

UNDERSTANDING RESEARCH & APPLYING DATA



Calculating Freshman On-Track



Building Relationships to Support the Transition to High School



Developing and Tracking Interventions



Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families



Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium



Calculating Freshman On-Track

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What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools

Technical Notes for Freshman On-Track

Purpose

The Freshman On-Track indicator provides a clear metric for predicting high school graduation in Chicago and targeting students for intervention. Schools can set goals around this metric and monitor them on an ongoing basis.

Tool Set A contains the essential research and background knowledge on Freshman On-Track so educators can begin this work in their school or district.

How & When to Use

The comprehensive “What Matters” report from the UChicago Consortium explores the foundational research that sparked the On-Track movement in Chicago, resulting in the dramatic increase in graduation rates. The Technical Notes tool illustrates how Freshman On-Track is calculated in Chicago Public Schools. We recognize this is a Chicago-specific example. However, it can be used as a guide for establishing and communicating the On-Track metric in your school or district.



Connections to Framework

The [Freshman Success Framework](#) is the foundation for effective school practice on On-Track and student success. The Network for College Success has seen the greatest and most sustainable gains for freshmen when schools develop high-functioning educator professional learning communities, which we call Success Teams.

This Tool Set focuses on the below actions of a Success Team stemming from the Freshman Success Framework.

Elements	Success Team
Setting Conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With principal and Team Lead, establishes foundational knowledge, sets purpose, and creates freshman success goals for On-Track and student connection
Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews actionable student-level data in order to provide appropriate support

This Tool Set also highlights the actions stemming from the Framework for the Principal and Team Lead in support of the Success Team work.

Team Lead

- Setting Conditions: Acquires foundational knowledge on the importance of freshman course performance as well as tools and strategies to lead the Success Team
- Implementation: Works with data technician to bring actionable student-level data at regular intervals

Principal

- Setting Conditions: Selects, programs, sets purpose, and provides foundational knowledge on freshman success work for core set of grade-level teachers
- Implementation: Provides professional development and training opportunities on the transition to high school, data strategy, and social-emotional learning



Calculating Freshman On-Track

What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools

Too many students in Chicago Public Schools and nationally fail to graduate from high school. It is a problem that can sometimes feel overwhelming to address because the causes of dropout are myriad and complex. What is often lost in discussions about dropping out is the one factor that is most directly related to graduation—students' performance in their ninth grade courses. In this research report, UChicago Consortium authors Elaine M. Allensworth and John Q. Easton look into the elements of freshman course performance that predict whether students will graduate and suggest what educators can do to keep more teens in school.

Chapter 1 of the report is included in this Toolkit. For the entire report, [click here >>](#)



CONSORTIUM ON
CHICAGO SCHOOL RESEARCH
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools

A Close Look at Course Grades, Failures, and Attendance in the Freshman Year

Elaine M. Allensworth
John Q. Easton



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Introduction

Improving graduation rates and reducing dropout rates are high-priority items on the national agenda for high school reform. There is increasing recognition that a high school diploma is a minimum requirement for success in the workplace and that too few students obtain this minimum standard.¹ Yet, it is a problem that can sometimes feel overwhelming to try to manage. In part, this is because of the magnitude of the problem: nationally, nearly one-third of students do not graduate from high school.² Almost half the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students fail to graduate from high school, and in some CPS high schools more students drop out than graduate.³ These numbers underscore the urgency of addressing this issue immediately.

The dropout problem is also difficult to manage because its causes are many and complex. Research on dropping out has shown that the decision to persist in or leave school is affected by multiple contextual factors—family, school, neighborhood, peers—interacting in a cumulative way over the life course of a student.⁴ This suggests a daunting task for dealing with the problem of dropout—if so many factors are involved in the decision to drop out of school, including experiences outside of school and in early grades, how can any high school effort substantially address the problem?

What is often lost in discussions about dropping out is the one factor that is most directly related to graduation—students’ performance in their courses. In Chicago, we have shown that inadequate credit accumulation in the freshman year, which usually results from course failures, is highly predictive of failing to graduate four years later. Research in New York City has shown very similar connections between inadequate credit accumulation and eventual dropping out, and national data confirms this; almost all students who drop out leave school far behind in course credits.⁵ As we

document here in more detail, success in high school coursework is directly tied to eventual graduation. Knowing that graduation is directly tied with course grades suggests two potential strategies for addressing dropout problems. At the very least, we can use freshman course performance to identify students at high risk of dropping out to target with support and intervention. At the most, if schools and teachers can influence the quality of students' performance in their coursework, then they have a direct lever to affect graduation rates—a lever that should simultaneously improve student achievement.

In this report, we look closely at students' performance in their coursework during their freshman year, how it is related to eventual graduation, and how personal and school factors contribute to success or failure in freshman-year courses. We show that data on course performance can be used to identify future dropouts and graduates with precision, and we compare performance indicators to discern how they might be used for nuanced targeting of students at-risk of dropping out. We examine the factors that contribute to course performance in the freshman year, showing that success in coursework is affected more by what students do while they are in high school than by their preparation for high school and backgrounds. Finally, we provide evidence that teachers and schools matter for how students perform in their courses, and that efforts to reduce dropout rates are consistent with initiatives to address low achievement.

We focus on the freshman year because our prior work, and work by others, has shown that course

performance in the freshman year sets the stage for eventual graduation. This report builds on a report we released June 2005 that described and defined the “freshman on-track indicator.” In that report, we showed the relationship between being on-track at the end of the freshman year and graduating from high school four and five years later. On-track students had at least ten semester credits (five full-year course credits) and no more than one semester F in a core course by the end of their first year in high school. Students who were on-track at the end of their freshman year were nearly four times more likely to graduate from high school than their classmates who were not on-track.⁶

The original on-track report provided initial evidence that we could use freshman-year course performance to precisely identify future dropouts. While it was a key validation of the on-track indicator, it left a number of unanswered questions: Why is the indicator predictive? Why are students off-track? And what might high schools themselves contribute to students' course performance? Furthermore, that report only examined whether students were making minimal progress in their freshman year, which meant whether they were earning sufficient credits to be on-track for promotion to the tenth grade. But we want students to graduate from high school ready for college and work, which means we should aim for students doing A and B quality work.⁷ In this report, we pull apart a variety of indicators of freshman course performance—including students' failures, absences, and overall grades—to learn what matters for a successful freshman year.

Introduction Endnotes

1 E.g., Orfield (2004); Barton (2005); National Association of Secondary School Principals (2005).

2 Swanson (2004).

3 Allensworth (2005).

4 Rumberger (2004); Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001).

5 Cahill, Hamilton, and Lynch (2006); National Center for Education Statistics (2007).

6 Research in Philadelphia has also shown that course performance in the eighth and ninth grades can be used to identify dropouts years before they leave school (see work by Robert Balfanz, Ruth Curran Neild, and Lisa Herzog). For example, using detailed records on students, Neild and Balfanz (2005) used attendance and failure in the eighth and ninth grades to identify dropouts in Philadelphia. As in Chicago, they found that test scores were not as predictive of graduation as students' performance in their coursework.

7 As documented in the CCSR report, *From high school to the future: A first look at CPS graduates' college enrollment, college preparation, and graduation from four-year colleges*, students with a GPA lower than a 2.0 are unlikely to enroll in college, and those with a GPA lower than 3.0 are unlikely to obtain a four-year degree. Grades are also very predictive of future earnings (Miller, 1998).

Chapter 1

A Close Look at Course Grades, Failures, and Absences in the Freshman Year

As a measure of minimally adequate performance, the on-track indicator groups together marginally successful students and very successful ones. Knowing that the on- and off-track groups both contain students with widely differing course performances, we decided to explore what aspects of being off-track made students less likely to graduate, and if more nuanced indicators of course performance—such as number of course failures, GPA, or absences—might be better predictors of eventual graduation. We begin this chapter by examining these other indicators of course performance as predictors of graduation. We then use the other indicators to look more closely at what it means to be off-track.

A Number of Freshman-Year Indicators Can Be Used to Predict High School Graduation

The on-track indicator is highly predictive of graduation, but it is a blunt indicator; and the requisite data to construct the indicator are not available until the end of a student's first year in high school. Schools and districts often ask if there are other indicators that could be used to forecast graduation. In fact, there are several related measures of how well students do during their freshman year that are equally predictive and more readily available, including freshman-year GPA, the number of semester course failures, and freshman-year absences.

Freshman Course Performance Among CPS Students

This report analyzes several different, but related, indicators of freshman-year performance. Each is defined below, along with summary figures that show the performance of first-time ninth-graders in the 2004–05 school year (24,894 students). We include only students who remained in school through spring of their freshman year.

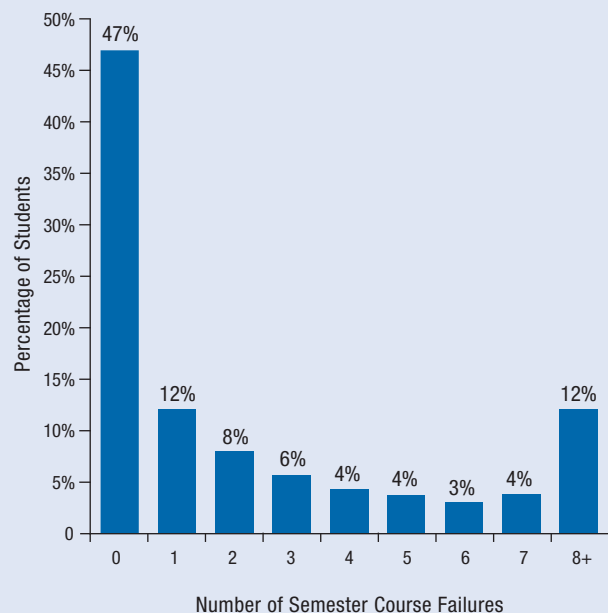
The 2005 report on the on-track indicator showed that freshman-year course performance has improved over the last decade in CPS; on-track rates improved from 50 percent with the 1994–95 freshman class to 60 percent with the 2003–04 class (excluding first-year dropouts), while freshman-course pass rates improved from 76 to 81 percent over the same period.^A However, as detailed below, one cannot escape the conclusion that, in general, freshmen in CPS still do very poorly; more than half of freshmen fail a course, the average GPA is below a C, and absence rates are very high—40 percent of freshmen miss more than four weeks of school (including class cutting). The statistics would sound even worse if we included freshmen dropouts in the calculations. For many students, freshman year is like a bottleneck—their performance is so poor that they are unable to recover. These negative experiences in freshman year put students at high risk of not graduating, which later prevents them from participating in the mainstream economy and larger society. We cannot hope to substantially improve graduation rates unless we substantially improve students' course performance in their freshman year.

On-Track: A student is considered on-track if he or she has accumulated five full credits (ten semester credits) and has no more than one semester F in a core subject (English, math, science, or social science) by the end of the first year in high school. This is an indicator of the minimal expected level of performance. Students in CPS need 24 credits to graduate from high school, so a student with only 5 credits at the end of freshman year will need to pass courses at a faster rate in later years. The definition

is aligned with the CPS promotion policy for moving from freshman to sophomore year, which only requires five full credits. In the 2004–05 freshman class, 59 percent of first-time high school students were on-track while 41 percent were off-track (excluding students who dropped out before the end of their first year in high school).

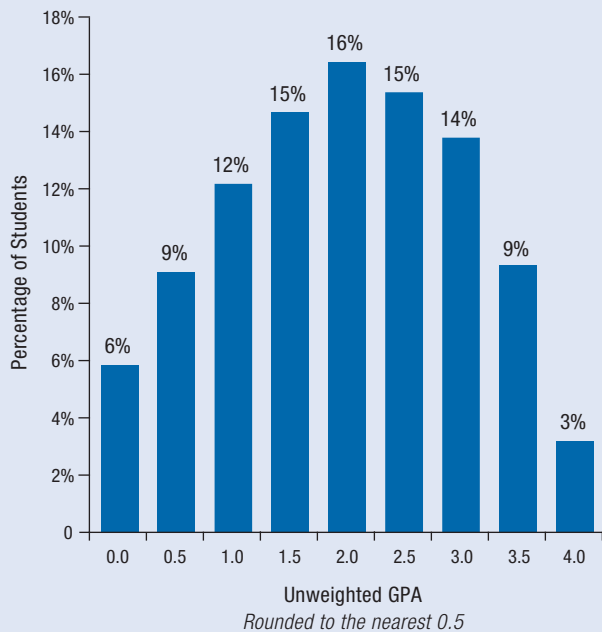
Number of Semester Course Failures: In this report, we measure failures across all courses by semester. This differs from the on-track indicator, which only incorporates failures in core subjects (reading, math, science, and social science); this report examines overall course performance, not just performance in core courses. A typical student takes 7 courses each semester; thus, a typical student could fail as many as 14 courses in a year. Figure 1 graphs the number of semester courses failed by first-time freshmen in the 2004–05 school year, excluding students who dropped out before the end of their first year in high school. The modal category of failures is 0; however, more than half the CPS freshmen (53 percent) fail at least one course.

FIGURE 1
Number of Course Failures Among Freshmen in 2004-05



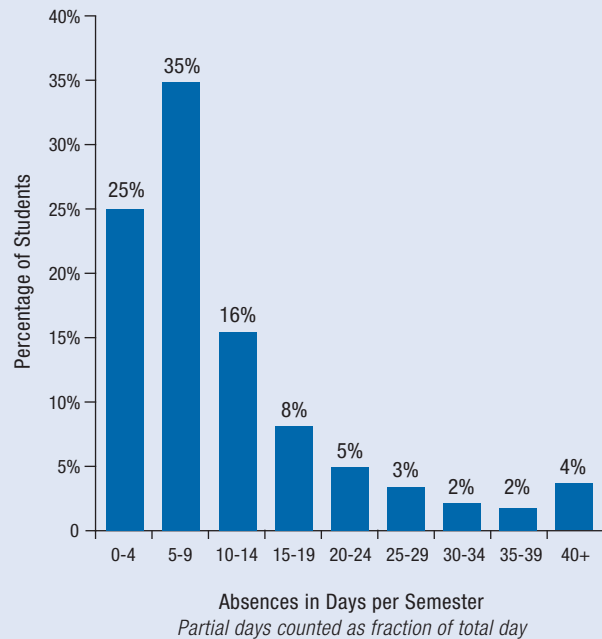
Grade Point Average (GPA): CPS students receive a weighted GPA on their report card, which gives extra points for grades in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In this report, we analyze unweighted GPAs (which use values of 4 points for an A, 3 for a B, 2 for a C, 1 for a D, and 0 for an F) for all credit-bearing classes. We analyze unweighted GPAs rather than weighted GPAs because all students do not have equal access to honors, International Baccalaureate (IB), and AP courses. Figure 2 shows the distribution of GPAs among first-time freshmen in 2004–05, for students who remained in school through spring term. A 2.0 GPA (C average) is typical for CPS freshmen. Very few students—only 3 percent—have A averages their freshman year, while more than 40 percent of freshmen finish the year with a GPA lower than 2.0 (a D+ average or lower). About a quarter of students have a B or higher average at the end of their freshman year.

FIGURE 2
Distribution of Freshmen GPAs in 2004-05



Course Absences: Absences are counted on a course-by-course basis and then aggregated into total number of days absent. If a student misses one out of seven courses in a day, it counts as one-seventh of a day of absence for that student. Figure 3 shows absence rates for students entering CPS high schools in the 2004–05 school year, excluding students who dropped out before the end of their first year in high school. One-quarter of students missed less than one week of school per semester. Forty percent of students missed more than two weeks of school per semester, which is a month or more of class time per year. There are 90 days in each semester, so these students missed more than 10 percent of the annual instructional time. Students can be counted as truant with 20 unexcused full-day absences.

FIGURE 3
Absences Among Freshmen in 2004-05



Sidebar Endnotes

A Allensworth and Easton (2005).

Table 1 shows how well each of the four indicators of freshman-year course performance predicts whether students will graduate from high school within four years. Whether a student is on-track, GPA, and the number of semester course failures all correctly identify graduates and nongraduates 80 percent of the time. GPA is the most accurate for identifying nongraduates. Freshman-year absences are slightly less predictive than the other three indicators because they do not distinguish students who are attending school but performing poorly in their classes from those who are attending and performing well. Although the four indicators of course performance may seem somewhat interchangeable, they each provide somewhat different information, as described below.

TABLE 1
Predictive Ability of Indicators of Freshman-Year Performance

Freshman Performance Indicator	Overall Correct Prediction	Specificity <i>Predicting Nongraduates</i>	Sensitivity <i>Predicting Graduates</i>
GPA	80%	73%	85%
On-Track vs. Off-Track	80%	72%	85%
Semester Course Failures	80%	66%	89%
<i>Fall-semester failures</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>91%</i>
Absences	77%	59%	90%
<i>Fall-semester absences</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>89%</i>

In the earlier report, we showed that students on-track at the end of their freshman year are about four times more likely to graduate than off-track students (see Figure 4). The on-track indicator has advantages over the other indicators in terms of ease of reporting and being easily understood by a broad public. Because it is a categorical variable with only two values—either on- or off-track—it is easy to report trends over time. However, the on-track indicator does not provide information that is precise enough to allow specific students to be targeted for specific interventions. In addition, the indicator does not provide timely information to schools: it cannot be calculated until the summer after students' first year of high school.

Several researchers have found that high absence rates are strong predictors of dropping out.¹ In CPS, about 15 percent of first-time freshmen have extremely

high absence rates, missing one month or more of classes each semester (see Figure 3). These students have largely disengaged from school—they remain enrolled, but have marginal attendance—and they have less than a 10 percent chance of graduating (see Figure 5). However, it is not just extremely low attendance that is problematic. *Even moderate levels of absences are a cause for concern.* Just one to two weeks of absence per semester, which are typical for CPS freshmen, are associated with a substantially reduced probability of graduating. In the 2000–01 cohort, only 63 percent of students who missed about one week (five to nine days) graduated in four years, compared to 87 percent of those who missed less than one week. This is of great concern, considering that only one-quarter of CPS freshmen miss less than one week of school per semester. Attendance is clearly a vital part of graduating from high school, but beyond this we show evidence later in this report that attendance is the most essential requirement for avoiding course failure.

Information on absences is available early in the school year and might be the most practical indicator for identifying students for early interventions. More than half the nongraduates can be identified by the end of the first semester using either absence or failure rates. By the end of the first term, course grades and failure rates are slightly better predictors of graduation than attendance because they directly indicate whether students are making progress in their courses. These rates also provide more specific information to target programs for struggling students than the on-track indicator. GPA, in particular, provides information about who is likely to struggle in later years and is the best indicator for predicting nongraduates.² As shown in Figure 6, students with a 2.5 GPA (C+ average) in their freshman year have a very high likelihood of graduating within four years—86 percent did so in the 2000–01 freshman cohort. As grades fall between 2.0 (C average) and 0.5 (D- average), graduation rates fall dramatically. Just under three-fourths of students with a 2.0 (C average) graduated by 2004 in the 2000–01 cohort, compared to about one-quarter of students with a 1.0 (D average). Virtually no student with an average lower than a D in the freshman year earned a CPS diploma; this is a cause for concern, given that 15

FIGURE 4

Four-Year Graduation Rates by Freshman On-Track Status

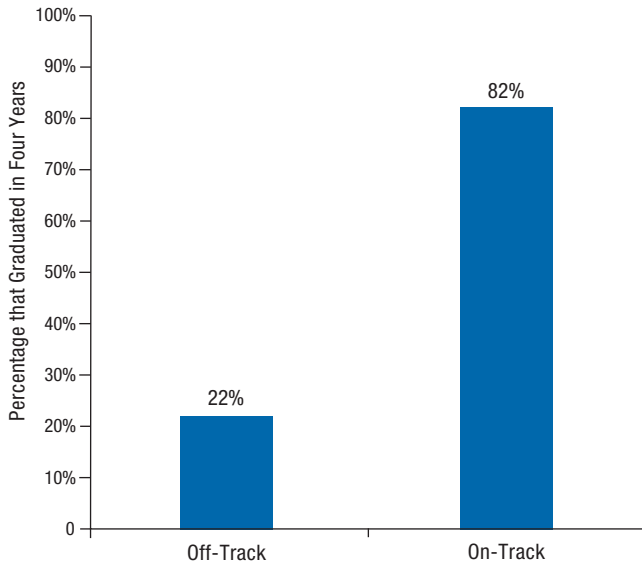


FIGURE 5

Four-Year Graduation Rates by Freshman Absence Rates

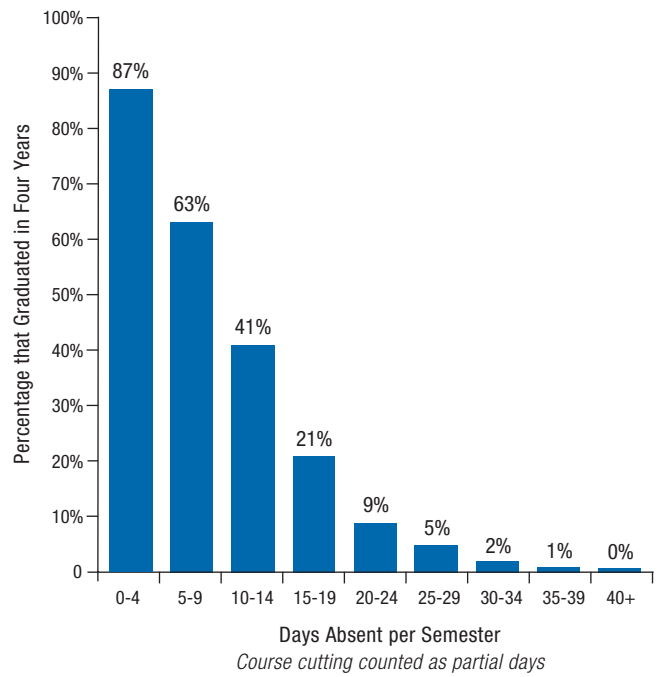


FIGURE 6

Four-Year Graduation Rates by Freshman GPA

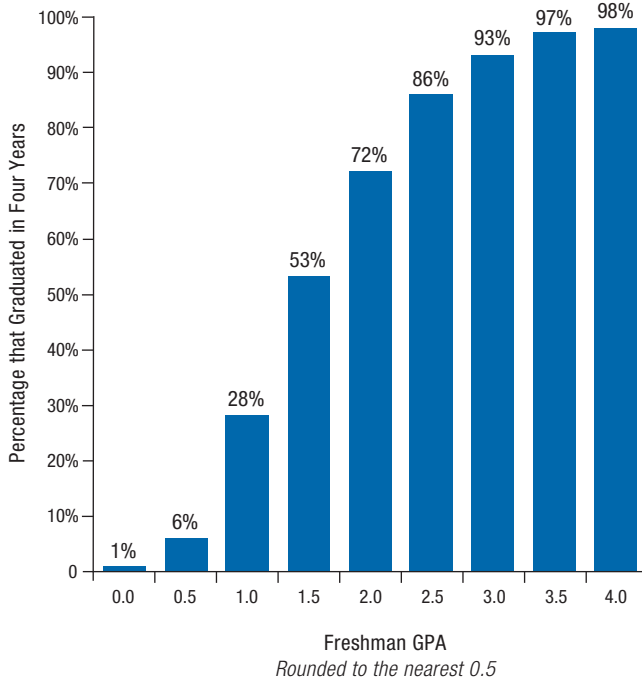
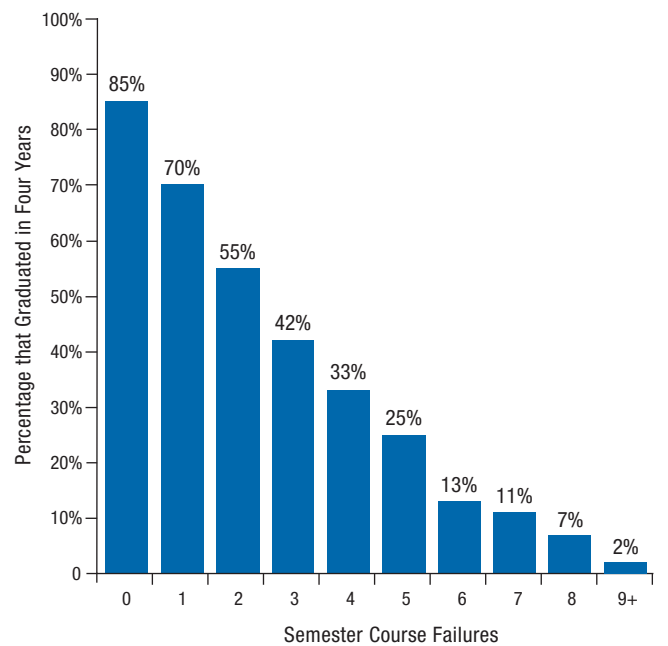


FIGURE 7

Four-Year Graduation Rates by Freshman Course Failures



Graduation rates are based on students entering high school in September 2001, followed until September 2005 for Figures 4-7.

percent of CPS students finished their freshman year with lower than a D average (see Figure 2).

On the other hand, students with good grades in their first year are very likely to be successful in their remaining years of high school. In the 2000–01 entering class, *almost all students with a B average or higher at the end of their freshman year graduated within four years*. Furthermore, almost 80 percent of these students graduated with a final GPA of 3.0 or higher. We know from research that the decision to drop out is affected by myriad factors in students' lives, many of which exist outside of the school.³ It is probable that first-year students who earned high grades experienced fewer outside stressors than other students, and fewer personal and home problems undoubtedly made graduating from high school easier for them. However, it is also likely that many of the students who received good grades

their freshman year also struggled with problems outside of school sometime during their four years of high school. Remember from Figure 2 that almost a quarter of CPS freshmen have B or higher averages in a district that is about 90 percent low income—thus, most students with B or higher averages are low-income students. Still, 95 percent of the students with B or higher averages graduated within four years.⁴ Success in the freshman year may make it easier for students to continue, despite personal and family problems that might develop during the course of high school.

Clearly, GPAs are related to course failures because failures are part of the calculation of students' GPAs. Course failures are more directly tied to graduation, however, because students need to accumulate a specific number of course credits to receive a diploma, and they must pass their classes to obtain credits. This is

Students' Freshman-Year Course Performance Is Much More Important for Graduation Than Their Background Characteristics and Prior Achievement

Students' likelihood of graduation is affected by their educational experiences prior to high school, and is related to their economic and demographic backgrounds.^A Research on graduation has shown particularly strong relationships of graduation with students' test scores and age on entry into high school—which is a proxy for grade retention. Graduation is also related to students' gender, race, and economic status. However, all of these factors together explain only about 12 percent of the variation in graduation rates in the cohort of students entering CPS high schools in the 2000–01 school year.^B In

contrast, students' freshman-year GPA and number of Fs explain 39 percent of the variation in graduation rates.^C Once we know how students performed in their classes in their freshman year, additional information about their backgrounds does little to improve our prediction of whether they will graduate.^D As we showed in Table 1, ninth-grade Fs or GPA each can be used to predict about 80 percent of graduates; if we include information about students' background characteristics and prior achievement, we only improve the prediction by about half a percentage point.^E

Sidebar Endnotes

A E.g., Rumberger (2004); and Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001).

B This is the reduction in log-likelihood (pseudo- R^2) that is achieved by predicting graduation with students' eighth-grade test scores, age, race, gender, poverty, and economic status with a logistic regression model.

C The variance explained increases from 12 to 40 percent if indicators of freshman course performance are included in the models described in the previous footnote.

D Background characteristics explain only an additional 1 percent more variation in graduation rates than do freshmen Fs and GPA alone.

E These statistics on variance explained in dropout are similar, albeit slightly smaller, to those reported by Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001) in their comprehensive study of factors across the life-course that contribute to graduation/dropout. They reported that ninth-grade performance, behaviors, and attitudes (GPA, grade retention, parent attitudes, pupil behaviors, and pupil attitudes) together explained 44.1 percent of the variation in dropout rates; when they added in background factors, the variation explained increased by just under 6 percent (to 49.8 percent).

reflected in the consistent relationship between the number of courses a student fails and whether that student eventually graduates, as shown in Figure 7. Each additional course failure makes it more difficult to graduate.⁵ Once students have failed six semester courses (i.e., three full-year courses), they are so unlikely to graduate that additional failures only modestly decrease the probability of graduating; these students have failed half their courses or more.⁶

Because each indicator has different advantages, an effective monitoring system could be created to take advantage of each indicator at different points in the school year. For example, because absence rates are known early in the school year, schools could address poor course attendance within the first quarter. After students' first-quarter grades are known, students with failure warnings should receive immediate supports. When semester grades are posted, those students with failures will need a strategy for making up missing credits. At the end of the school year, students' grades could be used to identify students at high risk of future failure and to identify students performing below their potential (e.g., students with high test scores but low grades). On-track rates for the cohort could be determined in the summer after the school year as a simple indicator to evaluate school programs and policies, and to identify particular groups of students with nonpromotion rates that are especially high.

Course Failure Is a Sign that Students Are Generally Struggling in School

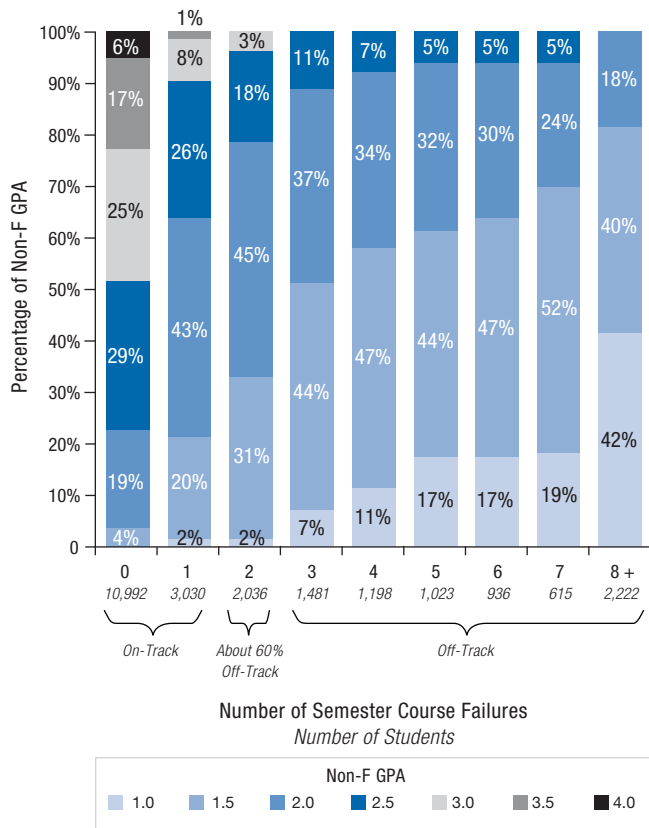
Students can be off-track just by failing one yearlong course (two semester courses). After writing the last report, we wondered about the extent to which students were thrown off-track by an aberrant course failure. We also wondered if course failure was as detrimental to graduation among students who were generally doing well in their other courses as it was for students who were struggling across all of their courses. To gain a better understanding of the variability in the course performance of on- and off-track students, and what that variability means for graduation, we examine on- and off-track performance by students' failures and their grades in the courses they passed.

In general, off-track students are struggling in all of their courses. Figure 8 shows the distribution of GPAs in passed courses by the number of semester course failures. Even on-track students have relatively low GPAs. Among students with no failures, the typical GPA is about 2.5 (C+). Only half (48 percent) has a GPA of a B or higher; 23 percent are C or D+. Among students with only one semester F, who are also on-track by our definition, over 90 percent have a GPA lower than 3.0 (B average) in the courses that they pass. More than three-fourths of students who fail just one full-year course have grades averaging 2.0 or lower (C or lower) in the classes they pass. Almost all off-track students who fail two or more semester courses have GPAs of 2.0 or lower in the classes they pass. It is most typical for off-track students to have a GPA of 1.5 (D+ average) in the courses they pass.

Few students experience isolated problems and perform well in other coursework. Failure in even one semester course is generally a sign of trouble in other courses. This suggests that problems or successes in one class may generalize to other classes. For example, a student who skips one class may fail to show up to subsequent classes that day. Likewise, success in one class may lead a student to put forth more effort in other classes. Of course, performance in all courses will be affected by factors such as students' background and preparation, and by the overall instructional climate of the school.

The strong connection between grades overall and failures in a few classes has implications for how we think about high school reform strategies. *Instead of being isolated, problems with course failure tend to indicate broader problems of academic performance.* This suggests that strategies that address particular courses (e.g., math remediation or tutoring) might be limited in their ability to affect broader outcomes, compared to more comprehensive strategies (e.g., instructional coordination across classes or schoolwide attendance initiatives). This also suggests problems of course failures, dropping out, and low achievement should be addressed by coordinated strategies. These issues are discussed further as we explore the school factors associated with freshman-year course performance.

FIGURE 8
Grades in Passed Courses by Number of Course Failures

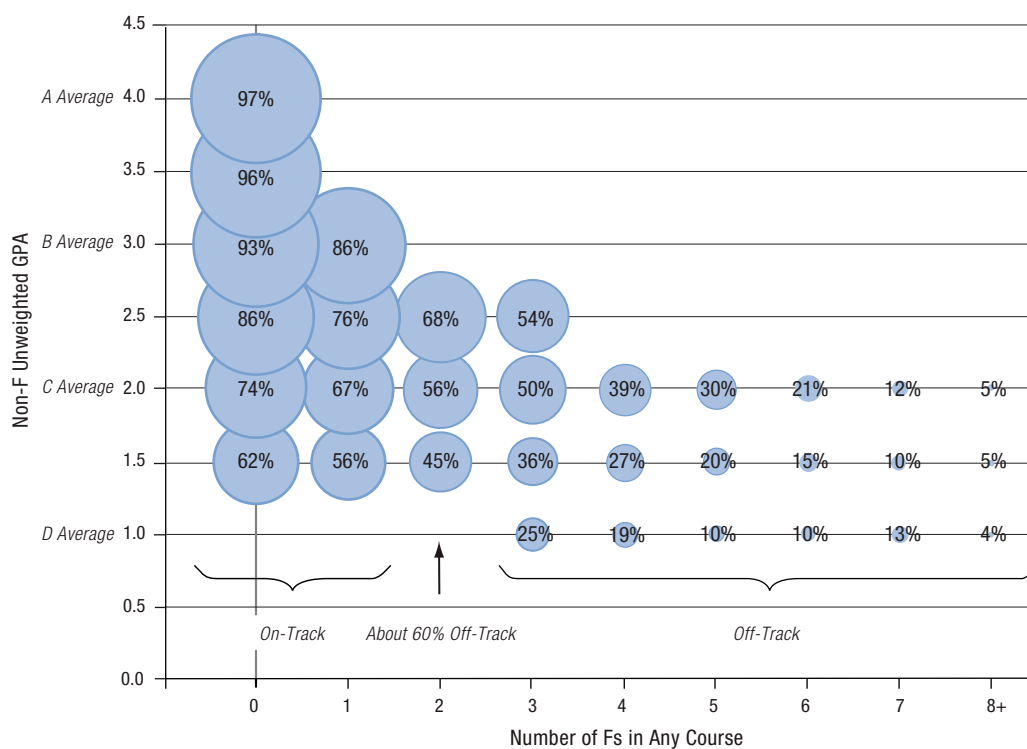


Overall Grades, as Well as Failures, Matter for Graduation

Course failures and overall GPA are strongly related. However, among students with the same number of Fs, higher grades in other courses increase the likelihood of graduation. Figure 9 shows graduation rates classified by the number of Fs and GPA in the courses that students passed. Each column represents students with the same number of freshman-year failures. Among students with the same number of failures, those who had higher grades in the courses they passed were much more likely to graduate. Even students with no failures in their first year of high school were at some risk of not graduating if they had a C average or lower. It is likely that poor grades in the freshman year foreshadow problems with course failure in later years. Students who just barely pass their freshman classes are likely to struggle as they move into their sophomore year.

Course grades predict the likelihood of graduating, but course failures have a direct effect on graduation beyond their relationship with students' overall grades. Ultimately, students need course credits to

FIGURE 9
Graduation Rates by number of Fs and GPA in Passed Courses



How to Read this Chart:

The size of the bubbles indicates the four-year graduation rate of students entering high school in the 2000-01 school year by their freshman year course failures and grades in the classes they passed. Students who passed all of their courses in their first year of high school are in the first column. Their graduation rates ranged from 62 percent among students with a 1.5 GPA to 97 percent for students with a 4.0. Among students who failed two semester classes their freshman year, graduation rates ranged from 45 percent among students who received a mix of Cs and Ds in the classes they passed (averaging 1.5 points) to 68 percent for students with all Cs in the classes they passed (2.0 average), up to 68 percent for students with a mix of Cs and Bs (2.5 average) in the courses they passed.

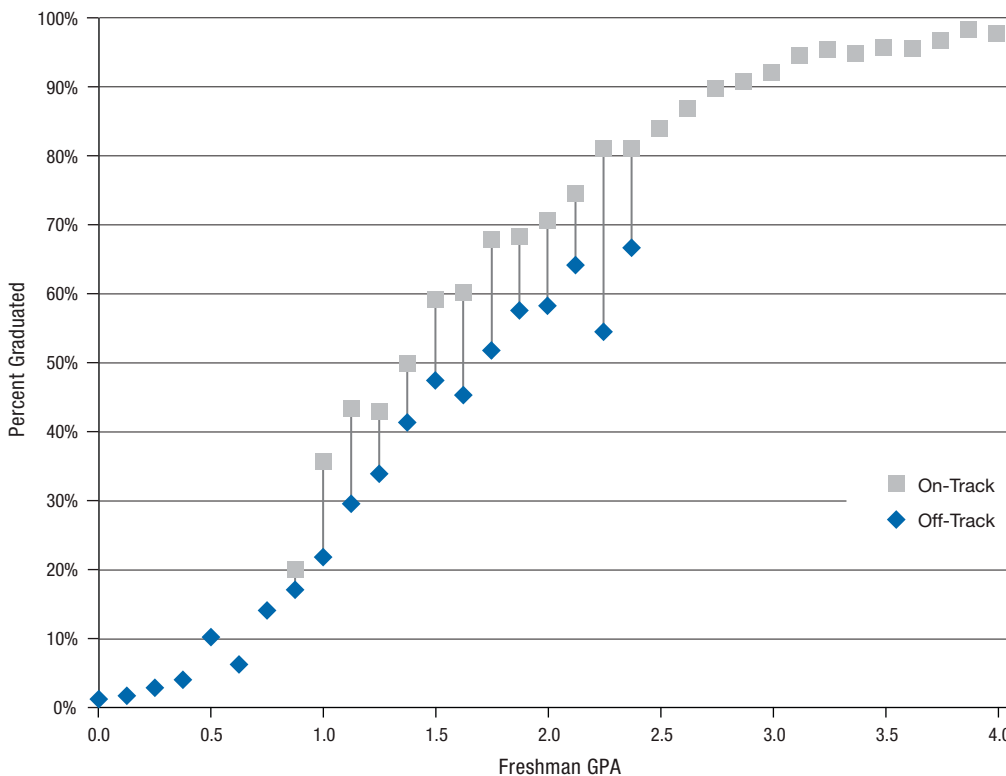
graduate; and failures have a direct effect on the probability of graduating. As shown in Figure 9, the probability of graduating declines quickly with each additional course failure.⁷ This can be seen more clearly in Figure 10, which shows graduation rates by freshman GPA for both on- and off-track students. All students with very low freshman GPAs are off-track (see far left of graph), and nearly all students with high GPAs are on-track (see far right of graph). But in the middle range, GPAs from 1.0 to 2.5 (D to C+), students can be either on- or off-track depending on how many Fs they have. For students in this middle range, about 60 percent of students, having failed more than one semester course has a strong impact on the likelihood of graduating. Among students with the same overall GPA, on-track students are about 9 percentage points more likely to graduate than off-track students with the same GPA. This occurs even though off-track students must have had higher grades in their passed courses than students with the same overall GPA who are on-track.

Intervention Efforts Are Needed for More Than Just the Lowest-Performing Students

Students with high rates of course failure are extremely unlikely to graduate. Those who fail four or more semester courses (i.e., two courses in each semester), or who hold lower than a D average, probably need very intensive assistance in order to graduate; and schools may be disappointed with the effects of programs that are not sufficiently comprehensive. On the other hand, students with GPAs in the D+ or C- range, or just one failure in the first semester (two semester failures for the year), are about as likely to graduate as not to graduate. Because students in this GPA range constitute a large percentage of students and they have a reasonable chance of graduating, efforts to support these students could have a substantial payoff for school graduation rates. However, because such students are not the lowest performers, these students may not be seen as in great need of support.

To gauge the degree to which graduation rates might be affected by a targeted effort to increase passing

FIGURE 10
Percentage of Students Who Graduated in Four Years by Freshman GPA and On-Track Status



Almost all students with GPAs below 1.0 are off-track, while almost all students with GPAs above 2.5 are on-track. Students with GPAs of 1.0 to 2.5 may be either on- or off-track. The gray lines show the difference in graduation rates for students with the same GPAs by on-track status. Students who are off-track must have had higher grades in the courses they passed than on-track students with the same GPA, yet they are about 9 percentage points less likely to graduate.

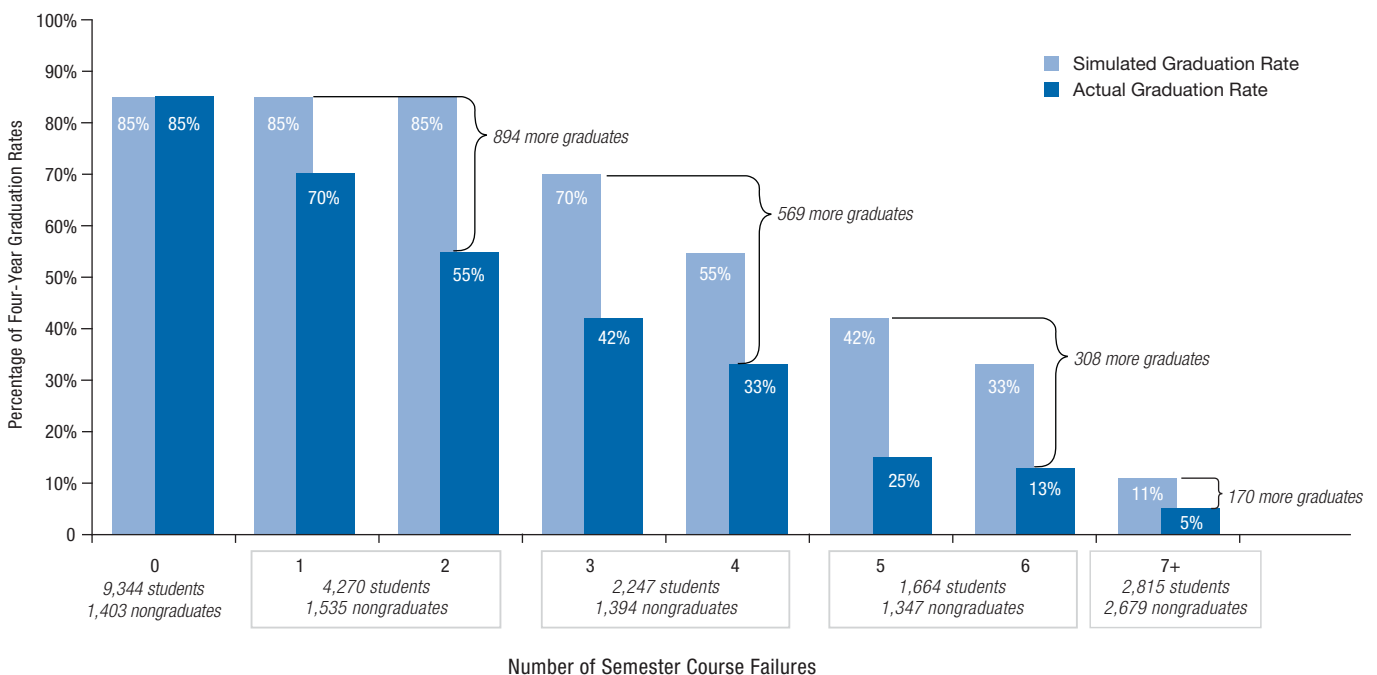
rates, Figure 11 simulates the maximum improvements in graduation rates that could be expected if schools could find a way to get each student to pass two additional semester courses (one full-year course) in their freshman year. This could be considered a summer school recovery effect, since students can take a full-year course over the summer, or a potential effect of increasing academic supports in the school year. To estimate the effect, we simply assign each student the graduation rate observed among students who had two fewer failures than that student. This is an overestimation of potential graduation rates, because we do not consider other factors that are associated with failure that influence graduation. However, it allows us to gauge the relative effects of improvements in pass rates on different groups of students.

The bottom of Figure 11 shows that about half the students who entered CPS high schools in 2000–01 and failed to graduate four years later received multiple

Fs in their freshman year: 2,679 students who failed to graduate had seven or more semester Fs in their freshman year, and an additional 1,347 students who failed to graduate had five or six semester Fs. Thus, this may seem like a reasonable group to target for recovery efforts or tutoring. However, improving pass rates among these students by two semester courses would do little to affect overall graduation rates—their probability of graduating is so small that they would still be unlikely to graduate with an additional two course credits. We might expect as many as 170 additional graduates among students with seven or more semester failures (a 1 percentage point increase in the total graduation rate), and as many as 308 more graduates among students with five or six semester failures (a 2 percentage point increase in the total graduation rate). Students with many course failures will need more support than tutoring or summer school to have a reasonable chance of graduating—all of these students

FIGURE 11

Estimated Improvements in Systemwide Graduation Rates if Each Student Passed Two Additional Semester Courses*



*Graduation rates for students failing fewer than two courses are estimated as if they failed no courses. This simulation suggests the maximum degree to which graduation rates could be expected to improve if each student failed two fewer courses or recovered two courses immediately after failure. It is an overestimation because it does not take into account factors other than Fs that affect graduation (e.g., grades in passed courses tend to be lower among students with more Fs). However, it can be used to gauge the relative effects

of recovery or improvements in pass rates for students with different rates of failure. While students with multiple Fs comprise the majority of nongraduates, small improvements in pass rates or recovery among these students would have a much smaller effect on graduation rates than similar efforts among students who have failed only one or two courses. These figures are based on students in the 2000-01 freshman cohort.

How We Obtained Information on Students and Schools

The analyses in this report are based on two cohorts of students. The statistics that show freshman course performance without any reference to graduation rates or survey data are based on all freshmen who entered CPS high schools in fall 2004 who did not attend charter schools (24,894 students). Statistics that tie freshman course performance to graduation rates are based on all students who entered CPS high schools in fall 2000 who did not transfer out of CPS before September 2004 and who did not attend a charter school (20,803 students).^A Statistics that use survey data only include those students from the 2004–05 cohort who participated in the spring 2005 surveys (14,045 students) described below.

Data on students' course absences and grades come from semester-by-semester grade files provided by the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Data on grades and absences are provided separately for each course taken by each student each semester. All CPS schools, except charter schools, provide this information. For this reason, charter school students cannot be included in any of the analyses in this report.

Data on students' background characteristics and school demographics come from student administrative records and test score files provided by CPS. Gender, race, and age are part of the administrative record files. Mobility, which is calculated from longitudinal administrative records on individual students, is measured as the number of times a student changed schools in the three years prior to high school. Eighth-grade achievement is measured with students' scores in the reading and math sections of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Students' socioeconomic status is measured through two variables, which were constructed from the 2000 U.S. census data, regarding the economic conditions in students' residential block groups. The first, concentration of poverty, is constructed from information on the male unemployment rate and the percentage of families living below the poverty line. The second, social status, is constructed from

information about average income and education levels. These indicators allow for much more discrimination in socioeconomic background than the simple indicator of free/reduced lunch, for which about 90 percent of CPS students are eligible.

Measures of school climate come from surveys conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) in spring 2005. Nearly 130,000 students, teachers, and principals across the system participated. Our surveys ask about learning climate, teacher-student relationships, leadership, and quality of the school's instructional program. They also ask about the school's professional environment, and the nature of the school's relationships with parents and the community. From these surveys we create measures about features of each school.^B Students' perceptions of climate are constructed from responses of ninth- and tenth-grade students. Teachers' perceptions are constructed from responses of teachers at all grade levels.

Unfortunately, the data do not allow us to discern individual students' specific experiences on a class-by-class basis. For each measure, students either reported on just one of their courses (English or math) or on the school as a whole. We can aggregate the data from all students to create measures of climate across the school, and classroom climate across English and math classes in the school, but we cannot distinguish different patterns of experience within the school among different students. Still, these measures of the average climate in schools provide some evidence about what matters for course performance, although we would expect to find stronger relationships if we could map out different experiences within schools.

Sidebar Endnotes

A Students who left for involuntary reasons (incarceration, institutionalization, death) are excluded from analyses, along with those who transferred out of CPS.

B For more information on our surveys and on the psychometric properties of our measures, visit the CCSR Web site at ccsr.uchicago.edu.

need to pass *at least* four additional semester courses to be on-track, and many need much more. Modest efforts to support these students will not be sufficient to have a sizable impact on graduation rates.

On the other hand, summer school and tutoring that is targeted at students with small numbers of course failures could potentially have a sizable effect on graduation rates. If students who failed just one or two semester classes were to pass those classes instead

of failing them, we might expect as many as 894 additional graduates. If students who failed just three to four semester classes (up to two full-year classes) were to pass an additional two semester classes (one full-year class), we might expect an additional 569 more graduates. Together, this is a 7 percentage point increase in the overall graduation rate. It is also likely easier to improve pass rates among students with few Fs than among students with multiple failures.

Chapter 1 Endnotes

1 E.g., Balfanz and Neild (2006); Alexander, Entwisle, and Horsey (1997).

2 In fact, 86 percent of nongraduates can be identified with freshman GPA by sacrificing specificity to 68 percent.

3 Rumberger (2004a); and Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001).

4 Ninety-five percent of these students graduated within four years, and only 3 percent dropped out. The remaining 2 percent remained for a fifth year of high school.

5 Besides preventing credit accumulation, failure may also impede graduation through indirect mechanisms. For example, failure may demoralize students and lower their expectations. Failure may also

disrupt students' schedules when they need to repeat a failed class.

Often students progress to classes that build on knowledge that should have been learned previously, thus a failure can indicate that a student is unlikely to succeed in a future class. For example, most CPS students who fail algebra in their freshman year take geometry in their sophomore year before passing algebra.

6 Most students take seven courses in their first year of high school.

7 Each additional course failure decreases the probability of graduating by about the same amount as a decrease of half of a grade point across all classes.



Calculating Freshman On-Track

Technical Notes for Freshman On-Track

This document was created by Chicago Public Schools to define how Freshman On-Track is calculated and provides considerations for appropriate use of the metric. The Network for College Success has edited this document to remove out-of-date references.

Technical Notes for Freshman On-Track

What is Freshman On-Track?

Freshman On-Track (FOT) is a measure of how many first-time freshmen are, by the end of their first year, “On Track” to graduate from high school within four years. The measure is based on two freshman year data points: (i) credit accumulation; (ii) course failures. An eligible first-year freshman is On Track by the end of the year if s/he has: (i) earned at least five course credits; (ii) failed *no more than* one semester of a *core* course—otherwise, s/he is off track. UChicago Consortium research shows that freshmen who finish their first year of high school On Track are more than three times as likely as those off track to graduate from high school within four years.

There are a few technical points regarding FOT calculation that anyone using this data should be aware of:

- Eligible freshmen count towards the FOT rate of the school they attend *on the 20th day of school*, regardless of where they finish, or spend the majority of, the school year.
- Freshman year dropouts *are* included in the metric, and they are counted as off track.
- Freshmen attending the following types of schools (as of the 20th day) are *not* included in the metric:
 - Charter schools
 - Jail schools
 - Alternative schools
 - Special Ed schools
- Students repeating ninth grade are not included in the metric.

While attendance may impact whether a student earns the necessary amount of credits and/or passes courses, attendance *does not* directly factor into the calculation of this metric.

Components of the Freshman On-Track Metric

- Credits accumulated during first year of high school (≥ 5)
- Number of semester core course failures during first year of high school (≤ 1)

How are results reported?

Annual

- **School-level** Freshman On-Track data for the years 1997-2016 is currently available on the CPS Performance Data website. To obtain it, go to Related Links and click on School Data. Then navigate to Metrics > Freshman On-Track.
- **Student-level** Freshman On-Track data—which is aggregated up to the school, area, and district levels for reporting and accountability purposes—is not available directly via website.

Point-in-time

A “point-in-time” Freshman On-Track rate—a rough approximation of end-of-year Freshman On-Track rate—is also available, on a dynamically updated basis, via the Freshman Success Report located on Dashboard. This point-in-time rate may be useful to monitor and manage school and area performance within the school year: be advised, however, that the value of this rate jumps around quite a bit during the school year, is always lower at the end than the beginning of the year, and is based on an approximation of the end-of-year FOT criteria.

What questions can Freshman On-Track data answer?

Freshman On-Track data can be used at the aggregate level—whether district, area, or school—to gauge what percentage of students are “On Track” to graduate in four years—in turn, we know that students who are On-Track after freshman year are over three times as likely as those off track to graduate in four years. In short, it helps us answer the broad question: “How good of a job is this part of the district doing making sure its freshmen have attained the education they need to graduate on time?”

Freshman On-Track data can also be cut in numerous ways to indicate how successful schools, areas, or the district as a whole have been at intervening with “at risk” students to ensure they are on pace to graduate on time. Interesting analytical questions and possible deep dives include:

- What % of students who were flagged on the beginning-of-year Freshman Watchlist (or any of the quarterly Freshman Success Reports) finished the year “On Track”?
- What kinds of “at risk” students are we most (and least) successful at getting On Track—kids with attendance problems? Academic problems? Both?
- How do different racial/demographic groups break down in terms of Freshman On-Track rates, and how (if at all) should this information inform school- and/or classroom-level FOT strategies?
- Did tailored, school-level interventions “work”?—How much more likely were “at risk” students who received particular types of intervention (e.g. tutoring, parent conferences, etc.) during their first year of high school to be “On Track” than those who did not?
- Among our off-track students, what particular classes or subject areas are causing the most semester failures? Do we have a plan to ensure that proper supports are in place to help reduce failure rates in these areas going forward?
- Among a high school’s freshman student body, are there substantial variations/patterns depending on what elementary feeder school a student attended, and how should this impact our feeder school outreach strategy?
- What percentage of our *off-track* freshmen graduate within four years?—and do we have effective credit recovery programs in place to get these kids back On Track during sophomore/junior/senior year?
- What percentage of our *On-Track* freshmen graduate within four years?—and do we have effective sophomore/junior/senior year transition programs in place to ensure that On-Track kids *stay* On Track?

What questions can Freshman On-Track data NOT answer?

- Freshman On-Track was designed to be predictive of high school graduation—NOT of either college enrollment or college success. Standardized test scores and GPAs are much better indicators of the latter.
- The Freshman On-Track rate will tell us how many of a given school’s freshmen were On Track, but not how close a given student was to the FOT “cutoffs”—i.e. it will NOT tell us:
 - How many more credits/fewer failures off-track students needed to be OnTrack
 - How far beyond “On Track” baseline cutoffs On-Track students were, in terms of credit accumulation
- Without deeper analysis, FOT will not indicate *why* a student was off track, i.e. whether it was because s/he did not *attempt* enough credits, or because s/he did not *pass* enough credits.
- FOT cannot directly answer any questions about student attendance, nor does it incorporate such data.
- FOT will not tell you anything about what happens to students who have been retained, i.e. are second-time freshmen.
- Also, keep in mind that FOT rates are highly dependent on:
 - Ability level and work habits of incoming students
 - Grading policies at individual high schools

How is Freshman On-Track data used within Chicago Public Schools?

Freshman On-Track data is a key self-monitoring tool for schools, which can be used to help gauge the effectiveness of school-specific intervention and transition strategies for 9th graders.

It is also a key district accountability metric, in two ways:

1. First, the metric **% of Freshmen On-Track** appears on the districtwide annual high school scorecard, which is used to gauge progress towards district and area goals.
2. Second, FOT is a crucial component of the district's Performance Policy, which dictates whether or not a given school is on probation. Specifically, a high school can earn up to three (3) points for its current FOT level, and up to (3) points for its FOT trend—six (6) points, total.



Building Relationships to Support the Transition to High School

Contents

[Easing the Transition to High School](#)

[Relationships Matter](#)

[The Magic of Mentoring](#)

[Mentoring Minority Students](#)

[The Developmental Relationships Framework](#)

Purpose

Building relationships with students is a critical lever for supporting them in the transition to high school. Structures such as mentoring and Freshman Advisory programs allow students to receive on-time and targeted support through one-on-one, small group, and/or whole group activities. During the initial phases, Success Teams may struggle when deciding what interventions will be the most impactful for their students. Tool Set B provides you with a collection of practical, research-based articles to increase your knowledge of meaningful and targeted student interventions.

How & When to Use

Professional readings provide a common learning experience for your Success Team. Using a text-based protocol with the professional reading allows participants to process new information as well as discuss implications for practice. The Network for College Success finds protocols to be very helpful for structuring an efficient and productive conversation when in teams. Some possible protocols for use with these articles are [the Four A's Text Protocol](#), [The Final Word](#), and [Text-Based Seminar](#).

Connections to Framework

The [Freshman Success Framework](#) is the foundation for effective school practice on On-Track and student success. The Network for College Success has seen the greatest and most sustainable gains for freshmen when schools develop high-functioning educator professional learning communities, which we call Success Teams.

This Tool Set focuses on the below actions of a Success Team stemming from the Freshman Success Framework.

Elements	Success Team
<p>Setting Conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With principal and Team Lead, establishes foundational knowledge, sets purpose, and creates freshman success goals for On-Track and student connection
<p>Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains strengths-based and action-oriented communication to support students

This Tool Set also highlights the actions stemming from the Framework for the Principal and Team Lead in support of the Success Team work.

Team Lead

- Setting Conditions: Acquires foundational knowledge on the importance of freshman course performance as well as tools and strategies to lead the Success Team

Principal

- Setting Conditions: Selects, programs, sets purpose, and provides foundational knowledge on freshman success work for core set of grade-level teachers
- Implementation: Provides professional development and training opportunities on the transition to high school, data strategy, and social-emotional learning



Building Relationships to Support the Transition to High School

Easing the Transition to High School

An advisory program can be a school's most powerful tool for building relationships with freshmen. This is a chronicle of one suburban high school's journey to shift the culture of support for freshmen through the creation of a Freshman Advisory program focused on building connections and providing academic and social survival skills.

[Click here to read >>](#)



Building Relationships to Support the Transition to High School

Relationships Matter

A review of the research on the importance of student-teacher relationships as a lever for student academic achievement. Practical suggestions are also provided.

[Click here to read >>](#)



Building Relationships to Support the Transition to High School

The Magic of Mentoring

An article on the basics of establishing a school-based mentoring program, including how to structure such a program, the role of a mentor, and supporting ongoing mentoring relationships.

[Click here to read >>](#)



Building Relationships to Support the Transition to High School

Mentoring Minority Students

An article describing one high school's approach to increasing minority enrollment in honors courses.

[Click here to read >>](#)



Building Relationships to Support the Transition to High School

The Developmental Relationships Framework

This Framework, produced by the Search Institute, has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives. Educators must build relationships with freshmen so they can successfully navigate the transition to high school. These relationships not only support students in the classroom, but can help them discover who they are in the world.

For more information on how the Search Institute helps educators discover what students need to succeed, [click here >>](#).

The Developmental Relationships Framework

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

Elements	Actions	Definitions
<p>1. Express Care</p> <p>Show me that I matter to you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be dependable..... Be someone I can trust. • Listen..... Really pay attention when we are together. • Believe in me Make me feel known and valued. • Be warm..... Show me you enjoy being with me. • Encourage Praise me for my efforts and achievements. 	
<p>2. Challenge Growth</p> <p>Push me to keep getting better.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect my best Expect me to live up to my potential. • Stretch Push me to go further. • Hold me accountable ... Insist I take responsibility for my actions. • Reflect on failures Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks. 	
<p>3. Provide Support</p> <p>Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigate..... Guide me through hard situations and systems. • Empower Build my confidence to take charge of my life. • Advocate Stand up for me when I need it. • Set boundaries Put in place limits that keep me on track. 	
<p>4. Share Power</p> <p>Treat me with respect and give me a say.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect me Take me seriously and treat me fairly. • Include me Involve me in decisions that affect me. • Collaborate Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. • Let me lead Create opportunities for me to take action and lead. 	
<p>5. Expand Possibilities</p> <p>Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. • Broaden horizons Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. • Connect..... Introduce me to people who can help me grow. 	

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.



Developing and Tracking Interventions

Contents

Considerations for Planning Tier 2 Interventions

Quick Guide to Tracking Interventions

Intervention Evaluation Flowchart

Intervention Success Monthly Action Plan (IS-MAP)

Student Success Intervention Plan

Behavior, Attendance, and Grades (BAG) Report

Purpose

One responsibility of the Success Team is to develop and track interventions. Team members should give thoughtful consideration to design to ensure that interventions are meeting the needs of all students, including those who are underperforming and those who are high achieving. The team must also determine the effectiveness of interventions and their impact on student achievement.

How & When to Use

Planning effective student interventions can be a challenging task for both new and established Success Teams. This set of tools provides support for teams that are creating and/or fine-tuning their student intervention systems by encouraging teams to describe, analyze, and reflect on their current practices. Furthermore, these tools provide team members with opportunities to adjust interventions to better serve students.



Connections to Framework

The [Freshman Success Framework](#) is the foundation for effective school practice on On-Track and student success. The Network for College Success has seen the greatest and most sustainable gains for freshmen when schools develop high-functioning educator professional learning communities, which we call Success Teams.

This Tool Set focuses on the below actions of a Success Team stemming from the Freshman Success Framework.

Elements	Success Team
Setting Conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in regular, calendared Success Team meetings to 1) analyze data and 2) develop, monitor, and adjust interventions
Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops, implements, tracks, and evaluates Tier 2 interventions, making adjustments when appropriate Refers students to appropriate level of intervention
Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages faculty in frequent communication on student progress and successful strategies

This Tool Set also highlights the actions stemming from the Framework for the Principal and Team Lead in support of the Success Team work.

Team Lead

- Setting Conditions: With principal and Success Team, sets freshman success goals for On-Track and student connection, and develops benchmarks to monitor progress
- Implementation: Develops action-oriented meeting agendas that consistently address freshman success goals generally and intervention development, tracking, and evaluation specifically
- Implementation: Works with data technician to bring actionable student-level data at regular intervals

Principal

- Implementation: Reviews and interrogates interim freshman success-related data in light of Success Team goals, and strategizes with team leadership around next steps



Developing and Tracking Interventions

Considerations for Planning Tier 2 Interventions

A set of guiding questions to use during the development of an intervention system. Questions are focused on looking at student data, targeting students, and intervention selection, implementation, and effectiveness.

Considerations When Planning Tier 2 Interventions

For information on the tiered systems of student support, please refer to the [RTI Action Network](#).

Data Questions

- To what degree is attendance playing a role in student performance? To whom do you refer Tier 3 students who have serious attendance issues (inside and outside of the school) so that the Success Team can really concentrate on supporting Tier 2 students?
- How does the grade distribution look by teacher? Are there teachers who are failing a disproportionate number of students?
- Do your assessment policies create opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery, or do they cause students to feel overwhelmed and fall off track?

Targeting Students

- How many students have you identified for Success Team intervention? Does this number fall in the 15 - 25% range for Tier 2 supports? Are there students who are really Tier 3 being included into Tier 2 supports?

Intervention Selection

- What issue is the intervention addressing? (academic/social-emotional/behavioral)
- What programs/resources already exist in the building that could possibly address the issue? How closely do these programs/resources align with the identified needs of students? For example, if tutoring is being offered already, is it designed to help students with real-time issues they face in their classes or is it specifically designed for remediation of basic skills?

Intervention Implementation

- Who will implement the intervention?
- Who will coordinate the intervention (logistics)?
- Who will own the tracking of the intervention's effectiveness?
- What does successful implementation look like?

Considerations When Planning Tier 2 Interventions (cont.)

Tracking Effectiveness

- Does tracking your intervention include the following information: targeted students' names, participation (such as the number of times targeted students participate within a specified period), grade check dates, and grades in targeted courses?
- Does your tracking tool allow you to aggregate point-in-time data in different ways so that you can accurately monitor targeted student progress?
- What is your timeline for course correction?



Developing and Tracking Interventions

Quick Guide to Tracking Interventions

A set of guidelines for designing an intervention tracking tool.

Quick Guide to Tracking Interventions

Tracking is necessary to determine the efficacy of an intervention so that adjustments can be made in a timely manner. A tracking tool is more effective when it is in a teacher-friendly format that can be disaggregated to pull data for specific subgroups. For example, if your team is using tutoring as an intervention, and the targeted student group requires tutoring in more than one core class, your tracking tool should be able to disaggregate data to ascertain intervention impact by course. Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets can support the tracking of interventions by disaggregating data and creating graphs.

Features of Good Intervention Tracking Tools

- Name of the intervention and what key performance indicator it addresses (attendance, point-in-time On-Track rates, GPA, behavior metric, etc.)
- Names of the targeted students
 - If tracking grades, include each core course's average expressed as a percentage
- Intervention contacts/implementation evidence
 - Tutoring attendance
 - Mentorship contact dates
 - "Office hours" visits
- Point-in-time progress on the key performance indicator impacted by the intervention
 - Should include at least 2 checkpoints within a 10-week period
 - If tracking grades, provide an average expressed as a percentage for each core course
 - If tracking attendance, provide number of cumulative absences and/or tardies

Quick Guide to Tracking Interventions (cont.)

Example: Henderson College Prep, Quarter 3 Mentorship Program, Key Performance Indicator
Addressed: Point-in-Time On-Track rates

		Meeting 1 Dates: 02/01 - 02/04/2016					
Student	Mentor	Abs	Tardies	ENG	MATH	SCI	SOC
A	Isom	1	1	75	83	56	80
B	Shields	1	0	90	57	83	32
C	Wells	0	3	48	67	77	93
D	Wells	0	5	79	78	76	57
E	Pitcher	0	1	82	84	88	32
F	Muldrow	1	1	44	78	88	57
G	Pitcher	2	6	75	81	87	71
H	Martinez	1	1	61	55	62	71
I	Pitcher	1	1	68	90	83	83
J	Isom	0	3	59	65	83	93
K	Isom	0	2	88	82	88	32
L	Martinez	0	1	88	92	51	85
M	Shields	0	0	75	78	88	76
N	Shields	1	0	83	83	88	57



Developing and Tracking Interventions

Intervention Evaluation Flowchart

A flowchart to determine if individual interventions are working for schools and to improve the use of data to successfully implement interventions.

Is our student success intervention working for our students?

YES

OR

NO: Is there a true opportunity for recovery if students participate with fidelity?



- What are you doing that works for students? (What is your evidence?)
- What are you doing that works for the adults implementing the intervention? (What is your evidence?)
- What parts of your implementation plan can you tweak for even greater success?

YES

NO

Is it an implementation fidelity issue?

Is it a student participation issue?

Is the issue a mismatch between the intervention and student needs?

Is the issue one that cannot be addressed by a Success Team intervention?

- Are there other school programs/ initiatives competing with effective implementation?
- Are teachers/owners aware of implementation procedures?
- Are teachers compensated when appropriate?
- Is there sufficient and reasonable time to implement the intervention?
- Is the intervention publicized effectively to appropriate stakeholders?
- Have you implemented the intervention long enough?

- How are students held accountable for not participating? By whom?
- Do they see the results of their participation?
- Are students encouraged by multiple adults to participate?
- Does the intervention respect student time and effort?
- Is the intervention viewed as punitive?

- Does the intervention provide supports for students struggling academically?
- Is the intervention frequent enough to be effective?
- How was the intervention selected? Based on identified student need? Adult preference? Feasibility?

- Examples:
- Teacher philosophy
 - Grading policies
 - Chronic truancy
 - Chronic suspensions
 - Curriculum pacing

Is our student success intervention working for our students?

Data Components Key To Successful Implementation

What data structures and practices, if addressed, will increase your team's efficacy in improving student achievement?

Access to timely Gradebook data

- Are grades updated in a timely manner according to the grade pull schedule?
- Who can provide the grade-level, course, and student-level data you need?
- Can you manipulate data into a teacher-friendly format?
- Do you have or make time to manipulate the data into a teacher-friendly format?

Student participation data

- How are you tracking participation? (intentionally or randomly)
- Is your tracking tool useful for highlighting trends in participation and its effect on achievement?

Intervention implementation data

TUTORING

- Are teachers actually tutoring students/ providing academic support?
- How are students provided with work to complete during tutoring?
- If tutoring is administered by external partners, how is communication of student needs and course expectations shared with them?

MENTORING

- Do mentoring conversations push students to action around their grades?
- What information are mentors provided with to drive their mentoring sessions?
- Are mentors able to advocate professionally with their colleagues?

Data analysis

- Is sufficient time allocated for analyzing data specific to your intervention?
- Does your team's analysis of intervention data lead to action toward increasing student achievement?

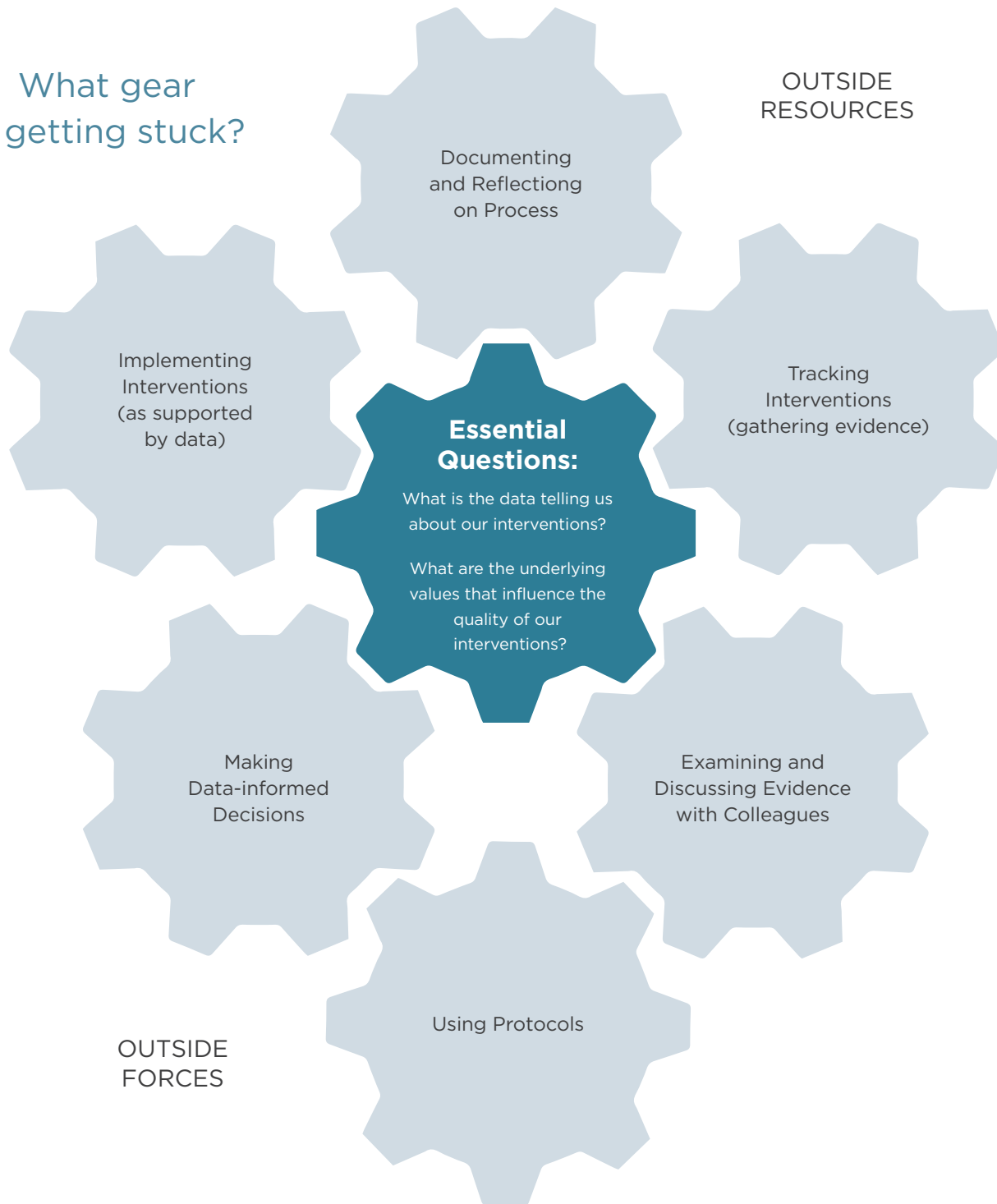
Intervention Evaluation Flowchart (cont.)

Some Considerations for Intervention Planning

- Identifying what students need
- Ensuring intervention is scheduled at accessible times and with a frequency that makes sense
- Matching adult expertise with student needs
- Strategizing how to get targeted students to the intervention
- Connecting what is happening in the intervention to what is happening in the classroom (relational/academic)

The Evidence Process

What gear is getting stuck?



OUTSIDE FORCES



Developing and Tracking Interventions

Intervention Success Monthly Action Plan (IS-MAP)

A plan to support action planning using results from the Intervention Evaluation Flowchart.

Intervention Success Monthly Action Plan (IS-MAP)

Based on quarterly student achievement data and your reflection using the Intervention Evaluation Flowchart, what area needs refinement and what is the change you will make? (refer to bolded categories on the Flowchart)

Area of Refinement: _____

Planned Change: _____

<p>Why am I planning to do this?</p> <p>What's at stake? What do I hope will happen as a result of this change in our team's practice?</p>	<p>How will I initiate this change?</p> <p>What action do I need to take to bring this change to fruition?</p>		<p>What supports do I need to be successful?</p> <p>Who can help me and what do I need from them?</p>	<p>How will I know if my team has made progress?</p> <p>What evidence will tell our team we're on the right track with the intervention?</p>
	Action Item	Due Date	What I Need	Resource Person



Developing and Tracking Interventions

Student Success Intervention Plan

A planning tool for student interventions that includes the identification of baseline data, criteria for success, status checkpoints, and plans for reflection.



Student Success Intervention Plan: Quarter ____

Date:	School:		Grade:			
Focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Attendance <input type="checkbox"/> Ds/Fs <input type="checkbox"/> GPA <input type="checkbox"/> On-Track Rate <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____					
Target group		Number of Students				
Baseline data used to select target group						
Intervention description	What it is: When it takes place (dates/times): Where it takes place: Description of activities involved:					
Goal of intervention						
Criteria for success						
Owner(s) of intervention						
Participants in intervention						
Timeline of intervention	Planning and preparation	Introduction to staff	Introduction to targeted students	Introduction to parents and stakeholders	Intervention start date	Intervention end date
Status checkpoints	Checkpoint 1	Checkpoint 2	Checkpoint 3	Checkpoint 4		
Summary of action taken after each checkpoint						
Reflection at end of intervention						



Developing and Tracking Interventions

Behavior, Attendance, and Grades (BAG) Report

A school-generated tool for educators to interact with students on behavior, attendance, and grades. Ideally, schools will produce these reports every five weeks. BAG Reports use real-time data so students understand where and how they are struggling, and which educators they may need to reach out to for support. They also help students understand their current status in relation to their goals. Schools can use BAG Reports in different ways, including individual conversations with students or holding “town hall” meetings for all freshmen to review the data and set next steps.

Behavior, Attendance, and Grades (BAG) Report



Student: Keith **Grade Level: 9** **8th Period Teacher: Donson**
 The numbers below reflect totals through Semester 1

BEHAVIOR

In what ways do I contribute to a Safe and Respectful school climate?

# of Infractions (# of Major Infractions)	# of Days of In-School-Suspension (ISS)	# of Days of Out-of-School-Suspension (OSS)
5 (1)	10	0

If I have any questions regarding my misconducts, I should schedule an appointment with the Dean of Discipline.

ATTENDANCE

Do my actions reflect the real me?

Days Enrolled	80
Days Present	73
Days Absent	7

My Year-to-Date Attendance Rate is 91%

If I have any questions regarding my attendance, I should schedule an appointment with the Attendance Dean.

GRADES

How am I doing academically in my classes?
 Do my grades represent my true ability?

Period	Courses	Teacher	Grade
P1	Algebra 1	Flint	D
P2	English 1	Lemon	B
P3	World Studies	Moeller	C
P4	PE I-Health	Spann	A
P5	Lunch		
P6	Science	Tyson	D
P7	Photography	McCain	B
P8	Intro to Comp	Donson	A

My Estimated GPA is 2.57

(this estimate does NOT include any previous semesters)

If I have any questions regarding my grade in a course, I should schedule an appointment with my Teacher.



Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Contents

**UChicago Consortium
On-Track Briefs for
Students and Parents**

**What Does “On-Track”
Mean?**

“Am I On Track?”

Purpose

Effectively communicating On-Track research and school-wide goals is important to create the necessary buy-in to improve outcomes for freshmen. Each part of the school community – students, families, faculty, and staff – plays a key role in successfully transitioning students to high school.

How & When to Use

Tool Set D contains examples that can be used as part of your communication strategy. While developing your plan, consider the following:


- What do you want to communicate to the school community and why?
- Who are your audiences?
- What are the key messages for each audience group?
- How will messages about On Track be shared with each group and who is the best person to deliver them?
- What is the most effective way for sharing information with each group?
- Where can student voice play a role?

Connections to Framework

The [Freshman Success Framework](#) is the foundation for effective school practice on On-Track and student success. The Network for College Success has seen the greatest and most sustainable gains for freshmen when schools develop high-functioning educator professional learning communities, which we call Success Teams.

This Tool Set focuses on the below actions of a Success Team stemming from the Freshman Success Framework.

☑			
⚙			
💬			✓
💡			

Elements	Success Team
Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages faculty in frequent communication on student progress and successful strategies

This Tool Set also highlights the actions stemming from the Framework for the Principal and Team Lead in support of the Success Team work.

Team Lead

- Communication: Coordinates freshman success assemblies, parent nights, and celebrations toward On-Track and student connection goals

Principal

- Setting Conditions: Selects, programs, sets purpose, and provides foundational knowledge on freshman success work for core set of grade-level teachers



Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

UChicago Consortium On-Track Briefs for Students and Parents

Created by the UChicago Consortium, these briefs provide a research-based, user-friendly explanation of the Freshman On-Track metric and how the metric relates to high school graduation and postsecondary outcomes.

The Parent Brief is available in English and Spanish.



Freshman Year: The Make-it or Break-it Year

You are about to start the most important year of high school—perhaps the most important year of school so far. This is the year that will set the stage for whether you will graduate and whether you will be ready for college.

How do we know this? Because researchers at the University of Chicago—the Consortium on Chicago School Research—have spent years trying to understand what really matters when it comes to graduating from Chicago Public Schools. Working in cooperation with the district, the Consortium researchers have analyzed years of data—surveys, standardized tests, student grades, attendance records—and uncovered some connections that might surprise you.

It's not about your 8th grade test scores, or even the ACT test that you will face in the 11th grade, although these tests do matter. It's not about where you live and how much money your family earns, although those facts get a lot of attention when educators talk about drop-out statistics.

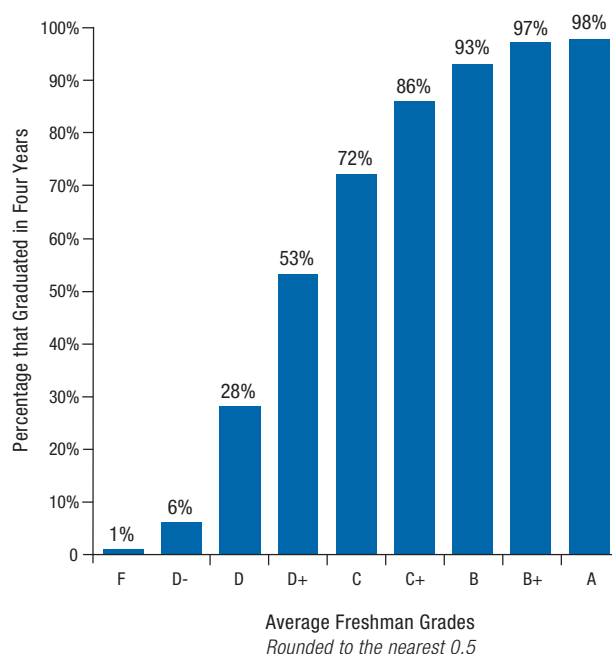
□ Here's what really matters far more than anything: **GRADES AND ATTENDANCE.**

No one wants to be a drop-out statistic. So as you begin this crucial year, consider what research tells us about Chicago freshmen and the factors that influence whether or not they will graduate four years later.

GRADES

- More than 95 percent of students with a B average or better in their freshman year graduate.
- Freshmen who earn a B average or better have an 80-percent chance of finishing high school with at least a 3.0 GPA.
- Freshmen with less than a C average are more likely to drop out than graduate.

Freshman Grades Predict Graduation

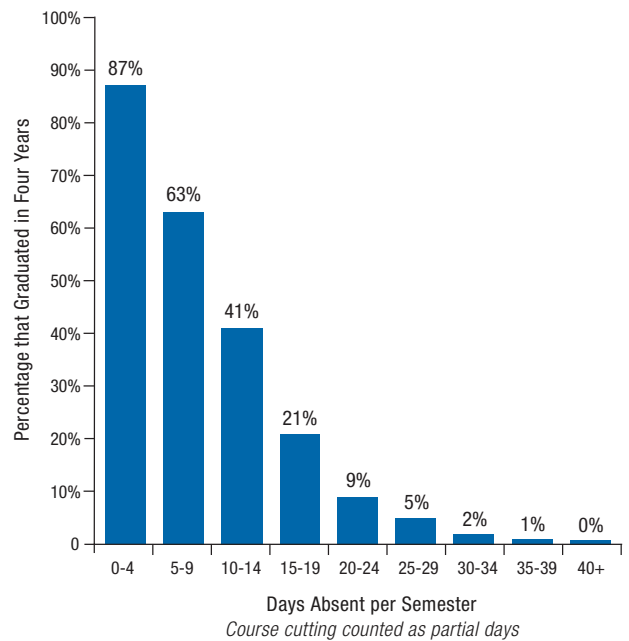


Grades and Attendance

ABSENCES

- Nearly 90 percent of freshmen who miss less than a week of school per semester graduate, regardless of their 8th grade test scores.
- Freshmen who miss more than two weeks of school flunk, on average, at least two classes—no matter whether they arrive at high school with top test scores or below-average scores. In fact, freshmen who arrive with high test scores but miss two weeks of school per semester are more likely to fail a course than freshmen with low test scores who miss just one week.

Missing Classes Puts Graduation at Risk



What does all this research mean for students?

Essentially, that the freshman year is an important chance for a fresh start. Strong students can quickly fall off course if they start cutting classes and blowing off homework. And students who struggled in elementary school can turn things around if they come to school every day and aim for a B average. For Chicago students who want to graduate from college—and 78 percent of seniors say they do—that B average in high school is what it's going to take to succeed in college.

It sounds simple, but there is a lot of room for improvement in these two areas. That's because:

- **More than half of Chicago freshmen fail a course.**
- **About 40 percent miss more than a month of school in that first year (which includes class cutting).**
- **The average GPA is lower than a "C."**

But you don't have to be one of these statistics.

So...what can you do?

- ✓ **Get to school on time and don't cut classes.** You may think it doesn't matter to blow off your first or last class of the day, but it does. Even occasional skipping leads to dramatically lower grades. And it sends the wrong message to teachers about your desire to succeed.
- ✓ **Ask your teachers for help.** Teachers should be helping struggling students, but sometimes it falls on you to ask for help. We know from our research that students do better in their courses when they trust their teachers and count on them for support.

- ✓ **Make academics your top priority.** This means trying hard on assignments even when they aren't interesting and choosing to study instead of socializing when there is a big test. Students with good study habits have higher GPAs and fail fewer courses than classmates who don't make homework a priority.



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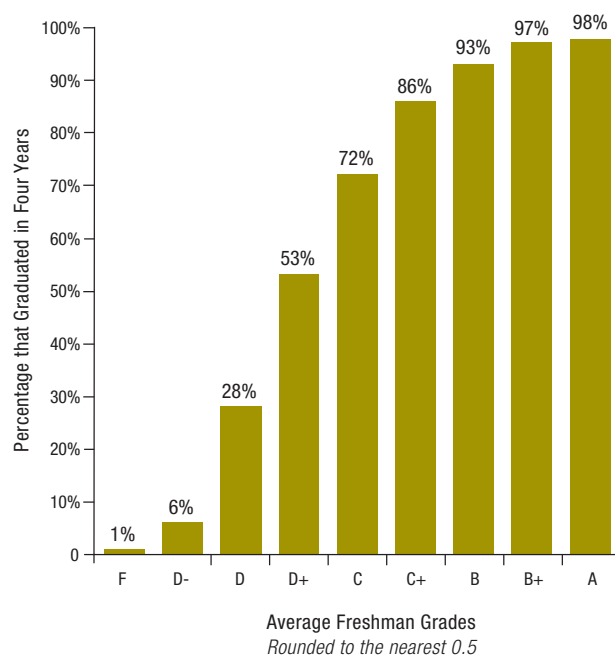
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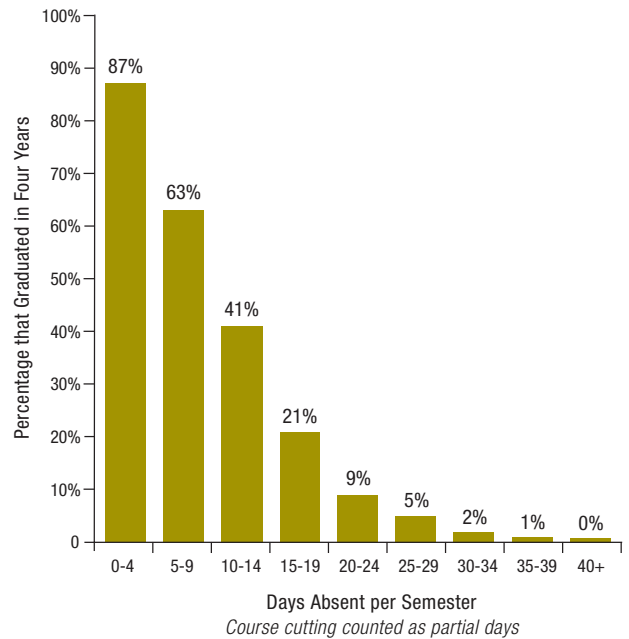


Grades and Attendance

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- ✓ **Talk with your student's teachers** about how you can help your teen succeed, especially if you see his or her grades start to fall. Teachers should be helping struggling students, but sometimes it falls on freshmen (and their parents) to ask for that help. We know from our research that students do

better in their courses when they trust their teachers and count on them for support. Communication with teachers is important, especially if there are personal issues affecting performance in class.

- ✓ **Make academics your top priority for your freshman.** This means trying hard on assignments even when they aren't interesting and choosing to study instead of socializing when there is a big test. Students with good study habits have higher GPAs and fail fewer courses than classmates who don't make homework a priority.



Primer Año: El Año de Pasar o Fracasar

Su estudiante está por comenzar el año más importante de escuela secundaria—quizás el año más importante de toda su vida escolar hasta el día de hoy. Este es el año que va a determinar si se gradúan de la escuela secundaria y si estarán listos para asistir a la universidad o no.

¿Cómo es que sabemos esto? Porque investigadores en la Universidad de Chicago—del Consortium on Chicago School Research—han pasado años tratando de entender lo que realmente importa sobre la graduación de la escuela secundaria de las Escuelas Públicas de Chicago (Chicago Public Schools). Trabajando en cooperación con el distrito educativo, los investigadores del Consorcio han analizado años de datos informativos—encuestas, exámenes estandarizados, calificaciones estudiantiles, listas de asistencia—y han descubierto ciertas conexiones que le sorprenderán.

No se relaciona totalmente con sus puntajes en los exámenes de 8^{vo} grado, ni tan siquiera con el examen de ACT, al que se enfrentarán en el 11^{mo} grado, aunque estos exámenes si son importantes. No se relaciona con dónde Usted vive y cuánto dinero su familia gana, aunque esos hechos atraen mucho la atención cuando los educadores hablan acerca de las estadísticas de deserción escolar.



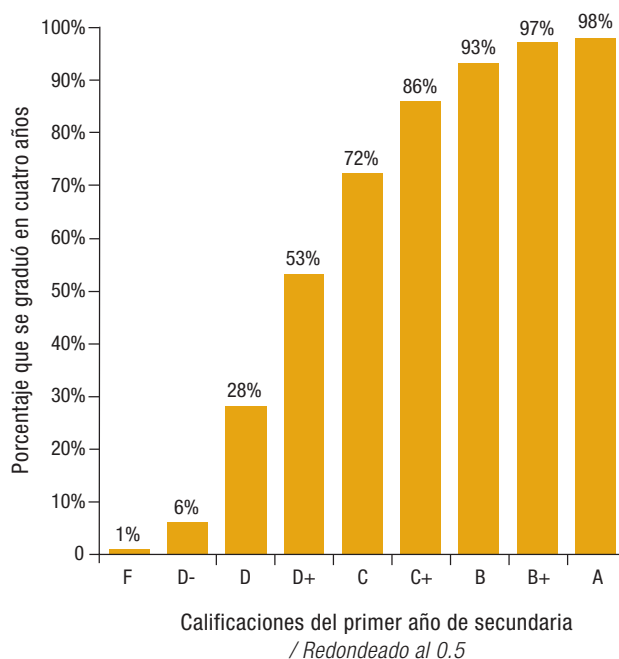
Esto es lo que realmente cuenta mucho más que cualquier otra cosa: **NOTAS Y ASISTENCIA ESCOLAR.**

Nadie quiere ser parte de una estadística de deserción escolar. Así que a medida que Usted guía a su adolescente a través de este año crucial, considere lo que las investigaciones nos dicen acerca de los estudiantes de primer año de la escuela secundaria y de los factores que influyen si se graduarán o no cuatro años más tarde.

NOTAS O CALIFICACIONES

- Aproximadamente el 95 por ciento de los estudiantes con un promedio de B o más en su primer año se gradúan.
- Los estudiantes del primer año de la secundaria que logran un promedio de B o más tienen una posibilidad de 80 por ciento de terminar la escuela superior con por lo menos un 3.0 de Promedio General de calificaciones (GPA).
- Los estudiantes con menos de una C de promedio tienen más posibilidades de darse de baja de la secundaria que de graduarse.

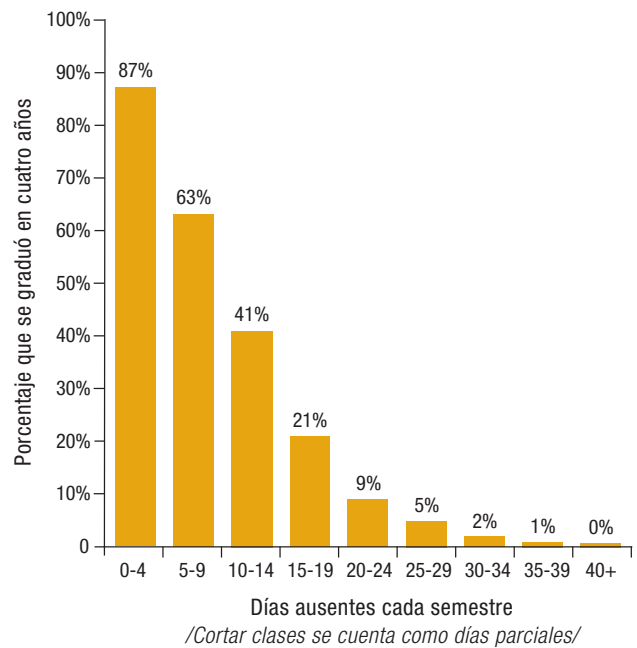
Calificaciones del primer año pronostican la graduación



AUSENCIAS

- Cerca del 90 por ciento de los estudiantes de primer año que pierden menos de una semana de clases por semestre se graduarán de la secundaria sin importar el puntaje obtenido en los exámenes de 8^{vo} grado.
- Los estudiantes de primer año que pierden más de dos semanas de clases fracasarán, en promedio, en por lo menos dos clases—sin importar si llegan a la secundaria con puntajes sobresalientes o por debajo del promedio en los exámenes. De hecho, los estudiantes de primer año que llegan con puntajes sobresalientes en los exámenes pero que pierden más de una semana de clase por semestre tienen más posibilidades de fracasar un curso que los estudiantes de primer año que obtienen puntajes bajos y que pierden menos de una semana.

La falta de asistencia pone la graduación a riesgo



¿Qué significan todas estas investigaciones para los estudiantes?

Esencialmente significan que el primer año de la escuela secundaria es una oportunidad importante para un buen comienzo. Los buenos estudiantes pueden desviarse de curso rápidamente si comienzan a cortar clases y si no cumplen con sus tareas. Y los estudiantes que han tenido dificultades en la escuela primaria pueden cambiar las cosas positivamente si asisten a la secundaria diariamente y tratan de obtener un promedio de B. Para los estudiantes de Chicago que desean graduarse de la secundaria—y el 78 por ciento de los estudiantes de cuarto año dicen que así lo desean—ese promedio de B en la escuela

superior es lo que necesitarán para tener éxito a nivel de universidad.

Suena sencillo, pero hay mucho que mejorar en estas dos áreas. Eso es así porque:

- Más de la mitad de los estudiantes de primer año de Chicago fallan un curso.
- Cerca del 40 por ciento pierden más de un mes de escuela durante el primer año de secundaria (lo que incluye cortes de clases).
- El Promedio General de calificaciones es menos de una “C.”



Entonces... ¿qué puede hacer Usted?

- ✓ Haga hincapié en la importancia de llegar a la escuela a tiempo y no cortar clases. Su adolescente puede pensar que no tiene importancia alguna “volarse” o estar ausente de la primera o última clase del día, pero esas faltas sí importan. Aún la omisión ocasional de clases puede resultar en notas dramáticamente más bajas. Además de que eso da la impresión equivocada a los maestros sobre el deseo de tener éxito de su hijo/a.
- ✓ Hable con los maestros de su hijo/a sobre cómo Ud. pueda ayudarle a tener éxito en sus clases. Los maestros deben de ayudar a los estudiantes cuando tienen problemas, pero algunas veces los

estudiantes o sus padres tienen que pedir ayuda. Sabemos por medio de nuestras investigaciones que los estudiantes hacen mejor trabajo en sus cursos cuando confían en sus maestros.

- ✓ Haga que los estudios sean la prioridad más alta de su hijo/a. Esto significa poner más esfuerzo en las tareas aunque no sean interesantes y escoger estudiar en vez de socializar cuando hay algún examen importante. Los estudiantes con buenos hábitos de estudio tienen un Promedio General de calificaciones más alto y fracasan en menos cursos que sus compañeros que no dan prioridad a la tarea escolar.



Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

What Does “On-Track” Mean?

A presentation that introduces the On-Track metric to students as well as emphasizing the importance of attendance and grades in freshman year.

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

What Does “On-Track” Mean?

“On-Track” Series Guidance Curriculum – Academic Domain

Al Raby High School 2009-2010

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Who wants to go to college?

- Why?
- What difference does going to college make?

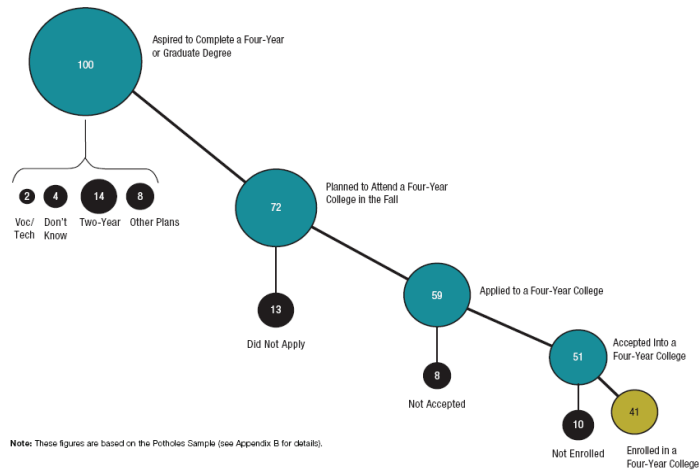
Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Tracking students through the steps to college enrollment:



Note: These figures are based on the Potatoes Sample (see Appendix B for details).

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

So how do I make sure I graduate?

- Know your destination (college) and keep it in sight
- Have a roadmap (a plan for how to get there)
- Ask for directions when needed
- Stay ON TRACK!

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

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Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

What does “On-Track” mean?

On-Track means you are performing in a manner that will allow you to graduate in four years

- Must earn at least 5 credits by June of freshman year
- Fail no more than .5 of a core course credit (one semester of a core class)

(Core Courses = Survey Literature, World Studies, Environmental Science, Algebra)

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Did you know...

An “On-Track” freshman is

3.5 X
MORE LIKELY
TO GRADUATE IN 4 YEARS

than an off-track freshman.

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

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Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

How do I stay On Track?

- Pass all classes
- Attend school every day
- Know the requirements for graduation

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Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Graduation Requirements at Al Raby High School

- 24 credits (minimum)
- 4 service learning projects, to be completed through your academic classes each year
- 4 years of student advisory
- Driver's Education (PE II)
- PSAE (Prairie State Achievement Exam)
- Public Law Exam
- Consumer Education exam

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Al Raby's Graduation Requirements

English	4 credits	1. Survey of Literature* 2. World Literature*	3. American Literature* 4. British Literature*
Math	3 credits	1. Algebra I* 2. Geometry*	3. Algebra II/Trig.*
Science	3 credits	1. Environmental Sci. 2. Biology*	3. Chemistry 4. Physics
Social Science	3 credits	1. World Studies* 2. US History*	3. (see electives)
World Language	2 credits	1. Spanish I* 2. Spanish II*	
Fine Arts	2 credits	1. Art* 2. General Music*	

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Al Raby's Graduation Requirements (cont.)

Physical Education	2 credits	1. PE I/Health* 2. PE II/Driver's Ed*	
Career Education	3 credits	AVID I, II, III, IV OR any course above and beyond the minimum requirement	English Senior Project*
Electives	2 credits (choose from the following)	Beg. Mixed Chorus Collins Writing AP Psychology AP US Government AP Studio Art AP Environmental Sci.	Statistics Pre-Calculus AP Calculus AP Statistics AP Lang. & Comp. AP Literature
Total = 24 Credits			
*Required course			

Speaking of credits, what are they?

- 1 semester class passed = ½ credit
- So, if you pass every class during the semester, you can earn how many credits?
 - 6 classes x ½ credit each =
 - 3 credits at the semester
 - 6 credits per school year

Speaking of credits, what are they?



Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

TOOL SET

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Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Is this student On Track?

	1 st Semester	2 nd Semester
Survey Lit.	B	B
Algebra	C	A
Env. Science	D	D
World Studies	B	C
PE/Health	A	A
Art I	B	B
Reading	B	C

YES

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Is this student On Track?

	1 st Semester	2 nd Semester
Survey Lit.	C	C
Algebra	B	C
Env. Science	D	C
World Studies	F	F
PE/Health	A	A
Art I	A	B
Reading	C	D

NO

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Is this student On Track?

	1 st Semester	2 nd Semester
Survey Lit.	C	C
Algebra	F	D
Env. Science	C	C
World Studies	C	B
PE/Health	A	A
Art I	A	A
Reading	D	C

YES

Attendance Matters!!!

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Attendance Matters!!!

Research shows that students who attend school each day:

- Get better grades
- Learn more
- Are more likely to get high school diplomas
- Are less likely to go to prison

TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Fact:

Nearly **90%** of freshmen who miss **less than 1 week** of school per semester **GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL** regardless of their 8th grade test scores.

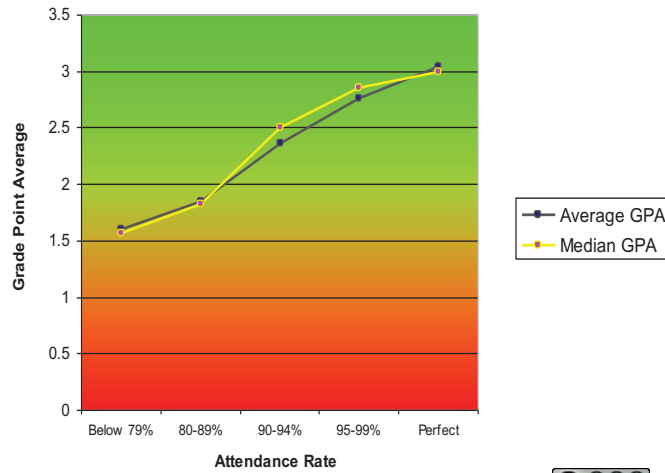
Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

TOOL SET

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Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Attendance vs. GPA
Quarter 1 - Raby's Freshman Class



Understanding Research & Applying Data
NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT

20



TOOL SET

D

Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

Attendance Matters!

- List 3 reasons why students are absent and tardy to school
- List solutions for each reason

Understanding Research & Applying Data
NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT

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Attendance Matters!

- What time are students expected to be at school?
- Where is the attendance office located?
- What is an excused absence?
- What is an unexcused absence?
- What are the consequences?

Check Points

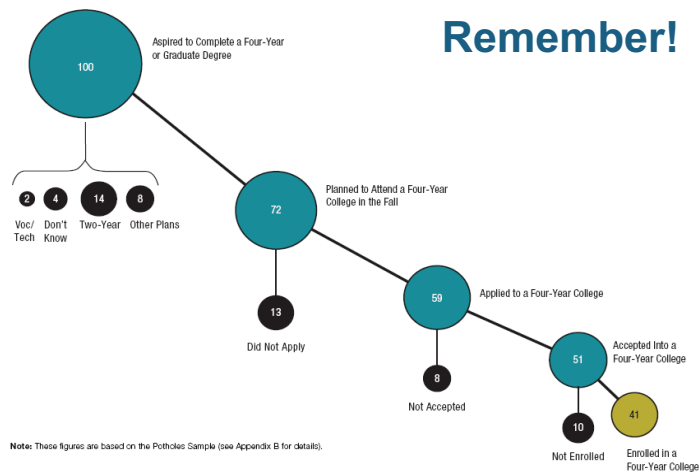
October 14	Progress Report 1
November 19	Report Card 1 (Pick-up)
December 16	Progress Report 2
February 3	Report Card 2
END OF 1 ST SEMESTER	
March 10	Progress Report 3
April 22	Report Card 3 (Pick-up)
May 19	Progress Report 4
June 18	Report Card 4
END OF 2 ND SEMESTER	

How do I stay On Track?

- Pass all classes
- Attend school every day
- Know the requirements for graduation

What are some possible consequences of falling off track in freshman year?

Tracking students through the steps to college enrollment:



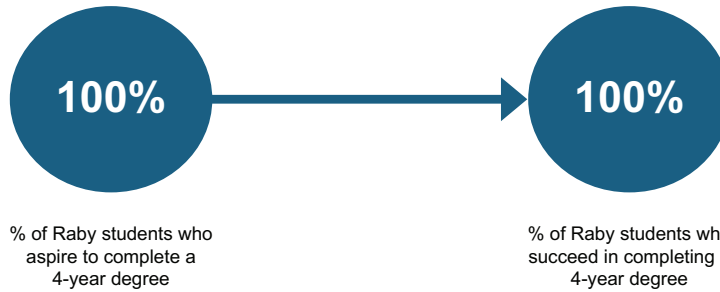
Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

TOOL SET

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Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

All Raby's Goal!



Stay On Track!



Communicating On-Track Research to Staff, Students, and Families

“Am I On Track?”

A student-friendly poster that describes the On-Track metric and provides students with clear criteria for evaluating their own On-Track status.

AM I ON TRACK?

“On Track” means you are performing in a manner that will allow you to graduate within four years

AFTER 1st semester

You are On Track if:

- You failed no more than one core course
AND
- you earned at least 3 credits

AFTER Freshman year

You are On Track if:

- You failed no more than 0.5 credits total in your core courses
AND
- you earned at least 5.0 credits

Core courses: Survey Literature, Algebra/Geometry, World Studies, Environmental Science, and Reading in Language Arts



Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

Contents

Annotated Bibliography of the UChicago Consortium's Research on the Transition to High School

Developing the Risk and Opportunity Framework

Purpose

The relationship between freshman course performance and high school graduation has been validated in schools, districts, cities, and states across America. Since the release of the [What Matters report](#), UChicago Consortium researchers have produced a plethora of new evidence on the transition to high school. This body of research is moving the field from mitigating course failure (just staying On Track) to supporting high levels of course performance for all students. Specifically, this means helping students increase their Grade Point Averages so they are ready for the rigors of college. Tool Set E provides educators with an understanding of how the work has evolved in Chicago since the development of the On-Track indicator.

How & When to Use

These tools can serve as reference guides when your school is ready to work on improving course performance more holistically. The Annotated Bibliography lists and summarizes the key research coming out of the UChicago Consortium on the transition to high school. It shows the scope of the work from 2005, when the relationship between On-Track and high graduation rates was identified, to the latest research in 2016. The *Developing the Risk and Opportunity Framework* slide deck describes how the research indicators and data analysis on freshman success evolved over time to become a more complex early warning indicator system.

The [Freshman Success Framework](#) is the foundation for effective school practice on On-Track and student success. The Network for College Success has seen the greatest and most sustainable gains for freshmen when schools develop high-functioning educator professional learning communities, which we call Success Teams.

This Tool Set focuses on the below actions of a Success Team stemming from the Freshman Success Framework.

Elements	Success Team
Setting Conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With principal and Team Lead, establishes foundational knowledge, sets purpose, and creates freshman success goals for On-Track and student connection
Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews incoming class performance data to develop early and targeted supports for students
Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages faculty in frequent communication on student progress and successful strategies

This Tool Set also highlights the actions stemming from the Framework for the Principal and Team Lead in support of the Success Team work.

Team Lead

- Setting Conditions: Acquires foundational knowledge on the importance of freshman course performance as well as tools and strategies to lead the Success Team
- Setting Conditions: With principal and Success Team, sets freshman success goals for On-Track and student connection, and develops benchmarks to monitor progress
- Implementation: Works with data technician to bring actionable student-level data at regular intervals

Principal

- Setting Conditions: Selects, programs, sets purpose, and provides foundational knowledge on freshman success work for core set of grade-level teachers
- Setting Conditions: Sets goals for On-Track and student connection with the Success Team and team leadership
- Implementation: Provides timely access to freshman success-related data, such as point-in-time On-Track data



Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

Annotated Bibliography of UChicago Consortium Research on the Transition to High School

Since the initial research on the On-Track metric, UChicago Consortium researchers have studied the transition to high school again and again to develop a large body of work on the critical nature of freshman year in Chicago Public Schools. This annotated bibliography provides an overview of the most important UChicago Consortium research over the past decade as well as how the findings push practice on the ground.

Annotated Bibliography of the UChicago Consortium Research on the Transition to High School

The On-Track Indicator as a Predictor of High School Graduation

JUNE, 2005

Elaine M. Allensworth and John Q. Easton

This research brief identifies the relationship between ninth grade course performance and high school graduation for the first time in UChicago Consortium research.

What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools

JULY, 2007

Elaine M. Allensworth and John Q. Easton

This report is the foundational text for On-Track work in Chicago. *What Matters* deepened researchers' and practitioners' understanding of the relationship between ninth grade and high school graduation by making connections between Freshman On-Track, absence rates, and the culture and climate of Chicago's high schools. The report also challenged the idea that students' academic skill level—as measured by achievement tests—was their biggest barrier to success in high school. Instead, the report suggested practitioners focus on boosting student attendance, increasing classroom engagement, and building stronger student-teacher relationships as strategies for increasing freshman course performance. Ultimately, the report hypothesized that supporting freshmen would lead to increased graduation rates.

What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools: A Focus on Students with Disabilities

DECEMBER, 2009

Julia Gwynne, Joy Lesnick, Holly Hart, and Elaine M. Allensworth

This report examines whether or not On-Track is an effective early warning indicator for students with disabilities in Chicago. The authors found that freshman year course performance—more than background characteristics such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, or prior achievement—predicts which students with disabilities are most at risk for dropping out of high school. This means that, while the work of keeping freshmen with disabilities On Track to Graduate may be difficult, it is still the right strategy for increasing graduation rates among this particularly vulnerable subgroup of students in Chicago Public Schools.

What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools: A Focus on English Language Learners

MAY, 2012

Julia Gwynne, Amber Stitzel Pareja, Stacy B. Ehrlich, and Elaine M. Allensworth

This report examines whether or not On-Track was an effective early warning indicator for English Language Learner (ELL) students in Chicago. The authors found that course performance indicators are highly predictive of graduation for ELL students. In fact, course performance is more predictive than other ELL-specific indicators, including English language proficiency level and whether students experienced interruptions in their education. This means that, while the work of keeping ELL students On Track to Graduate may be difficult, it is still the right strategy for increasing graduation rates among this particularly vulnerable sub-group of students in Chicago Public Schools.

Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance

JUNE, 2012

Camille A. Farrington, Melissa Roderick, Elaine M. Allensworth, Jenny Nagaoka, Tasha Seneca Keyes, David W. Johnson, and Nicole O. Beechum

This literature review was the beginning of a new line of work at the UChicago Consortium to understand noncognitive factors and how those factors shape students' success in school. Noncognitive factors can be habits and mindsets like belonging, academic perseverance, study habits, self-regulation, and many others. This work called attention to the idea that skills and habits can be shaped in schools, particularly in the classroom, and pushed educators to explicitly incorporate these factors into the ongoing work of teaching and learning. Noncognitive factors can offer practitioners a new way of seeing the On-Track work from a student's perspective and shed new light on freshman success. Rather than just focusing on student attendance and work, this review encourages educators to think about shaping students' mindsets as learners to make a successful transition into high school.

Preventable Failure: Improvements in Long-Term Outcomes When High Schools Focused on the Ninth Grade Year: Research Summary

APRIL, 2014

Melissa Roderick, Thomas Kelley-Kemple, David W. Johnson, and Nicole O. Beechum

What happens to graduation rates as On-Track rates rise? After many years of strong improvement in On-Track rates across Chicago's schools, UChicago Consortium researchers re-evaluated the relationship between the On-Track indicator and graduation. The authors found that schools that experienced substantial increases in On-Track rates also saw increases in graduation rates. In addition, On-Track increases paid off for all kinds of students in all kinds of schools, with African-American and Latino males—those who had the lowest On-Track rates to begin with—making the greatest gains. This research gave practitioners in Chicago confidence that the focus on ninth grade is the right focus for high school improvement.

Free to Fail or On-Track to College Series

SEPTEMBER, 2014

W. David Stevens, Elaine M. Allensworth, Amber Stitzel Pareja, Marisa de la Torre, Julia A. Gwynne, Todd Rosenkranz, and James Sebastian

This series comprises three short reports:

- An Introduction to the UChicago CCSR Research Series
- Why Grades Drop When Students Enter High School and What Adults Can Do About It
- Setting the Stage for Academic Challenge: Classroom Control and Student Support

The *Free to Fail or On-Track to College* series uses qualitative data from student interviews—in addition to the UChicago Consortium's quantitative data archive—to help illustrate new and ongoing challenges students face in the transition to high school. Among other important findings, this work identifies the enormous scope of talent loss between eighth and ninth grade in Chicago Public Schools, even among high-achieving students. These reports draw attention to the decrease in ninth grade course performance generally as well as the more specific problem of students who earn As and Bs in eighth grade but only Cs and Ds in ninth grade. Low course performance pushes students off the path to college readiness in the same way that course failure pushes students off the path to high school graduation.

Looking Forward to High School and College: Middle Grade Indicators of Readiness in Chicago Public Schools

NOVEMBER, 2014

Elaine M. Allensworth, Julia A. Gwynne, Paul Moore, and Marisa de la Torre

When released, this report helped Chicago practitioners make a shift from thinking about On-Track work as a way to mitigate course failure and increase high school graduation to envisioning a more holistic approach to supporting freshman success and ensuring that students are ready to succeed in college. UChicago Consortium researchers re-investigated the foundational relationship between students' academic performance in the middle grades and their performance in high school, and once again reinforced the importance of ninth grade as an inflection point in students' academic trajectories. The report also added important pieces of evidence to the body of research, such as the use of eighth grade attendance and GPA as indicators of high school readiness and the surprisingly low rate of academically talented eighth graders going on to earn B averages in high school. This research provides the evidence behind the "Risk and Opportunity" Framework that is now used by the Network for College Success and schools across the city as a robust early warning indicator system in the transition to high school.

Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework

JUNE, 2015

Jenny Nagaoka, Camille A. Farrington, Stacy B. Ehrlich, and Ryan D. Heath; with David W. Johnson, Sarah Dickson, Ashley Cureton Turner, Ashley Mayo, and Kathleen Hayes

Building off of the previously released literature review on noncognitive factors, this report provides a clear and detailed conceptual framework for supporting human development in schools and society-at-large from preschool to college. The Framework provides a developmental lens on how to best support students in the transition to high school. It also challenges high school educators to think about the extent to which we are developing *agency* and *integrated identity* in developmentally appropriate ways for adolescents, who have tremendously malleable mindsets and need special attention in the transition to high school.

High School Graduation Rates through Two Decades of District Change: The Influence of Policies, Data Records, and Demographic Shift

JUNE, 2016

Elaine M. Allensworth, Kaleen Healey, Julia A. Gwynne, and René Crespín

This report examines two decades of data on Chicago's rising graduation rates and parses out different reasons for those improvements. While some increases in high school graduation rates could be attributed to factors like increased student achievement in grades K-8 or changes in student demographics, the authors find that the biggest contribution are increases in ninth grade factors, like On-Track rates. The report also lays to rest concerns that Chicago's graduation rate may be inflated by artificial changes or factors outside the control of Chicago's high schools. It makes clear that authentic changes in course performance for Chicago's freshmen has been the primary driver of the 20 percentage point increase in high school graduation rates over the last decade.

The Network for College Success: A Capacity-Building Model for School Improvement

NOVEMBER, 2016

*Mary Ann Pitcher, Sarah J. Duncan, Jenny Nagaoka, Eliza Moeller, Latesha Dickerson,
and Nicole O. Beechum*

This model-capture paper uses qualitative data and a deep understanding of the Network for College Success approach to describe a comprehensive model for supporting freshman success work in a network of high schools. The paper accompanies the NCS Freshman On-Track Toolkit.



Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

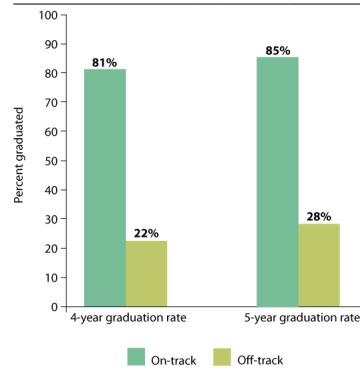
Developing the Risk and Opportunity Framework

This slide deck breaks down the data system that Chicago schools now use to monitor freshman success. As the On-Track work evolved, UChicago Consortium researchers and the Network for College Success collaborated to develop a broader data framework to guide improvement efforts. Called the Risk and Opportunity Framework, it now functions as a detailed early warning indicator system for monitoring freshman success in schools throughout Chicago. Adopting this new and more complex data system also helped practitioners move from improving On-Track rates to increasing freshman course performance to higher levels.

Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

Prior to 2014, the UChicago Consortium identified two crucial indicators for freshman success: On-Track and Bs or Better. On-Track is an early indicator of high school graduation. UChicago Consortium research shows that On-Track students are four times more likely to graduate from high school than their off-track peers.

Figure 2
Four- and Five-Year Graduation Rates by Whether On-Track at the End of the Freshman Year
Students entering high school in September 1999



Note: Students who dropped or transferred out of CPS before the end of the school year are not included in these calculations. If students who dropped out during their first year were included, the off-track graduation rates would be 20 percent (4-year) and 25 percent (5-year). The on-track rates would remain the same.

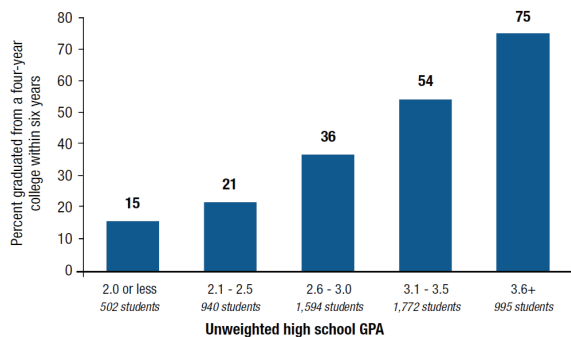


NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT



Bs or Better (meaning a student has a 3.0 GPA or better) is an important leading indicator of college readiness. In addition, students who earn above a 3.0 GPA in high school are more than 50% likely to graduate from college. Critically, high school GPA, not test scores, is the best predictor of college graduation.

REVISED FIGURE 3-4
College graduation rates by unweighted high school GPA



Note: These were CPS alumni who enrolled full time in a four-year college by spring following their high school graduation and enrolled in a college for which we have graduation information.



NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT



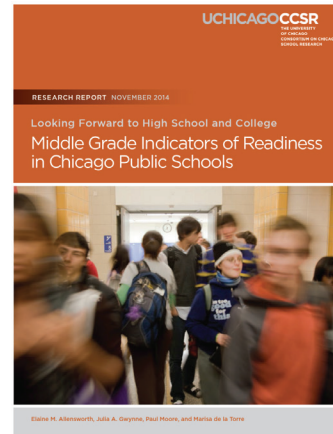
Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

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Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

In the summer of 2013, UChicago Consortium researchers began discussing the findings from the report, *Looking Forward to High School and College: Middle Grade Indicators of Readiness in Chicago Public Schools* with Network for College Success staff. This report included several critical pieces of new information around freshman year, including findings about talent loss among high-achieving students between 8th and 9th grade. UChicago Consortium researchers and Network for College Success staff began presenting these research findings and discussing their implications for practice at partner schools.



NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT



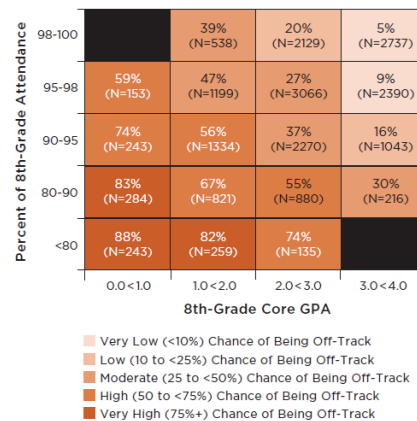
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Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

The “Looking Forward” report included this table for considering the likelihood of Freshman On-Track status (and a similar table for the likelihood of earning a 3.0 GPA), given 8th grade attendance and GPA.

FIGURE 15
Risk of Being Off-Track in Ninth Grade by Eighth-Grade Core GPA and Attendance



Note: Based on students who began ninth grade in the 2009-10 school year.



NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT

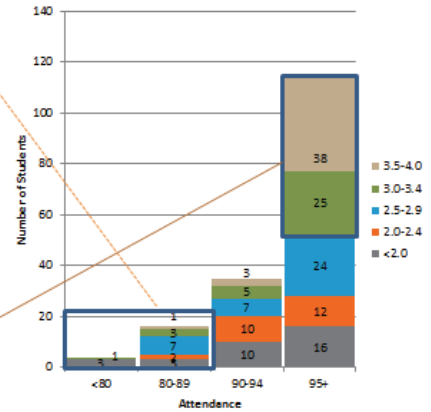


In the fall of 2013, with support from Network for College Success staff under a Federal School Improvement Grant, Hancock High School used this table to group incoming freshmen, pushing staff to support students to achieve “Bs or Better.”

8th Grade Attendance & GPA

Students arriving with attendance below 80% are extremely likely to dropout

Would we be doing a disservice if these 63 freshmen achieved anything lower than a B average?



Defining “Risk and Opportunity” for 9th Grade Success

Network for College Success Data Strategists and UChicago Consortium researchers turned the table from the “Looking Forward” report into the Risk and Opportunity Framework, a case management tool that schools could use with their real-time data.

		8th Grade Core GPA			
		0-1.0	1.0-2.0	2.0-3.0	3.0-4.0
8th Grade Attendance	≥ 98%			Opportunity	High Opportunity
	≥ 95%		Vulnerable		
	≥ 90%				
	≥ 80%	High Risk			
	<80%				

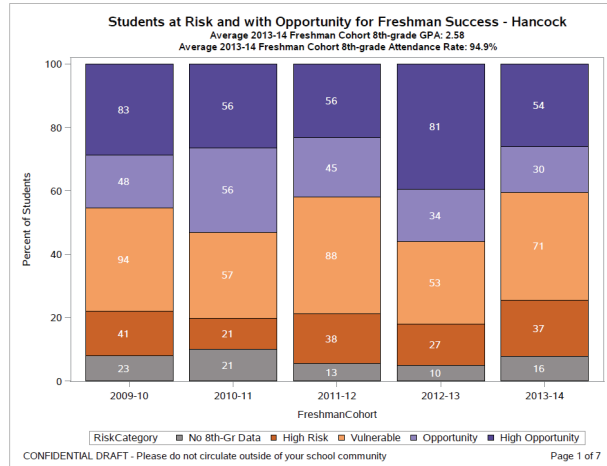


Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

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Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

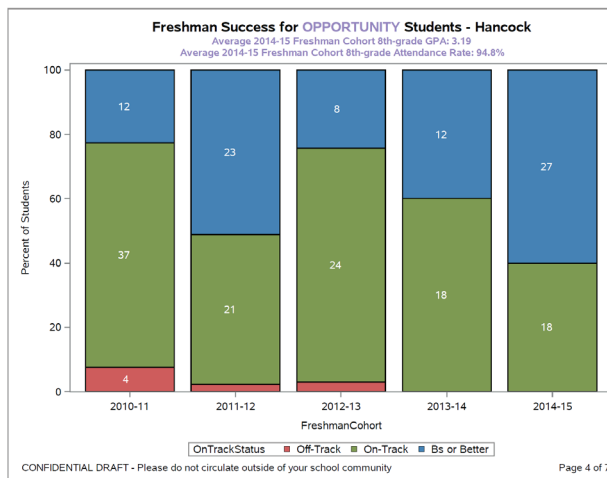
As schools like Hancock began to use the Risk and Opportunity Framework in real time, UChicago Consortium researchers designed reports to show trends within the various schools.



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Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

First distributed in the fall of 2014, the new trend reports included not just On-Track and off-track status, but a status category for “Bs or Better.”



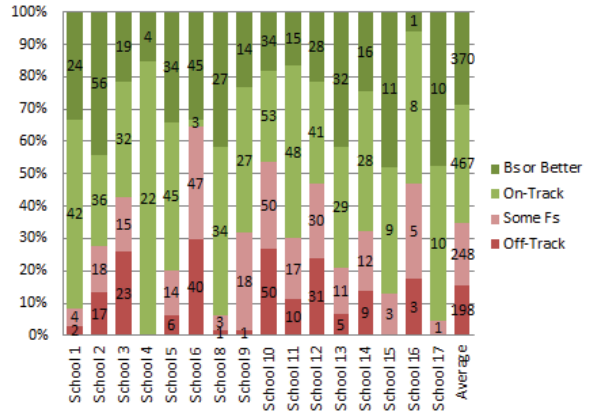
Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

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Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

Also in 2014, the Network for College Success began holding quarterly Performance Management sessions on freshman success for partner school leaders.

Overall Freshman Success for Vulnerable Students



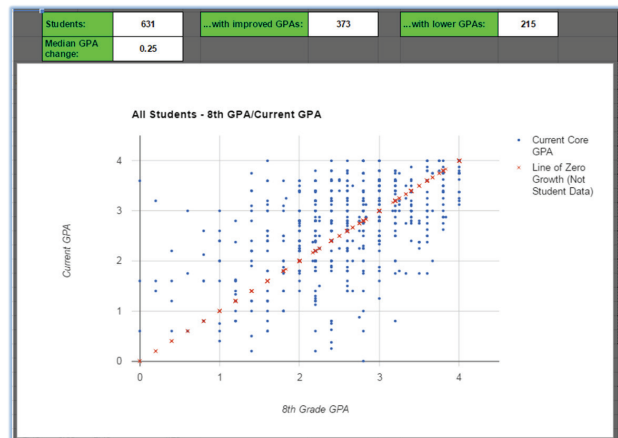
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Ongoing Research from the UChicago Consortium

Network for College Success Data Strategists built tools to be used in schools to manage freshman success data as well as guide practice and interventions between the Performance Management sessions.



Understanding Research & Applying Data
NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT



In school year 2015-16, the Network for College Success expanded quarterly Performance Management sessions to all 99 high schools in the city, serving an additional 350 educators.

Quarter 1 Freshman Success – Network 10-13 Schools

