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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Curriculum Coordinators, and Grants Managers  
FROM: Meg Porcella, BEST/Act 230 Program Manager  
SUBJECT: Sample Level of Evidence Statements  
DATE: September 14, 2018

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In February of 2018, the Agency of Education released the [Use of Levels of Evidence to Support Grant Funded Work in Schools](#) memorandum. This document describes how Vermont's state-funded grants will require the same criteria that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) establishes for the use of federal funds. It also explains the criteria that inform the different levels of evidence. The grant applications associated with BEST/Act 230 funds require a level of evidence to be applied to each activity for which you are seeking funds, and I am offering the following statements of evidence to help in the accurate completion of your application. This is not an exhaustive list of professional learning for which BEST/Act 230 funds may be used. This list includes statements of the level of evidence for many of the professional learning opportunities offered through the BEST/PBIS professional learning calendar as well as activities that have been included in recent BEST/Act 230 applications. I will add to this list as more statements of evidence become available.

### Statements of Evidence:

#### SW-PBIS

**Level 1:** School-Wide PBIS is an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school's sense of safety, and support improved academic outcomes," all of which address ESSA requirements (Horner et al., 2009; Sprague & Horner, 2007). Over 23,000 U.S. schools are implementing PBIS and saving hours of annual instructional time otherwise lost to school discipline. Implementing PBIS improves school climate and helps keep students and teachers in safe and productive classrooms. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) comes directly from the language used in the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). PBIS, based on the principles of applied behavior analysis, the prevention approach, is a valuable use of ESSA funds. PBIS is a framework for assisting schools in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavior interventions into a continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students. PBIS is not a packaged curriculum, scripted intervention, or a particular, manualized strategy, but instead is a set of core features that can be achieved through an array of options, and creates safe, positive, school environments to benefit all students (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai et al., 2000).

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Letter from Acting Assistant Secretary Chism to State Assessment Directors re: [ESSA State Plan Peer Review Criteria \[final\]](#) for Title 1, Part A; Title III, Part A; and the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program under the McKinney-Vento Act, March 28, 2017.

From: Von Ravensberg, H., & Blakely, A. (2017). [Guidance for States on ESSA State Plans: Aligning the School Climate Indicator and SW-PBIS](#). OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

## **Trauma-Sensitive Strategies**

**Level 4:** The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) provides research and studies that inform the need for trauma-sensitive strategies. Included is the [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACE\)](#) study, which provides criteria to support rationale for the potential impact of the strategies, creates an awareness of trauma’s impact, and lays a foundation on which schools can build.

## **Restorative Practices**

**Level 3:** Because the research is limited and is still building, restorative approaches and restorative practices are considered “promising” or “under evaluation” rather than “evidence-based” according to the [Evidence Provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#). Refer to the Agency of Education’s [Whole School Restorative Approach Resource Guide](#) for more information on both levels of evidence and the implementation of restorative practices in schools.

## **Classroom Management Practices**

**Level 3:** The practices demonstrated though this training involve teacher praise and providing students with opportunities to respond. The impact of these practices is supported by an emerging (didactic training, self-management) or well-established (performance feedback) evidence base (MacSuga & Simonsen, 2012).

## **De-escalation/Relationship Development (adapted from Life Space Crisis Intervention)**

**Level 4:** The research and studies provided through the [LSCI site](#) offer the necessary criteria to support rationale for the potential impact of the program. The De-escalation/Relationship Development program provides a systematic, comprehensive approach to addressing escalating behavior that can be used for students in preschool through high school across all three tiers of the PBIS. It systematically integrates evidence-based practices related to crisis prevention and intervention, behavior management, cognitive behavior modification, and prosocial skills training into tiered instruction.

## **Functional Behavior Assessment/Behavior Support Planning**

**Level 3:** What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) identifies [Functional Behavioral Assessment-based Interventions](#) as having “potentially positive effects on engagement and potentially positive effects on problem behavior...” The interventions themselves are studied, not the structure of the problem-solving and planning process from which the intervention plan originates.

## **Responsive Classroom**

**Level 4:** The [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#) has not reviewed any studies that meet WWC standards. The [Responsive Classroom](#) website offers [a document](#) that can support the rationale for choosing RC as a fundable program.

## **Second Step**

**Level 4:** The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) published a review of [Second Step](#) in 2013 which indicated that none of the many studies reviewed met the WWC evidence standards and that additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of Second Step.