

## New charter school grows in Loop

**Though classes will be in midst of retail district, after-school shopping will be allowed on Fridays only**

**By Mary Owen  
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When Jazmin Rodriguez gets off the train downtown with her polka-dot backpack she's not going to an office, museum or department store as most folks do. The 14-year-old freshman from the Northwest Side is headed to Muchin College Prep – what will be the only K-12 school in the Loop.

"It's awesome," she said as she walked past Sears department store to Muchin, which is located primarily on the 7th floor of 1 N. State St. "On Friday, if we don't have detention, we get to leave early and go shopping."

Muchin, one of eight Noble Street Charter Schools in Chicago, opened to 256 freshmen from all over the city in an unusual location – the former Mandel Brothers department store. It becomes the third school in the country to be in a high-rise, according to the architect. Additional grades will be added in the future.

With Nordstrom's Rack and H&M across the street and Macy's a block away, Muchin students look dreamily into State Street stores since they are prohibited from going in Monday through Thursday. School officials are determined to ensure their students are not a nuisance to local business and have instructed retailers to contact the school if they see a khaki-pants-and-navy-blue-shirt-clad student.

"We don't want to get kicked out of downtown," said Tanesia Simmons, Muchin's dean of operations.

A downtown school has created some interesting opportunities and challenges. Soccer practice is held in Millennium Park. Basketball and volleyball are played at the Lakeshore Athletic Club. And if there is a fire, the meet-up point will likely be the "Bean" in Grant Park, said Principal Kimberly Neal.

For many students, going downtown used to be a special treat. Before school started, Martin Lopez, 14, only came downtown when he rode along to pick up his mom from her job at the Willis Tower.

"Now, I'm like living down here," he said. "It's kind of a cool adventure."