

# Accelerating Academic Achievement through Standards-Aligned Expanded Learning

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## **Competitive Priority 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity**

*Maintaining Student Outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs*

	<b>Current Year - 2014</b> (full organization budget)	<b>At Year 5 of i3 grant -2019</b> (full organization budget)
Total Budget	\$6.5 million	\$9 million
Number of students with intensive service	1,000	1,920
<i>Cost/students directly served</i>	\$6,500	\$4,688

With Validation support, Higher Achievement (HA) will almost double the number of students served directly. It will reduce the cost per student (entire operating costs divided by student roster) in its model by 28% (from \$6,500 to \$4,688), while ensuring at least 60% of students achieving Advanced/Proficient or increasing test scores by 2020. Cost reducing measures include deploying a web-based training and curriculum platform (saving \$100,000 annually) and leveraging AmeriCorps members to support increased sites at lower cost. HA's full project budget includes \$4.8 million in one-time costs (IT, curriculum, training, videos) over the five-year period (40% of the full grant), which will fuel this cost-effective plan.

To ensure sustainability of operations after the duration of the grant, HA will maximize cost efficiencies while securing sustaining revenue streams. Ongoing costs equal 60% of the grant (approximately \$7.14 million) to seed expansion to nine new sites across at least eight LEAs in four states and to support centralized services, dissemination, and training. To ensure ongoing operations of sites (\$2.1 million in annual expenses), HA will deploy two new revenue streams: school payments (\$40,000 per site) and corporate sponsorships (\$75,000 per site), totaling \$2.7 million (\$115,000 per Center x 24 Centers), which more than covers the gap. This revenue model is already piloted effectively. To support the national office (\$1.4 million annually), \$760,000

will come from the existing “10% pay-in” structure from affiliates to national. The remaining \$640,000 annually will be provided by philanthropy; the national office raised \$662,000 in 2014.

According to the MDRC RCT published in 2013, HA’s results are equivalent to 50% of the gains made by KIPP’s charter schools; HA’s intensive model is only 25% of KIPP’s cost per student. This cost efficiency makes national scale more feasible. Further, Censeo Consulting will analyze project implementation costs and coach HA to monitor and improve cost efficiency.

HA will disseminate these tools to impact up to 30x more students. When considering this strategy, the cost per student served *and impacted* drops dramatically to \$410/student.

Dissemination Strategy Costs	Current Year – 2014	At Year 5 of i3 grant -2019
Number of students impacted through dissemination strategy	665	20,000
<i>Cost/students served and impacted</i>	\$3903/student	\$410/student

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 – Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practices**

The impact of the Validation project will far exceed the 1,920 students directly served in HA’s intensive program. HA will share its standards-aligned curriculum and robust training platform for broad adoption to benefit at least 20,000<sup>1</sup> students. There is high demand, with more than 30 practitioners and LEAs requesting lesson plans and trainings in four years.

HA will refine lessons, training materials, and instructional practices as detailed in the grant narrative to meet the needs of schools, nonprofits, and diverse learners. These tools and practices will be monitored by the MDRC i3 evaluation plan, including implementation assessments that identify the most practices most crucial to success. To ensure fidelity, requests for curriculum will be met only if paired with training support from HA (online or in-person) and use of a How-To Guide to adapt to diverse learners (especially special needs and English Language Learners)

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<sup>1</sup> With existing partnerships with BELL (11,000 students) and Citizen Schools (5,000 students), and interested partner LEAs, the number could easily exceed 50,000.

and environments (including rural areas). Training will be bolstered by conference presentations such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the American Association of School Administrators, National Summer Learning Association, and National Afterschool Association, and free webinars on standards-aligned topics.

Critical to replication, the curriculum teaches math and ELA anchor standards for grades 5-8. Training topics will include: 1) A Primer on CCSS for Volunteer Tutors 2) Metacognition, 3) Growth vs. Fixed Mindset, 4) Using Costa's House to Encourage Critical Thinking Skills, 5) Persuasive Speaking and Writing—Tips and Tools to Support Middle School Students.

### **Competitive Preference Priority 3 – Supporting Novice i3 Applicants**

Higher Achievement has never received an i3 grant.

#### **Eligibility**

Higher Achievement (HA) is a 501c3 organization, partnering with seven LEAs (District of Columbia Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, Richmond Public Schools, Alexandria City Public Schools, Pittsburgh Public Schools, Center City Public Charter School – DC, and Achievement Prep Public Charter School – DC), that successfully meets all eligibility requirements to be considered for a Validation investment. By late 2014, HA anticipates operating its 15<sup>th</sup> site in partnership with its 8<sup>th</sup> LEA: Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools in DC. The proposed project will increase academic performance (measured by math and standardized test scores and classroom grades) for high-need 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school students, as defined in the NIA. HA has a proven record of significantly improving student achievement through its expanded learning model delivered in close partnership with schools and LEAs. HA will raise the private sector match required from foundations such as the Wallace Foundation and Ford Foundation, corporate partners including Censeo Consulting and Vornado, and with leadership from its Board of Directors. School partners are Title I schools in HA's four affiliate communities, with high rates of economic need and low academic performance. Selection criteria are detailed in Appendix

J. HA’s model has been proven effective in a randomized control trial study published by MDRC and rated Highly Effective Without Reservations by the What Works Clearinghouse.

## **A. Significance**

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### **A.1 National Need and Priorities to be Met:**

*Executive Summary: States and schools across the country are grappling with the transition to new academic standards. Without support, low-income urban districts will likely face a steeper challenge and plummeting test scores. HA proposes a cost-effective way to fill this need: delivering rigorous standards-aligned curriculum by volunteer tutors afterschool and summer teaching staff, equivalent to 100 extra days of school instruction.*

The project proposed is a partnership between Higher Achievement (HA), seven LEAs (District of Columbia Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, Richmond Public Schools, Alexandria City Public Schools, Pittsburgh Public Schools, Center City Public Charter School – DC, and Achievement Prep Public Charter School – DC), and MDRC to refine, expand, and rigorously evaluate HA’s standards-aligned expanded learning time model in 24 Title I schools. By late 2014, HA anticipates operating its fifteenth site in partnership with its eighth LEA: Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools in DC. HA has been rigorously evaluated and shown to improve academic outcomes for middle school students.<sup>2</sup> Through growth and dissemination of best practices to influence instructional practices within and outside the traditional classroom, this project is expected to impact almost 2,000 students directly and 20,000 students indirectly. Close collaboration with school day teachers in the project, as well as HA students’ academic gains in the classroom, will lead to more preparedness for school day classroom and academic gains and support LEA goals for successful standards implementation.

HA proposes a Validation project in response to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE)’s Absolute Priority to help “teachers, principals, *and others* translate these standards

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<sup>2</sup> *Staying on Track: Testing Higher Achievement’s Long-Term Impact on Academic Outcomes and High School Choice*, Herrera et al, MDRC, 2013.

*“Higher Achievement is not just school reform, and it is not just afterschool.  
It is the best of both.” - Sanjiv Rao, Program Officer, Ford Foundation*

into classroom practices that help students, particularly high-need students, excel.” HA partners with teachers and principals to advance achievement for high-need students in the traditional *and* HA classrooms, leveraging a diverse community of other educators (well-trained volunteer tutors, summer teachers, and nonprofit staff) to expand learning at low cost to schools and LEAs.

Experts agree that new standards require more time to deliver rich content in an effective, engaging manner. Achieve, a policy group that assisted in the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), noted that, “Teachers will likely need more instructional time in order to teach more rigorous, higher-level content in more depth and to integrate literacy skills into their lessons.”<sup>3</sup> To surmount this challenge, expanded learning programs like HA offer significantly more instructional time through close partnerships with schools.

Students who chronically underperform when compared to their better-resourced peers will have an even steeper road ahead as they master new standards. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)’s annual test reveals persistent achievement gaps between white and African-American students across the country, which are further compounded in high-poverty communities.<sup>4</sup> Significant changes in the structure of learning are required to support these students throughout new standards implementation. HA offers a proven solution.

The HA year-round, multi-year program model, determined Highly Effective Without Reservations according to the US Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse,<sup>5</sup> is comprised of 650 annual hours of standards-aligned academic enrichment and serves high-need middle school students. In the six-week **Summer Academy**, experienced teachers deliver small-

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<sup>3</sup> *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The Role of the Elementary School Leader*, Achieve, College Summit, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

<sup>5</sup> What Works Clearinghouse’ Institute of Education Services, USDOE, 2014.

classroom instruction for 40 hours per week in math, science, social studies, and literature. Students experience a daily elective class, weekly field trips, and an overnight college trip.

**Afterschool Academy** operates for 25 weeks, and students receive homework help, dinner, an elective, and intensive tutoring in math, literature, and seminars. Students attend the program three days per week until 8:00 p.m., and partner with a well-trained volunteer tutor each night.

Currently, 85% of students are eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARM); in some sites, as many as 98% of students are FARM-eligible. Additionally, 80% of students are African-American and 10% Latino. HA is open to all students in accordance with Section 427 of GEPA. Sample student profiles and daily program schedules are in Appendix J.

## **A.2 Estimated Impact and Scale**

*Executive Summary: Unique among its peers, HA has successfully demonstrated the positive impact that high-quality expanded learning services can have in the classroom. Its alignment to standards has been externally validated by an educational consulting firm, Cross & Joftus.*

This grant will enable HA to help at least 1,900 middle school students across 8 high-need LEAs (Washington, DC, Alexandria, VA, Baltimore, MD, Pittsburgh, PA, Richmond, VA, and three charter LEAs in DC). There is demand for growth, with over 200 students on waitlists and seven schools responding to a recent expansion RFP. The project will also assist 24 school sites to meet their student achievement goals. HA's program will offer the equivalent of 100 extra school days (traditional school day = 6.5 hours of instruction), delivering standards-aligned instruction in a cost-effective manner (less than \$7/hour/student). It will impact at least 20,000 additional students through a partnership-based dissemination strategy described under Competitive Priority #2. HA is uniquely positioned to provide the time and supports required to deliver rich new content without requiring schools and teachers to increase instructional time.

Educators often dismiss expanded learning time as little more than childcare. But HA is different. HA is the only afterschool and summer program with statistically significant impacts

on math and reading test scores in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) study<sup>6</sup> that meets the WWC highest standards of evidence without reservations. The study found that after just two years of HA, youth score higher in both math and reading (ES = 0.11 and 0.10 respectively). The four-year follow-up found that HA helps youth navigate to top high schools. The full study and WWC assessment are in Appendix J. Further, internal indicators demonstrate long-term impact:

- 95% of graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders advance to top high school programs.
- 94% graduate from high school on time – *twice the rate of their peers*.

HA recognized early the need to more closely align its instruction to be of greater value to students and schools. With support from the Wallace Foundation, a leading education firm, Cross & Joftus, conducted a thorough assessment of HA's curriculum and training framework to determine alignment with the CCSS. Cross & Joftus noted that HA's program model and instructional approach effectively position the organization to advance CCSS content. Further, Cross & Joftus ranked HA **among the highest** of its peer organizations in alignment.

### **A.3 Feasibility of National Expansion**

*Executive Summary: HA is a mature, proven organization, ready to respond to growing demand from LEAs who are looking for partners who are fully-aligned to new rigorous standards.*

HA's program model is built to scale, with a successful track record of achieving student impacts and sustaining growth. To expand successfully, an organization needs a clearly documented model, strong training and supervision to ensure new staff are properly implementing the model, and robust fundraising skills to sustain growth. HA has all of these elements. Growth will align with HA's four preconditions for successful expansion

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<sup>6</sup> Herrera, et al, MDRC, 2013.

(demonstrated need and opportunity, alignment with city and school districts, funding sustainability, and a strong tutor and staff talent pipeline), further described in Appendix J.

Founded in Washington, DC in 1975, HA reorganized in 2000 as a rigorous, data-driven academic intervention. Successful outcomes resulted in HA's \$4 million RCT study. From 2006 to 2009, HA developed the infrastructure required to grow with high-quality program fidelity:

- Centralized structure that provides: program implementation and monitoring, data evaluation, financial management, human resources, fundraising, and communications and advocacy;
- Web-based, password-protected curriculum and student performance system;
- Standardized training tailored to each role: staff (initial 90 days, plus ongoing professional development), tutors (5 hours in advance, bi-weekly trainings throughout the year), and summer teachers (7 days, with daily support throughout the summer);
- Standardized operating procedures on every element of program model (from coaching tutors to running an effective parent meeting), available through SharePoint;
- Oversight of each site's quality, with regular assessments, role-specific observation tools, weekly staff coaching, and nightly tutor observations and coaching;
- Significant investment in professional development, including annual funds available to every staff person and annual all-staff training retreats; and,
- Strong organization brand and visibility, including awards and high-visibility fundraising successes such as the annual gala, which raised \$1.2 million in 2013.

Growth followed these infrastructure investments, first with expansion to Alexandria, VA. Then a robust business planning effort supported by the consulting group Bridgespan led to new affiliates in Baltimore, MD, in 2009, Richmond, VA, in 2011, and Pittsburgh, PA, in 2012.

HA partners closely with LEAs, with letters of support signed by seven current LEA partners found in Appendix G. HA also works closely with policy advocates such as the National Summer Learning Association and the National Center on Time and Learning, and program initiatives such as the Open Society Institute’s Campaign for Black Male Achievement, and Urban Teacher Center. 15 signed letters from these and more partners are in Appendix G.

HA serves 1,000 middle school students in 15 sites across 4 affiliates, with a clear plan for growth to deepen its impact across cities served. Concentrating its impact in those cities allows HA to test its instructional approach, achieve positive student outcomes, and, after the Validation project, grow through three strategies for *future* national impact:

- 1) Continue to saturate current affiliate cities, and grow to surrounding LEAs as feasible;
- 2) Use expected positive results from the evaluation to launch new affiliates where districts recognize the opportunity of expanded learning to improve school day performance; and,
- 3) Disseminate its best practices for standards-aligned instruction, curriculum, and training so that other organizations and schools can use them within and outside the school day.

## **B. Quality of Project Design**

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### **B.1. Clear Goals, Strategies, and Risks**

*Executive Summary: The proposed project will: 1) increase student achievement and engagement toward national standards through the practices in the HA “classroom”; 2) increase the number of students benefiting from the HA model; and, 3) support organization sustainability and dissemination of proven best practices to influence the school day.*

*“Higher Achievement is undoubtedly the best afterschool program in the country.”*

*- Dr. Leigh Linden, Assistant Professor, University of Texas - Austin*

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. Higher Achievement’s mission is to close the opportunity gap during the pivotal middle school years. By leveraging the power of communities, HA’s proven model provides a rigorous year-round learning environment, caring

role models, and a culture of high expectations, resulting in college-bound students with the character, confidence, and skills to succeed. *HA's program is driven by a proven theory of change based on providing high-need middle school students with robust academic opportunities. These opportunities increase interest, effort, and achievement.*

HA proposes an effective expanded learning intervention to support the implementation of new academic standards. The Validation project enables HA to increase the instructional time of 1,920 high-need middle school students by 650 hours per year, leverage resources not available during the school day, and disseminate standards-aligned instructional practices that positively impact students within and outside the traditional classroom.

HA achieves its positive results (increased standardized test scores<sup>7</sup>, student and family engagement, high school graduation rates, and college graduation rates) through three key strategies: 1) the organization's overall approach (middle school-focused, intense, and volunteer-driven), 2) its curriculum and instructional practices, and, 3) its unique culture.

### ***1. Organization Approach:***

*Focus on Middle School:* Research demonstrates that middle school is the “last, best chance” for a student to get on track to college, and that, “The level of academic achievement that students attain by 8<sup>th</sup> grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness...than anything that happens academically in high school.”<sup>8</sup> Neuroscience research is proving that the middle school years are second only to early childhood in neurological development. Dr. Jay Giedd at the National Institute of Mental Health found that, “In many ways, early adolescence is the most tumultuous time of brain development since coming out of the womb.”<sup>9</sup> It is also the period of

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<sup>7</sup> Herrera, et al, MDRC, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> *The Forgotten Middle*, ACT, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> *Inside the Teenage Brain*, Frontline, PBS, 2002

time when students begin to disengage from school and from their families, resulting in a universal middle school “achievement dip.” This dip is more pronounced in at-risk communities, where students are more likely to lack quality schools, out-of-school time activities, and positive role models. HA intervenes to transform these years into a springboard for academic success.

*Intensity:* Recent research finds that, by the time children born in poverty reach 6<sup>th</sup> grade they have spent *6,000 fewer hours learning* than their middle class peers.<sup>10</sup> Most students lose about two months of math learning each summer. For every one line of print read by a low-income student in the summer, a middle-income student reads three.<sup>11</sup> HA reverses those gaps in the middle school years, providing the equivalent of 100 extra days of school day instruction.

*Volunteer Tutors:* During the school year, each student works with volunteer tutors three nights per week for two hours per night. Volunteers are a diverse sampling of community members: professionals (60%), college students (30%), retirees and others (10%). All tutors are extensively interviewed and screened. A four-hour mandatory orientation includes HA’s instructional approach, youth development philosophy, and culture. Additionally, tutors receive ongoing trainings such as differentiated instruction and Bloom’s Taxonomy. In groups of 2 - 4 students, tutors teach standards-aligned lessons, designed and trained by HA, with nightly observations from staff who are educators. Tutors help students stay and do better in school, avoid risky situations, find positive alternatives to negative behavior, and develop resiliency.

## ***2. Curriculum and Instruction:***

HA provides year-round academic instruction. During the school year, weekly tutors deliver math and reading instruction. In the summer, experienced teachers deliver daily instruction in

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<sup>10</sup> *The 6,000-Hour Learning Gap*, ExpandEd Learning by TASC, [www.expandedlearning.org](http://www.expandedlearning.org)

<sup>11</sup> National Summer Learning Association, [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org)

math, reading, science, and social studies in small classes of 8 – 12 students. The Validation project will strengthen HA’s standards alignment and allow for new curriculum to be written across all content areas. HA intends to build interdisciplinary units of instruction so students see natural connections between what is studied in science, read about in literacy, and how the content applies to math. Whether it is the skills needed to become a rocket scientist or measuring and comparing distances rockets travel, lessons will tie directly to real world application. HA will continue to accelerate learning by previewing content in the summer so students enter the school year with knowledge of upcoming subject matter, decreasing summer learning loss.

HA’s model mirrors many of the CCSS expectations. It places students in small learning groups with ample adults to support individualized instruction. With close guidance, students are expected to explore the analysis deeply and draw connections across disciplines and sources. Lessons are project-based to engage students throughout these extra hours of learning.

The refined curriculum will leverage the best of HA’s individualized instruction practices with key CCSS literacy and math practices. HA’s engaging lessons are taught through a lens of social justice, connecting academic concepts to real-life issues. This increases relevancy for students, another key goal of the CCSS. HA’s Community Meeting – a time for staff, tutors, and students – offers daily opportunities for public speaking, debate, and rich peer learning. An example is in Appendix J, where 7<sup>th</sup> graders present about a school closure plan and community reactions, with accompanying Community Meeting activities across all other grade levels.

### ***3. Organization Culture:***

HA is best distinguished by its organization culture, often described as its “secret sauce.” HA’s culture is built around four core values – spirit, excellence, respect, and collaboration – and three principles: talent is everywhere; intellect is built through effort; and opportunities matter.

Staff, volunteers, families, and students construct an environment of high expectations with rich supports. Students stand when they speak, raise their chins and make eye contact, and are encouraged and expected to use their voice, directly aligning with CCSS expectations of using appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation. The Wallace Foundation highlighted this unique culture in its *Stories from the Field* publication.<sup>12</sup>

## **Project Goals**

HA will accomplish three key goals as it successfully implements the Validation project:

### **Goal 1 – Increase Student Achievement and Engagement toward National Standards**

HA will improve student performance on assessments benchmarked to new academic standards. The organization anticipates that:

- In Year 1, 35% of students will improve math and reading standardized test scores or maintain Advanced/Proficient; 50% in Year 2 and 65% by Year 3.
- Annually, 60% of students will increase or maintain A/B math and reading grades
- Annually, 50% of students will report as engaged on the Gallup Student Poll.

### **Goal 2 – Increase the Number of Students Benefiting from Higher Achievement**

HA will increase the number of students directly served to 1,920, opening at least 9 new sites in its current affiliate cities. An anticipated growth trajectory is found in Appendix J. Nearly 20,000 students will be impacted through partnerships, disseminated training, and consulting. HA will build on its partnership track record with entities including the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Academy, the YMCA of Central Maryland, and Richmond’s Middle School Renaissance 2020. Further descriptions of these partnerships are in Appendix J.

### **Goal 3 – Support Organization Sustainability and Dissemination of Proven Best Practices**

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<sup>12</sup> *Stories from the Field: Expanding Learning, Enriching Learning*, the Wallace Foundation, 2013.

The proposed i3 investment would provide the resources required for HA to sustain far beyond the Validation grant. i3 grant dollars would partially fund the first three years of operations at all new sites, which would be additionally supported by the organization's sustaining revenue streams: private philanthropy, school-based payments, and sponsorships. Additionally, HA will disseminate its instructional best practices, curriculum, training modules, and coaching to benefit thousands more students across partner LEAs, additional districts, and other community-based organizations. These resources will be available gratis to partners.

### **Strategies to Achieve Goals**

HA will employ the following strategies to achieve the stated goals:

- *Strengthened Curriculum and New Training Platform:* With Cross & Jofus, HA will refine its curriculum to more completely align with CCSS and develop a web-based training platform to support its diverse instructional team in implementing new standards. A description of the Cross & Jofus engagement is in Appendix J. (Goal 1)
- *Robust Staff Training and Professional Development Support:* HA will expand its annual staff retreat to a week-long Curriculum and Instruction Institute to intensively train all program staff in the revised content and instructional practices and prepare them to train part-time staff, volunteer tutors, and summer teachers. (Goal 1)
- *Collaborative LEA Partnerships:* A new Chief Operating Officer will support affiliate leadership in developing and maintaining strong, mutually beneficial relationships with LEAs to pave the way for growth and secure school-based payments. (Goal 2)
- *Expanded Corporate Sponsorship Program:* Leadership and development staff will secure multi-year corporate sponsorships (up to \$100,000 per year) to sustain sites. (Goal 2 and 3)

- *Broadened Organizational Influence:* HA will advance its position as a thought leader and preeminent provider of expanded learning to improve student outcomes. By leveraging its proven outcomes, codified best practices, and increased visibility to sustain and grow nationally, HA will make the case for effective expanded learning partnerships. (Goal 3)

## Risks & Mitigation

HA anticipates three implementation risks and has identified associated mitigation strategies:

Identified Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Adapting to varied LEA needs and priorities	HA will rely on its flexible approach to supporting multiple LEAs. Staff will integrate into school leadership teams to ensure curriculum and pacing is aligned to the school day. Cross & Joftus will ensure that curriculum aligns to ELA anchor standards and Standards for Mathematical Practice, is sequenced with schools, and provides clear options for flexing pace and content.
Continuous school support and alignment with expanded learning	Current partner schools all understand the benefits of HA’s expanded learning approach. With principal or district leadership turnover, there is a risk that new leaders will not appreciate the benefits of expanded learning partners. To mitigate, HA develops and stewards relationships across LEAs, from the superintendent down to local principals, assistant principals, and teachers.
Varied public support and state alignment to new standards	There is a risk that more states may step back from implementing the new standards as student face challenging assessments. The inherent goals of the standards, however, align with HA’s most successful instructional strategies. Regardless of states’ decisions on standards, HA’s work will accelerate learning to a high bar. Further, HA’s community volunteers and supporters may drive public support for new standards..

## B.2. Previous Barriers to Scaling

*Executive Summary: The proposed i3 investment will provide HA with the infrastructure upgrades and credibility required to successfully scale its programming on a national level.*

HA is guided by a strategic plan for rapid growth across its current footprint. This growth must be sustained by smart investments in infrastructure and increased influence to sustain the organization. Proposed one-time investments will position HA to serve more students:

- *Enhancements in Curriculum and Instructional Training:* HA will engage Cross & Joftus in curriculum refinement and develop new training to support staff and tutors.
- *Training Platform:* A new web-based training platform will ensure program fidelity through a period of growth, and position the organization to scale nationally.
- *Management Information System Overhaul:* HA needs to invest in an MIS that more closely integrates LEA data systems and is easier to use across growing affiliates. The system will include a tutor feedback app for rapid assessment on student progress.

Importantly, USDOE’s investment in the proposed project will remove one of the most persistent barriers to national scale for HA: the ability to make a national case that high-quality expanded learning organizations can have a positive impact on student learning in the classroom.

### **C. Quality of Management Plan**

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***Executive Summary:** HA has the financial resources, diverse revenue model, national and affiliate staffing, instructional expertise, and experience in sustained organization growth to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget.*

With four affiliates operating successfully across seven LEAs with strong centralized leadership and support services, Higher Achievement is well-positioned to scale regionally during the grant period. HA is using a proven model to increase its adoption of nationally- and internationally-benchmarked academic standards, and is ably led by its mature organization structure and staff tenure. HA has a long track record of data-driven, effective program delivery and success in managing significant growth investments. A five-year Validation investment will complete the groundwork being laid for national scale. Relevant successes include:

- \$13 million raised from private philanthropy in support of operations, organization growth, and evaluation, including the Wallace Foundation, the Atlantic Philanthropies, Altria, William T. Grant Foundation, Spencer Foundation, and the Smith Richardson Foundation.

- Winner of the Washington Post Excellence in Management Award; the Coming Up Taller Award from the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities; the MetLife Afterschool Innovator Award from the Afterschool Alliance; and the Johns Hopkins University Excellence in Summer Learning Award.
- Featured in the S&I 100 Social Impact Exchange and Giving Library, highlighting high-performing organizations that are poised to scale.
- Selected as one of seven leading, national expanded learning providers to participate in a Wallace Foundation-funded analysis of Common Core State Standards (CCSS)-alignment. The reviewers, Cross & Jofus, ranked Higher Achievement highly for providing curriculum strongly aligned with CCSS.

HA partners with LEAs that a) vary in size and progress in adopting new standards, and b) reflect diverse, high-need student populations, including high percentages of economically disadvantaged (90% on average) and English Language Learner students. With the Validation grant, HA will explore opportunities to grow to surrounding suburban or rural LEAs.

**C.1. Responsibilities, Objectives, Timeline, Milestones, Metrics & Targets**

<b>PROPOSED ROLE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
<b>Project Director</b> National Program Director	Oversees strategic implementation; monitors progress toward all objectives and annual targets; works with Senior Leadership Team to ensure resources are fully deployed; meets regularly with LEA leaders.
<b>Senior Leadership Team</b> CEO, Program Director, Development Director, Controller, Chief Operating Officer	Ensures that resources and capacity from across the organization support the successful implementation of the project.
<b>Research Team</b> Program Director, Manager of Program Quality and Evaluation	Leads annual internal implementation review and provides data for monitoring annual project objectives and mid-point adjustments; ensures that all permissions and data agreements proceed as planned; liaises to the MDRC evaluation team.

<p><b>Curriculum and Training Team</b> Program Director, Manager of Program Quality and Evaluation, Manager of Curriculum and Training</p>	<p>Leads the creation and feedback and revision cycles for all program resources for the project; responsible for curriculum, professional learning, staff development, online learning, and any related publications; liaises to the Cross &amp; Joftus team.</p>
<p><b>LEA Partnership Team</b> COO and four affiliate Executive Directors</p>	<p>Delivers program activities to LEAs; manages day-to-day school relationships; ensures project is implemented with fidelity at schools.</p>
<p><b>i3 Grant Oversight Team</b> Senior Leadership Team and members of the Board of Directors Executive Committee</p>	<p>Provides senior project management and financial oversight support to ensure that the goals and objectives of the i3 grant are met in a timely and fiscally responsible manner; and, that the project meets the requirements of the USDOE and LEA partners.</p>

***Objectives, Metrics, and Annual Performance Targets***

HA’s track record and culture focus on data-driven decisions and high-quality programs. The organization will use additional metrics to monitor progress toward stated project objectives. Annual performance targets will complement the evaluation plan (Section D).

Program data metrics designed by MDRC will provide ongoing sources of information to inform and adjust program implementation, as will a formative assessment underway (funded by the Wallace Foundation, conducted by Policy Studies Associates) through March 2017.

**Goal 1 – Increase Student Achievement and Engagement toward National Standards**

Each year, HA will collect and analyze quarterly classroom grades and school attendance information, strong indicators of academic performance and engagement. HA will administer the Gallup Student Poll biannually to monitor student hope, well-being, and engagement.

<p><b><u>Objective 1.1</u></b></p>	<p>Increase or maintain strong math and reading standardized test scores</p>
<p><i>Targets</i></p>	<p>Year 1: Planning Year</p>
	<p>Year 2: 35% of students increase math and reading test scores or maintain advanced/proficient.</p>

	Year 3: 50% of students increase math and reading test scores or maintain advanced/proficient.
	Years 4&5: 65% of students increase math and reading test scores or maintain advanced/proficient.
<b><u>Objective 1.2</u></b>	Increase or maintain strong math and reading classroom grades
<i>Target</i>	Annually, 60% of students increase math and reading classroom grades or maintain As/Bs.
<b><u>Objective 1.3</u></b>	Decrease school absences
<i>Target</i>	Annually, 60% of students decrease school absences or maintain fewer than 5 absences.
<b><u>Objective 1.4</u></b>	Demonstrate increased student engagement
<i>Target</i>	Annually, 50% of students report engaged on the Gallup Student Poll

### **Goal 2 – Increase the Number of Students Benefiting from HA Model**

HA will monitor key annual indicators of growth success, including signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with schools and potential non-school partners for all new sites.

<b><u>Objective 2.1</u></b>	Secure new school and non-school based partnerships according to anticipated growth strategy.
<i>Target</i>	Secure 1 new program site in 2015, 5 in 2016, and 3 in 2018.

### **Goal 3 – Support Organization Sustainability and Dissemination of Proven Best Practices**

HA monitors revenue generation on a monthly basis to ensure ongoing organization sustainability. HA will set annual targets for developing and disseminating best practice resources, such as a revised curriculum, web-based training modules, and the creation of a “How To” guide to coach other expanded learning organizations and school-day partners in delivering standards-aligned curriculum and instructional techniques.

<b><u>Objective 3.1</u></b>	Secure school- or partner-based financial commitment for new sites
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<i>Target</i>	100% of new schools or partners contribute financially or leverage support
<b><u>Objective 3.2</u></b>	Secure multi-year corporate sponsorships of new sites
<i>Target</i>	100% of new sites supported by multi-year corporate sponsorships, providing financial and volunteer support
<b><u>Objective 3.3</u></b>	Train partners to implement core components of HA (standards-aligned curriculum, youth development practices, etc.) to more students
<i>Target</i>	At least four new partners trained to support at least 20,000 students throughout the grant period.

### *Timeline and Milestones*

<b><u>2015</u></b>	<b><u>2016</u></b>	<b><u>2017</u></b>	<b><u>2018</u></b>	<b><u>2019</u></b>	<b>FINAL TARGET</b>
<b><i>Management Information System Upgrade</i></b>					
Overhaul MIS					<i>Enhanced data analysis</i>
<b><i>Onboarding of New Staff</i></b>					
COO, Federal Grants Specialist, Curricula and Training Manager	Communication and Development Manager, Administrative Assistant				<i>5 New Central Positions</i>
<b><i>Strengthened Curriculum and Training Platform</i></b>					
Refine Curriculum and Training	Deliver Refined Curriculum and Training	Deliver Refined Curriculum and Training	Deliver Refined Curriculum and Training	Deliver Refined Curriculum and Training	<i>Continuously Refined Standards-Aligned Curriculum and Training</i>
Develop Web-based Training Platform	Launch Web-based Training Platform				
<b><i>Robust Staff Training and Professional Development Support</i></b>					
Develop New Training Curriculum					<i>Additional 5 Days of Enhanced Staff Training Per Year</i>
Launch Enhanced Annual Training	Enhanced Annual Training	Enhanced Annual Training	Enhanced Annual Training	Enhanced Annual Training	
<b><i>New Sites and Collaborative Partnerships</i></b>					
1 New Site	5 New Sites		3 New Sites		<i>24 Total Sites 9 New Sites 1,920 Students Served</i>
Recruit Volunteer Tutors and Students	Recruit Volunteer Tutors and Students	Recruit Volunteer Tutors and Students	Recruit Volunteer Tutors and Students	Recruit Volunteer Tutors and Students	
Enhanced Recruitment Strategy					

<b>Expanded Corporate Sponsorship Program</b>					
	6 New Corporate Partners	6 New Corporate Partners	6 New Corporate Partners	6 New Corporate Partners	<b>24 New Corporate Partners</b>
<b>Project Evaluation and Other Internal Assessments</b>					
Prepare for Project Evaluation	Recruit Students for Evaluation	Track Students for Evaluation	Track Students for Evaluation	Evaluation	<b>1,920 Students With Intensive Service</b>
Human Capital Assessment	Cost Effectiveness Study				
Partnership Assessment	Launch New Partnership Strategy				
<b>Broadened Influence and Dissemination of Curriculum and Training</b>					
	Market Curriculum and Training Resources	Reach 3,000 Students	Reach 5,000 Students	Reach 12,000 Students	<b>Additional 20,000 Students Impacted</b>

## **C.2. Multi-Year Financial and Operating Model**

**Executive Summary:** HA has a well-established and effective staffing model, infrastructure, and LEA partnership structure to support its expanded learning intervention. This discipline, combined with a significant market for standards-aligned curriculum, training, and coaching resources amplify the opportunities available to this regional program and leave it well-positioned for national expansion by the close of the Validation grant period.

### **Financial Model and Sustainability**

The Validation project will be sustained through HA’s mature financial model. In its strategic plan launched in 2012, HA set a goal of sustaining program sites through two new revenue streams: school-based payments and corporate sponsorships. Those revenue streams cover between 50-66% of program sites’ annual costs, with the balance covered by philanthropy. Now, new sites include corporate support of \$75,000 per year and school payments. The required private match required for this project will also engage new and sustaining investors.

HA boasted an impressive 93% “win rate” of funds expected vs. funds secured in the last fiscal year, and is projected to end this fiscal year with a surplus of more than \$400,000. Unrestricted surplus funds will be moved to a Board-Designated Reserve Fund that can be accessed when sustainable growth opportunities require launch investment; the organization will add to the reserve fund through “stretch revenue goals” that exceed expenses over time.

With significant pro bono support from Censeo Consulting Group, HA developed a financial model that marries expense management and program delivery to produce powerful dashboards that monitor costs against student performance. Data is transparent across the organization from front-line staff to board members and put into action quarterly to improve cost per impact. Censeo will support implementation of the Validation project. Financial model snapshots are in Appendix J.

*“The financial model puts Higher Achievement beyond the vanguard of nonprofit management.”*

-Dara Rose,  
Senior Program Officer,  
The Wallace Foundation

### ***Operating Model***

HA’s centralized national office provides key services such as human resources, finance and grants management, communications, and development. A core program and evaluation team ensures program model fidelity, leveraging best practices from a variety of fields (including education reform, youth development, and neuroscience) and monitoring student outcomes.

HA recognizes the need to invest in organization capacity and has identified key roles to add over the course of the project to ensure that the organization achieves its outcomes and is well-supported for future national growth: **Chief Operating Officer** to oversee finance, human resources, and administration and help with USDOE and LEA partnerships; **Federal Grants Compliance Specialist**; **Curricula and Training Manager** to support refinement of standards-aligned programming; **Communications and Development Manager** to sustain organization growth; **Administrative Assistant** to support increased operations; **External Relations positions** in Baltimore and Pittsburgh affiliates (currently lacking this role) to secure more volunteer tutors and corporate funding; **Affiliate Program Managers** in Richmond and Pittsburgh (currently lacking this role) to monitor local program quality during growth and steward LEA relationships; and, additional support staff as needed as sites are added.

In addition to the Cross & Joftus project, HA will also engage consultant support on three additional projects that will support the organization's long-term sustainability goals:

*Human Capital Assessment:* HA will ensure that sites are sustainably staffed, that staff salaries and benefits are commensurate with the field, and that sufficient staff development and support are in place to sustain rapid organization growth.

*Partnership Assessment:* HA will assess affiliate and national partnership landscapes, develop compelling partnership engagement materials and benefits, and coach leadership in successfully securing sustaining partners for financial support and volunteer recruitment.

*Cost Efficiency Analysis:* As HA grows, it will partner with Censeo to attain lasting cost efficiencies that sustain operations, especially after the duration of the Validation project.

Finally, HA is proud to continue a partnership with MDRC to perform a randomized controlled trial study, survey the existing RCT cohorts to assess long-term results, and promote program evaluation and improvement. These investments will provide HA with the resources required to fulfill the objectives of the grant and operate the project at the national level.

### **C.3. Project Director Experience**

*Executive Summary:* HA is a mature non-profit with an experienced staff, effective program model, and strong, carefully-stewarded LEA relationships. HA has successfully replicated, expanding to three new cities while maintaining program quality. This experience is exemplified in the Project Director who brings seven years of organizational leadership to the role.

#### ***Prior Experience and Organizational Readiness***

In 2006, Higher Achievement, with support from the Bridgespan Group, conducted a feasibility study to model potential expansion opportunities, and ultimately produced a business plan to guide growth. Additionally, HA undertook a rigorous RCT study, the first of its kind in its field, managing fundraising, cohort recruitment, data collection, and reporting in partnership with the research team. HA had a \$900,000 budget when the study launched, but managed the

\$4 million field-building study with excellence while expanding to new cities. HA's growth beyond its flagship affiliate has been carefully implemented and purposefully disciplined. Since 2009 the student roster has grown from 450 to 1,000. Going forward, the organization will achieve greater impact and saturation in current cities and more closely align with education reform priorities. With Validation support, HA will advance this promising new plan, catching at-risk students in middle school and advancing them to college success.

### ***Personnel***

HA's i3 Grant Oversight Team represents nearly 50 years of collective service to the organization, and is comprised of national office and affiliate leadership. Three project leaders are described below; full team biographies and organization charts are found in Appendix J.

***Mike DiMarco, Project Director:*** Mike DiMarco serves as HA's National Program Director after seven years with the organization. He oversees program management, delivery, and evaluation across four states and 14 sites. Under his leadership, HA has increased the number of students served by 11%, and improved cost efficiency by 14%. Further, Mr. DiMarco led HA's implementation of new dashboards which marry program outcomes and financial data. Trained by Mr. DiMarco, front-line staff use these dashboards to refine program delivery every month.

Mr. DiMarco has risen steadily through the organization since beginning as an Assistant Center Director in 2007, first to Center Director, Development Manager, and Director of Program Quality & Evaluation, building a holistic wealth of organization knowledge. His site leadership developed many of the best program practices that were codified as standard organization practice before additional affiliates launched. He raised the initial operating funds required to launch HA's third affiliate in Richmond, identifying and cultivating a \$1 million funder portfolio in that new community. Mr. DiMarco's project management experience ranges

from direct program implementation, serving 90 students and overseeing 90 tutors at one site, to successfully launching the Pittsburgh affiliate, coaching local staff on hiring, tutor and student recruitment, training, program implementation, school relationships, and evaluation. Mr. DiMarco liased to the MDRC evaluation team to successfully complete and publish HA's first RCT study and disseminate its findings across a variety of sectors. He has led recent program initiatives, including centralized training, robust program quality monitoring protocols, and the organization's alignment with CCSS. Mr. DiMarco holds a BA in Political Science and Public Policy from Duke University and a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Georgetown University, including studies in change management, marketing, and financial management.

***Sameer Bhargava, Chair of the Board:*** Sameer Bhargava has served as a member of the Board of Directors since 2010 and as Chair since 2012. As Chair, he provides strategic direction and collaborates closely with HA leadership to accomplish the organization's goals. He is Managing Director and Director of Corporate Development at The Carlyle Group, focusing on firm strategy and planning, firm acquisitions, fundraising initiatives and strategic relationships. Prior to joining Carlyle, Mr. Bhargava was at Bain Capital, LLC, Advent International Corporation, and McKinsey & Company. Mr. Bhargava received his M.B.A. with distinction from Harvard Business School and graduated from Harvard University with an honors degree in biology.

***Lynsey Wood Jeffries, CEO:*** Lynsey Wood Jeffries is the national CEO of HA. During her nine-year staff tenure with the organization, she was closely involved in the Bridgespan expansion planning and codification/documentation of best practices. She led expansion of the DC Metro affiliate and the new strategic plan in 2012. Ms. Jeffries' experience with HA began in 2000 as a HA volunteer tutor. After five years of volunteering, Ms. Jeffries joined the professional staff in 2005 as Director of Grants and Communications. From 2008-2012, she served as Executive

Director of HA DC Metro, increasing annual revenues from \$1.7 million to \$2.8 million. She stepped into the CEO role in 2012, overseeing the launch of the organization’s fourth affiliate in Pittsburgh and recent strategic planning process. Prior to joining HA, Ms. Jeffries served as a program officer for the Fannie Mae Foundation, and a congressional liaison at NeighborWorks. Ms. Jeffries holds a B.A. in English and sociology from Wake Forest University, and an M.P.A. from the University of Pittsburgh, with a concentration in nonprofit management, graduating at the top of her class. She was named one of the top 12 nonprofit leaders in the U.S. under age 40 by the Independent Sector and American Express and is a founding board member of Mundo Verde Public Charter School. Ms. Jeffries is currently a Cross-Sector Leadership Fellow with the Presidio Institute and a W.K. Kellogg Community Leadership Network Fellow.

#### **D. Quality of the Project Evaluation**

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**D.1. Key Research Questions and Methods:** The proposed evaluation will use data from two well-designed student-level randomized trials to address four clearly defined questions.

The proposed evaluation consists of two related studies. The first, the “middle school study,” entails conducting another independent, third-party experimental analysis of program impacts across seven LEAs (Alexandria, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Washington DC, and two charter schools) and HA’s approximately 20 sites by randomly assigning students who apply to participate in HA to either the program group that will be allowed to enroll in HA and experience the CCSS compatible model or to a control group that will not be allowed to enroll in HA (but can receive other school services). Students in the middle school study will be followed over two years and assessed on reading and mathematics skills each spring through state math assessments. The implementation analysis for this middle school study, discussed below, will assess program fidelity and alignment of HA instruction to CCSS. The second smaller study, the

“college study,” will investigate the possible long-term benefits of HA. It entails collecting records from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for participants in HA’s first RCT to explore whether a program like HA – that helps students academically, as well as helping them and their families apply to and get financial assistance to selective high schools—can have impacts on college attendance.

### **Key Questions**

Data from these RCTs will enable us to determine the answers to four important questions: (1) Can HA train volunteer tutors to use CCSS-aligned instructional practices? (2) Does HA improve academic performance in the first two years? (3) Does HA lead to more positive middle school behavior (such as better school attendance)? (4) Might HA lead to positive impact on college outcomes? The rigorous answers to these questions will provide practitioners, policymakers and researchers with the quality of information needed for decision-making. There is currently little information on whether staff in academic expanded learning programs will be able to change their practices to support the more complex learning students are being asked to master in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, there is little rigorous information available on how to improve middle-school reading and math skills (Slavin Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008; Slavin, Lake, & Groff, 2009; Deshler, Palincsar, Biancarosa, & Nair, 2007), and even less on how out-of-school supplemental education services can be used to improve academic skills (Matsudiera 2008; Mariano & Martorell, 2012). Lastly, the college follow-up research will explore whether middle school interventions like HA increases or accelerates college-going and if it can help address the college “under match” problem that plagues many low-income but academically competent students who do not apply to more demanding colleges.

To reduce concerns about multiple hypothesis testing producing statistically significant impact by chance, we will follow IES guidelines (See NCEE-2008-4081) by pre-specifying a small number of confirmatory research questions and by conducting a composite statistical test to “qualify” or call into question multiple hypothesis tests that are statistically significant individually but that may be due to chance in the context of mixed results.

The main confirmatory research questions of the middle school study are: *What is the impact of HA on middle school students’ reading achievement compared to non-HA students? What is the impact of HA on middle school students’ math achievement compared to non-HA students?* The confirmatory research question for the college study is: *What is the impact of HA on attendance at academically rigorous colleges (those with SAT scores of 1000 or higher) compared to non-HA students?* While we think of the two middle school questions as being in separate domains (math and reading), we would use a Benjamini-Hochberg adjustment to address the more general question of “*Does HA impact academic achievement?*” to adjust for multiple hypotheses.

**D.2. Evaluation to Produce Evidence of Effectiveness:** Both RCTs will produce evidence about HA’s effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Evidence Standards without reservations.

Because the middle school study will include student-level random assignment, if well-implemented, will meet WWC evidence standards without reservation. To ensure the design is well-implemented, MDRC will be solely responsible for random assignment of students to treatment conditions, informing HA of designations. MDRC will collect all outcome data and be solely responsible for the analysis and interpretation of findings. MDRC has high response rate

standards and expects to receive school records for at least 80% of sample members and information about tutor practices from at least 80% of the tutors.

The one issue that could bias the impact estimates derived from the middle school study is a potential spillover effect of HA on the control students in host schools where a significant portion of the student body attends the year-round program. For example, if high saturation causes the culture of learning to shift in the school or the school-day teachers to teach differently, the impact estimate could be biased. While we cannot prevent this type of spillover, if it does occur, the impact estimate will be biased downward. Thus, if we find a positive significant effect, we can confidently conclude the program works. In our implementation study, we will investigate whether this type of spillover effect might be occurring by talking to the program managers and principals about the experience of the regular school day.

The original RCT of HA has been reviewed and met WWC evidence standards without reservation. Thus, a follow-up study based on NSC data on this sample of students should also meet WWC standards without reservation based on our expected low sample attrition. We have name and date of birth for all sample members, and expect these students to attend colleges covered in the NSC database.

**D.3. Evaluation at Proposed Level of Scale:** The evaluation will generate information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student populations.

In addition to the main confirmatory questions, the evaluation will address exploratory questions intended to deepen our understanding of the overall average impact of HA:

1. *Student subgroup impacts (experimental)*: How do middle school impacts differ for students in centers where recruitment is targeted to the host school and its feeders versus centers

where students are recruited more broadly? How do HA impacts differ for middle school students who start at high, average, and low levels of math or reading scores? For students of various ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds? For boys versus girls? We will also investigate subgroup impacts in the college study. In particular, because college-going behavior is related to family income and parents' education, we will test for differential impacts by these variables, as well as by students' baseline test scores.

2. ***Program Implementation (experimental)***: Are impacts on middle school math and reading achievement greater in schools that had operated HA before the alignment of HA instruction to Common Core standards, i.e. more mature programs? ***(correlational)***: Are impacts on middle school math and reading achievement greater in schools with stronger fidelity? Does HA's impact depend on the proportion of students in a given middle school participating in HA? And relying on implementation data collected in the original study, are college-level impacts greater for students who attended HA longer?

In addition to exploring differential impacts by subgroups, we also plan to examine other outcomes in our exploratory analyses. These include examining hypotheses about:

3. ***High school impacts (experimental)***: Does HA affect middle school students' school attendance? Their mobility between middle schools?
4. ***College impacts (experimental)***: Does HA affect the likelihood that students go to college? Does it enable students to start college sooner? Does it help them persist in college longer? How does it affect mobility between colleges?

**D.4. Evaluation Plan:** The evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan that enables us to rigorously address each of the research questions; and the proposed sample size will enable us to detect the expected impacts with reasonable power.

**Analysis Plan.** The proposed research design allows us to test experimentally hypotheses related to all three research questions comparing the treatment group's outcomes to those of the control group. Our basic confirmatory impact estimates will be intent-to-treat (ITT) estimates derived from a multivariate model accounting for any blocking done in random assignment. To improve the precision of the impact estimate (and statistical power), we will include covariates in the impact model for key student baseline characteristics such as math and reading test scores, free/reduced-price meal status, parent education, prior state test scores, and students' grade level in their first year of enrollment in a study school (the latter for analyses that pool across grades). We also plan to test the model without covariates to analyze attrition patterns and ensure that the initially comparable research groups are not differentially affected by attriting students.

Students applying to a given site undoubtedly share many characteristics (e.g., the quality of their schools, socio-demographic characteristics) that would result in student outcomes within a center being correlated. As a result, we estimate the outcome regressions as a system of linear equations with an error structure that is correlated both within and across equations using the technique of Seemingly Unrelated Regressions. This technique also allows us to adjust for the fact that we are testing a family of related hypotheses especially in the exploratory analyses, following Kling and Leibman (2007). Instrumental variables techniques will also be used in our exploratory analysis to estimate the effect of actual participation in HA (as opposed to the *offer* of participation) on outcomes (Abadie, Angrist & Imbens, 2002).

**Sample.** Sample members will be recruited in spring 2016. From each of the existing 14 sites, 60 5<sup>th</sup> and 20 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be recruited; from 5 new host schools, 60 5<sup>th</sup> and 60 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be recruited. Students will be tracked for two years. The table below shows how students will enter the study over time and when data will be collected on them.

## Middle School Sample Build-Up and Size

Half Ts/ Half Cs	Spring 2016	Spring 2017	Spring 2018
14 existing centers	1120		
5 new centers	600		
Total BL sample	1720		
end Yr1		1720	
end Yr2			1720

Notes: BL=Baseline data (application, parent and youth surveys, prior year's school records)

**Power Analysis.** Using the full sample, we estimate a minimum detectable effect size (i.e., MDES; the smallest true effect that can be detected for a specified level of power and significance level for any given sample size) of 0.11. This calculation is based on a sample of 1,720 students split evenly between treatment and control, with an 80% response rate at the student level, 80% power, a statistical significance level of .05 with a two-tailed test, and covariates explaining 30 percent of the variation in test scores. This translates into at least a 5.7 percentage point effect on binomial variables, such as being proficient in a subject. The two-year math impact in the original study was 0.11 in standard deviation units. In the original RCT, covariates explained 70 percent of the variation of test scores. If the covariates in this study were equally effective in explaining test score variation, the MDES would be 0.09 or a 4.5 percentage point difference in a binomial outcome.

The main confirmatory hypotheses will be tested using the full sample but many of the exploratory analyses will be based on various subsamples. If the subgroup of interest is half the size of the full sample, the MDES will be 0.16; while if it is a third of the size, it would be 0.20.

**D.5. Key Components and Outcomes of Project:** The evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

The evaluation consists of an implementation study that will assess the implementation of the model's key components (i.e. large dosage, instructional quality, small group settings, high

expectation of the youth) and an impact study. The impact study, described earlier, has two components. The middle school study will focus on student test score performance. The college study will focus on diminishing under-matching (i.e enrollment in more rigorous colleges) and (exploratorily) on college timing and persistence.

The implementation study will address questions in three areas pertaining to the program's key components, as well as about HA's process of program expansion: (1) How did HA help tutors master teaching of CCSS skills (training, supervision and feedback, online material)? And to what extent did tutors incorporate activities related to the CCSS into their sessions? (2) Did the HA sites implement the program with fidelity (e.g. deliver the hours specified for various key components, the desired tutor/student ratios and the dosage for students)? An "acceptable threshold of implementation" will be negotiated with HA during the pilot year. (3) What factors (such as type of tutor training and supervision) affected the degree of CCSS alignment of tutors' instruction and a site's level of fidelity?

The implementation study will answer these research questions triangulating across several data sources. First, *longitudinal implementation surveys* will be administered to program managers and tutors at the end of each school year. Surveys will collect data on the school context, program fidelity, training and supervision, and the presence of other related programs in each school that might provide similar services to controls. In addition, HA tutors will be asked to complete *instructional logs* on randomly selected days in the spring each year to provide another measure of how their instruction aligns with CCSS skills. MDRC researchers will also *visit* HA sites during the school year to conduct a more detailed case study. The programs will be selected randomly, stratifying on their maturity and the concentration of host-school students—factors that we hypothesize will influence implementation. During the visits, researchers will

conduct interviews with principals, HA staff and tutors and observe the program. These data will provide insight into program context, implementation challenges, and service contrast.

Responses to the log and survey items will enable MDRC to calculate implementation fidelity scores for HA program components and overall program implementation. If funds are available, we may also conduct a survey of students to learn what services they receive, to obtain a better measure of service contrast.

**D.6. Sufficient Resources for Proposed Project Plan:** The proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the evaluation effectively, including uniquely qualified leadership. We have pulled together an outstandingly qualified set of researchers to conduct an RCT and implementation study on the proposed project and follow the first RCT's sample into college to examine the long-term impacts of HA. Dr. Jean Grossman, Senior Fellow at MDRC will be the project director (PD), while Drs. Herrera and Linden will be co-Principal Investigators (PI). This leadership team was used quite successfully in the first RCT. Dr. Rekha Balu (MDRC) will lead the implementation study and overall project manager, coordinating all day-to-day activity. Short descriptions of key staff are below.

**Dr. Jean Baldwin Grossman (PD)**, Senior Research Fellow at MDRC and on the faculty of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, has extensive experience directing complex projects such as this one; for example she is currently the PD on the 54-school Scale Up evaluation of SFA Middle School Math. She is a quantitative researcher with an expertise in evaluation design, having over 30 years conducting (25 years directing) evaluations including 11 RCTs, one of which was HA's first RCT. While considered an evaluation design expert, her substantive specialty is the study of school- and non-school-based education programs, as well as mentoring programs, both for disadvantaged adolescents. Prior to coming to MDRC, she directed

the research department of Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) and worked at Mathematica. In 2010-11, she was the Chief Evaluation Officer for the U.S. Department of Labor overseeing all the department's program evaluations. She has a Ph.D. in economics from M.I.T in 1980.

**Dr. Leigh L. Linden (co-PI)** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Texas at Austin. He focuses on understanding both methods for improving the effectiveness of schools and for improving children's participation rates. His work has investigated the effectiveness of a wide range of interventions with a particular focus on early childhood literacy and technologically assisted instruction. Prof. Linden is an expert econometrician, leading more than a dozen RCTs in schools over the last 9 years, including serving as co-PI on HA's first RCT.

**Dr. Carla Herrera (co-PI)** is currently an Independent Consultant, after being a Senior Research Fellow for P/PV for 14 years. She has expertise in youth programs and has led many multi-method studies examining impacts and implementation using quantitative and qualitative data. She has been a PI on many large complex evaluations including: the RCT of HA, the RCT of Big Brothers Big Sisters' School-Based Mentoring program, and a combined RCT/quasi-experimental study of the effects of mentoring on higher-risk youth. Currently, she is an investigator on a 120-site impact and process evaluation of an initiative to strengthen the implementation of evidence-based practices in youth mentoring at a national level. She received her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Michigan.

Our proposed budget includes \$1.8 million for the evaluation, which based on the third party evaluator's extensive experience evaluating school and student support interventions, will be sufficient to carry out the proposed work.