

What Works Clearinghouse



December 2008

WWC Quick Review of the Report “Evaluation of the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools® Initiative”†

What is this study about?

This study examined whether *Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools*® improve students’ reading assessment scores.

More than 3,000 kindergarten through eighth grade students in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri participated in the study. These children attended one of 18 Kansas City churches that hosted the *CDF Freedom Schools*® during the summers of 2005 through 2007.

The study examined data from standardized reading assessments that were collected during the first and last week of each summer session.

The study examined changes in reading assessment scores separately for 2,638 students who participated in the *CDF Freedom Schools*® program and for 508 students who did not participate in the program.

Features of *CDF Freedom Schools*®

Summer educational program hosted by churches in predominantly African-American communities

Staffed by college interns who have participated in a training program

Focuses on reading using culturally appropriate literature

Encourages parental and community involvement

WWC Rating

The research described in this report is not consistent with WWC evidence standards

Cautions: The study examined test score changes for students who participated in the *CDF Freedom Schools*® program and for students who did not. The study does not provide evidence that these two research groups were initially equivalent. It is possible that there were differences between the two groups that could have influenced their reading scores. For example, students who chose to participate in the program may have been more academically motivated than those who chose not to participate. Because these two groups of students may be different from each other in ways that are not controlled for in the analysis, the difference in achievement score gains between the two groups cannot be attributed with confidence to the effect of the program.

What did the study authors report?

The study reported higher gains in reading assessment scores for students who participated in the *CDF Freedom Schools*® program than for students who did not participate.

The WWC does not consider these results to be conclusive because there is no evidence that the research groups were equivalent initially. The reported differences between the groups might reflect differences in the students that are not related to the *CDF Freedom Schools*® program.

†“Evaluation of the Kansas City CDF Freedom Schools® Initiative.” Philliber Research Associates, Accord, NY, August 2008.