

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a light-colored fuzzy sweater, is sitting at a wooden desk in a classroom. She has her right hand raised high in the air, looking up with a smile. In the background, other children are visible, some also with their hands raised. The classroom has large windows with a view of trees outside. The overall atmosphere is bright and positive.

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Choosing the right school is a big decision. Our Best Schools Guide helps families in Chicagoland make smarter choices with confidence.

Why Trust Our Guide?

This “Best Schools” guide combines public data (U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Census Bureau), community reviews, surveys and academic indicators like test scores and college readiness.



Start Your Search Today

Explore even more top-ranked schools and find the right fit for your family at **ChicagoParent.com.**

Chicago Parent

We help families make the most of their time together with clear, practical recommendations on what to do, where to go and why it matters.

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to Hear
from You!**

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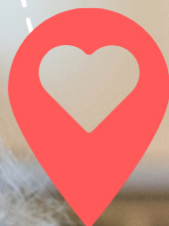
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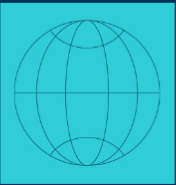
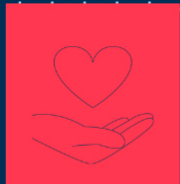
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4 SMART TIPS

for Choosing the Right School for Your Child

Finding a school today can feel more like applying to college than simply enrolling in the neighborhood option. But with a thoughtful approach and some planning, the process can be more manageable—and even empowering.

Here are four practical tips to help you find a school that fits your child and your family.

1 Start Early and Do Your Homework

Schools, especially popular ones, can fill up quickly. Give yourself plenty of time to research, visit and apply. Starting early allows you to explore different programs, ask questions and avoid last-minute stress. Make sure to tour schools in person, observe classrooms if possible, and pay attention to how staff interact with both children and families.

2 Focus on Your Child's Unique Needs

Every child is different, and so are schools. Consider what's most important for your child—whether that's extra academic support, social-emotional learning, language services, strong extracurriculars or a nurturing environment. Think about how your child learns best and what kind of setting will help them thrive.

3 Look Beyond Test Scores

Academic performance is important, but it's only part of the picture. Look for schools that foster curiosity, creativity, independence and kindness. Explore what's being taught, how it's being taught, and whether the school values diversity and supports all types of learners. A welcoming, inclusive culture matters just as much as academics.

4 Consider Practical Logistics

Sometimes, practical factors play a big role in the decision. Things like location, transportation, school hours, after-care availability or proximity to a caregiver can all influence your choice. Use online tools—like enrollment guides from local school districts or private schools—to help compare options and find a good fit for your schedule.





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BEST SCHOOLS: COOK COUNTY

ELEMENTARY

1. Barbara B. Rose Elementary School

SOUTH BARRINGTON

An innovative K-5 public school that integrates arts, technology, and academics in a nurturing, hands-on environment.

2. Graham Elementary School

NAPERVILLE

A K-5 public school that emphasizes personalized learning, academic excellence, and a diverse, supportive educational community.

3. Ellsworth Elementary School

NAPERVILLE

A tradition-rich K-5 public school that fosters strong community ties and outstanding results in literacy and numeracy.

4. Grove Avenue Elementary School

BARRINGTON

An inclusive K-5 public school that develops social-emotional skills and academic excellence through diverse enrichment opportunities.

5. Elm Elementary School

BURR RIDGE

An eco-conscious K-5 public school that blends academic rigor with outdoor education and environmental sustainability programs.

MIDDLE

1. The Joseph Sears School

KENILWORTH

A tradition-rich, high-achieving PK-8 school rooted in values, community and academic excellence.

2. Wood Oaks Junior High School

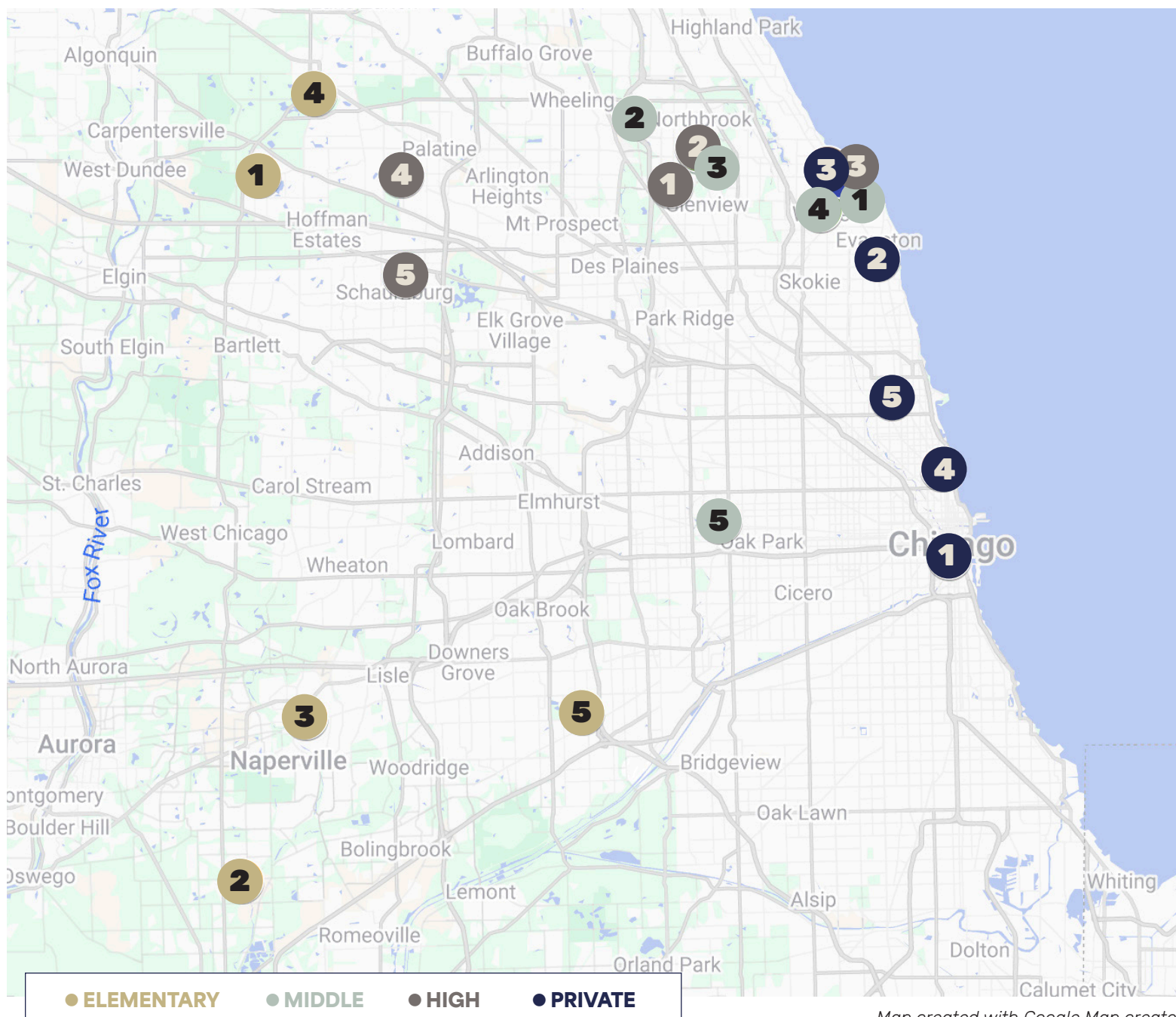
NORTHBROOK

Award-winning junior high fostering academic excellence, innovation and student growth in a supportive environment.

3. Maple School

NORTHBROOK

A collaborative, student-focused school dedicated to excellence, growth and preparing learners for future success.



4. Highcrest Middle School

WILMETTE

A vibrant, student-centered school fostering growth, curiosity, and success for 5th and 6th graders.

5. Roosevelt School

RIVER FOREST

A vibrant, inclusive middle school focused on academic excellence, student growth and community connection.

HIGH

1. Glenbrook South High School

GLENVIEW

A dynamic, inclusive high school offering rigorous academics, diverse programs, and a supportive community.

2. New Trier Township High School

WINNETKA

A top-ranked school fostering academic excellence, compassion and service through rich programs and student support.

5. James B. Conant High School

HOFFMAN ESTATES

A tradition-rich, high-performing school committed to innovation, academic excellence and student growth.

PRIVATE

1. British International School of Chicago, South Loop

CHICAGO

An elite PreK-12 private school offering rigorous academics, global focus, and exceptional extracurricular opportunities.

2. Roycemore School

EVANSTON

A private school offering a student-centered, college-prep education with gifted programs, passion projects, and community-building.

3. North Shore Country Day

WINNETKA

A PreK-12 private school that offers a rigorous liberal arts education, encouraging student-designed courses and civic-minded learning.

4. Francis W. Parker School

CHICAGO

A progressive PreK-12 private school that emphasizes community, ethics, and modern learning rooted in civic responsibility.

5. Lycée Français de Chicago

CHICAGO

A French immersion PreK-12 school that emphasizes multilingual fluency, global citizenship, and rigorous IB and French Baccalaureate programs.

3. Glenbrook North High School

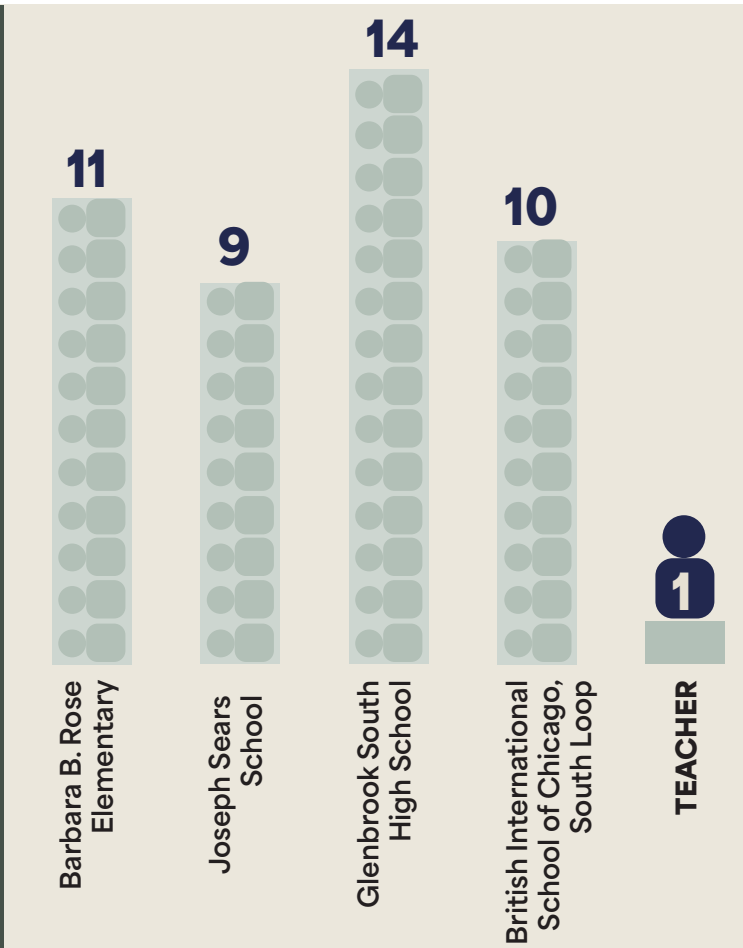
NORTHBROOK

A high-achieving, inclusive school offering rigorous academics, diverse programs and strong college preparation.

4. William Fremd High School

PALATINE

A proud, high-achieving school fostering innovation, academic excellence, and strong community spirit.





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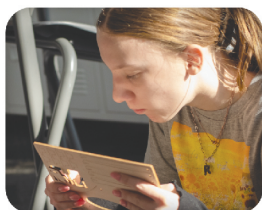
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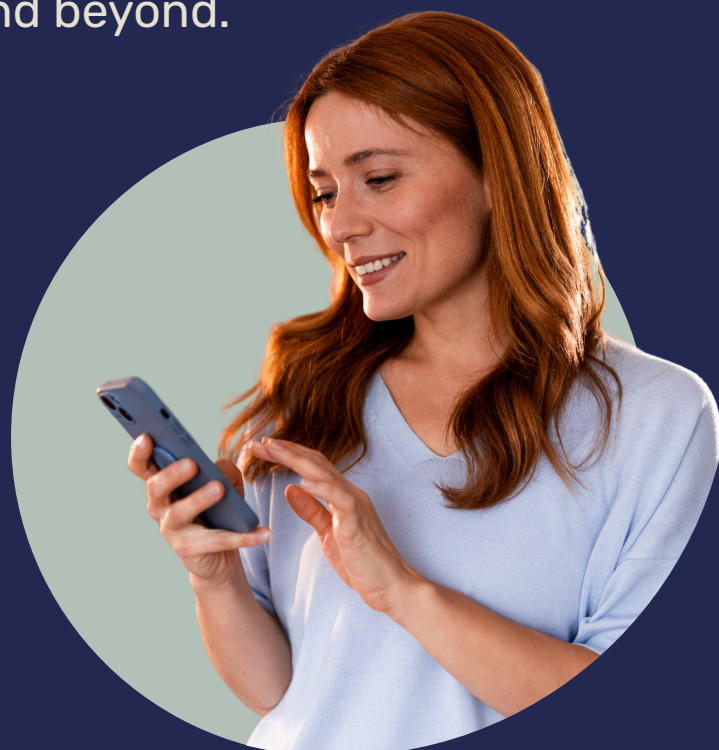
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- ✓ **Expert tips** on choosing the right learning environment
- ✓ **Resources** for tutoring, enrichment and learning support
- ✓ **Insightful breakdowns** of education trends and teacher profiles



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Montessori Schools That Help Kids Thrive

Looking for top Montessori schools in Chicago? This list highlights schools that nurture intellectual, emotional, and social growth through integrated, child-focused education.

Council Oak Montessori School

BLUE ISLAND

Council Oak Montessori in Blue Island fosters a love of nature through hands-on outdoor learning, music, Capoeira, and a strong PreK–8 Montessori academic program.

Beacon Academy

EVANSTON

Beacon Academy serves Chicago-area students in grades 9–12, offering International Baccalaureate courses and a unique Experiential Learning track that blends real-world learning with Montessori principles.

Joliet Montessori School

JOLIET

Joliet Montessori School serves PreK–9 students with small class sizes, whole-child education, and multi-age elementary classrooms for personalized learning.

Montessori Academy of Chicago

CHICAGO

Montessori Academy of Chicago serves infants to eighth graders in the West Loop with small classes, a strong literacy program, and annual trips to Nature's Classroom Institute.

Ancona School

CHICAGO

Ancona School in Chicago serves PreK–8 with a focus on social justice, global perspectives, and culturally responsive, anti-biased education in a 15,000-square-foot facility.

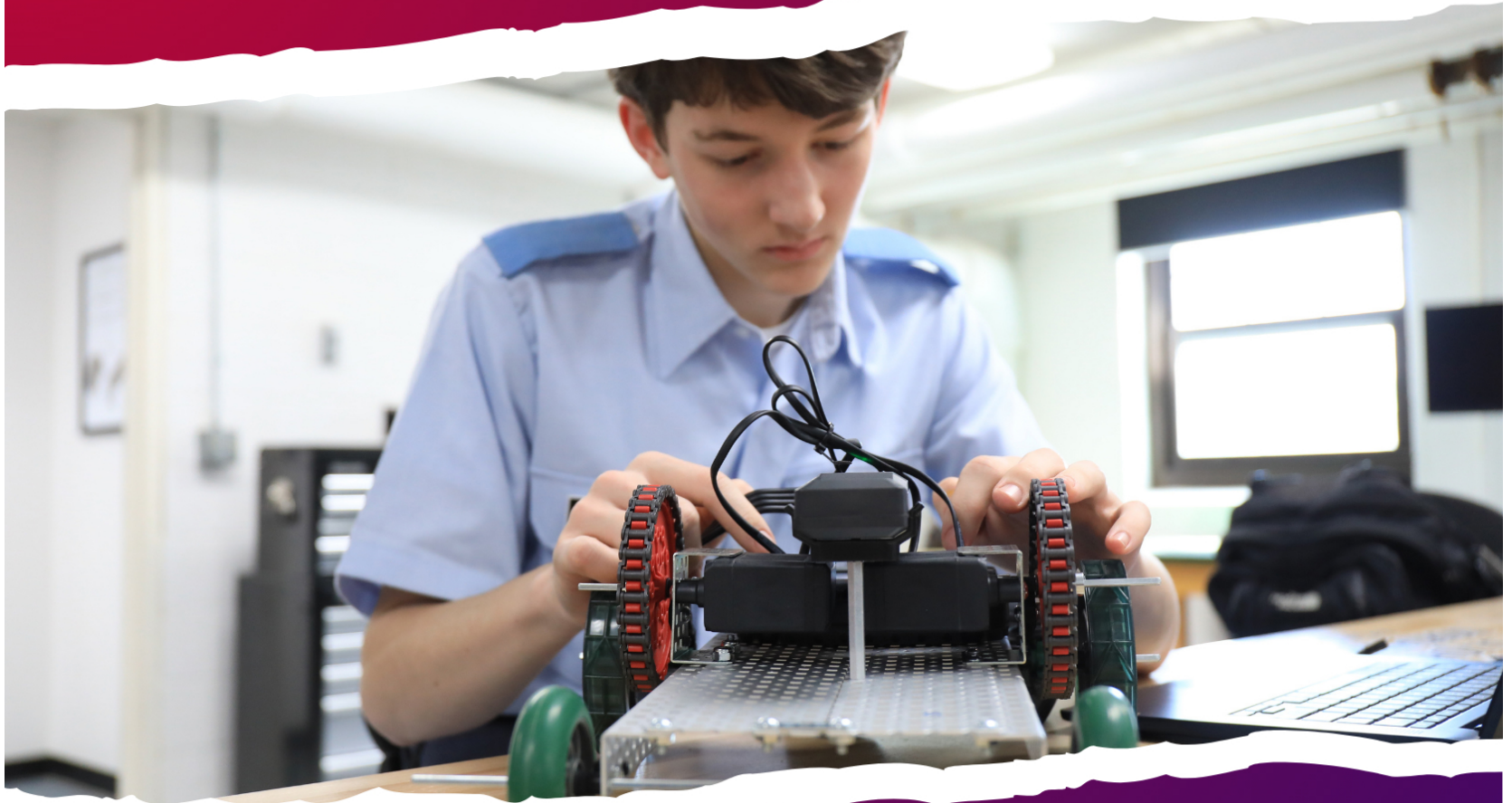
Near North Montessori School

CHICAGO

Founded in 1963, Near North Montessori serves infants through 8th grade with stand-out facilities, including a theater, rooftop farm, STEAM lab, and indoor pool.



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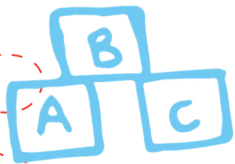
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Age 3 through 8th Grade | Old Town, Chicago

BEST SCHOOLS: DUPAGE COUNTY

ELEMENTARY

1. Ellsworth Elementary School

NAPERVILLE

A community-centered school with deep roots, it excels in literacy, numeracy, and strong parent partnerships.

2. Elm Elementary School

BURR RIDGE

A nurturing, long-established school combining academic rigor with environmental sustainability and outdoor, stewardship-focused learning experiences.

3. Meadow Glens Elementary School

NAPERVILLE

A vibrant school combining strong academics, athletics, and a commitment to holistic student development and growth.

4. Mill Street Elementary School

NAPERVILLE

A well-rounded school blending strong academics, diverse extracurriculars, and progressive teaching rooted in a tradition of excellence.

5. Walker School

CLARENDON HILLS

A high-achieving school combining immersive learning, strong parent involvement, and innovative practices to support student growth and community.

MIDDLE

1. Kennedy Junior High School

LISLE

A top-rated junior high offering academic excellence, a well-rounded curriculum, and deep roots in the Lisle community.

2. Clarendon Hills Middle School

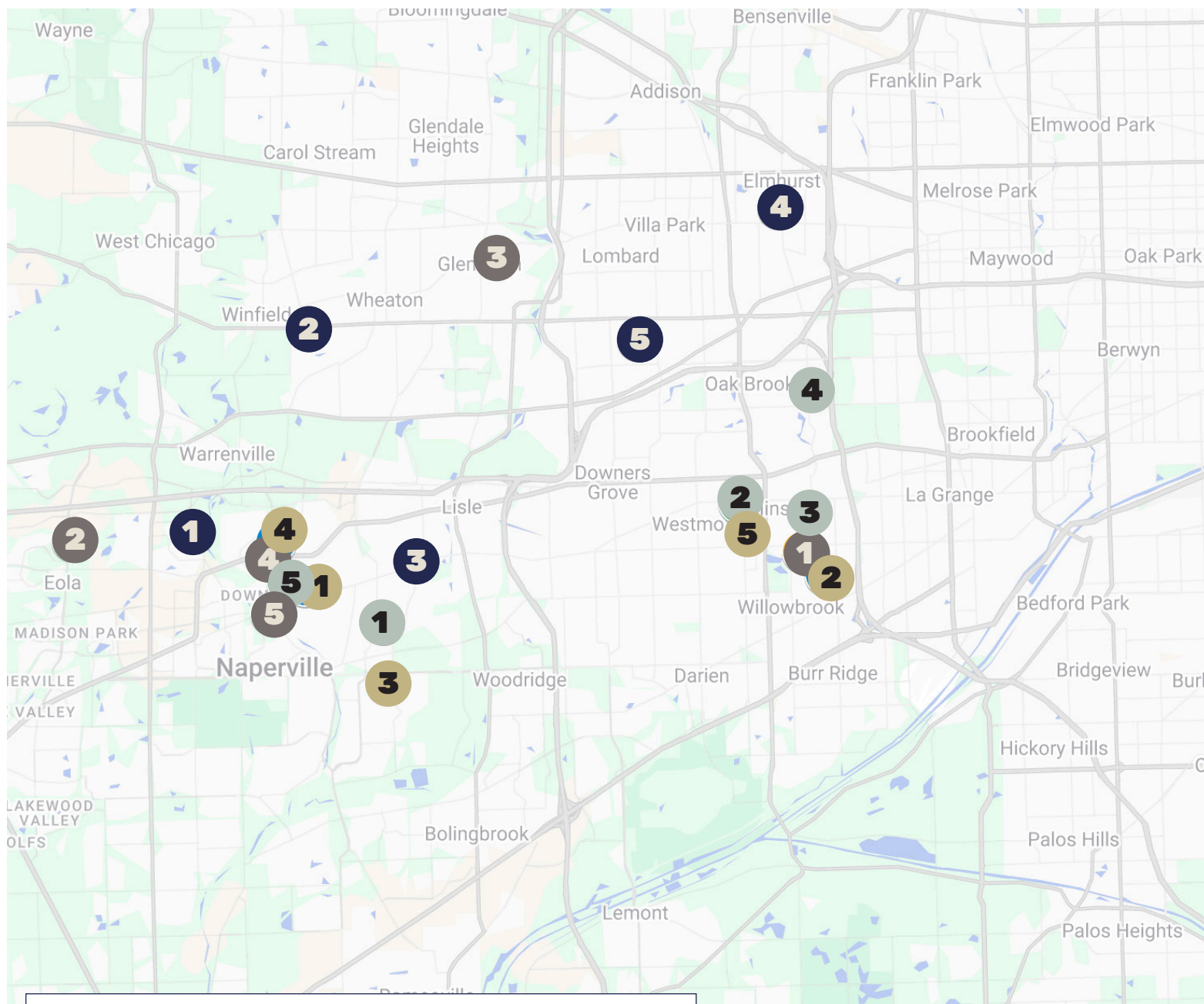
CLARENDON HILLS

A top-ranked National Blue Ribbon middle school known for academic excellence and strong community-supported educational foundations.

3. Hinsdale Middle School

HINSDALE

A nationally ranked middle school with a rich history of academic excellence and strong community engagement.



Map created with Google Map creator

4. Butler Junior High School

OAK BROOK

A high-achieving junior high recognized nationally for excellence, personalized learning, and a supportive, nurturing school community.

demics, diverse extracurriculars, and a strong commitment to student growth and community.

HIGH

5. Washington Junior High School

NAPERVILLE

A well-established junior high offering rigorous aca-

1. Hinsdale Central High School

HINSDALE

Hinsdale Central offers top-tier academics and

support, serving 2,500+ students in Chicago’s western suburbs.

2. Metea Valley High School

AURORA

Metea Valley High School excels in academics and arts, serving Aurora with award-winning programs.

3. Glenbard West High School

GLEN ELLYN

Glenbard West blends rich tradition with innovation, serving 2,100+ students in historic Glen Ellyn.

4. Naperville North High School

NAPERVILLE

Naperville North inspires future-ready learners through collaboration, critical thinking, and community-driven education.

5. Naperville Central High School

NAPERVILLE

Naperville Central excels in academics and college prep, empowering 2,500+ students for future success.

PRIVATE

1. Naperville Christian Academy

NAPERVILLE

A top-ranked PreK–12 Christian school offering classical, liberal arts education with Christ-centered values and rigorous college prep academics.

2. St. Francis High School

WHEATON

A co-ed Catholic high school offering rigorous academics, faith-based values, and personalized schedules to prepare well-rounded college- and career-ready graduates.

3. Benet Academy

LISLE

A co-ed Catholic high school rooted in Benedictine tradition, offering rigorous academics, faith formation, and holistic student development.

4. IC Catholic Prep

ELMHURST

A co-ed Catholic high school offering rigorous college prep academics, faith-based education, and strong extracurricular and service opportunities.

5. Montini Catholic High School

LOMBARD

A co-ed Catholic high school known for strong academics, extensive AP and honors courses, faith-based learning, and vibrant student life.

Top 5 School Districts in DuPage County

1

Hinsdale Township High School District No. 86

2

Indian Prairie Community Unit School District No. 204

3

Naperville Community Unit School District No. 203

4

Elmhurst School District No. 205

5

Community Unit School District No. 200

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- An ambitious curriculum paired with proper supports
- A rich array of fine arts, co-curricular + leadership opportunities



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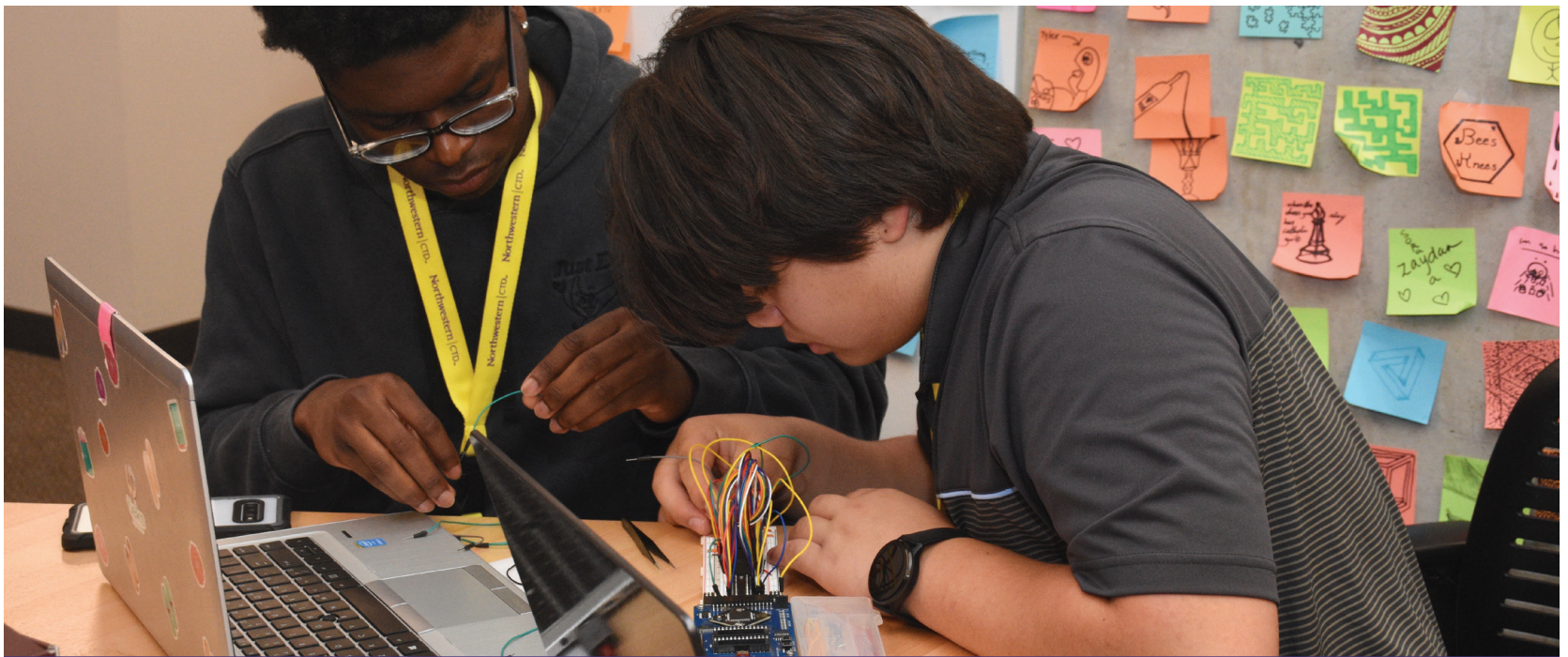
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5 Schools on the Rise in Chicagoland

These five Chicagoland schools are gaining attention for innovation, growth and bold approaches – making them standout choices for families seeking a fresh, forward-thinking education.

1

It Takes a Village

CHICAGO

This private school network expands with a \$12M investment, opening a new K-8 Bronzeville campus focused on social justice, global learning, and future growth.

2

City Garden Waldorf School

CHICAGO

City Garden Waldorf expanded to serve ages 2–6, offering a rare, play-based early education that nurtures creativity, storytelling and outdoor learning across mixed-age classrooms.

3

Hawthorne Scholastic Academy

CHICAGO

Hawthorne Scholastic Academy earned National Blue Ribbon honors in 2024, with 95% of students excelling academically – all while offering rich extra-curricular and community opportunities.

4

Sutherland Elementary School

CHICAGO

Sutherland Elementary, an IB World School, nearly doubled reading scores from 2021 to 2024—growing from 18% to 38% meeting state standards.

5

Walter R. Sundling Junior High School

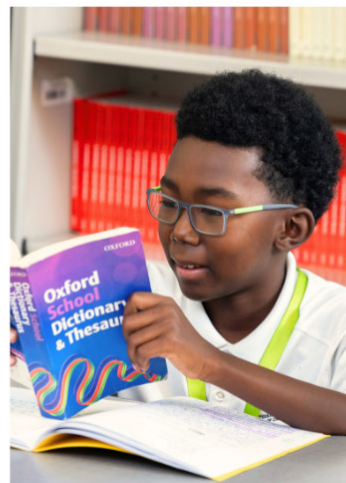
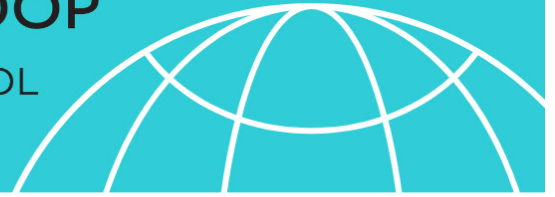
PALATINE

Walter R. Sundling earned national recognition for closing achievement gaps through culturally responsive teaching and personalized support that engage its diverse student community and meet individual needs.



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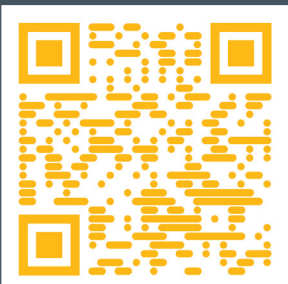
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BEST SCHOOLS: LAKE COUNTY

ELEMENTARY

1. Bannockburn School

BANNOCKBURN

A community-driven PreK–8 school offering personalized learning, small class sizes, and a balance of rigor and growth.

2. Roslyn Road Elementary School

BARRINGTON

A nurturing K–5 school integrating STEAM education with holistic learning to foster creativity, curiosity, and growth.

3. Rondout Elementary School

LAKE FOREST

An innovative K–8 school combining collaborative learning, student engagement, and a legacy of educational adaptability.

4. Half Day School

LINCOLNSHIRE

A leadership-focused 3–5 school combining strong academics and character education in a supportive, community-rooted environment.

5. Oak Grove Elementary School

LIBERTYVILLE

A well-rounded K–8 school balancing academic excellence with standout arts, athletics, and community-focused growth.

MIDDLE

1. Bannockburn School

BANNOCKBURN

Small, student-focused district delivering academic excellence and support in a close-knit, tech-enhanced environment.

2. Daniel Wright Junior High School

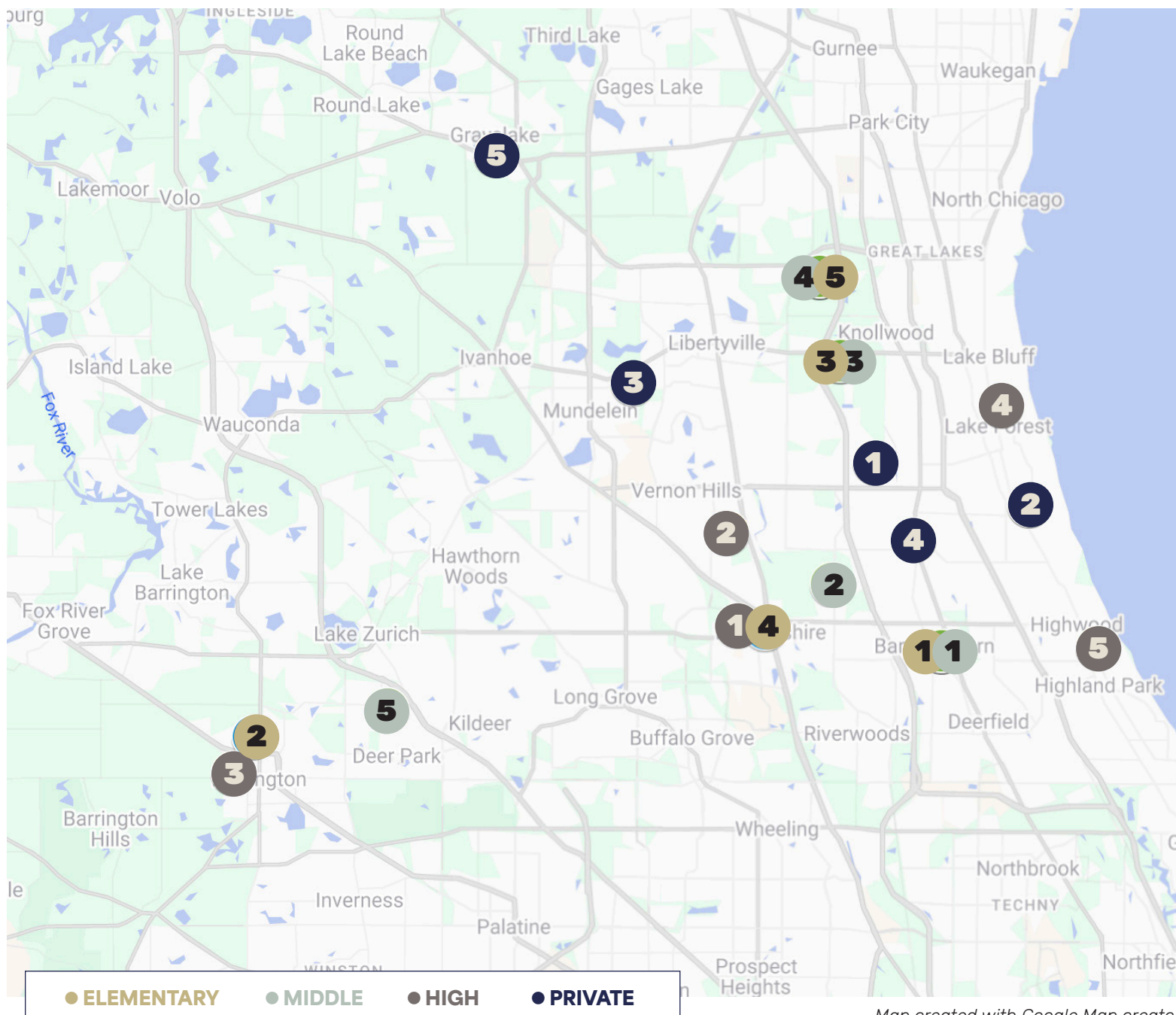
LINCOLNSHIRE

Award-winning junior high with strong academics, competitive clubs, and a proud tradition of excellence.

3. Rondout Elementary School

LAKE FOREST

Innovative, community-centered school developing well-rounded learners through respect, responsibility, honesty and kindness.



Map created with Google Map creator

4. Oak Grove Elementary School

LIBERTYVILLE

Award-winning K-8 school igniting learning through innovation, inclusion and a passion for excellence.

5. Lake Zurich Middle School - South Campus

LAKE ZURICH

Top-ranked school with strong academics, dedicated teachers and a supportive, student-centered environment.

HIGH

1. Adlai E. Stevenson High School

LINCOLNSHIRE

Inclusive high school offering exceptional academics, student support and diverse extracurricular opportunities.

PROFICIENCY AT A GLANCE: MATH & READING

BANNOCKBURN SCHOOL:

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67% proficient Math

ROSLYN ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

58% proficient Reading,

52% proficient Math

DANIEL WRIGHT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL:

71% proficient Reading,

77% proficient Math

ADLAI E. STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL:

72% proficient Reading,

72% proficient Math

VERNON HILLS HIGH SCHOOL:

56% proficient Reading,

63% proficient Math

2. Vernon Hills High School

VERNON HILLS

Vibrant high school offering rich academics, arts and athletics in a supportive, well-rounded environment.

3. Barrington High School

BARRINGTON

Nationally ranked high school blending innovation, tradition and college-career readiness for 3,000+ students.

4. Lake Forest High School

LAKE FOREST

Top-ranked high school fostering academic excellence, personal support and lasting community on Chicago's North Shore.

5. Highland Park High School

HIGHLAND PARK

High-achieving, student-centered high school focused on equity, well-being and academic excellence near Chicago.

PRIVATE

1. Lake Forest Academy

LAKE FOREST

A top-ranked private high school combining rigorous academics, global travel, and vibrant boarding life on a scenic campus.

2. Woodlands Academy of the Sacred Heart

LAKE FOREST

A Catholic all-girls high school offering rigorous academics, small classes, and enriching day and boarding experiences.

3. Carmel Catholic High School

MUNDELEIN

A top-tier co-ed Catholic high school with rigorous academics, vibrant student life, and exciting campus enhancements.

4. Fusion Academy Lake Forest

LAKE FOREST

A personalized 6–12 school specializing in one-to-one instruction for students with learning and emotional differences.

5. Westlake Christian Academy

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A Christ-centered PreK–12 school fostering whole-child development, strong academics, and inclusive athletic opportunities.

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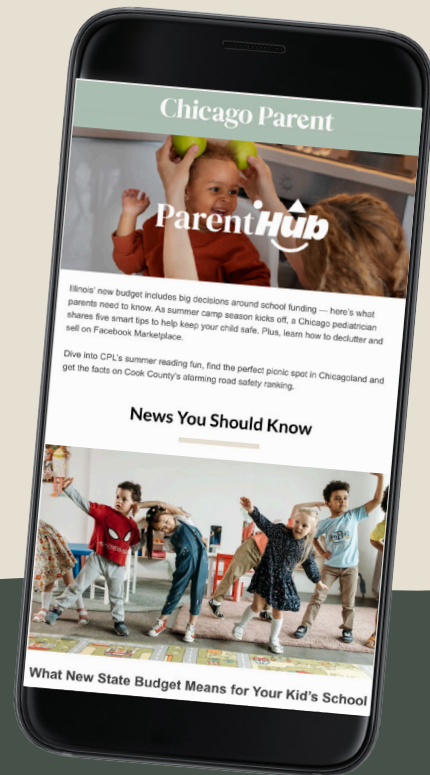
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A New Kind of Middle School for Chicago Kids



Big ideas. Real-world learning. Global impact.

Wander Through Wonder is a new Chicago microschool for grades 6-8 that blends STEAM education and global citizenship – with social-emotional learning at its core. It's hands-on, purpose-driven learning that prepares students to thrive in a connected world.

From local projects to Costa Rica

Students tackle real issues like human impact and social inequality through creative, interdisciplinary projects. Fieldwork around the city and an end-of-year international trip – next stop: Costa Rica – bring the learning to life.

Small school. Big thinking.

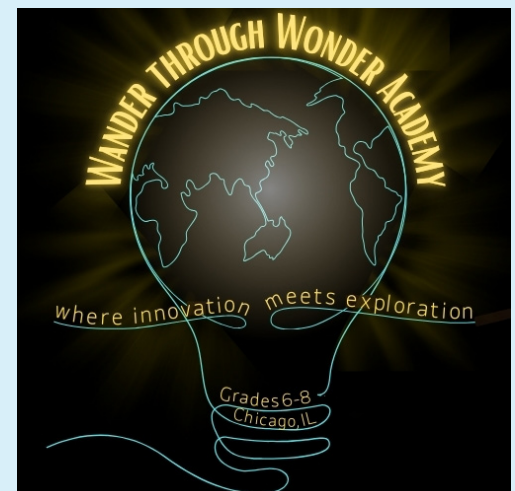
With personalized attention and deep community connections, Wander Through Wonder helps middle schoolers grow into curious, confident changemakers.

OPENING in 2025

Wander Through Wonder Academy

916 W Diversey Pkwy
Chicago, IL

wanderthroughwonder.org
312-505-3075





Rooted in **Nature,** Built for **Growth**



Where nature, learning and movement come together

Tucked along the historic Cal-Sag Channel in Blue Island, Council Oak Montessori School offers more than just academics — it's a place where children connect deeply with the natural world. Students help plant native vegetation, care for bird habitats and engage in meaningful outdoor activities that nurture a sense of wonder, responsibility and belonging.

A well-rounded Montessori journey for PreK-8

Council Oak combines advanced Montessori academics with hands-on learning and a strong sense of community. From early learners to middle schoolers, students thrive in an environment that encourages curiosity, independence and growth.

Programs that move the body and mind

In addition to academic core work, children explore music, nature studies and Capoeira — a Brazilian art form that blends movement and rhythm — all thoughtfully integrated to support the whole child.



Council Oak Montessori School
2521 Grove St., Blue Island
counciloakmontessori.org | 708-926-9720



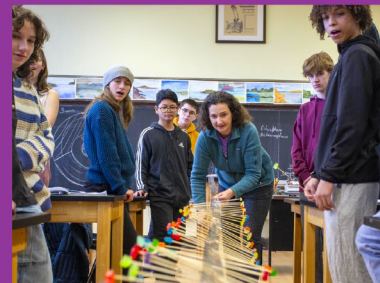
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experiential, screen-free lower school

Our lower school programs (preK-5th) nurture imagination, empathy, and social connection—without screens—laying the foundation for focused, joyful learning.

a whole-child education, PreK-12th grade

At Chicago Waldorf School, every student engages in every subject—science, math, music, language, the practical and fine arts, drama, travel, movement, humanities, and *more*—fostering rich, hands-on learning that encourages both challenge and well-rounded growth.



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