

Seizing the Opportunity to Advance Education Equity:

Data Insights from Chicago's Options School Students

The Education Lab uses data to improve how public schools serve students facing significant barriers to completing a high school education by designing and testing innovative programs and policies that can support students at scale.

**Individualized
Instruction**

**Trauma-
Informed
Supports**

Reengagement

**Post-
Secondary
Success**

A photograph of a classroom filled with rows of empty desks and chairs. The desks are light-colored and the chairs are dark. A large white rectangular box is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing the title text. The overall lighting is somewhat dim, giving it a quiet, empty atmosphere.

Data Insights from Chicago's Options Schools

Conventional Wisdom Suggests the Educational System is in Crisis...

America, We Have an Education Crisis

The Science of Learning Can Help

FEBRUARY 15, 2017

U.S. students' academic achievement still lags that of their peers in many other countries

BY DREW DESILVER

18 REASONS THE U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEM IS FAILING

BY MATTHEW LYNCH / APRIL 3, 2017

A

The Atlantic

Sign In

U.S.

The Failure of American Schools

NEW YORK

Intelligencer

EDUCATION | JULY 27, 2020

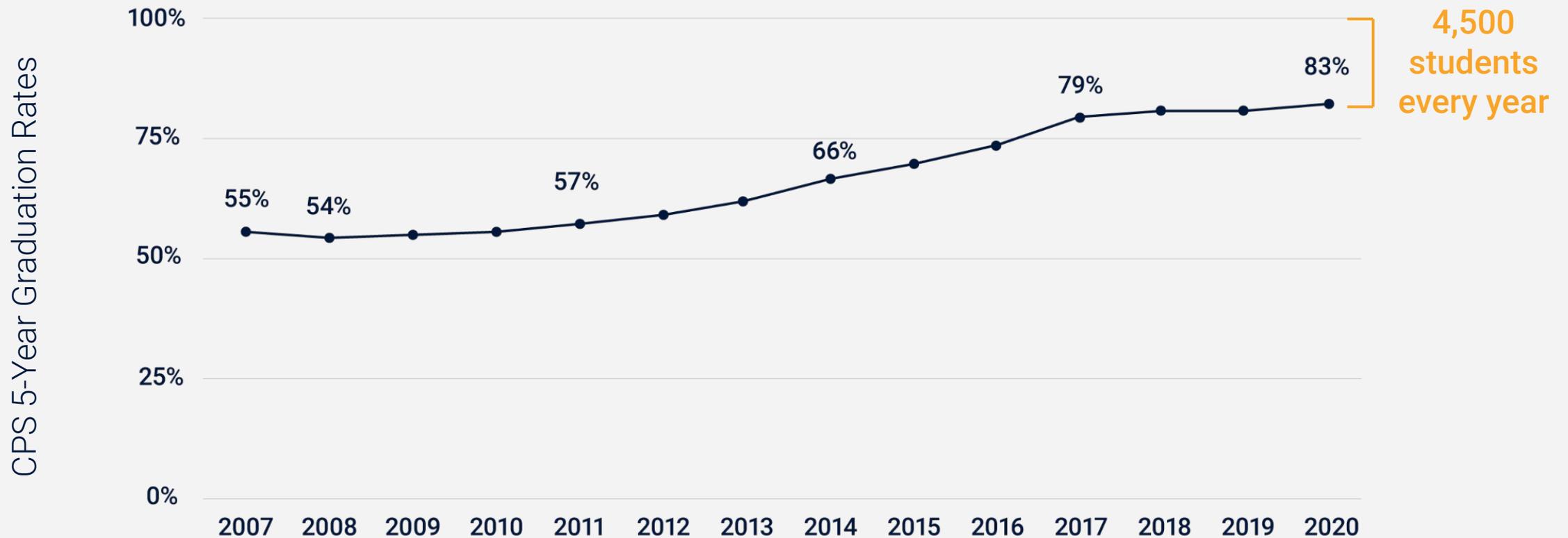
Did America Set Public Schools Up to Fail?

By Sarah Jones



But what we actually see in the data is that for most kids, the education system works quite well.

Graduation rates have increased dramatically in Chicago and nationally across the country



Source: Chicago Public Schools, cps.edu/about/district-data/metrics



**How do we best support
students who face barriers
to completing their
high school degree?**

- 
- 1. Use data to identify priority students and their needs.**
 - 2. Provide students personalized supports—systematically and at scale.**

Among

25,000

non-graduates in CPS since 2017, we find

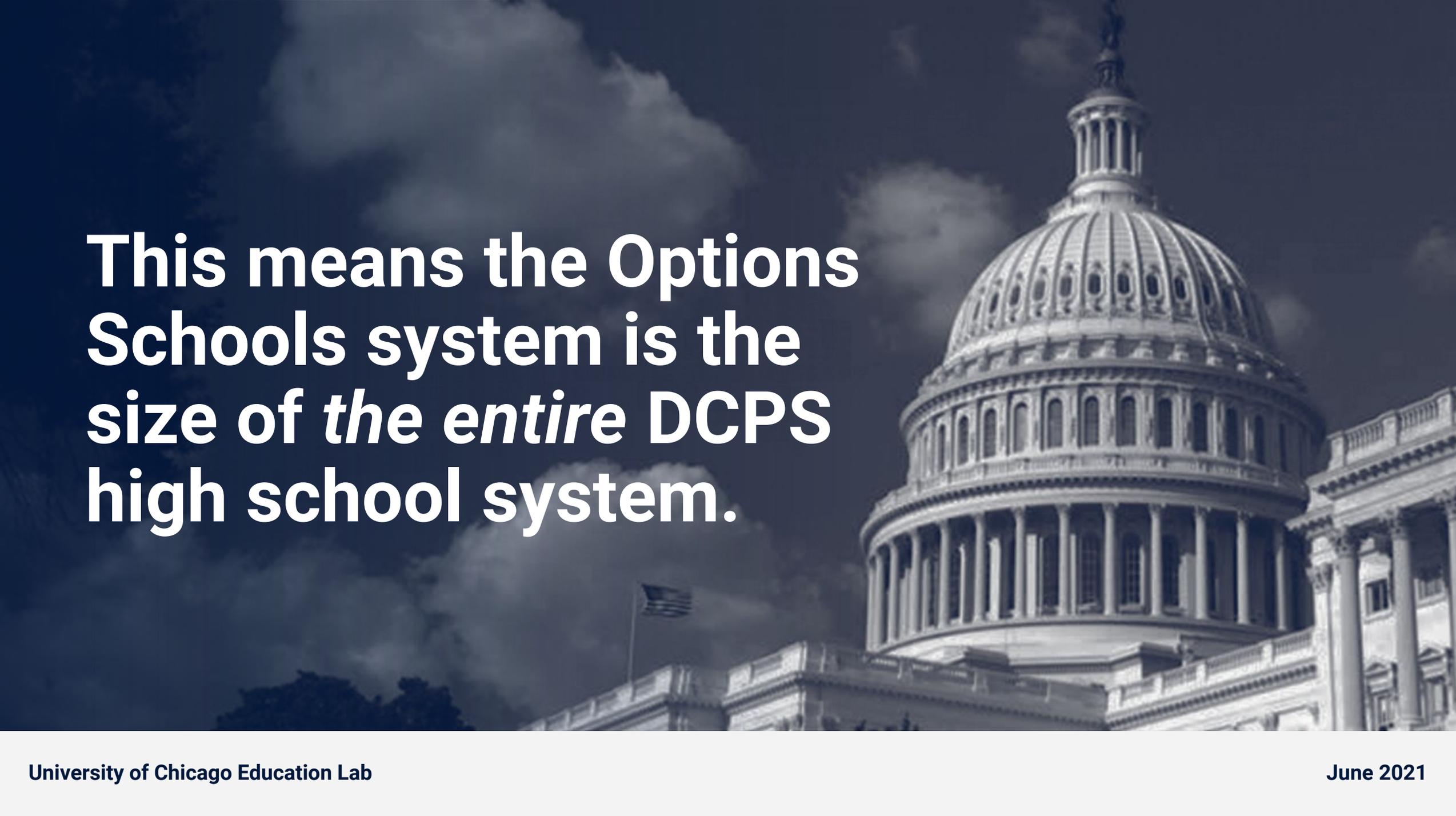
637

unique enrollment pathways.

Among non-graduates in CPS,

2 in 3

enroll in an Options School at
some point during high school.

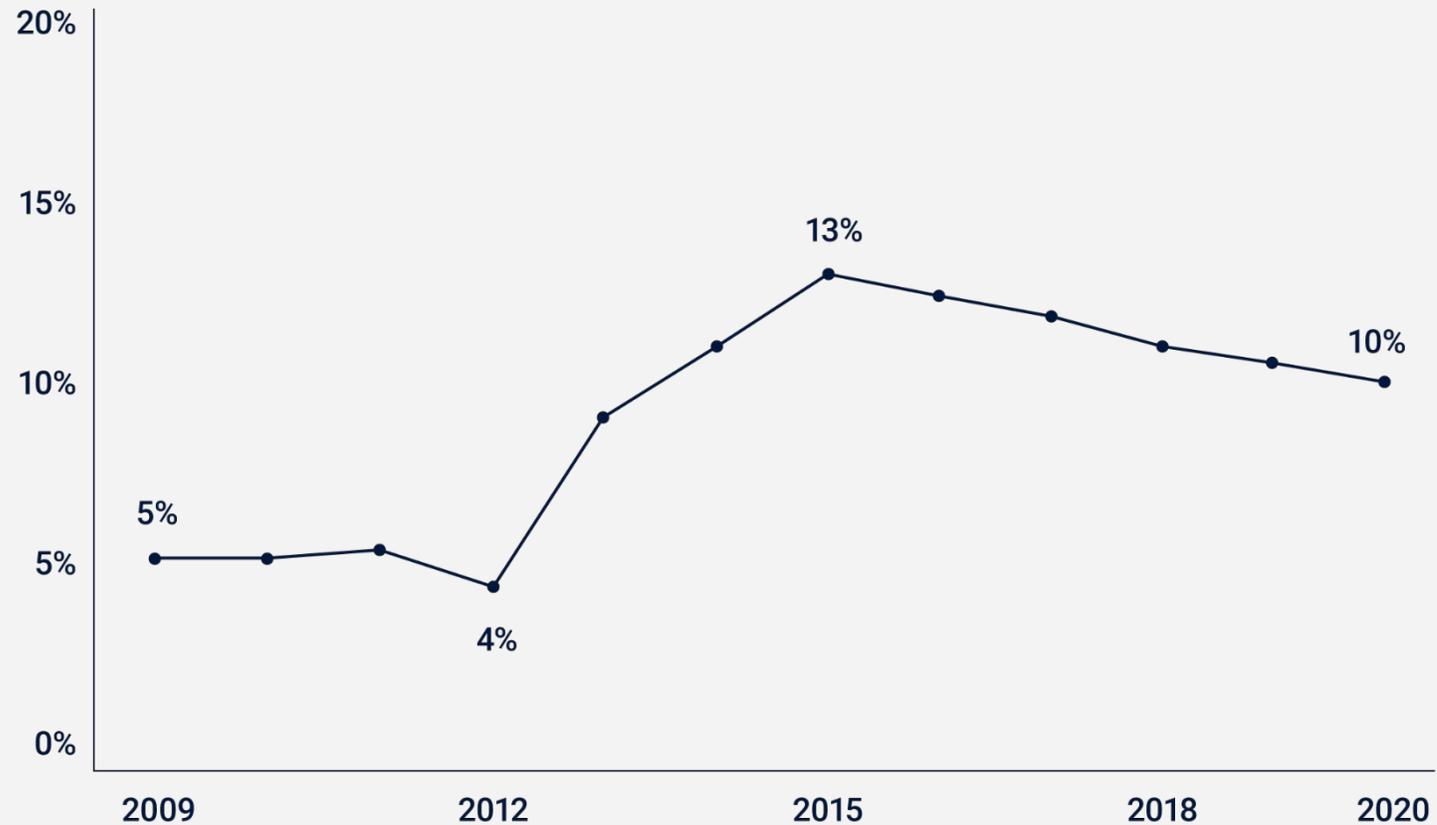


**This means the Options
Schools system is the
size of *the entire* DCPS
high school system.**

93%

of students who attend an Options School for at least one day **never return to a non-Options CPS school.**

Percent of total CPS high school population attending an Options School each year, 2009-2020



3%
of public high school students enroll in an alternative school nationwide



"I have been **out of school**, but I am ready to come back."



"I am a **parent**, and I want a school that can support me as I finish high school."



"I was **expelled**, but I want to finish school. Where can I go?"



"I have been **involved in the juvenile justice system**, and I want to go back to school. Where can I go for help?"



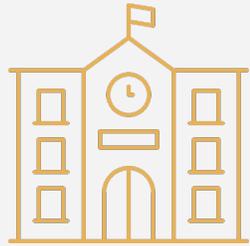
"I am **behind on credits**, and I need help getting back on track toward graduation."



"I **have a job**, and need a school that works around my schedule."

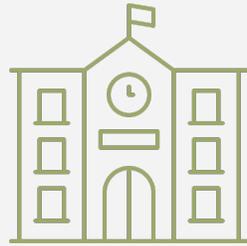
Source: Chicago Public Schools, www.cps.edu/schools/re-engagement-to-high-school/

Types of Option Schools in CPS



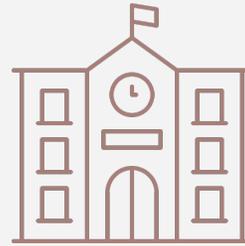
CPS-run Options Schools (4)

Schools in Cook County Jail, Cook County Juvenile Detention Center, and other CPS-run Options schools. **York, Jefferson, Simpson, Peace & Education.**



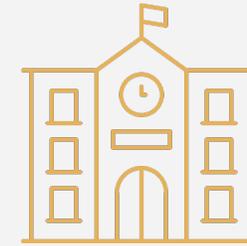
SAFE Schools (2)

Educational options for students expelled from CPS or pending expulsion for serious violations. **Camelot.**



Alternative Learning Opportunity Programs (10)

Self-paced, blended learning models while following all CPS policies and procedures. **Ombudsman, Pathways.**



Charter Schools (20)

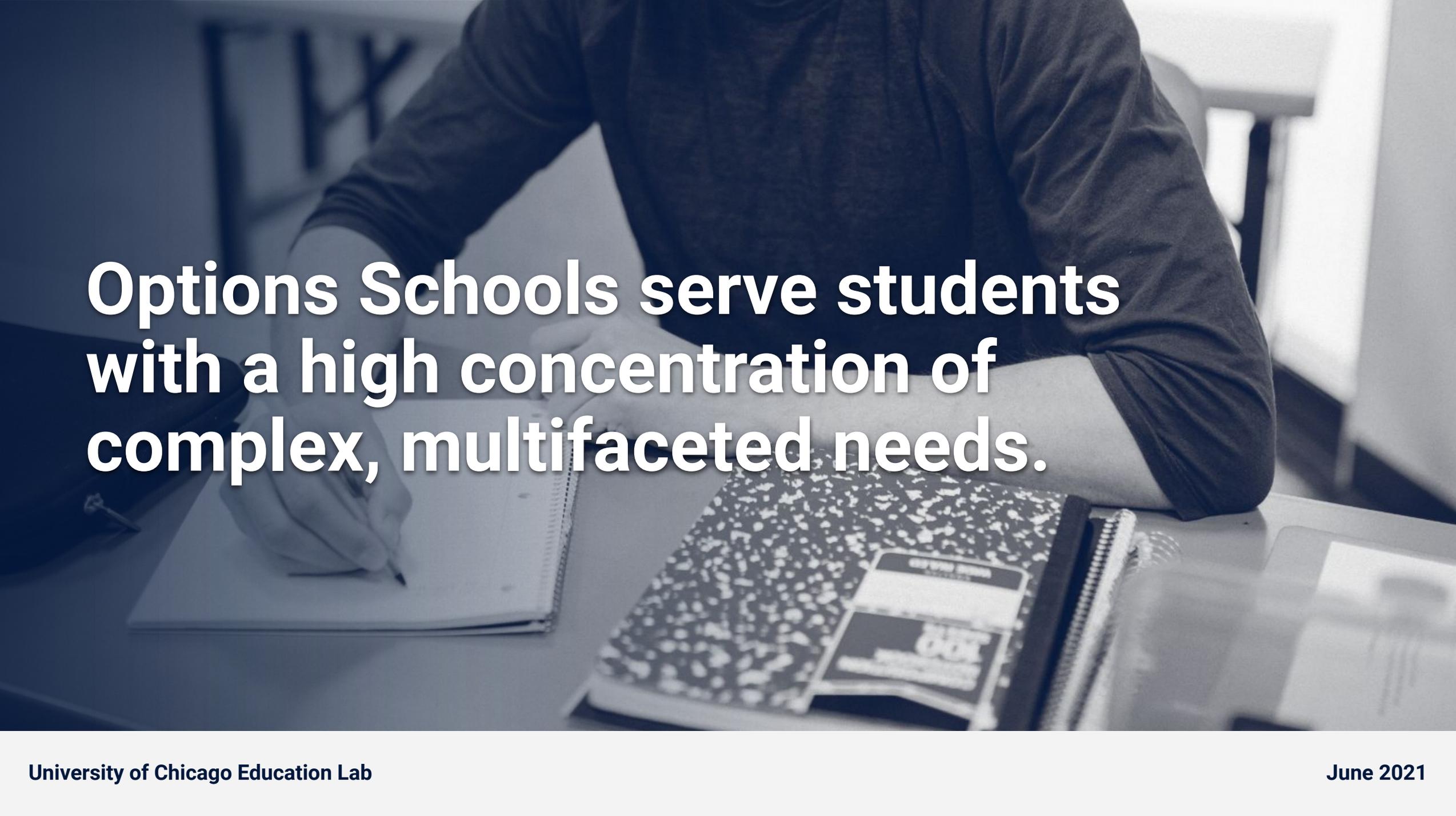
Traditional or accelerated learning models serving primarily students who have dropped out or at risk of dropping out. **YCCS, Instituto.**



Contract Schools (5)

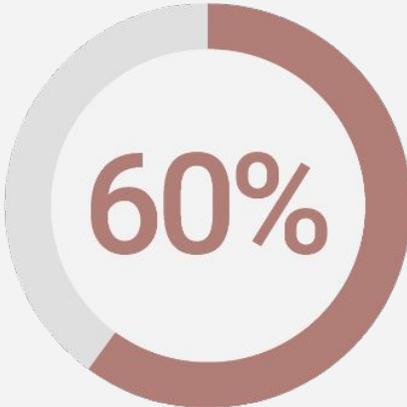
Managed by external operators, offer an accelerated, traditional learning model, with smaller class sizes. **Camelot, Little Black Pearl.**

Source: Chicago Public Schools, www.cps.edu/schools/re-engagement-to-high-school/

A person is sitting at a desk, writing in a notebook. The desk is cluttered with school supplies, including a spiral notebook, a pen, and a stack of papers. The background is slightly blurred, showing a chair and a window. The overall scene is in a classroom or study environment.

Options Schools serve students with a high concentration of complex, multifaceted needs.

**Options
Schools
Students**



**Non-Options
Schools
Students**



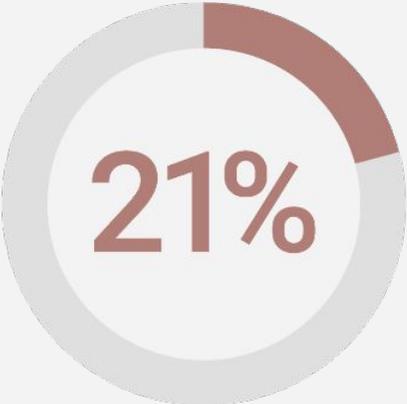
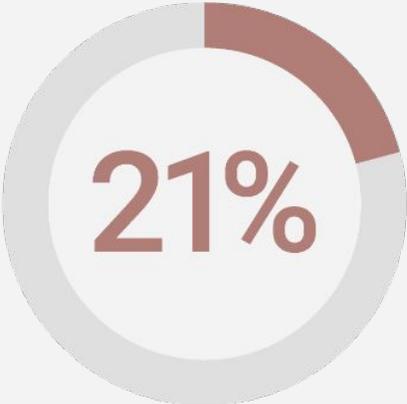
Male

Black

Latinx

* In the 2018-19 school year.

**Options
Schools
Students**



**Non-Options
Schools
Students**



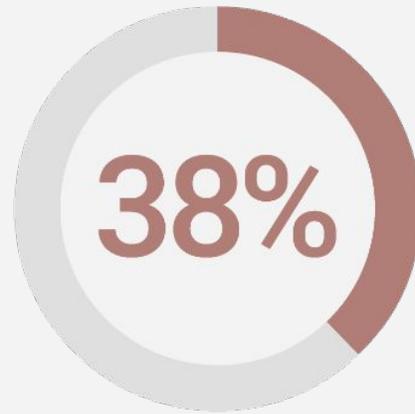
**Free & Reduced
Lunch Eligible**

Homeless

**Individualized
Education Plan**

* In the 2018-19 school year.

**Options
Schools
Students**



**Non-Options
Schools
Students**



**Previous Year L4-6
Disciplinary Infraction**

**Previously
Victimized**

**Previously
Arrested**

**Transferred at
Least Once**

* In the 2018-19 school year.

These differential experiences result in different outcomes...

91%

6-year graduation
rate of students in
non-Options Schools

39%

6-year graduation
rate of students in
Options Schools

But without Options Schools, they likely would have been worse.

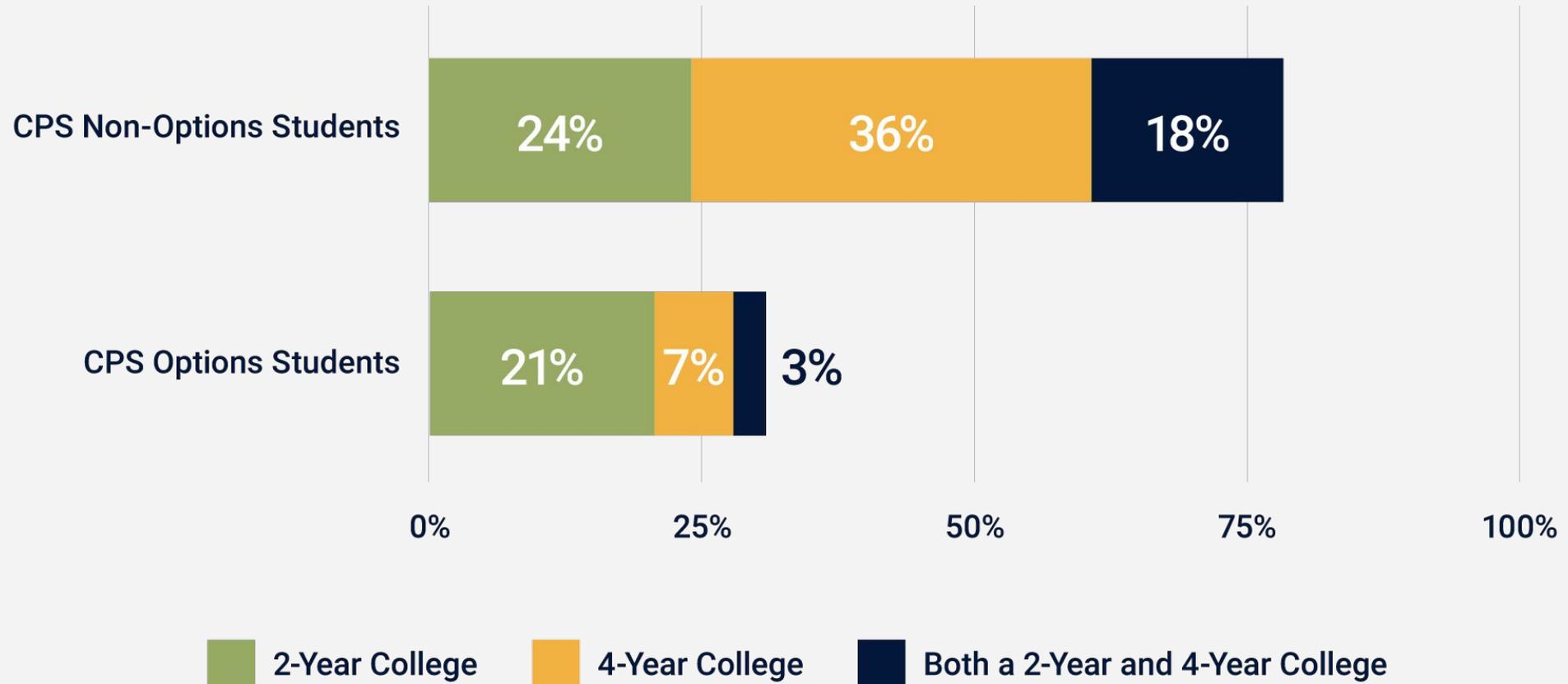
91%

6-year graduation
rate of students in
non-Options Schools

?

6-year graduation
rate of students without
Options Schools

After graduating from high school, almost 70% of Options School students do not enroll in college



40%

of Options students come from
just **20 CPS high schools.**

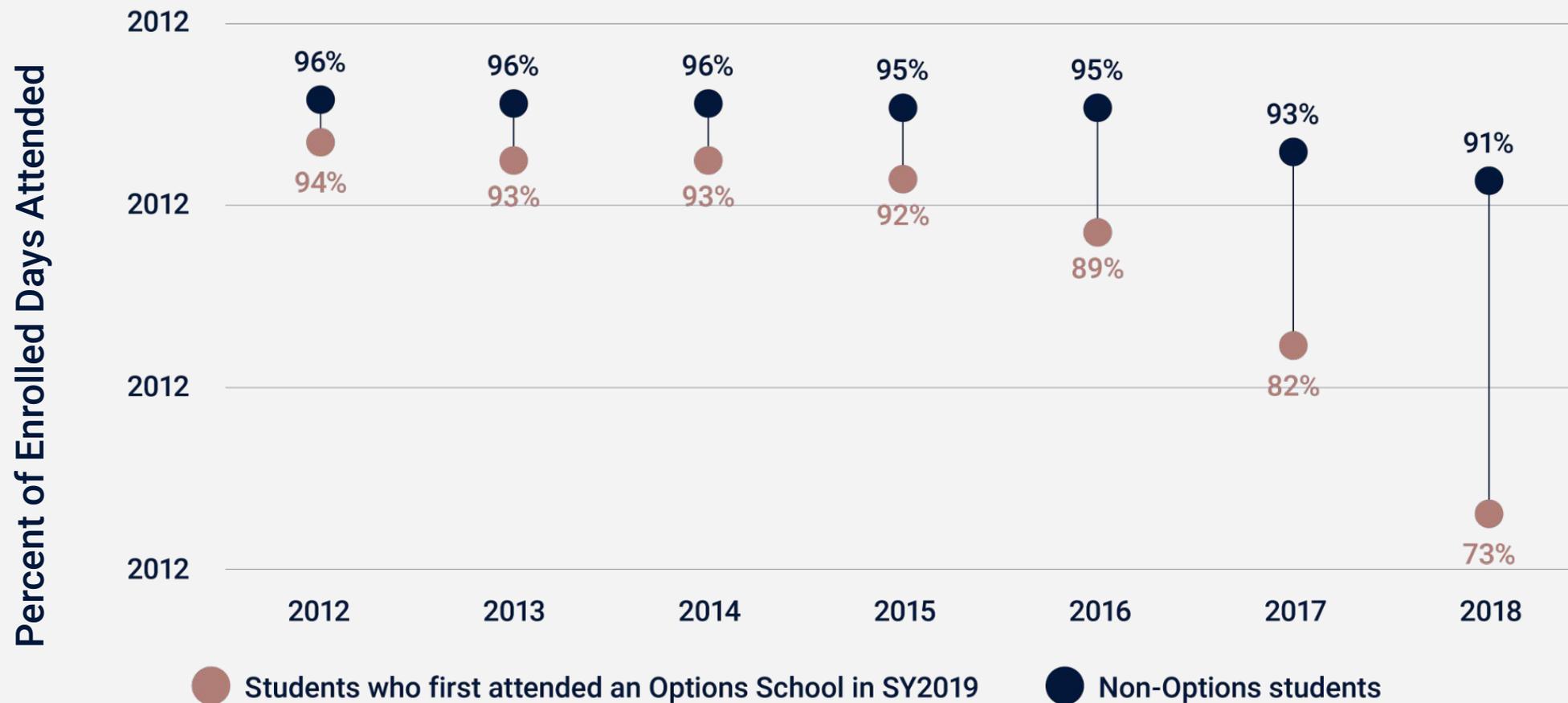
Options students miss

10× more

school days than the district average
prior to enrolling in an Options School.

But that wasn't always the case.

Four year prior to enrolling in an Options School, Options students' attendance rates are nearly equal to those of other CPS students



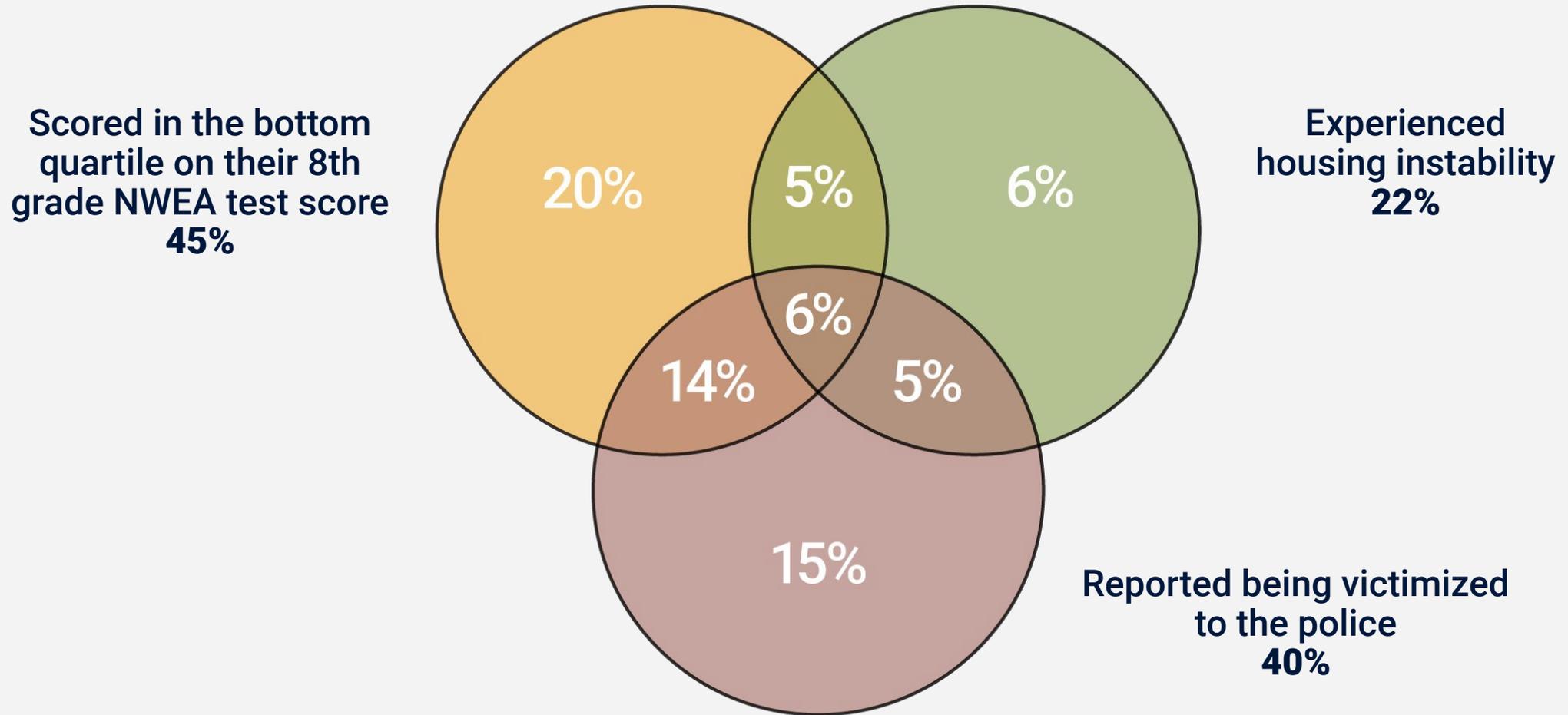


**How can we best support
students who face barriers
to completing their
high school degree?**

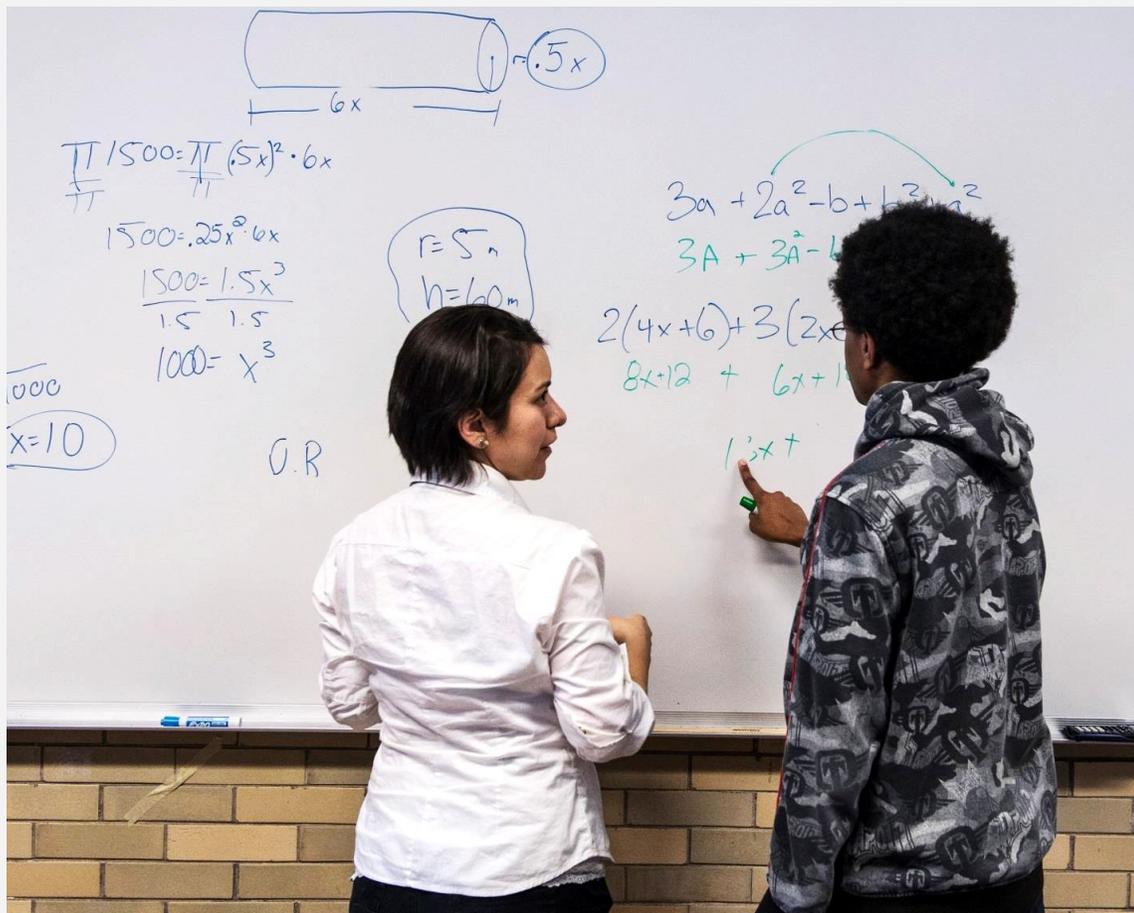


**A personalized
approach might help.**

Percent of Options School students in SY2019 who:



We have some evidence that this approach works



The Opportunity at Hand

\$123 billion

ARP funding provided to
states and school districts

Invest in **data analysis** to better understand
the needs of students.

- Who are the students most at-risk of disengaging?
- What are their trajectories and experiences in the school system?
- What barriers do they face to completing their education?

Provide students **personalized supports**—systematically and at scale.

- Use data and relationships with key stakeholders to inform program design and evaluation
- Address policy barriers that prevent adoption

This personalized system should utilize touchpoints with social service agencies beyond the school system

School Based Supports

Instructional Needs
Trauma-Informed Counseling
Meal Provision
Enrichment Activities

Out of School Supports

Housing Instability
Financial Needs
Violence Victimization
Medical and Dental Care
Transportation

How We Do This Work is Important

- Identifying priority students and their needs must be **informed by data**
- **Partner with key stakeholders** to design appropriate supports – including students, families, school and district staff
- **Build trust and relationships** by working on concrete problems of practice and bring resources to partners
- Must be **complementary to and not supplant** approaches to reduce harm
- Schools cannot do it alone; we need **institutional collaboration** around specific individual needs to make this work.



Except where otherwise cited, statistics in this report are derived from SY2009 to SY2020 administrative data obtained from Chicago Public Schools.

For more information about this work please contact Dr. Monica Bhatt, Senior Research Director of the UChicago Education Lab, at mbhatt@uchicago.edu