What Works Clearinghouse™

# Practitioner Perspectives of the What Works Clearinghouse
## A Summary of the First Year of the Small Working Group of Experienced Education Practitioners

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) serves as a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education. The WWC designs its resources to help educators, administrators, families, researchers, and policymakers make evidence-based decisions. In fall 2023, the WWC convened the Small Working Group of Experienced Education Practitioners (SWEEP) to provide feedback that will allow the WWC to improve its resources.

## WHAT IS THE SWEEP?

The SWEEP brings together education practitioners with diverse perspectives to help the WWC learn how educators use and apply evidence. The group has nine members who hold different roles in the education system, including experience in the classroom and as school and district leaders. The SWEEP generates ideas for improving WWC resources so that educators can:

- Find and understand the information the WWC provides.
- Use the content to make evidence-based decisions, set priorities, and develop programs and policies.
- Use WWC resources to inform practice and decision making.

All of these are designed to help the WWC make sure that education practitioners find, understand, and use WWC resources to improve education in the United States.

## WHAT DID THE SWEEP DISCUSS?

Beginning in November 2023, the SWEEP met four times to discuss improving WWC practice guides, WWC supporting resources for practice guides, the reach of WWC resources, and the WWC's website search tools. In these meetings, SWEEP members provided valuable feedback on whether current offerings meet the needs of education practitioners and how they can be improved. The SWEEP will continue to meet regularly.

### PRACTICE GUIDES

Practice guides are publications that present evidence-based recommendations for educators to address challenges in their classrooms and schools. They provide how-to steps and tips for implementation with specific examples and advice from experts on potential solutions to roadblocks to success.
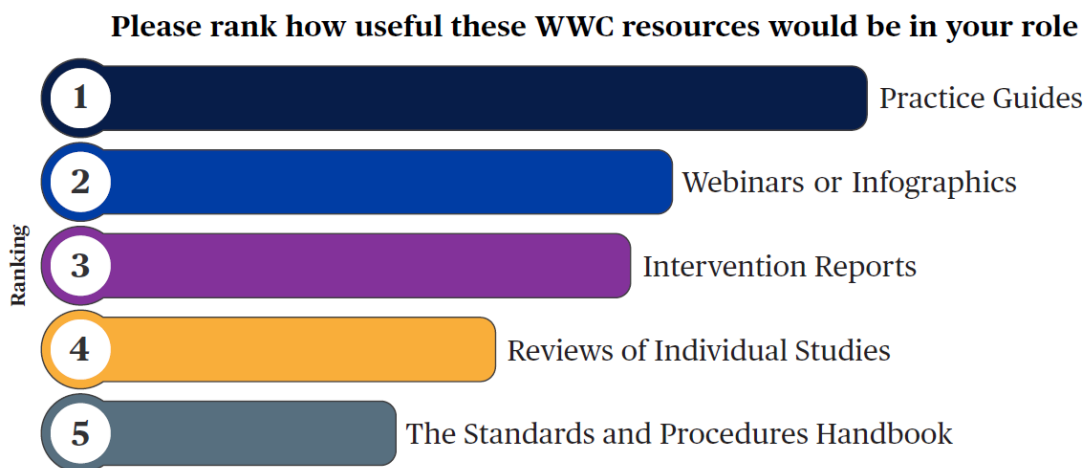
*What is working well?* Among all current WWC resources, SWEEP members view WWC practice guides as the most useful (Figure 1). They particularly appreciated the implementation advice provided in practice guides, such as how to address obstacles.

*What needs to be improved?* SWEEP members critiqued the length and dense text in practice guides and suggested providing additional support for educators to implement and use the recommendations. Specific ideas included:

- Breaking up the long document into smaller documents, each with a focus on one recommendation.
- Increasing the guides' visual appeal by using more graphics, callout boxes, and lists so educators can more easily find help.

- Linking to supporting vignettes, resources, podcasts, and video clips to provide more in-depth information and tailor the content to different audiences.

- Developing resources and activities to help teachers implement the recommendations on their own, collaboratively, and via professional development or coaching.

**Figure 1. WWC resources and their ranking of usefulness among SWEEP members**

**Please rank how useful these WWC resources would be in your role**

1. Practice Guides
2. Webinars or Infographics
3. Intervention Reports
4. Reviews of Individual Studies
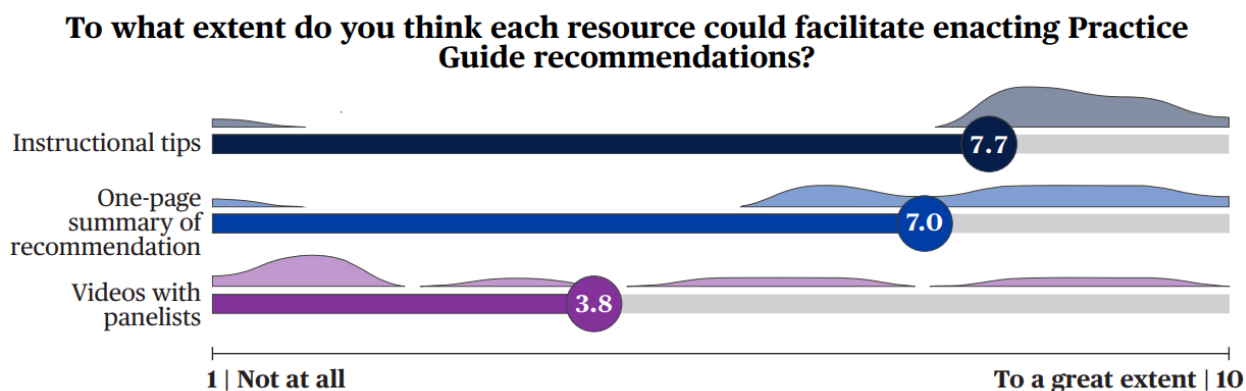5. The Standards and Procedures Handbook

_Ranking_

The ranking question is calculated with a points system in which the item ranked first will get as many points as the total number of items available in the question, and then descending. With five items to rank, the item ranked first receives five points, the second four points, and so on. The length of the line represents an average of the number of points received, based upon ranking.

## SUPPORTING RESOURCES FOR PRACTICE GUIDES

The WWC uses resources like videos, webinars, infographics, and one-page summaries to help educators understand and implement practice guide recommendations.

_What is working well?_ SWEEP members agreed that instructional tips, such as the Instructional Tips for Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School, and one-page summaries of recommendations, such as this summary of Designing and Delivering Career Pathways at Community Colleges, could help educators implement practice guide recommendations (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Extent to which SWEEP members indicated each resource could help educators implement practice guide recommendations**

**To what extent do you think each resource could facilitate enacting Practice Guide recommendations?**

Instructional tips — 7.7

One-page summary of recommendation — 7.0

Videos with panelists — 3.8

1 | Not at all                    To a great extent | 10

*What needs to be improved?* SWEEP members thought that shorter videos focused on classroom demonstrations of practice guide recommendations would be better suited for a practitioner audience. The SWEEP also recommended designing resources that can be more easily used for professional development so that educators can easily adapt them for specific training and professional development needs to address educators' time constraints.

## REACH OF WWC RESOURCES

Although some practitioners and administrators are aware of the WWC, the WWC could take steps to extend the reach of its resources. The WWC's impact on evidence-based decision making will be greater if more people can find and access its resources.

*What is working well?* SWEEP members reported that WWC practice guides were familiar to some practitioners and thought of favorably. They indicated that practice guides and other WWC resources could be used in professional learning opportunities and professional development. Encouraging use of WWC materials in these opportunities could expand reach.

*What needs to be improved?* Expanding and enhancing awareness of the WWC and its resources is important. The SWEEP identified teachers, administrators, faculty and staff in educator preparation programs, and leaders of professional development as potential audiences for WWC resources. Members offered suggestions to increase awareness with these audiences, including those listed in the box on the right.

> **Improving the WWC's reach**
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> The WWC's impact on evidence-based decision making will be greater if more people can find and access its resources. The SWEEP suggested the following ways to improve the WWC's reach:
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> - Promoting WWC resources through social media and drawing on existing networks.
> - Engaging with specific organizations that connect with the topic at hand, such as professional associations for educators.
> - Connecting with and drawing on the networks of WWC practice guide panelists.
> - Framing WWC resources for use in professional learning communities.

## IMPROVING THE WWC SEARCH FUNCTION

The WWC website should be a gateway for educators to find resources to support evidence-based decisions. The WWC's search tool is intended to help users access evidence on interventions and practices that the WWC has reviewed.

*What is working well?* Although SWEEP members experienced challenges using the search tool, some of their searches were successful after experimenting with alternative search terms or when applying filters.

*What needs to be improved?* Many of the SWEEP's initial searches returned few or no results, while others returned too many results. SWEEP members saw opportunities for the WWC to design the search to focus more on practitioners' needs related to evidence, including:

- Using website data from search terms used to learn about what users seek and to help improve the search tool.
- Exploring creating filters for different audiences or search specifications tailored to practitioners.
- Including more information about the interventions and practices the WWC reviews, such as details about the intervention's rationale and the specific components that make up an intervention.