



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.

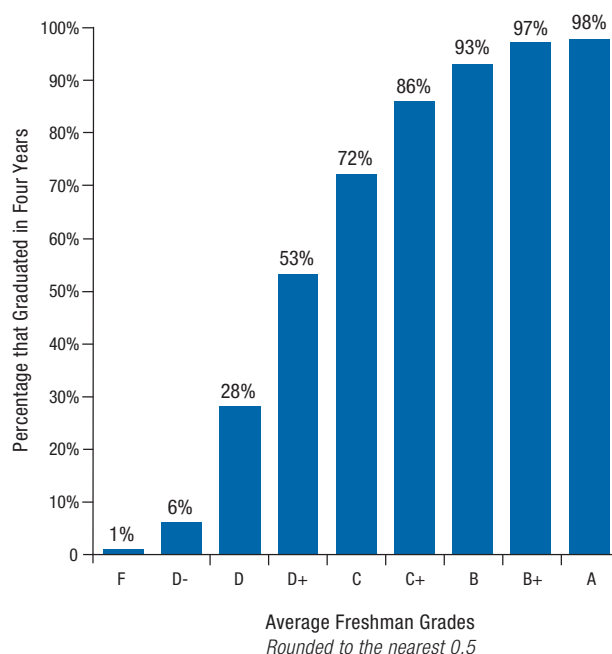
□ Here's what really matters far more than anything: **GRADES AND ATTENDANCE.**

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

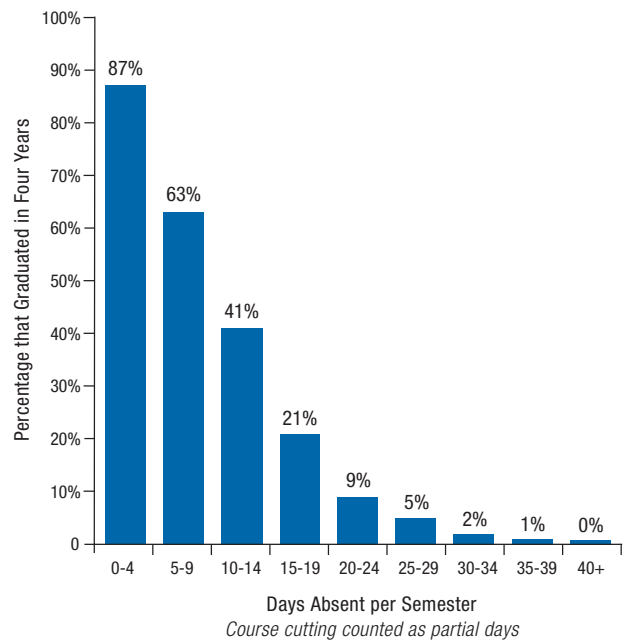


Grades and Attendance

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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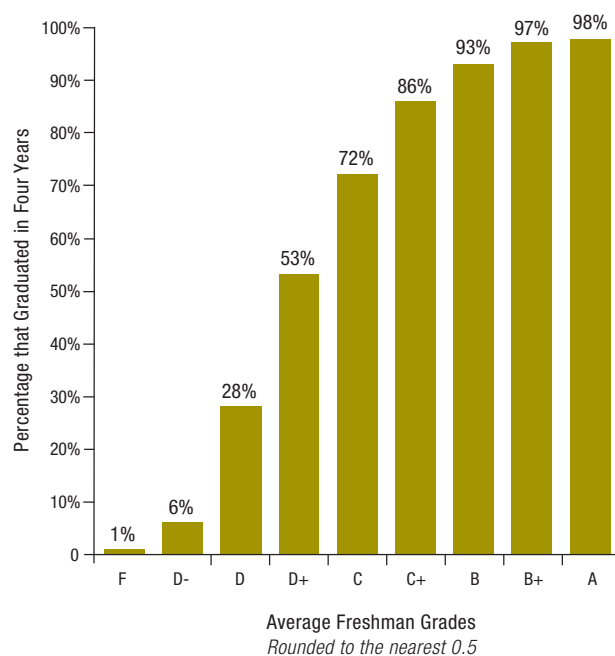
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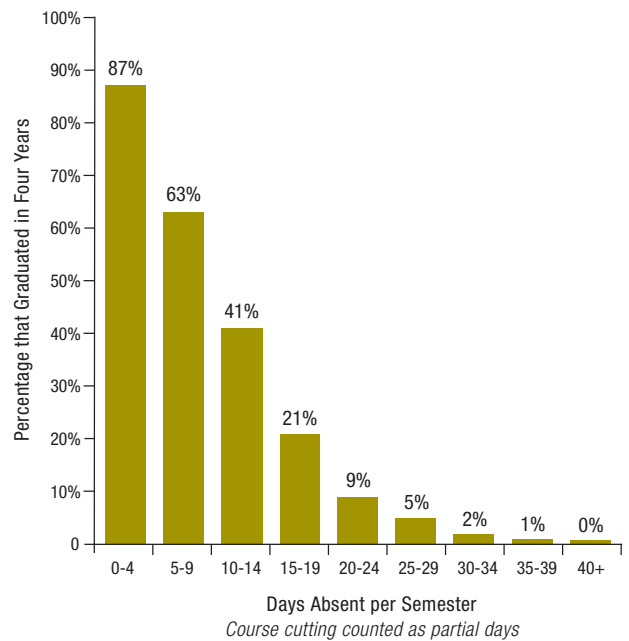


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- ✓ **Reinforce the importance of getting to school on time and not cutting classes.** Your teenager may think it doesn't matter to blow off the first or last class of the day, but it does. Even occasional skipping leads to dramatically lower grades. And it sends the wrong message to teachers about the desire to succeed.
- ✓ **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.



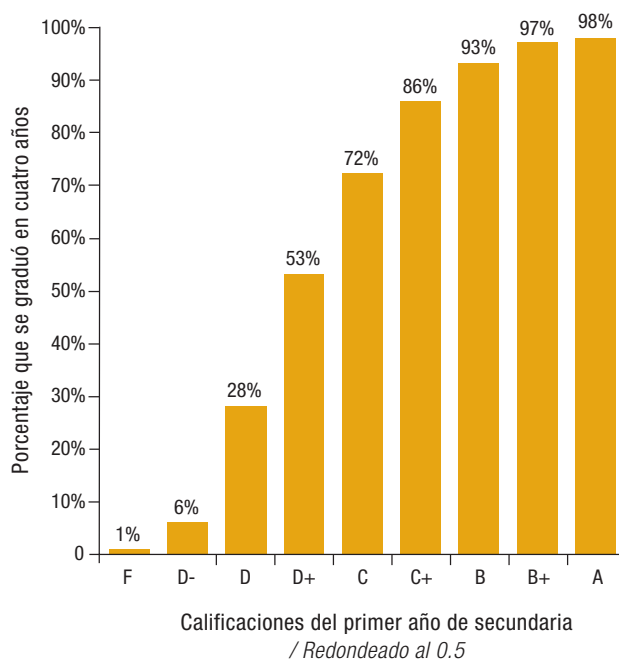
Esto es lo que realmente cuenta mucho más que cualquier otra cosa: **NOTAS Y ASISTENCIA ESCOLAR.**

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.

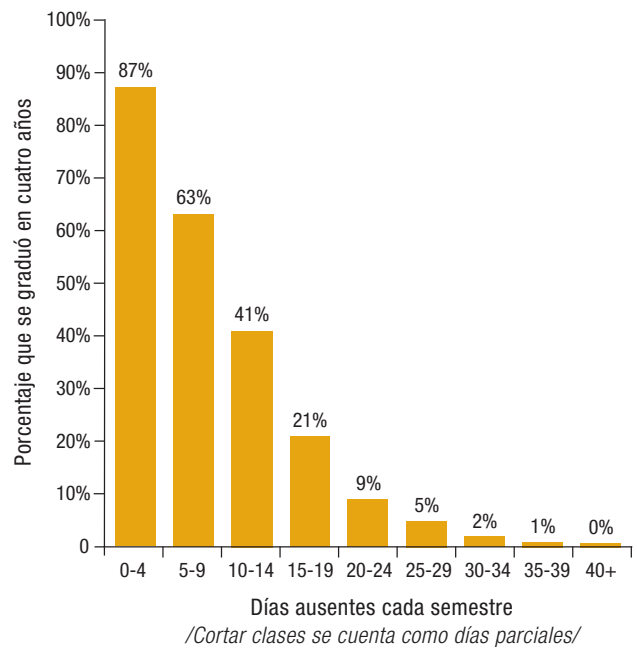
Calificaciones del primer año pronostican la graduación



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.