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# The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students: 2020



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# Introduction

Education plays a powerful role in shaping young people’s experiences, and its effects extend across their lifetime: students who complete higher levels of education are more likely to have longer, healthier, and more economically secure lives.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this annual report on the educational attainment of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students is to provide practitioners and other stakeholders with an understanding of how CPS students are progressing on the path to and through high school and college. In particular, we examine three key milestones—high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion—and track how rates on these milestones have changed across time. Where possible, we disaggregate the data by race/ethnicity and gender, disability status, and, for the first time, English Learner (EL) status to understand which students face more barriers to educational attainment and where different strategies and supports are needed.

To assess the most recent available rates of high school and college attainment in tandem, we calculate the Post-secondary Attainment Index (PAI), which represents the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders that would complete any degree or certificate from a two-year or four-year college within 10 years, if current rates of attainment were to hold constant during the next decade. The PAI is not a true cohort attainment rate, in that it does not follow one single cohort of students for 10 consecutive years. Instead, to provide more

timely information, it combines information from more recent cohorts to suggest what their college outcomes might be, if the most recent available rates of attainment were to hold constant during the next decade.

In 2019, nearly 75 percent of CPS ninth-graders indicated that they aspired to complete at least an associate degree or certificate.<sup>2</sup> In this annual analysis, we report descriptive data that measures the extent to which the district has provided students with the quality of education needed to achieve these aspirations.

Disaggregated rates of educational attainment are also a powerful measure of whether CPS students are being served equitably by their schools and higher education institutions, however information alone isn’t enough to change policies and practices. Our hope for this report is that the inequitable outcomes we show spur a critical examination of students’ opportunities and experiences in schools, and adults and institutions are held responsible for making changes to the system. At the same time, the data in this report represent individual students, who every day face—and overcome—systemic barriers. In making changes to practices and policies inside and outside of schools, students’ voices should be considered as experts of their own lived experiences.

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<sup>1</sup> Trostel & Chase Smith (2015).

<sup>2</sup> University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium) analysis of the 2019 *5Essentials* Survey. In 2019, 74.1 percent of CPS ninth-graders indicated

that they wanted to complete at least an associate degree or certificate. The survey’s response rate was 81.4 percent, and 78.4 percent of respondents answered this question.

## Student Attainment Data During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our students renders data on the challenges they face more important than ever. The conditions brought upon by the pandemic affected almost every aspect of students' lives, whether financial, social, academic, or emotional. These conditions shaped students' educational trajectories in significant ways, from whether or not students graduated from high school to whether or not and where they enrolled in college.

Because of changes to the district's grading policies in response to the pandemic,<sup>A</sup> CPS students' course grades for the spring semester of the 2019–20 school year do not provide the same information that their course grades did before the pandemic. For this

reason, we do not report a 2020 Freshman OnTrack<sup>B</sup> rate in this analysis. Because of the change in grading practices, we exclude students' spring 2020 course grades from the calculation of students' GPAs on the To&Through Online Tool,<sup>C</sup> a public website which enables users to interact with data on the educational attainment of different student groups in CPS at the individual school level. Both this report and the To&Through Online Tool provide 2020 data on CPS students' rates of high school graduation and college enrollment, which reflect the onset of the pandemic, as well as 2019 data on CPS students' rates of college completion, which reflect the most recent data available.

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**A** For more information about changes to CPS grading policies during the spring of 2020, please see CPS's April 2020 press release, <http://cps.edu/press-releases/chicago-public-schools-releases-equity-focused-guidance-on-grading-graduation-requirements-and-promotion-policy/>

**B** 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 (math, English, social studies, or science) and has earned enough credits to be promoted to tenth grade (five credits).

**C** See <http://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/hs>

# Educational Attainment Milestones

## High School Graduation

Graduating from high school is a key milestone along the road to post-secondary success, and tracking this metric over time provides an important measure of the district's improvement in guiding its students to high school completion. **Figure 1** shows the percentage of students who graduated from high school within four years. We include first-time ninth-graders, charter students, and students in Options schools,<sup>3</sup> as well as students who transferred into CPS after ninth grade. We exclude students who transferred out of the district.<sup>4</sup> Note that the class of 2020 completed high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on how this metric is calculated, see **Appendix B on p.28**.

## College Enrollment

CPS graduates who immediately enroll in college are significantly more likely to complete a college degree or certificate compared to those who do not immediately enroll.<sup>5</sup> At the district level, tracking college enroll-

ment rates over time is an important indicator of the district's improvement in supporting its students to take the next step in their education.

**Figure 2** shows the percentage of CPS graduates who enrolled in a two-year or four-year college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. For more information on how this metric is calculated, see **Appendix B on p.28**. Note that the class of 2020 enrolled in college during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

Enrollments from two institutions typically attended by many CPS graduates, North Park University and Lincoln University, are missing from 2020 rates, as these institutions had not yet reported fall 2020 enrollments to National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) at the time of this report. In 2019, 146 students immediately enrolled at these two institutions. If a similar number of 2020 graduates enrolled at these institutions, the actual district-wide immediate enrollment rate would be 0.6 percentage points higher than the rate reported here.

**3** Options schools serve students for whom the traditional school structure or schedule does not serve well, who are significantly behind on credits, or who have been expelled. A few Options schools have graduation requirements that differ from CPS, but the vast majority have course credit distribution requirements that are similar to CPS and students who graduate through Options schools receive a standard CPS diploma. University of Chicago Education Lab (2021).

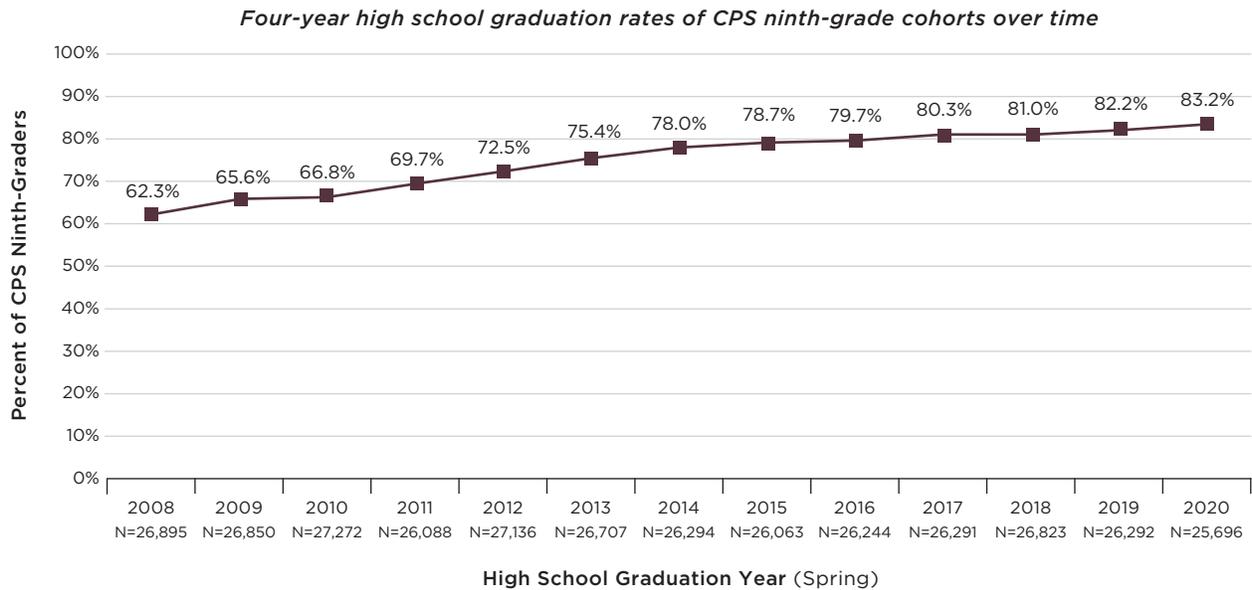
**4** For the cohort of students who started as ninth-graders in 2016, 12 percent transferred out of the district before reaching high school graduation.

**5** Nagaoka, Lee, Usher, & Seeskin (2021).

**6** For more information on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on college enrollment and retention, see Nagaoka, Mahaffie, Usher, & Seeskin (2021).

**FIGURE 1**

**The Four-Year CPS High School Graduation Rate Is at an All-Time High**



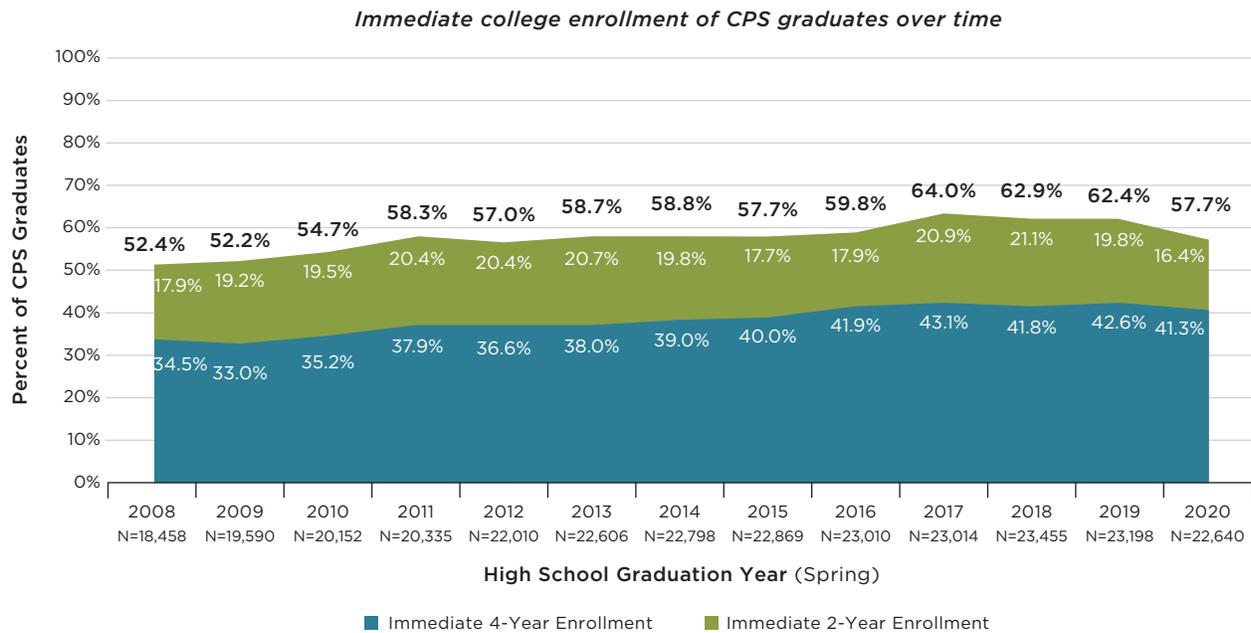
**Note:** All CPS high school students, including charter and Options school students, are included in this analysis. Students are counted as high school graduates if they completed high school within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year of high school—the 2020 high school graduation year rate, for example, represents students who began high school in the fall of 2016. Ns represent the total number of ninth-graders in each cohort. Students who left CPS for a valid leave reason during high school are excluded from this analysis.

**Figure 1 Takeaways**

- The four-year high school graduation rate increased significantly since 2008, from 62.3 percent to 83.2 percent.
- Increases in the high school graduation rate have been more gradual since 2014, at the rate of about 1 percentage point per year.

**FIGURE 2**

**Both Four- and Two-Year Enrollment Rates Dipped During the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic**



**Note:** These are immediate college enrollment rates for all CPS high school graduates, including those who graduated high school in five or six years.

**Figure 2 Takeaways**

- **Four-year college enrollment increased since 2008, but two-year college enrollment has seen more fluctuations.** Since 2008, the proportion of CPS graduates enrolling immediately in a four-year college increased about 6.8 total percentage points, and the proportion enrolling immediately in a two-year college fell about 1.5 total percentage points (mostly due to the decline from 2019–20).
- **The rate of total immediate college enrollment declined from 2019 to 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.** Immediate enrollment was 62 percent for the class of 2019 and 58 percent for the class of 2020.
  - **This decline was driven by a greater decrease in the rate of immediate enrollment into two-year colleges** (from 20 percent in 2019 to 16 percent in 2020) than the rate of immediate enrollment into four-year colleges (from 43 percent in 2019 to 41 percent in 2020).
- **Nationally, as reported by the NSC, immediate enrollment into two-year colleges declined by 13 percent in 2020, while the rate declined by 17 percent in 2020 for CPS.** Nationally, immediate enrollment into four-year colleges declined by 3 percent for public four-year colleges and 5.2 percent for private four-year colleges in 2020, while overall immediate enrollment into four-year colleges declined by 3 percent in 2020 for CPS.<sup>7,8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Causey, Harnack-Eber, Ryu, & Shapiro (2021).

<sup>8</sup> For more information on how immediate four-year college enrollment changed by institution type for CPS graduates in 2020, see Nagaoka, Mahaffie, Usher, & Seeskin (2021).

## College Completion

Completing a college degree or post-secondary certificate is increasingly a prerequisite for social and economic stability in the 21st century.<sup>9</sup> With increasing numbers of CPS graduates enrolling in college, tracking whether or not they are completing a degree or certificate is an important measure of how well both K-12 and higher education institutions are supporting students to succeed.

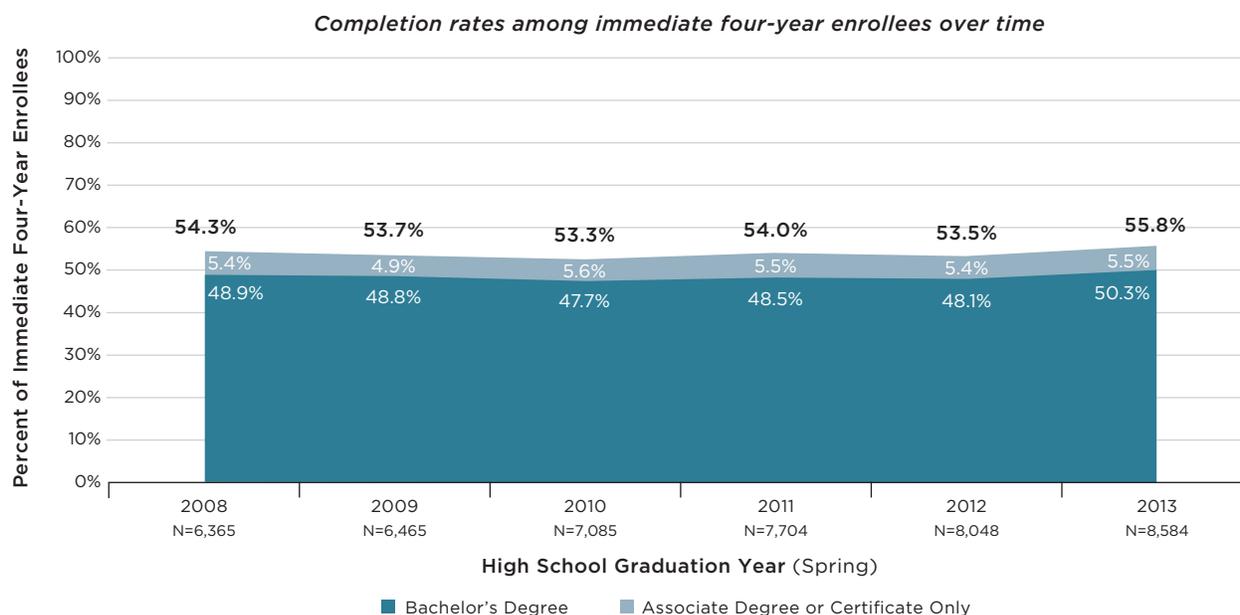
We show college completion by where and whether students from the CPS graduating class of 2013 were

enrolled immediately after high school graduation.

**Figures 3 and 4** show how many students who immediately enrolled in a four-year college or a two-year college, respectively, completed a degree or certificate. **Figure 5** shows how many delayed and non-enrollees<sup>10</sup> completed a degree or certificate. We define college completion as completing an associate degree, bachelor's degree, or certificate from a two-year or four-year college within six years of high school graduation. For more information on how this metric is calculated, see **Appendix B** on p.29.

**FIGURE 3**

**College Degree and Certificate Completion Rates for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees Increased for the CPS Class of 2013**



**Note:** These are college completion rates for CPS high school graduates who graduated high school within six years. Students are counted as having completed college if they completed a credential within six years of graduating from high school. For example, our 2013 rate includes all 2013 CPS graduates who completed a degree or credential by spring of 2019. The bachelor's degree category includes students who completed an associate degree or certificate in addition to their bachelor's degree. Fewer than 2 percent of 2013 CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year institution completed both a bachelor's degree and an associate degree/certificate, which means that another 49 percent of these graduates completed a bachelor's degree only.

### Figure 3 Takeaways

- After remaining steady for several years, the degree completion rate for immediate four-year enrollees rose slightly in the most recent year (students who graduated from CPS in 2013) from 54 percent to 56 percent, representing close to an additional 200 students completing college.
- The national rate reported by the National Center for Education Statistics was higher than the CPS rate: nationally, 63 percent of students who started at a four-year institution in the fall of 2013 completed a four-year degree within six years.<sup>11</sup>

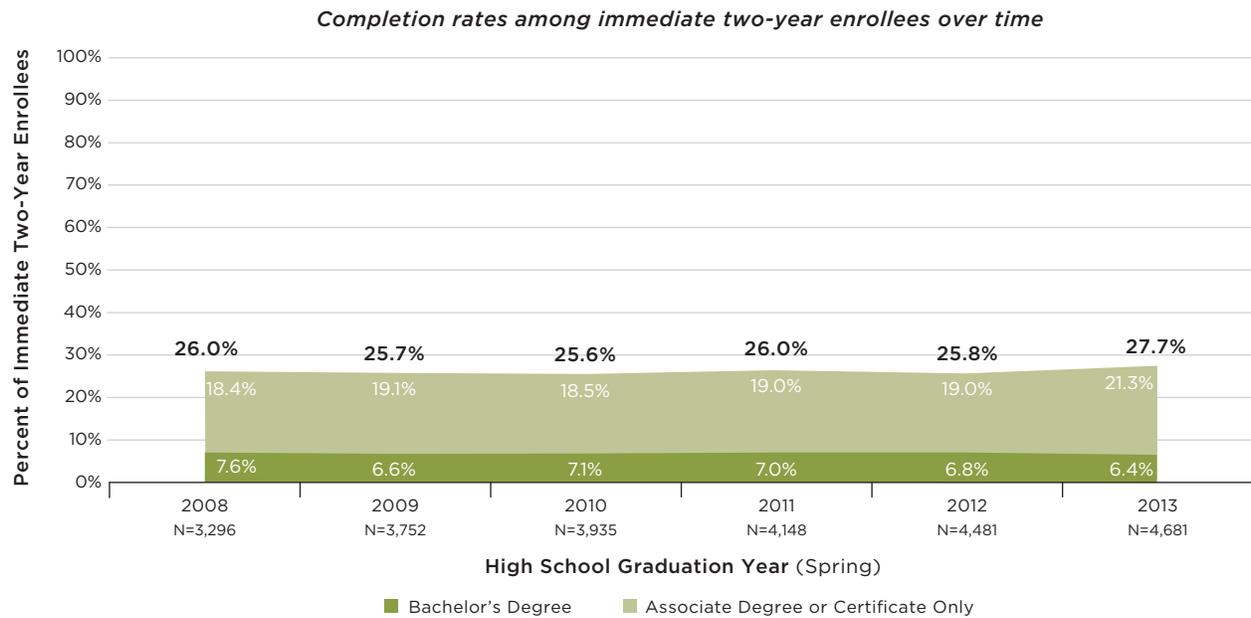
<sup>9</sup> Trostel & Chase Smith (2015); Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Gulish (2016).

<sup>10</sup> We define delayed enrollees as graduates who delayed entry into college, and we define non-enrollees as graduates who did not enroll in college within six years of high school graduation.

<sup>11</sup> National numbers are not a direct comparison with CPS, as the national data represents the completion rate, from first institution attended, of first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students at four-year or two-year institutions. See National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), Tables 326.20 and 326.10.

**FIGURE 4**

**College Degree and Certificate Completion Rates for Immediate Two-Year Enrollees Increased, But Were Lower Overall Than for Immediate Four-Year Enrollees, for the CPS Class of 2013**



**Note:** These are college completion rates for CPS high school graduates who graduated high school within six years. Students are counted as having completed college if they completed a credential within six years of graduating from high school. For example, our 2013 rate includes all 2013 CPS graduates who completed a degree or credential by spring of 2019. Although calculating a six-year completion rate for two-year programs is not standard, we do so here to maintain consistency with our other completion metrics. The bachelor's degree category includes students who completed an associate degree or certificate in addition to their bachelor's degree. About 4 percent of 2013 CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year institution completed both a bachelor's degree and an associate degree/certificate, which means that another 2.4 percent of these graduates completed a bachelor's degree only.

**Figure 4 Takeaways**

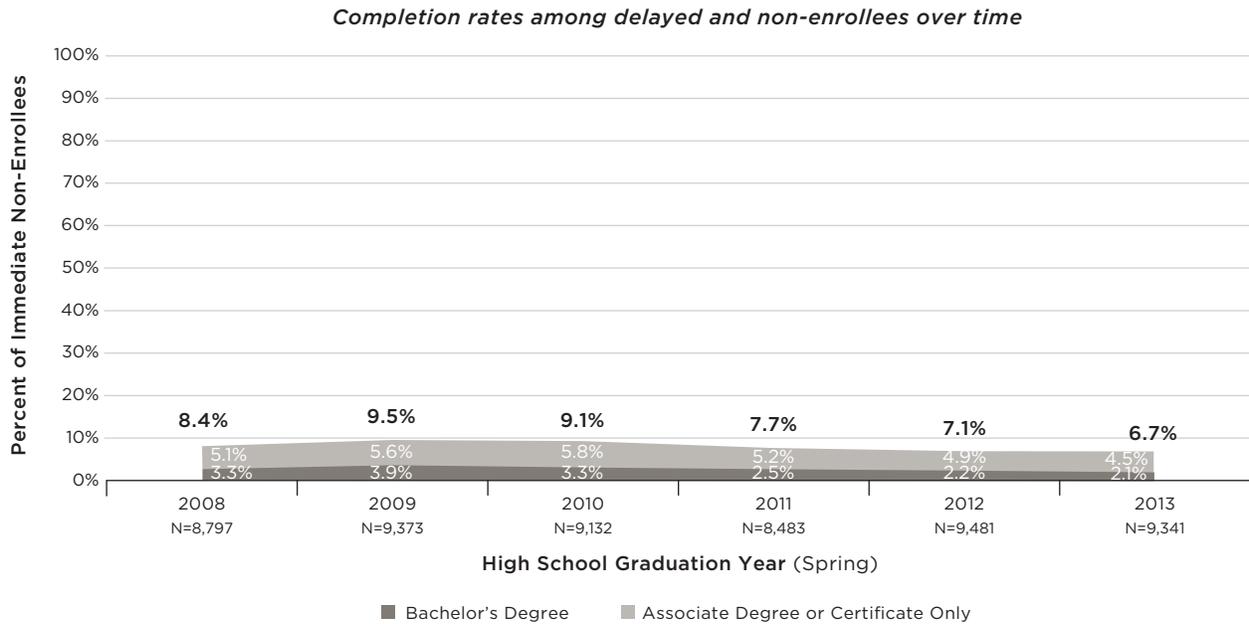
- After remaining steady for several years, the degree completion rates rose slightly in the most recent year for graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college (from 26 percent to 28 percent, representing close to an additional 100 students completing college).
- The national rate was higher than the CPS rate: nationally, 33 percent of students who started at a two-year institution in the fall of 2013 completed a two-year degree or certificate.<sup>12</sup>
- CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college were half as likely as immediate four-year enrollees to complete a college degree or certificate: 28 percent of immediate two-year enrollees in the class of 2013 completed college by spring 2019, compared to 56 percent of immediate four-year enrollees.
- The large majority—nearly 80 percent—of degree completions for CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college were associate degrees or certificates.

<sup>12</sup> National numbers are not a direct comparison with CPS, as the national data represents the completion rate, from first institution attended, of first-time, full-time degree/certificate-

seeking students at four-year or two-year institutions. See National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), Tables 326.20 and 326.10.

**FIGURE 5**

**College Degree and Certificate Completion Rates for Delayed and Non-Enrollees Have Declined Since 2009**



**Note:** These are college completion rates for CPS high school graduates who graduated high school within six years. Students are counted as having completed college if they completed a credential within six years of graduating from high school. For example, our 2013 rate includes all 2013 CPS graduates who completed a degree or credential by spring of 2019. Component rates, as labelled, may not sum to the total rate due to rounding. The bachelor's degree category includes students who completed an associate degree or certificate in addition to their bachelor's degree. About 0.3 percent of 2013 CPS graduates who were delayed or non-enrollees completed both a bachelor's degree and an associate degree/certificate, which means that another 1.8 percent of these graduates completed a bachelor's degree only. We define delayed enrollees as graduates who delayed entry into college, and non-enrollees as graduates who did not enroll in college, within six years of high school graduation.

**Figure 5 Takeaways**

- The degree completion rate for students who delayed enrollment or did not enroll remained relatively steady at approximately 7 percent for the last three cohorts.
- Students in this group were more likely to complete associate degrees and certificates than bachelor's degrees.

# Post-Secondary Attainment Index

The Post-secondary Attainment Index (PAI) synthesizes the most recent available rates of high school and college attainment. The index represents 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 the district's current rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion<sup>13</sup> were not to change (see Figure 6).

The 2020 PAI synthesizes four-year high school graduation data for the class of 2020, immediate college enrollment data for the class of 2020,<sup>14</sup> and six-year college outcomes for the class of 2013.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, the index is not a measure of actual attainment for any one cohort of students, nor is it intended to predict attainment for any one cohort of students.

However, if current rates of high school and college attainment were to hold constant over the next decade, the system would indeed produce these outcomes for current CPS ninth-graders (see Figure 7). Improvement

is possible, but it is contingent upon an increase in the CPS four-year high school graduation, immediate college enrollment, and/or six-year college completion rate.

## Rates of Attainment Used to Calculate the PAI

Earlier in this report, we examined the most recent available college enrollment and completion rates for students who graduated from high school within six years, but the college enrollment and completion rates used to calculate the PAI exclude students who took more than four years to graduate from high school. We exclude these students because the college enrollment and completion rates used to calculate the PAI would otherwise include students from multiple cohorts and potentially double count students who took longer than four years to graduate. To find the overall high school and college attainment rates used to calculate the PAI, see Table A.1 in Appendix A on p.26.

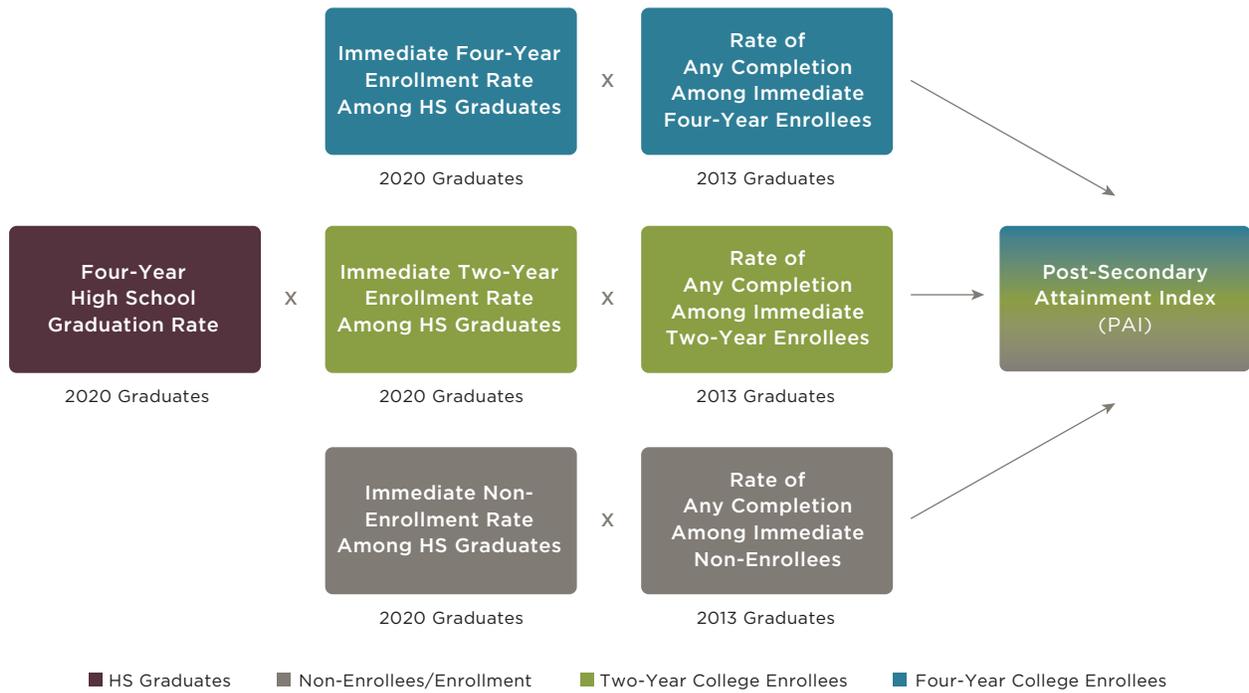
<sup>13</sup> We define college completion as the proportion of two-year and four-year college enrollees who completed a degree or certificate within six years of high school graduation, and we define a degree or certificate as a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate.

<sup>14</sup> In the previous iteration of this report, we calculated the PAI using high school graduation data for the class of 2019 and college enrollment data for the class of 2018. This year, we

are able to calculate the PAI using high school graduation and college enrollment data for the same cohort (the class of 2020), due to the earlier availability of NSC fall enrollment data relative to previous years.

<sup>15</sup> We use six-year college outcomes for the class of 2013 because this cohort of CPS graduates had the most recent data available at the time of this analysis.

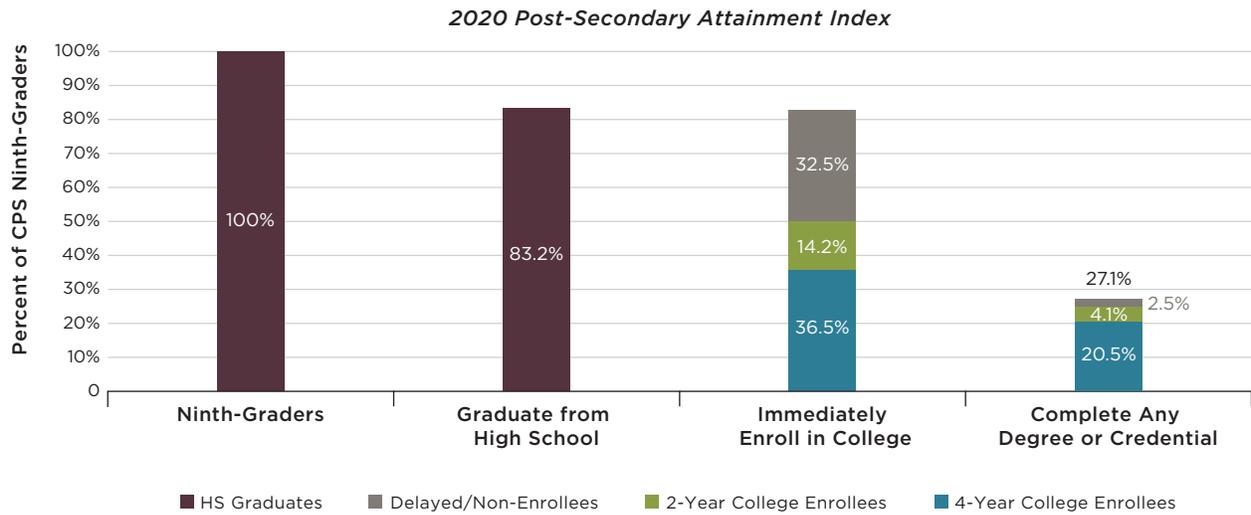
**FIGURE 6**  
**Post-Secondary Attainment Index (PAI)**



**Note:** The enrollment and completion rates used in calculating the PAI (available in Table 1) do not match those included in Figures 2-5. This is because the denominators of all college enrollment and completion rates used in the PAI are limited to students who graduated from high school within four years, while the enrollment and completion rates reported in Figures 2-5 include students who graduated high school in five or six years.

**FIGURE 7**

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



**Note:** 'Delayed/non-enrollees' include students who did not immediately enroll in college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation. We define delayed enrollees as graduates who delayed entry into college, and non-enrollees as graduates who did not enroll in college, within six years of high school graduation.

**Figure 7 Takeaways**

- If current rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion were not to change over the next 10 years, 20 percent of current CPS ninth-graders would complete a bachelor’s degree and another 7 percent would complete an associate degree or certificate within 10 years (when they will be approximately 25 years old).<sup>16</sup> **Together, this means that the 2020 PAI is 27 percent.**<sup>17</sup>
- **If rates were not to change from 2020 rates, of 100 current CPS ninth-graders, 83 would graduate from high school within four years.**
  - Of those 83 graduates, approximately 37 would immediately enroll in a four-year college, 14 would immediately enroll in a two-year college, and 32 would not immediately enroll in college.
  - **At the end of six years post-graduation, a total of 27 of the original 83 graduates would have completed any credential**—20 of the 37 graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college, four of the 14 graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college, and three of the 32 graduates who did not immediately enroll in college.

**16** For data used to calculate the Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Index (BDAl), see Table A.2 in Appendix A.

**17** As a point of comparison, nationally, 36.9 percent of adults between 25 and 34 years old hold a bachelor’s degree. However, this is not a direct comparison because the PAI

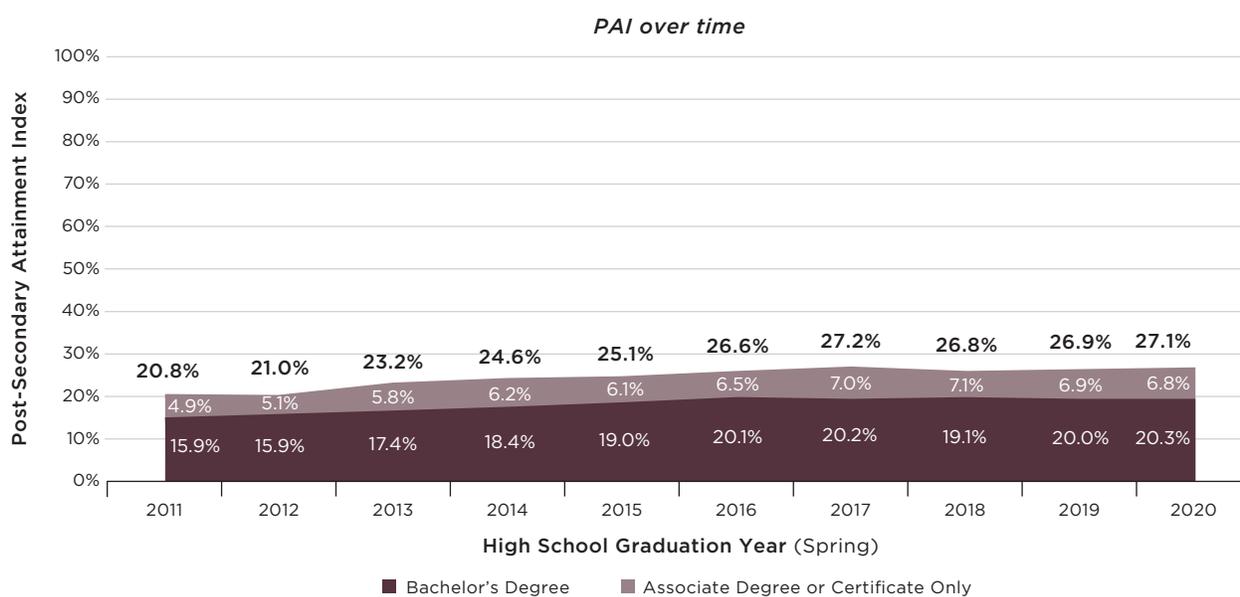
includes both students who completed a bachelor’s degree as well as students who completed an associate degree or certificate. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Educational%20Attainment&y=2019&tid=ACST1Y2019.S1501>

## PAI Over Time

We track the PAI over time to assess year-over-year improvements in the most recent available rates of high school and college attainment. Note that the PAI is not intended to predict attainment for any one cohort of students. For example, for the most recent ninth-grade cohort for which actual completion data is available

(2009–10), the PAI was 23.2 percent (see Figure 8), but increases in the high school graduation and immediate college enrollment rates—as well as slight increases in completion rates among immediate enrollees—meant that the actual completion rate for the 2009–10 cohort of CPS ninth-graders was 32.6 percent.

**FIGURE 8**  
The PAI Improved Steadily Between 2011 and 2017, but Slightly Declined Between 2017 and 2020



**Note:** The bachelor's degree category includes students who completed an associate degree or certificate in addition to their bachelor's degree. To calculate these historical rates, we applied the method that we used to calculate the 2020 PAI retroactively to all years of data, rather than using indices that were calculated in the past. For example, the 2020 PAI is calculated using the 2020 high school graduation rate, the 2020 college enrollment rates, and the college completion rates for 2013 high school graduates, so the 2011 PAI is calculated using the 2011 high school graduation rate, the 2011 college enrollment rates, and the rates of completion for 2004 high school graduates. For rates of high school graduation, immediate college enrollment, and college completion used to calculate the PAI over time, see Table A.1 in Appendix A.

### Figure 8 Takeaways

- The PAI has held relatively stable in recent years because the district's steady gains in high school graduation have been offset by declining rates of immediate college enrollment since 2017 and relatively stagnant rates of college completion.
- Additionally, it is important to note that only the high school graduation and immediate college enrollment rates used to calculate the 2020 PAI reflect the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, because the most recent available data on college completion is for 2019.

# Educational Attainment for Different Student Groups

Before examining rates of attainment for different student groups, it is critical to state plainly that the differences in attainment that we see across groups should not be interpreted as a reflection of the capacity of CPS students, families, and communities. These differences 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. There is a considerable body of research that has informed our understanding of the role that systemic racism plays in Chicago's schools and history, which we recommend as a starting place for readers seeking to learn more.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the differences in attainment that we see across groups are due to issues of racial equity within the district that reflect the broader context of systemic racism in which schools are situated. The district, however, holds the most responsibility for these differences, and future improvements in differences of attainment for students with different races/ethnicities and genders will indicate the district's progress toward its goals around equity. It is important to acknowledge that many CPS students achieve educational attainment milestones despite significant systemic obstacles to their success, but without conversations and action to dismantle the oppression inherent in our current systems, the current state of educational attainment in CPS will not improve.

Further, 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,<sup>19</sup> gender,<sup>20</sup> disability status, and other student identifiers.

## Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Like the PAI for the overall district, we calculate the PAI for each race/ethnicity and gender group using the most recent available data for each milestone: four-year high school graduation data for the class of 2020, immediate college enrollment data for the class of 2020, and six-year college outcomes for the class of 2013 (see Table 1).<sup>21</sup> For this reason, the index is a hypothetical projection of future attainment if current rates remain the same, and not a measure of actual attainment for any one cohort of students. Furthermore, while data for the class of 2020 reflect the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, six-year college outcome data for the class of 2013 do not reflect the pandemic's impact.

<sup>18</sup> There are many places to begin a journey of understanding the role that systemic racism plays in Chicago's schools and history. The following publications are a few of those that the authors have found helpful: Ewing (2018); Payne (2008); Todd-Breland (2018); Chicago Beyond Equity Series (2019); Drake & Clayton (1945); Henricks, Lewis, Arenas, & Lewis (2017); Moore (2016); Rothstein (2017); Sampson (2011); Wilson (1987).

<sup>19</sup> 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. The racial categories available in our data are limited and therefore do not accurately reflect the full spectrum of races and ethnicities embodied by CPS students.

<sup>20</sup> Historically, CPS has collected data that groups students into one of two gender categories: male and female. 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.

<sup>21</sup> Like the PAI for the overall district, the college enrollment and completion rates used to calculate the PAI for each race/ethnicity and gender group exclude students who took more than four years to graduate from high school.

A 2019 survey<sup>22</sup> of CPS ninth-graders showed that nearly 75 percent aspired to obtain at least an associate degree or certificate. In the key takeaways below,

we use this percentage as a benchmark with which to compare the PAI for different groups of students.

**TABLE 1**  
**Although Students in Every Race/Ethnicity and Gender Group Graduated from High School at a Rate Above 75 Percent, No Group Reached a PAI of 75 Percent**

Component Rates of the 2020 PAI, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender								
	2020 CPS Graduates				2013 CPS Graduates (Any Degree or Certificate Completion Rate)			Post-Secondary Attainment Index
	4-Year High School Graduation Rate	Immediate 4-Year College Enrollment Rate	Immediate 2-Year College Enrollment Rate	Delayed/ Non-College Enrollment Rate	Immediate 4-Year College Enrollees	Immediate 2-Year College Enrollees	Delayed/ Non-College Enrollees	
All Students	83.2%	43.9%	17.1%	39.0%	56.2%	28.7%	7.6%	27.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	94.0%	70.2%	13.6%	16.2%	85.8%	54.5%	14.3%	65.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	89.5%	56.4%	19.7%	23.9%	79.3%	40.3%	16.3%	50.6%
Black Young Women	84.5%	47.2%	11.6%	41.2%	48.3%	19.9%	5.7%	23.2%
Black Young Men	75.5%	37.5%	9.6%	52.9%	36.5%	14.1%	4.2%	13.0%
Latina Young Women	87.5%	44.3%	23.8%	31.9%	62.3%	37.8%	11.5%	35.2%
Latino Young Men	79.4%	33.3%	20.5%	46.1%	52.2%	30.7%	7.1%	21.4%
White Young Women	93.0%	62.8%	15.0%	22.3%	81.2%	49.0%	12.7%	56.9%
White Young Men	87.8%	57.2%	15.5%	27.3%	72.4%	37.1%	12.5%	44.4%

**Note:** The high school graduation rates used in calculating the PAI are four-year high school graduation rates, and the denominators of all college enrollment and completion rates are also limited to students who graduated from high school within four years. For this reason, the enrollment and completion rates used in calculating the PAI in this table, as well as overall CPS rates (available in Appendix A, Table A.2) do not match those included in Figures 2-5 in this report, which show college enrollment and completion rates for all CPS high school graduates, including those who graduated high school in five or six years.

<sup>22</sup> UChicago Consortium analysis of the 2019 *5Essentials* Survey. In 2019, 74.1 percent of CPS ninth-graders indicated that they wanted to complete at least an associate degree or certificate.

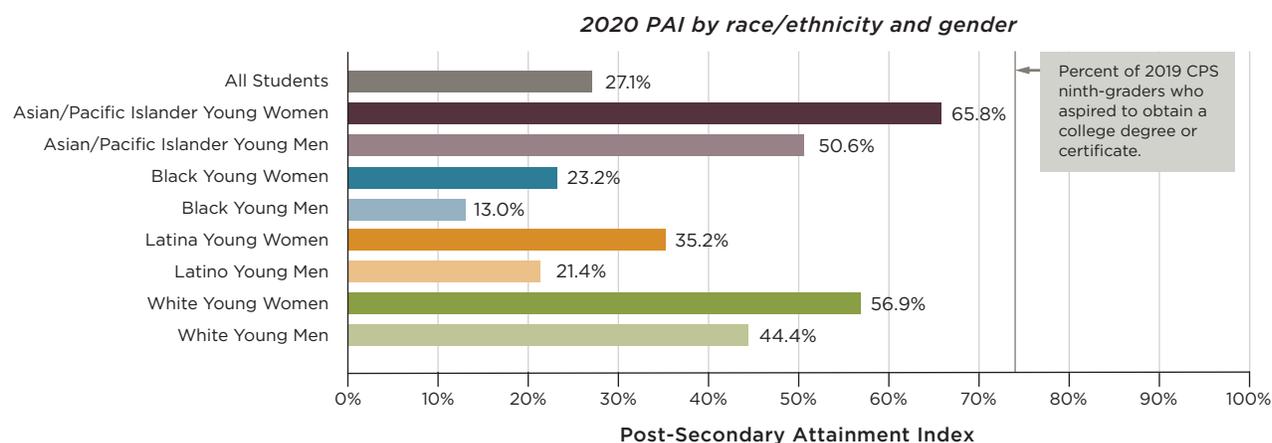
The survey's response rate was 81.4 percent, and 78.4 percent of respondents answered this question.

## Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Before examining the PAI for different student groups, it is critical to restate that the PAI should be understood as the product of the cumulative effects of oppressive policies and structures in high schools and colleges. We

report these numbers to contribute to critical examinations about how high schools and colleges can change practices and disrupt policies that have contributed to these inequitable outcomes. The PAI also reflects the broader context of systemic racism that differentially impacts rates of attainment by race/ethnicity and gender.

**FIGURE 9**  
Young Men of All Racial/Ethnic Groups Have a PAI Lower Than Young Women of the Same Race/Ethnicity



**Note:** The high school graduation rates used in calculating the PAI is the four-year high school graduation rate, and the denominators of all college enrollment and completion rates are also limited to students who graduated from high school within four years. For this reason, the enrollment and completion rates used in calculating the PAI (available in Appendix A, Table A.2) do not match those included in Figures 2–5 in this report, which show college enrollment and completion rates for all CPS high school graduates, including those who graduated high school in five or six years. A UChicago Consortium analysis of the 2019 *5Essentials* Survey showed that 74.1 percent of CPS ninth-graders indicated that they wanted to complete at least an associate degree or certificate. This percentage can be used as a benchmark with which to make comparisons. Data for Multiracial, Native American/Alaskan Native, and students who didn't report their race/ethnicity in CPS records are not included because we suppressed rates for groups of fewer than 100 students to avoid reporting fluctuations in rates that do not reflect consistent trends in student outcomes.

### Table 1 and Figure 9 Takeaways

- If the most recent available rates of attainment for CPS students were not to change over the next decade, **no race/ethnicity and gender group would have 75 percent of students attain a college degree or certificate in 10 years.** Yet in 2019, nearly 75 percent of CPS ninth-graders indicated that they aspired to obtain at least an associate degree or certificate.
- **Young men of all race/ethnicity groups graduated from high school, immediately enrolled in college, and completed college degrees and certificates at a rate lower than young women of the same race/ethnicity.**
- **While more than 75 percent of Black and Latino young men graduated from high school within four years, significant systemic improvements are needed for Black and Latino young men to immediately enroll in college and complete degrees and certificates at a similar rate.**
- **While young women of all race and ethnic groups graduated from high school within four years at a rate near or above 85 percent, fewer than one-half of Black and Latina young women immediately enrolled in a four-year college.**
  - More than one-half of Latina young women who immediately enrolled in a four-year college completed a bachelor's degree within six years—a rate higher than the district average—but significant improvements in college enrollment and completion rates are still needed for both Latina and Black young women to complete bachelor's degrees at a rate closer to 75 percent.
- **Rates of college attainment for White and Asian/Pacific Islander young women are unlikely to approach 75 percent unless rates of immediate four-year college enrollment—or completion rates for those who immediately enrolled in a two-year college—improve.**

## Options Students

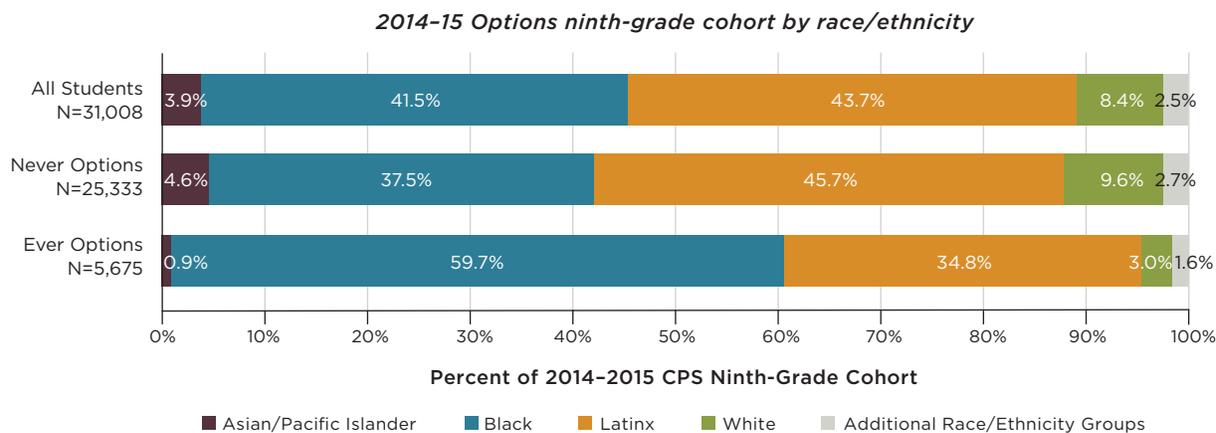
Options schools are non-traditional CPS high schools for students who have not been served well by the traditional school structure or schedule, who are significantly behind on credits, or who have been expelled.<sup>23</sup> Historically, almost all students who complete a high school diploma at an Options school started ninth grade at a non-Options CPS high school.<sup>24</sup>

A recent study showed that among students in the 2014–15 CPS ninth-grade cohort who attended an Options school for at least one day, 93 percent never returned to a non-Options CPS school.<sup>25</sup> Because so few students returned to a non-Options CPS school

after just one day of attendance at an Options school, we categorize students as ‘ever Options’ students—defined as students who were enrolled in an Options school for at least one day within six years after starting high school—and ‘never Options’ students.

As the proportion of CPS students who were ever enrolled in an Options school has grown, it has become increasingly important to understand which groups of students are attending Options schools, as well as these students’ educational outcomes.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, we begin by disaggregating students who were ever enrolled in an Options school by race/ethnicity and gender.

**FIGURE 10**  
Students Who Were Ever Enrolled in an Options School Were More Likely to Be Black



**Note:** Students are included in the ‘ever Options’ category if they were enrolled in any Options school for at least one day within six years after starting high school.

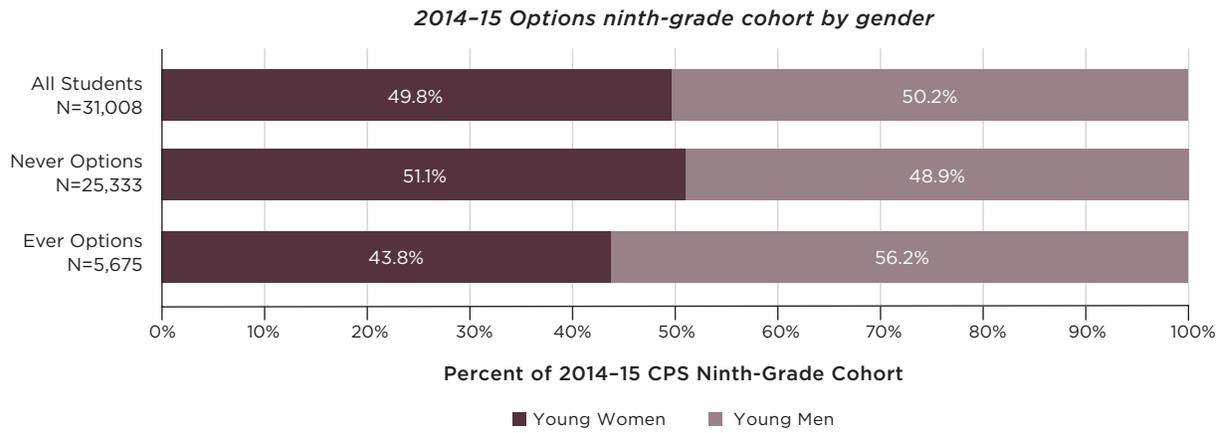
<sup>23</sup> University of Chicago Education Lab (2021).

<sup>24</sup> Nagaoka, Mahaffie, Usher, & Seeskin (2020).

<sup>25</sup> University of Chicago Education Lab (2021).

<sup>26</sup> For more information about Options students, including a list of Options schools, see the report *Seizing the Opportunity to Advance Education Equity* from the Education Lab at the University of Chicago Urban Labs (2021).

**FIGURE 11**  
**Students Who Were Ever Enrolled in an Options School Were More Likely to Be Young Men**



**Note:** Students are included in the 'ever Options' category if they were enrolled in any Options school for at least one day within six years after starting high school.

**Figure 10 and Figure 11 Takeaways**

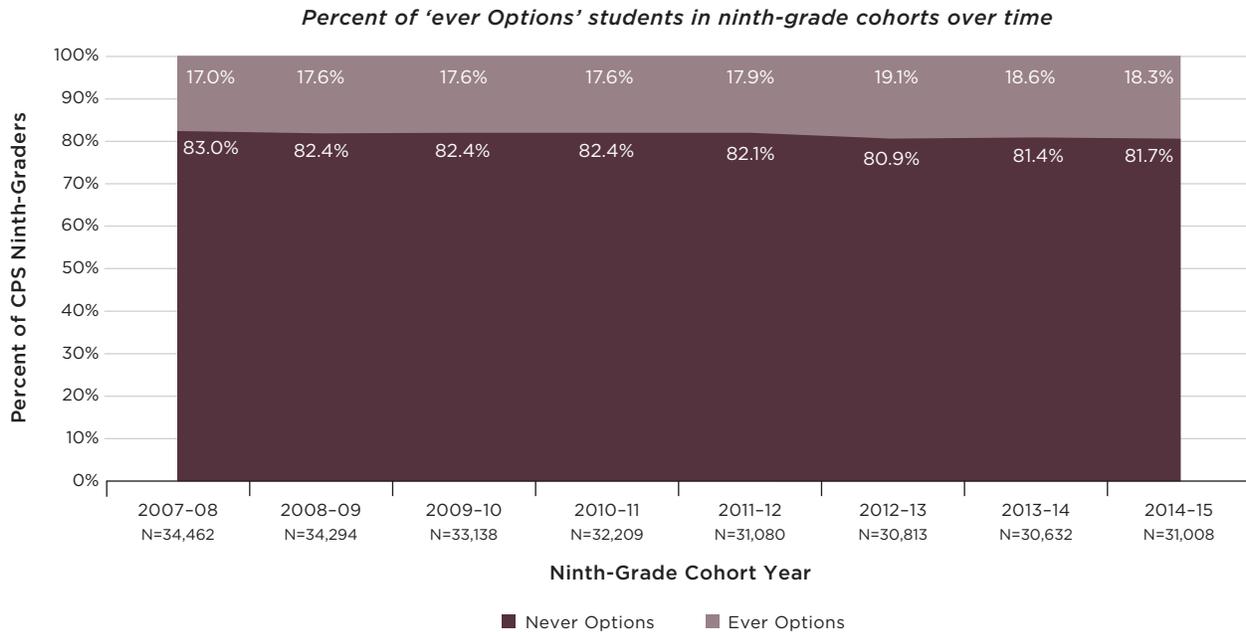
- Black students comprised a disproportionate share of students who were ever enrolled in an Options school.
  - While about two in five students in the 2014-15 CPS ninth-grade cohort are Black, nearly three in five students in this cohort who were ever enrolled in an Options school are Black.
- Young men were more likely to ever be enrolled in Options schools than young women.

## High School Graduation Rate for Options Students

We track over time the proportion of each ninth-grade cohort that was ever enrolled in an Options school. We then examine the six-year high school graduation rate over time for students who were ever enrolled in an

Options school (see Figure 13).<sup>27</sup> We use a six-year time frame for their high school graduation rate because many Options schools are intended for students who are significantly behind on credits or who have been out of high school for a certain period of time and wish to return to complete a diploma.

**FIGURE 12**  
**Nearly One in Five Students in Recent CPS Ninth-Grade Cohorts Were Ever Enrolled in an Options School**

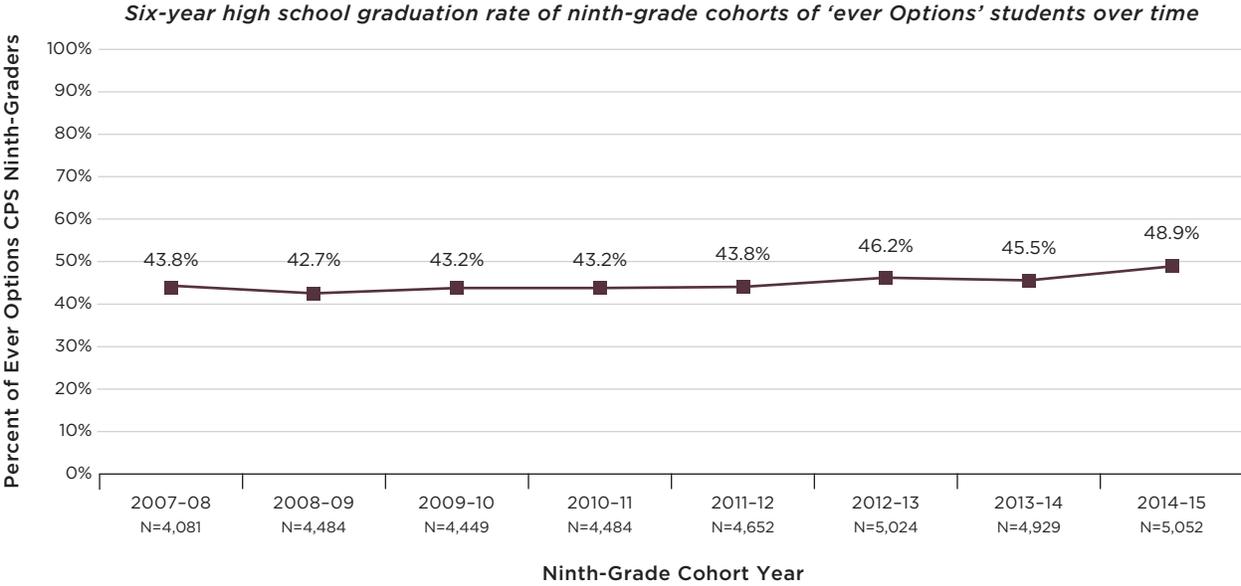


**Note:** Students are included in the 'ever Options' category if they were enrolled in any Options school for at least one day within six years after starting high school.

<sup>27</sup> Few students returned to a non-Options CPS school after just one day of attendance at an Options school (University of Chicago Education Lab, 2021). We therefore categorize

students as 'ever Options' students—defined as students who were enrolled in an Options school for at least one day during high school—and 'never Options' students.

**FIGURE 13**  
**Options Students' High School Graduation Rate Showed Improvement in the Most Recent Year of Data**



**Note:** Students are included in the 'ever Options' category if they were enrolled in any Options school for at least one day within six years after starting high school. We use a six-year rather than a four-year high school graduation rate for students who were ever enrolled in an Options school.

**Figure 12 and Figure 13 Takeaways**

- For most recent CPS cohorts, nearly one in five students were ever enrolled in an Options school at some point in time.
- Since the 2007 ninth-grade cohort entered high school, the proportion of students in each cohort who were ever enrolled in an Options school has increased, from 17 percent for the 2007 ninth-grade cohort to 18 percent for the 2014 ninth-grade cohort.
- The six-year high school graduation rate for students who were ever enrolled in an Options school improved by about 5 percentage points between the 2007 and 2014 ninth-grade cohorts. The most significant improvement happened between the 2013 and 2014 cohorts, when the rate increased by more than 3 percentage points. Still, slightly fewer than one-half of students in the 2015 cohort who were ever enrolled in an Options school graduated by 2020.

## High School Graduation and College Enrollment Rates for Students Who Began as English Learners

Among the nearly 26,000 students in the 2016–17 CPS ninth-grade cohort, more than 8,000 students began at CPS as English Learners (ELs) (see Figure 14). We define **students who began as ELs**<sup>28</sup> as students who took the ACCESS<sup>29</sup> test of English proficiency at any point during their time in CPS. This category includes students who later became former ELs<sup>30</sup> by demonstrating English proficiency (scoring above the cut score) on the ACCESS test, as well as students who remained as active ELs throughout high school. We define **students who were never classified as ELs** as students who were never eligible to receive EL services, either because their native language was English or because they scored high enough on the

English proficiency screener test—which is different from the ACCESS test—when they entered CPS to be considered proficient in English.

While reporting data on active ELs calls attention to students in need of the most support,<sup>31</sup> excluding former ELs obscures the success of students who reach English proficiency. Assessing the performance of the district in supporting ELs across their educational trajectories requires understanding the average high school and college attainment for students who began as ELs. Therefore, we disaggregate four-year high school graduation rates (see Figure 14) and immediate college enrollment rates (see Figure 15) by whether students began as ELs or were never classified as ELs. In the future, we hope to report on college completion outcomes for students who began as ELs and track their high school and college attainment over time.<sup>32</sup>

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**28** This method of classification draws from the method of classification originally used by de la Torre, Blanchard, Allensworth, & Freire (2019), and we define ‘students who began as ELs’ as those who took the ACCESS test at any point after their entry into CPS. However, their analysis only includes students who were continuously enrolled in CPS from kindergarten through eighth grade, while our analysis includes students who entered CPS during or after kindergarten.

**29** ACCESS assesses social and academic English proficiency and is administered to students as early as kindergarten. For more details, see: <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/ACCESS-for-ELLs.aspx>

**30** Students can exit out of EL status as early as the end of kindergarten, or at the end of the first school year during which they were classified as ELs. CPS kindergarteners who were designated as ELs and exited out of EL status at the end of kindergarten are included in students who began as ELs. Many students who began as ELs exited out of EL status

by the third grade. Furthermore, most students who began as ELs exited out of EL status by the time they reached high school. About one in five students who began as ELs remained classified as ELs upon high school enrollment (de la Torre et al., 2019).

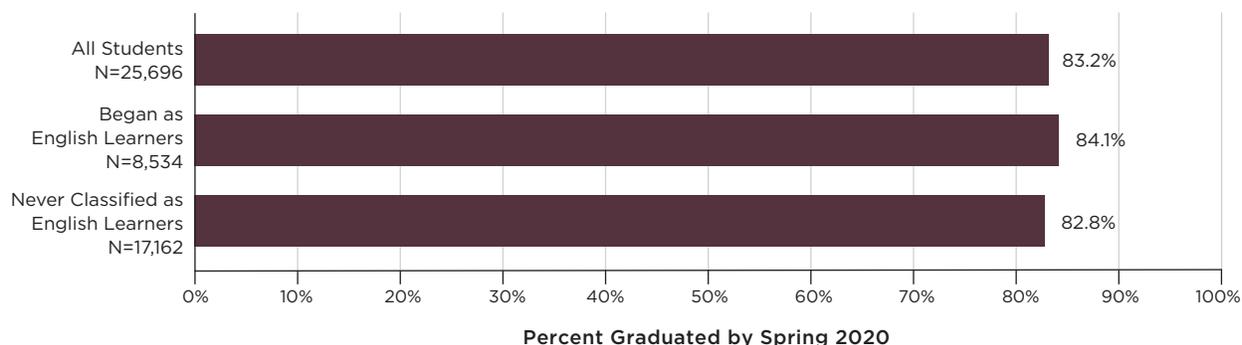
**31** Hundreds of CPS schools have been cited by the district in recent years for not supporting ELs to the degree legally required (Belsha, 2017 June 28). We acknowledge this reality with the aim of preventing people from ascribing ELs’ educational outcomes solely to the choices and capacity of EL students and their families.

**32** We cannot yet report on rates of college completion for students who began as ELs because the earliest CPS ninth-grade cohort for which kindergarten ACCESS test scores are available is the 2016 ninth-grade cohort, and we use a six-year time frame after high school graduation to track students’ college outcomes.

**FIGURE 14**

**Students Who Began as English Learners Graduated from High School at a Slightly Higher Rate Than Students Who Were Never Classified as English Learners**

*Four-year high school graduation rates by English Learner status (2016-17 ninth-grade cohort)*

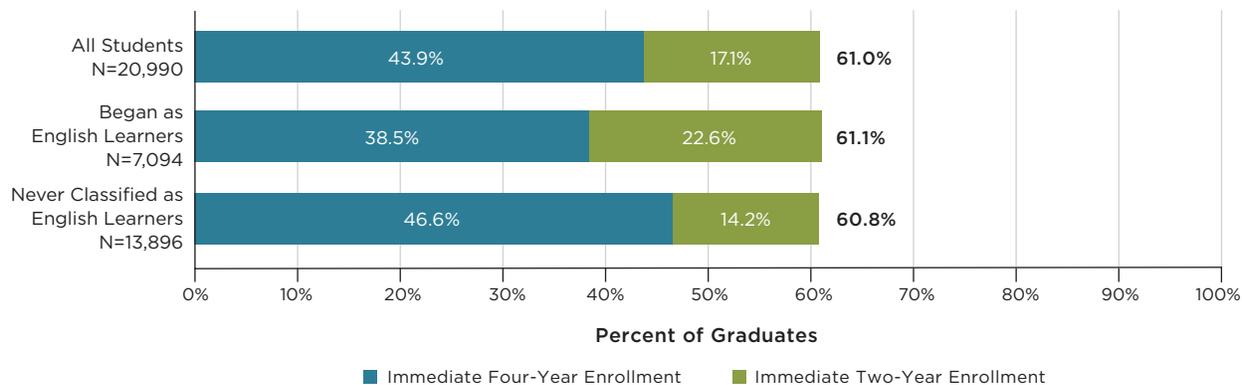


**Note:** The high school graduation rates reported here are four-year high school graduation rates. The total graduation rate includes students who graduated through an Options school within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year of high school. The 'began as English Learners' category includes students who took the ACCESS test at any point after their entry into CPS—which includes both 1) students who later became former ELs by demonstrating English proficiency (scoring above the cut score) on the ACCESS test and 2) students who remained as active ELs throughout high school. We define students who were never classified as ELs as students who were never eligible to receive EL services, either because their native language was English or because they took the English proficiency screening test when they began school in CPS and scored high enough to be considered proficient in English.

**FIGURE 15**

**Students Who Began as English Learners Immediately Enrolled in College at About the Same Rate as Students Who Were Never Classified as English Learners**

*Immediate college enrollment by English Learner status (spring 2020 high school graduates)*



**Note:** Because the earliest CPS ninth-grade cohort for which kindergarten ACCESS test scores are available is the 2016 ninth-grade cohort, students who graduated from high school in five or six years are excluded from the college enrollment denominators, unlike the college enrollment rates included in Figure 2, where all CPS graduates are included in the denominator. The 'began as English Learners' category includes students who took the ACCESS test at any point after their entry into CPS—which includes both 1) students who later became former ELs by demonstrating English proficiency (scoring above the cut score) on the ACCESS test and 2) students who remained as active ELs throughout high school. We define students who were never classified as ELs as students who were never eligible to receive EL services, either because their native language was English or because they took the English proficiency screening test when they began school in CPS and scored high enough to be considered proficient in English.

**Figure 14 and Figure 15 Takeaways**

- Students who began as ELs graduated from high school at a rate slightly higher than the district average.
- High school graduates who began as ELs immediately enrolled in college at about the same rate as students who were never classified as ELs.
- High school graduates who began as ELs were more likely to immediately enroll in two-year colleges than students who were never classified as ELs, although four-year colleges were more commonly attended overall by immediate college enrollees in both groups.

## High School Graduation Rates for Students With Disabilities

Thousands of students in each ninth-grade cohort have one or more disabilities. Students with disabilities are often treated as a single group, however, 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.

Therefore, in this analysis shown in **Table 2**, we disaggregate rates of high school graduation<sup>33</sup> by students' primary disability type:<sup>34</sup> students with behavioral disabilities, cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities. These four groups are used to divide the 16 categories of disability in the data:<sup>35</sup> *behavioral disabilities* include Emotional and Behavior Disorder, Behavioral Disability, and Emotionally

Disturbed Students with Disabilities; *cognitive disabilities* include Autistic, Intellectual Disability,<sup>36</sup> Severe/ Profound [Intellectual] Disability, and Traumatic Brain Injury; *learning disabilities*<sup>37</sup> include Learning Disabled, Moderate Learning Disability, and Severe Learning Disability; and *physical disabilities* include Deaf, Hearing Impaired, Hard of Hearing, Other Health Impairment, Partial Sight, and Visual Impairment. For definitions of the 16 categories of disability used by CPS, see **Appendix C on p.30**.

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 Individualized Education Programs<sup>38</sup> (IEPs) and receive services at their high school.

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**33** We do not examine rates of college enrollment and completion for students with disabilities because there is a relatively low number of high school graduates among students in certain disability categories, and we suppress rates for groups of fewer than 100 students to avoid reporting fluctuations in rates that do not reflect consistent trends in student outcomes.

**34** If a student is identified by the district as having one or more disabilities, we categorize the student into only one of these four groups, based on the primary disability type designated by CPS. A student's primary disability is designated by CPS during the services eligibility determination process, during which an IEP team determines whether a student is eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

**35** We do not include students with a '504' education plan in the categories for students with disabilities. Eligibility criteria for '504' education plans use a broader definition of a disability than eligibility criteria for special education and related services. For the CPS definitions of disability categories, see Appendix C.

**36** CPS defines Intellectual Disability as "cognitive development significantly below that of their typically developing peers,

existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (Chicago Public Schools Procedural Manual, 2021). For more information about how CPS defines categories of disability, see Appendix C.

**37** CPS uses the term Specific Learning Disability, defined as "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia" (Chicago Public Schools Procedural Manual, 2021). For more information about how CPS defines categories of disability, see Appendix C.

**38** An IEP identifies a student's unique needs and describes how their school will address those needs. The IEP establishes a student's educational goals and identifies the supplementary aids, supports, and services to allow the student to meet those goals.

**TABLE 2****Students with Learning Disabilities and Students with Physical Disabilities Graduate from High School at a Rate That Approaches the District Average**

Six-Year High School Graduation Rates by Disability Category		
	2014-15 CPS Ninth-Grade Cohort (Percent Graduated by Spring 2020)	
	Students	Total Graduation Rate
All Students	26,823	86.1%
Students with a Behavioral Disability	266	59.3%
Students with a Cognitive Disability	591	48.1%
Students with a Learning Disability	2,545	82.0%
Students with a Physical Disability	301	81.6%

**Note:** 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. The total graduation rate includes students who graduated through an Options school. Students who left CPS for a valid leave reason during high school are excluded from this analysis.

**Table 2 Takeaways**

- In 2020, nearly three in five students with behavioral disabilities graduated from high school.
- Fewer than one-half of students with cognitive disabilities graduated from high school.
- More than four in five students with learning disabilities graduated from high school (82 percent), which approaches the six-year high school graduation rate for all students in the district (86 percent).
- More than four in five students with physical disabilities graduated from high school (82 percent), which approaches the six-year high school graduation rate for all students in the district (86 percent).

# Conclusion

In 2019, the CPS six-year college completion rate reached above 45 percent for the first time.<sup>39</sup> Although systemic improvement of CPS students' college outcomes may appear slow and incremental, when considered alongside significant improvements in rates of high school graduation and college enrollment over the past decade, these improvements have translated to hundreds more CPS graduates each year who attained their post-secondary aspirations.

Despite the enormous challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the high school graduation rate has continued to increase, slightly but steadily, each year between 2014 and 2020. However, 2020 rates of high school graduation and immediate college enrollment reflect only the onset of the pandemic, and 2019 data on college completion in this report do not reflect the impact of the pandemic at all.

The PAI demonstrates that rates of attainment for each of the three key milestones—high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion—constitute equally important links in the chain of events that determine CPS graduates' educational outcomes.

While the majority of students of all race/ethnicity and gender groups graduate from high school, the 2020 indices for Black and Latino young men and women suggest that they still do not have access to equitable educational experiences and post-secondary pathways.

Supporting CPS students throughout their high school and college journeys will likely require an unprecedented level of investment and new collaborations and partnerships across the city as we emerge from the pandemic. We will also need an understanding of the lived experiences of CPS students and graduates impacted by the pandemic as well as further research to understand their educational outcomes when more data become available.

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<sup>39</sup> To view the overall CPS college completion rate over time, see the To&Through Online Tool: <http://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/hs>

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# Appendix A

## Additional Figures

We received college completion data sooner this year and were able to calculate the PAI with more recent rates than we have been able to in previous reports. To provide adequate historical comparisons, we applied the method that we used to calculate the 2020 PAI retroactively to all years of data to calculate the PAI over time in **Table A.1**.

Previously, the PAI was calculated using college completion for the CPS graduating class eight years prior to the graduating class used to label the PAI. Currently, we use college completion data for the CPS graduation class seven years prior.

For example, with the new methodology, the 2020 PAI is calculated using the 2020 high school graduation rate, the 2020 college enrollment rates, and the college completion rates for 2013 high school graduates. The 2011 PAI is calculated using the 2011 high school graduation rate, the 2011 college enrollment rates, and the rates of completion for 2004 high school graduates.

**Table A.1** shows the rates of high school graduation, immediate college enrollment, and college completion used to calculate historical PAI rates with this new methodology, which uses seven years of data.

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.

**TABLE A.1**  
Component Rates Used to Calculate the PAI Over Time

PAI Year	4-Year High School Graduation Rate	Immediate 4-Year Enrollment Rate (Among High School Graduates)	Immediate 2-Year Enrollment Rate (Among High School Graduates)	Delayed/ Non-Enrollment Rate (Among High School Graduates)	Any Degree or Certificate Completion Rate for Immediate 4-Year Enrollees	Any Degree or Certificate Completion Rate for Immediate 2-Year Enrollee	Any Degree or Certificate Completion Rate for Delayed/ Non-Enrollees	Post-Secondary Attainment Index
2011	69.7%	41.6%	20.9%	37.4%	52.2%	24.4%	7.9%	20.8%
2012	72.5%	40.3%	20.6%	39.1%	52.0%	23.3%	8.2%	21.0%
2013	75.4%	41.7%	21.3%	37.0%	53.2%	25.3%	8.7%	23.2%
2014	78.0%	42.7%	20.4%	36.9%	53.5%	25.7%	9.3%	24.6%
2015	78.7%	43.6%	18.4%	38.0%	54.5%	26.3%	8.6%	25.1%
2016	79.7%	45.3%	18.5%	36.2%	54.2%	26.6%	10.7%	26.6%
2017	80.3%	46.4%	21.6%	32.0%	53.6%	26.5%	10.1%	27.2%
2018	81.0%	44.6%	21.8%	33.6%	54.1%	27.0%	8.8%	26.8%
2019	82.2%	45.4%	20.6%	34.0%	53.9%	26.8%	7.9%	26.9%
2020	83.2%	43.9%	17.1%	39.0%	56.2%	28.7%	7.6%	27.1%

The second, the Bachelor's Degree 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.

**Table A.2** shows the rates of bachelor's degree completion for immediate four-year enrollees, immediate two-year enrollees, and delayed/non-enrollees that are used to calculate the BDAI for different race/ethnicity and gender groups. Only the rates for immediate four-year enrollees in **Table A.2** are used to calculate the DBDAI.

**TABLE A.2**  
Direct Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index and Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index

Component Rates of the 2020 PAI, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender					
	Bachelor Degree Completion Rate (2013 Graduates)			Attainment Index	
	Immediate 4-Year Enrollees	Immediate 2-Year Enrollees	Delayed/ Non-Enrollees	Direct Bachelor Degree Attainment Index	Bachelor Degree Attainment Index
All Students	50.6%	6.6%	2.6%	18.5%	20.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Women	81.7%	14.3%	11.4%	54.0%	57.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander Young Men	75.9%	17.9%	6.5%	38.2%	42.8%
Black Young Women	42.8%	4.7%	1.9%	17.1%	18.2%
Black Young Men	31.8%	3.7%	1.5%	9.0%	9.9%
Latina Young Women	55.4%	7.7%	3.5%	21.4%	24.0%
Latino Young Men	45.2%	6.3%	1.8%	12.0%	13.7%
White Young Women	76.7%	21.6%	5.9%	44.8%	49.0%
White Young Men	69.0%	5.6%	7.5%	34.7%	37.2%

**Note:** The DBDAI is calculated by multiplying the four-year high school graduation rate, immediate four-year enrollment rate (both found in Table 1), and the bachelor's degree completion rate for immediate four-year enrollees in this table. The BDAI is calculated in the same way, with the addition of immediate two-year and non-enrollee enrollment and bachelor's degree completion rates (also found in Table 1 and this table).

# 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. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) are used for all college enrollment 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.

### Data Definitions

Throughout this report, the year refers to the spring of the school year (e.g., 2020 refers to the 2019–20 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.

#### 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. 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.

#### 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. We calculate a six-year high school graduation rate for students who were ever enrolled in an Options school and students with disabilities.

#### College Enrollment

Throughout this report, college enrollment refers to the proportion of graduates who enrolled directly in college in the fall following spring or summer high school graduation, and does not include students who delayed college entry. Data on college enrollment come from the NSC, which houses enrollment and graduation records for colleges throughout the United States. Students whose records are suppressed due to FERPA or other reasons are also excluded from the numerator for immediate four-year college enrollment and immediate two-year college enrollment rates. Enrollments from two institutions typically attended by many CPS graduates, North Park University and Lincoln University, are missing from 2020 rates, as these institutions had not yet reported fall 2020 enrollments to NSC at the time of this report. In 2019, 146 students immediately enrolled at these two institutions. If a similar number of 2020 graduates enrolled at these institutions, the actual immediate enrollment rate would be 0.6 percentage points higher than the rate reported in this report.

**Two-Year Enrollees:** Students who enrolled in a two-year college the fall after graduating from high school

**Four-Year Enrollees:** Students who enrolled in a four-year college the fall after graduating from high school

**Delayed/Non-Enrollees:** Students who did not enroll in college the fall after graduating from high school.

Delayed enrollees include students who delayed entry

into college but did enroll at some point within six years of high school graduation. Non-enrollees include students who did not enroll in college within six years of high school graduation.

### College Completion

The proportion of two-year and four-year college enrollees who completed 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 the numerator or denominator of these rates.

### College Types

**Two-Year College:** Institutions classified in the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (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.

### English Learners (ELs)

**Students Who Began as ELs:** Students who took the ACCESS test of English proficiency at any point during their time in CPS. This category includes students who later became former ELs by demonstrating English proficiency (scoring above the cut score) on the ACCESS test as well as students who remained as active ELs throughout high school.

**Students Who Were Never Classified as ELs:** Students who were never eligible to receive EL services, either because their native language was English or because

they scored high enough on the English proficiency screener test—which is different from the ACCESS test—when they entered CPS to be considered proficient in English.

### Gender

Historically, data has been collected by CPS in a way that groups students into one of two categories: male and female. We hope in the future to be able to report data that more fully and accurately describes the identities of CPS students.

### Options Students

**Ever Options Students:** Students who were enrolled in an Options school for at least one day within six years after starting high school. Analyses of ‘ever Options’ status and ‘ever Options’ students’ demographic characteristics include students who exited CPS for a valid leave reason after the ninth grade.

**Never Options Students:** Students who were never enrolled in an Options school during high school.

### 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

## CPS Disability Categories Definitions

In this analysis, we disaggregate rates of six-year high school graduation by students' primary disability type:<sup>40</sup> students with behavioral disabilities, cognitive disabilities, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities. These four groups are used to divide the 16 categories of disability in our data:

**Behavioral Disabilities:** Include Emotional and Behavior Disorder, Behavioral Disability, and Emotionally Disturbed Students with Disabilities.

**Cognitive Disabilities:** Include Autistic, Intellectual Disability, Severe/Profound [Intellectual] Disability, and Traumatic Brain Injury.

**Learning Disabilities:** include Learning Disabled, Moderate Learning Disability, and Severe Learning Disability.

**Physical Disabilities:** include Deaf, Hearing Impaired, Hard of Hearing, Other Health Impairment, Partial Sight, and Visual Impairment.

The definitions of the current categories of disability used by CPS—which differ slightly from the categories that are used in the data—can be found in the *CPS Procedural Manual: Guidance on Providing Special Education and Related Services to Students with Disabilities Pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, published in August 2021.<sup>41</sup> They are also provided here, for readers' convenience:

### Autism

A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disability.

### Deaf/Blindness

The student exhibits concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes severe communication, developmental, and educational needs that cannot be accommodated by special education services designed solely for students with either deafness or children with blindness.

### Deafness

A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

<sup>40</sup> If a student is identified by the district as having one or more disabilities, we categorize the student into only one of these four groups based on the primary disability type designated by CPS. A student's primary disability is designated by CPS during the services eligibility determination process, during which an IEP team determines whether a student is eligible for services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

<sup>41</sup> <http://cps.edu/globalassets/cps-pages/about/departments/office-of-diverse-learner-support-and-services/draft-2021-22-idea-procedural-manual.pdf>

## Emotional Disability

(This includes schizophrenia but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disability.) A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
- Inappropriate behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

## Hearing Impairment

An impairment in hearing, permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

## Intellectual Disability

(Mild, Moderate, Severe/Profound) Cognitive development significantly below that of their typically developing peers, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

## Multiple Disabilities

Concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes severe educational needs that cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. (Does not include deaf-blindness.)

## Other Health Impairment

Limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that

results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), leukemia, diabetes, rheumatic fever, or Tourette syndrome, and adversely affects a child's educational performance.

## Physical (Orthopedic) Impairment

A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, disease or other cause (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputation, fractures, or burns).

## Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

## Speech or Language Impairment

A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

## Traumatic Brain Injury

An acquired injury to the brain, caused by an external force. This injury results in total or partial functional disability, or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. This term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative or induced by birth trauma.

## Visual Impairment

An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance (includes both partial sight and blindness).

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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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.

**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.



**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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**OUR MISSION** With the goal of supporting stronger and more equitable educational outcomes for students, the UChicago Consortium conducts research of high technical quality that informs and assesses policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools. We seek to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, families, and communities as we support the search for solutions to the challenge of transforming schools. We encourage the use of research in policy action and practice but do not advocate for particular policies or programs. Rather, we help to build capacity for systemic school improvement by identifying what matters most for student success, creating critical indicators to chart progress, and conducting theory-driven evaluation to identify how programs and policies are working.



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