

Evanston D65 Budget Analysis

Per-Pupil Expenditure Comparison vs. Peer Districts | April 2026

1. Top-Level Snapshot

All figures are per-pupil expenditures from the Educational Fund unless otherwise noted. Peer districts include Northbrook (G30), Park Ridge, Wheeling, Glenview, Oak Park, and Wilmette.

Total Spending FY25 (per pupil)	Above Peer Average	Evanston FY24 to FY25 Change	ED Fund Deficit FY24 / FY25
\$23,230	+\$5,382 (+30%)	-\$1,151 improvement	-\$1,548 (FY24) / +\$675 (FY25)
Peer average: \$17,848	vs. all peers in dataset	From \$24,425 to \$23,230	Swung to surplus in FY25

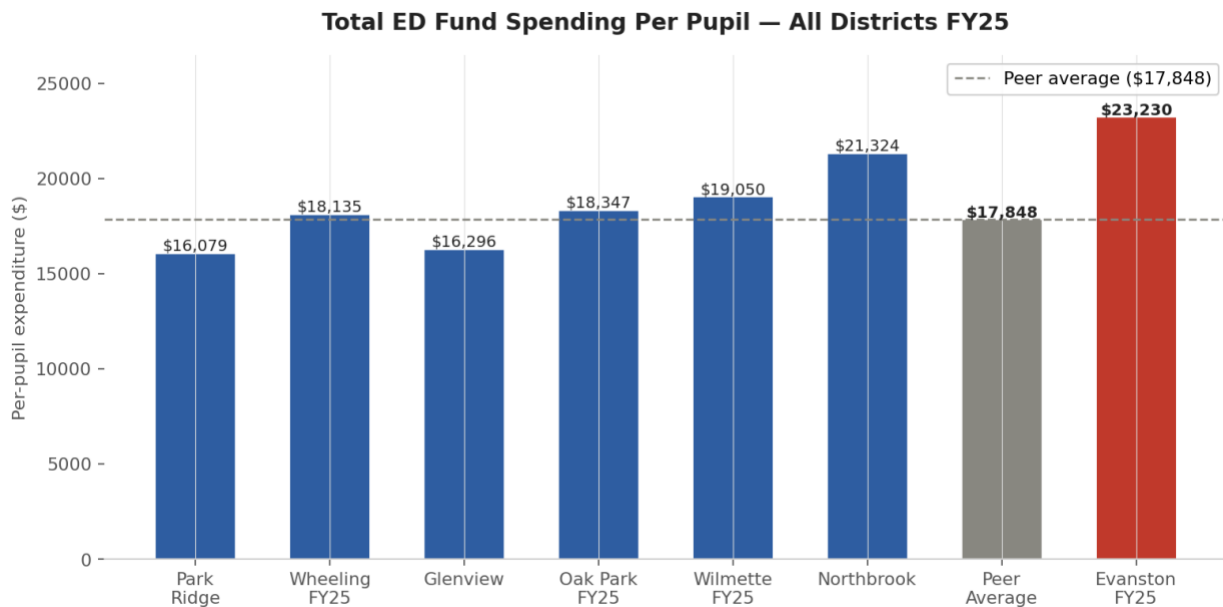


Figure 1. Total ED fund per-pupil spending across all districts (FY25). Dashed line = peer average (\$17,848). Evanston exceeds every peer by at least \$4,180.

Evanston's FY25 total per-pupil spending of \$23,230 is approximately 30% above the peer average of \$17,848. The district improved its fiscal position meaningfully from FY24 to FY25, swinging the ED fund from a \$1,548 per-pupil deficit to a \$675 surplus, but the absolute spending gap with peers remains very large.

2. Evanston FY25 Spending Composition

Evanston FY25 — ED Fund Spending Composition

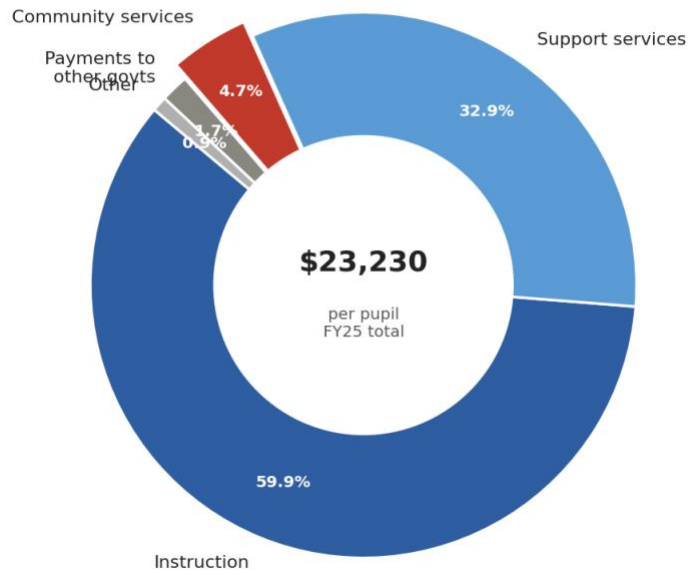


Figure 2. Evanston FY25 ED fund spending by major category. Community services (shown in red) accounts for a disproportionate share relative to peers.

Instruction makes up the largest share of Evanston spending, but support services and the anomalously high community services line together represent significant areas where peer comparisons reveal gaps. The composition chart illustrates how spending is distributed, with community services standing out as an outlier relative to every peer district.

3. Key Spending Categories: Evanston vs. Peer Average

Evanston FY25 vs. Peer Average — Key Spending Categories

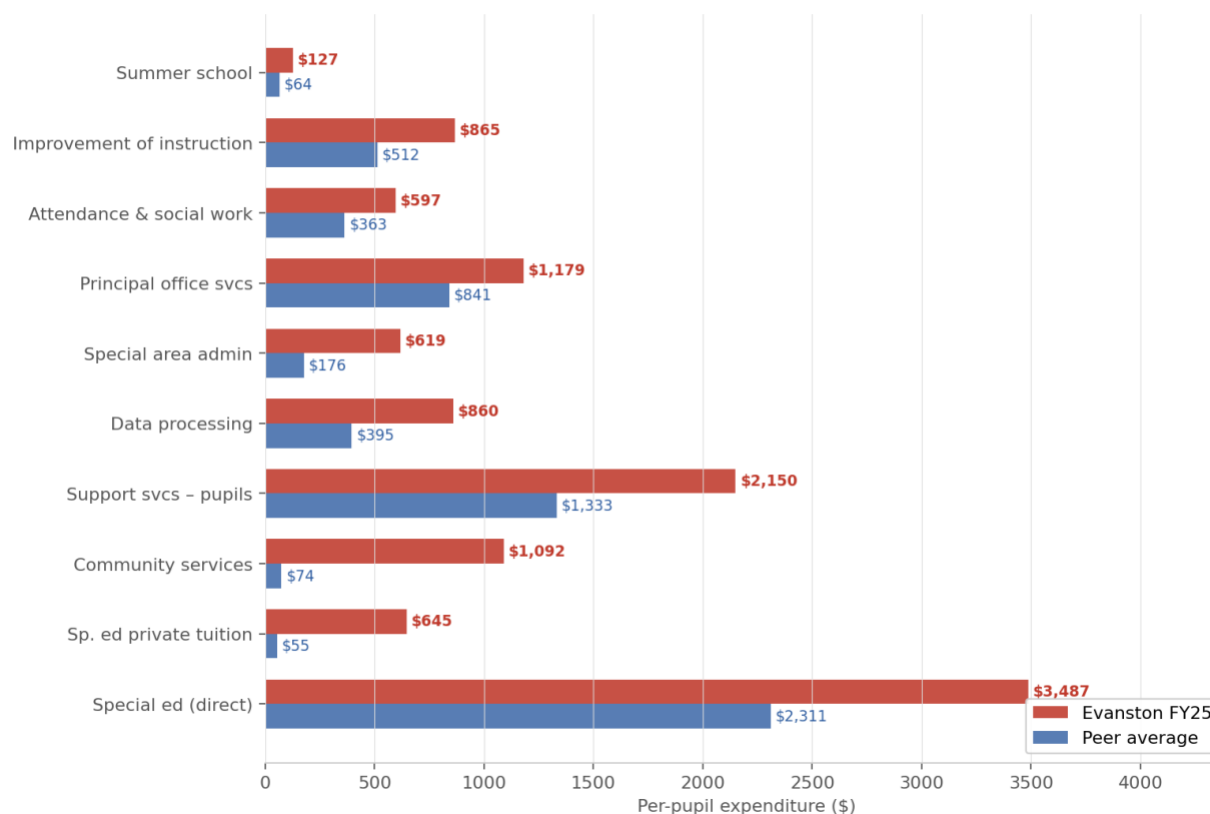


Figure 3. Per-pupil spending by category, Evanston FY25 (red) vs. peer average (blue). Note the extreme gap in community services, special ed private tuition, and overall support services for pupils.

The chart above illustrates where Evanston's per-pupil spending diverges most sharply from the peer average. Community services and special education private tuition are the most extreme outliers in relative terms; special education (direct) is the largest in absolute dollar terms.

4. Where Evanston Should Consider Cutting — and Why

Several categories are substantially above peer levels and warrant discretionary review. Some (notably special education direct costs) are largely legally constrained, but even there, programmatic decisions influence cost trajectories over time.

Community Services (\$1,092/pupil vs. \$74 peer average)

This is the single most anomalous line in the entire dataset. Evanston spends 14 times the peer average and no other district comes remotely close. The district should be asked to itemize exactly what this covers. It is either misclassified spending or a genuinely exceptional program commitment that deserves explicit public justification.

Special Education Private Tuition (\$645/pupil vs. \$55 peer average)

Placements in private schools for students with disabilities are legally driven but are also the result of IEP decisions the district influences. At 12 times the peer average, with Oak Park and Wilmette both reporting \$0, this warrants a thorough review of whether in-district programming can substitute for

private placements over time. This is a multi-year strategy, not a near-term cut, but ignoring it is not an option.

Data Processing (\$860/pupil vs. \$395 peer average)

Technology and data systems spending at twice the peer average is striking for a district of Evanston's enrollment size. Economies of scale should work in Evanston's favor here. Technology contracts and vendor relationships are the right place to start an audit. This category fell from \$1,123 in FY24, a positive trend, but it remains the second-highest in the peer group.

Special Area Administration (\$619/pupil vs. \$176 peer average)

This category rose from FY24 to FY25 while most others fell, and sits at 3.5 times the peer average. A detailed breakdown of positions and functions in this category is warranted before the next budget cycle.

Pupil Support Services (\$2,150/pupil vs. \$1,333 peer average)

Attendance and social work, guidance, psychological services, and speech pathology are all above peer levels. Some of this reflects genuine need in a demographically diverse district. However, the sub-categories show room to examine staffing ratios and caseloads. Attendance and social work alone (\$597/pupil) is the highest of any peer in the dataset.

Improvement of Instruction (\$865/pupil vs. \$512 peer average)

Professional development and curriculum spending is down from FY24's high of \$1,110 per pupil. Continued scrutiny is warranted — this is a large discretionary category that has historically been well above peer levels.

5. Key Areas to Focus: Most Egregious Differences

Category	Evanston FY25	Peer Avg	Gap	Severity	Note
Community services	\$1,092	\$74	+\$1,018	Critical	14x peer avg; no peer comes close
Sp. ed private tuition (K-12)	\$645	\$55	+\$590	Critical	12x avg; Oak Park/Wilmette \$0
Special ed programs (direct)	\$3,487	\$2,311	+\$1,177	Critical	Largest absolute gap; legally constrained
Support services — pupils	\$2,150	\$1,333	+\$817	High	Att. & social work, psych, speech
Data processing	\$860	\$395	+\$465	High	2x avg; discretionary tech contracts
Special area administration	\$619	\$176	+\$443	High	3.5x avg; rose FY24 to FY25
Principal office services	\$1,179	\$841	+\$338	Medium	School admin overhead; many buildings
Attendance & social work	\$597	\$363	+\$234	Medium	Highest of any peer in dataset

Improvement of instruction	\$865	\$512	+\$353	Medium	PD spend; down from \$1,110 FY24
Summer school	\$127	\$64	+\$63	Monitor	Down from \$327 FY24 — improvement
Gifted programs	\$0	\$216	-\$216	Below avg	No gifted program — equity question

6. TL;DR Summaries

Evanston FY24 vs. FY25

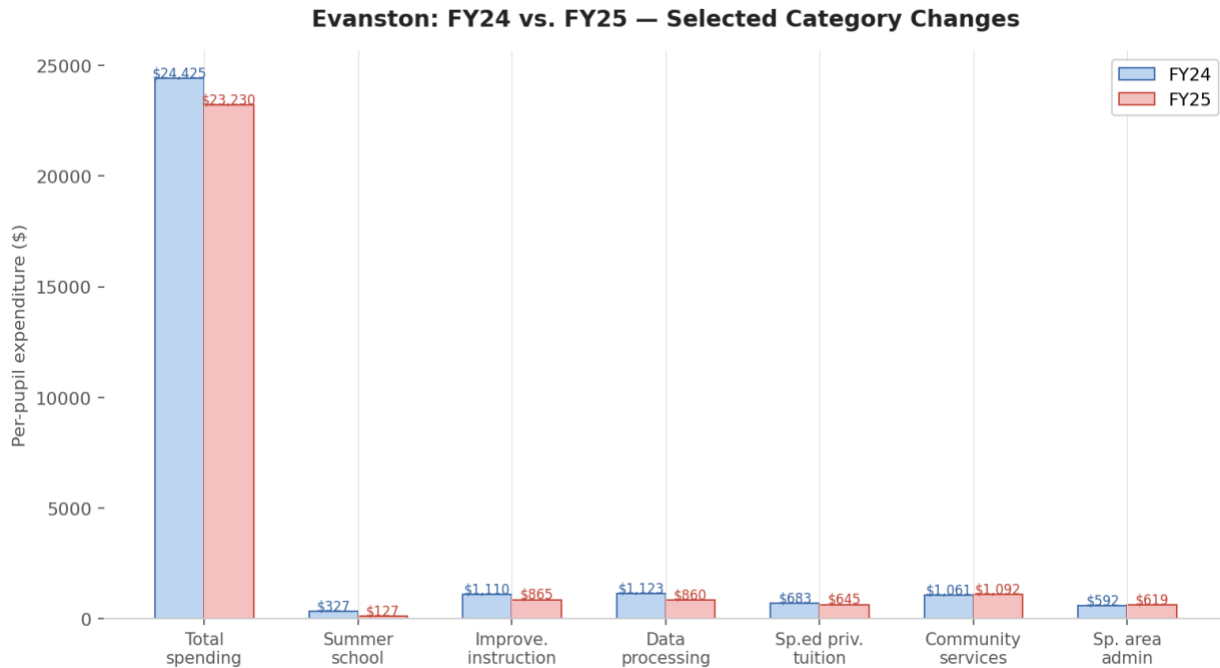


Figure 4. Selected per-pupil expenditure categories, Evanston FY24 (light blue) vs. FY25 (light red). Summer school and data processing show the largest reductions; community services and special area admin rose slightly.

Evanston improved its fiscal position meaningfully in FY25 but remains far above peers in absolute spending.

- Total per-pupil spending fell approximately \$1,151 (from \$24,425 to \$23,230).
- The ED fund swung from a -\$1,548 deficit per pupil (FY24) to a +\$675 surplus (FY25) — the single most important improvement.
- Summer school plummeted from \$327 to \$127 per pupil, a major discretionary cut.
- Improvement of instruction fell from \$1,110 to \$865 per pupil (professional development reduction).
- Data processing dropped from \$1,123 to \$860 per pupil — still double the peer average.
- Special ed private tuition fell modestly from \$683 to \$645 per pupil.
- Community services held near-constant at a very high level: \$1,061 to \$1,092 per pupil.
- Special area administration rose: \$592 to \$619 per pupil — the wrong direction.

FY24 vs. FY25 for Other Peer Districts

Wheeling and Oak Park show the most movement among peers with both years of data.

- Wheeling increased total ED spending by approximately \$1,827 per pupil (from \$16,296 to \$18,135), driven by instruction and support services growth.
- Oak Park grew from \$16,594 to \$18,347 per pupil — a similar trajectory to Wheeling.
- Wilmette grew modestly: \$18,510 to \$19,050, with special ed and principal services rising.
- Glenview, Park Ridge, and Northbrook have only one year of data — direct FY24/FY25 comparison is not available for them.
- Among peers with both years, the average per-pupil increase was approximately \$500-900, far less than Evanston's still-elevated level above the group.

Evanston FY25 vs. Other Districts FY25

Evanston outspends every peer by a wide margin in FY25.

- At \$23,230 per pupil, Evanston spends approximately 30% above the peer average of \$17,848.
- The largest single contributor is special education (\$3,487 vs. \$2,311 peer avg), which is largely legally driven but still warrants scrutiny of placement and private tuition decisions.
- Community services at \$1,092 per pupil is 14 times the peer average of \$74 — the most anomalous category in the entire dataset.
- Pupil support services (\$2,150) and special area administration (\$619) are also substantially above peers.
- Data processing (\$860) is more than double the peer average despite being a category where economies of scale should favor Evanston.
- Evanston spends \$0 on gifted programs; no peer district does the same. This may reflect equity choices but creates a programming gap worth acknowledging explicitly.
- On the positive side, Evanston's health services and executive administration are at or below peer average.

7. Data Quality Issues and Inconsistencies

The following issues in the comparison sheet should be resolved before using this analysis in formal board presentations or public communications.

Type	Issue	Detail
Error	Wheeling FY25 O&M fund = \$0	Wheeling shows \$0 across the entire O&M fund for FY25, while FY24 shows \$1,916 per pupil. Almost certainly a missing data entry — it makes excess/deficiency rows for Wheeling FY25 meaningless across O&M, DS, TR, and MR/SS funds.
Warning	Glenview: only one year of data	Glenview has data labeled without a year suffix, unlike the 24/25 pattern for other districts. It appears to be a single-year snapshot, making FY24 vs FY25 trends impossible for that district.
Warning	Average column mixes FY24 and FY25 data	The 'Average (not Evanston)' column blends FY24 and FY25 figures from different districts rather than comparing a consistent year. This makes the 'Amount Evanston is above avg' column methodologically suspect for strict apples-to-apples comparisons.

Warning	Northbrook labeled 'G30' — different type	Northbrook may be a K-8 or elementary district rather than K-12. Including it in the peer average may distort comparisons, particularly for high-school-specific spending categories.
Note	Glenview 'financial indicator' = 3.8	A value of 3.8 appears in row 2 for Glenview with no label or explanation. May be an ISBE financial profile score, but its meaning and relevance to the comparison are unclear.
Note	Scientific notation values for near-zero entries	Several cells contain values like 7.27E-3 (less than one cent per pupil), indicating rounding artifacts from the ISBE data export. These are functionally zero and should be treated as such.

Prepared by Legion of Data Nerds incorporating Claude.ai | Source: Illinois Report Card district expenditure data