

i3 Impact Evaluation

In 2010, Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI) received a federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant to implement its early-childhood literacy program with kindergarten through second grade teachers in four U.S. school districts with high-need student populations: Philadelphia, PA; Chicago, IL; Newark, NJ; and Camden, NJ. This program provided teachers more than 460 hours of seminars and in-class coaching sessions. In addition, CLI mentored school leadership on how to best promote an environment of learning in classrooms, and provided schools with book collections and other literacy resources.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted an independent evaluation of CLI's impact through a randomized control trial. In its report on the results from a three-year impact evaluation, AIR concluded, "the CLI program produces substantial effects on teachers' classroom environment and literacy practices, which in turn, lead to measurable effects on average reading achievement in early elementary grades." AIR also reported the following impact results.

Teachers' Literacy Instruction Practices & Classroom Environment

Teacher practice and classroom environment were measured by the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO), an observational measure of the presence of literacy best practices. This included how well and how often a teacher encouraged extended classroom discussions, facilitated oral language development and whether the teacher regularly used and updated a word wall in the classroom.

The Study Found

- Teachers who received CLI training had a classroom environment significantly more aligned with literacy best practices (e.g., leveled library, labels around the room)
- Teachers who received CLI services exhibited language and literacy teaching practices significantly more aligned with best practices (e.g., asking follow-up questions, encouraging vocabulary development)

Reading Achievement

Student reading achievement for kindergarten students was measured using the Predictive Assessment of Reading (PAR), an individually administered test of pre-reading skills. First and second grade students' reading achievement was measured using the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE), a group-administered assessment of students' word reading as well as meaning and comprehension.

The Study Found

- CLI Kindergarten students exhibited significantly greater reading achievement than non-CLI students
 - Especially students in classrooms with teachers who had received CLI training for two years
- Average non-CLI kindergarten student would perform better than 50% of peers, but with CLI-trained teacher would perform better than 57% of peers Translates to an improvement index of 7 for kindergarten students
- First grade students entering CLI classrooms as low performers showed significantly greater reading achievement compared to low-performing control students, reducing gaps between low performers and high performers in CLI classrooms
- Based on reading achievement scores, second grade CLI students received the equivalent of two additional months of instruction as compared to non-CLI students
 - Without expense and logistical difficulties of keeping school open for summer, CLI teachers provided students with the instructional equivalent of attending school nearly year-round