

EVALUATION BRIEF

New Futures Outcome Evaluation

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Executive Summary

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Introduction

This evaluation brief provides a summary of outcomes based on the study of New Futures participants from 2000-2010, as well as a comparative sample of students in the same school district as the program participants.

New Futures is a nonprofit education organization that currently provides enriching afterschool and summer programs to students in three low income housing complexes in the South King County (Seattle, Washington) area that have been identified by their classroom teachers and New Futures staff in the Highline School District as needing more academic and social support. The mission of New Futures is to partner with families in their communities and with educators to ensure that children succeed in school and in life. The program uses a holistic, multi-level approach that targets individuals, families, communities, and systems.

Study Methods

All data analyzed for the evaluation were secondary data provided by the New Futures program, Highline School District, and Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) at Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM).

Out of 1,166 New Futures students, 434 students (or 37.2%) had assessment data within 12 months pre- and post-enrollment in the New Futures program. This sample was largely representative of the New Futures students served over a decade of programming. A smaller sample of comparison students was drawn (197 out of 1,516 – or 13.0%) to compare assessment data with the New Futures sample. The New Futures sample had a higher representation of Hispanic students and students that received English Language Learner (ELL) services than the comparison sample. The assessment data were from multiple assessments (e.g., *Measurement of Student Progress [MSP]*, *High School Proficiency Exams [HSPEs]*, and *Measures of Academic Progress [MAP]*), which were rescaled to create standardized measures of reading and math proficiency.

Post-secondary education data from OFM were available for 484 New Futures students and 614 comparison students. High school graduation rates, General Equivalency Diploma (GED) attainment, and college enrollment were compared between New Futures students and comparison students. These outcome indicators also were examined for a subset of New Futures students that had assessment data available as described above.

Summary of Findings

Several evaluation questions guided this study of the New Futures program. These questions are presented below along with the main findings for these questions. The evaluation of New Futures yielded mainly positive results, indicating that program participants experienced higher rates of high school graduation and four-year college enrollment than comparison students. In addition, longer duration in the New Futures program was associated with higher rates of enrollment in a four-year college and greater improvement in reading test scores between pre- and post-enrollment.

Are high school graduation rates and post-secondary education enrollment rates higher for students who participated in New Futures programming than for the students in the comparison group?

- New Futures students had significantly higher rates of high school graduation than comparison students.
- New Futures students had significantly higher rates of four-year college attendance than comparison students.
- A subset of New Futures students with standardized test scores had a significantly higher rate of four-year college attendance than comparison students.
- There were no significant differences in GED earned between New Futures and comparison students.

Are student scores on standardized assessments given by the school district higher for students who participate in New Futures programming than for students in the comparison group?

- There were no significant differences between New Futures students and comparison students on reading outcomes prior to controlling for group differences on pretest reading scores.
- There were no significant differences between New Futures students and comparison students on math outcomes prior to controlling for group differences on pretest math scores.
- There were no significant differences between New Futures and comparison students on reading or math scores after controlling for group differences on pretest scores and demographic characteristics.

Do student assessment scores increase with longer duration in the New Futures program?

Are graduation rates and post-secondary education enrollment higher with longer duration in the New Futures program?

- A significantly positive relationship was found between duration in the New Futures program and improvement in reading scores.
- There were no significant differences in duration in the New Futures program between those who graduated high school and those who did not.
- New Futures students that attended college spent significantly more time in the New Futures program than those who did not attend college.

Do assessment scores improve when examining student cohorts over time?

- The cohort of more recent New Futures students (2007-2010) had significantly greater improvement in math scores than the cohort of New Futures students enrolled during the first four years of programming (2000-2003).
- There was no significant improvement in reading scores between the two cohorts of New Futures students.

Recommendations

In light of the study findings, we offer the following recommendations to help guide decision making about forthcoming New Futures programming and evaluation.

- Consider how program activities can be enhanced to more strongly encourage students and their families to contemplate and prepare for a path toward college education.
- Continue to emphasize and direct resources toward efforts to include the full family support model.
- Consider ways to support program graduates who enroll in college so that they stay enrolled and graduate. For example, develop new funding streams to support New Futures staff in this area and/or form partnerships with organizations that do this work.
- Use the study findings to carefully consider the tradeoffs of serving students in the program for a longer duration.
- Continue to place emphasis on supporting math instruction as part of the New Futures program.
- Seek funding to support a comprehensive evaluation. Consider measuring program process data, such as dosage and program quality, as well as outcomes using a prospective, longitudinal, mixed-methods design.
- Conduct in-depth qualitative case studies on program graduates to learn more about the longer term impacts of the program and the factors that influence success. Utilize the findings for learning and program improvement.
- Include additional process and outcome indicators in future evaluation efforts, such as:
 - Parent knowledge and involvement in educational activities
 - Student self-efficacy
 - Student behavior (e.g., suspensions)
 - School attendance
 - Grade Point Average (GPA) or credits earned
 - 21st Century skills such as creative thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.