

NEEDLE-MOVING COLLABORATIVES THREE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Chicago

Focus areas: High school graduation rates and cradle-to-career. Tracked metrics have included freshman on-track rate and high school graduation rate.

Founding date: 2008 (Freshman On-Track initiative); 2013 (Thrive Chicago)

Leadership (backbone): Chicago Public Schools (for Freshman On-Track), Thrive Chicago

Results at time of 2012 study: From 2008 to 2011, the freshman on-track rate increased by 22 percent; from 2008 to 2011 the high school graduation rate increased by 10 percent.

Most recent results: The freshman On-Track rate has increased by 15.7 percent (from 72.6 percent in 2011 to 84 percent in 2014); the high school graduation rate increased by 11 percent from 2011 to 2013 (latest data available), rising from 55.6 percent in 2011 to 61.7 percent in 2013.

Chicago's experience over the last three years: None of the other collaboratives we looked at have seen as much change in their basic structure over the last three years as Chicago's education initiative. While the Chicago effort was

“*[The Chicago Public Schools'] graduation rate reached an all-time high . . . This is a direct result of a tight CPS focus since 2007 on helping freshmen successfully transition to high school. Ground-breaking research by the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research identified this critical link—revealing that passing ninth grade is more predictive of high school graduation than race, ethnicity, poverty, or test scores.***”**

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originally envisioned as a cradle-to-career collaborative, it lacked the breadth of support to pursue such a broad focus. Renamed the On-Track initiative, it focused on improving high school graduation rates—using data to identify and support students at risk of falling behind in ninth grade. “[Chicago Public Schools] designed an early-intervention system for the schools—real-time data that flagged students with particular needs,” explained Elaine Allensworth, managing director of the Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago, which helped develop the on-track approach and data system. “These reports allowed schools to develop systems and strategies. A lot of schools showed really big improvements over time in their on-track rates.”

In 2013, Chicago returned to the broad focus on cradle-to-career academic achievement with a collective impact initiative, modeled after Strive, called Thrive Chicago. The new initiative will build upon On-Track's work on high school graduation as one of five "change networks," with other networks focused on kindergarten readiness, high school enrichment, college completion, and employment at a living wage.

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