

# COLLEGE TRANSFERS AND LEAVES FOR CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS GRADUATES

Below are key findings from the report “[Navigating the Maze](#),” which examines the college mobility patterns of 2010-2012 CPS graduates, a sample of approximately 63,000 students.

**MYTH:** Taking a gap year after high school promotes students’ persistence in and completion of college.

**FACT:** The vast majority of CPS graduates who completed a degree within six years immediately enrolled in college the fall after high school graduation.

## GRADUATES WHO COMPLETED A...

### FOUR-YEAR DEGREE

**94%** immediately enrolled

### TWO-YEAR DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE

**71%** immediately enrolled

For students who **did not immediately enroll in college**, only **1 out of 10** completed a college degree or certificate within six years.

While taking a “gap year” has become popular with some high school graduates around the country, the data in the report suggests that for many CPS students, delaying college enrollment results in lower completion rates. Not all CPS graduates have the resources or the support structures to enroll directly in college, but counselors should be wary of recommending time off to those who are able to directly enroll in college.

**MYTH:** Most students stay enrolled in the same college until they graduate or until they “drop out” of college.

**FACT:** Transferring between **four-year** and **two-year** institutions, and taking time off school (or “stopping out”), was common for CPS graduates. Nearly **1 in 5** CPS graduates enrolled in both a **two-year college** and a **four-year college** at different points in their post-secondary journeys.

Students had different likelihoods of stopping out based on which type of institution they started at: **51%** of **immediate four-year enrollees** and **83%** of **immediate two-year enrollees** stopped out from college at least once.

**38%** of students experienced a transition within just their first two years after high school.

**MYTH:** College students who take time off school usually return and complete a degree.

**FACT:** Many CPS graduates — particularly those who **immediately enrolled in a two-year college** — took at least one semester off of school (or “stopped out”) and many did not return. Those who did return were significantly less likely to graduate than students who stayed. For the most part, the only students who stopped out and still completed a degree were students who returned to college after **only one semester off**.

About **half** of students who **stopped out** returned after one semester.

**75% did not complete** a degree or certificate within six years of high school graduation.

About **one-quarter** of students who **stopped out** took off three or more semesters.

**88% did not complete** a degree or certificate within six years of high school graduation.

**MYTH:** It’s typical for CPS graduates who **enroll in a two-year college** to **transfer to a four-year college**.

**FACT:** Students who immediately **enrolled in a two-year college** were unlikely to **complete a four-year degree**. Although Chicago wants and needs this pathway to work for students, the findings in this report suggest that starting at a two-year college with the intent of transferring and completing a four-year degree is not yet an easily navigable pathway for most CPS graduates.

**Immediate two-year enrollees:** **22%** transferred from a two-year college to a four-year college **7%** completed a four-year degree

**Notes:** The 2010, 2011, and 2012 cohorts are the three most recent years of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) high school graduates with six years’ worth of college enrollment and completion data. We only include fall and spring terms and do not include summer enrollments. We focus on movement between four-year and two-year colleges rather than lateral transfers.