



## NORTH CHICAGO COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 187

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# Great things on the Great Lakes

North Chicago School District 187, home to nine schools and nearly 4,000 students, is undergoing a renaissance, one much needed and long overdue. The District, working in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education, aims to dramatically improve academic achievement, restore the District's financial health, increase family engagement and provide more educational options so that children of the community can remain and thrive in North Chicago Public Schools from pre-school through high school.

In the 2011-12 school year, the District applied for and was awarded a competitive \$6 million federal School Improvement Grant to transform North Chicago High School during the next three years. As part of that agreement, the District has selected the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), a proven school reform organization, to lead the charge toward excellence.

Additionally, the State Board of Education is working with the District to improve School Board training and operations, budgeting and financial planning, and instructional, staffing and facilities decisions. In fact, nearly every aspect of the school district's operations and plans will be reviewed and moved forward with the help of the state education agency during the next five years.

Part of the reform strategy under way is the consideration of a new charter school to be located in a state-of-the-art facility on the Naval Station Great Lakes. The charter, open to all students in the District, is expected to serve up to 500 kindergarten through eighth-graders with a unique academic focus, possibly Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

District 187 hopes to take advantage of increased flexibilities available for charters, such as increased freedom to implement new and innovative programming, longer school hours and school years, and classes that integrate extracurricular activities into the school's primary academic theme, such as math lessons that incorporate music or physical fitness.

As a public school authorized by District 187, the school would be open to all families in the District, but could possibly allow a fixed percentage of eligible students to come from military families. This could provide a financial benefit to the District since the District receives federal funds in direct proportion to the attendance of military children. However, for the charter to have any such preference there would have to be a change in state law that could be considered in the General Assembly's spring 2012 session. Regardless of the outcome, enrollment will not be limited exclusively to children of military families.

Applications for a charter proposal will be evaluated beginning this month by a team made up of the North Chicago District administration, representatives of the ISBE and the Navy, regional and charter educational experts, and local community members who will make a recommendation to the District Superintendent and District 187 Board of Education. Prior to voting, the Board must have a public hearing on the charter school. Details on this public hearing and additional opportunities for community feedback will be coming soon. Please check the District 187 website at <http://d187.org> and ISBE's charter school webpage at <http://www.isbe.net/charter> frequently for additional information about this initiative.