

# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM



## VOCATIONAL ED

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## Law pushes voc-ed into real world

by Lorraine Forte

**A**t Senn Metro High School in Edgewater, 30 students—some of them potential dropouts—work for two periods a day in a newly-renovated shop equipped with lathes, milling machines and other metalworking equipment.

They spend the rest of the day in regular classes that enhance the hands-on learning in metal shop. In English, they will learn to write technical reports. In math, they will use trigonometry and algebra to design precision-crafted machine parts. In chemistry, they will study how metals interact to form alloys.

Across town at Simeon Vocational High School in Chatham, students in the automotive technology program will start, next semester, studying a new curriculum that faculty and auto industry consultants spent months writing. In math, for instance, they'll learn measurement of engine components; in science, theories of engine combustion. In social studies, they will research and report on the rise and social impact of the auto industry.

By next fall, Simeon teacher Willie

Scott hopes to move into a new, much larger auto shop that will accommodate twice the number of students now enrolled in the program, long the school's most popular. When they graduate, students can apply for one of 12 community college scholarships awarded each year to inner-city youngsters by automaker Mercedes-Benz. To date, the company has never had applicants for all 12 scholarships in a single year.

Senn and Simeon are two of dozens of high schools striving to improve vocational education, spurred by the 1990 Carl Perkins Act, which calls for reforms in schools that receive federal vocational education funds.

As a result, schools are updating curriculum, starting new programs to meet the demand for workers in fields such as industrial technology and health, and working with businesses to provide students with internships and other work experience. And many schools are giving vocational education a new name: "tech-prep." With this approach, students in the last two years of high school take vocational courses

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that prepare them for jobs and academic courses that prepare them for post-secondary training at two-year community colleges.

"One of the problems we have [with students] is that they don't have direction. They don't know why they're in school," says Jerry Ohare, a tech-prep coordinator for the Illinois State Board of Education. "tech-prep is a good option—it prepares kids for a specific outcome."

In Illinois, schools that receive Perkins funds to develop tech-prep must meet three state guidelines in their programs, says Richard J. Miguel, assistant superintendent of vocational education for the Illinois Board of Education.

The school must outline how vocational and academic faculty will work together to improve curriculum; how

school faculty will work with community colleges to coordinate coursework; and how the school plans to work with business to align vocational courses with the skills needed in the industry.

## Good timing

Tech-prep and other reform efforts come at an opportune time, Miguel and other educators assert.

"Voc-ed has become marginalized, pushed more and more into the background," Miguel says. "There's been a tremendous neglect of kids who don't go on to college."

By the year 2000, 70 percent of jobs won't require a college degree but will require post-secondary training, according to the 1990 report "America's Choice: High Skills or Low

Wages" by the National Center on Education and the Economy. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the three fastest-growing occupations are technicians, service workers and sales workers; none of the jobs requires four years of college.

(For job projections in the Chicago area, see story below.)

While such jobs are growing, the lack of skilled technical workers is "a definite problem, and getting worse," says Thomas Reid, vice president for education and environmental issues at the Illinois Manufacturers Association. A 1990 survey of 140 IMA member firms found that 65 percent had problems finding skilled tradespeople, and 50 percent had problems finding technical personnel.

The need to prepare kids for jobs at a time when unemployment is high, especially in the inner-city, also has shined a spotlight on voc-ed.

"We're trying to feed kids into real jobs, not Burger King," says Tilden Principal Hazel Steward, whose school has a new travel and tourism program and a career center where students can get information about careers and help with job searches. Career preparation is crucial at Tilden, she adds, because "so many of our kids come from neighborhoods where unemployment is high and they don't see people working or get exposure to the workforce."

And parents are slowly realizing that college isn't the only route to good careers.

At Senn, for instance, a standing-room-only crowd of parents and students turned out for an open house on the new metalworking program. And graduates of the Senn program won't have much problem finding jobs; about 400 precision metalworking jobs go unfilled in the Chicago area each year, says Bruce Braker, executive vice president of the Tooling and Manufacturing Association in Park Ridge. "When business improves, as it's doing now, companies have a terrible time finding trained employees," Braker says.

"Everyone is not college material," says Ron Sistrunk, an LSC member at two schools and former executive director of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform. "Parents are looking at it from an economic standpoint. They're enrolling kids in college and they're not graduating, not getting jobs. Paying for

## Bachelor's degree not required

There's good news for high school students who don't want to attend college for four years: Many of the jobs expected to grow fastest in the Chicago area won't require it, according to a 1991 report by Northwestern University's NCI Research.

The report ranks jobs in 25 industries on three factors: wages, education requirements and projected hiring through 1995. Jobs requiring two to four years of training beyond high school were ranked higher overall than those requiring just a high school diploma or four years of college.

The most promising jobs, listed in the accompanying chart, have an average starting wage of more than \$23,000. These jobs, the report says, "fulfill the role that high-wage manufacturing jobs played in past decades, [offering] a decent standard of living for those with less than four years of college."

Overall, the industries with the best job prospects are health care, transportation and manufacturing, says James E. Peterson, who directed the study.

The report calls for apprenticeships, tech-prep and similar pro-

grams to link high school studies to real jobs and two-year community-college training.

The study is an important resource for schools planning new and revamped vocational programs.

"There's a tremendous need for information, [because] it's difficult for schools to plan at a time when skills and competencies are changing rapidly," Peterson says. "You can't just take something out of Washington, because so much depends on the local economy and what jobs are in demand." L.F.

OCCUPATION	AVERAGE 1989 WAGE
Registered nurses	\$30,000
Health technicians and licensed practical nurses	\$20,000
Technicians (other than health)	\$28,000
Retail and service managers	\$30,000
Sales and marketing (includes insurance and real estate agents, non-retail sales reps, others)	\$22,000
Mechanics (installation and repair of machinery)	\$24,000
Secretaries and stenographers	\$17,000
Other clerical and support personnel	\$17,000

it gets to be a burden."

Negative attitudes toward skilled trades usually signal a "lack of understanding about the scope of knowledge these jobs take," says former vocational teacher Melvin Wilson, now treasurer of the Chicago Teachers Union. "You can't just raise the hood of a car, set a spark plug with any kind of tool and that's it."

## Mandate for change

The call for more academics, through tech-prep or other means, is apparently winning over educators who have criticized traditional vocational education.

"It's the right direction," says Warren Chapman, Illinois coordinator for the Coalition of Essential Schools. Coalition founder Theodore Sizer of Brown University has written that vocational education "as it exists now in high schools ought to be eliminated," Chapman says. "That's what he's called for—more academics."

Another move called for by Perkins is teaching students about all aspects of an industry, not just a narrow set of skills for one entry-level job. That means teaching ownership, management, finance, labor and environmental issues, basic technological principles and workplace health and safety, according to the Center for Law and Education in Washington, D.C.

Simeon auto shop teacher Willie Scott agrees. "My goal is to help them understand that they may start out working in the grease and dirt, but they can become technicians, middle managers, even own a dealership."

Some schools are meeting this goal through entrepreneurship education, in which students learn the basics of running a business. (See story on page 6.)

Starting this year, schools receiving Perkins grants will themselves be put to the test. The state will evaluate their vocationed programs on the basis of student test scores, graduation and dropout rates, the number of students that find jobs and other criteria, Miguel says.

The law requires states to evaluate only those programs funded with Perkins money, but Illinois will evaluate all vocational programs at those schools. "We think schools will want to know how they're doing overall," Miguel says. "For the first time, they'll have solid data to use in planning



JOHN BOOZ

Students in Simeon High School's automotive program repair an ailing engine.

[improvements]."

Nationwide, about \$1 billion in Perkins money has gone to state education agencies this year. Illinois received \$39 million. In addition, state board officials lined up prominent business executives to lobby the Illinois legislature for an additional \$3 million, Miguel says. They were successful.

"That was a miracle, given that they were cutting back on other programs," Miguel says.

Under the new Perkins Act, 75 percent of funds must go directly to school districts; the old law required states to

allocate only 57 percent to districts. State education agencies can retain the rest, using it for teacher training and other support to districts.

In turn, districts must "target" their funds to those schools with the highest numbers of low-income, minority, limited-English-proficient and disabled students.

This year, Chicago received \$7.8 million; \$4.5 million was distributed to 36 high schools. The central office is using the remaining \$3.3 million to pay the salaries of vocational teacher aides and group of resource coordinators who work with all schools, as well as for other support, says Bernard Spillman, assistant superintendent for academic and vocational instruction.

The school "targeting" requirement caused some confusion in Chicago, however, because last year Spillman's office awarded Perkins money on a competitive basis. Schools submitted proposals, and industry and community representatives evaluated them. Spillman and other officials had reasoned that the process would meet the law's guidelines because the vast majority of Chicago students, whatever school they attend, are poor.

This year, the state turned thumbs-down on the idea. As a result, five schools that had won grants last year but had relatively few low-income students received no money this year, and 11 other schools with a majority of poor or limited-English-proficient stu-

## Perkins grant recipients

Following is a list of schools that received Carl Perkins vocational education grants for 1992-93.

Austin, Chicago High School for Agricultural Science, Chicago Vocational, Clemente, Collins, Crane, DuSable, Englewood, Farragut, Fenger, Flower, Foreman, Gage Park.

Harper, Jones, Juarez, Kelly, Kelyvn Park, Kennedy, King, Lane, Manley, Near North, Orr, Phillips, Prosser, Robeson, Senn, Simeon, South Side Learning Center, Steinmetz, Taft, Tilden, Washburne Trade School, Wells, Westinghouse.

dents received grants even though some had not submitted proposals. Spillman says central office will help those schools develop acceptable proposals. "They'll have to come up with some plan," he insists.

## Costs, other obstacles

The new law has sparked changes, but it's far from clear that the changes will be radical enough to generate substantial gains in student learning.

For instance, schools are still stymied by the high cost of equipment and the lack of money to hire extra teachers for special programs. At Simeon, renovation of the new auto shop—located in an adjoining building the board purchased from the 7-Up Co.—could run over \$500,000. To fully equip the shop will take thousands more.

At Senn, assistant principal Judy Hernandez would like to accommodate an additional class of students—68 applied for the 30 available slots—but that would require an additional \$150,000 to equip a second shop, plus more money for a second shop teacher. The school also needs new computers for its computer-aided design and drafting programs; the current ones aren't powerful enough to run the latest software.

Getting businesses to chip in for equipment is one possibility, but it's not easy. "In order to get stuff from industry, you have to have time to track it down," says Senn drafting instructor Grove Durry. "And if a corporation's going to donate something, they won't donate the new stuff. They'll buy themselves the new equipment and give away the old."

The CTU's Wilson says he sometimes relied on industry during stints as a vocational instructor at Simeon and Dunbar. More often, however, he solved the problem by ordering replacement parts, listed in the budget as supplies rather than equipment. "When the parts all came, I had enough to make new machinery," Wilson recalls. "It wasn't exactly according to Hoyle, but that's what you had to do."

The high cost of equipment is one reason schools and businesses need closer partnerships, Wilson adds. "There are so many new technologies

surfacing that even industry might not have access yet. If schools are not able to get these things, industry will have to step in and help out."

Greg Darnieder, executive director of the Chicago Cluster Initiative serving four high schools and their elementary feeder schools, agrees. "You can't expect schools to keep up with technology advances. They just can't do it."

Partnerships between schools and businesses are slowly emerging; industries that have worker shortages are, not surprisingly, easiest to recruit, Spillman says.

Such linkages are crucial for reasons other than equipment needs, Spillman and others point out. Students need summer internships, on-the-job training such as apprenticeships (see story on page 11) and, if possible, the chance to "shadow" employees to see what a typical day at the job is like.

"We would like to encourage businesses to do some of these unconventional things," Darnieder says. "Business also needs to accept respon-

sibility for working with young people. They need to look at young people as a resource to be developed in positive ways."

Another critical need is for teacher training. Now that the state must distribute more money to school districts, fewer dollars are available for the training the state has offered. "The idea was to get money to local areas and let them plan it themselves," says Miguel.

The state's guidelines for tech-prep programs require schools to set up staff development. But, says Miguel, "The depth and extent of that is left up to them." Schools that receive Perkins funds but don't set up tech-prep programs aren't required to provide staff development.

Teachers need training "not just to incorporate more academics into the [vocational] courses, but in how to work with one another," he says.

"If academic and vocational teachers work together, it's better for all kids." ■



JOHN BOOB

Simeon students Teneshia Warren and Kareem Forte troubleshoot computer problems in Larry Scott's electronics class.

# Employers seek grads with academic skills

**W**ithout basic academic skills, high school graduates headed for the workplace won't have much chance with prospective employers.

"They need reading and thinking skills. Employers are saying, 'If they don't have those basic skills, don't bother to send them to us,'" explains Richard J. Miguel, assistant superintendent of vocational education for the Illinois Board of Education.

Judging from employer surveys, however, schools are doing a poor job of teaching those skills.

A 1992 study by the Committee on Economic Development (CED) asked more than 400 firms across the country to rate recently hired high school graduates on 15 factors essential to success in the workplace. The factors encompassed simple academic and social skills, such as following directions, using arithmetic and working well with other employees.

The results were dismal: Only 33 percent of employers said graduates could read and understand written or verbal instructions. Only 25 percent said they could perform basic arithmetic. Only 12 percent said they could write well. And only 10 percent said they could solve complex problems. As for dressing and behaving properly on the job, only 39 percent of employers gave positive reviews.

On average, firms reported screening five applicants to find one with adequate skills for an entry-level job.

Closer to home, firms in the metro Chicago area have voiced the same complaints. A 1990 survey by the Illinois Manufacturers' Association asked members in eight state Senate districts in Chicago and elsewhere around the state to rate the overall skills of recent graduates who had applied for work with their firms.

Statewide, 40 percent of the 140 firms that responded said applicants

were "poorly educated [and] unprepared" for the work force; the remaining 60 percent rated them "average [and] trainable."

Firms in the Chicago district and in the two collar-county districts reported that roughly half—54 percent and 51 percent, respectively—had average skills, with the other half poorly educated. Firms in the suburban Cook County district gave applicants the highest rating, saying 81 percent of applicants had average skills and only 19 percent were poorly educated.

## Minorities farthest behind

A 1990 study shows African Americans and Hispanics, who are most likely to attend poor, inner-city schools, are at the greatest disadvantage. The study, conducted by the Educational Testing Service, tested the "document literacy" of 20 million job seekers who had registered for unemployment or were enrolled in federal Job Training Partnership Act programs. Document literacy was defined as the ability to understand and use information from common workplace documents, such as job applications, payroll forms and sales charts.

The study found that between 26 and 31 percent of blacks and Hispanics scored at the lowest level on various tests, compared to 5 to 8 percent of whites.

To clarify what schools need to teach students, the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) outlined in 1991 the skills essential for any workplace. They are:

■ **BASIC SKILLS.** In reading, writing and math.

■ **HIGHER-ORDER SKILLS.** Ability to think creatively, generate new ideas, make decisions, solve problems, interpret graphs and other non-verbal

information and learn and apply new knowledge.

■ **PERSONAL QUALITIES.** Responsibility, high self-esteem, sociability, discipline, integrity and honesty.

## Business to blame?

Miguel, however, cautions that concentrating on basic skills can keep schools from developing better technical programs that lead to better jobs.

"Look at an employer's hiring behavior," he says. "If four applicants come in and all four of them have basic skills, they'll hire the one that has the technical skills they need."

One noted political economist argues that business is as much to blame for inadequately trained workers as the schools are.

Corporate giving to education usually goes to colleges and universities, not public schools, writes Harvard University's Robert Reich in the September 1992 issue of *Harper's* magazine. In addition, American corporations "are busily siphoning off state and local tax dollars, which might otherwise prop up public schools, by demanding tax breaks and subsidies as a condition for remaining in or coming to an area."

As a result, business' share of local property taxes "has dropped precipitously in recent decades—from 45 percent to 17 percent between 1957 and 1987," notes Reich. "In many poor and working-class towns, without corporate tax dollars there just isn't enough money to pay for good schools."

Reich also gives poor marks to American businesses for on-the-job training. Workers who least need extra training are most likely to get it, he says; workers with college degrees are 50 percent more likely to receive training than those without. L.F.

## New directions: Entrepreneurial education

# Business boomlet in CPS high schools



TONY GETSUG

Orr teacher Ofelia Rosso shows Desktop Catering students how to prepare vegetables.

In scores of classes across the city, vocational education students are learning how to be boss.

At Orr High School in Humboldt Park, 10 students in an advanced cooking course run Desktop Catering, which prepares and sells hot and cold dishes, desserts, fruit and health drinks to area businesses.

And at Flower Vocational High School in Garfield Park, each junior signs up to work in one of five student-operated business ventures: a credit union, a school supplies shop, a secretarial service, a fashion boutique and a cafe.

Student-run businesses are one way to fulfill a new federal requirement that federally funded vocational education programs teach all aspects of an industry—in other words, not only production but also ownership and management.

Advocates of this comprehensive approach also say it helps keep young people in school.

"Some teens don't see a need for high school," says Betty Sandifer,

chair of the home economics department at Orr. "If we can make them see a connection between what they do in the classroom and how it can improve the quality of their lives, they'll come to school."

In the inner city, where unemployment is enormous, entrepreneurial education could be a lifeline not only for students but also for their communities, says Curtis James, director of the Entrepreneurial Awareness Program at Chicago State University.

"Our economy has changed significantly in recent years," James observes. "We have gone from a manufacturing industry to a service one. Many manufacturing jobs are gone. How do these youngsters employ themselves in the future? One way is to start businesses that, in turn, can stimulate the economy and help provide jobs in their communities."

Funded by a grant from the Coleman/Fannie May Foundation, James' four-year-old program is aimed at stirring student interest in small, community-based businesses,

such as retail stores, fast food franchises, accounting and tax preparation services and small contracting firms. Currently, it is working with 30 schools that have student-run businesses.

At Orr, students who run Desktop Catering get an overview of the food and catering industry, including nutrition, food safety and sanitation, and how to create menus, use professional cooking equipment, prepare tables and serve meals. They also learn general business skills, such as how to use a computer, write a business plan and market their products.

The program also integrates academic and vocational subjects. The math teacher might work with students on accounting and converting recipes to higher and lower yields, or the English teacher might have students produce marketing strategies and write contracts.

Ofelia M. Rosso, Orr's food service and catering teacher, says students are beating down her door to enroll in her classes so they eventually can join the catering venture, which was launched last year to serve in-house school events. Desktop is an outgrowth that started this year.

LaToya Robinson, a junior and an advanced cooking student, says she would like to open a food service operation like the ones at major hotels. "I love to cook. I even try to tell my mother things that I have learned, though she reminds me that she's been cooking for 20 years."

## Flower retools

Flower eases all its students into a business frame of mind. As freshmen, students learn a little about each of the school's five business ventures, or clusters. As sophomores, they select a venture and complete an orientation that includes visiting businesses and writing a business plan. By the junior year, students work in their chosen venture.

"In each cluster, our kids take their regular subjects, enroll in a small-business ownership course and have on-the-job training," says teacher Bettie Stewart. "The academic teachers work very closely with the vocational and special education teachers. If our students decide that instead of trying

their hand at owning a business, they want to go on to college, they're prepared."

Two of the ventures began last year, three this year. Says Stewart, "We are already seeing improvement in students' behavior and attitudes."

## Realistic program?

James believes that entrepreneurial education needs to be incorporated into every school's curriculum. To that end, his program has begun working with 150 teachers in elementary, middle and high schools on ways to teach business ownership.

In light of the high failure rate among new businesses, James says entrepreneurship programs give students an opportunity to learn from mistakes before their lives depend on business success.

This may be especially important for African Americans. Studies of inner-city businesses owned by blacks and by Koreans say blacks succeed less often in part because their preparation was inferior, according to an article in the Sept. 17, 1992 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*. In the article, R.C. Longworth reports that some studies say "inner-city blacks fail, relatively speaking, because they are poorly educated, did not grow up in a business culture, have little access to money and do not have strong families to help them."

"Our kids need to be able to be self-employed," says Simeon electronics teacher Larry Scott, who teaches entrepreneurship in his classes. "We want them to know, as African-Americans, how important it is to be self-employed so they can then hire other [blacks]."

Looking beyond preparation, Lauren Jacob, staff attorney of the Center for Law and Education in Washington, D.C., says vocational education should be linked with community development. The center gives grants and other assistance to community groups that work with minority businesses.

"No matter how wonderful the skills [students learn]," Jacob says, "if kids are just going back to low-income communities that have only low-skill, low-wage jobs, their skills aren't going to be of use."

Debra Williams

## New directions: Integrating academics

# Bowen cuts failures by linking courses

**A**t Bowen High School in South Chicago, failure rates in geometry and drafting dropped significantly the first year of a program that enrolls students in both courses back to back.

Similarly, at 17 of 28 high schools in a consortium organized by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), vocational education students posted higher reading, math and science scores following two years of a program that weaves more academic content into vocational classes. Of the eight schools that made the biggest gains, six had been near the bottom.

These success stories illustrate a key thrust in the drive to reform vocational education: Academics must be integrated into the curriculum so that vocational students learn "thinking skills" as well as "job skills."

Without thinking skills, young people will find it nearly impossible to land jobs in an economy based increasingly on exchanging services and information, various experts and educators say. "The smokestacks and assembly lines of the past are gone," write Alvin and Heidi Toffler, best-selling authors of *Future Shock* and *The Third Wave*, in the October 1991 issue of *World Monitor*. America now has "an economy whose primary resources are educated brainpower, innovative creativity, [and] rapidly learned skills."

The 1990 Carl Perkins Act requires schools that receive federal voc-ed funds to include more academic content in vocational courses. In an automotive program, for example, students should learn not only engine repair but also the physics and math concepts used in engine design.

Conversely, academic courses could benefit from an infusion of vocational teaching techniques, some educators argue.

New teaching practices advocated by education reformers "are already being practiced in vocational programs," writes Larry Rosenstock in the February 1991 *Phi Delta Kappan*. Vocational students "engage in experiential and applied learning, learn to pose and solve problems, work cooperatively and have experience with performance assessment," explains Rosenstock, director of occupational education at the Cambridge (Mass.) Rindge and Latin School.

"I hear the academic teachers complaining all the time that kids aren't motivated," concurs Bowen drafting teacher Rich Pusateri, who helped develop the geometry/drafting program. "We know from experience that vocational application does motivate kids. And vocational education is more and more going to become the application of academics."

## Copycats

The Bowen program began two years ago when geometry teachers complained that their students had no interest in the course and were failing at a high rate. Pusateri and other drafting teachers stepped in with a plan to benefit students in both courses: encourage geometry students to take drafting, and drafting students to take geometry.

"Drafting is a natural complement" to geometry because measurement and other operations drafting students use are based on geometric principles, says drafting teacher William Africh. And the hands-on experience of drafting class reinforces the abstract concepts taught in geometry.

In the program's first year, 36 students signed up; 25 percent ended

up failing geometry and 10 percent failing drafting. But for students outside the program, failure rates were much higher: 40 percent of geometry-only students and 18 percent of drafting-only students.

This year, nearly 75 students enrolled in the joint program. Word of its benefits has spread beyond Bowen, too. Nearly a dozen other schools are "copy-cating" the program with a curriculum guide the central office created with Bowen teachers, says Bernard Spillman, assistant superintendent for academic and vocational instructional support. And female geometry students have signed up for the accompanying drafting classes at a much higher rate than young women who don't take geometry: 50 percent vs. 10 percent, respectively.

The program has stimulated competition among students, but has also fostered more cooperation. Students compete to have the best drawings in drafting and the best grades in geometry, yet work together readily on projects and homework. "It helps build cooperative learning skills, more sharing of what they learn," geometry teacher Betty MacDonald observes.

Teachers benefit from working together as they coordinate the curriculum. "I like the fact that teachers are working with teachers," Pusateri says. "We learn what the math department is doing, they learn what we're doing. I think as we integrate more [courses] collegiality will keep building."

## Fighting low expectations

"The bottom line is, it works," observes SREB Director Gene Bottoms, who organized the consortium of 28 high schools, spread over 13 southern states. "The second bottom line is, it's hard as hell to get schools to change." What's most difficult to change, he explains, are the low expectations schools have for vocational students.

Students whom schools know can learn easily "get a demanding [academic] curriculum," Bottoms says. Vocational students "get a shell of that curriculum"—general math but no algebra or geometry, science courses without lab work, and English

without substantial required reading and writing.

The consortium's goal was to narrow the gap in test scores between academic and vocational students by one-third within five years. Twenty-eight schools volunteered, and their state education offices agreed to pay for staff development and other training needed for change.

The schools drew up improvement plans and agreed to participate in yearly conferences with other consortium members and in SREB's assessment of the program. The assessment included analysis of student transcripts and test scores, surveys of students and faculty and site visits by SREB staff.

Schools were not given a specific blueprint for change. "What we did was give them two sheets of paper," Bottoms explains. One stated the achievement goals; the second outlined nine practices, based on effective schools research, that SREB suggested schools adopt. The practices were:

- Determine ways to communicate high expectations to students.
- Make vocational classes more like academic classes by teaching basic concepts related to the course.
- Make academic classes look more like vocational classes, by teaching concepts through application.
- Eliminate the general track.
- Find ways for academic and vocational teachers in related areas to work and plan together.
- Provide guidance and counseling that encourages all students, not just those headed for college, to take more challenging courses.

"Tell them everyone's going to get a fast track. Get everyone on the superhighway," Bottom says.

■ Make all classes look like honors classes by getting students actively engaged in learning.

■ Don't compromise standards, but do give kids extra help if they need it.

■ Use data to figure out what works and what doesn't.

After two years of the program, 8 of the 28 schools had made "dramatic" progress and 9 had made "modest" progress in raising scores on the reading, math and science sections of the National Assessment of Educational Progress.



JOHN BOOZ

Bowen student Brandon Parker practices using a compass in drafting class.

At the eight schools, SREB reports, teachers worked together more often, schools developed more specific improvement plans and vocational students said that teachers stressed reading, math and science concepts and encouraged them to take higher-level academic courses. The schools also began offering more applied academic courses and including more academic content in vocational classes.

Six of the eight schools, mainly in rural areas or small towns, had been among the lower achieving ones at the program's outset. The majority of their students were white, but black students in other schools made progress as well, SREB reports. Black students at all 28 schools usually scored well above black students nationally.

At 11 schools, however, test scores dropped. But SREB contends that those schools, most of them larger and in urban areas, failed to implement most of the nine suggested practices.

The consortium has expanded into six more states since it was formed in 1988. Schools in several suburban Chicago communities are considering joining, Bottoms says; no Chicago schools have yet signed up. L.F.



## New directions: Career awareness

# Harper takes freshmen on year-long industry tour

Ten years ago, the job placement rate for graduates of Harper High School's vocational programs was about 70 percent. By 1990, the rate was down substantially, hovering between 40 and 50 percent.

Jobs were available, but graduates' basic skills simply weren't good enough to get them hired, explains veteran teacher Irma West, chair of the West Englewood school's business and computer education department. Students' reading, math and problem-solving skills were below par, and they didn't know the importance of "work ethics," such as showing up on time and being dressed appropriately.

"Compared to the kinds of students we were placing 10 years ago, they just didn't have it," West says.

West proposed a solution: Students

Technically and Academically Ready for Success, or STARS, a career orientation program aimed at low—but not the lowest—achievers (specifically, those whose reading and math scores are one to two years below grade level). "That's where the need is," West says. "That's the most neglected group, and these are the kids who go into vocational education."

Research confirms West's observation: Students at the top of the class usually go on to college, while those in the bottom quarter either drop out or enroll in dropout-prevention programs. The STARS kids fall in between.

During a year spent planning the program, West and other faculty recruited representatives from community groups, government agencies and local businesses to serve on an advisory committee to set up field trips and internships for students, send speakers to classes and provide other assistance. West was able to tap businesses that had hired Harper graduates and provided internships in the past. "We've tried over the years to keep in touch with those companies," she says.

The STARS "teaching team"—four teachers who each serve as a division teacher for one group of STARS pupils—got extensive training in cooperative learning, applied math and biology, computer skills and methods of building students' self-esteem and motivation.

Then, last spring, West and Harper counselors visited area elementary schools to "sell" the program to eighth-graders recommended by their counselors. Students and their parents later attended an open house to tour Harper and meet with teachers and Principal Barbara Pulliam.

"We've been rejuvenated, renewed,

rededicated," West told guests at the open house. "You might say we've been born again as teachers."

STARS was launched this September, and West is now teaching only one class a day in order to spend more time coordinating the program.

Here are some highlights:

■ To build career awareness, classes focus on a different industry during each of the four quarters of the school year: transportation and utilities, health technology, industrial technology and business and financial services. Faculty chose the industries based on job projections of Northwestern University researchers. (See story on page 2)

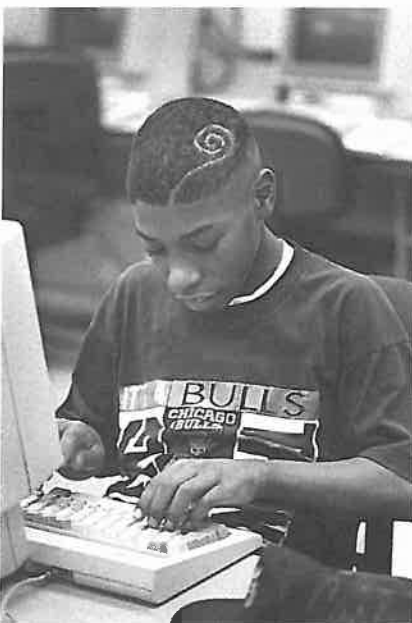
"We want students to make better decisions on what courses to take [during the rest of high school], and we want them to make better career decisions," West says.

During the "transportation" quarter, for example, students will study the history of the Chicago Transportation Authority and hear speakers from the CTA and Commonwealth Edison.

The four STARS groups take turns visiting a major facility related to the industry they're currently studying; for instance, O'Hare Airport. Students will videotape their visit and later make a presentation to their peers on the jobs they observed and how each fills a niche in the facility's purpose. In the process, students will build their writing, public speaking and research skills.

■ To upgrade basic skills, students work daily in a new computer lab on individualized reading and math lessons that teach at an accelerated—not remedial—pace. "We hope to bring students up to grade level by the end of the year," West says. Working in the lab also gives students an early grounding in computer skills.

■ Integrating academic content into



Robert Pollard tries his hand at one of Harper's new computers.

JOHN BOOZ

all courses is a must, West says. To that end, the teaching team works together during the morning preparation period to coordinate lessons.

■ Members of the advisory board are available to help parents who need help finding housing, keeping their children out of gangs and developing parenting skills geared toward adolescents. Social intervention should pay off academically, West believes, because "sometimes when kids don't do well [in school], it's because of a home or community situation."

Barbara Hughes, the STARS parent coordinator, says word of the program has spread and parents are clamoring to enroll their children. "The more exposure a child gets to different careers, the better," says Hughes, whose son is in the program. L.F.

JOHN BOOZ



Irma West coaches STARS student Alonzo Birrages.

## Resource roundup

### CITY COLLEGES

City Colleges are working with high schools across the city to develop tech-prep programs.

**Sharon Wheeler, executive director**  
Business Partnership Programs  
City Colleges of Chicago  
226 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, Ill. 60606  
(312) 368-8839

### CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The office of vocational program improvement helps schools set up tech-prep programs, update curriculum and make other innovations

**Shirley Macklin, Tech-Prep**  
**Frank Candioto, Innovation**  
Chicago Public Schools  
1819 W. Pershing Rd., 6th floor  
Chicago, Ill. 60609  
(312) 535-8860

### JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Promotes youth apprenticeship; has organized a consortium of model programs in schools across the country.

**Hillary Pennington, executive director**  
Jobs for the Future  
1815 Massachusetts Ave.  
Cambridge, Mass. 02140  
(617) 661-3411

### CENTER FOR LAW AND EDUCATION

Works with community groups to promote economic development and create school programs that combine entrepreneurship with vocational education.

**Lauren Jacobs, staff attorney**  
**Paul Weckstein, co-director**  
Center for Law and Education  
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW Suite 510  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
(202) 986-3000

### SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD

Organized a consortium of schools dedicated to integrating academics into vocational courses.

**Gene Bottoms, executive director**  
Southern Regional Education Board  
592 Tenth St. N.W.  
Atlanta, Ga. 30318  
(404) 875-9211

### MAYOR'S OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Worked with Senn and Juarez high schools to develop new vocational programs.

**Mary Gonzalez-Koenig, director**  
Mayor's Office of Employment and Training  
510 N. Peshigo Ct., Suite 2-A  
Chicago, Ill. 60611  
(312) 744-8787

### NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The center has six regional offices that provide information on vocational curricula.

**Rebecca Douglas, director**  
East Central Region Curriculum  
Coordinator/NCRVE  
Sangamon State University, F-2  
Springfield, Ill. 62794  
(217) 786-6375

The center's national office publishes a newsletter on vocational education trends and research; also publishes resource guides, reports and other materials.

**NCRVE**  
University of California at Berkeley  
1995 University Ave., Suite 375  
Berkeley, CA 94704-1058  
Toll-free number: (800) 762-4093

### ILLINOIS BOARD OF EDUCATION

The department of vocational and technological education oversees tech-prep and other Carl Perkins programs.

**Jerry Ohare, innovation coordinator**  
State Board of Education  
Dept. of Vocational and Technological Ed  
100 N. First St.  
Springfield, Ill. 62777  
(217) 782-4620

## New directions: Apprenticeships

# Germany tracks kids into good jobs

In Germany, about 70 percent of young people do not go on to university. Instead, they get on-the-job training while still in school, in fields from carpentry and plumbing to high-tech electronics and banking. The apprenticeship certificate they earn gives them a head start in the job market.

In America, about half of high school students do not go on to college. While in high school, they usually get little work experience other than afterschool and weekend jobs in fast-food restaurants or retail sales. After graduating, they're left to fend for themselves in the job market.

Neglect of the "forgotten half" who don't attend college has American educators, business executives and government officials pointing to Germany for answers. "We need this type of bona-fide training and access to good jobs," says Richard J. Miguel, assistant superintendent of vocational and technological education for the Illinois Board of Education.

The German apprenticeship system works by tracking students, at an early age, on the road to university or the workplace. By age 10, German students and their parents choose one of two tracks: *gymnasium*, which leads to university; or *hauptschule* (intermediate school) or *realschule* (general school), both of which lead to the workplace. Then, by age 16, students not headed for university find employers to hire them as apprentices. They spend the next three-and-a-half years working up to four days a week, with the remaining days spent attending classes in science, math and other subjects.

American cultural attitudes, however, make it difficult to replicate the German system, advocates admit. For one, putting students into college and non-college tracks at an early age is

anathema here in the U.S. "Germans are very comfortable with tracking, unlike Americans, who all want their kids to go to college," Miguel says.

Another belief is that universities, not apprenticeships, provide the entree to white-collar, professional jobs. Miguel learned otherwise while on a study tour last year with other American business and government officials. He recalls meeting an impressive young German who, after completing a banking apprenticeship, obtained the kind of finance job that "my daughter couldn't hope to

*"It's not just throwing kids into a dirty factory to be exploited as cheap labor."*

—Richard J. Miguel

get" even though she is a college graduate.

"If more Americans could see that," Miguel says, "they wouldn't be so apprehensive [about apprenticeships]. They'd see it's not just throwing kids into a dirty factory to be exploited as cheap labor."

Another sticking point is getting businesses to commit to workplace training, says Robert Sheets of the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University. The German commitment is rooted in the centuries-old European tradition of worker guilds, under which master craftsmen took on apprentices to train them to become silversmiths, bakers and the like.

"What you're asking [businesses] to do is spend a lot of their own money on someone who may or may not work for them in the future,"

Sheets explains. Still, Sheets and other experts say schools and businesses need to develop workplace training models. And the success of the German system, which has helped make Germany an economic powerhouse by producing large numbers of highly skilled workers, has sown some seeds of change.

The Council of Chief State School Officers, for example, has awarded over \$500,000 in grants to 12 states to help launch apprenticeship programs. Jobs for the Future, an organization based in Cambridge, Mass., has selected 10 schools in eight states to participate in its National Youth Apprenticeship Initiative, a consortium of model programs that get funding and technical assistance from the group.

In Illinois, the state plan for implementing the federal Carl Perkins Act encourages schools to launch tech-prep programs that prepare students simultaneously for entry-level jobs as well as two-year, post-secondary

training. Apprenticeships or other work-based training can be part of such programs, Miguel says.

"Business needs to [accept] responsibility for working with young people," says Greg Darnieder, executive director of the Chicago Cluster Initiative, a group of four high schools and their respective feeder elementary schools. Darnieder is working with the high schools to improve their vocational programs; he recently made a presentation to members of the business group Chicago United to solicit their help.

Apprenticeships are not yet in the works, Darnieder says, but are something to shoot for in the future. "Sometimes they [businesses] think they're doing kids a favor by hiring them. They need to look at young people as a resource to be developed in positive ways." L.F.

New directions: Scrap the general track

# Pittsburgh voc-ed overhaul leads to radical move

**Y**ou won't find Pittsburgh public school officials talking about vocational education, but that's not because their schools don't offer it. In fact, Pittsburgh has earned national acclaim for its career-training programs. Hundreds of visitors, from as far away as Indonesia, check them out each year.

"We don't use the term 'vocational education,' because in the minds of most people that's something for somebody else's kid," explains Fred A. Monaco, referring to its reputation as the place to put "dummies." Monaco is the district's director of applied technology and career development.

Pittsburgh began overhauling its vocational programs in the early 1980s, spurred in part by a sharp change in the city's economic base. The once-thriving steel industry, long an abundant source of high-pay but low-skill jobs, was in decline; the service industry was taking its place. And high-tech and medical research firms were lured to the city by the presence of Carnegie-Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh.

These new businesses provided jobs, but needed workers with better skills and training, school district officials realized.

Another critical factor was the arrival of Supt. Richard Wallace. (Recently retired, Wallace became one of the country's most highly acclaimed superintendents.) "He made it very clear he was pushing everybody to improve," Monaco says.

■ In 1982, the district spent \$500,000 installing a high-tech electronics lab at Schenley High School, a school with a bad academic reputation but a central location. "If you

have a school with problems, you put things in that school that people want," Monaco says.

The lab was the centerpiece of a four-year program that enrolls 80 students a year and weaves science and technology throughout the curriculum. Students get three grades for each lab assignment: one from the electronics teacher on their mastery of electronics concepts, one from their English teacher on the written report, and a third from a business teacher on their command of computer skills used.

The program is open to all students, even those without a solid background in math or science. (As a magnet program, entrance is based on grades and results of a lottery.) Students who need tutoring can get it, and some considered "marginal" have thus graduated from the program, Monaco says.

■ In 1984, with the help of a \$110,000 grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and technical assistance from the local Urban League, the district launched a Business and Finance Academy aimed at motivating low-achieving freshmen at Westinghouse High School.

Banking executives helped faculty write a finance-oriented curriculum that has students studying world economics in social studies and financial terminology in English. Students are assigned to mentors in the business community and get summer and part-time internships at banks and other local businesses.

The academy has been so successful that the district decided to keep funding it after the grant ran out. So far, nearly 100 percent of academy students have graduated. Almost 50 percent have gone on to college; the

rest have either enrolled in the military or found jobs within a year of graduating.

■ In 1988, four of the district's 12 middle schools began giving seventh- and eighth-graders hands-on experience in the construction trades through OASES (Occupational and Academic Skills for the Employment of Students). In the program's first exercise, students designed and built a wheelchair ramp for a handicapped man. Since then, they have built a full-size courtroom for one high school's legal-affairs program, a physical fitness facility at another school, window boxes for a neighborhood group and other projects.

The program was targeted at students who had low grades or spotty attendance, not at those who seemed most likely to drop out, says Monaco. "These kids had told us, 'The top athletes and students get a lot of praise and attention, and the burnouts have their own [dropout prevention] programs, but there's nothing for us.'"

Eight middle schools now offer the program. Students' test scores and attendance have increased, while truancy and discipline problems have declined, Monaco reports.

## General track 'a disgrace'

The district also took its most radical step later in 1988: It decided to eliminate the general track from high schools, forcing students to choose between an academic, college-preparation track and a vocational track.

The general track was "a disgrace," Monaco says, an educational no-man's land that didn't prepare kids for either jobs or college. "We [educators] should all be ashamed to have the general track in our schools."

The move stirred controversy at first, but the superintendent and Board of Education were persuaded by solid statistics. During the 1986-87 school year, 13.6 percent of general education students dropped out, compared to 3 percent of vocational students and less than 1 percent of college-preparatory students. And 90 percent of vocational graduates got jobs or enrolled in two-year technical training programs within one year of graduating, compared to 75 percent of general-track graduates. The figures had been much the same for 10 years, Monaco says.

(There are no comparable figures for Chicago because the definition of tracks varies from one school to the next, according to William Rice, director of information and analysis; for example, many students at vocational high schools are listed as college preparatory students.)

Monaco says skeptics primarily

wanted to know "If you take them out of general ed, what do you put them in?" To explain what happens, he cites math courses: The district continues to offer general math, but students can't keep taking it for four years. Now, general math serves only as preparation for higher-level courses. "If you're an academic student, you'll take algebra," Monaco explains. "If you're a vocational student, we'll encourage you to take algebra too, but if not, you'll have to take some kind of [applied] math related to your other [vocational] classes."

The academic track gained most from the demise of the general track. In 1988, 52 percent of students were in the vocational track, 26 percent in the academic track and 22 percent in the general track. Now, 54 percent are in the vocational track and 46 percent are in the academic track.

In Illinois, Belvidere High School in Belvidere this year became the second school in the state to dump the general track, the state board reports.

"It had outgrown its time," Principal Jerry Fisher explains. Students in the track were taking the easiest, introductory-level courses "that didn't lead to anything, whether kids were headed to college or to work."

Most former general-ed students are now enrolling in tech-prep programs the school is developing in manufacturing, health and business.

"I think you're going to see a lot more schools doing this," Fisher says. "Many schools in our area [near Rockford] are talking about it."

Richard J. Miguel, head of vocational education for the state, would like to see legislation introduced to eliminate general education in all Illinois high schools. So far, though, teachers' unions have opposed the move, he says.

L. F.

## Oregon, other states add 'mastery' requirement

Last year, the Oregon Legislature passed a bill that the president of the National Center on Education and the Economy called "the most sweeping response yet" to the group's 1990 report calling for better education of non-collegebound youth.

The report, "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages," advocates educational performance standards (not just paper-and-pencil tests) and enough resources to ensure all students eventually meet them.

The Oregon law deals primarily with improving early childhood education, but also provides for sweeping changes in vocational training. For one, it eliminates the general track from high schools by 1997, forcing students to choose between a college-prep track and a new professional-technical track that will include on-the-job training. Currently, the majority of Oregon high schoolers are in the general track.

High school students will be required to earn a Certificate of Initial Mastery before finishing the 10th grade, to show basic proficiency in English, math, history, science and other core academic subjects.

Before graduating, they must earn a Certificate of Advanced Mastery showing they have completed either the college-prep or the professional-technical track.

Elementary students are to get exposure to careers and the workforce. Such early exposure is needed because "there are families where parents don't work, grandparents don't work," says Norma Paulus, state superintendent of public instruction. "We want to have third-graders observing workplaces."

The state teachers union favors most of the bill, but opposes the dual track and the certificate system. "There could be better [career] preparation without changing the entire structure of high school into tracking kids at age 16 into a narrow vocational choice," says Karen Famous, president of the Oregon Education Association.

The union also contends the initial certificate will become a new "stopping point" in high school and might give 16-year-olds a reason to drop out, according to an article in the June 10 issue of *Education Week*. Both provisions send the wrong mes-

sage, "that the purpose of high school is the preparation of a workforce," Famous says. In any case, cutbacks in state voc-ed funds make it impossible for schools to set up new training programs, she adds.

The state set aside \$2.3 million for tech-prep programs last year, according to the article in *Education Week*. But the real solution, Paulus says, is more state funding.

Other states are making similar moves. Washington passed legislation earlier this year requiring students to earn mastery certificates before graduating, starting in 1997; the state also set aside \$97,000 for grants to programs to integrate academics into vocational courses.

Business and education councils in Rhode Island, New York and California have recommended adopting certificate programs, and Tennessee legislators have voted to eliminate the general track. Indiana lawmakers passed a bill requiring students to pass a 10th-grade exit exam and complete either a college-prep or tech-prep program; both tracks must meet entrance requirements for state universities.

L.F.

## Ask not what your principal can do for you...

by Milton Garfield

Three years into reform, the local school council members I have observed show a healthy humility regarding the job they have been asked to take upon themselves. "Improve the way things are done at this school," they've been ordered. "You have been empowered to do it."

Soon, as students' test scores are tallied and compared, it is the LSC members who will be judged and held to account—by their communities, by parents, by politicians, by the press and, considering the notoriety of Chicago school reform, by the nation and world as well. The question "Can ordinary folks be entrusted to lead a neighborhood school from wrong to right?" is begging for an answer. Small wonder LSCs are getting nervous.

By now, most LSC members probably have learned that their actual power to change the way things are done at their schools is and likely will continue to be limited fundamentally by laws, by money and by their own time-on-task, to use a bit of educator jargon. They also probably have realized that their mission rests, as well it might, squarely on the shoulders of

their chief executive officer, the principal. Those who have reflected on the situation will see, more specifically, that their principal's entrepreneurial insights and managerial skills are central to the success of their mutual mission.

### CEO improvement plan

Having learned and acknowledged these two organizational realities, what then? Hold the principal's feet to the fire? Of course, it's fun stuff to evaluate, to fire and to hire principals.

But how can the members of a local school council, often untrained and sometimes lacking day-to-day exposure to the complex world of schooling, hope to make fair and meaningful judgments on the performance of a particular principal in a particular school setting? And yet, by law, they must.

There is another way to tackle the twin issues of performance and accountability; it is based on the premise that a good leader is as good as his constituents permit and help him to be. In other words: Ask not what your principal can do for you; ask, rather, what you can do for your principal.

Here are some suggestions for following that course. In creating your next school improvement plan, start with the question: How are we to help develop and assist our principal become a superior chief executive?

Agree to view your council not only as a policy-making and oversight body, but also as a service unit in a service-oriented system.

As a policy-making body, you might want to initiate everyone in and connected with your school to this philosophy. As a programmer for improvement, you might want to adopt service to the principal as one of your most vital functions. By doing so, you would be setting an example of what you mean by service; carried out consistently and innovatively by the council and other school people, this concept will lead to meaningful service to your students, the ultimate goal.

If this is to be done right, you will need to consider two components:

First, a CEO Improvement Plan. I suggest you charge a committee of two (your chairperson and your CEO/principal) with devising this plan for improving the principal's management skills.

While many, if not most, principals engage in professional development activities, you—and they—will find it highly profitable to reduce the activities to writing in a coherent plan that is considerate of the time demands, experience and particular needs and interests of your principal. The components will focus equally between concepts and practices and equally between education and non-education situations.

A typical program might include: (1) reading books on executive theo-

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*Milton Garfield is a management consultant who is an advisor to the Board of Directors of the Citizens School Committee. Formerly he was an adjunct professor in leadership studies at the Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy.*

ry and practice, articles in management-oriented journals, and research reports; (2) participation in seminars, workshops and conferences, sponsored by school-related and other organizations; (3) visits to schools that are reported to have successfully implemented a specific innovation, especially in management and/or LSC procedures; (4) private counseling by an experienced executive development consultant, not necessarily one associated with a university or firm concentrating in education.

You should expect your CEO/principal to share his or her new or more exciting ideas with you at LSC meetings, distribute reprints of articles believed to be of interest and value to you, and send you one or two friendly accounts each school year chronicling what he or she has been up to vis-à-vis his or her own professional development plan. Keep the whole thing informal, enjoyable—but disciplined.

Second, you will need a Council/CEO Interaction Plan. Here you focus

on who does what and when in the relationship between council members and principal. You may want to assign specific areas of activity, both ongoing and ad hoc, to each council member.

For example, your elected chairperson automatically is responsible for creating agendas, conducting meetings and, along with you and your CEO/principal, keeping the school improvement plan on track. Similarly, your representative to the subdistrict council carries the water in your behalf on issues that can and should be resolved there.

Now, you may want to appoint a member to captain your local public relations, keeping contact with the local press. Another member might coordinate contacts with school advocates and activist organizations; another with local business. Another might like to oversee security and keep in touch with the local police. Teacher members might be assigned to oversee the more school-related, ad hoc projects, such as elections,

housekeeping, fund raising.

The CEO/principal can be expected to work right along with each of you, particularly since most, if not all, outside communication will be directed to his or her office. In time, each member will learn a lot about the ins and outs of his or her "specialty" and enjoy the respect, results and pride of being an "expert."

Finally, acknowledge the enormity and difficulty of the principal's task. Let the principal know—often—through words and deeds that you are there to serve and empower, not to assess, exercise authority or play politics.

And give the process time—two school years, at least. It may require some new thinking on your part and on the principal's, some extra hours and a few dollars out of your budget. But in time your staff, your parents and your students will be the beneficiaries of your decision and actions that ask not what your principal has done for you, but, rather, what you have done for your principal. ■

## Letters

### 'Blank check amendment' would give schools a pass

The tired refrain, just "give schools more money" and everything will be okay, espoused by James H. Lewis in the October *CATALYST* reflects the discredited attitude that if we shower more money on the educational establishment it will rid itself of the problems that have interfered with the delivery of education to our children.

Much of Mr. Lewis' commentary in support of the proposed amendment to the education article of the 1970 Illinois Constitution is devoted to the assertion that people are willing to plow even more money into teachers' salaries and other expenses of the current system.

Unfortunately, neither the overly broad language in the "blank check amendment" nor Mr. Lewis' opinion allow for putting necessary limitations or preconditions on that money. In fact, the amendment's

unconditional language is probably a legal bar to any reasonable conditions that the Legislature might try to impose.

I submit that citizens are willing to provide more funding to those schools that really need it—but only if those citizens are confident that current funding (now about \$9.75 billion in Illinois) is being spent in an efficient and productive manner and is producing acceptable results for kids. That confidence is justifiably lacking with respect to many Illinois school districts.

If this amendment passes on Nov. 3, we have all lost a golden opportunity to obtain hard-to-get reforms, such as ridding ourselves of costly union contract provisions in Chicago and reducing the number of school districts outside Chicago from the current, excessive 900 plus.

It takes no imagination to see that the incentive to do the tough job of accomplishing these reforms will be gone if educators are given lots more money without conditions. The "blank check amendment" can force that unfortunate result.

In addition, although we all feel education is important, I do not believe that

we should mandate that it be given the funding that the education establishment wants every year—as the proposed amendment's "paramount duty" language would require—to the detriment of other emergency needs or priorities that might arise in the state.

Pension funding, funding for the Department of Children and Family Services, public safety money, and alcoholism and drug dependency money are examples of needs that could be seriously short-changed if the "blank check amendment" becomes part of the constitution.

Sen. Arthur L. Berman, the amendment's sponsor, said it very clearly and honestly in selling the proposal in the Senate floor debate. He used the examples of mental health, battered women and "other good causes," saying that education should be a priority and "should be paramount." Speaking of these other causes, he said, "You take what's left after you take care of education...."

*Donald C. Ames, assistant general counsel  
CNA insurance companies*

## Ames' arguments don't hold up

Donald Ames' article in the October 1992 issue of *CATALYST* that expresses opposition to the proposed amendment to the Education Article of the State Constitution relies on three basic arguments, each of which is seriously flawed.

First, Mr. Ames argues that providing schools with adequate resources would undermine new accountability measures such as the Chicago school reform. But to place increased pressure on teachers to raise their students' test scores without providing them with the necessary tools



will almost certainly create a perception of failure and publicly discredit our schools. Even the School Finance Authority, which exerted so much leadership in cost cutting this year, has acknowledged the need for more funding to make reform work in Chicago.

Second, Mr. Ames argues that the amendment would be too costly. He cites a Legislative Research Unit estimate that the amendment could cost as much as \$3 billion. The exclusive use of this figure misrepresents the facts, however, as the cited figure is only the highest of a series of estimates based on various assumptions, and is three times higher than the lowest estimates, which much more closely model what the future is likely to look like.

I was also amused at Mr. Ames' concern about what would happen to programs such as welfare in the event that money was short and the Legislature put its first dollars into education. Where was this concern two years ago when General Assistance was being axed?

Finally, Mr. Ames appears concerned that the language in the amendment is not sufficiently specific. Constitutions are not statutes. They are designed to provide the broad principles of government and by their nature are subject to interpretation. Ames' argument could be used to call into question the construction of even the U.S. Constitution, a document far more vague and subject to conflicting interpretation than the Illinois Constitution, yet arguably

the most successful political document in world history.

The proposed amendment simply puts language into the Illinois Constitution consistent with the principles found in many state constitutions across the country. The amendment gives strong direction to the Legislature in requiring both greater adequacy and equity for Illinois school finance, but correctly stops short of telling the Legislature how these requirements should be achieved.

*James H. Lewis, director  
Department of Research and Planning  
Chicago Urban League*

## Amendment opponents really want vouchers

I have served in public office for nearly three decades. Few issues during my career have been as important as the proposed Education Amendment to the State Constitution that will be on the ballot this November.

In the October issue of *CATALYST*, an opponent of the amendment stated that the proposed Education Amendment "would stifle and undo reform efforts only partially underway and encourage perpetuation of inefficient and discredited existing systems."

Does anyone really believe that adequate funding of schools would make our schools worse? In my opinion, the greatest obstacle to education reform is too little money, not too much. The elimination of sports and extracurricular programs and the layoffs of every truant officer in the Chicago schools are only the latest examples of our education funding crisis.

Let us all make it perfectly clear to the voters this November: The crisis in education in Illinois is the lack of adequate state funding, not the schools themselves. Statewide, we are in the first year of a nationally recognized accountability initiative that will demand improved academic achievement from every school. And reform is still young in Chicago, where thousands of people are devoting their time to improving their schools.

We have created the mechanisms to improve schools. Now we must also provide the funding.

Opponents of the Education Amendment

somehow believe adequate funding would spell the end of reform. They would have us starve our schools in order to save them.

They are the same individuals who believe that if public schools could only get worse, we could implement a voucher system in Illinois. They are a group of special interests who are willing to pass demanding new reform and accountability legislation but then provide only enough funding to make sure that reform fails.

These special interests have bottled up education funding in Springfield for years. Now, through the Education Amendment, voters have their one and only chance to bypass the special interests and demand that the state provide adequate funding to our schools. I urge all Illinoisans to vote "Yes" on the Education Amendment.

*Arthur L. Berman  
State Senator*

## Article mixed up committee, coalition

Thank you for reporting that the school districts currently suing the State of Illinois over the unconstitutional inequity in its funding of public schools will be pursuing the case on appeal after its dismissal from the Cook County Circuit Court (*CATALYST*, September 1992).

However, I want to correct one small detail. Ed Olds III, the superintendent of the Mount Morris School District, is the "head" of the Committee for Educational Rights, which is the group of 72 districts bringing suit. I am the president of the Coalition for Educational Rights, which is made up of statewide groups supporting the suing school districts, monitoring the development of potential legislative solutions and working to help the people of Illinois understand the need for a constitutional amendment if education is to be a fundamental right of children in this state.

The confusion is very understandable, but I want to be sure Ed gets the credit for keeping the suit on track. These school districts need all the help they can get, and we're glad to be able to help them.

*G. Alfred Hess Jr., executive director  
Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance*





# Diaries

*This month, Marcia leads off with an account of a school closing, an anguished occasion feared by many these past two years but experienced by few. A veteran teacher details first hand the beginnings of a special teacher training program, Teachers for Chicago, that involves a number of universities in the city. Matthew, a teacher intern and a new CATALYST diarist, does the same for yet another such program, Urban Teacher Corps, at DePaul University. Other good news draws our attention to fruitful ways various schools are interacting with their communities. However, our blue skies are, as usual, clouded. We find that teachers are not always enthusiastic about school reform. And three diarists get down to cases on the failures of decentralization.*

*One voice missing this month is our teacher Carlos. We wonder why. Could it be that because he became a principal on September 2 he has a few other things on his mind!?*

## A school closing

### MARCIA, community

**March 28** The district superintendent let us know there are to be many school closings and consolidations for 1992-93. I asked *which* schools and was told they didn't know. I had a talk with Supt. Ted Kimbrough. There is indeed no hit-list yet.

**May 12** The last week in April two board members came to visit our school. They saw plaster peeling and windows broken; they saw children running around in the building unsupervised.

Our school is one of the five on the hit-list of closings. This is the second time around for us.

The principal had the nerve to ask me what to do to save the school. I told him to get petitions, media, letter writing and a bus to the board. We do have a weak principal. He should have been providing much stronger leadership and clear educational goals for the school.

We also have a troublesome teacher staff. The teachers do not get along with each other. They argue often.

The LSC is no better. We have had three chairpersons since the beginning of this school year. There is no togetherness at all among the members. They very much need training. I

gave them a list of organizations that do training, including names, addresses and telephone numbers to make appointments. This was back in November 1991. To this day they have not had training.

Parents. There is no parent participation in the school whatsoever.

The physical condition of the school is, it is said, why we might be closed. Our needs *are* great: new windows, new paint, new roof, etc. When it rains, it rains into certain parts of the school.

But we have other problems. Reading and math scores are very low. Attendance is low.

And discipline. The police are at the school every day, bringing children in or taking them out. I had a discussion with the principal and the LSC about how serious the situation is. Suspending children every day is not the solution. Rather, begin with a conference with the child and the parents. The parents on the council told me they are concerned about only *their* children. But their children are just as bad as the others.

**June 6** I was at the board meeting when they voted to close the school. I phoned the school to tell the bad news. The next day everyone was walking around like zombies. The principal was shocked.

Board members told me that the school was closed for these reasons:

poor physical condition of the building, lack of academic programs, low retention rate, low attendance.

**July 10** The last day of school was June 19. On June 27, parents received a letter from the board to let them know what schools their children were assigned to for 1992-93. The seventh- and eighth-graders, of course, would go on to high school. Of the remainder, three-fourths would go to Elementary School A, and the others to Schools B and C.

There was a lot of emotion coming from the parents. They did not want their children to go elsewhere. I sent out letters for them to meet at the school June 30. About 300 parents showed up. I explained to them that it was too late now for their show of numbers. We needed their support in the spring at the board meeting; then, out of a school with 458 students, only eight parents went with me to that meeting.

I further explained to the parents what the boundary lines were that had determined which school their children would be in: 250 at School A, 61 at School B, 29 at School C.

**Aug. 9** I was at our school the last week of July. The teachers were cleaning out their classrooms. They told me they have appointments on August 11 at Pershing Road to be reassigned to other schools.

**Sept. 11** Yesterday, the first day of school, I was at School B at 8:30 a.m. to see how the children were going to be welcomed. They were all smiling and happy. It made me feel good. I told them I would be coming back to see them.

Today I went to School A. Some of the kids don't like it there. I told them that the atmosphere is new and they will get used to it.

I've been an LSC member for three years. It is tiresome: lots of meetings and planning. I didn't accomplish much of what I wanted to last year. But it has been worth it. When our school closed, I said I wouldn't run

again for an LSC at any school. But I have changed my mind. I will run again.

## Teachers for Chicago program

**LAZARUS, teacher**

**May 21** To attract people interested in changing their careers to teaching, a new Teachers for Chicago program is being born, sponsored by the Board of Education, the Chicago Teachers Union, the Golden Apple Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and other organizations. In this special teacher certification program, intern participants will work in inner-city schools as part of their curriculum.

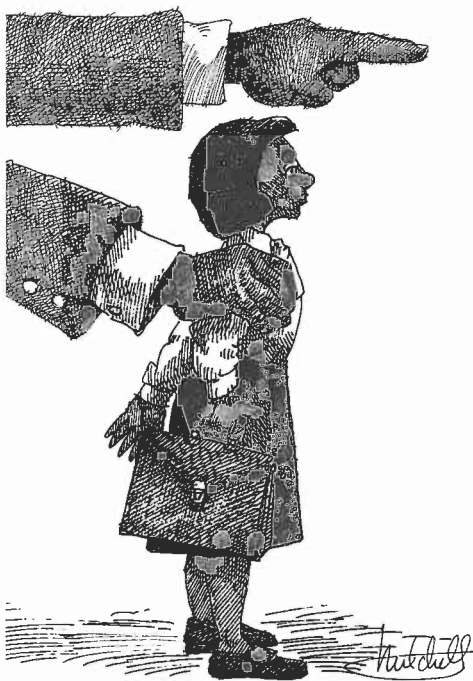
I have been accepted as a mentor in this program, under which four interns will be assigned to our school in September. I will work with them full time for two years.

How will these four interns respond to conditions we have come to regard as normal? The coordinator of the program has assured us that these four did well on the Haberman Urban Teacher interview. But I'm dubious. Have they any idea of the reality about to confront them? What effect will the difference between the ideal and the real have on our interns?

What will they think of our lax discipline and security? How will they handle the frustration of wanting to do a good job but being thwarted by sporadic interruptions on the public address system, by faculty meetings called at the last minute. Will it distress them to see a promising young student pregnant before the end of the school year? Will something in them die if they learn this is not the student's first child? Will they come to expect the abuse and poverty our children bring with them from home? Will they accept philosophically the loss of a promising student to gang recruitment? to drugs? to street violence? Will they look at the community and be appalled by the devastation that is taken for granted there? Will they find sufficient reward in teaching to keep them in the system beyond their initial two-year commitment? Will they continue to

function despite the heartache? Worse yet, how will they react when they discover the system itself shows little true commitment to developing each child to his or her fullest potential? How much are they willing to allow the system to dictate terms to them when the latest research shows the need to trust the teacher to be a professional?

How can I help the interns retain their resilience in the face of such situations? How can I help them continue to keep trying?



KURT MITCHELL

**June 4** A meeting with the instructors from the local university who will be coordinating the intern/mentor program with our school. It is an exciting time for all. We will all have a hand in shaping the program. We begin with a blank slate.

**June 10** One of our interns visits the school. It is clear to all that she will be a tremendous asset to our program. Although I gloss over none of our problems, she is undaunted.

**June 11** The intern/mentor program is launched at Pershing Road with a large meeting of all involved for 1992-93. Two of our four interns are graduates of our school. They are coming home. All four are enthusiastic about the program and can hardly

wait to take over the classes in September. This special energy seems to prevail in the room.

**June 25** A meeting with instructors at the local university where our interns will be taking classes for their master's degrees. The instructors outline the first course for me and a mentor from another area school. We have been invited to teach the practical aspects of the class while the two instructors cover theoretical material.

**July 1** The first class at the university with our interns. They ask many, many questions about the nitty gritty ingredients of their new roles; and as they reveal themselves and what they are about, I feel fairly confident that the review board made excellent choices of interns.

**July 6-10** Training for the Teachers for Chicago mentors. The effervescent instructor presents the mentors with case studies on videotape of novices doing their best in classrooms. We analyze and discuss what we see. The instructor continually guides us to withhold judgment and instead offer feedback on the effect of the teacher's behavior on learning in that classroom. Not an easy task for people who have been in the classroom as long as we have; yet, it is an exercise essential for the success of the program. Our role is to encourage innovation and risk-taking, not to curb creativity.

**July 15** The interns have met with a few high school students who are enrolled in a special summer program at the university. In discussing their perceptions of the students, the interns reveal the level of caring and of openness to students that I hoped they would.

**July 21** A class session for the interns on school reform. Despite their heavy loads of study and teaching for the coming year, some interns express interest in active participation in reform efforts. There is hope for the future. The instructor shows "The Dead Poets Society"; "Stand and Deliver" had been shown earlier. Both films were analyzed by the interns in terms of teacher role models.

**Aug. 31** A day of training for the

100 interns in the Teachers for Chicago program. Participants have hardly a moment to breathe from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. as presenters provide information on systemwide procedures. First impressions of the group: youth full of energy, smiles and excitement as the first day of school approaches. Here and there are some exceptions to the youth motif: a shock of gray hair, a frame bent somewhat with age.

The interns have spent the summer taking their first classes in their two-year master's degree programs at their respective local universities.

## Urban Teacher Corps

*Another teacher certification program currently provided in Chicago also requires its participants to work in inner-city schools, seven of which are involved this year in the program, the Urban Teacher Corps, centered at DePaul University.*

### **MATTHEW, teacher intern**

**Aug. 28** We have taken the first three units of our standard certification course work and feel better prepared to go into the schools on September 8.

**Sept. 8** The interns met at Pershing Road to receive "sub" cards. However, this process took most of the morning, and we did not get to our schools until noon. "Good lucks" were liberally spread around, and the mood was jovial.

At Inner-City Elementary I met Mr. Campbell, my mentor, or cooperating teacher, for the year. He is a delightful, soft-spoken person with a penchant for responding to most questions with "mmm, mmm," "mmm, umm" or "mmm, humm." We spent the rest of the afternoon washing worn desks and putting up bulletin boards.

I had not expected to see the extensive deterioration inside and outside the school. For children facing drugs, violence and gangs, more funding should be found for maintenance. These circumstances, however, have not lowered the expectations of teachers or parents for the students' education.

**Sept. 9** Assisted in school registration. Parents are interested in placing

children with the "most caring, most disciplining" teacher (by reputation). There is also the repeated question, "Is the school closed campus this year?" (It is not.) Closed campus refers to an article in the current Chicago Teachers Agreement that relates to restructured school days whereby the students do not have a lunchtime recess during which they can go off "campus" (home to lunch, etc.); instead, a closed-campus school has a shorter midday break at the school and supervised by teachers. Thereby, the school day ends at 2:30 p.m. Given the school surroundings, the closed campus issue is clearly a major concern of the parents.

**Sept. 15** A meeting for primary grade teachers was called by the principal to remind teachers about the importance of maintaining progress folders on students, covering all content areas. Discussion included obtaining information on intervention strategies practiced in relation to the school improvement plan and to increasing math and reading scores on IGAP and Iowa tests.

**Sept. 18** A general meeting of all teachers was called by the principal to discuss low student enrollment; it has decreased at the school in part because of transfers to schools with closed campuses. For teachers and staff here, this could mean a loss of jobs. Our school has some of the best programs in the area outside of a magnet school, and the children in our community deserve to know about them and participate in them.

Gang wars and such that have erupted in this area are a major concern for parents. Of course, closed campus is offered as a solution. But a solution to some of the teachers is a problem to other teachers.

**Sept. 24** A meeting for all teachers was called today to discuss the issue of closed campus. There have been several shootings during school hours, and the parents, LSC and police supervisor of the area are pushing for closed campus. The parents are concerned for their children's safety during the lunchtime recess and the afternoon after the later 3 p.m. dismissal time. The LSC and the police supervisor talk of safety, but explain that police "shift changes" make guarding the school play-

grounds during recess and dismissal "impractical."

The teachers want to reach some realistic compromise. The issue involves, of course, parents, teachers and the community. The parents can mobilize against gangs and drugs in their community. Parents can volunteer in more school programs that involve their children. With a closed campus, more staff will be needed to spell off the teachers during the lunch hour. Who will volunteer?

At the meeting one parent put this question to the teachers, "Why don't you want to close the campus to protect my child?" The response was, "Help us to protect all the children!"

Parents have suggested a strike to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem.

## Beyond school walls

### **LAZARUS, teacher**

**June 30** A meeting on cluster initiative, designed to bring our school and its feeder schools together with community resources. Attended largely by representatives of social service agencies in the community and administrators of our school and its feeders. The brainstorming sessions yield a wide range of ideas, sometimes potentially contradictory—for example, proposals for developing a common curriculum versus pleas for individualizing the curriculum.

We are looking for innovations in our school, but we are, at best, at the very preliminary stages. Because those involved to date have been for the most part administrators, a key element in the equation—teachers—is missing.

**July 15** Cluster initiative meeting, with similar attendance as at last month's. Those present are very anxious to begin planning to implement the ideas from the previous meeting, but their intentions are seriously handicapped by the absence of certain actors. Representation from the feeder schools is scant, although a teacher from one of the schools is enthusiastic and believes she speaks for her principal and faculty. At most, as someone in the room suggests, we can only "plan to plan." The community abounds in resources if we but

have the wit to form the links necessary to bring those assets fully into the school and, where feasible, bring the school to the community.

**Aug. 5** Cluster initiative meeting at our school. Again, excellent representation from the community. Businesses and social service agencies are beginning to take the schools into account in their thinking and planning.

**Sept. 3** Cluster initiative meeting. Committee reports. A funded project on parent involvement is well underway. Plans for other ventures abound. For example, use of the parks for afterschool programs, and an arrangement between certain classes and local businesses whereby entrepreneurial students can sell their skills and benefit the community.

#### ELIZABETH, teacher

**Aug. 1** A recent American Association of School Administrators publication urges: "For schools to succeed, we must look beyond our classrooms to our communities and families. Schools will never be much better than the commitment of their communities. Each of our communities must become a place where learning can happen."

This, I believe, is the premise of the Chicago school reform legislation. Our own community around South Elementary is involved.

For instance, at the end of the school year just past, many businesses in our area presented awards for scholarship and attendance. Also, at the urging of the community, our afterschool program goes far beyond academics and gives kids a reason to love the school. Furthermore, there are many parent volunteers in the school every day. It is not perfect, but all this is a genuine contribution. Community involvement does make a difference.

#### LAZARUS, teacher

**Sept. 19** Even the smallest items sometimes loom as significant. One principal spoke to me with pride about the response of the community to the school's request for a piece of carpeting for a small room at the school. One local business quickly donated a remnant, and another loaned the school a van to haul the carpet.

#### ROBIN, observer

**Sept. 23** School C is sponsoring an English as a Second Language class for parents at a local church. The class is crowded with parents anxious to learn English. The LSC and the principal are trying to find a way to keep the building open in the evening so parents can have more opportunities to learn.

**Oct. 4** Chicago school reform is a gold mine for researchers, and I have an idea I'm willing to give away free. Someone should study the community members on the LSCs. I've observed many councils in action by now, and I'm struck with the dedication not only of parents and teachers, who after all have an obvious stake in the success of each school, but of many community members. Of course, some of them also (most clearly, local business owners) have important reasons for wanting the school to be peaceful and well-organized.

But I have the impression that a lot of them go far beyond that self-interested motivation in their contributions to the schools they serve. Some examples: A local business owner who hires eighth-graders to work in his shop a few hours a week. A local banker who manages all the number-crunching involved in the school's SIP budget. An employee of a local cultural institution who connects the school with outstanding enrichment programs. I'm sure there are others who make even more substantial contributions. Where's the researcher to highlight this fruitful facet of volunteerism?

## Teachers not on board

#### LAZARUS, teacher

**Aug. 25** From experience at my own school, I know that most of our faculty members have remained largely untouched by reform. Unfortunately, this is confirmed on a larger scale by a summary from the CTU Quest Center. They have gleaned statistics from various teacher surveys and concluded that to date only 10 percent of the Chicago schools have been significantly affected by reform.

The Center, whose staff is slim in

relation to the need, hopes to bring reform to the classroom. A monumental task to accomplish before state-mandated deadlines a few short years away. Most teachers do not know even the vocabulary of reform, much less the experience of reform.

#### ROBIN, observer

**Sept. 24** At School A, there's been a setback to teacher involvement in planning. Last year, teachers voted in the required numbers (70 percent) to restructure the school day to begin 10 minutes early each day, allowing for one half-day every three weeks when children would be dismissed early so teachers would have time for joint planning and staff development.

However, the principal and those teachers who favored it neglected to campaign for it before the vote was taken this fall, and the required 70 percent failed to materialize. It appears that nothing can be taken for granted when it comes to changing teachers' habits of isolated work. Unfortunately, there is no appeal for this year; the advocates of the restructured day must wait for next year—and will need to persuade a number of their colleagues of the benefits of working together.

## Bureaucracy hangs tough

#### MARCIA, community

**Sept. 19** Top Chicago Public Schools officials describe reform as something we at the local level do, but empowering schools and supporting change processes are not at the core of their enterprise. For that matter, the Education Commission of the States cannot identify a *single* big-city public school administration that is fostering and promoting school-based change.

Reform has made great gains at a number of Chicago schools, but many other schools are stifled and limited by an unchanged bureaucracy that is holding back reform efforts by its attitudes and its behavior. All LSCs and all personnel at the schools sometimes get frustrated by the strictures put on the scope of reform by central office deadlines and rules.

Furthermore, principals often feel caught between LSCs that under-

standably want action and that determine the principal's contract, and central authorities who require conformity to the old imperatives and who control the principal's access to important information and resources.

Finally, many teachers do not buy

out that the Illinois Board of Education is encouraging schools to move away from departmentalization in the upper grades to an integrated curriculum more characteristic of the middle school. In fact, her school had just received a grant from the state board

of Language and Cultural Education were moved to a district office. Staff from Special Education and Dropout Prevention were also redeployed to a district office. As one person said to me, "Central office is still calling the shots. They will do the same things they were doing before. Their services will not be concentrated in our district. We [at the district office] are just housing them."

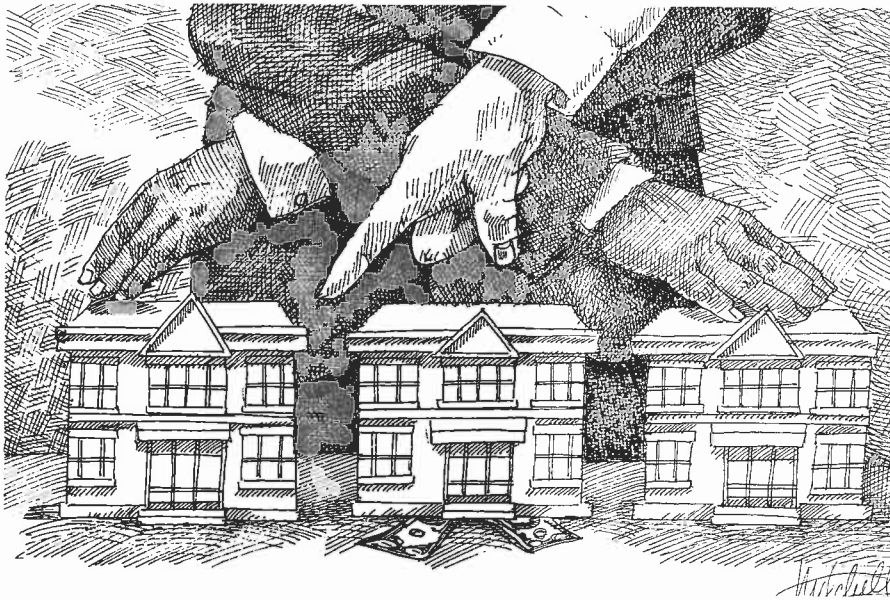
The Reading Recovery staff, who provide a valuable and much-needed service to the elementary schools, have been redeployed to a high school. The Reading Recovery program is targeted at first-grade students, so why put these people in a high school?

Furthermore, there is at central office a Reading Recovery lab which is used almost daily for training sessions. In addition, there is ample meeting space at central office, the facility is centrally located and there is plenty of parking available. Best of all, the buildings on Pershing Road do not have to close down at 4 p.m. like the schools must because there are no funds allocated to pay the engineer time and a half to keep the school buildings open. This means training sessions can be held after school in a relatively safe, convenient and comfortable environment. So why move the Reading Recovery staff from a central location to a local high school? Just to satisfy those who insist on decentralization?

The CPS staff development support office has been split. Its director remains at Pershing Road, but secretaries and files have been moved to Wendell Phillips School.

Another type of move: One K-8 elementary school, to its surprise, discovered in its budget a sizable allocation for driver education!

Decentralization should not be about moving staff from one location to another, as in a shell game. Decentralization is about giving local schools



into the possibilities of reform. Tendencies to cynicism, resignation and routine are reinforced by the contradiction between reform rhetoric and management behavior.

**OLIVIA, principal**

**Sept. 20** The CPS Department of Transportation drops a bus company from its list of approved service providers. In the process, a receiving school for special education students is left off the bus service route. When this is brought to the Department of Transportation's attention, the principal is told she must write a letter requesting renewed bus service. "Why must I write a letter when *they* were the ones who made the mistake in the first place?" she reasonably asks.

**ROBIN, observer**

**Sept. 26** Bureaucracy has not faded away. At a meeting of principals, they were informed that soon upper-grade teachers would be required by the Board of Education to have an endorsement in a subject area (math, science, etc.). One principal pointed

to assist in precisely such a transition. That the state, in line with national trends, is encouraging this approach was news to the board bureaucrats who seem to be pushing for more specialization on the part of seventh- and eighth-grade teachers.

**OLIVIA, principal**

**Oct. 3** The call to decentralize the CPS administration has been loud and persistent. Get rid of central office, we are advised. Get rid of central office, we are advised. Put the resources at the local level. Eliminate the bureaucracy and streamline services. Little by little, positions are cut from various departments, and staffers disappear.

Where do these people go? Some have been reassigned as teachers. Others have been "redeployed." Those who have been redeployed have been sent to district offices or various schools, there to continue to do much as they have done before when housed at central office.

In early September, for example, several people from the Department

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Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough

# Critics say he's not a leader, backers say he's boxed in

by Michael Klonsky

**T**ed D. Kimbrough arrived in Chicago from Compton, Calif., almost three years ago. Rather quickly he fell out of favor with the reform-minded Interim School Board that hired him, and now a number of reform leaders are calling for his ouster when his contract expires June 30.

While no one in power has rushed to Kimbrough's defense, the beleaguered superintendent does have some support, primarily in the black community, from those who believe he's being made the scapegoat for the system's lack of political and financial support.

His detractors fault him primarily for failing to deliver more authority and money to principals and local school councils.

"There has been a constant attempt by Kimbrough to put a management hold on the district," says Joan Slay of the reform group Designs for Change and a member of the Interim Board of Education that hired Kimbrough. "He has the old 1920s mindset of having middle-management . . . control people at local schools."

But Charles Thomas, a former school superintendent in North Chicago who now conducts superintendent searches for small and mid-sized districts, says Kimbrough has performed commendably in "an impossible job."

"I think Kimbrough has his heart in reform, but there are too many political and financial restraints on him," Thomas explains. "Most educational decisions are not made for education-



*Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough reviews documents at a School Board meeting.*

al reasons, but rather for political and economic ones, and the superintendent has to live with those decisions." He cited school closings and employee assignments based on seniority.

"And the fact is that every constituency in the city is fighting for a piece of the pie," adds Thomas. "As resources become scarce, the battle becomes fierce."

Reflecting a significant sector of the black community, Conrad Worrill says: "We support Supt. Kimbrough because Kimbrough has given our community an attentive ear." Worrill is chairman of the National Black United Front and a professor at the Center for Inner-City Studies, Northeastern Illinois University. He is a leading proponent of an Afrocentric curriculum. He credits Kimbrough with the approval the curriculum has received inside the Board of Education.

"The issue is not so much Ted Kimbrough as it is the attempt by a white power structure to dismantle a

public school system which is predominantly black," says Worrill.

He contends decentralization is aimed at stripping black educators of leadership jobs they only recently obtained. He accuses Mayor Richard M. Daley, a voucher proponent, and "white school-reform groups" of trying to "change the rules of patronage" now that whites have lost control of jobs.

Like Kimbrough's supporters, State Sen. Miguel del Valle (D-Chicago) believes that the school system's financial condition would hamstring any superintendent. But he says that's no excuse for abdicating leadership.

"Where is the leadership from the superintendent on the constitutional amendment [to increase state school funding]?" the senator asks. "Here is a chance to really fight for more resources from those who said we needed structural change before funding. Now we have made the structural changes, but we are lacking aggressive leader-

ship at the top of the system to go after those resources."

Diana Nelson, president of Leadership for Quality Education, the corporate-backed reform group, says simply that Kimbrough "was the wrong man for the job." She maintains he has not fulfilled the performance goals in his contract.

Those goals are:

- Helping local school councils get set up with "an emphasis on local decision making rather than central decision making."

(In a mid-1990 poll sponsored by Leadership for Quality Education, 44 percent of LSC members said decisions made by central office were obstacles, 31 percent said they were supportive and 25 percent said they were neutral.)

- Fulfilling all legal and contractual obligations.

(There have been no major legal judgments against the school system. But the Chicago Teachers Union is challenging the board's dismissal of several hundred truant officers, clerks and other non-teacher members.)

- Restructuring the central office to insure accountability, and limiting non-instructional costs.

(Some 900 central-office positions have been closed since 1988, and various offices have been consolidated. But operations have not changed substantially.)

- Staff development, recruitment.

(Teacher job fairs have been held so that principals could talk with applicants. And the shortage of bilingual teachers has been reduced substantially.)

- Budget and fiscal management, including state Chapter 1 distribution and implementation of lump-sum budgeting.

(Kimbrough had eyed state Chapter 1 funds, which are school-based discretionary dollars, to help balance the system's budget, but reformers successfully protected the money. Only recently did the administration agree to drop its time-consuming approval process for state Chapter 1 spending. It's unclear what's happening with lump-sum budgeting.

- Alleviating overcrowding.

(Kimbrough had considered cancelling leases on space used to alleviate overcrowding—again to help balance the budget—but grassroots activists prevailed. New schools and additions are being built with bond sales in the works before Kimbrough's arrival.)

- Implementing a plan to upgrade service to children with disabilities.

(Under a new associate superintendent, the school system has taken its first major step toward the integration of special education students into regular schools and classes. A lawsuit contends the process is going too slowly, but many LSC members say the proper support is not in place.)

- Producing a satisfactory System-wide Educational Reform Goals and Objectives Plan to guide school decentralization.

(The board and superintendent repeatedly struck out with the Chicago School Finance Authority, which must approve the plan. Anxious for the SFA to ease up some accounting constraints, the school system submitted an acceptable plan last summer.)

- Improving student performance and raising test scores.

(Between 1990 and 1991, scores on the state language arts test improved significantly. For example, the percentage of eighth-graders in the bottom quartile dropped from 40 percent to 32 percent. Math and reading scores stayed roughly the same. However, Kimbrough has disavowed responsibility for test scores, saying "I'm not in charge anymore.")

- Developing a legislative agenda reflecting the "realistic needs of the district" and establishing the credibility of the district with federal, state and local legislators.

(Kimbrough has tended to use worst-case estimates in making financial forecasts, but a study by the consulting firm of Booz Allen & Hamilton confirmed that the district is in deep financial trouble.)

- Implementing an equitable affirmative action program for hiring personnel and outside contracting.

## Blue-sky picks for school chief

*Forget paper credentials. Forget politics. Forget race. Who best embodies the key characteristics you want in a superintendent? CATALYST posed that blue-sky question to everyone it interviewed for this special report on the superintendency. Here are their choices and their reasons.*

**DERRICK BELL**, former Harvard University law professor who took an unpaid leave to protest the law college's



failure to add a woman of color to its tenured faculty, even though a number had been visiting professors. Was fired when he refused to resume teaching. Now a visiting professor at New York University Law School.

In his new book, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*, Bell contends that black people will never gain full equality in this country.

**Why Bell?** "He has shown his dedication to fighting for minority students. He's not afraid to take risks."

**CLINTON BRISTOW**, member, Chicago Board of Education. President for two years. Dean, College of Business Administration, Chicago State University.

**Why Bristow?** "He has the experience. He's an educator and an administrator. He can work with every group in the city."



**TED D. KIMBROUGH**, superintendent, Chicago Public Schools for the past three years. Previously, superintendent in Compton, Calif. Before that, chief legislative lobbyist for the Los Angeles Public Schools. President, National Alliance of Black School Educators.

**Why Kimbrough?** "Attentive to the African-American community and needs of minority students. He has ended the cycle of annual strikes and has done a good job with little support."

**HEYWOOD BURNS**, dean, City University of New York Law School. Participated in programs to train lawyers to serve in underserved communities and to encourage students in those communities to become lawyers. Past president, National Lawyers Guild.



**Why Burns?** "He has an abiding commitment to the lives of black people and believes in education as a means of transforming people's lives."

**HENRY CISNEROS**, former mayor of San Antonio, Tex. Now, chairman of a national investment management firm. Chairman, National Civic League. Conducts national, daily, Spanish-language radio commentary.

**Why Cisneros?** "He showed a willingness to take responsibility for change and carry it through. He reached out to all the different communities in much the same way as Harold Washington did."

**MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN**, founder and president, Children's Defense Fund, one of the country's most powerful children's advocacy groups. In her book, *The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours*, she advises: "Don't just complain about our political leaders; run for political office, especially school boards."



**Why Edelman?** "No one knows in more intimate detail the obstacles that young people face as they try and come of age in this society."

**LEON JACKSON**, president, Multi-Fac Corp. and Bill's Shades and Blinds Service, both based in South Shore. Member, Chicago Board of Education, 1983-84. Director, Leadership for Quality Education. Previously, chair of Chicago United's Education Task Force.

**Why Jackson?** "He is an enthusiastic school reformer and a business entrepreneur. That's the combination we should be looking for."

## Public's views sought, then ignored in '89

In 1989, the Interim Board of Education began its search for a superintendent by soliciting public opinion. But, in the end, it went its own way.

The board retained the Illinois Association of School Boards to organize the search. The IASB tapped several nationally recognized educators and organization leaders to conduct the search. This committee invited members of the general public to submit their priorities; then it interviewed Chicago's main educational, business and civil rights groups to get their views.

"We were searching primarily for an educational leader," recalls Joan Isenberg, then assistant executive director for the IASB. "We also wanted someone who could pull off school reform and make the concept of local school councils work."

In interviews with more than 30 prospective candidates for the job, the committee identified 10 it considered qualified. It presented five names to the board. At the time, a board member said the finalists included one white, one Hispanic and "several blacks," including the incumbent, Manfred Byrd Jr.

"We gave them people who had been involved in reform or local control efforts and who were enthusiastic about reform," says Isenberg.

Ted D. Kimbrough was not on the list.

"They didn't use our recommendations," says Isenberg, "and didn't ask us to put forward any new ones."

The board had its eye on Joseph Fernandez, who as superintendent in Dade County (Miami), Fla., had championed school-based management. But New York, where Fernandez grew up, outbid the Second City.

Seeing it wouldn't get Fernandez, the board looked to Memphis, Tenn., where schools Supt. Willie Herenton

was so popular he was considered an eventual candidate for mayor. But Herenton was involved in a messy situation whose outcome was uncertain: A teacher with whom he had had a relationship was suing him for allegedly failing to follow through on promises to advance her career.

Losing another candidate, board members Joseph E. Reed, then president of Leadership for Quality Education; William Singer, an attorney, and James Compton, president of the Chicago Urban League, struck out on their own.

Reed declines to explain, saying only that the board felt "terrific tension." On the one hand, school reformers wanted an outsider who would be free to slash the bureaucracy; on the other, some black leaders were determined to protect school job gains denied them in the past, says Reed.

The board trio's search led them to Compton, Calif., where Kimbrough had become superintendent following a series of administrative jobs in the Los Angeles system. Kimbrough had a reputation as a savvy politician and tough administrator, just the kind of person the board wanted to clean house at Pershing Road.

"We were looking for someone with experience in large-city school systems with the complexity of Chicago," says Reed. "We also wanted someone who was the right age and who wouldn't retire on us in the middle of the reform effort. Finally, it had to be a minority."

But there was nothing in Ted Kimbrough's resume or background to suggest he was a reformer or decentralizer.

Says Joan Slay, a member of the interim board who is now calling for Kimbrough's ouster: "Kimbrough was hired on the basis of what he said, rather than what he had done." M.K.



**WANTED:** Tough, visionary leader to reform large, urban school system on verge of financial collapse. (Reform plan officially in place but board support unclear.) Must have the savvy to negotiate treacherous political landscape where race figures prominently. Should be an experienced coalition builder, fund raiser, manager. Education background a plus. Great pay. Super benefits. Lots of grief. Minority applicants encouraged to apply.

**DRAFT**

# Leaders write want ad for superintendent

*The last time Chicago conducted a superintendent search, it had a brand new reform law, a brand new Interim School Board and a surge of new property tax money that made union contract negotiations a breeze. Now, after three years of fits and starts, the city has a plan to guide reform efforts, a substantially reduced central office and a \$383 million deficit on the horizon.*

*Does the new situation require a new kind of superintendent? What does Chicago want its superintendent to do? Should he or she be an educator or a businessperson? What about race? CATALYST posed these questions to a variety of leaders involved in education. It also spoke to university professors who have studied urban school superintendents. Here's what they said.*

## On the challenge at hand:

"Leading" change edged out "managing" change.

As Diana Nelson, president of Leadership for Quality Education (LQE), put it, the school system needs "someone who can lead a movement ... who can articulate the vision of reform, and hire good, smart people to implement the Reform Act.

"It is very difficult to find, in one body, a charismatic leader of a movement who is also a top administrator who can balance a budget and hire and fire personnel."

The superintendent also must "understand politics," Nelson added.

Lauren Allen, president of The Woodlawn Organization (TWO),

also called for someone to lead restructuring. "While some core functions should remain with the central office, it seems clear that we have more than enough managers now that power is moving to the local schools."

Allen added that the superintendent should show compassion. "It should be someone who is efficient, but mainly compassionate with the children. Someone who cares, has an affinity with the students and comes out of an urban setting."

Lawrence Howe, executive director of the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, said the city needs a superintendent who can "find the right balance" between central-office and school authority. "How are we going to fix the schools

**EUGENE E. EUBANKS**, professor, School of Education and Urban Affairs, University of Missouri-Kansas City. Chair,



court-appointed Desegregation Monitoring Committee, Kansas City, Mo. Court-appointed desegregation monitor, Rockford, Ill. Former high school principal and math teacher.

**Why Eubanks?** "He knows how the system works and how to change it."

**BERTHA GILKEY**, a community organizer who has helped public housing tenants in St. Louis and other cities successfully take over and manage their housing projects.



**Why Gilkey?** "If she can help public housing tenants successfully manage housing projects, she can motivate LSCs to successfully guide their schools. Gilkey is charismatic, believes in helping people taking control of their own destinies and, most important, has got common sense."

**MARGARET HARRIGAN**, associate superintendent for human resources, Chicago Public Schools. Previously,



associate superintendent for educational services, where she oversaw development of state-required learning objectives in every subject. As a district superintendent, she was instrumental in resurrecting down-and-out schools as magnet schools.

**Why Harrigan?** "She's an experienced woman who knows the system and wants to reform it. She is an honest person with leadership qualities."

**ARTHUR JEFFERSON**, Former superintendent, Detroit Public Schools. Now, visiting professor of education at the University of Michigan. Twice turned down a bid from Chicago Board of Education.

**Why Jefferson?** "He knows how to survive and get things done. He works well with community groups."

## SPECIAL REPORT

**VINCENT LANE**, chairman, Chicago Housing Authority since 1988. Previously, president and general partner of Urban Services and Development, Inc. and LSM Ventures Associates, which managed close to 3,000 apartment units and developed commercial properties.



**Why Lane?** "He knows what his constituents want and need and is willing to take risks to provide it. He also has the savvy and the personality to swim in Chicago's turbulent political waters."

**SOKONI KARANJA**, executive director, Centers for New Horizons, a social service agency in Grand Boulevard. Director, Leadership for Quality Education. Previously, assistant dean of students, Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass. Assisted in organizing an alternative school at Brandeis for African-American children.



**Why Karanja?** "Great motivator. Could have gone anywhere but stayed committed to the inner city."

**BENJAMIN KENDRICK**, executive director, Marcy Newberry Association, a West Side social service agency. Founder, West Side Consortium Organization. Active in a coalition that lobbied for the School Reform Act. Former CPS teacher.



**Why Kendrick?** "Has given his life to create a haven for the dispossessed and downtrodden."

**MICHAEL STREMBITSKY**, superintendent of schools, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, for the past 17 years. Decentralized school management to the point where 77 percent of the district's money is budgeted by principals. Now experimenting with use of private contractors for maintenance.

**Why Strembitsky?** "He's a strong leader who has done in Edmonton exactly what we need to do here: site-based management, with classroom improvement."

that are failing without oversight authority at the top to step in?" asks Howe.

Leonard Dominguez, deputy mayor for education, suggested, "Maybe what we need is two people in that job instead of one. One could serve as the educational leader while the other serves as the general manager."

Dominguez said the mayor takes the selection question "very seriously" since "whatever happens, he gets the blame."

State Sen. Miguel del Valle (D-Chicago) said the superintendent should have a vision of clearly defined responsibilities among the School Board, the business community, teachers, parents and students.

Similarly, Migdalia "Millie" Rivera, executive director of the Latino Institute, talked about bringing groups together, specifically with regard to school funding. "If we would ... pull the main stakeholders in education to the table, like we did at the Education Summit, we could make progress in finding resources."

Rivera is critical of the current administration's response to revenue shortfalls, which she says has been limited to cutting services. "A superintendent's job is to change the whole function of the central office, not just eliminate services," she said.

Two researchers who have studied school superintendents agreed that school systems, particularly urban ones, need leaders who can build coalitions.

Any new school superintendent "should spend a minimal amount of time actually running the district and most of their time building coalitions," said Prof. Thomas Glass of Northern Illinois University, author of *The American School Superintendent*, a 1992 report commissioned by the American Association of School Administrators.

Prof. Robert L. Crowson of the University of Illinois at Chicago said that the current state of urban school districts requires a "political entrepreneur [who is] a charismatic and out-front leader, willing to face the press and sell his or her vision of school change." This indi-

vidual must have the ability to exploit resources, identify opportunities and form political coalitions, said Crowson, also a senior research fellow with the National Center on Research on School Leadership.

(For more information on the national picture, see story on page 28.)

### On professional background:

"Businessperson" got few votes, but there was a consensus that the superintendent does not have to be an experienced school administrator.

Picking a businessperson is not a good idea, said the two business-group leaders contacted by *CATALYST*, Nelson of LQE and Howe of the Civic Committee.

"Business people are flawed, in the sense that they are used to giving orders and having things just happen," explained Nelson. "Implementing public policy in a democracy is different. We need somebody who is going to make this their life's work, who is fanatical about turning around one of the largest urban systems in the country."

"You can't easily translate the business experience into the educational experience," agreed Howe. "I think we need a superintendent who can articulate a vision for school reform—not a business genius."

However, Rivera of the Latino Institute said she wanted a "business-type" person who is "a risk taker" with a successful track record.

By looking outside the education community for a risk taker, Rivera is in line with findings of Glass' survey of the country's 15,000 school superintendents. When asked the main reason for their being hired, only a third of the superintendents in districts over 50,000 checked "potential change agent".

Glass—along with Nelson—suggested consideration of someone outside the school administrator ranks. "But only if they hire people to work directly underneath who are education people," added Glass.

Glass also agreed with Nelson and Howe that a business person

would not be a good choice. In business, the bottom line is clear: increasing profits, Glass said. But in education, he said, there is dispute over goals.

Illinois law requires superintendents to have a certain amount of experience and college coursework in elementary and secondary school administration. However, there is precedent for making exceptions for the Chicago superintendent. The General Assembly waived some course requirements for Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough so that he would not have to go back to school following decades of administrative experience.

Indeed, the Legislature has repeatedly singled out Chicago for special treatment; one whole section of the Illinois School Code is devoted to special rules for schools in cities with populations over 500,000, namely Chicago.

Nationally, at least one other city has gone the non-educator route. Howard Fuller, Wisconsin's former labor secretary and community activist, became superintendent in Milwaukee recently following passage of legislation to waive certain requirements.

"When you hire a Howard Fuller, you disrupt expectations," commented Glass. "It is these expectations that often prevent change because people believe you are limited to the way things were done in the past or limited to existing rules and regulations."

## On race:

There was no disagreement on the need for an African-American superintendent.

"As a member of the African-American community, which has the majority of the students in the system [60 percent], naturally I would support an African-American superintendent," said Lauren Allen of TWO. "But more importantly, I want someone who knows the challenges that the system presents and who has an affinity with the students."

There has been some speculation in the black community that Mayor Richard M. Daley might push for a Latino. But Rivera of the Latino Institute said, "I don't see the groundswell in our community for that to happen.... The system is majority African American and it's only logical that the superintendent should also be African American."

If Chicago limits itself to current black school superintendents, however, it will have few choices. Only 8 of the 59 superintendents in large districts—enrollments over 50,000—are African American, according to Glass' survey.

As in the past, Chicago is competing with other cities with large minority populations. Los Angeles and Pittsburgh are in the market for superintendents.

Further, Chicago's rough-and-tumble politics makes this city a tough sell. In the past, a number of highly regarded black superintendents, including former Detroit (Mich.) Supt. Arthur Jefferson, have rejected Chicago bids.

Glass said that Chicago's school system is more closely tied to mayoral politics than are school systems in other cities. "What bothers me is the political character of the job," he said, adding, "Mayor Daley is not as far away as he claims."

Chicago's brand of school reform makes it even more unlikely that a current administrator would want the job, said former Chicago Supt. Manford Byrd Jr. "Chicago's system is now closer to a confederation of schools," he explained. "The more Chicago reform is noted around the country, the fewer candidates you'll find for the job."

However, Charles Thomas, a former North Chicago superintendent who now works for a superintendent search firm, believes there are good, minority superintendents who would take the job because "they would want the challenge."

But he cautioned, "People think having a certain kind of person at the top is the key thing—but it's not. The problem is the system." M.K.

**DEBORAH MEIER**, founder and principal of the widely acclaimed Central Park East Schools in East Harlem, New York City. Active in the



Coalition of Essential Schools, which promotes more active student involvement in the learning process and demonstration of student mastery."

**Why Meier?** "She is a decentralizer. She has done it in New York's District 4—choice without vouchers."

**CHARLES MINGO**, principal, DuSable High School since 1988. Winner, Whitman Foundation Award for Excellence in Educational Management, 1989. Previously, high school district administrator and assistant principal, Whitney Young Magnet High School.



**Why Mingo?** "He's innovative but tough enough to put a program through. He cares about kids."

**EDWARD NOHA**, chair, CNA Financial Corp. Chair, Illinois Business Roundtable. Director, Leadership for Quality Education. New chair, city's Economic Development Commission.



**Why Noha?** "Noha took over a company in the dumps and turned it around. He could do the same for the school district."

**SYLVIA PETERS**, former principal, Dumas Elementary School in Woodlawn. Founding partner, the Edison Project, a brainchild of entrepreneur Christopher Whittle that seeks to create state-of-the-art, for-profit schools. Taught for 24 years in CPS. Also worked for educational products firm.



**Why Peters?** "A woman would be great. She did fantastic things at Dumas and she has a business background."

**BARBARA SIZEMORE**, new dean, DePaul University's College of Education. Previously, professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Before that, Washington, D.C. school superintendent. From 1969-71, director of Woodlawn Experimental Schools, a joint project of the Chicago Public Schools and the University of Chicago.



**Why Sizemore?** "Has in-depth knowledge, based on experience, of how to turn schools around, especially those on the bottom."

**B. KENNETH WEST**, CEO and chairman of the board, Harris Trust and Savings Bank. Active in Mayor Harold Washington's School Reform Summit and the founding chair of Leadership for Quality Education.



**Why West?** "He looked from on high and saw the needs of the poor and opened doors. He didn't send a subordinate."

**CHRISTOPHER WHITTLE**, chairman, Whittle Communications, one of the country's largest producers of educational materials and programming. Created Channel



One, a daily news and information show broadcast in schools; the show carries advertising. Launched the Edison Project to create state-of-the-art, for-profit schools.

**Why Whittle?** "Whittle is the best entrepreneur-education person in the country. If he would devote his energy to public instead of private education, he could turn this system around."

CATALYST Interns Debra Williams and Matthew Kowalsky contributed to this special report.

## Big cities need 'new breed'

Large, urban school systems have changed so much and face such enormous obstacles to progress that they need a new kind of superintendent, according to two local researchers who have conducted national studies.

The researchers are Robert L. Crowson, an education professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Thomas Glass, an education professor at Northern Illinois University. Glass is the author of the recently released *The American School Superintendent*, which is based on a survey of the nation's 15,000 superintendents. Sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, the study is the seventh in a series dating back to 1923.

Until recently, urban superintendents primarily have been behind-the-scenes managers adept at setting policy for and running highly centralized bureaucracies, researchers say. And the bureaucracies served as their political power base.

But reform movements initiated in the late 1980s "created a backseat role for superintendents and school boards," Glass reports in his new study. "The emergence in 1990 of 'choice' movements across the country, as well as advocacy for more control at the local level by principals, parents, teachers and students themselves, have become additional challenges to superintendents' authority and policy-making leadership."

Add in staggering financial pressures, and the job becomes nearly impossible, says Crowson. Traditional superintendents, in particular, are ill equipped to handle the tension between reform and budget-balancing, he says.

Pressure to close facilities, eliminate programs, cut services and fire personnel tend to push traditional school leaders back toward centralization, he explains. But recentraliza-

tion inevitably provokes strong community reaction.

He cites Chicago's recent experience with school closings. The mayor and superintendent proposed closing schools to save money. The reform community expressed outrage. The School Board sided with the reformers. The mayor then showered the board with contempt, and the Legislature refused to provide more money for the system.

Most traditional superintendents are either unwilling or unable to lead a school system gripped by such super-charged politics, says Crowson.

Emerging from the country's deepening leadership crisis is a new kind of superintendent, whom Crowson describes as a "political entrepreneur."

Crowson points to Detroit's Deborah McGriff, New York's Joseph Fernandez, San Diego's Thomas Payzant, Milwaukee's Howard Fuller and Pittsburgh's Richard Wallace (recently retired) as examples.

These leaders initiate creative solutions to problems rather than just react to crises, says Crowson.

"The political entrepreneur must be a charismatic and out-front leader, willing to face the press and sell his or her vision of school change," he says. Tops on the list of qualifications is the ability to exploit resources, identify opportunities and form political coalitions, he says.

"The problem," Crowson adds, "is that there are damn few available."

M.K.

### Big-city superintendents

**Gender:** Male, 98%. Female, 2%

**Race:** White, 83%. Black, 14%. Hispanic, 3%.

**District insider:** Yes, 41%. No, 59%.

**Average tenure:** 2.6 years.

**Politics:** Moderate, 67%. Liberal, 19%. Conservative, 14%.

**No. 1 reason hired:** Personal character, 36%. Potential change agent, 36%. Able instructional leader, 22%. No particular reason, 5%.

Source: *The American School Superintendent*.

## Teachers Academy shuts down under fire from funders

by Debra Shore

The Teachers Academy for Math and Science has dismissed its 90 substitute teachers and taken a recess, under pressure from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to improve operations.

The brainchild of Nobel Laureate physicist Leon Lederman, the academy was founded two years ago with the goal of upgrading the teaching of science and math in Chicago's public schools.

Funded in part by DOE, it planned to funnel all 17,800 K-8 teachers through programs that would teach them during the regular school day how to teach hands-on math and science. To make this possible, the academy hired substitute teachers (officially, "replacement" teachers).

"We felt this was the only way to reach the teachers it was hardest to reach and that were the neediest," says Henry Frisch, University of Chicago physics professor and co-chair of the academy's program committee.

However, some replacement teachers were inadequate.

"With my older classes, the school was up for grabs," reports Karen Carlson, principal of Prescott Elementary School in Lincoln Park. Also, the teachers slated for training were reluctant to leave their classes and found the scheduling disruptive, she adds.

Another problem is the cost of supplying substitutes. To date, the academy has spent \$9.5 million to train 719 teachers from 30 schools and serve another 5,000 through workshops and special programs. Further, there were questions of liability, since

academy teachers, though insured, were not CPS employees.

Until recently, the academy had not developed an evaluation and assessment program to determine the effectiveness of its approach. And charges of incompetence had been leveled against trainers and administrators.

Last summer, after reviewing academy operations, DOE threatened to withhold future funding unless the academy met certain conditions:

- Reach formal agreement with CPS concerning liability of replacement teachers.

- Devise a vision and strategic plan based on best available research, reorganize the academy and restructure the curriculum with all academy teachers trained in the new model by January 1993.

"This is an experiment," admits Frisch. "You have to learn from what you do. One of the problems is that everybody starts a small pilot to study the problem, and they never get beyond that. We've got a huge problem here: Every year, there's another group of kids who get turned off. So one doesn't have much time."

In fact, some of the early results are impressive: Principals and teachers who have participated in academy programs are largely enthusiastic, and their students' state test scores are up.

"I had a science teacher who had a ton of materials and never used them," says Albany Park academy Principal Mary Lee Lasher, whose faculty was trained in 1991. "He only went by the book, and the kids took tests in the back of the book. Now, this guy has not only teamed up with

the math teacher, but I see experiments going on in his room. I see a tremendous change in his thinking."

As a result of DOE's prodding, the academy recently retained several top administrators—Portia Elliott from the University of Massachusetts, Barbara Radner from DePaul University and Larry Cross from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory—to strengthen programs, follow-up and evaluation.

The board of directors has been reconstituted to include more business leaders—for example, Donald Perkins, former chairman of Jewel Companies, and Richard Morrow, former chairman of Amoco—and a development effort is underway to secure foundation and private-sector funding.

The academy now plans to resume training in January, probably with added delivery models, including afterschool, weekend and summer programs. The Board of Education and the academy have just signed a statement of collaboration.

Academy Director Jon R. Thompson predicts they'll soon be reaching 1,000 teachers a year. "We feel our model is fine," he says. "The important things are the schools' commitment, the quality of instruction provided, and measurable feedback and [student] outcomes."

At the academy's urging, Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) has introduced legislation to ensure federal funding for it and to launch similar efforts in 25 other urban centers. DOE spokesman Steven Fried stressed the agency's commitment to the academy.

But critics are still wary of the academy's prospects. Says Eric Hamilton, director of the consortium Access 2000 Chicago Partnership, funded by the National Science Foundation, "They're still talking vision, not pedagogical vision, but sound-bite vision that they're going to retrain every teacher in Chicago. But they still haven't demonstrated that they can do that cost effectively." ■

*Debra Shore is a Chicago writer.*

# School system seeks views for school accountability plan

The Office of Instructional Services is soliciting public comment prior to drafting a plan for holding schools accountable for increased student achievement.

A public hearing has been scheduled for 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Nov. 20 in Board of Education chambers, 1819 W. Pershing, 6th floor, east building. Presentations also may be made at meetings of the board's Educational Support Committee, 3 p.m. Nov. 10 and Dec. 8, and of the board itself, 10:30 a.m. Nov. 25 and Dec. 16.

Also, representatives of a variety of interests—e.g., subdistrict councils, reform groups, parents, teachers and principals—are being convened into focus groups to discuss accountability issues.

The office has set a target of Jan. 6 for submitting a plan to the Educational Support Committee.

Under the Chicago School Reform Act, the first goal for every school and for the school system as a whole is to "assure that students achieve proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics and higher-order thinking skills." The act specifically calls for "at least 50 percent of all students—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or income status—in each attendance center" to score at or above the national norm on a standardized test in each of these subject areas.

In a background paper entitled "The Accountability of Schools Under School Reform," the Office of Instructional Services poses and discusses a series of questions for the public to consider. They include:

- Can the 50 percent standard be met by 1994, the date cited in the law? Is the 50 percent standard the only goal to be met? The paper notes that working simply to boost half a school's students over national norms could shortchange students at both the high and low ends of the achievement scale.

- Are there measures that should be used other than the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (in elementary schools) and the Tests of Academic Proficiency (in high schools)? It notes that the state IGAP tests are not given to every student every year and that developing criterion-referenced tests, performance assessments and portfolio assessments would be time consuming and expensive.

- How should benchmarks be set to indicate whether a school is in trouble? The paper notes that giving this responsibility to central office "would tend to be resisted as contrary to reform." The alternative, it adds, is requiring schools to provide for benchmarks and appropriate testing in their school improvement plans. "The district superintendent [then] should ensure that the targets established are both reasonable and significant."

- Are other indicators in the Systemwide Goals and Objectives Plan satisfactory to tell the School Board whether progress is being made? These indicators include attendance, mobility, suspensions, pupil-teacher ratios, minutes of instruction by subject, and course registrations and failures. Are there other indicators that should be used? What are the least expensive and least intrusive indicators that a school is in trouble?

- Do district offices have the capacity to intervene efficiently and effectively at schools in trouble? The Reform Act requires district superintendents to monitor implementation of school improvement plans and provide help to schools that need it. Failure to correct deficiencies can—after a year—lead to further intervention by the board, including replacing the LSC, the principal or the faculty or closing the school.

Copies of a summary of the background paper can be obtained by calling the Office of Instructional Services (312) 535-8250. *L. L.*

## Revised retirement bill better for boards

A proposed early retirement law sought by teachers' unions has been modified to attract school boards' support, but the Chicago Board of Education still proclaims neutrality.

Previous versions of the bill required boards to pay a lump sum to the pension fund for every teacher who took advantage of the program, which permits teachers as young as 50 to retire with some pension. The current proposal makes retiring teachers pay part of the lump sum, and spreads out the boards' share over five years. As a result, boards that replace retiring teachers with younger teachers will reap savings more quickly.

Chicago schools could save \$20 million next year, according to David Peterson, lobbyist for the Chicago Teachers Union. Asked to respond, School Board lobbyist Richard Guidice was noncommittal: "The union's figures are not necessarily the same as the figures that I have seen."

Peterson speculates that the board may be withholding support to use the measure later as a bargaining chip in contract negotiations.

Both the Chicago Teachers Pension Fund and the Illinois Teachers Retirement System have endorsed the program.

Rep. Michael Curran (D-Springfield) introduced the bill, called 5+5, last spring, but it never came up for a vote. He intends to seek a vote in November. *D.W.*

## Upcoming events

- **NOV. 12** The Chicago School Finance Authority will hold its monthly meeting at 4 p.m. at Whitney Young High School, 211 S. Laflin. The December meeting will be held at the same time and place on the 15th of the month.

- **DEC. 4** This is the deadline for nominating teachers for the Golden Apple Award for excellence in teaching. The 1993 awards will go to teachers in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. To obtain a nominating form, call (312) 407-0006.

## Money matters

■ Reacting to a \$1.5 million cut in funding for extracurricular activities, Chicago's high school principals said they would shut down sports and other programs following the fall season rather than ration remaining money.

The *Chicago Sun-Times* responded with a fund-raising drive. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a front-page story suggesting the principals were crying wolf, since schools had weathered similar cuts in the past. The *Tribune* story did not point out that Chicago's initial sports budget was low to begin with.

School districts outside Chicago spend, on average, a much larger share of their budgets on interscholastic activities than Chicago does—almost 20 times as much. In 1990-91, interscholastic spending was 0.1 percent of Chicago's total education fund and 1.9 percent of the education funds in other districts, according to the Illinois State Board of Education.

■ The Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board refused the bid of the

Chicago Teachers Union to halt the dismissal of several hundred clerks, truant officers and library aides. However, the IELRB did schedule a hearing on the CTU's dispute with the School Board over these firings, which saved the board some \$10 million. If the CTU prevails, the workers could get their jobs back.

■ The School Board won praise from Leadership for Quality Education for making cuts in administration before making cuts at schools. But LQE said there were alternatives to cutting extracurricular activities. LQE also reported how schools plan to spend state Chapter 1 money this year. Reducing class size is No.1 for elementary schools; attendance services, for high schools.

■ Local school councils have gotten the final OK to use state Chapter 1 funds to replace programs cut by central office. However, state regulations restrict spending to: early childhood, reduced class size, enrichment, attendance improvement, remedial assistance and "other educationally beneficial expenditures." L. L.

## \$383.5 million deficit on horizon

How can the Chicago Public Schools plunge from a balanced budget this year into an estimated \$383.5 revenue gap for the 1993-94 school year? School finance officials provided this explanation at a recent Budget Committee meeting. Figures are in millions of dollars. They do not include any increases in salary scales, except for principals and other non-union employees, who have not received general raises for two years.

### RESOURCE CHANGES

No state aid speedup	\$ (45.7)
Less property and other local taxes	(45.3)
SFA restores restriction calculation	(43.4)
Loss of one-time FY '93 revenue	(7.0)
Less state aid	(20.3)
Additional federal aid	0.4
Chapter 1 phase-in	(73.4)
<b>Total resource changes</b>	<b>\$ (234.7)</b>

### INCREASED SPENDING

#### Current services

Bonuses, longevity and lane pay	\$ (17.1)
Staff for enrollment growth	(2.7)
Staff for special ed growth	(4.1)
Other special ed	(2.5)
Inflation in medical benefits	(14.1)
Non-compensation (e.g., energy)	\$ (6.6)
<b>Total current services</b>	<b>\$ (47.1)</b>

### Salary raises

Annualizing FY '93 raises	\$ (9.1)
Raises for principals, other non-union employees	(4.5)
<b>Total salary raises</b>	<b>\$ (13.6)</b>

### Program changes

LSC elections	\$ (1.3)
Restore cuts in non-school equipment	(2.0)
Required desegregation spending	(3.9)
Data processing initiative	(10.0)
Facility repair contracts	(10.0)
<b>Total program changes</b>	<b>\$ (27.2)</b>

Expiration of law diverting pension money to teacher salaries	\$ (60.9)
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<b>TOTAL CHANGES, NET</b>	<b>\$ (383.5)</b>
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*CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform* is an independent publication created to document, analyze and support school improvement efforts in Chicago's public schools.

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*Catalyst*  
VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

# Bright Ideas

## Geography a trip at Skinner

Last year, teachers at Skinner Classical School on the Near West Side wondered how they could motivate students to learn a "yucky" subject like geography.

"Our children could tell you that Chicago was in Illinois and that Illinois was part of the U.S.," says first-grade teacher Sherry Torimaru-Charvat. "They had the pat answers, but they really didn't have a clear understanding that the world is made up of diverse areas."

After a lot of brainstorming, Torimaru-Charvat and fourth-grade teacher Janice Schnobrich created two geography-based games for children in first through sixth grades. Named after *Where's Waldo* books, which feature collages that bury Waldo among a host of look-alikes, the Skinner games are called "Where in the United States is Waldo?" and "Where in the World is Waldo?"

Each week, every student writes a postcard about a secret location, weaving in such clues as its climate, physical features (e.g., mountains, rivers), agricultural products and cultural features. Primary grades write postcards containing clues about the United States; intermediate



JOHN BOOZ

Skinner student Ayodele Love (center) plays "Waldo" while Justin Berry (left) and Aaron Washington look on.

grades write about foreign countries.

One student, whose name is pulled from a hat, gets to play Waldo. Sporting a red-and-white striped shirt, red knit hat, red goggles, walking cane and backpack, Waldo delivers postcards to each class.

Children are grouped into teams of four, and each team chooses one postcard to trace to its place of origin. They have

24 hours to come up with the answer. Teams earn five points for each correct answer. After 12 weeks, the team with the most points wins an atlas bearing the winning team's name; the atlas is displayed in the winning team's classroom.

Skinner used a grant from the Chicago Foundation for Education program to purchase laminated maps of the world and of the United States to

post in its hallways as ready references. It used funding from the University of Illinois' Cooperative/Competition Grant program to purchase globes and combination U.S./world maps for the classrooms of each teacher participating in the program.

"Our children are not only learning about locations, but also about the area's features and about the people who live there," notes Schnobrich.

"My students come to school excited because they noticed license plates from different states over the weekend or because they know all about a product's country of origin or where their clothes were produced," adds Torimaru-Charvat.

The Waldo games also teach writing and research skills as well as how to work in groups, says Schnobrich. Some parents have pitched in by taking their children to the library to explore encyclopedias and atlases for clues.

"Give children a hook that they can hold on to—one that they want to hold on to—and they learn," says Torimaru-Charvat.

Debra Williams

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