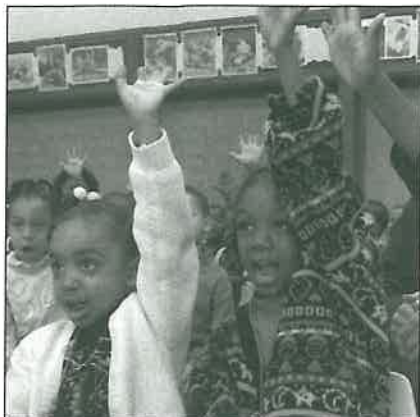


# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM



## FUNDING

**State financial watch list doesn't tell whole story** 111 districts on list, another 200 borrow and stay off **page 6**

**A primer on school finance** City-suburb comparisons, how Illinois ranks, changes since reform **pages 5, 7-9**

**Opinions** Teachers: The good eggs and the bad apples. Students with weapons should be expelled **page 18**

**Updates** Half of subdistrict councils lack quorums. Head Start transfer worse in second year **page 25**

**Letters • page 20**  
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## A guide to this year's financial mess

by Michael Klonsky and Linda Lenz

*"Chicago parents had better start lining up day care for September."*—State Sen. Judy Baar Topinka (R-North Riverside)

*"There is no rabbit in the hat."*—Mayor Richard M. Daley

*Without state help, "you're going to face a train wreck or a meltdown."*—Martin "Mike" Koldyke, chair of the Chicago School Finance Authority

**E**ven by Chicago standards, the rhetoric surrounding the school system's current financial crisis is extreme. Are these leaders crying wolf, or does 1993 pose a different dilemma from years past, when last-minute gimmickry opened schools on time?

"This year is different," Diana Lauber of the corporate reform group Leadership for Quality Education says emphatically. "The difference is the size of the deficit that can't be patched without a huge increase in outside money." Or, she could have added, without massive budget cuts.

Gimmickry can, at best, bring the board's projected revenue shortfall down to roughly \$180 million. And even that would require a move that the Chicago Teachers Union has blasted—the continued diversion of pension taxes to help pay for salaries—and a move that school reformers strongly oppose—deferring the last installment of state Chapter 1 payments to schools.

## AN ANALYSIS

On paper, deferring Chapter 1 would not cost schools anything because it's money they don't yet have. But reality can be different. For example, LSC member Walter "Slim" Coleman says that his school, Kosciuszko Elementary, would have to cut four teaching positions. That's because Kosciuszko is planning to use the final state Chapter 1 installment to replace \$140,000 it will lose in federal Chapter 1

*Continued on page 3*

**MEMO TO CHICAGO:** Four outsiders offer advice on 'what next' for reform. Pages 10-17.

## In This Issue: What next for reform?

Is school reform succeeding? Clearly, more schools than ever before are making serious efforts to substantially improve the education of their students. And just as clearly, far more are only tinkering, perhaps even standing still. So, what next?

We asked that question of four well-informed, highly respected school watchers who, as non-Chicagoans, have no local agenda. Three of them—Michael Katz, Elaine Simon and Michelle Fine—hail from universities; as a trio, they have been scrutinizing Chicago for almost three years, repeatedly visiting a handful of schools, interviewing grassroots and city leaders and attending reform events. In the process, they have become unabashed Chicago reform enthusiasts.

The fourth school watcher, Anne C. Lewis, is a veteran education journalist who is familiar with reform efforts across the country. Repeatedly over the years, Lewis has heard grand new programs trumpeted and then seen them fizzle or fail to do much good. Count her as a skeptic with hope. Indeed, she says it's too early to tell whether any of the "valiant efforts" of the 1990s will bring about a "truly excellent education for children of the cities."

Despite their different perspectives and attitudes, Lewis and the Katz-Simon-Fine trio have markedly similar ideas about "what next" for Chicago. Both single out the importance of staff development, new forms of assessment and an accountability program that focuses on whole schools and has teeth. These issues are a lot thornier than rewriting school law and union contracts to give schools and principals more flexibility—the current thrust of Chicago reform activists. But without them, no amount of power shifting is likely to make a big difference for kids.

But as Katz-Simon-Fine stress, the biggest threat to school reform is the school system's financial crisis. Which brings us to the other focus of this issue.

The charts on the following pages show that Illinois is doing a disgraceful job of financing education. They also show that Chicago has cut its bureaucracy and shifted money from central office to local schools, leaving less money for salaries and other basic, systemwide expenses. And they show that Chicago's school spending, teacher staffing and teacher and administrator salaries are in line with those in the suburbs, where it is much easier to teach. (However, Chicago school employees do enjoy an exceptional medical insurance package and a shorter-than-average work day.)

Without more revenue, Chicago's teachers or school programs face enormous, unjustified cuts. Either one would leave the fledgling school improvement movement gasping for breath.



**WORTH PONDERING** "We've had an education president and an education governor, and I've never heard one elected official who has not said that education isn't the top priority. If that is true, why are we in the condition we're in?"

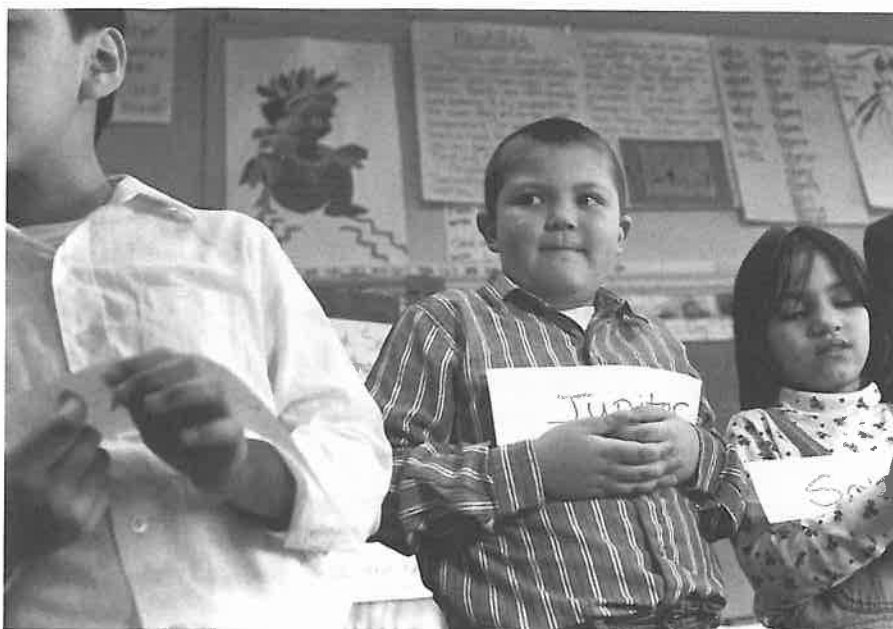
*Illinois Education Supt. Robert Leininger, as quoted in the April 1993 issue of Illinois Issues.*



**ABOUT US** Next September, CATALYST will launch a new feature profiling individuals, schools and communities that are working hard and taking risks to substantially improve children's learning. If you know of a school whose story should be shared, please drop us a note. Also, in response to reader requests, we are looking for examples of ways to involve parents more deeply in their children's education and in schools themselves. Again, send us your story tips.

Finally, may we boast? In May, CATALYST received "best newsletter" honors in the 1992 Peter Lisagor Awards competition sponsored by The Headline Club, which is the Chicago chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. In April, our Updates section received a Distinguished Achievement Award in the 1993 Edpress Awards competition, sponsored by the Educational Press Association of American.

*Linda Levy Lorraine Forte*



Burr second-graders Anthony Guevara and Daisy Aviles become "planets" for a lesson on the solar system. Burr's reading scores went up significantly between 1989 and 1992.

#### FINANCIAL MESS *continued from page 1*

money as a result of "the undercounting of poor children in the census," he explains.

As difficult as the pension and Chapter 1 moves would be, every option to cover the remaining \$180 million is still worse to one powerful political entity or another. Here they are:

- The state could, as the Civic Federation has proposed, raise the income tax rate to pump an extra \$1.5 billion into schools statewide and provide property tax relief. But with conservative Republicans breathing down his back, Gov. Jim Edgar has vowed not to raise taxes during his first term, which runs through 1994.

- The Legislature could give the Chicago Board of Education authority to raise property taxes. But Mayor Daley has vowed to hold the line, arguing that it's the state's responsibility to fund education.

- The Legislature could permit the Chicago Board of Education to engage in deficit financing, which is available to every other district in the state. (See story on page 6.) But that would raise property taxes, too, and all but eliminate the need for the School Finance Authority (SFA), which is charged with ensuring the board has a balanced budget each year.

- The Legislature could permit the SFA to sell bonds again to cover Chicago school operating costs, another measure that would raise property taxes. The Legislature created the SFA in 1980 to sell

\$573 million in bonds to keep Chicago's bankrupt school system operating and guard against overspending. By the time those bonds are paid off, Chicagoans will have paid an estimated \$700 million to \$750 million in interest.

- The state could, as the SFA's Martin "Mike" Koldyke has proposed, sell \$1.35 billion in bonds to help schools statewide for the next two years, but that, too, would require a state tax increase. As with local borrowing, state borrowing would end up costing more than a regular tax increase to funnel money directly into schools. Estimated interest costs are \$500 million.

- The School Board could, in effect, declare bankruptcy, which presumably would bring in the state to sort things out. Similar action is under way in North Chicago and Mt. Morris, where poor school districts are trying to dissolve and annex themselves to neighboring, wealthier districts.

- School employees could take 18 percent pay cuts, which would leave Chicago's powerful school unions in shambles and totally demoralize the people who are being asked to make major changes to improve the education of children.

Given these bleak alternatives, it's no wonder that so many reformers think there might be some sort of school shutdown. Unlike in 1987, they don't see any silver lining. That year, a record 19-day strike lit the fuse that led to the Chicago School Reform Act. Now, says James Deanes, who heads up the newly formed Coalition

for African American Equity in Education, a shutdown "would lead to chaos. There is a sense of hopelessness. We could have uncontrollable civil unrest."

School Board member Stephen Ballis says a shutdown by such a large employer would be an "economic disaster" as well as an educational disaster.

These predictions could well scare politicians into providing some real money for a short-term solution. But there is another complicating factor. For the first time, the School Board, governor, SFA and mayor are demanding work-rule concessions from unions, to give principals and local school councils more flexibility in running their schools.

"If all we wanted to do is open school, we would have a different strategy," board member Jack Valinote told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "People must realize we're not in the business of opening schools or signing contracts or having a jobs program. The biggest thing is focusing on student achievement. That's the name of the game."

## Give-backs for what?

Traditionally, however, unions don't give up anything—especially seniority rights—unless they get something in return. Chicago's school unions, however, are being asked to give up money, too. To help balance the budget, the mayor has proposed that all employees pay some of the cost of their medical insurance premiums; the board wants unions involved in school maintenance to accept changes that would reduce overtime earnings.

The only financial offer the board apparently is ready to make is extending the 5+5 early retirement plan to Chicago teachers—and, simply, sparing them from salary cuts. However, there are some non-financial proposals the teachers union might like, including a revised teacher evaluation system that would incorporate peer review.

"Those advocates who expect employees to give up working conditions and money at the same time are not being very realistic," says Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance. The time to have won a longer work day, a longer work year and other work-rule changes, he says, was back in 1990 when the Interim Board of Education agreed to 21 percent raises over three years and substantial bonuses for teachers who take



Chicago Teachers Union officials are glum as the third round of contract talks begins.

more college courses.

GOP lawmakers are pressing legislation to make work-rule concessions possible—e.g., ending the Reform Act's job protection for supernumeraries, teachers who lose their posts because of program changes or declining enrollment—but Democrats, including some friends of reform, have bottled up the measures.

The mayor and SFA also have proposed scrapping the system's 11 subdistrict offices, a that move that seemingly would require legislation because the

Reform Act gives subdistricts certain duties. Since subdistricts have a role in selecting members of the School Board Nominating Commission, Daley critics contend the proposal is aimed at giving the mayor more control over School Board appointments. (See story on page 25.)

As CATALYST went to press May 20, Koldyke's state borrowing plan, which even he described as a "last resort," remained the center of attention. It had won endorsements from Mayor Daley, other Democratic politicians, *Crain's*

*Chicago Business*, the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Even though the plan would not require a tax increase until 1995—past the governor's self-imposed blackout—the GOP turned thumbs down. "It's almost laughable," said Michael Belletire, the governor's chief of staff. "You don't float unsecured notes. What bank would underwrite them? Why would the state guarantee them?"

"If the schools don't have enough money," said Senate President James "Pate" Phillip (R-Wood Dale), "they ought to cut."

A leading voice in the financial community chimed in, calling the scheme "no plan at all." Steven Hochman, a vice president of Moody's Investors Service in New York, said, "This kind of borrowing would lower the state's credit rating, making it more difficult and more expensive to borrow in the future."

Several states, including Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont, recently sold bonds to help pay for operating expenses, and the costs have been huge, he said. Massachusetts' bond rating dropped three notches, he noted.

Responding, Koldyke said, "Bankers have never been known for their imagination." He also maintained that Edgar is "crazy" if he thinks a Chicago school strike won't hurt his reelection chances. However, GOP sources say Edgar could survive.

Given the complexities of the Chicago situation, it likely will take a summit meeting to arrive at any solution. Given the political stakes, no one is likely to budge until the last minute, if then. ■

## Why shortfall rose to \$415 million

An independent study of the school system had confirmed the Board of Education's numbers: The school system's projected revenue shortfall for 1993-94 was \$383.5 million.

Then, less than a month before the Legislature was scheduled to adjourn, the board hiked the number to \$415 million, infuriating Mayor Richard M. Daley.

"It's \$384 [million] or is it \$425 [million] or \$435 [million]?" he asked. "That's what you have to look at. What is it really? ... It cannot keep changing."

Speaking later to the Donors Forum Education Group, the board's chief financial officer explained. Budget estimates change in response to changing circumstances, said Charlie Gillespie. "If the mayor

doesn't understand that," he added, "ask him about 911."

Gillespie was referring to the escalating cost estimates of plans to improve the city's emergency phone service.

According to Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, there were three reasons for the board's increased projection: (1) Gov. Jim Edgar proposed a smaller increase in state school funding than had been anticipated. (2) The federal government refused to permit Chicago to use federal Project CANAL funds for general costs. (3) The board had to hire an additional 300 special education workers to meet the requirements of a federal agreement. M.K.

# Reform beefs up local schools

The shift in state Chapter 1 funds from central to local control has enabled schools to hire more teachers, which has improved the city's student-teacher ratio to the point where it is more in line with metropolitan area averages. Schools with greater percentages of low-income children receive proportionately more state Chapter 1 money.

## CPS Staffing

	Oct. 1987	Sept. 1992	Change
Central office	2,808	1,138	- 59%
Citywide services *	370	1,764	+ 377%
Subdistrict offices	2,384	174	- 93%
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>5,562</b>	<b>3,076</b>	<b>- 45%</b>
<b>Local schools</b>			
Teachers	23,798	28,640	+ 20%
Career service	12,050	14,543	+ 21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41,410</b>	<b>46,259</b>	<b>+ 12%</b>

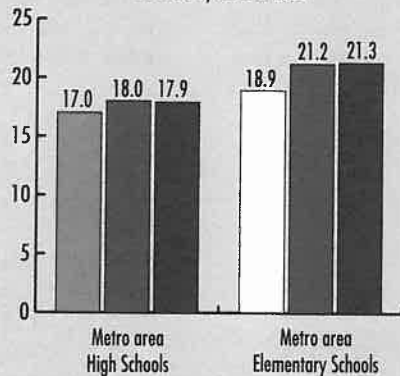
## Student-staff ratios

	1987-88	1991-92	Change
Students per administrator	343.3	376.0	+10%
Students per teacher			
High schools	19.2	18.7	- 5%
Elementary schools	23.3	20.9	-10%

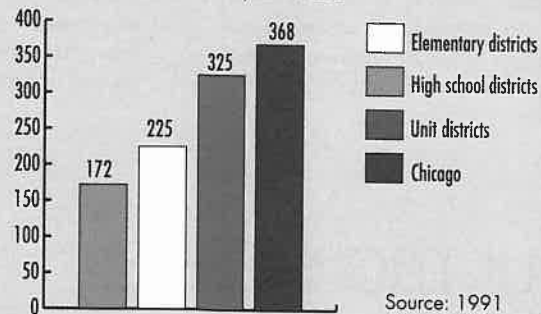
\* Citywide services include health and medical personnel, operations and maintenance workers and others who work at more than one school. The increase is due mainly to a reclassification.

Sources: School report cards, racial-ethnic surveys

### Pupil-teacher ratio 1990-91, metro area

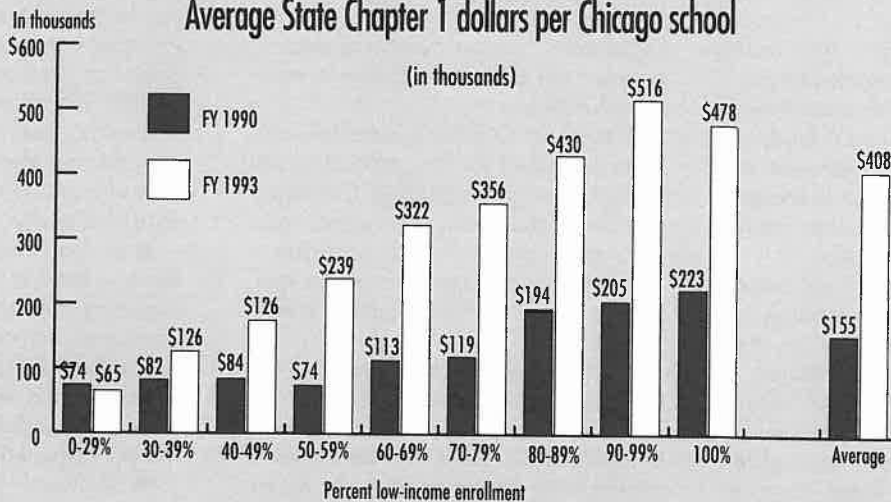


### Pupil-administrator ratio 1990-91, metro area



Source: 1991 Metrostat Databook, Vol. II.

## Average State Chapter 1 dollars per Chicago school



Source: Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance

# 200 districts escape 'watch list' by borrowing

**M**ore than 100 of the state's 946 school districts are so close to going in the red that the Illinois Board of Education has put them on its financial watch list.

But about twice as many districts that don't appear on the list also are in financial trouble. Those districts have "solved" their problem by using long-term debt, such as bonds, to cover costs.

"If they can't pass a [tax hike] referendum, they have no other option," says Gary Ey, assistant superintendent of school finance for the state board. But, he adds, "in our estimation, it's not a healthy practice financially." Each year, Ey's office sends cautionary letters to districts that rely heavily on bonds to finance deficits; last year, about 200 letters went out.

Oak Park-River Forest High School

District 200 is an example. This year, it sold about \$5 million in bonds, bringing its total long-term debt to \$13 million, according to Supt. William Offermann. Regular revenue now runs about \$2 million short of expenses, for a deficit of about \$722 per student. (Under the bond plan proposed to bail out Chicago schools, Chicago's 1993-94 deficit would only be about \$45 per student; if Chicago borrows to cover its \$415 million shortfall, the deficit would be about \$1,000 per student.)

As with Chicago, part of the problem in Oak Park is a loss of state aid. This year, the district received about \$1 million, down from \$4 million several years ago. "What we've lost from the state would more than make up our deficit," Offermann points out.

Over the past several years, the district has cut costs, closing out 32 teaching positions, adopting student athletic fees, reducing coaching positions and charging students for ACT and SAT preparation programs. An after-school study and tutoring program that had cost about \$40,000 in teacher overtime and other expenses is now staffed by volunteers.

Bond sales like Oak Park's have been called "back door" referenda because taxes automatically go up to pay for the bonds. Voters get a chance to approve bond sales only if they petition to have the sale put on the ballot. In the collar counties, property tax caps have killed most bond sales because the resulting tax increases exceed the caps. At press time, the Illinois Senate had approved tax caps for suburban Cook County; the House had yet to vote on them.

State law, enacted after the 1979 Chicago school financial collapse, bars Chicago from engaging in deficit financing; some reformers have suggested allowing Chicago to run a deficit for a year or two to get by. ■

Lorraine Forte

# Four more states forced into finance reform

**T**his year, judges in four states—Missouri, North Dakota, Tennessee and Alabama—have declared their states' school funding systems unconstitutional because of wide disparities in per-pupil spending and an over-reliance on local property taxes to raise school revenue.

Altogether, 11 states have been forced to overhaul school funding in recent years, according to the Education Commission of the States.

In Illinois, a Cook County Circuit Court judge last year dismissed a lawsuit seeking a more equitable school finance system. Judge Thomas O'Brien ruled that the Illinois Constitution does not make education a right and that it's up to the

Legislature, not the courts, to decide whether the state should ensure equitable funding.

However, O'Brien's decision has been appealed by the coalition of 68 school districts, including Chicago, that filed the lawsuit; the recent decisions could bolster the suit's chances.

Here's what happened in the four states, according to *Education Week* reports:

■ In Missouri, Gov. Mel Carnahan told legislators in late April that they have a "moral obligation" to approve higher income taxes and redistribute other state revenue to help raise \$365 million additional dollars for schools. The legislature has 90 days after the current session ends to come

up with a new, more equitable funding formula; the current formula was struck down in January.

■ In Tennessee, a lawsuit against the state's funding system had prompted Gov. Ned McWherter and the legislature to propose a new funding formula even before the state supreme court handed down a final decision against the state in late March. The court also ruled that the judge who first heard the lawsuit must now decide whether the new funding formula meets constitutional standards for equity.

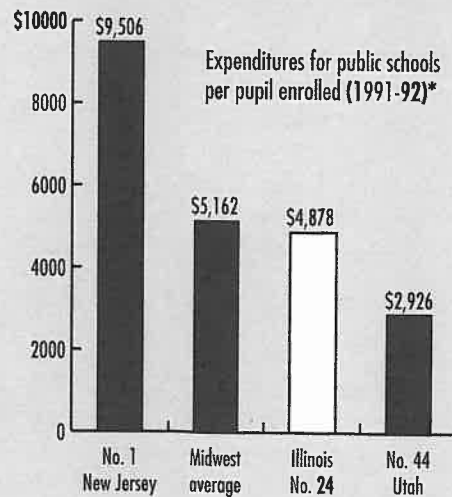
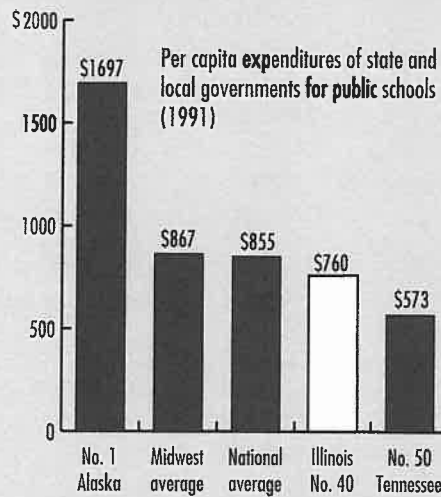
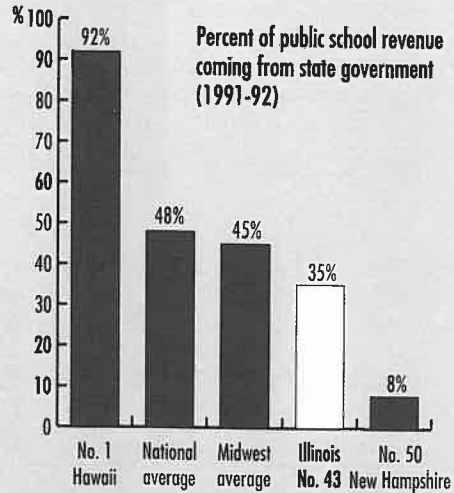
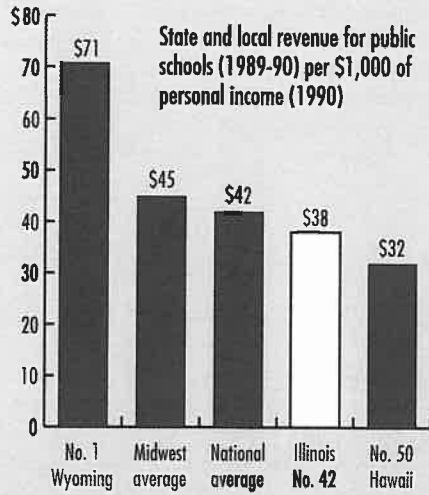
■ In Alabama, many of the defendants named in the original lawsuit, including the state superintendent of education, switched sides to join the plaintiffs as the case progressed. Gov. Guy Hunt, one of the last remaining defendants, has said he will not appeal the April ruling.

■ In North Dakota, a judge in February gave lawmakers six months to come up with a new funding system. ■

Lorraine Forte

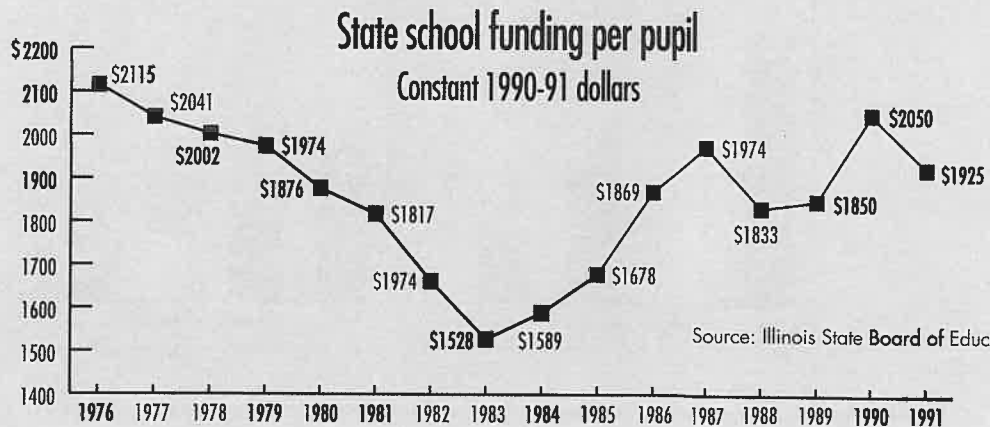
# Illinois not an 'education state'

Illinois ranks below average—in some cases, far below average—on several major measures of states' financial support to elementary and secondary education.



Source: National Education Association. CATALYST calculated Midwest averages from data for seven states surrounding Illinois: Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, Michigan and Minnesota.

\*National average was not calculated because data were not available for seven states. Midwest average is missing two states.

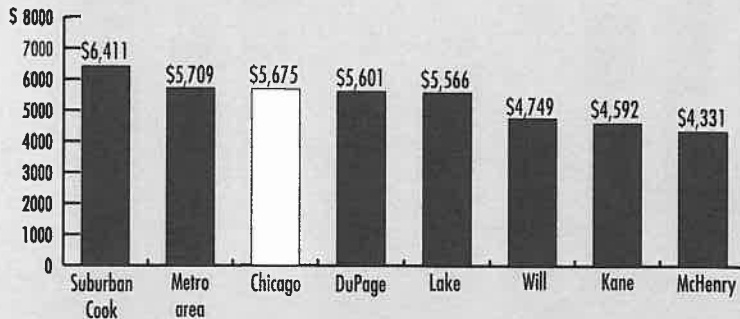


Source: Illinois State Board of Education

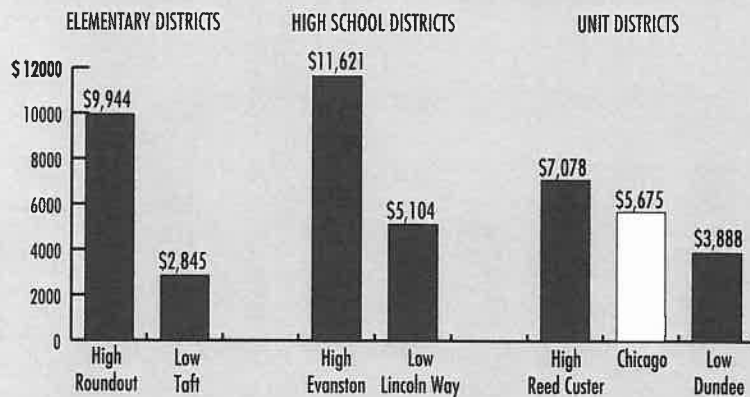
## Spending, taxes: Chicago vs. suburbs

Chicago's per-pupil school spending is substantially lower than that in suburban Cook County and only slightly higher than that in DuPage and Lake counties, according to official data. Official data inflate Chicago's total, however, because calculations use attendance rather than enrollment and Chicago has relatively low attendance. Chicago's school tax rate is below average for the six-county metro area, but its total tax rate, which includes the city and other local taxing bodies, is above average.

### Average spending per pupil, 1990-91



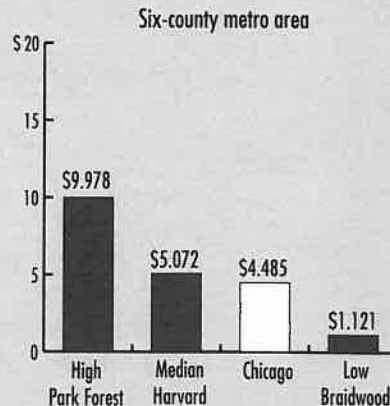
### High, low spending per pupil, 1990-91



### Total property tax rates, 1990-91



### School tax rates, 1990-91



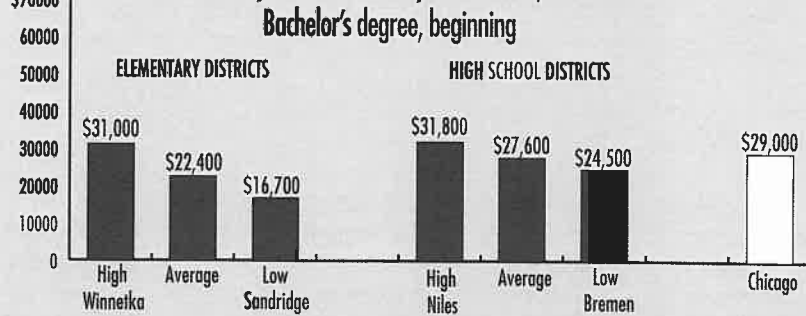
Sources: Spending, 1991 Metrostat Databook, Vol. II, Education Finance, Education Statistics of School Districts in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. Tax rates, Education Data and Consulting Service.



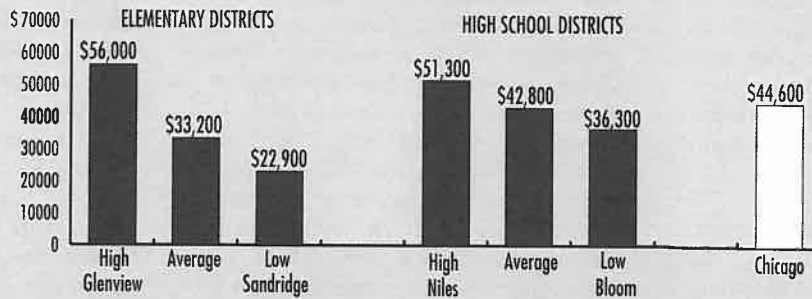
## Salary, benefits: Chicago vs. suburbs

Chicago teachers have one of the better salary and benefits packages in Cook County, a CATALYST analysis of state records shows. Both beginning pay for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and pay for a 10-year teacher with a master's degree are higher than average. Chicago is one of only 9 Cook County school districts that pay 100 percent of hospitalization insurance and dental insurance for both teachers and their families.

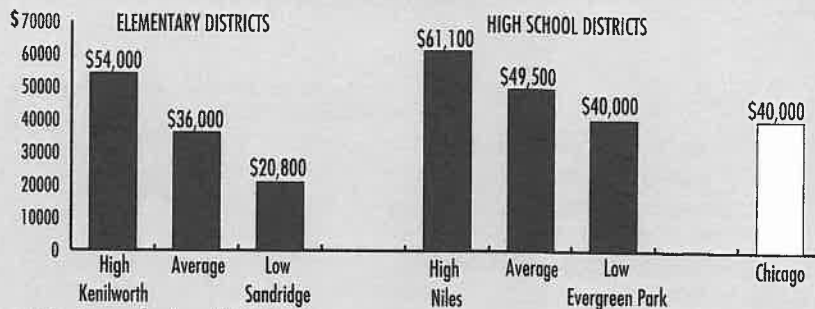
### Cook County teacher salary schedules, 1992-93



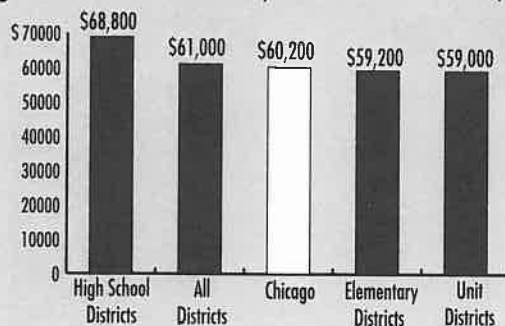
### Master's degree, 10 years



### Average Cook County teacher salaries, 1991-92



### Average administrator salaries, 1990-91



Sources: Teacher salary and benefit information, Illinois Teacher Salary Study, 1991-92 and 1992-93. Teacher salaries include "pension pickup" where school boards pay employees' share of pension costs.

Administrator salaries, 1991 Metrostat Databook, Vol II: Education Finance, Education Statistics of School Districts in the Chicago Metropolitan Area

## Memo to Chicago

# You've got to tackle everything at same time

by Anne C. Lewis

**M**any years ago, when my father was a cub reporter on a Chicago newspaper, I learned to roller skate in Lincoln Park. It is one of those childhood memories that sticks forever because it was something I figured out by myself. I held onto a long, narrow stick, practiced swaying it back and forth while keeping my balance, then tried the maneuver on wheels, and it worked. That one accomplishment

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*Anne C. Lewis is a Washington D.C.-based education writer and editor. She writes a regular column for Phi Delta Kappan magazine and has been a member of the CATALYST editorial board since its inception.*

turned me into an explorer of park and neighborhood, and a speedy one at that.

This experience came to mind as I looked back on four years of intense effort to change how public schools work in Chicago, because there are some parallels between my little adventure and your enormous one. Giving power over formal education to parents and communities is unprecedented and risky. It requires new skills that must be learned and lots of practice. Everything important to creating positive, substantial change must move forward at the same time; if one component—be it leadership or staff development or parent involvement—lags behind, the whole effort could topple.

Just as I was not the only youngster learning to skate in the park, Chicagoans are not the only people struggling to radically improve schooling. Valiant efforts are going on throughout the country, mostly in urban areas, where the problems are immense, bureaucratic habits are highly entrenched and personal accountability seems to have disappeared. Through some fortuitous assignments, I am chronicling this process in several cities—Louisville, Ky.; Rochester, N.Y.; San Diego; Baltimore; Oakland, Calif.; and Milwaukee—as well as following national policy initiatives. In all these places I hear echoes of the frustrations and hopes CATALYST amplifies in its articles every month.

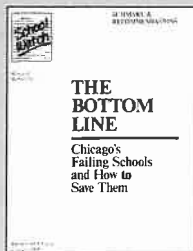
**1985**

**JULY** New state law creates local school improvement councils, giving them a voice in schools' discretionary spending. Later, critics of the School Board accuse the board of thwarting the new law.

**JAN**

**DEC**

**JAN** Designs for Change study shows that 53 percent of CPS students don't graduate and that among those who do, two-thirds read below 12th-grade level.



**1986**

**JAN**

**DEC**



**OCT** Mayor Harold Washington creates an Education Summit, tapping 35 school, civic, business and university leaders to draft "contracts" setting forth actions to improve the education and employment of young Chicagoans.

It is too early to say if any of these efforts will bring about a truly excellent education for children of the cities. It is possible, however, to single out common issues facing places like Chicago.

■ **TIME IS ESSENTIAL** Time is important in several respects. First, education reforms require a minimum of four years of concerted implementation before they show up in improved student performance, which, after all, is the bottom line of all this effort. Reforms aimed at changing school cultures cannot let up but, rather, must lead to ever-deepening levels of change. Second, teachers need time to develop the collegial professionalism essential to changing classroom instruction schoolwide. Third, school schedules need to be viewed as tools for change. Increasingly, schools are using block scheduling, extended days, extended years and off-campus experiences as ways to improve student learning.

■ **STAFF DEVELOPMENT CRUCIAL** Generally, today's teachers were not educated to deal with today's urban school students, a population that is increasingly minority and poor and does not have the support of stable, middle-class family situations. Researcher Milbrey McLaughlin of Stanford University finds that teachers can react to the situation in one of three ways—they can stick to tra-



JOHN BOOZ

Kindergarteners at Douglas Community Academy clamor to try out a stethoscope during a lesson on how the heart operates.

ditional teaching methods (frustrating for teachers because they don't work), they can lower their expectations (frustrating for students because they get bored), or they can change their teaching and expectations.

This last response cannot be accomplished alone. It requires teachers to be part of what McLaughlin calls "professional communities of learning," schools where high instructional content and high

expectations are pursued by teachers together.

It is distressing to learn from a *CATALYST* survey (May 1993) that staff development is a "hit-or-miss affair" in Chicago schools because, as those involved in reforms will learn sooner or later, nothing significant will happen for children unless the relationships within classrooms change—and unless teachers come to see themselves as learners who must constantly build up

1987

**MAR** The Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance seeks legislation to phase in local control of budgets, curriculum and school operations.

**JUNE** The Chicago Teachers Union, along with Chicago United, host a conference on school-based management, featuring programs crafted jointly by unions and school boards.

**SEP** School employees strike for a record 19 days.

**NOV** Mayor Washington appoints a 50-member Parent/Community Council and expands his then-dormant Summit group, overwhelming School Board and union representatives with parent, community, civic and business leaders. Suddenly, the mayor dies.

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

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**APR** Chicagoans United to Reform Education (CURE) unveils a plan to create local school councils and give them the right to hire and fire principals and teachers, control lump-sum budgets and set curriculum. More than 400 people turn out for a CURE rally.

**OCT** Close to 1,000 Chicagoans gather for a rally at the University of Illinois Pavilion to brainstorm ideas for reforming schools. Mayor Washington pledges to present a plan within 120 days for reforming and funding schools.

**NOV** U.S. Education Sec. William Bennett declares that Chicago has the worst school system in the country but that the "right ideas are winning."

a repertoire of skills that are successful with urban students.

There has been much rhetoric about having the right attitudes in order to teach poor kids. Research shows that the one-shot staff development seminar on teaching the “culturally different” seldom changes attitudes or practice. What does convince teachers of the abilities of their students is seeing how changes in practice produce results.

In Louisville schools with the highest percentage of low-income families, for instance, students exposed to writing across the curriculum are building up impressive portfolios and winning regional writing contests. In a San Diego school dominated by high-achieving students from wealthy families, low-income minority students who have been taught critical thinking skills are making the honor roll. In inner-city Baltimore middle schools where instruction relies largely on cooperative learning, students are achieving more academically and behaving better than they did under traditional teaching.

None of these changes in classroom practice was easy for teachers, and they received a great deal of help from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation’s investment in staff training and leadership building. But teachers in these schools now say they have different attitudes about

their students’ abilities and more confidence in making it possible for their students to succeed.

■ **ACCOUNTABILITY A SCHOOL MATTER**  
Unfortunately, the Chicago reform plan minimized, at least initially, the importance of school accountability

work; they should be partners in the accountability process but not asked to impose consequences, essentially, on themselves.

In Kentucky, site of the country’s most radical statewide education reform, the state has established base-

*It is the fortunate school that learns early that it should be serving whole families.*

for the success of students. It relies too much on the implied ability of parents, along with community involvement, to hold schools accountable for results. Ideally, that might be possible, but making schools responsible for student outcomes is a complex issue that, at some point, must include an “enough is enough” consequence.

When schools consistently fail to make progress with their students—as determined by hard analysis of available data, not by surveys of parent contentment—the school governance structure must provide for authoritative steps to hold them accountable. This would be a difficult task for local school councils and other parents as they struggle to make their schools

line achievement data and two-year improvement targets for every school in the state. Schools that exceed the targets get bonuses. Those that fail to improve get technical help, then penalties and, finally, could be put out of business. Parents eventually will have the right to transfer their children to schools that are succeeding. Sure, this creates tension, but it works.

A visitor to Kentucky schools today would find universal understanding of the changes and objectives of the Kentucky Education Reform Act, and, in most schools, intense activity to improve children’s performance on assessments—“teaching to the test” is desirable because Kentucky’s tests emphasize writing and problem-solving and do not depend on multiple-

**1988**

**MAR** A majority of the Education Summit adopts a plan calling for local control of schools and more resources—e.g., parent and teacher training centers, expanded early childhood programs, higher teacher salaries.

**MAY** The office of Interim Mayor Eugene Sawyer unveils legislation to implement the Summit’s recommendations. Rejecting the proposal as a perversion, the Summit dissolves.

**JULY** The Legislature adopts the 127-page Chicago School Reform Act creating elected local school councils with the power to hire and fire principals. Control over hundreds of millions of dollars in state Chapter 1 money is to be shifted from central office to schools over the next five years, a shift that will make it increasingly difficult for the board to pay for raises.

**DEC** A compromise is reached on the Reform Act.

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**FEB** A bill incorporating CURE’s plan is introduced in the Legislature. Meanwhile, a rump group of the Summit, including CURE, business leaders and the United Neighborhood Organization, has begun drafting a tougher plan than the Summit’s.

**JUNE** Hundreds of activists lobby in Springfield for reform. Corporate CEOs jet down to join in. House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) convenes reform leaders to draft a compromise bill. His requirements: It must be “revenue neutral” and acceptable to the Black Caucus and school unions. On the last day of the session, the measure falls one vote short of passage in the Senate.

**SEP** Gov. James R. Thompson uses his amendatory veto to make several minor and several major changes, drawing fire from the Black Caucus (on the issue of reform oversight) and the CTU (on the issue of job protection for supernumeraries).

choice questions. The next step for Chicago is to fashion an accountability system with teeth in it.

■ **NEW ASSESSMENTS NEEDED** As long as schools can hide behind standardized test scores as the measure of what they do, those trying to change the outcomes for students will be severely limited. Such tests often discriminate against poor children, but, more importantly, they take such a constricted view of knowledge that they promote mediocrity.

National policy and much state and local practice are moving toward the development of alternatives—portfolios that emphasize the importance of writing across all subjects, performance assessments (e.g., conducting science experiments), and demonstrations of mastery (e.g., projects that require students to show they can apply their knowledge through multiple skills such as research writing and oral presentations).

It appears certain that the U.S. Congress will phase out the use of standardized testing to evaluate federal Chapter 1 programs. Chicago should be preparing now for this change, beginning with substantive discussions by local school councils about the outcomes they want for their children and the best ways of measuring those outcomes.

■ **SCHOOLS NEED TO ENGAGE THEIR COMMUNITIES** Only by including parents

and the community in the power structure can all the needs of children be met. For the most part, low-income families are alienated from public schools—this is as true among white Appalachian families as it is in poor black families in Chicago. Until this distrust is broken down, there will not be strong connections between schools and homes nor a wrapping of shared values around children.

Obviously, many local school councils are still struggling to be the voice of parents. In other places, a gradual evolution in attitude among parents and communities is taking place, replacing rhetoric with non-traditional strategies to bring schools, homes and communities together. It is the fortunate school that learns early that it should be serving whole families.

These schools are making room for parent centers and sites for integrated services. They are offering classes for parents on everything from handling checkbooks to operating computers. Many schools consider adult literacy, especially that of mothers, to be important to the school success of their students and are offering or connecting parents to literacy education.

Certainly, national policy is moving in this direction, emphasizing collaborative efforts among education,

health and social services. Only by making these connections can schools be sure their students have the supports they need in order to learn. In Chicago, reforms are changing relationships among people and institutions; the process often is messy and frustrating, but it is necessary.

■ **REFORMS MUST FOCUS ON SYSTEMS AS WELL AS SCHOOLS** What happens in classrooms is the bottom line, but events and policies far from classrooms eventually envelop them. State and national policy making, staff development resources, flexibility to shape responses to local needs, curriculum outlines that reflect higher content, new assessments—all of these must be worked on at the same time, albeit at different depths and speeds. The trick is to integrate bottom-up reforms, as being carried out by local school councils, with the big picture.

Basically, the most important factor in learning to skate—or learning to create good outcomes for children—is the will to do it. Sure, official pressure must be evident, the tools must be adequate, and the time needed to change must be given, but little will happen in Chicago, or elsewhere, unless people keep in mind that they are working for children and that their best skills must be used—or new ones learned—if urban children are going to flourish, or even survive. ■

1989

**MAY** A 7-member Interim Board of Education appointed by Mayor Richard M. Daley takes control.

**AUG** The Interim Board demotes Supt. Byrd to consultant and taps longtime administrator Charles Almo as interim superintendent.

**OCT** The first LSC elections draw 17,256 candidates and 294,200 voters.

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**MAR** The School Board reluctantly extends Supt. Manford Byrd Jr.'s contract for a year.

**JULY** The Interim Board cuts 456 administrators and reduces the number of subdistricts from 23 to 11, saving \$40 million. Art and music teachers are restored, elementary class sizes reduced, new special education positions opened and preschool programs expanded. Beginning teacher salaries are hiked 12.5 percent, with current employees getting an average 5.4 percent increase. Schools get the first of five annual installments of discretionary state Chapter 1 funds.



**OCT** The Interim Board selects Compton (Calif.) Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough to head Chicago's school system.

## Memo to Chicago

# You could be beacon, you must not fail

by Michael B. Katz, Elaine Simon and Michelle Fine

**S**ince the fall of 1990, we have traveled to Chicago from Philadelphia more than a dozen times to observe and interpret Chicago school reform. We are drawn by our interests. Michelle Fine is a social psychologist active in school reform in Philadelphia and nationally; Elaine Simon is an anthropologist who specializes in qualitative evaluations of educational programs; Michael Katz is a social historian who has written about education, poverty and social welfare.

Originally, we hoped to interpret Chicago school reform to an audience outside the city; increasingly, we found ourselves offering an outsider's perspective to people in it. In this memo, we summarize our thoughts about the significance and status of school reform and the issues confronting it.

Chicago school reform is the most radical structural reform of an American urban school system since the mid-19th century. It is the first "reform" to redistribute and decentralize power by dismantling the bureaucracy and shifting decision making and accountability to schools, parents and communities. Unlike New York in the 1960s, Chicago has devolved authority to individual schools, not subdistricts, and has vested real power in parents. Historically, other urban school reforms have shifted around the furniture in the rooms of schooling; Chicago has torn down and rearranged the walls.

Chicago school reform is about more than education, too. It is also about the dissatisfaction with government and public institutions shared by both "liberal" and "conservative"

Americans. The pressing question about government, as Robert Bellah and his colleagues have written, "is not just what government should do but how it can do it in a way that strengthens the initiative and participation of citizens, both as individuals and within their communities and associations, rather than reducing them to the status of clients." This redefinition of the relation of government to citizens lies at the heart of Chicago's great experiment with school reform and vests it with an importance that goes beyond the city, indeed beyond schooling.

So then, what are the measures of success or failure? Assessments of school reform should think of it as a process, not a series of events with a definable beginning and end. If it works, school reform never will be over. Instead, it will release local energies in a continuous process of school improvement that never will be "finished." We have been told that about 100 schools, or roughly one-sixth of the system, have seized the opportunity offered by reform to begin significant educational change in processes of learning and teaching. Given the short history of reform and the historic difficulty of turning urban schools around, this is an extraordinary achievement.

One can also measure success by what hasn't happened. Professional educators, in the aggregate, worried

1990

**APR** LSCs at half the schools sign principals to their first four-year contracts; 82 percent retain the incumbent.

**JUNE** To help the Interim Board grant raises, the General Assembly OKs diverting some pension taxes to operating accounts for three years.

**NOV** Acting on a suit filed by the Chicago Principals Association, the Illinois Supreme Court declares the Reform Act unconstitutional because of LSC election procedures that violate the "one person, one vote" rule.

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**MAR** A new School Board Nominating Committee sends Mayor Daley three names for each of the 15 slots on the new, permanent Board of Education.

**MAY** Schools complete their first school improvement plans.

**JULY** Employee unions win 21 percent raises over three years, contingent upon the board receiving enough money to pay for them. The new CTU contract provides for a teacher intern program for college graduates without teaching credentials, \$6,000 bonuses for teachers taking extra coursework, performance bonuses for whole school staffs when schools excel. The latter never was funded.

about having to respond to idiosyncratic, unreasonable, educationally unsound demands from "uninformed" parents and community members. In fact, not only have parents and community members proved responsible; they have been educationally conservative. The problem has not been an excess but a lack of imagination, a point to which we shall return.

Others worried that four-year contracts decided by local school councils and the lack of tenure would render the job of principal unattractive. In fact, dozens of candidates willing to play by the new rules of school reform apply for every principal opening. Indeed, surveys show that principals, elementary school teachers (high school teachers have not yet been surveyed) and local school council members approve of reform.

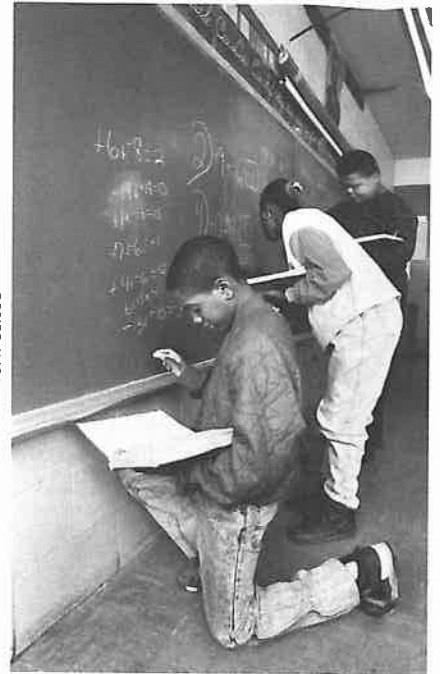
Everyone we have listened to talks about how to "make reform work." No one suggests reversing it, such as by recentralizing the system or taking power away from parents. What has been accomplished and taken for granted in Chicago scarcely can be imagined in other American cities. That Chicago implemented the administrative and structural aspects of reform so quickly and completely is itself an amazing and historic achievement. In Chicago, debates about public education assume the existence of reform. This in itself is

one measure of its success.

One explanation for the rapid and thorough transformation of public education in Chicago arises from the character of its school reform as a social movement. Indeed, Chicago school reform shares the qualities that observers have found in contemporary social movements, that is, a multi-ethnic, multi-constituent coalition mobilized around the cause has fueled and sustained the process.

Chicago provides a particularly congenial setting for such a movement. Without its heritage of community organizing and its sophisticated network of local organizations, the extent of school reform would have been impossible. Without the city's philanthropic and corporate communities, which have joined together to offer extraordinary support, school reform also could not have happened.

Yet another indicator of success concerns public discourse about public education in Chicago. School reform here has stimulated constructive public conversations about education. In what other major city would a public television station devote nearly six hours of Saturday programming to three panel discussions on public education? In what other city could this forum attract the governor, mayor, a foundation president, the leader of a major national union, corporate chief executives,



TONY GETSUG

Aldridge sixth-graders (from front) Anthony Lewis, Aminthia Cox and Gerry Welch take a math quiz.

nationally known school reformers and many others?

We have noticed with some concern, however, that conversations about public education often proceed on separate tracks. Some people focus primarily on systemwide issues, such as the role of the central administration or state finance; others focus

1991

**APR** LSCs at the second half of schools sign principals to four-year contracts; again, about 80 percent retain the incumbent.

**AUG** The Chicago School Finance Authority rejects the School Board's reform plan as weak on decentralization. Also, The School Board closes five school buildings and consolidates nine special schools into regular schools.

**OCT** The second LSC elections draw 8,173 candidates and 161,100 voters; of those elected, 60 percent are new to LSCs. Also, a survey of elementary school teachers by the Consortium on Chicago School Research shows that "on balance" they are pro-reform but that fewer than half expect their teaching to change as a result of reform.

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**JAN** The General Assembly reaffirms reform but delays correcting LSC elections until June, as the African American Education Reform Institute (a new coalition) and other reform leaders tussle over the issue.

**JUNE** Reformers repel an effort by Supt. Kimbrough to use the next school installment of state Chapter 1 money to help balance the system's budget.

**SEP** To get schools open on time, the board cuts 520 teaching jobs, 81 assistant principals and 11 teacher librarians. School supply funds are slashed. Wage negotiations continue as schools open.

**OCT** School maintenance unions agree to skip promised 7 percent raises in return for job guarantees for next year.

**NOV** In the office of Mayor Daley, the board and CTU agree to 3 percent raises effective Feb. 7.

on the details of how to make things happen in schools. We worry that the din of debate about systemwide issues will drown out what's happening at local schools, and that it increasingly excludes the most important actors: principals, teachers and parents.

The Board of Education's unanimously approved SAVE plan, which addresses both systemwide and school-related issues, merges the two levels of conversation in a unified vision of what's needed to move reform forward. Other indicators suggest that SAVE foreshadows an encouraging, new stage in discussions of school reform.

## New vision needed

Why hasn't more happened at local schools? Why hasn't change been faster? Part of the reason reflects the challenge to the imagination posed by the opportunity for school reform. Prisoners of a model of education over a century old, most of us find it nearly impossible even to imagine alternative ways of learning and teaching; socialized in one powerful and pervasive system, we fear the risks in trying something wholly novel.

One great problem of Chicago school reform is finding ways to foster alternative visions of education and,

at the same time, to allay the anxieties that radical change evokes.

By failing to stimulate new visions and to nurture and protect risk takers, the central administration has missed an opportunity to foster reform. Its potential role as a catalyst for radical educational visions is unimaginable in most debates about the role of the central administration either by its supporters or opponents. The capacity to liberate the imagination should be high on the list of qualities sought in a new superintendent.

By their training and work experience, not to mention their own education, teachers have difficulty envisioning radical alternatives because the culture of their schools discourages conversations, professional development and risk taking. Many individual teachers are remarkable; most school cultures are stifling. But no reform that reaches the classroom level will take place unless teachers develop and use new models of classroom practice. As many have noted, the legislation creating school reform neglected teachers; professional personnel advisory committees were invented quickly, with little conceptual strength. Relatively little thought was given to how to mobilize teachers into the cause of reform.

Educationally meaningful and professionally rewarding staff development, thus, stands out as a crucial need

in this reform effort. We have seen splendid examples of schoolwide staff development around the city, which have already produced outstanding results. Nonetheless, such examples remain too few and scattered, leaving most school cultures untouched. Funds and incentives for staff development should rank very high among the priorities for every school.

It falls to principals to take the lead in staff development. Indeed, we have been struck by the centrality of principals to school success or failure. Chicago school reform redefines every aspect of a principal's job. It increases principals' risks and opportunities; it provides them with new masters and greater autonomy; it demands extraordinary amounts of time and energy. Some principals have seized these new challenges; others haven't. We wonder to what extent the successful principals have been appointed by LSCs since school reform and whether they are first-time principals. We suspect that "new" or post-reform principals are more responsive to their local school communities and more educationally innovative. These are important issues for research.

Appointing a principal seems to us the most important job of a local school council. Of the many problems facing local school councils, we would like to mention just one; their

# 1992

**MAR** The Finance Authority again rejects the board's reform plan.

**JUNE** Designs for Change reports that more than 70 independent organizations, universities and national school renewal projects are providing intensive help to 180 schools.

**AUG** Under pressure from the Finance Authority, the School Board adopts a plan to transfer more authority and money to schools over the next three years.

**NOV** A majority of Illinois voters say "yes" to a Constitutional amendment to increase and equalize school funding, but the measure falls 3 percentage points shy of the 60 percent required for adoption. Corporations led the attack.

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**JAN** With a \$1.1 million grant from the MacArthur Foundation, the Chicago Teachers Union opens its Quest Center to help teachers restructure their schools.

**MAY** Consultants Booz Allen & Hamilton and Washington, Pittman & McKeever confirm the school system's need for substantial new revenues to balance its budget in the future. A \$540 million shortfall is forecast for 1996.

**AUG** The School Board and unions agree to defer 7 percent raises until Oct. 13, string out payment of teacher bonuses and fire about 100 custodians. Central office positions are reduced by 210. The board also cuts 556 clerks, truant officers and library aides, drawing an unfair labor practice charge from the CTU. (The matter is not yet resolved.)

**NOV** Citing "personal reasons," a beleaguered Supt. Kimbrough announces he won't seek renewal of his contract, set to expire in June.



relative isolation from one another. Despite district-level meetings of LSC representatives, councils have failed to form associations for sharing experiences and ideas or advancing their own interests. Like teachers and principals, LSC members remain relatively isolated. Truly, the loneliness and isolation that are key components of the culture of public education discourage innovation and risk.

The preoccupation with conventional measures of assessment also discourages innovation and risk. Faced with evaluation by national or statewide standardized test scores, the safest course for teachers and principals often seems the most familiar one. Still, the need to assess achievement cannot be evaded.

Although many educators and reformers in Chicago and elsewhere accurately criticize conventional measures, no alternative has been systematically adopted. Some educators are experimenting with promising alternatives more suited to current thinking about teaching and learning, such as portfolio-based assessment, but these are not yet used widely. If existing test scores appear an inadequate measure of the progress of Chicago school reform, the development of alternatives demands urgent attention. Poor student outcome was the reason reform came into being. The question of achievement must be

addressed vigorously and creatively.

From whatever perspective one takes, and by whatever measures one uses, some schools are performing badly. It could be that they need more time or a new principal. But, eventually, the question of what to do about non-performing schools will require an answer. The issue is crucial in part because of the need to find some way to pressure recalcitrant schools to improve and partly to show that Chicago has a democratic means for holding its schools accountable. Only when they are convinced that the system has a commitment to accountability will many in Springfield be willing to provide more money for Chicago's schools.

## Reform a model

The question of what to do with non-performing schools plagues the nation. Local control does not automatically solve the problem. Typically, parents in a neighborhood are loathe to close down their local school. Leadership, therefore, must come from some other sources. Chicago needs to create mechanisms whereby poorly performing schools are supported, transformed, or closed and reopened.

Of all the issues threatening Chicago school reform, the most serious is its budget crisis. If the resolu-

tion of the crisis results in the erosion of reform, and this is one scenario we have heard from more than one well-informed observer, the tendency will be to blame the conceptual underpinnings of reform and to discredit the capacity of parents and the potential of local democracy. Such a reading would be wrong. The budget crisis has structural origins that have nothing to do with reform.

In fact, with support, Chicago school reform will legitimate local democracy. As it trains LSC members in parliamentary procedures, the analysis of budgets, the selection of principals, the evaluation of curricula and many other matters, Chicago school reform is a vast engine of adult education for developing effective citizens. If it revitalizes public education, Chicago school reform will become a model for how to reverse the slide into privatization and restore the preconditions of an effective public sphere in America. This is why it must succeed. ■

*Michael B. Katz and Elaine Simon are co-directors of the Urban Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania. Michelle Fine is a professor of psychology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and she also is senior consultant to the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative.*

# 1993

**FEB** The board selects Subdistrict 9 Supt. Richard Stephenson as interim superintendent. The board also unveils the SAVE plan to give principals more control over their buildings and staffs, to lengthen the school day and year and to get schools open on time—all without employee raises.

**MAR** An estimated quarter million television viewers tune in to a daylong series of panel discussions on school reform, broadcast on WTTW-TV and WBBM-AM Radio. Also, 60 individuals apply for superintendent.

**MAY** The mayor, governor, legislative leaders, School Board and union officials continue to toss the school funding hot potato among each other as the system's 1993-94 revenue shortfall rises to \$415 million.

JAN

**JAN** The School Board names five prominent out-of-town business, civic and education leaders to screen applicants for superintendent.

FEB

**FEB** Leadership for Quality Education releases a poll of LSC members showing an overwhelming majority of each group (parents, community members, teachers and principals) believe their schools are operating better since reform.

MAR

**MAR** Mayor Daley calls for union give-backs on work rules and money, as well as more state aid.

APR



MAY

**MAY** Laval Wilson and Argie Johnson are named finalists for superintendent. Interim Supt. Stephenson bids for consideration.

JUN

Sources: News reports; *School Reform, Chicago Style*

## Teachers: the good eggs and the bad apples

by John Kotsakis

**A**esop once said that any fool can propose impossible remedies. Recently, as an example of Aesop's maxim, we have seen a number of proposals from reformers and politicians to solve the problem of "bad" teachers. A recent survey by *CATALYST* magazine also points to the volatility of this issue among teachers themselves. (See *CATALYST*, May 1993.) But why is it that we always look at the problem of the quality of teaching as a question of bad teachers?

Teaching is important, the most important thing done in our schools except learning. So it is only natural that everyone be concerned about the quality of teachers. The more motivated, qualified and dedicated people you have in any enterprise, the better your chances for improved performance of that enterprise. That's nothing new. What is new is this prominent belief that the reason our schools are failing is because of bad teaching and bad teachers.

If the politicians and the reformers want qualified, dedicated and motivated teachers, they will never reach that goal as long as they stay on the path they have recently set. They can't reach that goal because they don't want such people teaching in



JOHN FIGLER

our schools. People who are dedicated and motivated would not teach in a system where a principal could simply issue an order for dismissal and have a teacher fired. Motivated professionals would not want to work for an enterprise that values caprice and ire more than it values performance and dedication.

The most pitiful thing about this latest round of teacher bashing—and I don't mean union bashing because that's nothing new—is that it is based on outmoded theories of management. In essence, these reformers are trying to maintain long-discredited practices under the guise of innovation.

Actually, it's not hard to design a process giving teachers more professional dignity and greater responsibility for their performance. It's not hard to create a whole professional ethos that will deliver better quality instruc-

tion. It's not hard to provide a system of rewards for the motivated and dedicated teacher. In fact, we have already suggested several designs to the Board of Education.

We talk about improving the performance of all teachers, and they talk about firing bad ones. We talk about designing a process that will give teachers more control over their own profession, and they talk about giving principals more power to get teachers to perform. It is as if teachers were lions and principals were the lion tamers. An approach which emphasizes supervision instead of individual responsibility will fail because that is exactly the kind of system we have right now. The so-called reformers are a bunch of troglodytes when it comes to this issue.

Here are some real and different suggestions for encouraging professional dignity and improved teacher performance:

- Stop preparing, recruiting and selecting teachers the old-fashioned way. It doesn't work. We have plenty of research and programs to guide us in setting up something better.

- Expand the present Teachers for Chicago internship program and make it a systemic plan for preparing new teachers. Why should we depend entirely on college experience to prepare someone to be a teacher? Teaching is not just theory and good will. It is an art, a performance art to be exact.

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*John Kotsakis is assistant to the president for educational issues, Chicago Teachers Union.*

■ Create a mandatory peer review program for all non-tenured teachers in their first two years. No one should reach tenure without undergoing careful scrutiny, adequate guidance and constant support for improvement.

■ Chuck the present teacher evaluation system. It is a meaningless and demeaning way to encourage excellence among teachers. Good principals don't like it either. Instead, establish a process of collegial review allowing teachers to observe each other, discuss each others' work and assess what they do. That's the best way to reinforce a set of professional values, and it's the best way to encourage people to work together.

■ Revitalize the present dismissal process so that there are trained consulting teachers who can provide real help to those who are failing. Also, provide some kind of incentive for these consultants. If there are unsatisfactory teachers who won't take the

help or accept the advice, then give them a dismissal notice.

■ Send every one back to school and pay them for it; or make it voluntary and reward the ones that go. Staff development for beginning teachers should include training in classroom management and instructional organization. For experienced teachers, it should include teams of people from the same school working on the priorities they have set to meet the school's instructional plan.

■ Set the standards for the profession by adopting the work of the National Board of Standards in Teaching. Trust the teachers to establish their own professional standards board and decide whether a colleague is competent or not. They will be sterner task masters than most principals. Let's stop kidding ourselves that anyone can recognize quality teaching just by walking by a classroom and listening to the gurgling sounds of happy kids. There's

more to teaching than having a quiet room. If teaching were all that easy and rewarding, then I'm sure we'd find more journalists, reformers and politicians doing it.

I won't bother to talk about how difficult it is to get rid of "bad" teachers. That problem would be best solved by getting rid of hand-wringing principals who complain about having their hands tied by complex laws and contract clauses.

Reformers are now saying that the reason our children are not learning is that there are too many poor teachers. Give parents power, and the scores will go up, they said. Now, three years into reform, the scores aren't up and the children are still not learning. What do reformers say now? Give councils more power. Give the principals more power. Power is the guiding word of the day. What a sorry state of affairs. But in the end, no one is empowered through a failing enterprise. ■

# Students with weapons should be expelled

by Patrick J. O'Malley

Oh, for the good old days! Not long ago the top seven discipline problems in the school system were talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, cutting in line, dress code violations and littering. Today they are drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery and assault.

The most basic responsibility of the Chicago Board of Education is to ensure safe and secure schools for our children. The board has failed to do this because they refuse to accept and act on the new realities.

In September 1990, each Chicago high school was assigned two Chicago police officers during school hours, in keeping with a campaign promise of Mayor Richard M. Daley, prompted by the very serious increase of violent criminal acts in and around our city schools.

The officers have been doing their job, and doing it well. This recent

police presence has torn down the "wall of silence"; that is, in the past, most crime in the schools went unreported. Now we know the facts.

■ From September 1990 to June 1991 there were 9,822 arrests; 182 guns were seized.

■ From September 1991 to June 1992 there were 10,100 arrests; 200 guns were seized.

■ From September 1992 to March 10, 1993 there were 6,506 arrests; 120 guns were seized.

These are not "the good old days."

I believe the vast majority of CPS students are interested in receiving a high-quality education. However, because of failed board policy and lack of vision, students who have a history of violent acts against fellow students and demonstrate chronic disruptive behaviors are allowed to return to school after brief suspensions—to continue to prey on other students.

When discipline, short of expulsion, fails to correct disruptive behavior, I believe expulsion must be carefully administered. In this way, schools will send a clear message that behavior which disrupts learning

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and/or poses a danger to students will not be tolerated.

Only through tough, bold new efforts can we remake our schools into places of learning and not violence. I propose that as a first step in sending a clear message to the criminals in our midst, the board establish a policy mandating a program of expulsion for public school students who bring dangerous weapons onto school property; the policy could set forth several features such as:

- Any student found to be in possession of a dangerous weapon in/on public school property shall be immediately arrested by the police and excluded from school by school authorities, and scheduled for an expulsion hearing.

- Within five days of the time of the incident of possession of a dan-

gerous weapon, the accused student shall be given the opportunity to participate in an expulsion hearing conducted by the school district.

- If the board finds that the student was in possession of a dangerous weapon on school property, it shall impose immediate expulsion for one semester and provide an avenue of possible return to school in the following semester.

Such a plan must include the following feature: Every possible effort shall be expended to ensure that the student does not return to the school where the incident occurred.

However, we also need a comprehensive review of the criteria for transferring students involved in criminal or other antisocial behavior. Shifting problems from one school to another, often with no warning given to school

personnel on the receiving end, is not a real solution and may lead to disastrous consequences. Further, the general superintendent should undertake a complete review and investigation of all sources of social services (private, city, county, state and federal) and should establish inservice programs for staff on the best use of these services in creating a safe and secure school environment.

New initiatives in state legislation are also needed. For example, the Safe Schools Act must be amended to include as a felonious act the possession of weapons (guns, knives, etc.).

I would also hope the board would support legislation proposed by the Chicago Teachers Union to establish two alternative schools for

*Continued on page 27*

## Letters

### CATALYST test analysis missed much about Bridge

*In its April 1992 issue, CATALYST listed schools whose 1992 IGAP test scores were significantly above or below those of schools with similar student populations. Bridge School was found to be "below expectations." The following letter was written in response to that finding.*

I wish to make three points. One, your portrait of Bridge School had some very significant elements missing. Two, you did exactly what you and others implied you should not do: focus on test scores so early in reform. Three, there are some things that those who set goals and criteria for schools should consider seriously.

Test scores do not reflect the extent to which we at Bridge have implemented school-based management, the number of teachers who are attending classes and workshops to improve their teaching skills and our support programs for students in both affective and academic domains.

Even so, we have made test score gains. In every grade but fourth, the median gain in reading on the 1992 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills was one grade level or high-

er. Students made similar gains in math, with the exceptions of grades three and eight. Further, on the 1992 IGAP, Bridge met or exceeded state expectations at every grade level tested, in every subject tested except science, for which standards have not been set.

In your article you state, "Currently, however, there is no systematic way to identify schools that are moving forward, standing still or falling behind." I hope that those who do establish a systematic manner of determining growth use the same measures from year to year. For example, one year, we see a school's stability rate; the next year, its mobility rate.

When test results are published, enough information should be given for people to make reasonable interpretations. Mobility, stability, low-income level, attendance rate and the percentage of people belonging to a particular racial or ethnic group are not the only determiners of progress. For example, funding levels are different, and some schools are overcrowded. State and federal regulations affect schools differently, too.

But above all, please do not send us back to the days of skill-by-skill, criterion-referenced testing. I would hope that our instruction will be driven by a full, well-rounded curricula.

When I first skimmed your issue, my emotions ran the gamut from righteous indignation to absolute abjection. However, now I wish to thank you for the articles, which forced me to put a few of my thoughts about Bridge (in particular) and education (in general) in writing.

In closing, I want to make it clear that all of my statements are made in defense of Bridge School and the efforts by our entire school family—parents, community, faculty, maintenance and lunchroom staffs, students, PTA and LSC—to help all Bridge students "Cross the Bridge to success," and not to indict or criticize anyone else.

We are constantly evaluating our progress or lack thereof and making adjustments which we hope will be beneficial to our students. As recently as March 30, we instituted an extended-day program for children who do not complete their work in class. Bridge offers an excellent, quality, inclusive, well-rounded, educational program, and our students are making significant academic gains.

*Vera Stevenson, principal  
Bridge Elementary School*

### Correction

On page 4 of the April 1993 issue, CATALYST mistakenly identified O.A. Thorp Scholastic Academy as one of 19 schools that suffered a significant decline in average IGAP math scores between 1988 and 1992. The school that suffered the decline was J.N. Thorp Elementary School. We regret the error.

# Diaries

"From a good beginning comes a good end." This old English proverb summarizes our message this month, the final month for CATALYST's Diaries section. Diaries began in our first issue, February 1990. In that issue, we wrote, CATALYST had recruited "individuals who constitute a microcosm of the school system and reform community...to write anonymously about their experiences with and reflections on reform." Our diarists have given readers a nitty-gritty but fruitful view of how reform is, and in some cases is not, working. They have let you in on precisely what we predicted in the beginning: "a wide range of experience—from defeat, suspicion and disillusionment to success, confidence and elation." CATALYST would like to thank all our diarists for their insight and hard work. Beginning next September, we will spotlight schools in these pages.

methods. They are eager to participate, but still many only meekly request attendance as though it were a great imposition on the school. Most of our teachers find it difficult to believe that now the norm is to attend conferences—that they are officially encouraged to do so.

## Aspiring teachers, future leaders

**LAZARUS, teacher**

**March 27** Teachers for Chicago mentors are preparing to meet the next wave of applicants for the program. In reading some of the applications, I could not help but be favorably impressed by the wealth of expertise and idealism reflected in the statements of the applicants. In interviews they again and again tell of deep-seated and long-standing desires to teach. Collectively they represent a pool of visionary professionals in the country that is probably only the tip of the iceberg. For those who are not accepted into the program, there will be other routes to enter the profession. It will not be surprising to see all those who applied, not only those accepted, become the educational leaders of the future.

## Problem kids sap energy

**DEAN, parent**

**April 5** Teachers tell me some of the frustrations that bother them: They feel that more time is spent on discipline than on teaching; there is a tendency to spend most time with the problem students, rather than focusing positive attention on the overwhelming majority of good kids who truly want to learn.



The teaching staff also perceives that the faculty's standards are lower than in the past few years. Allegedly, some of our teachers are passing kids simply to make themselves look good, given the fact they feel existing formal evaluations are meaningless.

## Teachers eager yet wary

**LAZARUS, teacher**

**April 6** State and federal Chapter 1 funds make it possible for our teachers to attend professional conferences and get up-to-date ideas on teaching

## LSC shaping up at last

**DEAN, parent**

**April 5** Our regular LSC meeting was called to order with two members noticeably absent. They were the chairs for two key committees. Each was to have a report for us. But because they didn't, it was convenient for them not to attend.

The usual tension and animosity of our council meetings seemed to have subsided. Discussion on the large number of issues that remain open may have served as a catalyst to focus attention on the fact that we have talked and met often but have accomplished very little.

I commented on the fact that although more than 18 months have passed since our term began, we still have until October to make positive change happen. It's never too late to begin moving. With only three more working meetings to go before our term is over, the obvious has finally been acknowledged. We have accomplished virtually nothing that will benefit our children.

Our chair suggested we set a date to review the many outstanding issues and to put them in a priority. He also was interested in modifying the committee structure in a manner that would more likely generate some output.

The Principal Evaluation is due to be completed by May 5. It has been a matter of contention for months—and what is even worse, the contentiousness was more about form than content. The argument has been over the format that would be used to rate our principal's performance: either a comprehensive evaluation plan developed by another high school and shared with us more than three years ago, or the superficial one-page sample suggested in central office's Principal Evaluation package.

Because the "old" council originally used the comprehensive form in 1991, it was initially rejected by the new members as not appropriate; in 1992, the one-page document was approved by a 7-to-5 vote. The matter was raised again last month, and the longer format was discarded without further debate. More discussion today, with some of us urging this as an important issue that needs to be reconsidered. It was agreed that April 12 be set aside for this purpose.

**April 12** Nine of the LSC members met in this special session that began with a cordial welcoming of all. The tone had been set, and the remaining dialogue was encouragingly positive. We wanted to reach consensus on which Principal Evaluation form to use. Ultimately, we made subtle modifications to the evaluation format provided by another high school. And, more importantly, we *all* agreed on the final product!

Toward the end of this special session, we talked about the positive temper of our last regular meeting and the encouraging results of this current meeting. In my mind, I was trying to understand the reasons for our past differences and the difficulty in reaching agreement on nearly every pertinent issue. When I mentioned this, one of our community reps suggested that *trust* was the single element sorely lacking from the very beginning.

Although I don't know how this situation was able to sustain itself for so long, it is likely that the unwillingness to communicate and the tendency to foster negative perceptions were significant contributors. As a council, our torpid indifference to the spirit of school reform may have fueled a self-

fulfilling prophecy. Frustrations ultimately may have caused me to become part of the problem. When we openly thrashed out an idea, it almost always came down to a seven to five vote. In my disappointment (I was among the five), I found it easier to act on my own to accomplish a given task rather than to continuously fight and argue with the new members. That, in retrospect, may have fortified the barriers between us. We all have a lot to learn.

## Politics the problem

**QUESANA, teacher**

**April 14** "What difference is there between the schools today and the schools before reform?" I asked.

"None," he responded. My English department colleague was being sarcastic again, but less so than usual.

I asked if he had not perceived any new benefits for the teacher as the fourth year of school reform was coming to an end. "How about the copier?" I asked with a wink. "And the new computer?" He nodded, but his face was dull, and he yawned. I was about to point out the many good things that had come out of the copier and the Macintosh hardware, from desktop publishing of student writing to easy duplication of texts that were in short supply. But his expression stopped me cold.

"I will have to moonlight next year if I don't get a summer job," he finally said. "In fact, I may have to moonlight anyway."

I asked why. He replied that his eldest daughter would enter college in the fall, and although his wife also taught in the public schools, their combined salaries could not suffice to put her through college and also pay the mortgage, the auto loan and everything else.

I said nothing more on the subject. My question was answered. What use is it to speak of reform to a teacher worried about his next meal ticket? How many of us can plan earthshaking new instructional units when we are too busy moonlighting after school? My colleague has 20-odd years in the classroom, has an M.A.

plus 15 hours of lane credit and is still struggling along. He is not alone, even at our school. I know others who sell insurance part-time, work in law offices after school or teach night classes.

**April 20** Today I spoke with an LSC teacher rep from another school. The subject was the question I'd asked my English colleague yesterday. Progress in achieving reform there is at a standstill, but for a different reason. Her school is having problems with overcrowding because the local politicians refuse to approve the building permit required for an expansion. Was the LSC fighting back? Yes, but progress was slow. Only a mass community protest was finally getting the ball rolling. Politicians seem to have as much say-so in school financial matters as school boards and superintendents.

I saw some relationship between the political problem her school faced and my colleague's problem keeping his mind focused on his career. She said her school could do many wonderful things without the political opposition it was getting. Was not politics at the heart of all our school problems? A simple change in taxes could cancel the deficit, provide teachers with a much-needed raise and get the schools to open on time with plenty of seating space. If every Illinois resident were convinced to accept just \$1 a week in additional taxes, goodbye state money problems. So why the crisis?

**April 21** I had a pleasant surprise today. My English teacher friend showed me a play he was working on. He hoped to have it produced at a Chicago theater. He was quite another person from the one I talked to two days ago. When I asked why the change, he said he was abiding by his motto, which he took from a poem by Theodore Roethke: "Art is man's defense against hysteria and death."

I agreed, considering the effect upon his morale. I asked if he would look over proofs of a classroom newspaper I was putting out, and he cheerfully agreed.

Perhaps the answer to our seemingly insoluble educational problems lies outside the classroom, outside the educational system itself. I have

heard of outstanding practitioners of our craft in the Peace Corps, or in parochial schools, where the rewards are scarce materially but rich spiritually. We will certainly never find enough teachers willing to sacrifice a living wage, but perhaps their spirit of self-sacrifice is not exclusively theirs. I think of the Depression-era public school teachers who taught their hearts out for scrip.

Imagine what we might do with a little more!

**LAZARUS, teacher**

**April 24** The Board of Education proposes an eight-hour day for teachers, an extended school year and a reduction in salary for teachers. Do they know that many teachers already work an eight-hour day (or more)? That teachers often take work home? That teachers supervise after-school activities and extracurricular classes? Many who do not work extra time at school have other jobs to supplement their incomes.

## Kids quiz principal applicants

**ROBIN, observer**

**April 24** This week I attended a Principal's Forum, where candidates for the principalship of a school came before the public to explain why they should be chosen for the job. These were the four finalists, all women—two whites, one African American and one Hispanic. All of the candidates seemed qualified, though none had had experience as a principal.

The survey of principals recently completed by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (see *CATALYST*, December 1992) found that one consequence of reform is an increase in the percentage of women in the principal's role. Because this school was formerly led by a man, this will further the trend in favor of women. This is interesting to me, inasmuch as in the country at large there has been a definite prejudice on the part of school boards in favor of male principals: about 80 percent of principals nationwide are men. Is this a respect in which Chicago LSCs are different from school boards in general? Could be. LSCs have a majority-

female membership, while the majority on school boards generally is male.

There were 50 to 60 people present at this Principal's Forum, including a large contingent of teachers and about ten children. In keeping with the mixed population of the school, there were whites, African Americans and Hispanics present (all remarks were translated), but the plurality seemed to be Anglo.

The format for the meeting was that each candidate spent a few min-

utes introducing herself, and then questions were entertained from parents, teachers, community members and students. Given the fact that this is a K-6 school, it seemed a bit daring to include the students; but, in fact, once they got up the nerve to speak, they asked some excellent questions—more to the point than some of the adults' questions. With the first candidate, the LSC chair asked if there were a question from any student, and there was an embarrassed silence. By the next time around, a little girl raised her hand and asked, "What do you think about the bilingual program?" There was a collective gasp from the adults; I had the feeling this was an issue they took seriously and had not expected to hear raised from the

mouth of a child. Student questions (all from girls, by the way) to other candidates included, "What would you do if you were principal?" "What are we going to do about the fights on the playground?" "What can you do about our having to eat lunch in our classroom?"

I was interested that one of the candidates stressed her admiration for the school improvement plan, referring to it a number of times in her remarks as a guide to her actions as (possible) principal.



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All in all this meeting suggested that reform is working. Some of the questions seemed to express positions that the speakers may have thought of as narrow, "pet" issues, but for the most part the questions were thoughtful; the audience seemed to be making a genuine effort to learn about the candidates. Forms were passed out to get feedback on positives and negatives on each candidate, and a teacher asked her colleagues to indicate their first and second choices.

## Reflections on reform

**CARLOS, principal**

**April 30** I can honestly say that the job of principal is exciting because it

has so many sides to it, working with so many different people. The hardest part is the informal part—the gossip, the rumor, the hidden agendas, the innuendo. I do not have patience for that because I feel all professionals should simply always act professionally. For instance, we begin the day at 8:30. I expect the staff to be there at 8:30. I expect the staff to care what happens to each other, to the students, to the parents and to the community. Lack of teamwork can affect the entire school.

Nonetheless, this is a great job. School reform has given our schools the opportunity to make their own decisions about their futures. We are on the road.

**MIROMIRO, teacher**

**April 27** The one important thing I feel necessary for true school reform is for an equal number of parents and teachers to be on the local school councils. If it must be imbalanced, there should be more teachers. I am speaking as a teacher who is also a parent!

Somehow the decision making went from administrators to parents. When will teachers be respected as experts in the field of education?

**LAZARUS, teacher**

**April 28** It seems unfair that the Legislature which created school reform for Chicago should have so little patience in waiting for results. School after school has become involved in various aspects of reform. Is the Legislature aware of the efforts? Or was the deck stacked at the outset? What was the intent of reform? To improve the system or to surrender it to the state through receivership, thereby voiding all collective-bargaining agreements?

Our own school is on the verge of major changes to offer choice for students within the system. We have a long way to go, but we are beginning to confront the major obstacle of changing attitudes, and we are having some success. Faculty members are beginning to see themselves as professional with the destinies very much in their own hands. Does the Legislature see them that way? Can it trust enough to give the teachers and the schools the opportunity to make

the changes that will bring the Chicago public schools into the 21st century? Or will it confound our efforts and cancel out all the benefits that reform has brought to the system to date?

**DEAN, parent**

**April 30** Four years ago, those of us who chose to get involved harbored the suspicion that school reform was predestined to fail for political reasons. Beginning in 1989, during those first two years of reform, nearly all of our contacts with central administration supported this notion. Nonetheless, we were successful in many ways because of our determination to garner resources and work as a team to accomplish our educational improvement goals in spite of the lack of central office support.

I attempted not to allow myself to be vexed by the actions, arrogance and ignorance of the new members elected to the LSC two years ago. Yet, it's clear that my personal focus was diminished and my positive view of the future of education was significantly skewed.

Several facts remain evident, however. Change comes neither easily nor without obstacles. And people who need to "be in charge" for the sake of power, politics or their own personal agenda will always sully the true spirit of any noble goal. But they should never be allowed to kill it.

On the other hand, it is encouraging to have been a part of Chicago school reform in the very beginning. I've seen what can happen when 12

men and women unite and function as a cohesive team with one unified vision—improving our children's education.

My child is graduating in June. My four-year commitment to participating in making change happen is nearing an end, and I'll not be returning to the LSC as a parent rep. However, the position of community representative can keep some of us active in LSCs. In addition, other support organizations are always seeking men and women who care and are willing to get involved in educational reform.

It is tempting to reflect upon what could have been accomplished during the past two years if we had worked as a team of concerned individuals united and focused on a common cause. But that would be a waste of valuable time. It is better for us to share our experiences with others who will pick up where we left off and help them learn from our mistakes—and our successes. None of us will live long enough to make all the errors there are to make.

The Chicago school reform vision of enriching education will not be realized overnight. The local school council concept is good. Placing responsibility closer to the local level is what will ultimately improve education and better prepare our children for the future.

I hope we can put our petty differences aside and work together to pave the way for America's future leaders to be successful. There simply is no one else to accept this responsibility. It's up to us. ■



*Karen Carlson,  
principal of  
Prescott School,  
a 1993  
Reader's Digest  
American Hero  
in Education.*



## Half of district council meetings lack quorums

by Michael Morrissey

**A**ttendance at more than half of subdistrict council meetings this year was too low to conduct official business, a CATALYST review of attendance records has found.

Thirty-six of 65 meetings for which attendance information was available lacked a quorum, which requires one more than half the total number of council members. (Eighty-seven meetings were held, but attendance records were not available for 22 of them.)

Subdistrict councils, comprised of one representative from each local school council in the subdistrict, need quorums for such tasks as approving council minutes, taking positions on controversial issues or approving school repair funding plans.

Citywide, average attendance at subdistrict council meetings from September 1992 through April 1993 was about 50 percent, records show. Of the meetings with quorums, average attendance was 58 percent.

District council chairs blame the poor attendance on two factors: Some council members do not have time to attend meetings, and councils do not have money to promote attendance.

"In some of the districts, you have a predominately working class," says Carlos Heredia, District 5 council chair. "When you have parents who

are at the survival level, it's difficult for them to make the meetings."

"We don't have the wherewithal to send out anything and no staff to call representatives," says David Welch, District 4 council chair. "There is not one stamp in the system dedicated to that purpose. We don't have a dime to call our own."

Despite a poor record of obtaining quorums, councils play a vital role in disseminating hard-to-get information, says Welch. "The council chairs spend an obscene amount of time gathering information for the monthly council meetings," he says.

Welch, a self-employed insurance broker, says he spends about 20 to 30 hours per week gathering information for the monthly council meetings. "I try to squeeze school stuff between work, but most of the time, I end up squeezing work between school stuff."

And, he adds, "The networking of schools is very important."

According to meeting minutes, subdistrict councils regularly provide information that could be hard to get elsewhere. District 9, for example, discussed new school reform bills, school overcrowding and innovative teaching methods.

Subdistrict office staff also are a vital information link, says Heredia. "We [District 5] field between 50 and 100 calls per day from principals who have issues and emergencies."

For example, he says, District 5

### District council attendance

Average: Sept. '92-April '93

District 1	55%
District 2	63%
District 3	40%
District 4	48%
District 5	31%
District 6	57%
District 7	43%
District 8	50%
District 9	54%
District 10	41%
District 11	Not available

Source: CATALYST analysis of attendance records

Supt. Delores Gonzalez Engelskirchen once handled a deluge of calls from a school where parents were upset over the ineffectiveness of their local school council. Engelskirchen had to calm parents and work with the principal to make sure the council ran smoothly until the 1991 LSC election, Heredia relates.

William Moorehead, principal of Lyons Elementary School, says he often relies on the district office for help with special and bilingual education coordination, grant applications and state Chapter 1 paperwork.

But critics of the subdistricts maintain that information could and should be provided by central office. Leonard Dominguez, deputy mayor for education, says the poor attendance shows that subdistrict councils are not valued. "For some reason, all those schools are not sending their local school council representatives," he observes. "They just don't feel there's anything to be gained."

"We get virtually nothing from [the District 11 council]," concurs Mike Fahy, an LSC member at Lane Technical High School. "When we do get information, it's usually from the district superintendent, and not from the other council members."

Subdistrict council meetings are

*Michael Morrissey is a graduate student at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University.*

sparsely attended, Fahy says, because the councils lack real policy-making power. "Unlike local school councils, they can't make any policy, and they don't have any money to spend. They're just a buffer bureaucracy that prevents reform. They should be eliminated."

Mayor Richard M. Daley has proposed eliminating subdistrict offices, in part to save \$4 million. Subdistrict backers dispute the figure, but School Board and independent financial analysts confirm it.

Subdistrict council chairs are suspicious of Daley's motives. "It's pure politics," maintains Welch. "This is kind of a back-door tactic to eliminate the School Board Nominating Commission so [Daley] can have free reign to nominate anyone he wants."

Twenty-three of the 28 members of

the commission are subdistrict council members who, under the Reform Act, are chosen by the councils.

Although Daley has made no bones about wanting more power in appointing School Board members, Dominguez scoffs at Welch's speculation. "That's just silly, just paranoia. Subdistrict councils were never discussed as part of the plan. The real thrust of that item was to eliminate divided authority lines, and to make services a little more direct."

Perhaps the most important function the Reform Act gave to subdistrict councils is participation in the monitoring of school improvement. Under the law, subdistrict councils, on the subdistrict superintendent's recommendation, can take action against schools that are not moving forward. As a last resort, they can

remove the principal or even close the school.

"That's their job, to troubleshoot the schools," says Joy Noven, a director of Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE). "Truthfully, they're not functioning, and you can't get away from that."

CATALYST's review of available meeting minutes found no evidence of council action on lagging schools.

Welch acknowledges that most subdistrict councils haven't monitored schools "as much as they should," but notes that most schools have just started their improvement plans.

"It's asking a lot of volunteers who have to work and do other things beside this," he adds. "It comes down to, How many meetings can you handle? There just aren't the resources to really do what needs to be done." ■

## Head Start transfer worse in second year

by Dana Phillips

More than 1,400 disadvantaged Chicago youngsters have been denied Head Start classroom services this year because community-based centers failed to open on time, according to city records.

Only six of the 27 centers scheduled to open in September, serving 278 youngsters, were licensed as of May 6, city records show. The 27 centers are being opened as replacements for Head Start programs phased out of the public schools. Only three of eight additional centers, part of an expansion of Head Start, were licensed, with 105 slots available. The city's Department of Human Services (DHS),

which oversees all Head Start programs in Chicago, anticipates that the majority of the unlicensed centers will be licensed within the next two months.

The delay is worse than last year when, according to city officials, all 29 community-based centers slated to open in September 1991 were licensed and operating by March 1992.

Given this track record, there is concern about children in line for another 1,720 Head Start slots scheduled to be transferred from public schools to private agencies by next September. Indeed, the city is considering a Board of Education request to retain those slots in schools.

In 1991, the city began moving 129 Head Start classes serving 5,160 3- and 4-year-old children from Chicago public schools to private,

non-profit agencies. The transfer was to be complete by next September.

The board's program had been running at a deficit, largely because teacher salaries were rising faster than federal funding. Neither the board nor DHS has the money to make up the deficit. DHS, which is supervising the transfer, says private centers with less expensive teachers will make Head Start cheaper to run.

But the change has been rough.

"Kids are not being served in centers as fast as we'd like," acknowledges Maria Whelan, director of early childhood programs for DHS. But, she adds, "They are being served." Whelan is referring to home visits being temporarily made in lieu of regular classes.

City officials blame the delay on a lengthy renovation and licensing process. "There are not a lot of easily licensable facilities in poor communities," Whelan says.

Some centers blame a city manpower shortage. "The fire department takes two months to authorize [safety systems]," says Jan Berry of Chicago Youth Centers, which runs 10 Head Start sites. One of the organization's two sites scheduled to open in September is licensed.

More than \$3 million in federal

*Dana Phillips is a graduate student at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University.*

funds has been spent on renovation since the transfer began, according to city records.

Catholic Charities, for example, received \$59,000 to renovate the American Indian Center, 1630 W. Wilson, which was scheduled to serve 34 children as of last September, reports Cynthia Williams, the agency's director of early childhood education. But the lowest bid for the work was about \$97,000, Williams says.

After failing to raise enough money for the renovation, the organization found another site nearby that did not need as much work. That site is being renovated, and Williams hopes it will be licensed in a couple of months.

## Wasted money?

Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE), a school reform group, objects to the money and time being spent on renovation. The renovation money, says PURE director Joy Noven, exceeds the amount the Board of Education needed to maintain its programs.

However, renovation money cannot be used for operating expenses, which the federal government funds from different accounts. New Head Start operators are eligible for \$50,000 to \$100,000 in start-up and renovation costs, says Sarah Greene, chief operating officer of the National Head Start Association. These funds are not available to existing operators, she says.

The city has begun reviewing proposals for private centers to open in September 1993, says Whelan of DHS, declining to say when final decisions will be made. But the city also is considering the School Board's request to keep its remaining Head Start programs.

One consideration is "whether or not the Chicago public schools have the capacity to manage the program at its reduced size and the capacity to meet new Head Start standards," says Whelan.

"We're very happy that at least there is some discussion," says Velma Thomas, the board's director of early childhood education. ■

## LSCs finally have own organization

Three years in the making, the Chicago Association of Local School Councils (CALSC) has been launched with grants from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and Woods Charitable Trusts.

An outgrowth of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform, its goals are to bring LSC members together so they can learn from each other, to provide referrals and information, to help LSCs gain the skills and knowledge to better govern their schools and to speak on their behalf and support their positions.

"LSCs have to be able to communicate with each other and be one, strong voice if reform is to move to the next level," says Sheila R. Castillo, the association's coordinator, who was formerly a consultant with the Economic Development Commission. "Right now, most are isolated and don't know what other councils are doing."

Two projects are now in the works: (1) A survey to find out LSC members' interests and needs and how CALSC can assist them. (2) A June 12 workshop for councils to meet and talk to each other about ways to restructure schools.

CALSC offices are at 228 S. Wabash, 6th floor, Chicago, Ill. 60604. Its phone is (312) 663-3863. ■

Debra Williams

O'MALLEY continued from page 20

socially maladjusted and violent students. These schools would provide a way back into the community for these troubled and troubling youths. There should be a new and bold curriculum to challenge these students.

We teachers have long known the negative effects of criminal activity on the learning environment. Even common sense tells us that schools as places of terror cannot be real schools. We must provide safe and secure schools for our children. Educators who fail in this basic duty fail as educators. ■

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**Catalyst**  
VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

# Bright Ideas

## Science meets writing at Carroll

Last year, Melissa Paz, an eighth-grader at Carroll School, didn't care much for science. Now she enjoys it so much that she plans to attend the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. And this year, for the first time, she was chosen to compete in the District 10 science fair.

Paz is one of a number of students at the Ashburn school who are involved in a new investigative science program that emphasizes critical thinking. Says Paz, "We have to do a lot of writing and research, but I enjoy it."

The school uses science textbooks as the foundation, explains Laurence Johnson, a former classroom teacher who now coordinates the program as a science resource teacher. "We simply enhance the curriculum that is being taught with additional assignments that require in-depth research and writing." For example, students have written reports on the respiratory system, the chambers of the heart and the physical effects of drug abuse.

Children also conduct experiments—for instance, to discover why tomatoes turn red when they're ripe and why bal-



TONY GETSUG

Science resource teacher Laurence Johnson demonstrates a chemical reaction to sixth-graders at Carroll.

loons make loud popping sounds when they burst.

Launched in September, the program aims to raise students' scores on the science portion of the IGAP test, as well as meet a school goal to raise student proficiency in writing, says Principal Angelena Smith. Fourth- through eighth-graders from Carroll and its branch school,

Rosenwald, participate in the program. Next year, the school hopes to include first- through third-graders.

For hands-on work, Johnson buys science materials with state Chapter 1 funds, or borrows materials free of charge from the Field Museum and other institutions. He then pre-tests experiments before training other teachers.

"Most of the work involved in science is preparation," he says. "Teachers already have a big work load so I do the preparation and show them how they can use the information in their classrooms."

The school has no hard data on student progress yet, but Johnson says the program has helped conquer students' and teachers' fear of science.

In a second component of the program, Johnson works with a group of 15 children for about 40 minutes twice a week. Students in the group have been recommended by teachers or have shown, on their own, an interest in tackling more hands-on science. "Students select a project early in the year, and they work on it throughout the year," says Smith.

"In their research writing, we show all our children that there are certain steps to follow. They have to know about theories and hypotheses. In this year's science fair, they knew what they were doing. They didn't just demonstrate an experiment. They did very thorough research," says Johnson.

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