

Momentous School

Case Study



Situation

Momentous School, part of Momentous Institute, is a nationally acclaimed laboratory school serving preK-3 through 5th grade. As a critical component of Momentous Institute's mission, their school's mental health-informed, neuroscience-based curriculum places social-emotional learning on par with academic achievement, setting students up for both academic and lifelong success. Momentous School primarily supports students in underserved communities, with nearly 80% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.

Their students learn about the power of their own brains from a young age – how their brains work and how to apply this knowledge to regulate themselves. Momentous School focuses on the whole person and integrates mental well-being into all aspects of health and learning, cultivating resilient human beings equipped with tools to thrive.

What We Did

To understand the long-term economic implications of this kind of early investment in brain and mental health, the Brainomics™ and Momentous Institute teams analyzed academic achievement six years after high school graduation for 73 alumni from Momentous School's 2016-2018 graduating cohorts. We then projected their lifetime earnings (based on data described below) and compared outcomes to student data from the National Student Clearinghouse High School Benchmarks Reports, which track high school and college progression rates across the U.S.¹. We defined three comparison groups using this national data:

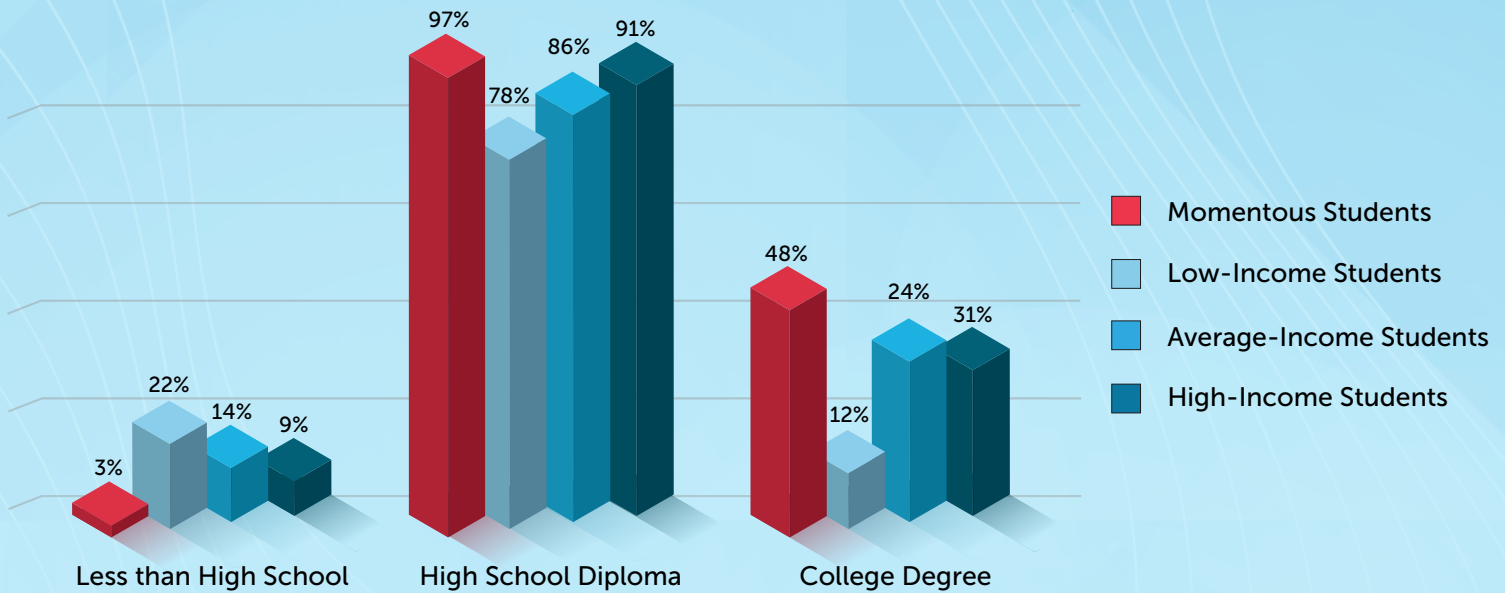
- Students from low-income schools (representing the likely alternative path for Momentous School alumni).
- Students from high-income schools.
- Average-income students (calculated as the mean between low- and high-income students).

What We Learned – Achievement

Momentous School alumni exceeded expectations for individuals rising from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and they even outperformed high-income students. Compared to most low-income students, our investigation found that Momentous School alumni are more likely to:

- Graduate from high school.
- Pursue higher education.
- Earn a college degree.

Educational Attainment: 2016-2018 Cohorts



Graphs above compare 2016-2018 Momentous cohorts with 2016-2018 averages calculated by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center¹.

What We Learned – Economic Impact

Research shows that academic success translates into significant economic impact. Using data compiled by the U.S. Career Institute on average lifetime earnings based on education level, our researchers expect students from the selected Momentous School cohort – tracked up to the bachelor's degree level – to earn between \$1.3 and \$2.7 million over their lives, totaling \$157 million in cohort earnings². These projections are conservative estimates, as high achievers may go on to earn graduate-level degrees and higher lifetime incomes. Even so, projected earnings are:

26% ↑

higher than low-income students

15% ↑

higher than average-income students

9% ↑

higher than high-income students

Importantly, the annual per-student cost of attending Momentous School is comparable to the average cost of public education in Texas. This means their core educational model doesn't require a higher baseline investment to implement.

Momentous School chooses to invest further in students' long-term success through daily nutrition and college scholarships, averaging an estimated investment total of \$19,200 per student. In our analysis, investment is calculated as if every student received the full eight years of nutrition and every college-bound alum received the average scholarship amount, even though this may not be the case. These factors actually overestimate the total investment, making our ROI estimates conservative. Our analysis yields a forecasted return on investment of:

24:1

vs. low-income students

15:1

vs. average-income students

9:1

vs. high-income students

What We Learned – Economic Impact

The numbers are quite extraordinary, confirming that investing early in brain health and mental health education pays off and delivers both human and economic returns. Based on our analysis, Momentous School alumni are more likely to graduate from high school, earn a college degree, and become higher-income earners than many of their peers.

This case study demonstrates the high value of a proactive approach to brain and mental health education and social emotional learning in education. It's never too early to start building brain and mental health with strategies that can unlock meaningful and measurable gains in how people thrive.

What's Ahead

Center for BrainHealth focuses on executive function training, beginning in adolescence when key neural networks for reasoning and decision-making in the prefrontal cortex are experiencing their greatest development. The success of Momentous School students makes a strong case for introducing brain-based and mental health strategies even earlier, giving tomorrow's leaders agency over their brain health from the very start of their formal education years.

In the future, Center for BrainHealth and Momentous Institute aim to broaden this collaborative approach to explore how neuroscience- and mental health-informed interventions that foster education and social emotional skills early in life generate lasting impact through:

- Long-term economic success and access to leadership opportunities.
- Resilience in the face of challenges (e.g., financial pressures, family and relationships, or illness).
- Flourishing – characterized by meaning and purpose, life satisfaction, mental and physical health, quality of relationships and financial stability.

Momentous School has high family engagement, a factor known to positively impact academic achievement. A question yet to be answered is the degree to which a neuroscience-informed approach compounds the already impactful role of family engagement for student success. Our research with middle schoolers demonstrates that providing students with strategies to strengthen executive function improves academic achievement irrespective of school climate or level of family engagement.



Our model is successful because we focus on the whole person and integrate neuroscience with all aspects of well-being. No one regrets, or forgets, learning about how their brain works and how mental health is critical to overall health.

Dr. Jessica Gomez, Executive Director,
Momentous Institute



¹National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2017; 2018; 2019). *High School Benchmarks*.

²Frey, J (n.d.). *How Much More High School Graduates Earn Than Non-Graduates in Every State*. U.S. Career Institute.