



## EVIDENCE ADVOCACY CENTER

# The Need for an Educational Evidence Base: An Overview of the Evidence Advocacy Center

by Douglas Carnine

## The Need to Establish Evidence as the Basis of a Professional Education System

Education in the United States is facing an existential crisis. Education has long struggled to define itself, beset by fundamental professional [deficiencies](#), conflicting [ideologies](#), and flawed belief systems. Little agreement exists on the core values of education beyond preparing our youngest citizens for the future. Educators can't develop valid knowledge about what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach without evidence of effectiveness (see the Evidence Advocacy Center's [Guide to Evidence](#)). When instructional designs, implementation principles, and leadership competencies are not informed by evidence of effectiveness, the harm foisted on millions is pernicious and heartbreaking, particularly for the most marginalized and economically-disadvantaged students. In 2022 57% of American Indian students, 56% of Black students, 50% of Hispanic students, and 27% of white students left the fourth grade unable to read at even a basic level.<sup>1</sup> Yet research indicates that more than 90% of all students could learn to read if they had access to teachers who employed scientifically-based reading instruction.<sup>2</sup> While the poor outcomes are unconscionable, the failure is underscored when these same results have occurred for the decades.

Achievement percentages are abstract to some, but reading and academic failure strike at the heart of a person's self-worth, motivation, ability to break the chains of poverty, and capacity to provide for their families. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicates 65% of fourth graders are not proficient in reading and 59% are not at grade level in math.<sup>3</sup> In international comparisons, the academic achievement outcomes are likewise glum. Students from the United States rank 36<sup>th</sup> in math, 18<sup>th</sup> in science, and 13<sup>th</sup> in reading, outcomes that are counterintuitive given our nation's wealth.<sup>4</sup> The tragedy is that even when scientific evidence, developed over years of research, points to the best practices to teach the majority of students to achieve academically, we struggle to make the essential changes to do better.

A major factor in maintaining these achievement gaps is grounded in a failure to implement evidence-based and research-based instructional practices in a majority of our nation's classrooms. This persistent shortcoming rests, to a large extent, on the inadequate preparation of teachers, a responsibility shared by many colleges of education, and on the districts, schools, and principals who hire teachers with little regard to the quality of their preparation or their teaching skills. For example, in preparing teachers to teach reading, instruction in many higher education programs continues to be based on untested

<sup>1</sup> Reading performance by race and ethnicity, [WordsRated.com](#)

<sup>2</sup> Torgesen, J.K. (2004). Preventing early reading failure. *American Educator*, 28(3), 6-9; Torgesen, J.K. (1998). Catch them before they fall: Identification and assessment to prevent reading failure in young children. *American Educator*, 22(1-2), 32-29. See [Torgesen](#) at [American Educator](#).

<sup>3</sup> National Assessment of Educational Progress

<sup>4</sup> Programme for International Student Assessment (2022)

assumptions, anecdotes, fads, and debunked theories. The National Council on Teacher Quality reviewed 702 programs in 580 higher education institutions and found that only 25% minimally prepared teachers to teach the five scientifically-based components of reading necessary to enable all students to become proficient readers.<sup>5</sup> Teachers and school administrators graduating from these institutions have not learned how to apply evidence to their selection of instructional strategies and materials and to monitor the progress of their students. In some cases, even when teachers and administrators do know what practices and materials are evidence-based or research-based others in the district or state may be directing them to use materials and practices shown to be ineffective. Teachers and principals are not at fault, however. They've trusted what their professors taught them, and the curricula handed to them by their districts.



## What is the Solution?

Society needs a comprehensive and sustained plan to increase the number of students who receive instruction based on reliable evidence. Scientific evidence and evidence from educators and school systems that consistently produce high student achievement must guide the creation of new pre- and in-service preparation models for teachers as well as state, district, and building-level leaders. The development of instructional materials and selection of programs must be based on evidence of effectiveness.

The Evidence Advocacy Center, (EAC) representing all components of the education system, has been established to advance a [systemic transformation of the education profession](#). The EAC is to serve as a repository of curated resources and a collaboration of evidence experts and advocates touching all aspects of the education system.<sup>6</sup> The EAC is unique in bringing together and leveraging the work of existing organizations and advocacy partners with demonstrated track records focusing on the use of evidence, while energizing new organizations and individuals committed to the same purpose.

The EAC's Executive Committee and Teams promote a radical transformation of education based on the use of evidence of effectiveness at the national, state, and local levels in order to establish legislation and policy to ensure accountability among all who have any degree of responsibility for PreK-12 achievement. This transformation requires consistent, evidence-based licensure and accreditation in educator preparation programs and a commitment to relying on confirmed evidence of effectiveness by teachers and administrators in their schools. Just as medicine became a mature profession only after radical changes in training and licensure, so too education can become a mature profession based on evidence and accountability.

This task will not be easy, but it is vital. Without institutionalized systems based on real evidence of effectiveness, schools will not be able to create and maintain programs capable of providing success for the most vulnerable children, and education will remain a profession unable to realize its purpose and remain competitive in the workforce marketplace. Elected officials must recognize that developing substantial change in education cannot be a consensual process, created from the opinions, philosophies and preferences of stakeholders and practitioners. Instead, education must be based on evidence of effectiveness proven by research and proven in the classrooms of high performing educators.

<sup>5</sup> National Council on Teacher Quality Reading Foundations Standard Teacher Prep Review (June 2023)

<sup>6</sup> With over [1,450,000 educational service businesses in the United States](#), identifying the trustworthy organizations that rely on research-based evidence is an important service to the education system.

Sometimes expectations based on concepts about education science, evidence-based and research-based education, and the science of instruction, regardless of content area, can lead educators astray. None of these phrases guarantees rapid and comprehensive improvements in student achievement. For example, the “science of reading,” a reference to reading instruction, is prominently referred to in the media and legislative language, but with misunderstanding of its promise and influence in eradicating reading failure.

Advocates of using scientific evidence to inform decisions about selection of reading programs, materials, and instructional designs must clearly understand that “science of reading” is not a teaching method, curriculum, nor an ideology. The science of reading is not synonymous with phonics. The phrase the “science of reading” is ripe for bandwagon parades if misunderstood. The level of desperation to reverse unconscionably high reading failure rates leads us to hope for “magic bullets.” However, the phrase, “science of reading,” has the potential to serve as a dynamic rallying point, but misuse of the concept could destroy itself if paired with impossible promises and unrealistic expectations.

Let us all ensure the “science of reading” is not the next educational trend destined to fade by being careful about how we use the phrase. The ever-expanding use of the “science of reading” is an objective way to explain that reading is complex and must be taught using instructional approaches informed by science and student data. These approaches must include the whole of literacy inclusive of spelling, writing, and oral language. Science is open-minded and objective. It doesn’t take sides, but rather illuminates a path. If new data confront and overturn long held assumptions and beliefs, we need to make changes that reflect this new information, not succumb to confirmation bias. Following the science and seeking to ensure that every student becomes a motivated learner and proficient reader is the right starting place. However, given the equally disastrous math achievement statistics, the challenges schools are facing with children suffering from trauma and exhibiting behavioral difficulties, and the need to prepare students for career opportunities, the EAC will over time curate research-based resources for the effective teaching of mathematics, science, secondary language arts, positive behavior supports, and career education.

*“When you’re working on something that’s so critical to a life—to a child’s life—belief systems don’t cut it. Evidence cuts it.” —G. Reid Lyon, a preeminent evidence advocate speaking on [The Science of Reading](#) podcast.*



## Evidence Advocacy Center’s Action Plan

### What is the Evidence Advocacy Center (EAC)?

The EAC is a clearinghouse of research-based resources (RBRs) and research-based practices (RBPs) to be used by all stakeholders in the U.S. education system. The EAC provides research-based resources (RBRs) for each of the essential components of the U.S. education system. This organization of RBRs gives educational leaders the value of one-stop -shopping that allows them to:

- Recognize the interdependence of all the system components
- Find RBRs for specific components
- Determine the degree to which the components are functioning adequately
- Plan how to improve the functioning of the components and their integration.

Evidence-based decision making is the foundation of the EAC’s plan to contribute to the transformation of the US education system. The EAC plan describes seven elements that are needed for any broad

reform efforts, such as using evidence related to educator preservice preparation and in-service professional development and continuing education. For example, EAC's [Theory of Change](#) illustrates how the EAC and its collaborators intend to cultivate a small consortium of states to institutionalize evidence-based licensure, educator preparation programs, continuing education, and accountability. Becoming an evidence-based profession has several benefits, with the most obvious being the empowerment of educators to accelerate the achievement and behavioral well-being of their students.

## **Short-Term Goal**

EAC's short-term goal is to dramatically increase the proper implementation of evidence-based and research-based resources. EAC is a business that markets and gives away (not sells) links to evidence-based resources (RBRs) and research-based resources (RBRs) created by other trustworthy organizations who collaborate with us. Collaborating organizations connect the EAC to the Collaborator's clients who can use EAC's RBRs. EAC's value added is that, for a given component of the education system, under the guidance of the Executive Committee, the EAC teams identify, curate, describe, and make accessible menus of RBRs to our clients which include state departments of education, districts and schools, educator preparation programs, policy makers, advocacy organizations, and parent and family advocates. The EAC has nine teams for the major components of the US education system. The teams are the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)/Educator Preparation Programs (EPP)
- State Departments of Education
- School Districts Superintendents, Principals, Other Administrators
- Linguistic Diversity, including multilingual learners and speakers of English varieties
- Special Education and Neurodiversity
- Assessment and Data Use
- Instructional Materials
- Professional Development
- Parent and Family Advocates

(See Appendix A for Work Team Composition and Function. See Appendix B for the EAC Directory Structure.) The teams are the essential core of the EAC and are led by renown experts in the field of education and policy with the knowledge to recognize what constitutes evidence. It is their job to curate research-based resources that will constitute the EAC's 'clearing house' by describing the RBRs and putting them into useful menus with clear guidance. Each team's RBRs will be:

- Impactful and accessible.
- Practical but comprehensive and scalable
- Inclusive and coherent.
- Derived from studies, from high-performing educators, and high-performing education systems.

The EAC's success or failure in meeting its short-term goal is also based on support from prominent national organizations To that end, the EAC will identify power champions to recruit and motivate representatives of four groups adversely affected by poor education outcomes: elected officials, social justice organizations, business community, and post-secondary institutions. Representatives from these groups will form the Advocate Advisory Panel, composed of influential national organizations whose missions are significantly hindered by the failure of the education system. The EAC relies on this panel to make prominent the critical role of evidence in improving student achievement. Examples of proposed members of the Advocate Advisory Panel are the following:

- NAACP
- League of United Latin American Citizens
- National Congress of American Indians
- National Association of Community Colleges
- National Governors Association.
- Business Round Table
- National Conference of State Legislators
- National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

Finally, EAC will also receive guidance from the Evidence Advisory Panel, composed of prominent researchers who are also engaged in moving research into practice. The Evidence Advisory Panel advises the EAC on current research work in states and districts to affect implementation and institutionalization of research-based policies and practices. They may choose to recommend power champions, other members of the Advocate Advisory Panel, and potential funders.

### **Plan for the Short-Term Goal (See Table 1)**

1. EAC Teams will create comprehensive menus of curated research-based resources (RBRs) with descriptions, such as the [IHE Literacy menu](#), designed to meet the needs of all clients.
2. EAC Teams will create specialized menus of curated resources linked to specific requests by identified clients. An example of a specialized menu is the IHE menu created for [The Path Forward](#).
3. A subgroup from the Teams will create an Implementation Guidance document that will be useful for all clients. This will be completed early spring.

To reiterate for the short-term goal, the EAC clients are primarily:

1. States and mid-sized and large school districts and entities within those states, such as Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) that certify teachers.
2. Policy makers such as the National Governor's Association
3. Advocate organizations such as the NAACP and parent and family advocacy groups
4. Organizations, such as The Path Forward at the Hunt Institute, that will use our curated RBRs when they consult with mid- sized and large school districts, states, and entities within those states.

### **Long-Term Goal**

EAC's two long-term goals, described in our [New Initiative](#) paper published by the *74 Million*:

- to make evidence the basis for licensure, educator preparation, accreditation, and continuing education
- to adopt a system's perspective that makes evidence central enable decision makers to optimize performance across the nine components of a state's education system.

### **Plan for the Long-Term Goal (See Table 1)**

Transformation of education into an evidence-based profession depends on all the following actions being carried out in a [coordinated](#), sequential, and systematic fashion to establish and implement education as an evidence-based profession.

1. Start by demonstrating, through the work of the EAC teams and other trustworthy organizations, that sufficient evidence- based and research-based resources exist in the education domain to

justify the creation of an infrastructure that would support educators and, at the same time, hold them accountable. The EAC does not create these RBRs; rather, the EAC teams make available RBRs already created by trustworthy organizations. In essence, the EAC serves as a clearinghouse, a one-stop-shop for carefully curated RBRs.

2. After the EAC teams' RBRs are on the website and clients are being served, the EAC continues to recruit and mobilize members of the Advocate Advisory Panel. With the assistance of the Advocate Advisory Panel, the EAC will establish a Professions Advisory Committee (PAC) for the purpose of recommending requirements for the establishment of education as a genuine profession. This committee is described in number 3 below.
3. The PAC members have expertise about what constitutes the infrastructure of a genuine profession. Their charge is to work with the Executive Committee to recommend an infrastructure for education as a profession and the process to establish that infrastructure. Members of the Professions Advisory Committee (PAC) would come from organizations that create certification exams for established professions. EAC and its allied education organizations will be seeking to recruit certifying organizations that oversee the licensure and examinations noted below:
  - [The Uniform Certified Public Accountant \(CPA\) Examination](#) is designed to assess the knowledge and skills entry- level CPAs need to practice public accountancy. The AICPA oversees this exam.
  - [The United States Medical Licensing Examination® \(USMLE\)](#) provides the individual medical licensing authorities ("state medical boards") with a common evaluation system for applicants for initial medical licensure. This exam is jointly managed by the Federation of State Medical Boards and the National Board of Medical Examiners.
  - Accountability for merchant mariners is under the control of the Coast Guard. The National Maritime Center administers the [Merchant Marine Credential](#).
  - [The National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies \(NASCLA\)](#) has partnered with several industry stakeholders to create one nationally recognized accredited trade examination for electricians.
  - [The International Code Council](#) is the leading global source of model codes and standards and building safety solutions that include product evaluation, accreditation, technology, training, and certification. It administers the (F24) Master Plumber ICC National Standard License Exam.

Table 1: The table below describes the specific tasks of each group participating in the Evidence Advocacy Center

	EAC Executive Committee	EAC Work Teams	Evidence Advisory Panel***	Advocate Advisory Panel****	Professions Advisory Committee*****
<b>Short-Term Goal: Dramatically increase the proper implementation of evidence-based resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead EAC Teams</li> <li>• Facilitate identification and curation of RBRs*</li> <li>• Identify reliable collaborators, clients, advocates and funders</li> <li>• Collaborate with the 2 Advisory panels.</li> <li>• Identify power champions to recruit and motivate the four adversely impacted group: elected officials, social justice and grassroot organizations, post - secondary institutions, and business organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and curate for the website a comprehensive menu with descriptions for each RBR, those already in your Dropbox and for additional RBRs.</li> <li>• Develop customized menus of RBRs for specific clients**</li> <li>• Recommend collaborators, clients, advocates and funders as opportunities arise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the EAC on current research work in states and districts to affect implementation and institutionalization of evidence-based and research-based policies and practices.</li> <li>• Advise EAC on important implementation elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to using evidence to improve education.</li> <li>• Make prominent the critical role of evidence in improving student achievement through messaging to your stakeholders.</li> <li>• Provide guidance to EAC Executive Committee on effective advocacy processes and efforts</li> </ul>	
<b>Long-Term Goal: Transform education into a genuine profession.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to identify reputable collaborators, client, advocates and funders</li> <li>• Continue to collaborate with the two panels.</li> <li>• Work to implement the recommendations of the PAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to curate resources with implementation guidance and serve as a one-stop shop for RBRs.</li> <li>• Continue to develop customized menu of RBRs for clients</li> <li>• Continue to recommend collaborators, clients, advocates, and funders as opportunities arise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the EAC on current research work in states and districts to affect implementation and institutionalization of evidence-based and research-based policies and practices.</li> <li>• Advise EAC on important implementation elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with the EAC executive committee to coordinate messaging, funding utilization and the creation of the PAC.</li> <li>• Continue to message stakeholders about the plan to transform education into a profession based on evidence while not blaming educators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend requirements for establishment of education as a genuine profession.</li> <li>• Work with EAC Executive Committee to propose an infrastructure and process for establishing education as a genuine profession</li> </ul>

\*RBRs include scientific evidence as well as qualitative research that includes High Performing Educators, defined as educators and/or whole schools that produce consistently high student achievement.

\*\*Clients include states, IHEs, mid-sized and large districts, and organizations that consult with mid-sized and large school districts, states, and entities within those states.

\*\*\*Evidence Advisory Panel consists of experts, primarily researchers, who have been studying learning, especially in key subject areas and in Behavioral supports.

\*\*\*\*Advocate Advisory Panel consists of influential national organizations whose missions are significantly hindered by the failure of the education system: elected officials, social justice groups, post-secondary institutions and organizations and business organizations.

\*\*\*\*\*PAC consists of organizations whose members have expertise about what constitutes the infrastructure of a genuine profession (Medicine, CPAs, Contractors, Plumbers, etc.)

## Appendix A: Composition and Function of the Evidence Advocacy Center Work Teams:

### Team Lead:

- Coordinate the work of the team for identified clients by curating research-based resources (RBRs) and identifying and clarifying mistakes to avoid any barriers to using those RBRs. Clients refer to the following:
  - a. States, mid-sized and large school districts, and entities within those states, such as Educator Preparation Programs at Institutions of Higher Education that certify teachers.
  - b. Organizations that will use our curated RBRs when they connect with mid-sized and large school districts, states, and entities within those states (for example, EPPs).
- Guide the team in creating the EAC's two types of menus:
  - a. A comprehensive team menu that includes all the team's RBRs. This is the menu that will appear on the website. See the EAC [IHE/EPP Team Resource Menu](#). In addition, the team website section will describe how a team's comprehensive menu aligns with the overall goals of the EA..
  - b. Customized team menus that include only the RBRs of interest to a specific client. An example is the IHE team RBRs shared with the third cohort of states and their IHEs in The Path Forward, a program within the Hunt Institute. See EAC [IHE Resource Menu for The Path Forward](#).
    - Describe the process the team will use to decide what resources to include as an RBR.
    - Determine when/how often the team would meet.
    - Be the link with the Executive Committee, for example, periodically filling out the Team Report and sending it to the executive committee. Another example is informing the Executive Committee when the team's RBRs will be ready to post on the EAC website.
    - Link the EAC's teams' clients to other EAC teams as appropriate.
    - Respond to selected requests.
- May or may not choose to interact with requests from contacts/clients and may clarify if you will do so independently from the EAC.

### Team Members:

- Identify with other team members and the Team Lead the RBRs as well as mistakes to avoid and barriers to using the RBRs.
- Help develop menus of Research-Based Resources.
- May or may not agree to respond to emails and phone calls from interested clients.
- Provide their name, discipline, affiliation, and title of any related projects they direct to be listed as a volunteer member of the Evidence Advocacy Center.

**Note:** any fee-based services are provided by a collaborating organization, a team member, or lead's own consultancy independent of the EAC.

## **Appendix B: Evidence Advocacy Center Directory Structure<sup>7</sup>**

EAC's goal is to ensure the academic and social emotional/behavioral wellness of ALL students. The EAC is organized by an Executive Committee, two advisory panels and twelve teams inside four components of the education system. To reach the EAC's goal, the teams curate and elevate reliable evidence in collaboration with existing trustworthy organization, make the evidence accessible and practical to decision makers in terms of resources, mistakes to avoid, and barriers to anticipate. In addition, the teams collaborate on how best to engage other organizations so that they adopt and correctly implement the resources.

### **Executive Committee**

### **Evidence Advisory Panel**

### **Advocate Advisory Panel**

### **The Work Teams**

**State Depts of Education and Policy Makers (includes legislators and Governors)**

**School District Superintendents, Principals, and Other Administrators**

**Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)/Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) – Literacy and Math**

**Assessment: Outcome, Screeners, Progress Monitors (and Intervention)/Data**

**Linguistic Diversity**

**Special Education**

**Professional Development Providers (Instruction, Intervention, and MTSS)**

**Instructional Materials**

**Parent and Family Advocates**

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<sup>7</sup> See the full EAC Directory here: <https://evidenceadvocacycenter.org/our-people/>