

# Opportunity mapping



*August 21, 2015*

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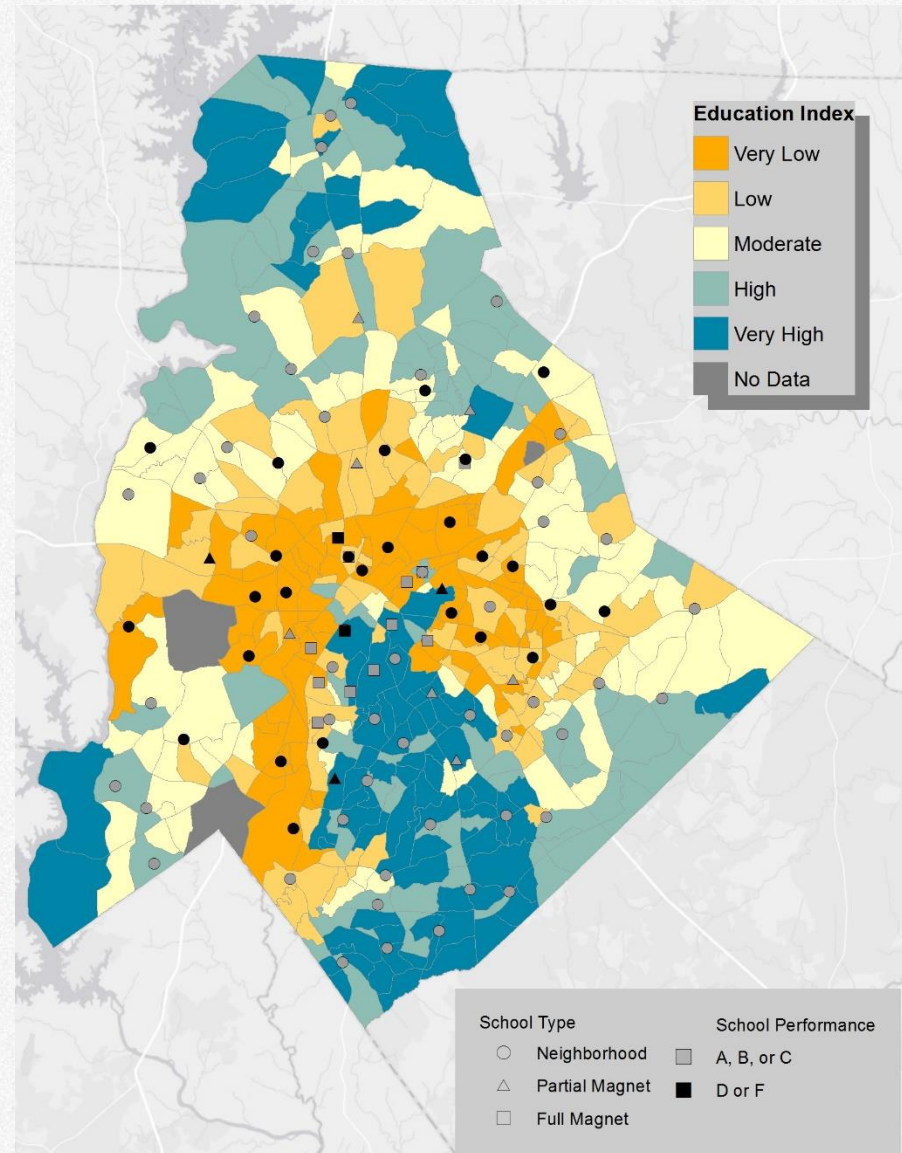
# What is opportunity mapping?

In this context, opportunity refers to neighborhood characteristics that facilitate individuals' success. Mapping neighborhood opportunity shows how opportunity levels vary across a community.

This brief is the first in a series of topical opportunity maps. At the end of the series, each topical map will be layered into a comprehensive map of opportunity in Mecklenburg County neighborhoods.

*Opportunity mapping combines various aspects of neighborhoods that foster opportunity into a cumulative index of opportunity.*

# Education index

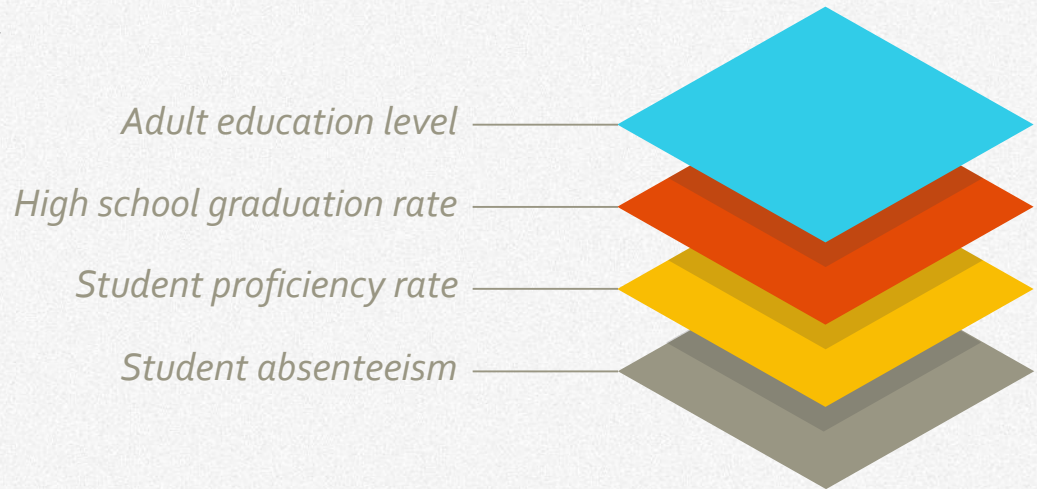


Education is one of the central pillars of opportunity, and there are a myriad of related indicators. Here, we have combined several key education indicators into an education index. Neighborhoods with low index values (in yellow) are less likely to foster opportunity, and those with high values (in blue) are more favorable for opportunity.

Overlaid on top of the index are the locations of CMS elementary schools. The shape of the school indicates whether it is a neighborhood or magnet school. The color indicates whether it received a School Performance grade of A, B, C or D, F.

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# Unpacking the index



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*The design and methodology for the index were modeled after opportunity indices created by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity.*

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The education index combines four common education indicators that relate to economic opportunity (listed above) into a single value. It was calculated by normalizing the indicators and then averaging the resulting z-scores.

All of the underlying data come from the [Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer](#) and were analyzed by neighborhood profile area.

In the following pages we will unpack the index by looking at the indicators that comprise it, explaining how each was measured and how each relates to opportunity.

On the left side of each page, statistics for each indicator are presented for two neighborhoods, **Revolution Park** in West Charlotte and **Myers Park** in South Charlotte, as well as the county overall and the nation or state where available.

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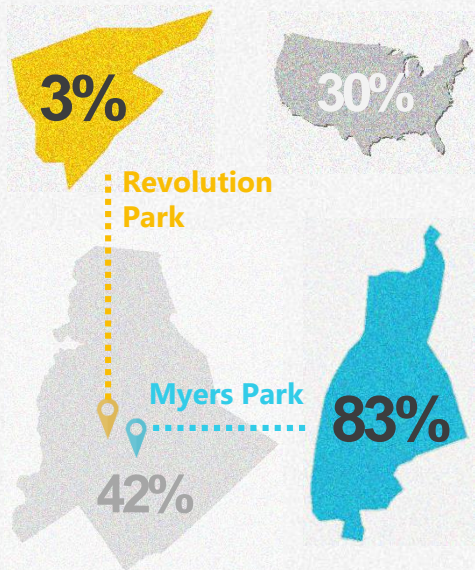
# Adult Education Level

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## By the numbers



*Percent of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher*



Adult education levels are highly related to economic opportunity and mobility. At the individual level, higher parental educational attainment leads to better educational outcomes for their children.

At the neighborhood level, children living in neighborhoods with higher adult educational attainment tend to have greater exposure to community norms that support higher educational attainment and to social networks that can lead to better jobs.

This indicator measures the percent of adults 25 years and older that have earned a bachelor's degree or more.

Like most urban areas, Mecklenburg County has a higher percentage of college graduates than the national average. Within the county, there are considerable differences. In many neighborhoods, less than 10% of residents have a bachelor's degree, while in others, this figure hits 90%.

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*For more information about this indicator, visit [mcmap.org/qol](http://mcmap.org/qol).*

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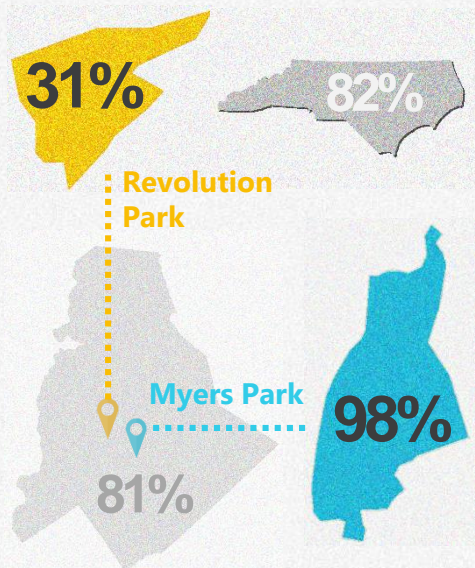
# High School Graduation Rate

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## By the numbers



*Percent of students  
graduating high school  
in 4 years*



Graduation rates play a vital role in economic opportunity and community well-being. Those who graduate from high school have more opportunities for further education, higher earnings, and better health outcomes, while those who do not face significant barriers to jobs that pay living wages.

Research has also shown that a neighborhood's high school dropout rate affects educational attainment and other developmental outcomes of the children living there.

This indicator measures the percent of CMS students that graduate high school in 4 years, using 4-year cohort data.

In 2013, the district-wide graduation rate for CMS was 81%, similar to the state average (82%). Some neighborhoods had rates as low as 20%, while others were as high as 100%.

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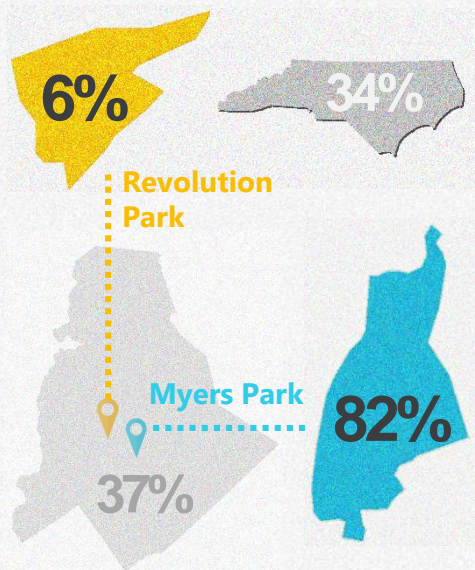
# Student Proficiency

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## By the numbers



*Percent of 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders proficient in end-of-grade tests*



Elementary test scores are a fundamental indicator of a child's future academic success. Research has shown that students with higher grades in reading are more likely to attend and complete college.

The proficiency of their peers also plays a role in a student's success. Studies have found that high-quality, high-achieving schools can increase academic success among low-income students.

This indicator measures the percent of 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students achieving a proficient score (level III or IV) on both reading and math end-of-grade tests.

District-wide, 37% of CMS students in grades 3-5 were proficient in both reading and math, slightly above the state average of 34%. Neighborhoods ranged from 4% proficiency to 100%.

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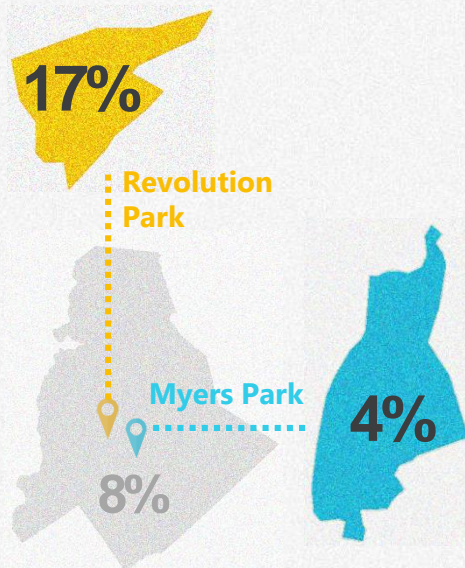
# Student Absenteeism

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## By the numbers



*Percent of students absent  
10% or more of school days*



School attendance is integral to a student's ability to complete high school and thus, their long-term economic prospects.

A high number of absences (commonly referred to as chronic absenteeism) reduces the likelihood a student will learn the necessary material, perform well on tests, and feel connected to their school community and often results in a student dropping out before they complete high school.

Students who miss 10% or more of school days are considered chronically absent. This indicator measures the percent of CMS students who were chronically absent.

Overall, 8% of CMS students were chronically absent. Absenteeism in some neighborhoods reached 20% or higher.

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