

Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM



For reviews of local school council training sessions see page 4.

For a sample of Chicago school vision statements see page 7.

Reformers jockey to shape training

by Nancy Devlin

For the most part, local school council members have been forced to sink or swim since their election last October. Some got straight answers to their questions; many did not. Some got good guidance and training; many did not. And many got no assistance at all.

But then, had school reform waited for the discovery of all possible solutions to all possible problems, *it* would have been dead in the water.

Now, six months into reform, a few lifeboats are on the way to parents, teachers and others reaching out for help. And the groups who scrambled to get councils going are

The Joyce Foundation, also warned that councils must "quickly move beyond issues of school operations and personnel and into deliberations about substance—about educational philosophy and curricular content and pedagogical emphasis."

In a fortuitous turn of timing, some of the nation's best thinkers and doers in elementary and secondary education are now appearing in a nine-part cable television series being taped for distribution to Chicago schools. The tapes will include follow-up discussions by a cross-section of individuals involved in Chicago school reform. (For details see accompanying story, "TV series spotlights learning.")

The broadcasts, a joint project of a federal educational laboratory serving the Midwest and the Public Broadcasting Service, are aimed at encouraging educators and noneducators alike to begin thinking and talking about a new, higher vision for teaching and learning, one that emphasizes problem solving and decision making.

"When you look at what schools have tried to do up to this point, it has been an impoverished vision of what kids should be learning," said Beverly J. Walker, urban education director for the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. "The programs focus on the learning

AN ANALYSIS

beginning to promote ways to ensure all councils get the information and support they need over the long haul.

But the order and efficiency that council members crave is not yet in sight. As a recent progress report on reform observed: "School reform, Chicago style, is messy, complicated, fractious and uneven. These also tend to be the characteristics of democracies in operation, especially in the early stages. Observe current goings-on in Eastern Europe."

That same report, prepared for

goals we think ought to be driving education reform."

And if viewers don't agree with the laboratory's goals, she said, at least they will have received ideas "to play around with" and will be learning a language they can use in talking about teaching and learning.

Chicago principals no doubt will especially welcome upcoming council training in "boardsmanship," or how to be a policymaker, not an administrative meddler. The two-day conference, with sites around the city for the second day, is being organized by the Illinois School Boards Association in cooperation with the Chicago Public Schools.

"We're not just going to preach," said Joan Isenberg, the association's assistant executive director. "We will have activities."

One can only hope that the activities will be relevant to council members who are already dealing with principal selection, budgets and school improvement plans.



Reform volunteers Kyle Henderson, a lawyer, and Betty Forbes, a corporate official, (standing) backstop Mildred Arroyo-Wanyung, as she translates principal selection procedures for fellow LSC members from Spry Elementary.

Future unclear

Meanwhile, a debate is brewing over the future of LSC training and support and the roles that the public and private sectors should play:

■ Don Moore of Designs for Change, a research and child advocacy group, would funnel more money into LSCs and let them decide, through their dollars, who provides training. "As much funding as possible should be in the hands of the school community rather than financing more groups that are supposed to help the school," he said.

■ But Douglas Gills of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization sees a need for continued support of community organizations. He shudders to think what might happen when community grants distributed by Leadership for Quality Education, a business group, expire. "These grants are needed more than ever because it's hard to keep the community involved," he said. Added KOCO colleague Ronald Sistrunk: "A lot of schools won't reach out for help. I go out to them and build that rapport and they trust me."

■ Gills and Sistrunk called for more funding to field African-

Sen. Jones lands South Side training center

Thanks to a sneak attack by Sen. Emil Jones (D-Chicago), 80 South Side schools will have their own leadership development center, funded by a hefty \$500,000 continuing state appropriation.

"I slipped it through the legislature," he said with a chuckle. "Other areas are going to be wanting this."

Seeing a need for ongoing training for local school councils, Jones looked for a permanent funding source and came up with the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, known principally for its 4-H programs.

The Extension Service has a \$4-million operation in Cook County. Until Jones's appropriation, however, virtually all of the money came from the federal government. The state appropriation also represents

an improved return on Chicago-generated taxes, Jones said. Taxes on racetrack betting help support Extension Service programs, and Chicagoans do a fair amount of betting, he explained. "This is Chicago money," he said.

The legislator cited one other benefit of this new arrangement: "We do not have enough minorities going to the University of Illinois. This will establish a link early on."

The School/Community Leadership Center is located at 11019 S. Halsted. Three staff members are on board and planning programs: James Drake, June Bonner and Virginia Johnson. All are South Side residents who were teachers or administrators in the Chicago Public Schools. For more information, call (312) 928-3870.

Linda Lenz

American trainers. "There are few black groups getting the training dollar," noted Gills. Added Sistrunk: "What we need to do—and I'm not on a black-white issue at all—is to develop folk who speak our language." KOCO staff arranged train-

ing for KOCO board members so that they, too, could help neighborhood councils.

■ Rosa E. Machabanski, director of training and management assistance for the Latino Institute, agrees that training must account for peo-

ple's cultural backgrounds. She believes it also should be aimed at making trainers out of LSC members themselves. "They need to be able to assess the needs of others and help others," she said. "We should look to empowering these individuals to provide continuing leadership in their communities."

■ Tom Guzik, who works virtually full time as chair of the Subdistrict 7 Council, would give more money to the system's skeletal subdistrict councils and offices, which are charged by law with coordinating training and communication among member councils and schools. "You got us to join the Army, you put us in the front lines but you gave us blanks," he said. "Everytime we shoot, we get shot down. The least I expect is cooperation and some money to run on."

Subdistrict councils have some 50 to 70 member schools, staffs of only four to five people and virtually no money.

■ But some local school councils don't want money earmarked for training. Indeed, they'd like to use this year's \$1,500 training allotment for paper, photocopying, telephones and other bare essentials of self-support.

■ The Illinois School Boards Association could come to the rescue of subdistrict councils and their schools by providing coordinators, independent of the school system, to work with them in pinpointing needs and crafting assistance, said Joan Isenberg.

■ Beverly Walker of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory envisions creative uses of the School Board's telecommunications network.

For example: Sending clear, concise information throughout the system by computer; setting up an in-house cable system to enable schools to tap into an enormous range of educational programming; equipping schools to use recorded telephone messages to keep parents up to date on activities, deadlines and even their children's daily homework assignments. (Both Illinois Education Supt. Robert Leininger and Chicago Schools Supt. Ted Kimbrough have voiced support for this thrust.)

■ Leadership for Quality Education, a business group, already has scheduled production of videocassette library covering such topics as

principal selection, budgeting, financial resources and LSC responsibilities.

■ Jeanine Grenberg of the Community Management Assistance Program, which has recruited corporate trainers to help individual councils, is thinking ahead to "technical assistance." For example: If a council has questions about, say, opening a computer center it could call CMAP for a volunteer consultant.

■ Peggy Gordon of the Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project is considering the creation of mediation teams to prevent hot spots from bursting into flames.

As for the Board of Education, its plans now include only development of a directory that will list available training. "I'm coordinating systemwide training," said Theodore Wright. "But that is not the same as being in charge. I have a staff of one."

Others at Board headquarters on Pershing Road are involved in training activities, but they are lodged in different departments with different lines of authority. Generally, they have gotten poor reviews from customers. A collective groan emerged from a recent citywide meeting of principals when someone mentioned the Board's "inept" training in lump-sum budgeting.

Lukewarm at best

The central administration—and, for that matter, the Chicago Teachers Union—are still perceived as being, at best, lukewarm about school reform. Councils that know only to call "downtown" may even have given up on training.

As school reformers look to the future of training, they should recognize that the training needs of councils will change as the long process of reform continues. Each council will reach a certain place in the process at a different time. Eventually, they all will have to tackle the challenge of providing quality education appropriate to their communities, which will require more sophisticated support than what is now being offered. Training will have to be adapted continually.

Though councils may now be stum-

Cable TV series spotlights learning

Just as Chicago has restructured its school system, the educators appearing in a live television series on Cable Channel 23 would restructure classrooms.

Students, for example, would become workers not mere recipients of information. Teachers would become learners, not just dispensers of information. Slow learners would receive enrichment rather than remediation. And students would work in groups more often, helping each other learn.

The topics in this series, "Restructuring to promote learning in America's schools," range from testing and student tracking to school-community connections. The talkers include such creative educational critics as Howard Gardner of Harvard University, Lauren Resnick of the University of Pittsburgh and Asa Hilliard of Georgia State University. Their words are complemented by taped footage of classrooms using new approaches.

Each two-hour broadcast concludes with a 45-minute question-and-answer session involving people at a number of teleconference sites around the Midwest.

Interested Chicagoans would be well advised to wait for edited one-hour videocassettes being produced by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, which is co-sponsoring the series with the Public Broadcasting Service. These tapes will include discussions by individuals involved in Chicago school reform.

The first two segments of the series have already been aired. Remaining segments are scheduled for broadcast from noon to 2 p.m. April 26, May 24, June 6, June 20, July 11, July 25 and Aug. 8.

Additional information on the broadcasts and availability of the edited tapes can be obtained from Beverly J. Walker at NCREL (708-941-7677) or Carole Nolan in the Board of Education's bureau of telecommunications and broadcasting (312-890-8225).

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Reviews

Two 'thumbs up,' one 'thumbs down' on training

To present a picture of the free training available to local school councils CATALYST asked three individuals who work with schools to attend a session and write about it. These are their reviews of training conducted by the Chicago Region PTA, the Board of Education's Parent Education Center and the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

Chicago Region PTA

Chicago Region PTA trainer Judy Budde summed up the PTA's training philosophy at the start of this session on school reform legislation with a disclaimer: "We do not interpret the bill for you. We tell you what the bill says." Though this approach did not produce the most creative or vision-expanding session for the Coonley Elementary LSC, it did provide very useful, practical information and guidance for future action.

The Coonley LSC, like many LSCs across the city, is still struggling to define its role and apply it through the school improvement planning process. It called in the PTA for a session on council powers and duties, and received a much-needed forum for questions and answers.

The atmosphere was relaxed and informal. In fact, in trying to be informal, Budde was in danger of being a little too chummy. She was flexible with both her time and her presentation; the planned one-hour session

stretched to two hours and included discussion on such diverse topics as the Illinois Open Meetings Act and the difficulties of removing a bad teacher.

The training offered a good combination of practical how-to information and school-based management philosophy. Budde stressed over and over that the LSC should "try not to be an 11-member dominating board...You were elected and you should pay attention to your constituents!" And she readily answered questions about how to do this. "Does the principal decide if we do a survey or does the Local School Council?" she was asked. "The Local School Council," she answered.

Many processes were not able to be explained thoroughly, due mainly to a lack of time, so Budde suggested that the council have her back for a full-length session on school improvement planning. Though it was my impression that she would be willing to give follow-up consultation, she did not make it explicit beyond offering to return for future workshops.

Over all, the Coonley LSC was very pleased with its training. The three members I spoke with gave it ratings of very good to excellent, and the mood of the room was one of satisfaction. The PTA was able to provide just what the council wanted. In the words of one teacher: "It was a good training. I asked my direct questions and got answers."

Ana Bedard
Executive Director
Organization of the North East

Parent Education Center

The March 26 training session given by the Board of Education's Parent Education Center was aptly billed as an overview of school improvement planning.

In fewer than 90 minutes we had covered the planning process, needs assessment, school improvement plan format, the "effective schools model," monitoring and consensus building.

The only presentation that lasted longer than 15 minutes was the one on plan format. It was filled with good information but difficult to follow because the presenter, a special education administrator, took an academic tone and recited statistics. Further, only about a third of the 200-plus people in attendance could see the screen on which key printed material was projected.

The best presentation was on the planning process. Given by Patricia Harvey, a center coordinator, it was concise, covered the planning elements and defined fundamentals.

The overview session was based on the "School improvement planning guide" the Board of Education has sent to every school. And that was part of the problem. The guide is thorough and well intentioned. But it contains language like: "This section should contain a description of the general strategy for, or approach to, changes contemplated. It should include a general sequence of changes proposed together with a statement of applicable assumptions." The first person to figure out what that

means, please give me a call.

Participants were repeatedly reminded that the Parent Education Center would bring "tailor-made workshops" to individual schools. Unless its small staff is prepared to visit 540 schools by May 1, I doubt the center will be able to offer much support to local school councils.

If you were new to the planning process, the overview session may have given you a start in framing your thoughts. If you had had any experience with planning, it probably did little for you. When it was over, one parent rated the session "excellent." But a teacher said: "I could have spent this time with my children."

Halisi K. Shauri
Second vice president
Citizens Schools Committee

The Chicago Panel

When I walked into a March 21 training session on school budgets, given by Evelyn Roman-Santos of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, I knew almost nothing about school budgets.

I was there to write a review of the session, but I quickly found myself taking notes on everything Roman-

Santos said.

She began with an explanation of what the Chicago Panel is, a coalition of 20 organizations that serves as a Board of Education watchdog. She then distributed a "suggested calendar" built around due dates in the budget cycle. Members of the audience immediately began asking questions, proving Roman-Santos's contention that the Board often assumes incorrectly that schools are familiar with the dates.

Roman-Santos encouraged her listeners to hold open budget hearings so that members of the community could express their views.

The trainer clearly explained a number of terms that council members frequently hear, such as discretionary funds and lump-sum budgeting. She also explained that money in a school budget comes from different sources, each with its own rules. For example, there is money earmarked for desegregation programs, for special education, for disadvantaged children and so on.

To complete the session, Roman-Santos distributed copies of a preliminary budget for the school where the training session was held, Roentgen Elementary, 15 S. Homan. With a real budget in hand, we learned how

to decipher the number codes that accompany each line item, indicating the general area and specific project for which money has been allocated.

Like others at the session—Roentgen's principal and teacher and community council members and several teachers from other schools—I found the session very helpful. By the end, the budget was no longer just a bunch of numbers to me. However, I would need another session to feel comfortable making changes, like closing out a personnel position.

Roman-Santos gave out the Chicago Panel's phone number, in case participants came up with other questions. The budget session was one in a series of five training sessions she gives in either Spanish or English. Her style is low key but she has no need to be charismatic because she brings much-needed information and clarification.

Timuel Black, a well-known black community activist and educator, recently became a Chicago Panel trainer, presumably to serve more councils in the African-American community.

Naomi Millender
Program director
Chicago Teachers Center
Northeastern Illinois University

Where councils can get help

The following organizations are among those offering free workshops or guidance at schools throughout the city.

■ Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, 939-2202. Two trainers available. Topics include School Reform Act, needs assessment, school improvement plan, budgeting, principal selection, problem solving.

■ Chicago Region PTA, 786-1476. Three trainers available. Topics include parent involvement, needs assessment, bylaws, leadership, parliamentary procedure, budgeting, effective schools, LSC powers and duties.

■ Community Management Assistance Program, 606-8240. 70 corporate volunteers available.

Topics include group process, effective meetings, budgeting, principal evaluation and selection.

■ CPA's for the Public Interest, 715-0666. 91 volunteer accountants available. Topic: budgeting.

■ Designs for Change, 922-0317. Five trainers available. Topics include group process, LSC's legal obligations, principal selection, conflict resolution, school improvement planning.

■ Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project, 332-2494. 110 volunteer lawyers available. Topics include problem solving, legal issues, the School Reform Act, conflict resolution, principal selection.

■ Parent Education Center of the Board of Education, 890-2907. Six trainers available. Topics include

school-based management, the role of the LSC, conflict management, effective schools.

■ Parents United for Responsible Education, 784-7873. Three trainers available. Topics include budgeting, principal selection, school improvement plan. Spanish sessions available.

■ Latino Institute, 663-3603. Five trainers available. Topics include leadership development, planning, decision making, budgeting, principal evaluation.

■ United Neighborhood Organization, 666-4445. Four trainers available. Topics include how councils can work with their constituencies, conflict resolution, organizing around school issues and parent-teacher partnerships.

School improvement: It all begins with a vision

by Geraldine D. Brownlee

School improvement should begin with a vision, a vision of the kind of lives a school community wants its children to lead. The statement of this vision then becomes a beacon directing the work of children, teachers, administrators, parents, and community residents involved in the school.

For those engaged in school improvement planning, that beacon illuminates first the goals a school adopts for itself and its children over the course of their schooling. The beacon then illuminates, in turn, the more specific, measurable objectives, or tasks, a school sets for itself and its children year by year.

In Chicago, school improvement begins with the Chicago School Reform Act adopted by the General Assembly in 1988.

Law sets purpose

That law states in part: "...the primary purpose of schooling is the transmission of knowledge and culture through which children learn in areas necessary to their continuing development." The "necessary areas" identified by the Legislature include language arts, mathematics, fine arts, physical development, health and biological, physical, and social sciences.

The law itself goes on to set goals that add up to the primary purpose of schooling. They deal with:

- Proficiency in reading, mathematics and higher order thinking.
- Provision of adequate athletic programs.
- Regular school attendance, continuing through graduation.

- Adequate preparation for further education.

- Adequate preparation for successful entry into employment.

- Provision of a common learning experience based on high expectations for all students.

- Preparation to compete in the international market place, in part through ability to speak a foreign language.

- Encouragement to explore journalism, drama, art, music, and other special fields.

- Ensuring teachers the authority to make decisions about instruction and the method of teaching.

- Ensuring students the means to express themselves creatively.

To be sure, no school is going to tackle all these goals at once. But school communities must keep them in mind, while still creating special environments to fit the needs of their particular group of students. These goals, in effect, provide the foundation for the Chicago school curriculum, a term rooted in the Latin word *currere*, which means "the course to be run."

Special challenge

The special challenge of the vision statement is its call to represent, simultaneously, the goals of schooling for all of our nation's children and the special needs and beliefs of each school community. This is not a task to take lightly.

Vision statements are important not only for their words, but also for the process by which those words are chosen. When parents, teachers, administrators and other members of the school community come together

to share and debate differing values and ideas and finally find common ground, they incorporate the vision into their expectations, their work, their lives. To be of value, a purpose must have the allegiance and commitment of the school community. Indeed, if a local school council cannot reach consensus, it should not adopt a vision statement.

In crafting a vision statement, local school council members would do well to acquaint themselves with theories of how children learn and with information about employment trends, citizenship, parenthood and other aspects of the greater society. With this knowledge, a council can avoid a too-easy projection of purpose that would lock students into a limiting status quo and deny them access to widening horizons and opportunities.

Keep it alive

Once written, a vision statement should be shared—constantly—to keep it alive. Print it up to have at hand for school personnel and visitors to the school office. Invite students to create posters and compositions around it. Use it as a theme for schoolwide programs, skits and drama. Print it on T-shirts and buttons. Mount a contest challenging students to convert it to a slogan, song or cheer. One school sums up its statement with this chant, which aptly describes what we all are about in Chicago: "Conceive it, believe it, achieve it." ■

Geraldine D. Brownlee is on the faculty of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

A Chicago sampler

Schools set their sights with vision statements

CATALYST put out a call for school vision statements to share with its readers. Here are some of the statements submitted by schools or organizations working with schools.

MARY FLOCK



Mozart Elementary 2200 N. Hamlin

We believe that Mozart School should be the focal point of the community providing pre-school, child care, adult education, special interest classes and student tutorial service in an enlarged air-conditioned facility operating on an extended day, year round.

We believe that all graduates should reach national norms in reading, math, science, social studies and writing skills and see the connections between these school subjects and success in the world outside of school.

We believe that all classroom teachers can incorporate special education techniques and that most special education students can be successfully mainstreamed.

We believe that teachers need time to build collegial relationships, exchange classroom ideas, and visit other classrooms both in our school and in other schools.

We believe in continual staff development that is based on our faith in our own ability to influence students'

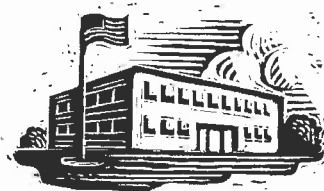
achievement.

We believe that the library should have the capacity to be a resource room for students to become "self-learners."

We believe that we have to seek more effective programs to motivate academic underachievers.

We believe that we must expose our students to an expanded fine-arts program.

We believe that our school must act as a team—with all staff, parents, community members and students working co-operatively together to achieve the vision we have.



Collins High 1313 S. Sacramento

We at Collins High School are committed to promoting an environment of excellence, confidence and growth, to encouraging curiosity, tolerance, tenacity, and pride, and to upholding the highest ethics. We also demand the best of ourselves and each other, in essence, to have the kind of school we have always wanted to attend.

We are committed to providing a school environment that motivates students, staff, parents, and community residents to strive for the highest academic standards and problem-solving skills, to pursue personal and social

excellence with a strong foundation in African-American history and culture, to live with dignity and humility, and to develop all of our talents so that we may serve best in our present and changing world.



Dumas Elementary 6615 S. Kenwood

The Alexander Dumas School is an institution that is committed to the idea that children can learn if they are properly taught. Several beliefs provide guidance for the practices and principles that are used to teach students. These beliefs include high regard for the rights of individuals, the rights of the family, and the collective rights of citizens in a free society.

As students here at Alexander Dumas, we are expected to acquire, through a variety of experiences, skills that will enable us to make informed choices when we become adults.

Furthermore, the school believes that its children need enrichment through the arts and cultural activities. In this way we will be able to develop knowledge that extends beyond basic skills.

Finally, our educational experiences must be firmly rooted in a deep understanding of black culture and its contribution to the civilization of modern as well as ancient man.



Robeson High School

6835 S. Normal

"Where Dreams Become Reality"

The Paul Robeson Community is responsible for carrying out all programs necessary to achieve peak performances of all of its members relative to academic and school-related progress.

The Paul Robeson Community will develop within its students the ability to think skillfully, communicate effectively, and choose appropriately.

The Paul Robeson Community will create within its students the desire to learn about themselves, to appreciate their own uniqueness, to develop self-esteem, to respect others, and to understand that their actions have outcomes.



Murray Language Academy

5335 S. Kenwood

At Murray we believe that every child can learn. Thus we strive to help each child reach his or her maximum potential.

We strive to equip our students academically, emotionally, socially and physically so they can acquire the self-esteem needed to become productive citizens and capable, well-adjusted adults.

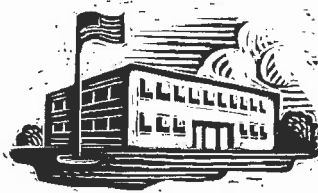
We strive to provide stimulating, child-centered instruction in a safe, positive environment.

We attempt to involve our students in the creative aspect of the learning process, emphasizing critical thinking skills rather than simply asking them to be recipients of information.

As a language academy, we strive to provide equal educational opportunities for all children in the develop-

ment of second language communication skills. We expect that these skills will lead to a keener awareness of other people, a greater sensitivity to their attitudes, customs, and cultures and to a wider range of career and job opportunities.

We strive to provide a quality program of instruction in all areas of the curriculum, integrating and interfacing the second language with the regular program.



Stevenson Elementary

8010 S. Kostner

As our mission, the Stevenson School Local School Council, faculty, staff, students and community believe that achievement is possible for every individual within a supportive, caring and nurturing environment that emphasizes the academic pursuit of excellence, the respect for individual differences, and the respect for the rights of others.

[Our goals are:]

To provide students with the basic learning tools necessary to enable them to assimilate knowledge for the rest of their lives.

To provide students with a knowledge and appreciation of their heritage.

To provide students with an environment in which to learn the responsible use of freedom and that each personal decision has a result.

To provide students with the opportunity to accumulate and accentuate such personality characteristics as integrity, responsibility, morality, dependability, initiative, self-discipline and leadership.

To provide differentiated and varied curriculum offerings and an environment in which a student can work toward the highest possible fulfillment of his/her potential.

To accept responsibility for educating all students regardless of individual differences—intellectual, physical, personal.

To provide students with an opportunity to develop an appreciation for

aesthetic qualities that contribute to a rich and full life.

To provide students with the knowledge of the importance of participating in and preserving the democratic process.

To provide each student with a recognition of his/her self-worth and respect for others.

To promote a concern for improving the quality of the school's teaching/learning environment by working toward school goals.



Blair Special Education Facility

6751 W. 63rd

We at Blair School are committed to encouraging our children to utilize their God-given ability and to developing the whole child—not just rehabilitating physical/medical anomalies, not just providing the optimal academic assistance, but developing the entire child so that that child will be able to have a solid foundation on which to go out into the world, a foundation that will enable him to become a productive member of society.

This will be achieved by creating a positive educational environment which promotes the child-first theory and by providing all necessary services, unlimited opportunities, guidance and support by all who are involved with the child.

Administrators and personnel must be: good educators, open minded, compassionate, happy, unselfish, motivated, of the belief that kids can achieve, willing to work together.

There will be an "open door" policy for all parents and community to be involved in the development of the child and school.



New faces for School Board

The 45 individuals nominated for 15 seats on an expanded Board of Education constitute, above all, a fresh field. While prominent in their local communities, most do not travel in the circles from which School Board members typically are chosen.

The individuals were selected by the School Board Nominating Commission, itself a group of fresh faces. By law, the Commission is made up of two parent or community representatives from each of the city's 10 elementary subdistricts, three from the citywide high school subdistrict and five individuals appointed by the mayor of Chicago.

The Commission chose the 45 nominees from among 178 applicants. They are grouped into 15 slates of three. If Mayor Daley rejects all members of a particular slate, the Commission must send him a new slate. Anxious to get the new Board in place, the Commission has five back-up slates ready.

Daley received the slates on March 23 and, by law, has 30 days in which to act. Nominees also must win City Council approval.

Here are the slates:

One-year terms

Fitz Barclay Jr., teacher, Thornridge High School, minister, Morgan Park Pentecostal Church; **Nuru-Deen Olowopopo**, obstetrician and gynecologist, Michael Reese Health Plan; **Walidah G. Sherman**, former project associate, Quality of Life Continuum.

Julia A. Camacho, office of ombudsman, Illinois Department of Public Aid; **Harry Kiang**, professor, urban land use planning, Northeastern Illinois University; **Marvin Perez**, recreation therapist, Illinois Children's School and Rehabilitation Center.

Augusta Cunningham, senior audit officer, City Colleges of Chicago; **Maxine Norris**, executive director, Community Linkages; **Clementine Smith**, upper-grade teacher,

Chicago Public Schools.

Benjamin C. Duster, lawyer, business executive, Cimplly Complex Communications Systems Corporation; **James C. Griggs**, special assistant to the chancellor, City Colleges of Chicago; **Albert N. Logan**, adjunct assistant professor of business, Chicago State University.

Two-year terms

Miriam Toronado Arambulo, supervisor Latino relations section, Illinois Department of Public Aid; **Linda G. Coronado**, volunteer director, Cook County Hospital; **Carlos Guevarra**, recreation supervisor, Chicago Park District.

Clinton Bristow Jr., dean, College of Business Administration, Chicago State University; **David Milliner**, chairman and chief executive, Direct Markets and Media International; **Larry Pickens**, pastor, Gorham United Methodist Church.

William G. Cole, past president, Lake Forest College; **Patricia L. Daley**, former teacher; **Ronald F. Gibbs**, public affairs consultant, Gibbs & Co.

Douglas C. Gills, community development

director, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization; **Vallmer E. Jordan**, retired personnel director, AT&T Technologies; **Bernice J. Miller**, president, Harold Washington College.

Three-year terms

Samella B. Abdullah, psychologist, Abdullah & Associates; **Thomas A. Murray**, consultant, former executive director, Metropolitan Rehabilitation Newtork; **Eric R. Outten**, senior field engineer, ICC Datachecker.

Joseph A. Antolin, ombudsperson, Illinois Department of Public Aid; **Jose A. Cuevas**, manager, Head Start Multicultural, Multilingual Resource Center, City of Chicago; **Mirta Ramirez**, homemaker, Puerto Rican education activist.

Stephen R. Ballis, real estate developer, Dayton Resources; **Walter L. Coleman**, editor, *All Chicago City News*, Justice Graphics; **Donald C. Sembach**, retired, sales management.

Michael J. Harrington, communications consultant, Harrington Communications; **Nathaniel Jarrett**, minister, Martin Temple A.M.E. Zion Church; **Ann Whitaker**, associate professor of education, Northeastern Illinois University.

Four-year terms

Edgar B. Alvarado, assistant asset manager, Travelers Realty Investment Co.; **Maria J. Vargas**, senior order clerk, Illinois Bell Telephone and private counselor; **Maria J. Yanguas**, consultant, Illinois Resource Center.

Harriett Cotharn, teacher, O'Keefe Elementary School; **Florence B. Cox**, past president, Chicago Region PTA, LSC trainer; **John L. Dunham**, senior district director, Network 2000/U.S. Sprint.

Randall Johnson, dean of Arts and Sciences, Kennedy-King College; **Rev. William Townsend**, minister, St. Mary A.M.E. Church; **Timothy W. Wright III**, commissioner, Chicago Department of Economic Development.

Candidate pool profile

Gender: 16 females, 29 males.

Race/ethnicity: 27 blacks, 11 Hispanics, 6 whites, 1 Asian.

Parents: 31 are parents of current or former Chicago Public Schools pupils.

Occupations: 11 educators, 11 business, 8 social services, 4 clergy, 3 attorneys, 1 homemaker, 1 physician, 6 retired and other.

Areas of residence, with subdistrict in parentheses: 4 Far Northwest (1), 5 North (2), 3 Near Northwest (3), 1 West (4), 3 Near Southwest (5), 8 Near South (6), 2 Far Southwest (7), 1 Mid-South (8), 13 Far South, east (9), 5 Far South, west (10).

Good schools always in the making

by William Ayers and Sylvia Peters



Thousands of people throughout Chicago are now struggling to produce good schools. We would like to offer for their consideration some of the things we have found to be true

as we work in and around schools. "Goodness" is complex and hard to measure, but one important feature of a good school is that it is geared to continuous improvement; goodness, then, is always in the making.

There are several themes that add up to "goodness" in schools. Good schools effectively meet students where they are and find ways to nurture and challenge them to learn. That is, good schools fit the range of students who walk through the doors. The guiding assumption is one of respect and compassion, rather than contempt or pity, for youngsters, families, and communities. Every child can learn, every child is valuable, and every child can become a person of integrity. Instead of focusing on the things the kids lack (a deficit model), good schools focus on the skills, experiences, and know-how the kids bring to school, and start teaching them from there.

A second theme in good schools is that teachers are respected. Teaching is a vocation that calls for the very best people, and can call out the best in those people. In good schools teachers are expected to be decision makers and model citizens. Because teaching is at its heart an intellectual and ethical enterprise, teachers in good schools are given lots of responsibility.

A third theme in good schools is

that they are organized around and powered by a set of core values. Those values are drawn both from tradition and from the specific needs and orientations of a particular community. The key is that the values are alive, that they are embraced and in a sense owned by the entire community. The values are not simply tacked on. They are implicit, built-in; but they also are explicit, obvious because they are embedded in the environment and the culture of the school. For example, in good schools a value like self-respect is not simply stated but is visible in the hallways, on the walls, in the curriculum, and in the interactions throughout the school community.

Finally good schools have straightforward goals that apply to all stu-

dents, yet are personalized for each student. Good schools accept responsibility for developing capacity in youngsters, for making them more powerful, more able, more active in the world. Students tend to be more active in these schools; and teachers more like coaches, guides, or collaborators and less like all-knowing dispensers of knowledge.

Knowing these themes is a start, but school change requires more than knowing what works. It requires engagement in a process that is difficult, complex, idiosyncratic, and hard to control. In this time of reform it would be wise to remember that, all too often, the more things change the more they stay the same.

Here are some themes of effective reform. Successful school improve-



Dumas pupils put their values on parade at a school/community assembly.

ment efforts tend to be site-based, grounded in the concrete realities of a local situation. The school context is the starting point. The participants in successful school improvement efforts—teachers, parents, administrators, students—are visible and accountable to one another.

Successful school improvement tends to be bottom-up or inside-out rather than top-down. In other words, the improvement agenda is powered from the needs and intentions of the people in the school community, not from the ideas of administrators or academics—no matter how wonderful—or the initiatives of funding sources far from the school—no matter how generous and tempting.

Successful school improvement efforts change the structures of

schools, expand the roles of teachers and students, and address the culture and ethics of the school. Good ideas, curriculum guides, and excellent materials are of limited usefulness without developing new roles for teachers.

Successful school improvement efforts activate school people to define and then solve their own problems. They do not rely on the notorious, quick-fix inservice workshops that ritualistically reinforce teachers' powerlessness. Successful efforts lead to an action plan for school people, not simply a curriculum guide or a theory of education.

There are many observers who expect Chicago's reform initiative to fail. Some think it is too far-reaching, others think parents and teachers are

ill-equipped to make important educational decisions. One prominent educator quipped that in Chicago the keys to the asylum had been handed over to the inmates. Perhaps.

But there is real hope here that a meaningful partnership will at last be built between parents and teachers. The objections of the critics can only be answered now by the actions of principals, parents, teachers, and students themselves. It is, as it should be, in their hands. ■

William Ayers is an assistant professor in the College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago. Sylvia Peters is principal of Alexander Dumas Elementary School in Woodlawn.

Too few councils opened door to change

by Diana Azcoitia



Why would a Chicago Public School principal reject a contract offered on Feb. 28 by the caring and supportive local school council of a wonderful little schoolhouse filled with some of the greatest children of all times and blessed with a dedicated faculty? Because school reform is about change, and change, in order to impact students, must begin at the local school. I am that principal, and my reasons for rejecting a contract last February are the true meaning of school reform.

Half the city's 540 local school councils were charged this winter with the responsibility of making one of their most crucial decisions: whether to retain their current principal—who could have been at the school anywhere from a month to a hundred years—or to open the doors for change by considering a number

of qualified candidates, including the current principal if desired. Councils had the opportunity to let fresh air blow into their schools.

Unfortunately this decision had to be made by inexperienced councils with very little guidance or training; in some instances council members were threatened, intimidated, and fearful, making matters worse. It is no wonder that 82 percent of the LSCs retained their current principals, leaving 18 percent as the daring ones that decided to take a step toward initiating change in their schools. That was only a drop in the bucket of systemwide change, but it was a beginning.

Parents know enough

Critics, mainly principals, vendors, and other "interested" parties, claim that because councils, specifically parents, are not educators they should not be making these decisions. Council members are some-

times called "ignorant" and "illiterate" and their decisions sometimes branded "racist."

The truth is that although most parents are not teachers, they do know if their children are learning. You do not have to be very literate to know whether you are welcome at the school your child attends, whether teachers and the principal have high expectations for your child, whether students have the books and instructional materials they need, whether students are treated with respect, whether teachers and administrators really care or are there only to receive—not earn—a paycheck. You do not have to be an educator to realize that your child is not learning, is bored to death and does not want to attend this school, and cannot wait to be 16!

Let's face reality. Our schools have not been meeting the needs of our students. If there is one thing we can be certain of as educators, it is that what we have been doing to teach

our children does not work. Our drop-out rate, our standardized test scores, school vandalism, gang activity—all are constant reminders of the need for change. Society, communities and children have changed, and we must change with them.

Evaluating and hiring the principal was one of three major powers given to the local school councils elected last Fall. Very few—too few—LSCs fully evaluated their principals or chose to see what others might bring to their school. Most of those few councils that did decide to look round were criticized, harassed, and even threatened.

Principals themselves should see in reform an opportunity, not merely a

threat. Change does cause dislocations. It does not result in everyone's desired end. But we must keep the larger picture in mind.

Some fine principals were not retained at schools that obviously wanted change; other poor principals somehow managed to be retained by LSCs that presumably exist for other reasons than school improvement.

The matching of principals and LSCs might be thought of in terms of a marriage. For example, the two may both be good, but not for each other. Or they may deserve each other, but at the expense of the school. Sometimes a permanent separation is best for all concerned—especially the children. If an LSC

insists on a divorce, then the good principal will see the new situation as a challenge.

Effective principals and reformers do not fear for job security; they do not resort to manipulation, threats, or demonstrations; they themselves open the door for change, both for their schools and themselves. They welcome competition, and at the end of the race, when they finally sign a four-year contract, the LSC, principal, students, community, and parents will realize that this marriage was meant to be. ■

Diana Azcoitia is interim principal of Burroughs Elementary School and 1 of 40 applicants for a four-year contract there.

Racial tension in schools calls for student solution

by Adolfo Mendez



Racism and ethnic conflicts are not unknown to Chicago public schools. Jones Commercial High School, for one, has had its share of such problems.

A number of students there spoke freely to me about the state of affairs at Jones.

For example, Kelly Glenn, a black student, said that during a school assembly in celebration of Black History Month this year, the Hispanic students made cat-calls and other disruptive sounds. Armando Vasquez, a Latino student, claimed that the black students "think they own the school because there's a little more blacks than Mexicans." And the washroom walls are a continuing battlefield of confrontation, with slurs against both groups repeatedly appearing.

But the tension at Jones, which is 65 percent black and 32 percent Hispanic, seems to have heated up because of school reform. Mercedes

Burgos, a junior, was elected the student representative to the local school council. Unfortunately, the election of a Latino at a predominantly black school does not, in this case, point to racial/ethnic harmony.

"I was in the auditorium [where students voted] and a lot of the guys were saying, 'I'll vote for Mercedes because that's a nice car,'" Burgos recalled. "And I heard that a lot of girls picked my name because it was the first name on the ballot."

After demonstrating the less-than-model voting behavior often found among students, some Jones students continued their irresponsibility with forms of racism. Burgos said about life after the election: "I didn't know what I was getting into."

Burgos often has been confronted by black girls who accuse her of working only for Latino students. "I try to tell them I'm here for the whole school," she said. "It's hard. It's really frustrating. I don't understand the racism. The reaction they give me is surprising. I haven't done anything

wrong."

Being a student is difficult enough without the extra burden of having to deal with ethnic problems at one's school. But Burgos has taken some steps to address the problem. She said she sends out a monthly newsletter to the students informing them about the LSC meetings. However, that clearly is not enough. Cherlyn Frasure, a black student, grumbled, "She's not informing us about what the LSC is doing; she's supposed to notify us as the representative of students."

Burgos said she also frequently distributes surveys to the students, asking for their input on various issues. She gets little feedback and blames student apathy.

Blacks and Hispanics complain that there has been little change at the school. This disappointment reflects a gross lack of realism on the students' part. First, Mercedes Burgos is only one student—a nonvoting member of the LSC. Second, when I asked Kelly Glenn how she would characterize the right student for the

LSC position (since Glenn had said Burgos was not that person), she responded, "Someone willing to get the job done." However, the students must realize that they, too, are part of getting "the job done." And they must realize that drastic change, or even mild change, takes time.

It's easy to point out faults of the elected rep. But this approach fails to recognize personal responsibility. Jones students themselves have an important role to play in improving their school. Instead of simply talking to a reporter about how bad problems are, they all need to offer suggestions to Burgos on how she can better serve them.

One thing the students can do is take seriously Burgos's survey forms. Another is to use the suggestion box she has located near the main office. Another is to approach her during lunch or just before the class bell and offer helpful suggestions, rather than using the opportunity to make accusatory remarks. Of course, to

many students at Jones all this may sound too simplistic. Maybe. But it is far from easy to practice because it requires maturity and personal effort.

Burgos could also enlist the support of students like Omar Thomson, a black senior, who said: "It doesn't matter who the LSC rep is, as long as the person does the job." Such students could form a committee to devise ways to promote greater union among students at the school. It won't solve all racial problems at Jones, and the students should not have unrealistic expectations. But the committee could undertake a few concrete and visible tasks. Members could stand in the washrooms to act as deterrents for those students who write racial comments on the walls. They could plan skits to show, in ways students could relate to, the racial problems at the school and possible resolutions of these conflicts.

George Hamilton, the LSC student rep at Amundsen High School, stops students in the hallways to get their

feedback on an idea before he presents his views at the LSC. In the same manner, Burgos could ask committee members to help her interview Jones students, thus encouraging the feedback she is seeking.

Perhaps the strongest impact the committee could have on the student population is to offer continuing examples of students trying to unite other students, rather than perpetuating division. Veronica Murillo, a junior, observed, "If the student body stands divided, they cannot do what they want to. They're just going to do things for their own racial group."

Added Burgos, "We're all human. We're made alike even though we may have different personalities and likes. But we have to learn to live with each other or we'll destroy each other." ■

Adolfo Mendez, a 1988 graduate of Kelyvn Park High School, is special projects editor at New Expression, a citywide teen newspaper in Chicago.

Letters

Councils want action on crucial issues

Well, well, what else to make my day? First, the deputy mayor for education is quoted as saying, "No public high school in the city is good enough" for her child. Then the School Board approves a school building and rehabilitation plan without a good deal of input from members of local school councils.

And now I read that Supt. Ted Kimbrough is calling all LSC members to a training session on "boardsmanship." Boardsmanship? Is this the burning issue facing most councils? Come on.

These are the things schools need and councils want:

- A longer school day, to provide 360 minutes instead of only 300 minutes of teaching time.

- Schools that are open evenings, weekends and summers.

- More money for teachers, in exchange for a longer workweek and improved performance.

- Reorientation for school staff so that they come to accept the need for radical restructuring of education practice and their new roles in building new schools.

- More help in classrooms, especially those serving low performing students.

- Support of safe-school legislation to combat gangs and drugs.

- Employment skills training for all students in grades 7 through 11.

- A community service program for young people, involving churches and community organizations, institutions and businesses.

I could go on—but would never get to the issue of boardsmanship.

Ronald Sistrunk

Kenwood Oakland Community Organization

Principal protests violated LSC rights

The Alliance for Better Chicago Schools is extremely concerned about specific aspects of the demonstrations that took place in a small number of schools

where the principal was not offered a four-year contract.

It is a clear violation of the civil rights of LSC members and of children when school staff members encourage or allow children to leave classrooms and roam the schools and school grounds to protest LSC decisions and when principals participate in and encourage such disruptions during the school day.

These actions also place the safety of children at risk and encourage truancy. We saw the potential for tragic consequences of such irresponsibility at Morgan Park High School, and we don't want to see it repeated elsewhere.

The Board of Education should adopt a rule that (1) prohibits the use of school resources for attempts to influence decisions of local school councils and (2) prohibits Board employees from carrying out activities intended to influence the results of LSC decision making while they are performing their official duties. This rule would not restrict the rights of staff to lead classroom discussions or of staff to organize other orderly forums to discuss school issues, in which diverse points of view are permitted.

Sokoni Karanja

Alliance for Better Chicago Schools

Bulletins

TESTING

Warning: scores to fall. The Board of Education finally has decided to update the standard it uses to measure the achievement of its students, which likely will cause a sharp drop in test scores.

In recent years, Chicago students have been measured against a nationwide sample of students who were tested in 1978. This year, the Board is switching to a sample of students tested in 1988. During that decade there was a general, nationwide advance in basic skills achievement. As a result, the achievement gap between Chicago and the nation as a whole, or the national norm, has widened.

By definition, half the students and schools nationwide are above average and half are below. Typically, students and schools in low-income areas are below while those in higher-income areas are above.

The Board is converting 1989 scores to the new standard so that schools will be able to separate real movement from change due only to the updated standard.

LAWSUITS

Nickerson case settled. Naomi Nickerson, an ousted principal who sued the Board of Education, is back on the payroll and will have a job until at least June 30, under a settlement of her case.

Nickerson agreed to a 30-day suspension without pay, and the School Board agreed to drop its dismissal case, according to Board attorney Denise Cahill.

The Board had removed Nickerson from Cameron Elementary, 1235 N.

Monticello, after the local school council chairperson accused Nickerson of terminating a recreational program against council wishes and signing the chairperson's name to the termination document. Nickerson countered with a federal lawsuit charging violation of due process, race discrimination and slander. Nickerson is black, the council chair is Hispanic.

Under the settlement, the decision on whether Nickerson should remain at Cameron was returned to the LSC, which then voted not to retain her. As a result, she is not guaranteed employment beyond June 30 but may apply for other administrative and teaching positions.

Since the settlement, Nickerson has had assignments in the central office and in a local school, not Cameron. Nickerson declined to comment.

Interim principal loses. Anita Martinez-O'Hara, an interim principal who filed suit after the local school council at Kelly High, 4236 S. Carolina, replaced her with another interim principal, failed to win a hearing on her dismissal.

A Circuit Court judge ruled that interim principals have no property rights to their jobs and, thus, are not entitled to due process, said Mark Zubor, attorney for Martinez-O'Hara. Interim principals thus serve at the will of the School Board and local school councils.

WORKSHOPS

Tapping all the senses. A principal from Tuscon, Ariz., who eliminated remedial reading classes for minority students deemed to have learning disabilities will share her approach at an upcoming workshop.

Called "whole language," the approach intertwines listening, reading and writing to develop literacy in students.

Sponsored by People United for Responsible Education, the workshop is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 5 at Truman College, 1145 W. Wilson. For details call (312) 989-6225 or (312) 784-7873.

Training in boardsmanship.

George McKenna, a nationally recognized school administrator from California, will be the keynote speaker at a two-day conference on boardsmanship for members of local school councils.

Organized by the Illinois School Boards Association in cooperation with the Board of Education, the conference will be held May 18 at the Pavilion of the University of Illinois at Chicago and May 19 at sites around the city. LSC members can register through their principals.

PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITIES

Kiddie College. Wright College, 3400 S. Austin, offers courses for parents and their children. Topics include reading, writing, computers, piano and "young astronauts." Courses typically last eight weeks and cost \$5 to \$10. For details, call Nancy Desombre at (312) 794-3254.

TELEVISION

Teen shows on Channel 20. Channel 20, the television station operated by City Colleges of Chicago, is not just for college students.

After school on weekdays, Degrassi High, a soap opera, shows how teens handle contemporary problems. Children also star in the Pappenheimers, a series aimed at teaching German, and in Carrascalendas, in which actors speak Spanish and English. These shows are aired weekend mornings.

Programming for the pre-college crowd is from 3:30 p.m. to 4:40 p.m. weekdays and from 6 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. weekends. For a program guide call Channel 20 at 838-4853.

Teachers guide. WNET-TV, New

York's public television station, is offering junior high school teachers a kit to help their students get the most out of upcoming segments of the show Nature that will deal with plants and animals.

The kit is aimed at helping students become naturalists—keep diaries, take notes—as they watch the segments, scheduled for April, May and June. Nature is broadcast from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sundays on Channel 11.

For details call (202) 560-6661 or write WNET/New York, Educational Publishing Dept., 356 W. 58th Street, New York City, N.Y., 10019.

Councils improvise

With scant guidance on how to proceed, members of Chicago's local school councils have had to improvise. Here are some of the steps they have taken to help themselves:

- Council chairs have formed their own associations or networks, often at the subdistrict level.

- Different members of a single council have attended different training sessions and then regrouped to exchange information.

- Members have videotaped presentations to accommodate people who could not attend.

- Councils that were not working well but weren't sure why have requested an observer from one of the nonprofit groups offering training.

- Councils from two schools have paired up for training so that they could benefit from each other's ideas and experiences.

- Members have asked training groups for references in an attempt to determine quality before signing up.

TRAINING *continued from page 3*

bling for lack of accurate information and high-quality training, school reform at the sixth-month mark still constitutes good news. The community has gathered around a pressing problem and is attempting to solve it democratically. A wide range of people are listening to each other with mutual respect.

"People who have never before had power are saying: Hey, I'm going to find out about this," said Grenberg of the Community Management Assistance Program.

Added Sandra Vanderwicker, a CMAP volunteer trainer: "Despite chaos, I'm optimistic because of the seriousness and thoughtfulness of the people involved."

Further, children are beginning to have models in their parents as learners, and parents are beginning to understand and pay attention to their children's learning. ■

Nancy Devlin is a psychologist and columnist who writes on education and parenting.

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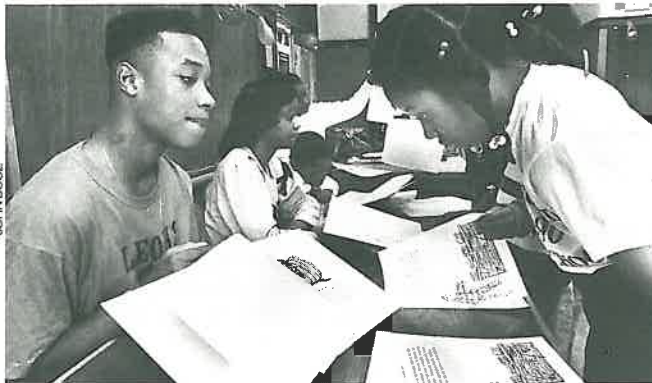
Bright Ideas

Young authors write best sellers

Young Authors is a citywide program that encourages children to write their own little books and thus come to learn the power of reading and writing. Fiske Elementary, 5145 S. Ingleside, took one extra step and organized an autographing party.

Fifty youngsters recently sold hard-back and paper-back books for 10 cents a piece and raised \$100, which they donated to the school.

Nora Morrison (312) 947-7390.



Tyree Edwards displays his illustrated No. 1 best seller, *The Halloween Gift*, at a Fiske School autographing party.

Translation team at Marquette

Marquette Elementary, 6550 S. Richmond, broke through the language barrier troubling councils at many largely Hispanic schools by creating a translation committee.

Information that will be discussed at LSC meetings must be submitted two days in advance. Then a group of

parents translates the material into Spanish. As a result, said LSC President Sue Salerno, Spanish-speaking parents and members of the council are prepared to participate.

Maria Bernal (312) 737-5057.

Send tips about bright ideas to CATALYST/Bright Ideas. Include your name and phone number.

Lincoln puts LSC action in a book

At Lincoln Elementary, 615 W. Kemper, the local school council is an open book.

Each month Principal George May compiles correspondence, minutes, letters and other written council business and puts them in a binder for public inspection.

Sometimes LSC members missed meetings and then asked him what had happened. "Rather than my having to explain it to them, they can just look it up," he said. Parents who come to the school leaf through the book, as well, he added.

George May (312) 549-2474

Nettlehorst keeps adults involved

Nettlehorst Elementary, 3252 N. Broadway, has found a way to maintain the interest of the community people who ran for its local school council but lost.

They come to the school once a week to read to students in the library. Community residents who cannot come to the school write letters to students.

Barbara Kent, Nettlehorst's reading improvement coordinator, said that the new program helps students see that writing and reading are meaningful activities in real life.

Barbara Kent (312) 880-8510.

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