



Facts & Accomplishments

- The Big Shoulders Fund is a private, separately incorporated 501 (c) (3) whose mission is to **provide support to the Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic schools in the neediest areas of inner-city Chicago.**
- The Big Shoulders Fund was created in 1986 by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin to provide support to Catholic Chicago inner-city schools. Since its inception, the Big Shoulders Fund has raised more than **\$155 million** and currently awards approximately \$11 million annually in grants and scholarships.
- The Archdiocese of Chicago's elementary and secondary schools comprise the second largest private school system in the world and the eleventh largest of all school systems in the United States. There are **93 schools supported by Big Shoulders** for school year 2007-2008, consisting of 76 elementary and 17 secondary schools enrolling more than 25,000 students.
- If the students from Big Shoulders schools were to transfer to public schools, it would cost taxpayers over \$250 million every year.
- The Board of Directors of the Big Shoulders Fund is co-chaired by Mr. James O'Connor, Retired Chairman & CEO of Commonwealth Edison, and John A. Canning, Jr., President of Madison Dearborn Partners. The full board comprised of 150 men and women who are Chicago's corporate and civic leaders.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- 80% of Big Shoulders school students are minorities.
- 32% of Big Shoulders school students are not Catholic.
- 58% of Big Shoulders Fund students live in families at or below the poverty line as calculated by the Federally funded free and reduced lunch rate.
- The elementary school student attendance rate is 97%. The high school student attendance rate is 95%.
- The average class size in Big Shoulders Fund supported schools is less than 20 students.
- 96% of Big Shoulders secondary school students graduate from High School. 87% of Big Shoulders students go on to higher education.
- 97% of Big Shoulders Fund supported elementary schools offer extended day programs.
- 98% of Big Shoulders elementary schools have kindergarten and 91% have preschools. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has accredited 52 preschools in schools supported by Big Shoulders. Fourteen more programs are currently pursuing NAEYC Accreditation. The Archdiocese of Chicago has more NAEYC accredited programs than any other private school system in the country.