Evaluation of the YouthBuild Pathways/ Social Innovation Fund Postsecondary Education Initiative

Final Report

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Finally, this study would not have been possible without the extraordinary, whole-hearted cooperation of the leadership, staff, and participants at the YouthBuild PSE sites. While too numerous to name individually, the YouthBuild Directors, program directors, PSE coordinators, counselors, teachers, and other staff all took time from their busy days to meet with us and share their perspectives on the YouthBuild PSE experience and to patiently collect surveys and other data required by the study. YouthBuild members at each site were equally willing to talk us through their histories and allow us to ask about their life circumstances, their goals, and their experiences at YouthBuild. All were remarkably thoughtful and candid. A common response from interviewees was, "We want to improve PSE so we want to help the study succeed." What came through loud and strong from the YouthBuild staff was their commitment to making a difference for YouthBuild's participants. It was a privilege to get to know and see so many of them in action over the past five years. What came through from the participants was how important a caring and committed staff was for them. We hope the report makes these messages clear.

YouthBuild's Postsecondary Pathways program was funded, in part, by a grant from the federally-funded Social Innovation Fund through a grant to New Profit, Inc. The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) was a program that received funding from 2010 to 2016 from the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that engages millions of Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the nation's volunteer and service efforts. Using public and private resources to find and grow community-based nonprofits with evidence of results, SIF intermediaries received funding to award subgrants that focus on overcoming challenges in economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. Although CNCS made its last SIF intermediary awards in fiscal year 2016, SIF intermediaries will continue to administer their subgrant programs until their federal funding is exhausted."

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the final report on the evaluation of the 2011-2016 YouthBuild USA Postsecondary Education (PSE) Initiative, a five-year effort to create new pathways to and through postsecondary education for low-income, educationally disadvantaged youth. The evaluation assessed the implementation of the PSE Initiative and its impacts on program participants between 2011 and 2016. The report provides a comprehensive look at program implementation, including background on program participants; characteristics of the YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners; the mix of programs and services that were put in place; challenges faced by sites (and participants) as they implemented the PSE "model"; and outcomes, in terms of changes in participant attitudes and participant progress to and through postsecondary education. It also integrates data from a separate national impact study of YouthBuild programs conducted by MDRC, which focused on YouthBuild participants who entered YouthBuild during two of the years covered by the implementation study (August 2011 through January 2013). Thus, this report is an effort to provide an in-depth understanding of the strengths and challenges of the YouthBuild PSE approach and a strong level of evidence of the program's participant impacts. It also considers YouthBuild USA's role in supporting the PSE sites and the prospects for the long-term sustainability of the PSE approach in the participating sites.

The intended audiences for this report are as follows:

- YouthBuild USA and YouthBuild sites nationally, which can use the findings to support program improvement and expansion.
- The Corporation for National and Community Service and its Social Innovation Fund, whose goals include building a research-based knowledge base on effective youth and education programming.
- Others interested in pathways to postsecondary education and training for low-income, out-of-school youth and young adults.

Background

YouthBuild USA is a national nonprofit organization that supports more than 260 local YouthBuild programs across the United States. YouthBuild programs each year help more than 10,000 low-income, out-of-school young people, ages 16 to 24, to earn a high school diploma or high school equivalency (HSE) credential and learn job skills (in the construction, health care, technology, and environmental fields). Supported mainly through federal and private funding, the programs are generally full time over a period of six to 24 months. While a fundamental goal of YouthBuild is to help young people acquire the education and skills they need for success in the labor market, they also emphasize leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive community of adults and youth in line with YouthBuild's mission to "unleash the intelligence and positive energy of low-income youth to rebuild their communities and their lives."

In 2011, YouthBuild USA received a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grant to expand its work to create new pathways to and through postsecondary education and training for low-income, out-of-school youth served by the national network of YouthBuild programs. The SIF grant built on two earlier YouthBuild initiatives: the National Schools Initiative (NSI), which increased the number of high school diploma-granting YouthBuild programs, and the Gates Foundation-funded Postsecondary Success Initiative (PSS), designed to build partnerships between education programs serving low-income, out-of-school youth and community colleges with the goal of helping young people complete a high school credential and enter and complete postsecondary education.[1] Under the SIF grant and additional matching funds from New Profit, Inc., the Open Society Foundations, and other funders, YouthBuild USA committed to engage twelve additional YouthBuild programs, serving approximately 650 participants per year, in its new PSE Initiative. The new sites would allow YouthBuild USA to continue to refine the approach developed through the Gates-funded pilot and to lay a foundation for expanding the number of YouthBuild programs moving participants into postsecondary education.[2]

As part of its work under the SIF grant, YouthBuild USA contracted with Brandeis University's Center for Youth and Communities (the Center) to conduct a five-year implementation study of the PSE Initiative. As noted above, the study was designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the operation of the PSE approach and the local YouthBuild/ postsecondary partnerships; generate "promising practices" or "what works" information about the PSE approach to inform refinement and future expansion; and provide a better understanding of the PSE process and its impacts from the participants' perspective. Key components of the study were regular visits to participating sites, including interviews with leadership, staff, program participants, and other key stakeholders at both the YouthBuild and postsecondary partner sites; visits to a small number of non-PSE YouthBuild programs to provide a comparative perspective on the PSE approach; surveys of YouthBuild participants; Center participation in cross-site meetings to observe training and support (and participate in cross-site exchanges); and analysis of YouthBuild/PSE reporting system data to document the program participants' characteristics, services provided, and participant outcomes.

Participant impacts for the PSE initiative were assessed through a partnership with MDRC which, along with Mathematica Policy Research and Social Policy Research Associates, is conducting a separate participant impact study as part of a national evaluation of YouthBuild funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The MDRC study is a rigorous, large-scale random assignment evaluation that includes 50 DOL and 17 CNCS-funded YouthBuild sites and a total sample of approximately 4,000 youth. Key elements of the study include three rounds of youth surveys (at 12, 30, and 48 months after enrollment) as well as administrative data and external data sources to assess impacts on educational attainment, employment, and a range of social behaviors

[1] The other national partners in the PSS initiative included the National Youth Employment Coalition, Jobs for the Future, and Brandeis University's Center for Youth and Communities.

[2] Seven of the twelve new sites were funded through the SIF grant; five were funded through grants from the Open Society Foundations and other funders.

and attitudes.[3] MDRC separately analyzed participant data from 12 current and former YouthBuild PSE sites participating in the national study to provide participant impact data for the PSE study.

The YouthBuild USA PSE Approach

The YouthBuild USA PSE initiative (and its predecessor, PSS) evolved in response to a growing recognition of the increasing importance of a postsecondary credential to long-term labor market success and the fact that only a small percentage of GED recipients, and low-income youth generally, enter postsecondary education and earn a degree. According to one study, less than half (47%) of 16-to 24-year-olds with a GED enter postsecondary education, and only 12% of those had graduated within eight years of entering.[4]

YouthBuild USA developed the PSE initiatives to address these issues and provide a pathway to and through postsecondary education for low-income, out-of-school youth aged 16-24. Building on the original YouthBuild model and on lessons learned during the PSS, the YouthBuild PSE approach integrates an explicit focus on helping participants to attain a postsecondary degree or credential (i.e., a certificate with recognized value in the labor market) and develops the program supports students need to achieve those degrees or credentials. The approach focuses on strengthening YouthBuild programs in three ways:

1. **Improving the academic preparedness of YouthBuild participants** by enhancing the YouthBuild educational programs to include more academically rigorous, college-related content; improved instructional practices; increased integration of reading, writing, and numeracy across the curriculum and across the program; and increased alignment of the YouthBuild educational curriculum with postsecondary entry requirements.
2. **Increasing college transition preparation and support** by creating a college-going culture within the YouthBuild programs (i.e., promoting the expectation that all participants will go on to some form of postsecondary education or training) backed by college awareness and planning activities, college counseling, financial aid planning and assistance, and bridge program activities that provide college exposure, orientation, and transition experiences for participants.
3. **Providing continued support into postsecondary** through regular engagement between YouthBuild staff and YouthBuild graduates as the graduates enter and move through postsecondary education; developing working partnerships with local postsecondary institutions to strengthen college advising and create programs of support for YouthBuild graduates; and creating peer-to-peer networks that provide ongoing engagement and support for YouthBuild alumni at postsecondary institutions.

[3] A detailed description of the MDRC study and its methodology can be found in the two reports produced by the study to date: Andrew Weigand et al. (2015). *Adapting to Local Context: Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation Implementation Study*. New York, NY: MDRC; and Cynthia Miller, Megan Millenky, et al. (2016). *Building a Future: Interim Impact Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation*. New York, NY: MDRC. Both documents are available at http://www.mdrc.org/project/youthbuild-evaluation#overview.

[4] For college-going by GED recipients, see Zhang, Guison-Dowdy, Patterson, & Song, *Crossing the Bridge: GED Credentials and Postsecondary Educational Outcomes (Year Two Report)*. Washington: GED Testing Service, 2011.

At the heart of the PSE approach is establishing close working partnerships between the YouthBuild PSE sites and one or more postsecondary institutions, generally a nearby community college. The partnerships are intended to promote mutual accountability and sustainability and to be multi-faceted and reciprocal. Ideally, YouthBuild programs and their partner institutions work together to enhance postsecondary preparation by strengthening curriculum and instruction, develop college bridge programs, and improve support systems for YouthBuild graduates at both the YouthBuild program and the postsecondary institution. The goal is to produce changes at both YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners that create a stronger pathway to postsecondary success for low-income, out-of-school youth.

The PSE Implementation Study: Research Questions and Methods

As noted above, the PSE implementation study was designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation and operation of the PSE approach and the local YouthBuild/ postsecondary partnerships and to generate the promising practices information needed to inform both refinement of the approach and future expansion. The study was guided by the following seven research questions, as detailed in the SIF Subgrantee Evaluation Plan (SEP):

1. Who are the YouthBuild PSE participants?
2. How is the PSE model being implemented across the YouthBuild SIF sites?
3. What are the key characteristics of the YouthBuild/Postsecondary partnerships?
4. What can we learn about "what works" in terms of designing and implementing programs to effectively prepare YouthBuild participants for postsecondary success?
5. What can we learn about the impact of the PSE program on participants' attitudes and goals?
6. What role has YouthBuild USA played in supporting the implementation of the PSE approach?
7. What can we learn about the sustainability of the PSE approach?

To address these questions the implementation study included both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. Key components were visits to participating sites, which included interviews with leadership, staff, program participants, program alumni, college partner representatives, and other key stakeholders, as well as observations of program activities; telephone interviews with program leadership; visits to a small number of non-PSE YouthBuild programs to provide a comparative perspective on the PSE approach; surveys of youth in two cohorts of YouthBuild PSE participants; participation in cross-site meetings to observe training and support and participate in cross-site exchanges; and analysis of YouthBuild/PSE reporting system data.[5]

PSE Participant Impact Study: Research Questions and Methods

The evaluation of PSE participant impacts was based on data on participants in 12 PSE sites drawn from MDRC's national impact evaluation of 70 YouthBuild programs. Key research questions for that study concerned the impact of YouthBuild programs on educational attainment, emotional development and

[5] The design and data collection procedures for the study were reviewed and approved by the Brandeis University Institutional Review Board, Protocol #13080.

identity development (including civic engagement), employment and earnings, and selected social and behavioral measures such as involvement with the criminal justice system, family formation, and engagement in risk behaviors. The study was a randomized control trial, with YouthBuild enrollees randomly assigned to participant and control groups. Data sources included participant surveys (at 12, 30, and 48 months) as well as use of administrative data from the program, external data sources (for college enrollment and employment data), and surveys of program administrators. MDRC conducted a separate analysis of the data for the PSE sites, which forms the basis for findings in this report.

Key Findings

Based on the data collected through June 2016, the end of the initiative, the two major findings for the five-year PSE Initiative are as follows:

The key *implementation* finding is that the YouthBuild PSE sites successfully put the major elements of the PSE approach into place and continued to refine and adjust their programs to meet their participants' needs. While each program had its own mix of strategies and services, reflecting differences in program context, population served, and postsecondary partnerships, all of the sites worked to enhance the academic preparation provided to their students, integrated college-going and postsecondary transition supports into their program culture and services, and created strategies aimed at providing support for students as they moved from YouthBuild into postsecondary education and training. All established partnerships with one or more postsecondary institutions, and most of those partnerships grew in scope over the course of the initiative as staff and administrators built relationships and learned more about one another's organizations.

The key *participant impact* finding from the MDRC study data is that participation in YouthBuild's PSE programs had a positive impact on participation in education and training services and on short-term educational outcomes, including postsecondary enrollment, for PSE participants. PSE participants were significantly more likely to have participated in a broad array of educational, job-training, and personal development services than control group members and to have done so for a longer period of time. These differences in service receipt were reflected in positive impacts for YouthBuild PSE participants on a number of core educational outcomes, including attainment of a high school diploma or HSE credential, enrollment in additional vocational education, and enrollment in postsecondary education. The data also showed positive impacts on measures of civic engagement and voluntarism (though no impact on most other measures of personal and social development). The participant impact data confirmed (at a strong level of evidence) achievement of the PSE initiative's primary goal: the creation of new pathways to postsecondary education for young people who had failed to succeed in the traditional education system.

Several other top-level findings are important to highlight:

1. **While increasing their emphasis on PSE access and completion, the PSE sites continued to serve a population of young people who faced major barriers to success.** Across the five years of the initiative, over half (56%) of the PSE participants tested below an 8th grade level at program entry and two thirds (66%) tested below the 8th grade level in math. Virtually all (99%) lacked a high school diploma or HSE credential at entry and were overage for their level of education. Most PSE

participants (70%) were first-generation college-goers, and significant numbers were young parents, were non-native English speakers, had prior juvenile or felony convictions, and/or were homeless. Based on the on-site interviews, many also brought barriers and experiences that were not reflected in the reporting system categories, such as exposure to serious trauma, learning disabilities, experience in the foster care system, and negative experiences in high school.

2. **While all sites implemented major elements of the PSE approach, they did so in tremendously diverse ways,** reflecting the diversity of the sites themselves (including organizational history and structure, funding, local context, and populations served) as well as their participant-centered approach, which includes individualized and therefore diverse strategies. PSE sites included relatively small "classic" YouthBuild programs (HSE credential preparation and construction training) as well as relatively large YouthBuild programs providing a charter or alternative school diploma and occupational training in multiple fields; two sites were integrated into large public high schools. While there were common elements among the sites as they applied the core principles that guided the initiative, there was no "typical" YouthBuild PSE site and thus no single YouthBuild PSE "model": each site brought its own distinctive history, circumstances, and strategies to the effort.

3. **Equally important, almost all sites continued to refine and expand their PSE approach over time: thus, the PSE "model" continued to evolve throughout the initiative**. PSE sites continued to revise and strengthen academic instruction, including better integrating college-ready academic skills into their curriculum; to expand counseling as well as occupational and career preparation resources and options; to expand college transition activities, including providing more hands-on transition experiences; and to establish clearer connections and stronger relationships with the postsecondary institutions to increase the availability of postsecondary supports.

4. **While working to strengthen their programs, the PSE sites continued to confront a variety of external and internal challenges**. Preparing YouthBuild students for success in postsecondary education and training was an ambitious agenda. Both programs and participants faced a number of challenges in moving that agenda forward. Most PSE sites had to regularly adjust their programs to a constantly changing environment in which funding changes (e.g., the loss of Department of Labor grants), new educational requirements (e.g., the new GED/High School Equivalency exams), and staff, administration, and policy changes at the college partner regularly threatened the continuity in relationships and arrangements that was required to build and maintain a strong and consistent program. Internally, programs also experienced staff turnover and struggled to build the college-ready academic skills that students needed in the program time available. (As discussed in Chapters II and III, many participants begin the program with 8th grade or lower literacy and numeracy levels; it is challenging to help students advance four or more grade levels in a year or two). Participants, while describing the support they received from YouthBuild as critical for their growth, also struggled to balance the demands of education, work, and family and to meet the challenges of finding housing, reliable transportation, childcare, and other essential supports. These demands shaped the ways in which PSE participants thought about and planned for postsecondary and were barriers to postsecondary success. Further, as the number of PSE graduates increased, so did the challenges of providing a growing number of students with the supports they needed to persist in postsecondary.

5. **Several key elements emerged from the interviews with program staff as critical to effective PSE programs.** These include establishing a strong college-going culture within the program; breaking the college and career pathway into clear, manageable steps for students; helping students to develop postsecondary navigation skills and strategies; making the postsecondary experience real (e.g., through on campus experiences); broadening the college partnership beyond the initial contact and creating a network of relationships; developing connections to training programs other than the college partner; and investing in staff and staff development.

6. **A caring and attentive staff, and particularly an effective PSE transition coordinator, stands at the** center **of the YouthBuild PSE experience.** In participant interviews, surveys, site visit discussions, and observations, the relationships between students and counselors, teachers, worksite supervisors, and other program and college staff emerged as the core element in moving students to and through postsecondary. In particular, sites with a strong transition coordinator seemed to have made more progress toward establishing a college-going culture, preparing participants for postsecondary education, and building a postsecondary support system.

7. **Participant responses to the follow-up surveys and on-site interviews reinforced many of the lessons learned through interviews with program staff**. The large majority of follow-up survey respondents were positive about their YouthBuild experience, feeling that they were well-prepared for postsecondary and well-supported by their YouthBuild programs. The alumni interviews echoed those themes. At the same, the surveys highlighted the importance of ongoing support, from YouthBuild staff and family in particular, as alumni moved into jobs and postsecondary education. Finally, while most survey respondents felt that YouthBuild had done all that it could to help them prepare for postsecondary, their suggestions for improvements included more time in the program, more exposure to college, and more support through the college transition.

8. **Based on participant survey and interview data, PSE sites changed program participants' educational and career aspirations and expectations.** The data from the retrospective post-program participant surveys, while limited by a low response rate, showed strong, significant gains in participants' goals and educational aspirations, their sense of their academic capabilities, their prosocial values, their role as a family and community leader, and their readiness to tackle postsecondary education and training: after their program involvement, YouthBuild participants viewed themselves more positively as students, said they had a better understanding of college requirements and expectations, and were more likely to aspire to a postsecondary education. They were also more likely to view themselves as part of a community. Interviews and focus groups with students reinforced that picture, with participants highlighting the impact of the programs on their goals and expectations and describing their serious planning for "life after YouthBuild." Even for those not immediately planning to go on to postsecondary, the PSE Initiative appeared successful in making postsecondary education a goal and an expectation for program participants.

9. **While there were significant gains in participants' attitudes and beliefs and high rates of success in earning secondary credentials, college-going results were mixed (though significantly better than those for comparison students, based on the MDRC data).** PSE programs were very successful in

moving participants to secondary completion: over the first four years of the initiative (the years for which complete data is available), over 80% of YouthBuild program completers acquired a GED or high school diploma and 94% received a high school credential and/or some form of occupational certificate (62% of all who entered the program attained a high school diploma or HSE credential). However, college-going rates for YouthBuild graduates were substantially lower. Across the first four cohorts (2011-2014), half (50%) of the YouthBuild PSE program completers enrolled in college and 5% enrolled in some other form of postsecondary education and training (in total, 53% entered some form of postsecondary). Though these rates are below YouthBuild's original goals, they compare favorably with the national data on college going for students similar to those in YouthBuild: HSE credential holders, first-generation, and low-income students. Given the range of barriers faced by YouthBuild participants, the fact that 50% of the 2011-2014 YouthBuild alumni attended college is a significant accomplishment.

YouthBuild data also suggest that YouthBuild alumni in postsecondary experienced many of the same challenges as other low-income, minority, and/or first-generation students. The majority of YouthBuild alumni in college were unable to test out of non-credit developmental education courses. Based on available data, approximately 70% of YouthBuild graduates were required to take developmental math courses and 60% were required to take developmental reading and writing, rates that are comparable to community college students nationally. Because they often began postsecondary by taking these non-credit classes, YouthBuild graduates were also slow to accumulate college credits: overall, 68% of those for whom credit information was reported had accumulated fewer than 12 credits by 2016; less than 10% had accumulated 26 credits or more. Despite these challenges, however, a substantial percentage of YouthBuild graduates persisted in college: a majority (62%) of the YouthBuild graduates who enrolled in college completed at least one year of postsecondary (4 quarters or more) and 42% persisted into their second year of postsecondary. On most of these measures, YouthBuild graduates performed comparably to community college students nationally, a significant accomplishment given the challenges faced by most YouthBuild participants.

MDRC impact study data show that the educational outcomes for PSE participants were significantly better than those for a comparable group of non-participating youth. As noted above, MDRC study data show that PSE participants were significantly more likely to participate in education, training, and personal development services than control group members and in many cases to participate for substantially longer. Based on data 12 months after program entry (and shortly after program completion for most YouthBuild members), PSE participants were:

- nearly 30% more likely to have participated in some form of educational services (78.5% vs. 61.1% for the control group);
- twice as likely to participate in achievement test preparation classes (32.9% vs. 16.0%), three times as likely to receive help in finding financial aid for postsecondary (46.0% vs. 14.9%), six times as likely to receive academic tutoring (25.7% vs. 4.1%), and six times as likely to participate in college preparation activities (49.8% vs. 8.2%) as control group members;

- more than 2.5 times as likely to participate in some form of job or training-related services (78.4% vs. 29.9%) and on average participated for more than 5 times as long as control group members (5.1 months vs. 0.8 months); and
- significantly more likely to receive personal development services such as mentoring, life skills training, leadership development, and health or mental health services – the kinds of supportive services that, along with academic and occupational skills, are designed to help young people address the barriers to education and employment.

The differences in receipt of services between YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members were reflected in positive impacts for YouthBuild participants on a number of education-related outcomes. Based on data from MDRC's 30-month follow-up surveys, YouthBuild PSE participants were more likely to attain a secondary credential (high school diploma or HSE credential), to enroll in vocational training, and to enroll in postsecondary education than control group members.

- YouthBuild PSE participants were nearly twice as likely to earn a diploma or HSE credential as control group members (63.6% vs. 33.1%), with significant differences in attainment of both high school diplomas (38.7% vs. 21.5%) and HSE credentials (24.9% vs. 11.6%).
- PSE participants were significantly more likely to enroll in vocational school than control group members (36.7% vs. 23.7%), including technical, business and/or trade schools.
- YouthBuild PSE participants were significantly more likely to have enrolled in postsecondary courses and to have attended a 2-year/community college: 25.5% of PSE participants enrolled in some form of postsecondary courses, compared to 15.3% of control group members; 24% attended a 2-year or community college vs. 15.0% of control group members. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (which tracks college enrollments nationally) showed a similar pattern of postsecondary impacts.

Finally, YouthBuild PSE participants in the MDRC study showed few significant impacts on employment and earnings or measures of personal and social development. The one exception was on measures of civic engagement: PSE participants were significantly more likely than control group members to be engaged in one or more civic activities since random assignment (94.6% vs. 88.9%), with the greatest difference in volunteering: YouthBuild PSE participants were more than twice as likely as control group members to have volunteered in the 30 months since random assignment (65.3% vs. 31.9%). On most other measures in the MDRC study, there were no significant differences.

The data from the national study provides the most rigorous assessment of YouthBuild PSE participant impacts and "strong level" evidence that YouthBuild PSE has had a positive impact on receipt of critical education, employment, and youth development services, and a positive impact on short-term educational outcomes, including postsecondary enrollment. Along with the YouthBuild reporting system data, they point to the effectiveness of the PSE approach.

10. **YouthBuild USA's technical assistance activities, particularly the effort to create a cross-site learning community, were seen as strong contributions to program improvement**. Sites were generally positive about YouthBuild USA's professional development efforts (though there were mixed reviews about the site coaches provided by YouthBuild USA). The sites saw the cross-site meetings as valuable opportunities for peer learning and regularly reported bringing home and implementing new ideas from other sites. YouthBuild USA also actively brought new resources to the initiative, including partnerships with national organizations to address financial management curriculum and college financial aid advising, and the development of new tools, including MT2, a model summer bridge program. For most of the staff interviewed throughout the evaluation, the PSE work would have been more difficult and less successful without YouthBuild USA's support and focus on continuous improvement.

11. **Sustainability.** As multiple YouthBuild directors and staff reported in their interviews, the PSE sites have integrated postsecondary "into their DNA." The emphasis on postsecondary education and many of the associated services, are likely to continue as core elements in the YouthBuild PSE sites. During the final year of the initiative, as many sites struggled to cope with continued funding challenges, all continued to pursue strategies for supporting the enriched academic learning, transitional services, and postsecondary support central to the PSE effort. In some cases the postsecondary partners began to pick up the costs of services; in others (especially charter-school-based programs), academic supports and college preparation activities were integrated into the school staffing and mainstream courses (senior seminars, capstones, etc.); others still integrated PSE with a broader career planning agenda. In short, all of the PSE sites believed that the PSE efforts had become integral to their identities and while specific, more costly elements might be lost, the basic PSE approach represented strategies that were here to stay. In that regard, the SIF investment in integrating postsecondary education into YouthBuild's core program design appears likely to have a long-term impact.

In sum, during the five-year initiative the PSE sites successfully implemented the major elements of the PSE approach, and most continued to refine and expand their efforts to build a clearer, more consistent pathway into postsecondary for YouthBuild students. In doing so, according to the evidence from the MDRC study, they had a positive impact on their program participants' ability to attain a secondary credential and make the transition to postsecondary education. This was an ambitious agenda, with the sites under ongoing pressure to do more with less in a challenging and constantly evolving environment. Nonetheless, the PSE sites successfully made the shift from programs providing "a GED and a job" to programs with a focus on preparing for college and a long-term, family-sustaining career.

However, as successful as the PSE initiative was in changing the focus and direction of YouthBuild programs and achieving positive impacts for program participants, the effort to strengthen the pathways to postsecondary success needs to continue at YouthBuild and its partner institutions. While the YouthBuild PSE Initiative clearly established new and effective strategies for providing enriched academic preparation, postsecondary transition services, and postsecondary supports, there are still multiple barriers that need to be addressed.

Perhaps the most important lesson to emerge over the five-year initiative was the continuing centrality of relationships, both in the process of working with the young PSE participants and in building the critical pathways to and through postsecondary institutions. The message from staff and students alike was that approachable, culturally competent staff who were able to build trusting relationships and were also appropriately persistent and demanding were the engine that drove the PSE process. A familiar saying in YouthBuild programs is that students "don't care what you know until they know that you care," and this continues to hold. Similarly, the ability to build and expand relationships within the postsecondary partner institutions was critical in identifying and accessing resources for YouthBuild students. The most successful postsecondary partnerships depended in large part on building a sense of shared mission and ownership between YouthBuild and college representatives. In short, the PSE structure and approach set the context, but the people gave it life.

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

This is the final report on the evaluation of the 2011-2016 YouthBuild USA Postsecondary Education (PSE) Initiative. This chapter describes the background of the initiative, the overall goals of this report, the YouthBuild USA PSE approach, the study's research questions and methods, and key findings.

Subsequent chapters provide more detailed findings. Chapter II discusses the characteristics of the PSE sites and program participants. Chapter III details the implementation of the major elements of the PSE approach across the sites, as well as the challenges that sites are trying to address. Chapter IV presents participant perspectives on their experience in the PSE sites and "what works" in preparing them for educational success. Chapter V examines the outcome data from participant surveys and the YouthBuild reporting system. Chapter VI presents findings on PSE-related participant impacts based on data from a separate national impact study of YouthBuild programs conducted by MDRC. Chapter VII summarizes the findings and highlights emerging lessons from the initiative.

The intended audiences for this report are as follows:

- YouthBuild USA and YouthBuild sites nationally, which can use the findings to support program improvement and expansion.
- The Corporation for National and Community Service and its Social Innovation Fund, whose goals include building a research-based knowledge base on effective youth and education programming.
- Others interested in pathways to postsecondary education and training for low-income, out-of-school youth and young adults.

Background

YouthBuild USA is a national nonprofit organization that supports more than 260 local YouthBuild programs across the United States. YouthBuild programs each year help more than 10,000 low-income, out-of-school young people, ages 16 to 24, to earn a high school diploma or high school equivalency (HSE) credential and learn job skills (in the construction, health care, technology, and environmental fields). Supported mainly through federal and private funding, the programs are generally full time over a period of six to 24 months. While a fundamental goal of YouthBuild is to help young people acquire the education and skills they need for success in the labor market, they also emphasize leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive community of adults and youth in line with YouthBuild's mission to "unleash the intelligence and positive energy of low-income youth to rebuild their communities and their lives."

Beginning in 2003, YouthBuild USA began to strengthen the academic base of its programs and build pathways to postsecondary education for its graduates. The first step was YouthBuild USA's National Schools Initiative (NSI), funded in 2003 through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The NSI's goals were to (1) increase the number of YouthBuild programs that offered high school diplomas in

addition to or instead of an HSE credential and (2) increase the academic rigor of participating programs. In 2009, YouthBuild USA joined with other national youth-serving organizations in the Gates Foundation-funded "Postsecondary Success Initiative," designed to build partnerships between education programs serving low-income, out-of-school youth and community colleges with the goal of helping young people complete a high school credential and enter and complete postsecondary education.[6] Seven local YouthBuild programs participated as pilot sites, with technical assistance provided by YouthBuild USA.

In 2011, YouthBuild USA received a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grant to expand its efforts to create new pathways to and through postsecondary education and training for low-income, out-of-school youth served by the national network of YouthBuild programs. Under the SIF grant and additional matching funds from New Profit, Inc., the Open Society Foundations, and other funders, YouthBuild USA committed to engage twelve additional YouthBuild programs, serving approximately 650 participants per year, in its PSE Initiative. The new sites would allow YouthBuild USA to continue to refine the approach developed through the Gates-funded pilot.[7]

Building on strategies developed under the NSI and the Gates PSE initiative, and in line with widely recognized effective practices for college access and success, the PSE approach combined (1) enhanced academic preparation for YouthBuild participants, emphasizing "rigorous and relevant academic content and engaging teaching practices;" (2) a program of postsecondary transition support that includes college awareness and planning activities, college counseling, application and financial aid assistance, and orientation programs for transitioning students; and (3) "proactive graduate support systems" to provide ongoing support for YouthBuild alumni in postsecondary settings.[8] Another part of the PSE approach was for the YouthBuild programs to coordinate these activities closely with postsecondary partner institutions. The initiative's ultimate goals were to (1) substantially increase the number of YouthBuild participants who attained a postsecondary credential and transitioned into careers and community leadership roles; (2) develop the systems and partnerships needed to sustain the new PSE approach and serve more low-income, out-of-school young people aged 16-24 across the country; and (3) influence the way postsecondary institutions serve such young people.

As part of its work under the SIF grant, YouthBuild USA contracted with Brandeis University's Center for Youth and Communities (the Center) to conduct a five-year implementation study of the PSE Initiative. The implementation study is explained in more detail in the subsequent Research Questions and Methods section. Briefly, the study was designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the operation of the PSE approach and the local YouthBuild/ postsecondary partnerships; generate "promising practices" or "what works" information about the PSE approach to inform refinement and future expansion; and provide a better understanding of the PSE process and its impacts from the participants' perspective. Key components of the study were regular visits to participating sites, including interviews

[6] The other national partners in the initiative included the National Youth Employment Coalition, Jobs for the Future, and Brandeis University's Center for Youth and Communities. Funders included the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Open Society Foundation, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and New Profit Inc.

[7] Seven of the twelve new sites were funded through the SIF grant; five were funded through grants from the Open Society Foundations and other funders.

[8] Quotations are from YouthBuild's online funding proposal to the New Profit Pathways Fund. Material provided by Scott Emerick, VP of Education at YouthBuild, email communication, August 28, 2011.

with leadership, staff, program participants, and other key stakeholders at both the YouthBuild and postsecondary partner sites; visits to a small number of non-PSE YouthBuild programs to provide a comparative perspective on the PSE approach; surveys of YouthBuild participants; Center participation in cross-site meetings to observe training and support (and participate in cross-site exchanges); and analysis of YouthBuild/PSE reporting system data to document the program participants' characteristics, services provided, and participant outcomes.[9]

Participant impacts for the PSE initiative were assessed through a partnership with MDRC which, along with Mathematica Policy Research and Social Policy Research Associates, is conducting a separate participant impact study as part of a national evaluation of YouthBuild funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The MDRC study is a rigorous, large-scale random assignment evaluation that includes 50 DOL and 17 CNCS-funded YouthBuild sites and a total sample of approximately 4,000 youth. Key elements of the study include three rounds of youth surveys (at 12, 30, and 48 months after enrollment) as well as administrative data and external data sources to assess impacts on educational attainment, employment, and a range of social behaviors and attitudes.[10] MDRC separately analyzed participant data from 12 current and former YouthBuild PSE sites participating in the national study to provide participant impact data for the PSE study. Chapter VI presents these data along with detailed methodological information for that aspect of the study.[11]

About this Report

The purpose of this report is to assess the implementation and participant impacts of the PSE Initiative. The report covers five years of program activities, from Summer 2011, when local programs began recruiting participants for the 2011-2012 program year, through June 2016. Earlier reports, parts of which are incorporated into this document, focused on program implementation at three points: at the end of the first year, midway through the five-year initiative, and during the last program year.[12] This report updates and expands on those earlier reports, providing a comprehensive look at program

[9] YouthBuild's national reporting system provides detailed information on participant characteristics; the educational, college transition, and supportive services received by program participants; and on progress towards and attainment of postsecondary credentials. PSE-related data elements were defined as part of the Gates Foundation-funded evaluation of the first cohort of PSE programs and continued in use for the SIF-funded sites.

[10] A detailed description of the MDRC study and its methodology can be found in the two reports produced by the study to date: Andrew Weigand et al. (2015). *Adapting to Local Context: Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation Implementation Study*. New York, NY: MDRC; and Cynthia Miller, Megan Millenky, et al. (2016). *Building a Future: Interim Impact Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation*. New York, NY: MDRC. Both documents are available at http://www.mdrc.org/project/youthbuild-evaluation#overview.

[11] The original Subgrantee Evaluation Plan for the PSE implementation study incorporated the use of data from the separate MDRC study to address the SIF participant impact evaluation requirements, to avoid subjecting the YouthBuild PSE sites to two concurrent impact studies. As is discussed later in this report, an effort was made to coordinate data collection for the implementation study and the impact study to minimize burden on the local YouthBuild programs and participants.

[12] The three reports, all from the Center for Youth and Communities are "Evaluation of the YouthBuild Pathways/Social Innovation Fund Postsecondary Education Initiative, Year 1 Implementation Report" (April 2013); "Evaluation of the YouthBuild Pathways/Social Innovation Fund Postsecondary Education Initiative, Mid-Term Implementation Report" (January 2015); and "Evaluation of the YouthBuild Pathways/Social Innovation Fund Postsecondary Education Initiative, 2016 Evaluation Update Report" (May 2016). Waltham, MA: Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University.

implementation, including background on program participants; characteristics of the YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners; the mix of programs and services that were put in place; challenges faced by sites (and participants) as they implemented the PSE "model"; and outcomes, in terms of changes in participant attitudes and participant progress to and through postsecondary education. As noted above, this report also integrates findings from the MDRC participant impact study, which focused on YouthBuild participants who entered YouthBuild during two of the years covered by the implementation study (August 2011 through January 2013), following those participants for a 30-month period following enrollment.[13] Thus, this report is an effort to provide an in-depth understanding of the strengths and challenges of the YouthBuild PSE approach and a strong level of evidence of the program's participant impacts. The report also attempts to assess YouthBuild USA's role in supporting the PSE sites and the prospects for the long-term sustainability of the PSE approach in the participating sites.

The YouthBuild USA PSE Approach

The YouthBuild USA PSE initiative evolved in response to a growing recognition of the increasing importance of a postsecondary credential to long-term labor market success and the fact that only a small percentage of GED recipients, and low-income youth generally, enter postsecondary education and earn a degree. According to one study, less than half (47%) of 16-to 24-year-olds with a GED enter postsecondary education, and only 12% of those had graduated within eight years of entering.[14]

YouthBuild USA developed the PSE initiative to address these issues and provide a pathway to and through postsecondary education for low-income, out-of-school youth aged 16-24. Building on the original YouthBuild model, the YouthBuild PSE approach integrates an explicit focus on helping participants to attain a postsecondary degree or credential (i.e., a certificate with recognized value in the labor market) and develops the program supports students need to achieve those degrees or credentials. The PSE approach focuses on strengthening YouthBuild programs in three ways:

4. **Improving the academic preparedness of YouthBuild participants** by enhancing the YouthBuild educational programs to include more academically rigorous, college-related content; improved instructional practices; increased integration of reading, writing, and numeracy across the curriculum and across the program; and increased alignment of the YouthBuild educational curriculum with postsecondary entry requirements.

5. **Increasing college transition preparation and support** by creating a college-going culture within the YouthBuild programs (i.e., promoting the expectation that all participants will go on to some form of postsecondary education or training) backed by college awareness and planning activities, college counseling, financial aid planning and assistance, and bridge program activities that provide college exposure, orientation, and transition experiences for participants.

[13] Publication of the final MDRC evaluation report, which includes data on the 48-month follow-up surveys of YouthBuild participants, is expected in 2018.

[14] For college-going by GED recipients, see Zhang, Guison-Dowdy, Patterson, & Song, *Crossing the Bridge: GED Credentials and Postsecondary Educational Outcomes (Year Two Report)*. Washington: GED Testing Service, 2011.

6. **Providing continued support into postsecondary** through regular engagement between YouthBuild staff and YouthBuild graduates as the graduates enter and move through postsecondary education; developing working partnerships with local postsecondary institutions to strengthen college advising and create programs of support for YouthBuild graduates; and creating peer-to-peer networks that provide ongoing engagement and support for YouthBuild alumni at postsecondary institutions.

At the heart of the PSE approach is establishing close working partnerships between the YouthBuild PSE sites and one or more postsecondary institutions, generally a nearby community college. The partnerships are intended to promote mutual accountability and sustainability and to be multi-faceted and reciprocal. Ideally, YouthBuild programs and their partner institutions work together to enhance postsecondary preparation by strengthening curriculum and instruction, develop college bridge programs, and improve support systems for YouthBuild graduates at both the YouthBuild program and the postsecondary institution. The goal is to produce changes at both YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners that create a stronger pathway to postsecondary success for low-income, out-of-school youth.

The PSE Implementation Study: Research Questions and Methods

Research questions. As noted above, the PSE implementation study was designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the implementation and operation of the PSE approach and the local YouthBuild/ postsecondary partnerships and to generate the promising practices information needed to inform both refinement of the approach and future expansion. The study was guided by the following seven research questions, as detailed in the SIF Subgrantee Evaluation Plan (SEP): [15]

1. **Who are the YouthBuild PSE participants?**

   What are the characteristics of PSE program participants? What are their goals and expectations as they enter the PSE program? How do those change over time? What strengths do young people bring to the YouthBuild PSE experience? What do they see as the major challenges that they face? How do the characteristics of PSE program participants differ, if at all, from participants in non-PSE YouthBuild programs?

2. **How is the PSE model being implemented across the YouthBuild SIF sites?**

   What are the major elements of the program model and how are they being implemented across the sites? How, for example, have YouthBuild sites adapted and enhanced their educational services? What supportive services are they providing, and how are they being delivered? What college bridge strategies have sites implemented? What types of postsecondary supports?

3. **What are the key characteristics of the YouthBuild/Postsecondary partnerships?**

   How were the partnerships developed and how have they changed over the course of the initiative? What supports are the postsecondary institutions providing? What adjustments or adaptations

[15] A discussion of changes in the final evaluation plan from the original SEP is included in the Appendix.

have the postsecondary partners made in the organization and delivery of educational services (such as developmental/remedial education) and student supports?

4. **What can we learn about "what works" in terms of designing and implementing programs to effectively prepare YouthBuild participants for postsecondary success?**

   What aspects of the program do YouthBuild program staff and participants consider particularly effective in promoting persistence in the program and academic success? Are there program strategies or services that are essential to any postsecondary model?

   At the institutional level, what do YouthBuild sites needed to transition from "classic" GED or diploma-focused YouthBuild programs to programs focused on college access and completion? Are there preconditions for a successful transition, such as changes in program staffing models or in staff training and development?

   What can we learn about "what works" in terms of program design and implementation at the postsecondary level, to support the success of participants who have made the transition?

5. **What can we learn about the impact of the PSE program on participants' attitudes and goals?**

   How do participants describe the effects of the PSE experience on the ways in which they think about themselves and their own capabilities, as well as their expectations and goals for the future?

6. **What role has YouthBuild USA played in supporting the implementation of the PSE approach?**

   What kinds of professional development and technical assistance has YouthBuild USA provided to the sites? From the perspective of the sites, how effective has it been?

7. **What can we learn about the sustainability of the PSE approach?**

   How are the sites funding the PSE effort (including the SIF grants), and what steps are they taking to ensure that the PSE approach can be sustained after the end of the PSE Initiative? How are PSE participants paying for college and how are YouthBuild sites and colleges working to make college affordable for students?

Methods. To address these questions the implementation study included both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. Key components were regular visits to participating sites, which included interviews with leadership, staff, program participants, and other key stakeholders, as well as observations of program activities; telephone interviews with program leadership; visits to a small number of non-PSE YouthBuild programs to provide a comparative perspective on the PSE approach; surveys of youth in two cohorts of YouthBuild PSE participants; participation in cross-site meetings to observe training and support and participate in cross-site exchanges; and analysis of YouthBuild/PSE reporting system data.[16] Following are more detailed descriptions of these activities:

[16] The design and data collection procedures for the study were reviewed and approved by the Brandeis University Institutional Review Board, Protocol #13080.

- **Site Visits**. Between 2011, when the evaluation began, and 2016, Brandeis conducted five rounds of site visits to each of the YouthBuild PSE sites.[17] The first visits, which took place in late 2011 and early 2012, were brief baseline visits to gain an initial understanding of each site, meet key stakeholders, and outline evaluation plans and expectations. Those visits were followed by more in-depth site visits in Spring 2012, 2013, and 2014 and in Summer-Fall 2016 to learn more about program implementation, modifications to the original plans, the evolution of the postsecondary partnerships, challenges, and to explore the "what works" question with program staff, partners, and students. Each visit in 2012, 2013, and 2014 was conducted by two Center staff members; one of the co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs) was the lead interviewer for each visit. The 2016 visits were conducted by one staff member – one of the co-PIs or a senior Center staff member who had participated in earlier site visits. Site visits generally took place over two days and included interviews with key YouthBuild staff (program directors, transition coordinators, educators, work site supervisors, etc.), representatives of the college partners, and YouthBuild participants. Most visits included time in class and/or at the worksite with YouthBuild participants to see the program in action. More than 750 interviews were conducted over the five-year period.[18]

  In 2015, when no site visits were conducted, Center staff conducted phone interviews (n = 20) with YouthBuild program directors and PSE transition coordinators. These interviews helped the staff stay up to date on program implementation during a year when no site visits were conducted.

  Brandeis also conducted site visits to three well-established YouthBuild sites that were not participating in the PSE Initiative with the goal of gaining a comparative perspective on PSE and non-PSE sites. As with the PSE site visits, the visits to non-PSE sites included interviews with program staff, postsecondary partner organizations (if partnerships existed), and program participants.

- **Cross-Site Meetings**. Beginning with the initial April 2011cross-site meeting, Brandeis staff (usually both co-PIs) participated in all semi-annual cross-site meetings conducted by YouthBuild USA.[19] Participation in the meetings served multiple purposes. Initially it provided an opportunity to orient sites to the evaluation and the data collection process. Subsequently, the meetings provided an opportunity to brief sites on emerging findings and to discuss their implications for the PSE

[17] The one exception was Abyssinian Development Corporation which left the PSE initiative in 2015. As a result, the Center did not conduct a 2015 telephone interview or 2016 site visit.

[18] See Appendix for site visit protocols.

[19] Cross-site meetings included the start-up meeting in Boston, MA (April 2011) and then twice-yearly cross-site meetings: at American YouthWorks (Austin, TX, October 2011), Portland YouthBuilders (Portland, OR, April 2012), Mile High Youth Corps (Denver, CO, October 2012), Abyssinian Development Corporation (New York, April 2013), YouthBuild Fresno (October 2013), YouthBuild Providence (May 2014), Los Angeles (hosted by the Coalition for Responsible Community Development, October 2014), Just-A-Start YouthBuild (Somerville, MA, Spring 2015), Guadalupe Alternatives Program YouthBuild (St. Paul, MN, October 2015), and Building Futures YouthBuild (Godfrey, IL, Spring 2016). At first limited to SIF funded sites, cross-site meetings grew to include representatives from additional YouthBuild PSE programs, including sites from the original Gates-funded initiative and sites added to the PSE network since the SIF project began. Brandeis staff also met with PSE sites at the national YouthBuild Directors meeting in Washington, DC (January 2013).

approach. The meetings were also an opportunity to visit the program hosting the meeting; for informal discussions with sites (learning about successes and concerns); and for relationship-building, an essential part of an effective evaluation. Lastly, the meetings allowed the evaluation team to observe first-hand the technical assistance and support provided by YouthBuild USA.

- **Participant Surveys**. To learn more about the YouthBuild participant experience and the program impact on participant attitudes and expectations, Brandeis surveyed the first and third cohorts of students in the PSE sites (i.e., students who entered in 2011 and 2013) at two points during the initiative: first when they were completing their YouthBuild programs (the post-program survey) and again approximately one year after YouthBuild (the 1-year follow-up survey).[20] The post-program surveys used a retrospective pre/post design to assess changes in participants' attitudes. They also collected feedback on their program experience at the time of their graduation from YouthBuild. The survey included questions about participants' career and educational goals, their sense of their own educational and leadership capabilities, their readiness for postsecondary education, their perspectives on the support they had received in the program, and the challenges they anticipated. The surveys were developed in collaboration with YouthBuild USA staff, reviewed by PSE site staff, and piloted with a small number of YouthBuild PSE participants. Copies of the surveys and information on the scales used in assessing attitudinal change are included in the Appendix.

  Survey packages for the first cohort were distributed to the PSE sites in January 2013; surveys for the third cohort were distributed in Spring 2014. The survey packages included a student agreement, the survey, and a postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope for returning the survey to Brandeis. An online version of the survey was also provided. Students were offered an incentive for completing the survey (a $30 gift card) and PSE coordinators were asked to encourage students to participate. As discussed in more detail in Chapter IV, the response to the survey was disappointing, with 275 participants from the 12 sites PSE sites completing the surveys (a response rate of approximately 30% of program completers). However, the survey respondents were broadly representative of PSE participants in terms of their characteristics and background experience.[21]

  Brandeis conducted a 1-year follow-up survey with the survey respondents from the first and third cohorts. This survey focused on PSE participants' experiences and their assessments of their PSE program a year following program completion. The follow-up surveys were distributed in Spring 2014 and 2015 as online surveys targeted to YouthBuild alumni who had completed the earlier post-program survey. Paper copies of the surveys were also distributed to PSE sites to be handed out to alumni from the two cohorts at alumni events. Alumni were offered a $50 incentive to complete the survey. YouthBuild staff were given lists of alumni who had responded to the earlier survey and

[20] The decision was made to not survey YouthBuild students in the second (2012-2013) cohort to avoid conflict with the MDRC study, which focused much of its data collection on that group. As discussed later in this report, several PSE sites involved in MDRC's random assignment study felt that the study had a negative impact on their programs, forcing them to accept more marginal candidates into their programs in order to meet the study's recruitment goals and damaging their subsequent YouthBuild recruitment efforts because of local youths' concerns that they might not be admitted to the program even if eligible.

[21] The timing of the surveys, the decision to use a retrospective pre/post design, and the survey response rate are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV and in the Appendix discussion of changes in the SEP.

asked to encourage them to respond to the follow-up. As with the post-program surveys, response to the 1-year follow-up survey was limited, with 127 YouthBuild alumni completing the survey, despite repeated efforts to contact non-responders and provision of substantial incentives. As discussed in Chapter V, the difficulty in conducting the follow-up surveys reflected the broader challenges reported by program staff of maintaining contact with YouthBuild participants after graduation.[22] At the same time, the follow-up surveys did provide valuable feedback on the program experience that complemented the comments of YouthBuild alumni in the local interviews and focus groups.

- **Reporting System Data.** Finally, Brandeis drew on data from YouthBuild's participant data reporting system to examine and report annually on the characteristics of PSE participants, PSE-related services received and short- and longer-term outcomes as participants progressed through YouthBuild and postsecondary education. The YouthBuild reporting system had integrated additional PSE-related items (particularly those concerning PSE-related services) during the Gates-funded postsecondary initiative. The annual analyses were shared with YouthBuild USA and the PSE sites as part of regular cross-site discussions on program improvement and lessons learned. Data from the full five-year period of the study is included in this report.

PSE Participant Impact Study: Research Questions and Methods

As noted earlier, the evaluation of PSE participant impacts was based on data drawn from a national impact evaluation of 70 YouthBuild programs conducted by MDRC. Key research questions for that study concerned the impact of YouthBuild programs on educational attainment, emotional development and identity development (including civic engagement), employment and earnings, and selected social and behavioral measures such as involvement with the criminal justice system, family formation, and engagement in risk behaviors. The study was a randomized control trial, with YouthBuild enrollees randomly assigned to participant and control groups. Data sources included participant surveys (at 12, 30, and 48 months) as well as use of administrative data from the program, external data sources (for college enrollment and employment data), and surveys of program administrators. Chapter VI reports impact findings based on data from 12 current and former PSE initiative sites that participated in the MDRC study and describes the research questions, study design, study sample, level of evidence (strong), analysis approach, and the study's impact findings.

Key Findings

This report uses all data collected through June 2016, the end of the initiative. It includes interviews and observations from the five years of site visits and cross-site meetings, participant surveys (including follow-up surveys), reporting system data through June 2016, and the impact results from the MDRC study. The two major findings for the five-year PSE effort are:

The key *implementation* finding is that the YouthBuild PSE sites successfully put the major elements of the PSE approach into place and continued to refine and adjust their programs to meet their participants' needs. While each program had its own mix of strategies and services, reflecting differences in program context, population served, and postsecondary partnerships, all of the sites worked to enhance the academic preparation provided to their students, integrated college-going and

[22] The follow-up surveys are discussed further in Chapter VI and the Appendix discussion of changes in the SEP.

postsecondary transition supports into their program culture and services, and created strategies aimed at providing support for students as they moved from YouthBuild into postsecondary education and training. All established partnerships with one or more postsecondary institutions, and most of those partnerships grew in scope over the course of the initiative as staff and administrators built relationships and learned more about one another's organizations.

The key *participant impact* finding from the MDRC study data is that participation in YouthBuild's PSE programs had a positive impact on participation in education and training services and on short-term educational outcomes, including postsecondary enrollment, for PSE participants. PSE participants were significantly more likely to have participated in a broad array of educational, job-training, and personal development services than control group members and to have done so for a longer period of time. These differences in service receipt were reflected in positive impacts for YouthBuild PSE participants on a number of core educational outcomes, including attainment of a high school diploma or HSE credential, enrollment in additional vocational education, and enrollment in postsecondary education. The data also showed positive impacts on measures of civic engagement and voluntarism (though no impact on most other measures of personal and social development). The participant impact data confirmed (at a strong level of evidence) achievement of the PSE initiative's primary goal: the creation of new pathways to postsecondary education for young people who had failed to succeed in the traditional education system.

Several other top-level findings are important to highlight:

1. **While increasing their emphasis on PSE access and completion, the PSE sites continued to serve a population of young people who faced major barriers to success.** Across the five years of the initiative, over half (56%) of the PSE participants tested below an 8th grade level at program entry and two thirds (66%) tested below the 8th grade level in math. Virtually all (99%) lacked a high school diploma or HSE credential at entry and were overage for their level of education. Most PSE participants (70%) were first-generation college-goers, and significant numbers were young parents, were non-native English speakers, had prior juvenile or felony convictions, and/or were homeless. Based on the on-site interviews, many also brought barriers and experiences that were not reflected in the reporting system categories, such as exposure to serious trauma, learning disabilities, experience in the foster care system, and negative experiences in high school.
2. **While all sites implemented major elements of the PSE approach, they did so in tremendously diverse ways,** reflecting the diversity of the sites themselves (including organizational history and structure, funding, local context, and populations served) as well as their participant-centered approach, which includes individualized and therefore diverse strategies. PSE sites included relatively small "classic" YouthBuild programs (HSE credential preparation and construction training) as well as relatively large YouthBuild programs providing a charter or alternative school diploma and occupational training in multiple fields; two sites were integrated into large public high schools. While there were common elements among the sites as they applied the core principles that guided the initiative, there was no "typical" YouthBuild PSE site and thus no single YouthBuild PSE "model": each site brought its own distinctive history, circumstances, and strategies to the effort.

3. **Equally important, almost all sites continued to refine and expand their PSE approach over time: thus, the PSE "model" continued to evolve throughout the initiative**. PSE sites continued to revise and strengthen academic instruction, including better integrating college-ready academic skills into their curriculum; to expand counseling as well as occupational and career preparation resources and options; to expand college transition activities, including providing more hands-on transition experiences; and to establish clearer connections and stronger relationships with the postsecondary institutions to increase the availability of postsecondary supports.

4. **While working to strengthen their programs, the PSE sites continued to confront a variety of external and internal challenges**. Preparing YouthBuild students for success in postsecondary education and training was an ambitious agenda. Both programs and participants faced a number of challenges in moving that agenda forward. Most PSE sites had to regularly adjust their programs to a constantly changing environment in which funding changes (e.g., the loss of Department of Labor grants), new educational requirements (e.g., the new GED/High School Equivalency exams), and staff, administration, and policy changes at the college partner regularly threatened the continuity in relationships and arrangements that was required to build and maintain a strong and consistent program. Internally, programs also experienced staff turnover and struggled to build the college-ready academic skills that students needed in the program time available. (As discussed in Chapters II and III, many participants begin the program with 8th grade or lower literacy and numeracy levels; it is **challenging** to help students advance four or more grade levels in a year or two). Participants, while describing the support they received from YouthBuild as critical for their growth, also struggled to balance the demands of education, work, and family and to meet the challenges of finding housing, reliable transportation, childcare, and other essential supports. These demands shaped the ways in which PSE participants thought about and planned for postsecondary and were barriers to postsecondary success. Further, as the number of PSE graduates increased, so did the challenges of providing a growing number of students with the supports they needed to persist in postsecondary.

5. **Several key elements emerged from the interviews with program staff as critical to effective PSE programs.** These include establishing a strong college-going culture within the program; breaking the college and career pathway into clear, manageable steps for students; helping students to develop postsecondary navigation skills and strategies; making the postsecondary experience real (e.g., through on campus experiences); broadening the college partnership beyond the initial contact and creating a network of relationships; developing connections to training programs other than the college partner; and investing in staff and staff development.

6. **A caring and attentive staff, and particularly an effective PSE transition coordinator, stands at the center of the YouthBuild PSE experience.** In participant interviews, surveys, site visit discussions, and observations, the relationships between students and counselors, teachers, worksite supervisors, and other program and college staff emerged as the core element in moving students to and through postsecondary. In particular, sites with a strong transition coordinator seemed to have made more progress toward establishing a college-going culture, preparing participants for postsecondary education, and building a postsecondary support system.

7. **Participant responses to the follow-up surveys and on-site interviews reinforced many of the lessons learned through interviews with program staff**. The large majority of follow-up survey respondents were positive about their YouthBuild experience, feeling that they were well-prepared for postsecondary and well-supported by their YouthBuild programs. The alumni interviews echoed those themes. At the same, the surveys highlighted the importance of ongoing support, from YouthBuild staff and family in particular, as alumni moved into jobs and postsecondary education. Finally, while most survey respondents felt that YouthBuild had done all that it could to help them prepare for postsecondary, their suggestions for improvements included more time in the program, more exposure to college, and more support through the college transition.

8. **Based on participant survey and interview data, PSE sites changed program participants' educational and career aspirations and expectations.** The data from the retrospective post-program participant surveys, while limited by a low response rate, showed strong, significant gains in participants' goals and educational aspirations, their sense of their academic capabilities, their prosocial values, their role as a family and community leader, and their readiness to tackle postsecondary education and training: after their program involvement, YouthBuild participants viewed themselves more positively as students, said they had a better understanding of college requirements and expectations, and were more likely to aspire to a postsecondary education. They were also more likely to view themselves as part of a community. Interviews and focus groups with students reinforced that picture, with participants highlighting the impact of the programs on their goals and expectations and describing their serious planning for "life after YouthBuild." Even for those not immediately planning to go on to postsecondary, the PSE Initiative appeared successful in making postsecondary education a goal and an expectation for program participants.

9. **While there were significant gains in participants' attitudes and beliefs and high rates of success in earning secondary credentials, college-going results were mixed (though significantly better than those for comparison students, based on the MDRC data).** PSE programs were very successful in moving participants to secondary completion: over the first four years of the initiative (the years for which complete data is available), over 80% of YouthBuild program completers acquired a GED or high school diploma and 94% received a high school credential and/or some form of occupational certificate (62% of all who entered the program attained a high school diploma or HSE credential). However, college-going rates for YouthBuild graduates were substantially lower. Across the first four cohorts (2011-2014), half (50%) of the YouthBuild program completers enrolled in college and 5% enrolled in some other form of postsecondary education and training (in total, 53% entered some form of postsecondary). Though these rates are below YouthBuild's original goals, they compare favorably with the national data on college going for students similar to those in YouthBuild: HSE credential holders, first-generation, and low-income students. Given the range of barriers faced by YouthBuild participants, the fact that 50% of the 2011-2014 YouthBuild alumni attended college is a significant accomplishment.

   YouthBuild data also suggest that YouthBuild alumni in postsecondary experienced many of the same challenges as other low-income, minority, and/or first-generation students. The majority of YouthBuild alumni in college were unable to test out of non-credit developmental education courses. Based on available data, approximately 70% of YouthBuild graduates were required to take

developmental math courses and 60% were required to take developmental reading and writing, rates that are comparable to community college students nationally. Because they often began postsecondary by taking these non-credit classes, YouthBuild graduates were also slow to accumulate college credits: overall, 68% of those for whom credit information was reported had accumulated fewer than 12 credits by 2016; less than 10% had accumulated 26 credits or more. Despite these challenges, however, a substantial percentage of YouthBuild graduates persisted in college: a majority (62%) of the YouthBuild graduates who enrolled in college completed at least one year of postsecondary (4 quarters or more) and 42% persisted into their second year of postsecondary. On most of these measures, YouthBuild graduates performed comparably to community college students nationally, a significant accomplishment given the challenges faced by most YouthBuild participants.

10. **MDRC impact study data show that the educational outcomes for PSE participants were significantly better than those for a comparable group of non-participating youth.** As noted above, MDRC study data show that PSE participants were significantly more likely to participate in education, training and personal development services than control group members and in many cases to participate for substantially longer. Based on data 12 months after program entry (and shortly after program completion for most YouthBuild members), PSE participants were:

    - nearly 30% more likely to have participated in some form of educational services (78.5% vs. 61.1% for the control group);
    - twice as likely to participate in achievement test preparation classes (32.9% vs. 16.0%), three times as likely to receive help in finding financial aid for postsecondary (46.0% vs. 14.9%), six times as likely to receive academic tutoring (25.7% vs. 4.1%), and six times as likely to participate in college preparation activities (49.8% vs. 8.2%) as control group members;
    - more than 2.5 times as likely to participate in some form of job or training-related services (78.4% vs. 29.9%) and on average participated for more than 5 times as long as control group members (5.1 months vs. 0.8 months); and
    - significantly more likely to receive personal development services such as mentoring, life skills training, leadership development, and health or mental health services – the kinds of supportive services that, along with academic and occupational skills, are designed to help young people address the barriers to education and employment.

    The differences in receipt of services between YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members were reflected in positive impacts for YouthBuild participants on a number of education-related outcomes. Based on data from MDRC's 30-month follow-up surveys, YouthBuild PSE participants were more likely to attain a secondary credential (high school diploma or HSE credential), to enroll in vocational training, and to enroll in postsecondary education than control group members.

- YouthBuild PSE participants were nearly twice as likely to earn a diploma or HSE credential as control group members (63.6% vs. 33.1%), with significant differences in attainment of both high school diplomas (38.7% vs. 21.5%) and HSE credentials (24.9% vs. 11.6%).
- PSE participants were also significantly more likely to enroll in vocational school than control group members (36.7% vs. 23.7%), including technical, business and/or trade schools.
- YouthBuild PSE participants were also significantly more likely to have enrolled in postsecondary courses and to have attended a 2-year/community college: 25.5% of PSE participants enrolled in some form of postsecondary courses, compared to 15.3% of control group members; 24% attended a 2-year or community college vs. 15.0% of control group members. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (which tracks college enrollments nationally) showed a similar pattern of postsecondary impacts.

Finally, YouthBuild PSE participants in the MDRC study showed few significant impacts on employment and earnings or measures of personal and social development. The one exception was on measures of civic engagement. PSE participants were significantly more likely than control group members to be engaged in one or more civic activities since random assignment (94.6% vs. 88.9%) with the greatest difference in volunteering: YouthBuild PSE participants were more than twice as likely as control group members to have volunteered in the 30 months since random assignment (65.3% vs. 31.9%). On most other measures in the MDRC study, there were no significant differences.

The data from the national study provides the most rigorous assessment of YouthBuild PSE participant impacts and "strong level" evidence that YouthBuild PSE has had a positive impact on receipt of critical education, employment, and youth development services, and a positive impact on short-term educational outcomes, including postsecondary enrollment. Along with the YouthBuild reporting system data, they point to the effectiveness of the PSE approach.

11. **YouthBuild USA's technical assistance efforts, particularly the effort to create a cross-site learning community, were seen as strong contributions to program improvement**. Sites were generally positive about YouthBuild USA's professional development efforts (though there were mixed reviews about the site coaches provided by YouthBuild USA). The sites saw the cross-site meetings as valuable opportunities for peer learning and regularly reported bringing home and implementing new ideas from other sites. YouthBuild USA also actively brought new resources to the initiative, including partnerships with national organizations to address financial management curriculum and college financial aid advising, and the development of new tools, including MT2, a model summer bridge program. For most of the staff interviewed throughout the evaluation, the PSE work would have been more difficult and less successful without YouthBuild USA's support and focus on continuous improvement.

12. **Sustainability.** As multiple YouthBuild directors and staff reported in their interviews, the PSE sites have integrated postsecondary "into their DNA." The emphasis on postsecondary education and many of the associated services, are likely to continue as core elements in the YouthBuild PSE sites. During the final year of the initiative, as many sites struggled to cope with continued funding

challenges, all continued to pursue strategies for supporting the enriched academic learning, transitional services, and postsecondary support central to the PSE effort. In some cases the postsecondary partners began to pick up the costs of services; in others (especially charter-school-based programs), academic supports and college preparation activities were integrated into the school staffing and mainstream courses (senior seminars, capstones, etc.); others still integrated PSE with a broader career planning agenda. In short, all of the PSE sites believed that the PSE efforts had become integral to their identities and while specific, more costly elements might be lost, the basic PSE approach represented strategies that were here to stay. In that regard, the SIF investment in integrating postsecondary education into YouthBuild's core program design appears likely to have a long-term impact.

In sum, during the five-year initiative the PSE sites successfully implemented the major elements of the PSE approach, and most continued to refine and expand their efforts to build a clearer, more consistent pathway into postsecondary for YouthBuild students. In doing so, according to the evidence from the MDRC study, they had a positive impact on their program participants' ability to attain a secondary credential and make the transition to postsecondary education. This was an ambitious agenda, with the sites under ongoing pressure to do more with less in a challenging and constantly evolving environment. Nonetheless, the PSE sites successfully made the shift from programs providing "a GED and a job" to programs with a focus on preparing for college and a long-term, family-sustaining career.

However, as successful as the PSE initiative was in changing the focus and direction of YouthBuild programs and achieving positive impacts for program participants, the effort to strengthen the pathways to postsecondary success needs to continue at YouthBuild and its partner institutions. While the YouthBuild PSE effort clearly established new and effective strategies for providing enriched academic preparation, postsecondary transition service, and postsecondary supports, there are still multiple barriers that need to be addressed.

Perhaps the most important lesson to emerge over the five-year initiative was the continuing centrality of relationships, both in the process of working with the young PSE participants and in building the critical pathways to and through postsecondary institutions. The message from staff and students alike was that approachable, culturally competent staff who were able to build trusting relationships and were also appropriately persistent and demanding were the engine that drove the PSE process. A familiar saying in YouthBuild programs is that students "don't care what you know until they know that you care" and this continues to hold. Similarly, the ability to build and expand relationships within the postsecondary partner institutions was critical in identifying and accessing resources for YouthBuild students. The most successful postsecondary partnerships depended in large part on building a sense of shared mission and ownership between YouthBuild and college representatives. In short, the PSE structure and approach set the context, but the people gave it life.

Chapter II
PSE PROGRAMS AND PARTICIPANTS

The twelve sites in the YouthBuild USA PSE Initiative were a diverse group of programs. For example, some sites were relatively small "classic" YouthBuild programs (high school equivalency (HSE) credential preparation and construction training); others were relatively large YouthBuild programs providing a charter or alternative school diploma and occupational training in multiple fields. In two sites, the PSE program was integrated into large public high schools that were managed by the local YouthBuild organization.

The YouthBuild PSE participants were also diverse. They came to the program with a variety of interests, goals, challenges, backgrounds, and other personal characteristics. But as a whole, they were representative of YouthBuild's target population: older, out-of-school youth, many with limited academic skills, facing significant barriers to educational attainment and a family-sustaining career.

It is important to understand the diversity of and backgrounds for the YouthBuild PSE sites and the participants they serve as a starting point for assessing the implementation of the initiative. There is no "typical" YouthBuild PSE site and thus no single YouthBuild PSE "model." All of the sites in the initiative established the major elements of the PSE approach; however, each site brought its own distinctive history, circumstances, and strategies to the effort to create a new focus on postsecondary education, just as each had brought its own distinctive elements to the original effort to develop a YouthBuild program. The sites were also constantly changing, with ongoing adjustments in program design and services in response to changes in funding, new opportunities, staff or other changes at the site or at the postsecondary partner institution, and lessons learned about effective ways to better address student needs. Those adjustments continued throughout the whole of the five-year initiative. Thus, the sites present an evolving picture of the widely varying ways in which YouthBuild programs can integrate postsecondary pathways into their operations and of the ongoing learning and adjustment process that is part of the implementation effort.

Similarly, the characteristics of the YouthBuild participants and the challenges involved in helping them become college-ready shaped both the design and the implementation of the PSE approach. As is discussed in detail below, YouthBuild PSE participants faced a host of personal, academic, economic, and social barriers to educational success. And, as the interviews with participants and staff made clear, they also often arrived in the program carrying a history of failure, rejection, and trauma. At the same time, they brought survival skills and often surprising resilience; and, as the life stories and interviews highlight, once they began to recognize their possible futures, they brought tremendous energy and commitment to the effort to achieve their goals.

This chapter describes the YouthBuild PSE sites and their participants, based on data from the site visits and the PSE reporting system.[23] The next chapter discusses the implementation of the PSE programs, the services provided, and the challenges faced by the PSE sites in more detail.

[23] Site visits and YouthBuild reporting data are described in the "Methods" section of Chapter I.

Organizational Context: The YouthBuild PSE Sites

Table II-1 at the end of this section provides a brief overview of the YouthBuild PSE sites and shows the wide variation in their size, their educational programming, the occupational training they provide as part of the YouthBuild effort, and the size and nature of their postsecondary partners.

In terms of size, the twelve PSE programs served an average of approximately 50 students per program per year over the five years of the grant, with somewhat higher numbers in the first two years and a drop in later years (which coincided with the decrease in the size of the PSE grants over time). Individual sites ranged from small to medium programs serving an average of 27 to 51 students per year (*YouthBuild Bogalusa*, *Mile High Youth Corps*, *Prevention PLUS, YouthBuild Providence, YouthBuild Fresno, American YouthWorks,* and *YouthBuild Just-A-Start*) to the larger school-based efforts (*CCEO*, *LA CAUSA*, *Civic Works*, *Abyssinian Development Corporation YouthBuild*, and *Guadalupe Alternative Programs* (*GAP))*, each of which served an average of 60 or more students and over 100 in the first year of the grant. While every program aimed to provide an individualized experience for students, larger and smaller YouthBuild programs often faced very different organizational challenges in managing services, coordinating among staff, and providing individualized supports.

The YouthBuild programs also varied in the educational options they provided at the beginning of the PSE Initiative, and several made significant changes during the five years of the initiative.

- Three sites - *YouthBuild Bogalusa*, *Mile High YouthBuild* in Denver, and *Providence YouthBuild* - were primarily traditional HSE credential programs at the beginning of the initiative. Bogalusa continued as a HSE credential-only program through the five year initiative, but Providence YouthBuild added a diploma program (and in 2017 became the diploma-granting YouthBuild Preparatory Academy); and Mile High Youth Corps replaced its HSE credential program with a diploma-granting charter school in 2015.
- Four sites – *Civic Works* in Baltimore and the three California sites (*LA CAUSA*, *CCEO* and *Fresno YouthBuild*) – were based in or connected to diploma-granting educational programs at the beginning of the initiative. Civic Works had recently taken over management of one of the city's high schools and integrated YouthBuild PSE into the high school program. *LA CAUSA*, *CCEO*, and *YouthBuild Fresno* were all sites for the YouthBuild Charter School of California, which provides a high school degree in association with California YouthBuild programs, using an innovative, project-based curriculum. All four of these sites continued their diploma-granting focus.[24] None of these four sites offered an HSE credential.
- Five sites provided a complex combination of HSE credential and diploma options at the start of the PSE initiative. *Prevention Plus*, *GAP*, *Just-A-Start*, and *American YouthWorks* all included both HSE credential and diploma options; in each, YouthBuild participants had the option of pursuing either type of credential or moving (at least to some extent) between programs for specific classes or to acquire specific skills. *Abyssinian Development Corporation*, part of a large community development agency serving New York City's Harlem neighborhood, operated a traditional HSE credential-based YouthBuild program for out-of-school youth and also integrated

[24] CCEO later changed its charter school affiliation to the John Muir Charter School network.

YouthBuild program elements into Bread and Roses High School, the public high school that the agency operated in partnership with the New York City Education Department. *Prevention Plus* later became The Bridge Academy (a diploma and HSE credential prep program for students who struggle academically in traditional public school), and as noted above, *YouthBuild Providence* offered both HSE credential and diploma options during the PSE initiative, and eventually became a diploma-granting institution.

The PSE sites integrated YouthBuild's traditional occupational training and leadership development elements into their programs in different ways. All of the PSE sites included construction training in their program design, reflecting construction's role as part of the original YouthBuild model. Construction training was also required under the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) funding received by some sites. As Table II-1 indicates, a number of sites expanded their occupational training into additional arenas, including health care (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant training), technology (e.g., computer repair, website development), recycling/conservation, automotive repair, food services, and welding. Some sites developed classes with their postsecondary partners, and others provided training through internships with local organizations or employers. The way sites organized occupational training and education also varied widely. Some followed YouthBuild's traditional 50/40/10 formula (50% education, 40% occupational training, and 10% leadership development) with students alternating between education and construction work on a daily or weekly basis. In other sites, particularly those operating in a school-like setting, occupational training took the form of daily or weekly classes or experiences, with substantially more time devoted to the academic program. Most sites incorporated at least some service elements into their training activities (e.g., working on buildings for low-income families). Some sites helped participants arrange community service activities that were linked to their occupational training. At a few sites, service and training were largely separate activities.

The differences in program structure had implications for how the YouthBuild sites implemented the PSE approach. In order to qualify for the PSE grants, the YouthBuild PSE programs had to demonstrate both a history of solid program operations and a commitment to broaden the opportunities for their graduates, and all were able to implement major elements of the PSE approach early in the initiative. But the programmatic starting point for each organization influenced both the kinds of programs each PSE site developed and the relative ease with which they could address elements of the PSE approach. As one example, some HSE credential programs, which tended to operate a shorter (6-9 month) program cycle, found it more difficult to build additional college-ready activities such as research papers, greater emphasis on reading and writing, homework assignments, and higher-level math into their programs. The diploma-granting sites, which tended to run longer (up to 2 years) and had more comprehensive programs, had more options for integrating the new emphasis into their programs. On the other hand, in general, the more school-like the setting, the more difficult it was for sites to integrate all of the elements of YouthBuild's mix of educational, occupational, and leadership experiences and its ideals of community, service, and a clear YouthBuild identity. As noted above, while occupational training was a significant element in all of the YouthBuild programs, the more school-like

programs tended to have training that was less hands-on and less likely to include the experience of working on construction projects in the community. [25]

Finally, the YouthBuild PSE sites' postsecondary partners, most commonly nearby community colleges, also differed widely in size, institutional interests, and culture. The colleges' enrollments ranged from approximately 3,100 students at Northshore Technical Community College (Bogalusa, LA) to over 40,000 students at Austin (Texas) Community College and the University of California at Los Angeles. While the smaller institutions were likely to be somewhat more accessible than the larger ones, even the smaller institutions dwarfed the YouthBuild programs in terms of numbers of students served, making it difficult for most, if not all, PSE sites to gain the attention of appropriate college administrators. Because of the diversity of size as well as cultures and structures among the postsecondary partners, no single point of entry into the colleges worked across all the YouthBuild PSE sites. Each YouthBuild program had to get to know its intended partner and, often through trial and error, find the most appropriate and effective point (or points) of connection.

[25] This was most evident in the two YouthBuild programs operating in large urban high schools. While the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) had a construction program for its GED students, the YouthBuild PSE students at ADC's Bread and Roses High School did not participate in any occupational training. At REACH high school, operated by Baltimore Civic Works, students took occupational training classes in construction, basic electrical work, nursing, pharmacy, and Homeland Security, but generally had more limited opportunities to participate in related service projects in the community.

Table II-1: Program Overview

PROGRAM NAME	Location	Initial College Partner (Total Student Enrollment 2013-14)	YouthBuild Participants (Based on YouthBuild Reporting Data)						GED/HSE Offered	HS Diploma Offered	Occupational Training Provided
			2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	5-Year Avg.			
GED/HSE Programs											
YouthBuild Bogalusa	Bogalusa, LA	North Shore Technical Community College (3,151)	27	29	20	27	30	**27**	Yes	No	C
Mile High Youth Corps	Denver, CO	Community College of Denver (10,432)	34	35	32	35	15	**30**	Yes	Yes*	C
YB Providence	Providence, RI	Community College of Rhode Island (17,699)	30	58	43	42	33	**41**	Yes	Yes	C*
Diploma Programs											
Civic Works	Baltimore, MD	Baltimore City Community College (5,394)	135	21	53	54	59	**64**	No	Yes	C,H
YouthBuild Fresno	Fresno, CA	Fresno City College (21,334)	55	78	69	36	0	**48**	No	Yes	C
LA CAUSA	Los Angeles, CA	Ctr. for Community Partnerships, UCLA (44,947); East LA College (36,606)	147	119	78	51	32	**85**	No	Yes	C,H
YB CCEO	Los Angeles, CA	El Camino College (23,996)	107	96	78	63	59	**81**	No	Yes	C,A,F,W,IT,B
Diploma and GED/HSE Programs											
Prevention PLUS, Inc.	Atlanta, GA	Atlanta Technical College (4,859); Clayton State University (7,261)	65	43	26	9	3	**29**	Yes	Yes*	C,MH
American YouthWorks	Austin, TX	Austin Community College (41,624)	58	59	49	46	41	**51**	Yes	Yes	C,H,W,A,IT
YouthBuild/Just-A-Start	Cambridge, MA	Bunker Hill Community College (14,023)	50	32	29	28	31	**34**	Yes	Yes	C
YB Abyssinian Development Corporation	New York, NY	CUNY Start Program at Borough of Manhattan Community College (24,186)	100	72	48	43	73	**67**	Yes	Yes	C, F (GED/HSE only)
Guadalupe Alternative Programs	St. Paul, MN	Inver Hills Community College (5,944)	69	71	84	85	129	**88**	Yes	Yes	C, H

Data based on YouthBuild participant reporting data, National Center for Educational Statistics (college enrollments), and site visit interviews. Occupational training categories: A=Automotive, B=Business, C=Construction, F=Food Service/Barista, H=Health/Nursing, IT=Computers, W=Welding.

**Notes: Mile High Youth Corps initially provided an online credit recovery/diploma program for a limited number of students, but in 2015 ended its HSE credential program and became a diploma-granting charter high school. Prevention Plus stopped providing GED services in 2014 and focused on its diploma program when its USDOL YouthBuild grant was not renewed, but returned to both diploma and HSE credential prep when it became The Bridge Academy. YouthBuild Providence provided internships in health care, culinary arts, childcare, and teaching for students who had completed the construction program; it is now the YouthBuild Preparatory Academy, a diploma-granting secondary education program providing both academic and occupational/service-learning opportunities.*

PSE Participants

YouthBuild's mission is to re-engage low-income out-of-school youth in education, help them create a pathway towards a career, and develop their capacity as community leaderships. The PSE participants in the PSE sites fit this profile. While each participant brought assets and experience to the program, YouthBuild participants generally faced significant barriers to educational and economic success in general and in particular to their efforts to move into and through postsecondary education.

Table II-2 at the end of the section provides an overview of key participant characteristics for the five cohorts of YouthBuild PSE participants who enrolled in the PSE sites during the five years of the initiative – a total of over 3200 participants between 2011 and 2016. As the table shows, the participants face a variety of challenges to postsecondary success: [26]

- Virtually all participants in the reporting system (99%) lacked a high school diploma or HSE credential at entry into the program. With an average age of nearly 19 years, most were over-age for their level of educational attainment.
- Participants were predominantly minority youth: 47% were Hispanic and 33% were African-American, two demographic categories highly correlated with lower rates of postsecondary success.
- More men than women were in the program (57% male, 43% female). Men from underrepresented demographic groups (such as Hispanic and African-American males) and from low-income backgrounds are less likely to enroll and succeed in higher education than women in those groups.
- The majority of program participants came to YouthBuild with limited academic skills. Across the five years, more than half (56%) of the participants tested below the 8th grade level in reading skills at entry and two-thirds (66%) below 8th grade in math. Even more striking, over a third (35%) tested below the 5th grade reading level and 39% below the 5th grade math level.
- Roughly 70% of the youth entering the PSE program reported that they were first-generation college-goers.

The YouthBuild PSE participants also brought other personal challenges to the educational process. Based on YouthBuild reporting system data, 31% were non-native English speakers; 21% were parents (often single parents); 21% had some kind of prior juvenile or felony conviction; 4% were currently court involved; 12% reported that they were currently homeless or had been homeless in the past year; and

[26] There is a substantial literature on the relationship between student characteristics and college access and success. For example: T. Ross, *et al.* (2012). *Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study* (NCES 2012-046). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; Susan Choy (2001). *Students Whose Parents Did Not Go to College: Postsecondary Access, Persistence, and Attainment* (NCES 2001–126). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Jeremy Redford and Kathleen Mulvaney Hoyer (2017). *Statistics in Brief: First-Generation and Continuing-Generation College Students: A Comparison of High School and Postsecondary Experiences* (NCES 2018-009). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; Jizhi Zhang et al (2011). *Crossing the Bridge: GED Credentials and Postsecondary Educational Outcomes, Year Two Report*. [Washington, DC: GED Testing Service, American Council on Education.

nearly 6% reported some form of disability. Based on the on-site interviews, many also brought barriers and experiences that were not reflected in the reporting system categories, such as exposure to trauma, learning disabilities, experience in the foster care system, and negative experiences in large urban high schools.

While the overall picture of YouthBuild participants remained relatively consistent during the five years of the initiative, several shifts in participant characteristics are worth noting. The percentage of Asian students served by YouthBuild PSE programs increased substantially, from 3% to 23%, largely driven by an influx of Southeast Asian refugees into *GAP* in St. Paul. (Note that while Asian students as a whole have higher than average rates of postsecondary success, rates are much lower for students from Southeast Asian communities.)[27] The percentage of ESL students also rose roughly eleven percentage points, with year-to-year fluctuations across multiple sites. At the same time, the average academic skills of entering YouthBuild participants dropped roughly a full grade level over the five-year initiative: the average reading level dropped from 7.6 to 6.6 and the average math grade level dropped from 7.0 to 6.2. The percentage of entering participants reading below an 8th grade level rose from 46% to 67% and the percentage scoring below 8th grade in math rose from 58% to 68%.[28]

There were also important variations in participant characteristics among PSE sites, reflecting the different communities and populations that each YouthBuild program served. Tables II-3 and II-4 provide site by site participant characteristic data: Table II-3 provides five-year averages for each site and Table II-4 shows year-by-year figures.

One area in which sites clearly differed in the racial and ethnic composition of their participants. Six sites (*CCEO*, *LA CAUSA*, and *YouthBuild Fresno* in California, *American YouthWorks* in Austin, TX, *YouthBuild Providence* in Rhode Island, and *YouthBuild Just-A-Start* in Cambridge, MA) served predominantly Hispanic youth, with the percentage of Hispanic participants ranging from an average of 52% in Providence to just under 100% at LA CAUSA between 2011 and 2016. Four sites (*Civic Works* (Baltimore), *YouthBuild Bogalusa*, *Prevention Plus* (Atlanta), *Abyssinian Development Corporation* (New York)), on the other hand, were predominantly African-American. As noted earlier, *GAP* stood out as serving a high percentage of Asian youth (76% over the five-year period), primarily the result of an influx of Southeast Asian refugee families. Overall, White students represented only 5% of the total YouthBuild population and made up more than 20% of the students in only one site (Bogalusa).

[27] "Overview of Southeast Asian Educational Challenges: Fact Sheet" (February 2013). Washington, DC: Southeast Asia Resource Action Center.

[28] There are a number of possible explanations for these changes. Overall, enrollment in YouthBuild PSE programs declined over the five years of the initiative, from 877 in 2011-12 to 505 in 2015-16. That decline may reflect regular variations in annual recruitment, a decrease in the size of the PSE grants over the life of the initiative, and/or the end of USDOL grants in some sites. However, it may also reflect the improving job market in which low income youth were better able to find employment. Similarly, changes in the skill levels of new enrollees may reflect broader labor market changes, with higher-skilled youth better able to find employment. and youth with more limited skills enrolling in YouthBuild. A one-grade level decline in entry reading and math skill levels also represents a significant shift, likely adding to the challenges of building college-ready skills: to be college-ready, youth entering with 6th grade reading or math skills would need to raise their reading and math skills by more than five grade levels in a year or two in the program.

Programs differed in other ways as well. Well over half of the participants in *GAP* and *LA CAUSA* and more than 40% in *YouthBuild Providence* were non-native English speakers. *YouthBuild Fresno*, *Mile High YouthBuild*, and *YouthBuild Bogalusa* served consistently high percentages of youth who were parents. *Mile High YouthBuild* and *Just-A-Start* served relatively high percentages of students with disabilities. On average, more than 20% of the participants at *YouthBuild Fresno*, *American YouthWorks*, and *Mile High YouthBuild* had been homeless in the past year. On average, about 70% of the YouthBuild PSE participants were first generation college-goers, but the percentages ranged widely, from a low of 35% among *Civics Works* enrollees to over 84% at *GAP*.

Participants' academic skill levels at program entry also varied among sites. In four sites – *CCEO*, *YouthBuild Fresno*, *GAP*, and *LA CAUSA* – an average of 65% or more of participants over the five years tested below the 8th grade level in reading, and at those four sites plus *Mile High YouthBuild* and *Prevention Plus*, more than 70% of participants tested below the 8th grade level in math. At the other end of the continuum, at *YouthBuild Bogalusa* and *Abyssinian*, an average of 78% or more of the participants read at the 8th grade level or above at entry; at Abyssinian more than 75% tested above the 8th grade level in math. Those entry reading and math skill levels influenced how sites approached helping students become college-ready. [29]

Though students at all sites faced significant barriers, participants in two programs faced striking combinations of challenges. In *YouthBuild Fresno* between 2011 and 2015, roughly 30% of participants were non-native English speakers, 45% were parents, 65% reported being homeless at some point in the past year, and more than 80% were court-involved and/or reported a prior felony conviction. [30] As noted above, 77% scored below the 8th grade level in reading at entry and 89% scored below 8th grade in math. Seventy-six percent (76%) were first generation college-goers. At *GAP*, an influx of Southeast Asian refugee families into the community brought a major shift in the population served, from 33% Asian in 2011-12 to nearly 90% in 2015-16. The proportion of ESL students rose from 49% to 98% during those five years. While relatively few *GAP* students were homeless (3%) or court involved (0.5%), almost all faced major academic challenges: overall, 75% scored below 5th grade reading on entry and 67% scored below 5th grade math (roughly 90% scored below 8th grade in both math and reading). Ninety-four percent (94%) were first generation college-goers.

The numbers reveal several key points about the YouthBuild PSE Initiative. First, the sites continued to serve the core YouthBuild population while taking on the challenge of building a new college-going culture and attempting to create real pathways to postsecondary education. Rather than raising the bar for program entry – which would make PSE success more likely - the PSE sites continued to serve young people with significant academic, personal, and social challenges, and the challenges even increased in some sites. Second, YouthBuild students clearly often faced multiple barriers to educational and economic success. Most faced challenges related to joblessness, unstable housing, parenthood, language, and/or involvement with the legal system as the context for their efforts to move ahead.

[29] It is important to note that, as a result of the small numbers of participants at most YouthBuild PSE sites, Table II-4 may show substantial variations in the percentages of participants with specific characteristics from year to year in individual sites. This discussion uses the five-year averages in Table II-3, which provide a more reliable indicator of site characteristics over the course of the initiative.

[30] Note that, as a result of limited funding, Fresno did not enroll any new YouthBuild participants in 2015-2016.

Based on interviews with staff across the sites, those challenges were often reflected in limited social and life skills, low self-regard, family problems, and a host of other issues that programs needed to recognize and address.

Participant Perspectives [31]

While the numbers tell an important part of the story, the interviews with YouthBuild participants help us to understand more about the participants and the context in which they joined the YouthBuild program. The reporting system data and the interviews collectively indicate that the participant group was often motivated, but in need of serious, sustained, and individualized supports in order to build their academic, personal, and social skills, as well as their ability to cope with the myriad challenges of higher education – and even of completing YouthBuild.

YouthBuild participants left school for a variety of reasons and at many different points. Some dropped out as early as middle school, reporting that they were bored, not into being a "student," actively using drugs, and/or not passing their courses. Others left a semester or two before graduation: some had failed one or two courses and were told they would have to return for another year; others were unaware until senior year that they were behind in credits; others had not passed their state's exit exams and were not interested in trying again; and still others were tired of trying to catch up after having attended multiple schools in different communities. One young woman who had moved from another state had trouble getting her transcripts transferred to her new public school and just gave up. Some participants who had children while still in high school had decided to drop out and try to find work to support their children. Some felt "pushed out" by teachers or counselors who suggested that, since they were unlikely to pass the high school exit exam, they might as well drop out and get a job. Others had been expelled for serious as well as relatively minor violations of school policies, sometimes as victims of rigidly applied zero tolerance rules. When asked if anyone at the school had offered support when they got "in trouble," participants not only indicated that this had not happened, but that they hadn't expected it to. Finally, at least some participants at virtually every site mentioned that part of the reason for leaving school was that no one there seemed to care whether they stayed or left.

> *I got expelled the first time when I was a freshman, and then I went to an alternative school. I did good [until] my junior year, then got caught up in the same things – smoking weed. I brought it to school and got expelled again.*
>
> *In high school [the teachers] might explain something in like five words and you're still, "Hold on, I don't get it," but they've moved on.*
>
> *When I started I wasn't really aware what I wanted to accomplish. I was lost between schools because I'd gone through so much.*
>
> *At first, after going to a public school, I didn't care at all about school. No one there cared about me.*

[31] This section is based on interviews conducted throughout the PSE evaluation. The Methods section of Chapter 1 describes the interviews; the interview protocols are included in the Appendix.

At my old high school, you're just a number. No one sees you unless you're really smart or you make a lot of trouble.

One day when I was in a crowded hallway it just hit me. I was no more than a number to the teachers. Why bother? I dropped out soon after.

Students gave different reasons for deciding to enter YouthBuild. Some had become parents and felt a new sense of responsibility about getting an education and a good job. Others were simply tired of not being able to find a decent job or afford a place to live. Some had come to feel that they were wasting their lives by doing too many drugs, drinking or partying too much, or spending too much time in prison or on probation. Some were attracted by the college goal, though most were initially looking for a route to a HSE credential or diploma and a job (some had been referred to YouthBuild by an employment counselor or probation officer). Some were encouraged – or pushed – to check out YouthBuild by a friend or family member. Some had found other HSE credential programs to be too impersonal and/or disconnected from employment. Some found the idea of "earning while learning" appealing (many YouthBuild programs paid participants a stipend for at least part of their time in the program).

I was in high school for 4 years but did not graduate on time. I was behind in credits for personal reasons and life as well. I was not doing well. I was at a park. [A YouthBuild staff member] was handing out flyers with a boy who graduated from here. … I liked how they talked about YouthBuild and how it focuses on you. They do really focus on you. I'm happy here, and soon to graduate.

The teachers at my old high school just focused on certain students.

I got caught up in gang banging and selling drugs and smoking and all that. But when it came down to it, I was living with my mom and I was on food stamps. … I found out about [YouthBuild] and was like, "eh, all right." Then it started and it opened my eyes. I had so much fun. I got to know people from the same background as me. … I've stopped smoking weed. I've cut off ties to my homeboys who were gang banging – I moved out so I'm away from all that and I can thank the program for that.

I came to YouthBuild because I had to – it was a condition of my probation. I spent my first year doing nothing – then realized that I'd wasted a year. I just wanted to hang out. But I got arrested and realized that I didn't want a dead end. I asked myself, "Do I want to graduate from county or graduate from college?" I decided I had to move forward. Not everyone graduates from YouthBuild – you have to want it. YouthBuild gives you the opportunity. Now I'm in college part-time.

I had a great probation officer who saw that I was ready to turn things around, and she thought YouthBuild was the place for me. I'd never heard of it but she sure was right.

High school was boring. YouthBuild expands your mind and tries to prepare you for hard work.

The following account, based on a student interview, illustrates a path followed by many students:

> *Darrell (not his real name) dropped out of school when they lost his records, leaving him no proof of credits. He came to YouthBuild at the suggestion of his brother (who was an alum), left, then returned two years later. He said, "I've made a few mistakes. I value life more now." He has an infant daughter and has learned a lot from the parenting group he's in through YouthBuild. His goal is to get his diploma and become an auto mechanic through a 16-month certificate program at the community college. He said, "YouthBuild never gives up on you. The teachers are more personal. They'll help you. They put their all into it."*

Students also came with grave questions about the realistic degree of opportunity that existed for them – whether they had the skills to succeed in college and career. Over the five years of the evaluation, we heard stories from students at every YouthBuild PSE site about how the YouthBuild approach (and the YouthBuild staff) had helped them make progress beyond their original expectations.

> *Ever since I can remember I thought about college, but didn't really think I could go. Now I'm just going.*

> *I've never been a real school type of person. I couldn't see sitting there for eight hours a day while someone tries to drill something into your head. I'm going to fall asleep or start talking to someone next to me. But it's different at YouthBuild.*

> *Before YouthBuild I had no sense of direction. I was looking for a minimum wage job. After I joined everything changed. … I learned about will power and that if I could at age 21 walk the stage for the first time holding my high school diploma, I can do anything I set my mind to.*

> *Before I started YouthBuild I thought I'd never get my diploma or attend college.*

> *I didn't feel like I could do college when I got here. In high school I sometimes wouldn't even go for a week. When I got here I was like, "am I really going to make it?" But then, I did.*

> *I grew up with the idea that college is for smart people, and I wasn't one of them. I didn't have anyone to guide me until YouthBuild.*

> *When I started at YouthBuild I just wanted my GED [HSE credential] so I could get a job. Any job. But when I got here I found out about all kinds of jobs I never knew about, and what you need to do to get them. Some only take a year or so of classes or training. Some of the training programs even pay you while you're learning.*

> *I never thought I could go to college, but I'm there now and I'm doing fine. Until I came to YouthBuild, no one ever told me I was good at anything. Here, everybody notices when you do things right and they help you see what you're good at and what you need to work on.*

College is scary. I said "no" before, but now I think I have to go. I have a great counselor and so much support.

Before YouthBuild, I didn't really know how to set goals and figure out how to reach them.

The teachers give you lots of personal time. Classes are smaller, you get tutoring when you need it, and they make sure you understand why and how. It wasn't like that at my old high school.

The YouthBuild participants set the context for the program. Both the reporting system data and the interviews tell us that the PSE participants as a group brought a mix of motivations, ambitions, expectations, and challenges. The programs' task was to provide the sustained and individualized supports that these diverse students needed to build their academic skills, their personal and social skills, their goals and expectations, their navigational skills, and their ability to cope with the myriad challenges involved in making it to and through postsecondary education.

Table II-2: PSE Participant Characteristics by Program Year

Characteristic	2011 Entrants	2012 Entrants	2013 Entrants	2014 Entrants	2015 Entrants	All Years
Total N	**877**	**713**	**609**	**519**	**505**	**3223**
Average Age	18.4	18.9	18.9	19.1	19.3	18.9
% Credential at Entry (HSE or Diploma)	0.6%	0.3%	2.8%	1.0%	2.6%	1.3%
Race	**Percent**	**Percent**	**Percent**	**Percent**	**Percent**	**Percent**
% Native American	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%
% Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%	0.7%	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%
% Asian	3.4%	9.8%	11.2%	15.6%	23.0%	11.3%
% White	3.8%	5.9%	4.1%	5.6%	6.1%	5.0%
% African American	37.7%	28.5%	30.9%	32.9%	30.5%	32.5%
% Hispanic	48.3%	53.2%	49.9%	41.6%	35.6%	46.6%
% Other	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	0.6%	0.8%	1.0%
% Multi-Racial	5.4%	1.4%	1.8%	2.7%	3.6%	3.1%
Gender						
% Female	40.6%	40.5%	46.6%	46.8%	43.8%	43.2%
% Male	59.4%	59.5%	53.4%	53.2%	55.8%	56.7%
% Other/Transgender	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.1%
Math Level at Entry						
% 5th Grade or Below	33.1%	45.7%	45.0%	35.5%	39.7%	39.5%
% 6th or 7th Grade	24.7%	24.7%	28.6%	34.4%	28.1%	27.5%
% 8th Grade or Above	42.2%	29.6%	26.4%	30.1%	32.2%	33.0%
Reading Level at Entry						
% 5th Grade or Below	26.2%	38.4%	41.7%	29.5%	48.5%	35.5%
% 6th or 7th Grade	19.8%	20.2%	23.6%	22.8%	18.5%	21.0%
% 8th Grade or Above	53.9%	41.4%	34.6%	47.7%	33.0%	43.5%

Characteristic	2011 Entrants	2012 Entrants	2013 Entrants	2014 Entrants	2015 Entrants	All Years
Other Characteristics						
ESL	23.9%	29.9%	35.6%	36.4%	35.2%	31.2%
First Generation in College	70.8%	71.7%	67.5%	67.6%	81.8%	71.2%
Parent or Primary Caregiver at Entry	17.9%	23.6%	21.7%	24.9%	16.2%	20.8%
Homeless (Current or in the Past Year)*	13.0%	14.8%	13.4%	10.7%	3.9%	11.6%
Disabled	5.8%	5.7%	6.0%	4.1%	6.7%	5.6%
Prior Juvenile or Adult Felony Conviction at Entry*	24.2%	22.0%	24.0%	21.0%	7.7%	20.6%
Court Involved at Entry	3.6%	7.0%	1.5%	0.8%	3.6%	3.5%

NOTE: 2011 Entrants enrolled in YB between July1, 2011 and June 30, 2012; 2012 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013; 2013 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014; 2014 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015; 2015 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. Civic Works Baltimore Includes Q3 2010 entries.
Source: YouthBuild Data Reporting System.
**In 2015, YouthBuild changed to a new participant reporting system. While most data items were unchanged, the definitions and/or data collection process for several items such as homeless status and prior court involvement were changed. As a result, 2015 data may differ substantially from that for prior years.*

Table II-3: PSE Participant Characteristics at Program Entry by Site, 5 Year Averages (2011-2016)

	CCEO	Fresno	Just a Start	YB Providence	American Youth Works	Civic Works	YB Bogalusa	Guadalupe	LA CAUSA	Mile High	YB Prevention Plus	Abyssinian	All Sites
Total Participants	81	48	34	41	51	64	27	88	85	30	29	67	645
Average Age	18.5	20.5	18.7	18.5	18.5	17	19	20.5	18.7	19.7	18.1	18.3	18.8
Credential at Entry (HSE or Diploma)	0.5%	2.1%	1.2%	0.0%	0.4%	4.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	4.8%	5.1%
Race (Percent)													
Native American	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Asian	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	2.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	75.8%	0.0%	2.6%	2.1%	0.6%	11.3%
White	1.2%	2.1%	11.2%	5.8%	13.0%	0.9%	34.6%	1.4%	0.0%	15.9%	4.8%	0.0%	5.0%
African American	10.2%	31.1%	12.4%	33.5%	16.2%	98.1%	62.4%	11.0%	0.0%	15.2%	74.0%	66.4%	32.5%
Hispanic	87.1%	54.2%	70.6%	51.9%	61.7%	0.3%	0.0%	8.7%	99.3%	37.7%	16.4%	28.6%	46.6%
Other Race	0.0%	0.4%	0.6%	0.0%	5.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.7%	2.1%	2.4%	1.0%
Multi-Racial	1.2%	3.4%	5.3%	5.8%	2.4%	0.3%	3.0%	1.8%	0.2%	25.2%	0.7%	2.1%	3.1%
Gender (Percent)													
Female	40.2%	26.5%	32.9%	35.0%	43.9%	51.2%	50.4%	53.0%	47.3%	27.8%	41.1%	47.9%	43.2%
Male	59.8%	73.5%	67.1%	65.0%	55.3%	48.8%	49.6%	47.0%	52.7%	72.2%	58.9%	52.1%	56.7%
Math Level at Entry (Percent)													
5th Grade and Below	41.9%	67.2%	38.2%	29.4%	28.6%	16.3%	11.3%	67.2%	54.5%	58.3%	39.0%	7.6%	39.5%
6th or 7th Grade	30.6%	22.3%	30.0%	39.2%	26.6%	31.9%	46.6%	23.7%	24.2%	18.5%	32.9%	17.4%	27.5%
8th Grade and Above	27.6%	10.5%	31.8%	31.4%	44.8%	51.9%	42.1%	9.1%	21.4%	23.2%	28.1%	75.0%	33.0%
Reading Level at Entry (Percent)													
5th Grade and Below	51.5%	53.4%	27.1%	18.1%	19.7%	20.7%	3.8%	74.8%	46.1%	20.5%	15.8%	4.7%	35.5%
6th or 7th Grade	22.8%	23.9%	22.4%	30.4%	18.1%	20.4%	18.0%	17.6%	22.4%	20.5%	25.3%	14.7%	21.0%
8th Grade and Above	25.8%	22.7%	50.6%	51.5%	62.2%	58.9%	78.2%	7.6%	31.5%	58.9%	58.9%	80.6%	43.5%
ESL (Percent)	23.3%	29.0%	7.1%	40.3%	10.7%	10.6%	0.0%	84.2%	57.6%	17.2%	2.1%	13.1%	31.2%
First Generation College-Going (Percent)	66.5%	76.4%	75.5%	89.2%	54.9%	35.1%	70.7%	93.5%	66.1%	72.6%	44.1%	65.5%	71.2%

	CCEO	Fresno	Just a Start	YB Providence	American Youth Works	Civic Works	YB Bogalusa	Guadalupe	LA CAUSA	Mile High	YB Prevention Plus	Abyssinian	All Sites
Parent or Primary Caregiver at Entry (Percent)	19.7%	44.5%	19.4%	19.9%	26.1%	2.8%	31.6%	20.8%	18.0%	34.4%	15.2%	11.3%	20.8%
Homeless (Current or in Past Year)(Percent)	8.7%	64.7%	17.8%	3.9%	20.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	4.3%	22.7%	5.0%	3.6%	11.6%
Disabled (Percent)	7.2%	4.6%	15.3%	1.0%	8.1%	2.8%	1.5%	4.1%	4.5%	21.4%	5.0%	1.2%	5.6%
Prior Juvenile or Adult Felony Conviction (Percent)	27.5%	81.1%	23.5%	4.4%	35.6%	0.0%	8.3%	4.6%	13.1%	51.0%	26.0%	5.4%	20.6%
Court Involved (Percent)	1.5%	25.2%	3.5%	4.4%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	4.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	3.5%

NOTE: Based on data from the YouthBuild participant reporting system. 2011 Entrants enrolled in YB between July1, 2011 and June 30, 2012; 2012 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013; 2013 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014; 2014 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015; 2015 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. Civic Works Baltimore Includes Q3 2010 entries.
Source: YouthBuild Data Reporting System.

Table II-4: PSE Participant Characteristics at Program Entry by Site and Program Year*

	CCEO	Fresno	Just a Start	YB Providence	American Youth Works	Civic Works	YB Bogalusa	Guadalupe	LA CAUSA	Mile High	YB Prevention Plus	Abyssinian	All Sites
Total Participants													
2011-2012	107	55	50	30	58	135	27	69	147	34	65	100	877
2012-2013	96	78	32	58	59	21	29	71	119	35	43	72	713
2013-2014	78	69	29	43	49	53	20	84	78	32	26	48	609
2014-2015	63	36	28	42	46	54	27	85	51	35	9	43	519
2015-2016	59	0	31	33	41	59	30	129	32	15	3	73	505
Average Age													
2011-2012	18.7	20.2	18.2	18.6	19.1	17.0	19.3	19.4	18	19.3	18.3	17.6	18.4
2012-2013	18.4	20.7	18.6	18.2	18.6	16.9	19.5	20.5	19	19.6	18.1	17.2	18.9
2013-2014	18.5	20.6	18.7	18.9	18.1	16.8	18	20.3	18.6	20.4	18	18.2	18.9
2014-2015	18.7	20.4	19.3	18.0	18.4	16.7	19.1	20.8	19.4	20.1	17.4	18.9	19.1
2015-2016	18.2	NA	19.3	18.8	18.2	17.4	18.6	21	19.4	18.3	17.7	20	19.3
Credential at Entry (HSE or Diploma)													
2011-2012	0.9%	1.8%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.6%
2012-2013	1.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
2013-2014	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	18.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	2.8%
2014-2015	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	9.3%	1.0%
2015-2016	0.0%	NA	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.3%	2.6%
Race (Percent)													
Native American-2011	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Native American-2012	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Native American-2013	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Native American-2014	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Native American-2015	0.0%	NA	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-2011	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-2012	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-2013	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-2014	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-2015	0.0%	NA	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

	CCEO	Fresno	Just a Start	YB Providence	American Youth Works	Civic Works	YB Bogalusa	Guadalupe	LA CAUSA	Mile High	YB Prevention Plus	Abyssinian	All Sites
Asian-2011	0.0%	7.3%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	3.4%
Asian-2012	0.0%	9.0%	0.0%	3.4%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	81.7%	0.0%	2.9%	2.3%	0.0%	9.8%
Asian-2013	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	73.8%	0.0%	9.4%	0.0%	0.0%	11.2%
Asian-2014	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	87.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	15.6%
Asian-2015	0.0%	NA	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	89.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	23.0%
White-2011	1.9%	0.0%	12.0%	3.3%	10.3%	0.7%	33.3%	4.3%	0.0%	2.9%	6.2%	0.0%	3.8%
White-2012	0.0%	2.6%	15.6%	8.6%	13.6%	4.8%	37.9%	1.4%	0.0%	17.1%	7.0%	0.0%	5.9%
White-2013	2.6%	2.9%	10.3%	2.3%	6.1%	0.0%	35.0%	1.2%	0.0%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%
White-2014	1.6%	2.8%	7.1%	4.8%	23.9%	1.9%	18.5%	0.0%	0.0%	17.1%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%
White-2015	0.0%	NA	9.7%	9.1%	12.2%	0.0%	46.7%	0.8%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%
African American-2011	9.3%	21.8%	12.0%	33.3%	15.5%	98.5%	66.7%	31.9%	0.0%	2.9%	69.2%	65.0%	37.7%
African American-2012	13.5%	35.9%	9.4%	37.9%	11.9%	95.2%	62.1%	11.3%	0.0%	25.7%	72.1%	61.1%	28.5%
African American-2013	11.5%	27.5%	6.9%	41.9%	20.4%	100%	60.0%	3.6%	0.0%	21.9%	80.8%	70.8%	30.9%
African American-2014	6.3%	41.7%	14.3%	31.0%	21.7%	96.3%	77.8%	8.2%	0.0%	14.3%	88.9%	74.4%	32.9%
African American-2015	8.5%	NA	19.4%	18.2%	12.2%	98.3%	46.7%	6.2%	0.0%	6.7%	100.0%	65.8%	30.5%
Hispanic-2011	88.8%	65.5%	70.0%	40.0%	67.2%	0.7%	0.0%	23.2%	100.0%	0.0%	18.5%	31.0%	48.3%
Hispanic-2012	86.5%	50.0%	71.9%	46.6%	62.7%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	99.2%	48.6%	16.3%	34.7%	53.2%
Hispanic-2013	85.9%	56.5%	75.9%	55.8%	63.3%	0.0%	0.0%	13.1%	98.7%	50.0%	15.4%	27.1%	49.9%
Hispanic-2014	85.7%	41.7%	71.4%	54.8%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%	98.0%	45.7%	11.1%	23.3%	41.6%
Hispanic-2015	88.1%	NA	64.5%	63.6%	63.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	100.0%	53.3%	0.0%	23.3%	35.6%
Other Race -2011	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	4.0%	1.1%
Other Race -2012	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	2.3%	4.2%	1.0%
Other Race -2013	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	1.1%
Other Race -2014	0.0%	2.8%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Other Race -2015	0.0%	NA	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.8%
Multi-Racial-2011	0.0%	1.8%	6.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.8%	0.0%	94.1%	1.5%	0.0%	5.4%
Multi-Racial-2012	0.0%	2.6%	3.1%	3.4%	5.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%
Multi-Racial-2013	0.0%	5.8%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	1.8%
Multi-Racial-2014	4.8%	2.8%	3.6%	2.4%	0.0%	1.9%	3.7%	0.0%	2.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
Multi-Racial-2015	3.4%	NA	6.5%	9.1%	7.3%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.2%	3.6%

	CCEO	Fresno	Just a Start	YB Providence	American Youth Works	Civic Works	YB Bogalusa	Guadalupe	LA CAUSA	Mile High	YB Prevention Plus	Abyssinian	All Sites
Gender (Percent)													
Female-2011	39.3%	12.7%	28.0%	26.7%	46.6%	48.9%	48.1%	50.7%	38.8%	20.6%	38.5%	55.0%	40.6%
Female-2012	40.6%	28.2%	25.0%	22.4%	52.5%	52.4%	51.7%	42.3%	52.1%	28.6%	32.6%	47.2%	40.5%
Female-2013	44.9%	29.0%	34.5%	48.8%	26.5%	66.0%	40.0%	63.1%	55.1%	18.8%	61.5%	50.0%	46.6%
Female-2014	41.3%	38.9%	35.7%	38.1%	45.7%	57.4%	51.9%	52.9%	60.8%	42.9%	44.4%	37.2%	46.8%
Female-2015	33.9%	NA	45.2%	42.4%	46.3%	37.3%	56.7%	53.5%	28.1%	26.7%	33.3%	43.8%	43.8%
Male-2011	60.7%	87.3%	72.0%	73.3%	53.4%	51.1%	51.9%	49.3%	61.2%	79.4%	61.5%	45.0%	59.4%
Male-2012	59.4%	71.8%	75.0%	77.6%	47.5%	47.6%	48.3%	57.7%	47.9%	71.4%	67.4%	52.8%	59.5%
Male-2013	55.1%	71.0%	65.5%	51.2%	73.5%	34.0%	60.0%	36.9%	44.9%	81.3%	38.5%	50.0%	53.4%
Male-2014	58.7%	61.1%	64.3%	61.9%	54.3%	42.6%	48.1%	47.1%	39.2%	57.1%	55.6%	62.8%	53.2%
Male-2015	66.1%	NA	54.8%	57.6%	48.8%	62.7%	43.3%	46.5%	71.9%	73.3%	66.7%	56.2%	55.8%
Other - 2015	0.0%	NA	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Math Level at Entry (Percent)													
5th Grade/Below-2011	59.8%	61.8%	32.0%	16.7%	25.9%	0.0%	0.0%	46.4%	53.7%	52.9%	38.5%	2.0%	33.1%
5th Grade/Below-2012	40.6%	82.1%	43.8%	32.8%	11.9%	61.9%	6.9%	83.1%	58.8%	62.9%	39.5%	0.0%	45.7%
5th Grade/Below-2013	34.6%	71.0%	51.7%	20.9%	26.5%	43.4%	20.0%	71.4%	53.8%	56.3%	30.8%	12.5%	45.0%
5th Grade/Below-2014	39.7%	36.1%	21.4%	11.9%	37.0%	14.8%	0.0%	66.7%	51.0%	54.3%	55.6%	9.3%	35.5%
5th Grade/Below-2015	21.8%	NA	45.2%	71.0%	52.8%	0.0%	30.0%		48.4%	73.3%	66.7%	22.6%	39.7%
6th or 7th Grade-2011	25.2%	29.1%	30.0%	36.7%	13.8%	24.4%	51.9%	29.0%	24.5%	26.5%	30.8%	8.0%	24.7%
6th or 7th Grade-2012	37.5%	12.8%	28.1%	43.1%	22.0%	28.6%	55.2%	14.1%	22.7%	17.1%	32.6%	5.6%	24.7%
6th or 7th Grade-2013	32.1%	13.0%	20.7%	53.5%	36.7%	34.0%	45.0%	23.8%	20.5%	18.8%	46.2%	25.0%	28.6%
6th or 7th Grade-2014	33.3%	50.0%	32.1%	40.5%	34.8%	53.7%	48.1%	27.4%	31.4%	20.0%	22.2%	16.3%	34.4%
6th or 7th Grade-2015	23.6%	NA	38.7%	12.9%	30.6%	0.0%	33.3%		25.8%	0.0%	0.0%	45.3%	28.1%
8th Gr./Above-2011	15.0%	9.1%	38.0%	46.7%	60.3%	75.6%	48.1%	24.6%	21.8%	20.6%	30.8%	90.0%	42.2%
8th Gr./Above-2012	21.9%	5.1%	28.1%	24.1%	66.1%	9.5%	37.9%	2.8%	18.5%	20.0%	27.9%	94.4%	29.6%
8th Gr./Above-2013	33.3%	15.9%	27.6%	25.6%	36.7%	22.6%	35.0%	4.8%	25.6%	25.0%	23.1%	62.5%	26.4%
8th Gr./Above-2014	27.0%	13.9%	46.4%	47.6%	28.3%	31.5%	51.9%	6.0%	17.6%	25.7%	22.2%	74.4%	30.1%
8th Gr./Above-2015	54.5%	NA	16.1%	16.1%	16.7%	100%	36.7%		25.8%	26.7%	33.3%	32.1%	32.2%
Reading Level at Entry (Percent)													
5th Grade/Below-2011	47.7%	49.1%	24.0%	6.7%	13.8%	0.0%	0.0%	56.5%	52.4%	20.6%	10.8%	0.0%	26.2%
5th Grade/Below-2012	55.2%	71.8%	34.4%	10.3%	13.6%	76.2%	0.0%	84.5%	42.9%	17.1%	16.3%	0.0%	38.4%
5th Grade/Below-2013	57.7%	39.1%	31.0%	23.3%	20.4%	69.8%	0.0%	76.2%	51.3%	12.5%	23.1%	4.2%	41.7%
5th Grade/Below-2014	57.1%	47.2%	7.1%	4.8%	26.1%	5.6%	0.0%	67.1%	24.0%	25.7%	22.2%	2.3%	29.5%
5th Grade/Below-2015	37.5%	NA	38.7%	54.8%	29.7%	0.0%	16.7%	83.9%	51.6%	33.3%	33.3%	21.4%	48.5%

	CCEO	Fresno	Just a Start	YB Providence	American Youth Works	Civic Works	YB Bogalusa	Guadalupe	LA CAUSA	Mile High	YB Prevention Plus	Abyssinian	All Sites
6th or 7th Grade-2011	29.0%	25.5%	18.0%	43.3%	10.3%	17.0%	7.4%	21.7%	18.4%	14.7%	26.2%	12.0%	19.8%
6th or 7th Grade-2012	19.8%	11.5%	40.6%	36.2%	13.6%	19.0%	10.3%	9.9%	26.9%	22.9%	32.6%	8.3%	20.2%
6th or 7th Grade-2013	20.5%	36.2%	34.5%	27.9%	22.4%	11.3%	40.0%	19.0%	20.5%	34.4%	19.2%	16.7%	23.6%
6th or 7th Grade-2014	15.9%	25.0%	7.1%	23.8%	19.6%	40.7%	3.7%	25.9%	34.0%	20.0%	11.1%	18.6%	22.8%
6th or 7th Grade-2015	26.8%	NA	12.9%	19.4%	29.7%	0.0%	33.3%	12.9%	9.7%	0.0%	0.0%	23.2%	18.5%
8th Gr./Above-2011	23.4%	25.5%	58.0%	50.0%	75.9%	83.0%	92.6%	21.7%	29.3%	64.7%	63.1%	88.0%	53.9%
8th Gr./Above-2012	25.0%	16.7%	25.0%	53.4%	72.9%	4.8%	89.7%	5.6%	30.3%	60.0%	51.2%	91.7%	41.4%
8th Gr./Above-2013	21.8%	24.6%	34.5%	48.8%	57.1%	18.9%	60.0%	4.8%	28.2%	53.1%	57.7%	79.2%	34.6%
8th Gr./Above-2014	27.0%	27.8%	85.7%	71.4%	54.3%	53.7%	96.3%	7.1%	42.0%	54.3%	66.7%	79.1%	47.7%
8th Gr./Above-2015	35.7%	NA	48.4%	25.8%	40.5%	100%	50.0%	3.2%	38.7%	66.7%	66.7%	55.4%	33.0%
ESL (Percent)													
2011-2012	3.7%	52.7%	0.0%	96.7%	8.6%	23.0%	0.0%	49.3%	50.3%	2.9%	0.0%	3.0%	23.9%
2012-2013	6.3%	29.5%	6.3%	5.2%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	81.7%	68.1%	0.0%	4.7%	41.7%	29.9%
2013-2014	33.3%	15.9%	27.6%	51.2%	10.2%	1.9%	0.0%	86.9%	71.8%	37.5%	0.0%	6.3%	35.6%
2014-2015	61.9%	16.7%	7.1%	40.5%	15.2%	1.9%	0.0%	91.8%	60.8%	20.0%	11.1%	0.0%	36.4%
2015-2016	32.2%	NA	0.0%	36.4%	4.9%	1.7%	0.0%	97.7%	12.5%	40.0%	0.0%	11.0%	35.2%
First Generation College-Going (Percent)													
2011-2012	69.6%	84.0%	71.4%	96.7%	60.5%	50.0%	74.1%	96.2%	63.8%	90.6%	50.0%	54.0%	70.8%
2012-2013	78.1%	71.6%	89.3%	77.6%	55.6%	80.0%	89.7%	96.2%	67.2%	58.8%	31.6%	70.6%	71.7%
2013-2014	78.2%	76.1%	56.0%	86.0%	37.2%	43.5%	70.0%	95.0%	61.5%	65.6%	85.7%	47.5%	67.5%
2014-2015	15.9%	76.5%	84.6%	100.0%	67.6%	18.2%	59.3%	85.9%	66.7%	76.5%	50.0%	86.0%	67.6%
2015-2016	86.4%	NA	77.4%	95.2%	61.5%	21.1%	60.0%	95.8%	90.5%	71.4%	100.0%	82.1%	81.8%
Parent or Primary Caregiver at Entry (Percent)													
2011-2012	9.5%	40.0%	18.0%	20.0%	34.5%	1.6%	44.4%	24.6%	8.2%	35.3%	15.6%	12.0%	17.9%
2012-2013	19.8%	52.6%	15.6%	8.6%	37.3%	0.0%	41.4%	8.6%	26.1%	40.0%	18.6%	6.9%	23.6%
2013-2014	33.3%	43.5%	24.1%	20.9%	14.3%	7.5%	5.0%	16.7%	16.7%	34.4%	15.4%	12.5%	21.7%
2014-2015	17.5%	36.1%	32.1%	23.8%	23.9%	0.0%	37.0%	37.6%	33.3%	31.4%	0.0%	11.6%	24.9%
2015-2016	22.0%	NA	9.7%	33.3%	14.6%	3.4%	23.3%	17.1%	12.5%	26.7%	0.0%	13.7%	16.2%
Homeless (Current or in Past Year)(Percent)													
2011-2012	15.8%	59.6%	26.5%	6.9%	26.5%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	2.8%	17.6%	5.0%	3.0%	13.0%
2012-2013	6.3%	72.7%	21.9%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	3.4%	29.4%	2.3%	0.0%	14.8%
2013-2014	5.1%	67.6%	10.3%	11.9%	12.2%	0.0%	0.0%	6.0%	6.4%	15.6%	7.7%	0.0%	13.4%
2014-2015	7.9%	48.6%	14.3%	0.0%	12.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	7.8%	31.4%	12.5%	16.3%	10.7%
2015-2016	7.0%	NA	9.7%	3.0%	15.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	13.3%	0.0%	2.9%	3.9%

	CCEO	Fresno	Just a Start	YB Providence	American Youth Works	Civic Works	YB Bogalusa	Guadalupe	LA CAUSA	Mile High	YB Prevention Plus	Abyssinian	All Sites
Disabled (Percent)													
2011-2012	6.3%	5.5%	4.0%	0.0%	11.8%	3.2%	0.0%	8.7%	4.3%	34.5%	1.7%	2.0%	5.8%
2012-2013	7.3%	3.8%	9.4%	0.0%	5.4%	14.3%	3.4%	1.5%	6.7%	22.9%	4.8%	1.4%	5.7%
2013-2014	10.3%	5.9%	13.8%	2.3%	17.4%	1.9%	5.0%	1.2%	2.6%	15.6%	3.8%	0.0%	6.0%
2014-2015	4.8%	2.8%	14.3%	2.4%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	23.5%	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%
2015-2016	7.0%	NA	41.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	1.6%	6.7%
Prior Juvenile or Adult Felony Conviction (Percent)													
2011-2012	29.9%	83.6%	38.0%	3.3%	50.0%	0.0%	14.8%	13.0%	16.3%	38.2%	40.0%	9.0%	24.2%
2012-2013	29.2%	94.9%	9.4%	3.4%	28.8%	0.0%	3.4%	1.4%	9.2%	28.6%	23.3%	0.0%	22.0%
2013-2014	29.5%	75.4%	31.0%	2.3%	32.7%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	12.8%	75.0%	3.8%	12.5%	24.0%
2014-2015	33.3%	58.3%	10.7%	4.8%	34.8%	0.0%	7.4%	10.6%	15.7%	71.4%	11.1%	2.3%	21.0%
2015-2016	11.9%	NA	19.4%	9.1%	29.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	9.4%	33.3%	0.0%	2.7%	7.7%
Court Involved (Percent)													
2011-2012	6.3%	5.5%	4.0%	0.0%	11.8%	3.2%	0.0%	8.7%	4.3%	34.5%	1.7%	2.0%	5.8%
2012-2013	0.0%	50.0%	3.1%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%
2013-2014	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
2014-2015	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
2015-2016	8.5%	NA	9.7%	6.1%	9.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	6.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%

NOTE: Based on data from the YouthBuild participant reporting system. 2011 Entrants enrolled in YB between July1, 2011 and June 30, 2012; 2012 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013; 2013 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014; 2014 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015; 2015 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. Civic Works Baltimore Includes Q3 2010 entries. Note: Fresno YouthBuild did not report any YouthBuild enrollees for the 2015-16 program year.

Source: YouthBuild Data Reporting System.

**In 2015, YouthBuild changed to a new participant reporting system. While most data items were unchanged, the definitions and/or data collection process for several items such as homeless status and prior court involvement were changed. As a result, 2015 data may differ substantially from that for prior years. Also, because of the relatively small numbers of participants per site, changes in year-to-year percentages of enrollees with a particular characteristic may seem large, though the change in absolute numbers of participants is relatively small.*

Chapter III
IMPLEMENTING PSE:
REFINING AND EXPANDING THE PSE PROGRAM MODEL

By the end of the first year of the initiative, all of the PSE sites had implemented the major elements of the PSE "model."[32] In varying degrees, all had begun to enrich their academic programs, build postsecondary transition processes, create partnerships with local postsecondary institutions, and establish postsecondary relationships and supports.

In the four years since then, the YouthBuild PSE sites continued to expand and refine those efforts, often making adjustments based on their experiences, with the goal of finding a mix of strategies that worked for their students, given the students' needs and the programs' contexts and resources. During that time, sites worked to better integrate college-ready academic skills into their curriculum, strengthen the counseling process, provide more hands-on college transition experiences, expand occupational and career preparation options, and establish clearer connections and stronger relationships with the postsecondary institutions. Sites also struggled at times to adapt to a variety of internal and external challenges, including funding cuts, staff turnover, changes at their partner organizations, and their program participants' ongoing and sometimes changing needs. One of the most striking features of the PSE implementation, in fact, has been the ongoing fine-tuning at the local level as each program responded to challenges and lessons learned. In that regard, two key implementation findings are that: (1) the PSE "model" was successfully implemented in each of the sites, but (2) PSE was not a single, static model; rather it grew and evolved over the full five years of the initiative. While all of the PSE sites worked within a common framework, the details of implementation varied widely across the initiative.

This chapter describes that evolving implementation of the PSE approach. The first three sections align with the major elements of the approach: academic enrichment, postsecondary bridging programs, and postsecondary support. The fourth section summarizes data about receipt of PSE services and the final section discusses key ongoing challenges in the PSE programs.

Academic Enrichment

The "Back on Track" model[33] that provided the framework for the PSE approach calls for "high-quality college and career-ready instruction with strong academic and social supports" with the goal of generating college-ready students. Key elements include developing college-ready skills (including critical thinking, problem-solving, self-directed learning, collaboration, and communication) through research papers and project-based learning; substantial reading and writing across the curriculum; opportunities for work-based learning; and individualized assessment and academic support.

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[32] Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University (2013). Evaluation of the YouthBuild Pathways/ Social Innovation Fund Postsecondary Education Initiative: Year 1 Implementation Report. Waltham, MA: Center for Youth and Communities. Prepared for YouthBuild USA and New Profit Inc. (April 2013).

[33] See Jobs for the Future (2014). "Back on Track: Pathways through Postsecondary: Key Elements and Operational Features." Available at: http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/iniatiatives/files/3phasemodel052114.pdf.

While all of the PSE sites had education programs in place at the beginning of the initiative, sites strengthened and refined those programs in a variety of ways, including integrating more college-type work (especially research papers and homework), aligning program curriculum with postsecondary testing and curriculum, test preparation support, dual enrollment, increased emphasis on career planning, and increased access to occupational training. Several sites, in part because of their PSE experience, significantly restructured their educational offerings, adding a diploma-granting capacity and/or integrating their HSE and diploma-granting programs to provide a more comprehensive educational experience.

Over the course of the five-year initiative, virtually all of the HSE credential programs expanded their academic curriculum to include more college-ready learning experiences, in some cases adding a diploma option or transitioning to a diploma-granting model:

- *Bogalusa YouthBuild,* which maintained its HSE/GED-only program throughout the PSE initiative, substantially revised its program to provide more advanced instruction. Changes included a new instructor and an increased emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, writing, and applied skills (for example, use of graphs and charts) in preparation for both the new GED test and postsecondary education. The revised curriculum included research papers, more writing, debating, and an introduction to basic computer skills (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint).

- In Denver, *Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC) YouthBuild* initially enhanced its HSE/GED program, add more reading and writing, research papers, note-taking skills, and exposure to lecture format classes to help students prepare for college-level work and the college environment. The program also added a capstone project (modeled on one at Providence YouthBuild) in which students developed plans for a nonprofit organization to address a community issue they identified. Finally, they integrated more academic skills into its construction training: instructors began highlighting the math used in construction (e.g., estimating amounts of lumber needed for a project, calculating angles) and requiring students to develop written bids and other construction-related writing projects. In 2015, after several years of planning, MHYC replaced its GED offerings with a new, diploma-granting charter school. The new school allowed MHYC to serve a significantly larger student body, expanded the teaching faculty to include teachers with subject-area expertise (vs. the single HSE/GED instructor), and revamped the curriculum to incorporate a project-based learning strategy. As of 2016, MHYC was refining its new curriculum and strengthening its PSE-related content.

Sites with diploma-granting programs also built more college-ready experiences into the curriculum:

- All three California PSE programs – *YouthBuild Fresno*, *CCEO*, and *LA CAUSA* – began with diploma-granting programs and integrated more college-type work into their curriculum. All three were initially part of the YouthBuild Charter School of California whose curriculum featured an interdisciplinary, project-based learning approach emphasizing problem solving and communications. Core classes each trimester were organized around a common, social-justice-related theme (such as poverty or inequality) and culminated in a community-focused project.

However, all three sites enhanced that basic model. YouthBuild Fresno teachers added more problem-solving, research papers, and writing exercises across the core subject areas; built in specific skills, such as use of the Cornell note-taking system; and added a class to help seniors prepare for California's high school exit exam. CCEO teachers similarly built more college-ready skills into their curriculum and added college prep math and English courses in the third trimester each year. In 2016 CCEO shifted its charter affiliation to the John Muir Charter Schools, but continued a project-based learning approach and continued to increase its emphasis on college preparation, including increasing the use of technology (Chromebooks, email, and online editing), into its classes. LA CAUSA shifted its education program to two-hour block scheduling to allow for more flexibility and in-depth learning, and increased its emphasis on college-level writing (creating a thesis statement, paragraph transitions), literary analysis, research skills, and using college-level books for class readings. A major change was a new collaboration between academic and construction program instructors incorporating more academic skills (e.g., math) into construction and more construction examples into academic classes.

- Some diploma-granting sites expanded their academic offerings through dual enrollment arrangements. *American YouthWorks*, which had both a HSE/GED program and access to a diploma-granting program, arranged access during most of the initiative to an entry-level English course at Austin Community College as well as some skills training courses (e.g., welding, automotive) in partnership with that institution.[34] Seniors at REACH high school (*Civic Works* Baltimore) gained access to entry-level English classes at Baltimore City Community College through its early college outreach program. New York's *Abyssinian Development Corporation* offered its Bread and Roses High School students the opportunity to take speech and digital story-telling classes at the City University of NY (CUNY) campus across from the school. In 2016, *LA CAUSA* added a dual enrollment component: East LA Community College faculty taught courses at LA CAUSA, with the goal of every student taking two college-level courses before graduation. *Just-A-Start YouthBuild* tested various dual enrollment courses, including a non-credit developmental education (DevEd) course and a credit-bearing health careers introductory course.[35]

- Sites also enhanced academic supports for students in many other ways. For example, *Just-A-Start* students benefited from tutors who were Massachusetts Institute of Technology students who helped YouthBuild students academically and also encouraged them to think about and prepare for postsecondary education. (Just-A-Start only had to pay 25% of the salaries for these

[34] American Youthworks had a variety of partnerships with diploma-granting programs during the PSE Initiative. The first was with an affiliated school, which later closed. As of December 2016, YouthBuild students could attend one of three nearby diploma-granting programs.

[35] DevEd courses are required remedial courses for incoming students who score below a certain level on placement exams. Students usually have to pay tuition for DevEd courses, but do not earn credit. As a result, students who have to take multiple DevEd courses are at higher risk of dropping out because of the costs and the delay in accumulating credits (Chen, X. (2016). Remedial Coursetaking at U.S. Public 2- and 4-Year Institutions: Scope, Experiences, and Outcomes (NCES 2016-405). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics). By providing dual enrollment opportunities in DevEd courses, sites made it possible for students to get a head start on completing their DevEd requirements.

work-study students.) *GAP*, having identified language issues as a key barrier to academics for its predominantly refugee students, joined the Adult Basic Education Consortium, which made more English Language Learner (ELL) supports available along with navigation skill-building and support for students going on to postsecondary. Several sites initiated or increased one-to-one meetings between students and teachers and/or facilitated study groups.

Several sites that offered both a HSE credential and a high school diploma integrated students and teaching across the two programs, in part to increase the options in the academic program and in part to strengthen the academic content of the HSE instruction:

- Early in the PSE Initiative, *Providence YouthBuild* added a separate, two-year diploma program to its one-year HSE credential option and in subsequent years integrated the two, including combining faculty. HSE and diploma students took many classes together, and HSE subjects were taught by teachers in their content areas (rather than having a single HSE teacher teach all subjects). The program emphasized project-based learning, with a senior capstone project in which students planned, designed, costed, and built a model for a sustainable home, which they presented to students and faculty. Both HSE and diploma classes included core academic subjects (English, math, social studies, and science) with individualized plans and a curriculum design that helped students move from basic concepts and skills into application through the project work. Both HSE and diploma classes also included research papers, reading for content, and writing (persuasive and informative essays). [36]
- *Just-A-Start YouthBuild* in Cambridge, MA created a similar structure: a one-year HSE credential or a two-year diploma program, with students in both programs sharing many classes. [37] The main difference between the programs was the time a student took to finish; also, students in the diploma track completed competency-based portfolio projects. All students took science, math, English language arts, and social studies; teachers emphasized critical thinking, problem solving, reading comprehension, and applied math skills, as well as analytical, persuasive, and descriptive writing. Preparation for the college transition – including note-taking, time management, study skills, opportunities to take Bunker Hill Community College classes, and placement test preparation – was part of the program for all students.
- *Prevention Plus YouthBuild* and *Guadalupe Alternative Programs (GAP)* also integrated HSE credential and diploma program instruction. At GAP, the program merged staff for the HSE and diploma programs. Prevention Plus also merged the diploma and HSE program staff (high school teachers taught both HSE and diploma students in their content areas) and added "thinkability skills" (problem solving) to the curriculum. Working with faculty at Atlanta Metropolitan College, a nearby two-year liberal arts college, Prevention Plus also revised its curriculum to better align with college level work and college placement exams.

[36] In 2016, the state of Rhode Island approved YouthBuild Providence's application to become a fully-accredited independent diploma-granting high school program, YouthBuild Preparatory Academy.
[37] Just-A-Start originally partnered with a local high school on the diploma program, but as of 2016 was working instead with the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experience, a Somerville Public Schools program.

- *American YouthWorks'* YouthBuild program, which provided a HSE credential, originally had participants who were interested in a high school diploma take classes in the organization's Service-Learning Academy charter school, but found that the charter school and YouthBuild programs did not match up well. (The charter school program later closed.) The YouthBuild program then developed partnerships with Premier High School (a "packaged" diploma program) and two "Graduation Preparation Academy" programs at nearby public high schools. YouthBuild participants were able to participate in the onsite HSE program or one of the diploma-granting programs.

Most PSE sites also added new occupational courses, generally in collaboration with their community college partners, to provide more opportunities for students to earn postsecondary credits while in high school and to see the connections between academic skills and the workplace. These courses were also intended to get students thinking about and started on family-sustaining careers, whether or not they chose to enter a degree program.

- Several sites, including *American YouthWorks*, *Prevention Plus*, *GAP* and *LA CAUSA*, expanded beyond the traditional YouthBuild construction training by arranging onsite or on-campus training programs in construction and other fields that were either certified by the college partners or taught by college instructors. The expanded construction training included GREEN construction methods, solar installation, and construction management. American YouthWorks and Austin Community College made Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), welding, and automotive courses available at different points during the initiative. Prevention Plus and Atlanta Technical College (ATC) provided forklift training and warehouse and distribution classes for Prevention Plus students as a route into ATC's supply chain management program. As part of a move into a new business incubator facility, Prevention Plus also developed a 3-month "industry curriculum" focused on requirements and job prospects for local growth industries including digital media, robotics, and business logistics. GAP established a CNA program with Inver Hills Community College, which provided materials and a part-time instructor for the program, but later hired its own credentialed instructor. LA CAUSA also added a CNA option through a partnership with the area Red Cross. Providence added an allied health track through its partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI).
- Sites also added internship and certificate programs to increase students' exposure to and experience in additional career pathways. *CCEO* created career exposure programs in several occupational areas, including automotive, construction, food handling, welding, and business; each introduced the field and taught basic applied skills. In most cases, community college instructors taught the courses, and students could often earn elective community college credit. *Providence YouthBuild* established an internship program for two-year diploma students who had completed construction training, providing opportunities to work in health care, culinary arts, and childcare, among other options. *Abyssinian Development Corporation* added barista training to its YouthBuild offerings as an alternative to construction training. *American YouthWorks* and *GAP* developed partnerships with local agencies, nonprofits, and businesses in order to provide students and graduates with more exposure and opportunities to gain work experience.

The expansion into new occupational areas and implementation of new career planning strategies arose from the development of the PSE-community college partnerships, from increased recognition of potential matches between local workforce needs and student interests, and from outside grants developed by YouthBuild USA to explore new career pathways. [38] In each case, the result was new education and career options and new opportunities to link academic skills, career advancement, and postsecondary education. Sometimes this expansion was as simple as offering a driver's education course when staff realized that some students couldn't qualify for jobs or training without a driver's license; sometimes it involved creating new community partnerships to make job shadowing and internships available to help students evaluate career options.

Sites also made program adjustments based on recognizing gaps in their programs:

- Several sites placed increasing emphasis on teaching campus navigation skills, realizing that many students were coming back to YouthBuild to solve problems that they might be able to solve on their own with campus resources.
- Most sites placed more emphasis on helping students to improve their general financial literacy, and especially to understand the rules governing enrollment and financial aid when they realized that students were spending down their AmeriCorps Education Awards and other financial aid too quickly. A common example was students who had enrolled in, then dropped, one or more courses, but did not know that they had to go through a formal withdrawal process by a deadline in order for the college not to charge them for the course(s).
- Many sites became increasingly aware of the financial and motivational barriers associated with students having to take multiple DevEd courses and made placement exam preparation and practice a part of their PSE programs.
- Many sites found that students were more motivated for PSE when they could explicitly connect career planning and PSE preparation, so they integrated the two more over time and added more career-oriented activities such as job shadowing and internships.
- Many sites sought new postsecondary and community partners to fill gaps and enhance student supports as they realized that their initial community college partner was not meeting the needs or aligning with the interest of all their students.

Experimentation and adjustments based on experience took place at the classroom level as well. One instructor said that she had added homework to the HSE/GED program, but reduced the amount when students struggled beyond what she felt was productive. *LA CAUSA* teachers needed time to figure out how to make best use of the longer periods under block scheduling. Atlanta's *Prevention Plus* established a computer-based lab as part of its credit recovery strategy, but found that the individualized lab approach did not motivate students; a new strategy of integrating computer lab time with a leadership class, so that students had more of a cohort/group experience, seemed to be more effective. *Just-A-Start, GAP,* and other sites, recognizing that nonacademic issues were hindering

[38] The new CCEO exposure program and LA CAUSA's CNA program were prompted, in part, by Walmart and JP Morgan Chase grants aimed at creating new career pathways. The barista training at Abyssinian Development Corporation was the result of a YouthBuild partnership with the Schultz Family Foundation and Starbucks.

students' academic progress, added new support services as well as professional development for instructors to help them deal more effectively with learning disabilities, a history of trauma, mental health concerns, and other issues they identified.

One of the benefits of the five-year PSE grants was that they allowed sites time to explore and evaluate different options that seem promising, and to make adjustments as they gained experience in preparing students for postsecondary. At the program level, this was particularly evident in those sites that moved from a HSE/GED-only design to adoption of diploma-granting strategies and, in several cases, shifted education providers in the effort to find the most effective instructional approach. Across the board, PSE sites brought something new to the table, in some cases totally revamping their programs several times. In each case, a commitment to continuous learning was an important element in the PSE effort.

It is also important to note that these adjustments were driven not only by an effort to achieve educational and career success, but also by funding issues. Not only did sites gain and lose Department of Labor and other key grant funding from year to year, but changes in enrollment numbers from year to year (usually beyond the sites' control) impacted the amount of local education funding that was available and, in turn, the numbers of teachers and courses that could be supported. As a result, PSE sites were regularly forced to review and revise their educational and other programming with an eye towards the bottom line. As discussed later, this instability in funding was a key ongoing challenge across the PSE sites.

Postsecondary Bridging

In line with the Back on Track model, the PSE sites also implemented postsecondary bridging (preparation and transition) strategies to increase postsecondary awareness, build college knowledge and survival skills (through college success activities and summer bridge programs), ease the initial transition into postsecondary education, and increase students' placement test scores so they would test out of, or at least into higher levels of, DevEd courses. Key elements included:

- Developing college success activities, such as college readiness courses at YouthBuild and/or in collaboration with the college partners and strengthening YouthBuild's counseling and planning activities.
- Creating summer bridge programs and activities that reinforced academic and college preparation skills while helping students acclimate to the PSE institution and preparing students for placement tests (including diagnosis, practice testing, and test-taking strategies).
- Creating a "college culture" that makes postsecondary education an integral goal and expectation. One staff member said, "We're all about 'life after YouthBuild.'"
- Establishing and supporting the role of the PSE transition coordinator. Both staff and participants saw this role as central to PSE efforts, both as a source of postsecondary information and support for students (and for YouthBuild staff) and as the primary relationship-builder between YouthBuild and the postsecondary partners.

College Success Activities. For most YouthBuild PSE sites, a key PSE component was a college success activity (often a workshop) to provide a framework for college awareness, knowledge, and planning and for helping students to develop both college-ready skills and the capacity and confidence to navigate college systems. While the specifics varied substantially, almost all included college counseling, career planning, financial aid planning and FAFSA completion, college tours and orientation activities, and assistance with applications, enrollment, and first year course schedules. Most also included life and college success skills, including financial management, time management, note-taking, study skills, and other "soft skills" needed for college success (and useful for post-YouthBuild training and work, as well). YouthBuild PSE coordinators most often led such workshops, but staff from the partner community college(s) or community partners also co-led or led them. Some examples:

- At *Prevention Plus*, Atlanta Technical College (ATC) instructors taught college success and placement test preparation classes at YouthBuild, and the YouthBuild PSE coordinator conducted small group and individual counseling. The college success class, taught by an ATC Admissions Advisor (a position the college created as part of its outreach efforts), included work on financial aid, time management, study skills, and other college-ready skills as well as campus tours and assistance with applications and setting up interviews. As a result, students were familiar with the Advisor and the campus prior to enrolling and the Advisor could "shepherd them through the process."
- *Bogalusa YouthBuild's* PSE class took place every other Thursday as part of its life skills course. The class included career and interest assessments, career research projects, resume writing, help with FAFSA applications, and placement test preparation. Students also created an individual "Life Plan Narrative" with the PSE coordinator. The program included visits to the nearby Northshore Technical Community College (NTCC) and out-of-town college visits – for example, to Spelman and Morehouse Colleges in Atlanta. Bogalusa YouthBuild is part of NTCC; thus, all YouthBuild students were enrolled at NTCC and received student IDs and access to campus resources when they joined YouthBuild, which helped them acclimate to campus early.
- At both *YouthBuild Fresno* and *CCEO*, weekly PSE workshops took place on Fridays, a day set aside for PSE, life skills, and leadership development. Fresno's weekly workshops included skill development (e.g., time management, study skills), FAFSA assistance, college trips, and tutoring in preparation for college placement tests. The course was co-taught by a Fresno City College advising program counselor, who spent four additional hours per week at YouthBuild (beyond Friday class time) to do student assessments and counseling. As part of the workshops, students could take (and retake) college placement practice tests, a major benefit of the college partnership. Fresno later added financial literacy workshops to help students learn how to make good financial decisions. CCEO's PSE workshops (led by the PSE coordinator) followed a regular sequence, including an awareness month in the fall with college speakers, time spent on different postsecondary options, FAFSA preparation, application completion (every student was required to complete an application), placement testing, and selection of and enrollment in postsecondary classes. In the final years of the initiative, CCEO added a senior seminar which included a focus on PSE preparation and work readiness.
- At *LA CAUSA*, the PSE coordinator and a charter school counselor co-led a two-hour, twice-weekly college readiness class using an "introduction to college" curriculum that walked

students through college planning and access with a strong emphasis on goal-setting and achieving dreams. This included having students create a video about their career and education goals. Visits to the partner campus (East LA Community College) included a scavenger hunt to learn about college offices and resources. In the final year of the initiative, funding cuts forced LA CAUSA to eliminate the separate PSE course and integrate PSE preparation into a senior seminar required of all students. The senior portfolio, developed as part of that class, included preparation of a postsecondary application, FAFSA application, the Accuplacer test, a scholarship application, a personal statement, and a transfer action plan, as well as career plans and workplace applications. The assistant principal reviewed all plans prior to graduation.

- *Providence YouthBuild* students who meet certain criteria (e.g., good attendance, satisfactory academic progress, and demonstrated interest in college) could take a 15-week Connect to College (C2C) course as a cohort during the school year. The course was provided by the C2C program at Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), YouthBuild's main college partner, and paid for with PSE initiative funding. The course focused on learning styles, effective study habits, self-awareness, responsibility, emotional stability, selecting courses, and more. Students earned three CCRI credits for the class. (It was expected that students would lose the advantage of taking the course as a cohort after PSE Initiative funding ended, but would continue to be able to participate individually.) Also, "Concierge Coordinators," part of C2C, came to YouthBuild monthly to talk about college transitions and provide FAFSA, application, and other assistance. YouthBuild staff also provided regular workshops on learning styles, study skills, note-taking, and other college-ready skills.
- The *Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC)* PSE program included a college and career preparation class for participating juniors and seniors at Bread and Roses High School and for participants in ADC's YouthBuild GED program. Taught by a program counselor, the course included college planning, savings and financial literacy, goal-setting, FAFSA, test preparation, college visits, help with college applications, and a strong emphasis on professional attitudes and skills (e.g., getting to work on time) in preparation for college and careers. The course met daily for the high school students and weekly for those in the GED program.
- *Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC) YouthBuild* began its PSE work by co-creating a PSE class with its college partner, Community College of Denver (CCD). The class included college awareness and planning, values, decision-making, budgeting and financial management, and developing college-ready skills such as time management, note- and test-taking, and study skills. The class also included time on the CCD campus so students could learn their way around. MHYC also developed a financial aid night, led by CCD staff, which provided information and an opportunity for students to meet additional CCD staff. In 2014, MHYC shifted the class to a once-a-week workshop and integrated major elements of PSE planning into its own Career Readiness Training. The goal was to help students see college and careers as closely connected. That practice continued under the new charter school structure.

- *GAP* offered a College and Career Readiness course for all students. The objective was to create a plan for college and/or career. The quarter-long course included 6-10 hours of homework. Topics included basics about career planning, including what education and training was required for which jobs; how the education system works; financial literacy; FAFSA and financial

aid; applying to college or training programs; enrollment; course selection; and navigating postsecondary systems.

At all sites, PSE preparation also included more individual and informal approaches. For example:

- At Baltimore's *Civic Works*, REACH high school juniors and seniors worked closely with the PSE coordinator through an active, individualized program. Seniors had a free period weekly to work with the PSE coordinator and an AmeriCorps volunteer on college planning, FAFSA completion, resume writing, and college applications; juniors worked with the coordinator during lunch or other free periods. Students who were eligible for the Baltimore City Community College early enrollment program participated in college success courses on campus.
- *American YouthWorks* provided both PSE workshops and individual PSE-related work. The PSE coordinator offered regular workshops on college readiness, including walking students through all the steps (academic preparation, applications, financial aid, registration); assisting with FAFSA applications; tips on navigating college systems; time management; and study skills. The coordinator and program staff also worked individually with students on goal setting, career planning, and tracking progress. Staff updated individual progress on careers and postsecondary planning on large whiteboards, which allowed staff to see where different students were and exposed fellow students to options in which they might be interested.

- *Just-A-Start* had consistently emphasized both individual and group PSE and career planning throughout the PSE Initiative, but in 2016 decided (based on experience and a strategic planning process) that some staff reorganization would enhance their ability to meet individual students' needs and to help them succeed at YouthBuild and in postsecondary education and training. They hired a clinical social worker (leading to an overall improvement in case management outcomes) and planned to move from having one person in the role of Education and Career Coordinator to having one Education Coordinator and one Career Coordinator, with an Alumni Coach.

- *GAP* and other sites enhanced their social work and case management staff, recognizing that the social and mental health needs of their changing student population were barriers to academic/PSE and career success. GAP also implemented a number of strategies to help the increasing proportion of students who were English Language Learners, having found that these language challenges created additional barriers to postsecondary education and training.

Summer Bridge Programs. Half of the sites established and/or accessed summer bridge programs to supplement school-year college success activities. Generally conducted in partnership with the college partner, these programs ranged from a few days to 6-8 weeks and included additional college planning and orientation, college success skills (such as study skills), academic work aimed at improving placement test scores, community-building, and practicing college-level work.

- In *Baltimore*, REACH high school students participated in a three-week (four hours daily) summer program on the Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) campus. The program

included English and math classes, financial aid sessions, mock interviews, team building, multicultural events, and a field trip to NYC and Providence to visit YouthBuild programs and colleges outside of Baltimore. BCCC faculty taught math and English classes; students took a placement test pre-test and post-test. If a student tested out of DevEd English (into English 101), the college paid the student's summer program costs; if the student tested into English 92 (DevEd English), REACH paid the summer costs; and if the student failed to complete the program, the student was billed for summer costs (about $800).

- *Bogalusa YouthBuild*'s summer bridge program was a three-day (five hours per day) orientation to Northshore Technical Community College (NTCC). Serving 10-15 students, the program provided an introduction to the campus and a continued focus on the soft skills needed for college – time management, social skills, communications, punctuality, study skills, and test-taking. Speakers from NTCC's financial aid and student affairs offices talked about the college's departments and supports.
- The *Fresno YouthBuild* summer bridge program was one week on campus at Fresno City College (FCC) led by the PSE coordinator and the FCC advisor. The program focused on college readiness skills, including time management, goal setting, and team building; a campus orientation (using a scavenger hunt); and instruction in working with the class schedule, email, and web advisor systems.
- *YouthBuild Providence* alumni participated in a CCRI summer bridge program – a two-day per week, six-week program on campus that included tutoring, placement test preparation, and testing.
- *Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC) YouthBuild*'s summer bridge program began as an eight-week, four hours per day program on the Community College of Denver (CCD) campus, and included traditional academic classes as well as campus orientation and college-ready skills. While students improved their English placement test scores, they were reluctant to participate ("Eight more weeks of academics wasn't ideal"). In 2014, MHYC and CCD staff shortened the program (four weeks) and added more emphasis on project-based learning, including science projects and digital storytelling. CCD also combined YouthBuild students with students from two other transition programs and added a peer mentor component where CCD students came to talk about the school experience. The program has continued with slots reserved for MHYC students. One ongoing recruitment challenge has been the problem of timing: because the CCD summer program started earlier than the end of the MHYC school year, MHYC students were either still finishing their classes at the beginning of the summer or were not ready to continue straight on to college.
- *LA CAUSA*'s summer bridge program began as a two-way partnership between LA CAUSA and UCLA's Center for Community College Partnerships and evolved into a three-way partnership involving LA CAUSA, UCLA, and East Los Angeles College (ELAC), the community college closest to LA CAUSA. The six-day program took place at UCLA, with students staying in campus dorms, and included academic work (math and English), career planning, and college preparation. UCLA student mentors worked with LA CAUSA students both at the summer program and at

community college.[39] ELAC's Transfer Center Director, LA CAUSA's primary contact there, taught the college preparation class. Having the Transfer Center Director involved in the summer program (including staying on campus with the students) ensured that when LA CAUSA students got to ELAC, they already knew a key staff person on campus.

In addition, under a separate grant from the GAP Foundation, YouthBuild USA developed curriculum for a summer bridge program ("Mental Toughness II" or MT2), which was pilot tested and then adopted in several of the PSE sites, including Austin, Bogalusa, Fresno, Civic Works, and CCEO. Responding to needs identified by the PSE sites, MT2 is an intensive two-week bridge program including lessons focused on college and career planning, PSE-related skills (budgeting, study skills, note taking, email etiquette), college knowledge (financial aid, planning a semester), as well as a range of personal and life skills (self-awareness, communications, teamwork, etc.). Sites used MT2 to supplement their existing college preparation courses and provide additional opportunities to reflect, reinforce skills, and solidify postsecondary preparation. As an in-house program, MT2 also addressed another logistical challenge: providing transportation for students to campus-based summer bridge experiences was a challenge, especially for sites that had added multiple postsecondary partners. By offering MT2 at the YouthBuild site, all of a program's prospective college-goers could participate.

Creating a College Culture. The college success activities and summer bridge programs built on, and were part of, efforts to create a college-going culture at the PSE sites. For most, this meant shifting the program goals from "a GED and a job" to postsecondary education and training, and building that message into program activities from even before the first day of orientation. Sites highlighted postsecondary education in recruitment materials and intake processes; often built a discussion of postsecondary education into their program's Mental Toughness Orientation; had college representatives visit the program early and often; redefined career planning to explicitly address postsecondary training and education; displayed the program staff's educational credentials; and crafted a consistent message from all staff (educators, counselors, worksite supervisors, etc.) that postsecondary education was an important and achievable goal.

This was a significant effort, and often included re-branding the local program, bringing in more staff with postsecondary experience and expertise, and convincing long-time staff that postsecondary education and training were achievable and desirable goals for their students. Staff and program leaders regularly highlighted the shift during the site visit interviews:

> *It's not all about the job anymore. We are clearer on the mission and vision. Just finding them a job – that's not our mission. It's PSE and a pathway to get there and addressing needs and barriers as they come.*

> *The idea of college is now the norm. It's not 'Have you thought about college?' It's 'What college are you going to?' … From day one, we tell them about postsecondary education and we*

[39] The summer bridge program was part of a constellation of Center for Community College Partnership (http://www.cccp.ucla.edu) programs aimed at establishing a pathway from secondary education through community college and on to four-year institutions. UCLA operates several summer bridge programs and places student mentors at LA-area community colleges to work with potential community college transfer students.

are clear that we expect that they will go on, that we want PSE to be their next option. We used to be a construction-GED program. Now we are seen as a college prep program.

Our culture is changing. It is much more PSE heavy. PSE is an expectation now – before it was an option. The expectation is that everyone will do some PSE.

We used to be seen as a nice program serving second chance students. Now more people see us as a program preparing skilled, educated workers.

We talk all the time - in classes, counseling, the worksite, everywhere – about preparing for what happens next. We call it "Life After YouthBuild."

Going without a PSE/transition coordinator now is like going without a math teacher.

We still don't have everyone going to college, but nearly all our students now leave YouthBuild with a career plan that includes at least some further training or education.

The goal is to prepare them for a lifetime, with a focus on stackable credentials so they can gain financial stability and go back to school in the future.

PSE awareness is way up – we see it in both current students and alums. The number of alums who visit to talk about PSE, and the number of visits they make, is going up each year.

One key difference between PSE and non-PSE YouthBuild sites was the consistency of the postsecondary message at the PSE programs.[40] Each of the non-PSE YouthBuild sites visited for the evaluation had created some connections to postsecondary education – for example, through relationships with local colleges, integration of more college-ready skills and preparation for college placement exams into the education program, and inclusion of postsecondary options in career planning. However, those efforts were more piecemeal, and at the time of the 2013 site visits were not yet a regular element of the program culture: the non-PSE sites saw the importance of creating postsecondary education opportunities, but had not yet made it a strong, consistent message or identity within the program. At the PSE sites, in contrast, the message was clear and the programs started delivering the message even before Mental Toughness: "Our job is to take youth and give them the skills they need to be successful. A high school diploma is not enough. So we want to get the idea into students' heads that postsecondary is important."

The process of establishing a college-going culture – a culture that "embraces PSE" – was often difficult. An administrator said, "there is a tier of staff that 'get it' and do something; a tier that 'get it' but don't know how to apply it in the classroom; and a tier that is resistant and say 'it's not going to happen with

[40] Evaluation staff visited Schenectady, NY, York, PA, and New Bedford, MA YouthBuild programs to learn about PSE efforts in YouthBuild sites that had strong education programs, but were not in the PSE initiative. (Schenectady YouthBuild later became part of the PSE initiative.) Each site visit included interviews with key staff and faculty; observations of classroom, occupational training, and other program activities; and interviews or focus groups with program participants.

this group of students.' We have to look at how we change mindsets, what kinds of training we need to implement this, what staff we need for the work ahead." Another said, "One of our biggest challenges is finding, hiring, and supporting staff, especially teachers, who buy into our integrated PSE approach – part youth development, part academic, part workforce development." A PSE Coordinator said, "It's everyone's job – not just the PSE Coordinator's – to promote PSE and help youth think about next steps." And when that works, students see it. As a YouthBuild graduate at community college put it, "It was continuous support to help me build the skills I needed for college. They broke my fears about college, and when I fell down, they picked me back up. EVERYONE helped – every teacher, every staff member, all the other young people in the program." A second graduate enrolled in a community college said, "At YouthBuild, I learned not to limit myself and not to close any doors. I'm more patient and I don't give up as easily as I used to. YouthBuild will stick with you till you learn how to do it yourself."

Staff at all of the PSE sites saw the change to a PSE-focused culture as a permanent one that was unlikely to disappear with the end of the PSE grants. Several noted that PSE activities and the focus on PSE were spread throughout their programs, though they might have to shift staff around as grant funds ended (if they had not already made such adjustments). As one YouthBuild Director noted, "it's fair to say that PSE is in [our] DNA now." Most programs also increasingly linked PSE with career pathways, which helped to sustain a PSE focus as it helped students to link education and training with the long-term goal of a family-sustaining career. In addition, according to YouthBuild staff and community college interviewees cited in Dohrn (2017), having a career goal boosted postsecondary persistence and success: YouthBuild graduates who identified and enrolled in a community college program connected to their career interests and goals were more likely to stay engaged with their college program, even if they could only attend school part-time due to work and family responsibilities. [41]

The PSE Coordinator. Across the sites and throughout the initiative, the PSE coordinator role was at the core of the PSE strategy. The coordinators served as the "glue" for PSE efforts. Although their efforts were increasingly part of a system of activities and experiences that helped make postsecondary education a viable option for students, and the PSE "message" was increasingly conveyed by all YouthBuild staff at most sites, the PSE coordinator still served "as the central resource for the whole program," in the words of one administrator, and "makes sure that PSE is incorporated into everything," in the words of another. In short, PSE coordinators played a central role in guiding and supporting young people, helping them consider and plan for career options, building college-ready skills into program activities, and making connections and building relationships with the community college partners. At most sites, coordinators initiated discussions about the importance of further education and training; arranged college tours; conducted personalized education and career planning sessions; assisted with the FAFSA and with college applications; led or co-led workshops on relevant topics such as time management, financial aid, and financial literacy; and helped students prepare for the

[41] Dohrn, B. (2017). Re-Engaging Disconnected Youth: Opportunities and Challenges at the Community College. Dissertation, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. Using interviews with graduates, staff, and community college representatives from four YouthBuild PSE sites, this study examined the community college supports and contextual factors that affect YouthBuild graduates' ability to navigate the system and complete certificates or degrees. Quotes from this study will be identified; all other quotes are from the PSE evaluation interviews.

placement exams that determine how many non-credit DevEd (remedial) courses a student has to take. In sum, coordinators provided opportunities for "exposure, exploration, and a head start" (Dohrn, 2017).

As a whole, the goals of the postsecondary bridging efforts were to motivate students and help them build both the confidence and the practical knowledge and skills they needed to enter and navigate postsecondary education. Advisors, coordinators, teachers, and alumni described the courses, summer programs, and creation of a college-going culture as part of a determined strategy to close the gap between students' skills and experience and what they needed to succeed at college. One key element was to help students see the connections – and the pathway – between education and jobs, and to help them break down the pathway into clear, manageable steps. Another was to provide as much college exposure and experience as possible – including college tours, enriched academics at YouthBuild, dual enrollment courses, summer bridge programs, and other activities – before students enrolled in postsecondary, so they could imagine themselves at college and experience fewer surprises when they got there. Ultimately, the goal was to make students as ready as possible to move ahead to the next level of education and training. The following sample of quotes from staff and students help illustrate this point:

> *We want to make them warriors to get through that system – to build their self-confidence.*
>
> *Our students see [PSE] as so long and so hard. We need to expose them to career tracks – how to get there and what it means for them in the long term. Then a light bulb goes off – "Maybe I can do this!"*
>
> *Students get the big picture, but once there, they get overwhelmed.*
>
> *We want to make college real. We want them to touch it and feel it.*
>
> *Case managers are critical to our college and career effort. Our students have a lot of personal challenges that case managers help with, which in turn helps the student achieve in college or career. But case managers have to strike a balance– one or two have overprotected some students, which got in the way of student aspirations.*
>
> *Preparation and exposure are really important – so we know what to expect and how to step up, and we understand the importance and consequences of different things, like the placement test.*
>
> *One of the most important things is for YouthBuild to empower us to do for ourselves – help us develop the autonomy to advocate for ourselves.*
>
> *I'd always wanted to go to college but before YouthBuild I didn't think I'd make it. … They helped prepare me and I'm getting through it. I wouldn't say it's easy. But I know exactly what I need to do. (Dohrn, 2017)*

What made it click are the little steps that they had us do to get ourselves where we are now. Touring at the schools. How they have us really research. They're determined for us. … They helped me every step of the way. (Dohrn, 2017)

Postsecondary Support

The third major element of the PSE model, and for many the most challenging, was supporting students once they entered postsecondary education. Postsecondary support strategies were intended to help students transition into postsecondary, and then continue to help them address barriers, solve problems, and stay motivated so they could persist and succeed. Almost every PSE site established and gradually broadened its community college partnerships towards those ends, and, over time, moved from getting the PSE coordinator on campus to creating a more robust system by identifying key contact points, developing strong and consistent relationships with college leadership and staff, improving access for YouthBuild students to existing support programs and services, improving students' college navigation ability, and sharing data between the YouthBuild site and the community college to minimize the student dropout or failure rate. However, while these postsecondary supports were helpful, PSE and college staff acknowledged that the barriers faced by entering students were still substantial. Through the end of the initiative, they continued to look for and test the most effective ways of providing needed postsecondary support. In multiple cases, turnover in key staff and leadership positions, especially at the college partners, increased the challenges as did the need to provide support for an increasing number of alumni in college as the initiative continued.

For most PSE programs, the starting point for postsecondary support was getting the PSE coordinator access to the postsecondary campus. Most PSE coordinators initially spent a day or more each week on their primary partner's campus to meet with YouthBuild students and exchange information with college staff who were working with the students. Arrangements varied: some colleges provided on-campus office or meeting space for the PSE coordinator, often in the counseling, student support, or advising center; at others, coordinators met with students in the library, café, or other public space. Most coordinators had a set schedule on campus; others varied their schedule to maximize the students' opportunities to meet with them. One PSE coordinator arrived on campus every week at lunch hour with pizzas and set up her "office" in the central quadrangle; students regularly joined her for lunch and conversation.

In many PSE sites, however, that early emphasis on campus access for the PSE coordinators evolved into more structured relationships with the college counseling and support services, with the goal of maximizing PSE student access to college resources. While strategies differed, most included dedicated counseling/advising support, access to existing outreach and support programs, and participation in college-based college success programs and classes.

- *Prevention Plus* and Atlanta Technical College (ATC) staff made the ATC Student Success Center the main point of contact for YouthBuild students on campus. As mentioned earlier, YouthBuild students met with ATC Admissions Advisors while still at YouthBuild; once at ATC, they were assigned a Student Success Advisor who was responsible for providing advising and support on campus. In addition, ATC used an early alert system to identify students, including YouthBuild students, who were at risk of failing courses or dropping out.

- At Baltimore's *Civic Works*, REACH high school initially connected to the Allied Health program at Baltimore City Community College (BCCC); then through that contact established strong relationships with BCCC's early enrollment and student support programs. Those programs linked REACH students to BCCC programs for entering students, including the Promise Academy, which offered advising, tutoring, courses, and learning communities for students who placed into DevEd; the PBI ("Predominantly Black Institutions") program, which provided advising, academic help, and summer programs for young African-American men; and several scholarship programs that included advising and academic support. The REACH PSE coordinator regularly met on campus with students and staff, and the directors of the early enrollment and student success center programs were actively engaged in tracking and supporting REACH students.
- *CCEO* worked closely with El Camino College's Career Pathways director, who brought college staff to YouthBuild for presentations and worked with YouthBuild students once they enrolled at El Camino. Through the program, students were connected to a career pathway, participated in a college and career preparation class (Human Development), and were often linked to first-year support programs on campus (such as First Year Experience and *Puente*) that provided additional counseling, tutoring and support as well as cohort/group activities. CCEO's PSE coordinator also visited the campus weekly to meet with college staff and YouthBuild students and problem-solve as needed.
- *LA CAUSA*, as noted earlier, initially focused on the UCLA community college transfer program as its primary postsecondary partner. However, the UCLA connection provided only indirect links to ELAC, the closest community college campus to LA CAUSA. In 2013-14, LA CAUSA began working actively with ELAC's transfer director and substantially expanded the direct partnership with ELAC. As a result, staff in ELAC's student outreach and dual enrollment programs began working directly with LA CAUSA, providing a primary point of contact on campus and connecting LA CAUSA students to first-year programs (e.g., *Adelante* and *Puente*) that offered dedicated counselors, tutoring, other academic help, and program-specific activities at ELAC. As noted earlier, ELAC faculty also taught college-level courses at the LA CAUSA campus, with the goal of providing all LA CAUSA students with a postsecondary experience before they completed their high school program.
- After looking at different possible connection points at the Community College of Denver (CCD), *Mile High Youth Corps* developed a strong relationship with CCD's Dean of Student Development, who in turn helped establish needed connections to staff in advising, admissions, financial aid, and other key departments. As a result, the college appointed a dedicated advisor in each department to work with YouthBuild students, and college and YouthBuild staff co-created the PSE workshop and summer bridge program for MHYC students. [42]
- *Just-A-Start* (JAS) in Cambridge, MA built a multifaceted partnership with Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) as its primary partner. A key contact was through BHCC's dual enrollment office, which was the vehicle for the courses offered to students – including a DevEd math course (not for credit) and a three-credit Intro to Healthcare seminar. JAS had informal relationships with a number

[42] The Dean of Student Development later joined the MHYC board of directors, further strengthening the MHYC-college relationship.

of BHCC student support programs as well. JAS also connected to Year Up, an option that many JAS alums used as a bridge to postsecondary and careers. [43]

- *YouthBuild Providence* worked primarily with Connect to College (C2C), a comprehensive student support program at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI). C2C served low income and first-generation students and provided a transition coordinator (Concierge) at the college who advised students and helped connect them to college services, including financial aid, career services, and tutoring. YouthBuild staff called C2C "the on-campus version of YouthBuild." C2C also provided resources for textbooks, academic support, workshops, networking opportunities, and service activities. Most YouthBuild students took CCRI's college success course, developed through CCRI's College and Careers Initiative. Intended to help students transition to college, the course emphasized practical tips and strategies to help students succeed, highlighting attitude, study habits, and time and stress management.
- *American YouthWorks* worked with a variety of individuals and departments at different branches of Austin Community College (ACC). Due to senior administrator turnover at ACC, some of the most effective and long-lasting relationships were with the Continuing Education department, which helped YouthBuild staff connect to student support resources and individual faculty members, and with faculty and administrators in the trades programs, such as construction management and welding.
- *GAP*'s initial partnership with Inver Hills Community College (IHCC) became unstable over the first three years of the initiative, due to staff turnover, especially in student support offices. In addition, a GAP administrator said that IHCC had "too much of a liberal arts focus" for most GAP students, and several staff mentioned that inadequate public transportation made it difficult for students to attend IHCC. Over time, GAP developed new partnerships with St. Paul College and Century College, which were accessible by public transportation, better aligned with students' needs and interests, and willing to work on supporting GAP alumni. GAP staff also arranged for assistance for students from the Minnesota Department of Higher Education outreach program and linked students with campus TRIO programs that support disadvantaged students. In addition, GAP developed partnerships with social service agencies and employers to enhance student support and success in job placement as well as college-going goals, including obtaining credit for prior learning.

In the later years of the initiative, a number of sites added new college partnerships in addition to those with their original partners. As one example, Civic Works in Baltimore developed new partnerships with the Community College of Baltimore County and Towson University. Just-A-Start in Cambridge developed new partnerships with North Shore Community College and Match Beyond, [44] and is exploring other partnerships in response to students' interests, such as with the National Aviation Academy. Mile High Youth Corps established new relationships with Red Rocks Community College and Emily Griffith

[43] The Year Up program provides young adults with the skills, experience, and support to get on a path to economic self-sufficiency through a "high support, high expectation model that combines marketable job skills, stipends, internships and college credits [that] focuses on students' professional and personal development." For more information see http://www.yearup.org/about-us/vision-mission-values/?location=national-us.

[44] The Match Beyond program is affiliated with Southern New Hampshire University and uses a "start-to-finish" coaching model (as well as financial and other support) to help students earn two- or four-year degrees. For more information see https://www.matchbeyond.org.

Technical College (a postsecondary vocational program operated by the Denver Public Schools). YouthBuild Fresno established a new partnership with Reedley College, a community college outside of Fresno that offered dual enrollment in the college's natural resources program for YouthBuild students interested in conservation. YouthBuild Providence developed relationships with several local four-year year colleges, including Providence College, the University of Rhode Island, and Johnson and Wales University. As noted above, GAP developed new relationships with Century College and St. Paul College. In each case, the new partnerships provided new options for students and opportunities to find educational pathways (and sometimes locations) that aligned better with student needs and interests.

In addition, several programs tried to build alumni networks to bring graduates together on a regular basis for mutual support and/or engaged alumni in working with current students. *Prevention Plus* created a "Get in the Game" alumni program with monthly meetings; *YouthBuild Bogalusa* and other sites invited alumni back to talk about their college experience and participate in service projects; *CCEO* arranged for alumni to lead college tours for program participants; *Civic Works* hosted alumni group meetings. However, most sites found it difficult to bring students together once they entered postsecondary and continued to explore other ways to keep in touch with alumni – e.g., through social media. One PSE coordinator said that scheduling and transportation issues were the biggest challenges to bringing alumni together, particularly as students struggled to balance work and school schedules. Another site had planned to bring alumni back to serve as peer mentors, but found that their graduates were not ready to take on that role: "Our alumni are still struggling in their second year – they are in the midst of it and not yet comfortable talking [as mentors] about their own experience." Another site assigned a VISTA as an alumni coordinator, but noted that it was still difficult to organize ongoing alumni engagement: "we haven't cracked that nut yet." Still other sites, including *American YouthWorks, Mile High Youth Corps*, and *GAP*, hired alums to work part-time or full-time after graduation. They could reach out to other alumni, positively influence current students, and (especially for part-timers) take a college course or two.

However, despite the growing network of services and relationships, PSE staff felt that more was needed to help their students successfully navigate the postsecondary transition. One PSE coordinator said, "We have to remind ourselves that we're working with students who never, ever thought about college prior to being here. They know practically nothing about it. Everything we do must start with the most basic information and move forward from there." A second PSE coordinator said that for her students, the first week on campus was the most critical: "That first week, it's so horrible." A third of her students who made it to the first day of class still dropped out in the first week: financial aid does not arrive on time, books are not available, and students quickly get overwhelmed. Her goal, which she rarely achieved, was to be on campus full-time with her students that first week: "I want to be there on Day One to introduce them to the teacher, reassure them, hold their hands. If we could be there the first week, it would make a difference. It's one thing to know what to do and another to do it. They have trouble transferring what they know." At a third program a staff member said: "The very barriers that led [students] here follow them in postsecondary. So the support – case management and the 'village' support – are important. [The PSE coordinator] can help with the details, but it takes the rest of the team to positively reinforce." Since her program did not have the staff to do it all, her goal was to build a peer learning community to provide additional supports: "We need to figure out all those barrier busters. Academics are one thing – the million-dollar question. But how do we create persistence until

they have their own?" Yet another PSE coordinator said, "It's educating them on their options and taking them through the steps so they don't feel like they're in it alone. It is very new to them. Just trying to put myself in their shoes … being that guardian that some of our students don't have and asking questions for them until they learn self-efficacy and how to do those things themselves" (Dohrn, 2017).

Finally, while many YouthBuild alumni regularly returned to their programs for academic help, counseling, and support, some did not – especially those who had not entered postsecondary or were struggling in school. One PSE coordinator said, "They have struggled to balance school vs. full-time job. Some are afraid to disappoint – they don't want to tell you. The hardest part for them is … they want to be full-time students and work full time. They can't do it all." Another said that this challenge reinforced a common YouthBuild theme that relationships are required for ongoing contact: "The key to follow-up is a relationship prior to graduation. Once they graduate, it's hard to keep in contact. If you have [a relationship] early, it's easier. Follow-up is all about relationships – not technology. If the connection is not there, it's hard to get them to buy in."

PSE Services Received

The many postsecondary-focused programs and services described in the previous three sections demonstrate the widespread implementation of the PSE model: the data on receipt of PSE-related services provides another kind of evidence to that effect. PSE sites were asked to report on each YouthBuild member's participation in PSE-related activities in the YouthBuild reporting system. Because programs often struggled to track and record these data, the records are likely less than complete. However, while imperfect, the data do indicate the extent to which PSE-related services were integrated into YouthBuild programs.[45]

Table III-1 shows the reported data for five cohorts of YouthBuild participants who entered and completed their programs during the initiative (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2016). The data excludes participants who were still active in the program and/or who had left the program at the time of the reporting.

As the table shows, the large majority of completers participated in a wide variety of the PSE-related services and activities – academic enrichment; college counseling and transition activities; and other career preparation, leadership, and youth development activities:

[45] YouthBuild PSE sites were asked to report on participation in PSE-related services in addition to the regular, quarterly YouthBuild reporting. Many sites found the additional reporting to be challenging: information on different services had to be gathered from different staff members (counselors, teachers, occupational instructors, etc.); data entry was often done by office staff (rather than counselors) who were unfamiliar with the activities of specific students; information for each individual had to be entered in a single sitting, making it difficult to update missing information. As a result, services data are missing for approximately 15%-20% of PSE participants. Percentages in Table III-1 are based on records with non-missing data.

Table III-1: PSE Services – Percent of Participants Receiving PSE Services

Types of Services	2011 Entrants (N=220)	2012 Entrants (N=413)	2013 Entrants (N=383)	2014 Entrants (N=279)	2015 Entrants (N=174)	Total (N=1469)
Academic Enrichment and Advising						
Academic Advising	99.5%	99.5%	98.4%	93.2%	97.1%	97.8%
Mentoring	20.4%	13.3%	12.9%	36.8%	51.0%	19.4%
GED Preparation	20.0%	34.3%	41.6%	80.3%	37.9%	42.7%
High School Credit Courses	90.9%	73.1%	74.1%	78.1%	79.8%	77.7%
High School State Test Prep	80.0%	67.8%	80.6%	74.5%	78.0%	75.4%
Research Papers/Projects	70.9%	55.8%	55.4%	80.1%	93.0%	66.8%
College Level Math	15.9%	22.3%	13.9%	10.6%	21.0%	16.9%
Dual Credit	6.4%	10.4%	17.3%	18.5%	11.2%	13.2%
Other College-Level Instruction	28.2%	37.4%	33.2%	43.4%	80.4%	40.9%
Other Pre-College Academic Support (tutoring, etc.)	73.6%	64.4%	61.7%	81.4%	95.9%	71.8%
College and Career Preparation						
College Prep/Transition Activity	93.6%	93.1%	85.9%	92.5%	97.7%	91.7%
FAFSA Application Completed	94.0%	95.1%	85.3%	57.4%	46.9%	87.3%
Career Preparation and Youth Development						
Vocational/Technical Instruction	42.7%	70.8%	73.6%	81.4%	96.0%	72.3%
Non-College Postsecondary Instruction	65.9%	60.0%	61.3%	76.9%	92.5%	68.1%
Leadership/Life Skills	97.3%	94.9%	94.7%	99.6%	100.0%	96.7%
Financial Literacy	92.7%	78.0%	84.1%	93.2%	100.0%	87.1%
Community Service/Service-Learning	89.1%	93.1%	91.5%	98.6%	100.0%	93.9%
Other Life/Youth Development/Cohort Building	78.2%	88.7%	92.5%	98.6%	100.0%	91.3%

Source: Data YouthBuild(DYB) reporting system. Data based on program completers. Data reported as of June 30, 2016.
NOTE: 2011 Entrants enrolled in YB between July1, 2011 and June 30, 2012; 2012 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013; 2013 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014; 2014 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015; 2015 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. Civic Works Baltimore Includes Q3 2010 entries.

- Virtually all participants (98%) received academic advising, a core element in every program. Roughly 43% of PSE students took part in GED preparation courses and 78% took classes to earn high school credits (some took both, so the total adds up to over 100%). Over 75% participated in some form of state high school test preparation classes and over half were in courses that involved research papers and/or projects. Involvement in college-level math was much less common (about 17% of completers) as was participation in dual enrollment programs (13%). However, 41% participated in other forms of college-level instruction and 72% received additional pre-college academic support (tutoring, instruction on study skills, etc.).

- College counseling and transition activities were also nearly universal: 92% of PSE participants received college preparation/transition services (for example, college advising, college success classes, college tours, and summer bridge programs) and 87% completed a FAFSA form while in YouthBuild.
- Finally, large majorities of YouthBuild PSE members participated in other career preparation, leadership, and youth development activities. Almost all participated in leadership and life skills training (97%), community service activities (94%) and financial literacy programs (87%), and over 90% were engaged in other youth development/cohort building activities aimed at building a sense of identity and mutual support. Slightly smaller proportions participated in vocational/technical Instruction (72%) and non-college postsecondary instruction (68%).

While not all PSE students participated in all activities, and there are year-to-year variations that may reflect changes in the local program mix and/or variations in reporting, the overall picture reinforces the conclusion that the PSE sites have successfully put the major elements of the PSE "model" into operation and engaged the large majority of their participants in activities aimed at moving them to and through postsecondary education and careers.

Ongoing Challenges in PSE Implementation

Even as they strengthened their programs, the PSE sites continued to confront a variety of external and internal challenges. In terms of the external environment, most PSE sites had to regularly adjust their programs to address changes in funding (e.g., the loss of Department of Labor grants) as well as new educational requirements (e.g., the new GED/High School Equivalency exams); also, staff, administration, and policy changes at the college partner regularly threatened the continuity in relationships and arrangements that was required to build and maintain a strong and consistent program. Such changes made it more difficult for at least some sites to build and maintain a consistent program. Internally, programs also experienced staff turnover and struggled to help students successfully address the myriad life challenges they faced while building the college-ready academic skills that students needed in the program time available. (As discussed in Chapters II and III, many participants begin the program with 8th grade or lower literacy and numeracy levels; it is challenging to help students advance four or more grade levels in a year or two). Participants, while describing the support they received from YouthBuild as critical for their growth, also struggled to balance the demands of education, work, and family and to meet the challenges of finding housing, reliable transportation, childcare, and other essential supports. These demands shaped the ways in which PSE participants thought about and planned for postsecondary and were barriers to postsecondary success. Further, as the number of PSE graduates increased, so did the challenges of providing a growing number of students with the supports they needed to persist in postsecondary – including the need for more postsecondary support than was originally expected.

External Challenges. Perhaps the most serious external challenge was the unpredictability of US Department of Labor (DOL) and other major funding for the PSE sites. While many PSE sites had other sources of funding, DOL funds often provided the core funding that programs needed to keep operating successfully. DOL funding came through 3-year grants (2 years of operations and 1 year of follow-up); competition for the grants occur every year, so programs had to reapply for funding regularly. As overall DOL funding for YouthBuild dropped because of federal budget cuts, so did the number of programs

receiving funding each year: DOL funding for YouthBuild programs dropped from $127.5 million in 2010 to approximately $80 million in 2015, with over 80 YouthBuild programs closing as a result.[46]

At least seven of the 12 PSE sites lost DOL funding for at least one year during the five-year PSE initiative.[47] In each case, programs had to make major changes in staffing and program design in response to the loss of funds. *American YouthWorks* staff members describe "scrambling" to develop new partnerships and reorganize the education program in response to the loss of both DOL funds and state funding for their charter school. One staff person commented, "Everything we are doing this year is new." At *Prevention Plus*, the loss of DOL funding prompted the decision to end their stand-alone GED program and integrate the GED classes into an alternative school program. Even for sites that maintained key program activities, the loss of DOL funds meant the loss of stipend payments for students, affecting participation and retention.[48] As one site representative said, "The loss of DOL money is critical. Students rely on stipends to take care of their families, stay in the program. Stipends also highlight their sense of responsibility – if they are late or absent, pay is docked – just like the real world." Even sites that did not lose DOL funding nonetheless experienced the uncertainty arising from reliance on short-term funding and expressed a need for funding mechanisms that promoted longer-term stability.

Other funding sources presented challenges as well. While local education funds provided relatively stable funding for charter school and other diploma-granting YouthBuild programs, year-to-year changes in enrollments could result in substantial variations in funding.[49] One YouthBuild charter school noted that, because of a drop in the number of conservation corps slots they could offer, enrollment in the charter school had declined (students enrolled concurrently in the charter school and the conservation corps). As a result, the school had to reduce its counseling staff. Another charter school had to reduce the number of teachers on staff because of a decline in enrollments, and the uncertainty over funding in turn led to turnover among the school faculty (2 of 3 teachers were new at the time of the final site visit).

The decline in PSE funding over the five-year grants[50] also presented challenges as sites worked to integrate functions developed through the PSE grants into their core operations. In particular, while the first three years of PSE/SIF grants included full funding for the PSE coordinator position, the smaller year 4 and 5 grants did not. Similarly, funds to support the postsecondary partnerships – often used to provide student incentives, pay for summer programming or dual enrollment faculty, or pay for transportation for PSE-related activities – also declined over time.

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[46] Figures from the YouthBuild website: https://www.youthbuild.org/funding-opportunity-youth

[47] Sites that lost DOL funding included Abyssinian Development Corporation, CCEO, YouthBuild Fresno, Prevention Plus, American YouthWorks, YouthBuild Bogalusa, and GAP. Listings of annual DOL YouthBuild grants can be found at: https://www.doleta.gov/grants/grants_awarded.cfm.

[48] In some cases, the loss of stipends also led to a shift to a younger student population: younger students were more likely to be able to afford participating in YouthBuild without a stipend since a larger percentage of them were living with family.

[49] In most cases, local education funding was based on average daily attendance (ADA). Lower enrollments from one year to the next led to a drop in funding.

[50] PSE grant amounts were smaller each year of the initiative. This strategy, used by many funders, is intended to encourage grantees in multiyear initiatives to take on increasing responsibility for funding grant activities.

The PSE sites responded to these challenges in multiple ways. Most looked for ways to integrate functions developed through the PSE grants into their core operations – e.g., incorporating the PSE coordinator role into their core budgets, supporting the position through multiple funding sources, or combining the PSE coordinator role with other funded positions, such as academic advisors, case managers, or counselors. Several sites integrated PSE advising and support functions into other program activities, including senior seminars or career and workforce preparation programs. In most cases, while the PSE coordinator role became less distinct, its major functions (support for students, PSE transition activities, liaison with postsecondary partners) were maintained. PSE sites also worked with their college partners to take over selected PSE functions, such as summer bridge programs and postsecondary supports for alumni. Some sought funding from foundations. Others looked for additional, outside supports from local businesses and corporations, an effort which aligned with sites' increasing emphasis on a range of educational and occupational pathways. However, even sites that obtained additional funding to support PSE-related work noted that having multiple funding sources presents its own kind of challenge. Different funding sources often have different, even conflicting, reporting requirements. Some funders had such rigid program guidance that sites were less able to adapt to participants' and partners' changing needs and make program changes based on data and experience.

Another significant external challenge was the introduction of a new GED exam (and alternatives to the GED in some states) in January 2014. The new exam was more difficult, building on the new Common Core educational standards; increasing the emphasis on higher order, critical thinking skills; and emphasizing more analytical writing and higher-level math (including algebra). The new exam was also computer-based and more expensive, making it critical to teach students keyboard skills and find ways to deal with higher exam costs. In addition, many programs had to retool their GED curriculum and determine how to help students prepare to meet the new requirements. Some brought in new GED teachers better able to address the new curriculum; others saw the new exam as one more reason to integrate GED and diploma classes. At the same time, the increased rigor of the new exam made it more difficult for students who began with lower levels of reading and math skills to pass the test in the time available. Some sites made it easier for students to stay at YouthBuild longer if necessary. One site created an additional remediation program, but was still finding that students were taking more than the usual 10 months of program time to complete their GEDs. [51]

As noted earlier, most sites also had to deal with changes in policies and personnel at their community college partners; some faced a similar challenge with state policies. Several programs had to deal with the departure or reassignment of partner college leaders and staff and begin building relationships with new deans, department heads, etc. At several colleges, the arrival of a new president led to the definition of new strategic priorities and the need for YouthBuild sites to position themselves afresh. On a state policy level, a new California state law requiring colleges to develop student success plans for all entering students created both a challenge and an opportunity. One college partner said that student advising and support resources were likely to increase substantially under the new legislation, creating new opportunities to work with her local YouthBuild partner; at other California colleges, however, the

[51] In contrast, the new exam was seen as an opportunity in some sites, where staff said it actually helped with PSE preparation and the challenges were less than anticipated.

change led to a restructuring of college admissions and student advising such that YouthBuild programs had to start over in developing arrangements for postsecondary support. Similarly, changes in California state law regarding eligibility for dual enrollment at state-funded colleges made it more difficult to enroll over-age students in dual enrollment programs.

Finally, program direction and staffing changes occurred at the YouthBuild programs themselves. By the time of the 2016 site visits, nearly all sites had experienced at least one senior leadership change (CEO, program director, school principal, etc.). Similarly, transition coordinators/lead PSE staff changed in at least eight of the twelve PSE sites. With each change came the need to build new relationships with students, alumni, and partners at the postsecondary institutions.

While the PSE sites addressed these challenges, each made it more difficult for them to build consistent program capacity and maintain continuity in staffing and services. These disruptions, in turn, likely had an impact on students, as new staff needed to build new relationships with students; as programs had to quickly identify and integrate new curriculum; and as relationships at the college level had to be adjusted and reconfirmed. In that regard, building stable, lasting programs in a regularly changing environment is an important ongoing challenge for the PSE sites. The lesson is that planning ahead where possible – diversifying the funding base, creating relationships that will support ongoing program development (for example, with faculty at the partner colleges), and broadening the network of relationships at the college partners as quickly as possible – is essential for long-term success.

Internal Challenges. While the PSE model included a range of academic and social supports, students brought so many persistent challenges that even in the best of cases they could not be easily addressed. Program participants' internal challenges included a low level of academic skills and the associated challenge of DevEd; social, emotional, and financial needs, such as a history of trauma and a lack of belief in self; lack of family support; and the need for more postsecondary support than was originally expected.

Most students' academic skill levels were low when they entered YouthBuild. As noted in Chapter II, over a third of entering YouthBuild students read below the 5th grade level, and 40% had math skills below the 5th grade level. Even with an increased program emphasis on academics, these students needed substantially more time than is usually in available in YouthBuild programs to reach near-college-ready skills. (A frequently reported additional, related challenge was that many students struggled with diagnosed and undiagnosed learning disabilities.) Several sites added new educational supports and/or extended the program to give students longer to build needed skills. Some reluctantly raised the program entry requirements to ensure that students could reach the skill levels required for postsecondary training and education in the time available. As one program director commented, those were not easy decisions:

There's a mismatch between the target group we have traditionally served and those we ought to serve given PSE…. We had to think about how to get young people ready for postsecondary in the time we have them. … It is a struggle for our staff, for our students and their families. We want to continue our main philosophy to support and nurture low-income youth, but we need to balance this with being realistic and looking at youth through the lens of getting into postsecondary education and then getting through it.

Related to these low skill levels are sites' concerns about helping alumni avoid or move through DevEd. Students who had to take DevEd courses, especially the lowest level DevEd courses, were at greater risk for dropping out of college early. As discussed earlier, DevEd students are paying for college-level courses but not earning credit. Staff noted that it is hard to persuade young people with low incomes and low academic confidence that this is a good investment of their time and money. A number of sites addressed this in part through a dual enrollment strategy: students who could obtain college credit (or take DevEd courses) while still in YouthBuild saved time and money as they built confidence about their ability to succeed in college. However, sites often faced logistical and other challenges in arranging for dual enrollment opportunities. For example, transportation was often difficult to arrange, and YouthBuild sites with a week on/week off work/classroom schedule, or a calendar based on trimesters, found it difficult to coordinate secondary and postsecondary-level classes.

Another challenge to career or educational success was students' considerable social, financial, and emotional needs. As one staff person put it, "life circumstances get in the way." PSE participants and program staff struggled to meet needs for housing and stable living situations, childcare for student parents, respite care for students who were caregivers for other family members, transportation (particularly in more rural settings), and income to pay for food and rent. In the words of one staff person: "It's the Maslow hierarchy of needs: if students don't have food to eat or a consistent place to sleep, they are not hearing me about the importance of PSE." Several staff noted that housing instability was not always apparent – the many students who were "couch surfing" often did not report themselves as homeless. Another staff member pointed out that some students needed to work, and once working, let PSE slide: "We need to help students figure out priorities. 'Yes, OK, you need a job. Get a job, but let's see if you can work your job around your college schedule.'" A third observed, "Most attendance issues stem from outside. Most drop out because of housing." In addition, in some sites, recognition of the need for more, or at least more explicit, trauma-informed services has been increasing. As one staff member put it, "Most of our students have had pretty serious traumatic experiences. If we ignore that, they are much less likely to succeed here or at college or in a career." Another said, "The more I learn about the effects of trauma, the more I want to apologize to students from prior years."

A related challenge for the PSE programs was to help students to believe and to give them the information to support that belief. As an alum at community college said, "I didn't think I could go. I thought I was too old. I thought I couldn't afford it. [YouthBuild] re-lit the flame." One program director observed: "the biggest challenge is belief in self. No one in the [student's] house talks about or values college. They have never talked about college or only know the stigma: that it is too much money and they are embarrassed they can't afford it. Or they've heard the horror stories of others not making it

through. We are changing this and telling them again and again, 'Yes, you can go. You are smart enough. Money is available and we are going to show you.'"

Many programs found an additional challenge in the young people's lack of family support for pursuing PSE. Young people found it difficult to maintain their interest in PSE when this support was lacking. Some students' families opposed college because they were worried that the student would graduate and move away; other families were worried about debt. Some students reported feeling isolated because family and friends "didn't understand" why they wanted a postsecondary education. Some programs responded through one-to-one support and groups for family members. At the same time, as the YouthBuild survey responses discussed later in this report make clear, many students relied heavily on their families and found that their support enabled them to meet the challenges of balancing school, work and family. [52]

Finally, while the original PSE model focused on providing support for the first year in postsecondary, many students needed some degree of continued follow-up and assistance. In the words of one program leader, "We can stabilize them and get them strong in a year, but their second year they are still not ready to launch. It's a fine line between cutting the apron strings and not cutting." In addition, while some PSE alumni have gone directly to postsecondary, others take some time to get ready for schooling and come back looking for help at a later date. As a result, PSE coordinators found themselves tracking and supporting multiple cohorts of students on a limited resource base. To address this challenge, programs worked to engage students in on-campus support programs, explored the engagement of alumni as peer mentors, and sought ways to incorporate more teaching of navigation skills into the YouthBuild program and bridging activities. But as the number of YouthBuild students enrolling in college grew, the challenges of providing growing numbers with the postsecondary support they need continued to expand.

The PSE approach remains a work-in-progress. Over the five-year initiative, PSE sites successfully implemented the major elements of the approach and revised and strengthened their strategies as they learned from experience and identified challenges to be met. That said, sites continued to face a host of external and internal challenges that still need to be addressed in the effort to help more students move to and through postsecondary education. Perhaps the key lessons from the five-year PSE experience are that: (1) far from being a single, tightly-specified 'model,' YouthBuild's PSE initiative provided a framework and approach that needed to be adapted to local settings and resources; and (2) that successful implementation of the PSE approach required the capacity to learn and adapt to a constantly changing set of circumstances and challenges.

[52] Finding a balance between education, work, and family went beyond time management skills. One coordinator said, "How do you get people confident and excited, but not overreach? How many classes are right? The goal is the right fit – not to try to do everything. If they have family, school, work, when things get tough, school is the first to be cut."

Chapter IV
PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES ON "WHAT WORKS"

One of the most important perspectives on "what works" in the YouthBuild PSE approach is that of the YouthBuild participants. While staff interviews and site visits highlight program developments and challenges, participants bring their own critical perspectives, helping to identify both the strengths of the YouthBuild experience and the issues that they continue to face as they move into further education and careers.

To bring that participant perspective to the implementation evaluation, Brandeis conducted follow-up surveys with YouthBuild PSE alumni from the 2011 and 2013 cohorts approximately a year after they completed the YouthBuild programs. The study team also conducted interviews with YouthBuild alumni as part of its annual site visits. Both the follow-up surveys and interviews helped the team to learn about the experience of participants after leaving YouthBuild and to gain their perspectives on their program experience after making the transition to work and postsecondary education.

As discussed below, both the 1-year follow-up survey and alumni interview responses reinforced many of the lessons learned through the interviews with program staff. While the response to the surveys was limited, the large majority of follow-up survey respondents were positive about their YouthBuild experience, feeling that they were well-prepared for postsecondary and well-supported by their YouthBuild programs. The alumni interviews echoed those themes. At the same time, the surveys highlighted the importance of ongoing support, from YouthBuild staff and family in particular, as alumni moved into jobs and postsecondary education. Finally, while most survey respondents felt that YouthBuild had done all that it could to help them prepare for postsecondary, their suggestions for improvements included the ongoing need for more time, more exposure to college, and more support through the college transition.

The first section of the chapter describes the 1-year follow-up survey and key findings about "what works" in the areas of preparing for college, support after YouthBuild, challenges to success in college and training, and suggestions for improvement. The second section highlights relevant comments from site visit interviews and focus groups with alumni.

YouthBuild Follow-Up Surveys

As outlined in Chapter I, Brandeis surveyed PSE participants from the first (2011) and third cohorts (2013) of participants at two points in time during the initiative: first when they were completing their YouthBuild programs (the post-program survey) and again approximately a year after YouthBuild (the 1-year follow-up survey). The post-program survey used a retrospective pre/post design to examine changes in participant attitudes about themselves and their education and career goals and also gathered feedback on participants' YouthBuild experience at the time of their graduation from the program. The retrospective pre/post design and the survey results (275 students completed the survey) are discussed in Chapter V (a table displaying responses to one key question on that survey is included in this chapter).

This chapter discusses the 1-year follow-up survey, which focused on PSE participants' experiences and their assessments of their PSE program a year or so after they completed it. The follow-up surveys were distributed in Spring 2014 and 2015 as online surveys targeted to the YouthBuild alumni who had completed the earlier post-program survey. Paper copies of the surveys were also distributed to PSE sites to be handed out to alumni from the two cohorts at alumni events. Alumni were offered a $50 incentive to complete the survey. YouthBuild staff were given lists of alumni who had participated in the earlier survey and asked to encourage them to respond to the follow-up.

Overall, the response rate for the 1-year follow-up survey was disappointing, with only 127 YouthBuild alumni from 8 of the 12 PSE sites completing the survey, despite the incentive offer and multiple rounds of email, text, and telephone reminders.[53] In part, the low response rate reflected the challenges reported by program staff of maintaining contact with program alumni. Not only had many alumni moved or changed their email addresses or telephone numbers since leaving the program, but changes in program personnel (particularly transition coordinators) at a number of sites also meant that the new transition coordinators had little or no relationship with alumni from earlier YouthBuild cohorts. Thus, their ability to reach out to alumni or encourage them to complete the follow-up survey was limited. Also, since the surveys were distributed a year or more after alumni had completed (or left) the program, the low response rate may in part simply reflect the difficulty of getting young adults who have moved on to other activities and responsibilities to take the time to respond.

As a result of the low response rate, the follow-up surveys cannot be considered truly representative of the PSE sites and participants. However, the survey respondents did represent a diverse group of YouthBuild alumni (Table IV-1). Approximately 60% of the respondents were women (a somewhat higher percentage than for YouthBuild as a whole) and the racial/ethnic mix (64% Hispanic/Latino, 25% African American, 7% White) was similar to the racial and ethnic diversity of YouthBuild participants as a whole. Respondents to the follow-up survey also reported the barriers faced by PSE participants overall, including court involvement (6%), parenthood (30%), homelessness (4%), English as a second language (39%), and being first generation college-goers (83%). While the percentages vary from the overall YouthBuild PSE population at baseline, the follow-up survey respondents were diverse and clearly include key groups from the PSE program.

Similarly, the follow-up survey respondents included alumni with a range of postsecondary experiences (Table IV-2). Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents had received their HSE or high school diploma through YouthBuild and just under half (49%) had taken classes in a college or technical training program. Just under 10% had left YouthBuild before receiving their GED/HSE or Diploma, and 14% had enrolled in college or training but had stopped attending for at least one term. Approximately 36% were currently attending a two- or four-year college, and a total of 44% were in college or a technical training program. Sixty percent (60%) were working full or part-time. Altogether, 82% were in either an

[53] Follow-up survey responses were received from participants from Abyssinian Development Corporation, CCEO YouthBuild, Civic Works, YouthBuild Fresno, Guadalupe Alternative Programs, Just-A-Start, LA CAUSA YouthBuild, and Mile High YouthBuild.

education program or working, or both. These figures are broadly similar to the post-program experiences of the YouthBuild alumni during the PSE initiative. [54]

Table IV-1: Characteristics of Survey Respondents Compared to All YouthBuild PSE Participants

Characteristic	YouthBuild Participants at Baseline (N=1486)	Follow-Up Survey Respondents (N=127)
Female	43.1%	60.3%
Male	56.9%	39.7%
African American	34.9%	25.0%
Asian	6.6%	4.8%
Hispanic/Latino	49.0%	63.7%
White	3.9%	7.3%
Parent	13.2%	30.2%
ESL	69.3%	39.2%
First generation college	43.1%	82.7%
Prior felony/Offender	24.1%	NA
Court involved	19.5%	6.4%*
Homeless in past year	28.7%	4.0%*

Note: "YouthBuild Participants at Baseline" includes all PSE entrants for the 2011 and 2013 cohorts. Data from the YouthBuild (DYB) reporting system. Follow-up survey data based on 1-year follow-up surveys of YouthBuild Alumni, N=127.

**These survey questions both ask about current status (court involvement and homelessness) while the data collected by YouthBuild at baseline included participants' prior history.*

Table IV-2: Post-Program Experience of Follow-Up Survey Respondents

Since joining YouthBuild have you done any of the following:	**N**	**Percent**
Received your GED/HSE or diploma?	100	78.7%
Taken classes in a college or technical training program?	62	48.8%
Enrolled in college or a training program but stopped attending for at least one term?	18	14.2%
Left YouthBuild before completing a HS diploma or GED/HSE.	12	9.4%
***What is your current status*:**		
Attending 2- or 4-year college part-time	22	17.6%
Attending 2- or 4-year college full-time	23	18.4%
Attending an education or training program other than college (apprenticeship, trade school, etc.)	11	8.8%
In Education Program (total)	55	44.0%
Working full or part-time	75	60.0%
In Education Program or Working	103	82.4%

Note: Based on 1-year follow-up surveys of YouthBuild Alumni, N=127.

[54] Reporting system data for the YouthBuild PSE participants as a whole are presented in the next chapter. Overall, approximately 60% of YouthBuild PSE participants enrolled between 2011 and 2014 completed YouthBuild and, on average, 80% of those completers acquired a HS diploma or HSE diploma. Of the completers, 53% entered some form of postsecondary and, on average, 86% were placed in a job or postsecondary education.

In sum, while not a statistically representative sample of the YouthBuild PSE population, the survey responses represent the experiences and feedback of a diverse group of YouthBuild PSE alumni. As such, in combination with the feedback gained through the site visits and participant interviews, they provide a further perspective on, and some triangulation of, the "what works" question about the PSE experience. [55]

Preparing for College. Looking back from a year or more out of the YouthBuild program, most of the PSE alumni who completed the survey felt that YouthBuild had done what it could to prepare them for postsecondary education and training. Overall, nearly half of the respondents (47%) reported that they felt "very prepared" overall for postsecondary and a similar percentage (46%) felt "somewhat prepared." However, a substantially greater percentage (73%) felt that *YouthBuild* had prepared them "very well" for their college or training programs, with an additional 23% reporting that YouthBuild had helped prepare them "somewhat/a little" (Table IV-3).

Table IV-3: Postsecondary Preparation

Overall, how well prepared did you feel for your college/ training classes?	**N**	**Percent**
Not at all prepared	9	7.3%
Somewhat/ a little prepared	57	46.0%
Very prepared	58	46.8%
Total	124	100.0%
How well did YouthBuild help you prepare for your college/ training classes?	**N**	**Percent**
Not at all well	6	4.8%
Somewhat/ A little	28	22.6%
Very well	90	72.6%
Total	124	100.0%

Noted: Based on 1-year follow-up surveys of YouthBuild Alumni, N=127.

PSE alumni were asked about the importance of several key PSE activities in preparing them for college or postsecondary training. Activities included doing a research paper or project, homework outside of class, tutoring assistance, workshops on study skills and time management, college awareness classes, FAFSA assistance, college tours, etc. – all key practices in providing enriched academic preparation and transition support (Table IV-4).

Nearly all survey respondents participated in these kinds of activities. On average, over 90% reported participating in each of the listed activities, with college awareness classes and research papers or projects as the most common activity (94% of respondents). Tutoring assistance was the least frequently reported activity, but a still substantial 86% of respondents reported receiving this kind of support.

[55] Another reason to treat these results with caution is that the surveys and site visit interviews do not include the voices of alumni who had not kept in touch with the YouthBuild program. These alumni might offer a different perspective on their program experience, though it is equally possible that they lost touch because they left town, had a strong relationship with a specific YouthBuild staff member who was no longer at the program, etc.

On average, 80% of respondents rated each activity as "important" or "very important" in helping them prepare for college or training. Assistance with FAFSA forms was most frequently cited, with 88% of respondents reporting it as important or very important (68% as very important). More than 80% of respondents rated college readiness classes (86%), research projects (84%), doing homework outside of class (84%), and taking a college tour (80%) as important or very important preparation. More than 70% of respondents considered the other activities on the list as important or very important: talking with a case manager, teacher, or counselor about college (78%), receiving tutoring assistance (71%), and taking a class or summer program to become familiar with college (71%).

Table IV-4: Postsecondary Preparation: Importance of Key PSE Activities

During YouthBuild, how important were each of the following activities in preparing you for college or training	**N Partici-pating**	**Percent Partici-pating**	**Percent of those Participating**				
			Not Important at All (1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**Very Important (4)**	**Important or Very Important (3 or 4)**
Doing a research paper or project	119	94.4%	4.8%	5.6%	23.0%	61.1%	84.1%
Homework that required reading and writing outside class	120	95.2%	2.4%	8.7%	29.4%	54.8%	84.2%
Receiving tutoring assistance	107	85.6%	6.4%	8.0%	26.4%	44.8%	71.2%
Class/ workshop on study skills/ time management	112	91.1%	2.4%	2.4%	30.9%	55.3%	86.2%
College awareness class/ workshop (learning about college, how to choose a college, how to apply, learning about college loans and grants, etc.)	117	93.6%	1.6%	10.4%	19.2%	62.4%	81.6%
Completing a FAFSA form	114	91.2%	0.8%	2.4%	20.0%	68.0%	88.0%
Taking a college tour	112	89.6%	4.8%	4.8%	23.2%	56.8%	80.0%
Taking a class or summer program to become familiar with college	108	85.7%	4.8%	10.3%	26.2%	44.4%	70.6%
Talking with a case manager, counselor, or teachers about college	110	88.7%	2.4%	8.9%	19.4%	58.1%	77.5%

Source: 1-year follow-up surveys of YouthBuild Alumni, N=127.

A similar question was included in the earlier post-program survey (administered to PSE participants as they completed their YouthBuild programs). Responses to that survey were similar, with 80% or more of respondents reporting that they had participated in each of the PSE-related activities, and 75% or more indicating that they saw each of the activities as important or very important in preparing them for postsecondary education (Table IV-5).

The 1-year follow-up survey also asked an open-ended question about what aspects of the YouthBuild program helped respondents the most to become ready for college or postsecondary training. In large part, the answers paralleled the responses in Tables IV-4 and IV-5. The two most common answers (cited by approximately 15% of respondents each) focused on (1) the college readiness classes and the emphasis on college throughout the academic courses and (2) the ongoing counseling and personal

support from YouthBuild counselors, teachers, and other program staff. [56] A sampling of answers illustrating these themes follows:

- *The aspect that help me out more to be ready for college was the career center which had everything from financial aid [information] to [information on the] class you will need to take. They took us to the campus, guided us to where everything was located and what to do if you have a problem with something.*

Table IV-5: Postsecondary Preparation: Importance of Key PSE Activities (Post Program Participant Perspectives)

During YouthBuild, how important were each of the following activities in preparing you for college or training after YouthBuild?	**N Partici-pating**	**Percent Partici-pating**	**Percent of those Participating**				
			Not Important at All (1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**Very Important (4)**	**Important or Very Important (3 or 4)**
Completing a FAFSA form	244	88.7%	2.5%	5.7%	24.6%	67.2%	91.8%
Doing a research paper or project	250	90.9%	0.8%	10.4%	37.2%	51.6%	88.8%
College awareness class/ workshop (learning about college, how to choose a college, how to apply, learning about college loans and grants, etc.)	256	93.1%	2.3%	9.0%	29.7%	59.0%	88.7%
Taking a college tour	252	91.6%	2.4%	9.1%	30.6%	57.9%	88.5%
Class/ workshop on study skills/ time management	244	88.7%	2.0%	9.8%	35.7%	52.5%	88.1%
Homework that required reading and writing outside class	255	92.7%	2.0%	10.2%	39.6%	48.2%	87.8%
Talking with a case manager, counselor, or teachers about college	252	91.6%	5.6%	7.5%	30.6%	56.3%	86.9%
Taking a class or summer program to become familiar with college	222	80.7%	6.3%	14.0%	34.2%	45.5%	79.7%
Receiving tutoring assistance	230	83.6%	9.1%	16.1%	36.1%	38.7%	74.8%

Source: Post-program (retrospective pre/post) survey of YouthBuild participants. N=275

- *Each class had a little practice of college to prepare you.*
- *How the teachers treated their assignments and teaching methods as if they were teaching college students.*
- *It was that college readiness class.*

[56] The open-ended survey responses were coded by research staff using qualitative research software (Atlas.ti) to identify common themes. Examples were then drawn from the list of responses to illustrate those themes.

- *Probably public speaking, because when I got into that program, I was not very talkative and used to get nervous when doing presentations, etc. Also what helped me a lot was the College Readiness class, which taught me all the processes to go through from community college to a university.*

- *The exercises and small steps we took to understand how college works. Especially the classes and little projects we did to get a feel and insight on how it will be to have us ready.*

- *The best part of the program that helped me was the staff because they were always reinforcing that college was a big deal. They made it priority number one. It was all we talked about and everything that we did was leading up to getting into college and thinking ahead of just community college.*

- *Meeting with my counselor helping me to stay on track and kept me up to date on what had to be done for college.*

- *The kind staff and nurturing environment that provide that safe place for my mind to grow out of the idea of "I'm stuck in the hood."*

- *Talking to teachers and counselors about the importance of college.*

- *The willingness to help me through hard times and showing me that as long as I keep my head on straight and narrow I could do it.*

Other common responses to the question of what helped respondents become ready for postsecondary included life skills and leadership classes, which included work on study skills, time management, public speaking, and career planning; summer transition classes; campus tours; and hearing from alumni and others about what to expect from postsecondary.

- *Taking tours and hearing from the people that actually are attending the college or training about how the journey will be and what to expect.*

- *Visiting college campuses and figuring out where everything was early on ahead of time.*

Finally, for a number of respondents, the answer to the question was "Everything!"

- *All the advice and support they put in us.*

- *All the extra work and going over everything until we learned it well.*

- *The entire program helped me.*

Taken together, the 1-year follow-up survey responses reinforced the major elements of the PSE approach, including the importance of a college culture that integrates PSE awareness and preparation throughout the YouthBuild program; the college readiness experiences that help respondents anticipate and prepare for the transition to college, both academically and socially; and the central role of YouthBuild staff in raising awareness, conveying knowledge, and providing ongoing encouragement and support.

Support After YouthBuild. The follow-up surveys also explored the sources and types of support that respondents received after completing the YouthBuild program. While one of the goals of the PSE approach is to help connect students to college or training program resources and supports, it was anticipated that YouthBuild alumni would still rely heavily on YouthBuild staff during at least the first year of their transition to postsecondary. The follow-up survey responses suggest that this was the case, with YouthBuild staff continuing to serve as a major source of advice and assistance in the period following completion of YouthBuild, and with college staff and family playing a secondary role. (It is important to note, however, that many respondents did rely heavily on families for support, reinforcing the frequent recommendation from the staff interviews that programs make additional efforts to engage family members in the PSE process.)

Table IV-6 summarizes the survey responses about the types of and sources of support respondents received after completing the program. Respondents were most likely to receive help on selecting and applying to college or training and staying motivated and convinced they could succeed (93% for both). Similar percentages (91%) received help on financial aid/paying for school and on solving a school-related problem (with schedules, a teacher, or a class). Most (85% or more) also got help with academic issues and solving personal or family problems. Help getting benefits (such as food stamps and transportation) and help with job-related issues (solving problems at work) was less common, though over 60% of respondents reported receiving help in those areas as well.

For most respondents, YouthBuild staff remained the primary source of assistance in these areas: in every category, respondents were substantially more likely to report receiving help from YouthBuild staff than any other source, and on most items, 60% or more of respondents reported receiving help from YouthBuild staff. Staff at the colleges or training programs were important sources of assistance on school-related issues, such as financial aid, solving a problem at school, or providing academic help. Family members were important resources in addressing personal or family problems, help with looking for a job, and helping respondents stay motivated and convinced they could succeed. However, the most common source of support for respondents during the year after YouthBuild was the program staff.

Table IV-6: Sources and Types of Support Post-YouthBuild

Since you completed YouthBuild, what kinds of support have you received and who provided each type of support?	N	Received From YB Staff or teachers	Received from College or Training Program Staff	Received from Others (family, friends, etc.)	Received Support from At Least One Source
Help/advice on where to go to college or training or how to apply	123	73.2%	19.5%	22.8%	92.7%
Help staying motivated and convinced you could succeed	123	71.5%	17.1%	31.7%	92.7%
Help/advice on financial aid and paying for school or training	123	67.5%	22.8%	19.5%	91.1%
Help solving a problem at school (for example, with your schedule or with a teacher or a class)	123	60.2%	26.8%	20.3%	91.1%
Help solving personal or family problems	123	56.9%	10.6%	32.5%	86.2%
Help looking for work/getting a job	123	59.3%	12.2%	22.8%	86.2%
Academic help (for example, tutoring or help with assignments)	123	59.3%	26.8%	11.4%	85.4%
Help getting benefits, such as food stamps or transportation	123	48.8%	9.8%	15.4%	69.9%
Help solving problems at work with a supervisor or co-worker	123	39.8%	10.6%	17.1%	63.4%

Source: 1-year follow-up surveys of YouthBuild Alumni, N=127.

Respondents were also asked an open-ended question about who, among those who provided support, had been most helpful since the respondents had left the YouthBuild program. In those responses, YouthBuild staff and teachers and family members stood out. Over 82% of responses (96 out of 116 that answered the question) mentioned YouthBuild staff, often highlighting specific teachers, transition coordinators, and academic counselors. Respondents consistently reported that YouthBuild staff played a key role in encouraging and motivating them, providing essential college knowledge, tracking student progress, and "being there" as a reliable source of support.

- *All my teachers and staff were always helpful and supported me. They always pushed me and motivated me to do what's best.*
- *All of the staff at [my YouthBuild program], because during school and after graduating they stay in contact and help you out, regardless of the situation, and find resources to help you.*
- *I cannot say that one staff helped me more than another, because they all equally helped me out. The way they did that was by keeping a smile on my face and motivating me to do better.*

- *I feel as if ALL of the YouthBuild staff was very helpful to me at my time in YouthBuild. But most of all M***, the Case Manager for College and Transitions and J***, the Program Coordinator for College and Careers*
- *I had a lot of support in YouthBuild with my counselor and staff. When I needed help with anything, I knew I could go to them for sure.*
- *J***. She not only provided emotional support, but resources for me to be able to become more mentally and emotionally independent, which helped me be comfortable enough to make decisions on my own and for my own best interests.*
- *Miss T***. She had the time. We set up a schedule and made time for the help that was needed and that was going to be provided. She was patient and never complained or seemed annoyed on all the questions I asked. She has been a great help for all the college questions I've had.*
- *Mr. D***. He kept pushing me when I was down and never gave up on me.*
- *Mr. E*** and Ms. D***. They pushed me when I thought I couldn't do anymore. I received so much help with applying to college and financial aid. Both advisors showed me anything is possible if you really wanted it.*
- *Ms. T*** helped me the most through my college experience making sure I knew my schedule, where my classes were. I know she is on campus every Tuesday if I need help.*
- *O*** has been the most helpful. As a student, he helped me with my class schedule and planning out a life-plan towards what I wanted out of life. He has continued to give me the positive advice I still need, and has never failed to take time to go through the areas in life I need to focus on and has encouraged me to take risks that can help me grow.*
- *YouthBuild staff has been the most helpful because they are the ones that motivated me to even go to college and they still check up on me to see if I need any help in anything.*

Most of the remaining responses (15 of the 116 – 13%) cited family members as key sources of support, especially motivation and emotional support.

- *My dad was the most helpful to me because he stayed on my back making sure I stayed on track.*
- *My mother was most helpful because she always believed in me no matter what.*
- *My sister she helped me a lot by telling me how to do essays and how to correct them. Always motivates me to do better when I want to quit on something.*
- *From my family, my sister pushes me to become a better me and she is like a second mother.*

What is striking in these open-ended responses is the absence of any mention of counselors, staff, or faculty from the postsecondary education and training institutions. Although it is unrealistic to expect that PSE alumni would duplicate the strong relationships they had built with YouthBuild staff during their time in the YouthBuild program, the absence of any mention of postsecondary staff in these responses suggests that further efforts to connect YouthBuild alumni to counselors and faculty at their

postsecondary institutions are need to take place. The evaluation site visits and staff interviews indicate that in some cases this was happening through alumni participation in targeted transition programs at the postsecondary institutions; in others, YouthBuild programs and their community college partners brought college staff to YouthBuild before PSE students graduate, so that relationships with postsecondary staff could be started before students left YouthBuild. However, the survey responses suggest that more work is needed to connect YouthBuild alumni to their new educational institutions.

Ongoing Challenges to Success in College/Training. While the survey respondents were positive about their YouthBuild PSE preparation and the support they received post-YouthBuild, it is also clear that most continued to face significant challenges as they moved to and through postsecondary education and training. The 1-year follow-up survey asked PSE alumni about the degree to which they faced each item on a list of common challenges to success in postsecondary education or training (Table IV-7). The three most common challenges, reported by 70%-76% of the survey respondents, were associated with time management (balancing school, work and family); financial challenges (paying for school and living expenses); and personal challenges (health issues, family, and adjustments to college life). Roughly 40% of respondents reported that financial and time management challenges affected them "a great deal" and about 33% said that personal challenges affected them "a great deal." Over 60% of respondents also reported facing academic challenges (keeping up in class, staying motivated, getting good grades) and challenges related to college knowledge (knowing where to get information and forms and how to work with faculty and staff). Fewer students (though still over half) reported challenges with college social life (feeling like they belonged at college or being able to join college activities).

Table IV-7: Challenges to Success in Postsecondary

Based on your experience, how much of a challenge is each of the following to success in college or a training program?	**N**	**Not at all**	**Not Much**	**Some**	**A Great Deal**	**Some or a Great Deal**
Time management (such as balancing work, school, family and friends)	116	6.5%	12.2%	35.0%	40.7%	75.7%
Financial challenges (such as paying for tuition, books and supplies, paying living expenses while at school, lack of employment, reliable transportation, transportation costs, other financial issues)	113	8.9%	8.1%	1.5%	42.7%	74.2%
Personal challenges (such as family issues, age, health, adjustments to college life, other personal concerns)	118	8.8%	15.2%	37.6%	32.8%	70.4%
Academic challenges (such as keeping up with reading, papers, coursework, staying motivated, faculty attitudes and support, getting good grades)	118	6.5%	24.2%	37.9%	26.6%	64.5%
College knowledge (such as knowing where to get information, forms for financial aid, how to work with faculty and other college staff)	116	13.7%	17.7%	38.7%	23.4%	62.1%
College social life challenges (such as feeling like you "fit in" at college, finding other students like yourself, being able to join campus activities)	116	22.4%	19.2%	23.2%	28.0%	51.2%

Source: 1-year follow-up surveys of YouthBuild Alumni, N=127.

When asked in an open-ended question what supports were most helpful in meeting these challenges, the most common answers were "family and friends" along with YouthBuild staff and "my YouthBuild family." While some respondents highlighted specific types of support – financial aid, transportation, child care, and assistance with time management – most emphasized emotional support, guidance, advice, and help with staying motivated and on an even keel as the most important forms of support.

- *Basically just staying motivated and focused is what helps me meet those challenges.*
- *Family and friend support -- just knowing people are there helps a great deal.*
- *Family support, financial advice and emotional/personal support.*
- *Just having people be there for me. Whether it's listening to what I'm going through, or giving advice.*
- *Support through knowledge: people telling me what to expect, how to get through it and then always being there in tough times.*

Suggestions for Improvement. Finally, the surveys asked the PSE alumni what the YouthBuild PSE programs could have done to better prepare them for college or postsecondary training. Not surprisingly, the most common answer – nearly half of the responses – was "Nothing": most respondents, even though they struggled, felt that YouthBuild had done all that they could to prepare them well.

- *Everything was good.*
- *Honestly nothing. They made sure we're ready.*
- *I believe everything I have learned and experienced was great and they went above and beyond. I think what they have taught me and shown me was great and they should keep on doing it.*
- *In my opinion they did a pretty good job in preparing me for college.*
- *Nothing. YouthBuild is a great program that prepares you and challenges you very well. No complaints.*

The alumni who responded felt that YouthBuild had done its part, and as several made clear, ultimately it was up to them to take full advantage: "They did a great job; it was my choice that made me who I am."

At the same time, alumni did have suggestions, which tended to reinforce the basic PSE approach and called for more: better teachers and staff support, more college tours, more practice with homework, increased life skills and time management training, and more time in the program. These aspects of the PSE approach varied from program to program, and the comments reflected the respondents' specific experiences. But the responses also echoed what the evaluation team heard from program staff in terms of strengthening instruction, providing more college exposure, and building both college knowledge and the practical skills needed to manage the complexities of college, work and family.

These are all areas that YouthBuild was continuing to work on, and the survey responses suggest they were heading in the right direction.

Perspectives from Site Visit Interviews/Focus Groups

The comments from YouthBuild alumni during site visit interviews and focus groups largely paralleled the 1-year follow-up survey responses. One or more YouthBuild alumni were interviewed or included in focus groups at each site during each round of site visits. Questions included "What has been the most important part of your experience?" and "How has your YouthBuild experience changed how you think about yourself and your expectations about the future?" [57] As in the survey responses, alumni interviewees talked about the individualized support provided by YouthBuild staff, including PSE coordinators and teaching staff; the importance of exposure through the program to college and careers; and continued access to PSE coordinators and other YouthBuild staff during and after the transition to postsecondary. Selected comments from the interviews are presented here, organized by the most common themes.

Staff/Transition Coordinator support

- *[The transition coordinator] kept pushing me. She checked with me all the time – what did I think about this or that program at the college, did I finish my FAFSA, how were my classes going, was I enrolling in the dual enrollment class. She never let up on me so I never let up on myself.*
- *Every time I'd say "I don't think college is for me," [the transition coordinator] pushed back. Now I'm enrolled in college. The first few weeks were tough but I'm doing ok.*
- *The College and Career Advisor got me to think about my goals and what I had to do to achieve them. We made a step by step plan which really cleared up my thinking and made me realize I could do it.*
- *They don't let you slip through the cracks. At my old school no one noticed if I wasn't there. Here, three different staff members called me if I didn't show up in the morning. Having people care about me like that made a big difference in how much I cared about my work and helped push me into the electrician apprenticeship I'm in now.*
- *When they showed that they cared and that I could count on them, it made me work harder.*
- *They challenge you all the time. You can't be lazy. That really helped me succeed and do things I never thought I could do, like apply to college.*
- *My [community college] professor [is] not going to remember this one face and if I go missing for three weeks, she's probably not going to notice. Whereas at YouthBuild, you go missing for lunch and they're looking for you. It's easy to fall through the cracks. (Dohrn, 2017)*

[57] Site visits are described in more detail in Chapter I; site visit protocols are included in the Appendix.

Individualized attention from teachers and program staff

- *I made it to 10th grade before I dropped out. I was OK at reading but flunked math three years in a row. The teacher here helped me understand fractions – finally! Once I got that, I made pretty good progress. Now I'm at community college and I only have to take one DevEd course in math.*
- *It sounds funny, but the construction supervisor made me better at math. He had us thinking about math all the time and after a while it just clicked for me in class. That's why I decided to go to college.*
- *The teacher had us write all the time. Sometimes about things we read, and sometimes about good things - and hard things – that were important to us.*
- *YouthBuild is all about one on one. They see you struggling, they'll go out of their way to help. In regular high school, you're on your own. (Dohrn, 2017)*

Exposure to college and transition support

- *If I'd come to campus without knowing where the financial aid office and advising office were I'd have turned around and left. Actually, if I'd had to come on my own I wouldn't have even known what to ask for. [The transition coordinator] and the college person who came to YouthBuild helped us with all the basics.*
- *It was amazing to visit the campus and see so many people who looked like me. It made all the difference to my mindset.*
- *That dual enrollment course really helped me. It was a real college class on campus, but it was just YouthBuild students so we could support each other. I did so much better than I expected. I'm less scared of college now and I have some credits already.*
- *[Transition Coordinator] really helped me figure out my financial aid. I don't know what I would have done otherwise.*
- *I sometimes ask my YouthBuild teacher to read over my papers before I hand them in. Then I revise them according to her comments. I'm becoming a better writer and getting better grades.*
- *I would've lost a lot of money if [Transition Coordinator] didn't tell me the rules about dropping a class.*
- *It's harder to talk to a counselor in college because so many people talk to them. I'm close to the YouthBuild counselors, so I go back to them when I need help. (Dohrn, 2017)*

Addressing postsecondary challenges

- *They [YouthBuild staff] help you with anything. When they helped me straighten stuff out about housing and transportation, I could concentrate on school and found out I'm smarter than I thought I was!*
- *I never would've made it past the first week at college if [transition coordinator] hadn't helped me plan things out about childcare and transportation.*

- *At YouthBuild they motivate you AND they help you with resources. They're helping me with the court process [so I can go to college]. (Dohrn, 2017)*

Taken as a whole, the survey responses and interview/focus group comments about what works were a reminder of how *personal* and *individual* the business of preparing and succeeding in postsecondary education is for low-income, out-of-school youth and young adults like those in YouthBuild and the great degree to which *relationships* as well as quality programming need to be part of the solution. The responses help to remind us once again that it is relationships – between YouthBuild members and program staff and teachers, as well as family and friends – that provide the glue that helps make the postsecondary transition possible.

Chapter V
PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Although the primary focus of this evaluation is on PSE implementation, it remains important to ask: did the YouthBuild PSE programs make a difference for participating youth? This chapter uses participant survey and interview data to assess self-reported changes in participant attitudes and aspirations and YouthBuild reporting system data to examine participants' secondary and postsecondary outcomes. Chapter VI assesses the impact of the YouthBuild PSE program relative to a randomly-assigned control group based on data from the national impact evaluation of YouthBuild programs conducted by MDRC.

Data from surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews suggest that the PSE initiative changed how YouthBuild participants thought of themselves and their futures. Comparing their attitudes, aspirations, and expectations from program entry to program completion, participants reported significant gains in how they viewed themselves as students, their educational and career goals and aspirations, their sense of their own value and worth, and their readiness to access and navigate postsecondary education. They were also more likely to view themselves as part of a community and more ready to act as community leaders. When asked directly in the surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews, participants and alumni said that their perspective had changed because of their PSE experience and that postsecondary education and/or training was now an important part of their life agenda.

At the same time, the results from participant outcome data from the YouthBuild reporting system and the National Student Clearinghouse were more mixed. Overall, the PSE programs were very successful in moving their participants to secondary completion: more than 80% of YouthBuild program completers attained a high school diploma or HSE credential, as did 62% of all who entered the program; 94% of completers and 78% of all YouthBuild enrollees gained a secondary credential and/or some form of occupational certification. However, college-going rates for YouthBuild graduates were substantially lower. Across the first four cohorts (2011-2014), half (50%) of the YouthBuild program completers enrolled in college and 5% enrolled in some other form of postsecondary education and training – in total, 53% entered some form of postsecondary.[58] Though these rates are below YouthBuild's original goal of having 50% of all YouthBuild enrollees (vs. completers) attend postsecondary, they compare favorably with the national data on college going for students similar to those in YouthBuild: HSE credential holders, first-generation, and low-income students. Given the range of barriers faced by YouthBuild participants, a 50% college-going rate for the 2011-2014 YouthBuild alumni is a significant accomplishment.

Similarly, available YouthBuild data suggest that YouthBuild alumni in postsecondary experienced many of the same challenges as other low-income, minority, and/or first-generation students.[59] The majority of YouthBuild alumni in college were unable to test out of non-credit DevEd courses and few

[58] More than half of the fifth (2015) cohort were still active in the YouthBuild program at the time the final data collection took place. As a result, they were not included in this analysis.

[59] See the "Postsecondary Outcomes" section of this chapter for a discussion of the postsecondary data, including data limitations.

accumulated significant college credits in their first year or two of postsecondary. At the same time, 62% persisted through at least the first year and 42% persisted into the second year of postsecondary. Overall, the experience of YouthBuild alumni mirrors that of similar students in 2-year public institutions nationally. While YouthBuild had originally hoped to help its alumni move to and through postsecondary at higher rates than the national norms, the fact that their students could succeed at rates comparable to other underrepresented students was an important accomplishment. Ultimately, the results reflect the challenges faced by YouthBuild graduates in postsecondary education and the need to continue looking for ways to support them through graduation. They also suggest areas of focus for YouthBuild sites that want to encourage postsecondary access and success for their participants.

The next section of this chapter discusses changes in participant attitudes and aspirations. It first focuses on survey findings concerning education and career goals, educational competence, educational aspirations and expectations, postsecondary support and college knowledge, and personal empowerment and leadership. It then presents the voices of young people describing changes in these areas. The subsequent sections, using YouthBuild Data Reporting System data, address secondary outcomes (credential attainment and academic skill improvement) and postsecondary outcomes.

Impacts on Participant Attitudes and Aspirations

While the PSE Initiative's primary goal was to help YouthBuild participants move to and through postsecondary education, the initiative also identified key attitudinal goals that would be expected, based on research and experience, to contribute to participants' long term educational and career success. Those included:

- An increased sense of educational competence
- Increased educational goals and expectations
- Increased college and career knowledge
- An improved understanding of potential educational and career pathways and their requirements
- An increased sense of personal empowerment, leadership, and involvement in their communities.

As part of the effort to assess these attitudinal and aspirational outcomes, Brandeis surveyed PSE participants in the first (2011) and third (2013) cohorts after they had completed YouthBuild (the post-program survey). These surveys were structured as "retrospective pre/post" surveys that asked students a set of questions about their attitudes prior to joining YouthBuild and a parallel set of questions about their attitude at the time they took the survey (i.e., "Now"). The retrospective pre/post design was chosen in part because of the practical challenges in conducting traditional pre/post program surveys in the first year of the initiative and because the design can be useful in settings where participants' perspectives on the questions is likely to shift during the course of the program.[60] For example, students may rate their leadership skills or college readiness more highly at program entry

[60] The original evaluation plan called for a traditional pre/post/follow-up survey design focused on the 2011 cohort of students. However, in consultation with the sites, who were making major changes to their programs, and with YouthBuild USA, the evaluation team decided that adding survey data collection to the sites' start-up tasks was not feasible and that the retrospective pre/post design was more practical. The team also decided to survey both the 2011 and 2013 cohorts in an effort to increase the overall survey sample size and capture data from participants beyond the start-up period.

than at program exit, although their skills had not actually declined: after they undergo a thorough orientation to leadership characteristics and postsecondary requirements and have to apply those skills in the program, they have a clearer idea of their true skill level. In a retrospective pre/post, participants answer both "pre" and "post" questions from a single, consistent frame of reference, ensuring that their understanding of the question is the same for both points in time. [61]

The post-program surveys asked about participants' education and career goals, academic self-concept, educational aspirations and expectations, personal self-concept, and leadership, as well as about postsecondary support and college knowledge. Ultimately, 275 YouthBuild graduates completed the surveys (180 students from the 2011 cohort and 95 from the 2013 cohort). While the response rate (approximately 30% of program completers) was lower than hoped for, the respondents' characteristics were broadly similar to those of the larger body of students in the two cohorts (Table V-1), providing some reassurance that the survey responses may not be systematically different from those that would have been available from a larger sample.

Table V-1: Characteristics of Post-Program Survey Respondents Compared to All YouthBuild PSE Participants

Characteristic	YouthBuild Participants (N=1486)	Post-Program Survey Respondents (N=275)
Female	43.1%	45.8%
Male	56.9%	54.2%
African American	34.9%	26.5%
Asian	6.6%	6.2%
Hispanic/Latino	49.0%	57.5%
White	3.9%	10.2%
Prior felony/Offender	24.1%	19.3%
Parent	19.5%	22.8%
Homeless in past year	13.2%	6.9%
ESL	28.7%	38.3%
First-generation college	69.3%	72.7%

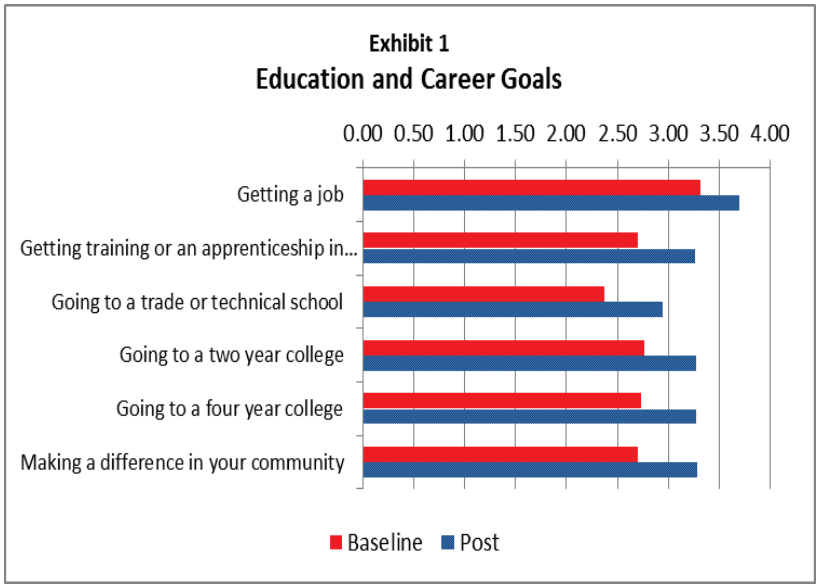
Note: "YouthBuild Participants" includes all PSE entrants for the 2011 and 2013 cohorts.
Source: Data YouthBuild (DYB) reporting system and post-program YouthBuild PSE surveys.

The post-program survey data show statistically significant gains for respondents on all the measures of educational goals and expectations, attitudes about school and themselves, sense of leadership, and commitment to making a difference in the community. Respondents came out of the program with

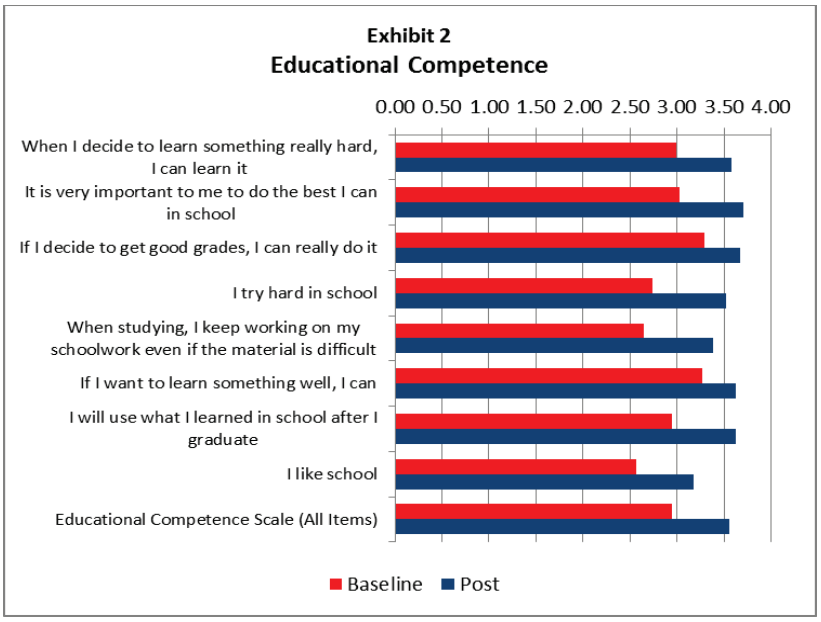
[61] The change in perspectives is known as "response shift bias." For an early statement of the issue, see G.S. Howard, R.R. Schmeck and J.H. Bray, "Internal Invalidity in Studies Employing Self-Report Instruments: A Suggested Remedy," *Journal of Educational Measurement*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer, 1979), pp. 129-135; and G.S. Howard, "Response-shift bias: A problem in evaluating interventions with pre/post self-reports," *Evaluation Review*, 4 (1980), pp. 93-106. For a more recent discussion, see D. Moore and C. A. Tananis, "Measuring Change in a Short-Term Educational Program Using a Retrospective Pretest Design," *American Journal of Evaluation*, Vol. 30 No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 189-202. It is important to recognize that the retrospective pre/post reflects respondents' self-assessment of change rather than an objective, outside measurement. Traditional pre/post surveys also reflect respondents' subjective self-assessment, though at two different points in time. Neither provides a perfect measure.

higher expectations for their future, a stronger sense of their own capabilities, and more confidence in their understanding of the steps needed to move towards postsecondary education.

The following paragraphs discuss the responses to each of the major sets of survey questions. Findings are described in terms of overall gains and the percentage of individuals reporting gains. Table V-3 at the end of this section provides a more detailed summary of the survey data for each set of questions.



Education and Career Goals. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the following education and career goals (i.e., getting a job, getting job training or an apprenticeship, going to a trade or technical school, going to a two- or four-year college, and making a difference in the community on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (very important)) during the period ***just before*** they joined YouthBuild and ***now*** (at the time of the survey).



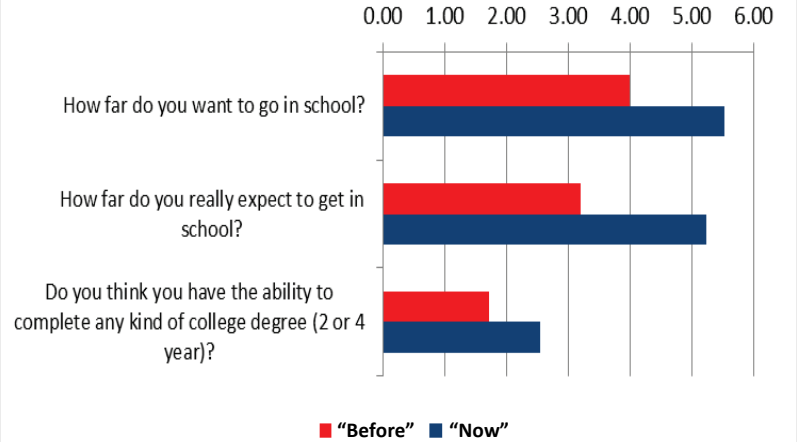
On average, respondents reported that the importance of each goal had increased during their time in YouthBuild (Exhibit V-1). Getting a job, rated as the most important goal ***before YouthBuild***, also had the highest rating ***now*** and increased the least. The importance of the goals of getting an apprenticeship, going to trade school, going to a two or four-year college, and making a difference in the community all increased substantially. Overall, roughly 40% of respondents reported a gain on each of these measures, and the average gain on each item was statistically significant. [62]

[62] Statistical significance means that a result (in this case, a change over time) is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Differences are generally considered statistically significant at the .05 level, i.e., a less than 5% likelihood that the change occurred randomly. In these findings, the chances that the change in score from "before" to "now" occurred randomly was less than .1% ($p < 0.000$).

Educational Competence. Respondents were also asked about their attitudes towards school and about themselves as students – their "educational competence." The questions assessed whether respondents saw themselves as capable and willing students – able to master difficult subjects, persisting when the subject matter was difficult, seeing the relevance of education, and committed to doing well in school (Exhibit V-2). Here, too, respondents showed statistically significant gains between their ***before*** and ***now*** responses. Overall, 68% of respondents showed a gain on the scale.

Educational Aspirations and Expectations. The increased importance of education as a goal and an increased sense of educational competence were reflected in significant increases in educational aspirations and expectations. Respondents were first asked how far they had *wanted* to go in school ***before*** YouthBuild and how far they wanted to go ***now***. They were then asked how far they *expected* to go in school ***before*** and ***now***. Options included completing an HSE credential or high school diploma, attending a vocational or technical program, attending some college (but not earning a degree), completing a two- or four-year degree, and going to graduate school for a Master's degree, Ph.D., or professional degree. Respondents were also asked whether they thought they had the *ability* to complete a college degree ***before*** and ***now***.

Exhibit V-3
Educational Aspirations



Respondents reported significant gains in both educational aspirations and expectations, with the average respondent moving from not expecting to attend college ***before*** YouthBuild to expecting to acquire at least a two-year college degree ***now*** (Exhibit V-3). Overall, 56% of respondents reported increased aspirations and 70% reported increased expectations of what they could realistically accomplish. Respondents were also significantly more confident in their ability to complete a degree: the average response shifted from "Probably Not" ***before*** to "Probably" ***now***.[63]

Table V-2 shows the shift in educational aspirations and expectations in a different way. Reading across, the table shows that 70% of the 91 survey participants who wanted to earn only an HSE credential or high school diploma at program entry ***(before)*** wanted to attain a two-year degree or greater ***now***; only 24% were still aiming for an HSE credential or high school diploma as their goal. Similarly, 65% of the 128 respondents who reported that the farthest they *expected* to get at program entry ***(before)*** was an

[63] Responses to the questions on educational aspirations and expectations were coded on a scale from 1 (Less than high school graduation or a GED [HSE credential]) to 8 (Complete a Ph.D., M.D., law degree, or other high level professional degree). The question about ability to complete a 2- or 4-year degree was coded from 1 (Definitely not) to 4 (Definitely).

HSE credential or diploma expected to get a two- or four-year degree or greater ***now;*** only 24% still expected to get only an HSE credential or diploma.

Table V-2: Changes in Respondents' Educational Aspirations and Expectations

Before YouthBuild		**"Now"** (Row Percentage)				
How far did you want to go in school?	**N**	**Diploma, HSE credential, or less**	**Certificate or Some College**	**Two- or Four-Year Degree**	**Graduate Degree**	**Two-Year Degree or Greater**
High school diploma, HSE credential, or less	91	24.2%	5.5%	51.6%	18.7%	**70.3%**
Certificate or some college (no degree)	12	8.3%	41.7%	41.7%	8.3%	**50.0%**
Two- or four-year degree	60	3.3%	0.0%	78.3%	18.3%	**96.7%**
Graduate degree	29	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%	89.7%	**100.0%**
Totals	192	13.0%	5.2%	53.1%	28.6%	**81.8%**
How far did you really expect to get in school?						
High school diploma, HSE credential, or less	128	24.2%	10.9%	40.6%	24.2%	**64.8%**
Certificate or some college (no degree)	19	10.5%	15.8%	52.6%	21.1%	**73.7%**
Two- or four-year degree	45	4.4%	2.2%	68.9%	24.4%	**93.3%**
Graduate degree	18	5.6%	0.0%	22.2%	72.2%	**94.4%**
Totals	210	17.1%	8.6%	46.2%	28.1%	**74.3%**

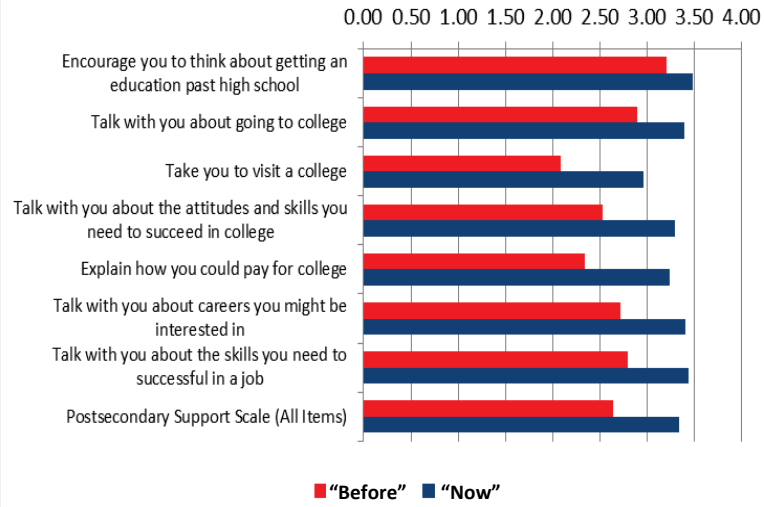
Based on YouthBuild Retrospective Participant Surveys, N=275. "Two-year degree or greater" percentage is the sum of the previous two columns.

A similar shift is evident among those who wanted or expected to get a vocational certificate or attend some college ***before*** entering YouthBuild: 50% of those who *wanted* a certificate ***before*** had raised their aspirations to wanting a college degree ***now***; 65% of those who *expected* to gain a certificate ***before*** YouthBuild had raised their expectations to expecting a college degree ***now***.

Overall, the proportion of survey respondents who wanted and/or expected to gain a college degree roughly doubled from ***before*** entry into YouthBuild to ***program completion (now)***: the proportion that wanted a college or graduate degree rose from 46% to 82%, and the proportion that expected a college degree or higher rose from 30% to 74%.

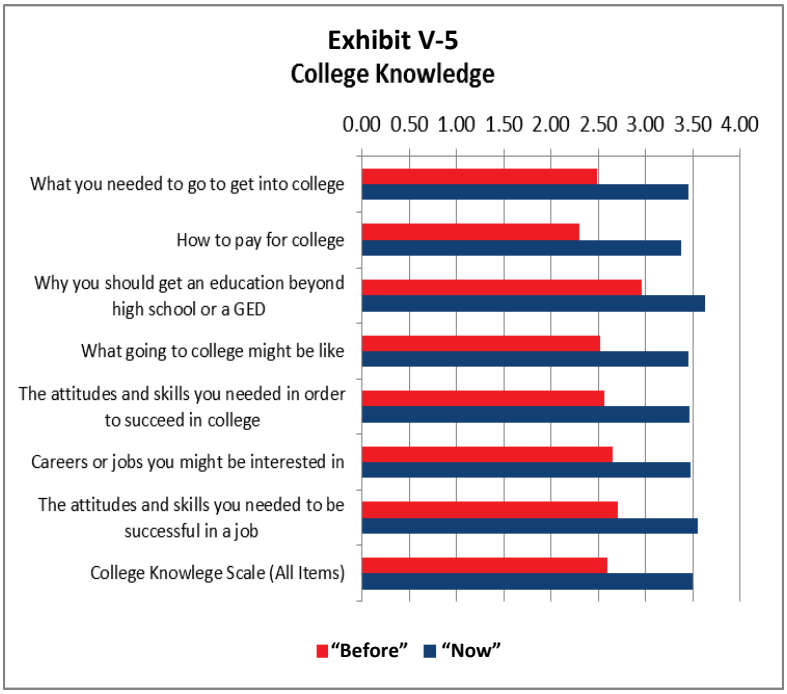
Postsecondary Support and College Knowledge. YouthBuild PSE programs were designed to increase students' capacity to make the transition to postsecondary education, providing them with a better understanding of the value of postsecondary education and of the steps needed to succeed in a postsecondary setting. The surveys included two sets of questions addressing these goals. The first asked about the kinds of postsecondary supports respondents had received ***before*** YouthBuild and ***now***. Questions included how often, for example, an adult had encouraged them to think about education beyond high school, taken them to visit a college, or talked about how to pay for college or about the attitudes and skills needed for college or careers.

Exhibit V-4
Postsecondary Support



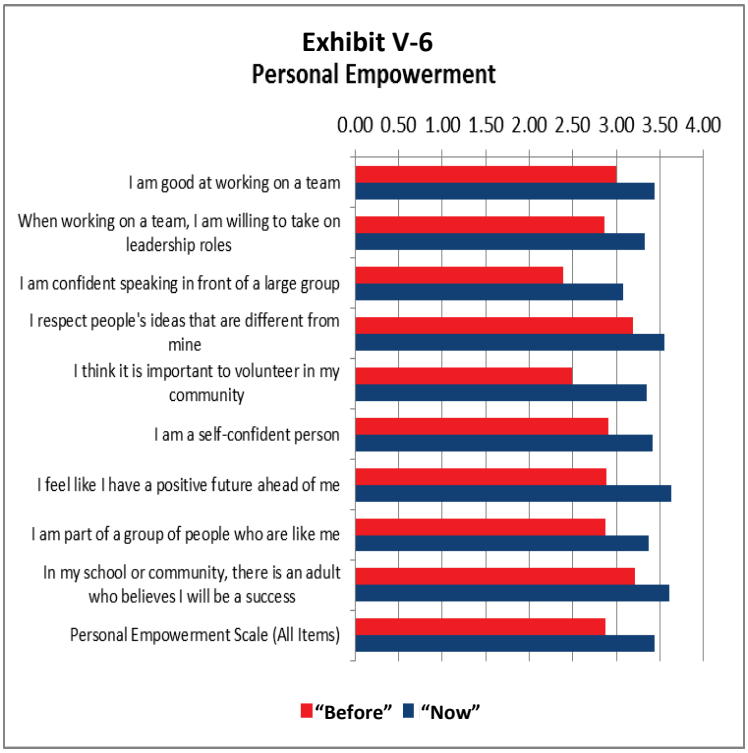
The second set of questions focused on how much respondents said they knew about key college-related topics, including what they needed to get into and pay for college, what going to college might be like, and the attitudes and skills they needed to succeed in college or careers.

Exhibit V-5
College Knowledge

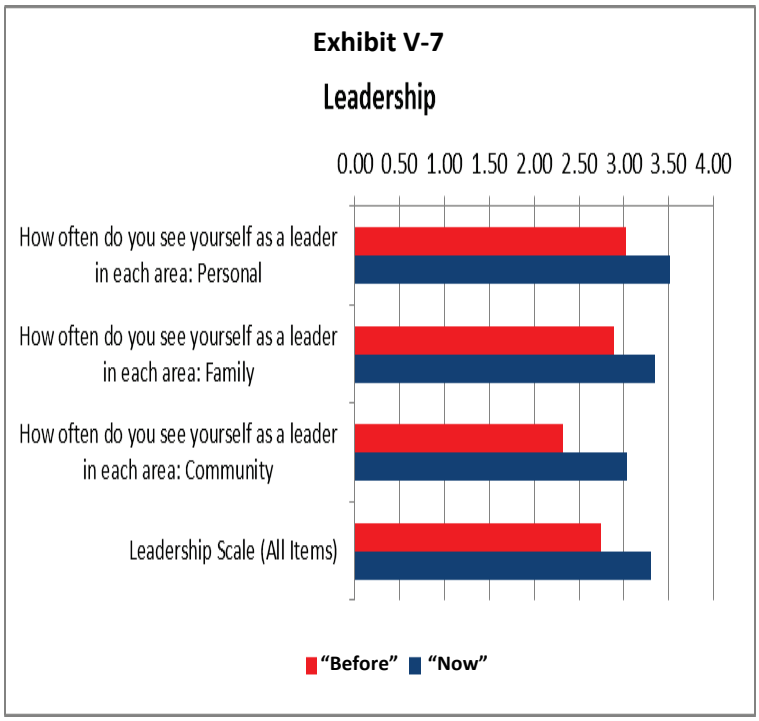


As Exhibits V-4 and V-5 show, respondents reported strong, statistically significant gains on both measures: they were much more likely to have had college and career-related conversations and experiences during YouthBuild than before, and those activities led them to feel substantially more knowledgeable about college than before. Two-thirds of respondents reported increased postsecondary support activities, and 79% reported an increased understanding of what college-going involved.

Personal Empowerment and Leadership. Finally, as noted earlier, YouthBuild's goals for all YouthBuild participants, not just PSE, include an increased sense of personal empowerment, leadership, and connection to the community. While not exclusively PSE goals, they are seen as an essential part of preparing students for success in postsecondary education and beyond. Two groups of survey questions addressed these outcomes. The first focused on personal empowerment, including questions about respondents' ability to work on a team, take on leadership roles, speak in front of large groups, and volunteer in the community, as well as their sense of belonging and having people who care about them. The second focused on leadership and asked how often respondents saw themselves as leaders (after defining leadership, according to the YouthBuild philosophy, as "taking positive steps to make things better for yourself, your family, and your community").



YouthBuild participants showed statistically significant gains across all individual items and each set of questions as a whole (Exhibits V-6 and V-7). On the overall measure of personal empowerment, 71% of respondents showed a gain, suggesting that they had become more comfortable working on a team, speaking in front of others, and taking on leadership roles – all critical skills for schooling and the 21st Century workplace. They were also more likely to see themselves as confident, having a positive future, and in the presence of supportive adults and peers. The largest gain, and the item on which the highest percentage of respondents showed gains, was related to volunteering: the response to the item "I think it is important to volunteer in my community" shifted from an average response of "Not very true for me" ***before*** to "Very true for me" ***now***.



Respondents also showed significant gains with respect to leadership: nearly 60% reported that they saw themselves as leaders more frequently ***at program completion (now)*** than ***before*** YouthBuild. The largest and most frequent gain was in leadership in the community: nearly half of the participants reported a gain. It is worth recalling that, in one of the earlier sets of questions (Exhibit V-1), respondents had also reported a significant increase in the importance of "making a difference in the community" as one of their goals.

Table V-3: YouthBuild Participant Surveys – Retrospective Pre/Post Analysis Results

Education and Career Goals *(How important is each of the following goals for you?)* [1]	**N**	**Baseline ("Before")**	**Post ("Now")**	**Difference**	**Sig. (p value)**	**Percent of Students Showing Gains**
Getting a job	262	3.32	3.70	0.38	0.000	32.8%
Getting training or an apprenticeship in construction or another trade	264	2.70	3.26	0.56	0.000	42.0%
Going to a trade or technical school	262	2.37	2.95	0.58	0.000	44.3%
Going to a two-year college	262	2.76	3.27	0.51	0.000	37.4%
Going to a four-year college	260	2.73	3.27	0.54	0.000	37.3%
Making a difference in your community	261	2.70	3.28	0.58	0.000	40.6%
Educational Competence/Academic Self-Concept *(How true is each of the following statements?)*[2]	**N**	**Baseline**	**Post**	**Difference**		**Percent of Students Showing Gains**
When I decide to learn something really hard, I can learn it	265	2.99	3.58	0.59	0.000	46.0%
It is very important to me to do the best I can in school	265	3.03	3.71	0.68	0.000	46.0%
If I decide to get good grades, I can really do it	264	3.29	3.67	0.38	0.000	31.4%
I try hard in school	266	2.74	3.52	0.78	0.000	47.7%
When studying, I keep working on my schoolwork even if the material is difficult	265	2.65	3.38	0.73	0.000	49.4%
If I want to learn something well, I can	265	3.27	3.62	0.35	0.000	30.2%
I will use what I learned in school after I graduate	264	2.95	3.62	0.67	0.000	45.5%
I like school	264	2.57	3.18	0.61	0.000	44.3%
Educational Competence Scale (All Items)	253	2.95	3.55	0.60	0.000	68.0%
Educational Aspirations and Expectations[3]	**N**	**Baseline**	**Post**	**Difference**		**Percent of Students Showing Gains**
How far do you want to go in school?	192	3.99	5.53	1.54	0.000	55.7%
How far do you really expect to get in school?	210	3.20	5.23	2.03	0.000	69.5%
Do you think you have the ability to complete any kind of college degree (2- or 4-year)?	265	1.72	2.55	0.83	0.000	59.2%

Note: All items are statistically significant at the .001 level or greater based on paired t-test.

Personal Empowerment *(How true is each of the following statements?)*[2]	N	Baseline	Post	Difference	Sig. (p value)	Percent of Students Showing Gains
I am good at working on a team	266	3.00	3.44	0.44	0.000	36.8%
When working on a team, I am willing to take on leadership roles	266	2.86	3.33	0.47	0.000	41.0%
I am confident speaking in front of a large group	266	2.39	3.08	0.69	0.000	50.4%
I respect people's ideas that are different from mine	266	3.19	3.55	0.36	0.000	33.1%
I think it is important to volunteer in my community	267	2.49	3.35	0.86	0.000	52.8%
I am a self-confident person	267	2.91	3.42	0.51	0.000	41.4%
I feel like I have a positive future ahead of me	264	2.88	3.63	0.75	0.000	46.6%
I am part of a group of people who are like me	266	2.87	3.37	0.50	0.000	38.0%
In my school or community, there is an adult who believes I will be a success	266	3.21	3.61	0.40	0.000	31.2%
Self-concept Scale (All Items)	250	2.87	3.44	0.57	0.000	70.8%
Leadership *(YouthBuild defines good leadership as taking positive steps to make things better for yourself, your family, and your community. How often do you see yourself as a leader?)*[4]	N	Baseline	Post	Difference		Percent of Students Showing Gains
How often do you see yourself as a leader in each area: Personal	268	3.02	3.51	0.49	0.000	39.6%
How often do you see yourself as a leader in each area: Family	268	2.89	3.35	0.46	0.000	39.6%
How often do you see yourself as a leader in each area: Community	266	2.32	3.03	0.71	0.000	48.5%
Leadership scale (All Items)	265	2.74	3.30	0.56	0.000	59.2%
Postsecondary Support Scale *(How often did an adult you know do any of the following?*[3]	N	Baseline	Post	Difference		Percent of Students Showing Gains
Encourage you to think about getting an education past high school	266	3.21	3.48	0.27	0.000	28.2%
Talk with you about going to college	267	2.90	3.39	0.49	0.000	41.6%
Take you to visit a college	261	2.09	2.96	0.87	0.000	51.0%
Talk with you about the attitudes and skills you need to succeed in college	262	2.53	3.30	0.77	0.000	46.6%
Explain how you could pay for college	262	2.34	3.24	0.90	0.000	51.5%
Talk with you about careers you might be interested in	262	2.72	3.40	0.68	0.000	45.8%
Talk with you about the skills you need to successful in a job	265	2.79	3.44	0.65	0.000	44.9%
Postsecondary support scale (All Items)	246	2.64	3.33	0.69	0.000	66.7%

Note: All items are statistically significant at the .001 level or greater based on paired t-test.

College Knowledge *(How much do you know about each of the following?)*[5]	**N**	**Baseline**	**Post**	**Difference**	**Sig.**	**Percent of Students Showing Gains**
What you needed to go to get into college	267	2.49	3.45	0.96	0.000	60.3%
How to pay for college	267	2.30	3.38	1.08	0.000	65.5%
Why you should get an education beyond high school or a GED	267	2.96	3.63	0.67	0.000	49.1%
What going to college might be like	267	2.52	3.45	0.93	0.000	62.2%
The attitudes and skills you needed in order to succeed in college	265	2.56	3.47	0.91	0.000	60.0%
Careers or jobs you might be interested in	266	2.65	3.48	0.83	0.000	58.6%
The attitudes and skills you needed to be successful in a job	268	2.71	3.55	0.84	0.000	54.9%
College Knowledge Scale - Baseline	260	2.60	3.49	0.90	0.000	78.8%

Note: All items are statistically significant at the .001 level or greater based on paired t-test.

[1] Based on a 4-point scale from "Not Important at All" (1) to "Very Important" (4)

[2] Based on a 4-point scale from "Not True for Me at All" (1) to "Very True for Me" (4)

[3] Aspirations based on an 8-point scale that runs from "Less than High School Graduation or a GED" (1) to "Complete a PhD, MD, law degree or other high level professional degree" (8). "Complete a 2-year degree" is at 4 on the scale; complete a 4-year degree is at 5. Ability to complete a degree is based on a 4-point scale from "Definitely Not" (1) to "Definitely" (4).

[4] Based on a 4-point scale from "Never" (1) to "Often" (4)

[5] Based on a 4-point scale from "Nothing at All" (1) to "A Lot" (4).

Voices of Young People

The changes in student perspectives are also evident in the responses to open-ended survey questions and in the interviews and focus group discussions with YouthBuild participants at the PSE sites. The surveys asked students, "How, if at all, did the YouthBuild experience change the way you think about yourself?" The most common responses were that YouthBuild had changed the ways participants thought about themselves and their futures – in particular, raising their goals and expectations to include college, learning that "I can accomplish anything that I want to," gaining confidence in their abilities, growing in maturity and responsibility, and seeing themselves as leaders. Exhibit V-8 provides a sampling of the survey statements. [64]

[64] The open-ended survey responses were coded by research staff using qualitative research software (Atlas.ti) to identify common themes. Examples were then drawn from the list of responses to illustrate those themes.

Exhibit V-8

Survey Responses: How did YouthBuild Change the Way You Think About Yourself?

College and my future

- YouthBuild changed my view on college and my own life completely.
- It made me look at school in a better way and changed the way I thought about a career.
- YouthBuild made me think more about our future.
- It changed a lot. I used to feel small and insignificant or just a number.
- It made me look at my life different and stop playing with life because it's time passing.
- YouthBuild changed me by helping me understand I can have a second chance and go to college.
- It made me take a step back and look at my life and had me make better choices.
- It changed me in so many ways. I'm now going to college - I never thought I would.
- YouthBuild made me believe I can accomplish what I really want.
- Made me think that I can succeed in life even with a criminal record.
- It showed me that I could do more and that my dreams could come true.
- I can do anything as long as I try and work hard.

Confidence

- I went from thinking I can't do something to knowing I can do anything.
- It gave me confidence and made me realize how far I can go in life
- It got me my confidence back and also gave me hope I didn't have after High School.
- They helped me realize how much potential I had. YouthBuild gave me confidence and [helped me] see myself as a productive member of the community.
- It made me believe in myself because others did.

Personal Growth

- Made me a wiser and smarter man.
- I felt like YB helped me become more of an adult, I felt like YB helped me grow up.
- Taught me to mature more, and to take things more seriously.
- I'm more responsible.

Leadership

- They pushed me to be the leader I knew I could be.
- I think of myself as more of a leader.
- It helped me see myself as a leader and as a bigger and better person.

The discussions with program participants in interviews and focus groups reflected similar themes:

> *What has changed for me at YouthBuild? Being able to improve myself and show others that I'm capable of much more than they expect. When I joined I didn't care. After I joined I started caring.*
>
> *People here kept telling me I could do bigger and greater things, and I finally believe them!*
>
> *I found that I have a love of learning.*
>
> *I was not too interested [in college] to be honest. I came here for the diploma and to get out. But coming here changed my perspective on college. I learned there are not enough jobs out there for those without a college degree or certification. Seeing that changed my mindset and what I want to do now.*
>
> *I never felt smart before.*
>
> *When I first came here I just wanted a GED [HSE credential]. But [YouthBuild staff] really pushed me. I took a welding course at the college while I was studying here. They stood by us, paid for the course, even transported us back and forth. Now I have my GED and I'm starting an internship in welding and they're going to pay me to go to school. I feel like I really have a future, and I never expected that at this point.*
>
> *No matter where or how we failed in the past – here at YouthBuild we can start from scratch.*
>
> *When I started I was looking for the paycheck because of family obligations, but YouthBuild totally remotivated me. I did well with my studies. The college courses helped me learn how to be a real student. The construction work helped me with my work ethic, learning to take constructive criticism, and understanding the importance of "finished products." Now I'm doing administrative work for a while before I go back to college, and I'm still into finished products!*
>
> *I picked up a flier and I saw that you can get paid to go to school [at YouthBuild] … at the time, money was something that I wanted. But when I came here, money wasn't even important. Then it was just about being in school and trying to meet people and better myself. (Dohrn, 2017)*

The data from the post-program survey as well as the interviews and focus groups strongly suggest that the PSE programs have helped to change how students see themselves and their futures. The shift from seeing an HSE credential or diploma as an educational goal to looking toward college and even graduate school is particularly striking. The fact that those increased expectations are accompanied by an increased sense of educational competence, personal empowerment, and of what college involves suggests a real change in respondents' attitudes and understanding.

Secondary Outcomes: Credential Attainment and Academic Skill Improvement

The initial task of the YouthBuild PSE program was to help participants gain the academic skills and credentials (an HSE credential or high school diploma) needed to gain access to postsecondary education, and for most YouthBuild PSE participants, the programs appeared to succeed in that effort. Data from YouthBuild's reporting system through June 30, 2016, show that high percentages of YouthBuild participants attained an HSE credential, high school diploma, and/or occupational certificate through the program. In addition, a majority of program completers showed substantial gains in reading and math scores. This section presents data about these secondary outcomes.

Table V-4 shows the secondary level outcomes for the first four YouthBuild PSE student cohorts – those who entered in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 – based on data reported as of June 30, 2016 in the YouthBuild data reporting system. It is important to note that as of the June 2016 reporting date, the 2014 cohort's results were still somewhat preliminary – 23% of the participants were still active in YouthBuild at the time. Data for the 2015 cohort were excluded from the analysis because more than half of the participants in the cohort were still active in the program at the time of the June 2016 data collection. The data for the 2011 through 2013 cohorts is more reliable and complete.

As noted in Chapter II, almost all young people entering YouthBuild had substantial educational challenges. Overall, 99% of those entering between 2011 and 2014 lacked a secondary credential (HSE credential or diploma) at program entry. The average reading and math levels at entry were between the 6th and 7th grades: 57% of students scored below the 8th grade level in reading and 67% tested below the 8th grade level in math.

Despite those challenges, the large majority of participants attained a secondary credential through the program. Among those who enrolled between 2011 and 2014 and either completed the program or were terminated (i.e., dropped out or were expelled), 62% earned an HSE credential or a diploma and approximately 78% earned an HSE credential, diploma, and/or occupational certificate.[65] Among those who successfully completed their YouthBuild programs, the figures are higher: 80% of completers between 2011 and 2014 earned an HSE credential or diploma, and 94% gained an HSE credential, diploma, or occupational certificate.

Those who completed YouthBuild also showed substantial gains in academic skills. Over half of completers gained two grades or more in reading (57%) and two grades or more in math (58%). At exit, YouthBuild completers averaged a 9th grade or better level in reading and close to a 9th grade level in math. While not all participants had achieved college-level reading and math scores, YouthBuild had clearly helped them to make major gains and become more college-ready.

[65] These figures include program completers and terminations. They do not include students who were still in the program ("active" participants) or "other exits" (students who left the program for non-program related reasons such as moving away).

Table V-4: YouthBuild Secondary Outcomes (Data Reported as of 6/30/2016)

	2011 Entrants		2012 Entrants		2013 Entrants		2014 Entrants		Total (2011-2014)	
Outcomes	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**
Entry Educational Attainment										
HSE credential or HS Diploma at Entry	5	.7%	2	.3%	17	2.8%	5	1.0%	29	1.1%
No Credential at Entry	872	99.4%	711	99.7%	592	97.2%	514	99.0%	2689	98.9%
Total Participants	**877**	**100%**	**713**	**100%**	**609**	**100%**	**519**	**100%**	**2718**	**100%**
Program Completion (as of 06/30/2016)										
Completed	515	58.7%	432	60.6%	398	65.4%	279	53.8%	1624	59.7%
Active (Still in YB Program)	1	.1%	4	.6%	30	4.9%	120	23.1%	155	5.7%
Termination (Dropout or Terminated)	181	20.6%	161	22.6%	133	21.8%	101	19.5%	576	21.2%
Other Exit	180	20.5%	116	16.3%	48	7.9%	19	3.7%	363	13.4%
Secondary Completion: Diploma/HSE credential/Occupational Certificate (*Based on program completers without a credential at entry)*										
N of Completers w/o credential at entry	515		432		398		279		1624	
Earned High School Diploma	342	66.4%	243	56.3%	264	66.3%	169	60.6%	1018	62.7%
Earned GED	96	18.6%	90	20.8%	49	12.3%	52	18.6%	287	17.7%
Earned Diploma or GED	438	85.0%	333	77.1%	313	78.6%	221	79.2%	1305	80.4%
Vocational/ Technical Certificate	243	47.2%	286	66.2%	235	59.0%	227	81.4%	991	61.0%
Diploma/ GED/ or Certificate	483	93.8%	411	95.1%	379	95.2%	256	91.8%	1529	94.2%
No Diploma/GED or Certificate	32	6.2%	21	4.9%	19	4.8%	23	8.2%	95	5.8%
Secondary Completion: Diploma/ GED Occupational Certificate *(Based on all enrollees without a credential at entry.)*										
N of Participants w/o credential at entry	691		591		517		347		2146	
Earned High School Diploma	353	51.1%	244	41.3%	268	51.8%	175	50.4%	1040	48.5%
Earned GED	97	14.0%	91	15.4%	51	9.9%	52	15.0%	291	13.6%

	2011 Entrants		2012 Entrants		2013 Entrants		2014 Entrants		Total (2011-2014)	
Outcomes	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**
Earned Diploma or GED	450	65.1%	335	56.7%	319	61.7%	227	65.4%	1331	62.0%
Vocational/ Technical Certificate	262	37.9%	311	52.6%	268	51.8%	270	77.8%	1111	51.8%
Diploma/ GED/ or Certificate	513	74.2%	436	73.8%	415	80.3%	302	87.0%	1666	77.6%
No Diploma/GED or Certificate	178	25.8%	155	26.2%	102	19.7%	45	13.0%	480	22.4%
Increased Reading Skills *(Program Completers)*										
Total N	515		432		398		279		1624	
Average reading level at entry	7.9		6.9		6.6		6.9		7.2	
Average reading level at exit	9.9		9.1		8.7		8.6		9.2	
Increased Reading Level 2 or More Levels	269	56.3%	221	55.9%	189	57.6%	111	60.7%	790	57.1%
Increased Math Skills *(Program Completers)*										
Total N	515		432		398		279		1624	
Average math level at entry	7.4		6.4		6.2		6.3		6.6	
Average math level at exit	9.6		8.5		8.2		8.8		8.9	
Increased Math Level 2 or More Levels	286	59.0%	215	54.3%	180	57.9%	83	65.4%	764	57.9%

Source: Data YouthBuild (DYB) reporting system. Data reported as of June 30, 2016.

NOTE: 2011 Entrants enrolled in YB between July1, 2011 and June 30, 2012; 2012 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013; 2013 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014; 2014 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015; 2015 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. Civic Works Baltimore Includes Q3 2010 entries.

Next, we look at completion and termination data and the characteristics of completers. Table V-5 shows completion and termination data for the combined 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 cohorts as of June 2016. Overall, 74% of those who enrolled in YouthBuild during that timeframe completed the program. Different groups completed the program, or left before completion, at different rates. On average, those with stronger reading and math skills at entry were more likely to complete; young women were more likely to complete than young men; Hispanic participants were less likely to complete than non-Hispanic students; and African-American and Asian students were more likely to complete than non-African-American or non-Asian participants. Being White or a young parent did not make a significant difference in completion (parents and non-parents were equally likely to be completers), but young people who were homeless in the prior year or had a juvenile or adult criminal record at entry were significantly less likely to complete than those without such barriers. The differences for all groups except students who were White and parents were statistically significant.

Table V-5: Completers and Terminations, 2011-2014 Cohorts

	Completers (N=1624)	Terminations (N=576)
Reading Level at Entry (Average)*	7.15	6.46
Math Level at Entry (Average)*	6.64	6.00
Male*	71.1%	28.9%
Female*	77.6%	22.4%
African-American*	78.7%	21.3%
Asian*	89.7%	10.3%
Hispanic	66.4%	33.6%
White	73.7%	26.3%
Parents at Entry*	72.6%	27.4%
Homeless in Past Year*	67.1%	32.9%
Prior Offender at Entry*	61.5%	38.5%
All Participants	73.8%	26.2%

Differences marked with an asterisk (*) were statistically significant at the p=0.05 level or greater. Statistical significance based on Anova analysis for reading and math levels and Fisher's exact for all other measures. Data do not include participants who are "active" (i.e., still in the program) and "Other Exit" participants. Based on data through June 2016.
Source: Data YouthBuild (DYB) reporting system.

The characteristics of completers who attained a diploma or HSE credential also varied (Table V-6). Overall, 82% of program completers earned a high school credential. Among completers, those who entered YouthBuild with higher reading and math levels were significantly more likely to gain a high school credential, as were young women and Asian students. The rates at which African-American, Hispanic, and White students attained a secondary credential were not significantly different from the overall average. However, as with completion rates, students who had been homeless, had juvenile or adult court records, or were parents at entry were significantly less likely to earn their GED or high school diploma, even when they completed the YouthBuild program.

Table V-6: Credential Attainment

	Attained a GED or HS Diploma in Program (N=878)	Completer but No HS Credential (N=186)
Reading Level at Entry (Average)*	7.27	6.49
Math Level at Entry (Average)*	6.86	5.49
Male*	80.3%	19.7%
Female*	85.2%	14.8%
African-American	81.1%	18.9%
Asian*	92.8%	7.2%
Hispanic	80.6%	19.4%
White	82.6%	17.4%
Parents at Entry*	74.3%	25.7%
Homeless in Past Year*	65.6%	34.4%
Prior Offender at Entry*	67.9%	32.1%
All Participants	82.4%	17.6%

Data include only program completers. Differences marked with an asterisk (*) were statistically significant at the p=0.05 level or greater. Statistical significance based on Anova analysis for reading and math levels and Fisher's exact for all other measures. Based on data from Data YouthBuild (DYB) reporting system through June 2016.

Two points about these differences are important to note. First, despite substantial differences in success rates among different groups, and despite facing an array of barriers, the large majority of students across all groups completed the program and acquired a secondary level credential. Second, the significant barriers faced by many YouthBuild students – limited reading and math skills, parenting, homelessness, and prior court-involvement – all clearly had an impact on the participants and represented critical challenges to success even for those who persisted through completion.

Postsecondary Outcomes

The postsecondary outcomes were more mixed: they compare well with those of similar students nationally, but were below YouthBuild's original goals. Table V-7 shows postsecondary outcomes for the 2011 through 2014 YouthBuild cohorts, based on YouthBuild reporting system data and additional college enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). While the tables include data for the 2014 cohort (participants who entered YouthBuild in 2014), it is important to recognize that about a quarter of that group had not yet completed their YouthBuild programs, and those in longer (2-year) YouthBuild programs may have only just acquired their diploma or GED/HSE credential at the time data were being reported (June 2016).

Overall, 50% of the 2011-2014 students who had completed the YouthBuild program had enrolled in college by June 2016.[66] Roughly 5% had enrolled in other types of postsecondary education, including apprenticeships and occupational training, with a total of 53% of students enrolled in some type of postsecondary education (some enrolled in both college and "other" postsecondary training). Sixty-three percent (63%) of the YouthBuild graduates were also employed. In total, 86% of completers had enrolled in postsecondary education or training or had a job by mid-2016.

[66] The figures that follow are based on both YouthBuild and National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) enrollment data. NSC data was used to supplement YouthBuild reporting on college enrollment, providing enrollment data on youth whose enrollment in postsecondary was not captured in the YouthBuild reporting. Both the YouthBuild-only results and the YouthBuild plus NSC data are provided in Table IV-7.

The postsecondary enrollment results were highest for the first (2011) cohort of YouthBuild students: 66% of that cohort had enrolled in postsecondary before June 2016. Postsecondary enrollment rates dropped off substantially for subsequent cohorts, to just under half (49%) of the 2012 cohort, and 42-45% of the 2013 and 2014 cohorts.

There are a number of possible reasons for the decline in enrollment numbers for the more recent cohorts. It may reflect graduates' decisions in recent years to work for a period of time before starting postsecondary education (note that the job placement rates for YouthBuild completers rose through this period). The gradually improving economy may have made more jobs available as well. It may also reflect important changes in the make-up of the YouthBuild population. First, as noted earlier, the GAP program experienced a major influx of Southeast Asian refugees into the YouthBuild program. While the Asian students in YouthBuild were more likely than other groups to complete a GED or diploma, they were significantly less likely to enroll in college than other groups. Second, the average reading and math scores of students in the post-2011 cohorts were also nearly a full grade lower than those of the initial cohort, at both program entry and completion. While these students acquired their secondary credential, they may have felt less prepared for college-level work or discouraged by the need to take non-credit DevEd courses. Finally, the decline may also reflect the reduced funding for PSE activities in the later years of the grant and/or the loss of Department of Labor funding at several sites at the same time, which resulted in reduced staff support for PSE activities at a number of the sites.

Despite the decline in enrollment over time, the overall college enrollment figures for the 2011-2014 YouthBuild completers nonetheless compare well with national college-going data for students similar to those in YouthBuild (GED holders, first-generation, and low-income students), though they are below YouthBuild's original goal of having 50% of all YouthBuild enrollees attend college. It is difficult to make direct comparisons with national college enrollment data: YouthBuild graduates include students with a mix of educational barriers that often do not match up with the ways in which national data are reported.[67] However, three comparisons are worth considering. First, an estimated 43% of GED holders nationally (and 47% of those aged 16-24) enter some form of postsecondary education. Second, according to national census data, approximately 55% of low income youth (family income in the bottom 20%) were enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college between 2010 and 2015. Finally, college-going rates among first-generation college-goers nationally have been estimated at 47%. For these three groups, YouthBuild's college-going rates are comparable to the national averages. Thus, given the range of barriers faced by YouthBuild participants, the fact that 50% of the 2011-2014 YouthBuild alumni attended college is a significant accomplishment.[68]

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[67] The results of the MDRC participant impact study (see Chapter VI), which used a randomized control trial design, provide a more direct comparison between YouthBuild and comparable non-YouthBuild students.

[68] For GED college-going rates, see Zhang, Guison-Dowdy, Patterson, and Song (2011), *Crossing the Bridge: GED Credentials and Postsecondary Educational Outcomes (Year Two Report)*. Washington: GED Testing Service. For college-going by income level, see the U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 302.30, "Percentage of recent high school completers enrolled in 2-year and 4-year colleges, by income level: 1975 through 2015," in "Most Recent Tables" (retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/current_tables.asp). For college-going by first-generation students, see J. Engle, "Postsecondary Access and Success for First-Generation College Students," *American Academic*, Vol. III, 2007.

The data suggest that once in postsecondary education, YouthBuild graduates faced many of the same challenges as other low-income, minority, and/or first-generation students, including difficulty in testing out of non-credit DevEd, accumulating postsecondary credits, and persisting in postsecondary education (Table V-8). It is important to note, however, that the reporting data on postsecondary progress for YouthBuild graduates is incomplete, with missing data on several measures for a majority of the YouthBuild participants who enrolled in college. [69]

According to the available data, the large majority (88%) of YouthBuild graduates from the 2011-2014 PSE cohorts who went on to postsecondary enrolled in 2-year colleges – generally publicly-funded community colleges. Approximately 47% of this group enrolled as full-time students and 53% as part-time. This is close to the national averages for students entering 2-year public colleges. While some studies suggest that full-time attendance is associated with higher rates of degree attainment, many YouthBuild PSE coordinators noted that it often made more sense for their members to begin with a part-time schedule as they learned to balance academics, work, and family. [70]

Approximately 30% of YouthBuild participants entering college tested out of DevEd math at entry, and roughly 40% tested out of DevEd reading and writing: that is, about 70% of YouthBuild graduates were required to take remedial math courses and 60% to take remedial reading and writing. These figures for YouthBuild graduates are slightly higher than one national estimate that 60% of all entering community college students are referred to DevEd math and 33% to DevEd reading, but are in line with other estimates that 68% of entering community college students take remedial courses. [71] One of the initial hopes of the PSE effort was to enable YouthBuild graduates to bypass remedial/DevEd courses. That clearly proved difficult to accomplish. On the other hand, the data suggest that YouthBuild graduates entered postsecondary with skills comparable to those of community college students generally.

[69] YouthBuild staff regularly noted in interviews that, despite data sharing agreements, it was difficult to gather follow-up data on placement testing, credit acquisition, and semester to semester persistence. Consequently, data on those measures is missing for a substantial percentage of YouthBuild students. The reporting here is based on the available data.

[70] Full-time/part-time enrollment percentages are for entering students based on data in National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, *Snapshot Report: First-Year Persistence and Retention Rates, Fall 2009 – 2015,* Entering Cohorts, National Data Tables, June 13, 2017. For the benefits of full-time enrollment, see Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2017). *Even one semester: Full-time enrollment and student success.* Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Educational Administration, Program in Higher Education Leadership.

[71] The first estimates are from Thomas Bailey et al. "Student Progression Through Developmental Sequences in Community Colleges." Community College Research Center, CCRC Brief, Number 45 (September 2010). Another recent study estimates that 68% of students entering public 2-year colleges take at least one remedial education course. See Chen, X. (2016). *Remedial Coursetaking at U.S. Public 2- and 4-Year Institutions: Scope, Experiences, and Outcomes* (NCES 2016-405). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Because they often began postsecondary by taking these non-credit DevEd classes, YouthBuild graduates were also slow to accumulate college credits – though here too, there is substantial missing/unreported data.[72] Overall, 68% of those for whom credit information was reported had accumulated fewer than 12 credits by 2016; less than 10% had accumulated 26 credits or more. Some of this is influenced by the time in school: students from the 2011 and 2012 cohorts were substantially more likely to show higher numbers of credits than more recent college entrants. However, even among the earlier cohorts, less than 15% had earned 26 credits or more. While there is little national data on credit accumulation, data from the Achieving the Dream (ATD) project found that 31% of first year students in the ATD schools earned 20 or more credits during their first year of school. The figures for YouthBuild graduates appear to be substantially lower. However, since ATD colleges are focused on improving college completion, the higher credit accumulation figures may reflect the strategies put into place at ATD schools to improve student success. YouthBuild rates may be more typical of underserved students at non-ATD schools.[73]

Despite these challenges, a substantial percentage of YouthBuild graduates persisted in college. Overall, 62% of the YouthBuild graduates who enrolled in college completed at least one year of postsecondary (4 quarters or more) and 42% persisted into their second year of postsecondary (i.e., were enrolled for 5 quarters or more) as of June 2016. The rate of persistence into a second year of postsecondary is higher among the earlier cohorts: 61% of the 2011 YouthBuild cohort and 45% of those in the 2012 cohort persisted into the second year of postsecondary.[74] These figures also compare well with the national data for similar students. Among GED holders nationally, approximately 47% of students persisted into the second year of college (i.e., enrolled for 3 semesters or more); National Student Clearinghouse data indicate that 62% of students in public 2-year colleges persist to their second year.[75]

[72] There are no data on college credits for roughly 64% of the YouthBuild college enrollees. This figure likely includes both students with no earned credits and students for whom credit information was never collected and reported.

[73] Achieving the Dream, "Data Notes." Vol. 6, no. 6. November/December 2011. Retrieved from: http://achievingthedream.org/resources/newsletter/data_notes.

[74] Many 2013 and 2014 entrants into YouthBuild were likely to have just begun postsecondary or completed their first year of college at the time of the 2016 report. As a result, the persistence rates into a second year are substantially lower.

[75] Zhang et al (2011) and National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2017).

Table V-7: Postsecondary Outcomes (Data Reported as of 6/30/2016)

	2011 Entrants		2012 Entrants		2013 Entrants		2014 Entrants		Totals	
Outcomes	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**
Program Completers	515		432		398		279		1624	
Enrolled in College (YouthBuild Data)	259	50.3%	156	36.1%	140	35.2%	84	30.1%	639	39.3%
Enrolled in College (YouthBuild and NSC Data)	313	60.8%	210	48.6%	178	44.7%	118	42.3%	819	50.4%
Enrolled in Other Postsecondary (YB Data)	46	8.9%	17	3.9%	8	2.0%	9	3.2%	80	4.9%
Enrolled any Postsecondary (YB Data)	294	57.1%	170	39.4%	146	36.7%	89	31.9%	699	43.0%
Enrolled any Postsecondary (YB and NSC Data)	340	66.0%	220	50.9%	184	46.2%	122	43.7%	866	53.3%
Placed in a Job	309	60.0%	269	62.3%	251	63.1%	188	67.4%	1017	62.6%
Placed in Job or Postsecondary (YB Data)	435	84.5%	343	79.4%	318	79.9%	234	83.9%	1330	81.9%
Placed in Job or Postsecondary (YB and NSC Data)	454	88.2%	360	83.3%	335	84.2%	246	88.2%	1395	85.9%

Source: Data YouthBuild reporting system and data from National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Data reported as of June 30, 2016.
NOTE: 2011 Entrants enrolled in YB between July1, 2011 and June 30, 2012; 2012 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013; 2013 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014; 2014 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015; 2015 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. Civic Works Baltimore Includes Q3 2010 entries.

Table V-8: Postsecondary Progress (Data Reported as of 6/30/2016)

	2011 Entrants		2012 Entrants		2013 Entrants		2014 Entrants		Totals	
Outcomes	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**	**N**	**Percent**
Enrolled in College (YB Data only)	259		156		140		84		639	
Part-Time at First Report	99	57.6%	63	54.3%	76	59.4%	47	60.3%	259	50.5%
Full-Time at First Report	73	42.4%	53	45.7%	52	40.6%	31	39.7%	235	45.8%
Missing/unknown	87	33.6%	40	25.6%	12	8.6%	6	7.1%	145	22.7%
2-Year College/Community College	213	82.2%	142	91.0%	129	92.1%	81	96.4%	565	88.4%
4-Year College	38	14.7%	11	7.1%	10	7.1%	2	2.4%	61	9.5%
Other (Technical School)	8	3.1%	3	1.9%	1	0.7%	1	1.2%	13	2.0%
Tested out of DevEd Math at Entry	31	58.5%	17	28.8%	18	23.4%	9	13.8%	75	29.5%
Tested out of DevEd Reading at Entry	32	60.4%	26	43.3%	31	40.3%	18	27.7%	107	42.0%
Tested out of DevEd Writing at Entry	31	58.5%	22	37.3%	29	37.7%	19	29.2%	101	39.8%
Missing/Unknown	206	79.5%	97	62.2%	64	45.4%	37	36.3%	404	61.4%
Credit Attainment *(College Enrollees)*										
1-12 Credits	22	39.3%	46	67.6%	57	82.6%	35	85.4%	160	68.4%
13-25 Credits	27	48.2%	13	19.1%	10	14.5%	5	12.2%	55	23.5%
26 or More Credits	7	12.5%	9	13.2%	2	2.9%	1	2.4%	19	8.1%
1 or More Credits	56	21.6%	68	43.6%	69	48.9%	41	40.2%	234	35.6%
No Credits or Missing	203	78.4%	88	56.4%	72	51.1%	61	59.8%	424	64.4%
Postsecondary Persistence *(College Enrollees)*										
One through three quarters (i.e., less than 1 year)	81	31.3%	43	27.6%	63	45.0%	54	64.3%	241	37.7%
Four quarters (1 year)	21	8.1%	43	27.6%	51	36.4%	16	19.0%	131	20.5%
Five or more quarters	157	60.6%	70	44.9%	26	18.6%	14	16.7%	267	41.8%

Source: Data YouthBuild reporting system. Data reported as of June 30, 2016.
NOTE: 2011 Entrants enrolled in YB between July1, 2011 and June 30, 2012; 2012 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013; 2013 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014; 2014 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015; 2015 Entrants enrolled in YB between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. Civic Works Baltimore Includes Q3 2010 entries.

Table V-9: Characteristics of College Goers and Non-College Goers (2011 - 2014 Cohort Completers Combined)

	College Goers (N=805)	Non-College Goers (N=819)
Reading Level at Exit (Average)*	9.90	8.52
Math Level at Exit (Average)*	9.50	8.10
Male	48.3%	51.7%
Female	53.1%	46.9%
African-American*	56.4%	43.6%
Asian*	22.0%	78.0%
Hispanic*	54.3%	45.7%
White	49.4%	50.6%
First-Generation College	49.5%	50.5%
Parents at Entry	46.4%	53.6%
Homeless in Past Year at Entry	47.5%	52.5%
Prior Offender at Entry	45.9%	54.1%
HS Credential – GED	50.9%	49.1%
HS Credential – Diploma*	57.8%	42.2%
All Completers	50.4%	49.6%

Data includes only program completers. Differences marked with an asterisk (*) were statistically significant at the p=0.05 level. Statistical significance based on Anova analysis for reading and math levels and Fisher's exact for all other measures. Based on data through June 2016.

Finally, based on the combined data for the 2011 through 2014 cohorts (the most complete data), there were significant differences in the college-going rates among different groups of YouthBuild completers (Table V-9). Among the completers, those who enrolled in college had, on average, significantly higher reading and math skills at program exit than the non-college-goers. Women were more likely than men to enroll in college, but the difference was not statistically significant. African-American and Hispanic completers were significantly more likely to enroll than non-African-American or non-Hispanic completers, and Asian completers were significantly (and strikingly) less likely to enroll than non-Asian completers. In contrast to the data on program completion, youth who had been parents, had been homeless, were prior offenders, or were first-generation college-goers were not significantly less likely to enroll than young people without those characteristics. Apparently, once those young people completed YouthBuild, they were as likely as any other YouthBuild graduate to make the transition to postsecondary. Perhaps one of the more significant findings in terms of program design is that young people who earned a high school diploma enrolled in postsecondary education at a significantly higher rate than those who earned an HSE credential.

When the participant and program characteristics listed in Table V-9 are combined in a single, multivariate analysis, three characteristics emerged as significant predictors of which YouthBuild completers were most likely to enroll in college: Asian completers were significantly less likely to enroll than non-Asian completers (likely reflecting the influence of the refugee population in the Minnesota program and elsewhere); completers with higher math scores at exit were more likely to enroll; and completers with a high school diploma were more likely to enroll than those with an HSE credential. [76]

[76] The analysis is based on a logistic regression that used college enrollment as the dependent (outcome) variable and included gender, math and reading scores at exit, race (Asian, African-American, Hispanic, White) and type of credential (diploma vs. GED) as covariates. When all covariates were included in the model, the only characteristics that were statistically significant were type of high school credential (odds ratio=2.537, sig. =0.000), Math score at exit (odd ratio=21.129, significance = 0.003) and Asian (odds ratio = .188; significance = 0.000).

With respect to the latter predictor, it is important to recognize that YouthBuild programs serve multiple goals, and many participants may be unwilling to enroll in the generally longer-duration programs leading to a high school diploma. However, the early data suggests that YouthBuild PSE students who gain a diploma are more likely to go on to postsecondary education than those who earn a GED.

Overall, the data from the YouthBuild participant surveys, interviews, and focus groups, along with YouthBuild's reporting system, indicate that the PSE Initiative met many of its participant goals. Based on the participant surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, the YouthBuild PSE sites helped young people to change their ideas about themselves and their futures in important ways, raising their ambitions and their confidence in their ability to achieve. The reporting system data make clear that YouthBuild sites achieved a high rate of success in helping their students attain a secondary level credential, and on average YouthBuild students, who faced some extraordinary barriers to educational success, went on to college at a rate comparable to that of other educationally disadvantaged students nationally. Once in college (generally a local community college), YouthBuild graduates faced many of the same challenges as students in similar situations and performed comparably in terms of their ability to test out of remedial classes, begin accumulating credits, and persist in school past the first year. In that regard, while the original goal at YouthBuild had been to move their students to and through postsecondary at higher rates than the national average, the fact that their students could succeed at rates comparable to other underrepresented students was nonetheless an important accomplishment. Ultimately, the results reflect the challenges faced by YouthBuild graduates in postsecondary education and the need to continue looking for ways to support them through to graduation.

Chapter VI
PSE SITES IN THE NATIONAL IMPACT EVALUATION

Introduction and Summary

One of the goals of the SIF initiative is to generate research that provides reliable evidence of the impact of its funded programs as a means of building a broader knowledge base of effective programs and practices for the field. While the survey and reporting system data presented in the previous chapter show positive outcomes for participants in the YouthBuild PSE programs, the question remains whether those outcomes are significantly greater than those for comparable young people who did not participate in the program – that is, did YouthBuild PSE programs have a positive net impact on key participant outcomes, such as secondary degree attainment and postsecondary enrollment, compared to young people who did not participate in these programs?

To address this question, this chapter examines data on participant impacts at YouthBuild PSE sites drawn from a larger, national participant impact study of YouthBuild programs funded through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The national study, which is being conducted by MDRC, Mathematica Policy Research, and Social Policy Research Associates, is a rigorous, large-scale random assignment design study that includes 50 DOL and 17 CNCS-funded YouthBuild sites and a total sample of approximately 4,000 youth. Key elements of the national study include three rounds of youth surveys (at 12, 30, and 48 months after enrollment) that provide data on in-program and post-program impacts on educational attainment, employment, involvement in the criminal justice system, living arrangements, marriage, and childbearing, and social/emotional development, as well as use of administrative data, external databases, and grantee surveys to provide additional information on program context, implementation, and participant outcomes. [77]

This chapter focuses on data from 12 YouthBuild PSE sites that were collected as part of the MDRC study. MDRC analyzed the data from the PSE sites using the analysis methods used in the national study and provided the data tables for the chapter. The Brandeis PSE evaluation team is responsible for the interpretation and discussion of the data in this chapter. The data included here are from 12 of the sites that participated in YouthBuild's two PSE initiatives: seven from the current SIF-funded initiative and five from the earlier effort funded through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Table VI-1 lists the 12 sites.) It is important to note that not all of the Gates or SIF initiative sites were selected for inclusion in the national MDRC study – hence those sites are not included in this analysis. Similarly, while MDRC found additional YouthBuild sites in the broader study sample that had active postsecondary initiatives as part of their programs, they were not included in this analysis since they had not been part of the formal

[77] A detailed description of the MDRC study and its methodology can be found in the two reports produced by the study to date: Andrew Weigand et al. (2015). *Adapting to Local Context: Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation Implementation Study*. MDRC: [New York, NY]; and Cynthia Miller, Megan Millenky, et al. (2016). *Building a Future: Interim Impact Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation*. MDRC: [New York, NY]. Both documents are available at http://www.mdrc.org/project/youthbuild-evaluation#overview.

Gates or SIF-funded PSE initiatives. Consequently, this analysis focuses on a subset of sites that were part of YouthBuild's deliberate efforts to build an effective PSE approach and, as such, adopted the PSE initiatives' "Back on Track" design and participated in the two initiatives' reporting, and technical assistance activities. [78]

Table VI-1: YouthBuild PSE Sites in the Impact Study [79]

Site	Location	Initiative
ADC YouthBuild	New York, NY	SIF
Clayton County YB/Prevention Plus	Forest Park, GA	SIF
Guadalupe Alternative School	St. Paul, MN	SIF
La Causa YouthBuild	Los Angeles, CA	SIF
Metro Atlanta YouthBuild	Atlanta, GA	Gates
Mile High Youth Corps	Denver, CO	SIF
Operation Fresh Start YouthBuild	Madison, WI	Gates
Portland YouthBuilders	Portland, OR	Gates
YouthBuild Bogalusa	Bogalusa, LA	SIF
YouthBuild Brockton	Brockton, MA	Gates
YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School	Philadelphia, PA	Gates
YouthBuild Providence	Providence, RI	SIF

The data presented in this chapter are based on the 12- and 30-month surveys conducted for the MDRC study – the 48-month follow-up survey data were not available at the time of this report. The 12-month surveys provide information on short-term, in-program outcomes, including participant assessments of their program experience and receipt of services. The 30-month surveys provide the basis for interim impact assessments, including impacts on education and training outcomes (attainment of secondary credential and postsecondary enrollment), employment and earnings, youth development measures, living arrangements, and delinquency and risky behavior. The survey data were supplemented by administrative data from the National Student Clearinghouse (for postsecondary enrollment) and the National Directory of New Hires (for employment and earnings).

The data from the PSE sites show a number of positive impacts for program participants, including statistically significant impacts on the receipt of education and training services, attainment of a high school diploma or equivalency credential, and enrollment in postsecondary education. YouthBuild PSE participants were also more likely to be civically engaged than control group members; in particular, they were more than twice as likely to have volunteered in their communities. At the same time,

[78] Because the MDRC data reported here is drawn from a purposive sample of sites (i.e., those who participated in the PSE initiative), rather than a representative sample of all YouthBuild programs incorporating PSE into their operation, the targeted level of evidence was moderate, with strong internal reliability (through the use of the randomized control model for the study), but only moderate external validity (multiple sites, but not randomly selected, hence limiting generalizability). However, the final assessment of the study by CNCS concluded that the sites were sufficiently representative to reach a "strong" level of evidence. MDRC's national YouthBuild study, which is based in a representative sample of DOL and CNCS-funded YouthBuild sites, is designed to achieve a strong level of evidence for the program as a whole.

[79] YouthBuild PSE SIF sites not included in the national evaluation are CCEO YouthBuild (Los Angeles, CA), YouthBuild Fresno (Fresno, CA), American Youthworks (Austin, TX), Civic Works (Baltimore, MD), and Just-A-Start (Cambridge, MA). Of the Gates-funded sites, YouthBuild Columbus (Columbus, Ohio) and McLean County YouthBuild (Normal, IL) were not included in the national study.

participants in PSE programs showed no significant impacts on measures of employment, and only a few scattered impacts on other (non-civic-related) youth development attitudes or in their living arrangements and involvement in delinquency or risky behaviors. In some cases, the absence of clear impacts may reflect the small sample size for the PSE sites, but in large part the pattern of impacts reflects that for YouthBuild programs nationally – that is, positive short-term impacts on involvement in education and training and in education-related outcomes, but more limited short-term impacts on employment and social behaviors. [80]

Where the PSE sites stand out is in their impacts on the kinds of services received by program participants. Not only were PSE participants more likely to participate in PSE-related services such as test preparation, financial aid planning, and college preparation activities than control group members, but they also participated in those activities at a substantially higher rate than the average YouthBuild participant nationally. In that regard, the national impact study data help to reinforce the conclusion that PSE sites were providing a different mix of services that were much more focused on preparing members for postsecondary education.

The MDRC Impact Study

The national MDRC study is designed to examine YouthBuild's effects on a wide range of outcomes, including educational attainment and enrollment, work and earnings, criminal justice involvement, family structure, and social-emotional development. Key outcome questions for the national study include:

1. **Does YouthBuild increase youth's educational attainment?**
   - Does the program increase youth's receipt of either a GED or high school diploma?
   - Does the program increase enrollment in post-secondary education?
   - Does the program increase receipt of post-secondary credentials, such as college credits, college degrees, vocational training certificates, and other industry-recognized credentials?
   - How do the program's effects on educational attainment vary over time?

2. **Does YouthBuild affect measures of social and emotional development and identity development?**
   - Does the program increase youth's sense of empowerment?
   - Does the program increase youth's involvement in their communities?
   - Do these effects occur both within and beyond the program period?

3. **Does YouthBuild increase youth's employment and earnings?**
   - Does the program increase rates of employment in unsubsidized jobs?
   - Does the program increase overall earnings?
   - Does the program affect benefits or types of jobs youth hold, such as wage rates, employer provided benefits, and industry and occupation?

[80] Miller and Millenky (2016) note that the employment findings represent relatively short-term outcomes and may reflect the fact that YouthBuild graduates were entering the labor market when post-recession unemployment rates were still high for young people. A key question for the national study is whether the 48-month data will show a greater impact (Miller and Millenky, 2016, 65).

- How do the program's effects on employment and earnings vary over time?

4. **Does YouthBuild reduce youth's involvement with the criminal justice system?**
   - Does the program affect youth arrest rates?
   - Does the program affect incarceration rates?
   - How do the effects vary in the short- and longer-term?

5. **How does YouthBuild affect youth's living arrangements, marriage, and childbearing?**
   - Does the program affect the number of youth who have stable living arrangements?
   - Does the program affect the rates of marriage or co-habitation?

6. **Does YouthBuild affect measures of self-regulation/control?**
   - Does the program reduce youth's propensity to engage in risky behavior?

The MDRC impact analysis also includes questions related to differences in impacts by type of youth and differences in program design, as follows:

7. **Do the effects of YouthBuild vary for different types of youth?**
   - Are the effects of YouthBuild consistent across most types of youth, or do they vary according to certain demographic characteristics, such as education level or age?

8. **Do the effects of YouthBuild vary by site fidelity to the model, other dimensions of implementation strength, or certain program features?**
   - Do they vary according to the extent of the service difference between the program and control groups?
   - Are particular program features, such as the length of MTO, the focus on post-secondary education, the type of school, or the ability to earn industry-recognized certification, associated with larger program impacts?

The primary outcomes of interest for the PSE initiative are those related to educational attainment and social/emotional development, with a focus on educational attainment as the core outcomes for the study. While other outcomes in the national study (such as impacts on living arrangements, involvement in the criminal justice system, or engagement in risky behaviors) are important for the YouthBuild program generally and will be reported in this chapter for the PSE sites, they are not a focus of the PSE initiative. It should also be noted that since MDRC's analysis of impacts according to different elements of program implementation will not take place until the analysis of the 48-month survey data, it is not available for use in this report.

Study Design. As noted above, the national MDRC study uses a randomized control design in which young people recruited to a nationally representative sample of YouthBuild sites were randomly assigned to program participation or participation in a control group. Control group members were prohibited from enrollment in YouthBuild for a period of at least two years, but were free to participate in other education and training programs.

As described in the MDRC interim impact report, 75 programs were selected for the national study: 58 funded through Department of Labor (DOL) grants and 17 through grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) AmeriCorps program. For the DOL programs, the program sample was selected using probability-proportional-to-size, in which larger programs had a greater probability of selection. As such, each program slot or participant had an equal chance of being represented in the study. For the CNCS-funded programs, 17 of the 24 programs receiving CNCS grants were determined to be eligible for the study and were included in the evaluation.[81] From among this sample, 3,929 youth were enrolled in the study between August 2011 and January 2013. For each enrollment cycle, the programs used their typical selection process to create a pool of applicants eligible and appropriate for YouthBuild. This process included recruiting potential participants and screening them for eligibility for the program.[82] The program applicants were then assigned at random to fill the available program slots or to a control group.[83] The study aimed for a random assignment ratio in which an average of 60% of eligible youth were assigned to the program group and 40% to the control group. In practice, some programs had difficulty in securing enough excess applicants to meet the 60:40 ratio. As a result, in the final sample, 69% of eligible applicants were assigned to YouthBuild and 31% to the control group.[84]

Once participants were enrolled, surveys were administered to a subset of participants in the study 12 and 30 months after they entered the study. The 3,436 participants in the survey sample included all of the control group members and a random sample of 76% of program participants from each of the study sites. The surveys were administered online with telephone follow-up with non-responders. Both the 12- and 30-month surveys achieved 80% response rates with very small differences in response rates between the program and control groups. A total of 2,845 participants responded to the 12-month survey, and 2,808 participants responded to the 30-month survey.[85]

In addition to the survey data, the MDRC study drew on two national databases to provide information on employment and earnings and postsecondary enrollment for the full sample of study participants. Employment and earnings data from the National Directory of New Hires, which provides quarterly wage data for existing workers in employment covered by the unemployment insurance system, were used to assess employment and earnings outcomes. Postsecondary enrollment data were obtained for the full sample from the National Student Clearinghouse, which tracks college enrollment and degree

[81] The other 7 programs reported that they were closing their CNCS programs within the year or that young people in the program would likely receive services comparable to those in YouthBuild (Miller and Millenky, 2016, 11).
[82] Eligibility requirements included being age 16 to 24; having not completed high school; and falling into at least one of the following categories: current or former foster child, youth offender, adult offender, young person with a disability, migrant farm working, child of an incarcerated parent, or low-income youth. Young people in CNCS-funded programs could not have been convicted of murder or be registered sex offenders (Miller and Millenky, 2016, 2). Some programs also screened participants based on basic skills assessments or drug testing.
[83] In most cases (81% of programs, 75% of participants), random assignment took place before the Mental Toughness Orientation (MTO), which often served as an additional orientation and screening activity for the programs. The decision about when to conduct random assignment was made on a program by program basis. Random assignment took place after MTO in sites where MTO was likely to screen out large numbers of participants before they began full program participation (Miller and Millenky, 2016, 14).
[84] Miller and Millenky, 2016, 14.
[85] The survey response rates and characteristics of responders and non-responders for the national study are discussed in Appendix B in the MDRC report (Miller and Millenky, 2016, 79-96).

receipt nationally. There are some limitations to both databases: National Directory employment data do not include employment that is not covered by unemployment insurance, including informal or temporary work and self-employment. Similarly, the National Student Clearinghouse database varies in its coverage of different types of institutions. Although it captures over 90% of postsecondary enrollment in the United States, its coverage is highest for public institutions and lowest for for-profit institutions. Thus, while both databases are important complements to the survey data and provide data on the larger sample, they may miss some types of employment and postsecondary enrollment. [86]

Finally, the analysis made use of administrative records from YouthBuild for information on participant characteristics and service receipt and as a check on the reliability of some of the survey data.

PSE Study Participants. As noted above, the analysis of the impacts of the PSE approach focused on study participants from the 12 YouthBuild programs in the MDRC study that also participated in YouthBuild's organized PSE initiatives. In total, 671 young people from those sites participated in the MDRC study, including 489 program participants and 182 control group members; 554 study participants were included in the survey process. Of those, 491 youth completed the 12-month survey (87%) and 461 completed the 30-month survey (83%). Table VI-2 provides the breakdown of participants and control group members in the PSE sample.

Table VI-2: Sample Size and Response Rates in PSE Sites

	Participants	Control Group	Full Sample
All Study Participants in PSE Sites	489	182	671
Survey Sample in PSE Sites	372	182	554
12-Month Survey Respondents (Response Rate)	330 (88.7%)	161 (88.5%)	491(88.6%)
30-Month Survey Respondents (Response Rate)	316 (84.9%)	145 (79.7%)	461 (83.2%)

As was the case for the national study, the participant and control group members in the PSE sample were well-matched, with statistically significant differences on only two baseline characteristics: control group members were significantly more likely to be male and significantly less likely to have been referred to YouthBuild by a friend. The differences in gender were controlled for in the analysis. In terms of age, race and ethnicity, parental status, education levels, housing status, etc. there were no significant differences. Table VI-3 provides data on the baseline characteristics of the two groups.

As Table VI-4 shows, there were some significant differences between survey respondents and non-respondents within the PSE study sample. Non-responders were significantly more likely to be male, though the difference was significant only at the $p>0.10$ level. There were also other significant differences between the two groups: non-responders were more likely to be Hispanic, Latino or Spanish while responders were more likely to be African-American; and responders were more likely to be living at home, while non-responders were more likely to be staying at someone's house or apartment. However, while these differences are statistically significant and suggest some response bias, the relatively small number of non-responders means that the differences in characteristics between the survey responders and the full PSE sample are small and thus unlikely to distort the overall results.

[86] Miller and Millenky (2016), 15.

Table VI-3: Baseline Characteristics, by Research Group

Characteristic	Full Sample	Program Group	Control Group	Sig.
Age (%)				
16-18 years old	35.6	36.6	33.0	
19-21 years old	54.7	54.8	54.4	
22 years old or older	9.7	8.6	12.6	
Male (%)	56.1	54.2	61.3	*
Race/ethnicity[a] (%)				
Hispanic, Latino	21.4	20.1	24.9	[ ]
White, non-Latino	7.2	6.6	8.8	
Black, non-Latino	65.5	67.0	61.3	
Other[b]	5.2	5.5	4.4	
Not specified	0.7	0.8	0.6	
Has a child (%)	34.1	36.1	29.3	
Highest grade completed[c] (%)				
6th or lower	0.2	0.2	0.0	[ ]
7th	0.6	0.6	0.5	
8th	6.0	5.8	6.6	
9th	18.5	18.6	18.1	
10th	27.5	27.1	28.6	
11th	40.4	41.1	38.5	
12th	6.9	6.6	7.7	
Has a high school diploma or equivalent (%)	3.5	2.7	5.6	
Has a disability (learning or physical) (%)	12.3	13.0	10.5	
Housing status (%)				
Living with family	73.4	74.9	69.7	[ ]
Own/rent apartment, room, or house	9.0	8.9	9.1	
Staying at someone's apartment, room, or house	13.1	12.0	16.0	
Staying with foster guardian/in foster system	1.1	0.9	1.7	
Halfway house/transitional house	0.6	0.4	1.1	
Residential treatment	0.2	0.2	0.0	
Homeless	2.6	2.7	2.3	

(continued)

Table VI-3: Baseline Characteristics by Research Group (continued)

Characteristic	Full Sample	Program Group	Control Group	Sig.
Who suggested you apply to YouthBuild? (%)				
Family member or relative	34.0	35.9	28.9	
Decided on my own	31.9	30.3	36.1	
Friend	20.8	21.2	20.0	
School counselor, truant officer, teacher, principal	5.3	4.4	7.8	
Case manager/Counselor/Mentor/Program Staff	3.5	3.5	3.3	
Judge or someone from the justice system	1.5	1.9	0.6	
Someone else	3.0	2.9	3.3	
Reasons for applying to YouthBuild				
High school equivalency	95.1	95.2	94.9	
To get life on track	94.2	94.5	93.3	
Job	88.4	87.7	90.2	
Training	74.2	72.8	78.0	
College	73.3	71.9	77.1	
Friends	5.9	6.8	3.5	*
Sample size	671	489	182	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on the YouthBuild baseline data form. Brackets [ ] indicate that the significance level may not be reliable due to the small sample size (i.e., expected value of <5 in more than 20% of cells).
NOTES:

[a]Categories are mutually exclusive.

[b]Other includes Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan, and response of multi race/ethnicity.

[c]This information is missing for some sample members.

Table VI-4: Baseline Characteristics of 30-Month Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents

Characteristics	Respondents	Non-Respondents	Full Sample	Sig.
Age (%)				
16 -18 years old	35.2	37.3	35.6	
19-21 years old	55.5	49.0	54.7	
22 years old or older	9.3	13.7	9.7	
Male %	52.6	72.6	56.1	*
Race/ethnicity (%)				[***]
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	18.8	32.4	21.4	
White, non-Hispanic	7.5	6.9	7.2	
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	68.7	48.0	65.5	
Other	3.8	12.7	5.2	
Not specified	1.1	0.0	0.7	
Has a child (%)	34.8	29.1	34.1	
Highest grade completed (%)				[ ]
6th or below	0.0	0.0	0.2	
7th	0.2	2.0	0.6	
8th	6.9	4.0	6.0	
9th	18.6	14.9	18.5	
10th	26.2	30.7	27.5	
11th	41.2	42.6	40.4	
12th	6.9	5.9	6.9	
Has high school diploma or equivalency (%)	2.9	4.0	3.5	
Has a disability (learning or physical) (%)	10.7	16.3	12.3	
Housing status (%)				[***]
Living with family	76.6	64.0	73.4	
Own/rent apartment, room, or house	9.1	6.0	9.0	
Staying at someone's apartment, room, or house	10.3	22.0	13.1	
Staying with foster guardian/in foster system	1.2	1.0	1.1	
Halfway house/ transitional house	0.7	1.0	0.6	
Residential treatment	0.0	1.0	0.2	
Homeless	2.1	5.0	2.6	

(continued)

Table VI-4: Baseline Characteristics of 30-Month Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents (Continued)

Characteristics	Respondents	Non-Respondents	Full Sample	Sig.
Who suggested applying to YouthBuild? (%)				[ ]
Family Member or relative	35.2	29.0	34.0	
Participant decided on their own	32.5	32.0	31.9	
Friend	20.5	19.0	20.8	
School Counselor/Truant Officer/Teacher/Principal	4.5	8.0	5.3	
Case manager/Counselor/Mentor/Program Staff	3.3	3.0	3.5	
Judge or someone from the justice system	1.1	4.0	1.5	
Someone else	2.9	5.0	3.0	
Reasons for applying to YouthBuild				
High school equivalence	95.3	96.5	95.1	
To get life on track	94.3	93.9	94.2	
Job	89.5	84.7	88.4	
Training	74.7	68.0	74.2	
College	74.6	73.5	73.3	
Friends	5.6	5.3	5.9	*
Sample Size	102	452	671	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on the YouthBuild baseline data form. Brackets [ ] indicate that the significance level may not be reliable due to the small sample size (i.e., expected value of <5 in more than 20% of cells).
NOTES:

[a]Categories are mutually exclusive.

[b]Other includes Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan, and response of multi race/ethnicity.

[c]This information is missing for some sample members.

Analysis Model

The impact analysis focuses on the differences in average outcomes between the participants and control group members. Because all enrollees were included in the analysis (including those who later dropped the program), the analysis reflects an "intent-to-treat" model, as opposed to a "treatment-on-the-treated" model which includes only those who fully participated in the program. As a result, to the extent that young people who left the program are included in the participant group, the findings may understate the benefits of the program for those who complete the full program. Similarly, while control group members were excluded from YouthBuild participation, they were not prohibited from participating in other services in the community. As discussed later, a substantial portion of the control group participated in other services. Thus, the impacts measured here are in comparison to other available services, rather than to youth with no service.

Impacts were estimated for each outcome using regression models in which the outcome of interest is regressed on an indicator of program status and several variables measured at or before the time of random assignment. These additional variables (participant's age, gender, education level, parent status, and race/ethnicity) improve the precision of the impact estimates. Variables are also included for each individual program in order to account for variation in the random assignment ratio among participating programs. Exhibit VI-1 provides a more detailed description of the analysis model, drawn from the MDRC interim impact report (Miller and Millenky, 2016).

Outcome Measures

As noted, the national YouthBuild study addresses a range of youth outcomes, including the following:

- Impacts on service receipt (participation in education, training, and personal development services);
- Education and training outcomes (postsecondary degree attainment, enrollment in postsecondary education, receipt of postsecondary degree);
- Employment and earnings outcomes (employment, job industry, full/part-time work, earnings)
- Youth development outcomes (civic engagement, mental health (view of future, depression, etc.), overall health, sense of social supports, self-esteem, self-efficacy);
- Living arrangements and household characteristics (living arrangements, homelessness, marital status, receipt of government benefits, parenting status);
- Delinquency and risky behaviors (ever arrested, convicted, substance abuse experience).

The major outcomes of interest for the PSE initiative are those related to receipt of education and training services (particularly those related to postsecondary preparation), education and training-related outcomes (secondary degree attainment and postsecondary enrollment), and civic outcomes (leadership development). While other outcomes are important to YouthBuild generally, they are not a primary focus of the PSE initiative.

Exhibit VI-1: The Analysis Model

The basic estimation strategy is to compare average outcomes for the program and control groups. Regression adjustment in a linear regression model increases the power of the statistical tests.

Outcome data were processed according to standard procedures to check for outliers or other irregularities. Outlier values on employment-related outcome variables (such as earnings, hourly wages, and weekly hours worked) were set to missing. These outlier values affected less than 1% of the sample for any given outcome.

The impact analysis used the following model:

$$Yij = \alpha + \beta Pij + \delta Xij + \gamma j + \varepsilon ij,$$

Where Yij is the outcome of interest (such as "earned a high school equivalency credential," "employed," or "involved in civic activities") for sample member *i* in site *j*,

α is the intercept of the regression,

Pij is an indicator for membership in the program group,

Xij is the series of binary variables that represents the baseline covariates for a sample member, including age, gender, whether the person applied to YouthBuild at a CNCS-funded program, highest grade completed, race/ethnicity, whether or not a young person was a parent, and high school diploma or equivalency completion, for sample member *i* in site *j*,

δ is the set of regression coefficients for Xij,

γ represents program fixed effects to account for varying random assignment ratios by site, and εij is the random error term for sample member *i* in site *j*.

For the analysis of survey outcomes, weights were added to the model to account for varying selection probabilities by cohort and research group.

For an observation with a missing baseline covariate (see the list for Xij above), that covariate was assigned the average sample value and a dummy variable indicating "missing" for that covariate was set to 1 and thus included in the analysis model with Xij. Fewer than 2% of observations had missing values for any given covariate except parent status. Parent status was missing for 11% of the sample. Observations with missing values for an outcome variable were dropped from the impact analysis for that outcome. Missing values for outcome variables were not imputed.

Finally, as the number of outcomes that are examined increases, the probability of obtaining impacts that are statistically significant simply by chance also increases. Although the estimates in this report are not formally adjusted to account for multiple hypothesis testing, the analysis does attempt to address this risk by limiting the number of outcomes examined. In addition, effects that do not appear to be part of a larger pattern are given less emphasis in the discussion.

From Appendix A: Site Selection, Random Assignment, the Analysis Model, and Previous Evaluations in Miller and Millenky (2016), p. 73-74 and from Chapter 1, p.16.

The primary sources for outcomes data are the 12- and 30-month surveys conducted by the national study. Most of the survey items are designed to collect self-reported data on key behavioral outcomes (participation in services, degree attainment, etc.). Additional scaled items are designed to assess attitudinal impacts (assessments of depression, social supports, self-esteem, and self-efficacy). In most cases, survey items were drawn from existing national studies and from prior YouthBuild evaluations, including the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (Bureau of Labor Statistics), the Youth Transitions Demonstration (MDRC), the Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (National Institutes of Health), and the national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (CDC). Scaled attitudinal assessments were similarly drawn from existing, widely-used assessment tools. The surveys were pre-tested as part of the design process to ensure that respondents understood the questions and were able to answer them consistently. [87]

In addition to the survey data, administrative data from the National Student Clearinghouse (postsecondary enrollment) and the National Directory of New Hires (employment and earnings) were used to complement the survey data, providing information on all study participants, including those study participants who were not included in the survey process (i.e., those not selected for inclusion in the survey process and non-respondents).

PSE Findings

The analysis of the PSE site data shows a number of positive impacts for YouthBuild PSE program participants, including statistically significant impacts on the receipt of education and training services, attainment of a high school diploma or equivalency credential, and enrollment in postsecondary education. YouthBuild PSE participants were also more likely to be civically engaged than control group members and, in particular, were more than twice as likely to have volunteered in their communities. The effect sizes for most of the statistically significant outcomes were medium or large. At the same time, participants in PSE programs showed no significant impacts on measures of employment, and only a few scattered impacts on other (non-civic-related) youth development attitudes or in their living arrangements and involvement in delinquency or risky behaviors. As noted earlier, in some cases, the absences of clear impacts may reflect the small sample size for the PSE sites, but overall the pattern of impacts reflects that for YouthBuild programs nationally – that is, positive short-term impacts on involvement in education and training and in education-related outcomes, but more limited short-term impacts on employment and social behaviors.

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[87] Sources for the YouthBuild surveys and pre-test process are described in a report to the US Department of Labor on the pre-test process (Memorandum from Mathematica Policy Research to Eileen Peterson, YouthBuild Program Officer, USDOL/ETA, 7/13/2012). The memorandum is included in the study's submission for OMB approval, available online at https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=201208-1205-007. National survey sources included the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (https://www.nlsinfo.org/content/cohorts/nlsy97); the Youth Transitions Demonstration (http://www.mdrc.org/project/youth-transition-demonstration#overview); the Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth); and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm). Sources for the attitudinal assessments included the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), a 9-item scale used to diagnose clinical depression (Kroenke K, Spitzer R, Williams W. "The PHQ-9: Validity of a brief depression severity measure." *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 2001, 16:606-616) and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.)

Impact on Service Receipt. As already discussed, one of the key goals for the YouthBuild PSE programs is to provide an organized and comprehensive program of education, training, and youth development services that incorporates the academic preparation, postsecondary transition services, and postsecondary supports needed to support postsecondary access and success. While many such services are available in many communities, they are often scattered among different organizations and may not be responsive to the needs of highly disadvantaged youth. A key assumption behind the YouthBuild PSE initiative, and the YouthBuild program generally, is that YouthBuild will provide better access to services for disadvantaged youth than available to similar youth outside the program.

The data from the 12- and 30-month surveys from the YouthBuild PSE sites bear this assumption out, showing that YouthBuild PSE participants were significantly more likely to participate in a wide range of education, training, and personal development services than the control group members. In many cases, the differences in participation rates and duration of participation were striking.

Tables VI-3 and VI-4 compare service receipt for YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members at 12 months and 30 months after enrollment in the study. In each case, services are divided into three broad categories: education, job or training-related services, and personal development services.

- As Table VI-3 shows, at 12 months (shortly after program completion for most YouthBuild participants), YouthBuild participants were nearly 30% more likely to have participated in some form of education-related services (78.5% vs. 61.1% for the control group) and on average participated in education services for more than twice as long as control group members (5.5 months vs. 2.4 months). [88]
- While YouthBuild PSE participants were not significantly more likely to participate in GED prep classes or high school diploma prep classes, they were much more likely to receive a critical array of educational and postsecondary transition supports: YouthBuild PSE participants were twice as likely to participate in achievement test preparation classes (32.9% vs. 16.0%), three times as likely to receive help in finding financial aid for postsecondary (46.0% vs. 14.9%), six times as likely to receive academic tutoring (25.7% vs. 4.1%), and six times as likely to participate in college preparation activities (49.8% vs. 8.2%) as control group members.
- YouthBuild PSE participants were also significantly more likely than control group members to participate in job or training-related services at 12 months. Overall, YouthBuild PSE participants were more than 2.5 times as likely to participate in some form of job or training-related services (78.4% vs. 29.9%) and on average participated for more than 5 times as long as control group members (5.1 months vs. 0.8 months). YouthBuild PSE participants were also significantly more likely than control group members to participate in specific types of job training services, including job-skills training programs (44.7% vs. 16.1%); on-the-job training (58.1% vs. 9.4%); job certification programs (32.1% vs. 11.0%); job-search assistance (62.3% vs. 21.1%) and help applying to a vocational training program (45.8% vs. 10.7%).

[88] Unless noted otherwise, all of the differences between YouthBuild PSE and control group members in service receipt were statistically significant at the p> 0.01 level or greater.

- Finally, at 12 months YouthBuild PSE participants were also significantly more likely to receive personal development services – the kinds of supportive services that are designed to help young people address the barriers to education and employment beyond basic academic and occupational skills. Overall, roughly 71% of YouthBuild PSE participants participated in some form of personal development programming, compared to less than 30% of control group members. YouthBuild participants were significantly more likely to receive help or advice from a mentor (58.4% vs. 16.3%); participate in life skills training (44.2% vs. 15.4%), communications or public speaking training (42.5% vs. 5.3%), or leadership development training (49.6% vs. 8.3%); receive health services (35.0% vs. 9.0%) or mental health services (25.1% vs. 4.8%); or work with a case manager (44.8% vs. 13.0%). As with the other types of services, time of participation was also significantly greater for YouthBuild PSE participants (5.6 months vs. 1.6 months).

The pattern of significantly greater participation in education, training and personal development services was equally evident in the data from the 30-month survey. As Table VI-4 shows, while the overall level of participation in services tended to increase for both groups from 12 months to 30 months, YouthBuild PSE participants continued to report significantly greater participation across the full range of service categories; in most cases, the gap in service receipt remained large. Length of participation also continued to be significantly greater for all three broad categories of services. As at 12 months, the only areas in which the differences in service receipt between YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members were not significant were in basic GED or diploma preparation courses.

While both YouthBuild PSE and control group members accessed a range of services, participants in YouthBuild's programs clearly were more likely to participate in any education, training and developmental services, to participate in a broader range of services, and to participate for a greater period of time.

YouthBuild's impacts on receipt of these categories of services were not solely a feature of the YouthBuild PSE approach. In MDRC's analysis of the full national sample, the same broad pattern of difference in service receipt was evident, with YouthBuild participants in the national sample significantly more likely to receive education, training and personal development services than control group members and to have participated in those services for a longer period of time. In that regard, the impacts on service receipt among the PSE sites are consistent with those of the YouthBuild program nationally.

At the same time, some differences between the PSE sites and the national sample are evident, reflecting the added focus on preparation for postsecondary education at the PSE sites. Table VI-5 compares the average participation levels in education, training, and personal development services for YouthBuild participants in the PSE sites and for YouthBuild participants in the national sample.[89] While the overall rate of participation in education-related services was similar for both groups of programs, participants in the PSE sites were more likely to have received tutoring assistance and participated in achievement test preparation, college preparation activities, and financial aid assistance – all activities

[89] It is important to note that the YouthBuild PSE site data are included in the data for the national sample. Also, the comparison is based on the summary data available for the PSE sites and the national sample; as such, a more rigorous statistical test of the differences was not possible. This report does not include a statistical analysis of the differences between the PSE sites and those in the national sample.

associated with the PSE goals of increased academic preparation and support for the postsecondary transition. While both the PSE sites and the programs in the national sample provided similar job training-related services, the PSE sites were substantially more likely to have engaged participants in personal development services, including mentoring, life skills training, communications skills training, and assistance from a counselor or case manager. The analysis is only suggestive at this point; however, the differences in service receipt between the PSE program and the national YouthBuild sample tend to highlight some of the "value added" in the PSE approach.

Table VI-3: 12-Month Impacts on Service Receipt

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Sig.	P-Value	Effect Size
Education-related services						
Ever participated (%)	78.5	61.1	17.4	***	0.000	0.40
High School equivalency preparation	43.0	35.7	7.3		0.114	0.15
Academic tutoring (not related to high school equivalency)	25.7	4.1	21.5	***	0.000	0.54
High school diploma prep courses	37.6	32.8	4.8		0.294	0.10
Standardized achievement test preparation	32.9	16.0	16.9	***	0.000	0.37
College-preparation activities[a]	49.8	8.2	41.7	***	0.000	0.85
Getting help finding financial aid	46.0	14.9	31.1	***	0.000	0.64
Other[b]	12.0	7.4	4.7		0.169	0.15
Months participated	5.5	2.4	3.1	***	0.000	0.67
Job or training-related services						
Ever participated (%)	78.4	29.9	48.5	***	0.000	1.02
Job-skills training program	44.7	16.1	28.6	***	0.000	0.59
On-the-job training in construction or another field	58.1	9.4	48.7	***	0.000	0.98
Job certification program	32.1	11.0	21.1	***	0.000	0.48
Job-search assistance[c]	62.3	21.1	41.3	***	0.000	0.82
Help applying to a vocational training program[d]	45.8	10.7	35.1	***	0.000	0.73
Months participated	5.1	0.8	4.2	***	0.000	0.98
Personal development services						
Ever participated (%)	70.9	28.8	42.1	***	0.000	0.86
Help or advice from a mentor	58.4	16.3	42.1	***	0.000	0.84
Life-skills training[e]	44.2	15.4	28.9	***	0.000	0.60
Communication or public-speaking training	42.5	5.3	37.2	***	0.000	0.79
Leadership-development training	49.6	8.3	41.3	***	0.000	0.85
Health services	35.0	9.0	26.1	***	0.000	0.58
Mental health services	25.1	4.8	20.3	***	0.000	0.51
Working with a case manager	44.8	13.0	31.8	***	0.000	0.66
Months participated	5.6	1.6	4.1	***	0.000	0.82
Sample size (total = 491)	330	161				

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to 12-month survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Effect size calculated as impact/sample standard deviation (Cohen's *d*). Effect sizes of 0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large.

[a] Includes college awareness or college guidance activities, college preparation or transition programs, or preparation for college entrance exams.

[b] Includes attending adult education classes, various certification courses, and college attendance.

[c] Includes activities such as help filling out an application, writing a résumé, or going for an interview.

[d] Includes help with a program application or interview.

[e] Includes activities such as parenting skills classes or learning how to balance a checkbook.

Table VI-4: 30-Month Impacts on Service Receipt

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Sig.	P-Value	Effect Size
Education-related services						
Ever participated (%)	85.7	75.3	10.3	**	0.013	0.27
High School equivalency preparation	46.5	45.6	0.8		0.861	0.02
Academic tutoring (not related to high school equivalency)	32.0	8.1	24.0	***	0.000	0.55
High school diploma prep courses	46.1	40.7	5.3		0.277	0.11
Standardized achievement test preparation	38.6	25.7	12.8	**	0.016	0.27
College-preparation activities[a]	56.2	19.8	36.4	***	0.000	0.73
Getting help finding financial aid	56.1	22.4	33.6	***	0.000	0.67
Other[b]	17.7	11.1	6.6		0.113	0.18
Months participated	7.4	4.0	3.4	***	0.000	0.56
Job or training-related services						
Ever participated (%)	87.1	58.7	28.4	***	0.000	0.71
Job-skills training program	56.3	34.5	21.8	***	0.000	0.43
On-the-job training in construction or another field	62.4	27.7	34.7	***	0.000	0.69
Job certification program	43.1	20.5	22.6	***	0.000	0.47
Job-search assistance[c]	68.5	44.1	24.4	***	0.000	0.50
Help applying to a vocational training program[d]	53.3	22.8	30.5	***	0.000	0.61
Months participated	7.2	3.1	4.1	***	0.000	0.64
Personal development services						
Ever participated (%)	80.0	42.3	37.7	***	0.000	0.82
Help or advice from a mentor	65.3	24.5	40.7	***	0.000	0.82
Life-skills training[e]	51.4	20.7	30.7	***	0.000	0.62
Communication or public-speaking training	49.5	11.5	38.1	***	0.000	0.77
Leadership-development training	54.7	15.2	39.5	***	0.000	0.79
Health services	42.3	16.0	26.3	***	0.000	0.55
Mental health services	30.8	11.6	19.3	***	0.000	0.44
Working with a case manager	47.9	22.7	25.2	***	0.000	0.51
Months participated	7.9	3.0	4.9	***	0.000	0.66
Sample size (total = 491)	316	145				

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the 30-month survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Effect size calculated as impact/sample standard deviation (Cohen's *d*). Effect sizes of 0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large.

[a] Includes college awareness or college guidance activities, college preparation or transition programs, or preparation for college entrance exams.

[b] Includes attending adult education classes, various certification courses, and college attendance.

[c] Includes activities such as help filling out an application, writing a résumé, or going for an interview.

[d] Includes help with a program application or interview.

[e] Includes activities such as parenting skills classes or learning how to balance a checkbook.

Table VI-5: Service Receipt: Comparison of YouthBuild PSE Sites to National YouthBuild Sample (12-month survey)

Outcome	PSE Sample	National Sample	Difference
Education-related services			
Ever participated (%)	78.5	75.0	3.5
High School equivalency preparation	43.0	55.6	-12.6
Academic tutoring (not related to high school equivalency)	25.7	18.1	7.6
High school diploma prep courses	37.6	25.5	12.1
Standardized achievement test preparation	32.9	25.0	7.9
College-preparation activities[a]	49.8	31.0	18.8
Getting help finding financial aid	46.0	30.9	15.1
Other[b]	12.0	11.0	1.0
Months participated	5.5	4.6	0.9
Job or training-related services			
Ever participated (%)	78.4	70.8	7.6
Job-skills training program	44.7	43.2	1.5
On-the-job training in construction or another field	58.1	54.6	3.5
Job certification program	32.1	31.1	1.0
Job-search assistance[c]	62.3	54.2	8.1
Help applying to a vocational training program[d]	45.8	35.1	10.7
Months participated	5.1	4.4	0.7
Personal development services			
Ever participated (%)	70.9	59.3	11.6
Help or advice from a mentor	58.4	38.5	19.9
Life-skills training[e]	44.2	33.2	11.0
Communication or public-speaking training	42.5	31.0	11.5
Leadership-development training	49.6	41.4	8.2
Health services	35.0	27.9	7.1
Mental health services	25.1	18.5	6.6
Working with a case manager	44.8	31.6	13.2
Months participated	5.6	4.0	1.6
Sample size	330	1,852	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on responses to the 12-month survey. National sample data are from the MDRC interim impact report (Miller and Millenky, 2016, Table 2.3, p.32).

NOTES:

[a] Includes college awareness or college guidance activities, college preparation or transition programs, or preparation for college entrance exams.

[b] Includes attending adult education classes, various certification courses, and college attendance.

[c] Includes activities such as help filling out an application, writing a résumé, or going for an interview.

[d] Includes help with a program application or interview.

[e] Includes activities such as parenting skills classes or learning how to balance a checkbook.

***Impacts on Education and Training*.** The differences in receipt of services between YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members were reflected in positive impacts for YouthBuild participants on a number of education and training-related outcomes. As Table VI-6 shows, at 30 months following enrollment in the study, YouthBuild PSE participants were more likely to attain a secondary credential (high school diploma or equivalency credential), to enroll in vocational training, and to enroll in postsecondary education than control group members.

- The most consistent impacts were on attainment of a secondary credential. YouthBuild PSE participants were nearly twice as likely to earn a diploma or equivalency credential as control group members (63.6% vs. 33.1%), with significant differences in attainment of both high school diplomas (38.7% vs. 21.5%) and high school equivalency credentials (24.9% vs. 11.6%). The effect sizes for those outcomes fell into the small to medium range. Interestingly, despite being more likely to attain a credential, YouthBuild PSE members were somewhat less likely to report having enrolled in a high school diploma or equivalency program (57.2% vs. 67.2%), though the difference was only marginally significant ($p>.10$). One interpretation might be that control group members were somewhat more likely to enroll in an educational program, but less likely to follow through to completion.
- PSE participants were also significantly more likely to enroll in vocational school than control group members (36.7% vs. 23.7%), including technical, business and/or trade schools. However, while PSE participants were slightly more likely to receive a license or training certificate (3.9% vs. 1.2%), the differences between PSE participants and control group members in acquiring a technical/trade credential were not significant.
- Finally, based on the 30-month survey data, YouthBuild PSE participants were significantly more likely to have enrolled in postsecondary courses and, in particular, to have attended a 2-year or community college: 25.5% of PSE participants enrolled in some form of postsecondary courses, compared to 15.3% of control group members. There was no significant difference in enrollment in 4-year colleges (3.3% vs. 1.2%), but YouthBuild PSE participants were significantly more likely than control group members to attend a 2-year or community college (24.0% vs. 15.0%).
- Given the relatively short follow-up (two and a half years after program entry), it is not surprising that the rate of degree attainment for both YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members was low: 1.4% of PSE participants and 1.2% of control group members reported having earned a degree. The difference was not significant.

Postsecondary education outcomes were also examined through analysis of data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The data are shown in the bottom half of Table VI-6. As noted earlier, the NSC collects enrollment data from an estimated 84% of public and private 2- and 4-year Title IV educational institutions, covering an estimated 97% of students enrolled in all Title IV postsecondary institutions.[90] NSC data can be used to confirm college enrollment, provide information on the types of institutions students attend, and report on eventual degree attainment.

[90] Title IV institutions are postsecondary institutions eligible to administer US federal student loans. See Afet Dundar and Doug Shapiro (May 2016). *The National Student Clearinghouse as an Integral Part of the National Postsecondary Data Infrastructure*. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Retrieved from: https://nscresearchcenter.org/workingwithourdata/.

Table VI-6: 30-Month Impacts on Education and Training

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Sig.	P-Value	Effect Size
Earned high school diploma or high school equivalent	63.6	33.1	30.6	***	0.000	0.61
High school diploma	38.7	21.5	17.2	***	0.000	0.36
High school equivalency credential	24.9	11.6	13.4	***	0.001	0.33
Ever enrolled in high school or high school equivalency classes	57.2	67.2	-10.0	*	0.054	0.20
Ever enrolled in vocational school[a]	36.7	23.7	13.0	**	0.011	0.27
Received trade license/training certificate[b]	3.9	2.1	1.8		0.427	0.10
Ever enrolled in postsecondary courses	25.5	15.3	10.2	**	0.029	0.24
4-year college or university	3.3	1.2	2.2		0.234	0.13
2-year or community college	24.0	15.0	9.0	**	0.050	0.22
Received postsecondary degree	1.4	1.2	0.1		0.915	0.01
Associate's degree	0.9	0.1	0.8		0.418	0.09
Bachelor's degree	0.0	0.0	0.0		--	--
Other degree	0.5	1.1	-0.6		0.432	-0.08
Outcomes from administrative data[c]						
Attended college since random assignment (%)						
Enrolled in a 4-year institution	4.5	4.3	0.3		0.880	0.01
Enrolled in a 2-year institution	19.9	10.3	9.5	***	0.004	0.25
Enrolled in a less than a 2-year institution	0.2	0.4	-0.2		0.692	-0.04
Public	19.4	8.9	10.4	***	0.001	0.28
Private	21.3	8.2	13.1	***	0.000	0.34
Full time	7.5	9.4	-1.9		0.436	-0.07
Part time	15.4	3.6	11.9	***	0.000	0.36
Received a degree (%)	2.1	1.6	0.4		0.717	0.03
Certificate	1.8	1.6	0.2		0.853	0.02
Associate's	0.2	0.0	0.2		0.518	0.06
Bachelor's	0.0	0.0	0.0		--	--
Master's	0.0	0.0	0.0		--	--
Sample size (total = 461)	316	145				

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on National Student Clearinghouse data and responses to the MDRC 30-month survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Effect size calculated as impact/sample standard deviation (Cohen's *d*). Effect sizes of 0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large.

[a] This includes technical, business, and trade schools as well.

[b] This includes technical, business, or trade certificate as well.

[c] Sample sizes for outcomes from administrative data for the program group and control group are 489 and 182 respectively.

The NSC data show a pattern of impacts similar to that in the 30-month survey data. YouthBuild PSE participants were nearly twice as likely to attend 2-year/community colleges as control group members (19.9% vs. 10.3%). Enrollment rates at 4-year colleges were similar, with no statistically significant differences. YouthBuild PSE participants were also significantly more likely to attend postsecondary education when the results are broken out by type of institution: PSE participants were more than twice as likely to attend public institutions as control group members (19.4% vs. 8.9%) and nearly three times more likely to attend private institutions (21.3% vs. 8.2%). Finally, PSE participants were slightly (but not significantly) less likely to attend school full-time than control-group members (7.5% vs. 9.4%) and significantly more likely to attend part-time (15.4% vs. 3.6%). As was the case with the survey data, the NSC data on degree receipt show only a small percentage of study participants had attained a postsecondary degree at 30 months, with no significant differences between PSE participants and control group members.

In large part, the impacts found in the PSE sample are consistent with those in the larger national sample of YouthBuild sites. In both samples, YouthBuild programs showed positive impacts on YouthBuild's key goal of attaining a secondary-level credential (diploma or equivalency credential), and in both samples YouthBuild participants were also significantly more likely to continue on into vocational training and enrollment in postsecondary education. [91]

***Impacts on Employment and Earnings Outcomes*.** While the YouthBuild PSE sites demonstrated significant impacts on education and training outcomes at 30 months, this was not the case for impacts on employment and earnings. Table VI-7 shows the results for key employment and earnings outcomes, based on 30-month survey responses (top section of the table) and administrative data from the National Directory of New Hires (bottom section of the table). As the Table shows, based on the 30-month survey data, YouthBuild participants and control group members were (roughly) equally likely to have been employed at some point since random assignment, to be currently employed, to work full-time, and to earn $10 or more per hour. There were no significant differences in average weekly earnings. The one significant difference (though only at the p>0.10 level) was in the degree of employment in the food service and lodging fields, with control group members significantly more likely to work in those industries. Administrative data presented similar results: YouthBuild participants and control group members showed no significant differences in employment or earnings through the first 10 quarters following enrollment.

These results largely parallel those for the national sample at 30 months, which showed only scattered impacts on employment and earnings. As the MDRC report notes, however, the follow-up period for the study was 2012 through mid-2015 when post-recession youth unemployment rates were still very high and earning opportunities for young people were generally limited. [92] Moreover, for the PSE sites in particular, those YouthBuild participants still in college may have forgone regular employment or better earning opportunities in order to find jobs that would accommodate their college schedules. In that regard, the longer-term employment and earnings results still to come in the national study may be more meaningful.

[91] Miller and Millenky (2016), 37-42, Table 3.1.

[92] Miller and Millenky (2016) 7-9, 42. The national study findings on employment and earnings are presented on pages 42-44 and Table 3.2.

Table VI-7: 30-Month Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Sig.	P-Value	Effect Size
Ever employed since random assignment (%)	79.9	79.2	0.6		0.892	0.02
Currently employed (%)	44.3	45.9	-1.6		0.775	-0.03
Works full time (35+ hours/week)	24.4	28.7	-4.3		0.381	-0.10
Self-employed	12.9	10.7	2.2		0.557	0.07
Works through a temp agency	5.9	9.5	-3.6		0.200	-0.14
Earning $10/hour or more	19.0	17.3	1.8		0.687	0.05
Average weekly earnings ($)	157.7	151.4	6.3		0.807	0.03
Current job industry (%) Construction	5.4	3.1	2.3		0.320	0.11
Retail trade	8.1	5.3	2.8		0.351	0.11
Admin / support / waste mgmt. / remediation	4.2	6.9	-2.6		0.288	-0.12
Health care and social assistance	7.7	6.6	1.1		0.705	0.04
Accommodation and food service	7.3	13.0	-5.7	*	0.073	-0.20
Other	10.9	10.7	0.2		0.952	0.01
Outcomes from administrative data[a]						
Ever Employed (%)						
Employed in Year 1	44.5	44.3	0.2		0.955	0.00
Employed in Year 2	58.8	61.5	-2.7		0.526	-0.05
Employed in Quarter 10	47.8	48.7	-0.8		0.846	-0.02
Total earnings ($)						
Earnings in Year 1	1817.1	2167.5	-350.5		0.154	-0.06
Earnings in Year 2	3639.4	4173.6	-534.2		0.282	-0.06
Earnings in Quarter 10	1424.2	1493.9	-69.7		0.750	-0.02
Sample size (total = 461)	316	145				

SOURCES: Data from the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and responses to the MDRC 30-month survey.
NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Effect size calculated as impact/sample standard deviation (Cohen's *d*). Effect sizes of 0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large.
[a] Sample sizes for outcomes from administrative data for the program group and control group are 489 and 181 respectively.

Impacts on Youth Development Outcomes. One of YouthBuild's key goals nationally is to promote youth leadership and civic engagement. As noted throughout this report, most YouthBuild programs, including the PSE sites, incorporate leadership development and community service into activities such as the programs' housing rehabilitation efforts, youth leadership councils, and regular community service days.

The emphasis of the YouthBuild PSE sites on civic engagement is reflected in the 30-month survey data. As Table VI-8 shows, PSE participants were significantly more likely than control group members to be engaged in one or more civic activities since random assignment (94.6% vs. 88.9%). The key difference was volunteering: YouthBuild PSE participants were more than twice as likely as control group members to have volunteered in the 30 months since random assignment (65.3% vs. 31.9%). On the other hand, the differences in political engagement were relatively small and non-significant: YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members reported that they were registered to vote, had voted, and were involved in politics or local community activities at similar rates. [93]

The MDRC study also collected data on other youth development measures, including attitudes towards the future, signs of major depression, measures of overall health, and assessments of social supports, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. None of the differences between YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members on these measures was statistically significant. While all these measures reflect YouthBuild's commitment to healthy youth development, none were explicitly defined outcomes for the PSE initiative, and all are subject to a much broader range of influences than a single youth development program. As the MDRC report notes in assessing these results, "research suggests that it is difficult to create lasting changes in many of these attitudinal measures." [94]

***Impacts on Other Outcomes*.** The MDRC study also collected data on an array of outcomes related to living arrangements, family formation, delinquency, and involvement in risky behavior. As noted earlier, while these are not outcomes of primary interest for the YouthBuild PSE initiative, they do reflect participants' broader transition to adulthood beyond the more targeted educational outcomes for the PSE initiative. Overall, as Tables VI-9 and VI-10 show, there were almost no significant differences in these outcomes between YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members. PSE participants are more likely to be living in their own home (as opposed to living with parents, etc.), but the difference is only significant at the $p>0.10$ level. None of the other measures concerning living arrangements – homelessness, marital status, receipt of government benefits, or parental status – show any significant differences between the groups.

Similarly, there are no significant differences between YouthBuild PSE participants' and control group members' reported involvement in delinquent or risky behavior. While YouthBuild PSE participants are slightly more likely to report that they had been arrested and charged, the differences are not statistically significant. Similarly, none of the differences in drug or alcohol use are statistically significant.

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[93] The national sample results were similar, with positive, significant impacts for YouthBuild participants on civic engagement and volunteering. YouthBuild participants in the national sample were also significantly more likely to be involved in politics or local community activities than control group members. Control group members in the national sample, however, were significantly more willing to wait for bigger financial rewards, one of the measures of attitudes towards the future. See Miller and Millenky (2016), 46 (Table 3.3) for national results.

[94] Miller and Millenky (2016), 47.

Table VI-8: 30-Month Impacts on Youth Development Outcomes

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Sig.	P-Value	Effect Size
Civic engagement since random assignment (%)	94.6	88.9	5.7	**	0.029	0.23
Volunteered	65.3	31.9	33.4	***	0.000	0.67
Registered to vote[a]	88.6	83.8	4.8		0.180	0.14
Voted	58.3	56.8	1.5		0.758	0.03
Involved in politics or local community activities	19.4	12.6	6.9		0.119	0.18
Currently happy (%)	79.3	83.6	-4.3		0.344	-0.11
What the future holds (%)						
Willingness to wait for bigger financial rewards[b]	34.8	39.5	-4.7		0.398	-0.10
Will probably attend college[c]	78.3	69.7	8.7			0.20
Expects to live at least 70 years	82.9	77.1	5.7		0.231	0.15
Exhibits signs of major depression[d]	16.7	15.2	1.4		0.736	0.04
Overall health	81.7	80.4	1.3		0.767	0.03
Believes most people can be trusted (%)	23.8	21.1	2.7		0.568	0.06
Social support scale[e]	3.1	3.1	0.0		0.739	0.04
Self-esteem scale[f]	3.2	3.3	-0.1		0.388	-0.10
Self-efficacy scale[g]	3.0	3.0	0.0		0.663	0.05
Sample size (total = 461)	316	145				

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on responses to the 30-month survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Effect size calculated as impact/sample standard deviation (Cohen's *d*). Effect sizes of 0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large.

[a] Currently registered to vote at the time of the survey administration.

[b] Determined from question "would you rather get $80 tomorrow or get $100 three months from now?"

[c] Among those how have not attended and are not currently attending college. This is a non-experimental measure, therefore significance level and P-value are not included.

[d] The PHQ-9 is a 9-item scale used to diagnose depression in clinical settings. Response categories range from 0 = "not at all" to 3 = "nearly every day." Higher scores indicate more frequent occurrence of depression symptoms. If the item score sum is greater than or equal to 10, the respondent is considered to exhibit signs of major depression."

[e] 6-item scale about the presence of social support. Response categories range from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 4 = "strongly agree," where higher scores indicate stronger social support. The six items are averaged.

[f] The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale assesses feelings of self-esteem. Response categories range from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 4 = "strongly agree." Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem. The 10 items are averaged.

[g] 6-item scale that assesses respondents' self-efficacy. Response categories range from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 4 = "strongly agree." Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-efficacy. The six items are averaged.

Table VI-9: 30-Month Impacts on Living Arrangements and Household Information

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Sig.	P-Value	Effect Size
Current living arrangement						
Parent's home	52.8	54.5	-1.7		0.754	-0.03
Another person's home[a]	14.9	21.2	-6.3		0.133	-0.17
One's own place	27.6	19.4	8.2	*	0.082	0.19
Incarceration facility	1.3	-0.2	1.5		0.175	0.15
Other arrangement[b]	3.4	5.1	-1.7		0.445	-0.09
Ever homeless since random assignment	21.3	23.9	-2.6		0.569	-0.06
Married or living with spouse/partner	23.6	22.8	0.9		0.850	0.02
Receiving government benefits	62.3	56.0	6.3		0.239	0.13
Has children[c]	50.0	48.7	1.3		0.771	0.03
Young parent[d]	1.7	0.4	1.3		0.295	0.11
Lives with all or some of their children	39.7	38.8	0.9		0.842	0.02
Has non-custodial children	12.8	13.1	-0.3		0.933	-0.01
Paid child support in last 30 days	2.9	2.6	0.3		0.866	0.02
Sample size (total = 461)	316	145				

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on responses to the 30-month survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Effect size calculated as impact/sample standard deviation (Cohen's *d*). Effect sizes of 0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large.

[a]Includes living with family other than parents.

[b]Includes a group home or halfway house, a long-term homeless shelter, an emergency housing shelter (including for domestic violence), living on the street, situations such as college or a residential training program, or another situation.

[c]Includes a person's biological, adopted, foster or stepchildren, plus any other children he or she is responsible for.

[d]"Young parent" is defined here as a person under the age of 20 who is pregnant or who has a child.

Table VI-10: 30-Month Impacts on Delinquency and Risky Behavior

Outcome (%)	Program Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	Sig.	P-Value	Effect Size
Ever arrested	21.6	16.8	4.9		0.278	0.12
Ever charged	18.5	16.4	2.1		0.621	0.06
Ever convicted or found delinquent[a]	9.8	7.4	2.4		0.467	0.08
Drug offense	3.9	3.0	0.9		0.672	0.05
Driving under the influence	0.4	-0.2	0.6		0.273	0.13
Failure to pay child support	0.0	0.0	0.0		--	--
Property offense[b]	1.8	4.5	-2.7		0.143	-0.17
Violent offense[c]	1.5	0.1	1.4		0.230	0.14
Other	2.0	0.0	2.0		0.154	0.17
Ever locked up due to a sentence	4.5	3.8	0.8		0.747	0.04
Involved in a gang fight in past 12 months	5.0	2.6	2.3		0.315	0.12
Substance abuse						
Has 5+ drinks once or more in typical week	27.9	22.7	5.3		0.298	0.12
Used marijuana since random assignment	47.3	48.4	-1.1		0.845	-0.02
Used another drug since random assignment	10.4	8.7	1.7		0.623	0.06
Drove a car while drinking or doing drugs in last 30 days	4.2	3.7	0.5		0.829	0.02
Sample size (total = 461)	316	145				

SOURCES: MDRC calculations from responses to the 30-month survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1%; ** = 5%; * = 10%. Effect size calculated as impact/sample standard deviation (Cohen's *d*). Effect sizes of 0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large. All outcomes reflect activity since random assignment unless otherwise noted.

[a]In the juvenile justice system, the term "adjudicated delinquent" is used rather than "convicted."

[b]Property offenses include shoplifting, burglary, larceny, theft, auto theft, writing bad checks, fraud, forgery, arson, vandalism, and possession of stolen goods.

[c]Violent offenses include physical or sexual assault, rape, robbery, manslaughter, attempted murder, and murder.

Summary of Findings

The data for the YouthBuild PSE sites drawn from the national YouthBuild impact study provide solid evidence for a number of positive short-term impacts for the YouthBuild PSE programs. Based on both 12- and 30-month survey data, YouthBuild PSE participants are significantly more likely to have participated in a broad array of educational, job training-related, and personal development services than control group members. While both groups were equally likely to have participated in preparation for a high school diploma or an equivalency credential, YouthBuild PSE participants were substantially more likely to have received support services such as tutoring, test preparation, college preparation activities, and financial aid assistance; personal development services such as mentoring, life skills training, leadership, and communications training; and health, mental health, and case management services. Overall, YouthBuild participants were more likely to have participated in educational programming and to have done so over a longer period of time than the control group members. YouthBuild PSE participants were also significantly more likely to have participated in some form of occupational training, to have participated in multiple types of training, and to have participated in training for (on average) five times longer than control group members. In sum, participation in the YouthBuild PSE programs, as was the case for the larger group of YouthBuild programs in the national study, provided participating youth with access to a much broader, more comprehensive set of services than were available to comparably situated youth left to access those services on their own.

The differences in service receipt were reflected in positive impacts for YouthBuild PSE participants in the core educational outcomes targeted by the PSE initiative. YouthBuild PSE participants were significantly more likely than control group members to earn a high school diploma or equivalency credential; more likely to enroll in additional vocational education; and significantly more likely to go on to postsecondary education. In that regard, the data confirm achievement of the PSE initiative's primary goal: the creation of new pathways to postsecondary education for young people who had failed to succeed in the traditional education system.

The impacts on outcomes other than key education measures are more limited. There were no differences between YouthBuild PSE participants and control group members in terms of short-term employment and earnings outcomes. While a substantial body of research points to the economic benefits of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education, it may be that those benefits take some time to occur, particularly in the post-recession economy in place at the time of the national study. YouthBuild PSE participants did show strong, positive impacts on measures of civic engagement and voluntarism, reflecting the YouthBuild program's emphasis on youth leadership and community engagement. However, there were no significant impacts on other measures of youth development, family structure and living situation, or involvement in delinquent or risky behaviors. It seems likely that these outcomes are subject to a much broader range of influences, and while YouthBuild works to improve its participants' overall resilience, the program does not target these issues as primary goals.

In the end, the data from the national study provide a strong level of evidence for the impact of YouthBuild's PSE programs on service receipt and short-term educational outcomes, including postsecondary enrollment. The final results from the national MDRC study, which will include data from the 48-month follow-up, should inform our understanding of YouthBuild's longer-term impacts.

Chapter VII
IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT OF THE YOUTHBUILD PSE INITIATIVE: SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS

The goal of the five-year YouthBuild PSE Initiative was to strengthen pathways to and through higher education for low income, out-of-school youth, whose disproportionately low rates of participation and success in postsecondary education and training affect their ability to achieve economic self-sufficiency. YouthBuild PSE sites were expected to form working partnerships with community colleges and implement key elements of the PSE "model" (enriched academic preparation, college bridge programs, and postsecondary support) to help their low-income, out-of-school youth participants move to and through postsecondary education and training. Through site visits, interviews with partners, staff, and participants, analysis of YouthBuild reporting system data, and active participation in twice-yearly cross-site convenings, Center staff documented the implementation of the PSE approach. The implementation evaluation covers five years (2011 through 2016) of data and program activities.

In order to assess participant impacts in the PSE sites, the implementation evaluation team examined a subset of data collected for a larger, national participant impact study of YouthBuild programs led by MDRC. That study used a random assignment design to assess the impacts of YouthBuild programs in 70 sites nationally. The subset used in this study included data from 12 sites that were part of YouthBuild's two PSE initiatives (seven from the current SIF-funded initiative and five from the earlier Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded initiative).

The seven research questions for the implementation evaluation were:

1. Who are the YouthBuild PSE participants?
2. How is the PSE model being implemented across the YouthBuild SIF sites?
3. What are the key characteristics of the YouthBuild/Postsecondary partnerships?
4. What can we learn about "what works" in terms of designing and implementing programs to effectively prepare YouthBuild participants for postsecondary success?
5. What can we learn about the impact of the PSE program on participants' attitudes and goals?
6. What role has YouthBuild USA played in supporting the implementation of the PSE approach?
7. What can we learn about the sustainability of the PSE approach?

Chapters II-VI answered the first five questions, discussing the characteristics of program participants, the YouthBuild PSE programs, and their postsecondary partners; the strategies used and services offered; challenges sites faced as they implemented the PSE "model"; and participant outcomes. They integrated relevant findings from the national MDRC participant impact study and discussed both the challenges sites faced and the lessons they learned that can help YouthBuild USA strengthen and expand the model throughout its network.

Responses to the two remaining research questions – YouthBuild USA's support role and sites' sustainability efforts – have not been explicitly addressed so far, though are woven throughout the

report to some extent. This final chapter first pulls together and expands on the responses about YouthBuild USA's role and PSE sustainability and then summarizes key findings and lessons learned.

YouthBuild USA Role

At the initiative level, YouthBuild USA contributed to the sites' continuous improvement through a substantial program of technical assistance and support. In addition to the initial framing of the PSE approach and selection of the sites, YouthBuild USA assigned experienced program "coaches" to each site; convened twice-yearly, two-day cross-site meetings; provided access to relevant other meetings, training opportunities, and written materials; and invested in developing new program resources. The YouthBuild USA PSE staff also provided consultation and support through frequent site visits and phone conversations.

Sites were generally positive about YouthBuild USA's professional development efforts. The PSE site staff interviewees clearly saw the YouthBuild USA support strategies as strong contributions to ongoing program improvement. In particular, they described the cross-site meetings as valuable opportunities for peer learning and regularly reported implementing new ideas from other sites. They also commended YouthBuild USA's work in actively bringing new resources to the initiative, including partnerships with national organizations to address financial management curriculum and college financial aid advising and the development of new tools, including Mental Toughness 2 (see Chapter III), a model summer bridge program.

Site coaches – who were consultants with experience in secondary and postsecondary education, as well as in YouthBuild – were expected to telephone their assigned sites regularly and visit several times a year. Calls included problem-solving and reflection; visits might involve staff development, observing classrooms or worksites, or facilitating meetings with college partners. Interviewees presented a slightly more mixed picture of the role and value of the PSE coaches. While most said that the coaches' assistance had been valuable, several said that the coach initially assigned to them had not been a good match and/or did not have the expertise to help the site address its greatest needs; one or two coaches had not been in touch as often as the site expected and wanted. However, these slightly less satisfied interviewees said that YouthBuild USA had responded quickly to their concerns (for example, by changing the coaching assignments).

Each cross-site meeting included visiting the host YouthBuild program to see first-hand how it had enriched its academics, created college transition strategies, and provided postsecondary support. Meetings included workshops and small group discussions as well. Sites were encouraged to bring teams of YouthBuild staff and college partner representatives so that they could return home with shared understandings and ideas. YouthBuild staff interviewees unanimously described the meetings as valuable, with many noting that they had "stolen" program ideas from other sites after a meeting. One said, "The conferences have been good for sharing information and what has been successful. Last conference we got a host of ideas that we would like to implement here." Another said, "The cross-site meetings have been a key way that we have learned in this initiative." Interviewees also mentioned the benefits of team participation. One commented, "It's brilliant to have the college partner at these meetings. It creates a real opportunity to build relationships and get buy-in to YouthBuild and what we are doing." College representatives said that participating helped them understand YouthBuild and the initiative's goals.

Staff interviewees also consistently said that YouthBuild USA PSE staff helped the sites to solve problems and find useful connections and resources. One said, "[Senior YouthBuild USA staff] are frequently in touch. Their input and insight about what we have done and what we can improve on have been good." Another commented, "[Senior YouthBuild USA staff] have been responsive, helpful, and intelligent. … I love working with them. They've pushed in good ways."

The implementation evaluation team interviews with coaches (April 23, 2013) – along with informal discussions with them at cross-site meetings – yielded relevant insights about YouthBuild PSE implementation. Most coaches said that sites needed to increase the rigor of their education programs; however, they also questioned the sites' ability to help participants move from very low literacy and numeracy levels to college preparedness in a year or two, no matter how academically rigorous the education program was. Some coaches also said that some sites emphasized confidence-building at the expense of academic and navigation skill-building. These interviews and conversations led the implementation evaluation team to refine site visit interview questions to include more attention to academics and the finer points of college preparedness.

Overall, leaders at the PSE sites agreed that YouthBuild USA's support was critical to the effective implementation of the PSE approach at the local level. As one YouthBuild program director noted, "We could have figured it out on our own, but it wouldn't have gone as smoothly. It was good to have the support, experience and tools." The introduction of postsecondary as a key goal, the framing of the PSE approach through use of the "Back on Track" model, and the practical support offered throughout all five years were seen difference-makers for sites moving from ad hoc interest in postsecondary to an integrated PSE culture. As another YouthBuild Director observed, "It would have happened eventually, but YouthBuild really accelerated the effort, pushed the focus, and helped make it happen." Another simply stated, "Without PSE and its support, no one would have done this." Together, these comments suggest that YouthBuild USA played a vital intermediary role helping the PSE sites integrate the elements of the PSE approach.

Sustainability

Throughout the initiative, the PSE sites funded their activities through a variety of sources: the SIF grants, particularly during the first three years, provided support for PSE staff, payments to postsecondary partners to cover faculty and/or tuition costs for dual enrollment courses; travel expenses for college visits; new curriculum materials and professional development; food and other costs for student and alumni gatherings. The SIF funds were supplemented YouthBuild DOL grants (where applicable); education funding/tuition for those sites operating charter schools and other diploma-granting programs; other federal grants (for example, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP) grants) and other locally-generated funding sources. Some sites also increased the number of their AmeriCorps staff and assigned the new staff to assist with postsecondary preparation and support.

As the size of the SIF grants dropped during the final two years of the initiative, PSE sites were generally unable to secure new funding for PSE activities and, as a result, were forced to reduce specialized PSE staff and eliminate at least some of the PSE grant-supported activities noted above. Most sites said that curtailing these previously funded activities would decrease their effectiveness to at least some extent – especially the loss of a designated, full-time transition coordinator as numbers of alumni increase.

However, all of the interviewees at the study sites believed that PSE had become integral to their identity and that the basic PSE strategies were there to stay. Even sites that had lost not only DOL funding but also financial and other supports from their primary postsecondary partner (when those partners had their own financial challenges) were continuing PSE efforts. Most YouthBuild directors and staff reported in their interviews that their sites had integrated postsecondary "into their DNA" and that the program emphasis on postsecondary education and many of the associated services were likely to continue as core elements in the eleven YouthBuild PSE sites remaining at the end of the initiative. During the final year of the initiative, even as many sites were coping with continued funding challenges, all continued to pursue strategies for supporting the enriched academic learning, transitional services, and postsecondary support central to the PSE effort. In some cases, postsecondary partners began to pick up the costs of some services. Some sites, especially charter-school-based programs, integrated academic supports and college preparation activities into school staffing and mainstream courses (such as senior seminars and capstone projects). Many sites integrated PSE and career planning activities – a move that streamlined these activities and also helped participants to think more comprehensively about "life after YouthBuild." In addition, many sites widened their array of connections at their partner community college and/or added more partner colleges, which helped them to weather inevitable college staffing and policy changes. Many also added new postsecondary training partners – local agencies, organizations, and businesses that had internships and/or training to offer YouthBuild PSE graduates. In short, all of the PSE sites believed that the PSE efforts had become integral to their identities and while specific, more costly elements might be lost, the basic PSE approach represented strategies that were here to stay.

Sites that were able – before the SIF funding ran out – to diversify their funding base, create relationships that supported ongoing program development (for example, with faculty at the partner colleges), broaden the network of relationships at the college partners, and develop partnerships with new colleges and other partners that could offer training and internships appeared most poised at the end of the initiative to continue focused PSE efforts over the long term. None of the sites, however, believed that they would reduce their recently acquired emphasis on postsecondary education as a program goal. In that regard, the SIF investment in integrating postsecondary education into YouthBuild's core program design appears likely to have a long-term impact.

The other aspect of the sustainability research question concerned how PSE participants were paying for college and how sites and colleges were helping to make college more affordable. One answer is that most alumni who enrolled in college were attending community colleges, which are more affordable than four-year colleges. In addition, the two main sources of financial aid available to most YouthBuild students were AmeriCorps Education awards, earned through completing a set number of community service hours, and federal Pell grants, available to very low-income students. While both seemed likely to continue to be available, they do not cover the full cost of attending college (tuition, books and supplies, and living expenses). Some students took out student loans, but a substantial number of them (and their families) were worried about indebtedness. Many PSE sites provided financial literacy training and support, which helped students make their money go farther, gave them information about student loans, and educated them about potential financial pitfalls. Both PSE sites and the postsecondary institutions worked to link students to supports such as subsidized housing, childcare, or transportation that could help them limit college costs. But the implementation study team found few examples of creative approaches to enhance PSE graduates' financial situations. Thus, most YouthBuild

PSE alumni who were enrolled in college – especially those who had children – also had to work at least part-time, adding to the complex challenge of achieving postsecondary success.

At the same time, it is important to note that both the implementation study and a recently completed doctoral study (Dohrn, 2017) found that college students needed more than money to be successful.[95] YouthBuild PSE staff, postsecondary staff, faculty, and administrators, and alumni themselves frequently said that academic and other supports were as important as financial aid in helping students to succeed in college.

Summary: Key Findings and Lessons Learned

YouthBuild participants faced a host of personal, academic, economic, and social barriers to educational success, and often enrolled in YouthBuild carrying a history of failure, rejection, and trauma. The PSE programs' task was to provide the sustained and individualized supports that these diverse students needed to build academic, personal, social, and navigational skills; increase goals and expectations; and improve their ability to meet the myriad challenges of making it to and through postsecondary education. Against the odds, the PSE programs largely accomplished their goals. This section recaps the study findings (discussed in detail in Chapter I) and presents some key lessons learned arising from the study.

***All YouthBuild PSE sites successfully put the major elements of the PSE approach – enriching academic programs, building postsecondary transition processes, and establishing postsecondary partnerships and supports – into place*.** While increasing their emphasis on PSE access and success, the sites continued to serve YouthBuild's target population – low-income, out-of-school young people who faced major barriers to success. The sites implemented the PSE approach in tremendously diverse ways, reflecting the participants' diversity, the sites' diversity, and the sites' participant-centered approach, which includes individualized (and therefore diverse) strategies. Thus, although sites shared a common framework and core principles, there was no "typical" YouthBuild PSE site and no single, static YouthBuild PSE "model." Almost all sites refined their PSE approach over time: thus, the PSE "model" evolved throughout the initiative. Each site brought its own history, circumstances, and strategies to the PSE implementation effort and made ongoing adjustments in response to challenges, new opportunities, experience, and lessons learned, given students' needs and resources. As such, the sites present an evolving picture of the widely varying ways in which YouthBuild programs can integrate postsecondary pathways into their operations as they respond to challenges and lessons learned.

In fact, one of the most striking features of PSE implementation was the local programs' fine-tuning and continuous improvement. In particular, over the course of the five-year initiative, most sites better integrated college-ready academic skills into their curriculum, strengthened counseling, provided more hands-on college transition experiences, expanded occupational and career preparation options, and established stronger relationships with the postsecondary institutions.

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[95] For recent pertinent reports, see Kelchen, R. (2017). A look at Pell Grant recipients' graduation rates. Brown Center Chalkboard. Washington DC: Brookings Institution. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/10/25/a-look-at-pell-grant-recipients-graduation-rates; and Powell, F. (2017). Colleges offer campus programs for low-income students. *U.S. News and World Repor*t, December 11, 2017. Retrieved from https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/2017-12-11/colleges-offer-programs-to-assist-low-income-students.

Sites struggled at times to adapt to continuing internal and external challenges that affected students' ability to move to and through postsecondary education. Most programs had (and still have) to regularly adjust to a constantly shifting environment of funding changes; new educational requirements; staff, administration, and policy changes at the college partner; their own staff turnover; and their participants' changing characteristics and needs. Programs struggled to help students with low literacy and numeracy levels gain college-ready academic skills in the time available, while also providing them with the resources and tools to find housing, reliable transportation, childcare, and other essential supports. Further, as the number of PSE graduates increased, so did the challenges of providing a growing number of students with the supports they needed in postsecondary.

Despite the challenges, post-program survey respondents reported strong, significant gains from program entry to completion in educational goals and aspirations; confidence in their academic capabilities; prosocial values; readiness to be a family and community leader; understanding of college expectations and readiness to navigate postsecondary education and training; and sense of themselves as part of a community. In interviews and focus groups, participants called postsecondary education and/or training an important part of their life agenda now and described serious planning for "life after YouthBuild." Even those not immediately planning to enroll in college said they expected to do so eventually. The shift from an educational goal of an HSE credential or diploma to college or even graduate school is particularly striking. The fact that an increased sense of educational competence, of personal empowerment, and of what college involves accompanied this shift suggests a real change in respondents' attitudes and understanding.

Findings from both the implementation study and the MDRC data confirmed participants' high rates of success in attaining a secondary credential. The implementation study showed that, despite differences in success rates among different participant categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, literacy and numeracy levels, and homelessness), the large majority of students across all categories completed the program and acquired a secondary level credential.[96] The MDRC data showed that YouthBuild participants attained secondary credentials at significantly higher rates than control group members.

Similarly, both sets of findings confirmed that, although YouthBuild PSE graduates' college-going rates averaged around 50% (below YouthBuild's original goal of 50% of all enrollees) participation in YouthBuild PSE programs had a positive impact on postsecondary enrollment. Moreover, on average, YouthBuild students, who face extraordinary barriers to educational success, went on to college at a rate comparable to that of other educationally disadvantaged students nationally, entered postsecondary with skills comparable to those of community college students generally, and performed comparably to community college students nationally in terms of testing out of non-credit remedial classes, accumulating credits, and persisting in school past the first year.

Based on MDRC study data, PSE participants were significantly more likely than control group members to participate in education, occupational training, PSE-related services, and personal development services, and often to participate for substantially longer. These differences in service receipt highlight

[96] It is worth noting that YouthBuild PSE completers with a diploma were more likely to enroll in postsecondary than those with an HSE credential. Many participants may have been unwilling or unable to enroll in the generally longer-duration programs leading to a diploma, due to the need to support a family or the desire to move on quickly after having been out of school for several years.

the "value added" of the PSE approach and are reflected in the positive impacts for YouthBuild PSE participants discussed above.

YouthBuild PSE participants also showed strong, positive impacts on civic engagement and voluntarism compared to control group members in the MDRC study, reflecting YouthBuild's emphasis on leadership and community engagement. There were no significant differences between PSE participants and control group members on other youth development measures, family structure and living situation, involvement in delinquent or risky behaviors, or short-term employment and earnings outcomes; however, it is important to note that these were not explicit goals of the PSE initiative. (The final MDRC report should inform our understanding of longer-term impacts.)

The national participant impact study data provide "strong level" evidence that YouthBuild PSE has had a positive impact on receipt of critical education, employment, and youth development services, and a positive impact on short-term educational outcomes, including postsecondary enrollment. These are significant accomplishments given the challenges most YouthBuild graduates faced. Along with the YouthBuild reporting system data, they point to the effectiveness of the PSE approach and confirm achievement of the PSE initiative's goal of creating new pathways to postsecondary education for young people who had previously failed to succeed in the traditional education system.

Several elements emerged from the implementation study as critical to effective PSE programs:

- Establishing a strong college-going culture within the program. This involves, among other things, infusing PSE as an idea and a reality into the program, starting at intake.
- Breaking the college and career pathway into clear, manageable steps so students can see how to move from "here" to "there." Many alumni said that they were able to enroll and persist in college because they "knew what to do next."
- Helping students to develop postsecondary navigation skills. In addition to step-by-step information, students need to know what to do when something goes wrong. In alumni survey responses and interviews, the absence of any mention of postsecondary staff as key student supports suggests that more work is needed to connect those alumni to their new educational institution. Similarly, in Dohrn (2017), few alumni interviewees used campus services or developed other networks and connections at community college. YouthBuild and college staff attributed at least some of this to insufficient attention to navigation skills during the YouthBuild PSE programs.
- Making the postsecondary experience real. The more postsecondary experiences students have while in YouthBuild (e.g., campus visits, classes, workshops, test preparation, meetings with staff, alumni presentations), the more confident and prepared they will be.
- Broadening the college partnership beyond the initial contacts and creating a network of relationships. Some sites focused on higher-level administrative contacts; others on staff who were associated with programs for lower-income, first-generation students and were able to open doors throughout the institution; still others on connections with faculty. Most sites, however, found that more contacts across more divisions helped the partnership to thrive. Many noted that partnerships take time and persistence: programs need to find the right entry point(s), develop relationships, and keep expanding the relationships.

- Developing connections to training programs beyond the college partner. For some students, certificate or apprenticeship programs may be the first step toward college; for others, they may be the key to a family-sustaining career even without college.
- Investing in staff and staff development. New strategies require new knowledge and skills. Academic instructors need to incorporate teaching of college-ready skills; counselors and career instructors need to understand the postsecondary process; occupational training staff need to learn how to promote postsecondary pathways.
- Supporting the centrality of relationships. The study underscored the centrality of relationships between students and YouthBuild staff; between staff and community college (and other) partners; among students; and between students and college staff. A caring, attentive YouthBuild staff (offering high levels of support while having high expectations for students) stood at the center of the YouthBuild PSE experience.
- Enhancing organizational capacity to learn from experience, adapt to a constantly changing set of circumstances and challenges, and adjust to each cohort's needs and strengths. Every year is different. As discussed earlier, YouthBuild's PSE approach is not a tightly-specified "model," but needs to be flexibly adapted to local settings and resources to be relatively more effective and sustainable.
- Taking care of basics. Helping students to get help with resources such as food, housing, child care, transportation, and health and mental health services supports both attainment of the secondary credential and PSE persistence.
- Appreciating that the participants are a unique resource for YouthBuild PSE programs. They bring survival skills, creativity, and often surprising resilience. Once they recognize their possible futures, they bring tremendous energy and commitment to the effort to achieve their goals.

At the same time, the overall results reflect both the need to continue looking for ways to support YouthBuild participants and areas where YouthBuild PSE efforts might refine their focus. When asked how YouthBuild PSE could improve, students, alumni, and staff suggested more time in YouthBuild; more college tours and other exposure to college; more support, especially from YouthBuild staff and family, as they moved into jobs and postsecondary education; strengthening instruction and providing more practice with homework; building both college knowledge and the practical skills needed to manage college, work, and family, including more training in life skills and time management; and engaging more family members in the PSE process.

Overall, the findings are a reminder of how personal and individual the business of postsecondary education preparation and success is for low-income, out-of-school youth and the degree to which relationships as well as quality programming need to be part of the solution. The findings point to the need for individualized and comprehensive financial, academic, and social supports at all stages (before college, during the transition to college, and during college); the positive influence of caring, knowledgeable staff who provide these supports and help the young people break the pathway into clear, manageable steps; and the importance of both flexibility and learning from experience. The PSE structure and approach set the context, but the people gave it life.

At the end of the initiative, the YouthBuild PSE sites were continuing to emphasize this individual approach within the same PSE structure and approach, even though they had fewer designated PSE resources. At the very least, it seems clear that the SIF investment yielded very good returns. The funds enabled the PSE sites to experiment, take risks, make continuous improvements, and integrate the PSE approach into their programming. Other YouthBuild programs, and other programs serving similar populations of young people, can learn from their experience as they build additional pathways into postsecondary. .

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Summary of Changes from the Subgrantee Evaluation Plan

The original Subgrantee Evaluation Plan outlined a three-year evaluation design that combined two independent research studies:

- A rigorous assessment of the impact of YouthBuild's PSE programs on program participants based on data from a national participant impact study conducted by MDRC for the US Department of Labor (DOL). The national study planned to collect data from up to 70 YouthBuild sites funded through DOL and the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps program using a rigorous randomized control trial (RCT) design. The PSE impact analysis would be based on data from a subset of up to 16 YouthBuild PSE sites that participated in the larger MDRC study.
- A PSE implementation study by Brandeis University designed to provide "an in-depth understanding of the implementation and operation of the PSE model… and to generate 'best practices' information about PSE program design and implementation to inform both refinement of the model and future implementation." Focused on the 12 YouthBuild sites funded through the SIF-funded PSE initiative, the implementation study planned to use a mix of site visits, on-site interviews with staff and program participants, participation in cross-site meetings, participant surveys, and YouthBuild reporting data to document program implementation and key participant outcomes.

Overall, both elements of the original design were carried out as intended. However, three major changes did take place in terms of the scope and timing of the implementation study; collection of participant survey data for the implementation study; and the MDRC data available for use in the study.

Scope and Timing of the Implementation Study

Under the original SEP, the implementation study was intended to cover the first three years of the PSE initiative (2011-2014), including a baseline and annual follow-up site visits, three years of participant surveys, and analysis of the first three years of YouthBuild participant reporting data. In 2014, in response to the funding of the YouthBuild PSE sites for two additional years, and to accommodate expected delays in availability of the MDRC participant impact data (discussed below), the decision was made to extend the implementation study an additional two years to cover the full five years of SIF-funded activity. The extension of the study resulted in three major changes to the evaluation plan:

1. Two additional years of staff and participant interviews and site visits at the YouthBuild PSE sites were added to the study. To accommodate the limited budget for the extension, the decision was made to conduct telephone interviews with the PSE sites in 2015 (Year 4) instead of full-scale site visits, and to conduct 1-day site visits for the final round of visits in 2016 (Year 5). The 2015 telephone interviews focused on YouthBuild staff and postsecondary partners: Brandeis staff conducted 1-2 hour telephone interviews with YouthBuild staff representatives at each site (generally the Director or Program Director and PSE Coordinator) and a separate one hour interview with the lead representative of the postsecondary partner. As with the earlier site visits, the 2016 site visits included on-site interviews with YouthBuild administrators, program staff, teachers, and program participants, as well as on-site interviews with representatives from the postsecondary partners.

2. Inclusion of two additional years of analysis of YouthBuild reporting system data. In each of the two additional years of the study, Brandeis provided YouthBuild with interim analyses of the updated reporting system data. During the two additional years, the decision was also made to acquire and use postsecondary enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse to supplement the postsecondary enrollment data available through YouthBuild's reporting system. The analysis of reporting system data for the final report incorporated the full five years of reporting system data and the data from the National Student Clearinghouse. As a result, the final data analysis included information on approximately 2700 YouthBuild participants, an increase from the 2100 participants anticipated in the original evaluation plan.

   During the two-year extension, YouthBuild's data system also underwent a significant redesign that included a major upgrade in the data entry and reporting functions (making it substantially easier for local programs to enter participant information), but also included the elimination of a number of reporting elements in order to streamline data entry and reporting. For example, several data elements related to PSE service receipt were dropped from the reporting system as a result. As a result, the final report only reports on data that was consistently available for the full five years of the initiative.

3. To incorporate the extended timeline of the study, the reporting schedule was also extended and revised. The original evaluation plan included three annual reports (in September 2012, Summer 2013, and Fall 2014). The revised evaluation plan evaluation plan called for four reports on an extended timeline: an initial implementation report (April 2013), a mid-term report (October 2014), and a final report in mid-2017, with the exact timing of the final report dependent on when the participant impact data from the MDRC study became available. The fourth, a brief update report in May 2016, was added to provide updated reporting system data and a summary of the 2015 telephone interviews.

Implementation Study: Participant Survey Data Collection

The original SEP for the implementation study included administration of baseline and annual follow-up surveys with the first (2011) cohort of PSE participants. As outlined in the SEP, the goal of the surveys was to "learn about the expectations that participants bring to the program, to gather participant feedback on what kinds of activities they participated in and what they thought was important about their program experience, and to see how their attitudes towards school, themselves, and their futures change during their time within the program." As such, the surveys were intended to provide an additional perspective on the participant experience and not to serve as a substitute for the more rigorous, MDRC-led impact study. The baseline surveys would be distributed by YouthBuild staff in the PSE sites, with follow-up surveys administered through a combination of methods including distribution by PSE staff and direct follow-up by Brandeis staff through texts, emails, and telephone reminders. It was anticipated that the surveys would be distributed to approximately 700 participants (assuming 60 participants per site x 12 sites) with an 80% response rate.

As initially detailed in the mid-term report (October 2014), after consultation with the PSE sites and YouthBuild USA, it was decided to replace the traditional pre/post/follow-up design with a retrospective pre/post survey at the end of the program year followed by a single, follow-up survey a year later. Instead of surveying only the initial 2011 cohort, it was also decided to survey participants in both the 2011 and 2013 cohorts.

There were several reasons for the change in design. First, it was determined in consultation with the PSE sites that adding survey data collection to the sites' start-up tasks, which included major changes to their programs, was not feasible given available staff time and energy. The use of the retrospective pre/post survey design allowed YouthBuild staff to focus on program implementation at the beginning of the program year and to conduct data collection later, at the end of the program year. The retrospective pre/post design was also seen as providing a more accurate assessment of changes in participant attitudes and expectations given that participants' understanding of their own skills and readiness for postsecondary were likely to shift during the course of the program. For example, there was concern that participants might rate their college knowledge or leadership skills more highly at program entry than at program exit because they did not yet understand the practical challenges that they faced and would learn about through the program. In the retrospective pre/post design, participants were asked a set of questions about their skills and attitudes prior to joining YouthBuild and a parallel set of questions about their skills and attitude at the time they took the survey (i.e., "Now"). By asking the questions at post program, participants are able to apply a common frame of reference to both sets of questions.[97]

In addition to adopting the retrospective pre/post design, the decision was also made to administer the surveys to both the 2011 and 2013 cohorts of participants.[98] The primary reason for extending the survey to a second cohort was to increase the sample size after a disappointing response to the initial (2011) round of surveys. While the second round of surveys did add to the sample, the response rates for both the 2011 and 2013 surveys were disappointing, despite substantial survey incentives and multiple rounds of telephone, email, and staff reminders. As noted in the final report, 275 YouthBuild graduates ultimately completed the retrospective pre/post surveys (180 students from the 2011 cohort and 95 from the 2013 cohort), a response rate of approximately 18.5%.

The other major change in the survey process was the decision to limit the follow-up surveys to a single, 1-year follow-up survey aimed at those participants who had completed the retrospective pre/post survey. The original goal of the follow-up survey was to provide feedback on the program experience from those participants who had completed the YouthBuild program a year before and to provide additional follow-up data on participant attitudes. As with the retrospective pre/post survey, however, the response rate for the follow-up survey was low for both the 2011 and 2013 cohorts. The follow-up surveys were distributed in Spring 2014 and 2015 as online surveys to those YouthBuild participants who had completed the earlier retrospective pre/post. Paper copies of the surveys were also provided to PSE sites to be handed out at alumni events for 2013 PSE participants. Students were offered a $50

[97] The change in perspectives is known as "response shift bias." In simple terms, in some settings a respondent's understanding of the question and their response changes as a result of the program experience. In those settings, it may be more accurate to ask "before" and "after" questions at the end of the program where both sets of questions can be answered from the same perspective. For an early statement of the issue, see G.S. Howard, R.R. Schmeck and J.H. Bray, "Internal Invalidity in Studies Employing Self-Report Instruments: A Suggested Remedy," *Journal of Educational Measurement*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer, 1979), pp. 129-135; and G.S. Howard, "Response-shift bias: A problem in evaluating interventions with pre/post self-reports," *Evaluation Review*, 4 (1980), pp. 93-106. For a more recent discussion, see D. Moore and C. A. Tananis, "Measuring Change in a Short-Term Educational Program Using a Retrospective Pretest Design," *American Journal of Evaluation*, Vol. 30 No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 189-202.

[98] The decision was made to not survey YouthBuild students in the second (2012-2013) cohort to avoid conflict with the MDRC study, which focused much of its data collection on that group.

incentive to complete the survey, and YouthBuild staff were asked to encourage alumni who had participated in the earlier survey to respond to the follow-up as well. Overall, only 127 YouthBuild alumni from 8 of the 12 PSE sites completed the follow-up, despite multiple rounds of email reminders, texts, and telephone messages. [99]

As noted in the report, the relatively low response rate on the follow-up survey reflected the challenges highlighted by program staff of maintaining contact with alumni from their programs. Not only had students moved or changed their email addresses or telephone numbers since leaving the program, but changes in program personnel (particularly transition counselors) at a number of sites also meant that the new transition counselors had little or no relationship with students from earlier YouthBuild cohorts. As such, their ability to reach out to alumni or encourage them to complete the follow-up survey was limited. At the same time, since the surveys were seeking feedback from YouthBuild members a year or more after they had completed (or left) the program, another reason for the low response rate may have been the difficulty of getting young adults who had moved on to other activities and responsibilities to stop and take the time to respond.

Given the low response rate for the follow-up surveys, the decision was made not to conduct further follow-up surveys. Similarly, because of the small numbers of follow-up surveys the decision was made to focus the follow-up survey analysis on the feedback provided on the program experience rather than on post-program changes in participant attitudes.

Overall, the participant data collection process represented a major challenge for the implementation study (the MDRC impact study, which focused its resources more heavily on participant data collection, was more successful in that regard). As noted in the report, the participant survey data needs to be treated with some care. However, while the response rate for the retrospective pre/post survey was low, the survey respondents were broadly representative of the program's participants in terms of gender, race and other key participant characteristics. As such, the survey results can be seen as providing a solid, though far from definitive, assessment of the types of changes in attitudes and knowledge experienced by participants in the PSE programs and convey the ways in which participants' ideas about themselves and their futures changed in the course of the program. The follow-up surveys provide a substantially less representative sample – some sites provided no respondents at all to the follow-up survey. That said, the survey responses do represent the experiences and feedback of a diverse group of YouthBuild PSE alumni. In combination with the feedback gained through the site visits and participant interviews, they provide a further perspective on, and some triangulation of, the "what works" question about the PSE experience.

Impact Study: Integration of the MDRC Impact Study Data

Under the SEP, the final YouthBuild implementation report was expected to include participant impact data for a subset of YouthBuild PSE sites drawn from the national impact study being conducted by MDRC. Under the original plan, that data would include data from three rounds of MDRC participant surveys: 12 month, 30 month and 48 month. MDRC would extract the data from their study and run the analysis to provide results for the PSE sites that were comparable to those for the national study.

[99] Follow-up surveys responses were received from participants from Abyssinian Development Corporation, CCEO YouthBuild, Civic Works, YouthBuild Fresno, Guadalupe Alternative Programs, Just-a-Start, LA CAUSA YouthBuild, and Mile High YouthBuild.

In most regards that plan has been carried out, with the MDRC data presented in Chapter X of this report. However, because of delays in the data collection process for the MDRC study, that data is limited to data from the 12 and 30 month follow-up surveys. The 48 month survey data had not yet been analyzed and was not yet available at the time of this report. The analysis of the 30 month data includes the overall impact analysis, but does not include the more extensive subgroup analysis which was planned for the 48 month surveys.

Also, the original plans anticipated the inclusion of 16 PSE sites in the MDRC study sample, including sites from both the original Gates-funded PSE programs and the SIF-funded PSE sites. However, when the final sample for the MDRC study was completed, however, only 12 of the PSE sites were included. One result is that the sample size for the PSE data was smaller than the original projections. The table below summarizes the difference. Based on the original estimates for minimally detectable effects (MDE), the final sample size was sufficient for analysis of the full sample, though likely not for additional subgroup analyses.

	Administrative Data	**Survey Data**
Original SEP Estimates (16 PSE sites)	1440 participants	864 surveys
Final Sample Size (12 PSE sites)	671 participants	554 surveys

Retrospective YouthBuild Pre/Post Survey Scales: Sources and Reliability

Domain	Source	Items
Educational Competence/ Academic Self-Concept	Adapted from US Department of Education, Educational Longitudinal Study, 2002. Alpha = .903	Think back to just before you joined YouthBuild. How did you think about yourself as a student at that time? For each of the following statements, please mark how you would have responded just before you joined YouthBuild. (From (1) Not True at All to (4) Very True for Me) a. When I decide to learn something really hard, I can learn it. b. It is very important to me to do the best I could in school. c. When studying, I keep working on my schoolwork even if the material is difficult. d. If I decide to get good grades, I can really do it. e. I try hard in school f. I feel like I would use what I learned in school after I graduated g. I like school h. If I want to learn something well, I can. i. When studying, I put forth my best effort.
Educational Aspirations and Expectations	Adapted from US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009.	As things stand now, how far in school would you like to go? As things stand now, how far in school do you think you will get? a. Less than high school graduation or a GED b. High school diploma or GED c. Certificate from a vocational or technical school program or a community college d. Attend some college but not get a degree e. Complete a two-year college (Associate's degree) f. Complete a four-year college (Bachelor's degree) g. Complete a Master's degree h. Complete a graduate degree Ph.D., M.D., law degree, or other high level professional degree i. Don't know
	US Department of Education, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009.	Whatever your plans, do you think you have the ability to complete a four-year Bachelor's degree? a. Definitely b. Probably c. Probably not d. Definitely not

Domain	Source	Items
Personal Empowerment	Foutz et al, "A Youth-Directed Science Café: Impacts on Teen Participants." (NSF Grant ISE-0714762). Alpha = .880	For each of the following statements, please indicate how you would have responded just *before* you joined YouthBuild and *now*. Was each statement "Very True," "Not True at All," or somewhere in between? a. I am good at working on a team. b. When working on a team, I am willing to take on leadership roles. c. I am confident speaking in front of a large group. d. I respect people's ideas that are different from mine. e. I think it is important to volunteer in my community. f. I am a self-confident person. g. I feel like I have a positive future ahead of me. h. I feel like I am part of a group of people who are like me. i. In my school or community, there is an adult who believes I will be a success.
Leadership	The Center for Information Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Pathways into Leadership: A Study of YouthBuild Graduates (CIRCLE, Tufts University, 2012) Alpha = .718	YouthBuild defines good leadership as taking positive steps to make things better for yourself, your family, your program, and your community. *Before* YouthBuild and *Now*, how often did you see yourself as a leader for yourself, in your family, or in your community? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often) a. Personal b. Family c. Community
Postsecondary Support	Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University – Developed for YouthBuild Pathways evaluation. Alpha = .927	During the year before YouthBuild, how often did an adult you know (for example, from your family, school, work, or a community program) do any of the following? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often) a. Encourage you to think about getting an education past high school. b. Talk with you about going to college. c. Take you to visit a college. d. Talk with you about the attitudes and skills you need to succeed in college. e. Explain how you could pay for college. f. Talk with you about careers you might be interested in. g. Talk with you about the skills you need to successful in a job.

Domain	Source	Items
College Knowledge	Adapted from Boguslaw, Melchior, and Pierce, Partnership for College Completion: Process, Implementation and Outcome Assessment. Alpha = .925	Has any adult talked with you about the following? Please tell us whether each topic was "never discussed," "briefly discussed," or "discussed in-depth." a. What you need to do to get into college. b. How to pay for college. c. Why you should get an education beyond high school or a GED. d. What going to college might be like. e. The attitudes and skills you need in order to succeed in college. f. Careers or jobs you might be interested in. g. The kinds of attitudes and skills you need to be successful in a job.

Note: All alpha scores based on responses to the post-program retrospective pre/post survey, N=275.

YouthBuild USA – Postsecondary Education Initiative
Guiding Questions for Initial Site Visits, 2012
Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University

Key Overarching Research Questions for the Evaluation
(Brief subsection headings in brackets)

1. Who are the YouthBuild PSE participants? [**PSE Participants**]
2. How is the PSE model being implemented across the Cohort II sites? [**Implementation**]
3. What are the key characteristics of the YouthBuild/College partnerships? [**Partnership**]
4. What can we learn about "what works" in terms of program design and implementation? [**What Works**]
5. What can we learn about the impact of the PSE program on participants' attitudes and goals? [**Impact on Participant Attitudes and Goals**]
6. What is YouthBuild USA's role in supporting the implementation of the PSE model? [**YouthBuild USA Role**]
7. What can we learn about the sustainability of the model? [**Sustainability**]

For CBO Administrators and direct staff

A. BACKGROUND

1. Tell us about your program/organization and its history.

- When did your organization get started?
- Who do you serve?
- What are your core programs?

2. How and why did you get involved in the Postsecondary Education Initiative (PSE)?

- What was your organization hoping to get out of your participation?
- What was the planning process like for the initiative? Who was involved?
- What are the major challenges/opportunities so far?

3. What is your community like? Have any local challenges or events affected PSE implementation?

- Economic, environmental, or social events or challenges
- Community assets and opportunities

B. PSE PARTICIPANTS

1. Who are the young people you hope to serve in the PSE program?

- Demographic data – race, gender, income, immigrant history, geography
- Other characteristics – homeless, foster care, etc.
- Are they different from the groups you have worked with historically?

2. How do you recruit participants?

- How, if at all, have recruitment strategies changed with PSE?
- How many participants do you have? How many have you usually had in the past?

3. **How have you shaped your program to address barriers that participants face and capitalize on their assets?**
   - What kinds of barriers do they bring? What kinds of assets do they have?

C. IMPLEMENTATION

1. **We want to understand the elements of your PSE program model. At the initiative level, the lead organizations have described the PSE process in terms of three major stages or principles: enriched academics, summer bridge, and postsecondary support. Does that fit the way you think about your approach? Why or why not?** If it does, what fits in each of the major stages?
   - Enriched academics: what specific activities/strategies are included? What is the goal?
   - Summer bridge: what is included, what are you trying to accomplish?
   - Postsecondary support: what is included, what is the goal?

If not, how would you describe your approach?

2. **What is the role of the transition counselor in your program?**

3. **What are the steps/stages that a young person entering the PSE program is likely to go through?**
   - What is the typical sequence? Time frame?
   - How does PSE fit into the YouthBuild MTO – Mental Toughness Orientation?
   - How do you integrate PSE into the traditional job-training model of YouthBuild?

4. **What is your organization doing to strengthen the academic and college readiness aspects of your program?** What is different in terms of:
   1. Curriculum, teaching approach, academic supports, etc.?
   2. Counseling and support?
   3. College awareness, prep, and transition support?
   4. Assessment and/or preparation for college testing?

5. **What, if any, other PSE components do you hope to put in place?**

D. PARTNERSHIP

1. **Please describe the local CBO/College partnership.**
   - Key players (staff, faculty, counselors, leadership, etc.) involved?
   - Are there people that need to be involved but are not?

2. **How was it established?**
   - What is the history, if any, of relationships between YouthBuild and the college?
   - How did you choose your college partner?

3. **How does it operate?**
   - What are the respective roles/responsibilities of key players?
   - Is a governance process in place?
   - Does a Memorandum of Understanding exist? [Get copy]
   - How are activities planned/coordinated?
   - What is the interaction between faculty/staff?

- How are communications organized? How is information/data shared?
- Are feedback mechanisms in place?

4. **What is your organization's hope / goal for this partnership?**
   - Where do you want this partnership to go?

5. **How is the partnership going?**
   - What is working well, and what is not? And why?

E. WHAT WORKS

1. **What has your organization learned so far about what works and what doesn't in PSE programming?**
   - What works and what's important in terms of program strategy? What have been the biggest challenges?
   - Which program components or aspects are the most important?

2. **What organizational changes have you made in order to implement the PSE program?**
   - Staffing?
   - Staff training? Recruitment?
   - Counseling and supportive services?
   - Program cycle/timing?
   - Other?

3. **What challenges and constraints have influenced your approach?**

4. **Is the model that you have what you would like it to be?**
   - Ideally, what would your organization like to do differently?

5. **How have participants responded to this program so far?**

F. YOUTHBUILD USA ROLE

1. **What kinds of training/support have you gotten from your national partner (YouthBuild USA)?**
   - What has been your experience with:
     - Cross site meetings
     - Site coaches
     - National training institute
     - Scott and Albert's visits
     - Other
   - Please give examples of how your organization has used these various supports
   - What has been most helpful?
   - What has been least useful?

2. **Is your organization getting support from other sources?**
   - Examples

3. **What kinds of additional help/support from YouthBuild USA or others do you need to get the program where you would like it to be?**

G. SUSTAINABILITY

How are your YouthBuild program and this initiative funded?

NEXT STEPS

- **Share information from the handout, "Evaluating the YouthBuild USA Postsecondary Education Initiative."**
- **Ask for suggestions re timing of spring site visits and participant surveys.**

For Community College Administrators

A. BACKGROUND

1. Tell us a little about your college and its history.

- When was the college established?
- What is your mission and who do you serve?
- What are your core programs?

2. How and why did your college get involved in the Postsecondary Education Initiative (PSE) with YouthBuild?

- What is your college hoping to get out of your participation?
- What, if any, were the worries or concerns?
- What was the planning process like for the initiative? Who was involved?
- What are the major challenges/opportunities so far?

3. What is your community like? Have any local challenges or events affected the implementation of this project?

- Economic, environmental, or social events or challenges
- Community assets and opportunities

A. PSE PARTICIPANTS

1. What is the target population for the college as a whole?

2. How do the YouthBuild participants compare to the general student population?

3. What other programs do you have that serve students who are similar in background to YouthBuild students?

B. IMPLEMENTATION

1. We want to make sure we understand the elements of the program model. At the initiative level, the lead organizations have described the PSE process in terms of three major stages or principles: enriched academics, summer bridge, and postsecondary support. Does that breakdown fit the way you think about your approach? Why or why not? If it does, let's talk about what fits in each of the major stages. Specifically:

- Enriched academics – what specific activities/strategies are included (if you have any involvement)?
- Summer bridge – what is included, what are you trying to accomplish?
- Postsecondary support – what is included, what is the goal?

If not, how would you describe your approach?

2. Developmental education and advising are important areas for most YouthBuild participants. How are those organized at your college, and how do the YouthBuild PSE students fit in?

3. **What steps/stages is a young person entering the program likely to go through?**
   - What is the typical sequence? Time frame?
4. **What is your college doing to strengthen the academic and support program (including developmental education) to accommodate the YouthBuild PSE students?**
   - What is different in terms of:
     - Curriculum, teaching approach, academic supports, etc.?
     - Counseling and support?
     - College awareness, prep, and transition support?
     - Assessment and/or preparation for college testing?
5. **What other college initiatives aim to increase college completion**?
   - How are they similar to or different from the PSE initiative?
6. **What does your college hope to have in place with respect to this program in the future?**
7. **How, if at all, is the PSE affecting how your campus serves students?**

C. PARTNERSHIP

1. Please describe the local CBO/College partnership.
   - Key players (staff, faculty, counselors, leadership, etc.) involved?
   - Are there people that need to be involved but are not?

2. How was it established?
   - What is the history of the partnership, if any?
   - Why this college?

3. How does it operate?
   - What are the key players' respective roles/responsibilities?
   - Is a governance process in place?
   - Does a Memorandum of Understanding exist? [Get copy]
   - How are activities planned/coordinated?
   - What is the interaction between faculty/staff?
   - How are communications organized?
   - How is information/data shared?
   - Are feedback mechanisms in place?

4. What is your organization's hope / goal for this partnership?
   - Where do you want this partnership to go?
   - Do you see this program as a catalyst for positive changes on your campus?

D. WHAT WORKS

1. **What has your organization learned so far about what works and what doesn't?**

- When you think about program strategy, what works, what's important? What have been the biggest challenges?
- What do you think of as the most important elements? If you had to point to just a few key pieces/activities/ideas, what would they be?

2. **What kinds of organizational changes have you made in order to implement the current program?**
   - Staffing?
   - Staff training? Recruitment?
   - Counseling and supportive services?
   - Program cycle/timing?
   - Other
3. **What challenges and constraints have influenced your approach?**
4. **Is the model that you have what you would like it to be?**
   - Ideally, what would your college like to do differently?
5. **How have participants responded to this program so far?**
6. **How have faculty and staff responded to this program so far?**

E. YOUTHBUILD USA ROLE

1. **What, if any, is YouthBuild USA's role with respect to your community college?**
2. **Have you and/or has someone else at your college been involved in training/support from YouthBuild USA?**
   - If so, which ones?
     - Cross site meetings
     - Site coaches
     - Scott and Albert's visits
   - What has been most helpful?
   - What has been least useful?
3. **Is your college getting training/support from other sources for work with disconnected youth?**
   - What are some examples?
4. **What kinds of additional help/support do you need to get the program where you would like it to be?**

F. SUSTAINABILITY

What kinds of resources are you using to support the work of the PSE partnership?

FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for agreeing to talk with us today.

As you may already know, we're from the Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University. We have a contract with YouthBuild to study their Pathways program, which is working to get you into college and make sure you succeed in college.

This is not an inspection visit, but a chance for us to learn how the program is going.

Anything that you talk to us about will be confidential. If you don't want to answer one of the questions, you don't have to. We will not reveal your name(s) or any other identifying information.

1. How did you get involved in the program?

- What were you looking for?

2. Please describe the program.

- What parts are you involved in?
- How often do you go to each part of the program? Per week? Per month?

3. What has this experience been like for you?

4. What do you see as the most important part of the program?

- What do you think makes the biggest difference for most of the participants in the program?

5. How is the program working for you and for others?

- If it's working well, why? What makes a difference?
- If it's not working well, why not? What needs to be different? What could be done better?

6. Is the program changing how you think about yourself as a student and about your future? If so, how?

7. Are your expectations different now than when you entered the program?

8. Would you recommend the program to a friend? Why or why not?

2015 YouthBuild Telephone Interview Questions

We'd like to talk about the following:

- What does your program look like now?
- What changes have occurred in the past year? What activities, strategies, partners, etc. have you added or dropped?
- What does PSE followup look like now that you've been "doing" PSE for a while?
- What are relationships like with your PSE partners – colleges, training, apprenticeship programs, etc.?
- What accomplishments are you most pleased about?
- What things have been especially hard?
- What kind of PSE success rate feels right for you – what are you aiming for? What do you need to achieve that?
- What are you learning about PSE? *What* does it take to effectively promote access and success, and *how long* does it take?
- What changes are coming up for your program next academic year?
- What should we ask about/focus on when we visit you in Spring 2016?
- Looking farther ahead, what are the prospects for and challenges re sustainability?

2016 SITE VISIT GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOL FOR THE YOUTHBUILD USA PATHWAYS/SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INITIATIVE

YouthBuild USA Pathways/Social Innovation Fund PSE Initiative goals:

- To substantially increase the number of YouthBuild participants who attain a postsecondary credential and transition into careers and leadership roles in communities
- To develop systems and partnerships to sustain the new PSE model and serve more Opportunity Youth aged 16-24
- To influence the way postsecondary institutions serve young people

Who we'd like to talk to:

- Those involved in various aspects of PSE efforts: transition coordination, postsecondary support, teaching, career counseling and case management
- Lead contacts and/or other relevant staff at partner colleges
- Lead contacts and/or other relevant staff at other key partner sites (if applicable)
- Students and alums in small groups.

The overall goal of site visit interviews is to enhance our understanding of the evolution and future of your program.

Overall PSE program & operations	• What does your program design look like now?
	  – What is your approach to building academic skills, college readiness, and college awareness?
	  – What kinds of postsecondary supports are in place (academic, social, etc.)? What supports do you provide for alumni?
	  – What relationships does your program have with colleges and other partners? How have these PSE partnerships evolved?
	  – What kinds of occupational training/service take place? How does that connect with the academic/PSE strategy?
	• What activities, strategies, and partners have you added or dropped since the initiative began—especially in the past year? Why did these changes occur
	• What do you see as the most critical components of your program?
	• How is the program staffed? What additional supports are available to participants?
	• How is the program funded? How has the funding mix changed over the past five years?
	• Who are the participants these days? Has it changed?

Service	• Which service tracks does your program have, and (briefly) how do they work? (schedule, location, work/service/education activities, training, etc.)? How much time do members typically spend in each activity? • How are the different tracks' service experiences similar or different? • How/to what extent do the different service tracks involve interaction to the community? How do they help build/enhance community involvement and leadership? • What other kinds of service experiences are youth involved in? Do they count towards AmeriCorps hours? Please describe… • Traditionally, YouthBuild has focused on construction as its contribution to the community. How do the alternative service tracks fit into that model? • Ultimately, what do you see as the advantages and challenges of moving beyond construction in your programs service
PSE Lessons Learned & Partnerships	• What lessons have you learned about promoting PSE access and success? – What kinds of supports are most critical at each step of the process? – What barriers do students face, and how can you address them (or not)? – at partnerships have proven most valuable? Why? What does it take to build a solid partnership? • What lessons have you learned about the staffing and management of PSE efforts like yours? • What external forces (funding, changing community, etc.) have impacted your efforts, and how? • What outcomes do you think are appropriate? What PSE success rate are you aiming for? What supports and resources are critical in reaching these goals? • If you were going to redesign the PSE 'model' or 'approach', what would you change? Add? Drop? Revise?
What impact has PSE had on program participants?	**For Program Staff** • From your perspective, what impact has the program had on participants? How would you describe what difference YouthBuild has made? In terms of academics? College readiness? Personal growth? Other? • To what extent/how do you see the type of service they are involved in as making a difference? Does it affect their civic attitudes, educational goals, • How would you define success for your members? What more do you think they need to succeed post-YouthBuild? • Do you think participants feel connected to their education and confident about their future? • Do you think participants feel supported by YouthBuild USA and partner institutions? Do you think they plan to stay connected after completing the program? • What do you think are the most lasting impacts from being in YouthBuild?
Greatest accomplishments	• What 2-3 accomplishments are you most pleased about? Which accomplishments have been most important for your program's success? • What factors contributed to these successes?

Greatest challenges	• What 2-3 things have been especially difficult? • How did you face these challenges? • How have these experiences informed your programming for the future (i.e. what will you do differently in the future)?
Program changes & improvements	• What program changes/improvements are in store for next academic year? Why will you make these changes?
Program sustainability	• How do you plan to sustain the key elements of your PSE approach? How do you expect to fund the program? • What are the prospects for and challenges concerning sustainability? • Which elements will be carried forward and which elements will be cut? • What kind of organizational changes do you anticipate in the next year in terms of staffing, counseling and supportive services, program cycle/timing and capacity? • To what extent will you maintain your relationships with colleges and other partners? • How will you maintain support for program alumni? Will there be any changes to current levels of support and guidance? • How will your program change without consistent supports and trainings from YouthBuild USA? Have you utilized any other resources or supports that you will continue to use beyond the grant?
Intermediary	• Looking back, how important has the role played by YouthBuild USA been – in terms of technical assistance, convening, grant management, etc.? What kinds of support have been most important? Specific examples? What else would have been helpful? What can we learn about the role of intermediaries?
Organizational Impacts	• How has the PSE initiative impacted your organization? Are there ways in which the organization has changed beyond the specifics of the PSE program? • How has the PSE initiative impacted you (program director, transition coordinator, lead teacher)? Are there ways in which PSE has changed how you do your work? See your job? View the youth you work with?
Final Reflection Questions	• What lessons have you learned about PSE that have helped or will help you improve your programming and might help other sites interested in implementing PSE initiatives? • Has your PSE program been worth the effort? • What hopes do you have for the legacy of this initiative? • Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't already discussed? • If you had unlimited funding for PSE, what improvements would you make?

Questions for Participants – Still in YouthBuild	**For youth participants (still in YouthBuild):** • What brought you to YouthBuild? What were you looking for? • What has this experience been like for you? What has been the most important part of your experience? Would you recommend the program to a friend? What would you tell them? • Has the program changed how you think about yourself and your expectations for the future? If so, how? • What have been your biggest challenges in YouthBuild? What has made this hard? • Where do you see yourself one year from now? What are your goals for the future?
Questions for Participants – Post-YouthBuild	**For youth participants (post-YouthBuild):** • What brought you to YouthBuild? What were you looking for? • What are you doing now? • What are your goals? How have they changed since you began YouthBuild and how have they changed since you finished? • How has your YouthBuild experience changed how you think about yourself and your expectations about the future? • What was the most important part of your experience in the program? Would you recommend the program to a friend? What would you tell them? • What have been the biggest challenges or barriers to success since completing YouthBuild? What do you struggle with as you pursue work, training or PSE? • Looking back, what could YouthBuild or others have done to help you be better prepared for PSE? What kinds of supports after YouthBuild would have made the most difference for you? • Have you stayed connected to YouthBuild? If so, what helps keep you connected?

Service experience	We are particularly interested in the service/training experiences you've had in the program. • What service track or tracks are you involved in? Can you describe your experience in each? • Did you select your service track, or was it assigned? In either case, what did you expect, and what were you looking for from that service experience? • What kinds of opportunities have there been through your service to connect with the community? To exercise leadership skills? • Has the service experience helped to change the way you think about yourself and your future? If so, how? • What has been the most important part of your service experience? What has made the biggest difference for you? • Looking ahead, do you expect to stay involved in your community? Why?

Checklist - Site visit general information and scope of program

Participants	• # of participants in each PSE cohort (Fall 2014, Fall 2015) • # of YouthBuild participants not considered to be "in" PSE
Funding	• Main sources of funding for PSE programming • Main sources for YouthBuild program as a whole
Program Structure	• Main elements of PSE program, briefly described (enriched academics, summer bridge and postsecondary support) • Length of program • Service activity/academics mix (e.g., week of service activity alternating with week of academics) • Nature and length of Mental Toughness Orientation • Nature and length of Mental Toughness 2, if applicable
Major Players	• YouthBuild staff members who are key to PSE efforts • Identity and nature of key partnerships with community colleges, four-year colleges, community organizations, etc.