

House Prices 2006:
Getting Nervous? See page 102

OCTOBER 2006

Chicago

The Best Elementary Schools

140
Winners
IN THE CITY
AND SUBURBS
+ WHAT MAKES
THEM GOOD

PLUS

The Dentist
and the Pimps:
One Weird
Partnership

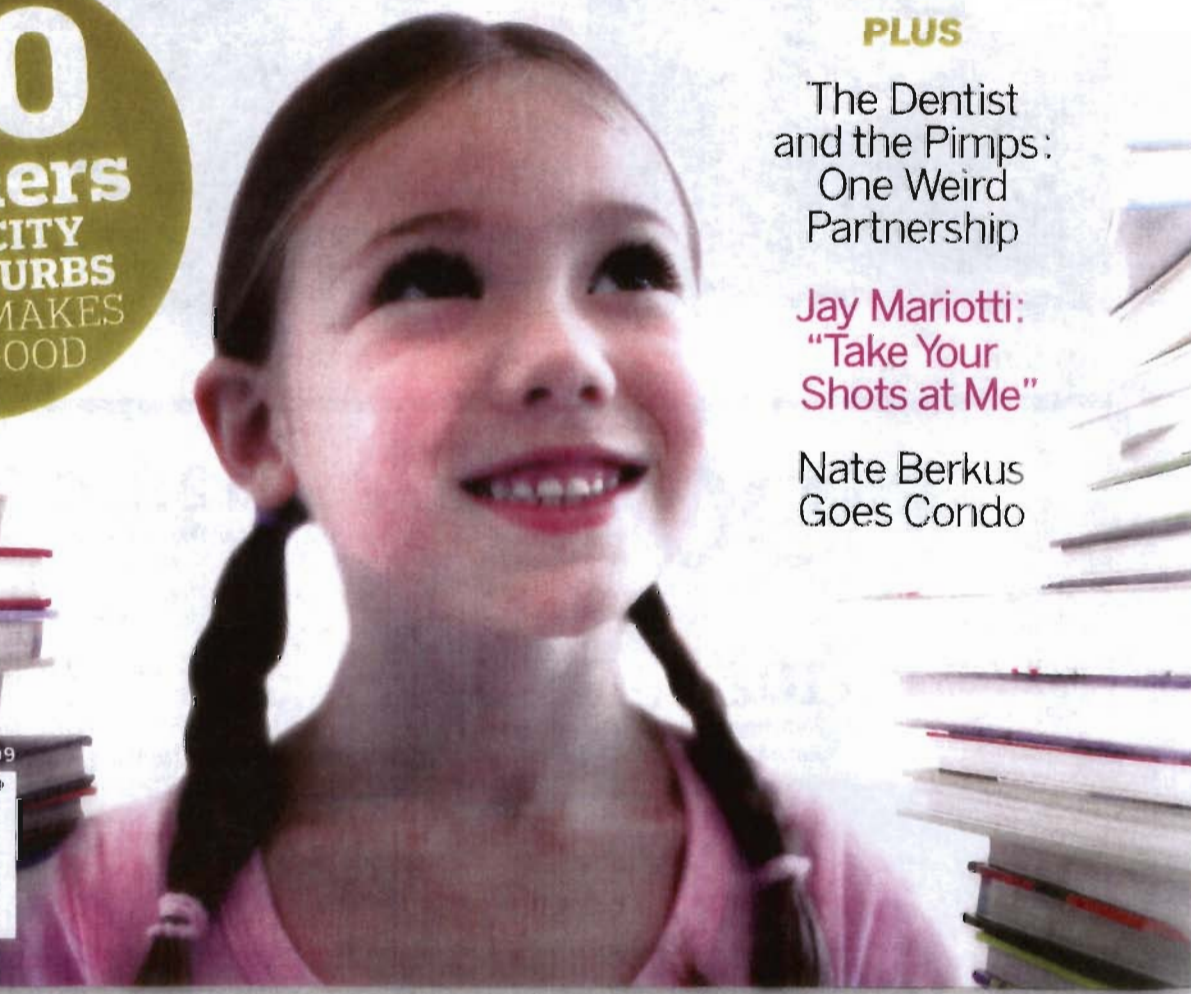
Jay Mariotti:
"Take Your
Shots at Me"

Nate Berkus
Goes Condo

U.S. \$4.99 CANADA \$5.99

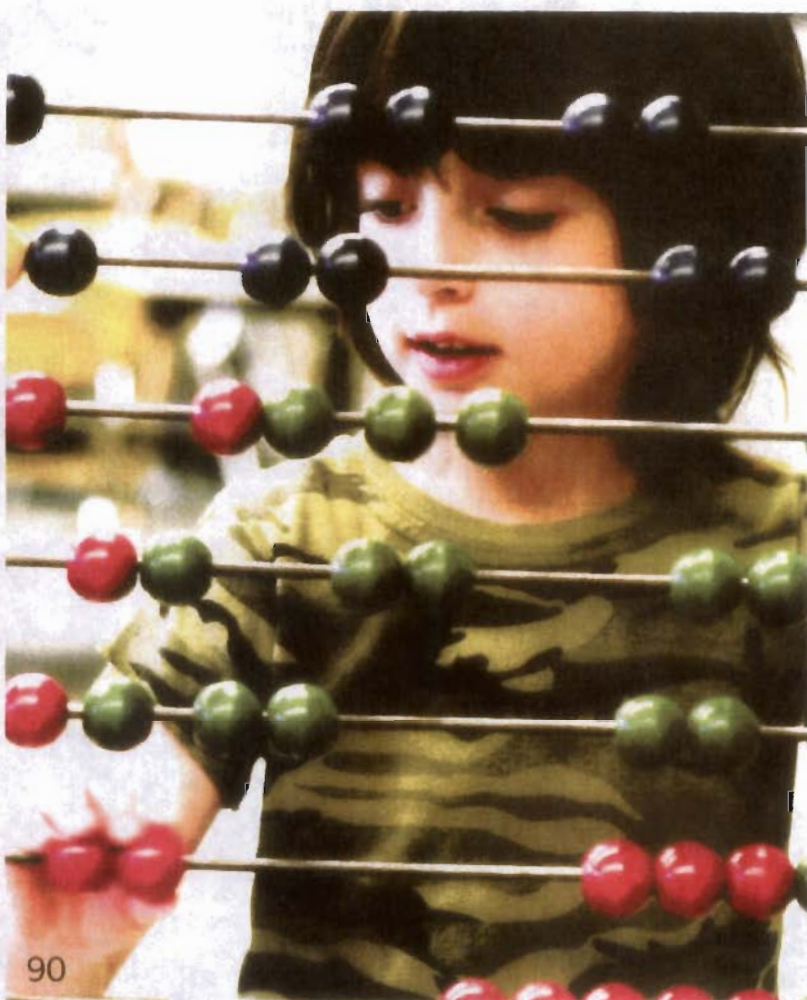
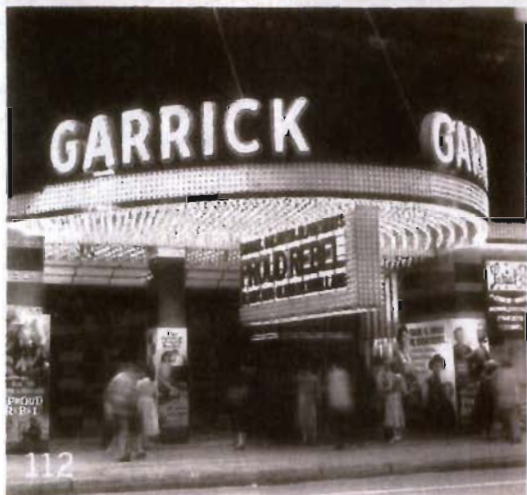


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Chicago

FEATURES



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» ON THE COVER
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90 THE A+ TEAM We crunched data on more than 1,740 Chicago-area public elementary and middle schools to name the 115 best. We also compiled a list of 25 topflight private schools. *by Dennis Rodkin and Amy Rainey*

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS GUILLEN

Chicago

The A+ Team



We crunched data from more than 1,700 public elementary and middle schools in the Chicago area—evaluating everything from average class size to expenditures per student to standardized test results—and picked the 115 best. We also interviewed education experts to come up with 25 private schools deserving high marks

BY DENNIS RODRIN
AND AMY RAINY



>> TO LEARN HOW THE TOP SCHOOLS RANK, SEE THE CHARTS BEGINNING ON PAGE 94



>> At Fenwick, the head of elementary school recently led a garden tour to the parents.

» A Brook Forest Elementary School first grader works on carrying the two



On the first day of school every year, fifth-grade teacher Peter Sompolski walks to the chalkboard in his classroom at Brook Forest Elementary School in Oak Brook and makes the same dumb mistake. He adds three and three and gets nine.

"Then I look around," he says. "Did I get shot down, did the world come to an end? No. I made a mistake, and nothing happened. So then it's everybody else's turn to come up to the board and make a mistake."

One by one, each child in the room gets a chance to commit a mistake in front of everyone else. There's hesitance, followed by silliness, but soon the message is abundantly clear: room 204, Mr. Sompolski's

class, is a place where it's OK, and even encouraged, to get the wrong answer. "You'll be making many more mistakes this year," he tells the kids. "That's how we're going to learn. If you will not let yourself make mistakes, you won't be able to learn."

Sompolski's math stunt is just one moment in a school year that is filled with chances to learn—and to learn how to learn. "Those teachers are ad-

vocates for our children, all the way," says Kim Rosas, a mother of two students at Brook Forest. By encouraging children to make mistakes, tricking them into learning U.S. geography when they think they're just talking football, and even letting them camp out in his backyard, Sompolski is nourishing not only children's brains but their character—their entire selves.

That approach, known in

school circles as the "whole child" view, is a key piece of the all-around educational success that puts Brook Forest, Oak Brook's only elementary school in the top ranks of *Chicago* magazine's first-ever list of the 115 best public schools in the region.

We tunneled into a mountain of data on the more than 1,740 public elementary, middle, and junior high schools in Chicago, the rest of Cook County, and the five surrounding counties, hunting for all-around top performers. And we found them. Kids learn well and achieve on standardized tests at these schools, but that's not enough. The top schools also serve parents and teachers well: class sizes are small but most budgets aren't huge; teachers are largely veterans and can count on a respectable salary that stokes their commitment. It's not an easy set of balls for school administrators to juggle, but some manage the trick nicely.

In the chart on pages 94 to 101, we list the top schools in Chicago and each of the counties, as selected by *Chicago* magazine based on data from all public schools' 2005 report cards from the Illinois State Board of Education. Separately we've identified 25 of the best private elementary schools in the region (see page 146), based on information provided by the individual schools. (See page 102 for an explanation of the data used to compile the charts.)

Schools are configured differently around the region, and their programs and resources vary widely. The top city schools on our chart—Lenart, Decatur Edison, and Keller—are specialty campuses, enclaves of intensive learning for superbrilliant kids drawn from all over the



Braeside: WEATHER REPORT

If you're a student at Braeside Elementary School in Highland Park, you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. That's because you can always stop by the weather monitoring computer station outside Larry Hiler's second-grade classroom. There you'll find the latest data from the school's weather station, showing not only the wind's direction but also its speed as well as the temperature and the day's rain or snow total, if any.

Hiler uses data from the three-year-old rooftop weather station (purchased for about \$2,500 with a grant from the school's parent-teacher organization) in various ways. His students graph daily high and low temperatures, write their compositions on subjects such as wind chill, and learn weather-related vocabulary words. In winter, they regularly report the temperature to the school office, so the principal can determine whether students will play outside that day.

"Kids are really curious about the weather and they're aware that it affects their lives every day," says Hiler, a lifelong weather buff because of his childhood in a Michigan farming community, where the weather really mattered. "So when you bring it into the classroom, they're interested." It also forges a strong connection between home and school. "Parents always tell me that within a month of coming into my classroom, their kids start running down the driveway in the morning to get the newspaper and start reading the weather page," Hiler says.

Parents see Hiler's fascination with the weather as characteristic of the warm atmosphere that pervades Braeside. "Teachers here are encouraged to pursue their own passions and bring them to school," says Paula Canchester. That goes not only for Hiler but for the third-grade teacher who's into opera and the school librarian, who's an accomplished storyteller—a sort of vocal folk artist. "If you let teachers go with their gifts and you give them great material to work with, they return it," Canchester says. Her kids prove it every time they pass the school on weekends and identify several teachers' cars parked outside. "We know they're dedicated to working with our kids," she says.

Dedication may be easier to cultivate in an affluent district like Highland Park, where the average teacher salary is \$67,874, the highest in Lake County and fifth highest in the region (four districts in DuPage County top the salary ranks) and the average class size in first grade is 16, among the lowest in the county. Together, those numbers mean teachers in the affluent North Shore town get a very teachable setting (not too many kids) and are rewarded well for their work.

But Hiler says that on top of the gifts a community's affluence brings, "teachers here feel like they're invested in the community. There are opportunities to shape curriculum and experiment. You feel extremely supported."

—D. R.

>> Braeside Elementary School; 150 Pierce Rd., Highland Park; 847-433-0155, www.nssd112.org/braeside



How We Ranked Them

The charts on these pages are not all the same. The larger set of charts rank public elementary middle and high schools in Chicago and its surrounding counties, out of the city's total 740 schools in the Chicago area, with only the 115 not ranked appearing in the data surrounding price is the subject below. The number of schools we list for each category is roughly proportional to the total number of schools there, except for heavily populated Cook and DuPage counties, where we list the top 30, but for the not less populated McHenry County, only five.

On the last chart, we show role and data for a school group of private and parochial schools, but we do not rank or score them. (English and history classes, for example, are not universal in parochial schools.) For the public schools, most of the scores are standardized as released by the Illinois State Board of Education. (Except for math, there are no such common gauges available for private schools. All information on private schools comes directly from the schools themselves.)

The ISBE, based in Springfield, gathers data on every public school in the state, measuring 16 kinds of attributes from the essential such as the number of children at the school performing at or above state standards, or math tests, to the esoteric, such as the percentage of the school district's budget devoted to fire prevention and safety. The information is reported by an individual school or school district, and often is used in local community or the local Chamber of Commerce card. Chicago's list is based on the 2005 report card, but data available, which came out in a fall and slaves from the 2004-05 school year (New York is collecting the 2005 data for school year, which started in the fall) is used to schools in October.

The first step in picking the best public schools was to y
(continued on page 117)

city, but these schools spend the same \$6,023 per pupil as all the city's 476 other elementary schools. Brook Forest, by contrast, draws children of all ability levels from a wide swath of small, tony Oak Brook (some children on the edges of the suburb go to schools in other towns), but it's in a district that spends a generous \$9,440 per pupil, the most for any district on our chart. Every student at Lenart, the prestigious South Side magnet school, meets or



>> Enjoying a paddling, Brook Forest Elementary style

» Third graders at Lenart take turns reading from *Anne of Green Gables*



Public Schools: CHICAGO

District Name

1) Lenart Elementary Regional Gifted Center	City of Chicago School District 29
2) Decatur Classical Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
3) Edison Elementary Regional Gifted Center	City of Chicago School District 29
4) Keller Elementary Gifted Magnet School	City of Chicago School District 29
5) Edgebrook Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
6) McDade Elementary Classical School	City of Chicago School District 29
7) Hawthorne Elementary Scholastic Academy	City of Chicago School District 29
8) Oriole Park Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
9) Jackson, A., Elementary Language Academy	City of Chicago School District 29
10) Poe Elementary Classical School	City of Chicago School District 29
11) LaSalle Elementary Language Academy	City of Chicago School District 29
12) Skinner Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
13) Lincoln Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
14) Sheridan Elementary Math & Science Acad.	City of Chicago School District 29
15) Murray Elementary Language Academy	City of Chicago School District 29
16) Wildwood Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
17) Bell Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
18) Thorp, O. A., Elementary Scholastic Acad.	City of Chicago School District 29
19) Blaine Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
20) Franklin Elementary Fine Arts Center	City of Chicago School District 29
21) Sauganash Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
22) Garvy, J., Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
23) Ebinger Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
24) Beaubien Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
25) Stone Elementary Scholastic Academy	City of Chicago School District 29
26) Canty Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
27) Burley Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
28) Norwood Park Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
29) Solomon Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29
30) Washington, G., Elementary School	City of Chicago School District 29

Lake Forest: STAR TECH

When Lake Forest Country Day School's 430 students return from their summer vacations in September, they'll notice some changes. The main school building's 160,000-square-foot addition was completed over the summer, part of a \$19-million facility upgrade that also includes a high-tech component that puts the school's first- through eighth-grade classrooms on the leading edge of school technology, out where even some colleges haven't yet arrived.

The private school (tuition: \$10,500 to \$17,500, depending on the grade) spent about \$500,000 to make the entire campus a wireless zone and install an innovative combination of tablet PCs and LCD projectors in 33 classrooms. Think of the devices as multimedia, multi-input, interactive descendants of the chalkboard. While roaming the classroom, a teacher equipped with a wireless tablet PC can handwrite an equation, call up prepared lecture notes, or access a Web site or video and then beam it via the LCD projector onto a wall-size screen.

"It's not a shiny toy," says Mara Grujanac, the school's technology curriculum coordinator. "The idea is to give our teachers a tool that enhances what they already do." If a teacher is talking about the Holocaust, for instance, and a child asks what the camps looked like, the teacher can call up photos, video, and other images on the spot. "It's not the teacher saying, 'I'll find some pictures and show them to you tomorrow,'" Grujanac says. "It's 'Right now, right here in this moment, let's explore the things you're asking about.'"

Unlike notes on a chalkboard that get erased later, the notes and other images used in class can be available later for students who were absent or even for parents who want to review a lesson, explains Keith Gillette, director of information technology for the school. "This breaks down some of the classroom walls," Grujanac says.

Advanced technology is nothing new at Lake Forest Country Day. Wireless PCs are deployed around the school for use by classes and also for checkout by students working on projects outside of class time. There's also the robotics program that is integral to the science curriculum from kindergarten on up. Kindergartners use "turtles," or little round wheeled robots, to measure distances in the classroom and hallways. At higher levels, kids participate in a national robotic design challenge. "It's a technology-rich environment here," Gillette says. —D. R.

» Lake Forest Country Day School, 145 S. Green Bay Rd., Lake Forest, 847-234-2380, www.lfcds.org

exceeds state goals on standardized tests—not a surprise given its prerogative to enroll only the brightest. At Brook Forest, about 94 percent of students meet or exceed standards; that's an impressive figure when you consider that the test takers have a broader range of academic abilities than those at Lenart.

The charts show how schools compare numerically, but that alone is too reductionist a way to view them. Like children, schools have many fundamental similarities, but they are also gloriously individual, each one's personality a manifestation of its unique circumstances.

The real differences lie not only in the data but in the way the different schools attend to each child's needs. Is Brook Forest better because it spend

*For an explanation, see "How We Ranked Them," page 93.

City	Grades In School	AVERAGE CLASS SIZE				Total School Enrollment	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Avg. Years Teacher Experience*	Avg. Teacher Salary*	Spending per Student*	2005 School Composite % Meets/Exceeds (reading, math, and science)
		K	Grade 1	Grade 3	Grade 6						
Chicago	pre-K-8	23.0	22.0	30.0	32.0	263	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	100.0
Chicago	K-6	26.0	25.5	25.0	22.0	266	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	99.5
Chicago	K-8	27.0	27.0	28.0	31.0	259	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	99.1
Chicago	1-8		30.0	28.0	28.0	231	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	98.7
Chicago	K-8	31.0	40.0	30.0	27.0	288	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	97.0
Chicago	K-6	27.0	25.0	22.0	28.0	186	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	95.8
Chicago	K-8	31.5	31.0	31.0	29.5	557	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	93.8
Chicago	pre-K-8	20.0	32.5	29.5	30.5	525	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	92.3
Chicago	K-8	28.5	30.5	29.5	31.5	540	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	91.9
Chicago	K-6	20.0	25.0	29.0	25.0	182	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	91.9
Chicago	K-8	31.0	32.0	31.5	29.5	563	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	91.7
Chicago	pre-K-8	29.7	26.5	30.0	32.3	611	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	89.0
Chicago	K-8	22.5	31.0	33.5	25.0	604	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	88.1
Chicago	K-8	28.5	28.5	30.5	30.0	527	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	87.7
Chicago	K-6	29.0	30.5	28.0	28.0	367	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	86.5
Chicago	K-8	34.0	28.0	28.0	27.0	334	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	86.5
Chicago	pre-K-8	30.0	28.7	28.0	26.7	788	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	84.6
Chicago	K-8	28.3	28.3	27.0	31.0	817	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	83.8
Chicago	pre-K-8	28.3	20.5	22.0	18.5	651	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	83.5
Chicago	K-8	28.0	28.0	29.0	31.0	368	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	81.7
Chicago	K-8	29.0	26.0	29.0	37.0	421	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	81.7
Chicago	K-8	28.5	27.0	23.5	30.0	541	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	81.6
Chicago	pre-K-8	26.7	25.3	28.5	26.0	595	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	81.3
Chicago	pre-K-8	22.0	27.0	28.8	28.8	993	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	80.4
Chicago	K-8	30.5	20.7	30.0	30.5	605	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	79.6
Chicago	pre-K-8	26.0	24.5	28.0	33.0	609	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	79.0
Chicago	pre-K-8	26.0	26.5	23.0	20.5	437	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	77.4
Chicago	pre-K-8	32.0	22.5	31.0	25.0	350	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	77.4
Chicago	pre-K-8	30.0	38.0	30.0	33.0	395	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	77.2
Chicago	pre-K-8	22.3	20.7	29.0	18.7	699	20.2/1	13.4	\$61,178	\$6,023	77.1

more money and educates everybody? Well, can you quantify the extra layers of worldly education Lenart kids get by growing up in an urban mix instead of a securely suburban life? Or Lenart's providing a setting where smart kids don't feel isolated by their intellectual gifts? Is the fact that an Oak Brook child will spend kindergarten through eighth grades with the same 40 or 50 classmates a plus or a minus?

"There are multiple factors that go into making a school a place where powerful learning can happen," says Richard Streedain, a professor of educational leadership at National-Louis University and a school principal for 25 years in Westmont, West Chicago, and Winnetka. He says the single best indicator of school quality may

Edgebrook: GRADE INFLATION

Two decades ago, most students at Edgebrook Elementary School on the city's Northwest Side came by bus from other neighborhoods. It wasn't that the surrounding neighborhood, a leafy enclave of lovely homes on quiet streets, lacked children; but many local parents preferred to send their kids to parochial schools, where they could get a better education. Then Diane Maciejewski moved into the principal's office. Maciejewski set about trying to convince local parents that Edgebrook could work for their children. She gradually reshaped the teaching staff, pulling in people dedicated to rigorous education, and together they established a solid program. It includes pre-algebra in sixth grade—before most other neighborhood Chicago public schools teach it; 45 extra minutes a day of algebra for eighth graders; and an "integrated curriculum" in which reading, math, social studies, music, and other subjects revolve around common topics, each reinforcing lessons learned in the others.

Maciejewski retired over the summer, but her successor, Janice Kepka, intends to carry on with what Maciejewski started. "We expect a lot from our kids here," says Kepka. "They have accelerated reading, writing, and math available to them from the beginning."

Local parents have taken notice of the improvements. This fall Edgebrook is so full, largely with neighborhood kids, that it is adding four temporary classrooms. Parents raise money each year to pay half the salary of a full-time science and writing aide. And on last year's state report card, more students at Edgebrook met or exceeded state standards on tests than at any other neighborhood school in the city. The city schools that scored higher were all gifted-specialty campuses, whose students were upper intellects.

Edgebrook has done all this "despite huge class sizes," Kepka says. Last year's first grade had 38 students in one classroom, probably too many to get the intensive teacher attention children at that age need. This year's first grade has 60 students in two classrooms. Much of the increase from last year can be attributed to the school's spreading reputation in the community. These days, parents "clamor to get into the neighborhood so their kids can go to Edgebrook," Kepka says.

-D. R.

>> Edgebrook Elementary School: 6525 N. Hawatha Ave., Chicago; 773-534-1194, www.edgebrook.cps.k12.il.us

be an institutional commitment to deal with the whole child. "When small children say, 'I like my teacher,' they're saying, 'The teacher is addressing my social, emotional, moral, ethical, and intellectual needs,'" he explains. "The day goes pretty fast, and I feel important in my classroom."

"We are all part of the puzzle for the success of that child," Sompolski says. "If we don't have the parents, the teacher, and the child working together, there can't be success."

It may sound simplistic, but building that three-legged stool takes a certain amount of craft and attention to detail. One Brook Forest parent saw how it happens when her second grader was slow to grasp reading. The school's reading specialist pulled him into a skills group—and urged his mom to come along, too. "She wanted me to sit in the room when they were doing the lessons so I could take it home," this mother says. "I learned things like putting his finger under certain words to read the line, and how to break up syllables" by tapping once on her arm for each. It facilitates sounding the word out. "We did all that at home," she confides, and by third grade the boy was out of the special reading group. He is now reading above his grade level, according to his mom.

In Highland Park, where several schools are ranked on our Lake County chart (among them my own child's school, although that was not a factor in the selection), the mother of one Braeside School student with learning difficulties found a similar sense of partnership with the teachers. When her third grader couldn't get more than two of ten spelling words

Public Schools: COOK COUNTY

- 1) Spring Avenue Elementary School
- 2) Wescott Elementary School
- 3) Wood Oaks Junior High School
- 4) Grove Elementary School
- 5) The Joseph Sears School
- 6) Maple School
- 7) Middlefork Primary School
- 8) Shabonee School
- 9) Willowbrook Elementary School
- 10) Sunset Ridge Elementary School
- 11) Hickory Point Elementary School
- 12) Westmoor Elementary School
- 13) Northbrook Junior High School
- 14) Hodgkins Elementary School
- 15) Crow Island Elementary School
- 16) Greenbriar Elementary School
- 17) Greeley Elementary School
- 18) Carleton W. Washburne School
- 19) Hubbard Woods Elementary School
- 20) Meadowbrook Elementary School
- 21) Henry Winkelman Elementary School
- 22) The Skokie School
- 23) Horace Mann Elementary School
- 24) South Elementary School
- 25) Hollywood Elementary School
- 26) Pleasantdale Elementary School
- 27) Highlands Middle School
- 28) Blythe Park Elementary School
- 29) Field School
- 30) Willard Elementary School

District Name

- La Grange School District 105 (South)
- Northbrook/Glenview School District 30
- Northbrook Elementary School Dist. 27
- Northbrook Elementary School Dist. 27
- Kenilworth School District 38
- Northbrook/Glenview School District 30
- Sunset Ridge School District 29
- Northbrook Elementary School Dist. 27
- Northbrook/Glenview School District 30
- Sunset Ridge School District 29
- Northbrook Elementary School Dist. 27
- Northbrook School District 28
- Northbrook School District 28
- Northbrook School District 28
- La Grange School District 105 (South)
- Winnetka School District 36
- Northbrook School District 28
- Winnetka School District 36
- Winnetka School District 36
- Winnetka School District 36
- Northbrook School District 28
- West Northfield School District 31
- Winnetka School District 36
- Oak Park Elementary School District 97
- Glencoe School District 35
- Riverside School District 96
- Pleasantdale School District 107
- La Grange Highlands School District 106
- Riverside School District 96
- West Northfield School District 31
- Evanston C C School District 65

City

- La Grange
- Northbrook
- Northbrook
- Northbrook
- Kenilworth
- Northbrook
- Northfield
- Northbrook
- Glenview
- Northfield
- Northbrook
- Northbrook
- Northbrook
- Hodgkins
- Winnetka
- Northbrook
- Winnetka
- Winnetka
- Winnetka
- Northbrook
- Glenview
- Winnetka
- Oak Park
- Glencoe
- Brookfield
- La Grange
- La Grange
- Riverside
- Northbrook
- Evanston



Northbrook: IT'S ACADEMIC

Talented teachers get into the profession because they value learning, so you can figure that giving them ample opportunities to advance their own education will pay off in the classroom. That's being proved at Northbrook's School Districts 27 and 30, each with multiple schools in the top 20 on our Cook County chart. In both districts, teaching teachers is a major thrust. "We believe fundamentally that if you're better educated, you're going to provide better education to children in the classroom," says David Kroeze, superintendent at District 27. "So it's critical that you invest in your teachers, that you create an environment where they are constantly learning."

Teacher advancement is an all-out campaign in District 27, in northwest Northbrook. The district allocates 4 percent of its annual budget to professional development for teachers; according to its own study, three comparable local districts all spend less than 2 percent. In the past five years, the district has increased the number of professional development days for teachers from four (which is typical of comparable districts) to seven. And the district's teacher salaries are tied to the teacher's education level in an unusual way. In essence, teachers with only bachelor's degrees hit a pay ceiling at ten years. The aim is to encourage all teachers to upgrade to master's degrees and, after 17 years, to further degrees. The idea is to ensure that the district's teachers are always out front, bringing home the best new ideas on how to get through to children. "Where you have strong adult learning, you'll have strong student learning," says Richard Streedan, of National-Louis University.

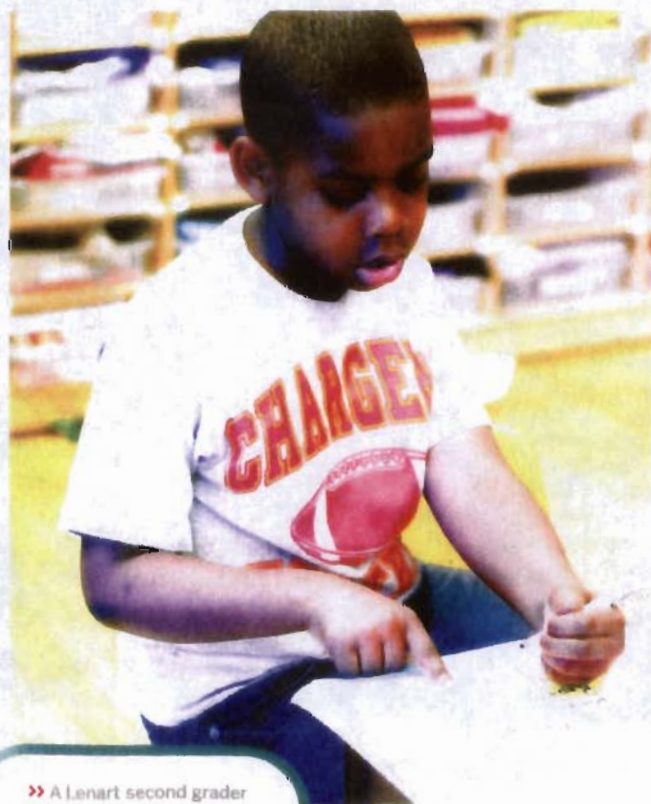
The results are evident: Kroeze says that for many years, roughly 60 to 65 percent of his district's eighth-grade students scored in the top quartile on standardized math tests. After the district emphasized training in math-teaching skills from 1998 to 1999, that figure popped into the middle 70s, where it has remained.

In the adjacent School District 30, each teacher gets at least \$400 a year to spend on professional growth. The teachers are "always bringing in ideas that lead the way," says superintendent Linda Vieth, such as asking for training on how to incorporate digital cameras, iMovies, and PDA note-taking into the classroom.

—D. R.

>> Northbrook School District 27: 847-498-2610, www.northbrook27.k12.il.us. Northbrook School District 30: 847-498-4190, www.district30.k12.il.us

Grades in School	AVERAGE CLASS SIZE				Total School Enrollment	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Avg. Years Teacher Experience*	Avg. Teacher Salary*	Spending per Student*	2005 School Composite % Meets/Exceeds (reading, math, and science)
	K	Grade 1	Grade 3	Grade 6						
K-6	15.5	16.5	19.5	15.5	230	14.9/1	18.3	\$66,438	\$7,409	96.3
pre-K-5	17.3	23.0	22.7	-	442	14.3/1	17.8	\$65,216	\$7,661	93.2
6-8	-	-	-	15.9	476	12.8/1	14.9	\$67,685	\$9,595	91.9
K-3	13.0	18.3	18.0	-	262	12.8/1	14.9	\$67,685	\$9,595	91.8
pre-K-8	20.7	15.3	23.7	19.0	580	14.4/1	15.1	\$63,693	\$7,856	94.4
6-8	-	-	-	22.7	401	14.3/1	17.8	\$65,216	\$7,661	90.9
K-3	16.3	19.0	17.3	-	228	12.7/1	12.7	\$62,091	\$9,094	95.3
4-5	-	-	-	-	297	12.8/1	14.9	\$67,685	\$9,595	88.7
pre-K-5	14.0	21.5	18.5	-	279	14.3/1	17.8	\$65,216	\$7,661	88.3
4-8	-	-	-	19.0	311	12.7/1	12.7	\$62,091	\$9,094	92.8
K-3	16.3	17.8	17.8	-	275	12.8/1	14.9	\$67,685	\$9,595	87.7
pre-K-5	15.7	16.0	16.0	-	322	13.3/1	13.4	\$59,595	\$8,785	93.5
6-8	-	-	-	16.6	622	13.3/1	13.4	\$59,595	\$8,785	93.3
pre-K-6	16.0	12.0	25.0	22.0	204	14.9/1	18.3	\$66,438	\$7,409	87.0
K-4	18.6	18.0	18.0	-	412	14.6/1	12.2	\$59,855	\$7,103	96.4
K-5	19.0	13.7	18.7	-	312	13.3/1	13.4	\$59,595	\$8,785	91.7
K-4	19.5	20.3	18.5	-	345	14.6/1	12.2	\$59,855	\$7,103	94.8
7-8	-	-	-	-	462	14.6/1	12.2	\$59,855	\$7,103	94.6
K-4	20.0	20.7	22.5	-	392	14.6/1	12.2	\$59,855	\$7,103	94.1
K-5	17.8	20.0	17.4	-	522	13.3/1	13.4	\$59,595	\$8,785	89.4
K-5	18.8	16.4	17.0	-	537	13.2/1	14.4	\$60,924	\$7,155	88.3
5-6	-	-	-	21.1	464	14.6/1	12.2	\$59,855	\$7,103	92.8
K-5	18.5	17.8	18.8	-	439	16.3/1	14.3	\$60,032	\$6,542	91.9
K-2	21.0	20.4	-	-	437	14.5/1	12.0	\$55,967	\$6,556	95.1
K-5	19.0	12.0	20.0	-	119	15.8/1	13.9	\$57,870	\$5,652	95.3
pre-K-4	19.0	19.0	22.8	-	470	14.7/1	13.9	\$56,494	\$6,435	91.5
6-8	-	-	-	24.0	311	16.1/1	14.0	\$56,485	\$6,041	93.9
K-5	18.0	15.0	17.0	-	108	15.8/1	13.9	\$57,870	\$5,652	94.6
6-8	-	-	-	18.7	324	13.2/1	14.4	\$60,924	\$7,155	86.0
K-5	18.0	21.0	22.0	-	311	15.3/1	14.0	\$63,032	\$6,521	87.6



» A Lenart second grader reviews his vertebrates and invertebrates.

right three weeks in a row, she recalls, "I went in and said, 'He's obviously not getting anything out of these tests but a feeling of defeat.' The answer wasn't 'too bad, he can't keep up.' It was 'What do you think would work for him?'" The eventual solution was to give him an abbreviated list and a multiple-choice test on which he would identify the correct spelling. "The teachers wanted to work with me to work with him; they were willing to figure out a way to help him succeed enough to make it a meaningful kind of test," the mother says.

Teaching the whole child does not equate to coddling or going soft; it's recognizing that young brains work best when comfortable. Most schools are far away from the old call-and-response style of teaching,

where the teacher rattled off facts and students gulped them down just to rattle them back later. Schools have come to understand the fact that people have many different styles of learning; now they take it as a principle of their game plan. That's why when your third grader studies the pioneers and goes off to music class, music from the pioneer era is on the agenda, and why Sompolski has an NFL geography game, in which each student tracks the record of one pro football team, along the way learning about the city the team calls home. Walk into an elementary school today, and it's not long before you happen across kids making PowerPoint presentations, or using iMovie software to create their own videos, or even, as they do in some class-

rooms in School District 30 in Northbrook and Glenview, taking notes on personal digital assistants. It's no secret that contemporary children are steeped in technology; using it in the classroom cuts both ways—it enhances their tech skills at the same time that it puts them in a familiar environment.

"Today's best pedagogy puts kids into a lot of really powerful learning experiences," Streedain says. "When you and I were in school, teachers just lectured, and if we got it, we got it. Now, if you're struggling with reading in first or second grade, but you know 'My teacher likes the way I play ball and talks to me about sports and we can read about sports,' you're going to hang in there." Even when kids are as bright and as motivated to learn as they are at Lenart, says JoAnna Theodore, the principal, the process of learning has to be dynamic. "If we want to encourage creativity, divergent thinking, and higher-level thinking, we have to provide the venues for [students] to do that," she says. "We have to listen to them as much as we want them to listen to us. Do we always like what they say? No, but if they are going to be able to succeed outside of

Public Schools: LAKE COUNTY	District Name	City
1) Braeside Elementary School	North Shore School District 112	Highland Park
2) Lincoln Elementary School	North Shore School District 112	Highland Park
3) Laura B. Sprague School	Lincolnshire-Prairieview School Dist. 103	Lincolnshire
4) Edgewood Middle School	North Shore School District 112	Highland Park
5) Kildeer Countryside Elementary School	Kildeer Countryside C C School Dist. 96	Long Grove
6) Bannockburn Elementary School	Bannockburn School District 106	Bannockburn
7) Daniel Wright Junior High School	Lincolnshire-Prairieview School Dist. 103	Lincolnshire
8) Half Day School	Lincolnshire-Prairieview School Dist. 103	Lincolnshire
9) Ivy Hall Elementary School	Kildeer Countryside C C School Dist. 96	Buffalo Grove
10) Ravinia Elementary School	North Shore School District 112	Highland Park
11) North Barrington Elementary School	Barrington C U School District 220	Barrington
12) Cherokee Elementary School	Lake Forest School District 67	Lake Forest
13) Arnett C. Lines Elementary School	Barrington C U School District 220	Barrington
14) Prairie Elementary School	Kildeer Countryside C C School Dist. 96	Buffalo Grove
15) Wayne Thomas Elementary School	North Shore School District 112	Highland Park

Public Schools: DuPAGE COUNTY	District Name	City
1) Brook Forest Elementary School	Butler School District 53	Oak Brook
2) Butler Junior High School	Butler School District 53	Oak Brook
3) Gower West Elementary School	Gower School District 62	Willowbrook
4) Walker School	C C School District 181	Clarendon Hills
5) Oak Elementary School	C C School District 181	Hinsdale
6) The Lane Elementary School	C C School District 181	Hinsdale
7) Madison Elementary School	C C School District 181	Hinsdale
8) Prospect Elementary School	C C School District 181	Clarendon Hills
9) Monroe Elementary School	C C School District 181	Hinsdale
10) Gower Middle School	Gower School District 62	Burr Ridge
11) Clarendon Hills Middle School	C C School District 181	Clarendon Hills
12) Meadow Glens Elementary School	Naperville C U District 203	Naperville
13) J. T. Manning Elementary School	Westmont C U School District 201	Westmont
14) Edison Elementary School	Elmhurst School District 205	Elmhurst
15) Jackson Elementary School	Elmhurst School District 205	Elmhurst

Lenart, they have to be able to formulate their thoughts and make the right decisions."

When she arrived at Lenart as a teacher in the mid-1990s, Theodore recalls, "our basketball team could never win a game, and the teacher would

say, 'Just show them your test scores.' But I think we want these children to be more well-rounded." The school's pompon squad (from grades six through eight) was first in the city last year, and second this year.

Granted, many of the top schools on the magazine's chart are in relatively affluent areas, where you would figure the parents cultivate a drive to learn because that's what sparked their own life successes. But parents, too, need to keep learning: at Lenart and other schools like it, the school year is dotted with seminars for parents on SENG, or the social and emotional needs of the gifted child, a complex topic you can't always nail down on intuition alone. Lenart's Theodore ex-

plains that programs like these cultivate parents' understanding of how and why the school clicks for their children, encouraging them to reinforce the school's methods at home.

There's also an effort, she says, to "give the parents something they themselves can benefit from," such as technology classes for adults, an occasional program run by volunteers.

"If you do something that pertinent to the parents' lives, you make that link for them, and they buy into your school more," Theodore says.

Teachers need to buy in, too, of course. Brook Forest third-grade teacher Elizabeth Sompolksi, wife of Peter Sompolksi, is president of the local teachers' union. She acknowl-




» Polton is the motion at Brook Forest.

Grades in School	AVERAGE CLASS SIZE				Total School Enrollment	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Avg. Years Teacher Experience*	Avg. Teacher Salary*	Spending per Student*	2005 School Composite % Meets/Exceeds (reading, math, and science)
	K	Grade 1	Grade 3	Grade 6						
K-5	21.0	16.0	15.7	-	286	15.5/1	14.3	\$67,874	\$7,092	94.4
pre-K-5	22.0	18.0	18.0	-	277	15.5/1	14.3	\$67,874	\$7,092	93.4
K-2	18.0	21.5	-	-	495	16.6/1	13.9	\$60,448	\$6,651	97.6
6-8	-	-	-	16.8	569	15.5/1	14.3	\$67,874	\$7,092	92.3
1-5	-	18.8	21.3	-	500	17.6/1	14.6	\$64,330	\$5,518	94.8
K-8	10.0	12.0	14.0	12.5	189	11.7/1	14.1	\$57,029	\$7,402	92.8
5-8	-	-	-	23.9	834	16.6/1	13.9	\$60,448	\$6,651	93.6
3-4	-	-	22.3	-	367	16.6/1	13.9	\$60,448	\$6,651	93.4
1-5	-	23.3	24.8	-	517	17.6/1	14.6	\$64,330	\$5,518	93.8
K-5	22.0	21.5	16.7	-	304	15.5/1	14.3	\$67,874	\$7,092	89.9
K-5	22.0	21.3	24.5	-	533	18.8/1	12.2	\$62,709	\$6,093	96.6
K-4	19.0	22.8	21.5	-	425	14.0/1	11.3	\$57,679	\$6,292	93.7
K-5	21.5	20.5	26.0	-	607	18.8/1	12.2	\$62,709	\$6,093	95.2
1-5	-	21.5	18.7	-	364	17.6/1	14.6	\$64,330	\$5,518	93.3
K-5	18.7	19.7	20.3	-	361	15.5/1	14.3	\$67,874	\$7,092	88.5
<hr/>										
K-5	16.5	16.0	19.0	-	289	12.7/1	16.0	\$67,121	\$9,440	93.7
6-8	-	-	-	18.3	195	12.7/1	16.0	\$67,121	\$9,440	92.6
pre-K-4	19.0	21.4	21.0	-	497	16.0/1	18.5	\$68,692	\$6,560	92.3
K-5	24.0	20.3	19.0	-	307	17.9/1	13.8	\$73,504	\$6,064	97.2
K-5	22.5	20.0	20.3	-	351	17.9/1	13.8	\$73,504	\$6,064	96.7
K-5	19.7	21.7	18.7	-	358	17.9/1	13.8	\$73,504	\$6,064	96.2
K-5	27.0	23.0	23.3	-	399	17.9/1	13.8	\$73,504	\$6,064	95.4
K-5	21.7	24.3	23.0	-	448	17.9/1	13.8	\$73,504	\$6,064	95.3
pre-K-5	18.0	22.0	26.0	-	467	17.9/1	13.8	\$73,504	\$6,064	94.2
5-8	-	-	-	26.2	447	16.0/1	18.5	\$68,692	\$6,560	89.1
6-8	-	-	-	24.2	766	17.9/1	13.8	\$73,504	\$6,064	92.5
K-5	23.5	25.5	22.3	-	599	20.2/1	14.5	\$69,719	\$5,671	95.0
pre-K-5	18.0	20.0	17.5	-	265	16.1/1	15.9	\$68,167	\$6,705	88.6
K-5	20.5	19.0	25.5	-	337	17.7/1	13.1	\$66,647	\$6,107	92.0
K-5	25.3	20.3	23.3	-	395	17.7/1	13.1	\$66,647	\$6,107	91.8

edges that a major motivator for teachers is to feel integral to the machinery of education, and not like a mere cog. "When you come to work and you feel respected, you want to do your best," she says. "You feel valued; you feel that sense of empowerment. And it comes through in what you do in your classroom." Salaries in the Oak Brook school district, where Brook Forest is located, average \$67,121, below those in nearby districts in Hinsdale, Naperville, and Burr Ridge. But class sizes and the ratio of students to teachers are notably smaller in Oak Brook than in those districts; clearly there's a tradeoff teachers make.

The Sompolskis' children go to Naperville schools. "They



Lenart: JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

Aaron Gray was a bright kid, smart enough to land a spot at one of the elite gifted specialty campuses of the Chicago Public School system, but his teachers weren't satisfied with that. Being smart wasn't enough, they told him repeatedly. "They harped on it, that it's not just about your academic record," he recalls. "You have to be good at a number of things to be successful in life."

The teachers at Lenart Elementary Regional Gifted Center "rewarded and honored and recognized your academic achievements," says Gray, now 25 and working in Los Angeles in a business-development role for the movie ticket company Fandango while applying to some of the nation's top-ranked MBA programs. "But they also emphasized to you that the other things you do, behavior-wise, affect where you go in life."

At Lenart, located at 81st and LaSalle streets, "we have accepted that we don't only educate kids," says principal JoAnna Theodore. "We are their mother, their doctor, and their lawyer."

When she was a classroom teacher at Lenart, Theodore was big on giving out gum for kids to chew on; now there's a bowl of candy on the front office counter. "As adults, we do these things without permission," she says, "so I think children can be allowed to do these little things that make them feel their own independence, not always look to adults for direction."

At a school populated by high-octane intellects, she says, it's essential that the atmosphere be relatively carefree so kids don't get the impression they have to live up to painfully high standards just because of their academic gifts. "People come in expecting to see our kids all lined up in straight rows, marching down the hall silently" Theodore says. "But these are children. They make noise, and they're not going to stay in order. They don't have to here."

-D. R.

>> Lenart Regional Gifted Center: 8101 S. LaSalle St., Chicago; 773-535-0040, www.lenart.cps.k12.il.us

» Working a notebook at Braeside



have outstanding teachers and curriculum," their mother says. "But because of the school's size, they can't get the same feeling we have" at Brook Forest, which is a little more than half the size of her children's school. "We truly have this sense of knowing the children and the parents and working together closely with them. There are kids I haven't had in my classroom but I have a real sense of who they are and how they're developing. It makes for an ideal work situation for a teacher."

Brook Forest parent Kim Rosas echoes that impression: "It's a pretty intimate environment," she says. "The small class size has been a hallmark of our school district." For students as well as teachers and parents, she says, "it builds a camaraderie that you don't see much anymore."

It's true that there is a luxury in smallness, but no matter how big the school is, the web of relationships—parent to teacher, teacher to student, school board to teacher—determines how well the school succeeds at grooming children for success later in life. "This is a group process," says Elizabeth Webb Peterman, the principal of La Grange's Spring Avenue School, the top-ranked elementary school on our Cook County chart. "It takes every single person in this building, district, and community to make this school work."

Public Schools: KANE COUNTY

	District Name	City
1) Mill Creek School	Geneva Comm. Unit School District 304	Geneva
2) J. B. Nelson Elementary School	Batavia Unit School District 101	Batavia
3) Heartland Elementary School	Geneva Comm. Unit School District 304	Geneva
4) Western Avenue Elementary School	Geneva Comm. Unit School District 304	Geneva
5) Grace McWayne Elementary School	Batavia Unit School District 101	Batavia
6) Coultrap Elementary School	Geneva Comm. Unit School District 304	Geneva
7) Alice Gustafson Elementary School	Batavia Unit School District 101	Batavia
8) H. C. Storm Elementary School	Batavia Unit School District 101	Batavia
9) Lily Lake Elementary School	Central Comm. Unit School District 301	Maple Park
10) Hoover Wood Elementary School	Batavia Unit School District 101	Batavia

Public Schools: WILL COUNTY

1) Reed-Custer Primary School	Reed Custer C U School District 255U	Custer Park
2) Milne Grove Elementary School	Lockport School District 91	Lockport
3) Reed-Custer Intermediate School	Reed Custer C U School District 255U	Braidwood
4) Eisenhower Elementary School	Joliet Public School District 86	Joliet
5) Green Garden Elementary School	Peotone C U School District 207U	Frankfort
6) Kelvin Grove Junior High School	Lockport School District 91	Lockport
7) Grand Prairie Elementary School	Frankfort C C School District 157C	Frankfort
8) Reed-Custer Middle School	Reed Custer C U School District 255U	Braidwood
9) Pioneer Elementary School	Valley View CUSD #365U	Bolingbrook
10) Chelsea Elementary School	Frankfort C C School District 157C	Frankfort

Public Schools: MCHENRY COUNTY

1) Algonquin Road Elementary School	Fox River Grove Cons School District 3	Fox River Grove
2) Ringwood School Primary Center	Johnsburg C U School District 12	Ringwood
3) Maplewood Elementary School	Cary C C School District 26	Cary
4) Three Oaks School	Cary C C School District 26	Cary
5) James C. Bush Elementary School	Johnsburg C U School District 12	Johnsburg

Spring Avenue: PARENT POWER

Teachers are the fundamental educational resource in any school, but at Spring Avenue Elementary School in La Grange, students and parents pitch in, too. Kindergartners help teach one another phonics, the basic sounds that make up words. The children partner up and coach each other through recognition of building-block sounds, explains Elizabeth Webb Peterman, the school principal. "In the old days, the teacher would do 'Ah, ah, ah; ay, ay, ay,'" she says. "The kids were just repeating it and you hoped they were applying it." Now, led by their teacher, Spring Avenue's K-Pais, as they're called, nudge each other to identify the different sounds "a" can make.

A writing consultant, Peterman says, "I would have said this was a stretch for kindergartners, but these kids are coaching one another to the point of mastering the concept." In the process, some of the learning has nothing to do with phonics; instead, it's about working together, problem solving, citizenship.

When Celeste Pearson enrolled her son in kindergarten at Spring Avenue last year, she wanted to get involved and wound up running an afterschool science program for kindergartners. It was a logical place for the Northwestern University science professor to put in her volunteer time, and one of a couple dozen afterschool programs taught by Spring Avenue parents. "It's not unusual around here for parents to offer their expertise to the school," she says. "The woman across the street teaches art, and a man down the street teaches ceramics." Pearson taught kids to make slime out of water, Elmer's Glue, and borax, and had them measure the different strengths of sunscreens on little beads left in the sun.

The kids had fun, and school officials tapped Pearson's scientific knowledge for an unusual project: vetting new science textbooks. A committee of teachers had already narrowed the range of options to a few possibilities, which they then handed off to Pearson. "I reviewed the textbooks for their scientific content, whether or not the statements were correct science," she says. The book she chose was adopted for use this school year. Peterman says parents with expertise in other academic realms may get the nod to do the same later.

» Spring Avenue Elementary School: 708-482-2710, www.edline.net/pages/Spring_Ave_Elementary_School
La Grange School District 105: 708-482-2700, www.edline.net/pages/LaGrange_School_District

Grades in School	AVERAGE CLASS SIZE				Total School Enrollment	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Avg. Years Teacher Experience*	Avg. Teacher Salary*	Spending per Student*	2005 School Composite % Meets/Exceeds (reading, math, and science)
	K	Grade 1	Grade 3	Grade 5						
K-5	22.8	22.6	22.3	-	568	18.3/1	12.2	\$58,396	\$4,965	93.8
K-5	22.3	21.3	24.0	-	444	18.6/1	11.5	\$60,945	\$5,140	90.9
K-5	23.7	19.0	21.3	-	479	18.3/1	12.2	\$58,396	\$4,965	92.7
K-5	20.3	23.0	23.3	-	490	18.3/1	12.2	\$58,396	\$4,965	91.5
pre-K-5	19.0	21.8	28.3	-	572	18.6/1	11.5	\$60,945	\$5,140	89.3
K-5	17.0	19.0	26.7	-	473	18.3/1	12.2	\$58,396	\$4,965	89.4
K-5	19.3	19.5	24.3	-	418	18.6/1	11.5	\$60,945	\$5,140	88.7
K-5	20.8	21.3	22.7	-	402	18.6/1	11.5	\$60,945	\$5,140	88.5
K-5	17.0	17.0	19.5	-	218	17.1/1	13.4	\$57,771	\$4,998	87.4
K-5	23.5	20.0	22.5	-	570	18.6/1	11.5	\$60,945	\$5,140	87.7
Private Schools										
K-2	20.8	24.6	-	-	376	20.0/1	17.6	\$60,851	\$6,394	91.2
K-3	20.7	18.3	24.7	-	247	17.4/1	13.8	\$51,693	\$4,824	83.8
pre-K-5	-	-	24.8	-	446	20.0/1	17.6	\$60,851	\$6,394	82.0
1-5	-	19.7	24.5	-	278	22.4/1	13.3	\$49,066	\$4,554	93.8
K-4	20.5	16.5	20.0	-	171	17.8/1	13.2	\$44,232	\$4,353	92.7
4-8	-	-	-	21.3	407	17.4/1	13.8	\$51,693	\$4,824	79.3
pre-K-3	25.2	25.3	24.4	-	888	19.0/1	11.4	\$48,064	\$3,938	88.9
6-8	-	-	-	23.1	465	20.0/1	17.6	\$60,851	\$6,394	76.0
pre-K-5	22.2	25.7	32.5	-	814	22.1/1	10.6	\$52,662	\$4,806	83.0
4-5	-	-	-	-	454	19.0/1	11.4	\$48,064	\$3,938	83.7
Public Schools										
pre-K-4	21.7	21.7	28.5	-	319	17.3/1	13.7	\$53,397	\$4,914	91.8
pre-K-2	20.3	22.6	-	-	568	23.5/1	14.6	\$56,260	\$5,239	87.4
K-4	20.7	19.6	25.7	-	387	21.8/1	14.0	\$58,607	\$4,549	91.7
K-4	23.3	22.8	28.0	-	609	21.8/1	14.0	\$58,607	\$4,549	88.7
3-4	-	-	24.1	-	383	23.5/1	14.6	\$56,260	\$5,239	84.0

Private Schools: Aiming for Excellence

FOR A LISTING OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS, SEE CHART ON PAGE 146

The Chicago area is home to many outstanding private schools, but because there are no standard figures by which to compare them, we chose not to rate the 25 best. Rather, we interviewed education experts in the area to compile a list of schools that are highly recommended and then sought additional data for the chart (page 146) from the schools themselves.

» **Alphonsus Academy and Center for the Arts** 1439 W. Wellington Ave., Chicago; 773-348-4629, www.alphonsusacademy.org

In addition to offering enrichment classes such as dance and visual art, Alphonsus integrates art into every part of its core curriculum.

» **The Ancona School** 4770 S. Dorchester Ave., Chicago; 773-924-2356, www.anconaschool.org

Founded as a racially integrated school in the 1960s, Ancona uses the Montessori method, which promotes hands-on, self-directed learning, for younger grades, while older children learn in small instructional groups.

» **Baker Demonstration School** 201 Sheridan Rd., Wilmette; 847-905-2240, www.baker.nf.edu

The school recently added a new media center and other amenities. Faculty members help train future teachers through the school's affiliation with National Louis University.

» **Chicago City Day School** 541 W. Hawthorne Place, Chicago; 773-327-0900, www.chicagocitydayschool.org

Rather than spend the day with one teacher who covers all subjects, even prekindergartners

learn from a variety of teachers specializing in specific subjects.

» **Chicago Jesuit Academy** 212 S. Francisco Ave., Chicago; 773-638-6103, www.cjacademy.org

The school day doesn't end at 3 p.m. for students at this full-scholarship all-boys' school. They stick around till six, participating in extracurricular activities and attending an evening study hall.

» **Council Oak Montessori School** 11030 S. Longwood Dr., Chicago; 773-779-7606, www.counciloakmontessori.org

Following the Montessori method, this Morgan Park school teaches in three multiage groups based on the theory that children go through three stages of social and intellectual development.

» **Frances Xavier Warde Schools** Old St. Patrick's Campus, 120 S. Desplaines Ave., Chicago; Holy Name Cathedral Campus, 751 N. State

St., Chicago; 312-466-0700, www.fxw.org

This downtown school gives scholarships to 30 percent of students in order to maintain a diverse enrollment.

» **Francis W. Parker School** 330 W. Webster Ave., Chicago; 773-353-3000, www.fwparker.org

Parker is the only independent school in the city that has pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in one building, creating opportunities for mentoring programs.

» **The Hyde Park Day Schools** 1375 E. 60th St., Chicago; 877-477-5665; 1980 Old Willow Rd., Northfield; 847-446-7075, www.hpds.uchicago.edu

Designed for children with learning disabilities, the school aims to return its students to mainstream schools, a transition one-third make within two years.

» **Immaculate Conception School** 1431 N. North Park Ave., (continued on page 146)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

(continued from page 101)

Private Schools	Religious Affiliation	City	Grades in School	AVERAGE CLASS SIZE		Total School Enrollment	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
				Grade 1	Grade 6		
Alphonsus Academy and Center for the Arts	Catholic	Chicago	pre-K - 8	18	11	222	12.0/1
The Ancona School	none	Chicago	pre-K - 8	25*	16	260	9.0/1
Baker Demonstration School	none	Wilmette	pre-K - 8	20*	16*	360	8.0/1
Chicago City Day School	none	Chicago	pre-K - 8	16	20	275	8.0/1
Chicago Jesuit Academy	Catholic	Chicago	5 - 6	-	10	40	5.7/1
Council Oak Montessori School	none	Chicago	pre-K - 8	18*	10*	80	10.0/1
Frances Xavier Warde Schools	Catholic	Chicago	pre-K - 8	20	24	720	15.0/1
Francis W. Parker School	none	Chicago	pre-K - 12	18	16-18	590	9.0/1
The Hyde Park Day Schools	none	Chicago/Northfield	1 - 8	10	10	85	5.0/1
Immaculate Conception School	Catholic	Chicago (North Park Ave.)	pre-K - 4	20*	20*	210	10.0/1
Lake Forest Country Day School	none	Lake Forest	pre-K - 8	14	15	430	9.0/1
The Latin School of Chicago	none	Chicago	pre-K - 12	21	19	663	8.0/1
Morgan Park Academy	none	Chicago	pre-K - 12	16-18	18	240	12.0/1
North Park Elementary School	none	Chicago	K - 8	20	20	180	15.0/1
North Shore Country Day School	none	Winnetka	pre-K - 12	25*	18	286	9.0/1
P.L.A.I.D. Academy	none	Chicago	K - 8	12*	20*	50	15.0/1
Providence-St. Mel School	none	Chicago	K - 12	16	18	365	17.0/1
Queen of the Rosary School	Catholic	Elk Grove Village	pre-K - 8	15	30*	315	21.0/1
Sacred Heart School	Catholic	Winnetka	pre-K - 8	18	22	317	15.0/1
Sacred Heart Schools at Sheridan Road	Catholic	Chicago	K - 8	18-20*	18-20	650	8.5/1
St. Helen School	Catholic	Chicago	pre-K - 8	25*	25	275	23.0/1
St. Therese Chinese Catholic School	Catholic	Chicago	pre-K - 8	22	22	216	15.0/1
St. Zachary Catholic School	Catholic	Des Plaines	pre-K - 8	12	16	155	16.0/1
Solomon Schechter Day School	Jewish	Skokie/Northbrook	K - 5/K - 8	15	15	980	10.0/1
University of Chicago Laboratory Schools	none	Chicago	pre-K - 12	22	17	1,250	10.0/1

*These classrooms have more than one instructor, often a teacher and an assistant.

Chicago; 312 944-0304.

www.icnorthpark.org

Reopened in 2002, Immaculate Conception is adding one grade each year until 2010; the school staffs each classroom with two teachers to keep the student-teacher ratio low.

» **Lake Forest Country Day School**

145 S. Green Bay Rd.

Lake Forest; 847 234 2350

www.lfcds.org

The school has just completed a \$19-million addition and technology upgrade (see story on page 94).

» **The Latin School of Chicago**

Lower School, 1531 N. Dearborn

Pkwy, Chicago; 312 582 6200.

Middle and Upper School, 59 W.

North Blvd., Chicago; 312 582

6000, www.latinschool.org

Recognizing that some children

need more attention and some

need more challenging work, the

school adjusts the curriculum for

each student's learning style.

» **Morgan Park Academy**

2153 W. 111th St., Chicago;

773 881-6700 www.morganparkacademy.org

A challenging liberal arts curricu-

lum is designed for average to su-

perior students; 100 percent of

graduates go on to college, the

school claims.

» **North Park Elementary**

School 2017 W. Montrose Ave.,

Chicago; 773 327 3144.

www.npeschool.org

Parents with specialized skills lend

their talents—three parents, an ar-

chitect, a naturalist, and a con-

tractor, pitched in to create the

play lot—helping keep tuition low,

says principal Lynn Lawrence.

» **North Shore Country**

Day School 310 Green Bay Rd.,

Winnetka; 847 881 8522.

www.nscds.org

The school emphasizes the im-

portance of community service,

third graders, for example, or-

ganized a fundraising concert

last year.

» **P.L.A.I.D. Academy** 11156 S.

Hoynes Ave., Chicago; 773 238

2603 www.plaidacademy.org

Offering two field trips per month

and yoga in gym class, P.L.A.I.D.

(Positive Learning in an Atmos-

phere of Individual Development)

combines hands-on learning with

a traditional textbook curriculum.

» **Providence-St. Mel School**

119 S. Central Park Ave., Chicago;

773 722-4600, www.psm.k12.il.us

The focus here is on preparing

students from the start for college

by placing a strong emphasis on

standardized test performance.

» **Queen of the Rosary School**

690 Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Vil-

lage; 847 437 3322, www.qotr.org

This Catholic school created a tel-

evision studio last year, allowing

older students to do weekly news

broadcasts.

» **Sacred Heart School**

1095 Gage St., Winnetka;

847 446-0005, www.sacredheart-winnetka.org

Sacred Heart, part of the Archdio-

cese of Chicago, says it maintains

a sense of camaraderie through

small classes and parent support.

» **Sacred Heart Schools**

at Sheridan Rd. 6250 N. Sheri-

dan Rd., Chicago; 773 262 4446.

www.shs-chicago.org

Part of an association of inde-

pendent Christian schools, Sacred

Heart combines single-sex class-

rooms with coed interaction in the

lunchroom and during after-

school activities.

» **St. Helen School** 2347 W.

Augusta Blvd., Chicago; 773 486

1055, www.sthelenchicago.org

St. Helen prides itself on a di-

verse student body that is 40

percent Hispanic, 40 percent

Caucasian, 15 percent African

American, and 5 percent Asian

American.

» **St. Therese Chinese**

Catholic School 247 W. 23rd

St., Chicago; 312 326 2837.

www.sttheresechinatown.org

St. Therese, located in Chinatown,

is the only Catholic school in the

Midwest that teaches Cantonese

and Mandarin.

» **St. Zachary Catholic School**

567 W. Algonquin Rd.,

Des Plaines; 847 437 4022.

www.saintzacharyschool.com

The school strives to balance faith-

based curriculum with academic

and to shape children's values in

accordance with the Catholic faith,

says principal Cathy Determann.

» **Solomon Schechter Day**

School of Metropolitan

Chicago 3210 Dundee Rd.,

Northbrook; 847 498 2100, 930

Gross Point Rd., Skokie; 847 412

5600 www.schechter.org

Focusing on Jewish heritage and

tradition, the school says it seek

to instill positive values in the

students.

» **University of Chicago**

Laboratory Schools 1362 E.

59th St., Chicago; 773 702 9450

www.ucis.uchicago.edu

This rigorous institution, which

attracts students from 65 different

ethnic backgrounds, receives top

notch resources from the Univer-

sity of Chicago.

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