
CSRQ Center Report on Middle and High School Comprehensive School Reform Models Educator's Summary Last Updated November 25, 2008

Which comprehensive school reform programs have evidence of positive effects on middle and high school achievement? To find out, this review summarizes evidence on comprehensive school reform (CSR) models in grades 6-12. 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, 197 studies on 18 national programs were reviewed. Of these, 15 studies were rated “conclusive,” and 12 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



 None

Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	America's Choice	Provides teachers and schools with a coherent, standards-based educational system that aligns instruction to expectations. Using data from regular ongoing assessments, teachers and school staff chart progress and provide safety nets in a timely and targeted fashion.	E-mail: schooldesign@ncee.org Website: www.ncee.org
	School Development Program	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.	Website: www.schooldevelopmentprogram.org
	Success for All Middle School	Provides teachers and schools with a proven set of instructional practices focusing on cooperative learning, which target achievement outcomes - reading, writing, science and the humanities – and non-achievement outcomes - student attendance, retention, and promotion, and discipline rates.	E-mail: sfainfo@successforall.org Website: www.successforall.org
	Talent Development High School	Provides support for teachers to teach standards-based lessons and encourage active participation and contextual learning during 90-minute scheduling blocks.	E-mail: bhebron@csos.jhu.edu Website: www.csos.jhu.edu/tdhs

Limited Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Description	Contact / Website
	Expeditionary Learning	Designs schools where students engage in active learning and connect their learning to the real world, with the belief that “authentic” practices in the classroom create academic rigor and character growth.	E-mail: info@elob.org Website: www.elob.org
	First Things First	A set of strategies that includes engaging students through strong and consistent adult-student relationships within the school, connecting in-school relationships to a student’s family, and improving the academic instruction within the school to enhance student learning without remediation.	E-mail: infor@irre.org Website: www.irre.org/ftf
	KIPP	Provides underserved communities with free open enrollment schools that prepare students to succeed in high-level academics, including college, through use of rigorous instruction, additional time, extensive home assignments, and high standards.	E-mail: info@kipp.org Website: www.kipp.org
	Middle Start	Collaborates with other national and local organizations to provide professional development for teachers, support networks for schools, and challenging and supportive programs for students.	E-mail: info@middlestart.org Website: www.middlestart.org

Rating	Program	Description	Contact/Website
	More Effective Schools	Aligns school culture with research and supports school leaders through professional development, technical assistance, and recognition of success.	E-mail: aes@mes.org Website: www.mes.org
	Project GRAD	Focuses on high-quality curriculum and instruction aligned with high academic standards, with the expectation that 80% of students graduate from high school and 50% of those graduates enter and graduate college.	Website: www.projectgrad.org

Other Ratings

Zero Evidence of Effectiveness

Accelerated Schools Plus
 ATLAS Communities
 Coalition of Essential Schools
 High Schools that Work
 Making Middle Grades Work
 Modern Red Schoolhouse
 Onward to Excellence II
 Turning Points

Review Methods


For its quantitative analyses of overall achievement, CSRQ identified 18 CSR programs serving at least 40 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 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 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, October). CSRQ Center report on middle and high school comprehensive school reform models. www.csrq.org/MSHSreport.asp