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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category One</th>
<th>Category Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Strong Evidence</td>
<td>4 Demonstrates a Rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Moderate Evidence</td>
<td>Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Promising Evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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](image)

**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](image)
**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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Review all materials received from the facilitator.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due Date</td>
<td>Date Completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow-up Notes/Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Attend team meeting and ask any questions to be sure the process is clear.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due Date</td>
<td>Date Completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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).

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention:</th>
<th>Select the Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Not recommended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Recommended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Strongly recommended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reconstitution</th>
<th>Select the Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Evidence Level:** Moderate

**Summary of Research:**

One quasi-experimental study found improved student achievement in the first year of the reconstitution but smaller impacts in subsequent years. Over time, it does not seem that the positive impact on student achievement is sustained; however, it may be due to the withdrawal of support such as professional development that occurred in the years following the reconstitution.

**Additional Information Regarding Relevance and Appropriateness:**

Student achievement data; school improvement plans for comprehensive and targeted support schools; student data from schools that have reconstituted in the past.

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Guide Area</th>
<th>Consensus Rating</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>SR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Implementing Systemic Change</td>
<td>Intervention 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(reconstitution)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(transformation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(transfer control)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(magnet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Establishing Strong Leadership</td>
<td>Intervention 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(principal commitment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intervention 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(principal behaviors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SEA Planning Form** – allows the facilitator to record the priorities, challenges, and timeline for production of resources to support LEAs (see pg. T-50).

**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**


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).


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.

Adapted from Instructional Rounds in Education – Elizabeth A. City, Richard F. Elmore, Sarah E. Fiarman and Lee Teitel, 2009

The development of a theory of action may help educators consider the rationale behind their choice of interventions and convey the thinking behind the decisions they make. A general theory of action can be the basis for the creation of a more specific logic model.

Logic models are helpful in planning and monitoring evaluations of interventions. They can guide those working with the interventions develop a clear and complete understanding of the activities involved in the intervention along with the intended outcomes. They can also help those involved in the implementation of the intervention to think through the details of implementation systematically. In addition, a logic model may help educators formulate evaluation questions and ensure that the general evaluation questions are clear, specific, and actionable. An example of a logic model developed by the Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific is below: