



**Smart Start Evidence-Based and Evidence-Informed Programs and Practices:
A Summary of Research Evidence, Revised Edition**

July 2018

Developed by:

Compass Evaluation and Research, Inc. and The North Carolina Partnership for Children

*Based on work previously developed by Smoky Mountain Research Institute and
The North Carolina Partnership for Children*

All nonprofits are motivated to meet their missions. Yet funding for our work can be quite limited. As stewards of public and private funds, we want to ensure that we are targeting our resources in ways that are most likely to address our community needs and achieve the outcomes that help us meet our missions. For this reason, Smart Start and The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) target funds to evidence-based and evidence-informed (EB/EI) programs and practices.

Definitions of Evidence-Based and Evidence-Informed Programs/Practices

The use of evidence-based or evidence-informed practices was mandated by the North Carolina legislation in 2011 for programs that operate using Smart Start funds. The North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation that provides guidance for employing evidence-based and evidence-informed practices. Using this guidance and input from a variety of organizations, The North Carolina Partnership for Children Inc.'s Board of Directors adopted definitions of evidence-based and evidence-informed practices to guide the work of local partnerships. The following are the definitions that were passed by the Board:

- Evidence-based programs or practices are those that have repeatedly and consistently demonstrated desirable outcomes through application of scientific research methods (replicated experimental, experimental, and quasi experimental).
- An evidence-informed practice is one that is guided by child development theory, and practitioner wisdom, and qualitative studies, and findings from basic research and has written guidelines, and a strong logic model, and a history of demonstrating positive results. They may be rated "Promising" or "Emerging" by at least one source that rates evidence-based programs.

Changes Since the Original Smart Start EB/EI Resource Guide

We have made several content and editorial changes to the EB/EI information including:

- **Revised rating categories** - Smart Start had previously developed four rating categories based on the definitions above:

Evidence-based: Well-established

Evidence-based: Established

Evidence-informed: Promising

Evidence-informed: Emerging

Criteria for each of these categories have been reviewed and tightened for this edition. See *Smart Start Categories for Evidence Based and Evidence Informed Activities* for updated criteria and definitions. The main difference is related to the use of meta-analyses for the well-established rating. In some cases, the interventions included in a meta-analysis in the original EB/EI Resource Guide had substantial differences in implementation. The new criteria ensure that studies are assessing the same intervention. As a result of these changes, some activities have had their ratings adjusted downward.

- **New research evidence** - We have also searched for and reviewed new research evidence for all rated activities. Some ratings have been adjusted based on new research evidence.
- **Updated list of activities reviewed** – New activities have been reviewed and rated. A small number that were in the original Resource Guide are no longer included. Those removed typically are due to the purveyor having significantly changed the intervention and the new approach not having been adequately evaluated yet.
- **Umbrella activities split-out** – Some umbrella programs such as Incredible Years, Nurturing Parenting Program, Triple P, Motherread, etc. actually include a range of separate programs. The original EB/EI Resource Guide combined these under the umbrella program. In reality, some under the same umbrella have more research than others. This affects the research ratings. Now individual programs under the same umbrella activity have been split out, receiving their own EB/EI rating. Sometimes they have their own stand-alone write-up, in other cases they are included in the same comprehensive summary but have separately assigned evidence ratings.
- **Layout** – We have added a snapshot that shows suggested indicators for the Community Early Childhood Profile, suggested Smart Start outcomes for the activity, whether training is required and so on. The research table also includes the study design which is needed for determining the EB/EI ratings. A summary of each research study is now included for those who want to better understand the details.

- **Web-based** – The original EB/EI Resource Guide was one large document. This made it difficult to update items and insert new activities over time. The new approach is web-based. Click on the topic area of interest including early care and education, family support, health, or early literacy. Then, click on an activity to see the snapshot before going to the full write up. Note that several early childhood activities may fall into more than one category. Child care health consultants, for instance, could be considered both health and early care and education. Activities spanning more than one area have been included under all relevant topic areas.

How to Use the Smart Start EB/EI Ratings

The Smart Start EB/EI ratings and research write-ups provide a summary of research evidence for programs and practices most commonly funded by Smart Start partnerships. The Smart Start EB/EI ratings and research summaries provide a source of information for local partnerships on potential activities to address EC Profile indicators, which activities may help achieve desired outcomes, and activity requirements which should help local partnerships determine feasibility for your community, and so on. The EB/EI Ratings do not replace thoughtful, inclusive planning, implementation, and local evaluation, but should instead be used to inform those processes.

What to Expect Going Forward

More improvements are planned for the Smart Start EB/EI Ratings including:

- Establishment of a process for identifying new activities to review as well as when and how to update research and ratings for items currently reviewed.
- Development of a public website that will feature comprehensive search functions to better help users drill down to activities that will best meet their needs.

Smart Start EB/EI Ratings Citation

Much effort went into this revised edition. A special thank you to the following contributors:

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Please use the following citation to recognize these efforts:

Heinemeier, S., D'Agostino, A., Johnson, L., Mead, E., Nelson, J., O'Donnell, W., Spence, A. (2018) Smart Start Evidence-Based and Evidence-Informed Programs and Practices: A Summary of Research Evidence, Revised Edition. Ed. K. McCombs-Thornton. Raleigh, NC: The North Carolina Partnership for Children.