

What Works Clearinghouse



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WWC Quick Review of the Report “San Francisco Bay Area KIPP Schools: A Study of Early Implementation and Achievement”[†]

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 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 Rating

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

Strengths: Used statistical procedures to match *KIPP* students to similar non-*KIPP* students.

Cautions: Although the study matches *KIPP* students to traditional public school students on a number of observable characteristics, there may still be unobserved student or parent characteristics that affect both the decision to enroll at a *KIPP* school and student achievement, such as motivation or commitment to schooling. Therefore, differences in achievement between the two groups of students may not be solely attributable to the effect of *KIPP* schools.

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.

[†]“San Francisco Bay Area KIPP Schools: A Study of Early Implementation and Achievement. Final report.” Katrina R. Woodworth, Jane L. David, Roneeta Guha, Haiwen Wang, and Alejandra Lopez-Torkos. SRI International, September 2008.

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.