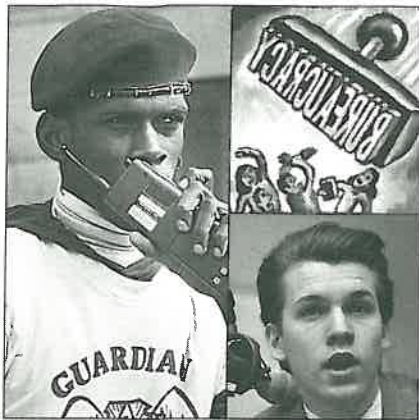


Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM



SAFETY

1 in 4 students fear violence A survey of 31 high schools around the state. **page 2**

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Gangs, guns, violence challenge schools

by Michael Selinker

Jaime Villagomez has a year to go at Wells High School, 936 N. Ashland. He's a good student who has stayed out of gangs, but he might not make it.

Jaime has been intimidated by gangs around his school and neighborhood so often that his mother, Ana, is thinking of taking him back to Puerto Rico, a move Jaime favors.

"I just can't even walk across the street without being scared," he explains. "There's always a teenager on the corner, and I always have to watch out because I don't know if he's in a gang. In Puerto Rico, you don't have to worry about [gang] colors."

Says Ana: "I'd have to leave my job, my car and my house, but what good are they if I lose my son?"

Jaime's fear of gangs and violence is common among public high school students. It also is well founded.

Just ask the 10-year-old girl who was raped in February by a 14-year-old in a hallway of O'Keeffe Elementary School, 6940 S. Merrill. Just ask the 8-year-old girl who was shot in the back in March by another 8-year-old in a classroom of Sharon Christa McAuliffe Elementary School, 1841 N. Springfield.

Just ask the kids. That's what the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority did in a survey released earlier this school year. Researchers

for the authority questioned 2,693 students and 1,379 teachers in Illinois public high schools; about a quarter of those surveyed were from Chicago.

What the researchers found was that one in four students were afraid some of the time that they would be hurt or bothered in school. Almost one in five said they were afraid they would be hurt going to and from school. In a recent survey of Chicago elementary school teachers, one in three said their children did not feel safe coming and going to school. (See CATALYST, October 1991.)

LSCs respond

Some Chicago principals and local school councils (LSCs) refuse to acknowledge problems in their schools, crime fighters say. But there has been a marked increase in attention to school security since the advent of school reform.

The Board of Education doubled its security budget in the past two years, from \$12 million to \$24 million a year. Much of that increase has gone toward Operation SAFE, which placed police officers in every high school. (Since September 1990, they have arrested an average of one student per school per day.) The board

1 in 4 students fear violence

To get a picture of crime in Illinois' public high schools, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority surveyed one class per grade at 31 schools around the state. Conducted in May 1990, the survey consisted of 154 questions about crime, fear and school and neighborhood issues. It was administered to 2,693 students, including 606, or 23 percent, from Chicago. The authority also surveyed 1,379 teachers, including 346, or 25 percent, from Chicago. To avoid any bias associated with elective courses, the authority surveyed students in homeroom, English and physical education classes. The following are some of the key findings. Numbers represent the proportion of students who:

Fear violence in school	1 in 4	Were physically attacked	1 in 12
Fear violence coming to and from school	1 in 5	Were victims of an attempted attack	1 in 6
Stayed home to avoid getting hurt	1 in 12	Were cut or shot (of those attacked)	1 in 8
Brought a weapon to school	1 in 3	Blamed gangs for attack (of those attacked)	1 in 7
Brought a gun to school	1 in 20	Were robbed at school	1 in 20
Brought a knife or razor to school	1 in 8	Were victims of the theft at school	1 in 5
Think drugs a serious school problem	1 in 3	Say gangs go to the school	6 in 10
Think alcohol easy to get in school	3 in 4	Know person who dropped out due to gangs	1 in 3
Think marijuana easy to get in school	1 in 2	Say teachers maintain order only sometimes	1 in 3
Think cocaine/crack easy to get in school	1 in 4	Think school rules are not fair	1 in 2
Avoid certain areas of school building	1 in 10	Think punishment is not the same for all	2 in 3
Avoid certain routes to and from school	1 in 5		

Source: "Education and Criminal Justice in Illinois." Trends and Issues, 1991, published by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. For copies, call public information officer Kevin Morison at (312) 793-8550.

also provided training and uniforms for security guards. And it purchased portable metal detectors to lend to schools.

LSCs are attacking violence from a variety of angles. They have organized parent patrols, reached out to anti-crime groups, insisted on the removal of gang graffiti from buildings, adopted dress codes to banish gang identifiers and used discretionary money to mount after-school programs as an alternative to gangs. At some schools, students help counsel their peers away from gangs, assist the police with information and patrol school grounds. (See stories on pages 5, 6 and 7.)

"Safety is a prime requisite," says Roosevelt Burnett, principal of Chicago Vocational High School (CVS), 2100 E. 87th. "If youngsters are afraid of turmoil, learning is simply not going to take place."

Indeed, students in the survey who expressed more fear also were more likely to dislike school. And victims of

crimes were absent more often than were students who had not been victims.

"Our children live in fear from the moment they wake up until the time they go to sleep," contends Frances Sandoval, whose son's gang-related murder led her to form Chicago's Mothers Against Gangs. "To be afraid to stand on a street corner and wait for a bus, to pray to God someone doesn't mistake you for a gang-banger, to check the colors you have on to be sure you aren't wearing gang colors—that's got to be terrifying to a child."

This fear of violence in school was also expressed by the teachers surveyed. Fifteen percent were afraid they would be hurt going to or from school, and 18 percent feared being hurt inside the school. Almost one in five avoided being alone in school after hours, when teachers help students having difficulties in class.

Students and teachers—both urban and suburban—reported many crimes in and around schools during

the school year. One in 12 students reported being attacked, and one in six reported an attempted attack. Among teachers, about one in eight reported being the victim of an attempted attack.

The assaults are much more severe than in the past, reports Lt. Thomas Byrne, head of the Chicago Police Department's new school patrol division: "The days of 'West Side Story' and fist fights are over. Now it's chains and brass knuckles and anything you can maim with."

Despite the severity of assaults, about two-thirds of the victims did not report them to authorities—either out of fear they would suffer retaliation or in the belief nothing would be done. Many of those who did report assaults said they were dissatisfied with the outcome.

One in three students said they brought weapons to school at least once, often for protection. One in eight brought a knife or razor, one in 15 brought a spray such as Mace (illegal in Illinois), one in 20 brought a gun. Projected to the whole state, that amounts to 26,000 guns, the authority noted.

"Youngsters carry weapons for all kinds of reasons," observes CVS principal Burnett. "Most of them do it for reasons of protecting themselves, however misguided that may be. For some of our youngsters, it's very difficult getting to school every day. They stand on a dangerous street corner, and to tell those students, 'You must come to school with only a handkerchief and a pencil,' they think it's ridiculous. But we keep telling them. We've got to."

10,000 school arrests

George Sams, safety director for the Chicago Public Schools, says students who bring weapons for protection should be treated just as harshly as those who bring them to commit crimes. "The only reason someone has a gun in school is to shoot someone, whether for defense or not," Sams explains.

Last school year (the first for which statistics were kept), the school patrol unit confiscated 182 guns, for an average of one a day, and made almost 10,000 arrests, for an average of one per school per day.



Field School has its own Guardian Angels. They are (from left) Jose Cruz, Elias Alcazar, Ricardo Davila, Landis Davis, Mike Fuentes, Aaron Gillespie. (See story on page 7.)

Arrests were made in virtually every public high school for crimes ranging from vandalism to sexual assault.

Confiscations and arrests are running apace this school year; as of March 31, 146 guns had been confiscated and 7,710 arrests made.

Overall, criminal incidents reported by principals increased 17 percent in the last three years. Disorderly conduct went up the most.

Weapons often are confiscated during surprise searches using handheld or walk-through metal detectors, which can be requested through Sams. This year, walk-through metal detectors have been used in 14 schools, twice as many as last school year. Weapons have been confiscated every time the walk-through detectors have been used.

"We want the guns," says Byrne. "We're not always insisting that when we get a gun, we have an arrest. If we find a gun on the floor it's a success. You put the kids on notice that you're watching them."

The issue of weapons has leaped to the front of many LSCs' agendas. In separate incidents, two students with guns were caught recently in Kenwood Academy High School, 5015 S. Blackstone. One of the students was expelled. But the other was not,

leading some LSC members to question whether a clear message was being sent.

Last year, the LSC adopted the Kenwood Code, under which students pledge in writing not to wear gang-related clothes in school and not to bring weapons to school.

"As the shooting at Christa McAuliffe showed, there's no place that's safe anywhere," observes Kenwood LSC member Mary Hynes-Berry. "There has to be a very clear message that there is no acceptable reason for there to be guns in school.

Our position is that it should be grounds for automatic expulsion."

Noting that expulsion is only for a semester, she adds: "You are not exiling the student for all time. In elementary and secondary schools, we are talking about kids who are subject to change. One foolish action shouldn't destroy your whole life."

The School Board's Uniform Discipline Code does not support automatic expulsion for gun possession and permits as light a penalty as a six-day suspension. Under law, however, a student older than 14 who is caught with a gun in school—a crime—will be tried as an adult, with penalties ranging up to three years in prison.

As a recent *Chicago Sun-Times* series showed, the Cook County State's Attorney's office is aggressively prosecuting youngsters for crimes in and around schools. As a result, some young first-time offenders have received very harsh sentences, the series said. One principal complained to the paper that students who carry weapons for self-protection—but are otherwise law-abiding—are paying a higher price than gun-toting gang members, who are savvy about avoiding detection.

Aggressive prosecution puts too many kids beyond redemption, contends Howard Saffold, president of the Chicago-based

Criminal incidents reported in CPS

Type of Incident	88-89	89-90	90-91
Assault/Battery	559	483	661
Bomb threat	59	45	47
Disorderly conduct	259	416	573
Drugs/Narcotics	94	75	55
Robbery/Theft	184	142	159
Sex offenses	47	44	23
Trespassing	142	119	107
Vandalism	102	124	117
Weapons violations	194	167	204
Other crimes	20	34	54
Total	1,660	1,645	2,000

Note: Incidents, which may involve more than one student, were reported by school principals. Years are from September to June.

Source: Board of Education Department of Safety and Security.

Bringing peace to CIN Elementary

Fighting before and after school. Excessive running in the hall. High truancy rates. Students wearing caps to one side, gang-style. Drug sales within a block of campus. Racial violence. A principal and local school council that don't think they have a problem.

Welcome to CIN Elementary, a model of a school gone bad. CIN Elementary is an exercise in the Chicago Intervention Network (CIN) seminar "You Can't Learn If You Don't Feel Safe." Dozens of local school council members "visited" this school during an LSC training conference conducted in January by the Board of Education's Office of Reform Implementation.

CIN's Al Kindle and Boyse Edwards divided members into groups and gave them 10 minutes to propose solutions to the hypothetical school's problems.

One group—a principal, an assistant principal, two community representatives and a parent from different schools—initially toyed with suggestions like "Shut the school down" and "Get a new LSC." But then it got down to business and came up with these ideas:

The LSC decides it wants a better

school. It sends home flyers heralding its intention to do a needs assessment so that parents and community residents can air their concerns about safety. It instructs the principal that he must act to improve safety.

The principal hires guards, his budget permitting. At minimum, he walks the halls himself to show authority. Students are told they need passes to be in the halls.

An attendance officer is appointed to keep track of chronic truants. A truant-monitoring program is begun, with school workers going to chronic truants' homes to get them back in school.

Volunteers are recruited to supervise children prior to the start of school. If fighting persists, classes would start earlier and recess would be eliminated.

After-school programs are created to give kids other options than gang activity. Parents and staff are posted outside after 2:30 p.m. to halt fights.

Cultural awareness programs are instituted to lessen racial tension. The LSC and staff are educated in gang symbols and activity.

For this list of proposed changes, CIN gave the group an A+. M.S.

Drug crimes can net the offender up to seven years, and weapon possession and use in the school can net up to five years.

In 1991, Mayor Richard M. Daley's administration finally posted signs proclaiming the zone around most CPS schools. Police and courts have followed through on the higher penalties. But still many young criminals are not deterred, says Lt. Byrne. "They don't care if it's 1,000 feet or whatever. If they're going to sell drugs, they don't mark off the 1,000 feet to find out whether they're in the Safe School Zone."

Similarly, the threat of a stiff penalty for association with gang members has not proved a deterrent. "We asked the question in an auditorium of 500 students, 'How many of you know someone in a gang?' About 450 hands went up," recalls CIN's Edwards. "We asked, 'How many of you sometimes hang out with that person?' About 450 hands went up. We said, 'That's illegal. If he or she gets busted, you go down too.'"

Much of the gang violence centers around drugs. The money involved makes counseling non-violence a difficult task. "There are so many types of peer pressure now," notes police officer James Grissette, who patrols CVS. "It's hard to tell some individuals to take a job at minimum wage when they see a student in a BMW."

Early intervention key

However, removing gang symbols can reduce violence in schools, says Lt. Byrne. "You've got to get the gang colors off them. It makes the atmosphere a lot more conducive to learning." (See story on page 8.)

Juvenile experts stress early intervention, especially from seventh to ninth grades, when gang recruitment is heaviest. During these years, students go from being the biggest kids in school to the smallest, making them particularly susceptible to gangs' allure. But they also are particularly open to alternatives such as after-school activities, youth groups and pre-employment work training.

"We're losing our children when we don't have to," says Mothers Against Gangs' Sandoval. "We want children to grow up thinking it's not cool to be in a gang. You're going to

Positive Anti-Crime Thrust (PACT), which joins with ex-offenders to persuade young people to avoid criminal behavior.

"I don't think we've made the decision that the kids are worth saving," says this former Chicago police officer. "We're calling the police on kids these days. Cops may mean well, but they're often just not capable of dealing with a kid's problems."

Counseling efforts such as PACT's are springing up in a number of public schools. At CVS, for example, police officers conduct self-help classes for young men who are likely to get involved with gangs. (See story on page 7.)

Most teachers and students surveyed by the Criminal Justice Information Authority said gang members attend their schools, frequently recruit in school and wear colors to school.

But many school officials refuse to acknowledge gangs in their schools, according to Boyse Edwards of the Chicago Intervention Network (CIN), the city's anti-gang agency. "All the principals want to say, 'We have no gang problems here.' They identify gang activity with violence. If they don't see violence, they think they don't have gangs. But gangs can be subtle. They may fight three blocks away, but they start it in school."

That three-block distinction is an important one. Since 1987, each Illinois school has been ringed by a 1,000-foot Safe School Zone. In this two-block radius, criminal penalties are increased and youths can be tried as adults.

Gang activities, including recruitment and even association with gang members who commit crimes, can be punished by up to five years in prison.

end up dead, or killing somebody and going to jail, which is just as good as being dead."

The students and teachers surveyed by the Criminal Justice Information Authority reported a general breakdown in authority. For example, nearly a third of the students said their teachers maintained order only some of the time, and 10 percent said their teachers hardly ever maintained order. About one in five teachers themselves said they maintained order only some of the time.

More than 40 percent of teachers broke up physical fights in the month preceding the survey, and more than 75 percent broke up verbal fights. More than half said a student had called them an obscene name in that month, and a third said a student had

directed an obscene gesture at them.

A majority of both groups said their principal was fair, firm and consistent with discipline. However, teachers were more likely than students to see school rules as fair—less than half the students but more than three-quarters of the teachers said they were. Nearly two-thirds of both groups said punishment was not the same for everyone, and a third of both groups said rules were strictly enforced only sometimes.

The CPS Uniform Discipline Code spells out school penalties for various acts. Minor offenses like loitering or improper dress can trigger conferences with teachers and parents. But for major offenses like battery, arson or gang activity, a student faces at minimum suspension, assignment to

another school and/or police notification. At maximum, a student can be expelled and arrested.

But some experts draw the line at suspension and expulsion, two common punishments. Students soon learn certain advantages of being pushed out of school, they say.

"I see a direct correlation with what happened to them at the grade school level," says PACT's Saffold. "When a 12-year-old kid is kicked out of school, he starts sitting on the windowsill outside the school, encouraging other 12- and 13-year-olds to come join him. And before you know, they have guns and drugs and they're doing crazy things to each other."

But many beleaguered parents,

Continued on page 13

Sawyer reverts to old-fashioned discipline

Walk into Sawyer Elementary School during the school day, and you might wonder whether school is in session. No one is hanging around outside the school. The hallways are deathly silent. When a first-grader does appear, he quietly walks down the stairs, smiles, waves hello and darts into his classroom.

The student is sporting a white dress shirt and blue corduroys, the colors of the new uniform at this Southwest Side school, 5248 S. Sawyer.

"We're one of the old-time schools," says Assistant Principal Jerry Gliege. "We believe in discipline from day one. When you begin discipline in kindergarten and first grade, the kids just accept it. There's never any problem after that."

As a recent survey of Chicago's elementary teachers showed, student misbehavior is a major concern. (See *CATALYST*, October 1991.) Sawyer's approach to the problem is an old-fashioned one. (For alternatives, see *CATALYST/Bright Ideas*, November 1991.)

Gliege and Principal Ellen Reiter introduced a strict discipline code at the start of this school year. There's no talking in the halls. Students line up with their teachers before they are let in and out of school. And they eat lunch in their classrooms, a practice

aimed at maximizing supervision. (The school has closed campus, meaning children cannot leave for lunch.)

While some parents and educators would shudder at these measures, students seem not to mind. Throughout the school, kids appeared happy and energetic about learning. In a reading class, students enthusiastically volunteered answers—but didn't speak until the teacher acknowledged them.

Parents supportive

Gliege says parents are overwhelmingly supportive of uniforms; a survey tallied 509 in favor and 90 against.

"The kids act better if they have on their good clothes," says Gliege. "They know they'll be in trouble if they get their clothes torn."

Students can wear their choice of shoes, with one exception: no Converse sneakers. Converse features five-pointed stars, a symbol of the People gang nation. Students must tie the laces on top, not on the left or right, a symbol of gang affiliation.

Gliege watches for religious symbols, such as the cross (a Latin King symbol) or the Star of David (a Folks symbol). "I have to tell them I don't

want to see it. If it's tucked inside a shirt, it's okay. But if I can see it, it's got to come off."

This year, there have been few fights or weapons in school, says Gliege. Once he took a knife from a fourth-grader, who had brought it to impress friends rather than cause harm. Under the school system's Uniform Discipline Code, the boy could have been suspended. But he wasn't.

"Suspension is our last resort, because we want our kids in school," says Gliege. "But we let them know in no uncertain terms that if they want to be disruptive in class, they're out of here."

"It's a different school," says parent Erika Volpe, who withdrew her son from Sawyer many years ago because of lax discipline and refused to send her daughter Jennifer there. "They don't want any distractions. They want the students learning."

When deciding where to send nine-year-old Vincenzo, Volpe ran into Reiter at a meeting on gangs. The mother was so impressed that a principal would spend an evening at a community meeting that she enrolled Vincenzo at Sawyer and served a term on the local school council.

Michael Selinker

Kids, parents, cops, Angels stand guard

by Michael Selinker

At Lane Tech:

Lizette Rivera, a sophomore at Lane Technical High School, wears colors just as prominent as those of any gang in Chicago. Her symbol is an eagle, just like the Latin Eagles gang. She controls a piece of the school turf and fires guns in school.

But Rivera is no gangbanger. The colors, eagle and guns belong to the U.S. Army, and Rivera is a Cadet Sergeant 1st Class in the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC).

At Lane, 2501 W. Addison, JROTC students are asked to volunteer as monitors for major school events such as International Day, where school clubs perform. At these events, students from other schools can attend, increasing the chances for violence.

"We watch out for trouble," says Rivera. "The minute we see it, we get on the walkie-talkie and report it to our commander, who gets a security guard. We never try to break it up ourselves."

The sight of uniformed students in the halls gives some students an added sense of security, though the uniform is not universally respected. Gang members often pay no heed, Rivera notes, unless "a big guy is wearing it."

"At a dance, students weren't allowed to take in their jackets [often a symbol of gang affiliation]," Rivera recalls. "I wouldn't let them in [with the jackets], and they complained. But eventually they respected the uniform and gave them up."

"We don't like to put the kids in a position where they're police or guards," says Lt. Col. Robert L. Sneed (Ret.), who commands the program at Lane. "But just by their presence at these activities, we don't have as big of a problem. Kids see other kids

doing their jobs, and they'll think twice about causing problems."

Rivera says she and her fellow cadets often can calm things down more than adults can. "It's better if you talk one on one, kid to kid. They don't want to hear from an adult, 'You can't do this, you can't do that.' We talk to them in a mature manner, but we're still just kids talking."

Lane's JROTC is one of 31 in city high schools and is rated by JROTC officials as one of the best; it has won several all-city competitions. About 200 students—5 percent of Lane's enrollment—belong. They report to school two hours early to drill in the Lane football stadium.

And yes, they do fire real .22-caliber rifles at a target range in the school basement. With weapon possession an endemic problem in Chicago's schools, JROTC officials see no contradiction with arming their cadets—under supervised conditions.

"We're done before the first school bell rings," Col. Sneed says. "I'm sure there're a lot of teachers that don't even know we're down there firing the rifles in the basement."

At Chase:

Nine blocks south of Chase Elementary School is Roberto Clemente High School, where members of some of Chicago's most dangerous gangs are enrolled. Gangbangers used to come to Chase to recruit and sell drugs.

Not any more, says Mary Birmantas, whose daughter graduated from Chase last year. For six years, Birmantas has been a leader of the School Watch parent patrol. Most days, she is at Chase, 2021 N. Point, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

"The gangs and dealers have learned to respect us and stay outside



Officer James Grissette of CVS.

the Safe School Zone [a two-block radius around the school]," she says. "We know who the gang members are, and they know we know it. And they know we'll call the police."

The patrol has six members. Each devotes about 45 minutes a day, usually when dropping off or picking up young children.

Chase has a security guard, but she cannot monitor the entire school. Patrol members sometimes stop fights, though they are careful about it.

"I don't want to get hurt," Birmantas acknowledges. "I'll break up little kids, but I won't break up a fight between bigger kids by myself. That takes several of us or the security guard."

Since local school councils were first elected two-and-a-half years ago, the Chicago Intervention Network (CIN) has helped establish patrols at 90 schools. Members can be recognized by their orange armbands.

Al Kinkle of CIN recommends a patrol of three to seven parents, with two acting as the patrol's nucleus. They should have schedules, maps with member stations and rules of conduct and behavior, which members themselves should develop.

"Parents think this is a big responsibility, but we say, 'No, all you have to do is watch this hallway for an hour,'" Kinkle explains. "We tell them, 'You're not there to be police, you're there to be observant.'"

Even so, some LSCs have not been able to put patrols together. "We tried to form one, but nobody volunteered," says Margaret Klem, a Burr Elementary School parent. "The parents want safety, but nobody wants to



Cadet Lizette Rivera and Commander Charles Goodrum of Lane Tech's JROTC.



Mary Birmantas of Chase School's parent patrol.

do anything. There's only a few parents [involved] and they're spread pretty thin."

At Field:

When students at Field Elementary School get into trouble Principal Nelda Hobbs can't handle, she does what every resident of Metropolis would do: She calls Superman.

Superman and partners Towtruck and O.J. are members of the Guardian Angels, a volunteer crime-fighting organization. Their Chicago headquarters is at Morse and Wayne, four blocks from Field, 7071 N. Ashland. In addition to providing emergency help, they stand guard as classes are dismissed for the day.

"We realized that at the same time that we're handing out flyers and recruiting for the organization, the gangs are doing the same thing at the schools," says Frank Harris, a.k.a. Towtruck. "We figured we could help by protecting the kids at Field from the gangs so they can go home in peace."

The Angels serve as a warning to high school gang members that they are not welcome at Field, Harris says. "You can't miss a red beret and a white T-shirt. The gangs see us and learn to stay away from the school."

Hobbs is in her first year as principal at Field, an overcrowded school serving 1,188 youngsters. Her staff includes a security guard and two counselors (one part-time) who help the guard. But when a fight broke out last October, Hobbs recognized she

needed more help.

She met the Angels at their fashion show fund raiser and invited them to police the school for a time. Initially, their presence caused problems. Students thought they broke up a fight with too much force, Hobbs recalls, and then rumors flew among staff that the Angels would replace the security guard. Since then, trust has replaced tension.

"My kids look up to them as big brothers," says Hobbs, a former police-woman. "My kids respond to them better than they do the police. They don't see the Angels as threatening."

Some students are so taken with the Angels they have asked Hobbs to start a Junior Angels chapter. She is trying to arrange the required martial arts and crime-fighting lessons, which she believes would deter fights.

"When I started, their fighting was pent-up energy at the end of the day," she explains. "If I got a Junior Angels chapter open, the kids would have a positive direction for that energy."

At CVS:

Last fall, a student at Chicago Vocational High School scared the daylight out of his teacher and spread fear through the building by whipping out a very realistic toy gun.

The teacher stayed home for several days, and students and staff were uneasy for a week, recalls Principal Roosevelt Burnett. Everyone knew the gun could easily have been real, for real guns turn up in Chicago public schools virtually every day.

The presence of these lethal weapons is one reason the Board of Education and the Chicago Police Department launched Operation SAFE (Schools Are For Education), started two years ago. Under this program, two full-time police officers are stationed in every public high school. At CVS, 2100 E. 87th, one of the officers has worked at the school for more than a decade.

Officer James Grissette—"Officer G" to the students—knows the school inside and out. "You have to know the physical plant. There are areas where young people think they're not going to be busted, and they do their gambling or drugs or whatever there. You make periodic unannounced visits, and sometimes you get lucky."

In addition to enforcing the law, Grissette also holds guidance sessions aimed at steering kids in trouble toward positive goals. "They're not all going to buy what I say, but if I can get just one out of the group, that's one saved."

CVS, a school of 3,000, also has four security guards, a few part-time police officers and a student patrol of 30 seniors, which helps monitor halls.

The School Board's decision to assign police officers to schools got mixed reviews. Five months into the program, a board survey found that only half the teachers approved. No other surveys have been conducted, but there is anecdotal evidence that police now are more welcome.

Take Kenwood Academy High School, 5015 S. Blackstone, which

Continued on page 13

Recognizing gang symbols first step to deterrence

For many parents and school personnel, gang violence seems random, incomprehensible and impossible to prevent.

It is none of these things. Gang members typically follow simple codes and behavior patterns, which knowledgeable and alert people can interpret and act on.

Gangs recruit students between seventh and ninth grade. Younger recruits often display gang signs and symbols without understanding the ramifications; adults can use such opportunities

to dissuade them from further gang activity.

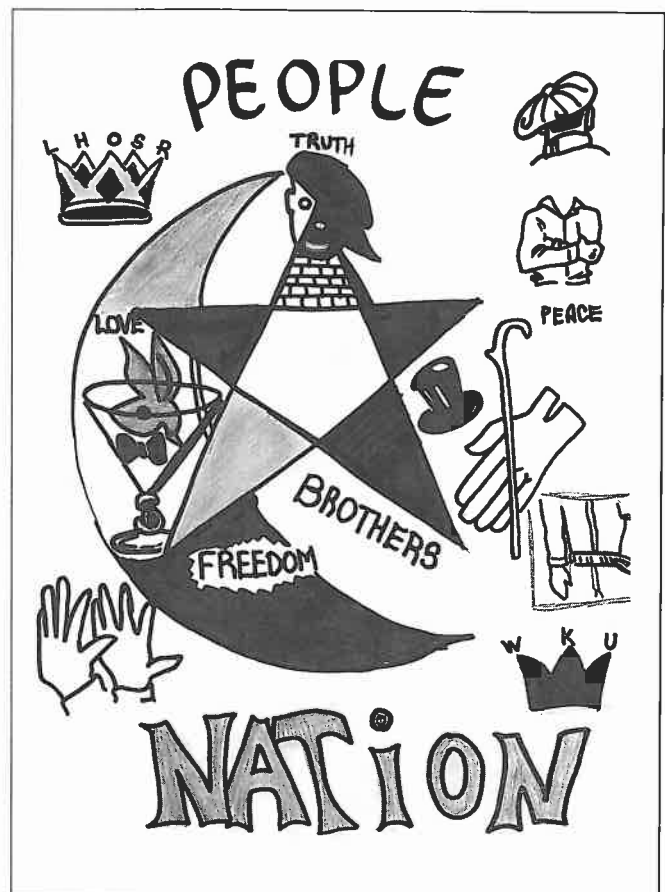
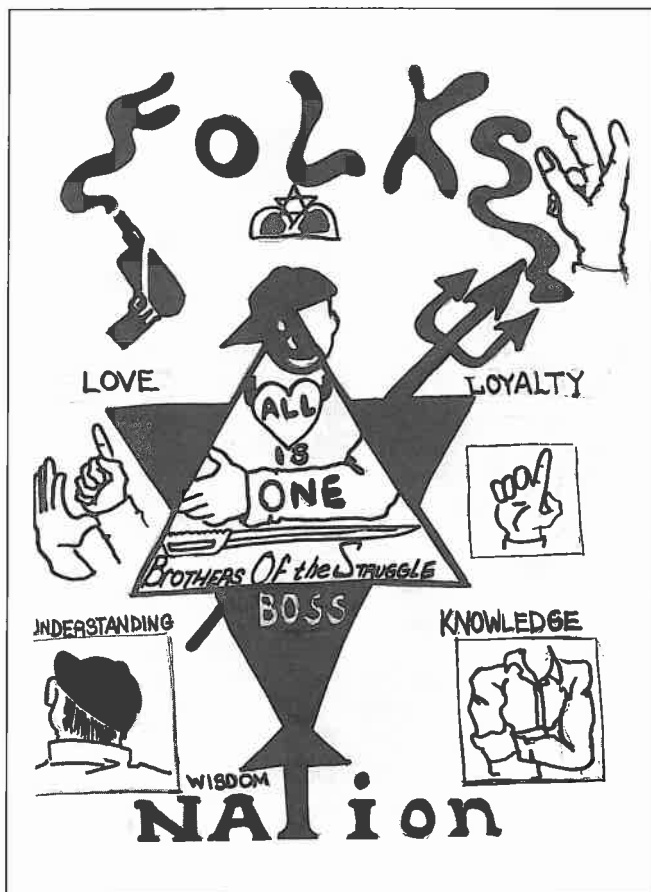
There are key gang indicators to watch for; when they appear in numbers, local school councils and school personnel should meet to plan a counterattack.

There are 15,000 to 20,000 active gang members in Chicago, according to the Chicago Intervention Network, the city's anti-gang agency. Gangs belong to "nations," which compete and fight with each other. Gangs belonging to the same nation may battle each other at

times, but they will always defend each other against gangs from another nation.

There are two main nations in Chicago, the People (sometimes called Brothers) and the Folks. Both cross racial and geographical boundaries. All major Chicago gangs belong to one or the other, as non-affiliation invites attack from all quarters. Folks are much less centralized than People and, as a result, generate more violence.

People gangs include the Vice Lords, Latin Kings, Gaylords and El



These illustrations of gang symbols were drawn by a young man who lives in a gang-infested public housing project.

Gang guide

IDENTIFIER	GANG NATION PEOPLE/BROTHERS	GANG NATION FOLKS
Major gangs	Vice Lords, Gaylords, Latin Kings, El Rukn, Insane Unknowns, P.R. Stones, C-Notes, Insane Deuces, Cobra Stones, Villa Lobos	Black Gangster Disciples (all), Simon City Royals, Latin Jivers, La Raza, Orchestra Albany, Two-Six Boys, Popes, Spanish Cobras
Racial mix	All races	All races
Territory	Citywide, suburbs	Citywide, suburbs
Organization	Centralized	Fragmented
Side of body	Left	Right
Star symbols	Five points (one point up)	Six points (Star of David)
Crown symbols	Three or five points (points up), or upside-down rounded Folks crowns	Rounded crown, or upside-down three or five-point People crowns
Playboy Bunny	Straight ears	Bent ear on left
Pitchfork	Points down, may be crossed out	Points up, may be cut into eyebrow
Other symbols	By gang	By gang
Colors	By gang	By gang
Hand signs	See illustration	See illustration
Stylized initials	VL or LV, LK, GL	F, BGD, D, SCR
Civil War hats	Grey, tilted left, lower part of crossed rifles cut to make V	Blue, tilted right
Jewelry	Left earring, Irish Claddagh ring (crown)	Right earring, Italian devil horn
Shoelaces	Tied on left or halfway up right	Tied on right or halfway up left
Gym shoe brand	Any, but Converse popular for star	Any
Pant legs	Rolled up on left	Rolled up on right
Clothes and logos	Louis Vuitton, L.A. & Sacramento Kings	Fendi, Detroit, L.A. Raiders & Kings, Gucci, White Sox
Code words	Truth, love, peace, freedom, brothers	Love, loyalty, understanding, knowledge, wisdom, all is one, brothers of the struggle

Rukn. Folks gangs include the Black Gangster Disciples (which has a number of factions), the Simon City Royals, the Two-Six Boys and La Raza. Both the Disciples and the Two-Six Boys consider themselves independent nations allied together.

Gangs take their identifying signs and symbols very seriously; identifiers should never be mocked. Parents and school officials should carefully note gang signs on students when a crime occurs, as identifiers can be critical for conviction.

Through the use of color and placement, gangs have appropriated many ordinary objects as identifiers, including single earrings, single gloves, shoe laces, jewelry, pocket linings, certain kinds of shoes and jackets, hats tilted to the side and belt buckles worn to the side. Since many identifiers are borrowed from pop culture, not every person displaying a certain symbol, gesture or clothing style should be considered a gang member.

Folks and People anchor their symbols on different sides of the body, with the People using the left side and the Folks using the right. For example, members of People gangs wear their caps to the left.

Each gang has its own distinct symbol as well. For example, the Rebels use Confederate flags, the Latin Eagles use eagles, and the Imperial Gangsters use Imperial Butter logos.

When a gang wants to show disrespect for a rival gang, it paints the rival's symbol upside-down. When a gang threatens a person with death, it writes his name upside-down.

Gangs also have hand gestures. Members often will flash the symbol of a rival nation to determine whether someone is an enemy. If the person returns the hand signal, he is attacked.

Colors are another identifier, though

there is overlap. The Black Gangster Disciples wear black and blue, but so do the Popes, the Simon City Royals and the Latin Disciples. Again, someone who wears gang colors is not necessarily a gang member.

Gang members often use shoelaces to display their colors, with one color on one foot and the other color on the other foot. People tie their laces on the left, Folks tie theirs on the right. To show disrespect, gang members tie laces on the side of their rivals, only halfway up. Hooded jackets, hair

beads, "slave" bracelets and painted fingernails also are used to display gang colors.

The Chicago Intervention Network encourages parents and school personnel to watch out for gangs, but it urges caution in approaching them because members may be armed. Calls to the network, police or other knowledgeable authorities are recommended. ■

Written by Michael Selinker from material provided by Al Kindle and Boyse Edwards of the Chicago Intervention Network.

Student leaders say 'Listen to students'

Gangs, violence and weapons are a constant threat in Chicago high schools, even those with top academic reputations. Metal detectors and uniformed police officers can help. But what's needed more is for adults to listen to students' opinions about why kids join gangs and what can be done to prevent violence. These are among the key points that three student LSC representatives made in a roundtable discussion with writer Michael Selinker. The students are Phillip Bleicher of Kennedy High, 6325 W. 56th; Martha Sanchez of Kelly High, 4136 S. California; and Bobby Brown of Lincoln Park High, 2001 N. Orchard.

MICHAEL: How bad do you think the problem of violence in Chicago schools is today?

PHILLIP: The problems with violence are very clear, as you've seen on the news recently with all the problems in the elementary schools. It's been taken for granted that the elementary schools have not had problems. High schools have these problems all the time. Students get shot and mugged and raped in the high schools, and this is ridiculous. You're supposed to go to high school to get an education, not to get wounded by gang violence.

MICHAEL: Do we have a problem with people communicating with each other about this problem?

MARTHA: Many people don't seem to realize that this problem is a real big problem that's affecting us right now. Many people try to avoid it, saying, "What do you mean people are getting killed at schools?" I think we're getting ignored.

BOBBY: Gangs at Lincoln Park are very prevalent now. We've formed a safety committee where we're working with police to keep this gang problem under control.

PHILLIP: You have to ask students, "Do you want metal detectors? Is that going to help solve students bringing knives and guns to the school, and drugs as well?" If you ask students if they want metal detectors, in some schools they're going to say yes and in some they're going to say no. What about students having a dress code? In Miami, the students voted unanimously that there must be a

dress code in order to curb gang violence from students wearing certain colors. Do the students in Chicago feel that?

MICHAEL: About metal detectors, what do you think?

MARTHA: In some cases it's necessary, sometimes it doesn't help. You might have some schools with metal detectors and they will find out what day this is going to happen and they might just go around.

MICHAEL: Do you see a lot of weapons in your school?

MARTHA: No, not as [much as] before. Years back, yes, they had some guns, but not any more, not as much.

BOBBY: In my school girls have keys wrapped around their hands and it's real long and you can just whack somebody. We define those as weapons.

MARTHA: You'll find grammar schools with kids with weapons. You might not see it, but I think they have them. I haven't seen one from anybody at school, but there's been cases where they have caught a few knives.

MICHAEL: There seems to be an image that violence tends to happen mostly in schools that are heavily black or Hispanic. Is this a fair image?

MARTHA: I don't think so. Because there is a problem at school with a certain gang doesn't mean that it has to involve racial things.

PHILLIP: Black students and Hispanic students and white students can get together and they can all get along, but there seems to be a power

struggle with gangs. They tend to form Hispanic gangs and white gangs and black gangs and then they split even further, and blacks are feuding with blacks and Hispanics are feuding with Hispanics and whites with whites. So that's why I say it's not that it's racial problems, it's just a power struggle.

MICHAEL: We've now got police in every high school in the city. Are they helping?

MARTHA: I think it depends a lot on the school. Not everybody has the same problems, so it doesn't always have to be the same at every school. Yes, in some cases it does. In my school, I think it has helped a lot. It just really depends on how the students take it. If they want to be protected, they will. If they don't, well...

BOBBY: These two police officers that we have at our school, they have to stick with each other, which is the problem. Students are not dumb. They can frame things. Students can start a fight and make the policemen go here while these other gangs go jump on the next gang. It's not helping at Lincoln Park. It's not.

MARTHA: Well, it might be the cops not working. Two years ago, we had terrible gang problems at school. There would be a gang on one side of the street and the other gang on the other side of the street. I think we reinforce security. We had a cop on each floor and it does help a lot. Every little thing that they saw that was wrong, they would stop it.

PHILLIP: We are spending money on police officers when that money could have been used for educational tools to train these students not to join gangs. Instead of looking to a positive light and say, "Let's teach these students not to join a gang," instead we're going toward the negative, saying, "Let's stop the gang. Let's force them into a corner and let's get them."

BOBBY: That's true. If they're going to have police, they should train the policemen to deal with the problems that are significant to their responsibility. Policemen are to serve and protect. Protection means if there's people fighting, they should get the students that are fighting [instead of] worrying about someone's ID. You can always go back and get somebody's ID. You can't go back and save someone's life.



Students discuss gangs and violence in an interview taped at WBEZ-FM studios. They are (from left) Bobby Brown, Martha Sanchez and Phillip Bleicher.

MICHAEL: Do you have a positive relationship with the cops in your school?

BOBBY: I don't. They don't focus on the students who are doing what they're not supposed to.

PHILLIP: I have a good relationship with the police officers in my school. We communicate, and if there's any problems I inform them. I believe that they have a good relationship with about half of the students in the school simply because the half of the students are trying to solve the gang problems and make our school safer; but the other half, of course, is not trying to make it safer. They're more concerned over their power.

MICHAEL: How do you reach kids like that with positive messages?

PHILLIP: You can be friends with them. Find out why are they in a gang. Is it something in their home life? Is it simply they feel if they're in a gang they have that added protection where they can walk down the street and know, "Hey man, I've got power and if you mess with me, I'm going to get my buddies after you." Yet, if you're not in a gang you have to have enough self-esteem yourself to say, "Well, I don't need buddies to get after you. I can simply just walk away from you because you're not worth my time."

MICHAEL: Are there areas in school that are controlled by one gang or another?

PHILLIP: Yes, but the police officers and many students are trying to curb that. Any graffiti, simply erase it, scrub it off the walls. We have a program where students who have been suspended have the distinct pleasure

of erasing the walls where their friends like to mark.

MARTHA: Yes, we also have that. It seems like a good idea because instead of them just killing time there sitting on a chair, they could be doing something useful for the school and for themselves so they won't be writing on the walls any more. If you get caught writing on the wall, you get a chance; but if you do it again, then it's either you're out of there or you're suspended.

MICHAEL: Why is it necessary for a kid to tag a wall?

MARTHA: Sometimes they do it because they like their name and they want to have it on a wall, or they want to put their gang name on the wall.

PHILLIP: By tagging a wall, it simply states that this is our gang's territory, and if you come over here you are invading our territory, which is grounds for a rival fight.

MICHAEL: What about people who are not in the gangs, though? Does that sense of territory apply to them?

PHILLIP: Unfortunately, for some it does because they know that if a certain gang is trying to recruit them, the other gang might label them as that particular gang when, in fact, they don't even want to have any part in that gang. But yet when they're over in that territory, they could be labeled as that gang member, and what happens next is elementary.

MICHAEL: What do you think about improving discipline in the school? Is that a negative approach or does it actually work?

MARTHA: It depends on what kind of discipline you're talking about. There is some kind of discipline that

you just don't agree with. When somebody applies a rule, you actually want to know why. It's like, why should I do it? Just because you tell me to do it?

MICHAEL: What wouldn't you accept? What's an unfair infringement on your rights?

MARTHA: Well, there's a lot of things, but I guess the most obvious one is you can't be wearing [certain clothing]. Maybe if a gang is wearing this, if they tell me the reason why I shouldn't wear it, I wouldn't wear it. But if they don't explain that to you, I think that seems kind of rude.

MICHAEL: What about locker searches? Do you think that's a fair strategy for solving this problem?

BOBBY: No. Just because you've searched in someone's locker doesn't mean that you've eliminated their gang or their problems. It's going to stir up confusion, because you're going into someone else's personal things just because you suspect that someone is doing something.

PHILLIP: I don't want anybody going through my locker and searching my coats. It's just like an apartment where the landlord has the rights to that door. He owns the door, but what is inside belongs to the tenant. The landlord has no right to open the door any time he wishes and walk right in, take everything or go through anything he wants.

MARTHA: Just because you suspect that somebody has something bad in there doesn't mean that you can just go in. How can you make sure that that person has something in there? How can you prove that she does?

MICHAEL: Do students know that if

they commit a major crime, say a physical assault, that at minimum they're going to face a penalty of probable suspension or at maximum they can be arrested and expelled?

BOBBY: They know it at Lincoln Park because we've had so many arrests this year that everybody knows if I do this, I'm being arrested. They go by the discipline code at Lincoln Park, but it doesn't seem to be helping. Every other Friday there's going to be a fight and then they bring all these police officers, all this publicity, and everybody knows. What's the problem? Our disciplinarian, he gives them another chance. You can't let them just stay in the school and go to school with the same person again. You never know, it could happen again and again.

MICHAEL: *Where are they supposed to go? This is supposed to be a public school system, which is a safety net for everybody to go to school. Does taking them out of the school make it more or less likely that they're going to commit that behavior?*

MARTHA: You have to really think about that, because if you put a rotten apple with the rest, what's going to happen? They're all going to be rotten at some point, right? There's two ways of looking at it. If I kick him out, he might do something worse. But what's going to happen if you leave him there? What's going to happen to those students that stay there? If a kid does not want to be educated and the only reason why he's going to school is to cause trouble, why should he be there? You can't help somebody if they don't want to be helped.

MICHAEL: *Sixteen is the age when the student is no longer required to be in school and so at that point they can drop out or be pushed out of school if they're a problem. Is that a common occurrence?*

BOBBY: Common in Lincoln Park.

PHILLIP: It's common in Kennedy. I would say at least two a week.

MICHAEL: *These students are expelled usually for one year, for a term, right? Do they come back?*

PHILLIP: That has not occurred at Kennedy. I know once you have signed out of school and you're 16, it is up to that particular student to find another school. The only thing is now you have that on your record, and,

while schools are trying to clean up themselves, your chances are very low that you're going to find another school that will accept you, a public school.

MICHAEL: *So one shot and you're out for good?*

PHILLIP: Most likely, yes. You'd have to get a GED.

MARTHA: The problem is they realize afterwards. Many kids who get expelled from school, if you stay after school, you see them at night school and they're trying to get finished what they didn't finish before. They realized after they're out of the school that they should have stayed there.

MICHAEL: *We have a policy called automatic transfer, where if you're caught with a weapon in the school building or some other major infraction, you will be transferred into the adult justice system rather than being tried as a youth. Is that too strong?*

BOBBY: It really depends, because I was reading in the *Sun-Times* where there were really serious gang problems at this boy's school and he couldn't do anything, so he brought a gun to school and got caught [and was sentenced to 30 months probation]. So I believe that it depends.

MICHAEL: *Wait a second, Bobby. Is it ever acceptable to bring a gun to school? Is there any good reason for it?*

BOBBY: Protection, but I'm not saying that you should do it. Guns, no. That's to the extreme. You don't bring guns.

MICHAEL: *Are you saying you're safer with a knife?*

BOBBY: No, you're not safer with a knife, but some type of protection. Not a weapon. No weapons. There's no use for them. You should have someone like the police, they can be your protection.

PHILLIP: This is where the dialogue must begin with students and adults. If the students are going to talk to the police officers and the adults are going to listen, I don't feel there would be a need to bring a gun, a knife or a blunt instrument. If you have the dialogue going, the students are not going to be so afraid because they'll know that they have this trust here. Somebody will protect them—not a gang, not a gun or a knife.

MARTHA: What type of protection are you giving yourself if you're car-

rying a gun? If somebody sees you with a gun, they're going to think you might shoot me, so I should kill him first. So why should you carry a gun? I don't think there's any reason for that.

MICHAEL: *What should the penalty be for bringing a gun to school?*

MARTHA: I don't think [automatic transfer is] too severe. If you see somebody with a gun, what are you going to think? He's a murderer. He has a gun and he might kill somebody. You don't want him near any of your kids.

MICHAEL: *Let me ask you bluntly: Do you feel safe in school?*

BOBBY: Yes, I do.

MARTHA: I feel safe at the school right now. You know most of your friends are at school. I think if you have friends and they're involved in gangs, you don't actually call them all friends, right, but you know these people. They know you. They know what you're about. They know what you want to do in life and they don't mess with you. They don't start any trouble with you.

PHILLIP: I don't believe that my life has been threatened since I began at Kennedy. Our school is safe for some people and our school is not safe for other people. Those students who do not feel safe are the ones who are being pressured into joining a gang [which says:] "Hey man, you're going to feel safe because you'll have us behind you."

MICHAEL: *That doesn't sound like a very safe attitude.*

PHILLIP: It is not safe, but that's the illusion that you are given. It's a false illusion that you will have 24-hour protection by your fellow gang members. Truthfully, I would rather not have a drug addict or someone who sells drugs to little kids guard me or protect me.

MICHAEL: *If you were principal, what would you do to make certain everyone was safe?*

PHILLIP: Talk with the students and find out what kind of security they need. I would have suggestions just like any other student or administrator, but I would not impose them on the students.

BOBBY: With all of everybody's opinions put together, you never know what you'll come out with. We'll have it all under control. ■

Resource Roundup

If you learn or suspect your school has a problem with youth crime or gangs, these agencies can help. All are in the 312 area code.

The Chicago Public Schools

The Bureau of Safety and Security will assist with security guards, metal detectors, drug-sniffing dogs and police patrols. Director George Sams, 535-4990 (for emergencies 535-SAFE).

The Chicago Police Department

The various police divisions work closely with one another when the crimes involve youths and schools. Emergencies can be reported through the 911 dispatch system.

The School Patrol Division has two police officers in every public high school, plus officers in mobile patrols. Lt. Thomas Byrne, 746-8395.

The Youth Division investigates juvenile crimes. Cmdr. James Hollandsworth, 747-5594.

The Narcotics Division investigates drug-related crimes. Cmdr. Charles Ramsey, 747-6216.



Guardian Angel Landis Davis

The Gang Crimes Division investigates gang-related crimes. Cmdr. Robert Dart, 747-6328.

The Civil Rights Division investigates crimes motivated by racial hostility or other bias. Cmdr. Thomas Ferry, 747-5485.

The Chicago Intervention Network

The city's anti-gang agency intervenes in gang hostilities and will help schools in identifying potential gang problems. Director Ron Alston, 744-1820.

Community groups

Many community groups work to reduce the influence of gangs and

improve students' safety. Some citywide groups are:

Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development (BUILD) counsels youth against gang membership and holds activities. Executive Director Daniel Swope, 227-2880.

Fulfilling Our Responsibility Unto Mankind (FORUM) works to give youth alternative activities to gangs. Executive Director Yessie Yehudah, 933-5700.

The Guardian Angels is a volunteer crime-fighting force that patrols Chicago and accepts high school-age recruits. Chicago headquarters, 761-2676.

Mothers Against Gangs is a parent group that seeks to protect Chicago from gang violence. Founder Frances Sandoval, 853-2336.

The Positive Anti-Crime Thrust (PACT) joins with ex-offenders to deter youth from criminal activities. President Howard Saffold, 918-2354.

Sport or aggression?

For some young thugs, baseball bats are the weapon of choice. But it's not always easy to tell whether a bat is intended for sport, self-protection or aggression.

Here's how Boyse Edwards of the Chicago Intervention Network, the city's anti-gang agency, made the call outside Harper High School, 6520 S. Wood.

"My partner and I saw 14 young men carrying baseball bats. At this point those bats were items of entertainment and sports. But my partner saw they didn't have any baseballs. So we stopped them inside the 1,000-foot [Safe School Zone] limit and said, 'Hey, bloods, where are the balls?'"

"They said, 'The balls are the heads of those dudes that's gonna roll when we get to the school.'"

Case closed. The youths were arrested, and no heads rolled.

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teachers and students favor getting rid of the troublemakers, regardless of what happens to them.

"If you have a student who is not truly about the business of education and has demonstrated that through behavior, the rights of the body at large who are about the business of education should not be sacrificed," insists Kenwood's Hynes-Berry.

All the experts interviewed for this article stressed that parents and LSC members must not deny the prevalence of crime, gangs and drugs, which are present in nearly every school in Chicago. "Crime in the schools is terrible," says Lt. Byrne. "Can we make a dent in it? I don't know. We can only do it with community, parent, principal and LSC support. That's the only way." ■

Michael Selinker is the former research director for the Chicago Commission on Human Relations.

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saw three of its six security guards replaced by two policemen whom the LSC considered uncooperative.

"The school had no input on who was assigned, and the principal had no control over the policemen, so it was impossible for the principal to direct a coordinated strategy in a crisis," says Kenwood LSC member Mary Hynes-Berry. The LSC lobbied for new officers and got them; Hynes-Berry says they are helpful.

Lt. Thomas Byrne, who commands Operation SAFE, says schools need police to fight crime because "most guards out there are a facade. They have no weapons, no power to arrest. Kids don't respect that."

However, Burnett says CVS students play an important role, too. "We found we have many students who just won't stand for anti-social behavior. If they see a fight or someone dealing drugs, they'll tell someone." ■

Poverty, not bureaucracy, root of school problems

by Gary Orfield

The following essay by Gary Orfield was written as a foreword to a study by Peter Scheirer, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, on race, poverty and achievement in Chicago area schools. Their paper is titled "Poverty, Not Bureaucracy: Poverty, Segregation and Inequality in Metropolitan Chicago Schools." Orfield, a sociologist and longtime advocate of school desegregation, recently joined the faculty of Harvard University following more than a decade at the University of Chicago. A response to his essay begins on page 17.

Sometimes everyone is so sure of something that no one bothers to check the evidence. If the fact that seems so self-evident turns out to be incorrect, that means that the entire debate over the problem under consideration may have been off target. This report provides striking evidence that the basic diagnosis underlying the nation's most ambitious school reform program may well be incorrect.

Everyone knows that the Chicago public school system is terrible. Former U.S. Education Sec. William Bennett called it the "worst in America." Although there is no common data on achievement among most U.S. districts, this conclusion has been endlessly repeated. Many education reformers in the city and in the state Legislature have pointed to the school district's bureaucracy as the source of the continuing problems. Business leaders give terrible ratings to the Chicago schools and praise their suburban counterparts. Conservatives and liberals attack the vast headquarters on Pershing Road; minority leaders and whites join in the criticism. The basic impression is that the children of Chicago are the victims of an octopus-like bureaucracy, which sucks up resources and strangles creativity. If that bureaucracy can be smashed and

local initiative released, the reformers assume, the Chicago schools can work like successful schools elsewhere.

Both the school reform movement and the movement for choice plans rest on the assumption that the problem of schooling is an institutional one and that the reason for the devastating problems of inner-city schools is bureaucratic strangulation. Those institutional barriers are supposed to be broken by decentralization of authority to the schools, or to individual parents who would be able to choose schools for their children.

In the Chicago area, these criticisms are almost completely focused on the city school district. No one runs campaigns against suburban school bureaucracies. The state Legislature does not impose parent elections and school control on them. They are thought to be the very models the city should aspire to. Surveys show that parents believe that education in the suburbs is much better.

This report clearly shows that the Chicago schools do much worse on virtually any measure than suburban schools. The analysis strongly suggests, however, that the underlying problem is not bureaucracy but concentrated poverty. We may be blaming symptoms for causing the problems and treating effects rather than causes. If we have

diagnosed the wrong disease, the treatment is not likely to work.

Systematic comparisons of schools across metropolitan Chicago were impossible until the state government began to require report cards on each school in 1986 and to require that elementary students at three grade levels take the same test, the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP). The availability of these data for more than 1,500 elementary schools in the Chicago area makes it possible to compare schools in many different school districts. In suburban Cook County and the collar counties there are hundreds of separate school districts, many of them very small and with very little bureaucracy. Most have schools with far higher test scores and graduation rates than Chicago.

Poverty, segregation

Schools cannot be compared, however, simply on how well their students did. If there were a school serving children with severe muscular handicaps, for instance, it would not be fair simply to compare the athletic accomplishments of its students with those of schools with almost all healthy students. The first school could be doing much more and making much more of a difference just by having its students participate in athletics. In order to measure the effectiveness of a school district, it is essential to consider what difference it makes. The right question is not how well do students in the district compare with students elsewhere, but how well do the two districts do in comparing the students who began at the same starting point.

The social problems connected with concentrated poverty are very strongly related to weak educational performance. The fact that poverty is highly concentrated in big cities and among minority children often leads observers to conclude that the fault is in the organization of urban schools (whose bureaucracies were considered a model for the nation when they served middle-class families) or with the values of African-American and Latino families. Concentrated poverty is strongly related to segregation of minority students in the Chicago area, and both are strongly related to weaker scores on tests and graduation rates. The average school in Chicago has larger concentrations of poverty and minority enrollment than the vast majority of suburban schools.

The Metropolitan Opportunity Project has been studying the schools and colleges in five of the nation's largest metropolitan areas for five years. Earlier reports have shown extreme segregation by income and race in metropolitan Los Angeles, Chicago and Atlanta and have shown very high

relationships between concentrated poverty and educational inequality. But they have not explored the extent to which it was caused by differences in the quality of city and suburban school systems. A 1987 report on all Chicago and suburban high schools showed an extremely high relationship between the percentage of low-income students in a school and its graduation rate and average college entrance examination scores. Average per student spending did not have a substantial relationship with outcomes, but concentrated poverty had an extraordinary relationship; in other words, the students and their families were much more decisive in shaping school outcomes than the level of public funds.

The relationship between poverty and low achievement does not imply that income leads directly to achievement. Concentrated poverty is systematically related to concentrations of many other kinds of problems in the environ-

ment of the students and the teachers in low-income schools. The differences start even before birth and affect students in many ways. Children of low-income mothers are much more likely to have been born without appropriate prenatal care and nutrition and to be developmentally disabled at birth. They are much more likely to live with chronic untreated health problems, to experience violence and abuse, to have no stable place to live and go to school because the family cannot regularly pay rent and to have no quiet place to study or do homework.



JOHN FIGLER

They must frequently change schools, and they often have no educational resources at home. The neighborhood which shapes the society of the school is much more likely to be one where teen pregnancy and gangs or crime are endemic. Students are much less likely to have contact with adults who have finished college or with other students seriously preparing for higher education. In an area where many students are poor the range of physical, emotional, legal and psychological problems that confront teachers and school staff can often be overwhelming. Even the most dedicated teachers and counselors tend to burn out in such a situation and either transfer elsewhere or lower their expectations. Often, the message of low expectations is reinforced by the appearance of a deteriorated and neglected school building.

Although poverty is strongly concentrated in Chicago, it is possible to find enough similar schools across city-suburban lines to compare their operation

and to find out whether or not suburban school organization and much smaller bureaucracies lead to different results. There are some suburban schools with high concentrations of low-income and minority students high enough to be directly compared to Chicago schools. Similarly, there are some relatively affluent schools in the city that are similar to many suburban schools. Comparing such schools in the city and suburbs shows a remarkable pattern. The city and the suburbs perform very much the same with similar children, and city magnet schools exceed suburban schools serving communities with similar numbers of poor or minority students.

Decentralization no solution

If differences in school structure, size of school district, traditions of the local community, culture and values and bureaucratic style were decisive in determining school outcomes, and if the Chicago school management was as defective as is generally assumed, there should have been a clear city-suburban relationship independent of income differences. Certainly there should have been wide variations in outcomes between one vast urban district and the 295 much smaller suburban ones in the metro area. There was not. This suggests that much more attention should be devoted to social and economic conditions and much less to issues of school organization.

The implications of these patterns are critical to policy development. The basic problem, it appears, is not bureaucracy; therefore, the basic solution is not likely to be any form of reorganization. The underlying problem is concentrated poverty, which is almost always concentrated minority poverty. Family and community background effects overwhelm school effects. If concentrated poverty for minority students is the root problem, a much wider range of possible solutions needs to be part of the debate over opportunity in metropolitan Chicago. In particular, we need to think of schools as only part of a much broader system of needed changes and to recognize that those which could be most decisive might well be those which address the poverty of the entire family through access to decent jobs for the parents. The full array of related issues of job

training, employment discrimination and other issues needs more attention.

Metropolitan Chicago has never faced the changes forced in many other metropolitan areas by school desegregation policies which can reduce the extreme isolation of poor and minority children. The 1990 Census shows that metro Chicago still has the nation's most segregated housing. Calculations for the 1986-87 school year show that it had extremely high school segregation for both blacks and Hispanics compared to other metropolitan regions. There is no opportunity for Chicago's minority students to transfer into available spaces in much more competitive suburban schools, though this opportunity is available to students in St. Louis, Milwaukee, Indianapolis and other large cities.

Interdistrict choice

Desegregation and interdistrict choice plans that would provide access by poor minority children to more effective middle-class schools deserve attention. The fact that we are moving toward a situation of half minority enrollment across the entire metropolitan region and the schools are serving a rising proportion of low-income children makes these issues vitally important. Since research shows that such integration helps low-income students (who are more influenced by their school) without hurting middle-class students (who are more influenced by their family background), such plans can provide a considerable net gain in educational opportunity. The high achievement levels of some of the integrated city magnet schools provide useful examples.

Housing integration could also make an invaluable contribution. Northwestern University research following children from low-income black families who received certificates allowing them to move to outlying suburbs under a court-ordered program showed that children from extreme conditions of isolated ghetto poverty adjusted rapidly and well to living in and attending school in middle-class suburban communities.

The problems of concentrated poverty are so totally isolated from the experience of white families in this metropolitan region that they often tend to see poverty problems as racial problems. Among the schools of the metropolitan area there is

not one white school (90 to 100 percent white enrollment) that has a majority of poor students. If you go to a white school, in other words, the chance that you will be in a predominantly low-income situation is zero. If you go to a minority school, the chance is 88 percent. If you attend an overwhelmingly black school, the probability that half the students will be poor is 90 percent. The average white school has 4 percent poor students, and none has more than 31 percent. There are many poor whites, but the housing market does not segregate them in all-poor neighborhoods and schools.

This study also suggests the need to seriously consider policies affecting magnet schools in Chicago. These schools are achieving considerable success. They perform, on the average, substantially better than suburban schools with similar proportions of low-income and minority students. Magnet schools do not, however, tend to be heavily low income, and to some extent their high performance is a reflection of their screening procedures, not their educational approach.

Expand magnet schools

These schools are, however, critically important in making competitive education available to city students, and it is vital that access to them be fair, that parents have good information about the opportunities and that students assigned to inferior schools with very low levels of competition be provided with real alternatives. The drift of the present reform is toward de-emphasis on magnet schools in favor of parent-controlled neighborhood schools. If the real problem is concentrated poverty, not bureaucracy, and magnet schools offer one of the few available alternatives to breaking it, there should be a serious discussion about the need to preserve and expand magnet programs. Recent decisions cutting off free transportation to magnets for high school students should be seen as decisions forcing low-income students to attend inferior, concentrated-poverty schools.

It is always wrong, of course, to conclude from a strong statistical tendency that a relationship is inevitable and unchangeable. We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that the overwhelm-

ing majority of the schools were not exceptions and that there are likely to be serious barriers to change given the syndrome of interacting forces described earlier that tend to maintain inequalities (e.g., housing patterns, health care). In spite of these limitations, however, it is surely important to foster the expansion of school-level efforts that appear to work.

If the underlying problem is concentrated poverty, policies that reduce poverty and/or reduce its concentration can be beneficial. Many public policy decisions of the past decade have made the poor poorer and have overburdened low-income neighborhoods. They include: rising tax burdens in payroll tax and excise taxes for the poor while taxes on the affluent fell, drastic reductions in subsidized housing programs, sharp reductions in coverage of unemployment insurance and Medicaid programs, welfare payments only about half the value of those two decades ago, ending basic skills training for high school dropouts, termination of the CETA public jobs program, policies which weakened unions and led to lower wages and policies producing minimum-wage increases lagging far behind the cost of living. There have also been many policies of state and local governments that subsidize moving jobs out of inner cities to new suburban locations, further depressing inner-city economies.

In an important sense, the dominant tendency in recent school reform has accepted a preposterous assumption—that within a society with profound and deepening inequalities, individual schools have the capacity to transform outcomes fundamentally on a very large scale. When this does not happen, we blame the schools, their administrators and the teachers. At its worst, this approach totally removes responsibility from the rest of the society and heaps additional criticism on educators already overwhelmed with the problems of concentrated poverty. While it remains very important to monitor, prod and encourage school-level reform, it is essential that we reopen the broader issues of poverty, isolation and race that have virtually disappeared from the reform discussion. Without seriously addressing those issues, reformers risk intensifying the problems and building pressure inside the very institutions that are already the most overburdened and immobilized. ■

Poverty, not bureaucracy: A response

City schools can't wait for poverty cure

by G. Alfred Hess Jr.

It is an uncomfortable task to comment upon the frustrated scribbles of one's closest allies. "Poverty, Not Bureaucracy: Poverty, Segregation and Inequality in Metropolitan Chicago Schools" is one publication that would have been better left unexamined. It is a small, unremarkable study by an undergraduate (Peter Scheirer), with a foreword by his faculty advisor (Gary Orfield) that stretches the study into a last frustrated cry over the failure of the 1960s-style efforts at desegregation.

I have opposed giving the comments of Gary Orfield further exposure because, unlike most of his valuable previous work on desegregation in American schools, these jottings are not based on any real data. Instead, they show us more about the man's interior state than they tell us about Chicago school reform.

There are really two quite separate essays in this little paper, published by the Metropolitan Opportunity Project, a vehicle Orfield set up to receive foundation grants and support his ongoing studies when he was at the University of Chicago. (He has since left for the hallowed halls of Harvard.) The basis of the paper is a study of student achievement scores in Chicago area schools.

Peter Scheirer's study is a quite nice documentation of the continuing gravity of racial isolation in the Chicago metropolitan area. His statistics show convincingly that low-

income and minority public school students are shunted aside into schools where they predominate while white and more affluent students tend to go to schools with few minorities or poor students.

Scheirer also shows that as the concentrations of poverty increase, student achievement decreases. This is all quite unremarkable because it is just



one more update in a long and dreary line dating back to James Coleman's 1966 study for the U.S. Office of Equal Educational Opportunity. (I must admit that I have contributed my share of efforts to this tradition.) The study is remarkable only in that it is so well done by an undergraduate; an admirable trait of Orfield's is his promotion of his students' best work. I wish I had had such a professor when I was in school!

A quick comment on Scheirer's technical study is in order, since it is not reprinted in this issue. His descriptive data about the isolation of children are compelling and frightening.

Reading this data again (METROSTAT, a division of the Chicago Panel, publishes this data in its annual Data-books), it appears that the fears of the Kerner Report on the race-based rioting of the mid-1960s have come true: The United States, at least at the public-school level in metropolitan Chicago, has become two separate nations, one white, one black.

Scheirer demonstrates that student achievement declines as the concentration of low-income students increases. He then notes that some city schools do better than suburban schools with similar poverty levels, specifically in the 40-percent to 70-percent range. From those two observations, he concludes that the problem for Chicago schools is poverty, not bureaucracy.

However, there are too few schools in this middle range of poverty—in either the city or the suburbs—to draw any significant comparisons. Sixty-four percent of city schools have enrollments that are more than 70 percent low income while 90 percent of the rest of the schools in the six-county area have enrollments that are less than 30 percent low income.

Orfield stretches the study by trying to use it to show that the Chicago school reform effort is misdirected and runs the risk of "intensifying the problems and building pressure" on "overburdened and immobilized" teachers and principals. He allowed his student to charge that these efforts "have been based on oversimplified and inaccurate assumptions." Unfortunately, it is Scheirer who narrows the reform effort down to just one component: an attack on the bureaucracy on Pershing Road.

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The richness and diversity of the 125-page reform act are reduced to just one theme.

Orfield, in his frustrated foreword, goes several steps farther out on the shaky limb of city-suburb comparisons. The center of Orfield's complaint seems to be that school reformers are focused on schools instead of trying to change the whole nature of our society and instead of resisting the conservative forces that have increased the tax burden for the poor, reduced subsidized housing, lowered unemployment insurance and welfare subsidies, lowered wages and moved jobs out of the central city. He implies that school reformers are wasting their time when they should be fighting these problems; he further implies that school reformers are not also interested in the problems he lists. But in doing so, Orfield sets up a straw man. He does not quote a single reformer to demonstrate that such a person exists.

Bureaucracy an impediment

Orfield implies there is an either/or choice: solve the problems of poverty in our society or fix America's schools. But most reformers I know recognize that both problems are important. And they do so not from statistical analyses but from working with the traumatized 9-year-old who is only now working her way out of the shock of seeing her murdered cousin lying on the street two years ago, or from working with local school councils that are seeking ways to keep weapons out of their schools.

In truth, Orfield is asking the wrong question. He thinks it is "preposterous" of school reformers to think they can fix Chicago's schools without fixing the poverty affecting Chicago's students. On the other hand, Chicago reformers, while they agree about the impact of poverty, think it is even more "preposterous" to do nothing about our schools until there is a new resurgence of 1960s-style liberalism that might reduce that poverty.

Orfield implies that reformers think school bureaucracies created the problems in our city's schools. In actuality, it is just the opposite; bureaucracy is seen more as an impediment

preventing schools from improving the education they offer disadvantaged students. School autonomy—already quite extensive in the suburbs—is a vehicle to get around that impediment. There is a fairly extensive body of research, known as the effective schools literature, that has demonstrated the soundness of that thinking, as Orfield well knows. Central to that effort is the conviction that all students can learn. Orfield, it appears, does not share that conviction.

Triage strategy

Orfield's deepest frustration seems to be that Chicago reformers are not willing to keep on fighting the desegregation battles of the 1960s and 1970s. His recommendations are for city-suburb student exchanges (such as the minimal efforts going on in Milwaukee and St. Louis) and, failing such an alternative, to increase magnet programs to give talented minorities an avenue of escape from the intractable problems of inner-city schools. Thus, Orfield continues to argue for a triage strategy of saving the most adept inner-city youth while ignoring the rest.

But, in our evaluations of the Chicago desegregation program, the Chicago Panel has shown that with white students making up only 12 percent of total enrollment, desegregation has gone about as far as it can go in the city. Further, only about three percent more minorities now attend school with significant numbers of whites than was the case when the deseg plan was adopted in 1981.

Orfield focuses on the few students attending Chicago's 34 magnet schools (students who are disproportionately white) while ignoring the 63 percent of minority students who continue to attend the more than 300 totally segregated schools. Chicago school reformers give protected status to the gains made under desegregation but focus instead on the majority of students who continue to attend racially identifiable schools. These reformers have taken their lead from the minority parents who, when the deseg plan was being designed a decade ago, testified that they did not want to put their children on the

bus—they wanted their community schools to be made better.

Chicago reformers have lived through the federal government's rejection of its own 1980 deseg recommendation that a metropolitan solution should be found for the problems of housing, jobs and schools. They have seen the failure of the state to adequately fund schools since 1976. They have come to the conclusion that no one else is going to fix their schools for them. They recognize the difficulties they undertake. And they can understand why Orfield finds their optimism "preposterous."

But they also see the resources, both financial and human, now being made available to improve their schools. For example, since the reform act passed, Chicago schools have used their new discretionary funds to add an average of eight new positions per school. And Chicago reformers cannot understand why Orfield cannot appreciate the reform act's extension to all schools of the benefits previously kept exclusively for magnet schools: staff selection on merit, discretionary resources, program autonomy and differentiation.

Reform has many facets

If our optimism seems "preposterous" to him, then his skepticism, his paternalistic favoritism toward a "deserving" few and his apparent preference for doing nothing to improve inner-city schools until the dawning of a new day of liberalism seems "preposterous" to us.

The Chicago School Reform Act is a rich tapestry of diverse changes aimed at improving our city's schools; getting around the stifling effects of an overgrown bureaucracy is only one of its threads. Whether it will be a sufficient impetus to improvement will not be known, for sure, for many years. But for Chicago reformers, the question is not whether poverty or bureaucracy is the bigger contributor to the failings of America's inner-city schools. Given our nation's current hard-hearted policies, the more important question for us is: What do we have to change if we want to improve our schools prior to the coming of a new golden age? ■

Finn, Clements ducked the issues

Chester Finn and Stephen Clements' response to my assessment of their "monitoring" work in Chicago (*CATALYST*, April 1992) does everything except engage the criticism. They are in turn surprised, saddened, misunderstood and intrigued—but they never address the content of the debate. They condescend, name-call and whine—but they never respond point by point. To reiterate briefly:

1. Finn and Clements consistently describe African-American and Latino youngsters exclusively by their putative circumstances, failing to see how schools can tap into the experiences, skills, know-how and aspirations kids bring to school as a sensible starting point for teaching and learning. Their approach leads them to conclude that "even the best schools find it difficult, perhaps impossible, to boost student achievement" (emphasis added). They now say that they only raised the "social deficits" issue "after an extraordinary conversation with several members of a major Chicago area civil rights organization." No doubt. But it is a significant step between understanding the social reality faced by millions of Americans and excusing school failure.

2. Finn and Clements see "financial problems" as "virtually insoluble."

Jonathan Kozol, Bernie Noven, the Chicago Panel, the Urban League and Designs for Change have all proposed credible approaches to addressing and solving schools' financial difficulties. Finn and Clements disregard all of this, claiming that "resource redistribution...is...politically unrealistic, now and in the near future." It is ironic (if not downright pernicious) to act as if the political situation in this one area is intractable while in all other areas (say, the move to privatize public education) the political landscape is dynamic and alive, requiring our advocacy and participation.

3. Finn and Clements are centralizers disguised as decentralizers. The most recent evidence is Finn's approval before the School Finance Authority of the Board of Education's Systemwide Plan. While he claimed to have several reservations, he urged the Authority to pass the plan so that it could be implemented immediately. Most

telling is his enthusiastic endorsement of Chapter Five, the section that calls for the creation of syllabi for each subject increased standardized testing, greater power to control staff development, the bloating up of central staff functions—a complete reversal of the intent and current direction of reform. Chapter Five also incongruously steps up to applaud the Bush administration's America 2000 initiative in language Finn himself could have written.

4. Finally a word about racism. My point is that racism is more than bias or prejudice, that it includes the stratification of people according to race. In other words, the endurance and strength of prejudiced ideas and values lie in their renewable life-source: the reality of inequality based on color. In Illinois (and elsewhere) we have created what amounts to two parallel school systems—one privileged, stable, effective and largely white, the other ineffective, chaotic, disadvantaged in countless ways and largely African-American, Latino and poor. Racism is expressed through this duality, through inadequate resources for those most in need, through isolation, through unresponsiveness.

Beside the point

For Finn to claim in the face of all this that he expects a lot from "kids of every hue" is almost sweet in its naivete, and it's entirely beside the point. To charge that raising the issue of race "may play well in Chicago" (read any discussion of race panders to African Americans) but that it is "counter-productive" is to dismiss the true significance of race in our society. For in spite of Michael Jackson's popular "it don't matter if you're black or white," nothing in America has mattered more, nothing has been more intractable and insistent, more enduring and disfiguring for all concerned—for Finn and Clements as well as for those youngsters being regularly cheated out of life-chances in our public schools. What I am arguing here I have argued for a long time—I don't intend to "outgrow" it as Finn and Clements urge.

I, too, believe that we should have a wide-open debate about reform, now and in the future. But a debate requires a back-and-forth engagement of ideas. If Finn and Clements want to put forward their impressions and "findings," so be it. But as the Pat Buchanan of school reform, Finn in particular should be prepared for a struggle. Don't duck and dodge.

*William Ayers, faculty member
College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago*

Special ed bill misrepresented

I would like to respond to Daniel Cattau's article "Special Education Changes Face Stiff Opposition" published in your March 1992 issue.

It mentioned that a bill has been introduced in the Illinois Legislature "that would make it more difficult to place disabled students in regular classrooms." Mr. Cattau referred to several sources who inferred that private-sector special education schools were trying to maintain the financial status quo.

As co-author of the bill, I must take exception with this interpretation. House Bill 2606 was introduced by Rep. Lee Preston (D-Chicago) after extensive discussion with concerned principals, teachers and parents from special and regular education programs in the public schools.

As you are aware, the federal government in Public Law 94-142 gave specific procedures, guidelines and safeguards for placing a child in a special education program. House Bill 2606 provides that these precautions be applied when a child in a special education placement is to be mainstreamed, integrated or included into the regular education program.

The decision to place a child into special education is made by a multi-disciplinary staffing team in order to provide the child with an appropriate program, including related services. It is the intent of the Preston bill to guarantee that the multi-disciplinary staffing team (including the parents) makes the decision about the appropriateness of any alternative placements, and to insure that any related services follow the child into any new placements.

These procedures are not intended to make inclusion more difficult to accomplish; they are intended to insure that the inclusion of the child in a specific program is appropriate and that the services recommended in the child's individualized education plan are received.

*Murray Fisher, special education teacher
Talcott Elementary 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

In early April, Supt. Ted Kimbrough presented the School Board with a list of schools to close or consolidate. This month, two diarists tell of "hit list" rumors that preceded the announcement. Another diarist reports the conclusion of an intense debate at an overcrowded school over whether to adopt a year-round schedule or go on controlled enrollment. This same diarist also discloses a severe blow to schools struggling to find more time for staff development. And a student proudly announces the formation of an African-American history club at school and comments favorably on a sexual awareness day. CATALYST's diarists, who are writing anonymously, include a principal, teachers, students and others involved in school reform.

First black history club formed

ALF, student

Feb. 4 A group of students went to discuss Black History Month with the principal. The majority of the students at my school feel that because we are a predominantly black school, we should celebrate our heritage for not only one month but all year round. They suggested African-American history and African dance classes be implemented, and a black history club formed.

Feb. 11 The first black history club meeting in our school's history took place. The meeting adjourned with 67 members, the highest number held by any club in the school. We are still awaiting African-American history and African dance classes, but we have made a giant step toward getting to know our past.

Frustration with central office

OLIVIA, principal

Feb. 7 District principals meeting. What about Supt. Kimbrough's "think tank" idea? Think tanks are worthwhile only in a climate that welcomes new ideas and encourages freedom of expression. The present climate does neither.

A more serious problem with the think tank idea is that in order for it to flourish, its members have to be healthy, stable and secure. It is impos-

sible to be creative, innovative and productive when you face the kind of stress experienced by principals every day. Kimbrough seems unable (or unwilling) to offer a kind or supportive word. But yet he wants our best thinking.

In the meeting, my colleagues share their concerns and, ultimately, their frustrations. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the system is breaking down, disintegrating around us.

Openings for ESEA staff purchased with those additional funds made available to us last October remain in limbo; placement of special education students is problematic at best; phone calls to many departments are answered by machines, and if we get past the machines very few staffers are willing or able to give us straight answers. Expenditures are supposed to be under the control of the local schools, but we must comply with numerous (recently introduced) procedures before our requisitions are approved.

The more we talk, the more evident is our frustration and sense of personal isolation. I'm relieved to know I am not the only one suffering, but that is little comfort.

Inspiration undermined

LAZARUS, teacher

March 5 At a local performance of "Man of La Mancha," with its quest after impossible dreams and all that, I

find inspiration for our modest efforts toward reform. I am reminded, too, that in Tina Rosenberg's *Children of Cain* (on violence in Latin America) the Columbian judge who stood up against the drug cartel and paid for it with his life is described in reference to "Quixote." That much is not asked of us, but often the indignities we are subjected to in our efforts to bring about change make us, at least for the moment, question the wisdom of our involvement.

I do not know if this is true for all the professionals who have supported reform in the schools, but I do know of one elementary school teacher who worked as union delegate and at her own expense saw to it that her faculty was informed and provided with material on all issues related to reform. Her faculty went blithely on ignoring most of what she gave them. Some even denied they had ever received it. For her efforts the principal called her a troublemaker and breathed a sigh of relief when she transferred to another school.

Closings, consolidations

OLIVIA, principal

Feb. 11 A group of principals and parents from our community met today to discuss the issue of consolidation. It quickly became apparent that misinformation and/or lack of information hinders our handling of this problem. Parents are being told one thing by the district superintendent; principals are being told something else or nothing at all.

It didn't take us long to decide that consolidation is wrong for our community. Our schools are all overcrowded—student enrollments exceed the ideal size for a school; lack of space makes the implementation of support programs almost impossible.

The board and CPS staffers make decisions that do nothing to improve educational progress. In fact, many

decisions over the years have adversely affected this community. Parents expressed anger and frustration about the way decisions are made from the top down. Now that we operate under the reform law, parents want to know why decisions that concern their children aren't being made by them, or with input from them.

Feb. 26 We're asked to attend an "emergency" meeting at the district office. The task force on consolidation is collecting information on the schools in our district. We're told to review the highlights section of our school report card to be sure we have included all special programs offered at our school. Supposedly, this information is to be used to make decisions about which schools are to be consolidated. I don't for a minute believe that, but I go through the motions anyway.

I glance through the copy of my school report that I've been given to update, and I'm shocked to see that we are reported to be at significantly less than capacity in terms of student enrollment. My "Hey! What is this?" draws the attention of several other principals, and I am gently told that all of *their* school report cards also exaggerate the schools' capacities.

This is not the first time principals in my district have questioned the accuracy of the numbers used by the Department of Facilities. Several years ago, our district had a task force on overcrowding. The task force invited staff from the Department of Facilities to explain the discrepancy between what their printouts indicated was available space and what we knew to be severely overcrowded conditions. They told us the discrepancy existed because the board had a definition for "available" space that did not concur with the definition used by the local school. We argued at length that the department should reconcile its definition with reality, but to no avail.

Isn't there some standard formula (taught in basic architecture classes) that specifies space per pupil in a school building and factors in additional space for other necessities such as bathrooms, libraries, corridors, gyms, lunch rooms and miscellaneous office space? Given the serious dis-

crepancies between what the department identifies as capacity and what the local schools identify as capacity, we are talking about two radically different realities.

ALF, student

Feb. 28 Teachers are whispering and students are eavesdropping. Rumors are flying through the building that our school will be on the board's 1992-93 closing list—because of an enrollment that is below 900 students in a building with maximum capacity of 3,000. Students are upset that no one is talking to them about this possibility, but teachers say they aren't talking because they aren't sure we are on the list.

Until the actual list comes out, we can either forget about it or talk about it. In the meantime, our students are still going to elementary schools to recruit so that if we aren't on the closing list *this* year, we definitely won't be on it *next* year.

Job descriptions needed

OLIVIA, principal

Jan. 25 A training session for new LSC members. The moderator tells us that if we do not achieve in the classroom, then reform will not have been a success. Funny, I thought reform was about governance. Why do these people keep getting governance and educational achievement mixed up?

After the opening session, we break up into smaller groups to discuss our roles and responsibilities. We are later further grouped by type: principals with other principals, parents with parents, teachers with their colleagues. Each group is to determine roles and responsibilities for itself with respect to school reform. These are then written on newsprint and put up on the wall for all groups to peruse. Everyone has an opportunity to agree or disagree with what's been written down.

It became clear (to me, at least) that teachers and principals have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, but parents on the LSCs are still confused. Some of the roles listed by the parents were: build-

ing maintenance, lunchroom operations, increasing math and reading scores, ensuring adequate instructional materials and supplies, teachers teaching. Here lies a big-issue problem, that should have been the major focus of this workshop: differentiating between the administration of a building (the principal's job) and policy making (the role and function of the LSC). But because we didn't get started until half our allotted time had expired, we were never able to get to this.

LAZARUS, teacher

Feb. 11 LSC meeting. A routine agenda. Not much is being asked of us. The new principal's mode of operation has been to inform the council of policy decisions *after* the fact.

Council members who have been involved in reform for a while agree with my recommendation that it is time to take stock of where we are and where we want to be as a council responsible for setting policy. Because of the agreement of my fellow LSC members, I decide not to submit the resignation letter I carried with me to this meeting. As a result of tonight's meeting I no longer feel alone. Perhaps the council can again function like a team.

March 3 A very remarkable special LSC meeting to define that illusive line between policy and day-to-day operations of the school—or, more precisely, what are the roles of the principal and the LSC? The chair reminds the principal that the council must be involved in decision making and in representing the school when the media raise questions. The meeting deals with hard yet delicate issues.

By the end of the evening, those present stay longer than they might have intended because they do not wish to lose the feeling of the moment, of solidarity, of mutual respect and consideration.

March 14 At some of our feeder schools, principals have not been sharing budget information vital for the LSCs to perform their monitoring function. Unfortunately, changes in administration have not always improved the situation.

At a recent meeting, our own principal brought out the internal accounts records and shared information related to it. A giant step forward. For two

and a half years our council asked repeatedly for this material from the previous administration and was repeatedly denied it.

Teachers as leaders

LAZARUS, teacher

Feb. 11 I have, alas, come to the horrendous realization that our faculty will not be able to assist in the drafting of the school improvement plan because they have never been adequately trained to do so.

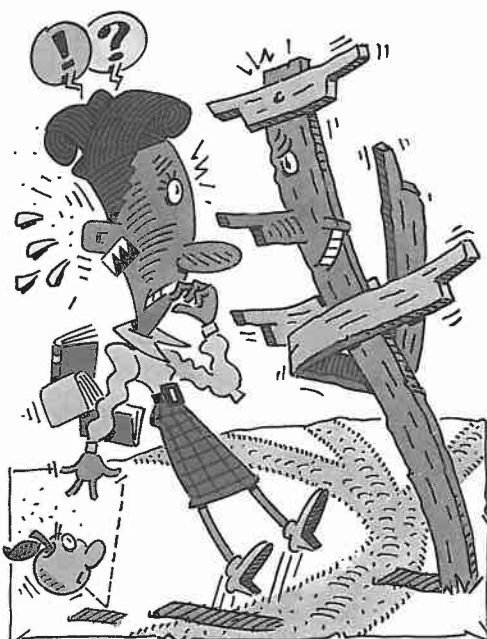
We are years behind where we should be. It is no help that Board of Education formats for the SIP have been changed from year to year, requiring an enormous amount of paperwork for what should be a relatively simple process that will benefit the school. We are considerably off course and have no real sense of direction about where we want to be as a school. But we are still afloat, and we can take some consolation from that.

Feb. 22 In the school system at large, the initial wave of reform has receded. Although its total effect cannot yet be measured, it is clear that for many in the system the wave receded even before there was any awareness of its existence. With the exception of the quadrennial selection of the principal, many have settled back into the status quo. Yet to be tapped is the tremendous potential of the PPAC, which should be the source of the SIP and its implementation.

Feb. 26 At a PPAC meeting, it becomes painfully evident to me how lacking in professional self-confidence our members are. Those who attended an inservice conference on cooperative learning are willing to try the new methods *within* their classrooms but not to share them with the faculty, the latter apparently being a tougher house to play. Yes, it is understandable that it would be difficult to duplicate precisely the efforts of experienced presenters, but it is my belief that still some concepts could be shared.

Feb. 29 The CTU PPAC course

moves along. Participants seem to be getting the feel for how important consensus-based decision making is for achieving goals related to reform or restructuring. I see more than one smile when I remind them that they are professionals and deserve to be treated with respect by having their opinions heard in the decision-making process. We are defining what decision-making groups should look and feel like so that the participants can go back to their schools to try out new behaviors to help groups function well. This is a major step



toward reform because we go nowhere without commitment from the classroom teacher.

March 4 SIP meeting for the entire faculty. Our needs are great, especially in the areas of providing reform training for the faculty. We need, also, to follow Prof. Linda Darling-Hammond's advice (see Diaries, November 1991) about sending the faculty out to other schools to collect all sorts of ideas before making a commitment to changing the course offerings or curriculum. We need to look closely at ourselves and our students' needs.

March 7 CTU PPAC class. One school reports on its efforts to try to encourage the other members of its faculty to be receptive to the ideas of restructuring. Other members of the faculty from the same school begin to develop a strategy for involving oth-

ers in planning. It becomes eminently clear that one serious problem is the lack of sufficient planning time in the teaching day to deal with the issues of reform and restructuring.

Old ways give way

LAZARUS, teacher

Feb. 4 When those in attendance at an inservice on grant writing indicate they are well acquainted with the school report card and other data which can be used for developing the school profile, present is a former central office administrator, wise and experienced in the ways of CPS. He is impressed with the sophistication of those at work and comments with appreciation, "I guess the dinosaurs [the prereform old-school fogies] are dying out."

Students and sex

ALF, student

Feb. 20 One whole school day was devoted to sexual awareness. Male and female students attended workshops about drugs, pregnancy, safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases. Many students felt the time was well spent on issues plaguing today's youth.

They found the medical staff who sponsored the workshops to be helpful in explaining and in answering questions. Booklets and flyers passed out to the students were well illustrated. "I will think twice about having sex without a condom," said one student after watching a film about sexually transmitted diseases. At the end of the workshops, the medical staff emphasized how abstinence was the only 100-percent birth control method and safeguard against S.T.D.

Community and reform

LAZARUS, teacher

Feb. 22 A joint budget training session with our LSC and some of our feeder schools. An indication of the commitment of the larger community

to the educational reform movement is seen in the formation of a group of CPAs who are volunteering their services to assist LSCs. A helpful and heartwarming gesture.

March 16 In an informal moment, the students in the off-site gifted class (see Diaries, February 1992) share stories of the impact of our area's major industry on their families. "My father has a scar on his stomach where he was burned at work." "You should see my father's work clothes. They always had little burn holes all over." "My father's friend can't hear out of one ear anymore. That side of his face was burned." One student is leaving the program because the family has already moved to a more prosperous neighborhood.

In a community of dying industry and dying hope, our students struggle day by day confronting the terror of the streets where gangs and drugs have become ready solutions to unemployment and loss of dignity. How can the school hope to counteract these abominable trends when, at best, it can hold out only the faintest promise of a better life for these children? Is it realistic to expect mammoth changes from educational reform?

Security and racism

RACHEL, student

Feb. 27 The hall sweep (see Diaries, April 1992) is becoming a thing of the past. Students still cut, teachers no longer lock their doors after the bell rings and students still indulge in gang activity. I thought our school was changing for the better, but I was wrong.

Three sophomore girls jumped and badly beat a freshman girl inside the school this week. The reason? The freshman girl "looked" at one of the older girls the wrong way. I assumed these two girls would be kicked out of the school. According to head of security, any person caught fighting will be expelled. Instead, each girl received 10 days suspension from the school. As for the girl they beat? They are planning to get revenge on her for telling.

Feb. 28 Today my school held its

annual Black History Assembly. Of course, all of the black people sat together. To keep crowd control, the security guards stood close to the black section. One black student clapped too loud, the security guards alleged, so he was escorted out of the auditorium and given two days in-school suspension.

On the other hand, white students were booing and making obscene remarks at the performers. No action against them.

After the assembly, as everyone was leaving, I noticed police cars on the school lawn and in front of the building. The officers were frisking black male students who were coming out of the auditorium. The security guards claimed they were afraid of a race riot. Yeah, right!

March 30 An incident that happened today made me realize I am not safe at my school. Violent crimes have become a big factor at my school. The security guards don't help much. They either sit in front of the auditorium or wander the halls after the late bell rings. Today they proved to me that they are worthless in the school.

As I was coming down from my locker on the second floor after division, I noticed a crowd of students by one of the stairways. So I decided to see what was happening. A white girl and a Hispanic girl were fighting by the doorway leading to the stairs. The stairway was crowded with students who were trying to see the fight. At least two teachers passed by without stopping the fight. No security guards were in sight. Finally, a student broke up the fight.

Even though the late bell had rung, students were still in the hallway waiting to see what was going to happen next. The white girl was collecting her belongings on the floor. As she was walking through the doorway, two girlfriends of the Hispanic girl jumped her. No security guards were in sight. Teachers were looking out of their classrooms at the fight. The fight lasted for at least three minutes before a teachers aide broke the fight up. One minute later, the security guards finally show up. Everyone ran to their classes. I ran to my study hall on the first floor. I sat in study hall not believing that it took the security

guards at least six minutes to break up the fight. Anything could have happened within six minutes.

Later on today, I saw the two Hispanic girls who jumped on the white girl. They were acting like nothing had ever happened. I'm beginning to wonder if they were even caught by the security guards, or did they escape the scene of the crime?

A decision at last

ROBIN, observer

March 2 The LSC at overcrowded School H is deadlocked on the question of whether to institute controlled enrollment or become a year-round school (see Diaries, April 1992). With a sense of urgency the LSC met again to arrive at a decision. The district superintendent, a district administrator, an administrator from Pershing Road and a member of the School Board were introduced. A team from TV Channel 9 News was there, and with their camera and lights lent an air of excitement to the proceedings.

As on previous occasions, the LSC chair asked those who wanted to speak to sign up in advance, and this kept the crowd from engaging in actual debate—or shouting matches. Strong feelings were indeed expressed.

A number of teachers spoke for *immediate* relief, by which they meant controlled enrollment, describing present conditions which made it impossible for them to do the job they want to do. A visitor from a year-round school spoke enthusiastically about its academic benefits and asserted that programs are being provided for children during their vacation periods—an issue that has worried School H parents about that option.

There is some feeling that controlled enrollment, which would not allow new residents to send their children to School H, might have a negative effect on the attractiveness of the community. A local real estate agent spoke, but without taking a very strong stand, saying that controlled enrollment could result in slightly lower property values.

In response, some people seemed to be trying to pin the year-round

alternative on greedy property owners. There were a few remarks like, "We should be concerned here with *children*, not with real estate values." But at least three parents and a teacher supported the year-round idea, on the grounds that it would have academic benefits.

The council (as I reported last month) had sponsored a survey that showed a substantial majority of parents and a narrower majority of teachers in favor of controlled enrollment rather than a year-round school. At this meeting, the viewpoint was again strongly expressed that the council should follow the opinions manifested in the survey. One parent spoke heatedly about how each parent's vote should count. "You're not supposed to vote for us," she insisted. "You're our representatives."

When all the members of the audience who wished had had a chance to speak, the chair asked the council members to express their views. There was a markedly more guarded tone this time, and a number of members begged the community to "respect our decision." The principal especially spoke strongly about the need to continue to address the issue, whichever way the vote might come out, and the need to work together to do that. "There can't be winners and losers," he concluded.

A couple of the LSC members who voted for year-round school at the previous meeting mentioned the feelings their vote had aroused. One urged, "I hope people will respect the way people vote. I wasn't respected last time." Another said, "I can't believe the things people said to me."

Finally, the vote was taken: 6 to 4 in favor of controlled enrollment. There was noisy applause. One member, who voted at the previous meeting for year-round school on the first ballot and abstained on the second ballot, changed to controlled enrollment at this meeting.

This controversy at one local school raises, of course, classic questions of representative democracy: To what extent must LSC members *reflect* the opinions of their constituents? Is there a way LSCs can *lead* their constituents? I am convinced that the four members who supported the year-round school were basing their judg-

ment on careful study and a sincere conviction that it would be the best solution for educational reasons. Were they wrong to vote their consciences in this matter?

A central office gift

LAZARUS, teacher

March 4 Our principal announces to the faculty that the Board of Education has given our school and one other a new program oriented toward careers of the future. It will start small and increase in enrollment over the next few years. Why our school? I don't



know. I do know that our council has supported every recommendation for educational innovation brought to it by the faculty. Perhaps this receptivity and openness to change has not been lost on the decision makers at higher levels. If so, it is a well-deserved reward for the council's earnest efforts to improve our school.

Innovation crushed

ROBIN, observer

March 14 In the last few weeks, the state (through the Board of Education) has dealt a painful blow to schools. (See story on page 31.) These schools, with CTU encouragement, had restructured their school days, beginning instruction earlier in the morning so that at the end of two or three weeks they would be able to

dismiss children early and have an hour or two when teachers could meet to plan or to have staff development activities.

At two schools I know well, this was beginning to pay off in terms of teacher commitment to change. At one of these schools, inservices with five members of a university Reading Department were taking place every other week. At the other, the members of the Upper Grade Department of the school had decided that to address the needs of their particular children a major revision of their current departmental organization was required, and that in the time allotted through the restructured day they would plan that significant change.

However, the Illinois School Code says that every child must have five hours of instruction *per day*, rather than a fixed number of hours *per week*. Therefore, the board informed principals that they must immediately go back to their old schedule.

The very same day many principals received this demoralizing instruction, they also learned that they cannot legally allow teachers to meet in the school before 8:00 a.m. (As part of the trend that was emerging in some schools for teachers to take charge of their own work, they had been meeting at 7:30.)

The combined effect of these two directives was even worse than the cancelling of precious time. It told local schools, particularly teachers in schools, that indeed they could *not* control the circumstances under which children will be educated. It put them back in the position where they had been too long: hired employees rather than professionals with the judgment and expertise to decide what is effective with the children they teach.

There's been a lot of talk about how reform has dealt with only organizational issues and classrooms have not been changed for the better. If someone was trying to guarantee this result, they could not have done better than to come up with these two directives. ■

Parent project insider shares lessons on change

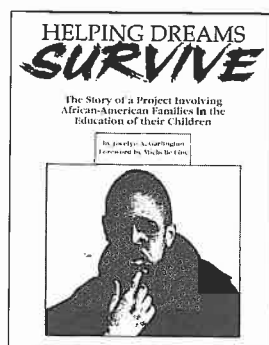
by Charles Payne

The idea that low-income and minority parents "don't care" about their children's education is so deeply rooted that we ought to be grateful for each new demonstration of its falsity. Jocelyn Garlington's *Helping Dreams Survive* is a welcome contribution in that regard. The book is the story of With and For Parents, a foundation-funded effort to increase the level and effectiveness of parent involvement in a Baltimore middle school. It was a three-and-a-half year effort, conceived as a dropout prevention project. One hundred fifty-six families, all African American, were targeted for intensive support services.

Garlington, the project's director, describes Harlem Park Middle School as a demoralized, dispirited place. Eighty-five percent of its students read below grade level; 70 percent had been retained in grade at least once. It was the kind of place where misbehaving students were still forced to wear dunce caps.

The staff was essentially dismissive of parents. Officially, of course, parents were encouraged to participate in the school in the usual ways. Unofficially, and probably unconsciously, school personnel sent messages that struck parents as contemptuous. The messages could

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HELPING DREAMS SURVIVE:
The story of a project involving African-American Families in the Education of Their Children.

by Jocelyn A. Garlington
 Washington D.C.: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1991. 167 + xxiv pp.

be as subtle as using an inappropriate tone of voice or as crude as making parents wait inordinately long periods of time before being helped. When parents failed to participate, staff was reinforced in its belief that parents just did not care.

(Initially, the school did have a Chapter 1 person who was supposed to be assigned to increasing parent involvement, but that person was also assigned such duties as substitute and teachers aide that pulled her away from working with parents. That sounds very much like what happens with many school-community representatives here in Chicago.)

The program that With and For Parents brought to the school was built

around advocacy and outreach, with much of the latter aimed at keeping parents better informed about what was going on with their child academically and socially. "We encouraged parents to assume a more proactive rather than reactive posture, to be less accepting of what they had perceived as mandates from 'on high' and to view decisions about their children's education as negotiable," the author writes. (p.148) With the program staff there to help and advise, parents were more likely to at least question decisions about suspensions, retentions, expulsions, forced transfers and the like. The parents eventually formed a parents club, which operated as an on-going source of support.

The book offers a number of discussions that I found useful. There are vivid descriptions of the barriers to school participation—including lack of information about school processes or the inability to interpret available information, the self-righteous and off-putting attitudes of school personnel, larger family problems that overwhelm educational issues and, perhaps above all, a lack of confidence on the part of parents that they can have any positive effect on their children's education. One leaves the book with a finer appreciation of the corrosive power of alienation.

There are also helpful discussions of the slow process of building trust with parents, the difficulties of initially getting parents to trust one another—they were at first unwilling to exchange phone numbers among themselves—the process of learning how to put together an effective parent newsletter.

ter, the questioning of whether meetings are a useful way to get anything done anyway.

I thought the most instructive parts of the book, though, are those that describe the process by which the program staff learned to think about what it was doing. Much of the book is testimony to the power of thoughtful self-criticism. Repeatedly, we get to see the staff making a set of assumptions, finding that they do not work out in practice and going back to reconsider their approach. The project did lead to an increase in parent involvement, but there were real limits.

1 of 5 unresponsive

When they began, school officials told them to expect 75 percent of the families to be inaccessible. That proved well off the mark, but despite strenuous efforts, 20 percent did remain essentially closed to them, including, of course, the families of some of the children doing most poorly academically. The staff of With and For Parents reluctantly made the difficult decision to concentrate on the 80 percent of the parents who were responsive. It is good to be reminded that there may be a hard-core among parents that even extraordinary efforts cannot reach.

Some educators, noting that the program had five (apparently full-time) staff members to work with fewer than 160 families, may want to stop reading right here. Educators have every right to complain about Never-Never-Land models, models that assume levels of resources most schools can only dream about. What With and For Parents has to say about the process of change should not be written off because it had better-than-usual resources.

We have much experience from other projects to show that the kind of resources With and For Parents had, however useful, are not essential. Since reform in Chicago, a number of schools have increased parent participation without any extraordinary resources. The four schools on the West Side—Jefferson, Riis, Brown and Dodge—that are implementing James Comer's School Development Process have all seen substantial increases in

a variety of forms of parental participation within the past few months. The only new resource they have had available is part of the time of the project facilitator assigned to each building.

Despite the book's strengths, I frequently found *Helping Dreams Survive* frustrating. The description often becomes vague at precisely the points where detail would have been most useful. There is extended and useful discussion of the problematics of getting parents to turn out for meetings, but we don't learn much about what should go on in meetings once you get them there.

There was a meeting where the staff took some of the active parents to a restaurant and asked them some very important questions about how they saw the school. We never learn what the parents answered; instead, the author uses the incident to point out the advantages of finding a place to meet where parents can talk freely. There is an interesting discussion of their experience in carefully introducing into each home a set of reference materials donated by the project; we never learn if anyone ever used them.

Parent voices unheard

It is also disappointing that the author does almost nothing to set her story within the context of previous research on improving parent involvement. It would have been useful to know how this approach—starting rather late in the child's school career, holding a very traditional concept of "parent involvement," using organizers from outside both the school system and the community—compares to others.

It is similarly disappointing that we are seldom allowed to hear parent voices directly. Almost the entire story is told through the eyes of the author. I would have liked, for example, to hear a few parents talk about the changes in their behavior as they saw them.

The program's initial cohort of students is not scheduled to graduate from high school until 1994. Interim data suggest the program is having some impact on school-leaving rates. At the end of their freshman year, 68

percent of the experimental group as against 52 percent of the control group were still somewhere in the Baltimore school system. This was the case even though there was no visible improvement in achievement or attendance for the experimental group. The program seems to be keeping marginal students in school longer.

It may also be having an unanticipated consequence. The rate of geographical mobility among the experimental group is less than what would normally be expected. It may be that as parents come to feel more a part of the school, they make more of an effort to not move away from it.

Research over reason

We in Chicago should note that the need to set up the program with an experimental and a control group was a burden in program implementation. The more "normal" way to have gone about a project of this sort would have been to find a few receptive parents and then let them pull in their friends and relatives. With and For Parents could not take advantage of naturally existing networks because doing so would have violated the purity of the experimental group. The requirements of research design won out over those of sensible program implementation, which seems to be the way that battle usually ends.

Researchers (among which tribe I count myself) have been remarkably successful in selling the idea that adding to the general store of knowledge is more important than implementing a particular program sensibly. It is a dubious proposition, one we should all begin to re-examine. In the Baltimore case, I have no doubt that they could have put together a more effective program had they worked with whichever parents were most responsive, not just those whose names came up on some randomly chosen list.

I suspect that *Helping Dreams Survive* fails to fully capture the richness and complexity of the With and For Parents experience. Even so, it is an illuminating work on an important topic, and even some of its problems are thought-provoking. ■

Elsewhere

DETROIT

Local control. A radical decentralization plan adopted by the Detroit Board of Education on March 31 is threatened by a union revolt.

While initially signing on to the plan, the unions now charge that the board is engaging in unfair labor practices; a court fight seems likely. Supt. Deborah M. McGriff insists that no union contracts have been violated and says that no grievances have been filed. "Since the unions don't know what the new system might bring, they feel safer with the old one," she says.

Under the new system, schools that volunteer to sign "charters," or improvement agreements, with the board would gain wide-ranging powers. They must continue to abide by state law and union contracts and meet the same outcome standards as other schools in the district, but would otherwise be free to set their own course.

In perhaps the most radical change, empowered schools could go to private vendors as well as central office for business management support, educational services (curriculum development, staff training, psychological services, school improvement planning) and auxiliary services (maintenance, security, purchasing).

Empowered schools would receive lump-sum budgets that include 92 percent of the district's general school allocation and any state or federal categorical grants they are entitled to. The district would keep the remaining 8 percent of the general allocation for debt retirement and capital improvement projects. Schools must maintain balanced budgets but they could carry money over from one year to the next.

Once a year, the central administration would evaluate each empowered school to determine whether it has achieved "acceptable levels of educational improvement and fiscal

integrity."

Before the union revolt, the parents and staff at 10 of the city's 247 schools had voted for empowerment and received lump-sum allocations for the remainder of the school year. As many as 30 schools had been expected to receive empowerment status by next fall. Now, the unions are urging schools to boycott the plan.

"Only schools where staff and principals ignore the embargo will be able to gain empowerment in the near future," says McGriff.

DENVER

Waivers on testing. Breaking new ground in its year-old program of local school control, the Denver Board of Education granted the requests of five elementary schools to curtail standardized testing.

Following the lead of many early childhood education experts, the schools opposed standardized testing in primary grades and wanted to use alternatives such as portfolios, according to an article in the March 25 issue of *Education Week*.

Barbara Baker, principal of Montclair Elementary, told the newspaper, "We've demonstrated to the board that there's really neat stuff going on out here in schools. I hope other schools start demonstrating the same thing."

While supporting the testing waivers, the Denver Classroom Teachers Association plans to file a grievance against the board over a testing policy that is says relies too heavily on standardized tests. The policy has sparked parent demonstrations at some schools.

"The problem is that they wrote School Board policy on such an important issue without collaboration," said association president Rae Garrett. She added that the teachers union and the Denver Elementary

Schools' Principals Association are forming a committee of parents, teachers and administrators to draft a new testing policy "in a collaborative way;" the proposal will be submitted to the board.

MILWAUKEE

Unconventional leader. Most urban school systems are "bloated and fossilized entities that have little to do with kids and are impervious to change," the new head of one of those systems told a Chicago audience recently.

Milwaukee School Supt. Howard Fuller spoke as part of The Joyce Foundation Lecture Series. The recently-appointed superintendent came to his post with unconventional credentials and is using unconventional methods to promote school reform.

Fuller, a former Wisconsin secretary of labor and community activist, has never been a teacher, principal or, before now, central-office administrator. To hire him as superintendent, Milwaukee got the Wisconsin Legislature to waive a state requirement of at least three years of classroom experience.

After only seven months on the job, Fuller has eliminated 118 central positions—93 administrators and 25 secretaries—that studies showed to be unnecessary. As a result, central office is about 20 percent smaller. Fuller also says that "local schools should decide if they want to buy services from the board or from outside sources."

Fuller does not suggest, however, that administrative cuts can finance reform. He is especially critical of those who would deny equitable funding to city schools and claim that "money isn't important. If music rooms and art rooms are important for suburban kids, why are they not important for ours?" ■

Michael Klonsky

Tug of war continues over power, systemwide plan

by Michael Klonsky

Nearly three years into school reform, the power struggle between central authority and local schools continues.

On March 25, the School Finance Authority (SFA) rejected the Board of Education's latest version of its systemwide plan on the grounds that it failed once again to shift sufficient power to local schools. The Authority and a contingent of reform leaders are pushing for more decentralization in the belief that it is a necessary step toward school revitalization.

"Without decentralization, people don't feel like they own the process," explained Joan Jeter Slay of the reform organization Designs for Change. "When people create the process, they believe in it. We have tried for years to tell teachers what to teach and how to teach it. We have even tried to make the process 'teacher-proof' by supplying syllabi for every class, and what have we achieved?" (Under the rejected plan, central office would write syllabi, or outlines, for each course.)

However, Supt. Ted Kimbrough sees decentralization as a separate issue from educational improvement. The real issue, he told the Authority is "education, not decentralization." The problems in Chicago schools "have nothing to do with governance."

Some reform leaders also question the value of further decentralization. "There is growing sentiment in the community and among teachers and principals against going overboard on decentralization," said Gwendolyn LaRoche, acting chair of the African American Educational Research Institute, a policy coalition.

Pointing to principals who are overloaded with tasks previously performed at Pershing Road, she asks: "Are the people who have to deliver all these programs going to be able to under such a high degree of decentralization?"

The institute, she added, is "more conservative than other reform groups on the question of decentralization because we are not sure what the Reform Act meant."

The School Board's latest reform plan was slightly schizophrenic on the issue. In one section, it says the role of central office "must change from directive to supportive." It also says school reform must be "bottom-up" and "structural," not an "add-on." Yet, it also scales back a previously proposed shift in funding and control to schools.

Even the Authority consultants who helped write the plan weren't sure how to deal with the dilemma, giving the plan an A+ for the "bottom-up" sentiments expressed in its introductory sections, another A+ for its stated goals and objectives and then an F for its half-hearted attempt to put them into practice.

The Authority's action means that local school councils will be without a guiding plan when they draft their new school improvement plans in June, as required by law. It also means that for another year the board will not be able to connect its budget with a plan to implement school reform.

The Authority's third rejection of the plan in less than a year came after months of close collaboration with the board. Writing groups

included Authority consultants Fenwick W. English and Chester E. "Checker" Finn Jr., Authority member Maxwell Griffin and School Board member Florence Cox and her Reform Implementation Committee.

But just when it seemed unity of purpose had been achieved, the superintendent's staff rewrote some key sections dealing with decentralization. In the eyes of many school reformers, this amended version could usurp broad areas of local school council authority.

"A clear delineation has developed between the 15 board members on the one hand, and the superintendent and his staff on the other," maintained Griffin. "The question is, who sets policy."

Some areas of the plan most heavily criticized by reformers are:

- Its retreat from an earlier draft that called for the shift of \$430 million in operational funds from the central office to local schools, with 83.2 percent of operational funds to be controlled by local schools by 1994. The new plan reduces the locally-budgeted funds to \$243 million and is vague on who will actually control money and personnel.

- Development by central office of course syllabi (outlines), in-class assessments and standardized achievement tests for every course of study and every grade level. "Defining what students are expected to know and be able to do does not conflict with local initiatives in curriculum and instruction," the plan says. "Rather, it creates a foundation upon which local school councils can build."

- Granting subdistrict superintendents added authority to review all school improvement plans and "evaluate whether, in the professional opinion of the district superintendent, the school's annual objectives meet the needs of the students of the school." Superintendents could intervene with remedial programs—in all schools, not just those identified as having difficulty.

Diana Nelson, who recently suc-

ceeded Joseph Reed as president of Leadership for Quality Education (LQE), a corporate group, praised certain sections as major improvements over past efforts. "The goals and objectives section is excellent. The board not only listed its goals but also performed a good service in prioritizing them."

Nelson also supports intervention at schools where no progress is being made. But she contends the board "exceeded their role" in prescribing standards. "The board has a role in monitoring progress, but not in setting curriculum or dictating standards. That is not in the spirit of decentralization."

At the March 25 meeting, Authority member Griffin led the charge against the plan. "Bureaucracy's main goal, it appears to me, would be to perpetuate itself," he asserted. "What the Legislature has asked the system to do is dismantle itself. I have reached the conclusion that it will not be done."

Contending central staff has been reduced from 3,000 to 1,700, Kimbrough countered that the central administration has "already decentralized." "The SFA seems to overlook the fact that the School Board has legal mandates at the state and federal level that we are required by law to fulfill, and cannot ignore."

(Later, LQE's Nelson said her organization found 2,449 central and district office positions, some of which were hidden in local school budgets. Between August 1991 and mid-February 1992, central office grew by 33 positions, she said.)

Several Authority members and consultant Finn proposed passage of the plan "in part," excluding some of the controversial areas on decentralization. Finn said that failure to pass the plan would: (1) defer many worthwhile actions scheduled to begin this spring, (2) leave schools without a catalyst for their school improvement plans and (3) keep some significant changes out of the board's 1992-93 budget.

English called the plan "the best of all of the documents [he has] reviewed over the past several years." He praised its language as "more in harmony with the language of the Reform Act."

But Authority members Deborah S.

Pardini and Joyce E. Moran argued that the whole plan was flawed. Pardini cited the plan's restructuring of the high school day to six, 50-minute periods. "This would wipe out enrichment programs," she maintained, explaining that schools would have to dip into "supplementary resources" to provide such programs after the regular school day.

The plan would give the central authorities the power to shape the

Pershing Road to the Loop.

When asked by SFA members about the "Restructuring Plan," Cox voiced dismay. "The plan was not what I expected," she said. "Ballis did it, and I have problems with it."

Kimbrough's plan also drew criticism from some reform organization leaders. "Taking people from one spot and putting them in another is not the solution," said James Deanes, chair of the Parent/Community

The problems in Chicago schools "have nothing to do with governance."

—Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough

school day for all schools, even to the extent of determining the length and number of breaks.

In an emotion-charged speech, Kimbrough maintained that classroom performance "is the bottom line" and that the call for accountability must be turned from the central administration to the schools. (Later, the superintendent threatened to "fire the principal, remove the [LSC] or close the school" if performance isn't increased.)

The Authority was unimpressed. It voted 4 to 1, with Chairman Phillip Block dissenting, to reject the entire plan and schedule hearings in April to prepare for another revision of the section on decentralization. The prospect of Authority-sponsored public hearings brought a wink from some board members; one could be heard whispering, "Now they'll get a dose of what we've had to take."

Meanwhile, Kimbrough, with impetus from board member Stephen Ballis, came out with a separate "Five-Year Plan" called "Systemic Restructuring," which some reformers regard as an attempt to make an end-run around SFA oversight.

The Kimbrough-Ballis plan calls for a \$3.8-million reorganization of the central service center into three distinct groups: corporate, central resource and training, and subdistrict support. The board's corporate offices most likely would move from

Council. "We don't need to spend millions more on moving the board staff. We need supplies. We need books, not more office rent."

But some reformers think the whole issue of a reform plan is irrelevant.

"It's just paper," said community activist Slim Coleman, a member of the LSC at Kosciuszko School. Coleman argues that the debate over the systemwide plan is "side-tracking people from the realities of a \$300 million budget deficit." There's no money to back up *any* plan, he notes.

Coleman says sights should be shifted to Springfield. He is calling for legislation to force the Finance Authority to permit the schools to use another \$35 million from a much disputed "reserve fund" and for Gov. Edgar to again speed up state aid payments, which would generate another \$50 million for next year's budget.

LaRoche expressed similar views. "We are arguing over an underfunded system. Clearly we don't have the resources to implement much of this plan anyway."

Even so, a reform plan is important, said Nelson. "With a \$2.4 billion budget, a long-term plan is vital and ought to drive that budget." Calling on reformers to take an active part in the upcoming hearings, Nelson said: "Our focus should be on helping the SFA develop a workable plan for site-based management." ■

Early retirement bill could save board money

by Dan Weissmann

A bill now before the Illinois Legislature would give teachers incentives to retire early and could save the financially strapped Chicago Board of Education an estimated \$29 million to \$57 million per year.

Modeled on the incentives state employees were offered last year, the package would allow teachers as young as 50 to retire with some pension benefits and would increase benefits to all teachers retiring under the age of 59. Almost 9,000 of Chicago's 30,600 teachers and principals would qualify, estimates the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund. The bill applies to all other teachers in the state, too.

School boards would save money by replacing veteran teachers with newly hired teachers, who get paid about half as much. Although the plan would increase total payout to retired teachers over the next few years, school boards don't make those payments; the Illinois and Chicago teacher pension funds do.

The Chicago Board of Education supports the bill in concept but has reservations about the details. As currently written, the program might cost the board money in its first year, possibly increasing the board's projected \$300 million deficit for 1992-93.

However, officials at a state budget watchdog agency have raised a red flag. The cost of the program likely would fall to the state because the teacher pension funds depend on state aid, says Bill Hall, executive director of the Illinois Fiscal and Economic Commission. Further, he adds, the state is ultimately responsible for the pension funds' debts; sooner or later, the state would have to invest more in them. "You're benefiting a very small number of people at a very high cost," Hall contends.

Hall says the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund is in relatively good financial shape, but the downstate Illinois Teachers' Retirement System (ITRS) is less stable and more dependent on state aid.

ITRS also supports the concept of early retirement but has some concerns about the cost, says Fred Huseman, the system's executive director. Huseman says that ITRS would hope to recoup some of its costs by taking a share of any savings the initiative produces for local school districts.

Six-month window

If the bill goes through, eligible teachers will have a six-month "window" in which to apply. They'll make an upfront payment to the pension fund, "buying" an extra number of years of investment in the fund—in effect, making up for the monthly payments they would be making over the next several years if they were still working.

Under current law, the Chicago Board of Education has to make its own lump-sum contribution for every teacher who retires early—almost three times the size of the teacher's contribution. That requirement could make the bill costly to the board in 1992-93, which now has an enormous projected revenue shortfall.

The board is pushing for changes in the bill which would make the bill a cost-saver for the schools even in the first year, according to Richard Guidice, associate superintendent for governmental relations. "The issue of pensions is going to be of extreme interest to us [this legislative session]," he says. "Anything that is going to be cost-productive is going to be of interest."

Finding replacements for retiring Chicago teachers would not necessarily be difficult, according to Margaret Harrigan, associate superintendent for human resources. Teachers in the "shortage area" of bilingual education tend to be younger and ineligible for early retirement, she notes. And there is a surplus in areas where teachers tend to be older, including home economics, vocational education and business courses. In other areas, including the shortage area of special education, teachers' ages are more evenly distributed.

Turnover "might have a positive impact" on education in general, speculates Bruce Berndt, president of the Chicago Principals Association. The incentives might appeal most to "people who might be unhappy enough in their situation that they're not an effective teacher or principal," he explains. "However, 50 is a pretty early age to retire," he adds, especially since retirees would not get full pension benefits and would have to make lump-sum payments.

The proposal could be "the best thing that ever happened to anyone who ever worked for the Board of Education," says Lorrette Dent, assistant principal at Pope Elementary School, 1825 S. Albany. Dent feels that the schools' current requirements for age and length of service to qualify for pension benefits are unusually restrictive.

About 30 percent of eligible state employees took advantage of last year's incentives. Savings data are not yet available. ■



BILL STAMETS

Yvonelle Moreau, a student at Lincoln Elementary School, catnaps during a meeting on the school budget crisis.

Some school-day waivers illegal

A dozen elementary schools that had rescheduled the school day to provide large blocks of time for staff development have been forced to abandon the practice because it violates state law.

Taking advantage of a provision in the School Reform Act for waivers from board and union rules, these schools had won permission to shave 10 to 15 minutes off teachers' half-hour morning preparation period and then recapture that time once or twice a month for a half-day staff development session. Under this arrangement, classes started 10 to 15 minutes early and children were dismissed early periodically. (See *CATALYST*, December 1991.)

Last month, central office told schools they must stop the practice because the Illinois School Code provides that students must have "no less than five clock hours of instruction per day." Under the rescheduling program, the dozen schools had, instead, only an average of five clock hours.

The law provides several exceptions to the 300-minute rule: the first and last days of school and five staff development days, which had already been scheduled into the school calendar. (In Chicago, two of these staff development days are used for report card pickup and parent-teacher conferences.)

Early dismissals also could diminish state aid to Chicago schools, says William Rice, director of information analysis in the School Board's Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning. State aid is based in part on the number of students who attend school each day for the full 300 minutes. On the days when students at the dozen schools went home early, Chicago was not entitled to count them fully for state aid.

Meanwhile, principals and teachers say the three staff development days—technically, half days—scheduled into the school year fall far short of the time they need to upgrade teaching techniques. "We need one day a month," says Reva Hairston, principal of Terrell Elementary School, 5410 S. State.

"That's the main complaint teachers have, [that] they don't have enough time to brainstorm, to share ideas," says Charlotte Projansky, principal of Mozart Elementary School, 2200 N. Hamlin. "This is something that was in the [reform] law. If we're going to have reform and we come up with a good idea, we ought to be able to do something about it."

"The payoff was that teachers were learning," Hairston observes. "Teachers need to go to school too."

Terrell and Mozart are among the schools forced to resume regular scheduling.

The Chicago Teachers Union, which championed waivers, plans to lobby legislators to change the law to permit the rescheduling. "If the schools decide this is something they want to do, then certainly we're in favor of it," says Gail Koffman, a CTU field representative.

Sympathizing with the schools, Deputy Supt. Robert Saddler says the practice was "a reasonable way for them to carve out the time. I wish it hadn't been a violation" of state law. However, the board's goal now is to lengthen the school day (through negotiations with the CTU), not to seek a change in the law. "There may be some way to address staff development with that," he says.

Rice believes the practice short-changed students. An extra 10 or 15 minutes added on to the day for a few weeks doesn't make up for missing a half-day of instruction, he contends. "By and large, the half-day just isn't picked up. Our kids get too little instruction as it is. This is just one more place where they're taking away from them."

Some school staff strongly disagree. Teachers at Ryerson Elementary School, 646 N. Lawndale, gave extra homework on days students were dismissed early. And teaching became more productive as a result of the extra staff development, says reading teacher Cassandra Gibbs. "We took so much back to the classroom, and that's the whole purpose of us being here."
Lorraine Forte

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VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Bright Ideas

Students carry science home

For five weekends last year, students in Lillian Degand's second-grade classroom at Peterson Elementary School, 5510 N. Christiana, took home science experiments in plastic ziplock bags.

Parents or other adults were to help or supervise the students as they conducted the experiments. On Mondays, Degand replicated the experiments in class.

The exercises tended to be simple, with instructions copied from project books. One week, for example, students were directed to dissolve an Alka-Seltzer tablet in water and hold a lighted match over the glass. Results: Carbon dioxide released through carbonation extinguished the flame.

Degand's students responded enthusiastically to hands-on science, which experts say is the best way to

JOHN BOOZ



Brian Ferrell examines a peanut used in his take-home science experiment.

teach science. The teacher noticed, however, that her colleagues tended to rely on books. New textbooks "were going to be the whole science curriculum in some classrooms," she recalls.

This year, Degand applied for and received an Oppenheimer Foundation grant to expand the program to other primary classrooms; the \$920 grant paid for materials for 10 weeks' worth of experiments, and for an assembly to cap the series.

Says Degand: "Now, students beg

their teachers, 'I gotta have my science in a baggie!' And even the most reluctant teachers are so happy with it."

Dan Weissmann

Computers, scanners raise attendance

With the help of computers and scanning units, Kennedy High School, 6325 W. 56th, has drastically reduced class cuts—from nearly 100 a day last year to about 7 a day this year. Tardies plummeted, too, from 200 daily to 20 daily.

Here's how Kennedy did it:

A student who is late for school gives his ID card to an aide, who scans the card's bar code with a laser wand connected to a computer terminal. The apparatus identifies the student and prints out a tardy slip. Portable scanning units are used to issue tardy slips to students caught up by midday hall sweeps. In either case, tardy students

automatically get a detention.

Teachers enter the names of students who miss class into a computer. Students who have no legitimate excuse must either bring a parent in for a conference or serve in-school suspension.

Before computerization, one person recorded all tardies and cuts by hand. "The paperwork was overwhelming," recalls Jack Begy, the school's suspension coordinator. "Everything was mixed up." With cuts mounting into the thousands each year, some weren't even recorded, thus sparing students a penalty. Now, with paperwork at a minimum and the addition of a second attendance coordinator, the school is able to follow through consistently.

Begy says students were "upset, horrified" over the new system, which cost \$10,000 in state Chapter 1 money. "They asked, 'What are we, supermarket items?'" Says student Michelle Williams: "I don't like it. But there's nothing we can do." Deborah Hinton

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