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**https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=491**

**Purpose:** Career Academies combine several key school improvement strategies, including creation of small learning communities, use of school-to-work curriculum to better align high school learning with anticipated professional pursuits, and creation of partnerships with local employers and social institutions to strengthen the relationships between schools and communities. In previous evaluations of Career Academies, researchers found a positive effect on labor market outcomes for males but no significant impact on academic outcomes in high school or at the postsecondary level. The National Academy Foundation responded to these findings by designing an academically enhanced Career Academy model. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the effect of the enhanced academies on academic outcomes during high school.

**Project Activities:** The research team is conducting a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the enhanced Career Academies. Students who apply to the Career Academies program will be included in a lottery to select those students who will be offered admission in the program. Students who apply to Career Academies, but are not selected through the lottery will constitute the control group. The research team will evaluate the effect of Career Academies on a variety of student outcomes including attendance, on-time promotion, course completion, student achievement, on-time graduation, and grade point average.

**Products:** The major products of this project will be published reports on the efficacy of the academically enhanced Career Academies program.

**STRUCTURED ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The National Academy Foundation, a major organization of Career Academies, has designed an academically enhanced Career Academy model. This project examines the enhanced Career Academies and their impact on academic outcomes during high school.

**Setting:** The study is being conducted in 20 National Academy Foundation academies clustered in 8-12 districts across the United States. The districts are located primarily in urban areas where employer partnerships are possible.

**Population:** The study sample includes approximately 2,000 high school students who are entering the ninth or 10th grade and are applicants to academies. The National Academy Foundation academies focus their outreach on low-income students of color.

**Intervention:** The National Academy Foundation's academically enhanced Career Academy model is designed to include: an academic curriculum that is relevant to real-world contexts and builds upon student and community assets, clear and rigorous standards that are designed to prepare students for postsecondary education and careers, work-based and project-based learning supported by multiple assessments (including standardized and performance-based measures), and links between the Academy curriculum and core academic subject areas.

**Research Design and Methods:** The research team is conducting a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the enhanced Career Academies. Students who apply to the Career Academies program will be included in a lottery to select those students who will be offered admission in the program. Students who apply to Career Academies, but are not selected through the lottery will constitute the control group.

**Control Condition:** Applicants randomly assigned to a control group are not admitted to the academy and experience the regular high school curriculum, either at the same or another high school.

**Key Measures:** The research team is using student records to measure attendance, on-time promotion, course completion, student achievement, on-time graduation, and grade point average.

**Data Analytic Strategy:** The research team is estimating impacts for the full sample and key subgroups as the difference of mean outcomes for the program and control groups using a fixed effects regression model to adjust for individual student baseline covariates and individual site indicators.

**PUBLICATIONS**

**Nongovernment report, issue brief, or practice guide**

Visher, M.G., Altuna, J.N., and Safran, S. (2013). [*Making It Happen: How Career Academies Can Build College and Career Exploration Programs*](https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED540691). New York: MDRC.

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