

ABSTRACT

The positive narrative of academic recovery told by Chicago Public Schools (CPS) emphasizes gains in student involvement and achievement. However, a more thorough examination of budgetary allocations, attendance patterns, and standardized test distributions (IAR and STAR360) indicates notable inequalities that affect student results. The distribution of standardized tests highlights the need for fair academic support by revealing achievement discrepancies across various demographic groups. By looking at these elements, we may better comprehend the challenges CPS faces in creating fair learning environments and guaranteeing that every kid makes steady academic development.

METHODS

We compiled and analyzed District and student-level data from multiple sources to analyze CPS resource allocation and student outcomes. Data was acquired through web scraping, downloading publicly available sets, and FOIA requests.

Through the use of our Python web crawler, we are able to track all CPS FOIA requests, allowing us to also obtain that data for our own records. We submitted legal challenges to procure public records when they were not provided. We additionally use Python, R, and other programming tools to clean and organize data before analysis.

RESULTS

We analyzed student-level data from 2019 through 2024 and determined that CPS policies intended to improve equity failed to yield meaningful results. In fact, the achievement gap expanded during this time period.

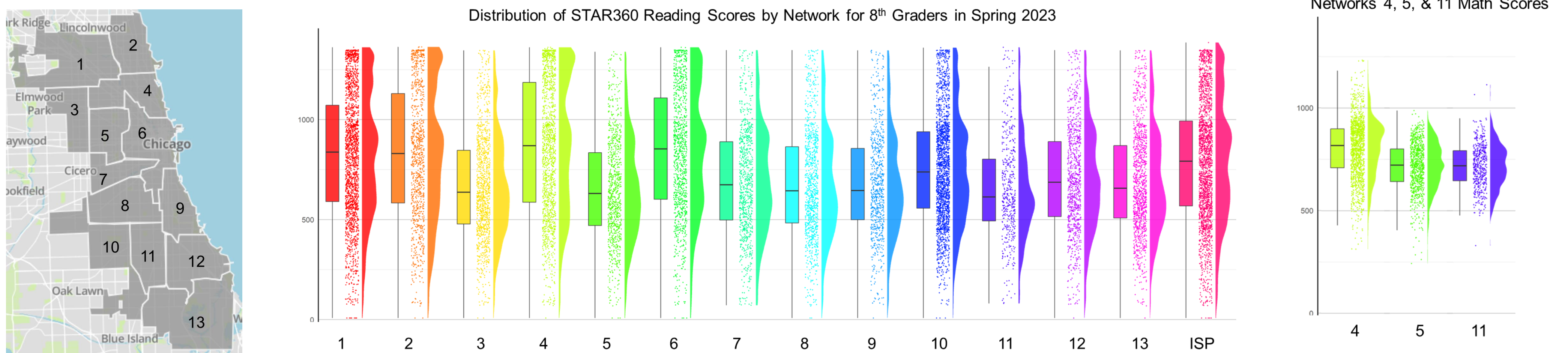


FIGURE 1: CPS STAR360 Scores Show Dramatic Achievement Gaps Between Network Schools. CPS schools are clustered into networks based on their geographic distribution (1A). We found profound variability in student proficiency within and among schools. The concentration of poverty within regions of the city contributes to the significant differences in performance in network schools in both reading (1B) and math (1C).

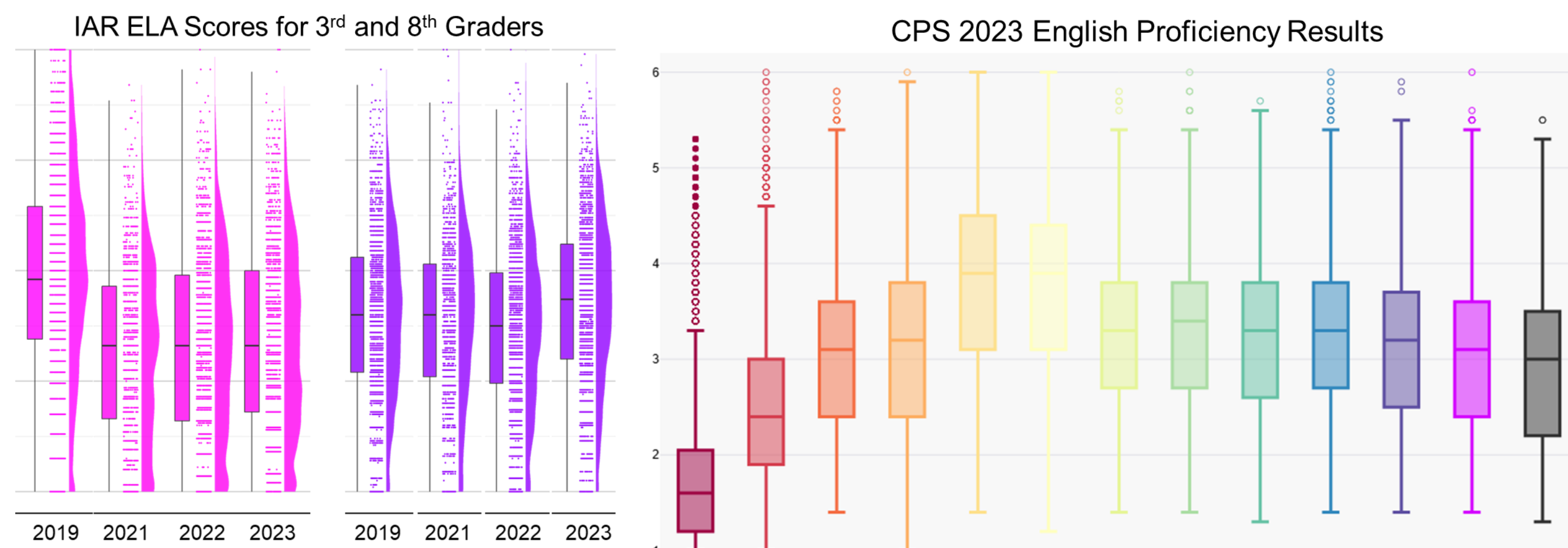


FIGURE 2: CPS IAR Scores Give a Misleading Impression of Student Recovery. We analyzed the English Language Arts (ELA) test results for every single CPS student from 2019 through 2023 (2A) and found the recovery results do not support CPS's false claims of having the highest post-pandemic recovery. We find a similar lack of recovery in mathematics. Disparities in learning are particularly pronounced for English language learners. We show that English language learners fail to make gains in later elementary school (2B), suggesting the effectiveness of CPS instruction for non-English speakers may be far more limited than previously reported.

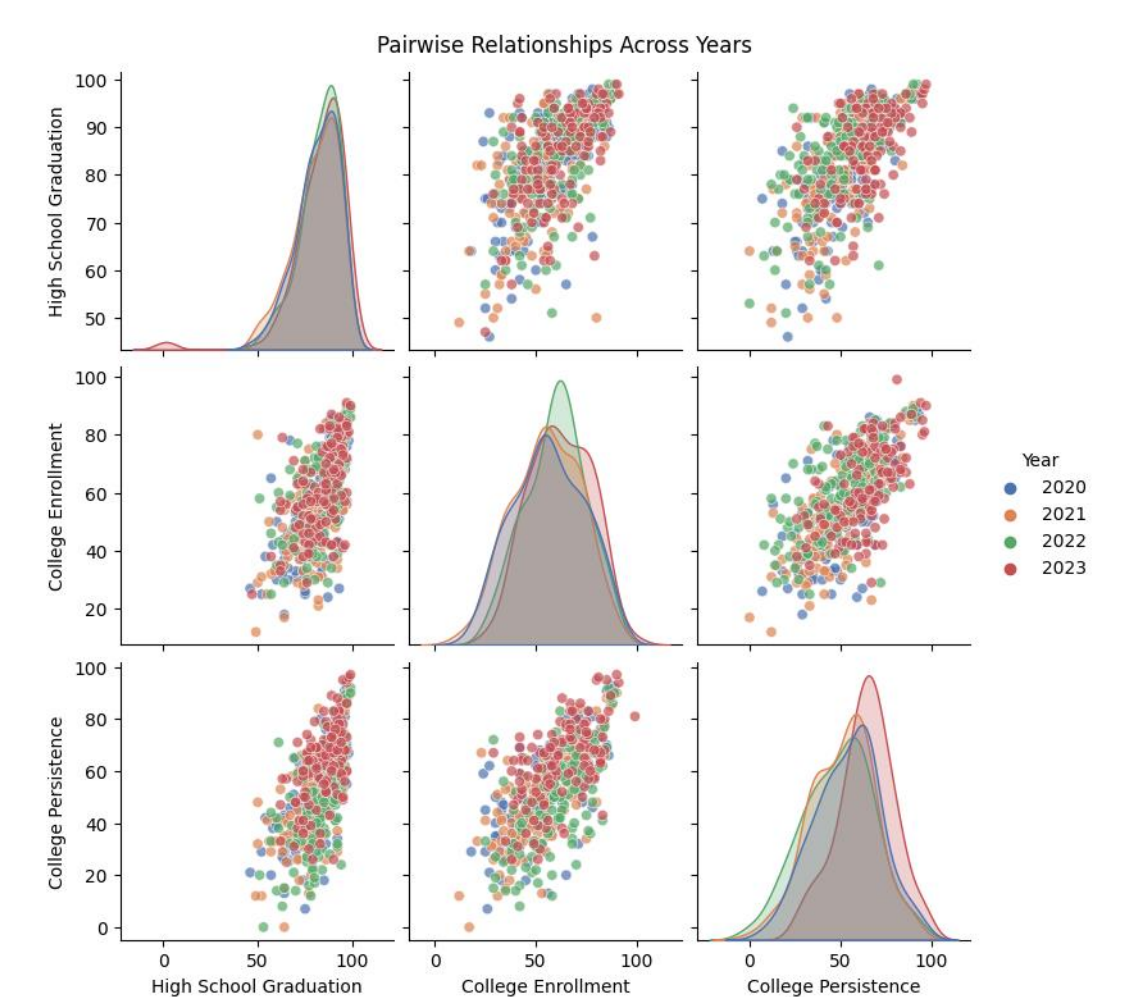


FIGURE 3: CPS Graduation, College Enrollment, & Persistence is Changing. The changes do not directly correlate with changes in student academics.

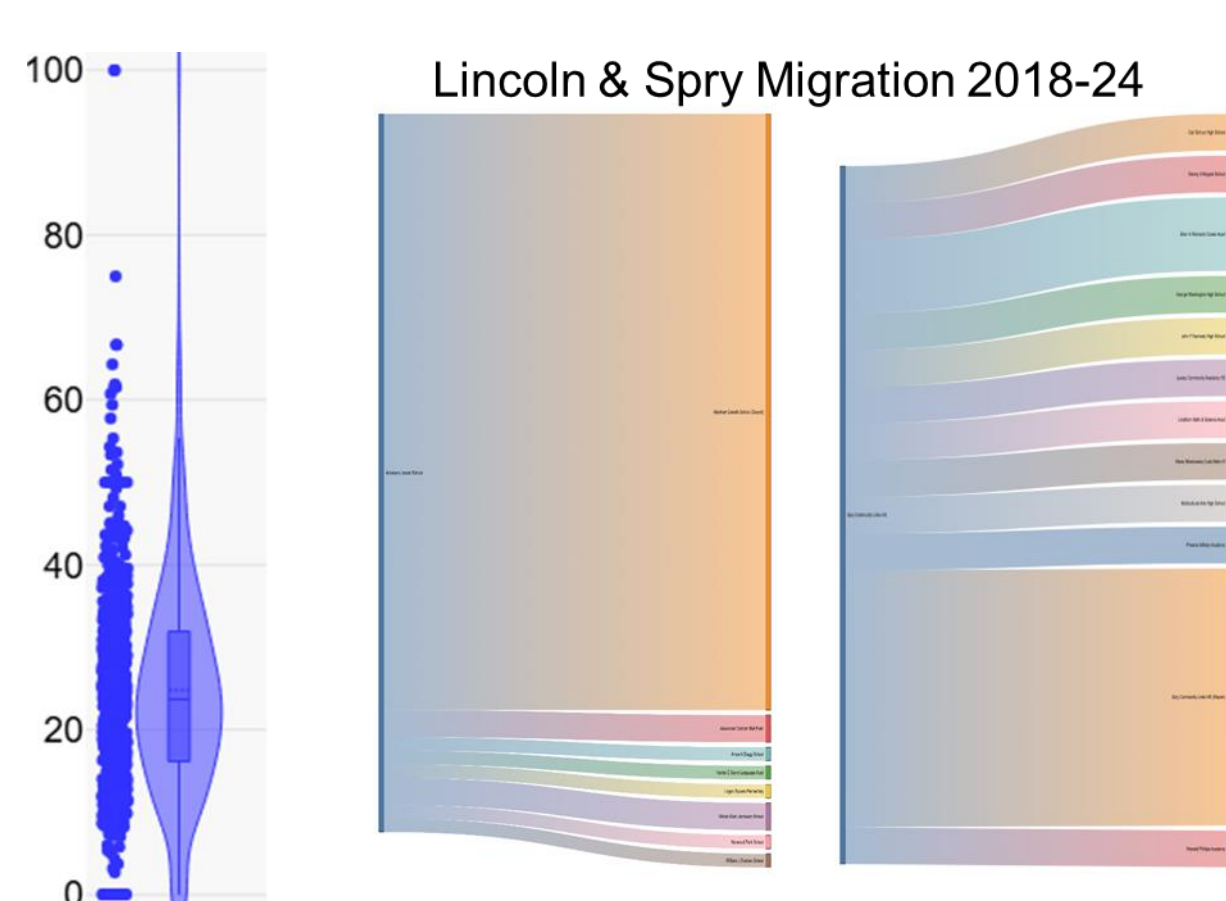


FIGURE 4: Turnover of Teachers & Staff are a Problem. We analyzed the employment of every CPS employee from 2018 through 2024. We find a pattern of migration out of low-performing schools. High-performing schools like Lincoln HS have very high rates of retention while Spry have very low rates, despite receiving 5x more per-student funding.

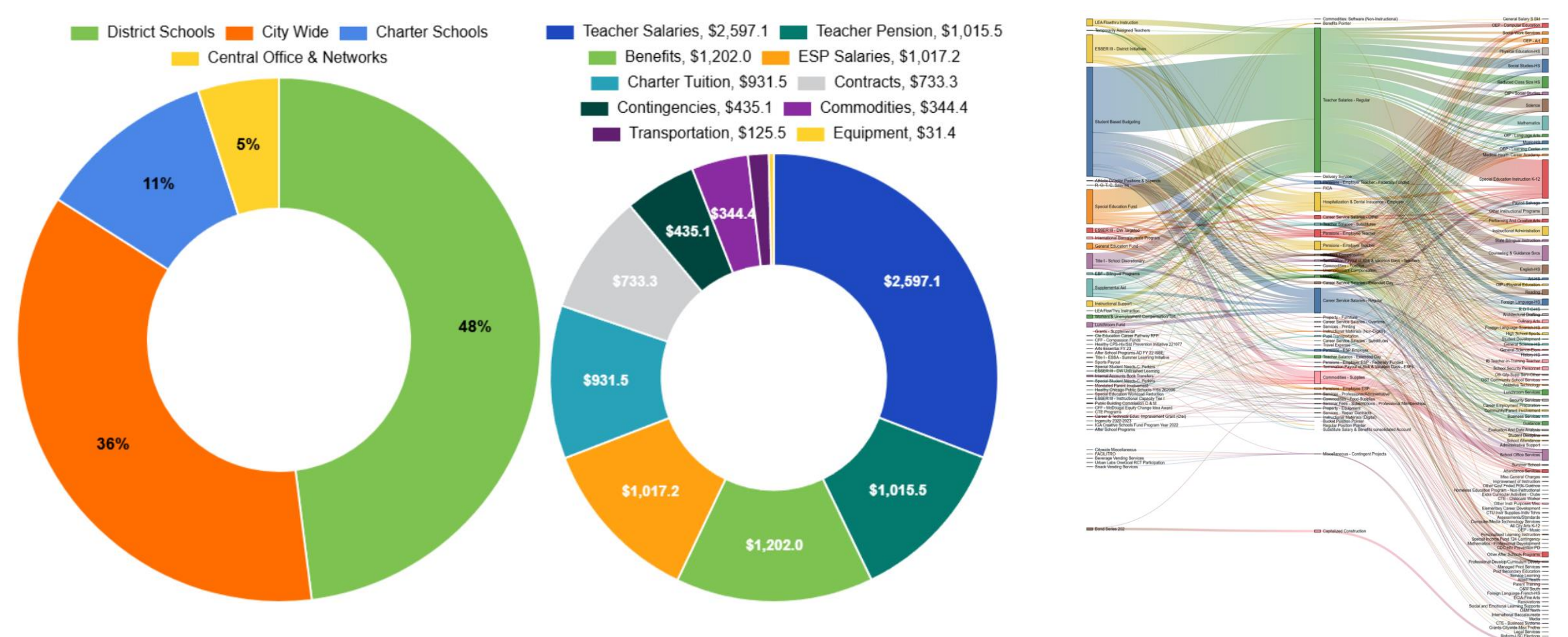


FIGURE 5: Poor Budget Transparency Prevents Accountability. We analyzed the CPS budget and calculated line-item transfers for millions of expenditures over multiple years. We identify concerns over appropriate school funding, questionable investments, and sustainability of CPS finances. We are developing tools to allow for better accountability of school spending and improve student outcomes.

Conclusion: We are the first to identify discrepancies in CPS reports of student outcomes with respect to post-pandemic recovery, English language learner proficiency, student outcomes, and budget allocations. These results challenge the effectiveness of CPS DEI initiatives. We will expand these efforts to advocate for CPS students.