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Moving Forward with Comprehensive Reform

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Moving Forward with Comprehensive Reform

by Bill Kincaid and Julie Pederson

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR D) Program, begun in 1998, aims to raise student achievement by helping public schools across the country implement successful, comprehensive school reforms based on reliable research and effective practices. Research shows that an entire-school approach can be a powerful way to improve teaching and learning. In establishing this program, Congress and the President recognized the potential for the wider use of proven, research-based models for comprehensive school reform. The CSR D program builds upon and leverages state and local efforts to implement challenging academic standards in the classroom. In addition,

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Lessons Learned

- ✓ ***Take time to plan.***
- ✓ ***Find a good match.***
- ✓ ***Establish an effective working relationship with external partners.***
- ✓ ***Commit time for professional development.***
- ✓ ***Provide new kinds of leadership to support and sustain comprehensive reform.***
- ✓ ***Secure the full support and involvement of the district.***
- ✓ ***Make use of data and evaluate for continuous improvement.***

CSRSD is intended to strengthen Title I schoolwide programs, showing how a school can use all of its funding, including federal, state and local funds, in a coordinated effort to help students achieve challenging standards.

Under CSRSD, a comprehensive school reform program must integrate all of the following components:

- A comprehensive design with aligned components that:
 - Integrates curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, technology, and other aspects of effective school functioning;
 - Addresses identified school needs; and
 - Enables all students—including children from low-income families, children with limited English proficiency and children with disabilities—to meet high standards
- Effective, research-based methods and strategies
- Ongoing, high-quality professional development for all teachers and staff
- Measurable goals and benchmarks for student performance
- Support within the school
- Meaningful parent and community involvement
- High-quality external technical support and assistance
- Evaluation strategies
- Coordination of financial and other resources

Each school participating in the CSRSD program receives at least \$50,000 in start-up funds each year, renewable for up to three years, to help make improvements using *all* of the school's resources. To compete for CSRSD funds, districts must apply to their State Education Agency on behalf of local

schools that are ready to undertake a comprehensive reform effort. CSRSD grants have been awarded to approximately 1,750 schools representing all fifty States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. CSRSD grantees represent a range of schools, including significant numbers of both urban and rural schools.

Of the schools selected to participate, almost two-thirds operate Title I schoolwide programs, and more than 40% have been identified for improvement under Title I. Approximately 70% of the participating schools are elementary schools, and about 30% serve the middle and high school grades. CSRSD schools are implementing a wide array of models, including both nationally available models and locally developed ones. To learn more about participating schools, please see the searchable database of CSRSD schools maintained by the Southwest Education Development Laboratory at www.sedl.org/csrd/awards.html.



Omaha Nation Public School, Macy, Nebraska

At this high-poverty, rural K-12 school serving a predominantly Native American population, students in grades 8-12 conducted statistical studies of regional plant life, through observation and the use of computer spreadsheets, in preparation for a journey to retrace the Buffalo Trail. The school, which operates a Title I schoolwide program, is implementing an entire-school reform effort that includes Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound. This reform model features interdisciplinary curricula, cooperative learning, ongoing assessment of student work and team teaching. In the elementary grades, teachers are also implementing Success for All, a program focused on improving reading instruction. Through these efforts, teachers and school staff in grades K-12 are engaged in ongoing professional development and collaboration to improve teaching and learning throughout the school. Students in the elementary grades, most of whom were reading below grade level, have shown significant gains in reading achievement. Increasingly, families are reading with their children at home. Furthermore, while the school is still in the early stages of its reform effort, there has been a marked improvement in school climate, especially in the upper grades.

In several states, the CSRD program is leveraging additional resources to support schools in planning and implementing comprehensive reforms. In California, the CSRD program is integrated into the state's accountability initiative, where CSRD funds and state planning grants are supporting schools identified for assistance due to low student performance. Nevada

has allocated state funding to help schools in need of improvement adopt proven models for schoolwide reform, and Maryland is using criteria similar to CSRD to guide use of state funds by local districts. These and other investments reflect the growing commitment to comprehensive reform as a research-based strategy for school improvement.

Lessons Learned

Based on visits to CSRD schools conducted by Education Department teams and lessons learned by states, schools, and districts, here are some key action steps to keep in mind when planning and implementing a comprehensive reform program:

- ***Take time to plan.*** It takes a significant amount of time and planning to prepare and build support for a truly comprehensive reform effort—a schoolwide approach that will serve all students in a school and assist every teacher in improving teaching and learning in the classroom.
- ***Find a good match.*** Schools must determine whether a model has a strong research base with evidence of effectiveness, as well as whether the model addresses specific needs that the school has identified and is well aligned with state and local standards and assessments.
- ***Establish an effective working relationship.*** Together, the school and its model or other external partner must develop a shared understanding of expectations for the partnership as well as an ongoing system for communication and feedback.
- ***Commit time for professional development.*** Extensive time is needed to provide teachers with the professional development they need

McCoy Elementary School, Kansas City, Missouri

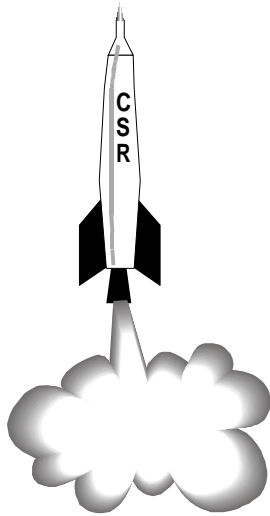
Building on work the school already had underway with the Comer School Development Program to strengthen school governance and family involvement, McCoy is using its CSRD grant to partner with the Institute for Learning, a non-profit organization based at the University of Pittsburgh that supports the use of research-based, innovative literacy approaches. Faculty meetings have been replaced with staff study groups addressing instructional issues. Rubrics are used to assess both teacher practice and student progress. A new enthusiasm for reading and a love of books is evident throughout the entire school, from the lunchroom to the library to the classroom. The percentage of third graders scoring at or above the proficient level on the Missouri Assessment Program has increased from 9% to 27%, surpassing the district average.

to implement reforms in the classroom. Changes in the use of time and staffing require attention early in the planning process.

- ***Provide new kinds of leadership to support and sustain comprehensive reform.*** The principal serves not only as an administrator but also as an instructional leader in the school, maintaining a vision and ongoing support for teachers in the reform effort. In addition, teachers may take on added responsibilities, including serving as a facilitator for a model or as a team leader or observing other teachers as a “critical friend.”
- ***Secure the full support and involvement of the district.*** Districts provide critical support by making a long-term commitment to the school’s improvement strategy, by allocating resources needed by the school, and by giving technical assistance in planning, implementing, and evaluating the reform effort.

- ***Make use of data and evaluate for continuous improvement.*** An effective evaluation design assesses progress in implementation as well as impact on student achievement. Developing implementation benchmarks based on the school’s comprehensive reform plan, including but not limited to benchmarks provided by an adopted model, can help schools collect and use data to make mid-course corrections.

Making schoolwide improvements is a complex task. However, there are a number of resources available to help. State Education Agencies, federally funded Regional Education Laboratories and Regional Comprehensive Assistance Centers, national education organizations—many groups are working to help schools and districts undertake comprehensive reform. The National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform is an important new resource that can help you access useful information on comprehensive reform and research-based strategies for school improvement.



The Future of Comprehensive School Reform

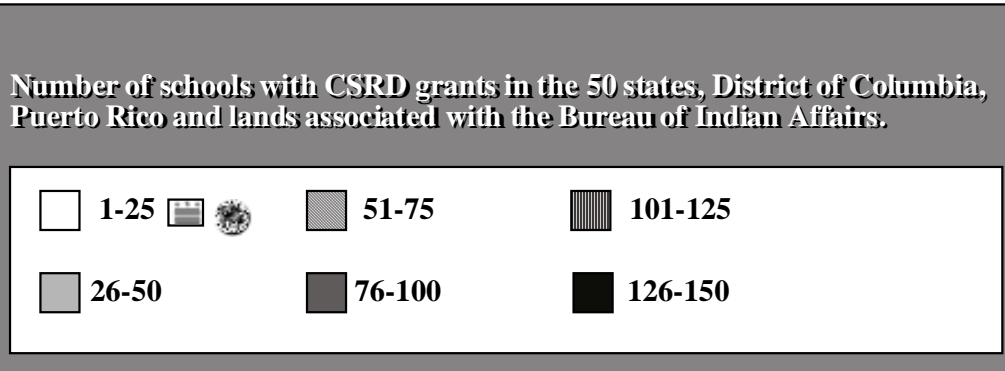
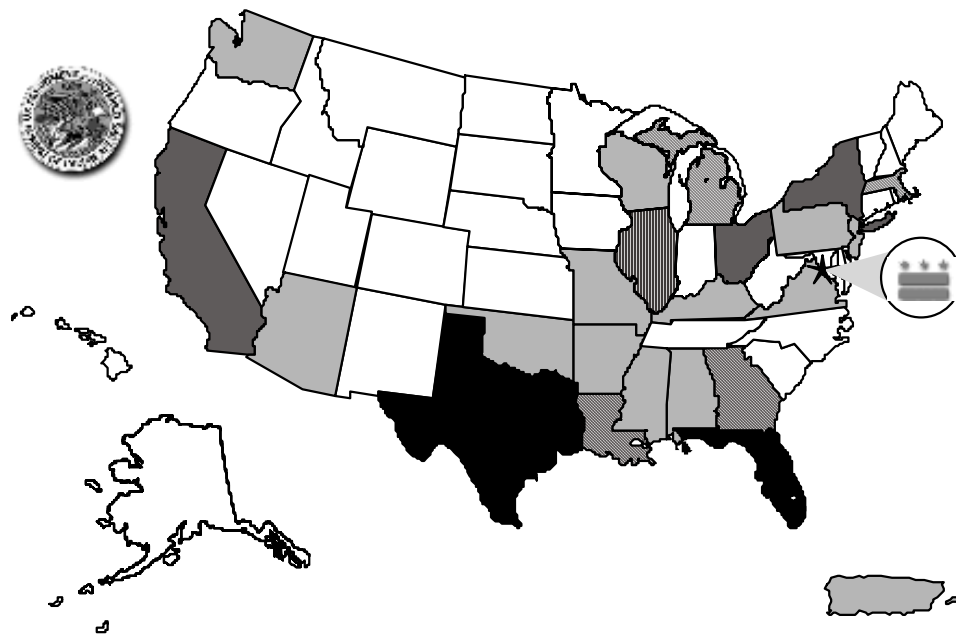
Congress and the President have increased the investment in comprehensive reform with additional funding for the CSRD program in the fiscal year 2000 budget. This increased funding will allow as many as 1,000 new schools to receive start-up CSRD funds. Local districts and schools should contact their State Education Agency for more information on how to apply for these funds.

Looking into the future, the Administration has proposed to extend the CSRD program beyond its first three years and to draw on CSRD to strengthen Title I schoolwide programs. The House of Representatives has passed a Title I reauthorization bill that includes Comprehensive School Reform as a distinct authority within Title I; Senate action is pending.

There is a consensus today that we must set high expectations for all students. States have made real progress in setting challenging standards for what all children should know and be able to do. Teachers, school leaders, parents and community members are all involved in the important work of helping all students meet these standards. Comprehensive school reform can lead to success for schools through a coordinated school improvement plan that addresses school needs and through the use of strategies with evidence of effectiveness that help every teacher in a school make improvements to teaching and learning in the classroom.

The Delaware Academy, Syracuse, New York

The Delaware Academy, a high-poverty public elementary school, has a diverse student population, including a large percentage of limited-English proficient Latino students. The school's restructuring effort aims to strengthen student learning, teaching and school management. The district has provided an on-site facilitator to assist the school in implementing Success for All, a program that emphasizes early reading, intensive professional development in reading instruction, and family involvement in reading at home. The comprehensive school reform grant acted as a catalyst for the school to coordinate funds and resources, including Title I schoolwide program funds, state and local funds, and considerable community support, to make schoolwide improvements in curriculum and instruction. Due to these efforts, more students, including English language learners, are meeting and exceeding state standards.



Since the inception of CSRD in 1998, CSRD grants have been awarded to schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In total, states have awarded CSRD funding to 1,750 schools so far.

Watch for changes in this map on NCCSR's web site. With CSRD's increased funding for fiscal year 2000, approximately 1,000 more schools may be awarded CSRD grants.

Information was gathered from the Database of Schools Awarded CSRD Funds created by the Southwest Educational Development laboratory. The database can be searched by model, state school location, grade or name. There is a summary of awards by state and a list of models implemented. The database can be accessed at <http://www.sedl.org/csrd/awards.html>.

Developing New Comprehensive School Reform Designs

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded contracts to seven organizations to develop and evaluate comprehensive school reform models for middle and high schools. Thus far, about 30% of CSRD grants have been awarded to middle and high schools to make schoolwide improvements. Participating middle and high schools can be found across the country, from rural areas of Virginia and Maine to urban areas such as Detroit, Los Angeles and Houston. One of the significant challenges facing middle and high schools interested in comprehensive reform is that relatively few research-based reform models are designed specifically for secondary schools. The Department has awarded these contracts to significantly increase the number of research-based secondary school models. The contracts require the new models to include strategies, procedures, materials and teacher professional development for schoolwide reform. Descriptions of the projects are below; more information on the contracts can be found in the last issue of Benchmarks, which is available on NCCSR's web site at <www.goodschools.gwu.edu>.

Education Development Center, Inc.: ATLAS

The Education Development Center, Inc: (EDC) model brings together the best features of the elementary school model ATLAS Communities and EDC's decade-long experience with middle-grades reform. ATLAS stands for Authentic Teaching, Learning and Assessment for all Students. The goal of the new model is to help middle-grades schools become high performing organizations that are academically rigorous, developmentally responsive and socially eq-

uitable. EDC will use a variety of service delivery mechanisms to support this change effort, including on-site and distance coaching; networking within and across districts; institutes, workshops, and other professional development programs; electronic communications; and distance learning. Abt Associates, Inc. will be EDC's research and evaluation partner.



Galef Institute: Different Ways of Knowing

The Galef Institute will build a middle grades reform program drawing on its extensive experience with Different Ways of Knowing (K-6) in over 500 schools and pilot studies in the middle grades. Galef will provide fully tested curriculum, instruction, and assessment modules in all subjects and grades (developed in collaboration with the 2061 Project, Connected Math, and others), technology for teachers and students, after-school programs, and family programs. All of these will be aligned into a schoolwide plan for standards-based reform. WestEd will provide the formative and overall evaluation of the model. Different Ways of Knowing is based on the belief that all students and teachers are intelligent and have the capacity to develop expertise in a given subject or skill. Learners need varied instructional pathways so that they can tap prior knowledge and represent their new knowledge in multiple ways. The program will use drama, dance, music, art, and media as tools to promote in-depth, creative thinking that motivates students to think critically and gain deeper, longer lasting understanding.

Johns Hopkins University: Talent Development Model

The Talent Development Model balances research-based reforms with a planning and implementation process that encourages local adaptations and staff buy-in of changes. It builds on recent work conducted at the University's Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, and at the University of California-Berkeley's Career Academy Support Network. The Talent Development Model seeks to transform low-performing, high-poverty middle and secondary schools. It is designed to reorganize middle and high schools into small learning communities, including career academies in high schools. It emphasizes reform of curriculum and instruction wherein a common core of high standards courses are offered to students with flexible time and resources that address all students' needs. It stresses reform of parent and community involvement through the use of multiple partnerships. It also seeks to reform professional development by providing on-site assistance and help to staff for planning and classroom innovations.

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation: First Things First

First Things First is a model for district and whole school reform. It is currently being phased into all comprehensive high schools and middle schools in Kansas City, Kansas, a medium-sized urban district. The model includes a set of seven critical features that are based on research and aimed at building strong, mutually accountable relationships among adults and adolescent students; transforming teaching and learning in every classroom with an initial focus on literacy; and realigning organizational supports to achieve these two goals. The plan builds on 3 years of model imple-

mentation and research in Kansas City, work in another urban school district, and pairs of high schools and feeder middle schools in urban and rural areas. Through this work, the research and development team will create the tools to support further expansion in and beyond this project. They will also generate reliable information on implementing the First Things First model and its effects on student and adult outcomes. The Institute for Research and Reform in Education, which developed First Things First, will provide technical support during implementation and expansion. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation will oversee all aspects of the project.



National Center on Education and the Economy: America's Choice Design

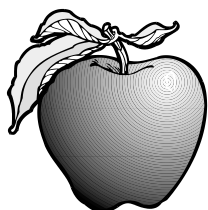
The National Center on Education and the Economy, in association with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, aims to use close collaboration between researchers, developers and practitioners to strengthen the middle school and high school components of the America's Choice Design. The Design will tie together a curriculum that extends from the beginning of middle school through the end of the lower division in high school. The Design calls for an extensive system of safety nets intended to make sure that all students reach the standards, no matter where they start. These include intensive courses for entering students, an after-hours tutoring program and a dropout recovery program. All students will attend their program in "houses" of 200 to 400 students, and core teachers will follow their students throughout the programs.

Southern Regional Education Board: Making Schools Work

The Southern Regional Education Board will design, develop, implement and refine a comprehensive middle and secondary-grades model by bringing together its High Schools That Work and emerging middle-grades efforts into an integrated whole-school improvement initiative for clusters of rural schools. The project will:

- (1) develop capacity to deliver an array of site-specific services to accelerate change;
- (2) incorporate proven, standards-based curriculum products;
- (3) provide access for all students, particularly at-risk students, to an “advantaged” academic core curriculum;
- (4) perform a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the model and its effect on school and student performance; and
- (5) expand the focus of High Schools That Work to include feeder middle schools.

Southern Regional Education Board will refine the model, implement Making Schools Work in clusters of high schools and middle schools, and will assess the model’s utility for nationwide implementation. The Research Triangle Institute will evaluate the model, including its impact on school organization, instructional practices and student achievement.



The Success for All Foundation: Success for All Middle School

Building on much of the widely adopted Success for All elementary schools program, the Success for All Foundation will develop, evaluate, and disseminate the Success for All Middle School program. This program will be designed to accommodate the developmental needs and extraordinary capabilities of young adolescents, especially those who are placed at risk due to poverty, limited English proficiency, minority status, or location in inner cities or isolated rural areas. The Success for All Middle School will be organized to create close connections between young adolescents and their teachers to help them succeed in rigorous coursework. The quality of the curriculum and instruction will be improved and a variety of support services will be provided to connect schools with children’s families and communities. The consistent themes throughout the Success for All Middle School are high expectations, rigorous and exciting curricula designed to engage students’ motivation, curiosity, and social energy, and supports of many kinds to enable all students to succeed in the equivalent of a top-track curriculum. Rigorous field experiments will evaluate outcomes and processes of the program.

For more information on these grants contact Oliver Moles at (202) 219-2211 or oliver_moles@ed.gov. Oliver Moles is an Education Research Analyst at the Office Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education

Resources for Planning a Comprehensive Reform Effort

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

Web site:

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform>

E-mail: compreform@ed.gov

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Database of CSRD Schools

<http://www.sedl.org/csrd/awards.html>

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Catalog of School Reform Models

<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/catalog>

WestEd Regional Education Laboratory

*Comprehensive School Reform: Research-
based Strategies to Achieve High*

Standards (guidebook and videos)

<http://www.wested.org/csrd/resources.html>

North Central Regional Education Laboratory

*Comprehensive School Reform: Making
Good Choices—A Guide for Schools and
Districts*

<http://www.ncrel.org/csri>

American Institutes for Research

An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform

<http://www.aasa.org/Reform>

American Federation of Teachers

*Seeing Progress: A Guide to Visiting
Schools Using Promising Programs*

[http://www.aft.org/edissues/rsa/guide/
change/seeing.htm](http://www.aft.org/edissues/rsa/guide/change/seeing.htm)

Education Commission of the States

*Comprehensive School Reform: Five Les-
sons from the Field*

<http://www.ecs.org> (under "Products")

Regional Education Laboratories

A Guide to Working with Model Providers

[http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/
whatsnew.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/whatsnew.html)

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About NCCSR:

The National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform collects and disseminates information that builds the capacity of schools to raise the academic achievement of all students. This is accomplished by continuously examining the literature related to comprehensive school reform (CSR), adding high quality materials to the databases and actively sending useful information to educators and policy makers at the local, state and national levels. Through the web site, reference and retrieval services, and publications NCCSR is the central gateway to information on comprehensive school reform (CSR).

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