

**Career Academies: Impacts  
on Students' Initial Transitions  
to Post-Secondary Education  
and Employment**

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# Overview

Established more than 30 years ago, Career Academies have spread rapidly over the past decade as states, school districts, and individual schools throughout the country have turned to the approach as part of a solution to a range of problems faced by large comprehensive high schools. Career Academies are typically characterized by three basic features: a school-within-a-school organizational structure, curricula that combine academic and career or technical courses based on a career theme, and partnerships with local employers. The main goals of Academies are to prevent students from dropping out and to prepare them for college and careers.

In 1993, MDRC began conducting the Career Academies Evaluation, a 10-year longitudinal study of the Academy model in nine schools around the country. In the evaluation, more than 1,700 Academy applicants in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade were randomly assigned to enroll in their high school's Academy (the Academy group) or to enroll in any other high school program (the non-Academy group). The differences between the two groups' outcomes serve as estimates of the Academies' effects. Owing to its random assignment design, diverse set of participating students and sites, and long follow-up period — which extends four years beyond the students' scheduled graduation from high school — this study is both more comprehensive and more rigorous than previous studies of Academies and other school reforms. The evaluation is being funded by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and 17 private foundations and organizations. The new impact findings presented in this report are based on survey data collected about one year after scheduled high school graduation. A later report will present results for the rest of the follow-up period.

## Key Findings

Although the participating Career Academies enhanced the high school experiences of their students in ways that are consistent with the reform's short-term goals, these positive effects did not translate into changes in high school graduation rates or initial transitions to post-secondary education and jobs.

- Earlier results from the evaluation indicate that the Academies improved students' high school experiences on several fronts, including their average level of school engagement, the rate at which they combined academic and career-related courses, and the rate at which they participated in career awareness and work-related learning activities. The Academies had little influence, however, on course content and classroom instructional practices and left standardized test scores unchanged.
- For students who entered the programs at high risk of dropping out, the Academies increased the likelihood of staying in school through the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year, improved attendance, and increased the number of credits earned toward graduation.
- The results presented in this report show that, relative to similar students nationally, both the Academy and the non-Academy groups had high rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and employment.
- The Academies had little or no impact on high school graduation rates and initial post-secondary education and employment outcomes. In other words, the Academy group's relatively high outcome levels were matched by those of the non-Academy group — the best benchmark against which to compare the Academy group's performance. This was true for subgroups of students at high, medium, and low dropout risk.
- The results suggest that Career Academies should consider expanding their efforts to recruit students who may not be motivated to enroll in Academies on their own, to provide college counseling from the beginning of high school, and to ensure that teachers have access to professional development opportunities aimed at improving curriculum and instruction.

The new findings go beyond those presented in earlier reports from this evaluation and from previous research on Career Academies. Nevertheless, the full story of Academies' effectiveness is still unfolding. Data collected as the evaluation continues will shed light on any differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups' education and labor market experiences that emerge during the second, third, and fourth years after high school.



# Contents

<b>Overview</b>	iii
<b>List of Tables and Figures</b>	vi
<b>Preface</b>	vii
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	ix
<b>Executive Summary</b>	ES-1
<b>Report</b>	1
I.    Introduction	1
II.   Career Academies: The Approach and This Evaluation	2
III.  Data and Analysis Issues	12
IV.  Outcomes and Impacts for the Full Sample	19
V.   Impacts for the Risk Subgroups	29
VI.  Implications of the Findings	40
<b>References</b>	48
<b>Recent Publications on MDRC Projects</b>	50

## **Technical Resources**

Amplifying on issues and findings in the report, the Technical Resources are available only on the Web at [http://www.mdrc.org/Reports2001/CareerAcademies/CA\\_TechResources.htm](http://www.mdrc.org/Reports2001/CareerAcademies/CA_TechResources.htm).

Unit 1: Issues Underlying the Impact Analyses and Comparisons with National Data

Unit 2: Additional Impacts for the Full Sample

Unit 3: Additional Impacts for the Risk Subgroups and Impacts for Subgroups  
Defined by Gender, Race, and Educational Expectations

## List of Tables and Figures

### Table

ES.1	Outcomes for the Non-Academy Group and the NELS Sample	ES-4
ES.2	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment	ES-5
1	Definitions of the Outcome Measures Used in the Analysis	15
2	Employment Rates and Job Characteristics for the Full Study Sample	27
3	High School Course-Taking Patterns Among On-Time High School Graduates, by Risk Subgroup	33
4	Employment Rates and Job Characteristics, by Risk Subgroup	38

### Figure

1	Conceptual Model of the Career Academy Approach	4
2	High School Completion Rates for the Non-Academy Group and the NELS Sample	20
3	Post-Secondary Enrollment Rates for the Non-Academy Group and the NELS Sample	22
4	Employment Rates for the Non-Academy Group and the NELS Sample	23
5	Impacts on High School Completion Status for the Full Study Sample	25
6	Impacts on Post-Secondary Education Enrollment for the Full Study Sample	26
7	Impacts on the Average Number of Months Spent Attending School or Working, for the Full Study Sample	28
8	Impacts on High School Completion Status, by Risk Subgroup	31
9	Impacts on Post-Secondary Education Enrollment, by Risk Subgroup	36
10	Impacts on the Average Number of Months Spent Attending School or Working, by Risk Subgroup	41

## Preface

The Career Academies Evaluation is aimed at providing reliable evidence about the extent to which Career Academies and related education reforms deliver on an ambitious goal: to transform schools into nurturing environments where all students can acquire the skills needed to succeed in further education and employment. The evaluation is rare among education studies for its design — in which Academy applicants were randomly assigned to a group that enrolled in Academies or to a group that enrolled in other high school programs — and for its long follow-up period, which spanned high school and the years after scheduled graduation.

A milestone in the 10-year project, this report focuses on students' transitions to post-secondary education and jobs during the year after high school. It is being released at a pivotal time for education policymakers and practitioners across the country who are seeking concrete ways to improve high schools and are debating the role of school-to-work programs and career education in this effort. At the federal level, several offices in the U.S. Department of Education are promoting secondary school reform initiatives that include rethinking organizational arrangements, upgrading standards for curriculum and instruction, and building partnerships with employers and other community organizations. In addition, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act recently expired, and Congress will consider reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Applied Technology and Vocational Education Act within the next year or two. The goals and organizational components of the Career Academy approach place it at the intersection of these and related reforms.

As the report reveals, the nine Career Academies in the evaluation had little or no impact on students' rates of high school graduation, enrollment in post-secondary education, and employment. Both among Academy and non-Academy students, the outcomes on these measures were comparable to national averages and above average relative to the kind of large urban high schools where the Academy approach is typically implemented. The lack of impacts at this stage may stem partly from the remarkably high performance of the students not enrolled in Academies, all of whom — like the Academy students — took the initiative to apply to an Academy.

Many critics of career and vocational education contend that programs such as Career Academies track students into classes and work experiences that orient them toward immediate entry into the labor market and away from further education. The high outcome levels achieved by the Academy students in this study suggest that these criticisms are not well founded. At the same time, more than a quarter of the Academy students did not graduate on time, and nearly half of them did not enroll in post-secondary education within a year of their scheduled graduation, suggesting that there is room for Academies to improve.

The present findings stand in contrast to those reported earlier from the evaluation. Previous reports found that the Academies positively affected students during high school. But the reports also noted limitations on the Academies' effectiveness that, viewed in the context of the current findings, point to areas where Academy proponents in particular and education policymakers and practitioners more generally may need to devise ways to build on the programs' strengths.

The full story of Career Academies' effectiveness is still unfolding. As the evaluation continues, data on students' education and labor market experiences during the second, third, and fourth years after high school are expected to shed light on whether the Academies enable students to reach higher levels of education and to obtain higher-wage, more career-oriented jobs. We are confident that, in keeping with MDRC's mission, the Career Academies Evaluation will continue to offer policymakers and educators useful lessons about what works for high school students and will demonstrate the value of subjecting promising school reform approaches to rigorous tests of effectiveness.

Robert Ivry  
Senior Vice President



## Acknowledgments

Like the previous reports from the Career Academies Evaluation, this report is an outgrowth of an extraordinary collaboration between the sites, funders, and advisers who have supported MDRC's efforts over the last eight years. The evaluation would not have been possible without the vision and support of the funding organizations listed at the front of the report. Special gratitude is also due the staff at the participating Career Academies, high schools, school districts, and employer partners as well as the young people who generously gave of their time to respond to the Post-High School Survey. The survey was administered by Anne Van Aman and her associates, who worked tirelessly to find and interview members of the study sample.

The report also benefited greatly from the input of key advisers to the evaluation. Thomas Bailey of Teachers College, Richard Murnane of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and David Stern of the University of California at Berkeley reviewed an early draft of the findings and provided invaluable advice regarding further analyses and offered insights into the results and their implications.

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Leaders from several organizations concerned with Career Academies also provided valuable comments on the findings: Charles Dayton and Susan Tidyman of the Career Academy Support Network, John Ferrandino and Bonnie Silvers of the National Academy Foundation, and Natalie Allen of Philadelphia Academies, Inc., and of the National Career Academy Coalition.

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From the beginning of the Career Academies Evaluation, Robert Ivry, MDRC's Senior Vice President for Development and External Affairs, has played a pivotal role in building partnerships with the sites, funders, and advisers that form the foundation for the study. This

report benefited greatly from his insights and advice on how to sharpen the presentation of the findings and their policy implications. Other MDRC staff members played key roles in acquiring and analyzing data for this report. Marla Sherman coordinated the survey administration and data collection process with Anne Van Aman, and Joel Gordon and Galina Farberova prepared the initial survey data files for analysis.

Judith Scott executed the analyses that produced the findings, provided a wide range of research assistance, prepared the tables and figures, and coordinated the production of this report. Howard Bloom, Fred Doolittle, Judith Gueron, Robert Ivry, Kent McGuire, Marilyn Price, and Jason Snipes reviewed drafts and provided helpful technical and substantive guidance on the presentation. Finally, the author would like to thank Valerie Chase for her insightful comments on the report drafts, thoughtful editing, and efforts to bring the report to publication.

The Author

## Executive Summary

This report examines how Career Academies, one of the oldest and most widely established high school reforms in the United States, influence students' preparation for and transitions to post-secondary education and the labor market. Since the first Career Academies were established more than 30 years ago, they have been characterized by three features: (1) a school-within-a-school organizational structure aimed at creating a more supportive, personalized learning environment; (2) curricula that combine academic and career or technical courses to enrich teaching and learning; and (3) partnerships with local employers to increase career awareness and provide work-based learning opportunities.

Over the past 10 years, Career Academies have spread rapidly as states, school districts, and individual schools look to the approach as part of a solution to a range of problems facing large comprehensive high schools. The rapid growth of the Academy movement, which now encompasses an estimated 1,500 to 2,500 schools nationwide, has been accompanied by an expansion of the model's target population and goals. Whereas Career Academies originally focused on keeping students at high risk of dropping out enrolled in high school and on readying such students for the world of work, since the early 1990s they have aimed to prepare a mix of high-performing students and high-risk students for both college and employment. These developments have fueled the need for reliable evidence about how Career Academies affect students' performance in high school and their transitions to further education and careers.

With funding from the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and 17 private foundations and organizations, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) began evaluating the Career Academy approach in 1993. The Career Academies Evaluation is one of the few studies of a school reform initiative that compares the experiences of students who applied to participate in the initiative and were randomly selected to enroll (the Academy group) with those of students in the same schools who applied for the initiative but were randomly selected not to enroll (the non-Academy group). The differences between the two groups serve as estimates of the Academies' impacts on students' outcomes. This type of research design is widely considered to be the most reliable way to measure the effectiveness of selective, voluntary interventions such as Career Academies. The evaluation is also unusual among studies of school reforms for following both groups of students from the beginning of high school through several years after graduation.

The nine participating high schools had implemented the three basic features of the Career Academy approach when they were selected for inclusion in the evaluation. As a group, they reflect the typical conditions under which Academies have operated during the past decade: All are located in or near urban areas, and each school's Academy sought to serve a mix of students ranging from those at high risk of dropping out to those highly engaged in school.

Focusing on the year after students' scheduled graduation from high school, this report examines these Career Academies' effects on graduation rates, post-secondary education enrollment, and labor market participation. The primary data were obtained from a survey administered to nearly 1,500 students in the study sample — about half of whom had been randomly assigned to Academies and about half of whom had been randomly assigned to other high school pro-

grams — approximately 14 months after their scheduled high school graduation (hereafter referred to as the “year after scheduled graduation” or the “year after high school”).

## **Previously Reported Findings**

Evidence presented in previous reports from the evaluation indicates that the participating Career Academies changed students’ high school experiences in ways that are consistent with the short-term goals of the Academy approach:

- Relative to other high school programs, the Academies increased the level of interpersonal support that students received from their teachers and peers.
- Compared with their non-Academy counterparts, Academy students were more likely to combine academic and career or technical courses and to participate in career awareness and work-based learning activities.
- For students who entered the programs at high risk of dropping out, the Academies increased the likelihood of staying in school through the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year, the attendance rate, and the number of credits earned toward graduation.
- For students at medium or low risk of dropping out, the Academies increased access to career or technical courses and raised participation in career development activities without reducing academic course-taking.

Previously reported findings also revealed the following limits on the Academies’ effectiveness:

- More than one-third of the students who enrolled in the Academies left the programs before the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year.
- The Academies that did not increase the interpersonal supports that students received from teachers and peers reduced student engagement — as reflected in school attendance, course-taking, and dropout rates — for some students.
- The Academies had little influence on course content and instructional practices and did not affect standardized test scores for any subgroup of students.

## **New Findings**

The evidence presented in this report addresses three key questions:

1. What were the high school graduation rates and early college and work experiences of the non-Academy students, who in this research design set the standard against which Academy students are compared?
2. What impacts did the Career Academies have on these outcomes?

3. To what extent did the Career Academies' impacts differ across subgroups of students with characteristics associated with being at high, medium, or low risk of dropping out of high school?

Following is a summary of the findings.

- **Relative to similar students nationally, the non-Academy group achieved high rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and employment.**

Owing to the study's random assignment research design — which ensures that there were no systematic differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups at the outset of the study — the outcomes for the non-Academy group are the best benchmark against which to measure the impacts of the Career Academies on the Academy group. As shown in Table ES.1, which presents several key outcomes for the non-Academy group, a large majority of non-Academy students graduated from high school on time, and a majority went on to post-secondary education programs during the following year.

Table ES.1 places the non-Academy outcomes in the context of outcomes for a nationally representative group of students with similar background characteristics who were enrolled in urban comprehensive public schools. The non-Academy students generally fared better than similar students who were enrolled in career or technical programs, on a par with or better than students in general curriculum programs, and somewhat worse than students enrolled in academic or college preparatory programs. Overall, the performance of the non-Academy group thus sets a formidable standard for the Academy group to exceed.

- **On average, the Career Academies had little impact on high school graduation rates and initial post-secondary outcomes. The relatively high outcome levels achieved by Academy students were matched by those for their non-Academy counterparts.**

Table ES.2, which presents the high school completion, post-secondary education enrollment, and employment rates for the Academy and non-Academy groups, makes clear that there were virtually no differences between the groups during the year after scheduled high school graduation. The lack of impacts on these transitional outcomes appears to be inconsistent with the substantial differences between Academy and non-Academy students' high school experiences documented in previous reports from the study. Two factors may help account for the discrepancies. First, judging from the non-Academy group's high outcomes relative to those for national samples, it appears that the students who applied to the Career Academies would have found other routes to graduation and post-secondary education without the programs. Second, the benefits that accrued to Academy students during high school may not have related directly enough to students' immediate post-high school transitions or may not have been substantial enough to affect these transitions. Longer-term follow-up will reveal whether the benefits eventually lead to higher levels of educational attainment or greater labor market success.

- **Among students at high risk of dropping out, the Career Academies' impacts were less pronounced during the year after high school than they were during high school.**

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table ES.1**  
**Outcomes for the Non-Academy Group and**  
**the NELS Sample**

Outcome (%)	Non-Academy Group	NELS Sample		
		Career/ Technical	General	Academic
Earned high school diploma or GED	86.7	81.4	86.2	88.5
On-time graduate	74.4	63.8	68.8	84.7
Late graduate	7.4	14.0	11.3	3.5
Earned a GED or other certificate	5.0	3.6	6.1	0.3
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	54.6	41.8	43.9	53.5
Bachelor's degree program	15.5	20.7	15.6	26.1
Associate's degree program	27.8	17.0	17.5	18.6
Skills training program	11.3	4.1	10.8	8.8
Ever employed	87.2	84.5	82.6	80.0
Sample size	665	269	886	744

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), 1988-1994 data.

NOTES: All measures reflect status at the end of August in the year following scheduled high school graduation.

The NELS sample includes only students who were enrolled in a nonselective urban public high school in 10th grade.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they received their diploma by the end of June in the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Post-secondary education measures reflect the highest degree programs in which students enrolled. Students must have earned a high school diploma or GED to be considered enrolled in these programs.

Ever employed means having ever worked for pay during the follow-up period.

MDRC estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

The NELS estimates were regression-adjusted and mean-centered to reflect outcomes for students who had the same distribution of background characteristics as non-Academy sample members.

No tests of statistical significance were performed.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table ES.2**  
**Impacts on High School Completion,**  
**Post-Secondary Education, and Employment**

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact (Difference)	Percentage Change
Earned high school diploma or GED	87.2	86.7	0.5	0.6
On-time graduate	74.0	74.4	-0.4	-0.5
Late graduate	5.8	7.4	-1.6	-21.8
Earned a GED or other certificate	7.5	5.0	2.5	49.6
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	54.8	54.6	0.2	0.3
Bachelor's degree program	14.7	15.5	-0.9	-5.6
Associate's degree program	27.3	27.8	-0.5	-1.8
Skills training program	12.8	11.3	1.6	13.9
Ever employed	88.7	87.2	1.5	1.7
Sample size (N=1,482)	817	665		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect status at the end of August in the year following scheduled high school graduation. Students were considered on-time graduates if they received their diploma by the end of June in the year they were scheduled to graduate.

The post-secondary education measures reflect the highest degree programs in which students enrolled. Students must have earned a high school diploma or GED to be considered enrolled in these programs.

Percentage change equals the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Ever employed means having ever worked for pay during the follow-up period.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. The difference in receipt of a GED or other certificate was statistically significant at the 5 percent level. No other differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups in this table were statistically significant.

Earlier findings from the evaluation indicate that the Academies increased school engagement — as reflected in higher school attendance rates and lower dropout rates — and facilitated progress toward graduation among students who entered the programs at high risk of dropping out. The findings in the current report are more mixed. For the high-risk subgroup, the Academies led to a modest (though not statistically significant) increase in the on-time graduation rate and in the likelihood of completing a basic academic core curriculum. Also, the Academies produced a statistically significant increase in the proportion of high-risk students who earned a one-year post-secondary license or certificate. During the year after scheduled graduation, however, students in the non-Academy group “caught up” with Academy students by graduating from high school late and enrolling in bachelor’s or associate’s degree programs at about the same rates as the Academy students. By the end of the year after high school, there was virtually no difference between the Academy and non-Academy students in the high-risk subgroup in the amount of time spent attending post-secondary education, working, or combining the two.

- **In general, the findings for students who entered the program at medium or low risk of dropping out of high school were consistent with those for the full sample: Academy and non-Academy students did well relative to national samples, but the two groups’ education and labor market outcomes were comparable.**

With few exceptions, the Academies had no impacts on key transitional outcomes for students in the medium- and low-risk subgroups. For the medium-risk subgroup, there were two notable statistically significant impacts. On the one hand, the Academy group was somewhat more likely to earn a General Educational Development (GED) credential instead of a high school diploma. On the other hand, although the Academy and non-Academy students in the medium-risk subgroup were equally likely to be employed during the year after high school, the jobs held by Academy group members paid a higher average hourly wage.

## **Implications**

- **The findings indicate that Career Academies offer a viable pathway to high school graduation and post-secondary education.**

Career Academies have been associated most notably with career and technical education and the school-to-work movement. Some critics of Career Academies and related education strategies have argued that Academies primarily target students who do not plan to go to college, tracking them into classes and work experiences that orient them toward immediate entry into the labor market. Other critics maintain that Career Academies induce college-bound students who are attracted to the programs to substitute career and technical classes and work experience for academic classes and experiences that would qualify them for college.

Overall, the present findings suggest that neither line of criticism is well founded. The Career Academies in this evaluation prepared most of their students to graduate from high school and enroll in post-secondary education. In fact, Academy students reached these milestones at rates roughly comparable to those for similar students in urban public schools across the country. Some



researchers and policymakers have suggested that large comprehensive high schools such as those in this study do not offer enough pathways from high school to post-secondary education to accommodate all students. The Career Academy approach may afford one way to expand the set of available pathways, at least for students who have the initiative to apply for them.

- **Academies changed the high school environments and experiences of their students and teachers in ways that were consistent with the program’s short-term goals. Yet these changes did not translate into different initial post-secondary education experiences than would have been expected for equally motivated students not enrolled in Academies.**

Evidence from this evaluation and others indicates that Career Academies improve students’ high school experiences. While the small learning communities probably account for the stronger interpersonal supports and higher levels of engagement among Academy students, the career themes provide a framework for combining academic and career-related courses, and the employer partnerships afford students greater access to career development experiences and work-based learning opportunities.

Beyond these short-term outcomes, however, the Academies’ impacts appear to dissipate. As discussed in a previous report from this study, the participating Career Academies — though they created conditions for maintaining and even enhancing students’ engagement in high school — did not change classroom instruction substantially or affect standardized measures of academic achievement. Similarly, most of the participating Academies did not provide college counseling services tailored for Academy students or to their needs and interests, which may help explain the lack of impacts on post-secondary education enrollments.

- **The present findings challenge Career Academy proponents and education policymakers to build on the strengths of the approach as they attempt to raise rates of high school completion and enrollment in post-secondary education.**

More than 25 percent of the students in the Academy group did not graduate from high school on time; approximately 45 percent had not enrolled in a post-secondary education program by the end of the year after scheduled graduation; and only 15 percent enrolled in bachelor’s degree programs. These findings suggest that, although the Academy students did as well or better than national samples of similar students in similar programs, there is room for improvement. At this point in the evaluation, it is possible only to suggest some hypotheses about how the Career Academy approach might effect these improvements.

**Increase high-risk students’ access to Career Academies.** To the extent that Academies have longer-term impacts, the impacts are concentrated among students who entered the program at high risk of dropping out. This finding suggests that Academies should make greater efforts to attract and retain such students. At the same time, targeting the programs exclusively to high-risk students might lower teachers’, students’, and parents’ expectations of the program. More importantly, based on implementation research conducted for this evaluation, the Academies appear to draw at least some of their power to improve interpersonal supports and to increase student engagement from the diversity of their student bodies.

**Heighten the emphasis on meeting academic standards, and provide more intensive guidance and support for college entrance.** The Academy model has been shown to address such problems as low student engagement, learning activities that have little relevance to students, and weak connections between schools on the one hand and local communities and the world of work on the other. The approach appears to be less well equipped to improve other outcomes, such as standardized test scores and rates of enrollment in four-year colleges. Academy proponents and policymakers should develop strategies for addressing these limitations directly. For example, school officials and Academy administrators might consider implementing an accelerated academic program in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to help students who are behind academically to catch up. In grades 10 to 12, the Academies could then focus on providing students with a rigorous academic curriculum of higher-level courses that would prepare them for high-stakes tests and help them garner the credentials needed to attend college. It is also critical to provide college and career counseling throughout high school and to monitor students' progress both in and outside the classroom.

### **Next Steps in the Evaluation**

Although the results presented in this report go beyond those presented in other research on Career Academies and in previous reports from this evaluation, the full story of Career Academies' effectiveness is still unfolding. Indeed, the findings reported to date point to the need to examine longer-term results before making definitive judgments about the effectiveness of the approach.

Earlier results from the Career Academies Evaluation show that the Academies expanded students' exposure to career awareness and development activities and work-related learning opportunities. Moreover, consistent with studies indicating that the year after high school graduation is a particularly unsettled period for 18- to 20-year-old youth, the Academy and non-Academy students in this study exhibited a relatively high rate of enrollment in one- and two-year post-secondary degree programs, and many made multiple transitions between education and employment opportunities. Finally, a more definitive assessment of the strengths and limitations of the Career Academy approach — a school-to-career initiative — should include evidence about its longer-term effects on educational attainment and employment outcomes.

To address these and other issues, the evaluation is collecting data on students' education and labor market experiences during the second, third, and fourth years after scheduled high school graduation. The goal of this ongoing work is to determine whether the Academies enable students to make better choices about post-secondary education and employment and, if so, whether their choices lead to higher educational attainment and entry into higher-wage, more career-oriented jobs.

# Report

## **I. Introduction**

This report examines how Career Academies, one of the oldest and most widely established high school reforms in the United States, influence students' preparation for and transitions to post-secondary education and the labor market. Since the first Career Academies were established more than 30 years ago, they have had three distinguishing features: (1) they are organized as a school-within-a-school to create a more supportive, personalized learning environment; (2) they combine academic and career and technical curricula around a career theme to enrich teaching and learning; and (3) they establish partnerships with local employers to provide career awareness and work-based learning opportunities for students. Although the basic organizational features of the approach have remained the same since its inception, its goals and target population have changed. The original Academies were designed primarily to keep students at risk of dropping out enrolled in high school and to increase such students' preparedness for work. There is now widespread agreement that Career Academies should serve a broad population, including students who are highly engaged in school and students who are at risk of dropping out, and should seek to prepare students for both college and work.

Over the past decade, Career Academies have proliferated more rapidly than ever. National, state, and local networks of Academies have grown significantly, while the Career Academy model has been incorporated, in whole or in part, into other school reform initiatives. Academies now stand at the intersection of several high school reform movements, including efforts to build school-to-work systems, to reconstitute vocational and technical education, to effect comprehensive school change, and to break large high schools into smaller learning communities. Many of these initiatives are tied to federal and state legislation that point to the Career Academy approach as reflecting their policy goals. In addition, local school districts and individual high schools have looked to the Career Academy model as a concrete approach to realizing these and other policy initiatives.

The expansion of the Career Academy approach, the extension of its target population and goals, and the growth of related reforms have fueled the need for reliable evidence about Academies' effects. In 1993, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) began a uniquely rigorous evaluation of the Career Academy approach in a diverse set of nine high schools across the country. The evaluation's primary goal is to provide policymakers and educators with reliable evidence about how Career Academies affect students' performance and engagement during high school and their later transitions to post-secondary education and the labor market. It also aims to provide information about how the programs operate and to examine factors that may enhance or undermine their effectiveness. The evaluation is funded by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and by 17 private foundations and organizations.

This report, the fifth from the evaluation, examines the participating Career Academies' effects on high school graduation rates and on the rates at which students in the study enrolled in post-secondary education programs during the year after scheduled high school graduation. It also includes information about the rates at which students worked and combined school and

work. A later report will examine the Academies' effects on educational attainment, labor market participation, and life experiences over four years after high school.

The next section describes the Career Academy approach in detail, highlights the key features of this evaluation, and briefly summarizes the findings from previous reports. The third section describes the types of data used to capture students' initial post-high school experiences and examines several analytical issues critical to interpreting the findings discussed in the remainder of the report. To provide a context for the findings, the high school completion and post-secondary education statuses of students in the Career Academies Evaluation are then compared with those of a national sample of students with similar characteristics. The remainder of the report presents the program's effects on the full study sample and on subgroups of students defined by characteristics associated with being at risk of dropping out of high school. The final section discusses some implications that the study findings may have for education policy and practice.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. Career Academies: The Approach and This Evaluation**

### **A. The Career Academy Approach**

The durability and broad appeal of the Career Academy approach are partly attributable to the fact that its core features offer direct responses to a number of problems common in large comprehensive high schools, particularly in urban schools that serve low-income students. The following constitute the basic elements of a Career Academy. First, a Career Academy is organized as a *school-within-a-school* — or a “small learning community” — in which students stay with the same group of teachers over three or four years during high school. The aim is to create a more personalized, supportive learning environment for students and teachers. Second, a Career Academy offers students a combination of *academic and career-related curricula* and uses a career theme to integrate the two. Third, a Career Academy establishes *partnerships with local employers* in an effort to build connections between school and work and to provide students with a range of career development and work-based learning opportunities. This definition of an Academy, now commonly accepted, was reviewed by a broad range of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who have worked closely with Career Academies.<sup>2</sup>

The early Career Academies, which operated in the 1970s and 1980s, were primarily vocational education programs targeted at students who appeared to be at high risk of dropping out of high school. The central goals of those programs were to keep students engaged in school, provide them with work-related learning experiences both in the classroom and on the job, and establish clearer pathways between high school and post-secondary employment.

Since the late 1980s, the primary goals and target population of most Career Academies have shifted. In particular, there is now wide agreement that the Career Academy approach

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<sup>1</sup>For the [Technical Resources](#) for this report — which include information about the samples, measures, and analytical methods used to derive the findings and supplementary tables presenting detailed findings for the full study sample and various subgroups — see Kemple (2001).

<sup>2</sup>Career Academy Support Network, 2001.

should distinguish itself from traditional vocational education by seeking to prepare students for both work and college. Vocational education, as defined in federal law and by historical precedent, has been directed at preparing young people for occupations that do not traditionally require advanced degrees. In line with what has been called “the new vocational education,” Career Academies now seek to include a wide cross section of students and to combine a rigorous academic curriculum with exposure to extensive information about an industry both in the workplace and in the classroom. The career theme used to integrate curricula is intended to provide exposure to a broad array of careers in a given field rather than to prepare students for specific jobs in that field.

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model of the pathways through which the Career Academy approach is hypothesized to affect students’ outcomes during high school and thereafter. The figure lists the three basic organizational elements of the Career Academy approach in the first column and shows how they are hypothesized to give rise to the three types of supports and learning opportunities in the second column: (1) The intensive collaboration afforded by the school-within-a-school organization is hypothesized to enhance interpersonal supports; (2) the combination of academic and vocational courses is hypothesized to help focus curricula and enrich teaching and learning; and (3) the employer partnerships are hypothesized to increase career awareness and work-based learning opportunities. Together the supports and learning opportunities are intended to increase students’ engagement in school (as reflected, for example, in school attendance), prevent them from dropping out, enhance their academic performance, encourage them to use their nonschool hours constructively and to avoid risk-taking behaviors (such as criminal activity and drug use), and help them meet graduation requirements. The ultimate goal of Career Academies is to prepare young people for post-secondary education and employment.

During the mid and late 1990s, education policymakers and practitioners began pursuing a number of far-reaching strategies for improving high schools in the United States. Some of these efforts fell under the umbrella of the school-to-work movement, whereas others came under the rubric of “comprehensive” school reforms (the latter aim to reform entire schools through changes in governance, curriculum, and organization). Many of these strategies include principles embedded in the Career Academy approach, while others include the Career Academy model as an explicit component. There are now estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,500 Career Academies nationwide, more than 10 times as many as during the late 1980s.<sup>3</sup> Much of this growth can be traced to the increasing number of national, state, and district Academy support networks. Although most Career Academies share the approach’s basic elements, the Academy model has been adapted to a wide range of local needs and circumstances.

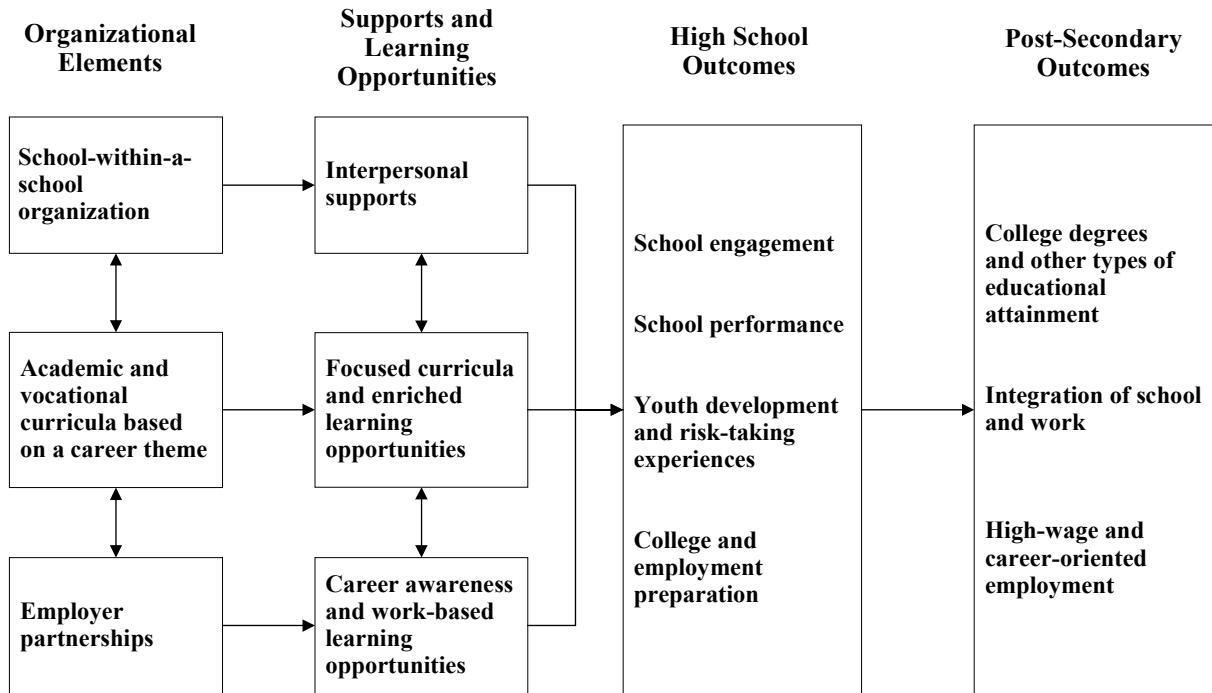
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<sup>3</sup>Stern, Dayton, and Raby, 2000.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Figure 1**

**Conceptual Model  
of the Career Academy Approach**



## **B. The Career Academies Evaluation**

Over the past 15 years, researchers have conducted numerous studies of Career Academies.<sup>4</sup> Several studies documented the feasibility and institutional growth of the Career Academy approach in a single school, school district, or state. Other studies assessed Academies' effects on students' high school performance and graduation rates, enrollment in post-secondary education, and labor market participation. In general, past research on the effects of Career Academies suggests that Academy students have better attendance, grades, and graduation rates than other students with similar background characteristics. The few studies that attempted to follow students after high school found evidence suggesting that Academy students are more likely to enroll in post-secondary education programs than other students with similar background characteristics.<sup>5</sup> Both lines of research are sometimes taken to indicate that Career Academies are responsible for Academy students' better outcomes.

Recent trends in the Career Academy movement in particular and in the policy environment more generally have increased the demand for more reliable, extensive evidence about the effectiveness of the approach. As already noted, there are now an unprecedented number of Academies nationwide, and the Academies in this new generation have broader goals and aim to serve a wider spectrum of students than did their precursors. Academies are also being promoted as a response to federal policy initiatives including the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1998, and the Smaller Learning Communities Program. These trends raise questions like the following: How well does the Academy approach meet the needs of a much wider spectrum of students than it was initially designed to serve? To what extent is it more effective under some conditions than under others? Which features of the Academy model make the most difference for students? How well do Career Academies meet the needs of federal, state, and local policy initiatives?

The Career Academies Evaluation, which was designed to address these questions, offers at least four advantages over previous research on Career Academies:

1. a random assignment research design — the most rigorous way to measure a program's effects;
2. a longitudinal database that will eventually include four years of post-high school follow-up data to learn about Academy and non-Academy students' educational attainment and labor market experiences;
3. a diverse group of sites (schools and districts) that reflect the typical conditions under which the Career Academy approach has been implemented and sustained;
4. a focus on the effectiveness of Academies across their new broader target population of students and new wider spectrum of goals.

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<sup>4</sup>For a recent summary of this research, see Stern, Dayton, and Raby (2000).

<sup>5</sup>See Maxwell and Rubin, 1997, 1999, 2000.

Following is a description of these key features of the evaluation.

**A random assignment research design.** The research designs used in previous studies have left uncertainties about the reliability of the findings of program effects. Researchers working on these studies have recognized that their findings may overestimate, or even underestimate, the true effects of Academies on student outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, there have been uncertainties about whether the relatively high performance levels of Career Academy students are actually attributable to the services provided by Academies.

On the one hand, because Academies are typically voluntary programs, good student performance results at least partly from the extra motivation or other characteristics of the students who were attracted to Academies rather than from their experiences in the programs. In other words, Academies may attract students (even among those whose background characteristics indicate a risk of dropping out) who would have been motivated enough to do well even if they had not been in the program. Thus, comparing these students with students who are not motivated to apply for an Academy may result in overestimates of the program's true effects. On the other hand, many Academies expressly aim to serve at-risk students. In studies where such students are compared with the general high school population, which probably includes a higher proportion of high-performing students, the true effects of the programs may actually be underestimated. Many researchers in past evaluations of Career Academies have emphasized that a random assignment research design would be necessary to rule out such systematic overestimates and underestimates of Academies' effects.

The Career Academies Evaluation is rare in the field of education research in that it has demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of implementing a large-scale, multisite random assignment research design within an ongoing high school program. There is wide agreement that this is the most reliable approach to measuring the effects of programs like Career Academies.<sup>7</sup> The random assignment design used in this evaluation was made possible by the fact that each of the nine Career Academies in the study had more than twice as many applicants as it was able to serve. Knowing that the program would therefore have to be "rationed" in their schools, the participating Academies worked with MDRC to implement a random process for selecting eligible applicants to fill their Academies rather than selecting on some other basis.<sup>8</sup>

The research sample for the evaluation includes 1,764 students who applied to enroll in a Career Academy. Approximately 55 percent of these applicants, the *Academy group*, were randomly selected to enroll in the Academies. The remaining 45 percent of students, the *non-Academy group*, were not invited to enroll. The non-Academy students either continued to attend the general high school program in which they were enrolled or selected options other than the Academy that were on offer in the same high school or in the same school district. The differences between the two groups' outcomes serve as estimates of the Academies' *impacts* on stu-

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<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Stern, Dayton, and Raby, 2000; and Maxwell and Rubin, 2000.

<sup>7</sup>See Betsey, Hollister, and Papageorgiou, 1985; Job Training Partnership Act, 1989; Atkinson and Jackson, 1992.

<sup>8</sup>For a detailed description of how the random assignment procedures were implemented for this evaluation, see Kemple and Rock (1996).



dents' outcomes. As discussed below, data are being collected for the sample members in both groups over an eight-year period starting at their high school entry.

The random assignment process ensured that, at the outset of the study, there were no systematic differences between the two groups of students in terms of their background characteristics, prior school experiences, or initial motivation and attitudes toward school. Any systematic differences that subsequently emerge between the groups can therefore be attributed with confidence to differences in their access and exposure to the Career Academies.

**A longitudinal database.** Resource limitations and other constraints on data collection prevented previous studies from compiling information that could be used to determine the long-term effects of Career Academies on a wide spectrum of educational and labor market outcomes. To overcome these obstacles, this evaluation built a consortium of public and private funders and established an extensive longitudinal data collection system.

Each student in the evaluation sample applied to an Academy and was randomly assigned to one of the research groups at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Data have been collected from a variety of sources including school transcript records; surveys that students completed at various points during high school; standardized math computation and reading comprehension tests administered to a subsample of students at the end of their scheduled 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year; and qualitative field research conducted throughout the evaluation to document the participating Academies' implementation, local contexts, staff, students, and employer partners.

Previous reports from the evaluation followed students in both the Academy and non-Academy groups through the end of their scheduled 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year, that is, until just before they would have graduated from high school. The new data presented in this report were obtained from a survey that students completed somewhat more than a year after their scheduled graduation.

**A diverse group of participating sites.** A third important set of questions that has not received much attention in previous research concerns the variation in Career Academies' effectiveness across a wide range of contexts and networks. This evaluation focuses on nine high schools that were strategically selected for, among other characteristics, serving a diverse group of students.<sup>9</sup> As a group the sites reflect the typical conditions under which Career Academies have been implemented across the country, and as individuals they capture much of the variation in the approach as it has been tailored to local needs and circumstances.

Each of the high schools in the study is located in or near a large urban school district that serves a substantially higher percentage of African-American and Hispanic students than school districts nationally. On average, the school districts in which these Academies are located also have higher dropout rates, higher unemployment rates, and higher percentages of low-income families than do school districts nationally. Consistent with the Academy model's new, broader

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<sup>9</sup>For a more detailed description of the criteria and process used to select sites for this study, see Kemple and Rock (1996). Ten sites were initially selected, but one of the Academies was disbanded two years into the study period and was therefore unable to provide sufficient follow-up data to be included in subsequent analysis of students' experiences and outcomes.

scope, each Academy sought to serve a mix of students, including students with characteristics associated with dropping out of high school and students who entered high school highly engaged in school and performing well academically.

Each of the Academies had implemented the basic Career Academy components described earlier: a school-within-a-school organization, a curriculum that integrated academic and vocational coursework, and employer partnerships. This combination of features was not available through other programs in the participating high schools. Although some of the participating schools operated other programs that they classified as “academies,” information collected for this study indicated that such programs did not include all the basic components of the Academy approach described above. As a result, the participating Career Academies represent a clear contrast with the other programs in the host high schools.

In summary, the sites participating in the Career Academies Evaluation provide a foundation on which to build a credible assessment of the implementation and impacts of the Career Academy approach. Three important caveats should be kept in mind, however, in interpreting the findings from this study — particularly those in this report.

First, because the participating sites were chosen strategically rather than randomly, the findings from this study cannot necessarily be generalized to all schools and school districts. Nevertheless, as a group these sites typify urban schools and school districts of moderate size, reflecting much of the diversity of such places.

Second, like their host high schools and school districts, the participating Career Academies are dynamic and evolving. Over the study period, most of the programs have modified various components of the Career Academy approach in response to changing conditions in their host high schools or school districts, and many of them have moved toward realizing more complete versions of the model. Others were weakened by staff turnover, decreases in funding, changes in local or state education policy, fluctuating levels of support from building or district staff, and changes in the amount and types of support provided by employer partners.

Third, each Academy in this evaluation operated as a single, relatively independent school-within-a-school, or a “pocket Academy.” Throughout the 30-year history of Career Academies, this has been the typical organizational arrangement. More recently, a few school districts have begun to convert entire high schools into clusters of Career Academies, or a “wall-to-wall Academy.” In such schools, all students must choose an Academy or Academy-like program. As a result, caution should be exercised when attempting to apply the findings from this evaluation to wall-to-wall Academies, which represent a dramatic departure from the approach taken in the pocket Academies examined here.

**A diverse group of students.** The student populations in Career Academies tend to reflect the ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic characteristics of their host high schools, which are increasingly diverse. Moreover, with their expanded goals, Academies now attract students with a wider range of needs and interests than they did in the past. Little is known about the relative effectiveness of Academies for key subgroups. For instance, some students who apply for Academies at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade are already highly engaged in school. A key goal of Academies is to prepare such students for college and to provide them with career-related learning ex-

periences and credentials that will make them more competitive in the labor market. At the other extreme, some Academy applicants are already on a path toward dropping out or having their education end with high school. Academies need to help “reengage” these students, providing them with more applied learning experiences and encouraging them to develop higher aspirations for both education and employment. More needs to be learned about the suitability of the Academy approach for meeting the needs of students in different groups.

To assess the variation in program impacts across this diverse group of students, the Career Academies Evaluation has estimated impacts on subgroups of students defined by background characteristics and prior school experiences associated with dropping out of high school. Following are brief definitions of the three *risk subgroups* that have been the focus of the findings in previous reports and are examined here as well. Each of the characteristics used to define these subgroups was measured at the time that students applied for a Career Academy, that is, before they were randomly selected to be in the Academy or the non-Academy group.<sup>10</sup>

1. **High-risk subgroup:** students in the study sample (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) with the combination of characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out
2. **Medium-risk subgroup:** students in the study sample (approximately 50 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) who had characteristics indicating that they were not particularly likely to drop out but were not highly engaged in school.
3. **Low-risk subgroup:** students in the study sample (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) with the combination of characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out

### **C. Summary of Previous Findings from the Evaluation**

The first three previous reports from the evaluation described the implementation of the core elements of the Career Academy approach and assessed the extent to which these elements provided students, teachers, and employers with the types of supports and learning opportunities outlined in Figure 1.<sup>11</sup> The fourth report examined the impact that the participating Academies had on students’ performance and engagement through the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year in high

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<sup>10</sup>The definition of these subgroups is based on analyses using background characteristics to predict dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. These analyses yielded an index that expressed dropout risk as the weighted average of selected background characteristics. The index was then calculated for the Academy group using the same characteristics. Because the predicted relationship between background characteristics and dropout rates was based on information about the non-Academy group, however, it is likely to yield somewhat more accurate predictions of likely dropouts for that group than for the Academy group. Therefore, the dropout rate actually observed for the students in the high-risk non-Academy group may be artificially high. Extensive analyses were conducted to identify the magnitude of this potential distortion. These analyses indicate that whatever distortion exists is minimal and could not have changed the patterns of impacts presented in any of the reports from the evaluation. For a detailed discussion of the method used to define the risk subgroups, see Kemple and Snipes (2000).

<sup>11</sup>See Kemple and Rock, 1996; Kemple, 1997; and Kemple, Poglinco, and Snipes, 1999.

school.<sup>12</sup> Following is a brief overview of the key findings and conclusions presented in those reports.

Several findings indicate that the participating Career Academies changed students' experiences during high school in ways that are highly consistent with the short-term goals of the Academy approach:

- Relative to other high school programs, the Academies increased the level of interpersonal supports that students received from their teachers and peers.
- Compared with their non-Academy counterparts, Academy students were more likely to combine academic and career or technical courses and to participate in career awareness and work-based learning activities.
- For students who entered the programs at high risk of dropping out, the Academies increased the likelihood of staying in school through the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year, improved attendance, and increased the number of credits earned toward graduation.
- For students at medium or low risk of dropping out, the Academies increased career and technical course-taking and participation in career development activities without reducing academic course-taking.

Previously reported findings also indicate several limitations on the Academies' effectiveness:

- One-third of the students who initially enrolled in the Academies left the programs before the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year.
- The Academies that did not substantially increase interpersonal supports from teachers and peers reduced engagement and academic course-taking for some students.
- The curriculum and instructional strategies used in Academy courses were generally similar to those used in courses offered in the rest of the high school.
- The Academies had no impact on standardized test scores for the full sample or for any of the risk subgroups.

Not surprisingly, the Academies appear to have been most effective at influencing those aspects of school functioning and student and teacher experiences that are closest to the core features of the approach. For example, the Academies' school-within-a-school organization appeared to create communities of support for teachers and students. In this context, students were more highly engaged in school, which was reflected in high attendance rates, low dropout rates, and — in the words of several students — a sense of being in a “family-like” atmosphere. Teachers too saw the Academies as a “learning community” in which they collaborated with colleagues and were able to give students more personalized attention. The findings suggest that these types

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<sup>12</sup>See Kemple and Snipes, 2000.

of interpersonal supports may have paved the way for the positive effects that the Academies had on student engagement. The Academies that did not increase interpersonal supports (relative to what was already available in the regular high school environment) were more likely to have students become disengaged and even drop out of high school.

Another key feature of the Career Academy approach — employer partnerships — offered employers structured, concrete opportunities to engage in the educational mission of high schools. These partnerships provided students with a broad array of career awareness and development experiences both in and outside school, including work-based learning internships.

The Career Academies in this evaluation had the strongest and most pervasive effect on the engagement of high-risk students. For these students, the Academies reduced dropout rates and increased attendance and credits earned in both academic and career or technical courses. For the medium- and low-risk students, the Academies were able to increase exposure to career-related courses and career development experiences without reducing the likelihood of completing at least a basic academic core curriculum.

The Academies in this evaluation appeared to have less influence on curriculum content and teachers' instructional practice than on the measures mentioned above. Academy students were more likely to take career-related courses than their non-Academy peers, but the academic and career-related courses that they took were generally typical of those offered in the regular school environment — probably because Academy teachers were bound by the same requirements regarding the scope and sequence of the curriculum in their courses as were their non-Academy counterparts.

Similarly, although the Academies were somewhat more likely to expose students to applied and work-related learning activities, they typically did not integrate academic and career-related curricula and instructional practice in ways consistent with practices that have been identified in other research.<sup>13</sup> Such integration requires offering more extensive development opportunities to teachers — over and above the in-service workshops normally available through school and district resources — than most of the Academies could provide. Other professional development opportunities, such as shared planning time for teachers, were focused on student-related concerns and on coordinating the career development and employer-related activities.

Given the similarity between Academy and non-Academy academic curricula and instructional practice, it is not surprising that the Academies did not affect students' standardized test scores. Still, Academy students performed at least as well as their non-Academy counterparts on standardized tests and received the added benefits of participating in a combined academic and career-related curriculum and in a series of career development activities.

Finally, the attrition rates among the students selected to enroll in the Academies were high. In all, one-third of those who initially enrolled left before their scheduled high school graduation. In addition, approximately 12 percent of the applicants who were randomly assigned to the Academy group never enrolled at all. It is unclear how much of the attrition could have

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<sup>13</sup>For a review of research on approaches to integrating academic and vocational education, see Grubb (1995a, 1995b).

been influenced or avoided by the Academies. Student mobility, usually owing to family circumstances that the Academies were unlikely to be able to affect, accounted for about one-quarter of the attrition; students' own choices accounted for more than one-half. But even the latter type of attrition may not stem from shortcomings of the Academy model or its implementation: Many students who left the Academies did so because they wished to take advantage other classes, programs, or opportunities that better suited their interests and needs.

The high attrition rates do suggest, however, that there is not a high level of demand for Academies, at least under circumstances where students can choose to leave and staff can ask students to leave. In any case, these circumstances represent those under which Career Academies typically operate. As a result, Academies may be able to influence students' behavior and performance for only a year or two before students move on to other opportunities. In an effort to provide the most policy-relevant information about Academies' potential to affect students' behavior, this evaluation takes the reality of attrition squarely into account by including in the analysis all students who were randomly assigned to Academies, whether they remained enrolled or not.

Before the assessment of Career Academies' effects on high school completion and initial transitions to post-secondary education and employment is presented, the next section describes the data sources used in this analysis and highlights several important issues that help frame the interpretation of the findings.

### **III. Data and Analysis Issues**

#### **A. Data Sources**

The primary data for this report were obtained from a survey administered to students in the study sample approximately 14 months after their scheduled graduation from high school: the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Survey.<sup>14</sup> In the survey, students were asked whether and when they had graduated from high school or received a General Educational Development (GED) certificate and whether and when they enrolled in post-secondary education programs and institutions. Students who were enrolled in post-secondary education programs were asked about the programs' characteristics and about their level of engagement in them. The Post-High School Survey also requested information about students' work experiences during the year after scheduled graduation from high school, including the jobs they held, how their employment may have been connected to career-related activities during high school, and how their work experience might be preparing them for the future. Finally, the survey asked students about other experiences in their lives and their plans for the future.

The findings in this report are based on the sample of 1,482 students who completed the Post-High School Survey. These students represent 84 percent of the 1,764 students in the full study sample: 85 percent of the Academy group and 83 percent of the non-Academy group. The

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<sup>14</sup>In this report, the follow-up period is sometimes referred to simply as the "year after scheduled graduation" or the "year after high school."

overall level of these response rates — and their comparability between the research groups — are very high by the standards of survey research. In addition, there were no systematic differences in background characteristics between the Academy and non-Academy group members who responded to the Post-High School Survey. In short, the relatively high response rates and the comparability of the Academy and non-Academy group members who responded afford high confidence that the survey data will yield valid estimates of the Career Academies' impacts.<sup>15</sup>

The evaluation also obtained high school transcript records for 86 percent of the students who completed the Post-High School Survey. The transcript data include information about attendance and course-taking patterns through the end of the scheduled 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year or until the point of dropping out of high school. This sample of students and these data permit examination of high school engagement and performance outcomes in the context of students' subsequent transitions to post-secondary education and the labor market.<sup>16</sup>

The report also compares outcomes for students in the non-Academy group with those for a sample of students from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 through 1994 (here called the *NELS sample*).<sup>17</sup> NELS administered surveys in 1988, 1990, 1992, and 1994 to a nationally representative group of students who were 8<sup>th</sup>-graders in the spring of 1988 and were scheduled to graduate from high school in 1992. Because virtually all the students in the non-Academy group completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the analyses presented here include only students from the NELS sample who were 10<sup>th</sup>-graders in 1990 (that is, who did not drop out before the 10<sup>th</sup> grade). Also, to maintain comparability with the schools in the Career Academies Evaluation, only NELS students from nonselective public comprehensive high schools in urban school districts were included in the comparisons presented here.

The report presents outcomes for three subsamples of students in the NELS database: those who reported being enrolled in an academic or college preparatory program in their high school, those who reported being enrolled in their high school's general curriculum program, and those who reported being enrolled in a career, technical, or vocational program. The findings presented in this report for the NELS sample reflect outcomes and experiences through approxi-

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<sup>15</sup>For a more detailed discussion of the Post-High School Survey response rates and analysis issues related to data availability, see the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001). Further analysis revealed a difference between the response rates of those who dropped out of high school before the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year and those who remained in high school. The response rate was particularly low among dropouts from the non-Academy group relative to dropouts from the Academy group. To test the sensitivity of the impact estimates to these response patterns, in the [Technical Resources](#) for this report Kemple (2001) presents impact estimates using sampling weights intended to correct for the differential survey response rates. In brief, this analysis indicates that the use of sampling weights does not change the pattern of results presented in this report.

<sup>16</sup>For some sites, the transcript data also included information about whether students graduated from high school. This afforded the opportunity to cross-check students' self-reported graduation status from the Post-High School Survey with the status recorded in high school transcripts. Graduation information from both transcripts and the survey were available for 670 students. Overall, only 3 percent of the students in this sample had transcript indicators for graduation, remaining in school, or dropping out that conflicted with their self-reports. For example, of those who reported graduating on time, 91 percent also had a graduation indicator in their transcript records. For most of the remaining students, there were indicators that they had transferred between schools or were still enrolled at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (neither of these statuses was considered inconsistent with a self-report of on-time graduation).

<sup>17</sup>National Center for Education Statistics, 1996, 1999.

mately 14 months after students' scheduled graduation from high school (through approximately August 1993). The findings on these measures were regression-adjusted and mean-centered to reflect outcomes for students who had the same distribution of background characteristics as non-Academy students in the Career Academies Evaluation.<sup>18</sup>

## **B. Analysis Issues**

This section describes four analysis issues that are critical to interpreting the impact findings: distinguishing between program outcomes and program impacts, the statistical significance of impact estimates, sources of variation in impacts, and the relationship between program participation and impacts.

**Outcomes versus impacts.** When examining the effectiveness of Career Academies, it is important to distinguish between measures of program outcomes and measures of program impacts. In this report, *outcomes* are measures of student engagement, performance, behaviors, achievement, and attitudes. The report examines three broad categories of outcomes:

1. high school completion status;
2. post-secondary education enrollment, completion, and continuation status; and
3. employment experiences and job characteristics.

Table 1 provides definitions of the key outcome measures presented in the report.

An *impact* is defined as the effect that a Career Academy has on an outcome. Considered alone, the average outcome levels for students in the Academy group are misleading indicators of the difference that the Academies made. Previous research and prior experience highlight the fact that there are many reasons why students succeed or fail in high school that are not related to a special intervention like a Career Academy; thus, a positive outcome for the Academy group might have nothing to do with the Academies. More importantly, Academy students are exposed to many of the same opportunities and problems within the broader high school context that may enhance or limit their success in school and beyond. In order to determine the impact, or *value added*, of a Career Academy, it is necessary to compare the experiences of a group of students who were selected to enroll in an Academy (the Academy group) with a group of students with the same characteristics who were not selected to enroll (the non-Academy group).

As discussed earlier, the Academy and non-Academy groups were created using random assignment, which is widely acknowledged as the best way to ensure that there are no systematic differences between research groups initially. The outcomes for the non-Academy group are the best indicators of how students in the Academy group would have fared if they had not had access to the programs. Therefore, the impacts — that is, the differences in outcomes between the Academy and the non-Academy groups — represent the changes that the Career Academies produced over and above what students were likely to achieve in non-Academy environments.

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<sup>18</sup>For a detailed description of the analyses that form the basis of these findings, see the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001).



## Career Academies Evaluation

Table 1

### Definitions of the Outcome Measures Used in the Analysis

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Basic academic core curriculum</b>	At least four years of English, three years of social studies, two years of mathematics, and two years of science; or at least 13 year-long academic courses
<b>Basic academic core curriculum plus a career/vocational focus</b>	Basic academic core curriculum plus at least three year-long career or vocational courses
<b>Graduated on time</b>	Received a high school diploma by the end of June in the year of scheduled graduation
<b>Graduated late</b>	Received a high school diploma after June in the year of scheduled graduation
<b>Earned a GED</b>	Earned a GED or another high school certificate
<b>Bachelor's degree program</b>	Any program conferring a bachelor's degree upon completion
<b>Associate's degree program</b>	Any program conferring an associate's degree upon completion
<b>Skills training program</b>	Any program conferring a certificate or license upon completion
<b>Completed skills training program</b>	Earned a certificate or license during the follow-up period
<b>Ever employed</b>	Ever worked for pay during the follow-up period
<b>Ever employed full time</b>	Ever worked for at least 30 hours per week during the follow-up period
<b>Primary job</b>	Job at which the sample member worked the greatest number of months during the follow-up period

Many of the outcome measures presented in the figures and tables in this report show the percentages of students in the Academy and non-Academy groups who attained a given status or reported a given behavior or experience. For example, some figures and tables report the percentages of students who graduated from high school or received a GED, enrolled in a four-year or a two-year college, or worked at a full-time job. Each figure or table compares the percentage of Academy group students who experienced a given outcome with the percentage of non-Academy group students who did so. The difference between the groups on each outcome represents the impact of the Career Academies on that outcome.

**Statistical significance.** Another issue of interpretation concerns the statistical significance of impact estimates. *Statistical significance* is a measure of the degree of certainty one may have that a nonzero impact truly differs from zero. If an impact estimate is statistically significant, then one may conclude with confidence that the program really made a difference. If an impact estimate is not statistically significant, then the nonzero estimate is likely to be the product of chance. The notes to the tables and figures in this report indicate whether the impact estimates shown are statistically significant at the 10 percent level (or lower). Thus, for an impact to be statistically significant, the probability that the difference is solely a result of chance must be .10 (or lower).

Statistical significance does not directly reflect the magnitude or importance of an impact estimate — only the likelihood that an impact actually occurred. In general, statistical significance is a function of two factors: the size of the sample on which an impact estimate is based and the variation, or spread, of the impact in that sample. Smaller sample sizes and greater variation yield less reliable impact estimates (that is, estimates in which one can have less confidence) than are possible when samples are larger and variation is smaller. The full sample for this evaluation is large enough to reveal moderately sized yet policy-relevant impacts at the 10 percent (or lower) level of statistical significance. Impacts of this size and relevance would include, for example, a reduction in the dropout rate or an increase in the high school graduation rate of 5 percentage points or more. For impacts in the medium-risk subgroup (which comprises only half of the full sample) to be detectable, they would have to be larger. For even smaller subgroups, such as the high- and low-risk subgroups (each of which comprises about one-quarter of the full sample), even large impacts of great relevance to policy may not be statistically significant at the 10 percent level (or lower) because of the small sample sizes and the high degree of variation in such samples.

In short, an impact estimate of a given magnitude that is statistically significant for the full sample or for a large subgroup may not be statistically significant for a smaller subgroup. An impact that is not statistically significant should be interpreted cautiously because it may be due to chance rather than to a true effect of the Career Academies.

**Variation in impacts.** The discussion of findings focuses on outcome measures and impact estimates that are aggregated across all the students and all the sites in the evaluation. As noted above, each of the participating Academies had implemented the core elements of the approach — at least to a basic threshold level — and each attempted to deliver similar types of services and curricula. The aggregate results thus build on these common features and provide particularly useful insights into how the Academies affected the average student in the sample under the typical conditions under which the programs operate.

At the same time, the aggregate findings mask possible variation in the extent to which the Academies were more effective for some students than for others. To explore this possible variation in impacts, the evaluation has also disaggregated findings by subgroups of students based on their background characteristics, most notably based on characteristics associated with dropout risk. As discussed later in the report, the risk subgroups exhibit particularly dramatic differences in outcome levels. Interestingly, however — and with the exception of a few outcomes for the high-risk group — the subgroups exhibit generally similar patterns of impacts.

Analyses conducted for this report also investigated variation in impacts across the nine participating sites to explore the extent to which Academies may have been more effective under some conditions than others. Because these findings were inconclusive, they are not presented in the report. There was no pattern of statistically significant variation in most of the impact estimates across the sites.<sup>19</sup> Other analyses attempted to assess the variation in impacts across subsets of the sites. For example, previous reports from the evaluation highlighted several dimensions of program implementation or local context that distinguished one group of sites from the others.<sup>20</sup> The analyses presented in this report likewise revealed no consistent or systematic variation in impacts across these groups. In a few strands of these analyses, one or two of the sites stood out as having generally positive (or negative) impacts on some outcomes. Even in these cases, however, the patterns of impacts did not vary with distinctive features of program implementation, local context, types of students served, or patterns of enrollment and attrition. In view of the general similarity of impacts across the sites, this report focuses on aggregated findings.

**Impacts and program participation.** A final analysis issue concerns the relationship between the amount of time that students were enrolled in the Career Academies and the impacts that the programs had on students' success in high school and beyond. As noted above, student attrition is a naturally occurring feature of Career Academies and, in fact, of high schools in general. As discussed in previous reports from this evaluation, one-third of students in the Academy group eventually left the Academy in which they enrolled (and a small percentage of students in the non-Academy group were inadvertently allowed to enroll in an Academy). In addition, the background characteristics of students who remained enrolled in the Academies differed from those who enrolled for a time and then left, making it difficult to make an unbiased estimate of the impacts that the Academies had for students who remained in their programs.

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<sup>19</sup>A general F-test was performed to check whether the impact estimates are statistically similar across the sites. The F-test indicated that this hypothesis could not be rejected, suggesting that the results could be aggregated across the sites.

<sup>20</sup>For example, Kemple and Snipes (2000) identified one group of sites where the Career Academies represented a particularly dramatic contrast with the non-Academy school environment in terms of the extent to which students reported receiving high levels of interpersonal support from their teachers and peers (referred to as “high-contrast” sites). In the remaining schools (referred to as “low-contrast” sites), the Academies represented less of a contrast with the non-Academy environment along this dimension. Kemple, Poglinco, and Snipes (1999) identified another configuration of the sites where one group had implemented a particularly highly structured approach to organizing the partnerships with employers and career development activities for students. The remaining sites had implemented less structured employer partnerships. General F-tests were also applied to a comparison of impacts across each of these subgroups of sites. These tests did not reveal a consistent pattern of systematic differences in impacts across the site subgroups.

For example, high-risk students in the Academy group were less likely than medium- and low-risk students to enroll in a Career Academy and were more likely to have left the programs if they did enroll. If high-risk students (including those who dropped out of high school altogether) were excluded from the Academy group but included in the non-Academy group, then comparisons between the groups would systematically overestimate the impacts of the Academy programs. In other words, if the high-risk (and less engaged) Academy students were excluded from the analysis, then it would appear that the Academies increased student engagement more than they actually had. However, there were also students who left the Academies who were highly engaged in school but wished to move on to a school environment that was better suited to their evolving needs and interests. If these students were excluded from the Academy group but included in the non-Academy group, then it would appear that the Academies reduced student engagement.

In order to produce unbiased estimates of the Academies' impacts, therefore, the primary analysis conducted for the evaluation includes all students in the Academy and non-Academy groups, regardless of their Academy enrollment status at any point after random assignment. In this way, the findings reflect the impact of Career Academies under real-world conditions, which include a high rate of student attrition. Studying Career Academies under these conditions is arguably the most policy-relevant approach.

Of course, it is highly unlikely that the Career Academies had much effect on students in the Academy group who never enrolled in the programs. Nor can it be assumed that the Academies had no effect on students in the study's non-Academy group who were allowed to enroll in the programs inadvertently. From this perspective, the impact estimates may be perceived as being diluted by the inclusion of some students in the Academy group who never enrolled in the programs and the small proportion of non-Academy group members who were inadvertently allowed to enroll. It is therefore useful to examine impact estimates that account for these "crossovers" in research status, particularly estimates that indicate the *impact per enrollee* on each outcome. The impact per enrollee can be interpreted as the impact from actually enrolling in an Academy as opposed to simply being recruited and selected for admission.<sup>21</sup>

Adjusting for crossovers does not substantially change the overall pattern of impacts discussed in this report. For students who completed the Post-High School Survey, 87 percent of the Academy group enrolled in an Academy for at least one semester during high school, and 7 percent of the non-Academy group did so. The impact per enrollee adjustment is obtained by dividing the observed impact estimates by the difference between these rates, .8, which is equivalent to multiplying each impact estimate by 1.25. (If the percentage of students who enrolled in an Academy had been 100 percent in the Academy group and 0 percent in the non-Academy group, then the difference between the rates would be 1.0, and no adjustment would be necessary.) As

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<sup>21</sup>This adjustment, which was proposed by Bloom (1984) and Orr et al. (1996), relies on two important assumptions: (1) that selection for the Academy group had no effect on students who did not enroll in an Academy and (2) that the average outcome levels for non-Academy students who were inadvertently allowed to enroll would have been the same if they had been assigned to the Academy group initially. Thus, the adjustment can be seen as discounting both the zero impact for the Academy group members who did not enroll in the program and the nonzero impact for the non-Academy group members who got the same treatment as the Academy enrollees.

discussed in the report, most of the impact estimates are not sufficiently large to have this adjustment make them much larger or more policy-relevant.<sup>22</sup>

#### **IV. Outcomes and Impacts for the Full Sample**

##### **A. The Non-Academy Group's Outcomes: A Benchmark for Measuring the Impacts of Career Academies**

As noted earlier, the only difference between the non-Academy group and the Academy group at the outset of the study was that non-Academy group members were not selected to enroll in an Academy. The outcomes for the non-Academy group are therefore the best indicators of what the Academy group's outcomes would have been in the absence of the opportunity to attend an Academy. A central theme in this report is that the non-Academy group's outcomes set a formidable standard for the Academy group to surpass. Even without access to an Academy, 87 percent of the non-Academy group graduated from high school or received a GED, 55 percent enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program, and 87 percent were employed during the year after high school.

This section places these outcome levels in the context of those for a nationally representative group of similar students, namely, the three NELS subsamples described above. In brief, the non-Academy group attained graduation rates and post-secondary outcomes as high as or higher than those attained by similar students nationally, indicating that the Academies attracted students who were highly likely to graduate and pursue post-secondary education even without enrolling in the programs. Thus, the students in the Academy group had to surpass national averages in order to do better than the non-Academy group, that is, for the Academies to have had a positive impact on them.

**High school completion rates.** Figure 2 shows the percentage of students in the non-Academy group and the NELS sample who graduated from high school or received a GED within 14 months of their scheduled graduation. It shows that 74 percent of the non-Academy group graduated from high school on time, 7 percent graduated late, and 5 percent received a GED. In all, 86 percent of non-Academy group members received a high school diploma or a GED.

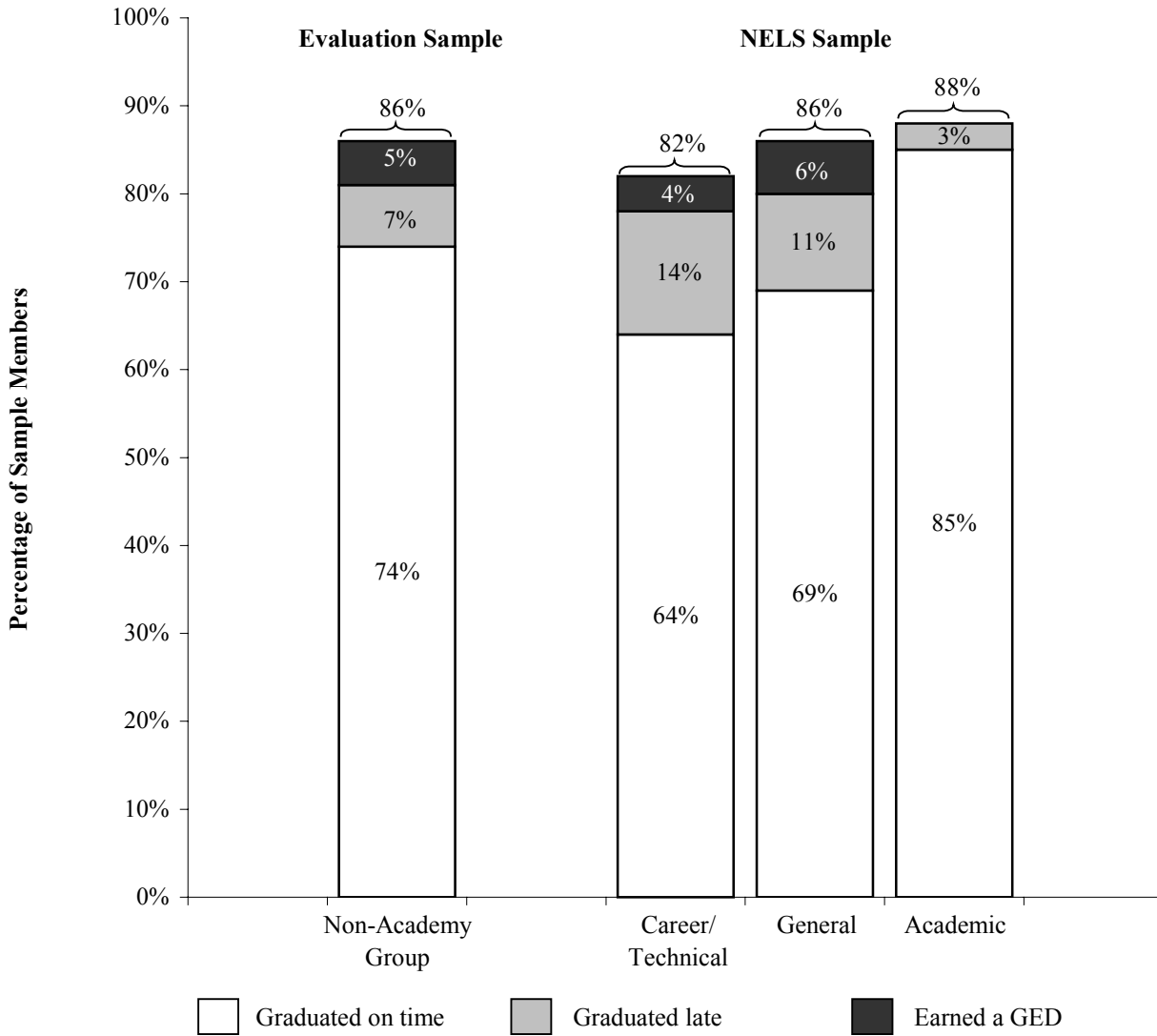
Figure 2 indicates that students in the non-Academy group were somewhat more likely to graduate on time than similar students nationally who were enrolled in career or technical programs (64 percent) or the general curriculum program (69 percent) in their high schools. The NELS students in these two types of programs were more likely than the non-Academy group members to graduate late, and, as a result, their high school graduation rates during the 14 months after scheduled graduation were similar to those of the non-Academy group. The NELS students who were

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<sup>22</sup>For tables that include the impact per enrollee, which is defined as the observed impact divided by the difference between the percentages of Academy and non-Academy students who ever enrolled in an Academy, see the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001).

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 2**  
**High School Completion Rates**  
**for the Non-Academy Group and the NELS Sample**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), 1988-1994 data.

NOTES: All measures reflect status at the end of August in the year following scheduled high school graduation.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they received their diploma by the end of June in the year they were scheduled to graduate.

The NELS sample includes only students who were enrolled in a nonselective urban public high school in 10th grade.

MDRC estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

The NELS estimates were regression-adjusted and mean-centered to reflect outcomes for students who had the same distribution of background characteristics as non-Academy sample members.

No tests of statistical significance were performed.

enrolled in academic or college preparatory programs were more likely to graduate on time and less likely to receive a GED (as opposed to a high school diploma) than were non-Academy students.

**Post-secondary education enrollment.** Figure 3 shows the percentages of students in the non-Academy group and the NELS sample who enrolled in some type of post-secondary education degree program — that is, a four-year bachelor’s degree program, a two-year associate’s degree program, or a skills training program — at some point during the 14 months after scheduled high school graduation. Of the 55 percent of the non-Academy group members who attended a post-secondary education program, about half (or 28 percent of all students in the non-Academy group) enrolled in a two-year associate’s degree program.

Overall, the non-Academy students were more likely to enroll in some type of post-secondary education program than the students in the NELS sample who were in general curriculum or career or technical programs. The students in the non-Academy group were about as likely to enroll in some type of post-secondary program as the students in the NELS sample who were in the academic or college preparatory programs. The largest difference between the non-Academy group and the national sample is in the rate of enrollment in a bachelor’s degree program. Whereas 26 percent of the NELS students in academic programs enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program, only 16 percent of non-Academy group members did so. At the same time, 28 percent of students in the non-Academy group enrolled in an associate’s degree program, compared with only 17 percent to 19 percent of the three NELS subsamples.

**Employment.** Figure 4 presents data on labor market participation during the 14 months after scheduled high school graduation for the non-Academy group and the NELS sample. Overall, 87 percent of non-Academy group members were employed at some point. This employment rate is comparable to that for similar students nationally who were enrolled in career or technical or general education programs in high school and somewhat higher than that for similar students nationally who enrolled in academic or college preparatory programs.

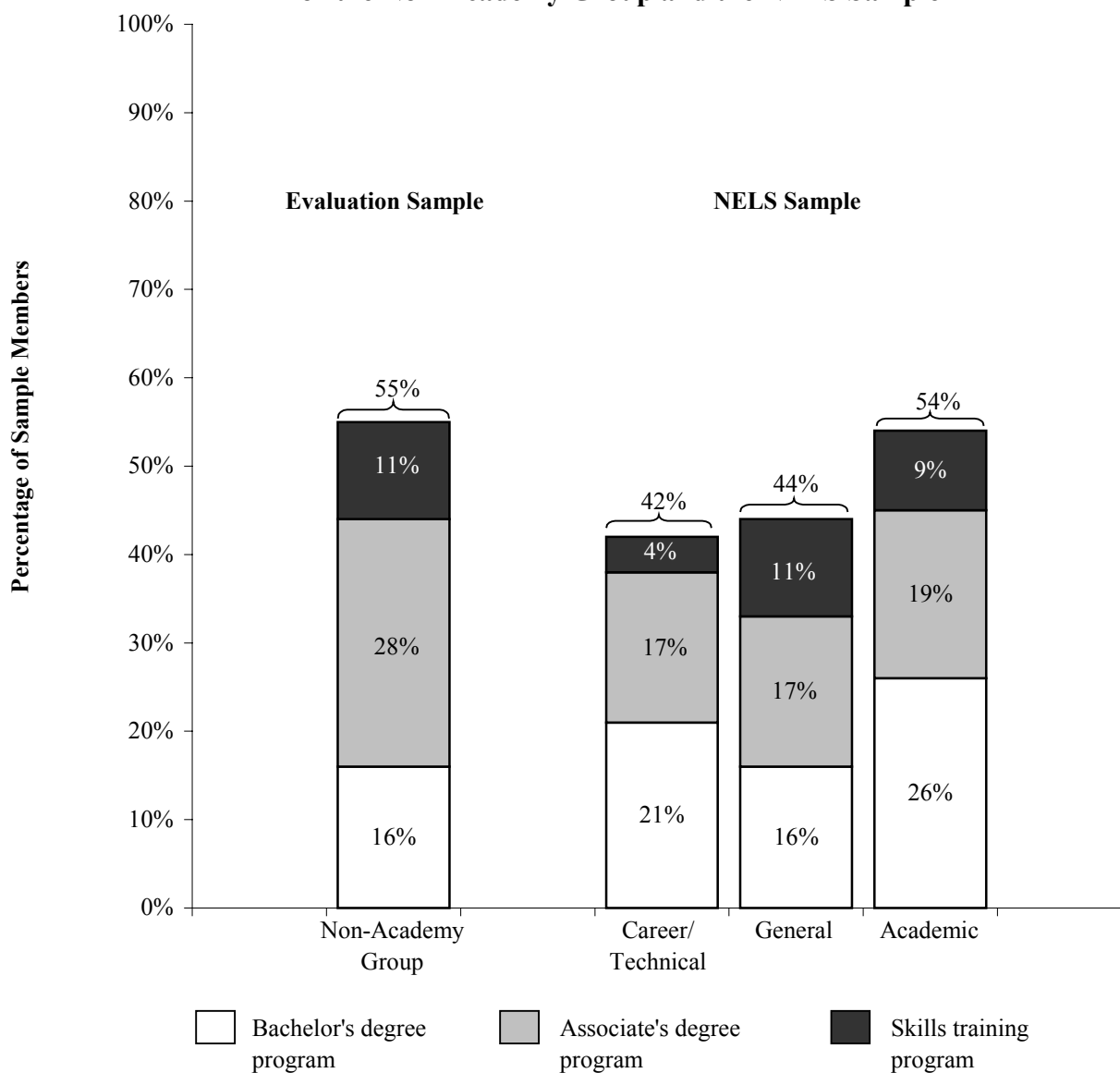
As discussed in previous reports, this evaluation sought to include schools with relatively high dropout rates and Academies that made specific attempts to serve students who were perceived to be at risk of dropping out of high school (as well as those who were doing well in school). Thus, one might expect students in the non-Academy group to have had considerably lower high school graduation and post-secondary education enrollment rates than the nationally representative NELS sample. In fact, the rates for the non-Academy group were about the same or, in some cases, higher than those for the national subsamples (the rates were particularly high relative to those for the NELS students enrolled in career or technical programs). These findings indicate that, though there is room for improvement, the Academies attracted applicants who — even without being selected to enroll in the Academies — were highly likely to graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary education.

## **B. Impacts for the Full Study Sample**

With this context in mind, the Career Academies’ impacts on high school graduation, post-secondary education enrollment, and employment outcomes are now directly assessed by comparing the outcomes for the Academy group with those for the non-Academy group. The

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 3**  
**Post-Secondary Enrollment Rates**  
**for the Non-Academy Group and the NELS Sample**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), 1988-1994 data.

NOTES: All measures reflect the highest degree program in which students had enrolled by the end of August in the year following scheduled graduation. Students must have earned a high school diploma or GED to be considered enrolled in these programs.

The NELS sample includes only students who were enrolled in a nonselective urban public high school in 10th grade.

MDRC estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

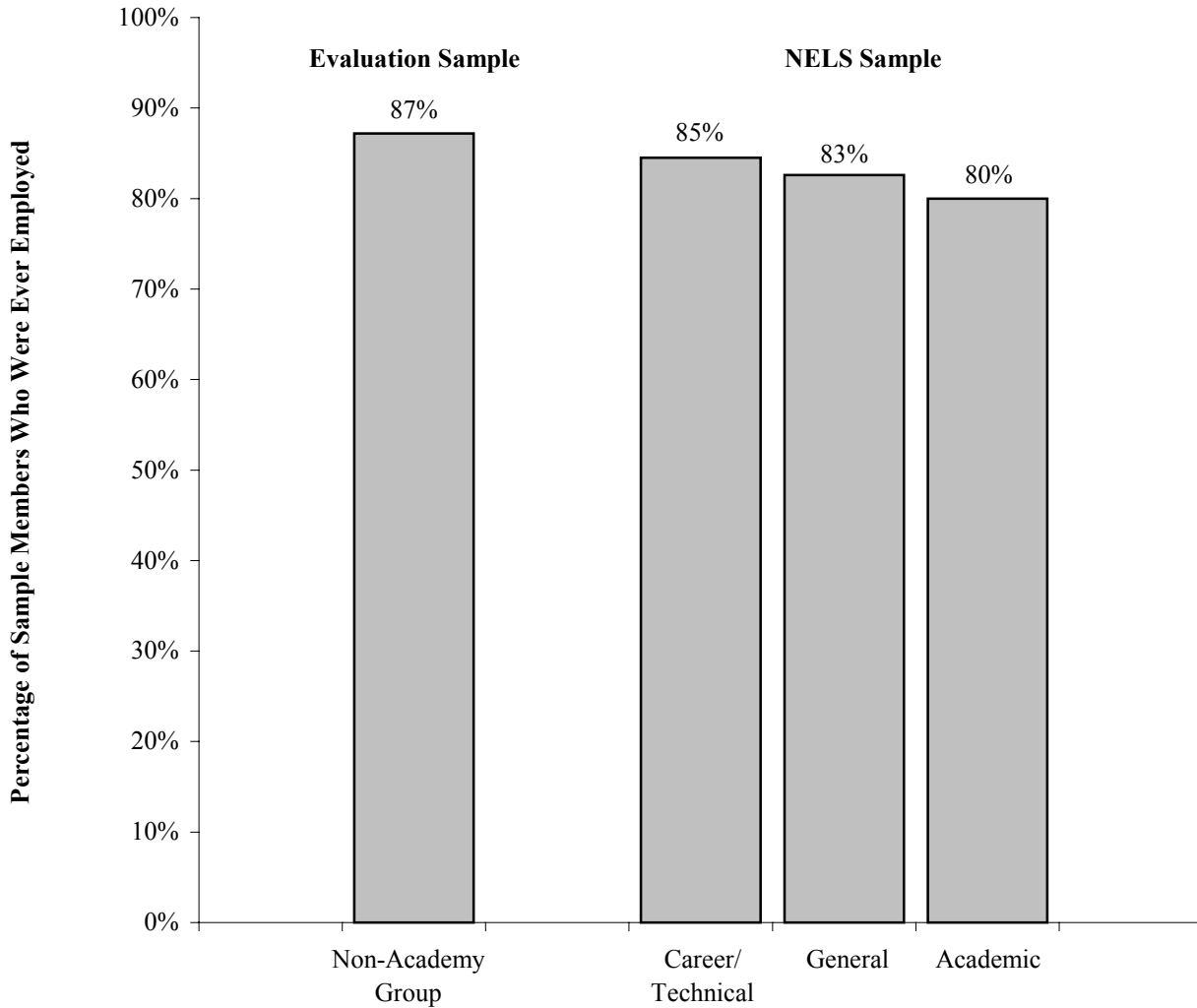
The NELS estimates were regression-adjusted and mean-centered to reflect outcomes for students who had the same distribution of background characteristics as non-Academy sample members.

No tests of statistical significance were performed.



## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 4**  
**Employment Rates**  
**for the Non-Academy Group and the NELS Sample**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), 1988-1994 data.

NOTES: Ever employed means having worked for pay during the 14-month follow-up period.

The NELS sample includes only students who were enrolled in a nonselective urban public high school in 10th grade.

MDRC estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

The NELS estimates were regression-adjusted and mean-centered to reflect outcomes for students who had the same distribution of background characteristics as non-Academy sample members.

No tests of statistical significance were performed.

general finding is that, on average, students in the Academy group attained virtually the same high rates of high school graduation, post-secondary education enrollment, and employment as those in the non-Academy group. In other words, the Career Academies had little or no effect on most indicators of educational attainment and labor market participation during the year after high school.<sup>23</sup>

**Impacts on high school graduation status.** Figure 5 shows that students in the Academy and non-Academy groups were equally likely to graduate from high school on time and that students in the Academy group were slightly more likely than non-Academy students to receive a GED as opposed to graduating late. Overall, however, the Academy and non-Academy groups were equally likely to graduate from high school or receive a GED during the year after scheduled graduation.

**Impacts on post-secondary education enrollment rates.** As Figure 6 indicates, 55 percent of both the Academy group and the non-Academy group (more than 60 percent of those in each group who graduated or received a GED) enrolled in some type of post-secondary degree program during the year after scheduled graduation. Approximately half of those who enrolled in post-secondary education (27 percent of the Academy group and 28 percent of the non-Academy group) enrolled in a two-year associate's degree program, and slightly more than a quarter enrolled in a bachelor's degree program. The remaining sample members who went on to post-secondary education enrolled in a skills training program in pursuit of a license or certificate.

**Impacts on employment.** Table 2 presents several indicators of labor market participation during the year after scheduled high school graduation. As the top panel of the table shows, approximately 89 percent of Academy group members and 87 percent of non-Academy group members were employed at some point. In addition, about two-thirds of both groups held a full-time job. Both the Academy and non-Academy groups worked for an average of somewhat more than 9 months during this period.

The bottom panel in Table 2, which lists three key characteristics of the primary jobs held by employed Academy and non-Academy group members, indicates that students in the two research groups who worked held jobs with similar characteristics.<sup>24</sup> In both groups, the average hourly wage was in the \$7.15 to \$7.50 range — about 40 percent higher than the federal minimum wage (\$5.15 per hour) — and the average number of hours worked per week was 32 to 33.

**Impacts on combining school and work.** Figure 7 further examines the extent to which sample members were engaged in productive activities during the period covered by this report. The figure displays the average number of months that students spent working or attending school during the 10-month school year (September through June) after scheduled high school

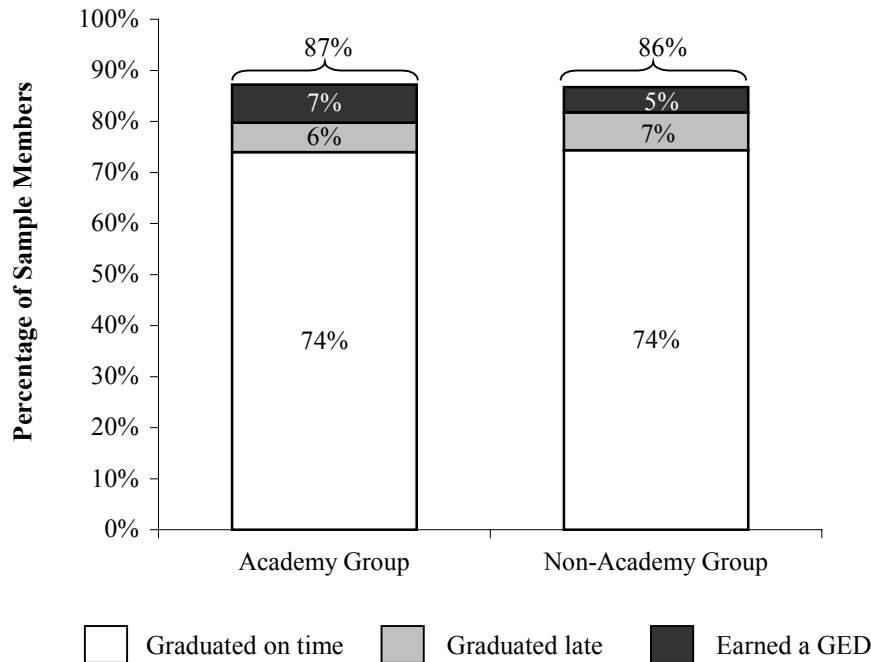
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<sup>23</sup>For a more detailed list of outcomes for the full sample impacts, see the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001).

<sup>24</sup>In Table 2, the numbers in italics include only employed members of the Academy and non-Academy groups and do not reflect the impact that Career Academies may have had on different students' capacity to find and hold jobs. This is because the background characteristics of employed Academy and non-Academy group members were not necessarily the same at the outset of the study and thus might account for any difference in sample members' finding higher- versus lower-quality jobs.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 5**  
**Impacts on High School Completion Status**  
**for the Full Study Sample**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect status at the end of August in the year following scheduled high school graduation.

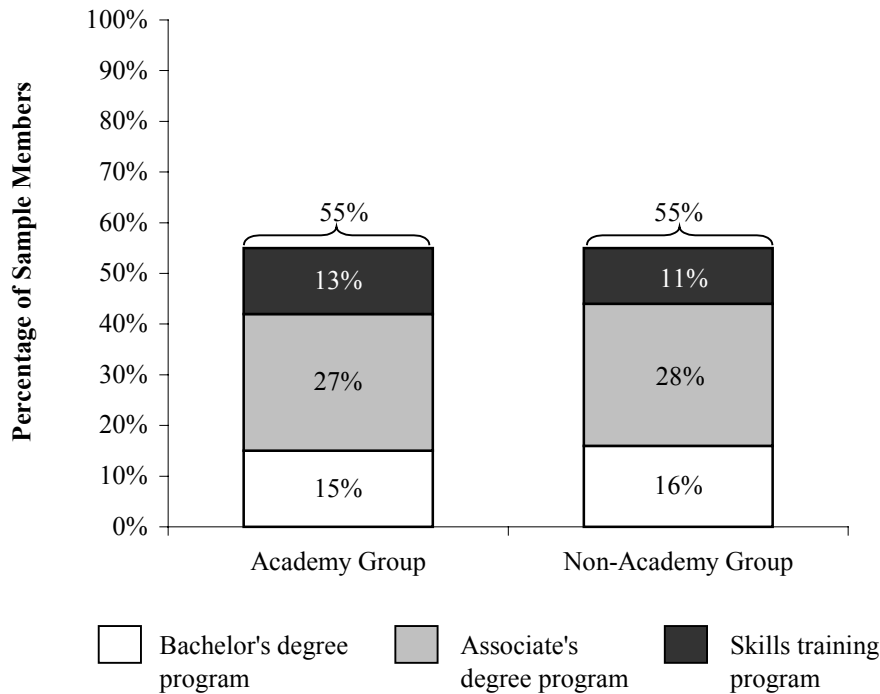
Students were considered on-time graduates if they received their diploma by the end of June in the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. The difference in GED receipt was statistically significant at the 5 percent level. No other differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups in this figure were statistically significant.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 6**  
**Impacts on Post-Secondary Education Enrollment**  
**for the Full Study Sample**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the highest degree programs in which students had enrolled by the end of August in the year following scheduled graduation. Students must have earned a high school diploma or GED to be considered enrolled in these programs.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. No differences in this figure were statistically significant.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 2**  
**Employment Rates and Job Characteristics**  
**for the Full Study Sample**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact (Difference)	Percentage Change
<b>Employment status</b>				
Ever employed (%)	88.7	87.2	1.5	1.7
Ever employed full time (%)	66.9	67.2	-0.3	-0.4
Held two or more jobs (%)	42.7	42.8	-0.1	-0.3
Number of months employed	9.4	9.3	0.2	2.0
<b>Characteristics of primary job</b>				
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	<i>32.8</i>	<i>32.4</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>1.4</i>
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	<i>7.44</i>	<i>7.17</i>	<i>0.26</i>	<i>3.7</i>
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	<i>241.38</i>	<i>233.25</i>	<i>8.14</i>	<i>3.5</i>
Sample size (N=1,482)	817	665		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures refer to the 14-month follow-up period.

The primary job is defined as the job at which the sample member worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period.

Percentage change equals the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

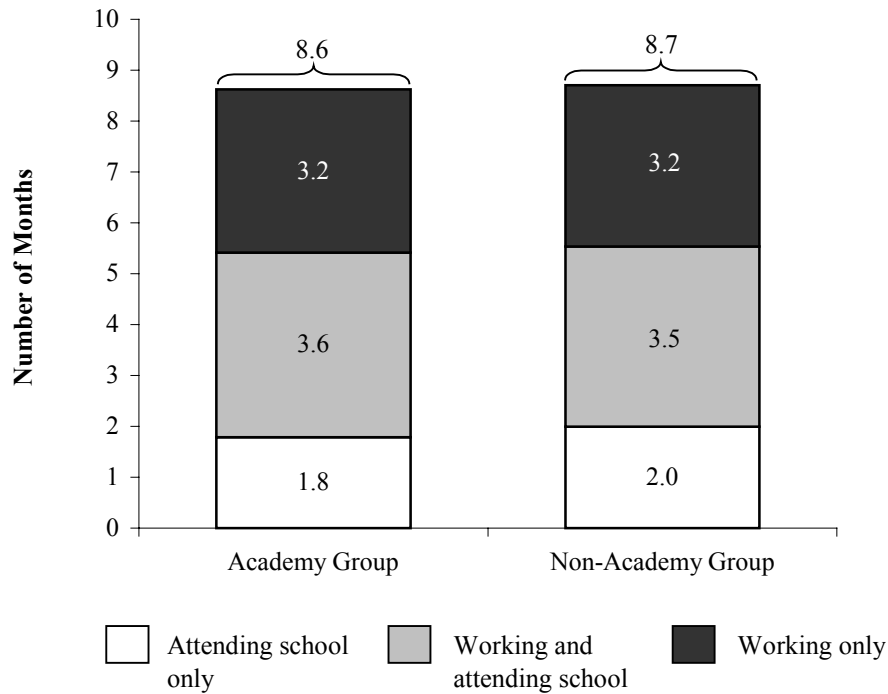
Numbers in italics refer only to employed sample members. Because these numbers do not represent experimental comparisons, no tests of statistical significance were performed.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to the unitalicized differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. No differences in this table were statistically significant.

## Career Academies Evaluation

Figure 7

### Impacts on the Average Number of Months Spent Attending School or Working, for the Full Study Sample



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the average number of months spent in each status during the 10-month school year following scheduled graduation from high school.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. No differences in this figure were statistically significant.

graduation. Students in both the Academy and non-Academy groups spent an average of more than 8.5 months (more than 85 percent of the 10-month school year) attending school, working, or combining school and work. In all, more than 95 percent of students in the study sample spent at least 1 month during this period either working or attending school (not shown in the figure).

Figure 7 also shows that the most prevalent activity for those in both groups was combining school and work (about 3.5 months on average). The second most prevalent activity was working without attending school. Overall, sample members spent more than two-thirds of the school year working and about 55 percent of the school year attending school. Although not reflected in the figure, further analysis indicates that more than half of those in both the Academy and non-Academy groups spent at least 1 month attending school and working, and 39 percent of Academy group members and 36 percent of non-Academy group members were engaged in this combination of activities for at least 5 months.

In sum, very few of the sample members neither worked nor attended school for an appreciable period of time during the school year after scheduled high school graduation.<sup>25</sup> Further analyses indicate, however, that many sample members made several transitions between working, going to school, and combining the two activities. For example, only about 27 percent of those in both the Academy group and the non-Academy group spent the entire school year in the same job, education program, or combination of job and education program (not shown). In other words, nearly three-quarters of the sample members made at least one transition from school to work, from one job or education program to another, from working to not working, or the like. In fact, about 45 percent made two or more such transitions, and nearly 20 percent made three or more.<sup>26</sup>

The prevalence of sample members' making multiple transitions between education and employment opportunities highlights the fact that it will take several more years for many sample members to settle into patterns of activity that could pave the way to steady jobs or careers. Based on the data now available, it is difficult to predict the longer-term educational attainment and career paths of these young people.

## **V. Impacts for the Risk Subgroups**

Previous reports from this evaluation have highlighted the dramatic differences in outcomes among subgroups of non-Academy students in the study sample. This variation in outcome levels is also reflected in the high school graduation and post-secondary education enrollment rates. Most notably, as discussed in this section, non-Academy students in the low-risk subgroup were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school on time as those in the high-risk subgroup. They were also twice as likely to enroll in a post-secondary degree program during the year after scheduled graduation.

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<sup>25</sup>Among those who did not work or attend school (about 4 percent of both the Academy group and the non-Academy group), about half were young women who were taking care of their children.

<sup>26</sup>It should be noted that there were no systematic differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups on these transition indicators.

Given this marked variation in outcome levels among students in the non-Academy group, an important goal of the Career Academies Evaluation has been to assess the extent to which the Academy programs may have made a larger difference for some groups of students than for others. For example, it would be difficult for the Academies to improve on the very high graduation rates of the non-Academy students in the low-risk subgroup. An important question about this group, however, is whether the Academies expanded (or at least did not limit) access to post-secondary education and the labor market. Students who began high school at relatively high risk of dropping out, in contrast, might have benefited from enrollment in an Academy in a variety of ways; for instance, the Academies could have increased their likelihood of graduating on time and of pursuing post-secondary education opportunities that might not otherwise have been available to them. This section provides an overview of the key findings for the three risk subgroups described earlier.<sup>27</sup>

With the exception of a few key outcomes for the high-risk subgroup, the Academies had little or no effect for all three risk subgroups. Among those in the high-risk subgroup, the Academies produced a modest (though not statistically significant) increase in the on-time graduation rate, and Academy graduates were more likely than non-Academy graduates to complete a basic academic core curriculum. For these students, the Academies also increased the likelihood of earning a license or certificate in a one-year post-secondary skills training program. Even in the high-risk subgroup, however, non-Academy students eventually graduated from high school and enrolled in a bachelor's or associate's degree program at about the same rates as Academy students. In the other subgroups, the high school completion rates, post-secondary enrollment rates, and employment rates were virtually the same for the Academy and non-Academy groups.

#### **A. Impacts on High School Completion Status, by Risk Subgroup**

Figure 8 shows the high school completion status of Academy and non-Academy students in the high-, medium-, and low-risk subgroups. The first point to notice is the dramatic differences in the on-time graduation rates across the risk subgroups. For example, whereas only 50 percent of the high-risk students in the non-Academy group graduated from high school on time, 91 percent of the low-risk students in the non-Academy group did so. Also, non-Academy students in the high-risk subgroup were much more likely to earn a GED than were non-Academy students in the low-risk subgroup. With the exception of the high-risk subgroup, however, the high school completion rates were nearly the same for the Academy and non-Academy groups.

**High-risk subgroup.** As Figure 8 indicates, 56 percent of the high-risk Academy students graduated from high school on time, compared with 50 percent of the high-risk non-Academy students. Although this difference is not statistically significant, it represents a 12 percent increase in the on-time graduation rate — which, if real, would be a policy-relevant effect.

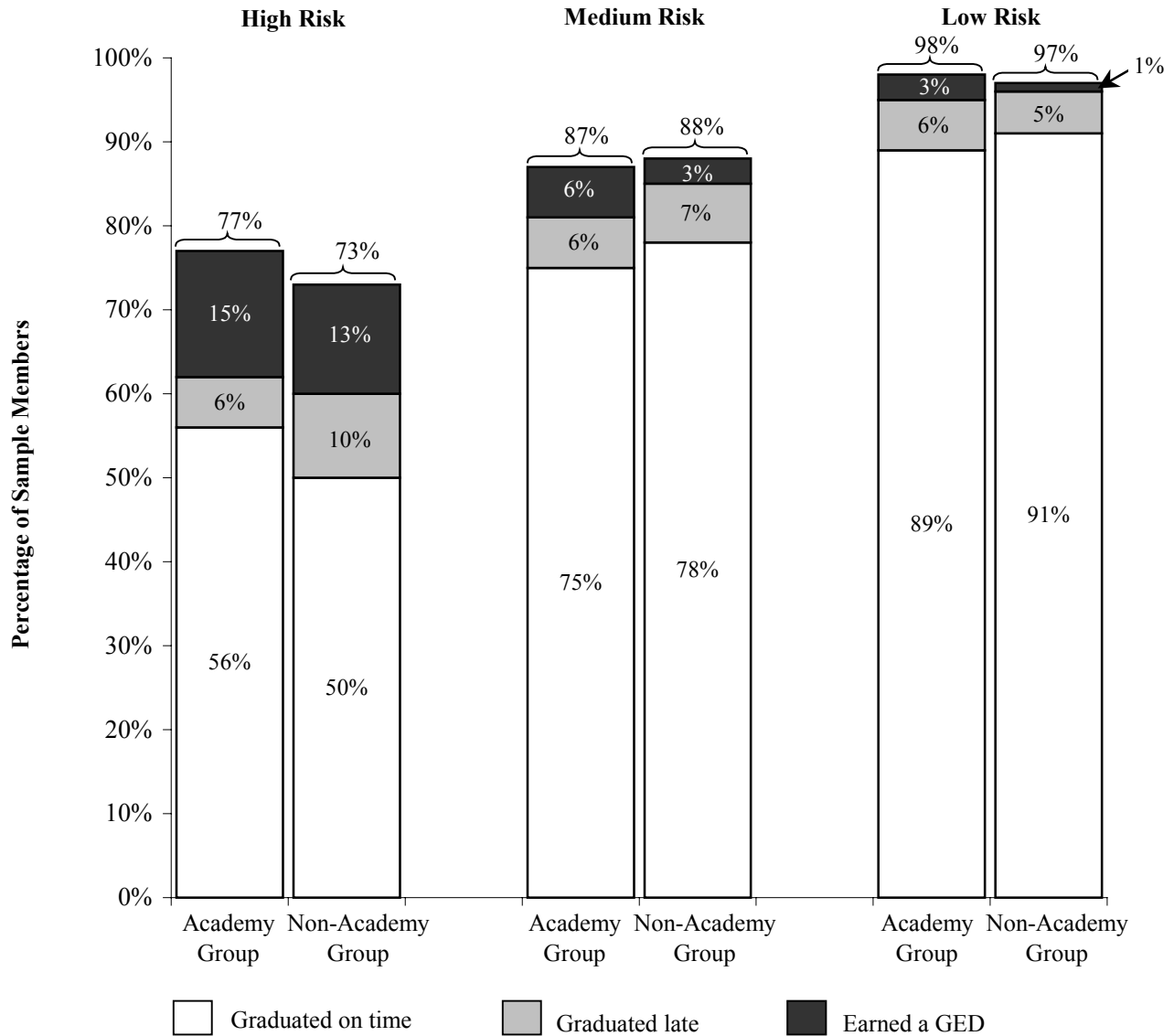
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<sup>27</sup>For tables showing a more detailed list of outcomes for the risk subgroups, see the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001). The Technical Resources also include tables summarizing impacts for subgroups defined by race/ethnicity, gender, and students' expectations for educational attainment measured in their 8<sup>th</sup>- or 9<sup>th</sup>-grade year.



## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 8**  
**Impacts on High School Completion Status,**  
**by Risk Subgroup**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect status at the end of August in the year following scheduled high school graduation.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they received their diploma by the end of June in the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. The difference in GED receipt in the medium-risk subgroup was statistically significant at the 5 percent level. The difference in high school graduation rates (which reflect on-time and late graduation combined) in the medium-risk subgroup was statistically significant at the 10 percent level. No other differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups in this figure were statistically significant.

Further analysis reveals some promising trends in the type of curriculum completed by on-time graduates from the high-risk subgroup. Table 3 presents the percentages of on-time graduates in the Academy and non-Academy groups who completed two types of course sequences during high school: a basic academic core curriculum and a basic academic core curriculum plus three or more career or technical courses.<sup>28</sup> Both of these course sequences are realizations of the dual goal of the Career Academy approach: to orient graduates toward both post-secondary education and careers.

The top panel in Table 3 shows that, among on-time graduates in the high-risk subgroup, 64 percent of the Academy group completed at least a basic academic core curriculum by the end of their 12th-grade year, and about 53 percent completed a basic academic core curriculum plus three or more career or vocational courses. In contrast, only about 49 percent of those in the non-Academy group completed at least a basic academic curriculum, and only 21 percent completed the basic academic curriculum plus three or more career or vocational courses. Thus, although the Career Academies produced only a modest (and not statistically significant) increase in the likelihood that students in the high-risk subgroup graduated from high school on time, they seem to have improved the quality of that credential in terms of the type of course sequences that on-time graduates completed.

These new findings are consistent with earlier results indicating that the Career Academies reduced high school dropout rates and increased academic course-taking among students in the high-risk subgroup. It should be noted, however, that the magnitude of the impact on the on-time graduation rate is somewhat smaller than the dropout reduction found in an earlier report. Further analysis shows that this discrepancy arises from differences between the sample of students who completed the Post-High School Survey and the sample used in the previous report.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the reduction in the dropout rate through the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year for high-risk students appears to have translated into a comparable increase in the on-time graduation rate for this subgroup.

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<sup>28</sup>The findings on course-taking patterns are derived from the evaluation's course detail records, which include high school transcript records through the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year. Thus, the estimates presented in the table do not include Academy and non-Academy group members who graduated late or received a GED. Because the background characteristics and previous school experiences of the Academy and non-Academy group members who graduated on time were not necessarily the same, any differences in these characteristics could account for differences in sample members' completing an academic curriculum. As a result, the comparisons presented in Table 3 do not reflect the impact that the Career Academies may have had on the rates of completion of these course sequences.

<sup>29</sup>The findings presented in Kemple and Snipes (2000) indicate that the Academies reduced the dropout rate in the high-risk subgroup by 11 percentage points. This difference is somewhat larger than the 6 percentage point increase in the on-time graduation rate reported here. The discrepancy between the two is largely due to the fact that the estimates are based on somewhat different samples of students. The findings presented in Kemple and Snipes (2000) relied primarily on the 1,454 students for whom individual school transcripts were available from the participating school districts (referred to as the School Records sample). The current report relies on the 1,482 students who completed the Post-High School Survey. Of these, 1,271 (86 percent) were also in the School Records sample. Analyses conducted for the current report indicate that the Academies reduced dropout rates and increased on-time graduation rates for high-risk students in this portion of the School Records sample by a statistically significant amount. For further information about the differences and similarities between the impact estimates derived from the two samples, see the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001).

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 3**  
**High School Course-Taking Patterns**  
**Among On-Time High School Graduates,**  
**by Risk Subgroup**

Outcome (%)	Academy Group Graduates	Non-Academy Group Graduates	Difference
<b>High-risk subgroup</b>			
<i>Completed basic academic core</i>	<i>63.8</i>	<i>48.2</i>	<i>15.5</i>
<i>Completed basic academic core plus career/vocational focus</i>	<i>52.5</i>	<i>21.4</i>	<i>31.1</i>
Sample size (n=136)	80	56	
<b>Medium-risk subgroup</b>			
<i>Completed basic academic core</i>	<i>79.2</i>	<i>81.0</i>	<i>-1.9</i>
<i>Completed basic academic core plus career/vocational focus</i>	<i>55.8</i>	<i>37.9</i>	<i>17.9</i>
Sample size (n=451)	240	211	
<b>Low-risk subgroup</b>			
<i>Completed basic academic core</i>	<i>84.1</i>	<i>88.0</i>	<i>-3.9</i>
<i>Completed basic academic core plus career/vocational focus</i>	<i>60.3</i>	<i>33.6</i>	<i>26.7</i>
Sample size (n=276)	151	125	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database and Course Detail Records Database.

NOTES: The percentages shown include only sample members who graduated on time. Complete high school transcript data were not available for those who did not graduate on time.

A basic academic core curriculum was defined as at least four years of English, three years of social studies, two years of mathematics, and two years of science; or at least 13 year-long academic courses.

A basic academic core curriculum plus a career/vocational focus was defined as the basic academic core curriculum defined above plus at least three year-long career or vocational courses.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

Estimates were not regression-adjusted.

The numbers in italics refer only to on-time graduates. Because these numbers are not based on experimental comparisons, no tests of statistical significance were performed.

Over the course of the year after scheduled graduation, however, high-risk students in the non-Academy group essentially “caught up” with those in the Academy group. Whereas 10 percent of non-Academy students remained in school and graduated late — or, if they had dropped out, returned to school and graduated late — 6 percent of their Academy counterparts did so. This result can be seen in Figure 8. Thus, by the end of the follow-up period, 62 percent of the Academy group and 60 percent of the non-Academy group had graduated from high school.

Finally, Figure 8 indicates that a relatively high percentage of those in high-risk subgroup earned a GED. In all, approximately 15 percent of the Academy group and 13 percent of the non-Academy group earned a GED within 14 months of scheduled graduation. This is more than twice the rate among students in the NELS sample discussed earlier (see Figure 2).

**Medium-risk subgroup.** Figure 8 shows that, in the medium-risk subgroup, Academy students were somewhat less likely to graduate from high school than were non-Academy students. Here 81 percent of those in the Academy group graduated (on time or late), compared with 85 percent of those in the non-Academy group (a statistically significant difference). Given the difference in the GED receipt rates (also a statistically significant difference), it appears that the Academies induced some students in the medium-risk subgroup to substitute a GED for a high school diploma.

There has been considerable debate about whether a GED is equivalent to a high school diploma in terms of value in the labor market and as a credential needed to pursue further education.<sup>30</sup> As discussed below, however, the moderate rate of substitution of a GED for a high school diploma in the medium-risk subgroup did not affect this group’s post-secondary education or labor participation patterns during the year after scheduled graduation.

Table 3 shows that, among medium-risk students who graduated on time, roughly equal percentages of Academy and non-Academy group members completed a basic academic core curriculum. The table also indicates that Academy students were much more likely than non-Academy students to have completed the basic academic core curriculum plus three or more career or technical courses. Further, completing this mixed curriculum did not reduce the medium-risk students’ likelihood of completing academic courses over and above the basic core curriculum (such as foreign-language courses): Academy and non-Academy students were equally likely to earn credits in these courses (not shown).

**Low-risk subgroup.** As Figure 8 indicates, the Career Academies had little or no effect on the high school completion rate for the low-risk subgroup. This is not surprising given that approximately 89 percent of students in the Academy group and 91 percent of those in the non-Academy group graduated on time and that an additional 6 percent and 5 percent in the two groups, respectively, graduated late. As in the high- and medium-risk subgroups, low-risk on-time graduates in the Academy group were much more likely than those in the non-Academy group to complete a basic academic core curriculum plus three or more career or technical courses (see Table 3).

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<sup>30</sup>See Cameron and Heckman, 1991; Murnane and Levy, 1996.

## **B. Impacts on Post-Secondary Education Enrollment, by Risk Subgroup**

Figure 9 displays the rates at which Academy and non-Academy students in the high-, medium-, and low-risk subgroups enrolled in post-secondary education programs during the year after scheduled graduation.

As in Figure 8, the first point to notice in Figure 9 is the dramatic differences between the risk subgroups. Twice as many of the non-Academy students in the low-risk subgroup (72 percent) as in the high-risk subgroup (37 percent) enrolled in a post-secondary education program. In each subgroup, more than half of those who graduated from high school or earned a GED attended a post-secondary education program. Further, the majority of those who enrolled in a post-secondary education program enrolled in an associate's or a bachelor's degree program. The overall post-secondary enrollment rates for the risk subgroups are higher than those for similar students nationally, although the enrollment patterns differed somewhat across the post-secondary programs.<sup>31</sup>

Overall, Figure 9 indicates that there were no systematic differences in the post-secondary education enrollment rate between the Academy and non-Academy groups for any of the risk subgroups. The only exception is the rate at which student in the high-risk subgroup enrolled in and completed skills training programs (not shown).

**High-risk subgroup.** Figure 9 shows that 41 percent of the Academy group and 37 percent of the non-Academy group attended some type of post-secondary education program during the 14 months after scheduled high school graduation. For both groups, this percentage represents somewhat more than half of those who earned a high school diploma or GED. Academy group members were slightly more likely to enroll in a skills training program than were non-Academy group members (though this difference was not statistically significant).

Importantly, further analysis shows that the Academies substantially increased the rates at which high-risk Academy group members actually completed a skills training program and earned a license or certificate by the end of the year after scheduled high school graduation (not shown).<sup>32</sup> Whereas 10 percent of the Academy group earned a skills training license or certificate, only 3 percent of the non-Academy group did so (a statistically significant difference).

Further analysis also shows that there were no differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups in post-secondary education attrition. Attrition was defined as the percentage of sample members who left their post-secondary education program before completion and who did not intend to return the following year. Overall, approximately 11 percent of Academy group members left their post-secondary education program before completion, compared with 7 percent of non-Academy group members (the difference is not statistically significant).

**Medium-risk subgroup.** As Figure 9 illustrates, about 55 percent of medium-risk students in both the Academy and non-Academy groups enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program after high school. About 80 percent of these sample members enrolled in an

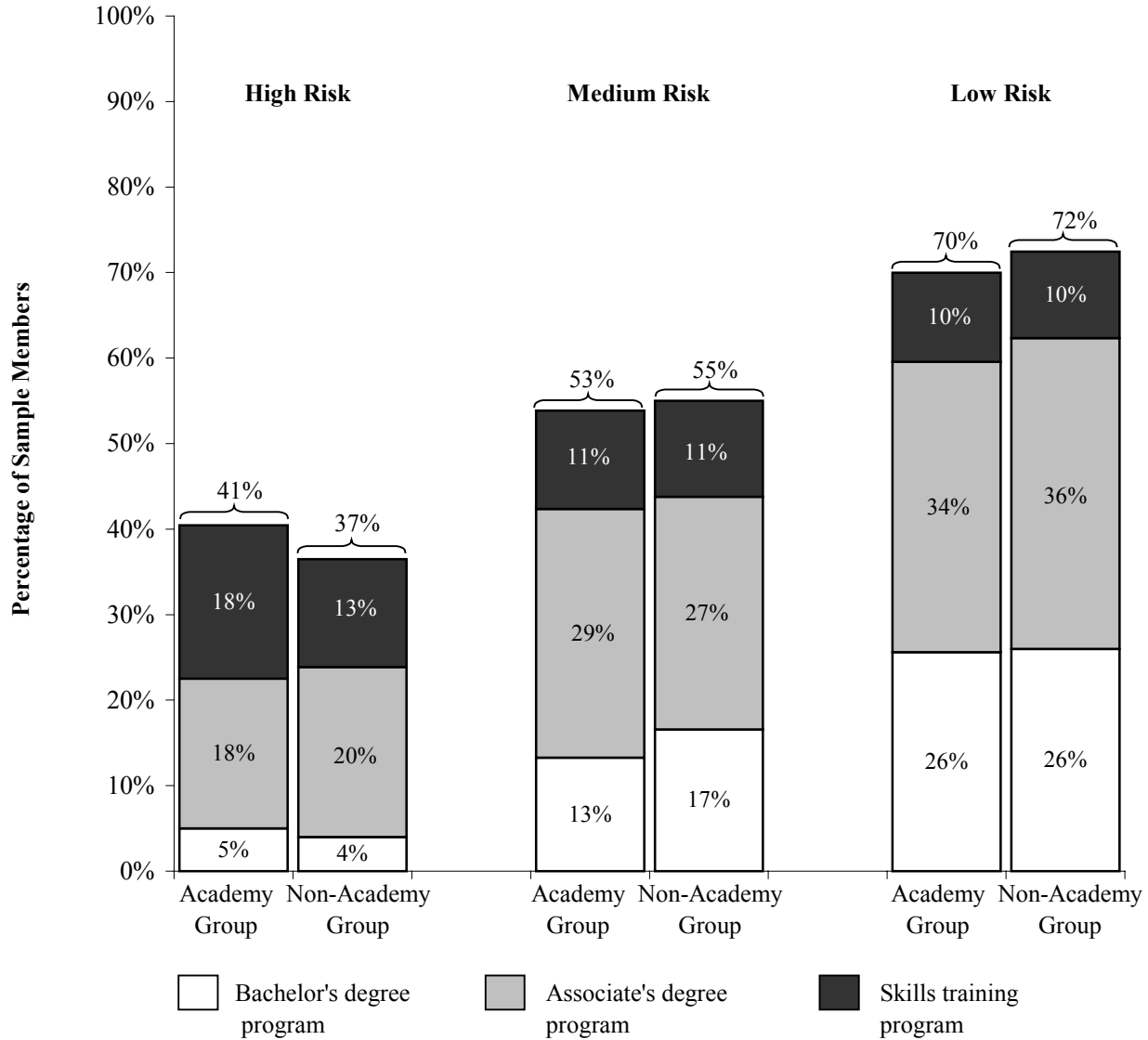
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<sup>31</sup>See the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001).

<sup>32</sup>See the [Technical Resources](#) for this report (Kemple, 2001).

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 9**  
**Impacts on Post-Secondary Education Enrollment,**  
**by Risk Subgroup**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the highest degree programs in which students had enrolled by the end of August in the year following scheduled graduation. Students must have earned a high school diploma or GED to be considered enrolled in these programs.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. No differences in this figure were statistically significant.

associate's or a bachelor's degree program. Despite the fact that Academy group members were somewhat more likely than non-Academy group members to receive a GED rather than a high school diploma, there was no difference between the Academy and non-Academy groups on these outcomes. In other words, the slightly higher rate at which Academy group members substituted a GED for a high school diploma did not keep them from attending a post-secondary degree program.

**Low-risk subgroup.** Figure 9 also shows that the Academies had little or no impact on the post-secondary education enrollment rate among students in the low-risk subgroup, largely because these students were likely to attend such programs regardless of whether they had access to an Academy. Further, more than 85 percent of low-risk students who enrolled in a post-secondary program entered an associate's or a bachelor's degree program. These findings may be seen as encouraging in that, on average, the Academies did not deter highly engaged students from attending post-secondary education programs. Along with school-to-work programs, Career Academies have been criticized for not providing students, particularly those most likely to be college-bound, with the preparation needed to go on to college.

Further analysis also indicates that more than half of the Academy and non-Academy students in the low-risk group (approximately 80 percent of the low-risk students who enrolled initially) were still enrolled in a degree program at the end of the follow-up period (not shown).

### **C. Impacts on Employment and Job Characteristics, by Risk Subgroup**

Table 4 lists the employment rates of the Academy and non-Academy groups as well as selected characteristics of the jobs held by those who were employed. Unlike the high school completion and post-secondary enrollment rates, the employment rates and job characteristics were similar across the three risk subgroups. In general, work effort — as reflected in employment rates, the number of months employed, and average hours worked per week among students who were employed — appears to have been high in all the subgroups. Students in the high-risk subgroup were somewhat more likely to be employed full time (more than 30 hours per week) than those in the medium- and low-risk subgroups, probably because students in the medium- and low-risk subgroups were more likely to be enrolled in post-secondary education programs. Finally, the average hourly wage earned by students in each of the three risk subgroups was between \$7.00 and \$7.50, well above the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour. With the exception of the average hourly wage for the medium-risk subgroup, the Academies had little or no impact on employment rates or job characteristics.

In the medium-risk subgroup, employed Academy group members held jobs that paid approximately \$.55 more per hour than the jobs held by employed non-Academy group members. This finding suggests that, although Academy and non-Academy group members were equally likely to be employed, the Academy group students were able to obtain higher-wage jobs than their non-Academy group counterparts. It is also important to note that, although Academy group students obtained jobs with higher hourly wages, they were also able to pursue post-secondary education at the same rate as those in the non-Academy group.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 4**  
**Employment Rates and Job Characteristics,**  
**by Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact (Difference)	Percentage Change
<b>High-risk subgroup</b>				
<b>Employment status</b>				
Ever employed (%)	87.6	87.7	-0.1	-0.16
Ever employed full time (%)	72.8	72.9	-0.2	-0.24
Held two or more jobs (%)	47.1	40.3	6.8	16.97
Number of months employed	9.1	9.0	0.1	0.75
<b>Characteristics of primary job</b>				
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	<i>34.5</i>	<i>33.3</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>3.59</i>
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	<i>7.38</i>	<i>7.34</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>0.56</i>
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	<i>255.18</i>	<i>240.58</i>	<i>14.60</i>	<i>6.07</i>
Sample size (n=372)	208	164		
<b>Medium-risk subgroup</b>				
<b>Employment status</b>				
Ever employed (%)	88.9	86.8	2.1	2.37
Ever employed full time (%)	66.8	64.9	1.9	2.94
Held two or more jobs (%)	39.5	41.8	-2.3	-5.52
Number of months employed	9.6	9.4	0.3	2.85
<b>Characteristics of primary job</b>				
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	<i>33.0</i>	<i>32.6</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>1.12</i>
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	<i>7.51</i>	<i>6.95</i>	<i>0.55</i>	<i>7.93</i>
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	<i>243.93</i>	<i>226.23</i>	<i>17.70</i>	<i>7.83</i>
Sample size (n=730)	396	334		
<b>Low-risk subgroup</b>				
<b>Employment status</b>				
Ever employed (%)	89.5	87.6	1.9	2.19
Ever employed full time (%)	62.1	65.1	-3.1	-4.7
Held two or more jobs (%)	45.0	46.2	-1.2	-2.61
Number of months employed	9.5	9.2	0.3	3.15
<b>Characteristics of primary job</b>				
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	<i>31.1</i>	<i>30.5</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>1.87</i>
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	<i>7.32</i>	<i>7.50</i>	<i>-0.18</i>	<i>-2.4</i>
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	<i>225.23</i>	<i>237.68</i>	<i>-12.45</i>	<i>-5.24</i>
Sample size (n=380)	213	167		

(continued)



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures refer to the 14-month follow-up period.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the sample member worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period.

Percentage change equals the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics of sample members.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences.

The numbers in italics refer only to employed sample members. Because these numbers are not based on experimental comparisons, no tests of statistical significance were performed.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to the unitalicized differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. No differences in this table were statistically significant.

#### **D. Impacts on Combining School and Work, by Risk Subgroup**

One criticism of school-to-work programs like Career Academies is that by promoting early entry into the labor market they may discourage students from pursuing further education. Figure 10 shows the number of months that students in the Academy and non-Academy groups spent working, attending an education program, or combining school and work during the 10-month school year after scheduled graduation. The figure indicates that the Career Academies did not promote this type of substitution and that sample members in all three subgroups spent about 7 months (or more) of the school year working, much of that time while also attending an education program.

Figure 10 indicates that Academy group members in the low-risk subgroup spent nearly half the school year both working and attending school. Low-risk students in the Academy group were slightly less likely than those in the non-Academy group to attend an education program without working (though this difference, which is not shown, is not statistically significant). In short, the Academies did not lead low-risk students to substitute work for education as some critics of school-to-work programs have suggested.

### **VI. Implications of the Findings**

The mixed findings presented in this report have mixed implications for education policymakers and practitioners. This final section attempts to respond to some of the arguments put forth by critics and proponents of Career Academies. It also offers insights into how Academies might be enhanced to build on their strengths and address their limitations.

#### **A. What Do the Findings Suggest About the Effectiveness of Career Academies and Related High School Reforms?**

- **The findings indicate that Career Academies offer a viable pathway to high school graduation and post-secondary education.**

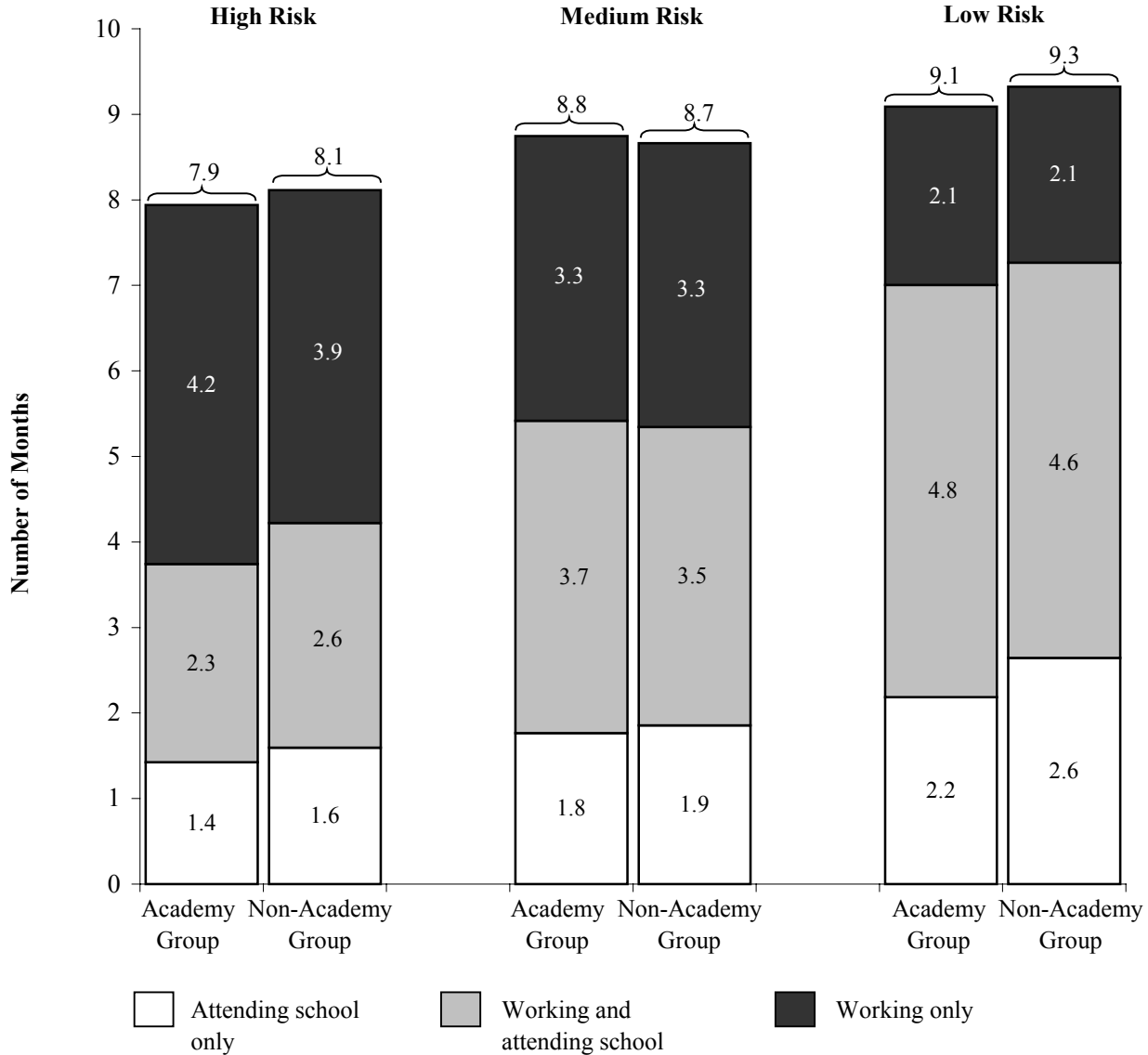
Career Academies have been associated most notably with career and technical education and with the school-to-work movement. Critics of Career Academies and these related education strategies have suggested that they divert students away from academic coursework during high school and limit their access to college. This critique has been offered from two perspectives. Some argue that programs like Career Academies target those who do not plan to go to college and then track them into classes and work experiences that orient them into immediate entry into the labor market. Others worry that the college-bound students who are attracted to the programs, once enrolled, are induced to substitute career or technical classes and work experience for the academic classes and experiences that would qualify them for college.

In general, the findings presented in this report suggest that — in the case of Career Academies — neither line of criticism is well founded. In all, 87 percent of the Academy group students in this study graduated from high school or completed a GED. This rate is equal to that among similar students nationally who were enrolled in general high school programs

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Figure 10**

**Impacts on the Average Number of Months Spent Attending School or Working, by Risk Subgroup**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the average number of months spent in each status during the 10-month school year following scheduled graduation from high school.

Estimates were regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. No differences in this figure were statistically significant.

and higher than that among similar students nationally who were enrolled in career or technical programs. On average, more than 60 percent of those who graduated from high school or received a GED went on to post-secondary education. With one exception, the post-secondary enrollment rates for Academy students were as high or higher than the rates for similar students nationally, including the national sample enrolled in academic or college preparatory programs. The one exception was that Academy students were more likely to enroll in an associate's degree program as opposed to a bachelor's degree program than similar students nationally. Finally, the vast majority of Academy students were engaged in some type of productive activity (working or attending school) during most of the year after scheduled graduation from high school. Although many Academy group students worked 30 or more hours per week, this did not limit their enrollment or persistence in post-secondary education.

To the extent that the Academies in this evaluation produced impacts on educational attainment, the impacts were concentrated among those who entered the programs at the highest risk of eventually dropping out. At the same time, the Academies continued to serve a diverse population of students and did not reduce the rates at which highly engaged students graduated from high school or went on to post-secondary education.

- **The participating Academies changed the high school environment and experiences of their students and teachers in ways that were consistent with the program's short-term goals. Yet these changes did not translate into different initial post-secondary education experiences than would have been expected for equally motivated students not enrolled in Academies.**

Proponents of Career Academies and related reforms, as well as the theory of change underlying the Career Academy approach, suggest that the program represents a significant enhancement over regular high school programs for similar students. Evidence garnered from this evaluation and others indicates that Academies indeed change the high school experiences of their students in ways consistent with the goals of Academies and related education reforms.

Not surprisingly, Career Academies had the most pronounced effects on the school processes and student experiences and outcomes that are closest to the key features of the intervention. For example, the Academies' small learning communities were associated with an increase in the availability of interpersonal supports and helped high-risk students reach higher levels of school engagement, and the career focus appeared to increase the taking of career-related courses in combination with a basic academic core curriculum. In addition, the employer partnerships played a key role in increasing students' access to career development and work-related learning experiences.

Moving beyond these short-term outcomes to high school completion, post-secondary education, and labor market participation, however, the Academies' impacts appeared to dissipate. Part of the reason is that the non-Academy students — whose outcomes set the standard against which the Academy students were compared — achieved relatively high graduation rates and post-secondary education outcomes. The level of performance among the non-Academy students, who applied for the Academies but were not randomly selected to enroll in one, suggests that the Academies attracted students who were likely to graduate and move on to post-secondary education and employment regardless of whether they gained access to an Academy.

Evidence presented in a previous report from the evaluation suggests that Career Academies — though they can create conditions for maintaining and even enhancing students’ engagement in high school — do not change classroom instruction substantially or affect measures of academic achievement. Similarly, many Academies do not provide supplementary college counseling services tailored for Academy students or to their needs and interests, which may explain the lack of impacts on post-secondary enrollments.

In short, it appears that the impressive education levels attained by students in this study were as likely to result from a non-Academy experience as from an Academy program. This pattern unfolded despite the substantial differences between Academy and non-Academy school environments with respect to organizational structure, career and technical course-taking patterns, and career development and school-related employment offerings that were documented in previous reports from the evaluation. It remains to be seen whether these benefits, which appeared during the high school years, will pay off for students in the longer term.

### **B. How Might Career Academies Build on Their Strengths and Advance Beyond Their Limitations?**

It is important to recognize that the Career Academies in this evaluation provided most of their students with a pathway to graduating from high school and moving on to post-secondary education. The overwhelming majority of students from the Academy programs were working, attending school, or combining the two activities during most of the year after graduation. The comparable performance of the non-Academy group indicates that the participating high schools also provided other pathways to these post-high school outcomes. Career Academies were never intended to serve as the only route to post-secondary education.

At the same time, the results from this evaluation indicate that there is room for the Academies to improve. More than one-quarter of the Academy students in the study sample did not graduate from high school on time, and about 45 percent had not enrolled in a post-secondary education program by the end of the year after scheduled graduation. Moreover, only 15 percent of sample members enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program during the year after scheduled high school graduation.

These findings challenge education policymakers and proponents of Career Academies to build on the strengths of the approach in their efforts to produce lasting impacts on high school completion and post-secondary education enrollment. Such improvements will likely be necessary if Academies are to justify the burdens they put on high schools (which, for example, have to rearrange high school schedules and organization and add to teachers’ responsibilities); employer partners (who, for example, may have to involve employees in school activities, accommodate student interns, and supply extra materials and resources); and students (who, for example, may have fewer opportunities to take elective courses and may need to satisfy additional career awareness and work-based learning requirements). At this point in the evaluation, it is possible only to offer some hypotheses about how Academies may produce these improvements.

**Increase high-risk students’ access to Career Academies.** To the extent that Academies have longer-term impacts, the impacts are concentrated among students who entered the program at high risk of dropping out. This finding suggests that Academies should make greater

efforts to attract and retain such students. At the same time, targeting the programs exclusively to high-risk students might lower teachers', students', and parents' expectations of the program. More importantly, based on implementation research conducted for this evaluation, the Academies appear to draw much of their power to improve interpersonal supports and increase student engagement from the diversity of their student bodies.

Several school districts and school reform initiatives around the country are now attempting to convert entire high schools into clusters of Career Academies. Instead of giving students the option of enrolling in traditional general or vocational track programs, these wall-to-wall Academies offer students a choice among different Academies that combine academic and career-related curricula. This approach may have the greatest potential for maximizing high-risk students' access to the programs (because all students would be required to enroll in an Academy) while ensuring that the Academies include a broad mix of students. These high schools and reform initiatives, however, face the related challenges of preventing high-risk students from being tracked into poorly implemented Academies and of ensuring a high level of implementation on a larger scale.

**Heighten the emphasis on meeting academic standards, and provide more intensive guidance and support for college entrance.** The Academy approach has flourished partly because it offers concrete, direct responses to pressing problems facing comprehensive high schools. Judging from the findings from this evaluation, however, the approach also has limitations, notably a lack of impacts on standardized test scores and college enrollment rates. These limitations, which are common to most efforts to improve high schools, probably stem from the fact that the Career Academy approach as currently formulated does not prescribe explicit, direct strategies for raising test scores, improving instruction, or guiding students toward college. One reason why such strategies have not been central in the Academy approach is that the earliest Academies were established with narrower goals and a narrower target population than today's Academies. Moreover, setting up cohesive small learning communities, scheduling coherent blocks of academic and career course sequences, and building productive employer partnerships have proven to be significant challenges in their own right. With the recent advent of the academic standards movement and the increasingly high premium placed on post-secondary education, the Academies will need to expand beyond their original core components.

In view of the present findings, school officials and Academy administrators should consider building on the Career Academy model's existing components to prepare students to meet new academic standards and provide them with the information they need to apply for and gain admission to college. For example, school officials and Academy administrators might consider implementing an accelerated academic program in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to help students who are behind academically catch up. In grades 10 to 12, the Academies could then focus on providing students with a rigorous academic curriculum of higher-level courses that would prepare them for high-stakes tests and help them garner the credentials needed to attend college.

A growing number of states and school districts are beginning to define more clearly the content knowledge and skills that students should learn and that teachers should teach and to develop ways to assess whether students have attained these skills. Teachers are typically provided with few opportunities to learn about the content standards for which they are held accountable or to incorporate these standards into curricula and instructional practice. Career Academies'

small learning communities provide an opportunity for teachers to plan together, develop curriculum and instructional strategies aligned with the content standards, and monitor the progress of the students whom they all teach.

Most Career Academies do not have a counselor who can provide students with individualized, ongoing guidance about their post-secondary education options and the steps that they need to take to prepare for, apply to, and be admitted to college. More importantly, many students and their families — both in and outside Academies — are intimidated by the high cost of a college education and do not consider a bachelor's degree program or even an associate's degree program a realistic option. Most Academies must rely on the host high school's counselors, who are typically overwhelmed handling a wide range of guidance issues in the school. Even when they manage to concentrate on college counseling, high school counselors are typically able to focus only on students and families who take the initiative to seek out their services.

Career Academies may be able to address these limitations by building on their small learning communities, course sequences, and employer partnerships. Their school-within-a-school organization, for example, gives them the capacity to provide students with a greater degree of personalized attention, especially with regard to students' day-to-day performance and behavior in school. This student-centered environment also might be used to help students set long-term goals and prepare for post-secondary education from the beginning of their high school careers. In addition, Academies' curricula and course sequences could be designed to ensure that students will have met college entrance requirements by the time they are ready to graduate. Finally, Academies might compensate for limited college guidance capacity by calling on their employer partners to help incorporate information about strategies for pursuing post-secondary education into the Academies' career awareness and development activities and work-based learning programs.

**Identify systemic problems that keep any one intervention from making a substantial difference for high school students.** Several studies have documented a wide range of systemic problems that prevent students from making successful transitions from high school to post-secondary education and the labor market.<sup>33</sup> One strand of this research identifies the lack of active collaboration between faculty and administrators at different levels of the education system as a contributing factor. Because many colleges have established standards that high schools must follow, they do not see high schools as customers with whom they must collaborate to ensure a smooth flow of students into their institutions. High schools must also contend with multiple demands for accountability to their primary customers (students, parents, taxpayers, and so on), which may prevent them from developing clear communication with post-secondary education institutions and employers.

At the same time, several studies have documented a strong relationship between education credentials and skills development and successful transitions to stable, high-wage employment.<sup>34</sup> For example, the transition from school to work is easiest for college graduates and most difficult for high school dropouts. Yet the skills and credentials that students acquire in high

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<sup>33</sup>See, for example, Klerman and Karoly, 1995; and Osterman and Iannozzi, 1993.

<sup>34</sup>See Klerman and Karoly, 1995; Murnane and Levy, 1996; and Snipes, 1998.

school and even in post-secondary education often fail to match the demands of the labor market. Further, even when young people obtain relevant credentials and skills, employers are often unable to differentiate among prospective employees except by looking at gross indicators of quality such as diplomas and degrees.

It is unrealistic to expect the Career Academy model or any other high school reform by itself to have a substantial impact on these types of systemic problems. At the same time, it is important that policymakers and practitioners who wish to promote Academies and related reforms develop a clearer understanding of the larger social, educational, and economic context in which the model will be implemented. Equipped with such understanding, they might then combine a reform such as Career Academies with initiatives aimed more explicitly at building strong links between high school and post-secondary education and the labor market. For example, the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) has been developing industry skill standards that employers will value and that education institutions can use to shape their own curricula and standards. SCANS also includes a "portable diploma" — which signifies attainment of competencies across a range of skills in a given industry or career area — that can serve as a clear indicator to prospective employers and even to education institutions of a student's suitability for a job or further education. The National Academy Foundation — a national organization sponsoring nearly 500 Career Academies in three career areas — has embarked on developing a similar credential for use by its member Academies. Other initiatives are beginning to develop new procedures and standards for boosting admissions to four-year post-secondary degree programs.<sup>35</sup>

### **C. Further Follow-Up Is Needed to Determine the Long-Term Effectiveness of Career Academies**

Although the results presented in this report go beyond those presented in other research on Career Academies and in previous reports from this evaluation, the full story of Career Academies' effectiveness is still unfolding. The findings reported to date raise several issues that highlight the need to examine longer-term results before making definitive judgments about the effectiveness of the Career Academy approach.

First, earlier reports from this evaluation showed that the Academies increased students' exposure to career awareness and development activities and to work-related learning opportunities. The employer partnerships provided students with personal and structured connections to the world of work and local employers with an opportunity to help shape the workforce preparation of high school students in their communities. Academy students were also much more likely than their non-Academy counterparts to complete a sequence of career or technical courses in addition to a basic academic core curriculum. Given that most students in the study sample did not start out in career-oriented jobs, it is unlikely that such experiences would have strong effects on their transitions into the labor market during the year after high school. It will be therefore important to examine the extent to which the Academies' focus on career-related experiences during high school leads to better employment outcomes and career trajectories in the longer term.

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<sup>35</sup>See Urquiola et al., 1997.



Second, previous research indicates that the year after high school graduation is a particularly unsettled period for 18- to 20-year-old youth.<sup>36</sup> The patterns of education and employment experiences for the students in the present sample are consistent with this evidence. For example, 40 percent of the Academy students went on to a two-year associate's degree program or a one-year training program. Many students use these types of educational opportunities as stepping-stones to four-year colleges or other programs. In addition, during the school year after scheduled graduation, about 75 percent of the sample members made at least one transition into or out of an education program, a job, or a combination of education and work; about 45 percent made two or more such transitions; and 20 percent made three or more. In view of the prevalence and likely persistence of such transitions for another year or two, it is extremely difficult to discern a career trajectory at this stage. Thus, it will be important to determine whether Academy students' more career-oriented experience helps them make smoother, more successful transitions between the options available to them.

Finally, in assessing the effectiveness of Career Academies — a school-to-career initiative — evidence about longer-term effects on educational attainment and employment outcomes should be weighed particularly heavily. Academies have a demonstrable capacity to keep students in school and to improve several key indicators of school engagement (for example, attendance and course-taking patterns) for high-risk students. Although the Academies in this study were less successful in changing curriculum and instruction and improving student achievement, the vast majority of Academy students nevertheless made successful initial transitions into post-secondary education or employment. A more definitive assessment of the strengths and limitations of the Career Academy approach should take account of evidence about their effects on longer-term outcomes.

To address these and other issues, the evaluation is collecting data on students' education and labor market experiences during the second, third, and fourth years after their scheduled high school graduation. The goal of this ongoing work is to determine whether the Academies enable students to make better choices about post-secondary education and employment and, if so, whether their choices lead to higher levels of educational attainment and entry into higher-wage, more career-oriented jobs.

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<sup>36</sup>Osterman and Iannozzi, 1993.

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Note: For works not published by MDRC, the publisher's name is shown in parentheses. With a few exceptions, this list includes reports published by MDRC since 1999. A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its Web site ([www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)), from which copies of MDRC's publications can also be downloaded.

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This study examines the implementation and impacts on achievement of the Accelerated Schools model, a whole-school reform targeted at at-risk students.

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### Project GRAD

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*Career Academies: Communities of Support for Students and Teachers — Emerging Findings from a 10-Site Evaluation.* 1997. James Kemple.

*Career Academies: Building Career Awareness and Work-Based Learning Activities Through Employer Partnerships.* 1999. James Kemple, Susan Poglinco, Jason Snipes.

*Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School.* 2000. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

### School-to-Work Project

A study of innovative programs that help students make the transition from school to work or careers.

*Home-Grown Lessons: Innovative Programs Linking School and Work* (Jossey-Bass Publishers). 1995.

Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp, Joshua Haimson.

*Home-Grown Progress: The Evolution of Innovative School-to-Work Programs.* 1997. Rachel Pedraza, Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp.

### Project Transition

A demonstration program that tested a combination of school-based strategies to facilitate students' transition from middle school to high school.

*Project Transition: Testing an Intervention to Help High School Freshmen Succeed.* 1999. Janet Quint, Cynthia Miller, Jennifer Pastor, Rachel Cytron.

### Equity 2000

Equity 2000 is a nationwide initiative sponsored by the College Board to improve low-income students' access to college. The MDRC paper examines the implementation of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee Public Schools.

*Getting to the Right Algebra: The Equity 2000 Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools.* 1999. Sandra Ham, Erica Walker.

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This study of the Literacy in Libraries Across America (LILAA) initiative explores the efforts of five adult literacy programs in public libraries to improve learner persistence.

*So I Made Up My Mind: Introducing a Study of Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs.* 2000. John T. Comings, Sondra Cuban.

*"I Did It for Myself": Studying Efforts to Increase Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs.* 2001. John Comings, Sondra Cuban, Johannes Bos, Catherine Taylor.

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An exploration of strategies for increasing low-wage workers' access to and completion of community college programs.

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A collaboration among researchers at MDRC and several other leading research institutions focused on studying the effects of welfare, antipoverty, and employment policies on children and families.

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*How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Employment and Income: A Synthesis of Research.* 2001. Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos.

### **Minnesota Family Investment Program**

An evaluation of Minnesota's pilot welfare reform initiative, which aims to encourage work, alleviate poverty, and reduce welfare dependence.

*Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program. Volume 2: Effects on Children.* 2000. Lisa Gennetian, Cynthia Miller.

*Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program.* 2000. Virginia Knox, Cynthia Miller, Lisa Gennetian.

### **Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project**

A test of the effectiveness of a temporary earnings supplement on the employment and welfare receipt of public assistance recipients.

*The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects on Children of a Program That Increased Parental*

*Employment and Income* (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, Ottawa, Canada). 2000. Pamela Morris, Charles Michalopoulos.

## **National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies**

Conceived and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with support from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), this is the largest-scale evaluation ever conducted of different strategies for moving people from welfare to employment.

*Do Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs Affect the Well-Being of Children? A Synthesis of Child Research Conducted as Part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies* (HHS/ED). 2000. Gayle Hamilton.

## **Teen Parents on Welfare**

*Teenage Parent Programs: A Synthesis of the Long-Term Effects of the New Chance Demonstration, Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, and the Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD).* 1998. Robert Granger, Rachel Cytron.

### **Ohio's LEAP Program**

An evaluation of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which uses financial incentives to encourage teenage parents on welfare to stay in or return to school.

*LEAP: Final Report on Ohio's Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents.* 1997. Johannes Bos, Veronica Fellerath.

### **New Chance Demonstration**

A test of a comprehensive program of services that seeks to improve the economic status and general well-being of a group of highly disadvantaged young women and their children.

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*Parenting Behavior in a Sample of Young Mothers in Poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study.* 1998. Martha Zaslow, Carolyn Eldred, editors.

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MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.

# Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Initial Transitions to Post-Secondary Education and Employment

December 2001

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## Technical Resources



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Unit 1:  
Issues Underlying the Impact Analyses and Comparisons  
with National Data

Unit 2:  
Additional Impacts for the Full Sample

Unit 3:  
Additional Impacts for the Risk Subgroups and Impacts for Subgroups  
Defined by Gender, Race, and Educational Expectations

**\*Click the above links to access each unit**



# Contents

<b>Unit 1</b>	<b>Issues Underlying the Impact Analyses and Comparisons with National Data</b>	<b>1</b>
	Post-High School Survey Data and Analysis Issues	2
	Comparisons with the National Education Longitudinal Survey Sample	8
Table 1.1	Response Rates for the Post-High School Survey, by Risk Subgroup, Gender, Ethnicity, and Educational Expectations	12
Table 1.2	Differences Between Academy and Non-Academy Sample Members' Background Characteristics	13
Table 1.3	Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being in the Program Group for the Full Study Sample and Risk Subgroups (Post-High School Survey Sample, N = 1,482)	17
Table 1.4	Response Rates for the Post-High School Survey, by 12 <sup>th</sup> -Grade Enrollment Status and Risk Subgroup	20
Table 1.5	Average Sampling Weights, by 12 <sup>th</sup> -Grade Enrollment Status and Risk Subgroup	21
Table 1.6	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment, With and Without Sampling Weights	22
Table 1.7	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment, With and Without Sampling Weights, for the High-Risk Subgroup	23
Table 1.8	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment, With and Without Sampling Weights, for the Medium-Risk Subgroup	24
Table 1.9	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment, With and Without Sampling Weights, for the Low-Risk Subgroup	25
Table 1.10	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample	26
Table 1.11	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample for the High-Risk Subgroup	27
Table 1.12	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample for the Medium-Risk Subgroup	28
Table 1.13	Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample for the Low-Risk Subgroup	29
Table 1.14	Outcomes for NELS 10 <sup>th</sup> Graders in Urban, Public, Non-Selective High Schools, Regression-Adjusted by Risk Subgroup	30
<b>Unit 2</b>	<b>Additional Impacts for the Full Sample</b>	<b>32</b>
Table 2.1	Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments for the Full Study Sample	33
Table 2.2	Impacts on Employment for the Full Study Sample	35
Table 2.3	Impacts on Combining Education and Employment During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation for the Full Study Sample	36

<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>Additional Impacts for the Risk Subgroups and Impacts for Subgroups Defined by Gender, Race, and Educational Expectations</b>	<b>38</b>
Table 3.1a	Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments for Students in the High-Risk Subgroup	39
Table 3.1b	Impacts on Employment for Students in the High-Risk Subgroup	41
Table 3.1c	Impacts on Combining Education and Employment During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation for Students in the High-Risk Subgroup	42
Table 3.2a	Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments for Students in the Medium-Risk Subgroup	44
Table 3.2b	Impacts on Employment for Students in the Medium-Risk Subgroup	46
Table 3.2c	Impacts on Combining Education and Employment During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation for Students in the Medium-Risk Subgroup	47
Table 3.3a	Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments for Students in the Low-Risk Subgroup	49
Table 3.3b	Impacts on Employment for Students in the Low-Risk Subgroup	51
Table 3.3c	Impacts on Combining Education and Employment During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation for Students in the Low-Risk Subgroup	52
Table 3.4	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Male Subgroup	54
Table 3.5	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Female Subgroup	56
Table 3.6	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Hispanic Subgroup	58
Table 3.7	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Black Subgroup	60
Table 3.8	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Asian/Native American Subgroup	62
Table 3.9	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the White Subgroup	64
Table 3.10	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Low Expectations Subgroup	66
Table 3.11	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Average Expectations Subgroup	68
Table 3.12	Impacts on High School Completion, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the High Expectations Subgroup	70

**Unit 1**

**Issues Underlying the Impact Analyses and  
Comparisons with National Data**

## **I. Post-High School Survey Data and Analysis Issues**

The Career Academies Post-High School Survey, which was administered to students in the study sample approximately 14 months after their scheduled graduation from high school, constitutes the primary data source for this report. The survey sample of 1,482 students represents 84 percent of the full study sample — 85 percent of the Academy group and 83 percent of the non-Academy group. The overall response rate and the similarity between the response rates for the Academy and non-Academy groups are very high by the standards of survey research.

Whenever survey response rates are less than 100 percent, however, it is important to investigate two factors that may confound interpretation of the findings. The first part of this unit focuses on whether the respondent sample systematically differs from the nonrespondent sample. It concludes that there were a number of differences between respondents and nonrespondents. Most notably, in the respondent sample students in the high-risk subgroup were underrepresented and students in the low-risk subgroup were overrepresented. As a result, caution should be exercised in generalizing the impact findings from the respondent sample to the full report sample.

A second and more serious concern is that respondents in the Academy group may differ systematically from respondents in the non-Academy group. The second part of this unit concludes that there were no systematic differences in background characteristics between the Academy and non-Academy group members who responded to the survey, affording a high degree of confidence that differences in outcomes between the two groups reflect impacts of the Career Academies rather than preexisting differences in background characteristics.

Although there were no systematic differences in background characteristics between the Academy and non-Academy group members who responded to the survey, further analysis revealed that the response rate among those who dropped out of high school before the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year was lower than that among those who remained in high school through the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year. More importantly, the response rate was lower among dropouts in the non-Academy group (70 percent) than among dropouts in the Academy group (81 percent).

The third part of this unit discusses results from “sensitivity tests” of the impacts, that is, analyses that attempt to take these differences into account by using sampling weights. It concludes that the use of sampling weights would result in only negligible changes in the impact estimates and would not change the pattern of impacts for the full sample or for the risk subgroups.

The final part of this unit compares the results for the students in the survey sample with those for the students whose high school transcript records were available, that is, those who were the focus of the previous impact report from the evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

### **A. Post-High School Survey Response Rates**

The evaluation team attempted to obtain information about high school graduation and initial post-high school education and employment experiences for the full sample of 1,764 stu-

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<sup>1</sup>James J. Kemple and Jason C. Snipes. 2000. *Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

dents in all nine sites participating in the study.<sup>2,3</sup> For the present purpose, this group of students — all of whom applied for a place in an Academy — is referred to as the *study sample*. Of the students in the study sample, 959 (54 percent) were randomly selected to enroll in an Academy (the *Academy group*). The remaining 805 students (46 percent of the study sample) were not invited to participate in the Academies but could choose other options available in their high school or school district (the *non-Academy group*).

Each student entered the study at the end of the 1992-1993, 1993-1994, or 1994-1995 school year, at which point he or she was at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup>- or 9<sup>th</sup>-grade year. Whether students were in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade or 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the point of application depended on the Academy program to which they applied; two of the Academies began in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and the remaining seven began in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Students applied for admission to the programs at the end of the school year before expected enrollment. This report follows sample members through the end of the year after they were scheduled to graduate from high school — that is, the 1996-1997, 1997-1998, or 1998-1999 school year, depending on the year during which and the grade level at which sample members entered the study.

Table 1.1 lists the percentages of students in the Academy and non-Academy groups who responded to the Post-High School Survey. The first line in the table shows the response rates for the full study sample, and the next three lines show the response rates for each of the three risk subgroups discussed in the report. The remainder of the table lists the response rates for other subgroups for which impacts were estimated; the impacts for these other subgroups are presented in Unit 3 of the Technical Resources.

The first line in Table 1.1 shows that the small difference in response rates between the Academy and non-Academy groups was not statistically significant. The table also shows that there were no systematic differences in response rates between Academy and non-Academy students in the high-risk and medium-risk subgroups. However, the response rate was somewhat higher among low-risk Academy students than among low-risk non-Academy students. The response rate for male students in the Academy group was also slightly higher than that for male students in the non-Academy group. When the response rate is larger for one research group than the other, impact estimates may be biased if there are systematic differences in the background characteristics or the pre-random assignment experiences of Academy and non-Academy students who responded. As discussed shortly, however, there were no systematic differences between Academy and non-Academy students who responded to the survey in any of the subgroups.

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<sup>2</sup>Details about site selection can be found in the following previous report from the evaluation: James J. Kemple and JoAnn Leah Rock. 1996. *Career Academies: Early Implementation Lessons from a 10-Site Evaluation*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

<sup>3</sup>As discussed in Kemple and Rock (1996), the initial research sample consisted of 1,953 students in 10 sites. A total of 189 of these students were dropped from the initial research sample, and efforts to collect data for them were discontinued. Students who were dropped from the sample include the following: 126 students who attended an Academy in the initial sample that was disbanded after two years in the study and was unable to provide sufficient follow-up data for its students and the 59 students in the initial sample who applied for an Academy program during their 10<sup>th</sup>-grade year and should not have been included in the study. This information was obtained from pre-random assignment school records and was confirmed with school staff. Finally, over the course of the data collection period, MDRC learned through contact with the schools and families that four other students were deceased.

A key question for interpreting the findings presented in this report is whether students for whom Post-High School Survey data are available are representative of the full study sample. To address this question, multiple regression was used to determine the extent to which the average characteristics of the students who responded differed from the average characteristics of students who did not respond. The analysis indicated that there were systematic differences between respondents and nonrespondents in background characteristics. An illustration of the differences can be seen by comparing the response rates for the high-risk, medium-risk, and low-risk subgroups in Table 1.1. The response rates were lowest for the students in the high-risk subgroup and highest for students in the low-risk subgroup.

In short, the analysis of response rates indicates that the samples of students for whom Post-High School Survey data are available are not perfectly representative of the full study sample of 1,764 students. Thus, caution should be exercised when attempting to generalize the findings beyond the students who are included in the analyses. Nevertheless, the overall response rates show that data are available for the vast majority of students in the study sample, making the findings fairly representative.

### **B. Comparison of Respondents in the Academy and Non-Academy Groups**

The main strength of a random assignment research design is that it ensures that there are no systematic differences between the research groups in measured or unmeasured background characteristics when sample members enter the study. As a result, any differences that emerge after that point can be attributed with confidence to the fact that one group had access to an Academy and the other group did not. Previous reports from the Career Academies Evaluation demonstrated that there were indeed no systematic differences in background characteristics between Academy and non-Academy students in the study sample.

A key question underlying the analyses presented in this report is: Do the Post-High School Survey response patterns preserve the lack of systematic differences between the research groups ensured by the random assignment design? In other words, does the Post-High School Survey sample exhibit the same lack of systematic differences between Academy and non-Academy students, both overall and for each of the risk subgroups? Table 1.2 presents the average characteristics of Academy and non-Academy students in the Post-High School Survey sample. This table shows that, with two exceptions, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups on any of the characteristics.

A more rigorous way to test for such differences is to use multiple regression analysis. Table 1.3 presents linear regression estimates and statistical tests of whether there were any systematic differences between Academy and non-Academy students in the survey sample and in each of the three risk subgroups. The first column in Table 1.3 shows that none of the characteristics were statistically significant and that there was no systematic difference overall between the groups. The final row in the first column, the p-value of the F-statistic for the full study sample, is very close to 1, providing strong evidence that there was no overall pattern of differences between Academy and non-Academy students in the survey sample. A p-value of .10 or lower is typically considered a “high” likelihood that there are systematic differences between groups.

The three remaining columns in Table 1.3 present the same analysis for each of the three risk subgroups. These columns indicate that there are slight differences on a few individual char-

acteristics but no overall pattern of differences between Academy and non-Academy students for any of the subgroups. The p-values of the F-statistic for the subgroups range from .754 to .921.

In summary, the random assignment design resulted in two groups of students who did not differ systematically with respect to background characteristics or prior school experiences. The pattern of survey response rates for the full sample and for each of the risk subgroups preserves this feature of the research design, affording confidence that any differences in the outcome measures found are the result of the Academy group's enrollment in the Career Academies.

### **C. Response Rates for Dropouts and Nondropouts**

Further analysis of the Post-High School Survey response rates revealed substantial differences between the sample members who had dropped out of high school before the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year and those who remained in school. Table 1.4 presents response rates by 12<sup>th</sup>-grade enrollment status and by risk subgroup. It shows, for example, that 89 percent of those who remained enrolled in high school through the end of their 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year completed the survey, compared with only 76 percent of those who dropped out. This is consistent with the difference in the response rates of the high- and low-risk subgroups.

Potentially more troubling, however, is the fact that the response rate among dropouts from the non-Academy group (70 percent) was much lower than that among Academy group dropouts (81 percent). This could be a serious problem, because previously reported findings from the evaluation indicate that the Career Academies actually reduced the high school dropout rate for students who entered high school at the highest risk of doing so. Specifically, the difference in response rates between dropouts in the Academy and non-Academy groups may lead to underestimation of the Academies' true impacts on high school graduation and post-secondary education outcomes because the non-Academy group of respondents includes a disproportionately low percentage of dropouts relative to what the percentage would have been if the response rate were as high as it was among the Academy group dropouts.

This section presents results from analyses that use sampling weights in an attempt to "correct" for the differences in response rates. The goal of these analyses is to determine the extent to which the high school graduation and post-secondary education impacts presented in the report are sensitive to the "dropout composition" of the respondent sample. In summary, the results indicate that the specific estimates are only marginally sensitive to this correction and that the general pattern of findings remains the same as that presented in the report.

Overall, the goal of constructing sampling weights is to make the survey sample reflect the distribution of student characteristics (including 12<sup>th</sup>-grade dropout status and Academy and non-Academy group status) in the original sample. Following is a summary of the primary weighting strategy that was tested.

A straightforward way to construct sampling weights for the survey that reflect the distribution of dropouts in the full sample is to divide the percentage of dropouts in the full sample by the percentage of dropouts in the survey respondent sample. In this way, respondents with characteristics that are underrepresented in the survey sample (relative to the full sample) would be given more weight (a weight greater than 1.0) in the analysis and those with characteristics that are overrepresented in the survey sample would be given less weight (a weight less than 1.0).

The same strategy can be employed to construct separate sampling weights for dropouts and nondropouts within the Academy and non-Academy groups and within each risk subgroup. This approach has the effect of reconstructing the original distribution of dropouts and nondropouts across the research groups and risk subgroups in the full study sample. It assumes, however, that respondent dropouts (or nondropouts) have the same background characteristics as nonrespondent dropouts (or nondropouts), an assumption that could well be incorrect.

As a result, sampling weights were instead constructed using “scores” based on regression analyses that predicted the survey response rates using sample members’ background characteristics and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade dropout status. This strategy was aimed at reducing the influence of the assumption that respondent dropouts have the same characteristics as nonrespondent dropouts. Also, separate regression analyses were performed for the Academy and non-Academy groups and for each risk subgroup. This strategy accounts for the possibility that any survey nonresponse bias that existed may have differed across subgroups.

Further analysis comparing the two strategies outlined above indicates that the added specifications for the sampling weights (using regression on background characteristics split by risk subgroup) do not make much difference to the impact estimates. However, the regression-based strategy enables more rigorous testing of the central assumption that respondents and nonrespondents have similar characteristics. Following is an overview of the findings concerning the sensitivity of the impact estimates to the survey response patterns.

First, Table 1.5 lists the average sampling weights constructed for the Academy and non-Academy groups, split by risk subgroup and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade enrollment status. A sampling weight greater than 1 for a given group indicates that sample members in that group were underrepresented in the Post-High School Survey sample and should be given more weight in the impact estimates. Conversely, a sampling weight of less than 1 for a given group indicates that sample members in that group were overrepresented in the Post-High School Survey sample and should be given less weight in the impact estimates.

Table 1.6 presents weighted and unweighted impact estimates for the full Post-High School Survey sample. The left panel in the table presents the unweighted impact estimates, and the right panel presents the impact results sample using the sampling weights described above. Comparing the results in the two panels reveals that the sampling weights had only a negligible effect on the impact estimates and virtually no effect on the general pattern of findings.

Tables 1.7–1.9 present weighted and unweighted impact estimates for the high-, medium-, and low-risk subgroups, respectively. The left panel in each table presents the unweighted impact estimates presented in the current report, and the right panel presents the same impact estimates adjusted using the sampling weights described above. Again, the tables indicate that the sampling weights had only a minor effect on the impact estimates and no effect on the general pattern of findings.



#### **D. Comparing Results for the Post-High School Survey Sample with Results for the School Records Sample**

Findings presented in an earlier report<sup>4</sup> from the evaluation indicate that the Career Academies reduced dropout rates in the high-risk subgroup by approximately 11 percentage points. This is larger than the 6 percentage point increase in the on-time graduation rate for the high-risk subgroup presented in the current report. The difference between the magnitude of the on-time graduation impact presented here and the magnitude of the dropout impact reported previously is partly due to the fact that the estimates are based on slightly different samples of students.

The impact estimates presented in the earlier report were based primarily on the *School Records* sample, which consisted of 1,454 students (82 percent of the full sample) for whom school administrative records data were available through the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade year or until a student was identified as a dropout. Post-High School Survey data were available for 1,271 (87 percent) of these students.

This unit of the Technical Resources compares the impacts for the Post-High School Survey sample with the impacts for the students in the School Records sample for whom Post-High School Survey data are available. In general, this analysis indicates that, with one important exception, both the pattern and magnitude of impacts are very similar for the two samples. The exception is the impact on high school dropout status and the on-time graduation rate for students in the two samples' high-risk subgroups.

The left panel in Table 1.10 presents the impact estimates for the Post-High School Survey sample, and the right panel presents the impact estimates for the School Records sample. Comparing the results in the two panels reveals that the pattern of impacts is generally similar across the two samples. In most cases, there are only minor differences between the samples in the specific impact estimates. A notable exception is the impact on dropout status, which is shown in the first line of Table 1.10. The left panel of the table indicates that there was a very small increase in the dropout rate for students in the Post-High School Survey sample, and the right panel indicates that there was a small decrease in the dropout rate for students in the School Records sample. But neither result is statistically significant, indicating that the Career Academies had no impact on the dropout rate for either sample. This conclusion is consistent with results presented in the previous report. Furthermore, the results in the remainder of the table are consistent across the two samples.

Tables 1.11–1.13 compare the impact estimates for the Post-High Schools Survey sample with those for the School Records sample for the high-, medium, and low-risk subgroups, respectively. The left panel in each table presents the impact estimates for the Post-High School Survey sample, while the right panel presents impact estimates for the School Records Sample. Comparing the results across the two panels for the medium- and low-risk subgroups indicates that the pattern of impacts is generally similar between the two samples. In most cases, there are only minor differences in the impact estimates.

For the high-risk subgroup, Table 1.11 indicates that there are two noteworthy differences between the samples. First, the left panel indicates that the Academies produced a small, not sta-

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<sup>4</sup>Kemple and Snipes, 2000.

tistically significant reduction in the dropout rate, while the right panel indicates that the Academies produced a moderate, statistically significant reduction in dropout rates. The primary difference between the two impact estimates is that the dropout rate for non-Academy students is higher in the School Records sample than it is in the Post-High School Survey sample.

This difference is partly due to different patterns in the response rates for the two data sources. On the one hand, non-Academy dropouts were somewhat underrepresented in the Post-High School Survey sample relative to in the full study sample. The estimated impact on dropout rates for the high-risk subgroup in the Post-High School sample therefore may have been smaller than it would have been had these data been available for everyone in the full study sample. On the other hand, non-Academy dropouts were somewhat overrepresented in the School Records sample, possibly leading the impact estimate to be somewhat larger than it would have been had these data been available for the full study sample.

Table 1.11 also reveals a difference between the two samples in the impact the on-time graduation rate for the high-risk subgroup. Whereas the left panel indicates that the Academies produced a modest, not statistically significant increase in the on-time graduation rate for the high-risk subgroup, the right panel indicates that they produced a moderately large, statistically significant increase in the on-time graduation rate in the same subgroup. This discrepancy, too, is partly due to the differential representation of dropouts — and thus on-time graduates — in the two samples.

In short, the general pattern of results and most of the specific impact estimates are highly consistent across the two samples. The primary differences are confined to the impacts on the dropout rate and the on-time graduation rate for the high-risk subgroup. Even here, however, the positive impacts on the on-time graduation rate for the School Records sample did not translate into an impact on the Post-High School Survey sample's initial transitions to post-secondary education.

## **II. Comparisons with the National Education Longitudinal Survey Sample**

In an effort to provide further context for evaluating the performance of students in the study sample, the report compares outcomes for the non-Academy group with those of a nationally representative group of similar students. For this comparison, the evaluation drew on data collected from a sample of students in the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 through 1994. This section describes the NELS dataset and explains how outcomes for use in this comparison were estimated.

NELS, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, followed a nationally representative sample of nearly 25,000 students from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade through the second year following their scheduled graduation from high school. The first round of NELS surveys was administered to students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 1988, and follow-up surveys were administered in 1990, 1992, and 1994. The study collected detailed demographic information as well as data on high

school experiences and outcomes, postsecondary education, and employment. These data are publicly available through the National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>5</sup>

The goal of this analysis was to identify a group of students in the NELS sample that was similar to the students in the Career Academies Evaluation in the following ways: the types of high schools they attended, the type of educational programs in which they were enrolled, and their individual background characteristics and school experiences prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Thus, only a subset of the full NELS sample was used in the analysis. Following is an overview of the specific criteria and the strategy used to identify such a comparison sample.

First, in order to maintain comparability with the schools in the Career Academies Evaluation, only NELS sample members from public, nonselective, comprehensive high schools located in urban school districts were included in the comparisons. The NELS variables specifying which were urban public schools were straightforward to interpret; however, in order to identify which high schools were comprehensive, it was necessary to rely on several different variables describing the types of schools that students attended. The following were excluded from the analysis: schools that never or rarely admitted students based on where they resided, schools that always admitted students based on admission tests or auditions, schools that always admitted students on the basis of some other admission criteria, and students enrolled in special education programs for the physically and/or learning disabled.

Second, the analyses focused on three subsamples of students in the NELS database: (1) students who reported being enrolled in an academic-honors or college-preparatory program in their high school, (2) students who reported being enrolled in the high school's general curriculum program, and (3) students who reported being enrolled in a career, technical, or vocational program. In general, Career Academies tend to be a mix of these three types of high school programs or curriculum tracks, although they are less comparable to the academic-honors or college-preparatory programs than to the other two types of programs. Also, based on information from student transcripts, it appears that non-Academy students in the study sample tended to be enrolled in their high school's general curriculum program, and many of them took at least one career, vocational, or technical course. NELS sample members for whom high school program information was missing, as well as students enrolled in "other" types of programs, were excluded from the comparison group.

Third, because virtually all the students in the non-Academy group completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the analyses presented here focus on students in the NELS sample who were 10<sup>th</sup>-graders in 1990 (rather than all students who were 8<sup>th</sup>-graders in 1988).

Once a comparison group was identified, it was necessary to create a set of equivalent outcome measures. In general, the outcomes used by NELS were very similar to those measured in the Career Academies Evaluation. One significant difference, however, was that the NELS study followed students through two years after their scheduled graduation from high school, whereas the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Survey was administered 14 months following scheduled graduation.

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<sup>5</sup>For data products and publications list, see the National Center for Education Statistics Web site: [nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/](http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/).

In order to make the outcome measures more comparable, the analysis focuses only on outcomes attained by students in the NELS sample through August of the year following scheduled graduation. For example, any student who earned a high school credential after that point was considered a nongraduate for the purpose of the comparisons made in this report. Likewise, NELS data on post-high school employment (ever employed and duration of employment) were truncated to cover the period through August of the year following scheduled graduation.

Adjusting the NELS indicator of “highest post-secondary educational enrollment” was somewhat more complicated, because students could have enrolled in multiple programs at various levels over the course of the follow-up period. Students whose initial post-secondary enrollment occurred later than 14 months after scheduled high school graduation were not considered a post-secondary education enrollee. However, students whose first enrollment fell within those 14 months were given credit for all post-secondary enrollments, even those occurring after the 14-month cutoff. Overall, however, only about 11 percent of the full NELS sample attended more than one post-secondary institution, so this inconsistency is likely to have only a minor effect on the findings.

Finally, the outcomes for the NELS sample were regression-adjusted and mean-centered based on the distribution of background characteristics and prior school experiences among the non-Academy students in the Career Academies Evaluation sample. This means that the numbers presented from the NELS dataset in this report do not represent outcomes for an actual subsample of NELS students. Rather, these adjustments allowed for a closer approximation of what the NELS outcome levels would have looked like if the NELS sample had a distribution of characteristics more like those in the Career Academies Evaluation sample.

The background characteristics measured by NELS were very similar to those measured for students in the Career Academies Evaluation at the start of the study. In fact, many of the questions used in the Career Academies Evaluation Baseline Questionnaire were drawn from the NELS surveys.<sup>6</sup> Following is a list of the characteristics, all measured at baseline, that were used in the estimation of outcomes for the NELS sample:

- Gender and ethnicity
- Lives in a single-parent household
- Has an older sibling who dropped out of high school
- Is overage for his/her grade
- Has parents who did not finish high school
- English grades
- Math grades
- Attendance rate
- Number of risk factors from the following list: single-parent household, sibling who dropped out, low parental education, limited English proficiency, three or more hours left unsupervised each day, low family income.

Adjusting the NELS outcomes to reflect the distribution of background characteristics in the Career Academy Evaluation sample entailed three steps: (1) using multiple regression to

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<sup>6</sup>James J. Kemple and JoAnn Leah Rock. 1996. *Career Academies: Early Implementation Lessons from a 10-Site Evaluation*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

identify the relationship between each outcome and the above characteristics, (2) calculating the mean for the Career Academy Evaluation sample on each of the above characteristics, and (3) multiplying the Career Academy sample means by the parameter estimates from each regression and adding them to each intercept. In order to estimate outcomes for the risk subgroups, the same parameter estimates were used, but in this case the sample means from each individual risk subgroup were used instead of the means from the full Career Academy sample.

Table 1.14 presents the regression-adjusted outcomes for the full sample and for the risk subgroups, split by type of high school program. These outcomes, including high school completion status, post-secondary enrollment status, ever employed, and duration of employment, can be compared with the findings for the Career Academies Evaluation sample presented in Figures 5, 6, 8, and 9 and Tables 2 and 4 in the report.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 1.1**  
**Response Rates for the Post-High School Survey**  
**by Risk Subgroup, Gender, Ethnicity, and Educational Expectations**

Subgroup	Sample Size	Total (%)	Academy Group (%)	Non-Academy Group (%)
<b>Full sample</b>	1764	84.0	85.2	82.6
<b>Risk subgroup</b>				
High risk	474	78.5	80.6	75.9
Medium risk	869	84.0	84.1	83.9
Low risk	421	90.3	92.6	87.4 *
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	773	80.1	82.2	77.4 *
Female	991	87.1	87.6	86.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Hispanic	972	86.1	87.2	84.8
Black	523	82.2	84.3	79.7
White	111	75.7	77.2	74.1
Asian/Native American	124	83.1	81.7	84.9
<b>Educational expectations</b>				
Does not expect to graduate from college	448	84.8	84.8	84.9
Graduate from college	671	84.4	86.2	81.9
Attend higher level of school after college	614	83.4	84.8	81.8

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: A chi-square test was used to evaluate differences between Academy and non-Academy response rates. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out; low-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out; medium-risk students represent the remaining students with neither a particularly high nor particularly low likelihood of dropping out.

The educational expectations subgroups are based on students' self-reports at the time they applied for an Academy. Expectations for the first group ranged from not finishing high school to attending some college; the majority, however, expected to attend some college. The middle group expected to graduate from college but did not intend to pursue schooling beyond college. The group with the highest expectations planned to attend a higher level of school after graduating from college.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 1.2**  
**Differences Between Academy and Non-Academy Sample Members**  
**Background Characteristics**

Characteristic	Full Sample (%)	Academy Group (%)	Non-Academy Group (%)
<b><u>Demographic and family characteristics</u></b>			
Gender			
Male	41.8	43.1	40.2
Female	58.2	56.9	59.9
Age of student at time of application			
13 or younger	8.6	7.6	9.8
14	35.9	36.2	35.6
15	46.5	46.8	46.0
16 or older	9.1	9.4	8.6
Race/ethnicity			
Black	29.6	30.6	28.4
White	5.8	5.5	6.2
Hispanic	57.6	56.8	58.6
Asian or Native American	7.1	7.2	6.9
Student speaks limited English <sup>a</sup>	7.6	6.4	9.1 *
Student lives with			
Mother and father	62.7	62.1	63.4
Mother only	27.9	28.1	27.6
Father only	4.2	4.8	3.4
Other family/nonrelative	5.3	5.0	5.6
Student lives in single-parent household	37.3	37.9	36.6
Father's education level			
Did not finish high school	40.6	40.3	40.9
High school graduate/GED recipient	32.0	31.9	32.1
Completed some post-secondary	15.6	14.4	17.0
College graduate	11.9	13.5	10.1
Mother's education level			
Did not finish high school	37.4	36.7	38.3
High school graduate/GED recipient	34.3	33.9	34.8
Completed some post-secondary	18.0	19.3	16.5
College graduate	10.2	10.1	10.4
Neither parent has high school diploma	29.6	30.2	28.9
Parental work			
Both parents work	48.1	47.2	49.2
Father works	23.9	23.8	24.0
Mother works	17.6	19.3	15.4
Neither parent works	10.5	9.8	11.4

(continued)

**Table 1.2 (continued)**

Characteristic	Full Sample (%)	Academy Group (%)	Non-Academy Group (%)
Family receives welfare or food stamps	23.4	23.3	23.6
Family mobility in past two years			
Have not moved	60.7	59.9	61.7
Moved 1 or 2 times	32.8	34.1	31.2
Moved 3 or more times	6.5	6.0	7.2
Student is home alone more than 3 hours per day	13.6	13.7	13.5
<b><u>Educational characteristics</u></b>			
8 <sup>th</sup> -grade math test score <sup>b</sup>			
75 <sup>th</sup> percentile or higher	9.1	9.3	8.8
50 <sup>th</sup> to 74 <sup>th</sup> percentile	19.9	20.7	18.8
25 <sup>th</sup> to 49 <sup>th</sup> percentile	31.7	30.2	33.6
24 <sup>th</sup> percentile or lower	39.3	39.7	38.9
8 <sup>th</sup> -grade reading test score <sup>c</sup>			
75 <sup>th</sup> percentile or higher	8.5	9.1	7.7
50 <sup>th</sup> to 74 <sup>th</sup> percentile	21.4	23.0	19.4
25 <sup>th</sup> to 49 <sup>th</sup> percentile	32.9	30.7	35.8
24 <sup>th</sup> percentile or lower	37.2	37.3	37.1
Student does not feel safe at school	22.6	22.3	23.0
Frequency of cutting classes			
Never	80.1	79.8	80.4
At least 1 time a week	18.7	19.5	17.7
Daily	1.2	0.8	1.8
Sent to office for misbehavior			
Never	82.4	81.9	83.0
1-2 times	14.7	15.1	14.3
3-10 times	2.9	3.0	2.8
Educational expectations			
Does not expect to graduate from college	35.1	34.7	35.6
Graduate from college	38.8	41.0	36.1
Attend higher level of school after college	26.1	24.3	28.3
Hours per week spent on homework			
1 hour or less	28.4	27.9	29.0
2-3 hours	37.9	38.7	36.9
4-6 hours	17.6	18.5	16.4
7 hours or more	16.2	14.9	17.8
Hours per day spent watching TV			
Less than an hour	11.7	11.2	12.2
1-2 hours	27.1	27.4	26.6
2-3 hours	26.6	25.4	28.1
Over 3 hours	34.6	35.9	33.1

(continued)



**Table 1.2 (continued)**

Characteristic	Full Sample (%)	Academy Group (%)	Non-Academy Group (%)
Student has worked for pay	34.8	34.9	34.8
<b><u>Characteristics associated with dropping out of school</u></b>			
Attendance rate, year prior to random assignment			
96-100%	55.5	54.8	56.4
91-95%	23.9	22.6	25.5
86-90%	10.5	12.0	8.6
85% or lower	10.2	10.7	9.5
Credits earned in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade <sup>d</sup>			
5 or more credits	82.3	81.5	83.2
3-4 credits	12.8	13.4	12.2
2 or fewer credits	4.9	5.1	4.6
Grade point average in year of random assignment <sup>e</sup>			
3.1 or higher	36.9	35.6	38.5
2.1-3.0	38.7	39.6	37.7
2.0 or lower	24.4	24.8	23.8
Student is overage for grade level <sup>f</sup>	20.2	20.2	20.1
Student transferred schools 2 or more times	25.8	26.3	25.2
Student has sibling who dropped out of high school	20.1	20.0	20.4
Risk of dropping out of high school <sup>g</sup>			
Low risk	25.6	26.1	25.1
Medium risk	49.3	48.5	50.2
High risk	25.1	25.5	24.7
Sample size	1482	817	665

**(continued)**

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Student Baseline Questionnaire Database and Student School Records Database.

NOTES: All characteristics were measured at the time students applied to the Career Academy program and prior to being randomly selected to the Academy and non-Academy groups.

Invalid or missing values are not included in individual variable distributions. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating of sums and differences.

A chi-square test was applied to differences in the distribution of characteristics across the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

<sup>a</sup>These are students who responded that they spoke English "not well" or "not at all."

<sup>b</sup>Several different standardized, nationally normed math tests were administered to students, depending on the district where their school was located and the year they entered the study. National percentile scores were used because they were the only standardized scores available across tests.

<sup>c</sup>Several different standardized, nationally normed reading tests were administered to students, depending on the district where their school was located and the year they entered the study. National percentile scores were used because they were the only standardized scores available across tests.

<sup>d</sup>This was applicable only to students who applied to the Career Academy at the end of their 9<sup>th</sup>-grade year.

<sup>e</sup>Grade point averages were converted to a standard 4.0 scale from 100-point or 5-point scales for some sites.

<sup>f</sup>A student is defined as overage for grade at the time of random assignment if she or he turns 15 before the start of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, or 16 before the start of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. This indicates that the student was likely to have been held back in a previous grade.

<sup>g</sup>The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out; low-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out; medium-risk students represent the remaining students with neither a particularly high nor particularly low likelihood of dropping out.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 1.3**

**Regression Coefficients for the Probability of Being in the Program Group  
for the Full Study Sample and Risk Subgroups  
(Post-High School Survey Sample, N = 1,482)**

Variable	<u>Full Study Sample</u>	<u>High-Risk Subgroup</u>	<u>Medium-Risk Subgroup</u>	<u>Low-Risk Subgroup</u>
	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)
Intercept	0.197 (0.431)	-0.426 (0.807)	0.751 (0.795)	2.077 (1.776)
Site 1	0.029 (0.080)	-0.237 (0.157)	0.208 * (0.120)	-0.054 (0.177)
Site 2	-0.027 (0.088)	-0.167 (0.174)	0.028 (0.125)	-0.031 (0.234)
Site 3	0.056 (0.101)	-0.086 (0.228)	0.063 (0.141)	0.030 (0.270)
Site 4	-0.011 (0.101)	-0.010 (0.175)	-0.098 (0.150)	-0.072 (0.320)
Site 5	0.015 (0.068)	0.034 (0.118)	-0.017 (0.105)	-0.011 (0.153)
Site 6	0.047 (0.061)	0.060 (0.111)	0.144 (0.093)	-0.178 (0.133)
Site 7	0.031 (0.052)	-0.082 (0.098)	0.075 (0.079)	0.104 (0.108)
Site 8	0.053 (0.050)	-0.012 (0.104)	0.090 (0.074)	0.053 (0.102)
Graduation cohort 1996	0.058 (0.041)	0.016 (0.093)	0.097 (0.060)	0.003 (0.083)
Graduation cohort 1997	0.026 (0.035)	-0.069 (0.085)	0.043 (0.050)	0.020 (0.067)
In 8th grade at application to Academy	0.030 (0.082)	0.012 (0.155)	-0.011 (0.113)	0.182 (0.237)
Female	-0.036 (0.028)	0.008 (0.060)	-0.036 (0.040)	-0.047 (0.056)
Age at application to Academy	0.033 (0.025)	0.060 (0.049)	0.000 (0.037)	0.040 (0.053)

**(continued)**

**Table 1.3 (continued)**

Variable	<u>Full Study Sample</u>	<u>High-Risk Subgroup</u>	<u>Medium-Risk Subgroup</u>	<u>Low-Risk Subgroup</u>
	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)
Hispanic	0.042 (0.060)	0.236 * (0.135)	-0.039 (0.083)	0.022 (0.125)
Black	0.110 (0.078)	0.307 * (0.161)	0.031 (0.113)	0.108 (0.156)
Asian/Native American	0.045 (0.078)	0.164 (0.169)	-0.051 (0.112)	0.151 (0.157)
75th percentile or higher in 8th grade math	-0.001 (0.064)	0.208 (0.198)	0.027 (0.089)	-0.067 (0.113)
25th percentile or lower in 8th grade math	0.024 (0.037)	0.092 (0.074)	0.055 (0.052)	-0.145 * (0.078)
Missing 8th grade math test score	0.187 (0.153)	0.161 (0.300)	0.500 * (0.255)	-0.188 (0.271)
75th percentile or higher in 8th grade reading	0.044 (0.058)	-0.056 (0.161)	0.079 (0.080)	0.060 (0.106)
25th percentile or lower in 8th grade reading	-0.003 (0.037)	0.018 (0.075)	-0.041 (0.053)	0.014 (0.077)
Missing 8th grade reading percentile	-0.194 (0.156)	-0.143 (0.304)	-0.462 * (0.257)	0.079 (0.285)
Has sibling who dropped out	-0.010 (0.033)	0.024 (0.059)	-0.002 (0.057)	-0.663 * (0.400)
Is overage for grade level	-0.040 (0.042)	-0.067 (0.077)	0.014 (0.066)	0.140 (0.188)
Transferred schools 2 or more times	0.006 (0.031)	0.030 (0.058)	0.013 (0.052)	-0.025 (0.271)
Attendance rate, year prior to random assignment	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.023 (0.014)
Credits earned in 9th grade	-0.007 (0.016)	-0.002 (0.024)	-0.051 (0.044)	0.064 (0.093)
Grade point average, year of random assignment	0.009 (0.026)	0.012 (0.059)	0.036 (0.044)	-0.097 (0.075)

**(continued)**

**Table 1.3 (continued)**

Variable	<u>Full Study Sample</u>	<u>High-Risk Subgroup</u>	<u>Medium-Risk Subgroup</u>	<u>Low-Risk Subgroup</u>
	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)	Parameter Estimate (Standard Error)
Sample size	1482	372	730	380
Degrees of freedom	28	28	28	28
Mean of dependent variable	0.551	0.559	0.542	0.561
R-square	0.009	0.050	0.030	0.060
F-statistic	0.476	0.642	0.770	0.802
p-value of F-statistic	0.991	0.921	0.798	0.754

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: The statistical significance of parameter estimates is indicated as \*\*\* = 1 percent, \*\* = 5 percent, \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out; low-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out; medium-risk students represent the remaining students with neither a particularly high nor particularly low likelihood of dropping out.

Several different standardized, nationally normed math tests were administered to students, depending on the district where their school was located and the year they entered the study. National percentile scores were used because they were the only standardized scores available across tests.

Several different standardized, nationally normed reading tests were administered to students, depending on the district where their school was located and the year they entered the study. National percentile scores were used because they were the only standardized scores available across tests.

A student is defined as overage for grade at the time of random assignment if she or he turns 15 before the start of the 9th grade, or 16 before the start of the 10th grade. This indicates that the student was likely to have been held back in a previous grade.

Credits earned in 9th grade applies only to students who applied to the Career Academy at the end of their 9th-grade year.

Grade point averages were converted to a standard 4.0 scale from 100-point or 5-point scales for some sites.

A student is defined as overage for grade at the time of random assignment if she or he turns 15 before the start of the 9th grade, or 16 before the start of the 10th grade. This indicates that the student was likely to have been held back in a previous grade.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 1.4**  
**Response Rates for the Post-High School Survey**  
**by Twelfth Grade Enrollment Status and Risk Subgroup**

Subgroup	Sample Size	Total (%)	Academy Group (%)	Non-Academy Group (%)
<b>Enrolled at the end of 12th grade</b>	1436	88.8	89.3	88.2
High risk subgroup	298	86.6	88.0	84.7
Medium risk subgroup	739	88.2	87.8	88.7
Low risk subgroup	399	91.5	93.1	89.6
<b>Not enrolled at the end of 12th grade</b>	226	75.7	80.5	69.9 *
High risk subgroup	128	77.3	82.8	71.9
Medium risk subgroup	82	74.4	76.0	71.9
Low risk subgroup	16	68.8	88.9	42.9 (**)
<b>Unknown 12th grade enrollment status</b>	102	35.3	41.7	26.2
High risk subgroup	48	31.3	29.6	33.3
Medium risk subgroup	48	35.4	46.4	20.0 *
Low risk subgroup	6	66.7	80.0	0.0

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: A chi-square test was used to evaluate differences between Academy and non-Academy response rates. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent. Parentheses indicate that because of small sample size, the chi-square may not be a valid test.

Twelfth grade enrollment status was based on school records data, rosters completed by the host high school, and student self-reports on a survey administered at the end of scheduled 12th grade. Approximately 6% of the full study sample lacked conclusive information from any of these three sources and were thus categorized as unknown.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out; low-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out; medium-risk students represent the remaining students with neither a particularly high nor particularly low likelihood of dropping out.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 1.5**  
**Average Sampling Weights**  
**by Twelfth Grade Enrollment Status and Risk Subgroup**

Subgroup	Sample Size	Total	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group
<b>Enrolled at the end of 12th grade</b>				
High risk subgroup	258	0.907	0.917	0.894
Medium risk subgroup	652	0.952	0.958	0.945
Low risk subgroup	365	0.986	0.994	0.977
<b>Not enrolled at the end of 12th grade</b>				
High risk subgroup	99	1.014	0.973	1.061
Medium risk subgroup	61	1.134	1.115	1.165
Low risk subgroup	11	1.230	1.033	1.755
<b>Unknown 12th grade enrollment status</b>				
High risk subgroup	15	2.346	2.468	2.206
Medium risk subgroup	17	2.498	1.762	4.892
Low risk subgroup	4	1.208	1.208	.

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Twelfth grade enrollment status was based on school records data, rosters completed by the host high school, and student self-reports on a survey administered at the end of scheduled 12th grade. Approximately 2% of the post-high school follow-up survey sample lacked conclusive information from any of these three sources and were thus categorized as unknown.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out; low-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out; medium-risk students represent the remaining students with neither a particularly high nor particularly low likelihood of dropping out.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 1.6**  
**Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment**  
**With and Without Sampling Weights**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample, Unweighted			Post-High School Survey Sample, Weighted		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	87.2	86.7	0.5	86.2	85.6	0.5
On-time graduate	74.0	74.4	-0.4	72.3	72.2	0.1
Late graduate	5.8	7.4	-1.6	5.8	7.8	-2.0
Received a GED or other certificate	7.5	5.0	2.5 **	8.0	5.6	2.4 *
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	54.8	54.6	0.2	54.1	53.6	0.5
Bachelor's degree program	14.7	15.5	-0.9	14.8	15.4	-0.7
Associate's degree program	27.3	27.8	-0.5	26.6	27.2	-0.6
Skills training program	12.8	11.3	1.6	12.7	11.0	1.7
Ever employed (%)	88.7	87.2	1.5	88.4	87.6	0.8
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.9	67.2	-0.3	67.0	68.2	-1.2
Held two or more jobs (%)	42.7	42.8	-0.1	42.1	43.5	-1.4
Number of months employed	9.4	9.3	0.2	9.4	9.2	0.2
Sample size (N=1,482)	817	665		817	665	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures refer to the fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.



**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 1.7**

**Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment  
With and Without Sampling Weights  
for the High Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample, Unweighted			Post-High School Survey Sample, Weighted		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	76.6	72.9	3.7	75.3	71.2	4.1
On-time graduate	55.5	49.7	5.9	53.3	45.7	7.5
Late graduate	5.6	10.0	-4.4	5.9	9.7	-3.8
Received a GED or other certificate	15.5	13.3	2.2	16.1	15.7	0.4
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	40.5	36.5	4.0	39.2	36.1	3.2
Bachelor's degree program	5.0	4.0	1.0	4.6	3.7	0.9
Associate's degree program	17.5	19.9	-2.4	16.7	19.6	-2.9
Skills training program	17.9	12.6	5.3	17.9	12.8	5.2
Ever employed (%)	87.6	87.7	-0.1	86.9	88.1	-1.2
Ever employed full-time (%)	72.8	72.9	-0.2	72.5	74.3	-1.8
Held two or more jobs (%)	47.1	40.3	6.8	45.4	41.9	3.5
Number of months employed	9.1	9.0	0.1	9.0	8.9	0.1
Sample size	208	164		208	164	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures refer to the fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 1.8**  
**Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment**  
**With and Without Sampling Weights**  
**for the Medium Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample, Unweighted			Post-High School Survey Sample, Weighted		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	86.9	88.5	-1.6	85.8	87.4	-1.6
On-time graduate	75.5	78.5	-3.0	73.7	76.4	-2.6
Late graduate	5.6	7.5	-1.9	5.4	8.5	-3.2 *
Received a GED or other certificate	5.9	2.6	3.3 **	6.7	2.5	4.2 ***
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	53.9	55.0	-1.2	53.1	53.4	-0.2
Bachelor's degree program	13.3	16.6	-3.3	13.6	16.6	-3.1
Associate's degree program	29.1	27.2	1.9	28.3	26.0	2.3
Skills training program	11.5	11.2	0.3	11.3	10.7	0.6
Ever employed (%)	88.9	86.8	2.1	88.6	87.2	1.4
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.8	64.9	1.9	67.0	66.3	0.7
Held two or more jobs (%)	39.5	41.8	-2.3	38.9	42.0	-3.0
Number of months employed	9.6	9.4	0.3	9.6	9.3	0.3
Sample size	396	334		396	334	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures refer to the fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Medium risk students (approximately 50 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with neither a particularly low nor particularly high likelihood of dropping out.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 1.9**  
**Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment**  
**With and Without Sampling Weights**  
**for the Low Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample, Unweighted			Post-High School Survey Sample, Weighted		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	97.8	96.8	1.1	97.8	96.2	1.6
On-time graduate	88.8	90.9	-2.0	88.6	89.8	-1.1
Late graduate	6.1	4.8	1.3	6.2	4.7	1.5
Received a GED or other certificate	2.9	1.1	1.8	3.0	1.7	1.3
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	70.0	72.4	-2.5	70.0	72.1	-2.2
Bachelor's degree program	25.6	26.0	-0.4	25.8	25.2	0.7
Associate's degree program	33.9	36.3	-2.4	33.7	36.6	-2.9
Skills training program	10.4	10.1	0.3	10.4	10.4	0.1
Ever employed (%)	89.5	87.6	1.9	89.6	87.7	1.9
Ever employed full-time (%)	62.1	65.1	-3.1	62.5	65.4	-2.9
Held two or more jobs (%)	45.0	46.2	-1.2	45.3	46.4	-1.1
Number of months employed	9.5	9.2	0.3	9.5	9.2	0.3
Sample size (n=372)	213	167		213	167	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures refer to the fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Low-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 1.10**

### **Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample			School Records Subsample		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Dropped out of school (%)	10.1	9.6	0.5	10.0	12.5	-2.5
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	87.2	86.7	0.5	88.9	87.6	1.3
On-time graduate	74.0	74.4	-0.4	75.1	74.6	0.4
Late graduate	5.8	7.4	-1.6	7.4	8.7	-1.3
Received a GED or other certificate	7.5	5.0	2.5 **	6.4	4.3	2.1 *
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	54.8	54.6	0.2	55.8	56.8	-1.0
Bachelor's degree program	14.7	15.5	-0.9	15.2	16.4	-1.2
Associate's degree program	27.3	27.8	-0.5	28.1	29.6	-1.5
Skills training program	12.8	11.3	1.6	12.5	10.8	1.7
Ever employed (%)	88.7	87.2	1.5	89.6	86.9	2.7
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.9	67.2	-0.3	66.8	65.8	1.0
Held two or more jobs (%)	42.7	42.8	-0.1	41.9	43.0	-1.0
Number of months employed	9.4	9.3	0.2	9.5	9.3	0.2
Sample size	817	665		699	582	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, all measures refer to the fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Students in the school records subsample are those students who have both a post-high school follow-up survey and complete school records data.

Dropout status was measured at the end of scheduled twelfth grade.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 1.11**

**Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment  
for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample  
for the High Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample			School Records Subsample		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Dropped out of school (%)	21.9	25.7	-3.8	20.7	32.9	-12.2 ***
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	76.6	72.9	3.7	80.4	71.2	9.2 *
On-time graduate	55.5	49.7	5.9	59.4	47.7	11.7 **
Late graduate	5.6	10.0	-4.4	7.2	10.2	-3.0
Received a GED or other certificate	15.5	13.3	2.2	13.7	13.3	0.4
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	40.5	36.5	4.0	42.0	36.0	6.1
Bachelor's degree program	5.0	4.0	1.0	5.8	3.5	2.3
Associate's degree program	17.5	19.9	-2.4	19.3	21.6	-2.3
Skills training program	17.9	12.6	5.3	17.0	10.9	6.1
Ever employed (%)	87.6	87.7	-0.1	88.1	87.3	0.9
Ever employed full-time (%)	72.8	72.9	-0.2	73.9	70.9	3.0
Held two or more jobs (%)	47.1	40.3	6.8	48.1	41.4	6.8
Number of months employed	9.1	9.0	0.1	8.9	9.1	-0.1
Sample size	208	164		163	132	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, all measures reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out.

Students in the school records subsample are those students who have both a post-high school follow-up survey and complete school records data.

Dropout status was measured at the end of scheduled twelfth grade.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 1.12**

**Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment  
for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample  
for the Medium Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample			School Records Subsample		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Dropped out of school (%)	8.3	5.5	2.9	8.9	8.2	0.6
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	86.9	88.5	-1.6	88.0	89.9	-2.0
On-time graduate	75.5	78.5	-3.0	75.5	78.8	-3.3
Late graduate	5.6	7.5	-1.9	7.3	9.3	-2.0
Received a GED or other certificate	5.9	2.6	3.3 **	5.2	1.8	3.4 **
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	53.9	55.0	-1.2	54.5	57.6	-3.1
Bachelor's degree program	13.3	16.6	-3.3	13.3	17.2	-3.9
Associate's degree program	29.1	27.2	1.9	29.3	29.2	0.1
Skills training program	11.5	11.2	0.3	11.8	11.1	0.7
Ever employed (%)	88.9	86.8	2.1	89.5	86.1	3.3
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.8	64.9	1.9	66.1	63.7	2.4
Held two or more jobs (%)	39.5	41.8	-2.3	37.7	42.3	-4.6
Number of months employed	9.6	9.4	0.3	9.7	9.4	0.2
Sample size	396	334		344	291	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, all measures reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Medium-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with neither a particularly low nor particularly high likelihood of dropping out.

Students in the school records subsample are those students who have both a post-high school follow-up survey and complete school records data.

Dropout status was measured at the end of scheduled twelfth grade.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 1.13**

**Impacts on High School Graduation, Post-Secondary Education, and Employment  
for the Full Post-High School Survey Sample and the School Records Subsample  
for the Low Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Post-High School Survey Sample			School Records Subsample		
	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact
Dropped out of school (%)	2.4	1.8	0.6	2.0	2.8	-0.8
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	97.8	96.8	1.1	98.1	96.7	1.4
On-time graduate	88.8	90.9	-2.0	87.7	89.6	-2.0
Late graduate	6.1	4.8	1.3	7.4	6.5	0.9
Received a GED or other certificate	2.9	1.1	1.8	3.1	0.6	2.5 *
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	70.0	72.4	-2.5	69.8	72.9	-3.1
Bachelor's degree program	25.6	26.0	-0.4	25.9	26.6	-0.7
Associate's degree program	33.9	36.3	-2.4	33.9	36.4	-2.5
Skills training program	10.4	10.1	0.3	10.0	9.9	0.1
Ever employed (%)	89.5	87.6	1.9	91.2	87.7	3.5
Ever employed full-time (%)	62.1	65.1	-3.1	62.8	64.4	-1.6
Held two or more jobs (%)	45.0	46.2	-1.2	44.6	44.9	-0.3
Number of months employed	9.5	9.2	0.3	9.7	9.2	0.5
Sample size	213	167		192	159	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, all measures reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Low-risk students have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out.

Students in the school records subsample are those students who have both a post-high school follow-up survey and complete school records data.

Dropout status was measured at the end of scheduled twelfth grade.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 1.14**

**Outcomes for NELS 10th Graders  
in Urban, Public, Non-Selective High Schools  
Regression-Adjusted by MDRC Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	All Programs	Career/ Technical	General	Academic
<b><u>10th Grade Enrollees</u></b>				
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	85.7	81.4	86.2	88.4
On-time graduate	73.1	63.8	68.8	84.6
Late graduate	8.4	14.0	11.3	3.5
Received a GED or other certificate	4.1	3.6	6.1	0.3
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	47.0	41.8	43.9	53.4
Bachelor's degree program	20.6	20.7	15.6	26.1
Associate's degree program	17.3	17.0	17.5	18.6
Skills training program	9.1	4.1	10.8	8.8
Ever employed (%)	82.8	84.5	82.6	80.0
Total number of months employed	8.9	9.3	9.0	8.0
<b><u>High Risk Subgroup</u></b>				
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	78.9	76.7	79.2	81.2
On-time graduate	63.1	57.5	57.3	77.5
Late graduate	8.9	12.0	12.3	3.7
Received a GED or other certificate	6.8	7.2	9.6	0.0
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	35.2	38.3	31.7	40.8
Bachelor's degree program	9.1	17.9	5.8	11.9
Associate's degree program	17.9	17.0	18.3	19.5
Skills training program	8.2	3.4	7.5	9.4
Ever employed (%)	79.7	83.3	80.3	74.3
Total number of months employed	8.6	9.7	8.7	7.0
<b><u>Medium Risk Subgroup</u></b>				
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	86.5	81.8	86.9	89.8
On-time graduate	74.3	64.6	70.2	86.0
Late graduate	8.3	13.7	11.1	3.4
Received a GED or other certificate	3.9	3.5	5.7	0.4
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	48.1	42.2	44.6	55.3
Bachelor's degree program	21.9	21.2	16.6	27.7
Associate's degree program	17.1	16.6	17.1	18.8
Skills training program	9.1	4.4	10.9	8.8
Ever employed (%)	83.3	84.8	82.9	80.7
Total number of months employed	8.9	9.3	9.1	8.1

**(continued)**



**Table 1.14 (continued)**

Outcome	All Programs	Career/ Technical	General	Academic
<b><u>Low Risk Subgroup</u></b>				
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	91.5	86.1	92.6	93.7
On-time graduate	81.7	69.2	78.9	89.9
Late graduate	8.1	16.9	10.6	3.3
Received a GED or other certificate	1.7	0.0	3.1	0.5
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	58.0	44.6	56.0	63.5
Bachelor's degree program	30.9	22.9	24.6	38.4
Associate's degree program	17.0	17.7	17.2	17.0
Skills training program	10.0	4.0	14.2	8.2
Ever employed (%)	85.4	85.4	84.7	84.9
Total number of months employed	9.1	8.8	9.2	8.7
Sample size	1899	269	886	744

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the NELS:88-94 database, adjusted using the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures refer to the fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted to reflect the background characteristics of the MDRC sample.

The definition of MDRC risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out; low-risk students (approximately 25% of both the Academy and non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out; medium-risk students (approximately 50% of both the Academy and non-Academy groups) represent the remaining students with neither a particularly high nor particularly low likelihood of dropping out.

"Earned high school diploma or GED" and "Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program" were not directly estimated from the NELS data. The measures that comprise them were estimated directly, and then added together. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license. Post-secondary enrollment numbers may include some students whose highest post-secondary enrollment occurred more than 14 months after scheduled graduation.

**Unit 2**

**Additional Impacts for the Full Sample**

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 2.1

#### Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments for the Full Study Sample

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school	87.0	6.6	80.4 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12	52.6	4.1	48.5 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED	87.2	86.7	0.5	0.6	<i>0.6</i>
On-time graduate	74.0	74.4	-0.4	-0.5	<i>-0.5</i>
Late graduate	5.8	7.4	-1.6	-21.8	<i>-2.0</i>
Received a GED or other certificate	7.5	5.0	2.5 **	49.6	<i>3.1</i>
No high school diploma or GED	12.8	13.3	-0.5	-3.7	<i>-0.6</i>
Still in high school	1.7	1.4	0.3	18.3	<i>0.3</i>
Dropped out	11.1	11.9	-0.7	-6.3	<i>-0.9</i>
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	54.8	54.6	0.2	0.3	<i>0.2</i>
Bachelor's degree program	14.7	15.5	-0.9	-5.6	<i>-1.1</i>
Associate's degree program	27.3	27.8	-0.5	-1.8	<i>-0.6</i>
Skills training program	12.8	11.3	1.6	13.9	<i>1.9</i>
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	7.6	8.1	-0.4	-5.5	<i>-0.6</i>
Completed post-secondary skills training program	6.5	5.7	0.8	14.6	<i>1.0</i>
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion	10.9	10.0	0.9	9.1	<i>1.1</i>
Job-related reason	4.1	4.1	0.0	-0.4	<i>0.0</i>
School-related reason	2.0	3.6	-1.6 *	-44.8	<i>-2.0</i>
Personal reason	4.8	2.2	2.5 ***	112.7	<i>3.1</i>
Received high school diploma or GED but never enrolled in post-secondary education	24.8	24.0	0.7	3.1	<i>0.9</i>
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	1.1	2.3	-1.2 *	-51.2	<i>-1.4</i>
Enrolled in basic education	4.9	3.7	1.2	33.3	<i>1.5</i>
No education program	6.8	7.3	-0.6	-7.7	<i>-0.7</i>

(continued)

**Table 2.1 (continued)**

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Education program enrollment status at end of follow-up period</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	38.8	41.4	-2.6	-6.4	-3.3
Bachelor's degree program	11.9	13.5	-1.6	-12.0	-2.0
Associate's degree program	21.0	21.0	0.0	-0.1	0.0
Skills training program	5.9	6.9	-1.0	-14.6	-1.3
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	6.3	5.0	1.3	26.0	1.6
Received high school diploma or GED but not enrolled in post-secondary education	42.1	40.3	1.8	4.5	2.3
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	0.6	1.7	-1.0 *	-63.0	-1.3
Enrolled in basic education	2.5	1.7	0.8	45.6	1.0
No education program	9.7	9.9	-0.2	-2.3	-0.3
Sample size (N=1,482)	817	665			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Post-secondary non-degree programs include classes at a two- or four- year institution or a skills training program but not leading to a degree, certificate, or a license.

Basic education includes students enrolled in GED or ABE programs or in high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 2.2**  
**Impacts on Employment**  
**for the Full Study Sample**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	88.7	87.2	1.5	1.7	<i>1.8</i>
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.9	67.2	-0.3	-0.4	<i>-0.3</i>
Worked at two or more jobs (%)	42.7	42.8	-0.1	-0.3	<i>-0.2</i>
Total number of months employed	9.4	9.3	0.2	2.0	<i>0.2</i>
Employed in 12 or more months (%)	46.4	45.0	1.4	3.1	<i>1.7</i>
Employed at the end of the follow-up period (%)	66.2	64.3	1.9	3.0	<i>2.4</i>
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	32.8	32.4	0.4	1.4	<i>0.5</i>
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.44	7.17	0.26	3.7	<i>0.33</i>
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	241.38	233.25	8.14	3.5	<i>10.12</i>
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.2	9.2	0.0	-0.3	<i>0.0</i>
Sample size (N=1,482)	817	665			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 2.3**  
**Impacts on Combining Education and Employment**  
**During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation**  
**for the Full Study Sample**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Combining Education and Employment</u></b>					
Enrolled in education program and employed for at least one month (%)	55.4	53.9	1.5	2.9	1.9
Average number of months combining education and employment	3.6	3.5	0.1	2.6	0.1
Primary activity was combining education and employment (%)	39.9	37.4	2.5	6.6	3.1
<b><u>Attending Education Program and Not Working</u></b>					
Attended an education program without working for at least one month (%)	36.5	37.2	-0.7	-1.8	-0.8
Average number of months attending an education program without working	1.8	2.0	-0.2	-10.4	-0.3
Primary activity was attending an education program without working (%)	16.8	20.3	-3.4 *	-17.0	-4.3
<b><u>Working and Not Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Worked without attending an education program for at least one month (%)	55.4	54.1	1.3	2.5	1.7
Average number of months working without attending an education program	3.2	3.2	0.0	0.9	0.0
Primary activity was working without attending an education program (%)	30.7	32.7	-2.0	-6.0	-2.4
<b><u>Working and/or Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Attended an education program and/or worked for at least one month (%)	96.2	96.6	-0.4	-0.4	-0.5
Average number of months working and/or attending an education program	8.6	8.7	-0.1	-1.0	-0.1
Primary activity was working and/or attending an education program (%)	87.4	90.4	-2.9 *	-3.3	-3.7
Sample size (N=1,482)	817	665			

**(continued)**

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the average number of months spent in each status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary activity is defined as the activity in which the student spent the greatest number of months during the ten-month school-year period.

**Unit 3**

**Additional Impacts for the Risk Subgroups and  
Impacts for Subgroups Defined by Gender, Race, and  
Educational Expectations**



## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.1a

#### Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments for Students in the High-Risk Subgroup

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school	83.4	2.1	81.3 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12	35.3	1.6	33.7 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED	76.6	72.9	3.7	5.0	4.5
On-time graduate	55.5	49.7	5.9	11.8	7.2
Late graduate	5.6	10.0	-4.4	-44.0	-5.4
Received a GED or other certificate	15.5	13.3	2.2	16.6	2.7
No high school diploma or GED	23.4	27.1	-3.7	-13.6	-4.5
Still in high school	2.0	2.9	-0.9	-31.3	-1.1
Dropped out	21.4	24.1	-2.8	-11.4	-3.4
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	40.5	36.5	4.0	10.9	4.9
Bachelor's degree program	5.0	4.0	1.0	25.1	1.2
Associate's degree program	17.5	19.9	-2.4	-11.9	-2.9
Skills training program	17.9	12.6	5.3	42.3	6.6
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	3.7	8.8	-5.1 **	-58.4	-6.3
Completed post-secondary skills training program	9.5	3.2	6.3 **	197.7	7.8
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion	11.4	7.4	4.0	53.6	4.9
Job-related reason	4.4	3.6	0.8	21.9	1.0
School-related reason	3.0	2.3	0.7	31.6	0.9
Personal reason	4.1	1.6	2.5	158.5	3.1
Received high school diploma or GED but never enrolled in post-secondary education	32.5	27.7	4.8	17.5	5.9
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	0.7	4.5	-3.8 **	-83.5	-4.7
Enrolled in basic education	9.9	7.6	2.2	29.3	2.7
No education program	12.8	14.9	-2.1	-14.2	-2.6

**(continued)**

**Table 3.1a (continued)**

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Education program enrollment status at end of follow-up period</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	20.5	27.6	-7.1	-25.6	-8.7
Bachelor's degree program	1.4	3.7	-2.4	-63.0	-2.9
Associate's degree program	12.4	15.3	-2.9	-18.8	-3.5
Skills training program	6.7	8.5	-1.8	-21.3	-2.2
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	3.4	3.6	-0.2	-4.3	-0.2
Received high school diploma or GED but not enrolled in post-secondary education	52.6	41.8	10.9 **	26.1	<i>13.4</i>
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	0.4	3.1	-2.7 **	-87.0	-3.4
Enrolled in basic education	4.0	4.1	-0.1	-3.1	-0.2
No education program	19.0	19.8	-0.8	-4.1	-1.0
Sample size (n=372)	208	164			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Post-secondary non-degree programs include classes at a two- or four- year institution or a skills training program but not leading to a degree, certificate, or a license.

Basic education includes students enrolled in GED or ABE programs or in high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 3.1b**  
**Impacts on Employment**  
**for Students in the High-Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	87.6	87.7	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2
Ever employed full-time (%)	72.8	72.9	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
Worked at two or more jobs (%)	47.1	40.3	6.8	17.0	8.4
Total number of months employed	9.1	9.0	0.1	0.8	0.1
Employed in 12 or more months (%)	40.1	44.3	-4.2	-9.6	-5.2
Employed at the end of the follow-up period (%)	61.3	60.1	1.1	1.9	1.4
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	34.5	33.3	1.2	3.6	1.5
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.38	7.34	0.04	0.6	0.05
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	255.18	240.58	14.60	6.1	17.97
<i>Number of months employed</i>	8.8	9.0	-0.2	-1.9	-0.2
Sample size (n=372)	208	164			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 3.1c**  
**Impacts on Combining Education and Employment**  
**During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation**  
**for Students in the High-Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Combining Education and Employment</u></b>					
Enrolled in education program and employed for at least one month (%)	40.2	47.1	-6.9	-14.6	-8.5
Average number of months combining education and employment	2.3	2.6	-0.3	-11.7	-0.4
Primary activity was combining education and employment (%)	27.3	26.4	0.9	3.4	1.1
<b><u>Attending Education Program and Not Working</u></b>					
Attended an education program without working for at least one month (%)	33.0	33.2	-0.2	-0.7	-0.3
Average number of months attending an education program without working	1.4	1.6	-0.2	-10.7	-0.2
Primary activity was attending an education program without working (%)	11.1	17.0	-5.8	-34.3	-7.2
<b><u>Working and Not Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Worked without attending an education program for at least one month (%)	66.9	61.4	5.5	9.0	6.8
Average number of months working without attending an education program	4.2	3.9	0.3	7.8	0.4
Primary activity was working without attending an education program (%)	41.2	40.4	0.7	1.9	0.9
<b><u>Working and/or Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Attended an education program and/or worked for at least one month (%)	93.7	93.9	-0.2	-0.2	-0.3
Average number of months working and/or attending an education program	7.9	8.1	-0.2	-2.2	-0.2
Primary activity was working and/or attending an education program (%)	79.6	83.8	-4.2	-5.0	-5.1
Sample size (n=372)	208	164			

(continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the average number of months spent in each status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. High-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the highest likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary activity is defined as the activity in which the student spent the greatest number of months during the ten-month school-year period.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 3.2a**

**Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments  
for Students in the Medium-Risk Subgroup**

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	Impact per Enrollee
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school	88.9	6.5	82.4 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12	54.7	2.8	51.9 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED	86.9	88.5	-1.6	-1.8	-1.9
On-time graduate	75.5	78.5	-3.0	-3.8	-3.6
Late graduate	5.6	7.5	-1.9	-25.8	-2.3
Received a GED or other certificate	5.9	2.6	3.3 **	130.1	4.1
No high school diploma or GED	13.1	11.5	1.6	13.8	1.9
Still in high school	1.7	1.0	0.7	76.5	0.9
Dropped out	11.3	10.5	0.8	8.1	1.0
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	53.9	55.0	-1.2	-2.1	-1.4
Bachelor's degree program	13.3	16.6	-3.3	-19.9	-4.0
Associate's degree program	29.1	27.2	1.9	6.9	2.3
Skills training program	11.5	11.2	0.3	2.4	0.3
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	8.0	6.7	1.3	19.3	1.6
Completed post-secondary skills training program	4.6	6.5	-2.0	-30.1	-2.4
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion	11.1	10.2	0.9	8.4	1.0
Job-related reason	4.6	3.8	0.9	23.0	1.1
School-related reason	1.8	4.2	-2.3 *	-56.6	-2.9
Personal reason	4.6	2.3	2.3 *	102.1	2.8
Received high school diploma or GED but never enrolled in post-secondary education	25.1	26.8	-1.7	-6.4	-2.1
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	1.8	1.8	0.0	1.9	0.0
Enrolled in basic education	4.1	3.2	0.9	28.8	1.1
No education program	7.1	6.5	0.6	9.7	0.8

**(continued)**

**Table 3.2a (continued)**

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Education program enrollment status at end of follow-up period</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	38.9	41.6	-2.7	-6.4	-3.2
Bachelor's degree program	11.7	14.0	-2.3	-16.3	-2.8
Associate's degree program	21.3	20.3	1.0	4.8	1.2
Skills training program	5.9	7.3	-1.4	-18.7	-1.7
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	6.6	4.5	2.1	47.9	2.6
Received high school diploma or GED but not enrolled in post-secondary education	41.4	42.5	-1.0	-2.5	-1.3
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	1.0	1.2	-0.2	-15.9	-0.2
Enrolled in basic education	2.5	0.9	1.6	166.3	1.9
No education program	9.6	9.3	0.2	2.4	0.3
Sample size (n=730)	396	334			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Medium-risk students (approximately 50 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with neither a particularly low nor particularly high likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Post-secondary non-degree programs include classes at a two- or four- year institution or a skills training program but not leading to a degree, certificate, or a license.

Basic education includes students enrolled in GED or ABE programs or in high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 3.2b**  
**Impacts on Employment**  
**for Students in the Medium-Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	88.9	86.8	2.1	2.4	2.5
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.8	64.9	1.9	2.9	2.3
Worked at two or more jobs (%)	39.5	41.8	-2.3	-5.5	-2.8
Total number of months employed	9.6	9.4	0.3	2.9	0.3
Employed in 12 or more months (%)	49.5	44.6	4.9	10.9	5.9
Employed at the end of the follow-up period (%)	68.1	68.0	0.1	0.2	0.1
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	33.0	32.6	0.4	1.1	0.4
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.51	6.95	0.55	7.9	0.67
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	243.93	226.23	17.70	7.8	21.49
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.5	9.5	0.0	0.3	0.0
Sample size (n=730)	396	334			

SSOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Medium-risk students (approximately 50 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with neither a particularly low nor particularly high likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.



**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 3.2c**

**Impacts on Combining Education and Employment  
During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation  
for Students in the Medium-Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Combining Education and Employment</u></b>					
Enrolled in education program and employed for at least one month (%)	56.4	51.7	4.7	9.1	5.7
Average number of months combining education and employment	3.7	3.5	0.2	4.8	0.2
Primary activity was combining education and employment (%)	38.0	37.2	0.8	2.1	1.0
<b><u>Attending Education Program and Not Working</u></b>					
Attended an education program without working for at least one month (%)	34.7	35.5	-0.9	-2.5	-1.1
Average number of months attending an education program without working	1.8	1.9	-0.1	-4.9	-0.1
Primary activity was attending an education program without working (%)	17.8	18.1	-0.2	-1.2	-0.3
<b><u>Working and Not Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Worked without attending an education program for at least one month (%)	55.5	55.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average number of months working without attending an education program	3.3	3.3	0.0	0.3	0.0
Primary activity was working without attending an education program (%)	33.5	35.4	-1.8	-5.2	-2.2
<b><u>Working and/or Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Attended an education program and/or worked for at least one month (%)	96.7	96.8	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
Average number of months working and/or attending an education program	8.7	8.7	0.1	1.0	0.1
Primary activity was working and/or attending an education program (%)	89.4	90.7	-1.3	-1.4	-1.5
Sample size (n=730)	396	334			

**(continued)**

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the average number of months spent in each status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Medium-risk students (approximately 50 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with neither a particularly low nor particularly high likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary activity is defined as the activity in which the student spent the greatest number of months during the ten-month school-year period.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.3a

#### Impacts on High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Education Enrollments for Students in the Low-Risk Subgroup

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school	86.9	10.7	76.2 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12	65.5	9.3	56.1 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED	97.8	96.8	1.1	1.1	<i>1.4</i>
On-time graduate	88.8	90.9	-2.0	-2.2	<i>-2.7</i>
Late graduate	6.1	4.8	1.3	27.7	<i>1.7</i>
Received a GED or other certificate	2.9	1.1	1.8	159.8	<i>2.3</i>
No high school diploma or GED	2.2	3.2	-1.1	-33.1	<i>-1.4</i>
Still in high school	1.3	0.7	0.6	93.4	<i>0.8</i>
Dropped out	0.8	2.5	-1.7	-67.5	<i>-2.2</i>
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	70.0	72.4	-2.5	-3.4	<i>-3.2</i>
Bachelor's degree program	25.6	26.0	-0.4	-1.5	<i>-0.5</i>
Associate's degree program	33.9	36.3	-2.4	-6.6	<i>-3.1</i>
Skills training program	10.4	10.1	0.3	3.1	<i>0.4</i>
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	10.7	10.3	0.3	3.2	<i>0.4</i>
Completed post-secondary skills training program	7.2	6.3	0.9	14.7	<i>1.2</i>
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion	9.9	11.9	-2.0	-17.1	<i>-2.7</i>
Job-related reason	3.0	5.1	-2.1	-41.2	<i>-2.8</i>
School-related reason	1.2	3.9	-2.6 *	-68.7	<i>-3.5</i>
Personal reason	5.7	3.0	2.7	92.0	<i>3.6</i>
Received high school diploma or GED but never enrolled in post-secondary education	17.2	14.0	3.2	23.0	<i>4.2</i>
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	0.0	1.3	-1.3 *	-104.0	<i>-1.7</i>
Enrolled in basic education	1.8	0.7	1.1	146.6	<i>1.4</i>
No education program	0.4	1.2	-0.8	-65.4	<i>-1.1</i>

**(continued)**

**Table 3.3a (continued)**

Outcome (%)	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Education program enrollment status at end of follow-up period</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program	55.7	55.3	0.4	0.7	<i>0.5</i>
Bachelor's degree program	21.4	23.6	-2.2	-9.2	<i>-2.8</i>
Associate's degree program	29.0	27.6	1.4	5.1	<i>1.8</i>
Skills training program	5.2	4.1	1.1	27.6	<i>1.5</i>
Enrolled in post-secondary education non-degree program	8.8	7.3	1.5	20.4	<i>2.0</i>
Received high school diploma or GED but not enrolled in post-secondary education	33.3	34.1	-0.8	-2.3	<i>-1.1</i>
No high school diploma or GED and					
Enrolled in skills training	0.0	1.3	-1.3 *	-104.0	<i>-1.7</i>
Enrolled in basic education	1.3	0.7	0.6	93.4	<i>0.8</i>
No education program	0.9	1.3	-0.4	-31.5	<i>-0.5</i>
Sample size (n=380)	213	167			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Low-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Post-secondary non-degree programs include classes at a two- or four- year institution or a skills training program but not leading to a degree, certificate, or a license.

Basic education includes students enrolled in GED or ABE programs or in high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

**Table 3.3b**  
**Impacts on Employment**  
**for Students in the Low-Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	89.5	87.6	1.9	2.2	<i>2.5</i>
Ever employed full-time (%)	62.1	65.1	-3.1	-4.7	<i>-4.0</i>
Worked at two or more jobs (%)	45.0	46.2	-1.2	-2.6	<i>-1.6</i>
Total number of months employed	9.5	9.2	0.3	3.2	<i>0.4</i>
Employed in 12 or more months (%)	46.9	46.2	0.7	1.6	<i>0.9</i>
Employed at the end of the follow-up period (%)	67.9	60.6	7.3	12.1	<i>9.6</i>
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Average hours worked per week</i>	<i>31.1</i>	<i>30.5</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>0.8</i>
<i>Average hourly wage (\$)</i>	<i>7.32</i>	<i>7.50</i>	<i>-0.18</i>	<i>-2.4</i>	<i>-0.24</i>
<i>Average earnings per week (\$)</i>	<i>225.23</i>	<i>237.68</i>	<i>-12.45</i>	<i>-5.2</i>	<i>-16.35</i>
<i>Number of months employed</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>0.1</i>
Sample size (n=380)	213	167			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Low-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

**Career Academies Evaluation**

**Table 3.3c**

**Impacts on Combining Education and Employment  
During the School Year Following Scheduled High School Graduation  
for Students in the Low-Risk Subgroup**

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
<b><u>Combining Education and Employment</u></b>					
Enrolled in education program and employed for at least one month (%)	67.9	65.5	2.5	3.8	3.2
Average number of months combining education and employment	4.8	4.6	0.2	4.4	0.3
Primary activity was combining education and employment (%)	55.0	49.6	5.4	10.9	7.1
<b><u>Attending Education Program and Not Working</u></b>					
Attended an education program without working for at least one month (%)	44.0	43.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average number of months attending an education program without working	2.2	2.6	-0.5	-17.4	-0.6
Primary activity was attending an education program without working (%)	20.5	27.7	-7.2	-26.1	-9.5
<b><u>Working and Not Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Worked without attending an education program for at least one month (%)	44.5	43.2	1.3	3.0	1.7
Average number of months working without attending an education program	2.1	2.1	0.0	1.2	0.0
Primary activity was working without attending an education program (%)	16.8	17.6	-0.8	-4.6	-1.1
<b><u>Working and/or Attending an Education Program</u></b>					
Attended an education program and/or worked for at least one month (%)	97.8	99.3	-1.5	-1.5	-2.0
Average number of months working and/or attending an education program	9.1	9.3	-0.2	-2.5	-0.3
Primary activity was working and/or attending an education program (%)	92.3	94.9	-2.6	-2.8	-3.5
Sample size (n=380)	213	167			

**(continued)**

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: All measures reflect the average number of months spent in each status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The definition of risk subgroups involved identifying background characteristics that best predicted dropping out among students in the non-Academy group. Low-risk students (approximately 25 percent of both the Academy and the non-Academy groups) have an array of these characteristics associated with the lowest likelihood of dropping out.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Primary activity is defined as the activity in which the student spent the greatest number of months during the ten-month school-year period.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.4

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the Male Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	87.2	4.2	83.0 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	49.6	2.4	47.3 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	85.4	84.7	0.7	0.8	0.8
On-time graduate	70.3	70.9	-0.6	-0.8	-0.7
Late graduate	5.2	8.1	-2.8	-35.1	-3.4
Received a GED or other certificate	9.9	5.7	4.1 *	71.6	5.0
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	22.7	20.7	2.0	9.5	2.4
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	53.2	52.3	1.0	1.8	1.1
Bachelor's degree program	14.0	16.0	-2.0	-12.3	-2.4
Associate's degree program	23.6	25.5	-1.9	-7.4	-2.3
Skills training program	15.6	10.8	4.8 *	44.3	5.8
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	7.7	4.8	2.8	58.7	3.4
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	10.3	10.4	-0.1	-1.0	-0.1
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	92.7	90.9	1.8	2.0	2.1
Ever employed full-time (%)	74.5	72.5	2.0	2.8	2.4
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	35.0	33.9	1.1	3.2	1.3
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.84	7.46	0.38	5.1	0.46
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	272.64	254.04	18.60	7.3	22.40
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.4	9.1	0.3	3.2	0.4
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	9.0	8.9	0.1	1.2	0.1
Number of months combining education and employment	3.7	3.7	0.0	0.3	0.0
Number of months attending an education program without working	1.6	1.9	-0.3	-17.9	-0.4
Number of months working without attending an education program	3.7	3.2	0.4	13.7	0.5
Sample size (n=619)	352	267			

(continued)



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.5

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the Female Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	86.7	8.2	78.5 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	54.6	5.5	49.1 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	88.5	88.1	0.3	0.4	0.4
On-time graduate	76.5	77.0	-0.5	-0.7	-0.7
Late graduate	6.3	6.8	-0.5	-7.5	-0.6
Received a GED or other certificate	5.7	4.4	1.4	31.9	1.8
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	18.1	16.1	2.0	12.5	2.6
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	56.4	55.7	0.7	1.2	0.8
Bachelor's degree program	15.1	15.3	-0.2	-1.5	-0.3
Associate's degree program	30.4	29.1	1.3	4.6	1.7
Skills training program	10.9	11.4	-0.4	-3.9	-0.6
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	5.8	6.0	-0.2	-2.7	-0.2
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	11.4	9.5	1.9	19.6	2.4
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	85.9	84.6	1.4	1.6	1.7
Ever employed full-time (%)	61.3	63.3	-2.0	-3.2	-2.6
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	31.0	31.2	-0.1	-0.4	-0.2
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.13	6.95	0.18	2.6	0.23
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	216.77	217.24	-0.47	-0.2	-0.60
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.1	9.3	-0.2	-2.4	-0.3
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	8.4	8.6	-0.2	-2.4	-0.3
Number of months combining education and employment	3.6	3.4	0.2	6.3	0.3
Number of months attending an education program without working	1.9	2.1	-0.1	-7.1	-0.2
Number of months working without attending an education program	2.9	3.1	-0.3	-8.6	-0.3
Sample size (n=863)	465	398			

(continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.6

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the Hispanic Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	91.4	6.9	84.5 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	54.1	4.4	49.8 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	87.7	87.9	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
On-time graduate	74.5	75.7	-1.2	-1.6	-1.4
Late graduate	5.8	8.3	-2.5	-30.2	-3.0
Received a GED or other certificate	7.4	4.0	3.5 **	88.0	4.1
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	19.9	17.3	2.6	15.0	3.1
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	55.4	55.0	0.3	0.6	0.4
Bachelor's degree program	10.1	12.9	-2.8	-22.0	-3.4
Associate's degree program	30.8	28.5	2.3	8.2	2.8
Skills training program	14.5	13.6	0.9	6.3	1.0
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	8.3	6.8	1.5	22.7	1.8
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	8.7	10.3	-1.6	-15.8	-1.9
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	89.0	86.6	2.5	2.8	2.9
Ever employed full-time (%)	67.5	67.0	0.6	0.9	0.7
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	33.7	32.1	1.5 *	4.8	1.8
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.33	7.17	0.16	2.2	0.19
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	243.34	229.49	13.86	6.0	16.41
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.6	9.8	-0.2	-2.4	-0.3
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	8.7	8.9	-0.1	-1.5	-0.2
Number of months combining education and employment	3.9	3.7	0.2	5.5	0.2
Number of months attending an education program without working	1.7	1.8	-0.1	-5.6	-0.1
Number of months working without attending an education program	3.1	3.3	-0.2	-7.3	-0.3
Sample size (n=837)	457	380			

(continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.7

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the Black Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	77.9	7.8	70.1 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	47.7	4.2	43.5 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	84.8	85.5	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0
On-time graduate	71.0	73.0	-1.9	-2.7	-2.8
Late graduate	6.2	5.3	0.9	16.9	1.3
Received a GED or other certificate	7.6	7.2	0.4	5.1	0.5
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	20.3	18.5	1.8	9.9	2.6
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	52.6	52.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bachelor's degree program	21.4	18.7	2.7	14.6	3.9
Associate's degree program	19.3	23.1	-3.8	-16.3	-5.4
Skills training program	11.8	10.8	1.0	9.5	1.5
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	4.8	5.0	-0.3	-5.2	-0.4
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	12.4	10.1	2.3	23.3	3.3
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	87.6	87.2	0.4	0.5	0.6
Ever employed full-time (%)	68.3	70.7	-2.4	-3.4	-3.4
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	31.8	33.1	-1.3	-3.8	-1.8
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.25	7.01	0.24	3.5	0.35
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	230.16	231.71	-1.55	-0.7	-2.21
<i>Number of months employed</i>	8.6	8.8	-0.2	-1.9	-0.2
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	8.4	8.4	0.0	-0.4	-0.1
Number of months combining education and employment	2.8	2.9	0.0	-1.1	0.0
Number of months attending an education program without working	1.9	2.0	-0.1	-4.8	-0.1
Number of months working without attending an education program	3.6	3.5	0.1	2.7	0.1
Sample size (n=430)	246	184			

(continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.8

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the Asian/Native American Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	88.0	2.2	85.8 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	57.5	3.6	53.9 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	85.6	87.4	-1.8	-2.0	-2.1
On-time graduate	79.1	73.6	5.5	7.4	6.4
Late graduate	4.2	10.2	-6.0	-59.0	-7.0
Received a GED or other certificate	2.4	3.6	-1.2	-34.5	-1.5
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	20.5	15.8	4.8	30.3	5.6
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	56.8	60.2	-3.4	-5.6	-3.9
Bachelor's degree program	21.0	19.5	1.5	7.7	1.8
Associate's degree program	30.8	35.9	-5.1	-14.2	-5.9
Skills training program	4.9	4.7	0.2	4.6	0.3
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	3.3	2.5	0.8	33.2	0.9
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	13.9	6.6	7.3	111.9	8.5
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	84.3	86.9	-2.6	-3.0	-3.1
Ever employed full-time (%)	59.0	59.5	-0.4	-0.7	-0.5
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	32.3	30.2	2.1	7.0	2.5
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	8.45	8.29	0.17	2.0	0.19
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	274.71	259.28	15.43	6.0	17.99
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.2	7.4	1.8 *	23.5	2.0
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	8.4	8.9	-0.6	-6.2	-0.6
Number of months combining education and employment	3.9	4.6	-0.7	-14.7	-0.8
Number of months attending an education program without working	2.1	3.1	-1.0	-32.8	-1.2
Number of months working without attending an education program	2.4	1.3	1.1 *	88.6	1.3
Sample size (n=103)	58	45			

(continued)



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.9

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the White Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	94.4	1.2	93.1 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	54.5	2.6	51.9 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	89.6	86.5	3.1	3.6	3.4
On-time graduate	71.1	74.2	-3.1	-4.2	-3.3
Late graduate	5.8	6.1	-0.3	-4.6	-0.3
Received a GED or other certificate	12.6	6.1	6.5	106.5	7.0
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	23.8	21.3	2.5	11.6	2.7
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	53.3	63.8	-10.5	-16.5	-11.3
Bachelor's degree program	11.3	17.6	-6.4	-36.1	-6.8
Associate's degree program	29.7	39.8	-10.1	-25.3	-10.8
Skills training program	12.3	6.4	5.9	91.7	6.3
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	0.3	7.2	-6.8	-95.6	-7.3
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	20.1	10.4	9.7	93.7	10.4
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	95.3	87.7	7.6	8.7	8.2
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.8	59.0	7.8	13.1	8.3
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	31.2	33.2	-2.0	-6.0	-2.1
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	8.02	6.49	1.53	23.6	1.64
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	243.72	248.99	-5.26	-2.1	-5.65
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.2	8.9	0.3	3.3	0.3
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	9.1	8.3	0.8	9.9	0.9
Number of months combining education and employment	4.4	3.8	0.6	15.9	0.6
Number of months attending an education program without working	1.6	2.1	-0.5	-23.0	-0.5
Number of months working without attending an education program	3.1	2.4	0.7	29.8	0.8
Sample size (n=84)	44	40			

(continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.10

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the Low Expectations Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	88.9	4.7	84.2 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	50.6	2.9	47.7 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	81.4	83.6	-2.1	-2.6	-2.5
On-time graduate	68.1	66.5	1.5	2.3	1.8
Late graduate	4.9	10.0	-5.2 **	-51.4	-6.1
Received a GED or other certificate	8.5	7.0	1.5	21.2	1.8
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	26.5	24.5	2.0	8.1	2.4
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	44.5	43.7	0.9	2.0	1.0
Bachelor's degree program	7.1	6.9	0.3	3.7	0.3
Associate's degree program	20.8	22.3	-1.4	-6.4	-1.7
Skills training program	16.6	14.5	2.0	14.0	2.4
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	6.5	6.8	-0.4	-5.5	-0.4
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	10.3	9.2	1.1	11.9	1.3
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	87.8	91.0	-3.2	-3.5	-3.8
Ever employed full-time (%)	70.3	75.1	-4.9	-6.5	-5.8
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	34.2	33.3	0.8	2.5	1.0
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.49	7.35	0.14	1.8	0.16
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	254.83	245.99	8.84	3.6	10.50
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.7	9.3	0.3	3.5	0.4
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	8.3	8.6	-0.3	-3.8	-0.4
Number of months combining education and employment	3.1	3.0	0.0	1.2	0.0
Number of months attending an education program without working	1.3	1.5	-0.2	-15.3	-0.3
Number of months working without attending an education program	4.0	4.1	-0.1	-3.2	-0.2
Sample size (n=512)	279	233			

(continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The low educational expectations subgroup included students who indicated at the time they applied for an Academy that they did not expect to graduate from college. Expectations for this group, representing 35% of those who answered the question, ranged from not finishing high school to attending some college; the majority, however, expected to attend some college.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.11

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the Average Expectations Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	87.0	8.0	79.0 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	50.0	5.5	44.5 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	88.8	88.5	0.3	0.3	0.4
On-time graduate	74.8	76.7	-1.9	-2.5	-2.5
Late graduate	6.5	6.6	-0.1	-0.9	-0.1
Received a GED or other certificate	7.5	5.2	2.3	44.2	2.9
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	18.0	15.0	3.0	20.1	3.8
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	57.3	58.0	-0.7	-1.2	-0.9
Bachelor's degree program	14.2	17.4	-3.2	-18.3	-4.0
Associate's degree program	31.7	30.7	0.9	3.0	1.2
Skills training program	11.4	9.9	1.6	15.9	2.0
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	6.8	5.3	1.6	30.2	2.0
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	10.6	10.6	0.0	-0.5	-0.1
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	88.9	84.6	4.3	5.1	5.4
Ever employed full-time (%)	64.9	61.7	3.2	5.2	4.0
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	32.5	32.0	0.6	1.8	0.7
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.42	6.99	0.43	6.2	0.55
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	238.35	229.30	9.06	4.0	11.46
<i>Number of months employed</i>	9.1	9.5	-0.4	-3.9	-0.5
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	8.8	8.8	0.0	0.3	0.0
Number of months combining education and employment	3.8	3.8	0.0	-0.1	0.0
Number of months attending an education program without working	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.8	0.0
Number of months working without attending an education program	3.0	3.0	0.0	0.5	0.0
Sample size (n=566)	330	236			

(continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The average educational expectations subgroup included students who indicated at the time they applied for an Academy that they expected to graduate from college but did not intend to pursue any schooling beyond college. This group represents approximately 40% of those answering the question.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.

## Career Academies Evaluation

### Table 3.12

#### Impacts on High School Completion, Post-secondary Education and Employment for the High Expectations Subgroup

Outcome	Academy Group	Non-Academy Group	Impact	Percent Change	<i>Impact per Enrollee</i>
Ever enrolled in a Career Academy during high school (%)	84.7	7.5	77.2 ***	--	--
Was enrolled in a Career Academy at the end of scheduled grade 12 (%)	60.2	4.1	56.1 ***	--	--
<b><u>High school graduation status</u></b>					
Earned high school diploma or GED (%)	93.6	89.5	4.1	4.6	5.3
On-time graduate	81.7	82.0	-0.3	-0.4	-0.4
Late graduate	5.7	5.4	0.3	5.0	0.3
Received a GED or other certificate	6.2	2.1	4.1 **	194.2	5.3
Ever dropped out of high school (%)	13.2	12.6	0.6	4.4	0.7
<b><u>Enrollment in education programs</u></b>					
Enrolled in post-secondary education degree program (%)	65.1	64.4	0.7	1.1	0.9
Bachelor's degree program	24.2	24.2	0.0	-0.2	0.0
Associate's degree program	29.6	31.0	-1.4	-4.4	-1.8
Skills training program	11.3	9.2	2.1	22.9	2.7
Completed post-secondary skills training program (%)	6.7	4.8	1.9	39.4	2.5
Exited a post-secondary education degree program before completion (%)	12.7	9.9	2.8	28.6	3.7
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>					
Ever employed (%)	89.7	85.4	4.3	5.0	5.6
Ever employed full-time (%)	66.3	62.6	3.7	6.0	4.8
<b><u>Characteristics of primary job</u></b>					
<i>Hours worked per week</i>	31.9	31.0	0.9	2.9	1.2
<i>Hourly wage (\$)</i>	7.48	7.19	0.29	4.0	0.37
<i>Earnings per week (\$)</i>	233.69	217.97	15.72	7.2	20.38
<i>Number of months employed</i>	8.8	8.8	0.0	-0.1	0.0
<b><u>Combining education and employment</u></b>					
Number of months working or attending an education program	8.8	8.7	0.1	1.0	0.1
Number of months combining education and employment	4.1	3.8	0.3	8.0	0.4
Number of months attending an education program without working	2.1	2.6	-0.5	-19.9	-0.7
Number of months working without attending an education program	2.6	2.3	0.3	12.3	0.4
Sample size (n=380)	195	185			

(continued)



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Career Academies Evaluation Post-High School Follow-Up Survey Database.

NOTES: Unless otherwise indicated, statuses reflect a fourteen-month period ending in August of the year following scheduled graduation. Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating differences. A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the Academy and non-Academy groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent.

The high educational expectations subgroup included students who indicated at the time they applied for an Academy that they expected to attend a higher level of school after graduating from college. This group represents approximately 25% of those answering the question.

Percent change is defined as the impact divided by the non-Academy group average.

Impact per enrollee is defined as the impact divided by the difference in the percentage of Academy and non-Academy group members ever enrolled in a Career Academy. It is italicized because its calculation does not involve a direct comparison of Academy and non-Academy students.

Students were considered on-time graduates if they graduated in June or earlier of the year they were scheduled to graduate. Students were considered still in high school if they last attended high school in May or later of the year following scheduled graduation but had not graduated.

"Ever dropped out of high school" includes some students who eventually graduated late or earned a GED.

Students were considered enrolled in a post-secondary education degree program if they received a high school diploma or GED and were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program, associate's degree program, or skills training program leading to a certificate or license.

Primary job is defined as the job at which the student worked the greatest number of months during the 14-month follow-up period. Numbers in italics only include employed sample members. They do not represent experimental comparisons, and no tests of statistical significance were performed.

"Combining education and employment" measures refer to the average number of months spent in each education/work status during the ten-month school year (September through June) following scheduled graduation from high school.