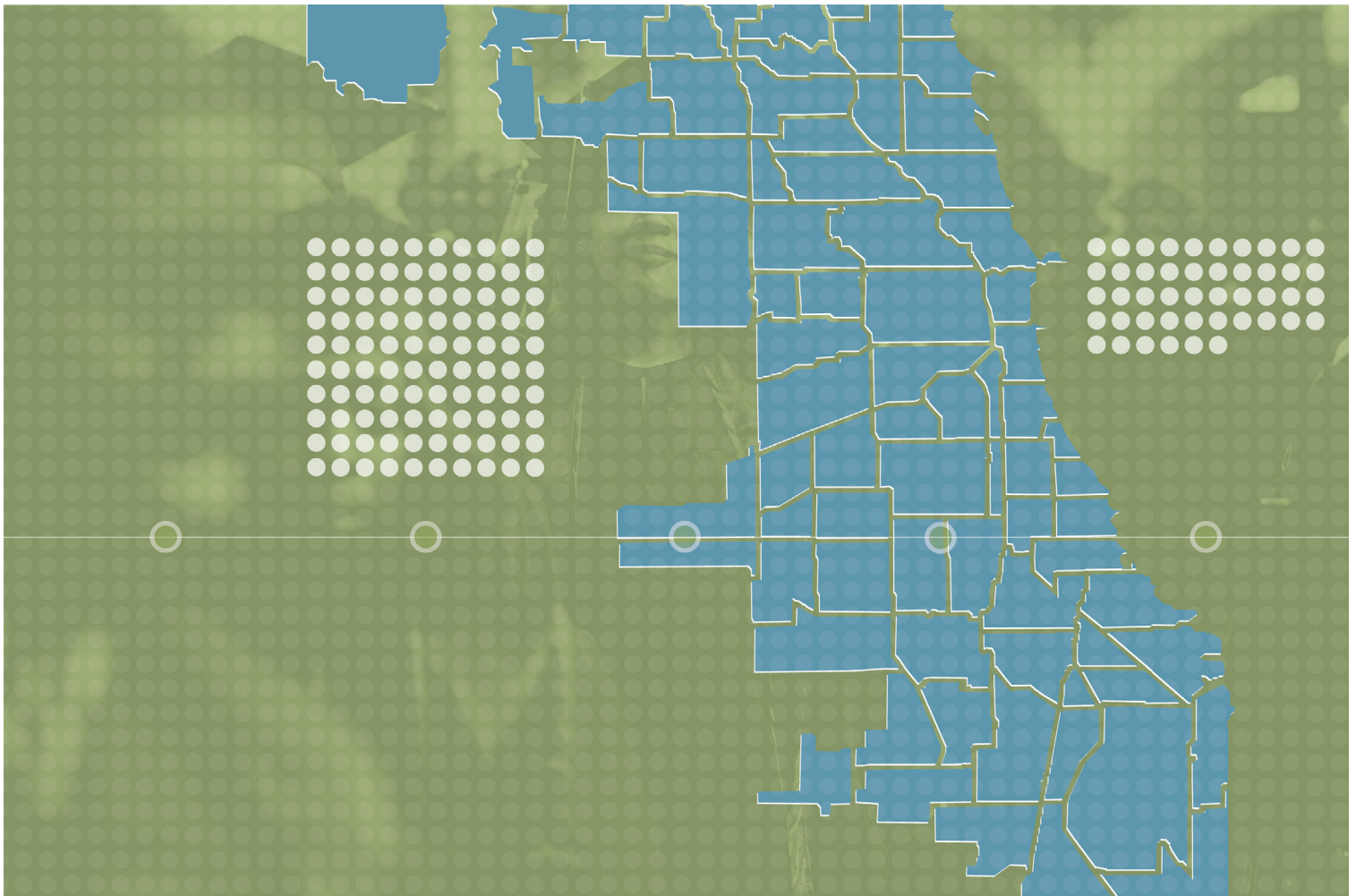


RESEARCH REPORT NOVEMBER 2021

Approaching Chicago Student Attainment from a Community Perspective



Dominique McKoy, Alexandra Usher, Jenny Nagaoka, and Sanya Khatri

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Executive Summary

Ensuring that each and every student reaches their goals for high school and college graduation is central to educational equity. However, while attainment outcomes are reported for every high school in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), it is not known how many students who live in any given geographic community area of Chicago end up completing high school and college. This report provides new, descriptive analyses that use the lens of where CPS students live, rather than where they attend high school, to understand high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion rates.

Considering these key milestones by the 77 community areas of Chicago, instead of by high school, is particularly important because educational policies encouraging school choice for the past two decades have resulted in a district where students living in the same community area attend many different high schools, particularly among students living in majority-Black community areas. Without directly seeing how attainment looks by community area, we are left without an understanding of whether providing more options to attend high-quality schools has resulted in improved outcomes across community areas. The descriptive analysis in this report raises critical questions around how the intertwined legacies of race and location are impacting CPS students' educational outcomes. It also surfaces how addressing the enduring disinvestments in communities of color could be another avenue to help more students reach their full potential and transform the futures of their families, communities, and the city as a whole.

Key Findings

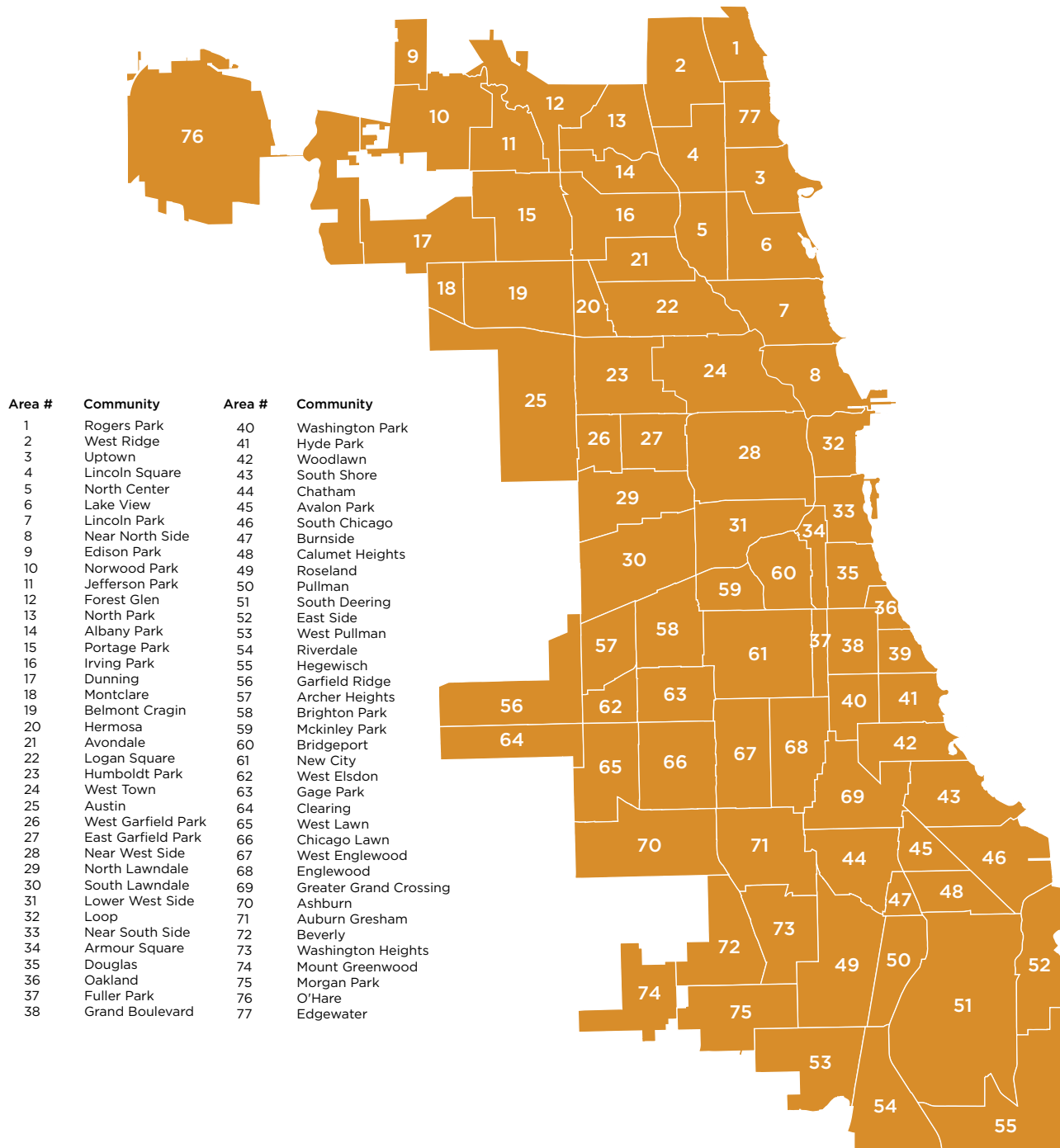
In 2019, high school graduation rates were similar across community areas; in most community areas the rates were between 70 and 90 percent. However, the rates for the same students by high school ranged from 49 percent to 99 percent. In 2019, there were only 14 community areas where CPS students had a high school graduation rate under 80 percent, and in 10 community areas, the graduation rate was greater than 90 percent. In contrast, the

range of graduation rates for the same students was much larger when organized by high school. More than 20 percent of high schools had graduation rates greater than 90 percent (29 out of 127 schools), while 14 percent of high schools had graduation rates less than 70 percent (19 out of 127 schools).

In almost every community area in Chicago, more than 50 percent of 2019 high school graduates enrolled in a two-year or four-year college immediately after graduating from high school. In comparison, when we looked at the rates for the same students by high school, about 16 percent of high schools had college enrollment rates below 50 percent (21 out of 124), and four had rates below 40 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, in four high schools, over 90 percent of graduates made an immediate transition to a two-year or four-year college, while no community area had a rate greater than 80 percent.

Unlike high school graduation and college enrollment rates, the two-year and four-year college completion rates varied widely by community area. Among immediate college enrollees in the class of 2013, the college completion rate by community area ranged from 24 percent to 74 percent. The range was even greater by high school, in almost 30 percent of high schools, the college completion rate for immediate college enrollees was less than 30 percent (29 of 99 schools). Four high schools had college completion rates above 80 percent and another two had rates between 70 and 80 percent.

City of Chicago Community Areas



Source: City of Chicago: <https://data.cityofchicago.org/Facilities-Geographic-Boundaries/Boundaries-Community-Areas-current-/cauq-8yn6>

Introduction

Educational equity requires a commitment to ensuring students are reaching their goals, regardless of the community where they live. However, while high school and college attainment outcomes are reported for every high school in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), it is not known how many students who live in any given geographic community area of Chicago end up completing high school and college.

This report helps to close this gap in understanding by providing a descriptive analysis of high school enrollment, high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion measures for CPS students living in each of Chicago's 77 community areas. It raises critical questions on how a geographic understanding of CPS attainment can impact ongoing efforts to ensure CPS students across all communities have equitable access to high-quality school and post-secondary opportunities.

Adding the lens of community area to the high school lens is particularly important because educational policies encouraging school choice for the past two decades have resulted in a district where students living in the same community area attend many different high schools. Without directly seeing how attainment looks by community area, we are left without an understanding of whether providing more options to attend high-quality schools has resulted in improved outcomes across community areas. These patterns of high school enrollment have left a complicated understanding of the relationships that exist between where students live and where they engage in formal schooling and what their educational attainment looks like.

By examining high school enrollment patterns and educational attainment by community area, we are able to more clearly see the consequential impacts that the legacy and current reality of racial segregation has had on

students' educational experiences throughout Chicago.¹ With the overdue but emerging efforts of city leaders and CPS to reconcile the impact of segregation and combat the effects of racism in Chicago's public education systems, an understanding of the outcomes of high school and college experiences by *place* becomes critical to inform current and future improvement efforts focused on racial equity.²

Along with the release of the To&Through Community Milestones Tool (see box titled **History of the To&Through Community Milestones Tool on page 6 for description**), a public online tool that allows users to explore community-based educational attainment, this analysis focuses on providing a descriptive understanding of how educational opportunities and outcomes are currently distributed across different community areas of Chicago and provides an additional lens of analysis through which our system can leverage to interrogate progress toward goals racial equity.

Community Attainment through the Lens of “Expanded Accountability”

Much of current education policy in Chicago seeks to address existing inequities by focusing on supporting students' attainment—but does not incorporate efforts

1 Henricks, Lewis, Arenas, & Lewis (2017); Metropolitan Planning Council (2017); Rothstein (2017).

2 In recent years both the city of Chicago and Chicago Public School have developed offices focused on improving racial

equity for citizens and students of Chicago. In 2019, CPS developed and centered an equity framework as a key tenet of the latest five-year vision (Chicago Public Schools, 2019).

to address the underlying inequities in the communities where students live that may be contributing to educational disparities. As a research team, we found the concept of “expanded accountability,” developed by Dr. Eve L. Ewing’s *Beyond Schools Lab* (BSL), to be a helpful lens through which to think about the connections between students’ lived experiences in the community and their educational attainment.³ Through expanded accountability, BSL argues for a more holistic view of accountability that interrogates and holds non-educational decision-makers accountable for the ways that their actions contribute to the environment in which students, teachers, and schools are trying to succeed.⁴ As the BSL writes, “thinking about expanded accountability is a way to spur education researchers, leaders, and advocates to look beyond school buildings and school policies for a view of the broader ecological factors that shape students’ lives, and to challenge those working in other areas such as housing and transportation to think inclusively and expansively about how their work is related to school outcomes.”⁵

In Chicago, there exists a vast network of educators, activists, student organizers, community members, and researchers who use data and have dedicated their work toward better understanding and combatting the present impacts of racial segregation on families in Chicago. We hope that this analysis of CPS attainment data from a community perspective in Chicago can contribute to these leaders’ efforts to build the differentiated supports needed for CPS students across communities and encourage further cross-policy opportunities to grapple with concepts like “expanded accountability” to improve student experiences.

Aims of this Report and the Limits of Descriptive Data

Data can be a powerful tool for disrupting inequitable systems and reimagining new ways of meeting the needs of those living in communities disproportionately impacted by racist policies.⁶ However, this information

alone is rarely enough to spur collective action, change practices, or disrupt policies. This report and the accompanying *To&Through Community Milestones Tool* (see box titled *History of the To&Through Community Milestones Tool* on page 6 for description) provide overdue access to reliable measures of community-level high school and post-secondary attainment, but as a descriptive data resource that focuses solely on outcomes, it is vital to acknowledge the fundamental tensions and limitations that exist in the use of quantitative data to inform racial equity efforts.⁷

Most importantly, the patterns that we see in these data cannot be separated from the legacy of segregation and racist education policies that have plagued Chicago’s history and continue to shape its present reality. While this new lens of community-based attainment can provide a powerful starting place to explore the educational experiences of CPS students, as authors, we recognize the dangers that this outcome data poses to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and narratives about community areas. This report provides an admittedly incomplete understanding of the educational experiences provided to CPS students and the inequities in resources and investments across different community areas in Chicago.

These data are meant to be 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.⁸ In order to leverage the full potential of this data, we as researchers, readers of this report, and users of the tool must all actively unlearn the harmful practices of deficit interpretations that have too often served as the default lens in educational data analysis and that do little to help inform an understanding of students’, families’, and communities’ lived experiences.

Ultimately, we must remember that the numbers that make up these descriptive data possess little value on their own.⁹ However, when coupled with a deep understanding of student experiences and the unique histories,

³ The Beyond Schools Lab at the University of Chicago was founded on understanding how these seemingly non-educational structures of social inequality shape the everyday lives of young people and their experiences with school (Beyond Schools Lab, 2021).

⁴ Ewing, Davis, & Guz (2021).

⁵ Ewing et al. (2021).

⁶ Garcia, Lopez, & Velez (2017).

⁷ Garcia et al. (2017).

⁸ Nagaoka, Mahaffie, Usher, & Seeskin (2020).

⁹ Garcia et al. (2017).

resources, and relationships that exist in students' lives, quantitative data can play a vital role helping practitioners interrogate the systems and conditions that support or hinder high school and college attainment.

Through this analysis, we hope to provide policy influencers, practitioners, and community leaders with new data and opportunities to understand how students' experiences both inside and outside of CPS classrooms are affecting their educational outcomes and ultimately help to inform systems of support that focus on helping Chicago students achieve not *in spite of* where they come from but *because of* the communities they call home.

Chapter 1 examines data on the 2018–19 CPS ninth-grade class to see how many students lived in each of the community areas, and whether students were concen-

trated in community areas along lines of race/ethnicity. It also explores differences in patterns of high school enrollment across the district and by race/ethnicity, and how ninth-graders who lived in the same community area were dispersed across different high schools.

Chapter 2 looks at three educational milestones: high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion by high school and by community area, and uses the Post-secondary Attainment Index to provide a broader perspective of what the cumulative effect of the different milestones may be on students' likelihood of completing college.

Chapter 3 is an interpretive summary that discusses implications of the findings in this report and areas for future investigation.

History of the To&Through Community Milestones Tool

This research report serves as an accompanying resource to the To&Through Community Milestones Tool, a publicly available online data resource that was developed in an effort to begin to fill the gap in community-centered education data. Building on the **To&Through High School Milestones Tool**, which provides high school and college attainment data for 134 different CPS high schools, the To&Through Community Milestones Tool provides similar data on high school and college attainment, from the lens of the 77 Chicago community areas within which CPS students live.

This publicly available data resource equips the public with data on five key milestones for college success—high school enrollment, high school graduation, college enrollment, college persistence, and college completion^A—for the CPS high school students, organized by the community area they live in.^B The To&Through Community Milestones Tool provides helps users draw hyper-local insights into how families in each community area are navigating the complexities of high school selection and the resulting educational outcomes of students from different community areas, regardless of what high schools those students attend.

The To&Through Community Milestones Tool was inspired by the work of the Little Village Education Collaborative (LVEC), a community-based collective organized by Enlace Chicago. LVEC aims to connect key stakeholders impacting the education system in the Little Village community to evaluate the system, plan strategic improvements, and support legislative changes that expand educational access and opportunity from “birth to old age.”^C

In their 2017 report, “Little Village College Enrollment Report: Where Data Calls for Social Change,” LVEC used qualitative analysis and quantitative data from the To&Through High School Milestones Tool to clarify patterns in the community’s college readiness, application, and enrollment trends. While this research approach provided the best approximation for local trends using available data at the time, it also highlighted a limitation of the To&Through High School Milestones Tool; it does not provide student outcomes from a geographic perspective, and local high school outcomes are inadequate measures of the educational experiences for students that live in a given community area.

The To&Through Community Milestones Tool was developed in recognition of the fact that community-led efforts like LVEC have also historically been denied data tools and resources needed to maximize their impact, as well as the foundational belief that communities possess the knowledge and abilities to solve the challenges that they face.

When coupled with local relationships and a deep understanding of a community area’s context, these data can equip Chicago’s community-based practitioners, educators, and leaders with vital feedback on how they may be able to help students leverage community assets and navigate potential barriers on their paths to and through high school and college. **Appendix B** provides a user’s guide for understanding the data provided on the tool, along with questions that can guide explorations of educational outcomes at a community level.

A All college rates are reflective of two-year and four-year college choices.

B For high school enrollment and high school graduation milestones, students are grouped into community areas based on their address in CPS files from when they are ninth-graders. For post-secondary milestones—college enrollment,

college persistence, and college graduation—students are grouped into community areas based on the address in CPS files in the year they graduated from high school. For more details, see Appendix A.

C Cañas (2017).

Where Did 2018–19 Ninth-Graders Live and Go to High School?

Before examining high school and college attainment data by community area in the next chapter, we provide some context about where students lived and attended high school. This chapter is intended to help the reader make meaning of attainment outcomes by having a better understanding of who lives in community areas and where they attend high school, and showing why using the lens of community area may differ from examining attainment patterns by high school.

The numbers in this chapter use data on ninth-graders who started at a CPS high school in the 2018–19 school year.¹⁰ We first show how many students resided in each

of the 77 community areas and how students were concentrated in community areas along lines of race/ethnicity. We then examine the different types of schools into which CPS ninth-graders enrolled and discuss how this has shifted from the past. We also provide a “dispersion ratio” that shows the number of schools attended for every 100 CPS ninth-graders in a community area. Finally, we examine the enrollment patterns of 2018–19 CPS ninth-graders into different school types, and how those patterns differed according to the racial/ethnic group makeup of the community areas in which students lived.

10 We focus on ninth-graders rather than all high school students for two reasons. First, the transition into ninth grade is the point at which most students and families choose which high school they will attend. Second, students leave or

transfer high schools at different rates and different points in time across community areas, so the ninth-grade cohort is the most stable and provides the most consistent analysis group across community areas.

Why the 77 Community Areas?

This report and the To&Through Community Milestones Tool use the 77 geographic community areas of Chicago as their unit of analysis. Unlike political wards, which may change over time as populations change or neighborhood boundaries which may be defined differently by different groups, these 77 community area boundaries have remained the same except the addition of two areas (O'Hare in 1956 and Edgewater in 1980). Using boundaries that remain consistent is crucial for our tool as we look at changes in enrollment and educational patterns over time. Most scholars and city officials still refer to these 77 community areas as a consistent way to map the city, and publicly available data, like our tool, is often reported using these units.

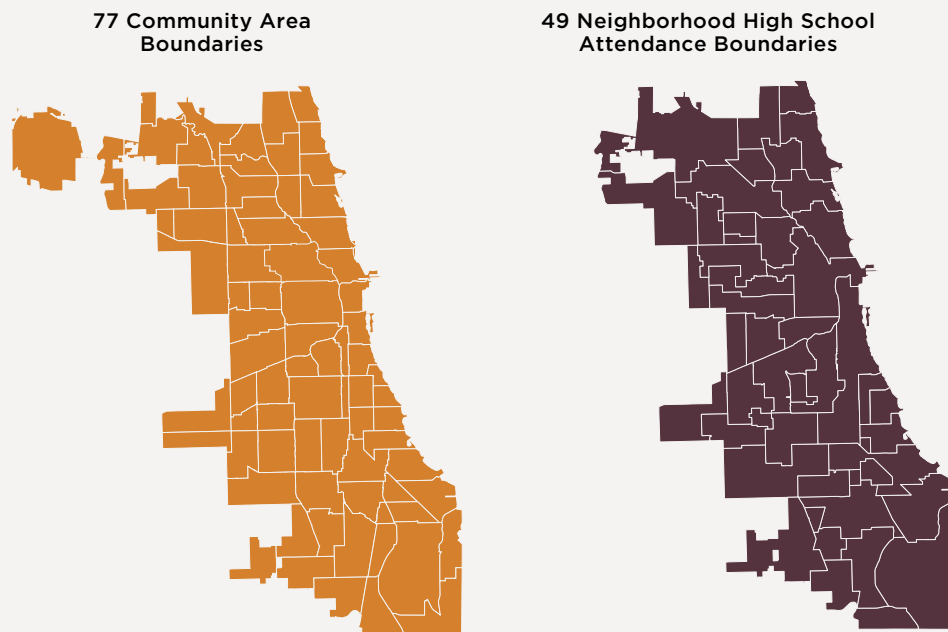
However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this framework. The 77 community areas are not neighborhoods and may not match the name or physical boundaries that Chicagoans

conceptualize. For example, Little Village is a distinct neighborhood with its own culture and significance to Chicago, but you cannot find that name on our tool or in our analysis. Rather, it is encompassed, in part, by the South Lawndale community area. Neighborhood names and locations change over time and different people have different perspectives on those names and locations.

It is also important to note that neighborhood high school attendance boundaries are often very different from the community area boundaries, as shown in **Figure A**. A single community area could contain the attendance zones for several different neighborhood high schools (meaning that students living on different sides of the same community area may be zoned to attend different schools). One neighborhood high school attendance zone could also encompass more than one community area.

FIGURE A

Chicago Community Area Boundaries Are Different from Neighborhood High School Attendance Boundaries



Source: City of Chicago: <https://data.cityofchicago.org/Facilities-Geographic-Boundaries/Boundaries-Community-Areas-current-cauq-8yn6>

Source: Chicago Public Schools: <https://data.cityofchicago.org/Education/Chicago-Public-Schools-High-School-Attendance-Boun/bv6n-449d>

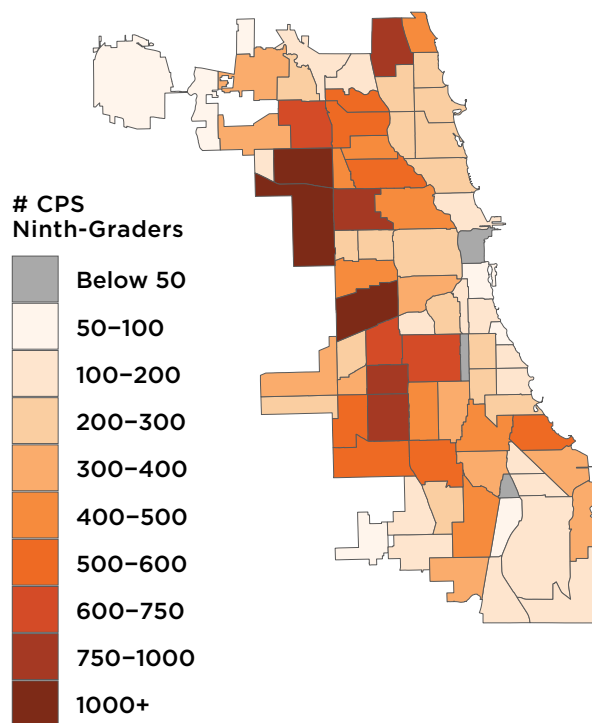
Note: There are 49 attendance boundaries but 47 neighborhood schools because 1) the Little Village Lawndale High School Campus consists of four schools that all share the same attendance boundary—Infinity: Math, Science Technology; Multicultural Arts; Social Justice; and World Language—and 2) four high schools have fragmented (non-continuous) attendance boundaries: Bowen High School, Corliss High School, Phillips Academy High School, and Hirsch Metropolitan High School.

In Which Community Areas Did 2018–19 CPS Ninth-Graders Live?

The ninth-graders in our analysis lived in all communities across the city, but the numbers of students in each community area varied. The community areas with the largest numbers of 2018–19 CPS ninth-graders were in west and southwest areas of the city, while the community areas with the lowest numbers were in the far northwest and southwest corners of the city, as well as around the downtown area (see Figure 1). Community areas—which are geographically-based and do not change over time—differ from school attendance boundaries, which are determined by CPS and may change across years (see the box titled *Why the 77 Community Areas?* on page 8 for more information).

FIGURE 1
Community Areas in the West and Southwest Had the Most 2018–19 CPS Ninth-Graders

Number of CPS ninth-graders across 77 Chicago community areas



Most community areas were home to between 100 and 500 CPS ninth-graders; for context, there were about 27,000 total students in the 2018–19 ninth-grade class. However, there were several community areas in which fewer than 100 CPS students lived, and some community areas where more than 500 CPS students lived (see Table 1). This population difference is influenced by several factors, including the total number of people living in a community area, the age distribution of people living in a community area, and the rate of private school enrollment (see box titled *Private School Enrollment Means That Examining Data on CPS Alone Paints an Incomplete Picture of Community Educational Experiences* on page 10). This difference in number of students sometimes complicates the comparison of outcomes (such as high school graduation or college enrollment) across different community areas, as the rates for some communities are based on a much smaller number of students, and caution should be used in interpreting numbers for community areas with fewer students. For this reason, we exclude community areas that have fewer than 50 CPS students. In this chapter, all analysis excludes Fuller Park, Burnside, and the Loop.

TABLE 1
Number of Community Areas by Population of 2018–19 CPS Ninth-Graders

# CPS 9th-Graders	# Community Areas
<50	3
50–99	6
100–249	24
250–499	27
500–1000	14
>1000	3
Total	77

Private School Enrollment Means That Examining Data on CPS Alone Paints an Incomplete Picture of Community Educational Experiences

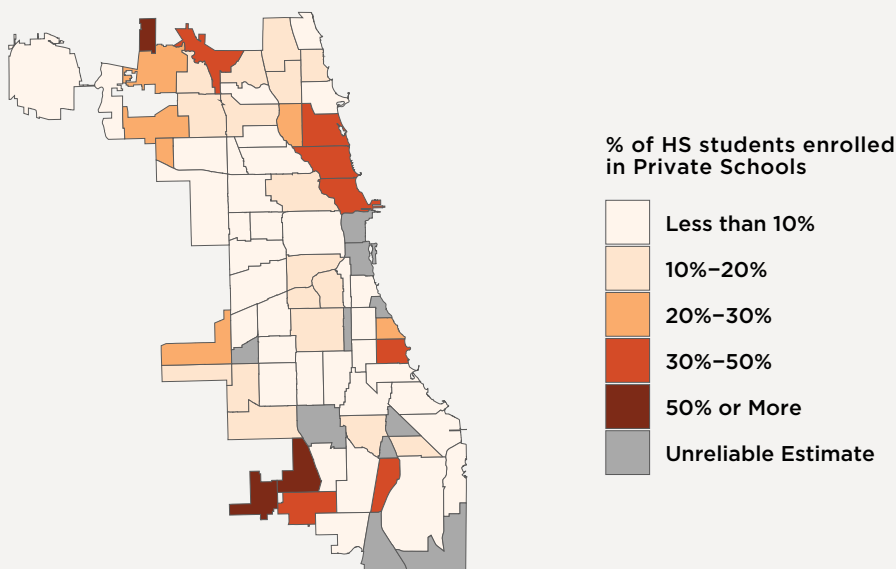
The analysis on high school enrollment, graduation, and college achievement rates for this report and for the To&Through Community Milestones Tool is constructed from CPS's administrative data. This means that our data and analysis is limited to only public high school students (including charter students), but does not include students enrolled in private schools. According to the 2018 one-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 12.4 percent of high school students in Chicago attend a private school, and concentration of private vs. public school enrollment varies greatly across the city, meaning our data provides a particularly limited

view of high school students in certain community areas (see Figure B). Community areas with high private high school enrollment tend to be concentrated on the North and Northwest Sides, near the lake on the North Side, and on the Southwest Side of the city.^D There are three community areas—Mount Greenwood, Edison Park, and Beverly—that have private school enrollment over 50 percent among high school students.^E The findings in this report are only for CPS students, so the data on high school enrollment and student attainment for the community areas with high private school enrollment do not show an accurate picture of the experience of all high school students in the community area.

FIGURE B

Private High School Enrollment Tended to be Concentrated on the North and Northwest Sides, Near the Lake, and on the Southwest Side of the City in 2018

Percentage of private school enrollment among high school students by community area



Note: The data for this map was derived from ACS 2018 five-year estimates, and the estimates that had a margin of error higher than the estimate are shown as N/A because that estimate is unreliable. We used the 2018 calendar year data because most students enroll in school in the fall of the school year, which for this analysis was 2018. See Appendix A for details on methodology.

D 2018 ACS, five-year estimate. We used the 2018 calendar year data because most students enroll in school in the fall of the school year, which for this analysis was 2018. See Appendix A for details on methodology.

E To find the public vs. private high school enrollment rates for each community area, visit the To&Through Community Milestones Tool.

Were 2018–19 CPS Ninth-Graders Grouped in Community Areas Along Lines of Race/Ethnicity?¹¹

We next examine where 2018–19 CPS ninth-graders lived across community areas in relation to race/ethnicity. In **Table 2**, we display data for four race/ethnicity groups: White, Latinx, Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander¹² and show three categories of the percentage of ninth-graders from each racial/ethnic group that live in that community area (>50 percent, >75 percent, and >90 percent).

Chicago has a long history and current reality of residential segregation by race¹³ and this segregation is mirrored in the residential patterns of 2018–19 CPS ninth-graders. In 65 of the 77 community areas, one racial/ethnic group comprised over 50 percent of ninth-graders. In 27 community areas, over 90 percent of ninth-graders came from the same racial/ethnic background.¹⁴

We also see clear patterns by race/ethnicity. In 26 community areas, more than one-half of 2018–19 ninth-graders were Latinx and there were 18 community

areas in which Latinx students comprised 75 percent or more of ninth-graders, and 10 community areas in which Latinx students made up 90 percent or more of the ninth-graders. Black students made over one-third of ninth-graders in 2018–19. In 30 community areas, Black students made up more than 50 percent of ninth-graders. Additionally, there were 25 community areas in which Black students made up 75 percent or more of the ninth-grader cohort, and 17 community areas in which 90 percent or more of ninth-graders were Black. Only 4 percent of ninth-graders were Asian American/Pacific Islanders, but there were two community areas in which over 50 percent of ninth-graders identified as Asian American/Pacific Islander, Armour Square at 79 percent Asian American/Pacific Islander and Bridgeport at 51 percent Asian American/Pacific Islander. Both are located in or near the neighborhood commonly referred to as Chinatown. White students comprised 9 percent of ninth-graders, and there were seven community areas in which 50 percent or more of the ninth-graders were White, in two of these community areas more than 75 percent of CPS ninth-graders were White.¹⁵

TABLE 2
Number of Community Areas by Race/Ethnicity of Resident Ninth-Graders in 2018–19

Race/Ethnicity	% of 9th-Graders in Racial/Ethnic Category, Citywide	# of Community Areas where 9th-Grade Population Was...		
		More than 50%	More than 75%	More than 90%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	4%	2	1	0
White	9%	7	2	0
Black	36%	30	25	17
Latinx	48%	26	18	10

Note: Three race/ethnicity categories are not shown in this table. Native American students were 0.3 percent of 2018–19 ninth-graders, and multiracial students and students who did not have a recorded race/ethnicity were each 1 percent of ninth-graders.

11 We acknowledge that the race/ethnicity categories available in our data do not accurately reflect the full spectrum of races and ethnicities embodied by CPS students, conflate the two separate constructs of race and ethnicity, and mask diversity within racial groups. While we do not intend to define students based on their race/ethnicity category, we recognize that race and ethnicity are a primary lens through which our society understands and influences peoples' experiences and therefore can provide important insights in our analysis.

12 CPS expanded its race/ethnicity categories in the 2010–11 school year to include a multiracial option, and the Asian American category was split into two categories: Pacific

Islander/Hawaiian and Asian American. Our groupings by race/ethnicity combine Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and Asian American categories, due to the small number of CPS students who are Pacific Islander/Hawaiian.

13 Bechteler (2016).

14 To explore trends in a specific community area, visit the To&Through Community Milestones Tool: <https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/comm>

15 The seven community areas where more than 50 percent of their ninth-graders were White were (in increasing order): Lake View, Norwood Park, North Center, Lincoln Park, O'Hare, Edison Park, and Mount Greenwood.

Into Which Types of High Schools did 2018–19 CPS Ninth-Graders Enroll?

In the last two decades, CPS has gone through a massive expansion of the city’s high school portfolio; this expansion in school choice has led to students living within the same community area attending a wide range of high schools. In 2002, there were only 76 high schools compared to 154 in 2018–19.¹⁶ This was due to policy reforms intended to expand high-quality public school options, such as Renaissance 2010 and the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative, which split up larger high schools into smaller high schools and increased the number of charter schools and selective enrollment schools in the city.¹⁷ The growth in the number of schools has been accompanied by the development of specialized types of schools and programs, even within neighborhood schools.

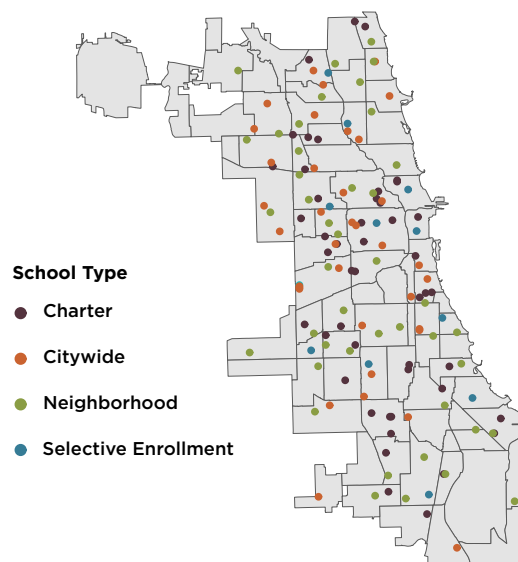
To understand the enrollment patterns of 2018–19 CPS ninth-graders, we grouped all CPS high schools into four main types: neighborhood schools, charter schools, citywide schools, and selective enrollment schools. For our analysis, we defined neighborhood schools as “schools that have attendance boundaries,” and we further divided that category into: 1) “assigned” if the student was attending the school assigned to them using their address; or 2) “other neighborhood” if the student was attending a neighborhood school whose attendance boundaries did not encompass where the student resided. Neighborhood schools sometimes accept students who live outside their attendance boundaries through specialized programs, such as International Baccalaureate (IB) or Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.¹⁸ Citywide schools are schools that do not have attendance boundaries, including magnet, options, specialty, and military schools, but not including selective enrollment or charter schools; some citywide schools have admission criteria while others do not. Selective enrollment schools are a collection of 11 high schools which have test- and grade-based selection

criteria, do not have attendance boundaries, and draw students from all over the city. Charter schools are CPS schools that are publicly funded but independently run, and they are open enrollment, meaning students from any neighborhood are eligible for enrollment via a lottery system. For a more detailed explanation of how schools were grouped into these five main types, see **Appendix A**.

Figure 2 shows the location of the CPS high schools in the 2018–19 school year, by the four categories of school type (neighborhood, charter, selective enrollment, and other citywide). High schools, both neighborhood and non-neighborhood types, were located throughout the city and have no clear pattern by school type.

FIGURE 2
Different Types of High Schools were Located All Across the City, with No Significant Patterns in Clustering of Certain Types of Schools in Particular Community Areas

Community areas layered with locations of 2018–19 high schools, by the type of school



Note: This map has schools that were open in the 2018–19 school year and does not include options schools, since this report focuses on the experiences of first-time ninth-graders, who are unlikely to start their high school experience in option schools.

¹⁶ 2002 number is from Barrow & Sartain (2017).

¹⁷ Barrow & Sartain (2017).

¹⁸ CPS currently does not collect data on how many students are enrolled in the various programs that exist within high

schools, so it is difficult to determine how these programs influence students’ decisions to attend neighborhood schools that are not their assigned neighborhood school.

Table 3 shows what percentage of CPS ninth-graders in 2018–19 were enrolled into the different types of schools. Although students attending neighborhood high schools made the largest share of ninth-graders, only about one-quarter of ninth-graders attended their

assigned neighborhood school. That is, more than three-quarters of ninth-graders exercised school choice and attended a school other than their assigned school, possibly traveling longer distances outside their community to attend school.¹⁹

TABLE 3
2018–19 Ninth-Graders’ High School Enrollment

Type of High School	% of 9th-Graders Enrolled in 2018–19
Assigned Neighborhood	23%
Other Neighborhood	20%
Charter	25%
Selective Enrollment	15%
Other Citywide	17%

¹⁹ It is outside the scope of this report to answer questions of why students chose to enroll in their assigned neighborhood school or opted into another choice, or how far students travelled to get to school. However, some of these questions have been addressed by existing work, including the CPS Annual

Regional Analysis (Kids First Chicago, 2019), a quantitative paper on GoCPS exploring school choices (Barrow & Sartain, 2019), and a qualitative paper on student experiences around high school choice (Shyjka, 2021).

How Were Students Living in the Same Community Areas Dispersed Across Different High Schools?

Given that 77 percent of CPS high students were attending schools that were not their assigned neighborhood school, in this section, we examine the extent to which students who lived in the same community area attended the same schools. This helps us understand the extent to which patterns of student attainment for community areas may differ from looking at patterns by high school.

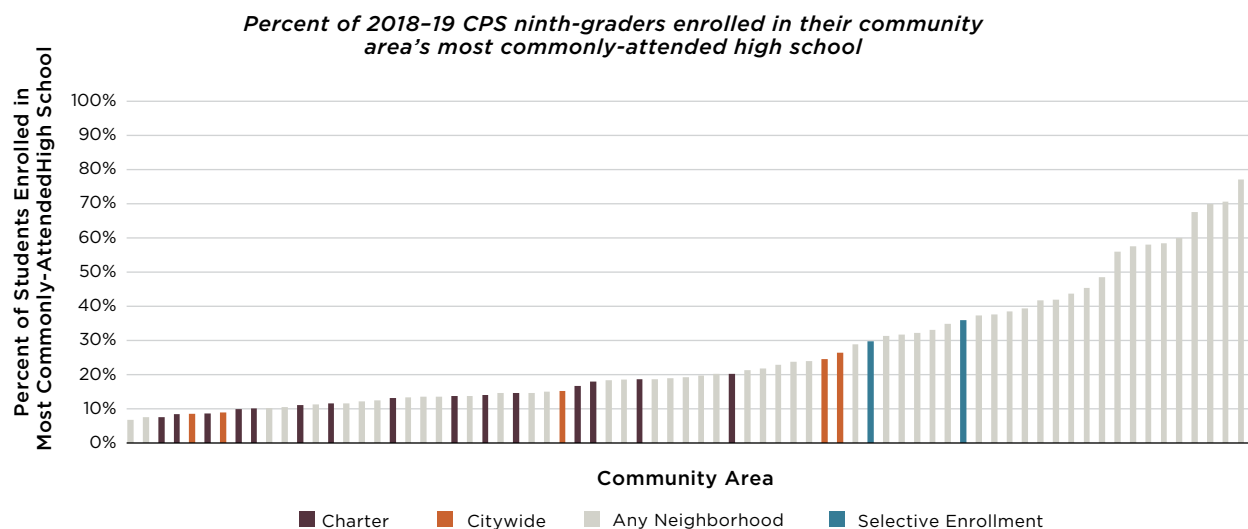
We first looked at the most commonly-attended high school enrolling the largest number of students from a given community area. In **Figure 3**, each bar represents a specific community area. The height of the bar represents the portion of the ninth-grade population in 2018–19 that attended the most commonly-attended high school in the community area (for example, in Albany Park, the most commonly-attended high school was Roosevelt, where 24 percent of 2018–9 Albany Park ninth-graders enrolled). The color of the bar represents what type of school the most commonly-attended school was.

The pattern of having the majority of students living in a community area attend the same high school was uncommon for 2018–19 ninth-graders. In most community

areas, the most commonly-attended school enrolled fewer than 25 percent of the students living in that community area. In only two community areas were 75 percent or more of the ninth-graders enrolled in the most commonly-attended school. On the other hand, 46 community areas had less than one-quarter of the ninth-graders enrolled in the most commonly-attended school, meaning that their ninth-graders were scattered across multiple high schools.

In **Figure 3**, we also show the school type of the most commonly-attended high school so we can see if it is usually a neighborhood school with attendance boundaries or one that could be drawing students from across the city. In most community areas, the most commonly-attended school was a neighborhood school. There were 15 community areas that had charter schools as their most commonly-attended schools, but all of them enrolled 20 percent or fewer of the CPS ninth-graders living in the community area. Two of the most commonly-attended schools for a community area were selective enrollment schools: the Near South Side had 30 percent of its ninth-graders attending Jones College Prep and North Center had 36 percent of its students attending Lane Tech College Prep. Mount Greenwood, a community area that had a low percent of its high school population attending public

FIGURE 3
For the Majority of Community Areas, the Most Commonly-Attended School Was a Neighborhood High School, that Typically Enrolled Less Than One-Half of the Ninth-Graders Living in That Community Area



Note: Community areas with a ninth-grade population below 50 students have been excluded (Fuller Park, Burnside, and the Loop). Each bar in the graph represents one community area. Bars are arranged along the x-axis in increasing order of percentage of students enrolled at the most commonly-attended school. Bars are colored by the school type of the most commonly-attended school.

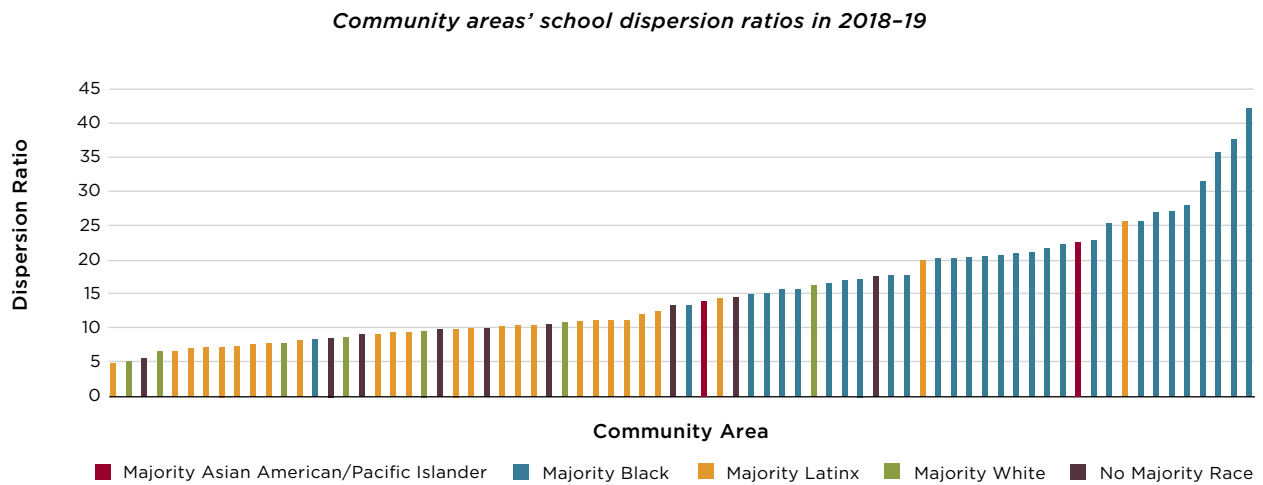
school, had 92 percent of its CPS ninth-graders attending Chicago Agriculture Science High School, a citywide school. There were five other community areas where the most commonly-attended school was a citywide school, meaning it did not have attendance boundaries, ranging from 8 percent to 26 percent of the ninth-graders in a community area enrolling in said school.

Next, we examined the extent to which different community areas were sending students to multiple schools at different rates and how this differed by the majority race/ethnicity of the community area (majority race/ethnicity is defined by over 50 percent of a community area’s population coming from a given racial/ethnic group). We wanted to better understand the extent to which the numbers for community area reflected enrollment in a handful of schools or many schools. To analyze this more closely and account for differing numbers of students in each community area, we calculated a “school dispersion ratio,” which

measures the number of schools attended for every 100 CPS ninth-graders in a community area; in other words, the total number of schools the ninth-graders living in a community area would attend, if that community area had 100 CPS ninth-graders.²⁰

Figure 4 shows that there is a wide range in this school dispersion ratio across community areas. In some community areas there were as few as five high schools attended per 100 ninth-graders, while in other community areas, there were over 30 high schools attended per 100 ninth-graders living in that community area. There is a stark pattern in student dispersion by race, with the community areas that were majority-Black being the most likely to have their students dispersed across many different high schools. Figure 4 shows that 21 of the 25 community areas with the highest dispersion ratios were majority-Black, while only one of the 25 community areas with the lowest dispersion ratios was majority-Black.

FIGURE 4
Majority-Black Community Areas were the Most Likely to Have Students Dispersed Across Many Different High Schools



Note: A “school dispersion ratio” measures the number of schools attended for every 100 CPS ninth-graders in a community area. Community areas with a ninth-grade population below 50 students have been excluded (Fuller Park, Burnside, and the Loop). Each bar in the graph represents one community area. Bars are arranged along the x-axis in increasing order of school dispersion ratio. Each bar is colored according to the majority racial group of the 2018-19 ninth-graders in that community area.

²⁰ The school dispersion ratio is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{school dispersion ratio} = \frac{\# \text{ of schools at least 5 ninth-graders attend in community area}}{\# \text{ of ninth-graders living in community area}} \times 100$$

How Did CPS 2018–19 Ninth-Graders' Enrollment Into Different School Types Differ Across Lines of Race/Ethnicity?

We next examined the enrollment patterns of 2018–19 CPS ninth-graders into different school types, and how those patterns differed according to the racial/ethnic group makeup of the community areas in which students lived, using the same majority race/ethnicity categorization as in the previous section.

Table 4 shows the patterns of school type by racial/ethnic classifications.²¹ Overall, these patterns indicate significant differences in the types of schools into which CPS ninth-graders enrolled by the racial/ethnic group makeup of ninth-graders in those community areas. Only three majority-Black community areas had more than one-quarter of their ninth-graders attending their assigned school. Instead, more majority-Black community areas had over one-quarter of their students opting into other types of schools, particularly charter or other neighborhood schools, while only two majority-Black community areas had at least one-quarter of students attending a selective enrollment school. More majority-White community areas and community areas without a majority race/ethnicity had at least one-quarter of their students attending their assigned neighborhood school or a selective enrollment school. One-half (13 out of 26) majority-Latinx community areas had at least one-quarter of their ninth-graders attending their assigned neighborhood school and in 11 had at least one-quarter of students attending a charter school, but there were not any majority-Latinx community areas where at least one-quarter of students attended a selective enrollment school.

When we examine enrollment patterns by school type, we see that 22 out of 30 majority-Black community areas had at least 25 percent of ninth-graders enrolled into charter schools, as did 11 of 26 majority-Latinx community areas. No majority-White or majority-Asian American/

Pacific Islander community areas had at least one-quarter of ninth-graders enrolled in charter schools. The community areas with at least 25 percent of ninth-graders who enrolled in selective enrollment schools were mostly majority-White, majority-Asian American/Pacific Islander, or did not have a majority race/ethnicity. There were only two majority-Black and no majority-Latinx community areas from which at least one-quarter of ninth-graders enrolled in selective enrollment schools.

As school choice has expanded over recent decades, CPS ninth-graders were much less likely to attend their assigned neighborhood schools, choosing to go to many different types of schools. However, more students from majority-White neighborhoods are still choosing to attend their assigned neighborhood school. The patterns of ninth-grade enrollment along lines of community race/ethnicity lead to questions about the availability of information, time, and support for making choices about schools types across different community areas and which school types are realistically accessible to students from communities with different racial/ethnic makeups, which are important constraints on students' ability to exercise choice over their school enrollment. The dispersion of students to several different schools also raises important questions about the implications of the expansion of schools and school options.

This analysis raises important questions around how these enrollment patterns complicate the efforts of community-based organizations that are working to meet the educational needs of their students that attend several different high schools. How does it complicate the work of a school as practitioners aim to meet the needs of their student body, which is coming from community areas across the city? It also raises questions about how attending a different school from their peers who live in the same community area affects students, positively and negatively. In the next section, we will delve deeper into the relationship between students' educational outcomes and the community areas in which they reside.

²¹ To explore patterns by school type and race/ethnicity in a specific community area, visit the To&Through Community

Milestones Tool, <https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/comm>

TABLE 4**High School Enrollment Patterns for Community Areas with Different Racial/Ethnic Majorities**

Race/ Ethnicity Category	Number of Community Areas in Category	Number of Community Areas with More than 25% of 9th-Graders in...				
		Assigned Neighborhood High Schools	Other Neighborhood High Schools	Charter High Schools	Selective Enrollment High Schools	Citywide High Schools
Majority-Black	30	3	10	22	2	4
Majority-Latinx	26	13	6	11	0	3
Majority-White	7	4	0	0	4	1
Majority-Asian American/ Pacific Islander	2	0	2	0	2	0
No Majority Race	9	7	2	1	4	1

Note: Community areas with a ninth-grade population below 50 students have been excluded (Fuller Park, Burnside, and the Loop).



Educational Milestones by Community Area

In this chapter, we take a closer look at patterns of three educational attainment milestones (high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion) for CPS students by the community area where they lived and by the high school they attended. We then use the Post-secondary Attainment Index (PAI) to provide a broader perspective of what the cumulative effect of what the three educational attainment milestones may be on students' likelihood of completing college. By contrasting the community and high school lenses as two ways to examine educational attainment outcomes for the same students, we can begin to reframe how we think about the role of community and the role of high schools and school choice in the educational experiences of students.²²

As we examine the educational outcomes by community area, it is important to restate that the rates of educational attainment cannot be separated from larger systemic issues and beliefs that directly and indirectly led to public and private disinvestment in schools and communities of color. In looking at educational outcomes, it is critical to consider them in this broader context, rather than a reflection of students' abilities and aspirations. To do otherwise is to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and narratives about students and their communities.

We intend the following data on educational outcomes by community area to be a starting point for dialogue and discussions around community context and how we can disrupt the current system that has been built to perpetuate inequities in communities of color. Much of the efforts to improve attainment have centered on schools and students, but as the framework of expanded accountabil-

ity notes, addressing the enduring disinvestments in communities of color is an underutilized and essential avenue to help more students reach their full potential.

Readers interested in delving more deeply into specific community areas can turn to the To&Through Community Milestones Tool, which provides numbers for individual community areas, as well as by student characteristics. On the tool and in this report, caution should be taken when comparing across community areas because, as shown in Chapter 1, the number of CPS students residing in community areas varies widely and the rates for less populated community areas may fluctuate from year to year.

What Were 2018–19 High School Graduation Rates by Community Area and High School?

The first milestone we examine in this report is high school graduation within four years. As described in the previous chapter, most CPS students travelled outside their community area to attend high school and, as a result, the patterns by community area may not mirror the rates for high schools located in that community.

The role of high school choice in understanding outcomes is complex. High school choice offers students opportunities to attend schools which may better serve their academic, social, or other needs. At the same time, when students leave their community area to attend high school, neighborhood high schools lose students who may have had the potential to succeed closer to home.

²² To explore trends in a specific community area, visit the To&Through Community Milestones Tool: <https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/comm> and to

explore trends in a specific high school, visit the To&Through High School Milestones Tool: <https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/hs>

CPS students' likelihood of completing high school has dramatically increased over the past 20 years and was 82 percent for 2018–19 graduates. In 2003, using graduation by age 18 instead of graduation within four years, the graduation rate was 46 percent.²³ When we look by community area over time, the patterns for 2018–19 CPS graduates (see Table 5) look very different from the patterns shown in a 2005 report from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium)

for the graduating classes of 2002 and 2003. For the spring of 2002 and 2003 cohorts, there were only six community areas where at least 60 percent of students graduated from high school by age 18 and in seven community areas, fewer than 30 percent completed high school. In contrast, in 2018–19 there were only 14 community areas where CPS students had a high school graduation rate under 80 percent, and in 10 community areas, the graduation rate was greater than 90 percent. In 2018–19, in community areas

TABLE 5
High School Graduation Rates by Community Area Dramatically Increased between 2002/2003 and 2018–19

Community Area's High School Graduation Rate	# of Community Areas in Category in 2002/2003	# of Community Areas in Category in 2018–19
0–29%	7	0
30–39%	13	0
40–49%	31	0
50–59%	19	0
60–69%	4	2
70–79%	2	12
80–89%	0	49
90–100%	0	10

Note: Community areas with fewer than 50 students are not included (Mount Greenwood in 2002 and 2003 and Edison Park, Fuller Park, Loop, and Burnside in 2019). The two high school graduation rates differ in how they are calculated. The 2002 and 2003 graduation rates are from Allensworth (2005) and are based on age cohorts of 18-year-olds, and the 2019 graduation rates are four-year graduation rates based on ninth-grade cohorts.

²³ Allensworth (2005).

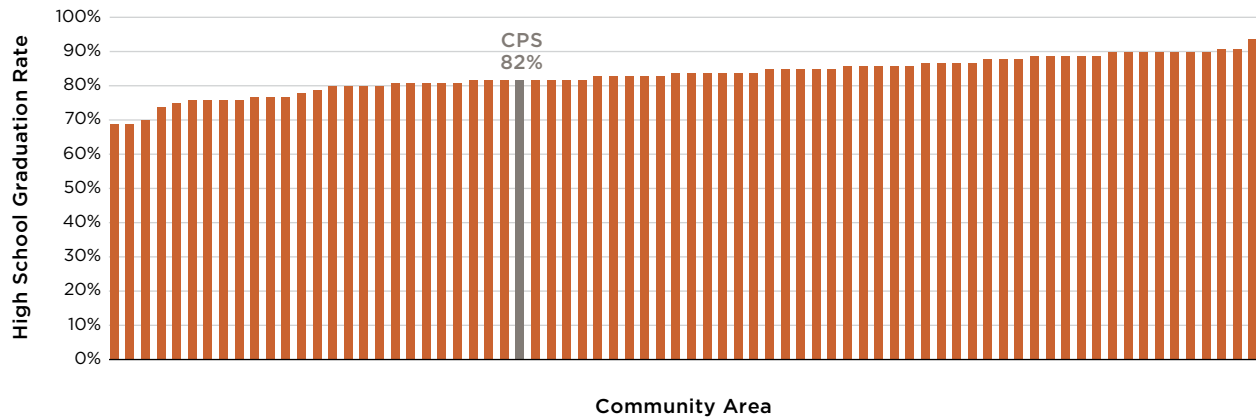
across the city, the vast majority of students were graduating from high school.

Examining high school graduation rates by community area is especially important because the pattern looks very different than when the rates are analyzed by high school. More than 20 percent of high schools had graduation rates greater than 90 percent (29 out of 127 schools), while 15 percent of high schools had graduation rates less than 70 percent (19 out of 127 schools), and only two community

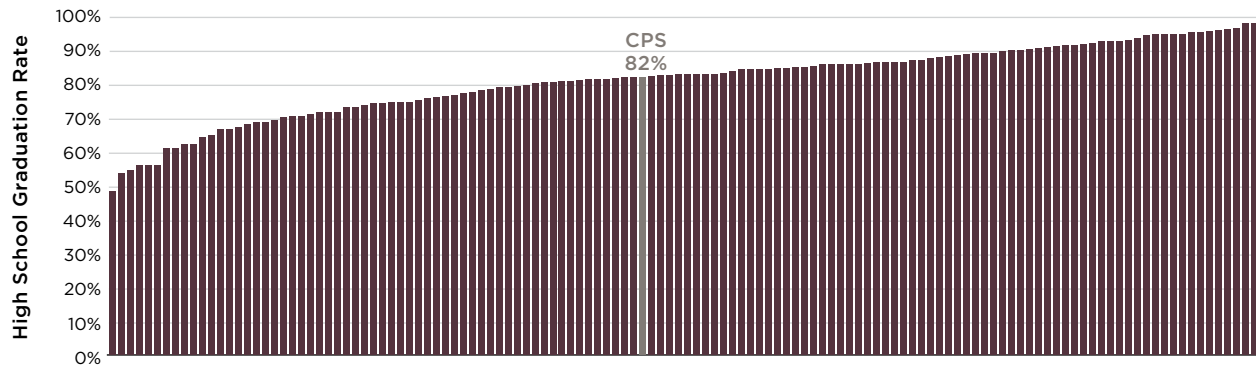
areas had a rate that low (see Figure 5A). Graduation rates by high school ranged from 49 percent to 99 percent (see Figure 5B). This wide range in graduation rates by high school had many potential sources, but it is important to note that admissions requirements at high schools and programs within high schools could lead to clustering of students into certain high schools who are more likely to graduate within four years.²⁴

FIGURE 5
2018–19 High School Graduation Rates Varied More by High School than Community Area

A. 2018–19 high school graduation rates by community area



B. 2018–19 high school graduation rates by high school



Note: Each bar in the graph represents one community area or one high school, and they are arranged along the x-axis in increasing order of high school graduation. Community areas with fewer than 50 students are not included (Edison Park, Fuller Park, Loop, and Burnside). High schools with fewer than 25 students in the ninth-grade cohort are not included (VOISE Academy and all options schools), although their students are included in the CPS rate.

²⁴ Barrow & Sartain (2019).

What Were 2019 College Enrollment Rates by Community Area and High School?

As the high school graduation rate has increased, more CPS graduates enrolled in college. In 2019, around two-thirds of CPS graduates enrolled immediately in college, compared to about one-half of graduates in 2007.²⁵ About 43 percent of 2019 graduates enrolled immediately in a four-year institution and 20 percent enrolled immediately in a two-year institution.²⁶ But what does the college enrollment rate look like by community area?

In almost every community area in Chicago, more than 50 percent of high school graduates enrolled in a two-year or four-year college immediately after graduating from high school (see **Figure 6A**). In about one-quarter of community areas (19), between 50 and 60 percent of high school graduates enrolled in college; in about 44 percent

of community areas (32), between 60 and 70 percent enrolled in college; and in a little over one-quarter of community areas (20) between 70 and 80 percent enrolled in college. In some community areas, the proportion of students enrolled in two-year vs. four-year colleges differed considerably from the overall enrollment rates for CPS.

The pattern of college enrollment for 2019 graduates looks very different when analyzed by high school, and the rates vary dramatically between high schools (see **Figure 6B**). About 16 percent of high schools had college enrollment rates below 50 percent (21 out of 124), and four had rates below 40 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, in four high schools, over 90 percent of graduates made an immediate transition to a two-year or four-year college. In contrast, when we examine enrollment rates by community area, no community area had a college enrollment rate under 40 percent and none have one over 80 percent.

²⁵ Nagaoka et al. (2020).

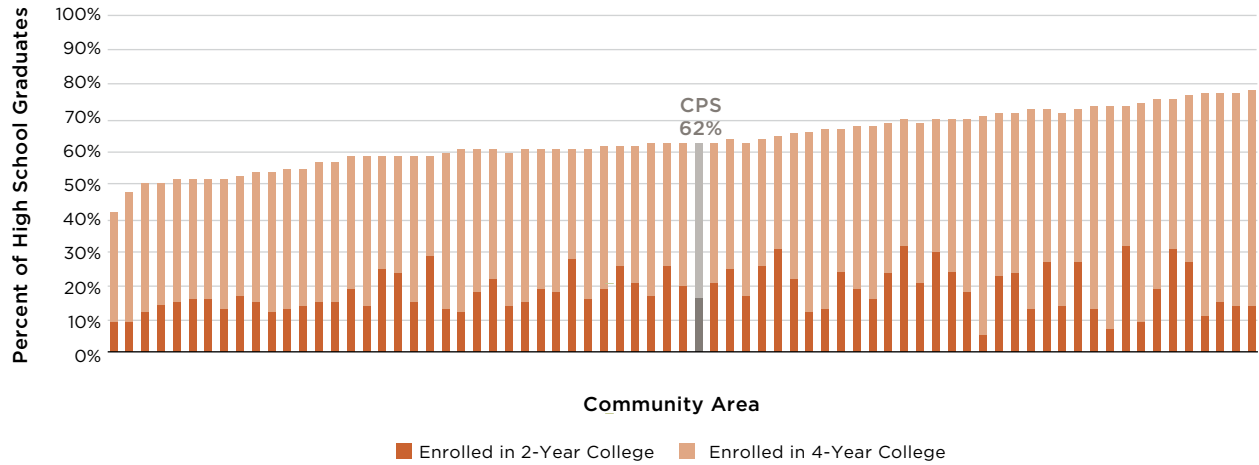
²⁶ The cohort that this section refers to is the class that graduated in the spring of 2019 and immediately enrolled in college in summer or fall of 2019. For post-secondary milestones—

such as college enrollment and graduation—students are assigned into community areas based on where they lived in the year they graduated from high school. See Appendix A for more details.

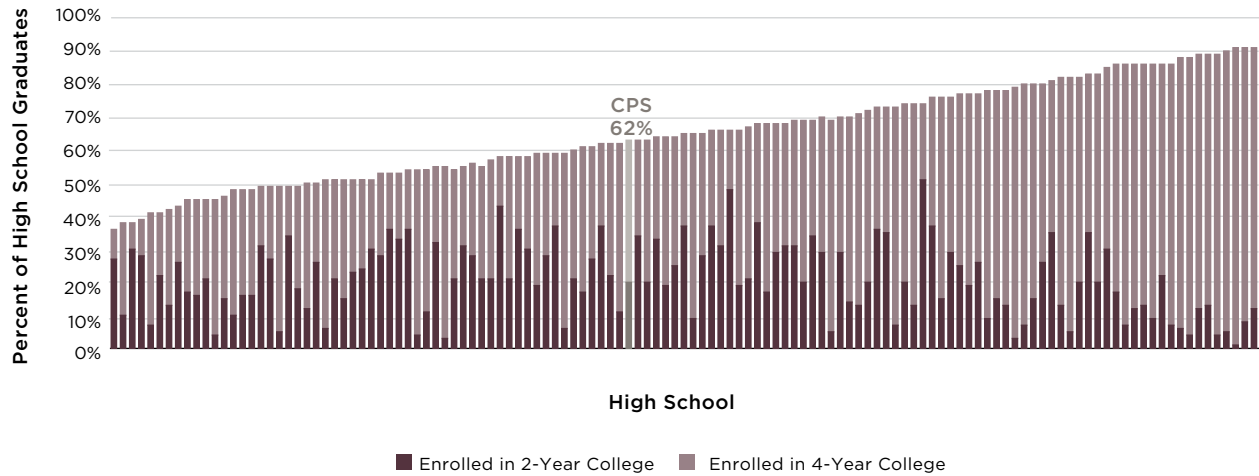
FIGURE 6

In Almost All Community Areas, More than One-Half of High School Graduates Enrolled Immediately in College; Rates Varied Much More by High Schools

A. Immediate college enrollment for CPS class of 2019, by community area



B. Immediate college enrollment for CPS class of 2019, by high school



Note: Each bar in the graph represents one community area or one high school, and they are arranged along the x-axis in increasing order of high school graduation. Community areas with fewer than 50 students are not included (Edison Park, Fuller Park, Loop, and Burnside). High schools with fewer than 25 students in the ninth-grade cohort are not included (VOISE Academy and all options schools), although their students are included in the CPS rate.

What Were 2019 College Completion Rates for Immediate College Enrollees by Community Area and High School?

The final milestone we examine is college graduation within six years, looking at certificates and two-year and four-year college degrees for students who enrolled in a two- or four-year college immediately after high school graduation. For the district as a whole, between 2011 and 2019, the college completion rate for immediate college enrollees went up by 5 percentage points, but still fewer than one-half of college enrollees (46 percent) ultimately completed college within six years in 2019.²⁷

Across the city, immediate college enrollees from all community areas are completing college. However, the completion rates among immediate college enrollees in the class of 2013 (the latest cohort for which college graduation data is available)²⁸ varied widely by community area, ranging from 24 percent to 74 percent (see **Figure 7A**). Yet even as the differences in college completion rates by community area were large, they were even larger across high schools. In almost 30 percent of high schools, the college completion rate for immediate college enrollees was less than 30 percent (29 of 99 schools), with two high schools having a rate below 10 percent. Four high schools had college completion rates above 80 percent and another two had rates between 70 and 80 percent (see **Figure 7B**).

²⁷ We do not include students who did not make an immediate transition to college because very few of these students ultimately completed a degree or certificate (Nagaoka et al., 2020).

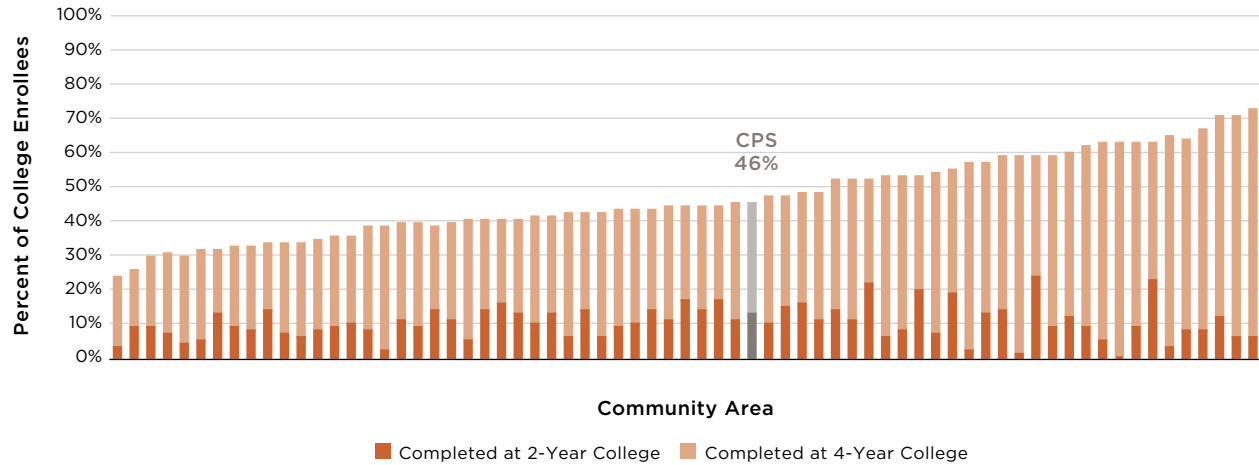
²⁸ The cohort used in this section refers to the students who graduated from CPS high school in the spring of 2013, im-

mediately enrolled in college in fall of 2013, and graduated college by spring of 2019. For post-secondary milestones—such as college enrollment and graduation—students were assigned into community areas based on where they lived in the year they graduated from high school. See Appendix A for more details.

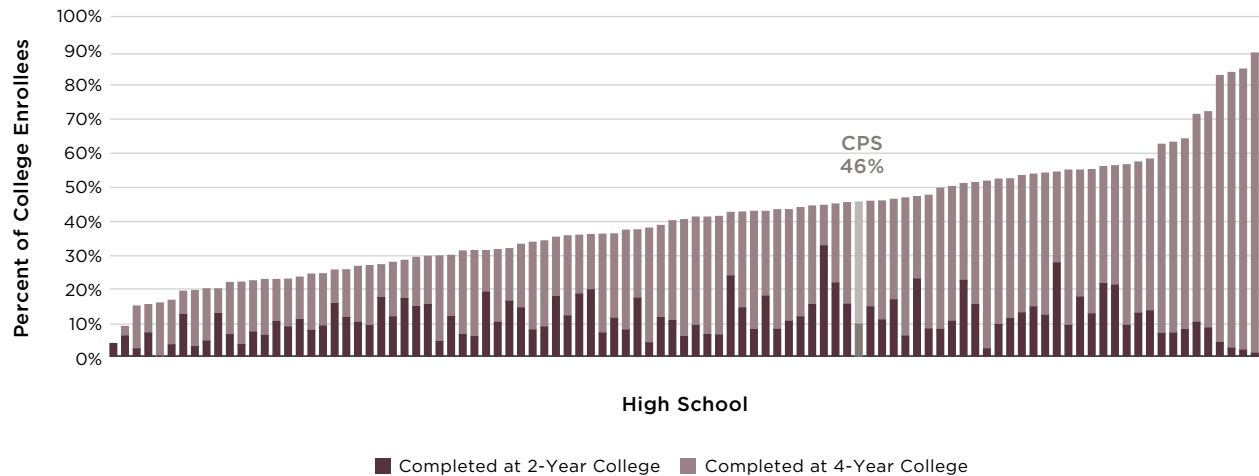
FIGURE 7

2019 College Completion Rates for Two- and Four-Year College Enrollees Varied Widely by Community Area, But Varied Even More Across High Schools

A. College completion within six years for immediate two- and four-year college enrollees in the graduating CPS class of 2013, by community area



B. College completion within six years for immediate two- and four-year college enrollees in the graduating CPS class of 2013, by high school



Note: Each bar in the graph represents one community area or one high school, and they are arranged along the x-axis in increasing order of college completion rate. Community areas with fewer than 50 2013 CPS graduates immediately enrolling in college are not included (Burnside, Edison Park, Fuller Park, Hegewisch, Loop, Mount Greenwood, Near South Side, O'Hare, and Riverdale). High schools with fewer than 25 2013 graduates immediately enrolling in college were not included (Douglass, Hirsch, Multicultural Arts, Richards, Spry Community Links, VOISE Academy, and all options schools), although their students are included in the CPS rate.

What Might College Completion Rates Look Like for 2018–19 Ninth-Graders by Community Area and High School?

We have described the attainment rates by community area for three milestones: high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion. In this section, we show the Postsecondary Attainment Index (PAI) by community area, to provide a broader perspective of the cumulative effect of the different milestones on students' likelihood of ultimately completing college. The PAI is a projection of the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders that would go on to complete any degree or certificate from a two-year or four-year college within 10 years, if current rates do not change. It makes the connections between the three attainment milestones and provides one number that summarizes their implications. To make this projection, we use the most recently available data on high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion, rather than following a single cohort across time.²⁹

When using the PAI to project the post-secondary trajectory of students by community area, the differences by the community area where students live became even clearer. While high school graduation and college enrollment rates were relatively high and looked similar across community areas, the cumulative effects of differences by community area, added to the differences in college completion rates by community area, made the patterns of projected college completion look starkly different. In 23 community areas, less than 25 percent of ninth-graders were projected to complete college within 10 years. In contrast, for students living in five community areas, their

projected likelihood of completing college in 10 years was double, at above 50 percent (see **Figure 8A**).

The patterns for the projected 10-year college completion rates for ninth-graders varied widely, particularly when we sort students by high school. By high school, the projected 10-year college completion rate ranges from less than 5 percent to almost 80 percent of ninth-graders (see **Figure 8B**). The cumulative impact of differences in high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion by community area result in some community areas where young people have a high probability of having a college credential by the time they reach their mid-20s and some community areas where very few students are likely to graduate with a college credential. The college aspirations of students have never been higher, but students' likelihood of completing college continues to be shaped by where they live, and even more by where they go to high school.

While these numbers describe the differences we see by the community area where students lived when they graduated from high school, they do not illuminate the reasons why the differences were so stark. Students coming from different community areas came to college with different financial resources, academic preparation, and knowledge of college culture. They may have lived in communities that looked very different from the colleges they attended and where many adults did not complete college. Perhaps more importantly, they may have been making different college choices and attended colleges with varying degrees of resources, policies, and environments for supporting first-generation college students and students of color. College enrollment and completion outcomes were also shaped by the practices, policies, and cultures of higher education institutions, many of which were not designed to serve first-generation students and students of color.³⁰

²⁹ For more information on how the PAI is calculated, see Nagaoka et al. (2020). For high school graduation, students were assigned the high school they attended and the community area they lived in ninth-grade. For college enrollment

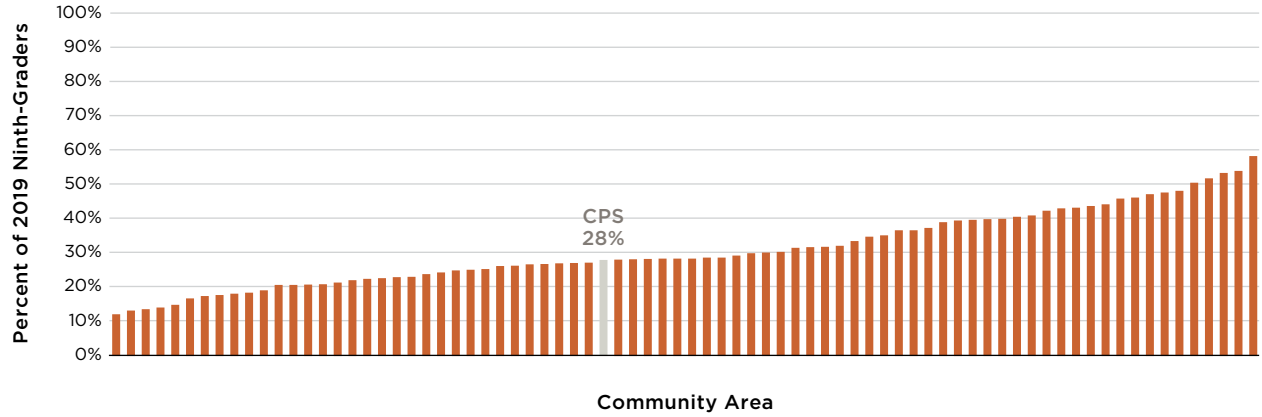
and completion, students were assigned to the high school attended and community area where they lived when they graduated from high school.

³⁰ Rudolph (1990).

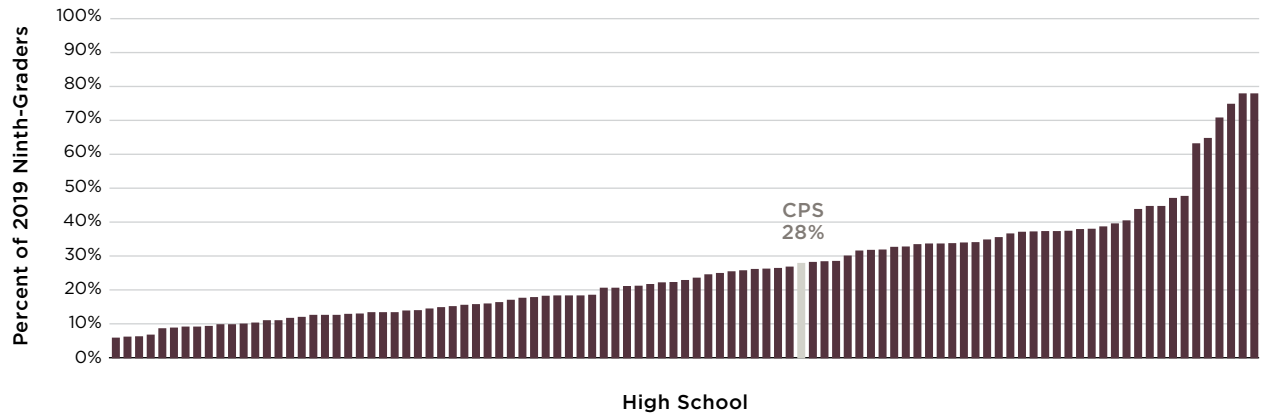
FIGURE 8

The Pattern of Projected College Completion Rates for Ninth Graders Vary Widely Across Both Community Area and High School

A. 2019 Post-secondary Attainment Index by community area



B. 2019 Post-secondary Attainment Index by high school



Note: Each bar in the graph represents one community area or high school, and they are arranged along the x-axis in increasing order of PAI.



Interpretive Summary

Our conceptualization of educational attainment is usually centered around individual students or the schools they attend. In this report, we have sought to provide a different lens by which to examine the patterns of attainment in Chicago and provide a different understanding of educational attainment.

Students' educational trajectories are not just a product of the schools they attend, but the past and current policies, practices, and beliefs that have shaped students' communities. We need to start to disentangle how experiences and opportunities in the communities where students live and how the schools they attend shape their educational trajectories. We also need to consider how school choice may shape students' educational experiences and outcomes. Through this report, we hope to raise critical questions for readers about how institutions and organizations across sectors play a role in how students are able to engage in school and how attainment is shaped by the community where students live. We also ask readers to consider how increasing levels of educational attainment can have implications not just for the futures of individual students, but also the impact it could have on their families, communities, and the city as a whole.

Many high school students in Chicago, particularly students in majority-Black community areas, are seeking high schools other than their assigned neighborhood school.

The growth in the number of high school options has deeply shaped the patterns of school enrollment. Many students, particularly students living in majority-Black community areas, opt to attend a high school other than their assigned neighborhood school, and may be traveling outside their home community to attend school. In part, the pattern is the logical result of CPS policies over the past 20 years that have greatly expanded school options, including Renaissance 2010 and the expansion of charter

schools, small schools, IB, and other specialized programs.³¹ However, this pattern also raises questions about the reasons why students in majority-Black community areas are more likely to opt out of attending their assigned school, particularly compared to students in majority-White community areas.

While the promotion of school choice may have addressed inequities in terms of expanding the number of high-quality options, the role it played in addressing or perpetuating racial inequities in community investment and residential segregation in Chicago is unclear. Beyond their role in educating young people, schools have long served as core institutions in communities, bringing together families and acting as sources of stability and connectedness for efforts to support young people.³²

Currently, some high schools serve many students from outside their community area and some community areas contain multiple high schools. The large number of schools serving students from a single community area means that community-based organizations and agencies seeking to support young adults are serving students from a multitude of high schools, which deeply complicates their efforts. With these differences, it becomes particularly important for adults working with students to be aware that the community context of their students may be very different from the community surrounding their high school. Using tools that provide information, such as the To&Through Community Milestones Tool, would be an important place to start. We also need a better understanding of how attending a school different from their assigned neighbor-

³¹ Barrow & Sartain (2017); Barrow, Sartain, & de la Torre (2020); Young et al. (2009); Gwynne & Moore (2017).

³² Ewing (2018).

hood school affects students' experiences in high school and their relationship to their community.

School choice may have provided some students the opportunity to attend high schools with higher average graduation and college enrollment rates so that rates look similar across community areas, but many students still attend high schools with low average attainment rates.

The district has seen dramatic increases in high school graduation and college enrollment rates over the past 20 years. In every community area in 2018–19, the rate of high school graduation was above 70 percent, and in almost every community area, over one-half of high school graduates were immediately enrolling in college. This represents a major shift in the level of educational attainment across community areas in the course of one generation.

Community area context clearly shapes students' experiences in high school and their attainment, but high schools play a more proximal role in helping students graduate and go on to college. Providing students the opportunity to choose their high school may have done much to ameliorate the differences in high school graduation and college enrollment across communities.³³ However, the sorting of students also means that many students still attend high schools that have low attainment rates; in about one-sixth of high schools, fewer than 70 percent of students graduated and in about one-fifth, fewer than 50 percent of graduates immediately enrolled in college. The variation across high schools suggests that much more could be done to deepen investments in high schools that serve students from under-resourced communities so that all schools are positioned to guide their students through graduation and to college.

High school choice has led to a sorting of students by school, which can be interpreted as both an endorsement of the success of students opting to attend a school that may better meet their interests and needs, and as a call to reinvest in neighborhood schools so students have better options closer to home. Many students, particularly Black students, are traveling across the city to attend high school,³⁴ when many students and their families would prefer to be in schools closer to home.³⁵ It will be important for future research to investigate one of the key

unanswered questions from this report: would students who chose to attend high schools other than their assigned school have been as successful if they stayed closer to home?

A student's community area continues to matter greatly in whether they attain a college credential.

In every community area in Chicago, students have college aspirations, and many do enroll in college and graduate. However, where students live deeply shapes their likelihood of obtaining a certificate or college diploma. In about one-third of community areas, fewer than 25 percent of ninth-graders are projected to complete a college credential within 10 years, if current attainment rates do not change, compared to over 50 percent in five community areas.

While students' likelihood of graduating from high school and going on to college was relatively similar regardless of what community area they lived in, that was not true for college completion. Providing students with the option of attending high schools that enhanced their college enrollment chances was not enough in the long term to ensure they completed college. The connection between individual students' socioeconomic status and students' access to social capital and their likelihood of attaining a post-secondary credential has been well-documented.³⁶ The patterns in college completion we see by community area suggest that using a community-based strategy on top of school-based strategies can also be useful in addressing inequities in college completion.

For colleges to ensure their students graduate, they need to understand the communities where students come from, and their effect on how students engage in and experience college life. Colleges are just beginning to grapple with how to make their campuses welcoming and supportive of first-generation college students and students of color. There is a growing awareness of the number of college students who are facing food and housing insecurity and how small, unexpected expenses can create enormous barriers to completion. The differences in college completion rates across community areas also point to the importance of community context and an unmet need for public agencies, community organizations, and colleges to provide resources where their students live.

³³ Barrow & Sartain (2019); Gwynne & Moore (2017).

³⁴ Barrow & Sartain (2019).

³⁵ Glazerman & Dotter (2017); Harris & Larsen (2017).

³⁶ Duncan & Murnane (2011); Kena et al. (2015); Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini (2004).

Conclusion

Chicago has a long history of segregation and racist policies that continue to systematically disadvantage communities of color. Education is often seen as a means to provide social mobility and ameliorate some of the inequities that continue to exist. Examining educational attainment through the lens of the community areas in which students live, as opposed to the more common comparison across the high schools students attend, complicates the story of rising educational attainment among CPS students. It reminds us that young people everywhere desire to succeed academically and have aspirations for college, and many are reaching their goals. It also demonstrates how deep-seated many of the inequities in opportunities are, particularly for students of color, and how strongly students' likelihood of graduating from college is based on where students grow up, even as more and more students make it to college campuses.

Transforming the educational futures for young people depends on looking beyond the K-12 education system and higher education, to investments in the communities where students live, guided by a sense of expanded accountability for the educational outcomes of students. It is not enough for education institutions to help students overcome inequities that exist by community; changing the educational trajectories of young people also requires directly addressing these deep-seated inequities. We need to build an ecological understanding of change and interconnect the work of people across sectors to transform how students can engage in school and envision their futures. Schools are the center of educational change but starting to address the inequities in the communities where students live is an essential step in transforming what is possible when students transition to adulthood.

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Appendix A

Methodology and Data Sources

CPS Data Source and Ninth-Grade Cohort Information

The data for this section were calculated from CPS administrative records, which are shared with the UChicago Consortium through its Master Research Services agreement with the district. 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 transferred into CPS after ninth grade were retroactively included in the cohort in which they would have been a ninth-grader and were assigned to the first CPS high school they enrolled in for the high school graduation rates included in Chapter 2.

For the high school enrollment and high school graduation milestones, students were grouped into community areas based on their home address, as it appeared in the CPS administrative records during their ninth-grade year. For post-secondary milestones—college enrollment and college graduation—students were grouped into community areas based on their address, as it appeared in the year they graduated high school. This is done under the assumption that students' post-secondary experiences were most directly shaped by the community area they lived in when they graduated high school, rather than the community area they lived in as ninth-graders. Our

groupings of students into race/ethnicity categories follow the categories used by CPS that are present in their administrative data. We acknowledge that these groupings may not be reflective of the full breadth of identities of CPS students.

Public/Private Enrollment Disaggregated by Community Area

The data for Chapter 1 was calculated from the American Community Survey's (ACS) 2018 five-year estimates on school enrollment. This data is available by census block group, and we aggregated it to the community area level for use in our analysis. The public/private breakdown is estimated in the ACS through survey responses from a sample of residents living in the census block, and the five-year estimates combine samples from surveys taken over the course of five years. This allows for more spatially valid estimates, which is key for community area level estimates, but it does compromise its temporal validity. Even with these five-year estimates, there are some community areas with high margins of error (most often due to a low population of high school students or a low percentage of private high school enrollment, which is difficult to capture through a random sample), meaning that the survey estimate is not as reliable. In **Figure B on page 10**, any community area that had a margin of error that was higher than the estimate itself is displayed as N/A.

Definition of High School Types

Neighborhood School

CPS schools that have a defined attendance boundary. All CPS students have an assigned high school, based on their residential address. If a student lives within a school's attendance boundary, it is known as their "assigned neighborhood school." Some neighborhood schools also accept students who do not live within their attendance boundary.

Neighborhood—Assigned Neighborhood School

Students who attend a neighborhood school and have a residential address within that school's attendance boundaries.

Neighborhood—Other Neighborhood School

Students who attend a neighborhood school and who have a residential address outside of that school's attendance boundaries.

Charter School

CPS schools that are publicly funded but independently run. All CPS charter schools are open enrollment, meaning students from any neighborhood are eligible for enrollment, via a lottery system.

Selective Enrollment School

CPS schools that admit students from across the city. Students must apply to gain admission; criteria for admission include students' grades and scores on standardized tests and an entrance exam, and the

majority of seats are allocated according to a tiered system based on socioeconomic status. No student is guaranteed a seat based on their home address.

Citywide School

CPS schools that do not have a defined attendance boundary. Some may offer preferential admittance to students from within a certain area. The following school types are categorized into citywide schools:

Military Academy/Service-Learning Academy School

Open enrollment CPS high schools that specialize in JROTC programming; students must meet a minimum standardized test score for admission.

Options Schools

Non-traditional CPS high schools that serve students outside of traditional school-day structures.

Specialty Schools

CPS schools that provide educational, therapeutic, and sometimes residential services to special education students with serious or complicated clinical needs.

Other Schools

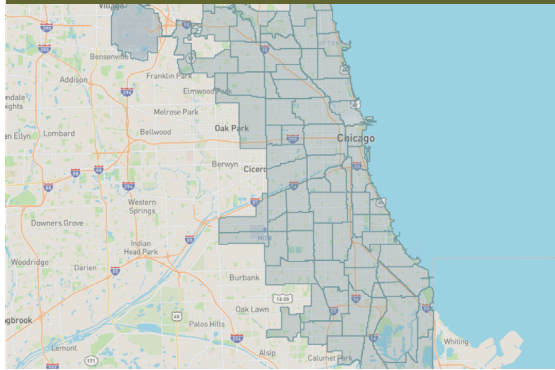
Other CPS schools that do not have specified attendance boundaries. Some, such as magnet schools, may have a curriculum specialized in a particular area—for example, fine and performing arts, STEM, or language—while others do not have a particular curricular focus. Some may have test score and/or GPA requirements for admission, while others do not have any criteria for admission.

Appendix B

To&Through Community Milestone Tool User Guide

Explore educational attainment data by community area for the CPS students who live there.

Drill down into data for each of Chicago's 77 community areas:



Today, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) freshmen from a given community area are more dispersed than ever: about three in four opt out of attending their assigned neighborhood school, with many enrolling in schools outside of their community. The To&Through Community Milestones Tool is a publicly available online data resource that fills some of the critical gaps in community-centered education data in Chicago. The tool enables users to drill down into CPS educational attainment data through the lens of Chicago's 77 community areas.

When coupled with local relationships and a deep understanding of a community area's context, in addition to census data available on the tool, it provides a starting place for a more holistic understanding of CPS students' experiences and can equip Chicago's community-based educators and leaders with vital feedback on the support provided to their students on the path to and through high school and college.

THE TOOL PROVIDES DATA ON 5 KEY MILESTONES FOR HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE SUCCESS:

FRESHMAN ENROLLMENT

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

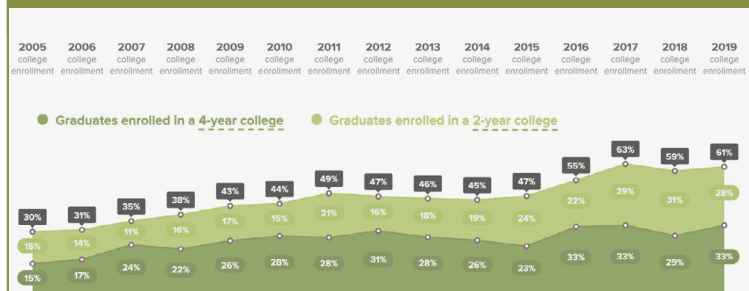
COLLEGE PERSISTENCE

COLLEGE COMPLETION

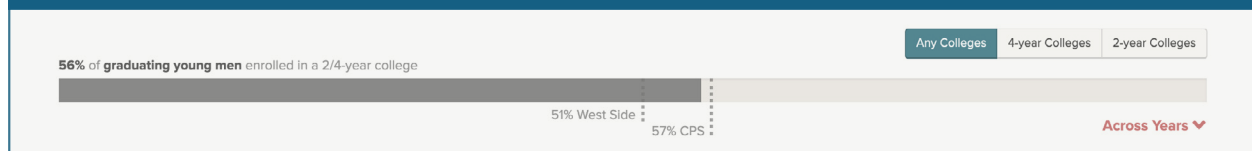
Learn which CPS high schools & colleges enroll the most students from your community:

High School	Number of Enrollees	Percentage of Enrollees
Juarez	156	14%
Farragut	127	12%
World Language	90	8%
Infinity Math/Science	88	8%
Greater Lawndale HS	74	7%
Other	552	51%

Explore trends over time in your community:



Understand educational attainment outcomes for different groups of students in your community:





We recommend reflecting on the following questions while exploring the tool:

- How is high school choice exercised by families in my community?
- What factors outside of students' in-school experiences impact my community's data?
- What community strengths contribute to our students' success?
- How do the data confirm or challenge what I know about my community's educational choices and outcomes?

USING THE TOOL, USERS CAN INTERACT WITH DIFFERENT COMMUNITY AREAS' DATA TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

<p>FRESHMAN ENROLLMENT First-time freshmen who enrolled in a CPS high school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many ninth graders in my community attend CPS, and how has that changed over time? • What types of high schools (neighborhood, selective, charter, or citywide) do students in my community most commonly attend?
<p>HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION First-time CPS freshmen who graduated from high school within four years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the high school graduation rate in my community area changed over time? • Do high school graduation rates differ by students' race/ethnicity and gender?
<p>COLLEGE ENROLLMENT CPS high school graduates who immediately enrolled in two- & four-year colleges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students in my community immediately enrolling in college? How has college enrollment changed for students over the last decade? • What colleges are students in my community area most commonly attending?
<p>COLLEGE PERSISTENCE Immediate college enrollees who remained enrolled for two consecutive years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percentage of immediate college enrollees are still enrolled after two years of college? • How have persistence rates differed for students that attend two-year or four-year colleges?
<p>COLLEGE COMPLETION Immediate college enrollees who complete a college degree or credential in six years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percentage of college enrollees complete a degree or certificate within six years? • How have college completion rates changed over time for students from my community area, and do rates differ by students' race/ethnicity and gender?

To examine the same data by high school, visit the To&Through High School Milestones Tool: toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/hs

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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 Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice.

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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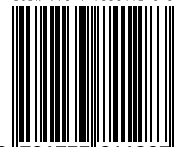
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