

Understanding Student Mobility

What is student mobility?

Student mobility occurs when students move in and out of schools during the school year. How often students change schools can show how "stable" a community is. A stable community means families are getting enough support and resources to stay in one place.

Why is measuring student mobility important?

It matters because it's hard for teachers to help students when the group of students keeps changing. Existing connections between teachers, students, and peers are lost, and the student moving may struggle to fit into the new school environment and may receive less personalized support.¹

In addition to its social impact, students who change schools frequently may¹:

- Have trouble with normal development
- Have trouble keeping up with schoolwork
- Get lower test scores
- Be less likely to graduate high school

Schools are affected by high student mobility too. Classroom learning gets interrupted, the climate and culture within the school and classroom may suffer, and schools may get less money for staff, which can hurt learning and well-being for all students.²

Who gets measured?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines, Ascend tracks student mobility annually for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students at the five Promise Neighborhood schools: S.A.N.D. and Wish elementary schools, Milner and M. L. King, Jr. middle schools, and Weaver High School.

How is student mobility calculated?

Per U.S. Department of Education guidelines, Ascend calculates and reports student mobility annually using a standard measure. Specifically, student mobility includes any school change *during* the school year that is *not* because of graduating to the next level (like moving from elementary to middle school).

The student mobility rate is calculated by:

1. Counting how many students entered the schools between October 1 (the official date for calculating school enrollment) and June 1 (the last month of the school year).
2. Counting how many students left the schools during that same time.
3. Adding these two numbers together to get the total number of movements.
4. Dividing by the total number of students enrolled in October, to get the “per student” mobility rate.
5. Multiplying by 100 to get the number of moves per “100 students” to make it easier to interpret results.

This calculation tells us how many moves in/out of the school happened for every hundred students who were enrolled, with lower rates being better as it represents less school changes during the school year.

Where does the data come from?

A data sharing agreement between the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the University of Hartford Center for Social Research, and Connecticut Data Collaborative allows Ascend to track mobility for all students residing within the North Hartford Promise Zone as well as students who attend any Hartford Public School. This data lets Ascend track mobility by grade level, by school, and for all five Promise Neighborhood schools each year. For comparison, Ascend also calculates mobility rates for other Hartford Public Schools.

How to Read the Graph

The graph below shows the student mobility rate for pre-kindergarten through 12th graders (combined) from 2021-22 to 2024-25.

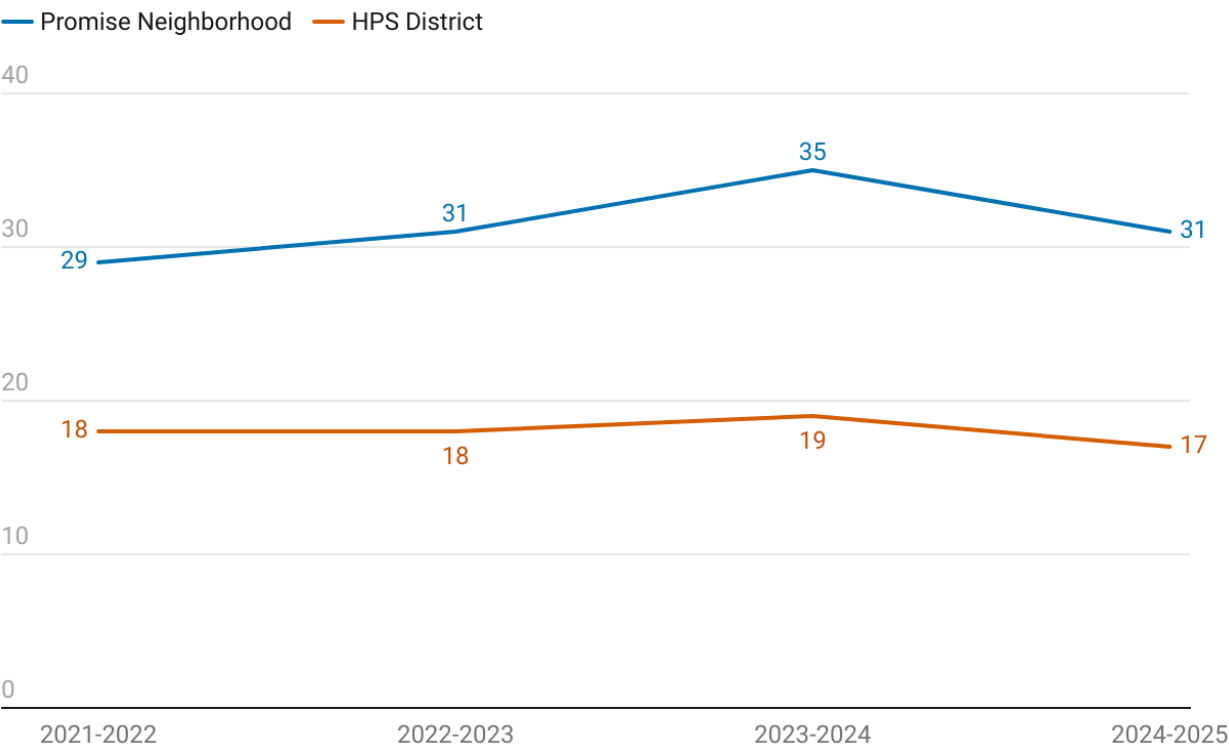
The orange line in the graph shows the mobility rate (per 100 students) for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools, and the blue line shows the mobility rate for students attending other Hartford Public Schools. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) does not report student mobility for other Connecticut public schools. Because the student-level CSDE data required to calculate this indicator was first obtained in 2024, there is currently no established Ascend target value for this result.

For student mobility, lower numbers are better!

What do the results show?

Student Mobility

Mobility Rate Per 100 Students*



Years refer to school years. For example, 2024-2025 refers to the school year from Oct 2024 through Jun 2025.
*The student mobility rate represents the number of students who are entering or exiting **during** the school year per 100 students. For example, in 2024-2025, there were 31 moves per 100 students.

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

- For the 2024-25 school year, the student mobility rate was 31.3 moves per 100 students.
- Compared to the 2023-24 school year, mobility decreased by 3.6 moves per 100 students, the first decrease in mobility rates for Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools since 2021-22.
- The mobility rate for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools continues to be substantially higher than the mobility rate for students at other schools in the district, and the gap has widened despite the recent improvements for the Ascend Promise Neighborhood schools.

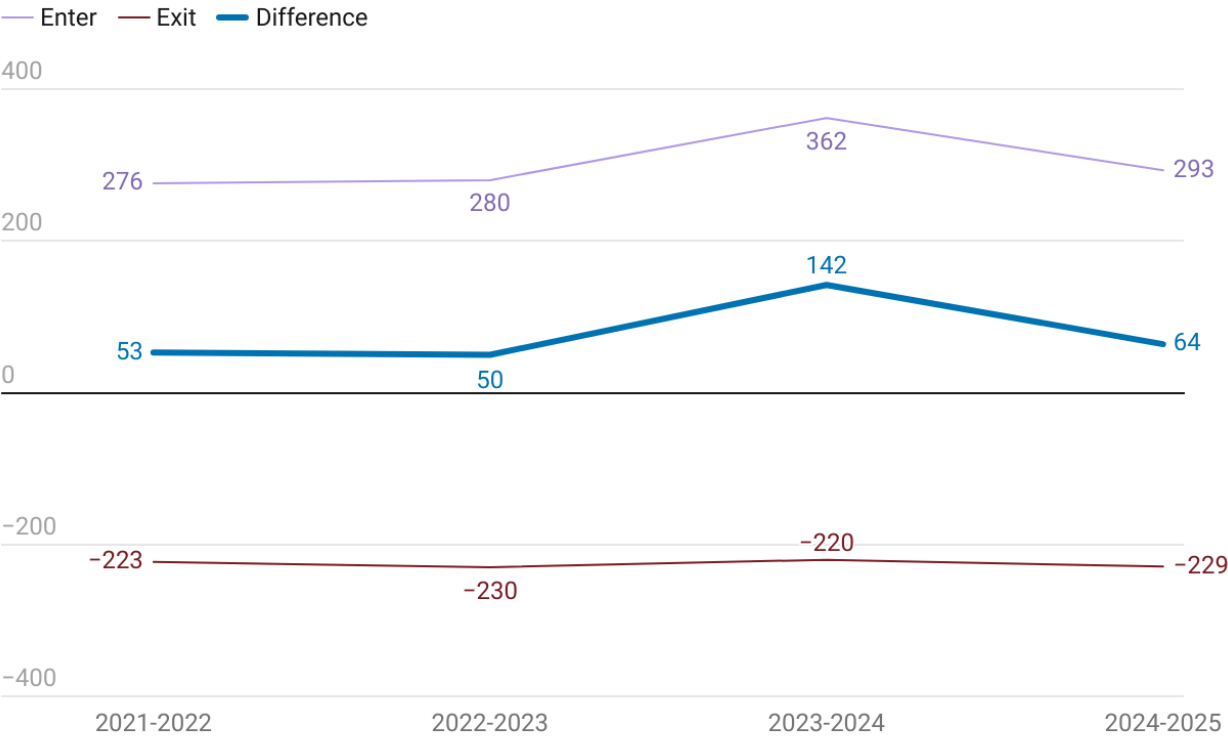
How many students are entering or leaving during the school year?

While the mobility rate provides a way to compare the amount of student movement over time and across schools of different sizes, it is also important to understand how many students enter and leave those schools each year.

The graph below shows the number of students entering Ascend schools (in purple), the number of students exiting Ascend schools (in red), and the net loss or gain of students at Ascend schools (in blue).

Students Entering and Exiting: Promise Neighborhood

Number of students who **enter** and **exit** during the school year, along with the **difference** between entrances and exits (net loss or gain)



Years refer to school years. For example, 2024-2025 refers to the school year from Oct 2024 through Jun 2025.

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

- There are around five hundred students who enter or leave the five Ascend schools *during the school year* each year, with a total of 522 students entering or exiting in 2024-25.
- For each of the years, more students are entering the five Ascend schools during the school year (blue) than are leaving (orange), resulting in a net gain in enrollment during the school year.
- For the Ascend schools, while the number of students leaving the schools has remained steady, the number of students entering in 2023-24 increased by 82 students over the previous school year. However, in 2024-25, the number of students entering decreased by 69 students, bringing the total back down to levels similar to prior years.
- While not shown in the graph above, other HPS schools also experienced a net gain in enrollment during the school year (i.e., the number of students entering

during the school year exceeded the number exiting), except in 2021-22 when the number of students exiting exceeded the number entering.

What percentage of students end the year at the same school they started at in October (student retention)?

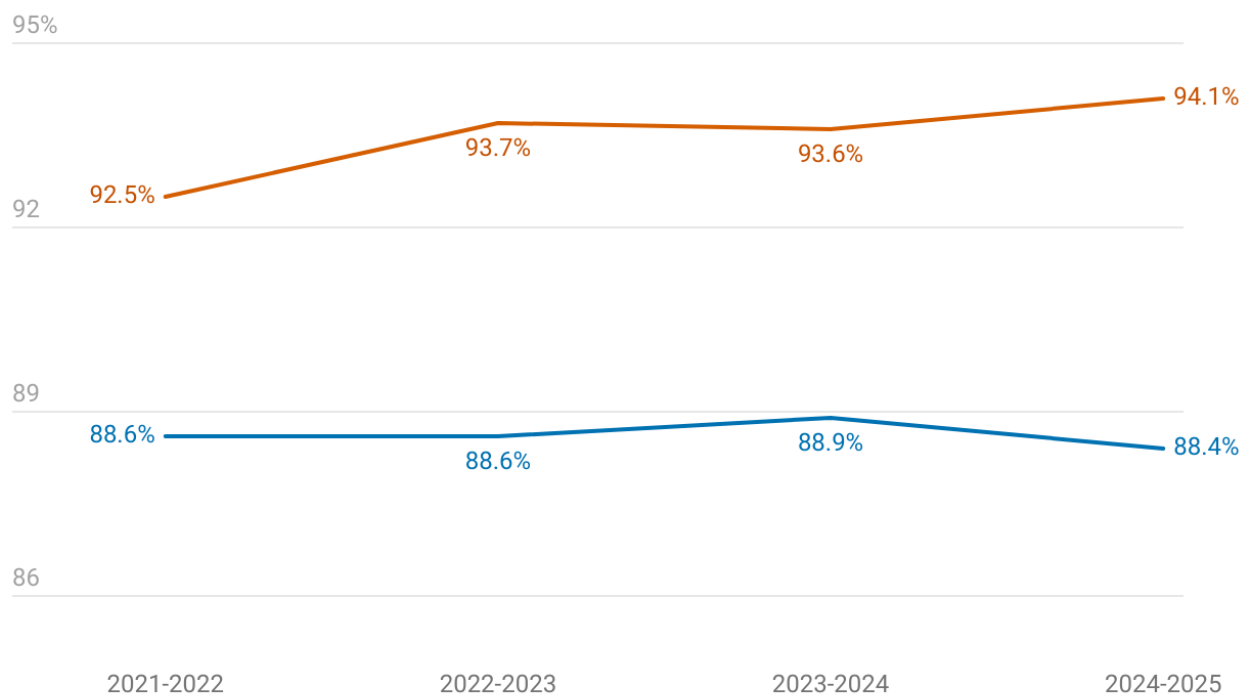
Another way to view student mobility is to look at the percentage of students who started at each school (in October) who were still attending the same school at the end of the year (June), referred to as the *retention rate*. The higher the student retention rate the better, because it means that students are staying at the same school for the whole school year.

The graph below shows the October-to-June retention rates for both Ascend schools (the **orange** line) and the other HPS schools (the **blue** line) from 2021-22 to 2024-25.

Student Retention

Student Retention Rates (October to June)

— Promise Neighborhood — HPS District



Years refer to school years. For example, 2024-2025 refers to the school year from Oct 2024 through Jun 2025.

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

These data show that the majority of students remain in the school they started in, and that these retention rates have stayed about the same over the four years. The data also show that student retention is lower at the Ascend schools than at the other HPS schools, consistent with our findings regarding mobility rates.

Why is this happening?

Based on conversations with school principals and district experts who track student mobility, some of the likely causes of student mobility include:

- Housing instability (e.g., families can't afford rent or find stable housing)
- Unemployment
- Safety concerns in neighborhoods
- New families immigrating into the community

Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the district paused reassignment of students to new schools based on changes in their home address to avoid adding additional stress and disruptions to students' lives. The district resumed reassignment to schools based on a student's current address in 2023-24, resulting in increased student mobility that year.

To better understand why student mobility is increasing, more research is needed on things like poverty, housing, jobs, immigration, and safety in the community. Further input is also needed from students and families to gain their perspective on potential root causes for student mobility in the community.

How can Ascend help reduce student mobility?

Several programs affiliated with Ascend may help reduce student mobility.

One program that may reduce mobility is [Hartford Promise](#), which 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 encourages families to stay in one place.

Another program that can help reduce student mobility is [Connecticut Children's Healthy Homes](#). Some of the core activities of the program include:

- Improving living conditions for families.
- Connecting families with services to address medical and social needs.
- Advocating for quality, stable, and affordable housing.

This can help provide housing support to families in the community.

In addition, [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 range of services that support children's healthy development and education. 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.

Addressing some of the potential root causes for student mobility will ultimately have a positive impact on this indicator; however, more support is needed in other areas.

References

1. Rumberger, RW. Student Mobility: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions. *National Education Policy Center*. 2015. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED574695>.
2. Rumberger, RW. The Causes and Consequences of Student Mobility. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 2015;72(1):6-21. doi.org/10.2307/3211287.