How does Year Up measure up?

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Comments on A Year Up: How a Pioneering Program Teaches Young Adults Real Skills for Real Jobs with Real Success

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Year Up—An evidence-based program model?

- Combines professional and technical skills training to develop youth non-cognitive as well as cognitive skills for job market
- Peer support as an integral component of wrap-around support services
- Training/curriculum designed to meet labor needs of employers
  - Youth and employers see its relevance
  - Six months of training
Important Year-Up innovations

- Peers play a key role in supporting the development of professional skills (e.g., correcting each others’ language, making encouraging calls to each other)
  - Year Up culture simultaneously builds lifelong friendships/networking and eases tensions associated with learning these skills
  - Sharing of life events/experiences, Friday feedback and “Turn Your Back” contribute to students’ persistence, high program completion rates
- Weekly stipend tied to performance contract
Year-Up innovations (continued)

- Year Up continues intensive support of young adults during 6-month internship phase
  - Employers see Year Up as “hiring pipeline”: students trained and integrated into companies through internships (with Year Up support)
- Students can earn college credit through training (colleges partner with Year Up)
- Constant, renewable source of philanthropic investment—corporate partners in internships
  - Does this limit scalability?
Year Up reported results

- 100% placement of qualified Year Up students into internships
  - Participants can “fire” themselves
- 95% of Year Up interns meet or exceed their internship manager's expectations
- 85% of graduates employed or attending college full-time within 4 months of program completion
- Employed Year Up graduates earn $15/hour on average (~$30,000 per year)
Eligible candidates randomly assigned to participate in Boston, New York City, and Providence

- 135 randomly assigned to treatment group
- 60 in control group (placed on waiting list and told could re-apply after 10 months)
- Last follow-up at 24 and 30 months after random assignment; resulting sample of 120 treatment and 44 control group members
- Intent-to-treat impact estimates
Year Up impact evaluation findings

- During Year Up, control group members earned more on average than Year Up participants
  - In year after program participation, Year Up participant annual earnings were $3,461 (30%) more on average than control group ($15,082 vs. $11,621, respectively)
- Year Up participants and controls were equally likely to be employed during second year (86% vs. 83%) and to attend college during the second year after enrollment (33% vs. 27%)
- No differences in availability of employer-provided health benefits or tuition assistance
Figure 2. Total Earnings During Each Quarter After Random Assignment

Note: Differences are statistically significant at the p<.05 level of significance in Oct-Dec 08 and Jan-Mar 08 and at the p<.10 level of significance in Apr-Jun 09.
“Add it all together and you get a workforce development system that really doesn’t work.”

Pattern of impacts for Year Up looks very similar to that for disadvantaged adults in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) System

- Estimated average increment in earnings of ~$2400 per year (26% of average earnings) for disadvantaged women who participated in WIA, and ~$1700 or 15% of average earnings for disadvantaged men
Quarterly Earnings Impact for Females, WIA Training versus Comparison Group

Heinrich et al., 2008; WIA nonexperimental impact evaluation

Lock-in effect
Year Up compared to Job Corps

- Job Corps serves disadvantaged youth ages 16–24, primarily in a residential setting
- Estimated impact per Job Corps participant was $22 per week (or $1,150 annually) in the fourth year (12% earnings gain)
  - Impacts persisted beyond year 4 (in years 5–10) only for 20– to 24–year–olds
- Increased receipt of GEDs and vocational certificates by >20 percentage points each
- Significant reductions in criminal activity found for all youth

Cost of Year Up=$25,000 is similar to Job Corps per participant cost
Should Year Up measure a broader range of program impacts?

Other Perry Preschool outcomes: marital status, pregnancy/out-of-wedlock births, public assistance, home/auto ownership, income tax revenues

High/Scope Perry Preschool Program Public Costs and Benefits

- Education savings
- Taxes on earnings
- Welfare savings
- Crime savings

Benefits
- $7,303
- $14,078
- $2,768
- $171,473
- Total Public Benefit $195,621

Costs
- $15,166

$12.90 return per dollar invested.

(Constant 2,000 dollars, 3% discount rate)

Schweinhart et al., 2005
Who Year Up does not serve

- Year Up looks for motivated applicants (resilience, inner strength)
- Year Up does not work with students who do not have a high school diploma
  - This leaves out a large fraction of disconnected youth in the targeted age group
    - Just 52% of black males earned a H.S. diploma in 2010, up from 47% in 2008 (Schott Foundation, 2012)
- Thus, Year Up is a selective program; the evaluation results can only generalize to the more motivated group of young adults selected for the intervention
Can we take key innovations and insights from Year Up model and extend them to other interventions (and/or age groups)?

- How can we help youth who do not make it to H.S. graduation?
- Can we intervene in similar ways earlier?

Recent research from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child suggests potential for enhancing development of “executive function skills”—similar to Year Up “pro skills”—at younger ages.
A range of tests measuring different forms of executive function skills indicates that they begin to develop shortly after birth, with ages 3 to 5 providing a window of opportunity for dramatic growth in these skills. Growth continues throughout adolescence and early adulthood; proficiency begins to decline in later life.

Year Up’s forward thinking

- Year Up has considered its own theory of change—how can it tackle root causes that drive the need for Year Up?
- College-based pilot program—moving the model into community colleges
- Can Year Up help extend/diffuse its innovative features to other organizations that serve youth/young adults?
  - Job Corps? Jobs for Youth Chicago?
  - High school programs?