

## Press Clippings 7/22/2022

### Chicago Tribune

#### School ticketing data update shows racial disparity at Naperville North --- 7/22/2022

By Jennifer Smith Richards and Jodi S. Cohen



School resource officer Roger Tambling walks the hallways in January at Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School in Bradley. (Armando L. Sanchez / Chicago Tribune)

Newly obtained police records from five Chicago suburbs offer additional details about students getting ticketed at school for minor offenses, a widespread practice documented in a Tribune-ProPublica investigation this year.

In Naperville, police provided updated records that include information about the race of students ticketed in the city's two high schools for violating municipal ordinances. At Naperville North High School, only 120 students are Black, or 4.5% of enrollment, but Black students received nearly 27% of the 67 tickets police have issued there since fall 2018.

Black students at Naperville North were nearly five times more likely than their white peers to receive a ticket. At the city's other high school, Naperville Central, police wrote 44 tickets to young people, most of them white students. The ticketing of Black students there was proportionate to school enrollment.

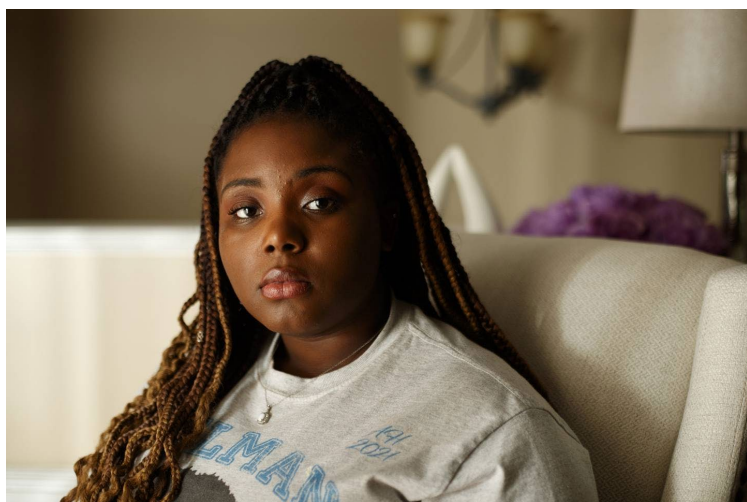
*[ Find out here how many tickets were issued in your Illinois school district ]*

Newly released records also confirm that police have ticketed young people at two other large suburban schools — Schaumburg High School in Schaumburg and Maine West High School in Des Plaines — in recent years for minor misbehavior, adding to the more than 140 districts where reporters already had documented that police had cited students.

The updated information, which also includes new data from South Holland and Bartlett, was added Thursday to an online lookup tool created for the investigation “[The Price Kids Pay](#).” The unprecedented examination of police ticketing at school, published in May, found that [police issued at least 11,800 tickets to students](#) in the three-year period examined: the school years ending in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The tickets, issued for offenses such as fighting or using a vaping device, often resulted in steep fines and debt for students and their families.

The investigation also uncovered a [pattern of racial disparities in ticketing](#). In Illinois schools and districts where data on race was available, Black students were twice as likely as their white peers to receive a ticket.

The racial disparity now identified at Naperville North offers context in an [ongoing legal battle over a ticket police issued to a Black student there in 2019](#). The 17-year-old girl was accused of stealing a classmate’s Apple AirPods, which she said she had thought were her own.



**Amara Harris, 19, a former student at Naperville North High School, continues to fight a theft ticket in court, saying she did nothing wrong. She and her family have alleged that the school and police pursued the matter aggressively in part because she is Black. (Armando L. Sanchez / Chicago Tribune)**

Now 19 and in college, she continues to fight the theft ticket in court, saying she did nothing wrong and refusing to pay a fine for what she said was a simple mix-up. She and her family have alleged that the school and police pursued the matter aggressively in part because of the girl’s race. On Thursday, a new attorney working on her behalf asked the city for more records and asked to question individuals involved in the matter. The next court date is in September.

The school district has distanced itself from the case and has said it is the Naperville police who decide whether to ticket students. The city previously denied that race played a role in police decisions to ticket students.

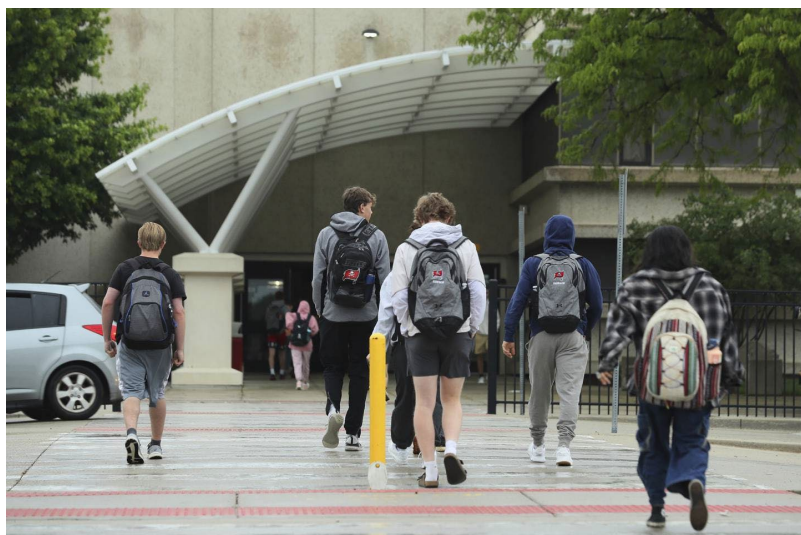
Police records show that students at Naperville's two high schools were ticketed most often for possession or use of cannabis or tobacco and for fighting. The fines vary depending on the offense; the minimum fine is \$100 for possession or use of tobacco or alternative nicotine by a minor. The city's municipal code allows fines for fighting, cannabis possession and some other infractions to reach \$750, the maximum allowed by state law for ordinance violations.

Most of the tickets Black students received were for fighting; white students were usually ticketed for tobacco use or possession.

In addition to the updated Naperville data published Thursday — which excludes tickets issued in the last school year to keep data consistent among districts — the ticketing database now includes several other changes:

**Schaumburg:** The Police Department initially did not confirm that tickets were issued at Schaumburg High School in Township District 211, the largest high school district in Illinois. The department has since provided data that shows officers issued 27 tickets to students in the three school years ending in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The tickets were for truancy, cannabis or tobacco use or possession, disorderly conduct and “instigating,” part of a local law related to fighting.

[The Illinois attorney general's office is investigating whether District 211 and the city of Palatine](#), where other district schools are based, violated state civil rights laws when ticketing students.



Students head into school at Palatine High School in May 2022. (Stacey Wescott / Chicago Tribune)

Schaumburg is not included in the state’s investigation. Village spokesperson Allison Albrecht said that police get involved with school incidents at the request of school officials, parents or other citizens, and that citations are “often a last resort.” The district superintendent has said school officials involve the police when a student violates a local ordinance, when there is a safety threat or when other interventions haven’t worked — regardless of the student’s race or background.

**Des Plaines:** The Police Department confirmed that officers had ticketed 27 students at Maine West High School, northwest of Chicago, over the three school years examined. Most of the tickets were for tobacco possession. Spokespeople for the city and school district have not responded to requests for comment.

**South Holland:** The village, south of Chicago, confirmed that debts from student tickets can be sent to collections. Police issued 90 tickets to students at Thornwood High School during the school years examined in “The Price Kids Pay.”

South Holland police wrote an additional 85 tickets to young people at Thornwood this past year. All but one of the tickets were for disorderly conduct, and all were issued to Black students. About 82% of the students are Black. As with the Naperville data, tickets issued last school year in South Holland are not reflected in the online database.

The fines from tickets issued to young people at the high school during the past four school years totaled \$47,950, of which \$10,800 has been paid, records show. No tickets were issued in spring 2020 or during the entire 2020-21 school year, when the school was closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The village administrator has not responded to requests for comment.

**Bartlett:** The Bartlett Police Department, which has jurisdiction at **Bartlett High School**, west of Chicago, had previously included some tickets that were issued before or after the three school years specified in the reporters’ records request. The correct number of tickets written during this time period is 167.

Bartlett High School is one of several schools in the large **U-46 District** based in Elgin. Since the publication of “The Price Kids Pay,” several schools and communities have changed their ticketing or policing practices. Bartlett Deputy Chief Geoffrey Pretkelis said that in the coming school year students will be referred to a smoking-cessation program instead of being ticketed for tobacco use or possession.

“What would happen going forward is, if you caught someone with tobacco or vaping we’d say, ‘Hey, listen we have this program,’ and if they complete it, we would not issue the citation,” Pretkelis said. “We were very successful in years past when we did have that diversion program.”

*ProPublica reporter Haru Coryne contributed to this story.*