

# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

## Peer review

In Toledo, Ohio, veteran teachers judge beginners—and colleagues

## National review

Hammond, Ind. teachers strive to meet national teaching standards

Pages 10-14

## Pershing Road warms up to small schools

by Michael Klonsky

**A**s a new school year began last month, there were signs of growing acceptance of small, innovative schools by Supt. Argie Johnson and her staff.

In addition to bringing the Corporate Community School into the public-school fold (see *CATALYST*, September 1994), Johnson has established a Small Schools Task Force that, so far, has helped two schools-within-a-school find new homes. Further, the administration is helping organize a daylong Small Schools Workshop. (For details, see page 32.)

With a boost from Johnson's task force, Perspectives School, established two years ago as a school-within-a-school at Dyett Middle School, is slated to move to Columbia College, provided the School Board votes its approval.

See **SMALL SCHOOLS** page 29



JOHN BOOZ

Music and drama are two elements of Nobel Elementary School's arts-centered curriculum, which teachers say has helped raise children's self-esteem. Here, students and staff perform in a musical staged by the school. See *Front Lines*, page 18.

## Teachers give an 'F' to rating process

by Lorraine Forte

*"How can it be that evaluations of teachers and principals in classes and schools with 60 percent drop-out rates read excellent or superior?"*

School Board nominee José Rodriguez, quoted in the *Chicago Sun-Times*

**T**hat's a timely question, because the Chicago school system is just now beginning to address how best to evaluate teacher performance.

The Board of Education and the

Chicago Teachers Union recently formed a joint committee to investigate ways to improve the current evaluation and dismissal process. [The committee grew out of last year's contract negotiations when, according to Richard Guidice, assistant superintendent for government relations, the two sides couldn't agree on a way to simplify the firing process. As a result, the contract specified that the committee be set up.]

Out in the field, however, there appears to be a clear consensus: The current evaluation process is, in most

See **RATING** page 4

# Time to reform teacher evaluation

In Chicago—and probably most other big school systems—teacher evaluation is a joke. The “standards” are a checklist of criteria that have little to do with good teaching practice. In all but the smallest schools, principals don’t have time to observe and confer with every teacher every year. And as Gale Community Academy Principal Edis Snyder points out in our lead article, in some cases, principals don’t have the expertise. “I can’t keep up with every aspect of curriculum development,” she notes.

Snyder, among others interviewed for the article, offers an obvious solution: Teachers need to be involved in evaluating each other. While this can be a sticky situation—passing judgment on someone who has long been a colleague—it doesn’t have to be. Not if the purpose is to improve teaching, rather than simply slap a rating—unsatisfactory, satisfactory, etc.—on everyone.

In our Opinions section, Abbott Elementary School teacher Barbara Randolph goes one step further, saying that each teacher needs to evaluate herself as well. Specifically, she recommends that teachers keep diaries of classroom events, noting what has worked for them and what hasn’t, and compile portfolios, which would include, for example, participation in professional development activities. Clearly, Randolph takes teaching very seriously. Just as clearly, that’s not the case with everyone who calls himself or herself a teacher. But Randolph’s recommendations are no less valid for these teachers-in-name-only; a little required self-examination just might nudge them into rethinking what they’re about.

Both Snyder and Randolph make one other recommendation that is logical under Chicago school reform. Each school should devise its own plan for teacher evaluation. But there can, and should, be some standard general guidelines, like the involvement of teachers.

A joint committee of the Board of Education and the Chicago Teachers Union has begun to explore the issues

of teacher evaluation and dismissal. If members agree up front that the goal is better teaching, they will, as Randolph urges, scrap the current rating system, which has neither improved instruction nor helped schools get rid of teachers who are beyond help.

*Linda Lenz*      *Lorraine Forte*



Linda Lenz



Roy Larson

With this issue, *CATALYST* editor Linda Lenz takes on the additional responsibilities of publisher, succeeding Roy Larson, who is retiring from the Community Renewal Society (CRS). *CATALYST* was conceived in 1989 when Lenz, then senior education writer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, brought the idea for an education newsletter to CRS, publisher of the award-winning *Chicago Reporter*. CRS embraced the idea, and together they developed *CATALYST* with the backing of four major foundations.

Lenz has been a Chicago area journalist for more than 26 years, serving as a reporter and editorial writer for the old *Chicago Daily News* and as a reporter and columnist for Pioneer Press.

Larson, a former *Sun-Times* religion editor, has been publisher of the *Reporter* since 1985 and of *CATALYST* since its inception. In his “retirement” he will help form the Center for Religion and the News Media, a joint endeavor of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

Also with this issue, Marvln Reed, a 1993 journalism graduate of Columbia College, assumes the new post of circulation manager for *CATALYST* and the *Reporter*.

*CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform* is an independent publication created to document, analyze and support school improvement efforts in Chicago's public schools.

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# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

VOLUME VI NUMBER 2  
OCTOBER 1994

## TEACHER EVALUATION

### 1 Teachers give an 'F' to rating process

They offer some alternatives too.

### 7 Principals win most dismissal cases

But it wasn't easy.

### 10 Peer review: a helping hand—and a push out the door

Teachers in several cities police themselves.

### 13 New program helps teachers put together a class act

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards swings into action.



### 16 Opinions

Teacher Barbara Randolph says current rating system should be abolished.

### 18 Front Lines

Nobel Elementary: How an inner-city school became a 'model for all'

### 27 Updates

Pershing Road warms up to small schools (beginning on page 1) . . . Mayoral campaign provides backdrop for School Board choices . . . Tribute to 'a dreamer and a pragmatist'

### 17 Letters

### 24 Grants

### 26 Elsewhere

### 32 Comings and Goings



1994, Best Newsletter  
Educational Press Association of America.

1993, 1994 Distinguished Achievement Award,  
Educational Press Association of America.  
1993 Peter Lisagor Award, Best Newsletter.



**Wil Matthews, junior,  
Whitney Young Magnet High School**

"If you failed a test, my geometry teacher would always ask questions like, 'Were you up late? Is there something going on at home where you couldn't study?' One time my friend didn't have a chance to study, and this teacher let her study and take the test again."



**Delin Guerra, senior,  
Kenwood Academy High School**

"My division teacher and I can talk about anything—what's going on in school and in my personal life. That's one of the qualities of a good teacher."

criticism, Nowatzki adds. "An athlete doesn't get better without coaching. Classical musicians still go to master classes. Everyone needs coaching to get better."

## No time

For principals, lack of time is probably the biggest barrier to better evaluation. Especially since reform, principals have more administrative duties, and less time to act as "instructional leaders." And Chicago requires every tenured teacher to be evaluated every year, even though state law requires tenured teachers to be evaluated only every two years.

With 80 teachers on staff, "for me to have a conference with all of them is just too much," says Beverly Tunney, principal of Healy Elementary in Bridgeport and president of the Chicago Principals Association.

Also, the Board of Education's prescribed evaluation form is a mere checklist that doesn't help principals accurately measure good teaching. "It's obsolete. It hasn't been updated since State Street was a prairie," says Principal Sharon Rae Bender of Schurz High School in Irving Park.

To get around that obstacle, Principal Linda Sienkiewicz of Piccolo Elementary in Humboldt Park designed her own form to use in addition to the board's. On her form, Sienkiewicz describes in detail what she has seen during classroom observations; later, she asks teachers what they were attempting to accomplish with a particular lesson, "to see if the teacher's objective matches what I saw in the

## RATING

*continued from page 1*

instances, meaningless. (For an explanation of the process, see story on page 6.)

Teachers say the process does little or nothing to enhance their professional growth, and that many principals never look at lesson plans, make more than a cursory visit—if any—to their classrooms, and sometimes give higher ratings to their "favorites" on staff.

On the last day of school, when teachers receive their evaluation forms, "We see it, we sign it, we get our paycheck, we go home," says Paddy O'Reilly, Head Start teacher at Whittier Elementary in Pilsen/Little Village. "It's something you do to fulfill the [teachers' union] contract."

"My class was quiet, my kids weren't flying off the rafters," says Consuela Milburn, a 23-year veteran of Earle Elementary in West Englewood and a winner of a Golden Apple teaching award. Former principals "assumed I was a good teacher, when really I could have been teaching about witches, cults or anything and they never would have known." (Earle's current principal, she adds, visits classes often.)

Evaluating teachers "is such a critical issue," she observes. "There are so many teachers taking up space, sitting at their desks. . . 'ditto' teachers who 'ditto' kids to death" by passing out

worksheets instead of preparing substantive lessons.

It's especially important for principals to spend time observing, evaluating and guiding new teachers, says Donna Nowatzki of Sabin Magnet Elementary in West Town. As a beginning teacher at McCormick Elementary in South Lawndale eight years ago, Nowatzki recalls, she got no observation or feedback. She had been assigned to a Spanish bilingual classroom—even though her second language is Russian, not Spanish—and had taught previously only at the high school level.

"No one darkened my door. It was a very frightening time," she says.

In contrast, in her first teaching job, at suburban Lyons Township High School, she was observed three times: twice by the principal or assistant principal and once by her department chair. Each visit was for an entire 50-minute period, and she and the observer had a conference afterward. "I did find it helpful and did learn things," she says.

Chicago Teachers Union spokesperson Jackie Gallagher agrees that evaluation is critical in a teacher's first years. "You would not end up giving tenure to people who shouldn't be there," she observes. "Whatever that person is going to do in the classroom is usually set within three years," the time it takes to earn tenure in Chicago.

Still, even experienced teachers benefit from observation and constructive

## Evaluation Committee

**BOARD OF EDUCATION:** Belkis Santos, assistant superintendent for human resources; Joseph Hahn, Subdistrict 6 superintendent; Linda Sienkiewicz, principal, Piccolo Elementary; Janis Todd, principal, Lincoln Park High.

**CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION:** Pamelyn Massarsky, recording secretary, Chicago Teachers Union; Annette Lucas, teacher, Brenan Elementary; Laurence Laughlin, teacher, Kennedy High; Thomas Starnicky, teacher, Disney Magnet; Verna Gray, teacher, Mark Sheridan Academy.

classroom." Sienkiewicz also outlines specific improvements a teacher needs to make, and tries to "find something commendable to say" about each teacher's performance.

Principals also must document their reasons for lowering a rating from the previous year. To avoid the hassle, "we've gotten into the rut, the habit, of giving *far* too many superior ratings," Tunney acknowledges.

That may be particularly true of new principals. "As a new principal, I *know* I gave people superior ratings I never should have given them to, and I was then locked into it," Tunney says. "It's just an uncomfortable situation."

The Board of Education was unable to supply statistics on the number of teachers whose performance ratings last year fell into each of the four categories: superior, excellent, satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

From a principal's point of view, there's a distinct Catch-22 to giving a teacher a rating of "unsatisfactory," no matter how poor their performance. A teacher with an "unsatisfactory" rating cannot be transferred to another school, yet it can take years to fire a teacher. (See story on page 7.)

"I've had people tell me 'I would advise you never to give an unsatisfactory because you'll never get rid of them,'" says Bender.

## Agenda for action

Teachers and principals seem to agree, however, that formal evaluation shouldn't be scrapped altogether.

"I view evaluation as a form of support," says Georgina Swanson, a former Sabin Magnet teacher who now is a coordinator with the Urban Education Program of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. "It's crucial for administrators to play a role, especially for new teachers. Principals need to be held accountable for what's going on at their school."

As a new teacher, "I did not like [not being observed]," says Milburn. "I really wanted to improve my craft and would have welcomed any constructive criticism. I thought, I'm being short-changed—someone else can see my mistakes better than I can."

In 1988, members of the Education Summit convened by the late Mayor Harold Washington recommended that

the evaluation process be "upgraded to be a developmental process for professional growth." That theme is echoed by teachers, principals and other educators.

"We're looking to link the evaluation process more to teacher improvement," says Joseph Hahn, superintendent of Subdistrict 6 and a member of the joint board-union committee. "A school is 80 percent service and like any service industry, the quality of your product is dependent on the quality of your people."

Susan Black, a professor of graduate studies at Elmira College (Elmira, N.Y.) who has researched evaluation systems, says that "you can't do a one-hour evaluation and expect a teacher to change." To improve the process, she says, principals and other evaluators should be neutral and "take personalities out of the process"; teachers should not strive to please principals; and principals should pay more attention to how they communicate their observations back to teachers.

In one study, Black points out, principals and teachers were given the same evaluation report to read and "saw entirely different things"; a principal, for instance, judged a particular written comment as a suggestion, while a teacher judged the same comment as criticism.

Black, who is helping the Elmira School District overhaul its evaluation process, says the most profound change

so far has been the district's focus on "asking teachers to clarify their beliefs about how kids learn and then move that into practice."

Education Summit members recommended a two-step process in which departments or grade-level units would set specific improvement goals each year; then, teachers, working with the principal, would set their own individual goals and be evaluated on how closely they achieved them.

Goal-setting should be central to any evaluation process, says Dren Geer, coordinator of the Chicago Alliance for Leadership and Learning, a consortium of area universities that offers training and mentoring programs for new and prospective principals. The Alliance does provide some training in evaluation, he says, "but we're much more concerned with [principals] giving support and leadership to teachers."

"The critical issue," Geer adds, "is asking, 'What have teachers done to help meet the goal? Has a teacher contributed to the improvement of the school?'"

## Let teachers judge?

Elsewhere, peer evaluation has caught on in a few mid-sized school districts. The American Federation of Teachers—of which the Chicago Teachers Union is an affiliate—promotes peer review. (See

### Eun Lim, senior, Mather High School

"My division teacher, who was also the computer teacher, was like one of the boys. We wrestled with him and threw paper airplanes at each other when we came to class. He's the kind of guy you want to be around and learn from. He understands kids. Unfortunately, he got laid off."

### Misty Handy, sophomore, Morgan Park High School

"I had a teacher who was really strict, but she cared about her students and wanted us to learn something. She was no-nonsense, but she cared. I could always go and get help from her."



JOHN BOOZ





**Irene Lee, senior,  
Lane Technical High School**

"When I was a freshman, I was very quiet and shy. Each class, my biology teacher would make me scream in front of the whole group. 'Act like you need to scream for help,' he'd say. After that I began to speak up and talk, and now sometimes I think I'm too loud."



**Jean Soh, senior,  
Kenwood Academy High School**

"My English teacher would make us write in journals every day and one entry we'd mark giving her permission to read. She'd write back and make comments, always positive, or help us with a personal problem. She also let people volunteer to read from their journals. I learned to be tolerant of the differences in people this way. I also discovered she was teaching me without me even being aware of it."

## How teachers are evaluated

The Illinois School Code requires school districts to evaluate each tenured teacher at least once every two years, but Chicago evaluates them every year.

A principal must hold a meeting with teachers after the 20th, but before the 40th, day of school, to review and explain the evaluation process.

Sometime during the school year, the principal or an assistant principal must observe the teacher on at least two different school days. The dates of the observations are included on the classroom teacher visitation form, a checklist of 19 criteria in instruction, classroom environment, and professional and personal standards, on which teachers are rated.

On the Friday prior to the last week of school, principals distribute teacher evaluation review forms, which include the dates of observations and conferences, statements on the teachers' overall strengths and weaknesses and the final performance rating: Superior, Excellent, Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. The forms become part of a teacher's personnel file.

It's apparently not uncommon for teachers to receive blank forms, though. One teacher who did says ironically, "I got a superior rating with blank spaces, so I assume I have no strengths and no weaknesses."

A new principal cannot evaluate tenured teachers until the principal has been at the school for five months; a new principal evaluating a teacher for the first time can lower that teacher's rating without documenting why. *Lorraine Forte*

they know it all, and I don't think there's anyone who knows everything. Those who think they know it all just outweigh those who are really willing to learn."

Another approach might be to let schools develop their own systems, within guidelines. Snyder, for one, favors the notion, "as long as each principal can document and be consistent" in rating teachers.

"When you look at the school settings across this city, you can't have one set of guidelines," Gallagher points out. "I don't think there can be one cookie-cutter approach." ■

story on page 10.) The teachers' contract specifies that the board-union committee consider peer evaluation as it makes its recommendations.

The AFT's rationale, says spokesman Jamie Horwitz, is that unions are "sick and tired of being blamed for bad teachers. If you're going to hold us responsible then give us the power [to police the profession]. The people who know bad teachers are other teachers."

From a principal's perspective, some form of peer evaluation would help ease the time burden because under current state law, only a principal or an assistant principal can conduct evaluations.

"You wind up being in a situation where there's just no opportunity to supervise in the most productive way," says Principal Edis Snyder of Gale Community Academy in Rogers Park. Snyder has a math specialist and a reading specialist on staff, and considers both qualified to conduct evaluations. She and the assistant principal, Snyder points out, "are not necessarily the most expert. I can't keep up with every aspect of curriculum development."

At Schurz, Bender and three assistant principals evaluate 188 teachers each year. But, says Bender, "I think peers are the best. If there's a weak link in the chain, teachers will go after them."

For teachers, the peer approach

would help eliminate favoritism and broaden what Black of Elmira College terms the "one-judge, one-jury" approach of most current systems.

"I don't think the school system should evaluate me, but I also think the school system should help me develop," says Barbara Randolph, a library media teacher at Abbott Elementary in Armour Square. "They should send me to conferences and have high-class staff development, [but] I think teachers should be developing each other."

Using peer review, however, "has to be done carefully," says the CTU's Gallagher. "If you have a principal and two teachers making decisions, it's difficult to not let personalities get involved. If [outside] people come in just to do observations and then judge a teacher's whole worth, that doesn't make sense either. . . It has to be a group discussion, with the teacher involved, really involved."

Time would still be a critical factor, Nowatzki points out. She recalls wanting to start a peer mentoring and evaluation program for newcomers at Sabin last year; the principal gave her the go-ahead, but the idea never got off the ground for lack of planning time.

Milburn is also skeptical of some teachers' ability to give and take constructive criticism. "Some teachers think

# Principals win most dismissal cases

by Lorraine Forte

It's no secret that most Chicago principals think it's too hard to fire poor teachers. Many parents, and about a third of teacher leaders think so too, according to a *CATALYST* survey published in the May 1993 issue.

Yet in the past year and a half, principals and the Board of Education have won 14 out of 21 teacher dismissal cases that went before a hearing officer of the Illinois State Board of Education. In seven cases, the hearing officer ordered the teacher reinstated.

Chicago also fired more teachers than school districts in the rest of the state. During the same time period, only 12 cases from outside Chicago went before the state board; hearing officers upheld the firings of five teachers and reinstated seven to their jobs.

Of the 14 Chicago teachers whose dismissals were upheld, only six were fired for unsatisfactory teaching. The other eight were fired for inflicting corporal punishment, excessive absenteeism or tardiness, being absent without leave, threatening a co-worker and "conduct unbecoming a teacher"—in this instance, having sexual intercourse with a student.

But in three of the seven cases in

which teachers were reinstated—including one that had dragged on for three years—the ruling was based on a technicality; for instance, a principal had not filled out a form completely or had given a teacher 44, rather than the prescribed 45, days of remediation.

One such case was later reversed after the Board of Education appealed the reinstatement to the Circuit Court of Cook County. The court ordered the same hearing officer to reconsider the case and make a decision based on the "substantive issue" of the teacher's performance. Finally, a year after the teacher was reinstated and two years after she was first told that her teaching performance was below par, the hearing officer ruled that the board could fire her.

Statewide, about 25 to 30 teacher dismissal hearings are held each year, according to Kim Knauer, spokeswoman for the Illinois State Board of Education. Other cases never reach that stage, Knauer says, because the teacher doesn't appeal the firing or the case is otherwise settled. There are no statistics on such cases, she explains, because "it's a local employment decision and they [districts] don't have to report it to us."

Putting together a case that likely will hold up isn't easy. A principal and the Board of Education must prove that the



JOHN BOGOT

**Erica Dobbs, junior,  
Whitney Young Magnet High School**

"I hate when teachers stick to their schedules no matter what, even if it means most of the class is lagging far behind because they don't understand something. When you ask some teachers for a little more time in a chapter, they say, 'No, we are supposed to finish this chapter in a week.' I know some kids who wouldn't go to class after that."

teacher's performance or conduct is "irremediable." And the Illinois Supreme Court has defined "irremediable" to mean that damage has been done to students, other faculty or the school, and that the teacher's conduct could not have been corrected if he or she had been warned. If the behavior continues long enough, it can also be judged irremediable, the Supreme Court has said.

"It takes a lot of data gathering [to prove a case], which I'm willing to do, but it's time consuming," says Linda Sienkiewicz, principal of Piccolo

## Steps for firing an unsatisfactory tenured teacher

### THE PRINCIPAL . . .

Months . . . . .	1-3 days	1-30 days	45 days
The principal documents the teacher's shortcomings, a process that principals say can take several months.	Within three school days after issuing the E-3, the principal must select, from a subdistrict roster compiled by the teachers' union, a consulting teacher to help with the remediation program. (The Reform Act shortened the remediation period for Chicago teachers from a year to 45 days; elsewhere in Illinois, it's still one year.)	Within seven school days after selecting a consulting teacher, the principal must schedule a meeting with the consultant and the teacher to discuss the remediation plan. The plan is to be put in place no later than 30 days after the E-3 is issued.	After the 45-day remediation period, the principal determines whether the teacher's performance has improved. If not, the principal writes a letter to the General Superintendent of Schools, requesting that the teacher be dismissed.

## How private firms fire workers

**H**ere is how some major private companies decide how to dismiss employees:

### Humana HMO

Humana uses a point system, instituted in June 1993, under which every offense is assigned a certain number of points, depending on seriousness. Any employee who racks up six or more points in a year is fired.

Since the point system has been in place, about 50 of Humana's 2,800 employees have accumulated six or more points. About half of them have appealed their firing to an employee panel, but most of those cases have not been settled yet.

### Merrill Lynch Investments

When the company cuts jobs to trim its costs, decisions about who to cut are based not on seniority but on money—Which divisions of the company are losing money? Which employees in those divisions bring in the least money? Are some positions expendable?

Investment firms are "unlike the teaching profession," says Bill Clark, vice president for communications. "You could have a teacher who had been teaching for 15 years, who is maybe burned out or over-the-hill, but you you can't get rid of that person. We can. We have a little more flexibility because we come down to a bottom line. We are in the business of profiting."

### CNA Insurance Companies

Supervisors are first expected to talk with a worker about any problem with his or her performance. If this first conversation doesn't turn things around, the supervisor writes a formal memo, outlining the problem and giving the worker 30 days to work it out.

If the problem is not solved after a month, the supervisor then maps out exactly what the worker must do to correct the problem over a one- to three-month probationary period. If the problem has not been solved by the end of the probationary period, the worker is fired.

### Motorola Telecommunications

A supervisor is expected to tell a worker if and when there is a problem with his or her performance, then ask the employee what is causing the problem and whether the company can help solve it.

If the employee has a personal problem and needs counseling, legal aid or other help, Motorola's Employee Assistance Program provides some services. If the worker needs better training to do the job, the company has a thick catalog of free courses.

If personal help or professional training cannot solve the problem and it continues, the worker can eventually be put on probation for three months. If the problem is not solved by the end of the probationary period, the worker is fired.

*Dan Weissmann*



### Kathryn Hughes, senior, Kenwood Academy High School

"'Are you David's sister?' That was it for me. For the rest of the year, my teacher had it out for me because she didn't like my older brother. She'd take points off my papers or lose my work. I had it rough, and I hadn't even done anything."

Elementary in Humboldt Park, who has won two out of three dismissal cases she initiated since becoming principal of Piccolo in 1990.

To bolster her cases, Sienkiewicz explains, she took special pains to document her efforts to help the teachers improve. "I won't say that I would have lost if I hadn't," she says, "but I personally felt it helped my case." In one instance, she kept a log on her home computer for nine months detailing each memo and discussion held with the teacher regarding her performance.

Proving poor performance "is really, in and of itself, probably the biggest

## Still more steps for firing an unsatisfactory tenured teacher

### THE SCHOOL BOARD . . .

#### Weeks . . . . .

The superintendent asks the Law Department to investigate. If the Law Department determines that the case has merit, the teacher is served with a notice that he or she must appear at a pre-suspension hearing presided over by a Chicago Board of Education hearing officer. If the hearing officer rules that the teacher should be suspended, a motion to suspend the teacher without pay is sent to the School Board for a vote.

#### 1-5 days

The teacher is served with a suspension notice within five days of the board vote. After being served with the notice, he or she is removed from the classroom.

#### 1-10 days

If the teacher wants to appeal the suspension, he or she must notify the board within 10 days.

#### 15-30 days

If the teacher appeals, the Chicago board contacts the Illinois State Board of Education to schedule a hearing for no fewer than 15, and no more than 30, days after the motion was approved.



problem," says Richard Guidice, assistant superintendent for governmental relations. "If you have any other paperwork at all to do, you have to put it aside and do this."

Rather than tackle a process that can take several years from start to finish, principals often just arrange to transfer a poorly performing teacher to another school. "Either that, or they just learn to live with them," says Sharon Rae Bender, principal of Schurz High School in Irving Park.

Such transfers aren't *always* bad for the receiving school, says Sienkiewicz. "A teacher might go down the street and be entirely successful because they needed that change."

Dismissal cases are time-consuming for School Board lawyers, too, and time is money. It costs the board "anywhere from \$25,000 to \$90,000" in lawyer salaries to handle a dismissal case from start to finish, Guidice estimates.

Costly delays also arise when hearing officers fail to rule on a case within 45 days, as required by state law. In such instances, principals and the Board of Education "lose jurisdiction," or authority, to dismiss the teacher.

"Basically, it means we lose the case," says School Board attorney Michael Hernandez. Guidice recalls one case that was ruled on in 46 days, "and it was still sent back."

Chicago is also shortchanged, Guidice adds, by the State Board of Education requirement that a hearing officer come from outside the school district involved. That rules out anyone from Chicago, he says, "who would be more familiar with an urban system."

Two years ago, the School Board lobbied for legislation that would have

eased both these restrictions. The legislation passed the Republican-controlled Illinois Senate, but died in the Democratic-controlled Illinois House.

## Standard union practice

Workers in any union workplace, like teachers, usually have the right to due-process hearings before they can be fired, says labor lawyer Tom Gibbons. It's also standard practice for any union contract to include "for cause" provisions requiring managers to show clear, substantive reasons for firing workers.

Often, Gibbons adds, a supervisor "just doesn't want to go through the hassle" of following the required disciplinary and due-process procedures. "Sometimes it seems people just want to go into a room and say, 'You're fired.'"

While taking a graduate course, Kenwood Academy High School teacher Karen Knudstrup researched teacher dismissal cases from across the country and found that, in the past, principals and school districts had often violated teachers' due-process rights. That happened so frequently that precedents against firing have built up, she explains, to the point that "it's now much too difficult to fire them."

"I was shocked," says Knudstrup, a teachers union delegate. "I believed initially that if you observed due process you could get rid of bad teachers. I found it was not the case."

Sienkiewicz, a member of a joint Board of Education-Chicago Teachers Union committee that is exploring ways to improve teacher evaluation and dismissal, says flatly that teachers—like principals—should be hired on contracts.

## Final steps for firing an unsatisfactory tenured teacher

### THE STATE BOARD . . .

#### 1-5 days

Within five days of being notified of the hearing, the State Board of Education must supply the Chicago board with a list of five prospective hearing officers. The Chicago board and the teacher (or his lawyer) alternately strike names until only one name remains.

#### Weeks . . .

Scheduling and completing a hearing can take "anywhere from a week to a month," according to School Board attorney Michael Hernandez.

#### 1-45 days

Within 45 days of the hearing's close, the hearing officer must issue a ruling either upholding the firing or reinstating the teacher. Either side can appeal to the Cook County Circuit Court.



JOHN BOUZE

### Dana Gills, sophomore, Morgan Park High School

"Once I had the flu and was out several days at the same time science projects were due. When I returned to school, my teacher wouldn't let me turn in my project even though she knew I was home with the flu. Another time, I forgot to write my name on a test and I scored 100 percent. She told me because I didn't write my name on the test, she was going to give me a zero."

That's highly unlikely, she concedes. But "no one ever thought principals would lose tenure, and they did," she adds. "Sure, it would be comfortable for me to sit back and have tenure, but I look at my friends in the business world and they say, 'Well, that's the way it is in my world.' So I'm no different from anyone else."

[Compared to the private-sector, it is difficult to fire a teacher. In Illinois, non-union workers at private firms can be fired "at will"—which means a company can dismiss an employee for just about any reason, provided the firing is not discriminatory; that is, based on race, gender or other reasons prohibited by federal law. However, many companies develop specific dismissal policies.]

Shortening the remediation period from 45 to 20 days would help, suggests Bender. "That gives teachers a month [to improve] and that's plenty time."

Other principals, though, are philosophical about the current process. "Yes, it is difficult, but realistically, you are talking about a career, and you do have to be careful that people aren't victims of favoritism [by principals] and so on," says Edis Snyder, principal of Gale Community Academy in Rogers Park. "So it must be a difficult process." ■

# Peer review: a helping hand—and a push out the door

by Grant Pick

**K**im Steinbock, a beginning teacher in the Toledo public schools, was leading her 6th-graders in a discussion of drug and alcohol abuse one day last fall when she found herself in awkward territory. A youngster pointed out that 13-year-olds can drink in Germany, and suddenly the class was asking why American teens couldn't do the same.

Not knowing what to say, Steinbock stumbled on for a few minutes without answering. At a break she turned to veteran teacher Marcia Heintschel, who was observing the class in her role as Steinbock's "consultant." "What do I do?" asked Steinbock. Heintschel advised her to acknowledge what goes on in Germany, but to say the practice doesn't square with American standards and then quickly move on.

The advice worked—the class saw a new perspective, and Steinbock was released from her bind.

Such interactions are central to Toledo's peer review program, which matches new teachers, called interns, with experienced colleagues for a year of classroom observation and counsel. At the end of the year, the consulting teachers recommend whether the neophytes should be hired permanently. Consulting teachers also are called upon to help experienced teachers who are judged in need of remediation. Together, these responsibilities make teachers every bit as important as principals in teacher evaluation.

While Toledo's peer-review plan has caught on in a few other cities, it remains a rarity in American school systems—in part because it asks administrators to surrender some of their assessment power and in part because many teachers prefer not to have such authority. But Toledo's

school district and teachers' union officials swear by the plan as a way to lend dignity to teaching.

"Teaching is usually viewed like a job in an automobile plant, with the principal as the foreman and the teachers as workers on the line," says Dal Lawrence, president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers, who designed the plan. "When there's poor instruction, the teachers say to the principal, 'You fix it.' We're saying it's the teachers—not anybody else—who need to be responsible for lousy teaching. This is at the heart of what the teaching profession should be about."

*"It's the teachers—not anybody else—who need to be responsible for lousy teaching."*

—Dal Lawrence, Toledo Federation of Teachers

Marcia Heintschel, a veteran 4th-grade teacher, applied for a consultant's position after her experience with student teachers convinced her that entry-level educators needed help. A consultancy is not a permanent assignment but a three-year leave from the classroom that brings with it a \$5,000 salary bonus. Landing the job required Heintschel to secure five recommendations—from her principal, her union representative and three colleagues—to be interviewed and to undergo unannounced classroom visits.

After becoming a consultant in 1991, Heintschel worked with interns who displayed a number of problems; Heintschel started with presenting the curriculum in the right order and making it interesting. Discipline, she says, also was frequently dispensed in an

inconsistent manner. "A new teacher might give Johnny a pass every time he talks, but whenever Debbie talks, she gets nailed," says Heintschel.

When Heintschel first showed up in her classroom, Steinbock, a recent graduate of the University of Toledo education school, was apprehensive. I hope she doesn't force me to teach just like she does, Steinbock thought. But during Heintschel's eight classroom visits, Steinbock came to rely on her—and not only in dealing with sensitive discussions on subjects such as drugs. At one point, Steinbock had trouble dealing with a boy named Dion,

who was forever battling her. Give the youngster positive reinforcement instead of the back of your hand, Heintschel suggested, and that did the trick. "It was as if Marcia had had Dion as a student," marvels Steinbock.

She even called Heintschel at home on such issues as how to frame negative remarks on a report card. "Marcia was more like a support than a person who was rating me," says Steinbock. "She was a consultant, but she was also a mentor, a friend—a rock, really."

Each spring, Toledo consultants rate their interns in four areas—teaching methods, skill at running a classroom, academic knowledge and personal characteristics—and then defend their findings before a review panel composed of five teachers and four administrators, including teachers union president

Lawrence and William Lehrer, the school system's personnel director. Steinbock got a satisfactory rating from Heintschel; two other interns during Heintschel's tenure were not so lucky and flunked. A military veteran ran his class like a regiment, says Heintschel, and a woman "thought she was Marshal Dillon, and her kids rebelled"; the woman is back in the intern program, trying to improve.

Second-year Toledo teachers, having passed out of intern status, are assessed by their principals, but by all accounts that rating is a rubber stamp. Thereafter, the principal does an assessment once every four years, though the second part of the Toledo plan allows the school administrator and a committee of teachers to recommend a poorly performing colleague for intervention. "Intervention is for somebody that everybody is bitching about," says Lawrence. "Nobody wants to work next to an incompetent."

Interventions are difficult, for the teacher under the gun as well as for the consultant assigned the case. Consultant Jackie Adams is dealing with one seasoned teacher whom she describes as "bad" by all measures. "This person feels very threatened," says Adams. "It's definitely not an amiable situation or anything close, and I can't see any progress."

## Frank assessment

Rules of the Toledo plan apply no performance standards to an intervention because each one is considered unique. And there is no time limit on the process. "They can go from three weeks to three years," says Lawrence. Ultimately, though, a consultant, either completing an intervention or tiring of it, will issue a report that contains a frank assessment but no recommendation. Disposition of the case is up to Lehrer's personnel department. If personnel fires someone, the union can elect to represent the individual at a state hearing. Under peer review, says Dal Lawrence, "I think we've taken on only two cases."

(In Chicago, "consulting" teachers,

during a 45-day remediation period, help teachers who have been rated unsatisfactory; at the end of this period, the principal evaluates the teacher's performance. If the teacher is fired and appeals to the Illinois State Board of Education, the Chicago Teachers Union is obligated to represent him or her at the hearing, according to spokesperson Jackie Gallagher.)

Lawrence says some union members complain about the overall plan, "but the larger goal is being accomplished—we have competent teachers in Toledo."

FRAN LEE



The Toledo plan owes its creation to Lawrence, union president since 1967. Before, principals judged their faculties. "The evaluations were hit or miss," says Lawrence. "Hardly anybody got fired, and when they were, they usually won their cases on appeal." An early convert to the notion of peer review, Lawrence found his members staunchly behind the idea, yet he got nowhere with it in contract talks during the 1970s. According to Lawrence, principals held tight to the old system of assessment because it meant power for them, "and it wasn't worth going on strike over."

During contract talks in 1981, however, Lawrence raised the intern issue and found a sympathetic ear in Jim Duggan, the board's labor lawyer. "How would this work?" Duggan wondered. After Lawrence laid out a program for

interns, Duggan went off to talk to Donald Steele, then the school superintendent. Duggan returned with the idea for intervention, and together Lawrence and Duggan stitched together the Toledo plan. To Duggan's mind, a key piece of the arrangement was the board of review for hiring new teachers; it includes both teachers and administrators yet is tilted slightly in the teachers' favor. "We felt that if this was going to work, it had to be driven from their side," recalls Duggan.

The plan does seem to be working, say observers. "What's happening in Toledo is extremely effective," says James T. Gallagher, an education professor at Michigan State University who has studied peer review. He applauds intervention—"It's taken teachers whose tools have gone sour and made them either improve or get out"—and he likes the intern program for its ability to weed out young people who aren't equipped to teach. "New teachers need support, but despite all we do, sometimes they don't have the skills," says Sylvia Washburn, a consultant who was named U.S. teacher of the year in 1990 by the Walt Disney Co. "Maybe they don't like

kids, or maybe they don't know how to handle them. Just because you're a CPA, doesn't mean you're an accountant. Just because you went to school doesn't mean you're a teacher."

## Complaints from colleagues

During the last academic year, 17 of 170 first-year prospects failed to make the grade, roughly a 10-percent failure rate that has held for the last four years. Over the last 13 years, relates Lawrence, Toledo has seen 44 interventions, resulting in 33 teachers either leaving the system or being fired. Eight teachers have won reinstatement, and three are still undergoing intervention. If teachers are upset over the intervention procedure, it's hard to tell—more than two-thirds of the complaints about experienced teachers come from

fellow teachers, not principals, and often after great angst. "Remember, you're having to target someone who you've eaten with and commiserated with," notes Lawrence. "It isn't easy."

Three ongoing interventions in a corps of 2,400 Toledo teachers may seem like a small number, but Lawrence insists, "That's three more than are going in most other school districts. The truth is that we probably have more incompetent teachers than that in Toledo, but then any school district has more incompetents than they are willing to admit."

David McClellan, president of the Toledo Association of Administrative Personnel, says that principals felt "initial resentment" over the Toledo plan because they saw "their prerogatives being bargained away." The association sued to block the plan, but a judge threw out the case. In time, though, the principals and other administrators were won over, and they even started a mentoring program of their own: Every newly assigned administrator in Toledo is paired with a veteran—for support and, after a year, for evaluation. Over five years, reports McClellan, a handful of administrators have been demoted as a consequence.

The Toledo plan has been replicated in nearby cities by affiliates of the American Federation of Teachers, whose president, Albert Shanker, supports peer

review. "Shanker has always been pleased with this," says Lawrence. "His underlings were aghast, but he got behind it."

In Rochester, N.Y., consultants called "lead teachers" divide their time equally between teaching and consulting, and interventions last just 18 months. Once past the intern stage, teachers are assessed every three years, partly through classroom observation and partly through portfolios they assemble—"just like fashion models do," says teachers union president Adam Urbanski, "except in our case there are fewer pictures."

Since 1986, when the peer review program went into effect in Rochester, 90 per cent of teachers getting beyond their intern year have stayed, a record that program coordinator Carl O'Connell credits to the early elimination of unworthy teachers. In the years before peer review, says O'Connell, Rochester's teacher retention rate stood at roughly 60 per cent, with many ill-equipped teachers quitting. "They burned out early," he explains.

In Cincinnati, teachers' union president Tom Mooney applauds his nine-year-old plan, a virtual duplicate of Toledo's, for its effectiveness in ridding schools of "really ugly teachers, with a thick file of complaints, who principals had never acted on." Mooney is keen on insuring that shoddy veterans continue to get tagged for intervention. "I just

came from a meeting where I pleaded with my building reps to make referrals," he said.

For many years, the National Education Association, the nation's largest confederation of teachers with more than 2 million members, opposed peer review, feeling it abridged administrative prerogatives, says John Grossman, the teachers union president in Columbus, Ohio. When Grossman instituted a Toledo-style plan at his NEA affiliate in 1986, he claims union superiors ignored him. Now the national leadership at least pays peer review lip service. "In essence, we believe that teachers helping teachers is one of the best things you can do," says NEA spokesman Kathleen Lyons.

"Seattle now has a plan, Grossman notes excitedly, "and Nashville and Memphis are looking into it."

## Best in mid-size cities?

Peer review has not spread further, suggests Urbanski, "because this is not a traditional union function, like getting salary, benefits and protection. Nobody likes change, except maybe wet babies. The union leadership is usually afraid they will be voted out if they raise the issue." Says Lawrence of Toledo: "Non-teachers don't want their turf trampled on, and teachers are used to bowing and scraping to administrators."

Many observers see peer review working best in mid-size school districts like Toledo, not in large cities. "If this were put into effect in Chicago you're talking about 40 to 60 consultants," says Jamie Horwitz, an American Federation of Teachers spokesman, "and they'd be going back to the classroom every two or three years. That's a lot of work, and a big budget bite."

More than a decade ago, Lawrence was invited to speak on peer review in Chicago by Robert Healey, then president of the Chicago Teachers Union, an AFT local. Though union officials listened to him respectfully, he says, "they weren't really interested." "I've been back several times since, and though attitudes have changed, I'm not sure this would work in Chicago. Toledo [a system of 39,000 students] is about the size of a subdistrict in Chicago. Chicago doesn't have the manpower to carry this off, except as a pilot program." ■

*Grant Pick is a Chicago writer.*

## Massachusetts tinkers with tenure

In June 1993, after two years of debate, the Massachusetts Legislature passed an education reform bill that, among other things, required teachers to get recertified every five years.

To get recertified, teachers don't have to prove that they're competent, only that they have completed a certain amount of continuing-education coursework. The state is still working on the details.

The legislation also added new grounds for firing teachers: Failure to satisfy a district's performance standards. Local districts are supposed to negotiate with teachers' unions over what their standards will be.

Further, the legislation took local school boards out of the firing process.

Previously, school boards had to approve teacher firings; now district superintendents make the final decision. But fired teachers may appeal to outside arbitrators.

Following the lead of two other states—Colorado and New Mexico—Massachusetts also eliminated teacher tenure, but in name only. Teachers who have been working for more than three years are now called "teachers with professional status," rather than "tenured teachers."

The day the bill was passed, a *Boston Globe* story said, "People involved in the bill disagree on whether the new process would make it easier or harder to remove poor-performing teachers." *Dan Weissmann*

# New program helps teachers put together a class act

by Lorraine Forte

**A**t the start of last school year, Hammond, Ind. teachers Cynthia Monberg and Denise Hughes had never met. Since then, they've become best friends—and in the process, they say, better teachers as well.

Monberg and Hughes coached and critiqued each other through a year-long program of teacher certification recently launched by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an independent, non-profit organization aimed at upgrading instruction throughout the country.

Through committees of classroom teachers, child development experts, teacher educators and subject specialists, the board is developing sets of rigorous standards for what teachers in different subjects and grade levels should know and be able to do. By offering certificates and encouraging teachers to apply for them, the board hopes to put its standards into practice and further “professionalize” teaching.

“I saw it early on as a fantastic opportunity for staff development,” says Pat O’Rourke, president of the 1,000-member Hammond Teachers Federation and one of 63 National Board directors. “It’s a natural extension of the latest research and thinking on ways to improve teaching and learning.”

O’Rourke pushed to have Hammond sign up for the National Board’s pilot program last year for certification in the middle-childhood language arts and middle-childhood generalist areas. Altogether, 539 teachers from 27 school districts, including 10 teachers from Hammond, participated. This fall, the teachers will find out whether they “passed” and have earned certificates.

To demonstrate mastery of the standards, teachers had to put together extensive portfolios and take a two-day written exam.

At first, Monberg says, “I thought,



Videotapes of lessons, a detailed résumé and essays on teaching are only part of the extensive portfolios that Denise Hughes (left) and Cynthia Monberg compiled in the National Board Certification program.

yeah, I really know my kids. But the program requirement was ‘show in your work *exactly* how you understand adolescents.’ ”

## Better than grad school

The program is voluntary, but Monberg and Hughes suggest that school districts could “spread the word” and entice more teachers to take part by offering credit toward salary increases to teachers who earn certificates.

They also say they learned more from the certification program than from some graduate courses, for which teachers earn salary credits in most school districts, including Chicago.

“Everything we went through was worthwhile and useful,” says Hughes. “In contrast to some graduate programs, I got really excited about it. I was writing for my portfolio over Christmas break.”

“All of us have been through schools of ed where you take classes that are

largely based on attendance, and you do work that may or may not be related to what you’re doing [in the classroom],” adds Monberg. “This whole process is infused with the work that I’m doing as a professional teacher with experience.”

By recognizing and helping good teachers, the certification program might keep them in the classroom, says Hughes. “We need to have other [advancement] opportunities for teachers who *want* to stay in the classroom and expand what they do, not go into administration.”

Monberg, who teaches at an alternative high school for students who have been expelled, and Hughes, who teaches 5th grade at an inner-city elementary school, first met during bi-weekly support meetings held for teachers going through the program. The meetings were conducted by the Hammond Leadership Academy, a staff development institute run by the district.

The two began working together after they discovered that they shared similar teaching styles and philoso-

phies. Both spent more than 100 hours compiling their portfolios, which included a detailed résumé, essays they had written on teaching philosophy and practice, recommendations from superiors, lesson plans, copies of students' work with comments by the teachers, and two sets of videotapes: a 30-minute, unedited tape of one lesson and eight 15-minute, unedited tapes of other lessons. The lesson plans, copies of students' work, and videotapes had to be based on 3-to-6-week series of lessons based on a single theme.

Hughes' videotapes made her aware of several bad habits she has now corrected. For one, she says, "I don't ignore the table in the back anymore." And she has stopped favoring the right side of her class when calling on students. "I found that because I'm right-handed, I teach to the right," she says. "These are things you would never pick

up unless you have a video on it."

For Monberg, the tapes helped raise awareness "of the dynamics between students." That's important, she adds, because teacher-student interaction and individual attention are the focus of the alternative school where she teaches.

The Leadership Academy helped participants with videotaping and copy-editing and provided computer time. "It made a huge difference to have professional help," says Hughes. But collaboration proved the biggest help.

"Even though we were doing completely different things and our portfolios don't resemble each other, our ideas are infused with each other's work," says Monberg.

Elements of the National Board program might be incorporated into Hammond's teacher evaluation process, says O'Rourke. A committee of district and union officials and classroom

teachers is working to overhaul Hammond's evaluation process; the goal is to design a new system by March "so it can be tested and in place for next [school] year," he says.

Last year, Hammond put a moratorium on all evaluations of permanent (Indiana's version of tenured) teachers because "no one was satisfied with the process," O'Rourke adds. The district had adopted a new evaluation form, but O'Rourke says it still wasn't oriented toward teaching practice. For instance, he notes, one rating category was judgment and "no one had a clue as to what it was supposed to mean. It could have been interpreted as showing bad judgment by not wearing a tie that day." ■

*Cynthia Monberg can be reached at the HOPE School, (219) 933-1551. Denise Hughes can be reached at Lafayette Elementary, (219) 933-2472.*

## Professional panel sets 5 principles to guide teachers

**T**he National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was created on the premise that "one of the most important actions the nation can take to improve schools is to strengthen the teaching profession."

Established in 1987 as a result of a Carnegie Corporation report calling for nationwide teaching standards, the Board bases its work on five principles:

1. Teachers should be committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers should know the subjects they teach and how to best teach them.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers should think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

Most of the Board's 63-member Board of Directors are classroom teachers. Committees comprising mostly teachers are working to develop 30 sets of standards for different subject areas and at four student development levels—early childhood (ages 3-8), middle childhood (ages 7-12), early adolescence (ages 11-15) and adolescence/young adulthood (ages 14-18+). Generalist standards, for teachers who teach a vari-

ety of subjects, will be created for each of the four development levels.

To be eligible for National Board certification, teachers must hold a bachelor's degree and have three years of experience either as a state-licensed teacher or in a state-accredited private school.

The Board's goal is to have all the standards in place by 1997.

### Sparking interest

Altogether, 1,537 teachers requested applications for the pilot project, but only 539 completed the process. "We knew it would not be 100 percent," says Joanne Kogan, communications manager for the National Board. "We had estimated all along that we would wind up with about a third finishing."

A follow-up survey showed that, most often, time and personal factors were the primary reasons teachers didn't finish, so the Board is trying to ease the burden somewhat. "We don't want to compromise quality [by making the process easier]," Kogan says, "but we will give people more time to complete their portfolios."

The Chicago Teachers Union's Quest Center is aiming to spark interest in the program by making it part of the

curriculum in its proposed master's-level program in teacher leadership, says Quest Center Director Deborah Walsh. The Center recently applied to the Illinois Board of Higher Education for degree-granting status, and is looking for outside funding to pay the \$975 certification fee for each of 25 teachers. "If we had the money, we could find the teachers," Walsh says.

Some school districts and states are taking similar steps. In Rochester, N.Y., the district now reimburses teachers for the certification fee. In Fairfax County, Va., where teachers must renew their state teaching licenses every two to five years, National Board certification counts for half the required renewal credits.

Iowa and New Mexico have set aside funds to pay certification fees and the cost of any related staff development teachers need to prepare for the program. And in Oklahoma, teachers moving to the state will automatically receive a state teaching license if they have National Board certification.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards may be reached at 300 River Place, Suite 3600, Detroit, MI 48207. Phone: (313) 259-0830, Fax (313) 259-0973.

*Lorraine Forte*

# PATHWAYS TO ACHIEVEMENT

By  
Argle K. Johnson  
General Superintendent  
of the Chicago Public Schools

In presenting our revised Pathways to Achievement: The Three-Tiered Process for School Improvement, I wish to thank our many critical friends for their contributions. This initiative continues to evolve with their assistance. The recent coming together of school system educators and concerned constituents from outside the system is unprecedented in the history of this city. The result is a unified focus on students, teachers, classrooms, and schools.

Our mission is to strengthen school improvement practices that lead to active learning and high student achievement. In doing so, the pathways process begins with a school self-analysis that generates support for all, recognition for many, and intervention for some.

Central to this process is the link to the school planning and state accreditation processes that are already in place. We are reinforcing the evaluation phase of the planning cycle and helping schools document their "comprehensive improvement systems" as required by the state.

With our critical friends, we are putting the essential pieces in place. We are developing the self-analysis study guide, setting up a support resource databank, improving our staff development capabilities, and establishing criteria and training for facilitators and peer teams. In addition, a restructuring of our research and evaluation services will improve the availability of data.

A new infusion of funds gives all schools real opportunities to convert their analyses into concrete actions that meet identified needs. These funds come from school system and government sources.

As we unify and focus our efforts, we keep three tenets before us: achievement and accountability, continuous improvement of the educational process, and efficient and effective administration and operations.



## FIVE THEMES

**SELF-ANALYSIS.** A self-analysis guide for schools emphasizes educational practices and student outcomes. Based on their analyses, schools will seek recognition and support.

**RECOGNITION.** Schools can receive recognition for specific practices and outcomes and for being exemplary overall. These schools will become resources for other schools. Some exemplary schools will become learning sites with additional resources to make this possible.

**SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT.** Support for all schools involves improvement funds and a resource databank. Schools that are preparing for next year's state quality review will receive assistance.

**INTERVENTION SUPPORT.** Peer teams will work with schools, as requested and needed, to address specific educational practice issues. This intervention serves as a safety net that upholds schools as they overcome weaknesses that could lead to remediation.

**ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW.** Peer teams will ensure the integrity of the process and provide additional assistance and information through in-depth analyses of sample schools.

## Abolish teacher rating system, let schools devise own plans

by Barbara Randolph

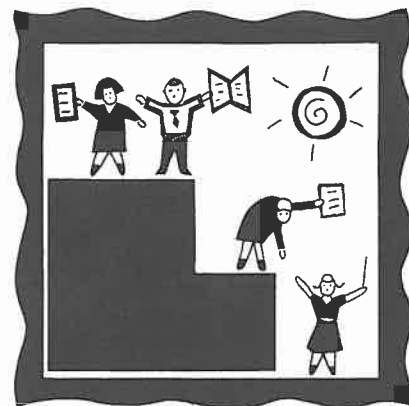
**A**s a Chicago Public School teacher since 1969, I have never experienced an evaluation that I could use to guide my journey toward becoming a better teacher.

**FIRST YEAR** To become a teacher in Chicago, I applied for a position with the Board of Education, took a national teaching test, and passed an oral exam. I set up appointments at three schools in the area where I would be moving; I wanted to investigate the quality of the schools and interview the principals. I found one school that reflected the child-centered environment I was seeking, and I was able to gain a temporary appointment there.

Within the first week of school, another teacher, with 18 years of service, “bumped” me from that position. I was placed in a mobile classroom at another school. In the process, my teaching philosophy was never discussed. During the year, no one visited my class. I felt very much alone in my development as a teacher.

**SECOND YEAR** After a maternity leave, I was placed in a school near my new home. That summer, I prepared to teach 3rd grade. However, when I reported for work, I discovered I had been reassigned to a 5th-grade class. When I asked the very cordial principal

for recommendations on dealing with 5th-graders, he suggested only that I give them a math quiz to diagnose their mathematical acuity and have them write an essay about their summer activities. Once again, I experienced this gnawing feeling that I would have little expert counsel.



I was never paired with a more experienced teacher, a mentor, someone with whom I could engage in serious inquiry about teaching and specific experiences with students.

That was a familiar and valued pattern embedded in my student teaching experience with my cooperating teacher. Instead, my isolation continued.

I began to receive annual ratings. The basis of the ratings was not made clear. I remember seeing the principal in my room for several short visits, but I never received any feedback. Tenure (awarded after three years) floated past without any discussion of my talent for teaching

or the areas in which I needed to focus to improve what I had learned to date.

I became aware that ratings sometimes were lowered to punish a teacher for resisting some administrative practice or openly questioning policy at the school.

**TENTH YEAR** I was transferred to a school on the South Side while another teacher was transferred north. We enhanced integration. My philosophy of teaching or ways of working with students was not considered.

**SIXTEENTH YEAR** My principal did request that faculty members submit lists of their individual goals for the year. I liked looking down the road of the new year and deciding what I would like to continue working on and what new goals I would add. For example, I had decided to begin using cooperative learning as a technique for teaching and classroom management.

However, when I received my rating, no reference was made to these goals. I was not asked if I had been successful or to illustrate ways in which I had succeeded. There was no connection made between these two steps of evaluation—goal setting and the final rating.

Why are there no standards for teaching? If teachers and administrators at each school put their minds together to create such a list, the discussions would be extremely enlightening for *everyone* involved. (Often, the teaching background of my principal evaluators was less extensive than mine.) Without standards developed jointly by managers and workers, there can be no valid evaluation. Without a well constructed and executed evalua-

*Barbara Randolph is a library media teacher at Abbott Elementary School and a member of the Teachers' Task Force.*



tion process, professional growth cannot be fully supported. And without professional growth for all professionals involved, schools and children's learning will not improve.

Ironically, several schools in Chicago have developed *student* evaluations that could serve as a model for teacher evaluations. They redesigned their report cards to reflect the curriculum. Students evaluate their own reading and writing practices. And parents report how often they read to their children and comment on their dialogue with their children about schoolwork. Leading up to these new practices was discussion and agreement on teaching and learning practices and students' responsibility for their own learning.

At least one of these schools tackled teacher evaluation, too, because the teachers themselves wanted to experience evaluation that gave them important feedback. Teachers, parents and students share in the appraisal of each teacher's work. Teachers meet in teams of four to share their goals and indicate, prior to being observed, the areas where they would like feedback.

Throughout the year, they convene regularly to support each other. As a result, professional development is the responsibility not only of the individual but also of the peer team.

In order to provide true guidance and real knowledge about development as a teacher, an evaluation process must include several components. The first is time for reflection. What did you most enjoy doing in the course of a year? What did students respond to best? What were the most difficult areas to tackle? Finding the answers to these kinds of questions would signal new directions to explore and practices to continue. (This process can be strongly enhanced by keeping a journal about classroom life, including practices that worked.)

Another essential component is identifying and committing to a series of goals for the new year, including participation in staff development activities. The school's budget and outside grants should support such new learning. As the year unfolds, the teacher would document achievement of his or her goals.

A third component is working with a team of colleagues to share ideas from

the self-reflection and goal setting. Each teacher in the group would have the opportunity to share and receive encouragement and support. Out of this experience, teachers might decide to team teach certain areas, create interdisciplinary units or share resources. These teams need time to meet each quarter of the year. Where possible, teachers should select their own team members on the basis of teaching philosophy.

A fourth component is creation of a portfolio that would include:

- The teacher's goals and documentation of progress toward those goals.

- Projects managed for a class, department or the whole school.

- Committees that one chairs or actively participates on, e.g. the professional personnel advisory committee, a curriculum committee, or the school-improvement-plan writing group.

- Participation in workshops and classes that add to knowledge.

- Presentations and workshops given in school and elsewhere in the city.

See **OPINIONS** page 30

## Letters

### Review of Vander Weele book missed the point, big time

*Reclaiming Our Schools: The Struggle for Chicago School Reform*, Maribeth Vander Weele's new book chronicling corruption in Chicago's public school system, was lamentably criticized by Mary O'Connell (*CATALYST*, September 1994). O'Connell's lengthy book review lightly skips over the book's central theme: bureaucratic bungling, corruption and mismanagement. Yet O'Connell repeatedly castigates Maribeth Vander Weele for not having a vision. "Eliminating waste and fraud," according to O'Connell, is "not enough . . . you need a vision." How's this for a vision: restitution and incarceration!

To local school council members on the firing line, this book is a welcome accounting of Pershing Road's lack of accountability. "The system is . . . immersed in theft and deceit," one LSC member recently told an Illinois Senate

investigating committee. "Corruption . . . is so pervasive . . . that it has become the norm." But the visionaries of the Pershing Road Complex and its MacArthur Foundation-spawned cottage industry are not comfortable talking about corruption. They prefer to think in terms of what O'Connell refers to as "a compelling vision."

O'Connell chides the author for recommending that "basic supplies such as tissues, toilet paper, pens, pencils, and copying paper" be included in our \$3 billion budget. "Unfortunately," says O'Connell, "Vander Weele doesn't suggest where the money for the toilet paper . . . is actually going to come from—and she doesn't even attempt to put a price tag on it." Did it ever occur to Mary O'Connell that if the Pershing Road Complex did not foster theft, corruption and mismanagement, we would have enough money for toilet paper without another tax increase?

Cynical LSC members might even suggest the possibility of a slight reduction in our \$3 billion payroll for the funding of toilet paper. An LSC on the West Side once offered to close a janitorial position and use the former salary for the purchase of toilet paper, but our straw bosses quickly put down that rebellion.

Mary O'Connell just doesn't get it: Our vision is education for children, not jobs for adults. If new taxpayer dollars were sent to

the Pershing Road Complex for Mary O'Connell's perceived shortage of funds for toilet paper, the funding would never reach the stalls. Our Board would create a Bureau of Toilet Paper, staffed by an Assistant Superintendent in charge of toilet paper purchasing & distribution, deputy superintendents, directors, coordinators, facilitators, and, of course, a \$60,000 per year liaison between the Bureau and the subdistricts.

Maribeth's book is must reading for all LSC members, and while toilet paper is in short supply, O'Connell's review could be put to good use.

*Michael J. Fahy, former member, chair  
Lane Technical High School  
Local School Council*

**Mary O'Connell responds:** My reference to toilet paper certainly caught Mr. Fahy's eye and apparently blinded him to what I actually said: that it's absurd that reform advocates even have to make the case for toilet paper. And, sure, we'd have enough money right now for toilet paper if fraud and waste were cleaned up; but for the broader reforms in Ms. VanderWeele's laundry list (the part of the sentence Mr. Fahy cut out) we need more funding—as well as energy and vision.

See **LETTERS** page 30

# Front Lines

## How an inner-city school became a 'model for all'



JOHN BOOZ

*Nobel's 50-piece band has performed at a number of city functions; from left are members Marshall Brewer, Valisha Powell, Diana Nuñez, Nancy Acosta and Fernando Roman.*

by Anastasia Benshoff

A television crew came to Alfred Nobel Elementary School a few years ago expecting to shoot some scenes for a story on the plight of inner-city schools. Located in a high-crime, high-poverty area and plagued by overcrowding, Nobel seemed a good choice.

But after looking around for half an hour, the crew's producer decided to find another school. "Quite frankly," the producer told school administrators, "nothing's going on."

"What he meant to say," says Nobel Principal Mirna Diaz-Ortiz, "is that nothing terrible was happening. . . . A good school is sometimes the last thing people expect to find here."

Six years ago, people would *not* have found a good school there, according to most accounts. Since the arrival of Diaz-Ortiz in 1988, however, Nobel has transformed itself into an effective school through strong leadership, an innovative arts program and community outreach.

"Nobel is an excellent model for *all* schools," says Barbara Radner, the head of DePaul University's Center for Urban Education. "Some schools just develop a facade of being an effective school. There's a positive image at Nobel, but it's positive to the core." ■

Diaz-Ortiz has worked in Chicago public schools for more than 20 years, serving as assistant principal at Brentano Elementary and a bilingual coordinator at Stowe Elementary

before coming to Nobel. Her philosophy is simple: All children can learn. "With kids like these, an attitude that prevails in many schools is, 'Well, we'll just provide them the best that we can and then, oh well,'" she says. "Well, not here. Absolutely not. Every child here is going to learn, and the ones that aren't, we're going to find out what to do to help them."

Diaz-Ortiz's management style is equally simple: Reward effort. At Nobel, there are rewards for everything and for everybody.

To encourage attendance, the school gives small gifts, such as a radio headset, to students who rarely miss a day of school, and it gives a field trip every month to the classroom with the best attendance. In the six years that Diaz-Ortiz has been principal, attendance has gone up from 89 percent to 94 percent. All students who show academic improvement, no matter how small, have a chance to be chosen Student of the Month. On the last week of every month, Ortiz reads the name of the winner, takes a picture and posts it on a bulletin board outside her office.

There are rewards for teachers, too. If they are present every day in a semester, they get a paid half-day off. In addition, teachers can fill out a wish list each month for materials, which Diaz-Ortiz usually obtains. Teachers who want to attend workshops usually may go during school hours without using personal time.

This incentive-oriented approach has raised morale among the staff, say many teachers. Fifth-grade teacher Marilyn Waldron, who recently finished a master's degree in science, observes: "There's plenty of room for staff development. It's there if you want it. We've

thrived under [Diaz-Ortiz].”

Kindergarten teacher Susan Vartanian agrees. “When I first came here, there was nothing,” she says. Gesturing to a wall stacked halfway to the ceiling with games and art materials, she adds, “Now, anything I want, I get. For an inner-city school, we have a ton of perks, and we get them from her.”

## Cleaning house

There have been physical changes at Nobel, too, which is housed in an 81-year-old, four-story, yellow-brick building.

Within months of arriving, Diaz-Ortiz began pushing forward with a remodeling project that had been planned by the Board of Education for 10 years but never carried out because of bureaucratic hurdles. Windows and desks were replaced, floors were resanded, and the cafeteria was moved from a basement hallway to a spacious classroom. When the work was finished, Nobel looked as if a thick, grey film had been peeled off.

“This was the dirtiest, ugliest school I ever saw,” says Bob Cannon, a former central office administrator who now directs the school’s fine arts program. “Now, it’s one of the best.”

Diaz-Ortiz said the building rehab was a necessary first step in turning the school around. “We need a learning environment that is bright and cheery. The kids have enough bad things in their lives. If we make them feel really comfortable, they want to stay in school.”

Her quick action on the rehab also helped Diaz-Ortiz establish herself as someone who gets things done. “For [the principal’s job] you have to be a good leader,” says Micki Landsman, a special education teacher at Nobel. “You have to be a good speaker, a good writer and be able to deal with students, faculty, staff and the board. She does.”

## An arts academy

*In Robert Reynolds’ 7th-grade classroom, students noisily prepare to test the porosity of dirt and sand. The room*

## The Student Body

**At 1,100, Nobel School is over its 950-student capacity.**

In addition, more than 1,000 other neighborhood children are bused to other schools. Under so-called controlled enrollment, the only new children admitted to Nobel generally are kindergartners.

**Most are Latino.**

76% Hispanic, 22% African American, 2% white. 41% are limited-English-proficient. 97% are low-income.

**Average test scores remain below city and state averages.**

	3rd, 6th, 8th — reading	3rd, 6th, 8th — math
Nobel	165	156
Chicago	181	194
Illinois	254	264

## The Neighborhood

**Humboldt Park, a West Side community.**

Most residents live in free-standing bungalows or low-rise apartment buildings. Violence is common. A few years ago, Nobel’s LSC built a faculty parking lot adjacent to the school after several teachers were mugged walking to their cars, one at gunpoint.

## The Educational Program

**Key Objective**

To integrate arts-centered teaching methods into the curriculum and to use residents to empower the school.

**Main Changes**

- ✓ All teachers are encouraged to attend seminars and workshops on arts-centered teaching as well as staff development of their choice.
- ✓ Parents and other residents are welcomed into classrooms.
- ✓ Social development, seen as an essential component of effective learning, is encouraged through activities such as band.



Volunteer Dorothy Fisher wears the school uniform several days a week.

JOHN BOOZ



## ***Nobel Presents!***

Colorful costumes, elaborate stage sets and music by Nobel's 50-piece band were part of a full-scale production of "Joseph's Dreamcoat," based on the smash musical that has been playing at the Chicago Theatre for more than a year. Over 200 people—students, staff, parents and community members—helped stage the musical, which ran for three days. "We are going to do an encore in November. The play was so popular that several people told us they missed it, and wanted us to do it again," says Principal Mirna Diaz-Ortiz, shown narrating at right.



*Photography by  
John Booz*

looks like a regular junior-high science lab, with bench desks and a periodic table of the elements over the door—but it has a distinct artistic theme. “I Have a Dream” essays by students are displayed on one wall. On another, several pen-pal letters between Nobel students and children in Sri Lanka hang amid pictures of art from the Indian Ocean island. Beneath the window lies a collage of “trash,” the result of a lesson on pollution.

While the students work, Reynolds moves among them with a camera, occasionally taking pictures of them with their experiments. “I use pictures for everything,” says Reynolds, as he gestures to a wall filled with classroom snapshots from various experiments.

Whether it’s letting students decorate the room with their artwork and photographs so they feel a sense of ownership, or creating a collage to demonstrate a scientific point, Reynolds’ classroom is typical of Nobel’s strategy of integrating the arts into all areas of the curriculum.

Arts education, says Diaz-Ortiz, is a way to get all children into the curriculum. “Even kids who don’t do as well in traditional academics can express themselves and do well in the arts,” she says. “We consider ourselves a fine arts academy even though we’re not a magnet school.”

The art theme is pervasive. Large framed posters of famous paintings—including works by Grant Wood, Georgia O’Keefe and Picasso—line the halls. Classroom doors are covered with art projects, and display cases are jammed with student creations.

Teachers are encouraged to use art, music and theater in their lessons. Several assemblies each year focus on cultural themes, and teachers are encouraged to coordinate their lesson plans with the shows.

Fine arts coordinator Cannon, who helps teachers incorporate the arts into their lessons, says most teachers at Nobel approve of the arts-centered approach, even if some were tentative at first. “Most teachers are open; they’re just waiting for help,” he says. “We have little or no negative reaction.”

Along with bringing the arts into academics, Nobel also started a band and chorus from scratch. Both groups have performed at city functions downtown as well as at other schools. Last spring, the groups staged an elaborate production based on “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” which ran for three nights and was attended by scores of area residents. The musical was such a hit that the school intends to present it again in November.

Students’ self-esteem, a vital part of learning, has been markedly improved, say teachers. “You never know how to reach these kids,” says kindergarten teacher Vartanian. “[Mrs. Diaz-Ortiz] has made the arts cool.” However, par-

*“Even kids who don’t do as well in traditional academics can express themselves and do well in the arts.”*

—Mirna Diaz-Ortiz, principal

ticipation in band and chorus must be earned: Members must attend school regularly and continue to improve their schoolwork.

Says Carolyn Hale, who has taught 8th-graders at Nobel for 14 years: “The school worked before, but Mrs. Diaz-Ortiz has enhanced it through the arts. [The approach] has tangible positive effects in classrooms.”

Most of Nobel’s art activities are funded through federal and state Chapter 1 money and through private grants. Diaz-Ortiz says she generally spends such funds on the staff’s needs and on arts programming, which she considers more important than high-priced “showy” items like computers.

Nobel also participates in several outside arts programs, including one with Marshall Field’s, which helps sponsor arts events at schools in the Orr School Network, which connects Orr High and its 11 feeder schools. Several teachers also attend arts-centered

teaching classes at DePaul University’s Center for Urban Education.

### Bringing the community in

*A volunteer at Nobel for more than a year, Faith Varney comes in almost daily and spends up to seven hours helping teachers and assisting students with homework. At night she takes GED classes at a local community college and says she would like someday to get a permanent job as a teacher aide. The volunteer work “gives me something to do and gives me the experience of working with kids,” she says. “I’ve worked in a hospital, a beauty shop and on an assembly line,*

*but I like this the best. Everyone’s easy to get along with.”*

*Local school council member Dorothy Fisher, who also volunteers at Nobel almost every day, says she sees herself as a mentor for students and even wears the optional school uniform several times a week; the uniform is intended to help counter peer pressure over clothing. “We ask the kids to do things, so we have to, too,” she says. “I’m just like a big sister.”*

When Diaz-Ortiz arrived, there were only two parent volunteers and no structured program for parental involvement in the school. “The only reason parents came here before was when they were called in for discipline problems,” says Diaz-Ortiz. “When I started to make them feel welcome, they stayed around.” To get parents involved in the school, Diaz-Ortiz began offering training programs on helping children with schoolwork.

Parents who expressed an interest in working at the school were invited to volunteer.

At first, says Diaz-Ortiz, teachers were hesitant about parent helpers. "It was a slow, slow, slow process," says Diaz-Ortiz. "Little by little [teachers] would see how helpful [the parents] were and then it got to be that teachers would say, 'If someone comes in could you send them over?'"

Now, close to 40 parents volunteer in the school. Twenty come to school every day, and the others have varied weekly hours. Their duties range from running the copier to escorting children to the bathroom during class. In a number of classrooms, volunteers' names are listed on the doors along with teachers' names.

For their efforts, most volunteers receive a small stipend—about 25 cents a day. In addition, they are invited to have coffee with school staff in the teachers' room, take part in luncheons and enjoy a cruise planned for them at the end of the school year.

Nobel also is actively involved in community development. Diaz-Ortiz

and Nobel's local school council were instrumental in getting two drug houses across from the school shut down and sold to Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit, affordable-housing develop-

come here, there's not a wall between the school and the residents," he explains. "People in the community like [Diaz-Ortiz's] openness; she's willing to listen."

*"When I come here, there's not a wall between the school and the residents."*

—Shoichi Tomita, volunteer

er. Students and staff participate in neighborhood anti-violence candlelight vigils, and the local school council has helped organize parent safety patrols that walk the area around the school at the beginning and the end of the school day.

Nobel's community outreach programs have been instrumental in improving the school, says Shoichi Tomita, a volunteer and former district curriculum superintendent. "When I

DePaul's Radner adds that Nobel's outreach programs have helped give it an identity in the community. "The world is becoming a very different place, and a school has to be identified as a learning center," she says. "They've done that." ■

*Anastasia Benschhoff, a recent graduate of a master's degree program in education policy at the University of Chicago, works for The Associated Press.*

## Network LINC school to parents, community

It used to be that when 8-year-old Jaclyn Diaz missed a day at Alfred Nobel School, her mother would have to call five to ten other mothers to track down her daughter's homework assignments.

Not this year.

Since August, Myra Diaz simply has had to call the West Humboldt Park LINC Line, a voice-mail system that gives callers 24-hour access to news at the 12 schools in the Orr School Network. The system carries messages from nearly 600 teachers, including homework assignments, report card pickup dates and field-trip information.

"This means a whole world of possibilities," said Orr Academy Principal Cynthia Feldon. "Our goal is to have all parents participate."

LINC Line also includes a voice-mail bulletin board for community

news. The neighborhood's nearly 70,000 residents can hear information on adult education, childcare, job training and community events. "It's difficult to organize and coordinate a community," said Jimmy Simmons, president of the West Humboldt Park Family and Community Development Council, an umbrella group of 80 community groups. "LINC Line provides an opportunity."

According to Leonard Dominguez, deputy mayor for education, LINC Line is the first system in the United States to link schools and the community through telecommunication.

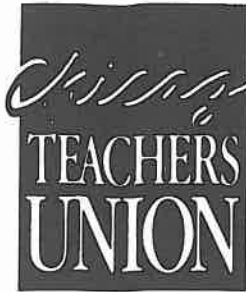
The system can take 12 calls simultaneously, and voice prompts are given in English or Spanish. To get school news, parents enter a child's class code. By using a separate classroom code for each teacher, parents can get informa-

tion on classes in any network school with one phone call.

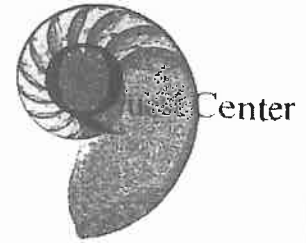
LINC Line is a project of the Orr School Network, a 5-year-old joint venture between Bank of America Illinois (formerly Continental Bank) and Orr Academy High School and its 11 feeder schools. Bank of America Illinois purchased the voice mail system for \$30,000 and has designed a three-year partial repayment plan for the schools, with the bank picking up \$3,750 of the cost.

Mike Katz, who heads the program for the bank, says the system may be expanded so callers can leave messages for teachers. Other possible plans include the addition of more phone lines and installation of a phone in each network school for use by residents who don't have phones.

*Anastasia Benschhoff*



## "Real Change is Real Hard"



### Remembering John Kotsakis

This column is running at half mast this month. The monthly column that John Kotsakis and I sought and planned for will now be written by me. When John died on Sept. 13, 1994, labor, education and the teaching profession lost a true friend.

John's philosophy characterized everything he did as Assistant to the CTU President for Educational Issues. To every task, John brought vision, intellectual capital and a wry wit. He saw the need for attracting new teachers into the profession, which resulted in Teachers for Chicago. He saw the need for teacher leadership after the 1985 and 1988 reform laws, which resulted in the CTU Quest Center. He saw the need for those in the trenches to have a say in how central office would be restructured, which led to his participation in the Chicago Board of Education's TIME project. John wanted to ensure that, through their union, teachers would have a voice in shaping the future.

John challenged us all: "What will your legacy be? Will you leave your school and your school system a better place than when you found it for the next generation?" John believed that each teacher had the responsibility and right to make a difference. The responsibility was the moral obligation to see where things needed to be changed and to try and change them. John believed that if teaching is to be considered a true profession, teachers must also have the right to shape the solutions to education's most challenging problems — not merely implement someone else's solution. He saw the union as playing a critical role in supporting teacher leadership and in providing professional development opportunities for teachers.

John believed that professionalizing teaching was a way to save urban pub-



**John Kotsakis**  
1939 -- 1994

lic education. Doing better at the same old thing and doing things the same old way wasn't enough. Setting our sights on halving our dropout rate and universal basic literacy was, in the words of former Secretary of Labor John Ray Marshall, consigning ourselves to third world standards. John knew that students with only basic skills will be virtually unemployable in a few years. He recognized the fundamental problem in trying to reform a system designed for yesterday, not today.

The mind and its capacity to generate and apply new knowledge has replaced natural resources as a major source of economic, intellectual, social, and cultural wealth today. We have yet to create a school system that helps all children to think abstractly about messy real world problems, to communicate effectively and to be self-directed learners. This fundamental problem requires fundamental change and John wanted to see teachers leading that change.

John recognized that the failure of so many schools was the fault of the system — not the people. The school sys-

tem traditionally has been subject to the factory mind set of "managers think and workers do."

John subscribed to Linda Darling Hammond's belief that "efforts to redesign schooling ultimately require that we rethink teacher preparation and professional development. Effective education relies on the deep knowledge of practitioners and their capacity to create ever-evolving strategies to meet the unique needs of children. That base of knowledge can be acted upon if it is made available to teachers."

John saw the LSCs and PPACs as mechanisms for teachers to redesign the system to better serve students. Teachers could capitalize on new knowledge, authority and flexibility to make changes for the benefit of the students.

John also saw the union's reform role as creating top-down support for bottom-up change. He played an essential role in the creation of the CPS-CTU Framework for Transforming Teaching and Learning. This framework includes expectations for what Chicago students should know and be able to do as educated citizens in today's world. These expectations will drive a new city-wide assessment system.

This framework and all the other initiatives that John created have left us with a responsibility to see them through. These were his efforts to leave things better than when he found them. He certainly accomplished that. He also realized that real change is real hard and that improvement is continuous. And so, with heavy hearts but great inspiration, we will recommit ourselves to the Quest Center's mission to help teaching professionals effect revolutionary change in the education of Chicago's children.

*Deborah Walsh is director of the CTU Quest Center.*

# Grants

## Reform group maps plan to spend \$50 million

Chicago's expected \$50 million share of the \$500 million that publishing mogul Walter Annenberg has pledged for urban education should be passed on to schools for restructuring efforts, say activists writing Chicago's proposal.

A new organization, tentatively dubbed the Chicago School Reform Collaborative, would be created to review applications from schools and offer technical assistance, according to a "concept paper" submitted last June to Annenberg's advisors by a working group.

The organization would start working with 50 "restructuring schools" in its first year and phase in 100 more "schools in need of educational support" over the next several years. A staff of three or four would run the Collaborative, which would be expected to obtain another \$142 million from non-Annenberg sources over five years, under the proposed budget.

The working group solicited and received letters of support from a variety of local power brokers, including the Mayor's Office, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Chicago school superintendent and local foundations. Members of the group say they're hoping for a green light from the Chicago Teachers Union as well.

The group continues to meet and has no formal requirements for membership. For more information, or to get involved, call Anne Hallett at the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, (312) 322-4880.

In addition to Hallett, participants to date include:

**Patricia Anderson**, principal of Sullivan High School; **Arnold Aprill** of the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education; **John Ayers** and **Karen Carlson** of Leadership for Quality

CALL SPECIFIC



Students from Salazar Bilingual Education Center participate in a celebration at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, as part of the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education. The program, funded by Marshall Field's and 14 foundations, awarded \$657,000 this year to 13 arts education partnerships.

Education; **William Ayers**, professor of education, University of Illinois at Chicago; **Carlos Azcoitia**, former principal of Spry Elementary and now head of the Office of School Reform; **Penny Brehman** and **Jane Rosen** of the Golden Apple Foundation; **Tony Bryk** of the University of Chicago's Center for School Improvement; **Sheila Castillo** of the Chicago Association of Local School Councils; **Warren Chapman** of The Joyce Foundation; **Jessica Clarke** of the Chicago Urban League; **Marie Cobb** of the Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore; **James Deanes** of the Parent/Community Council.

Others are **Pat Ford** of the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago; **Pat Harvey**, Executive Assistant to Supt. Argie Johnson; **Fred Hess** of the Chicago Panel on School Policy; **Sokoni Karanja** of Centers for New Horizons; **Coretta McFerren** of WSCORP; **Ken McNeil** of CityWide Coalition for School Reform; **Don Moore** and **Joan Slay** of Designs for Change; **Joy Noven** of Parents United for Responsible Education; **Camille Odeh** of Southwest Youth Service

Collaborative; **Eric Outten** of Schools First; **Francine Pope** of Teachers Task Force; **Millie Rivera** of Latino Institute; **Marilyn Stephens** of Citizens Schools Committee; **Madeleine Talbott** of Chicago ACORN; and **Steve Zelman** of Illinois Writing Project.

Dan Weissmann

## Activists envision education channel

A new consortium called the Chicago Education Network, or CENter, has won a \$25,000 grant from Kraft Corporation to help launch a public access cable TV channel dedicated to education programming.

"As it is, there's only a small group of people who are well-informed about education in Chicago," says Dren Geer, the sparkplug behind CENter and coordinator of the Chicago Alliance for

See GRANTS page 30



## Grant Deadlines

### Chicago Foundation for Education

Jan. 15 is the deadline for applying for \$200 and \$300 grants to adapt projects from the 1994-95 Impact II catalog, "Take an Idea . . . Go Creative," which will be delivered to schools in early October. Applications can be found in the back of the catalog.

Impact II is a national grant program that provides a network for teachers to share their ideas; it has been involved with Chicago public schools since 1991, awarding grants each spring to mentor teachers who have been selected for their creative efforts in the classroom and every winter to "adaptors" who use these ideas.

To order a catalog or for more information, contact the Chicago Foundation for Education, 400 N. Michigan Avenue, Room 311, Chicago, IL 60611, (312) 670-2323.

## Grant Briefs

### Polk Brothers Foundation

■ \$25,000 over two years to United Charities for a dropout prevention demonstration project that will provide tutoring, counseling, career clubs, arts exposure, parenting skills training, mentoring and incentives to West Side students as they progress from 8th grade through high school.

■ \$20,000 to United Neighborhood Organization of Chicago for the Year of Parent Involvement Initiative in Little Village and Southeast Chicago public schools.

■ \$20,000 to ASPIRA, Inc. of Illinois for leadership clubs in Chicago public elementary and high schools that involve students in academic, cultural appreciation and community service activities.

■ \$20,000 to Court Theater for the High School Matinee Program for Chicago public school students and for continuation of an intensive outreach project, "Writing-for-Theater-Reading-for-Theater," at DuSable High School.

■ \$15,000 a year for two years to Facing History and Ourselves, to train teachers and provide continuing education and professional development programs for Chicago public schools that implement this program, which uses the Holocaust and the rise of Nazism to teach adolescents about prejudice, racism and anti-semitism.

■ \$15,000 to Chicago Youth Success Foundation to provide supplemental, co-curricular and sports programs for Chicago public schools.

■ \$15,000 to Youth Communications to produce learning materials to accompany *New Expressions*, a newspaper produced by and for youth that is distributed free of charge to Chicago public high schools, and to sponsor a writing contest in each edition.

■ \$10,000 to the Latino Institute to provide leadership training for local school councils in schools with majority-Latino enrollment, and to monitor implementation of the reform law, disseminate information to LSCs and work with other organizations on reform.

■ \$10,000 to Chicago Cities in Schools to further develop the service delivery network at Lawndale Community Academy.

■ \$7,500 to the Rochelle Lee Fund to provide grants to Chicago public school teachers to implement innovative classroom reading programs.

### Chicago Community Trust

■ \$350,000 to Youth Guidance for

continued support of the Comer School Development Program in the Chicago Public Schools.

■ \$125,000 to the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago to hire consultants to assist in the restructuring of the central administration of the Chicago Public Schools.

■ \$100,000 to the Coalition for Educational Rights to support research in the methodology used to fund public education in Illinois.

■ \$80,000 to Roosevelt University to support the Chicago Alliance for Leadership and Learning, a collaboration of Roosevelt University's College of Education and Loyola University that provides training for new and prospective principals.

■ \$40,000 over two years to the Chicago Foundation for Education for general operating support.

### The Joyce Foundation

■ \$303,603 over three years to the University of Chicago Department of Education for support of the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

■ \$100,000 over two years to the Coalition for Educational Rights for work to reform the public education funding system in Illinois, in partnership with the Chicago Panel on School Policy and the Chicago Urban League.

■ \$80,300 to the National Conference of State Legislatures to conduct a regional two-day conference on urban education and school finance reform for legislators and policy makers in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

■ \$75,000 to Columbia College for a pilot science education project in five

West Side elementary schools: Burns, Hedges, Philip Sheridan, Spry and Whitney.

■ \$35,000 to Leadership for Quality Education and the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, for general support for groups of school reform leaders in Chicago, Denver, New York and Philadelphia to discuss strategies and recommend policies for urban school reform.

■ \$30,000 to Comite Latino for the Latino Parent Organizing Project in eight public schools—Brennemann, Gale, Greeley, Field, Kilmer, Edgewater, Peirce and Trumbull—to encourage Latino leadership and educational training.

■ \$25,000 to Parents United for Responsible Education for advocacy and training programs for members of local school councils.

■ \$75,000 to Northwestern University's Kellogg Graduate School of Management to work cooperatively with Designs for Change in three schools: Batemen, Corkery and Johnson.

### The National Endowment for the Arts

■ \$135,000 to Chicago Whirlwind Performance Company to help underwrite Whirlwind's Arts Centered Educators program over the next three years; the program will teach students reading, writing and arithmetic by integrating these subjects into music, drama and dance courses.

*Grants is a cooperative project of CATALYST and the Donors Forum of Chicago. It was compiled by Antione Wright.*

# Elsewhere

## LOS ANGELES

**Foundations backing off.** Corporate support for school reform efforts here may be collapsing, according to an article in the Sept. 7 issue of *Education Week*. One indicator is the recent firing of the president and most staff members of the Atlantic Richfield Company's foundation, which has been a leading contributor to school reform projects, including the Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now. In 1993, the foundation gave away only \$12.5 million, down from a high of \$37 million a decade ago.

The dismissal of the ARCO Foundation's longtime president, Eugene Wilson, a national leader in the corporate-giving field, shocked many officials in the philanthropy world, according to the article by writer Meg Sommerfield.

"This is very disturbing," said Diana W. Rigden, vice president for precollege programs at the Council for Aid to Education. "It reflects a real backing away from a serious commitment to education."

"Clearly, the ARCO Foundation has been one of the philanthropic leaders in the Los Angeles community, and Gene [Wilson] had provided personal leadership in that effort," said Theodore Mitchell, dean of the graduate school of education at UCLA. "All of us . . . are saddened and concerned by ARCO's decision."

Some members of the foundation community speculated that the cut-backs were connected with recent changes in ARCO corporate leadership, which an ARCO spokesperson denied. Others attributed them to the declining state of the economy in cities, like Los Angeles, where defense spending reductions have devastated many companies.

L.A. is not alone in facing reduced support for school reform, and ARCO is not the only major funder retreating from school giving. Recent shakeups in

giving programs followed the departure of RJR Nabisco Foundation Chairman Louis V. Gerstner Jr., who had pledged \$30 million to support innovative schools through Nabisco's "Next Century Schools" initiative. "Our giving is still pretty much on hold," acknowledged Joellen Shiffman, the company's director of philanthropy. "Our focus really is on maintaining and managing those relationships we already have, rather than taking on new commitments."

The number of corporations supporting K-12 education may begin to wane over the next few years, said Paul M. Ostergard, Citibank's vice president and director of corporate contributions and civic responsibility.

## PROVIDENCE, R.I.

**Public service required.** The first high school in the country with a curriculum centered around public service opened its doors last month, promising to supplement textbooks with "real life" education, reports the Sept. 14 issue of *Education Week*.

The Feinstein High School for Public Service will require its 180 students to take part in several hours of community service each week as a condition of graduation. The school is named after a Rhode Island philanthropist who donated \$500,000 in start-up funds.

Instead of grade levels, students will advance based on performance assessments from "explorer" to "master" to "major." Instruction will be divided into three areas: humanities, technology, and ethics, service and community studies.

Meanwhile, the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Justice is challenging two school districts that require community service for graduation, arguing that it constitutes involuntary servitude and, thus, violates the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, reports the August issue of *Teacher Magazine*. In

## PHILADELPHIA

**What makes for success?** A recent report from PATHS/PRISM, a Philadelphia public education fund, examines why a teacher-driven reform effort succeeded in some schools but not in others. PATHS/PRISM helped five elementary and two middle schools implement a project involving curricular reform, school-based management and parent outreach.

Among the ingredients necessary for success were a supportive principal, a history of positive faculty-principal relations and the presence of one or more teachers or administrators committed to following up ideas and plans. Copies of the report are available for \$5 each from PATHS/PRISM, 7 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Suite 700, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1294; (215) 665-1400.

## GEORGIA

**Blacks steered into special ed.** The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights says five Georgia school districts have unfairly steered black students into special education and remedial classes, according to the October issue of *The Executive Educator*.

Officials in the districts—Decatur, Dublin, Coffee County, Johnson County and Evans County—say the placements are made on the basis of testing and consultation and do not indicate racial bias. However, 1993 statistics from the Georgia Department of Education show that black students were twice as likely as white students to be labeled "moderately intellectually disabled" and three times as likely to be labeled "mildly intellectually disabled." Black students were more than twice as likely to be put into remedial courses.

Michael Klonsky

## Mayoral campaign provides backdrop for School Board choices

by Michael Klonsky

**J**ohn Filan, Pamela James and Waverly Robinson, the three new members of the Chicago School Board, may owe their positions to the current mayoral campaign.

Openly displeased with a nominating process he finds too restrictive, Mayor Richard M. Daley had begun rejecting candidates en masse—and taking months to do it. But he acted with relative speed on the latest slates of candidates presented by the School Board Nominating Committee. He made appointments from four slates while rejecting all the nominees on three other slates. One of the appointees, José Rodriquez, subsequently was forced to withdraw. (See story on page 28.)

"Were it not for the election, he wouldn't have acted," said newly announced mayoral candidate Joseph Gardner. "We challenged the mayor to act in a timely fashion, and our challenge was echoed by a *Sun-Times* editorial the following day."

Indeed, the mayor's handling of School Board appointments already had become an issue for his political enemies.

However, Deputy Mayor Leonard Dominguez insisted that Daley has been motivated by a desire to get "a balance of skill and value to lead the board in the years ahead," not by politics.

Lafayette Ford, chair of the School Board Nominating Committee, speculates that Daley's staff recruited Filan, James and Robinson. All three are connected with public agencies, are strong

on financial or management skills and are adept at working with large bureaucracies. Only James, chair of the Whitney Young Magnet High School Local School Council, has ties with the school reform organizations that typically recruit candidates.

Filan, who filled the seat held previously by Florence Cox, most likely will become the board's political leader. He is a partner in the clout-heavy accounting firm of Pandolfi, Topolski, Weiss & Company, was an aide to former Gov. Dan Walker and is the brother of Bill Filan, present chief of staff for Cook County Board President Richard J. Phelan.

### Filan 'brings more skills'

Until now, Stephen Ballis had been the board's political strategist, developing last year's SAVE plan aimed at winning union concessions and additional money from the Legislature. Ballis' term expired in May 1993 but he continued to serve because Daley rejected replacements recommended by the Nominating Commission, which itself had rejected Ballis.

Ballis had acquired the reputation of being Daley's ally, but when it came time for the Commission to vote this year on slates, the mayor's five appointees to the Commission didn't show up to back him. As a result, Ballis fell three votes short of being slated.

"Ballis did a tremendous job during the last four years," said Dominguez, one of the five who didn't attend the final slating session. "But now we are looking ahead, and we think Filan can bring even



JOHN BOOZ

*John Filan answers questions at a hearing by the City Council Education Committee. He is expected to become the School Board's political leader.*

more skills to the school system."

Some media accounts have suggested that Daley was displeased with Ballis' handling of the board's year-end \$50 million budget surplus; Ballis went along with using half of it for last-minute spending in schools rather than banking all of it to help reduce next year's anticipated shortfall. However, Dominguez noted that Daley had openly supported keeping some of the money in the schools.

"The problem with Ballis," said Dominguez, "was that he didn't have a good rapport with the legislators in Springfield." Many politicians had advised the mayor not to send Ballis back to Springfield because he "would do more harm than good," Dominguez added.

Ballis reportedly will land a consulting contract to continue working with the board.

In selecting Pamela James, Daley finally knocked Ballis off the board and, in the process, minimized the political fallout from his selection of Filan, who is white, over Florence Cox, who is African American and had become a rallying point for Daley's critics.

Daley "got rid of the most controversial people in the three racial

groups," Eddie Read, president of the anti-Daley Chicago Black United Communities, told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "He is trying to squash controversy." Read was referring to Ballis (white), Cox (African American) and Juan Cruz (Latino), who was to be replaced by Rodriguez but, now that Rodriguez has withdrawn, will continue as a lame-duck member.

Daley also outmaneuvered the Nominating Commission, which has had an anti-Daley tilt and tried to force Daley to choose Cox by putting her on a slate with two white candidates. "We learned how to play the game," Commission member Carlos Malave said before Daley announced his choices. "Slating her with two white candidates means that the mayor has to select a white over a black. He won't take that risk."

After Daley, indeed, took the risk, Gardner said, "I hope Florence will become a part of the campaign. Her removal is striking a deep chord in the African-American community."

In some circles, John Filan already is a controversial board member. He is

a former law partner of State Rep. Al Ronan, who is a lobbyist for the computer giant Unisys, which is expected to play a major role in the board's overhaul of its computer system. Also, Filan, following his stint with the Walker administration, was indicted but not convicted on charges of dispensing state computer contracts in return for campaign contributions.

The appointment of Pamela James, director of administrative services at Metra and a long-time school activist, drew praise from Ken McNeil, executive director of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform.

Dominguez expressed hope that James' knowledge of school operations will prevent "mistakes like last year's 50-minute class rescheduling," which caused chaos in most high schools.

Robinson is regional manager for the Illinois Department of Employment Security, administering over \$40 million in employment and training contracts and unemployment insurance. He has been involved in youth activities through such organizations as the YMCA and Hire the Future.

Like Filan, Robinson may have a conflict-of-interest problem because he is an unpaid member of an advisory board of Humana Health Care Inc., which does millions of dollars of business with the School Board.

Some reformers were troubled by what they see as a weakened and less dynamic board. "He [Daley] removed everyone with a strong enough base to exercise any independent decision making," said McNeil.

Filan, whose son attended Morgan Park High School, advocates even more decentralization and a still weaker board. He also likes the idea of school vouchers, "as long as they aren't paid for by funds already committed to public school operating costs."

Board members Maria Vargas and the Rev. Darrell James will join Juan Cruz as lame-duck members, leaving only one true vacancy on the 15-member board. Both Vargas and Rev. James often joined Cox in dissenting from the majority faction led by Ballis; both had been slated for another term, but Daley rejected them as well as everyone else on their slates. ■

## A contract, a statue and a candidacy that failed

**A**s chair of the Clemente High Local School Council, José Rodriguez voted for a school budget that included a contract with his employer, ASPIRA of Illinois, a non-profit Hispanic educational organization.

As a community activist, Rodriguez filed suit against Chicago Park District Supt. Forrest Claypool for denying a permit to erect a statue of Puerto Rican nationalist hero Pedro Albizu Campos in Humboldt Park.

Depending on whom you talk to inside City Hall, one of those two actions tripped up Rodriguez on his way to a seat on the Board of Education.

Rodriguez withdrew his name from consideration after Mayor Richard M. Daley withdrew his support, saying he couldn't muster enough votes to win approval from the City Council Education Committee.

Publicly, the rap against Rodriguez was that he voted for Aspira contracts, but in private, some insiders point to the statue flap. "Top people in the

Department of Human Services were angry over the statue issue and put pressure on some council members to get Rodriguez," said one activist.

While Rodriguez conceded he "probably should have abstained" on the budget vote, Hispanic aldermen accused white and black colleagues who opposed Rodriguez of applying a "double standard." Ald. Ambrosio Medrano (22nd) and Ald. Billy Ocasio (26th) asked why Rodriguez was "expendable" while a politically connected white nominee like James Filan was not. Filan's former law partner is a lobbyist for the computer giant Unisys, which is expected to play a major role in the board's overhaul of its computer system.

Education Committee Chair Patrick O'Connor (40th) flatly denied a double standard had been applied, noting that Filan had never voted on his own contract, as had Rodriguez. "How would you like to be in negotiations with [Senate majority leader] Pate Philip for school funding and have to defend your



*José Rodriguez at the City Council Education Committee hearing.*

approval [of Rodriguez]?" he asked.

After the Education Committee hearings, Filan told *CATALYST* he "would have no problem voting on contracts for Unisys" as long as his potential conflicts of interest "were out in the open, in clear view."

"What really happened," averred José Lopez, executive director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, "is that Chicago politics got in the way. If the decision had been made on merit or what could be done to help the schools, José would have been [approved]."

*Michael Klonsky*

## SMALL SCHOOLS

*continued from page 1*

"With our focus on career exploration, we needed to build a partnership with businesses," says Perspectives teacher Diana Shula, explaining the need for a location separate from Dyett, which is in Washington Park.

Colleague Kim Day says Perspectives teachers didn't want to create a separate school because they value their attachment to Dyett and do not want to divert time and energy to administrative chores.

Perspectives had attracted a number of Latino students to the overwhelmingly African-American Dyett; teachers hope that in its new location, the satellite school will attract a multiracial, multi-ethnic student body that reflects the city.

With donated space and busing already in effect for Dyett, the satellite will not impose additional costs, the teachers say.

Perspectives' proposed new arrangement is the result of many meetings among Johnson, her new task force, the Small Schools Network (a loose confederation of small-school advocates) and the Small Schools Workshop (an advisory team based at the University of Illinois at Chicago that works with schools).

### More mini-schools emerging

Earlier, Johnson's task force paved the way for Foundations School, another small school developed by teachers, to move from Price Elementary to a wing of Wendell Phillips High School.

Built on progressive educational theory, Foundations opened its doors at Price three years ago but found it increasingly difficult to share space with the more traditional school. And for administrative purposes, the two schools were classified as one; that meant, for example, that Price teachers had to vote on any contract waivers Foundations teachers wanted. Both Foundations and Price finally decided it would be best if Foundations moved. As an underutilized school repeatedly threatened with closure, Phillips was ready to provide the space for Foundations' some 220 pupils.

"Our rooms don't all have electricity yet," reports Lynn Cherkasky-Davis, Foundations' lead teacher. "Our plumb-

## Tribute to 'a dreamer and a pragmatist'

**O**n a hot Sept. 14 afternoon, hundreds of people crammed into and spilled out of the modest bungalow on North Ashland Avenue that was home to John Kotsakis and his wife, Sara. They had come to pay their respects to John and express their condolences to Sara. John, the Chicago Teachers Union's "voice of education reform," had died three days earlier of a massive coronary, at the age of 55.

The outpouring reflected the wide range of individuals who had been touched by "a man who was both a dreamer and a pragmatist." There were rank-and-file teachers, union presidents and school reform activists, as well as family members and personal friends.

But John Kotsakis was more than the CTU's voice of reform. He also was its arms and legs, ceaselessly making the rounds among school, union and foundation offices, as well as reform groups, to promote a new agenda for the union, including Teachers for Chicago, the CTU's Quest Center and the New Standards Project.

Most recently, Kotsakis had taken on central office, as a member of the core planning team trying to "re-engineer" Pershing Road.

"John was a wonderful amalgamation of ideas and abilities," said Peter



*John Kotsakis at WTTW-TV for last year's daylong broadcast on school reform.*

Martinez, senior program officer for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which provided the \$1.1 million kickoff grant to the Quest Center. "He understood the theory of reform and the literature—but he also had the streetwise savvy and know-how to get things done."

"He was remarkable in that he was at once a union leader who understood the needs of teachers as well as a '60s rebel who felt the need for reform," said William Ayers, co-director of the Small Schools Network.

James Deanes, president of the Parent/Community Council, recalled many of his disagreements with Kotsakis: "They were professional disagreements but there was always personal respect. What he said in one room, he always said in another."

*Michael Klomsky*

ing isn't working. But we've found a home. We've got our own [unit] number, our own budget and even our own sign that says 'A Chicago Public School of Choice—Designed and Led by Teachers.'"

Meanwhile, other schools-within-schools have emerged. At the elementary level, they include:

- Telpochcalli (Nahuatl for "the house of youth") at Spry Elementary in Little Village. A partnership with the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum and the Small Schools Workshop, this minischool plans to integrate Mexican arts, culture and history into its curriculum. It aims at full bilingualism (English and Spanish) for all students. Spry has several other schools-within-schools on the drawing board.

- T&T (Transitions and Transformations) at Henson

Elementary and Mason 21 in Mason Elementary, both in North Lawndale. The community organization ACORN is among a number of outside groups that helped create these minischools, which stress democratic participation by faculty and staff, with students voting on school rules.

At the high school level, COMETS, a minischool with an African-centered curriculum and an emphasis on project learning and team teaching, is in its second year at Harper High. And Bowen has three small schools, built around education, travel and tourism and vocational training.

Chicago Vocational High School has seven small schools, each organized around a career area. And Taft High has maintained its small-school program despite the departure of former Principal William Watts. ■

## GRANTS

*continued from page 24*

Leadership and Learning, an organization based at Roosevelt University that trains prospective principals. "You have to be incredibly aggressive to know anything. That's tragic. We're trying to rectify that."

Beginning late this fall, CENter is hoping to present six hours a day of fresh programming on Chicago education issues over Channel 51, a public-access cable channel. The six hours would be mounted by school groups in cooperation with film departments at local universities, says Geer.

When no programming is available, says Geer, viewers would be able to receive news about upcoming education events off a video bulletin board. Another 34 hours a week of Channel

51's airtime would be filled with Board of Education proceedings, currently broadcast over Channel 21, another public-access station.

In addition, CENter is planning to launch a newspaper, called *NewsCENter*, to be distributed free to local school council members, teachers and others. The paper would be edited by Steve Sewall, a former private-school principal and reform activist who has lobbied to get Chicago's daily papers to include more education coverage.

*NewsCENter* would carry program listings for Channel 51, a question-and-answer column and appropriate reprints of articles published elsewhere, says Sewall. CENter also hopes to book panel discussions regarding education on local radio shows.

The idea for CENter grew out of frustration over the Chicago Associa-

tion of Local School Councils' (CALSC) ill-fated attempt to get a workshop on local school councils broadcast before last fall's LSC elections. WTTW-TV (Channel 11) had agreed to do it, but the late start of the school year threw a wrench into those plans. In the spring, cable airings of a show on budgeting and school improvement planning found a respectable audience, say Geer and CALSC coordinator Sheila Castillo. With that success, the push for CENter was on.

Castillo says a recent CALSC survey of local school council members indicates that 70 per cent are at least interested in watching cable offerings on education. Of the 330,000 homes in Chicago wired for cable, 42 per cent have school-age children, according to Geer. *Grant Pick*

## OPINIONS

*continued from page 17*

■ Writings published in professional newsletters and journals.

■ Professional affiliations and attendance at related conferences.

■ Grants and other honors received.

As a whole, the evaluation should be a strong affirmation of the positive, with reference to next steps for development.

I have always engaged in self-evaluation and sought out information on more effective teaching methods and better management of students and curriculum. But this personal initiative has not been sufficiently supported by the school system I have served for so many years. What we have, instead, is an evaluation process that runs the gamut from administrative tyranny to a meaningless exercise.

It's time for a thoughtful process that promotes professional self-knowledge and a stronger support system among colleagues at a school. The current, mechanical evaluation system should be abolished. Instead, teachers should be evaluated on the basis of professional portfolios, recommendations and similar documentation of professional development. In support of site-based management, each school should design a plan of teacher evaluation that aligns with its goals and meets the needs of all the professionals who work there. ■

## LETTERS

*continued from page 17*

### New small school makes big plans

Thank you for Michael Klonsky's article (September 1994) on the Corporate Community School's entry into the Chicago public schools and the precedent it may offer for other new schools to form within the Chicago Board of Education.

As the article noted, a multiracial, multicultural group of parents and teachers from across the city is organizing a new small public school, the Maxwell Street Heritage High School. William Ayers and the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago are assisting this process.

Our group takes seriously the rights and responsibilities of parents and teachers as leaders that Chicago school reform introduced. We specifically want a small school in the tradition of learner-centered, progressive education. The other key theme will be infusion of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction throughout the school.

Central Park East Secondary School in New York City and others throughout the country have successfully used the small-school model to serve diverse urban students. These small schools are in their own buildings, as differentiated from the "school-within-a-school" model.

Our school will be open to students of all achievement levels and seek a student body from across the city, from diverse ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Maxwell Street Heritage School will be:

■ Small, so that each student will be known, relationships can be nurtured among students and faculty and an atmosphere of family and community can flourish.

■ A parent-teacher partnership. Teachers and parents are working together from the school's inception to devise and carry out a school with a clear educational vision that will model the democratic process at all levels. Parents' knowledge of students will be acknowledged, and the family will work with the student and the school to develop an individual educational plan for each student. Teachers will advise small groups of students and work with colleagues to design curriculum.

■ Based on progressive, student-centered educational approaches. We will be "a school that listens to students."

We will offer hands-on, experiential projects, use the community as a classroom, have an integrated curriculum and use graduation portfolios. Community service will be required for graduation, to help students understand that they have something to offer the community—and that they are needed.

■ Designed to educate all students to thrive in a multicultural world. School policies, curriculum and instruction will all be designed to infuse the cultural knowledge of students, their families and Chicago's diverse communities throughout the school.

The organizing committee is in the process of preparing to approach the Chicago Board of Education to explore how to become a Chicago public school. We are also inviting additional parents and teachers to join the effort. Interested parties may contact me at (312) 996-5161.

*Margy McClain, parent*

# It's About Time!

*This is the second in a series of monthly columns about T.I.M.E. T.I.M.E. is one of the Transformation Initiatives. The Transformation Initiatives are several multifaceted, comprehensive efforts by the Chicago Public School System to improve student academic achievement. T.I.M.E. stands for To Improve Management of Education. Members of the T.I.M.E. project seek to "reengineer" administrative and support processes that serve the city's 550 public schools.*

**By Leslie L. Bates  
Student Representative  
T.I.M.E.**

I am happy and privileged to be able to represent the student body of the Chicago Public School System on the *T.I.M.E.* project. I was recommended for this project by my good friend, Lakiesha V. Hamilton, who is the student representative on the Board of Education.

Lakiesha had said to me, "Leslie, you're always complaining about our school, and how it doesn't work. Serving on the *T.I.M.E.* project would be a good experience for you to really be able to say how you feel!"

You know what? Lakiesha was right. Now that I've been given the voice, though, I intend to use it for more than complaining and really help out.

When I first became a part of the core planning team, I heard a lot of words I didn't even know existed. I now carry my dictionary with me to every meeting I attend! My job on the team involves all aspects of the project. I have attended and have even *facilitated* (look it up!) several workshops that the team recently held in different schools



**Bates**

in Chicago. These workshops were held to get members input from school and community.

As you might expect, there have been lots of questions directed at me during many of these workshops.

Questions like: Why is there a student on the *T.I.M.E.* project? How is this project different from the other ones?

First of all, students are the focus of all the Transformation Initiatives. The *T.I.M.E.* project is no exception. Since we the students are in the schools, you could say we offer a good perspective of what is wrong, and what needs to be done in our schools today. It's no different from a business getting its customers involved in order to provide them with better service.

To answer the second question, the *T.I.M.E.* project is different because, as far as I know, this is the only other area besides the local school council that has a student representative on the team. This is going to allow for a two-way flow of information — from me to the team, and from me to the schools. I like that!

By the way, although I'm going back to school, I will continue to work on the project during my after-school hours.

For example, by the time you read this, I will have begun meeting with LSC student representatives, student council presidents and senior class presidents from each Chicago public high school to discuss what exactly is wrong and what works well in their schools.

By the time I've finished my job, I want everyone to know about *T.I.M.E.*

I plan to interact with the students so they will know there is someone they can get in touch with to help them — not just complain, but — have a real say. Stay positive! Now is the *T.I.M.E.*

Two final things:

To my friend Lakiesha, thanks a bunch for telling me about this project, and for telling my core team members about me.

To my grandmother, Lillie Henderson, thank you for always encouraging me to speak for what I believe!

*In addition to always heeding her grandmother's advice, Leslie is a senior at Kenwood Academy.*

*If you have any questions, write the T.I.M.E. Project, c/o Jones Metropolitan High School, 606 South State Street, Chicago, IL 60605. Or call us at (312) 541-4068.*

## Comings and . . . . . goings

**SMALL SCHOOLS WORKSHOP** Deborah Meier, principal of Central Park East High School, will be the keynote speaker at a free, daylong workshop on creating small schools with a progressive educational focus. Central Park was the subject of *High School II*, a documentary by award-winning



Deborah Meier

film maker Frederick Wiseman that was broadcast recently on WTTW-TV. The workshop will be held at Roosevelt University. Sponsors are the Small Schools Network, the Board of Education and the Chicago Teachers Union. Registration is first-come, first-served, with up to four people eligible to attend from each school. To register, fax the name of your school and the names and positions of the individuals who want to attend to (312) 535-3767. For more information, call (312) 535-7500.

**IN THE FIELD** Charles Kyles, a school reform activist who wrote *Kids First*, resigned as principal of Pritzker

Elementary shortly after his appointment . . . **Dolores Gonzalez Engelskirchen**, superintendent of Subdistrict 5, has resigned to become a principal in Rockford . . .

**Graciela M. Shelley**, a teacher in Subdistrict 3, has been named administrator of Subdistrict 3.

**A NEW NAME** Sbarbaro Elementary in Chatham has been renamed **Arthur Robert Ashe Elementary**, in honor of the late tennis star.

**AWARD WINNERS** Virginia Tate, a teacher at Lawndale Community Academy, is one of 12 finalists for 1995 Illinois Teacher of the Year. Tate is a computer and gifted-education teacher . . . **Joseph Rosen**, a former teacher, principal and district superintendent, has received the Distinguished Alumni Award of DePaul University, along with six other DePaul alumni. Recognizing the role parents and the community play in the success of schools, Rosen founded the North Lawndale Citizens' Commission, now the Greater Lawndale Conservation Commission, in 1949.

**MOVING ON** Diana Nelson, former president of Leadership for Quality Education, has been named director of public affairs at the Union League Club of Chicago.

**AT PERSHING ROAD** Joseph Cowans, senior consultant with CSC Consulting, has been named chief information officer; he will head efforts to revamp the board's computer system. CSC Consulting is a subsidiary of CSC

Index, the Cambridge, Mass.-based firm that is guiding central office's restructuring effort. . . **Alvin Crawley**, administrator in special education and pupil support services, has been named assistant superintendent of special education and pupil support services . . . **Nancy Pendry**, manager of risk management, has been named director of employee benefits . . . **J. Maxey Bacchus**, former director of the department of research, evaluation and planning, has been named coordinator of procurement and contracts . . . **Dorothy M. Aguirre**, principal of Hillard Adult Education Center, has been named to the new post of manager of professional development and staff training.

**NEW PRINCIPALS** The following assistant and interim principals have received contracts expiring June 1995: **Shirley Antwi-Barfi**, Penn; ( **Frank L. Blair, Jr.**, Brenan (formerly at Curtis); **Inez Garber**, McCutcheon; **Catherine Smith**, Solomon; **Lillian R. Stawicki**, LeMoyne; **Sharon R. Wilcher**, Ward . . . The following acting, assistant and interim principals have received contracts expiring June 1998: **Victoria Cadavid**, Pickard; **Lorenzo Flores**, Morrill; **Carol J. Habel**, Belding; **Deborah Jackson-Davies**, Aldridge; **Melovee Williamson**, Hayt . . . Receiving a contract that expires June 1997: **Mary Lou Gutierrez**, former facilitator in the Department of Language and Cultural Education, Everett. *Antione Wright*

**Catalyst**  
VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Community Renewal Society  
332 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60604

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