

Cradle-to-career outcomes: Impacts on economic mobility and equity¹



Economic mobility is StriveTogether’s north star. It includes economic success, power, autonomy and feeling valued in one’s community. The likelihood of earning a higher income than one’s parents has been on a downward trajectory and access to a quality education is a key difference between neighborhoods with high and low upward mobility.² StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network members are working to strengthen civic infrastructure in communities to transform systems by shifting policies, resources, practices and power structures to drive better and more equitable outcomes for Black, Indigenous, Latine and Asian youth and youth experiencing poverty. The seven cradle-to-career outcomes are key milestones on the path to economic mobility.



Milestone: Kindergarten Readiness **Impact on economic mobility and equity:**

Investment in and accessibility to preschool leads to greater student retention through graduation and decreases school reliance on special education programs for remediation.³ The biggest impact of kindergarten readiness is that children are socially and emotionally ready for school. Children who come from higher economic status tend to score higher on kindergarten readiness assessments, and Black and Latine children tend to score lower on kindergarten readiness than non-Latine white children.⁴

Factors and systems indicators⁵:

- Preschool enrollment and attendance
- **Access to early developmental screening**
- **Parental engagement**
- **Availability of culturally- or linguistically-inclusive programs**



Milestone: Early Grade Reading **Impact on economic mobility and equity:**

Reading proficiency during third grade impacts whether a student will graduate high school on time.⁶ Students not proficient in reading by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.⁷ Of all students who are not reading proficiently in third grade, Black and Latine children are two times more likely than white children to not graduate from high school.

Factors and systems indicators:

- Attendance
- **Social-emotional learning and curriculum**
- **Out-of-school-time reading**

¹Full citations and additional research forthcoming in the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Outcomes Report in late 2022. ²Opportunity Insights. ³McCoy et al (2017). ⁴Bernstein et al (2019). ⁵Systems indicators highlighted in bold and teal font. ⁶Hernandez (2011). ⁷The Annie E. Casey Foundation. ⁸Lee (2012). ⁹ACT (2008). ¹⁰Lee (2012).



Milestone: Middle Grade Math

Impact on economic mobility and equity:

Math achievement on tests in eighth, 10th and 12th grade are a good predictor of whether students will stay on course to attend a two- or four-year college.⁸ The level of academic achievement students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact than high school academic achievement on their college and career readiness.⁹ Racial disparities exist in the gap between an individual's goals and actual postsecondary outcomes.¹⁰

Factors and systems indicators:

- Kindergarten numeracy
- **Teacher qualifications**
- Mathematical self-concept



Milestone: High School Graduation

Impact on economic mobility and equity:

High school completion can lead to employment or opportunities to extend education to receive higher paying jobs. Individuals who complete high school earn about 23% more in weekly salaries than those who do not.¹¹ Graduation rates for Indigenous, Black and Latine public high school students are below the U.S. average.¹²

Factors and systems indicators:

- **Culturally responsive curriculum**
- Sense of belonging
- **School mental health supports**



Milestone: Postsecondary Enrollment

Impact on economic mobility and equity:

For each level of education that an individual achieves after high school, earning potential increases. Earning an associate degree brings an average pay increase of more than \$7,000 and earning a bachelor's degree brings an average increase of more than \$26,000.¹³ Children with parents in the top 1% of the income distribution are 77 times more likely

to attend elite colleges and universities than children with parents in the bottom 20%.¹⁴

Factors and systems indicators:

- **Social-emotional learning and curriculum**
- **Access to financial aid**
- Summer melt



Milestone: Postsecondary Completion

Impact on economic mobility and equity:

Parental income and college completion are the most prominent factors in determining upward economic mobility. The majority of those who complete college from the lowest parental income quintiles achieve upward mobility within a few years of degree completion.¹⁵ Students of color are more likely to persist in postsecondary education than white students but are less likely to attain a degree within six years of initial enrollment.¹⁶

Factors and systems indicators:

- **Early college programs**
- **Dual enrollment offerings**
- Immigration status



Milestone: Employment

Impact on economic mobility and equity:

The Urban Institute defines economic success as an individual having adequate income and assets to support their and their family's material well-being. People of color are less likely than all other workers to earn a living wage.¹⁷ Women of color, particularly Black women, face a "double gap" from the gender wage gap and the racial wage gap.¹⁸

Factors and systems indicators:

- Academic achievement
- Juvenile arrests
- **Internship and mentorship opportunities**

¹¹Torpey (2021). ¹²National Center for Education Statistics (2022). ¹³Northeastern University (2020). ¹⁴Opportunity Insights. ¹⁵Creusere et al (2019). ¹⁶Flynn (2014). ¹⁷Henry and Frederickson (2014). ¹⁸Holder (2020).