

COLLEGE-READY FOR ALL *preparing students for success*

OUR MISSION

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we believe that every life has equal value and each individual should have the opportunity to live up to his or her potential. In the United States, the key to opportunity is education. Education is the great equalizer. It enriches our lives, informs our choices, and prepares us for meaningful employment and to contribute to the communities in which we live.

THE FOUNDATION'S U.S. PROGRAM IS FOCUSED ON TWO MAJOR INITIATIVES: ensuring that a high school education results in college readiness and that postsecondary education results in a degree or certificate with genuine economic value.

To date, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has invested nearly \$4 billion to transform the levels of college-readiness and success for America's young people, particularly for low-income and minority youth. We have helped demonstrate that with the right opportunities, all young people can achieve at high levels.

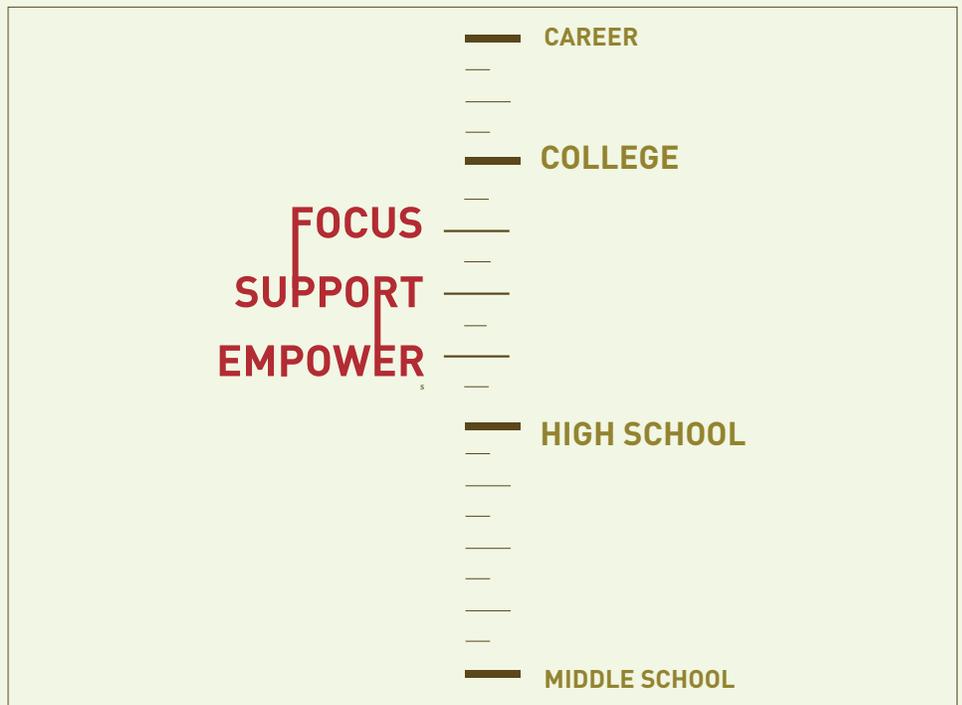
- In New York City, graduation rates in new small schools exceeded 70 percent in 2007, double the 35 percent rate posted by the schools they replaced and significantly higher than the district average
- The entire 2008 graduating classes at IDEA College Preparatory and YES Prep in Texas were accepted into four-year colleges
- The Gates Millennium Scholars program has awarded 12,000 scholarships to exceptionally talented low-income students of color since 2000, with nearly eight in 10 scholars graduating from college in five years

But despite such successes, the pace of change system-wide is simply too slow at a time when all students need to receive a high school education that provides them the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century. Today only 71 percent of American students earn a high school diploma, a figure that drops to fewer than six in 10 African-American and Hispanic students. The numbers drop dramatically again for those who graduate ready to succeed in college and work. A core lesson from our work is that we need to dramatically accelerate academic performance if we are to dramatically increase college readiness.

OUR APPROACH

WE HAVE SET AN AMBITIOUS GOAL FOR OUR WORK AND INVESTMENTS: TO HELP ENSURE THAT 80 PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADUATE COLLEGE-READY, WITH A FOCUS ON LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY YOUNG PEOPLE REACHING THIS TARGET.

In order for the foundation to meet the goal we have set, we must go deeper in our investments and work. Our strategy is based on evidence and on the lessons learned over the past eight years. We will continue to build on and accelerate our investments to date. We believe in order to achieve transformational results for students, we must focus on the heart of the educational experience: the learning partnership between teacher and student. Our strategy has three primary components:



OUR PLANNED INVESTMENTS

FOCUS ON SUCCESS AT A HIGHER LEVEL.

Our strategy will be to define more clearly the skills that lead to college readiness. We will work with policymakers to identify a priority set of fewer, clearer standards that define a ladder to college readiness to guide instruction. We will support and share methods and materials that help teachers and students master these skills. And we will develop fair measures to evaluate progress along the way. We will need alignment from state houses to schoolhouses to ensure that the work teachers and students do is totally focused on what is required for college readiness. We will make investments to:

- Better define the steps required to achieve college readiness and the interventions required to accelerate progress along that ladder
- Work with states and districts to identify a core set of standards and measures of student progress that are focused on the skills students need to succeed in higher education and good jobs
- Help create, identify, and spread the tools students and teachers need for powerful classroom learning, including student assignments and tests that reflect core standards
- Support the design and roll-out of better data systems to measure progress in each classroom, so teachers and students know whether classroom practices are working and so we can evaluate our investments

INNOVATE TO SUPPORT and engage students. Transforming the motivation and engagement of students is essential to accelerating their academic performance. We will invest in helping students develop the habits that research has found are tied to improved academic performance and greater college readiness. Taking advantage of all we now know about how people learn will also mean moving beyond the current system of schooling. That's why we are committed to supporting efforts to leverage technology to meet students when, where, and how they learn and to developing "next generation" models of education. The foundation plans to bring the same level of technological and scientific innovation to the problems of high schools that we have brought to the problems of global health and development. We will make investments to:

- Develop, identify, and spread select academic supports to motivate and engage students and ease the transition into high school
- Develop new pathways to graduation based on the demonstration of college-ready knowledge and skills rather than seat time and course credits
- Leverage new technology to better engage, motivate, and educate students
- Support the development of next generation school models that can take advantage of these technologies

EMPOWER EXCELLENT TEACHERS.

Accelerating academic performance requires increasing the concentration of effective teachers teaching poor children. Our first step will be to help design fairer, more powerful and more reliable means for measuring teacher effectiveness that can be agreed to by both teachers and researchers. We will then work with districts to reward teachers who meet more rigorous standards for tenure and ensure there are incentives for effective teachers who choose to work in high-need schools. At the same time, we will support efforts to provide all beginning teachers with the support they need every time they step into the classroom. We will make investments to:

- Design measures, observational and evaluation tools, and data systems that can fairly and accurately identify effective teaching
- Work with districts to develop management systems that retain teachers based on their performance, provide increased pay and greater roles and responsibilities for those who earn tenure, and concentrate excellent teachers where they are needed most
- Encourage, empower, and support excellent teachers to create a profession centered on evidence and the continuous improvement of student outcomes

UNDERLYING ALL THREE OF THESE INVESTMENTS ARE TWO RELATED AREAS OF FOCUS:

DATA. We need better data to tell us if we are making progress. We lack data in too many key areas: graduation rates, college-ready standards, effective teaching, to name a few that are essential to understanding what works in raising student achievement. We need evidence, and we need to go where it takes us.

ADVOCACY. Our nation won't achieve big improvements in college readiness or teacher effectiveness without a sense of urgency and the public and political will to take on tough problems in public education, to confront the barriers that we have skirted in the past, and to demand that doing things the way we have always done them is not acceptable.