

Validation and Confirmation of Core Knowledge:

Abstracts from the Research Literature

August, 1999

The following authors' abstracts are given verbatim from the research literature. These research reports supplement the more direct assessments of Core Knowledge conducted by other independent researchers, the results of which are also available at this website. The most important feature of the following abstracts is to confirm a correlation between the knowledge selected to be conveyed in the Core Knowledge curriculum and the LONG TERM effects of possessing such knowledge, even when all other relevant factors are controlled. These long term effects include: better grades at elementary, high school, and college levels, better ability to comprehend writing and speech directed to a general educated audience, e.g., The New York Times, better cognitive functioning, and finally, in post-school-and-collegelife, higher income and greater political power. Correlation does not prove causation, but when multiple correlations come from a variety of very different sorts of data, the argument for causation gains greatly in plausibility — especially when, as in this case, the causal relation was predicted and is well grounded in theory.

Correlation of Core Knowledge and higher academic achievement in elementary school.

ERIC
No/Availability: EJ414341

Author: Kosmoski, Georgia J. And Others

Title: Cultural Literacy and Academic Achievement.

Abstract: The relationship between cultural literacy and academic achievement was studied. Scores on the Cultural Literacy Assessment Test were obtained for 611 fifth graders for whom data about academic achievement were available. There was a significant positive correlation between cultural literacy and academic achievement for all ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups studied. (SLD)

Issuing body: Journal of Experimental Education v58 n4 p265-72 Sum 1990

Content time period: 1990

Cumulative effects of early Core Knowledge and Decoding Skill on later school achievement

ERIC
No/Availability: EJ561721

Author: Cunningham, Anne E. Stanovich, Keith E.

Title: Early Reading Acquisition and Its Relation to Reading Experience and Ability 10 Years Later

Abstract: Studied reading comprehension, vocabulary, general knowledge, and print exposure of 11th graders who completed reading battery 10 years earlier. Found that first-grade reading ability predicted all 11th-grade outcomes — even when cognitive ability was partialled out — and was linked to print exposure, even after 11th-grade reading comprehension ability was partialled out. Print exposure predicted reading comprehension growth. (Author/KB)

Issuing body: Developmental Psychology v33 n6 p934-45 Nov 1997

Content time period: 1997

General note: PUB TYPE: Journal article Research/technical report

Correlation of Core Knowledge with higher SAT scores and higher grades in college

ERIC
No/Availability: EJ543901

Author: Pentony, Joseph F.

Title: Cultural Literacy

Abstract: Hirsch's Cultural Literacy Test was completed by 200 undergraduates. Subjects who scored highest had higher grade point averages and Scholastic Assessment Test scores. Results for minorities were inconsistent and based on small samples. Effectiveness of the test for adult literacy students remains unproven. (SK)

Issuing body: Adult Basic Education v7 n1 p39-45 Spr 1997

Content time period: 1997

General note: PUB TYPE: Research/technical report Journal article

Language: English

ERIC
No/Availability: EJ458542

Author: Pentony, Joseph F.

Title: Cultural Literacy: A Concurrent Validation.

Abstract: The reliability and validity of E. D. Hirsch's (1988) Cultural Literacy Test (CLT) was studied with 150 first-year college students at the University of St. Thomas in Houston (Texas). The test appears reliable, with a split-half reliability estimate of 0.93, and the cultural literacy construct and the CLT are valid. (SLD)

Issuing body: Educational and Psychological Measurement v52 n4 p967-72 Win 1992

Content time period: 1992

General note: PUB TYPE: Journal article Research/technical report

Correlation of Core Knowledge and the vocabulary of the New York Times over eight years.

ERIC
No/Availability: ED302836 EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

Author: Willinsky, John

Title: The Vocabulary of Cultural Literacy in a Newspaper of Substance.

Abstract: To examine the role that items on the list of "What Literate Americans Know" (developed by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.) plays in the nation's literacy, a study conducted an electronic search of "The New York Times" to establish the frequency of occurrence for a sample from the list. A random sample of 424 terms (9% of the total list) was selected. Each term or expression which was searched produced a figure representing the frequency of occurrence in the "Times" over a period of 101 months (June 1, 1980 to October 28, 1988), representing a corpus of 660.5 million words. Four frequency periods — yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily — were devised based on how often, on average, a term might be expected to turn up in the newspaper. The terms were also divided into eight categories: geography; history; idioms/proverbs; literature/arts; math/sciences; politics/economics; psychology/anthropology; and religion. Results indicated that any given day's issue of the "Times" contained approximately 2,700 occurrences of terms from the list, with a few of them (such as "New York") making up

a good proportion of this number. Geography, the arts, and politics/economics dominated the frequency levels, while history and proverbs/idiomatic expressions were not high frequency categories. Results suggest that Hirsch has identified a corpus of cultural terms which play a part in the daily commerce of the published language. However, to be culturally literate in this set of terms will neither be sufficient nor necessary for a high level of comprehension in reading the "New York Times." (Three tables of data are included.) (MM)

Content time period: Nov 1988

Correlation of Core Knowledge and General Cognitive Functioning

Author: Stanovich, Keith E.

Author: West, Richard F. Harrison, Michele R.

Title: Knowledge growth and maintenance across the life span: the role of print exposure.

Abstract: One hundred thirty-three college students (mean age = 19.1 years) and 49 older individuals (mean age = 79.9 years) completed 2 general knowledge tasks, a vocabulary task, a working memory task, a syllogistic reasoning task, and several measures of exposure to print. A series of hierarchical regression analyses indicated that when measures of exposure to print were used as control variables, the positive relationships between age and vocabulary, and age and declarative knowledge, were eliminated. Within each of the age groups, exposure to print was a significant predictor of vocabulary and declarative knowledge even after differences in working memory, general ability, and educational level were controlled. These results support the theory of fluid-crystallized intelligence and suggest a more prominent role for exposure to print in theories of individual differences in knowledge acquisition and maintenance. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Issuing body: Developmental Psychology v. 31 (Sept. '95) p. 811-26

Correlation of Core Knowledge, income level, and political power in later life

Author: Hofstetter, C. Richard

Author: Sticht, Thomas G., Hofstetter, Carolyn Huie

Title: Knowledge, Literacy, and Power

Abstract: Studies based on two random digit samples (N=538 and N=632) of adults in San Diego suggest that higher levels of declarative knowledge about "mainstream" culture and politics in the United States are associated with achieving and exercising power regardless of cultural background. Statistical relationships were examined among general mainstream societal knowledge, domain-specific political knowledge, the amount of reading reported, indicators of power (including perceptions of powerlessness, political efficacy, and political interest). Extraneous cognitive-processing variance was controlled by using simple checklists of declarative knowledge. Although causality cannot be proven, the results suggest that a person's content knowledge is related to reading and power, even when age, education, gender, ethnicity, and measures of literacy practice are controlled. Thus knowledge is associated with power regardless of most barriers that citizens otherwise face.

Issuing body: Communication Research v 26 (Feb. 1999) p. 58-80.