



Invest in Kids voucher program

Case study:

The Field School, Chicago IL
State House District 78
State Senate District 39

One of the 50 Chicago Public Schools closed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel in 2013 [was Francis Scott Key Elementary](#), located in the Austin neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. At the time it was closed, Key's student body was [95% Black, 95% low-income, 16% students with disabilities](#).

Key's building and annex were [purchased by The Field School](#), a private Christian school founded in the same year that the Invest in Kids Act passed, 2017, and previously located in Oak Park. [The surrounding community was not in favor of the building's sale at the time](#). The Field School used [\\$3.25 million in New Market Tax Credit funds](#) to purchase and renovate the building.

[Based on the Illinois State Board of Education's non-public school data](#), the Field School's student body last school year was 27% Black students, 50% low-income and no special ed students. Until they removed it earlier this year, [an FAQ on the Field School website](#) stated that the school does not serve students with moderate to severe disabilities and implied that even students with mild disabilities might be rejected:

"Does the Field School serve students with special needs?"

To ensure that we can serve all of our students with excellence, applicants are assessed on a case-by-case basis. The Field School cannot accommodate those with moderate to severe disabilities."

In the [2021-2022 school year](#), 40% (79 of 199) of the students at the Field school received vouchers via the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program, according to the IL Dept of Revenue. This was at least \$851,188 in Invest in Kids voucher funds. In the [2022-2023 school year](#), 76 of 218 students received vouchers, at least \$690,890. Because the vouchers are funded with 75% state tax revenue, the school has received \$1.1 million in public funding in the last two school years. Only half of the vouchers at the school went to low-income students, and only one quarter went to Black students.

Nearby public schools

The three neighborhood CPS schools nearby, including the school where Key students were to move to when the school was closed in fall 2013, have very high percentages of students with disabilities: Ellington (18.5%), Brunson (18.9%), DePriest (22.4%). Howe serves 13.4% with disabilities. Even the two CPS charter schools in the area serve 13.7% and 11.9% students with IEPs. [All CPS school data found here](#).

Connections to extremist school board slate

In April 2023 a slate of candidates ran for school board in Wheaton-Warrenville CUSD 200, who were [connected to Christian nationalist extremist group Awake Illinois](#) and funded with a [PAC that raised \\$37,000](#)—a huge amount for a local school board race in Illinois ([See also here](#).) Only one of the slate's endorsed candidates won a seat on the D200 board, Amy Erkenwick. (See [their Facebook page](#) for an overview of their anti-LGBTQ+, anti-DEI positions.)

Several large donors to the CUSD 200 PAC were connected to [the Field School board treasurer, Phillip Nussbaum](#). Nussbaum himself and his wife Judy Nussbaum gave \$13,100. Allison Bonga, married to Phillip Nussbaum's colleague and a Jeanne Ives' donor, gave \$1,960. Another Nussbaum colleague, Mark Bodett, gave \$2000.