

Safal Partners | Webinar Tracking Outcomes Beyond School

ALEX MEDLER: This is Alex Medler with the National Charter School Resource Center on behalf of the US Department of Education and we going to launch our webinar on tracking outcomes beyond school.

Today, I'm going to first, as we get started, we're going to handle a little bit-- I going to hand off to my colleague from Safal Partners, Mukta Pandit, to talk us through a little bit of the agenda and the logistics today.

Well, actually, I think we have a bit of a change in the agenda. I'm going to actually just take care of a few issues for all those that are listening. On this webinar, you have a Chat feature. If you're having technical questions and need assistance, if you click on the Chat function on your screen, you'll be able to post a question to our facilitators and they can take care of any questions that you have.

You'll also see a Q&A box. That's an opportunity for you to ask questions or provide input to the content of the webinar. So if you have any questions or want to say anything, please use the Q&A box.

Also, if-- throughout the discussion, we'd like to make it as interactive as possible-- we may call on you, at which point we would unmute your audio. If you've called in by phone, generally there's too much background noise, so we keep people muted. So if we call on you to talk, we'll let you know by name and then activate your phone.

So that you know, we'll try to have questions and solicit questions throughout. And also, we are recording the webinar which will be available on the National Charter School Resource Center website next week. And we really encourage everyone to fill out the survey after the webinar concludes that we use for feedback. It also helps us plan other topics for webinars.

At that, I'm going to now turn it over to Mukta Pandit from Safal Partners. Mukta.

MUKTA PANDIT: Sure. Thank you, Alex. And thanks, everyone, for joining into this webinar. Just a quick background on the National Charter School Resource Center. We are funded by the US Department of Education. And, really, the main purpose is to both support the charter school grantees of the department, but then also provide high quality resources to support the broader charter school sector.

And all of our resources are at no cost. So you can access them at charterschoolcenter.org and this webinar hour is an example of one of these resources.

And with that, I'd like to go ahead and just introduce the very exciting panel that we have today. Alex, from Safal, will be moderating the panel. But we have both sort of a national perspective on this topic that Richard will be sharing. And then we are also going to go a little bit deeper with two schools-- with Matt from Noble and Benjamin from Democracy Prep-- to really get their perspectives and best practices, or at least notable practices, on this topic.

With that, I just wanted to briefly go over the agenda. And we'll just do a very quick sort of broad introduction of the topic and then move on to Richard to do a national overview and then move onto the two schools. We'd like to come back and just talk about implications for the field, and then, really, would love to have an interactive Q&A and get as many of your questions answered as possible.

So as we look at the data beyond K-12 and through college, this was a topic that's actually personally very interesting to me as well. We have a lot of evidence of charter schools that have historically used data to improve their programs. And, typically, we've seen those effects happen at the high school level or at the graduation rate level.

But we are, more and more, seeing some of the charter schools actually tracking their students beyond the high school and into and through college to make sure that the persistence and the graduation rates from college are also matching their high school graduation rates. And exciting thing is that you are seeing evidence that K-12 institutions can impact some of these outcomes and outcomes that are happening sort of six years after the student has left that institution.

And as we have seen evidence that this can be done, the question really is how, right? I mean, what should we do about this? Is this scalable? Is this possible to do at a much larger scale?

And one of our most exciting projects, right now, is actually developing tools and working with schools to track the data, to help improve the college match, to help improve the alumni advising, so that they can do this successfully. And with that, I'll actually turn it over to Richard to have him share his findings from the alumni project that he's been leading.

RICHARD

Well, thank you, appreciate that. My project, called *The Alumni*, is running as a series now.

WHITMIRE:

And I believe you've got a link to it. It's an attempt to track how these charter networks are

doing at boosting their college graduation rates. And we're strictly looking at four-year rates, bachelors-- four-year degrees, a bachelor's-- and giving kids six years to do it. So it's, what percent of your kids earn bachelor's degrees within six years?

KIPP really, as best as I can tell, started this effort in 2008 when they changed the name of KIPP to College to KIPP Through College. And this was based on anecdotal evidence. Just talking to their alumni, they knew they had a problem. They knew that their graduation rates were much lower than they anticipated. And when they took a real hard data look at that in 2011, it confirmed their suspicions that, nationally, they were at 31% success rate which is far above the national average for that demographic, but far below where they wanted to be.

Around roughly the same time, Uncommon Schools was hearing the same thing from their alumni and they started moving in the same direction, as did Achievement First. And others followed, copying the leaders. Best-known KIPP strategies, of course, grit, joy-- skills that enable students to survive on their own in college. I saw similar strategies with Achievement First who went so far as to pioneer an entirely new school called the Greenfield School which pushes personalized learning to a great degree. I guess you could call Summit Charters sort of the pinnacle of personalized learning.

It's interesting, watching KIPP build out KIPP Through College. For example, I visited their high school in New York, watched their KIPP Through College team play-acting college scenarios with seniors-- here's what could get you into trouble, and here is how you can get out of it. I visited a class, that same day, for juniors and they were hearing from two KIPP alumni, one of whom had struggled greatly. The most impressive thing I saw, that day, was the extensive counseling. Always go for your reach school with the perfect financial package that's actually going to work.

So what are the challenges? The big challenges, I would say, would be surviving in predominantly white colleges. This is a huge issue. It's interesting, I just came back from YES Prep, where the college counselors were saying that they had to convince some of their students that they were actually minorities. Because they, you know, they look in the hallways, left to right, and everyone looks just like them and they all speak Spanish. And they go, we're not minorities. And so they have to start with just explaining, you know, what it's going to be like to go into a predominantly white college and what kind of shock that's going to be.

Another challenge would be that the commuter colleges that have very low success rates--

sometimes even in the single digits-- and how to steer students around that. And Matt can talk about that at Noble, for sure.

Another challenge would be community colleges that often go nowhere. Alliance told me that in the LA area, their kids who go into community college, only about 6% of them end up with four-year degrees.

Another challenge would be families that don't want to see their kids leave town. That was especially apparent at IDEA in the Rio Grande Valley. And very tight-knit Hispanic families did not want to see their kids leave, and especially the girls. And yet, of course, often leaving town is to colleges with good college success rates-- is key to overall success.

Another challenge would be the small expenses, things that are not included in scholarships. Anything, really, over \$3,000 a year often becomes a non-starter. Activity expenses are huge, mandatory health care, things that they don't necessarily expect. But I mean, I found it not uncommon to talk to a kid who, you know, got into a highly-selective university. It's where the cost is \$66,000 a year. They're promised \$63,000 and, you know, in many cases, they just can't afford it.

Another challenge, of course, DACA students. When I was in Houston at YES Prep, I talked to one guidance counselor. She said maybe a third of her kids are DACA and probably 50% to 60% of the parents are undocumented. That creates all kinds of college financing issues, and not to mention hesitating to send your kids out of town.

Insufficient data is a big one. It's very expensive to track this data. The National Student Clearinghouse does it, but it's costly. And then, of course, if you try to do it on your own, that's even more costly.

So what's the success rate? I think you've got a chart there. KIPP, which tracks them from-- their kids from 9th grade to account for any dropouts, they were able to go-- KIPP New York was able to go from 33% success rate in 2010 to 46% today. KIPP, nationally, from 31% to 38%. Uncommon Achievement, First, YES Prep, all around 50%.

And Brett Peiser just wrote an op-ed, yesterday, which says that it as Uncommon looks-- scrubs its data on where its alumni are and how likely they are to succeed, they see an 80% success rate in the next few years. Which is extraordinary because 80% is what the kids and families in the highest-income quartile are experiencing.

California networks, much less successful. ASPIRE, Alliance at 25%. Green Dot, probably less, but their data's kind of rough. You know, they're all new to this college success push. And I wrote an op-ed and you've got a link to my series that explains what happened there in California and why they're so late.

I think that one of the big successes that's just beginning to unfold, there's a possibility of collaboration with traditional school districts. And you see this in Texas with a coalition between-- with KIPP and YES Prep and others. And including that-- this coalition includes some Texas ISDs. So there's real potential here because the ISDs don't lose anything by joining this collaboration. They won't lose students. They don't lose funding. It's kind of a win-win, and it's playing out in Texas and a really interesting way. One of the--

ALEX MEDLER: For those unfamiliar with Texas, the ISDs are the school districts.

RICHARD Yes.

WHITMIRE:

The strategies? You know, KIPP has kind of a kitchen-sink strategy, lots of grit, lots of expert college guidance, lots of tracking into college, and it doesn't come cheap. It's \$2,000 per year - per kid, per year. IDEA focuses more on the tough cases. And I would say Noble does as well. The use of mentors is big. Alliance is doing this. It's fairly low-cost. Let's say you give a junior a stipend to counsel maybe 10 freshmen. The focus of Uncommon is more on making changes in K-12 to improve college success, boosting GPAs, SAT, et cetera.

And all-- several of the networks are experimenting with electronic tracking, which is really intriguing, where they figure out a texting system. It says, this is your last day to drop this class if you've got a low grade, this is your last day to renew your financial package, et cetera. Now, that's a low-cost method that I think has a lot of promise. So I will, with that, I will stop talking, take questions later. Thanks.

ALEX MEDLER: OK. Thank you. Any-- if there are any questions, in particular, clarifying questions, feel free to post them in the Q&A. And now, we'll move on to Democracy Prep.

BENJAMIN FEIT: Fantastic. Thank you so much. This is Ben Feit from Democracy Prep. It's a pleasure to be here, appreciate you all taking the time this afternoon to join us. So I'm just going to piggyback on a lot of what Richard just introduced and hopefully talk a little bit about how Democracy Prep is approaching this particular situation.

So Democracy Prep is a growing network of 22 nonprofit public charter schools. During the current year, we are going to be educating around 6,500 students in grades Pre-K through 12, across 22 schools in New York; New Jersey; Washington, DC; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Las Vegas, Nevada.

So the mission of democracy Prep, as you can see here, is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. And so obviously, we're a mission-driven organization. What you can see there-- and apologies that this continues to move forward, just want to dwell on the mission a little bit longer-- is that, you see that each prong of this mission, both college success and a lifetime of active citizenship, affirmatively cannot be achieved while our students are enrolled at Democracy Prep schools. So at first blush, that can seem a little bit counterintuitive.

We opened in 2005 as a standalone 6th grade. We've obviously grown considerably since then. We're a K-12 school system. We're held accountable annually by each of our authorizers for student learning outcomes.

We obviously need to demonstrate to, say, the parent of a third-grader that our schools offer a desirable alternative to their zone schools in order for them to choose to enroll their student with us. Yet, we're driven by a mission that we're actually incapable of fulfilling, on its face, while the students are in our classrooms. So just how do we reconcile that tension? And what does that mean for us philosophically as a network?

So from an operational standpoint, it means that we're focused on equity, on access, and on student growth in early grades, as opposed to student proficiency. We back-fill students at all grade levels, even if that means our seventh grade ELA proficiency scores don't necessarily leap off the page.

The way that we've scaled relatively quickly is that we are one of the few national networks that will undertake turnarounds of underperforming charter schools. So even if that means we're absorbing multiple cohorts of students at tested grades in a given year-- students who likely had previously been attending an underperforming school and may be showing up with significant learning deficits-- that we are going to undertake those turnarounds in order to get them into our program and have as much time with them prior to the college admissions process as possible.

And so we're focused on the long game, not just college access, but college success. And not just civic engagement during school events, but a lifetime of active participation in civic and political institutions. So obviously, that means we're committed to meeting our students wherever they are when they enter our system, however far behind that might be, and working with them until they're prepared for college.

So, as Richard was saying, a lot of the work that we do is backwards-mapping from that 12th grade process into our K-12 program. We've learned some lessons about how to structure our curriculum, how to inculcate the habits and dispositions in our students that we know are correlated with college success, and kind of work through our K-12 instructional program with that in mind.

But beyond that, it means that the core of our mission, called success in a life of active citizenship, necessitates that kind of ongoing support, mentoring, programmatic assessment. All right, so now the--

ALEX MEDLER: Hey, I have a-- excuse me.

BENJAMIN FEIT: Yes?

ALEX MEDLER: I-- let me interrupt with is a question from one of our audience.

BENJAMIN FEIT: Yes.

ALEX MEDLER: And anybody can can speak to this one. When the question is, why do we use the six-year measure going out for the acquiring a four-year degree? Can you speak-- Richard or you-- speak to why it takes even so much longer after the K-12 system to measure the four-year degree acquisition?

RICHARD WHITMIRE: Well, I think I was just following what just is the standard way of doing it. It's the way it's always measured because kids have certain delays. And so it tends to be only the wealthiest kids are going to go through in four years. And I didn't invent the six-year standard. It made sense, and so I followed that. But, you know, when possible, I also give four-year rates.

MATT NIKSCH: Yeah, and there is--

ALEX MEDLER: Thank you, go--

MATT NIKSCH: Sorry, this is Matt. I was actually at KIPP right around the time they started making the

transition to Kipp Through College. And that was roughly our thinking as well. I think, you know, we sort of adopted the language that higher ed had and how they look at the time to completion. And most-- frankly, the data is most complete if you're looking at six-year numbers. Some of the colleges don't really consistently report their four-year completion rates.

And, you know, the reality is, a lot of our students need a little more time. I think, in particular, a good chunk of kids take a fifth year compared to the fourth year. The sixth year isn't as common, but I think we just wanted to take a look at what was actually happening and trying to report based on that.

ALEX MEDLER: Great, thank you. Cool. All right, continue.

BENJAMIN FEIT: Sure thing. So just as a kind of some background and context here, Democracy Prep, we started in 2006. Our first high school reached scale in 2013, so we actually just had our first cohort of high school graduates complete their college programs in that four-year time window we were just discussing. The current school year, we will have five high schools that have senior classes of students that are applying to colleges. Three of them, here in New York, one in Camden, New Jersey, and one in Las Vegas.

So the question is, in terms of how we have identified the effective manner in which to support our alumni in New York, how does that scale now that we are seeing far more graduates go off to college?

And so just generally, here, this is our approach to achieving the scale and impact necessary to support our various alumni as they go off to college. And kind of hitting on some of what we just discussed, so one of the foremost barriers we've seen to students completing their college programs is the need for academic remediation on the front end. So that certainly contributes to students being unable to complete their degree programs in four years, if they need to go in and they are required to take some non-credit-bearing coursework on the front end in order to remediate deficits that they completed their high school program with.

So obviously, in addition to academic remediation, we've seen the financial burdens and the lack of support services as key barriers. And we do what we can in order to address those barriers.

So structurally, at the Democracy Prep kind of Central Office level of the network, we have an Alumni Relations team. And that team has branches that are devoted separately to college

access and college success. So we tend to anticipate the challenges that our scholars will face and help set them up to overcome the odds that are stacked against them.

So on the access side, we're working with the college offices at each of our high schools. We're transmitting best practices to those college offices at each campus, and helping preemptively address the barriers that contribute to that 9% number that we saw in one of the graphs Richard showed earlier.

So some of that comes from students being undermatched and go attending colleges that are actually beneath their academic level and what they're capable of achieving. And those schools, kind of paradoxically, have seen lower completion rates. They have fewer resources and supports. The peer effects of attending classes with students who are going to push them to achieve at the levels at which they're capable are not there at lower schools. So ensuring that scholars are matched with the right school and that they have all of the financial aid to which they're entitled, so that's on the access side of making sure that our scholars are attending the right schools.

And then on the success side, it's working with our alumni to mitigate the factors that inhibit their persistence. So we have an Alumni Captain mechanism. And that is designed to facilitate ongoing relationships between staff, alumni, and their peers.

And so each Alumni Captain leads a cohort of 10 to 12 alums. They're trained here at the Central Office. It's a paid position to conduct that peer-to-peer advising. They receive training from our Alumni team in best practices. They disseminate information to the folks in their cohort and offer support and motivation so that the folks with whom they are friendly are kind of kept in the loop and stay in contact with adults here at the network who can help them succeed.

We have a microgrant program. And so that kind of provides last-dollar financial aid. If students need transportation to and from campus, bringing a family member to campus for a Parent Weekend, for books, for small tuition balances, so we have a grant program that we operate.

We have our iCare and Tech Lend program. So students can request donated iPhone replacements. We encourage staff who are upgrading their phones to donate them here. And then, we will disseminate those to students so that they have technology. And we can use those kind of tech interfaces that Richard was describing in order to transmit communication to

our folks who are off at college. They can utilize laptops here at our Central Office.

We tour college campuses. We visit them in-person, to provide a friendly face. We do conduct the outreach with individual advisors. We send motivational texts at critical times in the semester. We send reminders about the FAFSA, about internship opportunities and events, provide targeted situational support and intervention.

We have an Alumni Corps program that we've operated for quite some time. And so that is an opportunity for some of our alumni to come back and kind of conduct a paid internship either at our Central Office, like doing data support for our schools, or at the schools, doing operational support under the guidance of our principals.

Those are also paid positions. They're contributing, you know, to their school community. They're staying close to Democracy Prep in a manner that allows us to continue ensuring they're receiving the necessary supports. And it's valuable professional experience that prepares them for the life of active citizenship.

And this year, now that we do have college graduates, we have a Teaching Residency program. It's kind of the truest expression of our mission, where our alumni are coming back now and kind of being coached to become teachers in our classrooms. And it's incredibly powerful to have our alumni, who were in the position of our scholars, being up in front of those classrooms and continuing to pay it forward and change the world in that respect.

We, on the next slide, just show the kind of four general categories of support, that we break it down. Again, each of these are kind of aligned with one of the barriers that we see, the persistence for low-income students, first-generation students from communities of color-- in Harlem, in the Bronx, in Camden, in Southeast DC, in North Baton Rouge, in Las Vegas-- where our schools are located. And so we continue to provide ongoing academic support, last-dollar financial aid, social-emotional support, and just self-advocacy and civic advocacy training for our scholars, once they are enrolled in college. And we see the kind of general support categories that those fall within.

So, again, early data. So the first graduating class, about 40% have graduated. The remaining 45% or so continue to be enrolled. So that's the first data point that we've seen in terms of actual graduates. So our flagship high school has now produced four graduates of high school seniors. See those numbers through the first years. Now, it's getting into, how do we scale this? So Bronx Prep, you see there on the right, has the 91% in our most recent class from

Bronx Prep.

Just one side note here that is a unique consideration within the Democracy Prep network that I can touch on is that Bronx Prep and our school in Las Vegas which had formerly operated as the Andre Agassi College Prep Academy-- which is, this year, operating as Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus-- those are turnarounds of fully grown high schools that have already established reputations with college admissions officers. They have active and impassioned alumni bases. And they had their own independent approaches to access and success that existed prior to our arrival and which predated the school's engagement with Democracy Prep.

And so when you're thinking about how to provide alumni support for a school that had already existed in one incarnation and now it's going to become a Democracy Prep school, that presents a whole host of considerations that we need to take into account in terms of how do we ensure that the alumni at our existing schools, you know, are having the same opportunities as students who are attending schools that had previously, perhaps, had a different reputation among college admissions officers. If you're looking to remediate the concerns about students being undermatched, what does that mean now that you have a new academic program there?

And so that is just a multi-year kind of gradual process that requires some finesse and engagement with the folks who predated you in that building, who have graduating from high school, who have a really powerful affiliation with what came before you and perhaps not so much with you because they don't-- you know, they didn't go to school when it was a Democracy Prep school. They're certainly familiar with a different kind of administration and approach to the school.

And so we've seen that a Bronx Prep. We're heading into our fourth year there, now. And we're just kind of familiarizing ourselves with high school and alumni landscape in Las Vegas. And how do we do what we're doing here in Harlem effectively, not just outside of this region, but with a school that already has been producing high school graduates for quite some time prior to your arrival, and ensure some consistency of service provision and making sure, there?

Just a couple of quick outcomes, this is my last slide. So financials, so each of our graduates has been accepted to at least one college that has agreed to meet 100% of that student's financial aid need. Doesn't necessarily mean they've chosen to attend that school. But, again,

our mission is success in the college of their choice. And so if they are making an affirmative decision to go elsewhere, then we will make sure that they are provided with as much financial support as they can in order to reduce the barrier that is presented by that estimated family contribution.

And the civic engagement, so that's the second course part of our mission-- college success, life of active citizenship. And so we're partnering with a third-party researcher to measure our impact on voter registration, election participation, other civic knowledge and dispositions of our alumni.

We've done these studies before on a lotteried-in, lotteried-out basis. It's kind of the gold standard of research. Charter schools present a really powerful opportunity for researchers to conduct these analyses because you have a built-in control group of students who applied to the school. And just by virtue of the school being oversubscribed and running a lottery, you have the students who were admitted through the lottery, students who were not admitted through the lottery, and measuring their impact on that.

So we've conducted that research at our schools, had a 2012 study that was conducted out of the Harvard EdLabs by Dr. Roland Fryer and Will Dobbie. And then, a 2015 follow-up study out at NYU with Dr. Sean Corcoran and Dr. Sarah Cordes, who's now at Temple, on our outcomes for students in our schools.

And now, we're really excited to measure our impact on students once they have proceeded through our program and are off in college to see what kind of impact we are having on those more difficult to quantify civic outcomes that are part of our mission at Democracy Prep as well.

ALEX MEDLER: OK. I think we're going to move on to the Noble Network now. And, again, feel free to post your questions to the Q&A and we'll continue. All right, and now for Noble.

MATT NIKSCH: Thanks, Benjamin. So this is Matt Nicksch. I'm the Chief College Officer for Noble. And I've been here, this is the start of my sixth year. Like I mentioned briefly before, I spent about three years at the KIPP Foundation prior to that, helping to kind of launch some of the KIPP Through College initiatives there.

And I think that's a theme that you'll see, if you kind of think back to all the charter networks that Richard showed in his summary from the series, in *The 74*, I think all of us are

collaborating on this work. And you'll see a lot of the same strands.

When Benjamin talked about the way they support their alumni at Democracy Prep we're basically doing all those things too. I think that's one of the areas up for opportunity-- maybe we'll talk about later. I think, because it's so hard to judge the effectiveness of the support that you give to alums, you end up just sort of doing the kitchen sink approach and hope that something of the basket of things that you're trying in supporting your kids is going to help.

But let me take a step back and talk more about Noble. So you can see, here are four of our students in front of one of our downtown campuses. And if, Alex, you go to the next slide, here's an overview of Noble. We are only in Chicago, founded in '99, and started really expanding in 2006. So we went from about 600 or so alumni in 2009 to now having about 10,300 or so. So we've had a phase of exponential growth.

And, in fact, we're sending-- we had just shy of 2,000 graduates this year. We'll be sending, you know, 90% of them off to college, starting this week or next week. So, you know, haven't-- when Benjamin talked about scale, that's definitely something we've been feeling because expanding from having a hundred graduates as recently as eight years ago to having almost 2,000 now.

As you can see, one of the other things that's happened for Noble, we've expanded from having a handful of schools kind of on the Near West Side of the city to now covering, really, the entirety of Chicago. So there's-- if any kid from really-- living in, really, any neighborhood of Chicago has the opportunity to go to one of our schools.

Alex, you can go to the next slide.

And just as a-- I mentioned some of the stats-- we basically look like the city. The one exception is whereas the population of Chicago Public Schools is around 90% black and Latino, we're about 98%, so we have a small representation from sort of 10% of students that are white and Asian. But otherwise, these stats are almost identical to the rest of the city.

And, in fact, with our 13,000 or so students, we'll have about-- like I said at the top-- about 10% of all high school kids in the city of Chicago, this year. And even though we've been growing, our seniors this year who graduate will have about 10% of all high school graduates for the city of Chicago as well.

And, if you can go to the next slide.

I mean, here's a few more stats about kind of how we compare to the rest of the city. The second school in the table is just one of our schools, just-- and the one that the kids are pictured in the first page. It happens to be downtown, so it's kind of neat because it draws from all over the city.

And I think, generally speaking, the thing that's sort of interesting to compare us to in the last column, there's a set of magnet schools or selective enrollment schools in Chicago that has attracted a slightly different population. And it doesn't show on here, but one of the things that we're proud of is if you look at of the college outcomes that we have for our students, particular enrollment and enrollment in selective four-year colleges, we will often do as well as or better than those sort of selective enrollment magnet high schools.

And I guess we'll go, I'll go to my last slide. I'll sort of blow through those. But if people have questions, I'm happy to go back to it.

And this is just a real high level summary of some of the things we do to push towards the ultimate mission of having our kids be successful in college and then have the opportunity to go on and lead exemplary lives. And if I think about it, from people who might be on this call, first and foremost, it would be that first box. So like Richard talked about, like Benjamin talked about, one of the strongest things you can do if you have kids in high school-- and then focusing on the access side of things-- is help make sure they're going to match or sort of reach schools.

And, you know, the language we use at Noble is focused less on the selectivity of the school-- or if you want to think about it as how much their parents are going to brag to their friends about the schools they got into-- and more-- the way we talk about reach and match with kids at Noble is-- what kind of grad rate does the school have? And specifically, what sort of grad rate does it have for black and Latino students, historically?

And there's a number of studies, I think, about 10 years ago, Bowen put out *Crossing the Finish Line* that had some really compelling data from lots of states-- and some local researchers here at the University of Chicago have also replicated it-- that shows a pretty significant portion of whether or not kids are successful in college or not can be directly tied back to the institutional grad rate of the schools.

And so we put a lot of emphasis, in senior year, in talking to kids about the institutional grad

rate and what it might mean for them. In particular for-- if they have the choice of picking a school with a high grad rate versus picking a school with an average or low grad rate and what that means about your odds or your sort of likelihood of being supported well.

And then, obviously, factoring in the affordability as well. So we have a system where students are bringing in any award letters that colleges give them and then quickly try and turn that around into reports for kids and their families to use, to really make kind of a clean apples-to-apples comparison of what's affordable, what's-- what might not be, and also kind of comparing that against grad rate.

And then, obviously, the last piece is whether the kid actually wants to go to that school. And I think that's one thing, when you talk about using data, sometimes it's easy to design a system that ignores the fact that kids actually do have preferences, right. So I think one of the arcs to this-- as one of my colleagues at KIPP liked to say-- you know, college counseling is sort of a combination of head, heart, and soul.

And you can get the head pretty well with the numbers. But one of the benefits of finding systems to use data effectively is it gives the counselors a way to focus on the heart and soul side of things, while not throwing aside the head piece. So there's a real art to that. But I think if you focus on it and if you push the conversation about grad rates, 17, 18-year-old kids can understand that and internalize it really well.

If I move on to this sort of middle box, one of the frustrations of this field-- if you've been trying to dig into the research or the literature-- there's not a-- when we started looking at this-- but we didn't find that a lot of things that were super helpful for high school practitioners. I think a lot of people were looking at David Conley's books. And, you know, they're-- I put them in the category of-- his and some other sources-- you sort of read them, you sort of nod your head, and say, yeah, that makes sense. Kids need to know that.

But then if you turn around and say, well, what do I have to-- what specific things do I need to look for in a student? There weren't that many resources that we found that were helpful on a kind of a day-to-day level. So we'd conducted a research project, a few years back, to sort of look at every source that any researcher or sort of well-regarded source in the field that said, you know, here are the things besides kind of core academics that kids need to be successful in college and life. Came up with a list of like 300 of them, which is a little bit sad because, you know, we only serve kids for four years. We only operate high schools.

But, thankfully, some of the things were actually the same and just described in different language. And some of them were similar skills at a different level of development. So we sort of went back and remapped all of those skills to the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade-- sort of expectations based on our knowledge of what the typical kid can handle developmentally and also the kinds of things that kids are facing in those years.

So as an example, 9th grade, a lot of it is about just sort of adapting to a new environment that is high school. 11th grade might be adapting to an increased rigor in coursework, particularly if our kids are taking more AP courses. And sort of looking at those rhythms and then actually distilling it down to standards, we did it in about 17 different areas across four main categories, like navigating unstructured environments or internalizing college and life vision.

And then, since then, we've developed a quarterly scope and sequence along with example lessons and diagnostic assessments. Partially, why I'm mentioning this is it's a free and publicly available set of materials. So after the call is over, I'll-- I can have Alex and the team at the Charter Center distribute out the link to that stuff.

And then, finally, we have a team that supports our students in college. So there's 23 folks on our team, full-time, which sounds like a lot, but I have 10,000 alumni. And so one of the real challenges is trying to find out the most effective things you can do. And I think because, you know, we're not talking about a real narrow field here-- we're talking about 18, 19, 20-year-old adults. There's tons of things that go into it.

And trying to decide how you allocate your time if you're an Alumni Support person with a caseload of 150 freshmen college students is a real challenge. And I think it's something that we keep working at and trying to get better at every year. And, this year, we're even moving on to sort of trying to apply some of the tools of data science and machine learning to sort of pinpoint which kids need the most support.

And I think the last thing I'll mention along those lines, before we move on to the more general conversation, is the fact that I think-- particularly the schools like we've been talking about that some people would classify and sort of the no-excuses category of we're going to do whatever it takes, we're going to support our kids however much we can. If you take that mentality and sort of apply the way you work with students while they're sitting in your classrooms for eight to nine hours a day, a lot what happens is you say, well, I'm just going to do whatever it takes to make sure you get the outcome that I'm stating.

And to give an example, if we have a student who starts at college, stops out, takes a semester off, and says, hey, I want to go back to the-- I want to go back to school. And at that point, their option is to go to a local community college, frequently.

What we have done historically is say, well, you know, that it's really hard to enroll at the local community college. It's really tricky to navigate that place. Show up there tomorrow at 9 o'clock. I'll meet you there. I'll spend the whole day with you, walking you through registration, making sure you're all set up. You're set to graduate-- or set to attend classes the following week. Which is, I think, you know, a really sound application of the sort of no-excuses approach that many of us take at our schools.

The challenge with that is, if you don't have time the next semester, the student didn't really develop any skills to navigate that environment on their own. And if you're in an environment where you don't have a ton of counselors who can be really, really supportive across the entire college career, these kids may not have the opportunity to succeed kind of following that. So I think one of our shifts, one of our challenges is saying we're not going to be able to do that.

So instead, it'll be, show up at my office at 9 o'clock tomorrow. I'll have a two-page handout of the things that you ought to think about, that you ought to consider. I'm going to talk to you through it, prep you for it. And then, I'll call you a week from now to see how it went.

So I think that's one of the challenges and one of the shifts that we are starting to try to think about and try to address as we get into this question of, how do we support 2,000 new college freshmen at scale.

ALEX MEDLER: All right. Thank you very much. I think all three of you have given us an excellent overview of how this is working out nationally and a good would view at how it's working with two different high performing networks.

We want to move on to a discussion now. And, again, participants, feel free to post questions to the Q&A and we can answer those. But I'm going to start off with just a few probing questions for all of our panelists, and start off with maybe the most important one.

What are the most important lessons that you've learned since you started this work that anyone else who might try to replicate where you're doing doesn't have to reinvent? What's the most important lesson learned?

MATT NIKSCH: So I can start. You know, Richard mentioned our six-year completion rate is currently at 31%, 35% if I give more than six years for our kids. And one of the reasons it's lower than some of the other peers is we didn't know how bad some colleges were, at the beginning.

And I think it's-- that's similar to like a lot of us. You know, you started a-- your mission is like, I'm going to get you to college. And that's sort of shorthand to parents that the different class of aspirations for our students than they might have had from their community, historically.

But I think in that early set of kids, we would send a third of our kids to the local community college under this sort of naive assumption that that was a decent option that was affordable and not realizing that the success rates were similar to what Richard mentioned. We might have maybe 5% of our graduates going there with the intent of transferring and getting a bachelor's degree actually getting a bachelor's degree.

ALEX MEDLER: And, Richard, how does that work out nationally? Is that-- is the community college red flag a big one all around the country?

RICHARD
WHITMIRE: It certainly is in California where I got into it a bit. Yes, it is a real problem. And so there's a lot of-- it's very tempting to these kids because they can work while going to community college and it essentially costs them nothing. And so it really takes some assertive counseling to try and steer them elsewhere.

But it's not just community colleges. I mean, it's also these, what I call, these commuter universities. And in the profile of Noble, we actually name one that has very low success rate. But, once again, it's very tempting. They get to stay in Chicago. They can work part-time. The problem is this very low success rate. So I would say in the lessons learned, it's in this steering area to keep them away from certain-- either community colleges or community universities.

The other lesson learned is kind of a surprising one. It's just how-- there's such potential in sending kids to these small liberal arts colleges in rural areas in Pennsylvania and New York and Ohio. These are colleges that are really desperate to diversify. And the charters give them the kind of student that they really want-- well-prepared. And they know they're going to get help from the charter. And they just recruit aggressively and we're talking about success rates, at these places, in the 90s which is--

BENJAMIN FEIT: Wow.

RICHARD Which is incredible.

WHITMIRE:

ALEX MEDLER: OK. So in addition to the college match and identifying the red flag colleges, what are the other lessons learned? Oh, and we also have a question from one of the participants who asks, what the role is of parental and family engagement along with the student? So additional lessons, and also what you do with the kids' families?

RICHARD

WHITMIRE:

Well, I can jump in first, if you want, because I just came back from visiting a YES Prep. It's called IMPACT session, there in Houston. And this is where they bring in roughly the top one third of their students-- GPAs 3.00, 3.50 or so-- and then they meet with these IMPACT colleges which have, essentially, they guarantee to take their kids in small clusters, they guarantee near full ride, they guarantee help, et cetera. So it's kind of a matching session.

And the parents are very much part of that discussion. They are there for the full half-day of these meetings and there are separate sessions for the parents. And a lot of it-- I mean, I sat in on some of these-- a lot of it are where you have parents with older kids who come in and talk to these parents about hesitations and fears about sending them.

I mean, a lot of these parents are concerned about them just going out of Houston-- within Texas, but out of Houston. And as far as going out of Texas completely, I mean, that's a real fear on their part for lots of reasons. They know that in many cases they won't be able to afford airfare to come back for various holidays or family gatherings, that kind of thing. So it's talking them through all this. So the parents play a huge role here.

ALEX MEDLER: All right. Then, from Noble or Democracy Prep, any other additional points on that?

MATT NIKSCH:

Yeah, I had, I mean it's critical that you're keeping parents as part of the process. And I'd say the key word to keep in mind is just respect. Like respect that this is a family making a choice. And these are their children we're talking about, right? So it's not-- it's something you have to keep parents involved in.

And, you know, we try to do it in a number of ways. One is having a series of parent meetings-- really, the whole four years of high school, but in particular around senior year-- informing parents about the process we're going to go through. And then, as we're working with kids on kind of a preliminary list of colleges and as we refine it, sharing that back with parents.

And I think while the key thing is respect, it's also recognizing that, for most of our parents, this

is a new process. If 84% of our kids are first-generation, that means their parents don't have a lot of familiarity with the process. And so a lot of it is finding the right balance of informing while not being patronizing about it. And making sure that you're recognizing that even though they aren't aware of some of the facts in college, it doesn't mean that they can't make great choices about this.

But it is, you know, trying to be sort of the informed consultants in the room that should help them make the trade-offs based on what we've seen historically with our kids.

**RICHARD
WHITMIRE:**

And just to add some more to that, I mean, with I know at YES Prep, they feel very strongly that parents need to be warned early about expenses that may not be included in the scholarship. And, frankly, they're expenses I didn't even know about until I started doing this.

That it costs money to go to a college orientation, who knew? Between \$300 and \$500. And some of these colleges will hold them in June or July, which means that then you've got to come up with the extra plane fares, there and back, for a whole entire separate trip.

And that doesn't include activities fees. It doesn't include mandatory health care, if you're not covered under your parents. That's \$1,500 to \$3,000 a year. So they, the parents, need to know about this soon because they don't like to be surprised.

ALEX MEDLER:

OK. Well, let's back up. We have another question from one of the participants who asks, if you're running a K-8 school and trying to learn about this and contribute to the success, what do you do in K-8, based on your experiences and practices?

MATT NIKSCH:

Well, what a lot of people do is they actually just have a staff person who follows the kids in high school and then follows them into college, which is actually how KIPP got its start. If you're not going to do that, the next best thing you can do is focus on what high schools kids are going to and make sure they're, you know, as often as possible, the ones that are taking a really deliberative approach, either to the college access side or, ideally, the college access and the college success side.

I think you can try-- and then, obviously, getting kids like academically and sort of socially, emotionally, is really helpful, too. But one of the reasons that KIPP got into this work is they found just doing that wasn't necessarily going to guarantee the kinds of success they were hoping for.

ALEX MEDLER:

Any other observations on K-8?

RICHARD

Sure. If you've got the link to my series, go in and look up Uncommon Schools, the profile that's already run. I mean, as I said, Uncommon focuses more on the, I think, K-12 grades, but actually they say 5-12. And they've made a lot of changes there to make kids more successful in college, and middle school is part of that.

And I mean, just to give one example, they figured out that they-- when they present a lesson, let's say in English class-- if you discuss first and write second, what they found was that the weaker students in the class were essentially mimicking what the more outspoken or with-it students were doing. And they weren't really comprehending it. And that was showing up later as a problem area.

So now, they've shifted to a write first, discuss later. So they'll identify the kids for whom that the lesson is not sticking. So it's a lot of small changes, shifts in how you teach. But Uncommon is a good example of that.

MATT NIKSCH: I, you know--

ALEX MEDLER: OK, I'm going to--

MATT NIKSCH: If I could just put you back on that, one other point, and it's sort of a thing I was suggest people not do, or be cautious about what you think the efficacy of it will be.

There's this sort of thing that happens when kids go from high school to college. It's sort of like the blood-brain barrier. You can tell them all the things they're going to experience when they get to college, and many of them don't absorb it until they get to college and they face the struggle that you sort of told them about.

But, for whatever reason, unless they have the tactile experience of actually being there, actually experiencing it, they frequently can't intellectualize it before that experience. So if you try to talk about the kinds of thing that first-generation kids are frequently experiencing in college when they're in high school, or even if you try to cover that while they're in middle school, for a lot of kids-- and I'd say the vast majority of them-- it just really doesn't sink in.

ALEX MEDLER: OK. Let me shift gears a little bit. All these CMOs in many respects, have been quite successful in raising resources and fundraising. And other people may try to do this, or they might be intimidated and say, oh, well we can't raise the kind of money those folks can. Can you talk a little bit about what the resources this takes and how hard it is to raise resources for

this kind of work and what you may or may not do if you don't have additional resources?

BENJAMIN FEIT: Yeah, so this is Ben. And so Democracy Prep, we don't supplement our operating budget philanthropically. Right, so that is a deliberate choice that we've made in terms of how we want to run our schools, K-12 or public schools.

We want to demonstrate what's possible on public dollars, even if we're frozen at a lower per pupil, in many states, than traditional public schools receive. We're going to operate on public dollars, whether they are entitlement funds from the state, from local governments, from the federal government, or whether they are competitive public grants that we've received from any of those bodies as well.

What we do budgetarily is that we, from the time that students are in elementary school, like the surpluses at those schools are designated for Dream Dollar balances that we call-- right, so our kind of school-wide investment system that many similarly-structured charter schools use-- some kind of scholar dollar setup where students are earning money, or fictitious money, if they show up to school on time, in uniform. They get deductions if they are demonstrating low-level violations of the Code of Conduct.

So we set aside our Dream Dollar balance that, functionally, is put aside so that we have revenue to support our students once they have enrolled in college. So that is a budgetary choice that we make even when our schools are not up at the high school level yet.

And we are committed to using the public dollars that we get in order to ensure that we are fulfilling our mission, so it is certainly possible. And we're not doing it with the benefit of significant amounts of additional philanthropic support.

ALEX MEDLER: And, Richard, how's that match with the other folks you've been writing about?

RICHARD WHITMIRE: Well, most will raise money. And I do have a question for Ben because I thought that Democracy Prep had a change, a slight change of position there. They don't accept philanthropic funding for the basic K-12 education. But they concluded that the College Success program was independent and they would accept philanthropy. Is that not true?

BENJAMIN FEIT: No, and I think you're right that would, had we pursued it in any meaningful way. We have not, right. So as it currently stands, we continue to run our Alumni Relations programming on our allocations from the K-12 system.

You're right in the sense that were we to pursue philanthropy, it would be for something that is outside of a traditional public school budget. And so, to the extent that the New York City Department of Education is not giving schools an entitlement allocation to educate a student once they have completed high school, like that would be something that we would consider. But we have not made a point of seeking out that fundraising to this point.

**RICHARD
WHITMIRE:**

Gotcha. Well then, to answer your question, that attitude is or that position is very similar to what I heard at Alliance College-Ready. You know, it has been important to them from the beginning that they educate their children on the same dollar that the traditional public schools there get so that they can be used as an example.

So they do a very low-cost college tracking. And I mentioned it before, they'll have mentors-- let's say juniors-- who get a very modest stipend to counsel a small group of freshmen, let's say.

And I find it interesting to see, I mean, they do not have a great college success rate. It's 25%, but they're late to the game. But if they can boost that rate with a very inexpensive system, then, in a way, that could be a more valuable lesson than what KIPP is doing with its far more expensive KIPP Through College because other schools can copy that.

ALEX MEDLER: Let me ask another question.

MATT NIKSCH: Yeah, well, if I could just add, and I'll explain that, a couple things for people because, you know, there's a range obviously, nationally. You know Alliance is dealing with, I don't know, \$6,000 or less per pupil. And so if you're in at that kind of situation, obviously it's more daunting to think about how you try to do this on public revenue.

One of the tricks that we use, so the majority of the people that are doing college work for us are effectively teachers of a class. So we have an elective class for seniors. It's a senior seminar class, but we can fund that through public dollars because of the fact that those are teachers.

So the consequence of that is you're probably not having an extra elective for seniors that you might otherwise have. But because of the focus on college prep that we think is so important, it's a choice and a trade off that we have to make.

I'd say, though, the last-- the one other point I wanted to add, though-- you know, we have 23

kind of Alumni Support people. It'd be very hard for me to go find any philanthropist who wants to go out and fund the 24th or the 25th. But if this is a new program for your charter, you know, I think there will be plenty of people out there who would be really excited about that.

And we had the experience, recently, of adding a couple folks who are now focused on the career success of our bachelors grads. Because, unfortunately, we found that even if our kids are going out and getting bachelor's degrees, they weren't necessarily accessing professional careers very well. And even if they got into them, their careers were sort of slower than we would've expected for peers of similar age. And that was a really compelling idea, for the local philanthropic community to try to fund.

RICHARD Yeah, just to add to that--

WHITMIRE:

ALEX MEDLER: Well that, that brings up one of those--

RICHARD KIPP is doing that with their so-called KIPP Accelerator Fellowship Program which is new. And
WHITMIRE: they've, what they did is, they tapped about a dozen of their really fairly successful alumni who have earned their bachelor's degrees, who are out in the workforce, but are still behind their peers. And they're giving them the extra sort of professional, you know, how to expand their networks, et cetera. And they're trying to use it as a laboratory to learn.

MATT NIKSCH: Well, when I was at KIPP--

ALEX MEDLER: And one of the questions we have-- Actually, I mean, let's add a question from the field. One of the questions is about students that really don't want to go to college and that might be choosing other career paths.

How do you guys handle students for whom-- I mean, they're making those choices and some, even despite all your work, will choose different pathways and it makes sense for them? How do you handle the non-college-bound and still support them in different paths?

MATT NIKSCH: Wait, so our philosophy is if, like, at the end of day, this is a young adult making one of the most important decisions about their life, so it's not about us. It's about them and helping putting them on a good path.

So I think the key thing you look for in that kind of scenario is that the student has a clear idea of what they want, and that it's not sort of them just sort of being intentionally obstinate against

the mission of the school or sort of the culture that we've been sort of pushing pretty hard in the previous four years.

You know, and so philosophically, it's, yes, support students in doing the things that they want to do with their life because it's their life. The practical challenge is the pathways for those programs are either harder to observe or they have a lot of hidden barriers that we don't quite understand. And so you do try to support them. But it's-- practically speaking-- it's a harder task than the sort of tried-and-true path of just enroll as a freshman at this college and then persist and then you'll have a good outcome at the end.

**RICHARD
WHITMIRE:**

This is Richard here. And, just yesterday, I was talking to the head of KIPP Through College in DC. And I was surprised at the percent of kids in their portfolio who did not go to college, but are still followed by their KIPP Through College team.

So they check on their careers, even if they chose a trade. That's wrapped into the program. That's the first that I-- I don't, because I've never asked the question, I don't know if KIPP is unique there. I don't know if anybody else is doing that.

ALEX MEDLER:

OK. Let me ask another question. And I think we have a lot of people interested in this from school districts and other systems that are even outside charter networks, or individual people running a high school or something.

What do you think the opportunity is-- and I'll start with Richard-- for sort of regional approaches to this that get beyond a single network doing it and get to all the schools in a big city sharing the same tools and strategies? What's the challenges and opportunities there for sort of like a regional consortia to do this together?

**RICHARD
WHITMIRE:**

Yeah, I think it's huge, and we're already seeing this in Texas. And it's really led by Mike Feinberg, co-founder of KIPP who's put together several charter groups-- Uplift YES Prep, IDEA-- and experimenting with court. And they've brought in some school districts. Houston ISD just joined. Spring Branch is part of it.

And here's how it might work. So everybody there-- Uplift, YES Prep-- they're following their kids to-- let's say, they're good on the local area. Let's say, you're in Houston.

KIPP Houston, you know, it's easy for them to track kids there locally, but it's harder on the other side of the state. But on the other side of the state, you might have Uplift. So why not have a system where the Uplift College Success person checks on the KIPP kid who is there in

Dallas? And vice versa? If the Uplift kids go to Houston, then the KIPP Success Team can check on them.

So that's just an example of what they're experimenting with. I think that's a huge potential.

MATT NIKSCH: Yeah, I think there's a lot of promise in the idea. The challenges people run into are probably related just sort of the nitty gritty of management.

So in the example Richard gave, if you're saying, oh, we'll swap kids and I'll look after yours here, and you look after mine there, the question is whether you sort of structurally are treating them equally. If the person doing the work is managed by the results of their kids, but not necessarily the other network's kids, if push comes to shove, they'll probably spend more time with their kids, even though they don't, like, want to as a person who's doing the work.

But I think the management of it is tricky, both from an incentives approach as well as the fact that it's just, in general, hard to manage the people doing this work. The outcomes are sort of slow in the sense of you-- it's hard to get-- unless you have very sort of generous caseloads, it's hard to get detailed data on how kids are doing every semester, sort of getting grade information every term. It's hard to do that if you have-- unless you have a small set of kids.

And then if you don't have that, what you're tracking is sort of their annual, or through their semesterly enrollments. And that comes really slow. And it's also really hard to say, was the change or was the sort of outcome that you saw a result of the work of the Alumni Support person, or was it just a random thing and that person's not really doing anything to add value?

ALEX MEDLER: So that was--

MUKTA PANDIT: And one of the things that we are actually seeing, just even at Safal as working with some of the campuses that you guys talked about, is just coming at it from a data angle. So what we're trying to do is figure out better ways to make it easier and like integrate essentially all of the clearinghouse data so that you can actually see the different persistence rates and graduation rates. And not every school has to sort of develop that capacity and develop that data analysis at a one-on-one basis.

And then, ideally, like if you can have regional consortiums being able to have schools or colleges sort of log in to one system so you can actually make it much more student-focused and free of counselors who are usually-- they don't have enough time. And they, I mean, it

would be nice if they had really generous caseloads, but they usually don't.

You know, make it so that it's easier for them to prioritize, OK, these are the kids. But I can get alerts on, these are the kids that need to have a higher outreach priority, these are the kids that have a lower outreach priority, but that's-- we're trying to come at it from a more of a centralized data and system angle to help build some of those regional initiatives.

BENJAMIN FEIT: And this is Ben. Let me just-- one thought on this. So I think our initial model to how we intended to scale our Alumni Support program was not exclusively confined to alumni of Democracy Prep Schools. So it took into account exactly what we're talking about here-- where we see graduates from similar schools attending similar colleges-- and thinking about how best to leverage existing infrastructure and networks in order to extend the reach and make sure that we're not creating unnecessary redundancies or just doing the exact same work on campuses where Uncommon or AF or KIPP has already established an understanding of where the resources exist and how to connect students with those resources in order to ensure that they're persisting.

What we see and what I think will be a principal barrier to that is that there's a trust deficit that exists in a lot of our schools and communities with certain institutions that can certainly be alleviated with an extended commitment to demonstrating that, as a school, as a civic body, you're invested in the welfare of that kid, of that family, in a way that builds trust over time.

It's difficult to have that kind of trust and relationship built with a person with whom they're unfamiliar once they have gone off to enroll in college. And so we-- that's kind of why we ended up tweaking the model to go to this Alumni Captain construct that allows us to leverage existing relationships with trusted adults. Whether they're teachers, social workers, people on their high school campuses that they have a trusting relationship with that preexists their departure for college that we can leverage when they are experiencing some of the challenges that students face once they go off to enroll.

I can see that being one of the challenges in attempting to scale it, and kind of harnessing the collective power of various networks when you're trying to stay in contact with a student in a meaningful way that allows you to kind of anticipate those challenges, and help them kind of proactively address them.

ALEX MEDLER: OK. Well, we are running near the end of our time. So I'd like to invite our three panelists to give us a last closing thought-- about 15 seconds long-- of something that you really want to

make sure the audience leaves with or reinforce a point you think that's a key one to take away. So whoever would like to start with the first closing thoughts.

RICHARD WHITMIRE: I'll go first, if you want. It's Richard. I think it's just really what we were just talking about now, which is the potential for collaboration here. Because, once again, the school districts lose-- risk nothing in cooperating. They don't lose students. They don't lose funding. It's a win-win. And I think it's really a very bright future for the possibility of compacts, district-charter compacts.

ALEX MEDLER: Great. Ben?

BENJAMIN FEIT: Sure. I agree. I think the key takeaway here is that the 9% baseline is something that we've seen a lot of schools have significant success in exceeding. But we're just all kind of scratching the surface and feeling our way through what it means to support our alumni in this way.

And we do need to continue working with each other, transmitting those practices. And, really, not just saying we're going to continue helping our students overcome these odds that the likelihood is that they're not going to succeed in college, but move those odds in a different direction so that we have changed the playing field for students coming out of schools in these communities so that they are more likely to succeed in the college of their choice and it's not an unexpected outcome when they do.

ALEX MEDLER: All right. And Matt?

MATT NIKSCH: Yeah, and I would just bring up the motivation for doing this. So if I, if you talk to college admissions officers, they say the single biggest thing that they do is make sure the students they admit can be successful at the colleges they go to. And if you believe them-- that they're good at their job of doing the thing they care about the most-- the fact that low-income students or first-generation students have worse outcomes than high-income kids is just fundamentally wrong.

And, you know, the way we see it is it has nothing to do with academic qualifications of the kid. It has to do with systemic barriers that they're experiencing at those colleges. And we, as a country, need to figure out how to handle it. And we've been talking about a piece of that today, but it's a fundamental thing that I think we all should be worrying about and should be focusing on if we're trying to see a more just society.

ALEX MEDLER: Thank you very much. A wonderful note on which to close.

I'm going to just make a few announcements in addition to thanking our panelists and all of you for joining us today. This webinar has been recorded and will be uploaded into the National Center's resources along with links to the work of Richard documenting this and the resources listed by our speakers today.

And we really encourage you to participate in the survey that will follow to evaluate today's webinar and provides us feedback on other things you'd like to hear about. And we invite you to come back to the other webinars put on by the Resource Center.

And we want to thank the US Department of Education for their support and for hosting the entire event. So on behalf of Safal Partners and the Resource Center, thank you very much. And that concludes our webinar for today. Thank you.