

Higher Achievement: Launching Lifelong Success in the Middle School Years

A gold-standard external study demonstrates that Higher Achievement has a statistically significant impact on educational outcomes for disadvantaged middle school children. Only 2% of nonprofits in the country have undergone this type of rigorous research, and even fewer show impact. Higher Achievement was proven to significantly improve math and reading test scores, family engagement in education, and top high school placement.

About the Study

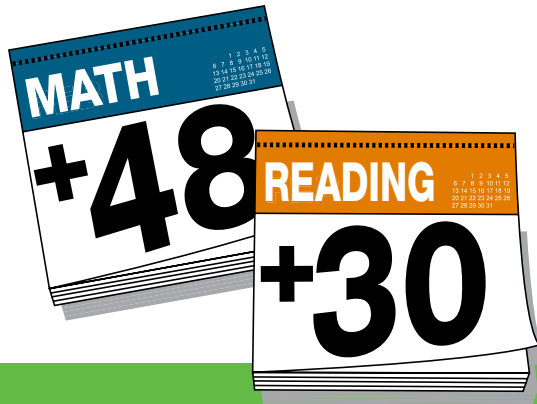
Since 2006, Higher Achievement has been the subject of a landmark, gold-standard impact study. This randomized-control trial (RCT) study is the most difficult and powerful form of social science research.

The researchers – first Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) and now the University of Texas at Austin – compared Higher Achievement scholars with their identical counterparts: students just like them who interviewed for Higher Achievement and met the admissions criteria, but who were not admitted into the program in a randomized lottery.

Key Findings

Higher Achievement's academic impact is larger than other expanded learning programs in the United States.

- Higher Achievement facilitates measurable, significant academic gains in math and improvements in reading. Gains were equivalent to an extra 48 days of learning in math and an extra 30 days of learning in reading.



- Further, math gains – a proven indicator of high school graduation – persist after students leave the program.
- Higher Achievement boosted the odds that youth would apply to, be admitted to, and attend a private high school. Importantly, the program successfully steered youth away from weaker public and charter schools.
- Higher Achievement increases certain types of family engagement in education, particularly in high school placement.



Overall, Higher Achievement's year-round, multi-year approach is proven highly effective in helping students achieve and sustain academic improvements, and exhibit behaviors and make decisions to build a path to college.

What Can We All Learn?

- Deep intervention in the middle school years can make a difference in students' long-term academic success.
- These results take time. Test score improvements emerge only after two years – funders and partners must be patient.

- Goal-oriented, individualized support produces meaningful family engagement.
- When schools partner with community-based organizations for expanded learning, results are sustained.

Expanded learning organizations like Higher Achievement are a nimble, cost-effective opportunity to effect school-wide improvement.

How Will We Work Differently?

Higher Achievement is extracting all lessons from this rigorous study and applying them to the ongoing operations in its four cities: Washington, DC, Baltimore, Richmond, and Pittsburgh. The organization has improved practices in:

- Retention; annual rates have increased from 68% to 79%
- Non-cognitive skills development
- Writing and reading comprehension skills development for persistent success.

Higher Achievement is also helping other expanded learning organizations and school partners by sharing best practices in youth development, data driven practice, family engagement, top high school placement, and more.

The study's results come at an important time for Higher Achievement as the organization implements a new strategic plan for deep impact and ambitious growth. Higher Achievement will partner closely with schools and districts to provide its proven model to more students who need it. Adapting the organization's proven model into a school turn-around strategy, Higher Achievement will concentrate our services within a single school and produce a tipping point impact across the entire school and broader community. Higher Achievement asserts that broader adoption of this model will result in lasting, effective education improvement.

About Higher Achievement

Higher Achievement transforms middle school into a springboard to college. As an expanded learning partner for schools and families, the organization's rigorous year-round program helps middle school 'scholars' fulfill their potential and ultimately improves whole schools and cities. On average, 96% of alumni graduate from high school and 76% graduate from college – **four times the rate of their peers**. For more information, please visit: www.higherachievement.org.

About the Study Partners & Funders

The randomized-control trial study adds to an extensive body of research conducted by P/PV on expanded learning programs over several decades. When P/PV ceased operations in July 2012, this report was still in development. MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization, agreed to partner with the researchers and publish the report. The findings and conclusions are solely those of the authors.

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