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# The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students: 2019



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# Introduction

In a city with both a long history and present reality of segregation and systemic racism, access to high quality education in Chicago has never been equitable.<sup>1</sup> Over the past several years, Chicago’s educators and community leaders have elevated an all-too-delayed dialogue about the systematic barriers facing communities of color, and we hope that this report—our annual look at the attainment of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students on five key milestones—can contribute to that discourse.<sup>2</sup>

Though it is an imperfect and incomplete metric (especially when used to assess individual students), the differences in educational attainment by race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status are reflective of the different learning opportunities and career pathways to which different groups of students have access. Our goal is for readers to come away from this report with a clearer understanding of the current state of educational attainment in CPS and be motivated to take part in conversations and action to dismantle the oppression inherent in our current systems.

Like many reports from the To&Through Project and the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium), this report is descriptive, meaning that it seeks to answer the how, where, when, and who questions of the problem, rather than the *why*. This is important: sometimes in education, describing what is happening in careful detail is critical in order to help practitioners and other stakeholders see the effect of their practice. But leaving the *why* up to the reader also runs the risk that people will intentionally or unintentionally ascribe educational

outcomes solely to the choices and capacity of CPS students, families, and communities, disregarding the broader and longstanding impact of racism.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, before moving forward with the analysis of this report, it is critical to state plainly that the differences in attainment that we see across our findings are due to a long history of racist and oppressive policies and structures and to the historical and ongoing oppression of people of color in Chicago and in the United States. As such, these data are meant to be consumed as part of a collaborative dialogue about the inequitable policies, systems, and practices that prevent CPS students, and particularly Black and Brown students, from reaching their academic potential.

Moreover, as we look at the outcomes for CPS students, there are several things that are important to keep in mind. First, there is a long history in Chicago of systemic racism that has included intentional economic and educational disinvestment in communities of color, and it is vital that we see these data in the historical and sociological history of Chicago and its education system.<sup>4</sup> Unless Chicago makes bold, intentional changes, our

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1 Ewing (2018); Payne (2008); Todd-Breland (2018).

2 Chicago Public Schools has launched several efforts—centered in the district’s new Office of Equity—that examine how the city’s education systems disproportionately and persistently create added barriers for black and brown students and communities.

3 Chicago Beyond Equity Series (2019).

4 Drake & Clayton (1945); Henricks, Lewis, Arenas, & Lewis (2017); Moore (2016); Rothstein (2017); Sampson (2011); Wilson (1987).

current system will sustain these inequities and continue to actively exclude communities of color. The responsibility for making changes to the system and creating equitable pathways to these attainment milestones belongs squarely with adults and institutions in Chicago. Although students and families must be at the table for these decisions, the responsibility for change cannot lie with them.

Second, it is critical for readers of this report to understand that the data we are presenting here can be difficult to discuss. Looking at data that is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status can arouse feelings of vulnerability, shame, and fear that can prevent honest dialogue across differences. Readers, particularly White readers, should embrace this vulnerability, while surfacing and rejecting any intentional or unintentional biases that connect outcome data to racist narratives of ability.

Finally, while important, the data in this report are inherently insufficient to understand students' experiences at CPS and after graduation. Due to data limitations, we are unable to report on outcomes for students who pursue pathways other than a college degree, such as opportunities in the military or workforce. We are also limited in our disaggregation by the data CPS has collected each year on race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, and other student identifiers.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly, student and family perspectives are necessary to fully understand the barriers that face students of color and students with disability status in Chicago. Ideally, readers are putting the limited, but vital quantitative data in this report in conversation with other research and their own experiences in the field. There is a considerable body of research on the role that systemic racism plays in Chicago's schools and history, and that have informed our understanding and that we recommend as a starting place for readers seeking to learn more.<sup>6</sup> The data in this report represent individual students, who every day face—and overcome—systemic barriers, and

whose voices should be elevated as experts of their own lived experiences.

As in previous annual versions of the *Educational Attainment of Chicago Public School Students* report, we look closely here at how CPS students are progressing on the path to and through high school and college. In particular, we examine five key milestones: Freshman OnTrack, high school graduation, college enrollment, college persistence, and college completion, and track how rates on these milestones have changed across time.

This year's report includes a number of changes. For the first time, we are including completion outcomes for students in two-year colleges (previously excluded due to data limitations). This is especially important since research shows that nearly 50 percent of CPS graduates who immediately enroll in college attend a two-year school at some point during their college experience.<sup>7</sup> Further, we cannot have a full conversation about educational equity without the inclusion of two-year colleges, as they serve a large proportion of students of color, low-income students, and first-generation college students.<sup>8</sup> As a result of adding two-year college outcomes, we are able to calculate a new attainment index, called the Post-secondary Attainment Index (PAI), which estimates the number of current CPS ninth-graders who will complete any type of degree or certificate in the next 10 years, if the district's current rates of attainment remain unchanged.

For all of the milestones in this report, we disaggregate the data by race/ethnicity and gender, and in this year's report, we also look at the educational outcomes of students according to disability status (in future years, we will also have enough data to calculate rates for students who have been classified as English Learners). Due to a limitation of space in this report, we only provide subgroup attainment rates for a historical baseline and the most recent year for which we have data. Readers who want more data on subgroups or schools should look to the To&Through Online Tool.<sup>9</sup>

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5 Historically, CPS has collected data that groups students into one of two gender categories: male and female. Additionally, the racial categories available in our data do not accurately reflect the full spectrum of races and ethnicities embodied by CPS students. Many students do not fit into one of these categories, but we believe that there are still insights to be gained from analysis of this data. We hope in the future to be

able to report data that more fully describes the identities of CPS students.

6 See footnotes 1, 3, and 4.

7 Coca, Nagaoka, & Seeskin (2017).

8 Ma & Baum (2016).

9 <https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/2019/#/milestones>

It is also important to note that all of the data and outcomes in this report are from before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are still important and applicable lessons to draw from this data. The pandemic disproportionately affected communities of color because it magnified and exacerbated already-existing inequities that students faced prior to this health crisis and that are reflected in the data in this report.

This report begins with an explanation of the PAI, an

updated version of our Degree Attainment Index (DAI), which now takes into account students completing associate degrees and certificates. Chapter 2 looks at the district's Freshman OnTrack and graduation rates, with a focus on students who graduate from options schools.<sup>10</sup> Chapter 3 examines trends in college enrollment and persistence, and Chapter 4 looks at college completion. We conclude the report with discussion of the implications of our findings.

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<sup>10</sup> Options programs are non-traditional high schools that serve students outside of traditional school-day structures.

# Post-Secondary Attainment Indices

Rates of educational attainment are a powerful measure of whether students are being served equitably by schools and institutions of higher education, and they have critical implications for young people’s access to future opportunities. Inequitable access to college credentials continues to contribute to racial disparities in income in Chicago and across the nation. If current rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation do not change, fewer than one-third of all CPS ninth-graders will complete a college credential within 10 years. In this report, we disaggregate rates of educational attainment for CPS students by race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status, focusing on five key milestones towards a college degree: Freshman OnTrack, high school graduation, college enrollment, college persistence, and college completion.

In this chapter, we explain the calculation of three attainment indices: the Direct Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Index (DBDAI), the Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Index (BDAI), and the Post-secondary

Attainment Index (PAI), before calculating the three indices for 2019 and disaggregating the indices and component rates by race/ethnicity and gender.<sup>11</sup>

## Calculation of Attainment Indices

For the past several years, the To&Through Project and the UChicago Consortium have calculated two bachelor’s degree attainment indices, which project the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders who will complete a bachelor’s degree within 10 years, if the district’s current rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and bachelor’s degree completion do not change. The first of these two attainment indices, the Direct Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Index (DBDAI), projects the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders that will go on to complete a bachelor’s degree through a direct pathway by graduating high school within four years, enrolling immediately in a four-year college in the fall after graduation, and then completing a bachelor’s degree within six years (see Figure 1).<sup>12</sup> The second, the Bachelor’s Degree

**FIGURE 1**  
Direct Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Index (DBDAI)



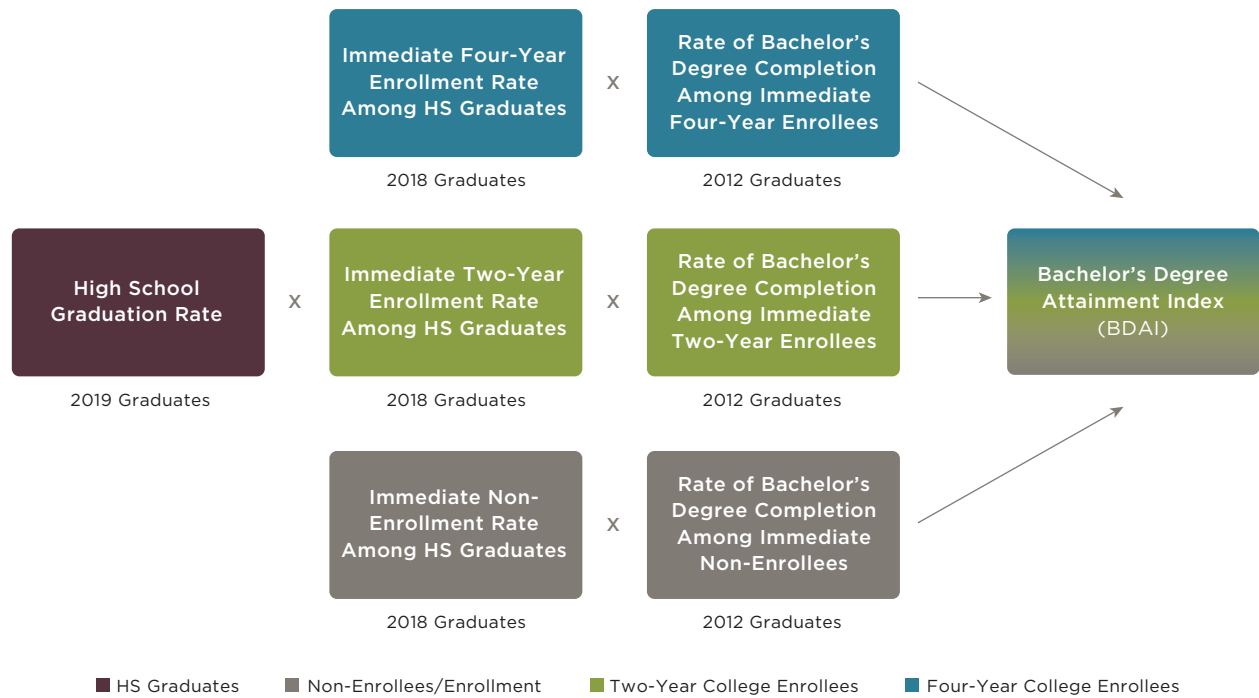
**Note:** High school graduates are defined as students who earned any diploma from CPS within four years of starting high school. For all data definitions, see Appendix B.

**11** Throughout this report, years refer to the spring of the school year (e.g., 2019 refers to the 2018–19 school year).

**12** The rates of college enrollment and college completion that are multiplied into the DBDAI, BDAI, and PAI do not match exactly those reported in Chapters 3 and 4. The denominators for the rates multiplied into the attainment indices are limited

to students who graduated within four years of starting high school. The rates of college enrollment and college completion reported in Chapters 3 and 4 include all CPS graduates in the denominator, including those who graduated five or six years after starting high school.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Index (BDAI)**



**Note:** High school graduates are defined as students who earned any diploma from CPS within four years of starting high school. For all data definitions, see Appendix B.

Attainment Index (BDAI), accounts for students who do not take a direct path, projecting the proportion of the current CPS ninth-graders that will go on to complete a bachelor’s degree within 10 years of their ninth-grade year of high school through any post-graduation pathway, including immediate enrollment in a two-year institution or delayed entry into college (see Figure 2).

In addition to the two bachelor’s degree attainment indices, we are also—for the first time—able to calculate an overall Postsecondary Attainment Index (PAI).<sup>13</sup> The PAI projects the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders that will go on to complete any degree or certificate from a two-year or four-year college within 10 years, including a bachelor’s degree, associate degree, or short- or long-term certificate (see Figure 3).<sup>14</sup>

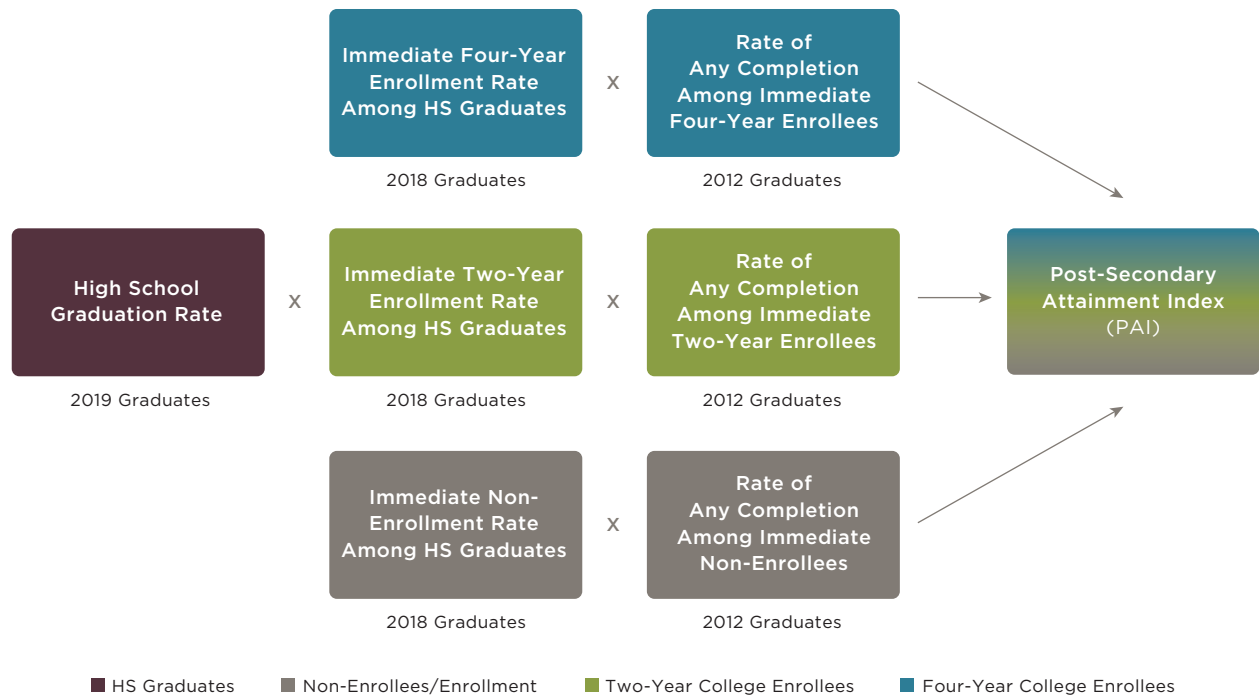
We calculate all three attainment indices using the most recent available data for each milestone: high school graduation data for the class of 2019, college enrollment data for the class of 2018, and six-year college outcomes for the class of 2012. For this reason, the indices are a hypothetical projection of future attainment given current rates, not a measure of actual attainment for any one cohort of students.

In this year’s report, we are introducing several changes to the calculation of the component rates that make up the attainment indices and, as a result, the rates that we are reporting this year differ from those reported in our previous annual attainment reports in a few key ways. Most notably, we are now counting students who graduated through CPS options programs

<sup>13</sup> For more information about the two-year completion data, including the data limitations that have prevented us from calculating this index in the past, see Appendix C.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix C for more information about two-year completion outcomes.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Post-Secondary Attainment Index (PAI)**



**Note:** High school graduates are defined as students who earned any diploma from CPS within four years of starting high school. For all data definitions, see Appendix B.

as high school graduates, and we are including these students for the first time in the denominators of college enrollment and college completion rates.<sup>15</sup> As a result of these changes, the indices calculated in this report should not be compared directly with those reported in

past publications. However, in the coming chapters, we show how each of the component rates, when calculated under these updated decision rules, has changed over time for all CPS students and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status.

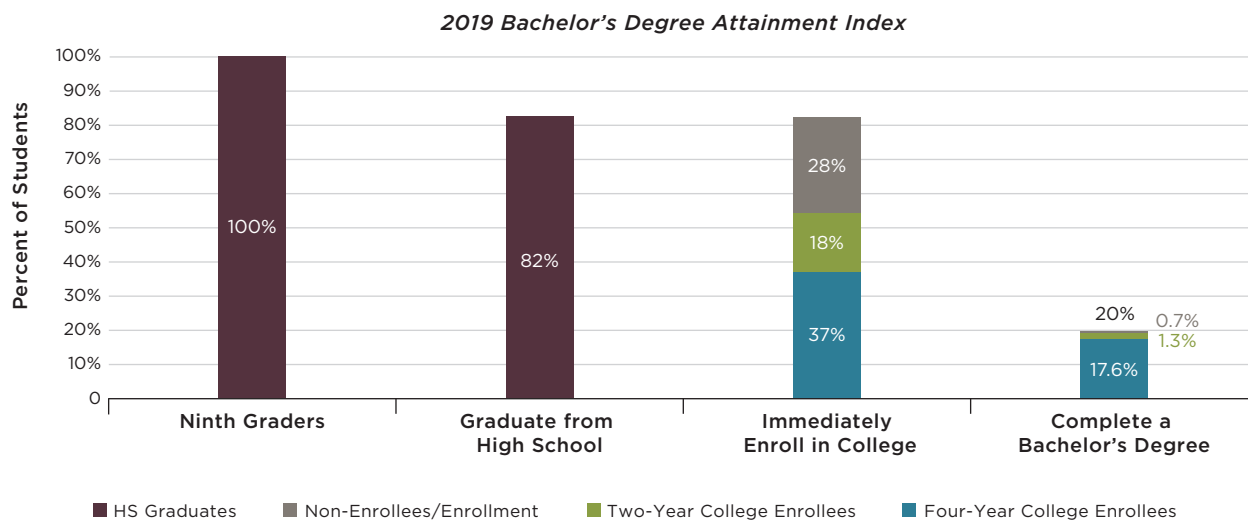
<sup>15</sup> More information about the impact of this change on the high school graduation and college enrollment rates can be found in Chapters 2 and 3, and more detail on specific decision rules can be found in Appendix B.



## 2019 Attainment Indices

**FIGURE 4**

**If Current Rates Hold, Only One in Five CPS Ninth-Graders Will Complete a Bachelor's Degree within 10 Years**



**Note:** The number of graduates from each immediate enrollment category in this projection do not sum to the total number of graduates because all numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number. Under this projection, of 100 current CPS ninth-graders, 82 would graduate from high school within four years. Of those 82 graduates, 37 would immediately enroll in a four-year college, 18 would immediately enroll in a two-year college, and 28 would not immediately enroll in college. At the end of six years post-graduation, a total of 20 of the original 82 graduates would have completed a bachelor's degree—18 of the 37 graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college, 1 of the 18 graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college, and 1 of the 28 graduates who did not immediately enroll in college. For data definitions, see Appendix B.

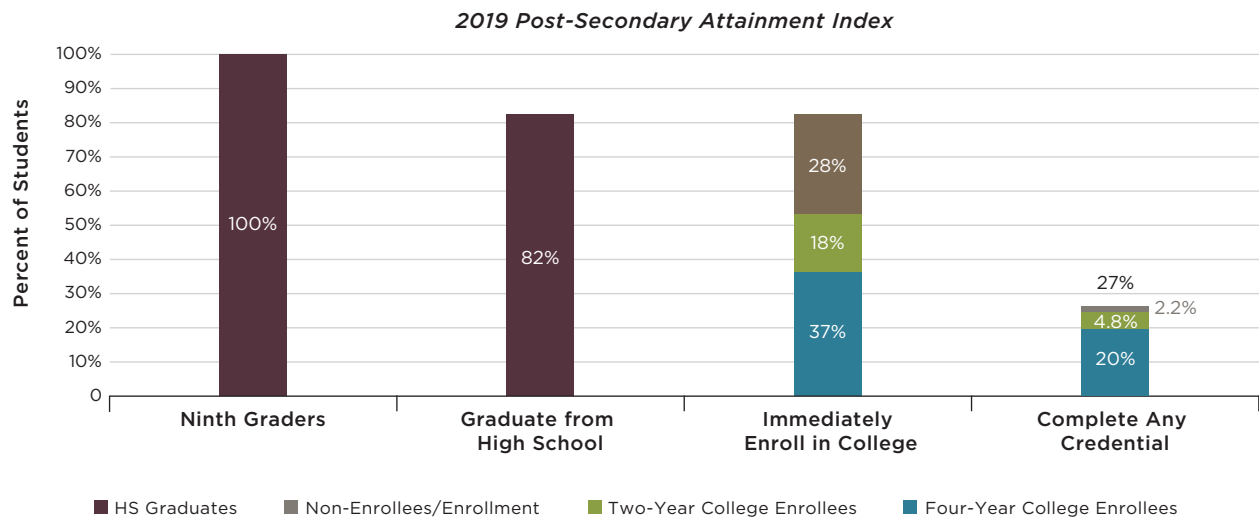
### Figure 4 Takeaways

- The **2019 DBDAI is 18 percent**. This means that if the current high school graduation, college enrollment, and bachelor's degree completion rate do not change over the next 10 years, **18 percent of current CPS ninth-graders will complete a bachelor's degree within 10 years through a direct pathway**—graduating from high school within four years, immediately enrolling in a four-year college, and completing a bachelor's degree within six years of high school graduation.
- If current rates hold, an additional **2 percent of current CPS ninth-graders will take an indirect path to a bachelor's degree by completing a bachelor's degree** after either enrolling immediately in a two-year institution or delaying their enrollment in college, resulting in a **total 2019 BDAI of 20 percent**. Nationally, 40 percent of adults between 25 and 34 years old hold a Bachelor's Degree."<sup>16</sup>
- If the BDAI were calculated the same way 10 years ago, using the high school graduation rate from 2009, college enrollment rates for 2008 graduates, and the bachelor's degree completion rates for 2002 graduates, **the 2009 BDAI would have been 14 percent, 6 percentage points lower than the 2019 BDAI**. Because high school graduation and college enrollment rates increased, in actuality, 18 percent of 2009 CPS ninth-graders went on to graduate from high school within four years and then earn a college credential within six years post-graduation.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.census.gov/content/census/en/data/tables/2019/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html>

**FIGURE 5**

**If Current Rates Hold, 27 percent of Current CPS Ninth-Graders Will Complete a College Credential within 10 Years**



**Note:** The number of graduates from each immediate enrollment category in this projection do not sum to the total number of graduates because all numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number. Under this projection, of 100 current CPS ninth-graders, 82 would graduate from high school within four years. Of those 82 graduates, 37 would immediately enroll in a four-year college, 18 would immediately enroll in a two-year college, and 28 would not immediately enroll in college. At the end of six years post-graduation, a total of 27 of the original 82 graduates have completed any credential—20 of the 37 graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college, 5 of the 18 graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college, and 2 of the 28 graduates who did not immediately enroll in college. For data definitions, see Appendix B.

### Figure 5 Takeaways

- If current rates hold, **an additional 7 percent of current CPS ninth-graders will complete an associate degree or certificate** from a two-year institution, resulting in a **total 2019 PAI of 27 percent**.
- This means that if the current high school graduation, college enrollment, and program completion rates do not change over the next 10 years, **27 percent of current CPS ninth-graders will complete any college credential**, including a bachelor’s degree, associate degree, or certificate, within 10 years. Nationally, 50 percent of adults between 25 and 34 years old hold any college degree.<sup>17</sup>
- If the PAI were calculated the same way 10 years ago, using the high school graduation rate from 2009, college enrollment rates for 2008 graduates, and the bachelor’s degree completion rates for 2002 graduates, **the 2009 PAI would have been 18 percent, 9 percentage points lower than the 2019 BDAI**. Because high school graduation and college enrollment rates increased, in actuality, 25 percent of 2009 CPS ninth-graders went on to graduate from high school within four years and then earn a college credential within six years post-graduation.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.census.gov/content/census/en/data/tables/2019/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html>

**TABLE 1**

**If Current Rates Hold, Only One in Eight Black Young Men in the Current CPS Ninth-Grade Class Will Complete a College Credential within 10 Years**

	High School Graduation Rate (2019 Graduates)		Immediate Four-Year Enrollment Rate (2018 Graduates)		Bachelor Degree Completion Rate for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees (2012 Graduates)		Direct Bachelor Degree Attainment Index (DBDAI)	Bachelor Degree Attainment Index (BDAI)	Post-Secondary Attainment Index (PAI)
All Students	82.2%	X	44.7%	X	48.1%	=	17.6%	19.6%	26.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	93.2%	X	67.5%	X	78.6%	=	49.4%	54.8%	62.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	85.4%	X	64.6%	X	71.4%	=	39.4%	43.0%	51.2%
Black Young Women	84.2%	X	47.8%	X	40.2%	=	16.2%	17.2%	23.3%
Black Young Men	73.3%	X	38.6%	X	30.3%	=	8.6%	9.4%	12.6%
Latina Young Women	86.9%	X	45.0%	X	53.3%	=	20.9%	23.9%	35.6%
Latino Young Men	79.0%	X	33.0%	X	44.8%	=	11.7%	13.7%	22.1%
White Young Women	90.5%	X	67.4%	X	76.6%	=	46.7%	51.6%	56.9%
White Young Men	85.0%	X	55.5%	X	69.9%	=	32.9%	36.8%	43.6%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. For data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 1 Takeaways**

- If current rates hold, **87 percent of Black young men** in the current CPS ninth-grade class **will not complete any post-secondary degree or certificate** within 10 years. Fewer than one in ten (9 percent) will earn a bachelor’s degree within 10 years.
- **Black young women** graduated from CPS and enrolled immediately in four-year colleges at rates slightly higher than the district average, but **completed credentials at lower rates than the district average** for students who enrolled in the same categories of institutions, resulting in a PAI below the district average.
- Latino young men who enrolled immediately in college on average complete credentials at a rate similar to the district average, but **only around one-third (33 percent) of Latino young men who graduated enrolled immediately in a four-year institution**, significantly lower than the CPS average of 45 percent.

The BDAI and PAI—and each of their component rates—vary by race/ethnicity and gender, as different groups of students face systemic barriers at different milestones on the path to a college degree. By examining the individual component rates, we can more precisely see where variations in different rates result in variations in overall outcomes for different groups of students.

Because different groups of students face systemic barriers at different points along the path to a college degree, considering each milestone individually

is necessary in order to understand disparities in the overall attainment indices and how to address them. The following chapters explore this variation in each milestone in more detail. Chapter 2 focuses on high school graduation and Freshman OnTrack, a critical early indicator of high school graduation. Chapter 3 explores college enrollment and college persistence, an early indicator of college completion, which is the focus of Chapter 4. Each chapter explores how district rates, and rates broken out by race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status, have changed over time at CPS.

# Freshman OnTrack and High School Graduation

In this chapter, we examine trends among CPS students for the first two of our five milestones, Freshman OnTrack and high school graduation, between 2007 and 2019. Freshman OnTrack and high school graduation are the two milestones that provide a direct means of examining how well the district is serving its students. However, district-level rates often mask differences in the experiences and outcomes for different students. For this reason, we take a closer look at how Freshman OnTrack and high school graduation rates changed between the 2007 and 2019 cohorts, by gender and race/ethnicity. We also show six-year high school graduation rates for students with disabilities by their primary disability classification.<sup>18</sup> By providing data that is disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender and disability category, we hope to spur important conversations about what intentional steps we can take to address inequities in the education system both within and across schools.

## Freshman OnTrack

Freshman OnTrack is an important indicator of how students are performing early in high school. For the past 15 years, the Freshman OnTrack indicator and related efforts to support students' transition to high school have been the focus of CPS efforts to increase their students' likelihood of graduating from high school. A student is considered "on-track" if, at the end of ninth grade, the student has failed no more than one semester of a core class (English, math, social studies, or science) and has earned enough credits to be promoted to tenth grade (five credits). Students who are on-track at the end of ninth grade are three and half more times more likely to graduate than students who are off-track.<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that the Freshman OnTrack rates do not include charter school students,<sup>20</sup> and the proportion of ninth-graders who attend charter schools has increased over time.<sup>21</sup> The rates for all other milestones do include charter school students.

<sup>18</sup> We use a six-year rather than a four-year high school graduation rate for students with disabilities to reflect the amount of time students with disabilities are given to complete their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and receive services at their high school.

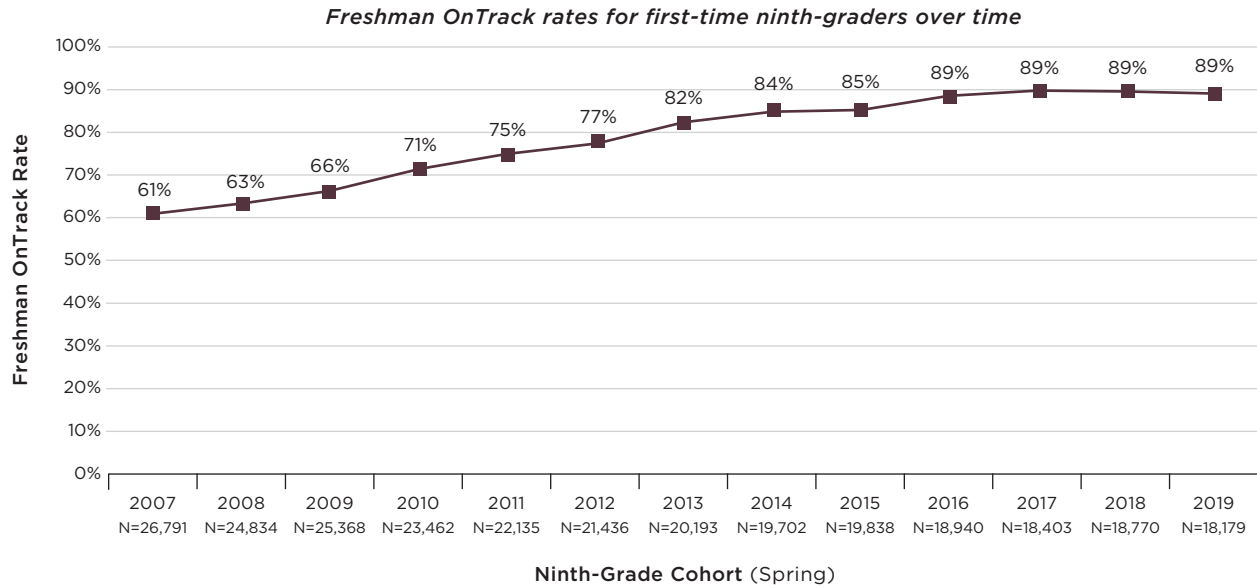
<sup>19</sup> Allensworth & Easton (2005).

<sup>20</sup> We do not calculate a Freshman OnTrack status for charter students because their course grades are not currently available to us; see Appendix B for details. Charter school students constitute a growing share of ninth-graders (about 28 percent of ninth-graders in 2019 vs. 8 percent in 2007).

<sup>21</sup> In the 2007 school year, 8 percent of ninth-graders were in charter schools, and by 2019, that number had risen to 28 percent. Black students in particular were likely to attend charter schools.

**FIGURE 6**

**Freshman OnTrack Rates Flattened in Recent Years**



**Note:** Course grades for charter school students are not currently available to us, so charter school students are not included in the Freshman OnTrack rate. Charter school students constitute a growing share of ninth-graders (about 28 percent of ninth-graders in 2019 vs. 8 percent in 2007). For more information on how students are assigned to ninth-grade cohorts, and for additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Figure 6 Takeaways**

- Of the 2019 first-time CPS ninth-graders, 89 percent were on-track to graduate, a rate that has held steady since 2015. The Freshman OnTrack rate for CPS is higher than the rate for the state of Illinois, which is 87 percent.<sup>22</sup>
- Compared to the 2007 cohort, when the rate was 61 percent, 89 percent of ninth-graders were on-track in 2019, an increase of 28 percentage points.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/state.aspx?source=trends&source2=freshmenontrack&Stateid=IL>

**TABLE 2**

**Freshman OnTrack Rates Ranged from 83 percent for Latino Young Men to 98 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women**

2007 and 2019 Freshman OnTrack Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender				
	2007 CPS Ninth-Graders		2019 CPS Ninth-Graders	
	Students	Percent On-Track	Students	Percent On-Track
All Students	26,791	61%	18,179	89%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	484	93%	510	98%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	460	85%	509	94%
Black Young Women	7,138	63%	3,030	90%
Black Young Men	6,771	48%	2,684	84%
Latina Young Women	4,781	68%	4,407	91%
Latino Young Men	4,768	56%	4,391	83%
White Young Women	1,185	84%	1,070	97%
White Young Men	1,167	69%	1,078	94%

**Note:** Course grades for charter school students are not currently available to us, so charter school students are not included in the Freshman OnTrack rate. Charter school students constitute a growing share of ninth-graders (about 28 percent of ninth-graders in 2019 vs. 8 percent in 2007. CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010–11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. For more information on how students are assigned to ninth-grade cohorts, and for additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 2 Takeaways**

- In 2019, Latino and Black young men had Freshman OnTrack rates below the district average of 89 percent.
- In 2007, fewer than half of Black young men were on-track; they had the largest increase in their Freshman OnTrack rate, 36 percentage points, going from 48 percent to 84 percent.
- Latino young men and Black young women also had an increase in their Freshman OnTrack rate of 27 percentage points between 2007 and 2019, going from 56 percent to 83 percent for Latino young men and 63 percent to 90 percent for Black young women.
- Almost all White and Asian/Pacific Islander young women were on-track at the end of ninth grade in 2019.

## High School Graduation

The second milestone we examine in this report is high school graduation within four years. We only include first-time ninth-graders and students who transferred to CPS after ninth grade, and we exclude students who transferred out of the district. Unlike the Freshman OnTrack rates, high school graduation rates include students who attended charter high schools, and so the two metrics do not represent the exact same students.

In previous attainment reports, we have provided high school graduation rates for students who com-

pleted a high school diploma at both options schools and non-options schools.<sup>23</sup> We similarly show both graduation rates—with and without graduates of options schools—in **Figure 7**. But different from previous attainment reports, we are including all graduates, including students who graduated through options schools, in our attainment indices and college enrollment rates in this report—in the attainment indices shown in Chapter 1, in the college enrollment and retention rates shown in Chapter 3, and in the college completion rates shown in Chapter 4. We made this change to reflect the growing

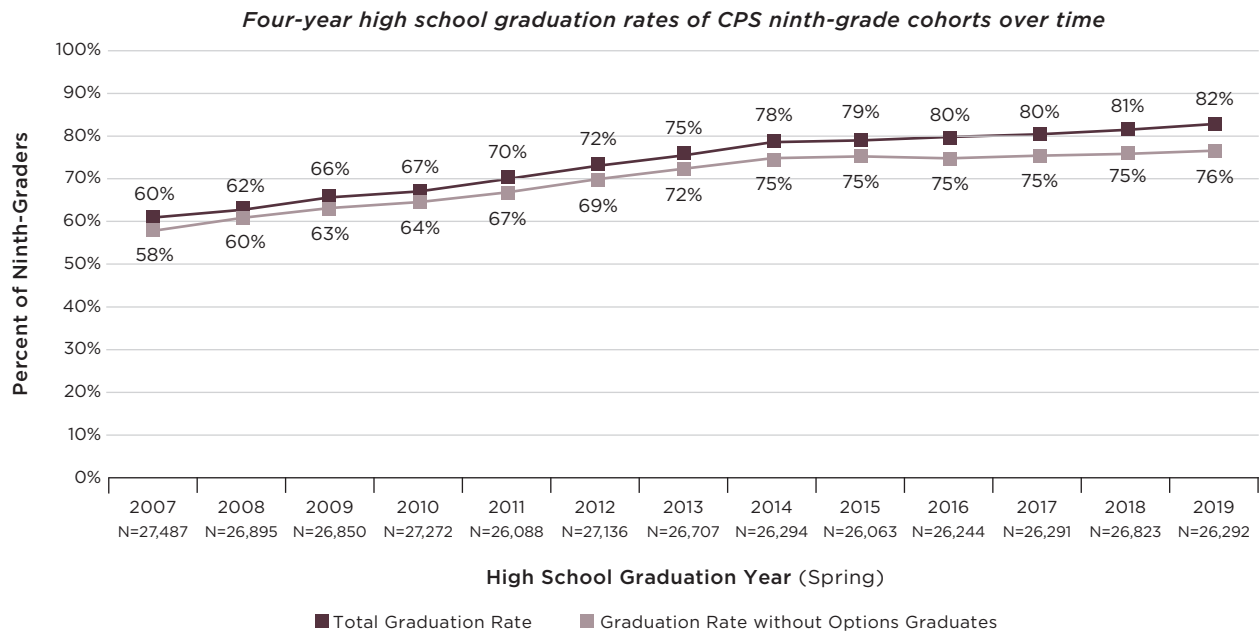
<sup>23</sup> A few options programs have graduation requirements that differ from CPS requirements, but the vast majority have course credit

distribution requirements that are similar to CPS (4 in English, 3 in math, 3 in social studies, 3 in science, 2 in world language).

number of CPS students attending options schools<sup>24</sup> and because options schools are a part of CPS and their graduates receive a CPS-recognized high school diploma. Additionally, almost all students who complete a high school diploma at an options school started

ninth grade at a non-options CPS high school. The box titled *Why We Include Students Who Graduate Through Options Programs in the Overall High School Graduation Rate* on p.15 provides more details about options schools.

**FIGURE 7**  
**Graduation Rates Increased by 22 Percentage Points Between 2007 and 2019**



**Note:** Students are defined as graduates if they earned a high school diploma within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year. Ns represent the number of students included in each ninth-grade cohort. For more information on how students are assigned to ninth-grade cohorts, and for additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

### Figure 7 Takeaways

- The percentage of CPS students completing high school in four years has steadily increased; for the graduating class of 2019, the rate reached 82 percent compared to 58 percent for students who graduated from high school in 2007, an increase of almost 24 percentage points.<sup>25</sup>
- When the high school graduation rate is calculated **without options graduates** the increase is lower, 18 percentage points, from 58 percent in 2007 to 76 percent in 2019 (see the box titled *Why We Include Students Who Graduate Through Options Programs in the Overall High School Graduation Rate* for more details about options school graduates).
- The 2019 total high school graduation rate for CPS graduates was **almost the same as the 2018 national high school graduation rate** of 85 percent, even though CPS serves a student body with higher levels of poverty.<sup>26</sup> The rate for the state of Illinois is slightly higher than the national rate, 87 percent.
- With roughly the same number of students (approximately 26,000), the 24 percentage point increase in the likelihood of graduating means that the **graduating class of 2019 had over 5,000 more graduates than the graduating class of 2007** (21,608 graduates compared to 16,598 graduates).

<sup>24</sup> Options programs (i.e., alternative schools) are non-traditional high schools that serve students outside of traditional school-day structures.

<sup>25</sup> In this report, unlike previous versions of the annual Educational Attainment report and other To&Through and Consor-

tium reports, we use the overall high school graduation rate as the primary high school graduation rate, as opposed to the graduation rate for only students in non-options high schools.

<sup>26</sup> See Table 219.46 at [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_219.46.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_219.46.asp)



## Why We Include Students Who Graduate Through Options Programs in the Overall High School Graduation Rate

Over the past several years, CPS has expanded its options high school programs (i.e., alternative high schools) to provide more varied opportunities for students to complete credits and receive a high school diploma. Options schools are designed for students who are significantly behind on credits, for whom the traditional school structure or schedule does not serve them well, or who have been expelled. Options schools support students through accelerated credit-recovery, flexible scheduling, and more intensive counseling. Between 2007 and 2018, the number of options programs increased from 12 schools to 46 schools, and from 625 graduates to 1,508 graduates.<sup>A</sup> As the number of options schools has grown, the number of CPS students graduating from options schools has increased. The impact of this expansion of options schools remains unclear; we do not know if options programs have provided the opportunity for

more students to attain a high school diploma or diverted students who would have otherwise completed a diploma at their original school. It is also unclear how attending an options school affects students' likelihood of enrolling in college.

By including students who graduate through options programs in the overall high school graduation rate, we have a more complete picture of who is completing high school in CPS. In 2007, almost all students across race/ethnicity and gender graduated from a non-options school (see Table A). In 2019, 13 percent of Black young women and Black young men who graduated from high school attended an options school, and Black students constituted a much larger share of options school graduates than non-options high school graduates (38 percent vs. 19 percent for Black young women and 30 percent vs. 15 percent for Black young men).

**TABLE A**

**Percent of CPS Options vs. Non-Options School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender in 2007 and 2019**

	2007 CPS Graduates			2019 CPS Graduates		
	Total Number of Graduates	Percent of Graduates Completed through Non-Options Programs	Percent of Graduates Completed through Options Programs	Total Number of Graduates	Percent of Graduates Completed through Non-Options Programs	Percent of Graduates Completed through Options Programs
<b>All Students</b>	18,185	96%	4%	21,608	93%	7%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women</b>	483	100%	0%	510	98%	2%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men</b>	513	99%	1%	485	98%	2%
<b>Black Young Women</b>	4,963	93%	7%	4,409	87%	13%
<b>Black Young Men</b>	3,391	94%	6%	3,515	87%	13%
<b>Latina Young Women</b>	3,851	97%	3%	5,295	96%	4%
<b>Latino Young Men</b>	3,077	98%	2%	4,905	96%	4%
<b>White Young Women</b>	984	99%	1%	992	98%	2%
<b>White Young Men</b>	867	99%	1%	945	98%	2%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Students are defined as graduates if they earned a high school diploma within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year. For more information on how students are assigned to ninth-grade cohorts, and for additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

<sup>A</sup> Options schools were identified using the school type categories in the CPS school names file and may not reflect all options schools, especially schools that have multiple campuses under one school unit number.

**TABLE 3**

**Within Racial/Ethnic Groups, Young Men Were Less Likely to Graduate from High School than Young Women**

2007 and 2019 CPS High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity And Gender								
	2004 CPS Ninth-Grade Cohort (Percent Graduated by Spring 2007)				2016 CPS Ninth-Grade Cohort (Percent Graduated by Spring 2019)			
	Students	Graduation Rate without Options Programs	Percent Graduated through an Options Programs	Total Graduation Rate	Students	Graduation Rate without Options Graduates	Percent Graduated through an Options Programs	Total Graduation Rate
<b>All Students</b>	27,487	58%	3%	60%	26,292	76%	6%	82%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women</b>	548	87%	1%	87%	547	92%	1%	93%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men</b>	521	82%	0%	83%	568	84%	1%	85%
<b>Black Young Women</b>	7,786	62%	4%	66%	5,237	73%	11%	84%
<b>Black Young Men</b>	7,063	44%	3%	47%	4,796	64%	10%	73%
<b>Latina Young Women</b>	4,493	66%	2%	68%	6,092	84%	3%	87%
<b>Latino Young Men</b>	4,336	50%	2%	51%	6,213	76%	3%	79%
<b>White Young Women</b>	1,317	78%	1%	79%	1,096	88%	2%	91%
<b>White Young Men</b>	1,373	65%	1%	66%	1,112	83%	2%	85%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Students are defined as graduates if they earned a high school diploma within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year. For more information on how students are assigned to ninth-grade cohorts, and for additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 3 Takeaways**

- In 2007, very few students across race/ethnicity and gender graduated from an options school. In 2019, **Black young men and Black young women were much more likely to graduate from an options school** than other students.
- Across all racial/ethnic groups, young women were more likely to graduate from high school than young men. Young men and young women graduated from options schools at similar rates.
- **Black and Latino young men had the largest increases in their graduation rates** between 2007 and 2019, 26 percentage points for Black young men and 28 percentage points for Latino young men.
- The overall high school graduation rate in 2019 for **Latina young women was 87 percent, a 19 percent increase** from 2007.

## Students with Disabilities

In this report, we examine rates on two key milestones for students with disabilities: high school graduation and college enrollment. We do not provide Freshman OnTrack rates for students with disabilities because the criteria for being on-track will depend on students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and are not directly comparable across disability type or to students without IEPs. Students with disabilities represent an important part of each ninth-grade cohort, 16 percent of the 2019 ninth-grade cohort (see Table B). The percentage of ninth-grade students with an identified disability remained fairly stable between 2007 and 2019. Students with learning disabilities are by far the most numerous, constituting 10 percent of the 2019 ninth-grade cohort.

We disaggregated the milestones by students' primary disability type (students with behavioral disabilities, cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities; see Appendix B for the disabilities we included in these categories); students may have been identified with disabilities other than

what were used here to classify students. The number of ninth-graders with disabilities declined between 2007 and 2019 by about 1,000 students, but the percentage of students by disability category has remained relatively stable. Black young men (23 percent) were disproportionately identified as having disabilities, compared to the district rate.

Students with disabilities are often treated as a single subgroup. In this report, we disaggregated by disability type because students' disability or disabilities vary widely in type and extent; as a result, their experiences in school and attainment rates are also far from homogeneous. Students with learning disabilities include students with moderate and severe learning disabilities. Students with behavioral disabilities include students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Students with cognitive disabilities include students with intellectual disabilities, students with autism, students who have experienced traumatic brain injury, and so on.

**TABLE B**  
Percent of CPS Ninth-Graders with Disabilities in 2007 and 2019

	2007 CPS Ninth-Grade Cohort (35,406 Students)		2019 CPS Ninth-Grade Cohort (26,924 Students)	
	Students	Percent	Students	Percent
Students with a Behavioral Disability	603	1.7%	331	1.2%
Students with a Cognitive Disability	795	2.2%	698	2.6%
Students with a Learning Disability	3,802	10.7%	2,818	10.5%
Students with a Physical Disability	157	0.4%	512	1.9%
Students with Any Disability	5,418	15.3%	4,390	16.3%

**Note:** For more information on how students are assigned to cohorts, and for additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**TABLE 4**

**Between 2009 and 2019, Students with Behavioral and Learning Disabilities Became More Likely to Graduate from High School within Six Years**

Six-Year High School Graduation Rates by Disability Category								
	2004 CPS Ninth-Grade Cohort (Percent Graduated by Spring 2009)				2014 CPS Ninth-Grade Cohort (Percent Graduated by Spring 2019)			
	Students	Graduation Rate without Options Programs	Percent Graduated through an Options Programs	Total Graduation Rate	Students	Graduation Rate without Options Graduates	Percent Graduated through an Options Programs	Total Graduation Rate
All Students	27,487	63%	4%	68%	26,291	77%	8%	86%
Students with a Behavioral Disability	462	27%	4%	31%	262	38%	16%	54%
Students with a Cognitive Disability	672	50%	2%	52%	628	46%	3%	49%
Students with a Learning Disability	3,066	52%	4%	56%	2,568	73%	10%	83%
Students with a Physical Disability	131	72%	3%	75%	223	67%	9%	76%

**Note:** Students are defined as graduates if they earned a high school diploma within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year. For more information on how students are assigned to ninth-grade cohorts, and for additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 4 Takeaways**

- The **six-year graduation rate** for all CPS students increased by 18 percentage points between 2009 and 2019, from 68 percent to 86 percent; a smaller increase than the 22 percent increase in the district four-year graduation rate over the same time period (60 percent to 82 percent). We use a six-year rather than a four-year high school graduation rate for students with disabilities to reflect the amount of time they are given to complete their IEPs and receive services at their high school.
- In 2019, slightly over one-half of students with **behavioral disabilities** graduated from high school within six years (54 percent), a substantial increase from the 2009 graduation rate of 31 percent.
- In 2019, 49 percent of students with **cognitive disabilities** graduated from high school within six years. This rate was slightly lower than the 2009 rate of 52 percent.
- In 2019, the six-year graduation rate for students with **learning disabilities** was only 3 percentage points lower than the overall CPS graduation rate of 86 percent.
- Students with **learning disabilities** were 27 percentage points more likely to graduate in 2019 than in 2009, when 56 percent of students graduated.
- Students with **learning disabilities** in 2019 completed high school through options programs at rates similar to other CPS graduates (10 percent vs. 8 percent).

In this chapter we examined the Freshman OnTrack and high school graduation rates for CPS graduates, and provided a closer look at rates by gender, race/ethnicity, and for students with disabilities. We've seen how both Freshman OnTrack and high school graduation rates have increased over the past 10 years. However, students' likelihood of being on-track and graduating from high school

continues to vary widely by race/ethnicity and gender and by disability type, pointing to differences in how students are experiencing high school and differences in how well students of different backgrounds are being served by schools. In the next chapter, we move to college outcomes and show rates for college enrollment and college persistence for both two-year and four-year colleges.

# College Enrollment and Persistence

This chapter continues our examination of CPS students' educational attainment through the first two post-secondary milestones on the path to a college credential: college enrollment and college persistence. We examine the trends on these milestones over time and disaggregate our findings by gender, race/ethnicity, and disability status. As in previous chapters, our intention in examining the data in this way is to highlight that the barriers faced by students—which are a product of the system and not of the choices or abilities of students—differ across lines of identity. These differences have important implications for targeting supports and resources to achieve equitable outcomes.

Previous attainment reports have centered around students' progress toward and completion of a bachelor's degree, but this report includes college persistence and completion outcomes for students at both four-year and two-year colleges, including community colleges and other certificate programs.<sup>27</sup>

## College Enrollment

Immediate college enrollment is an important milestone toward college completion because, as we show in Chapter 4, CPS graduates who enroll immediately in college after graduation are significantly more likely than those who do not immediately enroll in college to complete a college degree or certificate. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation.<sup>28</sup>

The following figures show the rate of immediate enrollment for 12 cohorts of CPS graduates, beginning in 2007. The proportion of CPS graduates who enroll immediately in college has been increasing gradually at CPS over the past 12 years, even as the number of CPS graduates per year has also been increasing over time. However, disparities in college enrollment rates by race/ethnicity and gender have persisted.

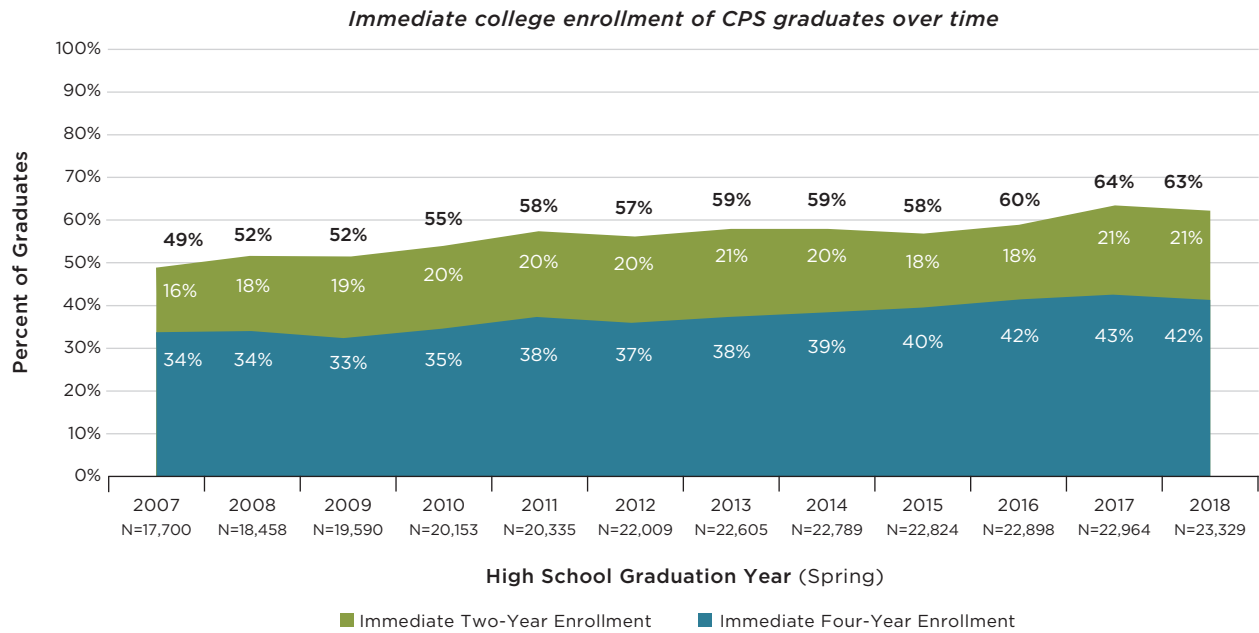
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<sup>27</sup> For more information on the decision to include two-year outcomes in this report, see Appendix C.

<sup>28</sup> This differs from CPS's definition of immediate enrollment, which includes any enrollment in the first academic year following high school graduation, including in the spring term.

**FIGURE 8**

The Proportion of CPS Graduates Enrolling Immediately in College has Risen Gradually Over Time



**Note:** Ns represent the number of students who graduated from CPS in each school year, including students who graduated after five or six years of high school enrollment. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. Component rates, as labelled, may not sum to the total rate due to rounding. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Figure 8 Takeaways**

- Around **two-thirds of CPS graduates enrolled immediately in college** in 2018: 42 percent enrolled immediately in a four-year institution, 21 percent enrolled immediately in a two-year institution, and 37 percent did not enroll immediately in college.
- The proportion of CPS graduates who **did not enroll** immediately in college has fallen 13 percentage points, from 50 percent to 37 percent, since 2007.
- Both four-year college enrollment and total college enrollment have risen fairly steadily. Since 2007, **the proportion of CPS graduates enrolling immediately in a four-year college has increased 8 percentage points**, and the proportion enrolling immediately in a two-year college has increased 5 percentage points.

**TABLE 5**

**There Were Significant Disparities in College Enrollment Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender**

Rates of Immediate College Enrollment Among CPS Graduates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2007 and 2018								
	2007 CPS Graduates				2018 CPS Graduates			
	Students	Immediate Four-Year Enrollment	Immediate Two-Year Enrollment	Any Immediate Enrollment	Students	Immediate Four-Year Enrollment	Immediate Two-Year Enrollment	Any Immediate Enrollment
<b>All Students</b>	17,700	34%	16%	49%	23,329	42%	21%	63%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women</b>	485	61%	13%	74%	507	66%	16%	82%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men</b>	445	57%	14%	71%	524	62%	20%	82%
<b>Black Young Women</b>	5,361	37%	16%	54%	5,009	45%	16%	62%
<b>Black Young Men</b>	3,681	28%	17%	45%	4,149	35%	14%	49%
<b>Latina Young Women</b>	3,258	26%	15%	41%	5,506	43%	28%	71%
<b>Latino Young Men</b>	2,478	23%	14%	37%	5,171	31%	27%	58%
<b>White Young Women</b>	1,043	50%	16%	66%	1,114	66%	14%	79%
<b>White Young Men</b>	920	47%	17%	63%	1,027	53%	18%	71%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Graduates in each school year include students who graduated after five or six years of high school enrollment. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 5 Takeaways**

- In 2018, Black and Latino young men immediately enrolled in four-year colleges at a rate significantly lower than the district average. Around 35 percent of Black young men, and around 31 percent of Latino young men, enrolled immediately in a four-year college after graduating from CPS in 2018, compared with 42 percent of all CPS graduates.
- Latino students enrolled in two-year colleges at rates higher than the district average. **Twenty-seven percent of Latino young men and 28 percent of Latina young women enrolled immediately in a two-year college** after graduating from CPS in 2018, compared with 21 percent of CPS graduates.
- **The two-year college enrollment rate has nearly doubled among Latino students since 2007**, increasing from 15 percent to 28 percent for Latina young women and from 14 percent to 27 percent for Latino young men.
- **Across all race/ethnicity groups, young women are significantly more likely to enroll immediately in four-year colleges than young men** after graduating from CPS.
- Both the four-year college enrollment rate and the overall college enrollment rate increased among all groups from 2007 to 2018.
- The rate of college enrollment among Black young men grew more slowly than the district average. While the overall college enrollment rate increased 14 percentage points, from 49 percent in 2007 to 63 percent in 2018, **overall college enrollment rate among Black young men increased only 4 percentage points** over the same period.



**TABLE 6**

**Students with Disabilities Were More Likely to Enroll in Two-Year than Four-Year Colleges**

Rates of Immediate College Enrollment Among CPS Graduates by Disability Status, 2007 and 2018								
	2007 CPS Graduates				2018 CPS Graduates			
	Students	Immediate Four-Year Enrollment	Immediate Two-Year Enrollment	Any Immediate Enrollment	Students	Immediate Four-Year Enrollment	Immediate Two-Year Enrollment	Any Immediate Enrollment
<b>All Students</b>	17,700	34%	16%	49%	23,329	42%	21%	63%
<b>Students with Behavioral Disability</b>	126	7%	18%	25%	164	13%	13%	26%
<b>Students with Cognitive Disability</b>	406	3%	7%	11%	447	9%	12%	21%
<b>Students with a Learning Disability</b>	1,638	12%	18%	30%	2,071	18%	24%	42%
<b>Students with a Physical Disability</b>	102	25%	16%	41%	232	22%	26%	48%

**Note:** Rates for students with behavioral and physical disabilities are suppressed for 2007 graduates due to the low number of students in those groups. Graduates in each school year include students who graduated after five or six years of high school enrollment. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 6 Takeaways**

- Among the 2,071 CPS graduates with **learning disabilities in 2018, 42 percent enrolled** immediately in college; 18 percent in a four-year college and 24 percent in a two-year college.
- Among the 447 graduates with **cognitive disabilities, 21 percent enrolled** immediately in college; 9 percent in a four-year college and 12 percent in a two-year college.
- Both the number of graduates with learning disabilities and the **college enrollment rate among graduates with learning disabilities have grown** since 2007.

## College Persistence

The two-year persistence rate is the proportion of immediate college enrollees who remained continuously enrolled in college for the first two years after high school graduation, or who had already completed a college credential within two years of high school graduation.

Two-year persistence in college is a powerful indicator of students' likelihood of completing a college degree. However, students' trajectories through college are complex—some students return to college after stopping out temporarily, and there are other students who do not complete a degree or certificate even after persisting in college for two years.

In the past, our definition of persistence has reflected only students' progress along a direct path to a bachelor's degree—we calculated rates of two-year persistence only

for students who had enrolled immediately in four-year colleges, and we considered only continuous enrollment in four-year colleges. In this report, we are also including students' two-year persistence in community colleges and other certificate programs. Additionally, we are calculating persistence for all graduates who enrolled immediately in any type of college, not just those who enrolled immediately in a four-year institution. Appendix C contains more information about this change.

In this section, we show rates of persistence for four-year and two-year college enrollees separately, and disaggregate both by race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status. As rates of college enrollment have increased, persistence rates have declined slightly over time, and disparities in the rate of persistence by race/ethnicity and gender have grown.

### Persistence Categories for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees

We define students' persistence categories based on their enrollments during the first four fall/spring terms after high school graduation. Students are considered to have persisted in college if they were continuously enrolled for the first four fall/spring terms or if they earned a credential within two years of high school graduation.<sup>B</sup>

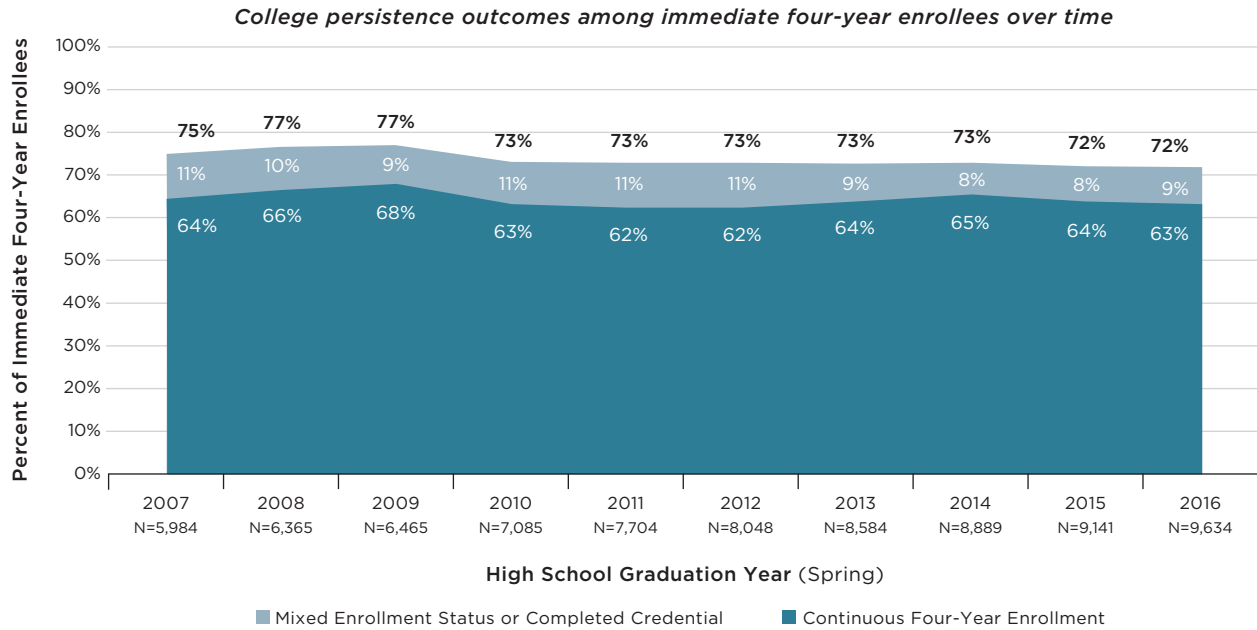
This report uses three persistence categories for immediate four-year enrollees:

- **Continuous Four-Year Enrollment:** Continuous enrollment in four-year institutions during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation.
- **Mixed Enrollment Status or Completed Credential:** Transfer to a two-year institution and continuous enrollment in any combination of institutions during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation, or completion of any credential within two years.
- **Did Not Persist:** Stopped out of college (was not enrolled) for at least one fall or spring term of the first two years following high school graduation, and did not complete a credential within two years.

<sup>B</sup> This differs from CPS's definition of persistence, which considers only enrollment during the first three fall/spring terms after graduation, and does not require continuous enrollment for students to be considered to have persisted in college.

**FIGURE 9**

**Rates of College Persistence among Immediate Four-Year Enrollees Declined Slightly Over the Past Decade**



**Note:** Ns represent the number of students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then immediately enrolled in a four-year college. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. Component rates, as labelled, may not sum to the total rate due to rounding. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Figure 9 Takeaways**

- Slightly less than two-thirds of 2016 CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college remained continuously enrolled in a four-year institution for two years. Of the 9,634 immediate four-year enrollees who graduated from CPS in 2016, 63 percent were continuously enrolled at four-year institutions for the first two years after graduation.
- An additional 9 percent of the graduates transferred to a two-year institution and either maintained continuous college enrollment or had completed a credential by the end of two years.
- Rates of both continuous four-year enrollment and continuous mixed enrollment have declined slightly over time as the number of immediate four-year enrollees has steadily increased.

**TABLE 7**

**Disparities in College Persistence among Immediate Four-Year Enrollees by Race/Ethnicity and Gender have Increased since 2007**

Rates of College Persistence Among Immediate Four-Year College Enrollees by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2007 and 2016								
	2007 Immediate Four-Year Enrollees (Percent Persisted in College as of Spring 2009)				2016 Immediate Four-Year Enrollees (Percent Persisted in College as of Spring 2018)			
	Students	Continuous Four-Year Enrollment	Mixed Enrollment Status or Completed Credential	Total Persistence Rate	Students	Continuous Four-Year Enrollment	Mixed Enrollment Status or Completed Credential	Total Persistence Rate
All Students	5,984	64%	11%	75%	9,634	63%	9%	72%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	295	81%	10%	91%	339	88%	2%	90%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	253	83%	7%	90%	305	78%	6%	84%
Black Young Women	1,998	56%	13%	69%	2,361	57%	11%	68%
Black Young Men	1,037	56%	10%	66%	1,562	46%	9%	55%
Latina Young Women	860	66%	12%	78%	2,221	67%	10%	77%
Latino Young Men	574	63%	10%	73%	1,545	58%	9%	67%
White Young Women	526	78%	8%	86%	663	84%	6%	90%
White Young Men	428	78%	6%	84%	472	77%	9%	86%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Immediate four-year enrollees are students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then enrolled in a four-year college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 7 Takeaways**

- Only 46 percent of Black young men who immediately enrolled in a four-year college in 2016 remained enrolled in a four-year college for two years, 17 percentage points lower than the CPS average of 63 percent. An additional 9 percent of Black young men transferred to a two-year college and remained continuously enrolled in college for a total of two years.
- While the total persistence rate has risen among both White young women and White young men, it has fallen 11 percentage points among Black young men, and 6 percentage points among Latino young men.
- Across all race/ethnicity groups, young women are more likely to persist in college than young men, and these disparities have increased significantly since 2007.
- In 2007, Black young men and young women remained continuously enrolled in a four-year college at the same rate, 56 percent. In 2016, Black young men remained continuously enrolled in a four-year college at a rate 11 percentage points lower than the rate for Black young women.

## Persistence Categories for Immediate Two-Year Enrollees

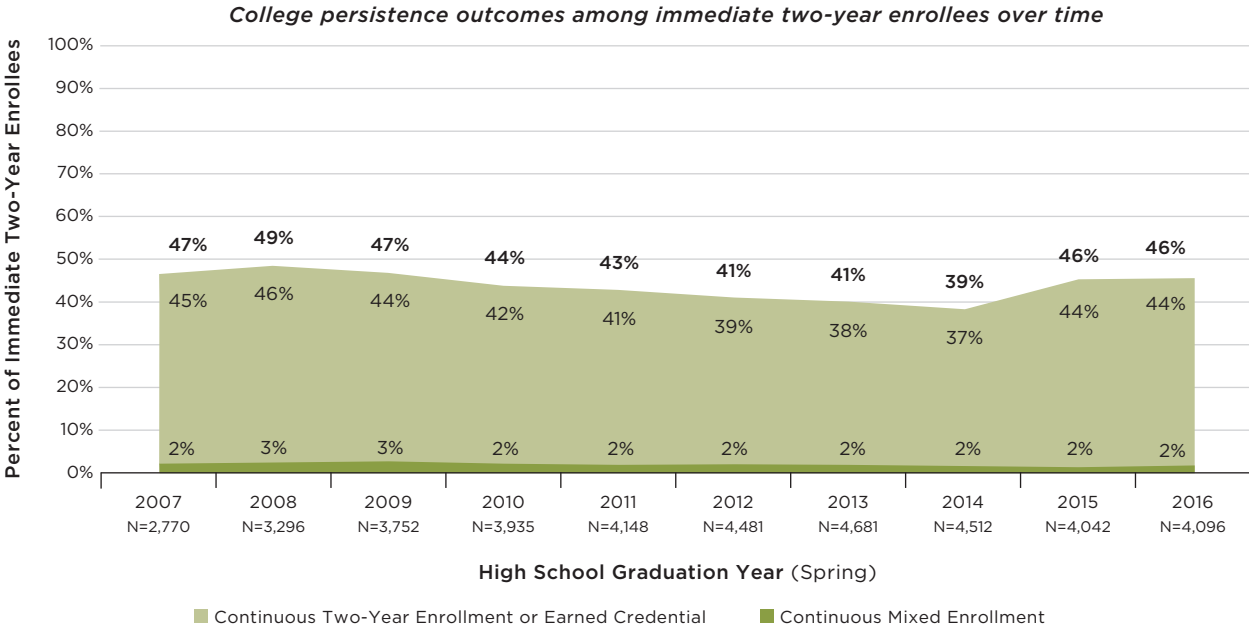
For immediate two-year enrollees, we also define students' persistence category based on their enrollments during the first four fall/spring terms after high school graduation. Students are considered to have persisted in college if they were continuously enrolled for the first four fall/spring terms or if they earned a credential within two years of high school graduation.

This report uses three persistence categories for immediate two-year enrollees:

- **Continuous Mixed Enrollment:** Transfer to a four-year institution and continuous enrollment in any institution during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation.
- **Continuous Two-Year Enrollment or Earned Credential:** Continuous enrollment in two-year institutions during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation, or completion of any credential within two years.
- **Did Not Persist:** Stopped out of college (was not enrolled) for at least one fall or spring term of the first two years following high school graduation, and did not complete a credential within two years.



**FIGURE 10**  
**Rates of Persistence among Immediate Two-Year Enrollees Have Remained Relatively Flat**



**Note:** Ns represent the number of students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then immediately enrolled in a two-year college. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. Component rates, as labelled, may not sum to the total rate due to rounding. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Figure 10 Takeaways**

- Of the 4,096 students who immediately enrolled in a two-year college after graduating from CPS in 2016, around **46 percent remained continuously enrolled in college for two years** or completed a credential within two years of high school graduation.
- Around 2 percent of immediate two-year enrollees had **transferred to a four-year institution** and maintained continuous enrollment in any combination of institutions for four terms after graduating from high school. An additional 44 percent of immediate two-year enrollees had completed a credential or remained continuously enrolled for two years in a two-year institution.
- The proportion of **immediate two-year enrollees who transferred to a four-year college within two years was very low** and has fallen slightly over the past decade. However, this rate does not include students who transferred to a four-year institution after the end of their second year in college. It is important to note that among 2016 graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college, only 81 students (2 percent) transferred to a four-year institution within two years, but an additional 198 students (5 percent) transferred in the fall of their third year.

**TABLE 8**

**Fewer Than One-Third of Black Students Who Immediately Enrolled in a Two-Year College Persisted in College for Two Years**

Rates of College Persistence Among Immediate Two-Year College Enrollees by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2007 and 2016								
	2007 Immediate Two-Year Enrollees (Percent Persisted in College as of Spring 2009)				2016 Immediate Two-Year Enrollees (Percent Persisted in College as of Spring 2018)			
	Students	Continuous Mixed Enrollment	Continuous Two-Year Enrollment or Earned Credential	Total Persistence Rate	Students	Continuous Mixed Enrollment	Continuous Two-Year Enrollment or Earned Credential	Total Persistence Rate
All Students	2,770	2%	45%	47%	4,096	2%	44%	46%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	62				67			
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	63				76			
Black Young Women	871	2%	34%	36%	751	3%	31%	34%
Black Young Men	614	3%	38%	41%	619	3%	27%	30%
Latina Young Women	481	2%	52%	54%	1,201	1%	54%	55%
Latino Young Men	353	2%	52%	54%	1,045	1%	45%	46%
White Young Women	166	1%	63%	64%	119	7%	66%	73%
White Young Men	147	4%	56%	60%	173	1%	53%	54%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010–11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Rates for Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaskan Native, and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Immediate two-year enrollees are students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then enrolled in a two-year college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

**Table 8 Takeaways**

- Around **30 percent of Black young men**, and **34 percent of Black young women**, who immediately enrolled in a two-year college after graduating from CPS in 2016, **remained continuously enrolled in a two-year college or had earned a credential** by the end of two years.
- An additional **3 percent of Black young men** and **3 percent of Black young women** had **transferred to a four-year institution** and remained continuously enrolled there.
- The total persistence rate among Latina young women increased slightly, but **the persistence rate among Latino young men fell 8 percentage points**. The number of Latino students who enrolled immediately in a two-year college more than doubled since 2007.

In the next chapter, we turn from college enrollment and persistence to college completion, examining completion rates for bachelor’s degrees and for two-year

programs over time, and disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender.

# College Completion

As increasing numbers of CPS graduates are enrolling in college, it is vital to track whether or not they are completing a degree or certificate. Many students overcome significant barriers and take on burdens—financial and otherwise—in order to attend college, so it is essential that they have the preparation and support they need to finish.

In this chapter, we break down college completion rates for different groups of CPS graduates, according to

where they were in the fall after high school graduation—immediately enrolled in a four-year college, immediately enrolled in a two-year college, or did not immediately enroll—and examine differences in rates across race/ethnicity and gender. We define college completion as completing a degree or certificate from a two-year or four-year college within six years of high school graduation. The data in this chapter are labelled according to the year that students graduated from high school.

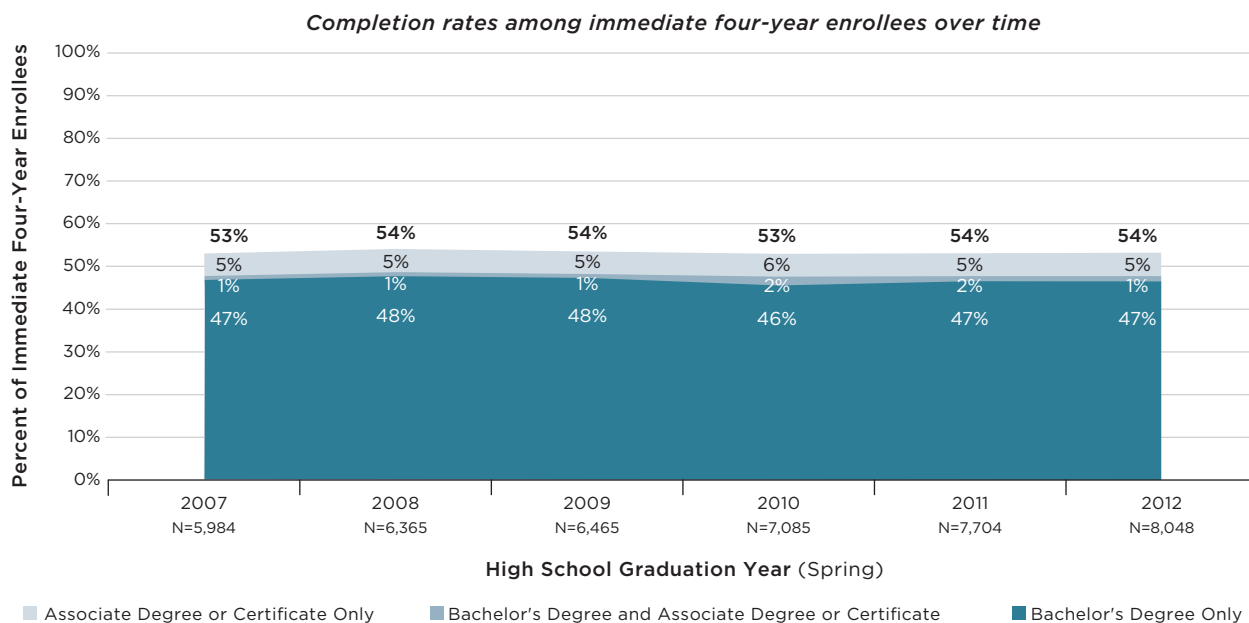




## Six-Year College Completion Rates for Immediate Four-Year College Enrollees

**FIGURE 11**

Completion Rates for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees Have Not Changed Significantly over the Last Six Cohorts of CPS Graduates



**Note:** Ns represent the number of students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then immediately enrolled in a four-year college. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. Component rates, as labelled, may not sum to the total rate due to rounding. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

### Figure 11 Takeaways

- Almost one-half of CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college earned a **bachelor's degree** in six years, a rate very similar to the rate for the 2007 cohort. This compares to a national average of 62 percent for 2012 full-time college enrollees.<sup>29</sup>
- About 5 percent of CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college earned an **associate degree or certificate** in six years but not a bachelor's degree, a rate that has remained relatively steady across the last six cohorts.

<sup>29</sup> This number is not a direct comparison, as the national data represents the completion rate, **from first institution attended**, of first-time, **full-time** bachelor's degree-seeking students

at four-year institutions. See National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), Table 326.15.

**TABLE 9**

Disparities by Race and Gender in Bachelor's Degree Completion Rates for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees Widened over Time

Rates of College Completion Among Immediate Four-Year Enrollees by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2007 and 2012										
	2007 Immediate Four-Year Enrollees (Percent Completed Credential by Spring 2013)					2012 Immediate Four-Year Enrollees (Percent Completed Credential by Spring 2018)				
	Students	Bachelor's Degree Only	Bachelor's Degree and AD or Certificate	Associate Degree (AD) or Certificate Only	Any Credential	Students	Bachelor's Degree Only	Bachelor's Degree and AD or Certificate	Associate Degree (AD) or Certificate Only	Any Credential
<b>All Students</b>	5,984	47%	1%	5%	53%	8,048	47%	1%	5%	54%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women</b>	295	71%	2%	5%	78%	314	77%	1%	4%	82%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men</b>	253	68%	2%	3%	73%	299	71%	1%	5%	77%
<b>Black Young Women</b>	1,998	39%	1%	6%	46%	2,329	39%	1%	6%	46%
<b>Black Young Men</b>	1,037	32%	1%	4%	37%	1,377	29%	1%	4%	34%
<b>Latina Young Women</b>	860	48%	2%	8%	58%	1,555	50%	3%	7%	60%
<b>Latino Young Men</b>	574	42%	2%	5%	49%	1,087	43%	2%	6%	51%
<b>White Young Women</b>	526	67%	2%	3%	72%	494	75%	1%	3%	79%
<b>White Young Men</b>	428	66%	1%	2%	69%	420	69%	0%	3%	72%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Immediate four-year enrollees are students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then enrolled in a four-year college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

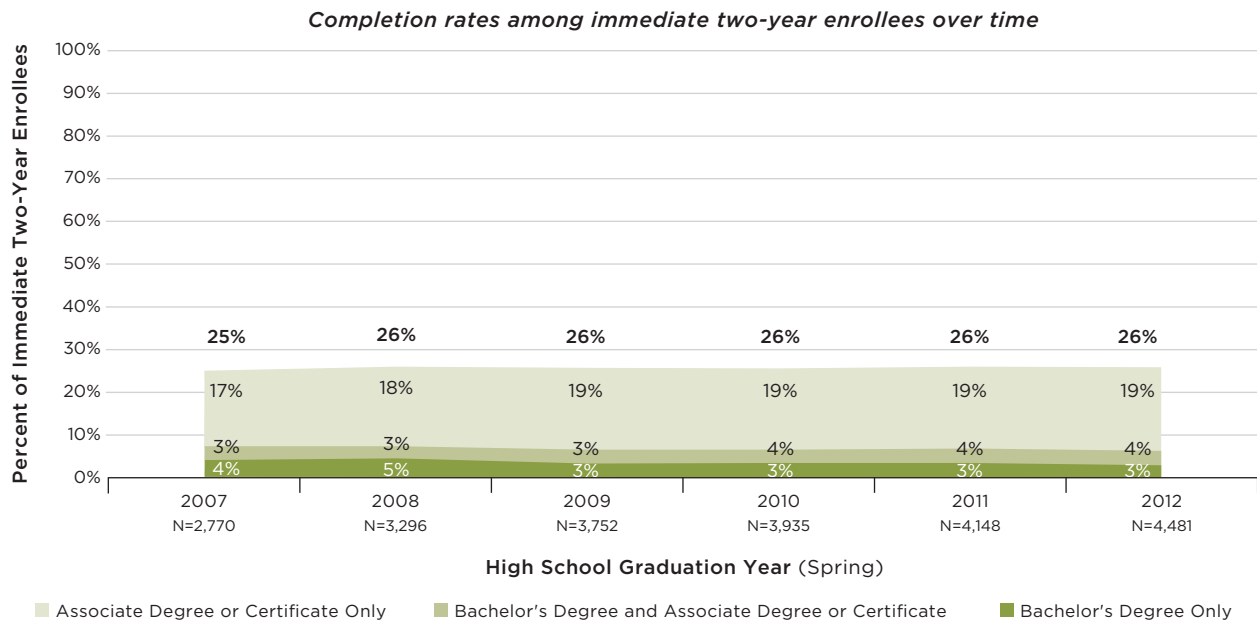
### Table 9 Takeaways

- The rate of bachelor's degree completion for **Black young men** who immediately enrolled in a four-year college declined slightly from 2007 to 2012, from 32 percent for the 2007 cohort to 29 percent for the 2012 cohort. The rate for Black young women remained steady at 39 percent. Both Black young men and **Black young women** completed credentials at a rate below the district average for graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college.
- The rate of bachelor's degree completion for **Latina young women** who immediately enrolled in a four-year college increased slightly, from 48 percent for the 2007 cohort to 50 percent for the 2012 cohort. The rate for **Latino young men** remained steady. However, during this same time period, the number of Latina young women and Latino young men who immediately enrolled in a four-year college almost doubled.
- **White and Asian/Pacific Islander young women** who immediately enrolled in a four-year college saw the largest gains in their bachelor's degree completion rates between 2007 and 2012, increasing 8 percentage points and 6 percentage points, respectively. White and Asian/Pacific Islander young men also saw increases, though smaller than their female counterparts.

## Six-Year College Completion Rates for Immediate Two-Year College Enrollees

FIGURE 12

Associate Degree Completion Rates for Immediate Two-Year Enrollees Rose Slightly over the Last Six Cohorts



**Note:** Ns represent the number of students who graduated from CPS in each school year and immediately enrolled in a two-year college. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

### Figure 12 Takeaways

- The percentage of graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college and **completed an associate degree or certificate** rose slightly between the 2007 and 2012 cohorts, from 20 percent to 23 percent.
- The rate of immediate two-year enrollees **completing a bachelor's degree** remained low, decreasing from 4 percent for the 2007 cohort to 3 percent for the 2012 cohort.
- The rate of immediate two-year enrollees **completing both a bachelor's and an associate degree** remained low.

TABLE 10

Differences by Race and Gender in Completion Rates for Immediate Two-Year Enrollees Widened over Time

Rates of College Completion Among Immediate Two-Year Enrollees by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2007 and 2012										
	2007 Immediate Two-Year Enrollees (Percent Completed Credential by Spring 2013)					2012 Immediate Two-Year Enrollees (Percent Completed Credential by Spring 2018)				
	Students	Bachelor's Degree Only	Bachelor's Degree and AD or Certificate	Associate Degree (AD) or Certificate Only	Any Credential	Students	Bachelor's Degree Only	Bachelor's Degree and AD or Certificate	Associate Degree (AD) or Certificate Only	Any Credential
All Students	2,770	4%	3%	17%	25%	4,481	3%	4%	19%	26%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	62					55				
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	63					72				
Black Young Women	871	2%	1%	17%	20%	1,227	2%	2%	15%	19%
Black Young Men	614	3%	3%	10%	16%	856	1%	1%	9%	11%
Latina Young Women	481	6%	5%	22%	33%	1,091	3%	6%	28%	37%
Latino Young Men	353	3%	4%	20%	27%	806	3%	4%	22%	29%
White Young Women	166	5%	13%	23%	41%	165	12%	11%	22%	45%
White Young Men	155	9%	5%	19%	33%	145	7%	10%	26%	43%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Rates for Asian/Pacific Islander students are suppressed in this table because there were fewer than 100 students in the denominators. Immediate two-year enrollees are students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then enrolled in a two-year college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

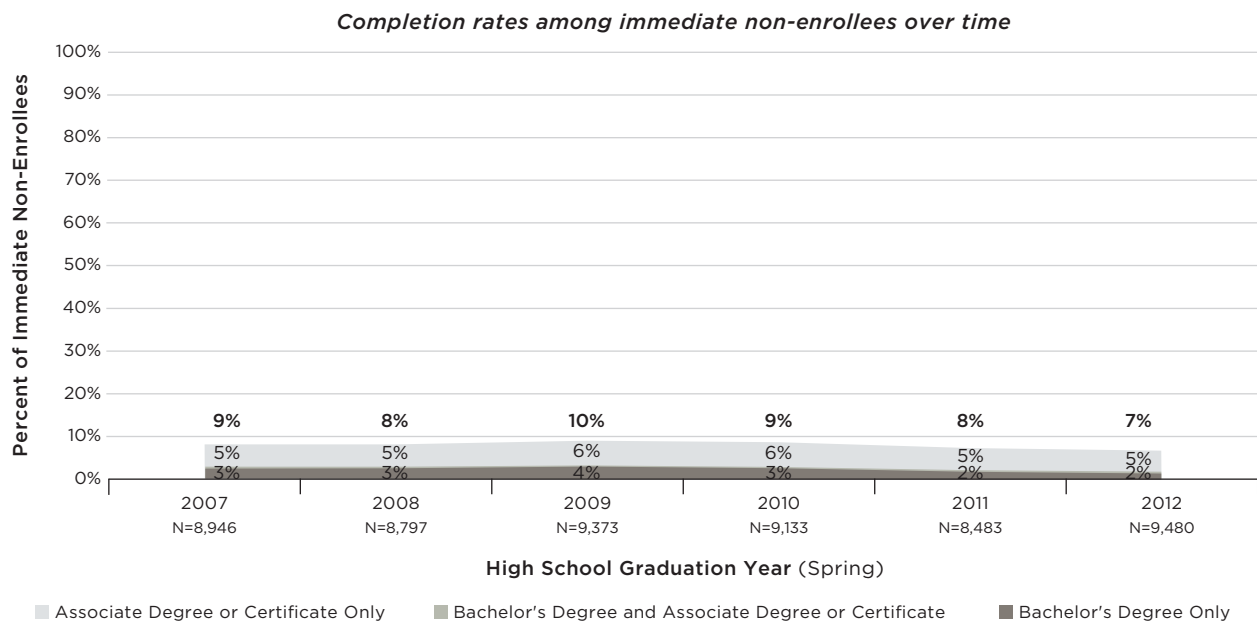
### Table 10 Takeaways

- In the 2012 cohort, **Latina young women** had the highest completion rate of associate degrees among graduates who enrolled immediately in a two-year college, at 28 percent. However, **White young women** had the highest rate of overall degree completion among immediate two-year enrollees (45 percent), because of their high rates of bachelor's degree completion (12 percent).
- **Black graduates** who immediately enrolled in two-year colleges had significantly lower degree completion rates than the district average, and were the only group that saw a **decline in completion rates between the 2007 and the 2012 cohort**, going from 20 percent to 19 percent for Black young women and 16 percent to 11 percent for Black young men.

## Six-Year College Completion Rates for Immediate Non-Enrollees

FIGURE 13

Completion Rates Among Immediate Non-Enrollees Remained Very Low



**Note:** Ns represent the number of students who graduated from CPS in each school year and did not immediately enroll in college. We define immediate enrollment in college as enrollment in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. Data labels are not shown for **Bachelor's Degree and Associate Degree or Certificate** because they round to zero for each year shown. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

### Figure 13 Takeaways

- The rate of **bachelor's degree completion** for graduates who did not immediately enroll in college remained consistently low over time.
- The rate of **associate degree or certificate completion** for graduates who did not immediately enroll peaked at 6 percent for the 2010 cohort, but then fell to 5 percent for the 2012 cohort.

TABLE 11

## Disparities by Race and Gender in Completion Rates for Immediate Non-Enrollees Widened over Time

Rates of College Completion Among Immediate Non-Enrollees by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2007 and 2012										
	2007 Immediate Non-Enrollees (Percent Completed Credential by Spring 2013)					2012 Immediate Non-Enrollees (Percent Completed Credential by Spring 2018)				
	Students	Bachelor's Degree Only	Bachelor's Degree and AD or Certificate	Associate Degree (AD) or Certificate Only	Any Credential	Students	Bachelor's Degree Only	Bachelor's Degree and AD or Certificate	Associate Degree (AD) or Certificate Only	Any Credential
All Students	8,945	3%	0%	5%	9%	9,480	2%	0%	5%	7%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	128	12%	1%	5%	18%	79				
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	129	8%	0%	6%	14%	98				
Black Young Women	2,492	3%	0%	6%	9%	2,308	1%	0%	4%	5%
Black Young Men	2,030	2%	0%	3%	5%	2,179	1%	0%	3%	4%
Latina Young Women	1,917	3%	0%	8%	11%	2,075	2%	1%	7%	10%
Latino Young Men	1,550	2%	0%	4%	6%	2,125	1%	0%	6%	7%
White Young Women	351	7%	0%	7%	14%	218	9%	1%	5%	15%
White Young Men	337	5%	1%	4%	10%	279	4%	0%	6%	10%

**Note:** CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010-11 school year to include a Multiracial option and the Asian/Pacific Islander category was split into two categories, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian. Our groupings by race/ethnicity include Pacific Islander/Hawaiian students in one Asian/Pacific Islander category due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian. Native American/Alaskan Native and Multiracial students are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified their race/ethnicity in this category, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Immediate non-enrollees are students who graduated from CPS in each school year and then did not enroll in college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For additional data definitions, see Appendix B.

### Table 11 Takeaways

- Among students who did not immediately enroll in college, **young men of all race/ethnicities had completion rates below those of their female peers**. However, while **Asian/Pacific Islander and White young women** saw growth in their rates of completing any credential between the 2007 and 2012 cohorts, **Black and Latina young women** had a decline in their completion rates.
- Black immediate non-enrollees completed credentials at a rate below the district average for graduates who did not immediately enroll in college, while Asian/Pacific Islander immediate non-enrollees completed credentials at a rate above the district average.

In addition to these important findings about completion for students based on initial enrollment status, there are also notable takeaways when comparing across the figures above. First, the likelihood of completing any degree is much lower for immediate two-year enrollees than immediate four-year enrollees, and is almost zero for non-immediate enrollees. Second, very few students who immediately enrolled in a two-year college completed a bachelor's degree, which has been upheld as a

feasible and even desirable pathway. However, it is important to keep in mind that the rates represented here do not reflect the most recent cohorts of high school graduates. Finally, differences in completion rates along lines of race/ethnicity have widened for students across all enrollment types, and most dramatically for Black students, who already had rates lower than the district average. This is exacerbating the already-inequitable differences in educational attainment.

# Implications

The findings of this report on the attainment of Chicago Public School students show that while there has been slow and steady improvement over the past decade—the Postsecondary Attainment Index has improved from 18 percent to 27 percent—the district cannot rest on past achievements. If the current rates remain unchanged for the next decade—something that is unlikely due to the impact of COVID 19—nearly three-fourths of today’s ninth-graders will not earn a degree or certificate within 10 years. Even this rate masks disparities for young men, for students of color, and for students with disabilities: if rates remain the same, 86 percent of the young Black men who are currently ninth-graders will not earn a college degree or certificate in 10 years.

Slow and steady growth is not enough for our city’s youth. If CPS and post-secondary institutions continue to improve at roughly the rate of the past decade, the district won’t reach a PAI of 50 percent for several decades. This means that yet another generation of our most marginalized students won’t have access to the careers that require post-secondary degrees or certificates.

Therefore, while our current education systems have shown incremental improvements, having each and every CPS student reach post-secondary success will require a deeper commitment to continuous reflection and a willingness to make significant changes. And at a time when our education system is already reacting to the forced disruption of virtual learning and its inequitable impact on students, there is both an opportunity and an imperative to think boldly about the ways we can change our education system to make them more engaging, accessible, and inclusive for all CPS students. By themselves, schools cannot fully solve the systemic problems in our society, but they remain a critical lever for change, and there is more work for us all to do—education researchers, policymakers, administrators, and community partners—on behalf of and in partnership with students and families.

For us at the To&Through Project and the UChicago Consortium, this work means that in our reports,

presentations, and other research products, we need to do a better job of naming the racist systems and beliefs in our city and our society that have contributed to the attainment disparities we see in our data. We need to listen to students, families, and communities to make sure we are representing their voices and perspectives. And finally, we need to acknowledge and interrogate our positionality—both individually and institutionally—and how our perspectives shape our work.

## Implications for K-12

On the K-12 end, some of the high-level rates are impressive, with nearly 90 percent of ninth-graders on-track and more than 80 percent graduating in four years. However, the fact that the Freshman OnTrack Rate seems to have plateaued in recent years suggests that off-track ninth-graders are facing serious challenges that require more resources or capacity than schools alone can manage. This has two implications. First, we need to identify students likely to be off-track in the middle grades and provide intensive support before they reach high school and continue this support through high school. Second, as options schools have become the primary way that CPS is trying to serve the district’s most vulnerable students, we all need to better understand the experiences of these students and



how their post-secondary outcomes compare to students with similar circumstances who remain in their traditional high school. The racial make-up of options school graduates also makes this a critical equity issue for the district. While Black students make up 34 percent of regular graduates, they make up 68 percent of options school graduates.

While the district has made long-term, incremental improvements for students of color and students with disabilities, there continue to be significant differences in opportunities connected to race, gender, and disability status. In particular, when six out of seven Black young men in CPS are not likely to earn a college degree or credential, K-12 educators and education stakeholders need to critically examine the role of race and gender in the learning tasks and environments of our schools. Over the last several years, the district has begun to lead this work through its Equity Office, modeling for teachers, administrators, and stakeholders how to grapple with inequitable outcomes. The next step is for this work to begin tangibly impacting policy and practice, and the current shifts in practice with virtual learning provide an opening for educators to consider new practices through the lens of equity.

### Implications for Higher Education

The increases in high school graduation and college enrollment is commendable, but the fact that this increase has not been accompanied by increases in college persistence and completion is alarming. Making significant improvements to Chicago's PAI must start with real growth in college completion rates.

There are important questions about the preparedness of all of these new students entering college and our findings on low completion rates certainly have implications for the level of rigor and support in high school courses. However, for too long, higher education has pointed at a lack of preparation as an excuse for low college graduation rates. After all, even for those students who enroll immediately in a four-year college after graduating from high school—a somewhat self-selected group with the motivation and perseverance to successfully navigate the complex application and enrollment process—only about one-half will earn any credential within six years, suggesting there is

something lacking in our post-secondary systems that is inhibiting these students from succeeding.

The incongruity between the increasing enrollment rate and static completion rate suggests the continued existence of systemic barriers to college completion for CPS graduates, particularly for students of color. As more first-generation college students attend college, institutions need to adapt to serve their needs instead of placing the burden for success entirely on the students. Some of the needs are very basic (facing food insecurity and homelessness) and others are emotional, financial, or academic. But given the financial burden that CPS graduates take on when they enroll in college, higher education institutions have a responsibility to create inclusive learning environments and to provide students with the support they need to be successful. For example, when we see that Black CPS college enrollees have seen a 10 percentage-point drop in college persistence, we must ask hard questions about the supports, campus cultures, and curriculum that Black students are experiencing during their first few years of college.

The introspection is especially necessary for two-year colleges, as our findings show that very few students who immediately enrolled in a two-year college transferred to a four-year institution or went on to earn a bachelor's degree in six years, and only about one-quarter earned a credential of any kind (we will examine this pattern in greater detail and uncover more about the enrollment patterns of these students in an upcoming report). This is especially true for Black two-year enrollees, with 11 percent of Black young men and 18 percent of Black young women earning any degree or credential six years after initially enrolling.

Two-year colleges play a crucial role in the post-secondary landscape, and it is essential that students have a low-cost, nearby, and easily accessible post-secondary option. Still, even at community colleges, the opportunity cost of not earning a degree or credential or transferring to a four-year college is significant and problematic. We need to better identify and understand community colleges and support programs that are seeing success, and scale the aspects of these efforts that are most associated with their success. City Colleges of Chicago's recent work to create equity plans at each of their campuses is an important start.

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## Conclusion

As educators across the K-16 spectrum confront radically different teaching and learning environments, we have a rare opportunity to collectively interrogate the systems that have historically led to inequitable outcomes for CPS students. When the COVID-19 pandemic ends, let's be sure that we don't reflexively revert back to the way things were. As we noted in the introduction, the differences in attainment that we see across our findings are due to a long history of racist and oppressive policies and structures and to the historical and ongoing oppression of people of color in Chicago and in the United States. If we are going to change those policies and structures, we must hold space to grapple with this history and its implications for current and future CPS students. We end this report by offering five questions we think can help put the findings of this report in conversation with the change we need to work towards:

- In what ways do your own experiences and assumptions frame the way you interpret the findings of this report? What work do you need to do to better understand the experiences and perspectives of students, particularly the most marginalized students?
  - In what ways do you see racist policies and practices creating different conditions and opportunities for different groups of students? What role can you play in drawing attention to and changing these policies and practices?
  - How do the findings from this report confirm or challenge the guidance you, or the schools you work with, give to students about high school and post-secondary success? How can your guidance account for students' experiences, identities, and circumstances?
  - In what ways do you see systems outside of education influencing the educational outcomes of CPS students? What role can you play in creating more intentional connections across organizations and systems?
  - Where do you see schools and systems creating spaces of belonging, support, and agency for marginalized students? What role can you play in uplifting those schools and systems?
-

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# Appendix A

## Additional Figures

The figures and tables included in this appendix are meant to supplement the report with additional district-level breakdowns that are not available in the report.

Further information about rates for each of the five milestones, including trendlines over time and break-

downs by race/ethnicity, gender, and prior achievement, are available at the high-school and network levels on the To&Through Online tool at [toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/](https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/).

**TABLE A.1**  
BDAI Components by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Graduating Class	Component Rate	Overall	Asian/Pacific Islander Students		Black Students		Latino Students		White Students	
			Young Women	Young Men	Young Women	Young Men	Young Women	Young Men	Young Women	Young Men
2019	Four-Year Graduation Rate	82%	93%	85%	84%	73%	87%	79%	91%	85%
2018	Immediate Four-Year Enrollment Rate	45%	67%	65%	48%	39%	45%	33%	67%	55%
2012	Bachelor Degree Completion Rate for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees	48%	79%	71%	40%	30%	53%	45%	77%	70%
2018	Immediate Two-Year Enrollment Rate	22%	15%	19%	16%	15%	29%	28%	14%	18%
2012	Bachelor Degree Completion Rate for Immediate Two-Year Enrollees	7%	24%	18%	4%	3%	9%	7%	24%	17%
2018	Immediate Non-Enrollment Rate	33%	17%	16%	36%	46%	26%	39%	19%	27%
2012	Bachelor Degree Completion Rate for Immediate Non-Enrollees	3%	13%	5%	2%	2%	3%	2%	11%	6%
	DBDAI	18%	49%	39%	16%	9%	21%	12%	47%	33%
	BDAI	20%	55%	43%	17%	9%	24%	14%	52%	37%

Note: For data definitions, see Appendix B.

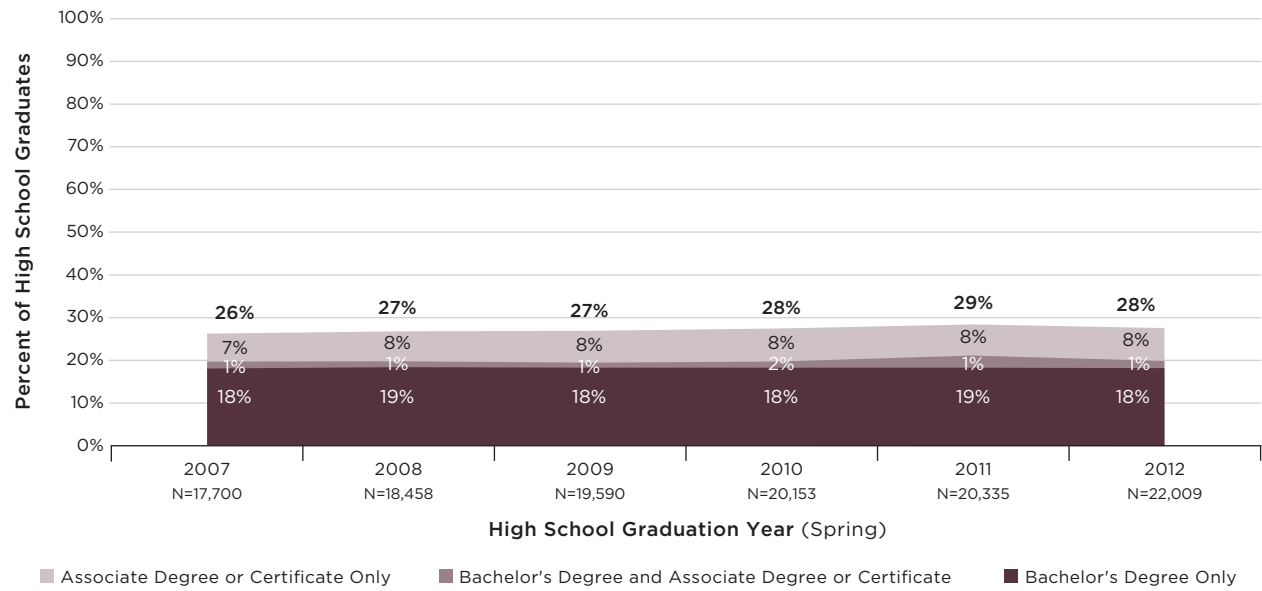
**TABLE A.2**  
PAI Components by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Graduating Class	Component Rate	Overall	Asian/Pacific Islander Students		Black Students		Latino Students		White Students	
			Young Women	Young Men	Young Women	Young Men	Young Women	Young Men	Young Women	Young Men
2019	Four-Year Graduation Rate	82%	93%	85%	84%	73%	87%	79%	91%	85%
2018	Immediate Four-Year Enrollment Rate	45%	67%	65%	48%	39%	45%	33%	67%	55%
2012	Any Completion Rate for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees	54%	83%	76%	47%	34%	61%	50%	79%	72%
2018	Immediate Two-Year Enrollment Rate	22%	15%	19%	16%	15%	29%	28%	14%	18%
2012	Any Completion Rate for Immediate Two-Year Enrollees	27%	43%	47%	19%	11%	38%	29%	47%	44%
2018	Immediate Non-Enrollment Rate	33%	17%	16%	36%	46%	26%	39%	19%	27%
2012	Any Completion Rate for Immediate Non-Enrollees	8%	23%	10%	6%	5%	11%	8%	16%	12%
	PAI	27%	62%	51%	23%	13%	36%	22%	57%	44%

Note: For data definitions, see Appendix B.

## College Completion Rates of CPS Graduates over Time

**FIGURE A.1**  
College Completion Rates of CPS Graduates over Time



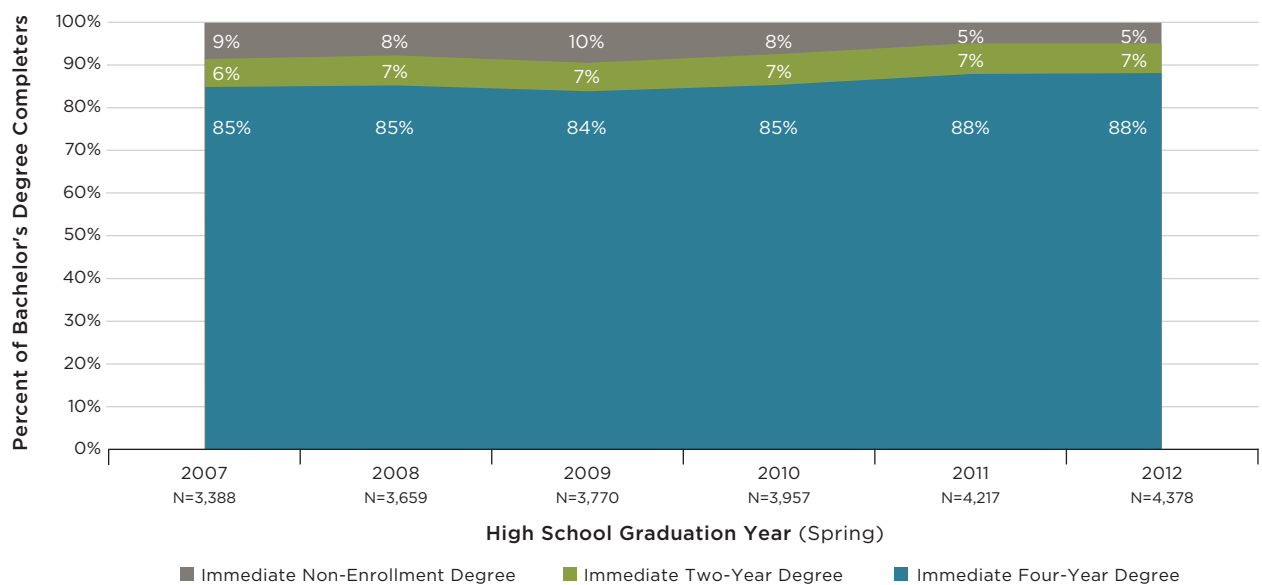
**Note:** For data definitions, see Appendix B.

## Immediate College Enrollment Statuses of Eventual College Completers

In the report, we look at rates of six-year college completion based on students' immediate enrollment statuses. **Figures A.2-A.4** show the same pathways in reverse, grouping students based on the highest credential that

they earned within six years and looking back at whether they had immediately enrolled in college after graduating from high school.

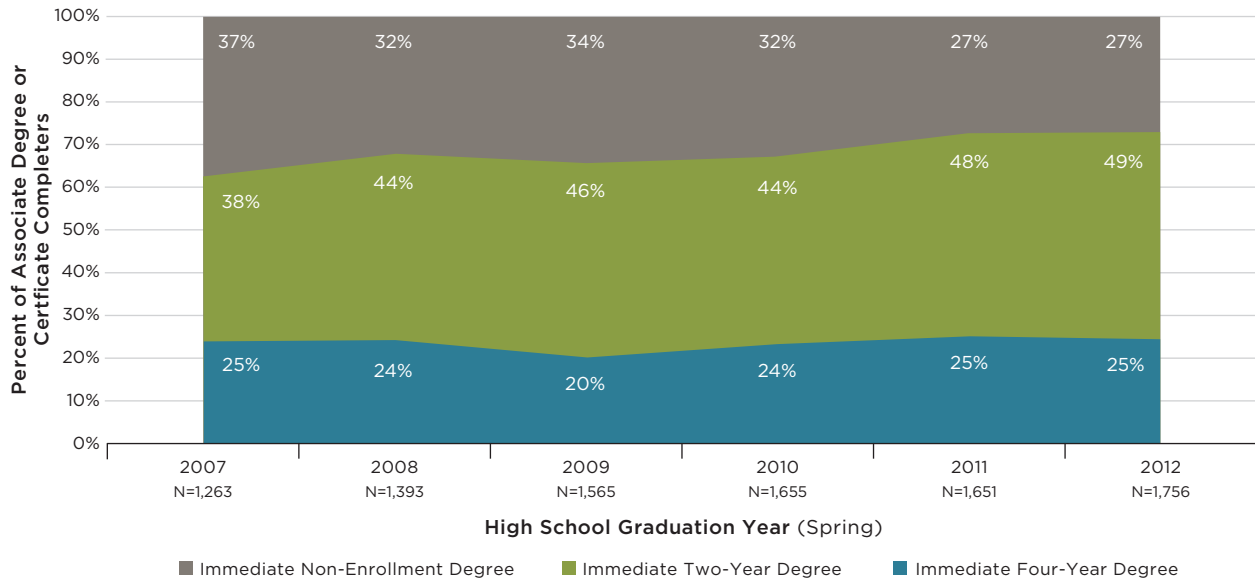
**FIGURE A.2**  
Immediate Enrollment Statuses of Bachelor's Degree Completers over Time



**Note:** For data definitions, see Appendix B.

**FIGURE A.3**

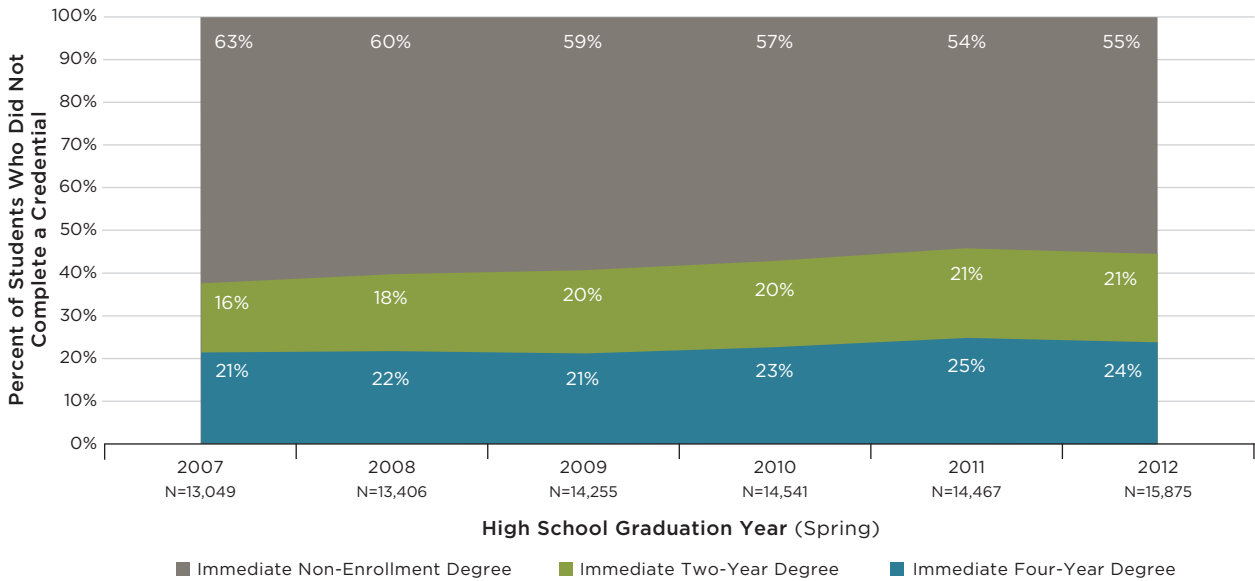
**Immediate Enrollment Statuses of Associate Degree or Certificate Completers over Time**



**Note:** For data definitions, see Appendix B.

**FIGURE A.4**

**Immediate Enrollment Status of Students Who Did Not Complete Credentials over Time**



**Note:** For data definitions, see Appendix B.

# Appendix B

## Data Sources & Definitions

### Data Sources

Information on student demographics and high school graduation is from CPS administrative records, which are shared with the UChicago Consortium through its Master Research Services agreement with the district. All data are available for charter school students, with the exception of course grades used to compute Freshman OnTrack rates. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) are used for all college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates. The NSC houses records on enrollment and post-secondary credentials for colleges throughout the United States, and covers 98 percent of all post-secondary enrollments nationally. All of these data are available for charter school graduates.

### Data Definitions of Key Milestones and Degree Attainment Indices

Throughout this report, the year refers to the spring of the school year (e.g., 2019 refers to the 2018-19 school year). We have suppressed rates for groups of fewer than 100 students to avoid reporting fluctuations in rates that do not reflect consistent trends in student outcomes.

#### Students with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to provide special education and related services to students whose school performance is “adversely affected” by a disability in one of 13 categories: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment. The categories used in the CPS data differ slightly from the IDEA categories. We divided the CPS categories into four groups and do not include students with a ‘504’ education plan in the categories

for students with disabilities. Some of these categories are no longer in use but were used to classify students in earlier cohorts.

**Behavior Disorder:** Emotional and Behavior Disorder, Behavioral Disability, Emotionally Disturbed

**Cognitive Disability:** Autistic, Intellectual Disability, Severe/Profound Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury

**Learning Disability:** Learning Disabled, Moderate Learning Disability, Severe Learning Disability

**Physical Disability:** Deaf, Hearing Impaired, Hard of Hearing, Other Health Impairment, Partial Sight, Visual Impairment

#### Ninth-Grade Cohorts

Students were considered first-time ninth-graders and included in the ninth-grade cohort if they had never before been enrolled in a CPS high school and if they either **1)** were actively enrolled as a ninth-grader on the 20th day of the school year or **2)** enrolled as ninth-grader after the 20th day of the school year and remained enrolled long enough to receive course grades. Students who enrolled in a charter school after the 20th day are included in the first-time ninth-grade cohort, even though we do not know if they remained enrolled long enough to receive grades. For the calculation of high school graduation rates, students who transferred into CPS after ninth grade were retroactively included in the cohort in which they would have been a ninth-grader and are assigned to the first CPS high school they enrolled in.

#### Freshman OnTrack Rate

The Freshman OnTrack rate is the proportion of first-time ninth-graders who have earned five or more credits and have failed no more than one semester of a core course (English, math, science, or social studies) by the end of ninth grade. On-track status does not take into account summer coursework, and was not calculated for ninth-graders who transferred in after ninth grade, did



not have two semesters' worth of ninth-grade grades, or had a valid leave reason.

Course grades for charter school students were not available for this report. Many CPS charter schools use different student information systems from the IMPACT system used by non-charter schools. Because each system varies in the way that it stores information about courses, credits, teachers, periods, grades, and other data, creating linkages across systems is difficult, and our data archive currently does not include records of charter school students' course performance. Therefore, we were unable to calculate on-track rates for charter schools. Charter school students constituted 28 percent of first-time ninth-graders in 2019.

### High School Graduation

The four-year high school graduation rate is the proportion of students in an adjusted, first-time ninth-grade cohort who earned either a regular high school diploma or a diploma from an options high school within four years, including the summer after their fourth year. For the calculation of high school graduation rates, students who transferred into CPS after ninth grade were retroactively included in the cohort in which they would have been a ninth grader and are assigned to the first CPS high school they enrolled in.

### College Enrollment

The college enrollment rate is the proportion of high school graduates who enrolled in a post-secondary institution (which participates in the NSC) in the fall following high school graduation. High school graduates who enrolled in primarily baccalaureate degree-granting institutions were considered four-year enrollees; graduates who enrolled in institutions that primarily grant associate degrees or certificates were considered two-year college enrollees. Off-cycle high school graduates were counted as graduates in the school year in which they graduated. High school graduates were not counted as college enrollees either if they enrolled in colleges that do not report enrollment data to the NSC, or if they requested that their college not share their data with the NSC. Individual high schools may have better data on their graduates' college enrollment. The NSC relies on a matching algorithm to pair data pro-

vided by CPS on their graduates with data provided by colleges. This algorithm may produce different results using data provided by schools, which may be more current than the data given by CPS. Additionally, high schools may have other evidence (e.g., course schedules or transcripts) of their graduates' college enrollment.

### College Types

**Two-year college:** Institutions classified in the IPEDs data as having only programs that are less than four-year.

**Four-year college:** Institutions classified in the IPEDs data as having programs that are four-year or higher.

### College Persistence

The college persistence rate is the proportion of students who immediately enrolled in either a two-year or four-year college and have been continuously enrolled in one or more two-year or four-year institutions for four consecutive semesters, or who earned a college degree or certificate within that time frame. Like with the college graduation rate, students who enrolled in a college that does not provide graduation records to the NSC in the fourth through sixth years after high school graduation were not included in persistence rates.

### Persistence Outcomes for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees

We define students' persistence category based on their enrollments during the first four fall/spring terms after high school graduation. Students are considered to have persisted in college if they were continuously enrolled for the first four fall/spring terms or if they earned a credential within two years of high school graduation.

This report uses three persistence categories for immediate four-year enrollees:

**Continuous Four-Year Enrollment:** Continuous enrollment in four-year institutions during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation.

**Mixed Enrollment Status or Completed Credential:** Transfer to a two-year institution and continuous enrollment in any combination of institutions during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation, or completion of any credential within two years.

**Did Not Persist:** Stopped out of college (was not enrolled) for at least one fall or spring term of the first two years following high school graduation, and did not complete a credential within two years.

### Persistence Outcomes for Immediate Two-Year Enrollees

For immediate two-year enrollees, we also define students' persistence category based on their enrollments during the first four fall/spring terms after high school graduation. Students are considered to have persisted in college if they were continuously enrolled for the first four fall/spring terms or if they earned a credential within two years of high school graduation.

This report uses three persistence categories for immediate two-year enrollees:

**Continuous Mixed Enrollment:** Transfer to a four-year institution and continuous enrollment in any institution during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation.

**Continuous Two-Year Enrollment or Earned Credential:** Continuous enrollment in two-year institutions during the fall and spring terms of the first two years following high school graduation, or completion of any credential within two years.

**Did Not Persist:** Stopped out of college (was not enrolled) for at least one fall or spring term of the first two years following high school graduation, and did not complete a credential within two years.

### College Completion Rate

The college completion rate is the proportion of two-year and four-year college enrollees who earned a degree or certificate within six years of high school graduation. Data on college completion comes from the NSC. Students who enrolled in a college that does not provide graduation records to the NSC, or whose records are suppressed due to FERPA or other reasons, are not included in these rates.

### Direct Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index

The Direct Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index (DBDAI) is the product of the most recent rates available for high school graduation, immediate four-year college enrollment, and four-year college graduation. It provides an estimate of the percentage of ninth-graders who will take a straightforward route to a bachelor's degree within 10 years of starting high school, meaning they graduated from high school within four years, enrolled immediately in a four-year college in the fall after graduation, and then completed a bachelor's degree within six years. The DBDAI is not the rate at which any single cohort of CPS ninth-graders obtains a bachelor's degree; rather it uses the most recent numbers for the three milestones to give a picture of the current state of the district.

### Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index

The Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index (BDAI) provides a more inclusive estimate of the proportion of ninth-graders who will earn a bachelor's degree within 10 years of starting high school because it accounts for students who take alternative routes to a bachelor's degree, either by delaying college entry or by first enrolling in a two-year college. While the BDAI only includes enrollment and graduation rates for four-year college enrollees, the BDAI uses the enrollment and four-year college graduation rates for two additional groups of CPS graduates: those who initially enroll in a two-year college and those who delay college enrollment.

### Post-Secondary Attainment Index

The Post-Secondary Attainment Index (PAI) provides an estimate of the proportion of ninth-graders who will earn any college degree or certificate within 10 years of starting high school. Like the BDAI, this index accounts for students who delay college entry or enroll in a two-year college; in addition, it accounts for students who do not earn a bachelor's degree, but do earn an associate degree or certificate. The PAI uses current rates of high school graduation, any college enrollment, and any college completion.

# Appendix C

## Details on the Inclusion of Outcomes for Students in Two-Year Colleges

While we have always reported rates of enrollment in two-year colleges, previous iterations of this report have used a more limited definition of college persistence (immediately enrolling in a four-year college and then having continuous enrollment in a four-year college for two years). Likewise, college completion rates formerly measured only bachelor's degree completion.

Specifically, using the completion data that we receive from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), we are not able to reliably distinguish between associate degrees and certificates completed at two-year colleges. This matters because associate degrees and certificates are not interchangeable completion outcomes; research has shown that associate degrees and longer-term certificates are generally associated with higher wages than short-term certificates, although this varies by major.

However, the To&Through Project and the UChicago Consortium recently completed a project in which we examined the NSC data more closely and compared it to a secondary data set shared by the Illinois Community College Board, which collects data on students enrolled at community colleges in Illinois.<sup>30</sup> A key finding from that project was that the majority of degrees earned by CPS students at two-year colleges in Illinois and which were uncategorizable using the NSC data were in fact associate degrees. Knowing that the vast majority (94 percent) of CPS students who attend two-year colleges do so in Illinois, this finding gives us confidence to assume that most two-year college completions we see in the NSC data represent associate degrees, and that two-year college completion is a valid measure of students' attaining a credential of economic value.

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<sup>30</sup> Nagaoka, J., & Mahaffie, S. (2020).

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**JENNY NAGAOKA** is the Deputy Director of the UChicago Consortium, where she has conducted research for over 20 years. Her research interests focus on policy and practice in urban education reform, particularly using data to connect research and practice and examining the school environments and instructional practices that promote college readiness and success. She has co-authored numerous journal articles and reports, including studies of college readiness, noncognitive factors, the transition from high school to post-secondary education, and authentic intellectual instruction. She is the lead researcher on the To&Through Project, a project that provides educators, policymakers, and families with research, data, and training on the milestones that matter most for college success. Nagaoka is the lead author of *Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework* (2015), which draws on research and practice evidence to build a coherent framework of the foundational factors for young adult success and investigates their development from early childhood through young adulthood and how they can be supported through developmental experiences and relationships. Nagaoka received her BA from Macalester College and her master's degree in public policy from the Irving B. Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

**SHELBY MAHAFFIE** is a Research Analyst at the UChicago Consortium. In this role, she supports the work of the UChicago Consortium and the To&Through Project in descriptive research, the To&Through Online Tool, and other data projects in conjunction with Chicago Public Schools.

She most recently worked as a Research Assistant with the To&Through Project as an undergraduate. She holds a BA in economics and public policy studies from the University of Chicago.

**ALEXANDRA USHER** is an Associate Director of the To&Through Project and a Senior Research Analyst at the UChicago Consortium, where she leads the research and data processes that inform the To&Through Project. Alexandra most recently led data strategy for the AUSL network of schools, and prior to that spent time at Chicago Public Schools and the Center on Education Policy. She holds a BA in international affairs from the George Washington University and an MPP from the University of Chicago Harris School.

**ALEX SEESKIN** leads the To&Through Project, which aims to significantly increase high school and post-secondary completion for under-resourced students of color in Chicago and around the country by providing education stakeholders with research-based data on students' educational experiences and facilitating dialogue on its implications for adult practice. Previously, he served as the Director of Strategy of the UChicago Charter School, and as a Resident at UChicago Impact. Prior to coming to UEI, Seeskin taught high school English in Chicago Public Schools for seven years, serving as the English Department Chair at Lake View High School from 2008-12. He earned a BS in communications from Northwestern University and an EdLD from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



**The To&Through Project** In collaboration with educators, policymakers, and communities, the To&Through Project aims to significantly increase high school and postsecondary completion for under-resourced students of color in Chicago and around the country by providing education stakeholders with research-based data on students' educational experiences and facilitating dialogue on its implications for adult practice. At the To&Through Project, we:

- Conduct research and publish data on what matters for the attainment of Chicago Public Schools students (in collaboration with the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research).
- Design data tools and resources for education stakeholders that make data meaningful and actionable, including the publicly available To&Through Online Tool.
- Foster conversations about what matters most for students' high school and post-secondary success.
- Facilitate a network of middle grades educators committed to building more equitable and supportive educational environments that promote the success of middle grades students in high school and beyond.

The To&Through Project is located at the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute in the School of Social Service Administration.

*This report reflects the interpretation of the authors. Although the UChicago Consortium's Steering Committee provided technical advice, no formal endorsement by these individuals, organizations, the full Consortium, or the To&Through Project, should be assumed.*

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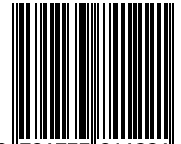
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