



The State We're In 2022

A LOOK AT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19
ON EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS



Advance
ILLINOIS

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Fellow Illinoisans,

We do not need a report to tell us that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on every facet of our lives. Nor do we need a report to know that parents, caregivers, and educators at every level worked heroically and creatively to support and engage young people of all ages under extraordinary circumstances. As we look ahead, the challenge now is to understand where our students are, what they and their families need to re-engage and access cradle-to-career care and education, and what we can do to ensure that this once-in-a-century event does not prevent them from reaching their full potential.

As it turns out, it is not a simple matter to take stock. Like so many other things, the pandemic has disrupted the nature and quality of available data, not just in Illinois, but across the country. Indeed, given the dearth of reliable data, Advance Illinois made the hard decision to postpone its biennial *The State We're In* report until we had access to more meaningful information. And while we are still not in a position to publish our typical comprehensive report on the state of education from birth to higher education, we are pleased to offer this analysis on the most meaningful data currently available and provide a partial window into the disruption caused by COVID-19 and its impact on education in Illinois.

Given the data available, this report focuses primarily on student enrollment, attendance, access to instruction, and students' social-emotional development and well-being. As more accurate and complete data comes online, we will issue additional analyses on areas of interest and relevance. We also hope to provide broader national context as data becomes available, but as you read and absorb this report, be aware that the challenges facing our children, students, and families are not unique to Illinois.

So, what does the available data tell us? Any way you slice it, the pandemic has had a dramatic impact on enrollment, especially, though not exclusively, on our youngest learners and in community colleges. The pandemic has also had a deep impact on how K-12 students accessed instructional opportunities and developed social-emotional skills.

Of special concern is the fact that impact has not been experienced evenly, but has laid bare and exacerbated existing inequities across lines of race, income, and educational need. While our full understanding of the pandemic's impact on children and students is necessarily incomplete, the data reported here begins to shine a light on the work ahead. Put simply, the effects of COVID-19 have been significant, so our ongoing efforts to understand and support children's and students' healthy academic and social-emotional development will need to be similarly deep and sustained.

You will see that much of the information in this report is sobering. But there are bright spots where concerted effort made a demonstrable difference. These include significant public investments to bolster fragile systems and dedicated efforts by educators and leaders in the field. We hope, therefore, that this report will not demoralize readers, but instead motivate us to continue our critical work. Illinois students, families, educators and leaders have proven their resilience in the face of extraordinary circumstances. We salute your tenacity, compassion, and dedication, and look forward to working together to ensure that this unprecedented global event does not hinder our children's ability to thrive.

Thank you for your partnership and for continuing to rise to this challenge.

Sincerely,



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The COVID-19 pandemic, unprecedented in scale and impact, has disrupted every possible facet of education in Illinois. Students, families, caregivers, and educators have all felt the effects. The 2022 edition of *The State We're In: A Look at the Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Illinois* is an effort to analyze the most meaningful data currently available to describe how this ongoing disruption has affected the education of children and students in Illinois during the 2020–2021 school year.

How does this report differ from a typical edition of *The State We're In*?

A Different Set of Metrics

This edition of *The State We're In* looks different from past reports. Given changes to data quality and availability, as well as massive disruptions to the context in which this data exists, we were unable to review the same broad suite of metrics that we typically analyze. Instead, we narrowed in on four areas where we have a working window into the “state we're in” and the pandemic's impact on education:

1. Enrollment and retention patterns in:
 - Early childhood education and care programs
 - K-12 schools
 - Institutions of higher education
2. Access to instruction in K-12 schools
3. Need for and access to mental health and social-emotional supports in K-12 schools
4. Academic outcomes in K-12 schools

A Focus on the Pandemic's Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime crisis that has severely impacted education systems and the context in which they exist. Given this, we have elected not to assess state progress over time. Instead, our quantitative analysis focuses primarily on the 2020–2021 school year, using historical data to contextualize the impact of the pandemic on education in Illinois. Because the pandemic impacted data collection as well as the policy context in which data exists, we have noted throughout the report where caution should be used comparing data over time.

No National Comparisons

Lack of comparable data across states on many of the key metrics in this report precluded the national comparisons and state rankings ordinarily included in *The State We're In*. Instead, we have focused on the pandemic's impact solely within the state of Illinois. In the future, we look forward to once again being able to place Illinois in a broader national context. In the meantime, while we cannot offer authoritative comparisons, readers should be aware that emerging data suggests that COVID-19 has taken a significant toll on educational access and outcomes across the country.^{1,2,3}

Qualitative Data

To fill in areas where state data is missing, we have incorporated qualitative data from focus groups of educators, parents, and students from 33 districts in Illinois. Focus groups were conducted in winter 2022, and participants were asked about their experiences throughout the pandemic in both the 2020–2021 school year and the 2021–2022 school year.

This report should be taken as a starting point for those trying to understand and respond to the pandemic's impact on education, as a full understanding of the pandemic's short- and long-term impact is still being uncovered. Our hope is that through a close analysis of current data, we can better understand “the state we're in” and where we will need to direct our urgent attention and resources in the coming years.

A Massive And Deadly Disruption

On March 17, 2020, public and private K-12 schools in Illinois shut by executive order for two weeks to curb the spread of a deadly new virus that was threatening individual and community health and taking lives.⁴ Within days, colleges suspended in-person learning, in-person early childhood education and care services were suspended, and a statewide stay-at-home order was issued.⁵ Educators and staff at all levels raced to move learning online. As COVID-19 cases grew exponentially, school closures were extended until the end of the school year.⁶ A number of early childhood education and care centers transitioned to providing emergency services for children of essential workers.⁷

Many K-12 and postsecondary students also spent a portion of the next school year (SY20–21) learning remotely, and, when in-person learning returned, following unfamiliar safety protocols and continued social distancing.⁸ Early childhood education and care providers re-opened under significant capacity restrictions and safety protocols.⁹ To support people and institutions managing under conditions of extreme uncertainty and overseeing unprecedented transitions in programs and services, the federal government sent several relief packages to state governments, state agencies, educational institutions, and families.¹⁰

COVID-19 has continued to spread across the United States since it first arrived in winter 2020, and it wasn't until winter 2021 that vaccines became available to certain high-risk populations in the United States.¹¹ In the spring of 2021, vaccines became widely available for adults and children 16 years and over as well as were later approved for children aged 12 to 15. The timeline was much longer for younger children, with vaccines for children under the age of 12 approved in fall 2021. Only recently, in spring 2022, have vaccines been approved for children under 5 years old.

The pandemic took far too many lives in Illinois, nationally, and globally. Since the first dark days of the pandemic, more than 3.3 million Illinoisians have contracted COVID-19, and more than 34,000 have died of the disease.¹² Families and communities have been navigating devastating economic conditions, including significant job losses, and these hardships have not been felt equally across communities. Nationally, data shows the health and economic impacts of the pandemic most severely impacted Black, Latinx, and communities of low-income background.^{13, 14, 15} Indeed, many have noted that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequities across race, income, and disability in American society.

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every aspect of education in our state and across the nation, irrevocably impacting the lives of our students, families, and educators like no crisis before it. Educators, families, and leaders responded to the crisis with extraordinary resilience. In the face of an unprecedented threat to public health, the state leveraged stay-at-home orders to limit the spread of COVID-19 and prevent as many deaths as possible. Programs and schools leapt to launch online programs, to provide emotional and material support to students and, later, to reopen with new safety protocols. Students and families navigated virtual services and remote learning, even while grieving for loved ones lost to the pandemic and grappling with job loss, illness, and isolation.

From the first weeks of COVID-19, it was clear that the pandemic would dramatically affect children and students' learning and wellbeing. In 2020, Advance Illinois released

Education in a Pandemic, a qualitative report aimed at understanding how K-12 students experienced learning during the pandemic's early months.¹⁶ Students and caregivers predicted students would have increased need for academic, social, and emotional support and that inequities in education would widen. These findings spurred further questions about the pandemic's longer-term impact.

Now into the pandemic's third year, we are beginning to unpack how the crisis altered the educational trajectory of students, children, and families in Illinois and worsened existing gaps in opportunity and outcomes along lines of race and ethnicity, income, and geography. While data continues to be incomplete, a picture is emerging—one which suggests we have a great deal of additional work ahead of us to ensure students, families and educators get the support they need at this critical juncture.

At Nearly Every Level of Education, Illinois Saw Declines in Enrollment that Exceeded Historical Trends and Demographic Shifts

The onset of the pandemic made it harder for families to access programs and schools. In the throes of job loss and economic instability, health and safety concerns, as well as changes in where and how programs and services were available, it is not surprising that enrollment in schools, programs, and services changed dramatically.

State-administered early childhood education and care programs—crucial programs that promote healthy development of children aged birth through five—saw significant enrollment declines in fiscal year 21 (FY21).¹⁷ In some of the largest programs, enrollment losses were disproportionately represented by younger children, children from lower-income households and Black and Latinx¹⁸ children.

Enrollment decreased meaningfully for students in grades K-8 in both public and private schools, particularly among white and rural populations. As in early childhood programs, younger students tended to experience steeper declines in enrollment.

Undergraduate enrollment similarly saw a sharp decline in fall 2020, with the most significant losses occurring among Black and Latinx students in community colleges. In a bright spot, four-year institutions actually saw increases in student retention and a growing enrollment of Black and Latinx students.

Enrollment patterns in early childhood education and care and community colleges are particularly troubling. These programs are important levers for improving race and income-based disparities in kindergarten readiness and academic outcomes, along with lifetime earnings and employment in our state.

In K-12 Schools, the Pandemic Created and Widened Inequities in Access to Instructional Opportunities

Black, Latinx, and students from low-income households¹⁹, who spent more time learning remotely in the 2020–2021 school year (SY20–21), were not set up for success. These students were significantly less likely to have the digital infrastructure they needed for remote learning, even after significant state and local investments and efforts to expand access. Gaps in digital access meant lost learning time for students, and likely contributed to the substantial increases in race and income disparities in chronic absenteeism (missing 10 percent or more of school days in a year) in elementary and middle schools across the state.

Not surprisingly, data also suggests that classroom instruction was impacted. Teachers across Illinois worked hard to adapt lessons to computer screens and to socially-distanced or hybrid classrooms. Still, and perhaps inevitably, school performance declined on the Ambitious Instruction indicator of the Illinois 5Essentials Survey, an annual research-based survey of parents, teachers, and students in PreK-12 schools.

K-12 Schools Lack Adequate Resources to Address Increased Student Need for Mental Health Supports and Social-Emotional Learning Opportunities

Focus groups with students, caregivers, and educators revealed that student needs for mental health resources and social-emotional skill-building increased as a result of the pandemic. In addition to impacting students' emotional well-being, remote learning and hybrid or socially-distanced classrooms left students with fewer opportunities to develop or sharpen important skills such as working with a group, managing emotions, and persisting on challenging assignments. As a result, educators and students observed a regression in student's social-emotional skills coming into SY21-22.

In the face of deep challenges, schools (impressively) did a better job providing Supportive Environments, as measured by the 5Essentials Survey. That said, data suggest that by and large schools are struggling to provide students the support they need. Despite heightened mental health issues, few parents and students in our focus groups reported using in-school supports, citing limited resources (including too few counselors, social workers, and psychologists) and barriers to accessing existing services, such as student anxiety around missing instructional time, or poor parent-school communication.

Although Critical Data Gaps Remain, Available Information Suggests that K-12 Outcomes Declined Substantially

While state assessments were administered in SY20-21, lower-than-usual participation rates, especially among students in remote environments, Black and Latinx students, English Learners, and students from low-income households, mean we should refrain from drawing fixed conclusions. That said, what information we have raises serious concerns. Proficiency

on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness and the SAT declined significantly across all grades in English and Math. And although the graduation rate remained steady in SY20-21, the 9th Grade On-Track rate, which strongly predicts the likelihood of high school graduation based on freshman performance, declined; an ominous sign for future graduation rates.

Our Understanding of the Pandemic's Impact on Education Remains Incomplete

While the state worked diligently to collect and report data during the pandemic, like everything else, data collection was disrupted in Illinois and nationally, creating significant gaps in our knowledge, making it difficult to interpret the data we have, and constraining our ability to compare impact across states. What is clear from the information that we do have is that pandemic-related disruptions to education do not present a solely short-term crisis, but rather an ongoing challenge

with long-term consequences. We are already seeing that things have not gone "back to normal" in SY21-22. K-12 and community college enrollment have not rebounded, and K-12 educators are working with students displaying significant gaps in their social-emotional development. And given the significant disruptions in the foundational early years of learning in SY20-21, there is no doubt that our youngest learners (and educators) will be feeling the impact for years to come.

The Work Ahead is Increasingly Clear

Children and students from every corner of the state, of every age, and from every demographic have been deeply impacted by the pandemic. Addressing the impact of steep enrollment declines in critical years, serious changes to student attendance patterns, modes of learning and sense of well-being, and lost learning and developmental opportunities will not happen

without focused and sustained effort. Let the information in this report serve to remind local and state leaders the scale of the work ahead and what is at stake, even as creative and selfless efforts from educators, leaders and families over the past two and half years inspire us to rise to the ongoing challenge.



ENROLLMENT

During the Pandemic, Illinois Saw Enrollment Declines at Virtually Every Level

As the pandemic upended every aspect of day-to-day life, health, employment, schooling and care, access to programs and schools was severely disrupted and many students and families were forced to make difficult decisions regarding enrollment. During the first two years of the pandemic, student enrollment dropped significantly in state-administered early childhood education and care programs for children from birth through age 5, as well as in K-12 public and private schools, and in community colleges. At all levels, these enrollment drops far exceeded historical declines, and are larger than can be explained by state demographic shifts. What's more, preliminary data from K-12 schools and community colleges shows that student enrollment has not fully rebounded in SY21-22.

Early Childhood Education and Care Programs Saw Steep Enrollment Declines in FY21

Early childhood education and care programs lay a critical foundation for kindergarten readiness and future success by building children’s basic math and literacy skills, knowledge, physical development, and social-emotional skills, such as how to manage emotions and work with others.²⁰ Accordingly, it is of concern that Illinois saw significant enrollment declines in state-administered early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 5 between SY19–20 and SY20–21.

The pandemic’s impact on enrollment is evident: declines in these programs far exceed what would be expected due to state demographic shifts. The American Community Survey 1-year estimates, for example, show a 3 percent decline in children aged birth through 5 in Illinois from calendar year 2019 to 2020.²¹ While these estimates are rough, they indicate that declines in state population are much smaller than statewide enrollment declines in early childhood education and care, which were as high as 22 percent for some programs.

A number of barriers likely contributed to limited access to and lower enrollments in early childhood programs. Significantly, many early childhood providers shut down for a period

beginning in March 2020; and some permanently closed.²² The state made significant and successful efforts to stabilize the system following the pandemic, but providers were still limited in their ability to serve as many children and families due to capacity restrictions and faced challenges such as staffing shortages, managing safety protocols, and economic uncertainty.

The pandemic’s impact on work and public health may have certainly played an additional role. Some number of caregivers who lost jobs or shifted to remote work may have opted to keep children at home, and families coping with income instability or loss during the pandemic may have reconsidered the costs involved in early childhood care and education. And of course, all of this occurred against the backdrop of a virus that few understood, and that had families scrambling to keep themselves and their children safe. Of note, state-administered early childhood education and care programs serve many families of color and those of low-income backgrounds who were disproportionately impacted by the economic and health disruptions of the pandemic.

Illinois Earns High Marks for Supporting Early Childhood Education and Care through a Crisis

It is worth applauding the deep and concerted effort Illinois made to keep early childhood education and care afloat during the pandemic. To date, \$983 million has been spent on relief for providers (through Illinois’ Child Care Restoration Grants and other funding sources) with real results: of licensed child care centers that were open prior to the pandemic, 97.9 percent were still open through FY21.²³ The distribution of funds began early in the pandemic in summer 2020 and has continued into FY22.^{24, 25} Relief dollars were robust and well distributed. Indeed, analysis of funding in FY21 suggests that the distribution of funds was both widespread and racially, economically, and geographically equitable.²⁶ In addition, throughout the crisis, the state has taken steps to allow as many families as possible to access early childhood programs, establishing emergency care for children of essential workers, and reducing co-pays for families enrolled in Illinois’ Child Care Assistance Program among other measures.²⁷ Researchers have pointed to Illinois’ efforts as a national model for state support for early childhood education and care in a crisis.²⁸

Enrollment plummets in programs serving children birth through 5.

Below is a summary of enrollment declines in each individual state-administered program.²⁹ Individual children may be served by multiple programs. Because many early childhood education and care providers combine funding streams, current data systems do not allow the state to provide a single unduplicated count of children enrolled in these programs.

PROGRAM	TOTAL PERCENT OF ENROLLMENT CHANGE	TOTAL NUMBER OF ENROLLMENT CHANGE
<p>Child Care Assistance Program Enrollment change from FY19 to FY21</p> <p>A subsidized child care for children from low-income households while the parent or guardian is working or in school.</p>	↓ 20%	↓ 15,360* PER MONTH
<p>Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion Enrollment change from FY20 to FY21</p> <p>Preschool programs based in schools and community centers for children aged 3 through 5-years-old who are not yet eligible for kindergarten. Preschool for All can be half-day or full-day while Preschool for All Expansion is full-day and includes additional services. Children and families are screened for program admission and given priority based on factors including homelessness, disability, child welfare involvement, and low household income.</p>	↓ 22%	↓ 18,574 PER YEAR
<p>Prevention Initiative Enrollment change from FY20 to FY21</p> <p>An intensive program to support the healthy development of children under 3 and prepare them for later school success. Children and families are screened and qualify based on eligibility factors including homelessness, limited English fluency, household income, and teenaged parents. The program includes home visits, learning activities for children, and parent coaching. It may also be integrated into a center-based child care program.</p>	↓ 6%	↓ 1,094 PER YEAR
<p>Home Visiting Enrollment change from FY20 to FY21</p> <p>Services provide a variety of supports to families to improve child development, family health, and parenting skills. In addition to Prevention Initiative, Illinois supports three home visiting programs that each support a variety of program models: Healthy Families Illinois, Parents Too Soon, and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home visiting.</p>	<p>HEALTHY FAMILIES ILLINOIS ↑ 3%</p> <p>PARENTS TOO SOON ↓ 3%</p> <p>MATERNAL, INFANT, & EARLY CHILDHOOD ↓ 13%</p>	<p>↑ 38 PER YEAR</p> <p>↓ 44 PER YEAR</p> <p>↓ 117 PER YEAR</p>
<p>Early Intervention Enrollment change from FY20 to FY21</p> <p>A Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act program for children under the age of 3 with developmental delays or disabilities. Specialists create support plans for eligible children and provide services at locations convenient to the family such as at home, a childcare center, or a library.</p>	↓ 20%	↓ 5,275 PER MONTH

**Prior to the pandemic, enrollment in the Child Care Assistance Program was increasing.³⁰ The pandemic brought enrollments down starting in March 2020, though the magnitude of the enrollment decline from FY19 to FY21 may be understated in this data. Enrollment counts in the Child Care Assistance Program are calculated based on the quantity of reimbursements a child care provider receives. In order to provide relief during the pandemic, the state continued to reimburse providers, even if they had lower attendance. This may cause enrollments in FY21 to appear higher than they actually were.*

The Pandemic’s Impact on Early Intervention Services

Early Intervention is a service supporting infants and toddlers under age 3 who have developmental delays or disabilities. Eligible children receive services from specialists, who also help parents learn how to support their children’s development at home. Unlike some of the other services described above, the state is legally obligated to provide Early Intervention services to eligible children per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

From FY12 to FY19, a gradually increasing number of infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities were enrolled in this critical service.³¹ When the pandemic hit the United States in March 2020, however, services were quickly disrupted. Although Early Intervention transitioned quickly to telehealth, there were technical challenges involved in altering this system to operate safely during a pandemic. Between March and May 2020, enrollment plummeted and families that were eligible for services experienced increased service delays, as shown in the chart below. Service delays include cases where there is no provider to provide services, insufficient capacity to provide all necessary services, or a delay in one or more services.

Even after the initial transition to telehealth, enrollments remained low throughout FY21. Between FY20 and FY21, the number of children enrolled in Early Intervention declined by 21 percent. That said, with fewer children to serve, the system was better able to provide services for all families that sought them, reflected in a decrease in service delays.

Low enrollments in FY21 may be due in part to a drop in referrals, which decreased 25 percent from FY20 to FY21.³² Families of children suspected of having a developmental delay or disability are often referred to Early Intervention by their pediatrician, an early childhood program provider, or other professional. Less contact with these professionals during the pandemic, when the public was advised to remain at home, may have meant fewer referrals. Although the state took steps to facilitate equitable access to services, other barriers to access may have impeded families as well, including lack of digital infrastructure such as internet connectivity or a digital device to access telehealth services.

In the first few months of FY22, enrollments have begun to rebound.

Early Intervention services were severely disrupted early in the pandemic.

Number of Active Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) in Illinois by Month, FY19-FY22; Percent of Children with Individualized Family Service Plans who Experience Service Delays in Illinois by Month, FY19-FY22



Source: Illinois Department of Human Services Early Intervention Monthly Statistical Reports

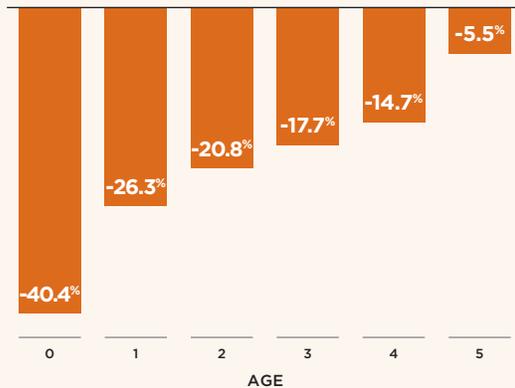
Early Childhood Program Enrollment Declined More for Younger Children

Two of the state's largest early childhood education and care programs showed higher rates of enrollment declines for the youngest children.³³ Among children aged birth through 5 enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program, enrollment declines were disproportionately greater for younger students. Enrollment of children less than 1-year-old dropped 40 percent

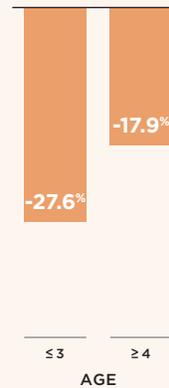
from FY19 to FY21, while enrollment of 5-year-olds dropped just 6 percent. Enrollment declines in Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion programs showed a similar pattern. Between FY20 and FY21 these programs lost a greater proportion of children aged 3 and under compared to children aged four and older.³⁴

Younger children experienced larger enrollment declines in the Child Care Assistance Program and Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion during the pandemic.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Child Care Assistance Program Monthly Average Enrollment in Illinois by Age FY19 to FY21



Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion Annual Enrollment in Illinois by Age FY20 to FY21



Source: Chapin Hall; Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map

Enrollment Declines Were Steeper for Children from Lower-Income Households

Enrollment in Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion programs declined disproportionately for children from lower income households between FY20 and FY21. The lower the household income, the steeper the enrollment decline. Enrollment of children from households in the lowest income category, 50 percent or less of the Federal Poverty Level, saw the largest enrollment decline: 27 percent between FY20 and FY21. Meanwhile, children from households at 400 percent or more of the Federal Poverty level saw the smallest decline: only 2 percent.

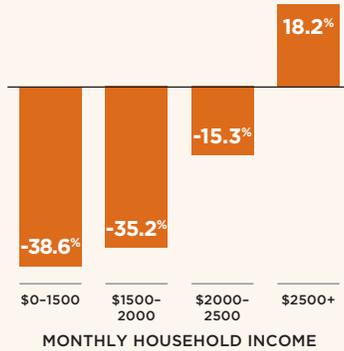
Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program showed a similar pattern of disproportionate enrollment declines for children from families in lower income categories between FY20 and FY21. Families earning less than \$1,500 a month, the lowest income group, showed the steepest enrollment decline (39 percent) compared to families in higher income groups. While the enrollment of children from all household income groups

earning less than \$2,500 monthly declined after the onset of the pandemic, enrollment of children from families in the highest income group (earning \$2,500 or more monthly) increased between FY19 and FY21.

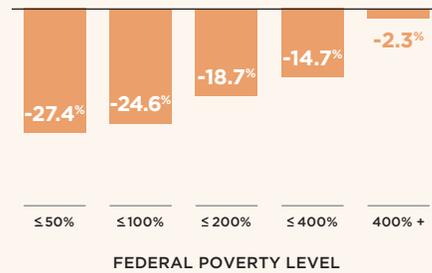
The increase in enrollment of children from households earning \$2,500 or more per month continues a trend that existed prior to the pandemic. This trend may reflect a shift in the income levels of families in Illinois. It is also likely related to an expansion of program eligibility. The first recent eligibility expansion came in July 2019 when the state allowed families earning up to 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level to qualify. Eligibility was expanded again in October 2019 to include families earning 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.³⁵ Although enrollment dipped early in the pandemic across all income categories, families earning \$2,500 or more a month saw a quick rebound in enrollment and a continuation of pre-pandemic increases.³⁶

Children from the lowest income households experienced larger enrollment declines in the Child Care Assistance Program and Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion during the pandemic.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Child Care Assistance Program Monthly Average Enrollment in Illinois by Monthly Household Income FY19 to FY21



Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion Annual Enrollment in Illinois by Household Income FY20 to FY21



Source: Chapin Hall; Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map

Enrollment Declined More for Black and Latinx Children

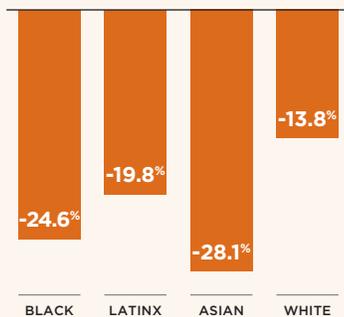
Enrollment declines in state-administered child care and preschool during the pandemic varied by race. Black and Latinx children, whose families were disproportionately harmed by the health and economic impacts of the pandemic at large, saw the largest enrollment declines.^{37, 38}

Enrollment for Black children, who make up the largest number of Child Care Assistance Program enrollees, declined by 25 percent between FY19 and FY21. That decline was 5 percentage

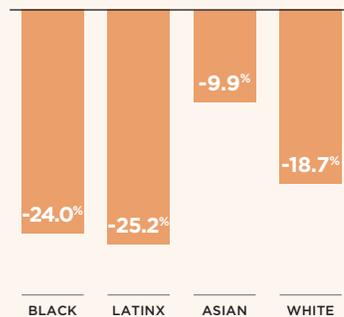
points higher than the average statewide decline of 20 percent. Enrollment in Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion declined 25 percent for Latinx children and 24 percent for Black children between FY20 and FY21. Those declines were 3 percentage points and 2 percentage points higher respectively than the average statewide decline of 22 percent. For Asian children, enrollment declined more than average in the Child Care Assistance Program and less than average in Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion programs.

Black and Latinx children experienced larger enrollment declines in the Child Care Assistance Program and Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion than their white peers as a result of the pandemic.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Child Care Assistance Program Monthly Average Enrollment in Illinois by Race/Ethnicity FY19 to FY21



Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion Annual Enrollment in Illinois by Race/Ethnicity FY20 to FY21



Source: Chapin Hall; Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map

K-12 Enrollment Dropped Significantly in SY20-21

K-12 enrollment has been declining in Illinois for many years, reflecting demographic changes. But the steep and alarming drop in enrollment for both public and private schools in 2021 is only partially explained by historic trends. Combined public and private K-12 enrollment dropped 3.0 percent between SY19-20 and SY20-21 (60,900 students), far more than the typical 0.5 percent to 1.5 percent annual enrollment declines in Illinois over the last 5 years.

Enrollment drops appear to outpace changing state demographics. Estimates from the American Community Survey show a decrease in school aged children between calendar years 2019 and 2020 of 1.5 percent, around half the size of the K-12 enrollment decline from SY19-20 to SY20-21.³⁹ While these population estimates are rough, they align with historic trends in K-12 enrollment. Moreover, it is unlikely that Illinois' enrollment drop can be accounted for by students moving to other states, as nearly every state in the nation saw drops in public school enrollment from SY19-20 to SY20-21.⁴⁰

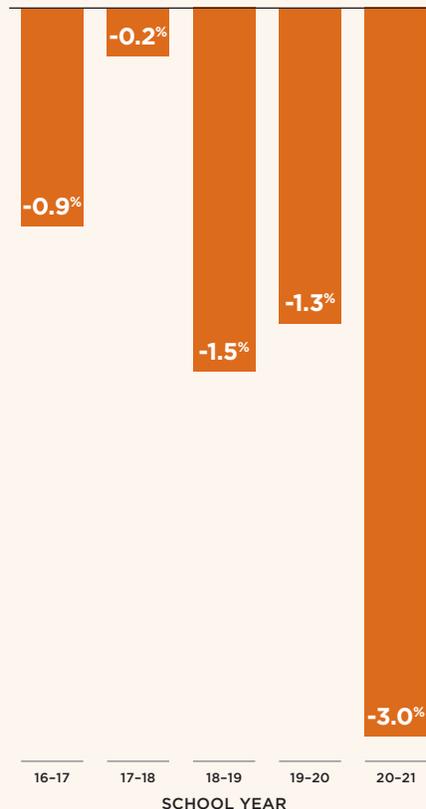
Despite the common assumption that public school enrollment drops can be explained by more affluent parents pulling their children from public schools and enrolling them in private schools, K-12 enrollment declined even more steeply in Illinois private schools. Between SY19-20 and SY20-21, the percentage drop in K-12 private school enrollment was 3.5 percent (5,600 students)—higher than the 3.0 percent enrollment decline in public schools (55,300 students).

It appears that public school students who left the system in SY20-21 did not return in SY21-22. Preliminary enrollment data for public K-12 enrollment from SY21-22 shows an additional enrollment drop of 1.5 percent, rather than an enrollment rebound.

It is possible that families chose to homeschool their children during the pandemic, however homeschooling counts are unavailable at the state level, as Illinois is one of only a small number of states that does not require families to register with the state or their local district.^{41, 42}

The drop in enrollment in Illinois K-12 schools in SY20-21 outpaced historical declines.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Public and Private K-12 Enrollment in Illinois, 2017-2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card; Illinois State Board of Education Annual Report

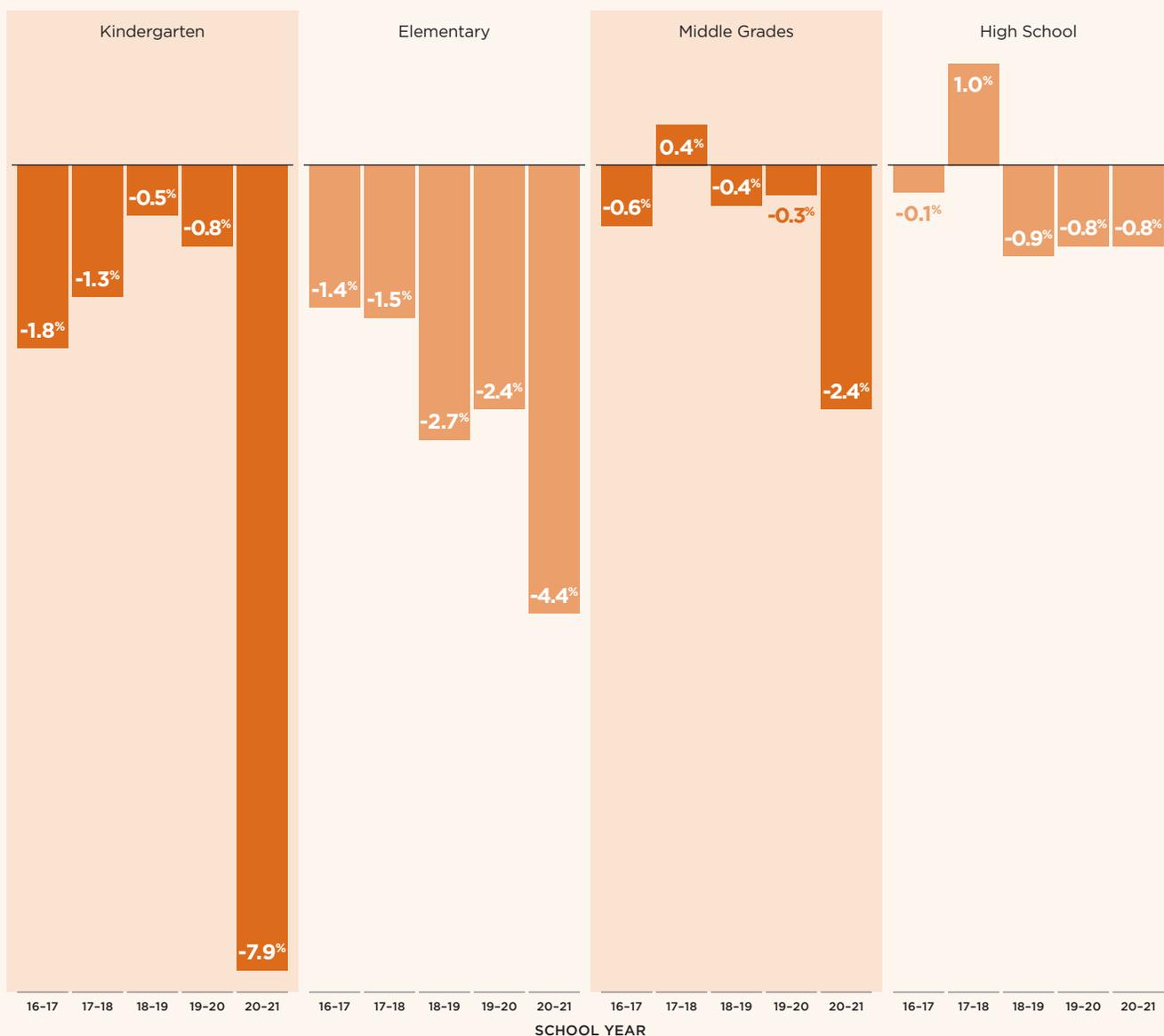
K-12 Public and Private Schools Lost More Students in Earlier Grades

Enrollment in K-12 schools historically has declined more quickly from year to year in the earliest grades, in line with changing state demographics. That said, in SY20-21, the enrollment drop in kindergarten to 8th grade far exceeded historic trends. The drop was especially steep for kindergarten enrollment, which fell 7.9 percent in SY20-21. The elementary

grades (1-5) saw the next largest enrollment decline in 2021, at 4.4 percent, while middle school grades (6-8) saw a decline of 2.4 percent. The pandemic appeared to have little to no impact on high school enrollment, which decreased just 0.8 percent in SY20-21, in line with declines in recent years.

K-12 enrollment declines were concentrated in the early grades.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Public and Private K-12 Enrollment in Illinois, 2017-2021

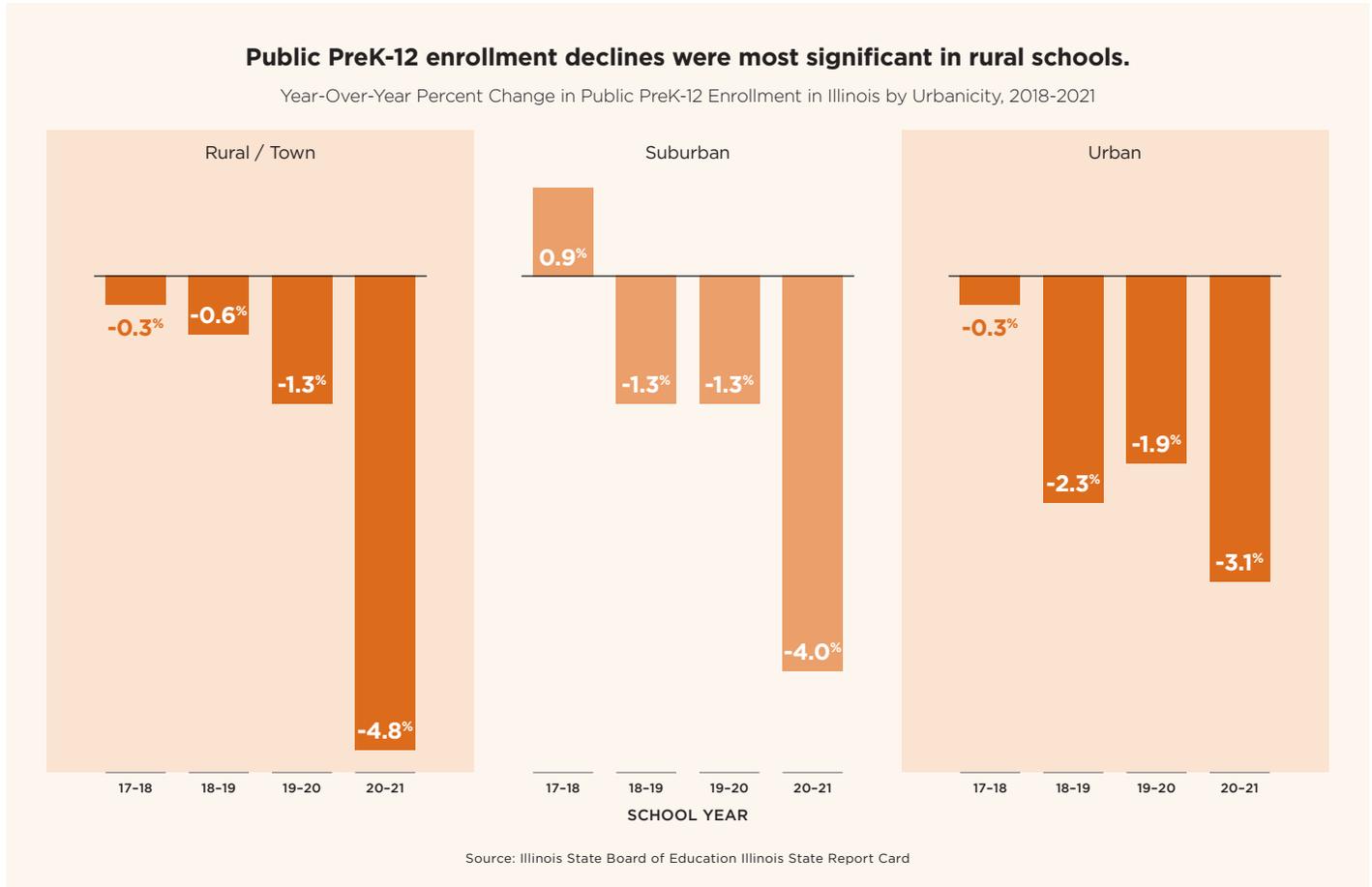


Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card; Illinois State Board of Education Annual Report

Public PreK-12 Enrollment in Illinois Dropped More in Rural Schools

Prior to the pandemic, public enrollment in Illinois PreK-12 schools was dropping more quickly in urban districts than in suburban or rural districts, as shown in the chart below.⁴³ During the pandemic, the trend shifted, with rural PreK-12 districts

losing 4.8 percent of enrollment between SY19-20 and SY20-21 compared to 4 percent for suburban districts and 3.1 percent for urban ones.⁴⁴



Enrollment Declined Most for White Students in Illinois PreK-12 Schools

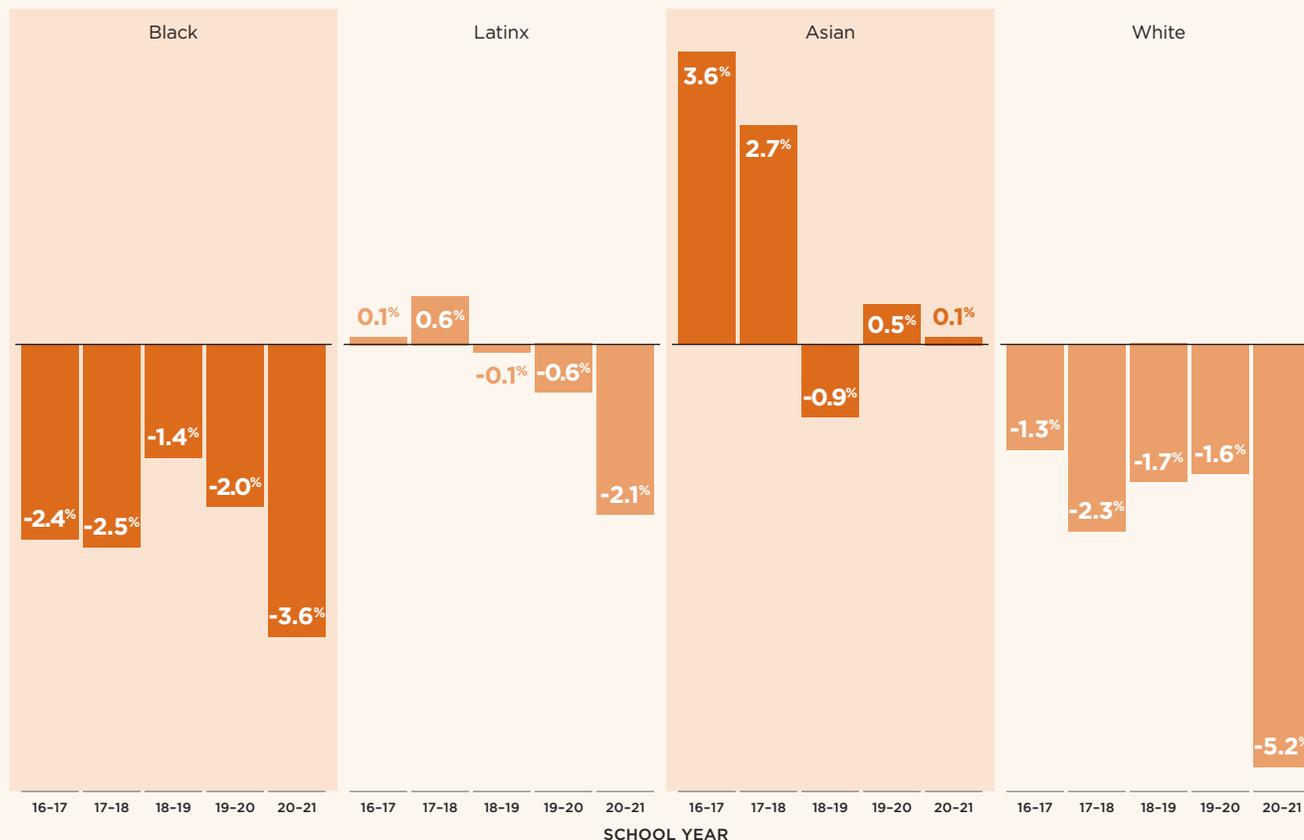
White students in PreK-12 schools saw the steepest enrollment declines due to the pandemic. Between SY19-20 and SY20-21, school enrollment dropped 5.2 percent for white students, 3.6 percent for Black students and 2.1 percent for Latinx students. All of these declines are much larger than one-year drops for any racial or ethnic group in the past decade, as shown in the chart on the next page.

The steeper enrollment drops for white students compared to Black students deviate from historical trends. Between

SY16-17 and SY19-20, PreK-12 schools in Illinois lost Black and white students at similar rates. While the enrollment drop for Latinx students is smaller than the decline for Black and white students, it's significant. Prior to the pandemic, Latinx PreK-12 school enrollment was growing, then remained fairly stable between SY16-17 and SY18-19, with a small decrease in 2020. Notably, enrollment did not drop across all races—public PreK-12 enrollment for Asian students between SY19-20 and SY20-21 was stable.

Public PreK-12 enrollment declines were most significant among white students.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Public PreK-12 Enrollment in Illinois by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card; National Center for Education Statistics Locale Classification

The disproportionate enrollment decline for white PreK-12 students in SY20-21 is not simply due to the decline in enrollment in rural Illinois schools. Enrollment drops for white students between SY19-20 and SY20-21 were disproportionately high across rural, suburban, and urban

areas. The disproportionate drop in white public school enrollment also cannot be attributed to white families transferring to or enrolling in private schools during the pandemic: private school enrollment for all races declined between SY19-20 and SY20-21.⁴⁵

Enrollment Declined Among English Learners and Students with IEPs

PreK-12 enrollments dropped among English Learners and students with IEPs (Individualized Education Programs). English Learners saw a decrease in enrollment of 0.5 percent (1,163 students) from SY19-20 to SY20-21 after more than 5 years of significant growth. It is not clear if this decline reflects that English Learners were more likely to unenroll due to the pandemic. It is possible that schools' identification process, which occurs through a home language survey and screening process, was disrupted by the pandemic, resulting in fewer English Learners being identified.^{46, 47}

Enrollment also declined among students with IEPs, though the particular impact of the pandemic on these students is not clear. Enrollments dropped 4.2 percent from SY19-20 to SY20-21, larger than the statewide enrollment decline. However, in the 5 years prior, the number of PreK-12 students with IEPs fluctuated significantly. In fact, before the pandemic, between SY18-19 and SY19-20, enrollment of students with IEPs dropped 4.6 percent (12,343 students), a larger year-over-year decline than was seen in SY20-21. As with English Learners, it is likely that the pandemic impacted identification and evaluation of students with IEPs.⁴⁸

Undergraduate Enrollment Declines in Higher Education Were Steepest for Community Colleges

There is a direct relationship between increased levels of education and everything from health outcomes and civic participation to employment rates and lifetime earnings.⁴⁹ A significant or sustained drop in postsecondary enrollment is of real importance to the longer-term health and well-being of our residents and our economy.

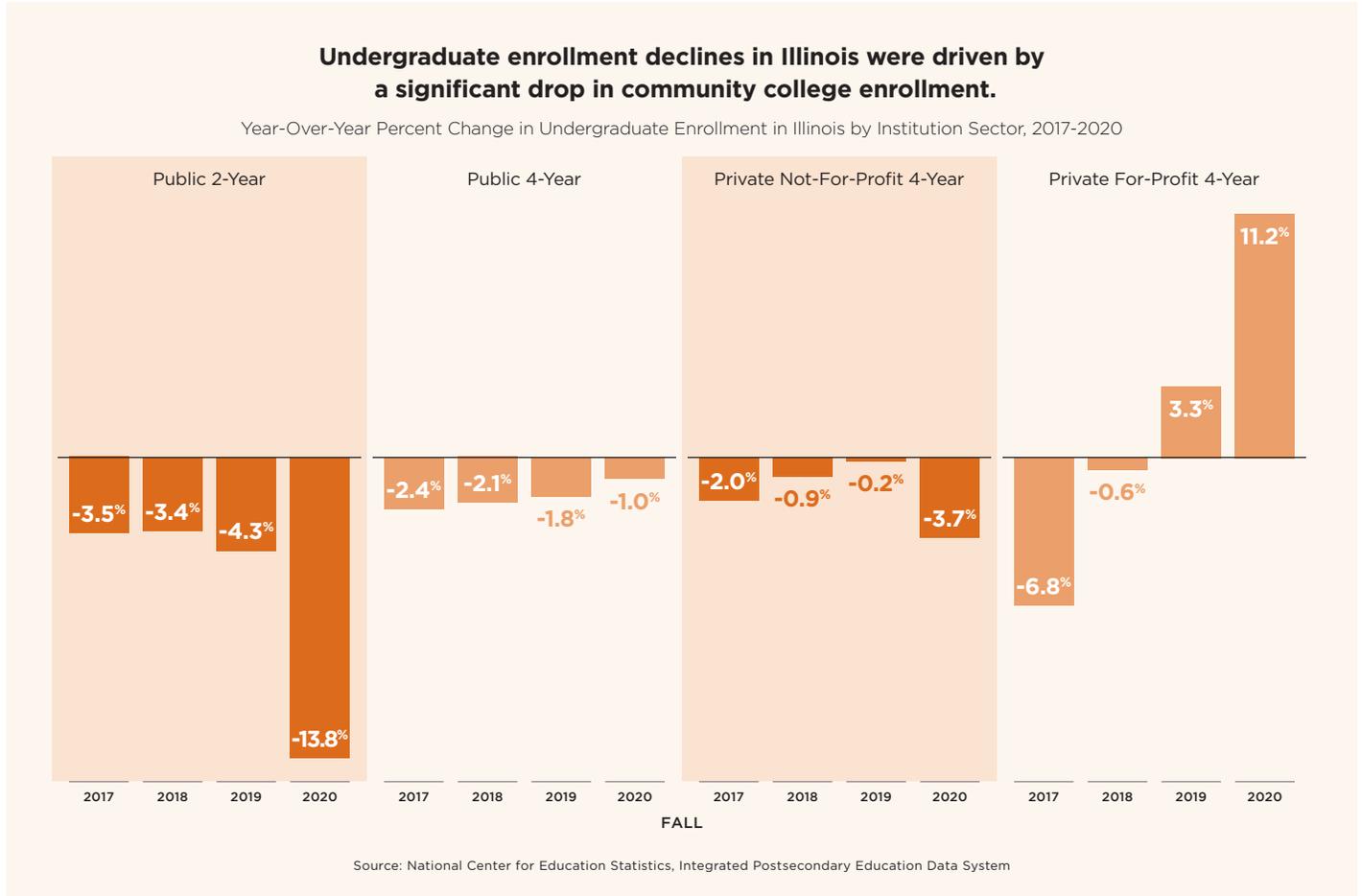
The pandemic brought on a significant decline in undergraduate enrollment at Illinois colleges and universities. Overall, undergraduate enrollment in Illinois dropped by 6.8 percent or 39,500 students between fall 2019 and fall 2020, nearly all of it driven by a drop in community college enrollment. Community colleges saw a 13.8 percent enrollment decline, for a total loss of 37,600 students. These institutions serve high proportions of part-time students and tend to have lower year-to-year student retention rates than four-year institutions.^{50, 51}

Only a small portion of the undergraduate enrollment decline in fall 2020 can be explained by historic trends. For several years prior to the pandemic, undergraduate enrollment in Illinois dropped about 3 percent annually statewide, and 4 percent annually in community colleges.

In the wake of the pandemic, enrollment changes in public and private four-year undergraduate programs in Illinois varied, as shown in the chart below.

- Undergraduate enrollment at public four-year institutions appears not to have been significantly negatively impacted by the pandemic. These institutions lost more students annually in the three years leading up to the pandemic than they did in fall 2020 and fall 2021.
- Enrollment in private not-for-profit four-year institutions appears to have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. These institutions saw a substantial enrollment drop in fall 2020 compared to prior years and have not seen enrollments rebound in fall 2021.
- Private for-profit four-year institutions, meanwhile, fared well during the pandemic. These schools saw a sizable enrollment increase in both fall 2020 and fall 2021.

Notably, enrollment in Illinois graduate programs increased during the pandemic, in contrast to undergraduate enrollment. Graduate enrollment increased by 2.3 percent or 3,557 students between fall 2019 and fall 2020, the highest year to year increase in graduate enrollment in the last 5 years.



Enrollment declines were more prominent among first-time students than continuing students, although community colleges saw declines between fall 2019 and fall 2020 in the number of first-time students, transfer students, and continuing students. Like their two-year counterparts, four-year institutions saw declines in first-time and transfer students. However, unlike community colleges, four-year institutions saw a 2.9 percent increase in continuing students. Full-time undergraduate

retention at four-year institutions actually reached a high of 82 percent in fall 2020.⁵² Although enrollment trends likely reflect a complex set of economic and social factors, state investments in institutions of higher education and efforts at the institution level likely played a role in mitigating enrollment declines among returning students and bolstering undergraduate retention in four-year institutions in fall 2020.⁵³

Undergraduate enrollment declines in fall 2020 were driven more by decreases in enrollment of first-time students than continuing students.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Undergraduate Enrollment in Illinois for First Time, Transfer, and Continuing Students by Level of Institution, Fall 2019 to Fall 2020



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

A variety of factors may have influenced the fall 2020 undergraduate enrollment decline. The U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey, an initiative aimed at quickly gathering data on the impact of the pandemic, revealed that financial concerns and hardships (including changes to family income) contributed to decisions not to enroll in or return to higher education in fall 2020.⁵⁴ Household Pulse Survey data also highlighted that concerns about contracting COVID-19 were also a factor in student enrollment, although in aggregate, we could not identify a positive relationship between institution-level declines in fall 2020 enrollment and county-level COVID-19 rates.

Household Pulse Survey data also highlighted the possibility that changes to class formats may have informed students' decisions about postsecondary enrollment. Statewide, we did not see a correlation between institutional enrollment declines and the proportion of remote courses at a school. However, given that more than 1 million households in Illinois did not have access to digital devices or broadband prior to the

pandemic, lack of access to technology for remote learning likely played a role in individual students' ability to access schooling during the pandemic.⁵⁵

Changes to class formats also took a toll on coursework that relied heavily on in-person curriculum, specifically Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes.⁵⁶ About a quarter of community college enrollments are in CTE programs, which help students build skills and credentials for high-value jobs and are more likely to require in-person, hands-on curriculum.⁵⁷ While institutions worked to continue these courses during the pandemic, transitioning these classes to online or socially-distanced environments presented real challenges. Not surprisingly, then, 12-month enrollment in CTE courses dropped 17.6 percent between SY19-20 and SY20-21, far above the overall decline of 14.2 percent.⁵⁸ This issue helps explain some of why community college enrollments were so significantly impacted by the pandemic.

Community College Enrollments Declined More Among Older Students

Enrollment patterns across community colleges and 4-year institutions also reflect differences in populations served. Community colleges are more likely to serve older students, who in turn may be supporting families or holding down jobs. Indeed, between SY19–20 and SY20–21, 12-month

undergraduate enrollments in community colleges declined the least among students aged 17–20 (-9.4 percent), with larger drops among older students aged 21–24 (-11.7 percent), 25–30 (-13.8 percent), 31–39 (-16.4 percent), 40–55 (-25 percent) and over 55 (-38.2 percent).⁵⁹

Black and Latinx Undergraduates Lost Ground in 2-year Enrollment While Gaining Ground in 4-year Enrollment

The pandemic's significant impact on undergraduate enrollment in Illinois community colleges disproportionately affected Black and Latinx students who have long been excluded from institutions of higher education in Illinois.⁶⁰ Between fall 2019 and fall 2020, community college enrollment dropped 16 percent for Black students, 17 percent for Latinx students, 13 percent for Asian students and 12 percent for white students. As discussed, students' enrollment decisions were often driven by economic and health concerns. Black and Latinx students and families were more severely impacted by pandemic-related economic disruptions and more likely to experience illness and death from COVID-19 than their white counterparts.^{61, 62, 63}

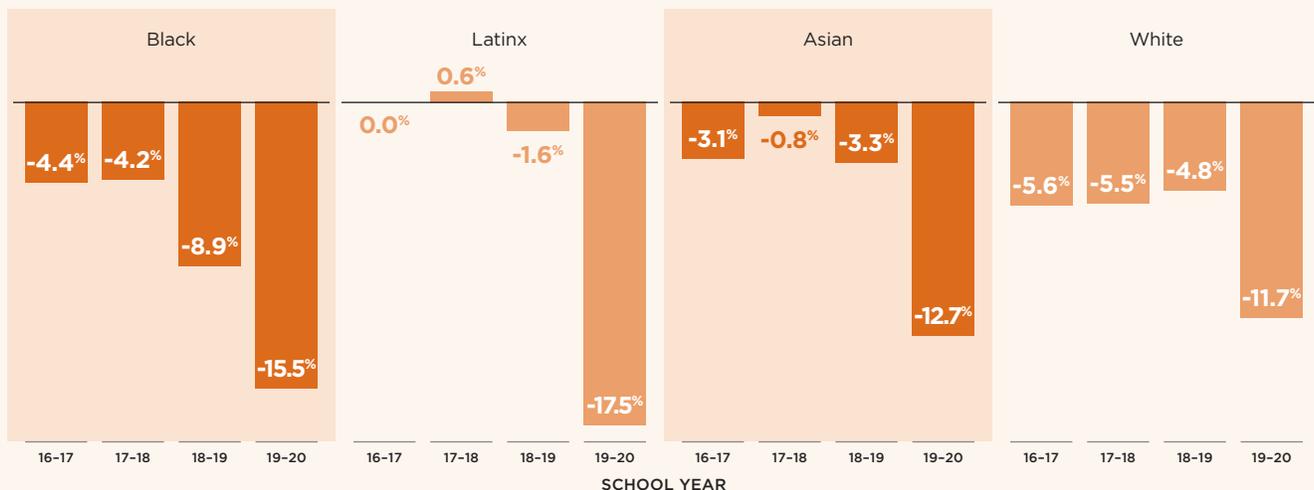
The fall 2020 community college enrollment decline for Latinx students, the highest proportional drop among all races/ethnicities, represents a particularly significant setback, given historic trends. Prior to the pandemic, undergraduate community college enrollment for Black and white students had been declining each year, although at much lower rates

than the declines seen in fall 2020. Latinx undergraduate community college enrollment, on the other hand, was holding steady between fall 2016 and fall 2019, before experiencing a steep decline in fall 2020.

At the same time, Black and Latinx students saw significant enrollment *gains* at four-year institutions in fall 2020.⁶⁴ Between fall 2019 and fall 2020, undergraduate enrollments at four-year institutions rose 3 percent for Black students, higher than any year in the 5 years prior, although these increases were concentrated solely at for-profit universities. Within the same time period, undergraduate enrollment increased by 6 percent for Latinx students, the largest year-over-year percentage gain in Latinx undergraduate enrollment of the last 5 years. For Asian and white students, the pandemic made little impact on enrollment trends, with Asian undergraduate enrollment in four-year institutions continuing to steadily increase and white enrollment continuing to steadily decrease.

Community college undergraduate enrollments declined most for Latinx and Black students.

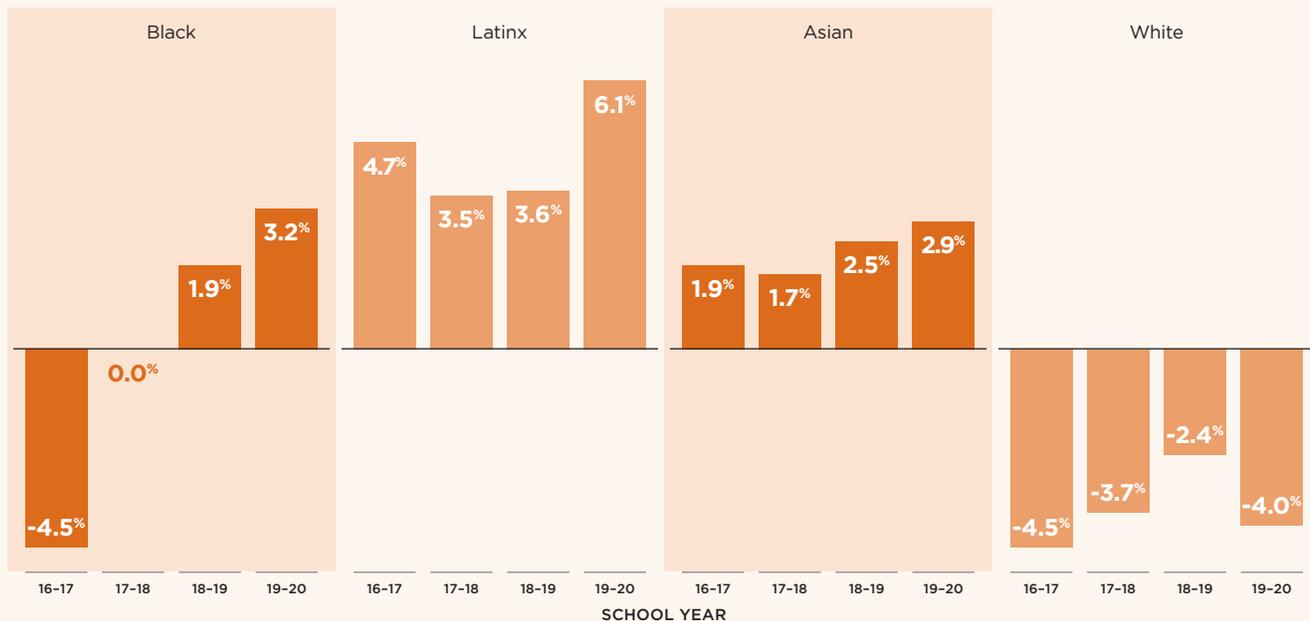
Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Undergraduate Enrollment at Public 2-year Institutions in Illinois by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-2020



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

Undergraduate enrollments in 4-year institutions increased significantly among Latinx students during the pandemic, accelerating years of growth.

Year-Over-Year Percent Change in Undergraduate Enrollment at 4-year Institutions in Illinois by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-2020



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

Enrollment Dropped Across the B-20 Continuum in SY20-21, but Different Groups Were Impacted Across Programs and Grade Levels

At each education level, the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on the enrollment of certain groups of children or students. The groups that were most affected, however, varied across system, program, and sector, reflecting the complexities of the pandemic's impact on access to programs and schools and the context in which families were able to make choices about enrollment.

By Age or Grade Level:

The younger the child, the steeper the enrollment decline. State-administered early childhood programs lost proportionately more of their youngest children. And in K-12 schools, enrollment declines were largest in kindergarten, followed by elementary grades 1-5, and middle school grades 6-8. Although age data is not available for all institutions of higher education, in community colleges enrollment dropped more for older students.

By Household Income:

The pandemic's impact on children from low-income households varied by program and sector. **For children birth through 5-years-old, enrollment declines in state-administered**

early childhood programs were disproportionately higher for children from lower-income households. There is not yet evidence that K-12 or undergraduate students from low-income households saw outsized enrollment decreases.^{65, 66}

By Race or Ethnicity:

Enrollment declines for Black, Latinx, Asian, and white students likewise showed different patterns by program and sector. **The enrollment of Black and Latinx students declined disproportionately in state-administered early childhood programs and in community colleges.** However, in PreK-12 schools, enrollment declines were largest for white students.

By Geography:

In state-administered early childhood programs and in institutions of higher education, enrollment declines in urban, rural, or suburban areas were inconsistent, varying by program or sector. However, **declines in PreK-12 enrollment were highest among rural schools**, a shift from historical trends.

Subject + Verb + Adjective

↓ ↓ ↓

K-12 INSTRUCTION



The Pandemic Increased Disparities in K-12 Students' Access to High-Quality Instruction

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Schools delivered instruction under extraordinarily difficult circumstances during SY20-21. Most PreK-12 schools operated remotely in the fall, and teachers needed to figure out how to engage and support students through a computer screen.

The use of remote learning, while necessary for safety, had a significant and inequitable impact on students' access to instruction, with Black and Latinx students and students from low-income households spending less time in classrooms and in live contact with their teachers. Data suggests that not only the time students spent on instruction, but the quality of that instruction suffered in SY20-21, with those declines impacting Black and Latinx students the most.

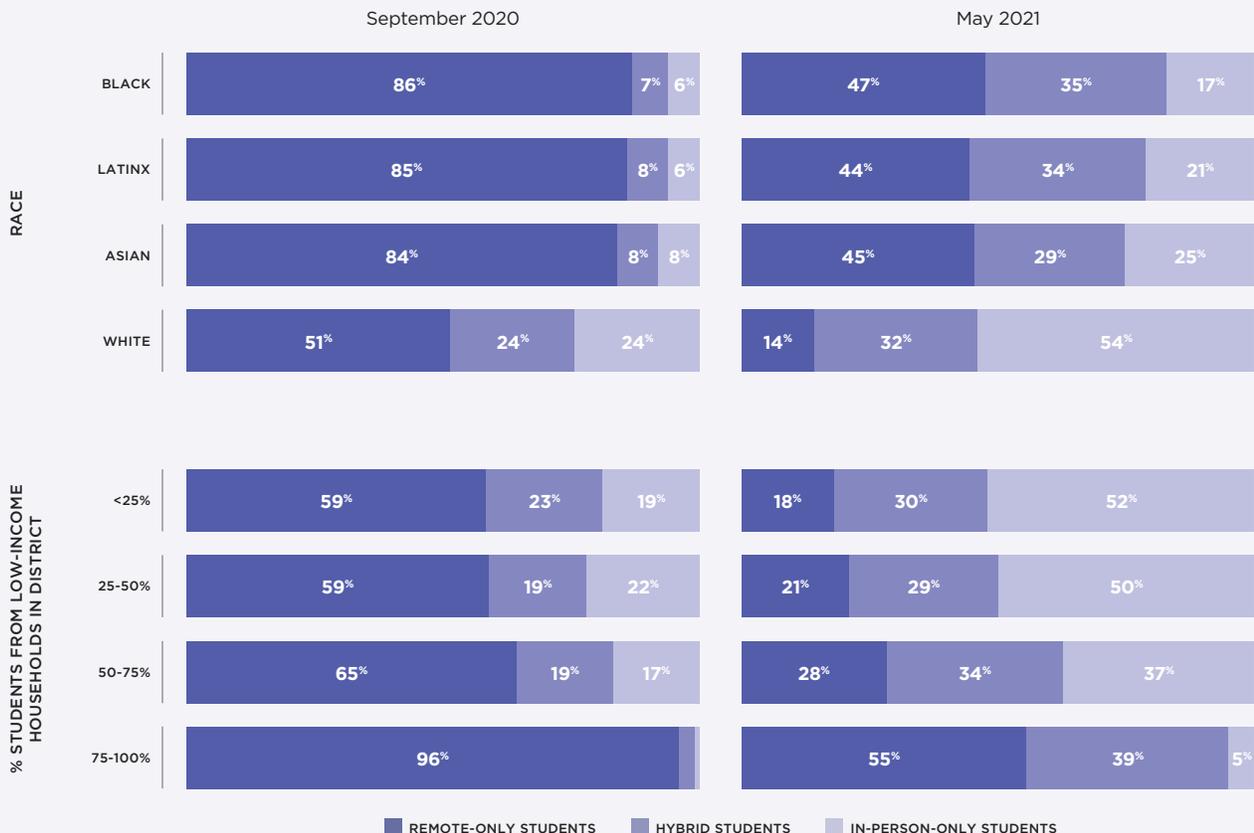
Students of Color and Students from Low-Income Households Were More Likely To Be Learning in Remote Settings

The use of remote learning in PreK-12 schools, though marked by significant challenges, was crucial for the safety of students, educators, and families throughout the pandemic. Remote learning was most prevalent in spring 2020, in the early months of pandemic. During SY20-21, more public and private schools gradually shifted to in-person learning. A common practice was “hybrid” learning, where groups of students alternated days of in-person and online instruction to allow for social distancing.⁶⁷ Use of remote-only, hybrid, and in-person schooling varied across contexts. Urban districts were much more likely to be majority remote-only, while rural districts were more likely to opt for in-person or hybrid learning. By fall 2021, the start of SY21-22, schools across Illinois had returned to in-person learning.⁶⁸

The prevalence of remote learning in urban areas contributed to differences across race and ethnicity in the amount of time students spent in in-person classrooms during SY20-21. Black, Latinx, and Asian students in Illinois were far more likely to be in remote-only learning compared to white students, as shown in the chart below. Although in-person and hybrid learning became more common later in the year, differences across racial groups persisted. By May 2021, only 14 percent of white students were still learning in entirely remote environments, as compared to 47 percent of Black students and 44 percent of Latinx students.

Students of color and students from low-income households were more likely to be in remote and hybrid learning modalities throughout the course of SY20-21.

Percent of Students in each Learning Modality in Illinois Public Districts by Race/Ethnicity and District Percent Students from Low-Income Households, September 2020, May 2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Disparities by Race and Income Persisted in Access to Digital Infrastructure

When schools abruptly shuttered in March 2020 as a precaution against rising COVID-19 cases, school district, state, and local leaders were confronted with a massive challenge. The inequities in access to home internet service and personal computers, long a concern, became a crisis. As remote schooling got underway, hundreds of thousands of Illinois households with school-aged children lacked access to internet or digital devices, according to 2018 data from the American Community Survey.⁶⁹ Black and Latinx children as well as children from low-income households were significantly less likely than their peers to be in households with access to digital infrastructure.

Despite state investment and significant gains, gaps in device and digital access persisted. Data from the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey show that 75 percent of respondents with K-12 students in their households reported that they always had access to the internet and 81 percent to a digital device, such as a laptop, for educational purposes in SY20-21. That means that anywhere from 20-25 percent of students had inconsistent, limited, or no access. When you consider that lack of access to digital infrastructure effectively means no access to school when students are learning remotely, these gaps are especially significant. Worse still, because this survey was conducted online, it likely undercounts households with limited or no digital infrastructure.

In addition to overall gaps, Household Pulse Survey data further suggests that access to digital infrastructure varied by race and ethnicity. Asian and white respondents were more likely than Black and Latinx respondents to report that K-12 students in their households had consistent access to digital devices and internet infrastructure. For example, while 81 percent of Asian respondents and 78 percent of white respondents reported that K-12 students in their households always had the internet available for learning, only 72 percent of Latinx respondents and 67 percent of Black respondents did so.⁷⁰

Access to the internet and digital devices for K-12 students also varied by household income. Respondents with incomes above \$100,000 were more likely than those in households earning less to report that their K-12 students always had access to the internet and digital devices for learning. For example, while 91 percent of respondents with household incomes above \$100,000 reported that K-12 students in their households always had a digital device available for learning, only 71 percent of respondents in households earning less than \$50,000 did so.

Illinois Mobilizes to Address the Digital Divide

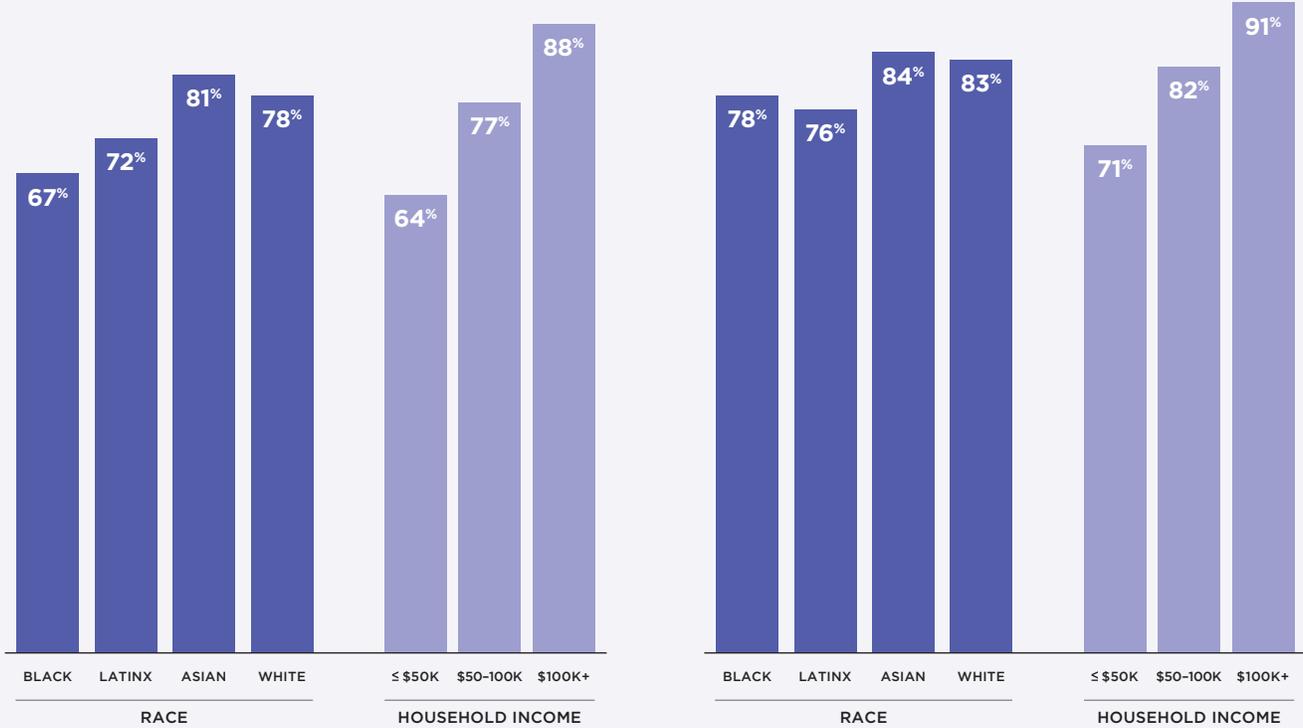
It was clear early on in the pandemic that in order for schooling to continue in any meaningful and equitable way, significant ground would have to be made in closing the digital divide. Armed with federal relief funds, Illinois invested millions to provide digital devices and internet access in schools with the most need. Funds were distributed to districts through Elementary and Secondary Relief Digital Equity grants.⁷¹ Notably, early in the pandemic, many districts mobilized to purchase crucial digital infrastructure even before federal funds arrived.⁷² These efforts yielded meaningful results. Data from the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey estimate that early in the pandemic (spring 2020), 73 percent of respondents with K-12 students in their households reported that they always had access to a digital device for educational purposes. This number increased to 81 percent in fall 2020, reflecting efforts in the intervening months to provide students with access to devices.

Inequitable access to digital infrastructure for learning posed a barrier for students in remote learning environments.

Percentage of K-12 Students with Consistent Access to Internet and Digital Devices for Educational Purposes as Reported by Survey Respondents in Illinois Public and Private Schools by Respondent Race/Ethnicity and Household Income, September 2020-May 2021

Internet Always Available to K-12 Students for Educational Purposes

Digital Device Always Available to K-12 Students for Educational Purposes



Source: United States Census Household Pulse Survey

Note: The Household Pulse Survey was disseminated digitally, so households with limited access to digital infrastructure are likely underrepresented.

“Our EL [English Learner] population—we went [to their homes] to see what was going on and they just couldn’t connect [to the internet]. Problem solving took so much time. Classes kept going and they were just missing them completely. Tech issues created the biggest barriers for EL students, so that gap grew for them academically, socially, culturally—they were so isolated from school, teachers, instruction. It was never resolved.”

SUBURBAN EDUCATOR (LATINX)

Chronic Absenteeism Increased Significantly in SY20-21

Not surprisingly, many students with limited access to in-person learning environments and digital infrastructure ended up spending less time in classrooms in SY20-21, as demonstrated through attendance data.

Measuring the amount of time students were absent from school during the height of the pandemic is challenging. Individual districts, schools and educators varied in how they counted students present during remote and hybrid learning, with definitions of attendance varying significantly across the state.⁷³ As a result, caution should be used when comparing attendance data for SY20-21 to pre-pandemic SY18-19.

Nevertheless, data suggests that student attendance declined in SY20-21. Average daily school attendance hit a decade low of 92.5 percent, following ten years at or above 93.9 percent. More significantly, chronic absenteeism—defined as students with excused or unexcused absences that account for more than 10 percent of the school year—grew between SY18-19 and SY20-21, from 18 percent to 21 percent.

Chronic absenteeism for Black and Latinx students between SY18-19 and SY20-21 increased far more than for white students, further widening racial disparities in chronic absenteeism rates. As shown in the chart below, chronic absenteeism grew by 5 percentage points for Latinx students and 8 percentage points for Black students compared to only 1 percentage point for white students. By 2021, white students had a chronic absenteeism rate of only 14 percent compared to 25 percent for Latinx students and 39 percent for Black students, the highest rate for any subgroup analyzed.

Chronic absenteeism also grew at above-average rates for English Learners and for students from low-income households, as shown in the chart below. In SY18-19, English Learners had a chronic absenteeism rate of 17 percent, just below the 18 percent average. By SY20-21, their chronic absenteeism rate grew 7 percentage points to 24 percent. Chronic absenteeism for students from low-income households, already at 25 percent in SY18-19, saw a 7-percentage point increase, rising to 32 percent in SY20-21.

Public schools saw a widening of inequities in chronic absenteeism during SY20-21.

Chronic Absenteeism Rate in Illinois Public Schools by Student Group, 2019-2021



The gap in chronic absenteeism rates between Black and white students grew from 18% to 25%.

Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card

The growth in chronic absenteeism between SY18–19 and SY20–21—and widening gaps in school attendance for Black and Latinx students, students from low-income households, and English Learners—was driven by elementary and middle schools. Overall, chronic absenteeism rates grew from 13 percent to 16 percent in elementary schools and 15 percent to 20 percent in middle schools. Chronic absenteeism in high schools saw no increase but remained high at 25 percent.

Decreases in student attendance may have been inevitable in SY20–21, given the myriad challenges the pandemic created for students and families. In addition to remote learning and lack of access to digital infrastructure posing barriers for many students, particularly Black and Latinx students and students from low-income households, an array of other barriers outside of the classroom would have prevented students from attending school. Students who contracted COVID-19 or who were exposed to the virus may have had to miss school due to quarantines or isolation periods. As discussed in the ‘K-12 Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health’ section of this report, students were also managing mental health challenges that may have made it harder for them to log on to classrooms or make it to school. Finally, as an educator notes below, older students were often needed to support their younger siblings or maintain jobs to help support their families.

The pandemic’s impact on chronic absenteeism was most significant in elementary and middle schools.

Chronic Absenteeism Rate by School Level
in Illinois Public Schools, 2019-2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card
Note: This data excludes charter schools

“We saw [in SY20–21] with most of our minority and low-income students is [that] they had responsibilities—older siblings taking care of younger siblings, some kids had jobs—they weren’t in remote learning by spring. They just stopped coming. We learned more about the complexity of their lives. We understood better how important the work is that we do, but also how much there is that is required of our kids. It’s not that they didn’t want to come—their whole families were counting on them.”

URBAN EDUCATOR (LATINX)

Some Students Spent Little to No Time in Live Contact with Teachers in SY20-21

Another way to quantify students’ access to instruction in SY20-21 is by the frequency of “live contact” with a teacher, whether by video chat, phone, or in-person. Remote instruction often took place via video chat, with teachers and students present on camera or audio. Learning could also be online and “asynchronous,” with students completing posted assignments on their own. For students without digital access, remote learning could mean completing written assignments retrieved from the school and perhaps speaking to a teacher periodically over the phone.

At intervals throughout SY20-21, respondents to the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey in households with K-12 students were asked the number of days in which those students had live contact with a teacher over the previous 7 days. During SY20-21, white respondents were more likely to report that students in their households had live contact with a teacher than were Black or Latinx respondents, as shown in the chart to the right. For instance, only 10 percent of white respondents said K-12 students in their households had 0 days of live contact with a teacher in the last 7 days compared to 14 percent of Latinx respondents and 17 percent of Black respondents.

Frequency of live contact with a teacher also varied by income. The chart below shows that K-12 students in households with incomes above \$50,000 a year were more likely than those living in households with incomes below \$50,000 a year to have live contact with a teacher one or more days per week. Students in households with incomes over \$100,000 were by far the most likely to have live contact with a teacher four or more days per week.

The Pandemic’s Impact on Access to High Quality Teachers

Teacher quality is the single most important school factor influencing student achievement. The pandemic’s impact on the size, quality, and diversity of our teacher workforce as well as the equitable distribution of effective teachers across districts will have important implications for student success. Early data indicate that Illinois has managed to continue to grow its PreK-12 teacher workforce, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷⁴ Still, ongoing impacts to the workforce and candidate pool remain to be seen. Accordingly, in winter 2022, Advance Illinois will publish additional analysis examining what we know so far about the impact of the pandemic on Illinois’ teacher workforce.

Student access to live contact with teachers varied by race/ethnicity and household income during SY20-21.

Number of Days K-12 Students had Live Contact with Teachers as Reported by Survey Respondents in Illinois Public and Private Schools by Respondent Race/Ethnicity and Household Income, September 2020-May 2021



Source: United States Census Household Pulse Survey

The Nature and Quality of Instruction was Impacted by the Pandemic

Given the challenges of teaching and learning during the pandemic, data from the Illinois 5Essentials Survey show that classroom instruction was significantly impacted. Between SY18-19 and SY20-21, school performance declined on the Ambitious Instruction indicator from the Illinois 5Essentials Survey. The decline was evident in elementary, middle, and high schools and in urban, rural, and suburban areas.

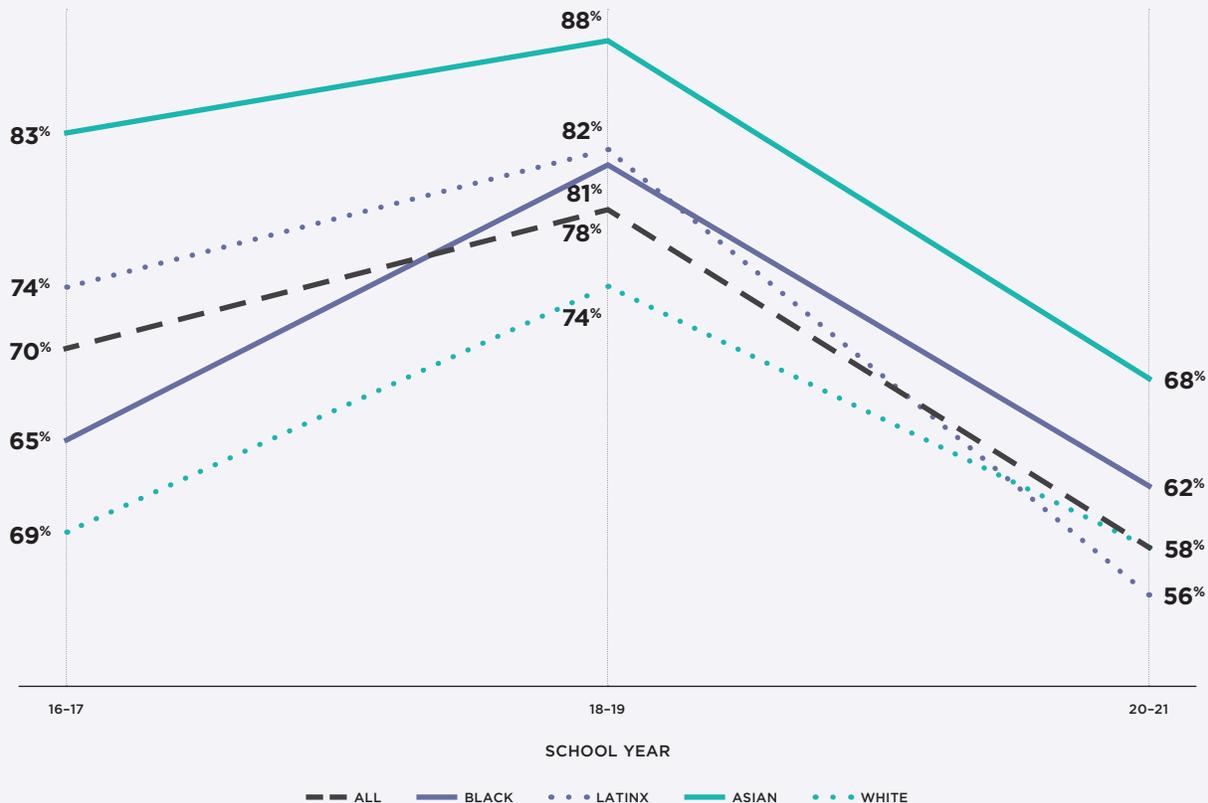
The 5Essentials Survey rates schools on five indicators that research shows are highly correlated with improved outcomes for students, including better school attendance, gains in standardized test scores, and higher graduation rates. Scores are calculated based on survey responses from students and teachers. Our analysis evaluated each school's performance against a benchmark score of 50.⁷⁵

Ambitious Instruction measures to what degree classes are challenging and engaging, instruction is clear and well-structured, and how encouraged students are to build and apply knowledge. This indicator consists of four individually rated components: English Instruction, Math Instruction, Academic Press (teachers expecting students to work hard to meet academic standards), and Quality of Student Discussion (students participating in class discussion that builds critical thinking skills). Between SY18-19 and SY20-21, Illinois schools' performance declined on each of these individual components.⁷⁶

The decline in school performance on the Ambitious Instruction indicator in SY20-21 affected Latinx students most significantly. In SY18-19, 82 percent of Latinx students were in schools scoring above 50. That proportion dropped 26 percentage points to 56 percent in SY20-21. Across the state, performance dropped 20 percentage points, from 78 percent to 58 percent.

School performance on the Ambitious Instruction Essential from the 5Essentials Survey declined in SY20-21.

Percentage of Students in Schools Performing at or Above 50 on Ambitious Instruction in Illinois Public Schools by Race/Ethnicity, 2017, 2019, 2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education 5Essentials Data Files; Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card; Chicago Public Schools School Profile Information
 Note: Only schools with at least 50% student participation and at least 10 student responses on the 5Essentials survey are included in this data.

K-12 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND MENTAL HEALTH



The Pandemic's Impact on Student Well-Being is Clear, as is the Ongoing Need for More School and Community Resources

The pandemic had an impact on students' emotional well-being and social emotional development in ways that are continuing to emerge. To address increased need, students, parents, and educators in focus groups facilitated by Advance Illinois highlighted the importance of increased student support. Many schools did a remarkable job providing safe and supportive environments for students in SY20-21. At the same time, schools were hard-pressed to meet growing needs, as they faced challenges in accessing and providing mental health resources for students and frequently lacked sufficient staff capacity to offer comprehensive mental health support and social-emotional learning opportunities.

The Pandemic and Virtual Schooling Impacted Students' Emotional Well-Being

The hardships of the pandemic took a toll on young people in Illinois. While some were only mildly impacted, or even thrived, others experienced turmoil and loneliness, heightened economic stress, and the loss of loved ones to COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control reported that nationally, Emergency Room visits for suspected suicide attempts among adolescents aged 12-17 rose in 2020 during the pandemic and continued to rise in SY20-21.⁷⁷

The first year of the pandemic was an especially troubling time. Our focus group participants reported that in spring 2021, students experienced unusually high levels of stress-related behaviors, as well as feelings of depression, loneliness, fear, and hopelessness. At this point, a year into the pandemic, many young people had endured a year of uncertainty, social isolation, and rising death tolls.

“We started to see more changes in our son...[he was] asking questions about if we are all dying. [We] had to sit him down and make him understand the world is suffering, but it was too much for him to process... he was worrying about who was vaccinated, who was going to get sick—he started to empathize more, but he seemed affected in a way that felt too painful..”

SUBURBAN PARENT (ASIAN)

Students, parents and teachers reported that the isolation of virtual schooling was especially hard for kids. In remote environments, students had less opportunity to form connections with peers and educators. Parents and students described students in the spring of 2021 as feeling overwhelmed, burnt out, depressed, lonely, and anxious.

“Kids wanted connection. Period. I had grown senior students calling me crying asking me to meet them at McDonald’s to teach them because they just wanted to see someone face-to-face, and there was nothing I could do about it.”

URBAN EDUCATOR (BLACK)

Yet not all students struggled. According to focus group participants, some thrived socially and academically during remote learning, appreciating the increased flexibility, time spent with families, and fewer experiences interacting with large groups of peers.

“She [my daughter] really thrived in virtual school. She missed her friends, and it was hard, but the pace, doing the work on her own—she found a groove and really got into it. We spent more time together. She got to breathe. It was the silver lining for us.”

URBAN PARENT (BLACK)

Returning to in-person learning in SY20-21, students and their parents reported that kids were feeling grateful to be back, more connected to school and others, and hopeful about the future.

“I never enjoyed school before [the pandemic]. I just always thought you had to go and everything. But then when the whole COVID thing happened, it makes you grateful because you couldn’t go. You couldn’t do anything then. No sports. No friends. So now I want to make the best of everything—I don’t want to miss anything.”

RURAL STUDENT (WHITE)

Focus Groups with Illinois Students, Parents, and Educators

Advance Illinois facilitated a series of focus groups to better understand the impact of the pandemic on public school students across the state. Discussion focused on students' engagement with school, emotional well-being, social-emotional skills, and relationships with adults and peers. We know these factors play a critical role in students' academic success, yet the state collects little quantitative data that would provide insight on the mental wellbeing of young people or their social and emotional development. Focus groups, conducted in winter 2022, helped fill this gap.

Participants were asked to recall their observations and experiences from spring 2021, when students were still learning in a variety of formats—including in-person, online, or a mix of the two. They were also asked about SY21-22, when most students had returned to school campuses. The 80 participants included:

- 19 educators, 19 students, and 42 parents
- 23 from urban districts, 26 from suburban districts, and 31 from rural districts
- 30 (38 percent) people of color, predominantly Black and Latinx
- 15 parents took part in one of two focus groups that were conducted in Spanish

Still, returning to in-person learning presented its own challenges. Students reported being worried about getting COVID-19 and were sad to miss events and extracurriculars at times when they needed to quarantine due to illness or exposure. They also worried about complying with safety protocols and felt anxious about socializing in groups and meeting new people.

“[The pandemic schooling] created, like, social anxiety, because you have been separated so long... when you come back to school, it’s a social setting, some people don’t know how to act—especially if you are a freshman. It is brand new, and it’s nerve-racking. ‘Come in, wear a mask, go on this sidewalk. You can’t go back through that hallway.’ It’s like what if I do something wrong? If I do something I’m not supposed to do and get COVID?”

RURAL STUDENT (WHITE)

Disruptions to Schooling in SY20–21 Left Gaps in Young People’s Social-Emotional Development

By SY21–22, Illinois students were back to in-person learning. Yet educators, parents, and students all agreed that student behavior and social-emotional development were not yet “back to normal.” Focus group participants reported that during a difficult and highly disrupted year, students’ ability to regulate their feelings and interact with others did not grow as it typically would. Educators and students across regions, race, and ethnicity, overwhelmingly reported that returning students demonstrated weaker social-emotional skills than pre-pandemic.

Students and educators in focus groups reported that the pandemic disruptions in SY20–21 contributed to more verbal and physical conflicts between students in SY21–22. Educators noted students exhibiting more challenging behaviors in the classroom, including difficulties managing emotions and impulses, trouble socializing (including empathizing with

others and establishing new relationships), and difficulty communicating effectively with peers and teachers (including a reluctance to engage in large groups). Educators also noted gaps in social-emotional skills that directly interfered with academic work, such as working independently, persisting in a task, and maintaining academic honesty.

“This year [2022] particularly my freshmen, they are babies. I taught elementary [before] and these kids now are like 4th graders. They are struggling; they are emotionally 10-year-olds. They are missing social skills, communication skills, maturity. The skills to self-regulate, how to talk to other individuals. I even had a student who came in the other day and threw a temper tantrum—I haven’t seen it since elementary. The inability to verbalize emotions and needs. How to handle discourse. They don’t have the verbal skills—know how to get their feelings out. They missed that skill-building.”

URBAN EDUCATOR (WHITE)

What is Social-Emotional Learning?

Social-emotional skills include self-control, the ability to manage and regulate emotions, empathy, relationship building and responsible decision-making.⁷⁸ The Illinois State Board of Education maintains a set of Social Emotional Learning Standards that elementary schools often teach using formal curricula, particularly in the early grades, and that teachers at all grade levels ideally integrate with academic learning.⁷⁹ A common practice is for students who need additional help learning these skills to be offered extra support in or outside the classroom, and research has linked strong social-emotional skills with better mental health, fewer school absences or suspensions, and higher academic achievement.⁸⁰

Focus group participants said that social-emotional challenges were especially prevalent for the following groups: students with disabilities, those already experiencing social or emotional challenges prior to the pandemic, those with little or no access to extracurricular activities, in-person learning, or the technology needed for remote learning during the pandemic, and students transitioning between schools, whether due to a family move or matriculation to middle or high school.

“We have seen a significant uptick in behavioral issues...for anybody this has been a huge transition, but for a lot of our underclassmen, imagine being ripped out of their 7th grade, 8th grade year and then have to transition to high school online or you did a whole year of 8th grade online.”

SUBURBAN STUDENT (BLACK)

Illinois Schools Performed Higher on ‘Supportive Environments’ than Ever Before

In light of students’ heightened social and emotional needs during the pandemic, educators made efforts to provide safe and trusting school environments. Students and teachers who completed the SY20–21 Illinois 5Essentials Survey gave schools high ratings on creating “Supportive Environments” for learning.

“Supportive Environments” is one of five indicators of effective schools measured by the Illinois 5Essentials Survey. Research shows performance on these indicators are highly correlated with improved outcomes for students, including better school attendance, gains in standardized test scores, and higher graduation rates. Scores are calculated based on survey responses from students and teachers. Our analysis evaluated each school’s performance against a benchmark score of 50.⁸¹

Between SY18–19 and SY20–21, schools improved substantially on the Supportive Environments indicator and on four of its six individual rated components: Student-Teacher Trust, Safety, Academic Personalism (a measure for grades kindergarten through 8 only, teachers connect with students in the classroom and support them in achieving academic goals), Peer Support for Academic Work (a measure for grades kindergarten through 8 only, students demonstrate behaviors that lead to academic achievement).⁸²

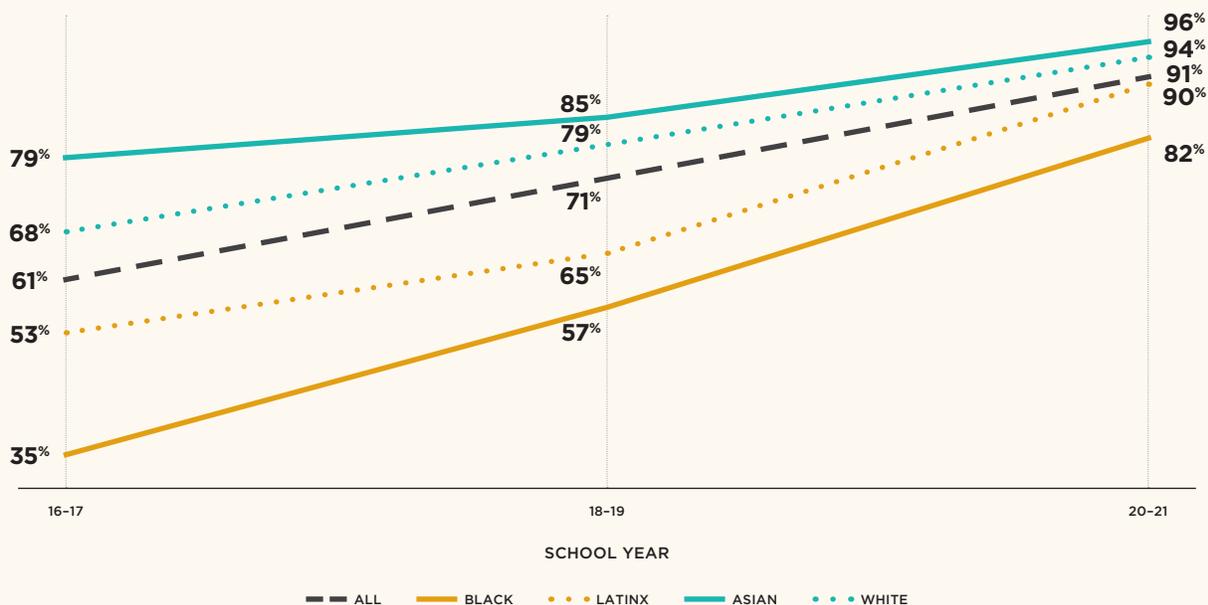
High school performance declined on two components of Supportive Environments between SY18–19 and SY20–21: School-Wide Future Orientation (a measure for high schools only, the school supports all students in planning for life after graduation) and Expectations for Postsecondary Education (a measure for high schools only, the school expects all students to go to college and promotes college readiness).⁸³

Despite declines in these two components, high school performance rose overall on the Supportive Environments indicator. In fact, school performance on this indicator improved across every K-12 grade level and across rural, suburban, and urban schools.

And while disparities by race/ethnicity in access to Supportive Environments persist, they have narrowed in SY20–21. The percentage of Black students attending schools rated at or above 50 on Supportive Environments rose from 71 percent to 91 percent between SY18–19 and SY20–21, a 20-percentage-point gain. The gain for Latinx students was 25 percentage points, from 65 percent to 90 percent between SY18–19 and SY20–21. The percentage of white students attending schools scoring at or above 50 increased only 15 percentage points (but was much higher to begin with), rising from 79 percent to 94 percent.

School performance on the Supportive Environments indicator from the 5Essentials Survey improved during the pandemic.

Percentage of Students in Schools Performing at or Above 50 on Supportive Environments in Illinois Public Schools by Race/Ethnicity, 2017, 2019, 2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education 5Essentials Data Files; Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card; Chicago Public Schools School Profile Information
 Note: Only schools with at least 50% student participation and at least 10 student responses on the 5Essentials survey are included in this data.

Schools Face Significant Barriers to Providing Accessible Supports for Student Mental Health and Responding to Gaps in Social-Emotional Learning

While schools improved on measures of student support, according to the 5Essentials Survey, our focus group participants pointed to urgent unmet needs. Educators in our focus groups highlighted that the anxiety students were experiencing, their disruptive behavior, and their struggles with skills such as regulating emotions and interacting with peers are too significant for classroom teachers to address on their

own. Parents, students, and educators observed an increased need for mental health services and programs that teach social-emotional skills in light of the pandemic. Participants noted that these services were already in short supply prior to the pandemic, and are now woefully inadequate to meet deeper needs. In addition to expanding services, parents and students urged schools to do more to help students access them.

Even When Schools Provide Mental Health Services, Students and Families Experience Barriers to Access

Participants noted many barriers to students' ability to access available mental health services at school. Some parents, particularly in suburban and rural areas, said they didn't know what services schools offered. Spanish-speaking parents noted a lack of communication in Spanish about resources. And participants noted that the stigma surrounding mental health also prevents students and families from seeking out services. Some parents reported that they were afraid to reach out and ask for help for their child for fear of being perceived as a poor parent, and so preferred to seek services elsewhere.

"I would never ask a school social worker to support my family with anything. I don't like the way parents as a whole are perceived in my district...I asked about an option at school and security got involved because they perceived my conversation as hostile because of a conversation with an administrator... Everything is perceived as hostile. Everything is perceived as parents being out of place."

SUBURBAN PARENT (BLACK)

Students who want counseling at school are often left to self-advocate, participants said, which can be difficult given mental health stigma in and outside of schools. And receiving services like counseling during the school day presents challenges for students. Students may feel ashamed or scared of what peers will think if they are observed visiting a counselor, or if one appears at the classroom door to pull them from class. Missing a class for counseling and needing to catch up on work is an added stressor, participants said, especially for students who are already struggling, given the disruptions to academic learning in the wake of the pandemic.

"We have resources, but they aren't the right ones. My students are exhausted, they are fragile, and they need to be in my class with a predictable rhythm. The counselors are wonderful, but if the only time they see you is to come out of my class, then you worry about my work you missed, what the kids think—the system around the support makes the support more stressful. So for kids who are just exhausted and need strategies, they never get them. Not until they are in crisis. That is the cycle."

URBAN EDUCATOR (UNKNOWN)

Counselors, Social Workers, and Psychologists are in Short Supply

Focus group participants—including parents, students, and educators—widely called for broader access to mental health resources and for social-emotional learning programs available to all students. But they recognized that schools currently lack the capacity to provide these services. Parents and educators identified the insufficient numbers of counselors and social workers, and the limited capacity of existing staff, as obstacles to more widespread student support.

"Many parents are looking for help. High school students did have access to counselors, but it wasn't the kind of counseling that children really needed. Everyone was experiencing the stress, but that wasn't something that was addressed with counseling. And counselors are saturated with work; it's not meaningful counseling...As a mom, you can request to meet with social workers. But there aren't that many. I tried to get that service for my daughter, because it's a right you have. You have to ask for it and be persistent, but even then, it's challenging."

SUBURBAN PARENT (LATINX)

According to focus group participants, staffing vacancies are part of the problem. Even when districts have money to set aside for counselors, social workers, and psychologists, there aren't always a sufficient number of applicants to fill those roles.

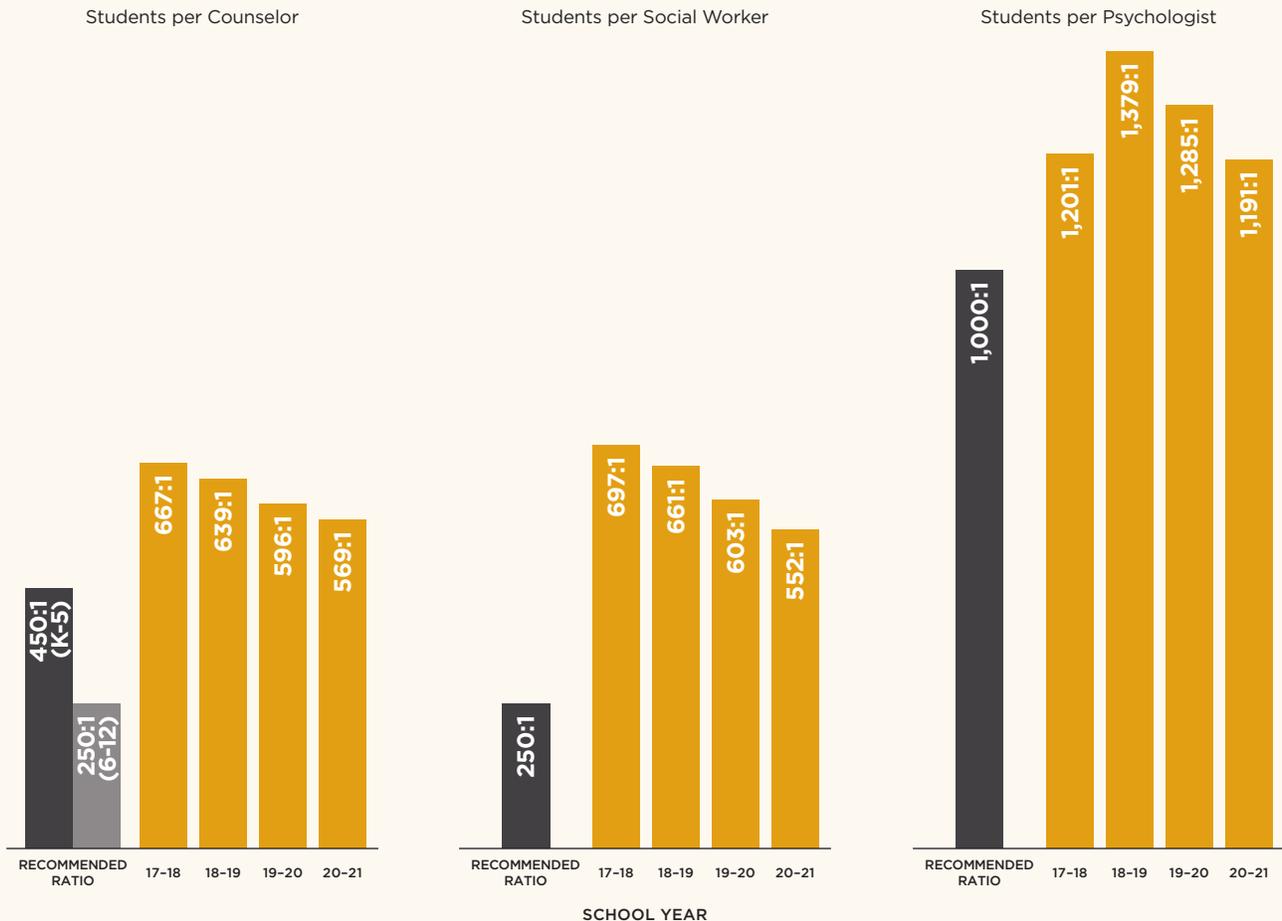
“I have a budget to add more counselors to our staff, but I don’t have any candidates. In our district, we have so many vacancies for counselors, social workers. We have students we have referred for urgent needs outside of school—they are all on waiting lists and can’t be seen; so they are just going without. We do what we can, but it is tiny patches on huge holes.”

URBAN EDUCATOR (BLACK)

With increases in funding and support staff, as well as decreases in student enrollment statewide, student access to support staff in Illinois has increased over time. Still, statewide, Illinois is not meeting the recommended number of students per counselor, social worker, and psychologist. These staff provide crucial services: counselors fulfill duties including social-emotional counseling and academic advising, while social workers and psychologists provide a variety of services that address the needs of the whole student including behavioral, social-emotional, and mental health supports. The research behind Illinois’ state funding formula calls for one counselor per 450 students in grades K-5, and one for every 250 6-12 grade students.⁸⁴ Yet statewide, public schools had only one counselor for every 569 students in 2021. Research recommends that schools provide one social worker per 250 students and one psychologist per 1,000 students.^{85, 86} Statewide, there is one social worker for every 552 students and one psychologist per 1,191 students.

Illinois public school districts do not have sufficient numbers of support staff.

Ratio of Students to Counselors, Social Workers, and Psychologists in Illinois Public School Districts, 2018-2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

The severity of the challenge varies geographically. Urban schools tend to have a better ratio of students to counselors than suburban and urban schools. Suburban schools,

meanwhile, have a better supply of social workers and psychologists. In urban and rural areas, the ratio of students to social workers is more than three times what it should be.

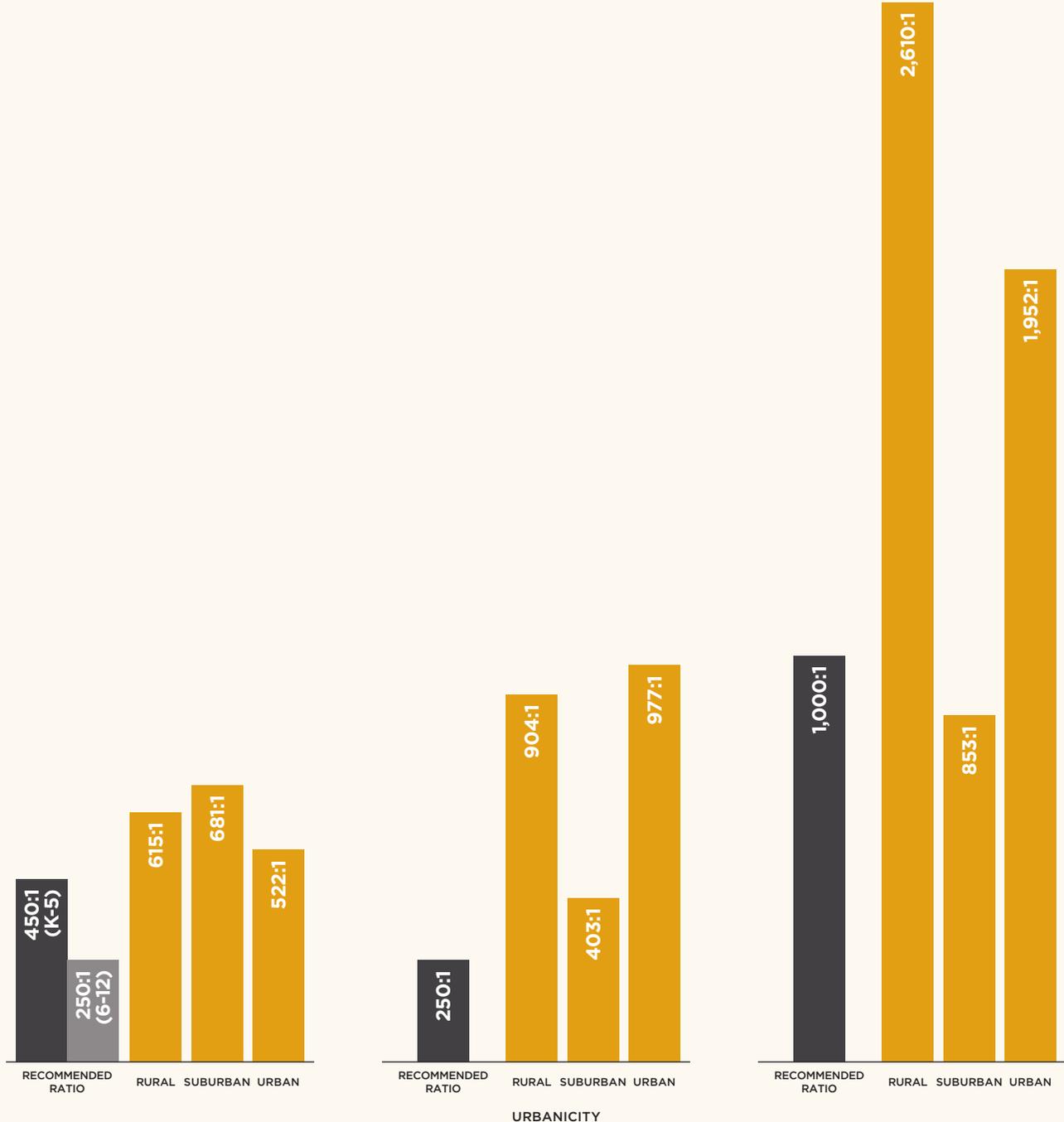
Access to support staff varies across geographies.

Ratio of Students to Counselors, Social Workers, and Psychologists in Illinois Public School Districts by Urbanicity, 2021

Students per Counselor

Students per Social Worker

Students per Psychologist



Source: Illinois State Board of Education; National Center for Education Statistics Locale Classifications

PreK-12 Teachers are Stretched Too Thin

When schools have an insufficient number of support staff, it places an extra burden on teachers. In our focus groups, teachers reported that with too few specialists, they were responsible for implementing social-emotional programming and attending to individual mental health needs—all in addition to delivering instruction amidst unprecedented behavioral issues as students return to in-person learning.

“As a teacher, [SY21–22] is the hardest year I’ve had in my career of 25+ years experience. It’s 95% back to normal, but kids are all over the place—behavior issues are way up, kids are emotionally fragile, immature, functionally behind, lacking independence—teachers are having to do so much more because the kids have such diversity of need and such extremity of demonstrating those needs. Some kids are having their best year and are years ahead, and the kids who are having their worst year are years behind. I have never seen anything like it.”

RURAL EDUCATOR (WHITE)

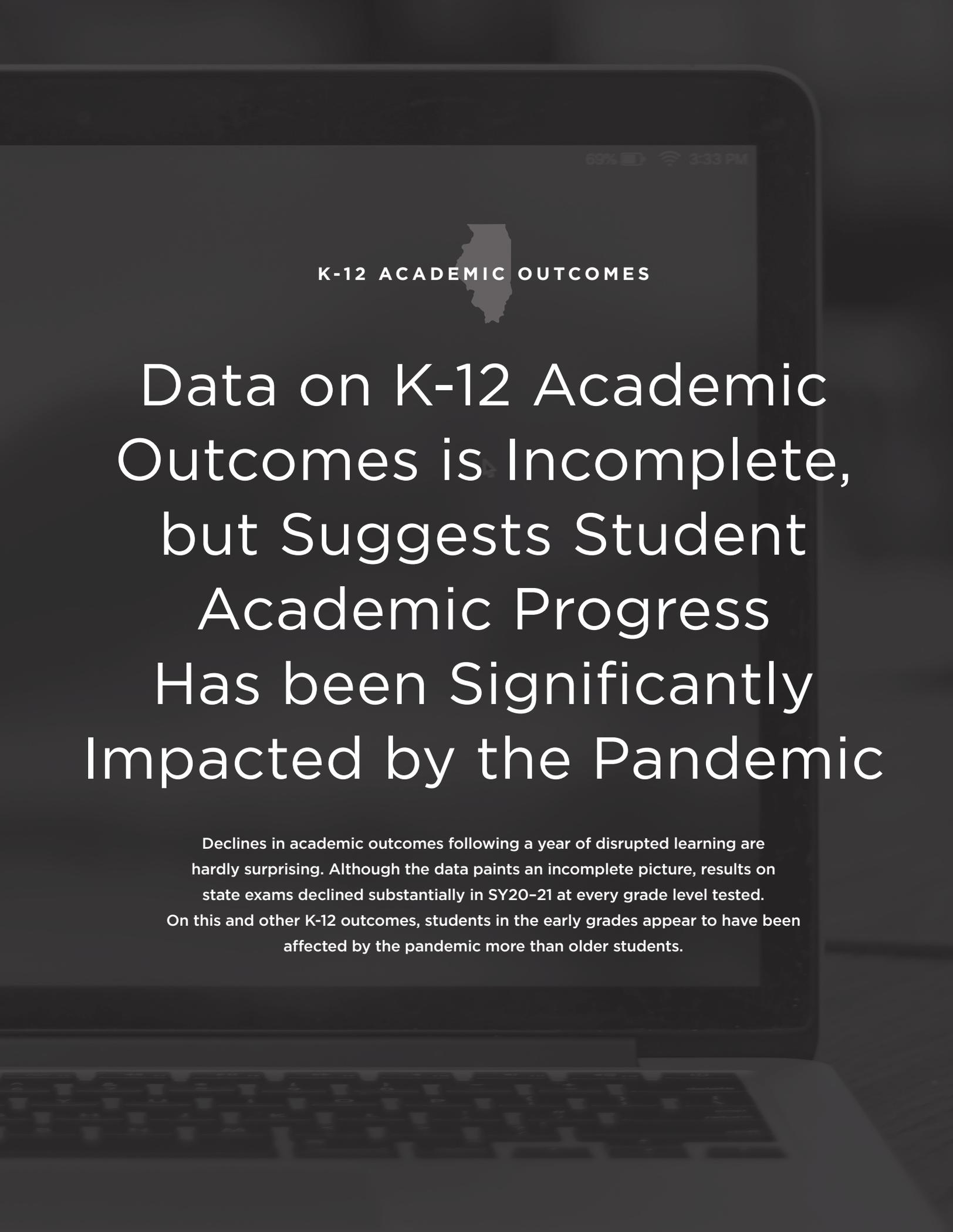
Like their students, educators have endured the mental and emotional toll of the pandemic. Educators in our focus groups reported a need for more professional development to better enable them to support students coping with the emotional impact of COVID-19—a need that was especially acute for teachers of color living or working in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

“I experienced the death of COVID, I experienced loss. And now I have to support a child’s experience with grief. I am a person. I am a human. I need training, too, constant professional development that isn’t just taking up my time. Something that is building my whole self and feeding back into the students; that addresses the trauma I experienced.”

URBAN EDUCATOR (BLACK)

Illinois Invests in Social-Emotional, Mental Health, and Trauma Support

Addressing the pandemic’s upheaval, and the resulting trauma that students, educators, and families have experienced, will likely need to be a priority for years to come. To date, the state has already made significant investments in building school capacity to address social, emotional, and mental health needs. Early in the pandemic, the state made training widely available to educators on how to identify and address student trauma.⁸⁷ Federal relief funds have also been used to expand a trauma-responsive pilot and initiate long-term school-community partnerships.^{88, 89, 90}



K-12 ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Data on K-12 Academic Outcomes is Incomplete, but Suggests Student Academic Progress Has been Significantly Impacted by the Pandemic

Declines in academic outcomes following a year of disrupted learning are hardly surprising. Although the data paints an incomplete picture, results on state exams declined substantially in SY20-21 at every grade level tested. On this and other K-12 outcomes, students in the early grades appear to have been affected by the pandemic more than older students.

State Assessments Offer an Early, Incomplete Window into the Pandemic’s Impact on Student Achievement

Overall participation on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness in Math and English Language Arts was extraordinarily low. In SY20-21, only 70.7 percent of eligible students took the math exam, compared to a 99 percent participation rate in previous years. Because tests were given in person, exam participation was lower at schools that had more students learning remotely. Accordingly, students who were more likely to be in remote classrooms—including Black and Latinx students, English Learners, and students from low-income households—had well below average participation rates on state tests in 2021. For example, the participation rate on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness Math exam was only 56.4 percent for Black students and 57 percent for Latinx students. Prior to the pandemic in SY18-19, participation rates were at 99 percent for both groups.

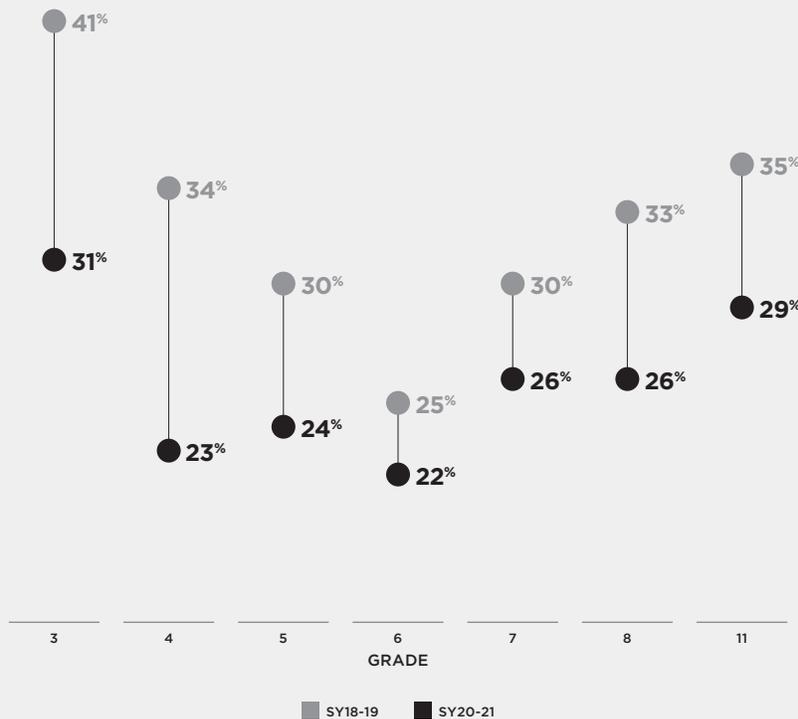
Given the low participation rates, we have limited information about student academic progress in SY20-21 and do not yet know the full scope of the pandemic’s impact on student

outcomes. That said, the data we do have paints a concerning picture. Between SY18-19 and SY20-21, the percentage of Illinois students at or above the proficient level in Math declined at every grade level on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness and the SAT. The declines were highest in 3rd and 4th grade, where the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient dropped 10 and 10.3 percentage points, respectively.

The results to date likely underestimate the toll COVID-19 has taken on student learning. Recent research from the Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative indicates that in-person learning in SY20-21 positively impacted student test scores on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness.⁹¹ The underrepresentation of remote learners, therefore, means overall academic progress has likely declined even more than the data indicate. While remote learning was ultimately necessary for the safety of students, educators, and families, evidence is beginning to show the challenges it brought.

Though a large proportion of students, especially those from schools that offered more remote learning, are missing test scores in SY20-21, data start to show a sharp decline in academic progress.

Percent of Students Demonstrating Proficiency on IAR or SAT in Mathematics in Illinois Public Schools by Grade Level, 2019, 2021



Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card

Note: Participation rates on IAR and SAT exams were extremely low in 2021 relative to prior years and remote learners. Black and Latinx students, English Learners, and students from low-income households are significantly underrepresented in the data.

Graduation Rates Have Not Declined During the Pandemic, but Ninth Grade On-Track Rates Fell

So far, the high school graduation rate in Illinois has not been negatively affected by the pandemic. Indeed, in SY19–20, due to districts instituting early pandemic policies such as no-fail courses and an easing of graduation requirements, the high school graduation rate briefly rose to an all-time high of 88 percent.⁹² Between SY18–19 and SY20–21, the high school graduation rate rose slightly from 86.2 percent to 86.8 percent, and racial gaps in high school graduation rates did not widen.

At the same time, 9th Grade On-Track, a measure highly correlated with graduation rates, fell significantly between SY18–19 and SY20–21, from 87 percent to 82.2 percent. Troublingly, 9th Grade On-Track rates in SY20–21 were

especially low for Black freshmen (71.7 percent on track to graduate) and Latinx freshmen (77.3 percent), and both represent a decline from prior years.

As detailed in the ‘K-12 Instruction’ section of this report, chronic absenteeism rates held steady in high school but rose alarmingly in the elementary and middle school grades in SY20–21. This may have implications for future graduation rates, as chronic absenteeism is strongly associated with future high school completion, even starting in early grades.⁹³ The particular impacts of substantial losses to instructional time due to the pandemic remain to be seen.

Conclusion

The pandemic's long-term impact on the children and students of Illinois will become clearer in the coming years. As more data becomes available, we will need to pay special attention to how the metrics analyzed in this report, and others, develop moving forward. How will enrollment declines in state-administered early childhood education and care impact students' academic and social-emotional development as they progress through the system? What will the long-term outcomes be for K-12 students, especially those currently in the younger grades, for whom instruction was severely disrupted during the pandemic? How will the pandemic impact college enrollment and completion over time? And what will be the long-term mental health consequences of the pandemic on children and students, birth through college?

Although the full impact of the pandemic has yet to be seen, what we know to date is cause for concern and should drive investment, programming, and policy in serious ways in both the short and long-term. Indeed, given the severity of the data, it is essential that we resist the impulse to return to "business as usual." Instead, based on what we already know, and certainly as we learn more, state and local leaders will need to continue to problem-solve as creatively as they have done to date.

The good news is, we have shown we can meet the moment. Educators, when tasked with rapidly transitioning their instructional practice to a remote environment, worked to continue their students' education and development in meaningful ways, all while managing ongoing uncertainty and trauma. In the face of unprecedented student need, schools rallied and created supportive environments for learning. When educating children depended on digital access, state and local leaders mobilized to provide laptops and expand internet and broadband access. And when the pandemic threatened the state's system of early childhood education and care, the state took steps to stabilize it.

Now, we must maintain our energy and focus. As available data makes clear, children, families, and communities have been deeply affected, in school and beyond. At the same time, students, families, educators and leaders have proven their resilience in the face of extraordinary circumstances. A once-in-a-century pandemic requires a once-in-a-century response. We salute the many heroes around the state who have risen to this challenge, and look forward to working together not just to respond to ongoing needs, but to use this moment to learn and grow as we support the next generation to reach its full potential.

DATA TABLES KEY

GREEN	YELLOW	ORANGE	GRAY
Data only reflects pre-pandemic conditions.	Data collection reflects conditions both prior to and during the pandemic.	Data only reflects conditions during the pandemic. Note that the pandemic's impact on policy and learning conditions evolved significantly over time from 2020 through 2022.	Data not available.

Data Tables

Enrollment in State Administered Early Childhood Education and Care Programs and Services

1 Child Care Assistance Program Average Monthly Enrollment of 0 Through 5-Year-Old Children		YEAR		
		2019	2020*	2021**
All		77,711	82,001	62,351
Age	0	7,853	7,548	4,678
	1	13,038	13,683	9,605
	2	15,240	16,164	12,065
	3	15,746	16,878	12,956
	4	14,756	15,856	12,581
	5	11,078	11,872	10,466
Race	Black	32,240	32,741	23,564
	Latinx	16,515	16,752	13,249
	Asian	1,047	1,100	753
	White	9,959	10,673	8,585
Monthly Household Income	\$0-1500	22,020	22,370	13,528
	\$1500<-2000	20,819	19,729	13,498
	\$2000<-2500	17,581	18,606	14,893
	\$2500+	17,291	21,296	20,433
English Learner				
IEP				
Urbanicity	Urban	41,017	43,039	31,548
	Suburban	29,732	31,105	24,213
	Rural	7,385	8,011	6,679

* This data is partially pandemic affected. Early in the pandemic provider payments continued despite center closures, leading to misleading counts in the data.

** Enrollment is calculated based on provider reimbursements. Reimbursements are provided if the provider has sufficient attendance of students in a program. Attendance requirements for providers to receive payments were eased during the pandemic, meaning providers may have received more money for the same or fewer children. Therefore, calculated counts likely overestimate enrollment. Use caution when comparing numbers over time.

2 Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion Annual Enrollment		YEAR		
		2019	2020*	2021
All		76,944	85,183	66,609
Age	<=3	33,598	34,312	24,840
	4+	43,160	50,871	41,769
Race	Black	17,104	20,103	15,285
	Latinx	21,988	26,673	19,956
	Asian	3,035	3,154	2,842
	White	30,141	30,767	25,024
Monthly Household Income	50% at/below the FPL	17,908	19,986	14,510
	100% at/below the FPL	20,068	22,123	16,678
	200% at/below the FPL	22,771	24,063	19,571
	400% at/below the FPL	9,203	9,597	8,183
	Above 400% FPL	5,448	5,421	5,298
English Learner		16,236	18,186	13,304
IEP		15,035	16,355	12,961
Urbanicity	Urban			
	Suburban			
	Rural			

* This data is partially pandemic affected. Enrollment is collected throughout the entire fiscal year, and significant pandemic-related disruptions including a shut down of public PreK-12 districts and child care centers began in March 2020.

3 Prevention Initiative Annual Enrollment		YEAR		
		2019	2020*	2021
All		18,026	17,567	16,473
Race	Black	5,325	4,513	4,758
	Latinx	4,820	4,991	5,292
	Asian	567	544	496
	White	4,614	5,081	4,774
English Learner		367	207	254
IEP		553	472	445
Urbanicity	Urban			
	Suburban			
	Rural			

* This data is partially pandemic affected. Enrollment is collected throughout the entire fiscal year, and significant pandemic-related disruptions including temporary closure of public PreK-12 districts and many child care centers began in March 2020.

4 Home Visiting Annual Enrollment		YEAR		
		2019	2020*	2021
Healthy Families Illinois			1,412	1,450
Parents Too Soon		1,539	1,266	1,222
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting		863	876	759

* This data is partially pandemic affected. Enrollment is counted throughout the entire fiscal year, and significant pandemic-related disruptions, including a temporary suspension of in-person home visiting services, began in March 2020.

5 Early Intervention Average Monthly Enrollment		YEAR					
		2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	PRELIMINARY 2022**
Average Monthly Enrollment		20,827	21,684	22,576	23,390	17,530	20,219
Average Monthly Service Delays		4.55%	4.42%	4.74%	5.19%	3.55%	3.89%

* This data is partially pandemic affected. Monthly counts are averaged over the entire fiscal year, and significant pandemic-related disruptions began in March 2020 as Early Intervention services transitioned to telehealth.

** Does not include data from the entire year. Only includes data from July 2021 through March 2022.

Enrollment in PreK-12 Schools

6 Public Pre-K-12 School Enrollment		YEAR					
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	PRELIMINARY 2022*
Grade	Kindergarten	134,027	132,064	129,692	130,713	120,110	120,120
	Elementary	734,542	723,228	704,300	688,146	657,104	642,264
	Middle Grades	448,147	449,966	448,784	448,215	437,827	419,693
	High School	609,347	616,162	611,732	607,488	604,208	595,229
Race	White	983,659	960,734	944,631	929,584	881,377	848,644
	Black	344,788	336,257	331,415	324,865	313,294	304,475
	Latinx	521,238	524,401	523,913	520,567	509,575	500,940
	Asian	99,380	102,078	101,210	101,765	101,915	98,644
Low-Income		1,018,137	988,755	968,445	949,154	907,799	855,229
English Learner		217,013	234,179	240,127	244,627	243,464	250,891
IEP		281,915	290,222	307,600	293,553	281,210	
Urbanicity	Urban	581,316	579,643	566,296	555,257	537,921	528,279
	Suburban	965,038	973,743	960,767	948,516	910,734	889,867
	Rural/Town	414,626	413,387	410,961	405,771	386,420	381,248

* The 2022 data reflect fall enrollment counts included in ISBE's fall enrollment file and should not be directly compared to the previous years of data. Final calculations using business rules consistent with years past will be reflected in the 2022 Illinois State Report Card. Fall enrollment counts tend to be lower than the final calculations included in the Illinois State Report Card.

DATA TABLES

7 Private School Enrollment	YEAR				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Kindergarten	14,971	15,058	16,658	14,448	13,606
Elementary	67,641	67,050	64,457	62,223	60,450
Middle Grades	40,364	40,318	39,512	38,586	37,307
High School	49,199	49,237	47,590	46,526	44,794

Undergraduate Enrollment in Higher Education

8 Undergraduate Fall Enrollment in Public 2-Year Institutions	YEAR						
	FALL 2016	FALL 2017	FALL 2018	FALL 2019	FALL 2020	PRELIMINARY FALL 2021	
All	304,173	293,411	283,415	271,336	233,777	230,322	
Race	Black	38,762	37,039	35,501	32,349	27,334	
	Latinx	74,320	74,331	74,761	73,567	60,726	
	Asian	14,319	13,869	13,753	13,298	11,603	
	White	156,403	147,622	139,488	132,809	117,334	
Urbanicity	Urban	102,249	98,867	95,093	89,133	77,732	
	Suburban	138,696	141,668	137,686	132,780	112,090	
	Rural	63,228	52,876	50,636	49,423	43,955	

9 Undergraduate Fall Enrollment in Public 4-Year Institutions	YEAR						
	FALL 2016	FALL 2017	FALL 2018	FALL 2019	FALL 2020	PRELIMINARY FALL 2021	
All	139,508	136,146	133,237	130,883	129,513	128,294	
Race	Black	18,255	17,331	16,633	16,151	16,109	15,690
	Latinx	19,956	20,836	21,654	22,170	23,198	23,312
	Asian	12,602	12,876	13,108	13,420	13,791	
	White	74,436	70,572	67,094	64,342	62,419	
Urbanicity	Urban	77,049	76,464	75,481	74,709	73,462	
	Suburban	44,442	43,189	41,728	40,781	40,206	
	Rural	18,017	16,493	16,028	15,393	15,845	

10 Undergraduate Fall Enrollment in Not-for-Profit 4-Year Institutions	YEAR						
	FALL 2016	FALL 2017	FALL 2018	FALL 2019	FALL 2020	PRELIMINARY FALL 2021	
All	131,854	129,225	128,081	127,842	123,095	122,093	
Race	Black	11,484	11,107	11,050	11,160	10,884	
	Latinx	21,134	22,122	22,809	23,803	25,122	
	Asian	9,108	9,275	9,535	9,843	10,034	
	White	71,939	69,246	66,860	65,735	61,336	
Urbanicity	Urban	90,531	88,991	89,108	89,183	86,325	
	Suburban	31,614	30,911	30,091	29,848	28,887	
	Rural	9,706	9,322	8,882	8,812	7,883	

11 Undergraduate Fall Enrollment in Private For-Profit 4-Year Institutions		YEAR					PRELIMINARY FALL 2021
		FALL 2016	FALL 2017	FALL 2018	FALL 2019	FALL 2020	
All		32,631	30,403	30,235	31,231	34,718	40,068
Race	Black	4,932	4,670	5,440	6,447	7,852	
	Latinx	3,919	4,182	4,309	4,549	5,295	
	Asian	1,675	1,685	1,599	1,581	1,740	
	White	16,404	15,565	15,717	15,985	16,494	
Urbanicity	Urban	25,815	23,404	23,085	16,558	19,867	
	Suburban	15,864	15,697	15,687	15,291	15,313	
	Rural	0	0	0	0	0	

K-12 Access to Instruction

12 Chronic Absenteeism Rate		YEAR			
		2018	2019	2020*	2021
School	Elementary Schools	12%	13%	7%	16%
	Middle Schools	13%	15%	9%	20%
	High Schools	22%	25%	17%	25%
All		17%	18%	11%	21%
Race	Black	27%	31%	19%	39%
	Latinx	18%	20%	13%	25%
	Asian	9%	9%	6%	8%
	White	13%	13%	8%	14%
Low-Income		23%	25%	16%	32%
English Learner		15%	17%	11%	24%
With Disabilities			25%	16%	28%

*Attendance collection was severely disrupted in Spring 2020 early in the pandemic, leading to inflated attendance numbers.

13 Number of Days Public and Private K-12 Students spent in Live Contact with Teachers Over a 7-day Period		DAYS		
		0	1-3	4+
All		12%	23%	65%
Race	Black*	17%	22%	61%
	Latinx*	14%	22%	64%
	Asian*	16%	16%	68%
	White*	10%	25%	66%
Household Income	<=\$50k	18%	21%	61%
	\$50-100k	11%	24%	65%
	>\$100k	9%	17%	74%

* Race/ethnicity represent demographics of the survey respondent, not the K-12 children in the household.

DATA TABLES

14 Percentage of PreK-12 Students by Learning Modality		SEPTEMBER 2020			MAY 2021		
		REMOTE	HYBRID	IN-PERSON	REMOTE	HYBRID	IN-PERSON
All		70%	16%	15%	30%	33%	36%
Race	Black	86%	7%	6%	47%	35%	17%
	Latinx	85%	8%	6%	44%	34%	21%
	Asian	84%	8%	8%	45%	29%	25%
	White	51%	24%	24%	14%	32%	54%
Income	Districts with <25% Students from Low-Income Households	59%	23%	19%	18%	30%	52%
	Districts with 25-50% Students from Low-Income Households	59%	19%	22%	21%	29%	50%
	Districts with 50-75% Students from Low-Income Households	65%	19%	17%	28%	34%	37%
	Districts with 75-100% Students from Low-Income Households	96%	3%	1%	55%	39%	5%
Urbanicity	Rural/Town Schools	25%	37%	39%	8%	25%	66%
	Suburban Schools	94%	4%	3%	48%	39%	12%
	Urban Schools	72%	15%	13%	29%	33%	38%

15 Percentage of Public and Private K-12 Students with Access to Digital Infrastructure for Educational Purposes*		CONSISTENT ACCESS TO INTERNET FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES	CONSISTENT ACCESS TO DIGITAL DEVICE FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES
All		75%	81%
Race	Black**	67%	78%
	Latinx**	72%	76%
	Asian**	81%	84%
	White**	78%	83%
Household Income	≤ \$50k	64%	71%
	\$50-100k	77%	82%
	> \$100k	88%	91%

* The Census Household Pulse Survey was disseminated digitally so households with limited access to internet or digital devices are likely significantly underrepresented.

** Race/ethnicity represent demographics of the survey respondent, not the K-12 children in the household.

16 Percentage of Students in Schools Scoring At or Above 50 on Ambitious Instruction*		YEAR		
		2017	2019	2021
All		69%	78%	58%
Race	Black	65%	81%	61%
	Latinx	74%	82%	55%
	Asian	83%	87%	67%
	White	68%	74%	58%
English Learner		76%	83%	58%
IEP		67%	76%	57%
Low-Income		65%	77%	56%
Total		69%	78%	58%
Urbanicity	Rural/Town Schools	55%	65%	53%
	Suburban Schools	78%	78%	53%
	Urban Schools	65%	86%	71%

*Only schools with at least 50% student participation and 10 student response on the 5Essentials survey are included in this data.

K-12 Social-Emotional and Mental Health Supports

17 Percentage of Students in Schools Scoring At or Above 50 on Supportive Environments		YEAR		
		2017	2019	2021
Total		60%	71%	90%
Race	Black	35%	56%	81%
	Latinx	52%	64%	89%
	Asian	78%	84%	96%
	White	67%	78%	93%
English Learner		56%	71%	92%
IEP		58%	70%	90%
Low-Income		47%	62%	87%
Urbanicity	Rural/Town	58%	73%	89%
	Suburban	66%	77%	90%
	Urban	44%	59%	91%

*Only schools with at least 50% student participation least 10 student responses on the 5Essentials survey are included in this data.

18 Student to Staff Ratio		YEAR			
		2018	2019	2020	2021
Students per	Counselor	667	639	596	569
	Psychologist	1,201	1,379	1,285	1,191
	Social Worker	697	661	603	552

19 Students to Staff Ratio in SY20-21		COUNSELOR	SOCIAL WORKER	PSYCHOLOGIST
Statewide		569	552	1,191
Urbanicity	Urban	522	977	1,952
	Suburban	681	403	853
	Rural/Town	615	904	2,610

K-12 Academic Outcomes

20 High School Graduation Rate		YEAR					
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021
All		86%	87%	86%	86%	88%	87%
Race	Black	75%	79%	76%	77%	80%	78%
	Latinx	81%	84%	82%	82%	86%	84%
	Asian	94%	95%	94%	94%	95%	95%
	White	90%	91%	91%	91%	92%	91%
Low-Income		77%	79%	78%	78%	82%	79%
English Learner		72%	74%	77%	72%	77%	75%
With Disabilities					75%	81%	77%

* In Spring 2020, the Illinois State Board of Education made short-term changes to graduation requirements that allowed more students to graduate.

DATA TABLES

21 Percentage of Ninth Graders on Track		YEAR				
		2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021
All		87.0%	86.0%	87.0%	88.8%	82.2%
Race	Black		76.4%	74.5%	78.5%	71.7%
	Latinx		83.7%	82.7%	85.9%	77.3%
	Asian		96.6%	96.6%	96.9%	95.1%
	White		90.8%	91.3%	92.8%	87.3%
Low-Income			76.5%	77.1%	81.7%	72.5%
English Learner			79.2%	78.7%	80.5%	72.2%
With IEPs			76.7%	76.9%	80.6%	74.8%

* In response to the pandemic, many schools instituted short-term policies in Spring 2020 such as no-fail courses that temporarily inflated ninth grade on track rates.

22 Percentage of Students Taking State Assessments Demonstrating Proficiency		ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS			MATHEMATICS		
		2019	2020	2021*	2019	2020	2021*
Grade	3	36%		28%	40%		31%
	4	36%		28%	33%		23%
	5	37%		29%	29%		24%
	6	35%		30%	25%		22%
	7	41%		33%	29%		26%
	8	39%		34%	32%		26%
	11	36%		33%	34%		29%

* Caution should be used when comparing numbers over time. Participation rates in 2021 assessments were extremely low relative to 2019, particularly in districts that served more remote learners in Spring 2021.

23 AP Exam Passage Rate		YEAR				
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Grade	9		63%	59%	63%	54%
	10	67%	69%	69%	71%	63%
	11	68%	69%	68%	75%	67%
	12	76%	75%	76%	81%	76%

Metric Definitions

TABLE 1

Average Monthly Enrollment in Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The average number of birth through 5-year-olds enrolled in CCAP each month. CCAP currently assists working families under 225 percent of the Federal Poverty Level with paying for child care services. Average monthly enrollment is calculated by dividing the sum of all monthly enrollments by 12. Source: Chapin Hall, 2019–2021.

TABLE 2

Annual Enrollment in Preschool for All or Preschool for All Expansion (PFA/PFAE). The number of children enrolled annually in Preschool for All or Preschool for All Expansion programs. PFA/PFAE programs serve children aged 3- through 5-years-old who are not yet eligible for kindergarten. Source: Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), 2019–2021.

TABLE 3

Annual Enrollment in Prevention Initiative (PI). The number of children enrolled annually in Prevention Initiative programs. PI is an intensive program to support the healthy development of children under three and can include home visits as well as center-based care. Source: Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), 2019–2021.

TABLE 4

Annual Enrollment in Healthy Families Illinois (HFI). The number of children served annually by Healthy Families Illinois home visiting services. HFI is an Illinois Department of Human Services home visiting program that works with parents and guardians to improve child development, family health, and parenting skills. Source: Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Home Visiting Report, 2019–2020; Illinois Department of Human Services, 2021.

TABLE 4

Annual Enrollment in Parents too Soon (PTS). The number of children served annually by Parents too Soon Home Visiting services. PTS is a home visiting program that serves new and expectant teen parents with incomes below or equal to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) Database, 2019–2021.

TABLE 4

Annual Enrollment in Maternal, infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV). The number of children served annually by Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood home visiting services. MIECHV is a program that provides a variety of supports to families to strengthen the parent-child relationship and promote healthy child development. Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) Database, 2019–2021.

TABLE 5

Average Monthly Enrollment in Early Intervention (EI). The average number of children receiving Early Intervention services each month. EI services support the needs of children with developmental delays or disabilities. Average monthly enrollment is calculated by dividing the sum of all monthly enrollments by 12. Children are considered to be enrolled in Early Intervention if they have an active Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Source: Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Early Intervention Monthly Statistical Reports, 2017–2021.

TABLE 5

Average Monthly Service Delays. The average percentage of children receiving Early Intervention services each month who experience a service delay. Service delays include cases wherein there is no provider to provide services, there is insufficient capacity to provide all necessary services, or there is a delay in one or more services. Source: Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Early Intervention Monthly Statistical Reports, 2017–2021.

TABLE 6

Public PreK-12 School Enrollment. The total number of students enrolled in public schools serving Pre-K through 12th grades. Enrollments are collected on October 1st of the school year. Source: Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Illinois State Report Card, 2017–2021.

- **Public PreK-12 School Enrollment by Urbanicity.** A school's urbanicity describes its geographic location in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications, 2018–2021.

TABLE 7

Private PreK-12 School Enrollment. The total number of students enrolled in private schools serving Pre-K through 12th grades. School enrollments are reported for all registered private schools. Source: Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Annual Reports, 2017–2021.

TABLE 8, 9, 10, 11

Undergraduate Enrollment. The total number of undergraduates enrolled in institutions of higher education in Illinois in fall of the given year. Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2016–2020; Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) First Look Enrollment Report, 2021.

TABLE 12

Chronic Absenteeism Rate. The percentage of students who miss 10% or more of school days per year with or without a valid excuse. Source: Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Illinois State Report Card, 2019–2020.

TABLE 13

Number of Days Public and Private K-12 Students Spent in Live Contact with Teachers Over a 7-day Period. The number of days respondents to the United States Census Household Pulse Survey reported that the public or private K-12 students in their households spend in live contact with a teacher over the preceding 7-day period. Live contact includes any synchronous conversation including video chat, phone, or in-person. The Household Pulse Survey was gathered in 2-week collection periods throughout the 2020 and 2021 calendar years. Responses are aggregated across collection periods from September 2020 to May 2021 (Week 14 through Week 31 of data collection). Only Illinois households reporting that they had public or private K-12 students in their households are included. Reported race and ethnicity are the race and ethnicity of the survey respondent, not necessarily the K-12 student(s) described by the data. Source: United States Census, Household Pulse Survey, 2020–2021.

TABLE 14

Percentage of PreK-12 Students by Learning Modality. The percentage of students in the given months who only attended school remotely, attended school in hybrid settings, or attended school completely in-person. Students are considered hybrid if they are marked as attending at least one remote day and at least one in-person day over the course of a month. Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2021.

- **Percentage of PreK-12 Students by Learning Modality by Urbanicity.** A school's urbanicity describes its geographic location in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications, 2018–2021.

METRIC DEFINITIONS

TABLE 15

Percentage of Public and Private K-12 Students with Access to Digital Infrastructure for Educational Purposes The percentage of respondents to the United States Census Household Pulse Survey who reported that the public or private K-12 students in their households consistently had access to a digital device or internet for educational purposes. The Household Pulse Survey was disseminated digitally so households with limited access to internet or digital devices are likely significantly underrepresented. The survey was gathered in 2-week collection periods throughout the 2020 and 2021 calendar years. Responses are aggregated across collection periods from September 2020 to May 2021 (Week 14 through Week 31 of data collection). Only Illinois households reporting that they had public or private K-12 students in their households are included. Reported race and ethnicity are the race and ethnicity of the survey respondent, not necessarily the K-12 student(s) described by the data. Source: United States Census, Household Pulse Survey, 2020-2021.

TABLE 16

Percentage of Students in Schools Scoring At or Above 50 on Ambitious Instruction. The Ambitious Instruction Essential from the 5 Essentials survey describes whether instructional delivery in a school is challenging and engaging. Scores are based on student and teacher survey responses. A score of 50 is used here as a benchmark to track progress over time and equity across student groups. A score of 50 is equivalent to the average school performance collected in a baseline survey implantation year (2015 for non-CPS schools, 2011 for CPS schools). Data are included only for schools with greater than 50% student participation rates who received scores in the given school year. Source: Illinois State Board of Education 5 Essentials Data File 2017, 2019, 2021; Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card 2017, 2019, 2021; Chicago Public Schools Demographic Data 2017, 2019, 2021.

- **Percentage of Students in Schools Scoring At or Above 50 on Ambitious Instruction by Urbanicity.** A school's urbanicity describes its geographic location in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications, 2018-2021.

TABLE 17

Percentage of Students in Schools Scoring At or Above 50 on Supportive Environments. The Supportive Environments Essential from the 5 Essentials survey describes whether school environments are safe and trusting and adults have high expectations of students. Scores are based on student and teacher survey responses. A score of 50 is used here as a benchmark to track progress over time and equity across student groups. A score of 50 is equivalent to the average school performance collected in a baseline survey implantation year (2015 for non-CPS schools, 2011 for CPS schools). Data are included only for schools with greater than 50% student participation rates who received scores in the given school year. Source: Illinois State Board of Education 5 Essentials Data File 2017, 2019, 2021; Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card 2017, 2019, 2021; Chicago Public Schools Demographic Data 2017, 2019, 2021.

- **Percentage of Students in Schools Scoring At or Above 50 on Supportive Environments by Urbanicity.** A school's urbanicity describes its geographic location in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications, 2018-2021.

TABLE 18, 19

Student to Counselor Ratio. Research behind Illinois' evidence-based funding formula recommends 1 counselor for every 450 students in grades K-5 and 1 counselor for every 250 students in grades 6-12. Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2021.

- **Student to Counselor Ratio by Urbanicity.** A school's urbanicity describes its geographic location in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications, 2018-2021.

TABLE 18, 19

Student to Social Worker Ratio. The National Association of Social Workers recommends 1 social worker for every 250 students. Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2021.

- **Student to Social Worker Ratio by Urbanicity.** A school's urbanicity describes its geographic location in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications, 2018-2021.

TABLE 18, 19

Student to Psychologist Ratio. Research behind Illinois' evidence-based funding formula recommends 1 psychologist for every 1,000 students. Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2021.

- **Student to Psychologist Ratio by Urbanicity.** A school's urbanicity describes its geographic location in a rural, suburban, or urban area. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications, 2018-2021.

TABLE 20

High School Graduation Rate. High school graduation rates represent a four year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card, 2017-2021.

TABLE 21

9th Grade On-Track Rate. A student is considered "on-track" if they earn at least ten semester credits and no more than one "F" in a core course in their 9th grade year. This measure is highly predictive of whether students go on to graduate high school. Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois Report Card, 2019-2021.

TABLE 22

Percentage of Students Demonstrating Proficiency on Exams. Percentage of students who score at or above proficiency on the Illinois Assessment for Readiness (grades 3 through 8) or the SAT (grade 11). Note that exam participation rates in 2021 are extremely low. Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card 2019, 2021.

TABLE 23

AP Exam Passage Rate. Percentage of Illinois high school students who take at least one AP exam who pass at least one AP exam. Source: Illinois State Board of Education Illinois State Report Card, 2017-2021.

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Notes

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17. Enrollment in Early Childhood Education and Care programs and services typically use the fiscal year rather than school year. The fiscal year generally refers to July 1 of the previous year through June 30 of the given year. Unlike the school year, the fiscal year includes the summer months.
18. Latinx (used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino and Latina) describes a person of Latin American origin or descent.
19. In 2018, Advance Illinois began consistently using the term "students from low-income households" as a way to move away from deficit-framing. We believe this terminology allows us to center students and define people by their assets and aspirations before noting structural challenges and information related to disparities in opportunity.

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30. Over the past 6 years, enrollments in the Child Care Assistance Program have been rebounding from significant reductions in the program in 2015. In 2015, the state restricted eligibility to those with household incomes of only 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), down from 185 percent of FPL. Later that year, eligibility was raised to 162 percent of FPL. In 2019, eligibility was again expanded, first to 185 percent of FPL in July and then 200 percent in October. Enrollment had not yet quite recovered to pre-2015 levels when the pandemic began.
31. Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map Database, 2012-2019.
32. In FY20, there were an average of 3,335 referrals per month. Referrals dropped to a monthly average of 2,493 in FY21. Source: IDHS Early Intervention Monthly Statistical Reports.
33. Child Care Assistance Program, Preschool for All, and Preschool for All Expansion were selected for closer analysis by family income, race, and the age of children over other state funded early childhood education and care programs because they are the largest and have the most robust data.
34. Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion enroll children a small number of children under 3 years old as well as 5-year-olds who are not yet eligible for kindergarten.
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About Advance Illinois

Advance Illinois is an independent policy and advocacy organization working toward a healthy public education system that enables all students to achieve success in college, career, and civic life. Since its founding in 2008, Advance Illinois has become a nationally recognized thought leader in education policy advocacy.

At Advance Illinois, we develop data-informed policies to support student success, build leadership and community partnerships and coalitions; and elevate the education narrative with the goal of furthering equity.



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