



# Applying research evidence

## Using research to strengthen your practice

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**Deciding whether and how to apply research evidence in your school or service is an ongoing process that involves careful reflection.**

As an education professional, drawing on research evidence can strengthen your confidence that you're using the most effective practices – practices that will maximise children and young people's learning and wellbeing. Considering new approaches doesn't mean your existing approaches 'don't work'. It's simply recognising that knowledge evolves over time. Even when children and young people are doing well, if we ignore the research, they could miss out on opportunities to achieve more. Research evidence shouldn't replace the professional wisdom and understanding that comes with experience. Rather, it should complement your experience, enrich your existing knowledge and give you confidence you're using the practices most likely to maximise learning in your context.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has produced 4 practice guides on using research to strengthen your practice:



[The Value of Research Evidence](#)



[Assessing Research Evidence](#)



[Looking for Research Evidence](#)



[Applying Research Evidence.](#)

If you're a teacher or educator, this practice guide and AERO's other evidence use resources can help you draw effectively on research evidence to strengthen decisions about your practice. If you're a school or service leader, you can use this guide and these resources to support your team in engaging with research evidence as part of their ongoing professional development.

### **Related frameworks**

#### **Early Years Learning Framework V2.0**

Principles: Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning.

#### **National Quality Standards**

Standard 7.2 Leadership: Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

#### **Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**

Focus Area 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice, which includes 'Plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research' at the Highly Accomplished level.

#### **Australian Professional Standards for Principals**

Professional Practice 2: Developing self and others.

## **Ways to use this practice guide**

- You can use this practice guide for personal professional learning to become more familiar with research.
- You can use this practice guide for professional learning to discuss research evidence as a team, such as in a community of practice.
- Leaders can use this practice guide to structure dialogue and reflection about using research evidence in a school or service. These concepts can serve as a point of conversation to build shared understandings of how to engage with research evidence.

## **Getting from research to practice change**

Once you've identified some rigorous and relevant research evidence about a practice or program of interest, you'll want to carefully consider whether you should use that practice or program, and if so, how to go about making the change.

Exactly how you do that will depend on factors such as the type and quality of evidence you have, the nature of the practice or program, your role, and how much time and other resources you have available.

## Deciding whether to use the practice or program and planning for change

It's a good idea to carefully consider your context and think through:

- whether the potential benefits of using the practice or program are worth the costs in time, effort and other resources
- how you'd implement the practice or program effectively and monitor its impact.

AERO's evidence use resources can help you think through these considerations.

AERO's [Interactive Evidence Decision-Making Tool](#) helps you decide how confident you are that a particular practice or program is evidence-based and worth using. The tool also offers suggestions for how to proceed – either collecting more evidence or using the approach – based on your level of confidence.

AERO's [Research Reflection Guide Worksheet](#) is designed to help you reflect closely on a particular piece of research – for example, a journal article or report. It prompts you to think about what the research says, how relevant it is to your context, whether you should implement the practice or program and what you could do to ensure successful implementation.

It can also be helpful to discuss your ideas about using evidence with colleagues and seek their feedback. [This case study](#) illustrates how leaders and educators worked together to use research evidence in an early childhood education and care (ECEC) service.

If you decide to implement an approach, using inquiry cycles can help you clearly identify problems and develop action plans. In [this case study](#), teachers and leaders used inquiry cycles to improve student outcomes at a secondary school.

## Implementing evidence: Resources for leaders

If you're a leader, there are resources available to help you successfully implement a new approach in your school or service.

For resources on developing and implementing educational programs in ECEC, see the [Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority \(ACECQA\) website](#). [ACECQA's Educational Leader resource](#) includes practical information about leading change and other topics to support educational leaders in their role.

To reflect on your school's readiness for change, see [How Ready is Your School for Change? Considerations When Introducing New Initiatives, Programs and Models to Your School Community](#). This article explores some of the factors shown to impact school staff's readiness for change and recommends 4 promising approaches for how school leaders can conceptualise, consider and increase readiness for change at their school.

For guidance on the process of implementing evidence, see [Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation](#). This detailed guide published by Evidence for Learning aims to help education professionals create the conditions for implementing change, and provides a structured process for planning, delivering and sustaining change.

For insights on how to help improve a school's culture and infrastructure around using research evidence, which can lead to increased and improved use of research, see [Supporting Teachers to Use Evidence Well in Practice](#). The other practice guides in this series [The Value of Research Evidence](#), [Looking for Research Evidence](#) and [Assessing Research Evidence](#) can support individuals and teams in finding and engaging with research evidence.

Professional learning communities can play an important role in embedding evidence use. This [case study](#) shows how a professional learning community worked to improve student outcomes at a secondary school.

For practical guidance on developing and applying effective school strategic plans, see AERO's [Supporting Continuous School Improvement resources](#).

## Next steps

Applying research evidence is an ongoing process. You can refer to this practice guide and AERO's other evidence resources as often as you need to when making decisions about your practice. Because these research evidence resources can be applied across topics, you can use them to reflect on any practice, program or piece of research. They can complement the evidence you generate through your daily practice, such as your observations or insights from student learning data.

If you're interested in implementing a specific evidence-based practice, visit [AERO's website](#) for the latest research and resources. AERO develops resources on specific ECEC and school practices and is continually reviewing and adding to the evidence base. AERO's [resources on evidence-based practices](#) include step-by-step guides for educators and teachers on how to effectively implement a number of evidence-based practices.