



Education  
Strategy  
Group

# From Tails to Heads

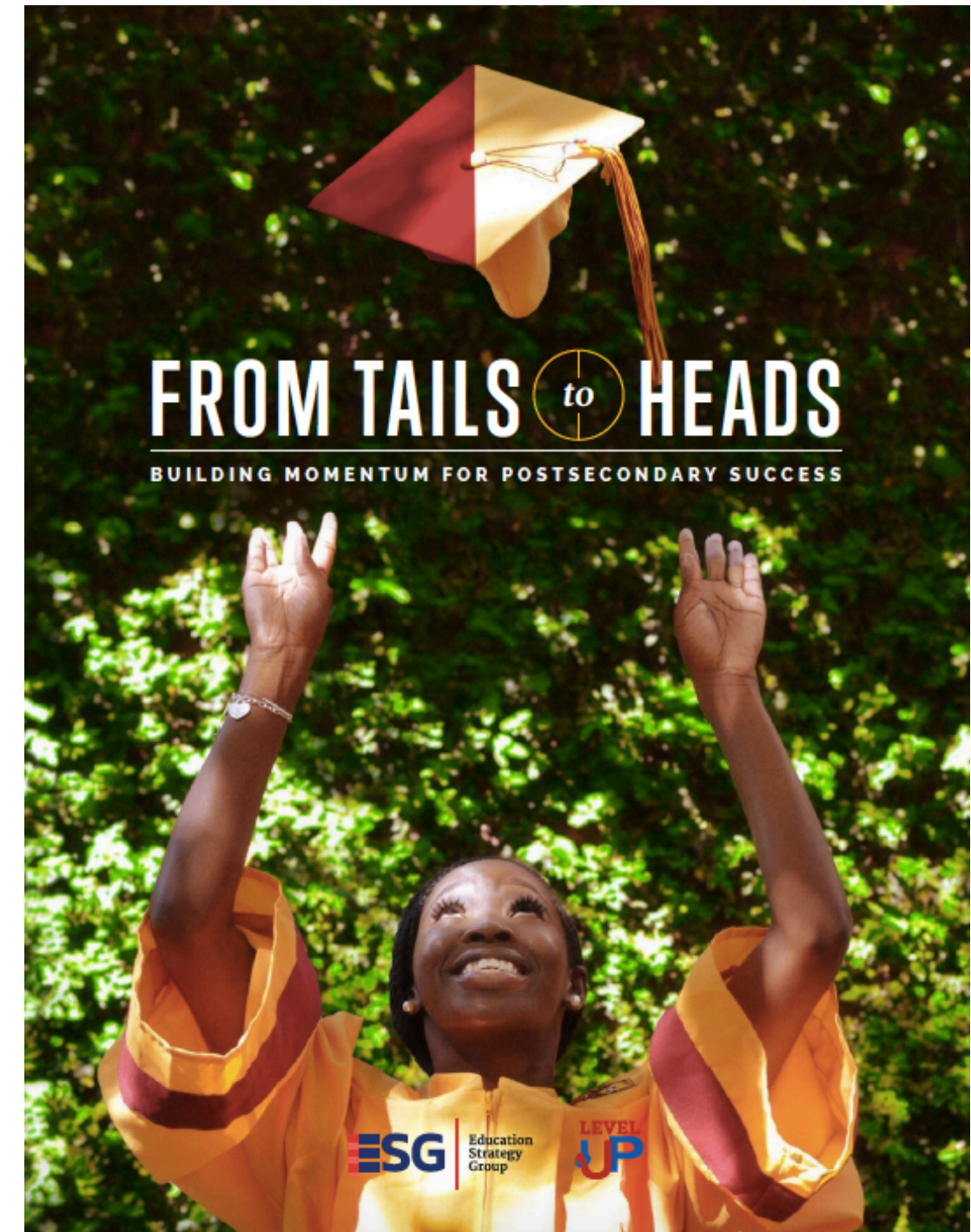
Building Momentum for Postsecondary Success

# A Coin Flip Can Change a Kid's Life

No one's chances for economic mobility should come down to a coin flip.

Yet, we estimate that there are at least **7,000** **“coin flip” high schools** where if you are Black, Hispanic, or from a low-income family, your **chance of proceeding into higher education directly after high school is less than 50 percent.**

<http://edstrategy.org/resource/from-tails-to-heads/>

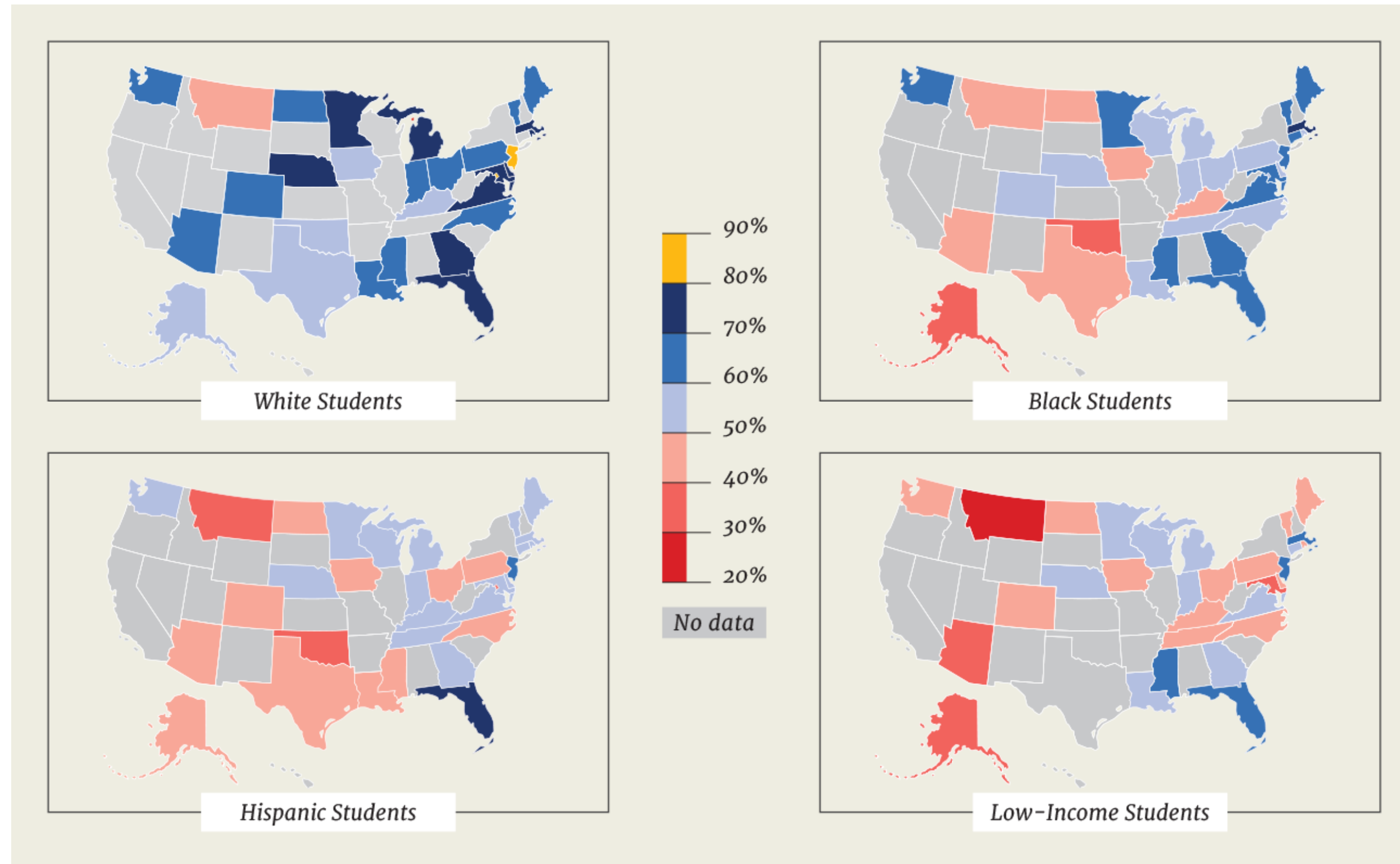


# A Missed Opportunity

**1 million**

students leave high school every year and do not successfully transition to a postsecondary education or training program.

# Large Gaps in Direct Enrollment





# Coin Flip High Schools

ESG reviewed disaggregated, school-level data on postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation in 27 states. We analyzed **how many high schools in each state send fewer than 50 percent of their graduates by race/ethnicity and income** on to postsecondary education within 12 months.

*In the 27 states we analyzed, there are:*

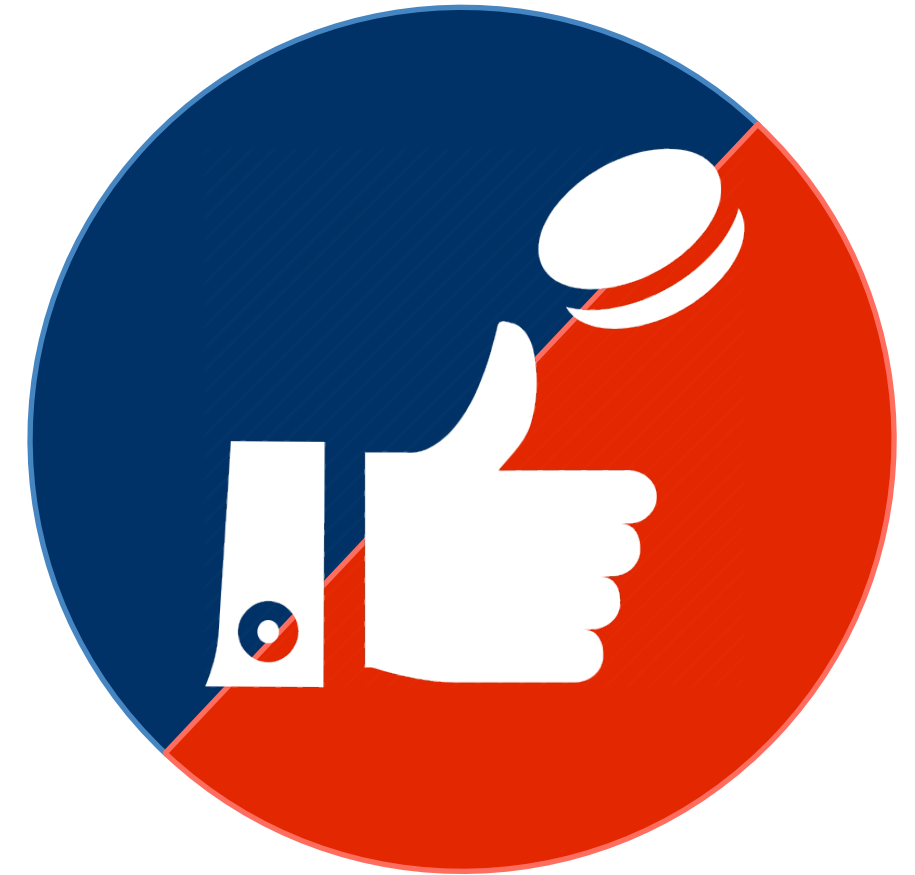
**1,300+** Coin Flip High Schools for **Black** students

**1,700+** Coin Flip High Schools for **Hispanic** students

**3,600+** Coin Flip High Schools for **Low-Income** students

*If extrapolated nationally, we estimate:*

**7,000+, or nearly 1/3 of all high schools,** give students of color or those from low-income families less than a coin flip chance of enrolling in postsecondary after high school graduation.

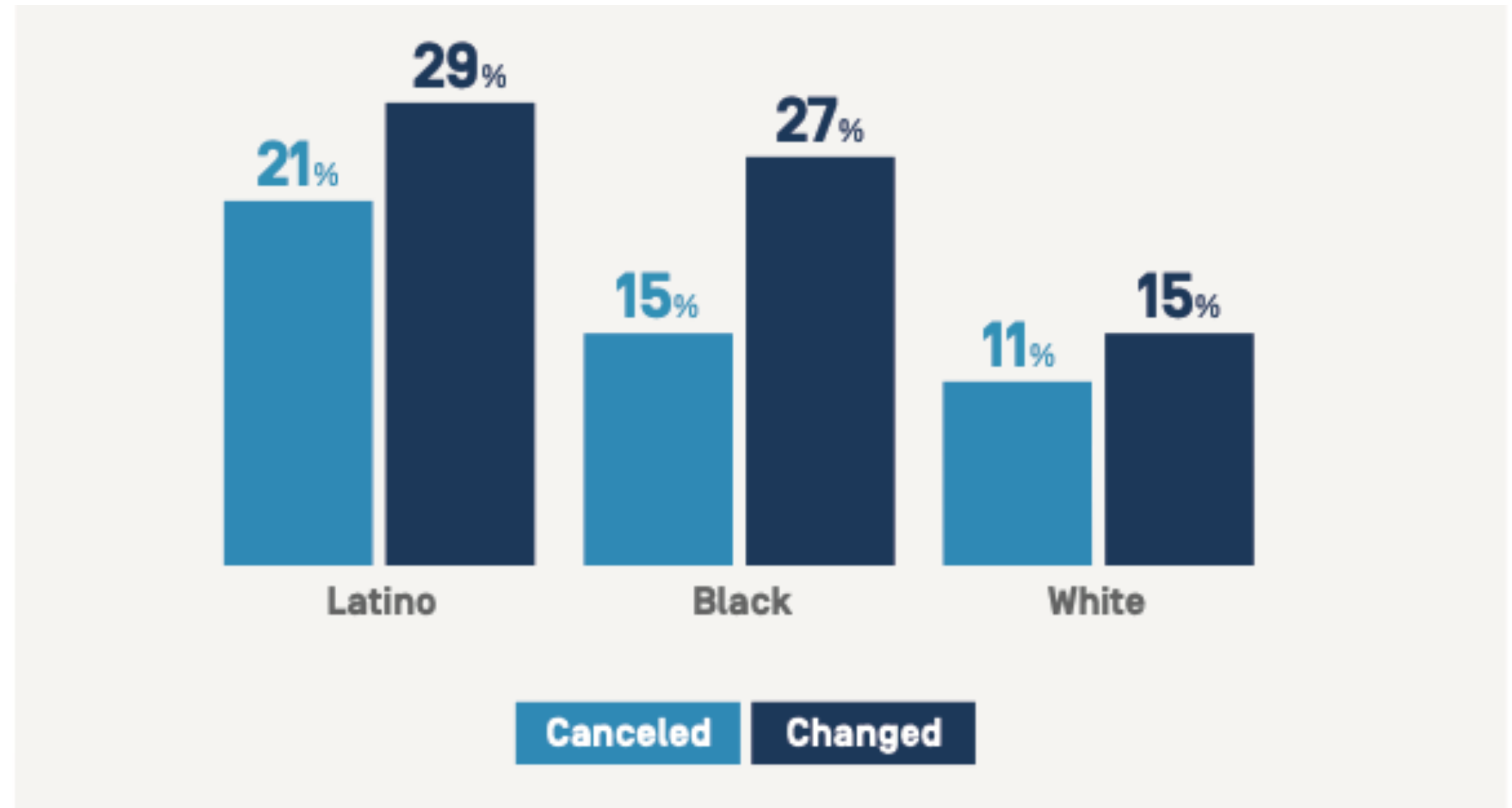


# The COVID-19 Roadblock

Students of color are more likely to have **changed or canceled** their education plans.

This will likely lead to even more gaps in postsecondary enrollment and credential attainment.

*Source: Strada COVID-19 Work and Education Survey, 2020*



# Success is Possible

Schools, districts, charter networks, and states across the country have turned the history of disparate outcomes on its head. They are laser focused on a set of metrics that are predictive of students' postsecondary enrollment and success. **Armed with data, they are making substantial changes in how they serve low-income students and students of color.**

**The country has cut in half the number of “dropout factories.” Now it’s time to turn our attention to the “coin flip” high schools.** Districts and states need to learn from their peers and commit to monitoring and intervening on a new set of postsecondary “Momentum Metrics” so that, collectively, the country can flip the trajectory of postsecondary preparation and success for millions of students.











# The Momentum Metrics






# Postsecondary Transition Momentum Metrics




Collectively, the Momentum Metrics represent the most predictive indicators of **postsecondary preparation, retention, and success.**

|           |   |   |  |
|-----------|---|---|--|
| PREPARING |  9th-Grade GPA         |  Potential for Advanced Coursework |  High-Quality Pathway Participation |
| APPLYING  |  College Application  |  FAFSA Completion                 |  College Match                     |
| ENROLLING |  Seamless Enrollment |  Gateway Course Completion       |  |


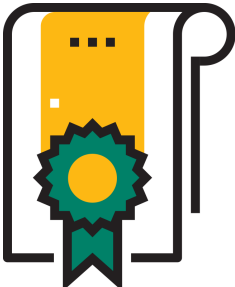
# Preparing

| Metric  | Definition  | Why it Matters  |
|---|---|---|
|  <b>9th-Grade GPA</b>                        | The percentage of students who have achieved at least a 3.0 GPA at the end of their 9th-grade year  | 9th-Grade GPA has been found to be predictive of 11th-grade GPA, postsecondary enrollment, and first-year retention. High schools may use GPA to qualify students for advanced coursework, and colleges consider GPA when making admissions, scholarship, and course placement decisions. |
|  <b>Potential for Advanced Coursework</b>   | The percentage of students who have shown potential to be successful in advanced coursework who have successfully completed at least one course                                   | Participation in early postsecondary opportunities—Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment—has been shown to increase high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and college persistence.   |
|  <b>High-Quality Pathway Participation</b> | Of students who participate in career and technical education (CTE) coursework, the percentage that concentrate in an in-demand pathway, as defined by regional labor market data | Students who complete a high-quality pathway are more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in higher education, and receive higher compensation after high school.   |

# Applying

| Metric   | Definition   | Why it Matters   |
|--|--|--|
|  <b>College Application</b> | The percentage of eligible high school seniors who submitted at least two college applications           | Increasing the number of applications students submit significantly increases their probability of enrolling at a postsecondary institution, and 89 percent of students submitting at least two applications are accepted by at least one four-year institution. |
|  <b>FAFSA Completion</b>   | The percentage of eligible high school seniors who complete the FAFSA by June 30                         | Completing the FAFSA significantly increases the odds that a student will enroll in a postsecondary institution directly after high school, persist in their college coursework, and obtain a degree.  |
|  <b>College Match</b>     | The percentage of high school seniors who are admitted to at least one “match” postsecondary institution | Students who attend postsecondary institutions that match their academic preparation levels are more likely to persist in their college coursework.  |

# Enrolling

| Metric   | Definition   | Why it Matters   |
|--|--|--|
|  <b>Seamless Enrollment</b>        | <p>The percentage of students who enroll at a postsecondary institution directly after high school</p> <p>The percentage of students who enlist in the military, enter the workforce (in a position with family-sustaining wages), or participate in a registered apprenticeship</p> | <p>Students who enroll at a college or university directly after high school are more likely to persist and attain a postsecondary credential. Direct connection to apprenticeships, the military, or the workforce at certain wage levels can increase the likelihood of an individual's chances for economic mobility.</p> |
|  <b>Gateway Course Completion</b> | <p>The percentage of students at postsecondary institutions who complete "gateway" (or entry-level) courses within their first year</p>  | <p>Students attain a postsecondary degree at a 20 percent higher rate if they complete gateway courses during their first year.</p>  |

# Bringing the Metrics to Scale



# Prioritizing New Measures of Success

## Challenge:

Very few states and districts are using these metrics to close equity gaps and drive overall improvements in postsecondary access and success

## Opportunity:

The evidence is clear that improving these metrics leads to increases in postsecondary transitions and attainment. And the data to calculate the metrics currently exist.

Prioritizing the most predictive measures of postsecondary preparation, transitions, and success must become the **norm, not the exception**.

It will take **collective leadership at both state and local levels** to commit to use these measures and take action to provide necessary supports for improvement.

# Recommendations for State Leaders

- ✓ Incorporate the metrics in the **state longitudinal data system**.
- ✓ Use the measures to track progress toward meeting the state's **postsecondary attainment goal**.
- ✓ Create **incentives** for districts to set and meet metric goals.
- ✓ Analyze statewide data to identify and promote **bright spots**.
- ✓ Target **supports** using research-backed interventions.
- ✓ Facilitate **peer learning networks**.
- ✓ Create supportive **policies**.
- ✓ **Communicate** about the most predictive indicators of student progress and success.

# Recommendations for Local Leaders

- ✓ **Adopt** Momentum Metrics as core measures of success.
- ✓ **Convene** cross-sector leaders to review data and plan for improvement.
- ✓ Set **goals** for improvement.
- ✓ Deploy capacity to offer **direct student advising and assistance**.
- ✓ Integrate metrics into **regional attainment strategies**.
- ✓ **Partner** with postsecondary institutions to address gaps.
- ✓ Identify **policy barriers** that impede progress.
- ✓ **Communicate** about the most predictive indicators of student progress and success.

# The Path Forward

Taken together, the Momentum Metrics represent the highest-leverage indicators that a student is on the path to successfully transition to college.

But students cannot walk this path alone. They need the help of school leaders, educators, and counselors to guide and support them. And schools need states and districts to enable the conditions to collect, monitor, and use these data to target support to the students who need it most.



**We owe it to our students to give them more than a coin flip's chance to realize their potential. Let's work together to reverse the odds and make every student's dream of a postsecondary education a reality.**

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