

Career Academies: Preparing Students For Post-Secondary Education and Careers

The Problem: Too many high school students leave school unprepared for post-secondary education or the workforce, contributing to the “skills gap” reported by America’s businesses.

- 28 percent of U.S. high school students fail to graduate on time.¹
- 74 percent of 12th grade students nationwide are not proficient in math and 62 percent are not proficient in reading.²
- Approximately 36 percent of 2007-08 first-year undergraduate students reported having taken a remedial course.³
- Employers have reported deficiencies in the math, reading comprehension and science skills of new workforce entrants with only a high school diploma.⁴
- Half of all new jobs nationwide created between 2008 and 2018 will require some type of formal education beyond high school.⁵
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) jobs – which often require post-secondary education – are expected to have the third-fastest rate of growth nationwide of all occupation groups between 2008 and 2018.⁶



The Career Academies Model: Career Academies integrate career technical training with a rigorous academic curriculum, equipping students with important skills highly valued by employers.

- Also called “smaller learning communities,” an academy:
 - Is comprised of a group of students who take classes together for at least two years and are taught by the same group of teachers;
 - Provides a college preparatory curriculum based on a career theme that helps students see relationships and connections between academic subjects and their application in the real world; and
 - Develops partnerships with employers, the community, and colleges.
- Approximately 4,800 high schools nationwide report having at least one Career Academy, serving an estimated 1 million students, many of whom are at-risk students in large urban areas.
- By working in teams and through real work experience, students begin to understand the importance of professionalism, reliability, teamwork, and clear oral communications skills.⁷

Proven and Promising Outcomes:

- A high-quality randomized control study showed that:
 - High-risk Career Academies students were 50 percent more likely to complete a core academic curriculum than similar students left out.⁸ Completing a core curriculum may better prepare students for college or the workforce.

- Academies produced a significant, sustained increase in former participants' earnings and overall months and hours of employment, without any decrease in educational outcomes, especially among young men and youth who had been in the high-risk subgroup. Young people who went through Career Academies worked 12 percent more hours per week and earned 11 percent more than those who did not participate.⁹
- Career Academies students were twice as likely to be working in the computer, engineering or media technology sector eight years after graduation as students left out, thus helping to increase the supply of needed STEM workers.¹⁰
- A 2011 review of data shows that students attending California Partnership Academies were more likely than other California students to:
 - Complete the entrance requirements needed for admissions eligibility to California's public universities; and
 - Graduate from high school.¹¹

Policy Opportunities: With only 5 percent of U.S. public high school students attending a Career Academy, the public and policy-makers must be made aware of their value as a key workforce development strategy.

- Currently, there is no federal funding stream solely dedicated to Career Academies-type models.
 - Congress recently eliminated all funding for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's (ESEA) Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) grant program, through which Career Academies received funding.
 - Career Academies have also received federal funding through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. Overall funding for Perkins was approximately \$1.1 billion in FY 2011, a reduction of approximately \$140 million from FY 2010. Authorization for the Perkins Act will expire on September 30, 2012.
 - Youth Opportunity Grants, authorized under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), could potentially support Career Academies, but Congress has not funded them since 2003.
- The Senate's draft ESEA reauthorization legislation establishes new Improving Secondary Schools Grants. These would be competitive grants to partnerships between high-need school districts and entities such as non-profit organizations or higher education institutions. to support reform of failing high schools and their "feeder" middle schools. Grants must be used to implement comprehensive reforms in secondary schools, which may include Career Academies.

1 Editorial Projects in Education. (2011). *Diplomas Count 2011. Beyond high school, before baccalaureate: Meaningful alternatives to a four-year degree*. Bethesda, MD: Education Week. Retrieved November 29, 2011 from http://www.edweek.org/media/diplomascount2011_pressrelease.pdf

2 National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *Grade 12 reading and mathematics. 2009 national and pilot state results*. Retrieved November 29, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011455>

3 Indicator 22. Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., Tahan, K. (2011). *The Condition of Education 2011*. (NCES 2011-033). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved November 28, 2011 from http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/indicators/indicator_rmc.asp

4 About half of surveyed employers report deficiencies in math and science skills and almost 40 percent reported deficiencies in reading comprehension. Casner-Lotto, J. & Benner, M.W. (2006). *Are they really ready to work? Employers' perspectives on the basic knowledge and applied skills of new entrants to the 21st century U.S. workforce*. Retrieved December 12, 2011 from http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/FINAL_REPORT_PDF09-29-06.pdf

5 Lacey, T.A. & Wright, B. (2009). Employment outlook: 2008-2018. Occupational employment projections to 2018. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Monthly Labor Review*, p. 82-125.

Retrieved on October 22, 2010 from <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2009/11/art5full.pdf>. Using a different methodology, the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce estimated that education requirements will be even higher. They estimate that by 2018 about two-thirds (63 percent) of all employment will require some college education or better.

They believe that the projections by the Bureau of Labor Statistics use a methodology that underestimates the demand for postsecondary education. Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N. & Strohl, J. (June 2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved October 22, 2010 from <http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/>

6 Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N. & Strohl, J. (June 2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved October 22, 2010 from <http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/>

7 Brand, B. (November 2009). *High school career academies: A 40-year proven model for improving college and career readiness*. Commissioned by The National Career Academy Coalition. Retrieved November 29, 2011 from <http://www.aypt.org/documents/092409CareerAcademiesPolicyPaper.pdf>

8 Kemple, J. J., & Willner, C.J. (July 2008). *Technical resources for "Career Academies: Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment, and transitions to adulthood."* MDRC. Retrieved November 29, 2011 from <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/482/techresources.pdf>

9 Kemple, J.J., & Willner, C.J. (2008). *Career Academies: Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment, and transitions to adulthood*. New York: MDRC.

10 Kemple, J. J., & Willner, C.J. (July 2008). *Technical resources for "Career Academies: Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment, and transitions to adulthood."* MDRC. Retrieved November 20, 2011 from <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/482/techresources.pdf>

11 Drayton, C. Hamilton, C., & Stern, D. (October 2011). *Profile of the California Partnership Academies 2009-2010*. Career Academy Support Network, University of California at Berkeley & the California Department of Education. Retrieved November 29, 2011 from http://casn.berkeley.edu/downloads/CPA_Report_2009-10.pdf