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**Matthew A. Kraft**  
@MatthewAKraft

[#academictwitter](#) It's time to update how we teach about effect sizes & the policy relevance of research findings.

Here are some resources:

1) I'm hopeful my paper can serve as an accessible introduction to interpreting the importance of effect sizes.

[journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.310...](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.310...)

### Interpreting Effect Sizes of Education Interventions

Matthew A. Kraft<sup>1</sup>

Researchers commonly interpret effect sizes by applying benchmarks proposed by Jacob Cohen over a half century ago. However, effects that are small by Cohen's standards are large relative to the impacts of most field-based interventions. These benchmarks also fail to consider important differences in study features, program costs, and scalability. In this article, I present five broad guidelines for interpreting effect sizes that are applicable across the social sciences. I then propose a more structured schema with new empirical benchmarks for interpreting a specific class of studies: causal research on education interventions with standardized achievement outcomes. Together, these tools provide a practical approach for incorporating study features, costs, and scalability into the process of interpreting the policy importance of effect sizes.

**Keywords:** education policy; education reform; effect size; evaluation; experimental research; policy analysis; program evaluation

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2) We need to teach students how to "translate" results into terms that are more widely understood (but still accurate!).

See for example work by Bard & [@JohnFPane](#)



Translating Standardized Effects of Education Programs Into More Interpret...  
Evaluators report effects of education initiatives as standardized effect sizes, a scale that has merits but obscures interpretation of the effects' practical i...  
[journals.sagepub.com](https://journals.sagepub.com)



1



2



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3) A picture is worth 1,000 words. We need to help students to create better visualizations of research evidence.

Explore work by [@EdwardTufte](#)

On your standards, visual guides like this from [@State](#)

### Relevant people



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@MatthewAKraft

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Associate Professor of Education and Economics at Brown University. Former high school humanities teacher. Proud papa.

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Trending with: [Messi](#) and [Barcelona](#)



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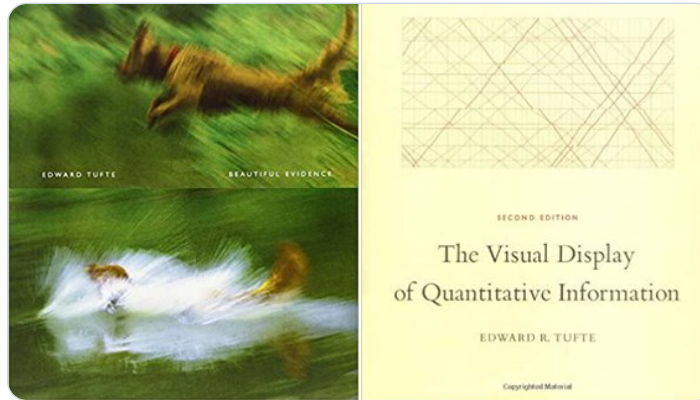
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Or even simple visual guides like this from [@Stata](https://stata.com/support/faqs/g...)  
[stata.com/support/faqs/g...](https://stata.com/support/faqs/g...)



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4) We need to teach students about opportunity costs and unintended consequences to contextualize policies and programs.

This [@J\\_HumanResource](#) paper by Jepsen & Rivkin on reducing class sizes in CA is one of my favorite examples:

[jhr.uwpress.org/content/44/1/2...](http://jhr.uwpress.org/content/44/1/2...)

1 6



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5) We have to teach students to think about program costs and cost-effectiveness:

Check out the great work by [@abrooksbowden](#) including:  
[journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00...](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00...)

A classic paper by [@douglasharris99](#):  
[journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/01...](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/01...)

[@cbcse](#) has a range of great resources.



Using Resource and Cost Considerations to Support Educational Evaluation...  
Cost, cost-effectiveness, and benefit-cost analysis are methods used by economists to evaluate public policies. Essentially, these methods rely on ...  
[journals.sagepub.com](http://journals.sagepub.com)

1 2 7



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6) Let's encourage students to ask - can that program or policy be effective at scale?

This [@IESResearch](#) i3 report about attempts to scale promising education interventions is sobering

[ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2018...](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2018...)

Exhibit 4.6: Summary of Whether the i3 Impact Evaluations Found Statistically Significant Positive Impacts on Student Academic Outcomes

All Grant Types  
(67 Evaluations)

Yes  
No (null)

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[@jesse\\_lecy](#)



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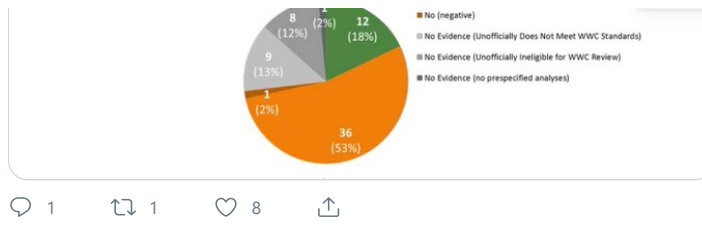
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