

Program: CAREER ACADEMIES

Population Served:

Size: 1,500 high schools with approximately 100-150 students at each
 Age: 8th or 9th grade at implementation, followed through the end of 12th grade
 Other Characteristics: Academies were selected to include school districts and high schools in large urban centers and small cities. On average, these school districts have higher dropout rates, unemployment rates, and percentages of low-income families.

Program Components:

<u>Component</u>	<u>Provided by</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Description</u>
School-within-a-school structure	Teachers	Throughout high school	A team of teachers is linked with a group of students
Integrated academic and vocational curriculum	High schools	Throughout high school	Topics and projects cross individual course lines; the curriculum is integrated thematically by the academy's occupational focus
Business partnerships	Employers in the community	Throughout high school	Employers assist in designing the academy program, provide workplace experiences, and can offer summer or even permanent employment to students

Program Objectives/Goals:

Information; technical and academic skills: Enhance engagement and performance in school; provide credentials and skills needed to make successful transition to postsecondary education and, eventually, a career

Study 1:

Kemple, J., & Rock, J. (1996). *Career Academies: Early implementation lessons from a 10-site evaluation*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Study Objectives and Measurements:

Objective:

Provide an overview of the study; describe the 10 participating Career Academies and evaluate whether each sustains the structural elements of the Career Academy approach.

Measurement instrument:

Self-administered questionnaire at application and follow-up; school records; teacher questionnaire; interviews with staff, students, school administrators, and local employers conducted by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, as well as observations of classes and program activities.

Evaluation:

Type: Qualitative and quantitative evaluation (nonexperimental)

Statistical techniques: univariate descriptives, significance level = .10

Population evaluated: At this first stage, 1,953 students had entered the research sample. Of these, 1,064 were assigned at random to the program group; 889 were assigned to the control group and could not participate in the academies (but could participate in other local programs).

Outcome:

None reported

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Other Information:

All sites implemented and sustained the demanding structural elements of the academy approach. 84 percent of the students selected to participate enrolled in the programs. Of those, 73 percent were still enrolled two years later. The academies have attracted large numbers of applicants with a high degree of demographic and educational diversity. Other results reported.

Study 2:

Kemple, J. (1997). *Career Academies: Communities of support for students and teachers: Further findings from a 10-site evaluation*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Study Objectives and Measurements:

Objective:

Assess the extent to which academies function as 'communities of support' for teachers and students

Measurement instrument:

Questionnaires completed by students and teachers during their first or second year in the study

Evaluation:

Type: Experimental: random assignment to control and treatment groups

Statistical techniques: significance testing, significance level = .10, two-tailed test

Population evaluated: 1,406 students and 468 teachers

Impacts:

Academy students were more likely than their non-academy counterparts to report that teachers give them personalized attention and have high expectations of them; to report that their classmates are highly engaged in school and work with them on school projects and assignments; to report that they were intrinsically motivated to attend school; and to perceive a strong connection between what they learned in school and their longer-term education and career interests.

Other Information:

None

Study 3:

Kemple, J., Poglinco, S., & Snipes, J. (1999). *Career Academies: Building career awareness and work-based learning activities through employer partnerships*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Study Objectives and Measurements:

Objective:

Examine the employer partnerships and how they evolved

Assess the extent to which CA increased student participation in various career awareness and work-based learning activities

Measurement instrument:

Field research

Survey administered to about 1,600 academy and non-academy students at the end of 12th grade

Evaluation:

Type: Experimental (random assignment); qualitative

Statistical techniques: regression adjusted to control for background characteristics of sample members. Significance level = .10

Population evaluated: 1,600 academy and nonacademy students at the end of 12th grade

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Impacts:

Students in the academy group were more likely to work, and more likely to work in jobs that were connected to school and that incorporated “high” levels of work-based learning content. More likely to be exposed to career-related themes or activities in school, and participate in job-shadowing or field trips; more likely to have high-quality work-based learning experiences during high school.

Academy students participated more frequently and intensively than nonacademy students in career awareness and work-based learning activities. Students in academies with highly structured employer partnerships or support from nonteaching employer coordinators reported greater participation in CA and work-based learning activities than those in academies with less structure.

Other Information:

None

Study 4:

Kemple, J. & Snipes, J. (2000). *Career Academies: Impacts on students’ engagement and performance in high school*. New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Study Objectives and Measurements:

Objective:

To what extent does the Career Academy approach alter the high school environment in ways that better support students? Change educational, employment, and youth development outcomes for students at greater or lesser risk of school failure?
How do the manner and context in which Career Academy programs are implemented influence their effects on student outcomes?

Measurement instrument:

School records (daily attendance rates, credits earned, course-taking patterns)

Student surveys (asking about school experiences, employment and work-related experiences, extracurricular activities, preparation for college and postsecondary jobs, and plans for the future)

Standardized math and reading tests.

Qualitative field research.

Evaluation:

Type: Experimental; random assignment of youths who applied for the program into a program group and a control group who did not receive CA services.

Statistical techniques: difference-in-means, significance testing, significance level = .10

Population evaluated: 1,764 students; 959 in the program group, 805 in the control group

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Impacts:

Substantially improved outcomes, especially among students at high risk of dropping out: reduced dropout rates, improved attendance, increased academic course-taking, and increased likelihood of earning enough credits to graduate on time. Without access to academies, a high percentage of nonacademy students in the high-risk subgroup became even more disengaged from school.

Among students least likely to drop out of high school, the CA site increased the likelihood of graduating on time and increased the number of vocational course-taking by these students without reducing their likelihood of completing a basic core academic curriculum.

Did **not** improve standardized math and reading achievement test scores.

Both academy and nonacademy students who reported that they received strong support from teachers and peers in 9th or 10th grade were less likely to drop out of high school, exhibit chronic absenteeism, or engage in risk-taking behaviors than students who reported less interpersonal support.

Other Information:

High-risk students entered the study with background characteristics indicating that they were disengaged from school. More than half had failed courses during the 9th grade, about one-third were chronically absent, most had low grade-point averages, and over 40 percent had been held back in a previous grade.

Students had varying degrees of exposure to CA programs.

The evaluation does not yet include information about the rates at which these students actually graduated from high school and whether the dropouts eventually returned to pursue a degree.

Approximately 88 percent of the students selected for admission to a Career Academy actually enrolled in the programs; 58 percent of those selected remained in an academy throughout high school.
