



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 3, 2018

**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CPS ANNOUNCE RECORD HIGH GRADUATION RATE OF  
78.2 PERCENT**

*African American and Hispanic Males Drove Record High Graduation and Freshman OnTrack  
Rate of 89.4 Percent*

As Chicago students continue to earn national attention for their academic progress, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Public Schools announced today Chicago's students achieved another record high graduation rate, with 78.2 percent of students earning a diploma and the biggest improvements coming from African American and Hispanic males. The graduation rate has steadily risen over the past seven years, growing more than 21 percentage points since 2011, when just over half of CPS students earned a high school diploma.

Thanks to improvements among African American and Hispanic males, CPS' freshmen class also hit a record high Freshman OnTrack rate of 89.4 percent.

"Parents, principals, teachers, students and so many community groups have worked tremendously hard to push Chicago's graduation rate to new highs, and today is a day for everyone to acknowledge this record before we focus again on the work ahead of us," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Seeing African American and Hispanic males leading these improvements is a great step for our city, and an encouraging sign that our investments in every school in every neighborhood are paying dividends for Chicago's children."

"As educators, we will never rest until all our students succeed – and we will continue to set high expectations for all of them, along with celebrating our progress and reaching new milestones," said CPS CEO Dr. Janice K. Jackson. "I'm focused on equity and making sure that CPS leads the way nationally in helping minority students close the achievement gap that every district in the country is grappling with."

**Graduation Rate Facts**

- In 2011, the graduation rate was 56.9 percent. The new record rate of 78.2 percent represents a 37 percent improvement.

- African American and Hispanic males improved their graduation rates by 1.9 percentage points and 1.5 percentage points, respectively.
  - African American males had a 5-year graduation rate of 62.8 in the 2016-17 school year and a graduation rate of 64.7 in the 2017-18 school year.
  - Hispanic males had a 5-year graduation rate of 75.8 in the 2016-17 school year and a graduation rate of 77.3 in the 2017-18 school year.
- More than three-fourths of CPS students earned diplomas within five years, with 20,717 graduates in 2018.

### **Freshman OnTrack Facts**

- The Freshman OnTrack rate is one of the strongest graduation predictors.
- In 2011, the Freshman OnTrack rate was 69 percent, and today's record rate of 89.4 percent represents a nearly 30 percent improvement.
  - African American males and Hispanic males improved their Freshman OnTrack rates by 1.4 percentage points and 1.2 percentage points, respectively.
  - African American males had a Freshman OnTrack rate of 83.1 in the 2016-17 school year and a Freshman OnTrack rate of 84.5 in the 2017-18 school year.
  - Hispanic males had a Freshman OnTrack rate of 84.1 in the 2016-17 school year and a Freshman OnTrack rate of 85.3 in the 2017-18 school year.

Numerous academic researchers and education experts in Illinois and throughout the country have validated and praised Chicago's strong academic gains, including the graduation rate.

"The 2018 Freshman OnTrack and high school graduation rates released by CPS reinforce the positive trends we have seen in recent years and what research has told us about the relationship between ninth grade and high school success," said Tanika Island Childress, Interim Director of the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute. "That young men of color were the drivers of the most significant progress last year is especially encouraging and I hope this growth will persist into the future."

### **Building On Progress**

With more students than ever before graduating from CPS, the district is also working to ensure that students have access to the tools and resources needed to promote college readiness. This includes strategic investments in college-level coursework through the expansion of proven academic programs such as International Baccalaureate, STEM, AP, dual-credit and dual-enrollment. For example, since 2011, CPS has added access to more than 10,000 IB seats and 4,000 STEM seats in high schools throughout the city.

By setting high expectations for students to access the district's wide menu of college and career credentials while they are still in high school, CPS is providing more students with exposure to rigorous college-level courses, access to college credits, and the confidence

they need to succeed in higher education.

### **More on Freshman OnTrack**

The Freshman OnTrack rate is a research-based measurement that is the single best indicator of whether or not a student will graduate, and it has risen for the seventh year in a row – signaling that more CPS students are likely to graduate than ever before.

CPS' work on Freshman OnTrack interventions, in partnership with the University of Chicago's Consortium on School Research and the Network for College Success, is leading the nation in developing practices that help freshmen succeed. Freshman OnTrack is valuable not only for its predictive value, but also for its ability to identify and help students who need additional academic supports. With clear data, teachers and schools can provide additional support such as tutoring, mentoring and individualized progress monitoring to get students back on-track. With this strategy, more students are staying in school because educators and administrators have the data to identify hurdles to success early on.

As CPS continues to reach ever-higher levels of freshmen who are on track to graduate, the district will continue to work with its academic partners led by the University of Chicago to refine its approach to monitoring freshman progress and intervening to keep students on track.

**Background:** The raw number of CPS students graduating continues to rise:

- By summer 2018, 20,717 students from the 2013 cohort graduated
- By summer 2017, 20,525 students from the 2012 cohort graduated.
- By summer 2016, 20,438 students from the 2011 cohort graduated.
- By summer 2015, 20,316 students from the 2010 cohort graduated.
- By summer 2014, 20,232 students from the 2009 cohort graduated.
- By summer 2013, 19,906 students from the 2008 cohort graduated.
- By summer 2012, 18,577 students from the 2007 cohort graduated.
- By summer 2011, 18,446 students from the 2006 cohort graduated.

*Chicago Public Schools serves 371,000 students in 646 schools. It is the nation's third-largest school district.*

# # #