



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | MAY 7, 2026**

**KIDS FIRST  
CHICAGO**

**Contact:** Kristin Pollock

Kids First Chicago | [kpolllock@kidsfirstchicago.org](mailto:kpolllock@kidsfirstchicago.org) | 847-830-0866

## **How are CPS students doing over time? New report tracks progress, gaps, and student experience across Chicago**

*Second annual State of Chicago Public Schools report highlights trends in academics, attendance, and well-being*

Chicago, IL – Today, Kids First Chicago (K1C) released its second annual review – [The State of Chicago Public Schools](#) – a longitudinal look at how students are doing across the district. The report tracks trends over time in academic performance, attendance, access to advanced coursework, and student experience, offering a clear picture of where progress is happening and where challenges remain.

“We have a responsibility to be honest about how our students are doing,” said Daniel Anello, CEO of Kids First Chicago. “Families, educators, and decision-makers need clear, accessible information to understand both the progress we are making and the work that still needs to be done. Transparency is not optional. It is how we improve.”

### **What’s New for 2026**

This year’s report introduces analysis on how Chicago students are performing on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) compared to other large urban districts. It also takes a closer look at elementary on-track rates, outcomes for English Learners, and access to rigorous high school coursework.

“Kids First Chicago has brought together vital and holistic information about the state of Chicago’s public schools, including students’ test scores and key metrics that affect test scores, like absenteeism, students’ experiences in school, and their mental health,” said Penny Sebring, Kids First Chicago Board Member and Co-Founder of the UChicago Consortium on School Research. “The user-friendly presentation, trends over time, and comparisons with other cities make this a must-read for parents, students, educators, community leaders, and Chicagoans generally.”

### **Report Overview & Key Findings**

The report is divided into five parts: (1) Student Demographics, (2) Elementary Student Outcomes, (3) High School Student Outcomes, (4) Chronic Absenteeism, and (5) Student Well-being.

Key findings include:

#### **(1) Student Demographics**

- CPS continues to serve a diverse student population with significant needs, reinforcing the importance of targeted, data-driven strategies to support all students.

## **(2) Elementary Student Educational Outcomes**

- Less than half of CPS elementary students are meeting current proficiency standards. In 2024–2025, 43% of students were proficient in English Language Arts, while 27% were proficient in Math.
- Elementary “on-track” rates have remained relatively stable since the pandemic. Today, about half of elementary students are considered on track.
- On the NAEP, Chicago’s 4th and 8th graders continue to perform at similar or lower levels than peers in other large cities and nationally. At the same time, Chicago students are improving at a pace that is similar to or faster than those comparison groups, meaning gaps are beginning to narrow.

## **(3) High School Student Outcomes**

- Long-term trends show declining performance on standardized assessments. Average SAT scale scores in both ELA and Math dropped steadily from 2018 through 2024, with sharper declines after 2021. Overall scores in both subjects are down by roughly 30 points since 2018.
- Post-pandemic recovery has been limited. Reading and Math performance have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- More recent ACT results show that 40% of students are proficient in ELA, 25% in Math, and 38% in Science.
- At the same time, key milestone indicators remain strong. More than 4 out of 5 9th graders are on track to graduate, and graduation rates also remain above 80%. About one-third of 8th graders are passing Algebra I, with steady improvement over time.
- Enrollment in advanced coursework varies across the city. Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses grew steadily through 2022 before dropping in 2023 and has not yet rebounded. AP enrollment is more concentrated on the North Side, while Dual Credit opportunities are more evenly distributed.

## **(4) Chronic Absenteeism**

- Chronic absenteeism remains a significant challenge, with 40% of CPS students missing at least 10% of the school year.
- Absenteeism has declined slightly for students in Kindergarten through 6th grade, with the largest improvement seen among Kindergarten students.
- In contrast, absenteeism increased slightly in upper grades over the past year, with the largest rise among high school seniors.

## **(5) Well-being**

- Student experience data shows both progress and ongoing challenges.
- Measures of safety and school safety declined between 2022 and 2024 before partially recovering in 2025.
- Student-teacher trust and peer relationships followed a similar pattern, with declines during that period and recovery in the most recent year. Peer relationships saw the steepest drop before rebounding.
- Students report stronger academic effort. Rigorous study habits increased by 14 points since 2022, the largest gain across all measures.
- Emotional health has improved gradually, while perceptions of neighborhood support remain the lowest among well-being indicators.

- Family engagement trends are mixed. Teachers report stronger parent influence on school decisions over time, but teacher-parent trust and day-to-day parent involvement have remained largely unchanged.

“This report reflects what we hear from parents every day,” said Micaelan Valesky, Manager of Data Science at Kids First Chicago. “Families want clear information about how schools are doing and where support is needed. When parents have that information, they can advocate, partner, and push for better outcomes for their kids.”

### **Join a K1C Data Briefing**

Kids First Chicago will host a series of conversations to walk through the findings and discuss what they mean for students, families, and schools across the city.

#### **The State of CPS Overview – [Living Room \(English\)](#)**

Tuesday, May 19 | 6:00–7:30 pm

#### **The State of CPS Overview – [La Sala \(Spanish\)](#)**

Wednesday, May 20 | 6:00–7:30 pm

### **Lunch Hour Deeper Dives**

*This year, we are offering virtual sessions that explore insights in key sections -- High School, Elementary School, and Student Wellbeing and Chronic Absenteeism. Join us for one or all!*

#### **The State of CPS: Student Well-being & Chronic Absenteeism (Virtual) – [Learn More](#)**

Monday, May 18 | 12:00-1:30 pm

#### **The State of CPS: High School (Virtual) – [Learn More](#)**

Tuesday, May 19 | 12:00-1:30 pm

#### **The State of CPS: Elementary School (Virtual) – [Learn More](#)**

Thursday, May 21 | 12:00-1:30 pm

These sessions are open to the public. CPS parents and caregivers, members of the media, and community and education partners are encouraged to join us to learn more.

### **Explore the Report Series**

Access the interactive report, available in English and Spanish, at [kidsfirstchicago.org/state-of-cps](https://kidsfirstchicago.org/state-of-cps).

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### **ABOUT KIDS FIRST CHICAGO**

Kids First Chicago’s mission is to dramatically improve education for Chicago’s children by ensuring their families are the respected authorities on what their kids need and decision-makers in their kids’ education. We do this by partnering with families to support them in gaining the resources, access, and voice they need to achieve their vision for their children. K1C provides transparent and rigorous education analysis to families, educators, and policymakers alike to inform data-driven and inclusive decision-making about the future of Chicago’s public schools. Visit [kidsfirstchicago.org](https://kidsfirstchicago.org).