



AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2009 – JUNE 30, 2010

AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

BRIDGING YOUTH POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH

Vision

Our vision is that all young people are able to meet their full potential in study, careers, and civic life as a result of our commitment and dedication to educate, inform, and engage policymakers in the development of effective and supportive youth policies.

Mission

AYPF's mission is to broaden the awareness and understanding of policymakers and to strengthen the youth policymaking process by bridging policy, practice, and research. We do this by identifying the most pertinent high-quality information on youth issues available and providing a forum for prominent leaders in government, programming, and research, as well as the youth themselves, to share their viewpoints and expertise about the policies and practices that improve outcomes for all youth.

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), founded in 1993, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, DC that provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national, state, and local levels. AYPF's goal is to enable policymakers to become more effective in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting the nation's young people by providing information, insights, and networking opportunities to better understand the development of healthy and successful young people as productive workers and participating citizens in a democratic society.

AYPF's work covers a range of education and youth topics, such as secondary school reform, college access and success, career and technical education, dropout prevention and recovery, alternative education, youth employment, service learning, civic engagement, and afterschool and expanded learning opportunities. This breadth of knowledge allows AYPF to bridge fields and sectors and supports our view of the need for integrated, holistic, and comprehensive academic and support services to help every youth be successful. AYPF has interacted with thousands of policymakers by conducting an average of 40 annual events such as lunchtime forums, out-of-town study tours, and discussion groups. AYPF also publishes a variety of highly respected youth policy reports and materials, available at www.aypf.org.

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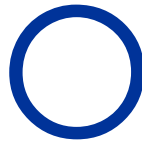
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AYPF thanks its funders for their generous support of our work to improve the lives of our young people by informing the education and youth policymaking process. Our funders include the: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, William T. Grant Foundation, and others.

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Over the past decade, various education reform efforts and policies have been put in place to help students graduate from high school prepared to go on to post-secondary education. Most of these efforts have centered on increasing the academic rigor of secondary school and ensuring that students meet certain prescribed academic standards that presumably have been keyed to the knowledge needed to be successful at the collegiate level. Other reform efforts over the past decade included changes to the structure and organization of high schools, such as creating smaller learning communities, academies, or schools within schools.

Despite these reforms, the high school dropout rate for the U.S. is close to 30% nationally and averages around 50% for urban school districts. African American and Hispanic youth drop out at much higher rates than White students, and large achievement gaps exist between subgroups of students. Of the students that do graduate from high school, approximately one third must take at least one remedial course in college, and currently less than 40% of 27-year olds have earned an associate's degree or higher. Many young people never develop the knowledge and skills needed to hold a family-sustaining career.

In spite of the positive intentions of concerned policymakers and practitioners instituting reforms, high dropout rates and low college attainment rates provoke concern and require us to examine current reform efforts to determine whether they are sufficient to help students succeed or if there are other interventions that might be more effective. We believe that the current reform efforts have been too narrowly focused and have not taken into account the complex process of youth development. We argue for a shift in thinking about education reform policy to an approach that is comprehensive, integrated, holistic, and that addresses more than just academic success. AYPF's perspective is that to be successful, young people must have various supports and opportunities to develop a range of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors, including, but not limited to, academic skills. This knowledge must cover multiple domains and is developed in various settings, not just in school.

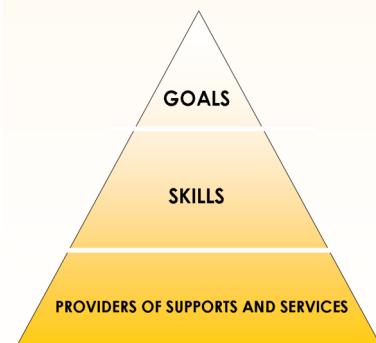
AYPF has consistently advocated for a broader approach to education reform that takes into account youth development, and we have formulated a comprehensive vision of how young people advance to higher levels of competency. This annual report will describe in greater detail our youth vision, how it can inform education and youth policymaking, and our work to showcase the youth policy vision. The report will also describe our work in building collaborations to advance youth policy and our strategies for enhancing communication with policymakers.

AYPF's Comprehensive Youth Policy Vision

AYPF has always operated from the belief that education and youth policy need to be comprehensive and holistic and that we need to create policies that support a broader approach to developing the potential of our young people rather than just building academic skills, even though such skills are a foundational necessity. While AYPF has always operated according to this belief, we have not always taken the time to explain our beliefs and philosophy in detail or to spell out what the implications for education and youth policy might be using this comprehensive developmental approach. Therefore, over the past year, we have dedicated time to explaining our youth policy vision and logic model and how it can help inform and undergird policy efforts to ensure all youth are ready for postsecondary education, careers, and success in society. Our vision is informed by almost 18 years of policy experience with middle and high school reform, youth development, career and technical education, dropout prevention and recovery, youth employment, college access and success, afterschool and expanded learning, and service learning.

Our approach to this work is described in our vision and logic model, which consists of three main components: the long-term goals we expect youth to meet; the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities needed to meet the long-term goals; and the people, providers, and systems that help youth develop the skills to meet the goals. We believe the long-term goals for young people are: (1) career success (family-sustaining wages and opportunities for career growth); (2) civic engagement (connected to society, responsible to others, and involved in the democratic process); and (3) capacity for lifelong learning (ability to participate independently in ongoing education and training when needed).

As students strive for the long-term goals, they will be aiming for shorter-term goals, such as developing academic proficiency in high



school, graduating from high school, planning for college and careers, and developing positive personal traits and behaviors. As they leave high school, we want them to enroll and persist in post-secondary education, earn industry credentials or academic degrees, and develop independence and financial responsibility. The attainment of these intermediate goals will help young people achieve the long-term goals of career success, civic engagement, and lifelong learning.

In order for young people to reach these goals, AYPF believes that they need to develop what we call a Foundation for Learning and Growth, which consists of two broad areas. The first area we refer to as Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities and the second as Personal Resources. The Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities domain includes academic knowledge, technical knowledge and skills, communication, problem-solving, critical-thinking, social, teamwork, and self-advocacy skills, goal-setting, college and career knowledge, and academic success behaviors. We further expand “academic success behaviors” to include intellectual openness, analysis, and interpretation as well as study skills, self-monitoring, and meta-cognition. By the term “college knowledge,” we mean having an understanding of the complex college admission and selection processes, of the resources available to help pay for postsecondary education, of the academic requirements for college-level work, and of the cultural and systemic differences between secondary and postsecondary education. “Career knowledge” includes an awareness of employer-desired skills and traits, career pathways, and workplace culture.

In addition to developing these Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, youth also need to develop Personal Resources which include physical and mental wellness, resilience, self-esteem, motivation, independence, personal and civic responsibility, and access to financial support for postsecondary education. In some cases, physical wellness can include housing, food support, and basic safety.

Developing these skills in order to achieve the long-term goals is a lengthy, complex process that involves many moving parts and people. No two adolescents are the same, and each needs tailored and personalized education and support at different stages of their life, in varying intensities and degrees, depending on their personal, family, and community circumstances.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES

- ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE
- ACADEMIC SUCCESS BEHAVIORS
- TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- PROBLEM-SOLVING
- CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
- SOCIAL SKILLS AND TEAMWORK
- GOAL-SETTING
- COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE
- CAREER KNOWLEDGE
- SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS

PERSONAL RESOURCES

- PHYSICAL/MENTAL HEALTH AND WELFARE
- RESILIENCE
- SELF-ESTEEM
- MOTIVATION
- INDEPENDENCE
- PERSONAL AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY
- FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR POSTSECONDARY
- EDUCATION

Families are usually the main source of support for youth, but many youth receive services and supports from other individuals and/or organizations. In addition to families and caregivers, we note that supports and services are typically provided by six other groups of “providers,” such as (1) schools; (2) social/medical service providers; (3) community- and faith-based organizations; (4) private organizations; (5) employers; and (6) postsecondary education institutions.

Despite the fact that the groups named above exist in every community, students do not always have equal access to all groups, or they only get services from some of the providers, or, in some cases, they might get lower quality services. While we assume that families and caregivers provide guidance and advice, health, wellness, and financial support, the reality is that youth oftentimes must seek out these services from another provider, given family limitations. And while we hope that all students have access to a high quality services, such as rigorous academic instruction in their schools, we know that is not uniformly true.

We also note that many of the skills and abilities described earlier are best learned through real-world experiences and in association with caring, competent adults in many settings beyond schools and classrooms. Schools have an important and key role to play in the development of knowledge and skills, but they cannot do the job alone and must work in partnership with other family and community members.

As one thinks about the knowledge and skills youth need to be successful, the number of services that need to be provided to help youth develop those skills, and the wide range of providers that can offer such services, a complicated, confusing, and multi-faceted image emerges. There is no one road to adulthood, but rather, many, many pathways. While most children and youth can depend on their families and caregivers to manage this process, many youth lack the family support to chart their future course and are left to navigate on their own.

The following scenarios depict the course that three fictitious students took through high school into post secondary education, and they illustrate how various providers (family, school, employers) helped young people develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in various settings.

a) *Student A is in the 12th grade in a well-respected high school with a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum. Her grades are mostly As and Bs, though she struggles with math. In addition to receiving extra help from her teachers and her father, she meets with a private math tutor once a week. Her parents have always expected her to attend a four-year college, have been saving for her college tuition since her early childhood, have helped her to fill out financial aid applications, and have taken her to visit several college campuses. She has a good relationship with her college counselor as well as her English teacher, who both help answer her questions about the college application process. Her afterschool activities include playing on the basketball team, participating in school plays, and volunteering as a tutor for younger students. She has also worked and held internships during the summers, helping her build teamwork and problem-solving skills, maturity, and self-esteem. She plans to attend a four-year college and major in psychology, with a long-term goal of earning a master's degree and working as a clinical psychologist. She feels academically prepared for college, although she knows she will continue to need assistance in math tutoring, but she feels confident that she can identify adults who will help her along her way.*



b) *Student B is in his first semester at a local community college. The path to postsecondary education was not always easy for Student B, but he benefitted from a number of supportive programs and a mother with high expectations. Student B scored below grade level on standardized tests at the end of middle school, and he was not looking forward to attending his large, neighborhood high school that was known for high dropout rates. However, the high school recently implemented a comprehensive reform initiative that included small learning communities based on career themes and more rigorous courses for all students. Student B entered a small school focused on the environment. He developed a close relationship with several of his teachers, who helped him recognize his strengths and also encouraged him to enroll in an afterschool tutoring program offered by a local community-based organization during his early years of high school to improve his basic skills. His mother made sure that he stayed on track with his assignments, and she participated in parent education workshops offered by the school to learn about helping her son plan for college and careers and about student financial aid programs.*

Student B began to think more seriously about college after he started participating in an afterschool college access program



during his sophomore year. Through this program, which was offered through a partnership between his school district and the community college, he took a “college success” class on the college campus and met regularly with a mentor who was an alumnus of the same high school and had earned a four-year college degree. Student B had always had strong technical skills, and his high school environment teacher helped him to explore different career fields in this area. The summer before his senior year, he had the opportunity to intern in the environmental compliance department of a civil engineering firm. After he learned about the community college’s associate’s degree program in Environmental Technology, he set his sights on this goal. Student B received a federal Pell Grant, as well as additional financial aid from the college.

- c) Student C attends an alternative high school, and she is four credits away from earning her high school diploma. Two years ago she dropped out of school, because she was struggling with family and personal problems, using drugs, and was unable to keep up in her classes after missing so much school, despite having strong skills. She eventually moved out of her parents’ house and started staying with an aunt. She got a job at a shopping mall, where she had a supportive employer and coworkers, and her self-esteem improved when they gave her increasing responsibilities and recognized her strong communication skills. She still wanted to earn her high school diploma, and when her boss told her about an alternative high school that offered a flexible schedule and helped older students get their diplomas, she decided to try going back to school. At her new school, she has a case manager who has connected her with family and drug counseling, as well as a career counselor who has helped her learn about different career pathways. She has small classes and knows her teachers and peers well. Most of her classes have final projects instead of exams, and she enjoys making final presentations of her work before the other students and teachers. Student C’s school offers dual enrollment classes taught by high school teachers that are certified as adjunct college faculty, and she has already earned eight college credits in Health Studies. She is planning to continue at the community college as a part-time student after she receives her high school diploma, and will continue working at her current job to help pay for college. Because of her personal skills and the knowledge she has gained from her life experience, she is interested in becoming a Certified Substance Abuse Counselor.



As hard as it is for youth to navigate this complex process, they are hampered by the fact that our current education and youth policy framework lacks the structure to sort out how, where, and when services are provided to them and by whom. There is no single person or agency in charge of a comprehensive youth policy or service delivery, although frequently the burden falls to the public education system to act as a “case manager.” This lack of a comprehensive policy is a challenge that faces education and youth policymakers and practitioners who often have to figure out how to appropriately match a youth with caring adults, competent providers, and the right mix of services that meet that young person’s needs at the right time and place.

AYPF’s comprehensive vision and logic model can help address this policy challenge. Policymakers can use the vision and logic model to better understand how various systems, programs, and funding streams can be aligned to the goals of success and guide how the various systems can connect. Policymakers and program providers can use the logic model to identify where there are gaps in services for certain groups of students (e.g. foster youth or teen parents) or for certain neighborhoods. The logic model can also be used as a framework to determine the overall impact of the various programs and providers on student success.

Using the logic model as a framework for creating a college- and career-ready system requires that certain policy issues be addressed. To start, policymakers need to establish system-wide goals and hold all the various providers accountable for meeting those goals. Setting common and long-term goals across programs and systems is a difficult undertaking, but moving toward shared accountability for youth outcomes and across various funding streams should result in positive changes. By doing so, there should be greater coherence across systems, more resources targeted at a common challenge, improved services for youth, and fewer opportunities for youth to fall through the cracks as they transition from one program, system, or stage to another. Finally, programs will be working toward the same goals, each program will see how it fits into a larger whole, and progress can be measured across a community, not just for a single program.

For our youth vision to be implemented, certain policy guidelines need to be implemented. The list below highlights the key policy actions that need to be addressed by policy leaders:

- *Develop a comprehensive plan and shared outcomes with the input and support of agencies, systems, and programs to ensure that a continuum of services, from middle school to postsecondary education completion, is provided to all youth across the community and that targeted services are made available to the youth who need them most.*
- *Hold all providers accountable for youth reaching the shared outcomes as a way to measure improvement across the community, not just by program. Develop a few key outcomes that all programs and providers contribute to.*
- *Allow greater flexibility across funding streams and reduce barriers to coordination so that providers can quickly and nimbly meet the needs of youth. Provide multiple pathways to postsecondary education and careers that meet the needs of the youth population.*
- *Support the role of intermediaries, which have a key role to play in convening providers, developing shared goals, providing capacity building, building public will, accessing resources, collecting data, and providing consistent leadership.*
- *Ensure that the full range of education and youth service providers, such as afterschool, alternative education, employers, postsecondary educational institutions, community-based organizations, and social services, are involved as partners.*
- *Place a greater value on the attainment of not only academic skills but the full range of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal resources that are necessary for career success, civic engagement, and lifelong learning. Promote the development and use of assessments that measure more than academic skills, in addition to ensuring academic rigor.*
- *Support initiatives that increase learning opportunities that occur during out-of-school hours or that use the school-day hours differently to allow learning and skill development in the nonacademic areas. Use out-of-school activities to engage youth, reinforce and enhance school learning, and provide time for college and career exposure and awareness and assistance with the college application process.*
- *Help youth who have left high school to reconnect to education, postsecondary education, and career training by providing various pathways to success. Design programs around the needs of the youth and ensure rigor and high expectations for all.*
- *Build the capacity of the adults across the system and ensure that they are aware of positive youth development principles. Help create a culture of respect and high expectations between adults and youth.*
- *Collect and use data from the various systems to identify student needs, as well as program effectiveness and impact, both formative and summative. Ensure that adults are trained to use data effectively and that data is reported to the public on a regular basis.*



Communities across the U.S. are trying to address these items and build comprehensive systems to serve youth. Continuity of leadership and availability of social capital, human resources, funds, and time are all key factors in building this type of integrated system. AYPF has worked with many policy-makers and practitioners who are leading efforts to create such holistic and comprehensive systems to support youth. Over the past year, we have showcased efforts and initiatives that embrace the themes, ideas, and recommendations from our vision. The next section describes a number of AYPF activities from the past year that expand and build upon these ideas and provide concrete examples of comprehensive policies, programs, and strategies to support needy youth.

AYPF Activities Supporting the Youth Policy Vision

AYPF released our youth policy vision and logic model in the publication, *Success at Every Step: How 23 Programs Support Youth on the Path to College and Beyond*, in October 2009. *Success at Every Step* also describes 23 programs that have third-party evaluations, that demonstrate success in helping youth prepare for postsecondary education and careers, and that fit into our youth policy vision. The programs that are included represent various approaches to serving youth, from school-wide reform models (such as First Things First and Talent Development High School); school-based programs targeted to certain students (such as AVID-Advancement Via Individual Determination and Upward Bound Math-Science); innovative high school models (such as Early College High Schools); afterschool and community programs (such as After School Matters and Hillside Work-Scholarships Connection); dropout recovery programs (such as Diploma Plus and National Guard Youth ChalleNGe); and college success programs (such as Opening Doors and Digital Bridge). Each program reflects various aspects of the logic model, such as the provision of comprehensive services, developing college knowledge or academic success skills, or preparing for careers.

AYPF disseminated the youth policy vision, examples of successful programs, and policy recommendations included in *Success at Every Step* in various ways over the past year, including a half-day Washington, DC forum, as well as a widely-attended national webinar. AYPF also wrote articles for the National Association of State Boards of Education's *The State Education Standard* and the *New Directions in Youth Development* journals, and staff made numerous presentations on the publication. Based on feedback we have received, national, state, and local policymakers understand the value of the youth policy framework and the comprehensive approach to serving youth, and several communities and state legislators are using the vision to craft their own systemic responses.



“I consider AYPF's forums and publications to be one of the best resources for educators and policy makers. You provide comprehensive information that is research-based which allows participants to apply or extend their learning. You do EXCELLENT work. Thank you. ”

In addition to the release of *Success at Every Step* and dissemination of the report, during the past year we conducted other programs and activities that demonstrate aspects of our logic model and youth policy vision. Our work on dropout prevention and recovery is directly linked to the logic model, in that we showcase community and non-profit providers that identify youth who have dropped out or are at-risk of dropping out and then reconnect them to education, training, and postsecondary education. Baltimore, Boston, Newark, and Philadelphia were all showcased as communities that are developing multiple pathways to high school graduation and college readiness and that have community-wide partnerships to guide efforts to serve high need students. Our forums also highlighted Big Picture Learning and Gateway to College that provide youth with wraparound supports, intensive guidance and counseling, strong connections to adults, rigorous and relevant coursework, and partnerships between schools and community organizations to help them be prepared for college success.

One Capitol Hill forum showcased the Community Education Pathways to Success model that targets out-of-school youth who want to earn a GED by addressing low literacy and math skills through integration of youth development, social supports, and career-related services. Through partnerships with community-based organizations and community colleges, youth are supported in completing their education, entering college, finding work, and contributing to their communities.

A series of forums explored another aspect of the logic model: that of preparing students for a rapidly changing world with a broad skill set, not just academic skills. Given the demands of the 21st Century, students must master interdisciplinary, higher-order thinking skills that they can apply to real-life situations. Preparing students to be citizens and workers in our global economy requires new methods of teaching and assessment designed to facilitate critical thinking and problem-solving skills and to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. A forum explored new ways to think about teaching and assessment and showcased the New Tech Network, a network of public high schools that has pioneered the use of collaborative, project-based learning and developed a new approach to teacher preparation so teachers can help students learn those skills.

Another forum in the series described the Urban Academy in New York City that uses inquiry-based instruction that revolves around discussion as opposed to lectures. Urban Academy teachers engage in class-wide discussion, group-based reading of text, and one-on-one assistance to students when

needed. Students must meet certain performance criteria to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, including a literary essay that demonstrates the ability to do comparative and analytical thinking; an extended mathematics problem-solving project; an original science experiment; a related research paper and oral presentation; and a social science research paper that demonstrates use of evidence and the ability to handle multiple perspectives.

A forum held on the role of apprenticeships in helping youth develop the skills needed for college and careers by providing learning opportunities outside of school, experiencing real work, and interacting with professionals continued the theme of developing a wide range of skills. This forum highlighted how apprenticeships engage high school students through hands-on learning and unique experiences under the guidance of skilled adults. For instance, in an apprenticeship, youth learn about themselves in new contexts, in situations that exist outside of school where perhaps they can feel more comfortable being themselves and gain confidence; understand the cycle of work; learn what it takes to prepare for tasks; become adept at working with uncertainty; move forward in the face of obstacles; and contribute to a larger effort, all valuable skills for careers. The Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program, which has been in existence since 1991, has served approximately 2,000 youth every year and aligns the required competencies for apprenticeship programs with what employers want in future employees as well as incorporating required academic content. Youth and employers express great satisfaction about the program and highly value the real-life learning experiences.

A large part of the logic model relates to what happens to youth outside of the school environment. Youth need access to safe, productive, meaningful, relevant, and developmentally appropriate activities, supported by competent, caring adults in the non-school hours. Some of the non-school hours can be effectively used to supplement, augment, enhance, and enrich classroom learning, and some of them can be used to expose youth to new activities and

“Keep up the very good work and wide-range of topics for forums, etc. Within the Washington DC metro area, AYPF provides unique opportunities for professional growth and development on education and youth issues. This is accomplished in a way that takes account of busy schedules and limited time.”

ideas or help them plan and prepare for college and careers. AYPF uses the term “expanded learning opportunities” (ELOs) to encompass activities in the non-school hours and has showcased numerous examples of effective ELOs. Some ELOs increase learning time by 30% by creating partnerships with community organizations to redesign the traditional school day and structure. Other approaches add hours to the school year for enrichment opportunities, increased instruction, and time for teacher planning and professional development. Still other ELOs offer youth internships or apprenticeships, connections to employers as mentors, college guidance and planning, college visits, and opportunities to learn new hobbies or pursue interests in the afterschool hours.

Native American youth face particular challenges to healthy development, high school graduation, and college success. To learn more about strategies to help tribal youth succeed, AYPF wrote case studies of five Tribal Youth Programs (TYP) supported by the U.S. Department of Justice and released the findings in a report entitled, *Strengthening Indian Country Through Tribal Youth Programs*. The federal TYP grant program helps tribes develop and implement culturally sensitive programs in five categories, including prevention services to impact risk factors for delinquency, interventions for court-involved tribal youth, improvements to the tribal juvenile justice system, alcohol and drug abuse prevention programs, and mental health program services. The grants are used by the tribes to provide a wide range of services to youth, usually in the afterschool hours, that allow young people to be in safe environments, learn more about the history and culture of their tribe, and support their academic success. In most cases, the TYPs provide multiple services for youth, involve a range of community partners, and create strong mentoring relationships between youth and adults.

These are only highlights of the past year’s programming, but they are illustrative of how our events bring our logic model to life and give policymakers concrete examples of effective programs and policies that are helping youth be college- and career-ready and good citizens.

Building Strategic Collaborations to Advance Youth Policy

Just as the logic model values the role of various providers in developing young people, AYPF values its partners in our work with education and youth policymakers. Through these partnerships, AYPF has broadened and deepened our

knowledge and effectively reached a diverse audience of policy-makers and practitioners. Over the course of this year, AYPF has worked hard to strengthen our relationships with key partners as well as foster partnerships with many newer organizations in the educational policy field.

Through the relationships with our partners, AYPF is able to both gather information relevant to our work as well as effectively disseminate our own work to a broader audience. Our partners provide us with a range of content area expertise based upon their own work along with innovative practices from the field. By publicizing AYPF's work through our partners, we have garnered attention from a wider range of state-level policymakers. In addition, we have also seen many of our materials being shared with state-level counterparts by many of our national partners.

AYPF has continued to partner with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) on a variety of activities and continues to value NGA's expertise in communicating with governors' offices. Given our long-standing partnership with NGA, both organizations have been able to effectively leverage our resources to support and promote each other's work. For example, NGA's *State Strategies to Achieve Graduation for All* initiative (a policy academy for teams of state policymakers) attracted a larger number of qualified state applicants than anticipated. Although NGA was not able to accept all of these promising state teams in their academy, they did want to provide support and asked AYPF to organize a study tour for four of the states that could not be included. Utilizing resources from our grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the C.S. Mott Foundation, AYPF organized a study tour to Boston, Massachusetts in March 2010 for these four state teams aimed at discussing state strategies for reducing and recovering dropouts. The trip focused on the key themes of utilizing data to both understand who dropouts are, where they are located and strategies to build political will and align state agencies' work to support a portfolio of options to ensure all students have a pathway to education and/or employment training. To ensure the participating state teams were able to take advantage of multiple resources, our partnership for this work also included America's Promise Alliance (APA) of which AYPF and NGA are both signed partners. America's Promise added their knowledge gained from hosting 100 summits in states and cities related to dropout prevention and recovery and also afforded our state teams an opportunity to participate in a training organized in Washington, DC focused on specific strategies to build capacity to address the dropout problem at both the state and local level.

AYPF has maintained and grown our partnership with the Data Quality Campaign (DQC). We continue to work collaboratively with the DQC to provide learning exchanges around critical topics in building and utilizing longitudinal data and data systems. We have formalized our partnership so that we will provide at least two learning exchanges each year; this agreement builds upon each organization's strengths to ensure participants have a rich learning experience that links data use to their state's overall reform agenda. A trip in April 2010 to Little Rock, Arkansas attracted seven state teams to learn and discuss the critical issue of role-based access to data. Our participants appreciated our comprehensive approach to the topic that included foci on both the technical and policy elements necessary to build a data system that serves the complete range of stakeholder needs.

"I have found AYPF to be the best, credible, and comprehensive source on youth development and education informing policymakers and practitioners in Washington DC."

Our neighbor, the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC), with whom we share our building, continues to be a valuable partner for AYPF. Given our proximity, we often rely on NYEC as a springboard for ideas, but this past year we found ways to formalize our idea-sharing through a series of roundtable discussions for our staff and other key partners related to understanding accountability and measuring success with struggling students and disconnected youth. Our organizations were able to capitalize on our respective relationships within the education sphere to ensure we had a diverse group of practitioners and policy influencers to ensure a rich discussion that provided each organization with valuable information to inform our future work.

AYPF has spent much of this past year supporting emerging organizations as a way both to enhance their efforts as well as broaden our own content knowledge. Our partnership with the Campaign for High School Equity (CHSE), a coalition of civil rights organizations, has broadened our target audience to include those groups as they become more active in the educational policy arena. In partnership with CHSE, AYPF has developed a year-long series of discussion group meetings focused on Closing Persistent Achievement Gaps and Preparing All Youth for Long-Term Success. These meetings bring together leaders from traditional education policy organizations and CHSE members, which include the National Urban League, the National Council of La Raza, the League of United

Latin American Citizens, and the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. The discussion group series aims to develop a strong peer-to-peer network of advocates with a shared commitment to closing achievement gaps. These convenings draw upon the expertise of the CHSE member organizations in supporting the success of students from under-represented groups, and they also allow participants to explore promising practices and policy levers.

“AYPF keeps us informed, educated, and allows for dialog opportunities that *make a difference.*”

The National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), a professional organization for high schools and colleges that fosters and supports rigorous concurrent enrollment, asked AYPF to be a partner in their efforts to expand their policy work at the federal level. AYPF hosted an informal lunchtime discussion for key national organizations as well as representatives from the Department of Education, which provided NACEP an opportunity to introduce themselves and their accreditation process. In addition, AYPF’s support of both Complete College America (CCA) and the Association for High School Innovation (AHSI) has allowed both of these organizations to gain access to a federal policymaker audience. We are at the beginning stages of our collaboration with these organizations and expect these relationships/partnerships to continue to grow and thrive in future years.

By working with these and other partner organizations, AYPF is able to reach more policymakers with its message, but is also able to encourage others to take a holistic, comprehensive, and integrated approach to serving youth. Additionally, many of our partners provide on-the-ground examples of schools, communities, and youth providers that demonstrate a commitment to our youth policy vision.

Strategies for Enhancing Communication with Policymakers

Communicating with policymakers is always a challenge. They are pulled in many directions, have hectic schedules, and oftentimes have limited background knowledge of the issues. There are many organizations that provide information to policymakers in addition to AYPF, so the

amount of information available can be overwhelming. Along with many other organizations, we have examined our communication strategies to determine how we can provide valuable information in concise formats that policymakers can use effectively. While we continue to provide Washington, DC-based forums and study tours to schools and youth programs around the country, we also have begun using some new strategies to reach busy policymakers.

One strategy has been to offer webinars in order to reach a national audience beyond the Washington, DC area. This has allowed state and local policymakers and practitioners access to our high quality events in real-time or from archives of the event. We have received very positive feedback from individuals around the country who are extremely pleased to participate in our webinars and get first-hand information. We also know that busy Washingtonians access the materials on a regular basis.

We also have videotaped a number of our Capitol Hill forums and have made that information available on our website and on YouTube. In addition to posting the full version of the event, we have also conducted short, concise interviews with key leaders to provide easily-accessible clips of relevant information. We intend to produce more videos of our events.

In addition to providing webinars and video of events, we have explored how to maximize the study tours for specific audiences. As our experience in organizing site visits for federal and state policymakers expands and deepens, we are increasingly able to craft well-developed trips during which the level of policy conversation and discussion is tightly targeted to the type of policymaker. Because of our sensitivity to the distinctions between federal, state, and local

"I can't tell you often enough how much these trips have informed me and my work. There is nothing quite like seeing the programs/initiatives first hand and being able to speak with those who have developed and implemented them. In addition, the sharing with other state [policymakers] and your own colleagues sometimes just doesn't happen "back at the ranch." This [study tour] has been like a mini brain-storming retreat for me and my colleagues."

policies, we are able to calibrate our programming to meet their needs so they have relevant information to help them do their job more effectively. We have developed effective strategies to allow teams of state policymakers to share, learn, and engage with each other during study tours, with the ultimate goal of more effective policymaking, coordination, and alignment of efforts when they return to their state. We have also developed a new format for issue briefs that concisely summarizes an issue area, draws upon lessons learned from forums and study tours, and provides relevant policy recommendations.

The feedback we continue to collect from our event participants indicates high levels of satisfaction. We are currently planning to conduct a third-party evaluation to determine the extent to which AYPF has been successful in educating policymakers about youth issues and how the information we provide has influenced policymakers. This data helps us provide consistently high quality services to policymakers, and we are interested in using social media and other tools and technology to continue to effectively serve policymakers.



Closing

We see a growing interest in many of the concepts included in the AYPF youth policy vision and logic model, as more people understand that improving high school graduation and college-going rates rests on helping our young people develop their full potential. Schools are a critical part of this equation, but so are families, caregivers, community- and faith-based and social service organizations, colleges, and employers. We need to find ways to involve these providers in an organized manner so that all students get the support and help they need. AYPF will continue to advocate for comprehensive efforts to support our youth and the policies to bring about such change in future years.