

i3 Children’s Literacy Initiative Model Classroom Program Impact Evaluation Year 2 Results

Summary of Results

In 2010, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) partnered with Children’s Literacy Initiative (CLI) to evaluate the impact of their Model Classroom Program. The two research questions guiding the evaluation of the CLI Model Classroom program are:

- What impact does the CLI Model Classrooms program have on kindergarten through 2nd grade student achievement in early literacy?
- What impact does the CLI Model Classroom program have on teacher instruction in early literacy?

Key findings from the Year 2 summary report include:

- **Kindergartners in CLI schools scored significantly higher on a standardized early reading test¹ than students whose teachers were not exposed to CLI.**
- **CLI had a significant positive impact on the quality of teachers’ literacy instruction and environment in both Kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms.**

Background

Children’s Literacy Initiative (CLI) is an approach to teacher professional development and coaching to improve literacy instruction in early childhood classes. The program provides professional development seminars and institutes to early elementary school teachers, coupled with classroom-based, job-embedded coaching on creating an appropriate classroom environment and on instructional practices. Coaches tailor their work to teachers’ individual needs but emphasize effective, research-based instructional approaches recommended by CLI. In the CLI Model Classroom program, coaches work with all teachers in a grade-level, and CLI provides additional resources and coaching to one “Model Classroom” teacher per grade, so that that teacher can be a model and mentor for the rest of the teachers in the grade. In 2010, CLI received a validation grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund to implement their Model Classroom Program. As part of the grant requirements, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) was selected by CLI to conduct an independent three-year evaluation of the impact of the CLI Model Classroom program on teacher practice and student achievement.

The evaluation consists of a randomized control trial conducted in 78 high-poverty schools in four urban school districts. The i3 impact evaluation was designed to evaluate the effect of the CLI model classroom coaching and professional development program on kindergarten through second-grade teachers’ classroom environment and literacy instruction, as well as the effect of the CLI program on student literacy achievement. This document presents findings through the second year of the evaluation.

¹ AIR is using the PAR (Predictive Assessment in Reading) to measure kindergarten achievement. More about this valid and reliable assessment can be found here: <http://childsmindpublishing.org/par/content/about-par>

To estimate the impact of the CLI program on teacher practice and student literacy achievement, schools that agreed to participate were randomly assigned to treatment or control conditions, with kindergarten teachers in treatment schools receiving CLI services starting in the fall of the 2011 -2012 school year and control schools continuing their “business-as-usual” early literacy instruction. All kindergarten through second grade teachers and students would participate in the study². The Predictive Assessment of Reading (PAR), an individually-administered test of pre-reading skills that assessed students’ word reading, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and rapid naming fluency, was used with kindergarten students. First grade student literacy achievement was measured using the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), a group-administered test of reading skills that assessed students’ word reading and meaning and comprehension. Both student assessments demonstrate strong validity and reliability and were administered by AIR-trained test administrators.

Impacts on Teacher Practice

Teachers’ classroom environment and literacy instructional practices were measured by the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Tool. AIR-trained observers visited the classrooms of one randomly-selected teacher per grade in each school once in the spring of 2013. Eighteen items of the ELLCO tool were combined into two subscales: general classroom environment and language and literacy. Separate impact estimates were calculated for each subscale.

- The estimated standardized effect size of the CLI Model Classroom program on language and literacy practices was 0.68 standard deviations ($p < 0.001$), and the impact on classroom environment was 0.52 standard deviations ($p = 0.003$), as measured by the ELLCO. Effect sizes show the strength of differences between two groups, in this case the CLI and non-CLI teachers. An effect size of 0.50 is considered large. Both of these impacts were statistically significant.
- The impact estimates varied by district, with all districts having moderate to large positive impact estimates.

Impacts on Student Literacy Achievement

Two cohorts of students were assessed in year 2:

- Cohort 1 treatment first grade students had begun school in Fall 2011.
 - Students in Cohort 1 had kindergarten teachers who were receiving their first year of CLI services; their first grade teachers had experienced up to two years of CLI services.
- Cohort 2 treatment kindergarten students began school in Fall 2012.
 - Their teachers (both kindergarten and first grade) had experienced up to two years of CLI services.

All eligible and consenting students in the school were tested, and all students in the school at the time of follow-up were included in the analysis. Separate impact estimates were calculated for each subscale of the kindergarten and first grade assessments.

- Cohort 2 kindergarten students in CLI classrooms significantly outperformed control students on one of four PAR subscales—letter-word reading, with an estimated standardized effect size of 0.17 standard deviations ($p = 0.007$).
 - This replicated the significant results found for letter-word reading with cohort 1 kindergarten students in the 2011-12 school year.

² CLI began working in schools one year prior to the start of the study in 2010-2011; coaching in the first year was isolated to third grade teachers only which are not included in the study.

- The impact of CLI on cohort 2 kindergarten students' PAR Early Reading Skills total score was positive and significant, with an estimated standardized effect size of 0.18 ($p=0.003$).
- No significant impact was found for CLI on cohort 1 first grade students' literacy achievement on either GRADE subscale.

Fidelity of Implementation

During the first two years of the CLI i3 impact evaluation, the AIR study team found that CLI was, overall, implementing the proposed Model Classroom program with fidelity.

- CLI had high levels of implementation for their three main program components: 1) resources and professional development seminars and trainings provided to all CLI teachers, 2) coaching provided to all CLI teachers, and 3) additional coaching and professional development seminars and trainings provided to model classroom teachers.
- CLI had moderate fidelity to the planned professional development provided to school-based coaches, and low fidelity of implementation for principal coaching and professional development.³

As designed, a large service contrast was observed in the amount and type of professional development and coaching received by treatment and comparison teachers, with treatment teachers reporting that they had received substantially more literacy-focused professional development.

About the American Institutes for Research (www.air.org)

AIR is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research and evaluation organizations. Its overriding goal is to use the best science available to bring the most effective ideas and approaches to investigating problems and finding solutions in education, health, workforce, and assessment, both domestically and internationally. AIR researchers and technical assistance providers conduct their work with strict independence, objectivity and non-partisanship. Founded in 1946 as a not-for-profit organization and headquartered in Washington, DC, AIR has offices throughout the United States and abroad. For further information please contact Terry Salinger at tsalinger@air.org.

³ Low fidelity was driven by principal's low attendance at principal meetings in many districts.