

**COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM
EXTERNAL EVALUATION 2006-07**

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM**
- **ONSITE SCHOOL VISITS**
 - **STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS**
 - **SUSTAINABILITY STUDY**
 - **FISCAL REALLOCATION STUDY**
 - **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results of External Evaluation of Comprehensive School Reform: Implementation and Sustainability, 2006-07

Overview

The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) contracted with the Occupational Research Group in the College of Education at the University of Georgia to serve as the external evaluator for 27 schools receiving Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grants in 2006-07, and to conduct a study of CSR continuation at schools no longer receiving CSR funding. The CSR evaluation provides information for required federal reporting, informs the state about program achievements and problems with implementation, and provides schools with feedback on their implementation progress. The evaluation continues the assessment of Round 5 sites who received their second year of CSR funding in 2006-07 by examining the extent to which each site continues to implement their reform model according to the 11 key components of Comprehensive School Reform.

A second component of the evaluation was designed to examine sustainability of reform efforts in schools that had received CSR funding previously but are no longer receiving CSR funding in 2006-07. This study addressed the issue of sustainability, i.e., what happens to school reforms when CSR funding is no longer available, the extent to which reform activities have been established and become a part of the school culture, what factors affect sustainability, and how Title I or other school resources are used by schools to ensure continuity of school reform and improvements begun with CSR funding. The study includes both Round 5 schools who are no longer receiving funding after one year of CSR and Round 4 schools who completed their three-year CSR funding cycle in 2005-06.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the evaluation of CSR implementation and sustainability:

1. Is participation in CSR associated with increased student academic achievement?
2. To what extent did each site do what it was funded to do?
3. Did local implementation of various reforms under CSR comply with federal requirements and the requirements of the selected models?
4. What evidence is there of successful implementation of the reform model selected by each of the schools?
5. What changes are needed at each CSR funded school to ensure full implementation of the reform model?
6. What evidence is there that whole school reforms continued after funding ended at sites that received either one year or three years of CSR funding?
7. What factors are associated with sustainability of whole school reform?

Methodology

The CSR evaluation process includes three components: 1) onsite visits by teams of evaluators during the 2006-07 school year; 2) survey questionnaires for parents, teachers, and school administrators in Spring 2007; and 3) student academic achievement test results and other indicators in Spring 2007. In addition to the CSR evaluation process, a study of the fiscal reallocation in schools facing reduction or elimination of CSR funding was conducted. Below is a summary of the key findings from onsite visits, achievement testing analyses, stakeholder

surveys, sustainability of reform, and fiscal reallocation resulting from reduction or elimination of CSR funding.

Participants

Schools participating in the CSR evaluation or sustainability study in 2006-07 consisted of three groups of schools:

- those that completed their first year of CSR funding in 2005-06 and received a second year of CSR funding in 2006-07 (Cohort 5 funded),
- those that completed their first year of CSR funding in 2005-06 and were not refunded (Cohort 5 unfunded), and
- those that completed their third year of CSR funding in 2005-06 and were not refunded (Cohort 4).

	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Total
Cohort 5-Funded Schools				
- September award	4	13	2	19
- December award	0	4	4	8
Cohort 5-Unfunded Schools	4	17	10	31
Cohort 4-Unfunded Schools	15	3	6	24
Total	23	37	22	82

Following is a summary of key findings from each of the information sources and the analyses conducted to assess CSR implementation and sustainability.

Findings from Onsite School Visits

Overview of the Visits

The purpose of the onsite visits was to gather first hand information about the extent to which CSR-funded school reform models had been implemented or continued. Cohort 5 funded schools (27) received two visits by evaluation teams, while non-funded Cohort 4 schools (24) and Cohort 5 schools (31) each received one onsite visit. Teams of two trained field researchers from ORG conducted the two day visits, using a common protocol, interview questions, and data collection format based on the 11 CSR components. In addition to direct observation and document reviews, evaluators conducted interviews with school and system administrators, reform leadership, teachers, support personnel, external experts, and parents at each school visit. Information from the multiple data sources at each site was compiled by the visit team using a common report outline that grouped information into 11 sections, based on the following CSR components:

1. Research-Based Methods
2. Comprehensive Design
3. Professional Development
4. Measurable Goals/Benchmarks
5. School Staff Support for Reform

6. Support Provided to School Staff
7. Parent and Community Involvement
8. External Assistance
9. Evaluation Strategies
10. Resources
11. Student Achievement

In addition, each school was rated on the level of implementation or sustainability of the 11 CSR components and indicators, using a rubric and rating scale developed by ORG to provide a quantifiable measure of qualitative information from the onsite visits.

Results

There are several themes that emerge from the school visitation data that have a direct bearing on how schools navigate the process of implementing reform and how sustainable that reform is after funding ends. Following are generalized findings from across the three cohorts of schools that relate to their success at implementing or sustaining reforms.

- **Funding makes a difference.** The first of these is no surprise; money talks. Having resources dedicated to reform implementation has a direct effect; it pays for professional development and external assistance that are specific to the reform model that was chosen. But it also focuses a school's attention on key elements of implementation such as model design, comprehensive implementation, evaluating the process, and involving all stakeholder groups. The Cohort 5 Funded schools have remained focused on the process and earned high scores and mainly positive comments on all components. Schools in the other two groups have split their attention between maintaining the progress they made with their reform models and the competing demands from their districts, the state, and the federal government. It is hard to serve two masters well, and so they scored lower as a group on reform implementation and sustainability.
- **Accountability for change.** Funding also brings accountability. It makes people take the process seriously. This is true for both administrators and for school staff. In the case of Cohort 4 schools, having completed implementation over a three year time period, seems to lock in support at a relatively high level, but not quite as high as those still being funded in the process. Commitment levels in the Cohort 5 Non-Funded schools, with only one year of CSR funding, while still high, were significantly lower than those of their funded peers.
- **Commitment counts.** Despite these differences, commitment by staff and administrators appears to be a strong point for all three groups. Whether the resources are fully available or not, they are willing to do whatever they can to raise student achievement. Schools have used a number of strategies to use whatever resources they do have available to continue the reform process. These strategies have enabled them to secure professional development, technology, and external assistance related to their reforms. Their willingness to improvise in order to achieve goals is worthy of praise.
- **Type of leadership matters.** Leadership is another theme that is reflected in several components. Schools with good reform leadership shared several characteristics. Decision making responsibilities were shared among stakeholder groups, especially teachers. A strong effort was made to open up communications among all stakeholder groups. This meant not only sending information about reform to teachers, parents and the community, but also a willingness to listen to those groups and address their ideas and concerns. Good

leaders also involved everyone in key aspects of reform including planning, evaluation, and instructional activities.

- **Parental involvement challenges.** It can be argued that the parent and community involvement component is a facet of leadership for these very reasons. Increasing parent involvement is perhaps the most difficult task for schools among the eleven components because so much of what matters is beyond the school's control. It requires a great deal of time and effort to truly involve the community in the life of the school; it is so much easier just to send information home with students and put good news articles in the newspaper. According to the research literature, the schools that make parents and community members real partners will reap gains in student achievement as these groups buy in to what the school is doing.
- **Data driven decisions.** A final theme is the importance of data. Four CSR components (professional development, goals and benchmarks, evaluation strategies, and student achievement) explicitly deal with identifying, collecting, analyzing and using data. All cohorts showed strong results in the first two and promising signs that they are collecting the right kinds of data in the others. The CSR schools seem to have absorbed the overarching idea that data must drive decision making if student achievement is to improve. This is not surprising given the current state and national emphasis on testing in the context of school improvement and increasing student achievement. Even so, that increased awareness of the value of data provides encouragement for the future.

Overall findings for funded vs. unfunded schools

- The schools in Cohort 5 Funded appear to be well on their way to completing implementation of their reform models and sustaining them in the future. They have made an excellent start. The key for them will be to maintain the momentum they have built up over their two years of funding.
- The Cohort 4 schools as a whole look to be sustaining what they have learned in the three years they were given to implement their models. A few have abandoned their models, and many have supplemented them with other strategies, but almost without exception they have taken the core values of reform to heart. They should be able to address current and new challenges with the lessons they have learned.
- Schools in Cohort 5 Non-Funded varied widely in their implementation scores, so it is difficult to summarize them in a single stroke. These schools were at a disadvantage compared to the other cohorts in two ways. First, of course, they only received one year of reform funding. Second, they were, on average, at a lower level of implementation after one year than their Cohort 5 Funded counterparts. Part of the rubric used to determine which schools would be funded in the 2006-07 school year was the total implementation scores earned during the mid-year and end of year evaluation visits in the first year of reform. All but one of the schools that received a second year of funding ranked in the high implementation range at the end of the year. In comparison, only 18 of the 31 schools that didn't receive funding earned a score in the high range.

Given these challenges, it is not surprising that this group scored significantly lower on all components than Cohort 5 Funded and merited more concern statements. On the other hand, this was not a recipe for guaranteed failure. Nearly half (15) of the schools earned a total score in the high implementation range this year. These schools maintained fidelity to their models for the most part; four of them supplemented their model with another model to

which they adhered closely. Their scores on the fidelity element of Component 1 were nearly two points higher than schools which scored in the medium range. There are really two groups of schools in this cohort: one with high implementation scores and one with more moderate levels of implementation

All of these schools bear watching over the next few years to see what their student achievement measures show. It would be ideal to measure how much they sustain their original CSR model over time, so that the relationship between model fidelity and achievement can be tested with confidence.

Findings from Stakeholder Surveys

Overview of the surveys

The purpose of the stakeholder surveys was to provide information about teacher, administrator, and parent involvement in implementing CSR and to assess stakeholder perceptions about the extent to which reforms have actually occurred or continued and with what results, both for the schools receiving CSR funding and for those whose funding ended in 2006-07. Online surveys were administered to school administrators/support personnel and teachers in all three cohort schools. Funded schools also administered paper surveys to parents.

Results are presented separately for each school cohort and, within the cohort, for each survey administered to the cohort school stakeholders. Data from the surveys are summarized by CSR component for each of the cohorts and surveys. An analysis of findings from across all three of the school cohorts follows the discussion of individual cohort survey results, to identify how differences in the duration of CSR funding (one, two, or three years) may have affected stakeholder responses.

Analysis of Survey Findings by Cohort

Cohort 5 Funded Schools

In general, teachers and administrators agreed on what their schools did the best and worst.

- The same components were ranked first (Component 1: research-based methods), second (Component 2: comprehensive design), and third (Component 6: administrative support for reform) for both groups.
- Component 7 (parent & community involvement) and Component 10 (resources for reform) were at the bottom for both groups, but not in the same order.

Parents were not as positive in their outlook as teachers and administrators.

- A majority agreed with only four statements: they understand the academic performance the school expects of their child, they have been informed about reform activities and results, they support the reform, and their children have a more positive attitude toward school.
- On the other hand, a majority disagreed that they had been involved in reform activities and that they had a chance to meet the CSR consultant this year.

Cohort 5 Unfunded Schools

Administrators rated their schools higher than teachers on eight of the eleven components.

- Teachers gave higher component means for agreement on Component 1 (research-based methods), Component 4 (measurable goals and objectives/benchmarks), and Component 8 (external assistance).
- The largest difference was on Component 10 (resources for reform); the mean for administrators was nearly one-half point higher.
- The smallest differences between groups were on Components 4 (goals) and 8 (external assistance), which were two of the components for which teachers gave higher scores.

Teachers and administrators agreed on what their schools did the best, although not exactly in the same order of importance.

- The same three components were ranked highest by both groups: Component 4 (goals), Component 6 (administrative support for reform), and Component 9 (evaluation strategies). Administrators rated Component 9 the highest.
- Teachers rated Component 4 the highest, but only two hundredths of a point better than Component 4. Components 8 and 10 were in the bottom three for both groups.

Elementary teachers gave higher ratings on all components than their counterparts in middle and high schools.

- Middle and high school teachers scored the components in very similar ways.
- Elementary administrators gave the highest ratings on nine of the eleven components; they had the lowest means on Component 5 (staff support for reform) and Component 10 (resources).

Cohort 4 Schools

Administrators rated seven of the eleven components higher than did teachers.

- On two of the components rated higher by teachers, Components 4 (measurable goals & objectives/ benchmarks) and 7 (parent & community involvement), the means were very close.
- On the other hand, teachers rated Component 1 (research-based methods) one-quarter point higher and Component 8 (external assistance) nearly one-half point higher. This large gap on external assistance may reflect a misunderstanding on the part of teachers about whether the external experts they interact with are actual CSR consultants.
- Both groups gave their schools the highest score on Component 9 (evaluation strategies) and had Component 6 (administrative support for reform) in their top three ranked elements.
- In addition, both groups had Components 8 and 10 (resources for reform) in the bottom three.
- For both teachers and administrators, middle school respondents gave the lowest scores on every component except one. That exception was administrators for Component 9, in which respondents from all types of schools rated their school very highly.

Analysis across Cohorts and Components

Teacher Scores by Cohort

Cohort 4 respondents had the highest averages for Components 4 (measurable goals) and 9 (evaluation). These two components were the highest rated of the eleven for both unfunded cohorts, while they rated only in the middle of the pack for Cohort 5 funded. The components focus on the process of measuring student achievement and using the data to improve instruction. Teachers in these cohorts may consider this the “take-home message” of reform;

instruction should be data driven. It should also be remembered that GPS and other state-driven educational efforts also emphasize data use, and GPS is the primary area of accountability for schools. Schools that are no longer focusing on reform implementation must devote much of their attention to meeting state standards. Teachers in funded schools may give GPS slightly less attention, even though their reform efforts must be aligned with its dictates.

Administrator Scores by Cohort

Administrative respondents in Cohort 5 Unfunded schools had the lowest mean on six of the eleven components. Although gains in student achievement (Component 11) aren't expected early in reform implementation, the barriers introduced by lack of funding may impede student progress even at that early stage. If the loss of funding affected staff support for reform, that could also contribute to a lack of achievement. Still, it is important to remember that these ratings reflect the perceptions of the respondents, and that no causality can be assigned between component scores.

Mean Component Scores by School Type

Among teachers, elementary respondents were the most positive and showed the least variation across all cohorts. High school teachers gave comparatively low scores in both of the Cohort 5 groups, but in Cohort 4 their component scores were higher. The average component scores for high school respondents were relatively stable across cohorts, while middle school respondents showed large differences among the cohorts. Middle school component means were relatively high in Cohort 5 Funded, close to the level of elementary teachers. In Cohort 5 Unfunded, their scores were slightly lower and similar to those of high school teachers. In Cohort 4, however, their scores were much lower than teachers from the other two cohorts.

Impact of CSR

Teachers and administrators in Cohort 5 Unfunded and Cohort 4 were asked questions about the impact of CSR on their schools. The vast majority of respondents from both cohorts agreed that their schools had adapted what they had learned from reform to meet new challenges. They also agreed that their schools had been positively impacted by reform in all of the areas listed.

Use of Data

One particular area of note is the question of whether their schools are better at using student data as a result of CSR. This item received the highest average in all three cohorts and was close to the top category for Cohort 4 administrators. This dovetails nicely with the high ratings for Component 9 (evaluation strategies) in those two cohorts. These findings point to an increased awareness of the importance of collecting student achievement data and using them to improve instruction.

Fiscal Decision-Making

Administrators in all cohorts rated principals as the most involved and influential stakeholder when it came to making financial decisions. There were clear differences, however, for other groups. When funding was present, school personnel and parents were rated as much more involved and influential than when funding ended or was cut. The superintendent and associate or assistant superintendents were rated as much more involved and influential in Cohort 5 Unfunded than in either of the other two cohorts. The district Title I officer was rated as less a part of the process in Cohort 4 than in the two Cohort 5 groups.

It appears that fiscal decision-making is more inclusive and school-based in funded than in other cohorts. In Cohort 5 Unfunded, when funding was cut the district office personnel, especially the superintendent, became more involved in the process. In Cohort 4, once the funding ended, fiscal decision-making seems to have devolved to principals with little input from the other stakeholders.

Findings on Sustainability of CSR Reform Efforts

Overview

Analysis of information from school visit reports was conducted to examine potential factors that contribute to sustainability and to describe schools that were successful in continuing their reforms. It focused on the following research questions:

1. What evidence is there that whole school reforms continued at sites that received either three years or one year of CSR funding?
2. What characteristics of the school or CSR project are associated with continuation of reform activities when the CSR grant ends?
3. What facilitates and impedes continuation of the overall reform or the various elements of a reform in a school after CSR funding ends?

Two measures of continuation were used to assess sustainability of CSR-initiated reforms. The first was the evaluators' overall rating of each school's fidelity to the CSR model originally funded by the grant. Ratings were based on a holistic assessment of all information from the two-day onsite visit and included the following categories:

- High fidelity to the CSR model
- Fidelity to the CSR model with adaptation/addition of some elements
- No CSR model continuation but other schoolwide reforms continuing
- No CSR or any other schoolwide reforms occurring

The second outcome measure was based on the evaluators' total rating scores for implementation of the 11 key CSR components and elements at each school, using the rubric and rating scale developed by UGA for the evaluation of CSR implementation. Each CSR component and the elements that comprised it received a rating from 1 (low level of implementation) to 5 (high level of implementation).

Sustainability Factors

To examine the characteristics of schools that may be associated with continued success after reform funding has ended UGA researchers used the research literature on CSR sustainability to identify a number of key factors for the study. These included both characteristics of schools themselves as well as factors related to the CSR funding, model, or implementation process.

School characteristics	CSR program characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: student enrollment • Type: High School, Middle School, Elementary School • Economic disadvantage: % free/reduced price lunch students • AYP status: number of years school met AYP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of years of CSR funding • Amount of CSR funding received • Teacher acceptance/commitment • School and district administrative commitment and support

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- Stable leadership: administrator turnover rate
 - Stable staffing: teacher attrition rate
 - Continued external consultant support
 - Professional development available
 - Perceived impact on teaching/learning
 - Comprehensiveness of reforms
 - Use of research-based reforms
 - Resources available to support continuation
 - Use of benchmarks and evaluation to track progress and results
 - Extent of parent involvement
 - Perceived impact on student achievement/learning
-

Qualitative Analysis

This analysis focused on trends and patterns that relate to the sustainability of CSR activities and impacts in a school. Findings suggest possible conditions or characteristics of systems associated with effective use of funding to sustain reforms past the end of a grant or the discontinuation of funding. The caution is that schools rating lower or higher on the fidelity scale may have other circumstances that make them effective or ineffective. This analysis focuses primarily on the impact of CSR funds and the sustainability of CSR reform after funding has ceased.

Based on data from onsite visits, researchers classified each school in terms of a fidelity category. This analysis draws from schools in the study no longer receiving CSR funding, where data were available at the time of the report. The four categories are described as follows:

- Category 1: High fidelity to the CSR model (21 schools)
- Category 2: Fidelity to the CSR model with adaptation/addition of some elements (8 schools)
- Category 3: No CSR model continuation but other schoolwide reforms continuing (15 schools)
- Category 4: No CSR or any other schoolwide reforms occurring (1 school)

Researchers reviewed each individual school report and identified characteristics and conditions that existed under each CSR component for schools in each of the fidelity categories above. This analysis allowed us to identify specific differences in schools that were able to sustain reform efforts after the funding had ceased, in comparison to schools that were less successful with CSR or who abandoned CSR for other systemic reforms.

Factors Critical to Reform Sustainability

The following list of characteristics and conditions were those most often noted as critical to either sustaining or disrupting the reform efforts at a school. Each is discussed in the findings section of the full report:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Articulated long term commitments to reform described by administrators, teachers and other school personnel. ○ Resource management involves a commitment to a long term plan. Therefore, resources align | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools/systems built capacity to continue reform efforts and made them an integral part of how the school operates. ○ Clear alignment existed to other initiatives and activities (professional development, |
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to this commitment and don't rely on a single source of funding; in addition, all resources to the school support this commitment so as to not impede reform efforts.

- Shared leadership among administration, teachers and other school personnel
- Committed and knowledgeable Administration/Principal
- Complete participation in professional development or reform activities; no staff member was able to opt out of these activities.
- Perceived effectiveness of Professional Development by teachers and evaluation of PD training by staff
- Teachers understood and could articulate reform efforts.
- Teachers had strong efficacy and belief in the reform.
- Onsite instructional support people assisted teachers in implementing and interpreting reform efforts (i.e. instructional or academic coaches)

school improvement plan, curriculum, GPS, etc.) and stakeholders articulated how all or most work supported and related to the reform.

- Schools collected formative and summative data on student learning.
 - Assessment data used to make instructional changes (effective use of formative assessment)
 - Accountability existed for all stakeholders. This accountability tied directly to the goals of the reform.
 - Increased student motivation and engagement noted by school personnel
 - Focus on learning in instruction with students, in meetings and in decision-making
 - Focused on teacher activities versus student learning (may include focus on student deficits)
 - Collaborative time allotted on a regular basis and focused on student learning
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Trends and Patterns by Fidelity Category

Category 1 Schools: High Fidelity to CSR (21 schools)

Schools with high fidelity to their CSR model demonstrated the following conditions that are associated with more successful use of funding to impact long-lasting reform efforts.

- ***School level administrative commitment/support***
Leadership emerged as critical to the successful implementation and sustainability of CSR reform. This leadership looked differently in each school, but the commonality was that the administration had and could communicate a clear vision of the reform to staff and the school community. In addition, administration was able to manage resources in a way that allowed for minimal disruptions to the reform process. In all cases, other stakeholders articulated the support of administration and most often their ability to clearly communicate vision, expectations and accountability in relationship to the reform. The messages these administrators sent were clear to all stakeholders and aligned to the goals of the school improvement work.
- ***Teacher acceptance/commitment***
Category 1 schools had strong teacher efficacy. Teachers believed that the reform made an impact on student achievement and had changed their practice. Teachers were supportive of reform efforts and seemed to fully understand the reform including their role and the impact it was having on student success. In addition, this description of teachers' understanding and belief in the reform emerged from comments made by other stakeholder groups (i.e. administrators, parents).

- ***Use of benchmarks and evaluation to track progress and results***
Few schools had a specific CSR evaluation plan. In fact, the school improvement plan was most often cited as the evaluation plan. However, Category 1 schools articulated their use of formative and summative data to improve and sustain the reform efforts. This coupled with a leadership team that met regularly, collected feedback and held one another accountable for reform goals appeared to be more important than a formal evaluation plan. Despite most schools lacking a formal evaluation plan, Category 1 schools implemented characteristics of quality evaluation into their work through organizational structures or the School Improvement Plan.
- ***Extent of parent involvement***
In the narrative reports, parent involvement did not seem to impact the sustainability of the reform model unless it was identified as a specific activity the grant was intended to support. Some schools indicated innovative parent involvement and others struggled significantly to communicate with parents. In contrast, on the parent involvement rubric ratings, Category 1 schools far outscored Category 2 or 3 schools. In this study, parent involvement was a strength in high fidelity, or Category 1 schools.
- Other characteristics of Category 1 Schools included shared leadership, accountability, capacity building, and stakeholder alignment.

Category 2 Schools: Fidelity to CSR with Adaptations (8 schools)

Schools that had adapted, dropped, or added some elements to their original CSR model were very similar to Category 1 schools. This suggests that systems that can demonstrate key sustainability conditions will be more successful in utilizing funding to impact long-lasting reform efforts. The following CSR program characteristics were identified for Category 2 schools.

- ***Impact of funding loss***
In most cases Category 2 schools had lost one or two components of their reform effort due to discontinuation of funding. Most often these schools lost an external provider, some parent involvement components, or some structure in terms of professional development. A few Category 2 schools had used their CSR funding for personnel; this caused some disruption in the reform efforts because they either completely lost that position or the position time was reduced. It is important to note that some Category 1 schools had very poor parent involvement or lacked external experts to support their work. The key difference is that for these schools the components were not originally part of the CSR proposal, whereas Category 2 schools that lost these components had them as integral components of their original plan. However, in every case, the reform was able to continue with most key components of the model in place and a continued focus on improving student achievement.
- ***Change in reform model***
There were a few schools in this category that, for various reasons, switched models to accommodate their student needs. This change in model was sometimes due to a new district direction or to a new principal. However, the change was still rooted in student achievement data showing a need for this shift in focus. Most stakeholders were able to articulate this shift as a result of student learning needs rather than solely on teacher desire to continue or discontinue.

- **School level administrative commitment/support**
As in Category 1 schools, leadership was strong in most Category 2 schools and all stakeholders described financial and instructional support offered by the principal as effective.
- **Resources available to support continuation**
In Category 2 schools, stakeholders did not feel that the loss of funds would impede the reform or school improvement efforts. They articulated their commitment and it was evident in their practice as well. These schools did lose one or two aspects of their reform. Therefore, one aspect in this analysis that sets Category 2 schools apart from Category 1 schools is that the system, school or leadership was unable to find funds to sustain all aspects of the reform, no matter how minor or inconsequential the loss might have been.

Category 3 Schools: No CSR Model but other School Reforms (15 schools)

Schools with no CSR model continuation but who carried out other schoolwide reforms, the following program characteristics were identified, which suggest that these schools will have more difficulty in utilizing funding to impact long-lasting reform efforts:

- **Comprehensiveness of reforms**
The rubric ratings on Comprehensive School Design showed few differences among Category 1 and 2 Schools. Ninety percent of Category 1 Schools and 87% of Category 2 Schools scored at the 4 and 5 level. In contrast, only 73% of Category 3 Schools were assessed at a 4 or 5. Category 3 Schools struggled to continue reform that impacted the school as a whole. Critical components of the reform were absent.
- **Use of research-based reforms**
Evident in the labeling of these schools as Category 3 is the fact that these schools are using some schoolwide reforms but without any research base for their decisions and implementation.
- **Use of benchmarks and evaluation to track progress and results**
In Category 3 Schools there was also evidence to suggest that decisions were made with a stronger awareness of teacher needs and desires versus student needs, specifically around learning. In addition, decisions were made without regard to research-based methods. Therefore, decisions to stop doing certain aspects of the reform were made based on feelings rather than student achievement data or proven school reform methods.
- **Teacher acceptance/commitment**
Category 3 schools often had teachers who articulated some parts of the reform but could not describe how these reform efforts impacted student achievement; or teachers could describe the connection to student achievement but lacked a clear vision of how this connection directly impacted their own work with students in the classroom.
- **Resources available to support continuation**
Category 3 schools often lost critical resources in the reform. Administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders felt that the loss of these resources prohibited them from continuing the reform efforts. In many ways, some of these schools seemed to articulate the resources as the reform, losing sight of the beliefs and actions that school improvement entails along with sufficient resources. Conversely, if schools had a model that was dependent on technology, textbooks or other materials, it was detrimental to continuation of the original CSR proposal

when funds ended. Cohort 5 schools most often described this as an issue as they only had one of three years of funding; if they had not purchased all they needed in that year, they were at a disadvantage.

Finally, a number of school and CSR program characteristics showed little or no impact on the fidelity category. This data might also inform future funding criteria in that other characteristics may take priority over these components in sustaining school reforms. Those characteristics that showed little or no impact on fidelity are: Teacher Attrition, Free-reduced lunch, Amount of CSR Funding, and AYP Status.

Key Attributes for Sustaining CSR Changes

The complex nature of school reform makes identifying cause and effect relationships difficult, since any one factor is not necessarily identifiable as a determiner of sustainability. Research on effective school reform has found that it is a combination of factors that contribute to a school being able to sustain comprehensive school reform past the end of a funding cycle.

This study revealed a number of key attributes that schools should have in place to sustain CSR work after funding has ended. Each of these factors is described below.

School-level administrative commitment and support

Schools where administrators were able to communicate a clear vision of the reform to staff and the school community were more successful at sustaining reform. In addition, administration was able to manage resources in a way that allowed for minimal disruptions to the reform process. The study also found that stakeholders articulated the support of administration and most often their ability to communicate a clear vision, expectations, and accountability in relationship to the reform.

Shared leadership

Shared leadership was usually demonstrated by some type of leadership team with diverse membership that represented the school and played a significant role in sustaining and directing the reform. Effective shared leadership included teams with decision-making power, and teams that collected and utilized feedback to support the reform and communicated those decisions to the rest of the community.

Use of both formative and summative data

In schools with the highest fidelity to their reform models, the use of formative and summative data to improve and sustain the reform effort was evident. This, coupled with a leadership team that met regularly, collected feedback and held one another accountable to reform goals, appeared to be more important than a formal evaluation plan. In those schools with a lower level of fidelity to the reform model, evidence suggested that decisions about the reform were made with a stronger awareness of teacher needs and desires versus student needs, specifically around learning.

Student achievement

In order to examine the relationship between student achievement and the schools desire, capacity, and rationale for sustaining reform after the funding ends, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status was used as an indicator of student achievement. This data was examined by cohort and in general, Cohort 4 schools have stronger AYP status than Cohort 5 schools in all

fidelity categories, suggesting that more time to implement reform may aid in sustaining or improving student achievement as measured by AYP. It is recommended that these schools be followed closely through the next few years, as they seem to have the most potential to increase student achievement as measured by AYP status.

Findings from the Fiscal Reallocation Study

The reduction of CSR funding in Georgia between 2006 and 2007 presents educators and policymakers with an interesting question: would schools continue to fund reform efforts previously funded through a CSR grant, and would schools maintain a constant level of commitment to specific ingredients of their reform paradigm? To address this question, a budget survey was sent to school and district administrators. These data were compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Overall findings:

- Despite loss of CSR funding, many schools continued to fund their CSR programs by using state funds from the Georgia QBE and from federal Title I funds
- Schools maintained a stable commitment to the key ingredients of their reform

Introduction

CSR's emphasis on widespread change across programs, grades, subjects, and structures in a school raises interesting questions about the effects of CSR funding cuts in Georgia schools required by loss of federal funding for CSR. Specifically, would schools who received cuts concomitantly reduce their investment in school-wide reform? Where would additional sources of revenue come from? What budget items were worth continued investment and resource reallocation?

Variation for this study therefore derives from three strata of schools – those with no continued funding after three years, those with reduced funding for a second year, and those with no continued funding after one year. It is conceivable that schools, in the face of a reduction in CSR grant funds, would continue to fund whole school reform efforts by reallocating resources or by finding funding from other sources. This study queries school and district level administrators in order to identify and compare funding levels for reform in 2005-06 and 2006-07.

The following are the research questions addressed by this study:

1. How much CSR funding was lost between 2006 and 2007?
2. Did schools continue to fund reform despite CSR funding cuts?
3. Where did funding to continue reform come from?
4. What reform categories seemed worth funding?

How much CSR funding was lost?

In 2005-06, the average CSR amount was \$222 per pupil. This amount was reduced by half to \$111 in 2006-07. This overall reduction, however, was not equitably distributed across all schools. Schools in Cohort 4, for example, only saw a per pupil reduction of \$68 in funding and schools in Cohort 5 funded schools saw an overall reduction of \$87. Cohort 5 non-funded schools saw the largest overall reduction of \$173. Despite the fact that Cohort 5 non-funded schools did not receive funding as expected, they were still able to spend \$95 dollars per pupil to support continued reform.

Did schools continue to fund reform despite CSR funding cuts?

Overall, 66% of schools in this study continued to provide funding for CSR-based reform, despite cuts. Interestingly, the split between schools in this category who also received CSR funding and those who didn't is almost even: 34% of schools that continued funding CSR-based reform did so with some CSR funding and 32% of schools continued funding CSR-based reform despite a complete loss of CSR funds. These numbers illustrate that, of all the schools continuing reform, a majority came from cohort 5. This is to be expected, since Cohort 5 is the only cohort that received CSR funding in 2006-07, had relatively high levels of funding per pupil, and had relatively lower cuts than their Cohort 4 and Cohort 5NF peers. A number of Cohort 4 and Cohort 5NF schools continued to pursue reform efforts despite termination of CSR grant funding, providing some evidence of school-level commitment to the reforms begun under the CSR grant making program

Where did funding come from to continue reforms?

It is obvious that CSR grants would be a major source of CSR-based funding. Other sources included Title I and other funds from federal allocations, Perkins (Career Technology Education) funds, grants or donations from the business community, funds from parent/teacher organizations, or school-based funding derived from school activities and under the control of the principal. CSR grants made up 81% of total funding in 2006. In 2007 this percent dropped to 29%. It could be anticipated that QBE and Title I funding would pick up the slack generated by the diminishment or elimination of CSR funds in the 2007 academic year. It seems as if the hypothesis about replacement funding is correct: on average, in 2007 the percentage contribution of QBE funds increased from 9% to 15%, and the contribution of Title I funds increased from 6% to 11%. Funding from other categories increased to 10% from 5%. Cohort 4 had the largest jump in contributions from Title I funds, from 1% to 11%. Cohort 5 also had its largest increase in Title I funds – from 8% to 11%. Cohort 5NF increased its share of funding from QBE funds from 2% to 19%.

What categories seemed worth funding?

Overall, in 2005-06, staffing and CSR specific investments accounted for a little over half of all reform-based funding in this group of schools. Curriculum received approximately 13% of reform funds, while technology received approximately 19%. This pattern of investment seems stable across all cohorts: community investment never rises above 5% of total; technology never falls below 15%, and curriculum never falls below 11%.

One key question is whether the loss of CSR funds encouraged schools to prioritize their reform-based funding any differently. On average, the commitment to staffing doubled in 2006-07, while the commitment to other services dropped. Other categories remained stable as a percentage of overall allocation. Interestingly, the percentage of total reform funding going to CSR-related items remains stable, although the variation across cohorts is more pronounced. For example, although the overall average contribution to technology remained between 19-20% across both years, Cohort 4 schools increased funding from 20% to 39% - almost doubling their commitment, while Cohort 5NF decreased its commitment from 15% to 7 percent, a reduction of half.

Overall, although there was variation across cohorts, schools that received reduced CSR funding did not radically alter their investment priorities. Staffing and CSR programs were still the highest funding commitments; curriculum and technology were secondary and equally important. Finally, the expenditure of funds on community-based practices such as after school tutoring was a low priority for these CSR-funded schools.

The shift in resource allocation by cohort shows an increased commitment to staffing in Cohorts 4 and 5NF. Cohort 4 increased technology funding, while funding for technology as a percentage of overall funds declined in Cohorts 5 and 5NF.

Overall Impact of CSR Funding Cuts

This study finds that cuts were substantial in nature in terms of dollars per pupil, especially when outlying values were eliminated. Secondly, this study determined that many schools persisted in their efforts to fund the CSR-based reforms they had initiated. Thirdly, this study finds that although schools did not find additional funding to replace CSR funds in terms of dollars per pupil, they did allocate a higher percentage of QBE funds as well as Title I funds in order to provide additional funding for CSR priorities. Schools did not take advantage of potential funding from businesses or other grants. Finally, the study found that schools maintained a stable commitment to key aspects of their reform efforts.

Findings from Student Achievement Data

The outcomes evaluation focuses on student academic achievement and other indicators of schoolwide reforms to determine if a school's participation in CSR is associated with increased student achievement as measured by state achievement test scores on the CRCT, GHSGT, and EOCT in Reading, English Language Arts, and Mathematics in elementary, middle school, and high school.

The key evaluation and sustainability outcomes questions were:

1. How does change in student academic achievement at CSR schools compare with similar non-CSR schools and with the state as a whole?
2. How does change in student non-academic indicators at CSR schools compare with similar non-CSR schools and with the state as a whole?
3. Does there appear to be a differential impact on special education students, low income students, ELL students, and students of various races/ethnic backgrounds, based on academic achievement test results for student subgroups at CSR-funded schools?
4. Did the duration of CSR grants (one, two, or three years of CSR funding) make a difference on student achievement test and other outcomes?

Methodology

For comparative analyses each Round 5 CSR-funded school was matched with a comparable school that has not had CSR funding, using the Georgia School Council's online Similar Schools formula. The change in percent of students who are at or above the minimum competency standard established for each test was calculated and compared for each CSR and comparison school, by school level and academic subject area. A similar comparison was done for student retention, student attendance, and graduation rate. Achievement test data also was disaggregated to examine disparate impact on Title I subgroups of students (ethnic/racial, special education, English language learners).

Changes in Student Academic Achievement Test Results

Elementary Schools (CRCT): Overall, in comparison to the pass rate on CRCT for the group of matched non-CSR schools, CSR-funded elementary schools performed better as a group in 2007 than they had in 2006, based on aggregated results for grades one through five. Across

all 15 test comparisons (3 subjects x 5 grades), gains in CSR schools exceeded (or declines were less than) comparison school rates in 10 (67%) of the 15 comparisons.

Middle Schools (CRCT): Overall, in comparison to the pass rate on CRCT for the group of matched non-CSR schools, CSR-funded middle schools performed better as a group in 2007 than they had in 2006, based on aggregated results for grades six through eight. However, overall gains from 2006 to 2007 in CSR schools were slightly less than their comparison schools. Across all 9 test comparisons (3 subjects x 3 grades), gains in CSR schools exceeded (or declines were less than) comparison school rates in 5 (56%) of the 9 comparisons. CSR schools gains and losses were similar to State average gains in all three subjects.

High Schools (Graduation Test): The average gain from 2006 to 2007 for CSR-funded high schools on the English/Language Arts graduation test was slightly lower than their comparison schools and CSR schools did not do as well on the Math graduation test, losing more than one percentage point on the pass rate, while comparison schools had a small increase. CSR schools as a group also did not do as well as their comparison schools on the change in mean scale scores. CSR schools average mean scale scores did not increase from 2006 to 2007 in either English or Math graduation tests. The decrease for English was greater than that in Math. In both English and Math, CSR schools did worse than the state each year.

High Schools (End-of-Course Tests): Overall, CSR-funded high schools did less well in 2007 than in the previous year with the exception of Geometry. The one-year change in pass rate from 2006 to 2007 for CSR-funded high schools on both 9th Grade Literature and American Literature was in a negative direction, while their comparison schools had a small increase on both tests. The drop in 9th Grade Literature was more than five percent in the CSR schools as a group. In mathematics, on the Algebra test the CSR-funded school average pass rate dropped nearly five percent, compared to matched schools which saw an increase of two percent. However, unlike the other three EOCTs, the average pass rate for Geometry in CSR schools increased by five percent, a gain that exceeded the comparison schools on this measure.

Changes in Non-academic Indicators

Attendance Rates: CSR-funded schools as a group had no change in the percent of students absent more than 15 days in 2007 compared to 2006. However, this percent increased for both high schools and elementary schools, while decreasing for middle schools. Overall, these results were more positive than the comparison schools. At each school level results varied: CSR and comparison high schools results were similar, CSR middle schools outperformed comparison schools, and CSR elementary schools did less favorably. In addition, on the state categories for attendance CSR-funded cohort had fewer schools in the Exemplary category, and more in both Acceptable and Unacceptable categories. This indicates a negative one-year change in attendance for these schools. CSR-funded schools did not have a change in the average daily attendance rate in 2007 compared to 2006. Within this cohort, the rate for elementary and high schools declined slightly and the rate for middle schools increased slightly.

Retention Rates: Both CSR-funded and comparison schools overall showed a slight improvement (i.e., decrease) in their retention rate from 2006 to 2007. CSR elementary schools did much better than their comparison schools, decreasing their rate while matched schools increased their rate. CSR middle schools improved their retention rate at a higher level than the comparison schools. CSR high schools performed more poorly on this indicator than other CSR-

funded schools and their comparison schools. CSR high schools had a higher retention rate in 2007 than in 2006, while the comparison school rate and other CSR school rates were less than the previous year.

Graduation Rates: The one year mean change in graduation rate was an increase of less than one percent for the six CSR high schools compared to an increase of more than four percent for comparison high schools. This group of CSR-funded schools still had a lower graduation rate than the comparison schools and the state as a whole in 2007. Results of this analysis show that the CSR and comparison school groups had exactly the same proportion of schools with increased (67%) and decreased (33%) graduation rates from 2006 to 2007. Overall increases in the graduation rate were greater for comparison schools than the CSR-funded high schools this year. It should be noted that for this group of CSR schools four of the six only received their CSR grant in the second half of the school year which may have limited implementation efforts.

Differential Impact on Student Subgroups

English Language Learners: ELL students in both elementary and middle school had the highest gains of all subgroups on all three CRCT tests. While this subgroup is still below the cohort and state proficiency level, as a group they have made good progress towards closing the gap in test scores this past year in CSR-funded schools. Similar increases in average test score for ELL students were seen on the graduation tests where gains far exceeded those of other subgroups and the state average.

Special Education Students: This student subgroup had positive increases in CRCT average scores from 2006 to 2007 on the Reading and ELA tests for elementary and middle school. Results in Math were negative for these students; however, this paralleled the results of many of the other subgroups on math tests. In high school, special education student results were less positive than the other subgroups on both Math and English tests, with declines on both measures.

Black Students: Black students as a group had strong gains on CRCT Reading and ELA in both elementary and middle school. Their results were better than all of the other subgroups except for ELL students. Black student average scores declined in CRCT math compared to last year, however, this was true for most of the schools this year. In high school, black students had gains on both the English and math graduation tests which exceeded state results. While this subgroup is still below the cohort and state proficiency level, as a group they have made good progress towards closing the gap in test scores this past year in CSR-funded schools.

Hispanic Students: This student subgroup had gains on three of the six CRCT tests for elementary and middle schools. Their declines were in ELA and Math on the CRCT. On the graduation test they had gains in average scores from 2006 to 2007 in both English and Math which exceeded state results.

Sustainability: Relationships between CSR Continuation and Achievement Outcomes

An analysis of the possible relationship between level of implementation as an indicator of sustainability and CRCT results produced the following findings:

- Middle schools with higher implementation schools had higher CRCT pass rates, and lower scoring schools had lower pass rates on CRCT Reading, ELA, and Math tests in both 2007 and 2006. No such pattern was evident for elementary schools.
- Only the one-year gain scores from 2006 to 2007 in CRCT Reading at the elementary level was a positive relationship found between years of funding and increases in test results over the two year. For other subjects no such pattern was evident.

Other analyses of relationships between the number of years of CSR funding and the test-based or non-academic outcomes were inconsistent. There was no overall pattern indicating that having a greater number of years of CSR support was associated with higher testing or other outcomes across school levels (elementary, middle or high schools) or measures. Many other factors that influence schools may explain this inability to find consistent trends in this analysis.