



**Workforce Related Initiatives Report for the
Oklahoma Legislature Public Safety Committee
Ongoing Data Collection in Relation to Juvenile Justice and Effective
Use of Research and Evaluation Findings
October 8, 2014**

This report illustrates some of the workforce-related programs in the US that have been demonstrated to be successful in assisting at-risk youth, especially minority men, at becoming college and career ready. We assume that the best case for a young person's success is to graduate from high school and complete at least some post-secondary education or job training, in a demand industry, and then enter the labor market with the skills, including "soft skills" to succeed.

What we know anecdotally, through our own youth programs, about successful programs. Successful programs must include:

- Exposure to work which includes being paid and which is hopefully leveraged into full-time, permanent employment that is provided by the employer, unsubsidized.
- Includes wrap around services, including mental health services that don't look like mental health services (i.e. group sessions). Cognitive behavior therapy address impulsivity, and drug/alcohol counseling is also often warranted.
- Include mentors who are demographically matched to the student.
- Include presentations from recent graduates to whom the students can relate and with whom they can share an attainable vision.
- Includes development of social cognitive skills or "soft skills."

Proven Solutions

Each one of the solutions described below is evidence-based.

- **Becoming a Man – Sports Edition** provides young men in Chicago in grades 7th through 10th with regular interaction with positive adult role models, after-school programming, and cognitive based therapy in a group setting. The program focuses on developing skills related to emotional regulation, control of stress response, improved social-information processing, interpersonal problem solving, goal setting and attainment, and personal integrity. Additionally, the program imparts a realistic, socially responsible view of adult masculinity to youth whose social environments often promote competing, more aggressive norms. Youth were offered an opportunity to participate in 27 one-hour small group sessions that met once per week during the school day. Each session was designed to develop a specific skill and included a homework assignment. After school sports were designed to reinforce conflict resolution skills and the social and emotional learning objectives of the Becoming a Man curriculum, as well as to increase program attendance. Sports varied from school to school and included wrestling, martial arts, archery, weight lifting, boxing and handball.
 - **Demographics and Results** – Study participants were identified as being at elevated risk for violence involvement or school dropout on the basis of GPA, attendance and other factors. Over 1/3 of the study youth had been arrested at some point prior to the start of the program. The average study participant had a D+ GPA and had missed more than six weeks of school in the year prior to the study. Participants showed a 44 percent decrease in violent crime arrests during the program, and participants also became more engaged with school, an impact that grew even larger in the year after the program ended. The program also reduced the likelihood of attending a school inside a juvenile justice setting in the year after the program by 53 percent. The program cost \$1,100 per participant, while its impacts on criminal behavior generated benefits to society that are valued on the order of \$4,300 to \$34,000 per participant, depending on how we measure the costs of crime, making the return on investment at least 3:1.
 - **Oklahoma Advantages** – Oklahoma has a large capacity and love for sports of almost all kinds. Boomer Sooner!
 - **Source:** MDRC, “Career Academies, Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment & transitions to adulthood; MDRC Boosting the Life Chances of Young Men of Color; BAM – Sports Edition University of

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Chicago Crime Lab Research & Policy Brief, July 2012; University of Chicago Press Release “Randomized Trial Finds Counseling and Mentoring Program in Chicago Reduces Youth Violence and Improves School Engagement,” July 13, 2012.

- **Career Academies** provide instruction in small learning communities and offer youth both academics and exposure to a particular occupation or sector. They partner with local employers to provide concrete work-based learning opportunities.
 - **Demographics & Results** – For students at high risk of dropping out, the Academies increased the likelihood of staying in school through the end of twelfth grade, improved attendance, and increased the number of credits toward graduation. The Career Academies produced sustained earnings gains that averaged 11 percent more per year for Academy group members than for individuals in the non-Academy group. These labor market impacts were concentrated amount young men. Through a combination of increased wages, hours worked, and employment stability, real earnings for young men in the Academy group increased by \$3,731 (17%) per year, or nearly \$30,000 over eight years.
 - **Oklahoma advantages** – Multiple career academies already exist in Oklahoma, especially through the CareerTech system, though they do not necessarily target high-risk youth or meet the standards of the Career Academies in the MDRC study.
 - **Source:** MDRC, “Career Academies, Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment & transitions to adulthood; MDRC Boosting the Life Chances of Young Men of Color.
- **Year Up** serves young people 18 to 24, almost all of whom have a high school diploma or GED and provides a year of intensive supports geared to helping them land jobs in better paying industries, like information technology. For the first six months of the program, students develop technical and professional skills in the classroom. Students then apply those skills during the second six months on an internship at one of Year Up’s corporate partners. Students earn college credits and a weekly stipend and are supported by staff advisors, professional mentors, dedicated social services staff, and a powerful network of community based partners. The program mixes intensive

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instruction in technical skills with instruction in communication and other professional skills, a paid stipend, and a six-month internship at a top company in their track.

- **Demographics & Results** - About 60 percent of sample members in a recent study were men and about 85 percent were black or Latino. A small random assignment evaluation of the program found that in the three years after exiting the program, participants earned about \$13,000 more than their control counterparts, primarily through higher wage jobs. Eighty-five percent of graduates are employed or attending college full-time within four months of completing the program.
 - **Oklahoma Advantages** – Via several different existing programs, we have all the pieces of the puzzle to make this program work.
 - **Source:** MDRC Boosting the Life Chances of Young Men of Color: Evidence of Promising Programs; <http://www.yearup.org/>
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- **Small Schools**, resulted from a series of high school reforms in New York City that included a new districtwide high school choice process for ninth graders, closure of more than 30 large, failing schools, and the opening of more than 200 small, nonselective high schools (small schools) designed to provide realistic choices for students with widely varying academic backgrounds. Over half the new small schools (123) created between 2002 and the fall of 2008 were intended to serve students in some of the district’s most disadvantaged communities and are located mainly in neighborhoods where large, failing high schools had been closed. They were all created through a competitive proposal process in which teachers, parents and community members came forward and formed school planning committees. Most oriented at least a portion of their school missions and curricula toward a specific academic, artistic, social justice, or professional theme. Most were founded in partnership with a local nonprofit organization or private employer that offered students relevant learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom and that provided the small school with additional staff support and resources. Almost all were provided additional philanthropic funds during their first 4 or 5 years and were offered special policy protections by the NYC Department of Education during their startup phase.
 - **Demographics & Results** – As noted above, over half the schools were in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and students as small schools are predominantly of color. The small schools raised graduation rates on average by nearly 10 percent, nearly all of which is accounted for by an increase in Regent Diplomas,

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the higher-level credential that requires students to pass five subject tests. The schools also boosted participants' college readiness as measured by increased passing rates for the English Regents Examination, which is used by the City University of New York to exempt incoming students from remedial English courses.

- **Oklahoma Advantages** – To be determined.
 - **Source:** MDRC Boosting the Life Chances of Young Men of Color: Evidence of Promising Programs; MDRC Sustained Progress: New Findings About the Effectiveness and Operation of Small Public High Schools of Choice in New York City
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- **Sector Based Employment & Training Programs** are programs tailored to the specific needs of employers within a specific industries or “sectors” that then connect graduates to job opportunities in those industries.
 - **Demographics & Results** – Public/Private Ventures did a study of these kinds of programs where half the study sample was male, 81 percent were African American or Latino, and about one-third were young adults aged 18 to 26. Participants earned 29 percent more than the control group the year after the program ended. Participants were also more likely to work consistently, at higher wages, and in jobs that were more likely to offer benefits.
 - **Oklahoma Advantages** – Transportation WorkAdvance is a very successful sector-based job training program in Tulsa.
 - **Source:** MDRC Boosting the Life Chances of Young Men of Color: Evidence of Promising Programs; Public/Private Ventures In Brief Job Training That Works May 2009

Other Factors & Resources

- **ReadyNation** is a membership organization of business leaders who work to strengthen businesses and the economy through proven investments in children and youth. They educate policy-makers and the public about research-based investments that will enable their businesses to compete in today's competitive global marketplace, build a foundation for lasting economic security, and help our nation's children get on the right track. They operate under the umbrella of the 501(c)3 non-profit, Council for a Strong America. <http://www.readynation.org/>
- **Restorative Justice: Resources for Schools**
 - <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/restorative-justice-resources-matt-davis>
 - <http://www.fixschooldiscipline.org/toolkit/educators/restorative/#>
 - <http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/BARJ/SCHOOL%20BARJ%20GUIDEBOOK.pdf>
 - For many reasons, our public schools have seen a major increase in disciplinary action in recent years that disproportionately affects students of color. A study published by the Justice Center of the Council of State Governments and the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University found that in Texas almost six out of 10 public school students were suspended or expelled at least one time between seventh and 12th grade. The study also found that 89 percent of African-American boys and 74 percent of Hispanic boys had received at least one discretionary violation—that is, a violation of the school's code of conduct—compared to 59 percent of white boys. After implementing Restorative Justice Practices, Denver Public Schools' suspensions fell forty percent. Other districts implementing restorative justice practices include Chicago, Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles.

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