

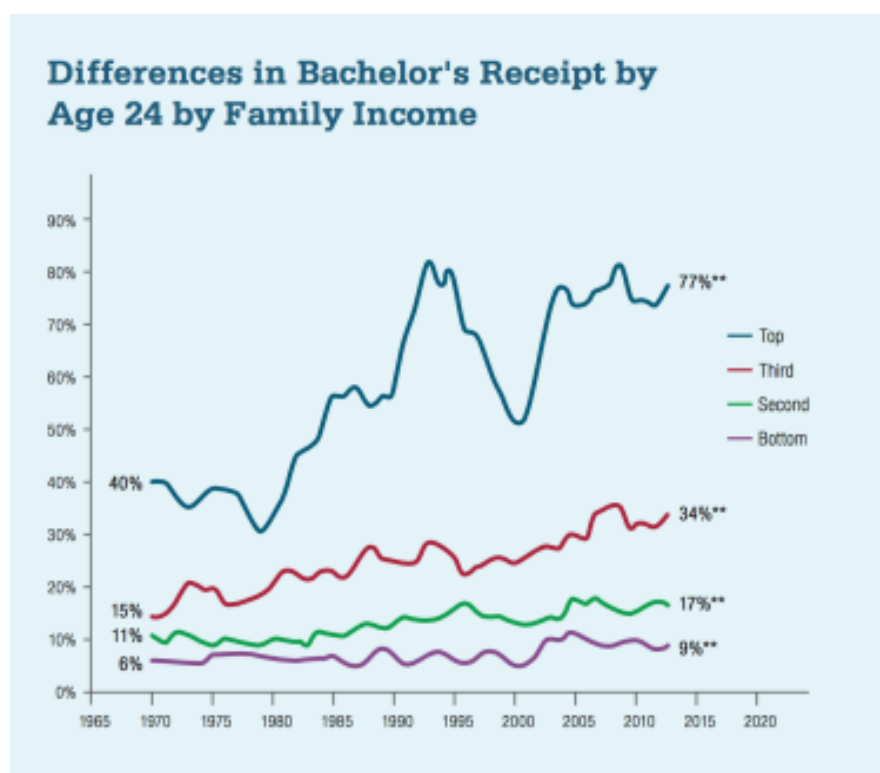
relinquishment, blog by Neerav Kingsland

writing about handing power back to educators and families – and other thoughts

The End of Education Reform

I. The Odds

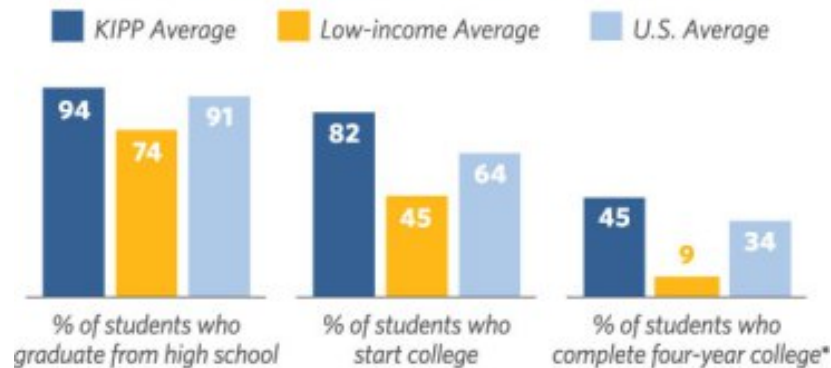
If you grow up poor, you will likely not get a bachelor's degree. Here's the data:



9% of students from the bottom quintile of income receive a Bachelor's degree by age 24.

Even amongst our nation's best schools for low-income students, the numbers are still tough:

Over 40% of early KIPP alumni have earned four-year college degrees.



**As of fall 2014, an additional 6% of KIPP alumni earned Associate's Degrees.*

KIPP tracks its rates of high school graduation, college matriculation, and college completion based on students (alumni) who either completed 8th grade at a KIPP middle school or graduated from a KIPP high school.

Or as leaders at Match charter school put it:

What the folks at Match began to notice was that 60% of the Match High School graduates actually graduate college—which if you look at relative to almost any comparative metric out there for this group of students, it is an extraordinary record. But as my colleague, Mike Larsson, who's really one of the founders of this effort and our COO, likes to say, "If you get a 60 at Match High School, that's actually an F."

II. And Even if You Do

Even if you go to college and graduate, you might not learn a lot.

"Academically Adrift" studied a sample of students who enrolled at four-year colleges and universities in 2005. As freshmen, they took a test of critical thinking, analytic reasoning and communications skills called the Collegiate Learning Assessment (C.L.A.). Colleges promise to teach these broad intellectual skills to all students, regardless of major. The students took the C.L.A. again at the end of their senior year. On average, they improved less than half of one standard deviation. For many, the results were much worse. One-third improved by less than a single point on a 100-point scale during four years of college.

Yes, through some mix of signaling and learning, you are much more likely to get a job if you have a degree, but it seems like there is a strong signaling component, which makes college very inefficient for everyone involved (save for the social component, which seems to work quite well, in both the best and worse senses).

One way I like to think about college is this: would you learn more if you simply worked at a decent for-profit, non-profit, or governmental organization?

I think most colleges fail this test. And even those that do pass, I still worry that they are underperforming their actual potential.

III. Two Problems to Solve

So there are two problems to solve:

(1) Given that getting a degree is good for the individual, how do we increase degree attainment rates for low-income students?

(2) Given that humans learning things is generally good for society, how do we make colleges more effective?

IV. The Innovators

Match charter school created Match beyond to try to solve both of these problems.

Here's how it works:

- Match Beyond partners with Southern New Hampshire University, which has a fully online college degree called College For America.
- College For All is competency based and designed to build skills in students that employers say they need to be successful in the workplace, such as data analysis, working in teams, communication skills.
- Match Beyond splits a pell grant with New Hampshire, so the degree is basically free for students.
- New Hampshire provides the platform and competency based curriculum.
- Match provides 1-1 coaching to their students to guide them through the competencies.

In more detail:

It's project-oriented and it's entirely online. There's no classroom requirement. There's no seat time requirement. You don't have to be anywhere at any particular point in time. There are 120 projects that a student needs to complete to acquire an Associate's degree and then another 120 projects for those who choose to go on to a Bachelor's degree. Because of that and because it's completely project oriented, it's highly flexible. If a student wants to work at eleven o' clock at night, then a student can work at eleven o' clock at night. If a student needs to take two months off to care for a sick family member, they can. These are all real stories, by the way, that happen all the time to our students.

How much coaching do they get with Match Beyond?

Each student gets assigned a coach and often that coach will be in touch with them daily. There are actually requirements in the first few months that students meet in person with their coach. They can come in to work in our space—they don't have to, but they can—or our coaches go out and see students all the time. They'll meet a student at Panera Bread to talk to him or her about what's going on and what they're doing.

For what's it with, I've seen it in action. I went to the Panera, had a coffee, and watched the tutoring.

Here's the results to date:

Was 2015 your first cohort of students?

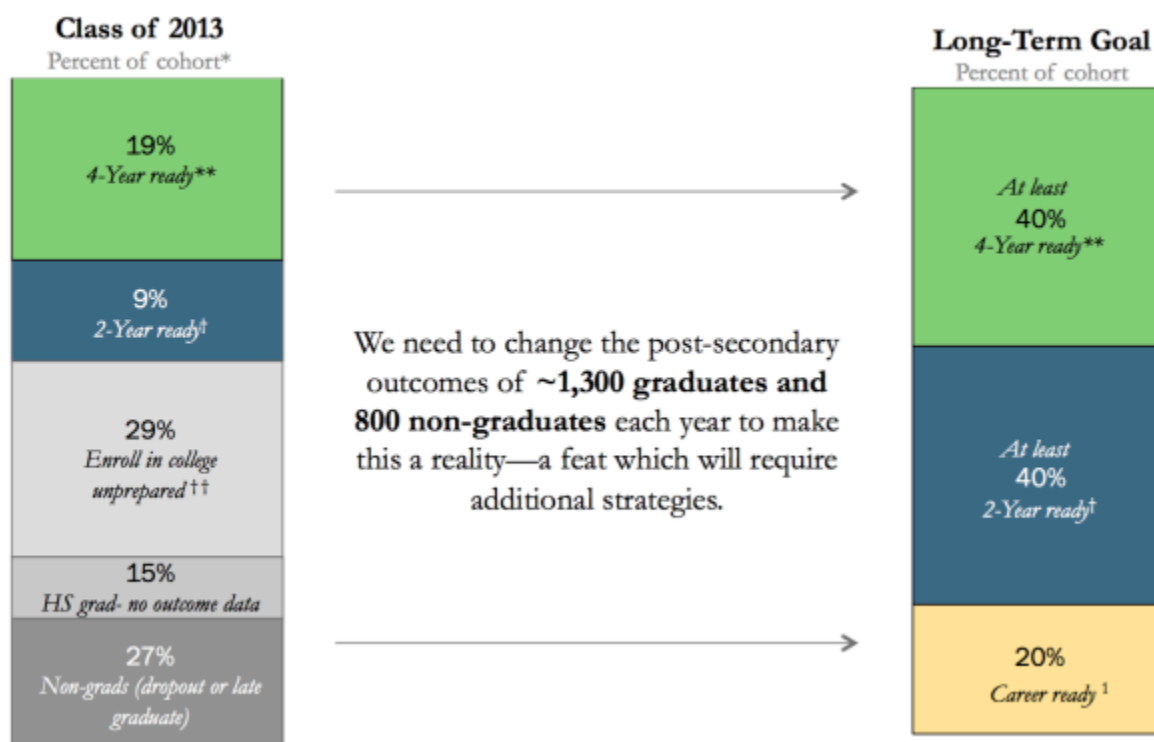
It was our first formal cohort but Match started piloting the partnership with Southern New Hampshire and College for America with the first group of seven or eight students starting in October of 2013. I'm proud to say 100% of those students are going to graduate. Most of them have already and the others are on track to graduate within two and a half years with their Associate's degree. Pretty cool.

V. Can It Scale Across a City?

After all the hard work in New Orleans – and the unprecedented achievement gains – many people in the city (and myself) are worried that these gains won't translate into degrees and jobs.

Here's some data on where New Orleans is trying to head.

Too Few Students are Prepared for College & Career



To make this a reality, a coalition of high schools, 2 year and 4 year colleges, employers, and non-profits are trying to reconstruct the high school -> post-secondary -> job pipeline.

The strategy is a mixture of alignment (building clear pathways where students aren't lost in the transitions between schools and the job market) and innovation (rethinking high school, college, and job training).

It is unknown whether this will work.

But for New Orleans to realize the promise of its K12 improvements, some sort of breakthrough will need to occur in the post-secondary sector.

I am concerned that the leadership and entrepreneurship we've seen in the charter sector does not exist in the post-secondary sector.

I hope groups like Match Beyond change that.

VI. The End of Education Reform

We can think about the phrase – “the end of education reform” in three ways.

One way to think about the phrase is that education reform ends at twelfth grade, and from there students are left to struggle in a dysfunctional post-secondary system.

A second way to think about the phrase is that education reform will end because it failed to deliver on its promise of a better life for those who benefited from the reforms.

A third way to think about it is that reforming post-secondary and job training institutions is the logical end effort of education reform, and that success here will improve the lives of students in this country.

Time will tell which way of understanding the phrase will most ring true.