In December, 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replacing No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as the main federal law governing K-12 education. Within the expansive bill are provisions with potentially revolutionary implications for education. These include a definition for standards of evidence for educational programs and practices:

- **Strong evidence**: At least one experimental (i.e., randomized) study showing positive student outcomes;
- **Moderate evidence**: At least one quasi-experimental (i.e., matched) study showing positive student outcomes;
- **Promising evidence**: At least one correlational study controlling for student inputs showing positive student outcomes; and
- **A fourth standard that can be considered evidence-building where the program is under evaluation**.

Evidence-based programs are referred to throughout the legislation. Programs meeting the top three standards are required for school improvement plans, for example, and priority points can be awarded for grant applicants who propose to use these programs. In addition, ESSA facilitates building the evidence base through program evaluations, an evidence-based education innovation and research grant program, and other provisions.

The ESSA provisions could be a giant step forward if they result in greater use of programs and practices with solid evidence of effectiveness, but widespread implementation will ultimately depend on meeting the demand they will create for information about programs with evidence of effectiveness. 

**But which specific programs and practices meet the standards?**

If educational leaders cannot easily find out about programs and practices that meet the standards, the ESSA provisions will have little impact on practice. We have begun to create a web site to help educators learn about the resources available to them.

**Our Plan**

The Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University has long worked to promote evidence-based reform in education, especially by publishing reviews of research on effective programs and practices in most subjects and grade levels, pre-k to 12.

We are in the process of creating an authoritative, user-centered database to help educators easily find programs and practices that meet their school and community needs and that align to the ESSA evidence standards. Database access will be open and free, and it will include information about locating further resources about the programs and their implementation. We have partnered with Interactive Strategies, an experienced, dynamic web developer that specializes in user-centered design to help strategize, design, build, and promote the database to maximize its usefulness in the field.
The database, which we are tentatively calling The Source, will provide users with the following:

1. **Access to information on programs and practices** that meet each of the ESSA standards in a given subject and grade level (e.g., secondary math, elementary reading);
2. **Links to brief program descriptions**, information on costs, availability, and other pragmatics, and links to program web sites;
3. Features to enable users to look for programs that have been successful with particular populations (e.g., English learners, special education);
4. Ability for users to **search by program name**, enabling them to find information for all programs, including those that have not yet been successfully evaluated;
5. Links to more **detail on the studies** evaluating particular programs and practices and others in the same content/age range; and
6. **Perspectives from users of particular programs and practices**, describing their on-the-ground experiences implementing and using them.

**Timeline**

If the ESSA standards are to have maximum impact, time is of the essence. States and districts have begun to unpack the new law. In this critical moment, the evidence provisions cannot appear to be unworkable due to a lack of options. We hope to launch The Source in Fall, 2016, with information on reading and math programs meeting strong, moderate, and promising standards. Additional information will then be added through the following year. The full web site will be available by Fall, 2017 (when the school improvement requirements under ESSA take effect), and will then be continually updated.

**Production Plan**

The Source will be produced by the Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University. It will be funded by private foundations, independently of government. The Source will build on work done by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and the Best Evidence Encyclopedia (BEE), as well as other review facilities, but it will be specifically tailored to help state and local leaders meet the ESSA requirements.

**Technical Work Group (TWG)**

Development of content for The Source will be guided by a Technical Work Group (TWG) composed of distinguished researchers and policy makers familiar with research review and evidence-based policy. The TWG will consult on review procedures and key decisions. On decisions where there is a conflict of interest, such as programs affiliated with a member of the TWG or CRRE staff, decisions will be made without participation by the conflicted party.

**Stakeholders Advisory Group**

In order to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the field, we are inviting representatives of stakeholder groups to work with us, with a particular focus on making The Source useful to their constituents. Advisory group members are invited to give us ideas and feedback as The Source develops, to share The Source with their members, and to put their logos on The Source web site to show their endorsement of the enterprise.

**Stakeholder groups that have already committed to collaborating with us include**

**Additional information**
Robert E. Slavin, Director, Center for Research and Reform in Education, Johns Hopkins University
rslavin@jhu.edu or 410-616-2310