

Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM



Panel targets tests, other hot topics

by Debra Shore

FED CHAPTER 1

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Following two years of intensive study, an independent commission of educators, researchers, administrators and parent advocates has called for sweeping changes in the federal Chapter 1 program, the federal government's primary effort to serve the educational needs of poor children.

In December, the Commission on Chapter 1 issued recommendations that, if adopted, would give Chicago schools much more flexibility in their use of this money, would reduce the district's reliance on the low Tests of Basic Skills (TBS) and would boost spending on staff development.

One proposal, to give more money to areas with high concentrations of poverty, could mean significantly more money for Chicago's schools. (See story on page 4.) But another proposal from the Commission, that states must ensure that essential educational services are comparable among districts, could jeopardize Illinois' funds. (See story on page 3.)

Since its passage in 1965 as one of the frontal assaults in President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, Chapter 1 has funneled more than \$70 billion to low-income, low-achieving children. This year, in Chicago alone, some \$147 million will provide extra instructional, counseling and other support services to almost

Illinois' 2 Chapter 1's

FEDERAL: Money comes from the federal government for low-income students in both public and non-public schools. The money is "targeted" first at schools with the most low-income children and then, in most cases, at the lowest achieving youngsters in those schools. Money may be spent only on supplemental instructional and support programs.

Total for CPS, 1992-93: \$147 million

Number of schools served: 327

Average amount per school: \$360,000

Number of child-parent centers: 24

Avg. amt., child-parent centers: \$517,000

STATE: Money comes from the state government for public schools that enroll low-income youngsters. The money "follows" the child, with every school receiving a given amount for every low-income child it enrolls. The money may be spent schoolwide and only on supplemental programs.

Total for CPS, 1992-93: \$230 million

Number of schools served: 456

Average amount per school: \$500,000

Continued on page 7

In This Issue: Feds consider real change

With this issue, CATALYST turns three years old. Like most toddlers, we are avid explorers, searching for ways to serve you, our readers, better. We believe "From the Editors" is one of those ways.

In this new feature, we will explain the thinking that went into the development of each issue, so that you will know where we're coming from. We also will share provocative quotes, telling statistics, insightful readings and other bits of information to help readers keep their school reform bearings. Finally, as we begin to talk directly to you, we hope you will talk back and, thereby, enrich the publication further.

Since its inception in 1965, Chapter 1 of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has been a mixed blessing. Each year it has funneled billions of extra dollars into schools serving the country's poorest children.

However, the rules and regulations governing the use of this money have worked against the academic progress they seek to promote. For instance, school districts have been forced to use the kind of multiple-choice tests that foster fragmented, minimally productive teaching. And schools have been forced to add on programs rather than upgrade their basic offerings.

The rules and regs are so convoluted that CATALYST writers Debra Shore and Michael Selinker could not find a single person within the Chicago Public Schools who understands them from start to finish.

But change is in the winds, as Shore's and Selinker's articles demonstrate. The first big question is whether those with an investment in the status quo—for one, the bureaucrats who keep the paper mill rolling—can be overcome. The second big question is whether schools are willing to abandon com-

fortable but outdated teaching practices and reach for real change. Sounds like Chicago school reform, doesn't it?



WORTH READING Need an easy-to-swallow dose of vision for your elementary school? Try *Smart Start: Elementary Education for the 21st Century*, by Patte Barthe and Ruth Mitchell of the Council for Basic Education (Golden, Colo: North American Press).

In 166 very readable pages, the authors explain how and why today's multitude of educational reforms—cooperative learning, integrated curriculum, etc.—can work together to provide a rich education for all youngsters. They conclude with a checklist so that readers can see how their schools measure up.

Oh yes, almost all the marvelous pictures of children that grace this book, reminding readers of what it's all about, appeared first in CATALYST.



WORTH PONDERING "Even with the most enlightened leadership and all the best breaks, by themselves schools cannot dent the poverty, crime and racial isolation that disfigure major American cities. In fact, unrealistic expectations for schools can retard the amelioration of social problems...by obscuring the difficult issues [of resource redistribution] that underlie them. What American school reform has lacked throughout its history, and Chicago has yet to offer, is a set of appropriate and realistic expectations, an ambitious but prudent sense of the outer limits of educational change."

Michael B. Katz, "Chicago School Reform as History," in *Teachers College Record*, Fall 1992. Katz is part of a University of Pennsylvania team that is tracking Chicago school reform.



ABOUT US Leon Jackson, a South Shore businessman who has been active in reform through Chicago United and Leadership for Quality Education, has been selected to serve a one-year term as chair of CATALYST's editorial board. In the early 1980s, he completed a one-year term on the Board of Education. Mayra Martinez Fernandez, communications director for the Latino Institute, is the new vice chair. Our thanks to outgoing chair Leon Finney and vice chair Jan Metzger.

Linda Levy Lorraine Forte

Illinois would lose with funding reforms

by Michael Selinker and Debra Shore

Illinois' substandard funding of education could cost the state tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars in federal Chapter 1 money each year under two proposed changes in the federal funding formula.

The measures, one being explored by Congress and the other recommended by a prestigious national commission, are aimed at pressuring states to fund their schools adequately and equitably. One proposal ties federal Chapter 1 money to the "fiscal effort" states exert on behalf of their schools—that is, the money each spends in relationship to some measure of its capacity to spend, such as average personal income.

The other proposal would slash or deny federal Chapter 1 funding to states that fail to ensure that all their school districts offer comparable "essential educational services," including counseling, health and social services.

On both counts, Illinois ranks near the bottom and would lose big.

Effort

In a report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education from SMB Economic Research of Washington, D.C., Illinois ranks 48th among the 50 states on per-pupil spending as compared to average personal income. On that ranking, states with few resources that spend a great deal on education have higher fiscal efforts than resource-rich states that don't spend much on education. The latter description fits Illinois.

If half of federal Chapter 1 funds were tied to this ratio, Illinois would lose \$23 million a year, a drop of close to 13 percent, according to SMB calculations using 1988-89 data.

Meanwhile, New York would gain \$40 million. Other big states in the winners column are Michigan and Pennsylvania, but they would have to contend with big-state losers like Florida and California.

Equity

The proposal to tie federal Chapter 1 to equity in services was made in December by the independent Commission on Chapter 1, which seeks sweeping changes in most aspects of the program.

The commission didn't calculate how each state would fare. But separate studies show Illinois has some of the most unequal school spending in the country. Illinois' heavy reliance on local property taxes has produced inequitable services, with many wealthy children receiving far more than many poor children. An analysis by the EdEquity Coalition found that in 1989-90, Illinois' highest-spending high school and elementary districts spent more than twice as much per pupil as its lowest-spending districts.

An Illinois official on the commission welcomed federal pressure. "I'm the last one to recommend federal involvement in the affairs of state education systems," says Al Ramirez, deputy state education superintendent. "But I think the current situation in Illinois is so immoral and so unfair that this might shame us into doing something about it. Ironically, there's now a consensus in this state about what constitutes an adequate education for all children. What we don't have is the political will to do what is right and design a system of taxation and revenue distribution that is fair to the children in this state."

When the commission unveiled its

Losers, winners

Below are the top 10 losers and winners based on a formula that allocates half of federal Chapter 1 grants in proportion to states' fiscal effort for education. The numbers are derived from fiscal 1989 data.

Losers

Illinois	- 12.6%
New Hampshire	- 12.6%
Hawaii	- 12.1%
Tennessee	- 9.7%
California	- 8.7%
Nevada	- 8.3%
Florida	- 8.0%
Massachusetts	- 7.8%
Washington, D.C.	- 7.5%
Kentucky	- 6.9%

Winners

Wyoming	+ 41.2%
Alaska	+ 41.1%
Montana	+ 25.2%
Utah	+ 21.8%
New Mexico	+ 15.1%
West Virginia	+ 11.5%
Vermont	+ 9.4%
New York	+ 9.1%
North Dakota	+ 8.0%
Iowa	+ 7.8%

Source: SMB Economic Research

recommendations, chairman David Hornbeck, former Maryland education chief, acknowledged that the equity requirement would be a hard sell. A study by James Wyckoff, published last year in *Economics of Education Review*, showed New York, Ohio and Massachusetts joining Illinois among the most inequitable states, while Florida and California are the only large states among the most equitable.

In Illinois, the cost of providing equitable services would be far larger than the potential loss in federal funds. The Illinois Task Force on School Finance put a \$1.8 billion price tag on equity and adequacy. And according to Richard Laine of the pro-equity Coalition for Educational Rights, the loss in federal funds would hurt only the poorest districts, but achieving equity would cost wealthier areas much more dearly. "That can be sold in Chicago," Laine says. "But it sure can't be sold in New Trier." ■

Battle heating up over funding formulas

by Michael Selinker

Who's poor? Who's educationally disadvantaged? Who deserves extra help?

Since the inception of Chapter 1, battles have raged nationally and locally over how to answer these questions. The options often have pitted small states against big states, inner cities against rural towns and blacks against Latinos.

Now, as Congress prepares to reauthorize Chapter 1 this year, battle lines are forming again. Two national panels, one independent and one public, have wrestled with these thorny issues. "There's going to be a huge fight over the formula," predicts Phyllis McClure of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, who chairs the public panel.

The stakes are enormous. Making minor changes in the definition of "poor," for example, could swing tens of millions of dollars from one state to another, and hundreds of thousands of dollars from one school to another.

Frank Perry, who until 1991 ran the federal Chapter 1 programs for the Chicago Public Schools, says politics swirled around local Chapter 1 decisions throughout the 17 years he oversaw the program. "Education is not an exact science," he says. "These are tough decisions, and I think they should be made on the grounds of fairness rather than politics."

And in this arena, some argue that the only group without a lobby is the students themselves. "This is a territorial war and the losers are the children," contends Principal Karen Carlson of Prescott Elementary, a mostly Latino school in Lake View. "The federal government needs to come down with a standard measure that says a child in Austin, Texas, who qualifies for federal Chapter 1 would also qualify if he came to Chicago."

To help Chicagoans follow the battle, CATALYST has compiled the following primer, which shows how Chapter 1 money works its way through five formulas before reaching any Chicago student. The money goes through one formula to get to Illinois, another to get to Chicago, two more to eliminate some schools and get the money to the rest, and a fifth to determine which students receive the dollars.



FRAN LEE

How money gets to Illinois

Formula 1

PURPOSE: To determine each state's share of low-income children.

WHO DECIDES: U.S. Department of Education.

FORMULA: The department adds together the totals from each of the following categories:

- School-age children from families at or below the poverty line, as identified by the decennial census. This sum represents more than 90 percent of the total.

- Children from families above the poverty line who are on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

- Children in foster care.

- Neglected and delinquent children not in institutions.

This formula is called the Orshanksy formula, after Molly Orshanksy, the Department of Commerce statistician who developed it in the 1970s.

RESULTS: In Illinois, about 350,000

children attending public and private schools, 150,000 of whom are in Chicago. (Public school districts administer federal Chapter 1 for private schools with poor children in their attendance areas.)

WHAT CRITICS SAY: The census tends to undercount minorities and the poor. For example, recent immigrants and refugees often are reluctant to participate for fear the information will be used against them.

In a federal lawsuit demanding an adjustment of the 1990 census, Chicago, New York and other large cities charge that the Census Bureau missed millions of urban residents. For example, whereas the census results claim Chicago lost 300,000 people during the 1980s, Chicago claims its population was undercounted and that there was no loss. If the original count stands, Chicago could lose tens of millions of federal education dollars, as well as millions in other areas.

Many of the same poor people who don't appear in the census won't show up on AFDC rolls either because they are not citizens. (Only citizens are eligible for AFDC.) This phenomenon is particularly troublesome to Latino groups.

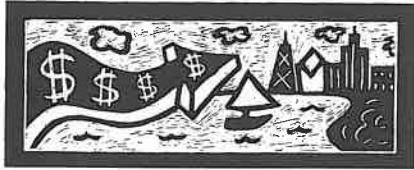
Finally, data from the decennial census, which by definition is taken every 10 years, is seriously out of date much of the time. This year, it's a special problem because the lawsuit is delaying application of the 1990 census. Currently, 1979 data are being used.

ALTERNATIVES: Neither of two national panels studying Chapter 1 will make detailed recommendations on funding formulas, McClure says. "It's far beyond our technical expertise." But both are concerned about using census information that is antiquated.

Perhaps the most popular alternative is the annual count of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunches. Illinois uses this count to distribute the extra state money it appropriates for schools with poor children, a program called state Chapter 1.

If federal Chapter 1 adopted this method, Illinois would see its poor-pupil count rise by almost half, according to a study by the Washington, D.C.-based SMB Economic Research, which used 1989 data. But Illinois' share of federal Chapter 1 funding would increase only 3 percent, or \$5 million, since most other states would

see their numbers rise, too. However, Chicago's share of Illinois' dollars likely would rise dramatically. Under the lunch count, Chicago has about 80 percent of all poor school children in the state, compared to 43 percent under the Orshansky formula.



How money gets to Chicago

Formula 2

PURPOSE: To decide the amount of money each school district gets.

WHO DECIDES: U.S. Department of Education (DOE), with data from states.

FORMULA: Multiply the number of poor children from Formula 1 by 40 percent of a state's per-pupil spending on public elementary and secondary schools. DOE designated the 40 percent, an arbitrary figure.

RESULTS: For Chicago, \$288 million, which amounts to \$1,900 for each of its 150,000 officially poor students. But Congress has never fully funded Chapter 1, according to Anderson Springfield, who manages Chapter 1 in Chicago for the state government. This year, appropriations fell more than 40 percent short of full funding. As a result, Chicago received only \$155 million, or about \$1,000 per poor student. About \$8 million of that sum went for children in private schools.

WHAT CRITICS SAY: Per-pupil spending reflects a state's willingness to spend, not the true price of a quality education in that state. As a result, poor children in states that stint education get less federal money as well.

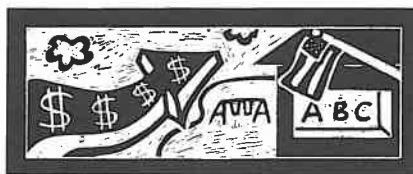
Further, by using the same formula for every school district in a state, districts with extremely high concentrations of poor children, such as Chicago and East St. Louis, don't get enough help.

ALTERNATIVES: Critics of the use of the state per-pupil spending formula look for measures that better reflect a state's cost of living. For example, one alternative would tie allocations to the

average wage in a state's private sector. If that measure were used, Illinois would gain \$3 million, according to the SMB analysis. Another alternative is using a state's average teacher salary. Under that measure, Illinois would lose about \$3 million.

Confronting the criticism that districts are treated alike, the independent Commission on Chapter 1 proposes that districts with high concentrations of poor children receive proportionately more funds than districts with lower concentrations. The logic for a tilt toward high concentrations is that school districts with, say, 80 percent poor children face a much stiffer challenge than districts with only 20 percent. (This urban-centered recommendation came from a commission whose membership hailed primarily from urban areas.)

Currently, about 8 percent of federal Chapter 1 money is reserved for supplemental grants to districts with high concentrations of poor children. If the concentration formula were used to distribute at least 50 percent of total Chapter 1 money, Illinois as a whole would get slightly less because its poor population is not as highly concentrated as, say, Massachusetts' or New York's. But Chicago's share, now 45 percent, would increase at the expense of some of Illinois' rural and suburban districts.



How money gets to schools

Formula 3

PURPOSE: To rank schools in each district by their percentage of poor children. Under federal regulations, only schools whose percentage of low-income children exceeds the average for the district may receive Chapter 1 funds.

WHO DECIDES: Chicago Board of Education, under broad federal guidelines.

FORMULA: Each school and branch adds half its pupils on Aid to Families

with Dependent Children and half its pupils on free and reduced-price lunch. Then it calculates that sum as a percentage of total enrollment. The board then ranks schools by these percentages, declaring schools that are "wealthier" than the average of the district "non-eligible."

(Until last school year, Chicago figured census data into the mix as well. It dropped that indicator because of the shortcomings mentioned under Formula 1 above.)

RESULTS: 362 schools, branches and child-parent centers qualify; the rest do not. As a result, only 64,000 of Chicago's 150,000 officially poor children are potentially eligible for programs funded by Chapter 1.

This year, Chicago's poorest non-eligible school had a student body that was 53 percent low-income. It is likely that such a school would easily qualify for Chapter 1 if it were in almost any other school district in the state. In northwest suburban Schaumburg, for instance, schools with only 4 percent poverty receive federal Chapter 1 funds, albeit not much. The total for Schaumburg's eight eligible schools is \$414,000.

WHAT CRITICS SAY: Cutting off schools that are wealthier than a district's average harms thousands of children who need help, say a variety of critics.

Principals of Latino schools are especially critical of the weight Chicago gives AFDC in its poverty formula, again because lack of citizenship bars the participation of many Latino students. A school has to score high on both measures, AFDC and lunch supports, to qualify for funds, but many schools with very poor Latino children do not.

Compare Fulton Elementary, a largely black school in Englewood, with Linne Elementary, a largely Latino school in Avondale. At Fulton, 76 percent of its students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in 1991; at Linne the number was 84 percent.

With a high AFDC count, Fulton this year is in 99th place on the city's federal Chapter 1 poverty index. But Linne, which has a low AFDC count, is in 371st place. Fulton received \$700,000 in federal Chapter 1, part of which it used to buy a computer system for its youngest poor students. Linne didn't get a dime.

"It doesn't seem fair," says Linne

Principal Charles Giglio. "Our test scores show that our children need help, but we aren't getting the help we need."

ALTERNATIVES: Giglio and an increasing number of principals support doing away with both the AFDC constraint and the school cutoff. If this were done, every school would get an amount proportional to its number of kids on lunch supports. "They should do the same thing with federal Chapter 1 that they do with state Chapter 1 and base it on free lunch," Giglio says. "Then we would at least get some of the money we need to improve the education here."

Frank Perry, Chicago's Chapter 1 director from 1974 to 1991, says the board never went to 100 percent lunch supports because the figures can be easily falsified. To qualify their children, parents only need to bring an income statement; then schools report their totals to central office.

"If you believe that everybody on free and reduced lunch is eligible for free and reduced lunch, I have some swampland I'd like to sell you," says Perry.

Formula 4

PURPOSE: To determine the share of Chicago's federal Chapter 1 dollars that goes to each of its 338 eligible schools and branches, as determined by Formula 3. (The district's 24 child parent centers are handled separately.)

WHO DECIDES: Chicago Board of Education, under federal guidelines that require the money be targeted at low-income children who *also* have low achievement.

FORMULA: Chicago's achievement index is tied to scores on the reading, vocabulary and math sections of the low Tests of Basic Skills. The formula multiplies a student's reading score by two, then it adds in the vocabulary score and the average of his or her scores on the three math sections. Finally, it divides this sum by four.

Each year, Chicago then chooses an arbitrary cutoff score; only students who score below the cutoff are eligible for federal Chapter 1 programs. This year, the cutoff was the 32nd percentile, meaning that only students who ranked roughly in the bottom third nationwide were eligible for federal Chapter 1 programs.

Elementary and high schools are

ranked separately, with high schools generally receiving far less money.

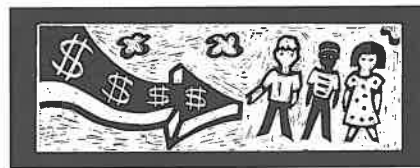
RESULTS: By using the 32nd percentile, Chicago distributed \$1,800 per student, which yielded an average of \$350,000 for each eligible school and branch.

WHAT CRITICS SAY: Chief among the complaints is that federal targeting requirements penalize improvement. If a school boosts its test scores, it stands to lose money. For example, a modest gain in test scores cost Nobel Elementary \$250,000 last year.

An additional complaint, again often from those associated with mostly Latino schools, centers on the formula's treatment of students in bilingual education who don't take the ITBS. The board makes the assumption that if these children did take the test, they would score at their school's average. Many associated with bilingual education consider this assumption ridiculous, as students in those programs often start with far less knowledge of their subjects than do their English-speaking peers.

ALTERNATIVES: Both panels assessing Chapter 1 for Congress are grappling with the disincentive issue. The independent panel proposes eliminating achievement targeting altogether. Perry argues against this concept, saying, "Since we've developed an educational achievement index, we should stick with it. Helping the most educationally disadvantaged children is the intent of Chapter 1."

As for the bilingual problem, tests comparable to the ITBS exist in Spanish but not in other languages spoken in Chicago schools.



How money gets to students

Formula 5

PURPOSE: To determine whether a school must spend its federal Chapter 1 money on only its lowest-achieving children or may put the money to schoolwide use.

WHO DECIDES: The Chicago Board

of Education, using broad federal guidelines.

FORMULA: Under federal regulations, any school with at least 75 percent poor children *may* use the money for schoolwide programs, so long as the state approves its plan. However, local districts have wide latitude in defining poverty and, thereby, determining the number of eligible schools. Local districts and the states also have authority to withdraw schoolwide status if a program is deemed ineffective.

RESULTS: After the federal government removed restrictions on schoolwide programs in 1988, Chicago identified six schools with 75 percent low-income enrollment, based on census data, AFDC and the number of children receiving free and reduced-price lunches. This year, following a revision in the formula and pressure from 50 principals, Chicago raised the number of qualifying schools to 68.

WHAT CRITICS SAY: Even under the old formula, more than six schools qualified, maintains the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance; in 1991, the Panel put the number at 31. And the 68 now allowed is still too few, the Panel and others say.

ALTERNATIVES: Again, critics suggest using free and reduced-price lunch counts. Under this method, nearly two-thirds of Philadelphia's schools qualified for schoolwide programs last year. If Chicago went this route, all but a handful of the schools eligible for Chapter 1 would qualify, the Chicago Panel calculates.

Both national panels reviewing Chapter 1 for Congress would scrap the 75 percent threshold. The publicly funded panel is expected to recommend a threshold as low as 30 percent; in a report released in December, the independent Commission on Chapter 1 calls for allowing every school to use its funds schoolwide.

"The original perception was that poor kids just needed an inoculation of education to get healthy," says McClure of the public panel. "But now, merely teaching them an added 30 minutes a day has come into question. We need a new focus on teaching skills." ■

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



Seventh-graders at Daley Elementary School in New City learn the basics of anatomy while practicing dance steps in an Urban Gateways program paid for with federal Chapter 1 funds.

PANEL continued from page 1

64,000 children in the Chicago public schools. In addition, \$8 million serves up to 6,500 children in non-public schools.

Yet, despite this substantial spending, Chapter 1 has not made much of a difference for poor children. Although students have registered some improvement, the gains have been primarily in basic skills, according to the interim report of a massive, Congressionally mandated study. "And their progress has been slow," says the interim National Assessment of Chapter 1.

Recent evaluations of the performance of Chicago's Chapter 1 students echo this finding. For instance:

■ Last year, about half the city's elementary schools saw the average test score of their Chapter 1 students increase in math computation. But only 12 percent of schools posted gains in math problem solving.

■ Citywide, about half of elementary students receiving Chapter 1 services showed gains in reading, as measured by the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

As much as educators now know about teaching children advanced skills and about the conditions necessary to transform schools, this new insight has not

penetrated the overwhelming majority of Chapter 1 programs. A spate of recent studies, many commissioned by the Department of Education for its National Assessment, show clearly that Chapter 1 in its present form is not working.

The independent commission's report, *Making Schools Work for Children in Poverty*, is but the first in a line of critical studies that will march before Congress when it conducts hearings this spring on the future of Chapter 1.

On deck are the final report of the National Assessment, analysis and recommendations by the RAND Corporation's Institute on Education and Training and an interim report of a six-year longitudinal study, called *Prospects*, that is tracking achievement, delinquency, truancy, dropout rates, enrollment in postsecondary education and employment and earnings.

An Illinois member of the urban-learning independent commission is optimistic that Congress will give the commission's report a fair hearing and that the Clinton administration might embrace and even advocate vigorously some of its recommendations. "The likelihood of adoption is much better given what happened in November," explains commission member Al Ramirez, deputy superintendent of

the Illinois State Board of Education. "I predict that many components will find their way into law."

Ramirez speculates that the strongest opposition to commission proposals will come from bureaucrats—"those who have an interest in preserving the status quo"—and perhaps from the standardized testing establishment.

He stresses that Illinois is already on its way to making some of the recommended changes. For example, the state has established high and rigorous standards for all students and conducts student testing to measure attainment of those goals. It also has just launched an accountability plan that is similar to what the commission proposed.

"Sure there's a risk [that the commission's proposal won't work]," says Ramirez. "But we have 30 years of experience to show us that the other approach overall is mediocre at best, and we're spending \$6 billion a year on this program!"

In one radical sweep, the independent commission proposes changing the focus of Chapter 1 from individual, identified students to whole schools, a thrust in keeping with the intentions of Chicago school reform. Further, it would base school eligibility for Chapter 1 funds

entirely on poverty. Currently, schools must pass two litmus tests to qualify: The first deals with poverty; the second, with achievement test scores. The test-score component yields a perverse penalty: If a school's scores go up, its money goes down.

"If Chapter 1 is to help children in poverty to attain both basic and high-level knowledge and skills," the commission report states, "it must become a vehicle for improving whole schools serving concentrations of poor children.

"There is ample evidence to show that under optimum teaching and learning conditions—[e.g.] high expectations and skilled instruction—children will learn at high levels. The proof is consistent: Those encouraged to work with challenging content, to solve problems, to seek meaning from what they study will make far greater academic progress than students limited to basic skills instruction."

The federal government itself helped set the stage for Chapter 1 programs and practices to develop as they have. Regulations requiring that Chapter 1 funds be spent only on services to eligible children led to an emphasis on "pullout" programs. In these, Chapter 1 students leave their regular classrooms for special remedial sessions of 30-45 minutes (often in computer labs). This made it easy for schools to show auditors that they were serving only eligible children.

Also, for years educators believed that students had to master basic skills before they could tackle more advanced or higher-order skills. This "conventional wisdom" about how children learn led to an emphasis on workbook drills and computer exercises that focused primarily on discrete, low-level skills, such as sounding

out letters, and adding and subtracting.

Moreover, the federal government's desire to monitor and assess the effectiveness of Chapter 1 led to an overwhelming reliance on standardized tests of basic skills as a way both of determining student eligibility and of measuring student achievement.

Unfortunately, the 27-year residue of these practices has been, at best, inadequate at helping children make gains and, at worst, downright damaging. Hence, the independent commission's recommendations for wholesale changes in Chapter 1.

In the following pages, we discuss some of the key recommendations and how they relate to what is now happening in Chicago.

Recommendation: Eliminate requirements that force schools to tie expenditures to individual students. "Schools should receive funding based on the number of poor children they enroll and should be free to spend it in whatever ways they believe will best help students meet state standards."

In one fell swoop, this recommendation alone would deter or abolish many of the most educationally harmful practices associated with Chapter 1, including pullouts, the segregation of Chapter 1 teachers and staff from the regular school program and reliance on standardized tests to determine eligibility. At the same time, it would make schools the focus for change.

"This will mean greater flexibility at the school level," says Ramirez of the Illinois Board of Education. "Currently, schools and districts tend to overemphasize pullout programs," he adds. "There was a lot of discussion [at the commission] to outright ban pullouts."

Pullouts and a related program called augmented staffing, which creates small classes for Chapter 1 students, are the mainstays of Chapter 1 in Chicago.

In 1990, the last year for which figures are available, 86 percent of elementary schools in Chicago offered some type of pullout classes for Chapter 1 students, involving some 500 teachers and 192 teacher aides. These pullouts ranged from small groups in which students received special instruction in reading or math using workbooks, dittos and computers, to special pullout computer labs.

Yet, researchers across the country have come to view pullouts with a severely critical eye. Henry Levin, professor of education and economics at Stanford University and director of its Center for Educational Research, has said (in *Education Week*), "We stigmatize kids with 'pullouts,' telling them they're in a program for dumb kids. We give our neediest kids the most barren program."

Isolating these youngsters not only has damaged their self-esteem, but also, over

1965 Congress passes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty programs; through Title 1 of ESEA, the federal government—for the first time—provides money for elementary and secondary schools.

The intent was to provide extra educational services to disadvantaged children, but many schools treated the money as general funds. In the early years, spending abuses occurred—such as paying for carpeting administrative offices, coaches' salaries, swimming pools and at least one airplane.

1969 A damning report—"Title 1 of ESEA: Is It Helping Poor Children?"—documents many problems: frivolous spending, lack of monitoring, programs that were poorly conceived and executed, parents kept out of the information loop, etc. The report was prepared by Phyllis McClure of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Ruby Martin, then director of the Washington Research Project for the Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy.

1970 Congress tightens programmatic rules, requiring that Title 1 funds be used only to supplement, and not supplant, the regular school program.

1974 Advisory councils consisting of parents of students receiving Title 1 services are established at the school and district levels.

1978 Congress further tightens Title 1 rules, specifying how districts must rank schools for eligibility, giving state education agencies authority to review local programs, and giving to the federal Commissioner of Education power to withhold funds from districts that violate the rules. Schools with 75 percent or more of their students in poverty are permitted to use Chapter 1 funds on a "schoolwide" basis, but must provide matching local funds.

time, has dramatically—and negatively—affected how teachers view their students and, most importantly, what they come to expect from them, researchers have found.

Pullout classes typically reinforce “basic skills” instruction with workbook exercises castigated as “drill and kill.”

Even computer labs—the tool of choice for many pullout and whole-class sessions—all too often amount to video workbooks. “In the last couple of years [schools have] gotten a lot of computers,” says Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, “but they’re still not using them to get kids to do things that are creative in writing and thinking. It’s still a lot of drill and practice.”

Pullouts don’t have to be that way. Some of the newer, highly-touted programs designed for Chapter 1 students—such as Reading Recovery and HOTS (see story on page 14)—take students aside to teach complex strategies and advanced skills.

Under augmented staffing, low-achieving students aren’t pulled out of anything, but they are taught separately, in smaller classes, from their higher-achieving peers. In 1991, roughly half of Chicago’s Chapter 1 elementary schools used 600 teachers and 83 aides to provide augmented staffing.

Yet, annual evaluations of Chapter 1 have not shown that reducing class size results in increased student achievement. “Reducing class size does not increase the *quality* of education,” says Bill Rice, director of management information and analysis in the Department of Research and Evaluation. “One of the problems is getting teachers to treat the class differently than when they had 25 students. It’s the

quality of the person providing the instruction that matters.”

Unfortunately, smaller class size does not necessarily result in changed instructional practice. In visits to observe Chapter 1 instruction in 89 elementary schools in 1991, evaluators from the Chicago Board of Education noted:

- A tendency not to capitalize on the advantage of small class size by individualizing instruction but to continue with whole-group and large-group instructional strategies.

- Infrequent use of questioning and other techniques to promote critical thinking and problem solving.

- In crowded schools, two small classes sometimes put together.

Under the independent commission’s recommendations, schools would no longer have to isolate low-achieving youngsters but, rather, could spend Chapter 1 money on a schoolwide basis, ideally in a way that would fundamentally change the school’s culture and instructional practices.

Since 1988, very high-poverty schools (those with at least 75 percent poor children) have had increased freedom to adopt schoolwide programs, thanks to Congressional amendments to Chapter 1. The results have not been encouraging.

Researchers from Abt Associates observed schoolwide projects in nine states and wrote, “It is hard to say whether these projects are better than what they replaced, but no one should have any illusions that schoolwide projects automatically produce educational benefits.”

Again, Chicago is no exception. Though principals and faculty speak enthusiastically about the benefits of schoolwide projects, the results have

been mixed. Parent involvement is up, attendance is better, the dropout rate is down, but those all-important test scores don’t show gains. Under federal regulations, schoolwide projects were to be judged by the test scores of the children who otherwise would have had targeted services.

Chicago started slowly on schoolwide projects with a pilot group of only five elementary schools (Attucks, Colman, McCorkle, Suder and Williams) and one high school (DuSable) in 1989. These schools got a little extra money—and little direction, too.

“We didn’t get off to a good start,” acknowledges Frank Perry, director of Chapter 1 in Chicago from 1974 until 1991. “We didn’t have a good planning period, and we didn’t know what was expected.”

As the fiscal and administrative manager for Chapter 1 funds, the Illinois State Board of Education was supposed to explain those expectations and help districts mount sound programs in their schools. But the state’s own funds for such tasks are limited. In 1991-92, the state had only \$2.7 million to oversee and assist Chapter 1 programs in 851 districts and 2,343 schools statewide.

Left adrift by the city and state, some high-poverty schools initially proposed simply opening up their computer labs and other supplemental programs to all students.

Zenos Colman School, for example, assigned all students to use the WICAT computer system teaching reading and math, purchased an Outreach Library so that students could take books and tapes home and sent some students for a week to the district’s outdoor education pro-

1981 Title 1 becomes Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA). Rules are streamlined as part of the Reagan Administration’s agenda to consolidate programs and to remove accountability requirements. The requirement for parent involvement is eliminated.

1988 Congress passes the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments with provisions designed to improve the targeting of resources, to strengthen accountability mechanisms, to provide incentives that encourage innovation and to promote the

teaching of advanced skills.

Moreover, schools not showing gains in the achievement of their Chapter 1 students are required to develop “program improvement” plans. The local matching requirement for schoolwide projects is eliminated, enabling exceptionally high-poverty schools to use Chapter 1 funds in a way that can benefit all students in the school.

In addition, Congress mandates a National Assessment of Chapter 1, which was due by the end of 1992, to study “how well Chapter 1 is working and how it can be better implemented within the context of national, state, and local reforms.”

1993 Hearings on the reauthorization of Chapter 1 will be held in the spring, with a vote to follow. A number of major groups and institutions, including the independent Commission on Chapter 1, the RAND Corporation’s Institute on Education and Training and the U.S. Department of Education, will make recommendations for Chapter 1 changes, which are likely to become part of a broader agenda for education reform.

1997 Final results are due from “Prospects,” a six-year, longitudinal study of children in Chapter 1.

Debra Shore

Chicago's Chapter 1 budget (in millions)

Pre-K - 12th grade

Contingency	\$ 9.3	6.0%
School-com. reps	8.1	5.2%
Central staff	5.9	3.8%
Extended day	1.8	1.2%
Fine arts program	1.7	1.1%
Reading thru art/science	1.3	.8%
Parent programs	1.8	1.2%
Other	1.2	0.7%
TOTAL	\$31.0	20.2%

Pre-K, Kindergarten

Child-parent centers	\$12.4	7.9%
Extra classes	8.3	5.4%
Other	0.2	0.1%
TOTAL	\$20.9	13.4%

1st - 8th grade

Smaller classes	\$28.0	18.0%
Math/read pullout	24.9	16.0%
Reading pullout	22.1	14.2%
Summer read centers	8.6	5.5%
Math pullout	4.5	2.9%
Reading Recovery	4.1	2.6%
Other	1.4	0.9%
TOTAL	\$93.6	60.1%

High School

Read/math centers	\$ 2.7	1.8%
Math centers	1.5	1.0%
Other	0.8	.5%
TOTAL	\$ 5.1	3.3%

Non-Public Schools

Contingency	\$ 3.7	2.4%
Instruction, support	4.3	2.8%
Other	0.1	0.1%
TOTAL	\$ 8.1	5.3%

Source: Board of Education data

gram at Camp Hastings in Lake Villa. Colman students also participated in the Urban Gateways/Artists in Residence program.

"You're talking about turning an entire machinery around," says Joy Pilcher, a reading specialist and 20-year Colman veteran. "It took us the first year to get up and running. In the second year we decided to focus on a core curriculum. It took three years to get [schoolwide] in place."

In late September, Colman and the other pilot schools suddenly received

notice from central office that the state had not approved their schoolwide plans for 1992-93. The Sept. 23 letter from Assistant Supt. Preston Bryant gave Colman two weeks to devise a new one-year plan that once again restricted services to the school's low-achieving students.

"This design may *not* serve all students in membership in your school [original emphasis]," Bryant's letter read. "Failure to submit your ESEA Chapter 1 program design by the deadline date will jeopardize your fiscal 1993 allocation for ESEA Chapter 1."

"The turnaround time for results should be longer," says a frustrated Pilcher at Colman. "When we wrote our schoolwide plan last March, no one contacted us to say it was deficient."

"We were not given any reason why we weren't chosen to continue as a schoolwide project," says a mystified Charles Nelson, principal of Williams School.

Federal auditors, who visited the schoolwide programs in 1991, offered a possible reason for Attucks: "The [school's] needs assessment cites the poverty level among families served by the attendance area, low achievement scores on the ITBS and the existence of associated problems such as low self-esteem and a high crime rate and drug use," the review states. "There is no relationship between the needs assessment and the design of the schoolwide project." (Attucks' design was to purchase a computer system for use by all pupils.)

While test results from the six pilot schools are not good, they are not entirely bad either, say evaluators from the Chicago Board of Education.

Muriel Clarkston of the board's Bureau of Program Evaluation, compared the Chapter 1 children in "schoolwide" schools to all Chapter 1 students in the school system. In this comparison, the findings were mixed. "There's progress shown in some areas," says Clarkston, "and not in others." Clarkston also compared the Chapter 1 children in "schoolwide" schools to Chapter 1 students in schools with similarly high poverty levels, finding that the "schoolwide" students made greater gains in reading in 1992, the third year of the pilot project.

In mid-January, Colman was still functioning as a schoolwide project—unofficially—and others in the original group were in limbo as well. "My personal opinion was that it would be too disrupt-

tive to the students and too disadvantageous to reorganize," says Principal Booker Thomason. "Right now we're waiting for the other shoe to drop."

The state, which must give final approval to schoolwide projects, was permitting McCorkle Elementary and DuSable High to continue as schoolwides on a contingency basis. "We're still looking at some of their evaluation data," explains Carolyn Farrar, director of Chapter 1 for the State Board of Education. "It's our role to scrutinize the plans. We're working with Chicago to do a year of planning for their schools, and we think that next year we'll open up with some excellent plans."

Last September, nine additional Chicago schools were granted permission to use their Chapter 1 money schoolwide: Phillips High and Byrd, Jenner, Schiller, Clark, Howland, Johnson, Woodson-South and Beethoven elementary schools.

"We really wanted schools to study themselves and come up with what would definitely boost achievement of Chapter 1 children, but also benefit other children in the building," Farrar says. "We have better guidance for these schools this year."

Recommendation: Substantial (and increasing) funds must be devoted to professional and school development. "The resources of Chapter 1 must be invested where they count the most—in people, specifically in teachers and building administrators."

Specifically, the commission recommended requiring that participating schools spend not less than 10 percent of their Chapter 1 funds on staff development in 1994 and 1995, not less than 15 percent in 1996, and not less than 20 percent in 1997 and every year thereafter.

Contrast the commission's recognition of the importance of staff development



Alfredo Almanza of Burnham Elementary in South Deering blows into a jar as part of an air pressure experiment in a mobile science lab that visits Chapter 1 schools. Classmates (from left) Ravon Buchanan, Sharod Smith and Mikita Phillips look on.

with the present situation in Chicago. "Staff development was the first thing to go when Chicago had such financial straits," says Bob Rush, a Chapter 1 coordinator for the Illinois Board of Education.

For each of the past three years, the Chicago Board of Education has allotted an average of only 2 percent of its total Chapter 1 budget for "improvement of instruction," with the amount decreasing each year. Thus, even as the importance of retraining teachers becomes ever more apparent, the funds for that purpose are being reduced.

Moreover, school administrators are not always aware of innovative and effective strategies that are best suited for their students and which teacher training activities might be best suited for their faculty, so the few funds schools have for staff development are not always spent well.

The traditional Chapter 1 approach to staff development has been to send teachers to conferences—such as the statewide Chapter 1 conference held in Chicago each spring—or to hold various inservice or demonstration sessions. In the past, however, such conferences have been little more than a kind of educational state fair where teachers can cruise among 'winning' exhibits and return home with a fistful of recipes but with little real sense that what worked in Aurora will work in Humboldt Park.

"Those big conferences have limited benefit," says Frank Perry, "and there's no follow-up and no opportunity to get individual help from somebody. It doesn't do any good."

This is where the independent commission's emphasis on whole-school improvement comes into play. "You can retrain math teachers until you're blue in the face," says commission member Kati Haycock, director of the Education Roundtable at the American Association of Higher Education, "but if the school as a whole doesn't support them, then they won't get anywhere."

Recommendation: States must set clear, high standards for what all students should know and be able to do. States then should adopt "performance-based" assessments to measure the progress of schools. Teachers would be responsible for measuring the progress of individual students.

Call this the "scrap standardized tests" provision. Indeed, the commission specifically said: "Do not require the low-level, norm-referenced, fill-in-the-bubble tests currently used to assess progress in Chapter 1."

There is no doubt this would bring a rousing cheer from principals and teachers throughout the Chicago public schools, who complain about the time devoted to testing.

Every spring, CPS administers two sets of tests citywide. One, the Illinois Goals Assessment Program, is required by the state and conducted only in grades three, six, eight and 11.

The other, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (and its high school counterpart, the Test of Achievement and Proficiency) covers virtually every student in the system and is administered largely to meet the requirements of federal Chapter 1 and other federal programs.

Drop the federal requirements for traditional standardized testing, and Chicago would be free to drop the ITBS and TAP.

The case against traditional tests is twofold. One is that they tend to measure basic, rather than advanced skills, and drive teaching in that direction.

"Rather than teaching students how to structure and solve large, messy problems like those found in the real world, curriculum and instruction increasingly focus on tasks like those found on multiple-choice tests," writes Brenda Turnbull in a recent analysis of issues in testing conducted for the National Assessment of Chapter 1 Independent Review Panel.

At the same time that Chapter 1 administrators are encouraging schools to develop an instructional program geared to the specific needs of their students, the reliance on standardized tests to assess performance works against innovation in the curriculum.

Ironically, if Chicago's teachers are teaching to the test, students' scores suggest they're not doing very well at it. "If we're teaching to the test, and if this is all we're achieving, then we've got some real problems," says Bill Rice.

The other big complaint against traditional tests is that they are not geared to any standards for knowledge or skill. "Currently, the tests mandated by Chapter 1 do not provide useful information on what students know and do not know," the commission's report says. "Instead of evaluating student progress toward important standards, these tests compare students with one another."

"If a student's score moves up from the 20th [place] to the 25th, should we be pleased because he or she has gained ground relative to the norm [which is 50 percent], or should we worry because his

or her achievement is still well below the median?" asks Turnbull. "What does either score—or a score at the median, for that matter—signify about the student's actual capabilities?"

Despite these criticisms, a few members of the independent commission, including George Madaus, director of the Center for the Study of Testing at Boston College, dissented on the push for performance assessments. Madaus warned that there are too many unanswered, critical questions about performance testing (e.g., having students conduct an experiment to measure their knowledge of science) to embrace that approach at the state level.

Al Ramirez of the Illinois Board of Education added in an interview that the provision for requiring the U.S. secretary of education to approve each state's education standards is a hot potato. "The notion of having the feds approve a state curriculum is pretty dramatic," he said.

Recommendation: Change the incentive structure to reward schools that progress, and establish and impose sanctions on those that do not.

"The best way to hold educators accountable," wrote the members of the independent commission, "is with student outcomes."

Hence they called on states to provide specific rewards for schools that make demonstrable progress in increasing the numbers of their students who achieve state standards—rewards such as institutional recognition, increased access to resources or supplemental services, additional professional development opportunities for faculty members and even financial bonuses.

Conversely, the commission called for a graduated sequence of aid and sanctions devised by each state for those schools that do not make progress. These might include technical assistance, visits from an inspection team that can requisition needed resources, changes in personnel or, ultimately, school closure.

This provision, which is in line with Illinois' new accountability system [to be



Kenyatta Crawford, a first-grader at Byrd Elementary School, practices spelling words under the watchful eye of Reading Recovery teacher Betty David.

featured in the next issue of CATALYST], is intended to overturn the present disincentive for improvement, namely, that those schools whose students show gains end up losing money.

Consider Nobel School in Humboldt Park. After her students' scores went up, Principal Mirna Diaz Ortiz discovered her Chapter 1 allocation had been cut by \$292,886 this year. As a result, Diaz Ortiz had to cut back from six full-day kindergarten classes to four and eliminate augmented staffing in first and second grades. "You make a little headway and they take it away," says Assistant Principal Lynn Ferris, "and it's not enough headway."

Some years ago, in at least one California school, teachers erased the correct answers and penciled in incorrect ones on their students' test answer sheets in order not to lose Chapter 1 money, according to commission member Kati Haycock, who worked in California.

While there is no evidence of such practices in Chicago, and no one will admit outright to providing Chapter 1 students with less instruction than they could merely to keep students in the program (and thus keep funds flowing to the school), nevertheless there are no tangible rewards for raising student achievement.

Recommendation: States should make plans for eliminating "external" barriers to learning for poor children, such as poor health, nutrition and housing. Schools may use Chapter 1 resources to coordinate the provision of health and social services.

No doubt some will see this provision as a new burden. "You mean they've got something else for us to do?" asks Principal Loesther Foley of Scanlan Elementary with a laugh. "I'll do it, as long as we can hire people to do this, but we don't need to give anything else to the professional staff to do."

However, Greg Darneider, director of the Chicago Cluster Initiative, enthusiastically endorses such linkages. "Obviously, the way that very proactive and visionary leaders at school and district levels are moving is towards seeing education as a

family process and as a community process," he says. As Darneider sees it, the commission's recommendation is "exactly what communities are looking at."

The Chicago Cluster Initiative works to coordinate the efforts of several Chicago high schools with those of nearby elementary schools, non-profit organizations and city agencies like the police and the Chicago Housing Authority.

Recommendation: Schools should inform parents on how well their children are progressing toward the state standards and how they can assist their children. Schools also should develop parent involvement plans aimed at enhancing parents' roles as their children's first teachers.

The first part of this recommendation is related to the proposed new testing structure. "Instead of useless information on what 'percentile' or 'stanine' their child is in, parents should get clear information at least annually on the progress of their students toward the [state] standards, on what the school is doing, and how they can help."

School districts and local schools would devise the assessments; teachers would control and administer the tests.

As for the second part, "the general idea is to move away from the kind of pro forma parent involvement that we see now, such as adding one parent to each committee," says commission member Kati Haycock. "We want to focus on parent education—what they can do to help their kids meet state standards, from supervising homework to learning ways to demonstrate scientific concepts in the home. Plus, schools could use Chapter 1 money for family literacy programs."

Chapter 1 currently supports a Parent Resource Center located at the board's Pershing Road headquarters. And many schools use some Chapter 1 funds to hire

school community representatives, who serve as ombudsmen, troubleshooters, ad-hoc truant officers and social service networkers.

Stowe Elementary in Humboldt Park, for instance, has three SCRs. Each serves 80 children, making home visits, explaining the students' needs to the parents, organizing workshops for parents on topics such as family life, stress management, drug abuse, AIDS and gangs, and encouraging parents to become involved in the school and in their children's education.

This year's Chapter 1 budget includes 329.5 school community representatives, 94.5 school aides and 26.5 parent-resource teachers.

One school watchdog, who asked not to be identified, charged, however, that these positions have become "a patronage job that the principal sort of passes out."

In addition, it is difficult to measure whether spending money this way has had any beneficial impact on student achievement (though the efforts of SCRs do help raise attendance rates and lower dropout rates, which arguably are prerequisites for achievement gains).

In announcing its recommendations, the Commission on Chapter 1 stressed that they should be considered as a whole. "Outcomes for poor children won't change if we simply layer these ideas in the form of additional policies and mandates on a structure that has become obsolete. Consequently, the commission proposes an entirely new framework, fundamentally and profoundly different. This new framework does not tinker. It rebuilds boldly." ■

Debra Shore is a Chicago-based investigative reporter and writer.

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1988 reforms well intended, didn't work

Dismayed over the lack of progress by Chapter 1 students, Congress adopted new measures in 1988 that sought to force schools to upgrade their programs.

If a school's Chapter 1 youngsters didn't meet federal and state achievement goals, as measured by standardized tests, it would have to work out a "program improvement" plan with the assistance of state and district education officials.

The result in Chicago and, apparently, nationwide has been to generate mountains of plans and reports but little pupil progress.

In an interim report, the Congressionally mandated National Assessment of Chapter 1 concluded: "The accountability provisions have not yet resulted in the setting of consistently high standards and expectations for Chapter 1 students and programs. Chapter 1 program improvement is a 'non-event' in many of the schools identified as in need of improvement. The improvement plans and activities implemented to date are modest at best."

In Chicago, a federal audit conducted in May 1991 found that principals in the schools visited did not have on hand the results of their annual review of program effectiveness—a violation of federal regulations and something presumably necessary to devise a program improvement plan for the school.

"Some principals did not have an understanding of the importance of, or procedures for, conducting program improvement," the federal report stated.

Under the federal plan, the Illinois State Board of Education was to provide technical expertise and assistance to schools in program improvement. However, the federal government provided virtually no additional funds to the states to carry this out.

In 1991-92, Illinois received \$697,432 to assist the more than 1,000 schools in program improve-

ment statewide. (Illinois had set a particularly high achievement goal, resulting in the most program-improvement schools of any state, including all of Chicago's Chapter 1 elementary schools.)

One man—Bob Rush—has responsibility for reviewing and approving program improvement plans submitted by Chicago's more than 300 schools in program improvement. About 16 district coordinators from the Board of Education assist him, and state monitors visit each school on a rotating basis; but, essentially, he's swamped. Rush also is responsible for coordinating all training and staff development for Chapter 1 throughout the state.

"You do all the work so that you have it on file when you get audited," complained the principal of one Chicago elementary school. "But you never get any response or feedback

whether what you wrote even made sense. You never get this: 'Did you read this research that would refute what you're trying? Here's some stuff to read that might help you.'

"When [auditors] do come out, you feel like they're police, telling you what you've done wrong rather than supporting you and offering ideas and help."

"Our weakness in the past was lack of sufficient personnel to follow up at each school," acknowledges Morven Ngaiyaye, the Chapter 1 program manager in charge of program improvement for Chicago schools.

For more than a year now, Ngaiyaye's been hoping for a substantial grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support representatives from local colleges and universities to assist each school with program improvement planning on a continuing basis. But the feds have kept him waiting, and there's no word

when the money will be released.

This year, Chicago has about \$257,000 to devote to program improvement in school buildings. The district and state must decide together which schools will receive minigrants based on their plans to improve Chapter 1 instruction.

Program improvement, then, was a mandate without the resources to achieve it.

In a nine-state study conducted for the Department of Education, Abt Associates found serious limitations in the ability of state education agencies to assist local Chapter 1 programs. "What are we supposed to do with [schools in need of improvement]?" asked one state Chapter 1 director who was interviewed for the report. "If the teachers can't fix them and the district can't fix them, what makes anybody think we can?"

Debra Shore

New ideas for teaching kids who lag behind

by Lorraine Forte and Debra Shore

Very slowly, schools across the country are abandoning traditional "pullout" programs for Chapter 1 students because of these programs' emphasis on drill-and-practice techniques. Instead, schools are beginning to experiment with new approaches that better reflect the latest research on how kids learn.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore are taking a three-year, in-depth look at alternatives schools have adopted, including some prominent national projects such as the Coalition of Essential Schools. The study, now in its second year, covers 10 programs being implemented at 25 schools and is part of a national, longitudinal evalu-

ation of Chapter 1 mandated by Congress. (The major study, called Prospects, is a six-year effort assessing the achievement of over 40,000 Chapter 1 students.)

"We aren't endorsing any of these [programs]," says Sam Stringfield of the Johns Hopkins Center for the Effective Schooling of Disadvantaged Students. "The point was to say [that] here are some approaches schools might consider." Stringfield is directing the three-year study.

Following are capsule descriptions of five programs being evaluated by Johns Hopkins—the Comer Project, the Coalition of Essential Schools, the Paideia project, Reading Recovery and Success for All—and two promi-

nent programs that Johns Hopkins did not include because of lack of time: HOTS and Accelerated Schools.

Some programs were chosen because they had a significant body of research to back them up, Stringfield explains. Others were selected because they represented the "cutting edge" of instructional practices.

The Comer Project

Developed by Yale University child psychiatrist James Comer, the Comer Project takes a backdoor approach to improving achievement. Many inner-city children have overwhelming developmental and social needs that



Students at Sullivan High School discuss Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in a Socratic seminar, part of Sullivan's Paideia program.

make it difficult to concentrate on academics; Comer schools strive to meet these needs in order to make teaching and learning more effective.

Parent participation is critical, and Comer schools have ongoing activities aimed at increasing parent involvement. Parents serve with the principal and several teachers on a planning and management team that sets specific goals and designs programs to improve the school's social and academic climate.

Comer schools also have a mental health team, comprised of teachers, guidance counselors, special education teachers and similar staff; this team, for example, might train school staff in ways to handle students with behavioral problems.

Although the Comer model doesn't focus specifically on achievement, its indirect approach apparently has merit. The program was first pioneered in 1968 in inner-city schools in New Haven, Conn., where test scores were far below national averages; by 1980, scores had improved dramatically, according to *Reform Report*, a newsletter published by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

Most schools that have adopted the Comer model are elementary and middle schools; however, the approach was designed for all grades.

Chicago has four Comer schools: Brown, Dodge, Jefferson and Riis. All are on the West Side.

For more information, call coordinator Vivian Loseth at Youth Guidance (312) 435-3900.

Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools is a high school program founded by Brown University professor of education TheodoreSizer. Coalition schools don't follow any particular "model"; instead, they design their own curriculum and instruction programs while following nine guiding principles:

- A school's focus should be on helping students learn to use their minds well.

- A school's goal should be to make sure students master essential skills in critical areas such as math and English.

- The school's goals should apply to all students, and teaching practices should be tailor-made to meet students' needs.

- Teaching should be as personal as possible, and choice of materials and teaching practice should be left up to the principal and staff.

- Teachers should concentrate on coaching students as they teach themselves, rather than lecturing to them.

- Diplomas should be awarded

based on mastery of the essential skills, not just accumulating credits or completing a particular grade.

- The school atmosphere should emphasize high expectations, trust and decency.

- Teachers should view themselves as general educators and scholars first, and as specialists (such as in chemistry) second. Teachers should expect to be assigned counseling and other duties as well as teaching.

- The budget for a coalition school should allow for no more than 80 students per teacher, and per-pupil costs should be no more than 10 percent above the cost for a comparable "traditional" high school.

In Chicago, 11 high schools are part of the coalition: Calumet, Chicago Vocational, DuSable, Englewood, Flower Vocational, Lindblom Technical, Mather, Phillips, Robeson, Steinmetz and Sullivan.

For more information, contact Patricia Anderson of the Illinois Alliance of Essential Schools (312) 814-1487.

Paideia

Socratic seminars, in which a leader fuels discussion by constantly asking questions of students, are the centerpiece of the Paideia program, founded by writer and Great Books

proponent Mortimer Adler. The goal of Socratic seminars is to go beyond having students get the "right" answer and, instead, get them to think and to defend their ideas about a topic.

Like Sizer, Adler doesn't prescribe a model for schools to follow. Instead, Paideia schools should help students meet three ambitious goals: acquiring knowledge through classroom instruction, developing their intellectual skills through coaching, and enlarging their understanding of ideas and values through the Socratic seminars.

Another cornerstone of Paideia is its emphasis on high-quality instruction for *all* students, thus eliminating tracking and so-called "remedial education."

In Chicago, the following schools have adopted the Paideia program: Park Manor, Gregory, Albany Park, Dvorak, DuBois, Burroughs and DePriest elementary schools; and Manley, Phillips and Sullivan high schools.

For more information, contact Sullivan Principal Robert Brazil, director of the Paideia Institute of Hyde Park (312) 534-2000.

Reading Recovery

Through one-on-one tutoring from highly trained teachers, Reading Recovery aims to help first-graders who have severe problems with reading get back on track with their peers. The program, developed by New Zealand educator and psychologist Marie Clay, is targeted at the lowest 20 percent of first-graders who show from diagnostic tests that they are at risk of reading failure.

Students receive 12 to 15 weeks of tutoring for a half-hour each day with a teacher who has undergone intensive year-long training; during training, teachers begin tutoring four students each day. The goal is to teach students strategies that will help them understand what they read; for example, using pictures as clues to meaning. Students are dropped from the program once they can read at the average level of their class.

In 1991 (the last year for which figures are available), 61 percent of Chicago schoolchildren who started the program were dropped from it



TONY GETSUG

Sullivan student Joseph Craigmiles ponders Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" during a Socratic seminar.

after achieving higher reading levels, according to the Board of Education's research department. Other benefits include increases in students' self-esteem and the use of Reading Recovery strategies by teachers in their regular classrooms. The board is now conducting a study to determine if successful students are able to maintain their gains in subsequent years.

Eight Reading Recovery teachers introduced the program in four Chicago elementary schools in 1988; 74 schools now use the program.

For more information, contact Mattie Williams, the board's director of language arts support (312) 535-8860.

Success for All

"In the early grades, success in school is virtually synonymous with success in reading," developers of Success for All wrote in a 1992 report. "A child who can read is not guaranteed to succeed in elementary school, but a child who cannot read is guaranteed to fail."

With that in mind, the primary goal of Success for All is to make sure children are reading at grade level by the time they complete the third grade. The program, developed by education researchers at Johns Hopkins University, also aims to lower retention rates and special education placements.

Key features are the use of certified teachers for one-on-one tutoring of stu-

dents with reading problems, and daily 90-minute reading periods during which students are regrouped by ability (instead of grade level) into classes of 15 to 20. Each student's progress in reading is assessed every eight weeks to see whether he or she should be reassigned to a new group.

For training, teachers attend a two-day staff development session at the start of the school year, and periodic workshops are held throughout the year. Staff and parents serve on an advisory committee that evaluates the program's progress. A family support team, comprised of teachers and other school staff, is set up to increase parent involvement, for example, by holding a workshop on family learning activities.

Schools that have adequate funds are urged to launch full-scale preschool and kindergarten programs that focus on language development, as well as to hire a full-time program coordinator.

Success for All was launched in five Baltimore schools in 1987 as a joint project of Johns Hopkins researchers and the Baltimore Board of Education. The schools that participated were all low-achieving schools with a predominantly low-income, minority enrollment. A 1992 report showed progress: Students in participating schools scored significantly higher on reading achievement tests than their counterparts in comparison schools. Retention rates in the five schools dropped substantially, as did special education placements.

Chicago has no schools involved in the program.

For more information, contact the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students at Johns Hopkins University (410) 516-0370.

HOTS

HOTS—Higher Order Thinking Skills—is a computer-assisted learning program that was developed by the University of Arizona's Stanley Pogrow. Pogrow and his colleagues had observed that Chapter 1 students made modest gains in basic skills using traditional drill-and-practice techniques, but couldn't retain or apply what they had learned. After the third grade, they

found, students remembered concepts only when they were linked to existing knowledge.

To help students overcome these obstacles, the HOTS curriculum stresses four key thinking skills: the ability to reflect on your own thinking processes, the ability to use clues from written text and elsewhere to understand material, the ability to apply information learned in one context to another situation and the ability to use information from various sources to solve a problem.

The curriculum revolves around 13 concepts such as similarities and differences, traits and capabilities. While working on the concept of perspective, for instance, students fly a hot air balloon on the computer screen. They grapple with altitude and how it affects the direction and speed of the balloon, and with the differences between directions in the real world and on a computer screen. Students must also develop a strategy for landing the balloon, contending with obstacles such as a flock of ducks. The games and class discussions are designed to get children to solve problems and talk about their strategies.

The HOTS program, geared toward grades four through six, requires 35 minutes a day, four days a week, with a maximum of 15 students per group. Teachers undergo a week of intensive training and follow a detailed daily lesson plan, essentially a script with probing questions.

In one study of two-year test scores, HOTS students posted gains that were 67 percent higher than the national average on reading tests and 123 percent higher than average on math tests. In the recently released Interim Report of the National Assessment of Chapter 1, the Department of Education cited HOTS and Reading Recovery as examples of programs that emphasize learning strategies and advanced skills.

HOTS is now in 1,300 schools in 47 states, including Illinois; however, no Chicago school uses the program.

For more information, call the HOTS Project at (602) 621-1305. A copy of the book HOTS: Using Computers To Develop Thinking Skills In Students At Risk can be ordered at (800) 541-5513.

Accelerated Schools

"Accelerate, don't remediate" is the guiding philosophy of the Accelerated Schools Project, which aims to speed up, rather than slow down, the teaching and learning of low-achieving students. The goal is to raise achievement to grade level by the end of elementary school.

The project doesn't recommend a strict model, but does set a number of goals schools need to strive for: expressing high expectations for students' academic success, setting deadlines for students to meet specific achievement goals, instituting stimulating teaching practices (such as peer tutoring and cooperative learning) and getting parents and the community involved in designing and running school programs.

Parents and members of the school staff and community are expected to work together to develop a specific "vision" of their school.

Accelerated Schools emphasize language development in all subjects, and instruction is geared toward helping students develop problem-solving and analytical skills.

Classes and subjects are usually organized around specific themes,



First-grader Alicia Bowen reads a storybook to Reading Recovery teacher Jamie Bennett in a tutoring session at Byrd Elementary.

like the environment.

The program was launched in 1986 by Henry Levin, a professor of education at Stanford University.

Four Chicago schools—Jefferson, Revere, Pope and Suder—are involved in the project.

The Illinois Board of Education runs an Accelerated Schools Initiative; for more information, call (217) 524-4832.

Other approaches

Following are descriptions of three general approaches the Johns Hopkins study is looking at, including school-wide projects, selected at Congress' request. "They had authorized use of money in this fashion and wanted to know if it works," Stringfield says.

Computer-assisted learning

Johns Hopkins researchers are studying several schools that use material developed by the California-based Computer Curriculum Corp., which has a solid base of research to back it up, Stringfield says. Materials are available for all grade levels and include a database for tracking and evaluating student progress.

Tutoring

Two tutoring projects are part of the study. One, a commercial program called METRA, was developed by educators at Brigham Young University and was first used with Navajo children. With METRA, children receive tutoring two to five times a week from trained teacher aides; several times a month, students read aloud and discuss stories in small groups.

The second project combines peer tutoring, tutoring by teacher aides and cross-age tutoring, in which older students tutor younger children.

Schoolwide projects

Since 1978, schools with at least 75 percent low-income enrollment have been permitted to adopt schoolwide projects rather than target Chapter 1 funds to eligible students. Close to 700 schools across the country now have schoolwide status.

Schools in the study have adopted extended-day and extended-year programs, coupled with other "home-grown" elements such as reduced class sizes. ■

Letters

Schools-within-schools in name only

Your recent issue on small schools and schools-within-schools (December 1992) was a valuable contribution to an important, ongoing discussion about the nature and direction of school restructuring. While small schools do, indeed, represent the possibility for long-term, fundamental school change, there is the danger that many people, seeing schools-within-schools as the latest trend or fad, will adopt the language of small schools to describe existing school practices that have consistently failed. For instance, one school that has always separated students by track now calls those tracks schools-within-schools. Another school that has identified a particularly weak department that it hopes to improve calls that department a school-within-a-school. And another that holds marginal students back in the ninth grade calls that practice a small school. These veneer-like changes will not likely lead to serious school improvement.

If schools-within-schools is to be a successful restructuring strategy, school people will want to examine some underlying assumptions and guiding features. The goal is to energize a group of teachers to take full responsibility for curriculum, instruction and evaluation, and to create an intellectual environment characterized by close personal relationships, a coherent curricular focus and high expectations and participation. This requires enormous effort, motivation, leadership and perseverance. It involves changing roles and capacities, changing expectations and school ethos and changing school structures. This is not a magic wand, quick-fix type of change, and it should not be undertaken lightly.

School communities interested in moving forward in this type of restructuring effort might initially take these steps: (1) Investigate the concept—contact the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Quest at the Chicago Teachers Union or Business and Professional People for the Public Interest. (2) Develop a shared vision. (3) Create one small working group (or several) to plan for innovation. (4) Define a unique, cohesive curricular focus or educational philosophy. (5) Figure out how to work thoughtfully

with the principal in the school where they want to work. (6) Go out into the city to visit small schools in operation and to see the variations that exist one from another. (7) Establish the roles, rights and responsibilities of the working groups.

These are critical planning steps. They must precede successful operation of a small school.

Each LSC in Chicago has the authority to charter small schools, to give them stipulated powers with the school improvement plan.

None of these steps can be taken automatically. Each will demand commitment and hard work from participants. The payoff is a potentially more challenging, more exciting, more engaging school experience for students and teachers alike.

*William Ayers, associate professor
University of Illinois at Chicago
director, Small Schools Workshop*

Philadelphia article got it wrong

I read the article regarding the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative in the December 1992 CATALYST with great interest, and dismay. At numerous moments in the text, I was misquoted, and my comments and those of others were often taken out of context.

While there are numerous points I could elaborate on, allow me to focus on one in particular. Prior to the arrival of Frank Guido and Joyce Harrison, the new regional superintendents for high schools, I was asked by a reporter about the "two individuals with less enthusiasm for restructuring." I indicated that both were very new, we hadn't met yet, I didn't know their plans, and that, "to pull this off takes an incredible amount of guts, knowledge, and experience." I continued, "In the absence of any meetings yet, we are all hoping for the best." My first sentence was printed, followed by the quote, "In the absence of any of those things, we're hoping for the best."

My comments were edited to suggest that I was quite skeptical, in advance, of the work of Guido and Harrison. They are fine educators with strong commitments to good schools. We are all trying to figure

out how to work to press reform forward.

I would hope that you would retract the quote in the next issue of CATALYST.

*Michelle Fine, senior consultant
Philadelphia Schools Collaborative*

Reporter Dan Weissmann responds: I believe I misheard Dr. Fine in this instance, and I regret the error. It was not my intention to misrepresent her.

Teachers Academy alive and well

With much regret, the board and staff of the Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science read your article "Teachers Academy shuts down under fire from funders" (CATALYST, November 1992). To set the record straight, let me share the sequence of refining a very exciting program.

With a specific mandate from the U.S. Department of Energy as the coordinating agency for the Academy's federal funders (including the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education), the Teachers Academy entered a sabbatical period this August and September. This mandate was imposed on the Academy not as a punitive measure but rather as a supportive growing tool.

In order for the Academy to become a model program to support school reform, it needed to define itself clearly. The two prime conditions were a collaborative agreement with the Chicago Public Schools and a vision and strategic plan, which were completed and approved by the Department of Energy on Sept. 30. Copies of the plan were shared with your reporter.

As of Oct. 2, we entered a transition phase to work with follow-up programs in the schools that were part of our intensive instructional program last spring. In addition, the readiness phase for our new schools began. At the same time, we have solidified our operational plan. This enables us to describe how we will work with schools in the implementation phase beginning Feb. 15.

This plan is now being presented to our board's Program Policy Committee, our full board and the Department of Energy for final approval. At the end of

this process, we will have copies available for anyone who is interested.

In any pilot program, and especially one with the magnitude of the Academy, it is necessary to become operational, step back and analyze and then proceed forward with a revised and refined plan of action. This is exactly what we are doing with the Academy, ever respectful of the public and private investment in our actions. The Teachers Academy is alive and well and looks forward to the challenge ahead.

*Elaine Athas, director of development
Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science*

Book, CATALYST review sell teachers short

Having read numerous studies about the people who played some part in launching school reform, I can believe Mary O'Connell's statement in her review of *Kids First/Primero Los Ninos* (CATALYST, December 1992) that all feel they "own" the reform movement.

There is one group, however, that has been neglected out of all proportion to its role in the movement, and Ms. O'Connell compounds this neglect by making no reference to the misleading and cavalier way that group is treated by the *Kids First* authors, Charles Kyle and Edward Kantowicz. This group is teachers.

For a litany of the book's shortcomings in this regard, I would refer CATALYST readers to my review of Kyle and

Kantowicz's book in the November 1992 *Substance*. My argument here is with Ms. O'Connell, who displays a little too much self-assurance with the facts presented in her review, as when she points out that "the one shortcoming" of the book is its underplaying of suspicions blacks have felt about reform. Not "one shortcoming" but "the one shortcoming."

This assumption is not an isolated case, for elsewhere she writes that the strength of the book is the way it puts school reform in the context of Chicago history, although all but the last chapter treat teachers not as concerned educators worthy of a hearing, but, rather, in terms of their union's "sophisticated strategy" or "political muscle." This cavalier treatment is accentuated by the fact that one of the book's more favorable epithets for the entire Chicago teaching corps is "the emerging black bourgeoisie."

The suspicions of the black community are important, certainly, but so is the distrust of community groups by teachers conscious of what was done to teacher Kay Thompson, who almost lost her position at Clemente High School because she exercised her constitutional right to free speech. [See "Clemente plan has roots in '70s protests," CATALYST, December 1992.] Did it ever occur to Ms. O'Connell that teachers are not entirely happy with the way reform is being implemented?

Perhaps it did occur to her, for this may explain the review's list of figures who played a role in reform. The list's total exclusion of teachers could easily lead lay leaders to conclude that teachers have had little or nothing to do with reform.

This negative view cannot be passed over lightly at a time when political clamoring for the removal of their hard-earned rights, including tenure and curriculum choice, threatens to shift the clock on teachers' professionalism back to the turn of the century, when they could be dismissed merely for joining a union.

Teachers were fighting for school reform long before the first community-based reform packages reached Springfield. Was it not teachers who first won significant reductions in class sizes? Was it not teachers who fought a winning war against Continuous Progress, Mastery Learning and other bureaucratic impositions that actually undermined learning? Was it not they who battled, at great risk to their careers, to free the children from the abuses of a James Moffat [a former principal now in jail for molesting students], of a school board that wanted to hit the classroom rather than the School Finance Authority or the politicians, and of community groups who thought that the best way to deal with local school problems was to censor teachers who pointed them out, as happened to Kay Thompson at Clemente?

Ms. O'Connell repeats *Kids First's* glaring lapse in not getting the teachers' viewpoint. Had she bothered to do so, she would have discovered that through their union, the teachers put together a set of reform demands called "Perspectives from the Classroom," which was published before the reform movement was even organized and which was later taken to Springfield and partially incorporated into the reform law.

A few "shortcomings" from reform writers like Kyle and Kantowicz may be excusable; a lot may strain the bonds that tie teachers and the communities they serve. Ms. O'Connell's review has helped pull them a little more taut, and for reform's sake, I hope they won't snap.

*Carlos Martinez, teacher
Wells High School*

Dixon students own international trading corp

Your issue highlighting vocational education (November 1992) included an informative feature on entrepreneurship education. I would like to take this opportunity to make you aware of the exciting entrepreneurship program at Dixon Elementary School.

An essential part of the instructional



Kindergartners clamor to be first to answer a teacher's question at Price Elementary School in Kenwood, where most students wear uniforms.

Diaries

This month, CATALYST welcomes three new diarists, two teachers and a parent. Quesana delights us with a tale of students performing a flawless skit, based on a short story they have read, as the "stars" of a TV documentary. Miromiro heartens us with accounts of dedicated parent volunteers. Dean, however, tells a disheartening story of an LSC fractured by politics and infighting. As always, our diarists write anonymously.

Lights, camera, action . . .

QUESANA, teacher

Oct. 16 Big Sky Productions is coming to videotape my class for a TV documentary. They became interested because we had produced a literary magazine about Nelson Algren, Chicago's own author who is the subject of their documentary. They were impressed by how much we seemed to know about Algren and by our initiative—for example, the magazine included an interview with one of Algren's friends, the Michigan Avenue bookseller Stuart Brent. Besides, our school is located in Algren's old neighborhood; Big Sky felt the locale was appropriate for filming a high school class in a discussion of one of Algren's stories.

Fate works mysteriously. Who would have guessed that a little school magazine could draw this kind of attention? It would have been impossible had it not been sponsored by our local school council and put together with a photocopier ordered through the PPAC and approved by the LSC. Three cheers for school-based management, which made all this possible.

Oct. 17 An idea crossed my mind: Why not prepare a class skit for the Algren video? It will get the students really involved in the story, as well as show people what they can accomplish.

We will use "A Bottle of Milk for Mother," which requires few props and little stage management. The story of Lefty Bicek, a hapless street punk who is interrogated by Chicago detectives for the killing of a wino, is

simple but poignant enough to waken my students' well-developed sense for theatrics. I assigned it for homework. The students were highly motivated, knowing they would be on TV. Everyone took the reading home.

Oct. 18 Our principal was enthusiastic about the filming but warned that by law I must get the parents' OK to have their children appear on film. This required a consent letter for the parents to sign. I got worried. But the principal assured me it would work out. "Just don't make them take off their clothes," he joked.

Spent this Friday evening writing a four-page skit of "Bottle" for the videotaping, using mainly Algren's own words. Couldn't resist putting myself in as an occasional narrator. Selfish, but I can't help it. Every teacher wants a little recognition now and then.

Oct. 21 Went over the story in class, finding that the students liked it immensely. I asked some interpretive questions and was happy to see they had understood it well, although they didn't yet realize how the main character alienated the cops, thereby sealing his fate. But close oral reading of key passages and a few pointed questions led them to discover this.

After the discussion, I began to assign roles for the skit. Pandemonium nearly broke loose, so eager were they to be in the performance. I let them decide who would be the most appropriate actor in each role, and it worked out well.

If only all my classes were as enthusiastic as this one!

Oct. 22 The producer was here for a preview of the skit.

Using copies of my script (another gift of the PPAC's Xerox machine), my class performed the play flawlessly. Surprisingly, the producer also wants a class discussion to follow the play. What have we wrought? They want that much more of us in the documentary?

Throughout the school, students are talking about the filming. I wish all the students were as fortunate as my students. I wish every teacher had this kind of chance to make their school experience more meaningful.

Oct. 23 The big day. A two-man camera crew turned our classroom into a miniature Hollywood studio, with klieg lights ablaze and a movable camera and tripod in back of the room.

We used a secondhand 1927 cast iron typewriter for the student/reporter taking notes of the interrogation. Adriana, who had taken typing, made the clicking of the keys sound professional, giving an atmosphere of tension to the proceedings. Some of the students dressed for their parts. Edith had a white shirt and a tie borrowed from her father, so as to look more like the head detective. Abel used a sleeveless undershirt to good effect as Lefty. His final scene kneeling in jail, with the famous line "I knew I'd never live to be twenty-one, anyhow," was memorable.

Everything went off like clockwork. No retakes were needed.

In the discussion that followed, the students were visibly eager to get in the act. There was a funny moment when three or four of them spoke at once, then stared at each other in silent amazement. It was a good sign of their enthusiasm.

The producer said it would be two weeks before he could show us the results. If the job looks good, as he expects, we have gained a great instructional tool. Of course, just the doing of the video itself was a great instructional tool.

A colleague pointed out that the

publicity value of having one of our classes on TV could be greater than ten years' worth of promotional flyers and brochures.

There would also be increased community confidence in a school whose students had shown so much talent and poise on the TV screen. All of this because of a little school reform and cooperation between our professional personnel advisory committee and local school council that furnished equipment that permitted our magazine to be attractive enough to sell in a bookstore—Guild Books, where the producer had originally found a copy.

fact. My volunteer immediately began paying special attention to her child. I respectfully brought this to her notice right away.

Nov. 20 A new volunteer for the day. This youthful grandmother graded a math test, read two stories to the children and practiced computer skills that would enable her to assist our little computer experts. She ended her day cheerily telling me, "I had a ball; no wonder they love it so." "I'm definitely going to complete the science project [paper model of a space shuttle] at home." "I won't let that computer defeat me." I told her that she hasn't

ed this September is the talk of the school. It is a highly regarded addition. Early every morning, an array of volunteers in and around the lunchroom line up children, pass out tickets and supervise the meal. This gives hungry children an opportunity to break their involuntary fast and start each new day full and alert.

A 'sleeping giant'

LAZARUS, teacher

Oct. 23-24 CTU Quest Conference at Malcolm X College. The keynote speaker points out that the American system of public education never has been as great as nostalgia makes it out to be. Our problem today is that its defects have become obvious. He calls this conference an opportunity for the innovators to celebrate and share their achievements.

And that we do. Schools that are flagships of change are represented at the conference again as they were last year. The number of innovative Chicago schools presenting is greater than last year. Two Quest proposal winners conduct workshops: Taft High School with its five schools within the school and the Price Foundations School. (See *CATALYST*, December 1992.)

Some teachers have come in groups from individual schools; others have come by themselves, trying to find support for their own innovations. The latter have the more difficult time of it—lone voices seeking some consolation for attempting something new with little support from administration or other faculty members.

Our own teachers are very animated at lunch, talking about what they have seen and heard. Half of our teachers at the conference are our Teachers for Chicago interns. What an exciting time to begin a teaching career! They are completely comfortable with the restructuring examples presented at the conference. The "sleeping giant" is beginning to wake. A whole school system may yet shake off the doldrums.

An authority at the conference who knows the system well but is outside of it confides that Chicago teachers have never known how good



CARL KOCK

Volunteer duty

MIROMIRO, teacher

Oct. 20 The coordinator of our Parent Volunteer Program called an early-morning coffee-and-rolls meeting of teachers and parents to introduce the partnerships and provide an opportunity for participants to mingle in an informal student lunchroom setting.

Parents were interviewed to determine a match for teachers. Many parents requested to work in their own child's room. I was not used to this because my former school did not allow it. I was politely asked to try it; if it didn't work, they would change. Unfortunately, my suspicion turned into

really had fun until she volunteers for lunchroom duty.

Nov. 25 A concerned father appeared early in my classroom yesterday morning. He explained, "My daughter told me I had to come up to school." I asked, "Why?" He had no idea. I called his daughter up, and she looked at us with big innocent eyes, shifted from one foot to another and shrugged her shoulder. Suddenly, her look clarified it for me. I asked her if she wanted her father to "help" at school. She beamed and nodded yes. I explained to the father that we have parents who volunteer in our class, and she wants him to volunteer too.

Dec. 1 A Breakfast Program institut-

some of them really are. Out of such knowledge a new self-confidence could be born.

Nov. 5 A meeting for Peer Coaching and Mentor Networking with suburban school districts attended by representatives of the Chicago public schools.

Although mentoring for new teachers is mandated in many states, it is not in Illinois. Peer coaching is being used in some school districts in the state as an alternative option to evaluation by an administrator. Peer coaches help each other to learn what is working in the classroom and what is not.

Dec. 3 Our school is forming a collaboration with a university that can bring us expertise in areas that will help us bring out the creativity of our students. Both our faculty and theirs are excited about the potential.

Uniform appeal

MIROMIRO, teacher

Oct. 30 Black and white is the color of our school uniform, as decided last spring by the LSC. The buzzing started immediately. "Why black?" "Black will be hard to find for children." "Some parents can't afford to buy uniforms." "Children will come to school dirty; some parents won't wash uniforms often enough." "Older children won't wear uniforms." "Should teachers also wear uniforms?"

September—time for initiating the wearing of uniforms. Most children dressed in them the first day of school; others didn't. Local stores had sold out of certain sizes. The substituted navy blue blended in well. A few wore other colors as well.

Finally, almost all were uniformed. Our students look quite studious parading around daily. Many teachers have noted that it changes the students' whole attitude. "They even behave better," some have remarked. I agree that the uniforms have a certain appeal (even some teachers have been spotted occasionally sporting this coded attire!), but I don't see the change in student attitudes and behaviors. Self-control and responsibility come from within.

Cluster Initiative

LAZARUS, teacher

Nov. 2 A Cluster Initiative meeting. (See Diaries, November 1992.) Progress is being made in parent involvement, use of resources outside the schools and networking with feeder schools. Plans on the drawing board will require the cooperation of faculty members who have not been brought on line yet. Members of our cluster plan are to visit the model schools within schools in New York City this month on a data-gathering expedition. (See *CATALYST*, November 1990, September 1992 and December 1992.)

The Cluster Initiative is bringing to our school outside resources we could not have contacted easily on our own. At present only a few teachers are touched by this; yet, for them it is as if a magic wand has transformed them. These are little steps and perfectly logical ones, but as piece is added to piece there is a sense of the possibility of wonderful things happening.

Nov. 16 Our teachers return from their NYC expedition, a short trip to visit schools within schools and magnet schools. We hope the ideas they return with will help us shape changes at our own school. Disseminating these ideas to all our faculty is a major problem.

Nov. 20 Our school is competing for Marshall Field's Neighborhood Arts Partnership Planning Grants, whose funding would bring us local artists to work with teachers and parents in a variety of ways. As we develop the proposal, we are discovering an endless number of artists in our immediate community and in the city at large. Visual arts, music, drama, dance. The city is rich indeed, and it is time for connections to be made between the arts and the schools.

As we collect material for the grant proposal, some teachers take

old dreams out of mothballs and hold them up to the light again. "Wouldn't it be great if we could...?" and they fill in the rest with ideas long since given up on.

Education takes a back seat

DEAN, parent

Nov. 3 During its first two years, our LSC shared a common vision of what our responsibility entailed. We focused on working together toward solutions—as a team. For example, we selected the most qualified principal we could find and agreed to



advise, support and monitor his progress in achieving fruitful results. Although contact with central office bureaucracy created frequent frustrations, we saw many good aspects of Chicago school reform and were encouraged to believe the reform experiment would work. During these two years, our school received three awards for educational excellence.

However, also during these two years, virtually no one other than LSC members ever attended the regular council meetings or special committee meetings, notwithstanding literally thousands of solicitations to parents and community residents for their participation. And much criticism was

leveled against the LSC for being "a rubber stamp of the principal."

Worn down by work, frustration and questionable criticism, less than half of the council members ran for re-election (4 of 10). A slate ran, and won, to fill the six vacant seats; they wanted the power to refocus the direction of the old LSC. The "old" members encouraged the notion that new eyes might well see even more productive ways of concentrating our attention on achieving the primary goal of school reform. We were wrong.

The new LSC quickly shifted from a priority of our children and their education to individual personal agendas. Once we were a unit. There were lengthy council discussions, and alternative viewpoints were exchanged. When a compromise was negotiated and voted upon, the result became a unified council decision. When we disagreed, it was with a position, not with a person.

Now the primary duty of the principal is to defend his actions and provide documentation to a suspicious council that has not looked beyond the meeting room to see what is really important. "Power" appears to be the single motivating element to many parents and community members.

We do have more parent and community attendance now at meetings; however, it's to "watch the fireworks."

Dec. 10 Power plays and personal agendas have undermined our school's unified thrust toward benefiting the children. The results of this crippling lack of cooperation abound.

One example: Our school hosted a special program, with a well-known speaker, intended to stimulate the interest of parents and bring them into the school. This effort was organized by one of the old members of the LSC. Not one of the new members supported it. Only a few parents showed up for the program.

As a follow up to this, I asked some of the school staff if they were aware of the special program. They said yes, but admitted their reluctance to support it. The faculty fears negative consequences from an assistant principal, allied with the new LSC majority. The "good ol' boy network" seems to be alive and well.

A sense of family

LAZARUS, teacher

Nov. 19 Grade pickup day. The school is filled with familiar faces—not just those of the parents of students currently enrolled but of former students picking up grades for younger siblings. Among the former students is one who thanks me for the concern and interest I showed in his plight many years ago when a gunshot wound left him with a permanent disability. Bread cast upon the waters.

Another former student relates at length anecdotes from his first year teaching in an inner-city school. Although the events he cites are discouraging, he outlines a plan of action to take the hardcore students on field trips and to broaden their experience, to give them a variety of choices to rely upon as an alternative to despair.

Despite the fact that there are many failing grades to be collected this evening, the school has an air of conviviality during grade pickup. Even our new metal detector, not yet permanently installed, provides a festive note as visitors make a game of setting it off with various metal objects as they pass through it in the main lobby.

'Gifted' politics

ROBIN, observer

Dec. 2 A November meeting as a follow-up to the October meeting on the gifted program at School A. (See Diaries, December 1992.) Three teachers of gifted classes addressed the LSC and audience.

The teacher of the fifth/sixth-grade gifted program led off by saying that at the school "gifted" really means "accelerated"; that is, children are expected to do work a year above their actual grade level. In addition, there is more variety in the activities in her class than in regular classes; they don't follow a fixed routine. She expects students to do independent projects with partners or in groups; for example, each student "becomes" a famous person, and groups present skits with members in character. Stu-

dents do research, with the teacher's help. They remember better what they learn because they *become* the famous person. Also, the class deals with some social issues, for example, morals and prejudice; and students often debate, with the teacher asking, "What do you think?" She insists that students stand up and talk before the class.

The teacher of the third/fourth gifted class talked about the need to "trick" children into learning so they enjoy it, and stressed the importance of the teacher's being a "guide on the side" rather than a "sage on the stage."

The first/second teacher said she starts projects at the second-grade level, and she showed the council a project she had used in which caterpillars are observed as they make cocoons and emerge as butterflies.

The teachers emphasized the fast pace that is maintained, and how hard students have to work. The concerns of parents about this program centered on the emotional strain these classes put on some children, especially if they entered the program after first grade. Apparently, some parents have felt their children were not adjusting satisfactorily and have requested they be returned to regular classes; but the principal assured the group that such situations are rare and that she always encourages parents to be patient and keep the child in the program.

I asked whether the kinds of things done in gifted classes wouldn't be equally appropriate in all classes. The principal and teachers agreed. I didn't ask the—to me—obvious follow-up question: If the same methods are appropriate for all, why should some children be separated from others?

The answer could be in part local-political rather than strictly educational: the principal pointed out that the program has been valuable in holding or attracting "good families," who might otherwise have chosen another school with a special program. In any case, teachers in this school are beginning to work on whole language and integrated units of instruction, and this approach has a lot in common with "gifted" education.

At this point the principal said, without elaboration or clarification, "Not everyone agrees with the idea of gifted education," then added, "You'll just have to make up your own minds." ■

Board picks panel to search for superintendent, reaction mixed

by Michael Klonsky

The Board of Education made support for decentralization the No. 1 requirement for its next superintendent as it officially opened a nationwide search for a replacement for Ted D. Kimbrough.

However, Kimbrough's lame-duck status, coupled with sharpening faction fights and allegations of financial wrongdoing at the board, threaten to make the interim period a stormy one.

At the start of the year, the board distributed a brochure advertising the position and tapped five prominent out-of-towners to rate incoming applications.

"It was a major victory for school reform," said Donald Moore, executive director of the reform organization Designs For Change. "We were deeply concerned that a real search wasn't going to be launched. The quality of people on the search committee makes us feel that the search is a real one."

But other reform activists worried that local voices would not be heard.

"Where are all the people who have been involved in educational change in Chicago?" asked Coretta McFerren, executive director of the West Side Schools and Community Organizing for Restructuring and Planning. "We need sweeping changes in the way our superintendent is picked. The national search committee has no connection to Chicago and our local school community, which is the only stakeholder in this situation."

School reformers generally were encouraged, however, by the board's

brochure because it reflects an emphasis on school reform and decentralization that they felt was missing when Kimbrough was picked. The brochure invites applications from candidates who:

- "Enthusiastically support actions that place key decision-making authority with the LSC and principal in a site-based, decentralized model that includes budget restructuring;

- "Will articulate a vision that inspires and mobilizes communities, teachers and staff for improving educational achievement...including those with special education and multicultural needs;

- "Will be a visible and courageous leader, one who is willing to take risks, is skilled at developing consensus, and will make children's needs a first priority."

Other qualities sought by the board include attention to accountability and ethnic diversity, and management and financial skills.

The screening committee is made up of business and education main-streamers: Christopher Cross, executive director of the Business Roundtable, Washington, D.C., and a former congressional staffer; Jeremiah Floyd, associate executive director of the National School Boards Association; Ana Sol Gutierrez, a board of education member from Montgomery County, Md.; Floretta McKenzie, a Washington, D.C. consultant and a former D.C. school superintendent; Robert Peterkin, the former superinten-

dent of Milwaukee who now heads a principal training program at Harvard University; and Anthony Trujillo, superintendent of schools in El Paso, Tex.

Some reform activists questioned the ability of such an establishment group to search for and evaluate leaders who don't come out of a traditional mold.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has agreed to fund a large piece of the search process, including the hiring of a consultant to guide the fledgling board through its first search.

The board has held two open hearings on the subject of superintendent selection, but several LSC members contacted by CATALYST complained that they weren't informed about the meetings and that only a small group of insiders were in the know. Many in the reform community are fearful that, as in 1989, the board will go its own way, paying no heed to the search committee or the community. (See CATALYST/Special Report, November 1992.)

Open process?

Will there be a repeat of those behind-the-scenes maneuverings? "I don't think so," said Joan Isenberg, assistant executive director of the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB). Isenberg and the IASB served as consultants in 1989 and will again this year.

"I believe the process will be opened up," said Isenberg. "So far, it has been carried out in executive session by necessity. Most candidates don't want their names made public at this time. But I think the board wants input from the entire school community. I don't think all these national people would come into the process if the issue was going to be settled in a back-room deal."

Isenberg said, however, that people should take the initiative and begin submitting nominations.

James Hammonds, an LSC member

Courtesy of WTTW/CHANNEL 11



Sixth-grader Minnie Blackwell is the focus of the WTTW/Channel 11 documentary "About the Children: School Reform, Year 4," which examines the impact of reform at Dyett Middle School in Washington Park. Dyett Principal Yvonne Minor is one of six finalists for a national principal's award. The program will air at 8 p.m. on Feb. 17. Videotapes of the program will be given to every Chicago public school.

at Goldblatt Elementary School on the West Side, called for creation of a screening committee made up of LSC representatives. "As long as the selection process is kept closed, the person selected will not see themselves as being chosen by the people themselves, but rather by the mayor's people."

Board member Steven R. Ballis defended the board's approach. "The qualifications we set for the new superintendent clearly reflect the position of reform and the views of the local school councils," he said, adding, "We mailed 1,000 brochures to local school people, inviting their suggestions and recommendations for a new superintendent."

Ballis also noted that the board "represents a cross-section of the school community [and] was put in place in a citizen-based process."

The selection process is unfolding during a critical period. Kimbrough's contract expires in June, which means that the school community faces the spring session of the Legislature and upcoming union contract negotiations with a lame-duck leader. The board has been weakened by faction fights and an alleged financial scandal of

undetermined proportions involving Kimbrough's chief operating officer, Robert Sampieri. Kimbrough relieved Sampieri of his duties, pending the outcome of an investigation; Sampieri says he's done nothing wrong.

There are fears that this unstable situation could have negative affects, such as:

- Taking the focus of reform away from schools and classrooms and putting it back on board politics.

- Giving unions little incentive to negotiate contract changes many reformers feel are needed to push reform ahead.

- Giving the Legislature more excuses for withholding badly needed financial aid; the board faces a projected \$383 million deficit for 1993-94.

The board is debating several alternatives to shore up its situation. There are those who, reflecting the views of Mayor Richard M. Daley and some on the School Finance Authority (SFA), would like to buy out the remainder of Kimbrough's contract and replace him with an interim superintendent or a small group of present board staffers.

Leonard Dominguez, deputy mayor of education, favors a buy-out. "It's obvious that a valid question exists about leadership as we try and develop the legislative agenda," he says. "We don't need a lame duck carrying our message down to Springfield."

But this step could generate considerable heat from black community groups that have traditionally backed Kimbrough and oppose what they see as a power grab by the SFA.

One activist, who asked not to be identified, argued that Kimbrough could play an even stronger role in union negotiations than he did before announcing his departure. "He can take a hard line in negotiations because he doesn't have to live with the union next year," the activist explained.

Besides, said another activist, hiring an interim "would be a terrible waste of money."

As CATALYST went to press in mid-January, board insiders said it was likely an outside negotiator would be brought in to handle union contract talks and the legislative agenda. The leading candidate: Seyfarth, Shaw, Fairweather & Geraldson, a pro-management law firm that is one of Chicago's largest. ■

Teachers academy to resume training

By mid-February, the Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science plans to resume teacher training with a group of 10 Chicago elementary schools.

Another 13 schools are to begin planning for future training, with school liaisons and teachers participating in monthly workshops.

"We see the next six months as a transition to the new plan," says academy development director Elaine Athas.

TAMS, an independent staff development program to upgrade math and science instruction in Chicago's public schools, stopped teacher training in August, under pressure from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), its principal sponsor. (See letter on page 18; CATALYST/Updates, November 1992.)

DOE threatened to withhold funds if TAMS didn't improve its operations. In addition, some schools complained that some of the substitute teachers the academy provided (to fill in for regular teachers during TAMS training) could not handle the children.

In December, TAMS unveiled a new plan designed to make its program more compatible with the school system's reform goals, and to change some of its more problematic aspects.

Under one major change, schools will be able to hire certified substitute teachers from a list provided by the Board of Education, with the academy picking up the tab.

The substitutes no longer will attempt to co-teach science and math with the regular classroom teacher. "It was too expensive," said Karen Carlson, a TAMS trustee and principal of Prescott Elementary School in Lincoln Park. "If you're going to co-teach, you have to do co-planning, and there was no time for that."

Still relying on its "whole school" approach, the academy plans to offer schools these new options: after-school, weekend and summer classes.

It also is launching a Teacher Resource Network aimed at connecting teachers with each other and the city's resources; a computer network initially will link TAMS, the Shedd

Aquarium, DePaul University and Casals Elementary School in Humboldt Park.

Also in December, the academy announced the resignations of Jon Thompson, executive director, and Don Perkins, co-chair of the board of trustees. Thompson will now work on special assignments for the academy, and Perkins has offered to launch a "Friends of the Teachers Academy" to encourage financial and moral support for TAMS from the business community.

The academy's founding father, Nobel laureate and University of Chicago physics professor Leon Lederman, is serving as interim executive director and board chair. Lourdes Montegudo, former deputy mayor for education, has been named principal investigator, with responsibility for program operations.

Many of the changes have essentially been imposed by DOE, which has since pledged \$1.5 million for the academy's 1992-93 budget. To get the money, however, the academy must meet several conditions, including:

- Appoint an eight-member executive committee to function as the board of directors; the present board has at least 44 members.

- Appoint a full-time staff person who is a science specialist and has had experience in teacher development and program implementation in an urban setting.

- Conduct a financial audit.

In a letter to Lederman dated Dec. 18, 1992, DOE noted that it would take three months to process the academy's funding application from the time it is received.

"I'm really hopeful," says Carlson. "The academy has such promise if they can just get it together."

Debra Shore

Daley picks Sharon Grant to succeed Albert Logan

On Jan. 12, Mayor Richard M. Daley chose D. Sharon Grant for another term on the Board of Education, to fill the seat held by Albert Logan, whose term expired last May.

Grant, 43, served on the Chicago

board from September 1988 to June 1989, and was chair of the real estate committee.

She is president of Concerned Health Care of America, a firm specializing in management of mental health and substance abuse treatment programs. She also has served as a member of the University of Illinois Urban Education Advisory Board.

In choosing Grant, Daley bypassed Esther C. Lawson and John William Long, whom the School Board Nominating Committee also had recommended.

Lawson, 62, is a retired Chicago public school principal who won a Phi Delta Kappa award from Northwestern University as Principal of the Year in 1986.

Long, 50, is director of the Upward Bound and Talent Search programs at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The groups help public school students to enroll in college. Long is on the boards of the Parent/Community Council and Citizens School Committee, and served on the late Mayor Harold Washington's education summit.

Lorraine Forte

Dropout rate tops 50% with Class of '91

Chicago has reached a dubious milestone: For the first time since four-year dropout statistics were computed for the Chicago public schools, more than half of a class dropped out before graduation.

The dropout rate for the Class of 1991 was 51.5 percent, as 12,557 students graduated and 13,332 dropped out. The rate is the worst since 1982, when the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance calculated the first four-year rate using official school data.

However, preliminary statistics indicate that the Class of 1992 did better. The Board of Education's Research, Evaluation and Planning Department estimates the 1992 rate will fall back to the level of 1990, which was 45.9 percent.

Of the city's 67 high schools, 54 had increases from their 1990 dropout rates, with 15 of the 54 post-

ing increases of more than 10 percent. Thirteen schools showed decreases, which averaged only 2.3 percent. Only Near North Career Magnet had a significant decrease, 7.9 percent.

Since 1982, only 10 high schools have shown improvement; of those, only Near North, Fenger, Hubbard and Young Magnet showed significant improvement, with their rates dropping an average of 8.3 percent.

Chicago's four-year dropout rate has gone up and down over the past 10 years but generally has been on the rise.

What do the most recent numbers say about school reform? Very little, according to Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change. "The problem with a four-year dropout statistic is that you're looking at the impact of things that have happened at least three or four years ago, and in some cases eight or nine years ago," Moore explains.

The first school improvement plans under reform were put into effect during the 1990-91 school year, which is when members of the Class of '91 would have been seniors. Typically, a majority of Chicago dropouts leave school during their freshman and sophomore years. The Class of '94, next year's graduating class, will be the first to have gone through all four years of high school since improvement plans went into effect.

To affect the dropout rate, you have to start in elementary school, says Moore. "It's a lot easier to raise the achievement of kids in first and second grade than it is to turn around the dropout rate for kids who have been in the system for eight or nine years."

Moore recommends setting up multi-grade classes in elementary schools so that grade retention is minimized, as kids who are held back are much more likely to drop out. And Moore says the board could do a great service to incoming high school students by eliminating the chaos they face every September.

"You have kids coming into high school saying, 'I wonder if this is for me,' yet some of these kids sit in study hall for a month while the school tries to find classes for them," he says.

Michael Selinker

School sports get an assist

The Legislature has given the Board of Education an assist in funding sports and other extracurricular activities, which suffered substantial cutbacks this school year.

In November, lawmakers passed legislation enabling the board, beginning in 1993-94, to use money from its playground tax for sports and extracurricular activities. Currently, the money can be spent only on playgrounds, stadia and some after-school programs.

However, since the board is taxing at the limit in the playground fund—8 cents per \$100 equalized assessed valuation—adding sports likely will require a cutback in the traditional uses.

Debra Williams

Upcoming events

The public is invited to a series of panel discussions being held as part of a course on Chicago school reform offered by the Teachers' Task Force of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform and Roosevelt University. Time: 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Place: Room 244 (faculty lounge), 430 S. Michigan.

■ **FEB. 2** The law, school structures and possibilities. Panelists are William Ayers, University of Illinois at Chicago; Peggy Gordon, Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project; Coretta McFerrer, West Side Schools and Community Organizing for Restructuring and Planning.

■ **FEB. 16** Roles and experiences of local school councils. Panelists are Joe Barerra, Shields Elementary School; Wil Berry, Chicago Association of Local School Councils; Malcolm Bush, Whitney Young High School; Kathy Kuranda, Kelly High School and Davis Elementary School.

■ **FEB. 23** Parent and community groups. Panelists are Lauren E. Allen, The Woodlawn Organization; Sokoni Karanja, Centers for New Horizons; Bernie Noven, Parents United for Responsible Education; Dan Solis, United Neighborhood Organization.

LETTERS *Continued from page 19*

program for all Dixon students is a Black Cultural Enrichment class. This class is designed to enhance students' self-esteem through an increased knowledge of their culture and its contributions to society, and of African and African-American history as it relates to the history of the U.S., the world and ancient civilizations.

An intriguing outgrowth of the Black Cultural Enrichment class has been the creation of a student-owned and -operated business: the Eagles International Trade Corp. It is the only chartered and incorporated business owned and operated by elementary school students in the state. The corporation imports and sells fabrics from Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Mali and the Ivory Coast. Clothing and accessories—including kente cloth dresses, T-shirts, ties, caps, hats, jewelry and umbrellas—are also part of the inventory.

The project was initiated in an effort to instruct young people about the advantages of becoming entrepreneurs, of conceiving and building businesses that will support and benefit their communities. Dixon students' reading, mathematics, language, geography and computer skills are challenged and enhanced through their involvement in the program. Their continued participation is contingent upon maintaining at least a C grade-point average.

At the present time, all profits are reinvested in inventory. However, the business may eventually issue stock certificates and pay dividends to investors. An immediate goal is that student employees become salaried, and that a retail outlet be opened to allow business to be conducted at least six days a week. Other goals include expansion into manufacturing, by training students as designers and tailors to produce garments and household decorator items from the imported fabrics.

We are quite proud of the Eagles International Trade Corp. and look forward to expanding in the near future. Dixon School may well serve as a prototype for entrepreneurship education at the elementary level. It is our belief that introducing these concepts at an early age will promote a realistic understanding of the correlation between school work and the world of work.

*Faye Terrell-Perkins, resource specialist
Dixon Elementary School*

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

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Bright Ideas

DuPrey faculty rallies to rewrite curriculum

Teaching reading, writing and spelling together, in lessons that center around themes, has become a widely recommended way of teaching language arts.

The idea is that children will learn more when they are submerged into a project that is relevant and meaningful to them.

The faculty at Ana Roque de DuPrey School in Humboldt Park believes this, and has come up with a way to spread this so-called thematic, integrated curriculum throughout its school.

To get the program off the ground, the entire faculty and a group of parents and students attended a two-day retreat in September that was conducted by Designs for Change. With a school goal of equipping students to contribute to solving problems throughout their lives, the group chose the following themes: politics, the community, environment, communication and the media, family and friends, self-esteem and respecting other cultures.

A committee was formed for each theme, with teachers volunteering to serve. Currently, the committees meet once a week during a morning preparation period and on half-day inservice



JOHN BOOZ

Fifth-grader Glenda Matias completes an essay on America's pioneer era, one of DuPrey's curriculum themes.

days to plan schoolwide activities for their themes.

"When committees meet, they create a list of objectives that they would like the children to meet, a list of activities for them, tasks that are assigned to each committee member and a deadline," explains Principal Gloria Roman. "The chairperson makes sure that tasks are completed."

In addition, about half of the school's teachers participated in 30

hours of staff development presented by the Chicago Area Writing Project to improve their skills in teaching children how to write.

Using state Chapter 1 funds, Roman also hired four teachers with strong writing skills to write a guide, including sample lessons, that teachers can follow in the future.

"We are still in the process of creating the curriculum, so our program is not schoolwide yet, but some teachers

are using themes to teach now, and all our students have gotten a taste of a thematic unit," says Roman.

Last year, students participated in a mock presidential election. As part of their assignments, students watched the news, read the newspaper, conducted interviews, wrote letters to the candidates and reports on their presidential choices, created campaign material and, finally, voted. After the presidential election was over, students put their new knowledge to work on student council elections.

For the fifth-grade pupils of teacher Jennifer Mundi, "electoral college," "primary" and "convention" became spelling words. "If a word was misspelled by the majority of my class, that word became part of our spelling lesson," she explains.

A theme-centered language arts program not only promotes literacy but also helps students learn about the world around them, says Roman.

"Before we started working on elections, I didn't know much about it," says fifth-grader Veronica Ramos. "But I know a lot now."

Debra Williams

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