

## The Second Window: How a Focus on Freshmen Transformed a System Discussion Guide

### Guiding Beliefs and School Cultural Conditions of Freshman Success Work

The [Freshman Success Framework](#) by the UChicago Network for College Success articulates the guiding beliefs and conditions for school culture that underpin the work of ninth grade success. Consider where you saw evidence of these beliefs and conditions in the schools represented in the film. Also consider where and how these ideas show up in your context.

Belief/Condition	How does this belief show up in this film?	How does this belief show up in your context?
Youth and adults can learn and achieve		
Developmental relationships with teachers are essential to student success		
High and future-minded expectations must be held for all students		
Opportunities for students to demonstrate success are varied and plentiful		
Data-informed decision making		
Develop capacity at all levels of the school		

## Quotes on the Impact of Freshman Success

“The Second Window” offered several key messages for the work of Freshman Success. We have highlighted a few quotes and understandings below to guide your thinking on the impact that Freshman Success work in Chicago and the implications for educator practice.

"The use of data has also been very critical in the growth that we've seen over the years as a school, and how we're looking at students, and providing supports for them. We are shooting to be very equitable in providing access to all of our students. We look at our data, and we see that there are some real gaps that are significant. We see gaps in GPAs between our boys and our girls: What does that mean about what we're doing, and how we're doing it?"

—Nora Gutierrez, Counseling Department Chair at North-Grand High School

- Data-informed decision making is a guiding belief of the NCS Freshman Success Framework. How do you use data for improvement and not accountability in your context?
- What role do you think data plays in the conversations about racial equity in education?

"I think that there is a perception that exists that 14-year-olds should function like mini adults and know how to study. That they should know how to carry themselves. That they should know how to articulate what they need. Some students are very great at that already by the time they come to high school. Many need some support in that area.”

—Emily Feltes-Maslanka, Principal of North-Grand High School

- Think back to your own ninth grade year. Who supported your transition into a new school environment?
- What support did you not get? What supports do you wish you had?

"I believe the most dangerous myth we have in education is that failing a student teaches them an important lesson. We know from our research here that when a student fails, they start to internalize negative stereotypes, negative narratives about themselves, that they don't oftentimes learn important lessons, that failure begets failure."

—Alex Seeskin, Director of To and Through Project at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute

- How does your school support students to see themselves as successful learners in a community?
- Take a critical eye towards your school, in what ways do you think the myth that failing students encourages them to work harder for success still shows up in your context?

"Since I have people who are actually counting on me now, like my momma, or Mr. Roberts, or any of my teachers, [Principal] Calloway, now that I have people who are actually trying to help me out, it's motivating me to actually do better and make them proud. So I've been trying to make them proud all this semester by getting all my work in. I got all my missing assignments in."

—Javeon, ninth grader at Kenwood Academy

- Think about a teacher or other adult who supported you in high school. What did they do that was so meaningful for your success?
- What did you previously think about teacher-student relationships and what do you think about them now?
- How do you create opportunities to elevate student voice and build stronger relationships in your context?

“What we have to think about is how do we look at every group of students who are entering into the building as a different set of young people who need our support. So we have to understand how they are coming to school? What do we need to understand and know about them? How might we need to shift again in service of them? And, if we do it in a way that is respectful—that we have trained our brains to think the best about everyone’s child—I think we have won half of the battle.”

—Dr. Maurice Swinney, Chief Equity Officer of Chicago Public Schools

- What does this quote mean for you in the skin that you are in?
- What would be different for students if all adults believed the best for everyone’s child?
- How would having high expectations for every child require you to show up differently as an educator?

### Resources:

[NCS Freshman On-Track Toolkit](#)

[UChicago Consortium’s The Predictive Power of Ninth Grade](#)

[UChicago Consortium’s What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago](#)

[UChicago To & Through Project Freshman Success Resources](#)

Created by the UChicago Network for College Success

