



# Comprehensive School Reform Models: Primary Educator's Summary

Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center **American Institutes for  
Research**

Last updated November 2008



**Best Evidence** Encyclopaedia  
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There are many comprehensive school reform (CSR) programmes that promise to turn around under-achieving schools, and these have been increasingly adopted. This trend is driven by the recognition that school improvement efforts are complex and require a co-ordinated, systematic approach that addresses every aspect of a school.

CSR programmes are often developed and supported by not-for-profit organisations which provide professional development, materials, and support to networks of schools. Typically, they 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 pupil achievement
- Emphasis on parent and community involvement

However, there have been few sources of information for schools to assess which of the available programmes can really meet the needs of their pupils.




This review summarises research on comprehensive school reform programmes for primary schools, and was conducted by the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center (CSRQ) at the American Institutes for Research. They looked at *all* available evidence on CSR programmes designed for use with pupils aged 5-11, in order to establish what we know works. They examined all studies of relevant CSR programmes from all countries, as long as a report was available in English.\* (NB Most studies took place in the US). They were then able to assess and compare the effectiveness of these programmes. Descriptions and ratings for all the programmes are listed further down this summary.

The full report (which this review summarises) is available at [www.bestevidence.org.uk](http://www.bestevidence.org.uk)



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

## Programme Ratings

Listed below are currently available programmes, grouped by strength of effectiveness. Within each group programmes available in the UK are listed first, and then the remainder in alphabetical order.

Key to Programme Ratings	
	<b>Very Strong:</b> 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.
	<b>Moderately Strong:</b> 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 $+0.15$ .
	<b>Moderate:</b> 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 $+0.15$ .





	<b>Limited:</b> 1 qualifying study, with 1-25% of outcomes significantly positive.
	<b>Zero:</b> No qualifying study outcomes were significantly positive.
<b>NR</b>	<b>No Rating:</b> No qualifying studies



### Very Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

None






### Moderately Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Success for All		Instructional practices and procedures that focus on co-operative learning and aligned professional development and materials.	UK website: <a href="http://www.successforall.org.uk">www.successforall.org.uk</a> (Product raining provided)
	Direct Instruction		Focuses on accelerating pupil performance using interactive, systematic, and explicit instruction, supported by a system of data analysis and problem solving tightly linked to instruction.	US website: <a href="http://www.nifdi.org">www.nifdi.org</a> US contact: kengel@nifdi.org

### Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness




Rating	Programme	Type	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.	UK website: <a href="http://www.renaissance-learning.co.uk">www.renaissance-learning.co.uk</a> (Product training available)
	Accelerated Schools Plus		Uses a transformation process that emphasizes placing school governance and decision making in the hands of school staff, parents, and pupils, so they can take responsibility for their own school culture	US website: <a href="http://www.acceleratedschools.net">www.acceleratedschools.net</a>






Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
			and practices.	
	America's Choice		Learning focused on all pupils reaching standards, varying only the time and resources needed, using prevention, early intervention, and acceleration strategies.	US website: <a href="http://www.ncee.org">www.ncee.org</a> US contact: schooldesign@ncee.org
	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 an academic year-by-year sequence in order to prevent repetition or gaps.	US website: <a href="http://www.coreknowledge.org">www.coreknowledge.org</a> US contact: coreknow@coreknowledge.org
	Literacy Collaborative		Professional development model that presents a comprehensive school-wide approach to literacy development, and includes capacity-building through a school-based literacy coordinator.	US website: <a href="http://www.lcosu.org">www.lcosu.org</a> US contact: guyd@rrel.org
	National Writing Project		Professional development programme which provides teachers with comprehensive instruction in methodologies for the teaching of writing, and the use of writing as a learning tool across the curriculum.	US website: <a href="http://www.nwp.org">www.nwp.org</a>
	School Development Program		Offers a structure and process for mobilising teachers, administrators, and community members to support pupils' along six developmental pathways: physical, cognitive, psychological, language, social, and ethical.	US website: <a href="http://www.schooldevelopmentprogram.org">www.schooldevelopmentprogram.org</a> US contact: schooldevelopmentprogram@yale.edu



## Limited Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
	Ventures Initiative and Focus System		Comprehensive professional development that helps teachers focus on active learning and problem solving. Services include web-based professional development courses and customized websites eg. To facilitate communication within the school community, or to manage academic and demographic data. Web services are supported 24/7.	US website: <a href="http://www.vesc-education.com">www.vesc-education.com</a> US/UK contact: Maxine Bleich, President, Ventures, mbleich@vesc-education.com (Product training available in the UK )
	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.	US website: <a href="http://www.atlascommunities.org">www.atlascommunities.org</a> US contact: iatlas@edc.org
	Different Ways of Knowing		Model based on a curriculum that uses the performing, visual, literary, and media arts to provide pupils with different	US website: <a href="http://www.differentways.org">www.differentways.org</a>



Rating	Programme	Type	Description	Contact / Website
			ways to understand themselves and their surroundings.	
	Integrated Thematic Instruction		Research on the human brain is used to guide the selection of curriculum and instructional strategies, so that schools are transformed into safe learning communities that develop responsible citizens.	US website: <a href="http://www.kovalik.com">www.kovalik.com</a> US contact: Debora Schweikl, Professional Development Liaison, dschweikl@theCenter4Learning.com
	Modern Red Schoolhouse		Professional development model based on the premise that in order to achieve high academic standards, school and classroom practices should accommodate the different needs of each pupil.	US website: <a href="http://www.mrsh.org">www.mrsh.org</a> US contact: info@mrsh.org
	Pearson Achievement Solutions (Formerly Connect)		Provides district-wide professional learning plans that are focused on improving the school and transforming the culture of teaching. These plans can include expanding district and school improvement efforts, developing the decision making process, enhancing instruction, and maximising professional growth.	US website: <a href="http://www.pearsonachievement.com">www.pearsonachievement.com</a>



#### Zero

Breakthrough to Literacy - [www.breakthroughtoliteracy.com](http://www.breakthroughtoliteracy.com)

Coalition of Essential Schools - [www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org)

Community for Learning - [www.temple.edu/lss/cfl.htm](http://www.temple.edu/lss/cfl.htm)

Comprehensive Early Literacy Learning - [www.cell-exll.com](http://www.cell-exll.com)

Expeditionary Learning - [www.elob.org](http://www.elob.org)

First Steps - [www.stepspd.org](http://www.stepspd.org)

Onward to Excellence II - [www.nwrel.org/scpd/ote](http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/ote)



## Review Methods

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

- Schools using each programme had to be compared to equivalent control groups
- Schools had to have pre-test 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.”

CSRQ also looked at evidence in three additional areas:

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

## The Full Report

- The full report, which this review summarises, was produced by the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center (CSRQ), American Institutes for Research. The full report is available at [www.bestevidence.org.uk](http://www.bestevidence.org.uk).

