

Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Focus groups target laws, union contracts

by Lorraine Forte and Michael Klonsky

DECENTRALIZATION

The many faces of school autonomy A look at programs in six cities. **page 4**

Decentralization trend building for decades
An analysis. **page 7**

Higher scores not assured
A review of research. **page 9**

Opinions Two views of decentralization. **page 11**

Updates 20 years of budget tricks. Winners, losers in Head Start transfer. Quest Center winners. **page 17**

Letters • **page 14**

Elsewhere • **page 16**

Bright Ideas • **page 24**

In May, teachers, principals and local school council members from 26 schools gathered in a hotel room to dream about reinventing Chicago's public school system.

Divided into four "focus groups," they dreamed big: Local school councils would set principals' salaries, principals would hire school engineers and maintenance staff, teachers would work on year-to-year contracts, and schools would control all professional development and some building repair funds.

In essence, schools would become nearly autonomous units. But autonomy would be "conditional on performance," with the superintendent having the power to intervene at schools that were not progressing toward the learning goals outlined in the School Reform Act.

The groups weren't just dreaming, however. Convened by the Chicago School Finance Authority, they were laying a foundation for revisions of the Board of Education's systemwide reform plan. The SFA had repeatedly rejected the board's own plan, saying it didn't shift enough money and authority to local schools; so the SFA's new chairman, Martin "Mike" Koldyke, turned to grass-roots focus groups to brainstorm ideas. He then sent their 26-page report to the board, saying that approval of the board's budget would be contingent on further decentralization.

Not surprisingly, the report generated a storm of controversy and kept issues of governance on the front burner three years into reform. Some groups hailed it for its keen-eyed vision of decentralization. Others criticized the SFA for relying on only 26 schools and accused members of "dismantling, not decentralizing" a system in which many schools in low-income neighborhoods are struggling and need guidance. Unions charged that the loss of job security would drive good workers away. And the superintendent complained that many recommendations were illegal or unworkable.

"This is the debate we should have had three years ago and didn't," observed Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, when the report was first issued. Hess supports decentralization but characterized a number of the proposals as "idealistic and naive."

"We're for reducing bureaucracy and bringing as many resources as possible to the local school level," said critic James Deanes, chair of the Parent/Community Council and a parent LSC member at three schools. "But we need safeguards. Many schools are experiencing major difficulties, and we can't just give them autonomy and leave them hanging."

Irene Damota, principal of Whittier Elementary School on the West Side

and a focus group member, put the report in perspective:

"When the focus groups came together, we were asked to imagine a system with no constraints and to begin creating the kind of schools where effective education could take place. So we imagined things like being able to have control over our funds, over our food service, over our curriculum.

"Actually, the whole proposal probably is illegal. The idea is to get the Legislature, the mayor and the governor, along with the School Finance Authority and the unions, to act and make it legal."

In July, the SFA directed the board to use the report as a jumping-off point to rewrite its reform plan and budget. Initially, the board should concentrate on decentralization in four areas: staff development, curriculum, minor building repairs and budgeting.

"These were the ones that were most important" to the focus groups, explained Barbara Holt, the SFA's new executive director. Holt is former executive director of the Citizens Schools Committee and a former CPS teacher.

As *CATALYST* went to press in mid-August, the SFA had again rejected the board's reform plan for failing to relinquish enough authority to schools. Here's what happened in the four areas targeted by the SFA:

■ **Staff development.** While the board agreed to distribute \$500,000 to schools on a per-pupil basis, it could have done better, said Holt. "We know

there is money in other [budget] areas for staff development," she explained.

Deanes and other critics objected to the transfer of a mere \$500,000. They said the sum is too small to have any substantial impact at schools—it amounts to only \$1.22 for each of the system's 409,000 pupils—and would have been better spent on central-office staff who could do training systemwide, particularly in schools that don't have enough money to hire outside trainers.

Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough has objected to per-pupil distribution as "the worst type of allocation" because it fails to account for greater need in some schools.

■ **Curriculum.** The focus groups wanted the board to give schools any curriculum money not now budgeted for direct services to schools; the board "did not comply with that," Holt said.

■ **Repair money.** The board decided to distribute money for minor repairs to subdistrict offices rather than follow the focus groups' recommendation to distribute it to local schools.

■ **Budgeting.** Schools wanted to budget their state Chapter 1 dollars without having to get central-office approval of their plans. The board did not drop the approval process, which schools contend causes undue delays; state regulations give the board authority to approve the plans, which must meet certain state requirements.

Following are other highlights from the focus group report:



Ald. Dorothy Tillman (3rd) joins activists protesting the Finance Authority's directives.

Focus group schools

Barton, Auburn/Gresham; Bethune, Garfield Park; Black Magnet [branch], South Shore; Bradwell, South Shore; Budlong, Lincoln Square; Bunche, Englewood; Cameron, Humboldt Park; Courtenay, Uptown; Cullen, Roseland; Dirksen, Northwest Side; Edwards, Archer Heights;

Farren, Grand Boulevard; Hale, Clearing; Hope, Englewood; Hyde Park High, Hyde Park; Lee, West Lawn; Lewis, Austin; Lindblom High, Englewood; Riis, Near West Side; Rocha, West Town;

Washington High, South Deering; Waters, Lincoln Square; Whittier, Lower West Side; Wildwood, Forest Glen; Wilson High, Jefferson Park; Yale, Grand Crossing.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT. A key recommendation calls for scrapping teacher bonuses and redistributing the money to schools for staff development to support their school improvement plans. Schools could earmark some money to "support individual teachers' aspirations." The proposal attacks a feature of the 1990 Chicago Teachers Union contract, approved by the Interim Board of Education, which gave teachers a \$6,000 bonus for earning a specific number of additional course credits. The bonuses were to be paid over five years.

ASSESSMENT. The state IGAP (Illinois Goals Assessment Program) tests should be the only tests required citywide. "We spend too much time and too much money testing," said William Auksi, principal of Farren Elementary School and a focus group member. "Getting rid of the Iowa tests would be a start."

Dropping the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills is a popular notion but would be problematic. Chicago administers the Iowa and its high school counterpart, the Tests of Academic Proficiency, in all grades every year; the board's research department explains that this practice is the most efficient way to meet testing requirements for federally funded programs.

State law also requires districts to have their own assessment programs in addition to the IGAP. In Chicago, the Iowa fulfills that requirement.

TEACHER CREDENTIALING AND HIRING. In one of its most radical recommendations, the report called for teachers to be hired on year-to-year contracts. Principals would consult with department chairs and other teachers when hiring new faculty; teachers whose contracts were not renewed would return to a citywide eligibility list maintained by the central office.

While this proposal is new to the reform debate, principals have long maintained that the procedures for firing teachers take too much time and effort. They also object to having to accept so-called "supernumerary" teachers, whose positions have been eliminated at other schools.

Jackie Gallagher, spokesperson for the CTU, says the union strongly opposes school-site contracts, which would violate their current contract. "One of the things that teachers need most is a sense of continuity," she said, contend-



The School Finance Authority makes clear its stand on further decentralization.

ing that school-site contracts would drive teachers out of the system.

"I can foresee a patronage system that wouldn't quit," Gallagher added, speculating that principals would dismiss veteran teachers to save money and would opt for teachers who "played ball" over "rabble-rousers" and unconventional teachers.

BUDGETING AND ACCOUNTING. All funds not required for a pared-down central office should go directly to schools in a lump sum, on a per-pupil basis; the use of money not going directly to the schools should be "clearly explained in the budget."

All school budgets should be approved by the central office before the beginning of the school year. A central "emergency fund" would be maintained for unanticipated school needs. Central office would provide accounting services to schools that request them.

Principal salaries would be set by individual LSCs; principal salaries now are set by the board and vary by the number of teachers on staff. Salaries of engineers would be set by the principals; they now are set by union contract.

REPAIRS AND FACILITY SERVICES. Funds for minor repairs should go directly to schools, but major rehabilitation and construction projects would continue to be planned centrally with greater LSC input. Engineers should be hired by principals; schools could hire maintenance staff or use contractors from outside the system. State law and union contracts would have to be changed to institute these hiring practices.

MANDATED SERVICES. No school could reject students with special needs (e.g., those with disabilities) but schools should be free to tailor their own special programs. Central office would drop its monitoring role, leaving that to the state and federal governments, and provide assistance instead.

Currently, the state and federal governments require the board to identify students with special needs, such as bilingual or special education, and ensure they are served properly, which requires a degree of monitoring by the board.

600 superintendents?

The focus groups' overall approach drew fire from several quarters. The CTU's Gallagher said: "What you have here is the equivalent of 600 separate school districts with 600 principals who are in effect 600 superintendents." The groups were "heavy on principals, light on teachers," she said, and the proposals should serve as "only one piece of the puzzle."

Deanes and others said Koldyke should have been more democratic and met with subdistrict council chairs, who are elected by LSC members, instead of only 26 schools. The process was "just another top-down approach by a small group of people," Deanes said. He, like others on both sides of the debate, also lamented that so much attention is being paid to governance instead of classroom issues.

Opponents fear more decentraliza-

tion will force schools that are now floundering to fail completely at reform. By further breaking up the system, they add, the SFA is acting as a "stalking horse" for proponents of a private-school voucher plan.

"We've got councils still trying to get quorums," said Mary Gardner, a former Subdistrict 4 council member who is on the LSCs of Douglass Middle School and LaSalle Language Academy. "They're forcing the board to relinquish authority, and some LSCs are just not ready. Meanwhile, we've got the 'choice' people waiting in the wings to take over."

But the SFA drew praise from others for breaking out of its historic isolation from the schools. "The house was on fire," said Ron Sistrunk, executive director of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform and an LSC chair. "The SFA offered some water. So we'll accept it."

Speaking during WBEZ-FM's "Studio A" program Aug. 13, Koldyke reiterated his opposition to vouchers, calling the stalking-horse notion "nonsense." He also said that if the board's reform plan isn't "overwhelmingly approved by the LSCs, it shouldn't go down, because it won't be successful."

Striking a determined chord, Damota, principal of Whittier Elementary, said: "It may take five years to accomplish. But now, at least, we have a vision. Now we need proactive behavior on the part of our leaders and a time line for change to be enacted." ■

The many faces of school autonomy

by Dan Weissmann

"Decentralization," like "reform," means different things in different places.

This is true, in part, because large, urban school districts don't all work (or fail to work) the same way. "The remedy you need depends on the disease you've got," says Charles Kerchner, a Claremont (Calif.) Graduate School professor who is editing a book on urban school reform.

In some districts, principals get more control over their schools; in others, teachers design and run programs of their own. In Miami, Fla., the teachers' union helped design a "school-based management" program; unions in Detroit, though, are working hard against a "school empowerment" plan. And only Chicago puts parents in the majority on school councils.

Below are descriptions of decentralization programs in six urban school districts. The first three are established programs with track records; the others are barely off the drawing board.



EAST HARLEM, N.Y.

"Schools of Choice"

Teachers in Community District 4 design and open their own "alternative" schools, with such themes as performing arts, math/science, maritime studies and environmental studies. All of the district's 23 middle schools—as well as six elementary schools—are alternative schools. When children leave fifth grade, they and their parents can choose any of the middle-school programs.

Schools of choice are small—usu-

ally 200 students or fewer—with more than one school occupying one school building. If too few students chose a school, the district closes it.

East Harlem is the success story of New York's 1972 decentralization, which divided the system into 32 community school districts. District 4's first superintendent soon invited teachers to create new schools, and successors have nurtured the program.

The administration is housed on a single floor of an elementary school; building principals know the entire district office staff. The district has a role in many important school decisions; but because it isn't enormous, removed and impersonal, it is predisposed to support, not obstruct, change.

WHO'S IN CHARGE: Each school-within-a-school has a program director, who works under a building principal. The district office chooses program directors, and principals are chosen by ad hoc councils that include the building's union delegate, parents and teachers from the school, a district school board member and a district office staffer.

PARTICIPATION: 29 out of 51 schools, serving 18 percent of district enrollment. Any teacher can propose a new school; if the district office approves and enough students sign up, the school opens—with a single classroom. If student demand increases, the school can grow.

MONEY: Central office for the New York City system, 110 Livingston St., controls most money. Some systemwide programs offer more school-level control, but only a few District 4 schools participate. District 4 receives no extra funding for its alternative schools program. Most program directors are paid regular teacher salaries; a few are assistant principals.

TEACHERS' UNION STAND: Cooperative, even when their contract isn't strictly observed. "We exploit our teachers," administrators say, half-joking, when asked how the district runs. Teachers routinely volunteer extra hours beyond contract requirements. In return, they get greater freedom than in other schools. Many teachers apply to transfer into District 4 each year, and the union reports no recent grievances.

BEGINNINGS: In 1974, District 4 had the lowest test scores of any community district. Then-supt. Anthony Alvarado offered to back teacher-designed alternative schools, and three programs opened that year. School choice became district policy 10 years ago.

RESULTS: Reading scores have advanced from last to 19th place; math scores have moved from last to 23rd place. District 4 graduates win admission to the city's most competitive high schools at better than twice the citywide average—23 percent, compared to 9 percent citywide.

Some critics worry that the school-choice policy "skims" the highest-achieving students into a few excellent schools, leaving lower-achieving students behind. District Deputy Supt. John Falco admits that "achieving equity across the board" remains one of the district's biggest challenges.



EDMONTON, CANADA

"Total Quality Management"

Edmonton is the home of lump-sum budgeting: 77 percent of the district's money is budgeted by principals. Each school gets a certain amount of money, based on its total enrollment and the various "funding levels" of its students. (For example, junior high students bring a school more money than do elementary students; students with special needs like bilingual education bring in more.) The principal then makes a budget that includes most school expenses: staff, supplies, furniture, some building repairs and others.

Pilot programs allow some schools to budget for utilities, maintenance

staff and consultants. Schools in the maintenance and consulting pilots can buy the services from the district office or outside contractors.

WHO'S IN CHARGE: Principals, usually with input from teacher- and parent-group representatives. Principals are hired by the Board of Education and placed in schools by the superintendent, who reassigns them every four or five years.

PARTICIPATION: All 196 schools do most of their own budgeting, 164 control their own energy budgets, 72 are in the consulting pilot, and 15 are in the maintenance pilot.

MONEY: Schools control 77 percent of the district's operating budget—up from 2 percent in 1976.

TEACHERS' UNION STAND: Amiable relations with central office.

BEGINNINGS: Supt. Michael Strembitsky has been moving spending powers out to schools since 1976, shortly after he took office.

RESULTS: Annual surveys show that most principals, teachers and parents generally feel that communication is good, that they are included in important educational decisions, and that they approve of the district's direction. The program was not intended to raise test scores, and it hasn't, according to district officials.



MIAMI

"School-based Management" "Shared Decision Making"

Miami sends power farther down the line than does Edmonton. Teachers, not just principals, gain a voice in running schools, and a school's whole staff has to take responsibility for any proposed changes.

Teachers can propose changes in their schools, including the waiver of board and union regulations. An application must be signed by a school's principal and union rep and then approved by a district-level, management-union committee. Teachers can propose almost any change so long as:

- The proposal reflects a consen-

sus of the entire school staff.

- The staff agrees to set up a governance council (like an LSC).

- The staff specifies at the outset any waivers the school will need from district regulations or union contracts.

- The changes won't cost the district any extra money.

Since 1991, all Dade County schools—not just those with school-based management and shared decision making, SBM/SDM for short—have gotten most of their budgets as a lump sum from the central office.

WHO'S IN CHARGE: A governance council, which must include some parents. The school staff decides how many people will be on the council, how they will be chosen, exactly what they will be responsible for and what the council will be called. Many are called "cadres," some are "councils," others are "boards."

In non-SBM schools, the principal makes budget and other decisions.

PARTICIPATION: 156 of 259 schools are now SBM/SDM, and all schools are on school-based budgeting. In a separate program, 12 schools were required to institute SBM/SDM.

MONEY: Schools have gotten some state money to train themselves in SBM, but they get no extra money for their new programs.

TEACHERS' UNION STAND: Strongly supportive.

BEGINNINGS: In 1985, the United Teachers of Dade teamed up with then-Supt. Joseph Fernandez (now chancellor of New York City schools) to design SBM/SDM as part of a larger collaborative project called "Teacher Professionalization." An SBM/SDM Pilot Program began in 1987.

RESULTS: A 1991 evaluation found no significant gains in student achievement but did note that SBM/SDM schools had slightly higher attendance and lower dropout rates. The report also noted improved morale in SBM/SDM schools.

Miami has gone through several superintendents since the program began. Last January, Harvard University Education Prof. Carol Weiss found teachers at one Miami school complaining that the district's "commitment to SBM/SDM had eroded considerably." A special office for the program had been shut, and "the steam had gone out of reform," she reported.



BALTIMORE (1)

"Restructured Schools Pilot"

In a small-scale program similar to Miami's SBM/SDM, schools proposed their own restructuring projects; 14 schools will implement their projects this year.

WHO'S IN CHARGE: A school restructuring team (SRT), including parents, community members, teachers' union rep and the school principal. The SRT must work by consensus.

PARTICIPATION: 80 of 117 schools applied. A central-office task force picked the 14 most likely to succeed.

MONEY: As in Miami, schools got some district money for SBM training, but none for new instructional programs.

TEACHERS' UNION STAND: Cautious approval. Since the program was launched, the district has changed superintendents. Baltimore Teachers Union spokesperson Linda Prudente says Supt. Walter Amprey may be rushing schools into SBM without enough training.

BEGINNINGS: The School Board approved the program in October 1990.

BALTIMORE (2)

"Tesseract Schools"

A for-profit company, Educational Alternatives Inc., will turn nine schools into Tesseract schools, modeled after a chain of private schools the company runs in Minnesota. Tesseract is a term from the novel *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle.

Tesseract will change the teachers' role and the classroom environment, according to EAI vice-president Mae Gaskins. Instruction will emphasize hands-on learning over teacher lectures, and EAI will add an associate teacher and new technology to every classroom.

Teachers will meet with parents to create an individual educational program for each student.

WHO'S IN CHARGE: Baltimore schools have school improvement teams made up of parents, teachers and administrators; EAI says it is working

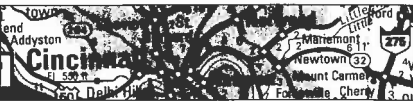
with them. But the principal will be responsible for executing plans and meeting goals set by EAI, says Gaskins. EAI trainers will work with teachers, parents and administrators at each school, and an EAI liaison at each school will report directly to EAI and the superintendent.

PARTICIPATION: Supt. Amprey picked the nine schools to represent a cross-section of Baltimore schools.

MONEY: Baltimore will pay EAI a lump sum, the same amount the district would have spent to operate the schools. EAI plans to raise extra money through outside grants; a similar EAI venture in Miami raised \$1 million last year. EAI also intends to increase profits by hiring non-union maintenance staff and by paying associate teachers at minimum wage.

TEACHERS' UNION STAND: "It's not an adversarial relationship at all...right now," says BTU's Prudente. The union has been negotiating with the district and with EAI to make sure the new arrangements won't violate the union contract.

BEGINNINGS: Discussions about the project "have been floating for two years," among the mayor, EAI and the district's previous and current superintendents, says district spokesperson Nat Harrington. The district sent an investigative team to EAI's Miami school last year, and Amprey saw one in Arizona while vacationing. The letter of intent was signed last May; the contract was approved in July.



CINCINNATI

"District Restructuring"

Last May, the School Board cut central office staff in half. Supt. J. Michael Brandt hired a former oil executive to oversee day-to-day business operations and replaced the largest central department—curriculum and instruction—with a much smaller office of quality improvement. The new office will disseminate research rather than administer programs. Brandt also cut out the district's area assistant superintendents; principals now report directly to Brandt.

A few months earlier, the district had reorganized into 9 "mini-districts," each with a lead principal. Each mini-district represents a cross-section of Cincinnati schools, not a geographic area.

WHO'S IN CHARGE: School principals work with each other in their mini-districts, and each principal reports directly to the superintendent. Cincinnati has been developing a shared-decision-making plan for years, but this year's central-office restructuring took priority.

PARTICIPATION: All 81 schools are affected.

MONEY: Because of central-office cuts, the district expects to save \$16 million, some of which will go to the schools. Budgeting is still done centrally, though schools can ask to trade in some budget items, e.g. one teacher for two aides.

TEACHERS' UNION STAND: Approving. The union has been pushing for reforms for years.

BEGINNINGS: Last year, a report from a local business task force proposed many serious reforms; Brandt—who took office only last year—says the report inspired current reform.



DETROIT

"School Empowerment"

Schools that vote to become empowered get their non-staff budget as a lump sum, and they can make their own policies, within the limits of union contracts and state regulations.

WHO'S IN CHARGE: A school empowerment council, which includes the principal, teacher union rep, a support staff rep, the chair of the PTA and, in middle and high schools, the student council president. The councils try to work by consensus, but the principal has the final say.

PARTICIPATION: Only 10 out of 247 schools have voted to become empowered, and no school has voted for empowerment since the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) told members not to last spring. To become empowered, a school needs "yes" votes from all its administrators, 75 percent of its teachers, 55 percent of

its parents, 55 percent of support staff and (in middle and high schools) 55 percent of its students.

MONEY: Empowered schools get a straight per-pupil allocation, instead of a more complex district-controlled budget. They may buy maintenance services from independent contractors, called outsourcing, or from central office. Next year, they may be able to go outside for school social workers, teacher substitutes, curriculum experts and summer school programs.

TEACHERS' UNION STAND: Initially supportive but now opposed. Outsourcing would endanger union jobs; 18,500 people work for the Board of Education, and only about 150 are non-union, according to Walter Jones, deputy superintendent for fiscal integrity. The DFT also contends that a per-pupil allocation will threaten the jobs of older, more experienced, more expensive staff.

BEGINNINGS: The program began in 1990 under the previous superintendent, with the union on board. Current Supt. Deborah McGriff has modified the program.

A recent report by the Rand Corporation describes decentralization efforts in Edmonton, Miami and three other cities. Here's a rundown on the other cities.

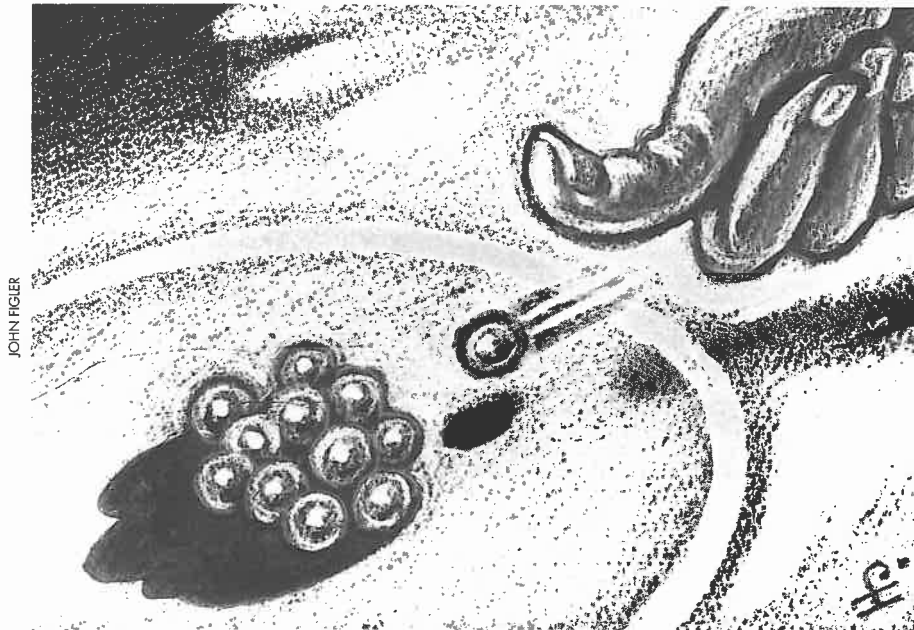
Columbus, Ohio, is piloting a SBM/SDM program in several high schools as part of districtwide reform. Since 1988, Jefferson County, Ky., has offered schools four restructuring models that emphasize shared decision making. By fall 1990, 85 percent of its schools had adopted one of the approaches, all by a majority vote of the faculty. Prince William County, Va., gave building principals sweeping powers and mandated a small, but crucial, role for school-level councils that include parents, teachers and community members.

Elsewhere, Philadelphia, Pa., used an \$8 million grant from PEW Charitable Trusts to start a SBM/SDM program and to encourage teachers in its comprehensive high schools to start "charter" programs similar to the schools-within-schools in East Harlem.

The Minnesota State Board of Education established a "charter" program in 1991, offering freedom from state regulations to schools with innovative plans.

Decentralization trend building for decades

by Michael Klonsky



JOHN FIGLER

Decentralization may be the hottest buzzword in education reform circles, but it wasn't that long ago that American reformers were railing against it. Indeed, the tension between central and local control can be viewed as a continual tug of war, with one side giving way to the other as new economic and social forces exert their influence on educational policy.

At the turn of the century, liberals considered school centralization a progressive trend. At the time, millions of workers were migrating to Northern factories from the rural South and Europe, seeking relief from poverty and oppression, speaking their own languages and practicing their own social customs.

Social reformers, taking their cue from the industrialists who built the factories, called on schools to adopt a standard curriculum to help socialize the children of these workers into

the country's mainstream. Because the new industries required workers who were prompt, obedient and minimally literate, schools taught good work habits as well as reading, writing and arithmetic.

Centralization was hailed as a way to provide the rudiments of an education to millions of working-class children who were overlooked by the elitist European system. Centralization also organized the newcomers to function as members of a democratic society, while striking a blow against the backwardness and inefficiency of everything small, rural and sectarian.

To reach their goal, reformers ousted the politicians and lay people who ran the schools and replaced them with educational professionals. To promote accountability, they developed standardized tests to match their standardized curriculum. In short, the factory became the model for the modern school system.

Midway through the century, however, the economy was shaken by change. Just as the industrial revolution had replaced the agrarian economy, now a revolution in technology was ringing out the smokestack era. Steel, coal, textile, auto and other basic industries gave way to data processing, aerospace, semiconductors and advanced communications. Third-world countries took over the assembly-line jobs as America created work requiring more creativity than lock-step performance.

New ideas began to emerge from farsighted corporate reformers like W. Edwards Deming, the American who helped Japan reorganize its economy after World War II. These ideas would soon have an impact on education as well as industry.

AN ANALYSIS

To improve the quality of work, Deming called for structural changes rather than simply asking workers to "work harder." He advocated shrinking corporate hierarchies, giving more power to local managers, involving workers in decision making and putting consumers' needs first.

Faced with stiff new competition from abroad, American business grudgingly began to adopt many of these ideas. Successful companies provided local managers better information and more direct control over their operations.

Markets also began to change as more diverse, short-lived products emerged. "Niche" markets flourished.

The trend toward decentralization was not limited to the United States. The technology revolution, with its freer access to information, fueled a desire by nations and people to have more of a voice in the decisions that affected their lives. The collapse of the Soviet Union offers perhaps the most dramatic example of how a central "command" authority could not survive in the new era.

Just as ethnic diversity and nationalism fueled the breakup of the Soviet Union, the rapid growth of the non-white, non-European and non-English-speaking sectors of U.S. society became a catalyst for decentralization. Years of white domination over a public education system that was

increasingly populated by non-white students heightened the local-control sentiment in many communities.

Indeed, it was the civil rights and black power movements of the 1960s that sparked the first wave of school decentralization, then called community control.

In 1967, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville section of New York City reached the boiling point. Community members, mainly African Americans, were fed up with the apparent failure of desegregation, low test scores, teacher strikes, increasing dropout rates and an unresponsive bureaucracy. They demanded that a new intermediate school (I.S. 201) either be racially integrated, as the city school board had originally planned, or that parents and community members be granted greater control over staff hiring and school operation.

Contrary to turn-of-the-century reformers, these activists saw educational professionals as the enemy. "Control of the ghetto schools must be taken out of the hands of 'professionals,' most of whom have long since demonstrated their insensitivity to the needs and problems of the black child," proclaimed black power advocate Stokely Carmichael. "These 'experts' bring with them middle-class biases, unsuitable techniques and materials [that] are, at best, dysfunctional and at worst destructive."

The struggle in Ocean Hill-Brownsville ultimately led to the division of the country's largest school system into 32 elementary school districts, each governed by a locally elected school board. The central, citywide board kept control of high schools, contracts and finances.

This modest decentralization plan did not go smoothly. Schools in Ocean Hill-Brownsville quickly became embroiled in sharp racial conflict. Community leaders fought with the central board over the control of finances and the hiring and firing of principals. The new community school board clashed with the teachers union over the right of the board to hire and transfer teachers unilaterally. Teachers finally struck citywide; they stayed out eight weeks to win assurances that the new community school boards would not tamper with union contracts.

Decentralization in New York City

was followed by some modest educational gains, including a short-lived upward trend in reading scores across all grades. It also produced what has become a model of teacher innovation and school choice in Spanish Harlem's District 4. However, to the dismay of reformers, many local boards came under the control of the teachers union and other political groups; some succumbed to corruption.

Later in the 1970s, Detroit followed in New York's footsteps. The school system was divided into eight subdistricts, each with a board that could hire and fire the subdistrict superintendent and set curriculum. Like New York, the central board kept control of the money.

The setbacks in Detroit and New York brought an end to the first wave of school decentralization. But the desire for local control ... continued.

Community groups wanted the power to fire racist teachers, an issue that brought them into conflict with the union. Teachers struck for 43 days before winning a rollback in community and parent power. After six years, the Detroit decentralization experiment was called a failure and dropped.

The setbacks in Detroit and New York brought an end to the first wave of school decentralization. But the desire for local control, particularly in minority communities, continued. In the 1980s, that desire met up with other forces to create a second wave of school decentralization.

The second wave is being driven by the economic need for schools to produce workers who can adapt to a changing workplace and by research that linked learning to innovative and nontraditional school settings.

These forces confront a system of public education that, for all the structural change sweeping other institutions around the world, still operates pretty much the way it did 50 years ago: Teaching is still largely telling, and administrations are still largely

top-heavy. New York, for example, has one district-level administrator for every 161 students. Reformers like Jerome Murphy, associate dean of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, say one administrator for every 1,000 to 1,200 students would do.

Alarmed by the shortage of high school graduates prepared for the country's new jobs, business leaders turned their attention to the schools. Not surprisingly, they advocated the same kind of decentralization and small-unit autonomy that had swept through their own industries.

A variety of educational research over the past several decades also argued for an end to centralized, cookie-cutter schools.

For example, the late Ronald Edmonds of Harvard University sought out successful inner-city schools where low-income, minority children were learning at or above national averages. In addition to identifying characteristics these effective schools had in common, he and his colleagues found that traditional solutions, such as simply spending more money or extending the school day, did not improve student achievement. In short, more of the same didn't work.

In the 1970s, a major study of federally funded programs found that they worked best in schools where teachers helped shape them.

Researchers studying how children learn have confirmed what many expert teachers knew through experience: Different children learn in different ways and at different rates, and a child's life outside the classroom has a major impact on how he or she learns.

Yet other research suggested that children learn more through interaction with adults, classmates and materials than through listening to lectures and memorizing.

Such studies argued not only for giving more autonomy to schools but also for giving teachers and even students a greater say in how schools and classrooms operate.

Meanwhile, certain segments of American society came to see diversity in culture and language as an asset. By implication, schools would need to accommodate diversity instead of seeking to eradicate it, as they did earlier in the century.

Thus, in this second wave of school decentralization, control is being shifted to the school level rather than a subdistrict level. And educational professionals are coming to be seen as part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

Some advocates of radical change would extend decision making to parents by giving them vouchers to use at public or private schools of their choice. The "niche marketing" of the education world, choice would promote diversity to meet the desires of parents and needs of business, advocates say. In the eyes of the business-minded, choice would promote

competition that would weed out ineffective schools.

Critics of the voucher approach contend it would only syphon desperately needed money from public schools, which now serve and likely would continue to serve children with the greatest needs.

"There are some voices for decentralization," contends Chicago Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough, "who are simply interested in controlling the money and are not interested in classroom improvement."

In Chicago, decentralization of the public school system has been resisted by those who fear it is a stalking horse for vouchers. Other critics simply contend that educators and parents in many schools are either unwilling or unable to manage the kind of change necessary to increase student learning significantly.

One point on which both proponents and critics of decentralization agree is that a dispersal of authority will not, in and of itself, turn schools around.

"Decentralization offers more flexi-

bility to innovate, but that does not mean that all schools will come forward with sparkling new ideas for experimentation," says Daniel J. Brown in his book, *Decentralization: The Administrator's Guidebook to School District Change*. "Some will take advantage of their newfound freedom to experiment. Most may not because no incentive is provided to innovate, only the resources to do so."

Adds Kimbrough: "All the restructuring in the world won't save a school system which is starved for funds and can't afford even the barest essentials like classroom supplies."

Whether America's second wave of school decentralization will usher in widespread classroom improvement remains to be seen. The harsh realities of worsening social conditions for most inner-city youth and the constraints of a depressed economy are high hurdles to any type of reform. But if history is any guide, decentralization will figure prominently in school reform for many years to come. ■

Higher scores not assured

by Lorraine Forte

But does it work? Ultimately, the true litmus test of any school reform is whether children learn more. But so far decentralization has yet to pass that test, education researchers say. In some decentralized districts, test scores have risen; in others, they have stayed the same or fallen.

"You don't find any relationship anyone would take to the bank," says Dan Lewis, a professor at Northwestern University's School of Education, who is writing a book on decentralization in Chicago and four other cities. "Lots of [advocates] thought it would improve achievement but it hasn't. There are lots of other things happening, such as poverty and mobility...that have a lot to do with kids learning."

Proponents claim that putting power

in the hands of schools will improve achievement because teachers, principals and parents are most familiar with students' needs and thus best able to make crucial decisions to promote their learning. "But there's not a lot of hard evidence those linkages are dependable," says Betty Malen, associate professor at the University of Washington's College of Education.

"Everyone assumes that because you have new actors, things get better, but that doesn't necessarily happen," notes Jane Hannaway, associate professor at Stanford University's School of Education.

In a 1990 paper, Malen and two colleagues wrote: "The link between school-based management and effective schools characteristics is fragile at

best." Newly formed school councils were found to focus mostly on security, discipline and other issues, rarely tackling curriculum and instruction. Schools often lacked the money for staff development, new equipment and other materials essential for classroom improvement. And teachers and principals reported that new governing duties often kept them from tackling more important classroom issues.

The authors found few districts that reported higher test scores; those that did usually reported higher scores in only a small number of pilot schools. As the authors wrote: "If school-based management were a potent factor, one would expect achievement gains to be more widespread and stable."

Overall, most schools maintained the

same level of achievement. "In other words, it [decentralization] neither helped nor hindered," Malen says. Still, these findings "could be interpreted as evidence that school-based management has simply not been given a full or fair test," the paper concludes.

Here are findings from other reports:

■ In 1987, 33 schools in Miami, Fla., and surrounding Dade County suburbs began participating in a pilot program that gave schools the power to set up their own governing bodies and request waivers from Board of Education regulations and teachers' union work rules.

In a 1991 status report, the school system reported that faculty attitudes about the program were generally positive. Teachers reported more collegiality and greater satisfaction with their jobs; most principals rated the new councils as at least "moderately" effective, but said their own jobs had gotten more difficult.

But the achievement picture was not rosy. Over the first three years, average scores on state reading and math tests fell at about the same rate in pilot elementary schools as they did in other elementary schools. In high schools, scores countywide rose slightly while those of pilot schools fell slightly. And suspension rates increased at about the same rate in both pilot and non-pilot schools.

On the positive side, drop-out rates decreased slightly, and attendance rose in some cases.

■ In 1977, California initiated a statewide program that gave schools additional funding if they adopted a state-approved "School Improvement Model." Participating schools had to write specific improvement plans, set up ongoing staff development and governing councils and conduct periodic self-evaluations. About 3,500 schools participated.

A 1984 report by an independent consulting group found that, by the 1982-83 school year, "many schools improved somewhat and a small percentage showed great improvement." However, the number of improved schools was matched by the number of schools where quality stayed the same; in a small percentage of schools, quality declined. Overall, the report found, the plan "neither revolutionized school management...nor had massive direct effects on improving student performance across the state."

Still, some districts contend that school-based management was key to substantially improved test scores.

■ In 1985, Prince George's County, Md., just outside Washington, D.C., gave schools more power over budgeting, curriculum writing and other critical tasks. The district also began new staff development programs and gave 16 low-income, predominantly minority schools extra money, equipment and staff. By 1990, test scores throughout the district had risen 12 points or more, and the gap between scores of black and white students decreased.

Even skeptics say that decentralization can work, but not just by changing a district's governing structure. Over-emphasizing governance has a "crippling effect," says Rodney Ogawa, one of Malen's co-authors and a University of Utah professor. Without information about good educational practices, "you've got people empowered to make decisions who don't have knowledge about teaching and learning."

"It's a blend of people, resources, opportunity, commitment. All those things make a difference," observes Malen.

"The reasoning [of decentralizers] has been too simplistic so far," Hannaway says. "You have to identify the condi-

tions under which it seems to work. If decentralization is going on, something else needs to be going on as well."

Researchers also note that a strong central office is necessary even in a decentralized system. A district office is the best vehicle for monitoring progress, holding schools accountable for improvement, intervening in schools that fail to get better and lobbying state legislatures for more funding for poor schools.

"Without strong district involvement, schools that are already effective are most likely to be the schools that improve," says the report on California's improvement plan.

In the May 1989 issue of *Educational Leadership*, researcher Jane L. David says central offices should do the following:

■ Build strong alliances with the local teachers' union.

■ Communicate goals and information.

■ Encourage experimentation and risk-taking.

■ Provide waivers from restrictive regulations.

■ Provide a broad range of opportunities for professional development. ■

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Edmonton plan one way to set schools free

by Diana Lauber and Christina Warden

Whether it's called site-based management, total quality management or just plain common sense, leaders of the Edmonton Public School System in Alberta, Canada, have devised an effective school system that operates under the decentralization principles that Chicagoans, so far, can only dream about.

The Edmonton system has developed into an organization that equitably allocates dollars to schools, supports schools as they decide the best ways to spend their money and which vendors to use, furnishes central office services that are, in general, superior to those of outside vendors and provides students with a quality education based on student needs.

How did Edmonton develop this management system over the last 16 years? What lessons can be learned from its experience that could help the Chicago public schools as they continue to decentralize in accord with the spirit and intent of the School Reform Act of 1988?

Last school year, we traveled to Edmonton in search of answers to

these questions. We visited three schools and interviewed their principals. We attended a school board meeting, interviewed the president of the local teachers' union and spent considerable time interviewing central office department heads and Supt. Mike Strembitsky. We also studied the district's budget, the teachers' contract and other documents produced by the central office and individual schools. And we reviewed results of extensive surveys over the past five years of parents, community members, students and staff.

As you consider our findings, keep in mind that these decentralization measures came about as a result of a progressive superintendent—who taught and was a principal in the Edmonton schools—and cooperative union leadership. No aggressive, grassroots movement was developed to achieve these results; instead, radical change came from people inside the system who had the desire to operate more efficiently and more directly in support of student needs.

Key lessons

■ Edmonton's successful management system evolved through careful planning, monitoring, reflection and refinement. Supt. Strembitsky says the system never could have decentralized if it had attempted at the outset

to decide on every detail and anticipate every situation.

■ Permitting schools to purchase directly from vendors or from the central office for goods and services created a strong incentive for the central office to improve the quality of its services. Rather than lose their jobs, central office staffers began to compete by providing competitive prices and good service. As a result, central office services are generally superior to outside vendors. Most schools choose the central office as their vendor because they get good service. When they don't, they go elsewhere.

■ Supt. Strembitsky was essential to the success of site-based management and was able to overcome recalcitrant central office administrators.

■ By encouraging schools themselves to provide school services on a competitive basis (e.g., vocational schools might repair equipment, and high school home economics departments might oversee school cafeterias), schools receive good services and make a profit, and students get real-life experiences.

■ One of Edmonton's principles of organization recognizes that rules, regulations and practices "that are designed to protect others from making mistakes tend to be designed with the least effective individuals in mind, and their uniform application tends to force all individuals to perform uniformly at the lowest common level of

Diana Lauber is director of program development and Christina Warden is associate program director of Leadership for Quality Education (LQE), a corporate-backed Chicago school reform organization.

effectiveness." Using the examples of the weakest schools to determine general policies treats every school as frail, weak and requiring extraordinary assistance.

■ The school system lobbied successfully for a change in province rules so that schools could intermingle categorical and regular funds. As a result, schools are able to exercise real authority over budget development and allocation. Schools have direct control over 77 percent of the entire school system budget; next year they will control 85 percent.

■ Putting central office staff on one-year contracts and periodically rotating them back to the schools keeps the administration focused on the schools and deters a sense of us versus them.

■ Edmonton distributes money to schools on the basis of weighted student enrollment. There are 11 weighting levels, ranging from a 1 for regular elementary students to a 7.97 for students with certain severe disabilities. In between are different weightings for regular junior and senior high students, for students who are low achieving and for students who need bilingual or special education. Once a school's weighted enrollment is determined, the district multiplies that number by a standard "per-pupil" allocation—to determine how much the school will receive.

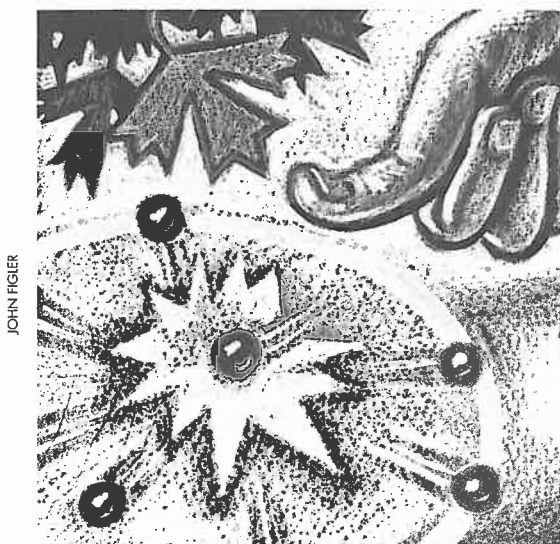
All but about 9 percent of school funds are distributed through this formula. Schools receive additional non-formula funding for such special programs as early childhood education. Small schools (fewer than 325 pupils) also get extra funds to compensate for the greater per-student cost of administration and operations. A committee of principals and central office staff annually review the basis for allocations.

This system provides a fair way to distribute funds and eliminates major discrepancies between schools with similar student bodies.

■ Site-based management allows schools to reinvent themselves, and distinctive schools have indeed been created. Schools variously have instituted cooperative learning, small-group interaction, thematic units, alternative heterogeneous groupings, performance assessments and other progressive

educational ideas that fit their students' needs. No amount of top-down inservice could have provided that level of staff creativity or buy-in.

■ Edmonton's superintendent and school board continue to develop pilot programs aimed at providing schools with more autonomy, linked with accountability. Taking the pilot approach allows the system to refine the programs over two or three years so they can be smoothly implemented systemwide. For example, of the 164 schools that chose to control their energy budgets in 1991, 88 percent realized savings. If schools conserve



JOHN FIGLER

energy, they keep part of the savings. To date, the schools and the district have saved about 10 percent of their energy budget through this incentive program.

Implications for Chicago

Although the system operates in a decentralized fashion, the superintendent and board of education have clearly defined the roles and lines of authority among the superintendent, principals and school-site personnel. Though some have argued that Chicago's School Reform Act blurs these lines, there remains plenty of room for an aggressive superintendent to lead by example—to define educational excellence, to set performance goals and objectives and then step back and let the schools figure out how to get there. The Edmonton exam-

ple shows one way this can be done.

Edmonton's superintendent and its central and district office personnel serve on one-year, renewable contracts, which builds in a high degree of incentive to meet the bottom-line needs of students. Principals, who are assigned by the superintendent, enjoy a high degree of autonomy and discretion over the allocation of school funds. There are no staffing formulas. Individual schools determine how large their classes will be—up to a maximum of 30 students—how many teachers, clerks and custodians will work in the school, and how much they will spend on supplies, equipment, staff development and other services.

Edmonton does not monitor "inputs" (e.g., how many schools 'violate' rules by spending over and under various budgeted line item). What matters most is student outcomes.

Edmonton represents a system that has evolved into an efficient, site-based management system that, even today, is still searching for ways to be more efficient and allow schools greater control over the educational destiny of their children.

We don't suggest that everything Edmonton does is strictly applicable to Chicago. We do suggest that perhaps the strongest lesson to be learned is that, once launched, site-based management was given a chance to succeed and, even with a few mistakes along the way, the performance of educational professionals and students improved. If a restructured central support system is implemented in Chicago this fall and given the proper internal and external support, we would expect it to succeed just as Edmonton's has. ■

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.

Don't lose sight of classrooms

by Tim Black

In recent months, much discussion has centered around the issue of decentralization/restructuring of the Chicago public school system. The discussion has focused primarily on anticipated cost savings from the shifting of the purchasing of goods and services from central administration to local schools.

There are those who believe that decentralization will automatically cure the public schools' budget problems and yield more efficient services, as well as an increase in student achievement. We are not in agreement with that line of thinking.

Earlier this year, the African American Education Reform Institute (AAERI) and the Chicago Urban League sponsored a forum on how to remove impediments at the local level so that schools could better meet the needs of their students in the delivery of educational programs. The school principals present at the forum expressed a need for more flexibility from central office, including the reform of purchasing practices.

AAERI agrees that efficiencies are needed to enhance the ability of central office, schools and local school councils to provide quality services and educational programs. AAERI is also aware that reducing or eliminating central office will not balance the budget nor, in and of itself, produce increased student achievement. Decentralization for the sake of decentralization is not and should not be the goal.

It should be noted, too, that in

Tim Black is co-chair of the African American Education Reform Institute, a coalition of African-American education and community leaders in Chicago. He also is a member of the Rainbow Coalition of Illinois.

order for any such reforms to be effectively and efficiently implemented, sufficient planning and support systems must be in place.

Further, any discussion of decentralization/restructuring must be linked with the discussion of anticipated educational outcomes for children. AAERI believes that the discussion around decentralization/restructuring, along with other initiatives, should be placed in its proper context: Will it contribute to increased student achievement?



JOHN FIGLER

The Urban League conducted research on two of the decentralized school systems cited in a Rand Corporation report making the rounds. The League's initial findings suggest that Chicago can learn valuable lessons from the experiences of other districts.

However, it is critical for education advocates to take into account the differences among school districts when applying models to Chicago. Fiscal constraints on Chicago public schools may not allow the implementation of such reform measures. For example, the school system management study by Booz, Allen and Hamilton found that there is a cost attached to man-

agement in a decentralized system.

Booz, Allen did not analyze the cost of decentralization proposals by the Chicago School Finance Authority's focus groups. But it is clear that implementing those proposals would cost money, which would have to be added to an already underfunded budget.

To make up a multimillion dollar revenue shortfall, the Board of Education was forced to make cuts that could adversely affect the delivery of goods and services to schools and children. At this writing, it appears that the board is again taking steps to reduce essential services, including curriculum support (which many teachers need), reform implementation support, summer schools and parent education centers.

Focus misplaced

We must refocus our discussion of decentralization/restructuring. We must consider first the needs of and goals for children at the point of intervention (the classroom) and then build programs, processes and systems that support those goals.

Over the past 2 1/2 years, local school councils have succeeded in setting the stage for reform as required by the School Reform Act. Local schools have made tremendous strides in bringing about change. Attendance is increasing at some schools. Teachers and principals are beginning to implement curriculum reforms. And some schools have adopted dress codes. These and other efforts must continue without interruption or diversion.

In the short term, the administration, the School Board, the School Finance Authority, the mayor and the governor must reason together to assure that the noble beginning of Chicago's reform effort continues without interruption and that reform remains focused on the needs of children.

All parties must be clear that it takes something from each of them to create a "win-win" environment for Chicago public school children. All parties must also have a genuine commitment to quality public education. Our goal is increased achievement and an efficient system of delivery of services, not the implementation of any process solely for

the sake of implementation or because others found it beneficial.

The Urban League's research of two decentralized school systems, Edmonton, Canada, and Dade County, Fla., found that about one year was devoted to planning before implementation began. Both cities piloted their decentralized support services systems in 4 percent and 12 percent of their schools, respectively. Neither system found that decentralization saved money or reduced central office staff. Rather, central office responsibilities were reorganized. And decentralization did not produce increased student achievement.

In the long term, the focus of school reform must be on the refine-

ment of instructional programs and increased staff development for teachers and other staff. School reform requires that teachers (and others) operate at high levels of proficiency, efficiency and professionalism. Opportunities for professional staff to learn, develop and interact must be provided regularly and systematically. Instructional programs must be developed that meet the unique educational needs of the 409,000 children in Chicago's some 550 schools.

Further, we must build a consensus around what constitutes an adequate education for our children and then explain that goal to the public so that people can come together to make adequacy a reality.

One crucial step toward adequacy is the proposed amendment to the education article of the Illinois State Constitution, which will appear on the ballot in November. AAERI wholeheartedly endorses and urges others to support the adoption of that amendment, which would make education a fundamental right for all citizens of the state.

It is our hope that the 1992-93 school year will be one of a widely shared vision of an adequate and equitable education for all Illinois school children. To that end, we hope the discussion centers on instructional and staff development that is backed by sufficient resources for Chicago and other Illinois schools. ■

Letters

Article slights Chicago's overworked, underpaid teachers

Having read *CATALYST* since its inception and having participated in school reform since a decade before it became fashionable, I've noted with sadness but not surprise your tendency to misreport and misrepresent the same issues that the mainstream media and traditional purveyors of teacher-bashing misreport.

But I was still a little surprised to find such an obvious misrepresentation of fact as appeared on page 25 of your June issue. Where did you get the idea that Chicago high school teachers work "366 minutes," as you state in your article "Suburban teachers work longer"? Our regular day begins at 8 a.m. and ends at 2:46 p.m.—or it begins at 8:44 a.m. and ends at 3:48 p.m., etc. Teachers on overtime positions are on the clock 20 percent more. Any way you count it, the average Chicago high school teacher works a minimum of 406 minutes per day. [See editor's note below.]

Since I was assigned to teach English at Amundsen High School eight years ago, I've noted that the majority of my colleagues arrive earlier than their required

time and stay later. While some of us periodically spend that time on extra-curricular activities, even the best funded (varsity sports coaching) of these are underfunded by comparison with the suburbs, and the others (like clubs) are funded so poorly as to be a bad joke.

Example: Two years ago I sponsored several clubs, including an award-winning writing club, an award-winning computer club and a very active ethnic club. For the first semester of the school year, my additional pay for all five of my clubs (those plus two others) totalled \$18. On average, I was in the building, working with children, one hour extra per day for that whole semester. And as I say, I was typical of the majority (not all) of the staff at my school.

I easily spend an average of two hours extra per day outside of school on school-related work. Last Christmas, for example, I spent the better part of one day working with a student on college entrance and financial aid paperwork. It paid off; she got into the University of Chicago with a \$23,000 financial-aid package. Between November and May, I wrote 57 letters of

recommendation for college admission and financial aid. The chairperson of our guidance department held 7 a.m. scholarship meetings for a group of seniors. Unlike our suburban counterparts, we can't assume that our working class and poor families know about these matters. If we don't supplement our families' desires—often on our own time—our kids simply don't have the same options as suburban kids.

I'm not writing this to toot my horn, but to correct the record that you have created. Because what I'm talking about here is typical of high school teachers I've worked with at the 16 high schools where I've taught full-time over the last 19 years.

We're not talking about a few years of 10-, 12- and 14-hour days when you're young, vigorous and without family responsibilities. We're talking about decades of hard work beginning when you're young, continuing while you're raising your family and concluding when your grandchildren are coming by.

If you teach seniors, you do a lot of career and college counseling. If you teach sophomores, you deal with that minihorror of adolescence—almost all of the students I've had who died in gang violence were sophomores.

Our coaches are paid half (or less) as much as suburban coaches in the same sports. On an hourly basis, our best varsity coaches are getting between \$5 and \$10; it's definitely a labor of love. Then they often face the additional indignity of having to fund their own championships when they produce winners. One, we don't get paid extra if our teams go to

city, regional and state championships. Two, we often have to risk our own insurance and vehicles transporting children who otherwise would not have the chance to compete.

As a friend of mine says repeatedly, with bitterness in his voice: Teachers are the only workers who accept less pay for overtime, rather than more. Another friend of mine puts it this way: Teaching in Chicago has everything; not only are we paid less than the suburbs, but our working conditions are worse.

Finally, your article said that Chicago's elementary teachers generally are paid more than suburban elementary teachers and that Chicago's high school teachers are, at some levels, paid more. But the article failed to put these numbers into historical context. One of the greatest advances for women's rights in Chicago came when the Chicago Teachers Union forced a reluctant Chicago Board of Education to adopt a uniform pay schedule for elementary and high school teachers. Yes, 50 years ago, Chicago paid high school teachers, most of whom were men, more than it paid elementary teachers, who, then as now, were mostly women. The CTU changed that. Good thing, right?

I'm not even sure whether the suburban elementary figures are correct, but I assume the issue should not be whether our elementary teachers should be paid (a) less than our high school teachers and (b) equally low with what you claim to be our elementary neighbors in the suburbs.

But the main problem in this small article is the same in the "pay" part as it is in the "hours" part. Where'd you get the information?

While it's nice to know that your salary information is based on "districts responding to the CATALYST survey," it was not impossible to get the information on those that didn't respond.

*George N. Schmidt
English teacher, LSC teacher rep, CTU delegate
Amundsen High School*

Editor's note: The difference between your number and ours for the required work day for Chicago high school teachers is a 40-minute lunch period. Since the length of lunch periods varied from one school district to the next, we subtracted that time when we made our comparisons. Again, the article was about the hours of work that districts require of their teachers.

Article named wrong school

Andersen Elementary School staff and parents have been supportive of all aspects of school reform. Even before

reform legislation was passed in 1988, teachers and parents participated in school-based management seminars and workshops in order to be ready for council activities.

We have always viewed CATALYST as a responsible periodical, dedicated to the reporting of school reform issues with integrity and the pursuit of truth and some justice.

We were therefore dismayed at an article that appeared on page 4 in the June 1992 issue. The article states, "Monique Williams, 14, left Andersen Elementary School this spring." The reasons given for Monique's early departure were: (1) she didn't like school, (2) the school she attended was boring, (3) she didn't like the teachers, (4) there was a lot of gangbanging and (5) no truant officer came after her.

We at Andersen are very sympathetic to this student's plight. However, Monique Williams has never attended Andersen Elementary School. Since the names of all Chicago Public School students are part of the public domain, we were able to easily discover that Monique attended a school with a similar name.

This may have been an oversight on the part of CATALYST, but an oversight that indicts a school that takes very seriously its obligation to all students.

We will continue to read CATALYST; we hope that the editors of this fine periodical continue to report reform issues, both positive and negative, after careful research and review.

*Marie M. Iska, principal
Andersen Elementary School*

Editor's note: We truly regret the error.

Dropout problem starts early

I am writing to express my pleasure concerning the articles on dropout prevention published in the latest CATALYST. The material was comprehensive and honest. I want to praise the two reporters who researched the topic, Michael Selinker and Michelle Martin. They were very thorough and precise.

I know the focus of the articles was on high school dropouts, but the problem starts way back in grade school. Perhaps you could do a follow-up on the efforts done at the elementary school level.

Our department has made tremendous gains in improving attendance with the targeted population. Significant gains were also made at the high school level.

*Grace G. Dawson, director
Division of Dropout Prevention
Chicago Public Schools*

Keeping kids in school requires community effort

I read with interest the articles on dropout prevention in your June 1992 issue. While they provided a comprehensive overview of the problem, they focused on discrete intervention strategies to the exclusion of comprehensive community-based solutions.

Only the integration and timely provision of education and human services in a demanding yet nurturing school environment will realize the dream of keeping all children in school until they graduate.

Chicago Cities in Schools works with 13 schools and over 700 youth to prevent them from dropping out. Although we provide some direct service, we strongly advocate and work toward local school and community planning and implementation of projects that assemble what schools and communities need to engage students in learning and to support families so that they in turn can support their children.

Frankly, I was surprised that you did not challenge the "Education Mayor" and the "Education Governor" to convene a joint summit on this complex problem.

*Sheila Radford-Hill, executive director
Chicago Cities in Schools*

Lekotek another resource for disabled children

I find CATALYST to be a stimulating and informative resource for Chicago school reform news. Your March 1992 issue was of particular interest to me because of its special education focus.

I'm writing because a significant resource was omitted from your list: The National Lekotek Center, 2001 Ridge Ave., Evanston, Ill. 60201, (708) 328-0001. Lekotek provides a variety of direct services to families with disabled children, but also provides teacher training. Lekotek has been involved in teacher training and other Chicago public school activities, especially through the Orr School network.

Compuplay, one of Lekotek's services, is particularly exciting to me because it provides children with special needs the opportunity to use specially adapted computers. Computers are the ultimate equalizer for disabled children. Compuplay Music, a program that I helped develop, allows children to create music, too.

*Nancy A. Norman, instructional designer
The Center for Instructional Design
Loyola University*

Elsewhere

CALIFORNIA, COLORADO

Voucher proposals. School voucher proponents suffered a serious setback in California when they failed to get enough signatures to put a proposal on the upcoming November ballot. But they appeared headed for a victory in Colorado, where backers said they filed almost twice the number of signatures needed to get a proposal before voters. In California, "it's a setback, but not a defeat," Kevin D. Teasley, campaign director for Excellence in Choice Through Education League (EXCEL), told *Education Week* in its Aug. 5 issue.

Teasley said he expects a new signature count will qualify the initiative for the next statewide election, in June 1994.

The defeat sets the stage for Colorado to become the focus of a national battle over the voucher issue. The Colorado plan would be "the first real voucher plan in the U.S. to get on the ballot," former Colorado legislator Hugh Fowler, a supporter, told the *Denver Post* in a July 31 article. Two earlier proposals, in 1984 and 1990, failed to make it to the ballot.

The group Coloradans for School Choice had collected 91,000 signatures in favor of the plan, the *Post* reported; 50,000 are needed. At CATALYST press time, the Colorado Secretary of State's office said it was still verifying the signatures; it must verify them by Sept. 14 for the proposal to qualify for the ballot.

The Colorado plan would amend Colorado's constitution to allow the state to give parents vouchers worth at least half the average per-pupil spending in their school district; on average, that would be about \$2,500 a year. In California, the proposal would have given parents vouchers equal to at least 50 percent of statewide per-pupil spending in the previous year, or, currently, about \$2,600.

Both plans would allow parents to

use the vouchers in any public or private school, including Catholic and other religious schools.

In Illinois, four voucher bills have been introduced since 1981, but none has made it to the floor for a vote.

MEXICO

Radical reforms. Overcoming resistance from a powerful national teachers union, the Mexican government has set out to overhaul public education by changing everything from textbooks to bargaining units.

The new measures are aimed primarily at "cutting bureaucracy and corruption, modernizing teaching methods and making schools more accountable to their communities," according to an article in the May 21 *New York Times*.

In announcing the new agreement with the teachers union, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari called education "the most fundamental issue of our time." He pledged steady increases in government funding of education and proposed that junior high school become mandatory for all Mexican children.

Under the agreement, the central government will relinquish to states the money and authority to negotiate union contracts and plan school spending, thus breaking the union into 32 separate, weaker entities. The state's governor will conduct union contract negotiations.

The reform program is a "radical departure in a country where teaching jobs are often lifetime appointments and past reform efforts have failed so miserably that most rural students never reach high school," wrote *Times* reporter Tim Golden.

Although government education budgets have grown 70 percent in real terms since 1989, Mexico still spends about half as much of its gross national product on its schools as do the U.S. and Canada.

RHODE ISLAND, NEW JERSEY

Channel One victory, loss. There was good news and bad news last month for Whittle Communication's Channel One school television program: Rhode Island lifted its three-year-old ban while New Jersey moved closer to imposing one.

Channel One is a children's current events show that includes three minutes of advertising in its daily 12-minute broadcasts. Schools that subscribe get about \$50,000 worth of video equipment for free. Recent viewer studies have shown that the program has not increased students' understanding of international news.

Three years ago, Rhode Island's education commissioner interpreted state law as barring advertising in public school classrooms. Then, in July, the Legislature passed a bill permitting "the display of electronic news or educational programming supported by commercial advertising" in the public schools of Pawtucket, a measure expected to be applied statewide.

In New Jersey, an administrative law judge ruled that Whittle's contract with the state makes students a "captive audience" and that the time devoted to advertising violates the state's constitutional obligation to provide "a thorough and efficient education." It is up to the commissioner of education to act on the ruling.

New York is the only other state with an outright ban on Channel One. In California, the superintendent of public instruction has threatened to withhold state funding from schools that subscribe, but some 80 schools have done it anyway, according to the Aug. 5 issue of *Education Week*.

The Illinois Board of Education has not taken action on Channel One, but Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough has banned it in Chicago. "We don't need to teach kids how to watch television," he explained. ■

Michael Klonsky

Decades of finance tricks create annual crisis

by Linda Lenz

Like tornados in spring, a budget crisis disrupts the back-to-school season in Chicago each year. And most everyone wonders why.

The answer is simple. The School Board, along with the governor, the Legislature and the mayor, has built new, ongoing expenses—mainly higher salaries—into its budget each year but has failed to build in new ongoing revenue to keep up with those expenses. It's like someone on a fixed income moving to a more expensive apartment each year.

During the 1970s, the board lived on credit. Almost every year, it borrowed more money to cover escalating costs until, in 1979, it went bankrupt. The next year, the Illinois Legislature created the Chicago School Finance Authority to ensure that the board didn't spend more money than it took in each year.

But school and political leaders didn't really mend their ways. Instead of raising taxes to pay for higher expenses, they patched together a string of one-time sources of revenue. In other words, the fixed-income renter used a Christmas bonus one year, an inheritance from Aunt Harriet the next and then winnings from Friday night poker games.

Such financial sleight of hand has been going on for more than two decades. Here are the highlights.

1971

After a four-day strike in January—which at the time was the beginning of the board's fiscal year—the board and unions agreed to a two-year contract raising salaries

8 percent each year and adding 600 teachers. To pay for the deal, the board considered closing school for several days the following December but decided instead to borrow against 1972 revenues.

1972

The board persuaded teachers to accept a raise of only 5.5 percent instead of the promised 8 percent. But it still had to close schools five days early in June. To prevent dropping additional school days in December, the board won legislative approval to borrow from its building rehabilitation fund for five years.

1973

As a teacher strike wore on, Mayor Richard J. Daley threatened to fire any board member who opposed settling on the union's terms. At the end of a 12-day strike, the union got a 2.5 percent raise and 210 new jobs. To pay for the pact, the board adopted a budget that cut 31 days off the school year, but an increase in state aid saved the days.

1974

As the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported, "This was hailed as the year that the School Board turned around. ... But the turnaround was somewhat illusory." Until 1974, the board had a fiscal year that ran from January to December; in 1974, it switched to a September-to-August fiscal year. As a result, it had eight months of revenue (January through August) to pay for six months of teacher payrolls (January through June.)

1975

At the urging of Mayor Richard J. Daley, the board agreed to raises that, absent higher taxes and budget cuts, more than doubled its deficit.

1976

The system closed 16 days early, reaping a \$30 million fine from the state for failing to conduct the required minimum number of school days. The deficit rose some 50 percent, to an all-time high of \$88 million.

1977

Schools closed one day early, but a court later ordered the board to pay \$2 million in salary that teachers lost that day. For the first time this decade, the board did not spend more money during the year than it received, and it shaved the carry-over deficit to \$77 million.

1978

Supt. Joseph Hannon wrote Mayor Michael Bilandic a detailed plea for new or higher taxes. He noted the cost of new mandated programs and of union contracts, as well as the increasing failure of corporations to pay personal property taxes as this tax headed for extinction—the 1970 Constitution abolished it effective in 1979. There was no known response from Bilandic.

Again the board lived within its means, while reducing the deficit slightly.

1979

Bad timing in a number of areas, including a month's delay in the county's collection of property taxes, brought the board's deficit financing to a screeching halt.

Throughout most of the 1970s, the board covered some of its operating expenses by engaging in a practice that its own attorney had described as illegal. Specifically, it borrowed from internal revenue accounts earmarked for the repayment of bonds. Beginning in 1975, it disclosed this

practice in its financial statements, but no one cried foul until 1979.

That's when the system got so low on cash that it could not repay the internal accounts before seeking another loan. Seeing this, bond rating houses lowered the board's credit rating to the point where the banks that the late Mayor Daley had coaxed into uncomfortable School Board loans finally had to say "no." The board ran out of cash, and school employees suffered payless paydays.

1980

On Jan. 13, following a summit of business and political leaders in the governor's mansion, the Legislature created the Chicago School Finance Authority as a separate taxing body to sell bonds—almost \$600 million—to pay off the board's debt and keep schools open.

The summit also determined that the school system, not the taxpayers, would pay for this solution: The Legislature took 50 cents in taxing authority away from the School Board so that an estimated Finance Authority rate of 50 cents per \$100 equalized assessed valuation would not increase the overall bill.

With only half the school year to go, the Finance Authority ordered the board to cut \$60 million. The board fired thousands of workers. But when it proposed that employees work a week with partial pay, teachers rebelled. They struck for two weeks. During the final, marathon bargaining session in the office of Mayor Jane Byrne, the board dropped the partial pay plan and agreed to rehire 500 teachers and aides. The union agreed to give up a day of work. To help pay for the deal, the board fired more blue-collar workers.

1981

Salaries went up 8.5 percent. To help pay for them, the Legislature passed a bill that enabled the School Board to collect \$60 million in property taxes earlier than it normally would have. Also, Mayor Byrne passed along some federal grant money and bought Midway Airport, which provided money for building rehabilitation.

"They've bought one more year by using every damn dime they can get their hands on and dug a hole for



JOHN BOOZ

(From left) Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough checks numbers with Controller Joseph Monahan and Chief Financial Officer Charley Gillespie.

next year that is absolutely staggering," warned SFA Chair Jerome W. Van Gorkom.

1982

Employees didn't get a raise this year, but they got something just as good. In addition to paying the employer's share of pension costs, the board began "picking up" the employees' share, which raised take-home pay by 7 percent.

The Legislature approved a new property tax to pay for the pension pick-up, but the governor amended the bill so that the tax could be levied for one year only. Even then, the levy merely offset tax rebates made by the board and Finance Authority as they took advantage of lower interest rates. So again, taxpayers were spared.

1983

Teachers struck for the sixth time in 14 years. This time, unions representing engineers, custodians and other non-teaching workers joined them. Members of these blue-collar unions had suffered disproportionately during the budget-slashing days of 1980 and 1981, and they didn't want that to happen again.

The strike lasted 15 days. Employees won 5 percent raises, but the increase didn't kick in until Jan. 1, 1984, which meant that employees

received and the board paid only an extra 3 percent during 1983-84. Thus, the board automatically built in an extra 2 percent in expenses for the following school year.

State aid increased by only \$7 million; however, the Legislature did restore the 50 cents it had cut from the School Board's tax rate in 1980.

Further, the Legislature passed something called the "difference tax," which permitted the board to increase its property tax rate, penny for penny, as the tax rate of the Finance Authority declined. Thus, the school system got more money even though the overall school tax rate stayed roughly level.

1984

This was the year of a state tax amnesty. The results would not be known until November, so the unions wanted to keep negotiations going into the school year. But the board insisted on rolling back insurance benefits to balance its budget. The unions struck for 10 days before winning a restoration of benefits and 4.5 percent raises effective Dec. 17.

The one-time revenue sources included \$27 million from the amnesty program and \$9 million from the settlement of a lawsuit. Also, the Finance Authority reduced the board's required ending cash balance by \$15 million.



The Finance Authority's new chairman, Martin "Mike" Koldyke.

1985

This year, Gov. James Thompson rode to the rescue. Following a two-day strike, he offered to speed up state aid payments so that employees could get 6 percent raises this year and 3 percent raises next year. However, the second-year increase was contingent upon the board receiving an extra \$50 million in state aid. He also promised to introduce legislation to make the speedup permanent. (The measure finally passed in 1992, but Gov. Jim Edgar vetoed it.)

1986

Thompson continued the speedup, but state aid rose only \$40 million instead of the needed \$50 million, so the governor threw in an extra \$10 million in one-time revenue.

1987

A record-long, 19-day strike produced raises of 4 percent this year and 4 percent the next, with the latter contingent on additional revenue. The board also agreed to beef up staff at 35 overcrowded schools and at 100 schools with low reading scores.

No tricks this year, other than the speedup. Increased revenue and budget cuts paid for the new contracts.

1988

The board received the speedup and

enough new money to make good on 4 percent raises.

1989

The Interim School Board, hand-picked by Mayor Richard M. Daley, agreed to a teachers contract raising salaries by an average 5.4 percent; pay for beginning teachers rose 12.5 percent. Further, the board agreed to add 1,871 teaching positions—some in the chronically short areas of bilingual and special education, others to restore formal art and music classes and others to increase preschool programs.

This also was the first year of a five-year shift in the budgeting of state Chapter 1 money. Hundreds of millions of dollars would be taken out of the board's base budget and put in schools for supplemental programs. In the first year of the phase-in, \$39 million was transferred, leaving the board with \$39 million less to pay for salary and other increases.

The reassessment of the city's property tax base generated substantial extra tax dollars to pay for this agreement. Also, the board cut some 450 central and district office positions.

1990

The Interim Board of Education agreed to another favorable contract for teachers.

It provided 7 percent raises for each of three years. The first raise was ironclad, but the second two were contingent on the board's receiving specified increases in tax dollars. The contract also provided \$6,000 bonuses for teachers who logged enough additional course credits to advance on the salary scale. (In its first year alone, the program cost three times what had been expected.)

Meanwhile, the state Chapter 1 phase-in took \$38 million out of the board's base budget. Further, the board suffered a decline in state aid. The state aid formula lowers state aid as property taxes increase, and the board had received a whopping property tax increase the previous year.

Since this was an election year, the Finance Authority won pledges from Democratic and Republican candidates for governor that they would continue the state aid speedup. The

authority also agreed to a one-time, \$35 million reduction in the so-called restriction calculation, a financial device aimed at ensuring the board puts aside money to pay for bills coming due.

Most significantly, the Legislature also temporarily relieved the board of its obligation to fund the employer's contribution to the teacher pension fund. That meant the board could use money from its pension property tax to pay for the pension pickup, that is, the employees' share. (See 1982 above.) That move, in turn, freed up some \$50 million from the education fund to pay for teacher raises.

This arrangement put Chicago on a par with other school districts in the state, all of which rely totally on the state for the employers' contribution. Chicago is the only district required to add an employer contribution out of its own budget. Its payments are scheduled to resume when the teacher contract expires in August 1993. A move to abolish them can be expected.

1991

The board failed to receive the revenue required to trigger the 7 percent raises. In negotiations overseen by Mayor Daley, teachers settled for 3 percent effective Feb. 1, and other unions took a salary freeze. In return, the board agreed to drop the contingency clause attached to next year's 7 percent pay hikes; employees were to get the raise regardless of the board's financial condition.

Meanwhile, the state Chapter 1 transfer took \$53 million out of the board's basic budget.

The board cut 360 positions from central office and closed several schools. Beyond that, it again had to rely on one-time revenue sources. Gov. Jim Edgar continued the state aid speedup. The federal government permitted the board to delay spending a required \$24 million on desegregation programs. And the Public Building Commission refinanced school construction and rehabilitation bonds to take advantage of lower interests. It used the \$8.6 million in savings for school maintenance, which, several twists and turns later, freed up \$8.6 million for teacher salaries. ■

Some communities win, others lose in Head Start transfer

by Dan Weissmann

THE GOOD NEWS: Preschool programs for disadvantaged youngsters now serve 1,320 more children than they did two years ago. By next May, another 700-plus seats will open. The reason is increased funding by the state and federal governments.

THE MIXED NEWS: While some neighborhoods have substantially more preschool service, others have less, a CATALYST analysis shows.

Under a 1991 agreement between the Board of Education and the city's Department of Human Services (through which Head Start money is funneled), school-run Head Starts are being transferred to private agencies over a three-year period. A mounting deficit for the school-based centers prompted the transfer. (See CATALYST/Updates, March 1992.) However, not every closed center has a new center nearby.

So far, the biggest winner is Austin, which gained 440 preschool seats; Austin also ranks No. 1 on DHS's list of 20 communities with the greatest unmet need for preschool programs for disadvantaged youngsters. With 120 fewer seats than two years ago, Kenwood is the biggest loser; Kenwood ranked 19 on the top-20 needs list.

In all, 25 communities, including 14 on the high-needs list, have gained seats; 16, including 5 on the needs list, have lost seats. In 36 communities, the number of seats has stayed roughly the same. These numbers take into account new Head Starts and new state pre-kindergarten programs, which operate in schools.

THE BAD NEWS: Continued disputes between the School Board and DHS have created obstacles for parents seeking preschool for their children.

By mid-August, DHS had not given

the board a list of this year's new community-based centers, according to Velma Thomas, the board's director of early childhood programs. So, said Thomas, her office was referring parents only to school-based centers.

DHS officials said they had not released the list because the information was not final. Last year, DHS released a list before it was final and lived to regret it.

What happened was that critics of the school-to-community transfer checked out agencies on the list to see whether the new centers were up and running on time. By the time those checks were made, however, the list had changed; some agencies had been dropped and others added. As a result, the critics' reports of delays in center openings were inflated.

In January, board employees used the preliminary DHS list in reporting that fewer than half of the transfer sites were open. Based on that information, the board delayed giving a final OK to the transfer's second year. By that time, however, DHS had a significantly different list of transfer sites, most of which were open.

A CATALYST study based on the revised list found that by January, 20 of 32 new centers were licensed and open, with the remainder under construction or awaiting final inspection.

In February, Ald. Helen Schiller (46th) used a study by Parents United for Responsible Education and the Junior League, also based on the preliminary list, to argue that the City Council should block the transfer. According to the study, many transfer sites were still not open. According to DHS, all of the programs on the revised list were open.

This year, as last, many new centers won't be licensed by September

and will begin with Home Start, a program that sends preschool staffers into homes once a week. Once again, DHS officials partly blame the School Board. By failing to move quickly on the second-year transfer, the board took preparation time away from DHS and community agencies.

MORE BAD NEWS: Even with the expansion of federal and state programs, less than half of Chicago's needy preschoolers are being served.

In a new report, "Success Starts Young," Voices for Illinois Children urges the board and DHS to conduct annual, joint needs assessments to coordinate services, especially in communities with overcrowded schools. It also recommends that the board encourage principals at overcrowded elementary schools, which generally don't have space for preschool programs, to offer them through subcontractors, which the state program permits.

There is some irony in the current difficulties with Head Start. Chicago's first Head Start programs began in private agencies under DHS. The program moved into the public schools in the late 1960s to avoid burdensome licensing requirements for child-care centers. Now, the rehabilitation of private sites to meet city codes is causing many of the delays—and expenses—of the transfer program. ■

Preschool changes '90-'92

BIGGEST WINNERS

Neighborhood	Seats
Austin*	+440
Logan Square*	+238
Washington Park	+204
Greater Grand Crossing*	+176
Roseland	+150

BIGGEST LOSERS

Neighborhood	Seats
Kenwood*	-120
E. Garfield Pk.	-92
Auburn Gresham	-80
North Lawndale*	-52
Douglas*	-52
South Chicago	-52

*Among 20 communities with the greatest unmet need, according to DHS.

Source: CATALYST analysis

CTU Quest Center supports innovation at 11 schools

Team teaching, ungraded classes and the integration of reading, math and other lessons are among reforms planned by 11 schools that won \$3,000 grants from the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center.

The center also will provide support to the schools' staffs. "A lot of teachers have the ideas but need help making them work," explains Carlene Lutz, the center's assistant director.

The winning proposals were chosen from 60 submitted by 53 schools. Schools that achieve the goals outlined in their proposals will receive rewards—as yet unspecified—for each of their employees.

The Quest Center was created earlier this year to help schools restructure the teaching/learning process; it is funded by a \$1.1 million grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Following are the winning schools, their neighborhoods and excerpts from their proposals.

Chalmers Elementary North Lawndale

Three primary classes will be ungraded; students will be assigned to them on the basis of developmental level as well as age. The school also will create a hands-on learning lab featuring puzzles and activities promoting analytical thinking.

Clissold Elementary, Morgan Park

The school will abandon the departmentalization of its upper grades in favor of team teaching. Language arts, reading and social studies will be taught together in a block of time, as will math and science. Each team will write curricula based on themes.

Foundation School, Kenwood

Created by teachers, this new K-5 school for 160 pupils will be housed in Price Elementary School. It will stress the connections between facts

and ideas, between school learning and life skills and between one person's experience and another's. It will draw on such resources as the city's museums, businesses and libraries.

Kelly High School Brighton Park

Kelly proposes a collaborative effort with feeder elementary schools to help prepare youngsters for high school and support them once they are in high school.

Students will be assigned to "houses," that is, groups of teachers who will stay with them for three years. Each house will develop its own restructuring program.

Mitchell Elementary, West Town

Team teaching will be done on a voluntary basis in grades five through eight. Students will work in teams as well as individually. The school will expand an African-American research project for seventh- and eighth-graders. The program intends to link current events to the past.

Muñoz Marin Primary Center Humboldt Park

This is a year-round school for kindergartners and first-graders. It seeks to develop activities for children during their periodic breaks from regular classes. It also proposes to use themes as the basis for teaching the basics and to use more cooperative learning techniques.

Norwood Park Elementary Norwood Park

Teachers will develop alternatives to standardized tests, including portfolios of written work, student-teacher conferences and student-interest surveys.

With a number of restructuring efforts already underway, Norwood Park seeks to be a demonstration and resource center for neighboring schools. It proposes sponsoring workshops and graduate-level courses for

teachers in conjunction with local universities.

Prescott Elementary, Lincoln Park
Teachers will develop curricula where themes, such as exploration, will serve as the basis for teaching reading, writing, math and other subjects. Emphasis will be placed on hands-on learning, higher-level thinking and connecting school learning to everyday life.

Prescott also plans to offer evening adult education courses and develop joint projects with nearby organizations, such as the YMCA, Park District and Christopher House, a social service agency.

Revere Elementary Greater Grant Crossing

The school will be restructured into seven "core" groups, each served by three regular and one special education teacher. Children will be assigned to classes within each core on the basis of their developmental level as well as age.

The school will take advantage of museums, libraries, universities, cultural centers and businesses as places both to learn and to display children's accomplishments, e.g., student art exhibits, piano recitals and readings.

Saucedo Magnet, South Lawndale

As at Prescott, teaching will center around themes, specifically the environment and other issues of public concern. Students will be encouraged to express their views, including how they would tackle contemporary problems.

Taft High, Norwood Park

Taft will design a program of "outcome-based" education, where students must demonstrate they know and can do what the course requires before receiving credit.

The school also will be divided into five self-governing units, each with a combined career/college prep curriculum. Themes for these schools-within-a-school will be communication arts, engineering and manufacturing technology, environmental and health sciences, personal and public service and business management, marketing and entrepreneurship. ■

Deborah Hinton

Legislature okays school-day exception

Earlier this year, about a dozen elementary schools that had altered the length of their school days to provide large blocks of time for staff development were told to stop. (See *CATALYST/Updates*, May 1992.)

Since then, the Legislature has altered the law so that the schools could resume the practice.

At issue was a state law that requires schools to offer 300 minutes of instruction daily. To create staff development time, some Chicago schools shaved 10 to 15 minutes from teachers' morning preparation, starting classes earlier; they then periodically dismissed children early to recapture the lost prep time. On those periodic staff development days, however, children did not receive the required 300 minutes of instruction.

At the urging of the Chicago Teachers Union and the School Board, the Legislature added an exception to the 300-minute rule: Schools may schedule half-day staff development at regular intervals—for example, once a month—so long as they add a half day to children's class time during the intervening days.

Other exceptions are the first and last days of school and the five full days of staff development already scheduled in the school calendar.

Suit seeks vouchers for poor children

A lawsuit seeking private-school tuition vouchers for the parents of low-income, minority schoolchildren in 24 South and West Side schools has been filed by a conservative public-interest group based in Washington, D.C.

Charging that the Chicago schools have failed to provide the "efficient system of high-quality public education" required by the state constitution, the suit is asking the Cook County Circuit Court to order the state to give parents their children's share of state aid, about \$2,500 per

child. The suit names the Chicago and Illinois boards of education as defendants.

The group, Institute for Justice, has filed a similar suit against the California Board of Education, seeking vouchers for parents of poor schoolchildren in South Central Los Angeles, Compton and Inglewood schools, says attorney Clint Bolick.

"The only way these kids can get a good education today is to give them money to go to private school," Bolick contends. "If you were to buy a car and the car turned out to be a lemon, the court wouldn't give the car company more money. They'd give you your money back."

Bolick, as attorney for the Landmark Foundation for Civil Rights, used that same argument in a move to intervene in the state funding equity lawsuit filed by Chicago and 72 other school districts. But a judge ruled that Bolick's group had no legal standing to intervene. Bolick later left the Landmark Foundation to co-found the Institute.

Chicago and Los Angeles are targets of the voucher suits, Bolick says, because both school systems have "monumental" academic problems but strong private school systems. Chicago's private schools are heavily parochial, however, and the suit could face a tough hurdle because a voucher program might violate the constitutional separation of church and state.

Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough has called the suit "elitist," and said that vouchers would destroy the "cash-starved" Chicago schools.

Since 1981, four voucher bills have been introduced in the Illinois Legislature, but none has made it to the floor for a vote.

More ex-principals charge discrimination

In the wake of a successful race-discrimination lawsuit by former Principal Walter Pilditch of Morgan Park High School, seven white former principals have filed similar suits against black and Latino local school council members. (See *CATALYST/Updates*, June 1992.)

Two other white former principals are suing LSC members on the grounds they were dismissed without cause.

The principals are seeking back pay and other damages. They are:

- Charles Keenan, Neil Elementary School in Chatham.

- Sylvia Asllani, Pickard Elementary School in Pilsen. Asllani also is suing other School Board officials and a number of Latino community organizations and activists.

- As a group, James Ahern, Bowen High in Calumet Heights; William Cox Jr., Cuffe Elementary in Auburn; Kenneth Dieml, Lyon Elementary on the Northwest Side; Donald Kimball, Chalmers Elementary in North Lawndale; Charles McCabe, Avalon Park Elementary on the South Side; Noreen Nagle, Irving Park Elementary on the Northwest Side; and Mary Ann Timlin, Carnegie Elementary in Woodlawn. Dieml and Nagle are not charging racial discrimination.

Funding equity suit dismissed

A Cook County judge dealt Chicago and 72 other financially needy school districts a major blow in June by dismissing a lawsuit charging that the state's school funding system is unconstitutional.

Proponents are now relying on voters to pass a constitutional amendment in November requiring the state to shoulder the "preponderant financial responsibility" for funding the schools.

Even with the amendment on the ballot, however, backers of the suit "don't intend to let it drop," says Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance and the head of the Committee for Educational Rights, which filed the suit. An appeal has been filed. The suit argued that the state's system of funding schools is unconstitutional and inequitable because it relies primarily on local property taxes, creating wide disparities between poor and wealthy districts.

In dismissing the suit, Judge Thomas O'Brien said that the Legislature, not the courts, should decide how to fund public education.

Mainstreaming advocates go to court

Advocates for children with disabilities have filed suit to force the Board of Education to speed up its integration of such children into regular classrooms and schools.

"The law says that children with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment and as close to home as possible," says Laura J. Miller, an attorney with the Northwestern University Legal Clinic, which along with Designs for Change is handling the lawsuit.

The suit was filed in federal court against the Chicago and Illinois boards of education. The four plaintiffs are children with disabilities who, contrary to their parents' wishes, have no interaction at school with children who are not disabled.

Thomas Hehir, associate superintendent of special education and pupil support services, says he is an advocate of "mainstreaming" special education children and that his department is moving as quickly as possible.

Counters Miller: "We realize that mainstreaming disabled children into regular education classes is being done, but it needs to be done on a larger scale."

About 40,000 Chicago public school pupils are classified as special education students.

School board roster

With the appointment of three new members and the reappointment of two incumbents, the Board of Education has only one vacancy.

Member Albert Logan is serving on an expired term. At press time, Mayor Richard M. Daley had not selected a replacement.

Joining the board in June were Charles E. Curtis Sr., James D. Flanagan and John Valinote. They replaced Grady Bailey, Patricia Daley and Anna Mustafa.

Curtis, 51, is a realtor specialist in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Flanagan, 29, is a commercial real estate division officer for the American National Bank & Trust Company. Valinote, 31, is a

manager with IBM. Reappointed were Clinton Bristow Jr. and Bertha Magaña.

The racial/ethnic composition of the board is seven blacks, four whites, three Hispanics and one Asian American.

Members and the years their terms expire are:

1993: Stephen R. Ballis, Sandra J. Bishop, Juan S. Cruz (vice president), Rev. Nathaniel Jarrett.

1994: Florence B. Cox (president), Rev. Darryl F. James, Maria Vargas.

1995: Pamela A. Lenane, Ashish K. Sen, James D. Flanagan.

1996: Clinton Bristow Jr. and Bertha Magaña, Charles E. Curtis Sr., John Valinote.

Committees and their members are:

Budget: Sen (chair), James, Flanagan, Jarrett, Lenane.

Educational Support: Bishop (chair), Logan, Valinote, Curtis, Magaña.

Operations Support: Ballis (chair), Bishop, Logan, Curtis, Valinote.

Facilities Support: Vargas (chair), Bristow, Ballis, Sen, Magaña.

Compliance (reform, desegregation, special education): James (chair), Cruz, Jarrett, Vargas, Flanagan.

Upcoming events

■ **SEPT. 8** Schools that have worked hard to serve their children better are the focus of a one-hour documentary to be broadcast at 8:30 p.m. on WTTW-TV (Channel 11). In "A Cry from the Edge," teachers talk about the ingredients of their schools' success, and children talk about what why they are learning more. The famed Central Park East Schools are among those profiled. The program will be rebroadcast at 2 p.m. Sept. 9.

■ **SEPT. 30** The Legislative Task Force on School Finance will hold public hearings in Chicago on ways to finance the proposed constitutional amendment requiring the state to fund the lion's share of public education. The amendment, on the November ballot, would cost the state an extra \$1 billion to \$3 billion, according to various estimates. Time: 2 p.m. Place: Room 16-504, State of Illinois Building, 100 W. Randolph. For more information call (217) 782-4648. ■

Lorraine Forte, Debra Williams

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PUBLISHER

Roy Larson

EDITOR

Linda Lenz

MANAGING EDITOR

Lorraine Forte

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

DiAnne Walsh

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Michael Klonsky

CONSULTING EDITOR

Durrett Wagner

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Catalyst
VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Bright Ideas

Writing becomes a weekend adventure

At Smyser Elementary School on the Far Northwest Side, a few furry pals are inspiring first-graders to build their reading and writing skills.

Each weekend, students take home storybooks with well-known characters such as Winnie the Pooh and Curious George. They also take home a stuffed version of the character, along with crayons, colored pencils, paints and paper to draw and write the tales of their weekend adventures with their friend.

Teacher Carol Moynihan started the program last January with a \$400 grant from the Chicago Foundation for Education. The money was used to purchase the storybooks, stuffed animals and other supplies.

"It's really amazing to see these children reading," says Moynihan, as several students race past her to the bookshelves. "Instead of going for the games, they're now going for the books." Reading and writing have become more fun because children are familiar with these storybook characters, she adds.

"Winnie the Pooh and me went to Indiana to visit my grandma," wrote



JOHN BOOZ

Teacher Frances Lawrence distributes reading videos at Terrell School.

Stefanos Reveliotis, while Cyndi Molnar drew a picture of herself with Curious George, preparing for bed.

On Mondays and Tuesdays, Moynihan's pupils share their weekend experiences. "One of the girls wrote seven pages on her weekend," says Moynihan with a laugh. "Soon, it became like a contest to see who could write the most."

Parents also like the program, Moynihan notes. "Some of the parents cannot afford quality books. This way, kids can read them without buying them."

Videos spur reading, not violence

Two years ago, while watching students imitate gun fights and other violent behavior they'd seen on television and videos, Principal Reva Hairston of Terrell Elementary School in Washington Park came up with an idea for converting TV to positive use.

"I wanted to give kids something of their own to watch, something positive," Hairston recalls. What

came to mind were the seeds of "Take Home a Teacher," a program that promotes reading by lending children videos of their teachers reading storybooks.

Students also take home a copy of the book—so they can read along—and a list of activities to complete with a family member, who must sign the "homework" to show that he or she has completed it with the child.

Besides improving reading skills, the program aims to foster better communication between families and teachers and teach parents good educational practices they can then use with their children.

A \$20,000 Urban Education Partnership grant paid for video equipment, supplies, tape editing and teacher stipends.

During its first year, the program served first through third grade. But it was so popular that last year it was expanded to fourth through sixth.

"Children love it," says teacher Frances Lawrence. "It really inspires them to learn how to read."

"It was funny seeing my teacher on TV," says second-grader Lawanda Shaw. "I really like the tapes." ■

Deborah Hinton

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