

Consortium on Chicago School Research

Press Release

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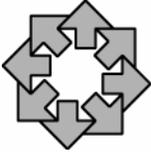
Contacts: William Harms, University of Chicago News Office
(773) 702-8356, Fax (773) 702-8324
w-harms@uchicago.edu

Lura Forcum, Consortium on Chicago School Research
(773) 834-8036, Fax (773) 702-2010
lura@uchicago.edu

Report: Graduation and dropout rates in Chicago Public Schools are improving, but remain very poor

Although graduation rates in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have been improving steadily since the early 1990s, a new study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago shows that the rates are lower than many people realize and that gaps have grown larger between the graduation rates of African-American students and other groups of CPS students.

- Graduation rates have been improving steadily since the early 1990s, with the exception of the first two cohorts of students subject to the eighth-grade promotion standards. Dropout rates at age 16 have been declining steadily for the last five years, which suggests that graduation rates will continue to improve for the next several years.
- Only 54 percent of CPS students who were 13 years old in 1998 graduated from CPS by age 19 in 2004. Similarly, only 54 percent of entering CPS freshmen in 1999 graduated four years later in 2003.
- African-American boys are the least likely to graduate from CPS: only 39 percent graduate by age 19, compared to 51 percent of Latino boys, 58 percent of white boys, and 76 percent of Asian boys.
- Girls have much higher graduation rates: 57 percent of African-American girls graduate by age 19, compared to 65 percent of Latino girls, 71 percent of white girls, and 85 percent of Asian girls.
- There are large differences in graduation rates across schools in Chicago. Many of the new charter and magnet schools show exceptionally high graduation rates.



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CPS calculates its graduation and dropout rates using formulas established by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). According to these formulas, 69.8 percent of CPS students who began high school in 1999 graduated in 2003. ISBE's method produces a much higher graduation rate than the Consortium's method because ISBE's method estimates the rate using easy-to-collect counts of students while the Consortium's method examines the records of all CPS students. Our report finds that the ISBE and CPI methods are flawed when there are large numbers of student transfers and large numbers of students repeating grades, as is the case in CPS.

“This report continues the Consortium's interest in providing the most accurate and fair depiction of trends in student performance and attainment in Chicago public schools,” noted the Consortium's Executive Director, John Q. Easton.

Graduation and Dropout Trends in Chicago, written by Consortium researcher Elaine Allensworth, includes graduation and dropout rates broken down by race/ethnicity and gender, community area, and high school. Extensive tables and graphs present detailed information about graduation and dropout rates from a number of viewpoints, providing the most nuanced and complete picture currently available of graduation and dropout rates in Chicago public schools.

This report can be downloaded or ordered from the Consortium's web site. Additional information about the Consortium, its previous publications, and its current research is also available at www.consortium-chicago.org.

The Consortium on Chicago School Research aims to conduct research of high technical quality that can inform and assess policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools. By broadly engaging local leadership in our work, and presenting our findings to diverse audiences, we seek to expand communication between researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The Consortium encourages the use of research in policy action, but does not argue for particular policies or programs. Rather, we believe that good policy is most likely to result from a genuine competition of ideas informed by the best evidence that can be obtained.