
CSRQ Center Report on Education Service Providers: Educator's Summary Last Updated November 25, 2008

Education service providers (ESPs), or education management organizations, are for-profit or non-profit organizations that contract with new or existing public, charter, or private schools to help them implement comprehensive reforms. Which of these ESPs have evidence that they help children in elementary and secondary school of positive effects on achievement? To find out, this review summarizes evidence on student achievement outcomes in schools managed by ESPs.

Education service providers offer to schools and districts services such as the following:

- Curriculum design
- Professional development
- Student assessments
- Financial and operational management
- Facilities management
- Human resources management

According to a survey cited in the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center (CSRQ) report, in 2004-2005 there were 59 for-profit ESPs managing 535 schools in 24 states and the District of Columbia, of which 86% were charter schools. The CSRQ report reviews research on the seven largest of these, which collectively serve 350 schools.

Key Findings

With the sole exception of Edison Schools, there was very limited evidence on student achievement outcomes in schools managed by education service providers. Overall, 20 studies (17 on Edison) were identified as eligible for full review, and nine (all Edison) met standards. Of these, seven were rated “conclusive,” two “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

 None

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact/Website
	Edison Schools	Partners with school districts, charter boards, and states to implement research-based school designs and curriculum, achievement management solutions, professional development models, and extended learning programs.	E-mail: information@edisonschools.com Website: www.edisonschools.com

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness

 None

Other Ratings

 **Zero Evidence of Effectiveness**

The Leona Group
 Mosaica Education
 National Heritage Academies
 SABIS Educational Systems
 White Hat Management (HOPE Academies)

No Rating (no information available)

NR Imagine Schools

Review Methods

For its quantitative analyses of overall achievement, CSRQ identified the education service providers serving the largest numbers of schools and districts. 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 their evidence of positive achievement effects as follows:

 **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 study outcomes were significantly positive.

NR No Rating: No qualifying studies

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, April). CSRQ Center report on education service providers. www.csrq.org/espreport.asp