

From High School to the Future: Making Hard Work Pay Off

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Since 2004, the Consortium has tracked the postsecondary experiences of successive cohorts of Chicago Public Schools graduates and examined the relationship among high school preparation, support, college choice, and postsecondary outcomes. The goal of this research is to help CPS, other urban districts and national policy makers understand what it takes to improve the college outcomes for urban and other at-risk students who now overwhelmingly aspire to college. CCSR's first report in this series, *From High School to the Future: A First Look at Chicago Public Schools Graduates' College Enrollment, College*

Preparation, and Graduation from Four-year Colleges, showed that increasing qualifications is the most important strategy to improving students' college participation, access to four-year and more selective colleges, and ultimately college graduation rates. The second report, *From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College*, looks beyond qualifications to examine where students encounter obstacles on the road to college.

This new report looks at the path to college for students in academically advanced programs -- graduates of the city's seven Selective Enrollment schools, those who completed International Baccalaureate programs, and graduates who had taken a sequence of at least six honors and two Advanced Placement classes. The study reveals that nearly two-thirds of these students graduate with access to selective four-year colleges, yet fewer than half of these students enroll in colleges that match their qualifications -- and about 17 percent didn't enroll in any college after graduation.

The study also shows that AP and IB programs seem to be filling an important gap in neighborhood high schools for students with higher-than-average achievement, and that students graduating from academically advanced programs have ACT scores and grade point averages that are substantially higher than the average CPS student--although there are wide variations among schools. Academically advanced students face distinctive challenges in navigating the road to college-- especially if they are first-generation college-goers and cannot count on receiving expert knowledge, the authors conclude. The study included case studies of students, analysis of tests scores, high school transcripts, student surveys and college enrollment data for about 5,600 graduates over two years.