



For Immediate Release
June 20, 2014

Contact: Carolyn Talaske
ctalaske@pcachicago.org
708-271-3957

POLARIS GRADUATES FIRST 8TH GRADE CLASS IN ITS HISTORY *Graduating 8th graders receive more than 225 high school acceptances*

CHICAGO, IL. — [Polaris Charter Academy](#) celebrated the graduation of its first class of eight grade students, totaling 48 students in two classes, on June 12th at George Westinghouse College Prep. Of these students, nearly all of whom are minorities and from low-income communities, 100% will attend schools of choice, most of which are college preparatory schools.

Polaris graduates were accepted to some of Chicago's best high schools, including 2 of Illinois' Top Ten high schools, [Jones College Prep](#) and [Lane Technical College Prep](#)¹. This graduating class includes one HSF scholar who will receive four-years of scholarship support as she attends [Christ the King Jesuit College Prep](#).



"Graduation is the end of one journey and the beginning of a new one," said Polaris Founder and Head of School Michelle Navarre. "At Polaris, we have very high expectations for our students and those expectations continue beyond graduation."

At Polaris, we value Active Citizenship, which is one of our Five Points of Polaris. As such, the graduating 8th graders collectively spent over 1,200 hours volunteering in their homes, communities, and school. Activities included writing cards to hospitalized or traumatized children through [Cardz for Kidz](#), multiple days sweeping their neighborhood's streets of garbage and debris, and shoveling snow during this past winter.

To support students in selecting the school that fit their goals and learning style best, Polaris developed the High School Counselor position that assisted students and families in navigating the Chicago High School landscape. Students first reflected on what characteristics of Polaris helped them to be successful and used these characteristics to determine their "schools of choice" to visit, apply to, and enroll in for the fall. All students were required to go to at least 3 open houses and submit at least 3 applications.

"I was very impressed with all of the hard work that students put forth into the high school application process" said Anne Oberdzinski, the new High School Counselor at Polaris. "Of the students that were

¹ Source: <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/illinois>

actively involved in preparing for selective enrollment high schools, we saw great results. We are looking forward to next year's 8th graders getting into top high schools.”

Polaris will continue to support our alumni through providing study space, partnering with [Horizons for Youth](#) and [Orion's University](#) for tutoring and mentoring, and tracking student achievement during their high school career. The expectation Polaris holds for its graduates is that they will achieve a GPA of at least 3.5/4, will graduate in four years with honors, and continue on to a 4-year college or university. Polaris' goal is to reverse the alarming statistic that 35%² of students drop out of high school in Chicago, even more for African-American boys (48%)³.

About Polaris Charter Academy

[Polaris Charter Academy](#) is the only public Expeditionary Learning (EL) elementary school in Illinois and the first school in the Midwest to be recognized as a Mentor School by the EL network. Polaris serves 450 students and is located in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago. Ninety-four percent of Polaris students are low-income and 99% are African-American or Hispanic. Students “learn by doing” as they conduct fieldwork, speak with experts, work collaboratively, and create authentic, high-quality end products for audiences beyond the classroom. The mission of Polaris Charter Academy is to educate students to be self-motivated, creative, critical thinkers, with the ultimate goal of shaping life-long learners and citizens with a strong sense of personal and civic responsibility.

For additional information and the latest on Polaris Charter Academy, please visit: www.pcachicago.org. For media inquiries, please contact Carolyn Talaske at ctalaske@pcachicago.org or 708-271-3957.

###

² Source: http://www.cps.edu/News/Press_releases/Pages/PR1_08_14_2013.aspx

³ Source: <http://schottfoundation.org/news/8-17-2010/new-report-yes-we-can-public-schools-black-male-students>