

American Youth Policy Forum
Compendium: Supporting College- and Career-Readiness for All Youth
Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
2008-2009

With the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the American Youth Policy Forum will develop a *compendium* that highlights a variety of school-based and out-of-school models supporting college- and career-readiness, particularly for youth from disadvantaged communities and those who are traditionally underserved by the education system. This compendium will showcase innovative programs and schools that have evaluative data and information on positive student outcomes such as increased high school graduation rates, college enrollment, persistence in postsecondary education, and future employment. The compendium will also identify common elements of promising approaches and provide policymakers with recommendations on how to support, sustain, and expand effective educational models that better prepare youth from diverse communities for full participation in the world beyond high school. The final product will be made available in print and on the web to policymakers, practitioners, and advocates at the national, state, and local levels.

What is an AYPF compendium?

AYPF compendia are synopses of current research and program evaluations. Their value is in the careful review, analysis, and cogent summary of the research we provide for policymakers. In addition to studying and summarizing the research, we gather information from program managers and researchers to ensure that we present the findings clearly and fairly. AYPF has extensive experience developing seven previous compendia on various education and youth policies, all of which have been well-received and widely used. Each compendium contains 20-30 summaries of programs and evaluations, and the publications' length is approximately 150 pages.

What is the role of the Advisory Group?

The Advisory Group will be comprised of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers with expertise in secondary school reform, college access efforts, and strategies for closing the achievement gap. This group will help inform the scope of analysis for the compendium and criteria we will use to select programs, identify research to be included, and provide a context for the framing of policy recommendations.

The group will meet at the beginning of the project and near the end to review the first draft of the compendium. Advisors from outside the Washington, DC area and those who are unable to attend the meetings in person will still have multiple opportunities to participate in the development of the compendium. Possible means of involvement include: email communication, conference calls, researcher assistance with the review of the evaluation summaries throughout the process, and dissemination of the publication through members' networks. AYPF will also explore the possibility of additional meetings of smaller groups of Advisors to inform specific topic areas or sections of the compendium.

What will this compendium include, and how will it be formatted?

This compendium will bridge the realms of comprehensive school reform models, community-based programs, and interventions targeting specific groups of disadvantaged students in order to distill best practices across an entire system of supports for college- and career- readiness.

Potential programs include college-access initiatives, career and technical education models, and dropout recovery efforts, as well as exemplary public middle and high schools serving disadvantaged communities. Each program will be summarized in two to four pages, in order to provide policymakers with concise descriptions of more complicated and comprehensive research findings. In addition to a brief synopsis of the program that illuminates its theory of change, these summaries will contain: information about the target population; a description of the research, evaluation, or data collection; the research findings; an analysis of contributing factors to success; and contact information.

AYPF will identify common characteristics that promote the effectiveness of these programs, drawing on the existing knowledge base on school redesign and adding new insights garnered from our inclusive lens. We will also summarize the differences between the programs, and conclude with an analysis of the roles of various types of models, partnerships, and leaders in promoting educational equity and increased opportunities for all youth. As opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach, this framework recognizes that diverse types of interventions may prove most effective for different communities and individual students. The compendium will provide decision-makers with a wealth of effective models, forming the research base for a college-ready agenda and highlighting important policy supports for a prepared workforce.

What challenges do we anticipate?

The lack of program evaluations and rigorous data continues to pose a challenge in the field of education and youth policy. Based on AYPF's experience developing compendia on other types of youth programs, we suspect there will be a limited number of scientifically rigorous evaluations. As many of the models we may wish to highlight are particularly recent innovations, they may not have longitudinal data or established evaluations. Many programs also do not disaggregate data by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or special needs status of students, making it difficult to establish their effectiveness in closing the achievement gap. AYPF will make every effort to identify program evaluations with high standards of research quality, prioritizing those using control or comparison groups and conducted by independent evaluators. We will also consider promising programs with strong in-house data, keeping in mind the limitations of their findings. We will also address the data collection needs of the field in our conclusions.

Because this compendium will take a broad focus and draw from multiple types of interventions supporting the goals of college- and career-readiness, AYPF anticipates some challenges specifying criteria for inclusion and framing the conclusions of this initiative. We will draw upon the research and policy expertise of our advisory committee members to help us articulate relevant parallels between the types of programs. Furthermore, AYPF's overarching youth development framework provides a foundation for a multi-faceted approach to overcoming the barriers to achievement faced by many students.

How will the compendium be disseminated?

The compendium will be widely disseminated to national, state, and local policymakers, practitioners, and researchers both in hard copy and on the web and through our partner networks. We plan to print 3,000 hard copies and deliver them to offices on Capitol Hill and mail them to key individuals in government agencies, national, state, and local policymakers, education and youth organizations, researchers, and the media.