



## THE MOMENTUM METRICS

# CASE STUDY

## State-Level Data Leadership in Connecticut

### PUTTING THE MOMENTUM METRICS INTO ACTION

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Create supportive policies.
- ✓ Communicate about the most predictive indicators of student progress and success.

State leadership has a critical role to play in making data accessible and actionable to support local action. States can provide the incentives (via accountability, grant opportunities, state-led challenges, and more) and the infrastructure to support local leaders in catalyzing their ability to track and use the Momentum Metrics. Connecticut has set the tone for the importance of several key metrics, driving local communities to prioritize this work for the benefit of students across the state.

### ADVANCED COURSEWORK POTENTIAL



Expanding access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses has been a priority for the state for nearly a decade. This dedication has led to Connecticut being one of the leading states for AP participation across the country, based on data from the College Board.

At the state level, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has launched an AP activation campaign to encourage students identified with potential to enroll in advanced coursework. Each year, the Commissioner sends a signed letter directly to every 10th and 11th grade student identified with AP Potential through College Board reports, which are based on PSAT data. Since starting the campaign, the state has seen an increase in the number of students enrolling in AP coursework, as well as in those taking and passing AP exams.

### SPOTLIGHT DEPARTMENT



Connecticut State  
Department of Education

### AP CAMPAIGN RESULTS

**64** PERCENT INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION IN AT LEAST ONE AP COURSE

**61** PERCENT INCREASE IN STUDENTS RECEIVING A 3 OR HIGHER ON EXAMS

**231** PERCENT INCREASE IN HISPANIC STUDENT AP PARTICIPATION

### MOMENTUM METRICS



In 2019, nearly half of the state's students participated in at least one AP course, an increase of 64 percent in the last decade, with the percentage of students receiving a 3 or higher on AP exams seeing a nearly mirror increase of 61 percent. For Hispanic students, the growth in AP participation has soared in the past decade by over 231 percent.

Meeting college and career readiness benchmarks—for AP, defined as scoring a 3 or higher on the exam—is part of the statewide accountability system, thereby creating incentives for schools to prioritize advanced coursework. CSDE encourages districts to use the AP Potential as a tool to advise students on their advanced coursework options. In a partnership with CSDE and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), the Board of Regents has also developed an AP Uniform Credit policy that ensures that students will receive postsecondary course credit for receiving a passing score on an AP exam. This policy is supported by a data sharing agreement between CSDE and higher education institutions that automatically shares student data on their performance on AP exams and the SAT, eliminating the need for students to request scores to be sent.

The state's focus on advanced coursework potential has driven local communities to prioritize this work. For example, Middletown and West Hartford school districts encourage every high school student to take at least one AP course before they graduate. Connecticut also provides training and support to districts on using AP Potential data to advise students and assess course offerings.

This year, Connecticut is expanding the data they are using to identify students beyond the PSAT by looking at assessment scores in earlier grades (more specifically 6th and 8th grade Smarter Balanced scores), recognizing the challenges that students have faced due to the pandemic in accessing and taking standardized assessments. With the push to look at

multiple indicators, the state anticipates that this shift will broaden the pool of identified students even further.

#### FAFSA COMPLETION



Recognizing that completing the FAFSA is a key indicator of the likelihood that students will enroll in college, CSDE and the Connecticut Office of Higher Education have partnered to provide weekly updates on student-level FAFSA completion data to districts. The state developed a template data sharing agreement for districts to complete to opt-in for access to the dashboard.

Inspired by NCAN's national FAFSA challenge, CSDE, in partnership with the Governor's Office, launched a statewide FAFSA completion challenge in December. The state also included cohort-based support for districts with low FAFSA completion rates from the prior year and that served a high percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch. Districts received seed grants; received access to Signal Vine, an AI-powered texting platform, to send targeted messages to students around key deadlines and opportunities for support; and participated in learning communities facilitated by CT Rise, a nonprofit organization that provides direct support to districts across the state to help close equity gaps in postsecondary access and success.

Finally, Connecticut revamped its existing statewide FAFSA dashboard, which provides student-level data to high schools on a weekly basis, to incorporate a public-facing view that compares completion rates among high schools across the state to promote friendly competition. The state set a goal for high schools to increase their year-to-year FAFSA completion rates by five percentage points. While the completion challenge officially ends on June 30, 2021, the majority of participating districts have already exceeded last year's completion rate.

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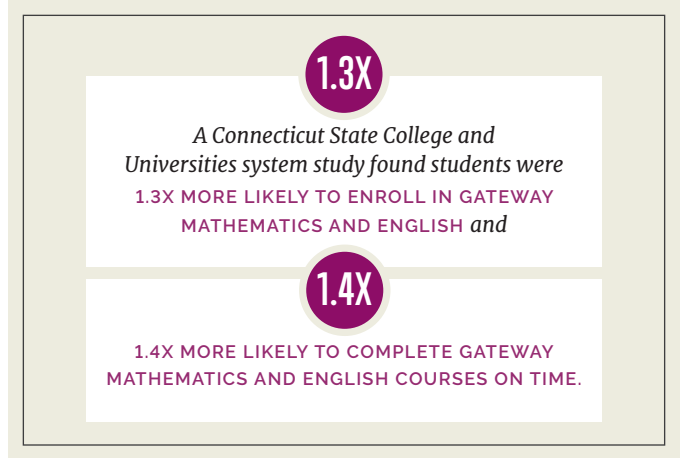
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## GATEWAY COURSE COMPLETION



In 2012, Connecticut passed Public Act 12-40, which aimed to increase the rate of gateway course completion by modifying the traditional, prerequisite model of remediation for mathematics and English courses. Students with lower levels of achievement were placed into transitional courses, while those with higher levels of achievement were placed into “embedded,” also known as co-requisite, courses. This new model was piloted and then rolled out to all 12 of the colleges in the Connecticut Community College system.

Since the implementation of the legislation, gateway course completion rates for first-time students enrolled at a community college have increased by 12 percentage points for mathematics and 16 percentage points in English. The average time it takes a student in need of remediation to enroll in a gateway mathematics or English course has also been cut nearly in half, from four semesters to two semesters.



The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system conducted a controlled **study** of the gateway course legislation and found that students were 1.3 times more likely to enroll in gateway mathematics and English courses under the new model and 1.4 times more likely to complete them on time.