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## **Education Leaders Launch Campaign to Help More Students Successfully Transition from High School Through Postsecondary**

*National coalition commits to 'level up' collective alignment efforts and remove stumbling blocks that get students off track*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Leaders from 18 education organizations across the country today launched a campaign aimed at alleviating the stubborn misalignment between K-12 and higher education that too often derails U.S. students from earning a postsecondary degree or credential and becoming economically self-sufficient.

Called Level Up, the new coalition is a group of local, state and national K-12 and higher education partners committed to measurably increasing the numbers of American high school students — particularly students of color, those from low-income families, and whose parents did not attend college — who are prepared for and successfully complete postsecondary education and training programs. Level Up will do this by providing direct technical assistance and producing research, as well as publicly supporting policies and practices that will make high-impact change for students.

“Postsecondary readiness and success must be a priority for every policymaker, educator and student, in order to ensure that the transition between high school and higher education is a launch pad, not a hurdle,” said Matt Gandal, president of Education Strategy Group, which organized the Level Up coalition. “As leaders of K-12 and higher education systems and institutions, we owe it to all students to work together to remove unnecessary burdens, frustrations and inefficiencies as they pursue something our society very much needs them to do: complete high school, earn a high-quality postsecondary credential or degree, and enter the workforce with the skills to contribute.”

Over the past 10 years, the quality and relevance of American public education have come under the microscope, and the resulting improvements of that examination have largely been positive: higher academic expectations, expanded access to community and four-year college, and greater emphasis on career readiness. But while there have been measurable successes, the United States continues to fall short on helping students achieve their education and employment goals. Too many students persistently stumble at the key transition point where they move from high school to college or other postsecondary training. And often they stumble again from those programs into the workforce.

Level Up aspires to dramatically increase the number of students who:

- **Get a jumpstart on postsecondary work while in high school.** Level Up will work to increase the percentage of students who earn postsecondary credit, whether industry credential or college credit, while in high school.
- **Build momentum toward a degree or credential.** Level Up aims to increase the percentage of students who complete postsecondary credit-bearing math and English coursework within their first year.
- **Attain a postsecondary credential or degree.** Level Up will work to increase the number of students annually who complete a postsecondary credential or degree.

Level Up is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. An advisory council guides the coalition's work and includes

- Bob Caret, chancellor, University System of Maryland
- Charlene Dukes, president, Prince George's Community College
- Mary Ellen Elia, commissioner of education, New York
- David Harrison, president, Columbus State Community College
- Teresa Lubbers, commissioner, Indiana Commission for Higher Education
- Pedro Martinez, superintendent, San Antonio Public Schools
- Kim Hunter Reed, commissioner, Louisiana Board of Regents
- Pedro Rivera, secretary of education, Pennsylvania
- Sonja Santelises, chief executive officer, Baltimore City Schools
- Jeremy Anderson, president, Education Commission of the States
- Rob Anderson, executive director, State Higher Education Executives Organization
- J. Noah Brown, president and chief executive officer, Association of Community College Trustees
- Rebecca Martin, executive director, National Association of System Heads
- Carissa Moffat Miller, executive director, Council of Chief State School Officers

At a launch event today at the National Press Club, Level Up showcased several programs that have had success in tightening the transition points between high school and college and college and careers. For example, the ACES program from Montgomery College provides academic coaching for high school juniors and seniors in historically underrepresented groups in order to help them get to and make it through college. Thanks to the support they receive, 99 percent of all ACES students receive their high school diploma and enter into higher education. Also featured was Shark Path, a program of Miami Dade College that offers academic and career advising to high school seniors. Since the program's inception in 2012, more than 50,000 new, first-time-in-college direct-entry students have benefited from Shark Path.



Also at the launch event, Level Up released its first research brief, outlining best practices for state and local education leaders to improve postsecondary transitions. The paper, *Taking Alignment to the Next Level: How K-12 and Higher Education Can Collaborate to Support Student Success*, is available [here](#).

For more information about Level Up and its partners, visit the [website](#), watch a video about the [work of some of its partners](#), or watch the [public launch event](#). You can also read what others are saying and join the conversation on Twitter: #LevelUpforStudents.

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**Level Up** is a coalition of state and national partners committed to measurably increasing the numbers of high school students prepared for and successfully transitioning to postsecondary education and training programs. Our collective mission is to make successful postsecondary transitions the new normal for all students in all communities. Today, too few youth — especially students of color, those from low-income families, and whose parents did not attend college — have that opportunity. That must change. We must level up our expectations and supports to close this gap.