



BRIDGING STUDENT TRANSITIONS INTO AND OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL

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 BRIDGING STUDENT TRANSITIONS INTO AND OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL

Enrollment in public schools has declined sharply since 2020—nearly 1.7 million fewer students by some estimates. But **recent enrollment data showed two bright spots**: three out of four high school grade bands had not trended negative nationwide, and high school graduation was still relatively strong, though slightly down from a ten year growth trajectory. The data suggests a precarious journey between middle and high school that warrants investigation and investment to ensure students are set up for success as they make that final push to complete their education. Likewise, the precipitous dropoff in enrollment post-graduation is a troubling indicator that K-12 schools are not currently equipping students with the resources and support they need to continue on to a postsecondary pathway that will ensure a high-value credential and livable wage in the future.

COMMON CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TRANSITION INTO AND OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL:

- Changing social and institutional relationships (and decreased access to existing)
- Leap in academic complexity, rigor, expectations
- New physical spaces and administrative systems to navigate
- Need for increased self-direction
- Gaps in support: No one school is “responsible” in between graduation and enrollment
- Knowing and believing in the “why”

Despite these challenges, a focus on bridging students into and out of high school can pay dividends for long-term student success.

Transition Trends Since Covid



SOURCE: Brookings Institution

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EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS TO BRIDGE STUDENT TRANSITIONS INTO AND OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Presenter: **Heidi Truax**, Executive Director, School Counseling & Postsecondary Advising, Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) Learn.Plan. Succeed. framework was developed as a means to help guide students in reaching postsecondary success. Learn.Plan.Succeed. recognizes **six postsecondary pathways**: college, employment, military, gap year programs, job training programs, and apprenticeships. It is now a graduation requirement that students submit evidence that they have made progress toward a postsecondary path. The intention is that Learn.Plan.Succeed. becomes self-fulfilling.

Since the pandemic began, CPS has expanded a smaller “**summer melt**” program for graduating

students into a more comprehensive Alumni Success strategy that supports students through their “14th” year. This initiative is largely driven by **Alumni Coordinators**, who are invested in Alumni success, are able to assess alumni need and then deliver multi-tiered systems of support.

LAUNCHED IN SUMMER 2020, THE ALUMNI SUPPORT INITIATIVE HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED PROMISE.

- 108 schools engaged in summer 2022 serving 17,199 Alumni
- 25,000 Alumni contacted (86.2 percent of Alumni in summer 2021; 99.2 percent of Alumni in winter 2022)
- 12,000 Alumni (49 percent) successfully engaged
- \$775,000 in emergency grants disbursed to Alumni to cover direct/indirect costs

Alumni Support Initiative Model



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EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS TO BRIDGE STUDENT TRANSITIONS INTO AND OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

- [Bridging Student Transitions Into and Out of High School - Slide Deck](#)



METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Presenter: **Matt Nelson**, Executive Director, College and Career Readiness, Metro Nashville Public Schools

To ease the transition from middle to high school, MNPS developed the **“Every Student Known” Transition Plan**. By completing a transitional checklist, including setting personalized goals for literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning, and postsecondary/career exploration, the Transition Plan helps build students’ confidence amid what is largely considered the most challenging academic transition.

Additionally, MNPS launched a signature initiative in 2020 called **“Navigator”**; 100 percent of MNPS students are assigned a Navigator at a 1:10 ratio, with at least 8 direct touch points with a dedicated adult to ensure students’ needs are met and to connect them to the opportunities they need to be successful. “When we began this work, we hung up photos of all the students, and then asked staff to place a dot on the students that they had a personal relationship with; and when we realized that there were students with no dots, we knew we had to change that.” Every adult in every school is a navigator; it is a requirement. As of the end of November 2020, more than **180,000 Navigator check-ins** generated more than 1,500 collaborative referrals connecting students to internal and external providers for needed support.

MNPS HAS ALSO DEVELOPED A COHERENT COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS CURRICULUM THAT INCLUDES:

- Community partnership
- 40 instructional modules
- Promising Scholars program pilot
- Personalized learning time
- Student portfolio

Every 9th grade student has this instruction built into their day to work with Navigators on CCR topics.