

**CLEVELAND
PLAN
PROGRESS
REPORT**

2021

MAYOR FRANK JACKSON, CITY OF CLEVELAND



In 2012, we reimagined public education in the city of Cleveland and united as a community, putting aside individual agendas. Our collective approach made our vision a reality as we institutionalized, *Cleveland's Plan for*

Transforming Schools, and House Bill 525, our legislative blueprint for education reform.

As our overarching goal, we wanted to ensure our children would attend high-quality schools, improve educational outcomes, and be prepared for their postsecondary education and career journeys. As such, we have built the much-needed infrastructure for Cleveland's schools and passed levies to execute the goals of the Cleveland Plan.

While we contended with a global pandemic, we continued to advance our work. However, we have also seen the impact on students' achievement. We know the current pandemic unveiled inequities we knew existed; yet, forced us to make a more concerted effort to rectify those inequalities and barriers—to do what is right and just by our children, their families, and our educators. Grounded in this stewardship, we recently completed a refresh of the Cleveland Plan, and embedded equitable standards that are replicable and measurable. In spite of the challenges, the pandemic has propelled us to vision, plan, and subsequently implement more innovative ways of teaching and learning.

Despite the pandemic, our report highlights some progress. Graduation rates have increased consistently each year. Data also shows students of color are more likely to graduate from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, than other school districts in the state. In addition, Cleveland has the fourth fastest

improving graduation rate among all Ohio districts in a ten-year period.

Although we experienced progress, there are areas of concern. Preschool and kindergarten enrollment saw a marked decline, and there was also a reduction in the number of students who enrolled and persisted in postsecondary education.

As an extension of our work, we have begun to create a postsecondary education culture. We have instituted Say Yes Cleveland, where we provide tuition scholarships and core services, including the Family Support Specialists in schools, who connect families and students with needed resources. Moreover, as we help students with their chosen pathway and careers we will be implementing the PACE program, a career planning and exploration program for middle and high school students who want to pursue a career or occupation upon graduation from high school. We saw Say Yes Cleveland and PACE as the next logical steps to our education continuum.

We are providing more quality educational opportunities and making an impact in our community and region as well. We have led the charge in our schools and have made progress over the years. While these improvements and additional efforts are noteworthy, there is more work to be done. Our continued success entails our ability to execute the Cleveland Plan, with our community partners, for meaningful, lasting change on behalf of our children and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Frank G. Jackson', written in a cursive style.

Frank G. Jackson

Mayor, City of Cleveland
Chair, Board of Directors, Cleveland Transformation Alliance



Thank you, Mayor Jackson, for your leadership in aligning the educational landscape and helping the community see its importance and potential.

**With Gratitude,
Cleveland Transformation Alliance Board of Directors**



MEGHANN MARNECHECK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Despite our deepest wish, the pandemic continues. In some ways, 2021 has presented more significant challenges than 2020. COVID-19 variants now make children more susceptible to illness. Masking and vaccinations

have become divisive political issues. Vaccination rates are below what is needed to reach some level of herd immunity. As a result, groups of students are isolating after possible COVID-19 exposure or the onset of illness. Labor shortages in schools—both locally and across the country—are forcing shutdowns or changes to service delivery. These shortages have affected busing, food distribution, and classroom instruction. All of these factors make in-person learning more complex. Yet, we know that in-person learning is critical to educational progress and engagement and leads to many students' emotional well-being.

As we reported last year, partners stepped up across the city to support our students. Learning pods opened when many schools were only offering remote education. Low to no-cost internet access was provided to families, and devices were deployed to students. The Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) used a local TV station to broadcast lessons to those without reliable internet. Innovation was happening at an unprecedented pace.

We also know, however, that students are still struggling. They have lost learning time, and it will take an ongoing commitment from the community for students to get back up to speed and likely several academic years for this catch-up to occur. According to an article by McKinsey & Company, "the impact of the pandemic on K-12 student learning was significant, leaving students on average five months behind in mathematics and four months behind in reading by the end of the school year. The pandemic widened preexisting opportunity and achievement gaps, hitting historically disadvantaged

students hardest. In math, students in majority Black schools ended the year with six months of unfinished learning, students in low-income schools with seven. High schoolers have become more likely to drop out of school, and high school seniors, especially those from low-income families, are less likely to go on to post-secondary education."¹

You will see on the following pages that students in Cleveland are no exception. There are some bright spots, but our community is still experiencing the devastating impact seen in national trends. While CMSD students are less likely to drop out, we know that some older students are being drawn from the classroom and into the workforce. Students are helping to support their families and seeing the short-term benefits of an income, yet the long-term impact of failing to graduate has severe implications for the student and our community. However, Black and Hispanic students are still more likely to graduate from CMSD schools than other public schools across the state.

The work continues to achieve the North Star vision described in the refreshed Cleveland Plan: All Cleveland public education students will have a high-quality, equitable education in schools that inspire joy in learning.

It has been nearly two years since the first effects of the pandemic hit schools. These past two years have been challenging for the people of Cleveland and for individuals across the globe. While we continue to persevere, we also cannot lose sight of the opportunity before us to innovate and improve education delivery for the benefit of our children and their future.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Meghann Marnecheck".

Meghann Marnecheck

Executive Director, Cleveland Transformation Alliance

¹Dorn, Emma, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, COVID-19 and education: The lingering effects of unfinished learning, 27 July 2021, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning>

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Nationally, enrollment of preschool and kindergarten children dropped by a higher percentage than enrollment of students from grades 1 through 12, according to data the National Center for Education Statistics collected from state education agencies. Preschool enrollment dropped by 22 percent, and enrollment of kindergartners fell by 9 percent.²

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on early learning in Cleveland, resulting in severely reduced enrollment, teacher shortages, reduced capacity, and overall system instability.

Overall enrollment in high-quality preschool in Cleveland dropped from 42 percent in December of 2019 to 25 percent in June of 2021.³ Within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District preschools, enrollment declined by 53 percent between the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years.⁴ While enrollment numbers continue to climb as families return to work and vaccinations increase, initial data from the 2021–2022 school year show ongoing enrollment challenges.

While kindergarten readiness data are not available for the fall of 2020, significant learning loss is anticipated among the current preschool and kindergarten cohorts who were not able to participate in early learning programs during the past two years. In addition to the loss of early learning opportunities, many children have also been cut off from access to critical services such as mental and physical health resources, special education, and vital nutrition support.

The instability resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is causing significant staffing and financial strains on the entire early learning system. Ongoing closures, reduced enrollment, staffing challenges, and increased costs have threatened early learning providers' ability to remain open and continue to serve children. In July 2021, 77 percent



of child care programs reported that they were short-staffed,⁵ driven by the systemic undercompensation of child care teachers and staff which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Early learning partners in Cleveland, including PRE4CLE, Starting Point, the Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children, early learning providers, and many partnering community organizations are working closely to support the needs of children, families, and early learning providers during this time. Ohio's allocation of \$1.3 billion for child care in American Rescue Plan Act funding is anticipated to begin reaching early learning providers in the last quarter of 2021.

Ongoing collaboration between local and state policymakers, school district leaders, and early learning stakeholders will be critical to keeping Cleveland's early learning system intact, and to help children, families, and early learning providers remain connected to critical resources and services.

² "Nation's Public School Enrollment Dropped 3 Percent in 2020–21," National Center for Education Statistics, June 28, 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/06_28_2021.asp.

³ Enrollment data was provided by Starting Point. Population data was provided by the US Census.

⁴ Data provided by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

⁵ Data provided by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment and attendance have been difficult to track during the pandemic. This was especially true when a majority of learning was occurring online. *The 74 Million* reported that as many as 8,000 students were disengaged from learning at CMSD.⁶ Unsurprisingly, enrollment numbers are reflective of this.

According to Ohio's report card, there also was a notable increase in chronic absence (defined as 18 days [10 percent] or more of excused or unexcused time not engaged in education activity). In 2020–2021, 24 percent of Ohio's K–12 students—almost 380,000 students—were chronically absent. As is the typical pattern for chronic absenteeism, Ohio's historically underserved and vulnerable students, and students in urban areas, experienced higher rates of chronic absenteeism than their peers.⁷

CMSD enrollment dropped significantly in the 2020–2021 school year. The drop is likely another impact of the COVID–19 pandemic and reflects national trends in low kindergarten enrollment. The District saw reductions across grades, however. The District lost 2,647 students or approximately seven percent of total enrollment from the prior year. The enrollment number marks an all-time low enrollment since the Transformation Alliance began tracking.

Total charter school enrollment equaled 15,078 for the 2020–2021 school year. It should also be noted that Ohio Connections Academy, which is an online charter school based in Cleveland, had an enrollment of 5,391 students. These are students from across Ohio, however, so the figure is not included in this total.



⁶ Patrick O'Donnell, "The Concerning Case of Cleveland's No-Show Students: More Than 8,000 Kids are Missing from City's Online Classes as Absenteeism Rates Double," *The 74*, December 16, 2020, <https://www.the74million.org/article/the-concerning-case-of-clevelands-no-show-students-more-than-8000-kids-are-missing-from-citys-online-classes-as-absenteeism-rates-double/>.

⁷ Ohio Department of Education, "Ohio School and District Results 2020–2021," https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Sections/General-Report-Card-Information/20-21_State_Report_Card.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US

CMSD PARTNER CHARTER SCHOOLS

In 2018, the Cleveland Transformation Alliance convened conversations to develop a list of criteria for charter schools to

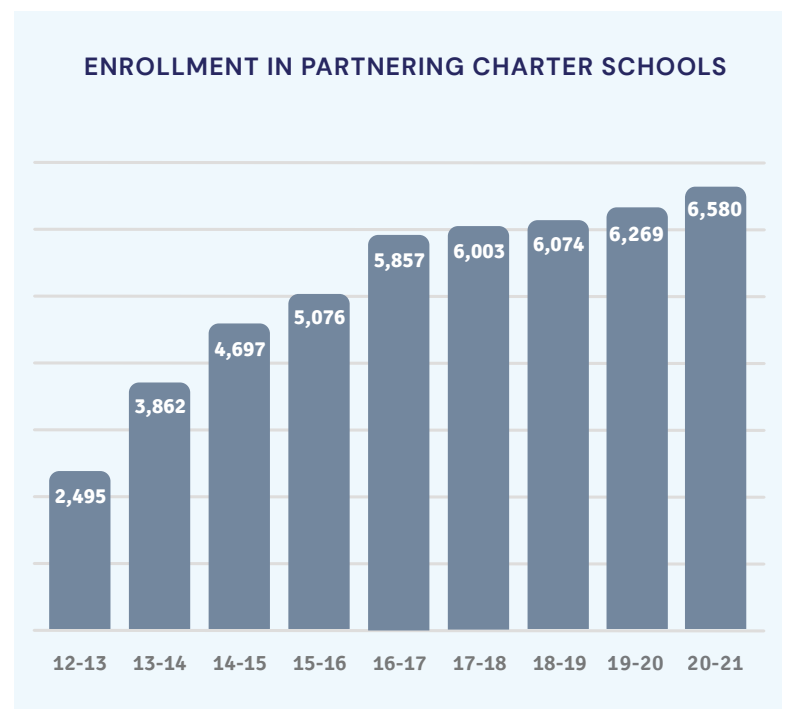
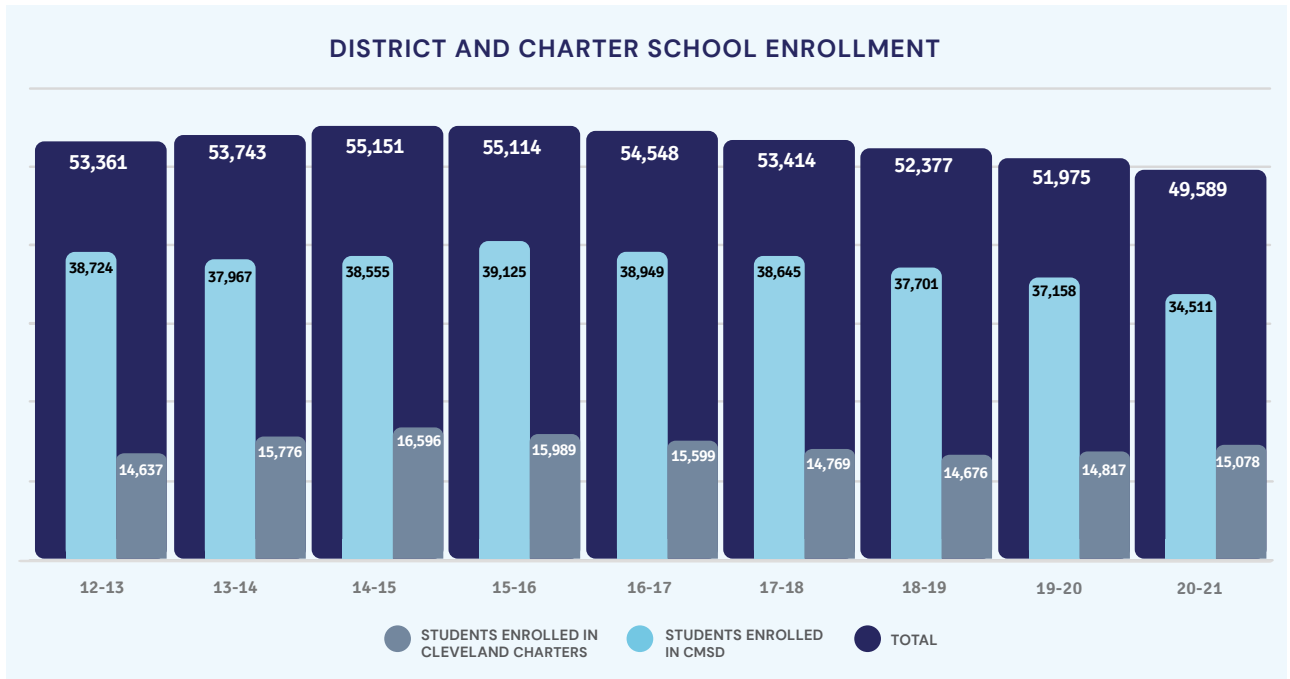
partner with the

CMSD. These criteria hold charter school partners to higher standards of practice that are outlined in the Cleveland Plan. As part of its comprehensive review of the Cleveland Plan and development of its strategic plan, the Alliance intends to convene conversations in 2022 to review partnership criteria to determine whether they are still the proper measures.

The following is a list of partnering schools during the 2020–2021 school year: Citizens Academy, Citizens Academy Southeast, Citizens Leadership Academy, Citizens Leadership Academy East, Cleveland College Preparatory School, Hope Academy Northwest Campus, Horizon Science Academy Cleveland, The Intergenerational School, Lakeshore Intergenerational School, Menlo Park Academy, Near West

Intergenerational School, Northeast Ohio College Preparatory School, Stepstone Academy, Village Preparatory School Cliffs, Village Preparatory School Willard, Village Preparatory School Woodland Hills, and Wings Academy.⁸

Enrollment at these schools totaled 6,580 students in the 2020–2021 school year. Despite the national trends on reduced enrollment mentioned previously, partnering charter schools saw an overall enrollment increase of 311 students, or about five percent.



⁸ This list includes charter schools sponsored by CMSD and schools that have signed formal partnership agreements with the district for the 2020–2021 school year.

GRADUATION

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

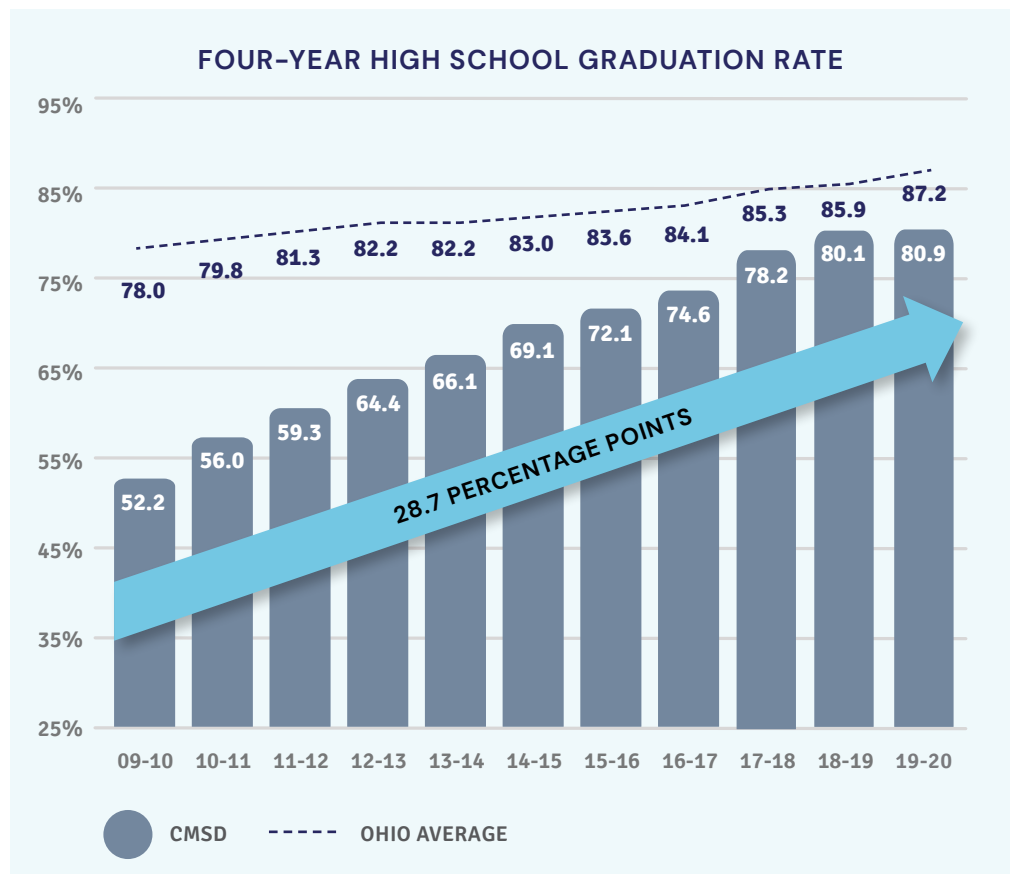
CMSD again achieved a new milestone by reaching an 80.9 percent graduation rate. This rate is the latest high in the District's history, topping the prior rate of 80.1 percent after the 2018–2019 academic year. The four-year graduation rate applies to students in the class of 2020 who graduated within four years. These are students who entered the ninth grade in 2016 and graduated by the summer of 2020.

In addition to the 27.9 percentage point increase in graduation rate since 2010, the District is closing the gap with Ohio's overall average. CMSD's graduation rate was 52.2 percent in 2009–2010, and the state average was 78 percent—a difference of 25.8 percentage points. Today, the District is within 6.3 percentage points of meeting the average.



CLOSING THE GRADUATION GAP

The graduation rate of CMSD's Black, non-Hispanic students is 80.9 percent. This is 4 points higher than the state average of 76.9 percent. Hispanic students' graduation rate is 84.9 percent; 6.1 percent higher than the state average of 78.8 percent. Once again, minority students are more likely to graduate from CMSD than other high schools around Ohio. This is news for which we can be truly proud. The five-year graduation rate of 85.8 percent for the Class of 2019 ranks CMSD second among Ohio's Urban 8 school districts.



READINESS

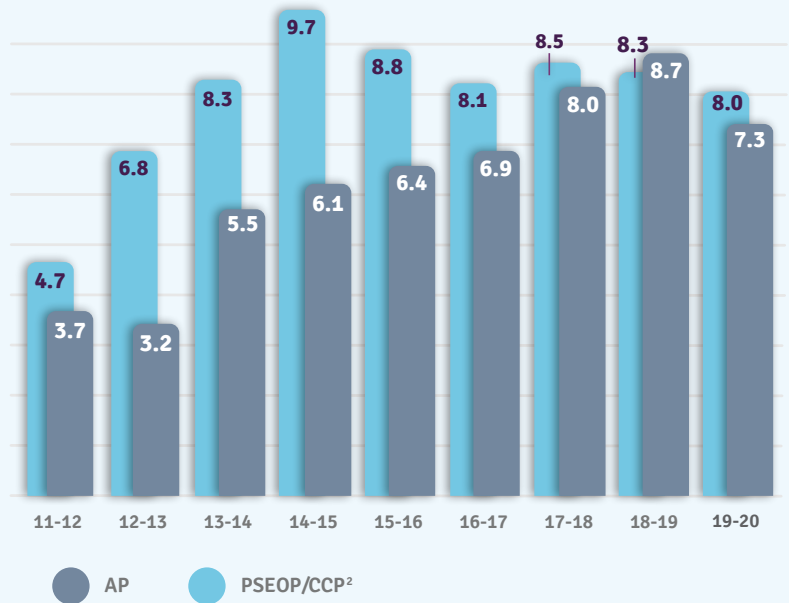
The college and career readiness data reflect some of the first signs of significant impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. There are dips in participation in Advanced Placement (AP) and College Credit Plus (CCP) programs. The drop is troubling since the District had experienced steady gains year over year—especially in AP participation. For the class of 2020, AP participation dropped from 8.7 percent to 7.3 percent, and CCP participation dropped to 8 percent.

ACCESS

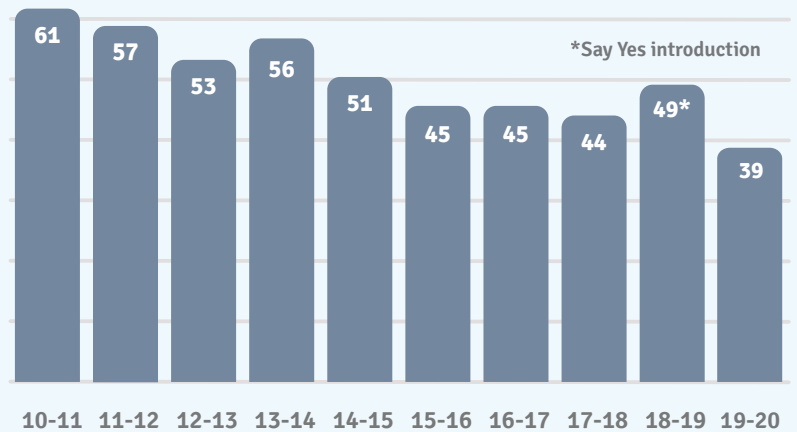
College access reflects the impact of the pandemic on older students. The FAFSA completion rate dropped for the class of 2020, which is an indicator of future reductions in college enrollment rates. It is anticipated that the pandemic will continue to affect college enrollment negatively for the next few years. CMSD graduate enrollment in college within one year of high school dropped ten percentage points in one year. Forty-nine percent of graduates in 2018–2019 had enrolled in college, but the percentage dropped to 39 in 2019–2020. This data reflects the most glaring indication of COVID-19's early impact. While this trend is playing out across the country, it is felt worse in Cleveland. The effect can be attributed to the City's high degree of poverty and the lure of the workforce because of our labor shortage.

However, we hope that Say Yes Cleveland and College Now Greater Cleveland will lessen the long-term impact in Cleveland compared to other cities across the country.

PERCENTAGE OF CMSD STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN COLLEGE-LEVEL COURSES



CMSD GRADUATE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE WITHIN ONE YEAR



²PSEOP is the Post-Secondary Education Options Program. PSEOP was replaced by the CCP program in the 2015–2016 school year. It is noted here because data before 15–16 reflects PSEOP participation.

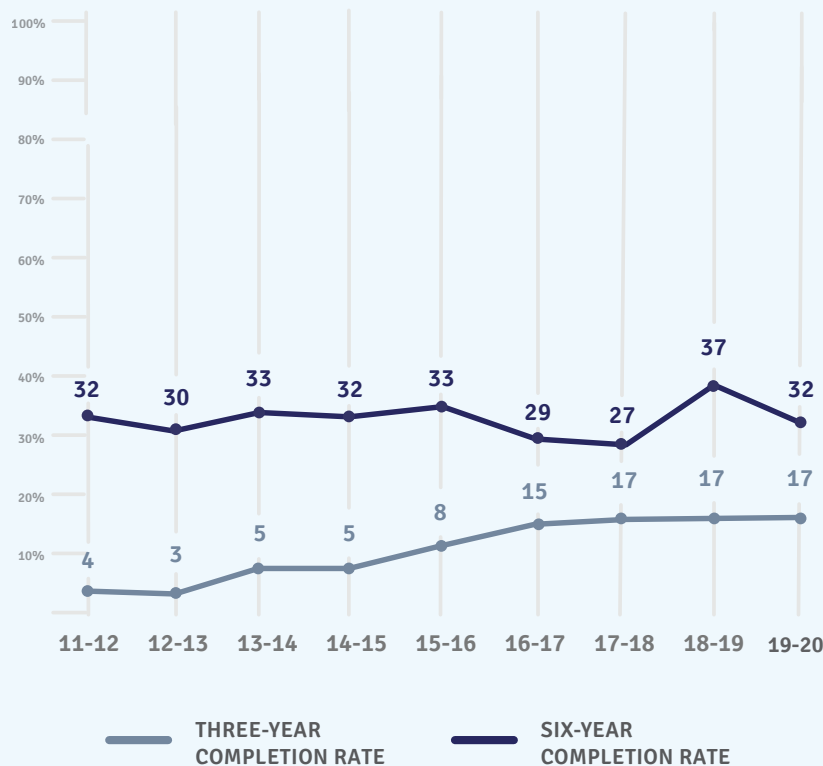
PERSISTENCE

The completion rate at four-year institutions declined in 2019–2020 to 32 percent from the prior year's high of 37 percent. While 32 percent is similar to our previous years' success, it is challenging to see a five percentage point drop after such significant gains in 2018–2019 as the Say Yes Cleveland program got underway. The class of 2019 may reflect a statistical high for a few years while we manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on persistence to graduation.

The completion rate at two-year institutions has held steady at 17 percent for the past three academic cycles. The partnerships created to establish retention programming on some college campuses have had measurable impacts on CMSD students. These programs helped students feel connected to their college, which has been especially important as students navigated remote learning and other effects of the pandemic such as isolation.

It is important to note that some of the data presented in this report differ from those provided in prior progress reports for the same academic year. These changes are due to updates in data accuracy and the increase in graduates since the previous reports. To learn more about readiness, access, and persistence data, please visit the Higher Education Compact of Greater Cleveland's 2021 Report to the Community.

PERCENTAGE OF CMSD STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM TWO- AND FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES²



SAY YES CLEVELAND

In May 2021, LEEAN ANDINO became the first Say Yes Cleveland scholarship student to graduate from college. After just two years, Ms. Andino graduated from Cleveland State University (CSU) with a bachelor's degree in psychology.⁹ The College Credit Plus program enabled her to begin taking college courses at the start of tenth grade, and she finished high school with an associate degree from Cuyahoga Community College and several CSU credits. After graduation, she planned to earn her master's degree in clinical psychology and had already been hired as a graduate assistant.

Ms. Andino is the first of many future scholarship recipients who will graduate. One month after her graduation, 15 Say Yes scholars graduated from Cuyahoga Community College with their two-year associate degrees. There are currently more than 1,100 CMSD graduates enrolled in post-secondary education through the Say Yes program.

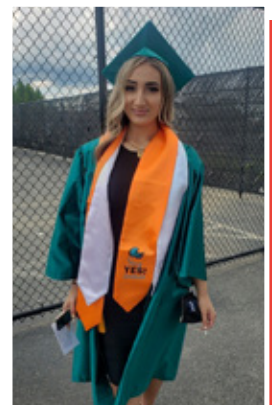
Say Yes tuition scholarships are awarded to students attending Say Yes eligible institutions after applying a Pell grant and Ohio College Opportunity Grant to a student's balance. The Say Yes Scholarship Fund paid out \$1.8 million in tuition scholarships over the prior year.

Say Yes Cleveland is more than just scholarships, however. The program helps prepare students in kindergarten through twelfth grade to address other

needs that may be barriers to education and encourage students to stay engaged in their education. These services have been incredibly impactful during the pandemic.

Say Yes Cleveland support services are being rolled out over four years, with all CMSD and eligible charter schools receiving supports by 2023. Say Yes support services include: a Family Support Specialist in each school; the Say Yes Postsecondary Planning System, which helps to identify student needs and enables the family support specialist to connect them with services and support; and access to services such as after-school and summer learning, mental health services, and legal services.

The goals of Say Yes Cleveland are to increase the education levels of Cleveland residents, boost and retain the population in the City of Cleveland, improve college access for middle- and low-income families in Cleveland, and spur economic growth and expansion in the region.



⁹ Cleveland State University, LEEAN ANDINO, First Cleveland Say Yes Recipient, Graduates from CSU in Just Two Years, 10 June 2021, <https://www.csuohio.edu/news/leean-andino-first-cleveland-say-yes-recipient-graduates-from-csu-in-just-two-years>
Photo Credit: Say Yes Cleveland

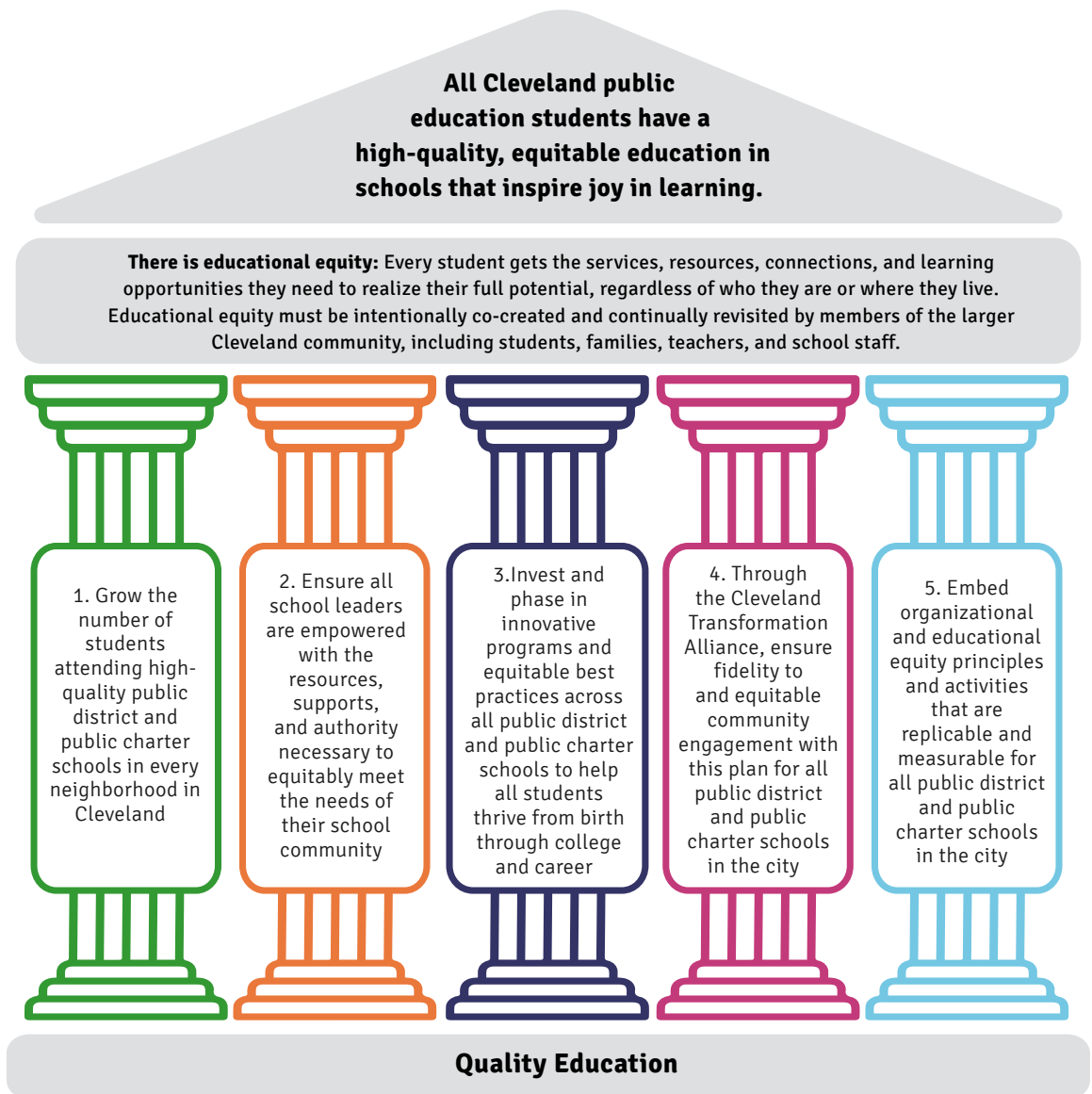
CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, and its impact will continue to affect students for some time. Recovery will also take time. Cleveland students have returned to in-person learning, although CMSD continues to offer a remote option which is at capacity.

The Cleveland Transformation Alliance felt it was important to leverage the urgency of the moment to review and refresh the Cleveland Plan. It is also critical to name and consciously address the systemic inequities that negatively affect many children and families in our city. That is why this refreshed Cleveland Plan addresses our city's urgent educational needs with equity in mind.

While the Alliance drove the refresh process, it is critical to emphasize that the Alliance is the convening stakeholder, not the authority, for the Cleveland Plan. Responsibility for implementation rests with the full community. This graphic shows how the pillars and goals of the refreshed Plan come together.

While recovery will take time, the Cleveland Plan sets the community up for the future. It has been difficult to see the drop in PreK engagement, K-12 enrollment,



College Credit Plus and Advanced Placement participation, FAFSA application rates, and college enrollment and completion. The bright spot of the increased high school graduation rate is noteworthy, however, and a point of pride.

Cleveland students will continue to persevere with the support of the community. Cleveland must come together to support its students and ensure they can reach their own potential.

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