

INSIGHTS

Tilden Career Community Academy High School is located on the South Side of Chicago between three high school networks and serves students from 31 feeder schools. 40 percent of Tilden's students are in need of special education, and many have experienced high levels of trauma outside of school.

Within this context, Tilden found that more than half of its incoming freshmen were vulnerable or at high risk of falling off-track during their freshman year, based on their 8th grade GPAs and attendance rates, fewer than two-thirds (64 percent) of its freshmen were on track to graduate, and only 51 percent of its seniors graduated in 2012.

These insights inspired and informed Tilden leaders' efforts to transform Tilden from Turnaround School to comeback school in only four years.

STRATEGIES

Tilden's leaders determined that improving their students' attainment would depend, in part, on building a foundation of social and emotional support designed to address the trauma many faced outside of school. To that end, they created a Care Team in collaboration with external organizations including City Year, Umoja, and Lurie Children's Hospital. The Care Team was dedicated to addressing the trauma-induced stress and anxiety that many of Tilden's students experienced, and opening up productive pathways to learning and staying on track to graduate from high school.

Tilden also created grade level teams—groups of teachers responsible for tracking the performance of students in each grade level—to get and keep students on track to graduate. The teams meet at least once per month to discuss which students need extra support and how to provide it. "Freshman Roundup Days," in which teachers meet with freshmen who are off-track according to the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research's Freshman OnTrack indicator, are also working to put more students on the path toward high school graduation.

RESULTS

Tilden's Freshman OnTrack rate has increased from 64% in 2012 to 77% in 2016 while their high school graduation rate has increased from 51% to 58% in the same time frame. The percentage of students graduating with a 3.0 GPA or higher has also improved fourfold—from 6% in 2012, to 26% in 2016.

Teacher retention has also increased at Tilden. By asking teachers to track a specific group of students, Tilden has inspired them to feel personally attached to the students' performance and created a more caring and supportive school culture in the process.