

**Table 1.1** Demonstrated Impacts of College Promise Models and Children’s Savings Accounts (CSAs)

Impact	College promise models	CSAs
Increased effort in school	Yes	No
Greater teacher expectations	Yes	No
Greater parental expectations	No	Yes
Greater student expectations	No	Yes
Strengthens social and emotional skills	No	Yes
Increased academic performance	No	Maybe
Promotes college-saver identity	No	Yes
Increased college enrollment	Yes	Yes
Reduced college undermatching	Depends	No
Pays significant cost of college	Yes	No
Covers nontuition costs	Rarely	Yes
Increases college completion	No	Yes
Positive impact on long-term financial health	No	Yes
Impact dependent on parental engagement	No	Yes

*Notes.* Some of these differences might be because neither the college promise model nor the CSA model has yet been tested on a particular outcome. For example, CSAs have not been tested with regard to increased effort in school or greater teacher expectations.

*Source:* This is a summary of findings from literature discussed and cited throughout this report.

### **Children’s Savings Accounts Savers Need a Promise in Addition to Small Savings**

In light of high and rising college costs, disadvantaged students need more than a positive future identity and their own savings to place their educational aspirations truly within reach. In order to fully change the bargaining power with which lower income children contemplate higher education, CSAs must also change the distribution of financial resources in the United States. Given the unequal distribution of wages today and the divergence of income and productivity (Mishel, 2012), this is unlikely to happen without a college promise program. Family saving contributions in CSAs matter, but will not allow children to pay the high costs of education. Given this financial reality, combining CSA and college promise models together may provide the best opportunity to not only reduce attainment gaps, but also to increase the return on a degree, and ultimately reduce wealth inequality in the United States.

### **College Promise Models Need Children’s Savings Accounts to Fully Engage the Aspirations of Low-Income Students**

Disadvantaged students also need more than a future promise to realize the opportunity of postsecondary education. One of the weaknesses of the college promise models is that, while a college promise is an effective way of reducing tuition costs, many low-income children never get to the point of seriously contemplating the cost of college. One of the unique features of CSAs is the ability to influence a college-bound identity through positive impacts on college expectations and by facilitating a tangible saving strategy to address, in real time, the challenges associated with covering college costs. What’s more, since college promise models typically cover tuition costs only, CSAs help to round out a strategy of overcoming the financial hurdle of college by creating a source of funds to use for non-tuition costs, such as an initial deposit for on-campus housing, which may not be particularly large, but can often trip up first-time college goers.

Source: Millett, C. (Ed.). (2017). *Designing sustainable funding for college promise initiatives* (Research Report No. RR-17-39). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12161>