



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Institute of Education Sciences

National Board for Education Sciences

November 13, 2008

Grover J. (Russ) Whitehurst  
Director  
Institute of Education Sciences  
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20208-5500

Dear Dr. Whitehurst:

In July 2008, the National Board for Education Sciences (the Board) commissioned a panel to examine the scientific validity of the What Works Clearinghouse's (WWC) review process and reports. This letter transmits their report and related documents for your information.

The panel was composed of six nationally recognized experts in the study of the effects of intervention programs in various fields, and the synthesis of information from such studies. Its task was to conduct a "...focused study addressing the fundamental question of whether the WWC's evidence review process and reports are scientifically valid-that is, provide accurate information about the strength of evidence of meaningful effects on important educational outcomes."

Based on the panel's analysis of the WWC, it concluded that:

- (1) "WWC procedures and processes for identifying and extracting information from intervention studies are generally well documented and follow reasonable standards and practices for systematic reviews;
- (2) WWC Intervention and Topic Area Reports provide succinct and meaningful summaries of the evidence on the effectiveness of specific education interventions."

The panel provided recommendations where improvements are possible. Primary among these recommendations is that the Department of Education commission a further review of the full range of WWC activities and procedures, with a time frame to allow a complete consideration of a number of issues not able to be evaluated in its report. The Board is already on record agreeing that such a review would be useful and that it should include how policymakers and practitioners make use of WWC information.

Attached you will find the report prepared by the WWC expert panel. Also attached is a letter from Mark Dynarski (Principal Investigator for the WWC) indicating his appreciation for the panel's work, its reassuring findings, and its useful guidance for the ongoing improvement of the WWC.

Please feel free to contact me directly or through the Board's Executive Director, Norma Garza, if you have any questions or would like to discuss these matters or the Board's work. Our contact information is below.

Sincerely,

Robert Granger, Ed.D.  
Chair  
National Board for Education Sciences

Attachments

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