

# What Works Clearinghouse



February 2010

## WWC Quick Review of the Report “Effectiveness of Selected Supplemental Reading Comprehension Interventions: Impacts on a First Cohort of Fifth-Grade Students”<sup>†\*</sup>

### What is this study about?

The study examined the effects of four supplemental reading comprehension curricula: (1) *Project CRISS* (*C*reating *I*ndependence through *S*tudent-owned *S*trategies), (2) *ReadAbout*, (3) *Read for Real*, and (4) *Reading for Knowledge*.

The study included over 5,500 fifth-grade students attending 89 schools in 10 high-poverty school districts.

Within each of the 10 districts, schools were randomly assigned to one of four intervention groups that received one of the supplemental curricula or to a control group that received no supplemental curriculum.

Student achievement was measured using two reading comprehension assessments: the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) and a social studies or science reading comprehension assessment developed for the study by the Educational Testing Service. Researchers also combined these scores into a composite test score.

### WWC Rating

***The research described in this report is consistent with WWC evidence standards***

**Strengths:** This study was a well-implemented randomized controlled trial.

### Features of Supplemental Reading Comprehension Curricula Examined

- *Project CRISS*: Focuses on comprehension through strategic reading techniques
- *ReadAbout*: Provides adaptive computer-based instruction and practice
- *Read for Real*: Teaches comprehension strategies using a set of nonfiction texts
- *Reading for Knowledge*: Reinforces comprehension strategies through cooperative learning

All four curricula are delivered in 30–45 minute daily sessions. Teachers developed their own strategies for incorporating the supplemental curriculum into their core reading instruction.

### What did the study authors report?

Students using the supplemental curricula did not score higher in reading comprehension than students who did not use these curricula. Students using the *Reading for Knowledge* curriculum scored lower than the control group on the composite test score and science comprehension, with effect sizes of  $-0.14$  and  $-0.21$ , respectively.

When all four intervention groups were combined, intervention group students scored lower than control group students on the GRADE and the composite test score (both effect sizes of  $-0.08$ ).

<sup>†</sup>James-Burdumy, S., Mansfield, W., Deke, J., Carey, N., Lugo-Gil, J., Hershey, A., Douglas, A., Gersten, R., Newman-Gonchar, R., Dimino, J., & Faddis, B. (2009). *Effectiveness of selected supplemental reading comprehension interventions: Impacts on a first cohort of fifth-grade students* (NCEE 2009-4032). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

\*Absence of conflict of interest: This study was prepared by Mathematica Policy Research, which also operates the WWC. For this reason, the study was reviewed by staff from RAND Corporation, SRI International, and Concentric Research & Evaluation.

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.