How Children's Savings Account Programs Can Support Black and Latine Students

Case Studies

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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Over the past decade, Children's Savings Account (CSA) programs have proliferated across the United States. CSA programs pair long-term savings and investment accounts with other supports to help families pay for post-secondary education. The goal of most CSA programs is to increase participants'—especially those from low-income households—post-secondary enrollment and completion. Within that broader aim, many programs also have goals around addressing barriers for Black and Latine participants to accessing and completing post-secondary education. However, there has been only limited research into how CSA programs are supporting Black and Latine participants.

To begin to address this research gap, Abt Associates and Prosperity Now conducted research in 2020-21 with four CSA program sites:

- **Boston Saves** (Boston, MA), which automatically enrolls children in the Boston Public Schools starting in kindergarten. It provides a $50 initial deposit and additional program contributions for families who link their accounts to the Boston Saves software.

- **KC Scholars** (Kanas City, KS & MO), an opt-in program that enrolls ninth grade students from low-income households in Kansas City. It provides a $50 initial deposit and additional program contributions for participating in workshops and college-related activities.

- **Lansing SAVE** (Lansing, MI), which automatically enrolls children in the Lansing School District starting in kindergarten. It provides a $5 initial deposit and opportunities to receive program contributions through participating in an annual event and from community champions.

- **Oakland Promise** (Oakland, CA), which has two CSA components:

  - **Brilliant Baby** is an opt-in program for Medi-Cal eligible babies born in Oakland. Children receive a $500 initial deposit and their parents are eligible to receive up to $600 in a cash stipend for participating in financial coaching.

  - **Kindergarten to College** automatically enrolls all kindergarten students in Oakland Unified School District. It provides a $100 initial deposit and additional incentives for opening a family-owned account and making regular deposits.

The four case studies explore what the programs are doing to address challenges faced by Black and Latine students in engaging with CSAs and ultimately accessing and completing post-secondary education. These key findings are:

- **The four CSA case study programs have a sphere of influence within which they theorize they can reduce barriers that Black and Latine students face in getting to and through college.** Specifically, most of the programs focus on (1) fostering college expectations for college from a young age and (2) addressing smaller financial resource needs—essentially creating a small safety net through the CSA for gaps left by financial aid and scholarships.

- **The CSA case study programs serve as linchpins around which a range of partners working to advance post-secondary access and success and economic mobility can** converge. CSA programs generally enroll participants at a young age and continue engaging with them through elementary, middle, and high school. Thus, they can be the foundation for bringing together partners focused on college access, scholarships, and other related services.

- **CSAs increase how long students are exposed to college access interventions.** The college access literature shows that specific interventions increase college access and completion rates for low-income and first-generation students, and to a more limited extent for Black and Latine students. CSAs take some of those interventions and apply them at lower doses and intensity, but over a longer period.

- **The degree to which the four case study programs directly focus on supporting Black and Latine students and use targeted strategies varies.** Case study CSA programs were largely not targeting financial resources based on participants' race. Instead, CSA programs use income as a proxy—as Black and Latine families disproportionately have low incomes and low wealth. Targeting resources to lower-income households means that CSA programs are serving higher numbers of Black and Latine students and their families. However, without targeted strategies, some of the challenges faced specifically by Black and Latine students may go unaddressed.

- **Case study programs have some of the data they need to assess how they are serving Black and Latine participants and other populations, but they are still learning and experimenting with how to address differences in program outputs and outcomes by race. Data on race** and other demographic factors of individual students can be difficult for CSA programs to obtain. Even the case study programs with more access to data are still early in determining how to address the differences they are seeing in outputs and outcomes by race.

Overall, the experiences of case study CSA programs indicate that many CSA programs are only just beginning to grapple with racial equity issues, including thinking through how to best serve Black and Latine participants. Although more research is needed to track the outcomes of these approaches, some potential opportunities identified through this study for CSA programs to support Black and Latine participants in getting to and through post-secondary education include:

- **Developing a comprehensive continuum of post-secondary education access and completion services:** CSA programs—by beginning the conversation about post-secondary education as early as birth or kindergarten—can be the linchpin around which a range of post-secondary supports are brought together to create a comprehensive continuum of services from cradle (or kindergarten) through starting a career.

- **Providing targeted equity contributions:** The purpose of these contributions is to promote equity by boosting the account balances of participants whose families, because of their race or household income (or the intersection of the two), are likely to have lower household wealth. Programs can use proxies, such as income or neighborhood, to target resources so they go predominantly to Black and Latine children without explicitly limiting them by race, which may be legally prohibited in many places.

- **Assessing existing program contributions with an equity lens:** Programs can assess their current program contributions to ensure they are accessible to and equitably distributed among Black and Latine participants. Programs can, for example, examine take-up information by race for benchmark incentives (i.e., provided for taking a particular action or reaching a milestone)—to assess equity, as well as consult participating families of color to learn whether they are experiencing barriers to completing required actions.

- **Developing targeted outreach and engagement strategies:** CSA programs can increase the effectiveness of their outreach and engagement to Black and Latine participants and families by employing targeted approaches that recognize community, cultural, and language differences.

- **Creating feedback loops with participants:** Participants and families can be valuable assets in helping programs increase their impact on Black and Latine participants. CSA programs could expand opportunities to gather feedback from participating families and youth—especially Black and Latine participants—by creating a participant advisory board or soliciting feedback through surveys or focus groups.

Section 1: Introduction

Black and Latine[1] young adults in the United States tend to experience greater barriers to post-secondary education than do their White and Asian peers. Some of the barriers experienced by Black and Latine young adults include a higher likelihood of being a first-generation college student, the opportunity costs of working to meet family financial needs, and the racial wealth gap, which results in fewer resources available for Black and Latine families to support their children's post-secondary education.

Over the past decade, Children's Savings Account (CSA) programs, which pair long-term savings and investment accounts with other supports to help families pay for post-secondary education, have proliferated across the United States.[2] The goal of most CSA programs is to increase participants' post-secondary enrollment and completion. Addressing barriers Black and Latine participants may face in accessing and graduating from post-secondary education is a goal of many CSA programs. However, only limited research exists about the specific ways that CSA programs are supporting Black and Latine participants.

To begin to fill this research gap, Abt Associates and Prosperity Now conducted research in 2020-21 exploring what CSA programs are doing to address challenges faced by Black and Latine students in engaging with CSAs and ultimately accessing and completing post-secondary education. This report summarizes findings from case studies of four CSA program sites—Boston Saves, KC Scholars, Lansing SAVE, and Oakland Promise. Each is attempting in different ways to reduce the barriers faced by Black and Latine students in getting to and through college.

Children's Savings Account Programs

CSAs are long-term savings or investment accounts that provide program contributions (e.g., initial deposits or savings matches) to help children and their families—especially those from low-income households—build dedicated savings for post-secondary education.[3] CSA programs vary in their design, but they share some general characteristics:

- Provide children long-term savings or investment accounts, which can be opened anytime from birth through adolescence.

- Provide program contributions, such as initial seed deposits, savings matches, or "benchmark incentives," to build participants' account balances. Benchmark incentives are provided when participants complete a certain action or reach a milestone.

- Intend account funds for an asset-building purpose, generally post-secondary education, though a few programs allow participants to use CSA funds for other purposes, such as buying a home or capitalizing a small business.

- Generally hold program contributions in a restricted account to ensure that funds are used for their intended purpose and to protect families with low incomes from losing eligibility for public benefits due to asset limits.

- May also provide financial education for children or their parents, connect participants with college preparation or academic supports, and directly offer or connect participating families with other programs and supports to address a range of financial needs (e.g., financial coaching).

Research indicates that CSA programs are associated with positive outcomes for participating children as well as their parents, across several areas. Past research findings include:[4]

- **Increased likelihood of having savings in a 529 for college.** SEED for Oklahoma Kids (SEED OK) is a randomized controlled trial of CSAs, which started in 2008, in which a treatment group of children automatically received a $1,000 seeded 529 college savings account shortly after birth. By making enrollment and the first $1,000 deposit automatic, the program significantly increased the likelihood that treatment group children had money set aside for college in a 529. As of 2019, 100% of the treatment group children had money saved in an Oklahoma 529 whereas only around 4% of control group children did.[5] Treatment group children were five times more likely to have a separate parent-owned Oklahoma 529 account, in which parents could make their own contributions than were control group children. Black and Latine children in the treatment group were more likely to have a parent-owned 529 than were those in the control group.[6]

- **Improvements in early childhood development.** Research from SEED OK found that four-year-olds in the treatment group had greater social-emotional development compared to those in the control group. Early social-emotional development (i.e., the ability to identify one's own feelings, empathy, manage strong emotions, and sustain relationships) has been found to have a positive correlation with later academic achievement.[7]

- **Higher parental expectations for their children's education.** Research from SEED OK found that mothers whose four-year-old children had received a CSA at birth had higher expectations for their children's future educational attainment than did mothers whose children had not received a CSA.[8] Later research when children were around age 12 showed that parents in the treatment and control groups had similar expectations for their children completing at least a two-year degree, but parents of children in the treatment group had higher expectations for their children to complete graduate school.[9]

- **Increased preparation for children's education.** In addition to higher parental expectations, SEED OK research found that parents of children who received the CSA at birth had taken more active steps to prepare for their children's education, such as preparing financially for the costs of education.[10]

- **Increased expectations of children for their own futures.** Other research indicates that youth (ages 12-18) who have an account to save for college are almost two times more likely to expect to go to college as do their peers without a college savings account. Research shows that higher expectations are strongly associated with increased educational attainment.[11] Research from SEED OK also indicates that CSAs may have an impact on academic behavior, with children in the treatment group more likely to believe that being a student is an important part of who they are.[12]

- **Increased likelihood of enrolling in and completing college.** Analysis of longitudinal survey data found that low- and moderate-income children with $1-$499 in savings for college—though not specifically through a CSA program—are three times more likely to enroll in and four times more likely to graduate from college than are children without an account.[13]

Research on CSA program participants by race is limited.[14] Other research has looked at CSA programs focused on particular racial groups, such as research on Prosperity Kids,[15] which almost exclusively served Latine children. The research found that participating families were saving for their children's future "early and often" despite their low incomes.[16]

College enrollment rates differ by race, with 59% of Asian-American and 42% of White individuals ages 18 to 24 enrolled in college in 2018, compared with 37% of Black and 36% of Latine individuals.[17] The disparities in college completion are even sharper. For students enrolling in college in 2010, the six-year graduation rate was 74% for Asian-American and 64% for White students, compared to 54% for Latine and 40% for Black students.[18] Given that CSAs are focused on increasing post-secondary access and completion, it is important to understand how they are serving Black and Latine students, the populations least likely to enroll in and complete college. Preliminary research and modeling suggest that CSAs could help increase the rate of college completion.[19]

Core Research Questions

Four research questions guided the development of the case studies:

1. What are the characteristics of the population served by the CSA program?

2. What are the opportunities and challenges facing Black and Latine students in the program's service area?

3. What are the key program design features, program activities, and engagement strategies aimed at increasing the post-secondary education completion rates of Black and Latine students?

4. How have these strategies made a difference in CSA program graduates' post-secondary education experiences or in parents' post-secondary expectations for their children?

The research team used Prosperity Now's race-equity analysis to provide the analytic framework for research questions three and four.[20] Table 1 summarizes the six components of Prosperity Now's race-equity analytic framework, which was developed to help CSA programs design and operate their programs with an equity lens.

Table 1.   Six Components of Prosperity Now's Race-equity Analysis

1) Community-centered program: Community members are engaged in the design and ongoing adjustment of CSA program design through community meetings, a community advisory board, or other means.	**2) Targeted deployment of resources:** The program focuses financial and non-financial resources on Black and Latine participants and families.
3) Racial equity goals: Addressing racial educational inequities is one of the program's primary goals, and its theory of change articulates how the program will affect post-secondary educational outcomes for Black and Latine participants.	**4) Connected with other organizations:** The program has partnerships with other organizations and programs that serve Black and Latine children and families.
5) Accessibility and inclusivity: All elements of the CSA program are accessible to and inclusive of Black and Latine participants.	**6) Tracking outcomes:** The program has metrics based on its theory of change to measure its impact on Black and Latine participants and regularly tracks these metrics to assess outcomes.

To examine race takes care, as race is intimately wound up with factors of access to financial, social, and knowledge resources. For example, Black and Latine students are more often the first generation in their families to attend college, but this experience is not exclusive to being Black or Latine. The research team tried to carefully tease out the various threads of lived experience that intersect with being Black or Latine, while recognizing that sometimes both the research and program design conflate the concepts of race with lived experience such as access to resources.

While the research presented in this report focuses on access to and completion of post-secondary education for Black and Latine students, it is important to note that although higher education typically increases Black and Latine individuals' income and wealth, it is not sufficient in and of itself to address racial and ethnic economic inequities. Research shows that despite rhetoric about education being an equalizer, the returns to educational attainment are not equal across racial and ethnic groups.[21] For example, data from the Survey of Consumer Finances show that Black and Latine families with bachelors' degrees have significantly less wealth than White families with bachelor's degrees.[22] Although beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to bear in mind that promoting college access and completion for Black and Latine students is only a small piece of a larger set of policies and practices needed to address racial economic inequities and the racial wealth divide.

Methodological Approach

This research project used a case study approach. Case study allows for triangulation and comparison within a single case as well as between cases.[23] Using a case study approach to answer the research questions makes sense because:[24]

- The research is exploratory to begin to understand the kinds of strategies CSA programs are using to address the challenges that Black and Latine students face.

- The context and landscape within which each CSA program is operating are likely to be critical to our understanding of how the CSA program addresses those challenges.

For the case studies, the research team made a conscious decision to interview staff, graduates, and parents rather than using survey data. Talking about race is uncomfortable for many people, and responses to questions related to race are subject to social desirability bias—meaning that respondents want to give answers to appear favorably to others.[25] Interviews allow the researcher to probe and gain greater insight into less socially desirable responses, or to push beyond where a response appears socially desirable.

The study focuses on four organizations running five CSA programs (Oakland Promise runs both Brilliant Baby and Kindergarten to College). The five CSA programs represent a cross-section of geographic locations and program design elements as shown in Table 2. The majority of participants in these programs are Black and/or Latine. All the programs have a high degree of direct and ongoing engagement with participating children and families.[26]

Table 2.   Overview of CSA Programs in Case Studies*

	Boston Saves (Boston, MA)	KC Scholars (Kansas City, MO & KS)	Lansing SAVE (Lansing, MI)	Oakland Promise – Brilliant Baby (Oakland, CA)	Oakland Promise – Kindergarten to College
Eligibility	Universal – All kindergarten students in Boston Public Schools (BPS)	Targeted – Low-income 9th grade students in six counties in Kansas City area	Universal – All kindergarten students in the Lansing School District (LSD)	Targeted – Medi-Cal-eligible babies born in Oakland	Universal – All kindergarten students in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)
Program Goal	Foster a college-going culture in BPS and encourage college savings	Assist students in saving for, reaching, and completing college	Foster a college-going culture in LSD and encourage college savings	Support college expectations for families with newborns	Support a college-going culture in OUSD
Year Started	2020	2016	2015	2016	2016
Enrollment Age or Grade	Kindergarten	9th Grade	Kindergarten	Newborn	Kindergarten
Participants' Race	29% Black 43% Latine	30% Black 28% Latine	37% Black 21% Latine	31% Black 50% Latine	24% Black 46% Latine
Program Administrator	Office of Financial Empowerment, City of Boston	KC Scholars (non-profit organization)	Michigan State Credit Union (under contract to City of Lansing)	Oakland Promise (non-profit organization)	Oakland Promise (non-profit organization)
Enrollment Type	Automatic (opt-out)	Opt-in	Automatic (opt-out)	Opt-in	Automatic (opt-out)
Account Type	Custodial savings account and open banking model	529 college savings account	Custodial certificates of deposit	529 college savings account	529 college savings account
Program Contributions & Other Financial Supports	Initial deposit: $50. Other contributions: incentives for linking child's bank account to program and completing eligible activities.	Initial deposit: $50. Other contributions: incentives for participating in eligible activities (e.g., workshops) and completing college-related activities.	Initial deposit: $5. Other contributions: incentive for participating in annual event; community champions raise funds for targeted contributions to participants' accounts.	Initial deposit: $500. Other supports: cash incentives for parents to participate in financial coaching.	Initial deposit: $100. Other contributions: incentives for opening family-owned 529 account and making regular deposits.

* The CSA program information was collected in 2020-21; some elements may have been revised subsequently.

For each program, the research team interviewed program and partner staff. For programs with participants who have completed high school, the research team interviewed program graduates; for other programs, the team interviewed parents of current participants. In addition, the team reviewed and collated output and outcome data collected by each program, reviewed program materials, and read existing reports about the programs. Table 3 is a detailed list of interviews and materials reviewed for each program.

Table 3.   Interviews and Materials Reviewed for Each Case Study CSA Program

Boston Saves	KC Scholars	Lansing SAVE	Oakland Promise
• 4 program staff interviews • 3 partner volunteer interviews • 5 parent interviews • Evaluation reports • Program document review	• 3 program staff interviews • 2 staff interviews • 2 graduate interviews • Virtual program event observation • Evaluation reports	• 4 program staff interviews • 3 partner staff interviews • Program document review	• 4 program staff interviews • 1 partner staff interview • 1 parent interview • 2 graduate interviews • Program document review

Notes on Terminology and Timing

Though we refer to "Black and Latine students" throughout this report, we recognize these two groups are not monolithic. Some Black students' families have lived in the United States for generations, with long histories of segregation and systemic racism. Some Black students' families are recent immigrants from the Caribbean and countries across Africa. Students from immigrant families may experience many similar barriers as those faced by Latine students coming from immigrant families. Latine students similarly may come from families who have lived in the United States for generations. Others may be part of more recent waves of immigrants, who come from a range of countries and US territories, such as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Colombia. We also recognize that some Latine students also identify as Black, and some Black students identify as Hispanic or Latine.

The research in this report was collected in 2020-21, though the report was not published until 2023. Some aspects of the CSA programs participating in the case studies described in this report may have changed since then, especially since this information was collected during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when programs had made adaptations to their models. We have seen more evidence emerging since then about the disparate impact of COVID-19 on health, economic and educational outcomes for people of color. In education specifically, the pandemic exacerbated existing inequities,[27] and these conditions likely affected students enrolled in the CSA programs described in the case studies. Further research is needed to understand the impact of COVID-19 on Black and Latine students in CSA programs. However, the overall findings in this report are still relevant and of interest to the CSA field.

Outline of the Report

The goal of this report is to provide core observations about how the four case study sites are addressing the challenges that Black and Latine students face in accessing and completing college.

The report begins with a review of the college access literature, examining the barriers identified for Black and Latine students and strategies that have been shown to increase the rates of Black and Latine students attending and completing college. The report then reviews the strategies that the case study CSA programs are using to overcome those barriers. Section 5 then identifies opportunities for CSA programs considering this issue, as well as opportunities for the field to explore this subject further through research and practice.

The report then provides detailed case studies for each program, including:

- Who the program serves

- The program's theory of change

- How the program works

- Challenges faced by Black and Latine students in the program's service area

- How the program is addressing these challenges

- Summary

Section 2: Overcoming Barriers to Post-Secondary Education

Barriers to Post-secondary Education for Black and Latine Students

College access and completion research identifies the barriers students from low-income households face in accessing college. Black and Latine students are disproportionately from low-income and low-wealth households, more likely to be first-generation college students, and more likely to be immigrants for whom English is a second language.[28] Challenges associated with income level, race, immigration, language, and first-generation status are distinct AND interact in complex ways in students' lives and the lives of their families. These factors are not always clearly distinguished in the literature nor by program staff. In this report we attempt to distinguish the differences between these factors.

Table 4 summarizes the most commonly cited barriers in the literature. The rest of this section provides greater detail on these barriers, including evidence from the evaluation literature on what programmatic interventions have been shown to increase college access and completion rates. Other factors do exist besides those described in this section, but these are the most frequently cited and well-researched. The relative importance of each of these factors is hard to determine from the available research.

Table 4.   Common Challenges in Accessing College

Barrier	General College Access Challenge	Specific to Black or Latine Students
Access to financial resources – income or wealth[29]	Students from low-income households have less resources to pay for college tuition and associated expenses	Income and wealth gaps mean that Black and Latine families have, on average, less financial resources for college expenses
Completing the FAFSA[30]	Many students do not complete the FAFSA (or file late) and thereby do not receive financial aid	Language barriers and less familiarity with the financial aid process mean Black and Latine families can struggle to complete the FAFSA
Low expectations from high school staff [31]	Lack of preparation and support from high-school counselors can lower chances of gaining admissions to college, especially to 4-year institutions	Black and Latine high school students disproportionately lack access to counselors in high school, and those with counselors often face low expectations
First-generation status[32]	First-generation college students face additional challenges when applying and when in college, including poorer academic preparation, different motivations for enrolling, and varying levels of parental support	Black and Latine students are disproportionately first-generation students and experience these challenges more often
Immigration status[33]	Being undocumented or having family members who are undocumented creates barriers including apprehension in applications and ineligibility for financial aid	Latine students are more likely to be undocumented immigrants or have family members who are undocumented immigrants
Language barriers[34]	Language barriers for both parents and students make access to and completion of college more difficult	Language is often a barrier for Latine students when applying for college, completing the FAFSA, and seeking out resources during college

Barrier	General College Access Challenge	Specific to Black or Latine Students
Familial expectations[35]	Familial expectations may require students to stay close to home, limiting college options	Many Latine students face such familial expectations, which affects their college options
Systemic racism[36]	Systemic racism contributes to discrimination, economic inequality, and lack of access to resources needed to be a competitive college applicant and to complete college	Black and Latine students face systemic racism, preventing them from achieving the same college outcomes as their White peers
Unwelcoming college campus and lack of role models[37]	College environments can be unfriendly to students due to systemic racism; a lack of role models leads to feelings of isolation on college campuses	Black and Latine students cite college campuses as unfriendly and unwelcoming, especially as there are few role models in the staff, faculty, and administration

Overall, Black and Latine students are more likely to be first-generation college students[38] and more likely to come from low-income families. As a result, they face some similar challenges. Expanding on the summary in Table 4, below are key challenges from the literature, which affect both groups of students, though some affect one group more often than the other.

Lack of financial resources: The research consistently points to finances as one of the top challenges that Black and Latine students face in accessing college. The racial wealth divide is a large driver of this challenge. As of 2019, the median wealth of Black families ($24,100) and Latine families ($36,100) was less than 13% and less than 20%, respectively, that of White families ($188,200).[39]

A Black Boston Saves parent shared her worries for her daughter: "It would be the finances – right now I am putting one in college and it's already a constraint, so it will definitely be the financial aspect when she is that age, and at that time I will be closer to retirement."

Economic inequity and lack of financial resources manifest in several different ways for Black and Latine students as they start looking at and applying to colleges. Because of the unattainably high cost of many colleges, many Black and Latine students turn to less expensive, less selective open access and for-profit colleges that "are more likely to have poor student outcomes combined with high levels of student debt."[40]

Completing the FAFSA: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) can be extremely confusing and overwhelming for first-generation students, including Black and Latine students and families. Latine students in particular may not complete the FAFSA due to language barriers. Low-income and Black and Latine students frequently do not fill out the FAFSA.[41] Not completing the FAFSA or filling it out incorrectly can mean "losing out on grants, scholarships, and loans that can help pay for college and living expenses."[42]

Low expectations from high school staff: Black and Latine students tend to have less access to and face lower expectations from counselors while they are in high school.[43]

First-generation students: According to one analysis, 38.5% of Latine students and 29% of Black students are the first in their families to go to college.[44] This leaves many Latine and Black college-bound

students without close family mentors who can help them navigate the college application process. By contrast, 16.7% of White students are first generation college students.[45]

Immigration status: For Latine students in particular, personal immigration status or the immigration status of family members can present a challenge.[46] Being undocumented or having family members who are undocumented can create apprehension that causes students to avoid activities and programs that they fear may reveal their status. Undocumented students are also ineligible for federal financial aid, compounding their financial challenges. Other research has found that students in families of immigrants face a range of academic obstacles, including feeling less academically prepared and more overwhelmed, leading to poorer mental health during their first semester at college than their peers.[47]

Language: Researchers have found that language barriers for parents and students affect access to college and completion.[48] Parents with language barriers often find it difficult to help their children work through the college application process, especially completing the FAFSA. Language barriers create issues for students in completing college applications; once in college, students find a lack of resources available to them in their primary language.[49]

Systemic racism: Systemic racism is a major barrier to Black and Latine students' college access and completion.[50] Systemic racism, which contributes to discrimination and racial economic inequity, is a major cause behind many of the other factors that prevent Black students from achieving the same college outcomes as their White peers. For example, "45% of Black children in K-12 attend high-poverty schools in which at least 75% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, nearly six times the rate of White children."[51] Neighborhood segregation, a result of systemic structural racist policies, has created this pattern. This situation leaves many Black students in schools with fewer resources, less experienced teachers, and a lack of access to rigorous courses that would prepare them for college.[52]

A Latine graduate of the KC Scholars program described attending a predominantly White institution and experiencing racist actions taken during a diversity and equity training for all students, along with racist graffiti on a college center for diversity.

Unwelcoming college campus: Once on campus, many Black and Latine students note that they experience unfriendly and unwelcoming campus environments, where they contend with stereotypes and low expectations from professors.[53]

Lack of role models: Black students also note that the lack of "role models represented in the staff, faculty, and administration with whom they could bond or seek advice and counsel,"[54] which adds to the isolating nature of the college campus.

Strategies that Increase Black and Latine Students' Likelihood of Completing College

Although research does not provide a complete picture of all the strategies that may increase the likelihood of Black and Latine students completing college, evaluations of interventions point to a few clear strategies that help increase rates of post-secondary access and completion. The research has focused mainly on specific strategies to help all students increase their likelihood of accessing and then completing college, rather than looking specifically at Black and Latine students. Table 5 outlines

strategies that research shows are effective and provides examples when CSA programs have employed them. Section 3 goes into more detail on these and other strategies the case study programs are using.

Table 5. **Evidence-based Strategies in College Access Programs and How CSA Programs are Using Them**

Strategy	Example from Case Studies
Small grants to cover living expenses and college costs (e.g., $1,000 emergency grant)[55]	CSA programs can help to address financial barriers. For example, Lansing SAVE participants accrue small-dollar savings through the CSA program to address small gaps in financial aid. SAVE also partners with Lansing Promise, which covers tuition for up to 65 credits at the local community college or equivalent costs at Michigan State University or Olivet University.
Supports while in college (e.g., access to a college coach) paired with financial aid[56]	CSA programs or partners can help to link participants to on-campus supports. For example, KC Scholars links students to on-campus counseling and support networks, as well as providing financial scholarships and CSAs.
Access to a high-quality high school counselor who is representative of the student population[57]	CSA programs can work with partners that link participants with high school counselors. For example, Lansing SAVE partner Capital Area College Access Network (CapCAN) provides each Lansing School District high school with specialized college counselors who supplement support of traditional guidance counselors by providing students with one-on-one support throughout the college application process.
Generally having better teachers who have higher expectations increases rates of college completion.[58]	All case study CSA programs seek to create a college-going culture within their service area, including influencing teachers. This may help increase expectations that students will attend college.
For Black students, having a Black teacher increases rates of college completion.[59]	This is generally outside of the control of CSA programs to influence.
Controlling for differences in demographic characteristics, attending a more selective institution leads to higher graduation rates. More selective institutions have more resources to provide to students including academic support, smaller class sizes, and better counseling.[60]	This is generally outside of the control of CSA programs to influence.

Section 3: How Four CSA Programs are Addressing Barriers to Post-secondary Education for Black and Latine Students

As described in the previous section, Black and Latine students face a range of challenges in getting to and through college that are shared by many low-income and first-generation students (e.g., access to financial resources, lack of knowledge of the college application process, and financial aid system). However, many of these challenges are compounded by factors specific to being a student of color (e.g., structural racism and inter-personal racism) and/or a non-English-speaking immigrant (e.g., language and culture). Black and Latine students face not just less in financial resources available to help with paying tuition, but also perhaps parents who do not speak English or ongoing experiences of inter-personal racism. This section discusses the strategies that the case study CSA programs use to address some of these challenges.

The four case study CSA programs structured their program models and goals to address some of the challenges discussed in Section 2 that low-income, first-generation, and immigrant students in general face in getting to and through college. Rarely did these programs target their programming toward challenges that were unique to Black and Latine students. However, because of the overlap between race and class in the United States, many of these general strategies apply to the barriers experienced by Black and Latine students.

Table 6 summarizes the strategies that the four CSA case study programs engage in over a child's life-cycle from birth to college. (Note that the case study programs start at different ages, so some begin engaging at birth and others in elementary or high school. How they engage with questions of equity therefore differs.) The table illustrates the early intervention that most CSA programs offer, allowing for a longer intervention period than is typical for college access programs, which generally start in middle or high school.

Direct CSA Program Interventions

Case study CSA programs conduct two primary strategies to address the barriers that Black and Latine students face in accessing and completing college.

1. **Financial resources:** In seeding a CSA and then providing either a savings match or incentives for completing eligible activities, CSA programs help to provide additional funds to students. Research from college access studies shows that this makes a difference to students who have fewer financial resources.

2. **Creating expectations of going to college**: The existence of the CSA and the messaging and outreach offered at each of the case study CSA programs help to set expectations that children will attend post-secondary education. Because most CSA cohorts, especially in the large municipal and state programs, have not reached post-secondary age yet, research has not yet demonstrated whether this intended outcome actually occurs. However, CSA programs' theories of change incorporate this as a core tenet. The college access literature, a field that predominantly engages with students in high school, shows that having high school teachers who expect a student to attend college increases the proportion of students who access and complete college. Some CSA research points to the role of CSAs in stimulating conversations about college.[61]

Table 6. **Potential CSA and College Access Supports and Activities from Birth Through College**

Support/Activity	Birth	Elementary School	Middle School	Junior Year	Senior Year	College
CSA opened with initial deposit (exact timing depends on program)	──────	──────	──────→			
Families encouraged to make deposits into account	──────	──────	──────	──────	──────	──────→
Parents/guardians and children participate in CSA activities and discuss college and career to build college expectations	──────	──────	──────	──────→		
Families are connected to supports and services to address financial needs and plan for the future	──────	──────	──────	──────	──────	──────→
Families receive basic information on the cost of college, how to financially prepare and support that will be available to them	──────	──────	──────	──────	──────	──────→
College access programs and high-school counselors support students and families through the college application and financial aid processes				──────	──────	──────→
College scholarship or promise programs provide financial resources for tuition				──────	──────	──────→
Students are linked with on-campus supports and resources						──────→

Integrated CSA Program Interventions

Three of the four case study CSA programs are already partnering with college access and completion programs or provide these services in-house; the fourth intends to do so when its oldest students reach middle to high school age. By integrating college access and completion services with traditional CSA programming, case study CSA programs are able to:

1. **Increase the amount of financial resources for students in need:** Recognizing that the funds accrued in a CSA alone are insufficient to address need, CSA case study programs work with college scholarship or "Promise" programs, or run their own, to increase participants' access to scholarships and grants.

2. **Pair financial aid with increased knowledge about and support for the college application and financial aid process**: Whether CSA programs provide college access services through partnering (e.g., Lansing SAVE partners with CapCAN)[62] or in-house, they offer information to students and parents about the college application and financial aid process.[63] Despite these partnerships with college access programs, interestingly, no case study CSA program actively collaborates with GEAR UP or TRIO, two federally funded efforts to provide college access services to low-income and first-generation students.[64]

3. **Link students with on-campus support networks:** The college access literature shows that first-generation students often experience "imposter syndrome"—feeling like they do not fit in on campus. Low-income students face challenges in managing occasional family financial crises, which can pull them back home. Less documented in the literature, but compounding these issues, is the challenge of racial discrimination on campus. Black and Latine students, who are

more likely to be both first-generation students and from low-income families, face an extra need for on-campus supports and counseling. KC Scholars provides direct links with counseling supports, and Oakland Promise provides mentors on campus for participants.

The small number of students whom the research team interviewed suggested that the interventions described in this section are making some difference. Yet we need further research to understand the degree to which these programs can improve outcomes. Collecting data by race will be critical to answering questions about how effective CSA programs are in addressing barriers that Black, Latine, and other students of color face in accessing and completing college. We also need to understand the different mechanisms involved in addressing those barriers.

Section 4: Key Findings on CSA Program Strategies from Case Studies

Reviewing the strategies of CSA case study programs yielded several overall findings about the approach the programs take in supporting Black and Latine students. This section reviews these findings.

The four CSA case study programs have a sphere of influence within which they theorize they can reduce barriers that Black and Latine students face in getting to and through college. Specifically, most of the programs focus on (1) fostering college expectations for college from a young age and (2) addressing smaller financial resource needs—essentially creating a small safety net through the CSA for gaps left by financial aid and scholarships. There is a whole range of other supports needed to address the challenges Black and Latine students experience in accessing and completing post-secondary education that fall outside a CSA program's sphere of control. As discussed next, programs work with partners or bring additional services in-house to address other challenges.

The CSA case study programs serve as linchpins around which a range of partners working to advance post-secondary access and success and economic mobility can converge. CSA programs generally enroll participants at a young age and continue engaging with them through elementary, middle, and high school. Thus, they can be the foundation for bringing together partners focused on college access, scholarships, and other related services. For example, in Lansing, although there was a pre-existing college promise and college access organization, the organizations now a part of Capital Area College Access Network (CapCAN) did not work together in the same way until they started meeting around Lansing SAVE. Over time, these interactions evolved into a shared vision of a continuum serving Lansing students and their families from kindergarten through post-secondary education that became known as BOLD Lansing.

CSAs increase how long students are exposed to college access interventions. The college access literature shows that specific interventions increase college access and completion rates for low-income and first-generation students, and to a more limited extent for Black and Latine students. CSAs take some of those interventions and apply them at lower doses and intensity, but over a longer period. In three of the CSA case study programs, conversations about post-secondary education and careers begin before most college access programs start working with students. For example, Boston Saves talks about its theory of change operating to build a culture of college going throughout the school system, starting in kindergarten. The belief is that this shift in expectations will transfer to teachers, parents, and other support staff within the school system. An open question is to what degree the effort will influence college graduation rates for the Boston Saves students.

The degree to which the four case study programs directly focus on supporting Black and Latine students and use targeted strategies varies. Case study CSA programs were largely not targeting financial resources based on participants' race. Instead, CSA programs use income as a proxy—as Black and Latine families disproportionately have low incomes and low wealth. Targeting resources to lower-income households means that CSA programs are serving higher numbers of Black and Latine students and their families. However, without targeted strategies, some of the challenges faced specifically by Black and Latine students may go unaddressed.

In some jurisdictions, CSA programs are legally prohibited from using race as a criterion for extending additional benefits, such as extra initial deposits. For example, Lansing SAVE staff explored providing

extra program contributions to Black and Latine students, but the approach was ultimately not pursued due to concerns about its legality.

Programs have used other strategies to distribute extra program contributions in ways that promote equity but are not explicitly based on race. One strategy is to limit program eligibility to a program population that is predominantly Black and/or Latine, so that the targeting of contributions among program participants is not necessary. For example, Oakland Promise's Brilliant Baby is open only to Medi-Cal-eligible families in Oakland; because of the intersection of race and class, the majority of Medi-Cal participants in Oakland are Black or Latine.

Some of the case study programs shared strategies for targeting non-financial resources to better reach students of color. For example, Oakland Promise has an explicit goal that program staff should reflect the community served, so the majority of staff are people of color. KC Scholars conducts bilingual orientation and outreach sessions. After seeing lower rates of engagement by Black and Latine students, Boston Saves placed family champions in elementary schools with more disadvantaged populations, a proxy for schools with larger Black and Latine populations.

Case study programs have some of the data they need to assess how they are serving Black and Latine participants and other populations, but they are still learning and experimenting with how to address differences in program outputs and outcomes by race. Data on race and other demographic factors of individual students can be difficult for CSA programs to obtain. The opt-out programs—Boston Saves, Lansing SAVE, and Oakland Promise's Kindergarten to College—generally do not receive individualized demographic data from school districts or other entities when they receive enrollment information, primarily because of concerns around privacy and federal and state regulations. However, Lansing SAVE was able to include some race data in its data-sharing agreement with the Lansing School District. The other, opt-in programs, which require parents to actively sign up for the program, have a better opportunity to collect such data. For example, Oakland Promise's Brilliant Baby has individualized demographic data about its participants, and it uses this data to assess whether or not its participants reflect populations in its geographic service area. However, opt-in enrollment could lead to other trade-offs that could offset the value of collecting more data.[65] Programs without individual-level data on race would find it difficult to evaluate whether their outputs and outcomes were different for different groups.

Even the case study programs with more access to data are still early in determining how to address the differences they are seeing in outputs and outcomes by race. Though Lansing SAVE identified differences in average account balances by race, it was not able to find a legally feasible solution to address the differences. KC Scholars found that Black male students were less likely to apply for its program but worked hard to increase participation among this group of students.

Overall, experiences of the case study programs show that ongoing conversations and learning are needed in the CSA field to develop best practices around tracking outcomes by race and employing innovative solutions to address any disparities in outcomes. At best, this type of assessment is necessary to promote racial equity in programs. At a bare minimum, it is needed to ensure that the CSA programs are not racially regressive, distributing funds and resources disproportionately to White students and away from Black and Latine students in need.

Section 5: Opportunities for the CSA Field

Review of the case studies suggests some key opportunities for programs to consider as well as considerations for the field as a whole. In this section we review the opportunities at both levels.

Opportunities for Programs

The experiences of case study CSA programs indicate that many CSA programs are only just beginning to grapple with racial equity issues—including thinking through how to best serve Black and Latine participants. Below are key opportunities identified for CSA programs to support Black and Latine participants in getting to and through post-secondary education. More research is needed to explore the outcomes of these approaches.

Developing a comprehensive continuum of post-secondary education access and completion services: Many states, cities, and communities served by CSA programs have a range of other college access programs to support students and their families in enrolling in and completing post-secondary education. However, students and families may not be aware of these services or how to access them. CSA programs—by beginning the conversation about post-secondary education as early as birth or kindergarten—can be the linchpin around which a range of post-secondary supports are brought together to create a comprehensive continuum of services from cradle (or kindergarten) through starting a career. It is important that these services do not end at post-secondary enrollment. Many students—especially students of color—who enroll in post-secondary education do not end up completing their degrees.[66] Building out ways to stay connected to and support participants during post-secondary education is a crucial piece of the continuum. For example, KC Scholars links students to on-campus counseling and academic support services.

Providing targeted equity contributions: Targeted equity contributions are deposits made by programs into a defined subset of participants' accounts above the standard contributions (e.g., initial seed deposit) provided to all participants. The purpose of these contributions is to promote equity; they are intended to boost the account balances of participants whose families, because of their race or household income (or the intersection of the two), are likely to have lower household wealth.[67] None of the case study programs provides extra contributions into participants' accounts based on race. As discussed in Section 3, programs can use proxies, such as income or neighborhood, to target resources so they go predominantly to Black and Latine children without explicitly limiting them by race. For example, programs with universal eligibility can provide equity incentives to subsets within the larger group that are predominantly Black or Latine (e.g., schools with a largely Black student population).[68] Because of the intersection of race and class in the United States, providing equity contributions based on household income is also likely to disproportionately benefit Black and Latine children in areas with significant populations of color.

Assessing existing program contributions with an equity lens: In addition to adding targeted equity contributions, programs can assess existing program contributions to ensure they are accessible to and equitably distributed among Black and Latine participants. Programs can, for example, examine take-up information by race for benchmark incentives (i.e., provided for taking a particular action or reaching a milestone)[69]— to assess equity, as well as consult participating families of color to learn whether they are experiencing barriers to completing required actions. For example, an incentive based on meeting grade 3 reading benchmarks could be disadvantaging English language learners; an incentive for logging into an account portal could be difficult for families with limited internet access, who are disproportionately

families of color. This periodic reassessment is important for ensuring that incentives are equitably distributed, rather than potentially reinforcing inequities.[70]

Developing targeted outreach and engagement strategies: CSA programs can increase the effectiveness of their outreach and engagement to Black and Latine participants and families by employing targeted approaches that recognize community, cultural, and language differences. For example, they can partner with local organizations already serving these populations. Partners could serve as culturally competent, trusted messengers to share information about the program with the communities they serve. Programs can also work with existing organizations that reach target audiences, such as the Black and Latine student groups through which Oakland Promise conducts targeted outreach in schools. Another approach is the family champions model used by Boston Saves, which deploys parents to talk with other parents in their community about the program.

Creating feedback loops with participants: As evident from the feedback provided by participants and parents during the case study interviews, participants and families can be valuable assets in helping programs increase their impact on Black and Latine participants. CSA programs could expand opportunities to gather feedback from participating families and youth—especially Black and Latine participants—by creating a participant advisory board or soliciting feedback through surveys or focus groups. This would help programs identify ways to target outreach and engagement, inform the development of outreach materials and incentive design, and facilitate changes in the program model to best serve participants of color. It can be especially valuable to engage potential participants and their families during CSA program design, as Oakland Promise did by having focus groups with families to inform the design of Brilliant Baby.

Opportunities for the CSA Field

The creation of a community of practice around CSAs and racial equity could support the advancement of equity work in the CSA field. A community of practice brings a group of individuals together with a common purpose to work toward both individual and group goals. Communities of practice benefit the field by creating a space to share best practices, build new knowledge, and advance a domain of professional practice. The case studies reveal that CSA programs have challenges around targeting resources, collecting data by race, and filling gaps in program participation among Black and Latine participants. They also demonstrate opportunities for CSA programs to partner with other organizations to create an ecosystem to support students of color to and through post-secondary education. A community of practice could:

- Identify best practices in designing and operating equitable, inclusive CSA programs.

- Foster more and deeper conversation in the field about the importance of developing strategies focused directly on Black, Latine, and other populations of color and specific ways this approach differs from a general focus on children from low-income households.

- Identify ways that CSA programs and partner organizations can address challenges faced by Black and Latine youth in attending and completing post-secondary education.

- Elevate promising practices in targeting financial and non-financial resources toward Black, Latine, and other participants of color and their families.

- Build capacity around data collection and evaluation to understand how programs are serving Black and Latine participants.

Future Research

This research project is one of the first to take a cross-program look at how CSA programs are serving Black and Latine participants. Additional research is needed to build off this initial analysis and to understand more deeply the impact of CSAs on post-secondary educational access for Black and Latine participants. Potential research topics are listed below.

Examining differences in the impact of CSA program interventions by race: To identify how to serve Black and Latine CSA participants most effectively, the field needs more data to understand the impact current CSA programs have on Black and Latine participants and the experiences of Black and Latine participants in CSA programs. Research topics could include the short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of programs for Black and Latine participants and examining the most effective outreach and engagement approaches for reaching these populations.

Understanding the impact of targeted equity contributions: A few CSA programs provide targeted equity contributions (e.g., Kindergarten to College in San Francisco, CollegeBound Saint Paul), but little research exists on the impact of these small-dollar account boosts for participants. The field needs to deepen its understanding of how equity contributions work; how they are perceived by participating children and families; and whether they have an impact on short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes for participants. This research will help with designing equity incentives to maximize impact and potentially provide more evidence to support a targeted approach to boosting account balances for Black, Latine, and other children of color.

Identifying best practices in integrating CSAs with other interventions: These case studies point to the promise of integrating CSAs into an ecosystem or continuum of cradle-to-career services to support Black and Latine students in getting to and through post-secondary education. However, we do not have longitudinal research on the impact of combining these interventions. In addition, research is limited on what combination of services is most effective and the best way to deliver those services in different communities. College access research has identified a bundle of support services that, together with financial aid, can increase rates of college access and completion. Building on this body of research could be a next step in understanding how CSA programs fit within this ecosystem of college supports.

Additional Considerations

The research presented in this report focuses on access to and completion of post-secondary education for Black and Latine students. However, when thinking about this topic, it is important to consider that although higher education typically increases Black and Latine individuals' income and wealth, it is not sufficient in and of itself to address racial and ethnic economic inequities. Research shows that despite rhetoric about education being an equalizer, the returns to educational attainment are not equal across racial and ethnic groups.[71] For example, data from the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances show that the median Black family and Latine family with a bachelor's degree has $51,000 and $77,000 in wealth respectively, compared with $298,000 for the median White family with a bachelor's degree. In fact, typical Black and Latine families with bachelor's degrees have significantly less wealth than the median White high school graduate ($115,000).[72]

Given this context, the strategies discussed in this paper for promoting college access and completion for Black and Latine students, though important, are only a small piece of a larger set of policies and practices needed to address racial economic inequities and the racial wealth divide. CSA programs can

also more directly address the racial wealth divide by providing significantly larger program contributions to participating children.

It's also important to note that other wealth building programs targeted to children and youth, such as Baby Bonds, could benefit from incorporating the learnings around strategies to engage and support Black and Latine students presented in this paper and more broadly discussed in the CSA field. These types of long-term wealth building programs will be most impactful if children and their families are aware of them from an early age, understand how they can be used when recipients reach adulthood (e.g., through financial coaching), and are connected with broader supports around purchasing assets, such as paying for college or putting a downpayment on a home.

Conclusion

CSA programs have an opportunity to collaborate with college access programs and build an ecosystem of organizations capable of reducing barriers faced by Black and Latine students as well as many first-generation, low-income students. The case studies that follow provide a detailed review of specific activities engaged in by each case study program in an effort to reduce barriers for Black and Latine students, along with first-generation and low-income students.

Section 6: Case Studies

Sections 1-5 of this report review the key findings from across the project's four case study sites. This section contains detailed information about each—Boston Saves, KC Scholars, Lansing SAVE, and Oakland Promise.

Data were gathered in 2020-21 through interviews, programmatic records, observation of program activities, and review of program evaluations and reports. Some aspects of the program operations may have changed after the research collection.

Boston Saves

A program of the City of Boston's Office of Financial Empowerment, Boston Saves is a CSA program operating for all children—kindergarteners through second grade, as it is being rolled out—in the Boston Public School (BPS) district. The program was piloted between 2016 and 2019 and officially launched district-wide in September 2019.

Key program design components include:

- Every child entering kindergarten receives $50, held on their behalf in the Boston Saves custodial savings account.[73]

- Parents, guardians, or families can set up their own bank account or use an existing one—in the latter case a 529, checking, or savings account—and link that account—to the Boston Saves program. They can also choose to participate in the custodial savings account into which they can make deposits.

- Once the parental account is linked, participants receive an incentive deposited into the program-owned custodial account. Participants can earn additional incentives for activities that prepare students for college.

- Family champions—community members, often parents or guardians of participating students—do outreach with other families at 39 out of 81 elementary schools to increase awareness and to help parents link their own accounts to the Boston Saves platform.

Because Boston Saves started only recently, program staff have not yet formalized partnerships with other college access and completion organizations in the Boston area. Program staff expect to develop these relationships in future years as students reach middle school and are positioned to take advantage of these programs.

Boston Saves currently partners closely with BPS, including having a BPS staff person dedicated to working on Boston Saves. In addition, Boston Saves staff intend that parents and family members of BPS students who are enrolled in Boston Saves can access financial coaching and workshops through the Office of Financial Empowerment, whose aim is improving the financial well-being of city residents.

Boston Saves has two primary partners: (1) Metro Credit Union, which manages the custodial account for the City (where seed deposits and incentives are saved); and (2) BPS, through which students are eligible for the program.

Who Boston Saves Serves

Program staff report that Boston Saves was designed to build the "*college-going culture*" of Boston families. Former Mayor Marty Walsh and his team of advisors decided to focus on BPS as the institution through which Boston Saves would connect with families. This decision included a trade-off in not serving about one third (30%) of school-age children within the city of Boston boundaries who do not attend BPS.

The students in BPS differ from the city of Boston student-age population in demographic characteristics. BPS students are disproportionately Hispanic or Latine,[74] whereas non-BPS schools (parochial, charter,

and private) tend to serve disproportionate numbers of Black and White students. Figure 1 shows this data.

Figure 1.   Race and Ethnicity Boston Public School Students versus Overall Boston City Student Age Population

Source: Boston Public Schools Data At-A-Glance 2019-2020 school year[75]

Within BPS, 72% of students in 2020 were categorized as economically disadvantaged.[76]

Because of automatic (opt-out) enrollment, all BPS kindergarteners receive the seed deposit and are eligible to earn incentives. Though all students in the program receive the initial seed deposit of $50, not all families link their own account with the Boston Saves online software, which means they cannot add to the account and cannot earn incentives through the program. Once they log into the Boston Saves account online, they can start earning incentives for their child.
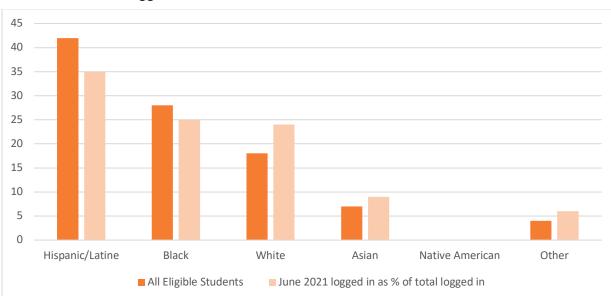
Figure 2   Race & Ethnicity by Share of Program Participants versus Share of Participants Who Have Logged into Their Accounts[77]

Source: Boston Saves program data 2020-21

Boston Saves has data on the characteristics of those who linked their savings accounts to Boston Saves. Figure 2 summarizes the race and ethnicity characteristics of those with accounts and those who linked their accounts to the Boston Saves program software. Looking at data for the 2020-21 school year —after the addition of family champions and with the full roll-out of the program—several trends emerge. First, Latine students are underrepresented among participants that had logged into their accounts. Secondly, black participants that had logged into their accounts are slightly underrepresented relative to their proportion participating in the Boston Saves program. White participants had logged into their Boston Saves accounts in greater proportion than their representation in the program. Additional data show that disadvantaged participants represent 74% of all students in the Boston Saves program but among those that had logged into their accounts, they represented 63% by the end of the 2020-21 school year.

While Black and Latine students are not logging into their accounts at the same rates as White families, Boston Saves 2020-21 school year data also shows the impact of introducing family champions into schools that have more economically disadvantaged students and more students of color. The rate of logging into Boston Saves accounts at schools with family champions increased by 425% between January and June 2021, as opposed to 275% at schools without family champions. This trend suggests over time Boston Saves program staff will be able to reduce racial and economic disparities in the rate of families logging into their accounts.

Theory of Change

Boston Saves was developed and piloted between 2016 and 2019. The original aim of the program was to build a culture of college and career across Boston and to help residents feel that their post-secondary goals were supported by the city. One program staff member described how they hoped to "…*spark the initial expectation that the city has money for me when I'm thinking about the future of my child and let's see what doors open.*" The staff member described the goal for Boston Saves to be *"…the spark, the entry point to a wider world of college access and completion."*

Since the program is relatively new and programming is targeted toward kindergarten, most participants are younger than fourth grade. BPS and Boston Saves work with *ReadBoston*—an early literacy program—to incorporate resources that increase students' interest in post-secondary education and careers. In the 2020-21 school year BPS curriculums for students starting in kindergarten included children's books that profile different careers. Boston Saves staff have trained teachers in a career-based curriculum in order to build teacher buy-in to career exploration. Staff see this training as part of building a "culture of college and career" because the curriculum develops a future orientation in students and sparks conversations about how to reach those careers.

Program staff view Boston Saves as a tool for families to help them develop and maintain post-secondary expectations. Staff recognize that the program will never be able to give families enough money to fully pay for college. Instead, they hope to shift expectations, particularly for those families who, as a result of financial barriers, believe a college education may be out of reach for their children. Additionally, program staff see Boston Saves as a way to build financial well-being for families and students by linking them to the City's Office of Financial Empowerment.

How Boston Saves Works

Figure 3 shows the key design elements of the Boston Saves CSA program.

Figure 3.   Key Boston Saves Design Elements

Program Administration	Eligibility and Enrollment	Program Contributions	Account Structure	Outreach
• Housed within the City of Boston's Office of Financial Empowerment • Works with Metro Credit Union and 39 BPS Elementary schools	• Universal eligibility: Students in Boston Public Schools, K-2 • Automatic (opt-out) enrollment	• Initial seed deposit: $50 • Incentives: To earn additional incentives, families must link an account (e.g., checking, savings, or 529 account) to Boston Saves software	• Custodial account holds seed deposits and incentives • Additional dollars can be saved in linked personal accounts	• District-wide BPS outreach • Family champions model: 39 out of 81 elementary schools have one parent who shares information about Boston Saves with other parents – targeted to schools with greater need

Boston Saves incorporates two unique program components.

1. **Custodial account and open-banking model:** A custodial account structure is one in which an adult opens an account in the name of the minor. In this case, the Boston Educational Development Fund (the 501(c)(3) arm of Boston Public Schools) [78] has a custodial account for the program held with Metro Credit Union on behalf of participating children. All funds are pooled together, and the program tracks the share of the total account balance held for each participant. This custodial account serves two purposes. Firstly, it holds the seed deposit and earned incentives for all program participants. Secondly, participants' families who do not wish to, or cannot open a traditional bank account, can open a non-interest-bearing custodial account on behalf of their child. The custodial account, held at Metro Credit Union does not require a Social Security Number to open.[79] As a result, it works well for students and their families who do not have a Social Security number, or for those whose CSA funds may push the family over asset limits and thereby make them ineligible for certain benefits.[80]

> **What is Boston Saves' open banking model?**
>
> The open banking model allows families of students to link any account—529, savings or checking—to the CSA program. This allows Boston Saves to track money deposited into a family's account of choice and provide incentives for those deposits.

Additionally, Boston Saves uses an open banking model. Instead of only partnering with one financial institution as is typical in CSA programs, Boston Saves recognizes any depository institution account as an eligible college savings account. Families link their own accounts to the Boston Saves deposit tracking software, allowing staff to keep track of dollars deposited.[81]

Boston Saves staff initially decided on this model after observing experiences at other CSA programs where the CSA was held by a single financial institution. Staff at these other CSA programs explained that families did not sign up for the accounts because they did not trust the financial institution, or the financial institution did not have local branches easily accessible to family members. Focus groups with BPS families during the design of Boston Saves, suggested the importance of allowing BPS families to link their own accounts so they would feel comfortable with the institution, as well as be familiar with the local bank branch locations and practices. In practice, this model has had tradeoffs. It has allowed families to easily begin saving for their children. But program staff observed that it is challenging for families to keep the money deposited separate from their regular cashflow. As a result, many families may end up using savings earmarked for college deposited for day-to-day expenses. Program staff were aware of the trade-offs of needing funds for immediate expenses versus saving them for longer-term goals.

2. **Family champions model:** Family champions are parents or guardians within a particular school who encourage student's family members to link their accounts (including 529, savings and checking accounts) to the Boston Saves tracking software. Family champions conduct direct outreach at school events, and during pick up and drop off, to increase family-members' awareness of Boston Saves. During the pandemic, Family Champions are trained on how to conduct digital outreach within their communities and are connected directly to the School Coordinators within their school. Additionally, family champions help walk school families through the process of linking their account to Boston Saves.

   Family champions are usually representative of at least one of the predominant demographic groups at a school—for example, in schools where many students speak Spanish, program staff try to find a Spanish-speaking family champion. Program staff view the family champions as a way to reach specific demographic groups and communities within each school, and to diversify their overall program staff and volunteers. Initial data from 2020-21 suggests that schools with family champions had approximately double the rate of account logins compared to schools that did not have family champions.

Challenges Faced by Black and Latine Students in Boston

Boston has historically been highly segregated, with many Black families residing in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. About one in four families in Boston were Black in 2012, and one third of these families were Black immigrants from the Caribbean or West Africa. [82]

Boston saw an influx of Latine immigrants from Puerto Rico in the post-World War II period, and then another influx of Latine immigrants since the 1980s from the Dominican Republic. The two largest Latine populations in Boston are Puerto Rican and Dominican, each of which make up approximately one quarter of the Latine population in the Boston area.[83] Latine Bostonians have historically resided in several core neighborhoods: Jamaica Plain, East Boston, and to some degree Roxbury.

Boston faces a particularly complex history of race relations between Black city residents and the public school system. Under a 1970s school desegregation plan, Black students were bussed into predominately White neighborhoods' schools. Residents of those neighborhoods reacted negatively resulting in violence, racism, and the exclusion of Black students and families as the desegregation plan unfolded. The experience left many Black residents of the city feeling disenfranchised and, in some cases, traumatized.

Black and Latine students in Boston face some challenges specific to Boston, as well as problems that are similar to the broader set of challenges faced by Black and Latine students across the country in attending college. Challenges that program staff spoke about include:

Being a first-generation student. Parents and/or family members who haven't been to college often don't understand the process of applying, enrolling, and attending college. First-generation students may not know about the range of careers available to people with college degrees. As a result, it is harder for them to weigh the benefits and costs of attending college. Black and Latine students are disproportionately represented among first-generation students.

Relatedly, immigrants and those who speak English as a Second Language face challenges, such as language barriers and lower enrollment in services that expand access to post-secondary education. One of the program staff explained: "*that's one of the challenges, understanding what this process looks like as child of immigrant or immigrant student or immigrant, you don't understand the process.*"

Lack of wealth, a result of historical racial wealth gaps. A recent report analyzing wealth data for residents of Boston by race, found that Dominicans and Puerto Ricans held about 1% of the wealth of White residents, while Black households held a little less than 3% of the wealth of White households.[84]

Being unbanked. More than one third of Dominican and Puerto Rican households in Boston are unbanked.[85] Being unbanked presents a particular challenge for building college savings. Households may be unbanked because they may lack the appropriate identification documents to open a bank account, or do not trust financial institutions. Additionally, Boston neighborhoods that are predominantly Black and Latine have a low actual number of bank branches and a high number of check cashing and other alternative financial product institutions.[86]

Cost of college. The cost of college is increasing rapidly, and many families do not have the resources to pay for college. One parent explained the greatest barrier to post-secondary education was anticipating paying for it at the same time she would be close to retirement and hoping to slow down at work: "*It would be the finances – right now I am putting one in college and its already a constraint so it will definitely be the financial aspect when she is that age and at that time, I will be closer to retirement.*"

Being undocumented. Undocumented students, who are often Black or Latine students, face challenges as a result of their immigration status. Parents may have brought their children to the United States at a young age and students may not have the ability to use certain financial support services (e.g., scholarship opportunities, general services post-high-school) to help them get to and through college because they lack a social security number.

Lacking access to computers and internet. The digital divide presents a particular challenge since students need to be computer literate and have access to a computer to complete many college-going activities. A local non-profit's report on the digital divide revealed that one in five students did not have access to a device or stable internet in 2020.[87]

How Boston Saves Addresses these Challenges

Boston Saves program staff see the CSA program as an overall strategy to address the challenges that Black and Latine students face within Boston. BPS students are majority non-White, and many are economically disadvantaged. By targeting the CSA program to BPS students, and especially working with schools to integrate programming to increase knowledge about and expectations of college, program staff see Boston Saves as a vehicle to increase the proportion of Boston students applying to and attending college.

Participatory program design: Boston Saves was designed drawing on the experiences and input of BPS families, students, and school stakeholders. Program staff conducted focus groups and convened families and stakeholders to inform the design of the program. As a result, the program incorporates both a custodial account option and an open banking structure which increases accessibility of the program for both unbanked families, and those who already have a trusted local financial institution. BPS families have also provided feedback on the incentive structure of the program.

> **Using Data at Boston SAVES**
>
> Boston Saves uses program data to understand who is linking external accounts to the Boston saves software. They then adjust and target their outreach towards families who are linking accounts less frequently. For example, after seeing the low sign-up rates of Black and Latine families, program staff created the family champions model.

Engaging non-English speaking families (especially Black and Latine families who speak Spanish or Creole) through family champions: Boston Saves leverages its family champions to build trust with families at 39 of the 81 elementary schools. Family champions are disproportionately located at schools with larger Black and Latine populations. Program staff report more families reaching out to Metro Credit Union to set up custodial savings accounts since the increase in family champions. Boston Saves pays family champions using prepaid gift cards so that they can recruit family champions that represent their communities. This allows family champions that are undocumented to participate.

Including a large unbanked population: Boston Saves is finding a multitude of ways to include the unbanked population in the program. First, the creation of a custodial account model allows unbanked families (whether due to lack of Social Security Number or for other reasons) to open a savings account and begin making deposits. Second, the active outreach by Boston Saves and its partner Metro Credit Union, includes credit union staff from different immigrant and population groups. Dominican and Puerto Rican groups are over-represented in unbanked households; Spanish speaking outreach is critical to reach these families.

Addressing the digital divide through BPS provision of computers to all BPS students: An unexpected benefit from the city response to COVID-19 came from BPS providing computers to all students. As a result, Boston Saves staff reported that more Boston Saves families were able to reach them digitally through email and zoom meetings.

CSAs are a structure around which to build other programs: Boston Saves staff look at the student accounts as a way to cover some of the costs of attending college, such as paying for books or other smaller college costs that can be prohibitive, but for which there are fewer scholarship funds available. Program staff work with other organizations such as *ReadBoston* to build expectations about college.

Program staff describe how including specific books about careers into the school curriculum helps students to imagine careers that are not a part of their current family and friend networks.

Future Programming

Since Boston Saves is still a relatively new program, staff have many ideas about how to build the program to support BPS students to access and complete college.

For example, Boston Saves plans on building an ecosystem of programs to support students of color in attending college. One program staff member talked about this effort as the "*ongoing creation of tools that can make up a cohesive war chest, a cohesive delivery system when students turn from middle to high school.*" Boston Saves program staff described their plan to work with city college access programs or initiatives such as BRIDGE program and Last Mile Grad Fund or GEAR UP which provides one-on-one support to students and families applying for college.

Additionally, program staff plan to integrate the new statewide CSA program, BabySteps, into Boston Saves programming, though they have yet to work out the details. Since the oldest BabySteps participants are only two years old, Boston Saves staff plan to work out the details in time to coordinate with the first BabySteps cohort that reaches kindergarten in BPS.

Program staff also plan to expand family champions to every school. Family champions need access to interpretation services to fully include the diverse group of students and families in any one school within BPS.

Getting families to save is a challenge with which program staff have not yet fully engaged. Their first goal is to get more families linking their accounts to the Boston Saves software. They are aware that family or student engagement is key to getting participants to save. However, staff are aware of the tension of the account structure which can mean that any savings accumulated can quickly be erased since funds are often easily accessible in a checking account. Low-income families are resource-constrained and setting aside funds for future investments can be challenging when facing immediate expenditure needs.

Experiences over the last year in conducting outreach to BPS families have made program staff more aware of the need for reaching non-English speaking students and families. Currently the Boston Saves paperwork and emails that go home to students are translated into the ten most commonly used languages of BPS families. Boston Saves will continue to offer translation services to families in order to increase access to the program. Further plans for increasing engagement include continued updating of short videos that share information about the program. Program staff anticipate additional steps as the program matures and students in the Boston Saves program move into middle and high school.

Summary

Boston Saves targets the challenges faced by Black and Latine students by:

1. Focusing on majority Black and Latine student population within BPS

2. Offering an account structure that facilitates access to accounts for both unbanked households and those distrustful of larger financial institutions

3. Engaging a diverse set of family champions to conduct outreach at schools

4. Building partnerships and programming to foster a culture of attending college.

Kansas City Scholars (KC Scholars): College Savings Match

Kansas City Scholars (KC Scholars)[88] was originally incubated by the Ewing and Marion Kauffman Foundation. It is now a non-profit organization consisting of three program components, including the College Savings (CS) program.[89] Ninth graders attending schools within a six-county area within Kansas City[90] are eligible to submit a competitive application for the CS program. Initially the CS program included two tiers of awardees. The first tier (up to 500 each year) received a savings account with a seed deposit. The second tier (approx. 50 each year) not only received the savings account and a seed deposit but was also eligible for savings match and incentives for eligible college related activities they completed while participating in the program up to $7,000.[91] A total of 1,471 students were awarded CSAs under the two-tiered system. Of these, 890 students are currently active in the CS program.[92]

The program restructured in 2021, eliminating the two-tiered system. It remained an opt-in program. For the incoming ninth grade awardees, all participants received both the initial deposit and the opportunity to earn matching funds based on the value of their contributions into their account through May of their senior year of high school and to earn incentive funds based on completion of college-planning milestones each grade of high school. Throughout the school year all awardees receive coaching and attend workshops to support financial capability and learn information about applying for and attending college.

In addition to the CS program, KC Scholars also has a traditional scholarship to which eligible 11th grade students in Kansas City can apply (and an adult learner scholarship program, which is less relevant to this case study). For all three program components, students can use the money awarded at a selection of 17 universities in the KC Scholars Postsecondary Network, campuses in or within a few hours of Kansas City. While this limits the pool of colleges at which students can use their KC Scholars' funding, it means KC Scholars staff can establish agreements with the universities to link students to college persistence advising and mentoring staff on campus.[93]

The CS program is only open to students from lower-income households. Information about the program is shared at high schools and broadly across the region, and high school staff and community members encourage applications from eligible students. Some schools more actively promote the program than others, leading to differences in application rates from different high schools. According to program partners, the program design means that more motivated students who have strong relationships with high school staff tend to apply for the programs.

Who the KC Scholars College Savings Program Serves

KC Scholars is open to eligible students attending public, private, or charter schools or homeschooled within a six-county area within Kansas City in both Missouri and Kansas. KC Scholars' service area covers 108 high schools and a large number of school districts, many with different opportunity structures for enrolled students.
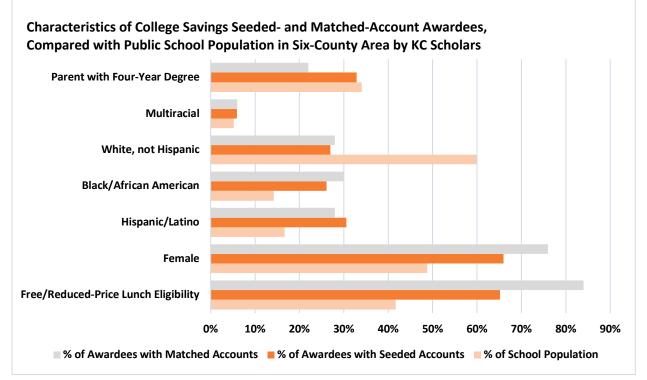
The six-county area has a diversity of students and schools. Black and Latine students make up approximately one third of the total students in the service area. Two thirds of students in the service area

have parents who do not have a four-year degree. Two fifths are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, suggesting they are from low-income households. About one half are female.

KC Scholars is an application-based program which works with students who know about the program and are motivated to apply – students must be low-or modest-income, meet the GPA requirement, and be enrolled in a school in the six-county service area. In general, across the three programs, KC Scholars serves a higher proportion of Black and Latine students than in the overall school systems in the service area – about two times the share of the regional high school population. However, the number and percentage of males in the program is lower than the number and percentage of females in both the traditional scholarship program and the college savings program. Through a concerted outreach and community involved effort, KC Scholars has increased the proportion of Black male students applying and receiving awards over the first four years of the program.

A much higher share of female students and a greater number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch are awarded college savings accounts than the population of the districts overall. More information on the demographics of students who participated in the college savings program as compared with the six-county service area is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4.   Demographic Breakdown for Students Participating in the KC Scholars College Savings Component, 2020 Award Cycle

Characteristics of College Savings Seeded- and Matched-Account Awardees, Compared with Public School Population in Six-County Area by KC Scholars

Note: Seeded account awardees receive the $50 initial deposit into the account. Matched account awardees are those whose savings are matched by the program.
Source: Rauner, M., Mandinach, E., Sublett, C, Torre-Gibney, T. (2020). Evaluation of the KC Scholars Program: Year 4 Report. WestEd.

Theory of Change

KC Scholars was established with three core goals in mind. To increase:

1. Post-secondary attainment in Greater Kansas City.

2. Economic independence of Scholars and their families through inclusive prosperity and equitable connections to regional workforce opportunities.

3. College graduates who remain in the Kansas City region to live and work, creating a racially, ethnically, and generationally diverse workforce pipeline.

Drawing on focus groups and work sessions with community stakeholders and lessons learned from previous and existing regional programs, the Foundation created a three-component program to achieve these goals. First, a traditional college scholarship program for eleventh graders; second, a college savings account program to start with ninth graders and go through the end of high school; and third, an adult scholarship program to support adults with some college and no degree to return to post-secondary education. The remainder of this case study provides an in-depth overview of the College Savings program.

The theory of change posits that these three interventions will increase the rate of KC Scholars attendance and completion of post-secondary education.

How the KC Scholars College Savings Component Works

Kansas City ninth graders are eligible to submit a competitive application for the college savings program. Initially the CS program included two tiers of awardees. The first tier of awardees was awarded a savings account with a seed deposit. The second tier of awardees not only got the savings account and a seed deposit but was also eligible for savings match and incentives for eligible activities completed. A total of 1,471 students were awarded CSAs in the first-tier program. Of these, 890 students are currently active in the college savings program—the remainder have graduated or have not engaged in the program. 240 awards to date have been made in the second-tier match and incentives program.

The initial design of the program included a large number of savings accounts awards with a smaller number of matched accounts. Beginning with the 2021 cohort, program staff decided to reduce the total number of accounts and to provide **all** accounts with access to matched savings. This meant awarding 250 ninth grade students an account in the latest round (2021). All awardees receive college planning advising and attend workshops throughout their time in KC Scholars that support financial capability and provide information about applying for and attending college.

In the restructured program, all awardees receive a $50 seed deposit and can earn up to $1,400 in match for their savings account. In the prior program structure (between 2017 and 2020), all awardees received a $50 seed deposit and the small group in the matched part of the program (a subset of awardees receiving the seed deposit) could earn up to $7,000 in match.

Students who are selected to participate in the College Savings component can only use the money awarded at a selection of 17 local universities. KC Scholars has Memorandums of Understanding with each of these 17 institutions to allow the direct transfer of CS program contributions and scholarships and

to ensure that students are linked with counseling and other support structures for a minimum of their first two years on campus. The goal is to provide students with support during those first two years of college when drop-outs are most likely.

Figure 5. **Key Program Design Elements of KC Scholars College Savings Component for 2021 Cohort**

Program Administration	Eligibility and Enrollment	Program Contributions	Account Structure	Outreach
• Non-profit with community-based board of directors • Works with 529 provider to open accounts for college savings program participants	• Targeted eligibility: Low-income-students; FAFSA Expected Family Contribution (EFC) cannot be above $12,000* • Opt-in enrollment: Requires a competitive application	• Initial seed deposit: $50 • Savings match: Match participant savings up to $7,000 • Incentives: For completing different college preparedness and financial capability activities	• 529 account • Requires SSN or ITIN to open 529 account	• KC Scholars program staff do outreach at community organizations and each high school for enrollment • High school staff conduct outreach with students likely to be eligible for the program

* Expected Family Contribution is the amount calculated in the FAFSA application.

KC Scholars partners include the high schools within the eligible six county region, the 529 program administrator, the 17 universities eligible for the funds, and the College Advising Corps. Based on interviews with KC Scholars program staff, many students in the college savings program have access to support from other local college access programs which augments support by College Advising Corps college advisers and KC Scholars staff. KC Scholars staff work closely with these partners to make the program run smoothly and increase the flow of students from high school through to college.

Challenges Faced by Black and Latine Students in Kansas City

Kansas City has a challenging, racialized history. Located at the border between the Confederacy and the Free States, Kansas City's racial history has informed ongoing current racial politics. As with many cities, segregation and redlining created extreme geographic segregation. With suburbs separating from the city, the Kansas City public school district is now one of 15 school districts that make up the Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area. KC Scholars serves all of these 15 school districts, which make up the central area of Kansas City. As a result of the geographical fragmentation of the school system within Kansas City, KC Scholars, and presumably other college access programs, cannot work with only one school district. Instead, they must work across multiple school districts within the Kansas City region.

The Urban League of Greater Kansas City examined educational inequities for Blacks, Hispanics/Latine, and Whites in the Kansas City region in 2019.[94] The report examined differences in (1) the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers—having a highly qualified teacher increases the rate at which students access and complete college; (2) the percentage of adults (25 and older) who are high school graduates; (3) the percentage of adults (25 and older) with a Bachelor's degree; and (4) ACT composite scores. A smaller percentage of Blacks and Hispanics/Latine were taught by highly qualified teachers. Though more Black and Latine students graduated high school than Whites, fewer completed a Bachelor's degree. ACT scores were lower for Black and Latine students by eight to ten points than for White students. As the Urban League report acknowledges, the historical legacy of institutional racism in the Kansas City region means there is a strong overlay of race and income/wealth inequities.

These background factors inform the set of specific challenges for Black and Latine students in accessing college noted by program staff and partners. Program staff and partners observed that race is not the only challenge students face. Many difficulties are a result of the intersection of race and class. The factors cited by program and partner staff include:

- **Cost of college**: Program staff report that the cost of college is a big barrier for students. Research for both Kansas City and nationally shows significant wealth and income disparities between Black and Latine families and White families. A lack of wealth and income makes paying for college harder—despite college scholarship programs and financial aid.

- **First-generation college students:** Program staff and partners described the challenges for first generation students in attending college. Within the six county school systems, 66% of students do not have a parent who has attended college. Parents don't have the information to help their children in thinking about college. As a partner noted: "*The challenge is … knowing what questions to ask and who to ask – true for many families no matter what demographic they fit into. If they are first generation, their members have not gone through the process themselves…*". Another partner noted that the college process requires that parents are proactive, and in the absence of parents who know what questions to ask, high school counselors need to help.

Low-Income families: A disproportionate number of Black and Latine students in the Kansas City region are low-income.[95] Low-income students face a specific set of resource challenges. Program staff noted that low-income families face the following challenges:

- **Students working full-time:** In addition to the challenges that students face with not having the financial resources to attend college, many students in the high-schools served by KC Scholars are working full time to help make ends meet for their families. Partners reported that:

   "students just don't have time to explore their college or post-secondary options and following through since in reality it takes time to find your best fit, fill out applications, and many of our students are going to school all day and some are working all night. Since COVID hit, lots of students have found full-time jobs while going to school full time as well – asking them to sit down for 30 minutes or an hour to talk about college stuff, they don't see the value in it since that is for future, but they are worried about the now.

- **Students from unbanked families**: Students from unbanked families are those whose family members do not use mainstream banking institutions, but instead use alternative financial institutions such as check cashers and payday lenders. These families do not have a history of working with

mainstream financial institutions such as credit unions and banks, meaning the steps involved with opening a savings account are unfamiliar.

- **Student transience:** KC Scholars partners report that relationships between high school staff and students are critical to encouraging students to apply for college. Partners report that one challenge in building the relationships with high school students generally, and perhaps an issue facing low-income students in particular, is the frequency of students moving homes and schools. This transience makes it difficult to build relationships between counselors and students. As one partner explained:

[E]ven though schools [have] done [a] good job increasing college going culture, we have a transient population – constantly getting new students and then they move out of [district]. [For those moving into the school, it] takes them a while to catch on – they do not know what is available.

Housing and educational mobility literatures point to the detrimental effects of student transience at critical educational moments—unless a student moves to a higher opportunity neighborhood with better performing schools.[96]

Completing College: Once students get to college, program staff and partners know that Black and Latine and low-income students are at great risk of dropping out in the first year, and at the second biggest risk the second year of college. Partners talked about these risk factors.

- **Fitting in and the pull home:** Despite wanting to get away from Kansas City, this partner noted that students feel strong relationships with family members and friends, and often have not traveled far from their communities. To travel to a university farther away can mean they come back after one semester because they want to be closer to home. Sometimes they return to their family when a family member faces a financial or health crisis and the student wants to help.

- **Racism on campus:** Another part of fitting into the college culture relates to racial belonging and racist incidents on campus. One KC Scholar articulated the challenge of being a person of color in a predominantly White institution:

"… I would say, being a minority at a predominantly White institution… there have been incidents on campus …racially directed towards people of color. And I know I was pretty upset when we had

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Tracking Race and Income

KC Scholars tracks demographic information about its awardees. It has commissioned a third-party evaluation every year since it was founded. The evaluation report documents key trends in performance for each of the programs, including breaking these trends out by race and income.

In 2020, the evaluation report included data comparing the proportion of KC Scholar program awardee demographics to the overall school population for the six-county service area. This confirmed that the program was serving a higher proportion of Black and Latine students than the school population.

KC Scholars has used race data to shift program design. For example, in the year 2 evaluation they learned that the program was not reaching sufficient Black male students. As a result, KC Scholars began working with community organizations to increase awareness among Black male students about the KC Scholars program.

something happen... ...they basically give an hour-long lecture about inclusivity and diversity. They are teaching people how to be inclusive. I was on zoom for one of those events, and it was around the time of BLM. Someone had hacked into the zoom and started writing on the screen that the professor had, and they started writing 'White lives matter', and vulgar messages, and basically anti-a lot of things, pro-White. Racist things, that upset me. We have a multicultural student center here, that just opened a couple of months ago. It's nice to have our own center. And last month someone went in and vandalized it and wrote vulgar things, against the LGBTQ community and racist things, all over the building. I was actually there, inside the building when that happened."

How the KC Scholars College Savings Component Addresses These Challenges

The KC Scholars College Savings component is addressing some, though not all, of these challenges. Although this case study focuses on the CS component of KC Scholars, in practice it operates to some degree in tandem with the scholarship program in that 9th grade awardees are able to, and often do apply for the Traditional (11th grade) scholarship if they are eligible.

Building financial resources: The college savings component helps to build savings for the student through their active saving, the match, and incentives. If a student also applies for and is awarded a Traditional scholarship,[97] the financial resources can make a significant dent in paying the student's college costs and overcoming financial barriers to attending college. The college savings account can help to cover costs such as books and supplies.

Increasing family knowledge about the college and financing college processes: With additional programming to support the student and their family in understanding the path to college, the KC Scholars program can help first generation students and their families to understand the college/post-secondary education application process, including the process of applying for financial aid.

On Campus supports: KC Scholars addresses the potential challenges of being a minority student on a majority White campus, by requiring that awardees participate in a campus-based support program a minimum of the first two years of college. The student who reported the racist events on campus noted that she was part of a campus wide club which offered support to her as a student of color.

Limited pool of post-secondary institutions: An unintentional benefit of the program raised by one program partner, is the limited pool of universities close to the Kansas City region. This helps students in the application process by reducing the sense of feeling overwhelmed about the college application process, and then when they get to the college, they are close to home already, and are less fearful about attending.

Future Programming Considerations

One group that is not served by KC Scholars due to account structure limits—notably the need for a Social Security Number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number[98]—are undocumented students. Partners hoped that KC Scholars could figure out a way to incorporate these students into the program since some of these students are the best performing students at the school.

Summary

KC Scholars is an application-based college savings program that starts in 9th grade and also provides coaching and supports for students who are awarded an account. The model is distinct from many CSA programs which are lower touch. Notably, the program helps address challenges to completing college by providing college advising and planning support throughout high school and campus-based supports while in college. KC Scholars' rigorous approach to evaluation and data collection allows program staff to use data to adjust their model and increase participation rates from certain demographic groups.

Lansing SAVE

Lansing SAVE is a universal CSA program enrolling all students in kindergarten in the Lansing (Michigan) School District. The City of Lansing launched the program in 2015 after seeing the successful pilot of San Francisco's Kindergarten to College CSA program. At the time, the high school graduation rate for the Lansing School District was below 60%. Program designers hoped that by supporting a college-going culture in the district and fostering college-bound identities for students at a young age, they could improve the high school graduation rate, as well as the percentage of students enrolling in post-secondary education and completing degrees. Lansing SAVE is part of BOLD Lansing, a partnership of public and private organizations offering a continuum of services from kindergarten through post-secondary education that support Lansing School District students and their families in planning, saving, and applying to post-secondary education.

The City of Lansing managed the program through its Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) for the first few years, with Michigan State University Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU) providing the accounts and financial education. In 2020, OFE contracted out management of the program to MSUFCU, with the Capital Area United Way leading fundraising and community outreach on behalf of the program. The goal was ensuring the long-term stability of the program and to insulate it from potential changes in city leadership. The Lansing School District has served as a partner throughout the program, providing program staff with student rosters to enable automatic enrollment, assisting with data collection and tracking, and conducting outreach to parents.

Who Lansing SAVE Serves

Lansing SAVE opens accounts for students in kindergarten, and as of May 2021, it serves students in kindergarten through sixth grade in the Lansing School District. The Lansing School District covers the City of Lansing, Michigan and has over 11,000 students in Pre-K through 12th grades. As of March 2021, 5,568 students had open accounts through Lansing SAVE. Since the program is universal and opt-out, the demographics of account holders reflect those of the student body in grades K-6 overall. (Staff estimate that only around 25 students have opted out since the program's launch.) The program receives demographic information on participating students from the school district, which shows that the majority of participants are children of color—37% are Black and 21% are Latine—as shown in Figure 6.[99]

The City of Lansing has a sizable and diverse immigrant and refugee population, with about 10% of its residents being foreign-born. Of the city's foreign-born residents, 40% are from Asian countries, 23% are from African countries, and 29% are from Latin America.[100] This diversity extends to the Lansing School District. As of 2017, students were from 70 countries and spoke 51 different native languages.[101] Nearly 15% of students in the district were English language learners, compared with 6% statewide.[102]
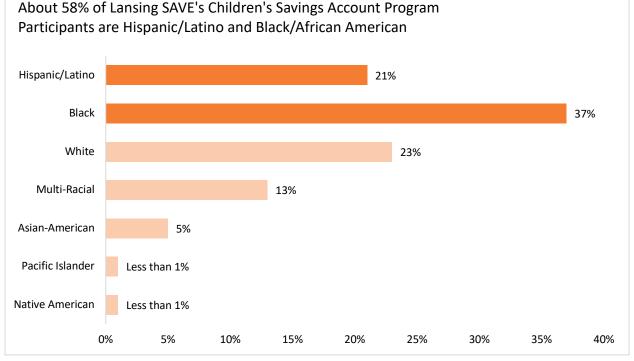
Figure 6.   Race and Ethnicity of Current Lansing SAVE Participants (K-6)

About 58% of Lansing SAVE's Children's Savings Account Program
Participants are Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
Hispanic/Latino	21%
Black	37%
White	23%
Multi-Racial	13%
Asian-American	5%
Pacific Islander	Less than 1%
Native American	Less than 1%

Source: Program data provided by Lansing SAVE

The Lansing School District participates in Michigan's Schools of Choice program, which allows families to send their children outside the district. In the 2019-20 school year, over 3,400 Lansing residents enrolled in public schools outside Lansing School District.[103] Children who transfer out of the district tend to be from wealthier, White, two-parent households. As a result, the percentage of Lansing School District students from low-income households is higher than the general population of Lansing. Specifically, 73% of district students are considered economically disadvantaged.[104] Although a direct comparison using this measure is not available for the general population, American Community Survey data shows that 31% of all Lansing households with children under 18 have incomes under the poverty level.[105] Lansing School District also has a high percentage of Black students (39%) and Latine students (20%).[106, 107]

During interviews, program staff explained that the flight of White, wealthier students out of the district has contributed to disinvestment in Lansing School District, as well as the perception that the district is lower quality than the surrounding suburban districts. District-wide graduation and college readiness markers are below Michigan statewide averages. The high school graduation rate for Lansing School District students for the 2018-2019 school year was 64% compared to 81% for the state.[108] On the SATs, the scores of only 6.5% of Lansing School District students exceeded the state's benchmarks compared to 33.9% for the state overall.[109]

Theory of Change

Lansing SAVE does not have an explicit, written theory of change. Instead, during conversations with program staff and partners, we elicited their views on the purpose and goals of the program and how they think it will impact participants. The themes that emerged from those discussions are:

- **Decreasing barriers to saving increases family savings for post-secondary education**: Staff posited that through automatically opening accounts at a local credit union, allowing in-school deposits, and connecting families to financial counseling, barriers to saving will decrease and more families will save for their children's post-secondary education. These small dollar savings, along with the account contributions provided by the program, will complement financial aid and scholarships and help cover small gaps in post-secondary funding.

- **Focus on college leads to a college-bound identity**: Staff explained that by engaging children and their families in talking about, preparing for, and saving for college and career early on through Lansing SAVE, children will develop a college-bound identity and mindset.[110] This identity is reinforced by the community's demonstrated investment in children, such as through funds raised to boost children's accounts through Lansing SAVE's community champions and Lansing Promise's scholarship commitment. These factors, combined with the tangible post-secondary access tools and supports provided by a partner college access organization, will ideally help make participants more likely to attend post-secondary education.

- **Financial education in school provides tools for young adulthood:** By providing financial education to children beginning at a young age and connecting them to financial counseling as needed during college and young adulthood, staff posit that participants will have the tools and skills needed to better manage their finances as young adults.

How Lansing SAVE Works

The design of Lansing SAVE reflects what program designers learned from other CSA programs, as well as the purpose and goals of the program discussed in the previous section. Figure 7 lays out key program elements.

Figure 7. Key Program Design Elements of Lansing SAVE

Program Administration	Eligibility and Enrollment	Program Contributions	Account Structure	Outreach
• Managed by MSUFCU, under contract to the City of Lansing • Works with partners through BOLD Lansing	• Universal eligibility: All K-6 students in the Lansing School District • Automatic (opt-out) enrollment: School district provides school roster to SAVE staff	• Initial seed deposit: $5 • Incentives: For participating in an annual event; others in development • Other: Community champions raise additional contributions targeted toward children in particular schools or neighborhoods	• Custodial CDs at MSUFCU; each child has three accounts for the initial deposit, incentives, and family deposits • Deposit options: In person at branches, direct deposit, in school on financial education days	• Annual Lansing SAVE night (yearly program kick-off) • Monthly in-classroom financial education classes for students

The program engages with participating students and families in several ways. Families and children are invited to the annual Lansing SAVE night, which serves as the program's kick-off event each November. The event, held at the local high school's field house, includes carnival activities and games for kids and information tables for parents about Lansing SAVE and other community programs. (In 2020, the event was virtual and focused on information sessions for parents.) Beginning each December, financial educators from MSUFCU visit all K-6 classrooms monthly for a 30-minute lesson for students. Families also receive additional communications from the program including quarterly account statements, along with prerecorded calls and other communications from schools.

Lansing SAVE is part of BOLD Lansing, a continuum of kindergarten through post-secondary services that support Lansing School District students and their families in planning, saving, and applying to post-secondary education. In addition to Lansing SAVE, the BOLD components are:

- **Lansing Promise** – A scholarship covering up to 65 credits at the local community college or equivalent costs at Michigan State University or Olivet University.[111]

- **Capital Area College Access Network (CapCAN)** – Provides specialized college counselors in high schools through the College Advising Corps, who supplement traditional guidance counselors by providing one-on-one support to students throughout all the steps in preparing and applying for post-secondary education, including SAT prep, FAFSA, college applications, career exploration, and more.

- **Lansing School District** – Provides career exploration opportunities in middle school and college tours and job shadowing in high school.

- **Financial Empowerment Center (FEC)** – Provides financial counseling to households and college students to help with debt reduction, credit, savings, banking, and more.

Through this continuum, the partners aim to:

- Build students' and their families' awareness of available resources and supports for preparing, saving, applying, and paying for post-secondary education.

- Ensure clear pathways and smooth transitions between the different BOLD programs (e.g., inducting Lansing SAVE participants as Promise Scholars in seventh grade).

- Walk students and families—especially first-generation college students—through the college application process and address challenges they experience.

- Offer financial support to families in saving and paying for post-secondary education.

Although Promise, CapCAN, and the school district existed prior to Lansing SAVE, the groups did not work together in the same way until they started meeting around SAVE. Initially, they began meeting periodically to share program updates. Over time, this evolved into a shared vision of a continuum serving Lansing students and their families from kindergarten through post-secondary education that became known as BOLD Lansing. Partners at both Lansing Promise and CapCAN credited SAVE with being the linchpin that brought the group together and rounded out their services by fostering a college-bound identity in students early on.

Challenges Faced by Black and Latine Students in Lansing

The design of Lansing SAVE and the BOLD continuum overall reflects program staff's perceptions of the challenges facing students in the Lansing School District in enrolling in and completing post-secondary education. When asked about the challenges specific to Black and Latine students, program staff and partners focused on the challenges faced by students from low-income households and those who would be first-generation college students, rather than specifically on Black and Latine students. However, because of the intersection of race, class, and educational attainment, Black and Latine students are more likely to be in one of the categories mentioned previously than White students. The barriers for students that staff discussed were similar to those faced by Black and Latine students across the country, including:

- **First-generation college students face challenges navigating the post-secondary education application system** – The college application process can be complicated and confusing for all students, but it is particularly daunting for first-generation college students and their families. They may not know how to select which colleges to apply to, how to complete the financial aid process, how to understand financial aid award letters, and other key steps in the process.

- **Limited knowledge of and barriers to accessing available resources and supports** – Although the Lansing School District and partner organizations provide many resources and supports to help students and families prepare for post-secondary education and navigate the challenges facing first-generation college students in the application process, the awareness of these resources is limited. Staff identified two main barriers for Black and Latine students and other first-generation college students:

- Racial gaps in internet access (often referred to as the "digital divide") mean that Black and Latine families may have greater difficulty than White families accessing online resources.

- Families with limited English proficiency may not be able to access resources that are only available in English.

- **Financial challenges in saving and paying for post-secondary education** – On average, Black and Latine households have lower wealth and incomes than White households, which can pose financial challenges for post-secondary education, including:

  - Less income to save for children's education

  - Higher rates of unbanked and underbanked households; 9% of households in Lansing are unbanked and 20% are underbanked[112]

  - Students having to pause their college education or drop out to help their families when they experience economic hardship—a problem that has been particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Specific challenges for students from immigrant/refugee households** – As described earlier, about 10% of Lansing residents are immigrants, over half of whom are from African or Latin American countries. Students who are immigrants or refugees, or whose parents are immigrants, experience specific challenges that make it difficult to attend and complete post-secondary education, including:

  - Significant pressure on them to support their families financially

  - Lack of documentation (e.g., birth certificate, Social Security number) needed for college applications and financial aid

  - Language barriers, including needing to serve as translators for parents who are not proficient in English

How Lansing SAVE Addresses these Challenges

Lansing SAVE does not take a targeted approach to supporting Black and Latine students. Rather, the program focuses more generally on addressing the challenges to attaining post-secondary education for students from low-income households and for first-generation college students. However, because of the intersection of race, class, and educational attainment discussed earlier, Black and Latine students are disproportionately likely to fall into one or both of those two groups.

In recent years, OFE staff has recognized the need to bring a racial equity lens when it comes to program contributions, noting that, on average, Black participants had lower account balances than White participants. Staff had a plan to top off the accounts of Black students to bring them up to the average balance of the accounts of White participants. However, the city's legal staff told OFE staff that targeting city resources based on race would be illegal.

The program's outreach efforts are not targeted by racial or ethnic groups. Some materials are translated, but key tools like the program website are not translated into other languages, including Spanish. Outreach to parents and students is standardized across-the-board, not community or culturally specific. When asked about targeted approaches to outreach, program staff mainly raised the need for more language access but did not discuss other tailored or focused outreach for groups that may be harder to

reach through the current outreach channels or have that historically been marginalized from government programs.

The program works in conjunction with partners through BOLD Lansing. The programs and entities of BOLD—Lansing SAVE, Lansing Promise, CapCAN, Lansing School District and the FEC—work together to create a continuum of services that they hope will create a clear pathway for students and their families from kindergarten through post-secondary education. This combined approach supports participants and seeks to address challenges in attaining post-secondary education in the following ways:

- **Fostering college expectations and a college-bound identity from a young age** – Through monthly financial education classes, in school deposits, and resources that encourage families to discuss post-secondary education with children, Lansing SAVE seeks to build a college-bound identity in participating students. Research indicates that young adults with college-bound identities are more likely to attend college.[113] Staff view the monthly interactions with students during financial education classes as core to this approach. Although the classes discuss financial topics, the financial educators also talk to students about their future education and careers. Staff discussed how these classes allow them to meet with the same students year after year and serve as a constant, supportive presence in their lives. Their goal is to help the students identify their vision for a successful future, understand what it will take to get there, and know how SAVE and other BOLD partners can support them in achieving their goals.

  During interviews, staff at partner organizations talked about how important this college-bound identity element of SAVE is to the whole BOLD Lansing approach. Since Lansing Promise and CapCAN do not begin working with students until middle school or high school, they view Lansing SAVE as pivotal in starting conversations about college and careers early, thereby setting children up for success with the later Promise and CapCAN interventions.

- **Making it easier for families to save for their children's post-secondary education** – Lansing SAVE automatically opens three custodial certificate of deposit (CD) accounts for each student at MSUFCU—an account to hold the initial deposit, an account for incentives and one for family deposits. Program designers made an intentional choice in both the selection of the financial institution and the type of account. They chose to use custodial accounts for program contributions (i.e., initial deposits and incentives) and for family deposits to be inclusive of undocumented families and refugees without Social Security numbers. They also worked with the credit union to offer an in-school deposit option on financial education days to make it easier for families to save.

- **Supporting families in addressing general financial challenges through the FEC** – Through Lansing SAVE night and other outreach, the program tries to connect families whose children are participating in Lansing SAVE with the services offered at the FEC. The FEC provides financial counseling and referrals to address families' financial needs. Counselors also talk with families about setting aside savings in their children's SAVE accounts.[114] Another goal is to help families who may be unbanked or underbanked build trust in a financial institution and potentially open an account.

- **Providing support through the post-secondary application process** – All students in Lansing School District have access to the in-school college counselors provided by CapCAN. The counselors walk students and their families through all the steps in the college application and financial aid processes—from identifying potential colleges, submitting applications, and filling out the FAFSA to understanding financial aid award letters and selecting a college.

- **Providing financial support for paying for college** – All students who graduate from the Lansing School District and live in Lansing can receive a Promise Scholarship. Promise covers tuition for up to 65 credits at the local community college or equivalent funding for the first two years at Michigan State University or Olivet University. An important caveat is that Promise is a last-dollar scholarship, meaning it covers any remaining tuition and fees after other financial aid is applied. This means that often students from low-income households, whose tuition may be fully covered through Pell and other grants, do not end up receiving Promise funds.

Program and partner staff view Lansing SAVE as a complement to Promise and federal/state financial aid. They recognize that most families are unlikely to save large sums of money in the accounts. However, the intention is for SAVE funds to be used to address some of the small gaps left by financial aid and Promise. One interviewee described it as a "safety net" for those small expenses that sometimes lead students to drop out of college.

Summary

Lansing SAVE is based on the theory that: 1) if barriers to saving are decreased, families will increase their post-secondary educational savings, and 2) by focusing on college early and often, children will develop a college-bound identity. Through combining these elements with the financial support provided through Lansing Promise and the college access services provided by CapCAN, the BOLD Lansing continuum is intended to increase post-secondary education enrollment.

This theory of change does not focus on Black and Latine students and the specific challenges they may face. Rather, the program's approach is a general one, focused on students from low-income households and youth who would be first-generation college students. Although the populations of Black and Latine students in the Lansing School District strongly overlap with that of students from low-income households, additional opportunities may exist for more targeted outreach and engagement strategies focused on Black and Latine students, as well as for providing targeted financial resources to address the specific challenges faced by Black and Latine students and to promote equity.

Oakland Promise

Oakland Promise was developed in 2016 with the vision that every child in Oakland graduate high school with the expectations, resources, and skills to complete college and be successful in the career of their choice. In 2019, Oakland Promise merged with the East Bay College Fund, a college persistence and scholarship organization in Oakland.

Oakland Promise began as an initiative of Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf and now has become a standalone non-profit organization. It partners with dozens of other non-profit organizations as well as pediatric medical clinics, public health, and social services agencies, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), charter school networks and local colleges and universities. The program is comprised of four components serving different age groups:

- **Brilliant Baby (ages 0-5):** Families with newborns who are Medi-Cal eligible (low-income) may enroll or opt into Brilliant Baby. Children receive a $500 seed deposit in a my529[115] account and their parents or guardians are offered one-on-one financial coaching, parenting resources, and a supportive community.[116]

- **Kindergarten to College (ages 5-13):** Beginning in 2016, all kindergarten students in an Oakland public school automatically receive a $100 scholarship deposited into a 529 account. Students can earn additional scholarships the longer they stay in an Oakland public school, and families who open a family-owned college savings account[117] through the program will also receive a one-time $75 seed deposit. Additionally, the program provides support to build a college- and career-going identity within students, which includes college and career week, college visits, family and student workshops, scholarship celebrations, and more.

- **College Access (ages 15-18):** Oakland Promise provides group and 1-on-1 advising to high school students to complete the financial aid process and apply for Oakland Promise and other scholarships. In addition, they inform students through workshops regarding the different pathways (i.e., CTE, 2-year, and 4-year colleges) to post-secondary education and support them with college applications. They help students complete FAFSA & CA Dream Act applications, college applications, review personal statements, and help parents navigate their students' post-secondary enrollment needs.

- **College Scholarships and Completion (ages 18-25):** Students awarded the Oakland Promise scholarship receive scholarship funds as well as mentoring, peer-advising, networking and career opportunities, and other persistence support and services to achieve college and career success. The program has developed partnerships with local colleges and universities to identify students who are at-risk of falling off-track and offers on campus support to mitigate issues.

Who Oakland Promise Serves

Oakland Promise serves two primary populations: low-income families with infants living in Oakland, California through Brilliant Baby and students attending OUSD through the Kindergarten to College, college access and college scholarships components.

Brilliant Baby has about 1,000 enrolled participants (as of September of 2021), 80% of whose parents or guardians have participated in financial coaching. Program Staff report that about 50% of participants are Latine, 30% are Black or African American, 8% identify as two or more races, 5% are Chinese, and 6%

identify as other. In order to be eligible for Brilliant Baby, families must qualify for Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid healthcare program).
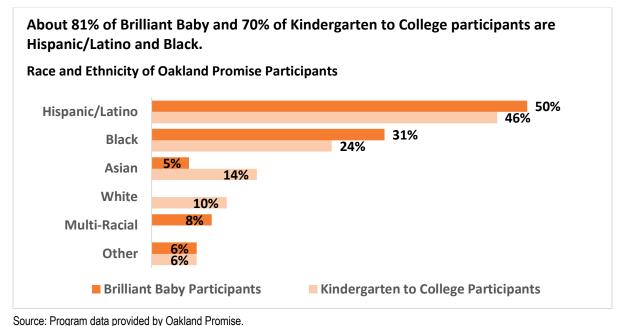
Kindergarten to College (K2C) is the automatic, universal CSA serving students from kindergarten up. About 25,000 OUSD students have received the initial $100 scholarship, and about 620 have opened their own 529 account to begin saving. The demographics of all enrolled K2C participants reflect that of the grades served in OUSD.

OUSD students are 47% Hispanic/Latine, 24% Black or African American, 14% Asian American and 10% White. At OUSD, nearly 72% of students qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch and 31% of students are English Language Learners. [118] Staff at Oakland Promise noted that OUSD serves disproportionately more students of color and families with low incomes than the demographics of the city of Oakland as whole. In particular, staff shared that there is a rise (from 72% to 77%) in the number of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch in higher grades because many higher income families leave the district in middle school. In addition, staff reported that the population of recently arrived immigrants is greater in middle and high school grades than elementary school.

College Access and Completion programming: At the high school level, about 9,000 students have received high school guidance or participated in College Access and Completion programming. Of those students, about 1,800 have received scholarships and 1,100 are working with a mentor. In addition to the demographic data above, Oakland Promise staff shared that about 10% of the high school students participating in College Access and Completion components are undocumented.

Figure 8 shows the race and ethnicity of Oakland Promise participants, of whom about 1,000 are enrolled in Brilliant Baby, and about 25,000 are enrolled in Kindergarten to College. Data were provided by program staff and collected from the Oakland Unified School District Scorecard (2015-2016).

Figure 8.   Race and Ethnicity of Oakland Promise Participants for School Year 2020-21

About 81% of Brilliant Baby and 70% of Kindergarten to College participants are Hispanic/Latino and Black.

Race and Ethnicity of Oakland Promise Participants

Race/Ethnicity	Brilliant Baby Participants	Kindergarten to College Participants
Hispanic/Latino	50%	46%
Black	31%	24%
Asian	5%	14%
White		10%
Multi-Racial	8%	
Other	6%	6%

Source: Program data provided by Oakland Promise.

In 2015-2016, 72% of OUSD seniors graduated high school, and just over 53% completed the requirements to attend post-secondary in the University of California or California State University systems[119]. Of high school graduates, nearly 31% enrolled in a four-year college, another 30% enrolled in a two-year, and nearly 39% were not enrolled in any type of post-secondary program within one year of graduation.[120]

Theory of Change

Oakland Promise's theory of change posits that families need access to both financial and non-financial resources in order to be successful. Each component of the program pairs a financial asset for the participant (e.g., $500 initial deposit in Brilliant Baby) with a resource or service to support families in navigating financial and non-financial challenges that might impede a child's academic progress and eventual college enrollment (e.g., financial coaching).

The organization's mission statement—"Engaging the Oakland community to advance equity and economic mobility in cradle to college and career achievement"—reflects the emphasis on equity in program design. The vision is a thriving Oakland without barriers to educational opportunity. Interviews with staff members underscored the importance of racial equity in each component of the program. At a high level, Oakland Promise's approach offers a mix of targeted and universal supports. The organizational goals reflect a desire to advance racial equity across the cradle to career continuum of services. Staff involved from the beginning of the program's creation described a design process that explicitly focused on families of color. Multiple Oakland Promise staff described equity as "the key performance metric." Each program is evaluated on whether or not the participants are representative of the service area and what adjustments need to be made to include underrepresented groups.

Oakland Promise had the advantage of early buy-in to the program's racial equity focus from key institutional partners including Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf and leadership at the school district level. Oakland Promise staff underscored how valuable the historic activism and civic engagement of Black, Latine, and Asian-Pacific Islander (API) leaders in Oakland is in advocating for student success. The overwhelming public support for targeting resources and the ability to lead the program with an explicit racial equity lens appears to be an asset to Oakland Promise.

Oakland Promise staff described that the cradle to career continuum was created with Black and Latine families in mind, with a defined goal of reducing inequity in the logic model at each phase of the continuum. Staff conducted focus groups with Oakland parents to gather input during the design processes for Brilliant Baby and Kindergarten to College. In addition, each component of Oakland Promise offers opportunities for participants to provide feedback. All components conduct surveys and offer opportunities for participants to provide feedback. One graduate of Oakland Promise described how the college access curriculum had changed over time and more recently was "a lot more relevant to what I actually wanted to know" relative to other college access workshops he had attended in the past.

How Oakland Promise Works

Oakland Promise is designed to reflect the theory of change as described in the prior section. Figure 9 shows the key program design elements.

Figure 9.   Key Program Design Elements of Oakland Promise

Program Administration	Eligibility and Enrollment	Program Contributions	Account Structure	Outreach
• Non-profit organization • Works with my529 and Self-Help Credit Union • Serves 62 OUSD elementary and 3 middle schools	Brilliant Baby • Targeted eligibility: Newborns in Medi-Cal eligible families • Opt-in enrollment K2C • Universal eligibility: All OUSD kindergarteners • Automatic (opt-out) enrollment	Brilliant Baby • Initial seed deposit: $500 • Other: Parents receive $100/month cash stipend for participating in financial coaching K2C • Initial seed deposit: $100 • Incentives: To earn additional deposit incentives families must open their own 529 account	• Custodial account holds seed deposits and incentives • Additional dollars can be saved in a family-owned 529 account	Brilliant Baby • Partner with early childhood orgs, hospitals K2C • Work with OUSD's equity office to reach Black and Latine students

Challenges Faced by Black and Latine Students in Oakland

Black and Latine students in Oakland face specific challenges related to their local context, but interviews with staff indicated that the broad set of challenges faced by Black and Latine students in attending college are not unique to Oakland. They noted that similar challenges come up in conversation with colleagues across the country serving Black and Latine youth. Challenges that program staff spoke about that are especially relevant to Oakland students include:

• **A growing housing crisis in Oakland:** The rapidly rising cost of housing has put tremendous strain on Oakland families. One partner described her clients, who are mostly Black mothers of young children, as experiencing "multiple layers of need related to housing" in which families are rent burdened (paying more than 50% of income on rent) while waiting for an open slot in affordable housing. The shortage of affordable housing has led to the displacement of Black families who have historically called Oakland home. In addition to creating strain on day-to-day needs, rent pressure reduces income available for long-term savings goals, including saving for college.

• **Many high school graduates do not meet the requirements to enroll in California Public University systems:** California has a robust set of UC/CSU degree programs that are fiercely competitive due to their relatively low-cost tuition and high number of applications. High school students in California must pass 15 specific classes (called A-G) in order to be accepted, but many high schools do not require these courses to graduate. In 2015-2016 53% of OUSD students

completed the A-G requirements.[121] Program staff identified two major drivers of this low completion rate: lack of middle school readiness which exacerbates the lack of high school readiness; and particular challenges for English Language Learners, who must meet English proficiency standards before moving on to the A-G courses.

- **Less familiarity with the college/financial aid process:** Program staff shared that there is a widespread information deficit among parents of K-12 students. This challenge is particularly acute for aspiring first generation college students who are not able to rely on the support from parents in navigating the process. Staff shared that families with children as young as middle school are discouraged by the bureaucratic financial aid process and do not have a full understanding of available scholarships.

  For Latine families, language barriers can prevent families from having a deep understanding of the college application and financial aid process. Undocumented and mixed immigration status families have added challenges. California has a separate application for students who are undocumented to qualify for state financial aid, but staff shared that mixed-status families or families with undocumented youth and/or parents are often hesitant to complete these applications out of fear of alerting authorities about their status.

- **Imposter syndrome or feeling out of place on a college campus:** College access and completion staff at Oakland Promise discussed that Black and Latine college participants may experience a sense that they do not belonging on campus. Students shared with staff that they experienced imposter syndrome[122] and felt that their college peers had a better understanding of how to access resources and navigate challenges. One staff member said: "When students get to campus, they don't feel like they belong, they don't see people that look like them succeeding." Students reported to Oakland Promise staff that they often feel discouraged in navigating challenges and assume that other students are not struggling.

- **COVID-19 exacerbated existing inequities in the classroom:** Staff noted that Oakland students, especially students of color, struggled to adjust to remote learning due to the pandemic. COVID impacted families in several ways:

  - Latine families in particular experienced a loss of income due to jobs in the service and hospitality industries.

  - Many Black and Latine students initially lacked access to devices to complete schoolwork. An initiative called Oakland Undivided provided laptops or tablets to students to mitigate the digital divide. However, an OUSD teacher remarked that simply having the device was not enough – many parents needed training on how to use new systems like Zoom.

  - Program staff noted that many students did not have an environment conducive to learning at home due to limited space, helping younger siblings in the home, and limited internet bandwidth when students needed to be online alongside parents trying to work remotely.

How is Oakland Promise Addressing these Challenges?

Program staff envision Oakland Promise as a cradle to career service model that incorporates both financial and non-financial resources from infancy through college graduation, through the following:

- **Providing a "a visible and present reminder of college" helps increase familiarity with college process:** This goal was repeated by staff leading different program components. Staff believe that exposing students and their families to information about college as early as possible will help reduce feelings of unfamiliarity with the college process by the time students are ready to begin applying. This is accomplished in a variety of settings including family-centered activities, one on one financial coaching, college campus visits, and student workshops. Providing a warm hand off between phases of the program is critical to ensuring consistent support to students of color.

- **Partnerships with college campuses to increase college completion rate once in college:** Oakland Promise has developed partnerships with colleges and universities in the Bay Area to help students transition from high school to college. Critically, these partnerships involve data sharing agreements to help Oakland Promise staff identify students that may be in danger of falling through the cracks. For example, if a student is enrolled for the semester but has not signed up for any classes, staff directly reach out to that student to help solve the problem. In addition, mentors (one component of the college access services) help students navigate issues about which they may feel uncomfortable reaching out to Oakland Promise staff or other on-campus staff. This support may help students who feel unsure about their place on campus because they have a support system to navigate unfamiliar challenges.

- **Supporting families holistically:** Oakland Promise recognizes that saving for college is one small part of a family's financial life. Because of this, the financial coaching component of Brilliant Baby is designed to support the family's goals, as defined by the family itself. As previously mentioned, a lack of financial resources is a major barrier to completing college. Incentives for participating in coaching are not made as deposits into the child's 529 account, although that is one possible use. Instead, participants receive $100 a month (per month of participation up to six month) as a prepaid gift card so they can make their own decisions about how to use those funds.

- **Adapting during the pandemic:** Staff learned over the course of the pandemic through feedback surveys that many parents preferred to attend virtual family workshops rather than in person. After some time adjusting to a new format, parents appreciated that virtual attendance solved some barriers to participation including transportation and childcare. One parent noted that it was a lot easier to make time for a workshop if they could attend on Zoom and switch a load of laundry or empty the dishwasher while listening. Staff expect to continue to offer some virtual programming over the next year.

- **Culturally competent and representative staff foster community credibility and trust:** Multiple staff remarked on the importance of culturally competent staff in serving Black and Latine students. Oakland Promise staff are generally reflective of the community they are serving. Staff described how staff diversity has had a positive impact on how the program lands with families, including enrollment and the popularity of Oakland Promise content on social media. It makes a real difference when families attend events and see that Oakland Promise staff have authentic relationships in the community beyond providing a service. In addition, Brilliant Baby conducts all family workshops in English, Spanish, and Cantonese to reduce barriers to participation, and K2C conducts all family workshops in English and Spanish.

- **Targeting outreach to participants who have been historically marginalized:** Several CSA programs have described challenges implementing targeted contributions or programming by race because of potential legal issues or explicit state statutes preventing such targeting. Oakland Promise has gotten around this challenge largely by working with the school district's Office of Equity. The

Office of Equity operates four targeted initiatives: African American Female Excellence, African American Male Achievement, Asian Pacific Islander Student Achievement, and Latino/a Student Achievement. K2C staff direct their outreach and communication efforts through the OUSD Office of Equity. In this way, staff direct outreach efforts toward boosting engagement among Black and Latine students.

> The College Access and Completion component uses a targeted outreach strategy for the college scholarships to prioritize undocumented students (predominately Latine) who are ineligible for federal aid, and Black and Latino male students. Staff indicated that higher outreach is needed because Black male students have historically been underserved by OUSD. Staff have recently developed a new partnership at the high school level with the African American Male Achievement student group to identify barriers for Black male students in completing scholarship applications.

- **Demographic data access allows the program to understand what gaps exist:** Across the organization, one major asset in providing better services to Black and Latine students is strong data access and a high capacity for evaluation. While a long-term evaluation of Brilliant Baby is underway with NORC, a research center at the University of Chicago, ongoing program monitoring allows staff to assess whether or not the participants in the opt-in components match the demographics of the service area. This helps staff identify gaps in services and outreach. For example, program staff found that Black students were slightly underrepresented relative to the student population among scholarship recipients. Having access to that data allowed the college access and completion team to assess their outreach strategies and prioritize specific high schools for the upcoming school year in which to deepen communication efforts. Access to this data also creates opportunities for staff to pivot to new strategies and test the effects. Oakland Promise is now in the process of revising some of its incentive offerings for Brilliant Baby so they better align with the program goals.

Summary/Discussion

Oakland Promise addresses the challenges faced by Black and Latine students by:

1. Leveraging existing efforts with their school district partners to target outreach to Black and Latine student groups.

2. Targeting significant financial and non-financial resources toward students of color and low-income families.

3. Developing a team of culturally competent and representative program staff to build trust.

4. Building partnerships and programming to ensure that students are supported at critical developmental junctures.

Endnotes

[1] The term Latine is used throughout this paper to refer to people with origins in Latin America (Central and South America) and the Caribbean. This term was selected because it is a gender-neutral term and better aligns with Spanish pronunciation than Latinx.

[2] CSAs are also known as Child Development Accounts (CDAs).

[3] "Post-secondary education" includes college, ending in a terminal degree, as well as training and vocational education, resulting in a certificate of completion.

[4] More recent research has been published since this paper was first written. See, for example, recent findings from SEED OK on Center for Social Development's project page and case studies from several CSA programs on the Center on Assets, Education and Inclusion's website.

[5] M. M. Clancy, S. G. Beverly, M. Schreiner, J. Huang, and M. Sherraden, *Financial Outcomes in a Child Development Account Experiment: Full Inclusion, Success Regardless of Race or Income, and Investment Growth for All* (Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis, 2021).

[6] Clancy et al., *Financial Outcomes*.

[7] Sondra Beverly, Margaret Clancy, and Michael Sherraden, *Universal Accounts at Birth: Results from SEED for Oklahoma Kids* (Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis, 2016).

[8] S. G. Beverly, M. M. Clancy, and M. Sherraden, *The Early Positive Impacts of Child Development Accounts,* CSD Research Brief No. 15-08 (Washington University, Center for Social Development, June 2016).

[9] J. Huang et al., A Long-term Experiment on Child Development Accounts: Update and Impacts of SEED for Oklahoma Kids (Washington University in St. Louis, Center for Social Development, 2021).

[10] Huang et al., Long-term Experiment.

[11] William Elliott, At-risk Children's College Aspirations and Expectations: The Potential of College Savings Accounts (Washington University in St. Louis, Center for Social Development, 2008).

[12] Huang et al., Long-term Experiment.

[13] William Elliott, Hyun-a Song, and Ilsung Nam, *Small Dollar Children's Savings Accounts, Income, and College Outcomes* (Washington University in St. Louis, Center for Social Development, 2013). The authors analyze Panel Survey of Income Dynamics (PSID) data, a longitudinal data set with detailed information about wealth.

[14] Some studies have looked at the impact of educational saving in general and found that it results in better college enrollment and completion, with the greatest benefits for Black students. See for example: *Elliott*, W., *Nam*, I., & *Friedline*, T. (*2013*). Probability of living through a period of economic instability. Children and Youth Services Review, 35(3). Teens who save for school are more likely to be on track to finish college, closing racial gaps in college progress (Elliott, Song, and Nam, *Small Dollar)*.

[15] Prosperity Kids is a CSA program in New Mexico that launched in 2014. It provides a CSA for children from low-income households that is seeded with a $100 deposit; savings in the CSA are matched 1:1 up to $200 per year until children graduate high school. Parents also participate in financial capability and parent-child development education.

[16] Megan O'Brien et al., *Savings Patterns and Asset Accumulation in New Mexico's Prosperity Kids Children Savings Account Program: 2017 Update* (University of Michigan, Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion, 2018).

[17] B. Hussar et al., *The Condition of Education 2020*, NCES 2020-144 (US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

[18] C. de Brey et al., *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018*, NCES 2019-038 (US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

[19] See for example: L. Sullivan et al., *Equitable Investments in the Next Generation: Designing Policies to Close the Racial Wealth Gap* (Institute on Assets and Social Policy and Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2016).

[20] That equity analysis looks more broadly than just at Black and Latine program participants—it incorporates other racial/ethnic groups and other historically marginalized groups. See Diego Quezada, *Designing Children's Savings Account Programs with an Equity Lens*, Children's Savings Account esign Resource (Prosperity Now, 2019).

[21] See for example, William R. Emmons and Lowell R. Ricketts, College Is Not Enough: Higher Education Does Not Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Wealth Gaps, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis *Review*, First Quarter 2017.

[22] Ana Hernández Kent and Lowell R. Ricketts, Wealth Gaps between White, Black and Hispanic Families in 2019 (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2021).

[23] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Methods: Design and Methods* (Sage Publications, 2003). With this research approach, we cannot generalize beyond the experiences of the four case study sites included in this report. We are able to discuss the social processes at work within the programs and their related programming. However, we cannot state that a particular approach used by one case study program will always work for another program.

[24] The project could have conducted a study of the field in general, rather than case studies. A study of the field would have been broad, with interviews or a survey of program staff at a sample of CSA programs. Such a study would not have allowed the research team to develop an understanding of the context for operational decisions and would have yielded more limited insights into the opportunities and challenges to address barriers that Black and Latine students face.

[25] See for example: A. Morning, H. Brückner, and A. Nelson, "Socially Desirable Reporting and the Expression of Biological Concepts of Race, *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2019), 439-455, doi:10.1017/S1742058X19000195.

[26] Larger, state-wide CSA programs tend not to engage directly with participants at this level, which introduces some measure of challenge applying lessons from these four case studies to state-wide programs.

[27] US Department of Education, Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students. (Office for Civil Rights, 2021).

[28] S. V. Poppe, Following Their Dreams in an Inequitable System: Latino Students Share Their College Experience. (UnidosUS, 2020).

[29] A. A. Jack, The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students (Harvard University Press, 2019).

[30] Poppe, *Following Their Dreams*. Gary M. Stearn, "Why Latino students Are Failing to Attend College," *The Education Digest,* vol. 75, no. 1 (2009): 46.

[31] Bates, W. G. Bowen, and D. Bok, "The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions," *Southern Economic Journal*, vol *66*, no. 4 (2000): 1011-1012. https://doi.org/10.2307/1061543. M. D. Martinez, "Missing in Action: Reconstructing Hope and Possibility among Latino Students Placed at Risk," *Journal of Latinos and Education,* vol. 2, no. 1 (2003): 13–21, https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532771xjle0201_3.

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Perspectives from First-year, First-generation-in-college Latino Students," *Journal of Latinos and Education*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2019): 134-150. W. L. Smith and S. Zhang, "Perceived Factors Facilitating Students' Transition from High School to College," *Michigan Sociological Review* vol. 22 (Fall 2008):19-40.

[33] Poppe, Following Their Dreams.

[34] Poppe, Following Their Dreams.

[35] S. R. Sy and J. Romero, "Family Responsibilities among Latina College Students from Immigrant Families," *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education,* vol. 7, no. 3 (2008): 212–227, https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192708316208.

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[37] Nina L. Dulabaum, 2016; Kim, Y., Park, J.,& Koo, K. "Testing Self-Segregation: Multiple-Group Structural Modeling of College Students' Interracial Friendship by Race." *Resources in Higher Education* vol. 56 (2015): 57–77; Johnson, D. R., Soldner, M., Leonard, J. B., Alvarez, P., Inkelas, K. K., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., & Longerbeam, S. D. "Examining Sense of Belonging Among First-Year Undergraduates From Different Racial/Ethnic Groups." Journal of College Student Development, vol. 48 no. 5, (2007): 525–542.

[38] RTI International. *First-generation College Students: Demographic Characteristics and Postsecondary Enrollment.* (2019). Washington, DC: NASPA. Retrieved from https://firstgen.naspa.org/files/dmfile/FactSheet-01.pdf

[39] Bhutta, Neil, Andrew C. Chang et al, Disparities in Wealth by Race and Ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances, FEDS Notes. Washington: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, September 28, 2020.

[40] Young Invincibles. 2017. "Race and Ethnicity as a Barrier to Opportunity: A Blueprint for Higher Education." www.Younginvincibles.Org, Young Invincibles, Feb. 2017, https://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Higher-Education-Equity.pdf.

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[42] Poppe, S. V. (2020). Following Their Dreams in an Inequitable System: Latino Students Share Their College Experience. UnidosUS.

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[44] Postsecondary National Policy Institute. "Factsheet: First Generation Students in Higher Education." https://pnpi.org/first-generation-students/. Accessed June 6, 2023.

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[46] Poppe, S. V. (2020). Following Their Dreams in an Inequitable System: Latino Students Share Their College Experience. UnidosUS.

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Steve Fund, JED. 2018. Students of Color Feel Less Academically and Emotionally Prepared for College. JED, Steve Fund. http://www.higheredtoday.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Steve-Fund-JED-infographic.pdf; Clayton, A. B., Medina, M. C., & Wiseman, A. M. (2017). Culture and community: Perspectives from first-year, first-generation-in-college Latino students. Journal of Latinos and Education, 18(2), 134–150. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1386101; Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. Sociology of Education, 70(4), 324. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270

[54] California Community Colleges Black and African American Advisory Panel. "Report and Recommendations for Improving Black and African American Student Outcomes." California Community Colleges. (February 10, 2020). https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Reports/black-aa-panel-final-report-recommendations-final-report-228202-a11y34.pdf?la=en&hash=F68E2DE588F6AA21490AA9B1824FE427AC50DBD0

[55] For example, one study found that an increase of $1,000 in grants led to an increase in post-secondary education completion of 1.5-2.0%. Nguyen, T. D., Kramer, J. W., & Evans, B. J. (2019). The Effects of Grant Aid on Student Persistence and Degree Attainment: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence. Review of Educational Research, 89(6), 831–874. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319877156

[56] For example, a study in Detroit community colleges found that college coaching paired with financial aid increased completion rates by 8%. Ratledge, A., O'Donoghue, R., Cullinan, D., and Camo-Biogradlija, J. 2019. A Path from Access to Success: Interim Findings from the Detroit Promise Path Evaluation. MDRC. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Detroit_Promise_Path_Report-Final_0.pdf

[57] Mulhern, 2020. Beyond Teachers: Estimating Individual Guidance Counselors' Effects on Educational Attainment. Harvard University. http://papers.cmulhern.com/Counselors_Mulhern.pdf

[58] Papageorge, N., Gershenson, S., & Kang, K. M. (2018). Teacher expectations matter. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w25255

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[61] Elliott, W. , Starks, B. , Seefeldt, K. & Ellis, J. (2018) Children's Savings Account Programs Enable Parents to Plan and Talk about College with Children and others. Sociology Mind, 8, 345-365.

[62] Lansing SAVE and the Lansing School District partner with CapCAN, which provides college access supports (e.g., financial aid application assistance, support in completing college applications) to students in the Lansing School District.

[63] For more on how CSA programs and college access programs partner, see: Shira Markoff, Elizabeth Morgan et al, "The Power of Connecting Children's Savings Accounts and College Access-Success Programs" (Washington, DC: Prosperity Now, 2019).

[64] GEAR UP and TRIO are both run by the US Department of Education. GEAR UP provides grants to states and local partners to offer services to students at high-poverty middle and high schools, including providing college access scholarships. TRIO consists of eight programs that support low-income students, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities from middle school through college.

[65] For a longer discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of opt-in versus opt-out enrollment, see Chapter 3 in: Shira Markoff and Dominique Derbigny. 2017. "Investing in Dreams: A Blueprint for Designing Children's Savings Account Programs" (Washington, DC: Prosperity Now, 2017).

[66] https://edtrust.org/resource/graduation-rates-dont-tell-the-full-story-racial-gaps-in-college-success-are-larger-than-we-think/

[67] For example, CollegeBound Saint Paul provides a $50 equity bonus to babies from "historically-disadvantaged" communities, including Black, Indigenous, Latine, and other people of color, as well as children of immigrant parents.

[68] For example, San Francisco's Kindergarten to College provides an additional $150 initial deposit and extra incentives to students in nine schools with a measurable opportunity gap for Latine, Black, and Pacific Islander students.

[69] Individualized data by race are often difficult to access. Programs should work with partner agencies to identify relevant proxies if individualized data by race are not available.

[70] More information on designing incentives equitably is available in: Diego Quezada, Designing Children's Savings Account Programs with an Equity Lens (Washington, DC: Prosperity Now, 2019).

[71] See for example, William R. Emmons and Lowell R. Ricketts, College Is Not Enough: Higher Education Does Not Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Wealth Gaps, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis *Review*, First Quarter 2017.

[72] Ana Hernández Kent and Lowell R. Ricketts, Wealth Gaps between White, Black and Hispanic Families in 2019 (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2021).

[73] A custodial account is one where the program holds one account on behalf of all the program participants. Each participant has one "share" of that overall account.

[74] "Latine" refers to individuals who identify as having ancestry or culture from Latin America. "Hispanic" refers to those who identify with any Spanish-speaking ancestry.

[75] Data in this chart are for all students in K-12, as opposed to K-2 (the grades currently served by Boston Saves). https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/187/BPS%20at%20a%20Glance%202019-20_FINAL.pdf

[76] "Economically disadvantaged" is defined as students who qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, state welfare programs, or MassHealth. This measure has some challenges because it undercounts low-

income students who may not be able to qualify for these programs because they are undocumented, or their parents do not participate in benefit programs for some other reason. Additionally, there is not an easily comparable statistic for all student-age children in the Boston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with which we can assess whether low-income students are overrepresented in Boston Public Schools. Data from a Boston Indicators report https://www.bostonindicators.org/reports/report-website-pages/kids-today suggests that low-income students are overrepresented in Boston Public Schools relative to the school-age population in the larger MSA.

[77] Data in this chart are for Boston Saves program participants, which includes kindergarten through grade 4: Kindergarten and grade 1 students are all students, and grade 2-4 students are those who participated in the pilot.

[78] Boston Educational Development Fund is a 501c(3) non-profit, which allows it to fundraise for Boston Public School students.

[79] Metro Credit Union uses an alternative tax ID such as an ITIN to open the account.

[80] "Asset thresholds" mean that if a household has more than a certain amount of savings, they will not be eligible for some benefits, such as SSDI. Saving for a child's college can push a household over the asset threshold, providing a disincentive to saving. The master account structure protects the saving individual from those asset threshold limits because no Social Security number is identified with the account.

[81] Note that this does not allow staff to see dollars accumulated. Participants may take out the dollars that they deposit.

[82] Muñoz, A.P., Kim, M., Chang, M., Jackson, R.O., Hamilton, D., and Darity Jr., W. 2015. "The Color of Wealth in Boston." Duke University, The New School and Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. 2015. https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/one-time-pubs/color-of-wealth.aspx#collapse2

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] These numbers count financial institutions by neighborhood and do not control for population. Bank of Boston, Office of Financial Empowerment webpage: https://ofe.boston.gov/bank-on-boston/

[87] https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/we-need-to-close-digital-divide-in-boston/

[88] Information for this case study came from interviews with program staff, staff working at partner organizations of KC Scholars, graduates from KC Scholars in their first year of college, evaluation reports, and the KC Scholars website. More details of interviews and secondary data reviewed are included in Section 1 of this report.

[89] KC Scholars refers to its CSA as a "College Savings Account." We use its terminology in this case study write-up. However, the program meets Prosperity Now's and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's definitions of a CSA, making it appropriate to include in this case study report.

[90] The Kansas City metropolitan area crosses two states—Kansas and Missouri.

[91] Second-tier match applicants were scored by a panel of three community members. Awardees have to meet a minimum threshold score in order to qualify for the match program.

[92] Because KC Scholars is a CSA program where high school students must apply in order to receive a CSA, it may receive applications from the most motivated students. It is hard to compare this CSA program with others that have an opt-out, universal enrollment for an entire school population—who presumably encompass the full population of aptitude, motivation, and individual circumstances. Despite this difference, we believe that there are lessons to be learned from some KC Scholars approaches to addressing barriers that Black and Latine students face in getting to and through college.

[93] KC Scholars established the KC Scholars Postsecondary Network to provide opportunity for campuses to learn from and with one another and the program regarding best practices for supporting low-income and first-generation students' persistence and completion and to ensure that KC Scholars graduates are supported through college-based support programs from even before college enrollment.

[94] Grant, G., & Tenenbaum, J. A. (2019). Urban Education: Still Separate and Unequal (pp. 1–197). School Smart KC.

[95] Grant, G., & Tenenbaum, J. A. (2019). Urban Education: Still Separate and Unequal (pp. 1–197). School Smart KC.

[96] For a good summary of the literature see: Brennan, M., Reed, P., and Sturtevant, L. 2014. "The-Impacts-of-Affordable Housing on Education." November 2014. Insights from Housing Policy Research. Center for Housing Policy, Washington DC. https://nhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-Impacts-of-Affordable-Housing-on-Education-1.pdf

[97] CSA awardees are eligible to also apply for the grade 11 traditional scholarship, and nearly 300 students have both awards.

[98] An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is a tax identification used for non-residents and resident aliens, their partners, and children who cannot get a Social Security Number.

[99] Data provided by Lansing SAVE.

[100] American Community Survey 2019, Selected Characteristics of the Foreign-Born Population by Period of Entry into the United States.

[101] Taylor Skelton, "Lansing School District's Diversity Reflects Community," *Spartan News Room, Michigan State University School of Journalism,* April 20, 2017.

[102] Michigan School Data. Student Enrollment Counts Report 2020-21 School Year.

[103] Michigan School Data. Schools of Choice and Other Non-Resident Enrollments Report 2020-21 School Year.

[104] "Economically disadvantaged" is defined as eligible for free/reduced price lunch; receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits; or being homeless, a migrant, or in foster care. Michigan School Data. Student Enrollment Counts Report 2020-21 School Year.

[105] American Community Survey 2019. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Population.

[106] Lansing School District. 2019-20 Annual Report.

[107] American Community Survey 2019. Selected Characteristics of the Native and Foreign-Born Population.

[108] Michigan School Data. Graduation/Dropout Rate Report 2018-19 School Year.

[109] Michigan School Data. College Readiness Report 2018-19 School Year.

[110] Children with a "college-bound identity" perceive themselves as someone who will go to college. Research shows that children are more likely to have a college-bound identity if they believe that they will benefit from attending college and that the costs will be manageable. For more information, see: Sondra G. Beverly, William Elliott, and Michael Sherraden, Child Development Accounts and College Success: Accounts, Assets, Expectations, and Achievements (St. Louis, MO: Center for Social Development, 2013).

[111] Lansing Promise is a "last-dollar" scholarship, meaning that it covers any remaining tuition or fees after other financial aid has been applied.

[112] Prosperity Now Scorecard data for Lansing, Michigan.

[113] William Elliott, Gina Chowa & Vernon Lake (2011). Toward a Children's Savings and College-Bound Identity Intervention for Raising College Attendance Rates: A Multilevel Propensity Score Analysis. *Sociology Mind* 1(04), 192-205.

[114] The data is limited on how many Lansing SAVE participating families end up using those services, as the Financial Empowerment Center only recently added a question about SAVE participation in its intake form.

[115] Oakland Promise elected to use my529 (Utah's 529 plan) instead of California's 529 plan due to my529's customized suite of tools for CSA program management.

[116] Medi-Cal is the state's Medicaid program, which helps with healthcare costs for people with limited incomes. Medi-Cal eligibility is capped at 138% of the Federal Poverty Level, an annual income of $36,156 for a family of four.

[117] Families may choose to open a my529 account or a savings account at Self Help Credit Union. The credit union option was designed for families who may be unable to open a 529 account, as it requires a Social Security number and does not accept cash deposits.

[118] Data provided by Oakland Promise.

[119] The University of California and California State University systems require incoming students to have completed what are called the "A-G requirements"—a set of coursework, to be completed in high school, that include math, English/literature, and science.

[120] Oakland Unified Balanced Scorecard 2015-2016. See: https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/3094/OUSD%20District-wide%20Balanced%20Scorecard%20-%202015-16.pdf

[121] Oakland Unified Balanced Scorecard 2015-2016. See: https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/3094/OUSD%20District-wide%20Balanced%20Scorecard%20-%202015-16.pdf

[122] According to *Psychology Today,* "people who struggle with imposter syndrome believe that they are undeserving of their achievements…that they are not as competent or intelligent as other might think."