

Understanding Post-Secondary Enrollment and Completion

What does post-secondary enrollment and completion mean?

Post-secondary enrollment tracks how many high school graduates enroll in college within a year of graduating from high school, while post-secondary completion tracks how many of those enrolled in college complete their degree within 6 years of enrolling.

Why is measuring post-secondary enrollment and completion important?

Going to college not only helps youth get higher wages and higher quality jobs,¹ it also is an indicator of the support available for students to reach that milestone if they decide to attend college and ultimately complete their program.

Cost is one of the largest barriers to attending college,^{2,3} with 35% of public colleges being labeled as “affordable” according to a study based on 2022-23 data.² Things like federal work study, federal student loans, and grant aid help offset the cost of college but if the tuition and any estimated emergency expenses exceeds that, it creates an affordability gap.² Post-secondary enrollment rates may provide insight on the resources available to students to make it more affordable.

Awareness and preparedness are also important pieces of making college more accessible for students. In high school, students should be:⁴

- Offered rigorous courses to be prepared for college-level work
- Assessed throughout high school to gauge their level of preparedness
- Surrounded by a support network to help them reach their goals
- Assisted with the college application process
- Informed on the different types of financial aid available and how to apply

A support network is vital, as mental health issues and emotional stress, such as loneliness and isolation, are among the top reasons students drop out of college.³

At the end of the day, tracking post-secondary enrollment and completion reveals how well-supported students are to reach their goals and aspirations.

Who gets measured?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines, Ascend tracks the post-secondary enrollment rate on an annual basis for students who graduated from Weaver High School, the Promise Neighborhood high school.

How is the post-secondary enrollment and completion rate measured?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines, Ascend calculates and reports post-secondary enrollment and completion rates annually:

1. Post-Secondary Enrollment – The percentage of high school graduates who enroll in a 4-year college or university within 12 months of graduating from high school.
2. Post-Secondary Completion – The percentage of high school students enrolled in a 4-year college or university who complete their degree within 6 years of enrolling.

Post-Secondary Enrollment is calculated by:

1. Counting how many students who enroll in a 4-year college or university within 12 months of graduating from high school.
2. Counting how many students were in the graduating cohort.
3. Dividing the number of students who enrolled by the number of students in the graduating cohort.
4. Multiplying by 100 to get the percentage of students enrolling into college by cohort.

Higher percentages are better, showing that more students are enrolling into college within a year of graduating from high school.

Currently, only data on college enrollment is available and included in this data story. Because the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school, Weaver High School, re-opened in the 2019-20 school year, rates of college graduation within 6 years of enrollment are not yet available for the graduating class of 2020 or beyond.

Where does the data come from?

The information comes from publicly available data from the Connecticut State Department of Education (see public-edsight.ct.gov), though some details are limited due to privacy rules. The National Student Clearinghouse provides information on students' post-secondary enrollment and completion through CSDE. This data lets Ascend track the post-secondary enrollment rate for the Promise Neighborhood high school each year. For comparison, Ascend also calculates the post-secondary enrollment rate for other Hartford Public Schools and for schools across the state.

How to Read the Graph

The graph below shows the 4-year college/university enrollment rate for high school students from the 2021 through 2023 graduation cohorts (starting one year after the first Weaver cohort graduated high school).

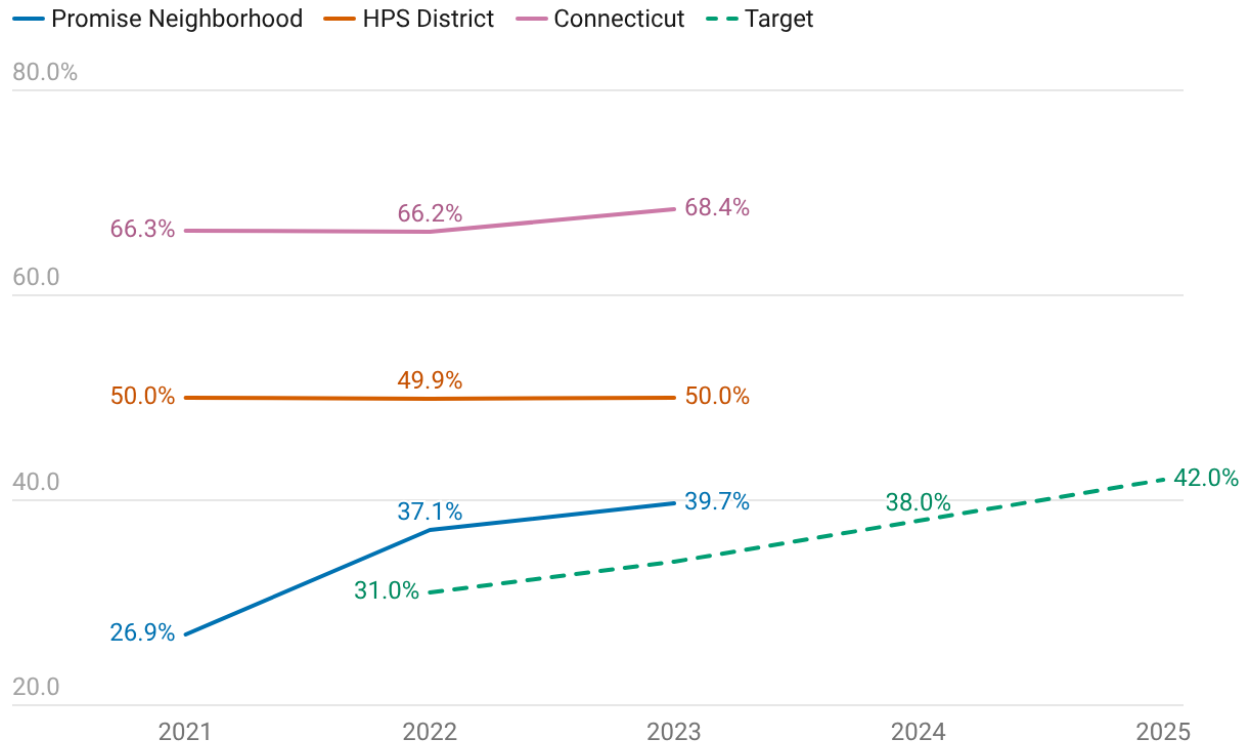
The orange line in the graph shows the college enrollment rate for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school, the blue line shows the percentages for students attending other Hartford Public Schools, and the pink line shows the percentages for students attending other Connecticut public schools. The dashed green line represents the Ascend target value set for the indicator for the years covered by the Promise Neighborhood grant.

For post-secondary enrollment, higher numbers are better!

What do the results show?

Post-Secondary Enrollment Within 1 Year

Percentage of High School Students Enrolled in a 4-Year College/University Within One Year of High School



Years refer to the graduation year.

Chart: Connecticut Data Collaborative • Source: Connecticut State Department of Education • Created with Datawrapper

- For the class of 2023, 39.7% of Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school graduates enrolled in a four-year college or university within one year of high school graduation, exceeding the target by 5.7 points.
- Compared to the class of 2022, post-secondary enrollment rates for Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school graduates increased by 2.6 points.
- Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school graduates have achieved a 12.8-point net improvement (a 48% increase) in post-secondary enrollment over baseline.
- While rates of post-secondary enrollment for Ascend Promise Neighborhood high school graduates remain lower than for their peers at other high schools in the district and state, the increases achieved in the past two years continue to close the gap.

Why is this happening?

The following factors have been shown to positively influence students' college decision⁵:

- The quality of education from primary and secondary school, such as advanced or honors classes
- The presence of a guidance counselor to help students apply for college and find financial aid
- Family support and encouragement

It may also demonstrate the continuous improvement of education and support students are receiving in the school district. The various programs in the community and Ascend are also another great resource for students when preparing for college, so these results may reflect the positive impact they are having on college enrollment.

How can Ascend help increase post-secondary enrollment and completion?

Several programs within Ascend help students graduate within our neighborhood:

[**COMPASS Youth Collaborative**](#) enrolls youth who have been impacted by violence between the ages 16 and 20 in a four-year program to build transformative relationships if they have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Youth at risk of not transitioning to adulthood successfully
- Youth exposed to violence
- Juvenile justice involvement
- Gang association or affiliation

Youth are provided with comprehensive case management, such as:

- Mental health support
- Life skills classes
- Connections to education and employment

The mission of this program is to take youth from trauma to trusting relationships to transformation.

[**Hartford Promise**](#) offers mentoring and college scholarships to students who:

- Maintain a 93% attendance record
- Have a 3.0 GPA
- Stay Hartford residents throughout high school
- Attend a Hartford public high school continuously from 9th to 12th grade

Students who qualify can receive up to \$100,000 for college, which may help bridge the affordability gap.

Hartford Public Schools offers multiple programs, services, and supports to students and their families as part of the Full-Service Community School model implemented at each of the Promise Neighborhood schools. These services may be provided by either school staff (e.g., FCSSPs, School Social Workers) or community-based organization partner(s), or both working in conjunction with each other. They provide the following types of support to students and to other members of their families:

- Integrated Student Supports (at all schools) promote students' academic success by developing and coordinating supports that target academic and non-academic barriers to achievement, including providing resources and supports to meet basic needs.
- Family Engagement services (at all schools) involve outreach and engagement with family members, including providing direct assistance to family members of the student. A few examples include Parent Engagement Groups, home visits, back-to-school events, and parent-teacher conferences.
- Referrals to outside organizations (at all schools) address needs that require a higher level of care or access to resources available outside of the school, such as housing, employment, food, and energy assistance.
- Family Resource Centers (at S.A.N.D. and Wish elementary schools) provide access to a continuum of services that foster the optimal development and education of children beginning at birth. They provide early childhood education, child care, and family support services to meet the specific needs that are presented when engaging with families.
- Career and Workforce Development (at MLK and Milner middle schools and Weaver High School) includes programs and services that support post-secondary education and career development, in-school or out-of-school, such as those that link students to higher education, vocational training, or work-based learning opportunities, or connect classroom learning to career pathways. This area also includes efforts to engage parents and provide financial resources for continued learning and/or student transition assistance.

The [Hartford Youth Service Corps](#) with Our Piece of the Pie provides youth with:

- The skills to get and keep a job
- Paid service-learning projects
- Internships
- Job placement
- Job readiness training
- Personal development workshops

Youth gain the confidence to grow professionally through this program while supporting the local community.

One of the services [San Juan Center](#) has to offer is workforce development. Staff provide trainings for:

- Computer skills
- Microsoft Office applications such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel
- Keyboard skills

These skills are necessary for youth to succeed in college.

The [Summer Youth Employment & Learning Program \(SYELP\)](#) with Capital Workforce Partners teaches youth 14 and up how to:

- Manage their money
- Write a resume
- Remain professional in work environments
- Work with local employers to build job skills and gain work experience

With this program, youth are prepared for their future after high school and in college.

[Young Legends](#) with the United Way Central and Northeastern Connecticut connects youth ages 16-29 to quality employment opportunities and resources. The programs and trainings that youth participate in equip them with the skills needed to become successful in and out of the workplace. Youth are also given the opportunity to:

- Be a part of a peer outreach network
- Share their perspectives with leaders in the workforce system to influence policies and practices

References

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