

Going for it at Nobles

Photo credit: Karen Snyder

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Every fall, hundreds of prospective Scholars and their families check the box on their Steppingstone applications indicating their interest in independent schools. These schools offer an exciting world of opportunity, but those first days in an unfamiliar environment can be filled with anxiety, even after 14 months of Steppingstone's academic and social-emotional preparation.

When Brittany Reid '05, Nobles '11, first heard of Steppingstone as a fourth-grader at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, she recalls, "My teacher said I should 'go for it.' But I had no idea what it would feel like to walk into Nobles' front door. *(cont'd)*



Brittany Reid '05.

Partner School Profile: Noble and Greenough

All I knew at the time was that Steppingstone would help me get into a good college, and that's all I needed to know to want to become a Steppingstone Scholar."

All went according to plan, as Brittany is currently an environmental studies major with a minor in math at Bates College. She also plays ice hockey and rugby, takes drum lessons, and is planning to spend her junior-year spring term studying in Copenhagen. In her "spare time," she works two jobs at Bates, in the financial aid office and the dining hall. But it wasn't always such smooth sailing for Brittany who grew up in a neighborhood she describes as "plagued by violence." "When I first got to Nobles, I had an adjustment period. I had never received less than a B+ and was used to being in class with almost all students of color. I believe Nobles, too, was learning how to best support inner-city kids entering the school."

Noble and Greenough has been determined to make these transitions for Steppingstone Scholars as seamless as possible. The school instituted a "Big Sibling" program, linking new students of color with older students. "Bridges," a summer orientation, was created to prepare new minority students for their arrival in September. But in addition to offering these thoughtful initiatives, Nobles gave Brittany a broad array of individual support—what she affectionately refers to as her "dream team."

This cadre included Dean of Enrollment Management Jennifer Hines serving as Brit's academic advisor for all six years; Bill and Nan Bussey whom Brit refers to as "my second set of parents" but whose official titles are Provost and Director of Financial Aid, respectively; and Mary Batty, Counselor. When Brittany became a five-day boarder in ninth grade, she also relied on Megan Hamilton, her dorm parent, college counselor, and coach. In Brittany's words, "My team was able to fulfill my tangible and emotional needs, from providing a laptop, to a graduation dress, to counseling." While she clearly benefitted from the academic rigor, Brittany believes that the most important lesson she learned at Nobles came primarily from these trusted five faculty members. "My team taught me that it's okay to trust them and this trust changed my life."

The use of the word "team" is quite deliberate at Nobles. Dean of Diversity Initiatives Steven Tejada describes the school's "Student Life Team" approach. "There are no silos of support here but rather, adults are integrated into the world of the students, providing academic support, mental health counseling, affinity group opportunities, and a ready ear." Buttressed with this support, Brittany soared. She played basketball, softball, served as a Student Life Council representative and an admission tour guide, and managed the girls' lacrosse and boys' basketball teams. She also traveled with the school to perform community service in India and New Orleans. Brittany reflects, "There wasn't a particular teacher who guided me to take advantage of all Nobles had to offer. It was all of them combined."

With the dream team supporting the 11 Scholars currently attending Nobles, Brittany is on her own and fortified for the future. "I expect to be a philanthropist after my successful career in marketing and promotions. And when I achieve this goal, my first check will be to Steppingstone. Steppingstone pushed me to do my best and to be forever ready to try things that I am not completely comfortable doing." Nobles and Steppingstone were certainly lucky she agreed to "go for it."



Photo credit: Tiffany Iron

The 11 Scholars at Nobles don't have to look far to find additional role models who have been in their shoes, with three Steppingstone Alumni currently working there: David Medina '99, Nobles '05, Holy Cross '09; Courtney Monahan '01, Nobles '07, Bryn Mawr '11; and Devareaux Brown '91, Nobles '97, Williams '01.



Photo credit: Karen Snyder

Back, from left: Steven Tejada, Dean of Diversity Initiatives; Jennifer Hines, Dean of Enrollment Management; and Bill Bussey, Provost. Front, from left: Erika Guy, Dean of Students; and Karen Gallagher, Director of Residential Life.

"Nobles' strength is to recognize that supporting students like Brittany doesn't rest on the shoulders of one person. We understand that education is the key to open doors, and we all wear different hats to make sure that the door doesn't start to close on any of our students."

~ Jennifer Hines, Dean of Enrollment Management



Photo credit: Bill Miles

CSA Scholar Abubakar Aden, Class 1.

No Winter Blues at College Success Academy

After the school bell rings for dismissal, 42 fifth-grade College Success Academy Scholars at the Jackson/Mann and Edison K-8 Boston public schools stay to attend Steppingstone classes every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoon to advance their math, reading, and writing skills. Through a math project, Scholars calculated that the time they spend in CSA classes each year is equivalent to 90 extra school days. In writing workshop, Scholars practice non-fiction writing through drafting scientific reports as well as articles for the school newspaper. English and math skills intersect in science lab where Scholars are collecting data, applying scientific method, and reporting on their progress in various experiments, including a recent contest to construct a bridge of popsicle sticks holding the most weight. Scholars are also integrating technology into the classroom through video projects and learning blogs. In January, Scholars earned the opportunity to visit the Boston College campus and attend a BC women's basketball game. Applications are streaming in for the second class of fourth-grade Scholars to begin their journey in CSA this summer.

Boston Non-Profits Bond Over College Access

How does a non-profit effectively expand educational access for the youth it serves? By stepping out of the silo and sharing information with like-minded, goal-driven organizations, that's how! Steppingstone's National Partnership for Educational Access (NPEA) not only connects its 219 members across the country but has also created a regional group called the Boston Learning Network (BLN). BLN is comprised of eight Boston-area non-profits* that are committed to improving educational access for youth. With NPEA as the convener, the BLN received a two-year grant from Third Sector New England in 2011 to work collectively on the following areas in support of underrepresented students: 1) collaboration, 2) communication, 3) best practices, and 4) student and family services.

The BLN is also committed to enabling the transitioning of students between Boston-area NPEA member programs and to improving communication between programs through the monthly NPEA meet-ups that are held for both NPEA members and nonmembers.

Wes Moore Featured at NPEA Conference

The fourth annual NPEA Conference, *Innovative Collaborations: Strategies for Supporting Underrepresented Students*, will take place on April 19-20 in Chicago, IL. The lead keynote speaker will be Wes Moore whose book, *The Other Wes Moore*, was published in April 2010 and became an instant *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller. Nearly 300 attendees, including school- and non-school-based academic enrichment programs, independent schools, charter schools, colleges and universities, education non-profits, and interested individuals, are expected to attend. Highlights will include more than 20 workshops on topics such as student transitions, college persistence, and public/private partnerships and collaborations.

News of Note

*Boston Learning Network Members:

- Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)
- Breakthrough Cambridge
- Families United in Educational Leadership (FUEL)
- MIT Office of Engineering Outreach Programs (OEOP)
- National Partnership for Educational Access (NPEA)
- Pine Manor College
- Trinity Education for Excellence Program (TEEP)
- The Steppingstone Foundation

Founded in 1990, The Steppingstone Foundation is a non-profit organization that develops and implements programs which prepare urban schoolchildren for educational opportunities that lead to college success. Based on the premise that, regardless of circumstance, children can achieve at high levels if they are prepared in a focused, demanding academic environment, Steppingstone programs emphasize rigorous standards and achieve meaningful results.

GETTING IN AN COLLEGE *Prof* STEPPINGSTONE COLLEGE DEPARTMENT

Recently, a Steppingstone Scholar in her senior year at a highly competitive east coast college called Matt Waldman, Steppingstone's Director of College Services, for advice. She was struggling academically and wanted help transferring to a new college. In many cases, transferring schools can lead to a longer—and more expensive—college career; transfer students also have a higher risk of dropping out.

Mr. Waldman worked with the Scholar to identify the challenges she faced at her current school and helped her navigate school resources to meet her needs. The Scholar is now on track to graduate from her current university.

The transition from high school to college can be an overwhelming experience for many students, including Steppingstone Scholars. For most, it signals a series of firsts—relocating to a new state, living with roommates, and balancing a job with heavy academic demands. Steppingstone's answer to this challenge was creating the College Services department in 2011. Once a Scholar graduates from high school, College Services becomes their primary Steppingstone resource, and the department offers personalized support, as well as myriad initiatives

designed to increase Scholars' chances of earning their four-year college degree.

From mentoring programs, to workshops on personal finance and résumé writing, to financial aid advising, Steppingstone's College Services department provides critical support to Scholars and equips them with the skills needed to attain a four-year college degree, and subsequently, enter the workforce capable of achieving a lifetime of success.



ND STAYING IN EGE.

Life on STONE'S NEW SERVICES TMENT

On the day each Scholar makes the ceremonious walk to the podium to accept his or her high school diploma, a Steppingstone staff member is in the audience cheering that Scholar's accomplishments. Since middle school, Steppingstone has been an integral part of the Scholar's academic journey. Leading up to this point, Scholars have sacrificed fun with friends in exchange for two summers of academic work at The Steppingstone Academy, attended countless Saturday Mentoring and Study Hall sessions to get ahead of homework assignments, toured colleges with other Scholars, and received financial aid and college placement counseling. And now, finally, it's time for college.



★ **Steppingstone Send-off** This annual gathering is held in June for Scholars heading to college in the fall and provides an opportunity to connect with Steppingstone and share experiences and concerns related to the transition to college in an informal and fun setting.

★ **Pre-College Bridge Program** Steppingstone offers a three-part workshop series focusing on personal finance, addressing college social concerns, and accessing campus resources. Scholars in high school have the chance to chat with Steppingstone Alumni about what to expect in college.

★ **Mentoring Program** Alumni in their junior and senior year in college are paired with freshmen and sophomores at their respective colleges.

★ **College Services E-Newsletter** A monthly newsletter updates the Alumni college community about the latest Steppingstone services and activities.

★ **Care Packages** In December of their freshmen year, all Steppingstone Alumni receive a package filled with goodies to congratulate them on completing their first-ever mid-term exams in college.

★ **Young Alumni Parties** These gatherings provide a networking opportunity to Alumni during winter and spring breaks.

★ **Advising** Alumni and their parents receive one-on-one advising on various topics including college financial aid forms.

★ **Career Services** Résumé and cover letter writing workshops are offered along with coaching on interview skills and on-campus recruiting opportunities.

★ **Workshops on Personal Finance** Seniors in college who are about to embark on the next phase of their life are offered strategies on successfully joining the work force.

From left to right: Marleah Cummins '05, Mahawa Sidibay '05, Matt Waldman, Director of College Services, and Jamelia Willock '05.

Steppingstone Placement Schools

Beaver Country Day School
Belmont Day School
Belmont Hill School
Boston College High School
Boston Latin Academy
Boston Latin School
Boston Trinity Academy
Boston University Academy
Brimmer and May School
Buckingham Browne
& Nichols School
Cambridge School of Weston
Commonwealth School
Concord Academy
Dana Hall School
Dedham Country Day School
Deerfield Academy
Derby Academy
The Dexter School
Fay School
The Fessenden School
The Governor's Academy
Holderness School
The Meadowbrook School
of Weston
Milton Academy
Newton Country Day School
Noble and Greenough School
John D. O'Bryant School
The Park School
Phillips Academy
Phillips Exeter Academy
The Rivers School
The Roxbury Latin School
St. Mark's School
St. Paul's School
St. Sebastian's School
Shady Hill School
The Southfield School
Thayer Academy
The Winsor School
Xaverian Brothers High School

Did you know? Collectively, Scholars spend over 1,525 hours on reading homework alone during their first Steppingstone summer at The Steppingstone Academy. ★ 11 Summer faculty are returning to teach at The Steppingstone Academy this summer. ★ Nearly half of College Success Academy Scholars are English Language Learners, and there are 10 different languages spoken at home between the 46 Scholars admitted to the program last spring.

Steppingstone Pep Rally

On November 2, 2011, more than 400 guests showed their school spirit at the Charles Hotel in Cambridge for Steppingstone's Pep Rally Gala. Guests included 18 heads of school and featured Scholar speakers, Joseph Okafor '10, a seventh grader at Fessenden, and Bruna Lee '09, an eleventh grader at The Rivers School. The event raised more than \$750,000 for Steppingstone programs.

Top Photo (Left to right): Brian J. Conway, Board Chair, Michael P. Danziger, Founder, and Kelly Glew, President and COO.

Bottom Photo: Joseph Okafor '10, seventh grader at Fessenden with David B. Stettler, Headmaster of The Fessenden School.



Photo credit: Michael Blanchard Photography

Stepping Out

College Success Academy Schools

Edison K-8 School
Jackson/Mann K-8 School



Photo credit: Briini Kem

Co-chairs Ayres Heller and Brian Morris.

Masquerade Crystal Ball!

Young Bostonians gathered at the Four Seasons Hotel on Friday, February 24, donning their best finery and mysterious masks for a masquerade-themed Crystal Ball to raise money for Steppingstone programs. Steppingstone Alumni **Donavan Brown '95** and **Kaitlin Barry Pellerin '96** served on the host committee for the event which attracted nearly 500 attendees and raised \$95,000.

For the first term of the 2011-2012 academic year, 223 Scholars received the Honor Roll distinction at their respective schools.

Scholars are narrowing down college decisions. Early admission recipients include Boston Latin School's **Gabriella Gilbert '06**, who will attend Columbia University in the fall, and Southfield School's **Ashley Santelises '08**, who was accepted to MIT.

Boston Latin School's **Angie Isaza '06** and Boston Latin Academy's **Melissa Rodriguez '06** received Posse scholarships and will have their full tuition needs met in college. Angie will attend Bucknell University and Melissa is heading to Union College.

Zoe Li '06 of Boston Latin School is the captain of the mock trial team, layout editor of the school newspaper, *Argo*, and editor of BLS' literary magazine, *The Register*.

Boston Latin Academy's **Andrés Cardona '06** was awarded the Brown University Book award at BLA's National Honor Society induction ceremony. **Faetitia Desamours '06**, **Kara Blackwell '06**, **Simon Ngo '06**, **Stephanie Thermora '06**, and **Carliana Teixeira '06** were also inducted into the National Honor Society.

Cassandra Vickers '06 of Newton Country Day School was inducted into the National Honor Society as a junior. She spent last summer working in a research lab at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard.

Bruna Lee '09 of The Rivers School delivered the 2011 Steppingstone Gala keynote address, and her accomplishments were then profiled in the *Charlestown Patriot-Bridge*.

Boston College High School's **Boma Dikibo '07** received the Houseman Scholarship through Boston Architectural College to participate in its summer 2012 high school program.

Winsor School's **Priyokti Rana '08** was elected president of the 10th grade class.



On January 16, Scholars, families, and staff joined more than 500 volunteers as part of Boston Cares to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. by gathering at the Curley Middle School in Jamaica Plain to make scarves and blankets to benefit Room to Grow and the New England Center for Homeless Veterans.

Edosa Onaiwu '09 of St. Sebastian's School was elected vice president of the ninth grade.

Dexter School's **Daniel Haro '05** was featured in *The East Boston Times-Free Press* for completing an architecture apprenticeship and volunteering for the Boston Natural Areas Network.

Milton Academy's **Sean Chanicka '08** was elected as a ninth grade Student Government representative. He recently played Romeo in Milton's production of *The Haunting of William Shakespeare*.

Justin Jimenez '08 of Noble and Greenough School participated in his school's Student Diversity Leadership Conference in December. **Gabriella Ureña '10** won a trophy for performing the best monologue from *Romeo and Juliet* in front of the entire Nobles middle school. Also at Nobles, **Felix Liang '06** was featured on WCVB Channel 5 News as an "A Plus Student."

Roxbury Latin's **Bassil Bacare '08** and **Tevin Barros '07** will be attending The Roxbury Latin School's 2012 Immersion Program in Burgos, Spain this summer.

Akeem Lindo '09 of Boston Preparatory was accepted into MIT's SEED Academy.



Derek DaSilva '09, a freshman at Roxbury Latin, addresses attendees at the Roxbury Latin Annual Fund Kick-Off Dinner.

Photo credit: Suzanne Comacina

Scholarly Achievements

Spotlight on Noble and Greenough School

ALSO INSIDE:

- ★ Wes Moore Speaks at NPEA Annual Conference
- ★ Getting in and Staying in College

SPRING 2012

Steppingstone news

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Scholars at Nobles, pictured here: Henry Liang '10 and Gabriela Ureña '10. Pictured on front clockwise, left to right: Adriana Ureña '05, Felix Liang '06, Justin Jimenez '08, Bryan Huynh '08, Sebastian Viasus '07, and Genesis De Los Santos '08. Not pictured: Ava Brignol '08, Noah Poindexter '08, and Sophia Lesperance '10.

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