

WORKING P A P E R

Assessing the Implementation of Comprehensive School Reform Models

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SUMMARY

This Working Paper is part of a five-year study evaluating the implementation and effects of comprehensive school reform models – Accelerated Schools (AS), Core Knowledge (CK), Direct Instruction (DI), and Success For All (SFA). The study endeavors, among several objectives, to measure the extent to which reform models are being faithfully implemented in schools. Although the four Comprehensive School Reform Models (CSRMs) have a common goal, which is to increase the academic achievement of students, they differ greatly in the following components: philosophy, instructional techniques, content and curriculum, staff development and training, accountability, parental involvement, school commitment, organization and governance, and support for the model.

The study uses a comparative longitudinal analytic approach that will track, over time, schools located in Texas and Florida that are implementing at least one of the study’s four CSRMs and a sample of “comparison” schools that are not implementing CSRMs. Principals and a random sample of teachers in the study schools provide information on model implementation through annual surveys (four waves). The surveys measuring model implementation include both common indicators to allow for comparability between model and non-model schools and specific indices that capture the uniqueness of each model.

The implementation results presented in this report are from analysis of the first wave of data collected in the Spring of 2002, and should be considered preliminary. We find wide variations in the degree of implementation across schools having adopted the same model. However, at an aggregate level, results suggest that model schools seek to faithfully implement their models with Core Knowledge having the lowest overall implementation score. The level of implementation of specific model components is the highest for curriculum for all models; methods of instruction is highest for AS, DI, and SFA models; groupings of students is highest for DI and SFA; and governance is highest for the AS model. Irrespective of model type, schools have the most difficulty adhering to the model requirements that specify the appropriate initial staff development and support that should be provided to teachers. Our analysis indicates that comparison schools engage in similar practices that are central to the model schools, but with less frequency and commitment.