

**Reference:** Mosteller, F., Nave, B. & Miech, E.J. (2004). Why we need a structured abstract in education research. Educational Researcher, 33 (1), pp. 29-34.

## STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

**Background:** Over 1100 education journals collectively publish more than 20,000 articles of education research each year. Under current practice, no systematic way exists to move the research findings from these studies into the hands of the millions of education practitioners and policymakers in the United States who might use them.

**Purpose:** To help disseminate education research findings, we propose that education journals consider adopting a *structured abstract*, a structural innovation that focuses on the format of the article itself. The structured abstract would replace the paragraph-style narrative summary – typically either an APA-style abstract or “editor’s introduction” – now present at the beginning of many articles.

**Intervention:** A structured abstract is a formal and compact summary of an article’s main features and findings. Like a table or figure, it has a predictable structure that compresses information into a small space and can be read independent of the main body of the article. The structured abstract is longer and more detailed than the standard paragraph-style narrative summary. On the printed page, the structured abstract appears between the title and the main body of the article. It includes basic items applying to all articles (i.e., background, purpose, research design, and conclusions) and several additional items that apply to some articles but not to others (i.e., setting, population, intervention, data collection and analysis, and findings).

**Research Design:** Analytic Essay

**Conclusions:** The structured abstract is a viable and useful innovation to help practitioners and policymakers systematically access, assess, and communicate education studies and research findings. Compared to current practice, the structured abstract provides a more robust vehicle for disseminating research through traditional routes as well as through new channels made possible by emerging technologies.

Originally published in *Educational Researcher*, January/February 2004, p. 29.