

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Junior Achievement (JA) has undertaken a bold and ambitious initiative to help high school students develop the leadership and entrepreneurial skill needed for success in the global economy. Working in partnership with the Orange County Public Schools (OCPS), JA has created Academy for Entrepreneurship and Business (*JA Academy*), a magnet school at Oak Ridge High School serving approximately 375 students in Grades 9 through 11. Between 2013 and 2015, RMC Research conducted annual evaluations of the *JA Academy* and its effect on participating students across grade levels. As an extension to the 2014 evaluation, the current project conducted a secondary analysis of student data from OCPS to provide evidence of program effect on students' behavioral and content knowledge measures. The evaluation answered the following two questions:

- 1. What is the impact of participating in the *JA Academy* on student performance as measured by Florida Standards Assessments (FSA), Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude test (PSAT) scores, benchmark assessment scores, attendance, behavior, grades received, and course failure?¹**
- 2. To what extent are impacts different by student demographic characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status)?**

This evaluation included a treatment group of 9th-to 11th-grade students who participated in *JA Academy*. Two comparison groups of business-as-usual students were formed for each grade level: one consisted of students who were randomly selected from the same high school and the other included randomly selected students from other high schools in the same school district. These two comparison groups helped to control for the influence of school characteristics. In total, 304 JA students and 817 comparison students were included in the study.

FINDINGS

- **In the 2014-2015 school year, the *JA Academy* students outperformed the non-participating students in Oakridge High School and other high schools in OCPS in both behavioral measures and academic outcomes.**
- ***JA Academy* had a significant influence on students' academic performance and school behavior.**
- **Students' gender and special education status moderated the program impact on their academic performance.**
- **JA students' academic growth varied by subject area and year of participation.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Consider conducting a multi-faceted evaluation of program impact on all key constituents.**
- **Consider examining the implementation of *JA Academy* in different subject areas and program years.**
- **Consider recruiting students who have different demographic characteristics and different performance levels.**

¹ In 2014-2015, the only Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) that was administered was FCAT Science assessment in Grades 5 and 8. Therefore, the current report does not include FCAT as a student outcome measure for 2014-2015.