

Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Enthusiasm, skepticism await Charter Express

by Michael Klonsky and Susan Klonsky

Attention, please! Arriving on the fast track from Springfield, the Charter Express. Charter school legislation, which was speeding through the Legislature as *CATALYST* went to press, will get a mixed reception when it hits town.

Eagerly anticipating its arrival, a number of educators and activists already are making plans to apply for one of Chicago's 15 charters to create public schools free from most state and local rules. (See story to right.) Others, though, predict that charters won't come anywhere near meeting the goals that proponents set out for them, providing innovative schooling that will spur regular schools to change as well. And some activists fear charters will have a negative impact on regular schools.

In the welcoming crowd, Alexander Polikoff, leader of the Small Schools Network and president of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, says, "Charters should allow groups of like-minded teachers to shape curriculum in smaller schools. This is the same approach we're taking to creating small schools within the system, and we're glad to see it done, even on a limited basis, in charter schools. They should impact positively on the rest of the system."

Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on School Policy, is a proponent of charter schools, but he says that the legislation provides for too few to foster true innovation. "They will be like magnet schools," he predicts,

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Some activists ready to go, others take a pass

"We're on our way," says Irene Damota, principal of Whittier Elementary School in Pilsen. Anticipating passage of charter-school legislation, the Whittier Local School Council voted Dec. 15 to apply. Damota is one of a number of innovative Chicago educators who have set their sights on charters. There are others, though, who believe they can reach their goals within existing rules.

Here's a partial rundown on who wants to do what and why:

Whittier "Absolutely"

A top priority for Whittier is expanding beyond its K-6 structure to include not only 7th and 8th grades but also high school—something Damota believes the School Board would not otherwise approve. "We want our kids to develop

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Orr's chess program

It has done a lot more than produce champions.

See page 12



Will charters teach us anything?

Charter schools should be a telling experiment.

Can 15 “new” schools light a fire under 550?

Are there even 15 groups of educators and parents in this city who are willing to do all the hard work of starting and sustaining a charter school?

Do any of them have any truly new ideas?

Will a whiff of competition force the Board of Education to make it easier for like-minded educators and parents to form their own schools *inside* the school system?

Will charters be successful in raising student achievement? If they are, will we know why? Because they were free of rules? Because they “creamed” the most highly motivated teachers, parents and students? Because they paid employees less so they would have money for more time, more technology, more training? Because they were forced to meet certain standards or risk being shut down?


Will the school networks supported by the city’s \$50 million Annenberg Foundation grant give charters a run for their money?

Will the vast remainder of schools in the system even take note?

Businessman Joseph Kellman’s experiment, the Corporate/Community School of America, has been sobering. The small school was free of bothersome union rules and government regulations. It was run “like a corporation,” meaning employees who didn’t produce supposedly got the boot. It offered a longer school day, a longer school year and pre-school for kids as young as 2. But even with all these seeming advantages, reports Contributing Editor Michael Klonsky, C/CSA still didn’t produce what it set out to produce: respectable student achievement, as measured by standardized test scores.

In these days of *The Bell Curve*, this story could easily

be perverted. Some people will read it as “Poor black kids can’t learn.” People in contact with the school, however, know that even C/CSA backers concede its board made some poor personnel choices—just like some local school councils have. Beyond that, though, C/CSA had no outside accountability—like Illinois’ new charter schools will have, and like all schools *should* have. C/CSA did not have to meet any particular achievement standards or else suffer some consequences.

 **CATALYST ON THE AIR** The first Sunday of every month, the people who speak through our pages will speak on the air as Editor and Publisher Linda Lenz hosts “City Voices” on WNUA-FM, 95.5. On March 5, charter schools will be the topic of discussion. “City Voices,” broadcast from 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., features rotating hosts who will delve into the urban agenda. Independent journalist Stan West is host the second Sunday of the month. Laura Washington, editor and publisher of *CATALYST*’s sister publication, *The Chicago Reporter*, is host the third Sunday. And Thom Clark, president of the Community Media Workshop, takes the fourth. When there’s a fifth Sunday, we’ll punt.

Ava Belisle-Chatterjee, director of educational studies at Columbia College, has been chosen as chair of *CATALYST*’s editorial board. Her previous work as a teacher at Sabin Magnet School won her a Golden Apple Award. Adrian Capehart, an instructor in the College of Education at DePaul University, is the new co-chair of the editorial board. He also is the education contributor to the “Mara Tapp Show” on WBEZ-FM, offering commentary every fourth Wednesday of the month.

With this issue, *CATALYST* welcomes a Springfield correspondent. Michael Hawthorne, who is the Springfield bureau chief for the *Champaign-Urban News Gazette*, will file regular reports.

Linda Lenz *Lorraine Forte*

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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

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CHARTER SCHOOLS



NANCY CHILDRART

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

The rules for schools without rules

How many charters will Chicago get, and how long will they last? Chicago will get 15 charters, which will be granted for three to five years.

Who can apply for charters?

Groups of individuals or established non-profit institutions and organizations, including universities and community organizations. Also, existing public schools or schools-within-schools. A for-profit company, such as the Edison Project, may not apply, but a non-profit group may hire a for-profit company to run all or part of its program, an arrangement that would have to be spelled out in the charter application. Also, private, parochial and other non-public schools may not apply.

Where will charter schools get their money?

For every pupil a charter enrolls, it will receive from the School Board an amount roughly equal to the district's so-called tuition level, which reflects the district's per-pupil spending on core operations. This year, Chicago's tuition level is \$5,136. Charters will also receive their proportionate share of state and federal categorical funds (e.g., Chapter 1, bilingual and special education money).

Also, since charters will be organized as independent, non-profit corporations, they will be free to raise money from foundations, corporations and individuals. They may not charge tuition, but they may charge certain fees.

What must a charter application show?

Basically, that the organizers have everything lined up, including space, faculty, financial plans, curriculum, standards and assessments, even students. They also must present evidence that the terms of the charter "are economically sound for both the charter school and the school district."

Since charters must abide by court-ordered desegregation plans, Chicago charters likely will be required to have racially integrated faculties. Existing schools that apply likely will be required to show that their student bodies won't move away from desegregation standards; new schools likely will be required to have racially integrated student bodies.

Existing schools that apply must show that a majority of their teachers, parents and local school councils approve of the charter application.

How will the School Board decide who gets a charter?

The legislation directs school boards to give preference to applications that:

- Demonstrate a high level of pupil, parental, community, business and school personnel support.

- Set rigorous levels of expected pupil achievement and demonstrate feasible plans for attaining those levels of achievement.

- Are designed to enroll and serve a substantial proportion of at-risk children, who are defined as children who, "because of physical, emotional, socioeconomic or cultural factors" are "less likely to succeed in a conventional educational environment."

If the School Board rejects a proposed charter, applicants may appeal to the Illinois State Board of Education.

Is there any accountability?

The Board of Education may revoke or not renew the charter of a school that fails to abide by its charter, to make reasonable progress toward its achievement goals, that has bad financial management or that violates the laws it is obligated to follow. A charter may not be renewed if the board determines that continued operation "is not in the interest of the pupils residing within the school district." Charters also must hire an outside auditor to perform annual audits of their financial records.

Who may attend a Chicago charter?

Any pupil who lives in Chicago. Similarly, no Chicago pupil may be forced to attend a charter school. Also, the Chicago Board of Education and one or more other school districts may jointly grant a charter, enabling stu-

dents from inside and outside the city to attend school together.

What if more children apply than a charter has space for?

Enrollment would be by lottery, with priority given to brothers and sisters of students enrolled the previous year.

May charter teachers be members of the Chicago Teachers Union?

That's unclear. Charter teachers may not be part of the district's teacher bargaining unit but may form their own. Also, if a Chicago teacher leaves a regular school to work in a charter, he or she may return to a regular school with seniority rights and pension intact—in effect, taking a leave of absence.

Will charter employees be paid at the same rate as regular school employees?

That's up to a charter's board and any charter union.

Can charters hire non-certified teachers?

Yes, under three conditions: They must have a bachelor's degree. They must have been employed at least five years in "an area requiring application of the individual's education." They must have passed the basic skills and content-area tests used for teacher certification.

Can teachers be forced to work in a charter?

No. If an existing school meets charter requirements—i.e., a majority of its teachers approve—teachers at that school who don't want to work under the charter may transfer to other schools, presumably as a reserve teacher.

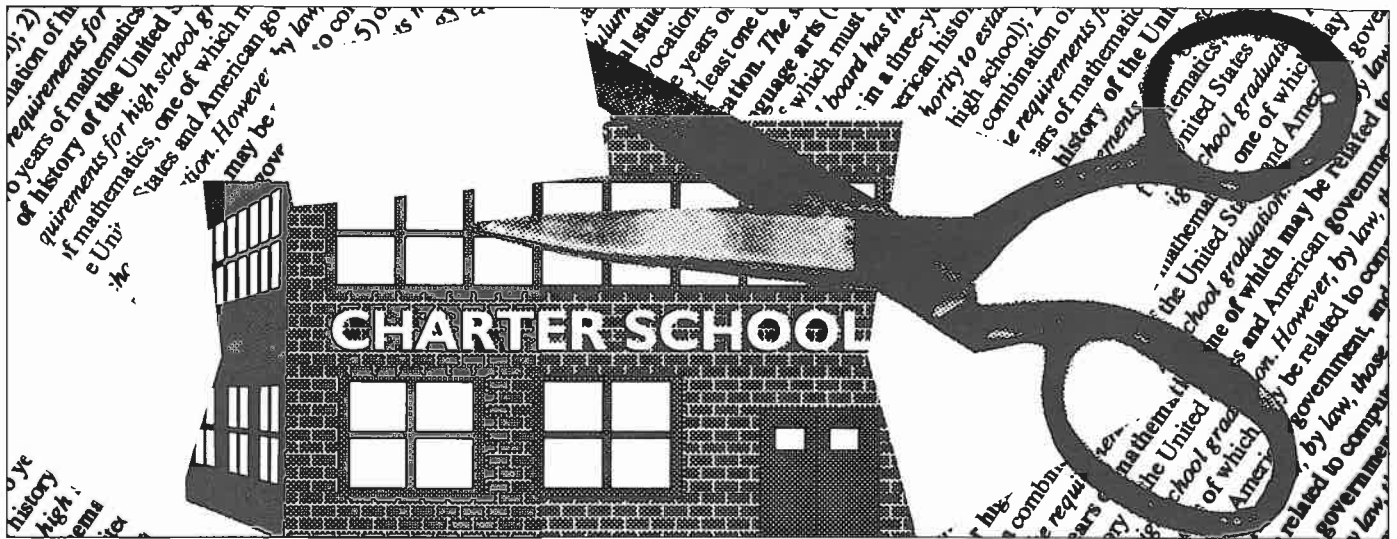
Will charters be free from all laws and regulations?

No. Charters must comply with civil rights laws and other specified laws and regulations, including the Open Meetings Act, the Freedom of Information Act and health and safety regulations.

What's the timetable?

Applications must be submitted by Jan. 9, 1996, for schools that want to open in September 1996.

Michael Klonsky



CHARTER

continued from page 1

noting that a number of existing schools want charters simply to make it easier to do what they're already doing. Those schools, Hess says, are ready to go and will "suck up all the charters. . . . I think you have to move beyond a few magnet schools if you want to create new avenues for innovation."

Giving the Board of Education the power to grant charters also works against innovation, Hess says. "They will grant charters to schools that will not put pressure on them to change, that will complement their program rather than compete with it," he says.

On this point, a national expert on charter schools concurs. Ted Kolderie of the Center for Policy Studies in Minneapolis says that other institutions should be empowered to grant charters. He also finds fault with Illinois' appeals process. An applicant who is turned down by the Chicago board can appeal to the Illinois Board of Education but must show bad faith or malfeasance, he says, not simply that their plan deserved approval.

Kolderie says another problem with the Illinois legislation is that charters cannot draw kids from outside the school district that granted the charter, meaning some proposals may not be able to round up enough students. "It's not a very good bill," he concludes.

Bernie Noven of Parents United for Responsible Education (P.U.R.E.) is among those who see charter schools as a strike against public education. The

state's "privatization bill," as he calls charter legislation, will permit public schools to be run by for-profit companies, he protests. Noven also fears that parochial schools will somehow get their hands on charters and "teach religious education after school hours."

Noven says that, at best, charter schools essentially will be magnet schools since they may enroll children from anywhere in the city. "If you want to judge whether or not charters are any better than regular schools," he says, "make them draw kids from the same neighborhood."

The legislative task force of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform also opposes charters. "Our opposition is based not on any objection to choice as a principle," says Ken McNeil, the coalition's executive director. "The legislative package is a smokescreen to mask [the Legislature's] failure to fund education in the state. There's been an implicit deal since 1988—reform the schools, and then we'll give you the money. Well, we have reformed. We shrunk the bureaucracy and improved the schools and still there's no money."

The legislative package, which newly empowered Republicans pushed through the General Assembly, also includes two other mechanisms for cutting red tape. One would enable school districts to obtain waivers from state regulations. The other would enable groups of schools in Chicago—high schools and their feeder elementary schools—to operate with fewer restrictions. The latter provides for a Learning Zone Commission to rule on the particulars; the commission

will include the governor, the state superintendent of schools, the president of the Chicago Board of Education, the mayor and five other members selected by the governor.

CTU objects

When first introduced last year, the GOP's education package drew heated protests from the Chicago Teachers Union and the Chicago Board of Education. The CTU's newspaper, *Chicago Union Teacher*, warned union members that teachers who joined charters would "lose their benefits, seniority and pensions." By the time charter bills cleared the House and Senate this year, however, these dangers had been removed. Even so, the CTU went on record against the bills, objecting principally to the right of charters to hire non-certified teachers. "We object to the idea that anyone can teach," says CTU spokesperson Jackie Gallagher. "Just because you're a physicist doesn't mean you can teach physics."

Further, she adds, "We don't need a charter law [in Chicago]. We already have innovative schools like those in the CTU Quest Center, and can waive whatever rules or regulations we need to."

Meanwhile, the Board of Education, which last year unfurled a long list of objections, switched sides, going on record in favor of charters. Board President D. Sharon Grant went so far as to endorse vouchers, a proposal that got shunted off the Republican's fast track but is still idling in Springfield. ■

Private school that went public faces vexing choices

by Michael Klonsky

In 1989, a Chicago businessman who had railed for years against the Chicago Public Schools bureaucracy threw down the gauntlet. I'll show you how to really educate children—without spending any more money—he told Chicago bureaucrats.

With funding from several major corporations, Joseph Kellman, president of Globe Glass and founder of the Better Boys Foundation, opened, in essence, a charter school for the children of Lawndale, one of the city's most economically depressed neighborhoods.

By 1994, however, his Corporate/Community School of America (C/CSA) had accomplished neither of its goals—producing higher student achievement or transforming the public school system through example. Questioning their \$2 million annual investment, Kellman's corporate allies began to pull back. Finally, in September, they negotiated a takeover by the Board of Education to keep C/CSA open. (See *CATALYST*, September 1994.)

If state and local rules are stifling innovation, as charter-school advocates say, then C/CSA's switch should have been the school's undoing. But Acting Principal Rollie Jones, a longtime public school administrator, reports, "The school has remained intact."

Catherine Moore, a member of C/CSA's new local school council and the mother of a 1994 graduate, agrees. "The reason C/CSA exists hasn't changed—it is to educate children," she says. "We can't deny that we are part of the bureaucracy, and teachers feel it. But I don't see anything that will keep us from doing what we want to do. We have not given up on the dream."

C/CSA has remained intact, however, largely because corporations are supplementing its budget with about \$700,000 a year.

Unlike the typical charter school elsewhere, and schools-within-a-school



Acting Principal Rollie Jones outside Corporate/Community School of America.

in Chicago, a key thrust of C/CSA is *more* schooling. C/CSA children are in school 7½ hours a day, 11 months a year, while children in other Chicago schools attend for 5½ hours a day, 9 months a year. C/CSA now pays for its extra hours with its state Chapter 1 funds, and for its extra months with corporation dollars. Before joining the system, C/CSA teachers simply worked longer for the same amount of money that public school teachers received.

Initially, children as young as 2 could enroll in C/CSA's preschool program. Preschool continues, thanks to corporate and state Chapter 1 dollars. But the local school council voted to increase the enrollment age to 3—at least for the time being—to recapture classroom space for other uses.

With most of its supplemental money buying extra teaching time, the LSC also found it could no longer afford a community services coordinator; now it is the school nurse who is responsible for linking families of C/CSA's 300 students with some 70 area social service agencies. The LSC also decided to discontinue busing for children who live less than 1½ miles from school and, thus, do not qualify for board-funded busing.

However, every classroom continues to have a teacher assistant, funded by corporate money.

Money issues aside, the new rules that the school must follow have had a negative impact in several areas. Class sizes are up by about three students each. Teachers have more work, too, because teacher assistants, whose salaries will drop from \$20,000 to \$14,000 when their agreement with C/CSA ends this year, are doing less work.

"Teacher assistants can't or won't do the same jobs, like lesson plans," says Monique Whittington, who has taught at C/CSA for about three years. "And there is far more paperwork and forms to fill out."

While some assistants have chosen to do less work, school system regulations also have played a part. For example, union rules prohibit assistants from taking over a class when a teacher is absent. At C/CSA, teacher assistants used to fill in for teachers while they attended meetings and workshops, engaged in planning or were home sick; since assistants were familiar with lesson plans, children suffered little, if any, disruption in their education. Now, a substitute teacher must be hired.

"It's hard to get good subs, and

many don't want to work here because of the longer day," says Whittington.

Teachers did recapture planning time, however, by adjusting the attendance schedule for children, a practice made possible for all Chicago schools by the School Reform Act's provision for union waivers.

The faculty and LSC aren't sure what to do about several instructional practices that do not fall neatly under board guidelines, such as using portfolios to grade children and grouping children of different ages into the same classrooms.

Just as the teachers' workload is up, so, too, is their compensation. They have a pension, which they didn't before. They enjoy better health insurance benefits. And their salaries—and job security—will increase once they obtain state teaching certificates.

(Currently, C/CSA teachers are paid at the rate of full-time substitutes, or FTBs; once certified, they will advance farther on the salary scale. Concordia College is conducting the required courses at C/CSA itself, and C/CSA teachers will do the required student teaching this summer.)

"We also have some resources, like

access to federally funded programs and grants, that we didn't have before," notes Whittington, who teaches 2nd grade.

Teachers also are learning a few new operating procedures, like following the chain of command. In the past, they went directly to Kellman or other C/CSA board members with their problems. So, when they discovered there was a 60-day waiting period before they could take paid sick leave, they complained directly to Supt. Argie Johnson. That brought a lecture. "We were told in no uncertain terms that things don't work that way here," Whittington reports.

Teachers 'pushed out'

Joe Kellman's greatest concern is state and union rules governing teacher dismissal. "The big thing is teachers," he says. "The only thing we didn't preserve was our non-union status. Before, if teachers weren't up to snuff, we terminated them. Under the present system, it's practically impossible to fire a bad teacher." But that doesn't bother Jones, who was appointed acting principal by Subdistrict 4 Supt. Allen Smith. "I'd rather work to improve teachers who

are having problems," she says.

C/CSA teachers say that staff turnover was high in the past. "It wasn't that a lot of teachers were fired," reports one teacher. "It's just that they were pushed out if they didn't believe in the program, and many didn't."

Primus Mootry, the school's projects director, fears that a time-clock mentality may be setting in. "Before, [teachers] could do pretty much whatever they chose, like working 'til 9 at night sometimes," he says. "When you become part of the system, your compensation is changed, and teachers worry about [the rules] more."

Meanwhile, C/CSA's new parent-dominated local school council seems to be having as much trouble selecting a principal as the school's corporate-dominated board did. Before going public, the school went through three principals in six years. When it came time for the council to select a principal, it failed to muster the required seven votes. As a result, Smith, the sub-district superintendent, will make the selection. Since Jones got six votes and was appointed to the acting post by Smith, she likely will get the chance to carry on. ■

School fails test-score challenge

When the Board of Education welcomed the Corporate/Community School of America into its fold, it tested all its students.

"Their scores were no better than other schools in District 4," reports James Deanes, Subdistrict 4's liaison to the school.

C/CSA has never made its test scores public, and Subdistrict 4 Supt. Allen Smith declined to assess the results of the special fall testing, preferring to wait and see how students perform under the new set-up. Results of the system's regular spring testing will be made public.

A testing report obtained by CATALYST shows that students, like their counterparts in the Chicago public schools, fall farther below average as they advance through school.

In 1993 and 1994, students had above-average reading scores in 1st

grade, according to the report by Louis A. Gatta, president of Educational Consultants and Research Associates, which administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to students. But by 8th grade, students scored 1½ to 2 years below grade level. Vocabulary and math scores showed the same downward trend.

"The low achievement scores in problem-solving and computation will cause students to have significant problems in their math courses when they enter high school," Gatta wrote. He also urged the school to spend more time on reading and writing.

Primus Mootry, C/CSA's projects director, attributes the low scores to the school's curriculum. "Much of our content had nothing to do with the tests," he says. "Children were learning two languages or how to use computers. It was a matter of where you focus your energies."

For the students to do well on standardized tests, Mootry says, "you would have to use a much more traditional approach to learning—more memorization of things like the [multiplication] tables and focusing on basics," which he favors. "But," he adds, "I was not the principal."

However, one respected educator familiar with the school, who asked not to be identified, says teaching was lax. A non-traditional curriculum can raise scores as well as a traditional one can, he says.

Deanes, whose post is being funded by C/CSA donor corporations, faults the school's top-down approach. "Innovation must come from the bottom up," he says. "You can't create a good school simply by firing people at will or by installing a bunch of computers. Like all the other schools in our district, the parents and teachers will have to do it." *Michael Klonsky*

READY

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an identity with the school," says Damota. "We want to be able to nurture our students all the way through school."

To relieve overcrowding, Whittier wants to establish two shifts, which would be followed by evening classes for adults. Damota hopes that charter status would enable her to provide day and night service without having to dip into state Chapter 1 money to pay overtime to building maintenance staff.

Damota also believes that charter status will enable Whittier to move ahead more quickly with plans for acquiring advanced technology and using it throughout its curriculum. "We have to bring our school and our children into the 21st century," she says. "We want to use the Internet and two-way communications as our window to the world."

Charter-school status might also bring back federal Chapter 1 funds the school lost this year, Damota says. For years, principals of largely Hispanic schools like Whittier have complained that the way the School Board calculates low-income enrollment for determining a school's eligibility works

than having to qualify under their school district's formulas.

As Damota says, Whittier is on its way toward applying for a charter. On Dec. 15, the LSC also established five task forces of parents and teachers to create a new vision for the school that would include alternative assessments and application of national standards.

"Our staff hiring will be done according to our vision," says Damota. "Everyone who works here, including the teachers and the principal, will have to decide what they believe in. . . . Of course, I already am hearing grumbles from our union people."

Foundations "Not now"

"Three years ago we would have jumped at charter schools," says Lynn Cherkasky-Davis, the lead teacher and driving force behind Foundations School. But now that the progressive, teacher-led school is firmly in place, Cherkasky-Davis is no longer interested.

When Cherkasky-Davis and nine like-minded colleagues at Dumas Elementary School decided to strike out on their own, the biggest problem

are even able to provide before- and after-school care, with busing to and from Foundations to the child-care location at Kennedy-King College."

"Yes, we had a tough time," admits Cherkasky-Davis, who is a Chicago Teachers Union activist. "But we wanted to do it within the [system] because, as teachers, we wanted to be creative and innovative and still keep our union protection."

As for union rules, when they get in the way, Foundations teachers apply for a waiver. For example, teachers "bank" daily preparation time for periodic extended planning sessions and professional development.

Foundations has been a trailblazer for teachers who want to create alternative programs but stay in the system. A newly sympathetic central administration has taken notice, with its Office for Reform contacting Foundations to work out a plan for replicating its program.

"Charters may be a great avenue for some others whose needs can't be met within the system," says Cherkasky-Davis. "We wanted to become part of a 'learning zone' two years ago. But now we believe it can be done from within because so many precedents have been set."

St. Xavier "Yes," grudgingly

"I hate the charter idea. It's just another way of avoiding the public and its problems," says Tim Leonard, an education professor at St. Xavier College. "But if it passes, maybe we can turn it into something positive."

Leonard is organizing a charter high school around the progressive curriculum ideas he teaches at Xavier. It would include programs like the Algebra Project, which uses life experiences to teach algebra and higher-level math, and a humanities curriculum based on appreciation of the arts. Drawing from the tradition of Quaker education, students would have a 20-minute period of silent reflection each day.

Leonard also plans to incorporate organizational patterns developed by Brown University's Ted Sizer and the Coalition of Essential Schools, which strive to limit the number of students that any one teacher teaches.

Teachers would evaluate themselves through peer review, with the process

"I hate the charter idea. But if it passes, maybe we can turn it into something positive."

—Tim Leonard, education professor

against them. The board's formula includes children on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and children who qualify for free and reduced-price lunches. Using both categories, they say, discriminates against poor Hispanics who do not apply for AFDC.

"We are not an AFDC-dependent community," says Damota. "Yet we are penalized by the board." The school lost \$300,000 when its low-income percentage fell below average for the district.

Depending on how charter-school regulations get written, charters could receive federal money directly rather

they faced was finding a home. After a couple prospects fell through, they convinced the principal of Price Elementary School to take them in as a school-within-a-school. But with one set of rules for two distinctly different instructional programs, the alliance quickly turned sour. Last fall, Phillips High School came to the rescue, agreeing to provide a wing of its underused building.

"Now we have our own unit number," says Cherkasky-Davis. "The board has rehabbed our separate space at Phillips. We control our own budget, and the board knows who we are. We



Crane High students sing at the dedication of WSCORP's first "communiversity" school, at Crane. Organizer Coretta McFerren hopes it will become a charter school.

managed by the teachers' union representative. School maintenance would be performed by crews of students and teachers. Specialized tasks would be contracted to local union tradesmen. Such staffing would enable the school to have a student-teacher ratio of no more than 20 to 1.

The school would be small, with no more than 200 students. Students would be organized into groups based on their interests, and a teacher with similar interests would be assigned to the group. Each group and its teacher would stay together throughout high school.

Leonard's school also has a social purpose: to draw black students from the southwest corner of Chicago and white students from the nearby suburbs into one school.

Percy Julian High at 103rd and Vincennes, he notes, is 100 percent African-American, while Evergreen Park Community High, at 99th and Kedzie, is 100 percent white.

"Schools are more segregated now than they were before the [U.S. Supreme Court's] Brown decision" in 1954, Leonard points out. "Because of [recent] court decisions, there is no way to spread the burden of desegregation to the whole metropolitan community. This may be one way to do it."

Percy Julian and Evergreen Park each have a "fairly traditional curriculum," Leonard adds, "and each has its own kind of educational malaise. Neither school is highly regarded in its respective community."

Loyola "Let us lead"

"Loyola is interested in leading the way," says Kathy Vates, the school's community relations director. "We are focusing on the Edgewater-Uptown and Rogers Park communities, trying to pull together a plan for a charter high school with a school-to-work curriculum." Vates says she has also met with groups like the Edgewater Community Council and People's Housing to discuss a charter elementary school.

WSCORP "Of course"

"Of course we will apply," says Coretta McFerren, who founded WSCORP (West Side Schools and Communities Organizing for Restructuring and Planning). "We want all of our Communiversity schools to get charters. The problem is that they are only making room for 15 [in Chicago]."

In January, WSCORP opened a "communiversity" at Crane High School, providing classes for adults and tapping community services. Whittier figures to become a communiversity, as do more than a dozen other schools. McFerren hopes that all communiversities can be covered by a single charter.

McFerren has been a leading voice for school reform. Yet she is among the loudest critics of the pace of progress

and still considers central office something akin to the old Soviet Kremlin. "Since 1989, even with school reform, not much has changed for the majority of Chicago school children, especially those on the Near West Side," she says.

Like Whittier Principal Damota, McFerren sees charters as a way to spend money differently and get around some union regulations. In particular, she wants to be able to use school dollars for adult-education programs; currently, adult education is funded only through community colleges. She also wants the freedom to hire teachers who may not have state teaching certificates, such as business or professional people from the community. And she wants principals to have the authority to hire all building staff, not just teachers.

National-Louis "Unnecessary"

A group of educators from National-Louis University has been planning a progressive high school, too, organized around the ideas championed in the newsletter "Best Practice." But they're not banking on a charter.

"Our aim is to show that you can succeed with ordinary city kids, with ordinary budgets and ordinary rules," says National-Louis professor Steve Zemelman. "What we would change is the curriculum, and you don't need a lot of special conditions which the rest of the world can't afford." *Michael Klonsky*

Charters elsewhere face money woes, lack of support

Currently, 11 states allow charter schools and about 200 charters have opened nationwide. Here's a snapshot of what's happened in two states that pioneered the charter effort:

MINNESOTA

Minnesota enacted the country's first charter school law in 1991, with the first charter, an alternative high school for former dropouts, opening in St. Paul in September 1992.

Local school boards can deny a charter in order to avoid siphoning off tax revenue for existing public schools. The law initially allowed only teachers to form and operate charters; now, other institutions may open charters, but teachers must make up a majority of the school's Board of Directors. To date, some 20 charters have opened.

A new study by the research department of the Minnesota House of Representatives found troubling trade-offs. Charters have greater freedom and autonomy, but lack financial security and are often forced to seek outside funds to cover basic expenses. And because charters have no tax-levying authority, they cannot seek tax relief. The most autonomous charters had the least financial and political support from their local school boards.

CALIFORNIA

California enacted legislation in 1992, authorizing up to 100 charters; only now are they approaching that number. Most were converted from existing public schools, although the law allows new charters to be developed by outside institutions.

A recent study of 34 charters by the Southwest Regional Laboratory found that the most autonomous charters had the least financial support. Charters that sought more control over staff hiring faced opposition from teachers' unions; those that sought more control over budgeting faced more bureaucratic opposition.

Susan Klonsky

Springfield Watch

Unions still carry some weight

by Michael Hawthorne

Labor leaders may think the Republican-controlled General Assembly is out to get them, but the state's teachers' unions proved they still have clout.

Following a series of union mailings to teachers around the state, the Senate Education Committee altered a GOP-backed proposal allowing school districts to seek waivers from state mandates. The Chicago Teachers Union and others said the original bill would have allowed schools to waive tenure and seniority protections for teachers.

The mailings incensed the bill's sponsor, Sen. Doris Karpel (R-Carol Stream). While offering an amendment prohibiting districts from waiving tenure and seniority, she chided a union lobbyist for "alarming" teachers.

One reason the senators were so angry: An Illinois Federation of Teachers mailing incorrectly stated the GOP bill also abolished teacher certification. "We made a mistake," conceded IFT lobbyist Steve Preckwinkle.

Another committee member, Sen. Todd Sieben (R-Geneseo), complained that scores of teachers called his home demanding action. "I fully expect the unions to send out another mailing to their members notifying them that we have made this change," he said.

Sen. Arthur Berman (D-Chicago) came to the unions' defense. Republicans didn't provide copies of their waiver bill until an hour before the committee voted on it, he said. That left little time for people to analyze the legislation and suggest changes.

"Whether you like it or not, the public should be apprised of what's going on," said Berman. "I applaud the union for revving up its members."

The unions' fears aren't totally unfounded. Senate President James "Pate" Philip (R-Wood Dale) wants to deny the Chicago Teachers Union the

right to strike and eliminate tenure protections. He has suggested those anti-union provisions could be linked to Republican support for riverboat gambling in Chicago.

Meanwhile, Gov. Jim Edgar has suggested that the Chicago Board of Education seek mandate waivers to help cut costs. Waivers will give Chicago more flexibility "to deal with a lot of their own financial problems," he said.

Edgar insists the state will not bail Chicago schools out of their projected \$300 million shortfall for 1995-96. "It isn't going to happen," he said.

Two years ago, the General Assembly made it possible for Chicago schools to remain open for two years, but it didn't use any state money; instead, it OKed more local borrowing.

The Legislature isn't expected to take up Chicago school finances until a special session in late summer.

Republicans also pushed charter school legislation to see whether freeing schools from state mandates will foster school innovation and higher student achievement. But at least one state mandate—teaching about the Holocaust—got a nod in the charter bill approved by the Senate.

Under an amendment successfully introduced by Sen. Patrick O'Malley (R-Palos Park) at the behest of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, charter schools would be "encouraged" to enlist community volunteers to speak about the Holocaust and "other historical events."

Meanwhile, Hispanic leaders didn't fare as well in their attempt to make charters adhere to the state's bilingual education requirements. Rejecting their appeal, Republicans argued that groups forming charters in Hispanic neighborhoods would be foolish to scrap bilingual education. But Hispanic leaders aren't so sure. "We're going to end up litigating this in school districts around the state," predicted Sen. Miguel del Valle (D-Chicago). ■

Let's Rise to the Challenge...

By
ARGIE K. JOHNSON
*General Superintendent
 of the Chicago Public Schools*

What a boost for Chicago school reform! The Annenberg Foundation has made available to Chicago public schools \$49.2 million to continue doing what they have been doing--improving student achievement. One by one, all of our schools will realize philanthropist Walter H. Annenberg's vision of safer, more intimate public schools that are staffed with highly trained teachers. His vision is already evident in a few of our schools such as:

WOODSON SOUTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At Woodson South Elementary School, the Parent Patrol Program assures students a safe corridor to and from school. The school has worked with parents to develop information about gang problems in their neighborhoods.

FLOWER VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

The Local School Council and staff of Flower Vocational High School have reorganized their school around six business enterprises, each one run by students. Flower has also joined the Coalition of Essential Schools, emphasizing the role of students as active learners, and teachers as coaches.

IRVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Staff at Irving Elementary School feel that intensive professional development is a must. Teachers receive continuous training to carry out best educational practices. They have become learners in the same kinds of activities that they later teach to children.

The \$49.2 million Annenberg gift is a challenge grant. It challenges schools to be their best. It also challenges legislators to step



up and look at the funding level of not only Chicago public schools but also schools throughout the state. The Chicago Annenberg Project's gift must be matched 2-to-1 with equal amounts of private donations and public funds. When this challenge is met, \$147.6 million will be available to our schools over the next five years. But NONE of the dollars may be used to narrow the school system's budget shortfall. The monies are to be used strictly to support school activities with a reform collaborative of 20 individuals overseeing the allocation of the monies.

In the first year of operation, about ten networks, each consisting of ten schools that work with external partners, will be selected to make up the first wave of Annenberg grant recipients. The school networks that are funded will be selected through a competitive proposal process.

To qualify for funds from the Annenberg grant, schools must do what Woodson South, Flower, and Irving have already done: establish partnerships with outside entities (universities, businesses, or community agencies); form a network with several other schools; provide staff development and teacher training; and, most importantly, make classrooms more exciting, more comfortable, and safer environments for students.

The central administration is also doing its part to encourage the kinds of networks and school-level innovations and sharing that are at the heart of why Chicago is a recipient of the Annenberg Challenge Grant. We're moving in the right direction. Let's rise to the challenge and continue to lead the way in reforming public education in America!

Front Lines

Chess club offers haven, wins national honors too

by Greg Jacobs

Orr Community Academy High School in West Humboldt Park has some of the worst stats in the city. Test scores and attendance rank near the bottom; the dropout rate is near the top. Yet its chess team is one of the best in the nation.

Last fall, Orr's seniors defeated affluent New Trier Township High School to take the 1994 state chess championship. Six weeks later, at the national championships in Orlando, Fla., Orr finished a heartbreaking second, half a point behind New York City's prestigious Stuyvesant High School.

It is easy to make Orr's unlikely competitive success into a "Hoop Dreams"-meets-Horatio Alger fable. But focusing only on the trophies and tournaments misses the point. Since founding the chess program in 1986, math teacher Tom Larson has built something at once more valuable and more fragile than a chess powerhouse: He has carefully and consciously created an oasis.

"There aren't too many places where the kids feel safe," says Larson. "Where they can be themselves, lose their tempers and know they'll be okay. A lot of them can survive because they've learned how not to make an issue of themselves, to fade away. What I'm after is to get them to feel good about themselves, to provide them with a positive, nurturing environment."

Observes Orr Principal Cynthia Felton, "The youngsters on the chess team have developed a real sense of camaraderie. They help to fend off outside influences. They don't need that gang over there—they've got each other."



Orr chess coach Tom Larson takes on a young opponent. When he introduced the game to Orr in 1986, winning trophies was the farthest thing from his mind.

Indeed, spending time with the Orr chess team is more like hanging out in a clubhouse than in a classroom. From 6:30 in the morning until well after the end of school, players pop in and out of Larson's second-floor sanctuary, a room that doubles as the in-school suspension center, which Larson oversees. They laugh, they argue, they make fun of each other, but most of all, they play chess. Constantly and without prodding, the way most kids play video games. And if they're not playing a game, they're usually watching one, studying and commenting on their teammates' moves.

All the while, "Larson," as the kids call him, looks on, trading barbs, offering advice and occasionally placing his bulky frame between would-be combatants. "If they get out of line," he says,

"I'll sit on 'em. If that doesn't work—belly flop."

Larson has managed to sustain a subtle balance, instilling in his players a genuine love of chess while using the game itself as a pawn, a tool to teach skills useful beyond the board: self-reliance, discipline, concentration and responsibility. "My job," he says, "is to guide them to independence, to guide them through the process of maturing. These are teenagers who don't care about anything. The threat of failure does not mean anything to them. They don't have too many dreams [of life] after high school. I'm trying to build the dream." His materials? "Faith, hope and love," he says. "Faith, hope and love."

Ten years ago, Tom Larson, 47, became so dismayed by the inadequate math skills of the job-seekers he was

ORR COMMUNITY ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL

screening that he quit his post as a night accountant for a downtown hotel to become a Chicago schoolteacher. In May 1985, he was assigned to Orr Community Academy as a full-time substitute. "When I first got here," he recalls, "I was hoping to transfer to a 'good school.'" A decade later, he laughs, "I'm still here—my choice."

A modest beginning

Necessity, not nobility, was Larson's motive for introducing chess to his classroom. Faced with teaching pre-algebra to students who had enough trouble simply staying in their seats, Larson was looking for "whatever kind of activity I could have them do to keep quiet after they got their work done." He turned to a 20-year hobby of his, one that combined concentration, quiet and intellectual discipline. "I started the chess club primarily as a math activity program in the classroom, as a way to get [students] to sit and think," he relates. "The self-motivated kids have all gone to Lane or Whitney Young [high schools]. They learned to sit still. Here at Orr, they can't sit still—some of them are still [behaviorally] in grade school."

The experiment succeeded, focusing students' competitiveness and concentrating their attention on the black-and-white board before them. Chess seemed to slow them down, channeling their aggression into a complex intellectual activity disguised as a game. Impressed, Orr administrators asked Larson to organize a chess team. With only five players, Larson laments, that first squad "got destroyed" by school after school. Only by doing "a lot of social activities" with his players—go-karting, movies, pizza—was Larson able to keep the team intact.

Overcoming its shaky start, Orr's chess program gradually expanded; friends brought in friends, and Larson was able to draw from the ready pool of recruits in his math-activity class. The team grew more competitive, and in 1991, the Spartans of Orr won the city chess title, an achievement that caught Larson by surprise and proved a turn-

The Student Body

Its 1,388 students are mostly African-American and poor

95.4% Black, 4.3% Hispanic, 0.1% White, 0.1% Native American.
75% low income.

Educational statistics are among the worst in the city.

Graduation rate is just 25.4%. Attendance rate is also low, 68.8%. IGAP test scores are well below city and state averages.

	10th-grade reading	10th-grade math	10th-grade writing
Orr	111	130	20.7
Chicago	170	180	22.3
Illinois	244	254	25.3

The Neighborhood

The south end of West Humboldt Park

A third of West Humboldt Park residents live below the poverty level; 40 percent of children ages 3-5 are in danger of hunger or homelessness.

"This is considered one of the most poverty-stricken communities in the city. Businesses have moved out because they can't maintain their insurance or because robberies cost them money. With that go the jobs and the sense of pride in the community. . . Pressures with guns, pressures to join the gangs, economic pressures in the home—the kids come here with all that baggage, and we're supposed to teach them Shakespeare?"

— Cynthia Felton, principal

The Educational Program

Key Objectives

Develop a program that matches every student with an adult mentor; institute character education and cooperative learning programs to improve student discipline and employability.

Recent Changes

- ✓ Instituted Writing Across the Curriculum program.
- ✓ Wired building for schoolwide computer network.
- ✓ Constructed greenhouse with money from private grant.



Joe Fuentes (right) moves against Derrhun Whitten in an after-lunch game.

JAHN BOOZ

JOHN BOOZ



Antwoine Conaway, champion



Cornell Faust, champion



Darnell Faust, champion

ing point for the program.

"After that," he says, "I started evaluating what I did that was a success. The behind-the-scenes things were the successful parts—developing them to where they had the confidence to do it on their own." So, he says, "I quit lecturing. I quit passing out openings [diagrams of opening moves.] I quit making them come and practice. I realized the key was [their] volunteering. When you're dealing with the mind, you can't force them to think. My chess kids are volunteers. They made the initial inquiry. They may stay, they may not—I give them that option. They have to make the decision. That's part of growing up."

Since then, Larson has emphasized the open, informal atmosphere of the chess club—anyone can play during any free period—rather than the competitive nature of interscholastic chess. "A lot of schools only focus on the best," he notes. "I focus on the beginners. I want to give them experience, not just winning." Larson's unorthodox coaching theory is guided by three precepts: "I believe they can do it—they don't doubt that my belief in them is total. I give them a caring, positive environment. And I give them a dream."

To allow his players the luxury of dreaming "somewhere below being Michael Jordan," Larson has fashioned a structure of rewards and responsibilities within which the students must operate.

Being an Orr chessman means team

jackets, trips to tournaments, trophies, and, last Christmas Eve, a skybox seat at a Bears playoff game, courtesy of Bank of America Illinois. In addition to the trappings of success, students receive the immeasurable benefit of an adult mentor to cajole, chastise and counsel them. Dean of Students David Meegan estimates that Larson spends an average of more than 20 extra hours a week with team members, even taking them out on weekends for pizza or a movie. "I do everything to fill in the blanks in their lives," Larson says, "to get them to keep on going and to not give up."

"Our kids need that personal touch," adds Felton. "Each of our teachers sees about 150 kids every day. You can't give that personal touch to 150 kids."

No. 1 job: Graduate

But the rewards do not come without responsibilities.

If students stick with the team, they eventually take on added duties, serving as both role models and teachers for the younger players. Larson has recently formalized these roles, establishing a peer coaching/peer tutoring program in which juniors and seniors earn \$5 an hour teaching chess to younger students and serving as big brothers and academic advisors for underclassmen.

"We take students and monitor how they do in each class," explains chess

club president Derrhun Whitten, a senior. "We make sure they pass and make sure they do their homework."

In the end, however, Larson says his students' "No. 1 job is to graduate." At a school where only a quarter of the students receive diplomas, this is no small feat, so the coach keeps close tabs on his players' schoolwork. "He just stays on them like crazy," Felton says. "He makes certain they attend class and checks their grades on a regular basis. He tutors them himself or arranges a tutor. He works with the home. He's their mentor, which is what the young kids need."

Larson's accomplishment, says Bank of America community relations associate Kevin Anderson, is to "take regular but promising students and help them develop skills they already had." During the first quarter of 1994, the 12 students on the team maintained a B-average, with just one F out of 72 grades. These students fit no particular profile, says Larson. "They're kids from all backgrounds: no parents to two incomes to welfare; with contact with the law, no contact with the law; with gangs and no gangs."

While it is impossible to separate the impact of chess-playing itself from Larson's nurturing, his claims of improved grades, attendance and discipline are consistent with a growing body of research demonstrating the positive academic effects of the game. Studies have linked chess to improved test scores and socialization skills, and

ORR COMMUNITY ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL

have indicated that it helps students develop problem-solving abilities, higher-order thinking skills and healthier self-esteem. The game's growing pedagogical legitimacy recently prompted New Jersey to write chess into its statewide 2nd-grade curriculum.

Orr's current seniors—Derrhun Whitten, Kelley Floyd, Antwoine Conaway and Cornell and Darnell Faust—have set their sights on a future beyond April's national team championships here in Chicago. Kelley Floyd, for example, wants to learn accounting at a local four-year college, while Cornell Faust is considering a career in mechanical engineering. And Larson's support will not stop when they leave Orr. Several of his former players are earning extra cash coaching chess at Orr and its feeder elementary schools while they pursue postsecondary goals.

(Pushing chess down into the elementary schools has been a struggle. At Wright Elementary, the teacher who

had been leading students over to Orr for chess lessons left, and the two-block walk is too dangerous for the students to make on their own. At Ryerson Elementary, Joe Cima's efforts to teach chess to students who have finished their in-class work have run into resistance from staff members who see chess as simply game-playing. "These people think that I'm not tutoring [the students]," Cima complains. "They say, 'Let's just stick to the Individualized Educational Plan.'" Nevertheless, he points out, with the aid of 21-year-old assistant coach Fred Tolliver, a former Orr chess player, about 25 Ryerson students "now can play a legal game.")

Ripple effects

In the early years of Orr's program, Larson dipped into his own pocket to cover the program's expenses. (He earns just \$200 a year for his formal

coaching duties.) In 1992, a newspaper article about the program caught the attention of a local businessman, who has since helped bankroll the team. In addition, says Larson, both Orr's administration and its local school council have "very strongly supported the program," sponsoring a well-attended pep rally before the team's trip to Orlando and purchasing snazzy black-and-gold team jackets for the players. Says Meegan, "The administration is 100 percent behind them. You always support winners."

Only the varsity basketball squad seems to have been put off by all the attention devoted to chess at Orr, says Felton: "The basketball team was a little perplexed. They said, 'We never got jackets!' There is a little envy."

The success of the chessmen has had ripple effects at Orr, Felton notes, boosting school spirit and injecting some much-needed pride into the school community. Three months after the team

Chess for all at Medill Intermediate

While Orr Community Academy may have the best chess program in the city, the most extensive is almost certainly at Medill Intermediate on the Near West Side.

Three years ago, Medill Principal James Malles received a \$17,900 grant from The Field Foundation of Illinois to develop a comprehensive chess program at his West Side school. A former tournament player who proudly boasts of his two losses to former world champion Bobby Fischer ("in 29 and 31 moves"), Malles has used the money to purchase a broad range of chess-related paraphernalia, including boards, computers, books, videos, trophies and even staff development programs.

Now, he says, "Every teacher has chess equipment," kids play at school and at home, and about a quarter of Medill's 277 students "have a good handle on the game."

In his 26th year as principal at Medill, Malles is matter-of-fact about

the depth of his school's troubles. "The students are, on average, 1½ years below grade level," he says. "I've got windows being blown out by bullet holes. I've got mothers here who won't take care of their kids."

Nevertheless, he is effusive about the impact the schoolwide chess program has had on his students. "The kids learn how to think better, they perform better, and they honestly learn to behave better," he contends. "It has given kids an identity and a sense of importance that heretofore they never had. It has improved their attendance and their identification with school."

Malles elaborates on how chess has helped develop students' higher-order thinking skills, one of the key components of Medill's school improvement plan: "It teaches kids how to conceptualize, how to sequentially see relationships. It really helps the kids think things out. They have to have a plan."

Moreover, Malles continues, "Chess has done marvels for my special ed

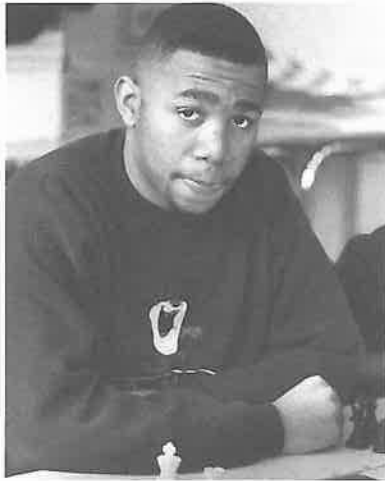
kids. Some of my best players are special ed children or children who have been identified as [having] behavioral problems. It gives them a great 'out.' Instead of trying to beat other kids up physically, they try to beat them intellectually. It gives them some hope—they say, 'Hey, I've got a brain.'"

And when teachers see special education students succeed at chess, Malles points out, "it broadens their perceptions of what learning is. It makes them know kids think in different ways."

Malles has used the equipment obtained with the Field grant to establish the District 4 Chess Olympics, an interscholastic competition to be held for the third time at Medill on April 12. Last December, 66 students from 11 elementary and intermediate schools participated. The tournament is free for students and schools, and Malles pays out of his pocket the only expense: Pepperidge Farm Chessmen cookies.

Greg Jacobs

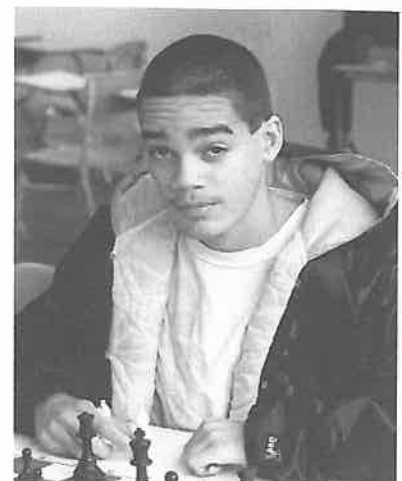
FRONT LINES



Derrhun Whitten, champion



Maurice Edmonds, newcomer



Joe Fuentes, up and coming

defeated New Trier in the state tournament, banners that blare "Congratulations Orr High School Chessmen—State Champions 1994" remain over the building's main entrances.

After observing Larson's impact on the lives of his players, Felton has decided to press ahead with plans for a schoolwide mentoring program, to be funded from state Chapter 1. "Every staff member in the education program would be a mentor," she explains. "Kids who have someone to turn to or [whose] parents have someone to contact do better."

Chess is also starting to become a selling point for a school suffering from a largely negative reputation. James Malles, principal and chess coach at Medill Intermediate School on the Near West Side, says that his best player, 8th-grader Rickey Hall, now wants to enroll at Orr. "If he didn't have chess," says Malles, "he'd go to the neighborhood high school, and he wouldn't have anything to identify with."

But even with all that the chess program has achieved at Orr, Larson would be the first to admit that he is no miracle worker. Currently, there are about 90 students in the program, but only a handful are seniors. Larson ticks off a partial list of reasons why participation drops off: "Jobs, money, girls, social life, peer pressure, violence in the neighborhood, gang recruitment, grades, jail problems, loss of interest. Sometimes kids will transfer to other cities or get

sent down to Mississippi where it's safer."

(Notably, none of the students in the chess program is female, thus the easy use of such phrases as 'big brother' or 'underclassmen.' Senior Derrhun Whitten jokes about the lack of girls—that it is because "they're afraid to lose"; but the real reason is that the

ceptive and quietly self-assured 17-year-old who joined the program as a freshman, arrives at Orr at 6:45 a.m., stays long past the final bell, and plays chess nearly four hours every school day. But such dedication is difficult to sustain. "It's so hard to get them to internalize it," Larson says, "to make it part of them."

Without Tom Larson, "It wouldn't be a program."

—Derrhun Whitten, senior

all-important oasis Larson has created for young, mostly black males hardly provides a welcoming environment for the few females who have ventured into it.

"Unfortunately," Larson acknowledges, "the boys are not kind. I'm trying to get these guys to respect girls as equals, but sometimes it's a losing battle." To correct this dramatic gender imbalance—and some would argue that it should not be corrected—Felton says the coaches must "actively recruit" girls. Larson, however, gives little indication that such an effort is forthcoming.)

Most students have neither the time nor the discipline to maintain the kind of effort necessary to be competitive at the high school level. Derrhun, a per-

All too often, Larson's delicate recipe—a strong mentor, a safe haven and a large dose of self-reliance—is overwhelmed by the bitter reality of his students' day-to-day lives.

Finally, just as this recipe cannot be effectively applied to every student, it also cannot be effectively applied by every teacher. With any effort where success rests so heavily on the shoulders of a single individual, the question of longevity inevitably arises; in this case, could the program survive without the coach? Derrhun Whitten contends that without Larson, "It wouldn't be a program." Adds Kelley Floyd, "If he left, I'd quit." ■

Greg Jacobs is a Chicago freelance writer.



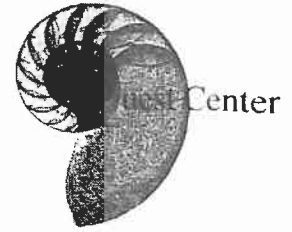
*By Deborah Walsh, Director
Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center*

The most significant teaching-learning experience of my life did not happen in grade school, high school or even college. It happened at age 32, at the very end of my doctoral studies. I had played the school game very well up until that time. Once I figured out what I had to learn, I gave it back on Friday's test and promptly forgot it. Even as a child, I thought that I could have been smart if I applied myself, but very few people ever asked me to.

Here thought, at the very end of my "formal education," I was being found out. Though five of the six people on my committee said I was ready to defend my dissertation, the sixth one didn't. He described what was wrong. I took it home and corrected it. It still wasn't right. We went back and forth. He said the work lacked "intellectual passion." I said, "Oh no, what is intellectual passion, and even more important, how do I stick it in this paper — fast?" He said the only thing left to do before quitting my committee was sitting down with me and going over a chapter page by page. I thought, "Anything to get out of here."

I emerged six hours later, after one of the most grueling and torturous learning experiences of my life, yet one of the most meaningful. When he would say, "What do you mean in this section?" I would explain and he would yell, "Then why didn't you say it that way? You have too much of Smith and Jones and not enough of you in here." This happened over and over again. I came to realize that intellectual passion meant much more than giving back the right names and the right research citations. It meant putting myself and my thoughts into the work. It meant

In Search of Intellectual Passion



drawing conclusions and supporting those conclusions with my own thinking. It was a whole different game than the one that I thought I was playing. In fact, it wasn't a game at all.

This kind of learning experience was too late. By this time I had my bachelors and a masters degrees in education and I was already teaching children. What kind of preparation did I have to teach them to think for themselves if it wasn't even required of me? What are the kinds of changes that need to happen in schools and schools of education in order to make intellectual passion the rule rather than the exception? These questions, derived directly from the experience with my (now-favorite) professor have guided my professional life ever since.

Through my work with my union, while I still don't have the answers, I think I have a better idea of the direction we should take to reach that goal.

I have found it helpful to draw a contrast between the characteristics of learning in the traditional factory model of school (that we borrowed from scientific management at the early part of this century), and an ideal model:

Learning in the Traditional Mode	Learning in an "Ideal Model"
passive	active
solitary	collaborative
teacher-centered	student-centered
one-size-fits-all	individual
basic skills	higher level thinking
predigested information	learners construct meaning
bureaucratic/	learning

rule-centered	centered
standardized breadth over depth	flexible depth over breadth
lecture mode	multiple modes of instruction
competitive	cooperative
fragmented	disciplinary & interdisciple

This contrast is not meant to be an indictment of everything in the traditional model. It is intended to illustrate a continuum of possibilities for thinking about organizing schools to better serve our students and help them acquire the survival skills for today's world. These survival skills certainly include "the basis" of the disciplines, but also include critical and abstract thinking and problem solving both in and across those disciplines — thinking passionately about issues.

The traditional model starts with the premise that our students can achieve more. They deserve our best thinking — and rethinking — of their education to meet entirely new and different demands. This need for a new "paradigm" of schooling occurs at the same time that there has been an explosion in our knowledge base about how children learn. Research findings in cognitive science over the last two decades support a conception of learning much more in line with my "ideal" model than the traditional.

These findings are part of the growing knowledge base supporting a different conception of learning than the traditional model. It demands rethinking how we teach, what we teach, how we group faculty and staff, how we use resources and time: virtually everything. We must work together to find ways to make intellectual passion the norm in our schools. Our future depends on it.

Ken McNeil wrong, GOP no friend of reform

The following was written in response to an open letter to the state's Republican leaders by Ken McNeil, executive director of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform, published in the December 1994 CATALYST.

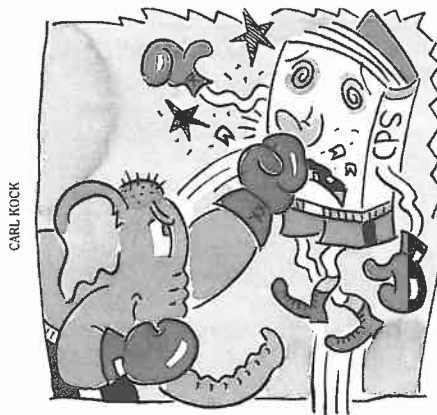
by Rodney D. Estvan

I believe every person involved in Chicago school reform has a right to express his or her views on the direction school change should be taking. I do not believe that Ken McNeil, because he is the executive director of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform, has the authority to be the voice of reform in Chicago, as the tone and the repeated use of the pronoun "we" in his open letter to leading Illinois Republicans would indicate.

Ken McNeil is an important voice in the reform movement, and it is a voice that I, as a parent of a disabled child in a low-income school, find to be deeply troubling. It is low-income schools and special education students that will bear the brunt of the developing Republican assault on public education.

Mr. McNeil argued in his letter that Republicans have been the ally of reform on the following issues: increasing principals' authority over school personnel, making schools more

Rodney D. Estvan, a graduate student at St. Xavier University, is a member of the Blaine Elementary School PTA and Parents United for Responsible Education.



accountable for performance and decentralization. But he fails to note the many issues on which Republicans have been the most intractable opponent of democratic school reform.

Contrary to Mr. McNeil's presentation of reform history, it was the Republican Party that vetoed the original School Reform Act. The first version of the law passed the House and Senate in 1988, without any Republicans voting in favor of it. It was the Republican Party that insisted that the School Finance Authority have oversight power over any reform plans developed by the Board of Education. The Rev. Jesse Jackson at the time correctly denounced this extension of powers as a "forced trusteeship."

Mr. McNeil completely avoids discussing the opposition of key Republicans to the Education Amendment to the state Constitution, which would have required the state to pick up at least 51 percent of the cost of educating our children. Judy Baar Topinka, a

Republican from North Riverside who is now state treasurer, summed up the unofficial Republican opposition to the amendment, stating: "Suburban schools will wind up supporting the whole state education system." Gov. Jim Edgar, whom Mr. McNeil argues has been with us, was in fact not with Chicago's schoolchildren on the amendment; he sat it out and watched it go down to defeat.

Maybe it should be recalled how Senate President James "Pate" Philip once compared increasing funding for Chicago's schools to "pouring money down a black hole," or how Philip taunted U.S. District Judge Charles Kocoras when he attempted to keep schools open in 1993, stating: "What's he going to do to us? Is he going to spank us?"

None of these issues from the past will come as news to Mr. McNeil. So why did he put forward such a selective history of the relationship between the reform movement and the Republican Party? Mr. McNeil is asking for "more time" to make school reform work. One of his arguments is that it has taken the Republicans more than four years of "trimming waste" to force state government to "live within its means"; therefore, isn't it logical that it would take longer to fix the schools?

But Mr. McNeil avoids any discussion of what the Republican Party considered to be "waste" in the government. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has argued that Illinois has enacted the "most dramatic" cuts of any budget-strapped state, thus reducing various health and welfare benefits for disadvan-

tagged people. This "trimming" of waste is one of the reasons why teaching Chicago's disadvantaged children has become increasingly difficult.

It would be grossly unfair to say that Republicans are solely responsible for the fiscal condition of education in Chicago; this disaster is clearly bipartisan in nature. But it is also a delusion not to examine the social agenda of the Republicans in this state, and to fail to project where it may leave education for Chicago's poor a few years from now.

The critical factor in school reform for the Republican leadership, in this state and on a national level, is the use of market mechanisms to promote change. Social theory such as that presented in the book *The Bell Curve*, or in the many papers turned out by conservative think tanks, have consistently challenged the whole concept of compensatory funding for the education of poor urban children. Yet, we read Mr. McNeil appealing to Republican leaders not to withdraw state Chapter 1 funds and to support local school councils, both of which have no real role in the Republican social agenda.

Mr. McNeil's strategy for compromise

with the Republican leadership is not helpful, and hopes for democratic control over our children's education could be doomed.

Confrontation needed

Here is one scenario: Charter schools, learning zones and vouchers are approved by the state Legislature. Two years later, little academic progress has been made in the Chicago schools, and the conservative think tanks argue that the LSCs are slowing up progress by inhibiting the authority of principals who need to be free to control their schools like chief executive officers in the marketplace. The LSCs' authority over budget issues is first modified, and in stages their authority is reduced to the role of advisors to the principal.

Instead of Mr. McNeil's strategy of compromise, I would argue for a strategy that includes confrontation with the social agenda of the Republican Party where necessary. Mr. McNeil attempted to present the outlook of Chicago's diverse school reform movement as being fundamentally compatible with the

views of Republican leaders. He is not alone in this strategy. I do not think this will impress the Republicans, though, because they know very well that they received very few votes or endorsements from the reform movement. I think it would be fair to say that the Heartland Institute's negative assessment of reform carries more weight with Republicans than any other assessment.

Mr. McNeil would in my opinion better serve the needs of Chicago's children by learning from struggles which parents, children and organizers have won. There is no better example in the last year than the fight waged and won by the parents and students of Daley Elementary School to prevent the busing of their children out of their community. I spent a day helping teach the protesting children of Daley in an empty lot near their school, which had been closed due to its deteriorating condition. I learned far more than I taught that day, about the resolve of an organized community. It is only the type of resolve exhibited by the parents and children of Daley that can make reform work and defend against the coming Republican assault the gains already made. ■

Letters

School reform has failed, let parents pick schools

I have grown tired of hearing advocates of Chicago school reform sing the praises of such "achievements" as teachers developing new learning outcomes, researchers getting involved in the dirty work of reform, and the central office taking a serious look at how to serve schools better. These are secondary concerns so long as this simple, tragic problem remains: Far too many Chicago public schools fail to provide a safe and effective learning environment for the children.

In her February 1995 article, "Reform sparks solid gains," Linda Lenz reports that Chicago's school reform law has failed to garner respect from politicians and community leaders. This is true for good reason. No one has seen improvements in attendance rates, dropout rates or achievement scores. What they do see is advocates of reform shying away from such measurable results.

School reform should be judged, advocates say, on how happy teachers are, how cooperative the teachers union has become, and how well administrators are learning to work together.

Parents, voters, and taxpayers know that such accomplishments have little to do with the bottom line, the *only* mission of a school: to produce a literate, educated young person able to be productive in today's complicated world.

As Daniel D. Polsby reported in his "First Annual Evaluation of Chicago School Reform" (released by The Heartland Institute, October 1994), "It is apparent that school reform has not yet improved the quality of public education in Chicago. If we had an education emergency before school reform, it appears that we still have one."

To determine whether a school provides a safe and effective learning environment for children, one must look at concrete, measurable standards: attendance, dropout rates, safety and achievement scores. Based on those standards, the Chicago public schools are failing.

This tragic situation will not improve until we redefine public education in Illinois. Public education should not be about preserving and improving school buildings, institutions, bureaucracies and

teachers unions. Public education should be defined as providing the best education possible for the greatest number of kids. Plain and simple. The purpose of public money for education is to benefit children, not schools.

Nothing will change until we put children, parents and families first. Until we give each parent the right and responsibility to choose the best education for their child, public or private, we will not see noticeable improvement in our children's educational performance.

What's the answer? It goes by many names—educational choice, vouchers, scholarships—but, in a nutshell, it means letting parents choose the school their children attend. There is no effective accountability without parental choice. There is no way to inject this competition without giving the consumers of education (parents and families) the ability to take their business elsewhere.

Who in this country should decide where a child goes to school? The answer is obvious: Who else could it be but the parents? And if the answer is so obvious, why then don't we work to create a system where such parental control is possible?

Joseph Walsh, executive director
The Prairie State Initiative

Annenberg architects get ball rolling

by Dan Weissmann

On January 23, it became official: Chicago will get \$49.2 million of Walter Annenberg's \$500 million bequest to public education in the United States.

While regulations governing the grant are not yet drawn up, schools and organizations that work with them already are angling to get a piece of the pie.

"There have been many principals who have been in touch with us after the Annenberg announcement, asking about hooking up with our network," says Harvey "Smokey" Daniels, who runs the Best Practice Network out of National-Louis University. The Annenberg grant, which requires schools to apply in networks that include an outside partner, "has made councils and principals very aware of the advantages of being in a network with some other schools and outside agencies."

The announcement also triggered at least one call from someone with money to give away. Harold Zimmerman, principal of Murphy Elementary School on the Northwest Side, says he got a late-January call from the president of a local bank. "I hear you need some matching money for this Annenberg thing," said the bank president. Yes, that's right, Zimmerman said. "Well," asked the banker, "do you think \$10,000 would be enough?"

Zimmerman responded that he thought it would but advised the banker to hold off until all the rules are in place.

Here's a rundown on what *is* known about the process.



Irving School 6th-grader Amanda Marado thanks the Annenberg Foundation for its \$49.2 million challenge grant to Chicago's public schools.

Who is eligible to receive Annenberg grants?

Networks of schools that are hooked up with an outside partner, such as the Coalition of Essential Schools or the Algebra Project. "No school can apply alone," says William Ayers, an education professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago and one of the three main architects of the Chicago Annenberg program. The outside partner "could be anything from a school reform group to a teachers union to a community organization to a university to a local business," Ayers says.

What do school networks have to do to get funds?

They have to propose initiatives that will do at least two things:

- Create a "more personal, intimate" setting for education, by, say, creating schools-within-schools.
- Provide time for teachers to meet.

How many schools will receive funding?

For 1995-96, the project will fund about 10 networks, with five to 10 schools each. Additional networks may be funded in subsequent years, and networks that get funded may be expected to recruit more schools as the program goes on.

Who will decide which schools get funded?

Two new groups will guide the process. The Chicago Annenberg Challenge Board of Directors will approve grants, hire project staff, and determine which funds can count towards the required \$98.4 million match. In addition, a group of 25 local reformers, called the Chicago School Reform Collaborative, will design the grant application and work with the project's staff.

Who will be in these groups?

The Board of Directors will be made up of nine representatives of organizations that have no vested interest in Annenberg money. The Collaborative will include Chicago parents, teachers, activists, administrators, local school council members and academics who are involved in school reform.

How will they be chosen?

The Board of Directors is being hand-picked by Adele Simmons, president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Simmons says Annenberg's advisors asked her to "work with the foundation leadership to create a board that would be diverse, including people from the community, business interests and civic leaders, and include no more than nine people."

Members of the Collaborative are being chosen by the dozens of local reformers who met over a 10-month period last year with the architects of Chicago's Annenberg proposal. Here's the process they are following:

■ In January, members of this loosely knit group generated 250 names.

■ A 10-person committee that includes the chief proposal writers—Ayers, Warren Chapman of The Joyce Foundation and Anne Hallett of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform—are narrowing that list to about 40 names, which will be mailed to the larger group.

■ The top 20 vote-getters will become members of the Collaborative; those members, in turn, will pick an additional five nominees to ensure representation for all constituencies.

How do the local matching funds figure in?

\$98.4 million is required over five years—\$49.2 million in private donations and \$49.2 million in public money. Current philanthropic spending on school-reform projects outpaces the requirement, but not all of it will count as matching funds. Project leaders hope the Annenberg grant will spur even more private giving. The public match may include some state Chapter 1 funds, which currently total about \$300 million a year. Project leaders say they are trying to steer other public funds, including federal Empowerment Zone money, to Annenberg-related projects. In order to count, matching funds, at a minimum, will have to support programs with goals compatible with the Annenberg Challenge; it hasn't been decided yet whether matching funds will have to be spent specifically on projects funded by Annenberg money.

Will foundations shift money to programs that promote the Annenberg goals?

Chapman of The Joyce Foundation says a shift likely will happen only if schools and education groups seeking grants tailor proposals to fit the Annenberg match requirements.

"I don't think foundations will set aside a bunch of money and say, 'This is for Annenberg,'" he says. "But they may say, 'These proposals [along Annenberg lines] are coming in, and they seem to be good proposals.'" ■

Three other cities get \$50 million

Chicago is one of four major cities that the Annenberg Foundation has selected so far to receive grants of about \$50 million each for school improvement efforts.

No two plans are alike, but there are some common themes. For instance, both Philadelphia and Los Angeles will focus on clusters of schools that serve children from kindergarten through high school in particular neighborhoods; similarly, some of the new schools funded by New York City's Annenberg money will serve grades K-12. And the programs in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia all emphasize creating smaller, more personal school settings.

As in Chicago, Annenberg funds in New York and Los Angeles are being administered by newly-formed, independent non-profit groups; in all three cities, individual schools must hook up with an outside partner to get Annenberg money. Philadelphia is the only place where all of the Annenberg money will be administered by the school district itself; it will go to a systemwide plan authored by new Supt. David Hornbeck, who helped design Kentucky's highly regarded statewide reform plan.

Candidates for smaller, urban grants

Small schools documentary

"Tell No Lies," a documentary on the efforts to create schools-within-schools at Bethune Elementary and Austin and Chicago Vocational high schools, will be broadcast at 10 p.m. March 21 on WTTW-TV, Channel 11.

Created by filmmaker Jeff Spitz as an organizing tool for the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois, the film addresses one of the chief goals of the city's Annenberg Foundation grant: creating smaller, more intimate school environments for children. Actress Cicely Tyson narrates.

include Broward County, Fla. (Ft. Lauderdale), Dade County, Fla. (Miami), Dallas, Houston and Detroit.

Annenberg also has launched a \$50 million "rural initiative," beginning with a \$3.25 million grant to a pair of Minnesota groups.

Here's a summary of the projects that the Annenberg Challenge has funded so far:

NEW YORK CITY \$25 million has been pledged to the New York Network for School Renewal, a coalition of reform groups and community organizations that, among them, have created several dozen small, innovative public schools over the last several years. The Annenberg grant will help fund those schools and open dozens more; it also will help the Network's member organizations continue their efforts to make the school bureaucracy and union rules more supportive of such schools.

Reformers from organizations that weren't part of the Network complained that they weren't consulted about the small-school approach, so Annenberg reserved half of New York's \$50 million for a second proposal. At the request of Schools Chancellor Ramon Cortines, the Bank Street College of Education is writing it. Denise Coleman, the college's dean of external affairs, estimates that she and College President Joe Shenker consulted 140 people in developing a proposal to boost math and science education in all of the city's middle schools. Bank Street hopes to submit the proposal in March.

LOS ANGELES A \$53 million grant is establishing the Los Angeles Metropolitan Project (LAMP) to create "families" of schools in a variety of neighborhoods. Like the Orr School Network in Chicago's West Humboldt Park, each family will link a high school with its feeder elementary and middle schools. To receive funds, a family must apply through an outside group, such as a university.

The grant project covers all of Los Angeles County, which is more than twice as big as the City of Los Angeles and includes about 1,700 schools in 82 districts, with about 1.3 million students. "The challenge is to give everybody a chance to do this. It won't be all the schools, that's for darn sure," says Guilbert Hentschke, education dean at

the University of Southern California and one of the architects of the city's proposal. He estimates that the project will involve "maybe a fifth to a third of all the schools, over five years."

All schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, which serves the city proper, would apply through a sponsor-organization called LEARN (Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now), a 4-year-old group that, working with the district, has enrolled about a sixth of the city's schools into a site-based management program similar to Chicago's.

PHILADELPHIA Unlike the grants made so far in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, Philadelphia's \$50 million is aimed at the system as a whole. "We're trying to get away from pilot projects, from creating little pockets of excellence," says Steve Guttentag, a consultant to Hornbeck.

The funds will be used to help create "communities of learning," small schools within existing buildings, which are part of Hornbeck's new systemwide reform plan. Some money most likely will be used to pay teachers, parents, administrators and consultants for time spent developing plans.

Hornbeck's plan also incorporates recent court mandates stemming from a desegregation lawsuit; these mandates, which include smaller class sizes and all-day kindergarten for all kids, will cost about \$371 million a year, according to the district's projections. Hornbeck also is shifting power to schools and proposes to support that shift by reorganizing the central office into three units: an Office of Schools, through which schools could buy services; and two monitoring bodies, an Office of Equity Assurance and an Office of Standards, Assessment and Accountability.

MINNESOTA \$3.25 million has been pledged to two independent non-profit organizations that, between them, will work with 32 to 35 rural school districts. One group, the Center for School Change, helps schools develop programs that give students a meaningful role in the community; the other, the Center for Reducing Rural Violence, works with schools as part of its communitywide anti-violence campaigns.

Dan Weissmann

DEADLINES

March 27. Rochelle Lee Fund

Grants of up to \$500 will be awarded to pre-kindergarten through 8th-grade teachers for use in purchasing paperback children's books for classroom use. Award winners must agree to spend at least three hours studying children's books in the Fund's library, and take at least eight hours of professional development courses offered free by the Fund. Teachers in subdistricts 1 through 4 may obtain applications from their principal; teachers in other subdistricts should call the Fund at (312) 989-8582 for more information and an application.

April 12. Pioneering Partners for Educational Technology

\$400,000 will be awarded to teams of educators in eight Great Lakes states who develop innovative ways to use technology in the classroom. Each team will be awarded about \$9,000. For more information and an application, write: Pioneering Partners/GTE Telephone Operations, McINAAJZ, 19845 U.S. 31 North, Westfield, IN 46074.

GRANT BRIEFS

Illinois Board of Education

■ \$435,883 to the Illinois Partnership Academy Planning program to develop business partnerships and collaborations at Austin, Chicago Vocational, Harper, Marshall, Orr, Prosser and Robeson high schools.

■ \$25,000 to Harper High to send 30 students to Northern Illinois to study environmental science and English under the Innovation and Collaboration program.

■ \$35,000 to Taft High to implement its Innovation and Collaboration program.

■ \$34,500 to Farren Elementary to develop collaborative programs between teachers and artists, an integrated arts curriculum and teacher and parent workshops in fine arts.

■ \$29,700 to Comprehensive Arts Program to improve the art education skills of teachers at Howland School of the Arts.

Illinois Arts Council

■ \$14,890 to Irving Elementary for an eight-month creative writing residency.

■ \$11,965 to Healy Elementary for the ArtsResource drama project and a two-month dance company residency.

■ \$9,709 to Farren Elementary for the ArtsResource drama project and a two-month theater residency.

■ \$4,284 to \$5,000 each to: Foreman High, eight-week dance company residency; McCosh Elementary, ArtsResource dramatic writing project; Nixon Elementary, one-month music company residency; Sheridan Magnet, ArtsResource drama project; Steinmetz High, nine-week visual arts residency.

■ \$3,630 to \$3,990 each: Courtenay Special Education Center, three-month theater company residency; Kinzie Elementary, ArtsResource drama/dance project; Pullman Elementary, two-month visual arts residency; Sheridan Magnet, two-month media arts residency.

Driehaus Foundation

■ \$2,500 to the Community Renewal Society for CATALYST.



The Joyce Foundation

■ \$150,000 over two years to the Academic Development Institute for the Alliance for Achievement Network and the Family Study Institute.

■ \$110,000 to North Central Regional Educational Laboratory for a collaborative project to overhaul the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning at the Chicago Board of Education.

■ \$100,000 to Brown University's Coalition of Essential Schools for work with its cluster of Chicago schools.

■ \$85,050 to the Illinois Tax Foundation to help superintendents from poor school districts develop models demonstrating how increased funding will help raise student achievement.

■ \$65,000 to Chicago State University for a mentoring program largely for new Chicago teachers.

■ \$46,600 to the Right Question Project, Inc., of Somerville, Mass., which will conduct training sessions (in partnership with Chicago-based organizations) to help increase low-income Chicago parents' involvement in their children's schools.

■ \$35,000 to CityWide Coalition for School Reform for policy development.

■ \$16,200 to Chicago Video Project to produce a videotape for the Coalition for Educational Rights, a statewide organization that is lobbying for more equitable state funding for schools.



John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

■ \$300,000 to Chicago Teachers Union to expand professional development and school restructuring at the Quest Center.

■ \$289,000 to Institute for Educational and Social Policy, New York, for quality review and training for seven organizations involved in restructuring Chicago schools.

■ \$234,000 to University of Illinois at Chicago, Small Schools Workshop to promote the organization and operation of small schools.

■ \$200,000 over two years to Community Renewal Society for CATALYST.

■ \$200,000 over three years to Chicago Panel on School Policy for research and reform advocacy.

■ \$186,433 to Brown University for the National School Reform Faculty Program to work with six Chicago schools involved in restructuring.

■ \$185,700 to Chicago Algebra Project for program support.

■ \$103,000 to Chicago State University for design and pilot testing of a teacher education program.

■ \$100,000 to United Neighborhood Organization of Chicago for support of programs to involve parents in school restructuring in schools in Little Village and the Southeast and Southwest sides.

■ \$90,000 over three years to Aspira, Inc. of Illinois to prepare parents as leaders and trainers for other parents in North Side schools with large Latino enrollments.

■ \$80,000 to Travelers and Immigrants Aid for the Adult Education Reform Coalition, which works to improve adult education and job training.

■ \$62,000 to Northwestern University's Kellogg Graduate School of Management for the Total Quality Schools program.

■ \$50,000 to Chicago Alliance for Leadership and Learning, based at Roosevelt University, to flesh out a proposal by a coalition of education and reform organizations that wants to launch a cable TV channel dedicated to education programming. The coalition is called the Chicago Educational Network, or CENter.

■ \$30,000 to Illinois Manufacturers Association for research on developing a statewide accountability system for schools.

■ \$25,000 to North Central Regional Educational Laboratory to help develop a plan to overhaul the Chicago Board of Education's Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning.

■ \$10,000 to Council for Basic Education, Washington D.C., to publish and distribute a paper on development of the Chicago Learning Outcome Standards.



Polk Bros. Foundation

■ \$50,000 over two years to Community Renewal Society for support of a staff writer for CATALYST.

■ \$15,000 to Music/Theatre Workshop's "Under Pressure" program, which encourages youth to talk about consequences of substance abuse, peer pressure, teen parenting and handgun violence, to expand educational activities for Chicago public school teachers and students.

■ \$10,000 to Junior Achievement of Chicago for its new Junior Achievement Elementary Program at Armstrong International School, which focuses on the relevance of education in the workplace.

■ \$10,000 to Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform for operational support.



Woods Charitable Fund, Inc.

■ \$50,000 to Chicago Panel on School Policy for completion of a six-year research project on school reform.

■ \$50,000 (second payment of three-year grant) to Designs for Change to support SCHOOLWATCH, a program of parent organizing, advocacy and technical assistance.

■ \$25,000 to the Consortium on Chicago School Research for a collaborative project to overhaul the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning at the Chicago Board of Education.

■ \$20,000 to the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, a network of advocates promoting community-based reform of urban schools.

■ \$20,000 to Fund for Educational Reform, which pools foundation money for small grants to local school councils and schools.

■ \$15,000 to Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), a network of arts education partnerships among schools, community agencies and arts organizations.

■ \$15,000 to Business & Professional People for the Public Interest to help develop schools-within-schools.

■ \$15,000 to Chinese American Service League Inc. to support participation of Chinese parents and community members in school reform activities.

■ \$15,000 (second payment of two-year grant) to Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project for training and legal assistance for local school councils.

■ \$10,000 to Parents United for Responsible Education (P.U.R.E.) for general operations.

■ \$10,000 to West Side Schools and Communities Organizing for Restructuring and Planning (WSCORP) for reform activities and leadership training at up to 20 schools.

■ \$10,000 to CityWide Coalition for School Reform for operating support.

Grants is a cooperative project of CATALYST and the Donors Forum of Chicago. Grant Briefs were compiled by Lynnette Richardson.

It's About Time!

T.I.M.E. is one of the Chicago Public Schools' major initiatives to support schools and improve student achievement. Some initiatives, such as Pathways to Achievement, uphold innovative school development and practice.

Others, such as the Chicago Learning Outcomes, build measurement and accountability systems. The T.I.M.E. initiative focuses on effective, efficient operations. T.I.M.E. stands for "To Improve the Management of Education." This initiative has set out to "change the way work gets done" in four areas: (1) managing and maintaining school facilities; (2) attracting and hiring qualified employees; (3) providing ongoing people development; and (4) communicating information inside and outside the system.



Effective, efficient operations increase quality education time.

The first T.I.M.E. prototype is rolling out. Others are on the way. A prototype is a learning experience. It is a way of testing and modifying one or more aspects of a proposed design. From design to implementation, the entire school system community contributes through focus groups, workshops, steering committees, team membership, and prototype participation.

The Conducive Environment Team launched its first facilities prototype in February. Being tested now is the cleaning prototype. Coming next are other prototypes, such as repairs and facilities staffing.

Five schools--May, Michele Clark, Emmet, Douglass, and Melody--have formed the first test cluster. These schools are close enough geographically to work together as a group. Additionally, they constitute a good mix of building age and school size for comparison purposes. Training, teamwork among and within schools, and resource sharing are core concepts.

"It's All of Us Together"

Betty Smith, principal of Douglass Middle School, views participation in the facilities prototype as an opportunity to be introspective and active about improving the school for children. She likes being "in on the ground floor" and is interested in other prototypes as well.

She particularly likes the clustering idea for sharing resources and talent. "So often a solution is within our system," said Ms. Smith, "and we don't know it."

She also feels that the project will enlighten members of the school community about how each fits into the whole picture. Custodial workers will become educational partners; teachers, parents, and community members will play roles in keeping the building clean.

Ultimately, the objective is to have all schools in the prototype achieve a defined standard of cleanliness.

It's a "get out there and do it" approach, much like learning to jump hurdles. While observation of the best and coaching are strategies that can be utilized, one still has to jump that first low hurdle, learn from mistakes, and move on to higher hurdles.

Those participating will be assessing methods and benefits, establishing measures by looking at the outside, and working toward the goal of providing the highest possible quality at a competitive market price.

To arrive at the prototype point, the Conducive Environment Team began collecting suggestions through citywide meetings and focus groups last summer. Since then, the team has met with principals, school engineers, custodial workers, teachers, local school councils, and other members of the school community. It has also looked inside and outside the school system to identify best practices and determine viability.

This research has resulted in a set of concepts and standards about effective, efficient ways to clean schools--the prototype. The testing and modification of this prototype will lead to a proposal for systemwide realization. The proposal, including a cost benefit analysis and an implementation plan, will go to leadership this May.

At recent citywide meetings, 162 schools learned about becoming test sites for future prototypes. These prototypes will come from all four teams: Conducive Environment, Perfect Match, Continuous Growth, and Communications. As this article went to press, 30 schools had returned participation forms.

Union wants old schedule back, proposes other costly changes

by Lorraine Forte

Scrapping the controversial 50-minute high school schedule, rehiring truant officers and putting limits on parent hiring by local schools are among the proposals the Chicago Teachers Union is making for its next contract.

The current contract doesn't expire for seven months—just before the new school year begins—but the CTU and the School Board have already begun negotiations. The goal, says union spokeswoman Jackie Gallagher, is to hammer out a new contract by April.

Meanwhile, the board has an estimated \$290 million budget shortfall, and Gov. Jim Edgar has repeatedly said the district shouldn't expect any financial help from the state.

Wishful thinking?

The union has proposed some fairly radical contract changes, some of which would cost the board tens of millions of dollars if adopted. Even Gallagher concedes that some of the proposals might be “pie-in-the-sky, wishful thinking. . . . But we listen to what our members say is important.” The union has not estimated how much any of its proposals would cost.

First and foremost on the list, however, is a raise for teachers, who have not had a pay increase for two years. “Our membership made it known we would do it [go without a raise] for two years, but we would not do it again,” Gallagher points out.

Board President D. Sharon Grant declined to discuss any of the board's proposals, saying only that both sides have “agreed not to negotiate in the press.”

Following are highlights of the union's proposals, all of which are outlined in a supplement to its monthly newspaper, *Chicago Union Teacher*.

NEW HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE The regular high school day would consist of eight 45-minute periods, rather than the current seven 50-minute periods. With a lunch period and no study hall, the switch would give students an extra 15 minutes of instruction each day.

The new schedule most likely would require the board to hire more teachers. Under the current schedule of seven 50-minute periods, students need to take only six classes to meet the state requirement of at least 300 minutes of instruction per day. With 45-minute periods, however, students would need seven classes to meet the state requirement; so, schools would need additional staff to teach the additional courses.

Before the 1993-94 school year, high schools had eight 40-minute periods. Switching to the current schedule enabled the board to close out 500 teaching positions and save \$18 million. The union agreed to the schedule change because a wave of early retirements allowed the board to cut many jobs through attrition. But high schools raised a hue and cry because the switch forced them to scrap elective courses and reprogram student schedules at the last minute.

STAFFING No teaching positions are to be closed after the first day of school. “I'm all for that,” says Beverly Tunney, principal of Healy Elementary in

Bridgeport and president of the Chicago Principals Association.

Under the current “20-day rule,” a school's fall staffing is based on enrollment figures from the previous June, and the board can open and close positions up through the 20th day of the new school year to accommodate shifts in enrollment. Typically, hundreds of positions are opened and closed within the 20-day period, and students often go for weeks without a permanent teacher. (See *CATALYST*, December 1994.)

One danger, at least from the board's point of view, is that a school could end up with more teachers than required by the contract if enrollment drops significantly over the summer. That would cost the system more money.

HIRING RESTRICTIONS Schools would not be allowed to hire “parent volunteers,” “individual contractors” or similar workers to perform duties usually assigned to teaching assistants, school clerks and other certified career service staff, who are union members.

“That's unfortunate,” says Tunney. By hiring parents or community members, she adds, “We're not trying to eliminate jobs, but to get as many people involved in the school as possible.”

The union is also proposing that tasks typically performed by truant officers, such as tracking down truant children at home, be performed only by truant officers. This proposal is aimed at forcing the board to rehire the system's 153 truant officers, all of whom were fired two years ago to help cut costs. Since the firings, truancy is on the rise, and schools have been assigning truancy duties to other staff.

SMALLER CLASSES, OVERCROWDING In schools with space available, kindergarten and elementary class-size limits would be lowered to 22 to 26 students; the current limit is 27 to 29 students.

If a school does not have extra classrooms to accommodate smaller classes, students would be bused to the nearest school with available space.

That would provide some relief from overcrowding, but presents three problems. For one, some parents, particularly in the Latino community, balk at sending their children to a school outside their home neighborhood. Second, schools that the board may consider underutilized may, in fact, be using so-called "extra" classrooms as computer labs, science labs or tutoring rooms (see *CATALYST*, December 1991). Finally, any increased busing means increased cost.

In high schools, the class-size limit for academic courses would be 25 students; the current limit is 28 students. Classes "with support" (for students working below grade level) or with a mix of lower-achieving and higher-achieving students would be limited to 20 students rather than 25.

INCLUSION LIMITS Given a lack of properly trained support staff to assist regular teachers with special education students, the union wants to set limits on the number of disabled children in regular classes. Gallagher explains, "It's what people in the field think needs to happen to make [inclusion] work."

The union's formula would:

- Limit the number of disabled children in any regular classroom to 10 percent of enrollment, or three students, whichever is greater.

- Count each student with a mild disability as two students, each child with a moderate disability as three students and each child with a severe disability as five students.

- Allow only one severely disabled child in a single classroom.

MORE SECURITY The board would be required to hire at least one off-duty Chicago police officer for each school.

Currently, high schools each have two police officers assigned to work during the school day. Elementary schools do not have police officers, but have used their own state Chapter 1 funds to hire security guards to combat gangs and crime in and around schools. As a result, arrests for crimes in and around schools have declined dramatically in the past four years. (See *CATALYST*, November 1994.)

YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS Teachers at year-round schools would be paid at their regular hourly rate, rather than at a substitute's rate, when they teach during a session for which they are scheduled to be off. ■

Math, writing projects boost test scores

The emergence of school-improvement networks, working on everything from algebra to writing, is one of the main outgrowths of school reform. With \$50 million now headed to Chicago from the Annenberg Foundation, those networks are set to expand and develop. Beginning this month, CATALYST will report periodically on their progress in raising student achievement.

Chicago Algebra Project

Algebra is a "gatekeeper" course. Without it, students are shut out of the higher-level math and science courses most colleges require, as well as post-secondary training required for trades such as plumbing and carpentry. Black and Latino students are especially likely to be "tracked" away from algebra and into lower-level math courses.

The Algebra Project aims to introduce elementary school students to algebra and advanced math by emphasizing problem solving rather than rote practice. Founder Robert Moses, a civil rights leader and mathematician, says it takes two years for teachers to fully change their teaching habits and become "coaches," not lecturers. To date, 29 schools have joined up.

RESULTS: The aim of the Project isn't just to raise test scores, but most schools "have had nice increases," says coordinator Cleetta Ryals. The following chart, compiled by *CATALYST*, shows the gains.

IGAP Math Scores

6th Grade Schools joining in:	Initial average	1994 average
1991	181	190
1992	163	174
1993	170	179
8th Grade Schools joining in:	Initial average	1994 average
1991	158	181
1992	182	186
1993	150	166

Contact: Cleetta Ryals at (312) 427-8999.

Chicago Area Writing Project

Based at National-Louis University, the Chicago Area Writing Project aims to improve reading and writing instruction across the curriculum. Two types of training are offered: extended 30-hour workshops, and a four-week summer invitational institute for teachers who want to learn to lead workshops.

To date, over 1,300 teachers have participated in 30-hour programs or in advanced workshops; 130 teachers have completed the summer program.

RESULTS Writing scores have risen city-wide in recent years, but a recent study by the Project reports that scores rose at a significantly higher rate at schools that organized 30-hour training. The following chart was compiled from the study:

IGAP Writing Scores

	1991 average	1992 average
3rd grade	15.1	15.4
6th grade	18.7	20.1
8th grade	20.2	22.2

Contact: B.J. Wagner at (708) 256-5250 ext. 2577.

Illinois Writing Project

Like the Chicago Area Writing Project, the Illinois Writing Project aims to improve writing instruction and is based at National-Louis University; 64 elementary and high schools have hosted training workshops; eight have undergone intensive staff development.

RESULTS The following shows how writing test scores have increased at the eight schools that underwent intensive staff development.

IGAP Writing Scores

	1990 average	1994 average
3rd grade	14.7	16.9
6th grade	19.1	20.7
8th grade	21.4	22.3

Contact: Steven Zemelman or Harvey Daniels at (708) 475-1100.

Lorraine Forte, Lynnette Richardson



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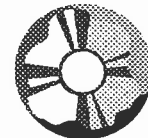
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Comings and goings

MOVING IN/ON **B.J. Walker** steps down as deputy director of North Central Regional Laboratory (NCREL) to serve as assistant to the governor for human services reform. Walker will assist the Governor's Taskforce for Human Services Reform as it carries out a plan to make human services programs more community-based. . . . **Nancy Brandt**, manager of education programs at Bank of America Illinois and a member of the *CATALYST* Editorial Board, has joined **Warren Chapman**, program officer at The Joyce Foundation, as a co-chair of the education group of The Donors Forum. . . . **Martha Jantho**, a former Board of Education member who has worked on education issues for Gov. Jim Edgar and City Colleges of Chicago, has succeeded **Barbara Holt** as the top staff person at the Chicago School Finance Authority. After a brief stint at Chicago State University as executive director of community relations, Holt is running for 5th Ward alderperson.

AT PERSHING ROAD **Vidal Cruz**, principal of Nettelhorst Elementary, has been named coordinator, Department of Special Education and Pupil Support Services. . . . **John Allen**, facilitator in the department of instructional support, has been promoted to administrator. . . . **Ana Estka**, assistant principal at Spry Elementary, has been appointed administrator in the Office for Reform.

'THREE-TIER' TEAM LEADERS Under Supt. Argie Johnson's "Three-tiered Process for School Improvement," the following are leading teams of educators and reform activists in helping more than 100 schools that are going through state quality

reviews. **Albert Bertani**, co-director of School and Leadership Development Programs, University of Chicago; **Vivian Loseth**, director of the Chicago Corner Project and associate director of Youth Guidance; **Ollie McLemore**, former principal at Beasley Magnet School; **Karen Carlson**, associate director, Leadership for Quality Education and former principal, Prescott Elementary; **Angela Miller**, assistant professor, DePaul University, School of Education, and former Chicago school administrator; **Harvey "Smokey" Daniels**, co-director of the Center for City Schools, National-Louis University; **Estelle Faulk**, former principal of Carpenter Elementary.



Martha Jantho



B.J. Walker

NEW NAMES Near North Special Education Center has been renamed **Bill Veeck Education Center**. . . . Evergreen Academy has been renamed **Evergreen Academy Middle School** and will serve as a specialty school for 6th- through 8th-grade students. . . . District 3 Middle School has been renamed **Logandale Middle School**.

DOLLARS FOR SNOW A campaign of the Student Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving schools through student involvement, is raising money for student programs and operating costs by

shoveling snow. For a minimum donation of \$10, which covers a one-time service, student volunteers will remove snow from businesses and homes. Contact **Jerome Bailey** at (312) 281-0076.

BUDGET TRAINING The Board of Education has hired **Arthur Andersen & Co.** and **Jones, Anderson and Co. Ltd.** to provide training in internal accounting and bookkeeping to principals and school clerks/treasurers. Training sessions will be held at each subdistrict, and a core group of administrators and principals will be trained to conduct future sessions as needed.

COMING ON CABLE Presentations on creating successful schools and a forum on school finance, conducted during the January convention of the Chicago Association of Local School Councils, will be broadcast from noon to 4 p.m. and rebroadcast from 5 to 9 p.m. March 4 on cable Channel 19.

WINNING WITH TECHNOLOGY Chicago public schools have more computers, on a per-pupil basis, than schools in the six-county metro area, according to the December 1994 issue of *The Chicago Reporter*. Chicago has 9.9 students per computer, compared to 12 students per computer in the suburbs, the newsletter found. School reform has greatly increased Chicago schools' discretionary dollars, enabling them to outspend suburban schools on technology in the past several years. Still, many of the computers in Chicago schools are "outmoded and outdated," Assistant Supt. **Joseph Cowans** told the *Reporter*.

Lynnette Richardson



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