

REDEFINING OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA:

College Readiness and College Completion

Key Takeaways

November 11, 2008

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

On November 11, 2008 the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation hosted a forum in Seattle to discuss college readiness and college completion in the United States.

As part of our ongoing commitment to hearing from our partners, we solicited feedback on the challenges and opportunities of our college-ready and postsecondary success strategies. This presentation summarizes the critical issues our partners identified during the forum.

Themes

Foster and Build Public Will

Build, Disseminate, and Act on Evidence

Use Technology to Improve Achievement

Focus on Students

Business is a Critical Partner

Foster and Build Public Will

- **Engage the public and move beyond the echo chamber**
- **Emphasize constituencies most impacted by the work**
 - **Especially parents and students**
- **Use emotional appeals to cultivate a sense of urgency and outrage**
- **Properly message and target evidence to move audiences**
- **Learn from the Obama campaign's strategies to engage the public**

Build, Disseminate, and Act on Evidence

- **To shape public will**
- **To inform policy**
- **To guide, replicate, and scale effective practices**
 - **E.g., teacher effectiveness**
 - **Implement evidence-based practices that improve outcomes**
 - **Identify skills and competencies teachers need to be effective at those practices**
- **Evidence is a partner to innovation and innovative practices must be measured**
- **Provide political cover for those acting on evidence even when unpopular**

Use Technology to Improve Achievement

- **Diagnose student strengths and weaknesses**
- **Target and customize instruction with DVDs and online lectures**
- **Use biggest problems like remediation as opportunities to drive innovative use of technology**
- **Provide greater system transparency to disseminate best practices and performance measures**
 - **Make user-friendly information about school and student performance broadly available**

Focus on Students

- **Research and understand student motivation**
- **Link standards and study to the real work of careers**
- **Make college an expectation for low-income students and families**
- **Provide information and access to college on-ramps early**
- **Develop tools to help parents and students drive for completion**
 - **Be clear on risks of balancing work and school**
- **Use changing demographics to inform communication with students**

Business is a Critical Partner

- **Urge business toward systemic intervention and away from mere ‘involvement’**
- **Encourage businesses to make the economic case for industry participation**
- **Encourage business leaders to build local consensus for ambitious education goals and hold partners accountable**
- **Recognize that employers can help or hinder students from degree completion**