



NEIGHBORHOOD
Parents Network

MARCH 2023 ISSUE

PARENT TO PARENT



*CPS high school options—
you have more than you think!*

*Preschool and elementary school
application processes revealed*

*How to tell if a summer camp
is a good fit for your child*

*Summer Camp
Directory Inside!*



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
OF CHICAGO, LINCOLN PARK
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

a **BIG** scientist starts with a **little** curiosity

Our teachers and specialists create a personalized learning experience for your child by adapting our curriculum to their needs.

This supports their development along the way and builds their confidence.

Ages 15 months – 11 years



Book a visit at bischicagolp.org!

OUR MISSION

Empowering a diverse community of families by providing support and resources designed to solve the challenges of parenting in Chicago.

PARENT TO PARENT

Sitaara Jones, Managing Editor
sitaara@npnparents.org

Amy Johnson,
Executive Director
execdir@npnparents.org

Jana Kline,
Advertising Operations Manager
jana@npnparents.org

Peggy Fink, Designer
nldesign@npnparents.org

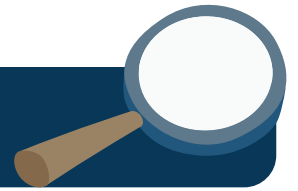
Parent to Parent contains articles and information straight from our NPN member community.

For information about editorial submissions, email: newsletter@npnparents.org

For advertising, email: advertising@npnparents.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



ASK AN EXPERT

How and When to Apply to Chicago Preschools and Elementary Schools 5

Preschool or Therapeutic Preschool 6

You Have More CPS High School Options Than You May Think 8

#REALTALK

How to Tell if a Summer Camp is a Good Fit for Your Child 10

DIRECTORIES

Summer Camp Directory 14

FEATURE

Finding a Special Needs-Friendly School 16

From the Executive Director

Dear Members,

Welcome to our first issue of Parent to Parent in over two years! So much has happened since our last issue went to print in January 2021 and we are thrilled to share parent-to-parent advice in print again.

In this issue, we've gathered some of our most popular articles and favorite contributors together to help you navigate both schools and summer camps in Chicago. Read and share advice and insights from local experts and city parents just like you.

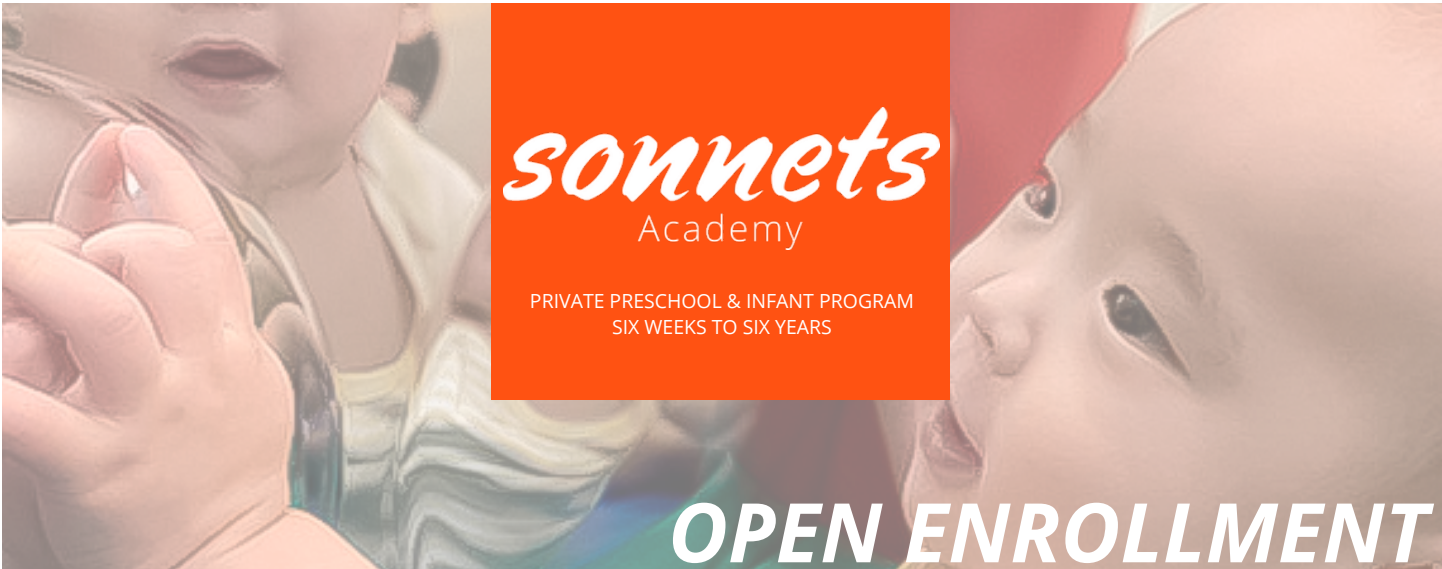
Now I encourage you to add your voice to the mix! Visit NPN's discussion forum to ask a question and share your perspective. Submit an article. Attend a playdate. Start a social group! You are important to NPN. I hope you will share your kind presence and unique parenting experience with us.

NPN is proud to be an inclusive organization and welcomes families of all cultures and backgrounds, regardless of gender, gender identity, race, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, or ability. You are a welcome and valued part of the NPN community. Enjoy!

Amy Johnson
Executive Director



Photo courtesy Amy Johnson





LINCOLN PARK . RIVER NORTH. WEST LOOP
www.sonnetsacademy.com



ASK AN EXPERT

How and When to Apply to Chicago Preschools and Elementary Schools

By **Grace Lee Sawin**, NPN member since 2005

Whichever schools or programs you are interested in, the key is to be ready to apply by understanding the timeline.

When should you start searching for schools, both public and private, in Chicago? This guide gives you important timelines for preschools and elementary schools.

While Chicago is replete with hundreds of school choices ranging from public options (open enrollment, magnet, selective enrollment) to private religious and independent options, all schools will require some forethought in planning except the one school into which you are automatically accepted and there is never a deadline: your assigned neighborhood Chicago Public School. Each Chicago address is guaranteed an assigned neighborhood elementary (K-8th grade) and high school (9th–12th grade) that allows for immediate enrollment any time of year. (Visit www.cps.edu/GoCPS to find your assigned school!)

All other schools (including other neighborhood schools) can be viable options for families but typically do require at least an application to be filled out and, in the case of private schools, can require a lengthy, multi-step process that begins one year before your child will start the program. Some private schools do have rolling admissions, but most schools start their application processes one year prior to enrolling.

The key for families is to be prepared and not to miss their window of opportunity, with the “entry year” (i.e., age or grade a program starts) of a school typically being the time when most spots may be available. The majority of Chicago schools also have a fairly strict birthday cutoff date of September 1, so if a school accepts students who are 3 by September 1, you should apply the fall when your child is 2 by Sept. 1. With the exception of Suder and Drummond (both start at 3 years old) and Inter-American (starts at 4 years old), CPS schools start in kindergarten, when your child is 5 by Sept. 1. Private elementary schools typically start at 3 or 4 years-old.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have centralized information for either 3 and 4-year-old preschool programs (www.cps.edu/ChicagoEarlyLearning) or K-9th grade programs (www.cps.edu/GoCPS). Preschool applications open the spring prior to entry (4/11/23 this year) while K-9th grade applications open a year prior (typically late September to early December). Private schools have varying application deadlines from late September to February or even rolling admissions. Be sure to check with each private school to determine application requirements and deadlines.



Photo courtesy Grace Lee Sawin

Public schools may offer tours and open houses, but attendance is not a requirement for admissions. Their applications are also straightforward with preschools allowing up to 5 options and K-9th grade applications offering two pathways that can both be chosen: one for up to 20 non-selective Choice programs and another for up to six selective enrollment (test-based) programs. Both applications are part of the online portal at <https://cps.schoolmint.com/login> and this year CPS preschool applications are available through the same link.

Private schools, however, typically do require participation in a coffee/tour, and may require a playdate or shadow day, parent interviews, and recommendations. While some private schools share online documents (via Ravenna or similar online platforms), each has its own application requirements and deadlines, so it's important to keep track every step of the way.

Whichever schools or programs you are interested in, the key is to be ready to apply by understanding the timeline. It really is a process that can require at least a year of foresight so we recommend families of any age visit NPN's Annual Preschool & Elementary School Fair to ask about entry years and find the open house dates and deadlines for each school they are interested in.

Grace Lee Sawin is a co-founder of Chicago School GPS. Chicago School GPS helps Chicago families navigate the often confusing world of public and private school searches, from preschool to high school and beyond, so that they can arrive at their school destination, no matter when they begin their journey.

ASK AN EXPERT

Preschool or Therapeutic Preschool

By Rose McLean, NPN member since 2015

Ask lots of questions, explore every option, and don't limit yourself to only your neighborhood school. There may be a better fit for your child and their developmental needs that can get them well-prepared to be independent little learners!

As the current school year comes to an end, you may be weighing some options for your kids coming into the fall. If you have a toddler at home, you may also be entertaining the idea of preschool to help get your little one reintroduced to the world, interacting with peers — as well as adults other than your immediate family — and just beginning to develop social skills again as we emerge from our homes.

While preschool is not a requirement or necessary for later success in school, experts agree it provides an environment for children to explore, play with peers, build self-confidence, and strengthen their social and emotional development, all while having fun and learning routines. If you're ready to send them off for more of these social experiences, you've likely fallen into a lot of options in Chicago for early learning. One factor to also consider in your search is whether your child would be appropriate for a "standard" preschool or a "therapeutic" preschool. It's a good idea to explore some differences in choosing a preschool or a therapeutic preschool for your youngster, as there are several distinctions that separate these two early learning options.

Ratios

In Illinois, preschools and daycares are mandated to follow predetermined adult-to-child ratio guidelines. Most stick to these minimum recommendations, which is a great question to inquire about when doing your research! These ratios are as follows:

- For 2-year-olds a 1:8 ratio, with a maximum group size of 16
- For 3- to 5-year-olds, 1:10 ratio, with a maximum group size of 20
- For children 5 and above, 1:20, with a maximum group size of 30

In a therapeutic preschool setting, most classrooms are much smaller than the recommended maximums. Ratios are also much lower. A typical therapeutic preschool has a class size of 6-8 children, with ratios of adult support anywhere from 1:1 to 1:3.

Therapy

If your child receives speech, feeding, occupational, physical and/or behavioral therapy, a therapeutic preschool might be the way to go. This environment has these specialized therapists guiding interventions, providing individual therapy sessions, and helping to generalize different skills among peers. For example, a speech therapist may work individually with a child on answering questions or forming multiple word responses, and then bring the child back to the classroom to practice this new skill with their friends.

Naps

Here's where therapeutic preschools may fall short. Therapeutic preschools are very therapy driven and most do not allow for a 2-hour mid-day nap, as a preschool or daycare set up would offer. If your little one is a power napper, a full-day program at a therapeutic preschool may not be the best option for them.

Diapers

Some Early Learning programs require enrolled children to be fully toilet trained. This can be a real limitation for some families who feel their children are ready for the social and emotional benefits of preschool, but are not quite ready to spend the day in undies. At a therapeutic preschool, there are potty training programs implemented with each child, as this is a skill most are able to work on because of the low teacher-to-student ratios they maintain.

Communication

Both a preschool and a therapeutic preschool likely offer a lot of great communication options between teachers and families. Notes going home, apps to receive updates, and face-to-face interactions help parents feel in touch and in the know about the day-to-day events with their children. However, if your child's communication seems to be behind their age-matched peers, this can be a high frustration level for many toddlers who have a good understanding of what's being discussed, but aren't quite able to get their thoughts and feelings out effectively yet. A preschool classroom can be a frustrating experience when there are challenges expressing your wants and needs, or advocating for yourself. Important questions to consider: Is my child easy to understand? Can they ask for help when they need it? Are they able to speak up to advocate for themselves? Am I the only one who can understand my child? Reflecting on some of these questions may help lead you to the proper enrollment for your child.

Enrollment

Every child can be assessed and receive an IEP (individualized educational plan) at age three in order to have recommendations for placement at a CPS preschool. But did you know that your IEP is good for three years, and you are not required to join a CPS preschool at that time? Students in Illinois are not even required by law to attend kindergarten; however, they must be enrolled in either a home-schooling program or a school district by age 6. Therefore, many families opt to pause enrollment from CPS to join a therapeutic preschool and reap the benefits of intensive therapeutic intervention, low student-to-teacher ratios, and engaging social and peer interactions. But don't worry: Whether they graduate from preschool or therapeutic preschool, they can still join their peers in either a kindergarten or first-grade classroom when they are ready!

Making a Switch

There are a handful of preschools in Chicago that enroll in the fall for the entirety of the year. Some have more strict guidelines on classroom placement based on birth date and ability level. However, many allow for enrollment throughout the school year, depending on birth date, availability, and current ratios in their classrooms. Most therapeutic preschools enroll throughout the entire school

year, and base these enrollments on the needs of the children and their families. So, if you are on the fence about what is most appropriate for your child, ask about enrollment commitments or cancellation fees, should you opt to enroll in a more therapeutic setting later in the year. Having this option may make enrollment in either program an easier commitment.

Regardless of what you choose for your child, you want this early learning experience to be positive for everyone involved. Ask lots of questions, explore every option, and don't limit yourself to only your neighborhood school. There may be a better fit for your child and their developmental needs that can get them well-prepared to be independent little learners!

Rose McLean has been specializing in pediatric physical therapy since 2004. As owner of the Chicago Pediatric Therapy & Wellness Center, she provides physical, occupational, speech, and behavioral therapy in a variety of settings and through the Early Intervention system. She lives in Roscoe Village with her husband Patrick and four crazy kids: daughter Mae, son Carmine, son Vinnie, and son Geno.



We provide Developmental, Feeding, Occupational, Physical, & Speech therapies, Social Work/Counseling services, and therapeutic preschool, in our clinic, at home, or in school.

Visit our website at
www.playworkschicago.com

Helping Children Achieve Their
Fullest Potential

The poster for ChiArts Summer Camp features a vibrant, multi-colored background. At the top, there are three small photographs showing children in different activities: a group of boys, two girls in a dance pose, and two girls playing. Below these is the title 'CHIARTS SUMMER CAMP' in large, bold, purple letters. Underneath the title are two more photographs: a boy playing a saxophone and a boy playing a trumpet. To the right of these photos is the text 'THE CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS'. At the bottom, there is a dark grey box containing text about the camp dates, location, and contact information.

Come one, come all artsy middle schoolers to ChiArts HS Summer Camp in the Humboldt Park and Ukrainian Village community! Participate in one of the following programs: Band, Creative Writing, Dance, Theater, Visual Arts, and Voice

July 10–28, 2023 // 9:00-2:00PM
✉ summercamp@chiarts.org
🔗 chiarts.org/summer-camp

#REALTALK

You Have More CPS High School Options Than You May Think

By Michael Beyer, NPN member since 2019

If you are open to considering options that are merely better than half the schools in the nation, you have an even greater number of choices.

If you think there are only a handful of acceptable choices for CPS high schools it may be time to adjust your perspective.

We've just closed the door on that stressful season when high school students-to-be partake in applications. My wife and I have been talking about high schools for our 6th grader for a couple of years, so we empathize. Fortunately, your choices are much better than what you might realize.

For families stressing about which school is "right" for their child, likely the anxiety is caused by the selection process to get into the "best" high schools. You might believe there are only a handful of acceptable choices for high schools, requiring astronomically high test scores, and all the rest are less than adequate. But it may be time to adjust your perspective.

Our city boasts some of the best schools in the country. These schools, like Walter Payton and Northside, are ranked in the top 1% nationally. If that's your thing, game on! For those with kids who don't enjoy high-stakes tests or who want other choices, CPS has 24 high schools ranked in the top quartile of the nation—meaning they are better than 75% of the schools in our country.

Of these 24, six have a neighborhood enrollment policy, so if you live in a specific boundary near the school, your child cannot be denied enrollment. Over the past six months, the average price for a 3-bedroom, 2-bath home near these schools ranged from \$145,000 to \$1.4 million.

If you're willing to accept a school that is merely in the top 50th percentile in the nation you can add 21 more CPS high schools to your list, for a total of 45 to consider. Ten of these additional schools have neighborhood components, starting with an average price of \$159,000 for a 3-bedroom 2-bath home. Another ten of these schools give preference to students living in proximity. For example, the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, on the far South Side, or Von Steuben on the North Side, are magnet programs



Photo courtesy Michael Beyer

requiring students to score in the average range on the NWEA MAP, but students are given additional preference if they live in proximity to the school. So why even consider moving to the suburbs, when you can make a shorter move across town?

If you are open to considering options that are merely better than half the schools in the nation, you have an even greater number of choices. If I can't convince you, I highly recommend the book *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success* by Julie Lythcott-Haims, who describes how pushing kids to only believe they are successful if they get into top schools is causing lots of issues—and worst of all, it will not allow children the space to become who they are.

Michael Beyer is a licensed real estate broker, and a National Board Certified teacher with an Ed.D. in education leadership, most recently having been a principal on the Southwest side and the Gold Coast

 jccchicago
EARLY CHILDHOOD
DAYCARE | PRESCHOOL

Growing Good Kids

Ages 6 weeks-5 years



discovery-based learning
outdoor curriculum
connection & community

Schedule a virtual tour:
jccchicagoearlychildhood.org

Florence G. Heller JCC
524 W. Melrose St., Chicago | 773.938.8340



 jccchicago
campchi

**HERE FOR SUMMER.
HOME FOR LIFE.**

OVERNIGHT CAMP IN LAKE DELTON, WI
2ND-10TH GRADE
LEARN MORE AT CAMPCHI.ORG



 jccchicago
apachi

IT'S NOT JUST DAY CAMP

REGISTER AT APACHI.ORG

WINTER PRICING DISCOUNT ENDS FEB. 28

3 Years-7th Grade + CIT (Counselor In Training: 8th-10th Grade)
9 Locations Across Chicago & North Suburbs

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE WITH REGISTRATION

JCC Chicago is a non-profit organization inspired by Jewish values, bridging traditions and generations to create a more vibrant, connected community.
JCC Chicago is a partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community. ©2022 JCC Chicago-A6292x 12/22

#REALTALK

How to Tell if a Summer Camp is a Good Fit for Your Child

By Candice Blansett-Cummins, NPN member since 2012

Great people who enjoy doing this work, working with a team and with children are the main ingredients that makes a program amazing.

How to vet a summer camp for your child: the questions to ask, the signs to look for and how to ensure the safety and happiness of your child all summer long.

I'm a parent like you and I've had to choose a summer camp for my own kids a zillion times. With so many options available, how do you know when a summer program is the right fit for your child and family?

A word-of-mouth reference about a program is a great start, and there are lots of great camp guides out there. Regardless of how you hear about the camp, make sure it's licensed as a Children's Activities Facility. Being licensed as such means all staff who are present with your child have been through a fingerprint-based state-police background check and that the Fire and Building departments have inspected the facility for safety. Some companies that offer camp for kids are licensed differently (with a Limited Business License only) because they offer 60% or more adult programming and do not specialize in children's programming.

More things to look for when vetting a summer camp:

- Is the camp site/facility secure? Are the entry and exit access-controlled by a system (for example, a self-locking door) or a person with eyes on the entrance at all times?
- How does the camp's price compare to other programs in the area? Does the price reflect the value that you expect from the provider?
- What is the max size of the camp? What is the leader-to-camper ratio? What is the age range of the campers? How are the ages grouped or not grouped? There are pros and cons to mixing a large age range, and you will want to decide for yourself what is right for your child.
- In addition to licensing for safety, how many staff members are trained and certified in CPR, basic life support and first aid? Optimally, every staff member is trained so that no student needs to wait for assistance in an emergency.
- Any program that has its eye on managing allergen cross-contamination will be cleaning throughout the day. What kind of cleaning products are used? Are they used around the campers? This answer should resonate with the guidelines you use in your own home.
- How does the camp play? Do the activities, including games, support empathy and other social-emotional skills?
- Is the team made of seasonal employees or permanent staff? If the employees are seasonal, are they studying or working in education, child development or the camp's specialty during the school year? Great people who enjoy doing this work, working with a team and with children are the main ingredients that makes a program amazing. Everything else is just marketing.



Photo courtesy Candice Blansett-Cummins

- What will the day/week be like? Even if you've heard great things, knowing what to expect can help you determine if the daily mix is right for your child's needs. Look for references to both fine-motor and gross-motor activities, open time and, if applicable, instruction time, and ask about time indoors and outdoors—it's summer!

Once your child is in camp, keep assessing the following:

- Were you welcomed on the first day and every day? After the first day, does the staff know your child's name? How does the staff interact with other campers? Does your child need to have a name badge to be recognized by the staff?
- Good programs will ask for a lot of information from you on registration forms. Is the staff using that information to contribute to your child's safety and experience? After camp has begun, is the staff relying on forms or do they seem to know your child?

- If your child is learning a new skill, is he enjoying the process? Is he feeling judged or encouraged? Does he show an interest in learning or practicing more?
- Is your child leaving the program with a smile on her face? Did she have fun? Did she make a new friend? Kids are great reporters when asked these questions in an open-ended way (e.g., "Tell me about your favorite part of the day").

Good luck finding the best camp for your family!

.....

Candice Blansett-Cummins is mom to Lucy and Jack, married to the same awesome Rob for more than 23 years and has a zippy rescue pup named Trixie. Transplanted from California in 2007 of her own accord, she lives, eats, works and plays in Chicago. She is an artist, thinker, parent, wife, friend, mentor, student and teacher who likes to drink coffee and have ideas.



MARY MEYER SCHOOL

At Mary Meyer Preschool we learn through purposeful play

PROJECT: Mary Meyer School Original Paints

CURRICULUM GOAL: Introduction to color theory and language arts

IDEA: Students mix and name their own paint color

HOW WE PLAYED: We read books, observed, explored and talked about color and what happens when it is mixed; plain old "green" became "frog green" and "pea green". Each child took turns with our Resident Artist to choose and mix their own paint and name their color.

RESULTS: A gorgeous array of paints created by children who have gained an understanding of color theory.

Students' language skills developed and their vocabulary expanded. Skills of independence and self-confidence are fostered as children learn to do things for themselves.

For more information and to apply visit
www.marymeyer.org

LET'S MIX | LET'S PLAY | LET'S LEARN

We take the stress out of **Wills & Trusts**



CAMPBELL LONG

A Boutique Family Firm

A mom-owned law
firm providing a high
level of customer
satisfaction.

We offer many family legal services, some at a flat fee:

- Wills & Trusts
- Trust Administration
- Probate
- Personal Injury & Wrongful Death
- Adult & Minor Guardianship
- Mediation
- Collaborative Family Law
- Premarital Agreements

Contact Campbell Long for an initial consultation.
Enjoy flexible scheduling including meetings via Zoom,
with children welcomed any time.



866.566.9494



assistant@clcounsel.com



clcounsel.com



**Enjoy a week of FREE daycare,
and NO enrollment fee!**

Reach out to any of our locations to schedule a tour:

1240 W Belmont Ave.
Chicago
773-697-9017

1738 E Kensington Rd.
Mount Prospect
224-257-4106

336 S Halsted St.
Chicago
312-496-3549

6100 N Lincoln Ave.
Chicago
773-942-6577



Redeem with the code:
ONEWEEKFREE*



*Valued at \$450+ Offer valid through 6/30/23
©LadyBug IP Systems, LLC. All rights reserved

SUMMER CAMP DIRECTORY

CAMP	CAMP SPECIALTY	LOCATION	LENGTH OF CAMP DAY	BEFORE/ AFTER CARE	AGES	COST PER WEEK
SOUTHSIDE TO DOWNTOWN CHICAGO						
i9 Sports Summer Camp	Athletics	Northside Chicago, Downtown Chicago	9 am–3 pm	None	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$301–500
Intercultural Montessori	Traditional day camp, Academic Enrichment	Northside Chicago, Northwest Chicago, Westside Chicago, Downtown Chicago, West Suburbs	8 am–2:45 pm	After Care Only	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs)	
Keshet Summer Camps	Special Needs	Northside Chicago, Downtown Chicago, North suburbs	9:30 am–3:30 pm	Both	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
SAIC Summer Art Programs	Art	Downtown Chicago	9:00 am–4 pm	None	Elementary (5–10yrs)	\$501–700
Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School	Special Needs	Southside Chicago	9 am–3 pm	None	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Stages Chicago	Music, Theater	Downtown Chicago	Mini-Camp & Half Day Camps: 9 am–12 pm; Full Day Camps: 9 am–4 pm	Both	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$301–500
Steve & Kate's Camp	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago, Westside Chicago, Downtown Chicago	8 am–6 pm	None	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$501–700
WESTSIDE CHICAGO						
Bennett Day Camp	Traditional day camp	Westside Chicago	9 am–3 pm	Both	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	\$301–500
Eyas Landing	Special Needs	Westside Chicago	Session 1: 8 am–1 pm; Session 2: 9 am–2:00 pm	After Care Only	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	
Hi-Five Sports Camp Chicago	Athletics	Downtown Chicago, Westside Chicago	9 am–3 pm	After Care Only	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	\$501–700
Intercultural Montessori	Traditional day camp, Academic Enrichment	Northside Chicago, Northwest Chicago, Westside Chicago, Downtown Chicago, West Suburbs	8:00 am–2:45 pm	After Care Only	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs)	
Steve & Kate's Camp	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago, Westside Chicago, Downtown Chicago	8:00 am–6:00 pm	None	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$501–700
Summer Sewing Camp	Art	Westside Chicago	8:30 am–11:30 am	None	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	\$301–500
Trinity High School Summer Experiences	Academic Enrichment	West Suburbs		None	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Up to \$300
NORTHSIDE CHICAGO						
Bucktown Academy	Art, Music, Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago	Jr PretoK (Sprouts) Ages 2–3: 9:30 am–11:30 am; Pre-K (Saplings) Ages 3–5: 8:30 am–12:30 pm	Both	Under 3 years old, Preschool (3–4yrs)	
Camp Theraplay	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago	8:30 am–3 pm	After Care Only	Elementary (5–10yrs)	\$501–700
Catherine Cook Summer Camp	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago	9:00 am–12:30 pm	Both	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs)	\$501–700
Chicago Waldorf School	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago	8:30 am–12 pm (Early Childhood Half Day), 8:30 am–3:30 pm (Full Day)	After Care Only	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$301–500

CAMP	CAMP SPECIALTY	LOCATION	LENGTH OF CAMP DAY	BEFORE/ AFTER CARE	AGES	COST PER WEEK
Circus and Performing Arts Summer Camp 2023	Theater	North suburbs	9 am–4 pm	None	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	\$301–500
Concordia Place School-Age 365 Summer Camp	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago, Northwest Chicago	7 am–5:30 pm	None	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$301–500
i9 Sports Summer Camp	Athletics	Northside Chicago, Downtown Chicago	9 am–3 pm	None	Elementary (5-10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$301–500
Intercultural Montessori	Traditional day camp, Academic Enrichment	Northside Chicago, Northwest Chicago, Westside Chicago, Downtown Chicago, West Suburbs	8 am–2:45 pm	After Care Only	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs)	
Keshet Summer Camps	Special Needs	Northside Chicago, Downtown Chicago, North suburbs	9:30 am–3:30 pm	Both	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Lillstreet Art Center	Art	Northside Chicago	9 am–1 pm, 1:30–3:30 pm., 9–3:30 pm	Both	Preschool (3-4yrs), Elementary (5-10yrs), Preteen (11-12), Teenage (13-18)	Up to \$300
Music Theater Works YouthREACH	Theater	North suburbs	Weekdays 9 am–3 pm; Saturdays and rehearsal and final performance at Community House Winnetka 2–4p.m. with the show at 5p.m.		Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	\$301–500
One In A Hundred Summer Camp	Special Needs	North suburbs	9 am–2 pm	None	Elementary (5–10yrs)	Over \$700
PlayWorks Prep Therapeutic Summer Camp	Special Needs	Northside Chicago	9:15 am–12:15 pm with optional add-on services until 1:45 p.m.	None	Preschool (3–4yrs)	
Porchlight Music Theatre Summer Camp	Theater, Music	Northside Chicago	9 am–3 pm	None	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	\$301–500
Smart Love Family Services	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago	8:30 am–2:10 pm	None	Under 3 years old, Preschool (3–4yrs)	\$301–500
Snapology Summer Camp	Tech/STEM/STEAM	Northside Chicago	Morning camp: 9 am–12 pm; Afternoon camp: 1–4 pm. All day camp is from 9 am–4 pm.	Both	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$301–500
Steve & Kate's Camp	Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago, Westside Chicago, Downtown Chicago	8 am–6 pm	None	Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12)	\$501–700
Tuesday's Child	Special Needs, Traditional day camp	Northside Chicago	9 am–3 pm	Before Care Only	Under 3 years old, Preschool (3–4yrs), Elementary (5–10yrs)	Over \$700
OUT OF STATE SLEEP-AWAY CAMPS						
Camp Manito-wish YMCA	Sleep-away	WI	N/A	N/A	Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Camp Marimeta for Girls	Sleep-away	WI	N/A	N/A	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Camp Pillsbury	Sleep-away, Theater, Music	MN	N/A	N/A	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Camp Tannadoonah	Sleep-away, Traditional day camp	MI	N/A	N/A	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Camp WeHaKee	Sleep-away	WI	N/A	N/A	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Camp Young Judea Midwest	Sleep-away, Art, Music, Athletics, Tech/STEM/STEAM	WI	N/A	N/A	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700
Swift Nature Camp	Sleep-away, Tech/STEM/STEAM	WI	N/A	N/A	Elementary (5–10yrs), Preteen (11–12), Teenage (13–18)	Over \$700

FEATURE

Finding a Special Needs-Friendly School

By **Tareema Jean-Baptiste**, NPN member since 2016

Focus on the positive, and make sure your decision is best for the entire family, if the school wants your child, that is half the battle, and be honest and keep an open mind.

**Editors note, this article was actually written in 2017! Read the full article for an update on where this family is today!*

Overwhelming, frustrating, and emotionally draining is how I would describe looking for schools — especially when you have a special needs child. Our son was thriving at a therapeutic preschool when we realized it was time: he was ready to be in a traditional school environment. Below are a few things we learned on our journey.

Focus on the positive.

We were apprehensive because as a family, we had found our peaceful rhythm. Tantrums were almost obsolete. We knew a change of this magnitude could take us back. But we also knew our son worked hard to get to this point and it was in his best interest to move forward with this new journey. Instead of focusing on the negative of what might happen, we focused on the positive: he was ready! Looking back, we didn't know if he would even get to this point, so gratitude and positivity became the fuel to help us through this next step.

Make sure your decision is best for the entire family.

Once we started our search, we had so many questions. What is an IEP? Public vs. Private? Should we hold him back or transition him into the correct grade for his age? How will this change affect our family logistics? We attended workshops and sought advice from our mentors, his doctors and other families. We took all the information and filtered it into what would work for our entire family — siblings included. We decided it was best for our family to find a private school that encompassed preschool to 8th grade for consistency. We wanted the school to be no more than 15 minutes from our home just in case there was an emergency, and we hoped the school would be able to accommodate our younger children. We really hoped to find a school that would be a strong community for our entire family.

If they want your child, that's half the battle.

We were very upfront about our son's diagnosis with each school we visited. We were looking for a school that would welcome a team approach. Some schools told us right away they didn't have the ability to support what our son



Photo courtesy Tareema Jean-Baptiste

needed. Some schools took the politically-correct approach, allowing us to apply — and ultimately wasting a lot of our time. The school we ended up choosing actually chose us first. During this time, our daughter was attending preschool at a local catholic school. Her school was never on our radar for our son. We planned on finding him a school and then moving our daughter to join him. The staff at my daughter's school would see my son at drop-off/pick-up, and when I would volunteer. They embraced him and approached us about having him join the school. They already had other diverse learners and were committed to creating an inclusive environment for all children. For us, their sincere desire to have our son at the school and willingness to work with our family was most important, and half the battle.

Be honest and keep an open mind.

So we had chosen a school. Now it was time to create a strategy for success. We needed to figure out what grade was appropriate: Where was our son, academically? The school did several assessments and interviews. In the beginning I remember getting upset when hearing some of the results. I felt my advocate senses tingling, if you will. However, once I took a step back and took the emotion out of the scenario, I was able to look at it from an honest, practical point of view. For the first time, my son was being compared to his peers. The results were hard to accept, but necessary to create the correct support for him to be successful academically and socially. Again, I was thankful to be at this point, but also honest with myself about what needed to be done to move forward successfully.

We are excited that our son loves his school. He finished his first year strong and exceeded our expectations! In addition, he graduated from kindergarten and is beginning first grade this fall.

Where Are They Now?

Wow, time flies! So much has changed since I wrote this article in 2017. A global pandemic, online learning, and a new school! As I read over my words my advice remains the same:

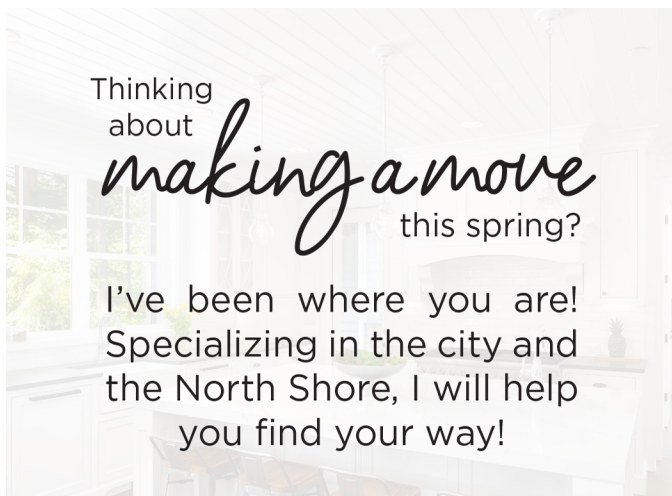
Focus on the positive, and make sure your decision is best for the entire family, if the school wants your child, that is half the battle, and be honest and keep an open mind.

The latter was the catalyst that helped us as we transitioned to a new school in 2020. The fact is, as parents, until our children have a couple of years of experience in school we genuinely will not know what type of learners they are.

So sometimes even when we have done an extensive search and made the best decision possible, the needs of our children change and we have to pivot. It can be overwhelming but if you keep an open mind you will learn so much about your kids and what they truly need along the way. In the long run, a transition like this can really be what changes your child's trajectory - for the better!

.....

Tareema Jean-Baptiste is a devoted wife and mother of three. Being a loving and nurturing mother is her passion. She is also a Real Estate Broker but her family is her top priority. With her faith as a bedrock, she is a tireless advocate for her children, fighting to provide them with the best life has to offer. Tareema currently shares what she has learned with others, helping them on their journeys as NPN's Program Manager.



Thinking
about
making a move
this spring?

I've been where you are!
Specializing in the city and
the North Shore, I will help
you find your way!



EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE.
SUPERIOR RESULTS.

**STACY
BURGOON**

773.559.5100
sburgoon@bhhschicago.com
Licensed in IL and WI

BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY | Chicago
HomeServices

©2022 BHH Affiliates, LLC. Real Estate Brokerage Services are offered through the network member franchisees of BHH Affiliates, LLC. Most franchisees are independently owned and operated. Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices and the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices symbol are registered service marks of Columbia Insurance Company, a Berkshire Hathaway affiliate. Information not verified or guaranteed. If your property is currently listed with a Broker, this is not intended as a solicitation. Equal Housing Opportunity.



Urban Prairie
Waldorf School

Education
Enthusiasm
Love



Enlightened
early learning
for mind, body, and soul



Chicago's Premier Learning Center
Family Owned & Operated Since 1974

Daycare, Preschool, Kindergarten, Parent & Me, Therapeutic, & Summer Camp

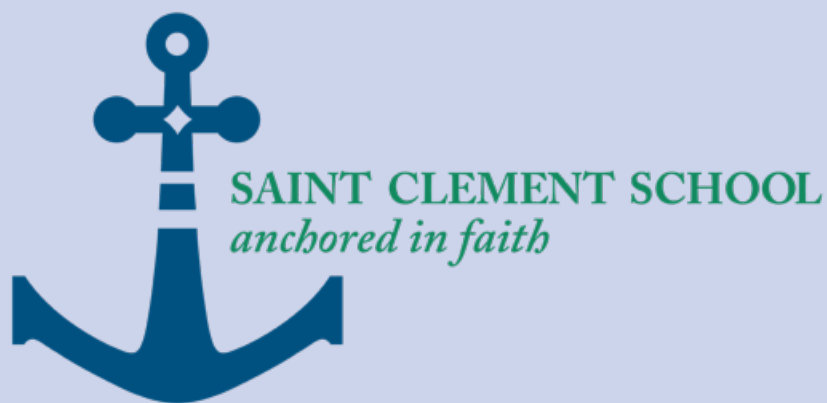
3429 N. California Ave.

Roscoe Village

773.747.3200

info@kidsworkchicago.com

www.kidsworkchicago.com



Saint Clement School is a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School!

**Located in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood,
we are an engaged community of leaders and
learners bringing together Catholic-based values
and modern academic practices to educate the
spirit, mind, and body of children from
PreKindergarten 3 to 8th grade.
Guided by our five anchors.**

— Belong, Learn, Pray, Serve, & Give —



**Join us for
a coffee &
admissions
tour!**





**NEIGHBORHOOD
Parents Network**

Neighborhood Parents Network of Chicago
3320 W. Foster Ave. Ste. 138
Chicago, IL 60625-4813
312.476.9351
info@nnpnparents.org
nnpnparents.org

Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Chicago, IL
Permit No. 2536

Get Involved with the NPN Community



Whether you're completely new to NPN or have been a member for years, we invite you to join our community! There are so many ways to participate—join a discussion on our forum or sign up to attend an upcoming event. We hope to connect with you and your family soon!

Not a member? Join today!

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
Annual Silent Auction	Monthly social events	Annual Preschool and Elementary School Fair	Annual Developmental Differences Resource Fair
Monthly special needs related webinars	Monthly tots to teens related webinars	Monthly school-related webinars	Summer Camp Directory, school related webinars
Monthly playdates around the city!	Monthly playdates around the city!	Monthly playdates around the city!	Monthly playdates around the city!