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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CHICAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS ON TRACK TO 82 PERCENT GRADUATION RATE

University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research Reports On-Track Graduation Rate Rises 25 Percent with CPS Strategy to Reducing Course Failure in Ninth Grade

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (UChicago CCSR) announced today that the Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) new targeted strategy to reduce course failure in the ninth grade has put CPS students on-track to achieve an 82 percent graduation rate, an increase of 25 percent from 2007. Since Mayor Emanuel took office in 2011, the CPS on-track graduation rate has risen 9 percent.

"Chicago Public School students are continually raising the standard of academic excellence," said Mayor Emanuel. "We must remain focused on successfully transitioning students from eighth to ninth grade to ensure all students from every neighborhood in Chicago are 100 percent college ready and 100 percent college bound."

UChicago CCSR previously reported that students who end their ninth grade year on-track are nearly four times more likely to graduate from high school than those who are off-track. Reducing course failure in the ninth grade is essential as both high- and low-achieving students have been found to struggle when they enter high school.

From expanding early childhood education to providing a full school day and full school year, Mayor Emanuel and CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett are committed to ensuring that students graduate from all of Chicago's high schools prepared for college. The City has also increased opportunities available at different school models, such as creating International Baccalaureate campuses and expanding selective enrollment to give parents and guardians more high-quality academic choices for their children.

"The freshmen on-track graduation rate is an encouraging sign of the progress our students are making with the support they receive from dedicated teachers, administrators and parents," said CPS CEO Byrd-Bennett. "This a testament to the work we've done to expand access to high-quality programs for students across the city, and we will continue to work hard on behalf of students in every neighborhood so that they are equipped with the tools they need to graduate. Last year the District realized a record-high graduation rate, and we continue to build on this momentum until every student graduates 100 percent college ready, and 100 percent college bound."

In 2012, Mayor Emanuel and CPS launched the Principal Quality Initiative (PQI), a comprehensive leadership development system to support the District's vision of providing every student in every neighborhood with an engaging, rigorous, well-rounded instructional program that will graduate them prepared for success in college, career and life. Local principals are responsible for selecting the most qualified teachers who are in touch with the needs of their students. The PQI continues to play an instrumental role in ensuring schools are keeping ninth grade students on-track while holding principals accountable.

In the report *Free to Fail or On-Track to College*, researchers looked at a diverse set of 20 Chicago Public High Schools. They determined that efforts to improve the academic performance of ninth grade students drove large improvements in graduation rates three years later. Freshman students are considered on-track if they complete at least ten semester credits, promoting them to the tenth grade and have no more than one failing grade per semester in a core course such as English, math, science or social studies.

Using data to monitor the level of CPS student dropout risk throughout the ninth grade year, teachers employed diverse strategies to intervene before students fell too far behind. CPS' goal was to match the type of intervention to the specific needs of the student and prevent a dramatic decline in grades and attendance that many CPS students experience when they transition to high school. Teachers used interventions such as calls home when students missed class, algebra tutoring, and homework assistance.

UChicago CCSR also released a second report entitled *Preventable Failure: Improvements in Long-Term Outcomes when High Schools Focused on the Ninth Grade Year*. This report showed that improvements in ninth grade on-track rates were sustained at tenth and eleventh grade and followed by a large increase in graduation rates. Within this same research, UChicago CCSR found that improvements in on-track status were accompanied by grade improvements at all ends of the achievement spectrum.

A copy of *Free to Fail or On-Track to College* can be found [here](#).

A copy of *Preventable Failure: Improvements in Long-Term Outcomes when High Schools Focused on the Ninth Grade Year* can be found [here](#).

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