



## 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK

### Invest Forward Convening: July 2022 Session Recap



### ABOUT THE CONVENING

In **July 2022**, Invest Forward held a convening in Nashville, Tennessee, bringing together **leaders from 25 districts** to share ideas, learn from one another, and prioritize stimulus funding to support postsecondary pathway programs in their schools.

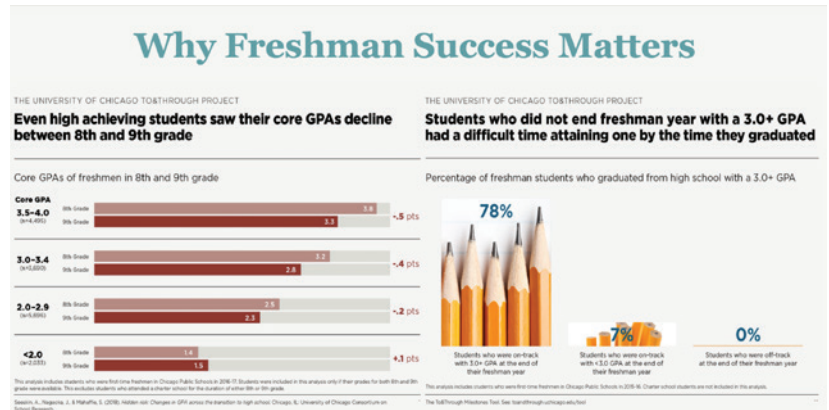
Research has shown that high-quality postsecondary education and training is the ticket to **long-term opportunity**. But since the pandemic began, we have seen declines in high school graduation rates, drops in direct college enrollment, a youth unemployment rate that peaked higher than it has in decades, and an education system that is still struggling to find a new “normal.”

Many schools have done tremendous work and invested heavily in strengthening and expanding their efforts to support students’ ability to obtain the training and credentials necessary to be successful beyond high school. **Invest Forward** is committed to recognizing and sharing those efforts widely, to build momentum and support for this important work.

## ABOUT 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK

The transition to high school can be challenging, even for high-achieving students. But students who are able to navigate this transition successfully—what many refer to as “on-track.”

By carrying an adequate number of credits to move on to grade 10, and by receiving no more than one semester failure in a core class, students are almost **four times as likely to graduate** from high school as students who are not on-track. It also is a reliable predictor of college acceptance and persistence.



[Click HERE to View the Presentation](#)



## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK INITIATIVES

### CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Presenter: [Sarah Duncan](#), Network for College Success & GRAD Partnership

Between 8th and 9th grade, **students experience significant change**—including in monitoring and support, study habits and academic effort, and importantly, student-teacher relationships. **Chicago Public Schools (CPS)** recognized that for individual students to make the transition successfully, they needed to build an **intentional scaffold of support** that would strengthen relationships between students and adults, assemble **“teacher teams”** to monitor data on student grades and attendance to ensure no student fell through the cracks, and work to change

grading practices that were overly punitive and negatively impacted students confidence in their academic abilities.

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The seeds of high school dropout are planted in the transition to high school. So are the seeds of graduation—and college success.
- Organizing around Freshman Success produced significant, lasting change in Chicago.
- Freshman Success work is about tending to the developmental challenge of the transition to high school.
- Relationships are everything.





## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK INITIATIVES (CONT.)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Invest Forward National Convening “9th Grade on Track” Slide Deck](#)

### Organizations Supporting “9th Grade On-Track”

- [GRAD Partnerships](#)
- [UChicago Consortium on School Research](#)



### FORT WORTH ISD

Presenter: [David Saenz, Ft. Worth ISD](#)

Though **Fort Worth ISD (FWISD)** has maintained strong high school graduation rates for the past decade, college readiness and persistence was lagging significantly behind. Viewing 9th grade as a **pivotal year to change practices and mindsets** for students regarding their futures, the district set a mission investigate and act around systems, structures, strategies, and culture that create and set conditions for success for this group of students, with the goal of ensuring **at least 78 percent of freshmen** will be on track to graduate as measured by Freshman On-Track criteria at the end of one year.

#### STUDENTS WOULD BE “ON-TRACK” IF THEY HAD:

- Earned at least six credits
- Not failed more than one semester of a core course
- Not been a repeating ninth grade student

FWISD created a district-wide professional learning community that meets monthly to review **BAG data (Behavior–Attendance–Grades)** and discuss strategies for improvement. They have also developed a **summer bridge program** for rising 9th grade students, which is a week-long camp that provides academic and social support as scholars transition from middle school to high school. Students participate in a wide range of activities designed to equip them with the fundamental tools needed to be successful during their first year of high school. Additionally, parents are required to attend mandatory parenting sessions on the final day of the Summer Bridge program.