

2025–2026

Student Enrollment Booklet

Your guide to student registration, enrollment options, and resources for CPS families.



Chicago
Public
Schools

Student Support
and Engagement

Whether you're new to Chicago Public Schools or returning for another year, this handbook is your step-by-step guide to enrolling your child with confidence. Inside, you'll find information about eligibility, school types, required documents, key dates, and resources



Contents

Welcome to Chicago Public Schools!	4
Student Eligibility for CPS Enrollment	5
Early Childhood Options	6
Section 1: Determining Your Child's School	7
Neighborhood School Model	7
Non-Neighborhood School Options	7
Section 2: Preparing for the Enrollment Process	8
Required Documents for Enrollment	8
Section 3: Enrolling Your Student in a Neighborhood School	12
For Neighborhood Schools	12
GoCPS Application Platform	13
What is GoCPS?	13
Section 4: Additional Considerations for Enrolling Prioritized Students	16
Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS)	16
Students with Disabilities	17
International Students	18
English Learners (ELs)	19
Section 5: Incoming/Transferring Students	20
Transferring From Another District, State, or Country	21
Transferring of EL Students	21
Completing Your Transfer	21
Section 6: Exiting Students	22
Key Dates for School Year 2025-26	23
Frequently Asked Questions	24
Resources	25

Welcome to Chicago Public Schools!

The Office of Student Support and Engagement is delighted to welcome you and your family to our Chicago Public Schools (CPS) community. This enrollment handbook, developed by the Attendance and Enrollment Team, is designed to guide you through the enrollment process for the 2025–2026 school year. Whether new to CPS or re-enrolling, this resource will help you navigate the steps to ensure your student is ready for a successful school year.

Attendance Matters

Once your child is enrolled, daily attendance becomes one of the most important ways you can support their success. Every school day is a new opportunity for learning, growth, and connection. When students attend school consistently and arrive on time, they build strong learning habits, stay connected with teachers and classmates, and feel more supported and confident in their learning environment.

Good attendance sets the foundation for academic achievement and helps students thrive both in and out of the classroom.

Warm regards,

The Attendance and Enrollment Team

*Office of Student Support and Engagement
Chicago Public Schools*



Student Eligibility for CPS Enrollment

All school-age children who live in Chicago are eligible for enrollment in Chicago Public Schools.

Grade Placement and Age Requirements *(Ages as of September 1 of each school year)*

Grade	Min. Age	Max. Age
Pre-kindergarten	3	4
Kindergarten	5	6
1st	6	7
2nd–8th	6–12	8–14
9th	13	—
10th–12th	14+	21

Grade Placement Notes: For special education placement, refer to page 18. To learn more about grade placement and age eligibility, refer to this [FAQ](#).



Early Childhood Options

Ages	Program Details	Resources
Ages 0 to 3	Chicago Early Learning Community-Based Programs Community-based preschool and early learning programs are citywide educational programs for children from 6 weeks to 5 years old, with options for home-visiting programs and prenatal services.	Visit the Chicago Early Learning Community-Based Programs website to explore nearby programs.
Ages 3 to 5	Pre-kindergarten and Community-Based Early Learning Enrollment CPS offers free full-day pre-k for every 4-year-old and a variety of community-based early learning programs for children from birth to age 5, including Head Start and Early Head Start.	Visit the Chicago Early Learning website to explore nearby programs.



Important Notes

- **Community-Based Programs:** Visit the [Chicago Early Learning website](#) to explore infant and toddler programs and services, as well as community-based preschool options. See the section entitled Community-Based
- **Preschool:** Visit the [Chicago Early Learning website](#) to apply for preschool at CPS.
- **Grades 1–8:** Students are usually placed based on age range.
- **Grades 9–12:** Grade placement is determined by the transfer of credits from prior schooling.

Section 1: Determining Your Child's School

Neighborhood School Model

All students, except pre-k students, are assigned a neighborhood school based on their home address. Use the CPS School Locator (schoolinfo.cps.edu/schoollocator/) to find your neighborhood school based on your most recent home address. All students are guaranteed a seat within their zoned neighborhood school of attendance.

Non-Neighborhood School Options

Some schools within CPS do not have defined attendance boundaries and instead use specific enrollment criteria. Students must submit an application and be accepted to these schools.

These include:

- **Choice schools:** Specialize in one subject area, such as fine arts, world language, or technology.
- **Selective Enrollment Schools:** Schools with specific admissions criteria.
- **Pre-kindergarten:** Subject to particular enrollment eligibility criteria and procedures.

Types of Schools

Type	Application Needed	Next Steps
Neighborhood K-12	No	Enroll in person at your child's neighborhood school with the required enrollment documentation
Choice School Programs K-9	Yes, via GoCPS	Apply at apply.cps.edu
Selective Enrollment Programs K-9	Yes, via GoCPS	Apply at apply.cps.edu

Section 2: Preparing for the Enrollment Process

Legal Note: CPS requires families and guardians to provide accurate and truthful information during the enrollment process. Parents or legal guardians are also responsible for updating the school if their address changes. This ensures that we can meet and serve the needs of our students in all attendance areas. If families provide false enrollment information, the student may be transferred to their accurate neighborhood school. More information on transfers following a finding of false representation of address can be found in [CPS Policy 702.1, Enrollment and Transfer of Students in the Chicago Public Schools](#).

Required Documents for Enrollment

When a child enrolls in a District school, the parent, legal guardian, or temporary custodian must provide valid registration documents.

Prepare for Enrollment: Official Required Documents (Pre-k–12)	
Document Type	Options for Documentation
Proof of Guardianship	<p>To confirm your relationship with the child being enrolled, please bring at least one of the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your most recent tax return showing the child listed as a dependent. The child's original birth certificate (photocopies are not accepted). The enrolling adult's name must be listed on the certificate. A valid court order establishing your legal guardianship or custodianship. Documentation of the child's health insurance coverage under your policy. Any public aid documents that include the child. Other relevant documents that authorize or establish your guardianship. For temporary custody, visit https://www.isbe.net/Documents/85-51_affidavit.pdf
Proof of Child's Age and Identity	<p>For enrollment, you must present at least one of these original documents to verify the child's identity and age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original or Official Certified Copy of Birth Certificate (photocopies not accepted. Can serve as proof of age even if the enrolling adult's name is not on it)* U.S. or Foreign Passport or Visa State-issued Medical Card (For pre-kindergarten enrollment only) Court Documents (For foster children enrolling in pre-kindergarten only) Baptismal Record (Not valid for pre-kindergarten enrollment) Medical Records (Not valid for pre-kindergarten enrollment) <p>*If your family is unable to provide an original or certified copy of the child's birth certificate at the time of enrollment, please review the information below on the Missing Children Records Act.</p>

Prepare for Enrollment: Official Required Documents (Pre-k–12)

Document Type	Options for Documentation
Proof of Adult's Identity and Permanent Chicago Address	<p>Picture Identification: Provide any of the following forms of current photo identification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unexpired U.S. Passport ● Employee ID Card ● Unexpired Illinois Driver's License or State ID Card (with Chicago address) ● Chicago CityKey ID <p>Permanent Address Verification: Please provide photocopies or digital copies of any two of the following documents. These documents must clearly show a Chicago address and list the name of the person enrolling the child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utility Bill from the last 90 days with service address (gas, electric, landline, water, cable, or internet) ● Deed (showing Chicago property ownership) ● Current Mortgage or Lease Agreement (for a Chicago residence) ● MediPlan/Medicaid Card ● Voter Registration Card (with Chicago address) ● Court Documents ● Illinois Department of Public Aid Card ● Stamped U.S. Post Office Change of Address Form (confirming Chicago residency) ● Illinois State Aid or Social Security Check (mailed to a Chicago address) ● Other Identification Card issued by a federal or state agency or a foreign government consulate (e.g., Matricula Consular) <p>Important Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Matching Information: The name and address on all submitted documents must match the name and address of the person registering the child. The photo ID is used to establish identity/guardianship, while separate proof of address documents must establish current residency. The address on the ID does not need to match the current proof of address. ● Utility Bill Definition: A utility bill is a monthly statement that details charges for essential household services. ● Temporary Leases: Addresses verified by temporary leases (under one year) may require re-verification upon expiration.
Documentation to Fulfill the Missing Children Records Act	<p>Within 30 days, please provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child's original birth certificate (Photocopies are not accepted) or ● Other acceptable proof of the child's identity and age with an affidavit (English / Spanish) that explains the inability to provide an original birth certificate. Acceptable documentation includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Passport ● Visa ● Verification of Release ● I-94 ● I-385 ● United States Department of State Travel Document

Prepare for Enrollment: Official Required Documents (Pre-k–12)

Document Type	Options for Documentation
For Transfer Between CPS Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Transfer Form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ This form can be obtained from your child's current (sending) school to confirm your child's enrollment history and status. • Previous school transcripts or records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Usually sent electronically between CPS schools, which includes grades, attendance, and assessment history. Parents/guardians can also request a copy. • Immunization and Health Records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Ensure your child is up-to-date on all required vaccines and has a recent school physical (if required for their grade level). • Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan (if applicable)

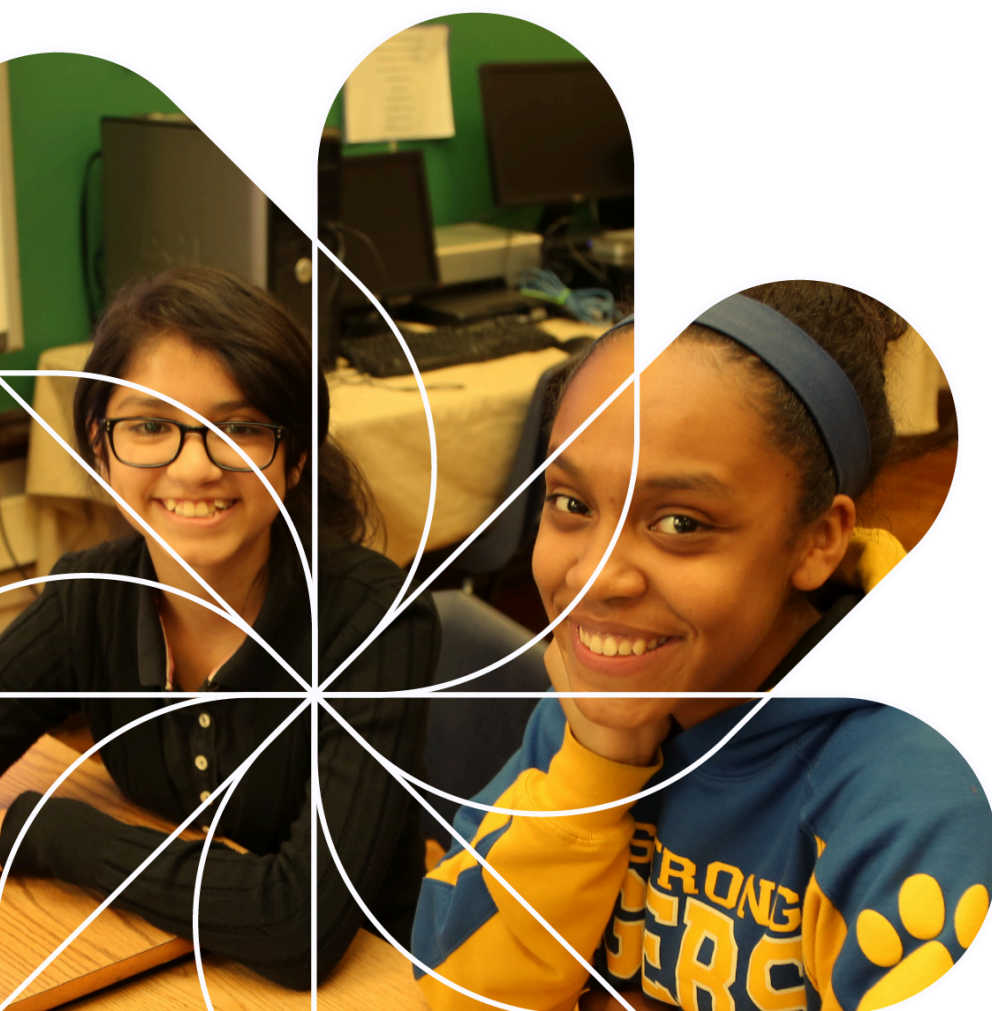
Required Medical Documentation

The following medical documents are required for your student's record. We encourage you to provide them at the time of enrollment. However, you may enroll your child without them initially, as long as you submit the necessary documents by the due date. If you're enrolling after the due date, please bring all required medical documents with you.

Document Type	Options for Documentation
Proof of Medical Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Medical Information Form [English / Spanish] • Illinois Certificate of Child Health Examination [English] • State of Illinois Proof of Dental Examination Form [English / Spanish] • Dental Examination Consent Form [English / Spanish] • Vision Exam Consent Form [English / Spanish] • State of Illinois Eye Examination Report Form [English / Spanish]
Proof of Immunization <u>Due by October 15</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus (DTP/Td) • Inactivated Polio • Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) • Hepatitis B • Varicella (Chicken Pox) • Haemophilus Influenza, Type B (HIB) • Conjugate Meningitis (MCV4) <p>Minimum Health Requirements: English / Spanish</p>

Physical Exam Required <u>Due by October 15</u>	Required For: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pre-k students (including lead screening) • Students entering kindergarten or 1st, 6th, or 9th grade • Students entering Illinois schools for the first time
Vision Records <u>Due by October 15</u>	All kindergarten students and any child entering a school in the State of Illinois for the first time are required by state law to undergo a vision exam by October 15 of the current school year.
Dental Records <u>Due by May 15</u>	All kindergarten, 2nd, 6th, and 9th-grade students must have a dental exam completed by a licensed dentist before May 15 of the current school year.






Families may download and print the [CPS Enrollment Checklist](#) for support through the enrollment process.
[English](#) / [Spanish](#)







Section 3: Enrolling Your Student in a Neighborhood School



For Neighborhood Schools

	Gather all required documents.
	Visit your assigned neighborhood school in person with your child.
	Complete required school-based registration documentation.
	Provide the school with all documentation.
	Complete medical compliance requirements.

For Non-Neighborhood Schools with Admission Requirements

	Apply through GoCPS (see section below).
	If offered a seat and it is accepted, complete enrollment at the school.
	Provide the school with all documentation.
	Complete medical compliance requirements



GoCPS Application Platform

What is GoCPS?

The GoCPS application platform enables families to explore and apply to nearly every K-9 CPS school and program through a single online application.

How to Apply



[Create an Account](#). Visit GoCPS to create a parent account if you are new to CPS. If at least one of your students has been or is currently enrolled in any CPS schools, you may already have an account with us.



[Research Schools](#). Explore programs by school type, academic focus, and location.



[Submit Application](#). If you are enrolling in your zoned school of attendance, an application submission is **not required**; if you are considering GoCPS elementary and 9th-grade high school programs:

- Log in/Create your account
- Apply to your program choices
- Explore [GoCPS resources](#)

Apply during the fall GoCPS application window or after the rolling waitlist opens in the spring. Dates change annually, so please **confirm deadlines** for the current application cycle.

GoCPS Priority Re-Enrollment for Choice and Selective Enrollment

Elementary Schools

Occasionally, circumstances cause families to leave the City of Chicago for a short duration. According to the Chicago Board of Education Rules, students in CPS magnet and selective enrollment elementary schools who leave the city can re-enroll in their previous school upon their return, under minimal circumstances. To retain a student's seat, the parent must request priority re-enrollment in advance of their departure. **Schools** should reach out to the Office of Access and Enrollment on behalf of families to request the submission form.

Applications for priority re-enrollment will only be approved under the following conditions:

1. The student **MUST** start the year at the school.
2. The student will be away for no more than one semester.
3. The student must return on or before the date indicated on the application.
4. The parent must complete the application at least one month in advance of departure.
5. The parent must supply proof of the cause for absence. The only acceptable causes for absence are for work or a personal emergency—examples of acceptable reasons are temporary work assignment overseas or a temporary relocation to receive specialized medical care.
6. The parent must present documentation of the schooling the child will receive while out-of-placement.

Please note: If students will not be receiving schooling during their absence, then the school should not unenroll them and will mark them absent for the duration of their absence.

Helpful Tips for a Smooth Registration Process

- **Visit Open Houses:** Review a school's website for details about upcoming open houses.
- **Prepare:** Call the school to confirm the registration hours or to determine if an appointment is required.
- **Start Early:** Review the [CPS Student Enrollment Requirements](#) and begin gathering documents as soon as possible to avoid last-minute stress.
- **Keep Copies:** Make copies of all submitted documents for your records.



Ask Questions

Enrollment is an excellent opportunity to learn more about your child's new school. Take time to craft your questions. You may want to gather information regarding the following:

- Sports and Athletics
- Extracurricular Activities and School Clubs
- Curriculum and Academic Programs
- Technology and Devices
- Parent Volunteer Opportunities

Parent Portal

Stay connected with your child's education by signing up for the CPS Parent Portal. It's a simple way to monitor attendance, grades, and stay in touch with your school, all in one place!



Gaining Access to the CPS Parent Portal

Stay connected. Stay informed.

Why Use the Parent Portal?



Get Alerts

Stay up-to-date on your student's grades and performance



Daily Attendance Updates

See if your student was present – in real time



Pay School Fees

Securely pay school-related fees online



Submit Absences

Quickly submit excused absences digitally



Tip When enrolling your student, ask for access to the CPS Parent Portal to stay involved and support their success!

Section 4: Additional Considerations for Enrolling Prioritized Students



Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS)

Housing instability should never prevent a student from enrolling in or attending school. If your family is experiencing housing instability, such as staying with others, living in a shelter, hotel, or temporary accommodation, your child still has the right to attend school. This right is protected under a federal law known as the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#).

The law applies to all students without stable housing, including:

- Families who have recently moved or lost housing
- Children new to the country
- Young people living on their own

If your child qualifies under this law, they can enroll in school right away, even if you don't have all the required documents. Families should notify the school at the time of enrollment if they are experiencing housing instability. School staff can help connect you with support and ensure your child receives the services they are entitled to.

Contact Information to Receive Support

Phone: (773) 553-2242

Website: cps.edu/studentsintemporarylivingsitutations



Students with Disabilities

- CPS is committed to serving students with disabilities from ages 3 through 22, ensuring the rightful presence of every student with a disability so they can fully engage in rigorous instruction at their grade level, in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible, and access the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Preschool enrollments require an acceptance letter from Chicago Early Learning or a school assignment from the OSD School Assignment Team. This requirement does not apply to kindergarten-aged students and older, who are entitled to enroll in their neighborhood school, whereas preschool students are not.

Enrollment Process

- Inform the school of the existing IEP or 504 Plan at registration
 - Families are encouraged to bring a copy of their child's current IEP to help us best support their needs.
- School will connect you with a case manager or specialist
- Appropriate placement and services will be provided

Contact Information to Receive Support

Phone: (773) 553-1800

Website: <https://www.cps.edu/services-and-supports/special-education/>



International Students

Students coming from schools outside the U.S. may need a transcript evaluation before enrolling in CPS to ensure proper grade and course placement.

- **Elementary School (Grades K–6):** Usually placed by age (as of September 1), but evaluation may happen in special cases, such as unusual schooling history or limited formal education.
- **Middle School (Grades 7–8):** Evaluation helps ensure correct grade placement, provides support for students with limited or interrupted education (SLIFE), and informs planning for high school applications.
- **High School (Grades 9–12):** A transcript evaluation is required before enrollment to assign credits and determine graduation requirements.

Early evaluation enables families to make informed decisions and facilitates a smooth transition into CPS.





English Learners (ELs)

English Learners (ELs) are students who speak a language other than English at home and are still learning English. When enrolling in a CPS school for the first time, all families are required to complete a [Home Language Survey](#). This survey will help schools determine if a student needs to take the English Language Proficiency Test (WIDA Screener).

If the test shows your child needs language services, they may qualify for one of these programs:

- **Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE):** For schools with 20+ ELs speaking the same language. Content instruction is provided in both English and the home language, with a focus on developing academic English skills.
- **Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI):** For schools with fewer than 19 ELs of the same language. Instruction is provided in English, with support tailored to individual language needs, and instruction focuses on developing academic English skills.

Some schools also offer [Dual Language Education](#), where students learn in two languages. You can find more about these schools during the GoCPS application process.

Contact Information to Receive Support

Phone: 773-553-1930

Email: OMME@cps.edu

Website: <https://www.cps.edu/about/departments/multilingual-multicultural-education/>

Section 5: Incoming/Transferring Students

Chicago Public Schools welcomes families transferring into and within the district. Whether your student is moving from another CPS school, another Illinois district, or from out of state or country, clear procedures help ensure a smooth transition.

Transferring Between CPS Neighborhood Schools



Transferring From Another District or State

Families new to CPS will need to transfer to their new school. Students who were previously enrolled in a private school (including homeschool), foreign school, charter school, or other school district and seek enrollment in the Chicago Public Schools are subject to transcript evaluation to determine proper grade placement. Additionally, they may be evaluated to verify appropriate grade placement.

Required Documents:

Students coming from outside CPS must complete full registration, including:

- Proof of identity and age
- Proof of current address
- Health records (including physical exam and immunization record)
- Previous school transcripts, report cards, or withdrawal paperwork

Please refer to the [CPS Enrollment Checklist](#) for the complete list of required documents.

Note: If your child is transferring from another public or private school in the U.S., please bring any available educational records.

Transferring of EL Students

If a student transfers to a school that does not offer a bilingual education program aligned with the child's English language proficiency, the student must be given the option to transfer to the nearest school offering an appropriate program. Pending identification and transfer to an appropriate school, or if the child opts to remain in the current school, the student must be provided with the most appropriate bilingual education services possible, consistent with the student's bilingual instructional needs.

Completing Your Transfer

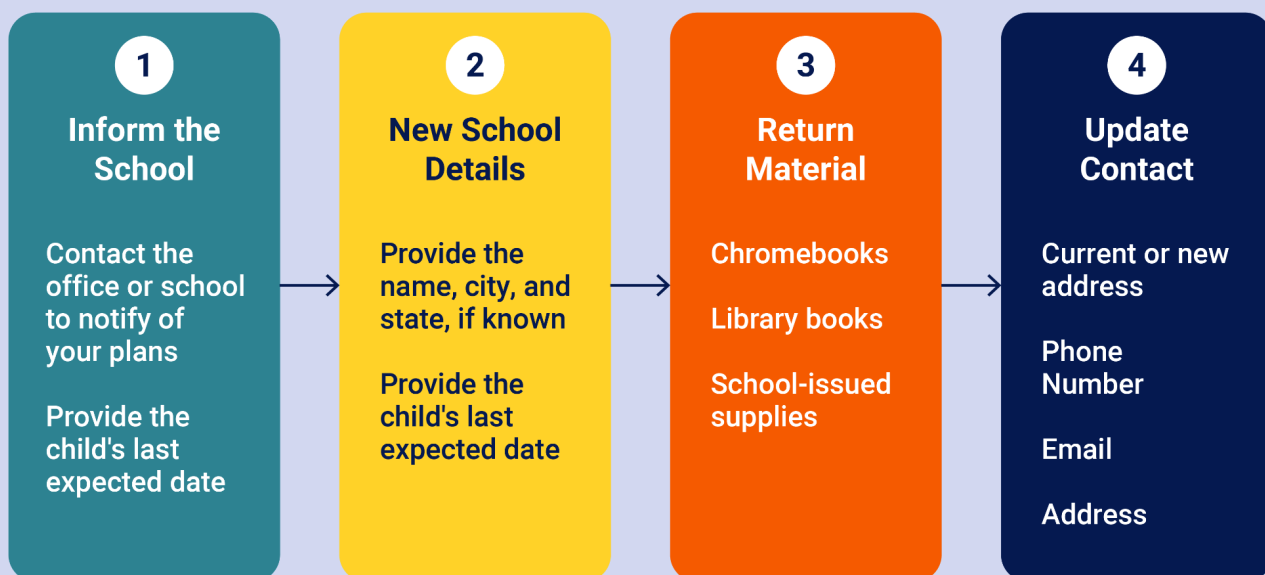
- Provide a completed Student Transfer Form
- Show enrollment documentation from the new school



Section 6: Exiting Students

Once a student is part of Chicago Public Schools, they have the right to remain at their current school unless documentation is provided to the school verifying a transfer. We understand that families move or make changes for many reasons, and we are here to support a smooth transition for your student. If your student will be withdrawing to attend a non-CPS school, either outside the district or outside the state, please follow the required steps to ensure a seamless process.

Steps for Withdrawing Your Child from School



Key Dates for School Year 2025-26

Events	Dates
School Begins	Monday, August 18, 2025
School Ends	Thursday, June 4, 2026
Quarters (Q)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q1 ends October 17, 2025 Q2 ends December 19, 2025 Q3 ends March 6, 2026 Q4 ends June 04, 2026
PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE DAYS Elementary School (ES) High School (HS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday, October 27, 2025 (ES and HS) Wednesday, March 18, 2026 (ES and HS)
Report Card Distribution Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q2 on January 09, 2026 Q4 on June 4, 2026
Winter vacation	Schools are closed from December 22, 2025, to January 2, 2026.
Spring vacation	Schools are closed from March 23, 2026, to March 27, 2026.
Anticipated Summer Programs	Anticipated Summer Programs include Summer Bridge (including Bilingual Bridge), English Language Summer Support, Extended School Year, Summer Acceleration, and High School Summer Credit Recovery. The earliest anticipated start date for summer programs is June 16, 2026, and may extend into August 2026.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q	Can I enroll my child if we just moved to Chicago?
A	Yes! You'll need proof of your new address (such as a lease agreement or utility bill) and other required documents.
Q	Can I enroll my child if I'm not the legal guardian?
A	Adults acting as guardians or custodians may enroll a child with proof of guardianship or custodianship. Exception: Proof not required for adults caring for unaccompanied youth.
Q	How do I apply for transportation services?
A	<p>Parents must submit a transportation request at the time of enrollment. To be eligible, students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an IEP or 504 plan with transportation as a related service. • Have a valid transportation request on file with the District. • Reside five miles or more from the home of record to the school of attendance; and the District does not readily have a route/vehicle. • Is a sibling of a student already receiving transportation under these criteria. • Identify as STLS. <p>To learn more about eligibility, contact your school or Transportation Services at 773-553-2860 or transoptions@cps.edu.</p>
Q	How do I find my neighborhood school?:
A	You can find your neighborhood (attendance-area) school using the CPS School Locator .
Q	How do I update contact information?
A	Contact your school office directly.
Q	Do I need to register my child again if they are returning to the same school?
A	No. If your child is already enrolled and returning to the same CPS school, you will need to complete the following steps. Your school will ask you to complete an updated Emergency Contact Form annually.

Resources

Department/Team	Contact Information	Usefulness
Family and Community Engagement (FACE)	Hotline: (773) 553-FACE (3223) Email: FACE@cps.edu Website: https://www.cps.edu/sites/face/	Supports families through their students' educational process and conducts community outreach.
Office of Access and Enrollment & GoCPS Support	Hotline: (773) 553-2060 Email: gocps@cps.edu Website: https://www.cps.edu/about/departments/access-and-enrollment-oae/	Assistance with navigating the application process for GoCPS programs, testing, and more.
Office of Students with Disabilities	Hotline: (773) 553-1800 Email: osd@cps.edu Parent Website: https://www.cps.edu/services-and-supports/parent-engagement/parents-of-students-with-disabilities/	Supports all issues related to special education.
Office of Multilingual-Multicultural Education	Hotline: (773) 553-1930 Email: OMME@cps.edu Website: https://www.cps.edu/about/departments/multilingual-multicultural-education/	Assistance for students from non-English speaking homes who are learning English.
International Student Services	Hotline: (773) 527-3203 Text: 773-527-3203 Email: newcomers@cps.edu	Assistance for students arriving from abroad.
School Locator	School Locator Website	Enter a school name or your address to find a school you can attend in your attendance area.
Early Learning	Early Learning Website	