



Seizing the Opportunity to Advance Education Equity



DATA INSIGHTS FROM CHICAGO'S
OPTIONS SCHOOL STUDENTS

JUNE 2021

**SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY
TO ADVANCE EDUCATION EQUITY**

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The Education Lab is grateful to Chicago Public Schools, the Youth Connection Charter School Network, Ombudsman, Excel Academies, and the Chicago Student Success Initiative team for their partnership, hard work, and dedication.

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Introduction



Over the past decade, we have made great strides in improving the graduation rate for public school students in Chicago and nationally. And yet we know these gains are not equitably distributed across all students. In 2011, despite experiencing a 20% gain in graduation rates in the decade prior,¹ Chicago was faced with accounting for roughly 60,000 students ages 13-21 living in the city who had dropped out of school — a disproportionate number of whom were low-income youth and students of color.²

The barriers many of these students face to obtaining a high school diploma have not, to date, been addressed using traditional approaches.³ And the past year of unprecedented crises has exacerbated many of the challenges young people are facing. There has been no shortage of calls to “reimagine public education” in the wake of COVID-19, but for the majority of students, going back to business as usual will meet their needs. However, for the approximately 20% of high school students who are still not completing their high school education, our schools and school systems must rethink their approach.

Through the University of Chicago Education Lab's partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and local Options Schools providers, we have spent the last five years working with the schools that disproportionately serve these students in Chicago. Our collaboration to better understand students who enroll in Options Schools and their experiences has revealed an important insight: tremendous variability exists among the barriers students face to completing an education and so identifying students' needs more precisely and providing them personalized supports — systematically and at scale — are key to helping them succeed.

That insight is not just important for helping Options students succeed; it is important to all students at risk of disengaging from school in Chicago and districts across the country. Contrary to popular belief, our current educational system has done a remarkably good job getting the vast majority of students — over 80% — to graduate from high school; as a result, the U.S. has one of the highest educational attainment rates in the world.⁴ But for students who are not yet benefitting from this progress, our current approaches offer too blunt an instrument to address individual student needs.

The first step toward providing students individualized supports is using data to better identify which students face barriers, what those barriers are, and how those students move through the school system. In sharing this analysis, we hope to begin to do that for Chicago. Despite the fact that approximately 10,000 students attend an Options School during an academic year — three times as many students as Chicago's prestigious selective enrollment schools — little has been written about the Options

School experience. Here, we hope to establish a baseline set of facts about the expansion of these schools within the CPS system and the trajectories of the students who attend them.

What we find is that Options students face extraordinarily high rates of barriers to completing an education, including high rates of homelessness and violence victimization. Importantly, however, these aggregated data mask a high degree of variability in what individual students need and experience. If we are able to more readily and systematically identify students' needs and match them with appropriate services, we think they could be better supported. We also know that any attempt to address disparities in student outcomes must include both Options Schools and their neighborhood counterparts, as there are students with similar experiences in neighborhood, or mainstream, district-run high schools as well as Options Schools. These findings have important implications for achieving equitable outcomes for Options students within the district, a goal highlighted in CPS's five-year strategic plan.⁵

Through this work, we have built a coalition of district administrators, school practitioners, Options School providers, principals, and community and philanthropic partners to raise the profile of students who attend Options Schools and other students like them in neighborhood schools. The work has not been easy and at times has laid bare the painful and systemic failures of our citywide institutions to support all children to reach their full potential. But we remain committed and hopeful that we can work together to understand how best to support all students to build a thriving city for all Chicagoans.

The Expansion of Options Schools

In Chicago Public Schools, one major response to engage students who were not graduating from high school was to expand access to alternative schools, or, as they are called in CPS, Options Schools. These alternative schools were originally designed to serve students for whom the traditional or mainstream school system was not working. Many Options Schools were created to provide flexible scheduling for students who were also parents, expectant mothers, or students with financial responsibilities. Options Schools also aimed to provide continuous enrollment cycles, culturally responsive schooling environments, and credit recovery for students who had too few credits to graduate from a traditional high school.⁶

Between 2011 and 2016, CPS expanded the number of Options Schools from 9 to 48 schools. Currently, there are 39 Options Schools operating in CPS. In contrast to this expansion, the number of non-Options CPS high schools has remained relatively stable since 2011, at around 150 high schools.

The number of students attending Options Schools has increased in parallel to the number of Options Schools. Figure 1 below shows the number of students who attended an Options School each year from SY2009 to SY2020.

FIGURE 1

Number of students attending an Options School each year SY2009-2020



DATA SOURCE: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

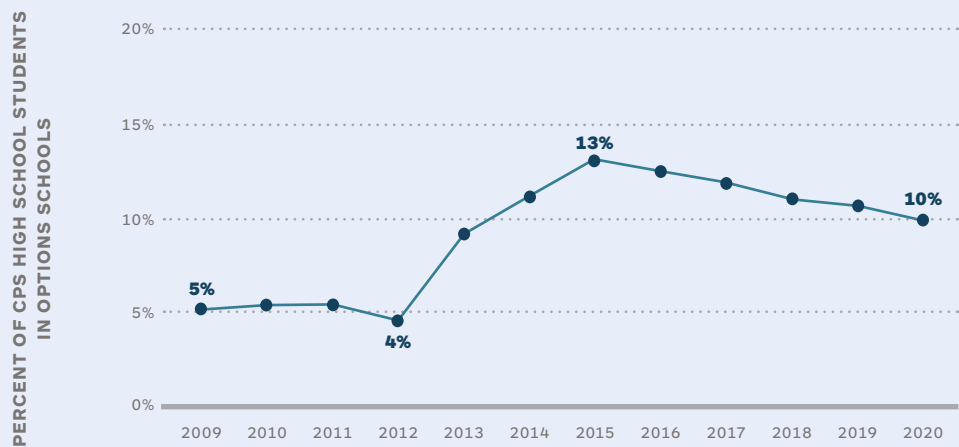
Notes: Attendance is defined as attending a CPS Options School for at least one day in a given school year.

The increase in Options School enrollment is particularly notable given that overall CPS enrollment has consistently declined in recent years.⁷ Therefore, the share of CPS students who attended Options Schools has also increased over this same time period. Figure 2 below tracks this increase by presenting the percent of total CPS high school students attending an Option School each year from SY2009 to SY2020. In SY2020, Options students made up 10% of CPS high school students, or 1 in 10 of all high school students in the district.

FIGURE 2

Percent of total CPS high school population attending an Options School each year

SY2009-2020



DATA SOURCE: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Notes: Percent of CPS high school students in Options Schools is calculated by dividing the number of students who attended a CPS Options School each school year by the total number of students enrolled in CPS high schools that year. Attendance in an Options School is defined as attending a CPS Options School for at least one day in a given school year.

Once an Options School Student, Always an Options School Student

CPS data shows that once a student attends an Options School, they likely stay there: 93% of students who attend an Options School for at least one day never return to a non-Options CPS school.⁸

Options School Students Face Many Barriers to Graduating Compared to Their Peers

In order to best support Options School students, we first need to understand their educational and life experiences. On average, Options students have more risk factors and fewer protective factors than other CPS students.

As presented in Figure 3, Options School students are more likely than non-Options School students to live in low-income households (84% vs. 76%, as measured by their Free and Reduced Lunch status), experience homelessness (21% vs. 4%), have individualized education plans (IEPs) (21% vs. 16%), have experienced serious school disciplinary incidents in the past year (13% vs. 5%), have been previously victimized in a crime (38% vs. 12%), and have at least one prior arrest recorded in Chicago Police Department data (38% vs. 3%). High school students who attend Options Schools are also more likely to be male (58% vs. 50%) and Black (60% vs. 35%) and, on average, older than their non-Options peers. Options students are much more likely to transfer schools at least once during high school, though this is primarily mechanical: by definition almost all Options School students transfer at least once, into an Options School.⁹

FIGURE 3

Comparison of student characteristics for students attending Options Schools and non-Options schools SY2019



DATA SOURCES: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Notes: Students are considered an Options student if they attended an Options School for at least one day during SY2019 and are considered a non-Options student if they never attended an Options School during SY2019. Age, FRL-eligible, homeless (Students in a Temporary Living Situation) status, and IEP status are taken from CPS SY2019 data. L4-L6 disciplinary infractions data uses CPS data from SY2018. For the purposes of this graph, race and ethnicity are categorized into four mutually exclusive groups: non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and Other. Gender is categorized into two mutually exclusive groups: Male and Female. Transfer count is restricted to a student's 9th grade, day 20 school and any subsequent schools they attended at least one day. Verified and unverified transfers out of CPS count towards a student's transfer count.¹⁰ Arrest and victimization records are derived from CPD administrative data. Note that York and Jefferson (schools in the Cook County Jail and the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center) are Options Schools, but they are excluded from this analysis to avoid mechanically increasing the percent ever arrested. Enrollments at both York and Jefferson are removed from the data, but students who attend either school plus a CPS or any of the other Option Schools remain in the sample.

Options School Students are More Likely to Come from Small Neighborhood High Schools

One way to understand student trajectories through the school system is to understand what schools they attend before they attend Options Schools. In fact, we see that a relatively small proportion of non-Options high schools comprise a relatively large proportion of the students who transfer to Options Schools during each school year. Table 1 below shows, for instance, that 25% of all Options students attended just 10 non-Options high schools right before their transfer to an Options School.

TABLE 1

Proportion of Options Students from neighborhood “feeder” schools

SY2019

	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENT OF NEW OPTIONS STUDENTS
Students who transferred from non-Options to Options Schools during SY2019	3,111	100%
Top 10 feeder schools (7% of all CPS high schools)	782	25%
Top 20 feeder schools (14% of all CPS high schools)	1,246	40%

DATA SOURCE: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Notes: This table includes all students who transferred from a non-Options CPS school to an Options School (defined as attendance for at least one day) during SY2019. Students who were already enrolled in an Options School or transferred before the start of the school year or after the end of the school year are excluded from this analysis. We define a student’s “feeder” school as the last CPS school they were enrolled in prior to their attendance in an Options School.

We see from Figure 3 that Options students, by definition, have higher transfer rates than their peers who never attend an Options School. The high schools from which Options students originate tend to be small neighborhood schools located on the South and West sides of Chicago, which are also where many Options Schools are located (see Appendix C for a map of Options School locations). At the average CPS high school, 4% of the student population transferred to an Options School over the course of SY2019. Of the 24 designated CPS “small schools” in SY2019, on average, 7.2% of the student body transferred to an Options School over the course of the school year.¹¹ There is, however, a lot of variation across schools in how many students they “send” to Options Schools each year. Some small schools enroll very few students who later transfer to Options Schools (the school with the smallest proportion of students transferring had just one student transfer), while some small schools have a much greater proportion of their student body transferring to Options Schools during the school year. For example, the school with the greatest proportion of its students transferring saw 16% of its student population subsequently enroll in Options Schools in SY2019. In addition, some larger neighborhood schools send large numbers of students to Options Schools each year, but their large enrollments mean the proportion of their student body that transfers is smaller.

Anecdotally, we know that there are some “push” factors that contribute to a student leaving their non-Options school for an Options School (e.g., the possibility of not graduating, not getting along with teachers or school administrators, not getting along with other students, safety reasons) as well as “pull” factors that attract students to Options Schools (e.g., more flexible scheduling options, faster-paced credit recovery). However, we do not have a full understanding of why students transfer to Options Schools; this is an area where future research is needed. What is clear is that the expansion of Options Schools has changed the landscape of schooling on the South and West sides of Chicago in ways that impact student experiences and opportunities.

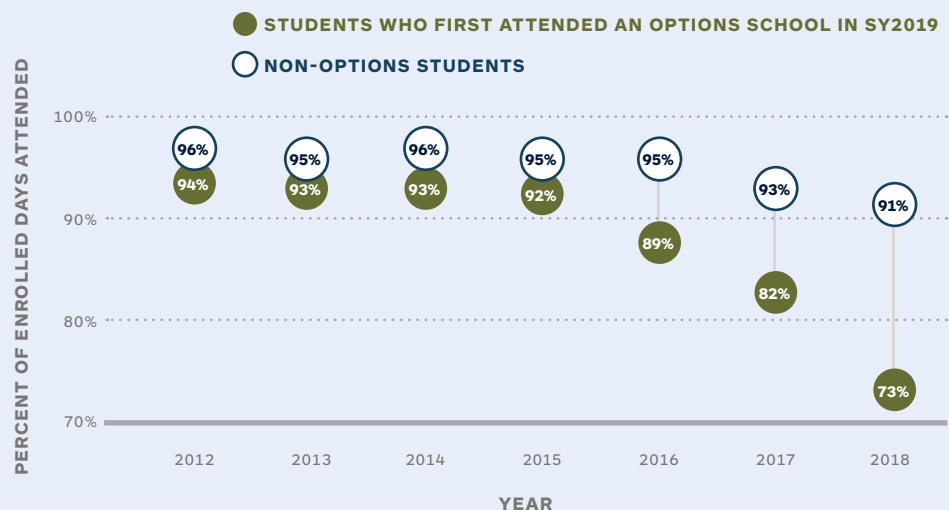
Options Students Demonstrate Different Behavioral Patterns Prior to Enrolling

It is clear that Options Schools serve a population of students with different life experiences than students served by non-Options Chicago Public Schools (CPS high schools. What we can also see in the data, though, is that over time, the differences between these two groups of students are more subtle and nuanced than these stark averages, especially when we look at specific behaviors like attendance. Figure 4 below shows trends in attendance for students prior to attending their first Options School in SY2019.

On average, four years prior to enrolling in an Options School, Options students' attendance rates are nearly equal to those of other CPS high school students. They only begin to deviate from the CPS average in the three years before a student enrolls in an Options School. This suggests that there is an encouraging foundation of school engagement to build on. It also suggests that disengagement is a process; the institutional factors related to this disengagement are important to further explore so that more supports might be provided further "upstream" in a student's educational career.

FIGURE 4

Prior attendance trajectories of students who first attend an Options School in SY2019 compared to non-Options student attendance trends



DATA SOURCE: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

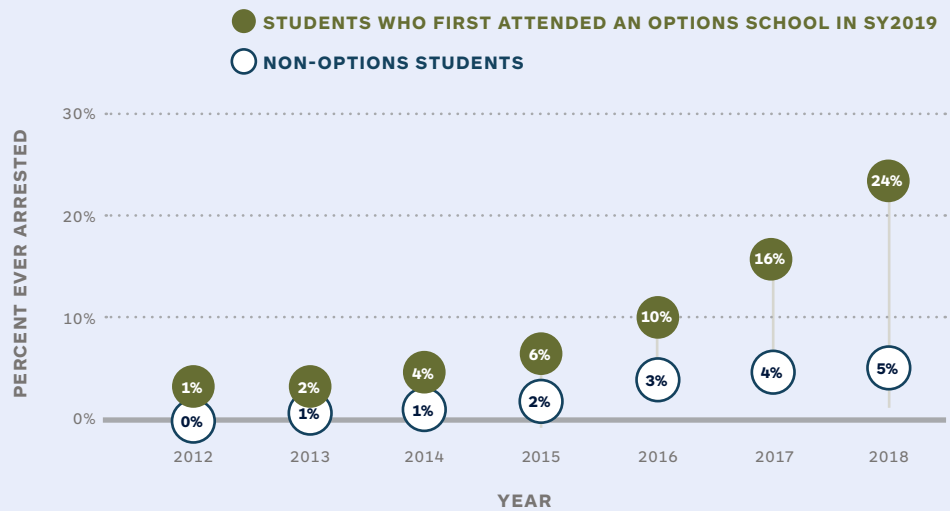
Students are included in the green dots as "first attended an Options School in SY2019" if they attended an Options School for at least one day during SY2019 and had not attended an Options School in any year prior. Students are included in the white dots as "non-Options students" if they were at least in 9th grade by SY2019 but had never attended an Options School prior to or during SY2019. This figure shows prior CPS attendance trends, as measured by percent of member days a student attended school. "Member days" is the CPS term for the days that a student is enrolled in CPS; this graph shows the proportion of their own member days a student attended. We removed students from a year if we did not have member or attendance information for that year.

The other place we see a similar trend in differentiation from non-Options peers is in arrest trends prior to Options School attendance. Figure 5 below shows the prior arrest trends of students who start attending an Options School in SY2019.

In this figure, we see that Options School students are much more likely, on average, to have experienced an arrest in the years prior to enrollment in Options Schools. Similar to their prior trends in attendance, however, they only begin to deviate from their non-Options peers three years prior to enrollment in an Options School.

FIGURE 5

Prior arrest trends of students who first attend an Options School in SY2019 compared to non-Options student arrest trends

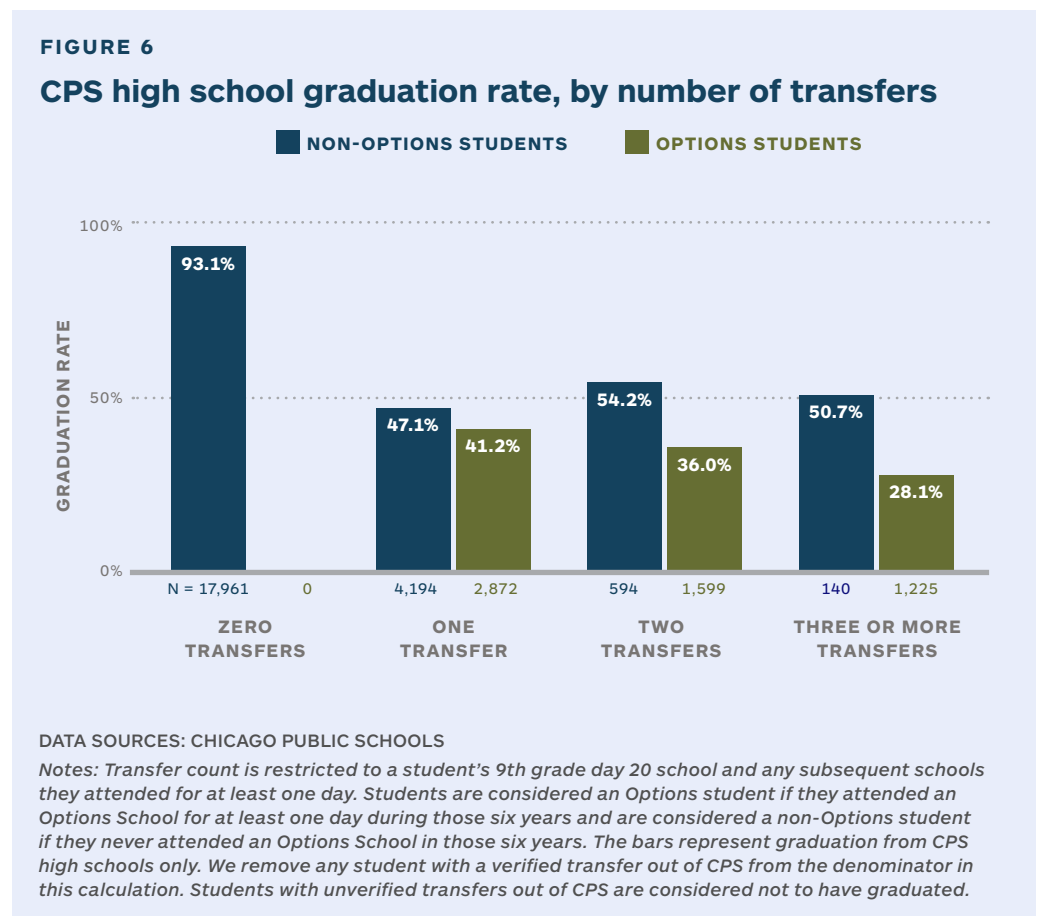


DATA SOURCES: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Notes: Students are included in the green dots as “first attended an Options School in SY2019” if they attended an Options School for at least one day during SY2019 and had not attended an Options School in any year prior. Students are included in the white dots as “non-Options students” if they were in at least 9th grade by SY2019 but had never attended an Options School prior to or during SY2019. This figure shows prior CPD arrest trends for students who first attended an Options School in SY2019. Note that York and Jefferson (schools in the Cook County Jail and the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center) are Options Schools, but they are excluded from this analysis to avoid mechanically increasing the percent ever arrested. Enrollments at both York and Jefferson are removed from the data, but students who attend either school plus a CPS or any of the other Option Schools remain in the sample.

Options Schools Students Have High Rates of Mobility, Which are Associated with a Lower Likelihood of Graduating

As shown in Figure 3, the vast majority of the students who attend Options Schools have transferred at least once. While students who attend Options Schools are more likely to transfer more times than their peers who never enroll in an Options School, we see that transferring even once is associated with a lower likelihood of graduating. Figure 6 below shows graduation rates from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) for CPS 9th graders in SY2014 as a function of the number of times they transfer during high school, comparing those who ever enroll in an Options School with those who never enroll in an Options School.



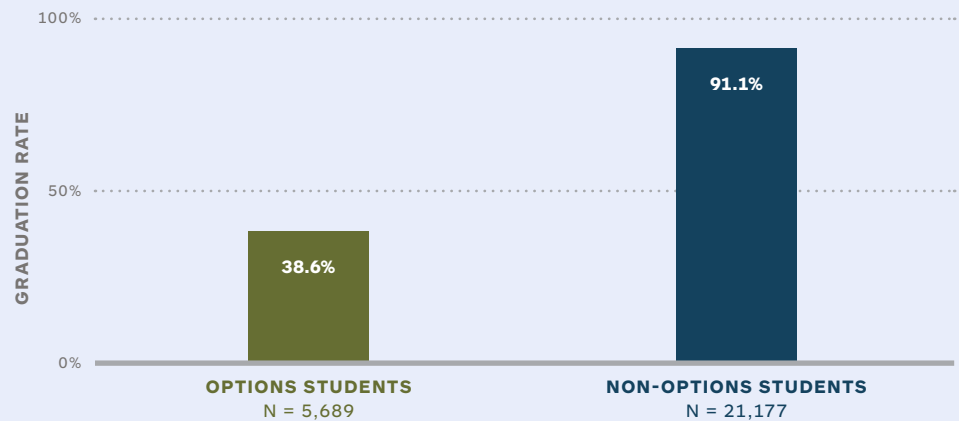
As one can see from the figure, the graduation rate from CPS for students who never transfer is above 93% (the zero transfer column, blue bar), whereas the rate for students who transfer even once during high school is half of that. This figure indicates that even one transfer is associated with a lower graduation rate and that this “transfer penalty” is present for students who enroll in Options Schools and, to a lesser extent, their peers.

Options Schools Students Graduate from High School and Enroll in College at Lower Rates than Their Peers, but These Differences Mask Differences in Student Experiences

Given that students who are more likely to face barriers to graduating are more likely to enroll in Options Schools, perhaps it is not surprising that students who enroll in an Options School during their high school career do not graduate at the same rate as their non-Options peers. Figure 7 below shows 6-year graduation rates for Options and non-Options students.

FIGURE 7

Percent of CPS SY2014 9th grade cohort graduating in six years, Options students vs. non-Options students



DATA SOURCES: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Notes: This figure presents graduation outcomes for the cohort of first-time CPS 9th graders in SY2014. Students are considered an Options student if they attended an Options School for at least one day during those six years and are considered as a non-Options student if they never attended an Options School in those six years. We remove any student with a verified transfer out of CPS from the denominator in this calculation. Students with unverified transfers out of CPS are considered not to have graduated.

Because Options Schools serve students who face more barriers to graduation and other challenges outside of school, differences in student outcomes between Options Schools and non-Options schools may not indicate differences in the quality of the schools.

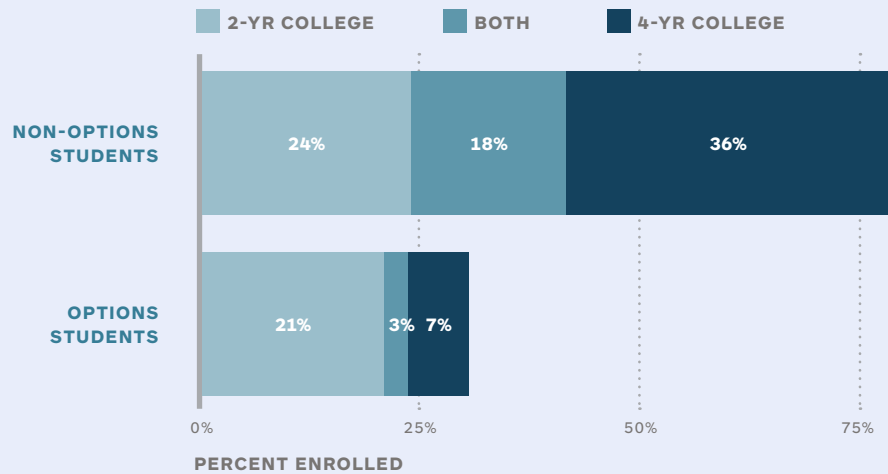
Even so, low graduation rates can be a call to action to provide additional supports to students in Options Schools.

Options School students' six-year graduation rate is just below 40%. For CPS students who never attend an Options School, their six-year graduation rate is more than double that, at 91.1%.

Further, even among those who graduate from high school, CPS students who attend Options Schools enroll in college at lower rates (30.7%) than their peers who do not attend Options Schools (78.5%).¹² Figure 8 below compares the 2- and 4-year college enrollment rates for CPS Options and non-Options students.

FIGURE 8

Options student vs. non-Options student college enrollment rates, conditional on graduating from high school



DATA SOURCES: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NATIONAL SCHOOL CLEARINGHOUSE

Notes: This figure presents college enrollment outcomes for the cohort of CPS 9th graders in SY2014. We remove students who we do not observe graduating from CPS within six years (by SY2019). We then observe college enrollment conditional on graduating through SY2020. Students are considered an Options student if they attended an Options School for at least one day from SY2014-SY2019 and are considered a non-Options student if they never attended an Options School in those six years. Multiple college enrollments per student can be observed in the time period; students are counted as only enrolling in 2-year colleges, only enrolling in 4-year colleges, enrolling in both at least one 2-year and at least one 4-year college, or not observed enrolling in college by SY2020.

Students who graduate from Options Schools are far more likely to enroll in a 2-year college compared to a 4-year college. Students who graduate from non-Options schools are more likely to enroll in 4-year colleges.

Importantly, however, our analysis demonstrates that it is hard to disentangle to what extent the difference in Options School outcomes is driven by student selection versus school performance or quality, indicating the difficulty in assessing if Options Schools themselves are supporting high-need students any better or worse than other CPS schools. The challenge instead is figuring out how to better help students who face barriers to graduating, wherever they are going to school. Therefore, building a strategy that targets more than just Options students to better identify and support students' specific needs would allow CPS to better prioritize and refocus resources to further support students on their path to graduation.

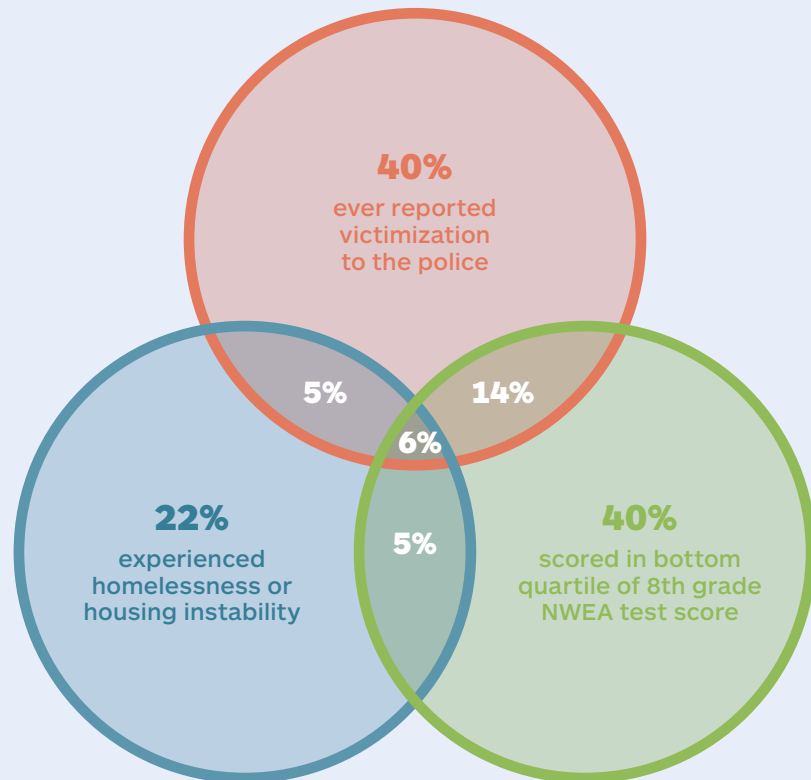
Systematically Supporting Students Through Individualized Supports

While Options students on average face more barriers to graduation than other Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students on every dimension we can observe in the data, the nature of their experiences vary. A closer look at the data reveals what many educators already know: that few Options School students have multiple risk factors and that student needs are not homogenous. The Venn diagram below (Figure 9) shows the overlap of Options School students in SY2019 who were 1) flagged as homeless or in a temporary living situation in the CPS data, 2) had at least one reported victimization experience in the CPD data, and 3) had 8th grade NWEA test scores in the bottom quartile.

FIGURE 9

Options School student experiences Are Highly Variable

PERCENT OF OPTIONS STUDENTS IN SY2019 WHO:



DATA SOURCES: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Notes: Students are considered an Options student in SY2019 if they attended an Options School for at least one day during SY2019. Homelessness status (defined as having a Students in Temporary Living Situations status) is derived from CPS SY2019 data. 8th grade NWEA test scores are derived from prior years' CPS administrative data. Previous victimizations are derived from CPD administrative data. We exclude 3,281 students who are missing an 8th grade NWEA test score. We impute zeroes for students who are missing an STLS status or who are not found in CPD victimization data. Enrollments at both York and Jefferson are removed from the data, but students who attend either school plus another Option School remain in the sample.

When we look at student experiences, we see that there is an overlap in the types of barriers to completing an education but perhaps not as much as we might have expected. For example, over 20% of Options School students in SY2019 were flagged in CPS data as being homeless or in a temporary living situation, but only a small portion of these students also had a reported victimization or scored in the bottom quartile on their 8th grade standardized test: 11% of all Options students both had a reported victimization and were flagged as being homeless, and 11% of Options students had bottom-quartile test scores and were flagged as being homeless. Similarly, there is not a comparably high rate of homelessness or victimization among students with low test scores nor comparably high rates of low test scores or homelessness among students with previous victimizations. Notably, 6%, or fewer than 500 students, of enrolled Options students in SY2019 were flagged as being homeless, had a prior victimization, and had 8th grade test scores in the bottom quartile. This rather high degree of heterogeneity in risk factors and need suggests that personalizing support for these students is crucial. Put differently, the data allow us to pinpoint the 500 students for whom the school system and other appropriate government agencies need to coordinate three specific types of services. If we had to provide each of the three sets of services for all 10,000 Options School students, we might fall short of our goal of providing high quality services, as often happens in our status quo system. Instead, these granular data allow us to identify which students need which services and provide them with an intensive version of that support. It is important to note that this approach must complement, not supplant, efforts to reduce these high rates of adverse student experiences in the first place.

The case for personalization extends even beyond Options students. As shown in Figure 6, students who transfer within CPS are less likely to graduate than students who never transfer. Of the 35% of CPS students who do transfer within CPS at least once, just 36% go on to graduate from CPS (N = 13,849); nearly two-thirds (64%) of students who transfer (N= 24,757 students) do not graduate from CPS. But among the approximately 25,000 students who began ninth grade in CPS from SY2012-2015, but did not graduate, we find 637 unique enrollment pathways between district-run, non-Options charter, and Options Schools. No single enrollment pathway is representative of more than 7% of students who transfer and do not graduate, meaning that every group of, on average, 30-40 students has a different, unique set of experiences that results in not graduating from high school. With so many unique pathways for students who do not graduate from CPS, we cannot rely on one single solution set to realize large gains in graduation. Instead, we must take the time to understand the pathways of each group of students — data can help accelerate this process — and provide targeted supports that address those needs.

We have generated some evidence in the Chicago context that this type of programming can be effective for student outcomes with respect to both instructional and non-instructional supports. For example, in a study of high dosage tutoring that personalizes instructional support for high school students, we find students who participate learn two to three times as much as their peers in math.¹³ A program that provides intensive mentoring and wraparound supports along with cognitive behavioral therapy for up to six months reduces criminal justice involvement and increases school participation among participants — and is currently serving Options students.¹⁴

While this evidence is promising, we are just beginning to better understand the rich array of student needs and experiences as well as effective programming that can support their educational performance and attainment. Furthermore, it is clear from the data that the school system cannot meet the needs of every student on its own, given that many student needs represent community or family experiences outside schools' locus of control — housing instability, violence involvement, and financial needs, to name a few. Institutions that can offer these supports must work together to systematically identify and address student needs. Data and research can be helpful in both the identification of individual students and needs, as well as evaluating the results of our efforts, but how we do that analysis is equally important. This analysis must be informed by input from key stakeholders including students, families, community-based providers, school and district staff, and social service institutions. Importantly, we must strive to continuously learn from our efforts and update our approach accordingly if we are to realize equitable outcomes for all students, in Chicago and beyond.

Seizing the Opportunity to Advance Education Equity

Over the years, there has been no shortage of efforts to try to address long-standing disparities in education. These efforts have sometimes yielded important gains in educational performance and attainment for American school children. All too often, however, proposed recommendations do not closely align with specifically identified student needs. The data presented in this report instead supports solutions that prioritize precisely and systematically identifying students' needs and matching them to appropriate services, in a manner that is informed by both data and local stakeholders.

This approach is appropriate for the unique moment in which we find ourselves. This past year upended America's education system, particularly for students who were struggling before the pandemic hit. As schools transition back to in-person learning, the education community has an obligation to center the student group that is currently benefiting least as we redesign the system. By investing in data and deep partnerships with local stakeholders, we can accelerate the pace by which we more systematically understand students' needs and provide them personalized supports at scale.

Data Sources

This report draws on administrative data obtained from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Chicago Police Department (CPD).

Educational and Demographic Characteristics from CPS Student Data

All educational and demographic characteristics in this report not cited as publicly available information rely on administrative data obtained from CPS from SY2009 to SY2020.

Data on the college enrollment patterns of CPS graduates is collected by the National School Clearinghouse (NSC) and was obtained through CPS. NSC data can be linked to other CPS administrative data using a student's unique CPS ID number.

Victimization and Arrest Data from CPD Records

Prior arrest and victimization data were obtained from internal CPD records, from 1999-2020, including both juvenile and adult records. Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Chicago Police Department.

CPD and CPS Record Linkage

Because city agencies and departments collect data independently of one another, linking individuals' information across datasets provided by different agencies is not a straightforward process. There is no standard identifier, like a Social Security Number, used to track individuals between city services. As a result, linking CPD and CPS data relies on a probabilistic matching algorithm to combine multiple individual identifiers into one that can match individuals across datasets. The algorithm uses information about an individual's full name, date of birth, and gender to link together their records for this analysis.¹⁵ To reduce the likelihood of making erroneous linkages involving program participation data, we impose two conditions on the matching algorithm. First, records must share a date of birth in order to match. Second, students identified by the algorithm should have accumulated no more than 200 days of attendance in a school year.

Although we use individuals' full names and dates of birth to develop identifiers that can link their records across datasets from different agencies, the output of our analysis does not include any personally identifiable information; the findings we report are always presented at the aggregate level.

Footnotes

- 1 "Metrics | Chicago Public Schools." Accessed June 4, 2021. <https://www.cps.edu/about/district-data/metrics/>.
- 2 WBEZ Chicago. "Luring Chicago Dropouts Back to School," August 26, 2011. Luring Chicago dropouts back to school | WBEZ Chicago. <https://www.wbez.org/stories/luring-chicago-dropouts-back-to-school-one-doorstep-at-a-time/3ace06f4-a440-40e5-b352-83e5f5572dcd>
- 3 See What Works Clearinghouse's Dropout Prevention Guide for a list of evidence-based programming for dropout prevention: Results: Dropout-Prevention. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW/Results?filters=,Dropout-Prevention>
- 4 National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). "Condition of Education Report: International Educational Attainment." Accessed June 11, 2021. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cac.pdf
- 5 "Vision | Chicago Public Schools." Accessed June 11, 2021. <https://www.cps.edu/about/vision/>.
- 6 For a full overview of Options Schools and types see Appendix B - C. The CPS list of Options Schools types and providers can also be found here: <https://www.cps.edu/schools/re-engagement-to-high-school/>.
- 7 "Demographics | Chicago Public Schools. 20th Day Membership Report, total enrollment from SY2006 to SY2021 " Accessed June 4, 2021. <https://www.cps.edu/about/district-data/demographics/>.
- 8 We followed the enrollment trends of a cohort of all CPS 9th graders in SY2014 for six years. Of all the students who attended an Options School (including York and Jefferson) for at least one day over the course of those six years, only 7.5% returned to a non-Options school for at least one day after their Options enrollment.
- 9 These comparisons reflect differences for students enrolled in Options and non-Options CPS high schools during SY2019. While the magnitude of the difference varies from one year to another, the general patterns remain the same.
- 10 Verified and unverified transfers are classifications used in CPS data and attached to a student's enrollment data when they transfer schools. A student's transfer is marked as 'verified' when a student transfers out of CPS and the student's receiving school confirms the transfer by requesting the student's transcript. If no such verification process occurs, the transfer is considered 'unverified.' When CPS calculates its student dropout rates, it considers students with unverified transfers to be dropouts.
- 11 CPS "small schools" are schools that have an enrollment of 300 students or less.
- 12 We see that 78.5% of students who enrolled as 9th graders in CPS in SY2014, graduated from CPS before SY2020, and never attended an Options School enrolled in college by SY2020. On the other hand, just 30.7% of students who enrolled as 9th graders in CPS in SY2014, graduated from CPS before SY2020, and attended an Options School enrolled in college by SY2020.
- 13 Guryan, Jonathan, Jens Ludwig, Monica P. Bhatt, Philip J. Cook, Jonathan M. V. Davis, Kenneth Dodge, George Farkas, et al. "Not Too Late: Improving Academic Outcomes Among Adolescents." National Bureau of Economic Research, March 8, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w28531>.
- 14 University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab. (2020). "Choose to Change: Your Mind, Your Game; University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab Research Brief." Accessed June 8, 2021. C2C at a Glance: <https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/attachments/dd47d0bf9f85c9543e871d03b25fa1dcc8ee779f/store/cf2bff02b6f54df79d84cd3c2b20d7bd0ec398cd7a4de0744e6e8860d6f/Choose+to+Change+Research+Brief.pdf>
- 15 In addition to using these fields, when an individual has been arrested by CPD, the algorithm is able to account for variation in a person's name or date of birth by relying on their Identification Record (IR) number. CPD assigns each individual an IR number based on their fingerprint which links together their records, regardless of name misspellings or date of birth entry errors. Using this information allows the algorithm's matches to be more robust to common mistakes in the data.
- 16 <https://www.cps.edu/schools/re-engagement-to-high-school/>

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APPENDIX A

Options Schools Overview

“Options Schools serve students who have been out of school and seek to return, or who may need opportunities to earn credits in an accelerated program. Some of our campuses offer additional supports such as counseling and alternative schedules for students who may work during the traditional school day.”¹⁶

Options Schools have been a part of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) high school portfolio for over two decades. In this report, we specifically focus on the expansion of Options Schools beginning in 2011. In January 2013, CPS issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) aiming to create additional schools and/or programs to deliver alternative education options for CPS students.

The RFP described the purpose of the Options Schools expansion as follows: “In a school district with over 400,000 students, there are an estimated 56,000 school-aged youth who are either no longer enrolled in school or still enrolled, but significantly off-track to graduation. To achieve the ambitious goal of providing a high quality educational option for every student, CPS is expanding the options it offers our out-of-school and off-track youth by recruiting high quality providers who can deliver alternative education schools and programs shown to be most effective in re-engaging, retaining, and graduating these youth.”

The RFP specifically called out several target “student segments” that the proposals should aim to serve. These student segments included students who had been expelled, students who had dropped out or were off-track for graduation, and older students (ages 17-20) who were off-track or out-of-school but generally would be able to receive a diploma with one additional year of programming.

The RFP, as well as additional CPS policies to expand school choice, resulted in the number of Options Schools increasing from 14 schools in 2012 to 35 schools in 2013, ultimately peaking at 48 open Options Schools in 2016.

In SY2019, there were 41 Options Schools operating in CPS. Appendix B provides an overview of the different types of Options Schools currently operating in CPS, demonstrating the breadth and variety of Options Schools providers. Appendix C shows Options Schools’ geographical distribution throughout the city overlaid on a heat map of Chicago’s community area household poverty rates. While Options Schools are located throughout the city, they tend to be concentrated in neighborhoods that experience relatively higher levels of poverty, according to the 2019 American Community Survey.

APPENDIX B

Options School Types



DISTRICT-RUN OPTIONS SCHOOLS

Schools in Cook County Jail, Cook County Juvenile Detention Center, and other CPS-run Options Schools



CHARTER OPTIONS SCHOOLS

Traditional or accelerated learning models primarily serving students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out



ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS (ALOP)

Self-paced, blended learning models that give students more flexible scheduling options while following all CPS policies and procedures



SAFE SCHOOLS

Educational options for students expelled from CPS or pending expulsion for serious violations



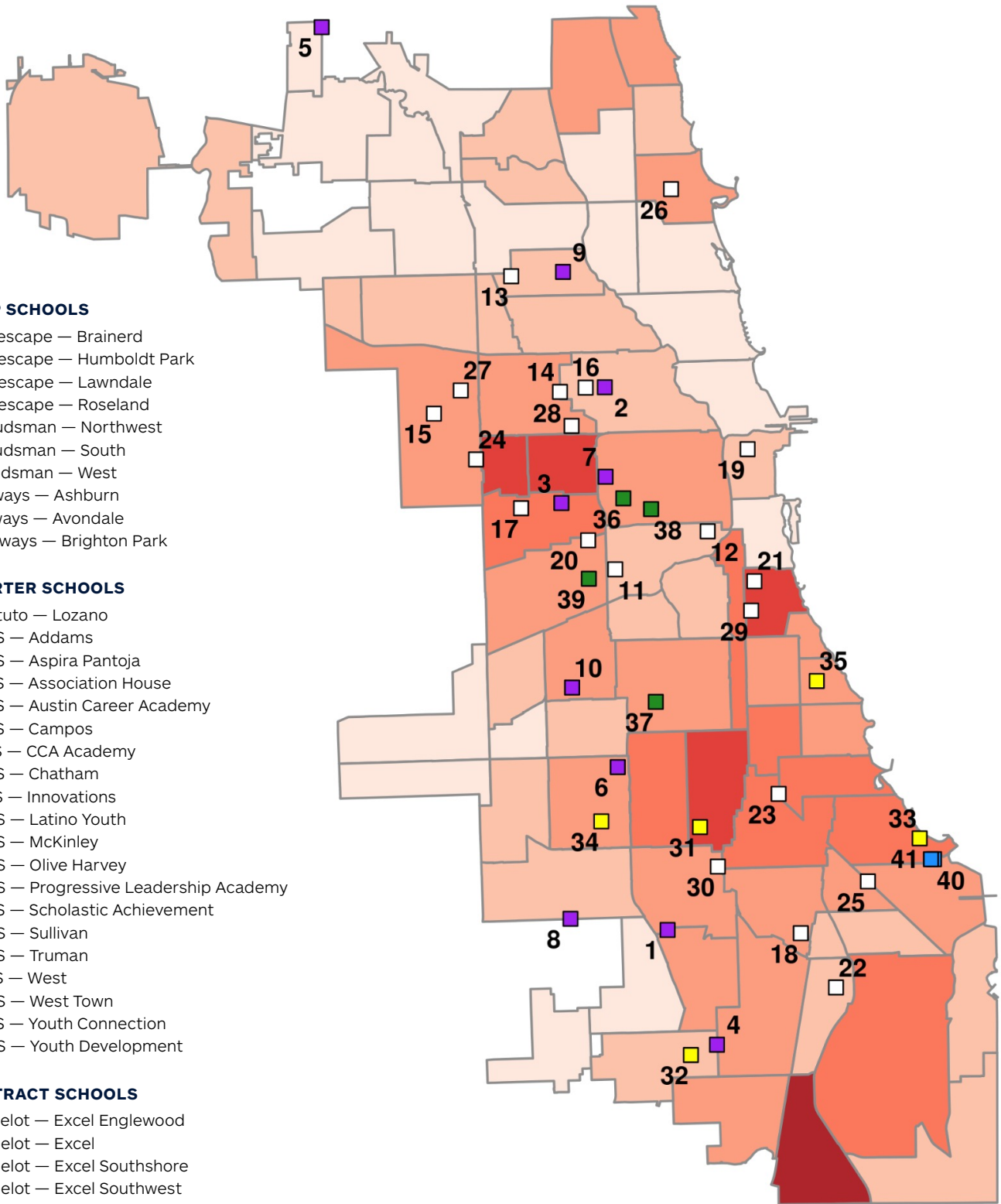
CONTRACT OPTIONS SCHOOLS

Managed by external operators, offer an accelerated or traditional learning model with smaller class sizes

APPENDIX C

Map of Options Schools by Type

SY2019



■ ALOP SCHOOLS

- 1. Bridgescape — Brainerd
- 2. Bridgescape — Humboldt Park
- 3. Bridgescape — Lawndale
- 4. Bridgescape — Roseland
- 5. Ombudsman — Northwest
- 6. Ombudsman — South
- 7. Ombudsman — West
- 8. Pathways — Ashburn
- 9. Pathways — Avondale
- 10. Pathways — Brighton Park

□ CHARTER SCHOOLS

- 11. Instituto — Lozano
- 12. YCCS — Addams
- 13. YCCS — Aspira Pantoja
- 14. YCCS — Association House
- 15. YCCS — Austin Career Academy
- 16. YCCS — Campos
- 17. YCCS — CCA Academy
- 18. YCCS — Chatham
- 19. YCCS — Innovations
- 20. YCCS — Latino Youth
- 21. YCCS — McKinley
- 22. YCCS — Olive Harvey
- 23. YCCS — Progressive Leadership Academy
- 24. YCCS — Scholastic Achievement
- 25. YCCS — Sullivan
- 26. YCCS — Truman
- 27. YCCS — West
- 28. YCCS — West Town
- 29. YCCS — Youth Connection
- 30. YCCS — Youth Development

■ CONTRACT SCHOOLS

- 31. Camelot — Excel Englewood
- 32. Camelot — Excel
- 33. Camelot — Excel Southshore
- 34. Camelot — Excel Southwest
- 35. Little Black Pearl

■ DISTRICT SCHOOLS

- 36. Nancy B. Jefferson
- 37. Consuela York
- 38. Peace and Education
- 39. Simpson

■ SAFE SCHOOLS

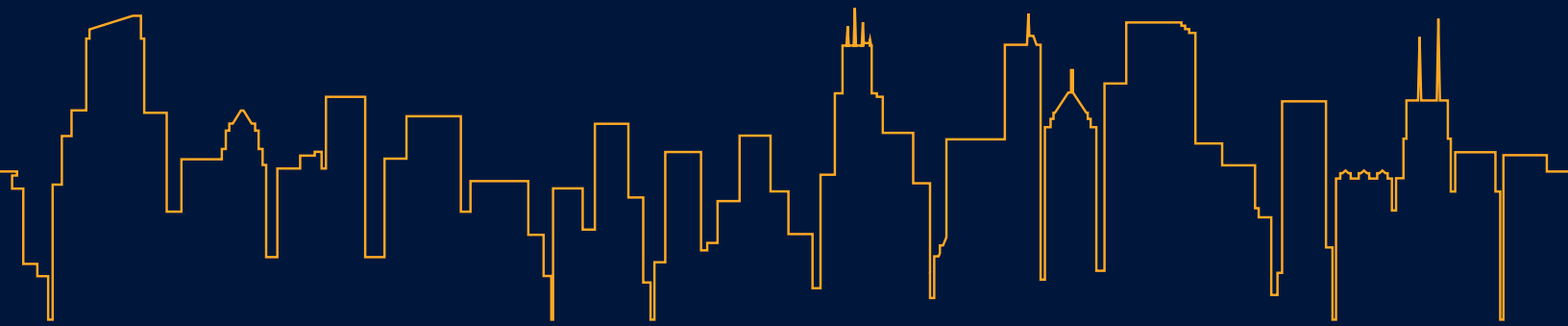
- 40. Camelot — SAFE HS
- 41. Camelot — SAFE ES

POVERTY RATE



DATA SOURCES: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)

Notes: The poverty rate is defined as the proportion of households in each Chicago community area with household income below poverty level, according to the 2019 ACS.



**SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY
TO ADVANCE EDUCATION EQUITY**

DATA INSIGHTS FROM CHICAGO'S
OPTIONS SCHOOL STUDENTS



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