
CSRQ Center Report on Elementary School Comprehensive School Reform Models

Educator's Summary

Last Updated November 25, 2008

Which comprehensive school reform programs have evidence of positive effects on elementary school achievement? To find out, this review summarizes evidence on comprehensive school reform (CSR) models in elementary schools, grades K-6. Comprehensive school reform models are programs used schoolwide to improve student achievement. They typically include the following elements:

- Innovative approaches to instruction and curriculum used in many subjects throughout the school
- Extensive, ongoing professional development, and coaches or facilitators in the building to help manage the reform process
- Measureable goals and benchmarks for student achievement
- Emphasis on parent and community involvement

CSR models are developed and supported by national organizations, mostly nonprofits, that provide professional development, materials, and support to networks of schools.

Key Findings

Overall, 495 studies on 22 CSR models were identified initially relevant, 158 were eligible for full review, and 95 met standards. Of these, 72 were rated “conclusive,” and 23 were rated “suggestive.”

Program Ratings

Listed below are currently available programs, grouped by strength of effectiveness. Within each group, programs are listed alphabetically.

Very Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

 None

Moderately Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	Direct Instruction (Full immersion model)	Focuses on accelerating student performance using interactive, systematic, and explicit instruction supported by a system of data analysis and problem solving tightly linked to instruction.	E-mail: kengel@nifdi.org Website: www.nifdi.org
	Success for All	Instructional practices and procedures that focus on cooperative learning and aligned professional development and materials.	E-mail: sfainfo@successforall.org Website: www.successforall.org

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	Accelerated Schools Plus	Uses a transformation process that emphasizes placing school governance and decision making in the hands of school staff, parents, and students, so they can take responsibility for their own school culture and practices.	E-mail: info@acceleratedschools.net Website: www.acceleratedschools.net
	America's Choice	Works with districts and schools to align classroom instruction with state standards and assessments. Through ongoing analysis of student assessment data and student work, teachers learn to focus instruction on identified needs and move students toward attainment of standards.	E-mail: info@americaschoice.org Website: www.americaschoice.org

Best Evidence
Encyclopedia (BEE)

Empowering Educators with Evidence on Proven Programs

www.bestevidence.org

Rating	Program	Description	Contact/Website
	Core Knowledge	Provides teachers with a set of specific topics that can be taught in language arts, geography, mathematics, science, and the fine arts. The content is presented in a grade-by-grade sequence in order to prevent repetition or gaps in the acquisition of knowledge.	E-mail: coreknow@coreknowledge.org Website: www.coreknowledge.org
	Literacy Collaborative	Professional development model for primary and intermediate grade level teachers that presents a comprehensive school wide approach to literacy development and includes capacity-building through a school-based literacy coordinator.	E-mail: guyd@rrel.org Website: www.lcosu.org
	National Writing Project	Provides teachers with comprehensive instruction in methodologies for the teaching of writing and use of writing as a learning tool across the curriculum through its professional development programs.	E-mail: nwp@writingproject.org Website: www.writingproject.org
	School Development Program	Offers a structure and process for mobilizing teachers, administrators, and community members to support students' maturation along six developmental pathways: physical, cognitive, psychological, language, social, and ethical.	E-mail: schooldevelopmentprogram@yale.edu Website: www.schooldevelopmentprogram.org

Rating	Program	Description	Contact/Website
	School Renaissance	Provides professional development opportunities, organization and management solutions, technical assistance, strategies for parental involvement, and a plan for annual evaluation.	E-mail: answers@renlearn.com Website: www.renlearn.com

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	ATLAS Communities	Offers a model for systematic change that leads to continuous improvement by changing the ways teachers and administrators think and work. The comprehensive approach is developed through the adoption of five key elements: teaching and learning, assessment, professional development, management and decision making, and family and community.	E-mail: iatlas@edc.org Website: www.atlascommunities.org
	Different Ways of Knowing	Model based on a curriculum that uses the performing, visual, literary, and media arts to provide students with different ways to understand themselves and their surroundings.	Website: www.differentways.org

Best Evidence
Encyclopedia (BEE)

Empowering Educators with Evidence on Proven Programs

www.bestevidence.org

Rating	Program	Description	Contact/Website
	Integrated Thematic Instruction	Helps local administrators and classroom teachers use research of the human brain to guide the selection on curriculum and instructional strategies so that schools are transformed into safe learning communities that develop responsive citizens.	E-mail: skovalik@kovalik.com Website: www.kovalik.com
	Modern Red Schoolhouse	Model based on the theory that for students to achieve high academic standards, school and classroom practices should accommodate the different needs of each student. Each Modern Red Schoolhouse program is custom designed to meet the individual needs of schools and districts.	E-mail: info@mrsh.org Website: www.mrsh.org
	Pearson Achievement Solutions (Formerly Co-nect)	Provides district wide professional learning plans that are focused on improving the school and transforming the culture of teaching. Pearson Achievement Solutions' plans can include expanding district and school improvement efforts, developing the decision making process, enhancing instruction, and maximizing professional growth.	E-mail: info@PearsonAchievement.com Website: www.pearsonachievement.com
	Ventures Initiative and Focus System	Provides for comprehensive professional development that helps teachers focus on active learning and problem solving.	E-mail: info@vesc-education.com Website: www.vesc-education.com

Other Programs

Zero Evidence of Effectiveness

Breakthrough to Literacy
Coalition of Essential Schools
Community for Learning
Comprehensive Early Literacy Learning
Expeditionary Learning
First Steps
Onward to Excellence II

Review Methods

For its quantitative analyses of overall achievement, CSRQ identified 22 CSR programs serving at least 20 schools in at least 3 states. They then did an extensive search for all types of studies that evaluated these programs. The evaluations' validity was rated as inconclusive, suggestive, or conclusive. Conclusive studies met the following criteria:

- Schools using each program had to be compared to equivalent control groups
- Schools had to have pretest scores or other baseline measures
- The outcome measures had to be reliable and valid
- The study duration had to be at least one year

To be considered “suggestive,” a study had to meet the same standards, but could have up to two “non-critical threats to validity.”

Program Ratings Basis

CSR programs were rated in terms of the strength of their evidence of effectiveness in five categories:

 **Very Strong Evidence of Effectiveness:** At least 10 qualifying studies, with at least 5 rated “conclusive” and 75% of outcomes significantly positive, with an overall mean effect size of $ES=+0.25$. “Effect size” is the experimental-control difference divided by the standard deviation.

 **Moderately Strong Evidence of Effectiveness:** 5-9 qualifying studies, with at least 3 rated “conclusive,” and 51% to 75% of outcomes significantly positive, with an overall mean effect size of at least +0.15.

 **Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness:** 2-4 qualifying studies, with at least 1 rated “conclusive,” and 26% to 50% of outcomes significantly positive, with an overall mean effect size of at least +0.15.

 **Limited Evidence of Effectiveness:** 1 qualifying study, with 1-25% of outcomes significantly positive.

 **Zero Evidence of Effectiveness:** No qualifying outcomes were significantly positive.

CSRQ also looked at evidence in three additional areas:

- Additional student outcomes
- The model's design based on research
- Services and supports provided to schools

Full Report

Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center. American Institutes for Research. (2006, November). CSRQ Center report on elementary school comprehensive school reform models. www.csrq.org/documents/CSRQCenterCombinedReport_Web11-03-06.pdf