

**COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM
SUMMARY REPORT OF EVALUATION FINDINGS**

**PREPARED FOR:
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA**

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Comprehensive School Reform

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Introduction

The Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program is a federally funded initiative that enables schools to restructure and/or enhance their organization and practices to better enable all students to achieve at high standards. In 1998, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CRDC) was originally enacted by Congress and, with the passage of the No Child Left behind (NCLB) Act in 2002, it became a fully authorized program and was placed under Title I. The 2006-07 academic year was the final year for which CSR funds were distributed to local districts and schools in Pennsylvania from the United States Department of Education (USDE) through the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

NCLB describes 11 components (rather than whole school reform models) of CSR that focus on the underlying processes that can act as a catalyst for changes needed in order for schools to ensure that all pupils can learn. The 11 critical components that schools were to address as part of their CSR grant were: (1) research-based methods; (2) comprehensive design; (3) professional development; (4) goals and benchmarks; (5) support *from* staff for CSR initiatives; (6) support *for* staff; (7) parental and community involvement; (8) annual evaluation; (9) external support; (10) coordination of resources; and (11) student achievement.

For the past several years, USDE has contracted with Westat, Inc. to conduct a national evaluation of CSR. As part of this effort, Westat developed CSR implementation and achievement data collection forms that were to be completed for each school receiving CSR funding; the intent of the forms was to ensure that common data elements were included in the evaluation and that common metrics were used to describe progress schools made in CSR implementation and subsequent gains in student achievement.

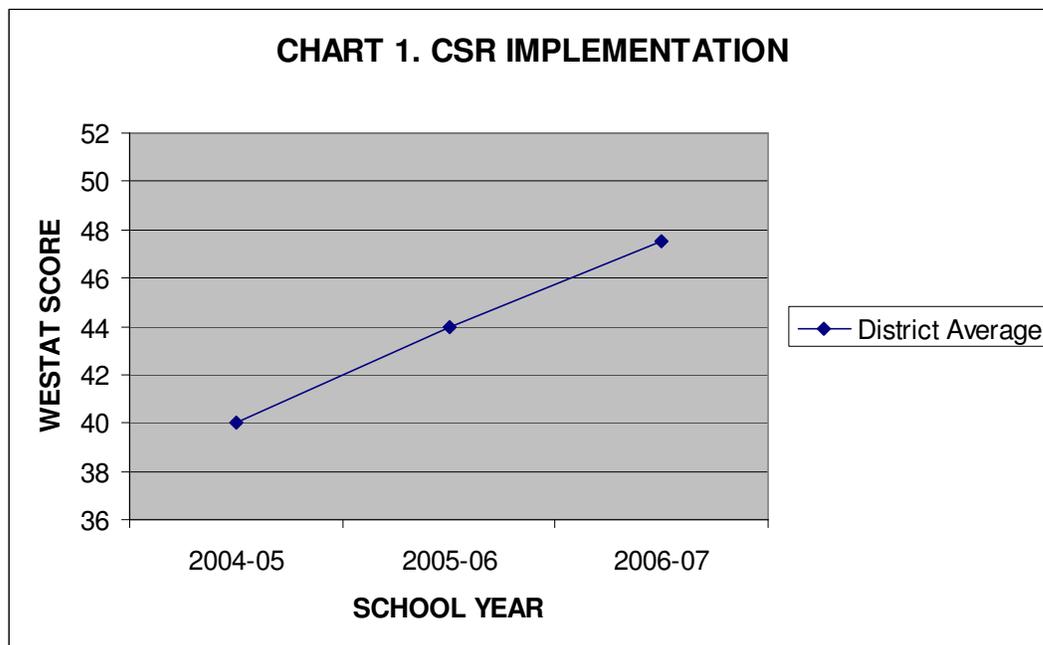
During the 2006-2007 academic year, the School District of Philadelphia had 20 elementary schools and one middle school involved in the CSR process. Educational Enterprises, LLC, has been serving as the external evaluator for these federally-funded grants and has conducted numerous site visits at each school over the course of the grant. This report provides a summary of the implementation and achievement data from the School District of Philadelphia and examines trends and findings for the 21 schools just completing the final year of their CSR grant.

Implementation

The data collection forms for documenting the degree of CSR implementation at each school site address the 11 components and each is rated on a five-point scale where, in general, the ratings are based on a continuum from: 1 = No Progress to 5 = Fully

Functioning. Based on the 11 items and the five-point scale, the highest score attainable by a school would be 55 and the lowest would be 11; a score of 44 would be indicative of an “implemented” rating. In addition, for each component, the facilitators and/or barriers to successful implementation were to be described.

As can be seen in Chart 1, the average implementation score increased from the 2004-05 school year to 2006-07. On average, the schools have been implementing the CSR components and are moving toward a more fully functioning level, where the components are becoming part of the culture and rituals of the school. In terms of the 11 CSR components, 10 of the 11 were “implemented” as defined by an average score exceeding 4.00. Only the parent and community involvement item was rated lower and the following three components were rated relatively higher than the others: goals and benchmarks, support for staff, and student achievement.



Of the 21 schools receiving CSR funds in 2006-2007, 17 schools were in their third and final year of CSR implementation and 4 schools were in their second year of CSR implementation. In viewing the results by schools, 14 of the 21 schools, or 66%, attained an average score that equated to an “implemented” scale score (mean > 4.00). The average implementation score for all 21 schools (based on the evaluation of 11 different components using the CSR implementation scale of 1-5) was 4.26.

The average implementation score for all Year III schools was 4.42; 11 of the Year III schools – Key (4.91); Richmond (4.82); Meade (4.82); Fairhill (4.82); Taggart (4.73); Waring (4.73); Hopkinson (4.64); Ludlow (4.64); Sheridan (4.55); Morrison (4.55); and Alcorn (4.45) – exceeded the Year III average *indicating a very high level of CSR implementation*. Three more Year III schools – Kelley (4.36); Fell (4.09); and Drew (4.0) – have at least minimally implemented their CSR agendas. And only three of the Year III

schools – Pickett (3.82); Ferguson (3.73); and Bethune (3.55) – failed to achieve the minimum 4.0 implementation target.

The average CSR implementation score for the four Year II schools was 3.54. However, only one of these Year II schools – Pratt (3.91) – was approaching the desirable 4.0 level of implementation at the end of the second year. Three Year II schools – Potter-Thomas (3.64); Bluford (3.36); and Munoz-Marin (3.27) – still need to make considerable progress to attain CSR implemented status.

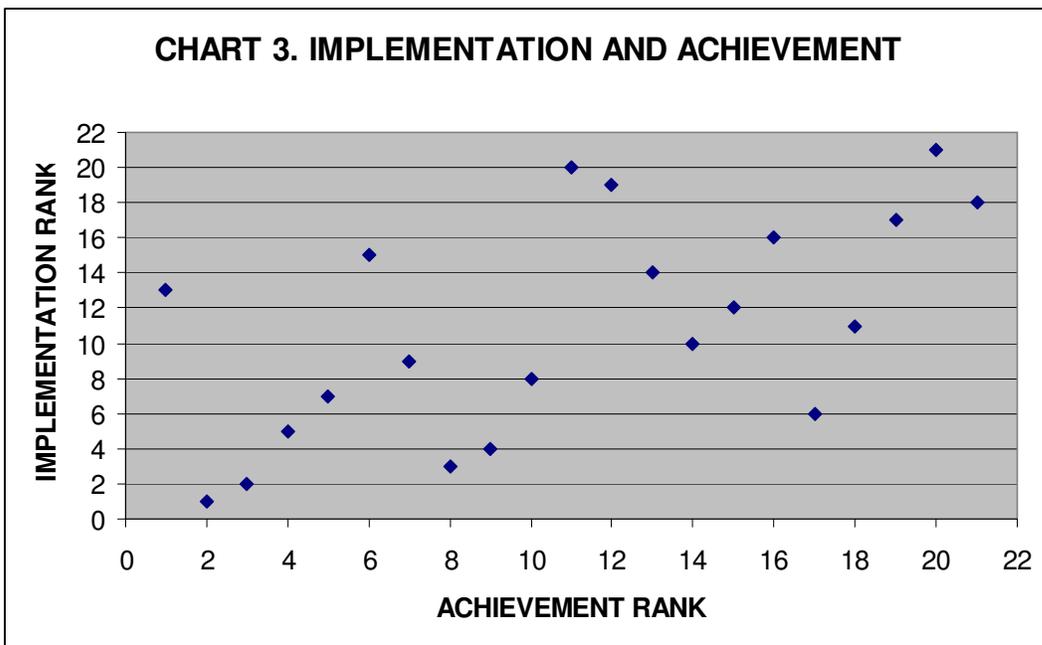
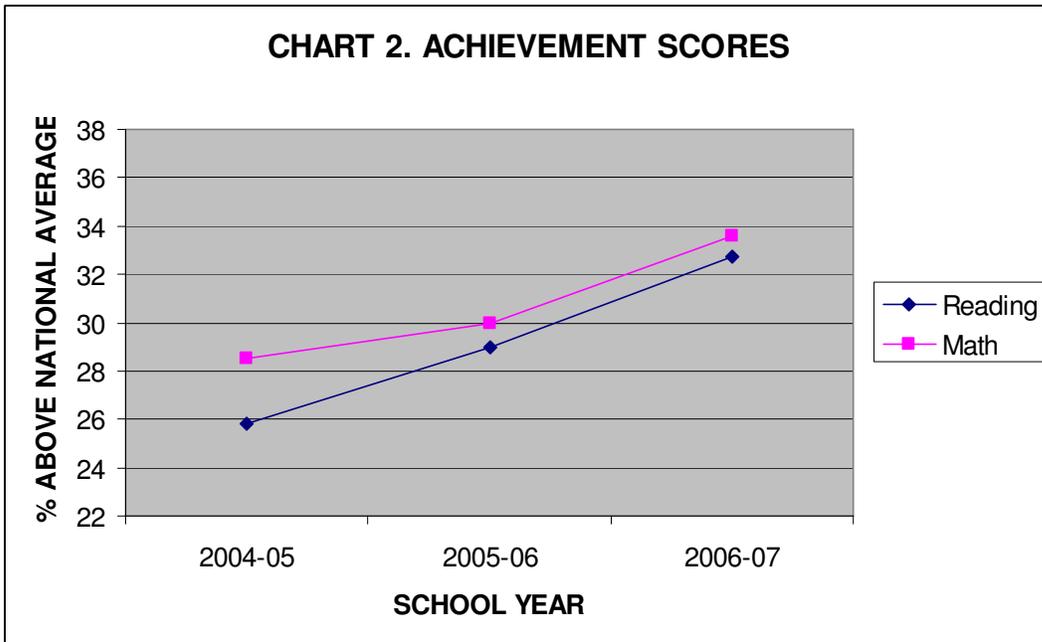
A content analysis of the implementation facilitators and barriers noted for each school suggested that a number of factors enhanced or inhibited CSR implementation. In schools with relatively higher implementation scores, there tended to be a strong instructional leader(s) who delegated authority to staff to assume responsibility for CSR initiatives, a creative approach to the coordination of resources and professional development, and a more “data-driven” focus on instructional strategies. Where schools were rated relatively lower, there seemed to be a greater incidence of turnover of leadership and key staff, a lack of initial “buy-in” to the CSR initiatives, and the lack of a “motivating leader” to enthusiastically promote the program.

Achievement

The School District of Philadelphia has administered the Terra Nova assessments over the past several years. As these tests are administered at each grade level each year, it is possible to track the same group or cohort of students across several years to obtain more accurate measures of student progress; this type of analysis was not possible in past years when the Pennsylvania State Assessment System results were utilized in conjunction with the CSR evaluation.

Chart 2 provides the Terra Nova Reading and Math scores for the 21 CSR schools beginning with the 2004-05 school year through the most recent testing in 2006-07. Across the three years, the trends are similar and encouraging. Both the reading and math scores increased over the course of the grant, and both sets of scores increased at about the same rate. The math scores were initially higher than the reading scores and that trend continued.

Chart 3 provides some data that begin to explore the relationship between the degree of implementation of the 11 CSR components and the achievement scores from the school sites. When the schools were rank-ordered in terms of 2006-07 implementation scores and achievement results, based on the percentage of students scoring above the national average on the reading and math tests, a fairly strong trend emerges. In general, the schools that were highly ranked in terms of implementation also were highly ranked on student achievement, and vice-versa. To the extent to which the 11 CSR components reflect sound educational practice, there seems to be a fairly strong relationship between the implementation of these principles and student achievement. These data suggest that CSR was a successful initiative that benefited many schools and enhanced student achievement at many sites.



Schools and Programs

In the course of approximately 50 formal visitations to elementary schools during 2006-2007, Educational Enterprises staff members have noted a number of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) reform models that may be worthy of in-depth attention from the School District of Philadelphia. These programs appear to be substantially impacting (or

at least seem to have the potential to meaningfully impact) the culture of the school, i.e. what is taught and/or how it is taught and/or how children learn.

The School District of Philadelphia may want to closely scrutinize the implementation of these CSR models to determine if any or all are worth replicating on a larger scale system wide. The site-based school leaders in each instance would be the most important and prime source of data in reviewing the effectiveness of any model based on their actual experiences with that model in practice. While it seems important to note that Educational Enterprises does not endorse any of the CSR models described below, it does view the recent and/or ongoing implementation of the specified CSR models/components specified above as “worthy of attention” from the School District of Philadelphia in terms of their substance and impacts at the schools.

Junior Great Books. This program is firmly in place at Richmond Elementary after three years of CSR implementation. At the heart of this model is a “shared inquiry” methodology now used by most teachers in classrooms school wide. This “Socratic” approach seeks to strengthen analytical and critical thinking among pupils. Aside from being able to select books from a rich array of choices, students work to develop skills in questioning, interpreting, clarifying, persuading and summarizing. This model involves “higher order” teaching and learning that has been blended nicely into the core curricula priorities of the School district of Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Writing Project (PhilWP). This CSR program is affiliated with the *National Writing Project* housed at the University of Pennsylvania. The Meade Elementary School is utilizing many of the “best practices” of PhilWP across its grade levels. The model’s pragmatic consultants are regularly on site and well respected at the school. The *PhilWP* model focuses on improving student literacy skills and encouraging pupil writing across the curriculum as keys to all learning. Extensive and ongoing professional development for teachers and collegial support and modeling from the provider are deemed to be essential to the growth and development of this program.

Steps To Guided Reading. This CSR program was developed by *Learning Media* of New Zealand. One key component is to help teachers to learn to “scaffold their students” to better address the development of reading skills and strategies among pupils with an array of different needs and skills. This model offers powerful professional development for teachers and periodic on-site presence of a representative to interact with and work along side classroom instructors. *Steps to Guided Reading* is well established at the Fairhill, Sheridan and Taggart elementary schools and is highly rated by school leaders.

Micro Society (Citizens in Action). Micro Society’s model of CSR known as *Citizens In Action* accents improved student citizenship and, to accomplish this, gives pupils key responsibilities in helping to run their school. The initiative seeks to generate a sense of community, cooperation and caring among the student body through classroom activities, a student run legislature and court, pupil law enforcement officers, and various student task forces. Trained consultants work with school staff to make all of this happen. This program is experiencing success at the Taggart Elementary School.

Caring School Community. This program is an affective component utilized school wide that seeks to create and enhance responsibility, participation, cooperation and better overall behavior among all students. It is firmly in place at the Waring School. This program involves regular class meetings (designed by the model provider), cross age “buddies” pairings of students, and Homeside activities that link the school with pupil homes. In the recent past, the *Caring School Community* model has also been highly rated by Educational Enterprises evaluators at the Fulton Elementary School.

Understanding Math. Neufeld Learning System has produced this computer-assisted mathematics program that targets the academic engagement of every student in a classroom. Effectively implemented at both Key and Fairhill Elementary Schools, *Understanding Math* is quite interactive and aims to stimulate pupils in problem solving, understanding concepts, and rigorous practice with different mathematics components. Two basic premises of this program are universal pupil involvement (“every student should answer every question”) and that “mistakes by students are good things” since they provide opportunities for learning.

Success For All. This program is a comprehensive reading approach being utilized at four Edison EMO’s – Alcorn, Waring, Ludlow and Kelley – as a key part of their CSR initiatives. SFA focuses on prevention and early intervention for pupils. Program components include a block of daily uninterrupted reading instruction for pupils, grouping and regrouping of students by reading levels, cooperative learning activities, individual pupil accountability, one-on-one tutoring, and ongoing classroom management training and materials for teachers.

Everyday Math. The University of Chicago’s *Everyday Mathematics* seeks to remove the study of mathematics from isolation and to make it more meaningful by rooting it in “real life” contexts and situations. It is focused on multiple exposures to math topics for students and frequent opportunities (multiple methods) for pupils to review and practice skills. Pupils are encouraged to explain and/or verbalize and share with classmates their mathematical conclusions. Calculators are utilized for many math enhancement activities. There is also a component of this model that links school and student homes. Three Edison EMO’s – Alcorn, Ludlow and Kelley – have successfully built this program into their CSR agendas.

Read 180. The materials and intensively individualized software of Scholastic’s *Read 180* program have had “glowing” advance publicity nationally. However, logistical, personnel and technical problems have somewhat hampered *Read 180* as it has attempted get established in several designated schools in the School District of Philadelphia. Nevertheless, this model bears watching and monitoring to determine if it might have any widespread value for pupils across the school system. Morrison and Hopkinson elementary schools seem to have made the most progress in getting *Read 180* into place.

One other CSR initiative worthy of school district scrutiny is the *Media Center at the Key School* which has been very effective in exposing parents to technology and its

educational applications. Additionally, this school's pragmatic web site should be considered as a potential model for other schools to emulate.

Keys to Successful CSR Implementation

As described earlier in this report, to the extent to which the 11 CSR components reflect sound educational practice, there seems to be a fairly strong relationship between the implementation of these principles and student achievement. These data suggest that CSR was a successful initiative that benefited many schools and enhanced student achievement at many sites. A number of factors have been consistently documented by Educational Enterprises staff at schools where CSR has had strong success and these are briefly summarized below.

1. In all cases where there has been significant implementation success, the CSR components have been perceived by school leaders and staff as an asset in pursuing district/school goals, agendas and vision.
2. Successful CSR implementation has almost always had widespread and non-coerced "buy in" from faculty and other constituencies *well in advance of implementation*.
3. In most cases, schools that have experienced effective CSR implementation have had faculty stability and a sense of professional community. *The chief cause of CSR implementation failure has been excessive staff turnover and/or leadership changes in the principalship which has often destroyed program continuity.*
4. Strong and sustained direction and oversight from the principal and teacher site leaders has existed where high CSR implementation has occurred. In almost all of these cases, teacher leaders have been effectively empowered by the school principal and there is a sense of "shared leadership" at the school.
5. The most effectively implemented CSR models have involved high quality professional development and/or related model provider assistance with some type of ongoing presence at the school also being sustained by the model provider(s). Schools have expressed a clear preference for those model providers who come on-site to interact and work with faculty on the CSR initiatives.
6. All of the successfully implemented CSR programs had informed and empowered school leadership teams that regularly provided ongoing monitoring/feedback to staff to create adjustments as necessary.
7. The school district's Title I office has maintained tight coupling with the schools regarding the CSR direction and funding streams. The Title I Office Regional Representatives have been "prime sources" for necessary information and inquiries at each participating school.