the To&Through project

UCHICAGO Consortium on School Research

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The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students: 2025

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Photo by Chris Joyce on behalf of Braven

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

2 Post-secondary Attainment Index

8 CPS High School Graduation Rate

14 CPS Immediate College Enrollment Rate

19 CPS College Completion Rate

25 References

29 Appendices

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Since 2014, this annual analysis has examined Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students' high school and college attainment at the district level. It serves as both an update on current rates, and an annual opportunity to reflect on progress and what more can be done to improve students' pathways to degrees.

Our report focuses on three milestones for CPS students—high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion. We then use these current rates to calculate the Post-secondary Attainment Index (PAI), which estimates the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders expected to complete a college degree or certificate within 10 years, ***if* current high school and college attainment rates were to hold constant over the next decade**.

Actions for readers

- Remember that **the PAI is an estimate that does not have to come true**; Chicago has historically worked to improve policy and practice and surpassed these projections. Consider where your work can contribute to this change.
- Examine **milestone trends over multiple years**, rather than focusing on year-to-year changes.
- Explore data for **different groups of students**—by race/ethnicity and gender, disability status, and English Learner (EL) status—to understand how unique student groups are situated and guide actions toward equity.
- Understand Chicago's outcomes **in context** alongside national rates.
- Use the To&Through Milestones Tool (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/) to explore trends in **your local schools or community**.

Context for this year's report

- The college completers represented in this report (college class of 2025) transitioned to remote learning in their first year of college (school year 2019–20). Likewise, the high school graduating class of 2025 finished their eighth-grade year in remote learning during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- The students in this report applied to and experienced college as the United States Department of Education increased pressure on higher education institutions to disengage from diversity- and equity-focused initiatives, resulting in a **nationwide pull-back of explicit efforts to improve racial diversity**.[1]
- The students in this report lived through the federal government's 2025 **aggressive immigration enforcement**, which led to drops in attendance and affected many students' sense of belonging and security for themselves and their loved ones in schools, campuses, and their communities.[2]

Supporting CPS students through high school and beyond requires ongoing investment and strong partnerships across the city. **Understanding the experiences of CPS students is crucial to inform changes to practice.** For a rich database of students and families describing their experiences in their own words, explore the To&Through Project Student Stories (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/resources/cps-student-stories) & Family Stories (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/family-stories). **This year, we have integrated quotes from students throughout the report to provide a better understanding of how students are experiencing these milestones.** Students' quotes and images are used with their consent.

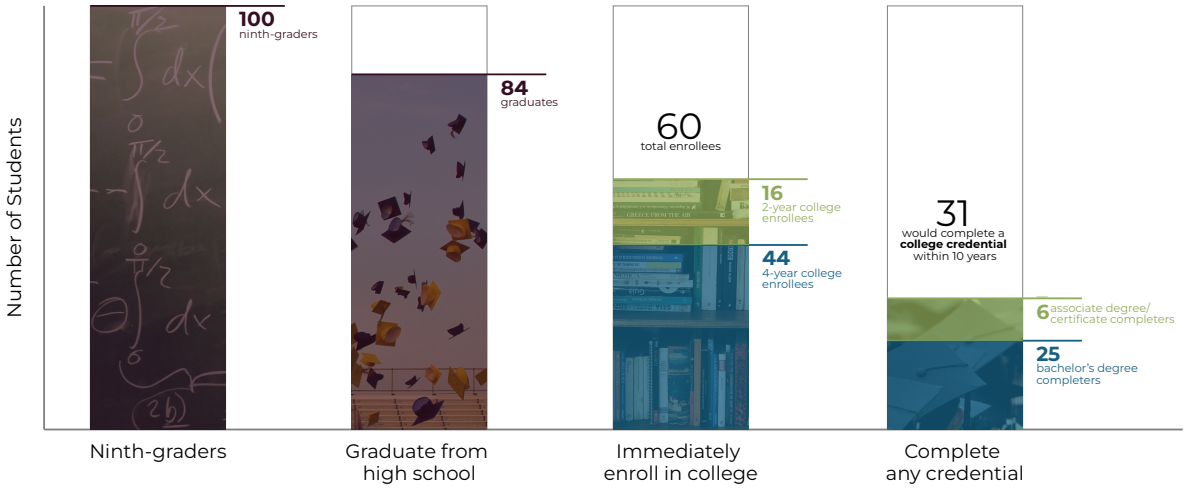
[1] Weissman (2025).
[2] Amin (2025).

Post-secondary Attainment Index

FIGURE 1

2025 Post-secondary Attainment Index

Of 100 2025–26 ninth-graders, 31 would earn a college credential by the time they're about 25 years old, if current rates stayed the same



Note: The high school graduation rates used in calculating the PAI are the 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 to calculate the PAI shown in Figure 1 do not match the enrollment and completion rates shown in Figures 8–15, which include CPS high school graduates who graduated high school in five or six years. The exact enrollment and completion rates used to calculate the PAI are available in Appendix A, Table A.1. *Photos by Jasmin Awad / Nate Umstead / Alfredo Lietor / baona for Getty Images.*

The PAI represents the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders who would complete any degree or certificate from a two-year or four-year college within 10 years, if current rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion were to hold constant over 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 multiple recent cohorts to suggest what college outcomes might be, if the most recent available rates of attainment were to hold constant during the next decade.

The PAI shows the combined influence of current high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation patterns on eventual degree completion. (To find the specific attainment rates used to calculate the PAI, see Appendix A, Table A.1.) Note that the PAI is not intended to be a prediction of what will happen. Continued investments in supporting CPS students in their post-secondary journeys hopefully will result in improved rates of high school and college completion. The PAI is intended to summarize current rates of high school and college attainment and put these rates in context with one another, **as a starting place for thinking about why these patterns exist and what can be done to change these patterns.**

2025 PAI — Key Points

- If 2025 rates held over the next decade, of 100 current CPS ninth-graders, 84 would graduate from high school within four years.
- Of those 84 high school graduates, 44 would immediately enroll in a four-year college, 16 would immediately enroll in a two-year college, and 24 would not immediately enroll in college.
- Six years after high-school graduation, a total of 31 of the 100 original ninth-graders would have completed a college credential—25 with a bachelor's degree and six with an associate degree or certificate.[3]
- The 2025 PAI of 31.0%, which we report rounding to whole numbers as 31%, shows a 0.9 percentage-point increase over the 2024 PAI of 30.1%.[4]

2025 PAI by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Before examining the PAI for different student groups, it is critical to state that the PAI should be understood as the product of the cumulative effects of historical and present systemic racism and economic inequality, including oppressive policies and structures in high schools and colleges and the communities students live in. The PAI also reflects the broader context of systemic racism that differentially impacts rates of attainment by race/ethnicity and gender. We report these numbers to contribute to critical examinations about how those working within the education field can change practices and disrupt policies that have contributed to these inequitable outcomes. To learn more about how we disaggregate data by race/ethnicity and gender, please reference the box *Interpreting Disaggregated Data Within the Context of Structural Oppression* and the "Data Definitions" section of the Appendices.

Rates for Native American/Alaskan students are reported in the figure notes on Figures 5, 9, and 15, combining information across cohorts to meet the minimum reporting sizes.

[3] The high school graduation rates used in calculating the PAI are the 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, which is why the denominator here is comprised of the 84 high school graduates.
[4] Usher, Mahaffie, & Nagaoka (2023). Earlier PAI rates are available in the Appendices.

Interpreting Disaggregated Data Within the Context of Structural Oppression

Where possible, we disaggregate data by race/ethnicity and gender, disability status, and English Learner (EL) status to understand which students face more barriers to educational attainment and where different strategies and supports are needed. We report these numbers to contribute to critical examinations about whether high schools and colleges are making progress toward fostering equitable outcomes, and how high schools and colleges can further change practices and disrupt policies contributing to inequitable outcomes.

We urge readers to examine disaggregated rates of educational attainment within the context of structural oppression—particularly the history and present reality of systemic racism—while moving through the stages of questioning needed to affect change. 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.[A] Specifically, we hope readers will:

- Interrogate how disparities in attainment are due to issues of equity—particularly racial equity—within the district and higher education institutions in addition to the broader context of systemic racism in which schools are situated.
- Beyond questioning why these disparities exist, question what can be done, both within and outside of education, to change them.
- Understand that, while important, examining these data is only a part of the efforts necessary to determine what questions should be asked to understand and improve students' experiences at CPS and after graduation.

Finally, limitations to note include:

- We do not have information on students who pursue post-secondary pathways other than a college degree, such as the workforce or the military. We are also limited by the data CPS collects on students' race/ethnicity,[B] gender,[C] disability status, EL status,[D] and other identifiers.
- These data represent individual students who face and overcome barriers to educational attainment every day. Students can bring a wealth of lived experience to bear on the inequitable policies and practices that prevent CPS students from reaching their full potential.

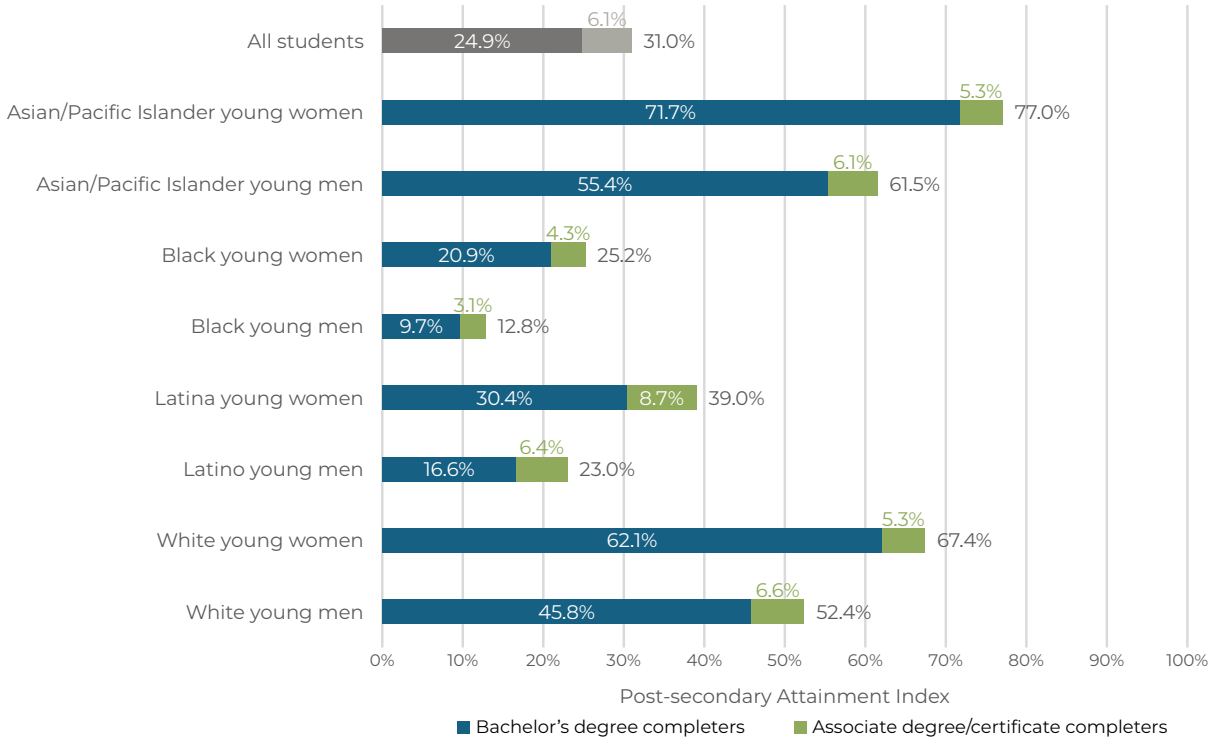
[A] Publications that have informed authors' understanding include: Ewing (2018); Payne (2008); Todd-Breland (2018); Chicago Beyond Equity Series (2019); Drake & Clayton (1945); Henricks, Lewis, Arenas, & Lewis (2017); Moore (2016); Rothstein (2017); Sampson (2011); Wilson (1987). See references for full details.

[B] We acknowledge that the race/ethnicity and gender categories available in our data are limited and do not fully reflect the spectrum of identities embodied by CPS students. Further, we have chosen to combine or suppress data for several groups because the small numbers of students in those groups makes it difficult to reliably interpret their rates. More specifically, 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. In this brief, our "Asian American/Pacific Islander" category combines three CPS data categories—Asian, Pacific Islander/Hawaiian, and Asian/Pacific Islander—due to the small number of students in the latter two categories. Students who identified as Native American/Alaskan Native, Middle Eastern, North African, and Multiracial students were not included in the figures, also due to the small numbers of students in these categories in the administrative records. However, on relevant figures, the figure notes include rates for these students from the past three cohorts combined.

[C] Many students do not fit into one of the two gender categories CPS has historically collected data on (male and female), but we believe that there are still insights to be gained from analysis of this data. Starting in 2020–21, the gender categories in the CPS demographic questionnaire were: male, female, and non-binary; however, we are not currently reporting data on non-binary students due to small group sizes. We hope in the future to be able to report data that more fully describes the identities of CPS students.

[D] In 2017, hundreds of CPS schools were cited by the district for not supporting English Learners to the degree legally required (Belsha, 2017 June 28). We acknowledge this reality with the aim of highlighting system-level disparities and discouraging people from ascribing English Learners' educational outcomes solely to the choices and capacity of English Learners and their families.

FIGURE 2
2025 Post-secondary Attainment Index by race/ethnicity and gender



Note: The high school graduation rates used in calculating the PAI are the 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 to calculate the PAI shown in Figure 1 do not match the enrollment and completion rates shown in Figures 8–15, which include CPS high school graduates who graduated high school in five or six years. The exact enrollment and completion rates used to calculate the PAI are available in Appendix A, Table A.1. 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. Historically, data has been collected in a way that groups students into one of two categories: male and female. Starting in 2020–21, the gender categories in the CPS demographic questionnaire were: male, female, and non-binary; however, we are not currently reporting data on non-binary students due to small group sizes. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed.

2025 PAI by Race/Ethnicity and Gender — Key Point

- In 2025, 72% of CPS ninth-graders indicated that they aspired to obtain at least an associate degree or certificate.[5] However, of the eight race/ethnicity groups displayed in Figure 2, only Asian/Pacific Islander young women would have at least 72% of students attain a college degree or certificate in 10 years, if the most recent available rates of attainment for CPS students were not to change over the next decade.

PAI Versus Actual Attainment Over Time

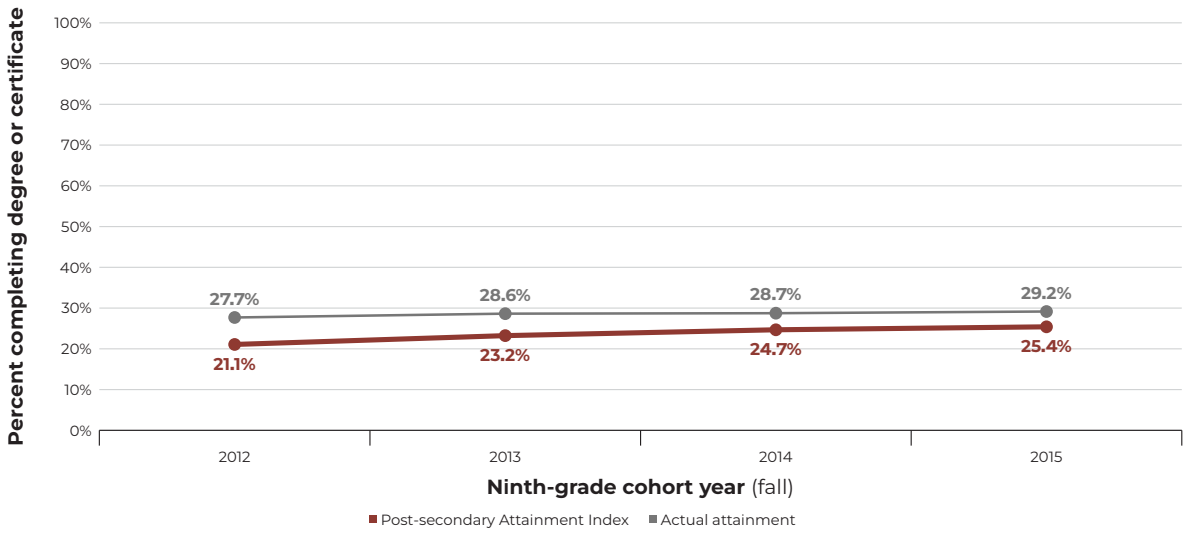
Because the PAI combines data from multiple cohorts, it is best understood as a measure of progress over time, rather than as a point-in-time estimate for a particular cohort. The PAI is intended to serve as a starting place for thinking about why patterns of educational attainment exist and what can be done to improve these patterns.

Figure 3 shows the PAI over time, for the years in which enough time has elapsed to also calculate the actual attainment rate for that cohort. The PAI and the actual attainment level are different because the component rates (high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion) changed between the time the PAI was calculated in students' ninth-grade year and the outcome year (10 years after starting ninth grade).

[5] UChicago Consortium analysis of the 2025 *5Essentials* Survey.

FIGURE 3

Attainment rates of college degree or certificate, over time



Note: To calculate these historical rates, we applied the method that we used to calculate the 2025 PAI retroactively to all years of data, rather than using indices that were calculated in the past. For example, the 2025 PAI was calculated using the 2025 high school graduation rate, the 2025 college enrollment rates, and the college completion rates for 2019 high school graduates, so the 2012 PAI would be calculated using the 2012 high school graduation rate, the 2012 college enrollment rates, and the rates of completion for 2006 high school graduates. For rates of high school graduation, immediate college enrollment, and college completion used to calculate the PAI over time, as well as what the PAI was for 2015–2024, see **Table A.1**.

PAI Over Time — Key Points

- In each year thus far, the actual attainment level was higher than the PAI because one or more component rates (high school graduation, college enrollment, or college completion) had improved between the time the PAI was calculated and the outcome year. For example, in 2015 the PAI was predicted to be 25.4%, but the actual attainment level for the 2015 9th grade class was 29.2%.
- For the years where data is available (2012–15), the improvement in rates between the time the PAI was calculated and the outcome year resulted in 5,264 additional students completing a degree, beyond what was initially predicted (24,991 students initially predicted to complete a degree vs. 30,255 students actually completed a degree).

National Context

Table 1 provides national rates on key milestones as a point of comparison and context for Chicago's story, and to interrupt narratives that are both incorrect and harmful about CPS students' outcomes. While exact comparisons are not always possible due to data and methodology limitations, we have provided the most relevant and recent numbers possible.

TABLE 1
National comparison rates

	National Rate	2025 CPS Rate
High School Graduation	87% Black students: 81% Latinx students: 87%	84% Black students: 82% Latinx students: 84%
Immediate Enrollment into College	63% Black students: 60% Latinx students: 55%	67% Black students: 59% Latinx students: 67%
College Degree or Credential Completion Within Six Years	64% Black students: 45% Latinx students: 52%	48% Black students: 35% Latinx students: 48%

Note: Rates specific to Black and Latinx students are included here as those populations make up 81% of the CPS student body. The national high school graduation rate is from IPEDS and represents the graduating class of 2023. The national college enrollment rate is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and represents the high school graduation class of 2024. The national college completion rate is from the NSC and represents the rate of college completion within six years for 2019 first-time enrollees in any institution, aged 20 and younger, while the CPS rate represents the rate for immediate college enrollees from the 2019 CPS graduating class.

National Context — Key Points

- CPS is outpacing the national rate for immediate enrollment into college, particularly for Latinx students, but is behind the national rates for high school graduation and college completion.
- When disaggregating rates for Black and Latinx students (who make up 81% of the CPS student body), CPS rates are closer to the national rates.
- The largest disparities in rates for Black and Latinx students compared to the average rate are in college completion, although less so for CPS graduates than nationally.

CPS Rates on Educational Milestones Reported by the UChicago To&Through Project

The To&Through Project also reports these rates—high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion—and more for each CPS high school and each community area in Chicago on the To&Through Milestones Tool (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/cps/).

Both this report and the Tool share annual data. This report is updated annually, to track how attainment rates are changing in the district year-over-year. The Tool is typically also updated annually, but may also have more frequent updates to provide users with timely data. In that case, data on the Tool may differ from the data on this report web page.

CPS High School Graduation Rate

STUDENT STORIES

Alejandro

CPS Class of 2025

"Some people say that once you graduate they feel like an emptiness because they don't know what they're gonna do, but like I said, I already had a plan, so I didn't feel really empty. I just felt just wholesome [and] kind of sad for a bit."

Read Alejandro's story: https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2026-08/Alejandro.pdf

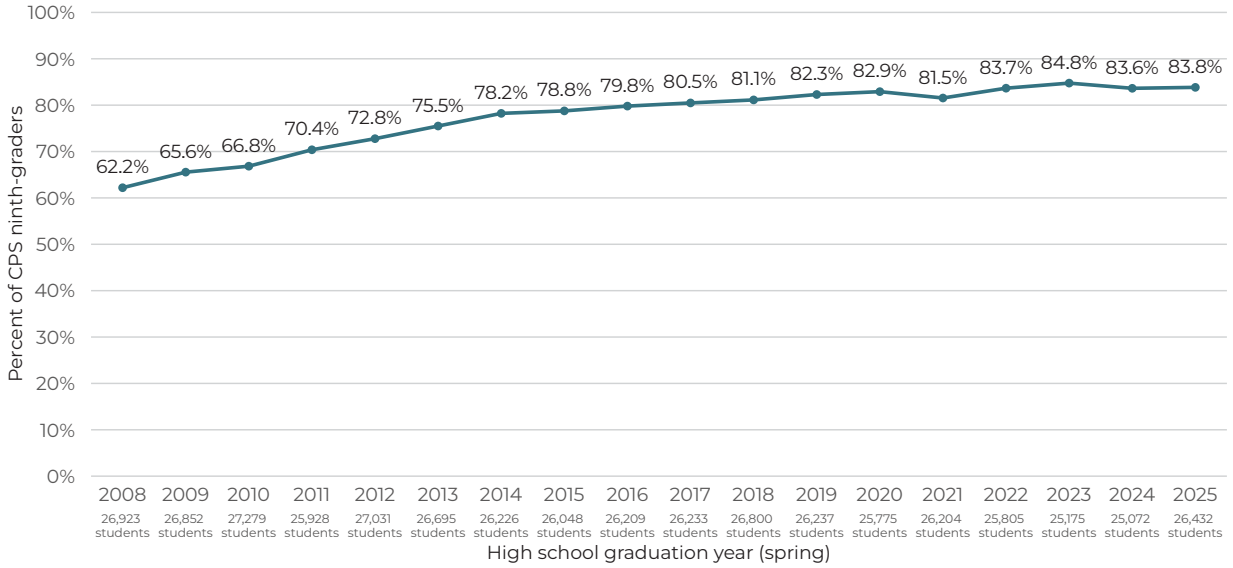


Among 2021–22 first-time ninth-graders, 84% graduated from high school by spring 2025.

For detailed information on how this metric is calculated, see the Appendices.

FIGURE 4

Four-year high school graduation rates of CPS ninth-grade cohorts over time



Note: All CPS high school students, including charter and Options school students, were included in this analysis. Students were counted as high school graduates if they completed high school within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year of high school—the 2025 high school graduation year rate, for example, represents students who began high school in the fall of 2021. Ns represent the total number of ninth-graders in each cohort. While students who transferred between CPS schools were included in this analysis, students who transferred to a non-CPS school during high school were excluded from this analysis.

2025 CPS High School Graduation Rate — Key Points

- The high school graduation rate has increased over the past decade, from 78.8% in 2015 to 83.8% in 2025.
- The high school graduation rate increased slightly in the past year, and remains 2.3 percentage points above its post-COVID low of 81.5% in 2021, and 1.5 percentage points above its pre-COVID high of 82.3% in 2019.

Foundational Work: The Middle Grades and 9th Grade On-Track

Although the PAI uses high school graduation as its starting place for understanding academic outcomes, developing the skills that students need to graduate from high school and succeed in post-secondary life begins much earlier. Strong foundations matter—and those foundations are laid throughout the elementary and middle grades. Our research has shown that students who have strong grades and attendance in elementary school are better set up for success in high school and beyond.[E]

Two key research-backed indicators help to guide educators' and advisors' support of CPS students through these critical middle grades and high school transition points:

- Elementary OnTrack, defined for 3rd–8th-grade students as having an attendance rate at or above 90% and a GPA at or above 3.0.
- 9th Grade On-Track, defined for ninth-grade students as ending the school year having earned at least 6.5 total credits, meaning at most one semester course failure.[F]

The measurement and tracking of these on-track indicators provides educators with actionable data in real time to respond to the unique needs and circumstances of students across CPS. Students who were in the On-Track category by the end of elementary school graduated high school at over twice the rate of students in the Intensive Support category (below 90% attendance and below a 3.0 GPA). And 9th Grade On-Track is more predictive of a student's odds of graduating from high school than all other factors combined;[G] students who are on-track in their ninth-grade year graduate high school at a rate of 87%, while students who are off-track graduate at a rate of 30%. Leaders also use this data to identify needed shifts in policies and practices, remaining responsive to student and community needs. To learn more about this data and to explore these indicators for the communities that you support, visit the To&Through Milestone Tool's Elementary Lens to explore Elementary OnTrack data and the High School Lens to explore 9th Grade On-Track data.

At To&Through, we facilitate this work through our Middle Grades Network (MGN) and as a partner to the district as they support practitioners to strategically use this data. The To&Through MGN partners with cohorts of CPS elementary schools to increase the number of students with attendance at or above 90% and GPAs at or above 3.0 through a meaningful increase in students' sense of belonging. Through a multi-year partnership, these schools use multiple forms of data to better understand students' daily experiences and create learning environments that foster the academic and social-emotional skills necessary for their long-term success. The MGN also serves as a thought partner to the district, sharing learnings and expertise, assisting in the development of a middle grades strategy for networks, and offering resources and professional learning to help schools analyze and use learning conditions data to improve student experiences. For more information on the MGN, visit the To&Through MGN website (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tothrough-middle-grades-network).

Finally, there is a long and important history of 9th Grade On-Track work in CPS. Efforts by the district have combined with research and coaching from organizations including To&Through and the UChicago Consortium and our partner organizations at the Kersten Institute for Urban Education including the Network for College Success. Decades of work by practitioners to build systems and structures, change adult mindsets, and improve student achievement have led to historically high rates of students' academic success in the ninth grade. This has been fundamental to the increases in high school graduation and college success shown in the figures in this report. For more information about the history of 9th Grade On-Track work in CPS, see the Overview of On-Track in CPS (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2025-11/FOT-One-Pager_1.pdf).

[E] Seeskin, Massion, & Usher (2022) and Allensworth et al. (2014).

[F] This definition was adopted by CPS starting in the 2024–25 school year. In the original research, the metric was defined as failing no more than one semester of a core course and earning at least five credits by the end of ninth grade.

[G] Allensworth & Easton (2005).

STUDENT STORIES

Bernijah

CPS Class of 2025

"I recently caught up with some of my high school and middle school friends that went to [elementary school] with me... We kind of just went down memory lane basically. I feel like it shaped me, [my] character development and just showed me that people in my life are not gonna be just like me at all. That's a big lesson."



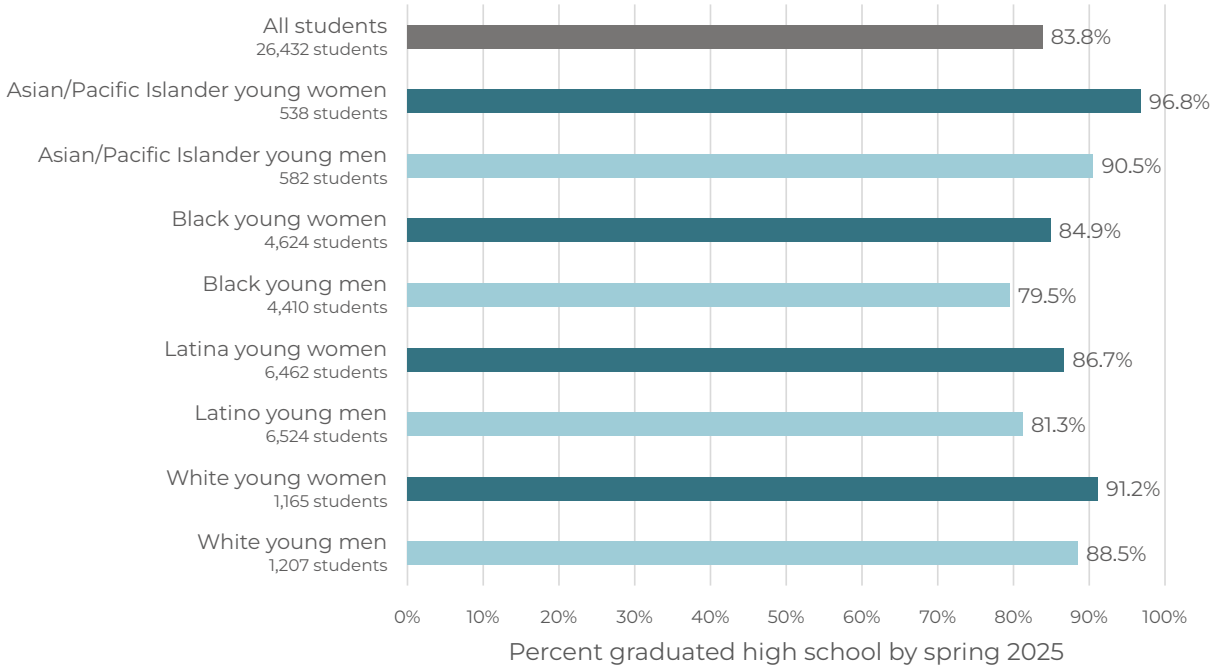
Read Bernijah's story: https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2026-08/Bernijah.pdf

High School Graduation: Disaggregated Data
High School Graduation by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

FIGURE 5

Four-year high school graduation rates by race/ethnicity and gender

2021–22 CPS ninth-grade cohort



Note: All CPS high school students, including charter and Options school students, were included in this analysis. Students were counted as high school graduates if they completed high school within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year of high school. While students who transferred between CPS schools were included in this analysis, students who transferred to a non-CPS school during high school were excluded from this analysis. The number of students in each of the race/ethnicity and gender categories does not sum to the number of students in the "All students" category because there were some students whose specific race/ethnicity groups are not shown in the figure, but who are included in the overall numbers. Specifically, Native American/Alaskan Native students, Multiracial students, and students who did not report their race/ethnicity are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified in each of those categories, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. When combined together (in order to meet minimum cohort reporting sizes), Native American/Alaskan Native young women (106 students) from the last three graduating classes graduated from high school at a rate of 90.6%, while Native American/Alaskan Native young men from the last three graduating classes (109 students) graduated from high school at a rate of 76.1%. Historically, data has been collected in a way that groups students into one of two categories: male and female. Starting in 2020–21, the gender categories in the CPS demographic questionnaire were: male, female, and non-binary; however, we are not currently reporting data on non-binary students due to small group sizes.

High School Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity and Gender — Key Points

- Within each race/ethnicity group, young men graduated from high school at a rate lower than young women of the same race/ethnicity.
- The graduation rates for Black young men (79.5%) and Latino young men (81.3%) were below the district average (83.8%).

To learn more about how we disaggregate by race/ethnicity and gender, see Appendix B. To track high school graduation rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender over time, see the To&Through Milestones Tool (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/).[6]

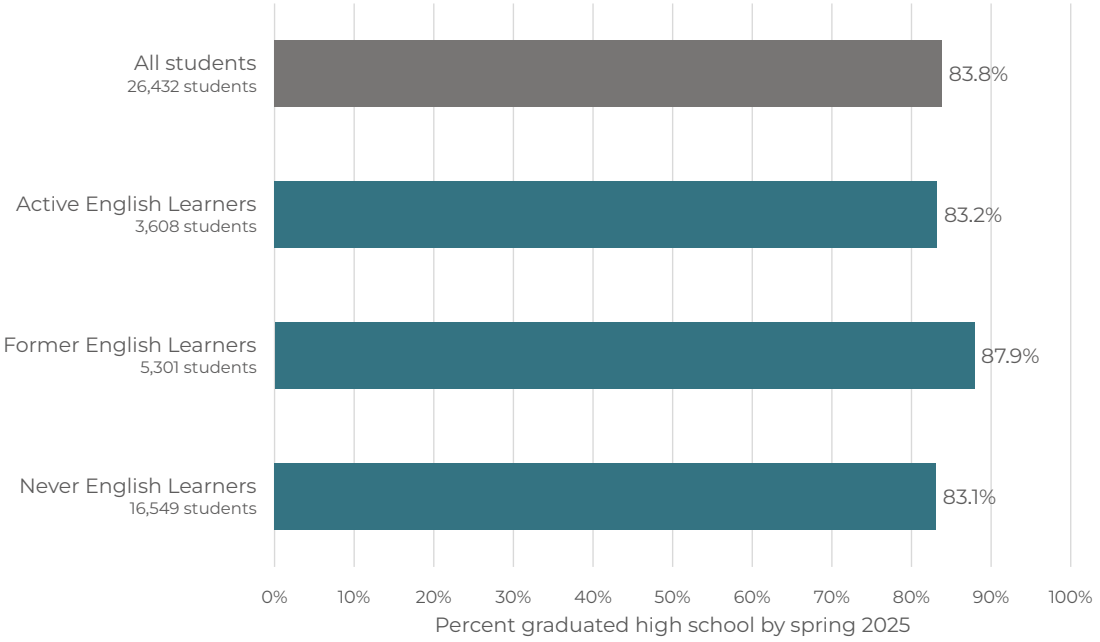
[6] The To&Through Milestones Tool is a public resource that allows users to explore rates of educational attainment across a variety of metrics, for individual CPS schools and the district as a whole.

High School Graduation by EL Status

FIGURE 6

Four-year high school graduation rates by EL status

2021–22 CPS ninth-grade cohort



Note: All CPS high school students, including charter and Options school students, were included in this analysis. Students were counted as high school graduates if they completed high school within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year of high school. While students who transferred between CPS schools were included in this analysis, students who transferred to a non-CPS school during high school were excluded from this analysis. The "Former English Learners" category includes students who took the ACCESS test at any point after their entry into CPS and then later demonstrated English proficiency (scoring above the cut score) on the ACCESS test, and thus were no longer classified as active English Learners at any point during high school. The "Active English Learners" category includes students who were active English Learners at some point during high school. We define students who were never classified as English Learners 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. The three EL status categories do not sum to the total N for all students because some students are missing an EL status due to data anomalies. Students can exit out of EL status as early as the first year during which they were classified as English Learners, including if that year is kindergarten. CPS kindergarteners who were designated as English Learners and exited out of EL status at the end of kindergarten are included in former English Learners. Many students who began as English Learners exited out of EL status by the third grade. Furthermore, most students who began as English Learners exited out of EL status by the time they reached high school. About one in five students who began as English Learners remained classified as English Learners upon high school enrollment (de la Torre, et al., 2024).

High School Graduation Rate by English Learner Status — Key Points

- Among 2021–22 ninth-graders, students formerly classified as English Learners graduated from high school at a higher rate (87.9%) than students who had never been classified as English Learners (83.1%).
- Students who were still classified as English Learners as of ninth grade graduated from high school at a rate on par with (83.2%) students who had never been classified as English Learners (83.1%).

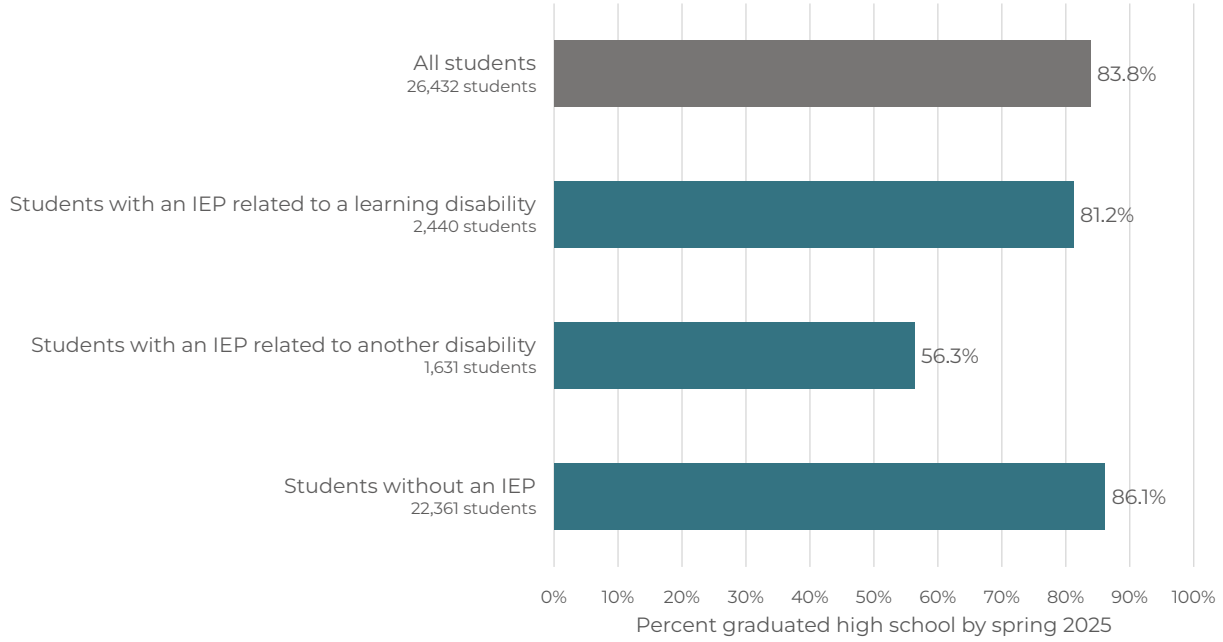
To learn more about how and why we disaggregate data by EL status, see the Figure 6 note and the Appendices.

High School Graduation by Disability Status

FIGURE 7

Four-year CPS high school graduation rates by disability category

2021–22 CPS ninth-grade cohort



Note: All CPS high school students, including charter and Options school students, were included in this analysis. Students were counted as high school graduates if they completed high school within four years of their first-time ninth-grade year of high school. While students who transferred between CPS schools were included in this analysis, students who transferred to a non-CPS school during high school were excluded from this analysis. Please see the Appendices for details about the disability categories used in this table.

High School Graduation Rate by Disability Status — Key Points

- Among 2021–22 first-time ninth-graders, students with IEPs graduated from high school within four years at lower rates than the four-year district average of 83.8%.
  - The four-year graduation rate for the 2,440 2021–22 CPS ninth-graders receiving services related to a learning disability was 81.2%.
  - The four-year graduation rate for the 1,631 2021–22 CPS ninth-graders receiving services related to another disability was 56.3%.

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legal document to provide a plan for services and supports for students with disabilities in public schools. There are also students with disabilities that are not captured by the IEP label alone. To learn how we disaggregate by disability status, see the Appendices.

CPS Immediate College Enrollment Rate

STUDENT STORIES

Bernijah

CPS Class of 2025

"College definitely was an option and I wanted to [go]. I was very excited about college. Just trying to figure out what I wanted to do was more so the harder part and stepping foot into a whole new like scene."

Read Bernijah's story: https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2026-08/Bernijah.pdf



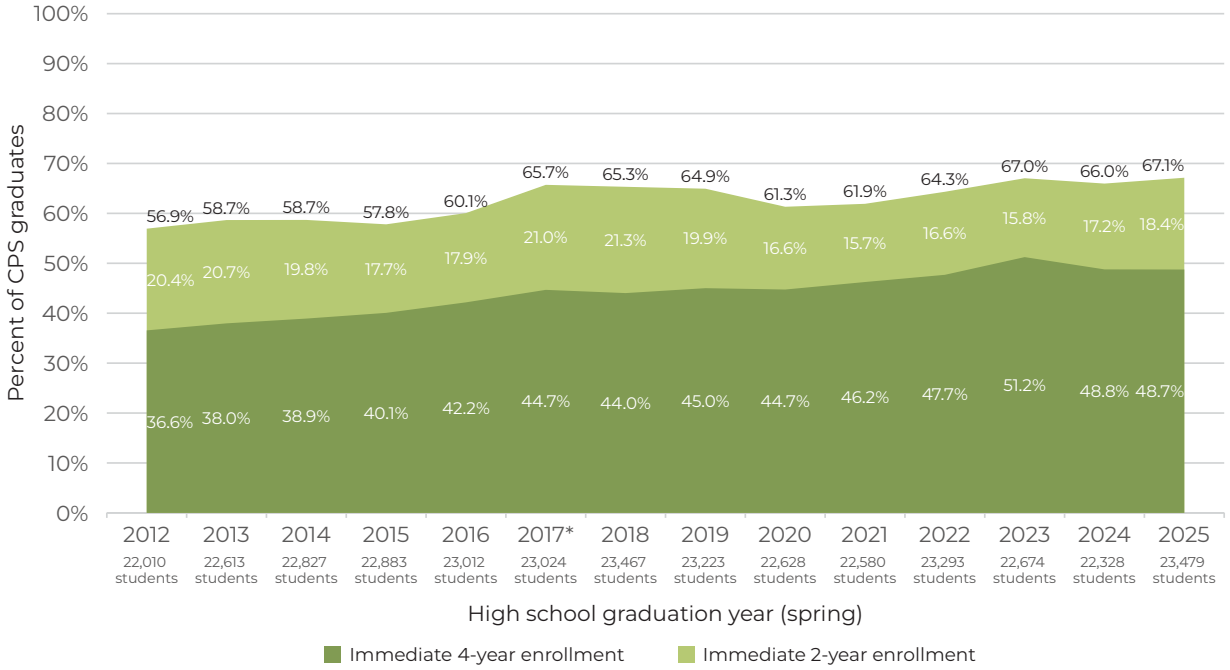
Among the CPS graduating class of 2025, 67% enrolled in a two-year or four-year college in the first summer or fall following high school graduation.[7]

For detailed information on how this metric is calculated, see the Appendices.

[7] The To&Through Project's definition of immediate college enrollment differs from CPS's definition of college enrollment in that CPS includes spring enrollments as immediate enrollments. The figures in this report include only immediate summer and fall enrollments as immediate enrollments.

FIGURE 8

Immediate college enrollment of CPS graduates over time



* The graph shows a large increase in enrollment between 2016 and 2017. About one-half of this increase was due to implementing corrected NSC data starting in 2017, and the remainder was a true increase in enrollment.

Note: These are immediate college enrollment rates for all CPS high school graduates, including those who graduated high school in five or six years. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed. College enrollment and completion data for the graduating classes of 2017–24 was revised to correct for a methodological error announced by the National Student Clearinghouse (see NSC press release (https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/news/national-student-clearinghouse-research-center-finds-a-methodological-error-affecting-preliminary-fall-2024-higher-education-enrollment-reports/)). This correction resulted in a small increase in immediate college enrollment numbers and means that the rates reported here do not match previous reports. For more information, see this brief summary of NSC Data Correction (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2025-11/2025_NSC_Data_Correction_0.pdf).

2025 CPS Immediate College Enrollment Rate — Key Points

- Overall college enrollment is at an all-time high of 67.1%, surpassing its pre-COVID high (which was in 2017) by 1.4 percentage points.
- The four-year college enrollment rate has increased over time since 2012, while the two-year college enrollment rate has seen more fluctuations and decreased overall.
- In 2025, the four-year college enrollment rate essentially held steady, while the two-year college enrollment rate increased 1.2 percentage points from the prior year, to 18.4%.

STUDENT STORIES

Alejandro

CPS Class of 2025

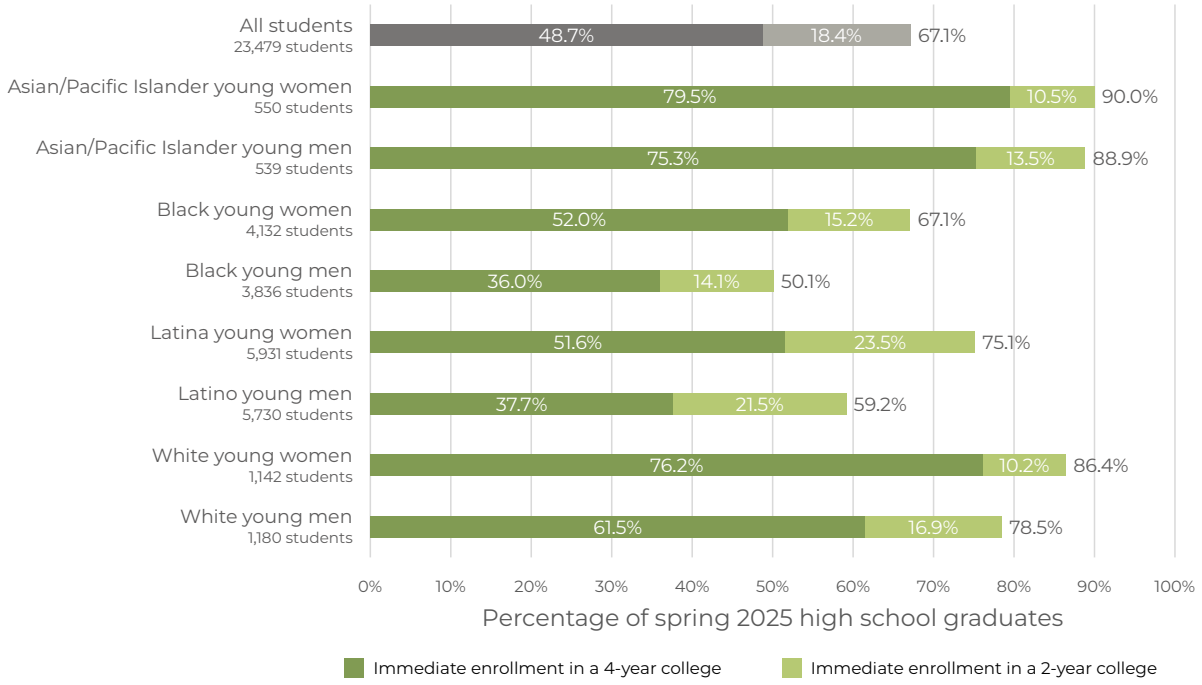
"One of my best friends, he influenced me to go to North Park University. He wanted to go there...Then I did my research. I applied to universities because it was something that everybody had to do and I ended up liking it and applying for a scholarship. I got the scholarship and I was so deep in, I was like 'I can't refuse it.'"

Read Alejandro's story: https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2026-08/Alejandro.pdf



Immediate College Enrollment: Disaggregated Data
Immediate College Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

FIGURE 9
Immediate college enrollment rates by race/ethnicity and gender



Note: These are immediate college enrollment rates for all CPS high school graduates, including those who graduated high school in five or six years. The number of students in each of the race/ethnicity and gender categories does not sum to the number of students in the "All students" category because there were some students whose specific race/ethnicity groups are not shown in the figure, but who are included in the overall numbers. Specifically, Native American/Alaskan Native students, Multiracial students, and students who did not report their race/ethnicity are not shown because fewer than 100 students identified in each of those categories, making it difficult to reliably interpret rates. Even when combining students from the previous three cohorts, there are not enough students in the Native American/Alaskan Native group to reliably report rates. Historically, data has been collected in a way that groups students into one of two categories: male and female. Starting in 2020–21, the gender categories in the CPS demographic questionnaire were: male, female, and non-binary; however, we are not currently reporting data on non-binary students due to small group sizes. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed.

Immediate College Enrollment Rate by Race/Ethnicity and Gender — Key Points

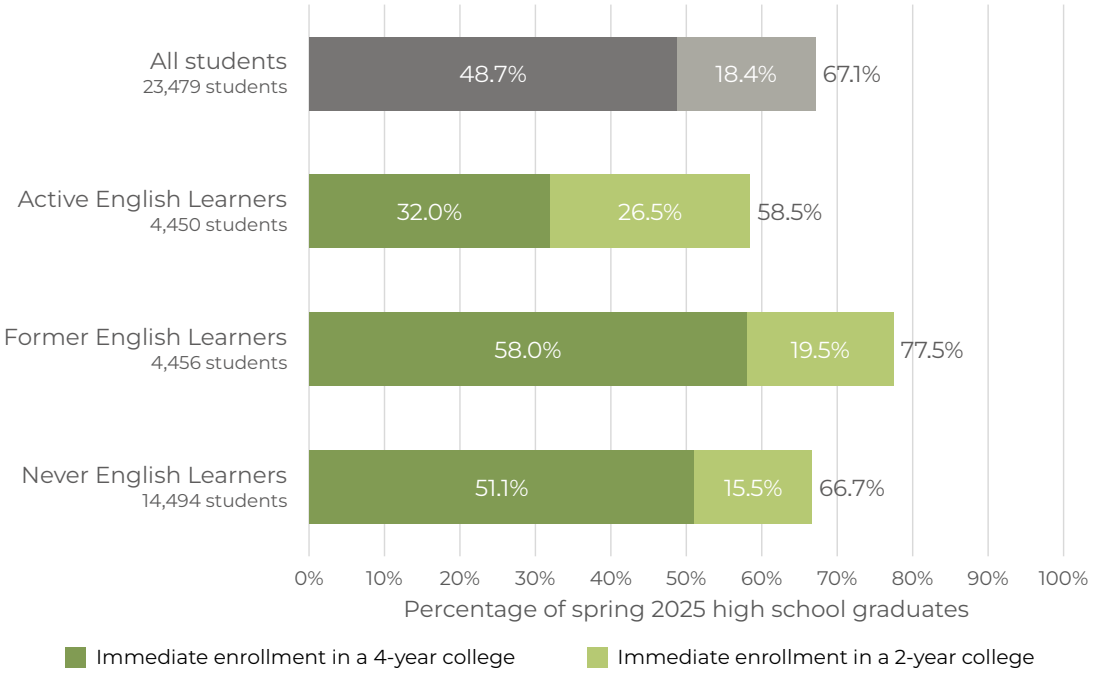
- Among 2025 graduates, young women of all race/ethnicity groups immediately enrolled in four-year colleges at a rate higher than young men within the same race/ethnicity category.
- Only 36.0% of Black young men and 37.7% of Latino young men immediately enrolled in a four-year college vs. the districtwide enrollment rate of 48.7%. However, Latino young men and Latina young women enrolled in two-year colleges at the highest rates among all groups (21.5% and 23.5% respectively vs. a districtwide average of 18.4%).

To learn more about how we disaggregate by race/ethnicity and gender, see the Appendices. To track immediate college enrollment rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender over time, see the To&Through Milestones Tool (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/).[8]

[8] The To&Through Milestones Tool is a public resource that allows users to explore rates of educational attainment across a variety of metrics, for individual CPS schools and the district as a whole.

Immediate College Enrollment by EL Status

FIGURE 10
Immediate college enrollment rates by EL status



Note: These are immediate college enrollment rates for all CPS high school graduates, including those who graduated high school in five or six years. The "Former English Learners" category includes students who took the ACCESS test at any point after their entry into CPS and then later demonstrated English proficiency (scoring above the cut score) on the ACCESS test, and thus were no longer classified as active English Learners at any point during high school. The "Active English Learners" category includes students who were active English Learners at some point during high school. We define students who were never classified as English Learners 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. The three EL status categories do not sum to the total N for all students because some students are missing an EL status due to data anomalies. Students can exit out of EL status as early as the first year during which they were classified as English Learners, including if that year is kindergarten. CPS kindergarteners who were designated as English Learners and exited out of EL status at the end of kindergarten are included in former English Learners. Many students who began as English Learners exited out of EL status by the third grade. Furthermore, most students who began as English Learners exited out of EL status by the time they reached high school. About one in five students who began as English Learners remained classified as English Learners upon high school enrollment (de la Torre, et al., 2024).

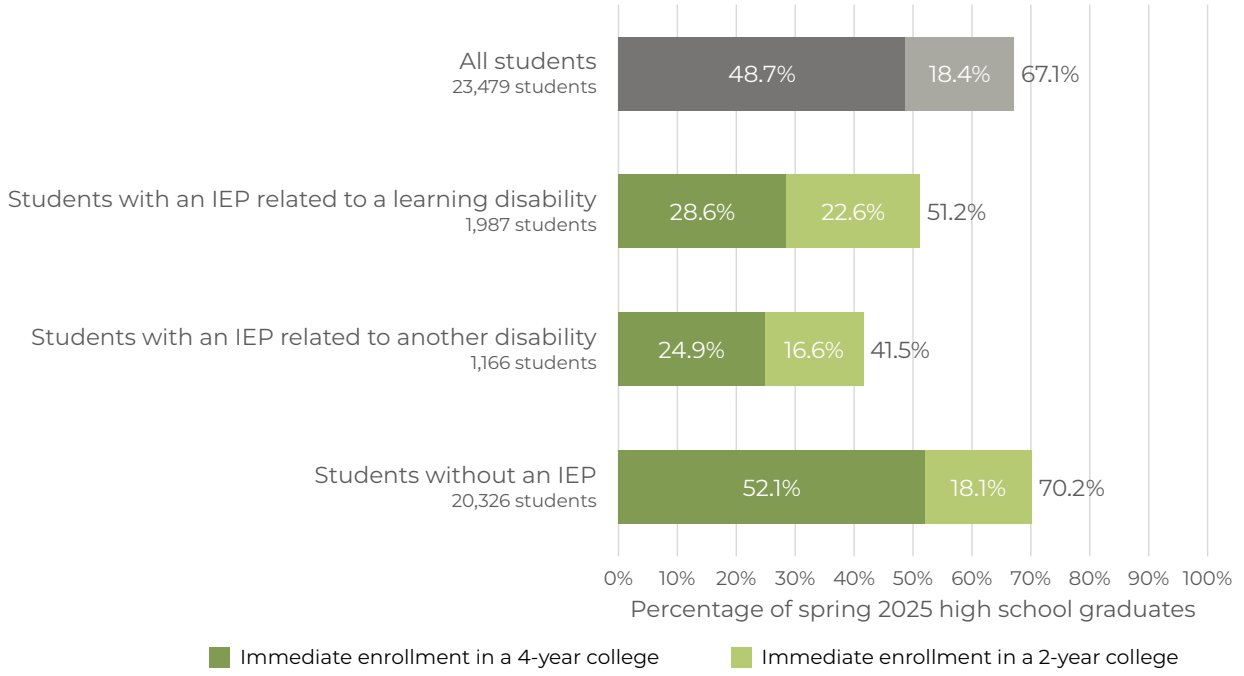
Immediate College Enrollment Rate by EL Status — Key Points

- Among 2025 high school graduates, students who were formerly classified as English Learners enrolled in college at a higher rate (77.5%) than students who were never classified as English Learners (66.7%).
    - Students who were formerly classified as English Learners enrolled in a four-year college at a similar rate (58.0%) as students who were never classified as English Learners (51.1%), but enrolled in two-year college at a much higher rate (19.5%, compared to 15.5%).
- Students who were still classified as English Learners while in high school enrolled in a four-year college at a much lower rate (32.0%) than their peers, but had the highest two-year college enrollment rate (26.5%).

To learn more about how and why we disaggregate data by EL status, see the Figure 10 note and the Appendices.

Immediate College Enrollment by Disability Status

FIGURE 11
Immediate college enrollment rates by disability category



Note: These are immediate college enrollment rates for all CPS high school graduates, including those who graduated high school in five or six years. Please see the Appendices for details about the disability categories used in this table.

Immediate College Enrollment Rates by Disability Status — Key Points

- The immediate enrollment rate into two-year colleges was the highest for students receiving services related to a learning disability (22.6%).
- However, students with no identified disabilities immediately enrolled into four-year colleges at a higher rate (52.1%) than students receiving services related to a learning disability (28.6%) or receiving services related to another disability (24.9%).
- The immediate enrollment rate into four-year colleges differed by 3.7 percentage points between students receiving services related to a learning disability (28.6%) and students receiving services related to another disability (24.9%).

To learn how we disaggregate by disability status, see the Appendices.

CPS College Completion Rate

STUDENT STORIES

Paola

CPS Class of 2019

"I decided to now actually finish Harold [Washington.] I graduated last year in June and then I transitioned to Northeastern Illinois University, which this will be already my third semester. So hopefully this is like my last year there, so I can graduate. I decided to pursue psychology... In an ideal world, I would definitely finish my master's."



Read Paola's story:
https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2026-08/Paola.pdf

Among the CPS graduating class of 2019, 56% of students who immediately enrolled in a four-year college and 32% of students who immediately enrolled in a two-year college completed a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate within six years.

To keep the focus on the lived realities these data represent, **Figure 12a** shows the total *number* of students who immediately enrolled in college and their completion outcomes. Each bar represents a different high school graduating class; these class sizes have changed over time (see the numbers in the horizontal axis of Figure 4). To view this graph for students from different race/ethnicity groups, use the dropdown menu under the figure title. **Figure 12b** shows persistence rates for the students in these cohorts. Historical data shows that students who persist are more likely to complete college,[9] and therefore persistence can be a leading indicator of completion rates.

The following two figures explore college completion rates according to where a student first enrolled in college. **Figures 13** and **14** show the *percentage* of students who immediately enrolled in a four-year college or a two-year college, respectively, who completed a degree or certificate. For the percentage of delayed and non-enrollees[10] who completed a degree or certificate within six years, see Figure A.3 in the Appendices.

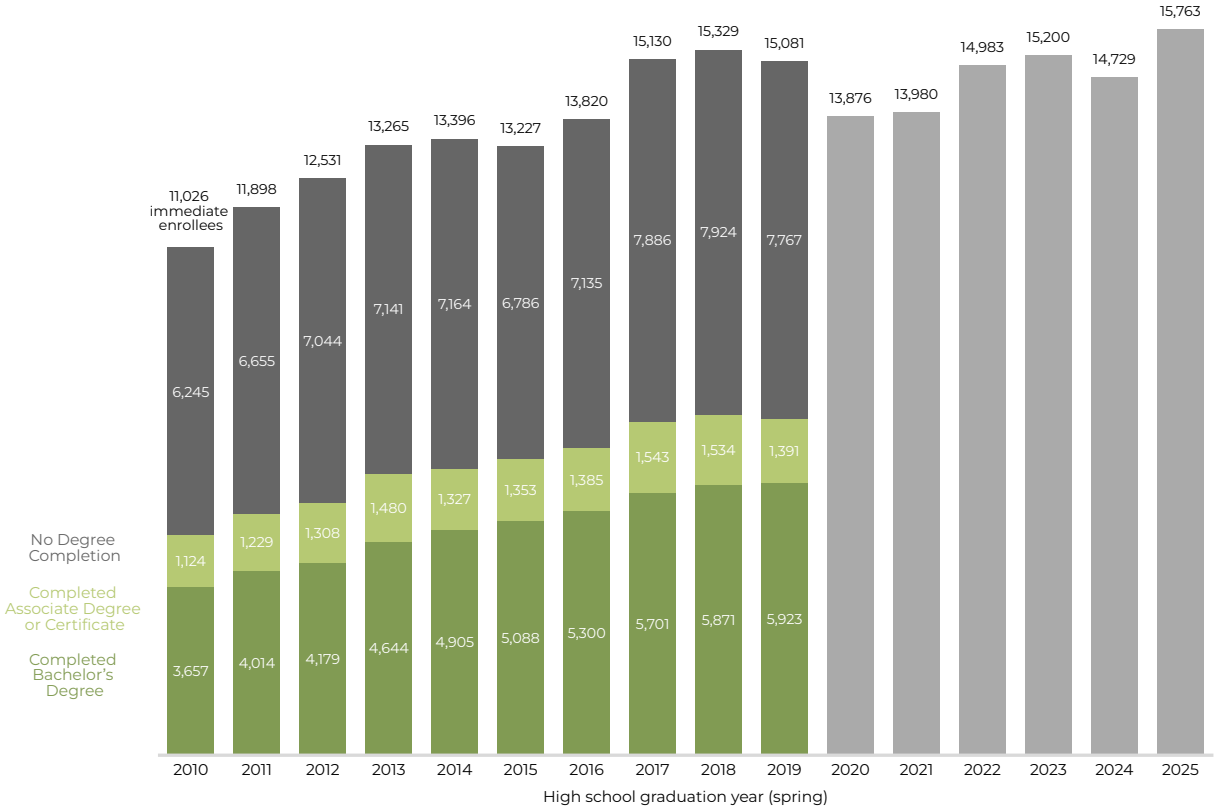
[9] Mahaffie, Nagaoka, & Usher (2024).

[10] We define delayed enrollees as graduates who delayed entry into college to the spring following high school graduation or later, and we define non-enrollees as graduates who did not enroll in college within six years of high school graduation.

FIGURE 12A

Number of immediate college enrollees and degree completion types

Immediate CPS college enrollees and degree completion types, by high school graduation year, 2010–25

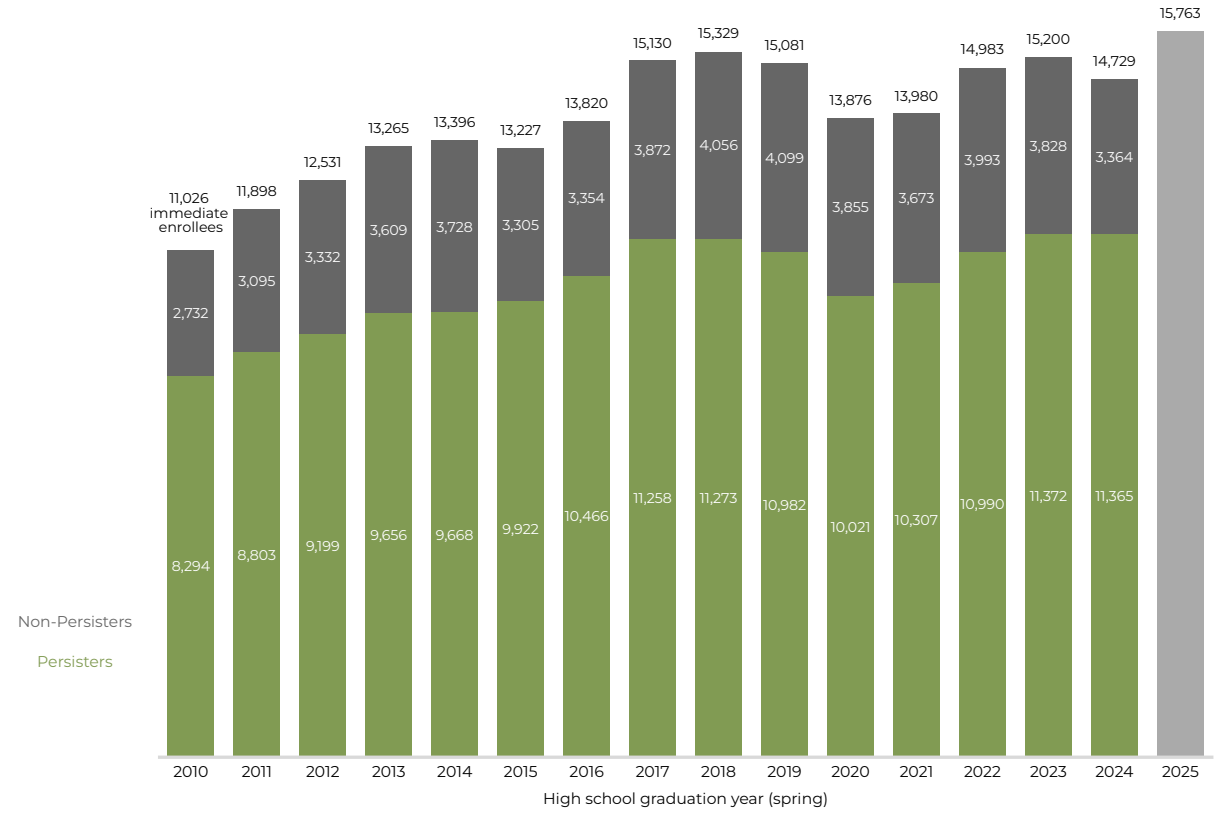


Note: In this figure, degree completion is defined as the completion of a bachelor's degree, associate degree, or certificate within six years of graduating high school. Students who complete both an associate degree or certificate and a bachelor's degree are included in the "Completed Bachelor's Degree" group. The six bars on the right are not divided into completion outcomes because data on six-year degree completion outcomes is not yet available for those cohorts of graduates. As an example of how to read this figure, the 2010 bar can be understood as follows: among high school graduates in 2010, 11,026 students immediately enrolled in college. Of those 11,026 immediate enrollees, 3,657 had completed a bachelor's degree by the end of six years after high school graduation (by spring 2016), 1,124 had completed an associate degree or certificate, and 6,245 had not completed a college credential.

FIGURE 12B

Number of immediate college enrollees and their one-year persistence

Immediate CPS college enrollees and their one-year persistence, by high school graduation year, 2010–25



Note: In this figure, persistence is defined as being enrolled in any post-secondary institution in both the fall semester directly after high school graduation and the subsequent fall semester. This differs slightly from CPS's definition, which includes students who enrolled in any post-secondary institution in the fall or spring semester directly after high school graduation, and were also enrolled the subsequent fall semester. The rightmost bar in the figure does not show persistence outcomes because data is not yet available for that cohort of graduates. As an example of how to read this figure, the 2010 bar can be understood as follows: among high school graduates in 2010, 11,026 students immediately enrolled in college. Of those 11,026 immediate enrollees, 8,294 persisted in college, and 2,732 did not persist.

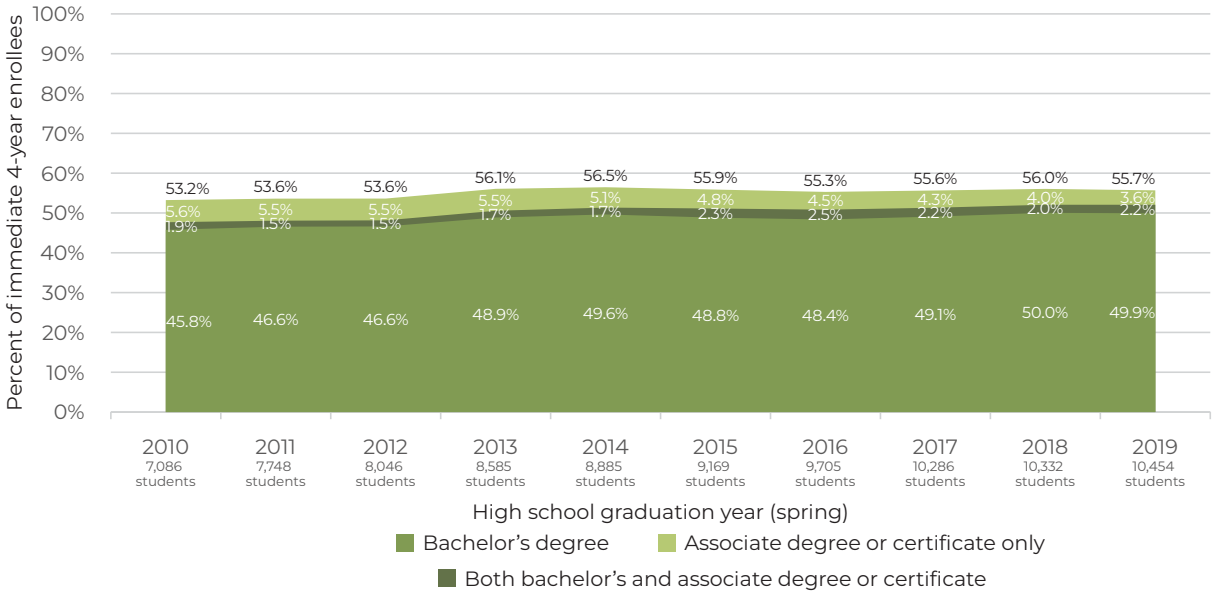
Number of CPS Immediate College Enrollees and Degree Completion Types — Key Points

- 2,266 more graduates from the CPS class of 2019 completed a bachelor's degree than graduates from the CPS class of 2010, and an additional 267 graduates from the CPS class of 2019 earned associate degrees or certificates.
- Because many more CPS students are enrolling in college, and college completion rates remain at around 50% among those who enroll, there are 1,522 more graduates from the CPS class of 2019 who enrolled in college, but left college without having earned a degree, as compared to the CPS class of 2010.
- The number of immediate college enrollees from CPS is at an all-time high in 2025, despite a decrease in ninth-grade class size.

FIGURE 13

Six-year college completion rates among immediate *four-year enrollees* over time

CPS graduating classes of 2010–19



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 2019 rate includes all 2019 CPS graduates who completed a degree or credential by spring of 2025. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed.

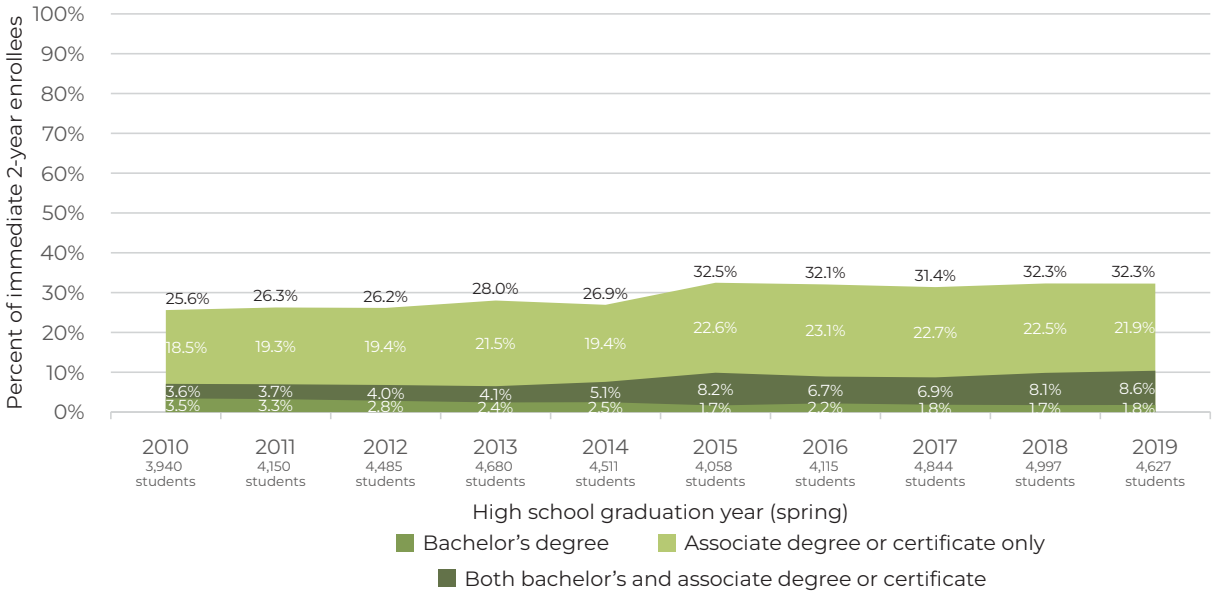
2025 CPS Six-Year College Completion Rate Among Immediate Four-Year Enrollees — Key Points

- One-half of 2019 CPS graduates (52.1%) who immediately enrolled in a four-year college completed a bachelor's degree within six years, an increase of about 4.4 percentage points since 2010.
- The percentage of CPS graduates who immediately enrolled in a four-year college who completed any degree or certificate within six years increased 2.5 percentage points (from 53.2% to 55.7%) since 2010.

FIGURE 14

Six-year college completion rates among immediate *two-year enrollees* over time

CPS graduating classes of 2010–19



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 2019 rate includes all 2019 CPS graduates who completed a degree or credential by spring of 2025. 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. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed.

2025 CPS Six-Year College Completion Rate Among Immediate Two-Year Enrollees — Key Points

- Among immediate two-year college enrollees, 10.4% of 2019 graduates completed a bachelor's degree within six years (by 2025), and an additional 21.9% completed only an associate degree or certificate.
- Among 2019 high school graduates who immediately enrolled in a two-year college, completion rates held steady from the previous year to 32.3%, and remain over 6 percentage points higher than they were for 2010 high school graduates.
  - It's important to note that the high school graduating class of 2015 was the first class eligible for the STAR Scholarship (https://pages.ccc.edu/apply/star/) to City Colleges of Chicago, which may have contributed to the increase in completion rates.
- More than two-thirds (67.7%) of immediate two-year college enrollees had not completed any credential by the end of six years.

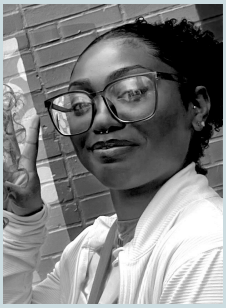
STUDENT STORIES

Elizabeth

CPS Class of 2019

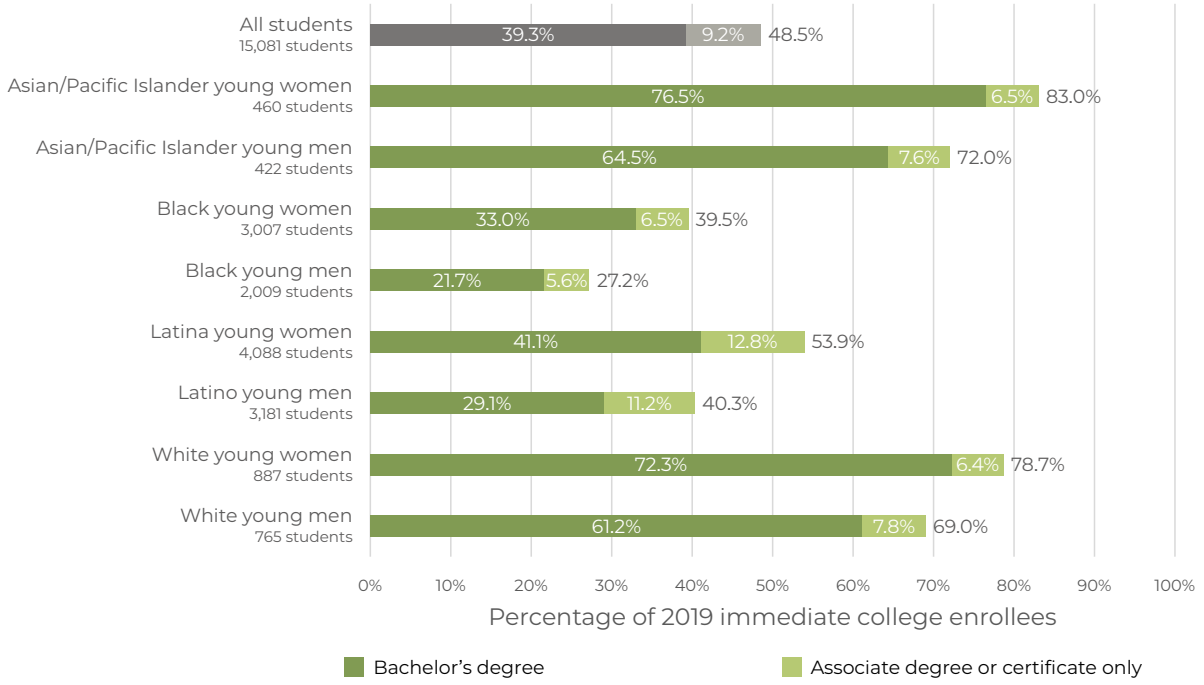
"I still got the degree at the end of the day. I'm using it and getting involved in the community, I'm still doing art, and trying to make it something that I do professionally."

Read Elizabeth's story: https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2026-08/Elizabeth.pdf



College Completion: Disaggregated Data
College Completion by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

FIGURE 15
College completion rates by race/ethnicity and gender
CPS graduating class of 2019 immediate college enrollees



Note: 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. 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. Historically, data has been collected in a way that groups students into one of two categories: male and female. Starting in 2020–21, the gender categories in the CPS demographic questionnaire were: male, female, and non-binary; however, we are not currently reporting data on non-binary students due to small group sizes. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed.

College Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender — Key Points

- Among Black and Latino young men in the CPS graduating class of 2019, fewer than one-third of students who immediately enrolled in college completed a bachelor's degree within six years.
- Latina young women, Asian/Pacific Islander students, and White students completed a college degree or certificate at a rate higher than the CPS average in 2025.
- Young men were less likely to complete a college degree or certificate than young women of the same race/ethnicity.
- Latina young women were the most likely group to complete an associate degree or certificate only.

To learn more about how we disaggregate by race/ethnicity and gender, see the Appendices. To track college completion rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender over time, see the To&Through Milestones Tool (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/tool/).[11]

We are unable to provide a disaggregation of college completion rates for students who are English Learners or students with disabilities, due to the small numbers of students in each category.

[11] The To&Through Milestones Tool is a public resource that allows users to explore rates of educational attainment across a variety of metrics, for individual CPS schools and the district as a whole.

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2016

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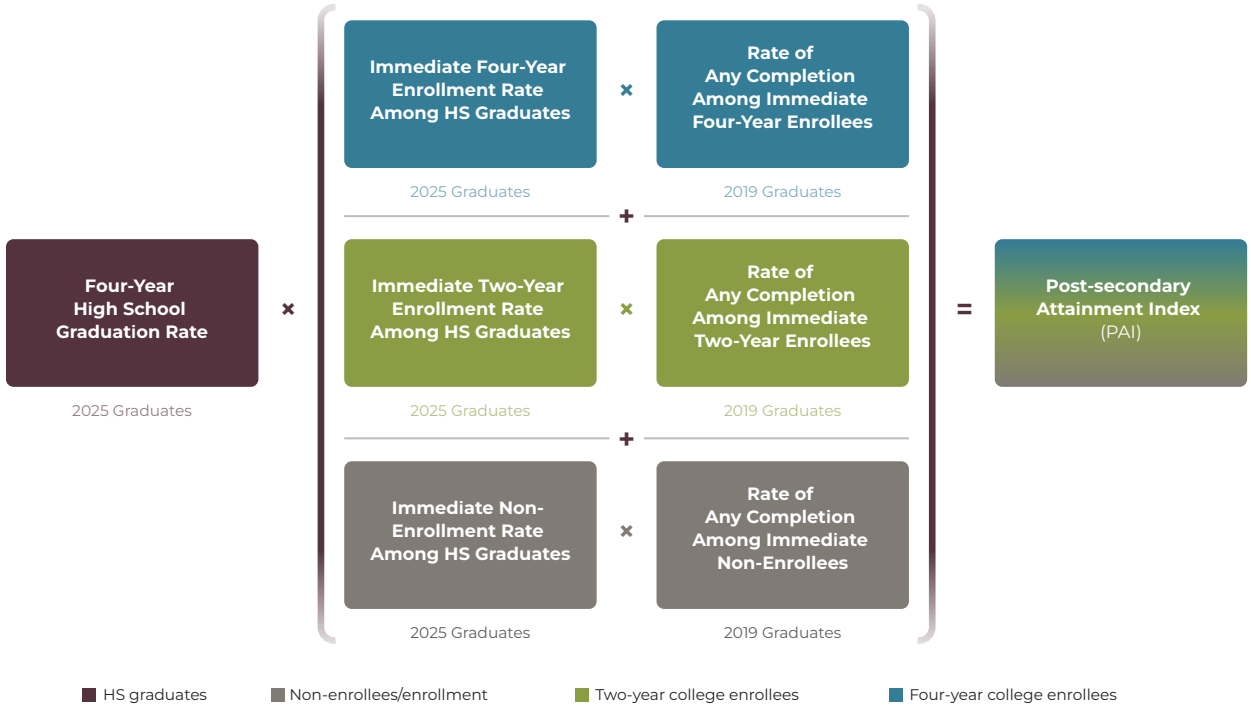
2014

Healey, K., Nagaoka, J., & Michelman, V. (2014). *The educational attainment of Chicago Public Schools students: A focus on four-year college degrees.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Appendix A: Additional Figures

This appendix provides more detail about how the Post-secondary Attainment Index (PAI) is calculated, and how the PAI and its components have changed over time. Additionally, this appendix provides the Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index (BDAI), which was the focus of older PAI reports. Breakdowns of the PAI and BDAI component rates by race/ethnicity and gender are also included here. Finally, this appendix provides college completion rates over time for all CPS high school graduates, regardless of their immediate college enrollment status. In past versions of the annual PAI report, some of this information was included in the main body of the report; it is now included in the appendix in order to provide a concise and brief webpage for the main body of the report.

FIGURE A.1
Post-secondary Attainment Index



The 2025 PAI is calculated using 2025 high school graduation rates, college enrollment rates for 2025 high school graduates, and rates of college completion for 2019 high school graduates according to the calculation shown in Figure A.1. We use these rates because they are the most recent available for each milestone.

For example, imagine a school district with the following rates:

High School Graduation in 2025:	80%
Immediate Four-Year Enrollment among 2025 Graduates:	50%
Rate of Completion among 2019 Graduates who Immediately Enrolled in a Four-Year College:	40%
Immediate Two-Year Enrollment among 2025 Graduates:	30%
Rate of Completion among 2019 Graduates who Immediately Enrolled in a Two-Year College:	20%
Immediate Non-Enrollment among 2025 Graduates:	20%
Rate of Completion among 2019 Graduates who did Not Immediately Enroll in College:	10%

This school district's 2025 PAI would be calculated as:
80% * [(50% * 40%) + (30% * 20%) + (20% * 10%)] = 80% * (20% + 6% + 2%) = 80% * 28% = 22%

PAI Over Time

Table A.1 shows the rates of high school graduation, immediate college enrollment, and college completion used to calculate comparable historical PAI rates over time.

Table A.2 shows the rates of high school graduation, immediate college enrollment, and college completion used to calculate comparable 2025 PAI rates for students in different race/ethnicity and gender groups.

Note that the high school graduation rates used in calculating the PAI are the 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 to calculate the PAI shown in **Figure 1** do not match the enrollment and completion rates shown in **Figures 8-15**, which include CPS high school graduates who graduated high school in five or six years. The exact enrollment and completion rates used to calculate the PAI are available in **Table A.1**.

TABLE A.1
Component rates used to calculate the PAI over time

	4-year HS grad rate	Immediate 4-year college enrollment rate	Immediate 2-year college enrollment rate	Delayed/ non-enrollment rate	Degree completion for immediate 4-year enrollees	Degree completion for immediate 2-year enrollees	Degree completion for delayed enrollees	Post-secondary Attainment Index
2012 PAI	72.8%	40.3%	20.7%	39.1%	52.0%	23.3%	8.2%	21.1%
2013 PAI	75.5%	41.7%	21.3%	37.0%	53.2%	25.3%	8.7%	23.2%
2014 PAI	78.2%	42.7%	20.4%	37.0%	53.6%	25.7%	9.3%	24.7%
2015 PAI	78.8%	43.7%	18.4%	38.0%	54.7%	26.7%	9.1%	25.4%
2016 PAI	79.8%	45.6%	18.5%	35.8%	54.2%	26.6%	10.7%	26.7%
2017 PAI	80.5%	48.1%	21.7%	30.1%	53.6%	26.5%	10.1%	27.8%
2018 PAI	81.1%	47.0%	22.1%	30.9%	54.1%	27.2%	9.0%	27.8%
2019 PAI	82.3%	48.0%	20.7%	31.3%	54.0%	27.1%	8.1%	28.0%
2020 PAI	82.8%	47.0%	17.0%	35.9%	56.5%	29.1%	7.8%	28.4%
2021 PAI	81.5%	48.8%	16.0%	35.2%	56.8%	27.9%	7.9%	28.5%
2022 PAI	83.6%	50.9%	17.1%	31.9%	56.3%	33.5%	8.9%	31.2%
2023 PAI	84.7%	54.1%	16.2%	29.7%	55.7%	32.8%	8.7%	32.2%
2024 PAI	83.6%	51.3%	17.4%	31.3%	55.9%	32.2%	5.4%	30.1%
2025 PAI	83.8%	52.0%	18.5%	29.5%	56.2%	32.8%	5.7%	31.0%

PAI Disaggregated Component Rates

TABLE A.2
Component rates of the 2025 PAI by race/ethnicity and gender

	2025 CPS High School Graduates				2019 CPS Graduates			
	4-Year HS grad rate	Immediate 4-year college enrollment rate	Immediate 2-year college enrollment rate	Delayed/ non-enrollment rate	Degree completion for immediate 4-year enrollees	Degree completion for immediate 2-year enrollees	Degree completion for delayed/ non-enrollees	Post-secondary Attainment Index
All students	83.8%	52.0%	18.5%	29.5%	56.2%	32.8%	5.7%	31.0%
Asian/ Pacific Islander young women	96.8%	81.4%	10.7%	7.9%	87.6%	61.4%	21.5%	77.0%
Asian/ Pacific Islander young men	90.5%	76.9%	13.7%	9.5%	77.0%	53.6%	14.9%	61.5%
Black young women	84.9%	55.8%	15.2%	29.0%	44.7%	24.4%	3.7%	25.2%
Black young men	79.6%	39.5%	14.7%	45.9%	30.3%	19.0%	3.1%	12.8%
Latina young women	86.7%	54.6%	23.1%	22.3%	62.7%	39.2%	7.9%	39.0%
Latino young men	81.3%	40.4%	22.4%	37.2%	49.6%	28.4%	5.1%	23.0%
White young women	91.1%	77.8%	9.6%	12.6%	84.3%	53.5%	26.1%	67.4%
White young men	88.5%	64.0%	16.6%	19.4%	76.6%	44.4%	14.7%	52.4%

Note: We include completion rates for 2019 high school graduates because this is the most recent cohort for which we have six years of available college data.

Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index

Prior to calculating the annual PAI, the To&Through Project and the UChicago Consortium calculated two bachelor's degree attainment indices, which project the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders who would 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 who 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.

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 who 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 college or delayed entry into college.

Table A.3 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.3** are used to calculate the DBDAI.

TABLE A.3
Component rates of the 2025 BDAI by race/ethnicity and gender

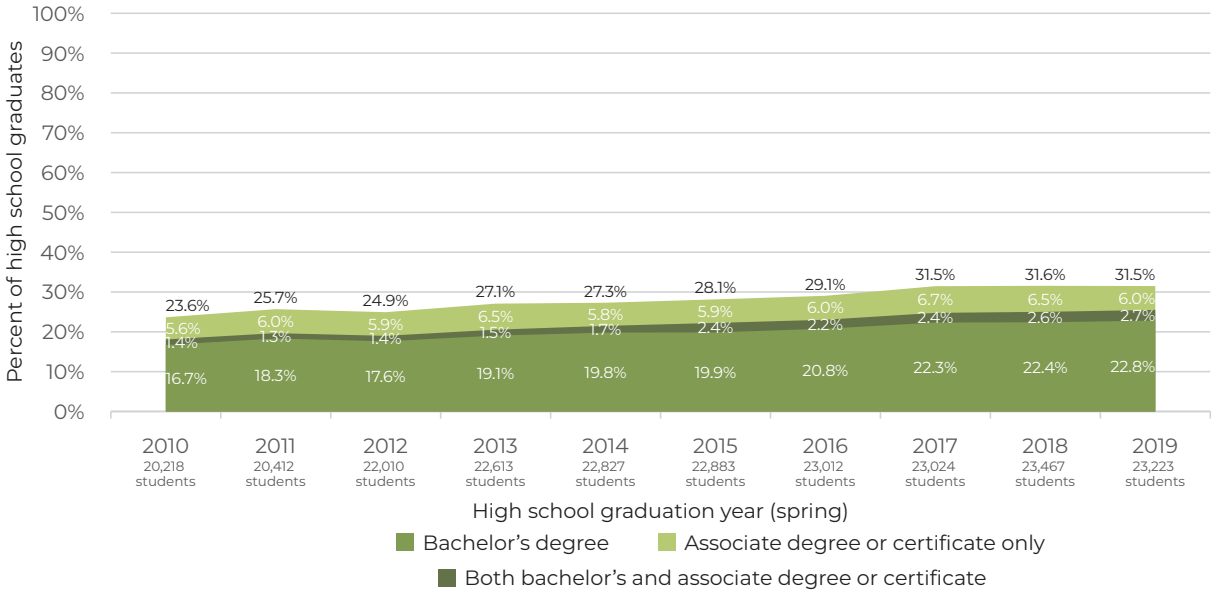
	Bachelor's degree completion rate for immediate four-year enrollees (2019 HS graduates)	Bachelor's degree completion rate for immediate two-year enrollees (2019 HS graduates)	Bachelor's degree completion rate for delayed/non-enrollees (2019 HS graduates)	Direct Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index	Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index
All students	52.1%	10.4%	2.1%	21.3%	23.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander young women	84.5%	33.3%	13.0%	65.0%	69.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander young men	74.1%	26.7%	4.5%	50.5%	54.3%
Black young women	41.4%	7.6%	1.2%	18.3%	19.6%
Black young men	27.1%	6.3%	1.1%	7.7%	8.9%
Latina young women	58.1%	10.7%	2.7%	26.0%	28.8%
Latino young men	45.0%	7.4%	1.2%	13.8%	15.5%
White young women	81.7%	26.5%	12.7%	56.7%	60.7%
White young men	73.3%	20.5%	6.1%	39.9%	44.2%

Figure A.2 shows college completion rates over time for all CPS high school graduates. For college completion rates for CPS graduates grouped by their college enrollment status immediately after high school graduation, see the Completion section of the report.

FIGURE A.2

Six-year college completion rates among all high school graduates

CPS graduating classes of 2010–19

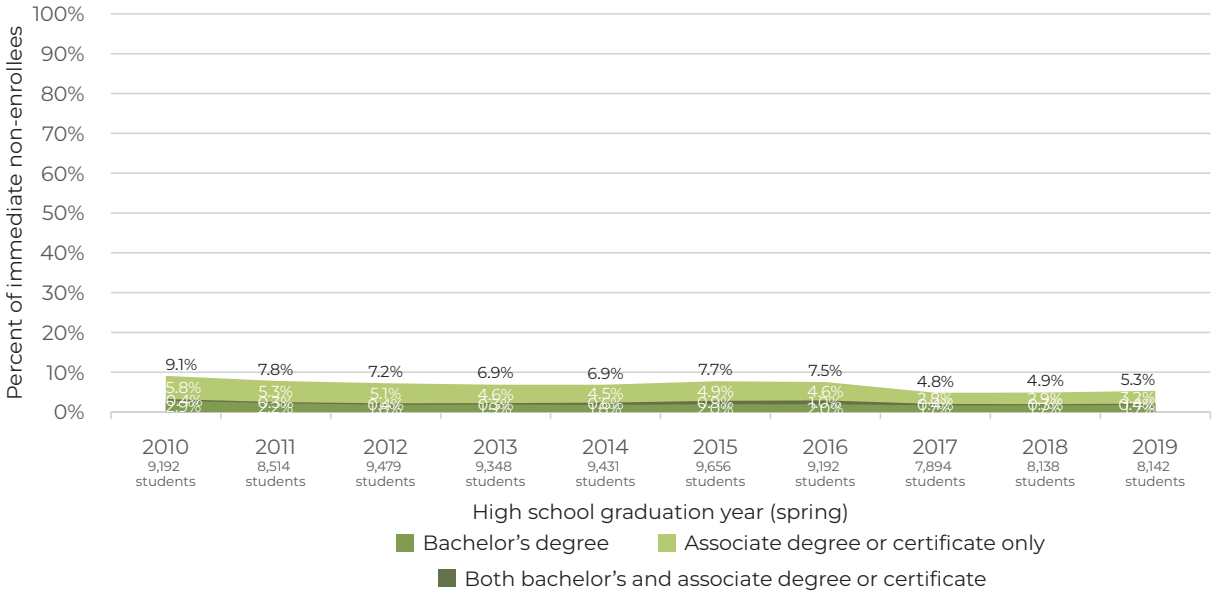


Note: These are college completion rates for CPS high school graduates who graduated high school within six years. Students are counted as having completed college if they completed a credential within six years of graduating from high school. For example, our 2019 rate includes all 2019 CPS graduates who completed a degree or credential by spring of 2025. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed.

FIGURE A.3

Six-year college completion rates among *delayed and non-enrollees* over time

CPS graduating classes of 2010–19



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 2019 rate includes all 2019 CPS graduates who completed a degree or credential by spring of 2025. We define delayed enrollees as graduates who delayed entry into college—including those who enrolled in the spring after their high school graduation—and non-enrollees as graduates who did not enroll in college within six years of high school graduation. Due to rounding, individual rates may not sum exactly to the total rate displayed.

Appendix B: Data Sources

Information on student demographics and high school graduation comes 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 for the 2023–24 school year was processed through a slightly different source due to one-time data availability issues, and small discrepancies may occur as a result. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) are used for all college enrollment and completion rates. NSC data has many limitations, including incomplete coverage at the student and institutional levels, but is the best available source of student-level data on college enrollment and completion data for CPS graduates.[12] The NSC houses records on enrollment and post-secondary credentials for colleges throughout the U.S., and covers 98% of all post-secondary enrollments nationally. College enrollment and completion data for the graduating classes of 2017–24 was revised to correct for a methodological error announced by the National Student Clearinghouse (see NSC press release (https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/news/national-student-clearinghouse-research-center-finds-a-methodological-error-affecting-preliminary-fall-2024-higher-education-enrollment-reports/)). This correction resulted in a small increase in immediate college enrollment numbers and means that the rates reported here do not match previous reports. For more information, see this brief summary of NSC Data Correction (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2025-11/2025_NSC_Data_Correction_0.pdf).

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. Students who enrolled in a charter school after the 20th day were included in the first-time ninth-grade cohort, even though we do not know if they remained enrolled long enough to receive 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 were 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 were assigned to the first CPS high school in which they enrolled.

College enrollment

College enrollment refers to the proportion of graduates who enrolled directly in college in the summer or fall following spring or summer high school graduation, including students who took more than four years to complete high school. Data on college enrollment come from the NSC, which houses enrollment and graduation records for colleges throughout the United States. This does not include students who delayed college entry. Enrollments from North Park University are missing from 2020 and 2021 rates. In 2019, North Park University enrollees comprised around 1% of all immediate enrollees from CPS.

> **Two-year enrollee**
> Students who enrolled in a two-year college the summer or fall after graduating from high school.

[12] See Nagaoka & Mahaffie (2020) for more information.

Four-year enrollee
Students who enrolled in a four-year college the summer or fall after graduating from high school.

Delayed/non-enrollee
Students did not enroll in college the summer or 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

College completion refers to 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, were not included in these rates.

College types

Two-year College
Institutions classified in the IPEDS data as having only programs that are less than four years. Students enrolled at these institutions usually complete associate degrees or certificates.

Four-year College
Institutions classified in the IPEDS data as having programs that are four years or higher. Students enrolled at these institutions usually complete bachelor's degrees or higher.

English Learners

While reporting data on active English Learners calls attention to students in need of the most support, excluding former English Learners obscures the success of students who reach English proficiency. Assessing the performance of the district in supporting English Learners across their educational trajectories requires understanding the average high school and college attainment for students who began as English Learners. Therefore, we disaggregate four-year high school graduation rates and immediate college enrollment rates by whether students began as English Learners or were never classified as English Learners.

We identify students as English Learners based on whether they took the ACCESS test of English proficiency and whether they reached proficiency on the test—not whether they were actually receiving services. Because ACCESS is required by the state for all English Learners, this allows us to include both English Learners who received services and those who did not.

This method of classification draws from the method of classification originally used by de la Torre, Blanchard, Allensworth, & Freire (2019). However, their analysis only included students who were continuously enrolled in CPS from kindergarten through eighth grade, and defines "students who began as English Learners" as students who were designated as English Learners based on the ACCESS test when they entered CPS as kindergarteners. The method of classification used in our analysis differs insofar as we include students who entered CPS during or after kindergarten, and we define "students who began as English Learners" as those who took the ACCESS test at any point after their entry into CPS.

In the future, we hope to report on college completion outcomes for students who began as English Learners and track their high school and college attainment over time. We cannot currently report on rates of college completion for students who began as English Learners 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.

ACCESS test

ACCESS assesses social and academic English proficiency and is administered to students as early as kindergarten. Students who are English Learners take the test once annually until they reach a score

that meets the proficiency benchmark.The ACCESS test is different from the screener test used to determine if students are eligible for English Learner services. For more details, see: isbe.net/Pages/ACCESS-for-ELLs.aspx.

In the 2015–16 school year, ACCESS 2.0 replaced the existing ACCESS test. This new test was more aligned to standards of college and career readiness and therefore more rigorous. Further, the cut score used to determine proficiency also changed over the years. This means that ACCESS test scores prior to the 2015–16 school year should not be compared to scores on the ACCESS 2.0 test. These changes to the test may also result in trend lines that show a spike in the number of students identified as English Learners in the 2015–16 school year.

Students who began as English Learners
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 English Learners by demonstrating English proficiency (scoring above the cut score) on the ACCESS test, as well as students who remained as active English Learners throughout high school.

Students who were never classified as English Learners
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 in a way that groups students into one of two categories: male and female. Starting in 2020–21, the gender categories in the CPS demographic questionnaire were: male, female, and non-binary; however, we are not currently reporting data on non-binary students due to small group sizes. We hope in the future to be able to report data that more fully and accurately describes the identities of CPS students.

Options students
CPS describes Options schools as "designed to offer a unique learning model for students who are not engaged in a traditional high school and seek an alternative pathway to graduation that leads to college and career success." Options schools may be known as "alternative schools" in other districts. For more information about Options schools and students, see the report Bhatt (2021) (https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/projects/data-insights-from-chicago-s-options-schools).

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. The PAI 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.

Bachelor's Degree Attainment Index

Prior to calculating the annual PAI, the To&Through Project and the UChicago Consortium calculated two bachelor's degree attainment indices, which project the proportion of current CPS ninth-graders who would 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 who 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.

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 who 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 college or delayed entry into college.

Race/Ethnicity

Reported data are grouped into four race/ethnicity categories: Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Latino/a, and White. The "Latino/a" category is composed of people who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino/a, regardless of which race they selected. All other race/ethnicity categories are composed of people who identified as not Hispanic or Latino/a, and the category is based on the race they selected. CPS changed its race/ethnicity categories in 2010–11 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.

Appendix C: CPS Disability Categories Definitions

Thousands of students in each ninth-grade cohort have one or more documented disabilities. Students with disabilities are often treated as a single group, however, students' disabilities vary widely in type and extent. As a result, their experiences in school and attainment rates are also far from homogeneous.

In this analysis, we disaggregate rates of six-year high school graduation based on whether students had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) related to a disability.[13] We report rates for three groups of students: students with IEPs related to a specific learning disability, students with other IEPs, and students without IEPs. After conversations with CPS's Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services, we decided to report rates with these categories because students with learning disabilities represent a plurality of students with IEPs and because finer categorizations of IEPs have changed over time. The "students with other IEPs" category includes students with a wide range of disabilities, including physical, cognitive, and behavioral disabilities.

The definitions of the 16 categories of disability present in CPS administrative data are below. These definitions 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.[14] Students with IEPs related to any disability other than Specific Learning Disability (SLD) are included in the Other IEP category.

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.

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.

[13] If a student is identified by the district as having one or more disabilities, we categorize the student into only one of these three 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).
[14] https://cps.edu/globalassets/cps-pages/about-cps/department-directory/office-of-diverse-learner-support-and-services-odlss/draft-2021-22-idea-procedural-manual.pdf

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 University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium)

The UChicago Consortium (https://consortium.uchicago.edu/) 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 encourages the use of research in policy action and improvement of practice, but does not argue for particular policies or programs. Rather, we help to build capacity for school reform by identifying what matters for student success and school improvement, creating critical indicators to chart progress, and conducting theory-driven evaluation to identify how programs and policies are working.

The To&Through Project

In collaboration with educators, policymakers, and communities, the To&Through Project (https://toandthrough.uchicago.edu/) aims to significantly increase high school and post-secondary 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 UChicago Consortium).
- 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 Kersten Institute for Urban Education in the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice.

This report reflects the interpretation of the authors. Although the UChicago Consortium's Steering Committee provided technical advice, no formal endorsement by these individuals, organizations, the full UChicago Consortium, or the To&Through Project, should be assumed.