



## Consortium on Chicago School Research

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### Dropout Rates in the Chicago Public Schools

The Consortium on Chicago School Research (Consortium) is adopting a new method of calculating dropout rates. The Consortium developed this method to provide accurate and comparable measurement of dropout rates in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) over time. The new method takes account of the impact of policy changes (in particular, the 1996 elementary student promotion policy) that can make it difficult to determine whether CPS dropout rates are declining or rising when other methods are used.

A new report, *Calculating a Cohort Dropout Rate for the Chicago Public Schools: A Technical Research Report*, explains why and describes how the Consortium calculates cohort dropout rates. This calculation follows students from the time they were 13 years old until they are 19 years old. Using the best data available and the method we think most appropriate, **the Consortium finds that cohort dropout rates have declined very slightly between 1997 and 2000, from 44.3 percent to 41.8 percent.** (By the fall of 2000, 41.8 percent of the 1994 Cohort had dropped out of school. This compares with a dropout rate of 42.9 percent for the 1993 Cohort, 43.6 percent for the 1992 Cohort, and 44.3 percent for the 1991 Cohort.)

Our report presents the results of different methods of calculation. Depending on the method, the results differ by several percentage points. Regardless of the specific method and data used, the **trends** in dropout rates are either declining slightly or they are flat. No method shows an upward trend.

The full impact of the CPS policy on ending social promotion on dropout rates will not be known for some time. A full six years has not elapsed for most students affected by the policy. Preliminary data (not for the full six years) show no clear trend of either increasing or decreasing rates among students affected by the policy.

#### Notes to Editors

The Consortium on Chicago School Research is an independent federation of Chicago area organizations that conducts research on ways to improve Chicago's public schools and assess the progress of school improvement and reform. The Consortium's reports present research findings; the Consortium does not argue particular policy positions.

*Calculating a Cohort Dropout Rate for the Chicago Public Schools: A Technical Research Report* by Elaine Allensworth and John Q. Easton is available on the Consortium's Web site at [www.consortium-chicago.org](http://www.consortium-chicago.org). This report reflects the interpretations of the authors. Although the Consortium's Steering Committee provided technical advice, no formal endorsement by these individuals, their organizations, or the full Consortium should be assumed.