team members to consider a variety of interventions from five evidence-based areas related to school improvement for recommendation in their state (see page T-20).

SEA Scoring Guide

The areas chosen for the *SEA Scoring Guide* were based on those identified in the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools.* A literature review was conducted identifying interventions associated with the areas. In addition, literature was also reviewed pertaining to the systemic interventions previously required for use in schools needing improvement. **The *SEA Scoring Guide* is not meant to be an all-inclusive or recommended list of school improvement interventions, but rather contains examples of interventions identified in the practice guide that might meet the needs of schools requiring comprehensive or targeted support.** A brief heading appears before the description of each intervention that corresponds to the *SEA Voting and Consensus Rating Form* to help team members recall the gist of each intervention as they complete the rating form.

Area 1: Implementing Systemic Change

LEAs or schools select and implement a systemic intervention which affects the organizational structure of the school.

Select the rating that reflects whether or not you feel this option should be included in the menu for selection by comprehensive or targeted support schools.

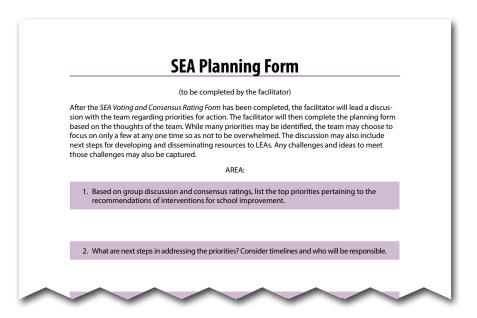**Reconstitution**   Select the Rating:

SEA Voting and Consensus Rating Form – allows the facilitator to record the voting results of the team to determine which interventions may be recommended in the state (see page T-47).

SEA Consensus Form:

NR = Not Recommended
R = Recommended
SR = Strongly Recommended

Scoring Guide Area	Consensus Rating	NR	R	SR
1. Implementing Systemic Change	Intervention 1 (reconstitution)	1	2	3
	Intervention 2 (transformation)	1	2	3
	Intervention 3 (transfer control)	1	2	3
	Intervention 4 (magnet)	1	2	3
2. Establishing Strong Leadership	Intervention 1 (principal commitment)	1	2	3
	Intervention 2 (principal behaviors)	1	2	3

SEA Planning Form – allows the facilitator to record the priorities, challenges, and timeline for production of resources to support LEAs (see pg. T-50).

SEA Planning Form

(to be completed by the facilitator)

After the *SEA Voting and Consensus Rating Form* has been completed, the facilitator will lead a discussion with the team regarding priorities for action. The facilitator will then complete the planning form based on the thoughts of the team. While many priorities may be identified, the team may choose to focus on only a few at any one time so as not to be overwhelmed. The discussion may also include next steps for developing and disseminating resources to LEAs. Any challenges and ideas to meet those challenges may also be captured.

AREA:

1. Based on group discussion and consensus ratings, list the top priorities pertaining to the recommendations of interventions for school improvement.

2. What are next steps in addressing the priorities? Consider timelines and who will be responsible.

Appendix A – allows the facilitator and team members to read information that provides additional support for each of the Scoring Guide areas (pg. A-1).

Appendix A. Annotated Bibliography

This appendix describes key references that provide additional support for each of the Scoring Guide areas.

Scoring Guide Area 1: Implementing Systemic Change

Strunk, K. O., Marsh, J. A., Hashim, A. K., & Bush-Mecenas, S. (2016). Innovation and a Return to the Status Quo A Mixed-Methods Study of School Reconstitution. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, DOI: 0162373716642517.

This study of a small set of schools that were reconstituted in an urban area (pg. 555) found that students in reconstituted schools experience sizable and significant gains in ELA during the first two years of reconstitution, but insignificant effects for math. Changes in the statewide assessment prevented these schools from being studied in subsequent years (pg. 556); however, case study data reflected that while reconstitution initially improves the student achievement at the school, the effects diminish over time (pg. 570). The authors suggest that it may be helpful for districts to maintain support in the form of funding and providing other resources for several years (pg. 571).

Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2003). Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of educational research*, *73*(2), 125-230.

The authors note that there are limitations on the overall quantity and quality of the research base; however, the effects of the comprehensive school reform model appear promising.

Appendix B – allows the facilitator and team members to read additional information pertaining to theory of action as well as view an example of a logic model (pg. B-1).

Appendix B. Theory of Action and Sample Logic Model

It is important that a strong theory of action and a logic model be in place when choosing interventions to utilize in schools needing comprehensive or targeted support. This is particularly important when using studies that fall under "demonstrates a rationale" level of evidence. A theory of action may be described as follows:

- Aligns intended theory with the realities of work within an actual organization.

- Connects strategy to the actions and relationships critical to good instruction and student learning.

- Identifies the mutual dependencies that are required to get the complex work of…improvement done.

- Grounded in research or evidence-based practice.

- Begins with a statement of a causal relationship between what I/we do and what constitutes a good result in the organization.

- High leverage for achievement and equity.

- Powerful enough to transform programs and practices.