



## [Inside LeBron James's New \\$8 Million Public School, Where Students Get Free Bikes, Meals, and College Tuition](#)

By [Max Zahn](#). July 31, 2018

Basketball star LeBron James, who briefly split the Internet asunder with his recent choice to depart the Cleveland Cavaliers for the Los Angeles Lakers, has made sure to leave something behind in Ohio: a public school for at-risk students.

James knows what it's like to be an at-risk student himself. As a fourth grader, [he says](#), he missed 83 days of school while he and his mother moved from one couch or spare room to the next. He credits mentors, some of whom he met at school, with a turnaround that helped him attend every day of fifth grade — which was also the first year he played organized basketball.

Now, 240 third- and fourth-graders will make up the inaugural class at the I Promise School, which opened this week in James' hometown of Akron, Ohio.

The unusual school is a public school formed in collaboration between James' philanthropic foundation and Akron Public Schools. Its out-of-the-box offerings include a long school day (eight hours); a “support circle” for students after lunch; and GED courses and job placement for parents. All are driven by James' mission to help kids overcome what he faced as a low-income student in Akron, he says.

James, who has won three NBA championships and four league-MVPs, called the school opening the greatest moment of his career.

“Walking these hallways and seeing, when I was driving here, just the streets that I walked, some of the stores are still up when I was growing up,” he [told ESPN](#). “It's a moment I'll never forget — and hopefully the kids, starting with the 240 kids that we have going in here right now starting today, will never forget it, either.”

Here's everything you need to know about LeBron James' I Promise School in Akron, Ohio.

The school selected area students from among those who trail their peers by a year or two in academic performance. “We did a random selection of all students who met that criteria, and got to make these awesome phone calls to parents and say, ‘How would you like to be part of something different, the I Promise School,’” Keith Liechty, the Akron Public Schools' liaison to James' foundation, told [USA Today](#).

The school is launching with third- and fourth-graders, but plans to add grades each year until it houses first through eighth grade in 2022.

Forty-three staffers will help run the I Promise School — including not just teachers but also a principal, assistant principal, four intervention specialists, plus a tutor, English as a second language teacher, music instructor, and gym teacher, USA Today reports. Classrooms will hold 20 students per teacher.

The most unique feature of the school may be the most ordinary: it's a traditional public school. Celebrities often back charter schools, like the [Harlem academy](#) founded by Sean “Diddy” Combs and the [Detroit charter](#) named after former NBA player and ESPN analyst Jalen Rose. Or they open unorthodox private schools — think Elon Musk’s 40-student school, situated in a conference room at Space X, [where kids play with flamethrowers](#).

James made a point of giving Akron a new public school. “It’s not a charter school, it’s not a private school, it’s a real-life school in my hometown,” he [told ESPN](#). “And this is pretty cool.”

This is what believing in the common good looks like. LeBron doesn't need public schools. He could build a school just 4 his own kids. Yet, he is investing for the good of community, while also not extracting resources from public schools that most black kids in the city attend.

That said, the school is far from traditional. Its lengthy school day runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., along with an extended school year that runs from July through May. During a seven-week summer session, the school [will provide STEM-based camps](#). Students will spend time each day on social-emotional learning, and participate in a “supportive circle” after lunch aimed at helping them refocus on work, Cleveland.com reports.

Nutrition is also central to the school’s mission. Every day students will receive free breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinks. They will have access to a fitness trainer. James says that, as a kid, he used his bicycle to explore different neighborhoods of Akron — so he gave one to every incoming student.

[http://time.com/money/5354265/lebron-james-i-promise-school-akron/?utm\\_source=time.com&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=the-brief-pm&utm\\_content=2018080117pm&xid=newsletter-brief&eminfo=%7b%22EMAIL%22%3a%221JIUKO%2bqECzFnqQMC8KxPw%3d%3d%22%2c%22BRAND%22%3a%22TD%22%2c%22CONTENT%22%3a%22Newsletter%22%2c%22UID%22%3a%22TD\\_TBP\\_1AD3CD19-33E5-428E-A63D-BA9E19C69078%22%2c%22SUBID%22%3a%2284306990%22%2c%22JOBID%22%3a%22841313%22%2c%22NEWSLETTER%22%3a%22THE\\_BRIEF\\_PM%22%2c%22ZIP%22%3a%22479068699%22%2c%22COUNTRY%22%3a%22%22%7d](http://time.com/money/5354265/lebron-james-i-promise-school-akron/?utm_source=time.com&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=the-brief-pm&utm_content=2018080117pm&xid=newsletter-brief&eminfo=%7b%22EMAIL%22%3a%221JIUKO%2bqECzFnqQMC8KxPw%3d%3d%22%2c%22BRAND%22%3a%22TD%22%2c%22CONTENT%22%3a%22Newsletter%22%2c%22UID%22%3a%22TD_TBP_1AD3CD19-33E5-428E-A63D-BA9E19C69078%22%2c%22SUBID%22%3a%2284306990%22%2c%22JOBID%22%3a%22841313%22%2c%22NEWSLETTER%22%3a%22THE_BRIEF_PM%22%2c%22ZIP%22%3a%22479068699%22%2c%22COUNTRY%22%3a%22%22%7d)