



Quick Hints on Research for Busy Educators

Although critical for educators, research can be extremely complex and time-consuming. Based upon the work of this tool group, we would like to provide some things to look for which provide a starting point for assessing the quality of research. This information is intended to be a complement to the extensive information, definitions, and examples in the Scientifically-Based Research module of *SETDA Connects* (www.setdaconnects.org). The members of the tool group have provided their reflections on the key pieces of knowledge that will help to decrease the intimidation of reviewing research and also allow non-experts to make decisions on the rigor of research.

1. **Support** – You can find research to support any case. The key is recognizing rigorous research that pertains to your situation.
2. **Methodologies** – Understanding the range of methodologies is a good starting-point for analyzing research (formal definitions can be found at <http://www.setdaconnects.org/content.cfm?sectionid=10>):
 - a. Experimental
 - b. Quasi-Experimental
 - c. Correlational
 - d. Case Studies
 - e. Anecdotal or Narrative
3. **Number of Subjects** – Experimental or quasi-experimental research does not have to be conducted with thousands of students. A small study with a well thought out and implemented design with matched control and experimental groups sets the groundwork. However, it is important that the study justifies the number of subjects and shares whether or not the sample size (number of subjects) is great enough to allow for results to be generalized.
4. **Date Research Conducted** – Find the date research was conducted (not just date of publishing). An absolute rule in terms of how recent a study must be conducted to be applicable does not exist; however, it is important to note how things have changed (i.e. high stakes testing) since a study was completed if it is not within the last five years. Additionally, a study may be considered seminal research which stands the test of time.
5. **Length of Study** – Determine the number of years over which the study was conducted. Is the study a longitudinal study? Does it follow the same subjects over time? Longitudinal studies often provide more in-depth data and information.
6. **Interventions and Components** – Verify whether or not the intervention or components of the study are based in best practices or previous research. Are full descriptions of the components and interventions included?
7. **Significant Findings** – Statistically-significant is the key term in experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational studies. A rather small % change may be statistically significant in some studies, but not at all in others.



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8. **Data Generalizeable** - Only experimental or quasi-experimental design can technically be generalized to the extended public; however, other studies may provide background and/or key facts to support your efforts or to help you understand how a particular intervention may work in your school, district, or state.
9. **Researcher** – Consider who the researcher is and whether or not the research is intended to promote something in particular. A strong methodology, however, may indicate that, although a researcher hoped to find a specific outcome, the outcome is still useful based upon the team of researchers and/or methodology.

Extensive details and rich examples are available at www.setdaconnects.org, and we encourage you to utilize the scientifically-based research module as you delve more into research or have specific questions.