

STATE OF THE *Youth* REPORT

Produced for: The Youth Council of
The Workforce Board of Northern Cook County, Illinois



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The State of the Youth Report is available online, as well as the "Youth Quake 2002" white paper at www.theworkforce.org.

Background

In January of 2001, the Youth Council of the Workforce Board of Northern Cook County proposed a vision for youth development:

The communities of Northern Cook County will have a comprehensive, unified youth development system that equips each and every youth with the work values, career skills, and love of learning necessary to enter satisfying adult roles at home, in the community, and in the high performance workplace of tomorrow.

The vision contains two key elements:

- The youth development system is about all youth, not just those with barriers. The system should be thought of very broadly. It includes K-16 education, community-based organizations, youth service organizations, faith-based entities, and public and private training institutions.
- The purpose of youth development is to enable youth to become well-adjusted adults with the skills needed to be productive in high skill careers. Youth development is not just a social issue. It is also a critical economic issue, both for the individual youth as well as for the Northern Cook area.

A “youth” is flexibly defined as an individual who does not yet possess the skills needed to assume an adult role in the work community. Typically, this would be an individual under the age of 25, but the Youth Council attempts to avoid categorizing based solely on age. Survey results reported by *Youth and Society* (10/97) indicated that the criteria for “what it takes to be an adult” were perceived to include:

- ◆ Accepting responsibility for actions
- ◆ Deciding personal beliefs independently
- ◆ Financial independence from parents
- ◆ Being able to run a household
- ◆ Being able to control emotions
- ◆ Settling into a long-term career

Using these criteria, there are many individuals over the age of 25 who are not yet “adults!”

The Youth Council, comprised of a broad spectrum of youth providers, educators, employers, and policy makers, identified numerous issues that affect young people in the area. The issues include changing demographics, lack of a database to inform the system, large and impersonal schools, increasing employer expectations, and substance abuse. The most critical issues facing youth were perceived to be:

School retention: We continue to lose too many youth from K-12 education AND we lose many college youth who fail to complete their program of study. Although Northern Cook County graduates a larger percentage of its secondary students than many other regions, losing even 5-7% is too many. “School retention” includes the postsecondary level. National data indicates that one-third of college freshman do not return to school

the following year, and that half of all college enrollees never graduate. Persistence rates have been dropping slightly over the last decade.

Ethics and family values: Families are often broken by divorce, or are intact but dysfunctional, or permit too little family time due to parents' work and social activities. "Values" and even ethics are subject to debate as our culture becomes less homogenous. An ethic that works well in one ethnic or socioeconomic culture may not work well in another. Research shows that many parents stress conformity and obedience and discipline their children on the basis of the *consequences* of the child's actions (external factors). Other parents stress self-direction and discipline children on their interpretation of the child's motives or intentions (internal factors). The former approach is more likely to instill an external locus of control; i.e., the individual believes that his or her problems are environmental rather than within himself. Low achievers are more likely to see failure as due to the difficulty of the task rather than their own abilities. In other words, they fail due to uncontrollable circumstances, an external locus of control. High achievers are likely to ascribe failure as due to their own effort; in other words, *controllable* factors or an internal locus of control. Teachers and employers are increasingly seeing an external locus of control in the classroom and in the workplace (Licht and Dweck, 1984).

Adult work skills: Adolescents still need to master cognitive, emotional and social maturity; i.e., the characteristics demanded of someone who can fulfill the role of a productive employee. Academic proficiency and job skill training are not sufficient to produce "adults." Adult work skills include being able to reason abstractedly, think less egocentrically, see things from others' perspectives, and develop more sophisticated moral reasoning. Virtually all cognitive skills - analyzing, synthesizing, and problem-solving - are learned by most people, most of the time, in contexts or settings that present a problem to be solved. These contexts or settings rarely resemble traditional classrooms or youth training programs.

Mentors and role models: Adolescents benefit from support, affection, involvement, praise, and communication - all of which are linked to developing the adult work skill traits identified above. Non-parental adults are important to youth development; kids need alternate sources of social support beyond their parents. Studies and anecdotal information repeatedly show that youth who successfully transition to adulthood have had many opportunities to interact with and form relationships with adults. Interestingly, we continue to sequester our young people with their peers in school, extracurricular activities, and even on the job. Many youth hold jobs where the vast majority of their co-workers are also youth.

Decision-making and knowledge of opportunities: Youth are not aware of the types of work that exist, the demands of those jobs compared to their own skill levels, or what it takes in education and experience to access those opportunities. The top fields rated as the highest paying and top demand for college graduates include engineering, mathematics, computer and information sciences, pharmacy, physics, and accounting, yet the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (01/26/01) reports that almost 25% of college students expect to need remedial work in math! The *Chronicle of Higher Education* also reported that for college freshmen, "to learn more about things that interest me" surpassed "to be able to get a better job" as a reason for going to college. Clearly, we still have work to do in connecting youth with the world of work and in helping them to understand their future role in the community.

Youth service providers were surveyed at a summit last year to determine what they thought would be the best indicators of whether Northern Cook County is making progress in the status of youth. Their choices were (in order of importance):

Indicator	Northern Cook Performance
Employer satisfaction with the skills of career entry-level people.	Employer satisfaction has not been measured for this specific population for this specific geographic area. Since 43.3% of the people who work in Northern Cook come from outside Northern Cook, surveying employers about their new hires may not necessarily provide information about how well <i>this</i> area is doing at preparing its youth. Schools and youth service providers would need to work collaboratively across the region to measure and improve this indicator. (Note: when employers across the state of Illinois were surveyed for the World Class One-stop Project about issues they have with their workforce, 39% indicated that “skill deficiencies in new applicants” was a problem.)
Social data (drug abuse, teen pregnancy, poverty, crime statistics)	Health and wellness indicators are not available for Northern Cook County alone. However, Cook County data excluding Chicago is available, so we can draw assumptions about suburban Cook County in general: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children in suburban Cook County are more likely to live in an intact family unit than in Chicago, but less likely than the state as a whole. ➤ Suburban Cook fares better than Chicago but less well than the state as a whole for children in foster care, percent of births to teens, infant mortality, and percent of students eligible for free school lunch. ➤ Children in suburban Cook experience a lower rate of abuse and neglect than the state average, but still at a higher rate than any of the outlying counties except DeKalb.

<p>Employment rates of 18-24 year olds in high skill, high demand jobs</p>	<p>Employment rates are obtainable for ages 16-19, but not for 18-24 year olds at the sub-county level. The rate at which 18-24 year olds are in “high skill, high demand” jobs is also not available through any existing data source. In 2000, 68.9% of civilian youth aged 16-19 who are high school graduates and not enrolled in school were employed, which is higher than Cook County, the greater Chicago metropolitan area, the state, and nation (national average is 65.3%). The employment rate of 16-19 year olds who are not in school and are not graduates was 57% - again the highest of the comparison areas (national average is 43.8%).</p>
<p>High school graduation rates</p>	<p>Rates vary widely across school districts within Northern Cook. Although Northern Cook fares better than most areas of the country, the districts with the most low income students are in particular need of help.</p>
<p>Number of quality work-based learning opportunities and participants</p>	<p>The exact number of work-based learning opportunities and participants cannot be ascertained without surveying each school. Youth participants in the Youth Council’s “<i>Youth Quake 2002</i>” indicated that there were internships and job shadowing experiences available – although they want more of them, a wider variety of them to cover more industries, summer internships, and time to participate in such experiences balanced with their other responsibilities. “High quality” work experiences may be defined as those that include use of higher cognitive skills and significant interaction with adults.</p>

The Purpose of This Report

The Youth Council recognized that they needed much more information about the current status of youth in Northern Cook County. Without a baseline of information, they would not be able to validate their impressions of what the critical issues are, clearly delineate the issues for others, nor determine whether progress is being made in addressing those issues.

This State of the Youth Report updates the 2002 draft report to assess where the area is before establishing where it needs to go. New secondary data has become available as census reports are released, and primary data was collected from young people at the first-ever “Youth Quake” event held in October, 2002.*

The Workforce Board already released a broader State of the Workforce Report for Northern Cook that explores in greater detail the workforce sectors, critical occupations, and skills and knowledge that are driving the local workforce economy. This information about skills and knowledge will help the youth system develop appropriate developmental strategies.

* The Youth Council agreed that “listening to the voice of youth” was to be one of their core values. To that end, students gathered from all over the North and Northwest Suburbs of Cook County to participate in an event designed by youth, for youth. The event gave participants an opportunity to talk candidly about education, work, careers, community resources, and transitioning to adulthood. A summary of their concerns and recommendations was distributed to youth service organizations in the “Youth Quake 2002” white paper.

Summary of Findings

- Northern Cook has the lowest percentage of young adults entering their early career years (18-24) compared to Cook, Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), Illinois, and the US.
- The relative percentage of young adults as a percent of the total population has been declining over time and is projected to continue to decline through 2012.
- Northern Cook has the highest percentage of individuals of Asian descent of all the areas compared. Growing Hispanic and Asian populations have language and cultural implications. Northern Cook has a larger percentage of youth aged 5-17 who speak English “not well” or “not at all” than the state or national averages. There are 8,022 youth with English language challenges, most of whom (68%) speak Spanish as their native tongue.
- Northern Cook youth are more likely to be from dual-parent households than youth from the surrounding area and state.
- Northern Cook youth tend to come from relatively affluent families.
- Children from black and Hispanic families are more likely to be in poverty than white and Asian families.
- Youth aged 16-19 are more likely to be enrolled in school than in any of the comparison areas. They are also more likely to be employed. About 40% of all 16-19 year olds both work and go to school. Youth aged 16-19 who are high school graduates and not enrolled in school are also more likely to be employed, as are dropouts in that age category. Overall, Northern Cook youth have higher rates of employment regardless of their school enrollment or secondary completion status than young people in the surrounding areas, state, and nation.
- The high percentage of students who are working does not appear to adversely affect school achievement. Northern Cook youth tend to be academically more successful at the secondary level than the surrounding area and state. The youth themselves report that by working they are learning time and money management, responsibility, and a work ethic in addition to exploring their interests.
- It comes as no surprise that the school districts with the highest rates of low-income students are in areas with the lowest median household income.

- Poverty and educational attainment are linked. The districts with the highest percent of low-income students are also those with the lowest high school graduation rates. Truancy rates follow somewhat the same pattern, although interestingly, one district with one of the highest graduation rates fell into one of the higher rates of truancy. Additionally, lower PSAE scores follow lower income to some degree.
- Student to teacher ratios are less consistent with achievement than factors such as poverty.

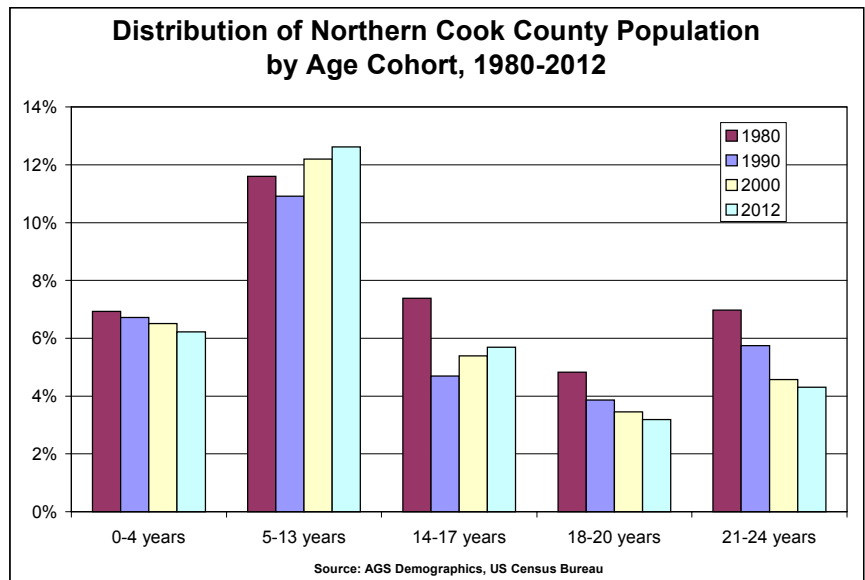
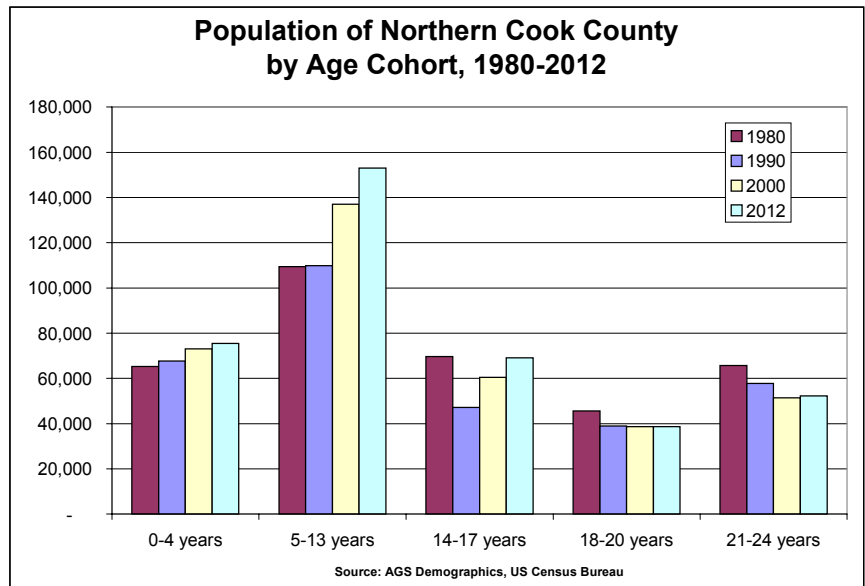
In summary – the area is in relatively good shape. But the numbers alone don't tell the full story. They don't tell the story of the youth populations who may be small as a percentage of the whole, but very large numerically. Language and cultural barriers, living in single-parent households, poverty, and academic challenges affect thousands of youth. More importantly, we don't know whether youth of all socio-economic and ability levels are being prepared with the skills and knowledge they need to **1)** transition to responsible adulthood; and **2)** be successful in the industries and occupations that comprise Northern Cook's excellent economy.

The Faces of Youth are Changing

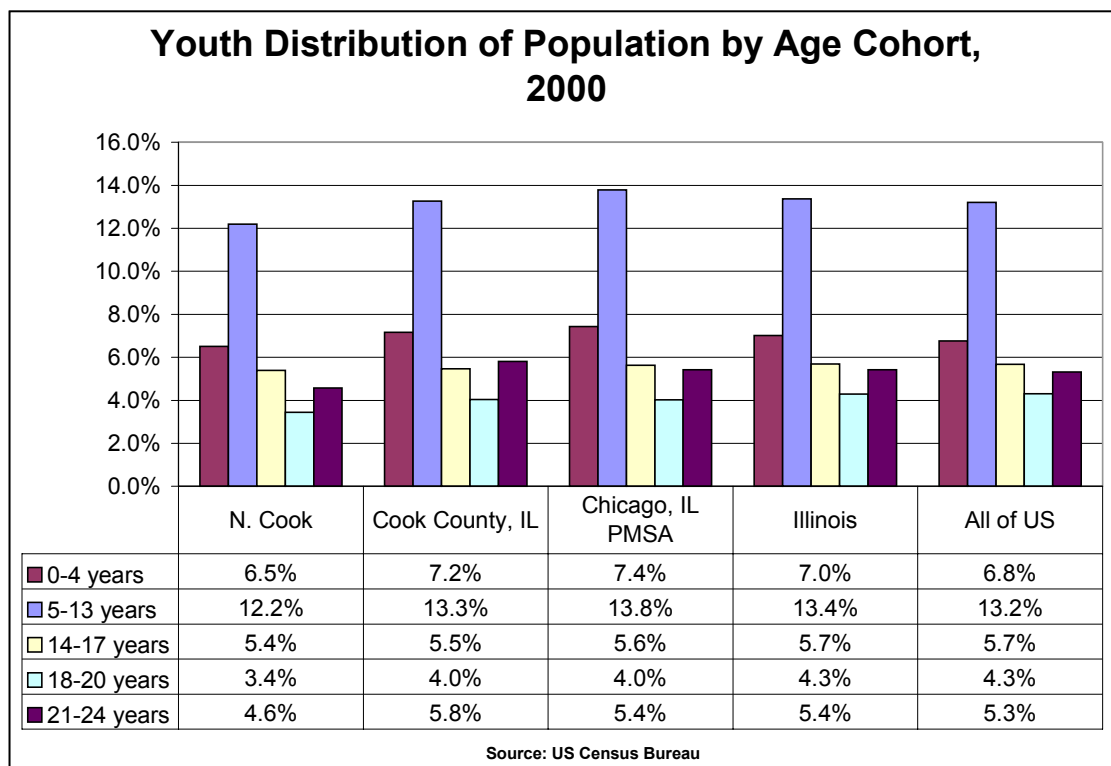
Northern Cook County youth are increasingly minority although to a lesser extent than in Cook County as a whole, the greater Chicago region, the state, or the nation. Many children have difficulty communicating in English, are affected by disabilities, or live in poverty. While the percentages for Northern Cook are lower than any comparison areas, the absolute numbers are increasing. This implies challenges for schools and youth service providers. Additional resources will be needed to ensure disadvantaged, disabled, and diverse children are assisted in reaching their potential.

How Many Youth Do We Have?

There are **360,640** youth aged 0-24 years in Northern Cook County (U.S. Census, 2000). By the year 2012 (only nine years away), the area can expect to have 388,517 young people, or an increase of 27,877. Increasing numbers will tax the schools and youth providers to keep up, particularly given the increasing challenges many youth have. Most of the increase has been and will be in the school-age category (age 5-17). While school age children have been increasing as a percentage of the total population, young adults aged 18-24 have actually been declining as a percentage of the total population. Their raw numbers have stayed steady or declined over the years even while the population of the area rose.



This may be attributable to the higher cost of living in Northern Cook. Young people just starting out in the world of work may not be able to afford to live here, or they may see the city as a more exciting environment to live in.



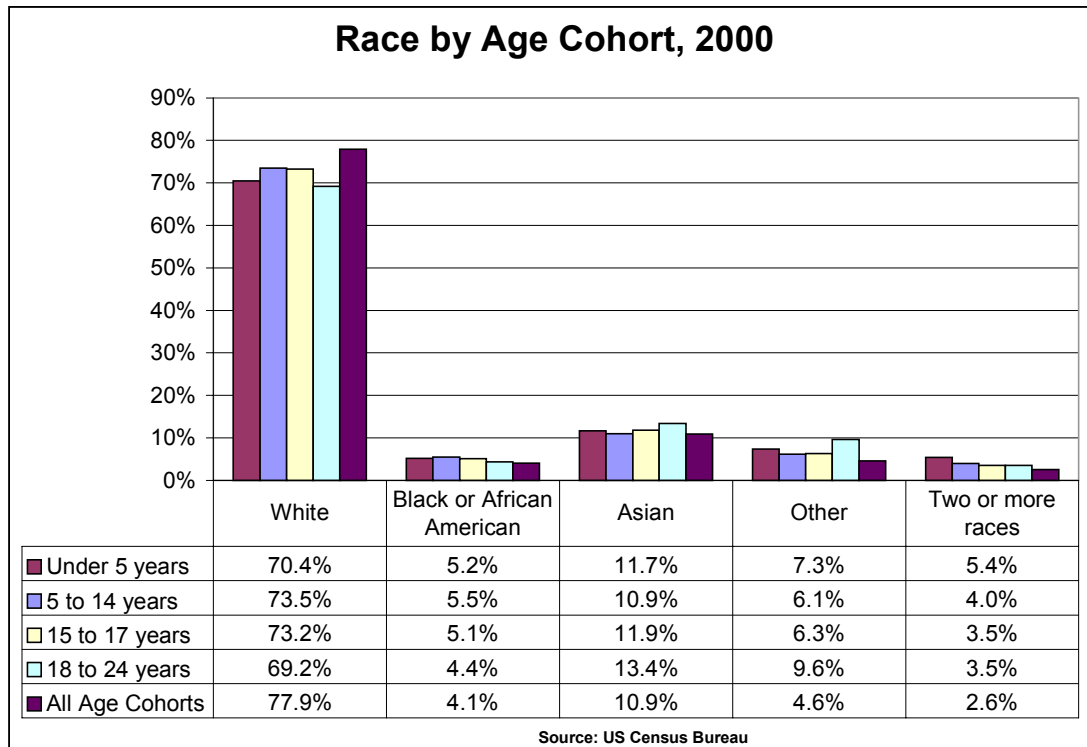
The relatively lower percentage of career-entry level young people has good and bad news implications for the economy. The good news is that young workers are, on the average, less productive than older workers, (primarily due to a lack of experience) and the more of them there are, the less productive the work place will be. It could be assumed then, that the lower percentage of career entrants in Northern Cook may actually provide the area a short-term competitive edge over the surrounding region. The bad news is that this is not a long-term competitive edge. Employers may not have access to the young people they need to grow their future workforce from entry-level positions. The situation won't change anytime soon. The raw number of 14-17 year olds still hasn't regained the number that were in that age cohort in 1980.

It is more important than ever that the relatively small supply of entry-level young adults be prepared to enter the jobs that sustain and grow the Northern Cook economy. The youth development system needs to be attuned to the skills and knowledge that are needed for those jobs. Work-based learning, which can provide youth with the experiences that help them increase productivity faster as adults, should be expanded, particularly in key occupations.

Participants in "Youth Quake 2002" indicated that they would like to have a broader range of work-based learning options from which to choose. They currently have access to job shadowing, internships, and career fairs, but want to explore many more occupations and industries.

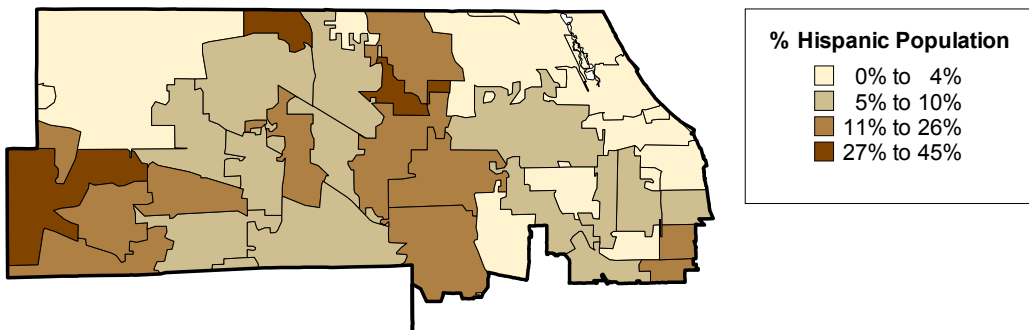
The Youth Population is Increasingly Diverse

Northern Cook County is predominantly white. Compared to other areas, it has a relatively small percentage of minorities. However, it has an unusually high proportion of Asian youth for the Midwest.

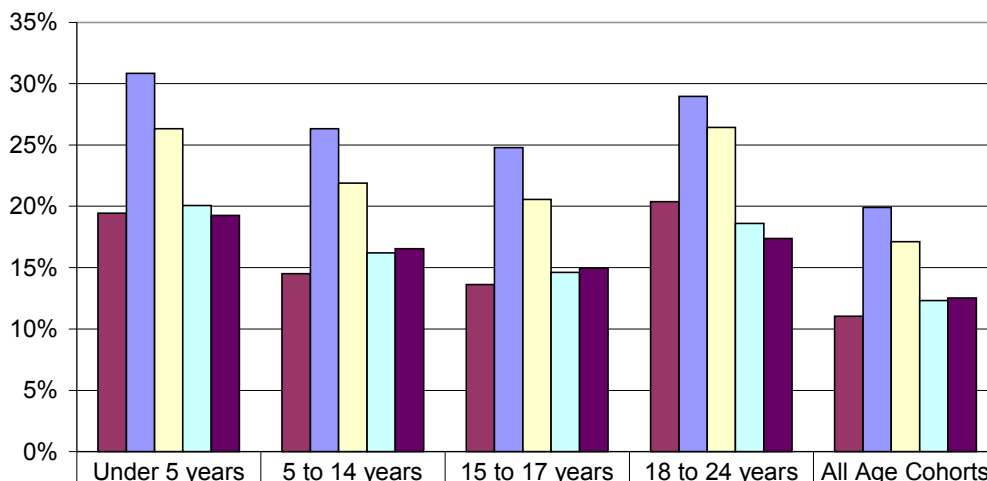


“Hispanic” is not a racial designation and therefore is not included in the above chart. The Hispanic population has been growing rapidly across the nation. Northern Cook’s percentage of Hispanic youth is about the same as the nation and just slightly less than the state average, but much less than Cook County and the greater Chicago metropolitan region.

The map below shows the relative distribution of the Hispanic population across the area, while the chart on the following page compares the percentage of Hispanic youth in each age cohort between geographic areas.



Hispanics as Percent of Age Cohort, 2000

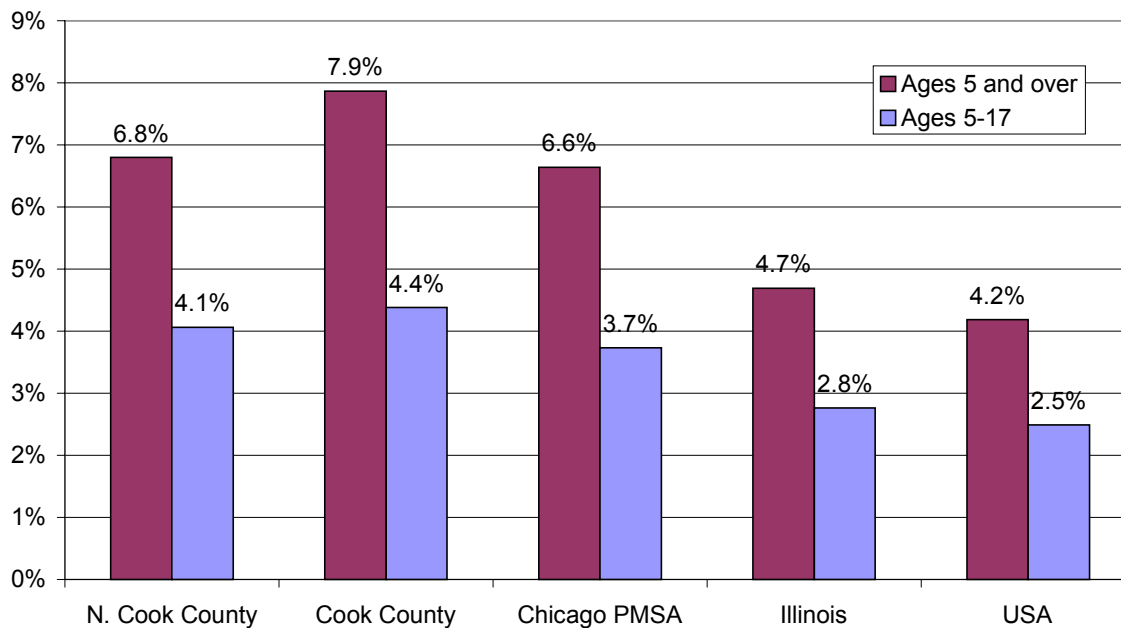


	Under 5 years	5 to 14 years	15 to 17 years	18 to 24 years	All Age Cohorts
N. Cook County	19.4%	14.5%	13.6%	20.4%	11.0%
Cook County	30.8%	26.3%	24.8%	29.0%	19.9%
Chicago PMSA	26.3%	21.9%	20.6%	26.4%	17.1%
Illinois	20.1%	16.2%	14.6%	18.6%	12.3%
USA	19.3%	16.5%	15.0%	17.4%	12.5%

Source: US Census Bureau

Diversity is healthy for the vitality of any area, but it does bring different cultures and values that need to be understood and accommodated in schools and workplaces. It also brings communication challenges. Over 8,000 youth between the ages of 5-17 speak English “not well” or “not at all.”

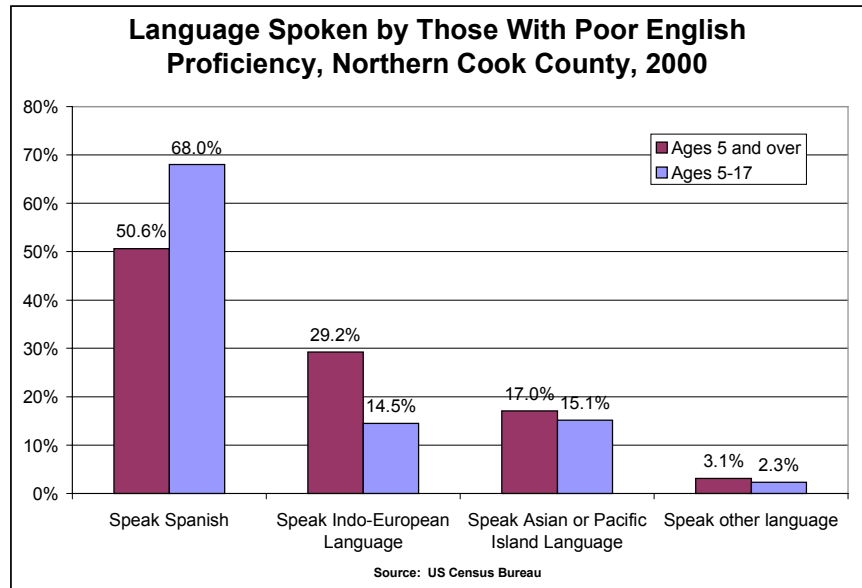
% of Population Speaking English "Not Well" or "Not at All," 2000



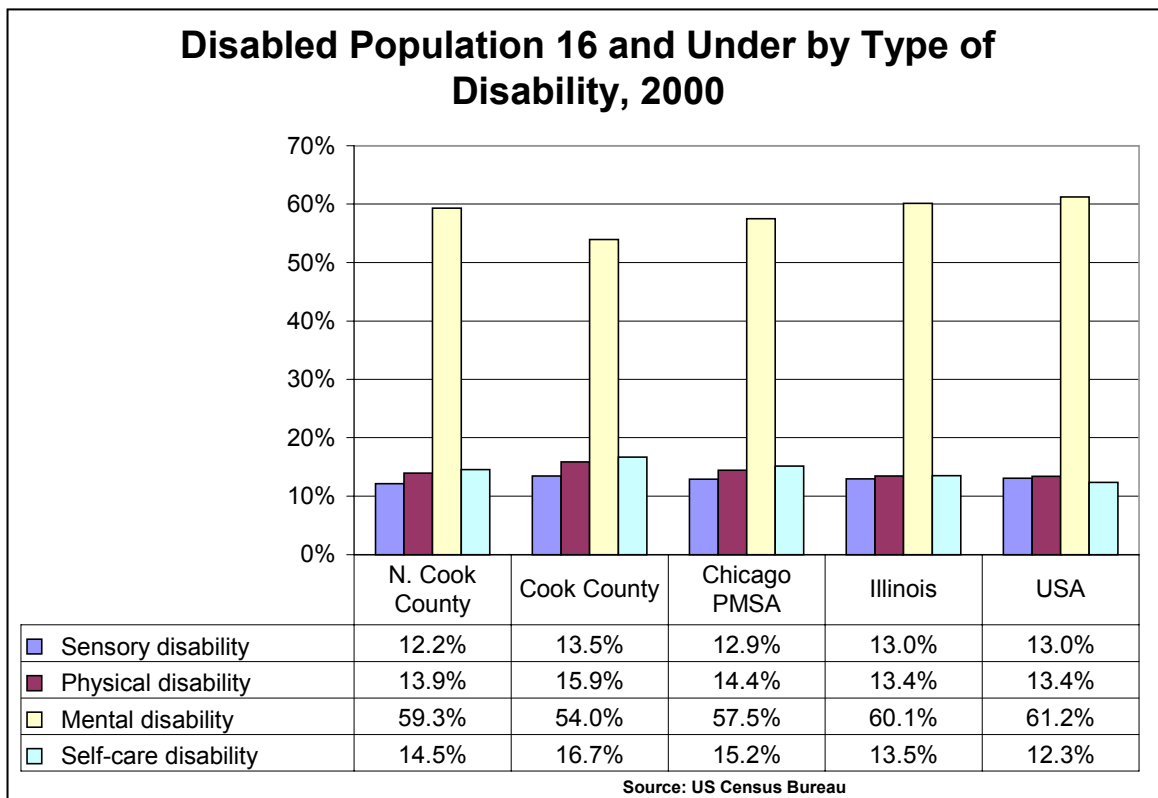
Source: US Census Bureau

The primary language spoken by those with poor English proficiency is Spanish, reflecting the increasing Hispanic population.

Note that Spanish is the only language for which the percentage of school age speakers (age 5-17) surpasses the percentage of all individuals aged 5 and older. This may reflect the fact that Hispanic families tend to be younger and have more children than immigrants of other cultures.



Youth With Disabilities Represent Another "Minority"



There are **167,635** youth aged 16 and under with disabilities in Northern Cook County. The area has a lower incidence of youth with disabilities than comparison areas. Only 5.1% of Northern Cook's youth have disabilities, while the rate in Cook County overall is 7.4%, Illinois is 7.2% and the national average is 7.5%. However, the distribution of types of disabling conditions (above chart) is quite similar to the state and national averages.

Mental disabilities comprise more than half of the total. Because mental conditions are not visibly obvious, these youth may have a harder time getting their needs recognized and met. Youth service providers and employers could benefit from assistance in working with these young people.

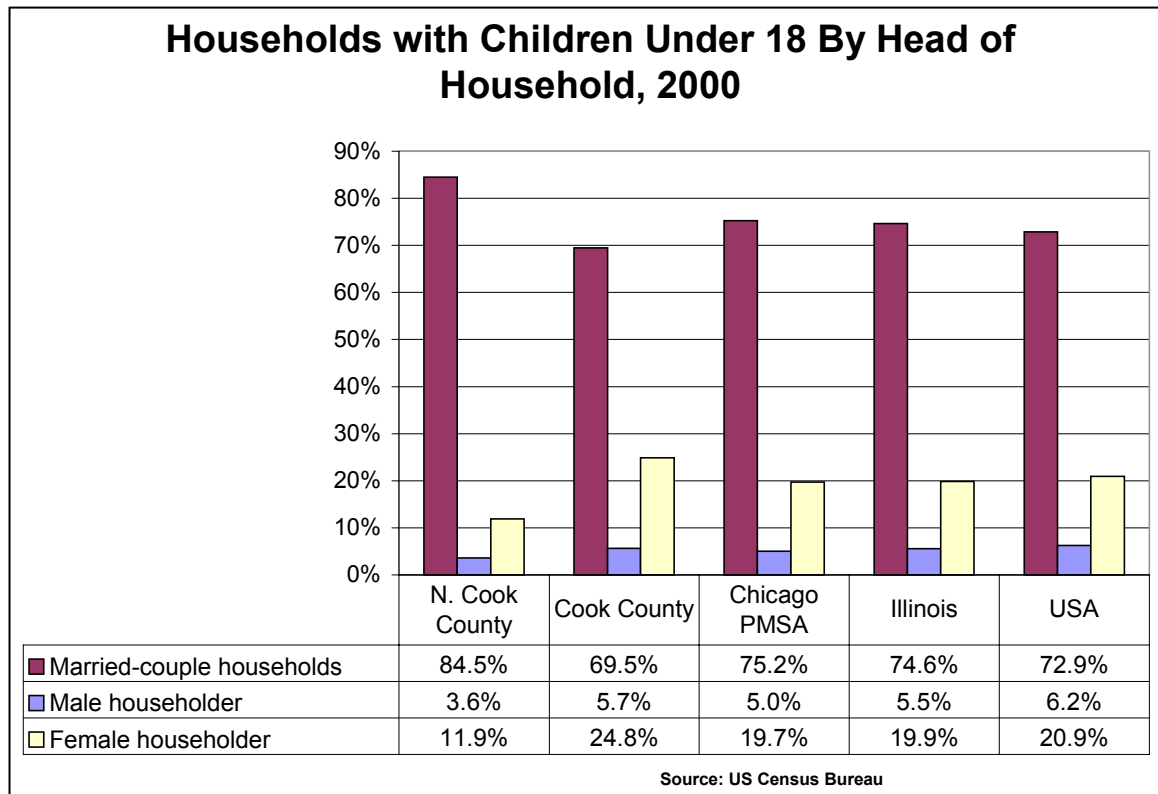
Conclusions:

- Young people are not all alike. One-size does not fit all. They may have language, cultural, physical, or mental barriers to success. Different strategies are needed to help different individuals become successful.
- Schools, providers, and employers may need additional assistance in working with increasingly diverse populations.
- There are relatively fewer young adults launching their careers in Northern Cook. Internships are not only a developmental strategy for youth, but also a recruitment strategy for employers. Increased housing and transportation options may entice more people in the 18-24 year old age bracket to live and work in Northern Cook.

Family Structures Doing Well, But Thousands of Youth in Poverty

Children in Northern Cook are more likely to live with married parents than in the surrounding region, state, or nation. Similarly, it has by far the smallest percent of households led by female single parents.

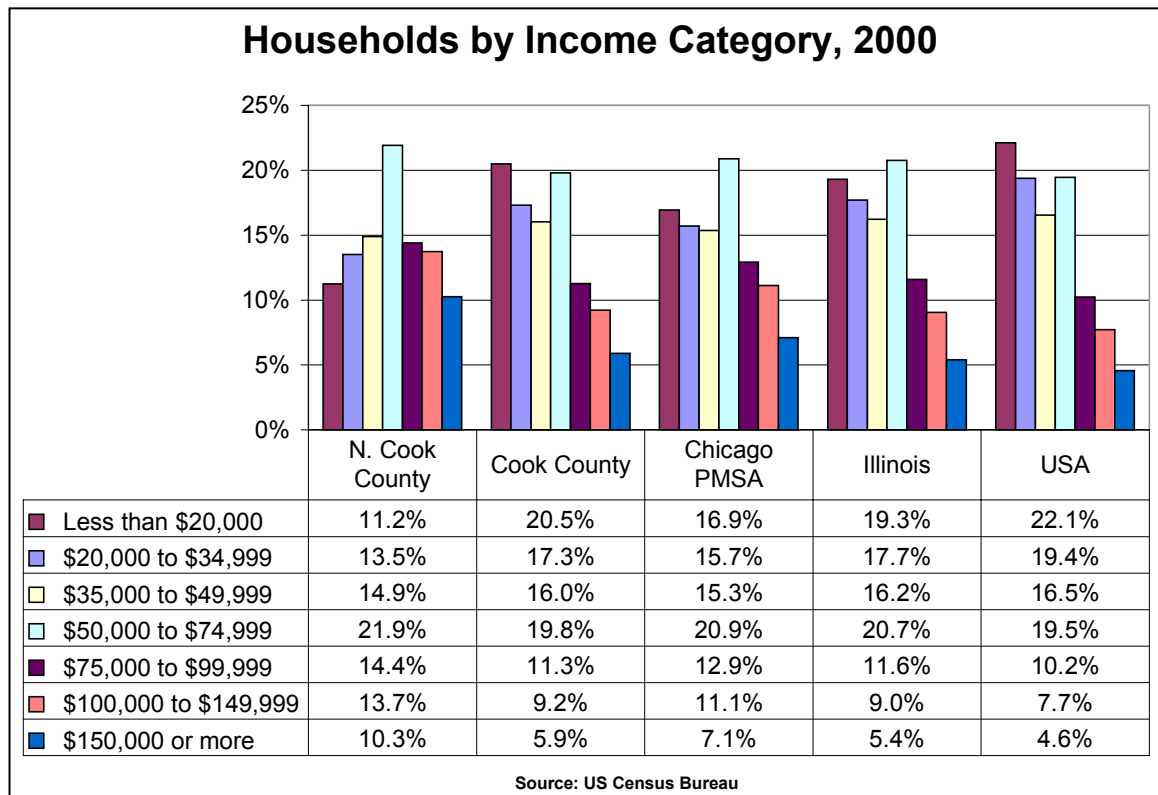
Nationally, youth from single parent households have greater truancy and other behavioral issues, and are more likely to be in poverty. Northern Cook's youth have a distinct advantage over their neighbors by the likelihood that they will enjoy the benefits of a two-parent household. However, the 15.5% of households headed by one parent still represents a tremendous number of youth who do not have a two-parent family structure. There are **21,420 families** in Northern Cook with children under the age of 18, headed by either a single female or male parent. Since many of those families would have more than one child, the actual number of children is far more than 21,000.



While all youth benefit from having a non-parental mentor, youth from single-parent homes have an even greater need for an additional adult in their lives. Recruiting and preparing adult mentors is a task that can and should be taken on by all entities within the youth development system. Appropriate training for the mentors is critical, particularly if the adult is to act as a supplemental source of career guidance. Participants in "Youth Quake 2002" mentioned how they valued having an adult available for personal advice as well as career and academic assistance. They wanted a supervisor at work who would

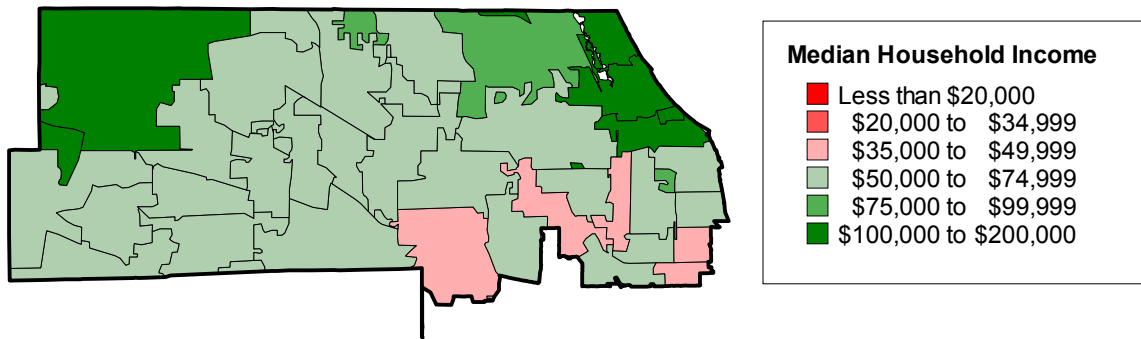
take an interest in them and have the time and patience to listen to their concerns. They want their teachers, club sponsors, counselors and others to be familiar with the range of youth programs in the area to help them access the right interventions when appropriate and needed.

The high percentage of two-parent families undoubtedly contributes to the low rate of poverty among Northern Cook County youth, along with other demographic factors (adults in the area are relatively more highly educated and have higher incomes than in most surrounding areas).

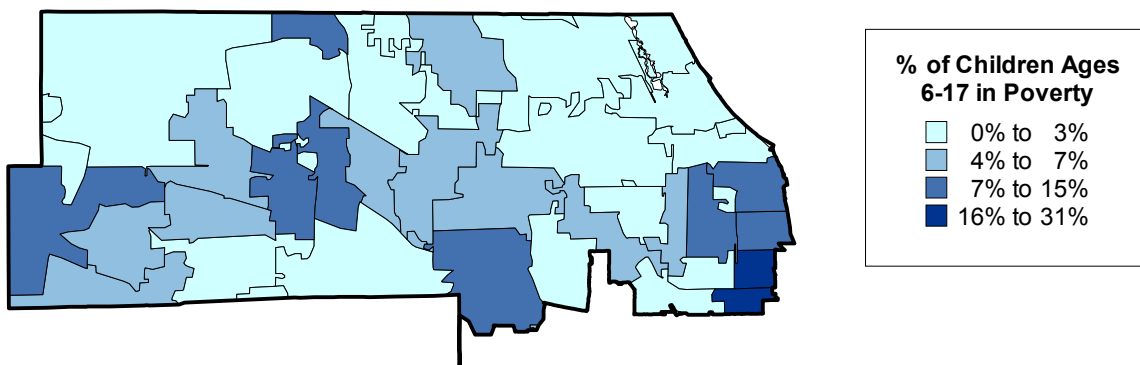


In Northern Cook, 60.3% of all households have an annual income of \$50,000 or more, compared to 46% in Illinois and 42% nationally.

High incomes, however, are not evenly distributed around the area. The highest median household incomes are in the northwest and northeast corners of Northern Cook and the lowest are in the southeast corner. Many issues are tied to income, including graduation rates, PSAT scores, access to technology, dropout rates, and postsecondary attendance. Children in poverty have fewer advantages to begin with, and if extra efforts are not made to bring them up to speed, their disadvantages tend to perpetuate into adulthood. The local economy and workplaces suffer for that loss as well as the individual families.



The map of childhood poverty aligns closely with the map of household incomes. The areas with the highest median household incomes also have among the lowest percentage of children in poverty and vice versa. However, the areas of “middle income” (the \$50,000 – 74,999 range) vary widely in the incidence of childhood poverty. Being poor in a relatively affluent area is more difficult than being poor in a relatively poor area and the disparities may produce greater difficulty for those youth.



Minority children are much more likely to be in poverty than are white children. In addition to cultural and language barriers, they must also deal with other deprivations. Black and Hispanic children suffer a higher incidence of poverty than white or Asian children do. Asian children are only very slightly more likely than whites to be in poverty. While blacks comprise only 5.1% of the total population aged 5-17, they represent 16.3% of children in poverty. Hispanics comprise 16.2% of all individuals aged 5-17, but 29.3% of all children in poverty. By contrast, 72.1% of all youth aged 5-17 are white, but white children comprise only 51% of all 5-17 year olds in poverty.

Even youth from affluent families may have work-related issues resulting from their socioeconomic status. However, employers are finding that the “echo boomer” group learned to be big spenders and picked up poor financial habits while still in their teens. Nationally, reports indicate that young people who have been accustomed to affluence are taking on staggering amounts of debt.

Becoming a responsible adult includes being able to establish and manage a budget commensurate with one's income. Financial planning skills need to be incorporated into youth development strategies to prepare young people for their futures. This includes youth who are pursuing high wage careers who may not know how to translate today's perceived riches into investments for the long-term. Participants in "Youth Quake 2002" reported that their part time jobs, while sometimes distracting them from their studies or interfering with other extracurricular activities, were teaching them about managing their money as well as their time.

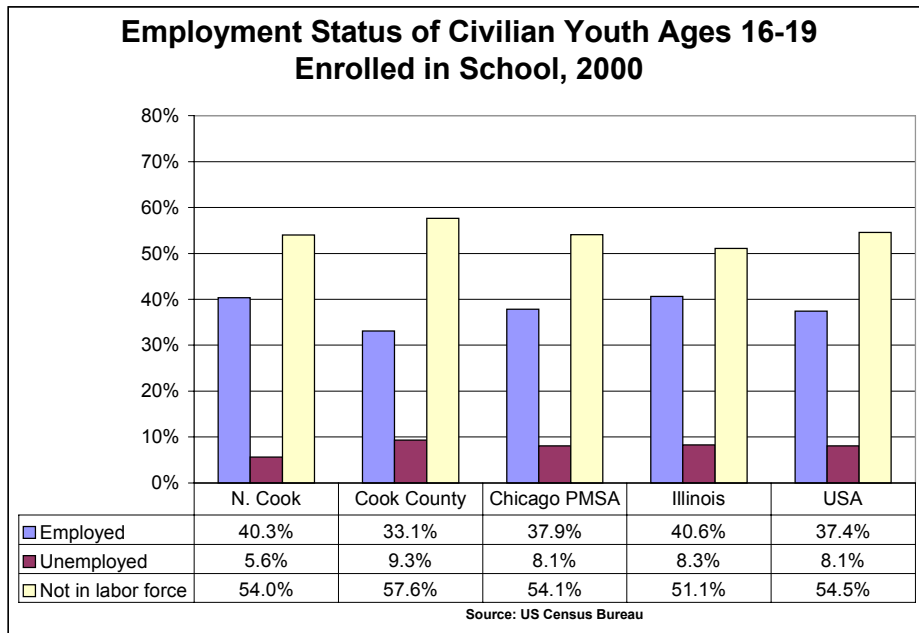
Conclusions

- Northern Cook youth are more likely than their peers elsewhere to enjoy a two-parent family and affluence. However, there are thousands of youth who are in poverty. Minority children are much more likely to be economically disadvantaged than white children.
- Poverty rates vary across the area. The pockets of higher poverty correspond to the geography of other problems. Youth in these areas may need more interventions available close by. Geographic mapping of social services could be done to ensure there is alignment between need and availability.
- Even affluent youth may need help learning how to manage money and lifestyle toward the day they become self-supporting.

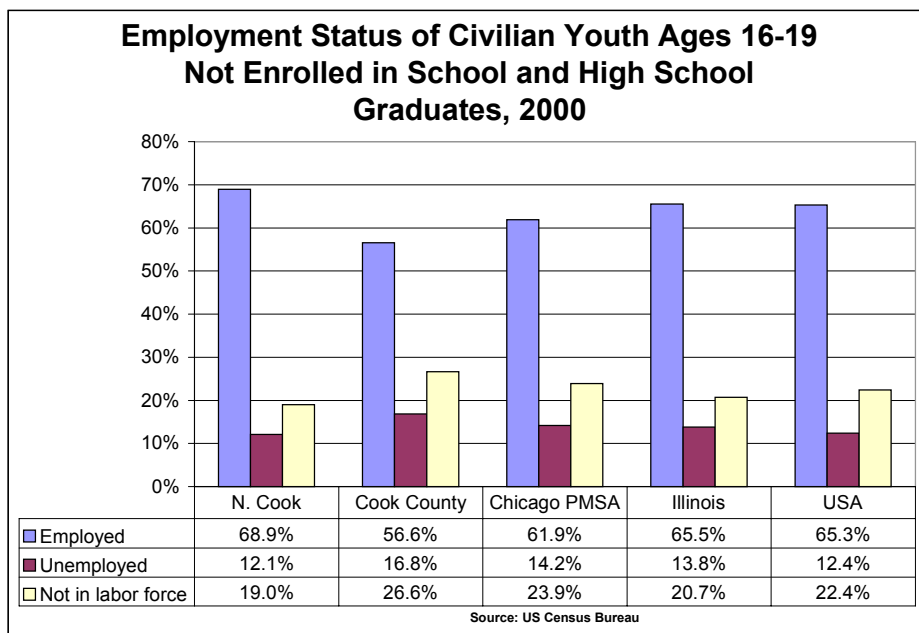
Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences are Needed to Prepare Youth for Northern Cook's Economy

Finding a job does not appear to be a major problem for youth in Northern Cook compared to its neighbors:

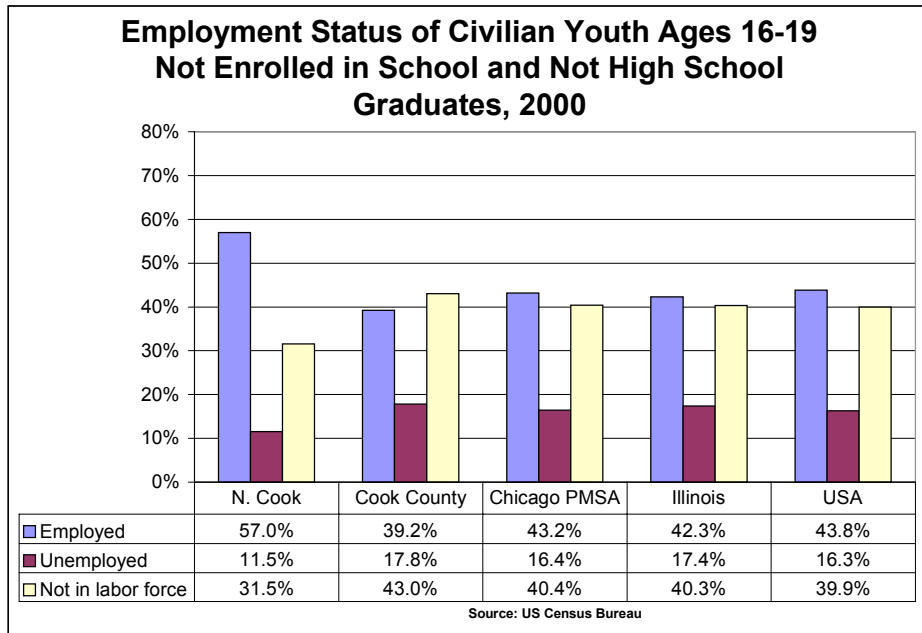
- About 40% of civilian youth aged 16-19 who are enrolled in school are also employed, compared to a Cook County average of 33.1% and national average of 37.4%.



- Nearly 69% of high school graduates aged 16-19 who are not enrolled in school are employed, compared to 56.6% in Cook County and 65.3% nationally.



- 57% of 16-19 year old youth who are not graduates and not enrolled in school are working compared to 39.2% in Cook and 43.8% nationally.



Participants in “Youth Quake 2002” reported that they are working in food service, retail stores, theaters, hospitals, day care centers, groceries, bakeries, and in their parents businesses. Although these are primarily part time, entry-level, low wage kinds of jobs, depending on the job, they have a range of responsibilities that includes handling money, establishing customer relationships, satisfying customers, training or managing other workers, assisting the sick, and being responsible for the safety and well-being of small children. They report that they are learning time and money management despite the toll working takes on their personal lives.

Some students report that their teachers or parents discourage them from working while other teachers and parents encourage them to do so. Some students indicate that they HAVE to work to help pay for their own expenses or to help support their families. Some are in essence working two full-time jobs: school and employment, with little time left over for homework, extracurricular activities, or a social life. Those who must work indicate that they don’t always get the understanding and support they need from teachers and counselors at school.

Of more concern are those youth who are age 16-19 and who are not enrolled in school and are not high school graduates. They have a high rate of unemployment (11.5%) and nearly a third are not in the labor force. “Not in the labor force” could be due to parenting, disability, incarceration, or simply detachment from the world of work.

The greater metropolitan Chicago economy is driven by occupations that require a high level of skill and knowledge, such as management, business and finance, education and training, computer and mathematical, health care practitioners, and legal. In the chart below, the average annual employment in each cluster is multiplied by the average annual wage to determine the total wages that cluster brings into the economy.

Occupational Cluster	Employment	Annual Wage(\$)	Total Annual Wage (\$)
1. Management Occupations	306,530	68,580	21,021,827,400
2. Office and Administrative Support Occupations	779,650	26,250	20,465,812,500
3. Sales and Related Occupations	395,320	28,700	11,345,684,000
4. Production Occupations	439,980	25,090	11,039,098,200
5. Business and Financial Operations Occupations	209,330	45,080	9,436,596,400
6. Education, Training, and Library Occupations	204,460	40,680	8,317,432,800
7. Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	322,920	25,410	8,205,397,200
8. Construction and Extraction Occupations	178,570	45,100	8,053,507,000
9. Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	186,170	41,400	7,707,438,000
10. Computer and Mathematical Occupations	103,910	56,560	5,877,149,600
11. Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	125,590	37,280	4,681,995,200
12. Architecture and Engineering Occupations	71,980	49,890	3,591,082,200
13. Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	145,590	20,830	3,032,639,700
14. Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	185,910	15,960	2,967,123,600
15. Legal Occupations	37,840	66,210	2,505,386,400
16. Protective Service Occupations	84,660	29,020	2,456,833,200
17. Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	46,900	35,730	1,675,737,000
18. Community and Social Services Occupations	49,690	31,390	1,559,769,100
19. Personal Care and Service Occupations	74,030	20,470	1,515,394,100
20. Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	28,380	46,620	1,323,075,600
21. Healthcare Support Occupations	63,310	19,330	1,223,782,300
22. Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	3,030	20,180	61,145,400

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Chicago PMSA

The same formula was applied to identify specific occupations that are important, and these were further sorted by the level of education and training required:

Occupation Title	Employment	Annual Wage(s)	Total Annual Wage(s)
Bachelor's Degree or Higher			
General and Operations Managers	61,770	71,310	\$4,404,818,700
Chief Executives	25,140	109,010	\$2,740,511,400
Lawyers	22,450	89,760	\$2,015,112,000
Financial Managers	27,060	\$73,660	1,993,239,600
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	47,410	\$40,660	1,927,690,600
Accountants and Auditors	36,740	\$41,820	1,536,466,800
Computer Systems Analysts	20,990	\$63,210	1,326,777,900
Sales Managers	18,010	\$70,900	1,276,909,000
Computer Programmers	24,960	\$50,230	1,253,740,800
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Vocational Education	22,070	\$55,370	1,222,015,900
Associates Degree / Post-Secondary Vocational Training			
Registered Nurses	71,710	\$44,620	3,199,700,200
Computer Support Specialists	13,240	\$43,380	574,351,200
Legal Secretaries	15,370	\$36,720	564,386,400
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	14,550	\$34,360	499,938,000
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	14,130	\$30,290	427,997,700
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	12,060	\$27,480	331,408,800
Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technicians	8,920	\$35,270	314,608,400
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	6,100	\$36,190	220,759,000
Chemical Technicians	5,940	\$32,220	191,386,800
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	4,530	\$39,080	177,032,400
Work Experience or On-the-Job Training			
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	46,780	\$43,860	2,051,770,800
Retail Salespersons	97,680	\$20,370	1,989,741,600
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	100,920	\$19,570	1,975,004,400
Customer Service Representatives	74,160	\$26,100	1,935,576,000
Office Clerks, General	83,170	\$21,830	1,815,601,100
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	88,640	\$20,200	1,790,528,000
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	40,370	\$38,520	1,555,052,400
Electricians	27,790	\$53,530	1,487,598,700
Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	42,780	\$31,700	1,356,126,000
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	63,860	\$20,480	1,307,852,800

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

These top occupations can help youth understand what their opportunities are within relative levels of educational attainment.

As described in the *State of the Workforce Report* published by the Workforce Board of Northern Cook County, the transferable knowledge and skill requirements most important for success in the regional economy are:

Transferable Skill Requirements: Critical thinking, Information Gathering, Judgment and Decision Making, Problem Identification, Reading Comprehension, and Writing.

Transferable Knowledge Requirements: Administration and Management, Clerical, Computers and Electronics, Education and Training, English Language, and Mathematics.

Computer knowledge in particular is becoming a “basic skill” as much as reading, writing, and arithmetic. At present, over half (57%) of all Americans over the age of 25 who are employed use a computer at work, and by the year 2010, jobs in the computer and mathematical fields are expected to increase by 67%. In Illinois, 44 out of every 1,000 private sector workers are employed by high-tech firms (22nd in the nation). Illinois is 7th in the nation for the overall number of high-tech workers and 11th for average high-tech wage. However, in 25% of schools in Illinois, the majority of teachers (at least half) are ‘beginners’ in using technology, according to The Children’s Partnership. Low income households are unlikely to have home computers and internet access, which means youth from those households will be less prepared for the higher paying, high technology jobs of the future. This makes it all the more critical that such youth be provided opportunities by well-trained teachers in the classroom and by youth service organizations.

A report by the American Association of University Women finds a growing gap between boys and girls in the use of technology and in taking higher-level computer courses. Girls tend to follow traditional “female career paths”, taking lower-level data entry and word processing courses, while boys are more likely to be found in the higher level computer courses. Thus, the “technology gap” not only impacts generations (young people are more technologically proficient than adults) and low-income youth, but also genders.

The top occupations and new “basic skills” have implications for educators and youth service providers. How will youth acquire these skills and knowledge in the classroom? How can work-based learning opportunities be developed for the occupations within each level of educational attainment so that all youth can benefit regardless of their educational aspirations? How can youth be shown where they are learning these skills and knowledge sets in their current after-school and summer employment so they understand how such skills are applied in the real world? How do jobs in food service, retail stores, theaters, day care centers, and grocery stores contribute to preparing youth for the leading occupations, and how can we make those experiences richer?

Conclusions

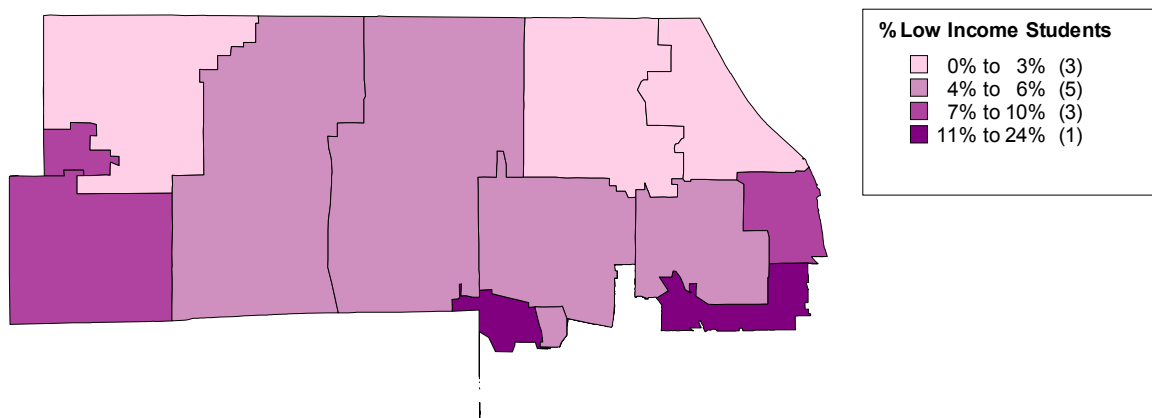
- Jobs appear to be relatively easy to find in Northern Cook compared to other areas, regardless of whether the young person is in or out of school, and whether a high school graduate or not.
- Youth need help making career and skill acquisition decisions based on:
 - ◆ Their educational aspirations (do they plan - - and are they able - - to climb the ladder through on-the-job training kinds of employment, or get a two-year degree, or higher?)
 - ◆ Labor market information that shows what occupations and skills are in demand;
 - ◆ Their personal interests (participants in “Youth Quake 2002” indicated that they need a greater range of job shadowing experiences and career fairs and more time to participate in them so they understand themselves and their options better).
- Youth service providers need to ensure that work experience is of high quality; i.e., includes the use of higher cognitive skills and offers significant interaction with caring adults.
- Particular attention needs to be paid to low-income youth and girls to help close the technology gap and open a path to higher paying jobs.

Socio-Economics Favor Northern Cook Schools, but Some Children Risk Being Left Behind

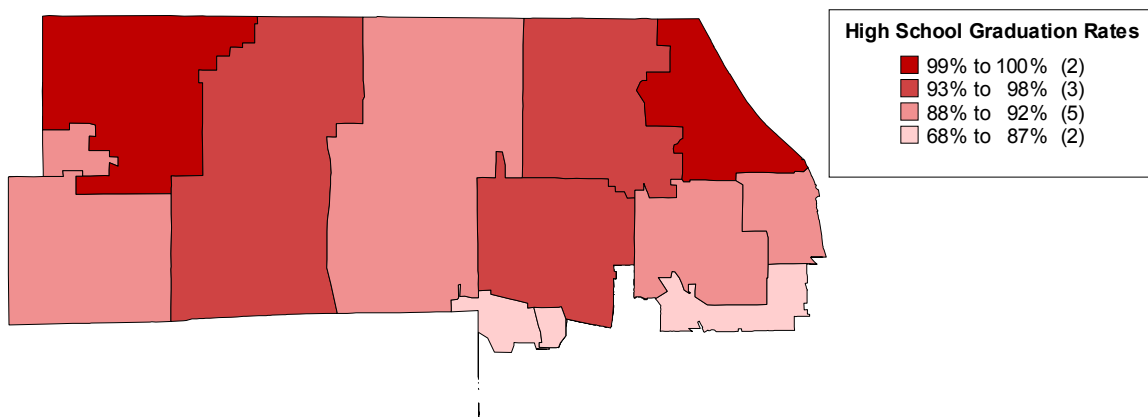
There is a direct correlation between socio-economics and educational success. Given that Northern Cook is a prosperous area with well-educated and employed parents, we can expect to see better relative outcomes from the school system. It has already been noted that within this affluent area there are thousands of young people facing poverty, disability, or cultural/language barriers, many of whom will need extra assistance in transitioning to adulthood.

The two maps below compare the incidence of low-income students and high school graduation rates among the seven districts. There is a noticeable correlation between the two factors. Actual rates range from 81.7% to 99.2% (discounting districts that overlap into other counties).

% Low Income Students by School District, 2001-2002 School Year

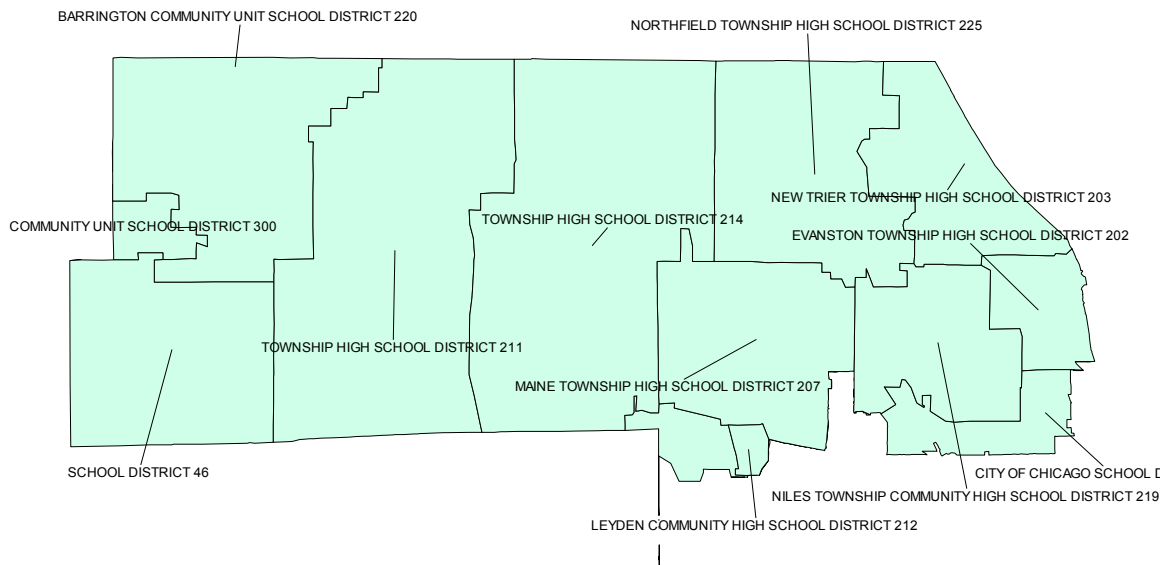


High School Graduation Rates by School District, 2001-2002 School Year



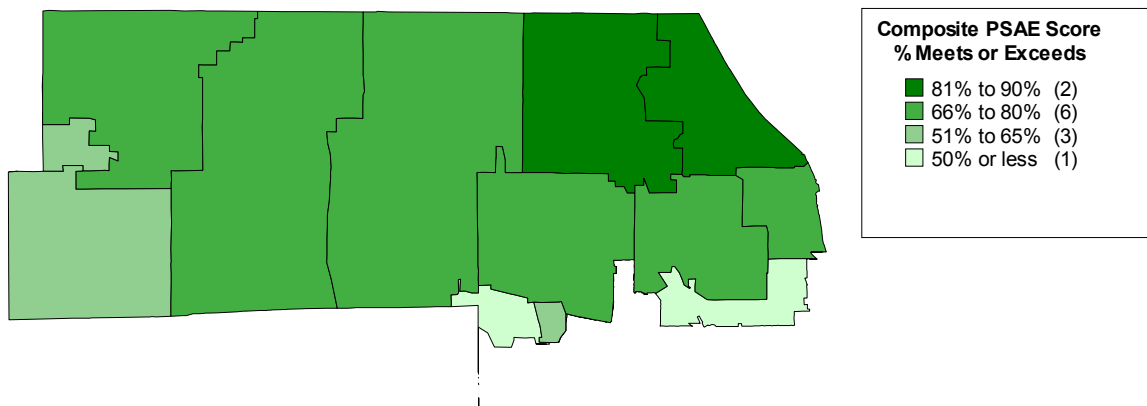
Source: Illinois State Board of Education

The school district names are shown below.



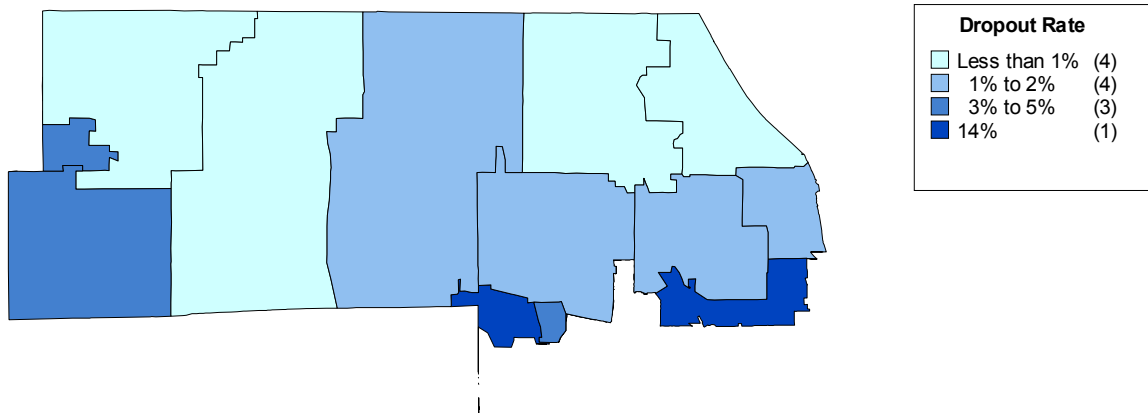
PSAE scores and graduation rates also show a correlation to income levels:

% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations for Composite PSAE Score by School District, 2001-2002 School Year



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

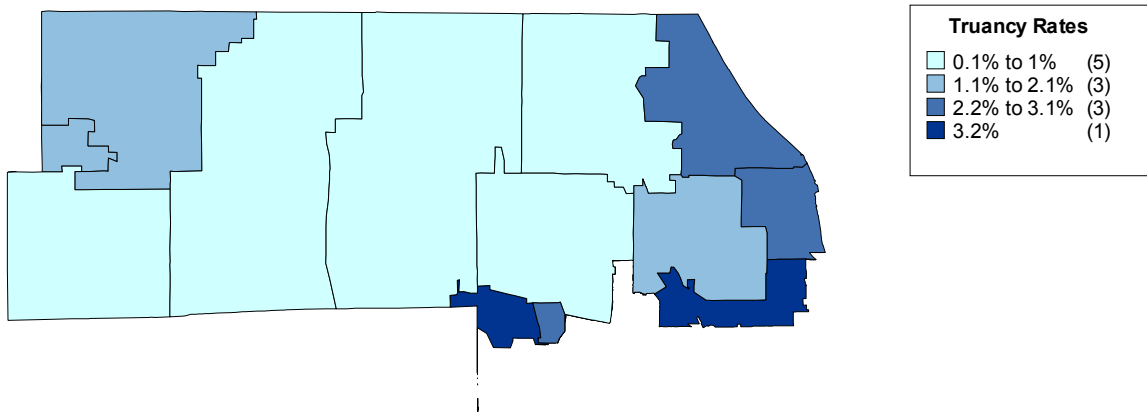
High School Dropout Rate by School District, 2001-2002 School Year



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Truancy rates, however, appear to be less consistently related to affluence:

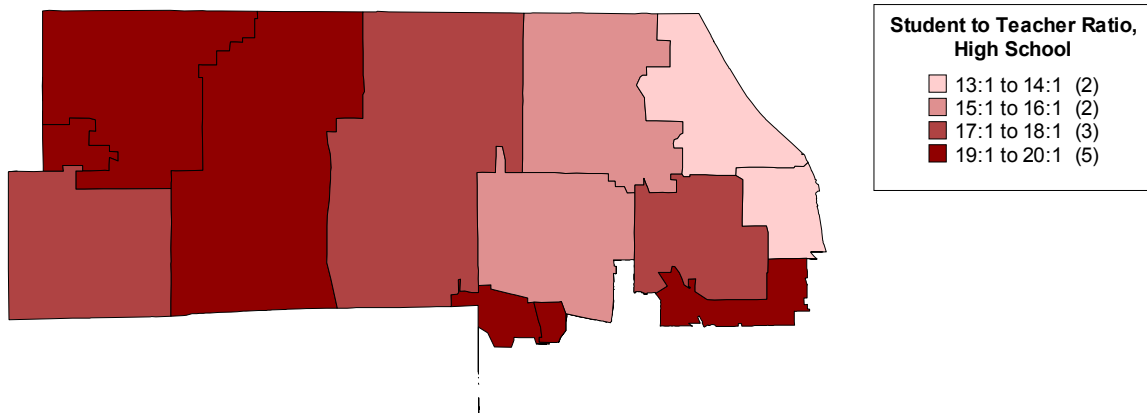
Truancy Rate by School District, 2001-2002 School Year



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Student-teacher ratios are also inconsistent with success factors as shown on the next page.

Student to Teacher Ratio by School District, 2001-2002 School Year



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Teacher salaries and experience in Northern Cook exceed the state average, with a high average annual salary of \$82,882 in District 211. All seven districts have higher rates of teachers with masters' degrees or above than the state average, with District 202 having the highest rate (82.2%).

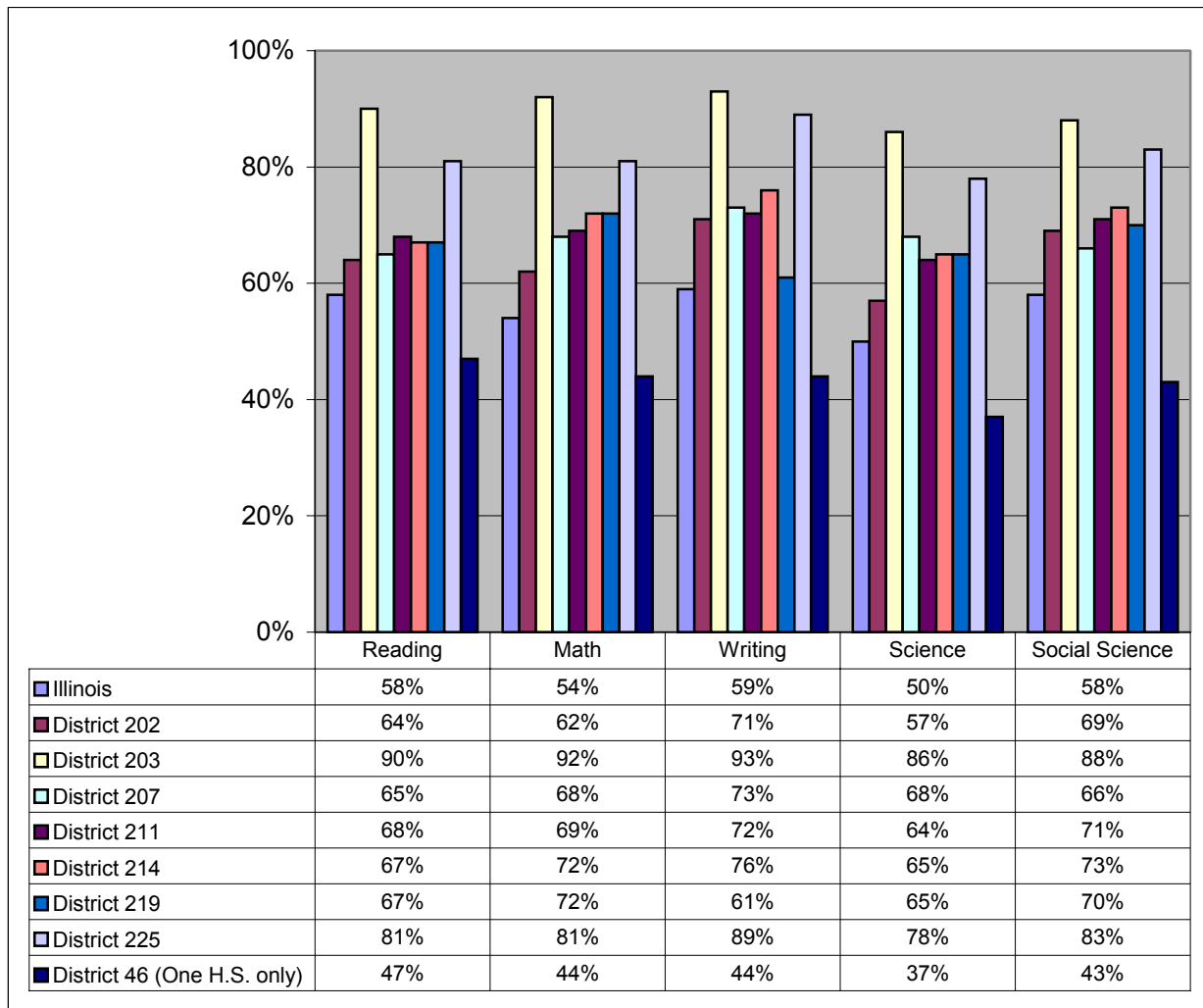
Average Teaching Experience

	Teaching Experience (years)	Teachers with Bachelors Degree	Teachers with Master or Above
Illinois	14.5	53.8%	46.0%
Evanston TWP District 202	15.0	17.8%	82.2%
New Trier TWP District 203	15.7	21.7%	78.3%
Maine Township District 207	13.7	23.9%	76.1%
Palatine-Schaumburg District 211	17.8	18.7%	80.1%
Arlington Heights District 214	17.4	24.4%	75.6%
Niles Township District 219	10.8	27.1%	72.9%
Glenview District 225	16.6	19.0%	80.6%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2001 School Report Cards

With the exception of one school examined, the Northern Cook County schools score better than the state average across all subjects, particularly in writing, but the lowest scores within Northern Cook are in science. As the economy continues to become more technical, the need for science knowledge and skill increases in importance. Focusing more attention on science scores will help Northern Cook youth become more competitive as adults.

11th Grade Assessment Scores, 2001



Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2001 School Report Cards

Secondary school success is a predictor of postsecondary persistence. One in three college freshmen does not return to school the following year. Freshman who were in the top tenth of their high school class have a 91% persistence rate while those attending colleges with “open door” admissions have a 54% rate. Students taking rigorous math courses early in secondary school are more likely to persist in college and secure good employment; 83% of students who take algebra and geometry enroll in college, while only 36% of students who do not take rigorous math enroll in college. “Taking algebra and geometry is particularly important for low-income students, with 71% of those enrolling in college, compared to 27% of those who do not” (Fast Facts, Winter, 1999 by Susan M. Quattrocchi, Ph.D).

Conclusions

- Northern Cook schools are doing well, but unequally. Income levels can predict academic success more so than student-teacher ratios or truancy rates. It is important to provide low-income youth with the extra supports they need to be successful. Community services that focus on mentoring, school retention, and tutoring should concentrate in areas that have the highest incidence of low-income students.
- All students should be encouraged to take rigorous coursework in high school to increase their chances of postsecondary (both two and four-year) and labor market success.



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