



Office of Accountability Fact Sheet on the CPS Five-Year Cohort Dropout Rate

What is the difference between the 2015 method and the prior method?

Under both the 2015 method and the prior method, verified out-of-district transfers (e.g., students who move to another school district) are removed from the calculation. However, starting in 2015, CPS increased the rigor of reviewing transfer verification information to ensure accuracy. When transfer documentation was found to be invalid (e.g., improper code) or incomplete, the student was not counted as a verified transfer but was counted as a non-graduate and added back into the calculation. As a result, cohorts in years 2011-2015 are larger using the 2015 method.

What is the Five-Year Cohort Dropout Rate?

The five-year cohort dropout rate follows a group of students who enter Chicago Public Schools (CPS) as freshmen and calculates the percent of these students who drop out within five years after their freshman year. For example, the 2007 rate tracks ninth grade students who started in CPS in the 2002-03 school year and dropped out of CPS by August of the 2006-07 school year.

How is the rate calculated?

The rate is calculated by dividing the number of students from an adjusted ninth grade cohort who dropped out over the five year time period by the total number of students in that cohort.

Who is included in the adjusted ninth grade cohort?

This cohort includes all CPS ninth graders who:

- Were active in either semester of their 9th grade year,
- Were in ninth grade for the first time, *and*
- Did not permanently transfer out of CPS during the five years following their freshman year

Who is counted as a dropout?

In addition to students over the age of 17 who notify the school of their intention to dropout, students were counted as a dropout if they:

- Have stopped showing up for school¹, *or*
- Have not arrived at the school they are enrolled in, *or*
- Have been "lost" from the system and cannot be located, *or*
- Have left CPS as an unverified transfer student.

What is an unverified transfer?

An unverified transfer is a student who left a CPS school and was entered into the student information system as a transfer (either to another CPS school or to a school outside of CPS), but for whom enrollment in the new school has not yet been confirmed. If a student is still in this status at the end of the school year in which the transfer was supposed to take place, s/he is converted into a dropout.

Who is *not* counted as a dropout?

- Students who graduate
- Verified transfers out of CPS
- Students who are still actively enrolled in CPS in the sixth year after their freshman year



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¹ Schools must follow mandatory truancy procedures for students under the age of 17.

What if a student drops out and re-enrolls?

Each student is counted only once in the five years, using his or her most recent status in CPS. So a student who drops out and re-enrolls is counted with his or her status at the end of the five years, rather than the earlier dropout status.

Example Calculation

School A had 725 ninth grade students enrolled during the 2002-03 school year. Twenty of these were repeating the ninth grade. Twenty-five of them transferred out of CPS and were verified in a new school during the five years following the 2002-03 school year. The adjusted ninth grade cohort for this school was:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Cohort}_{9^{\text{th}} \text{ adj.}} &= 725 - 20 - 25 \\ &= \mathbf{680 \text{ students}}\end{aligned}$$

During the five years following the 2002-03 school year, 286 of these 680 students dropped out and 364 graduated. Of the remaining 45 students, 5 were unverified transfers as of August 2007, and twenty-five were still enrolled in CPS in the 2007-08 school year. School A's Five-Year Cohort Dropout Rate in 2002 was:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Dropouts} &= 286 \text{ ("true" dropouts)} + 5 \text{ (unverified transfer students)} \\ &= \mathbf{291}\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Dropout Rate}_{5\text{-year cohort}} &= 291 / 680 \\ &= \mathbf{42.8\%}\end{aligned}$$