



**Inspire. Build. Transform.**

## Executive Summary

This study explored the long-term effects of the Horizons Student Enrichment Program (Horizons) on school outcomes. Horizons is a multi-year, intensive summer learning program that also includes year-round supports. Horizons serves nearly 6,000 low-income youth attending 59 affiliate programs across 19 states. The study examined 15 affiliates partnering in seven states. Unlike most summer learning impact studies that study short-term effects, this study explored long-term, sustained effects by comparing youth who participated in Horizons for at least four summers to similar non-participants who attended the same schools.

The Horizons program offers a unique opportunity to measure long-term effects across many grades. Horizons enrolls children in pre-K or kindergarten and continues to invite them back each summer through at least grade 8. Horizons provides a combination of high quality academic and enrichment programming, and most youth (88 percent) return from one summer to the next. This intensive, multi-year programming is hypothesized to improve long-term academic performance and behaviors.

The study employed a quasi-experimental design to compare the outcomes of long-term Horizons participants with similar non-participants. Within each program site, propensity score matching techniques were used to match long-term Horizons students to comparison students who attended the same feeder schools. The study examined outcomes for multiple cohorts of youth. Specifically, an elementary analysis examined effects on test scores, attendance, steady grade progression and disciplinary incidents for fourth- and fifth graders. A middle school analysis examined the same outcomes for youth in grades 6 through 8. The high school transition analysis explored effects on GPA, credits earned, attendance, steady grade progression and disciplinary referrals for students in grades 9 or 10. The study relied on administrative records provided by the school districts and Horizons participation data. Annual school records data were collected from school years 2010–11 through 2015–16, including school attended, demographic characteristics and academic outcomes.



## Inspire. Build. Transform.

Horizons students who participated in programming for at least four summers demonstrated stronger 2015-16 academic outcomes than comparison students. A summary of the results demonstrated that:

- Attendance rates were higher and chronic absenteeism was less prevalent among long-term Horizons participants versus comparison students. Horizons students had the equivalent of two extra days of schooling in the elementary and middle school analyses and 6.5 additional days in the high school transition analysis.
- Long-term Horizons students had stronger academic achievement outcomes, including, higher standardized assessments in math and science at the end of elementary school and higher GPAs and the equivalent of one full-year course credit by the end of grade 9.
- Long-term Horizons students were less likely to repeat a grade or receive a disciplinary referral during middle and high school.

These promising results are consistent with effects found with other high quality, intensive, multi-year interventions. Future, rigorous prospective analyses examining academic and social outcomes over several more years are warranted to learn more about how the program can influence the life trajectory of youth.