

Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM



JOHN BOOZ

The Chicago Teachers Union, under the leadership of President Jacqueline Vaughn, agrees to a contract that, for the first time, eases work rules. For this and related stories, see *Updates*, page 25.

Districts take on more debt than Chicago

by Molly Dunn and Lorraine Forte

Eighty-four Illinois school districts have borrowed more money, on a per-pupil basis, than Chicago proposes to do with its \$400 million bond and loan package, according to a *CATALYST* analysis of working cash bond sales for 1989-90 through 1991-92 (the latest data available).

In these districts, bond debt ranged from \$1,003 to \$4,304 per pupil. Under Chicago's proposed borrowing package, total per-pupil debt would be roughly \$1,000.

Chicago's plan calls for the School Finance Authority to sell about \$300 million in bonds, which amounts to about \$730 per pupil, and for the Board of Education to borrow \$110 million

See **UPDATES/DEBT** page 30

The New Extended Family: Collaborating for kids' sake

Organizers seize reform's moment

by Dan Weissmann and Michael Selinker

The Chicago School Reform Act gave community organizing groups like the Northwest Austin Council new opportunities to get involved with schools. Almost four years into reform, president Leola Spann was drowning in those opportunities.

As Chicago's school funding crisis steamrolled through September, Spann was juggling four school-related tasks. Her group was developing plans to boycott the lottery as a protest against the lack of state support for keeping schools open. She reluctantly was helping to arrange alternative school sites, even though she feared that would reduce pressure on politicians to keep schools open. She was trying to attend to a key reform responsibility, recruiting candidates for local school council elections. And somewhere along the way, she had to pay attention to a major local educational project, the restructuring of Austin Community Academy.

"We seem to always have so many crises, you can't always focus on what you need to be focusing on," says Spann. "Just when you've got a good principal in Austin High School, you've got [new coalitions like] the Chicago Cluster Initiative and the West Side Health Authority working out there, now we've got to revamp our focus—on

just getting the schools open."

The current crisis is more than a distraction; it's sapped people's desire to get involved in education at all. The LSC candidate training session conducted by the Northwest Austin Council attracted just 13 people. "People have said to me constantly, 'Can you assure me schools are going to open? Why should I get involved if you can't even tell me that?'" Spann says. "I tried to have a rally—you'd think at least you

"You can't do effective community organizing without the participation and involvement of quote-unquote 'gangs.'"

Nolan Shaw, seminary student

See story on page 6.

could pull 75 or 100 people out—but no turnout. People's minds are too preoccupied with the schools opening, so we have to work twice as hard."

That hard work, by the Northwest Austin Council and dozens of community organizations like it, is a key link in building a comprehensive set of supports for the city's children. Like gov-

See **ORGANIZERS** page 4

In This Issue: Wrapping things up

In our September issue, the cover article stated: "The chances are that teachers will return to school with their seniority rights only slightly altered and with more money, if not this year, then next. But they likely will be putting in more hours. Further, the work force will be reduced through attrition, and all employees will contribute to health insurance premiums."

No, we didn't have a crystal ball; that picture was simply the one that emerged from background talks with individuals close to the negotiations. So if that's how the situation looked in mid-August, when *CATALYST* went to press, why did it take the Chicago Teachers Union and the Board of Education so long to agree officially?

The union contends the School Board refused until early October to give on the issues of class size and compensation for requiring school staff to work an extra week in 1994-95.

But the board contends the union controlled the pace of negotiations, often refusing to come up with counter-proposals. "The union did not want to end negotiations a minute earlier than they did," says board member Stephen Ballis, conceding that the strategy produced more for the union than an early settlement likely would have produced.

In the end, the union agreed to class-size increases for one semester only, and got salary extensions, which count toward pensions, rather than stipends, which don't, for the extra week of work. (For other details, see story on page 30.)

So who won? Given the school system's financial bind, both sides can claim some success. Teachers ended up with more money; the board got some work rule changes that are important to schools. And the school system now faces a deficit of *only* \$300 million for 1995-96 instead of the \$500 million that had been forecast by consultants Booz Allen & Hamilton.

The only clear losers are the kids, who will continue

to suffer until the state begins funding its schools equitably and adequately.

Meanwhile, new contracts with the maintenance unions will allow schools to remain open after the regular school day without paying overtime to maintenance staff. That gives new impetus to a group of youth agencies that would like to establish outposts in schools.

Convened by Deputy Mayor for Education Leonard Dominguez, these groups, including the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago and Chicago Youth Centers, have tentatively linked up with 33 host schools, reports Michael Selinker, one of the lead authors in *CATALYST*'s three-part series, *The New Extended Family: Collaborating for Kids' Sake*.

CATALYST concludes the series this month with a look at the sometimes volatile relationships between community organizations and schools. As with the work of the citywide youth agencies, community-school partnerships could be strengthened by the new rules on keeping schools open.

But that's far from enough, according to three advocates who write in this issue's Opinions section. Carlos Azcoitia, principal of Spry Elementary School; Judy Langford Carter, executive director of the Family Resource Coalition; and Sokoni Karanja, president of Centers for New Horizons, set steep challenges for adults who want to meet the needs of children.



WORTH READING Several months ago, the Republican leader of the Illinois House proposed a pilot program of charter schools as a quid pro quo for helping resolve Chicago's school funding crisis. Since then, the proposal has faded away, but it's a good bet that charters will re-emerge in Springfield at some point.

To gear up for the debate, readers can turn to "Charter Schools: A New Breed of Public Schools," a 24-page special policy report written by R. Craig Sautter for the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. While presenting a generally positive view of charters, the report offers pertinent facts and clear explanations that both opponents and the undecided should appreciate as well. Contact: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1900 Spring Rd., Suite 300, Oak Brook, Ill. 60521-1480. Phone: (708) 571-4700. FAX: (708) 571-4716.

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Catalyst

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1993 Peter Lisagor Award, Best Newsletter.
1993 Distinguished Achievement Award,
Educational Press Association of America.

ORGANIZERS

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ernment agencies and schools (the other major participants in forming a new extended family), community groups are creating powerful partnerships; in fact, creating partnerships is what they do best.

CATALYST talked to dozens of organizers to learn how they try to help Chicago's children by working with local schools. Some such attempts include:

■ Organizing campaigns to force bureaucrats to heed children's needs, as when UNO (the United Neighborhood Organization) won the city's promise of five new schools to relieve overcrowding in Little Village.

■ Bringing new instructional approaches to schools, as when the Organization of the NorthEast brought its Partners in Learning math and science program to North Side schools that had not stressed these subjects.

■ Linking schools with government and private service providers, as when the Rogers Park Community Action Network helped to bring the Chicago Police Department's community policing meetings into neighborhood schools.

■ Providing legal expertise to schools, as when Chicago ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) went to housing court to get buildings demolished near South Side schools.

■ Pressuring elected officials to focus on children's needs, as when the Near North Development Corporation took parents to Springfield to talk to legislators about local reform successes.

The activities of community organizations in creating a new extended family take many forms, as many as there are groups to do it. For these groups, organizing around schools is imperative. "If community organizers aren't dealing with the schools, they've got their heads in the sand," says Todd Dietterle, who runs UNO's Southeast Side branch. "Because the first thing people are going to ask when they move to a neighborhood is, 'How are the schools here?'"

And for some areas, that's about all there is to ask. "A school is one of the few institutions we have left in low-income communities," says Madeline Talbott, executive director of ACORN's Chicago chapter. "You've got churches,



JOHN BOOZ

An LSC candidates' forum at Michelle Clark Middle School in Austin finds candidates addressing each other, mostly. Organizers found it harder than ever to get people involved in elections this year.

you've got schools, you've maybe got liquor stores; if even the supermarkets are leaving, you know you're in trouble. But the schools remain a community institution with tremendous potential."

Tapping that potential can require an approach that stands in stark contrast to the early years of Chicago community organizing. Though the legendary Saul Alinsky was once called "the country's leading hell-raiser," his successors often have to take a diplomatic tack.

When dealing with schools, says Talbott, organizers have to be "long on relationship-building and short on confrontation. We've certainly found that you don't confront the principal, you don't confront the teachers, you don't confront the parents, you don't confront the LSC. But that doesn't mean there isn't room for confrontation, if you need to get something done."

Academics first

Community organizations work with those four groups—principals, teachers, parents and LSCs—in distinctly different ways. Principals are often seen by community groups as key allies. But some principals find that community groups bring more than schools can absorb; for instance, Principal Jerry Johnson of McCorkle Elementary in the Robert Taylor Homes plans to eliminate several "worthwhile" community group-sponsored programs to focus more on academics.

At Einstein Elementary, Principal Phyllis Tate faced a similar decision

when a parent council from the neighboring Ida B. Wells housing project wanted her to help recruit children for a tutorial program then starting up at a community center. But Einstein already had similar programs, and Tate was too busy to attend planning meetings. Parent council members felt Tate was inaccessible, but Tate says her time must be spent on improving academics.

"The issue with community groups is that they view schools as places to access children for their programs," says Tate. "When you come in with social services, you take away time from instruction. At some point you do have to say no." Still, Tate has welcomed several programs teachers credit with improving discipline and achievement.

To further their own agendas, many community groups have targeted principals for dismissal, and some got what they wanted. UNO, for example, targeted a white principal at Little Village's Spry Elementary; critics charged that his replacement, Carlos Azcoitia, was chosen solely because he was Latino.

But time changes perceptions, says UNO Executive Director Daniel Solis. "That's the school where people said we'd done this terrible job, kicking out this great white principal," he recalls. Four years later, "Spry School is now supposed to be one of the better schools in the City of Chicago."

Elsewhere, the adversarial relationship between principals and community groups seems to be settling, too. "Six years ago, many principals saw us as the enemy," says the Logan Square Neighborhood Association's Nancy

Aardema. "There were a lot of stories in the papers about principals being asked to leave. I'd say that now, 90 percent of that has turned around, and we both have recognized how desperately we need each other."

Since teachers can't be removed as easily, community groups have less leverage with them. Some organizers see unsympathetic teachers as an entrenched opposition. "Some are cooperative, but many teachers have the attitude, 'I don't have the time,'" says Sokoni Karanja, president of the South Side group Centers for New Horizons. In his view, uncooperative teachers "create a barrier in schools."

To get around those kinds of barriers, ACORN is trying a new tactic in its campaign to encourage school restructuring in Englewood and North Lawndale. The group has hired a Chicago public school teacher, on leave from the Board of Education, to act as its liaison to teachers there. Talbott hopes that teachers will listen more intently to one of their own.

Parents, who have an automatic investment in better schools, often provide community groups' greatest strength. Emma Cabildo, a high school dropout and mother of three, has channeled her concern for her children into chairing the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council's Education Task Force, which is pressuring the School Board to build schools in Pilsen.

In tapping parents' strength, organizations help them develop themselves as well. Cabildo says working with Pilsen Neighbors has expanded her horizons. "When you're a housewife, you don't get a chance to get involved in almost anything. With this, I've met [Schools Supt.] Argie Johnson, I've met the mayor, I've met aldermen. Now, where is a normal, everyday housewife going to meet the alderman? Not at the Jewel."

A group like Pilsen Neighbors lets parents and school staff work together, which Cabildo appreciates. "We come to this meeting, and it's not The Administration and The Parents. They're people just like me."

Because LSCs have been given power to run schools, they are viewed by many community organizers as important partners in furthering the organizers' agendas. In Kenwood, for instance, the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO) has sought out LSCs near the controversial high-priced housing that KOCO and its partners are

developing in the depressed community.

"They're sending liaisons to LSC meetings," says Ron Sistrunk, who sits on the LSCs of Price Elementary and King High schools. "And they're saying, 'So when we've got this new *economic mix*—that's the buzzword, *economic mix*—you'd better get y'all's act together so these people don't feel like they have to send their kids out of the neighborhood to go to school. And you tell us what you need. Do you need a roof fixed? Let us apply some pressure for you.'"

Many community groups have promoted their own candidates for LSCs. For example, in the 1991 LSC elections, ACORN saw 87 of its members win seats.

"If community organizers aren't dealing with schools, they've got their heads in the sand."

—Todd Dietterle, *United Neighborhood Organization*

Community group involvement occasionally makes these elections a battlefield between rival groups. UNO and others have battled at Farragut Career Academy in Little Village. Its principal and most of the often combative LSC departed; 36 candidates vied for 10 seats, including 17 candidates for just two community representative seats.

But Farragut was an exception. In many places, getting people to run was much tougher than two years ago because of the school system's funding crisis. "People are telling us in droves that they don't want to have anything to do with this," Talbott reports. "We have a lot of incumbent LSC members who are walking off the job, and there's a long learning curve there. This just hurts us, it hurts us so much. People don't organize when they're hopeless."

For many organizers, hope may come from teamwork. Groups have become increasingly involved in coalitions, and there are even coalitions of coalitions. Austin, for instance, has recently seen the emergence of the West Side Health Authority, the Campaign for a Drug-Free West Side and the Garfield-Austin Network, which, in turn, are working with each other.

Battles over turf once were common on the West Side, says Bob Vondrasek,

director of a community group called the South Austin Coalition Community Council. But "out of desperation, I think, we've gotten over turf wars in the last six or seven years."

Jackie Kendall, president of the Midwest Academy, a local training center for organizers, notes that citywide, organizers have been teaming up more often recently. She points to a campaign to develop an affordable housing and jobs ordinance. More than 200 groups, most of them neighborhood based, have signed on as sponsors of the proposed ordinance.

Groups like Organization of the NorthEast and Pilsen Neighbors sent members to rallies at the mayor's office

and City Council chambers. Mayor Daley is offering an extra \$50 million for affordable housing next year if the groups drop the ordinance. But protesters weren't buying it, chanting, "The devil is in the details"; the activists are holding out for specifics.

Kendall suggests that there are limits to what organizations can do with schools without forming such broad coalitions. "You can't win on educational issues unless you can deal with the state Legislature and the mayor, and you can't do that without getting outside the neighborhood," Kendall says.

Getting outside the neighborhood often means crossing ideological as well as geographical boundaries. Each community group, she says, needs to consider other groups' points of view if they are to help provide Chicago's children a new extended family.

"There's no one right way to do anything; otherwise, we just close ourselves off to all kinds of opportunities," says Kendall. "What's good is what works." ■

Dan Weissmann is a contributing editor of CATALYST. Michael Selinker is writing a history of the Chicago Cluster Initiative. CATALYST Managing Editor Lorraine Forte and former intern Carrie Skibba contributed to this article.

Groups aim to put street gangs on better path

by Dan Weissmann

21st Century Vote captured media attention by bringing thousands of reputed gang members into the Loop to demonstrate against the school funding crisis; the group said it was bringing members of “street nations” into mainstream political life.

But 21st Century Vote is not alone in working openly with gang members. Several other community groups, as well as coalitions that include police, religious leaders and veteran politicians, are doing it, too, only more quietly. Some hope to change the roles gangs play in their communities; others are trying to connect gang members with “daytime” institutions like schools, GED programs, social services and job-training programs.

With 119 Chicago murders and a major role in drug sales attributed to gang-related activity in 1992 alone, this is, understandably, a controversial approach. But those who work with gangs and gang members say that they are trying to change the destructive behavior of these street organizations.

■ At Cabrini-Green, veteran community organizers are working with gang leaders to maintain a truce that is now a year old;

■ On the South Side, a retired police officer has organized a coalition that includes police commanders, religious leaders, public officials, politicians, community leaders and gang leaders;

■ In Little Village, UNO (United Neighborhood Organization) hopes that a joint police-University of Chicago project will help prevent gang-related turf disputes from turning the neighborhood's first new school in years into a battlefield;

■ At two West Side high schools, parent and community groups worked with gang leaders who came to speak to students in the hopes of making the schools safer.



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21st Century Vote packs the Loop.

“You can’t do effective community organizing without the participation and involvement of quote-unquote ‘gangs,’” claims McCormick Theological Seminary student Nolan Shaw. “They are key players in the community.”

For almost 18 months, Shaw worked with the Gang Intervention Task Force for the Chicago Initiative, a \$4.4 million urban superfund spearheaded by the Chicago Community Trust and the United Way. The task force funded programs, including some run by community organizations, that worked directly with gangs to defuse violence in several Chicago communities.

Although organizers generally don’t welcome gangs as potential allies, they recognize that as organizations, they are a force to be reckoned with and that they are strong competition.

“I think that gangs have organized the community very well,” laments Sokoni Karanja, director of Centers for New Horizons. “The real problem is that the gangs have a product, and we don’t: They are selling safety, camaraderie, employment, a group that shares a set of values—all the things that teenagers look for.”

In some communities, gangs may

provide the tightest knit of extended families. “Before 1970 or so, kids usually had other things in their lives besides gangs,” says Daniel Swopes, director of BUILD, a gang-prevention and intervention agency. “Before, kids didn’t see the gang as the total family. Now, that’s the first thing they say: This is my family.”

And sometimes gangs are, literally, families. Officer Gene Schleder from the West Side’s 10th Police District notes that the Latin Kings have been around so long that “a lot of the time, when you take a kid home, you’re taking him home to a father who’s a Latin King.”

Clearly, gangs make a difficult target for community groups. “If it were Us against Them, then We’d be dead,” says Todd Dietterle of UNO of Southeast Chicago. In a city where a police force with more than 11,000 members can’t stop the gangs, “What’s a community organization going to do?” he asks.

But if gangs can’t be beat, joining them can be problematic. It’s been tried. In the late 1960s, the Blackstone Rangers ran federal job training programs under the supervision of The Woodlawn Organization. Newspaper accounts of misused funds and the arrests of program workers on murder and rape charges led

the government and TWO to dump the Rangers in a hurry. The split reportedly left both sides feeling burned, and it contributed to the transformation of the Rangers into the notorious El Rukn drug operation.

Today, some organizations and coalitions walk a line, hoping that they can effectively fight the violence and the drugs without fighting the gangs themselves.

Some 20 years ago, recalls director Marion Stamps, the Tranquility Marksman Memorial Organization won one of its first victories, the construction and staffing of Soujourner Truth School in the Near North Side Cabrini-Green housing projects.

Tranquility Marksman is now one of nine organizations in six communities funded by the Chicago Initiative's Gang Intervention Task Force. By meeting with leaders of gang "nations" once a week for conflict-resolution sessions, its staff help maintain the truce that has held at Cabrini for a year now.

So far, their efforts seem to be paying off. Even Chicago Housing Authority security chief—and former Chicago Police Superintendent—LeRoy Martin credits the truce among gang leaders for the drop in crime at Cabrini-Green. Although Martin believes that the increased police presence at Cabrini was a catalyst for the peace, "The police, as a whole, have very little impact. The truce, regardless of what we think of it, is

responsible for the decrease in crime."

Tranquility Marksman's staff use the opportunity of the conflict-resolution sessions to offer leadership seminars; they engage the negotiators in discussions on topics from local government structures like local school councils and CHA local advisory committees to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Says director Stamps, "We tell the brothers, 'You can't lead if you don't know.'"

Stamps isn't happy that the end of the violence has not brought the end of the drug trade, but she isn't surprised either. "I understand that the only economic base in our community is selling drugs," says Stamps. "And if those brothers wanted to stop selling drugs today, it ain't that easy, right?"

In fact, some kids did try it. Shortly after the truce began, says Tranquility Marksman organizer Khalid London, the groups who controlled the drug trade at two Cabrini-Green buildings suspended operations. "Those kids stopped their livelihoods, and nobody came forth with any high-powered jobs for them," he says. "They'd come to me and say, 'Khalid, we quit selling drugs. Can you get us some jobs?'" But there were no jobs to be got, and the kids went back to dealing.

Tranquility Marksman also runs prevention programs—activities for kids who aren't involved with gang nations—that were designed with the

economic realities of the neighborhood in mind: Kids who participate get a stipend of \$5 an hour.

PACT's deal for kids

Meanwhile, on the South Side, an unusually broad coalition has come together. Led by retired police officer Howard Saffold, the Positive Anti-Crime Thrust (PACT) brings together gang leaders, community groups, religious leaders, police and educational institutions to try to find ways for members of street nations to get into education and job programs.

Saffold believes that most gang-affiliated young people will, given an alternative, swear off crime, but he says that they "will not ever divorce themselves from being identified with the family or nation they belong to. And there's no need for them to do that; there's no need.

"As a man 50 years old," he says, "I still identify with the people I was in a gang with when I was 14 years old. By the grace of God, I spent 25 years on the police force instead of in the state penitentiary—because someone did for me what I'm trying to do for these kids."

So far, PACT has succeeded in placing some young people in alternative school programs, but Saffold hopes to set up a more ambitious program with City Colleges. Under PACT's supervi-

21st Century Vote raises plenty of questions

The media have focused on what they are," says Janette Wilson, executive director of Operation PUSH. "What have they done wrong? They've participated in some marches, and they've brought some people downtown."

"They" are 21st Century Vote, a political organization that reaches out to gang members.

For Pat Hill, president of the African American Police League, 21st Century's relationships with gangs is a non-issue; the League was one of several groups that marched with 21st Century Oct. 12, protesting the school funding crunch, she says, because "even police officers have families. The point is that we have a crisis, and nobody's doing anything to resolve it."

Some black politicians are supporting 21st Century Vote, looking for help in defeating Mayor Daley in the next elections, observes Elce Redmond, director of the Northwest Austin Council.

"You've got to ask," he says, "What are they [gangs] going to want in return? Chances are, it's going to be something that may not be beneficial to the community."

Most of 21st Century Vote's demonstrators refused to talk with reporters. One exception was Billie House of Chicago Lawn, who works for Cook County Hospital and has two grown, employed children. She heard about the group on the radio and went to meet its leaders. She was impressed.

"I feel that they're doing something positive for our children," she says,

"because right now, they don't have no future. Right now, look at them. They don't have no life."

Administrators at Englewood Tech-Prep Academy, where 21st Century spokesman Jerry Washington sits on the LSC, say they strongly support the group in embracing "street organizations" and in giving its members legitimate roles in a society that offers them so many destructive ones.

"I think gang members have a right to vote and protest just like anybody else," says parent organizer Bernie Noven. "Well, not when they're breaking the law and killing people—but then our regular politicians are breaking the law and killing people all the time. So I don't know why we have a different standard." *Dan Weissmann*

sion, members of gang nations could enter the schools' regular programs. "I'm setting the stage for them to come in un-labeled," says Saffold.

PACT started life in 1979 as the educational outreach arm of the African American Police League, when Saffold was at the league's helm. When he and other PACT leaders were recruited into Mayor Harold Washington's administration, PACT faded away, re-emerging two years ago when Saffold retired from the police force.

Although PACT is committed to working with members of street nations, police involvement means that it will be less than tolerant of criminal behavior. "Individuals who want to change their lives, we'll do anything and everything we can to help them change their lives," says Austin Police District Cmdr. LeRoy O'Shields, a partner in PACT. "Individuals who commit crimes will be arrested."

And in Little Village, a Police Department program emphasizes reducing violence over putting kids in jail. For instance, police officers helped set up open-gym basketball at a local

park for leaders of one local gang two nights a week.

Some people might object to this kind of cozy relationship, but "if you look at the time these guys are in the gym, nothing is happening on the streets," says Officer Gene Schleder, one of two plainclothes police officers who work in the Gang Violence Reduction Program. "I don't think the [rival Latin] Kings know about it," he says. "We're trying to set something up for the Kings at St. Agatha's."

Using 'street workers'

The two officers work with four street workers who are former gang leaders; these workers have credibility among the older, hard-core gang members the project aims to reach. The streetworkers were hired by University of Chicago Professor Irving Spergel, a long-time academic authority on gangs, who oversees the project, a federally-funded collaboration between the university and the police department.

The street workers form relation-

ships with gang members and help those who are interested seek out jobs, get back into school, or hook up with social services. Street workers also help police by, say, steering them to the right group to question when violence breaks out.

The project also has ties to traditional community-organizing efforts, joining UNO in a local coalition.

The prospect of possible gang violence casts a shadow on one of UNO's biggest recent victories: the city's promise of five new schools for Little Village. The territories of rival gangs abut each other at the site of the first school. UNO organizer Juan Rangel hopes that the cops and the street workers can get the rivals to help make the school a safe place.

Even organizers who don't see gangs as legitimate organizations have tried working with them recently. "I have very strong feelings about gangs," says James Deanes of the Parent/Community Council. "I think they should be annihilated. But I realize that if we don't have

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Police station becomes recreation center

Police Commander LeRoy O'Shields of the West Side 15th District is pursuing a new tactic to fight gangs. In partnership with Wright Community College, the 15th District conducts after-school and Saturday classes in subjects ranging from math to martial arts to sewing to sign language.

If gangs fill certain needs for many kids, says O'Shields, then "we need to satiate those needs with positive activities."

About 50 kids come to after-school classes at the 15th District each day, and dozens more attend Saturday programs at Wright College. Called Positive Alternatives, the program attempts to knit a legal new extended family for kids by bringing the police department together with city colleges, churches, community organizations, schools and the park district.

"Positive Alternatives is not a kiddie program," says O'Shields. "It is a tactic. It is a police tool that we use to reach a targeted group who are constantly

given the opportunity to go into gangs and to use drugs."

So far, he says, the tactic has been effective, with youth crimes and truancy both reduced in the district since Positive Alternatives began in 1989.

Positive Alternatives is funded by Wright College's Adult and Continuing Education division, where Dean Sally Schwyn is O'Shields's partner against crime. It costs about \$100,000 a year to run the program in both the 15th and 14th districts. The money comes from fees that Schwyn's other programs charge, a source of income that most other city colleges lack; Wright sits in the mostly middle-class Northwest Side, where residents can afford to pay for computer, craft and other non-credit courses.

"In order to make this work across the city, it probably does need some extra funding, but it's not an expensive program," says Schwyn. "It's probably the most cost-effective thing going on in the city."

As important as money, says

Schwyn, is the enthusiasm of those running the program. "You could put a million dollars in it, and if the people involved weren't fully committed, it would never work," she explains.

In fact, Positive Alternatives has already gotten attention that a million dollars couldn't buy. Schwyn and O'Shields were one of two groups presenting youth programs to a Congressional committee in September; the other one was former President Jimmy Carter's Atlanta Project, which started with a nest egg of \$26 million.

Even so, Schwyn concedes that money is key. This fall, hundreds of parents tried to register their children for Positive Alternatives after all the slots had been filled, she reports. And even within those limits, the program's resources are taxed to their limit: the 15th Precinct's neighborhood relations staff work 80-hour weeks to keep Positive Alternatives going, and senior Wright College officials have had to shield the program from cuts in the school's budget. *Dan Weissmann*

Culture gap, isolation hinder agency efforts



by Rick Asa

For more than a century, West Town, a largely Hispanic community on the Near Northwest Side, has been a port of entry. By 1900, Italian, Polish and Irish immigrants had found their first homes among the first tenements built in the shadow of a growing skyline just to the east.

Erie House, a settlement agency, was created in 1871 to help the new Americans cope with the difficult transition. Over time, many other social service agencies joined the cause. For example, Daniel "Moose" Brindisi, legendary for working for and with young people, founded the Near Northwest Civic Committee, a West Town social center. From 1940 until his death last summer, he ran the city's oldest anti-gang program. The organization still owns and runs a summer camp.

Today, more than a dozen agencies and settlement houses offer services—including housing and employment assistance, educational programs, health care, arts and recreation—to a new wave of immigrants from Mexico and Puerto Rico, all looking for the same opportunity Europeans wanted at the turn of the century.

Their challenge is greater, though, for it's a different economy that confronts today's newcomers, one in which formal

education is more important for success. The social climate has changed, too. Violent gangs selling drugs and trouble walk many West Town streets, offering an enticing form of extended family and sense of community to disenfranchised youths who see nothing ahead but more poverty and hopelessness.

A majority of West Town's Hispanic adults are working poor, supporting families with low-wage jobs; another 31 percent live below the poverty line; 70 percent never finished high school. About 40 percent have no health insurance.

The statistics for younger residents are just as alarming. At Wells High School, the dropout rate exceeds 70 percent. West Town has the second highest teen birth rate in the city. Lead poisoning and obesity in children are common, and about 25 percent of preschool children show signs of poor nutrition. The community has 5,000 children aged 3 to 5 yet only 1,600 publicly-funded preschool seats.

Here and there, monied whites have spruced up West Town by rehabbing old tenements and spurring economic development, but such gentrification has been a blow to those in need, forcing up rents, obliterating old, low-cost buildings and increasing racial tension.

Not a parent priority

Struggling simply to survive this hostile world, many parents don't see education as a high priority. Many find schools intimidating or believe that teachers are the experts who alone will shape their children's futures.

"We have many community organizations working here, but we still need to close the parent information and education gap," says Carmen Martinez, acting principal of Wells High School. "Often, Hispanic parents separate themselves from the learning cycle of the child early on. The kids are expected to be adults. Parents think by pro-

viding basic needs, that's enough, that the teachers know best, that they're the experts. Well, not all the time."

"It's so important, especially for the Latino parents, to know they have a voice," agrees Rosa Alfanzador, coordinator of the after-school program at Association House. "Many don't speak English, and they just take what they can get and are grateful for it."

Connecting schools, parents

In an attempt to connect parents with their children's school, Erie House and Otis Elementary launched Project Smart Kid eight years ago. Erie House picked students up from school and took them to the agency for recreation and a tutoring period. Parents were required to participate in a number of ways, including attending a training session to help their children succeed in school.

"That really changed the attitude of many parents very quickly," says Principal James Cosme. "It really helped us get parents involved, and when school reform came, parents were willing to get involved in the council."

After five years, the funding for Project Smart Kid was cut, but Erie House still picks kids up for after-school programs and maintains a liaison with teachers, helping families who feel intimidated or can't get to school. Teachers, in turn, have made generous donations, including money and clothes, to Erie House.

At Burr Elementary, the Near Northwest Neighborhood Network recently conducted a workshop to help parents run for the local school council and understand how they function. "We provide the place and the mailing list, so to speak, and they come in and conduct a meeting to help us run the elections," explains Principal Scott Rzechula, whose Polish grandparents settled in a West Town tenement.

While parent involvement is a primary focus of West Town's community agencies, their school programs take many shapes.

For example, with money from the Polk Brothers Foundation, Association House "adopted" Burr Elementary School's Class of '92 under the national "I Have a Dream Program." So far, the investment has paid off: the students' scores on the Illinois Goals



Mitchell School students painted a "Tree of Knowledge" for a self-storage business owner John Doe (at left), after he contacted Debbie Both at Onward House, an agency that works with the school.

Assessment Program's reading test soared 80 points between sixth and eighth grade, making them the highest-ranking predominantly Hispanic class in the state, reports Rzechula. "We called them 'Los Animales' before the program," he recalls. "They were an absolute zoo."

At the high school level, three agencies—Northeastern Illinois University, Network for Youth Services and Northwestern University Settlement—teamed up for a program that identifies students at risk of dropping out while they are still in grade school and then channels them into a special program at Wells High that includes close monitoring and student incentives.

Agency moves into school

At Clemente High, ASPIRA, a national organization that focuses on Hispanic youth leadership development, opened an office that serves as an in-school counseling center for students who need help and guidance. ASPIRA started the program at the invitation of the local school council.

Aida Sanchez, director of ASPIRA Illinois, says school reform has formalized relationships between community organizations and schools, helping to define how each can help the other. "The relationship is different from school to school, depending on how we are perceived," she adds. "Some think

we are competing with them."

Talcott Elementary is one place where the school and a community agency are at odds. Emerson House has tried to provide support services inside the school but has been rebuffed, according to Wanda Hopkins, community relations coordinator.

Emerson, for example, applied for a grant that would have given Talcott parents a stipend to learn about the School Reform Act, but the school would not support it, telling a foundation the agency did not work well with the school, says Hopkins.

Emerson House then stepped up efforts to recruit candidates for the 1993 local school council election. "We want to educate the parents on a better way to educate their kids and make sure they know the school has to have a vision," Hopkins says.

Talcott Principal Marcella Richman, who has run the school for decades, refused repeated *CATALYST* requests for an interview, which Hopkins contends is indicative of the school's closed-door stance. Requests through the council secretary for an interview with the council chairperson also went unanswered.

"There's no trust between Emerson House and the school, whether there are reasons for it or not, and the end result is to the detriment of the kids," says Javier Roman, a council member who works with the Boys' Club in West Town. "Could the school be more sensitive to the needs of the community? Probably."

Roman concedes that council members' attendance is poor and says that the school has done little to educate members on the School Reform Act or to promote involvement by the community as a whole.

"They need a mediator at Talcott so they know how to work together," says Edalia Fernandez, a 30-year West Town resident who does community outreach for Mitchell School.

Program 'exploding'

While the Talcott-Emerson House impasse is an exception, collaboration in West Town suffers from fragmentation. Typically, local agencies have formed close alliances with only the nearest schools and without an overall strategy for West Town's needy population.

But in recent months, directors of West Town agencies have tried to think more globally, meeting regularly to explore ways to share information and refer clients to each other.

Those meetings led to a proposal to the Chicago Community Trust, which agreed to establish a Youth Options Unlimited (YOU) program to fund coordinated activities. As a result, agencies have added bilingual staff, who have improved outreach to the community and schools.

A new community catalog gives details on 50 different services and activities, ranging from tutoring to martial arts. And a school bus picks up children at any of the 10 participating agencies and takes them to the agency that has the program they want, thus sparing them from walks through unknown or gang territory.

"Our program is exploding," reports John Anderson, the YOU coordinator at Northwestern University Settlement. "From our perspective, YOU brings kids back to school. One dropped out of Wells and went back just to be part of YOU"

The goal, says Bonnie Capaul, YOU's assistant program director, is to create a mechanism for schools to identify kids' desires and needs and then to "plug them into" the appropriate agencies. "Part of our aim is to broaden kids' horizons," she says, "and schools can't always do that. But we have other resources that can." ■

Rick Asa is a Chicago writer who lives in West Town.

Centro sin Fronteras: Political power for whom?

Eileen Camacho, who taught at Kosciuszko Elementary School for 11 years, vividly recalls the campaign waged by political activists Emma Lozano and Walter "Slim" Coleman for the first local school council election.

"I still don't know where they found these little old Polish men who literally had to be walked to the school to vote," says Camacho, a teacher member of Kosciuszko's first council.

At the time, Centro sin Fronteras (Center without Boundaries), a community organization Lozano and Coleman started just down the street from Kosciuszko, was only two years old. But, by all accounts, the territory was wide open, with no other political action groups around. And Coleman was a seasoned community organizer; for example, he spearheaded organization of the Heart of Uptown Coalition, which helped elect Harold Washington mayor.

Lozano had become an activist more recently, following the 1983 murder of her brother Rudy, who was a labor leader and well-known activist in Little Village and Pilsen. Like Coleman, she views Chicago's power structure—the Daley clan in particular—with contempt.

The results of their first council campaign were impressive; the Centro sin Fronteras slate, which included Lozano, spurred the highest voter turnout among city schools. Two years later, Coleman ran for one of the two community slots on the Kosciuszko council and won. Lozano has served as council chair from the outset; Coleman is chair of the District 3 Instruction Committee.

The two believe that community organizing and school reform go hand in hand.

"It takes the whole community to educate a child, not just the school," Lozano explains. "We have to have a civic organization to keep those in political positions accountable. That way the community comes to a consensus and can say, 'This is what the community really wants.' It's a mechanism to keep them honest."

But in the eyes of Camacho and

other teachers who feel they were forced out of Kosciuszko, Lozano is seeking political power more for herself than for the community.

"In the Hispanic community, there is a fine line between children, education and politics," says Camacho, who has long been active in the Citizens Schools Committee, was Kosciuszko's Chicago Teachers Union delegate and is now a field representative for the CTU.

"Many Hispanic politicians begin in the education field," she continues. "Emma Lozano wanted a political base, but what we still have is a community



DOROTHY PERRY

LSC chair Emma Lozano outside the Rudy Lozano Bilingual and International Center.

of parents who really aren't informed. It was a forgotten, blighted neighborhood with no organization, and they sought it out."

Lozano dismisses her critics as "dinosaurs" who want to protect their turf and avoid the changes that reform brings.

Working through their local school council and community organization, Lozano and Coleman have made significant changes in and around Kosciuszko.

The council forced out the principal and hired a new one. It signed the school up for the Algebra Project; staff initially resisted this instructional mandate, but math test scores have risen significantly. The council also converted Kosciuszko into the Rudy Lozano Bilingual and International Center. The goal is to make all students bilingual in Spanish and English, but some critics contend that for Spanish-speaking students, continued instruction in Spanish retards the development of English.

About a fourth of Kosciuszko's teaching staff has left since the council was formed. One teacher, David Avadek, filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission charging that the council dismissed his bid for principal because he is white.

Meanwhile, Centro sin Fronteras has organized campaigns to have all school children at Lozano immunized and tested for lead poisoning, a common problem in West Town. The organization currently has a campaign to test adults for tuberculosis. A nurse from the city's Department of Health conducts tests every Thursday and returns on Saturdays to report results.

Centro sin Fronteras also has created a political process that is akin to placing propositions on the ballot. Every four months, all members of the community are invited to a meeting of the Community Rights Assembly to vote on propositions that have obtained signatures from at least 50 residents who are at least 16 years old. Adoption of the Algebra Project and conversion to a bilingual academy arose from such an assembly, Lozano says. Recently, a local landlord won backing for a request to the city to improve rat abatement.

"The main idea was to make sure the LSC did not work in isolation from the community, that you don't have a couple of individuals making all the decisions," explains Cathy Shanley, a Centro sin Fronteras volunteer. "They [the council] are part of the community and accountable to the community."

Camacho contends the community still blindly trusts the school—only now that trust resides in Lozano and the council rather than in the teachers who once "pretty much ran the school."

But Lozano gets a thumbs up from another outreach worker, one who shuns aggressive tactics. "Emma is different," says Eva Hernandez, community services director for the Erie Family Health Center. "But the community needs her approach, too."

Rick Asa

A losing battle brings shift in tactics



by Debra Williams

In August 1984, CBS-TV aired an hour-long documentary on troubled schools that stunned the residents of South Shore, a predominantly black, middle-class neighborhood located along Chicago's south lakefront.

"The Class of '84" showed their neighborhood high school, South Shore, to be in major trouble, with low academic standards and high truancy, course failure and dropout rates.

The next month, *The Chicago Reporter*, a highly regarded investigative journal that did legwork for the documentary, followed up with, "Education at South Shore High: A \$4.5 Million Flop."

"My son graduated from South Shore in 1976, and there were over 500 graduates," recalls Marie Cobb. "But when my niece graduated in 1984, there were only 167 graduates. I remember asking myself, 'Where are all the other kids?'"

The answer, she learned from TV, was: on the streets or attending schools outside the neighborhood.

What followed in South Shore was a campaign, first, to overhaul the school from within and, when that failed, to oust the school's long-time principal, William Marshall. That failed, too, but

Cobb and other activists did not give up on schools. Today, their organization, the Coalition to Improve Education in South Shore (CIESS), offers help to South Shore's elementary schools in restructuring themselves. And with Marshall taking early retirement in August, they have renewed hope for involvement with South Shore High.

After viewing the 1984 documentary, Cobb began to inform other community residents of the troubles at South Shore High, and a number of them became part of the school's local school improvement council, an advisory body.

At the same time, Steven Perkins, a community activist who owned property along 71st Street, South Shore's major commercial strip, invited local business people to a meeting in his living room to talk about the high school. The group included representatives from The Woodlawn Organization, South Shore Bank and the Neighborhood Institute.

"What happens to schools affects the community. And I was really concerned," Perkins recalls.

Eventually, Cobb's and Perkins' groups discovered they shared the same concerns; for the next year and a half, they collected data on the school, picketed outside the school and tried to organize parents to demand changes. But Marshall closed them out. "He really tied our hands," says Cobb. "When gangs and drugs were coming into the school, he denied that these problems existed in the school. A call for increased security fell on deaf ears."

The activists then tried to get the central administration to remove Marshall. Failing there, too, they formed CIESS and adopted the goal of improving the quality of education in all South Shore schools. Their first activity was to push for school reform legislation that would make it easier to remove principals and make other changes at schools.

In the first local school council elec-

tion, one CIESS member won a community seat on the South Shore council. But the majority of the council supported Marshall.

"We found it difficult to organize parents of the students," explains Perkins. "You have to have access to alpha [alphabetical] lists to talk to parents, something we didn't have."

The council signed Marshall to a four-year contract, and CIESS changed its focus.

"We found that the elementary schools had the same kinds of problems as the high school," says Yvonne Kinnison, hired in 1992 as CIESS's project director. "They had an attendance problem, a high rate of mobility and unstable enrollment."

Help, not criticism

Initially, some of the schools were hesitant to work with CIESS because of its reputation as a "critical watchdog" at South Shore, she notes. "To get schools to work with us, we toned ourselves down and had to show schools we were there to help, not to criticize."

CIESS works with Bradwell, Bryn Mawr, Coles, Powell, Mann, Parkside, O'Keefe and Madison in South Shore and Revere in Greater Grand Crossing. It does not work with South Shore, but invites the school to workshops.

Like other community organizations, CIESS recruited and trained candidates for local school councils and helped arrange new programs for schools. For instance, CIESS introduced Powell School to the Wee Deliver Program, created by the U.S. Postal Service to promote reading and writing.

"We have a post office, a postmaster and mail sorters," says Powell's principal, J. Walter Smith. "We even gave our halls street names." Weekly, students write to students in other classes, a practice that progressive language arts teachers advocate as a way to engage kids.

"Most of the time, teachers and principals are not afraid of trying out new programs," says Kinnison. "It's that new programs mean prep time and time for testing and implementing. Teachers don't have a lot of time available. But most of the schools, if they are helped over the hurdles, are glad to have these programs."

But those efforts did not seem to be enough. "We began to take a look at the

Powell School's Patrick Turner (left) and Tiffany Clausell sort mail for delivery to classrooms as part of the "Wee Deliver" program, which encourages students to read and write through letter writing.



big picture and were asking ourselves, 'How can we make a bigger impact?'" says Perkins.

Through the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center, CIESS discovered the potential of restructuring schools through curriculum and staff development. It successfully applied to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for a \$50,000 grant to promote restructuring at six schools—Bryn Mawr, Madison, O'Keeffe, Parkside, Powell and Revere. MacArthur also funds the Quest Center.

For starters, CIESS picked up the tab for two teachers at each school to attend a Quest Center conference. It arranged for representatives of the schools to visit other schools undergoing restructuring, picking up the cost of substitute teachers that day. And it is continually on the lookout for extra resources.

Principal network

For Revere School, CIESS helped write a grant proposal for a program the school was interested in. Principal Dean Gustafson adds that CIESS members have attended almost all of the school's local school council meetings. And he applauds the group for arranging networking meetings for principals.

CIESS also is trying to form partnerships between schools and area businesses. "We ask businessmen, 'Can you buy a ream of paper for this school?' and then, 'What can our children do for you? Sweep in front of your store after school?'" explains Kinnison. "There are all kinds of collaborations between schools and communities that work."

While CIESS is making progress with South Shore's elementary schools, it is not sure what to do with the high school.

"We know that it is still not a great school and that improving the feeder schools will probably mean those kids will bypass South Shore and go on to better schools," says Perkins. "But there is hope, there is new leadership at the school and council elections are coming up."

Meanwhile, CIESS recently joined forces with other area organizations in a fight to retain a neighborhood recreational center threatened with closing. Formerly a YMCA facility, the center was being rehabbed by the Chicago

Park District, but there were signs the district might abandon the project.

One of the organizations petitioning the Park District to reopen the center is South Shore Neighbors United, which had been dormant since 1991. Forrest Marberry, a son of the organization's founder, Jan Oliver, is reviving it. His plans are to bring neighborhoods together, block by block, to deter crime, largely by serving the area's youths.

"Our young people are missing out," says Marberry. "We had a community—churches, schools, neighbors—when I was growing up. We want this generation to have that too."

"You know, I watched young people on my block when school was out, and there are no programs for them," says Diane Chandler, a member of South Shore Neighbors United. "They have nothing to do, so they hang out on the streets. These kids need summer programs and after-school programs."

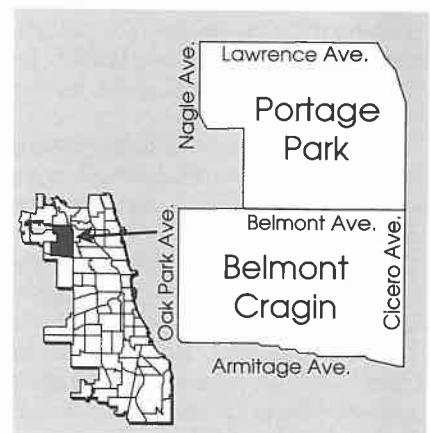
"It takes a whole community to help our children and our neighborhood," Cobb says. "A school community means teachers, parents, businesses and the community. If we don't walk these children through and everyone doesn't get involved, the streets will take them." ■

Taxpayers for reform

by Susan Klonsky

Wednesday night is Bingo Night for the Chicago Neighborhood Organizing Project (CNOP), whose base is in what columnist Mike Royko calls the "bungalow belt" on the Northwest Side. With 250 regulars, Bingo Night, held at a local community hall, means the rent for CNOP's storefront headquarters gets paid regardless of how its grant proposals fare at downtown foundations.

As the players streamed in one Wednesday in September, they got not just bingo cards but also newsletters reminding them of the deadlines for submitting applications to run for local school councils (LSCs). CNOP election flyers—some 12,000, printed in English, Spanish and Polish—were everywhere in the commercial areas of Portage Park,



Belmont-Cragin, Avondale, Hermosa and Irving Park. And the local *Leader* newspapers carried CNOP election ads, paid for by local savings institutions, gyros stands and funeral homes.

One issue that CNOP trumpeted was overcrowding at 29 elementary schools

in District 1 on the Far Northwest Side. Fundamentally, though, CNOP's appeal is to property owners—not parents—who want to make sure their tax dollars are well spent and that they get something in return for their money.

"The schools help protect property values," explains Norman Hodgson, a CNOP board member and parent member of the local school council at Sayre Language Academy. "As taxpayers, we're paying for the schools, and we should have a say-so in how they're being run."

During the lobbying that led to passage of the Chicago School Reform Act in 1988, CNOP called for equal numbers of parents and community representatives to serve on local school councils. The law provides, instead, for six parent members and two community members. Today some CNOP members believe that the group's Schools Committee has too many parent members and too few community representatives.

More local control

CNOP was founded in 1984 as the research and training arm of the Save Our Neighborhoods/Save Our City coalition, an alliance of community groups and churches that had formed two years earlier in white ethnic neighborhoods. The coalition worked primarily on home-owner issues, including utility rate controls and property tax reform. A major thrust was to prevent block-busting and white flight as racial housing patterns changed. For example, the coalition successfully lobbied for home equity insurance and a ban on "for sale" signs.

By 1987, the coalition began pushing for school reform that would bring greater local control. It was a founding member of Citizens United to Reform Education (CURE), which played a major role in shaping the Reform Act. By the fall of 1987, Save Our Neighborhoods/Save Our City obtained enough signatures to hold an advisory referendum on school reform in six mainly white, Northwest Side wards.

The proposition asked voters to say yea or nay to a decentralized school system with elected local school councils that would hire principals and teachers, control school operating budgets and design and implement comprehensive school improvement plans. More than 80 percent of voters said yes.

In their book *Kids First—Primero Los Ninos*, Charles L. Kyle and Edward R. Kantrowicz write, "SON/SOC touted this referendum as a last chance for the public schools. If it failed, they planned to ride the tax revolt of the eighties and seek a state law mandating voter approval before any tax increase for education could take effect."

Middle-class residents have a legitimate interest in quality public schools, says CNOP Co-Director Michael Smith, who takes issue with "those school reformers who said, 'I don't give a damn about the middle class. My only concern is for the poor.' Everybody has a stake."

While CNOP's focus is the Northwest Side, it often teams up with the Southwest Parish and Neighborhood Federation (for example, on the recent LSC election campaign), and the organization works with schools citywide.

"Through our parent education program, Working Together to Succeed in Schools, we're now in 10 percent of all Chicago public schools," says Executive Director Janet Hudolin-Gabin.

In this five-week program, parents and students compare learning styles and learn a range of study skills and "tricks"—like memory builders. According to CNOP, 72 percent of participating parents say their children do better on tests after graduating from the program.

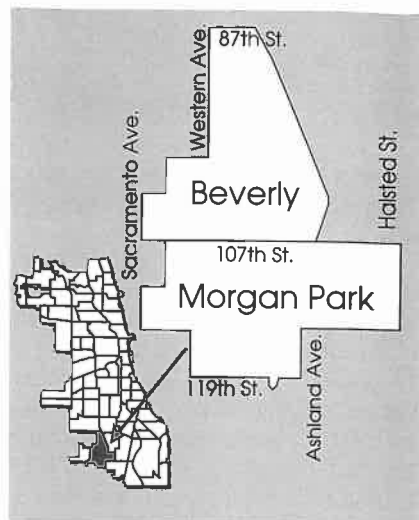
Supported by grants from 12 foundations, including a three-year grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the program is conducted in English, Spanish and Polish and is free to schools. "All we ask is that we can do classroom visits with the children and encourage their parents to register, and that the faculty attend orientation sessions," says Hudolin-Gabin.

With three full-time and 13 part-time trainers (mostly teachers), Working Together to Succeed in Schools is one of the city's most extensive parent education programs.

Though a member of an LSC, Norman Hodgson would like to see CNOP restore its former range of neighborhood issues. He describes CNOP as "a one-issue organization that would like to get back to its roots as a multi-issue community organization. But let's face it, in the last few years, all the money was there [in school reform]." ■

Susan Klonsky is a Chicago writer who has been active in school reform.

Promoting schools, integration



by Michael Klonsky

If you're shopping for a home in a middle- to upper-middle-class area of the city that is racially integrated and has good schools, you could end up in the sister neighborhoods of Beverly and Morgan Park. If you do, you will probably meet the Beverly Area Planning Association (BAPA), an organization that has been showing off the area's beautiful tree-lined streets and neighborhood schools for decades.

BAPA differs from most of the city's major community organizations in that it doesn't dwell on problems. Gangs exist at the neighborhood high school, Morgan Park, and drug abuse and teen pregnancy are problems locally, but they are not big issues for BAPA. Neither does BAPA see itself primarily as a service organization or as part of an "extended family" for area residents. As BAPA Director Sis Costello says, "The family structure in our community is doing just fine."

Nonetheless, the organization has sparked controversy. While its base is primarily white, BAPA has been the driving force behind the area's racial

integration. By encouraging whites to remain and steering both whites and blacks to integrated blocks, BAPA has ensured stable integration in the face of quick-buck artists fanning white flight. Not surprisingly, this success has brought BAPA both praise and enmity. The criticism comes not just from die-hard racists, but also from African Americans who contend BAPA has pulled its punches by ignoring race-related problems on its self-imposed borders.

Racial and religious conflicts have a long history in Beverly-Morgan Park. In the early 1900s, white Protestant settlers took over an area where Native American huts lined the ridges high above the emerging city. In the 1920s, hundreds of prospering, "lace-curtain" Irish-Catholic families left their working-class origins in places like Bridgeport and moved to Beverly-Morgan Park, where they jostled with the more established Protestants for community control. However, Catholics and Protestants found common ground in their resistance to racial integration; the area's two large Catholic parishes and its Protestant churches worked with the Democratic Party machinery to halt the spread of the black community at Vincennes Avenue, according to the book *Down from Equality* by Michael Homel.

Changes in attitude

When African Americans began moving west of Vincennes in the 1960s, many fearful white families moved out of Beverly-Morgan Park. But Costello, who grew up in a house across the street from Clissold School, and other long-time residents soon changed their attitudes instead of their addresses. "When I was growing up, there was more a feeling like we were a separate village—a sense of separate," she recalls. "With that separateness disappearing, we recognized some adjustments had to be made if our neighborhoods were going to survive. We convinced most that a change in attitude was necessary."

Morgan Park High School, which serves Morgan Park and Beverly, was and still is a focal point of racial tension.

In the 1930s, the Board of Education remedied severe overcrowding by creating branches of the high school at local elementary schools; it assigned whites



Sis Costello (left) and Adeline Ray of the Beverly Area Planning Association.

JOHN BOOZ

to all-white Clissold and blacks to all-black Shoop. According to Homel, black students at the then primarily white high school often suffered racial attacks and disrespect from the principal. Homel wrote that one school cheer began, "Nigger, nigger, pull the trigger." And a school administrator asked one black delegation seeking a fair remedy to overcrowding, "Isn't the real trouble out there due to the colored students being after the white girls?"

By 1970, the school's demographics had flipped. The school had become predominantly black, and whites feared they would be squeezed out. To preserve integration, the School Board initiated a program that limited the enrollment of nearby black students through a lottery and encouraged the enrollment of white students through special programs. Even so, white enrollment has declined to 6 percent currently.

At times, racial tension still pulses in and around Morgan Park High School. One such time was the 1990 decision by the newly elected local school council not to retain veteran Principal Walter Pilditch. Pilditch, who is white, sued the black members of the council, charging reverse racism. A jury found the four council members guilty, but a federal Appellate Court panel recently overturned that decision. (See *CATALYST*, October 1993.)

BAPA wasn't directly involved in the Pilditch case, but BAPA's president, Robert Berghoff, was Pilditch's attorney, and Pilditch himself is a long-time member of BAPA. In the 1991 local school council election, BAPA gave unofficial support to a slate of candi-

dates, called CHAMP, who sought to unseat the anti-Pilditch LSC members. CHAMP won handily, and only one anti-Pilditch incumbent, Calvin Pearce, was re-elected.

Pearce is one of BAPA's harshest critics. "Why are people from Beverly who won't send their own children to Morgan Park High School so bent on controlling it?" he asks.

BAPA was founded in 1947 as a typical, small community group that dealt with simple neighborhood needs, such as arranging city services, watchdogging zoning violations and mediating neighborhood quarrels. Like most community organizations on the Southwest (and Northwest) sides, BAPA worked to protect real estate values by steering black potential buyers away from white blocks. One older black resident of the area described the pre-1960s BAPA as the Beverly Area *Protection* Association.

But by 1971, BAPA leaders, with support from community institutions like Beverly Bank, recognized that change was inevitable. They reshaped BAPA into an umbrella group for several local civic organizations that were committed to managed desegregation and changed BAPA's goals and principles. Chief among the new goals was to accept "the inevitability of change." Four other significant areas of endeavor were: public relations, areawide education, fair and equal real estate practices and planned business development. BAPA, working with the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, opened a housing referral center to promote residential integration.

Currently, a major thrust is econom-



Calvin Pearce from the East Beverly Improvement Association.

ic development. BAPA's economic development program provides services to 1,800 area businesses, including a small but growing number owned by African Americans. These services include help with marketing, zoning issues, access to city services, parking problems and, for new businesses, loan packaging.

Another major thrust is support of the community's public and private schools. BAPA's education committee, headed by Gretchen McDowell and Adeline Ray, is particularly well regarded. One of its biggest projects is coordinating efforts between Morgan Park High School and its feeder elementary schools.

Kellogg Elementary School typifies a BAPA school. It is a small school (only 295 students) with a bright, cheery atmosphere, above-average test scores and a collegial group of veteran teachers. Its racially integrated student body (43 percent white) has seen a recent increase in white students coming from parochial schools whose rising tuition costs have made them prohibitive to more and more parents.

There has always been some tension between Kellogg and nearby Christ the King Catholic School, which compete for many of the same students. "They just don't like us," jokes one Kellogg teacher. During the record-long 1987 teacher strike, Christ the King tried to recruit Kellogg students, and BAPA stepped in to mediate, prompting the Chicago Catholic Archdiocese to issue a statement on its enrollment policy,

according to a grateful Mary Scannell, principal of Kellogg.

BAPA also organized community support and lined up the money to rebuild Kellogg's playground, which had become an eyesore. BAPA not only wrote a grant to purchase trees, but also got the county to plant them.

During a recent visit, Scannell chatted easily with BAPA's Adeline Ray about the need for a full-day kindergarten; currently, Kellogg's kindergarten is only half-day. She also pointed to BAPA's CLOWN program (Children Learning Other Ways Naturally), a substance-abuse program aimed at grades K-4, as an example of positive community involvement. Volunteers dressed as clowns visit classes to conduct non-threatening discussions on alcohol and drug abuse and how to "just say no."

Kellogg teachers Cynthia Mills and Alan Moleski sit on the school's local school council. They like BAPA's role as the primary trainer of council members. "BAPA launched reform here even before the Reform Act was passed," says Mills, an energetic African-American teacher whose own children attend Kellogg.

'Reform shortchanges us'

Neither Mills, Moleski nor Scannell seem very high on school reform. "It hasn't changed anything here at Kellogg except to give us more paperwork," says Moleski. "We already had a good school with plenty of parent involvement. The problem here is one of resources. Because we aren't considered a poverty school, we only receive about \$14,000 in [state] Chapter 1 funds. School funding seems to be set up to reward failure and punish success." Ray seems to agree, even though she has been among the most active community residents in carrying out the Reform Act, recruiting people to run for councils and training those elected.

Ray helped run BAPA's successful Summer Youth Program which attracted more than 500 kids, black and white, to participate in basketball, Kung-fu, day trips and teen mixers last July and August. She also helped plan and conduct an areawide principals conference that brought together educational leaders from private and public schools.

But although BAPA's successes and

the commitment of people like Ray are undeniable, some blacks and whites question the organization's commitment to equal opportunity. "They won't do LSC training for the schools east of Vincennes," says Calvin Pearce. "They even use our [high school] auditorium for their programs and exclude us from attending because we come from the wrong neighborhood."

Criticism from within

If, as a primarily white organization promoting integration, BAPA is a Chicago anomaly, Capers Funnye is an anomaly within an anomaly. A leader of the East Beverly Improvement Association, the BAPA affiliate with the largest black membership, Funnye is an African American and a Jewish rabbi; he heads the Beth Shalom Congregation on the South Side. Funnye sends his three children to Morgan Park High and presides over the local school councils at both the high school and at Barnard Elementary School. Funnye, known citywide as a peacemaker and unifier, is full of praise for BAPA's efforts, and Gretchen McDowell's in particular.

"She is at every [high school] LSC meeting," he says of McDowell. "She helped write the school improvement plan. She worked on school security, LSC training and getting articles in the *Villager*"—BAPA's newspaper. Funnye is also high on BAPA's summer program; his association sent the most kids to it. Funnye ran for the Morgan Park council on the CHAMP slate, which he says "wasn't a vehicle for anyone."

The divisions at Morgan Park High are healing, says Funnye. "We were pulling in different directions, but we have been successful lately, and Earl Bryant [who succeeded Pilditch as principal] went out of his way to be fair to everyone." Bryant took early retirement in September, and the council again is looking for a new principal. Like other organizations, CHAMP this year had a hard time finding people willing to run for the local school council.

But Funnye has some differences with BAPA's leadership, which he openly discusses. Though not as critical as Calvin Pearce, Funnye believes BAPA should extend its responsibilities beyond what he believes are arbitrary boundaries.

At Barnard, for example, Funnye is

frustrated by a pre-kindergarten program whose enrollment is 70 percent white, even though the school is 96 percent African American; Barnard is located on the eastern edge of Morgan Park, near Vincennes.

"The program is used by the principal for her neighbors, who don't keep their kids in Barnard," charges Funnye. "It's just a training ground for the Catholic schools. What is BAPA doing about this?" Responds BAPA's Costello, "The matter has never been brought to BAPA's attention. We have to be asked before we can get involved."

Muriel Van Albade, principal at Barnard for the last 15 years, says her program is on the up and up. "Whoever is speaking out on this is causing problems where there shouldn't be any. People who are attending our program are taxpayers and have a right to attend. Our kids are picked, not by me, but by a Board [of Education] screening team that chooses kids who are most at risk. Some continue on at Barnard, and some go on to Catholic school. That is something I can't control."

But the hottest school issue in the area, now that the Pilditch case has

been at least temporarily resolved, is the proposed expansion of the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences in nearby Mt. Greenwood. Many white neighbors of the predominantly black school have opposed the expansion and have the backing of Ald. Ginger Rugai (19th), who works closely with BAPA.

So far, BAPA has remained silent on the issue, which has riled Funnye. "BAPA should be involved in resolving this problem and in allaying neighborhood fears," he says. "We aren't an island over here in Beverly-Morgan Park." ■

Asian politics grow up around kids



by Michael Selinker

For a generation of Southeast Asians, war, famine and genocide in their homelands obliterated anything resembling formal education. Many of those who escaped could barely read and write their own languages, let alone others.

Now, a new generation of Southeast Asians is coming of age in sections of Uptown and Edgewater, the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Chicago. And the community groups of the pre-

ceding generation are coming of age with them, motivated by an intense will to provide all they can for their often traumatized children.

"I suffer a lot in my country," says Vietnamese Association of Illinois counselor Tam Duc Nguyen, who spent a decade in a Viet Cong prison. "I almost lost my young age in the war, and I never dreamed someday I released and come here. Now everything I do, I do for these kids. Young students, they suffer tremendously. If they come here, they have freedom, but it means they have lost everything at home. We have to give good counseling. They have to study fast, very fast."

Formed in the late 1970s during the first wave of immigration, the community organizations reflect distinct ethnic groups, including Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians; they are modeled after federally funded mutual aid associations that dispense services to refugees. In their infancy, the community groups rarely cooperated, as centuries-old racial hatreds held sway. Relationships with nearby black, Latino and white community organizations also were few and far between.

But since the second wave of immi-

gration in the early 1980s, the divisions, for the most part, have been swept away by what Samkhann Khoeun of the Cambodian Association of Illinois calls "an ocean of suffering and struggling. Here, we are all refugees."

Facing a wide range of problems, including years of poor health, trauma from horrific events back home, neighborhood crime here and a scarcity of jobs, Southeast Asian community organizations have focused on education as the best remedy. They are working the issue from both ends, pressuring and helping schools to meet their children's needs and encouraging parents to work with their children and the schools.

However, it has been difficult to get parents involved. In Southeast Asia, government-sponsored education is a relatively new commodity; until the 1950s, most education there was conducted in Buddhist temples. Also, in Southeast Asia, teachers are revered and even feared, and students would never disrespect them. Parents have no role. "All they would do would be to make certain the child went to school regularly," Khoeun says.

Here, they are just as reluctant to participate, he says. "The Cambodian people here, if they don't like an educational situation, they would rather ignore it or move than fight for what they need. I have to tell them, 'There are not many options. You have to work to change the situation you are in.'"

To stimulate parental involvement, community organizers seized on school reform. Several ethnic groups joined with the Asian American Educators



Counselor Tam Duc Nguyen of the Vietnamese Association helps Tran Sothea prepare for her ACT tests.

Association and the mayor's Commission on Asian Affairs (now an advisory council to the Commission on Human Relations) to conduct recruitment drives for the first local school council elections in 1989.

"We had the opportunity to elect our first elected officials," says Barton Moy, the advisory council's executive director. "Our target was the schools with the highest Asian population, but we went citywide. It was initially a hard population to motivate, but the results were incredible."

Though no school in Chicago is majority Asian, 57 Asians were elected to councils, making them the city's only elected Asian officials. Seats were secured not only at the ultra-diverse Senn High School and McCutcheon Elementary School, but also at schools with smaller Asian populations. And, Moy says, the drive drew leaders out of communities that had had few.

"We were very excited that we had representatives from the Cambodian and Laotian communities," he says. "They're smaller communities with tremendous mistrust of government. They think, 'They took everything away from me so why should I give back?' But they did."

Lobbying succeeds, school fails

After winning these seats, Asian community groups in 1990 successfully lobbied to open a Senn "satellite" school for refugees in the Institute for Cultural Education, 4750 N. Broadway. But the experiment failed because too

few refugee students showed up the first semester. Under pressure from the Board of Education to raise the satellite school's enrollment, Senn sent non-Asian kids who were not succeeding in Senn's regular program. This was a deal-breaker for most Asians; just a year after the satellite opened, there were no Asians there.

"The Vietnamese, the Cambodians, the Lao, they [were] scared over there," says Nguyen of the Vietnamese Association. "Because the other ethnic kids, they make noise, they don't respect the teacher, they don't respect the students. They put those kids together, and my students, they don't want to go."

The single-ethnic community groups, along with a few umbrella agencies like Asian Human Services and the South-East Asia Center, work closely with schools to identify and help those students who find American schooling daunting. (Khoeun puts that number at 80 percent to 90 percent of the Cambodians; Nguyen cites a similar range for Vietnamese.)

Some programs are not targeted at specific ethnic groups, such as a program conducted by the South-East Asia Center, under a contract with the Chicago Department of Human Services. Every day, Paul Sjordal, who is white, brings a multicultural self-esteem program to Asian and non-Asian students at Goudy and McCutcheon elementary schools.

"At a school like Goudy, the Asian kids, being very quiet and reserved, have a problem in a society with groups of kids who are more outgoing," Sjordal says. "This can help draw them out."

Most principals in the area say that the most important help the associations provide is tutoring. Principals at schools like Senn (18 percent Asian), Goudy (15 percent Asian) and McCutcheon (33 percent Asian) gladly open their doors to community groups who provide translation and bridge the culture gap.

With a severe shortage of teachers who speak the languages of Southeast Asia, immigrant students get only a couple hours a day of formal bilingual instruction. At Senn, for example, three Vietnamese-speaking teachers serve 300 Vietnamese students, half of whom have limited English proficiency. To ease the burden, the community groups sent workers to help students during their study halls. A first-year student would see Nguyen for at least

three study halls a week.

Then, in September, the Board of Education and Chicago Teachers Union agreed to a change in scheduling that eliminated most study halls.

"We talked about having Mr. Nguyen come in during the students' lunch period," says Lucy Grieco, Senn's bilingual coordinator. "But then they won't be able to eat lunch, which for some students is their only good meal. It's like you're damned if you do and damned if you don't."

Associations swamped

Without extra help in school, students crowd into the associations' offices for after-school tutoring; each worker may see 40 to 50 students a day.

This overcrowding makes it difficult for counselors like Nguyen to help students like Phan Nga, a bright 19-year-old Senn sophomore from Saigon. In the association's study room, Nga draws lines of whole notes, quarter notes and eighth notes. She has no idea what they are called, but she has puzzled out that the ones with flags on top are shorter than those without. Nga—her given name, which means Russia in Vietnamese—struggles because no one in school has time to teach her music in Vietnamese.

"This not hard," she forces out in English, and then stops. She needs to ask counselor Ahn Tuan Hoang to translate, "The explanation, that is the difficult part."

Nga's father, a South Vietnamese naval officer, was a political prisoner for seven years until April, when the U.S. government brought the family here. Nga now comes to the association for four hours a day after school to get help with her homework. Often, Hoang and Nguyen must cover the same ground an English-speaking teacher covered earlier in the day.

But there is only so much the association can do for Nga, who fears being kicked out of school at 21 (a Chicago Public Schools rule) and whose family's relief money expires in just a month (a federal rule).

"I must study," she says in stilted English. "I must finish. If I finish university, I have job. I must study." ■

Michael Selinker is a Chicago writer who lives in Edgewater.

Elsewhere

Community schools open in New York

The New York City Board of Education is opening dozens of new high schools this year, but the board isn't running them. Instead, they are being run by community organizations, labor unions, teachers' collectives, school reform groups, universities and even a children's choir.

The new community schools include the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, designed and operated by El Puente de Williamsburg, a combination youth center and community-activist group; the Local 1199 School for Social Change, designed and operated by New York's Hospital Care Workers' Union; and the Choir Academy of Harlem, designed and operated by the Boys Choir of Harlem.

Several of the schools come from community organizations, including one run by New York's chapter of ACORN, and three run by local branches of the Industrial Areas Foundation, the country's oldest community organizing group.

"Nothing like this, of this magnitude, has ever taken place in New York—or anywhere else—before," says Stanley Litgow, who, as deputy chancellor, oversaw development of the partnerships.

Most of the new schools are regular neighborhood public high schools—not magnet schools or alternative schools. The schools got to select their own teachers, but the teachers had to be regularly certified.

The object of the initiative, besides serving the children who attend, is to see whether effective innovation can take place within the confines of a massive, basically centralized school system.

The new schools already have chalked up one success: They outlasted some of the high-ranking Board of Education officials who worked to create them, like the ousted Chancellor Joseph Fernandez and Litgow, who left with Fernandez.

With a wide array of communities

and community organizations involved, notes Litgow, the schools have a strong political base of their own. Further, because the Board of Education passed a special resolution supporting the new schools, a new chancellor can't "unmake" them, according to Naomi Barber, an officer at the Fund for New York City Public Education.

The Fund is among a number of organizations that joined with the school system to create the new schools, all of which are starting out small. Last year, the Fund sent out over 16,000 copies of a request for proposals asking individuals and groups to describe the school of their dreams. After several rounds of interviews, 16 teams got planning grants; ten of those were ready to open schools this fall.

The Center for Collaborative Education, a network of innovative New York schools headed by Deborah Meier of the Central Park East schools, is running six of the new schools. These "Coalition Schools" eventually will replace an existing school, Julia Richman High, which will empty out over the next four years as ninth-grade students from its attendance area enter one of the new schools.

"The Board of Education has phased out schools before," says the Center's Executive Director, Heather Lewis, "but they never replaced them with anything remarkably different."

Although they are billed as regular, non-magnet schools, the new schools will be "somewhat elite for a while," acknowledges Peter Hatch of the Fund for New York City Public Education. "The kids whose parents tend to know about the good schools tend to be middle-class. I'm sure we'll be criticized as soon as they open for producing yet another crop of magnet schools."

The only admission requirements were from schools which favored applicants from their immediate geographical area. More than 10,000 kids applied to the new schools during a two-week application window. About 3,500 eventually enrolled.

Foundations have provided some start-up funds for the schools, but, generally, the schools will be subject to the same financial consideration that all other New York City public schools get. When budget-crunch time comes, says Joseph Colletti of the United Federation of Teachers, the new schools will be on the chopping block, too, not tucked safely into their own budgetary niche.

So far, the biggest problem seems to have been finding physical spaces in the overcrowded New York system for the new schools. For instance, only one of the six Coalition schools is operating in the space planners had hoped for. Three others are waiting for their buildings to be renovated, and the other two are awaiting asbestos cleanup.

Dan Weissmann



RICKY FLORES

Members of El Puente, a Brooklyn youth center and community organization, convert some unused rooms in its headquarters into classrooms for a public school.

Opinions

In our series, "The New Extended Family: Collaborating for Kids' sake," CATALYST has reported on schools, government agencies and community groups that are attempting to form partnerships to help meet the needs of children. Illinois and Chicago have a few fledgling efforts but no real leadership, much less a plan. In this Opinions section, three knowledgeable advocates—a school principal, a nationally recognized expert in family support and a community leader—say what they think needs to be done.

Reform must spread to other institutions

by Carlos Azcoitia



The school is a potentially very powerful entity in a community. With the combined energy of its students, their families, teachers, community resi-

dents and local organizations and institutions, a school can have a profound impact on the development of families.

We at John Spry School in South Lawndale, also known as Little Village (La Villita) have tried to do just that. We have used our energies to improve

Carlos Azcoitia has been principal of John Spry School since 1990. Before that, he was director of the Bureau of Vocational Support Services in central office and, for nine years, a classroom teacher. Spry is one of six "actively restructuring" schools featured in "A View from the Elementary Schools: The State of Reform in Chicago," a report by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

not only our school but also the quality of life in our community, because the success of one is tied to the success of the other. The school cannot succeed unless it is attached to a community network that provides safety, good health and nutrition, recreational activities, social services and jobs.

Spry has used state Chapter 1 funds to hire its own nurse to help meet the health needs of its 1,300 students and their families and to offer workshops for parents and community members on nutrition, substance abuse, contagious diseases and other community health issues. In collaboration with public agencies and community organizations, we have offered students dental services and immunizations for two consecutive years.

We also used state Chapter 1 funds to hire a social worker, who is working with a number of community agencies to reduce violence, steer children away from gangs and prevent alcohol and drug abuse.

A committee of the local school council meets monthly with Police Department representatives to help ensure safety for our children in and around school. The committee identifies

problem areas in our school community and monitors police intervention efforts. Helping it are neighborhood patrols, consisting of parents and community residents, who keep an eye out for illegal activities, such as damage to public property, gang intimidation and drinking in public places. Perpetrators are reported to the police.

Our students have joined with parents, police and older students from nearby Farragut High School to remove graffiti from buildings and to distribute flyers to owners and tenants regarding everyone's responsibility for a safe and clean community.

In partnership with community agencies, Spry has reclaimed abandoned lots to expand recreational activities for children. And a community organization helps us provide after-school recreational and academic activities that keep our school humming until 5:30 p.m. each day.

Most recently, the school has also conducted community conventions for family-centered educational activities and for teachers and neighborhood families to address school restructuring. The school, in conjunction with community agencies, has provided training for parents to organize educational block clubs to address health, safety and school-related issues. The objective of the program is to empower leader families to meet with their neighbors in their own homes to discuss community concerns.

Most important in all activities, students and parents have been involved from the outset by identifying needs,

participating in planning sessions, joining committees and volunteering. As a result, they have a sense of ownership, and the programs fit their needs.

By shifting authority and responsibility to local schools and by increasing the role of parents and community members, school reform set the stage for all these initiatives. Such reform now needs to spread to other bureaucracies, including city and state agencies and community organizations themselves, so that those who understand local problems have the authority to craft the solutions.

Decentralization also would enable the various agencies to carry out true collaboration with each other and with those we serve, which is essential for each of us to succeed.

Primary goals must be locating services where people live, fashioning an accountability system that is responsive to those people and eliminating the paperwork and red tape that stand in the way of change—all to be accomplished within a specified period of time.

Private organizations and agencies must re-examine themselves, too. Block clubs should expand their agendas beyond safety and organize residents to take control of their lives and community; it is imperative that community residents be organized to participate in planning services and deciding how to allocate resources. Organizations and agencies devoted to a particular cause must explore how they can work with each other.

In the Spry School community,

school reform has awakened many individuals to progressive agendas that benefit the entire neighborhood. Indeed, our agenda needs to expand to include affordable housing, creation of jobs, economic development and community-based assistance for immigrants to attain citizenship. Improving the achievement of our students remains our primary focus, but we now know we must also contribute to the well-being of our families and neighbors.

With many interests converging here, we have the power to accomplish much in this regard. But, obviously, a school can't do it alone. All sectors of the community must work together. For that to happen, structures and attitudes that stand in the way of true collaboration must be eliminated. ■

Parents must be seen as true partners

by Judy Langford Carter



Shawn and his sister Tisha tried to enroll in a Chicago high school when school opened in the fall. There was one little problem. The school nurse

sent them home with a note saying that Shawn and Tisha would not be allowed in school until they received measles vaccines.

Weeks passed and the children did not return to school. Finally, the children came with a note from a clinic documenting that they had received

their vaccinations. The school attendance clerk accepted the note and told the children their mother would now need to come into school so they could be reinstated. Shawn explained that their mother had some problems, mainly with drugs, and was not around much. The children often stayed with their grandmother, he explained, and suggested the attendance clerk could call her. The clerk informed Shawn and Tisha that their mother, as their legal guardian, was the only one who could get them reinstated in school and she had to do so in person.

Like too many Chicago students, Shawn and Tisha never returned to school.

The outcome we want for every child is to be a healthy, educable and educated, well-adjusted person capable of becoming the productive worker and competent parent of the next generation. We are painfully aware that the system we have been using to help that happen has not been producing the results we want. All too often the system itself creates even more barriers to success, as the Shawn and Tisha story shows. We have

to stop trying to figure out whose fault it is that the system is a mess, and start lining up all our available resources to address the needs of all our children. We can't afford to wait another day.

CATALYST has documented over the past three months a strategy that is emerging in many states and cities for approaching the complicated problems facing our children—and our society. This strategy involves a revolutionary reconfiguration of the relationships among families and the public and private institutions that serve children. Within these reconfigured systems, a family-centered approach is evolving—an approach that embodies the best information we have about what *does* work for families, and therefore for their children.

The ultimate goal is a flexible, comprehensive, holistic, community-based system of support to improve the capacity of families to support their children and make their own way in our society. The school, as the traditional, primary institution serving all children, has a particularly important role along with the other institutions, but it cannot, and should not, be expected to do it alone.

To achieve results for children, state and city governments, public health workers, social workers, school boards, principals, teachers and all people who work with and for children must begin doing business in a new way. They must begin every policy and every decision with the whole child in mind, not just

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the particular piece they are most concerned about. Strategies for increasing graduation rates are meaningless unless they consider all of the needs that go into achieving this goal. Is the child safe getting to and from school? Is the child healthy? Does the child have a place to do his or her homework?

Considering these and the myriad other factors that go into achieving just one goal can be overwhelming, and for this reason it is imperative that everyone work together, bringing their expertise, their budgets and their collective passion for making services work into a system that really works for children.

Parents needed most

We have seen this happen at the state and local level. Kentucky developed a 16-member Interagency Task Force, which includes people from schools, social service agencies and state human resources and education offices to guide a statewide initiative for family resource centers in schools. In Minneapolis, Mayor Donald Fraser created a Youth Coordinating Board of elected state and city officials to work with the school system; the board has developed cross-agency planning mechanisms and linked needed services to schools. The District Service Center in San Jose, Calif., is a physical example of how services as diverse as dental care and a children's museum can be put together in one place where children and families can easily access them.

These initiatives operate with the understanding that categorical programs and funding are antithetical to providing what is really needed by children and their families. Policymakers at all levels must begin with the question, "What does a child need to achieve the outcomes we want?" and then develop and implement the legislative and fiscal policies necessary to pull these resources together for each child.

As we reconfigure services and develop this new system of cooperation and collaboration, we must include the most critical partner—parents. The hardest part is convincing "the system" that parent involvement is really necessary for the services it provides to work. The institutions, agencies and professionals that have created the current way of working with families and children generally believe that this system and the

staff who are a part of it know best what families need. The idea that the parents and children might have some idea of what they need is rarely considered.

Legislating and implementing innovative service strategies from on high will not change the perspective of the human service system, nor will setting up token advisory councils or legalistic sign-offs on service plans by parents. Involving, respecting, understanding and responding to families where they are have to be a fundamental part of service reform—or the outcomes in a new service system will not be any different from the outcomes we are getting now.

This means involving even parents who are very difficult to locate and engage, a task made more difficult because no one before has ever asked them what they thought. This also means giving parents a meaningful way to participate in their children's education.

LSCs not enough

Local school councils are not enough either. Including parents as members of an interagency group planning a particular initiative, or regularly consulting parents as advisors, can provide real authority for parents and accountability for programs and services—provided the parents are sufficiently supported in carrying out their roles, and the selection of parents as advisors adequately reflects the parents who actually participate in the services. All too often, parents are selected because they represent a particular advocacy group or constituency, not because they really represent the parents who will be affected by the services in question.

Parent partnerships with the school are crucial because the school's unique location and role in the community provide an opportunity to identify and meet the needs of children and their families. Mattie Tyson, principal of Johnson Elementary School here in Chicago, is living proof that schools can reach out to parents and utilize what they have to offer to better serve the needs of children. Mattie went to the homes of all her students and developed relationships that have led to a level of parent involvement presumed impossible in the economically devastated Lawndale neighborhood. From GED (General Educational Development) classes to

parent security patrols, parents of Johnson Elementary students know they are valued and welcomed in the school.

Classroom teachers can do their part to encourage parent involvement in the school and in their child's education. A teacher could respectfully call parents and ask to visit with them at their convenience, at a location of their choosing, in a group or individually. The teacher may have to convince them that there are no problems with their child to complain about, no hidden agenda, nothing they are being asked to do. The teacher provides the food and the transportation—the "grease," as they say—to make it possible for the person with expert information (the parent) to provide advice and consultation to the person who needs it (the teacher).

Building a constituency

The rewards for the school in playing a new partnership role with parents and other resources can be substantial. Improvement in educational outcomes for students can be seen in a variety of measures. For example, early childhood programs that support and involve parents continue to show important and sustained gains for children. Political gains for the school can also be part of the reward; taking the risk of having more people know what challenges teachers and administrators face may reap the benefit of additional support and understanding for what you are trying to do about it.

Having parents actually get some personal, direct benefit from a school program serves the additional purpose of building a constituency for the program. The well-known activism of Head Start parents on behalf of their programs is a direct result of their feeling of ownership and empowerment, which is encouraged through the parent involvement focus of the programs.

The time has come for action to exceed rhetoric and not the other way around. Many talk about improving the lives of children and the nation's competitiveness, but few are willing to take the risks involved in changing business as usual and providing the support families and children need. By working together and by breaking down the barriers among parents and within and among education "systems" and social service

"systems," a new system can be developed that incorporates the strengths of each and ensures children and families get what they need to prosper.

Within this kind of new system, Shawn and Tisha would not get lost. Perhaps the nurse at their school could have immediately arranged an appointment for them at a local clinic, or

walked them to one within the school. With fewer bureaucratic regulations, the attendance clerk could have called Shawn and Tisha's grandmother and reinstated them in school. And perhaps some form of long-term stability in Shawn and Tisha's family could have been achieved if a community outreach worker were made available, alerted to

the problems and sent on a home visit to work with the children's mother to identify needs and services.

If we are really serious about wanting every child to grow into healthy, educated, productive adults, we need to change the "system" and create one that considers the needs of the whole child—and the whole society. ■

Community must take control of schools

by Sokoni Karanja



As I have observed the school reform movement, it has become very clear to me that the problems that affect the Greater Grand Boulevard community (North Kenwood,

Douglas, Grand Boulevard, Oakland and Washington Park) have gone unaddressed by the larger effort.

Disorder and chaos persist. Attendance and educational quality remain low. The dropout rate, an initial focus of the reform effort, remains extremely high—in some cases, as high as 70 percent to 80 percent. Test scores have not improved.

In my discussions with parents whose children attend our schools, frustration abounds, especially over teacher attitudes and the quality of instruction.

As a human and community development network in the Greater Grand

Boulevard community, Centers for New Horizons has joined with many other organizations, both inside and outside the community, first to write the school reform legislation and then to get the legislation passed. Eventually, we introduced amendments to improve the act. We organized, educated and promoted for the last two local school council elections. We trained members of local school councils to implement the Reform Act.

This coalition of organizations signed onto the lawsuit opposing the attempt by the Chicago Principals Association to have the legislation declared unconstitutional, fought for appropriate use of state Chapter 1 funds and engaged in many more efforts than I can mention in the space allotted here.

Locally, our staff have worked closely with Phillips, Mayo, Doolittle, Donoghue and Einstein schools. At Wendell Phillips High School, we initiated a significant number of new programs. They include adoption of Phillips by the South Side Partnership and Drexel Bank and creation of a mentoring program that involves more than 100 black men. Three other programs were set up in collaboration with First National Bank: a bank teller training program, a "Hire the Future" program and business training workshops. Through the Life Directions program, the coalition works with over 300 Phillips students on conflict resolution

and life and living skills development.

The coalition worked closely with the principal and staff of Mayo Elementary to establish, create and support the Chicago Educational Support and Scholarship (CHESS) program, which ensures the availability of college scholarships to 30 young people if they maintain at least a "C" grade average from seventh grade through high school.

At Doolittle, Einstein and Donoghue elementary schools, we have implemented "Self Esteem Through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence," (SET-CLAE), a history-based program developed by Jawanza Kunjufu, and High Achievement, Wisdom and Knowledge (HAWK), which teaches young boys the steps to African manhood, developed by Wade Nobles.

Centers for New Horizons also provides after-school care, Saturday tutorial programs, sports leagues and other special activities that involve youth in the community but are not linked directly to the schools.

All these programs and others established by other organizations benefit children in Greater Grand Boulevard. However, none of them has enabled us to penetrate the control and intractability of what has been described as the "three iron horsemen against school reform and all other positive change for the education of children": teacher attitudes, the Chicago Teachers Union and the Chicago Board of Education bureaucracy.

Our children are sacred, and the Board of Education and all its affiliates have violated that which is sacred to any human society. They are failing to prepare the future generation to exist in a civil framework and govern effectively.

If public education in the Greater Grand Boulevard community is to

Sokoni Karanja is founder and president of Centers for New Horizons, a service and education organization serving Greater Grand Boulevard on the South Side. Earlier this year, he received a prestigious MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, known popularly as a genius grant.

change, the community must take control of its schools. Students, parents, community leaders, churches and other institutions in Greater Grand Boulevard must join together to devise a plan, mobilize support and take whatever action necessary to force the education of our children to the center of everyone's concern. If we do not, we are, I believe, witnessing and, by our inaction, participating in genocide.

Our efforts must be aimed at the following goals:

- Making dramatic improvements in the depth and direction of the curriculum, including instituting an African-centered curriculum, a strong math and science component and teaching a minimum of three foreign languages.

- Getting poorly trained and uninterested teachers out of the schools in our community.

- Creating a positive physical environment for learning by developing a strategic plan for building and play-

ground repair and renovation.

- Initiating legal action on behalf of the children against all parties involved in the mayhem that exists in lieu of education in our schools.

Our fundamental goal for this organizing effort must be to create real and lasting change in the quality of education black children receive in Chicago. This has not been the focus of school reform in the Greater Grand Boulevard Community, as I have observed it for the past five years. ■

Letters

Legislature could adopt 'graduated' income tax

In Edna Pardo's "Opinion" piece in your October issue, she advocates a graduated state income tax as a major contribution toward solving the financial problems in Illinois public schools, but she points out that "changing to a graduated income tax requires a constitutional amendment" in our state.

There is another way—a legislative way without the necessity of a constitutional amendment—to achieve the same results a graduated income tax would produce; it has been suggested by state Comptroller Dawn Clark Netsch. She proposes the possibility of the General Assembly raising the current state income tax flat rate of 3 percent for individuals but giving tax credits to lower-income individuals so their taxes would effectively not exceed that current 3 percent.

Getting a tax increase through the state Legislature will not be easy, certainly, but it would probably be "easier" than amending the constitution!

Monty Jenkins
Chicago

Collaboration the only way to go for kids

I am genuinely excited about *CATALYST's* partnership series. It's high time that the reform community took a serious look at the issues of partnerships and collaboration.

Working together to help kids is more than just a nice sentiment. Both research and

experience conclude that urban school systems will continue to fail until they confront the multiple and complex needs of students and their families in the context of their schools and communities. Partnerships encourage the pooling of resources to help youth overcome the obstacles they face. Such collaboration addresses the factors at the root of urban educational decline; namely, poverty, racism and disinvestment.

Chicago Cities in Schools has spent more than 80 hours per year in 17 different schools, bringing together business, social service, educational and governmental resources in an effort to reach Chicago's at-risk youth. Last year alone, our team of more than 50 volunteers worked to provide personalized, accountable and coordinated services to over 600 young people.

We understand the importance of partnerships and collaboration, and are eager to help *CATALYST* readers understand it too.

Sheila Radford-Hill
Chicago Cities in Schools

Brendan Daley more than my son

I always look forward to Michael Klonsky's contributions to *CATALYST*. They are well researched, balanced and fair. But I found it difficult to remain detached or objective when I read the September Update regarding the School Board Nominating Commission. I am passionately committed to the ideal of a bottom-up reform of our schools. With the Nominating Commission having two representatives from each subdistrict, we still have some bottom-up power to influence the makeup of the Board of Education. Ideally, board members would be sensitive and responsive to the grass roots if they were put in place by the grass roots.

The community has been allowed pre-

vious little power in this process called school reform. Principal selection and some discretionary funds are the most obvious. And the administration continues to look for ways to thwart even those powers with rules and delays and budget cuts. So if the Nominating Commission is restructured to limit the little power has, what's left for the grass roots?

Having said all that, I'd like to take issue with the sidebar in Mr. Klonsky's article. There was a tiny sentence that jumped out at me. Brendan Daley is described as "the son of former board member Patricia Daley and a student at Roosevelt University." I would like to say that is not a description of Brendan Daley. He is a senior at Roosevelt University, a product of the Chicago public schools, vice president of the Student Council as well as active in various organizations. He was part of Mayor Harold Washington's Youth and Government program during his high school years. He represented the Chicago public schools in France, Germany and the Ivory Coast on special youth ambassador programs before I ever heard of school reform.

Further, as a former board member fully aware of the agony that is an integral part of the job, I never encouraged Brendan to apply. As a mother who has learned to respect him and his decisions and wisdom, I had to step aside and not discourage him either.

As I write this letter, there has been no call from the mayor's office to schedule an interview with Brendan. So I assume the mayor has written him off. And I can't help but wonder if it's because of his "son of former board member" status. Although Brendan has every quality to be an outstanding board member, I wouldn't wish that job on my worst enemy. Come to think of it, a few of my worst enemies already have the job, don't they?

Patricia Daley, former member
Board of Education

Board, high schools battle over new scheduling

by Michael Klonsky

Widespread protest against the new 50-minute class schedule may force Supt. Argie Johnson and the Board of Education to adjust its mandate. Board President D. Sharon Grant declined to speculate on what changes might be considered, saying, "The superintendent is in charge of day-top-day operations, and we will look at any recommendations she makes to us."

Following the outcry over the new high school scheduling, which led to the elimination of 500 teaching positions, the board and administration agreed to restore 100 teacher jobs to high schools.

The cuts came about because, with 50-minute periods instead of 40-minute periods, students need fewer courses to meet the state's requirement that they receive at least 300 minutes of instruction daily. Since students are enrolled in fewer courses, high schools need fewer teachers.

In August, the teachers union agreed that teachers would teach five 50-minute periods instead of five 40-minute peri-

ods, in exchange for eliminating teachers' duty periods. It was the board's decision to limit most students to six courses. Without such a limit, it could not have cut as many teacher positions and, thus, saved as much money.

After meeting Oct. 5 with more than 20 high school principals, Johnson agreed to form a task force to assess damage stemming from the 50-minute edict and to recommend adjustments.

Whatever the board's intentions, the result, according to most principals, was chaos, demoralization and student protest. Principals and staff had no time to prepare for the change. Thousands of students held walk-outs, sit-ins and marches in the Loop to demand restoration of their programs and teachers.

At an Oct. 12 breakfast meeting of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Johnson stuck to her guns, telling reformers: "We can get everything done in five, 50-minute periods per day without harming students." But, she said, students would have to make choices and would no longer have a full menu from which to pick.

The superintendent criticized high school principals for not setting the proper tone for change. "Anyone who



JOHN BOZ

On Oct. 15, U.S. District Judge Charles P. Kocoras extended a "temporary" waiver of state law to avert school closings for the third time. Schools will remain open through Nov. 15.

had any issue in the last 100 years threw it into the pot," she charged. She also accused some principals of using the crisis to get rid of teachers they didn't like rather than just closing out positions vacated by teachers taking early retirement.

Board member Stephen Ballis also defended the policy. "Like anything new, it will take time. Because of the financial pressures, we didn't have time to do the necessary staff development or to develop models for change in advance," said Ballis, architect of the

Chicago Vocational

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I just don't have time to talk about it," says a frustrated Principal Betty Despenza-Green.

Green was scheduled to describe for *CATALYST* how her school was coping with board-imposed changes. But at the moment, she's preoccupied with figuring out what to do with a Calumet

High teacher who showed up in her office; over the weekend, the central office had directed the teacher to report to Chicago Vocational.

"The position that he is coming here for, we already have someone in," says Despenza-Green. "I have no place for him here." After a quick call to Calumet's principal, she sends the teacher back to Calumet, which did need him.

Green also had just found out that central office somehow ignored the list of position closings Green had identified. Instead, it developed its own list.

"You are going to find high school principals all over the city tearing their hair out trying to re-do their schedules and figure out what to do about teacher positions," says Green.

Debra Williams



Chicago Vocational auto body shop teacher William Roedel has extra students after his classes were cut from four 40-minute to three 50-minute classes.

Board's SAVE Plan, which guided board members through negotiations.

The main problem, he said, "was not the 50-minute policy, but the lack of stable funding." The financial crisis forced the board to close teaching positions, which made orderly systemwide change impossible.

Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on School Policy, agreed. He directed some blame toward Mayor Richard M. Daley, too, for supporting the previous three-year union contract, which boosted the teacher salary scale by 21 percent and created teacher bonuses for taking additional courses (in addition to normal "lane" salary increases).

Asked whether the board had any alternatives, Hess said probably not. "I suppose Daley could have borrowed more money, but he wouldn't go along with that idea. Without adequate funding, there is no good way to restructure."

Diana Nelson, a former teacher and now president of the corporate group Leadership for Quality Education,

Lake View High

Anger over teacher cuts and the new schedule prompted 30 teachers to take a day off without pay to picket around the school. They were joined by Friends of Lakeview, a business group; later, students protested at City Hall.

Twenty-one of the school's 81 positions had been cut; 10 teachers took early retirement and two transferred, meaning Lake View had to send nine teachers elsewhere.

Many younger teachers who had just been hired and "were all fired up to teach" are now gone, says local school council chair Lorraine Straw.

Straw cites these other problems:

- Without study halls, students have less chance to use the library and a computer lab that opened in June, to meet with counselors and to take advantage of outside programs, such as Upward Bound and Life Guidance, that came to the school once a week.

- A new program launched as part of the Marshall Field's Arts Partnership is in limbo because teachers working on the plan were cut.

- Field trips that were part of the

Urban Studies program have been scrapped because teachers have no one to cover their classes while they're gone. "Before this mess, there were other teachers who could be shifted to cover a class because they were on a duty, like hall monitoring," says Straw.

- Special algebra and English classes for new students with low test scores have been reduced from 400 minutes of class time a week to 250.

- A college prep math program is in jeopardy because students have no time to take the classes and its teacher was cut.

"Lake View is not a Whitney Young or a Lane Tech, but we had programs that were just as good and where we were seeing progress in our students. Schools are being destroyed," says math teacher Rich Kaplan.

Debra Williams

Foundations Elementary

This teacher-led school-within-a-school won a last-minute reprieve from teacher cuts that would have closed its doors.

When the School Board increased ele-

mentary class sizes, Price Elementary, which houses Foundations, was told to cut eight teaching positions. Price Principal Carl Lawson Sr. had planned to take three positions from Foundations' staff of eight, which gets counted, for staffing purposes, as part of Price.

"If three of our teachers would have been cut, our whole program would have disintegrated," says Lynn Cherkasky-Davis, Foundations' head teacher. "The school would have to close down." One of the school's hallmarks is a smaller-than-average class size, about 22 students, which the staff "paid for" by sacrificing paid staff development days.

Lawson and Cherkasky-Davis met with Supt. Argie Johnson and Acting Deputy Supt. Olivia Watkins to try to save the school. Parents and community members sent petitions and faxes and made phone calls. Some influential Foundations backers made calls, and students wrote letters to the board. The board granted the school a reprieve, rescinded it, then finally gave it back, keeping the school open. At press time, it was unclear how many teachers, if any, Price would lose.

Molly Durrn

described the outcry as “a tempest in a teapot.” Principals complained because they resist change, and they exaggerated the chaos, she said. “Kids shouldn’t be taught in 40-minute segments.”

Nelson said her group opposed teacher cuts as antithetical to reform and would have preferred that teachers work a longer school day.

While Nelson didn’t like the way the plan was “precipitously implemented,” she blamed the CTU for the chaos. “If teachers would have settled early instead of stalling the negotiations process, this change could have been made in a planned, orderly way.”

According to union official John Kotsakis, both the union and the board saw the schedule change as a way to save about \$20 million through job attrition. But, said Kotsakis, “We [the CTU] didn’t envision it being implemented the way it was.”

He said the union believed the 50-minute class schedule would have worked if it had included more flexibility for schools. “When you try and solve a

complex problem by saying something will work in all 60 schools, you’re bound to fail,” he said. “We didn’t expect the program to be put into place before the negotiations were even finished.”

Joy Noven of the reform group Parents United for Responsible Education blasted the scheduling change as “completely contrary to reform” because it was “top-down rather than bottom-up. If these were suburban kids, this wouldn’t have been tolerated.” ■

Board cuts \$35 million to help balance budget

To help balance its 1993-94 budget, the Board of Education made \$35.3 million in cuts. An extra \$7 million in its beginning cash balance brought the board’s contribution to \$42.3 million.

Revised estimates, efficiencies

Medical benefits plan	\$6.3
Maintenance	1.6

Transportation	0.8
Special ed increase	(+2.8)

Program, service cuts

Extra school staffing	\$3.0
Reduce local subsidy of certain state and federal programs, e.g., ROTC, child-parent centers	1.8
Extra staffing year-round schools	1.1
Second-semester restaffing, high schools	0.5
Reduce district supervising engineers	0.5
Desegregation payback deferral	3.9
Maintenance contracts *	8.6
Reform plan actions*	3.2
Computer system upgrade *	3.8
Other non-school reductions	1.0

Funding shifts

Extracurricular charged to playground fund	\$0.6
School supplies charged to textbook fund	0.2

* Spending in these areas will rise though not as much as the board initially planned.

Robeson High

At Robeson, students are attending three 80-minute classes a day, a schedule the school adopted three years ago. As *CATALYST* went to press, the board had not tried to impose the new 50-minute schedule, according to Principal Jacqueline Simmons.

Robeson adopted 80-minute periods after joining the Coalition of Essential Schools, a nationwide school restructuring network. One of the Coalition’s guiding principles is that teaching should be as personal as possible, with teachers coaching students rather than lecturing to them. Achieving those goals was too difficult with the old 40-minute periods, Robeson staff thought. “Part of the problem was too much movement,” Simmons explains. “Every 40 minutes, kids were in motion to another class.”

Because staff supported the idea, and 80-minute “double” periods were common with the old 40-minute schedule, Robeson did not seek a waiver to implement the schedule.

The new schedule has meant fewer course failures and better relationships

between students and teachers, Simmons says. Students lost study halls, but those taking art, music and drama have more class time to organize productions and shows. Teachers had to undergo “massive” staff development, Simmons says, “because you certainly can’t lecture to kids for 80 minutes.”

Robeson lost 20 positions this year, but the impact was eased somewhat because 12 teachers took early retirement and three others quit last June to take jobs elsewhere.

Lorraine Forte

Harlan High

“Why didn’t the board check with the schools that have had 50-minute periods and find out what they did and how they did it?” asks 25-year veteran teacher Ronnie Lewis. “I would think that they would use those schools as pilots, sit down with us and say, ‘Let’s talk about what you did.’ But no one did that.”

For the last two years, Harlan has been one of about half a dozen high

schools with 50-minute periods. Teachers had agreed to the change—from 40-minute periods—largely to eliminate study halls, says Lewis, the school’s Chicago Teachers Union delegate.

However, the board’s 50-minute mandate has caused problems at Harlan because it also requires teachers to teach five periods and eliminates all duty periods. Previously, certain Harlan teachers—for example, department chairs and science teachers—taught only four periods so that they could spend more time on curriculum matters and preparing for labs.

At press time, teacher assignments at Harlan were in a state of upheaval. Nine positions had been closed, 11 teachers and the principal had taken early retirement, and several FTBs, or full-time-basis substitutes, were demoted to day-to-day subs, at lower salaries. One social studies teacher, Lewis reports, was notified on a Sunday that he was a supernumerary and told to report to Crane High School, even though Harlan had not closed his position.

Lorraine Forte

The high school day in suburban Cook County, elsewhere

	Largest Districts		Highest spenders		Lowest spenders		Most low-income students		Other Illinois cities	
	Palatine 211	Township 214	Evanston 202	Northfield 225	Lemont 210	Proviso 209	Bloom 206	Thornton 205	Elgin 46	Chicago 299
Minutes per class period	50	55	45	45	52	55	50	50	50	50
Number of periods in school day	8	8	9	9	7	7	10 staggered shifts	7	8	7
Number of periods teachers must teach	5.5	5	5	4-5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Number of duty periods	1	1	1	1 (60 min.)	1 (60 min.)	1	1	1 (25 min.)	1 (30 min.)	0
Length of time teachers must be in school	8 hrs.	7.5 hrs.	8 hrs.	9 hrs.	7.5 hrs.	7.75 hrs.	8 hrs.	7.5 hrs.	7 hrs.	6.75 hrs
Average number of classes students take	6	6	6	7	6	6	5-6	6	6	6
Maximum number of classes students may take	7	6	8	9	7	6	7	7	8	6*
Double period classes?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No*
Average class size '92-'93	24	20	14	20	17	20	20	19-21	19	19
Teacher salary (master's + 12 years)	\$55,714	\$57,866	\$52,649	\$51,802	\$42,000	\$40,171	\$40,497	\$46,269	\$41,150	\$47,822

* A School Board spokesperson said some students in some schools may take more classes. Also, schools may use state Chapter 1 funds to restore double-period classes.

Source: School district officials.
Compiled by Tonya McClarin.

Taft High

The new schedule left Taft's school-within-a-school program in a "state of limbo," Principal William Watts said.

Teacher Paul Ribeman's judgment was harsher: "It's causing major disruptions in the students' day and the student program. It's been a destructive force."

Ribeman and his colleagues in the business, marketing and entrepreneurship "house," or mini-school, had crafted a program that called for students to attend two three-hour classes, plus a gym period, every day for 36 days and then switch to new courses.

However, central office insisted that

Taft use the central computer for its scheduling even though it could not accommodate the school's plans, Ribeman says. As a result, students have only division and three 50-minute classes in their own "house."

Losing duty periods was also a major blow to schools-within-schools because teachers used them to help run their houses. "Staff run the school," Ribeman explains. "There's no principal, assistant principal, tardy office or discipline office. The teachers take care of everything."

Watts says he is considering using grant money to pay teachers to stay at school longer for planning and administrative duties.

Molly Dunn

Dunbar Vocational

At Dunbar, students now take three 50-minute vocational classes each day instead of four 40-minute classes, a loss of 50 minutes of instruction per week. "It's like throwing a brick in the way of something good," says Principal Floyd M. Banks.

Losses include one-third of vocational classes, all foreign language and advanced courses, remedial courses and so-called "early involvement" classes that gave 8th-graders a head start on high school. Twenty-one teachers took early retirement; 16 of those positions were cut, leaving the school with only five positions it can fill.

Tonya McClarin

First person

With every cut, the students lose out



Emily K. Smith is a senior at Whitney Young High School.

by Emily K. Smith

Last June, expecting budget problems within the school system, I prepared with some trepidation for my senior year of high school at Whitney Young. I had already been through two very long and difficult school stoppages. Little did I know, however, that things were going to be a lot more difficult this year.

First, school started a week late; second, when school did open, I found that I was programmed for all of the wrong classes. I was supposed to have a fourth-year French class, an advanced art class, an advanced placement (AP) physics class and an AP English composition class. What I got was a second-year Spanish class (although I have never studied Spanish), a regular-level physics class (which I had completed last year) and a regular English class. My art class had been cancelled.

It took me three days to find someone who would even admit that my schedule was wrong and two more days to fix it. Meanwhile, the classes that I was supposed to be enrolled in were fin-

ishing their first week of work, leaving me behind.

In addition, two periods in the day were dropped. My double-period, 80-minute, AP physics class had been converted to a one-period, 50-minute class. When I found out, I was outraged. Even before, AP science students struggled to prepare for the difficult national tests in May. Now, with 30 minutes less each day, it will be even harder.

The fourth week of school, my French teacher was let go and replaced by another teacher, who had no idea where we were in the curriculum and was not yet prepared to take over the class.

There is yet another side to the difficulty of losing two periods a day: because there are no study halls and no free time during the class day, I have been unable to talk to my counselor about filling out her part of my college applications.

I am not the only student in the system with such problems. At other schools, students did not receive their programs until school had been in session for over a week. Some found themselves in classes of 35 to 45 students, where they had to share desks or even

floor space. Students did not receive books because teachers were not sure whether there would be class the next week and were hesitant to pass them out.

Meanwhile, Whitney Young has had 20 teacher positions cut since school resumed, in addition to those positions that were eliminated when teachers picked up their early retirement options. These and other cuts have cost our school its fine dance program, the orchestra, one of the choirs and some art classes for art majors.

Our Academic Decathlon Team, which placed third in national competitions the last two years, has no school time available for study and few teacher-experts available to tutor. The list goes on, both at Whitney Young and other Chicago public schools. With every cut, the students lose out.

Quality education a right

As a whole, the students at Whitney Young have been very upset about these cuts. And we made our frustrations known. First we complained to each other, our counselors and our parents; we circulated a petition; and we attended a rally sponsored by the teachers union. We also formed an alliance with students from other schools. We have put aside the pettiness of school rivalries and prejudice because we have found a common ground in our concern for our education. We have tried hard to let the public know how costly these cuts have been for the students. But the cuts continued.

Students were putting forth their point of view. But we were continually frustrated by the fact that politicians and the general public don't regard our concerns seriously.

As young adults, we need to be shown that our education is important and that it's worth our while to exert leadership. As adults, you need to recognize these facts and realize that a quality education is a right, not a privilege. ■

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

New Chicago Teachers Union contract

Deficit reduction

■ **INSURANCE** Employees, as a group, now pay roughly 1.5 percent of their salaries for health insurance. As a result, the board's costs will go up less than expected, reducing the deficit by \$12.7 million.

■ **CLASS SIZE** Class sizes are increased for the current semester only. Savings, \$10.2 million.

■ **50-MINUTE PERIODS** High school periods increase to 50 minutes from 40 minutes; teachers continue to teach five periods but have no duty period. Because students now need fewer courses to meet the state's requirement of 300 minutes of daily instruction, the system needed 500 fewer teachers. Following an outcry over the staff reductions, the union and School Board agreed to restore 100 teaching positions. Net savings, \$16.1 million.

■ **PENSION BORROWING** (The following is to be part of state legislation.) The board may borrow \$110 million from the teachers' pension fund over the next two years but must pay it back with interest equivalent to the prime rate. If the board misses a payment, the fund will be paid by the state from the School Board's October state aid payment. If the fund's funding ratio dips below 80 percent this school year, the board may not borrow the second \$55 million.

■ **BONUS FREEZE** Teachers who have earned bonuses for taking additional courses to advance on the salary schedule will receive the money due them, but no new applicants will be accepted during the life of the contract. Savings, \$4.2 million.

What schools got

■ **EXTRA TIME** Beginning next year, school employees will put in an extra five days, split between the beginning and end of the school year, for staff development, parent conferences, class preparation and the like. Half the time will be used for activities of individual teachers' own choosing; half will be used for school-determined activities. For students, classes will begin with a full day of instruction the day after Labor Day instead of a half day of instruction two days after Labor Day; as a result, students will get an extra 1 1/2 days of instruction.

■ **PRINCIPAL DISCRETION** Beginning this school year, assistant principals and head teachers will have terms of office that run concurrently with those of the principals who appoint them. Previously, assistant principals and head teachers had, in effect, life tenure; those chosen before Sept. 1 are "grandfathered" into their current jobs.

■ **WAIVERS** A school can apply for waivers of union contract requirements if 63.5 percent of its teachers approve of the proposed waiver; previously, it took 70 percent.

What teachers got

■ **MONEY** Staff will be paid an extra 2.5 percent next school year to compensate it for the extra week of work. Cost \$26 million.

A draw

■ **SENIORITY** Principals no longer may keep teaching positions officially vacant indefinitely and, in the process, deny jobs to qualified supernumerary teachers, newly renamed "reserve" teachers. Any teaching position vacant for more than 60 days must be filled by a reserve teacher so long as the teacher has proper certification and fits within faculty integration guidelines. However, a principal may replace a reserve teacher with someone else before the 60 days expire. If there are no vacancies in a reserve teacher's certification, that teacher will have 20 months to become recertified in an area of special need determined by the board.

Joint board-union committees

■ To monitor and improve the health insurance program with the view toward establishing an employee assistance plan and "wellness programs."

■ On school safety and enforcement of the uniform student discipline code.

■ To develop guidelines on teacher attendance and tardiness standards.

■ To recommend changes in the teacher evaluation process.

■ To review the year-round school program and address attendant problems.

Linda Lenz

DEBT

continued from page 1

from the teachers' pension fund, which amounts to about \$270 per pupil—for a combined total of \$1,000 per pupil.

From 1989-90 to 1991-92, 217 districts sold bonds to raise regular operating revenue, according to data supplied by the Illinois State Board of Education. In its analysis of that data, *CATALYST* found that 37 of those districts sold bonds more than once.

Some districts, such as Bloom Township High School District 206 in Cook County, were in desperate financial straits. Others, such as Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125 in Lake County, were in good financial shape but wanted to collect extra revenue before newly-enacted property tax caps took effect.

In general, suburban districts tend to use bond revenue to "maintain the level of [school] programs they're accustomed to," while poorer Downstate districts turn to bonds as a last resort, says Richard Laine, executive director of the Coalition for Educational Rights, a statewide organization that is lobbying to increase state funding to schools.

Chicago's proposed borrowing is not as great proportionately as other districts, but that doesn't mean the system is in relatively better financial shape. "Chicago had to make serious cuts to get where it is," Laine notes.

Unlike other districts in Illinois, the Chicago school system cannot, on its own, borrow for operating expenses. After the system went bankrupt in 1979, the Legislature required it to have a balanced budget each year, and created the School Finance Authority to sell \$573 million in bonds to pay off the school system's old debt and keep it operating.

Now, the School Board has asked the Legislature to permit the Finance Authority to sell another \$300 million in bonds, and to permit the board itself to borrow from the teachers' pension fund.

As *CATALYST* went to press Oct. 20, legislators were not close to an agreement on this request; meanwhile, the school system was heading toward another bankruptcy by spending roughly \$1 million a day more than its revenue could cover, according to the Finance Authority.

Also unlike other Illinois school districts, Chicago property owners won't

Top 10

Following are the districts that incurred the most debt per pupil from the sale of working cash bonds between 1989-90 and 1991-92.

Thornton, Dist. 205	\$4,304
Stevenson, Dist. 125	4,206
Skokie-Fairview, Dist. 72	3,974
Oak Plk-River Forest, Dist. 200	3,509
Leyden, Dist. 212	3,453
Franklin Park, Dist. 84	3,213
Morton Grove, Dist. 70	3,205
J.S. Morton, Dist. 201	3,033
Bloom, Dist. 206	2,826
Skokie, Dist. 68	2,727

Source: CATALYST analysis of state data.

see their property tax bills rise to cover bond payments. Under the borrowing plan crafted by Mayor Richard M. Daley, the board's own property tax rate would be cut to compensate for the additional taxes the Finance Authority would have to levy to pay off the bonds. As a result, the board would lose about \$38 million a year in direct revenue.

Following is a sample of what happened in other districts that sold bonds:

■ To avoid cutting a fourth of its staff—100 out of 400 workers—Bloom Township High School District 206 sold \$10 million in bonds during the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years, for an average of \$2,826 per pupil. Even so, it had to cut its budget by \$1 million; it eliminated 10 teaching positions and 14 support positions and reduced supplies, extracurricular activities and athletic programs.

Next March, the district will ask voters to approve a property tax increase of \$1.99 per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation. If the referendum fails, says John Dolak, assistant superintendent for business, Bloom will have to cut \$5 million immediately. Even if the referendum passes, says Dolak, the district will have to cut \$1.25 million. "It's gonna be tough," Dolak says. "Education is the only area where people have a say in the matter, and it's hard to get people to vote for a tax increase."

■ Marengo Community High School District 154 in McHenry County had been making budget cuts when it sold \$1 million in bonds in 1991, an average of \$2,016 per pupil. "We knew we had to have a surplus until we could

reduce our costs or pass a referendum," says Supt. Robert Seaver. The district plans to ask for a tax hike within two years. If the referendum passes, the district will be fine, Seaver says; otherwise, programs will be in jeopardy.

■ Burdened with 15 years of accumulated debt, and faced with a potential \$250,000 deficit, Skokie-Fairview School District 72 in Cook County sold \$1.9 million in bonds in 1991, an average of \$3,975 per pupil. In November, the district will ask voters to approve a tax hike of 30 cents per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation.

■ Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125 in Lake County was in sound financial shape in September 1991 but knew that tax caps were set to go into effect in October. So the district sold \$10.2 million in bonds, an average of \$4,206 per pupil.

"It was an opportunity to protect long-term financial interests," says Jim Hintz, business manager. Even with the huge bond sale, the district's tax rate is expected to decline over the next five years because of the growth in the district's property tax base, he says. ■

GANGS

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an alternative for our young people—or another system of political justice—then we are continuing to encourage gang violence."

Deanes, the PCC and other groups tried an "experiment," he says, involving Wallace "Gator" Bradley, a leader of the gang truce group United in Peace. The groups took Bradley to Marshall and Tilden high schools, "with the hopes that this could be something really positive," says Deanes. The idea was that if schools are declared safe zones, "No one's turf is violated that way, because the school is nobody's turf."

But the idea didn't work. "That didn't pan out," says Deanes, "but I was willing to try it. I don't know if it's improper for someone to appeal to that violent element to stop messing with our babies, but I would not talk about them in terms of organizations that impact schools in a positive way." ■

Michael Selinker contributed to this story.

Fewer candidates run for councils

Almost 1,000 fewer candidates ran for local school councils in 1993 than in 1991—7,390 (according to the latest data available from the Board of Education on Oct. 13), compared to 8,359. There were fewer contested elections—but only for the parent and community seats. This year, there were more contested elections for teacher seats than in 1991. Large schools and those with more low-income students tended to have more candidates, according to an analysis of the board's Oct. 13 candidate roster by the Chicago Panel on School Policy. There was no correlation between a school's racial and ethnic composition and its number of candidates.

PARENT ELECTIONS	1993	1991	TOTAL NUMBER OF :	CANDIDATES	SEATS
Contested elections	351	410	Parents	4,256	3,252
Just enough candidates	118	70	Community members	1,522	1,084
Not enough candidates	81	54	Teachers	1,612	1,084
COMMUNITY ELECTIONS	1993	1991	SCHOOLS WITH THE MOST CANDIDATES:		
Contested elections	253	342	Farragut High School, Humboldt Park		36
Just enough candidates	208	131	Ellington Elementary, Austin		33
Not enough candidates	89	62	Inter-American Magnet Elementary, Lake View		27
TEACHER ELECTIONS	1993	1991	Burke Elementary, Washington Park		26
Contested elections	285	263	Swift Elementary, Edgewater		25
Just enough candidates	253	259	Lewis Elementary, Austin		25
Not enough candidates	12	18	Esmond Elementary, Morgan Park		25
SCHOOLS WITH MOST COMPETITION			Bryn Mawr Elementary, South Shore		25
All 1993 races contested		115	DuSable High, Grand Boulevard		25

Source: 1993, Chicago Panel on School Policy; 1991, Leadership for Quality Education.

Comings and goings

MOVING IN/ON **Janet Hively**, executive director of the Golden Apple Foundation for Excellence in Teaching, has resigned. . . . **Robert Penn**, recently ousted as superintendent of the Chicago Park District, has become a consultant to the Chicago Cluster Initiative. . . . **Brenda Heffner**, a former Chicago principal, joins the Illinois State Board of Education as associate superintendent for specialized programs. She served as principal at Haugan Elementary from 1987-89, at Smyser from 1977-87 and at Beethoven from 1976-77. Most recently she was principal of Haven Middle School in Evanston. Her new duties include oversight of the state board's Chicago office. . . . **Mary E. Davidson**, principal investigator for the Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation, has become dean at the School of Social Work at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR **Adela Coronado-Greeley**, a founder of Inter-American Magnet Elementary School and a member of the Interim Board of Education, is the 1993-94 Illinois Teacher of the Year. Speaking at the awards ceremony, she said: "Schools of higher education need to prepare teachers to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically divergent student populations. Only then will we reduce the dropout rate of minority students, increase their participation in higher education and ultimately create professionals of all cultures and language groups."

SUPERINTENDENT APPOINTMENTS **Joanne Wooden-Roberts** is the new deputy superintendent of operation support. Previously she was director of special services in Rock Island's public

schools. She is the creator of a screening program for children with disabilities and speech impediments that is used nationwide. . . . **Charley Gillispie** was reappointed as chief financial officer. . . . **Robert L. Johnson**, former transportation director, has become special assistant to the general superintendent. . . . **Michael J. Gurgone** is the new treasurer; previously he was interim treasurer. . . . Following these appointments, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund criticized Supt. Johnson for not naming any Hispanics. A spokesperson for Johnson responded: "She's not finished yet." Also, the teacher newspaper *Substance* criticized the increased salaries for some of the individuals, in a year of pay freezes for other workers.



Wooden-Roberts



Gillispie

IN THE FIELD **Alvin Solomon** is the new principal at Budlong School; previously, he was acting principal. . . . **Raymond A. Johnson** has advanced from administrator to superintendent in subdistrict 9.

PUBLIC TO PRIVATE The 14-year-old daughter of School Board President **D. Sharon Grant** had transferred from Von Steuben High School to Benedict High School. "Despite my objections

it was a family decision," Grant told the *Chicago Tribune*. Grant also charged that the information was leaked by Chicago Teachers Union officials in an effort to distract attention from a bitter contract dispute.

LSC MENTORS SOUGHT The Community Renewal Society's Education Advocacy Committee is seeking volunteers to serve as resource persons for local school councils. For more information, call **Nelson Ndove** at (312) 427-4830 ext. 230, or write to him at Community Renewal Society, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, Ill., 60604.

GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS Dec. 3 is the nomination deadline for the prestigious Golden Apple Award for excellence in teaching. Nominees must be full-time teachers, pre-kindergarten through grade 5, in any public or non-public school in Cook, Lake or DuPage county. To obtain a nomination form, call (312) 407-0006 or write the Golden Apple Foundation, 8 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 700, Chicago, Ill. 60603.

CREATIVITY: COMICS TO CHEMISTS What it takes to inspire creativity and the motivation to learn and achieve in everyone is the topic of an October 31 program sponsored by the Chicago Academy of Sciences, 2001 N. Clark. Participants include comic **Aaron Freeman**, chemist **R. Stephen Barry**, University of Chicago research psychologist **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**, noted arts educator **Harriet Mayor Fullbright** and award-winning, 16-year-old violinist **Jennifer Koh**. The program starts at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$18 at the door. For tickets or more information, call (312) 549-3077.

Tonya McClarin



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