Beginning in 2007, the Chicago Public Schools launched a major initiative designed to keep ninth-graders on-track to graduation. This program was a response to research demonstrating that the first year of high school was a pivotal period for students, and that early warning indicators could identify students at high-risk of not completing high school. The district encouraged early intervention, and provided data tools for schools to use to target students, but left decisions about how to use the tools up to individual schools. Over the past six years, from 2007 to 2013, on-track rates for ninth graders have risen from fifty-seven to eighty-two percent, with gains present in all student subgroups, and the most significant improvement in African-American and Latino males.

John Barker, Chief of Accountability for Chicago Public Schools, will provide the district perspective of the on-track program.

Amy Torres, Leadership Coach in the Network for College Success, and a former high school principal, will discuss strategies employed by schools to address ninth grade failure.

Two researchers from the Consortium on Chicago School Research will discuss research on different aspects of the initiative:

Melissa Roderick will present recently-released findings demonstrating that the improvements in on-track rates were sustained beyond the ninth grade year, and corresponded to stable student achievement and higher graduation rates.

David Stevens will explain why monitoring systems in the ninth grade year are effective.

An external view will be provided by Jim Kemple of the Research Alliance for New York City Schools.