What is this study about?

This study examined whether attending a Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) middle school improved students’ academic achievement.

The KIPP schools in the study included fifth through eighth grades and served primarily low-income, minority students.

The most rigorous analysis focused on 263 fifth-graders in three KIPP schools and over 2,000 fifth-graders in traditional public schools in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2003–04 and 2004–05.

The authors analyzed data on student standardized test scores drawn from school district databases.

The study authors used statistical matching to select students for the analysis. KIPP students were matched to students attending traditional public schools on demographics, where they lived, and fourth-grade test scores.

What did the study authors report?

The study found that fifth-grade students in KIPP middle schools generally performed better on math and language arts tests than comparable students in traditional public middle schools. Effect sizes for math ranged from 0.19 to 0.86, while effect sizes for language arts ranged from –0.05 to 0.54.

The WWC has reservations about these results because students who attend KIPP schools may differ from comparison students in ways not controlled for in the analysis.

What is a KIPP School?

- Operates as a charter school in most cases
- Aims to prepare poor and minority students to succeed in a college preparatory curriculum
- Provides training for principals and offers them greater autonomy over budget and hiring decisions
- Provides about 60% more instructional time than a traditional public school—through a longer school day and additional instructional days on Saturdays and in the summer


WWC quick reviews are based on the evidence published in the report cited and rely on effect sizes and significance levels as reported by study authors. WWC does not confirm study authors’ findings or contact authors for additional information about the study. The WWC rating refers only to the results summarized above and not necessarily to all results presented in the study.