



Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Bad teachers worry teacher leaders

Overall, school leaders give reform a passing grade

by Lorraine Forte

CATALYST's finding surprised some educators and activists who reviewed the results of the survey, which asked CTU delegates, PPAC chairs and LSC chairs a range of questions on the impact of reform, roadblocks to school improvement, LSC effectiveness and training, teacher involvement and staff development. (For an explanation of how the survey was conducted, see story on page 5.)

"When you're talking one out of three, that's fairly significant," says Al Bennett of Roosevelt University, co-author of the Consortium's principal report. "Teachers could be saying there are two or three bad apples here [at my school] and it would be better for us all if we got rid of them. Or, they could be reflecting the notion that bad people ought to go because they make the rest of us look bad."

When added to results from the principal survey, CATALYST's findings "translate into 40 to 50 percent of schools saying this is a serious problem," says Anthony Bryk, director of the Center for School Improvement at the University of Chicago and another co-author of the Consortium study. "We're not talking about a problem

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Prin cipals have long complained that it's too hard to fire bad teachers. But now a CATALYST survey has found that about a third of teacher leaders agree.

Asked to rate various obstacles to school improvement, 29 percent of Chicago Teachers Union delegates and 34 percent of chairs of professional personnel advisory committees said that difficulty removing poor teachers was a definite or serious problem for their school. The figure climbs to 53 percent for chairs of local school councils.

In a survey conducted last June by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, 64 percent of principals said difficulty in dismissing poor teachers is a serious problem. On average, principals said they would like to dismiss three to four teachers per school.

LEADER SURVEYS

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In This Issue: Three views of reform

Deborah Walsh, director of the Chicago Teacher Union's Quest Center, called the numbers "frightening": Only about half the teacher leaders surveyed by *CATALYST* reported that teachers at their schools played a significant role in designing curriculum, planning staff development and participating in other school-change activities.

Our survey results point to progress since reform, especially in increased *efforts* to improve curriculum and instruction. But without the full-fledged participation of teachers in crafting change, it's unlikely that schools will take on the hard work of meaningful, lasting change.

Certainly one way to give teachers more power is to amend the Reform Act to add more teachers to LSCs. Another idea that would work under the current structure comes from Roland Barth, founder of the Harvard University Principals Center,

In *Improving Schools from Within*, Barth argues that one of a principal's most important functions is drawing teachers into decision making and responsibility for the whole school. Indeed, he says that the "ability to relinquish power" is one characteristic of an effective principal. As local school councils decide whether to renew their principals' contracts, they should assess their principals on this point and make it a key criterion for the future.

In the following pages, *CATALYST* reports the results of surveys it conducted of CTU delegates, chairs of professional personnel advisory committees and chairs of local school councils. Our goal was to round out the views offered earlier by school principals.

Last June, the Consortium on Chicago School Research asked principals how things were going. In

general, the principals replied, things were going well. However, since principals were selected under reform, it could be argued that they were predisposed to judge it favorably. The same could be said of LSC chairs and, to a lesser extent, of PPAC chairs. But not of CTU delegates. The CTU had wanted a brand of reform that gave teachers more power, so it could be expected that CTU delegates were predisposed to look negatively on reform, even though the union's top leadership had urged them to help make it work.

As it turned out, CTU delegates consistently gave reform less favorable ratings than the other two groups. However—and this is a big however—delegates were more positive than negative. Most questions asked respondents to choose a number between 1 and 5, with 1 being very positive and 5 being very negative. Generally, no more than a third of the delegates marked 4 or 5, the two clearly negative choices.



WORTH PONDERING "No matter how democratic and inclusive the faculty process, it will not necessarily serve students well, nor improve faculty expertise, unless it is inspired by substantive visions of high quality student outcomes and professional practice. Conversely, no matter how well articulated the vision or standards of excellence for students and teachers, they are not likely to be implemented well unless faculty experience some sense of ownership over the process of defining and attaining the vision."

Karen Prager in the Spring 1993 issue of "Brief to Principals," published by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin.

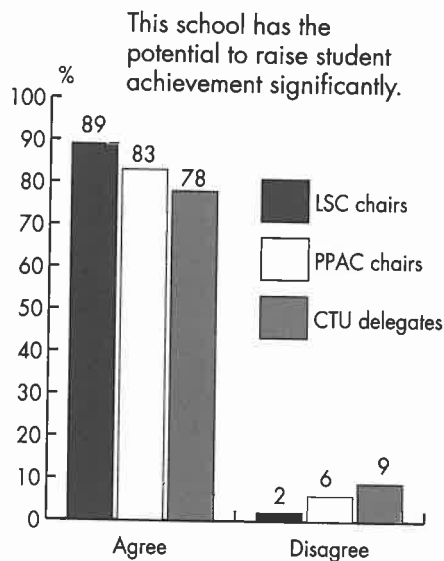
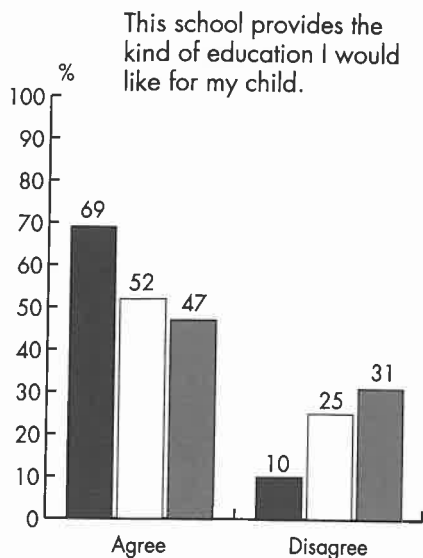


ABOUT US We are pleased to announce the promotion of Debra Williams from intern to associate editor. Williams is a former local school council member and the mother of two children in the Chicago public schools. She recently received a master's degree in journalism from Columbia College. The addition of an associate editor to *CATALYST*'s staff was made possible by grants from the Polk Bros. Foundation, Ameritech Foundation and Prince Charitable Trusts.



Linda Levy Lorraine Forte

'Schools good, can get better,' school leaders say



SURVEYS *continued from page 1*

in 10 to 15 percent of schools."

Millie Rivera, executive director of the Latino Institute, was not surprised by the finding. "The teachers I know and work with are willing to look at themselves and the negative effect that a bad teacher can have on a school."

But John Kotsakis, special assistant to the president for education affairs at the CTU, believes the problem of firing teachers has been "overstated" by principals and in the media.

"The problem isn't the one or two percent of non-performing teachers. It's what do you do to raise the level of performance of everyone else in the system?" he says. He also stresses the need for a better system for evaluating teachers.

"There is a process for removing incompetent teachers, but we don't have a process of effective evaluation," Kotsakis says. "Principals evaluate teachers on extrinsic things, such as classroom management, whether they show up on time, and so on. These are minimal standards. Principals focus on the extrinsic stuff because they don't have the time or a process for the intrinsic stuff."

To dismiss a tenured teacher, principals must follow a series of steps outlined in the CTU contract and in state law. First, the principal must notify a teacher of his or her unsatisfactory performance in writing, after observing the teacher in the classroom for at least two days. The written

notice, called an E-3, must state the reason for the unsatisfactory rating. The teacher must then participate in a remediation program with a consulting teacher, who is selected from a list supplied by the CTU.

If the teacher's performance does not improve during the 45 days, the teacher can be removed from the classroom, Kotsakis points out. The teacher, however, has the right, under state law, to have his or her case judged by a hearing officer of the Illinois Board of Education.

Reform streamlined the process by shortening the remediation period to 45 days rather than one year. But the number of teachers dismissed for unsatisfactory teaching hasn't increased significantly.

In 1989-90, according to board statistics, one teacher was dismissed and one resigned after receiving E-3 notices; in 1992-93, one teacher resigned and one was reinstated to a teaching position. 1990-91 saw the largest increase; of 11 teachers who received E-3s, eight resigned or were fired.

Says one teacher from a school in the Oakland neighborhood, asking that her name not be used, "The same protections that there are to protect good teachers also protect bad ones."

High optimism

The overall positive results of CATALYST's survey echo those of Consortium surveys of teachers and principals and a recent

random-sample telephone poll of LSC members sponsored by the corporate reform group Leadership for Quality Education. Consistently, a solid majority of responses to CATALYST's survey were positive or neutral; relatively few fell into the negative categories.

Following are other highlights:

■ The statements "I believe this school has the potential to raise student achievement significantly" and "Since reform, I am more optimistic this school will improve" generated the highest rate of positive responses in the entire survey.

But parents and teachers differ sharply when it comes to judging concrete results; 60 percent or more of LSC chairs, but roughly 40 percent of teacher leaders, agree that discipline is better, that time spent on learning has increased and that students are learning more since reform.

■ Half or more of each group say that efforts to update curriculum have increased and that more teachers are improving their teaching skills.

■ 45 percent of LSC chairs, 39 percent of PPAC chairs and 37 percent of CTU delegates said parent involvement at their school has increased.

■ 69 percent of LSC chairs, 52 percent of PPAC chairs and 47 percent of CTU delegates agreed with the statement "This school provides the kind of education I would like for my children."

"It's troubling that so many agreed with that," Bryk says. "It's hard to see how they can make that kind of statement, given the quality of instruction we see in schools. It could be that they're saying the school provides a safe, caring environment, but that doesn't mean the education being provided is adequate."

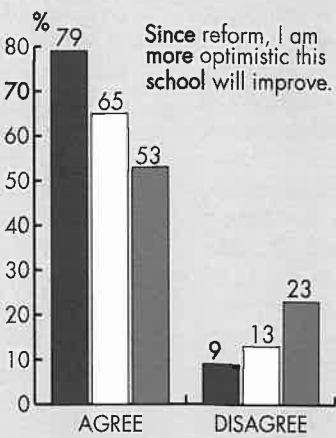
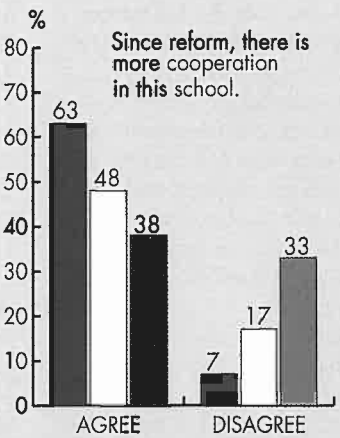
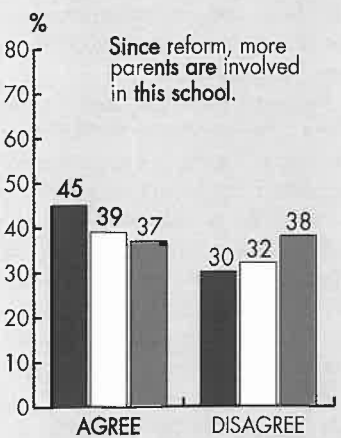
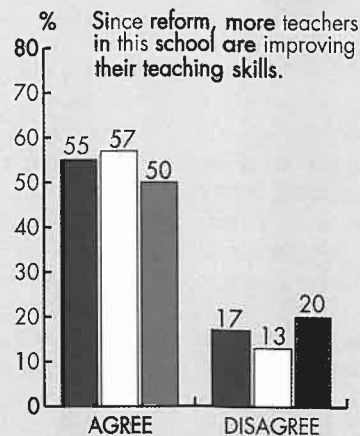
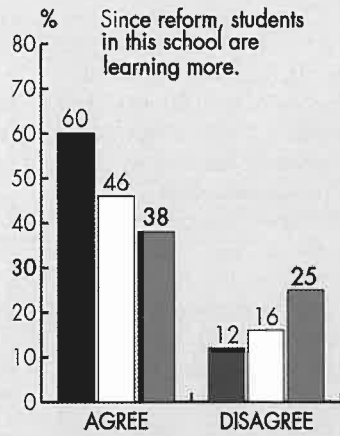
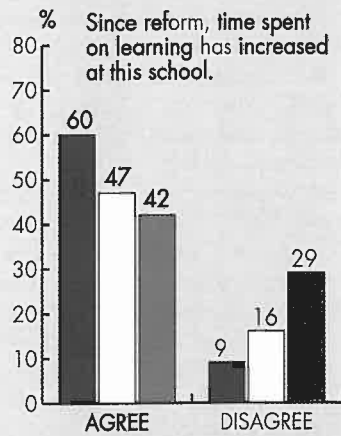
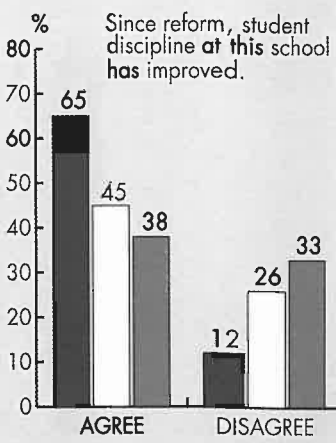
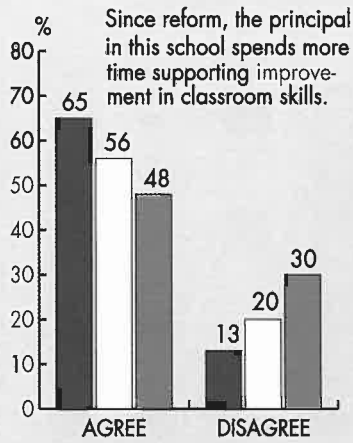
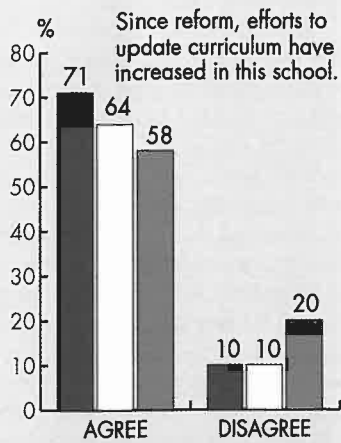
However, Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, points out that satisfaction with a school isn't necessarily related to the quality of instruction or to achievement levels. In a 1984 Panel study, parents in Englewood gave their schools the highest ratings, while parents in higher-achieving, more affluent Lincoln Park schools gave their schools the lowest ratings.

■ As in the Consortium surveys, school size played a significant role in how school leaders judge reform: Those at smaller schools were more positive than those at larger schools.

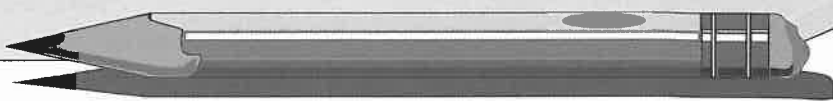
There was one exception to this trend: PPAC chairs at larger schools evaluated reform more positively than those at smaller ones. Brigitte Erbe of Roosevelt University, who conducted a computer

Changes since reform

■ LSC chairs □ PPAC chairs ■ CTU delegates



Note: Respondents were asked to select a number from 1 to 5 to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Those who chose 3 were considered "neutral" and are not depicted in these charts.



analysis of the survey results, speculates that they "may feel they have more input" and are less anonymous since reform.

■ LSC chairs with more education were most critical of reform and saw more serious roadblocks to school improvement.

■ In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to name the one thing they would change to improve their school, other than money.

The most frequent answer given by both LSC chairs and CTU delegates was to change the roles and responsibilities of school leaders.

For LSC chairs, however, that meant giving schools and principals more power. For CTU delegates, it meant getting rid of LSCs and principals who abuse their authority and giving teachers more input into school policy.

PPAC chairs most frequently said they want to see increased parent involvement.

Other changes school leaders said they would make include: rehabilitated school buildings; more space to relieve overcrowding; smaller class sizes; a longer or restructured school day; more staff; better staff (including a better principal); better communication and cooperation throughout the school; more staff development; and improved discipline.

Rose-colored glasses?

Throughout the survey, LSC chairs were consistently most positive and CTU delegates the most skeptical; PPAC chairs fell in between.

Does this mean LSC chairs are overly optimistic? "No," says West Side school activist Coretta McFerren. "They're the ones in the trenches. It's hard to look at things through rose-colored glasses when you're out in the mud digging."

Because LSCs are supposed to be the driving force for improvement under reform, "for them to say it's failing is to criticize themselves," says Charles Payne, professor of African-American studies at Northwestern University and a consultant for the Algebra Project. The true picture, he adds, is likely "somewhere in between" the teachers' and LSC chairs' views.

"LSC chairs are closest to principals in their [positive] perceptions of their school," says Bryk. "They're heavily invested in the institution in terms of time and effort and tend to think most positively about it."

Teachers' skepticism is no surprise, says Rivera. "Given that they are on the front lines every day, it's perfectly understandable that it's taking them longer to see real results."

"I do think we need to be more radical" about trying new things to improve schools, says Hess. "But then, things have been so bad in Chicago schools for so long that any change is good."

Still, the fact that teachers give reform lower marks "raises real questions as we move into the next stage [of reform], focusing on classroom instruction," Bryk says.

He suggests a system of incentives and sanctions that would increase teacher professionalism and foster school improvement:

First, the school system should put money into bonuses for teachers who participate in schoolwide, collective staff development rather than take individual classes. Doing so, Bryk explains, would "provide more coherent instruction and more collegiality among teachers."

Second, to increase accountability, the process of getting rid of poor teachers should be made easier, and sanctions imposed on schools that are failing to improve.

Third, "there needs to be an infrastructure to work with schools who are floundering as they look for help. Some schools are doing well, but a large number are not. No one wants the central office to do it, but no one's put anything in its place." ■

How the surveys were conducted

The CATALYST surveys of Chicago Teachers Union delegates, chairs of professional personnel advisory committees and chairs of local school councils were conducted with the help of Richard Warnecke, director of the Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Brigitte Erbe, director of research and development for the College of Education at Roosevelt University, conducted the computer data analysis.

CATALYST mailed the questionnaires Oct. 12 and sent a postcard reminder Oct. 19. On Nov. 13 and then again on Dec. 1, we mailed questionnaires to people who had not yet responded. LSC questionnaires went to home addresses; PPAC and CTU questionnaires went to school addresses.

The highest response rate was from CTU delegates, with 390 out of 661, or 59 percent, returning questionnaires. These delegates repre-

sented 267 elementary schools and 64 high schools. (Large schools have more than one delegate.)

PPAC chairs were next, with 290 out of 553, or 52 percent, responding. They represent 251 elementary schools and 39 high schools. Only 37 percent of LSC chairs returned a questionnaire; the smallest response rates were in District 4 on the West Side (18 percent) and District 5 on the Near Southwest Side (24 percent), a heavily Hispanic district.

LSC chairs with Spanish surnames and those at schools with an Hispanic enrollment of at least 45 percent received questionnaires in English and in Spanish. The total of these two groups was 150; 50 responded, with only two responding in Spanish.

In March, CATALYST conducted a telephone survey of 10 percent of LSC chairs in each district who had not responded. Two of the 33 interviews

were conducted in Spanish. An analysis by Erbe found virtually no difference between this group and those who completed a written questionnaire.

Erbe found no differences based on the race or ethnicity of LSC chairs.

Most questions asked respondents to give a positive or negative rating on a scale of 1 to 5. Consistently, about a third chose 3, which we counted as neutral.

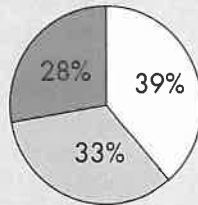
Members of several organizations participated in drafting questions, translating questionnaires into Spanish, field testing and conducting telephone interviews. They include the Chicago League of Women Voters, the Chicago Teachers Union, the Consortium on Chicago School Research, the Latino Institute and the Teachers Task Force of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform. Special thanks go to Amanda Mendez, Erbe's assistant at Roosevelt.

Linda Lenz

Principals report on classroom practice

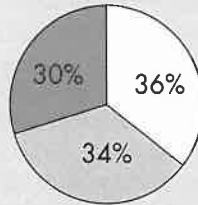
- Almost all
- About half
- Fewer than half

Students involved in literature-based reading.

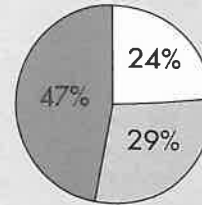


Elementary schools

Students involved in hands-on math.

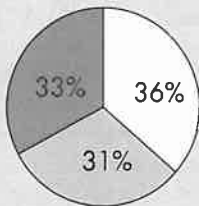


Elementary schools

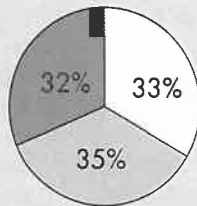


High schools

Students involved in hands-on science.

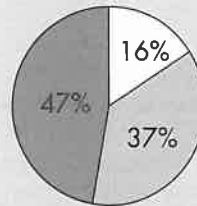


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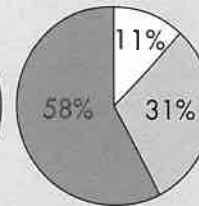


High schools

Students involved in cooperative learning.

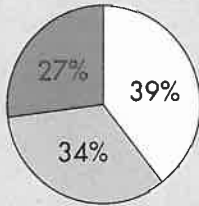


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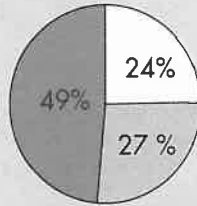


High schools

Students involved in writing across the curriculum.

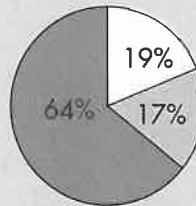


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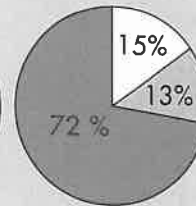


High schools

Students involved in Afrocentric studies.

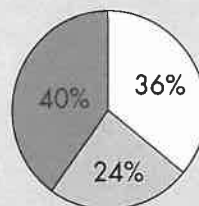


Elementary schools

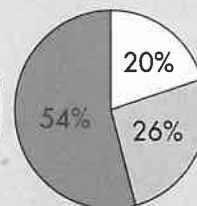


High schools

Students involved in multicultural studies.



Elementary schools



High schools

Has student involvement in the following educational practices increased since reform?

	Elementary schools		High schools	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Literature-based reading	43%	57%	n/a	n/a
Hands-on math	44%	56%	33%	67%
Hands-on science	44%	56%	29%	71%
Cooperative learning	48%	52%	40%	60%
Writing across curriculum	41%	59%	39%	61%
Afrocentric studies	28%	72%	31%	69%
Multicultural studies	33%	67%	16%	84%
Counseling at-risk students	32%	68%	33%	67%
Self-esteem programs	35%	65%	40%	60%

Reform starting to hit classrooms

School reform is beginning to change classrooms, according to surveys of school leaders.

In a survey administered last June, the Consortium on Chicago School Research, at CATALYST's request, asked principals to indicate the extent to which children in their schools were engaged in hands-on math and science, literature-based reading and other educational activities recommended by many experts.

Roughly 30 percent to 40 percent of principals said that children's participation in these activities had increased since reform.

Later, in its own survey, CATALYST asked LSC chairs, PPAC chairs and

CTU delegates to describe the biggest change in curriculum and instruction at their schools since September 1989. While a number said nothing had changed, others wrote about new programs that principals also had said were increasing.

Whole-language reading, expanded bilingual education and hands-on approaches to learning were among the changes cited. Several respondents mentioned new computers and computer-based curriculum. Afrocentric and multicultural curricula were also frequent answers.

Here are what some had to say:

"Our students are totally into the whole-language program, and litera-

ture is a big part of our curriculum."
— LSC chair

"Computer-aided instruction has increased significantly; more emphasis has been placed on science and math." — CTU delegate

"The Spanish and Polish bilingual programs have grown tremendously. Many of the rooms have team teachers." — PPAC chair

"There are no changes in curriculum or instruction since this time. If anything, things have gotten worse."
— CTU delegate

"Focus on improving writing skills across the curriculum. Every teacher becomes a writing teacher, and the departments collaborate...to get students to write more and write better."
— PPAC chair

"Addition of math manipulatives schoolwide, inclusion of an environmental education approach, inclusion of women's history." — LSC chair

"More work, more programs and insufficient time and help to do a good job at all of these." — CTU delegate

"Attempting to address the needs of African-American students by bringing balance and focus to the curriculum, as well as creating a curriculum with relevance for students who will come of age in the 21st century." — PPAC chair ■

Linda Lenz, Carrie Skibba

Staff development still falling short

Staff development seems to be a hit-and-miss affair in Chicago schools, CATALYST's survey shows.

Only about half of PPAC chairs and CTU delegates agree that their schools have a professional development program that promotes teacher growth.

The numbers surprised John Kotsakis of the CTU—but not because he expected a better showing. "That kind of astounds me. I know of very few schools that have a coherent staff development program."

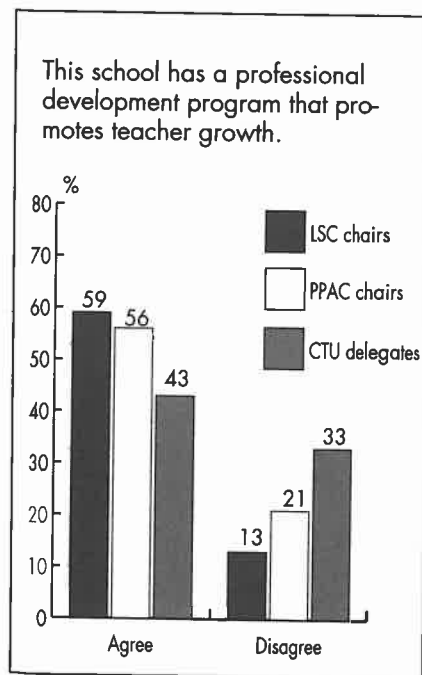
The primary avenue for staff development is apparently the state-required "institute days" held several times a year; over 80 percent of teacher leaders said their school reserves these days for staff development.

In contrast, only 50 to 60 percent said their school provides on-site, long-term workshops; the same per-

cent said their school provides money or substitute coverage for teachers to attend workshops elsewhere or to observe other teachers at work.

Deborah Walsh of the CTU's Quest Center says reform has paved the way for teachers to take the initiative for staff development planning "We want more teachers to know that the door is open for trying innovative things without asking for the central office's permission. We say, better to ask for forgiveness than to ask permission. Go for it."

To provide more time for training and planning, the School Board is pushing for a longer teacher workday and workyear. It has proposed adding a half hour to the current six-hour workday, and four weeks of summer training to the typical 39-week work year; however, teachers would not receive extra pay for the extra time.
Debra Williams



Teachers, parents blame each other

When it comes to judging obstacles to school improvement, parents and teachers are quick to blame each other.

For CTU delegates and PPAC chairs, apathetic or irresponsible parents are the biggest barrier to school improvement; two-thirds of each group said parents are a definite or serious problem at their schools.

Conversely, more than half of LSC chairs said difficulty removing poor teachers is a major obstacle; that item ranked second on their list after lack of money.

That teachers and parents hold each other in such low regard was disheartening, but not surprising, to educators and activists who reviewed *CATALYST's* survey results.

"Whatever parents do, teachers are going to interpret it in the most negative light," says Charles Payne, professor of African-American studies at Northwestern University and a consultant with the Algebra Project. "The minute they admit that parents are doing their part, then that puts more burden on them to do theirs."

"It's discouraging that there continues to be so much finger-pointing," says Millie Rivera, executive director of the Latino Institute. "That continues to be a barrier to [parents and teachers] working together to address the No. 1 issue, which is lack of funding."

The next superintendent needs to be vocal in urging teachers and parents to work together, Rivera adds. "It's very difficult for principals to deal with it alone at a local level. We need a bully pulpit."

West Side school activist Coretta McFerren, head of the reform group WSCORP, says LSCs "have got to create ways of ingratiating ourselves and building collegiality" with teachers. Her organization has launched a program to bring principals, parents, teachers and other school staff from 10 West Side schools together for

regular meetings to discuss problems and share solutions.

LSCs also need to support teachers' efforts to build collegiality among themselves and share resources, McFerren says. "In every school there are a core number of teachers who are open to outside help and information. We are asking our member schools to meet with and create support teams for those teachers, so they can come together, share ideas and reach out to other teachers."

Money tops list

Not surprisingly, given the dire financial straits of Chicago's schools, the inability to obtain sufficient funding ranked as the top obstacle overall; it was the only one of 22 roadblocks listed in the survey that was seen as a definite or serious problem by a majority of respondents from each of the three groups.

Among teachers, money ranked second only to problem parents; problem students ranked third.

Again, school size was a significant factor; respondents at smaller schools saw far fewer serious roadblocks than those at large schools.

Following are other highlights:

■ About half of teacher leaders said lack of time for teacher planning and professional development was a definite or serious problem at their school; it ranked fourth on teachers' list of roadblocks. (About two-thirds of principals surveyed by the Consortium said lack of planning time is a serious roadblock.) But only a third of LSC chairs in *CATALYST's* survey agreed with that assessment.

Al Bennett of Roosevelt University, co-author of the Consortium report, was dismayed at LSC chairs' failure to recognize the seriousness of this roadblock. "Everyone has to be on the same plane" in terms of under-

standing what the obstacles are, Bennett says.

Rivera, however, believes it is "unrealistic to expect people who are not in a profession to understand that profession's needs." Still, she adds, "It's incumbent on the principal to help LSCs learn what teachers need."

■ Lack of recognition for teachers ranked as a major obstacle for 49 percent of CTU delegates and 44 percent of PPAC chairs; it was fifth on teachers' list of obstacles. (LSC chairs were not asked to rate this item.)

■ Over 40 percent of LSC chairs, but less than 20 percent of CTU delegates and PPAC chairs, said the CTU contract and non-teaching union contracts are definite or serious problems.

■ About a third of each group said staff resistance to change is a serious obstacle.

That figure is surprisingly low, says John Kotsakis, special assistant to the president for education affairs at the CTU. "Any time there is change you will have some kind of resistance. That's not a high figure. I think they're really being over-rosy."

■ A third of each group said school overcrowding and rundown school buildings are definite or serious problems.

■ A quarter to a third of teachers said insufficient or outdated teaching materials are definite or serious problems, perhaps reflecting the impact of severe cuts in textbook and supply budgets in recent years.

Schools that are predominantly Latino are especially hard pressed because of "the dearth of outlets and resources" for materials that reflect Hispanic cultural heritage, Rivera says.

■ Ineffective principal leadership was seen as a relatively minor problem, with CTU delegates harshest in their judgment; 26 percent of delegates, 14 percent of PPAC chairs and 13 percent of LSC chairs said it is a definite or serious obstacle.

■ Lack of teacher leadership also ranked low; only 21 percent of CTU delegates, 20 percent of LSC chairs and 14 percent of PPAC chairs said it is a definite or serious problem.

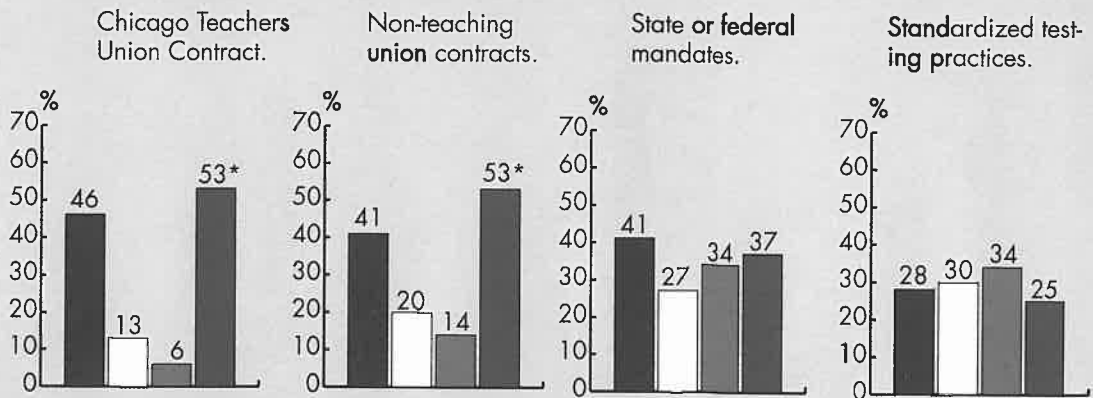
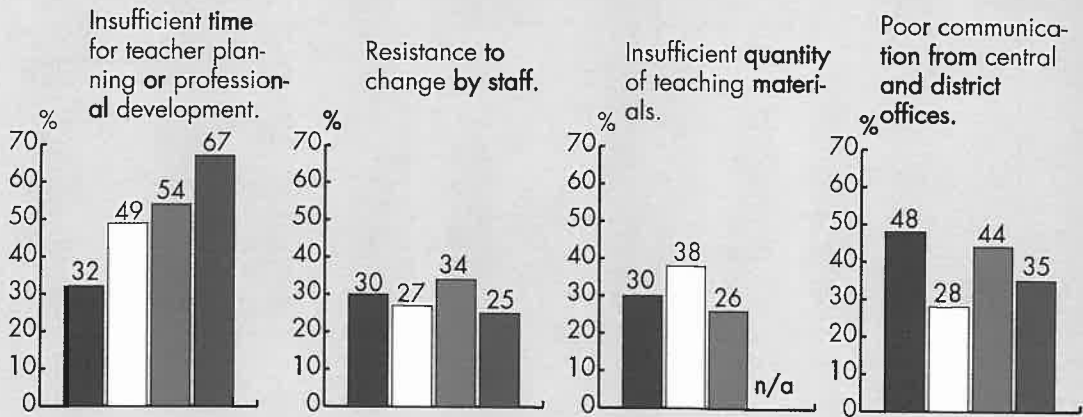
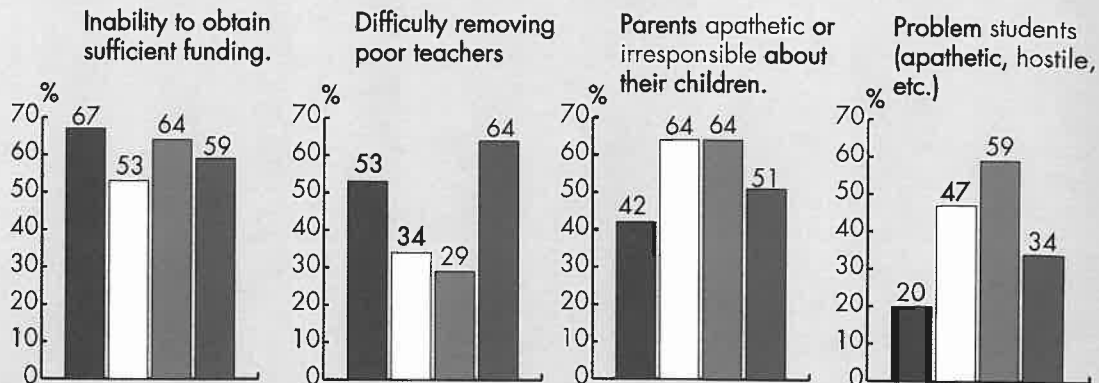
■ Teacher turnover, LSC internal conflict and lack of competent school office help were at the bottom of the list; 20 percent or less of respondents rated them as definite or serious obstacles.

Lorraine Forte

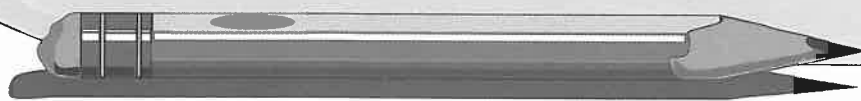
Roadblocks to school improvement

The following charts show the percentage of respondents who rated each item as a definite or serious obstacle impeding school improvement. Principals' ratings were supplied by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which conducted a principal survey last June.

- LSC chairs
- PPAC chairs
- CTU delegates
- Principals

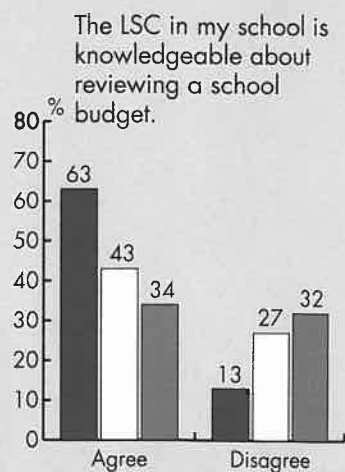
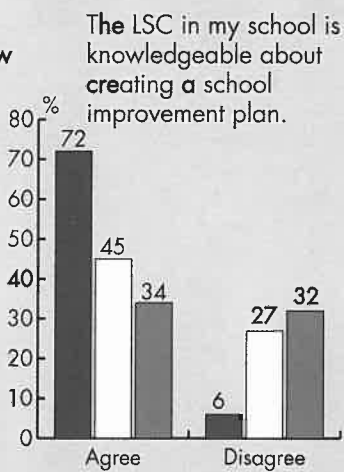
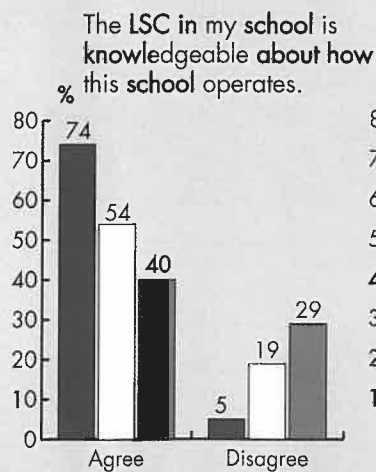
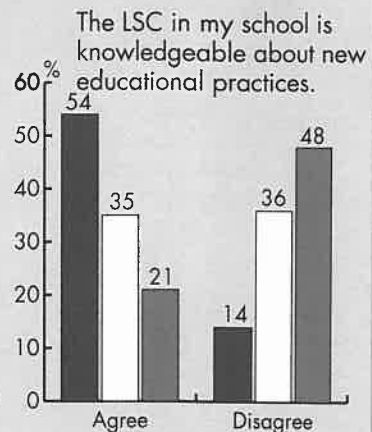
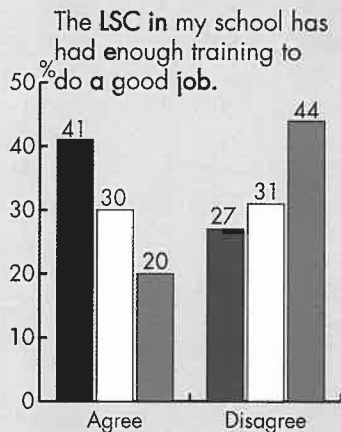
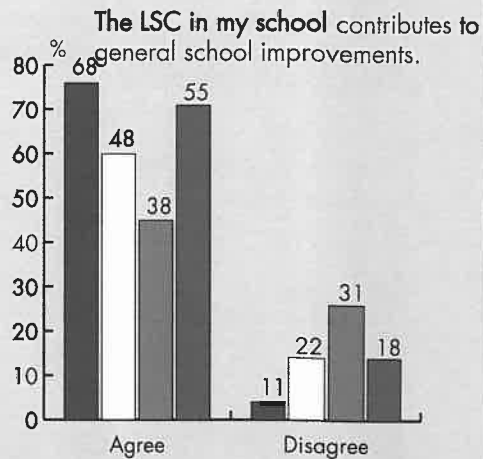
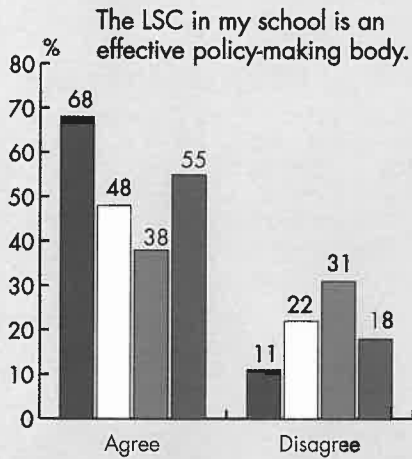


*In the principal survey, CTU and non-teaching union contracts were lumped together.

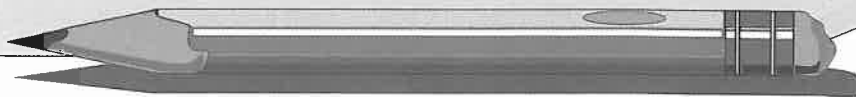


LSC effectiveness

LSC chairs
 PPAC chairs
 CTU delegates
 Principals



Note: Respondents were asked to select a number from 1 to 5 to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Those who chose 3 were considered "neutral."



LSCs great or not so great? It depends on whom you ask

by Debra Williams

Local school council chairs think their councils are doing a great job. Not quite, say teacher leaders in the schools.

In its survey, *CATALYST* asked 12 questions about LSC knowledge and effectiveness. On all but one, a solid to overwhelming majority of LSC chairs gave their councils high marks. But PPAC and CTU views of LSCs were much dimmer.

For example, 68 percent of LSC chairs said their council definitely is an effective policy-making body. Only 48 percent of PPAC chairs and 38 percent of CTU delegates agreed.

Most PPAC chairs gave their LSCs high marks on only five of the 12 items: being knowledgeable about how the school operates, contribut-



TONY GETSUG

Tyeas Anderson at Wadsworth School, where reading and math scores have risen significantly since 1989.

ing to general school improvements, having a good relationship with the principal, not being dominated by conflict and not losing interest in school reform. Most CTU delegates gave their LSCs high marks on only two: not being dominated by conflict and not losing interest in reform.

Teachers were most critical about their LSCs' knowledge of educational practices and contributions to academic improvement.

The only item on which less than half of LSC chairs gave their councils high marks concerned training: Only 41 percent of chairs agreed that their LSC has had enough training to do a good job.

Coretta McFerren, head of the reform group WESCORP, suggests that teachers and parents have different views because of lack of communication. At schools where she is involved, PPAC members rarely attend LSC meetings, and LSCs have not reached out to them, she notes.

Gwendolyn Laroche, education director for the Chicago Urban League, says it's only natural that LSC chairs would rate councils more highly. "It's like self-reporting. Who is

going to say they [themselves] are not doing a good job?" she asks.

Teachers are not as positive, Laroche continues, because they have not been fully included in the decision-making process. "I think teachers have some deep concerns that the LSC is not made up of more teachers. There is a general feeling among teachers that they have not been given the proper respect."

Laroche and Urban League research specialist Jessica Clark believe it is significant that all groups agree that LSCs are not dominated by conflict and have not lost interest in school reform, which had been predicted by a number of school reform skeptics.

Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, notes that fears about low council participation have not proved true, either: 70 percent of LSC chairs said that on average at least nine members attend every meeting; only 7 percent said their councils had more than two vacancies.

Concludes Moore, "There are still more people who are saying yes to reform than no." ■

LSC chairs report on training

LSC chairs: Has your LSC received training in these areas?

Area	More training	
	Yes	needed
Understanding budgets	84%	41%
Principal evaluation	76%	27%
Conducting meetings	75%	20%
Reform Act goals	72%	40%
Planning ed. improve.	69%	56%
Handling conflict	51%	29%

LSC chairs: Has your LSC received training from these sources?

Source	It was	
	Yes	valuable
Board of Education	81%	56%
Non-profit groups	75%	73%
Principals	53%	80%
Universities	31%	68%

Teacher involvement slow to catch on

School reform still has a way to go to get teachers involved in upgrading their schools, according to CATALYST's surveys.

Roughly half of chairs of professional personnel advisory committees and a third of Chicago Teachers Union delegates report:

- That the PPAC at their school definitely helps to improve curriculum and instruction.

- That the PPAC at their school clearly plays an important role in making decisions about school operations and programs.

- That teachers at their school participate in planning staff development and designing the curriculum.

Deborah Walsh, director of the Chicago Teachers Union's Quest Center, calls the figures "frightening."

"It's awful that after four years of school reform, only around half [the schools have teacher involvement] in these areas," she says. "Think about it. If your local hospital were going to make reforms that affect direct patient care, who would you want making the decisions about providing care, the doctors or somebody else? It's the same for schools. Reform will not trickle down to children if teachers are not involved in areas like planning curriculum."

A major problem, Walsh maintains, is that reform did not give enough power to teachers. "They [PPACs] serve in an advisory capacity, and there are only two teachers on the LSCs. Teachers can give advice, but nobody has to take it. Teachers need a stronger voice."

Adds John Kotsakis, special assistant to the president for education affairs at the CTU: "We hear all the time that their [PPAC] opinions are not being sought."

The PPAC Committee of the Teachers Task Force was more upbeat. In a written statement to CATALYST, the committee said it was "very encouraged" by the percentage of LSC and PPAC members who feel

PPACs are involved in key areas like improving curriculum and instruction.

Teachers tended to see their colleagues as part of the problem. Teacher leaders who gave their PPAC low ratings were asked why the PPAC was not playing an important role; the top two reasons, cited by about 40 percent of each group, were "Teachers lack initiative" and "The PPAC has not established a working relationship with the LSC."

That doesn't surprise Walsh. "Teachers who are in leadership roles are always going to want to see stronger leadership roles among teachers," she says. "There is always a need for more leadership and staff development."

CTU delegates rated their PPAC less positively at schools whose PPAC chair did not respond to the survey, suggesting that only the better-working PPACs responded. *Debra Williams*

PPAC information needs

Following are the percentages of respondents who said their PPACs definitely need more information in given areas.

	PPAC	CTU
Innovative educational practices	55%	50%
Creating a school improvement plan	55%	42%
School-based budgeting	51%	50%

Teacher involvement

CATALYST asked PPAC chairs and CTU delegates to rate teacher involvement in five school planning activities on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 meaning "very much involved" and 5 meaning "not at all involved." Following are the percentages of respondents who rated teacher involvement at their school as 1 or 2.

	PPAC	CTU
Writing SIP	64%	54%
Developing school budget	39%	27%
Planning staff development	52%	39%
Designing curriculum	54%	42%
Advising LSC	61%	43%

PPACs' biggest accomplishments

In its surveys, CATALYST asked: What is your PPAC's biggest accomplishment? Here are some of the answers:

"All teachers now participate actively and make decisions regarding Chapter 1 and long-range planning." — *CTU delegate*

"Not fighting with the LSC." — *PPAC chair*

"Engaged in collaborative efforts to review, research and modify the school language arts program to a literature-based whole language program." — *PPAC chair*

"Afrocentric curriculum. The PPAC did not give up until it was in place." — *CTU delegate*

"Nothing. It's a joke." — *PPAC chair*

"The PPAC is a rubber stamp; it no longer meets." — *CTU delegate*

"More opportunities for teachers

to influence policies. As a result, we are hiring a disciplinarian (full time) plus just completed a whole-day workshop about discipline and invited the whole staff." — *PPAC chair*

"Through the SIP, we've created a computer lab and several augmented classrooms and involved parents." — *PPAC chair*

"Setting up a crisis intervention center which houses regular students who exhibit disruptive behavior in the classroom." — *PPAC chair*

"Meeting a couple of times a year." — *CTU delegate*

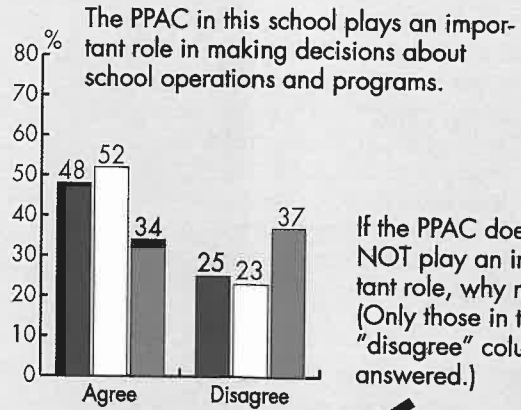
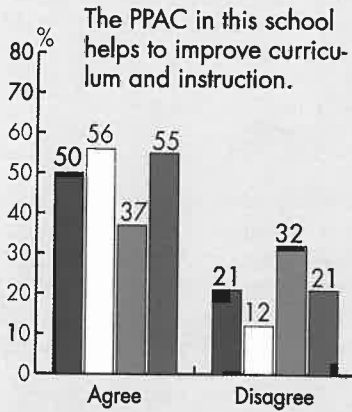
"Developing academic subcommittees which initiate and implement strategic learning programs to help students at every grade level." — *CTU delegate*

"Keeping the LSC from completely taking over." — *CTU delegate*

Carrie Skibba

PPAC involvement

LSC chairs
 PPAC chairs
 CTU delegates
 Principals



If the PPAC does NOT play an important role, why not? (Only those in the "disagree" column answered.)

PPAC profile

Avg. membership 14

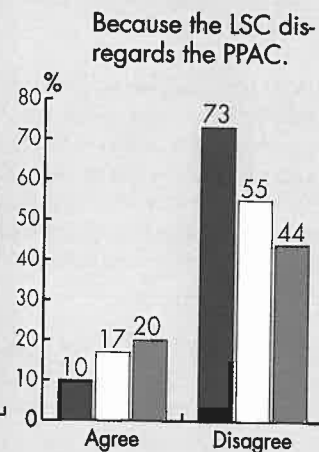
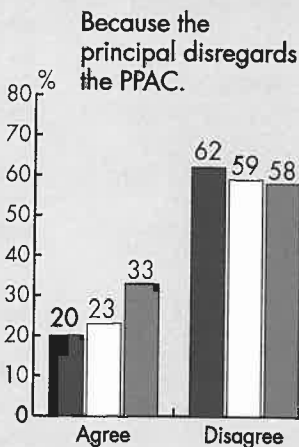
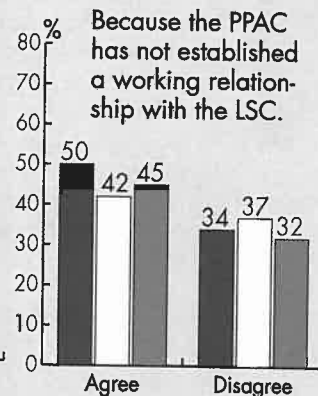
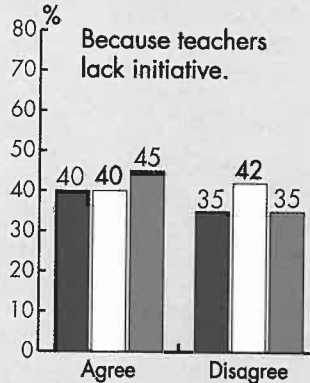
PPACs whose members include:
 LSC teacher reps 75%
 CTU delegates 70%

How members are selected:
 Elected by department 17%
 Elected by the staff at large 30%
 Volunteer 40%
 Other 13%

Frequency of meetings:
 Weekly 5%
 Biweekly 18%
 Monthly 53%
 Bimonthly 11%
 Other 12%

Chairs:
 Avg. years in CPS 19
 Avg. years in their school 12
 Avg. years as PPAC chair 3
 Who are LSC members 18%
 Who are CTU delegates 16%

Note: Data are from PPAC survey.



Note: Respondents were asked to select a number from 1 to 5 to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Those who chose 3 were considered "neutral."

What's on their minds...

LSC chairs

"School reform is alive and well, and although many of us are tired, we haven't given up. Each year, it gets easier to accomplish change, and the amount of fight needed to achieve change decreases. I still believe our biggest enemies are the employees of the central office, whose main concern is their job security and who fight increased local control tooth and nail. ...The union also must cooperate and make concessions when it comes to salaries and job security. In these days and times, they are asking for privileges that no other employees (professional and trade) have."



"Due to the fact that the board requires the signature of the LSC chair on even the most mundane of documents, I feel that the principal is constantly under pressure to meet deadlines that are arbitrarily set. ...School reform has not improved our situation. It has just produced another forest of paper to be shuffled."

"I would strongly urge the [reform] law to be amended to require that

every LSC member have one or two days off work every month paid by his or her employer to attend to LSC business in a serious manner."

"School reform is an excellent concept. However, parent apathy might be its downfall. I find that most parents are not concerned and only get involved at the 7th- and 8th-grade level. Some like to use the kindergarten program as a babysitter and that's it."

"The powers of the LSC are still limited. We've only been handed a small crumb of power to run our school. We need the whole pie. ...More parents need to turn loose the soap operas and head sets and start volunteering in the classroom more. Yes, some parents must work, but certainly some don't. Don't leave your children's education in others' hands—hold up your own hand."

"Support or help from the district level is very poor. The district council is a joke. Out of 46 to 48 schools, only 10 or 12 reps show up at meetings. No business can be conducted."

"I feel that school reform really doesn't make a difference because we are not able to get the support of the board regarding 'dead-weight' teachers. People that don't want to teach don't; they just stay in classrooms because they have CTU contracts, and we can't remove them. Therefore, our children suffer the consequences."

"I have found that [principals] are the only ones who earn their pay. Our principal is working at the school an average of 12-14 hours per day, plus he takes work home with him. He receives less pay than a lot of the teachers."

PPAC chairs

"I believe that staff development will not be the answer to improving education in the Chicago public school system. The answer to most of our problems is parental involvement. In my classroom, I have concentrated on motivation techniques, especially praise and rewards. They work. I also try to assume the role of parent or 'care giver.' It works."

"School reform at this point has not affected the children in the classroom. The teacher and administration have more paperwork to do, more materials to read. ...The teachers are so bombarded with implementation, reporting, etc. that the creativity necessary for inspirational teaching is stifled. The powers that be are so concerned about making educators accountable that they have forgotten that teachers need to be empowered in order to perform their best. Just let us teach!"

"In our school, reform has meant nothing except people fighting over power and misusing their positions on the LSC. Some of the members of the LSC have stated they do not want the teachers' input because 'reform is for parents.' That makes it very difficult to establish relationships with the LSC. Also, the same members of the LSC are against the principal and only act as obstructionists when he tries to get things done. It is totally out of hand, and the students have not benefited from reform at all at our school. Teacher morale is at an all-time low."

"I feel that school reform has made us all more aware of what is involved in running the school. We are more involved in making decisions that affect us; therefore the decisions were more accurate than any that would be made from the central office. The Chapter 1 funds that we receive are a godsend. ...We have more personnel, equipment and books than we've had in the last 30 years."



"I've been involved with the Teachers Task Force and am aware of the length of time it has taken to draw in a group of teachers who want to be active in creating change/reform in their schools. It is unfortunate that reform did not begin with the classroom teacher. ...We are beginning to realize the importance of the PPAC to

be involved in the school's budget. It is a slow process but we are gradually acquiring more knowledge so that we may assume the power necessary to make our voices heard in our school."

"As the ad states, 'We've come a long way'....The attitude of the entire staff has done an about face (for the most part). There is renewed vigor, an open willingness to go the 'extra mile' to produce better results and a desire to



meet the needs of all children. It's refreshing to see an active LSC do everything humanly possible to assist the principal and staff in providing quality education for our students. The PPAC provides an open forum for teachers to discuss, develop and decide pertinent issues. Viva reform!"

"I do believe race is a problem as tenured, tired whites don't seem to have the time or energy to care or don't understand blacks and black culture. For example, they don't understand what students and their parents consider insulting, etc....We do have many capable, dedicated white teachers, and I don't mean to imply that all black teachers are capable or dedicated. However, the tired, less capable, non-understanding teachers would not recognize themselves in my description."

CTU delegates

"The schools that I have worked in from 1989 until now have always had LSC members who have a high school degree or less. I have a problem when these people have no idea about curriculum and instruction. These LSC members should have a clause [in the reform law] that states that they will take the proper classes to obtain certain knowledge."

"What happens in suburban high schools compared to Chicago schools is like comparing Timbuktu to Paris. I go to school board conferences; I never see Chicago Board of Ed people. I go to special technology and innovation meetings, again no Chicago. I bring back innovations and new concepts to my Chicago school and they are ignored. The schools in my suburban district are quickly rising to the forefront of American education, while the school system I teach in is in decline."

"Why can't the bickering among all involved (board, CTU, pro-school reformers, anti-school reformers, state officials, city officials, etc.) in public education be stopped? And why can't the right person to run public schools be found?"

"If you believe that top-down management has been eliminated or even slowed down by 'reform,' your name is Alice and you live in Wonderland. The only thing reform has done in Chicago is to disempower teachers."

"We reformed from the bottom up, came together as a group with the leadership of a new principal and changed our school. The major planning was on weekends away from school."

"Many schools, like ours, are run by strong principals who control everything. While I do not consider my principal bad, I consider him in no way innovative. He allows me to do the job I feel is best for my students but does not push other teachers to improve. We are a stagnant 'good' school. We should have a strong PPAC working on making us an excellent school....Those who are on the LSC are nice people, but they have no knowledge of what our children need."

"We did not need a shift in politics of governance, we needed the initiative that would improve conditions for better learning. This reform just increased the number of arenas in which to fight for personal political power and recognition. It has done little for children and their learning situations....If I were not a professional educator, I would not seek to run academic programs. That job should be left to those who prepared themselves for such a mission—just as health is left to medical professionals and legal matters are left to law professionals."

"Establish some type of mandatory parent training on the home/family and student educational responsibility. I'm tired of being 'Mom', police officer, counselor, nurse, family therapist, etc. I want to teach."

"They can forget it if they are not going to fund it. I'm sick and tired of people mandating things, not funding their mandates and blaming teachers for not carrying them out. I'm tired of spending my hard-earned salary to supply materials for my class."



"What has been done to principals is horrendous....Once hired, the principal is the target for the parents and the community. If anything, relationships have become worse and instead of integrating schools, they are segregated again but this time, it is by choice. This has become a city of communities who want 'their own school' with their own people in them, and it will bode no good in the future."

"Need a real 'education governor' and a Legislature that is non-biased toward poverty students. Equal funding and resources necessary to help the poor of our state."

"The LSC handling the principal selection is not always a sound idea and it doesn't help the staff. It also places the principal in the position of knowing he is in a job that has no security. Do we as teachers ever want to become principals and give up job security? It hasn't increased parental involvement at our school or eliminated any of the problems. It has, however, made certain parents feel that their child could do no wrong."

Letters

CATALYST analysis of test scores flawed, misleading

In its April 1993 issue, CATALYST identified schools that had registered significant increases or decreases between 1989 and 1992 on the state IGAP tests. The analysis adjusted statistically for schools' mobility, percentage of low-income students and other factors affecting scores. The following letter is a response to that analysis.

We appreciate your effort to focus attention on the trends in student achievement in Chicago. Although measures such as the state IGAP (and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills) provide only partial and fallible indicators of students' knowledge, skills and proficiencies, they are the only broad-based data available about what Chicago's children know and can do.

The IGAP testing program is particularly valuable because it provides information about student achievement directly related to state goals. However, as a basis for drawing inferences about individual school improvement, it is inadequate. In order to make a valid inference about the performance of a school, we need to answer the question, How much are children learning during the period in which they are in attendance at that school?

What we need to know

To answer this question imposes some basic information needs. Ideally, we would like to know when each child entered the school (and if and when he or she left); we would also assess each child's achievement level near the entry to the school, and periodically thereafter (until the child left). At an absolute minimum, we need two assessments spread out over time for each child, with some assurance that the child was actually in attendance at a particular school in the interim between the two time points.

The IGAP program, however, does not track the achievement of individual chil-

dren over time. As a result, it is impossible to measure individual learning (or gains in achievement), and then aggregate these gains into indicators of the school's contribution to student learning. Without such indicators, we cannot make judgments about whether schools are improving. While the IGAP design is quite appropriate for monitoring possible changes in aggregate student achievement levels by subject and grade, it is totally inadequate for making judgments about the improvement effects of schools. No statistical adjustment can compensate for the lack of appropriate data.

Accounting for mobility

To make this point as concretely as possible, consider the fact that the citywide elementary school mobility rate is 34 percent. This mobility rate means that in a typical Chicago elementary school, over one-third of the children move in or out during the course of one academic year (technically between October 1 and the following June). Over a two-year period, many schools will turn over half or more of their students. Some schools will have virtually none of the same students in them two years later.

Reflect this fact against the data reported on page six of the April 1993 CATALYST, where you compare grade 6 scores from 1990 and grade 8 scores in 1992. The text introduces these results as describing "schools whose sixth-graders in 1990 made significant gains, or suffered significant losses, by the time they finished eighth grade two years later." However, in many of these schools the eighth-graders tested in 1992 are not the same students tested as sixth-graders in 1990. In most cases, we simply don't know what gains or losses have occurred. And again, statistical adjustments, such as those you used, cannot compensate for the absence of the basic data needed to

make judgments here.

We agree with CATALYST that it is important to sustain conversations in Chicago about the content and meaning of our standardized tests—what they can and cannot tell us about our students and our schools. Unfortunately, such conversations can quickly digress into technical details that often leave the public confused and distrustful.

Professor Robert Meyer of the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago has recently completed a careful analysis of the use of results from testing programs such as IGAP. His empirical results yield a startling finding. Individual schools can actually be making improvements in student learning (i.e., individual student achievement gains are increasing), but the gains can be totally obscured by student mobility and other factors. In some cases, annual test score reports for a school may indicate declining achievement, even though the school is having a very positive impact on the children it has had the opportunity to educate!

School change is a difficult, complex and long-term task. We should not make it any more difficult by inadvertently providing misleading information. With the assistance of the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning at the Chicago Public Schools, we have initiated a project utilizing data from the citywide ITBS testing program to provide a better answer to questions about school improvement in the city.

While the ITBS test has a clear substantive weakness (i.e., it is not tied to state or city goals), this testing program does provide the basic type of data necessary to determine whether school effects are improving over time. We look forward to sharing the results of these efforts in the very near future.

*Anthony S. Bryk
Professor of Education, University of Chicago
Co-director, Consortium on Chicago School Research*

*John Q. Easton
Director of Research, Chicago Panel on
Public School Policy and Finance
Co-director, Consortium on Chicago School Research*

Editor's response. The test score analysis conducted for CATALYST by Brigitte Erbe

of Roosevelt University was the first we are aware of that accounted in any way for mobility. Your study, which uses data not available to the general public, will be far better on that point.

However, there is a trade-off for this precision: Namely, the continued reliance on the Iowa tests, rather than the much more highly regarded IGAP tests. Ideally, teachers would teach to high standards and pay no attention to the kinds of questions on standardized tests, but, so far, that hasn't happened.

Finally, it seems that a fruitful conversation on testing requires a much better picture of student mobility. In 1991-92, the district reported a mobility rate of 34 percent and stability rate of about 90 percent, meaning that only 10 percent of the students were doing all the moving. Also, in how many schools does mobility mask achievement gains? Our study found possibly two, but the circumstances were highly unusual. Since high mobility has been correlated with lower test scores, perhaps the city should find ways to minimize mobility or its negative affects.

CATALYST has a particular interest in testing and welcomes this debate. We invite others to join in.

If teachers don't lead kids won't learn

The recent "Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspective" (CATALYST.insert, December 1992) reported that the principals' most "critical concern, leadership for instructional improvement (and enhancing their capacities to do this)" was being pushed aside by managerial issues from the schools and district and central offices.

First, it's questionable whether principals were spending more time on instructional leadership prior to reform—one pre-reform study of Chicago principals found that they spent less than 5 percent of their time in classrooms. In any event, the issue of teacher leadership deserves much greater attention than it has received.

One could argue that the reason Chicago reform has not moved beyond governance to classrooms is that, by and large, teachers have been left out of the dialogue. Teachers are wary of advisory roles, which reform has given them. They have had lots of input in the past, more often than not ignored.

We know that the professional personnel advisory committees have been uneven in their effectiveness, as have the local school councils. Yet, a strong PPAC armed with ideas and research could have tremendous influence in transforming a school. This won't happen, however,



JOHN BOOZ

Students from Douglas Community Academy peer over a stairway on their way to class.

unless teacher leadership is viewed as an asset instead of a threat and unless teachers are vested with some real authority for making decisions and held accountable for results.

I'm not talking about one teacher, but a team of teacher leaders in a school, teachers who share a belief that things could be different. If they could present a sound plan to their LSC and win support, the sky would be the limit in terms of the changes they could make to benefit their students. But all this requires time for reflection and examination of ideas, issues and models, as well as for meaningful professional development to gain the knowledge and skills to make dreams realities.

Even if the entire faculty is not ready for the kind of radical changes that are necessary to turn our schools around, it is still possible to initiate change. The rump group with the ideas can win (and has won) support for creating a school-within-a-school or even defecting to another school to do their thing, perhaps winning converts after they can prove that there's a better way.

With waivers from rules and regulations available from the state, the board and the union, never before has there been such potential for teacher leadership.

Teacher leadership doesn't have to be incompatible with administrative leadership. Indeed, it could give principals one less thing to worry about. It's time for such teacher leadership to emerge, to be valued and to be supported.

It is incumbent upon us as a profession to take the lead in informing reform, since classroom change has not happened automatically as a result of the Reform Act. It is incumbent upon us to put into practice the explosion of new knowledge about how and when and why children learn, which

defies the current educational structure and delivery system. For if classroom teachers don't do it, who will? And if it doesn't get done, what will happen to the children?

Deborah Walsh, director
Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center

Good-news article spreads good programs

Your recent article on White Elementary School (April 1993) made all of us at White—staff, parents, students and community—feel very proud.

It isn't every day that you have a publication or member of the news media seek out a school because it has successful programs. I understand that bad news sells, so that is what most of us read. Your publication, however, took time to find the good news in public schools.

I've received several calls from other principals and LSC members asking for more information on some of the programs you mentioned. You have helped network positive programs; for this, we salute you.

Yvonne G. Womack, principal
Darjean Carthan, LSC chair
White Elementary School

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

Diaries

Spring appears to be finally coming again to Chicago—with its renewal of the earth and flora, and perhaps of our own spirits as well. In any case, CATALYST's diarists this month seem to reflect this energizing as they share with us a refreshingly large number of experiences full of promise. We learn about an in-school bookstore brought into being by "miracles," about greater involvement by volunteer parents and community professionals in the problems and activities of various schools, about a fruitful newsletter for parents that also provides a student-learning component, about a building that, although scarred without, provides "warmth within." Yes, there are headaches: a sluggish LSC, a divided LSC, etc. But overall, the entries from our anonymous writers are filled with vitality.

Monks, miracles and books

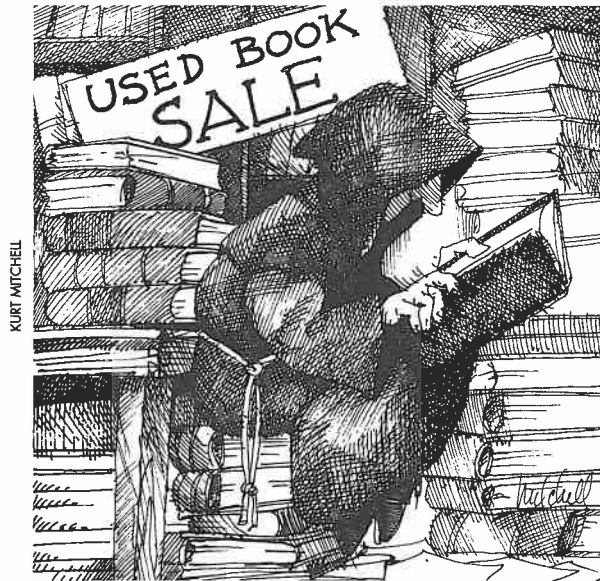
QUESANA, teacher

March 13 If there are no longer monks in this world, it is probably because they are teachers.

With the exception—until recently at least—of celibacy, we teachers are as monkish a lot in many of our professional characteristics as the Benedictines of the Archabbey of Beuron. Consider our "vow of poverty": we have not had a *real* raise since the Vietnam War; what we got was long ago eaten up by inflation. After ten years, I still buy secondhand clothes and drive a castoff Olds that leaks oil. I pray daily for a miracle that will allow my two daughters to go to college. Consider also our "code of conduct": we may not smoke, drink, swear, hold parties, come and go at will or take home our computers without arousing the wrath of the Holy See presiding over our modern Council of Trent—School Reform version.

Not that the Holy See is St. Pius incarnate. It has been liberal enough to allow me certain freedoms, such as publishing an independent classroom newspaper that sometimes looks critically at the administration. It has also allowed me to work toward a most important idea: an in-school bookstore. The store is in only the planning stage now, but I have been able to accumulate a nice stock of books from past Open House book sales.

These are donations and secondhand purchases. Once a week I visit two local Amvets, where books sell for a quarter, and stock up for the biannual sales when my students will sell the books for a dollar each in two makeshift bookstalls.



Also, down in the school boiler room there are five discarded utility cabinets. The space at the rear of my classroom is large enough to accommodate a narrow bookstore, if the cabinets are put against the wall. I have asked the Holy See for an indulgence, and pray for divine guidance.

March 20 Manna from heaven: the

five cabinets turned up mysteriously in my classroom! They were placed there overnight by angels unknown.

Miracles of this nature would have been difficult to achieve in the old days when every piece of furniture had to be accounted for in the "Vatican." Now that the Holy See has new dogmas, it is so much easier to move things around.

My students and I gleefully set about stocking the shelves of the five cabinets with the hundreds of accumulated books. One student began to put up labels describing each book category—classics, novels, history, biography, even romance. The rest sorted the collection into the various categories and carefully put the books on display, library style.

A large poster was drawn up with the name of our bookstore and taped to the door pane. The "hours" were listed: periods 3, 5, 7 and 10, when at least one student would serve as "bookseller" during his or her study period. A small table and chair were set up in back for the seller, with a cash box and a ledger to record sales. A longer table was placed against the wall adjacent to the cabinets, with a second-hand lamp I brought from home, and three chairs. Customers could sit at this "library table" and peruse books

before purchasing them—a nice, atmospheric touch.

It took a full day to get ready, but we are in business.

March 27 Our store has been open for a week, and already we have cleared \$50. The money will come in handy both to maintain our stock—which I replenish during week-

ly excursions to Amvets—and to upgrade our classroom newspaper, which is now printed on quality 11x17 paper stock using a Macintosh computer we obtained through a grant.

Looks are deceiving

LAZARUS, teacher

March 5 A Chicago Cluster Initiative meeting at one of the feeder schools. The school was built a few years ago to relieve severe crowding in a neighboring elementary school where every space, no matter how undesirable, had been used as a classroom.

The new structure has an austere exterior, nothing to suggest the warmth within. Once a visitor enters the front door, the high level of caring for the physical and psychological well-being of the students is immediately evident.

The tone is civil and courteous. Everyone, from staff members to volunteers to students themselves, makes the effort to be friendly and helpful to visitors. Volunteers come not as individuals but in teams.

The warmth within is in sharp contrast to the decay and the graffiti-covered walls that confront and assault the student outside the school building. A student choir, integrated in age and by ethnic groups, performs to the delight of visitors. Students running errands go out of their way to greet the principal whose gentility, in the finest sense of the word, is mirrored throughout the school.

A volunteer retired from a government job speaks proudly of mentoring programs he has been able to initiate at the school to help at-risk boys. While he speaks, one can see the evidence of the program as an adult confers softly with a young student in the corridor. School is a joyful experience here.

Chicago leads suburbs

LAZARUS, teacher

March 9 A conference involving Chicago and suburban teachers. It is clear that the suburban school dis-

tricts have their problems, also. Administrators cling too stubbornly to old ways. Teachers are discouraged from taking the initiative. There is often little support for change; teachers with innovative ideas have to buck the system.

What would our suburban counterparts think of our situation, where volunteer teachers have been able to create their own schools-within-schools with the active support of the principal and the local school council? How could this be happening in Chicago, of all places?

A speaker points out the radical changes that have begun to surface in our society's concept of leaders since her college days in the '60s. The espoused trend is toward greater participatory decision making and democratization. But still the ideal is not the real for everyone.

Newsletter to parents

MIROMIRO, teacher

March 27 A colleague of mine confidently uses two classroom computers purchased with state Chapter 1 money. Her latest creation is a monthly newsletter that is produced with "Children's Writing and Publishing Center" software, and a printer with color capabilities. The professional look and colorful graphics capture attention.

The newsletter, she says, "reminds parents of their obligations and keeps them abreast of school activities, as well as classroom rules, regulation, learning skills, etc." Other contents include "thank yous to parents, announcements of new brothers and sisters, reminders of field trips, recognition of students for achieved grades, etc. She continues, "This is something parents can post on the refrigerator to refer back to." Also, "parents are asked to read the newsletters aloud to help make children good listeners."

Spinning our wheels

DEAN, parent

March 19 Our list of action items

has not changed since last month. And (in)action itself has not changed. To get at least one group off the dime, it was strongly suggested to the Internal Problems Committee that they meet to discuss some of the issues. A meeting was called; five folks came.

Top on the list was a long-standing concern presented, in writing, by the Student Council in 1992. According to their memo, students were objecting to an escalation in drug and gang activity. Unfortunately, the committee chairperson questioned whether this was "still a problem." Perhaps she thought that like the common cold it would, if left unattended, just go away. The problem was, however, discussed. Perhaps, the committee thought, students could be enlightened by listening to and questioning ex-offenders who have firsthand knowledge of the consequences of substance abuse and gang activity. Two members agreed to look into bringing some such educational program to the school.

(Subsequent telephone calls to central office turned up leads on an existing program of this nature. Both Mayor Daley's and Gov. Edgar's offices were asked about such a program; no results from this effort. Surely there must be an ex-offender in Chicago someplace! No one seems to want to work with us or even talk to us regarding the concept of creating such a program for all of our children. Another good idea bites the dust.)

Back to the committee meeting. The more recent issue of how to deploy and manage the use of our metal detectors and wands still remains. (See Diaries, March 1993.) Our school has not used them since they were received. One member proposed that they be used at the administration's discretion. I'm not certain that fixes our problem, but if it becomes policy then at least the LSC has one fewer action items on its agenda.

Paring down action items and speeding committee deliberations seem of utmost importance to this committee. Actually, the biggest "issue du jour" seemed to be keeping the meeting to one hour; it adjourned after one hour and ten minutes. I have to seriously question whether

the parents and community members are qualified to advise and direct an educational institution.

March 26 LSC meeting. During the public comment portion, a parent concerned with security complained that she was able to walk into the school six times without being challenged once. Others in the audience chimed in, suggesting they too were aware that unauthorized personnel have easy access to our children.

Our teacher representative defended this as immaterial and not an appropriate topic of discussion. She claimed it is not the job of a teacher to challenge anyone about presence in the building. She further retorted, "Our police officer is accountable for this. Someone should get him off his butt!" That was the extent of our action plan on security.

We still seem to be predisposed to finding excuses rather than moving into action. There has yet been no dialogue on the problem of insufficient help in the discipline office to handle individual notification letters and parent conferences. (See Diaries, March 1993.) The list goes on.

I, like at least two other council members, feel so frustrated that we have talked about resigning. Although this term is nearly over, there is so much we *could* do, even this late in the game, if we just began pulling together and doing something.

No future committee meetings have been scheduled, and no emphasis is being placed on the upcoming evaluation of our principal's performance. I'm personally not a quitter, but the prospect of resigning seems to be looking more and more attractive as the weeks of inaction go by. I've always believed that one person can make a difference, but now I'm beginning to wonder.

Reform begins to snowball

LAZARUS, teacher

March 25 Individuals from social service agencies are beginning to get involved more personally with the schools in our Cluster Initiative area and are willing to mentor "problem" students by taking them to work with them at the agencies for a day rather

than having the students sit in a detention room for that time at the schools. In addition to having the benefit of an adult's attention for the day, the student accompanies the adult through the performance of all the worker's tasks and responsibilities, thus learning something about the real world. The process seems to be working to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned.

April 3 The level of ferment and involvement of local people in schools since reform legislation was enacted could not have been imagined. Hoped for perhaps, but never imagined.

At our high school we are beginning to see more parent faces in our halls and in the student lunch room as our volunteer program gets off the ground.

April 10 In school after school, the fruitfulness of reform is found. Restructuring is now as common a concept in the schools as is the lesson. Teachers' schedules are booked with all sorts of committee meetings, some school-specific, others systemwide.

Controlling controlled enrollment

ROBIN, observer

April 10 Last year I reported on three dramatic meetings on overcrowding at School H. (See Diaries, April & May 1992.) The LSC narrowed the solution options to year-round school and controlled enrollment. (Controlled enrollment means that once the arrangement is adopted, the only children accepted into the school are kindergartners [for the next September] and siblings of children already enrolled. All other children who move into the neighborhood are bused to other schools.) The council was at first deadlocked but then, after those contentious meetings, approved (barely) controlled enrollment.

This year the issue of a year-round school was introduced again. Another drama-filled meeting. More than a hundred people attended. There were plainclothes police present to keep order. There was also an outside moderator. People who wished to speak

had to sign up before the meeting began, a limited number of names were drawn lottery style and each speaker was allotted only two minutes. These arrangements, it turned out, were useful, given the intensity of feelings present.

Feelings ran high last year, but this year attitudes seemed to have hardened even more, with a militant (and noisy) majority opposing the year-round school idea. For example, last year a major reason given for opposition to the plan was the heat of the buildings in the summer. Now, permission has been granted to air condition the building, but that was not persuasive to the opponents. In fact, when a proponent of year-round said, "If we join now we'll get air conditioning," the response was jeering and boos, and the moderator had to quiet the meeting.

It seems that since last spring, more harsh words have passed between proponents and opponents of the year-round idea. Now, even more strongly than last year, speakers in opposition focused on the theme that the council is not responsive to their views. As to why they're actually opposed, specific reasons mostly centered around the series of short (20 days) vacations that make up a year-round schedule. A number of parents were concerned that families with more than one child in the school might have children on different cycles, so they would be on vacation at different times. And some parents expressed fear for their children's safety during those vacation periods. One speaker drew a lot of applause by challenging, "How dare you put our babies out on the street with the gangs!"

A PPAC representative reported that the teachers (faculty of 90) are opposed to a year-round school by a vote of 57 to 12. (The poll last year found 37 teachers for controlled enrollment and 23 for a year-round schedule.) The main reason given for opposition to year-round this time is that controlled enrollment is working and teachers want to "give it a chance." They are finally seeing reasonable class sizes and are not having to deal with the difficulties of integrating new students into their classrooms every few weeks. The

teachers want to "educate the children we have" the best way they can.

Someone said about 200 students are now being bused out of the community to other schools. Interestingly enough, no parents of bused children spoke; I'm not sure they were even there. Their only advocates were people who seemed to support year-round because they oppose controlled enrollment. As was the case last year, a few speakers argued that families would not want to buy houses in the neighborhood if

from the audience, "We don't want it then either," drew applause. A teacher member expressed the hope that once the decision was made, everyone would get back to the business of educating children. "We teachers are professionals, and we will do our job," he said.

Finally, the vote was taken on a motion to make the school year-round. There were four in favor, five opposed and two abstentions. A great deal of whistling and cheering greeted this decision; parents and teachers alike were happy with it.

tells us that efforts to provide 5+5 for CPS teachers are not dead yet. Many feel it should be granted as a matter of social justice inasmuch as all other public school systems in the state have the benefit.

Media image vs. reality

MIROMIRO, teacher

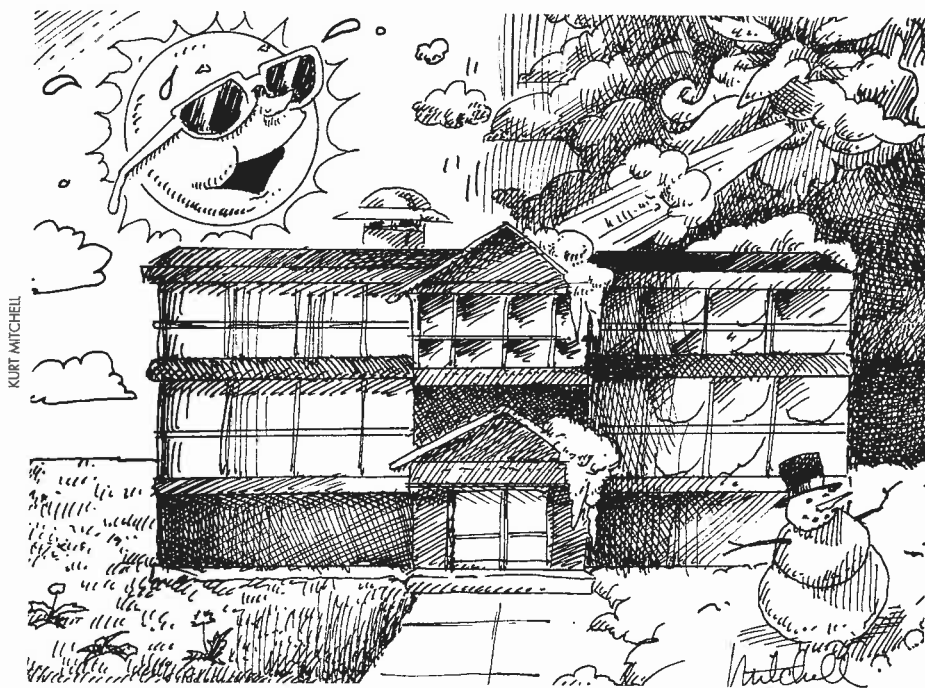
April 7 Our computer teacher has an idea and talks about it:

"Because we need to portray our teachers and students in a more favorable light, we need to create an informational booklet on the activities and programs at our school and on the various methods the teachers use in their classrooms. It is also a way teachers can share ideas and strategies with each other." The booklet would also contain pictures of teachers, students and classroom activities.

"Envision the Computer Lab as a newsroom. The sixth-grade students are behind the scenes networking and collaborating. During the initial stages, they work in pairs to type, decide on borders and scan the photographs to complete the profile of a particular teacher and students for the booklet. This way they experience all of the work stations. Later, they will work in teams of two to four and work only at an assigned station." This is a unique way to teach literacy and job skills to students. The students can see the connection between school and a real-world activity. And this outreach to the community is a way to enlighten others with our school's highlights.

"The images conveyed to society through the media—radio, TV, newspapers—regarding education distort the subject. The media have targeted their news toward our high school students, with focus on gang bangers and dropouts. Eventually, we learn to accept this isolated information as the norm or as the whole news.

"Those of us who make our livelihood in elementary school see a host of positive, creative and dedicated teachers doing outstanding and wonderful activities. In order for the public to hear about and see these, we must beat our own drum." ■



KURT MITCHELL

their children couldn't attend the local school. But generally, in regard to the difficulties families face because of busing, the mood was unsympathetic; the feeling seemed to be that this is *their* problem. Only one LSC member addressed the larger question of a growing school-age population in the community; she spoke eloquently of the need for the community to pull together to work for the opening of another school.

It was clear that the council, though divided, was concerned about the strong feelings aroused by this issue. The chair announced that the Overcrowding Committee had decided by a vote of 7 to 2 that if the council did pass the year-round idea, implementation would be postponed until July 1994; at this point a shout

No 5+5

LAZARUS, teacher

April 3 Our school custodian discusses plans for early retirement under the 5+5 plan recently passed by the state Legislature. Teacher assistants and career service personnel also qualify. *But not Chicago teachers.*

A friend who teaches in a suburban school system has also applied for early retirement under the 5+5 plan. Because he has been unhappy professionally for several years, I am pleased that he has this option. But for Chicago public school teachers, this possibility does not exist. There is no such safety valve.

April 10 Our state representative

The lead scare: Just how bad is it?

by Dan Weissmann

In February, Channel 5 News aired a three-part series on the health hazard of lead in schools. In March, a Cook County Circuit Court judge took the unprecedented action of appointing lawyers to protect students at two Chicago schools from lead hazards. Meanwhile, the Chicago Department of Health has launched its first campaign to inspect schools for lead, starting with a "hot list" of 100 schools this year.

Not surprisingly, parents are asking, How bad is this? Are lead levels "somewhat high? Extremely high?" asks Donna Sabak, PTA president at Burbank Elementary School, where lead is being removed from 10 classrooms. "Are we to get hysterical over nothing, or is there a real danger to children?"

To some extent, the answers to Sabak's questions depend on whom you ask. Some school activists argue that the city should be doing much more to inspect schools and get them cleaned up. But these activists also agree with the Health Department on several somewhat reassuring points:

- Lead in schools is a cause for concern, not alarm. The judge that appointed lawyers and ordered an immediate cleanup at two schools was "grandstanding," activists say.

- Many risks can be reduced by schools themselves. (See story on page 25.) And the Health Department is ready to move on some of the more serious situations.

- Whatever the risks at schools, children face the most danger in their own homes.

However, there also is cause for concern about lead abatement work



At Neil School, the Chicago Health Department's Alberta Odeigh draws blood from Natasha Abbey to test for lead exposure.

in schools. The work requires coordination among three government agencies: the Health Department, the Board of Education and the Public Building Commission (PBC), which sells bonds and uses the proceeds for school building rehabilitation and construction. The Health Department and School Board have been working together since last summer, but the PBC is still pretty much out of the loop.

When CATALYST went to press in mid-April, the PBC did not yet have a set of procedures for contractors to follow so that they do not make a lead hazard worse during building rehabilitation. In this situation, an unknowing contractor could send dangerous levels of lead dust into the air by scraping lead-based paint or knocking holes in walls that are covered with lead paint.

In contrast, the PBC does have rules for dealing with asbestos, which is another health hazard. If a roofer

working for the PBC encounters asbestos, she or he must stop work and notify the PBC; another contractor then must abate the asbestos before the roof work can continue.

Indeed, the PBC's top official seems unaware that the commission's contractors could create lead hazards during rehab. In an April interview, Executive Director Thomas Walker told CATALYST he believed that the only dangers to children from lead paint come from young children eating paint chips—not from inhaling or ingesting dust created when old paint jobs are disturbed.

Walker's assumptions are "dead wrong," according to Scott Meyers, a professor of public health at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Meanwhile, the Board of Education is still working kinks out of its program to make rooms with lead chips or dust safe again. The program started only last year, when community activists

and LSC members at Kosciuszko Elementary School in West Town raised a ruckus; after several skirmishes, the board agreed to do a cleanup job at Kosciuszko over the summer.

"What happened was that the [board's] asbestos workers stopped working on asbestos and became lead removers, and they really didn't know what it was to remove lead," maintains Kosciuszko LSC member Emma Lozano.

The LSC hired a consultant to keep an eye on the board's workers, and he corrected several of their mistakes. Eventually the job was done, and the consultant approved the results. "Now, they're probably very good at what they do," says Lozano.

Board stumbles

Even so, the School Board continued to stumble. For example, last December, the board was in danger of wasting a substantial amount of money and effort on fixing peeling paint at Stockton Elementary School in Uptown. Water from a leaky roof had caused lead-based paint in the gym, auditorium and several third-floor classrooms to deteriorate. Both the School Board and the PBC were taking steps to correct the problems, but their workers showed up in the wrong order. The board's lead abatement workers arrived before the PBC's roofers, meaning that the new paint job would still be subject to water damage from a leaky roof. The LSC had been waiting for months for roofwork to start.

The LSC took its concerns to a PBC meeting and caught the attention of both the PBC and the board's facilities department. The PBC sped up its work schedule for the school's roof, and the board's facilities people took a second look at their plans. The result: lead abatement was completed immediately in the gym, whose roof was in decent repair; other abatement work is on hold until the roof work is done.

PBC director Walker now says that the commission and board are looking

for better ways to make sure each group is kept current on what the other is doing—and that they keep out of each other's way. And Deputy Mayor for Education Leonard Dominguez has given himself an early-May deadline for establishing a comprehensive plan for lead issues to help the PBC, the Health Department and the School Board coordinate their efforts.

Sloppy job

Even when the board's lead workers are in the right place at the right time, though, they haven't always worked effectively. At Prescott Elementary School in Lake View, paint in one room "was getting ready to fall on children's heads," less than four months after board workers had finished lead abatement work, reports Principal Karen Carlson.

Ironically, in March, Mayor Richard M. Daley chose Prescott as the site for a photo opportunity to tout new bond money for school construction and repairs. When he arrived, Carlson escorted him directly to the room with the botched paint job. The next day, the peeling paint got scraped off.

Meanwhile, paint in a second room is starting to show cracks, according to Prescott LSC member Peggy Hobson.

The original work had been done during winter break, and Carlson speculates that workers rushed to finish it before students returned. "That's a waste of money. They should have waited until they had time to do it right." (Prescott's LSC had required that lead-abatement work take place only when the school was closed for vacations.)

To some community activists and LSC members, the quantity of lead abatement work is just as troublesome as the quality; Lozano and others charge that the Health Department is not doing enough—and not requiring the Board of Education to do enough—to protect children from lead.

Given current budgets, "We can't get the lead out of everywhere,"

The dangers of lead

■ A young child who inhales or swallows even small amounts of lead—e.g., a paint chip the size of a child's fingernail—can suffer permanent brain and kidney damage, resulting in hearing loss, anemia, behavioral and learning problems, and vomiting and nausea. High amounts of lead can also cause sterility in adult males.

■ Poisoning can occur by eating lead-paint chips or inhaling or swallowing lead-paint dust. Kids can get lead poisoning, for instance, by touching surfaces with lead-paint dust and then putting their hands in their mouths.

■ Children under six are most at risk. They are most likely to put their hands in their mouths; their bodies absorb lead more quickly; and their nervous systems—which lead attacks—are still developing.

■ Without proper precautions (see story on page 25), removing lead paint can be more hazardous than letting it be. Most methods of scraping paint send dust into the air; burning off lead paint is even worse. "Friction surfaces," like windows and door frames, also are sources of lead dust.

■ Lead in homes is a bigger danger than lead in schools, partly because younger kids spend more time at home than in school. In 1992, the city investigated about 3,500 cases of lead poisoning and traced every one to contamination at home.

■ Any building that went up before 1978 probably has at least one coat of lead-based paint; that year, the U.S. government finally banned lead paint, though its dangers had been known for decades. The older a building, the higher the likely lead content.

■ There is lead in the dirt around highways and other high-traffic areas; older cars that ran on leaded gasoline emitted particles that settled in the ground. *D.W.*

says Health Department administrator Frances Ginther, "but we are trying to protect children from the hazards of lead." For now, that means that she sets priorities to protect the most children from the most immediate dangers. But LSCs don't always agree with her decisions.

Cleanup triage

For instance, the Health Department's first priority in schools is classrooms for young children, followed by common areas like hallways and lunchrooms, then classrooms for older children and finally gyms, auditoriums and other areas that can be closed off. As a result, the department has angered some LSCs by refusing to order the Board of Education to clean up lower-priority areas.

Ginther recalls an LSC member demanding that her school's gym be fixed before the Health Department moved to another school. Ginther's response: "You're telling me that I cannot go find the next Priority One hazard because you want your school fixed first. That's nuts!"

Abating absolutely every contaminated space "would be nice," says public health professor Meyers, "but the bang for the buck isn't there, I think."

If some rooms must come first, LSCs should get some choices, says Karen Zaccor, a Stockton LSC member; a gym for all kids might be more important than a sole third-grade classroom. And ultimately, she maintains, it is "not acceptable" to permit lead dust and chips to stay in rooms for older children.

Unless young children are in imminent danger, counters Ginther, the situation poses an aesthetic problem, not a health problem. Some LSCs, she charges, are using lead as a "stick" to beat the School Board into fixing up "ugly" schools. "Do I want them to make a plan with the Board of Ed because this school needs to be fixed? Yes I do. But I will not let the alarming of parents continue by saying that the reason we have to repair all these things is because their children are going to [be in danger]." ■

Health Dept. makes progress, still far behind

In recent years, the Chicago Department of Health has almost doubled the number of children it tests each year for lead in their blood and quadrupled the number of homes it inspects for lead hazards.

But its work still falls far behind federal guidelines, and new state requirements are about to make the department's situation worse.

What the Health Department needs most, say activists, is more money.

"There's only so much efficiency they can get out of the staff that they have," says John Knox of the coalition Lead Elimination Action Drive (LEAD).

"Clearly, there aren't enough inspectors," agrees Scott Meyers, a public health professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

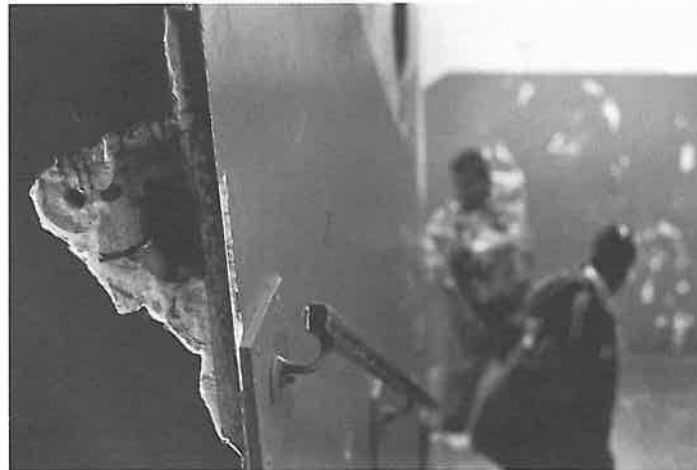
Last December, LEAD made an unsuccessful bid to get the City Council to almost double the lead program's \$2.2 million budget. Instead of joining the plea, the Health Department touted its advances. The department noted, for instance, that it performed more than 100,000 blood-lead tests in 1992—more than twice as many as in 1989.

But to meet guidelines of the federal Centers for Disease Control, the city would have to test every one of Chicago's more than 250,000 young children every year.

What's more, a state law that took effect in January will increase the demand for the test; every child under six now must get a lead screening before entering school or day care. And doing more tests will mean finding more cases of poisoning, which will mean more inspections; inspectors must go into a home when a child living there is found to have lead poisoning.

Knox also is concerned that the department's new efficiency may have cost quality. "On paper they're more efficient," he says, "but we question whether the inspections are as thorough [as they should be]. And we still hear stories of cases that don't get inspected or have to wait forever for results."

Schools' lack of money also poses a problem. Routine maintenance work that could protect kids from lead dust goes undone at some schools because janitorial staffs are short-



TONY GETSUG

A damaged wall at Lawndale Academy waits its turn for lead abatement; Lawndale's lead cleanup is supposed to be finished by mid-May.



JOHN BOOZ

Rebecca Holmes waits for a lead test at Neil.

handed, principals say.

Dusty areas at Sayre Language Academy that were waiting their turn for lead abatement didn't get the routine wet-mopping that the Health Department recommends. "Budget would not allow it, and manpower would not allow it," says Principal Rudolph Anderson.

Burbank Elementary School faced similar woes this spring. "It's a disgrace, and it looks like it's going to get worse," says Principal Hiram Broyles. "We've lost two [maintenance] people in the last five years, and enrollment has doubled since five years ago." Burbank now serves 1,100 students in two buildings sitting on 8.5 acres of land; the school has only two janitors.

Last October, however, the Health Department did improve schools' ability to deal with lead by providing a one-day workshop for school engineers. The engineers learned lead basics, including how to spot possible hazards, what they could do about small ones and when to call in Health Department inspectors.

Engineers' union chief Don McCue praised the training, and at least some engineers are using it. For instance, James Helm at Von Steuben High had some plaster damage "checked out," discovering there was no hazard.

Dan Weissmann

Protecting your child from lead

1 Have your child's blood tested for lead. Kids who have been exposed to lead often look fine; symptoms for lead poisoning are hard to spot and often don't show up until after there's been permanent damage.

On your own: Call the Health Department's Lead Hotline at (312) 747-LEAD or 747-5232 (TDD: 744-2960). Children six months to six years old can get a free lead screening at any of 17 city health centers.

At your school: To have children six and younger tested, ask your principal to call Cindy Fischer at 747-5842 to request that the Health Department's lead van visit your school. The van once a year routinely visits schools with prekindergarten services.

Once a screening has been scheduled, it's up to the school to inform parents when the van will be present; kids who aren't in preschool will need a permission slip or must be accompanied by a parent. Children over six will be tested only if a younger brother or sister is found to have lead poisoning.

Also, make sure your children's diet includes a good supply of iron and other minerals. The reason: If a child's body is missing minerals like iron, it may mistake lead—a poison—for the materials it needs and absorb more lead into the bloodstream.

2 Educate yourself and your community about lead. The Health Department publishes three very helpful pamphlets: "What Everyone Should Know about Lead Poisoning," "Lead—Is Your Child at Risk?" and a coloring book, "My Book About Staying Safe Around Lead." You can get copies from the Health Department by calling 747-LEAD.

There also are some well-informed community organizations that will provide information and support: the Lead Elimination Action Drive, 1545 W. Morse, (312) 973-

7888, and Parents Against Lead, P.O. Box 1870, Chicago, Ill. 60690 (Maurci Jackson, (312) 324-7824).

3 Look for potential trouble spots in your home. Any wall that was painted before 1978 probably has a coat of lead-based paint. There are a couple of things you can do to find out. If your child has been found to have lead poisoning, the health department is required to come out to inspect your home. Otherwise, you can get home testing kits in most hardware stores for around \$14. Professional inspections by private companies are expensive; check the Yellow Pages under Lead Removal & Abatement and Environmental & Ecological Services.

Lead paint that is chipping, peeling or flaking is a hazard; so is dust from painted window frames, door frames and other "friction surfaces." If any of these conditions exist:

- *Don't* scrape the painted surface with a dry wire scraper; that will create dust that kids and adults can inhale.

- *Don't* sweep up paint dust or chips because that will disturb the dust and make it fly into the air, where—again—kids and adults can inhale it and be poisoned.

- *Do* make sure that your youngest children are in rooms the farthest away from any possible lead dust or chips; children under six are especially susceptible to lead poisoning.

- *Do* wet-mop dusty surfaces or clean them with a wet rag—every day, if possible. The best detergents for cleaning up lead dust are banned from sale in Chicago because they contain high concentrations of trisodium phosphates (TSP), which become an especially toxic waste when flushed into sewers.

However, high-phosphate soaps can be purchased in the suburbs; also, some products that contain some TSP, like dishwashing detergent, are sold in Chicago. D.W.

Public, private schools come together

It was an unusual sight—a top Chicago public school administrator presenting awards to students from three Catholic schools. Yet, the presentations by James Maloney, superintendent of District 2, at Loyola University on March 30 symbolize a unique education project that embraces both public and private schools.

Called Partners in Learning, the three-year project aims to improve instruction in science, math and language arts in the schools of Edgewater and Uptown. It is a joint project of Organization of the NorthEast (ONE) and Loyola University's School of Education.

And on March 30, it drew more than 950 enthusiastic children, parents and teachers for an evening of science experiments, awards and fun.

"As a community organization, we were challenged to look at school reform as an issue of learning," says Josh Hoyt, ONE's executive director. "We knew that if we really cared about the community's children, we had to find a way to bridge the gap between public and Catholic schools."

He adds that by joining hands, ONE, Loyola and public and Catholic schools became a powerful fund-raising force. By the end of the project's first year, they had raised \$661,600, two-thirds of the project's \$1 million budget.

Since the program began a year ago, 250 teachers have participated in its eight-week curriculum workshops. Teachers receive a stipend,

Grants is a cooperative project of CATALYST and the Donors Forum of Chicago. It was written by Carrie Skibba.



TONY GETSUG

Students from Kozminski Community Academy visit the Oriental Institute, which received a grant from the Polk Bros. Foundation for a program involving Chicago schoolchildren and their parents.

materials and support to put their new skills into practice.

"Being a new teacher, I never would have had the training or the materials to do all these experiments," says Mary Sheehy, a first-year teacher at Stone Elementary School. "I've gotten microscopes, mealworms, meter sticks...It's wonderful. The kids really respond."

Loyola undergraduates help children participate in science programs, field trips and special projects. And parent participation in workshops and special events helps kids stay active and interested in school.

Partners in Learning also has established a network for sharing ideas. "Everyone benefits," notes Noel Ferrara Colfer, a teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes Elementary School. "We've gotten to know the public school people and exchanged ideas with them. Catholic schools are usually not a part of these things."

Partners in Learning has received grants from the Illinois Board of Education, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Lloyd Fry Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, Chicago Community Trust and "Serve Illinois."

Illinois' share of school grants recovers a little

Illinois' share of private foundation support for elementary and secondary education recovered somewhat in 1991 from a decline in the late 1980s, according to the most recent data from the Foundation Center, a research and resource center.

In 1987, Illinois-based non-profit organizations, including universities, ranked fifth nationally in the amount of grants received for elementary and secondary education projects (\$8 million). By 1990, Illinois had fallen to 10th place, despite a gain in the actual dollar amount to \$11 million. In 1991, Illinois moved up to seventh place, with a total of \$19 million. (1991 data are the most recent available.)

This review of Foundation Center data comes from William McKersie, a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago and former senior educa-

Continued on page 31

Grant briefs

Chicago Community Trust

■ \$150,000 to the Community Youth Creative Learning Experience (CYCLE), for the second phase of its Future Teacher Training Program, which provides college placement assistance, retreats, clubs and paid tutoring positions for minority students who are interested in becoming teachers.

■ \$25,000 to the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, to support the Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project.

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation

■ \$30,000 to the Golden Apple Foundation, for its program recognizing outstanding teachers in Cook and Lake counties.

■ \$20,000 to the Foundations School, a school-within-a-school formed by Chicago public school teachers that focuses on communication arts.

■ \$15,000 to the Rochelle Lee Fund to Make Reading a Part of Children's Lives, for general operating support.

■ \$10,000 to the Arts Education Awareness Campaign, a month-long media campaign to promote a hotline (1-800-808-ARTS) that provides information and resources about integrating the arts into education.

■ \$10,000 to the Chicago Arts Collaborative for Teachers, which is working through some of the city's art institutions to mount its first annual summer arts education workshop. The three-week session will give 50 Chicago public school teachers the chance to learn from professional artists and to tap the resources of participating visual art, music, theater and dance institutions.

■ \$10,000 to the Chicago Children's Museum, to strengthen its work with teachers and schools in the Chicago area. The museum integrates the arts into a hands-on curriculum through museum visits, educational materials and teacher training.

■ \$5,000 to Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, for its work in promoting awareness about the benefits of small schools.

GATX Corporation

■ \$5,000 to Parents United for Responsible Education, to help LSCs understand their school budgets.

■ \$5,000 to the Institute of Cultural Affairs, for designing and facilitating school improvement planning workshops for LSCs, parents and school staff.

■ \$3,000 to the Fund for Educational Reform, a cooperative venture among corporate foundations that provides small grants for the individual needs of LSCs and teachers.



Harris Bank Foundation

■ \$6,000 to the Chicago Cluster Initiative, for Youth Service Corps volunteer projects involving 50 students in Lawndale and Little Village.

■ \$5,000 to the Chicago Neighborhood Organizing Project, to expand its school reform program in training parents, students and teachers.

■ \$5,000 to Parents United for Responsible Education, for local school council budget workshops.

Polk Bros. Foundation

■ \$50,000 to Loyola University, for its Excellence in Education Programs to improve student performance, curriculum and teaching in Chicago schools.

■ \$50,000 to the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, to develop new learning materials to supplement guided tours of the institute's museum of ancient Near East history and archaeology. Teachers, parents and LSC members will participate.

■ \$30,000 to the Golden Apple Foundation.

■ \$25,000 to Youth Guidance, for in-school facilitators and planning retreats at schools participating in the Comer School Development Program.

■ \$25,000 to Designs for Change, for: (1) Training LSCs in legal rights, effective meeting techniques, education improvement planning and principal selection, and (2) The Policy Reform Program, which aims to protect and refine Chicago school reform.

■ \$18,650 to *CATALYST* magazine, for support of a staff writer position.

■ \$18,000 to the CityWide Coalition for School Reform, to help finance a curriculum conference sponsored by its Teachers' Task Force. The grant also supports CityWide's newsletter.

■ \$15,000 to the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, for training and information activities, including LSC assistance and publication of Reform Report and Panel Update.

■ \$15,000 to the Executive Service Corps, for its work in partnership with WSCORP in support of LSCs and principals at District 4 schools on the West Side and for the Careers for Youth Program, which provides speakers in 16 fields to sixth- and seventh-grade classes.

■ \$10,000 to the Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project.

■ \$10,000 to Chicago Cities in Schools, to further develop service delivery networks in Hermosa and Humboldt Park. Through collaboration and sharing resources, individuals and organizations come together to develop plans to help individual students succeed.

■ \$7,500 to the North River Commission, to help increase informed and active community participation in LSCs. The group also provides resources, training and advocacy.

■ \$7,500 to Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, for helping local schools identify their needs and organize to fulfill them.



Prince Charitable Trusts

■ \$25,000 to Lincoln Park High School, for a year-long planning session to integrate arts across the curriculum. Teachers will help develop a cross-disciplinary, team-teaching approach.

■ \$10,000 to *CATALYST* magazine, for support of a staff writer position.

■ \$7,000 to National-Louis University, for scholarship support for Chicago public school teacher leaders attending the Walloon Institute, a residential training program for teacher leaders from around the country.

■ \$5,000 to the Academic Development Institute, for its Alliance for Achievement Program, which provides resources and networking opportunities for schools and their communities.

■ \$5,000 to Urban Gateways, for the 1993 Training Institute in the Arts in Education, which helps teachers integrate the arts across the curriculum.

■ \$5,000 to West Side Schools and Communities Organizing for Restructuring and Planning (WSCORP), a coalition of over 100 agencies and organizations which pool their resources for West-Side students. It is located in Malcolm X College.

■ \$3,000 to Project LEAP, for providing monitors, judges and procedural support for the 1993 local school council elections.

Foundation Personnel

Denise Carter-Blank is the new director of education programs at the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation.

Estimated quarter million tune in to school reform

by Michael Klonsky

Lights! Camera! Action! It was a school-reform TV extravaganza. Everyone was there, dressed in their finest clothes, television makeup on their faces. They packed the spot-lit Studio A at WTTW-TV for the March 27 special "Chicago Public Schools: At the Crossroads."

The five-hour series of three panel discussions, broadcast simultaneously on WBBM-AM Radio, gave school reform a chance to strut its stuff before the whole city. But was the city paying attention?

The answer appears to be, yes. Despite competition from the NCAA basketball tournament, more than 90,000 local households, or 7 percent of TV sets in use that day, tuned in for at least part of the discussions.

"If you consider that at its peak, the show might have reached a quarter million people, there is good reason to be encouraged," says Robert Feder, TV and radio columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "These are extraordinarily high numbers, considering the day and the subject matter."

"We were very pleased," says Bruce Marcus, WTTW's senior vice president for corporate marketing and communications. Another 30,000 to 50,000 households were expected to watch rebroadcasts, conducted in segments over three nights.

"Saturday is usually our biggest or second-biggest viewing audience," Marcus adds. "But here we focused on a special target audience. It was

an unprecedented commitment of TV airtime to a very serious subject."

"I was surprised at the number of people who watched the show and contacted me about it," says participant Lula Ford, principal of Beethoven Elementary School.

"We're getting feedback from viewers who want tapes to show at their schools or community meetings," says Adele Simmons, president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. "We've also heard from state legislators who want to visit Chicago schools for the first time and want principals like Lula Ford to speak to them in Springfield."

Indeed, during the live broadcast,

Rep. Mary Lou Cowlshaw (R-Naperville), under some heavy pressure from moderator John Callaway, said she wanted to visit Beethoven. Cowlshaw, who had been lambasting Chicago schools, admitted she had never visited one. But as *CATALYST* went to press in mid-April, Ford reports that neither Cowlshaw nor any other legislator had called.

The show also generated significant coverage in the print media. The *Sun-Times* spun off a series, analyzing many of the reform issues in some depth, while the *Chicago Tribune* gave the show less attention.

While the broadcast sprang no surprises, it was a first chance for many in the television audience to hear all sides at once. "The aim was to bring the key stakeholders in schools together around two meals, and for good things to happen," says Simmons. "There was no intention to have agreement or resolutions to the problems raised. Rather, we saw it as an opportunity to showcase ideas—what is working and what isn't."

While lunch and dinner were sumptuous, they began to take on a



Diana Nelson (left) makes a point on structure and leadership. From left are Gwendolyn Laroche, Anthony Alvarado, B. Kenneth West, moderator Phil Ponce and Margaret Harrigan.

No kid voices

Chicago's students were conspicuous by their absence from any of the panels on "At the Crossroads." This did not go unnoticed; several members of the National Student Alliance showed up at WTTW-TV studios to voice their displeasure.

"They were making plans for us and talking about us, but not with us," said Bobby Brown, a sophomore at Lincoln Park High School. "Our ideas are just as good as the adults' on this panel. We go to these schools every day, and we know why schools are not working."

To make them work, said Brown, "Teachers have to be brought into reform from the beginning." Poor teaching and boring classes lead to more kids dropping out, he said, adding: "How are you going to do reform if there are no students in class to reform?" M.K.

somber aura, coming as they did on the brink of a potential system shut-down next fall. With the spring legislative session heating up, "Crossroads" was seen by many as a last chance to convince legislators that, yes, Chicago really does deserve to have its schools equitably funded.

A *Tribune* editorial called the summit "a bid to avert disaster. Watch it with your fingers crossed." *Crain's Chicago Business* warned business leaders: "If the teachers strike this fall, there will be 400,000 children on the streets of the city. That disaster must be avoided—and we'll be listening for suggestions from Messrs. Edgar and Philip on how it can be done."

As it turned out, neither of the "Messrs." made any such suggestions. Though invited, Senate President James "Pate" Philip (R-Wood Dale) didn't attend, while Gov. Jim Edgar stayed only for the first panel.

Only two days earlier, both Philip and Edgar had been accused of withholding dollars from Chicago schools for racist reasons. "They [GOP leaders] don't want the responsibility of increasing dollars and spending it in schools that their constituency view as

a black hole," Sen. Arthur L. Berman (D-Chicago) said on a radio show. "And when I say black hole, I mean it in all ways."

If a viewer watched most of the show, he would have learned:

- Schools in Chicago and throughout the state are in a deep and systemic crisis.

- Smoke-and-mirrors efforts to finance Chicago schools will no longer work.

- Chicago school reform is working and beginning to move from governance issues to the classroom—though Cowlshaw called Chicago schools a "bad investment."

However, if Edgar's lukewarm response was any indication, Chicago's school community had better find a way to turn up the volume.

Edgar and Mayor Richard M. Daley both sat attentively through the first segment after Daley gave a prepared two-minute welcoming statement. Then Edgar responded with a dig. While admitting he "was impressed that most of the talk wasn't about money," he spoke only about money, pointing out that Chicago "spends more with less results" than other districts. What's needed, he said, is not more money but better use of existing money.

Then Edgar, along with Daley, hopped planes for the friendlier climes of the Gridiron Club in Washington, D.C.

According to MacArthur's Simmons, the idea for the televised summit had its roots in President Bill Clinton's economic summit in Little Rock, which she attended. At a breakfast following the Clinton gathering, Simmons, along with School Finance Authority Chairman Martin "Mike" Koldyke and Chicago Housing Authority Chairman Vince Lane, hatched the plan for an education summit. Koldyke contacted WTTW station director William McCarter, who agreed to supply the studio and staff. Roosevelt University's Institute for Metropolitan Affairs signed on to coordinate the event.

The MacArthur Foundation, Chicago Community Trust, The Joyce Foundation, Wieboldt Foundation and the Spencer Foundation quickly agreed to put up money for the program.

"It was," recalls Simmons, "an idea that simply took off." ■

Panel highlights: Good Schools, Work in Progress

- ✓ Deborah Walsh, director of the Chicago Teachers Union's Quest Center, startled many of her CTU colleagues when she said that she didn't blame the state Legislature for withholding more money "until reform hit the classroom." Walsh, sounding more like a business reformer than a union official, argued that schools must be radically transformed to meet the needs of the information age.

- ✓ Reform is hitting the classroom, according to several on the opening panel. B.J. Walker highlighted the progress of the Chicago Algebra Project, which she chairs. The project has expanded to 19 schools since it was brought to Chicago two years ago by its founder, former Mississippi civil-rights leader Robert Moses.

- ✓ Principal William Watts of Taft High School said the task now is to spread innovations to the hundreds of schools that are not working and to encourage the schools that are.

- ✓ Michelle Fine, a professor who heads up a high school restructuring project in Philadelphia, spoke enthusiastically about Chicago's gains. But she warned against "recentralization" as the city seeks to ensure schools aren't left out.

- ✓ Interim Chicago Supt. Richard Stephenson used the forum to announce his candidacy for the permanent position of school superintendent, joining Washington High School Principal Reginald Brown and community college administrator Charles Kyle as announced candidates. "I believe I can galvanize the support it takes to do what is needed in this district," Stephenson told the WTTW audience. "I believe the job can be done and that my participation will help."

Stephenson's announcement drew the ire of School Board member Clinton Bristow, who is also thought to be a candidate. "The purpose of coming here today was not to campaign for the superintendency," said Bristow, "but to discuss an educational agenda for the Chicago public schools."

Panel highlights: Structure and Leadership

✓ Moderator Phil Ponce asked each of the 14 panelists what they wanted in a superintendent. After a round of platitudes about "a leader with vision," "political savvy" and "putting children first," Don McCue, president of the school engineers union, offered that the only leader who had all the necessary characteristics "had died 2,000 years ago." Similarly, Gwendolyn Laroche of the Chicago Urban League warned against "looking for a messiah" to run the school system.



"Decentralization is not the same thing as reform," says Anthony Alvarado.

✓ Should race be an issue in selection of a superintendent? asked Ponce. Political reality dictates a minority, several panelists said. But Whittier Elementary School Principal Irene DaMota challenged that notion, saying, "Race is as important as the limits on your vision make it."

✓ Responding to charges that the system has no standards for accountability, Associate Supt. Margaret Harrigan pointed to booklets that lay out in 400 pages what children are expected to know and be able to do in each subject at each grade level. The problem is, she said, schools aren't using them.

"If you've got 400 pages of standards that means you have no standards at all," countered Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers. Shanker suggested that schools were much more likely to get into trouble for failing to fill out forms on time than for failing to teach children to standards.

✓ "Decentralization is not the same thing as reform," commented Anthony Alvarado, superintendent of

Community School District 3 in New York City. For reform to be effective, he said, teacher training is key. Decentralization, he added, isn't just dismantling central office but, rather, a planned reorganization.

Panel highlights: The Bottom Line

✓ Principal Lula Ford from Beethoven Elementary School, situated alongside Robert Taylor Homes, was the only exception to the panel's parade of financial experts, none of whom seemed to have a workable solution to the \$383 million budget deficit that threatens the opening of school next fall. "When Chicago schools became mainly minority, funding decreased," said Ford. "Is it racism? Yes it is." She noted that her school was built in 1962 without a gym.

✓ The presence of Mt. Morris School Supt. Edward Olds demonstrated that Chicago isn't the only district with severe money problems. Olds is trying to disband his district for lack of funds, a move being tried in North Chicago as well.

✓ Rep. Mary Lou Cowlshaw (R-Naperville) and anti-tax advocate James Tobin led the counterattack. Cowlshaw insisted that Chicago schools become successful before any more money is given. "We wish we could provide more money, but we want to get a better return on our investment," said Cowlshaw.

✓ Martin "Mike" Koldyke, chair of the School Finance Authority, noted what he termed a "short-term solution"—riverboat gambling. Koldyke claimed that four river boats could produce more than \$100 million in the first full year. "What I hear is that competitive bidding could produce four boats on the lake by late summer," he said. Others familiar with the issue later challenged his numbers.

✓ State Sen. Emil Jones (D-Chicago) asked that Chicago be given the same privilege as every other school district in the state to engage in deficit financing. The Legislature yanked that privilege in 1980 when the school system went bankrupt.

✓ If there was a ray of hope in this discussion it was the expressed commitment of most of the panelists to intensify their efforts to restructure the financial base of schools. M.K.

'Panel should have included a teacher'

"Whenever there's a panel, there needs to be a teacher or two," said teacher Eileen Day. "A regular classroom teacher. Not an assistant principal, not a speech therapist, not a support person, not a counselor. It has to be a regular classroom teacher."

The absence of a classroom teacher on the panel on Structure and Leadership was the hot topic for a group of parents and teachers from reform organizations who got together to watch the panel on videotape.

Parents Joy Noven and Michael Radzilowsky added that high school students should have been at the table, too. And Radzilowsky pointed out that the only parent on the panel "had a couple other hats"; parent Doug Gills is also a community organizer and a public policy professor.

And the discussion itself "never did get down to the classroom level," complained teacher Kathryn Malone.

A better-informed moderator could have steered discussion more coherently, Noven said. Agreeing, Radzilowsky pointed out that when curriculum standards came under attack, moderator Phil Ponce didn't toss the question to the curriculum's author, Margaret Harrigan.

Harrigan and Whittier Elementary Principal Irene DaMota received the most approval from the folks around the TV set: Harrigan for complaining that the school day's structure is "inhumane"; DaMota both for her challenge to "grow beyond boxes" and for her complaint about regulations that stand in the way of building a coherent staff. ■

Dan Weissmann

60 candidates for superintendent

By the April 15 deadline, the Board of Education had received 60 applications for the position of superintendent, according to board secretary Thomas Corcoran.

About a third are from other states, and one is from Italy, Corcoran said. Another third are from business, government and other non-school arenas; under recent changes in state law, the Chicago superintendent does not have to have teaching and school administrator credentials.

A national search committee, comprised of prominent education, civic and business leaders, and the Washington, D.C.-based law firm Arnold and Porter, retained to assist recruitment, are reviewing the applications.

The board is working under the following timeline:

- April 30. The search committee and Arnold and Porter submit their reports to the board.

- May 15. Complete the first round of interviews and trim the list to eight to 10 candidates.

- May 30. Complete the second round of interviews and narrow the field to two or three finalists.

- June 15. Name the new superintendent.

Michael Klonsky

Union, board kick off negotiations early

At CATALYST press time, the first bargaining session between the Board of Education and school unions was set for April 26, the earliest start ever, as both sides felt increasing pressure to advance reform and find a way to overcome a \$383 million deficit.

Central to the negotiations are proposed rule changes for teachers, including a longer school day and year with no salary increases, major changes in health coverage and challenges to seniority rights. The proposals are laid out in the board's SAVE plan, which has drawn a hostile reaction from the Chicago Teachers Union. "We are going into these negotiations with an open mind," said CTU spokesperson Jackie Gallagher, "but it seems that the SAVE plan puts the entire burden of sacrifice once again on the teachers."

The board is approaching the talks differently from past years, said member Pamela Lenane, who is in charge of the contract talks for the board. "We will put all of our proposals out on the table from the very start," she said. "This is something the board, under Ted Kimbrough, didn't do." Lenane hopes to have all the main issues clarified well before the legislature adjourns June 30.

M.K.

GRANTS continued from page 26

tion program officer at The Joyce Foundation.

McKersie attributes the decline in the late 1980s to national foundations directing elementary and secondary education money to cities other than Chicago. "Basically, national funders found other things of more interest than Chicago school reform," McKersie explains.

Local foundations, however, gave increasing amounts to Chicago school reform, he says. For example, in 1987, Chicago's 10 most active education foundations gave only 9 percent (\$1 million) of their elementary and secondary education grant money to school reform efforts,

according to McKersie. In 1990, the top 10 earmarked 42 percent for school reform, contributing more than \$6 million.

Although Illinois' 1991 ranking is encouraging, McKersie cautions that it doesn't necessarily indicate the start of an upward trend. Funding for new initiatives and large, one-time grants can distort the picture in any state, he explains.

What's the message from this analysis? "Most importantly," says McKersie, "it suggests that Chicago foundations need to remind their national colleagues that Chicago school reform has national significance and deserves their support." ■

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Catalyst
VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Bright Ideas

Einstein's Mindware Center boosts scores

Afterschool academic programs are nothing new; most schools have them. But at Einstein Elementary School in the Oakland neighborhood, the afterschool Mindware Center pairs children, for the most part, with their regular classroom teachers.

"Nobody knows the children's strengths and weaknesses better than their classroom teacher," says Principal Phyllis Tate, who created the program with funding from Project CANAL. "They know what their children need to work on."

The program began last year shortly before students took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Children who participated at the Center scored higher on the tests than classmates who did not, prompting the school to expand the program from a half hour to an hour, two days a week.

Staffed by teachers who volunteer for the program, the Center now includes one teacher from every grade level. "Usually 75 to 80 percent of a teacher's class stays after, and there is always an opportunity for children from other class-

TONY GESBUC



Sixth grade teacher Dorothy Toaster and student Cassandra Adams work on a lesson in test taking skills at the Mindware Center.

es to participate," Tate says. Teacher overtime costs are about \$20,000.

Classes focus on studying and test-taking skills. "We also work on critical thinking and building vocabularies, and we still try to reinforce skills taught earlier," says sixth-grade teacher Dorothy Toaster.

Parents accustomed to having their

children stay after school for extracurricular activities welcomed the addition of more academic instruction. Concerns about children's safety were eased by arrangements to have tenant patrols from nearby housing projects, who walk children to and from school, return later to bring home Mindware Center participants.

Children have welcomed what is, essentially, a longer school day. "It's a great opportunity for me that some kids don't have," says sixth-grader Phatima Lee. "I want to be a teacher, and I've been on the honor roll since our first marking period."

Cassandra Adams, another sixth-grader, wanted to be part of the program so much that she made arrangements to have her little sister, a kindergartner, looked after while she stayed for Mindware. "I have to help take care of my little sister," she explains. "So I either ask a friend to take her home after school, or I make sure my grandmother comes to pick her up."

Cassandra adds that she's not only having fun but also has raised her grades to B's and C's.

Toaster believes the program has been very good for the children. "The attendance rate is good," she says, "and I'm finding they participate more during the day because they are more confident about what they're doing."

Debra Williams

Catalyst
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