

## Columbia College Chicago

### Convergence Academies Initiative

#### DID THE CONVERGENCE ACADEMIES MODEL IMPACT AVERAGE STUDENT READING AND MATH ACHIEVEMENT?

### Project Overview

#### **THE PROBLEM: What Challenge Did the Program Try to Address?**

The Center for Community Arts Partnerships (CCAP) at Columbia College Chicago<sup>1</sup> collaborated with Chicago Public Schools to implement a whole-school reform designed to turn around persistently low-performing schools with a model that embedded digital media and technology into curriculum.

#### **THE PROJECT: What Strategies Did the Program Employ?**

CCAP at Columbia College Chicago and Chicago Public Schools partnered to develop and implement the Convergence Academies initiative in two high needs public schools (PK-8 and 9-12), using the i3 development grant awarded (2012-2015) to CCAP.<sup>2</sup> The Convergence Academies model is designed to improve reading and math achievement at both the elementary and high school grade levels, as well as the 9<sup>th</sup> grade On Track graduation rate, and 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies and college and career readiness skills through the increased knowledge and skill with technology and media. The impact study measured student achievement in reading and mathematics for all students in 3<sup>rd</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grades. The study was designed as a short-interrupted time series (SITS) with no comparison group at the high school level, and a pre-post design for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade; the evaluation did not employ a comparison group. The model emphasizes inquiry-based learning and is developmentally scaffolded for integrating digital media learning into the curriculum design and lesson planning. Details of the approach are listed below:

<sup>1</sup> Columbia College Chicago received an i3 development grant supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program through Grant Number U411C120065.

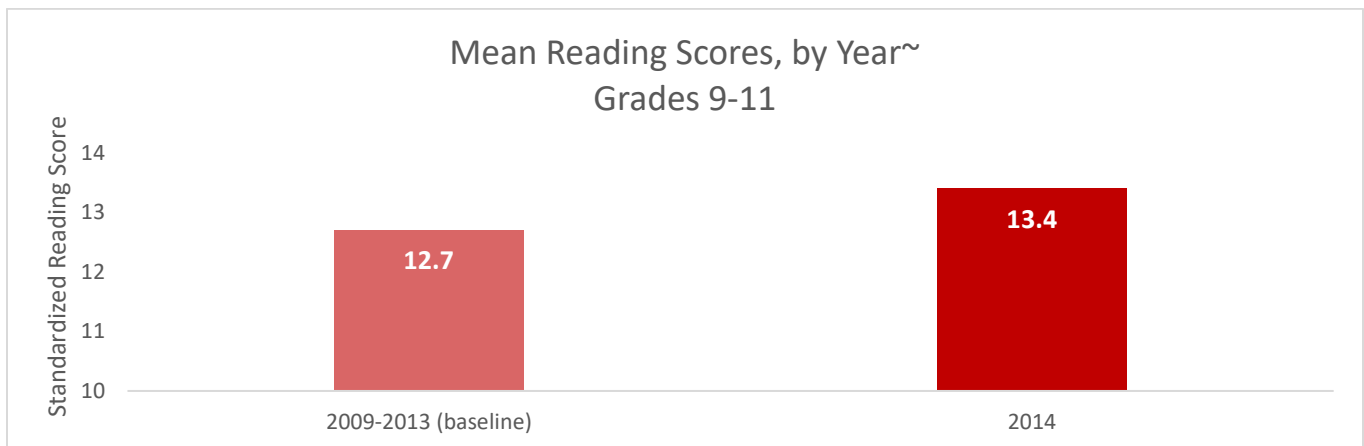
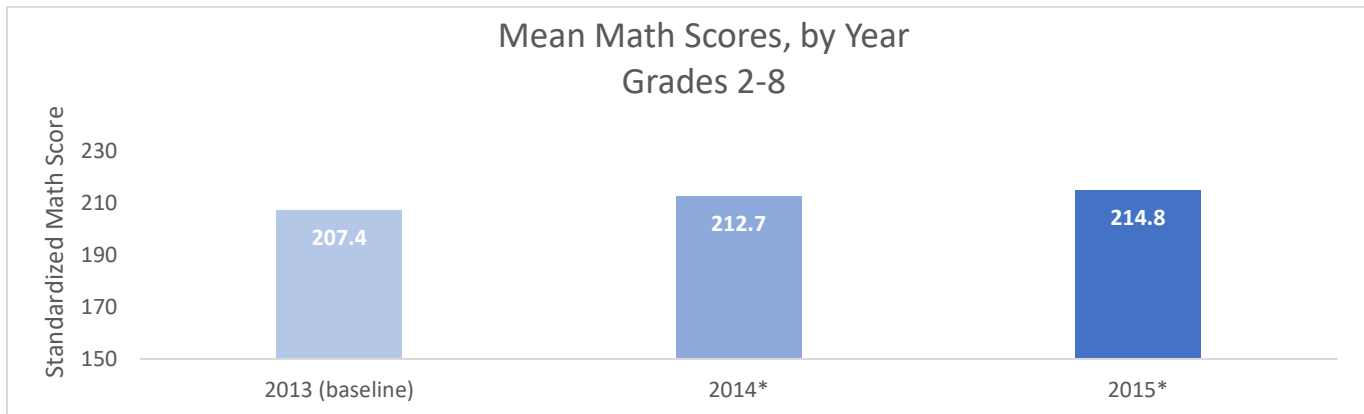
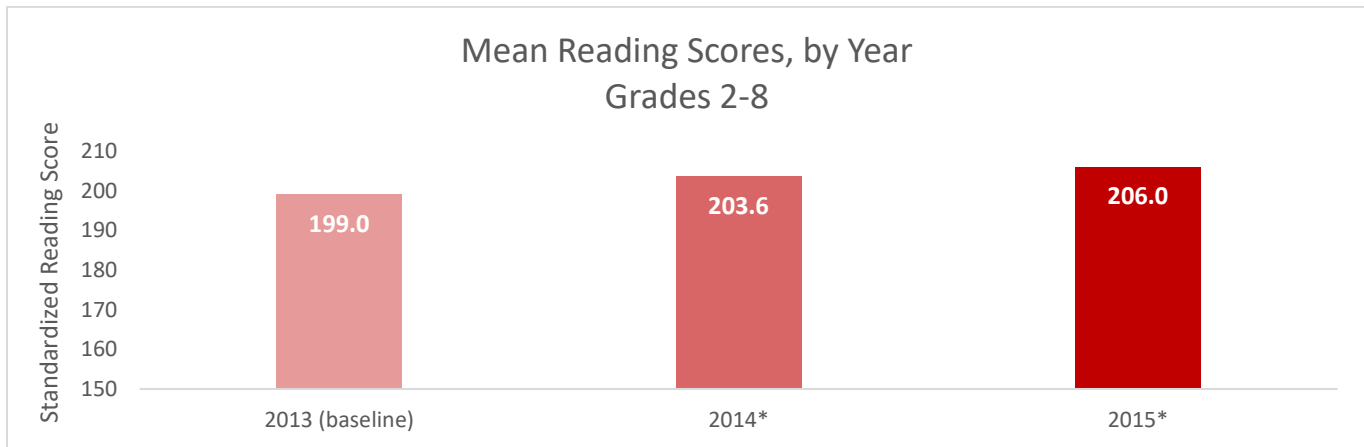
<sup>2</sup> Development grants provide funding to support the development or testing of novel or substantially more effective practices that address widely shared education challenges. All i3 grantees are required to conduct rigorous evaluations of their projects. The quality of evidence required to demonstrate a project's effectiveness depends on a project's level of scale or grant type.

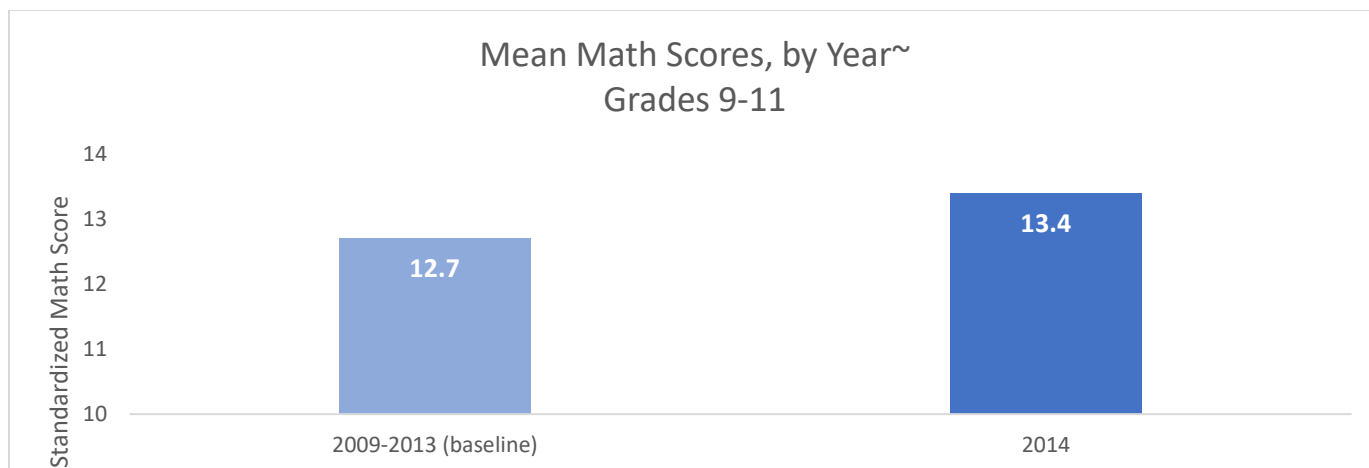
## THE CONVERGENCE ACADEMIES MODEL

- **Coaching and Professional Development (PD).** PD for teachers was centered on engaging participatory learning. Digital media and integration specialists supported teachers through coaching.
- **Digital “Atelier” Spaces.** These maker spaces were designed for hands-on learning for small groups of students.
- **Project-based learning.** Coaches and teachers worked together to design project-based units infused with digital media using an instructional framework involving six pillars: collaboration, authentic participation, choice of expression, critical response, and iterative learning.

## Summary of Results

### DOES THE CONVERGENCE ACADEMIES MODEL IMPACT STUDENT READING AND MATH ACHIEVEMENT?





\*Scores are statistically higher than baseline year scores. Scores are out of a possible 350.

~Scores are not statistically significant. Scores are an average of the EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT tests, a series of linked tests administered by the Educational Planning and Assessment System. Scores are out of 31.

The impact study investigated the effect of the Convergence Academies model on reading and math achievement at the elementary and high school levels, the high school's average On Track Rate for 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the average graduation rate, and the average college enrollment rate. The Measure of Academic Progress reading and math tests were used to measure impact.<sup>3</sup>

- **GRADES 2-8 MATH AND READING ACHIEVEMENT.** Both reading and math cross-grade average scores showed a statistically significant increase compared to the baseline score measured the prior spring for 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- **GRADES 9-11 MATH AND READING ACHIEVEMENT.** No statistically significant effects on reading and math scores in Years 1 or 2 of the study were found. The EPAS<sup>4</sup> tests were used to measure achievement.
- **FRESHMAN ON-TRACK.** A student is considered on-track if they have earned at least five credits and failed no more than one semester of a core subject at the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade. There were no statistically significant impacts to the Freshman On-Track rate during the two years of the intervention.
- **GRADUATION RATE.** There was no statistically significant impact on graduation rate during the intervention.
- **COLLEGE ENROLLMENT.** There was no statistically significant impact on college enrollment after Year 1 of the intervention. Year 2 data was not available.

Please see Appendices B and C for information about the evaluation's design and the quality of the evidence, respectively.

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<sup>4</sup> The ACT's Educational and Planning Assessment System

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Interviews, focus groups, and surveys were conducted with students, teachers, and administrators at both Morrill Elementary and Tilden High School. The implementation study found that students, teachers, and administrators alike were engaged in and enthusiastic about the learning opportunities and maker spaces.

- **STUDENT CONFIDENCE.** The implementation study noted that the intervention increased opportunity for engaged learning based on students' interest. Student confidence grew as they shared work with peers and gave and received feedback.
- **PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING PROJECTS.** Teachers developed challenging projects that integrated digital media and fostered student pride and self-efficacy. Key features of the projects included real world challenges, student choice and voice, and opportunities for feedback and reflection. Teachers across subject areas collaborated on these projects so that they spanned content work.
- **INSTRUCTIONAL MAPPING.** Teachers at Morrill were able to map curriculum across grade levels, in turn increasing the school's capacity for coordinated, intentional instruction schoolwide.
- **THE ATELIER SPACE.** The Digital Atelier space was used by students and teachers alike and is an example of a school infrastructure that provides the whole school access to digital media tools. Teachers designed lessons to incorporate the technologies available in the Atelier space; many professional learning opportunities were also hosted in this space.

## For More Information

### Evaluation Reports

[Evaluation Report](#) (Rockman et al, July 2016)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The information and data for this result summary was collected from the most recent report as of 02/10/2020: Rockman et. al, (2016). *Evaluation of the Convergence Academies Initiative: Final Report*. Retrieved from [http://rockman.com/docs/downloads/Convergence\\_Eval\\_Final\\_Rockman\\_sm.pdf](http://rockman.com/docs/downloads/Convergence_Eval_Final_Rockman_sm.pdf)

## Appendix A: Students Served by the Project<sup>6</sup>

GRADE(S)													
PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

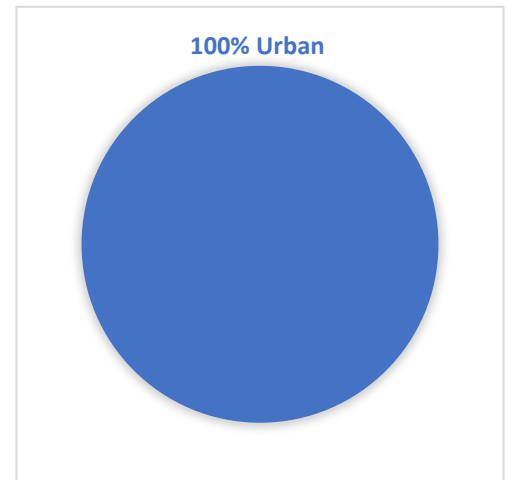
### GENDER

Not Reported

### RACE/ETHNICITY

Not Reported

### COMMUNITY



### HIGH-NEED STUDENTS<sup>i</sup>

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	English Learner	Students with Disabilities
Not Reported	Not Reported	Not Reported

<sup>6</sup>These data reflect the entire student population served by the intervention, not just the evaluation sample used in the impact study.

## Appendix B: Impact Evaluation Methodology<sup>7</sup>

### RESEARCH DESIGN:

<b>Design:</b>	Short-Interrupted Time Series, Pre-Post Design
<b>Approach:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One PK-8 school and one high school in Chicago Public Schools were selected to receive the intervention. There was no comparison group for either of the schools. The model was implemented as a whole-school reform. Second through 8<sup>th</sup> grade were assessed with the NWEA MAP test data for reading and math. Ninth through 11<sup>th</sup> grade were assessed with the EPAS test data for math and reading. Ninth graders were assessed for the On Track Rate using course completion and performance. Twelfth graders were assessed by graduation and college enrollment rates.</li></ul>
<b>Study Length:</b>	Two years

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

<b>Study Setting:</b>	Two urban schools in Chicago, IL
<b>Final Sample Sizes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Intervention Group</i>: Not reported</li><li><i>Comparison Group</i>: N/A</li></ul>
<b>Data Sources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Student assessments</li><li>Student record data</li></ul>
<b>Key Measures:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>NWEA MAP (2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade)</li><li>ACT EPAS (9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade)</li><li>Attendance (Percentage of enrolled days attended)</li><li>Course Completion Rates</li><li>Course performance (Passing grades 9<sup>th</sup> grade subjects)</li><li>College Enrollment Rates</li></ul>

<sup>7</sup> These data reflect only the evaluation sample in the impact study, not the entire population served.

## Appendix C: Quality of the Evidence

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### WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW<sup>8</sup>

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 02/10/2020	N/A

### EVIDENCE FOR ESSA REVIEW<sup>9</sup>

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 02/10/2020	N/A

### NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS REVIEW<sup>10</sup>

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 02/10/2020	N/A

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<sup>8</sup> <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://intensiveintervention.org/>



# Investing in Innovation (i3) Grantee Results Summary

Development, 2012-2015

The [\*Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\)\*](#), established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program at the U.S. Department of Education within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). i3 grants help schools and local education agencies work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community to develop and expand innovative practices that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and/or increase college enrollment and completion rates for high-need students.

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<sup>i</sup> “High-need student” refers to a student at risk of academic failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, attend high-minority schools, are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, in foster care, have been incarcerated, have disabilities, or who are English learners. For more information see: [\*Applications for New Awards; Investing in Innovation Fund-Development Grants, 81 FR 24070 \(April 25, 2016\)\*](#).