

2025

THE K2C IMPACT:

How Early Savings Foster College Access in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO'S KINDERGARTEN TO COLLEGE (K2C) program automatically gives every K-12 public school student a child savings account, starting them off with \$50 for their future education. The program has been [successful in boosting college access](#), especially for underrepresented students. To learn how K2C has helped kids and their families, researchers from Summitlab Consulting Group talked to students and parents from the first batch of K2C graduates – the class of 2023. To include a diverse group of interviewees, participants were randomly selected based on three main criteria: household income, enrollment in postsecondary education, and how engaged they were with the program. The researchers also ensured that the sample was diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, language spoken, and years in the program.



KEY FINDINGS

1. K2C FOSTERED COLLEGE DREAMS

What we learned

Both students and parents clearly understood that K2C is intended to support savings for education after high school. Even if they only had a little bit of money in the account, just having the account made them think about college as a real possibility. Parents appreciated that San Francisco was investing in their children and helping them plan and save for education after high school.

K2C encouraged parents and kids to talk about education after high school. This made students feel like college was a real possibility for them. Most kids already wanted to go to college, seeing education as the way to get a good job and a safe future.

Why it matters

Starting early, even with a small amount, can help students build big dreams. The program helped families talk about college, which made students feel more confident and determined to go.

“ If I didn’t have K2C I think that my life would be different... I wouldn’t be where I am today, using that money to pay for my materials. ”

– Kelsey, K2C graduate, Class of 2023
Enrolled in 4-year college

2. K2C MADE IT EASIER TO SAVE FOR FUTURE EDUCATION

What we learned

K2C encouraged families to put money aside for college, despite barriers to saving. K2C's programmatic incentives – additional contributions to students' K2C accounts for meeting certain milestones – were particularly helpful for facilitating savings.

“That was like the easiest process I've ever done. I think you filled out a form. They asked, “How do you want your payment?” and then you got it within an amount of time, which was quick. Wish financial aid was that quick!”

– Timika, K2C graduate, Class of 2023
Enrolled in 4-year college

For some families, the K2C account was the only savings they had for college, and they trusted that their funds were safe. For others who saved in different ways, the K2C incentives encouraged them to save even more.

Why it matters

K2C effectively supported families in saving, regardless of their income level. The incentives served as a great motivator, helping families build a small but significant fund for their child's future.



OVERALL IMPACT K2C is the first citywide program of its kind and the first to support students from kindergarten through college enrollment. Our [preliminary findings](#) also show that K2C students were more likely to enroll in college, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds. The biggest reason for this success seems

3. K2C MADE PAYING FOR COLLEGE FEEL LESS OVERWHELMING

What we learned

When it was time for college, students and families used K2C funds along with other resources like scholarships, grants, and loans. Knowing that their K2C money was there and easy to get gave students and families peace of mind.

Most respondents found it easy and straightforward to access the money from their K2C accounts. This ease of access brought a huge sense of relief and security, especially compared to more complicated funding sources, like competitive scholarships and complex financial aid programs. Even those with modest sums in their K2C accounts reported that the funds were useful for covering fees, materials such as computers or textbooks, and living expenses.

Why it matters

Knowing the K2C money was there and simple to get made a real difference in reducing financial stress during the college transition.

“It's like, day to day. It's just kind of reminding me like, “Oh, we should save money for college.” ...If I didn't have that saving, I probably wouldn't have been able to pay the entire first semester [of college] by myself.”

– Corrine, K2C graduate, Class of 2023
Enrolled in 4-year college

to be the way K2C encouraged ongoing conversations between parents and children about college, helping to build a shared vision for the future.

K2C's success demonstrates that automatic, universal children's savings programs can help make college a reality, particularly for underrepresented students.