



\$ EQUITY \$

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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

'Have not' districts push for equity

by Andrew Patner

Last school year, well-to-do Lake Forest had \$5,400 in general revenue to spend on every elementary school pupil and \$10,200 to spend on every high school student. Impoverished East St. Louis had only \$4,300 for each pupil across the grades. Yet, residents of East St. Louis faced school tax rates that were almost double those in Lake Forest.

Although these are somewhat extreme cases, significant disparities in school funding are the rule rather than the exception in Illinois. In measures of funding equity, Illinois ranks sixth from the bottom among the states. The culprit is the state's heavy reliance on local property taxes to pay for public education. Property wealth varies widely, so school funding does too. Lake Forest is a community of million-dollar homes, East St. Louis an economic backwater hemmed in by industries that lie outside its school-district boundaries.

In response to such inequities, and bolstered by action in nearly a dozen other states, education reformers and many school districts have banded together to lobby for radical changes in Illinois' school finance system. Wealthier districts, mostly in Chicago's suburbs, are resisting the effort, which they fear will diminish the educational quality that they see as the centerpiece of their communities.

Sixty school districts, including Chicago's, have filed a lawsuit to force reforms by court order. Mindful of the litigation, a task force created by the Illinois Legislature is struggling for consensus on a package of reforms. Due out in April, its recommendations likely will require a substantial increase in taxes and could extend to major changes in state policies on both the property and income tax.

Prodding both efforts is a coalition of 20 community and education groups called the EdEquity Coalition. Its three convenors are longtime Chicago school watchdogs—the Chicago Urban League, the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance and the League of Women Voters of Chicago.

Chicago above average

Spending by Chicago's public schools is above average for both unit (K-12) districts and elementary (K-8) districts, so the city has less to gain from equity than many other districts.

"We're taking a broad view and we're making common cause with those concerned about all Illinois school children," says Gwendolyn Laroche, education director for the Chicago Urban League.

Chicago, she adds, "will benefit

greatly from a more stable, more predictable system of equitable and adequate funding. Finance reform will allow our administrators and teachers to get to their real business—education.”

Nationally, the battle for equitable school funding began in the late 1960s, when education activists sought relief from the federal courts under the constitutional guarantee of “equal protection of the laws.” In 1972, however, the U.S. Supreme Court held that education policy was a state, not a federal, matter.

Later efforts to enforce language in the 1970 Illinois Constitution that the state has the “primary responsibility” for funding education were unsuccessful. In a series of rulings, the Illinois Supreme Court held that the language was “hortatory” or “directional,” that it merely *encouraged* state responsibility as a goal and left to the Legislature the determination of how much school funding should come from the state and how much from local districts.

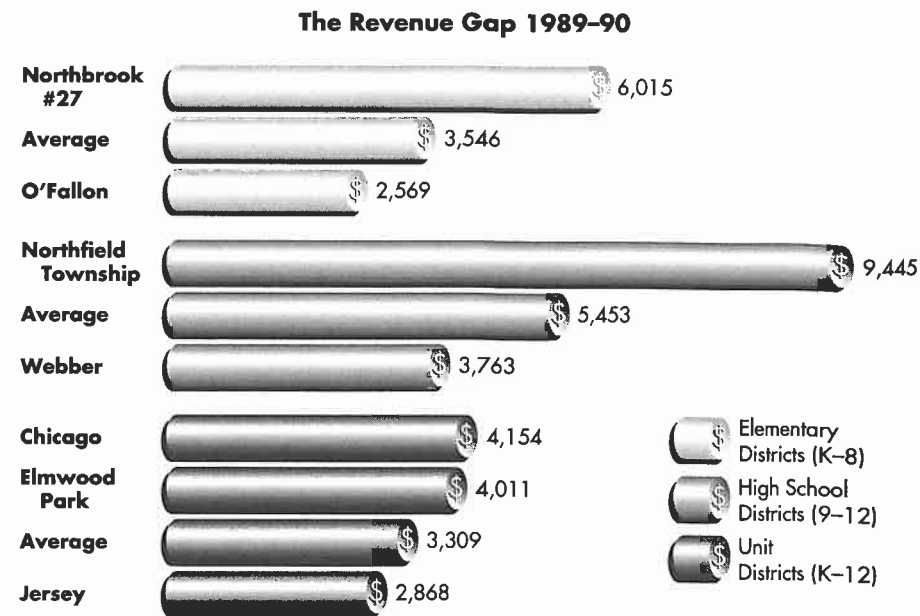
Legal challenge

The current lawsuit takes a different tack. It focuses on the state constitution’s requirement for “an efficient system of high-quality public educational institutions and services,” as well as the state’s guarantee of “equal protection,” particularly for those children categorized by the Legislature as being most “at risk” for failure.

In the suit, the plaintiffs argue that the reliance on local property taxes to finance elementary and secondary public education is the cause of the funding inequities. Because there is such a wide range of local property wealth—between cities and suburbs, and between school districts in towns with thriving business districts or power plants and those in rural areas or depressed cities—Illinois’ system results in unconstitutional disparities.

The state acknowledges the disparities and concedes that tax policies may indeed lie behind them. But in their response to the suit, Illinois officials argue that no language in the state constitution *guarantees* equitable state funding; thus, only the Legislature, they say, can reject the current system.

The plaintiffs also argue that in some cases spending is so low that the funding system is not only *inequitable*



Note: General operating revenue per child in average daily attendance; excludes state and federal categorical funds. High spending districts are those at the 95th percentile; low spending are at the 5th.

Source: Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

but also *inadequate*.

The difference in spending per pupil between the state’s wealthiest school districts and its poorest districts is a 6-to-1 ratio. Reform advocates are shooting for 1.5 to 1.

In 1989-90 (the most recent year for which audited figures are available), average per-pupil spending among Illinois districts was about \$4,800. That year, about 12 percent of school children lived in districts that spent more than \$6,000, while a full 60 percent lived in districts that spent below \$4,800. What that meant for children in the poorer districts was that they were in larger classes and had teachers with less experience, fewer credentials and lower pay.

For some people, the notion of funding equity conjures up a vision of “leveling down.” They fear that the state will take the total of local and state money earmarked for schools—currently about \$8 billion—and simply divide it up so that every district has the same inadequate amount.

But the lawsuit’s plaintiffs argue that the issue of equity cannot be separated from the issue of adequacy. The bottom line, they say, is, well, the bottom line. The single best way to solve the problems of school finance

inequity, they argue, is to increase the *total* state commitment to education, that is, to “level up.” Their goal is to let all Illinois school children, regardless of the wealth or poverty of their communities, share in the benefits of well-financed quality education.

Opposition to systemic change centers on two key financial issues. The first is obvious: While a sentiment builds throughout the country that education is in crisis, a stronger sentiment—no new taxes—carries tremendous weight with voters and politicians. Gov. Jim Edgar, for one, has made opposition to tax increases a cornerstone of his administration.

An even more prickly—and emotional—issue is that of local control of both local tax dollars and local schools. Reform advocates dismiss this issue as a phony one. “The only choice most districts have,” says Lawrence Frank, spokesperson for the lawsuit plaintiffs, “is ‘choosing’ which programs to cut and how many teachers to eliminate.”

Thirty-five percent of the state’s 942 school districts have tax revenues of less than \$3,000 per student, reform advocates note. (Thirty-eight districts that failed to tax at minimum rates set by the state have even less than the

\$2,530 the state guarantees, given sufficient local tax effort.) Meanwhile, the Illinois State Board of Education says adequate schooling requires more than \$4,000 per pupil.

The attachment to local control stems from the peculiar history of taxation and school funding in Illinois. In the early part of this century, Illinois had a state property tax rate and collection system. As its economy branched into farming and industry, a system of local control and collection of property taxes was adopted.

But as wealthy suburban areas expanded, the farm economy faltered and downstate mines closed, this system began putting more and more strain on many local school districts. So a mechanism for "equalizing" property tax assessments was introduced, and a system of direct "equalizing" grants from the state treasury was strengthened. But disparities persisted and have indeed gotten worse since the 1970s, when the state's share of school funding began to slide.

The disparities amount to unequal treatment for property owners, too. Those living in districts with, say, a nuclear power plant or a regional shopping mall are blessed with disproportionately low tax rates.

Further, while the value of taxable

property increases statewide at a rate of about 6 percent a year, more than half of the school districts—mostly downstate and in poorer urban areas—are watching their tax bases decline. In contrast, Chicago has seen its tax base boom due to the increased valuation of commercial and industrial property.

Statewide, local property taxes and other local revenues currently account for some 63 percent of the total spent on schools. General state aid, aimed largely at ensuring that school districts spend a minimum "foundation level," accounts for 23 percent. Categorical state aid, aimed at special needs such as bilingual education, accounts for 8 percent. Federal aid, also aimed at special needs, accounts for 6 percent.

New tax plans

Reform groups, legislators and business groups have placed several reform plans on the table. One would introduce a statewide property tax. Another would create a new state property tax on non-residential property. Over the last few weeks, EdEquity has been coalescing behind a proposal to redistribute a portion of local property taxes. The leadership of the

legislative Task Force on School Finance has proposed that any such redistribution be accompanied by property tax relief.

There is considerable disagreement over the likely outcomes and political viability of each plan, but all parties agree that any remedy will probably reflect a combination of current proposals.

A number of these plans would increase the proportion of extra state aid going to districts with low-income children. All of them leave state categorical and federal aid out of their calculations, another plus for districts with low-income families. With a relatively healthy property tax base, Chicago likely would not see major increases in funding. Under some of the plans, it would get only an extra \$200 per pupil.

Plans favored by EdEquity and by leadership of the legislative task force focus on a concept called "excess value." Under these plans, the state would "recapture" taxes on local property above a certain level and redistribute the money through the general state aid formula. Districts that lose money under this scheme likely would be granted authority to make up for at least part of the loss by raising their tax rates a certain amount without a referendum.

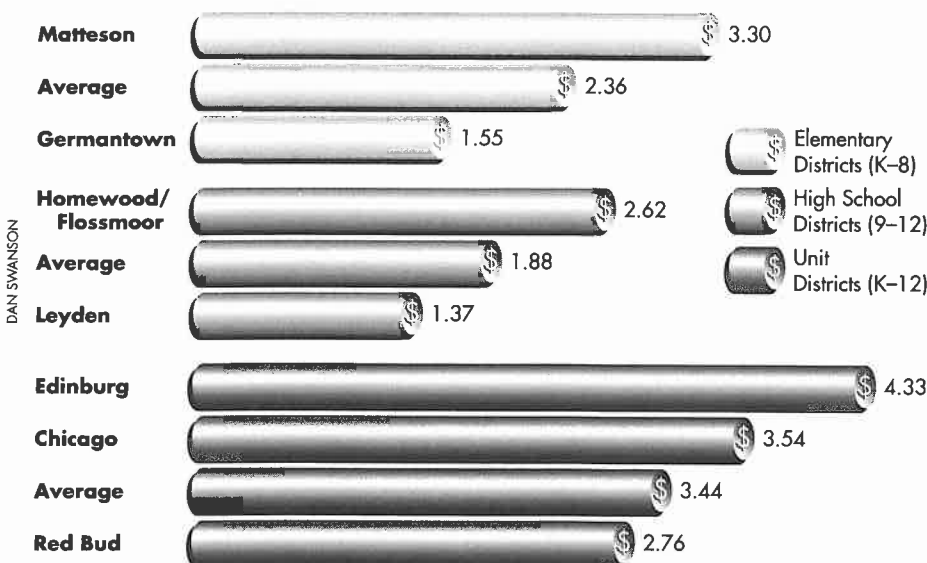
The task force also would offer some form of property tax relief, which would have to be offset by an increase in other revenues. Task Force leadership has made clear that it has an increase in the income tax in mind.

Weak knees?

Appointed in November of 1990, the task force includes not only legislators from both houses and both parties, but also representatives from business and industry, the major teachers' unions and several local school boards, including Chicago's. The group plans to present a report soon after its March 31 meeting in Springfield. Three public hearings are slated in April for Chicago, Springfield and Mount Vernon. The group hopes to have a package of bills ready for consideration during the spring legislative session.

Meeting in Chicago on Feb. 26, leaders of the body indicated that they may ditch the equity issue altogether

The Tax Rate Gap 1989-90



Note: Tax rates — for every \$100 equalized assessed valuation — are for operating funds only. High taxing districts are at the 95th percentile; low taxing districts, at the 5th.

Source: Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

and settle for a less controversial—but still expensive—increase in the minimum “foundation level” of state funding for local schools. Torn between urban, rural and suburban factions, the group seemed to acknowledge the general resistance to tax redistribution, especially from powerful legislative leaders representing wealthy northern and western Chicago suburbs.

Task force co-chairs Sen. Arthur R. Berman (D-Chicago) and Gene Hoffman, a former Republican legislator from Aurora, guided the meeting to a consensus on increasing the foundation level to a little over \$4,000.

“To use a ‘Buy American’ analogy,” Berman told the task force, “we agree that we aren’t satisfied with a Chevy for our kids and that we just can’t swing a Cadillac, but we are going to go with a Buick.”

The task force came to the new foundation level by defining an adequately funded school district as one that has 23 children in its elementary classrooms, an average teacher salary of about \$34,650 and a staff that includes librarians and physical education, art and music teachers. Once they receive their money, districts would be free to decide how to use it.

Little agreement

But after four hours of discussion made it clear that there was little agreement on the funding structure and other substantive issues, Berman and Hoffman dropped their bombshell—a proposal for “defining equity primarily in terms of adequacy.”

In other words, the task force could use the equity debate and pressure from the lawsuit to push through an overdue increase in the foundation level, sidestepping entirely the issues of funding equity and tax redistribution.

“Generally, equity has been thought of as reducing overall variation in revenues,” the task force’s executive committee suggested in a memo circulated at the February meeting. And “to do this over time, it would be necessary to remove part of the property tax revenues from districts in which the tax base is high and continually increasing.” But by defining equity as adequacy, the memo continued, “We would no longer be able to say that districts that have the desire and ability to

spend \$14,000 per student are spending too much. We would only be concerned with those districts with insufficient revenues to provide adequate, basic programs of education.”

Equity advocates and state school officials have estimated that even this “high foundation level” option would require an increase of state funds of more than \$3 billion. Given the strong desire for property tax relief, most observers assume that this increase would have to come from a boost in

believe that this will solve the problem. But the real issue is that the elasticity of state revenue is dramatic: In a period such as we are in now, the revenue derived from income and sales taxes is down, because income and sales are down. The property tax is the one area that shows stability or a potential for increase. And no local taxing body wants to give that up.”

“They’re trying to abandon the whole notion of equitable financing, plain and simple,” said a chagrined

“People right now don’t even want to help their neighbor. How do you persuade them to help poorer school children half way across the state?”

– Gene Hoffman, co-chair
Task Force on School Finance

the state income tax; EdEquity sees it going from 3 percent to 5.25 percent.

Among states with an income tax, a 3 percent flat rate is low, putting Illinois second from the bottom, according to the Illinois Department of Revenue. Illinois ranks similarly low on education spending as a percent of personal income. In 1988, Illinois ranked seventh from the bottom, according to the National Education Association.

But the task force itself has been mum on where the revenue for increased spending would come from. It hasn’t even been able to agree on a proposal to pass the buck to voters by offering a constitutional amendment that would obligate the Legislature to provide equitable or adequate funding for schools.

Before the February task force meeting, co-chair Hoffman sounded subdued in assessing the options for real change in the finance system. “I don’t see how the task force, or any other group, could sell the voters on a redistribution of property tax income,” he said.

And Hoffman admits that increasing the foundation level by itself has problems: “First of all, the proponents of the lawsuit just aren’t going to

G. Alfred “Fred” Hess Jr., executive director of the Chicago Panel. “They are simply too afraid to take on the wealthier suburban districts and find a just solution to this problem.”

On Feb. 28, attorneys for the lawsuit plaintiffs and the State of Illinois squared off before Cook County Circuit Judge Thomas J. O’Brien in his Daley Center courtroom; at issue was a state motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

Arguing for the state, special assistant attorney general Jeffrey W. Finke made it clear that the state regards the plaintiffs’ arguments as having been settled by state Supreme Court actions in earlier legal efforts to change the finance system. The 1970 Constitutional Convention intentionally couched the education article in the language of “goals,” Finke said, after rejecting specific proposals for state responsibility for funding.

In addition, Finke argued, to institute the plaintiffs’ “radical” solutions would require massive redistribution of wealth and tremendous expense for state taxpayers. “Any of these issues would be proper for the state legislature to take up,” Finke told the judge. “But there is simply not much a court can properly do about them.”

The examples of successful lawsuits in other states did not apply to this case, Finke argued, because those states had substantially different language in their constitutions. "The plaintiffs may have a just case," Jim Carroll, first assistant attorney general, said after the arguments. "But they've picked the wrong forum for making it. This is a legislative fight."

For the school districts, attorney William Gleeson, of the law firm of Hinshaw, Culbertson, Moelmann, Hoban & Fuller, hoped to persuade the judge that the courts had a duty to look beyond the specific language of prior decisions to enforce the state constitution's explicit and implied guarantees of equal protection of the laws for school children in all parts of the state.

Emphasizing that prior court cases had dealt with the *source* of tax revenues and that this lawsuit sought to change the *distribution* of funds, Gleeson called on the court to "give meaning to the idea of local control of spending for schools" by finding the current system of predominantly local fund-

ing to be unconstitutional.

Judge O'Brien, who seemed suspicious of the broad nature of the plaintiffs' case, said he would issue a written opinion on March 27. While neither side wanted to predict what that ruling would be, spokesmen for both pointed to the appellate and supreme courts for final resolution.

School finance reform advocates have a long road ahead of them. The legislative task force seems to have election-year jitters about passing any plan with truly substantive changes of any kind. The lawsuit puts pressure on the Legislature, but it is in its early stages and is based on arguments that may not be as persuasive under Illinois' constitutional scheme as they were in other states. Real reform of state school financing probably won't come about until voters persuade state politicians that they want quality education for all Illinois school children and that they are willing to pay for it.

Veterans of the education funding battles in the Legislature try to sound optimistic, but their visions clearly are

set on long-term reforms.

"There is simply no way to solve this terribly knotty problem without finding new revenue streams," says Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago), a long-time advocate for increased education funding and a former member of the task force. "And we have an 'education governor' who says that he is not interested in new revenues. So you have to find some way to overcome the strong opposition of a sitting governor and the even stronger opposition of the Republican legislative leadership. In the meantime, you need a policy that will appease the more affluent residents."

Says task force co-chair Gene Hoffman: "There just isn't any longer a sense of noblesse oblige about *anything*. People right now don't even want to help their neighbor. How do you persuade them to help poorer school children half way across the state?" ■

Andrew Patner, the author of I.F. Stone: A Portrait (Anchor Books), is a Chicago writer.

Court orders upend finance laws

by Dan Weissmann

In the last two years, court orders in Kentucky, Texas and New Jersey have sparked upheavals in state school funding.

In Kentucky, the Legislature overhauled the entire school system, pairing more money with education reform. In Texas, legislators adopted a "Robin Hood" plan that takes local tax money from wealthy districts and gives it to nearby poor districts. But the courts recently declared that plan unconstitutional, sending the Legislature back to the drawing boards. In New Jersey, the Legislature created a complex new finance system, then undermined it with amendments, sending the plaintiffs back to court.

All three reform packages feature a foundation system to promote equi-

ty; Kentucky and Texas have a guaranteed-yield program as well.

In a foundation program, the state guarantees that every school district that taxes at a designated minimal rate—say, \$2—receives a designated amount of money per pupil—say, \$2,000.

The state itself chips in money only if the designated tax rate fails to generate the designated "foundation" level of spending—in this case, \$2,000. If a tax rate of \$2 generates only \$1,800 per pupil in District A—using the same case—the state would give District A another \$200 per pupil.

In a guaranteed-yield program, the state guarantees that property-poor districts that tax above the foun-

ation requirement—say, 20 cents above, for a total of \$2.20—receive the same amount of extra money that a property-rich district would generate by boosting its tax rate another 20 cents. Again, the state makes up any shortfall.



KENTUCKY

The state Supreme Court demanded a complete overhaul of the state's school system, and the Legislature complied.

COURT RULING: The state has failed to abide by the requirement in the state constitution for an efficient system of common schools. The school finance system is both inequitable and inadequate.

LEGISLATURE'S RESPONSE: The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) revised not only school finance but also curriculum, teacher certification, student testing, school governance and other major elements of public schooling. As one education group said, the Blue Grass state is "taking KERA business."

Kentucky's finance reform includes a foundation program called SEEK and a guaranteed-yield program called Tier I. SEEK imposes an equal property tax rate on all school districts but provides varying foundation levels to account for special needs, such as bilingual education, special education, compensatory education and transportation. As such, SEEK addresses both equity and adequacy of funding.

Tier I, aimed at equity, helps poor-

er districts that tax above the SEEK rate by chipping in state money to bring the yield up to what it would be in more affluent districts. There is a cutoff point, however. Tier I money can be obtained only for tax rates that are up to 15 percent over the SEEK rate.

RESULTS/STATUS: In appropriating money for Tier I, legislators grossly underestimated the number of eligible districts that would take advantage of the plan—nearly all districts did. As a result, Tier I money had to be prorated, with the poorest districts getting the largest share. The Legislature is now considering a 1992-94 budget that nearly quadruples funding for Tier I. The SEEK program was, and remains, fully funded.

COST: \$1.2 billion in new taxes and tax-code adjustments.

POLITICS: Grassroots awareness campaigns through the 1980s prepared voters for both KERA and its cost, says Cindy Heine, director of the Pritchard Committee, a non-profit school reform group. Voters were well

aware that there had been no major tax increase at the local or state level for a decade and that Kentucky's schools were in terrible shape, she says. In the Legislature, the tax package and the education reforms were put on the same bill, forcing legislators to vote for all or nothing.



NEW JERSEY

The Legislature created and then undermined a complex new finance system, sending the plaintiffs back to court.

COURT RULING: Schools in the state's poorest urban districts must be brought up to par—in both funding and student achievement—with schools in the wealthiest suburbs.

LEGISLATURE'S RESPONSE: The Quality Education Act of 1990 (QEA) estab-

Spending, achievement: What's the connection?

People who argue against spending more money on schools often claim they have research on their side. But much of the research they cite is in dispute. And correct or not, it sometimes gets misused.

Take, for example, a major study by economist Eric A. Hanushek of the University of Rochester. William J. Bennett had Hanushek's work in mind when he claimed—during his years as President Reagan's secretary of education—that studies had shown that raising school spending did not increase student achievement.

Hanushek had compiled and analyzed all the studies that he believed dealt with both spending and student achievement. He concluded that the studies did not show that increases in school spending necessarily led to higher student test scores.

Other researchers question Hanushek's methods, arguments and conclusion. But assuming his research is sound, Hanushek does not argue,

as did Bennett, that increased spending will *not* bring results. Rather, he argues that *simply* increasing spending will not *necessarily* bring results, and that *simply* equalizing per-pupil spending will not *necessarily* bring equality.

Hanushek says increases in funding typically go for smaller classes and higher teacher salaries, including financial rewards for more experienced or better-educated teachers. As he reads the studies, there is no strong correlation, or link, between these factors (total school expenditures, teacher salary, class size, teacher experience levels, teacher education levels) and student test scores.

Writing in the June 1991 issue of the *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, Hanushek advocates "incentive-based" systems, including school choice, which he hopes would force schools to spend their money more effectively. He admits, however, that

the changes he advocates are unproven and will cost more money anyway.

TEACH America, a Chicago-based group promoting a school-voucher plan, points out that while Chicago schools spend as much or more per pupil than do schools in many nearby communities, Chicago test scores lag far behind. TEACH America concludes that Chicago schools are using their money badly.

Yet, according to Hanushek, per-pupil spending figures can be misleading because districts have varying kinds of needs and costs and varying kinds of revenues: Schools where working or living conditions are poor may have to offer higher salaries to attract a good teaching staff. Urban schools often need to spend more for special education, bilingual education and transportation. Schools in poor towns and cities often get state and federal grants for their special needs. None of this

lished a foundation program, put limits on spending in wealthy districts and made several structural changes in the state's school finance laws.

Among the structural changes was the transfer of teacher pension funding from the state to local school districts. Under state funding, rich districts got proportionately more state money than poor districts did because their teacher salaries are higher. That, the Legislature reasoned, was unfair. Relieved of the responsibility for pensions, the state then would have more money to boost general aid to poor districts.

Last March, the Legislature passed a set of amendments to QEA that took money out of the foundation plan, relaxed spending caps on wealthy districts, made it harder for poor districts to take full advantage of the foundation program and delayed the pension switch for two years.

RESULTS/STATUS: Poor districts have seen little substantial change. The plaintiffs from the original case are back in court, arguing that the current

money is supposed to go toward general education, yet all of it may be counted in a district's per pupil spending, which is what happens in Illinois.

Though Hanushek does take these factors into account in his policy recommendations, he fails to do so in his research; other experts point to this omission as a crucial error.

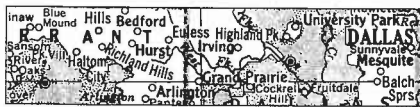
Harvard University education professor Richard J. Murnane, also writing in the *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, claims that the kinds of studies Hanushek looks at are completely inappropriate when trying to find out how money affects education. Educational consultant Keith Baker (writing in the *Phi Delta Kappan*) claims not only that Hanushek used the wrong studies, but also drew the wrong conclusions from them. Re-interpreting Hanushek's data, Baker concludes that spending increases are strongly linked to student achievement.

D.W.

law will never satisfy the court order.

COST: The original QEA included a \$1.1 billion tax increase, which was part of a \$2.8 billion tax package; the amendments took at least \$300 million away from school aid.

POLITICS: Democrats had control of the Legislature when both the original QEA and its amendments were passed. The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), the leading teachers' union, opposed the original QEA on the grounds that the pension switch hurt them financially. With NJEA backing, Republicans running on an anti-tax, anti-incumbent platform took control of the Legislature in last November's elections. The now-Republican Legislature is considering, among other tax relief measures, a rollback in the state sales tax. School spending cuts are likely.



TEXAS

A "Robin Hood" plan took local tax money from wealthy districts and gave it to nearby poor districts.

COURT RULING: Roughly equal property tax rates should yield roughly equal revenue. Previously, some very rich districts had been able to fund their schools comfortably with low tax rates while some of the poorest districts had taxed themselves heavily to fund barely adequate schools.

LEGISLATURE'S RESPONSE: To promote greater equity within the state's foundation program, Senate Bill 351 changed the program's main funding source from state to local taxes. Texas does not have a state income tax, and the state constitution forbids a state property tax. These restrictions limit the amount of money the state can generate to help poor districts.

Under S.B. 351, much of the money for foundation aid to poor districts comes from nearby wealthy districts. When a district's foundation tax rate generates more than enough revenue to cover foundation-level costs, the extra money is "recaptured" and distributed to poorer districts that can-

not meet the foundation level on their own. To ensure there would be enough "excess" revenue to help the poor districts, the Robin Hood law also increased the required tax rate.

To get around the prohibition on a state property tax, Robin Hood divided the state into 188 County Education Districts (CEDs), each with a mix of wealthy and poor districts. The CEDs levy the property tax required by the foundation program and redistribute the revenue. State funds enter the picture only when Robin Hood money cannot bring every district in a CED up to full foundation-level funding.

Texas had used a guaranteed-yield system before the Robin Hood law. S.B. 351 increased the guarantee level. The Texas plan is more generous than the Kentucky plan in the amount of extra "tax effort" it will augment in poor districts.

RESULTS/STATUS: Not all poor districts got a lot of extra money from the new foundation system. Those that benefitted most, as intended, were poor districts that had been taxing at high rates. As in Kentucky, the Legislature did not allocate nearly enough money for the guaranteed-yield program, and the available money was prorated. Future funding for guaranteed yield is unlikely to increase much, according to Catherine Clark, director of the Texas Center for Educational Research.

Meanwhile, some wealthy districts sued the state, charging that Robin Hood is, in effect, a statewide property tax. In January 1992, the Texas Supreme Court agreed and gave the Legislature until June 1993 to come up with a new plan, leaving Robin Hood in place for the next school year.

COST: Counting state and local monies, the foundation program rose about \$2.3 billion with about \$0.5 billion coming from the state.

POLITICS: Robin Hood was a political compromise among legislative leaders. Anti-tax sentiment augurs against a state income tax or a constitutional amendment to permit a state property tax, says Clark. Consolidation of school districts also would be unpopular, she says. One politician has proposed a constitutional amendment to lock in the current or some past school-finance scheme and forbid further court action on the matter. ■

Chicago's school budget from pupil's point of view

by Linda Lenz

How does the Chicago Board of Education spend its money? Several hundred million dollars here. Another several hundred million there. The numbers are so large that perhaps only a corporate accountant can truly grasp them.

To bring the numbers within reach of Joe citizen, *CATALYST*, with the help of the Chicago Urban League's research department, analyzed Chicago school spending on a per-pupil basis.

To give readers a yardstick by which to measure the results, *CATALYST* looked for another school district with roughly equal spending, as reported by the Illinois Board of Education in annual school report cards. To control for the cost of living, it sought a district in the Chicago metropolitan area. To control for the structure of the school system, it sought another unit district, one that includes kindergarten through 12th grade. What it found was Westmont Community Unit District 201 in middle-class, west suburban DuPage County, a district whose total enrollment is less than some Chicago high schools.

In the 1989-90 school year—the last for which audited financial statements are available—Chicago spent \$5,548 per pupil on operating expenses while Westmont spent slightly less, \$5,388, according to the state's school report cards.

Digging beneath the surface, *CATALYST* found that:

■ Despite what the report cards say, Chicago has less money to spend per pupil than Westmont does.

■ Spending in the two largest areas, instruction and operations, is strikingly similar. In operations, however, Chicago's salary and staffing formulas are higher, leaving less

money for maintenance materials. Teacher salaries are similar, though the work day is 45 minutes longer in Westmont.

■ Chicago spends substantially more on employee benefits, largely because the School Board pays 7 percent of the 8.5 percent of salary that employees are required to pay into their pension fund. The board "picked up" this pension payment in 1982 instead of granting raises that year. Chicago also provides its workers with a slightly better package of medical insurance. It pays the whole cost of major medical insurance for family coverage; in Westmont, workers wanting family coverage must pay half the extra cost. Chicago pays the whole cost of dental insurance for individuals and for families using "preferred providers." Westmont does not provide dental insurance.

■ Westmont spends substantially more on debt repayment—\$795 per pupil, compared to \$266 by Chicago, including bonds issued for Chicago schools by the Public Building Commission and the Chicago School Finance Authority. Most of Westmont's borrowing was for construction of its junior and senior high schools; the debt will be retired in 1996.

■ However, in most areas where spending differs substantially, the differences are not surprising. For example, Chicago spends more per pupil on remedial and bilingual education while Westmont spends more on the "gifted." Westmont spends more per pupil on central administration, but then it has a lot fewer students to divide into, say, a superintendent's salary or a business manager's salary. With smaller schools, it also spends more per pupil on the office of the principal.

In analyzing the numbers that

went into the state's per-pupil spending calculations, *CATALYST* discovered that Chicago suffers from two disadvantages.

First, the state arrives at per-pupil spending by dividing a district's total operating costs by its average daily attendance, not its enrollment. (The state also uses average daily attendance when granting state aid.) This penalizes districts with low attendance rates, such as Chicago.

For 1989-90, Chicago's average daily attendance was 335,787, compared to an official enrollment of 408,442. Using enrollment figures to calculate per-pupil spending that year, Chicago dips below Westmont by \$295. In the report cards, Chicago is \$160 ahead of Westmont.

Further, Chicago's spending is inflated by a unique requirement. Alone among Illinois school districts, Chicago uses some of its own money to help cover the employer's contribution to the teacher pension fund. (This is in addition to the partial pickup of employee contributions.) In other districts, the state covers the employer contribution. In 1989-90, Chicago chipped in \$66 million for teacher pensions, while Westmont paid nothing. Stripping this money from Chicago's financial report, the city's per-pupil spending drops another \$161.

There is one compensating factor: In Chicago, the employer cost of pensions for school workers who do not hold teaching certificates is borne by the City of Chicago through the Chicago Municipal Retirement Fund. Elsewhere in Illinois, school districts pay those costs.

In the following pages, *CATALYST* explores the spending practices of Chicago and Westmont and what those practices mean for the children and adults in their schools. ■

About our charts

■ Spending figures are derived from an analysis by the Chicago Urban League of 1989-90 financial reports that Chicago and Westmont submitted to the Illinois Board of Education.

■ Included are several categories of spending that the state does not consider when it calculates per pupil spending for publication in school report cards. These areas include adult education, debt service, summer school and community services.

■ In calculating per pupil spending, the League used 1989 enrollments of 408,442 for Chicago and 1,630 for Westmont. When the state calculates per pupil spending, it uses the number of students in average daily attendance, which is lower.

■ Pension contributions, except for the "pension pickup" in Chicago are omitted.

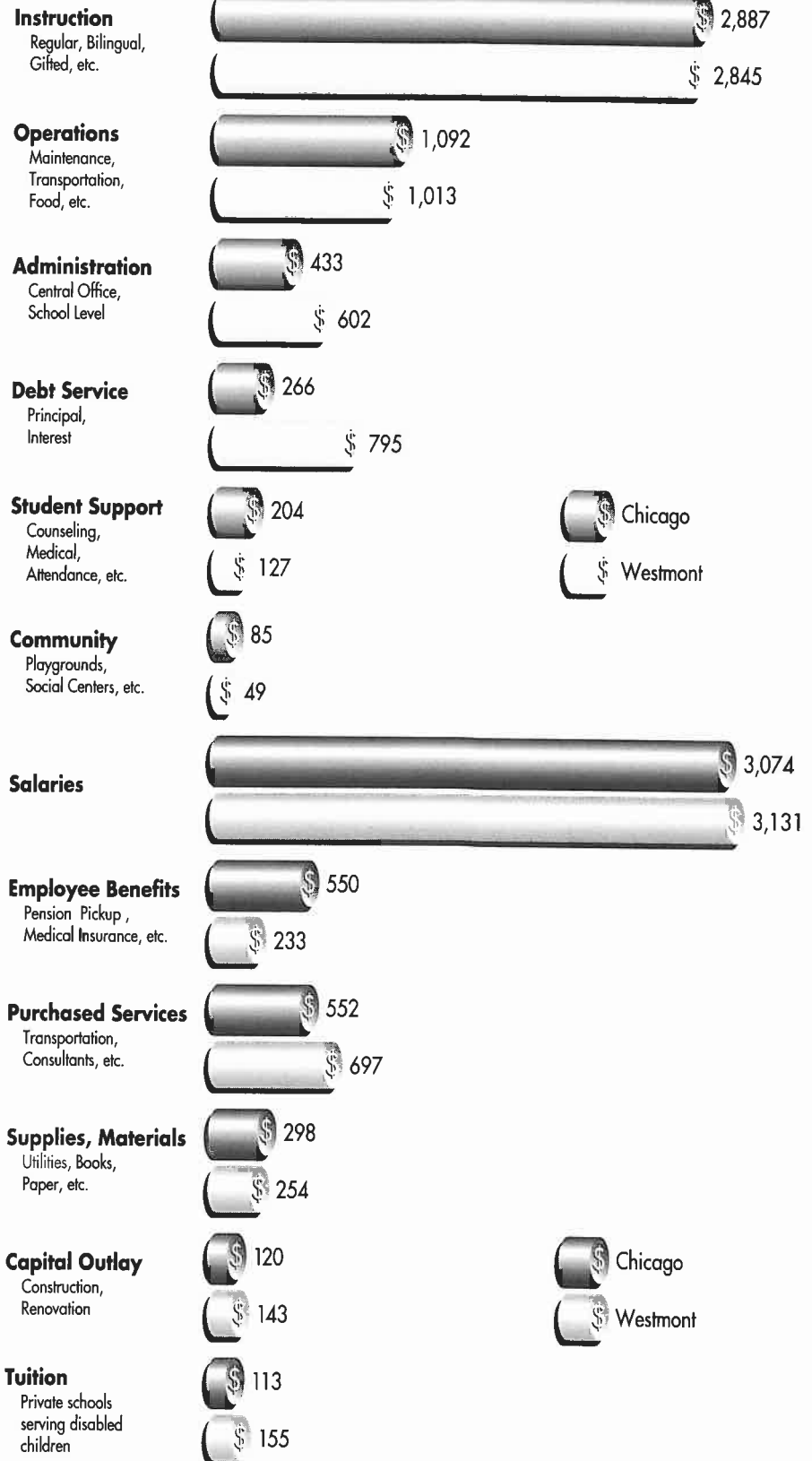
■ For Chicago, debt includes bond payments by the Chicago School Finance Authority and the Public Building Commission.



JOHN BOOZ

Dyett Middle School students trim blocks of wood on a lathe in industrial arts class.

Spending per Pupil 1989—1990



Spending per pupil

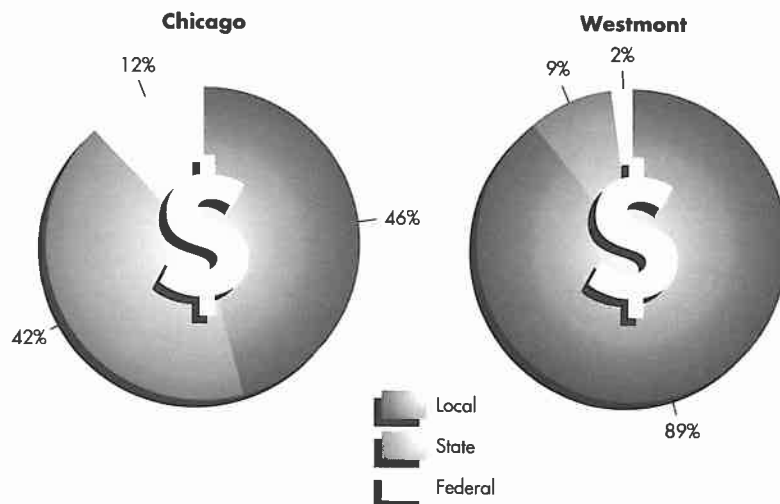
	Chi.	West.
INSTRUCTION		
Regular programs	\$1,752	\$1,822
Special education	519	490
Vocational	171	137
Remedial	162	101
Educational media	84	63
Bilingual	70	29
Improvement of instruction	64	16
Summer school	41	11
Adult education	8	0
Interscholastic	6	122
Gifted	6	20
Alternative programs	2	34
Assessment and testing	2	0
SUPPORT SERVICES		
Guidance services	\$108	\$56
Attendance, social work	41	22
Health services	32	33
Psychological services	22	17
ADMINISTRATION		
Office of principal	\$205	\$299
Board of Education	45	86
Federal program admin.	41	0
Data processing	38	30
Printing, warehousing	30	0
Fiscal services	17	15
Executive administration	15	73
Personnel	12	0
Direction, central support	12	0
Research, evaluation	9	0
Direction, business support	5	67
Information services	1	0
Other school administration	1	0
Other supporting services	0	30
OPERATIONS		
Operations, maintenance	\$593	\$580
Food services	229	167
Transportation	184	196
Facilities acquisition, const.	65	69
Support services	20	0
DEBT REPAYMENT		
	\$266	\$795
COMMUNITY SERVICES		
	\$85	\$49



1991 School Report Card

	Chi.	West.		Chi.	West.
SPENDING			Percent limited English		
Per pupil	\$ 5,548	\$ 5,388		11%	4%
Avg. administrator salary	60,206	60,107	Mobility rate		
Avg. teacher salary	38,409	37,904		34%	14%
Avg. years experience	17	14	ACHIEVEMENT		
Percent with master's	42%	54%	8th-grade reading (IGAP)		
Pupil-teacher ratio			Top quartile	14%	29%
Elementary	21 to 1	19 to 1	3rd quartile	16%	27%
High school	18 to 1	13 to 1	2nd quartile	36%	32%
STUDENTS			Bottom quartile	34%	13%
Enrollment	401,554	1,655	8th-grade math (IGAP)		
Racial breakdown			Top quartile	14%	63%
White	12%	84%	3rd quartile	18%	22%
Black	58%	5%	2nd quartile	23%	11%
Hispanic	27%	3%	Bottom quartile	45%	5%
Asian/Other	3%	8%	ACT college entrance exam		
Percent low income	70%	7%	Percent taking exam	59%	58%
			Avg. score (range: 1-36)	17	22
			Graduation rate	44%	90%

School Revenue 1989-90



Equal spending leaves Chicago kids behind

by Lorraine V. Forte

To see what equal spending means for children in two radically different districts, CATALYST visited the schools a typical student might attend. In west suburban Westmont, those schools are Manning Elementary (the largest of three K-5 schools) and Westmont junior and senior highs, which serve the whole district. In Chicago, they are Burke Elementary, 5356 S. King, whose budget is average for elementary schools and is one of a handful of the city's K-5 schools. Burke is a feeder school for Dyett Middle School, 555 E. 51st; Dyett graduates often go to DuSable High School, 4934 S. Wabash.

Carla" and "William" are both fifth-graders, bright and eager to learn. Carla lives in the Washington Park neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. William lives less than an hour's drive away, in west suburban Westmont, a town of 20,000 in DuPage County.

Every day on her way to Burke Elementary School, Carla walks past run-down storefronts and other buildings badly in need of repair; some are boarded up and abandoned. Census Bureau figures show more than half the residents live below the poverty line; Carla and all her classmates at Burke are poor.

Gang activity and crime are commonplace in Washington Park. One student describes life in the neighborhood in two simple words: "It's dangerous."

In contrast, William lives in a comfortable middle-class community of well-kept homes, where the average family income is over \$25,000. Only 7 percent of William's classmates at Manning Elementary School are poor.

William and nearly all his classmates have more opportunities to participate in outside activities that enhance learning. Compared to their peers at Burke, more own pets, belong to a club or sports team, take lessons of some kind or have visited a museum or seen a play within the last year, class surveys show.

Educators say Carla could have gotten a big boost from preschool, improving her chances for high achievement. But as a typical (and

hypothetical) child at Burke, she did not get that chance; only about a third of Burke students have attended preschool, Principal June Chenelle estimates. In Westmont, 50 to 60 percent of children attend preschool, district officials say.

At the same time, Carla faces a much greater risk of having her schooling disrupted by a family move—research has shown that mobility hinders achievement, especially for low-income children. Student mobility at Burke is 51 percent, compared to 16 percent at Manning.

Throughout their school years, Carla's school day will be shorter

than William's by 45 minutes. In high school, Carla's schedule likely will include more study halls.

Westmont residents are not particularly wealthy. Supt. Donald Wold says that each year more and more students arrive from lower-income, single-parent homes, lacking social skills and basic knowledge such as the alphabet. Still, 80 percent of the district's students come from strong, middle-class backgrounds, he says. In Chicago, 70 percent of children are low-income.

Chicago children come to school with greater needs than Westmont children do. Spending roughly the same amount of money, Chicago schools cannot cover the needs of their children as well as Westmont can cover the needs of its children.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

At Manning Elementary School, students perform experiments in a spacious science lab that boasts a new TV and VCR, a globe, posters, maps and growing plants labeled with students' names. In one experiment, students observe the growth cycle of small brine shrimp, then type their observations in the computer lab, which has 25 new Apples. Every class spends at least one period a week in each lab.

Meanwhile, at Burke, it took budgetary sleight of hand to equip class-



Classrooms inside Westmont High School are airy, spacious—and carpeted.

es with a few science kits to help prepare children for upcoming state science tests that emphasize the scientific process over facts. The school's regular budget did not have enough money for the kits; state Chapter 1 money could not be used because science equipment is not considered supplemental. But teacher Barbara MacDonald realized that if she taught summer school (a supplemental program), she could tap state Chapter 1 money. So MacDonald taught summer school, bought the kits and now lends them to other teachers when her class isn't using them.

"This is terrible, when you have to do something like this to get equipment," MacDonald says, shaking her head.

Scrimping for basics

Stories like this abound at Burke. Staff routinely spend their own money on classroom supplies; MacDonald estimates spending \$25 to \$30 each month. With a budget showing only \$19 for office supplies, Principal Chenelle and the staff had to pool money to buy reams of copying paper.

As Burke scrimps to buy basics, Manning is filled with the so-called "extras" that make up a stimulating, inviting learning environment. Many of the extras are purchased by an active parent-teacher organization (PTO), which raises over \$10,000 each year for Westmont schools. Each classroom has a computer. Nearly every classroom has an aquarium or ant farm, an abundance of posters and maps, and shelves of children's literature.

MacDonald and a colleague submitted a proposal to a local foundation for money to purchase small classroom libraries, but they were turned down. "We were told there were so many schools asking for money they couldn't possibly fund everything," MacDonald recalls. Burke's PTO, a group of about 25 parents, is working to develop fund-raising ideas, but it, too, suffers from high mobility, which saps parent involvement.

Chenelle also believes her students need an after-school recreation program—simply opening the gym for sports and games—since the sur-

rounding neighborhood has few such opportunities. Burke has some after-school programs, such as a choir, science and computer classes, and remedial math and reading; but those don't meet the students' need to simply interact and play together in a safe environment.

"That's why some kids have problems with socialization; I know a lot of them just go home after school and they're by themselves," Chenelle says. "That's one of our problems with discipline too—kids have no outlet for their energy. It used to be kids could go outside and play after school, but they can't do that anymore" for safety reasons.

But Chenelle's plans met a dead end when the board cut over 200 teachers from the state-funded Reading Improvement Program, forcing her to reallocate the recreation money for a reading teacher and an after-school remedial reading program. "That's still one of my priorities—a good recreation program," she says.

Extras not extra

Even the bright spots at Burke have some downsides. Federal and state Chapter 1 money has brought in extra teachers, bringing class sizes down to 23 to 24 in primary grades and 25 to 26 at the intermediate level. The numbers are similar to Manning's, but far above the 15-per-class some educators claim is necessary to make a real difference.

This year, the school has 27 new computers in three remedial reading and math labs. "We're seeing progress already," says reading lab teacher Mattie Fife. But, Chenelle notes, "our dream is to network every classroom," so that all students, not just the lowest achievers, get computer time.

Burke also has two Head Start classes, but Chenelle fears losing them now that programs are being turned over to the private sector (CATALYST, March 1992). With declining state aid, she adds, prospects for replacing them with a state-funded preschool are by no means certain.

"We're very adoptable," Chenelle says of her school's plight. "If you know anyone that would like to adopt us, let us know."

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Dyett Middle School and Westmont Junior High offer experiences that are more similar. Both schools are relatively new—Dyett was built in 1972, Westmont in 1974—and in good condition. Both schools offer similar basic and optional courses, and have gifted programs, science and computer labs and a range of extracurricular activities. Every classroom in both schools has a computer.

Dyett even has a small radio station where students make announcements over the public address system and practice recording tapes. Dyett also benefits from having been built next to a Chicago Park District facility; several years ago, the Board of Education took over and renovated the building, which has a pool, gymnasium and open space areas.

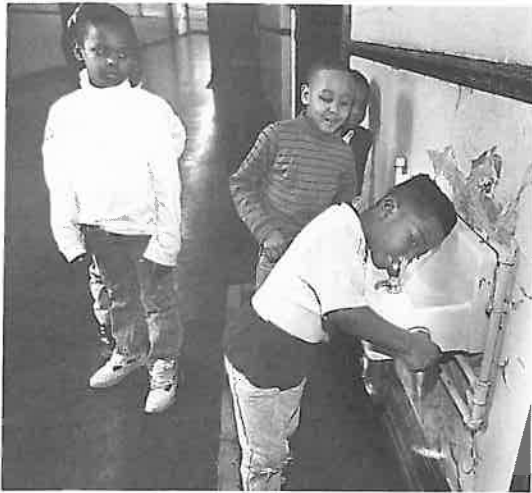
"That was one of my goals, to give [students] everything we possibly can," says Yvonne Minor, principal of Dyett since 1984. "Whenever I go out to another [school] system and see what they have, we try and get it."

But the needs of an inner-city urban school put more strain on Dyett's budget. Approaching adolescence, Dyett students are ripe for gang recruitment, so Minor hired a full-time police officer as a deterrent to gang members lurking near school grounds. This year, many incoming sixth-graders were reading below grade level, so Minor began an after-school remedial reading program that meets four days a week.

In other areas, Dyett has had to use money intended for special needs—state and federal Chapter 1 and desegregation funds—to provide what's considered standard in Westmont. "We're not getting more money, it's just been shuffled," Minor says, noting that the regular budget has shrunk as state Chapter 1 increases.

Without the special funds, Dyett—which has 830 students compared to 442 in Westmont Junior High—would not have computer equipment, an art teacher, a second guidance counselor, a Spanish teacher, extensive after-school activities and extra teachers to reduce classes.

Guidance is crucial for Dyett students, who constantly must cope with violence, crime and poverty. But even



Crumbling walls are a fact of life at Burke Elementary.



Teacher Carole Hicks brings the outdoors inside her seventh-grade classroom at Dyett.

with a second counselor, Minor feels students are shortchanged on emotional support: One counselor helps coordinate the school's special education program; both spend much of their time on paperwork, such as helping students enroll in high school.

At Westmont Junior High, Principal Keith Becker doesn't have those worries.

Becker, for example, is working on beefing up the school's library, whose card catalog and encyclopedia set have already been computerized. The school plans to add 10 more new Apple computers to its computer lab; last year, it bought 20. Next year, science labs will get new tables and other equipment.

Still, Dyett offers its students more than many other Chicago schools do. "I try to show them another side of life," says Minor.

HIGH SCHOOLS

At Westmont High School, "our biggest problem is kids cutting class," Principal Richard Windsor says.

At DuSable High School, the problems go far beyond students ditching class. "It takes a whole lot of work just to get them here," Principal Charles Mingo says.

As a result, DuSable's budget is drained in ways that Westmont's isn't. DuSable spends \$133,000 on attendance services, including a full-time coordinator and two assistants. Even so, only 67 percent of kids show up

on a typical day.

Gang activity—one critical factor in low attendance—and other crime in the surrounding neighborhood also compel DuSable to spend heavily on security. The school has seven security monitors and two uniformed police officers, who cost \$152,000. Teacher aides also monitor hallways. Still, Mingo observes, "I don't have every hall and corner covered."

Further, the two policemen can't be at DuSable during crucial before- and after-school hours because they must report to headquarters for roll call. The need for better security on the school's sports fields forced Mingo to hire two additional football coaches, with state Chapter 1 funds.

Meanwhile, regular funds for extracurricular activities—one way to keep kids off the street and out of trouble—are limited. "Why give me \$750?" Mingo asks, referring to money the Board of Education gave DuSable for athletic equipment. "What good is that? Why not just say, 'We're not giving you anything?'"

Budget cuts imposed by central office hit DuSable hard this year. The school lost a media center coordinator, an assistant principal and two discretionary teaching positions.

Westmont doesn't struggle with these problems. Attendance hovers between 93 and 95 percent. Security is nonexistent; school doors stay open throughout the evening, and residents can drop in to use the library or the pool on "open swim" nights. This

year, science labs were equipped with new furniture and chairs. And an architect is working on plans to modify the school's open-classroom arrangement. As for sports, the school has only 460 students—compared to 1,358 at DuSable—but its budget shows over \$14,000 for sports equipment, and over \$172,000 for all athletic programs.

At Westmont High, Windsor's concerns are adding more sports and science electives—Westmont already offers an advanced course that covers genetics, microbiology, anatomy and ecology. He is also working on upgrading the vocational education curriculum.

More than money

Mingo is quick to note, however, that generally since reform, the budget situation "has gotten better," primarily because of increasing state Chapter 1 funds. The school has more computers and more teachers, including a full-time coordinator for the Coalition of Essential Schools program, who is training teachers in cooperative learning and other new teaching techniques.

Mingo adds that more money wouldn't automatically boost achievement: "Our kids need more self-esteem, a better outlook. When you live in a neighborhood and see so many people not working, the question comes up: Why bother with an education? We need to let them know life's not hopeless." ■



DuSable School Maintenance

404,000 sq. ft.

20 workers

8-hour days

9.5-12 months

\$515,900 in salaries

Chicago upkeep not keeping up

by Michael Klonsky

Westmont and Chicago spend about the same amount of money per pupil maintaining their school facilities. End of similarity.

Westmont High School is less than an hour from Chicago, but the campus is a dream away from the inner city. The school's modern design, ample manicured lawns and sports club-like athletic facilities all stand in stark contrast to any city school.

At Westmont's Manning Elementary School, some sections of this older traditional building are painted every year. The entire school is painted every five years. Manning, the other two elementary schools and the junior high were all re-roofed in the past few years.

No children sit under leaking roofs, as happens in some Chicago schools. If a window breaks, it is fixed within hours. The bathrooms don't stink.

The word "maintenance" has a somewhat different meaning in Westmont. Supt. Donald C. Wold says he spends a large chunk of maintenance money on amenities like air conditioning—three quarters of Westmont's school area is air conditioned—and a massive carpeting project. (The present

carpeting appears to be in pretty good condition and would probably be welcome in most Chicago schools.)

In Chicago, Burke Elementary School is 80 years old. It is clean, but all the windows have plastic taped over them to keep out the cold. Classroom doors are kept shut to prevent drafts from wafting through the rooms. The walls around the water fountains are crumbling because of leaking pipes. The school hasn't had basic repairs—painting, plastering, new light fixtures—since 1976.

Teacher Barbara MacDonald looks at the scuffed floors, obviously in need of sanding and a new coat of varnish. "You wouldn't see this in a suburban school," she says angrily. "It just wouldn't happen." She believes the run-down environment has a negative impact on the students: "Do you think you could learn in a room with the walls crumbling? What does that say about what we think of them [students]?"

Why such a stark contrast when the two school systems spend the same amount of money per pupil on upkeep?

First, Chicago faces a pile-up of repair needs. Since its 1979 financial

collapse, it repeatedly has cut routine maintenance to help balance its budget and pay for employee raises.

Second, over the years Chicago has not sold sufficient bonds to meet major rehabilitation needs. During most of the 1980s, the board's own credit rating was too low to sell bonds, and the General Assembly permitted the Chicago School Finance Authority to make only a relatively small sale.

Pay now or later

As the mechanic in the oil filter commercial says: "You can pay me now (for a filter) or pay me later (for a new engine)." Like most major cities, Chicago is paying more later.

In recent years, Chicago's Public Building Commission has sold \$386 million in construction and rehab bonds for schools, but much of the money has been tied up in administrative red tape.

Chicago's facilities also suffer from more wear and tear, note city school and union officials, citing vandalism in particular. "In the last week at Hyde Park [Career Academy], we've had

Westmont District Maintenance

429,000 sq. ft.

18 workers

8-hour days

12 months

\$465,200 in salaries

JOHN BOOZ



three swimming pool doors kicked in," says Donald McCue, Hyde Park's chief engineer and president of the operating engineers' union.

At Westmont High, a lone wavy magic marker line running across a wall is the only visible sign of graffiti.

"How many children does Westmont feed breakfast each morning?" asks Bill Iacullo, an engineer-custodian at Perez Elementary School in Pilsen. "At my school, we feed a few hundred. That's another maintenance problem they don't have."

However, Chicago also grants its workers higher salaries and benefits, thus leaving less for desperately needed materials and supplies. Thanks to a powerful union, engineer-custodians are paid \$38,500 to \$54,800 a year, not counting overtime, to supervise custodial staffs and maintain mechanical systems. (A survey of major city school systems conducted by the Hay Group found that their average salary—\$44,000—is second only to that in New York City.) In Westmont, engineer-custodians are paid \$28,700 to \$35,600.

Chicago pays maintenance assistants \$31,275; Westmont doesn't even have "maintenance assistants," who in the days of coal-fired heating systems were called "firemen and oilers." In Chicago, the old furnaces went, but the stokers stayed, changing their name in the 1980s.

Chicago pays its year-round custodians a flat rate of \$22,481. In Westmont, custodial salaries range from \$18,000 to \$28,200 and average \$22,360.

Some Chicago school reformers question whether schools need such highly trained workers as engineer-custodians. Responds Iacullo, the engineer-custodian at Perez: "Sure, local school councils could contract out many of the jobs we perform. But would it be safe for the kids?"

He cites a case where an LSC had outside contractors install a door-lock system. The system violated city building codes and locked kids inside. "People with good intentions didn't know the regulations," he says. "I had to go and disconnect the system so the kids could exit safely in case of emergency."

On a typical day, says Iacullo, he might have to deal with pneumatic and electronic controllers or new electronic fire sprinkler systems, tasks for which an ordinary custodian isn't trained.

Keep it simple

Westmont's maintenance staff belongs to no real union; rather, they have an association that employees are free to join or not join. The principal runs the school and has the power to hire and fire maintenance staff, a form of accountability urgently sought by Chicago school reformers who complain of uncooperative workers.

"We basically use the KISS method out here," jokes Richard Koenig, association president and engineer-custodian at Westmont Junior High. "That means 'keep it simple, stupid.'"

"I feel like this is my school," he explains. "When something breaks, I fix it. If we need to replace something, I go out and get cost estimates. I do my own purchasing, from supplies to toilet paper. If a light bulb breaks, I get a ladder and replace it. In Chicago, if I did that, I would be in trouble with the electricians union."

Tom McGreal, supervising engineer in Chicago's Subdistrict 10, counters that this kind of direct purchasing can lead to local corruption and winds up being more expensive. "We can make our own shades, for example, and install them less expensively than a school which sources them out," he says.

While the Chicago Public Schools retain outside contractors for some jobs, it also employs a wide range of trades workers, including painters, glaziers, shademakers, bricklayers, machinists, sign painters, cabinet makers, plasterers, carpenters, asbestos laborers, power truckers, electricians, sheet metal workers, carpet cleaners and window washers. Salaries range up to \$60,000.

"I think we give the school system more maintenance for the same dollars," says McCue of the engineers union. "It is the suburban systems that will learn from us as the crisis get worse and their schools have to operate under the kinds of budget constraints we do." ■

Michael Klonsky is a writer with children in the Chicago public schools.

Teaching here, there

Numbers don't tell whole story

by Michael Klonsky

Numbers—poverty rates, attendance rates, racial composition, teacher strikes—tell much of the story about the differences between teaching in Chicago and teaching in Westmont. One major difference the numbers miss is the degree of conflict.

In Westmont, the prevailing attitude—from the superintendent to principals to teachers and parents—is one of satisfaction. Reading scores are above average; the graduation rate is high. There is little or no teacher turnover. “We haven’t had a teacher leave for another district in recent memory,” says Supt. Donald C. Wold. Community satisfaction with the school system is evident in the passage six years ago of a tax rate increase—by a remarkable 2-to-1 margin.

In Chicago, dissatisfaction is the rule. School reform and the new pressure for change adds to the tension. But in the minds of some teachers, that’s not bad.

“I’m the kind of teacher who likes to be where the action is,” says Odis Richardson, a counselor at DuSable High School, winner of a Golden Apple teaching award and president of Citizens Schools Committee, a non-profit group that has fought for change for decades. “Site-based management enables teachers to express our viewpoint on the school council. We feel a sense of responsibility.”

He points, for example, to curriculum innovations teachers helped establish at DuSable, including cooperative learning and participation in the Coalition of Essential Schools, a school restructuring program developed by Brown University Prof. Theodore Sizer.

“Some you win, some you lose,” adds Richardson, 52. He was on the losing side of a recent struggle to shave a few minutes from class periods to accumulate time at the end of each month for “badly needed collegial meetings.” As a deviation from the teachers contract, the change needed approval of 70 percent of DuSable’s teachers; it didn’t get it.

Small size counts

For John Soldwedel, 41, an art teacher at Westmont High, a school reform movement isn’t necessary. He was hired in 1974 as one of the school district’s original teachers. “We sat down and wrote the curriculum,” he recalls. And today teachers sit on curriculum committees and can “walk into the principal’s office” with a proposal and usually get the go-ahead and commendation from the administration for taking initiative.

“Because we’re so small, differences don’t become political,” Soldwedel says. “We can usually resolve things easily.”

Hearing of school reform activities in Chicago, Soldwedel said: “I would rather spend that time teaching instead of struggling.”

There is one major arena in which the professional lives of Richardson and Soldwedel are similar: Pay. As veteran teachers—27 years and 19 years, respectively—with master’s degrees, both receive total compensation in the high \$40,000s. While Richardson’s official work day is 45 minutes less, he, like Soldwedel, puts in many after-school hours supervising extracurricular activities.

Richardson is coach of the debate

and chess teams and sponsor of the Sigma Beta Club, which promotes male responsibility, and the DuSable College Assistance Fund, which raises money and provides support for young men attending black colleges. His coaching brings in about an extra \$1,000 a year.

Soldwedel coaches Westmont’s golf team and is the technical adviser for school plays. Staging for a production of *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* kept him at school until 10 p.m. on a recent Thursday night and brought him back the following Sunday afternoon. Soldwedel’s extracurricular activities earn him an extra \$2,000 a year.

Both describe themselves as role models for their students. Says Richardson: “This is the only place where [many kids] come in contact with a positive [black] male role model.”

But not all of DuSable’s teachers are Odis Richardsons. A small proportion, says Principal Charles E. Mingo, are “mediocre on the unsatisfactory side” but not bad enough to fire, under the state’s dismissal system. ■

Teacher hours, salaries

	Chicago	Westmont
Work year	180 days	180 days
Work day	6 ¾ hours	7 ½ hours
Sick/personal days	13	15
Bachelor’s degree		
Beginning	\$25,459	\$24,000
6th year	32,181	29,040
12th year	40,008	36,660
Master’s degree		
Beginning	\$27,222	\$27,120
6th year	33,945	33,120
12th year	41,770	40,320
Master’s plus 48 hours		
Beginning	\$29,867	\$31,440
6th year	36,590	37,440
12th year	44,414	45,840
20th year	48,467	53,520

Source: Teacher contracts.

Reform or revolution: Another response

It's time to go after sacred cows

by Gwendolyn Laroche and Sharon Jenkins-Brown

In their latest treatise on Chicago school reform (*CATALYST*, March 1992), choice advocates Chester E. Finn Jr. and Stephen K. Clements identify what they see as four major impediments to progress: the "social deficits" of the students, the lack of systemwide accountability, the general fatigue of school reformers and an entrenched, centralized bureaucracy. In urging a "revolutionary response" to these obstacles, they call for school choice and privatization. Nonsense.

One provision of the School Reform Act requires the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to expand school choices for students beginning in September 1994. But, we question, how can the much larger voucher system backed by Finn and Clements do these things:

- Create a safe school environment and diminish the violence in adjacent communities?
- Diminish the so-called "social deficits" of CPS students?
- Provide resources to retrain our teaching force?
- Give principals full authority over all personnel in their attendance centers?
- Provide resources to build new buildings and repair the old and unsafe ones?
- Change work rules to provide significantly more time on task for each student within the school day and year?
- Provide resources to ensure that

children most at risk of failure have access to early childhood education?

- Reduce our recurring budget woes?
- Improve instruction in all classes?

These are the real challenges facing Chicagoans as they struggle to provide quality education for all Chicago children. Finn and Clements offer no remedies. They seem to imply that schools



JOHN FIGIER

will magically correct themselves and attract students or in due time close because of failure to attract enough students. Indeed, a few public schools will perhaps become better, and the currently good public schools will maintain their high quality. Some CPS students may be able to transfer to private or parochial schools, but once the good public schools and good private schools are filled, many students will be stuck in inadequate public schools. What happens to those students?

Until we find ways to resolve the problems cited above, massive improvement in overall student performance will never be achieved.

Many of us in the school reform community were never naive enough to think that a change in governance would automatically bring about dramatic changes in student attendance and student achievement. We knew that the school reform law could be a first step in the process to identify problems school by school and to empower parents, principals and teachers to design solutions to best address those problems. No one ever imagined that improving a system serving more than 400,000 students would be easy or swift.

In fact, the country's best-known, successful systemwide effort within a public school setting is in New York City's District 4, in Spanish Harlem. There, teachers led the way to educational innovation, and it took 17 years to generate an 84 percent high school graduation rate among students—a rate that exceeds the systemwide average of 60 percent. The district can also boast a student attendance rate of 91 percent, up from 70 percent in 1973, and a teacher attendance rate of 93 percent, up from 80 percent in 1973. Today, more than 50 percent of the district's students read at or above grade level, up from 15.9 percent in 1973, with rates steadily improving each year.

With appropriate support from the

Gwendolyn Laroche is acting chairperson of the African American Educational Research Institute. Sharon Jenkins-Brown is co-chair of the institute's research and policy committee.

Board of Education and administration, surely Chicago's public schools should be able to develop similarly successful improvements over the next several years. We don't think it will take 17 years, but it surely won't happen after only three years of reform implementation.

Basically, what Finn and Clements do in their critique is to raise some provocative questions about school system structure. Although these are important questions, we think equal time needs to be given to other issues that influence student learning.

Take, for example, the financial condition of the Chicago public schools. It is grim. The public is aware of this, but some of the public may be running a cause-effect relationship in the wrong direction. That is, much criticism and blame is leveled at the Board of Education and the general superintendent, as if they caused the fiscal crisis. However, many people in Chicago's African-American community realize that the board and the general superintendent are stuck with inadequate revenues. Even so, many citizens are desperate for the administration to demonstrate it is being a good steward over existing resources.

Another aspect of financial responsibility and a significant part of any revolution should be an ongoing fight to insist on not only adequate but also equitable funding of the public education system. We hope the EdEquity Coalition is successful this year in effectively putting this issue on the front burner of everyone's agenda. (See story on page 1.)

Change 'untouchables'

Other problems thwart the efforts of the most conscientious local school administrators and dedicated teachers. As a reform community, we must ask ourselves whether we have honestly faced up to these.

Contrary to what Finn and Clements suggest, the impediments to successful reform go beyond the failures of the central administration. These obstacles are deeply imbedded in the culture of management/employee agreements and relationships. Lasting, substantive revolution will never occur until we make changes in some major "untouchable" areas of employee contracts, the Illinois School Code, burdensome Board of

Education procedures and even the School Reform Act.

For example, how can we justify elementary schools that choose to shorten the school day, most often in schools with students who are most in need of more instructional time? Closed campus has been championed as a way to protect children from unsafe neighborhood elements by keeping them in school at the noon hour. Instead, it has turned out to be a first-class hoax at an increasing number of schools, many of which bus children in and out and have no real noon-time safety problem. It is disgraceful to see schools shut down by 2:45 p.m. in some of our most difficult neigh-

It is disgraceful to see schools shut down by 2:45 p.m., sending children out on the street with little chance of finding wholesome recreation.

borhoods, sending children out on the streets with little chance of finding wholesome recreational or educational programs to creatively channel their energies. Closed campus should either be eliminated or made optional based on local school council criteria.

We believe other management measures should be considered to protect our children. We agree that we have to make all school staff more accountable, but Finn and Clements' solutions baffle us. We believe there are ways to make schools more accountable by employing the best elements of market-based mechanisms within a public school setting; and, keeping in mind the District 4 experience in New York, we believe that local school teachers and principals, working with LSC members, are the best ones to figure out what works. Under reform, the ideal role of the board and central administration should be to support those efforts.

This year, the African American Education Reform Institute will begin to develop strategies for change in some key structural areas, including provision of merit pay increases for teachers and full managerial autonomy for principals.

We will also raise questions about paying full teaching salaries for less than a full day's, or even year's, work. We think the "professionalization of teaching" issue should be reciprocal. By the end of the current teacher contract in 1993, teacher salaries will have increased 30.4 percent since the last teacher strike in 1987. We will then argue that future pay increases should be negotiated to bring work schedules in line with the real-world, private-sector reality of 40-hour week, 12-month career cycles.

We also believe that union contract rules must be eased to allow teachers more time to plan, tutor and counsel stu-

dents in nurturing, intellectually stimulating environments that the teachers are free to create. Teachers should be free to develop their own curricula based on the needs of their students and not have to rely on generic manuals developed by the central office.

Unlike Finn and Clements, we look forward with optimism to the successful implementation of school reform in Chicago—despite the tough issues to be addressed. We are encouraged by the development of scores of "cluster" initiatives that unite about 200 schools with the private sector, foundations and parents in innovative, long-term school-support initiatives that address academic and socioeconomic issues. These efforts, plus the extensive management and financial study that local businesses and foundations are sponsoring in cooperation with the Board of Education and reform activists, promise to provide all of us with a comprehensive overview of the true state of the system.

We are "no ways tired," and we hope that more attention is paid to what Chicago parents and teachers are, in fact, accomplishing, which we think is nothing short of amazing. ■

Reform report's authors respond to critics

by Chester E. Finn Jr. and Stephen K. Clements

We were really surprised—and saddened—by the shrill, *ad hominem* nature of the responses of Don Moore and Bill Ayers to our recent "Reform or Revolution" report to The Joyce Foundation (CATALYST, March 1992). We've had high regard for Don for many years, and had begun to hope that Bill was starting to overcome his past. There is a nasty tone to their essays that disappoints us.

Our main concern, however, from the standpoint of Chicago school reform, is their defensiveness in the face of sympathetic criticism and honest feedback. We have, in fact, applauded the reform effort in several previous reports and articles, and are disappointed rather than jubilant when things do not seem to be going as planned. Is praise the only form of commentary that Messrs. Moore and Ayers now find legitimate? Is it possible they have become so heavily invested in the reputation of the reform endeavor they helped to create as to find it intolerable when someone suggests it isn't yet going perfectly? History suggests that most reformers end up as the new establishment, just as protective and defensive as those they displaced. It would be a great shame if Chicago refused even to consider that some mid-course corrections might be needed. But then it's so much easier to take potshots at the messengers, to brand them voucher peddlers, racists and polemicists with malign intent.

We stand by our report, think much of it will resonate with CATA-

LYST readers and other Chicagoans, and feel no need to rebut each charge leveled against us. We must respond, however, to a few issues.

100 interviews

The first and perhaps the most important has to do with our "methodology," which Don finds so "mysterious" and deficient as virtually to discredit our enterprise. In our article, we did mention having visited two schools recently, but we never suggested that our conclusions were based on those visits alone. Indeed, we have over the course of almost three years visited more than a dozen Chicago public schools, both elementary and secondary, in various parts of the city.

We have also conducted over 100 interview sessions with principals, teachers, LSC members, community organization leaders, reform activists, business executives, district superintendents and district council members, Board of Education members, Pershing Road employees, Chicago Teachers Union officials, journalists, university professors, politicians and their staff members, and foundation officers, among others. We've attended LSC and district council meetings, looked at much other data on the school system and closely followed media coverage of school reform.

In the process, we've put together a substantial, cumulative information base to sift through and reflect upon as we prepare our occasional reports. When we write them, we forthrightly attempt to interpret what we see emerging from our broad-based interviews and school visits. This is certainly not "shooting from the lip." Perhaps a note about our information background should have

accompanied the report just to avoid this kind of controversy.

Nor have we ever aspired to do anything other than provide impressionistic feedback, based on our informal interview and site-visitation process, feedback from two outsiders who have no special stake or vested interest in Chicago school reform. This is what The Joyce Foundation asked us to do in March 1989. We have always known that the information we were gathering would not really be quantifiable, that much of it would be confidential and that our interpretations of it might be contested. But that was the nature of the project.

Don is unsettled because he cannot run our data through his computer system, analyze our questioning methods or peruse our interview notes. But we—and the Joyce staff, and many others we've talked to—believe such informally obtained information, unsystematic as it is, is nonetheless quite valuable. It allows us to see a different, yet revealing, picture of school reform than might emerge from a full-blown, highly structured, numbers-oriented, expensive and time-consuming social-scientific study of the entire school system.

Valid commentary

If Don is willing to heed only the information and interpretations that emerge from the latter kind of study, then he may have to wait many years before being able to draw even preliminary conclusions about reform. Until such studies are available (and the history of social science is such that there is no reason to believe these will be beyond dispute, either), we think most Chicagoans will be willing to consider the kind of constructive criticism and commentary we've offered, even if it is only tentative and based on informal research.

Don also asserts that we're jumping the gun, proclaiming school reform a failure even though major aspects of it have only been in place a short time. There is some irony in this accusation, since in previous reports we ourselves have stipulated that it may take five to ten years for reform to "work," and that we wondered whether Chicagoans would be patient enough.

Chester E. Finn Jr is professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University. Stephen K. Clements is a University of Chicago graduate student.

What we were trying to suggest in our most recent report was not that reform has flunked. We believe, rather, that reform has the potential to change schooling in Chicago by a little or by a lot. Significantly improving educational outcomes depends on fairly dramatic change in the school system. Based on what we've seen and heard so far, however, it appears to us that the problems we identified in the article suggest that Chicagoans are mostly making marginal changes in the overall system. That won't be enough to catalyze huge improvements in the outcomes.

We certainly do not disagree with Don about the amount of time it will take to see the full effects of reform. What we were suggesting is that, if current trends continue, five or ten years hence the schools will likely not have changed enough to meet the ambitious goals spelled out in the reform plan.

Our point about the test scores at the two schools we most recently visited was not to illustrate that reform has failed, but to point out the difficulties Chicagoans face in improving achievement without more radical changes in schools than they now seem willing to make. Don is surely entitled to disagree with us about the long-term impact of reform, but he doesn't have any grounds to question our logic or consistency.

We more or less expected the comments of Bill Ayers, whose background in political extremism predisposes him to identify the structure of society as the real culprit in educational (and most other) shortcomings. But his response, too, has an ironic ring. He accuses us of selling Chicago's mostly black and Hispanic kids short, of not expecting enough from them. Yet for almost two decades Chester Finn has been pilloried by the education establishment for expecting too much from school kids of every hue and background. Our very call for radical change assumes disadvantaged youngsters will respond to greatly increased educational demands and opportunities. We thought most people would read our statement of the obvious—that kids spend about 92 percent of their time

outside the classroom, and that much of what goes on during this time works at cross purposes to schooling—as a compelling reason to attempt dramatic change, not an effort to excuse failure.

Another irony involves our broaching of the "social deficits" issue, which we chose to do after an extraordinary conversation with several members of a major Chicago-area civil rights organization. These individuals forthrightly discussed the array of social and economic problems that children and communities face in contemporary urban society. They also acknowledged what Ayers himself admits, that linking education



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funding to property taxes is perilous, and that fiscal "equity" measures now being considered in Illinois will provide only modest financial relief for Chicago schools. We tend to agree.

But these individuals seemed also to realize that the drastic resource redistribution Ayers demands is, quite simply, politically unrealistic, now and in the near future. Community members themselves, they suggested, must generate educational and social change without expecting significant help from the outside.

If Ayers wants to dub the unwillingness of society at large to shift considerably greater amounts of resources to heavily minority inner cities as "racism," and implicitly brand us as apologists for such a system, he is free to do so. Such charges may play well in Chicago, but they strike us as counterproductive, if not downright pernicious. Use of such explosive rhetoric likely damages the cause of

redistributionary or "progressive" politics, and certainly tends to inhibit reasoned debate about solving the problems of America's big cities.

A better strategy would be to make non-race-oriented arguments in favor of increased urban spending and meantime to get on with creatively improving schools and other social institutions in ways that do not involve extensive new funds. Much is possible on this front.

Choice a good principle

We were intrigued that Moore and Ayers both raise the issue of vouchers, the alleged destruction of the public school system, and our work in the Education Department during the Reagan era. What is the point of using these ominous references to suggest that we want to subvert school reform, except to stifle legitimate discussion of important issues? As we've said, we've been fans of this reform effort—more than most non-Chicago education watchers—and surely wouldn't waste our time and energy scouring the city and writing reports if we wanted it to fail.

We have never called for vouchers for Chicago, or for massive public subsidization of private schools. We do think, however, that choice among schools is generally a good principle to support, and we think it follows logically from Chicago's reform idea, which leads to differentiation among and within schools. We also believe that a vigorous private school system can help prod public schools to improve, and can enhance various efforts (like Chicago's) to make public school personnel more accountable. But we neither predict nor desire the destruction of public schooling in Chicago.

The Moore-Ayers rhetoric seems mostly their attempt to discredit us by political association. We believe Chicago deserves a wide-open debate about the progress of its reforms, and it won't likely get one if the only input allowed is positive, or if it comes exclusively from commentators whose political opinions conform to those of the chief reform advocates. Circling the wagons in this manner is not in the best interests of the children of Chicago. ■

CityWide risks citywide support

by Doug Gills

The CityWide Coalition for School Reform played an important role in putting the structures of school reform in place. But as the focus now shifts to the classroom, CityWide is falling far short of its potential for ensuring continued widespread support for school improvement that is truly citywide.

The reformers and activists who participate in CityWide come from diverse backgrounds and sometimes have divergent interests. They do not agree on all the main questions facing the school improvement movement, let alone on the answers. Therefore, it is essential that CityWide serve as a forum for education and debate on ideas for solving our education crisis.

Heretofore, CityWide has targeted the public school bureaucracy as the principal impediment to developing better schools and, thus, better educated youth. With the installation of local school councils and the development of vital school communities at many attendance centers, it's time to switch targets. Focusing our energies on the administrative apparatus may be politically expedient, even astute, given the vulnerability of bureaucrats who lack a major constituency. But it's not productive. Indeed, it's counterproductive, for it lets the real culprits continue on their irresponsible course, accountable to no one.

CityWide should remember that the Board of Education has met the so-called administrative cap written into the School Reform Act; its spend-

ing on overhead remains below the median for other school districts in the state, even though it has more special programs to administer. Given the staff cuts in central office, it's little wonder that schools cannot get the support for teachers that we need.

CityWide should also take note that few of the surveys, polls, assessments and policy recommendations made by researchers and school reform agencies over the past two years have put the bureaucracy at the top of their reform priorities.

Consider the major roadblocks put in the path of school reform during the past year: the dismantling of Head Start in the public schools, the budget shortfall, school closings, a near teachers strike, disputes over the School Reform Act, voucher and privatization proposals, the enormous school repair backlog. These roadblocks emerged from those who set policy, not the administrators charged with carrying it out.

When you talk to parents and community leaders about these roadblocks, you find that they blame the politics and policy objectives of one or more of several players outside Pershing Road: trade and teachers union bureaucrats, the mayor and his advisors, the School Finance Authority, legislative leaders, the governors office and President Bush.

But then, CityWide has been keeping company with different folk: the corporate elite, neo-liberals and academic intelligentsia, who see efficiency as the main issue.

The concerns of parents and community leaders center around different issues. Foremost among them are:

- The demands of an economy that needs a technologically literate workforce and the question of who will be permitted to attain advanced academ-

ic and technological preparation.

- Adequate, equitable funding.

- What and how we teach our children and the role of teachers in urban classrooms.

- The role of schools in the process of community development in low-income black, brown and other national-minority neighborhoods.

As we look to these issues, it would be well to consider the pluses and minuses of school reform over the past five years, for they offer guidance on how to proceed.

Myths exploded

On the positive side, a broadly based coalition emerged, forging a new school structure that would not have seen the light of day if negotiations had been left to the central administration and the schools or to parents and teachers. School-based management, Chicago style, has significantly altered the relationships among parents, teachers and the community.

Second, the school reform movement exploded the myth that community residents are disinterested in schools and the development of youth and, more significantly, that parents are irresponsible, possessive and apathetic about their children.

Third, we have disproved the skeptics who questioned whether parents, community representatives, teachers and principals could together manage school affairs. Chicago's experiment in democracy has shown that local school councils do no greater harm than the old system. In fact, there is good reason to be optimistic that innovations in scores, if not hundreds, of schools will overcome some of the most injurious effects of the old system.

Now, for the opposite side of the historical ledger. A number of negative tendencies and trends must be corrected if the school reform movement, and especially CityWide, is to retain its progressive thrust and help build effective schools.

On paper, school reform gave parents and community representatives new authority to help shape their schools. But it has left them isolated, without the resources and accountability needed to ensure that better

Doug Gills is the chair of the Reavis Elementary Local School Council, a long-time community organizer and a faculty member in the School of Urban Planning and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

schools emerge. We must give LSCs the wherewithal to attract external resources to their schools. And we must invest in the accountability side of democracy by bridging LSCs with the broader communities surrounding them.

In the past two years, we made two crucial mistakes regarding accountability. One, after funneling money through community organizations for the first LSC election, Leadership for Quality Education was allowed to discontinue that funding. As a result, the focus of school governance narrowed from a school's community to the 11 individuals sitting on its LSC.

Two, we failed again to provide discretionary money for LSC operations. Such funds could have been used not only for training, but also for education and outreach to the broader school community.

LSCs like ostriches

The greatest long-term resource for local attendance centers is an organized parent-community alliance that forges a consensus for (1) new policies and innovations at the school level and (2) progressive school policies at the city and state levels. Save for LSC election time, we have not tried to tap this energy. We have not encouraged the development of independent LSC associations or groups outside the schools that would generate new leadership on broader yet germane issues such as school funding, health care, community safety and youth and family development.

In short, we have left the LSCs functioning like ostriches, buried in the day-to-day demands of their particular schools. Meanwhile, the status of public education has become more tenuous, and the political will to make public schools viable centers of education, youth development and community-building has diminished.

The CityWide Coalition for School Reform must create greater sensitivity in both the movement and in larger public circles to the creative role that parent-community forces can play in building effective schools and in further extending democracy into the school community. CityWide also should lobby for resources for LSCs to

develop and maintain effective democratic community participation in the local schools.

Another major shortcoming of our efforts is the scant attention we have paid to the issue of equitable and adequate financing of public schools. In 1987, we said that first we would press for school reform by restructuring power relationships and then demand adequate funding for quality education of all our children. Well, we have instituted school reform. Yet we let officials in Chicago and Springfield impose more unfunded mandates, close schools in the face of overcrowding, play games with the



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commitment to increase teacher pay, shine the spotlight on vouchers and privatize Head Start.

Further, we have not addressed the issue of what takes place in the classroom: what gets taught and how teaching proceeds. I am not questioning the commitment of the vast majority of classroom teachers. Most attempt to do a good job. However, a significant number are not prepared (or trained) to address the educational needs of urban children. CityWide should carry the banner for teaching that capitalizes on the community and cultural background of our children. It should carry it into the schools, the Chicago Teachers Union and the colleges and universities that prepare teachers.

Finally, CityWide has not been—but must become—sensitive to the race, class and elitist biases operating within the movement and within CityWide itself. Given the rise of racism in national policy circles over the past 12 years, there is no reason to think that the school reform movement or its players are immune. Racist ideas and attitudes do fuel agendas, perhaps unconsciously at times.

Racism surfaced in the debate over the new voting scheme for LSC members and again in debate over contract negotiations between the Board of Education and the CTU. It certainly is at the center of the resistance to take up the issue of adequate school funding. The feeling being conveyed is that black and brown kids don't deserve any new monies to reduce class size and overcrowding. Racism is partial motivation for the demand among some to eliminate the CPS central administration altogether.

As for CityWide, yes, the leadership is black. But the issue is not whether the leadership is African American or Latino American. The issue is whether the leadership will silence racist put-downs and assertions. What is the message when a leading CityWide member can tell a black man to "shut up," that his "opinion does not matter" because he is a parent, not an expert? What is the message when the director of CityWide states: "I want to hear from the expert?" Such attitudes flow from arrogance, condescension or racism, particularly when the people being silenced were black men and the two "experts" were white women.

Class bias in CityWide manifests itself when a major representative of corporate Chicago sits at the table as an unequal among equals, shaping policy for the groups it helps fund.

Class bias first surfaced in 1990 when the decision was made to discontinue funding of community groups to build strong LSCs. The reason given publicly was that LSCs themselves would henceforth ensure

parent-community involvement. That has not proved to be the case. Class bias surfaced again last fall when corporations, not community groups, were given responsibility for generating candidates and voters for the LSC elections. It also could be seen when "reformers" ignored LSC warnings that further cuts at Pershing Road would disrupt support services to the classroom. They did.

Finally, CityWide exhibits an anti-community bias when it fails to take seriously the perspective of parent-community representatives. If I were to develop a strategy for change, I would consult the people who are seriously attempting to make change happen. I would ask the change agents what resources they need, particularly since they have now been involved in the effort for quite some time. And I would be open to the possibility that what may at first appear to be a rational solution may, upon scrutiny, be inappropriate or impracticable.

At this juncture in school reform, the CityWide Coalition for School Reform faces a choice: to go forward as a broad-based coalition with unity around a limited set of goals and

objectives over a definite period of time or to adopt a centrist mission, program and strategy for fulfilling it.

As Chicago's only citywide, multi-national organization dealing with education policy, CityWide is a unique resource. Rather than risk divisiveness by insisting on action where there is no consensus, it would be better for CityWide to offer itself as the place where divergent views can be aired and critiqued without a commitment to action.

To maintain a broad base, CityWide would do well to do the following:

1. Assist the reform movement make the transition from issues of governance to building effective schools.

2. Keep the interest of the children first: Focus on promoting the best practices for teaching children in the Chicago public schools and providing the resources to make these practices happen in the classroom.

3. Fight for policies and practices that secure extended, democratic involvement of parents and community residents in all aspects of the school community.

4. Resist efforts that dismantle the schools by taking resources from chil-

dren who are enrolled in them, e.g., vouchers, privatization of Head Start.

5. Develop a parent-community perspective on school policies and involve LSCs and community-based organizations in the development of policy.

6. Encourage an independent voice for LSCs in public policy formation.

7. Facilitate forums and debates on the following topics:

- Instruction that uses cooperative learning techniques and addresses the needs of individual children.

- Curriculum that derives from children's communities and cultures.

- Standards for teacher competency and peer review to ensure they are met.

- Community access to schools outside regular school hours.

- Accountability of LSCs to parents and the community.

- School finance and child-centered budget building.

- Inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms.

- School clusters and specialization within those clusters.

- Combatting race, class and community biases in the school reform movement. ■

Letters

Special education story biased

The article "Special ed changes face stiff opposition," in the March issue of *CATALYST*, is an example of investigative reporting at its worst. If interviewing is to be used as the primary source of information, then equal opportunity, in terms of time and expertise, must be made available to all key stakeholders. If this principle is not followed, then a bias is created.

When Joy J. Rogers, education professor at Loyola University, uses an emotionally explosive descriptor like "disabled gulag" in reference to independent schools, and when she contends that these schools "process" but don't educate

students, then an opportunity for specific response should be made available.

Independent schools providing special education programs for children with severe disabilities are registered and licensed by the Illinois State Board of Education. The Illinois Assembly has consistently recognized the expertise and mission of these schools. Many independent schools are in compliance with the standards set by the North Central Association for the Accreditation of Elementary and Secondary Schools.

The professional staff of these independent schools, along with the parents whose children they serve, have been historical leaders in the development of Illinois and federal mandates for the education of all children with disabilities. These mandates recognize the independent schools as part of the required continuum of services.

Children who need the specialized environment of an independent school are placed through a process regulated by law. This law requires the agreement or consent of the parent of the child, and mandates that the placement be reviewed yearly to determine whether or not it is still the most appropriate environment to meet the child's educational goals. These facts are not presented in this article.

There is much more to be said in response to the generalities and incorrect information presented in this article. Perhaps the most significant closing remark that I can make is that it is unconscionable that not one parent, as a key stakeholder in this issue, was interviewed.

*Margaret Ortinau-Simons, past president
Chicago Council for Exceptional Children
Illinois Affiliation of Private Schools
for Exceptional Children*

Critic off base on special ed article

In contending that the article "Special ed changes face stiff opposition", in the March 1992 issue of *CATALYST*, should have represented a broader range of views, Margaret Ortinau-Simons apparently failed to notice the numerous quotations from people who, like herself, prefer that the current system of excluding one special education student out of every ten from the Chicago public schools should continue. Fewer than 2 percent of those students ever return to the public schools—a return rate actually worse than the former Soviet gulags. And, as in the gulags, children have died in independent schools. At least one such wrongful-death lawsuit is currently pending.

In contending that the reporter failed to interview a single parent, Ms. Ortinau-Simons apparently overlooked the entire article which was based on in-depth interviews with a parent (albeit one who fought successfully to spare her son from a segregated education).

Ms. Ortinau-Simons also hasn't mentioned that independent schools aren't required under state law to provide students with certified teachers, buildings that meet the state's life safety code for schools, and other benefits afforded to children who attend public schools. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court determined that segregated education is inherently unequal. In 1992, thousands of children with disabilities in Chicago still do not have access to equal educational opportunity. At least two United States Office for Civil Rights complaints are pending on that matter.

Daniel Cattau's excellent articles appear to have reported the spectrum of viewpoints on special education segregation in Chicago.

*Joy J. Rogers, professor
counseling and educational psychology
Loyola University*

Steinmetz program not changing direction

The article in your March issue of *CATALYST* about the Advocacy Project at Steinmetz Academic Centre revealed the dedication and concern of a couple of outstanding members of the school staff.

The article, however, left the impression that advocates were recruited to represent only students with problems.

As stated in the Ameritech Citation (Local School Council Awards Program

Booklet), the Advocacy Project was "in reaction to the low level of parental involvement"; therefore, student supporters were recruited to serve all students whose families were interested in the supplementary support system. The suggestion was originally made to the Steinmetz Local School Council by its chairperson, and the council authorized implementation of the program. Initial recruits were senior citizens and neighborhood residents.

There is at this time no intent to concentrate on recruitment of school staff exclusively, as indicated in the article by Sally O'Dowd.

These comments are not intended to be unduly critical of Ms. O'Dowd, but the information must be corrected in order to provide to *CATALYST* readers the most accurate information available.

*Thomas A. Murray, past chair
Steinmetz High School Local School Council*

[Editor's note: Sally O'Dowd accurately reported what the program director told her.]

History Fair promotes good race relations

I just received my new issue of *CATALYST* for February 1992, and I was surprised to see that the Chicago Metro History Fair was not included in the resources for dealing with racial tension and violence in our city schools. Although the History Fair does not have the "crisis" orientation of other programs, we do have a 14-year history of providing teachers and students with a unique opportunity to investigate the history of immigration, race relations and community development in our city.

Racism and intolerance is a long-term problem, deeply ingrained in the history of our city. I am glad that there are organizations that respond to an incident, a crisis; but let's not forget the long-term view, the need for educational opportunities to address this question regularly in the classroom, opportunities afforded by the Chicago Metro History Fair.

Where else are teachers and students supplied the historical City Council documents detailing the struggles of African Americans and other minorities in coping with mainstream Chicago? Where else does the study of community history yield dynamic student projects on ethnic succession in the city and suburbs? Where else can students use their own family history to access the political, economic, social and cultural forces that shape human relations, both cooperative and conflictual, in the city?

About 30 public high schools in the city participate in the Chicago Metro History Fair and substantially more than twice that number of elementary and middle schools. Students spend one to three months developing their projects, which encourage them to take a research journey of self-discovery, to exercise their own critical thinking skills and to present their own conclusions. And we represent an opportunity for professional development for teachers that will help them address these issues more effectively.

*Allen Schwartz, executive director
Chicago Metro History Fair*

Revive Stamp Act for school funding

Once again we are in an election year when no one will say the dreaded T-word, taxes. Let me solve the tax issue by taking a page from the American Revolution. I advocate a reenactment of the old British Stamp Act with the revenue going to education.

Why not sell revenue stamps in graded denominations and use them on wills, diplomas, court filings, and, yes, even stock transactions and newspapers. The press has a vested interest in improved schooling so students can read their product, or do we face a future press with only sports, comics, astrology and columns of advice?

As I tell my students, the Stamp Act was unwise because it was "taxation without representation" but also because it hit the two most vocal elements in colonial society, the colonial press and the lawyers. Both of these are special interests, then and today.

Connecticut until recently had no state income tax, but a high sales tax, and yet it had the largest per-capita income of any state. Now why couldn't the British have been that smart? Don't hit the influential special interests, hit the poor with a sales tax. Frankly, a Stamp Act to support the schools is far preferable to an increase in the sales tax. Call me Tory, but the British had the right idea, badly executed!

*Gerald Adler, history teacher
Kelly High School*

CATALYST welcomes guest editorials and letters to the editor. Send them to *CATALYST/Opinions*, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, Ill. 60604. They may be edited for clarity and space.

Diaries

We welcome two new diarists, both high school students, from the South Side and the North Side. Rachel and Alf are their chosen pen names. Their stories in this issue are primarily about security—from fights in the building to disciplinary favoritism to a murder at the school door. However, even under this ominous cloud, there is good news reported by our other anonymous diarists. A teacher is inspired by a creative gifted program where students are engaged in exciting learning. An LSC, with hard work and responsible research, tackles the knotty problem of overcrowding; the council and its school community come down to a tough decision between year-round school and controlled enrollment.

Politics as usual in principal selection

CARLOS, teacher

Feb. 4 How has school reform affected the Chicago public school system in terms of teachers wanting to become principals? Not favorably. I have discovered that applying for a principal vacancy is next to impossible.

The only requirement to become a principal candidate is the possession of a state Type 75 administrative certificate. In my school, two teachers have this certificate. The problem is that principal vacancies are not posted. The ordinary teacher does not have any way of knowing when vacancies occur. Even harder is knowing when the application process begins. And the greatest difficulty is getting an interview.

The Board of Education and its Reform Implementation Office have failed to publish all principal vacancies. They appear to be working very closely with the deputy of school operations and the district superintendents to narrow the candidate field to someone's relative or best friend.

Local school councils seem to have been keeping every bit of information to themselves. In most cases the assistant principals have the inside track. Also, community organizations and activists have much influence in the choosing of candidates.

No one wants to be given a principalship on a silver platter, but too many candidates I have spoken with feel that merit, qualifications and

experience amount to almost nothing. Clout counts. It's politics as usual, and the board is taking part in this unfortunate process.

Teachers bumped, returned

ALF, student

Jan. 13 What a day! Three of the 11 teachers the Board of Education cut from my school in October were returned to their teaching positions today.

The teachers were cut because of the school's declining enrollment. Many of the teachers' students went to the board to protest these cuts, but their protests went unheard.

When the teachers got bumped, the whole school was affected. Because the bumped teachers held more than 40 classes each day, the students in those classes had to be reprogrammed; and because of the limit to maximum student enrollment per class, the entire school had to be reprogrammed over the weekend.

At first, some students refused to go to class because they felt they were just getting used to one teaching style and now would have to adjust to a new teacher style. So, for about three days the cutting list was about five pages long.

Many of the teachers who were cut were sent to elementary schools until our enrollment increased or they were able to bump a teacher who had less teaching experience.

One of the teachers who returned said, "I'm happy to be back and pray I'm not transferred again."

An inspiration

LAZARUS, teacher

Jan. 18 The off-site gifted program for high school students (see *CATALYST*, February 1992, *Diaries*, page 17, Lazarus Oct. 18 entry) is still an inspiration for me. Today the class visits the new Harold Washington Public Library. It is an oasis, a Mecca for learning, this bright and airy facility where access to materials is easy and everything is designed in human proportions. A joy. A fitting tribute to the initiator of school reform.

The librarian directing our tour, in advising the teachers on acquiring funding to expand our program, emphasizes the importance of grants and community involvement; tap the businesses in your area. Wouldn't Tocqueville have been proud to know that this American tradition of volunteerism he observed more than 150 years ago continues to be our mainstay? (Alexis de Tocqueville, French visitor to U.S.A. in 1831-32, author of *Democracy in America*)

Feb. 4 The gifted program has picked up a handful of new students for the second term. The veteran students provide orientation for them. Work continues on our various museum projects: sorting, cataloguing, learning. The freedom to work unconstrained by a 40-minute bell schedule, and other restrictions of the normal school day, makes the program a special delight.

School security

ALF, student

Jan. 11 We want to see improvements in security. When a fight happens, there is not a security guard in sight, and it takes one forever to get there.

The way disciplinary action is handled is also a problem. It seems that the disciplinarian is playing favorites.

For example, recently two guys were fighting in the hall, and an officer sent them to the disciplinary office. One young man was suspended for two days and the other given Saturday detention. It just so happens that the one given only detention was a teacher's assistant. The students are insisting on a set of disciplinary guidelines the same for everyone.

LAZARUS, teacher

Jan. 13 We know well the prevalence and power of gangs in the city, the communities and the schools. During incidents at our school, too many of us have witnessed the unswerving loyalty of gang members to their cause. Members are possessed by the affiliation. At a recent faculty meeting, a representative of the police Gang Crimes Unit confirmed this ugly picture for us. What can the school possibly offer to counteract the hold gangs have on kids? The speaker suggested a few preventive measures to dissuade prospective members from joining gangs—such as taking time to listen, not betraying the youngsters' trust and extending school activities so that no time is left over for gang activity. No recommendations were made for the hardcore. At present, some funds are available at our school for a Saturday program of special activities but nothing for after-school or summer programs.

RACHEL, student

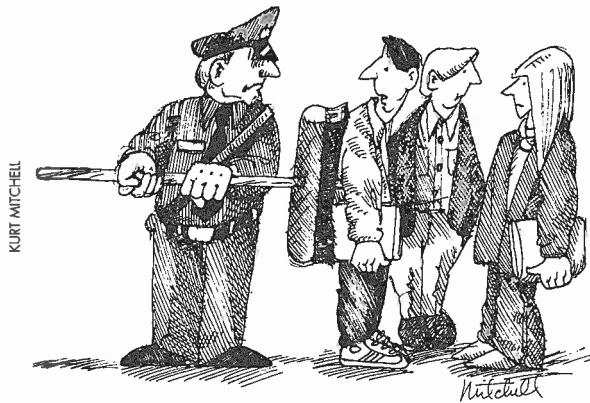
Jan. 25 Discipline has been tightened at our high school. One day, during the gym periods, all students had to attend emergency meetings called by the head of security. We now have four "strict discipline" rules: (1) No sharing of lockers with someone outside your division; if anyone is caught doing this, both students will be removed from the locker. (2) No fighting; if a person is caught fighting, that person will immediately be expelled from school. (3) No cutting; anyone caught, automatic detention. (4) Hall sweep; any student caught in the hallway after the bell rings will draw detention. Teachers are asked to lock their doors as soon as the bell rings; students left in the hall are "swept" up by the security guards.

Lines at the discipline office have been long! Students find it almost

impossible to make it to class in four minutes. The school is extremely big, and to make it between classes on time is ever so difficult. Yesterday I had to wear my coat from sixth period through ninth period because I didn't have time to go to my locker.

ALF, student

Feb. 7 Students were required to be at school at 8:30 a.m. today, instead of 7:40, because school staff were meeting with the principal to discuss ways they could eliminate the school's "social clubs." The school used to sponsor the clubs but banned them when pledging got out of hand. Even though banned they still exist and pledge students. The officers are usually seniors.



Two days ago, in front of the school door at about 2:45 p.m., a member of one club shot and killed a member of another club. The first two days after the shooting, security was tight outside the school; students and parents feared retaliation.

Feb. 10 Today everything is back to normal—not a cop in sight.

No help from above

OLIVIA, principal

Jan. 14 In an attempt to appear to be doing something (anything!) to save additional dollars, the board decided to vacate the east building at central office and rent out the space. Departments once considered favored because they had spacious offices in the east building now find

themselves crowded into the central and west buildings. Overcrowding is no better for bureaucrats than it is for school children, so it can be assumed that productivity is down and absenteeism is up. In the meantime, in light of the current real estate market and the fact that Pershing Road is not a prime business location, the east building remains vacant.

CARLOS, teacher

Feb. 11 We are receiving less and less information from our district office and from central office. For example, we had to make amendments to our ESEA government-funded programs and got no help whatsoever from the district or central offices. They are always requiring additional things, like certain signatures, rather than facilitating our work. In the meantime, the reality is that children do not benefit from the proposed changes which cannot be implemented until approval comes from the ESEA office.

OLIVIA, principal

Feb. 22 In the good old days, prior to reform, we were given discretionary dollars and guidelines on how to spend them. We were also told how much to budget for any staff we might want to purchase with these funds. If the formula used to calculate the cost of a teacher or a teacher aide exceeded the actual cost, the difference became "unexpended" funds and we generally were given an additional allocation in the spring.

Reform came along to make things "better." Now if we want to purchase a teacher or a teacher aide, we have to figure out how much this new position is going to cost us. (Reform means the local school does it.) If our calculations are off the mark, we may not know about it for several weeks.

In our most recent case, we submitted an opening for a teacher aide in early November 1991. Knowing the paper work would not be done for a few weeks, we thought it safe to assume we'd have the opening by

the beginning of January. And to be absolutely sure there would be enough money, we budgeted for 30 weeks, a good six weeks more than we knew we would spend. Wrong, wrong—on both counts.

First, the position opening, with all the required approvals, spent November and December languishing on some coordinator's desk. (Even factoring in the Christmas vacation period, this was unconscionably long.) "Not to worry," I was told in early January. The money had been loaded into the appropriate budget lines and we'd have a position number before the end of the payroll period. It didn't happen.

Second, when the position opening finally made it to the person who was to open the position, the computer indicated that the budget lines did not have enough money in them.

In the old days, a review of our funds would have revealed a surplus from which to take the additional required dollars. A transfer of funds would have been made and the position opened. These days, the position opening is returned to us. We are asked to look at our budget to see where we might find the required additional dollars. We are then told to write a letter to our coordinator directing him to transfer the necessary funds. This letter, of course, must be co-signed by the LSC chair. End result: the teacher aide position we requested in early November and for which we have plenty of money in the budget finally became available Feb. 14 and was staffed Feb. 19. Fourteen weeks of waiting! This is reform?

No help from within

LAZARUS, teacher

Feb. 8 I learned about the differences between an elementary school LSC and its faculty. The council, over objections by the teachers, chose a particular curriculum for the school. Despite the most earnest efforts by professionals in the building to educate LSC members and convince them that the curriculum simply wouldn't work, especially with reference to the test scores LSC members

were so concerned about, the council's agenda prevailed. The teachers then determined to work twice as hard as necessary—to meet the demands of the LSC and of their own consciences in doing what was best for their students. The teachers taught both curriculums.

CARLOS, teacher

Feb. 13 Staff development workshop. The principal is right on target in trying to change the way we operate in order to improve teaching and student achievement. The problem is that staff continues to challenge the principal. Certain staff members (one on the LSC) constantly disrupt meetings, question each move and respond negatively to everything that goes on. I'm not sure what their agenda is. Is it rooted in simple dislike of the principal? Is it race? I'm not sure the improvement of student achievement is even a genuine desire.

I honestly don't know how to deal with staff who refuse to improve themselves. It is a mystery to me how teachers can refuse staff development and ideas for professional growth.

OLIVIA, principal

Feb. 22 How can I focus my energies on being an instructional leader when I have to contend with a totally incompetent building engineer? This man is incapable of understanding his job responsibilities. The simplest concerns are beyond his comprehension.

Earlier this year, someone ran into the school fence, knocking down a section. The accident happened over the weekend, and when I arrived at school on Monday at 8 a.m., the broken fence section was still in the school yard. I had to explain to the engineer that he needed to remove the damaged fence section before the children arrived. I spoke to him three times before he finally attended to that task.

The heat situation is a constant problem; it's either too hot (at times above 80 degrees) or too cold. It's not only that the engineer does not know how to regulate the furnace, he rarely bothers to check individual room temperatures unless I nag him.

When it snows, he has to be reminded that sidewalks must be cleared and salted. He blames the

district supervising engineer for a malfunctioning snow blower and for his lack of supplies. Whenever I ask him to attend to something, he always looks for one of the janitors to do it. He apparently feels he can only supervise; as an engineer he is above doing the work himself.

School reform has now put the engineer under my supervision. Big deal! I cannot hire or fire. I cannot even get this bumbling fool off my staff. I have yet to see any kind of evaluation form on the engineer. I have complained to the district supervising engineer but he tells me the engineers union is so strong nothing can be done about such incompetence. I wonder—did the lawmakers in Springfield not know about the strong engineers union when they passed this latest wrinkle in the reform law? Or didn't they care?

What kind of leadership?

LAZARUS, teacher

Jan. 31 Teacher Institute Day. Those who attend a PPAC meeting, including a few LSC members, express interest in hearing more about the Chicago Teachers Union's restructuring center (now called the Quest Center, a MacArthur Foundation-funded program to encourage and help implement innovative teaching methods). However, the principal is reluctant to have our school involved, claiming the school should not be a guinea pig for educational experiments.

At department meetings, chairpersons read directives from administration. More tasks for teachers. Stand at your classroom door to clear the hallway between periods, keep your eye on student washrooms and your classroom to prevent students from marking up newly painted walls. Update unit lesson plans. The ultimate goal is to have every teacher in the department teaching the same thing at the same time. Lockstep teaching. Etc. Etc. All the directives come from the top down. No concession is made for the fact that teachers might be professionals with a few good ideas of their own. We are to be automatons.

Feb. 3 Today as I read the February issue of *Educational Leadership*, I am

painfully reminded of the leadership approach at our school. The journal's theme is "transformational leadership," which moves away from top-down power to consensual power—"a form of power manifested *through* other people, not *over* other people." Educational reform will surely fail, the journal authors insist, unless existing traditional power relationships in schools are not changed. And "most initiatives that fly the restructuring banner advocate strategies for altering power relationships. They include school-site management, increasing parents' and teachers' participation in decision making, and enhancing opportunities for teacher leadership."

Suggestions are given for instituting participatory decision making, the encouragement of creativity and professional growth. But the gap between the theory in the journal and the practice at our school deeply discourages me.

Feb. 10 Last month our school improvement plan committee meeting was well attended. The principal directed the group to one goal: improving student attendance. While those assembled gave thoughtful deliberation to addressing the goal, no one volunteered for the steering committee to write the SIP.

Nonetheless, we now have a new attendance policy, which places considerable responsibility on the teachers. It comes from the administration with two single-spaced pages of instructions and five different-colored forms. It involves much paperwork and more phone time for teachers than previously.

There is little joy as the paperwork mounts. And when simple changes that might facilitate the program are rejected, teachers set their jaw. (For example, two separate forms, after being filled out by the teacher, must be delivered to two separate administration offices. We requested *one* central spot to drop off *both* forms. Denied.)

Students overlooked

ALF, student

Jan. 23 Who cares? This is the response I get from my peers when we discuss the local school council

and what it is doing for our school.

Many of the students I have talked with think the LSC has not made any visible improvements in our school; therefore, they consider it a waste of time to run for council student representative. Says one student, "If your vote only counts in certain situations, why bother? It's not like we can help vote a teacher in or out." Many of the students at my school must feel this way because only one ran for 1991-92 LSC student rep.

The students do want more opportunities to voice their opinion on reform. It seems like every time a student tries to voice an opinion, he or she is made to feel by the faculty that the opinion doesn't count.

Coping with overcrowding

ROBIN, observer

Feb. 8 On Thursday at School H, I attended a public forum called by the LSC to get community input about the acute overcrowding at the school. Almost 90 people were in the audience. There was a translator for Spanish-speaking parents.

The Overcrowding Committee, composed of most of the LSC members, had carefully considered seven solutions. The committee chair described all the alternatives. Two solutions had been rejected: double shifts and mobiles. Three were acceptable but not feasible for the quick solution they felt was needed: buying or renting space, changing boundaries, trying to get a recently closed neighboring school reopened.

The two most appropriate options, they decided, were year-round school, which could start in July, and controlled enrollment, which could start sooner. Controlled enrollment means that the only children accepted into the school are kindergartners (in September) and siblings of children already enrolled. All other children who move into the neighborhood are bused to other schools. Year-round schools are divided into four "tracks," one of which is always on vacation. It is called the 60-20 plan because children and teachers are in school for 60 days and off for 20. This allows the school to enroll 25 percent more

than it otherwise could.

There were three invited speakers: principals of two nearby schools with controlled enrollment and the principal of a year-round school. The LSC chair from one of the schools and an LSC member from another also added their views.

The schools on controlled enrollment have been that way for 10 and 12 years. One principal emphasized two cautions: the bused-out students from her neighborhood now have to go farther because of districtwide overcrowding, and when controlled enrollment is instituted the faculty initially has to be reduced.

Though the principal did not express a strong position on the value of controlled enrollment, the LSC chair was negative. She felt there was a loss in the sense of community because not all the local children were in the local school, and the stability of the neighborhood was adversely affected: people considering moving in often chose not to when learning their children would be bused out, or people who moved in were turned off when they later found out about the busing.

The principal of the year-round school began by saying that her school was actually both year-round and controlled enrollment because year-round had not been enough to relieve overcrowding.

On the positive side, for a year-round school, she said it is a better system educationally for children, especially in the primary grades, because they don't lose as much in a 20-day vacation as in the long summer vacation, and teachers find they don't have to spend as much time reteaching. In addition, the teachers are fresher because they are teaching for only three months before having a break. Finally, an unexpected plus has been that the school is always there to help children in trouble even if they are on break.

On the negative side, she continued, this arrangement is very different from what people are used to, and the LSC "will get a lot of heat" for it. Still, after one year, she says most parents are for it, as are children and teachers. The person who suffers is the principal—it's "an administrative nightmare."

The principal of School H spoke about the school's commitment to being a neighborhood school for all children, but pointed out that the situation is acute, with average class size at 34 and some classes more than 40.

The council is to meet in a week to make the decision. Meanwhile, they are circulating a questionnaire to get the views of parents and teachers.

Feb. 13 At this meeting the crowd was a little smaller than last week, but the turnout of teachers was larger—about 20 out of a faculty of 90.

The results of the questionnaire were circulated: parents voted 428 for controlled enrollment to 108 for year-round school; teachers voted 37 for controlled enrollment to 23 for year-round.

options no one was stressing enough the crisis existing in the school. Its enrollment, he said, is growing faster than that of any school in the city. There is an urgent need for a decision.

Each member then spoke, indicating his or her preference. It was clear that all had given the matter much thought and weren't completely happy with their decisions. Both teachers on the council spoke for controlled enrollment and reminded the parent members that they shouldn't overlook the views of their constituents.

One put it, "If you ask for people's opinions, you should put aside your personal agenda." It began to look as though a majority would go for the year-round school; one teacher in the

to controlled enrollment), four for year-round, one abstain.

With considerable dissatisfaction all around, the council agreed to table the matter until a later meeting.

On the way out, I passed a group of three teachers tackling a community member who had spoken strongly for year-round school. They were saying, "We need help! Now!" Yes, but of course they won't get it, even with controlled enrollment, about May; but I guess that looks better to them than waiting until July, and then having to make all the adjustments involved in that major change.

Restructuring schools

LAZARUS, teacher

Feb. 8 Kickoff for the Chicago Teachers Union's PPAC training class. The first of the 10 Saturday sessions meets early in the morning. The goal of this three-hour credit course is to have each school team (10-15 teachers) develop a restructuring program for their school.

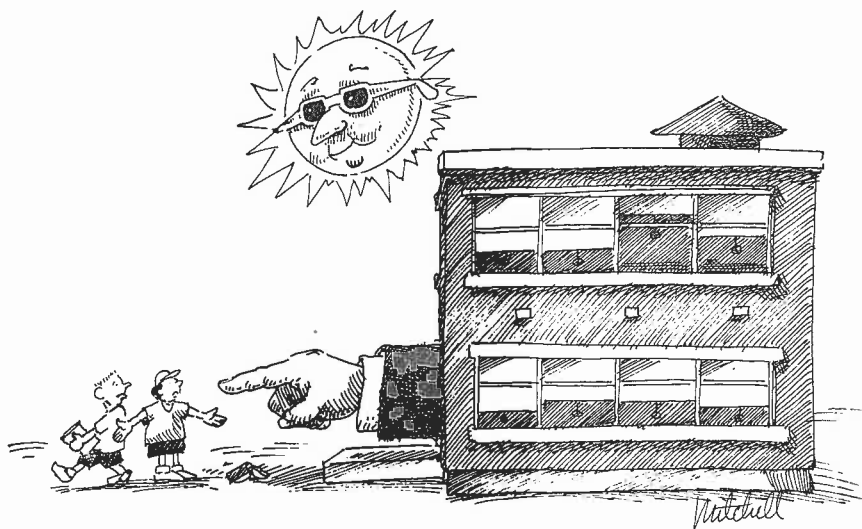
The session gets underway with introductions, a few get-acquainted activities and serious discussion of the possibilities of restructuring for CPS.

During the four-and-a-half-hour session, teachers help teachers. They are drawn like magnets to share information on how to bring about change. Underlying the small group discussions is "What is best for the children?"

Following the session, the three trainers for our group meet for another two hours to plan the next class. How to model restructuring with no wasted activity or effort?

Not easy. If we succeed, participants will feel and act like professionals drawing on their own creativity and the knowledge and experience of their colleagues to design the Chicago schools of the future.

When I consider how few educational changes have really taken root over the last 20 years or more, I could be easily discouraged. Yet I know that when the pendulum swings, it never actually ends up in exactly the same place. It is with this observation alone that I can summon the strength to try once again. ■



KURT MITCHELL

The council chair asked those audience members who wanted to speak to sign up and be called on; this was a good idea because everyone who wanted to had a chance but no one was directly answering (or shouting at) anyone else. A number of people spoke, fairly well running the pro and con gamut on both options.

Then it was the LSC's turn. The chair said the LSC had visited schools, talked to many experienced people, done research and conducted a survey. Now, she said, "Please be patient and let the members talk."

The principal spoke first and said that with all the discussion of the

audience noted that if they did go for a year-round school, they should immediately go for controlled enrollment *too* or set an enrollment figure that would trigger controlled enrollment into effect.

Finally, the local school council vote: five for year-round, four for controlled enrollment, one abstain. (One member has been inactive for some time; in fact, earlier in the meeting steps were taken to remove her from the council.)

This stalemate led to confusion and uncertainty about what to do next, but after further discussion another vote was taken: five for controlled enrollment (the previous abstainer changed

Board fund-raising plan stirs suspicions

by Scott Schraff

Seeking to snare more foundation grants for Chicago's schools, the Board of Education's Development Committee is proposing to set up a separate fund-raising agency.

Initially, the agency would focus on generating more money for local schools rather than for projects of the system, says Bertha Magaña, chair of the board's Development Committee. Other goals are to spread the wealth of foundation grants to more schools and to ensure funders that their money is processed quickly and used as intended. Magaña says the agency would develop guidelines for local

fund raising and train schools in how to obtain foundation grants.

"Our project is looking to make things more equitable and allow all schools to raise money," Magaña says.

There is growing interest among local school councils in setting up their own non-profit fund-raising groups. Supt. Ted Kimbrough recently suggested a ban on such efforts. But Magaña says her committee doesn't "feel the need to do away with the other entities."

Even so, the committee's proposal is being met with skepticism.

"The equity concern is a legitimate

one because most schools are not taking advantage of foundation money," observes John Ayers, co-chair of the education committee of the Donors Forum, an umbrella group for philanthropic foundations. "But what is the board's record in creating equity? It's not too good."

"Foundations don't look favorably on giving money to government agencies like the Board of Education," Ayers adds. "Foundations will still see this organization as a board effort, and they don't want a gatekeeper to watch over how their money is spent. Will this bring more money and creativity? I don't know."

Says James Deanes, chair of the Parent/Community Council: "I think they would be better to look at establishing this organization at the sub-district level. It would be a better way to coordinate fund raising and address the equity question." Expressing fear that a citywide agency might divert funds into the board's hard-pressed operating budget, Deanes says the

Friends of Ray nets \$50,000 plus

Ray School, 5631 S. Kimbark, was one of the first Chicago public schools to set up a non-profit fund-raising group. Created in 1982, Friends of Ray has raised enough money to supply a science lab with over \$50,000 of advanced equipment and help pay for a jungle gym.

Creating Friends was fairly simple. The group completed an application from the Internal Revenue Service to gain designation as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization (501 (c) 3).

"The hardest part was drawing up the bylaws," recalls former principal Sara Spurlark, who still serves on Friends' nine-member board.

"Luckily, we had a bunch of parents who were lawyers and understood the legality of establishing such an organization. After we got the

Friends program off the ground, we shared our information with other schools to help them set up their own program."

Initially, Ray's PTA was wary, says Spurlark, adding "now we work together." Through direct fund raising, such as calls to alumni, and grant applications, Friends raises money for long-term projects or big programs. The PTA concentrates on smaller projects, like giving teachers money for supplies, she explains.

Spurlark does not see the board's proposal to establish a citywide fund-raising agency as threatening, but she worries it will put pressure on schools to devote more energy to seeking outside assistance: "Fund raising is a full-time job, and I don't think it's the job of schools to be raising money." S.S.



Students at Ray Elementary play on a jungle gym bought with private donations.

board should encourage local fundraising efforts instead.

"It will take a huge amount of building of trust that money would be spent in an accountable way," concurs Jill Darrow, program officer for the Prince Charitable Trust Foundation. "Right now, I don't feel funding through the board would be effective because there is no way to assure that money will get spent in the way it's intended."

Under state law, grants to schools in excess of \$1,000 must be channeled through central office, which has been accused of delaying distribution. Drew Gilchrist, the board's director of accounting, says the allegation is untrue: "In general, we send out the money within a couple of days. Ninety-eight percent of the money goes through smoothly, but there are always exceptions."

Magaña believes that a citywide agency could gain the confidence of foundations.

A Chicago schools education foundation was first proposed by former Supt. Ruth B. Love. But corporate officials who were supportive dropped the idea when her contract was not renewed.

A number of other large cities, including Los Angeles, New York and Miami, have school fund-raising agencies, but virtually all are independent of the city school system. Pittsburgh, which boasts good relations among school, union and corporate leaders, is an exception. There,

the business community helped create a development office within the school bureaucracy. Since its inception in 1985, the Pittsburgh Development Office has raised \$25.8 million for school projects.

In Chicago, the board's Development Committee is considering four models; only one would be independent from the school board. The models are:

■ The Local Education Fund, an independent agency governed by representatives from private foundations, the business community and the broader community. The fund would seek financial and non-financial support from the business community, foundations, individuals, institutions of higher learning and civic and labor leaders.

■ The School District Initiated Foundation. Its board would include members of board staff and representatives from private foundations.

■ The Development Office, an administrative unit of the school system that would seek funds for programs identified by the School Board. It would have an advisory committee of corporate, small business and community leaders that would assist in fund-raising efforts.

■ The Support Group. While existing independently of the school system, its board would consist of school district personnel who would identify educational priorities, and community-based leaders who would obtain outside support. ■

Upcoming events

■ **April 3, 4** "Celebrating Teachers as Leaders in Curriculum," one day of visits to classrooms of outstanding Chicago teachers and one day of curriculum workshops. Fee: \$15. Deadline: March 30. For more information, contact co-sponsors: Citizens Schools Committee (312) 726-4678 or Teachers' Task Force (312) 341-3610.

■ **April 9** "Educational Finance: Striving for Equity in Funding," a lecture by Jack Foster, former Kentucky secretary of education, and Carl Parker, chairman of the Texas Senate Education Committee. Time: 4 to 5:30 p.m. Place: Bederman Auditorium,

618 S. Michigan, second floor. For more information: Richard Laine (312) 702-9456.

■ **April 11** "Special Education in Chicago: Taking a Closer Look," a forum dealing with learning disabilities, special education rules and regulations and integrating special education students into regular classes. Time: 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Place: Illinois Institute of Technology, 3241 S. Federal. Sponsor: Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE). For more information: Bernie Noven (312) 784-PURE.

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Catalyst
VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Bright Ideas

Harper lays down law to truants, parents

Saturday Attendance Workshop at Harper High School, 6520 S. Wood, was just getting underway when six parents arrived a few minutes after the 9 a.m. starting time. Harper Assistant Principal Richard Parker promptly turned the latecomers away.

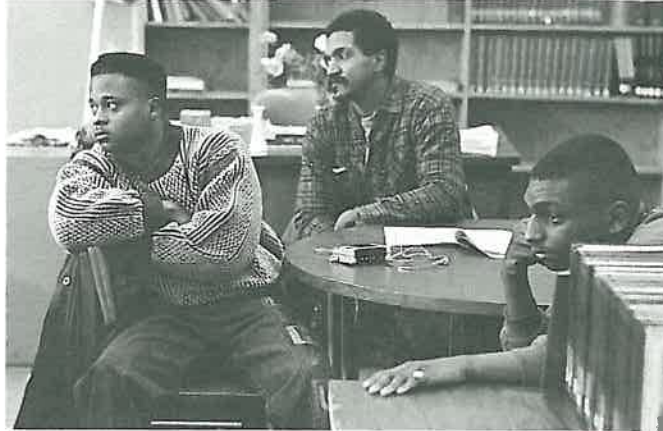
"If we let them in after 9 o'clock that defeats the whole purpose" of the workshop, said Parker. The tone was thus set for a session designed to hold parents accountable for their children's attendance problems.

In the last year, Harper has suspended more than 60 chronically absent students until they and their parents completed a three-hour attendance workshop. If parents refuse to participate, Harper reports them to the Cook County State's Attorney, who can charge them with a misdemeanor and/or strip them of public assistance benefits.

Six parents and their children attended this year's first workshop, held Feb. 22. The students had logged more than 25 unexcused absences during the fall semester. Harper ran eight workshops last spring, and plans to run at least two a month for the rest of this school year.

How do the parents feel about coming to a workshop? "They're angry!" says Emma Arnold, a community representative on Harper's local school council. But, she adds, "You've got to shake up the parents."

Nancy Jointer, a mother who attended the recent workshop, confirmed Arnold's



PAUL SEQUEIRA

Harper High School truants and their parents attend a Saturday attendance workshop.

observation: "It ticked me off to have to come up here on Saturday!"

Parker said that the latecomers had been clearly told to arrive by 9 a.m. and that he wanted them to know the school was treating absenteeism and punctuality seriously. The parents could attend another workshop the following Wednesday, but until then their children would remain suspended.

For those who arrived on time, Harper staff discussed school policies on such topics as attendance, punctuality and dress code. Maureen Roy of the Cook County State's Attorney's office explained how the courts prosecute parents of chronically absent students.

The parents then signed an agreement with the school stating they understood their responsibility to ensure their children's attendance. Students signed to acknowledge their need to attend classes to graduate. Finally, Harper teacher Patricia Brewer awarded each student a Certificate of Workshop Completion, which allows the student to return to classes.

Since the workshops began, attendance has risen three percentage points—to 79 percent, notes Principal Barbara Pulliam, who developed the program.

Previously, says Brewer, "There was not much we could do" about chronic absenteeism, which has been on the rise citywide. Adds Arnold: "We got tired of calling parents" about absent students and not getting results.

Rob Paral

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