

Chicago Public Schools fails its Hispanic students: Only 17 of every 100 read at grade level.

Officials create a facade of success.

By: Ted Dabrowski and John Klingner

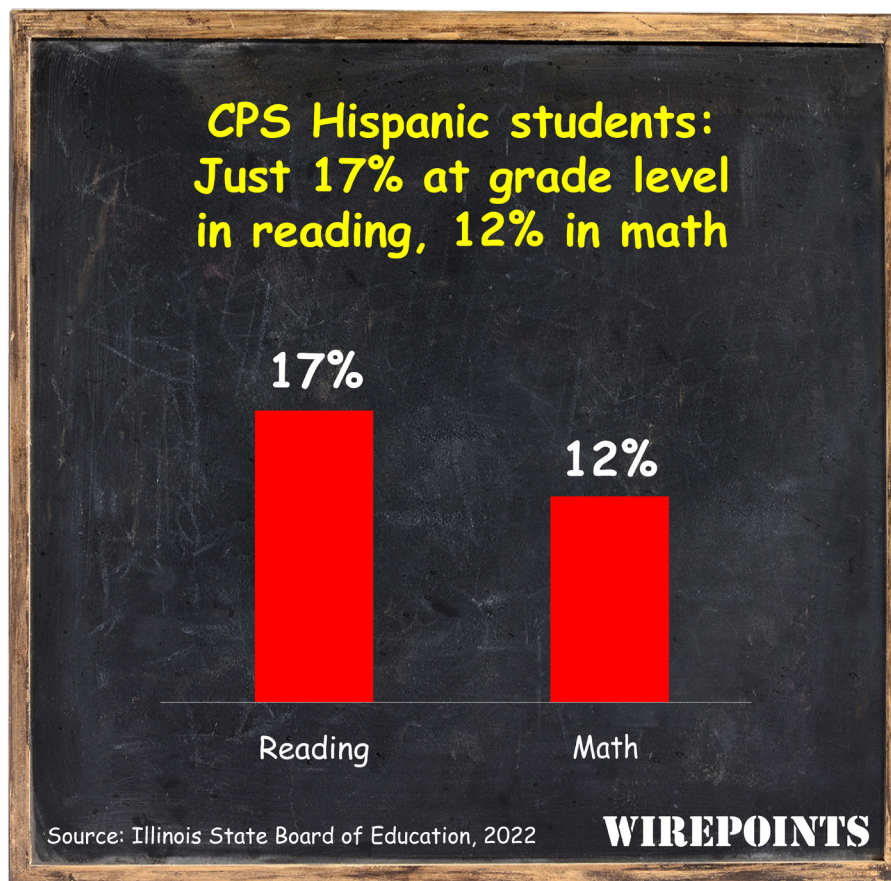


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Chicago Public Schools fails its Hispanic students: Only 17 of every 100 read at grade level.

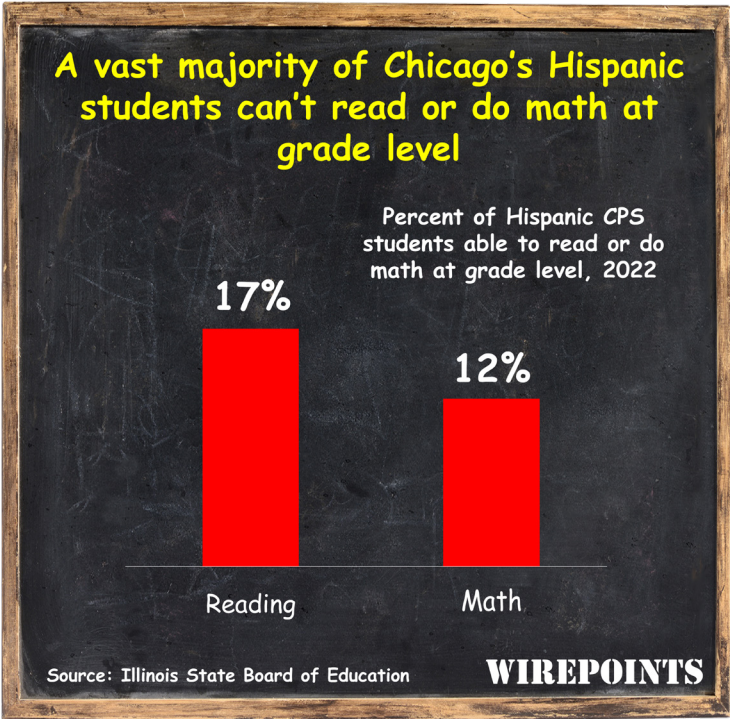
Chicago’s future depends in large part upon the success of today’s Hispanic students. Hispanics make up almost half of Chicago Public Schools’ enrollment and they’re the city’s fastest growing demographic.

But the city’s school system is failing them. Only 17 of every 100 Hispanic students can read at grade level. And just 12 of every 100 are proficient in math.*

Instead of addressing this crisis, union, district and state officials are covering up CPS’ failures with policies, data and “accountability standards” that create a facade of success. We are told Chicago’s children are learning even though most graduate from the system without the skills they need.

Below are several key examples of how district and state education officials give Hispanic parents and Chicago communities a false sense of progress:

- **CPS automatically advanced its 2021 3rd-grade Hispanic students to the 4th grade even though just 12% could read at grade level.** “Social promotion” happens all the way through high school.
- **CPS told parents last year that 85% of their Hispanic freshmen were “on track” to graduate, even though just 16% of those freshmen were proficient in math the year before.** The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) says the “on track” designation is a “key predictor of high school success.”
- **CPS graduated a record 84% of Hispanic students in 2022 even though their reading and math scores were at recent lows.** Just 19% of those students could read at grade level the year before.
- **98% of CPS teachers were rated “proficient or excellent” in 2020. 100% of teachers got the same rating in 2021.** And in 2022, 84% of all evaluated CPS teachers were rated either “proficient or excellent.” There is a major disconnect between those hyper-inflated teacher evaluations and actual student outcomes.
- **State school board officials rated 101 of the 148 majority-Hispanic (80%-plus) CPS schools as “commendable” – meaning deserving praise – even though only 15% of students in those schools, on average, could read at grade level.**



The data presented in this report represents a clear dereliction of duty by those who run Chicago's Public Schools and the state officials who oversee them. Those in charge offer a number of rationalizations for their failures, including the tired excuse of a lack of funding. But money is not the problem. The system itself is to blame.¹

It's hard enough for today's graduates to succeed in a competitive work environment that becomes increasingly more technical. For those with little-to-no reading and math skills, it will become a near impossibility.

Hispanic parents and their children in Chicago's public schools are being shortchanged. Yes, parents deserve a share of the blame – they're responsible, too. But the school system is paid billions of dollars and given great powers to ensure all students gain the skills to launch successful lives. To become electricians, carpenters, teachers, lawyers or doctors, students must be able to master reading and math.

The ongoing education failures in Chicago deserve far more attention. The media should be investigating why results are so low. Parents should be demanding answers from school officials. District administrators should be in a crisis-intervention mode to improve outcomes.

But too few seem to care.

Wirepoints focuses on Hispanic students in this report to bring special attention to the city's fastest growing demographic group. The outcomes of all students and major demographics were covered in detail in the Wirepoints articles listed below.

- [Six facts about Illinois' 2022 Report Card](#)
- [50 years of failure: Norman Lear's 'Good Times' first criticized Chicago's policy of automatically passing students in 1974. It's still happening today.](#)
- [Illinois' 2021 student outcomes collapsed during school shutdowns, Covid mitigations](#)
- [Poor student achievement and near-zero accountability: An indictment of Illinois' public education system](#)

**Illinois Assessment of Readiness testing measures five levels of preparedness in both English Language Arts and Math.*

Level 1 – did not yet meet expectations

Level 2 – partially met expectations

Level 3 – approached expectations

Level 4 – met expectations

Level 5 – exceeded expectations

*According to the ISBE's Score Guide for Parents, "Students performing at levels 4 and 5 met or exceeded expectations, **have demonstrated readiness for the next grade level** (or course) and, ultimately, are likely on track for college and careers."*

ISBE Score guide: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IAR-ScoreGuideParent.pdf>

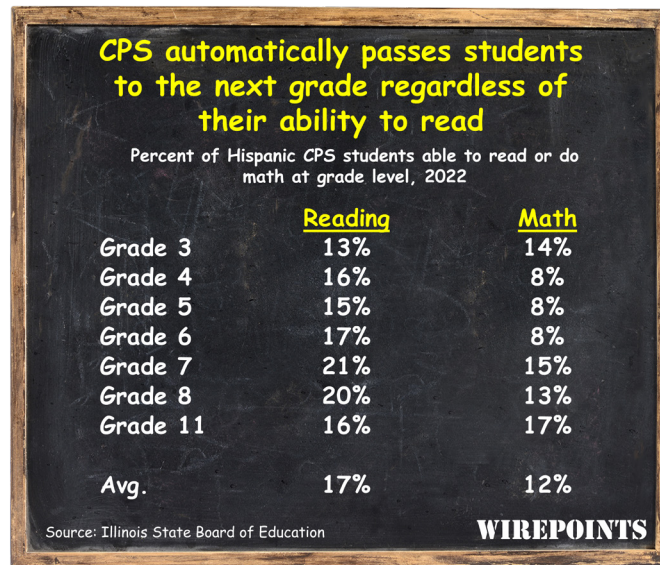
Students are passed to the next grade, ready or not.

CPS sets up students for failure by automatically passing children onto the next grade, never mind if they can read or not.

The failure begins in the 3rd grade when Hispanic students are moved on to the 4th grade no matter how they perform. Currently, only 13 of every 100 Hispanic 3rd graders can read at grade level.

Most of those kids are destined for failure because if they can't read in 3rd grade, they'll struggle to understand their science homework in 5th grade or their history lessons in 6th grade.

Students' lack of improvement is proof of that failure. Hispanic reading proficiencies grade by grade are stuck between 13% and 21% all the way through high school. Students never fully learn to read at grade level and yet the district just passes them on. Nobody cares.



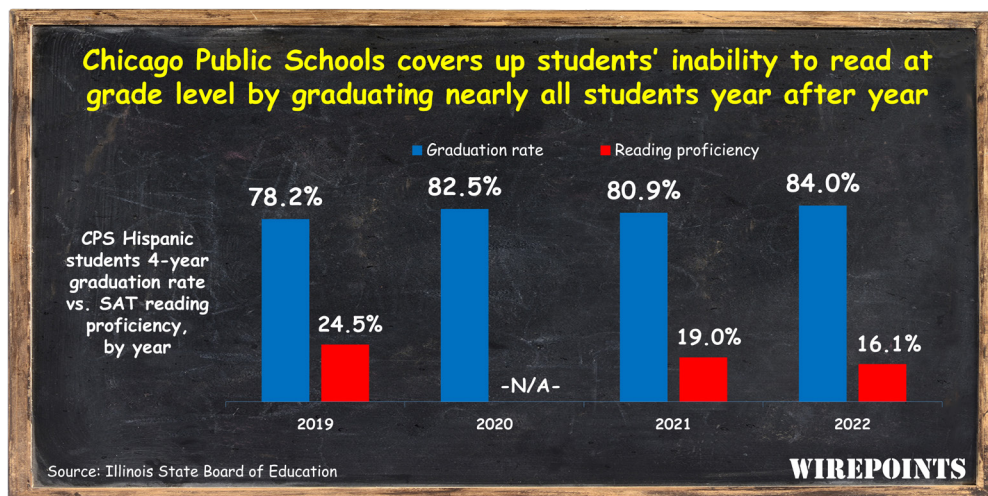
Florida has taken a different approach. Lawmakers there passed a law that outlaws passing 3rd-grade students to the 4th grade if they can't read at grade level. The law requires students to remain in the 3rd grade until they have the skills needed to move up.²

Students graduate regardless of proficiency.

84% of Hispanics graduated from CPS in 2022 – a record number that district officials publicly celebrated.

But what those officials failed to mention is how ill-prepared those students are for life after graduation. Only 19% of Hispanic high school students scored proficient in reading and only 17% proficient in math on the SAT the year before.

The adjacent graphic reveals a disturbing trend. The district's graduation rates have grown from 78.2% to 84.0% even as Hispanic high school reading levels have fallen from 24.5% to just 16.1%.



CPS schools are praised regardless of student performance.

In Hubbard High School, a heavily Hispanic school in West Lawn, only 9% of the school’s 1,800 students are reading proficient and only 8% are proficient in math. That means more than 1,650 students can’t read or do math at grade level. And yet the Illinois State Board of Education says Hubbard is “commendable” – the 2nd-highest school “accountability” designation out of four.

ISBE says those designations are supposed to “help families and communities understand how well schools are serving all students,” but they’re entirely misleading.³

Most CPS schools labeled “commendable” don’t deserve a positive title like that. The accompanying graphic, which includes Chicago’s 20 largest majority-Hispanic (80%-plus) schools, has some clear examples.

Washington G. High School is another school rated “commendable” even though just 8% of students can read and only 7% can do math at grade level. That’s just 119 and 108 students out of an enrollment of 1,500.

Juarez Community High School’s results are even worse. There, just 70 of the school’s 1,700 students could read at grade level last year and only 46 students could do math. But, yet again, the school is rated “commendable.”

Of the 148 schools in CPS that are 80% or more Hispanic, 101 are labeled “commendable.” And yet in those schools, an average of only 15% of students can read proficiently and only 11% are proficient in math.

Many CPS schools given the 2nd-highest ranking of “commendable” don’t deserve it

Hispanic-majority (80%) CPS schools with over 1,000 students, 2022

School name (Hispanic share of enrollment)	School designation	Student enrollment	Students proficient in reading	Students proficient in math
Juarez Community Acad HS (95%)	Commendable	1,696	4%	3%
Washington G High School (89%)	Commendable	1,530	8%	7%
Noble St Chtr - Mansueto (98%)	Commendable	1,072	9%	13%
Hubbard High School (93%)	Commendable	1,809	9%	8%
Curie Metropolitan HS (85%)	Commendable	3,048	10%	13%
Hanson Park Elem School (96%)	Commendable	1,173	12%	14%
Intrinsic Charter High School (93%)	Commendable	1,036	13%	12%
Noble St Chtr-ITW Speer Acad. (89%)	Commendable	1,159	13%	13%
Salorio Academy High School (97%)	Commendable	1,247	15%	18%
Locke J Elem School (83%)	Commendable	1,167	17%	6%
Gray Elem School (85%)	Commendable	1,000	18%	13%
Stevenson Elem School (91%)	Commendable	1,087	19%	9%
Back of The Yards IB HS (95%)	Commendable	1,052	19%	25%
Lyon Elem School (90%)	Commendable	1,111	23%	17%
Hancock College Prep HS (92%)	Commendable	1,019	50%	41%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

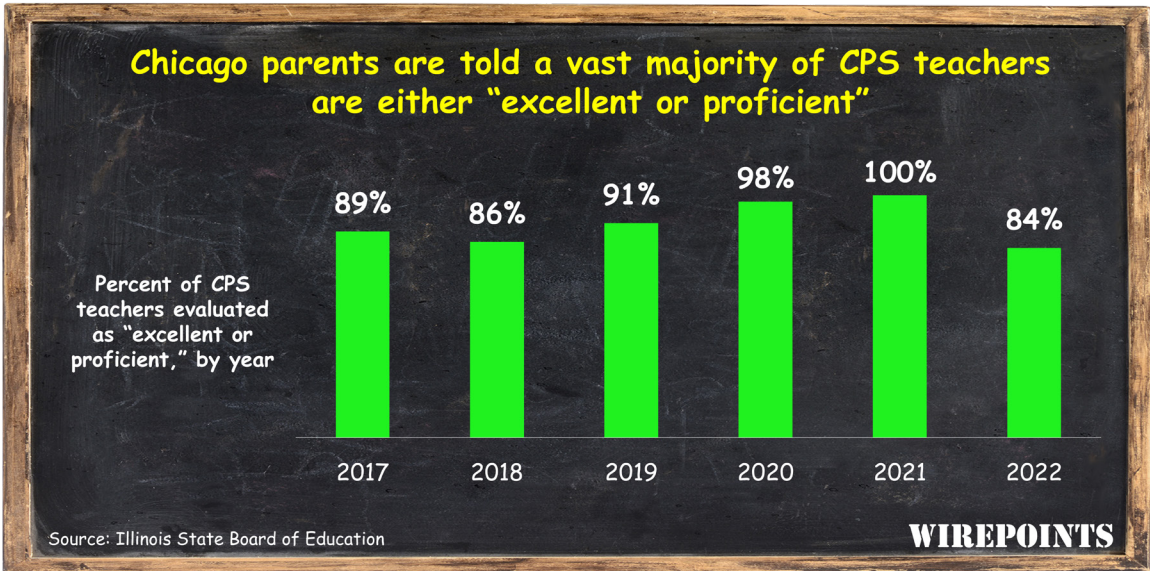
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Teachers are overwhelmingly evaluated as “excellent or proficient.”

98% of CPS teachers were rated “excellent or proficient” by supervisors or district evaluators in 2020. In 2021, it was 100% of teachers. That same year, however, only 17% of Hispanic students could read at grade level.

And 84% of teachers were rated “excellent or proficient” in 2022. Yet only 20% of CPS students were proficient in reading and just 16% in math.

CPS isn’t the only district to give its teachers high ratings that don’t match with student outcomes. Over 97% of teachers statewide were rated “excellent or proficient” in 2022. Illinois’ teacher evaluation process is at best broken, at worst deceptive. Either way, it provides no useful information for parents on the quality of their children’s educators.



The list of failing, largely Hispanic schools is long.

There are 148 Chicago schools where Hispanics make up 80% or more of enrollment. Many of those schools have student proficiencies at less than 10%. At CPS' School of Social Justice, for example, just 4 students out of every 100 could read at grade level. And Stowe Elementary School had just 6 students out of 100 able to read.

Only 14% of students, on average, are proficient in reading and only 10% are proficient in math across the district's 148 mostly-Hispanic schools.

Chicago's zero proficiency schools are the worst of all. Not a single student who attended Spry Community Links High School and Pantoja Alternative High School could read or do math at grade level.

That's not to say every single school has entirely dismal results. The top performers, Hancock College Prep, Everett Elementary, Sor Juana Ines Elementary and Orozco Elementary all had 40% or more of their students able to read at grade level. That's far from acceptable, but better compared to most CPS schools.

And it's not all bad news. There are a number of non-Hispanic-majority CPS schools where 75% or more of Hispanic students can read at grade level.

That includes Payton College Prep, where nearly 85% of the school's 270 Hispanic students can read at grade level. And of the more than 1,500 Hispanic students attending Lane Tech High School, 87% are reading proficient.

CPS' top performing Hispanic schools all have 40% or more of their students able to read at grade level

Top Hispanic-majority (80%+) CPS Schools, 2022

School Name	Student Enrollment	Students proficient in reading	Students proficient in math
Hancock College Preparatory HS (92%)	1,019	50%	41%
Everett Elem School (87%)	104	44%	28%
Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (89%)	317	44%	38%
Orozco Elem Fine Arts & Science (98%)	274	42%	27%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

WIREPOINTS

The top performing Hispanics in CPS: 75 percent or more read at grade level

Hispanic reading proficiency in CPS' eight highest-scoring districts

School Name	Student Enrollment	Hispanic share of enrollment	Hispanic students proficient in reading
Payton College Preparatory HS	1,193	23%	86%
Keller Elem Gifted Magnet School	212	12%	80%
Jones College Prep High School	1,954	30%	84%
Northside College Preparatory	1,040	29%	77%
Young Magnet High School	2,140	29%	80%
Lane Technical High School	4,380	35%	79%
Edison Elem Regional Gifted Cn	256	11%	81%
Decatur Classical Elem School	311	12%	81%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

WIREPOINTS

Most of the 148 majority-Hispanic schools in CPS have less than 20 students per every 100 able to read at grade level

Hispanic-majority (80%+) CPS schools ranked by reading proficiency, 2022

School name (Hispanic share of enrollment)	Student enrollment	Students proficient in reading	School name (Hispanic share of enrollment)	Student enrollment	Students proficient in reading
Hancock College Prep HS (92%)	1,019	50%	Acero Cntr Sch - Barto (97%)	254	12%
Everett Elem School (87%)	104	44%	Cooper Elem Dual Lang Acad (97%)	456	12%
Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (89%)	317	44%	West Park Elem Academy (82%)	486	12%
Orozco Elem Fine Arts & Sci (98%)	274	42%	Saucedo Elem Scholastic Acad (94%)	901	11%
Burroughs Elem School (91%)	381	38%	Sawyer Elem School (98%)	1,103	11%
Twain Elem School (88%)	958	33%	Little Village Elem School (99%)	629	11%
Inter-American Elem Magnet (84%)	680	32%	Nobel Elem School (85%)	601	11%
Washington G Elem School (93%)	641	27%	Acero Cntr Sch - PFC O (98%)	572	11%
Zapata Elem Academy (99%)	555	26%	Gallistel Elem Language Acad (92%)	593	11%
Azuela Elem School (97%)	714	26%	Edwards Elem School (96%)	1,295	11%
Acero Cntr Sch - Rufin (98%)	268	25%	Madero Middle School (99%)	265	10%
Columbia Explorers Elem (98%)	796	25%	Finkl Elem School (81%)	216	10%
Pickard Elem School (93%)	318	25%	Brighton Park Elem School (95%)	333	10%
Talman Elem School (97%)	340	25%	Acero Cntr Sch - Office (99%)	528	10%
Talcott Elem School (83%)	443	24%	Eberhart Elem School (95%)	1,120	10%
North River Elem School (81%)	258	24%	CICCS - West Belden Campus (92%)	539	10%
Durkin Park Elem School (83%)	670	23%	Barry Elem School (95%)	463	10%
Lyon Elem School (90%)	1,111	23%	Curie Metropolitan High School (85%)	3,048	10%
Pasteur Elem School (98%)	580	23%	Kanoon Elem Magnet School (99%)	439	10%
Cardenas Elem School (95%)	861	23%	Acero Cntr Sch - Sandra (97%)	476	10%
Scammon Elem School (88%)	650	22%	Prieto Math-Science Elem Sch (95%)	789	10%
Hurley Elem School (98%)	731	22%	Sadlowski Elementary School (91%)	618	10%
Christopher House Chrt ES (91%)	489	22%	Acad for Global Citizenship (93%)	466	9%
Garcia Lorca Elem School (91%)	667	21%	Thomas Kelly College Prep (81%)	1,721	9%
Evergreen Academy Elem (88%)	228	21%	Noble St Cntr-Pritzker College (94%)	970	9%
Carson Elem School (96%)	877	21%	Shields Middle School (97%)	522	9%
Back of The Yards IB HS (95%)	1,052	19%	Acero Cntr Sch - Robe (92%)	487	9%
Greene N Elem School (91%)	310	19%	Noble St Cntr - Mansueto (98%)	1,072	9%
Stevenson Elem School (91%)	1,087	19%	Hubbard High School (93%)	1,809	9%
Monroe Elem School (91%)	703	19%	Spry Elem Community School (99%)	326	8%
Tanti Elem School (96%)	833	19%	Mozart Elem School (91%)	481	8%
Acero Cntr Sch - Jovi (99%)	525	18%	World Language High School (96%)	316	8%
Gray Elem School (85%)	1,000	18%	McAuliffe Elem School (91%)	570	8%
Albany Park Multicultural (85%)	242	18%	Lloyd Elem School (96%)	811	8%
Grimes Elem School (87%)	393	18%	Infinity Math Science & Tech (95%)	404	8%
Addams Elem School (94%)	572	17%	Washington G High School (89%)	1,530	8%
Locke J Elem School (83%)	1,167	17%	Seward Elem Comm Arts (97%)	482	8%
Hibbard Elem School (80%)	826	17%	Corkery Elem School (83%)	417	8%
Acero Cntr Sch - SPC D (97%)	570	17%	Walsh Elem School (81%)	251	8%
Gary Elem School (99%)	809	17%	Hedges Elem School (97%)	495	8%
Dawes Elem School (83%)	988	17%	Northwest Middle School (94%)	467	7%
Lee Elem School (97%)	665	16%	Schurz High School (83%)	1,386	7%
Gunsaulus Elem Sch. Acad (93%)	674	16%	Darwin Elem School (82%)	542	7%
Acero Cntr Sch - Brigh (99%)	533	16%	Acero Cntr Sch - Octav (91%)	205	7%
Richardson Middle School (97%)	975	16%	Marine Leadership Acad (96%)	778	7%
ITLA Charter High School (97%)	121	15%	Nixon Elem School (95%)	591	7%
Haugan Elem School (84%)	850	15%	Hantline Elem School (91%)	555	7%
Solorio Academy HS (97%)	1,247	15%	Davis N Elem School (94%)	529	7%
Chavez Elem Multicultural (97%)	804	15%	Belmont-Cragin Elem School (95%)	451	7%
Acero Cntr Sch - Esmer (96%)	237	15%	Namaste Elem Charter School (91%)	447	7%
Nightingale Elem School (98%)	1,051	15%	Pilsen Elem Community Acad (87%)	229	6%
Ruiz Elem School (94%)	446	14%	Hammond Elem School (89%)	248	6%
Schubert Elem School (95%)	551	14%	Erie Elem Charter School (81%)	402	6%
Sandoval Elem School (96%)	782	14%	Shields Elem School (97%)	484	6%
Noble St Cntr - ITW Speer (89%)	1,159	13%	Funston Elem School (90%)	404	6%
Acero Cntr Sch - Carlo (98%)	418	13%	Stowe Elem School (88%)	584	6%
Reilly Elem School (94%)	608	13%	Acero Cntr Sch - Majo (97%)	642	6%
Intrinsic Charter High School (93%)	1,036	13%	ASPIRA Charter - E. College (96%)	310	6%
Camras Elem School (91%)	788	13%	McCormick Elem School (98%)	474	6%
Taylor Elem School (84%)	350	13%	IHSCA Charter High School (97%)	578	5%
Noble St Cntr-Noble Campus (83%)	674	13%	ASPIRA Charter - Haugan (89%)	119	5%
Peck Elem School (97%)	800	12%	Aspira Charter - Business (94%)	560	5%
Perez Elem School (94%)	286	12%	Daley Elem Academy (90%)	505	5%
Burbank Elem School (93%)	729	12%	Christopher Elem School (83%)	323	5%
Telpochcalli Elem School (92%)	248	12%	Juarez Community Acad HS (95%)	1,696	4%
Whitney Elem School (99%)	676	12%	Farragut Career Acad HS (90%)	495	4%
Lara Elem Academy (94%)	324	12%	School of Social Justice HS (88%)	300	4%
Marsh Elem School (88%)	676	12%	Whittier Elem School (96%)	178	4%
Henry Elem School (85%)	506	12%	Acero Cntr Sch Victori (98%)	553	3%
Hanson Park Elem School (96%)	1,173	12%	Kelvyn Park High School (88%)	489	3%
Falconer Elem School (95%)	902	12%	YCCS-Latino Youth Alternative (93%)	178	2%
Avondale - Logandale Elem (91%)	495	12%	Ortiz De Dominguez Elem (99%)	398	N/A
Hernandez Middle School (97%)	889	12%	Spry Community Links HS (98%)	88	0%
Calmecca Acad Elem School (97%)	663	12%	YCCS-ASPIRA Pantoja Alt HS (89%)	176	0%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education
 Note: Ortiz Elementary lacks a result because it is a PreK-2 school.



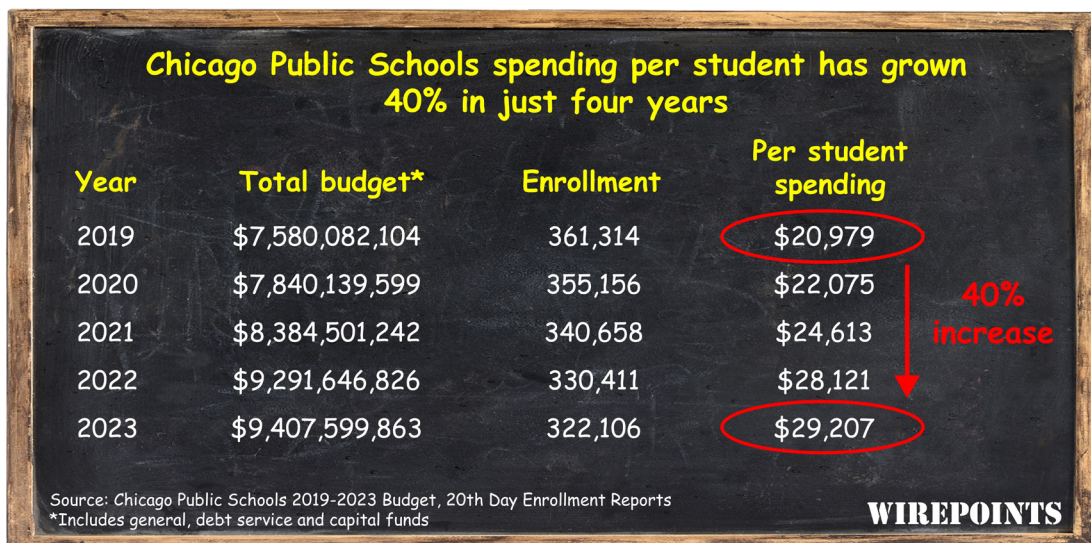
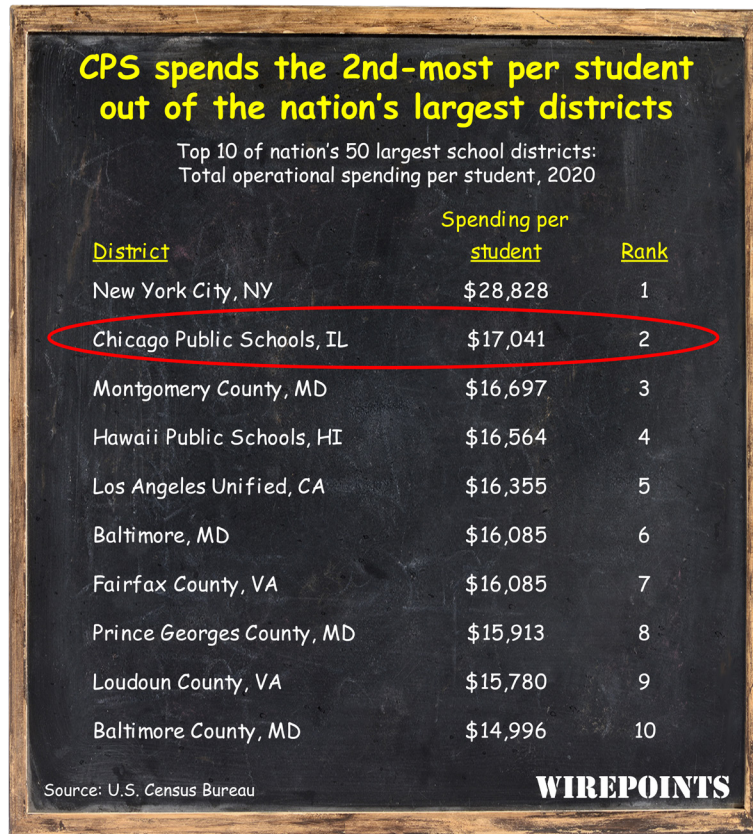
It's not about spending more.

Any discussion about the failures of CPS inevitably turns into an argument about money. Teachers, union leaders, administrators and lawmakers all complain that the district simply isn't spending enough to achieve decent results.

But the district's finances tell a different story. Chicago is already spending more per student than most big districts nationwide. CPS spent \$17,041 per student on operations in 2020. That's the 2nd-most per student out of the top 50 largest school districts, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.⁴

Chicago outspent other big cities like Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Denver and Dallas by hundreds or thousands of dollars. Only New York City was a bigger spender per student.

The full spending numbers, including money spent on debt and capital expenditures, show an even bigger per student spend on an annual basis at CPS. During pre-Covid 2019, the district's total expenditures were \$7.6 billion, or nearly \$21,000 per student.⁵



Fast forward to today and CPS is projected to spend a record \$29,200 per student in 2023 – a 40% increase in just four years. That number is the result of taking the district’s full \$9.4 billion budget and dividing it by a total enrollment of 322,000 students.

Most of that money goes to pay for the salaries and benefits of Chicago’s teachers.

Chicago pays its teachers an average of \$86,500 annually. That’s more than double the annual median earnings of Hispanic Chicagoans (\$32,100) and 30% more than the city’s median household income (\$66,576).⁶

CPS teacher salaries aren’t just generous compared to the incomes of ordinary Chicagoans. The district’s pay ranks between 1st and 4th-highest of all of its big-district peers.

Wirepoints analyzed teacher salaries using teacher contract data from the 148 biggest school districts across the 50 states compiled by the National Council on Teacher Quality. The data comprises “information on salaries for teachers throughout their careers, including starting, mid-career, and maximum salaries for teachers with a variety of education levels.”⁷

The data shows that a newly-hired Chicago teacher with a bachelor’s degree will receive an annual salary of over \$63,000 after adjusting for cost of living. That’s the highest starting salary of any big district in the nation.

By comparison, New York City pays new teachers \$55,700 after factoring in the cost to live there. And Los Angeles pays its new teachers just \$50,186.

Career Chicago teachers are also very well paid relative to their peers. A teacher with a master’s degree and 10 years of service is paid \$91,051 – the nation’s 2nd highest salary.

The highest possible salary Chicago teachers can receive under the current contract is \$120,715 – the 4th-highest maximum among the nation’s 148 biggest districts.

Chicago teacher salaries among highest when compared to pay in nation's largest districts

Chicago teacher salaries ranked vs. 148 largest districts across the 50 states

<u>Teacher education & experience</u>	<u>Annual salary (Adjusted for cost of living)*</u>	<u>Salary rank among nation's 148 biggest school districts (1st = highest)</u>
1st year bachelor's degree	\$63,195	1st
10th year bachelor's degree	\$86,673	3rd
Maximum with bachelor's degree	\$107,193	3rd
1st year master's degree	\$67,571	2nd
10th year master's degree	\$91,051	2nd
Maximum with master's degree	\$111,701	4th
Highest possible salary	\$120,715	4th

Source: National Council on Teacher Quality, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
*Cost of living based on BEA's 2021 Regional Price Parities

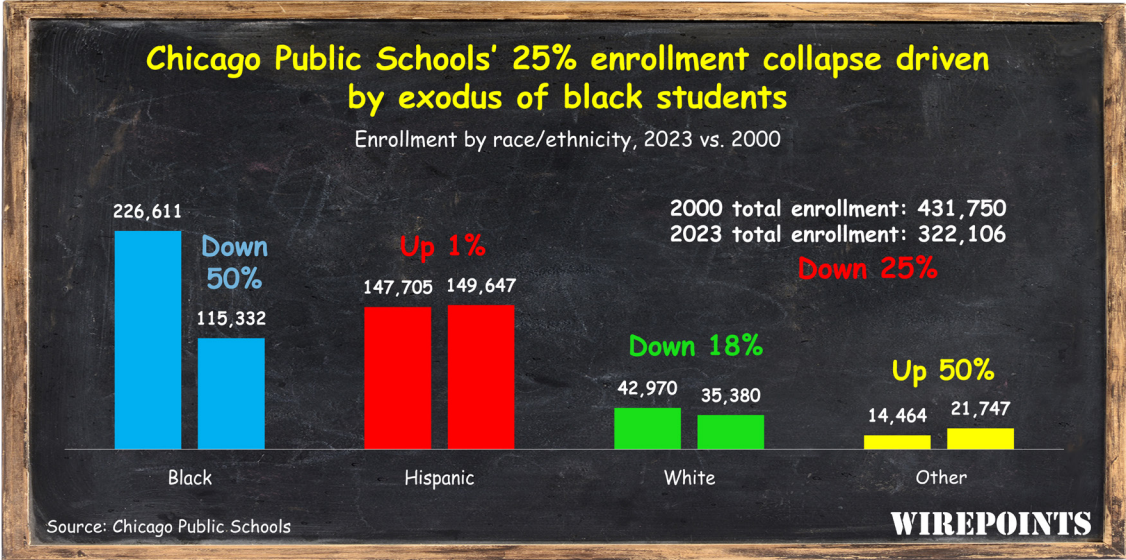
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Conclusion

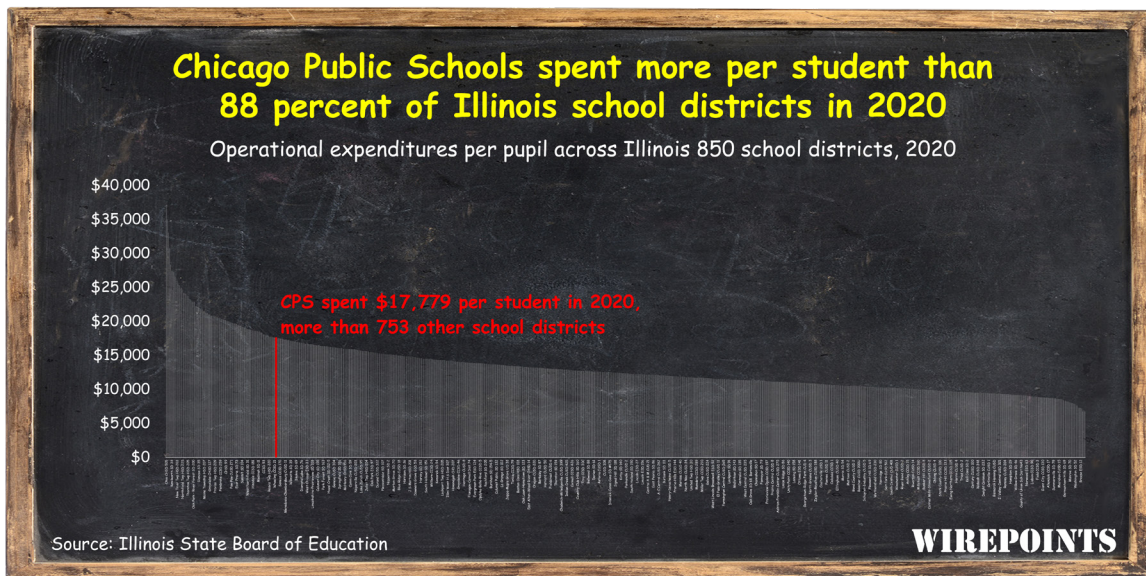
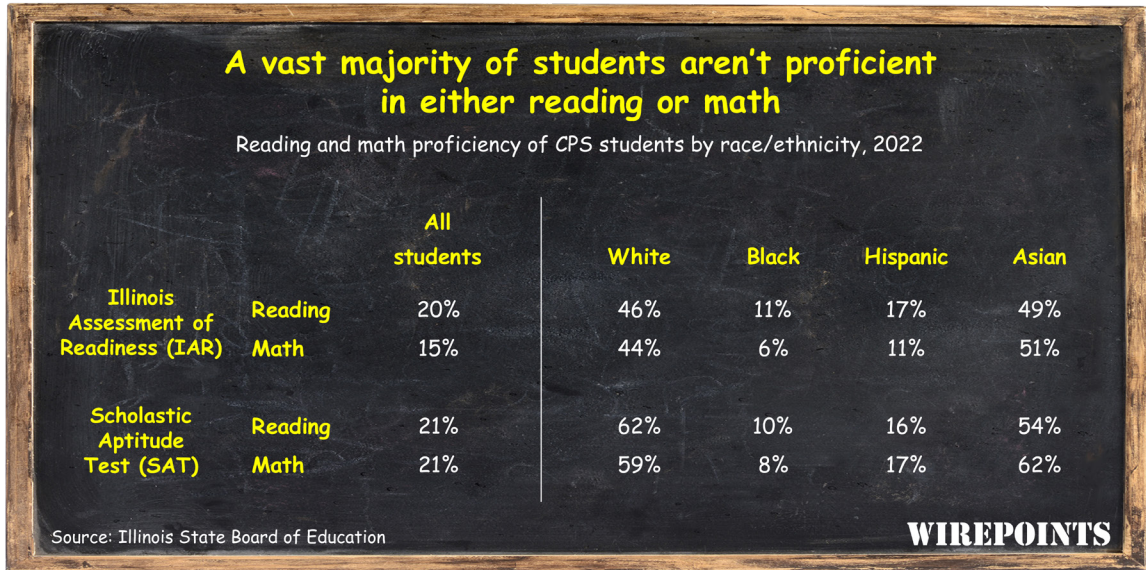
The consequence of CPS' failures is clear for all to see: a steady exodus of students. CPS' enrollment has fallen by 25%, or more than 100,000 students, since 2000, driven largely by a 50% collapse in blacks – some 111,000. Betrayed by decades of poor education, tens of thousands of black families over the years have moved out of the city to seek better opportunities for their children.

The district's decline would be even more severe if not for the stability provided by Chicago's Hispanic community. White students are increasingly less relevant – just 35,000 remain. Now more than ever, CPS' future depends upon Hispanics.

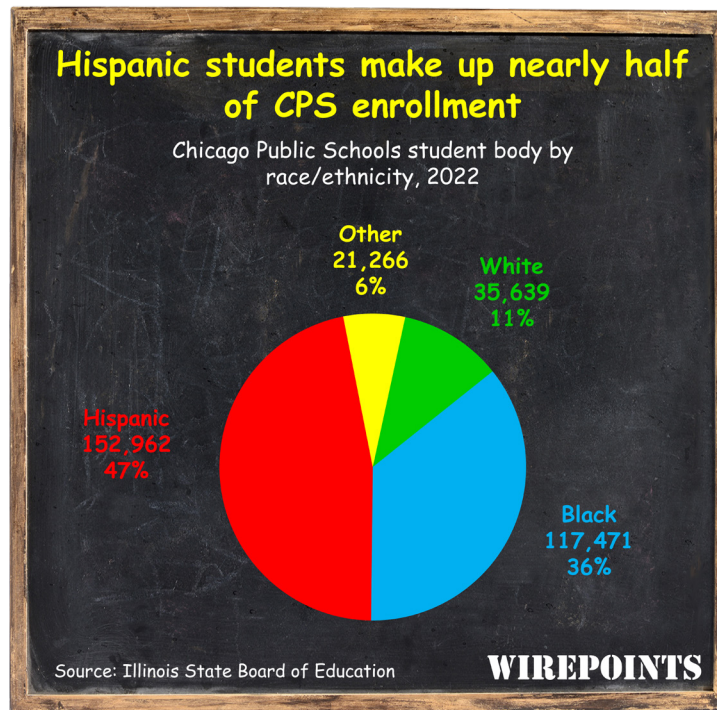
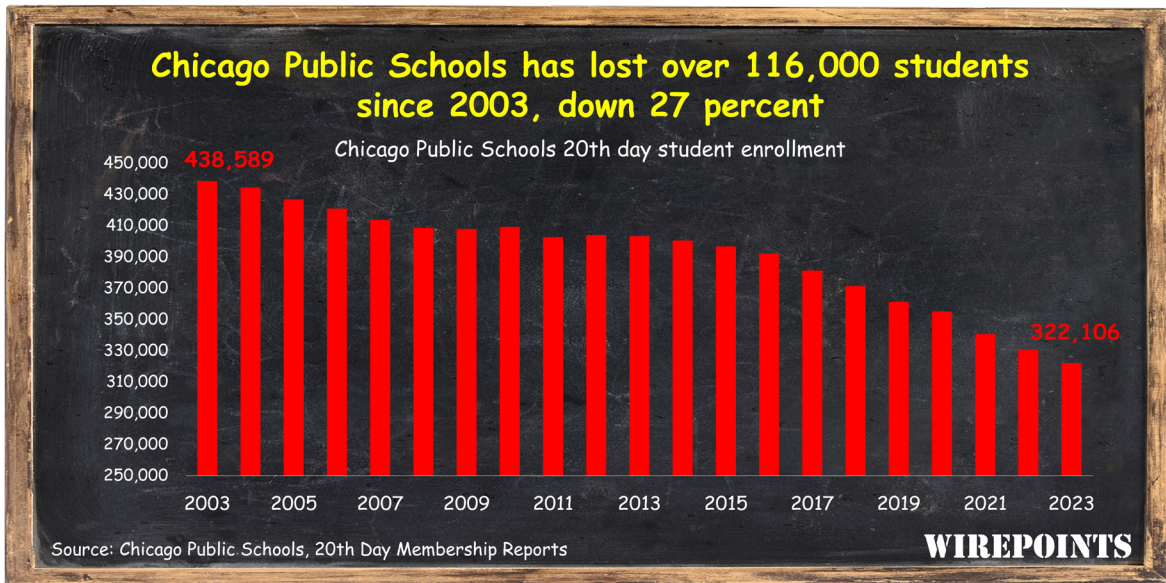
But if CPS continues to fail, those families will look for education opportunities outside of Chicago – just like black and white families have done for decades.



Appendix



Appendix



Endnotes

- ¹ Dabrowski, Ted; Klingner, John. "50 years of failure: Norman Lear's 'Good Times' first criticized Chicago's policy of automatically passing students in 1974. It's still happening today." Wirepoints. November 16, 2022. <https://wirepoints.org/automatically-passing-chicago-students-to-the-next-grade-norman-lears-good-times-criticized-the-policy-50-years-ago-its-still-happening-today-wirepoint/>
- ² Florida Department of Education. <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7539/urlt/readtolearn.pdf>
- ³ "Summative Designations." Illinois State Board of Education. <https://www.isbe.net/summative>
- ⁴ "2020 Annual Survey of School System Finances." U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/econ/school-finances/secondary-education-finance.html>
- ⁵ Chicago Public Schools Budget Book. <https://www.cps.edu/about/finance/budget/>
- ⁶ ISBE Illinois Report Card. <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/district.aspx?districtid=15016299025&source=teachers&source2=teachersalary>; "Median Earnings in the past 12 months" U.S. Census Bureau. <https://data.census.gov/>
- ⁷ "Teacher Contract Database." National Council on Teacher Quality. <https://www.nctq.org/contract-database/home>