

FROM TAILS HEADS

Building Momentum for Postsecondary Success

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE LEADERS

States have a vital role to play in ensuring data are collected, monitored, and used to increase students' postsecondary preparation, transitions, and success. We recommend that state leaders:

Incorporate the Momentum Metrics into the state longitudinal data system.

Whether these data are available should not be up to the individual priorities or capacity of districts. States should immediately begin collecting information and building tools to visualize data not currently in their longitudinal data systems so that both local administrators and state level policymakers have actionable insight into students' progress to successful postsecondary outcomes.

Use the Momentum Metrics to track progress toward meeting the state's postsecondary attainment goal.

The measures provide valuable information on the progress the state is making to meet its postsecondary attainment goal. State leaders should create a dashboard to monitor progress across all of the measures and visualize the trajectory of students on their path to postsecondary matriculation.

Create incentives for districts to set and meet metric goals.

In a time of significant competing priorities and budget reductions, communities will need incentives to prioritize the identified metrics. This is especially true if the metrics are not a component of the state's accountability system. States should consider grant competitions, using federal stimulus dollars, or other award approaches to encourage districts to set and meet annual improvement targets.

Analyze statewide data to identify and promote bright spots.

The state education agency—potentially in partnership with the state's higher education agency—should produce an annual report that highlights the state's progress in moving each of the metrics and points to specific schools, districts, or communities that have demonstrated significant year-over-year improvement and identify gaps in the metrics, by race/ethnicity, income status, and geography.

Target supports using research-backed interventions.

There are research-backed strategies that practitioners and policymakers can implement to improve student outcomes for each of the metrics. States should use their programmatic funds and bully pulpit to promote strategies that have proven to be effective in improving students' postsecondary preparation and success.

Facilitate peer learning networks.

To facilitate the use of the identified research-backed interventions, as well as to learn from the bright spot districts, states should consider developing peer learning networks around specific metrics. This will give educators and administrators a way to learn not only about what they should do, but also importantly, how they can implement the strategies.

Create supportive policies.

The state's role in setting the appropriate enabling conditions for success is paramount. State leaders must identify policy approaches that inspire action and remove barriers to improve students' postsecondary preparation and transitions. This includes both strategies for increasing data transparency and use and policies that research has shown will lead to student success, especially for students of color and those from low-income families.

Communicate about the most predictive indicators of student progress and success.

State leaders should organize appropriate communications targeted both at the public and school and district officials to make them aware of the critical leverage points in a student's path to and through postsecondary education and training.

