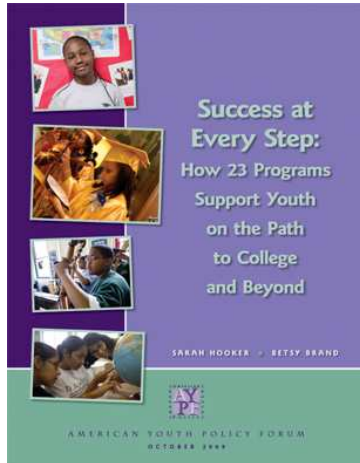




# Success at Every Step: How 23 Programs Support Youth on the Path to College and Beyond

***New Publication***



This publication is designed to help policymakers and practitioners learn about programs and policies that have been effective in helping youth become ready for college and careers. Twenty-three evaluations of programs that support youth are briefly summarized to give policymakers and practitioners a quick understanding of the research findings on effective programs along with a description of why the programs work.

AYPF takes a broad view of the concept of college- and career-readiness, expanding it to include the goal of postsecondary success, not just access to higher education. By this definition, readiness means being prepared to successfully complete credit-bearing college coursework or industry certification without remediation, having the academic skills and motivation necessary to persist and progress in postsecondary education, and having identified career goals and the necessary steps to achieve them. Readiness also requires the developmental maturity to thrive in the increasingly independent worlds of postsecondary education and careers, the cultural knowledge to understand the expectations of the college environment and labor market, and the employer-desired skills to succeed in an innovation-based economy. In order for students to be successful in this broader framework of expectations, they need rigorous academic preparation, college and career planning, academic and social supports, employer-desired skills, and personal resources.

## ***Methodology for Selecting Evaluations***

In selecting evaluations to include for analysis, AYPF looked for comparative, third-party evaluations of programs that aimed to help youth progress along a pathway to postsecondary success. AYPF also sought out evaluations that were published within the past five years, and all of the included program evaluations had a control or comparison group design, allowing researchers to examine the outcomes of the program participants relative to similar students or schools. The included programs span the fields of comprehensive school reform, career and technical education, expanded learning opportunities, college access, dual enrollment, and postsecondary student services.

## ***Logic Model***

AYPF has developed a comprehensive logic model, based on the analysis of the evaluations, to describe the process of preparing youth for postsecondary education, careers, and long-term success. The logic model starts with the assumption that the long-term goal of education is to ensure career success, civic engagement, and the capacity for lifelong learning for all young people. In order to achieve these goals, youth need a broad array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal resources, termed the Foundation for Learning and Growth. The Foundation for Learning and Growth consists of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, such as academic

***AYPF believes that the long-term goal of education is to ensure career success, civic engagement, and the capacity for lifelong learning for all young people.***

content, problem-solving and goal-setting skills, and college and career knowledge, as well as Personal Resources, including motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience.

The logic model describes the various types of educational services and supports that young people need in order to develop this foundation, and provides a visual representation of the interconnected roles of the various providers and systems—including family and caregivers, schools, social service providers, community-based organizations, employers, and institutions of higher education—that impact a young person’s trajectory. This framework demonstrates that building college- and career-readiness is a multifaceted process requiring attention to many dimensions of development, and it also spells out short- and intermediate-term outcomes that students are expected to achieve in their journey.

### ***Elements of Success***

The 23 programs exhibit a number of common practices, or Element of Success, that may contribute to their effectiveness in improving educational, career-related, and developmental outcomes. Ten Elements of Success have been identified and are grouped into two broad categories: Programmatic Elements of Success and Structural and System-Focused Elements of Success.

**Programmatic Elements of Success** include Rigor and Academic Support, Relationships, College Knowledge and Access, Relevance, Youth-Centered Programs, and Effective Instruction.

**Structural and System-Focused Elements of Success** include Partnerships and Cross-Systems Collaboration; Strategic Use of Time; Leadership and Autonomy; and Effective Assessment and Use of Data.

### ***Outcomes***

The programs included in this compendium have a positive impact on young people’s preparation for postsecondary success at various stages of their educational, professional, and personal development. Participants in these programs are more likely to be engaged in school, take advanced courses, apply for financial aid, enroll in college, earn postsecondary degrees, and find employment. The most common outcomes measured in the compendium can be organized into the categories of Secondary-Level Academic Outcomes, Planning for College and Careers, Postsecondary Academic Outcomes, Career-Related Outcomes, and Developing Personal Resources.

The most commonly observed findings were academic outcomes in middle or high school. Overall, 20 evaluations measured academic outcomes at the secondary level, and all 20 demonstrated evidence of effectiveness. Many of the programs in the compendium aimed to increase college access. Five evaluations specifically examined behaviors and contextual knowledge related to planning for postsecondary education, each of which had a positive impact in this area. Nine evaluations demonstrated a positive impact on college-level academic outcomes, including college enrollment, persistence, grades, credit accumulation, and degree completion. Only four evaluations measured career-related outcomes, and three demonstrated

***These programs increase the number of young people who graduate from high school prepared to make informed decisions about education and training and ready to succeed in college and careers.***

statistically significant impacts in this area. Nine evaluations measured outcomes related to the development of personal resources (such as self-efficacy, student engagement, and reduced negative behaviors), and all nine demonstrated positive outcomes.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

Policymakers at the national and state levels are in key positions to help create an overall framework and expectation of college- and career-readiness for all students. They can help establish system-wide goals, based on the long-term outcomes identified in the logic model, 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, across various funding streams, should result in greater coherence and ultimately more resources targeted at a common challenge.

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In addition to these general recommendations, AYPF suggests the following guidelines for policy:

- Support collaboration among providers to address the needs of students in a comprehensive manner by allowing greater flexibility in funding, reducing barriers to coordination, and supporting the role of intermediaries that help pull services and providers together.
- Ensure that the full range of education and youth service providers, such as afterschool, alternative education programs, employers, colleges, community-based organizations, and social services, are involved as partners in the college- and career-readiness system.
- Place a value on the attainment of not only academic skills, but also 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, including the competencies that are valued by employers.
- Support initiatives that use time to increase learning opportunities that occur during out-of-school hours or that use the school-day hours differently with the purpose of adding time for learning and skill development in nonacademic areas. Some of these approaches could involve the blending of secondary and postsecondary learning opportunities to accelerate learning.
- Ensure that youth who drop out of middle or high school have opportunities to reconnect to education opportunities that lead into college and career pathways, and that the programs are targeted to their needs and status.
- Build the capacity of the adults within the various systems so they have a commitment to high expectations for all youth and the skills to provide high-quality services to young people based on their needs and interests.
- Collect data from various systems over time to assess progress toward long-term outcomes and use the data to improve programs and services.

## Programs Profiled in the Publication

- 1) After School Matters
- 2) Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)
- 3) Career Academies
- 4) Communities in Schools
- 5) Citizen Schools
- 6) Digital Bridge Academy
- 7) Diploma Plus
- 8) Dual Enrollment in Two States: Florida and New York City
- 9) Early College High Schools
- 10) Enhanced Math in Career and Technical Education
- 11) First Things First
- 12) Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)
- 13) Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection
- 14) Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)
- 15) National Guard Youth ChalleNGe
- 16) Opening Doors and Enhanced Opening Doors at Chaffey College
- 17) Opening Doors Learning Communities at Kingsborough Community College
- 18) Project Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (GRAD)
- 19) Talent Development High School
- 20) Talent Search
- 21) Upward Bound
- 22) Upward Bound Math-Science
- 23) Washington State Achievers

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