

Establishing the Evidence Advocacy Center’s Evidence-Based Education Laboratory (EBEL) Consortium: A Proof-of-Concept for Systemic Educational Reform

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Abstract

The chasm between educational research and classroom practice persists, often due to fragmented policy and preparation systems and a lack of a coherent knowledge management system, a hallmark of other professions that rely on evidence. This paper proposes the Evidence Advocacy Center’s (EAC’s) **Evidence-Based Education Laboratory (EBEL) Consortium**, a proof-of-concept consortium starting among a select few states and their selected school districts which could later be a model for many states and many school districts. The Consortium's purpose is to create a blueprint for system-wide coherence and sustainable improvement that will demonstrate that education can become a mature research-based profession, similar to accounting, seafaring, and even medicine, by systematically applying and measuring the use of research evidence across four critical levers: state policy and practice; district policy and practice; educator preparation, including licensure and license renewal for educator certification, and accreditation of educator preparation programs (EPPs); and continuing education, including professional development (PD). By leveraging the technical expertise and resources of the **Evidence Advocacy Center (EAC)**, the EBEL Consortium aims to produce validated, scalable models for prioritizing scientific evidence, particularly in foundational areas like literacy instruction, mathematics instruction, and classroom management and behavior, thereby ensuring strong and positive student outcomes.

Introduction: The Imperative for Evidence-Driven Systems

Despite decades of robust educational research, adoption of proven practices remains sporadic (Davies, 1999; Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007). Dr. Douglas Carnine presciently wrote about education’s resistance to effective practices in 2000 and this problem continues today. This failure is often rooted not only in a lack of a clear knowledge base, but in a lack of systemic coherence—state policies conflict with district policies and training, which, in turn, conflicts with how teachers are prepared. For instance, accreditation systems frequently fail to focus on graduates’ effectiveness or competence in evidence-based instruction (NCTQ, 2017).

The **EBEL Consortium** directly addresses this failure by functioning as a controlled laboratory for large-scale, coordinated policy implementation. Its structure mitigates the risk of national mandates while maximizing the potential for success, resource pooling, and the generation of replicable models (RAND, 2025). The core commitment for participating states is to ensure that all decisions, from the statehouse, to the state’s education preparation programs, to the classroom, align with an understanding of what constitutes evidence using the EAC explanation of evidence or tiers 1-3 established by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). The Consortium members must also be committed to making decisions consistent with how people learn (cognitive/ learning science) and how best to design and deliver instruction (instructional science).

Core Focus Areas and Reform Mandates

The Consortium is organized to create systemic coherence across four interdependent domains, ensuring that evidence is the non-negotiable standard for quality.

A. State and District Policy and Practice (P&P)

Policy must be proactive, ensuring the use of evidence and prohibiting practices known to be ineffective.

- **Recommendation:** All new state and district instructional policies for the area(s) chosen by the state must align to evidence as described by the EAC, which includes findings of strong results from states, districts and schools, or tied to ESSA Tiers 1-3. District and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) must detail the specific evidence-based instruction and intervention chosen, the target metric, and a fidelity monitoring plan. States and districts should also make budgetary decisions aligned to evidence of effectiveness.

B. Educator Licensure and License Renewal (L&R)

Licensure and renewal tests and requirements must transition from measuring compliance to measuring competence and impact.

- **Recommendation:** Initial licensure requires successful completion of an assessment demonstrating mastery of the evidence-based knowledge of effective practices (e.g., literacy science, explicit mathematics pedagogy, the principles from cognitive science about learning, the principles of instructional science, and knowledge of assessment and use of data for informing instruction). NCTQ reviewed various licensure tests for reading by state and found many states lacking strong assessments. NCTQ found math licensure tests even more problematic. The EAC summarized states' reading licensure sources and ratings in a comprehensive 2024 report.
- **Recommendation:** Licensure renewal requires evidence of sustained use of effective practices that result in improved student achievement.

C. Professional Development (PD) and Continuing Education

PD must be scientifically validated and structurally effective.

- **Recommendation:** All state-funded or mandated PD and continuing education must be vetted against evidence and focus on high-impact models that include understanding assessments and data-based decision making, effective instruction and intervention, the ability to identify and use high-quality curriculum materials, job-embedded coaching, sustained support, and fidelity monitoring (Supplee & Metz, 2015). Presently, the continuing education system is fragmented and highly idiosyncratic.

D. Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Course Alignment and Accreditation Systems (AS)

Course content must reflect the evidence of what educators (teachers and administrators) should know and be able to do and be aligned to state evidence-based licensure exams. In

addition, accreditation of EPPs must be a powerful lever for content reform and accountability for impact.

- **Recommendation:** Course content for elementary and secondary educators, and for specialists in literacy and math, in particular, must be revised to align to evidence of what is necessary to become proficient readers and writers, and proficient in math, as well as to learning science about how people learn and retain knowledge, and to instructional science about how best to teach.
- **Recommendation:** Accreditation standards must be revised to require explicit curriculum alignment with the Science of Reading/literacy, evidence-based math, cognitive and instructional science, and evidence-based effective classroom and behavior management. EPPs, when feasible, could report data linking their graduates to P-12 student growth metrics within partner districts, although obtaining such data is often difficult and could result in unintended consequences. Currently, the two most used accreditation agencies, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP), do not prioritize evidence in their standards and review of education preparation programs. NCTQ found accreditation was insufficiently aligned to best practices for clinical experiences during educator preparation and while CAEP has recently strengthened its requirements around evidence, more alignment to evidence is essential.

The EAC as the Engine of Change: Resource Integration

The Evidence Advocacy Center (EAC) acts as the Consortium's facilitator for making the connection to expert technical assistance, providing the validated tools and partners necessary to bridge the research-to-practice gap (AIR, 2025). The EBEL Consortium will be supported to use the following EAC resources to streamline access to vetted and curated evidence-aligned resources for policies and practices:

A. Policy and Implementation Resources

The EAC provides the "how-to" Implementation Guides and model policy language for the necessary systemic changes:

- **Model Education Policy Navigator:** Provides vetted legislative and regulatory language that consortium states can use to prescribe evidence-based practices (e.g., policy to require evidence-based literacy competency for licensure), bypassing the time-intensive process of drafting complex scientific policy from scratch (EAC, n.d.).
- **Implementation Guides (State, District, EPPs.):** Offer structured, step-by-step action plans based on implementation science. These guides ensure that new policies are adopted with high fidelity at every level, addressing potential barriers in policy translation and execution (EAC, n.d.).

B. Content and Practice Rigor (Research-Based Menus)

The EAC's **curated menus** link to organizations and content to define the *what*—the specific, research-validated content that must be taught, assessed, and practiced— as well as *how* based on cognitive learning science and instructional science.

- **EPP/IHE Menu**: Provides the specific content framework and resources required for EPPs to align their curriculum with the Science of Reading/literacy, evidence-based math pedagogy, and effective behavioral health and classroom management practices. This is the core reference for the new accreditation standards.
- **Assessment Menu**: Guides the Consortium in understanding and selecting valid and reliable universal screeners, diagnostics, and progress monitoring tools— essential for measuring the impact required for both EPP accountability and teacher license renewal and for assessing effectiveness of district and school practices.
- **Professional Development (PD) Menu**: Curation of evidence-aligned PD programs and structural components (e.g., coaching models) that districts must prioritize, ensuring resources are not wasted on unproven training methods. Provides links to some of most effective, evidence-aligned professional learning providers.
- **Language Variations Menu**: Provides resources that are scientifically reliable and from evidence from effective school results, national reports from trusted organizations, and published articles and websites. These references and resources support Multilingual Learners, Emergent Bilingual Learners, English Language Learners, and students who speak English language varieties from General American English.
- **State Education and Policymakers Menu**: Elevates the work of trusted organizations and individuals by curating and sharing their resources with SEAs, policymakers, and those who support them. Resources are organized around major action areas related to the planning and implementation of statewide efforts in using scientific evidence and proven practices.
- **School District Administrator Menu**: Supports leaders in planning for evidence-aligned work, implementation of a Multi-tiered System of Supports, and accessing tools essential to making mid-course adjustments to improve results.
- **Parents and Family Advocates Menu**: Elevates the work of trusted organizations and individuals to empower parents and families to establish their rightful role in the educational system. Team resources are organized to equip parents and families with evidence-based resources, best practices, and tactics as they engage with various stakeholders in the educational system and hold them accountable for delivering outcomes to all students.
- **Special Education Menu**: Identifies practices in assessment and intervention to support decision makers in informing specialized instruction in mathematics, reading, and writing for high and low incidence disabilities and for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. This menu also identified ineffective

practices that must be discarded, and finally this menu reiterates that effective practices for general education students apply to students with disabilities as well.

- **Instruction Menu (in press):** Explains and provides resources about explicit and effective instruction, including classroom environment, critical content, important ideas for instruction design, delivery, practice, and application. This menu, still in development, focuses on these resources as applied to reading, math, and writing.

C. Canon of Literacy and Canon of Math

Two new documents (in press) are intended to clarify not just WHAT is necessary to teach but the HOW best to teach the vital content, drawing on evidence from what is known about the essential literacy/reading and math components, learning science, and instructional science.

- **Canon of Literacy:** This document (in press) unites the three sciences—literacy science, learning science, and instructional science— and explains cognitive load, deep processing, and how best to teach in order to develop mastery and retention of learning.
- **Canon of Math:** This document (in press) also unites science of math with learning science and instructional science, clarifying the vital importance of explicit instruction, conceptual and procedural knowledge, and understanding of the math hierarchy, as well as the importance of the development of math fact fluency, often neglected in today’s math instruction and materials.

First 2-Year Action Plan and Commitments (An Example Only)

The chart below shows a possible action plan that Consortium members might consider using as a model when designing their own evidence-based policies and implementation plans.

Phase (Months)	Key Deliverable	Consortium Partner Commitment	EAC Resource Utilized
P1: Policy Alignment (1-5)	Policy language Finalized including licensure policies (with initial focus on literacy or math)	SEA commits to drafting new rules/legislation using EAC Model Policy Navigator, starting with the selected focus determined.	Model Education Policy Navigator Research-based Resource Menus

P2: Regulatory Change (6-10)	New EPP course content requirements and accreditation standards announced	SEA commits to leveraging its authority to enforce AS rules tied to graduate impact and EPP Menu content.	Research-Based Resource Menus (EPP/IHE).
P3: Implementation Launch (11-15)	Mandatory PD & Data System Launch	Districts commit to full, high-fidelity implementation of K-3 SoR/literacy or science of math and the use of EAC-vetted screeners, following the District Implementation Guide .	Implementation Guides (State, District/School, EPPs) & Assessment Menu .
P4: Feedback & Planning (16-18)	Data Review and Year 2-3 Planning	All partners convene to review student and EPP performance data to refine policy and training for the following year.	EAC Implementation Guides for capacity building and data analysis training .

Commitments of Partners

- **States (SEAs):** Commit to regulatory priority (passing evidence-based laws), funding alignment (e.g. restricting PD funds to practices based on evidence), and data transparency (creating frameworks to link EPP, teacher, and student data).
- **Districts:** Commit to fidelity of implementation (full adoption of necessary practices), data collection (using vetted measures), and resource reallocation (shifting PD budget to evidence-based coaching).

Commitments of the EAC

The EAC will provide resources and will ensure the states and districts are connected to experts in the areas on which the states and districts will focus their work.

- **All EAC Resources:** Provide facilitated use of partner and EAC determined resources that represent “best fit” to the particular needs of the state, its main EPPs, and their districts
- **Implementation Science Guidance:** Facilitate the state, its selected EPPs, and selected districts through an implementation process to develop and sustain an effective plan of actions and ensure all stakeholders have participated.

Conclusion

The **EBEL Consortium** represents a critical evolution in educational governance, moving beyond fragmented reform efforts to a **systemic, evidence-driven model**. By strategically partnering with the EAC and making non-negotiable commitments to policy reform, the consortium will validate a powerful blueprint for accelerating the adoption of scientifically proven practices. This effort promises not only to professionalize the field of education but, more importantly, to ensure that every student benefits from the most effective instruction available.

Citations

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