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## Pay Up!

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### Stretch Article

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**CHICAGO, Illinois** (Achieve3000, March 21, 2012). There's a sense of order in the hallways of Noble Street College Prep, a charter school in Chicago, Illinois. All students wear school polo shirts tucked neatly into khaki trousers. There's plenty of chatter but no jostling, cell phone use, or dawdling on the way to class. The reason, administrators say, is that students have learned there is a price to pay—literally—for breaking even the smallest rules.

Noble Network of Charter Schools charges students at its 10 Chicago high schools money for failing to follow the rules. Here's how the system works: Students receive demerits for various infractions. For example, they get four demerits for having a cell phone and one for sporting untied shoelaces. Four demerits within a two-week period earn a student a detention and a \$5 fine. Students who get 12 detentions in a year must attend a summer behavior class that costs \$140. During the 2010-2011 school year, Noble collected almost \$190,000 in discipline "fees" from detentions and behavior classes.

Officials at the rapidly expanding network, heralded by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, say the system does its job. According to Superintendent Michael Milkie, the policy teaches students to follow rules and creates a structured learning environment. For instance, while fights can be an almost daily occurrence in some urban high schools, Milkie says, there's only about one a year on each Noble campus.

When students behave themselves, Milkie says, they're better able to concentrate on their classes. The superintendent points to the network's average ACT (test) score of 20.3. That's higher than at the city's other non-selective public schools. He says that more than 90 percent of Noble graduates enroll in college.

As for the fines, Milkie says they help pay for the cost of running the after-school detention, which otherwise would divert money intended for education.

Still, critics say the fees are unfair to students, most of whom live in low-income families. They say the system forces the worst offenders to leave the schools because these students can't pay all the fees.

"We think this just goes over the line....Fining [students] for having their shoelaces untied [or] a button unbuttoned [is] harassment, not discipline," said Julie Woestehoff. Woestehoff is the executive director of the Chicago advocacy group called Parents United for Responsible Education. The group staged protests over the policy after Woestehoff was approached by an upset parent.

Parent Donna Moore agrees that the system goes too far with students. Her 16-year-old son had to repeat ninth grade at Noble's Gary Comer College Prep after racking up 33 detentions and several suspensions.



Photo credit: AP/M. Spencer Green

*Noble Network schools charge fines to students who break school rules. Most of the students go on to college.*

"It was nothing [terrible], but just that the little things added up: a shirt unbuttoned, shoes not tied, not tracking the teacher with his eyes," said Moore, adding that her son has an attention disorder. "It's not normal to treat a young adult as a 2-year-old."

Woestehoff and Moore said some families have removed their children from Noble schools because they couldn't keep paying the fees. Still, Milkie said Noble sets up payment plans and on rare occasions, forgives the fees. He also said students never would be held back a grade solely because they couldn't pay.

Even so, Matthew Mayer, a professor in the graduate school of education at Rutgers University, said a fine is "highly inappropriate" because it likely has no bearing on students' academic performance and hurts low-income families.

Emanuel defended the schools, saying they get "incredible" results and parents aren't required to send their children there.

Parent Tammy O'Neal thinks the system works well. O'Neal said her two daughters are excelling. One of them once got a detention for not wearing a belt.

"If a kid is prone to getting in trouble and not taking school seriously, then [the fines are] a steep slope," she said. "But why don't you tell your kid to straighten up?"

Chadie Morris, 16, a sophomore at Noble Street College Prep, has earned a 3.8 (A) grade-point average at Noble Street College Prep, but figures she has paid \$45 already this year for such things as talking in class.

"Sometimes it can be about the littlest things and you can still get demerits," Morris said. "Demerits are horrible; detentions are horrible." Still, the system helped Morris improve her attendance.

Other charter school operators in Chicago and elsewhere say they don't fine students, but they respect Noble's academic success and its right to adopt its own discipline policy. Still, many schools have alternative policies that they say are effective.

Tim King is the CEO of Urban Prep Academies, which operates three high schools for boys in Chicago. King says he believes in guiding kids toward good behavior rather than punishing them for bad behavior. Every student in Urban Prep's first two graduating classes was accepted to a college or university.

At the Knowledge Is Power Program, a network of 109 charter schools in 20 states and the District of Columbia, middle school students are rewarded for good behavior with a weekly incentive "paycheck"—fake money that can be redeemed at the school store or used to pay for the cost of field trips. The system is phased out by high school because it is no longer needed.

Milkie, though, doesn't plan to change a thing. "It's a beautiful system," he said. "I don't want to brag, but it is. It's why the kids are so successful."

*The Associated Press contributed to this story.*

## **Dictionary**

**charter school** (*noun*) a special kind of school that students can choose to go to

**discipline** (*adjective*) having to do with teaching or correcting behavior

**harassment** (*noun*) continuing threats or other acts meant to cause torment

**infraction** (*noun*) a time when a rule is broken

**occurrence** (*noun*) something that happens; an event; a happening

## Noble Street College Prep Student Handbook

**Demerits** - A student can be assigned from 1-4 demerits for a rule infraction. Any infraction deserving more than 4 demerits, such as gross disrespect to staff or other students, results in the student being sent to the Dean of Discipline. It is up to the teacher's discretion as to the number of demerits, except as prescribed by the list below:

- a. Chewing gum – 4 demerits
- b. Eating or drinking outside the lunchroom– 2 demerits
- c. Food or drink visible outside the lunchroom- 1 demerit. Water in clear bottles is permissible.
- d. Pop, energy drinks (such as Red Bull or Monster) or chips, (except those sold or provided) visible anywhere – 4 demerits
- e. Standing, yelling or throwing anything in the lunchroom - minimum 1 demerit
- f. Not returning a tray or not cleaning up in the lunchroom – minimum 1 demerit
- g. Talking during a fire or tornado drill - 2 demerits
- h. Tardy to school:
  1. less than 1 minute – 1 demerit
  2. 1 minute to 45 minutes – 2 demerits
  3. Tardy to school more than 45 minutes – 4 demerits
- i. Tardy to class (not in assigned seat when the bell rings):
  1. less than 1 minute – 1 demerit
  2. 1 minute to 3 minutes – 2 demerits
  3. Tardy to class more than 3 minutes – 4 demerits
- j. Unexcused absence from a class or school-mandated function such as mandatory LaSalle, community service event – 4 demerits
- k. In the hallways at any time while classes are in session without an escort (except during passing periods or specific times designated by the principal) – 4 demerits
- l. Having, using, or evidence of using, a cell phone, , ipod, headphones, or other electronic devices visible (whether or not in use) or audible anywhere, anytime in school or without staff permission at any school event- 4 demerits and confiscation of the device until parent retrieves item from school.
- m. Dress code violations that can be corrected immediately (such as an untucked shirt, untied shoes) – 1 demerit (no warnings will be given and 4 demerits given if not corrected)
- n. Dress code violations that cannot be corrected immediately (Such as no belt, dress pants, or school shirt) – 4 demerits
- o. Foul language including curse words and ethnic or other slurs – minimum 1 demerit
- p. Bullying or verbal harassment - minimum 1 demerit
- q. Rowdy or loud behavior anywhere in the school - minimum 1 demerit
- r. Inappropriate public displays of affection – minimum 1 demerit
- s. Loitering on school grounds – minimum 1 demerit
- t. Disciplinary removal of a student from class – 4 demerits
- u. Academic dishonesty, cheating or plagiarism – 4 demerits
- v. Possession of a permanent marker or sharpie – 4 demerits

**Detentions/Demerit Cycles** –Anytime a student earns 4 demerits within a two-week period, he/she is issued a three-hour detention and charged a \$5 fee to cover the cost associated with detentions. Detention may take the form of a silent study period, behavior improvement work, cleaning or maintenance work, physical fitness work or a combination of these. Parents who object to cleaning or maintenance work, or physical fitness as part of detention should request in writing that their child only have silent study period or written behavior work during detention.

Demerit cycles coincide with the progress report cycles and are reset after the two-week period ends. Thus, if a student receives only one, two or three demerits within a two-week period, the demerits reset to zero and he/she will not be issued a detention.


 Search

# Student Demographics & Achievements

## Why Choose Noble Street?

Noble Street College Prep is conveniently located in Chicago's West Town neighborhood on the corner of Augusta and Noble. As Noble's Founding Campus, we have proudly served members of this community and beyond since August of 1999. Please read on for some more specific information about our demographics and achievements.

### Demography: (#)

- Latino – 81.8%
- African-American – 12.3%
- White – 1.6%
- Asian/Pacific Islander - .07%
- Multi-racial - .5%
- Low Income – 90.6%



### College Placement Record

Noble Street's success in preparing students for college also confirms the power of the Noble model. For the Class of 2011 more than 75% of these students entered below grade level, and more than 80% went on to four-year colleges and universities. Among 2011 and 2012 graduates, 100% have been accepted to college.

### Noble Street College Prep alumni have graduated from the following four-year colleges and universities:

Albion College | Amherst College | Ashford University | Aurora University | Bates College | Beloit College | Carleton College | Chicago State University | Coe College | DePaul University | DePauw University | Dominican University | Eastern Illinois University | Eureka College | Grace College | Governor's State University | Grinnell College | Kendall College | Kenyon College | Lewis University | Loyola University Chicago | North Park University | Northeastern Illinois University | Northern Illinois University | Northwestern University | Pomona College | Robert Morris University | Southern Illinois at Carbondale | University of Chicago | University of Illinois at Chicago | University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign | University of Southern California | University of Wisconsin at Madison | University of Wisconsin at Platteville | Valparaiso University | Wabash College | Wheaton College | Whittier College

### Noble Street College Prep alumni currently attend the following four-year colleges and universities:

Ashford University | Aurora University | Beloit College (#) | Benedictine University | Carleton College | Chicago State University | Coe College | Columbia College | Concordia University | Connecticut College | Davidson College | Dennison College | DePaul University | DePauw University | DeVry University | Dominican University | East-West University | Eastern Illinois University | Edgewood College | Elmhurst College | Full Sail University | Hiram College | Kendall College | Kenyon College | Illinois State University | Illinois Institute of Art | Illinois Institute of Technology | Illinois Wesleyan | Iowa Wesleyan | Kaplan University | Kean University | Kendall College | Knox College | Lake Forest College | Lawrence University | Lewis University | Loyola University Chicago | MacMurray University | Milliken University | Monmouth College | Morehouse College | North Park University | Northeastern Illinois University | Northern Illinois University | Northwestern University | Nova Southeastern University | Oberlin College | Ohio Northern University | Paine College | Pomona College | Princeton University | Robert Morris University | Roosevelt University | Saint Mary's of Minnesota | St. Mary's College | Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville | Southern Illinois at Carbondale | Stanford University | St. Augustine University | St. Xavier University | Taylor University | Tennessee State University



| Trinity Christian College | University of Chicago | University of Dubuque | University of Illinois at Chicago |  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign | University of Illinois at Springfield | University of Iowa | University of  
Maryland | University of Michigan | University of Pennsylvania | University of San Francisco | University of Wisconsin  
at Madison | University of Wisconsin at Platteville | Valparaiso University | Wheaton College | Yale University

### **Achievements and Awards:**

- Over the past four years, current Noble Street College Prep students have provided more than 31,000 hours of service to their community.
- For the past three years Noble Street has ranked within the top ten highest performing open enrollment Chicago high schools based on ACT scores.
- 100% of graduating seniors have been accepted to college.
- Graduates of the Class of 2012 were awarded over \$26 million in college scholarships.
- 82% of 2012 graduates are first generation college students.
- Regional Volleyball Champions, 2010 and 2011
- Noble Network Baseball Champions, 2010
- Louder than a Bomb Semi-Finalist, 2012
- Volleyball Best Sportsmanship in the Noble Network Award, 2011
- Girls Basketball Best Sportsmanship in the Noble Network Award, 2011
- Boys Basketball Best Sportsmanship in the Noble Network Award, 2011