

# The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students: **2018**

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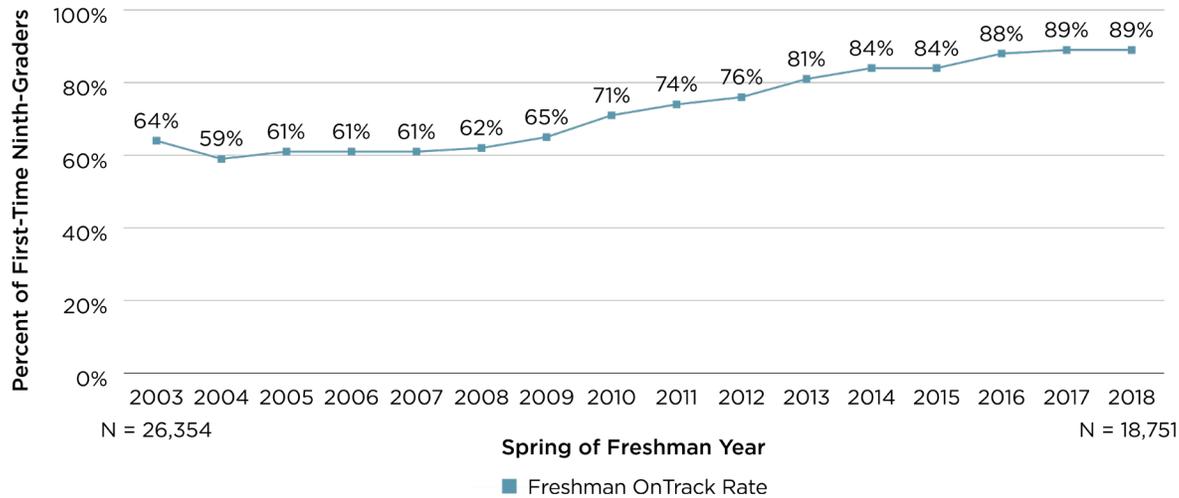
## OVERVIEW

The important role that education plays in shaping young people's lives has been well-documented. Students who complete higher levels of education are more likely to earn higher salaries, have greater life expectancy, and report higher levels of life satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> Compared to a decade ago, thousands more Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students reach key milestones of educational attainment each year, including high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation. This annual analysis of CPS students' educational attainment provides a high-level update of district trends through 2018, shows a comparison of attainment by race/ethnicity and gender, and projects the bachelor's degree attainment rate for students who completed ninth grade in 2018.

## » Freshman OnTrack

Students who are considered on-track at the end of ninth grade are 3.5 times more likely to graduate from high school than students who are considered off-track.<sup>2</sup> In the spring of 2018, 89% of first-time CPS ninth-graders were on-track to graduate (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> The Freshman OnTrack rate has risen dramatically over the past 15 years, although the rate has leveled off for the past 3 years.

**SNAPSHOT FIGURE 1: Freshman OnTrack Rates Have Risen Nearly 30 Percentage Points over the Past Decade**

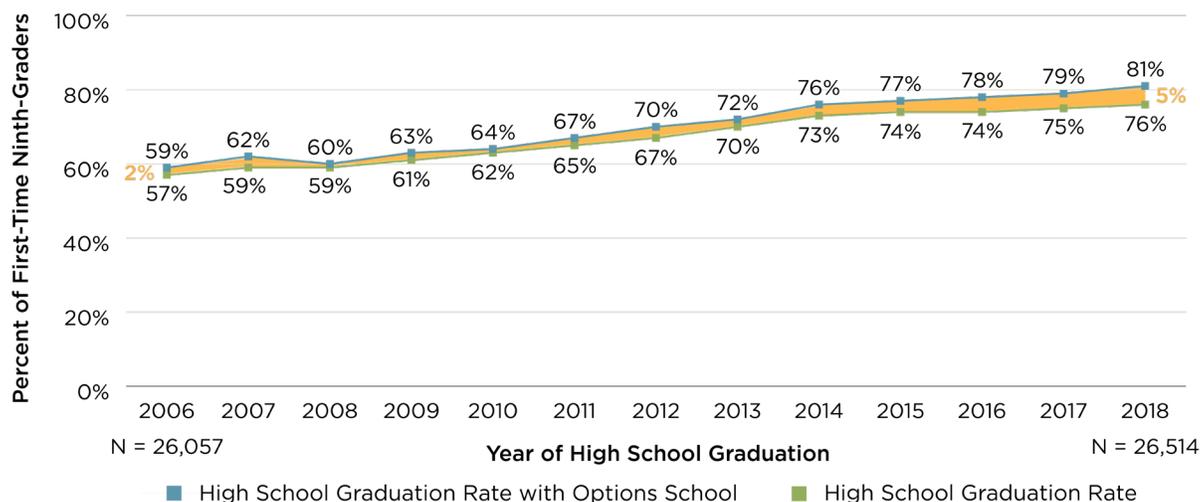


**Note:** Course grades for charter school students are not currently available, so charter school students are not included in the Freshman OnTrack Rate. Charter school students constitute a growing share of ninth-graders (about 26% of ninth-graders in 2018). Details on percentages and Ns are available in the [online technical appendix](#).

## » High School Graduation

In 2018, the CPS high school graduation rate reached 76%, compared to 57% in 2006—an increase of almost 20 percentage points and 5,200 more graduates (see Figure 2). When we include the approximately 1,200 graduates who attended options programs, the high school graduation rate reached 81%, for a total of over 21,300 graduates in 2018. This compares to fewer than 500 additional options school graduates in 2006, for a total of about 15,300 graduates.

**SNAPSHOT FIGURE 2: High School Graduation Rates Have Increased Considerably over the Past Decade**



**Note:** Details on percentages and Ns are available in the [online technical appendix](#).

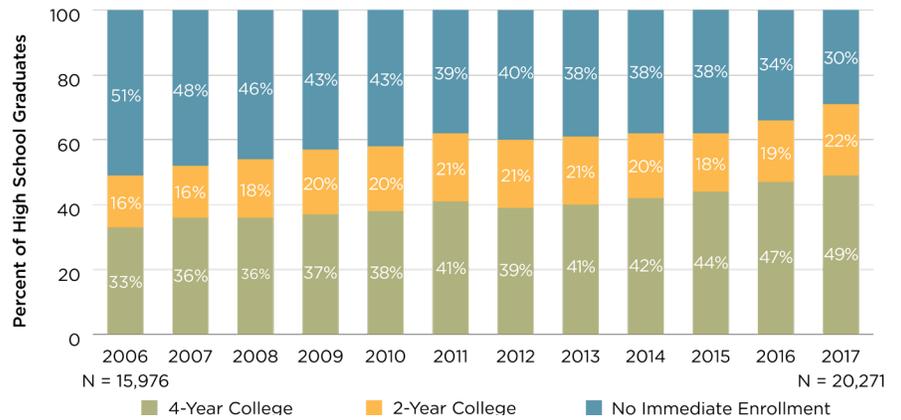
1 Trostel & Chase Smith (2015).  
2 Allensworth & Easton (2005).

3 Throughout this report, the year refers to the spring of the related school year (e.g., 2018 refers to the 2017-18 school year).

## » College Enrollment

The rising CPS high school graduation rate has been accompanied by a rising college enrollment rate. In 2017, nearly three-quarters of CPS high school graduates immediately enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year college, compared to fewer than one-half of high school graduates in 2006 (see Figure 3). This means that the number of CPS high school graduates immediately enrolling in college has increased from about 7,900 in 2006 to almost 14,300 in 2017. Most of these increases come from 4-year college enrollment; nearly one-half (49%) of CPS graduates enrolled directly in a 4-year college, while 22% enrolled directly in a 2-year college in 2017. The college enrollment rate increased by 5 percentage points between 2016 and 2017, with an increase of 2% in 4-year college enrollment and 3% in 2-year college enrollment.

**SNAPSHOT FIGURE 3: Nearly One-Half of All CPS Graduates Enrolled in a 4-Year College**



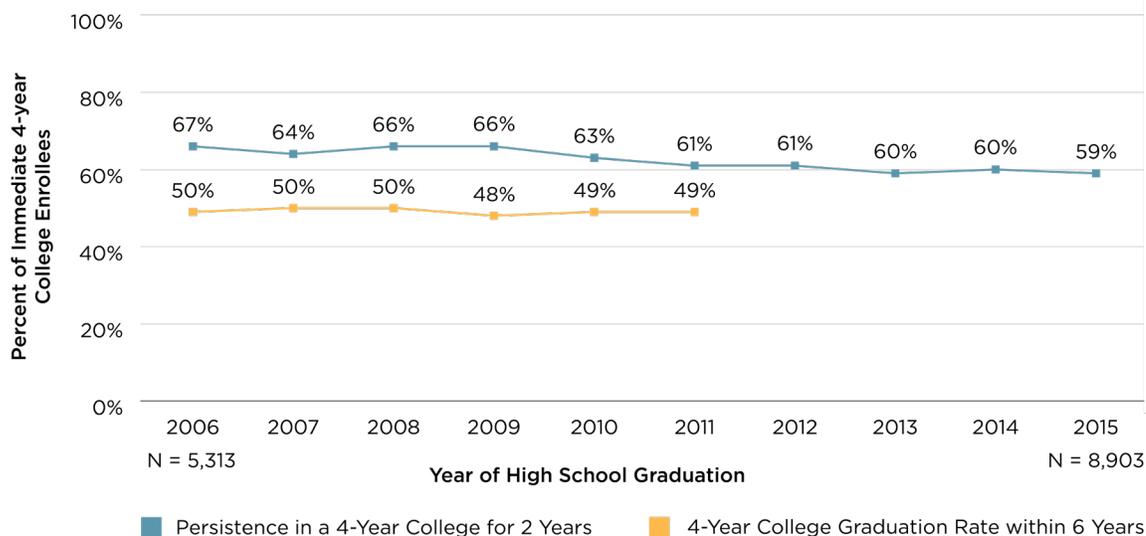
**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. 2018 college enrollment data are not yet available. Details on percentages and Ns are available in the [online technical appendix](#).

## » College Persistence and Graduation

**College Persistence:** The 2-year persistence rate for high school graduates who immediately enroll in a 4-year college declined from 66% in 2006 to 61% in 2011, but has remained fairly steady for the past 5 years (see Figure 4). Moreover, with more college enrollees each year, the total number of CPS students who persisted for 2 years in 4-year colleges increased to over 5,200 graduates in 2015, from about 3,500 graduates in 2006.

**College Graduation:** The 4-year college graduation rate for CPS high school graduates who made an immediate transition to a 4-year college and graduated with a bachelor's degree within 6 years continued to remain relatively flat, at about 49% (see Figure 4). Despite the flat 4-year college graduation rate, considerably more CPS students from the class of 2011 earned a bachelor's degree than the class of 2006, due to increases in the number of high school graduates and 4-year college enrollees. In total, about 1,100 more students from the class of 2011 earned degrees than the class of 2006 (about 3,700 vs. 2,600 total students). Approximately 500 additional students from the class of 2011 earned a 4-year college degree, after either delaying college enrollment or starting at a 2-year college.

**SNAPSHOT FIGURE 4: 4-Year College Graduation Rates Have Remained Flat for All CPS Graduates**

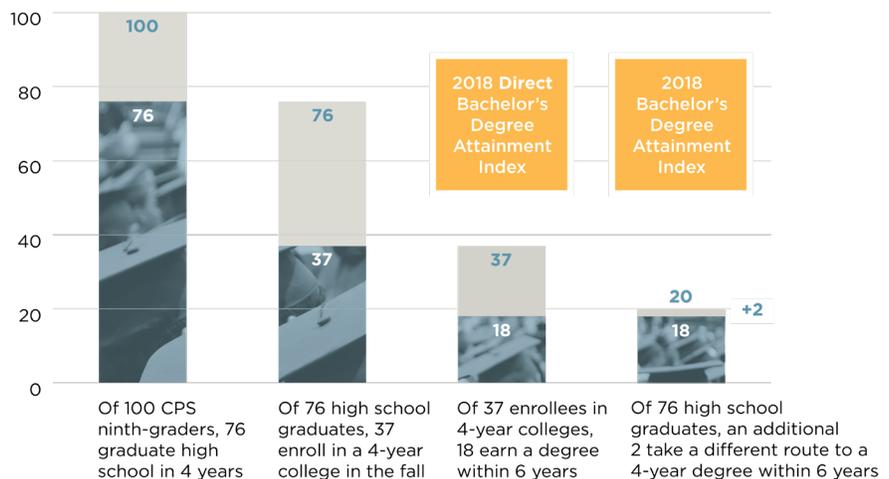


**Note:** Ns listed above refer to the number of first-time, immediate 4-year college enrollees for each year. Details on Ns, percentages, and methods used to calculate 4-year college graduation rates are described in the [online technical appendix](#).

## » Degree Attainment Indices

We estimate that 20% of 2018 CPS ninth-graders will earn a 4-year college degree within 10 years, what we refer to as the Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index (Bachelor's DAI; see Figure 5). This is a 1% increase from the 2017 Bachelor's DAI of 19%, and the rate has nearly doubled from the 2006 rate of 11%. Of the 20%, a majority (18%) will take a **direct path** to a Bachelor's degree by immediately enrolling in a 4-year college (Direct Bachelor's DAI), while 2% will either first enroll in a 2-year college or delay college enrollment. The Direct Bachelor's DAI is calculated by multiplying the most recently-available high school graduation rate (76% in 2018) by the 4-year college enrollment rate for high school graduates (49% in 2017) by the 4-year college graduation rate for 4-year college enrollees (49% in 2017). The Bachelor's DAI includes the 2% of ninth-graders who take an alternative path, but ultimately complete a 4-year college degree within 6 years of high school graduation.

**SNAPSHOT FIGURE 5: 2018 Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index**



Note: Data and methods are described in the [online technical appendix](#).

## » Attainment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

The rate at which students meet each attainment milestone varies widely by race/ethnicity and gender (see Table 1). If the underlying rates don't change, we estimate that 10% of Black young men and 14% of Latino young men who completed ninth grade in 2018 will have a bachelor's degree within 10 years of beginning high school, compared to the district average of 20%. In addition, within racial/ethnic groups, young men are less likely to reach each educational milestone than their female counterparts; among students who completed ninth grade in 2018, Black young women are 8 percentage points more likely and Latina young women are 10 percentage points more likely to earn a bachelor's degree within 10 years than their male peers. However, these data also show Black and Latina young women as significantly less likely to earn a bachelor's degree within 10 years than their White female peers (35 and 29 percentage points less likely, respectively). This suggests the need for different strategies to break down barriers to success for students of color and more effectively support every student.

**SNAPSHOT TABLE 1: Additional Supports Needed to Better Serve Black and Latino Young Men in CPS**

	Number of First-Time Ninth-Graders in 2017-18	High School Graduation Rate (Among 2015-16 Ninth-Grade Cohort)	4-Year College Enrollment Rate (Among 2017 HS Graduates)	4-Year College Graduation Rate (Among 2011 4-Year Enrollees)	2018 Direct Bachelor's DAI	2018 Bachelor's DAI
All Students	27,077	76%	49%	49%	18%	20%
Asian Young Men	562	88%	64%	62%	34%	38%
Asian Young Women	552	95%	68%	78%	50%	57%
Black Young Men	4,800	63%	46%	31%	9%	10%
Black Young Women	5,149	73%	54%	42%	16%	18%
Latino Young Men	6,683	74%	37%	44%	12%	14%
Latina Young Women	6,355	82%	47%	56%	21%	24%
White Young Men	1,169	85%	57%	63%	30%	34%
White Young Women	1,097	91%	69%	77%	48%	53%

Note: We include race/ethnicity categories with enough students to generate a reliable trend over time for these metrics, so some categories (e.g., Native American, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian, Multiracial) are not represented here.

## » Implications

**The Freshman OnTrack rate** has remained at around 90% for the past 3 years. For the 10% of ninth-graders who are not on-track, new and more intensive strategies may be needed to better support them as they continue to transition to high school. In future updates, we hope to calculate a Freshman OnTrack rate that includes charter school students, to provide a more complete picture of the ninth-grade year for all students. Charter school students represent a growing proportion of CPS ninth-graders; in 2006 there were approximately 2,600 ninth-graders in charter schools, compared to about 6,700 in 2018. There were also about 2,000 fewer total ninth-graders enrolled in CPS in 2018 than in 2006.

**The high school graduation rate** has continued to increase, particularly when we included students who graduated from options programs. As more students are attending options programs, it is critical to understand whether these programs provide students who would not have graduated otherwise with the opportunity to complete a high school degree, or whether these students could have been served just as well in their original high school. It will also be important to examine the college and career outcomes for options school graduates, particularly compared to similar students who graduate from traditional high schools.

**The college enrollment rate** increased by 5 percentage points between 2016 and 2017, the largest single increase in college enrollment in the past 10 years. As more low-income, first-generation college students enroll, it becomes increasingly essential for colleges to adjust their services and supports and for high schools to effectively prepare students for college so that all students are set up to be successful.

**The 2-year persistence rate in 4-year colleges** is currently the best indicator we have of college graduation, but it is not perfect. Given the dips in the persistence rate for the classes of 2010 and 2011, we may have expected to see corresponding dips in the 4-year college graduation rate. However, this decrease has not materialized, which raises important questions for future research about what happens to students who don't persist and the relationship between college persistence and graduation.

**Attainment by race/ethnicity and gender** continues to vary significantly, which points to the need to investigate the sources of these differences inside and outside of school, as well as how biases within the education community may reinforce systemic barriers for students of color in Chicago.

## Data Definitions

### Freshman OnTrack Rate

The proportion of first-time ninth-graders who have earned 5 or more credits and have failed no more than 1 semester of a core course (English, math, science, and social studies) by the end of ninth grade. The Freshman OnTrack rate does not include ninth-graders who attended charter schools, because the district did not receive ninth-grade grades from charter schools until recently.

### High School Graduation Rate

The proportion of first-time ninth-graders who graduate high school in 4 years. Students who transfer into CPS high schools are included with their corresponding ninth-grade cohort. Students who transfer out of CPS are not included in the high school graduation rate. The UChicago Consortium and the To&Through Project use a high school graduation rate that has not historically included students who attend options schools (i.e., alternative schools).

### College Enrollment Rate

The proportion of high school graduates who enrolled immediately in college in the fall following high school graduation, by type of college (2-year or 4-year). College enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates are based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse.

### College Persistence Rate

The proportion of high school graduates that immediately enrolled in a 4-year college and were continuously enrolled in 1 or more 4-year institutions for 4 semesters.

### College Graduation Rate

The proportion of immediate 4-year enrollees who earned a bachelor's degree from a 4-year college within 6 years.

### Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index

An estimate of the proportion of ninth-graders who will earn a 4-year college degree within 10 years of beginning high school (Bachelor's DAI), accounting for students who directly enroll in a 4-year college and students who either delay college entry or first enroll in a 2-year college. The Direct Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index only includes students who will take a direct path to a 4-year college.

# SUPPORTING RESOURCES

## Technical Appendix

For additional details on numbers and percentages used in this snapshot, please visit:

<https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/the-educational-attainment-of-chicago-public-schools-students-2018>

For a full description of data definitions and sources, please visit:

<https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/2018/definitions>

## To&Through Online Tool

The To&Through Online Tool makes data on key milestones for students' high school and college success available to the public. The tool links CPS high schools to college outcomes, providing the full picture of CPS students' educational progress, from the ninth-grade year through college graduation. School stakeholders can drill down to see detailed individual school metrics and make comparisons within and across schools. To access the tool, please visit <https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/data>. Please note that while the numbers in this publication reflect 2017-18 data, the To&Through Online Tool reflects the most current data available.

### About the To&Through Project

The **To&Through Project** integrates research, data, and professional learning to help more students get to and through high school and college. In collaboration with educators, policymakers, and communities, the To&Through Project aims to significantly increase the percentage of Chicago Public School Students who graduate from high school and go on to earn a college degree. The To&Through Project is a partnership among the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute and the School of Social Service Administration.

### About the UChicago Consortium

The **University of Chicago Consortium on School Research** conducts research of high technical quality that can inform and assess policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools. We seek to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners as we support the search for solutions to the problems of school reform. The UChicago Consortium is a unit of the Urban Education Institute at the School of Social Service Administration.

## Cite as:

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