



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.

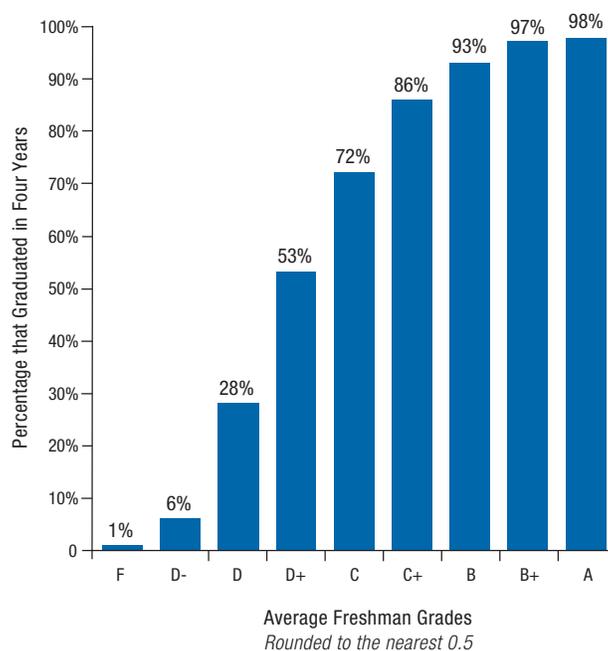
□ Here's what really matters far more than anything: **GRADES AND ATTENDANCE.**

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

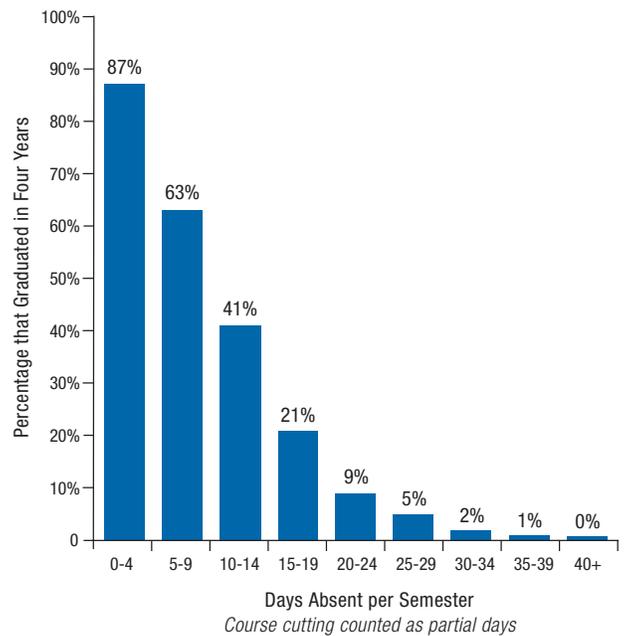


Grades and Attendance

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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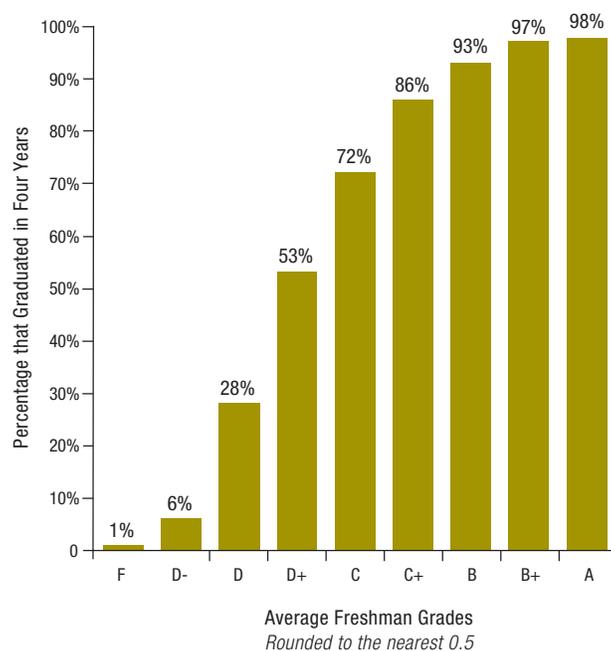
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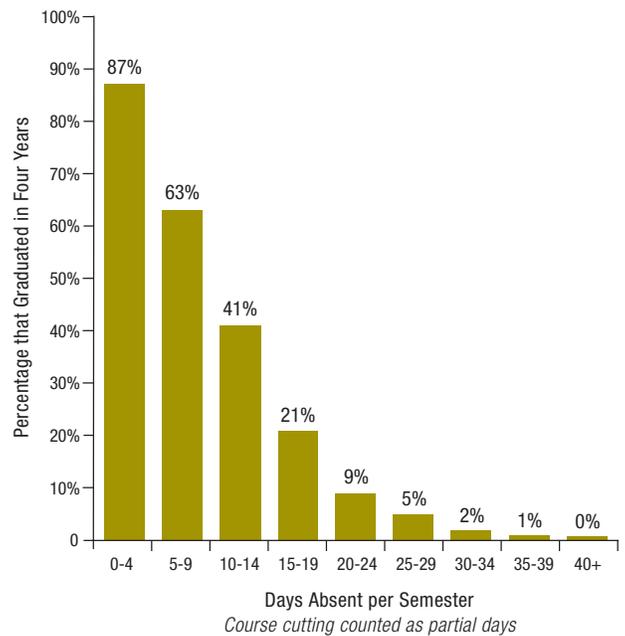


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- ✓ **Talk with your student's teachers** about how you can help your teen succeed, especially if you see his or her grades start to fall. Teachers should be helping struggling students, but sometimes it falls on freshmen (and their parents) to ask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



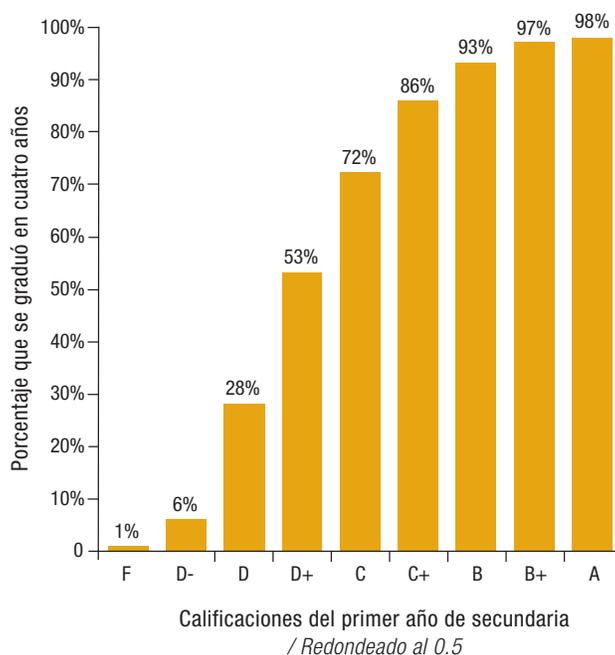
Esto es lo que realmente cuenta mucho más que cualquier otra cosa: **NOTAS Y ASISTENCIA ESCOLAR.**

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.

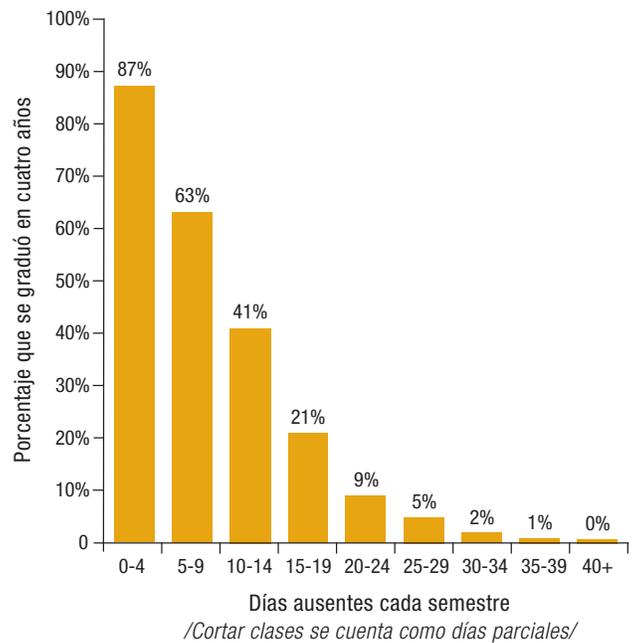
Calificaciones del primer año pronostican la graduación



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 como 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?

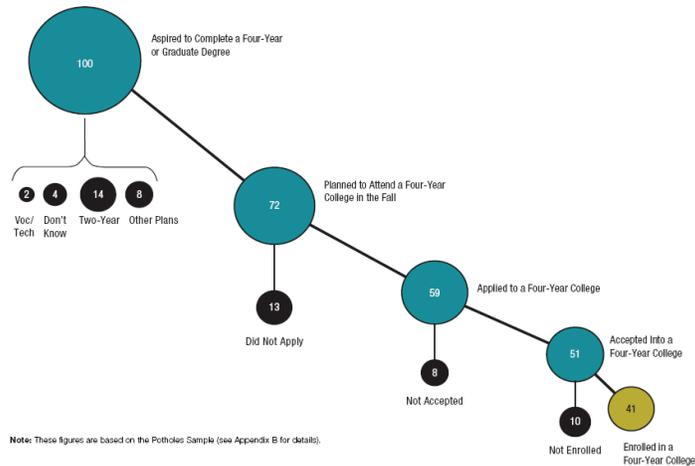
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TOOL SET

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

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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

TOOL SET

D

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)

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Did you know...

An “On-Track” freshman is

3.5 X
MORE LIKELY
TO GRADUATE IN 4 YEARS

than an off-track freshman.

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How do I stay On Track?

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

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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*	

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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?



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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

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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!!!

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TOOL SET

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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

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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.

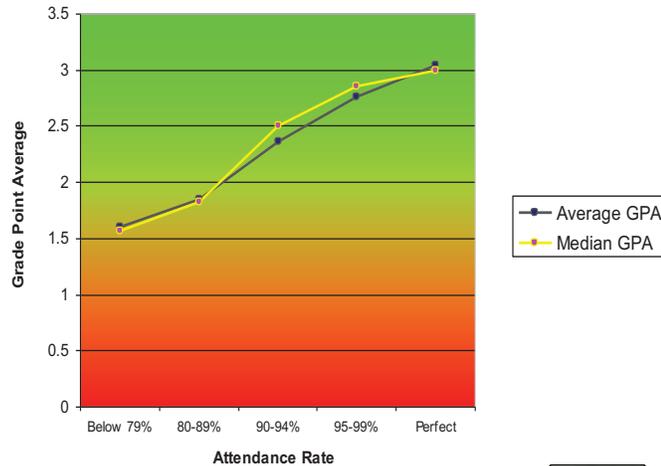
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TOOL SET

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



Understanding Research & Applying Data
NCS FRESHMAN ON-TRACK TOOLKIT

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

TOOL SET

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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?

TOOL SET

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Check Points

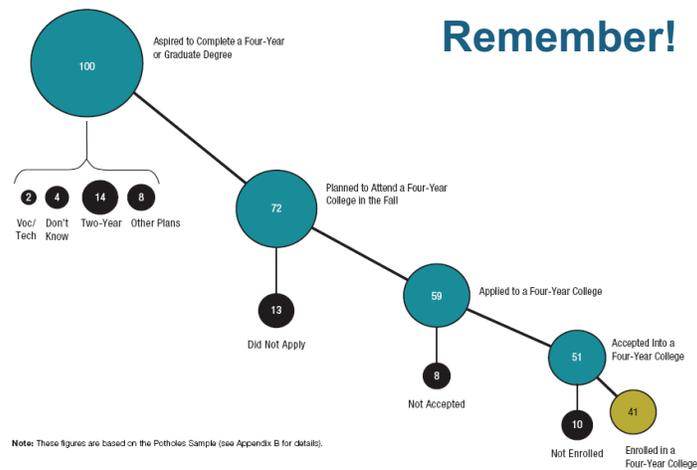
October 14	Progress Report 1
November 19	Report Card 1 (Pick-up)
December 16	Progress Report 2
February 3	Report Card 2
END OF 1 ST SEMESTER	
March 10	Progress Report 3
April 22	Report Card 3 (Pick-up)
May 19	Progress Report 4
June 18	Report Card 4
END OF 2 ND SEMESTER	

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:



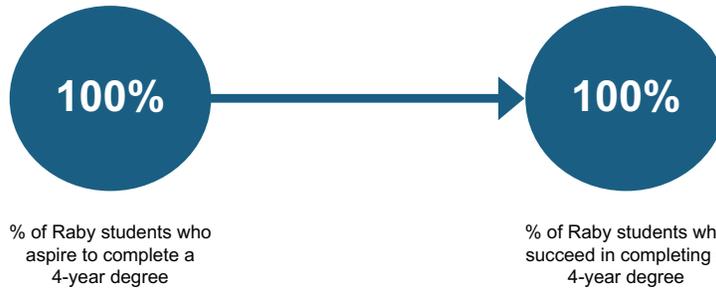
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All Raby's Goal!



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