

# 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.



**Step Up to Writing**® Fourth Edition is unparalleled writing instruction designed for learners of all levels and types in **grades K–12**. From the most fragile writers to those who are gifted and talented, **Step Up to Writing** offers content and strategies to meet students at their level of need and move them forward.

Implementing **Step Up to Writing** in every grade establishes a common writing language across grade levels and content areas. The program provides:

- Multimodal instruction/differentiation
- Flexible implementation options
- Compatibility with any core curriculum
- Support for writing across all content areas

## TIER 4 DEMONSTRATES A RATIONALE Criteria as Defined by ESSA

## How Step Up to Writing Demonstrates a Rationale

- 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
- Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention ideally producing promising evidence

- ✓ Forty eighth grade students with and without learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom participated in an adapted **Step Up to Writing** (Auman, 2002) intervention program.
- ✓ The intervention targeted expository essays and composing topic, detail, transitional, and concluding sentences.
- ✓ A repeated-measures ANOVA indicated that students with and without disabilities made significant improvements in expository writing skills as measured on the state's criterion reference test for written expression.

\*Study used for ESSA classification: Cihak, D. F., & Castle, K. (2011). Improving expository writing skills with explicit and strategy instructional methods in inclusive middle school classrooms. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26(3), 106-113.

## Evidence Summary

The purpose of the Cihak & Castle (2011) study was to examine the effects of an adapted **Step Up to Writing** (Auman, 2002) program for classroom practice for students with and without learning disabilities. Improvements in the quality of writing emerged after students received the writing intervention. Overall, students wrote expository essays that were qualitatively better, which were generally free from mechanical errors and language misuse.

This study confirmed previous studies that explicit and strategy instructional methods successfully improved the written expression of students with learning disabilities. Moreover, this study extends previous research by investigating large-scale classroom practices that included students with and without learning disabilities in an inclusive general education classroom.

Key findings from the study include:

- At the onset of the study, no students with learning disabilities performed competent writing skills, according to the writing assessment scoring rubric. Moreover, 67 percent of students without learning disabilities demonstrated competency on the writing assessment.
- After the writing intervention, 84 percent of students with learning disabilities and 100 percent of students without learning disabilities demonstrated expository writing competency.
- Additionally, students were observed applying the expository writing skills and strategies to other assignments and in other classes.

### With Implementation of **Step Up to Writing**

