

# Problem: Many students are left behind by the education system.

Illinois ranks far below the most-educated U.S. states in educational attainment. A wide and stubborn achievement gap exists that leaves minorities and low-income persons with far lower levels of educational attainment.

A high proportion of adults “stop out” of their education, including high school dropouts, individuals with college credit but no credential, and working

adults who need new skills or credentials. Illinois needs the full workforce participation of all its residents to meet the economic challenges it faces.

There are wide geographic disparities in educational attainment. Residents of many Chicago suburbs and certain pockets of downstate Illinois are far better educated than others living in inner city and rural areas.

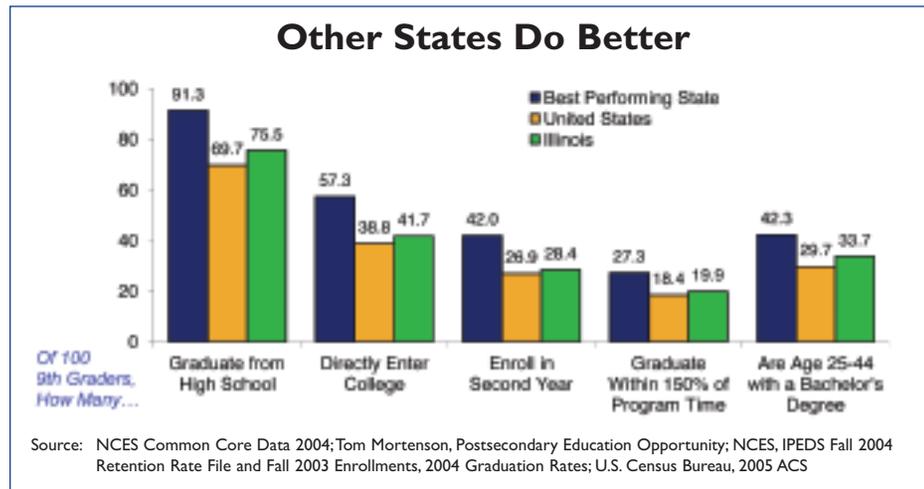


Figure 3. Illinois does better than the nation as a whole, according to these 2004 data, but it trails the best-performing states significantly in getting students through the education pipeline.

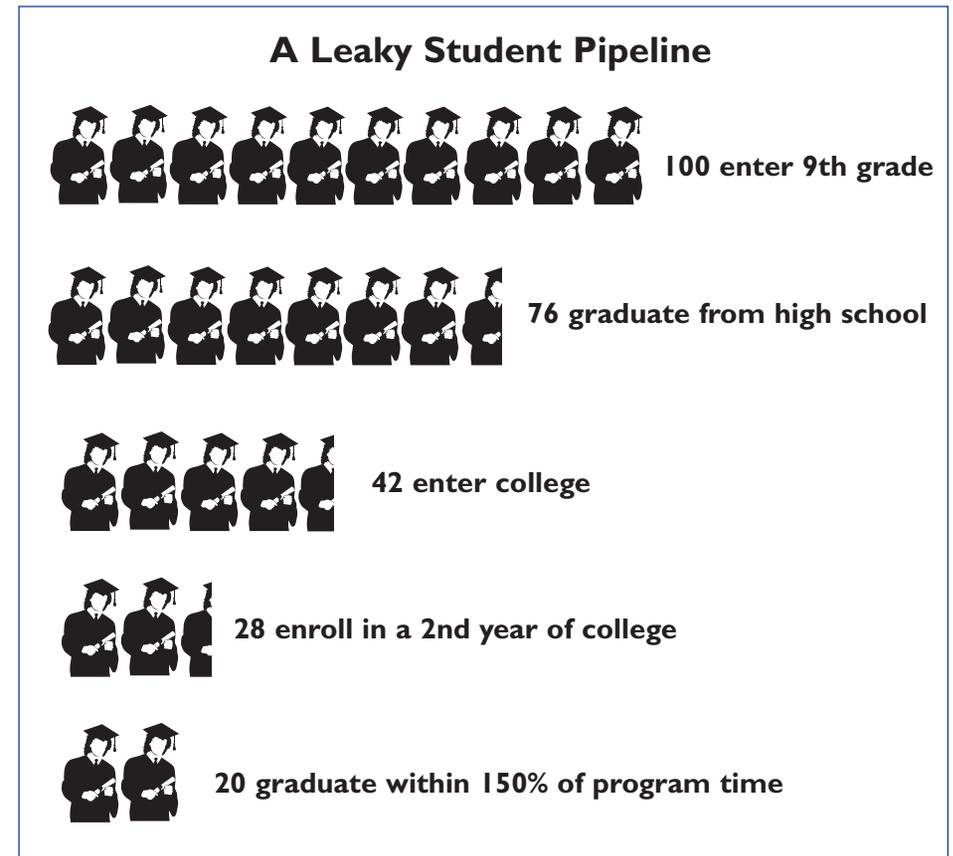


Figure 4. There are major leaks in the education pipeline in Illinois at all key transitions along the way to a college degree. For the typical four-year bachelor's degree, 150% of program time equals six years; for an associate's degree, it would equate to three years of study at the original school of enrollment.



## GOAL 1

# Increase educational attainment to match best-performing states.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** Increase success of students at each stage of the P-20 education pipeline to *eliminate achievement gaps* by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and disability.

**Strategy:** Improve college readiness through curriculum alignment, access to quality preschools, postsecondary and high school partnerships, and links between student financial aid and a demanding high school curriculum.

**Strategy:** Strengthen teacher and school leader quality through upgraded standards and professional development.

**Strategy:** Build success for students with disabilities through assistive technologies, improved transitions from high school to college, and Perkins Programs of Study.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** Increase the number of adults, including GED recipients, reentering education and completing a postsecondary credential.

**Strategy:** Increase support for adult students through an emphasis on adult basic education and GED completion, financial aid, support services, and incentives for adults with substantial college credit to finish degrees.

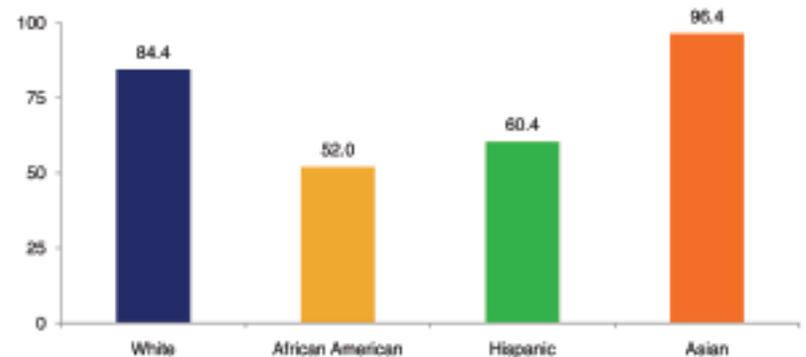
**Strategy:** Expand opportunities for adult learners through regional partnerships, baccalaureate completion programs, and new entryways for low-skilled residents.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** Reduce geographic disparities in educational attainment.

**Strategy:** Expand capacity through improved access to postsecondary education in rural areas of the state, baccalaureate completion opportunities, distance learning, and dual credit.

**Strategy:** Strengthen college readiness through implementation of a High School to College Success Report and partnerships between community colleges and high schools.

### First Major Leak: High School Graduation



Source: Illinois State Board of Education; NCES, Common Core Data

Figure 5. High school graduation rates (average of 2005-2006). The first major leak in the education pipeline comes at high school graduation when barely half of African American students and just three in five Hispanics leave with a diploma.