

# Districts' **Hidden Opportunities** to Boost Postsecondary Success

How Students' College Decision-Making Has Changed Since  
COVID and What Educators Can Do to Support Them

# Objectives for Today



Identify the **new and hidden barriers** preventing qualified students from enrolling and completing college

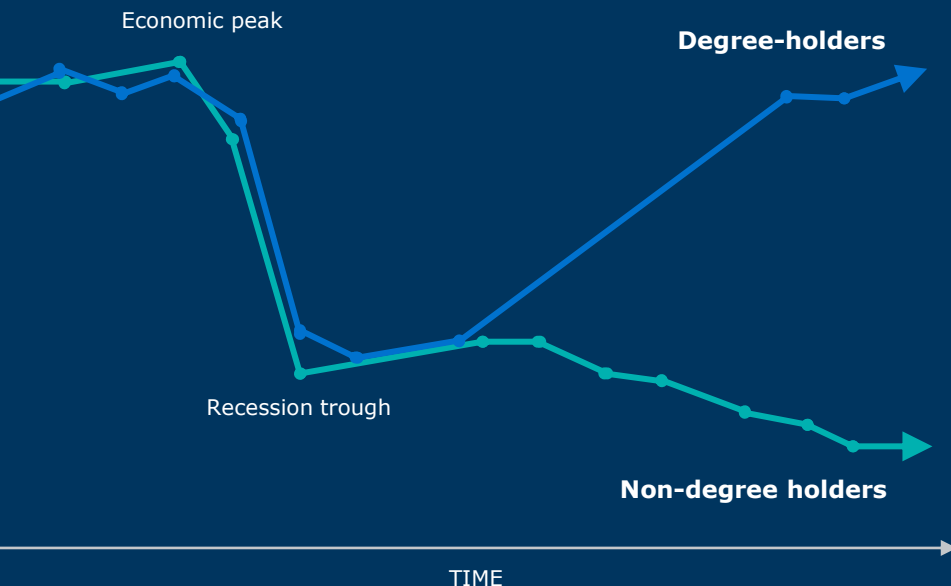


Learn **7 high-impact strategies** to prepare all students in your district for postsecondary success



Find out **how EAB will further support postsecondary success initiatives** in your district across the coming months

# College Degrees Essential in a Post-Vaccine Economy



99%

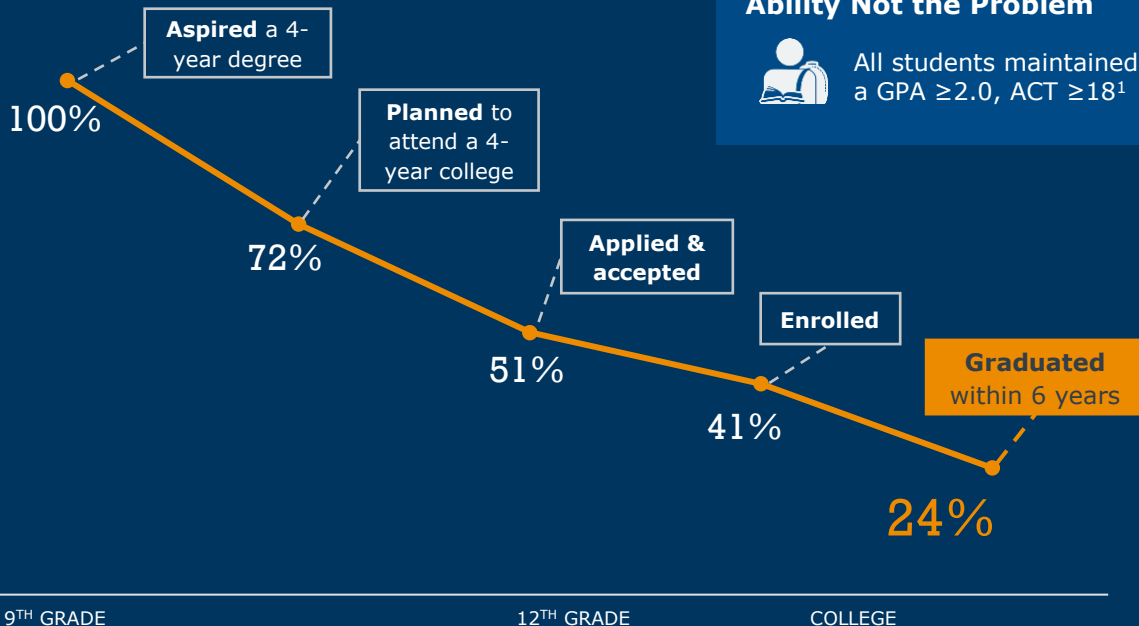
**of new jobs created** required a 2 or 4-year degree

7x

**projected growth of jobs** for degree holders in the next 10 years

Sources: Georgetown University Center for Education & the Workforce, [America's Divided Recovery: College Haves And Have-nots](#), 2016; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Occupations that Need More Education for Entry are Projected to Grow Faster Than Average](#), 2021; EAB interviews and analysis.

# Very Few Students Who Aspire College Earn a Degree

9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

COLLEGE

1) n=5,194 CPS students. Sample is 47% Black, 31% Hispanic, and 13% White.

# Pandemic Further Threatens Postsecondary Success



**AVERY**

*15 years old*

- Struggles with anxiety
- Failed first course



**No longer interested  
in college**



**SONIA**

*17 years old*

- Frequently absent
- Responsible for younger siblings



**Didn't apply to college**



**EMERSON**

*18 years old*

- Stops attending class
- Takes a daytime job



**\$9,000 debt with  
no degree**

# Huge Opportunity for K-12 to Impact College Success

## Colleges & Universities



Student success problems are **the #1** higher ed research request

## Community Organizations



**1 in 10** students live in a college access “desert”

## Parents & Families



**Less than half** of parents know how to apply to a college

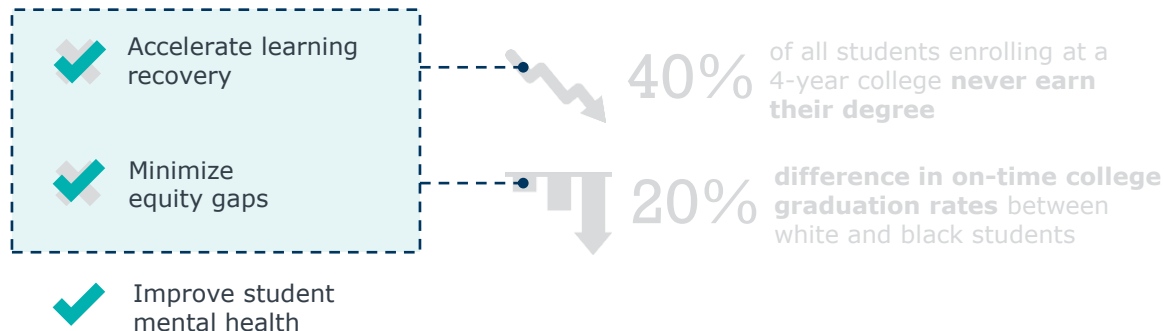
## K-12's Role in Postsecondary Success Larger than You Think



Access to all students

**80%** of barriers to can be addressed in K-12

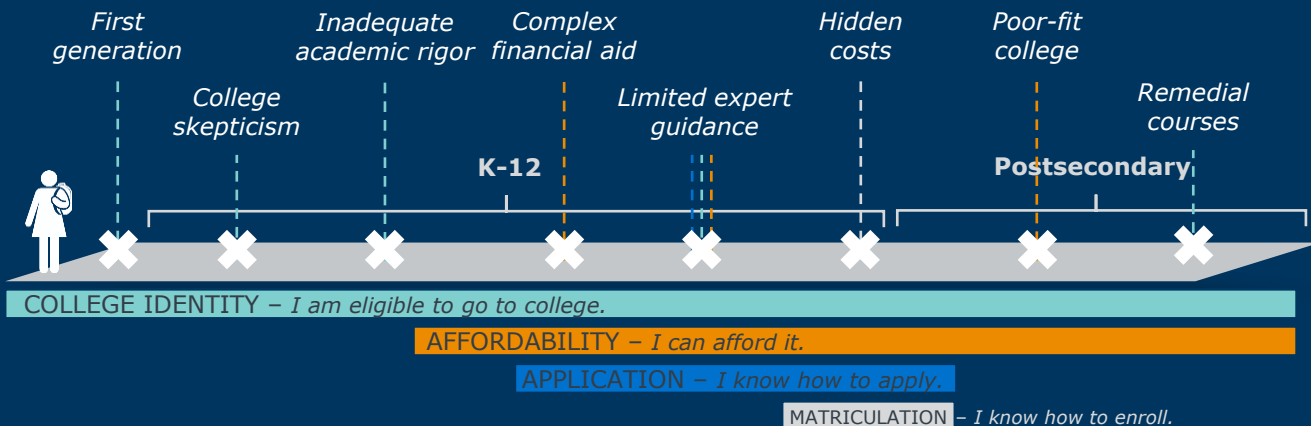
# Top District Priorities Will Fail Without Postsecondary Plan



"Consider the investment put into K-12 education: the money, the time, the careers...**what's the ultimate ROI of all this if our students don't achieve postsecondary success?**"

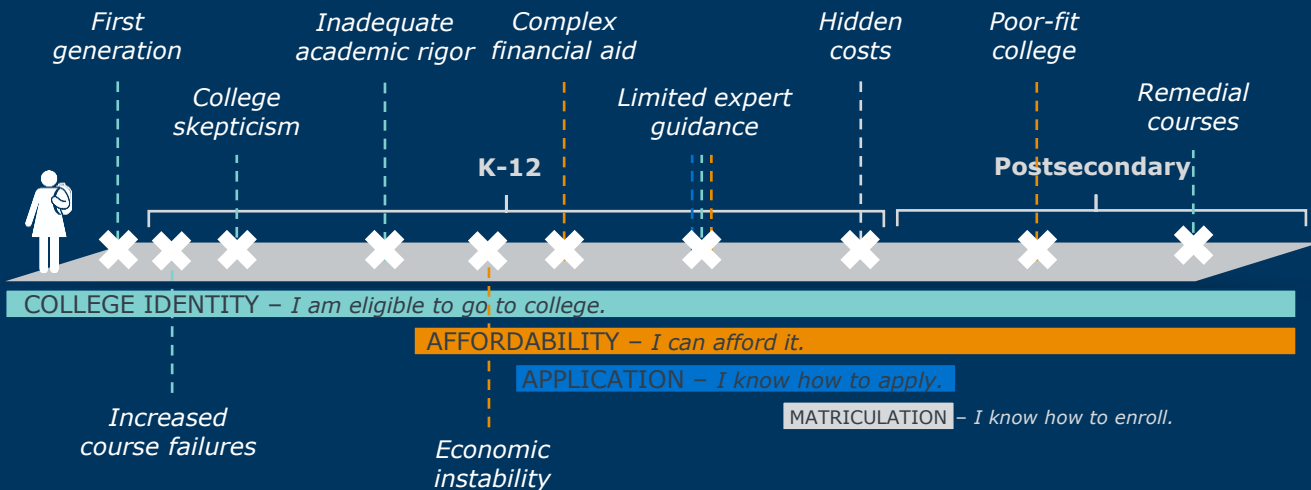
*Superintendent, K-12 Public School District*

# Postsecondary Decision-Making Increasingly Complex





# Postsecondary Decision-Making Increasingly Complex



**80%** of postsecondary success barriers are born **while students are in K-12**

# District Leaders Overwhelmed by Competing Needs



Superintendents build new learning systems essentially from scratch



Counselors spread thin with large case loads



Overall limited time and energy for new initiatives



All my focus is on school reopening and learning recovery, plus whatever walks through my door that morning. **I really hope someone else has college access figured out.**"

*Superintendent, Public School District*

# K-12 Districts Don't Need to Start from Scratch



**14 yrs**

of student success  
research

**1,100+**

Partners nationally  
and internationally

**315**

Best practices  
impacting student  
success

**15+**

K-12 districts and CBOs with  
outsized improvements in **college  
enrollment & completion**

# Exemplar Districts Share 3 Conditions for College Success

12



**Correct Student  
Misconceptions About  
College At Scale**



**Ensure College Choice  
Focuses on Likelihood  
of Success**



**Remove Barriers to  
College Application  
and Matriculation**



# 7 High-Impact Practices to Boost College Success



13

- 1** | **Redesign grading policies** to solely focus on academic mastery
- 2** | **Supplement FAFSA Night** with ongoing, student-navigated FAFSA guidance
- 3** | **Scale support on deciphering financial aid letters** using self-guided online platforms
- 4** | **Reframe college advising** to ensure college choice focuses on likelihood of graduation
- 5** | **Match students with best-fit colleges at scale** using online, student-led college comparison tools
- 6** | **Correct college misinformation** using district social media messaging
- 7** | **Send just-in-time summer text reminders** to increase college matriculation rates

# Practice 1

**Redesign grading policies** to  
solely focus on academic mastery

# Equitable Grading Critical for “Test-Optional” Admissions

## “Test Optional” Appears to Stay, Putting Grades at a Premium

**72%** of universities went **test-optional** in 2021

**54%** will **keep test optional** until 2023 at least



## More Failing Students Unlikely to Meet New Admission Standards

✗ Number of students failing core courses **nearly doubled**

✗ Course failures most common in **math and junior year**

✗ **Low income students and students of color** at greatest risk for course failure

“

My grades are terrible this year. **I don't even know if the college I want to attend will accept me.**”

*High School Junior, NY*

# Two Ways to Boost Grades and College Readiness

## Design a Learning Recovery Strategy



### Essential, But Long Term

- Results may require several years
- Mental health an overwhelming first step



Access EAB's **Learning Recovery Resource Center** [here](#).

## Redesign Grades to Reflect Learning



Up to 40% of criteria not related to learning

- × Homework
- × Attendance
- × Participation

### Necessary for Equity, and Short Term

- Results noticeable in less than a year
- Promotes more equitable student evaluations

Sources: National School Board Association 2020, "Accurate and Equitable Grading: Grading System can Perpetuate Inequalities"; Hough, L 2021 "Grade Expectations: why we need to rethink grading in our schools;" EAB interviews and analysis



# Reexamine Grading Policies, Particularly in High School

## Sample Grading

Test and Quizzes

A-

Participation & Attendance

C

On-Time Homework

B-

Final Research Project

B+



## Key Questions for Designing Equitable Grading Policies

1. Does all the criteria in grades reflect **course mastery**? Which can we remove?
2. Which criteria may accidentally **penalize at-risk students'** realities?
3. How can we **minimize interpretation** of course requirements?
4. How can we offer **multiple opportunities** to demonstrate mastery?

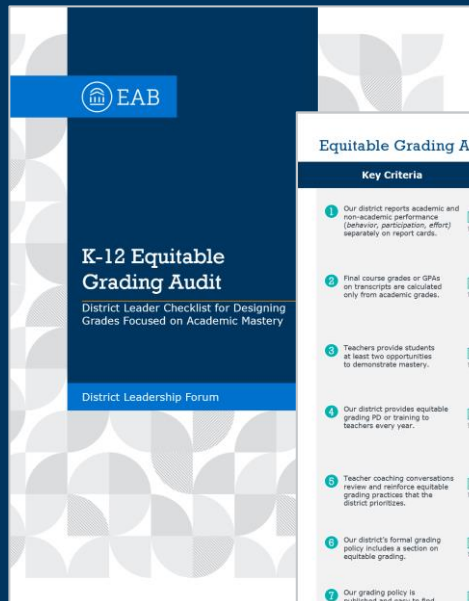
**250** Of high school students who failed last year were no longer failing



Reduced failures among low-income students and students of color

# Jump-start Equitable Grading in Your District

[Click here](#) to  
download EAB's  
**K-12 Equitable  
Grading Audit.**



Equitable Grading Audit for District Leaders			
Key Criteria		Recommended Next Steps	
1	Our district reports academic and non-academic performance (behavior, participation, effort) separately on report cards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Configure the LMS or grade book to include two sections on student report cards: one for academic grades only reporting learning mastery and one for non-academic performance. This reduces the chances that subjectivity infiltrates academic course grades. Refer to <a href="#">these examples</a> to get started.
2	Final course grades or GPAs on transcripts are calculated only from academic grades.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Set the expectation that teachers only report scores from academic mastery assignments and omit non-academic factors (i.e., completion, timeliness). This ensures that subjective elements—such as behavior and participation—do not interfere with final GPAs.
3	Teachers provide students at least two opportunities to demonstrate mastery.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Set the expectation that teachers assign final grades only after students receive at least two opportunities to demonstrate learning. This ensures scores reflect true academic mastery rather than the time it takes for students to get there.
4	Our district provides equitable grading PD or training to teachers every year.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Reserve at least two training opportunities around equitable grading, either during PLCs or existing teacher PD days. One way to start is to use PD resources from <a href="#">Grading for Equity</a> . The training helps scale consistent, equitable grading practices across classrooms.
5	Teacher coaching conversations review and reinforce equitable grading practices that the district prioritizes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Incorporate at least one of the equitable grading practices above into informal conversation rubrics or look-for documents. This increases the overall use of fair grading practices and signals that equity remains a district priority.
6	Our district's formal grading policy includes a section on equitable grading.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Include your district's approach to equitable grading in your district grading policy and provide specific examples. Use student-friendly language to ensure the broader school community understands it.
7	Our grading policy is published and easy to find on our district website.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Post your district grading policy on the district website two clicks from the homepage. This allows students & parents to easily search and reference your grading policy at any time.
8	Our leadership team reviews and discusses our equitable grading policy at least once a year.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	Host an annual equitable grading meeting with your leadership team to revisit this audit and reinforce the district's commitment to equitable grading.

©2020 by EAB. All Rights Reserved.

3

eab.com

## Practice 2

**Supplement FAFSA Night** with  
ongoing, student-navigated  
FAFSA guidance

# FAFSA Submissions Plummet Due to Pandemic

 **21%**

Reduction in FAFSA  
submissions for  
**first-year students**

**44%**

don't think  
they're eligible

**55%**

"Don't know anything  
about financial aid"



Severely limited  
guidance

**\$2 billion**

of federal aid left unclaimed

# Virtual FAFSA Night a Good Step, but Not Sufficient

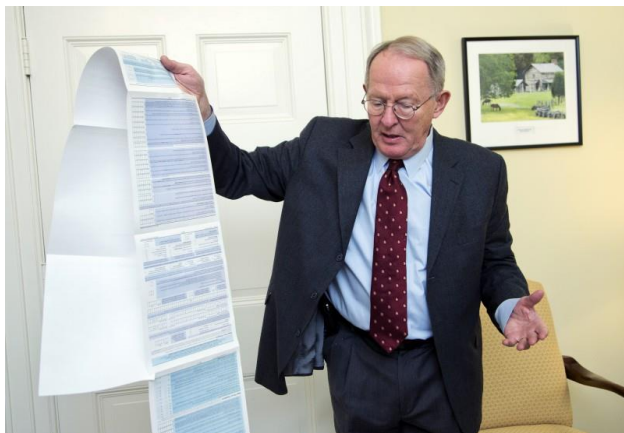


Photo: AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) unrolls full FAFSA form to illustrate its length and complexity



Low-income students  
**least likely to engage**



Most convenient for students  
**who've already decided**  
college is affordable

**<30%**

Of students attend organized  
financial aid events

# Provide Ongoing, Student-Navigated FAFSA Guidance

22



**Define & contextualize** difficult financial aid jargon



**Clarify common misconceptions** about FAFSA eligibility



**List simple requirements** for completing the FAFSA in 22 minutes



**Guide students through verification** without fear & confusion

## Key Benefits of EAB's FAFSA Toolkit



Accessible anytime



Customizable



English & Spanish



PDF & HTML

# Share EAB's On-Demand FAFSA Resources

[Click here](#) to  
download EAB's  
**FAFSA Submission  
Toolkit.**

## Customize with your district information

### Six Items and 22 Minutes: All You Need to Fill Out the FAFSA



Filing the FAFSA isn't as complicated or time-consuming as it seems – you only need about six documents and 22 minutes! So in the time it takes you to catch up on your Instagram feed, you can take the critical first step in getting the money you need to attend college!

Here's a checklist of everything you and your parent need to fill out, sign and submit the FAFSA:

- ☐ An [FSA ID](#). Your FSA ID allows you to log in to your account, sign the FAFSA and make changes or add schools. You and your parent must create separate FSA IDs. Create this first!
- ☐ You and your parent's Social Security or Alien Registration number. Here's what to do if your parent [doesn't have a Social Security number](#).
- ☐ Driver's license (if you have one)
- ☐ Your and your parent's federal income tax returns and W-2s from 2019 (you can use [the IRS Data Retrieval Tool](#) to import this data!)
- ☐ Bank statement
- ☐ If applicable, other records of money earned, and records of investments and untaxed income

## Practice 3

**Scale support on deciphering  
financial aid letters**  
using self-guided online platforms



# Students Left Alone to Decipher Confusing Aid Letters

## Award Letters Are Notoriously Unclear and Complex

### Financial Aid Award Letter

Your financial aid award provides you with a total commitment of \$62,600.00 in university-funded scholarships and grants over 4 years.

	FALL	SPRING	TOTAL
President's Scholarship	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,000
University of EAB Grant	\$5,325	\$5,325	\$10,650
Subsidized Direct Loan	\$1,750	\$1,750	\$3,500
Unsubsidized Direct Loan	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Parent PLUS Loan	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Federal Work-study	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000
Award Total	\$21,075	\$21,075	\$42,150

Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$43,573.00

Estimated Room & Board: \$12,000.00 - \$13,500.00

Costs buried in opening paragraph

Loans and grants not differentiated

136

different names for the *Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan*

1/3

of letters don't calculate what students must pay out-of-pocket

## Counselors Rarely Have the Bandwidth to Review All Financial Aid Letters

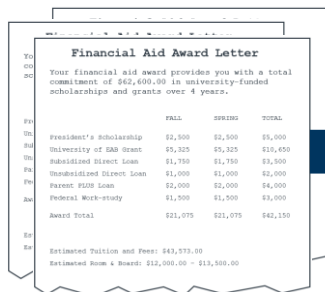


"Even if I spent all 8 hours of the school day helping students break down financial aid awards, **there wouldn't be enough time** to get to every student by May 1."

- College Counselor, K-12 Public School District

# Offer Self-Guided Tools to Help More Students Evaluate FA Letters

## Gather FA Letters



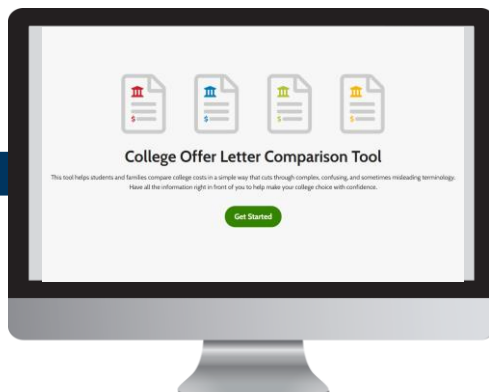
**Financial Aid Award Letter**

Your financial aid award provides you with a total commitment of \$42,600.00 in university-funded scholarships and grants over 4 years.

	FALL	SPRING	TOTAL
President's Scholarship	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,000
University of ABC Grant	\$5,325	\$5,325	\$10,650
Subsidized Direct Loan	\$1,750	\$1,750	\$3,500
Unsubsidized Direct Loan	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Parent PLUS Loan	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Federal Work-study	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000
<b>Award Total</b>	<b>\$21,075</b>	<b>\$21,075</b>	<b>\$42,150</b>

Estimated Tuition and Fees: \$43,573.00  
Estimated Room & Board: \$12,000.00 ~ \$13,500.00

## Upload to Online Tool



## Receive Custom Report

### Affordable Colleges

College A ☐

College B ☒

College C ☐

## Benefits of Using Online Financial Aid Comparison Tools



Define confusing financial jargon



Evaluate which colleges lead to the least amount of debt



Increase efficiency of financial aid conversations

# Three Free Websites for Automatic FA Letter Deciphering

	 Financial Aid Offer Comparison Tool	 Award Packages Comparison Tool	 Aid Awards Calculator
<b>No Sign Up/Login Required</b>	✗	✓	<i>Login required to save information</i>
<b>Embedded Definitions of Financial Aid Jargon</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Recommendations for Decreasing Debt</b>	✓	✓	✗
<b>Automatic PDF Upload</b>	✓	<i>Manual upload</i>	<i>Manual upload</i>
<b>Debt to Estimated Salary Ratio</b>	✓	✗	✗

## Practice 4

**Reframe college advising** to  
ensure college choice focuses  
on likelihood of graduation

# Traditional Advising May Not Lead to College Degrees

## Students Ask Disconnected Questions When Choosing a College

“ Which college will accept my GPA?

Where do I want to live?

What schools have the experience I want?

Which colleges have reached out to me? ”



## Many Students Select Schools Where They Won't Graduate

**40%** of students who enroll **never graduate**

**71%** Stop out due to **affordability issues**

**66%** of students who stop-out **chose their school based on location**

# Refocus Advising on Financial Fit & Odds of Success



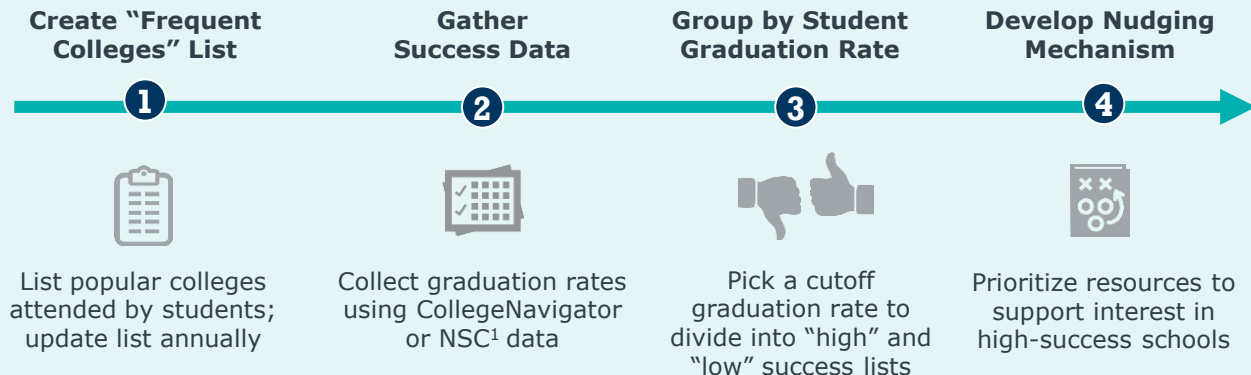
## Financial Fit



## Academic Fit



# 4 Steps to Implement Success-Focus Counseling

**4x**

Increase in at-risk students enrolled at "high-success" institutions

1) National Student Clearinghouse

# Implement Success-Focused Counseling in Your District

[Click here](#) to download  
EAB's **Success-Focused College Counseling Toolkit.**



## Success-Focused College Counseling

Five Steps to Improve Students' Choice of Postsecondary Institution

### This Step-by-Step Guide Will Help Users:

- Better understand the importance of college graduation rate choice of postsecondary institution
- Collect and analyze data on their student's postsecondary institution
- Learn how to leverage college outcomes data to influence student choice



### Step #1: Find Out Where Your Students Are Going to College

#### Description

- > Create a list of the institutions your graduates most frequently attend
- Use National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data if your district already partners with the NSC, and/or collect survey data from counselors, accepted seniors, and alumni to create a comprehensive list.
- > Keep list manageable and update regularly
- Adjust list size according to the number of students in your district to keep it manageable (we recommend the 20-40 most commonly attended schools to start with). Update and refine list annually to ensure it accurately reflects students' choices.

#### Time Needed

- > Minimal, several hours to compile data
- > Minimal, several hours to compile data
- > Cost of NSC membership (optional)
- > Minimal costs to distribute survey and collect data

#### Simple Process to Develop a Robust Data Set



#### Key Points

- The vast majority of your students attend a limited number of schools, usually local and regional public and private institutions.
- Districts need a good understanding of where their students are already going before focusing resources on better supporting their choices.
- The NSC provides an annual breakdown of the most popular postsecondary institutions for each district's alumni. If you have an NSC partnership, you can use that list as a basis to create your own.
- Having an NSC partnership is helpful, but not necessary. Districts can use exit or alumni surveys, or collect individual lists from college counselors to complement or substitute NSC data.
- Neither source of information is perfect – NSC data does not capture every student or institution, and surveys tend to have a low response rate. But even imperfect data would capture the most schools your students are attending and help you develop a list.

©2021 EAB Global, Inc. • All Rights Reserved

4

nsf.com



## Practice 5

**Match students with best-fit colleges  
at scale** using online, student-led  
college comparison tools

# Expert Guidance Less Readily Available



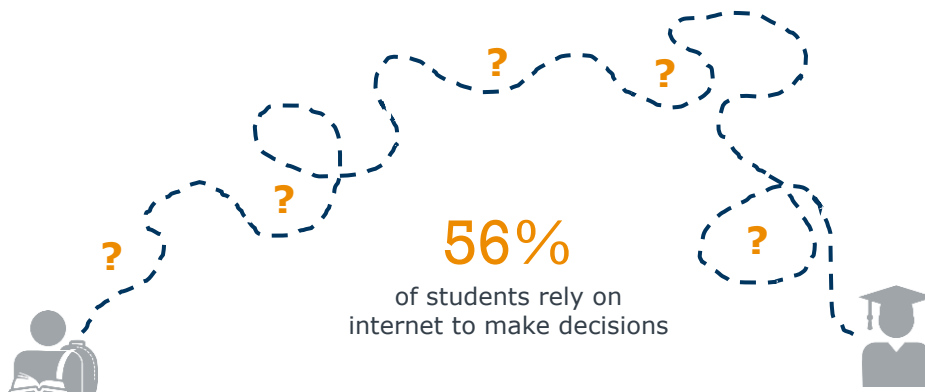
Postsecondary advising  
even less of a priority



CBO's highly localized and  
not available for all students



Parents too stressed to  
provide adequate support



# Two EAB Platforms Designed to Enhance College Advising

35



**One-stop tool** for targeted college search



**Local and national scholarship** database



**Counselor support** for easy implementation



**Connect students** with outside experts



**Personalized resources** for at-risk students



**Ready-made counselor training** on college advising

**FREE** for EAB partners



Designed to reach high schoolers

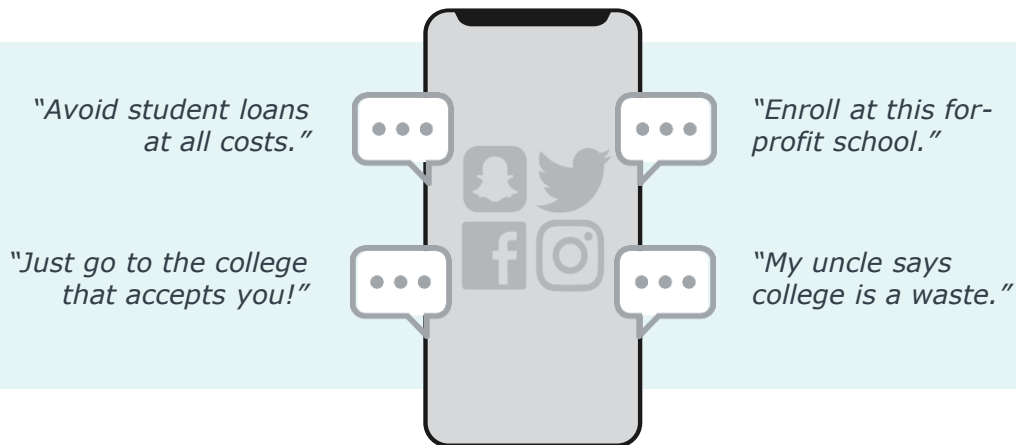


Dedicated support team

## Practice 6

**Correct college misinformation**  
using district social media messaging

# Social Media Messaging Is Often Inaccurate and Untimely



“

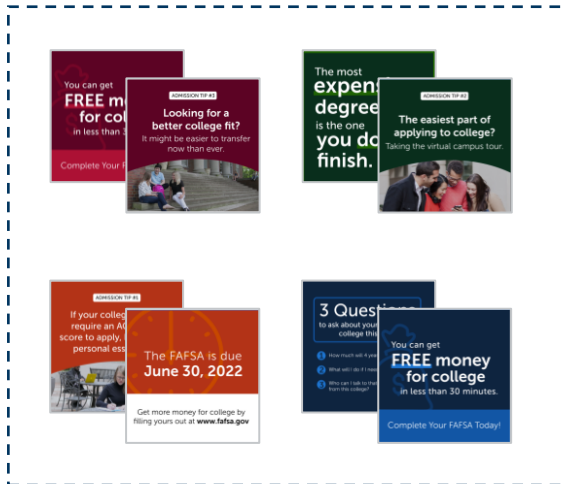
The district has social media accounts, and we know that students and parents see them – **but I just have no idea what to post** besides event schedules and snow day announcements.”

- Superintendent, K-12 Public School District

# Share Critical College Messages with EAB's Toolkit



## Sample Content:



## Included in EAB's Social Media Toolkit

- ✓ **Up-to-date social media messages about college** students are least likely to hear
- ✓ **Customizable colors** to match district or school branding
- ✓ **Caption suggestions and links to helpful resources** proven to compel students to act

## Benefits for District Leaders and Counselors



**Save time** from delivering important messages individually



**Reach more students and families** with timely, accurate college information

# 5 Tricks to Increase Your District's Social Media Influence

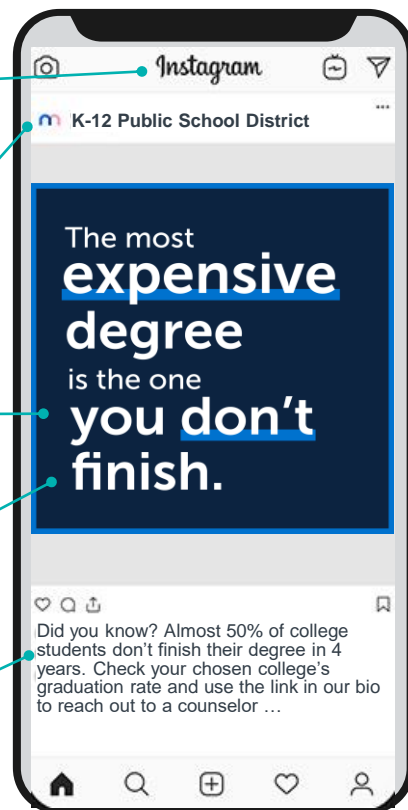
**1 Opt for Instagram and Twitter** (vs. Facebook) to reach the most digital natives

**2 Post from an existing social media account** that most students and parents already follow

**3 Share college content at least once every 2 weeks** to establish a consistent college-themed presence

**4 Use your own district colors** to boost authenticity and familiarity

**5 Hook readers with a caption** including a call-to-action, like contacting a counselor through a "link in bio"



## Practice 7

**Send just-in-time summer text reminders** to increase college matriculation rates



# Too Many Students Miss Summer Matriculation Deadlines



K-12



Summer Counseling Dead Zone



1/3

of admitted college  
students **fail to  
enroll** in the fall

Postsecondary

# Send Automated Text Reminders for Enrollment Deadlines

## 3-Step Process to Launch Text Messaging Campaign

### Collect Student Information

- Counselor records
- Flyers with phone number students can text for assistance
- Student surveys

### Create Message Templates and Schedule

- Key nudging milestones:
  - *Application deadlines*
  - *Financial aid deadlines*
  - *Enrollment deposit*
  - *Housing deposit*
  - *Health insurance*
  - *Orientation*
  - *Placement tests*
  - *Course registration*

### Deliver Messages and Provide Support

- All messages automated
- Split responsibility among staff for following up

**16%** Increase in applications

**22%** Increase in **financial aid** applications

**5%** Increase in FRPL<sup>1</sup> students enrolling in college

► Learn more details about this strategy in our [College Access Study](#).

1) Free and Reduced-price Lunch

# 7 High-Impact Practices to Boost College Success



43

- 1** | **Redesign grading policies** to solely focus on academic mastery
- 2** | **Supplement FAFSA Night** with ongoing, student-navigated FAFSA guidance
- 3** | **Scale support on deciphering financial aid letters** using self-guided online platforms
- 4** | **Reframe college advising** to ensure college choice focuses on likelihood of graduation
- 5** | **Match students with best-fit colleges at scale** using online, student-led college comparison tools
- 6** | **Correct college misinformation** using district social media messaging
- 7** | **Send just-in-time summer text reminders** to increase college matriculation rates

# EAB's K-12 Postsecondary Success Resource Center Coming This Month

✓ **Detailed best-practice descriptions** for today's college landscape

✓ **15+** implementation tools and resources

✓ Practices sorted by district user



# Recommended Next Steps Following Today's Session

45



## Baseline Tasks Every District Should Do

- ✓ Designate a post-secondary success task force team
- ✓ Disseminate the FAFSA toolkit to counselors & families
- ✓ Download and share EAB's social media images and GIFs on district platforms



## Starting Points for Emerging Leaders

- ✓ Assign team to examine and design grading policies using EAB's Equitable Grading Audit
- ✓ Request to connect with College Greenlight and Cappex
- ✓ Integrate one of the free FA letter deciphering tools into counseling services



## Gold-Star Strategies for Advanced Districts

- ✓ Implement a summer nudging system to increase enrollment
- ✓ Train counselors on Success-Focused Counseling

# EAB College Resources Designed to Make Your Job Easier

## OUR FOCUS TODAY



### Educate Your Team

Educate stakeholders on how the pandemic affects college decisions and how K-12 can play a role

Share presentation  
when launching  
task force



### Execute Strategies

Visit EAB's  
Postsecondary Success  
Resource Center to  
review strategies and  
download  
implementation tools

Download materials  
at [EAB.com](https://eab.com)



### Discuss Your Needs

Request customized  
support or connect with  
an EAB higher  
education expert

Contact your  
dedicated advisor

# Districts' **Hidden Opportunities** to Boost Postsecondary Success

How Students' College Decision-Making Has Changed Since  
COVID and What Educators Can Do to Support Them