

# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

## No money in sight to relieve overcrowding

by Debra Williams

**M**ore than 25 percent of Chicago's public schools are "overcrowded" or "severely overcrowded," according to the Board of Education. And there's hardly a one that doesn't want a new addition or new school to solve the problem.

"We need the space," pleads Emil DeJulio, principal of Swift Elementary School in Edgewater. "Our children eat in their classrooms at their desks because we don't have a lunchroom. We have no library. We have special education and bilingual classes in closets. We'd like to get something."

However, the word from both the Board of Education and City Hall is that schools shouldn't hold their breath: No new bond sales are on the horizon. In the meantime, Supt. Argie Johnson has

been pressing schools to take other steps, such as adopting year-round schedules or double shifts. But with relatively few schools responding, her administration is considering unilateral action that could force more busing.

### Board stymied

There are many obstacles to raising more money to build new Chicago schools and rehabilitate old ones, which arguably is an even greater need.

First, the Board of Education's disastrous financial condition precludes it from selling bonds, financial experts say. The lack of a long-term fiscal solution also casts doubt on the Public Building Commission's ability to sell more bonds on behalf of the School

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## What it's like to be 1 of 38 kids in a classroom

by Grant Pick

**O**swaldo Alvarez takes off his coat and hangs it, along with his backpack, on a hook in the closet of Room 205 of Mozart Elementary School in Logan Square. It's 8:55 a.m. on March 1, and the academic day is about to begin. Teacher Vidalina Lebron and her student teacher, Nilma Kerber, herd their kids to their seats. Oswaldo is delayed, jostling with several other children who also are hanging up their belongings. But, then, Oswaldo is used to being pressured for space, because his school is hopelessly overcrowded.

The old building, dating from 1911, has an official capacity of 725, but it now houses 1,004 students, most of them Hispanic. There are 156 more in five mobile classrooms that dot the playground, and another 625 children from the neighborhood are bused to other schools. Under so-called con-

See **OSWALDO** page 4

### Success for All

Successful elsewhere, highly structured reading program makes Chicago debut.

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# Overcrowding a problem LSCs can solve

It's common sense that teaching and learning suffer when there are 38 kids in a class—especially when those kids are from two different grade levels and especially when they are just learning English. Even knowing that, though, it's an eye opener to spend a day in such a class, as writer Grant Pick did recently. Oswaldo Alvarez, the 4th-grader whom Pick shadowed on March 1, had only two direct interchanges with his teacher, and neither could be considered educational. As Oswaldo headed home from Monroe Elementary School, he told Pick the day had been an average one. "Nothing bad happened," he remarked.

Monroe, located in Logan Square, is one of 76 Chicago schools that are "severely overcrowded," meaning they don't have enough classrooms to serve all the kids in the neighborhood. In Monroe's case, 1,004 children are crammed into a building designed for 725, another 156 children are in mobile classrooms, and another 625 are bused to other schools. Chicago has another 78 schools that are simply "overcrowded," meaning some teachers, usually art, music and other specialty teachers, don't have their own classrooms. The conditions at "overcrowded" schools aren't great, but they are tolerable. The conditions at "severely overcrowded" schools are unacceptable—if those schools are to teach and not simply warehouse children.

Understandably, schools of both sorts want additions or new schools to ease their plight, reports Associate Editor Debra Williams. But that's not going to happen, school and city officials warn. Considering the other financial needs of the school system, that *shouldn't* happen, either, at least not now. More money is needed first to put the school system on sound financial footing so that children, parents and teachers don't have to suffer the perils of Pauline each year. More money is needed

next to replace rotten window frames, patch crumbling plaster, replace leaky roofs and otherwise make schools decent places for learning.

More money is *not* needed to relieve overcrowding—as a handful of overcrowded schools have learned. These schools have adopted double shifts or year-round schedules, which feature overlapping "tracks" that alternate between 60 days of school and 20 days of "intersession." Edis Snyder, principal of Gale Community Academy, says year-round schooling is "the best thing since Wonder Bread." For one, Gale put all its 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders on a track that is in school during much of the summer, to help keep these rambunctious kids out of trouble. Peck Elementary recently adopted double shifts. While this move cut class time for children, it also cut class interruptions—there is no recess and lunch comes either before or after class. As a result, says teacher Bob Long, teachers actually have more time with their children.

Central-office administrators have been making the rounds of overcrowded schools, trying to persuade them to go the route of Gale or Peck or adopt other alternatives. The politicians and community groups that have been clamoring for more money to build more schools should join in. Helping overcrowded schools see how they can solve their own problems will do more for the children than holding out the false promise of new schools.



**CATALYST ON THE AIR** School overcrowding will be the topic of discussion on the April 2 edition of "City Voices," which is broadcast every Sunday from 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on Radio WNUA-FM, 95.5.

**NEXT MONTH** The Chicago Board of Education has increased the number of math and science courses required for graduation. The May issue of *CATALYST* will examine the repercussions.

*Linda Levy*      *Lorraine Forte*

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# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

VOLUME VI NUMBER 7  
APRIL 1995

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

## OSWALDO

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trolled enrollment, only kindergartners may newly enroll at Mozart, explains Principal Philip Yaccino; most older children who seek admission find themselves bused to one of 39 schools that can accommodate them.

The crowding at Mozart directly or indirectly affects every classroom. Where the Chicago Teachers Union contract would put no more than 31 youngsters in Room 205, there are, in fact, 38. The class is a transitional bilingual room, meaning pupils are being bridged into all-English instruction. Room 205 is also a split-grade room—24 of the youngsters, including Oswaldo, are 4th-graders, and the remainder are 5th-graders.

For the children in Room 205, the learning atmosphere is compromised. Lebron and Kerber teach primarily from the blackboard, with one-on-one interaction cut to a minimum. If there is a shortage of materials in many Chicago public schools, it's worse in Room 205, since there are so many students. It's no wonder that Lebron and Kerber emerge enormously harried from their days at Mozart, though Oswaldo seems to manage.

The students take their seats at desks pushed together in units of either two or four. Oswaldo occupies a desk in the middle of the room. He is 10 years old, a bright-faced child with a cowlick sticking from the crown of his head.

### He gets little attention

He lives blocks from Mozart with his parents, Vincent and Maria Socorro Alvarez, and two older sisters. Maria Alvarez, a native of Mexico who speaks only Spanish, once sat on the Mozart Local School Council and is still active at the school. Vincent, a government clerk, fears the gang influence in the neighborhood and at Mozart and walks his children home from school each afternoon. The Alvarezes like Mozart, but in Oswaldo's case they worry about his placement in Room 205. "It's hard when a teacher has two grades at the same time," Vincent says. "And there are so many kids. When the kids get behind, Mrs. Lebron can't give the right amount of attention."

Oswaldo passes in his homework—called "schoolwork 2 go" in Room

205—and then pays attention as Kerber begins a math lesson. Lebron is taking it easy today, since she's just back from a three-week bout with pneumonia. Stress, her doctor told her.

Sitting alone in the back is Antonio. Antonio, who has behavioral problems and performs at the 1st-grade level, attends a special education class upstairs for part of the day, but often, because of mainstreaming, he's in Room 205. "I give him some work sheets, and it'll take him two weeks to complete them," reports Lebron. "Sometimes he's disruptive, or else he plays or writes gang symbols on paper."

The morning math lesson concerns reducing fractions, a process the class has been studying for weeks and is finally understanding. "Now let's take number 13," says Kerber, standing at the front blackboard, where assorted students are figuring out solutions as

backing." Kerber briefly tells him he shouldn't have altered the words. He's been in Room 205 for an hour and 15 minutes, and the interchange with Kerber, however brief, is his first direct interaction with a teacher; three hours will elapse before he has a second one.

The Mozart gym teacher has recently quit. "I guess you guys are going to have gym in here today," Lebron tells the kids of Room 205, who appear disappointed. It's no wonder. Mozart is on a closed-campus schedule, which dictates a shortened school day and no opportunity for recess. "Gym once a week was my kids' only chance for release," Lebron will say later, "and so they miss it." As a substitute experience, Milton Piltz, a substitute teacher assigned to Mozart, leads a rudimentary form of hangman at—where else?—the blackboard. "Fun gym, huh?" remarks Lebron as Piltz exits.

*"You can't teach 38 kids. They're all at different levels, and you end up teaching to the lower level."*

*—Vidalina Lebron, teacher*

others do the work at their desks. Two boys in the back stand up, not to be disruptive but so they can see the numbers on the board. When the clamor in the room rises too high, as it frequently does, Lebron or Kerber puts up two fingers, a sign to quiet down, and the youngsters grow still.

Toward 10 a.m. Oswaldo joins a clump of kids seeking help from Kerber at the board, but Kerber, needing to explain a concept to the entire class, shunts the individual questioners away. "Everybody sit down," she says. "Let me explain something to all of you." Oswaldo, his confusion lingering, returns to his seat.

Soon the class has moved on to spelling and grammar. Kerber has covered the board with a section of text, pocked with the misuse of gerunds, and she beckons one kid and then another to come make corrections. "Lilly," says Kerber. "Lorena, your turn . . ." When Oswaldo's turn arrives, he changes the phrase "enjoy baking" to "enjoying

A few minutes after 11:30 the children file downstairs to lunch. "I'm the librarian without a library," comments Toby Rockwell as she does duty in the lunchroom. The school has co-opted Rockwell's library for a classroom, and so now she goes room to room, dispensing what skills she can using work sheets.

At 12:05 the children of Room 205 are back within their confines. Kerber gives Antonio a math work sheet, then takes eight 5th-graders through "The Emperor's Palm Tree," a story contained in a reader. Kerber, stealing sips of a Coke because her throat is dry from talking, has other students, mostly the 4th-graders, look up definitions in the picture dictionaries.

Oswaldo writes the definitions in neat handwriting, separating each answer with a blank line. After finishing, he is supposed to fill in a calendar for March with coloring and a happy thought for each day, but he dawdles—chatting with his friend



On a recent day, Oswaldo Alvarez, a 4th-grader at severely overcrowded Mozart School, had only two brief direct interactions with a teacher.

Abner, sharing a joke with a girl and helping another boy find the definition for the word “thinning.” After a bathroom break, Kerber promises a game of word bingo. The prospect delights Oswaldo, who approaches to ask if the class can play other bingo games, too. “Not today,” replies Kerber. “On Friday we’ll get creative.”

Word bingo, however, brings Room 205 to life. As Kerber picks letters and reads them out, the students squeal in anticipation of someone being the first to win. Each victor receives a piece of candy. “One more game, one more game,” the youngsters plead as the hour approaches 2:30, the end of the day. Antonio, who has been working intermittently at his work sheet, says, “I’m finished.” But no one hears him.

Lebron and Kerber assign homework. Before he slips on his coat to leave, Oswaldo says it’s been an average day in Room 205. “Nothing bad happened,” he remarks. He says he’s pleased he received a perfect score on his math homework.

Lebron, who’s in her fifth year on staff at Mozart, feels so strongly against overcrowding that she adamantly refused to accept a 39th youngster assigned to her class in January. (Actually, the room was scheduled for 42 youngsters in the fall until Mozart’s CTU delegate filed a grievance on behalf of Room 205 and other classes, forcing more busing.) “You can’t teach 38 kids what they need to learn, especially when you’re stuck with a split,” Lebron says. “They’re all at different levels, and

you end up teaching to the lower level.”

While reading and math merit daily attention, Lebron says she is hard-pressed to sandwich in social studies. Mostly she leaves science to a Mozart science teacher who comes in twice a week—and, anyway, Room 205 has no science textbooks.

While an art teacher appears weekly, Lebron says she tries to pepper most of what she does with art. Fridays, as both Kerber and Lebron indicate, tend to be more inventive, filled with art projects, puzzles and movies.

If the blackboard reigns supreme in Room 205, it’s largely because other more engaging and challenging forms of instruction are difficult to execute with so many children, says Lebron. “There’s no way to do it differently,” she insists. “There’s no time. If you dealt with the subject matter in groups, you’d never get through it.” As it is, says Kerber, “You cannot stop for a second. You turn your back, and someone will be picking on somebody else.”

Kerber, who is finishing her education degree at Northeastern Illinois University, recently broke up the class into groups of six and undertook the study of cells over four days. “We had microscopes, and the kids had various jobs,” Kerber relates. “One kid put the solution on the slide, another recorded results and another did the presentation to the full class. It wasn’t that successful, to tell you the truth. There’s only one me [she, not Lebron, directed the project], and I had to work with each group. We’re talking here about many different

elements for the kids—science, cell biology, English to Spanish speakers, vocabulary. It was exhausting.”

Principal Yaccino relates that fully half of the 30 classrooms at Mozart are crowded, and though he credits his teachers with doing “a marvelous job of coping,” there are negative consequences: “There’s less one-on-one between the teacher and the student. Overcrowding leads to less materials and supplies. It has a negative effect on morale. Tempers get short.”

While acknowledging the reliance on old-style instruction in Mozart’s crowded rooms, Yaccino points out that since 1992 the 6th, 7th and 8th grades have been organized into a school-within-a-school, stressing thematic, interdisciplinary teaching.

## More pressing problems

Construction is now underway on an addition to Mozart; it will house classrooms, a new library, a multipurpose room, a bilingual lab, a kitchen and lunchroom. But with the loss of mobile classrooms and a modular unit on the site of the addition, Mozart will gain only five classrooms, according to Yaccino.

Overcrowding will continue to be an issue, says Yaccino, but it’s hardly Mozart’s number-one concern. “I’m not pleased with the problem,” he comments, “but if overcrowding was taken away tomorrow, many more pressing problems would still be here.” He lists poverty (presently 94 percent of Mozart students come from low-income families), dysfunctional families, gangs and little appreciation of the value of education.

In 1994, the average 8th-grader at Mozart scored roughly at the Chicago average but well below the state average on the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP) tests in reading and math. Third-graders were below the city and state averages in reading and math.

Meanwhile, the students and teachers in Room 205 soldier on. Kerber and Lebron feel they would benefit enormously from a smaller class. “If there were fewer kids, it would be heaven,” says Kerber. Remarks a cynical Lebron, “Fewer kids would be nice, but it won’t happen.” ■

*Grant Pick is a Chicago writer.*



## Overcrowding solutions

Here is the list of options Supt. Argie Johnson is encouraging overcrowded schools to consider.

**YEAR-ROUND SCHEDULE** Divide children into four overlapping attendance tracks that alternate between 60 days in school and 20 days off.

**DOUBLE SHIFTS** Divide students and teachers between morning and afternoon shifts, allowing classrooms to be used by two different groups each day.

**LEASE SPACE** Lease space in available and "appropriate" facilities within or near the overcrowded school.

**ACCEPT DEMOUNTABLES** Place temporary facilities on available playground or parking lots adjacent to the school.

**"SURGE" SCHOOL** Re-open a closed school building to temporarily house extra students from overcrowded schools, while a new facility is being built. Students and teachers would remain under the instructional direction of the home-school principal and LSC. The surge school would need a building administrator if it houses students from several schools.

**SCHOOLS WITHIN SCHOOLS** Re-open closed schools to accommodate new small schools to relieve overcrowding, each with its own principal and LSC. Transportation would be provided for students living more than 1.5 miles away.

**RELOCATE SPECIAL PROGRAMS** Move magnet schools from densely populated areas to more sparsely populated areas.

**BOUNDARY CHANGE** Adjust boundaries between schools to distribute students more evenly.

**NON-CONTIGUOUS BOUNDARIES** Redefine attendance boundaries for overcrowded schools, designating a portion of the current area as part of the attendance area of a school with available space. Transportation would be provided for students living more than 1.5 miles from their new home school.

**USE EXCESS SPACE** Move groups of students, by grade or program, to available classrooms in other schools; such students would remain part of the home school for administrative purposes. Transportation would be provided.

*Debra Williams*

## MONEY

*continued from page 1*

Board—since it's a School Board tax levy that pays off the bonds.

"If bond holders were insulated from the school's operating deficit and bankruptcy, someone might buy," says Rich Ciccarone, director of municipal research at Kemper Securities. "But the borrowing rate would be very high."

Second, the newly enacted property-tax cap for Cook County also will have a chilling effect on the PBC. Under the tax cap, most government bodies, including the School Board, cannot increase their annual property taxes by more than 5 percent or the rate of inflation—whichever is lower—without getting voter approval in a referendum. Again, by relying on School Board property taxes, the PBC, in effect, can't act without a School Board referendum either.

"The common wisdom is that it's not likely that a referendum would pass," says Buzz Sawyer, senior advisor to the board's chief financial officer.

Thomas Walker, executive director of the PBC, notes, however, that a referendum would not be necessary if the board paved the way for bond sales with cuts elsewhere in its budget.

### No will to act

For communities clamoring for new schools and major repairs, the City Council and the Illinois Capital Development Board currently are the best targets. The city, which is not covered by the new tax cap, could sell its own general obligation bonds for schools or use its own tax revenue to back up PBC bonds.

But, as one City Hall insider notes, "No one wants to be associated with raising taxes."

"I think people are leery of raising taxes, particularly the mayor," says Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on School Policy, "and I have seen no interest from the state. I just don't see any political will to solve this problem."

Mayor Richard M. Daley signed off on the PBC's 1990 and 1993 bond sales for the School Board. However, those sales didn't raise taxes because they simply replaced old bonds that were being retired.

When asked if he would support a bond issue if it meant raising taxes, Daley said, through a spokesman, "Chicago residents shouldn't have to be overburdened by more taxes, especially when the state hasn't done all it can for our children." He, too, urged schools to consider alternatives.

Earlier this year, a group of Hispanic legislators and aldermen asked the mayor to support a \$600 million PBC bond issue for schools that would be backed by the city.

William Delgado, community affairs director for state Sen. Miguel del Valle (D-Chicago), predicts Daley eventually will yield. "But it's a matter of timing," he says. "Daley wants to be the hero, and at the last minute, at midnight, just like his dad used to do, he'll come to the rescue."

He adds: "If I were still in the child-welfare business, I'd cite the city for environmental neglect. Deplorable conditions we don't allow in homes, we allow in schools."

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund also has taken up the issue of overcrowding. Rosa Abreu, a staff attorney, says MALDEF plans to meet with the board and the PBC.

"Latinos have had the worst overcrowding in the last 15 years," she notes. "It's the board's responsibility to do something, and they have not dealt with this problem in an effective manner."

The Latino Institute concurs. In November, at a hearing on overcrowding, Executive Director Millie Rivera told state senators that the board's own racial/ethnic data pinpoint student population growth, but that the board failed to respond in a timely manner.

Valerie Archibald Torres, senior research associate at the Institute, also notes that overcrowding is not just in the Latino community. A study conducted by the Institute found that while a majority of children in "severely overcrowded" schools are Latino, the majority of students in "overcrowded" schools are African American.

But with no new construction money on the horizon, the School Board has been pushing schools to take action themselves. Marjorie Branch, deputy superintendent of academic support, and her staff have visited every overcrowded school in the city to talk about the options.

"Many of these [schools] could be a



*In October, school and city officials break ground for an annex at Monroe School, which still won't take care of overcrowding.*

lot more creative as far as creating more space," says Branch. "The year-round school is a way of creating 25 percent more space. And a split shift is another solution. We are also encouraging parents to look at underutilized schools."

While virtually every classroom in the city is being used, board reports show some 900 classrooms that are not required by school enrollments. For instance, Whistler in West Pullman uses two "spare" classrooms as rooms for staff, parents and an outside agency that works with the students.

If overcrowded schools refuse to budge, says Giacomo Mancuso, director of facilities planning and development, the board may set enrollment limits at schools, forcing them to bus children they can't accommodate.

A memo from the board's Law Department to board member Charles E. Curtis states: "A review of the statutes governing the board reveals the legislative intent that the board have all the powers that are necessary and proper to control and manage schools, as well as the authority to assign students to various schools."

Currently, 31 schools have agreed to bus more than 7,000 children out of their neighborhoods to alleviate overcrowding.

"In the spirit of reform, the board has pretty much let schools make decisions regarding their governance," says Mancuso. "It has not wanted to step in and say you must do this or you must do that. But . . . they may have to step in this time."

However, Torres of the Latino Institute warns that parents would strongly object to having their children forcibly bused out of the neighborhood. "Parents want their children to stay in the community," she says.

While proposals involving busing have drawn heated protests from some parents and community organizations, at least one Latino leader believes they're necessary to force schools to consider other options seriously.

"How reasonable is it to look at getting a new school as your only option," asks Carlos Heredia, executive director of Por Un Barrio Mejor. "If parents are as desperate as they claim they are, they'll visit a year-round school. They'll go look at some underutilized schools. . . . There are so many possibilities for schools to come together and create innovative curriculum for all children."

Heredia says that Rodolfo Serna, director of dual-language programs for the Board of Education, is exploring the possibility of creating such programs—where both English and Spanish are taught to all children—to attract Latino children from Subdistrict 5 to underused African-American schools in Lawndale. "Dr. Serna didn't even have a staff until a little while ago, so we'll see what happens," says Heredia.

There is a misperception, he adds, that Latino schools are overcrowded simply because parents do not want their children bused outside their neighborhoods. "Show them educational programs that will benefit their children, and they'll send them there, even

## Definitions

Chicago's definition of overcrowding is based on the proposition that all children should be able to attend their neighborhood school during the regular school year and that all teachers should have their own classrooms. Thus, even if a school brings its class size down by adopting a double shift, it still is considered overcrowded.

### SEVERELY OVERCROWDED SCHOOL

(76 schools, 68,580 students)

Enrollment exceeds the school's design capacity—that is, there is not enough room for all neighborhood children who want to attend. As a result, the school must resort to mobile units, busing, leased space, year-round schedules, double shifts or putting classes in non-classroom space, e.g. auditoriums.

### OVERCROWDED SCHOOLS

(78 schools, 56,522 students)

The school operates at 80 to 100 percent of design capacity and has more teachers than classrooms—e.g. art, music and other specialty teachers don't have their own rooms, or two classes and their teachers are assigned to one classroom.

### DESIGN CAPACITY

It is arrived at by multiplying the number of average-sized classrooms (600 to 900 square feet) by 30, and the number of larger classrooms (over 900 square feet) by 40. Labs, shops, arts and other specialty rooms are included in the calculation.

if it requires being bused," he says. "But what is happening is that children are thrown on a bus and sent to another school simply because it has a space."

Heredia says much of the inaction on overcrowding in Latino neighborhoods stems from poor communications. Latino parents are not made aware of educational opportunities such as magnet schools and programs, he says. Also, he adds, the School Board does not have a media person who communicates regularly with the Spanish-language media, and Spanish-language broadcasting stations do not have talk shows, where community issues can get aired.

Leadership is needed at all levels, he says. "Local school councils have a responsibility to let parents know what the options are fairly and honestly without injecting their opinions. No one—all the way up to the mayor—has taken a leadership role on this one." ■

## A sampler

# How governments want to spend your money

AGENCY/PROJECT	PROJECTED NEED	FUNDS IDENTIFIED	ARE THESE PLANS FOR REAL?
Board of Education	\$3 billion	Less than \$200 million	No. School officials concede \$3 billion is pie in the sky, built largely on the estimates by a private consultant that it would take \$2 billion to rehab buildings to optimal use. In contrast, the School Board's 1990 capital development "wish list," including new schools, totalled only \$1 billion.
Chicago Park District	\$205 million	\$205 million	Apparently so. Most of the money will come from \$175 million in bonds issued over the next five years. The district projects it will be able to pay for the bonds without exceeding its tax cap.
Chicago Housing Authority	\$2.8 billion	\$305 million	Hard to say. CHA Chair Vince Lane wants to replace high-rises with low-rise, scattered-site housing. But he first has to get an \$800 million "advance" on five years' worth of federal funds. Then he has to borrow almost \$1 billion privately. And <i>then</i> he has to get about \$1 billion worth of housing built for tax credits, rather than cash.
Chicago Transit Authority	\$2 billion	\$815-859 million	No. The \$2 billion figure comes from a consultant's report; the CTA may be able to get as much as \$900 million over the next five years for projects including reconstruction of the Ravenswood line (\$194 million) and rehabbing train cars (\$294 million).
Downtown Trolley	\$775 million	\$775 million	Probably. Money would come equally from a Downtown property tax, the state and the federal government.. Congress has approved the project but not the money. Gov. Edgar has warned that state funds for the trolley could cost the CTA some of its state subsidies.
911 Center	\$220 million	\$220 million	Yes. The city has already sold \$220 million in bonds to pay for the center, which will provide ultra-modern telephone hook-ups for emergency police, fire and health services.
Museum of Science and Industry, parking garage	\$43.6 million	\$39 million	Probably. The \$39 million is coming from the federal and state governments. While the city hunts for the remaining \$4.6 million, engineers are doing feasibility studies to see if the sand under the museum will support the garage at all.
Recycling center	\$41 million	\$41 million	Yes. The city sold the bonds in 1992.
City facilities	\$185 million	\$86.9 million	Maybe not. In its 1995-99 capital improvement plan, the city says it will spend \$185 million over the next five years for libraries, city offices, health centers, senior centers and police and fire stations. But that document identifies only \$86.9 million in funds, including planned bond sales.

This chart was compiled by Dan Weissmann from reports of the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group and Chicago Park District and interviews with CHA and School Board officials.





Neighborhood children gather outside Nobel School to wait for buses. The school is so overcrowded that 1,100 are bused to other schools each day.

# Schools don't know what's going on

**M**any school communities are angry and confused. They contend that they've been on an official Board of Education list for new schools but that nothing has materialized.

The list in question is the Board of Education's 1990 Capital Development Plan, which includes three scenarios pegged to different spending totals. However, the board received only enough money to pay for Scenario 1, the most modest of the three.

"The capital development plan was just that, a plan, a wish list," says Susan Ross, public information officer for the Public Building Commission, which sells bonds on behalf of the School Board. "We didn't say everything on that list was going to be built."

However, a number of overcrowded schools scheduled for relief under Scenario 1 have been left out. For example, Eberhart Elementary School in Chicago Lawn was scheduled to share a new school with nearby Morrill and Tonti schools. As it turned out, Morrill and Tonti—but not Eberhart—are getting additions.

"We didn't get a new school, and we are not on the drawing board," says Eberhart Principal Joyce Jager. "I have 40 kids in the 1st grade, and we're thinking of putting our 5th- and 6th-graders on a split shift to make more space."

Giacomo Mancuso, the School Board's director of facilities planning, explains: "There was no land available for a school for the three of them. So we agreed that we'd build additions. Unfortunately, Eberhart's site is too small to put in an addition, and there is no other land available nearby."

Mancuso says that schools were put on the list because of need. "A school was chosen based on the severity of its overcrowding," he says. "We also looked at the condition of the other schools that surrounded it. If they were also overcrowded, then that school was chosen."

But one close school observer says that's not the only way schools were chosen. Those that made the most noise got heard and were added to the list, she says.

"There may have been a little of that," Mancuso acknowledges. "But the general mode of operation was to give top priority to the most overcrowded."

In the meantime, other communities destined to get new schools complain that it's taking too long.

"We are still waiting for a new school," says Nobel Principal Mirna Diaz-Ortiz. "We were told we had the land for a new building at Kostner and Bloomingdale. But then we hear it's toxic, then we hear it's not. Then we hear another school wants the land. I

## PBC spending

### 1989 Bond Issue

**Total:** \$145.9 million  
**Funds committed:** 85%  
**Overcrowding:** \$5.6 million to build District 3 Middle School  
**Rehabilitation:** \$140.3 million

### 1990 Bond Issue

**Total:** \$230.3 million  
**Funds committed:** 60%  
**Overcrowding:** \$139.4 million  
**New schools:** \$92.3 million  
 3 completed  
 4 in progress  
 1 site under environmental study  
 2 on hold  
**Additions:** \$58.8 million  
 1 completed (Walsh)  
 13 in progress  
 1 on hold  
**Rehabilitation:** \$79.2 million  
**Lunchrooms:** \$11.7 million  
 8 completed  
 6 in progress

### 1993 Bond Issue

**Total:** \$169.6 million  
**Funds committed:** 20%  
**Overcrowding:** \$26.5 million  
**New schools:** \$10 million  
 1 in progress  
**Additions:** \$16.5 million  
 4 planned  
**Rehabilitation:** \$142.7 million  
**Lunchrooms:** \$365,000  
 1 in progress

Source: Public Building Commission

have 1,100 students in my building, and I bus another 1,100 to other schools. I don't know what's going on."

"They're on the list," Ross of the PBC assures. "But they are on hold because they really need more land."

Mancuso says that finding and obtaining a site is fraught with difficulties. Sites may be too small; they may have contaminated soil or soil that won't support the planned building; they may be owned by people who don't want to sell.

"While the board has eminent domain [authority to take private property for public use], it is very unpopular to take over a residential or business area," he says. "We don't want to do that."

*Debra Williams*



At McAuliffe School, designed with little community involvement, Principal Norma Cortez considers open spaces such as this one above the library a waste.

# Beautiful new school 'wastes' space

by Debra Williams

**W**ith 10-foot ceilings and a two-story, skylit atrium, Christa McAuliffe Elementary is open and airy. You'd think everyone at the four-year-old school would be delighted. But they're not.

"This place is built like a shopping mall, not like a place conducive to education," says Principal Norma Cortez.

McAuliffe was built to relieve overcrowding at three nearby schools—Funston, Mozart and Nixon—but it's already overcrowded itself. Just how overcrowded is, as usual in Chicago, a matter of dispute.

Jack Svaicer, an architect with VOA Associates, says his firm was hired to design a school to serve 900 students. Informed that the Board of Education puts the school's "design capacity" at 1,110, Svaicer says, "That may have changed because we built some seminar rooms that, at the time, were not to be used as classrooms, but they may be now, which would change the design capacity."

Again, Cortez protests: "That's 1,110 if you count using the library, the auditorium and the teacher's lounge as classrooms, which is what we're doing. I know what the report says, but they [central office] are welcome to come and see for themselves."

Cortez recently created additional classrooms by installing a partition in the teachers lounge, taking over a third of the library and putting three classes in the auditorium.

"Before I made changes, I had a 1st-grade classroom with 42 students and special education classes that shared a room divided by a portable partition," she says. I have an 8th grade with 38 students. These classes are too big, and the time-on-task for children is just not there, especially if they're below grade level."

Pointing to one of the school's architectural features, a third-floor classroom that overlooks the second-floor library, Cortez says, "If the third floor had been extended instead of cut off like that, another classroom could have gone there. The children don't need to look down into the library."

Cortez considers the atrium more wasted space. "We could have had at least seven more classrooms," she contends.

While McAuliffe may have space for more classrooms, Giacomo Mancuso, the school system's director of facilities planning and development, says there wasn't enough money to build them. "The school was financed by a 1985 bond issue, and we had a budget to maintain," he explains. "The bigger the school, the more it costs."

Daniel J. Kohnen, the school system's director of architecture, sympathizes with Cortez. "McAuliffe was built before reform," he says. "Since then, things are done differently. The community has more input."

Svaicer acknowledges that once the School Board determined the number and kind of rooms, his firm controlled the design. "How we did the layout was up to us," he says. "We wanted to bring light into the building, so that's why we built the atrium."

## Schools now get say

That's not the way it's done anymore. For example, last year the board convened a committee of architects, parents, community organizations, educators and a representative from the mayor's office to help design a prototype for five new schools in the Little Village and Pilsen communities, located in Subdistrict 5, the most overcrowded school district in the city.

"We wanted to not only look at 'How many children will this building hold,' but we also wanted instructional input, and that is best judged at a local level instead of a top-down approach," says Bertha Magana, a Board of Education member who served on the committee.

Elena O'Connell, principal of Corkery Elementary School, says she insisted on large rooms for preschool, kindergarten and 8th-grade classes. "The next time we got together, those changes were incorporated into the plans," she reports.

The architects also were informed that children attending area schools could not go outside for recess because the neighborhoods were not safe. In response, the architects provided for an inner courtyard, covered by a skylight and surrounded by classrooms.

"I thought, 'What a wonderful idea,'" says O'Connell. "I was really impressed with how our ideas were taken into consideration."

In addition, the Small Schools Workshop, based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was asked for advice on accommodating schools-within-schools and structures that would enhance student learning.

The Alliance for Community Excellence, a group under the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) that includes the police, churches and other neighborhood institutions, also made suggestions. "ACE has an educational subcommittee and works with a number of entities like the Quest Center," says Phil Mullins, UNO's director of staff and policy. "It was only natural that we be involved in looking at structures that help educate children, not just house them."

## Mid-sized schools

The new schools, being built for \$10 million each by the Public Building Commission, will include 24 classrooms, two special education rooms, a library, computer lab, science lab, gymnasium, kitchen, lunchroom and multi-purpose rooms for art and music.

Their design capacity will be 700 students. According to O'Connell, the Board of Education set that limit to keep the schools manageable. However, she predicts that, like McAuliffe, the new Southwest Side schools will quickly become overcrowded. "Some of my kids and some from Eli Whitney are going to one of the new buildings," she notes. "We're overcrowded by 250 students, and I think Whitney is by around 550. You just watch, it will be overcrowded in that first year."

Meanwhile, McAuliffe's condition is getting worse. "Often, people claim to live with a relative in the neighborhood so their children can attend the school," says Cortez. "Unfortunately, we no longer have truant officers that can check these stories out." Cortez says there's talk of 75 scattered-site, public housing units being built in the area, too. "I tell you, somebody is not realistically looking at student movement and demographics in this area," says Cortez.

But, so far, McAuliffe hasn't considered alternatives, such as controlled enrollment, under which newcomers are bused to other schools. "We don't bus our children to other schools," says Cortez. "We are a neighborhood school that takes neighborhood children." ■

# Political action pays off for four schools

by Debra Williams

**S**chool activists in the west Logan Square and Hermosa communities are feeling their oats. For years, their children suffered from severe school crowding. Now, after some intense political action, four area schools—Funston, Mozart, Monroe and Nixon—have annexes under construction, and a site has been identified for a new middle school.

"Reform is what mobilized us," says Amanda Rivera, the bilingual coordinator and a local school council member at Funston. "Without it, we never would have gotten our annexes or have the [middle school] site."

Idida Perez, a parent who serves on the Monroe Local School Council, agrees. "Before reform, we were afraid to act. In Latino countries, you don't question authority. And, God forbid, you question an organization like the Board of Education," she says. "But after reform, you had all these little organizations telling you, 'These are your rights as parents. You have the right to fight. The right to question.' Plus, parents were made to feel wel-

### **FUNSTON SCHOOL, 2010 N. Central Park**

Building capacity: 600.  
Children assigned to main building: 756.  
Children assigned to a leased church: 116.  
Children bused elsewhere under controlled enrollment: 300 to 400.  
Capacity of new annex: 332 students

### **MONROE SCHOOL, 3651 W. Schubert**

Building capacity: 780.  
Children assigned to main building: 1,000.  
Children assigned to leased Catholic school: 145.  
Children bused elsewhere under controlled enrollment: 465.  
Capacity of new annex: 332 students

### **MOZART SCHOOL, 2200 N. Hamlin**

Building capacity: 725.  
Children assigned to main building: 1,004.  
Children assigned to mobile classrooms: 156.  
Children assigned to leased fieldhouse at Mozart Park: 64.  
Children bused elsewhere under controlled enrollment: 625.  
Capacity of new annex: 332 students

### **NIXON SCHOOL, 2121 N. Keeler**

Building capacity: 850.  
Children assigned to main building: 942.  
Children assigned to a leased church: 200.  
Children bused elsewhere under controlled enrollment: 600.  
Capacity of new annex: 332 students

come in the schools, so their involvement increased after reform."

Thus emboldened, parents quickly banded together in 1991 when they learned that more bonds would be sold for school construction, acquisition and renovation. Perez says the group found out about the bonds because someone got a copy of the School Board's capital development plan.

"Boy, did we learn from that experience," Perez recalls. "We went to the PBC [Public Building Commission], who told us to go to the School Board, who told us to go to the PBC, and back and forth. So we got smart and got everyone in the same room, so no one would say, 'Hey, you have to talk to that person.'"

At first, Perez says, the group was assured they would get another new school. (McAuliffe Elementary had just opened in the area, but it already was bursting at the seams.) Then the group was told that no site was available.

"We went looking around ourselves," says Rivera, confirming that no site could then be found. "So we said we wanted the annexes built and then a new school later, when a site became available."

With the annexes assured, the group

moved closer to its ultimate goal in 1994, when it set its sights on the shuttered Ames department store at Armitage and Hamlin, which had become board-owned property. "We had expressed interest in the site," says Rivera. "But one day, a council member from McAuliffe who lives right across the street from the site spotted some men in suits looking it over, so she alerted the rest of us."

Rivera says everyone got suspicious and marched right over to Ald. Ray Suarez's office to find out what was going on. "That's when we found out the board had asked the PBC to put the property up for sale," she says.

"We organized a rally and picketed the area," recalls Mozart Principal Philip Yaccino. "We had the media to come out and Ald. Suarez and [state] Sen. Miguel del Valle. We made such a stink that the board backed out of selling the property."

Giacomo Mancuso, the board's director of facilities planning and development, acknowledges that political pressure blocked the sale. "So now we own the site, but we don't have the money to build a school on the property," he says.



Parents from Mozart School picket outside School Board headquarters.

Mancuso and the Logan Square-Hermosa activists offer different versions of what happened.

Mancuso says the board purchased the Ames site for a new school in '92 but that the community balked. "They didn't like the location," he says, and insisted on annexes instead. So the board used the money earmarked for a new school to build annexes, he continues, and decided to sell the Ames site and use the proceeds to purchase a

Catholic school to help relieve overcrowding elsewhere in Subdistrict 3.

"We were promised the annexes *and* a new school," insists Perez. "We got the agreement for the annexes in writing, and unfortunately the agreement for the new school was verbal. I hate we didn't get that in writing, too."

Perez says the parents went for the annexes first because they had seen earlier promises of new schools go unfulfilled. "Monroe had money allocated for

## Was Marjorie Branch bluffing or just misunderstood?

Last fall, as parents and educators from five overcrowded schools on the Northwest Side—Funston, Nixon, Mozart, Monroe and McAuliffe—were battling for a new school, a new problem reared up, seemingly out of nowhere.

Controlled enrollment, the schools were told, would end in a year. In other words, some 2,000 neighborhood children who were bused to schools with excess space would be returning.

According to Mozart Principal Philip Yaccino and many others, the pronouncement came from Marjorie Branch, deputy superintendent of academic support services, at a meeting she arranged with area principals. "She gave us a list of options we had to choose from, and we were told to come up with a plan by March," Yaccino reports.

The options included switching to a year-round schedule, adopting double shifts, redrawing attendance boundaries, leasing space, opening closed schools

and using "demountable" classrooms. The problem was, however, that most of the options were already in use. Those that weren't—such as year-round school, adopted only by Funston—were unacceptable to the school communities.

The schools then deluged Board of Education members and Supt. Argie Johnson with letters. And they alerted a host of officials, including Deputy Mayor Leonard Dominguez, Subdistrict 3 Supt. Julio Cruz, Associate Supt. Carlos Azcoitia, State Sen. Miguel del Valle and aldermen Ray Suarez, Billie Ocasio and Michael Wojcik.

Soon after, the local school councils called a meeting so they could air their case with Cruz, Azcoitia and William McGowan, Marjorie Branch's assistant. William Delgado, community affairs director for del Valle, also attended.

The school delegations were hopping mad. How could central administration do this, they demanded? Where would they put these children? What

would happen to the underutilized schools that now took their children? Would they be forced to close?

As it turned out, the group got no answers. Instead, they were told there had been a misunderstanding. "There are 31 schools on controlled enrollment," McGowan said. "No one has suggested that these schools come off controlled enrollment."

That statement brought Idida Perez, a Monroe council member, to her feet, "Excuse me," she interjected, her voice rising. "I was there, and I understood her [Branch] to say it would end and we had until March to think of alternatives. You said we must have misunderstood. I didn't misunderstand anything. I was told we had to put together a plan. Lots of people heard her say that."

But McGowan persisted: "Ms. Branch asked for schools to think about alternatives because some schools asked not to be on controlled enrollment."

12 years for a new school," says Perez. "I think that money sat in the bottom of a drawer somewhere. We didn't want the same thing to happen to us, so we quickly said we'd take the annexes and the school later."

"I think there is plenty of money," she adds. "I hear that a lot of new buildings that were supposed to be built with the 1990 bond issue weren't built."

The group now is working with aldermen and state senators to obtain money for a new school. While it is getting mixed signals on the likelihood of more bonds being sold, it remains confident.

William Delgado, director of community services for del Valle, notes that while the majority of students in the area are Hispanic, the councils are racially mixed. "But to quote [musician] Quincy Jones, they checked their egos at the door and work together because of a common thread, the children." As for their chances of getting that new school, Delgado says the annexes are proof of what they can do. "They got the attention of their district superintendent and the people at central office. What they are doing is true coalition building." ■

Echoing McGowan, Branch later told *CATALYST* that the issue arose because some parents refused to send their children out of the neighborhood. "You have a policy that you really can't defend—if a parent wants to challenge it, and this is what we had happen. . . . We haven't said as a system, you must go."

Meanwhile, parents and educators at the five schools are shaking their heads.

"I think she [Branch] was playing poker and bluffing to see what she could get away with," says Perez. "When she saw that more than 20 little people weren't going to sit back and take it, she backed down."

"That's how the board works," Perez adds. "They see how far they can push and get away with. If you raise a stink, they back off. That's why I always tell other parents to be watchful and alert, because if you're not, they try to pull one over on you."

*Debra Williams*

# Lloyd tries to ditch year-round schedule

by Debra Williams

In the last five years, 12 elementary schools have adopted year-round schedules to help ease their crowding. But that number could drop to 11 if Lloyd School in Belmont Cragin wins a tug-of-war with the Board of Education.

The tussle is a classic one for school reform, pitting a questionable solution of a local school community against the judgment of higher authorities.

In March 1994, less than a year after going year-round, Lloyd decided to revert to a regular schedule because parents were complaining that the new schedule interfered with vacations and put children from the same families on different attendance tracks.

But central office blocked the move, telling Lloyd it didn't have enough space to accommodate students during the regular school year. (The school already was busing 750 neighborhood children to other schools under controlled enrollment.)

Lloyd responded in two ways. First, it showed that it could free up a classroom by combining two 1st-grade classes and assigning two teachers and a teaching assistant to the group, which would total 50 students. Second, it made arrangements with the Chicago Park District to move preschool children to donated space at nearby Blackhawk Park.

Once again, central office said, No.

"When the facilities department inspected [Blackhawk], they said it didn't meet school safety codes," relates Ramon Williams, Lloyd's dean of students and a local school council member. "So the Chicago Park District spent \$40,000 to fix the things they said needed to be fixed."

But the codes were later "reinterpreted," Williams maintains, and the school was told the area still was not suitable for its students. "The Park District spent \$40,000," says Williams.

"The board's attitude was 'We didn't tell them to spend their money.' Talk about wasting the taxpayers' money. This is their way of forcing us to stay on a schedule we don't want to be on."

However, Alvin Peterson, director of equal educational opportunity for the board, says it was the city fire marshal, not the School Board, that determined Blackhawk still fell short of safety requirements. And even if Blackhawk had been acceptable, he says, Lloyd still would have been two classrooms short. "They have 145 kindergartners, which is far more students than they have graduating," Peterson adds.

## Parents not consulted?

Williams believes, however, that the central administration wants Lloyd to remain on a year-round schedule because it wants more schools to adopt the practice. If Lloyd comes off, he says, other schools may question the approach.

Robelo H. Solis, a teacher member of the local school council, speculates that the board is trying to save money. "We were on the list to get a new addition, and as soon as we went on year-round, they took our name off the list," he says. "They save money if they don't have to build a new building. It's also cheaper to bus students out."

Williams also maintains that the council that opted for the year-round schedule, which had a white majority, did not consult parents and the community, who are predominantly Latino. After a new council was elected and the previous principal retired, parents were polled. Three hundred, he says, signed a petition in opposition to year-round schooling.

"Overcrowding wasn't even the reason they [the old council] wanted to go year-round," says Williams. "They wanted to drop class sizes to 20 students, which I think is unrealistic."

"That's not true," counters Cheryl





Miryam Assaf-Keller (standing), principal of Lloyd School, and the Lloyd Local School Council discuss the next step in their struggle to return to a regular school year.

Strzyzynski, a community representative on the previous council. "Our enrollment was growing, and while we were not overcrowded, we saw we were heading that way. I told parents, 'If you don't want your children sitting on top of boiler pipes, we need to take a look at this.'"

"At first, they were hesitant," she says. "They asked if we could build mobile units instead. When we explained that we couldn't and showed them how year-round would work, they began to accept it."

However, two parents who spoke with *CATALYST* following a local school council meeting in March said they are

not happy with the arrangement.

"Some of the little kids in the 1st and 2nd grades are rebelling, because their friends are out in the summer, and they're here going to school," Patricia Cardona said. "The kids don't like this schedule."

Lillian Reategui said she and her two children—one attends Lloyd and the other, another school—can't spend as much time together. "When she's out of school, he's in. And because I'm working, I can't be at home for both of them when they are out of school."

Williams, the dean of students, notes that many families return to their

countries of origin during the summer, pulling their children out of school. Attendance is low in the summer, he says.

But administrative leaders dismiss these arguments.

"We are talking about a group of parents who are inconvenienced," says Joan Ferris, superintendent of Sub-district 1. "We are not concerned about vacation and babysitting problems. That is not our concern. Our concern is the children."

Peterson says central office offered to help Lloyd reorganize its attendance tracks so that siblings would be on the same schedule unless a parent requested otherwise. "We've got experienced principals on year-round that would be more than happy to help."

One bystander to the dispute who has worked with Lloyd maintains that the heart of the problem at Lloyd is the new principal, Miryam Assaf-Keller.

"She has shown parents every way she can why the program won't work because she doesn't want to work the summers," the source says, asking not to be identified. "Edward Paetsch, the former principal, had the year-round schedule set up to work like clockwork, and parents liked it. In fact, some parents had been threatened if they speak favorably for the year-round schedule."

Strzyzynski agrees and says she regrets that the council hired Assaf-

## Year-round school 'the best thing since Wonder Bread'

**F**ive years ago, Gale Community Academy in Rogers Park became one of the first schools in the city to adopt a year-round schedule. While overcrowding was the motivation, Gale has found that the schedule has "extraordinary educational potential," reports Principal Edis Snyder.

"It may be the best thing since Wonder Bread," she laughs.

For one, the schedule has enhanced the school's efforts to create smaller learning environments for its 1,015 students. "We were already broken down into four minischools or 'tracks,' so it made minischools so much easier to do," says Snyder.

In a first for Chicago's year-round schools, Gale last year assigned all its

6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders to a new, middle-school track.

"We researched middle schools and thought it would be good to have all our older youngsters taught together," says Snyder. Gale deliberately scheduled this track to be in school during the summer—to help keep these students out of trouble.

"And students come in to school," she says gleefully. "Our attendance rate in the summer is good." At 92 percent, it's higher than the citywide, school-year average for all Chicago elementary schools.

Each of Gale's other tracks, which include kindergarten through 5th grade, has a curricular theme—arts, humanities and multicultural education.

When children are on break or "intersession," they are assigned projects to work on at home. Over the years, home-project participation has increased, says Snyder; some classes saw it soar from 60 percent to 90 percent.

The school also offers activities, such as computer work, during intersessions. To boost participation by older children, Gale initiated a "room helper" program, wherein a middle-school student volunteers in a younger classroom during intersessions. The helpers tutor and read to youngsters and grade papers. Forty-five middle-school students served as room helpers during the October intersession, says Snyder. In all, 100 of Gale's 300 middle-school students participated in

Keller. "No one else had applied for the job, and she told us, 'If you don't hurry up and hire me, I'll go somewhere else.' So we did," says Strzyzynski. "I now think she simply is not properly trained to handle a principal's job."

And still another person, who also asked to remain anonymous, says Assaf-Keller has rejected outside help.

In response, Assaf-Keller says she is sad that's the perception. "My philosophy is to share decisions," she says. "And this is what the parents want. . . . They told me they had problems with year-round. They were ignored before."

As for central office's help, Assaf-Keller says it involved moving some teachers from classroom to classroom, something she and her staff did not want. "Teachers felt they had no stability," she explains.

At the March meeting of Lloyd's local school council, members resolved to seek a meeting with Supt. Argie Johnson. And Williams, the dean of students, said a lawyer had been contacted.

"Other schools are looking very closely at what happens here," says Assaf-Keller.

"Schools are going to be reluctant to change their schedules if they think they'll have a problem changing them back. At the moment, there is nothing on paper that says you have to remain on year-round for a specific amount of time. We are now waiting to see what happens." ■

#### intercession activities.

Because Gale is open 50 weeks a year, it has become a greater community resource, too, says Snyder. In December, for example, six battered women came in right before Christmas to seek help, she reports. Thanks to state Chapter 1 funds, Gale has a full-time social worker who directs neighborhood residents to agencies that can help them solve problems.

Snyder says there are three requirements for making year-round schooling work. "One, a commitment to the concept from the people involved. Two, organization is critical. Three, you can't be afraid of change. Change is our middle name."

*Debra Williams*

# Double shifts win praise at Peck

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by Felicia Morton

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Last year, hallways, closets and even old shower stalls served as classrooms at Peck Elementary School on the Southwest Side. On Jan. 30, the hallways and closets reverted to their intended uses, and the shower stalls were abandoned as Peck became the first elementary school in the city to go on double shifts.

The change also allowed about 76 children who had been bused out of the neighborhood because of overcrowding to return to Peck. Built for 500 students, the school now comfortably serves 750.

"We would prefer not having double shifts," says Principal David Domovic. "But we had to do something, and parents did not want year-round school or for their children to be bused somewhere else. So, we tried it, and everyone is very happy with it so far."

Under the new schedule, Peck is in operation from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. A hot breakfast is served at 7. The morning shift is in class from 7:30 to 11:45, and the afternoon shift is in class from 11:45 to 4 p.m. Lunch is served before class to afternoon students and after class to morning students. After-school tutoring and crafts programs begin at 4 p.m., and Domovic reports that morning students often come back for them.

Children receive only 255 minutes of instruction each day—45 minutes less than the 300 required by the state. (However, the state allows exceptions for schools that need to adopt double shifts to relieve overcrowding.) Peck has managed to devote the same amount of time to major subjects—math, reading and history—by cutting back on art, music and health.

Also, there are compensating factors for the loss of time. "It is a much more quiet, pleasant atmosphere," says Domovic. "The whole climate of the school has changed simply because we have more space."

The new schedule also gives Domovic more opportunity to interact with students by, for instance, serving as a substitute teacher. Previously, he says, most of his time was spent on crowd control.

Class sizes, which ranged up to 45 students under the old schedule, now average 30. "It is much better than having 45 kids in a room," says Bob Long, a 6th-grade teacher on the afternoon shift. "I have 32 kids now, and that is a lot compared to some rooms."

With no interruptions for recess, lunch and bathroom breaks, says Long, faculty actually have more time with kids, as well as more time to prepare for classes. Plus, he jokes, the kids in his room are happy because they get to stay home and watch "Oprah" before coming to school.

Long was one of 21 teachers—out of 33—who voted for the double shift. Under the Chicago Teachers Union contract, 63.5 percent of union staff members at a school must approve any schedule change.

As the first school to try double shifts in Chicago, Peck had no model to follow. "I simply made it up myself," says Domovic. "I wasn't sure how it would work out. All I knew is that I wanted to accommodate everyone and give up nothing."

Families who have more than one child in the school were given the option of having their children on the same shift, so that parents would not have to ferry children back and forth two times each day.

Parents also had the option of having their children on separate shifts. "Most parents felt it would be easier to keep their kids in the same shift, but some actually wanted their kids in different shifts because then they wouldn't be home fighting," Domovic says.

Domovic initially worried that children would not wake up in time for the morning shift, but those fears proved groundless. After the first week of the



Principal David Domovic drops by 4th grade.

new schedule, morning-shift students were assigned essays on how they were coping with the new routine. To Domovic's surprise, most students wrote that previously they had been up early anyway, watching cartoons on TV.

Bill Henzl, local school council chair and the father of three children on the morning shift, is pleased with how things have worked out. "For the first few weeks it was rough getting used to it," he says. "But I think it worked out better than we expected. My children come home and do their homework right away, so we have more time to spend with them now."

"My middle child had problems learning before, but with the extra attention she has been receiving in the smaller classes, she has sprung up like a flower," Henzl adds. Some parents resisted the change at first, "but now I'd say 95 percent like it," he says.

Students seem to like it, too. Says 6th-grader Daniel Tafelski, "I like it because you get to relax in the mornings. You can do your homework and stuff. Before, it was stressful because everyone was so jammed together, and sometimes you wouldn't get picked to answer a question until the end of the day."

Even so, the Peck LSC considers double shifts a temporary solution. The only long-term answer, Domovic stresses, is either an addition or a new school.

"I encourage everyone to look into it," says Domovic. "I would recommend it to anyone who asked, but if you don't have the support of the community and the LSC, it will not work. I was fortunate that the LSC trusted me to do what the parents wanted." ■

*Felicia Morton is a Chicago writer.*

# Los Angeles, New York short of space too

by Lynnette Richardson

**L**os Angeles has suffered such severe school overcrowding for so long that school officials can't even say what it would take to serve all children in a regular school during the regular school year.

"We've gotten so used to overcrowding that we don't consider our schools overcrowded as long as we have space for them [students]," says Pam Johnson, a planning consultant for the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Forty percent of the city's non-specialty schools are on year-round schedules, the result of a School Board mandate. More than 10,000 portable classrooms blanket city school sites. Increasingly, schools have more students in their portables than in regular buildings, according to Henry Heydt of the state's Schools Facilities Planning Division.

Despite these measures, 11,000 of the city's 636,000 students are still forced to attend school outside their neighborhoods—the same percentage as in Chicago. And another 69,000 are voluntarily bused to magnet schools and integration programs.

Laboring under property-tax caps since the late 1970s, California school districts must rely on the state for school construction. In 1982, the state launched an \$8 billion construction program, building mainly portable classrooms. (Heydt says the state moves quickly when overcrowding gets so bad that auditoriums and the like are used as classrooms.) Los Angeles also got one new school for each of the last five years.

But money has run out. In November, California voters narrowly defeated a \$1 billion school construction bond referendum. Heydt says that, statewide, there is a \$6 billion backlog of projects, including \$231.4 million for Los Angeles.

Like Chicago, Los Angeles has enormous school repair needs, too. "The

schools are falling down around us, and there is no money for repairs," says Johnson. Half the schools built in the 1960s in response to the baby boom had a life expectancy of only 30 to 35 years, she notes.

There's no money for leasing non-school space either, she says. And even if there were, finding space that meets earthquake guidelines is difficult, she adds.

For Los Angeles, the only good news on the overcrowding front is that city-wide enrollment has leveled off.

## Enrollment soaring

Meanwhile, New York's school-age population is soaring. Half of its 1,170 schools are considered overcrowded, according to the School Board's Division of School Facilities. Total enrollment, currently more than 1 million, jumped 9 percent in the last five years and is expected to rise 20 percent in the next seven, a citizens' commission reported recently.

As in Chicago, classes often are conducted in non-classroom space. New York also plans pilot programs in year-round schooling and collaboration with businesses and non-profit organizations that offer work-related experiences outside the classroom, reports *Education Week*.

In 1989, the city issued \$4 billion in bonds for the School Construction Authority. Since then, the authority has built 23 schools—another 13 are under construction—8 mini-schools (K-2) and 30 additions, 14 of which included modernization work. It also has completed 46 modernization projects and repaired 14 athletic fields.

It once took 10 years to get a school built in New York City, says Al Gallardo of the School Construction Authority. When the Legislature created the Authority, however, it "exempted [it] from much of the bureaucratic red tape," he says. Now it takes less than five. ■

# STRENGTHENED ACADEMIC AND PROMOTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By Argie K. Johnson, General Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools

A resolution to strengthen the curriculum in mathematics and in science for high school students has been adopted by the Chicago Public Schools and will become effective, on a phased-in basis, beginning with the 1996-97 school year. The core curriculum will increase to three years each of mathematics and science from the current two years of mathematics and one year of science now required for high school graduation.

The implementation of these increased standards was mandatory and non-negotiable if Chicago Public Schools students are to become better prepared to compete, and compete successfully, with students in the global marketplace. Our decision to move in this direction was necessitated by a number of persuasive factors, some of which include:

- > Preparing students to access the public (and private) university system without the need to take remedial courses for full admission. Too often, to our dismay, we discovered that our former students were exhausting their financial aid while on "provisional" status, which dictated their taking remedial courses to qualify for full admission.
- > Strengthening the value of the high school diploma for postsecondary education or for entering the work force;
- > Allowing a greater proportion of Chicago students to meet or exceed standards set in mathematics and in science established by the Illinois Goal Assessment Program and the National Science Foundation, and conforming to the Goals 2000: Educate America Act;
- > Enabling a higher number of students to successfully pursue careers in science, engineering, mathematics, and other technology-based fields.

The phase-in of the new curriculum requirements will be as follows:

CLASS OF	MATH + SCIENCE
1995 - 1999	2 Math + 1 Science
1996 - 2000	3 Math + 1 Science
1997 - 2001	3 Math + 1 Science
1998 - 2002	3 Math + 2 Science
1999 - 2003	3 Math + 3 Science

Consistent with the action to strengthen academics on the high school level, the system also has established districtwide minimum promotion requirements for high school students. No systemwide promotion policy had been in effect in the high schools prior to adoption of this standard, which could result in inconsistent placement of students transferring from one school to another. Students must successfully complete 20 units of credit to achieve a high school diploma.

Approved by the full Board of Education, the high school promotion policy for 9th-grade students entering high school in the fall of 1995 shall require the successful completion of the following units of credit for promotion:

- > From 9th grade to 10th grade, 4.5 units of credit;
- > From 10th grade to 11th grade, 10.0 units of credit;
- > From 11th grade to 12th grade, 15.0 units of credit.

As a lifelong educator and former classroom science teacher, I recognize that students will meet the expectations that we set for them. I have seen evidence of this throughout my career, notwithstanding my tenure of approximately 20 months as General Superintendent. There can be no better proof of this than the 21 young men and women selected by the Golden Apple Foundation of Illinois as 1995 Golden Apple Scholars: Cheryl Almonte (*Lane Technical High School*), Christina Botella (*Juarez High School*), Willie Burgess (*Lane Technical High School*), Everett Coburn (*Jones Metropolitan High School*), Marquita Cowley (*South Shore Community Academy*), Adam Dassow (*Lane Technical High School*), Sheenan Davenport (*Washington High School*), Harrington Gibson (*Lane Technical High School*), Jia Jia Gu (*Senn Metropolitan Academy*), Wendy Guerra (*Juarez High School*), Christina Hernandez (*Hubbard High School*), Maureen Mojica (*Lane Technical High School*), Pasqualina Piazza (*Washington High School*), Brad Raymond (*Hyde Park Career Academy*), Tenesha Sawyer (*Hyde Park Career Academy*), Roberto Silva (*Wells Community Academy*), Aisha Thomas (*Westinghouse Vocational High School*), Monica Utreras (*Hubbard High School*), Lisandra Vazquez (*Lane Technical High School*), Carol Williams (*Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center*), Joy Wills (*Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences*). We salute these Chicago Public Schools students for their academic achievement, and we salute their teachers for providing the quality instruction needed to help them reach their goals.

## Two schools overhaul reading with Success for All

by Elizabeth Duffrin

To 6-year-old Tabitha, words on the printed page are a mystery. She recognizes individual letters and knows the sounds they make, but she hasn't got the hang of blending those sounds together to read words. A 1st-grader at Terrell Elementary School in Washington Park—where most children start kindergarten not knowing what letters are—Tabitha's difficulties with reading are not unusual and, typically, foreshadow constant struggle with school learning.

However, the faculty at Terrell—and at McCormick Elementary School in Little Village—believe they have found a way to get children like Tabitha off to a good start.

Last year, both schools switched from a traditional basal reading program—which brings lessons, stories and quizzes together into reading “textbooks” and workbooks—to Success For All, an all-out effort in reading instruction. Developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, the program is aimed specifically at children who come to school without such “reading readiness” skills as familiarity with the alphabet.

For Tabitha, the program means more intensive instruction, a reading class of eight students instead of 25 and daily one-on-one tutoring sessions with Freda Foard, a regularly certified teacher. The two have been working since September to get Tabitha to write her own name, and “She's just finally able to write it by herself,” Foard reports.

This morning, the 1st-grader gets more than extra instruction. When Tabitha says she's hungry, Foard pulls out a packet of saltine crackers and a banana—the girl's first meal today.

Recognizing that a child's social environment can create academic difficulties and interfere with children's learning, Success For All calls on schools to take “a relentless approach” to make sure kids get whatever they need—from food to social services—to help them succeed at reading. If children don't learn to read well by 3rd grade, the program's developers note, they're likely to fail in later school years.

The program relies on a combination of proven strategies: reading classes organized by ability level; a “family support” team trained to intervene quickly and solve problems, such as truancy, that hinder achievement; cooperative learning activities; and individual tutoring for children who lag farthest behind.

Before turning to Success for All, both schools had already adopted some of these practices. McCormick used well-trained tutors in its Reading Recovery program, which focuses on low-achieving 1st-graders, and Terrell had trained its teachers in cooperative learning techniques. Still, reading scores remained low, and the schools were looking for a new approach.

“We had no systematic way of teaching reading,” explains Mariann Doherty, who coordinates Success for All at McCormick in Little Village. “Each teacher emphasized what they thought was important, and kids didn't always get the skills they needed. A lot of kids fell between the cracks because the structure wasn't there.”



Alphie the puppet, a Success for All staple, helps teach reading skills in teacher Carla Ellis' kindergarten classroom at Terrell.



## McCormick, Terrell elementary

Success for All provided the structure both schools wanted: an intensive 90-minute reading period and tightly scripted lesson plans that force teachers to lead interactive lessons.

"The lack of interaction makes learning, if it takes place, boring," says Terrell Principal Reva Hairston. "I have seen too many lessons being conducted like 'Read the first paragraph, and you read the second paragraph,' and maybe two or three questions are asked, and then [students] do the pages in the workbook." With Success For All, she adds, "It's almost like a mandate. The teacher must be interactive with the children."

"They can't get away with grading papers at their desks," Doherty agrees. "To do the program, teachers must be actively engaged with the kids for ninety minutes."

Success For All was piloted last year in McCormick's 1st-grade classes, and in many of Terrell's classrooms. This year, the program is up and running schoolwide at Terrell, from prekindergarten through 8th grade, and at McCormick in kindergarten through 5th grade. Bilingual classrooms at McCormick follow the program's Spanish version.

Success for All developers won't begin training unless a substantial majority of teachers vote to adopt the program. Even so, there was some resistance at first. "Teachers don't like to do things differently," Hairston explains. "And so there was some gnashing of teeth."

Skepticism faded, though, as teachers noticed something they liked: students reading earlier and better—and with more enjoyment.

Frances Lawrence, a 28-year Terrell veteran, admits she found the 1st-grade curriculum too prescriptive at first. "The teacher's manual tells you what to do, what to say, when to hold something up," she says. "I am not a person who likes to follow a script." She soon changed her mind—"The children were so enthusiastic about the program, that's what made me like it."

In spite of the gains teachers report, no one expects test scores to rise immediately. Ann Gray, Terrell's program coordinator, says reading scores con-



*Esmeralda Santoyo responds correctly during a phonics lesson at McCormick.*

### McCormick Elementary

#### The Student Body

992 students in preschool through 5th grade. Over 51% are in bilingual classrooms this year, the largest percentage ever. 98.7% Hispanic. 98% low-income.

#### The Neighborhood

Little Village, which gradually is becoming a port of entry for Mexican immigrants. Residents live mainly in brick two-flats and three-flats. Many hold low-paying jobs in hotels and factories, or in fast-food restaurants along the neighborhood's busy commercial strip.

### Terrell Elementary

#### The Student Body

660 students in preschool through 8th grade. 85% come from single-parent homes, the principal estimates. 100% black. 94.5% low-income.

#### The Neighborhood

Washington Park. Terrell sits on the southern edge of Robert Taylor Homes, the world's largest public housing project. Students come from six of the project's 28 highrises, and some must walk through enemy gang territory to attend school. Shooting is frequent, especially during the warmer months.

### Success For All

#### Objectives

To insure that every student succeeds in reading beginning in the first grade and then continues to progress.

#### Key Components

- ✓ A comprehensive reading program that trains teachers to use up-to-date, well-researched instructional methods.
- ✓ Tutoring for students falling behind in reading, with priority given to 1st-graders.
- ✓ A family-support team to help parents solve truancy, misbehavior and other problems that interfere with their children's learning.

cern her less than “the fact that we’re doing the program and that it’s being done correctly. Because if we are . . . then we’re going to see progress.”

Terrell and McCormick staff believe the real test of the program’s success will come when children who began the program in preschool or kindergarten reach the 3rd grade. Johns Hopkins has found that on average, 3rd-graders at Success For All schools score near grade level in reading, significantly ahead of their counterparts in other schools. (See story below.)

## Beginning Reading

Success For All starts off with a preschool program—a requirement for all Success for All schools—continues with Beginning Reading for kindergarten through 1st grade, and moves to Beyond the Basics for grades 2 and up.

Beginning in 1st grade, children take reading comprehension tests every eight weeks to make sure they are assigned to the correct reading class. In

some cases, students from two different grade levels are grouped together.

Before, most Terrell and McCormick teachers divided their classes into groups of high-, average- and low-level readers. While the teacher taught one group a lesson, other students completed workbook exercises.

“You’re trying to give some work to one group while you’re teaching the next group and still keeping an eye on the other group. You go crazy,” says Giselda Corrales-Murray, McCormick’s bilingual coordinator and a former 2nd-grade teacher.

Focusing on a single group of students for 90 minutes gets more work done, many teachers believe. “You feel more at ease,” says Corrales-Murray. “You feel like you’re accomplishing something with the kids. You see that the kids are learning more. They definitely are.”

In 1st grade, reading classes are roughly half the size of regular classes—10 to 18 students at McCormick and eight to 15 students at Terrell. Teachers hired as tutors teach the extra

reading classes.

Intense instruction begins at the kindergarten level. Disadvantaged kids don’t always come to school with what teachers call “reading readiness”—familiarity with the alphabet and the printed page, and the ability to speak in full sentences. To fill the gap, the beginning program stresses not only reading but oral language development, exposure to children’s literature and phonics.

“Any program that doesn’t teach word attack skills is in danger of failing a certain number of kids,” says Robert Slavin, one of the program’s developers. “Kids who don’t get that in first grade will always struggle.”

Phonics lessons are sensory. To learn the letter “p,” for instance, students recite a tongue twister like “Pokey puts peas and potatoes in a purple pot.” “What sound do you hear?” the teacher asks. Children practice making the “p” sound, paying attention to the way their lips press together and open with a “pop.”

Students also handle and identify small objects that begin with “p”—such

## Studies show kids score higher

**E**ight years ago, the Baltimore Public Schools asked Professor Robert Slavin of Johns Hopkins University for a program that would make every child in its inner-city district a good reader. A year later, Slavin and his research associates piloted Success For All in a Baltimore elementary school.

Almost predictably, all this high-powered attention brought success at that single school. “What’s surprising,” says Slavin, “is not that it’s been successful, but that it’s been replicable.”

Today, Success For All is running in more than 200 schools in 59 districts and 20 states across the country. Schools in both rural and urban areas have adopted the comprehensive reading program. So have schools with large populations of children whose native language isn’t English; for these schools, there’s a version for students learning English as a

second language and a version specifically for Spanish-speakers.

What Slavin and his research team hoped to prove was that a single school-reform model could ensure the success of disadvantaged kids in any school, even ones without an exceptionally able staff or above-average resources.

## Low achievers benefit most

Between 1988 and 1994, researchers matched 18 Success For All schools in 7 states with 17 “control” schools of similar ethnicity, income level and academic achievement. On standardized reading tests, Success For All schools outperformed control schools at every grade level from 1 through 5.

The gap widened in the higher grades. Success For All students led by 3 months

in 1st grade and 7 months in 3rd grade. While 5th-graders still scored slightly below average in reading, they outdistanced their control-school counterparts by more than a year.

The results were particularly strong for students in the lowest 25 percent of their classes, who benefited the most from tutoring and family support services. Comparing the lowest-achieving 3rd-graders, the average Success For All student scored better than 93 percent of the control group.

Even with strong and consistent results, the program is not without critics. “Whole language purists hate it,” says Slavin, referring to a method of instruction that rejects phonics drills. “They say it’s overly prescriptive, overly structured. They think teachers should develop their own curriculum based on the needs of their students.”

JOHN BOOZ



The Cobras are one of McCormick's cooperative learning teams. Member Janie Carillo displays the team logo while pondering a question.

as a peanut, paint brush or plastic pig. They draw "p's" in the air and then on a blackboard as they chant, "One stroke way down back up and around, the sound of p is p-p-p."

The repetitive sensory activities help children retain the material, teachers observe. "Repetition is how children learn," Doherty explains. "They don't get bored."

Slavin argues, however, that most teachers don't want to develop an entire reading curriculum on their own. Success for All provides not only the curriculum but also intensive teacher training and classroom visits.

"It's a pretty top-down, orthodox approach," says David Pearson, dean of the School of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana. "But the truth is, they establish some consistency and get the job done."

Pearson questions school-improvement efforts that focus on process, such as how decisions get made. "[Many] go through the process, and when they don't get results, they say 'Oh well, we tried,'" Pearson explains. With Success for All, "the bottom line is whether kids are learning what they should be learning."

*Elizabeth Duffrin*

Beginning reading lessons can take from two days to more than a week, depending on how fast students progress. Daily activities vary, but on a typical day with 1st-grade teacher Sylvia Harvey at Terrell, you might see the following:

■ **PHONICS REVIEW.** Students draw and spell four things that begin with "o" and share their work with the class.

■ **A GAME OF "QUICK ERASE."** Students read words made up of letters from earlier phonics lessons. Harvey writes words for them to sound out, replacing a letter from one word to form the next, so that "cat" becomes "cot" and then "not," "pot" and "pat."

■ **A GAME OF "CLAP AND SPELL."** The game helps students remember common words still too difficult to sound out. They chant, "Says, s-a-y-s, says" with a clap for each word and letter.

■ **CHILDREN'S LITERATURE.** Listening to literature read expressively gets kids excited about books; questions about plot, character and setting help them understand story structure and improve comprehension. While reading a story about a boy's rough day in school, Harvey pauses often to question. "Why did Ronald go into the closet?" "*Because he was hungry.*" "What started off his terrible day?" "*His pencil fell.*" "Then what happened?" "*He ate the boy's lunch.*"

■ **SONGS AND RHYMES.** Ninety minutes is a long time for 1st-graders to sit still, so reading lessons are interspersed with

songs and rhymes that help smooth transitions from one activity to the next.

■ **ALPHIE, A STUFFED PUPPET.** Teachers use Alphonse for parts of the lesson to spark the children's imaginations and motivate them to work harder. When Harvey puts the dog puppet on her hand, her students cry, "Good morning, Alphonse!" and rush to pat his head.

■ **AN ORAL LANGUAGE GAME WITH PICTURE CARDS.** The activity instructs students to think analytically and express themselves in complete sentences. Today, students are looking at pictures of people working. They find clues to identify each occupation, and then tell which job they would prefer and why. "I would like to be a painter so I could paint houses and get money," one girl explains.

■ **A "SHARED STORY."** In a traditional reading program, students finish one story and move on to the next. Shared stories are read many times—silently, in chorus with the class and then at least twice with a partner. The repetition helps students read more fluently. Earlier this week, Harvey's students read *The Costume Party* with a partner and answered questions on a "share sheet."

This morning, Harvey's class reviews the story. On the board, she writes questions for partners to consider as they read. "What was Nick's problem?" "Why couldn't Nick be a cat, a baseball player, or a dragon?" "How did Nick feel at the end of the story?"

Two girls sit facing each other, each with her own small book. As one reads the other follows along, sometimes tracing the words with her finger. "You forgot this word," Brittany says suddenly, and jabs a finger helpfully at the word on her partner's page. A few minutes later it's Brittany's turn to read. A word puzzles her. "What's this?" she demands, holding the page up for Victoria to see. Victoria reads the sentence, "Tim's cap is on Nick's cot."

At the end of the lesson, Harvey is pleased with her group's progress. "You may take those books home," she announces. The class erupts in cheers, "Yay!"

The students' books are eight pages long and photocopied on inexpensive paper. Teachers note advantages the

booklets have over basals. For one, the books are short and quickly mastered, helping children gain confidence. "It feels good to be six years old and you can pick up a book and you can read it from cover to cover," says Carolyn Epps, a Terrell tutor.

And unlike basals, the booklets can go home with the children. "A lot of these children don't have any books at home," says Epps. "No magazines. Nothing. So this is the only time they get to handle books. And it makes a real big difference."

For children struggling to keep up in reading class, tutoring also makes a difference. Schools hire additional staff as full-time tutors, and each works with nine or 10 students every day for 20 minutes. Currently, McCormick has 60 students in tutoring; Terrell, 27.

Tutors work on specific difficulties students have, like identifying letter sounds or blending sounds together. Students are tutored until they can keep up with their classmates. First-graders are a priority for tutoring because, Doherty explains, "The best way to prevent reading failure is one-on-one tutoring as soon as possible."

When they reach Beyond the Basics in 2nd grade, students are done with phonics and begin reading children's literature. Terrell's students read novels, and McCormick's follow the same lesson format using basal readers. For schools that can't afford to purchase novels, Johns Hopkins provides materi-

als to accompany ten major basals and two Spanish ones.

Beyond the Basics has three main components: Book Club, Listening Together and Reading Together. Through Book Club, students share what they read independently with projects that range from old-fashioned book reports to skits and rap songs.

In Listening Together, the teacher reads aloud for 20 minutes daily. Some 8th-graders at Terrell are listening to African-American novelist Zora Neale Hurston's works, "books that they would probably never pick up and read on their own," Principal Hairston says. "So they're getting an exposure [to literature] that they might not have gotten."

Teachers pepper their readings with questions about plot, character, setting—even foreshadowing and figurative language—to make students aware of the complexity of story structure.

In Reading Together, students read with partners instead of to the class—a change for the better, many teachers think. "Last year, when they read a story, say you have 30 kids in the room, they might get to read a paragraph or two," says Pat Walsh, a 5th-grade teacher at McCormick. "This way they get to read maybe five or six pages per student."

For each reading, students answer "treasure hunt" questions that test comprehension, write sentences with vocabulary words, and give a personal response to the reading in the form of, for instance, a newspaper report or a poem.

Once students complete "treasure hunt" questions and "meaningful sentences," they review their work with a team. Researchers at Johns Hopkins have found that working in cooperative learning teams substantially increases reading test scores. Terrell had already made team-learning school policy; McCormick had not, and some teachers were skeptical. "I thought there would be a lot of fooling around," Walsh says.

Cooperative learning keeps students "on task" by holding them accountable for each other's progress as well as their own.

At the beginning of each eight-week period, students are placed in teams and asked to come up with a team name and logo. The activity takes one or two class periods, "but it's worth it," says Doherty. "The payoff is the solidarity of the group, cooperation and mutual respect."

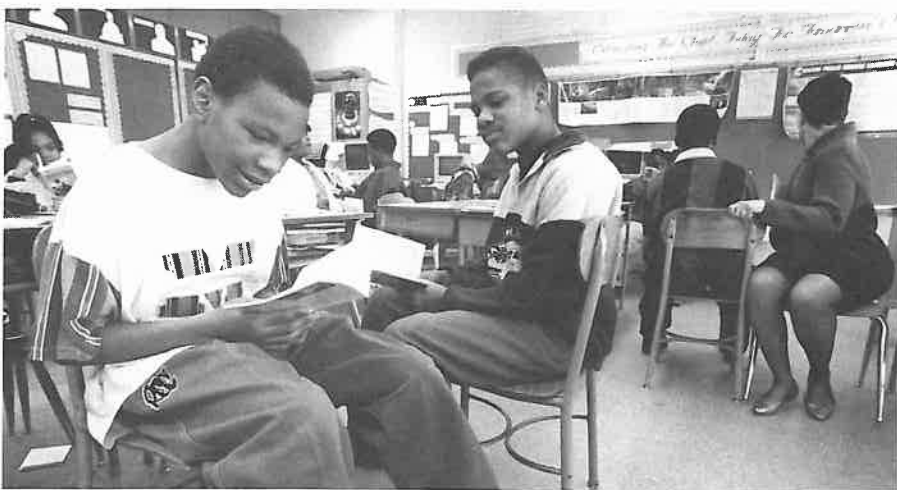
Mary Jean Kearney's 4th-grade reading class at McCormick sits at five-desk clusters. At each cluster, students prop up a manila folder with their team logo. Logos are colorfully rendered, with names like The Evil Bats, The Flying Devils and The Cobras.

Five Cobras are preparing for a story test. One girl reads "treasure hunt" questions from a list and points at her teammates to answer. Hands fly. "I know, I know!" two boys shout. One Cobra is startled when his name is called. "You got to pay attention!" another boy chides him.

At the end of the reading, students are tested individually on the story questions and vocabulary but receive the team average as a grade. High-scoring teams win prizes like pencils or stickers. Kearney says students put pressure on teammates to stay focused. "They don't like it when somebody doesn't do well."

Walsh agrees, "They really get on the other kids who don't know the material. The peer pressure there is nice."

Success for All coordinators at both schools think cooperative learning has made a difference in their students. "They can see that listening to others, encouraging them, respecting other points of view helps you get work done," Doherty says. Ann Gray agrees,



Terrell 8th-grader Robert Young (left) reads to partner Deandre Mardis.

"They've spent [too] many years in school competing, trying to outdo each other"; now they understand that "you help each other learn" and "sink or swim as a team."

### Beyond the classroom

To help students achieve, Success For All's program extends beyond the classroom. At home, every student is required to read aloud to a parent or family member four nights a week. Younger students read story booklets or "share sheets" with simple sentences. Older students read novels.

Parents must sign a sheet to verify the reading, which helps teachers track participation.

Parent participation at both schools has been strongest in the primary grades. Faculty report lower parent participation in the middle grades, however. Parents of 3rd- to 8th-graders are less willing to attend program meetings and listen to their children read, teachers point out.

Whatever difficulties students are having, from lack of parental support to trouble in class, Success For All provides schools with strategies that can prevent student failure.

For students whose parents don't listen to them read, Terrell recently began recruiting staff and parent volunteers to act as listeners. Last year, McCormick had students reading to secretaries, the assistant principal and building engineers.

This year, they've hired 15 parents to work with readers outside of class. Attention from staff and parent volunteers is as good for students' self-esteem as it is for their reading, Doherty notes. "It makes them feel important."

For students in more serious trouble, each school organized a Family Support Team. The team, made up of the principal, Success for All coordinator, social worker and other school professionals, helps families solve chronic student problems like truancy or misbehavior. The team "brings everybody in at a much earlier stage where its not



JOHN BOOZ

Calvin Davis (left), who works with Terrell and other schools on improving attendance, discusses the African fable "Tarik" with student Jason Glasper.

gone to the point where the child needs special ed," says McCormick counselor Marie Leake. "We're intervening earlier to avoid the case study later on."

While enthusiasm for Success For All runs high, both schools talk anxiously about its future. For various reasons, both schools may soon lose funds that support what Doherty calls "one of the hearts of the program"—tutoring.

Salaries make up the bulk of the program's costs—schools hire a coordinator as well as certified teachers to serve as tutors and teach 1st-grade reading classes. Additional expenses, which decrease over time, include materials and teacher training. This year's program will cost Terrell about \$200,000, including three tutor salaries. With twice as many tutors, McCormick will spend over \$340,000.

Terrell and McCormick are determined to keep Success For All running, whether it means training teacher aides as tutors or cutting back in other areas, like arts programs or summer school.

Yet, problems more serious than funding, especially at Terrell, may limit the program's long-term success. "A big problem we have is mobility," says Hairston. "We don't know how many kids will be here in 3rd grade that started out in 1st grade with the program."

In 1993-94, 76 percent of the students who began the school year at Terrell transferred out by June. At Robert Taylor Homes, where nearly all

of Terrell's students live, opposing gangs control the red-brick and white-brick high-rises. Many students transfer in and out, some as many as three or four times a year, because of gang threats, Hairston reports.

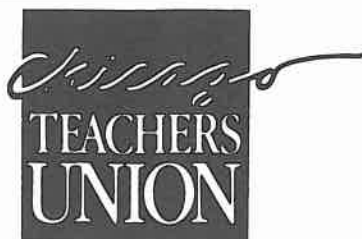
Hairston worries that while reading scores of children who have remained in the program may rise, schoolwide test scores will not. "And we're going to look and say Success for All didn't do a damn thing for these kids. I hate to [think] that the only measure of success will be a test score."

Her hopes for the program go far beyond test scores. She leans back in a desk chair and closes her eyes for a moment. "I want to see them love to read," she says quietly. "To see them going to the library and getting books out. . . . To see them sitting on the playground in the spring with a little paperback. Or maybe to pass by children and hear them discussing books instead of who had the latest fight. . . . To see it turn to literature." ■

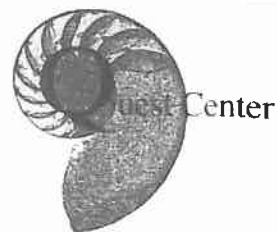
Elizabeth Duffrin is a Chicago writer.

Success For All also has been adapted for a new program called *Roots and Wings*, which includes math, science and social studies. Both programs are designed for schools whose poverty level is so high that they qualify for schoolwide use of federal Title 1 money. For more information, contact Chris Kane at (410) 516-8816.





## INFINITELY SKILLED TEACHING



By Deborah Walsh  
Director

Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center

In an earlier column, I referred to a comment by Lawrence Cremin that the reason past reform efforts have failed is that we have never invested in the infinitely skilled teaching such reforms require. The need for such an investment is more crucial than ever if we have any hope of saving public education. But investment in what? What kind of professional development is needed to enrich teaching and enhance learning?

As I work with reforming schools, I am awed at the depth and breadth of the repertoires of teachers: Socratic seminars, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary and thematic teaching, problem-based learning, performance assessment, incorporating critical thinking and theories of multiple intelligence. Using these strategies appropriately requires a deep understanding of the nature of intelligence and the development of understanding. Having this knowledge base, and incorporating and applying that knowledge in the classroom is what infinitely skilled teaching is all about.

Many of the recent breakthroughs in our knowledge base have come from the field of cognitive science, particularly the studies of what experts in a field do compared to what novices do and the translation of that knowledge into strategies for helping novices become expert. These findings have implications for rethinking the way we teach. Take reading, for example. It is widely agreed that expert readers do the following things automatically: understand that the goal is to make (or construct) meaning; activate relevant background knowledge, focus attention on the important ideas in the text, evaluate their constructed meaning for internal consistency and common sense, draw and

test inferences, and monitor all of the above to see if comprehension is occurring. Researchers and practitioners working together devised an approach to teaching reading comprehension drawing on these studies of what experts do that poor readers don't do called Reciprocal Teaching.

Reciprocal Teaching draws on four strategies used together to engage the learner. By giving poor comprehenders explicit instruction in these strategies and then lots and lots of practice reading out loud in small groups, these students would learn to eventually internalize them to greatly increase their reading abilities. Reciprocal teaching starts with heavy modeling by the teacher, with greater and greater responsibility turned over to the children, who, in small groups take turns being the teacher modeling for the other.

Studies found that scores on daily comprehension tests improved from 70 percent to 85 percent after 24 half-hour sessions, and remained at this level for at least six months after the reciprocal teaching. Other studies found increases in comprehension scores from less than 40 percent to between 70 and 80 percent, and that, while all readers improved, poor readers benefited the most.

In our quest to provide teachers with state-of-the-art professional development opportunities and to improve student achievement, we offered reciprocal teaching to Quest school teams. We found one of those practitioners, Kathryn Ransom, who worked with the researchers to develop the model and who, as the reading coordinator for the Springfield Public Schools, developed a performance-based reading assessment. Sixty-five Quest teachers gave up two Saturdays this winter to learn about reciprocal teaching, with no incentive other than intrinsic rewards of

knowledge for the sake of helping their students.

We asked them to consider systematically implementing the 24 half-hour reciprocal teaching instruction and engaging in a pre- and post-assessment of the model's effectiveness in their classrooms. Twenty-five classroom teachers, with more than 500 students, are now engaged in this quest for better reading comprehension. They have given pretests and are scheduled to conclude the reciprocal teaching instruction, give the posttests and turn in their results in mid-April. Stay tuned for results.

During the training, participants resonated with the notion that this might be a better way to teach reading comprehension, since so many of their students were having problems with traditional methods. Participants were excited about being on the cutting edge of a research-based teaching practice that could have profound implications on the way they taught. They were eager to be a part of its application. That they were there in teams and could support each other helped a great deal as they realized the complexity of the process they were about to try.

We emphasized the importance of what they were doing. If they could demonstrate significant increases in student achievement, they would be contributing to Chicago's entire teaching profession by providing a more effective way to help students become expert readers. They would be demonstrating to the political community that the teaching profession does care and does work hard to make a difference with children. And, because these kinds of breakthroughs in knowledge and practice don't come cheap, they would be sending a powerful message about making the necessary commitment to this kind of infinitely skilled teaching.

# Elsewhere

## CLEVELAND

**State takeover.** Citing a lack of leadership, internal politics and fiscal irresponsibility, a federal judge has handed over control of the Cleveland Public Schools to the state, according to reports in the March 4-7 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Under the order by U.S. Senior Circuit Court Judge Robert B. Krupansky, State Schools Supt. Ted Sanders must help the district obtain a \$29.5 million state-guaranteed loan to cover operating costs for the remainder of the fiscal year. The district has nearly exhausted its \$500 million budget for the year.

Krupansky also ordered Sanders and the Cleveland School Board to come up with a list and a timetable for closing 14 schools. While not naming the schools, the order likely is aimed at forcing the district to shut down 14 schools that a 1994 study identified as "beyond repair," according to the *Plain Dealer*.

Board members weren't enthusiastic about Krupansky's order, but said they had little choice but to comply and pledged cooperation. But member Adrian Maldonado told the *Plain Dealer*, "The judge is not being fair. We are being painted as incompetent, and I won't accept that."

However, lawyer Mark O'Neill of the state Department of Education said the ruling would end the indecisiveness that has plagued the board since Cleveland Schools Supt. Sammie Campbell Parrish resigned in February. Sanders and the board agreed to appoint James W. Penning, deputy superintendent of operations, as acting superintendent while a search is conducted for a permanent successor to Parrish.

Sanders, who served as Illinois' state superintendent of schools from 1985 to 1989, said he did not want the district to "promote from within" and would

prefer that the new superintendent have experience in running a large urban district.

Sanders' plans for the district also include cutting the budget, reorganizing the district's top management and appointing a small group of corporate leaders to oversee and give advice on district finances.

In a speech to a local civic group, School Board President Lawrence A. Lumpkin called on officials to solicit input on running the district from community groups that helped draft a school reform plan in 1993.

Sanders and the board had been at a standoff since last year, the *Plain Dealer* reported, when the board balked at Sanders' order that the district transfer between 400 and 1,000 students in order to maintain court-ordered, racial-balance guidelines in 20 schools.

The standoff, along with internal board politics and an increasingly precarious financial situation, prompted Krupansky's order. Krupansky, 73, came out of semi-retirement last year to oversee the the district's long-running desegregation case.

The Cleveland schools have been placed under state financial receivership twice before, but the takeover marks the first time the state has given control over the district's entire operations.

## PITTSBURGH

**Less is more?** Illinois lawmakers have toyed with the idea of breaking up Chicago into smaller school districts. But in Pennsylvania, a proposal has surfaced to merge 43 Pittsburgh-area districts into one.

The plan, devised by education professor William W. Cooley of the University of Pittsburgh, would create the nation's 10th-largest school district, serving 143,000 students, according to

the March 15 issue of *Education Week*.

Cooley maintained in his paper that operating numerous autonomous districts wastes resources by duplicating services; it also aggravates spending inequities, he argues. Under his plan, individual schools would be run by principals and school councils made up of parents, teachers and other school staff.

Cooley cited Chicago as one example of similar, successful site-based management.

## NEW YORK CITY

**'Discipline' academies.** Students who carry guns to school would be sent to one of four proposed "disciplinary academies" for a year, according to an article in the March 8 *New York Times*.

The proposal would, in effect, create a system of separate schools for violent children; such a system was dismantled under court order 20 years ago, according to the *Times*. And it would reverse the current policy under which principals and district superintendents determine the punishment for armed or violent students—which has often been no more than a week's suspension.

In the past eight years, violent incidents and weapons possession have risen steadily in New York schools.

Under the proposal, made by Schools Chancellor Ramon C. Cortines, children as young as kindergartners would be sent to the academies or to separate "disciplinary programs."

Older students using weapons other than guns, such as knives or box cutters, would also be subject to the mandatory one-year program.

The School Board is expected to approve Cortines' plan, which depends on additional funding. The estimated operating cost for each of the academies is \$2 million.

Lorraine Forte

# It's About Time!

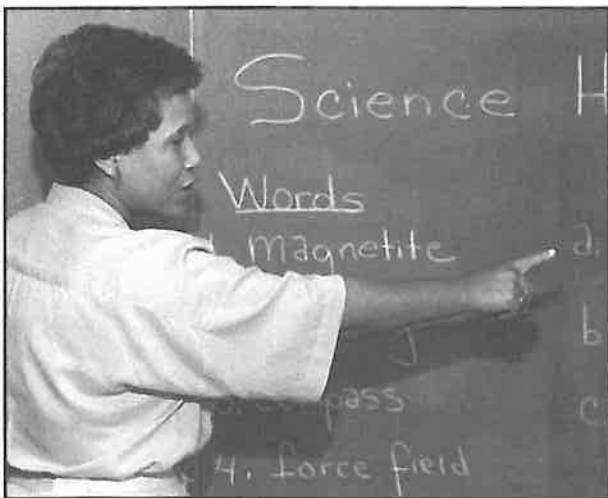
## T.I.M.E. Project Teams Make Best Practice Visits

By Mona Shah  
Research Associate, CSC Index

At 1:00 in the morning, T.I.M.E. team members and I found ourselves in a tower overlooking FedEx's Memphis hub. Below us, hundreds of intent employees systematically sorted and loaded thousands of packages onto a fleet of aircraft. Focus was the byword as these well-trained workers carried out their tasks. The scene was unforgettable and became etched in our minds.

You may wonder what drew us to FedEx so early in the morning. The Perfect Match (staffing) Team had identified FedEx as a "best practice organization"--an organization with superior performance levels in key process areas. Since T.I.M.E. is reengineering the management and operations of the Chicago Public Schools, the teams are looking at exemplary industry and school system processes. While the focus of the FedEx visit was staffing, we also brought back information related to management systems, employee development, and communications.

Throughout the best practice experience, we "saw" and "felt" what we had previously envisioned for the Chicago Public Schools. We



Improved processes--especially in staffing, employee development, and communications--will positively impact classroom instruction.

also encountered ideas that we had not foreseen. In this respect, the visit to FedEx served two purposes. First, analysis of key learnings and findings equipped us with tools for the redesign process. In many ways, FedEx provided a model for achieving the goals that we had identified for the Perfect Match initiative. Second, the experience "stretched" our minds and allowed us to ask the following question--"What if...?" In this respect, the best practice visit to FedEx furthered our thinking and understanding.

Key learnings existed in several areas. In the staffing area, for example, we studied FedEx's PRISM technology. Through this technology, managers have direct access to candidate information and can make on-line staffing decisions. In addition, accountability is paramount. FedEx believes in "taking the measure of quality." Measurement systems, including surveys and evaluation tools, are in place for process results and individual performance. Employee awareness, growth, responsibility, and communications are primary outcomes.

Throughout the reengineering effort, the T.I.M.E. Project will be learning from the best practices of today with the sole intent of becoming the best practice of tomorrow.

### Other Best Practice Highlights

#### **BROWARD COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

- Professional orientation
- Non-instructional skills development

#### **KANSAS BLUE VALLEY DISTRICT**

- Development for all
- Needs assessment

#### **MOTOROLA**

- Motorola University
- Measurement systems
- Consistent message

#### **COLUMBUS SCHOOL SYSTEM**

- Work order system

## Legislature tosses more reform options to Chicago

by Michael Klonsky

**F**lood warnings are up. First came the state's Quality Reviews, then Supt. Argie Johnson's Three-Tier Process, then the Annenberg Challenge and now state waivers and learning zones, with charter schools on the way and a pilot voucher program emerging. Whew.

"It's hard to know which way to turn," says John Mazurek, principal of Pablo Casals Elementary School in Humboldt Park and co-chair of the Orr School Network.

"I voted for the charter bill," says Sen. Arthur L. Berman (D-Chicago), the minority spokesperson on the Senate Education Committee. "But all these other waiver bills are making things too confusing for the school community." Berman doubts that most state senators know the difference between waivers, learning zones and charters; all three were part of the Republicans' "fast-track" legislative package.

Charter-school legislation hasn't reached the governor's desk yet (see story on page 29)—but waivers and learning zones are now law. Both aim to promote innovation by freeing schools from state laws and regulations that stand in the way.

The waiver law gives school boards throughout the state the right to apply for waivers of state school mandates and administrative regulations. Learning zones are for Chicago only; they give clusters of city schools the opportunity to work with lump-sum budgets as well as waivers from state and local regulations.

Authors of the measures believe that mandates dealing with time (e.g., a 180-day school year), curriculum (e.g., daily physical education classes) and accountability (e.g., school improvement plans) are likely targets. Asked why they didn't simply get rid of the mandates, Sen. Frank Watson (R-Carlyle) responds, "We tried." But "fierce union opposition" got in the way, he explains.

While Mazurek of the Orr Network jokes about the flood of programs rushing into the school system, he welcomes the opportunity to think more broadly about school change.

"We are reconsidering the way we use time and deliver services," he says of the network, a grass-roots reform effort involving Orr High School and its 12 feeder elementary schools. "We've done a lot of staff development around year-round schools, which will lead to smaller learning environments."

Learning zones, he says, "will allow us to be even more creative on a larger scale." He cites a number of issues the network would like to explore: bringing college instructors in to work with teachers, technology training for teachers and the transition from 8th grade to high school, possibly "blurring the lines within the Orr Network between high school and elementary schools."

"Learning zones could allow schools to look at all these things as a whole package of initiatives, to look systemically at whole-school change," Mazurek says.

Learning zones, initially proposed by Gov. Jim Edgar, will give local schools more economic power, too, says Mindy Sick, an education aide to the governor. "Learning zones require a community approach where schools begin to work together to combine purchasing power and obtain better services."

But Chicago Board of Education officials are worried about learning zones becoming a financial drain on the school system. The law provides for a nine-member commission (see page 28) and gives the commission the authority to hire staff, but it doesn't say where the money will come from.

See **OPTIONS** page 30



Clipboards in hand, students from Albany Park Multicultural Academy observe the whales at Shedd Aquarium. Principal Mary Lee Lasher says she bought clipboards so students would know that field trips are work, not play.

# The rules for breaking rules

## Learning Zones

### What is a learning zone?

It's a cluster of Chicago schools—a high school and its feeder elementary schools or “other reasonably related clusters”—that is to serve as a model for systemwide change while operating with greater flexibility.

### What are the advantages of being in a learning zone?

Schools can operate free from state laws and regulations and board rules and policies, as outlined in an approved plan. They also will get lump-sum budgets, meaning they will have greater freedom to decide how to spend money. The law requires the lump sum to include all monies to which the schools otherwise would have been entitled, including bilingual and special education funds.

### How does a cluster obtain learning-zone status?

It must apply to a nine-member Learning Zone Commission and win approval from a majority of members. Members will include the governor (or designee), the state superintendent of education, the president of the Chicago Board of Education, the mayor of Chicago (or designee) and five members appointed by the governor with the consent of the Senate.

### What will the commission look for in applications?

The extent to which student learning will be the “paramount priority and outcome.” High achievement standards for all students and staff. Shared decision making. Creative restructuring to create student-centered learning environments. Parent and community involvement. Ability to function on a “localized, decentralized basis” within the school system. Appropriateness of the budget. Impact of laws, regulations and policies for which waivers are sought.

### What regulations and policies cannot be waived?

Collective bargaining agreements, except that current provisions for seeking union contract waivers still apply. Student and staff civil rights. Health and safety. School performance and financial audits. Local school council provisions. The Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act. The Illinois Goals Assessment Program, including its IGAP tests. Chicago Learning Outcomes.

### How many learning zones will there be?

The law doesn't say, but it anticipates that, altogether, learning zones will include about 10 percent of the system's enrollment, or about 41,000. Also, altogether, zones are to “reflect the racial and ethnic diversity and demography” of schools citywide.

### Will schools have a choice about joining a learning zone?

Yes. Applications must show evidence that, at each school, the principal and a majority of the local school council and staff support the plan.

### What's the time period?

Learning-zone status will be granted for three to six years and may be renewed. The zones are to be fully operational by the 1996-97 school year. The Learning Zone Commission may revoke zone status from schools that are mismanaged, fail to meet standards or fail to make reasonable progress toward their goals.

## Waivers

### What laws or rules can be waived?

Mandates of the Illinois School Code or administrative rules and regulations of the Illinois State Board of Education.

### What about bilingual education?

Sen. Frank Watson, a sponsor of the legislation, says bilingual education waivers are possible but not probable. In Chicago, Supt. Argie Johnson has issued a statement in support of bilingual education, noting it generates earmarked state funds.

### Who may seek a waiver?

Any school board in the state.

### Who grants waivers?

The Illinois State Board of Education. However, if the state board rejects a request, the school district may appeal to the General Assembly, which may overrule the state board.

### What if an individual school wants a waiver?

It would have to persuade its board of education to include the request in the waiver application.

### What are the criteria?

The board must show that it can address the intent of the rule or mandate in a “more effective, efficient or economical manner” or that a waiver will “stimulate innovation or improve student performance.” Applications must include evidence of greater efficiency, such as a budget analysis.

### On what grounds can a waiver application be denied?

If it is not based on sound educational practices, endangers the health or safety of students or staff, compromises equal opportunities for learning or fails to make a persuasive case for greater efficiency or improved student performance.

### What steps does a school board have to follow?

The board must hold a public hearing for educators, parents and students directly involved in the proposed waiver. A notice of the hearing must be published at least seven days in advance in a newspaper of general circulation within the school district.

### What's the time frame?

Waiver requests must be submitted to the state board within 15 days of their approval by a local board. If the state board fails to act in 45 days, the waiver shall be deemed granted. However, the General Assembly then gets a chance to override the state board. By May 1 and Oct. 1 of each year, the state board must report what waivers have been granted and denied. The General Assembly has 30 days from the beginning of its next session to reverse the state board if it wants to. Waivers are for up to five years. *M.K.*



# Legislators finally talking about Chicago's budget crisis

by Michael Hawthorne

**T**wo years ago, state lawmakers resorted to borrowing schemes to keep the Chicago public schools open and get Gov. Jim Edgar and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley through their re-election campaigns.

Virtually everyone involved—the governor, lawmakers, schools officials and teachers—now agrees that was a politically expedient but fiscally foolish solution. However, with a \$150 million deficit threatening the opening of schools this September, lawmakers say some form of short-term borrowing may be necessary again.

Moreover, an option still seriously being considered would shift so-called state Chapter 1 funds to close the funding gap. This year, Chicago will get \$261 million in Chapter 1 funds, which are provided to local school councils based on the number of low-income students in each school.

As *CATALYST* went to press, lawmakers were still poring over numbers behind the School Board's revised deficit. "This gives us something more palatable we can deal with," says Al Grosboll, a top Edgar aide dispatched to help solve the funding crisis. "But there has to be more belt-tightening. The state isn't going to bail them out."

Grosboll, whom Edgar assigned to oversee relief efforts following the 1993 Mississippi River Flood, says the Board of Education should do more to cut expenses. He noted the board's revised shortfall actually includes \$28 million in new expenditures, mostly for a computer system.

School officials say \$140 million in one-time savings and revenue enabled them to slash a projected deficit of \$290 million. The bulk of the savings, \$93 million, came largely from teacher salaries; a wave of early retirements left thousands of teaching positions open, many of which have been filled by lower-paid newcomers or substitutes.

The board also reaped \$16 million more in property taxes than expected.

The School Finance Authority warns, however, that the board's projected deficit will soar to \$307 million for 1996-97. Under state law, the board must say now how it hopes to fill that hole. Further, none of these figures provides for raises, which would cost \$12 million for every percentage point. Salaries have been frozen for two years.

Lawmakers, meanwhile, agree with local school reformers that Chapter 1 funds are the state's only direct financial contribution to Chicago school reform. They're wary of any "quick fix" that gives the money to the Board of Education.

"We need to resist the tendency down here to seek a quick and easy solution that only pushes off the problem," says Rep. Mary Lou Cowlshaw, a Naperville Republican who chairs the House Education Committee. "I'm confident there are enough other options without resorting to stealing Chapter 1 funds."

Says Jackie Gallagher, spokesperson for the Chicago Teachers Union: "Taking Chapter 1 would cut off school reform at the knees."

But Republican lawmakers say a new rescue plan will come with a price. Both chambers are considering bills to break the district into 10 smaller ones, abolish and restructure the Board of Education and sell surplus property worth millions of dollars. Also under consideration are plans to turn cafeterias and janitorial services over to private firms, a move some lawmakers estimate could save up to \$80 million.

Senate President James "Pate" Philip (R-Wood Dale) wants to go even further. He has introduced legislation that would ban the Chicago Teachers Union from striking, eliminate tenure and force teachers to undergo basic skills testing.

Chicago teachers, Philip says, should be treated like firefighters and police officers. "By them [teachers] going on strike, it tends to force us to do something we regret later," says Philip.

Edgar and House Speaker Lee Daniels (R-Elmhurst) doubt Philip's bill will go very far.

"I voted for collective bargaining when I was in the Legislature," Edgar notes. "I understand what Sen. Philip is trying to do, but I don't think we should be taking that privilege away." ■

## 'No doubt' about charter schools

**T**he Republican-controlled General Assembly passed most of its so-called "fast track" legislation well within a self-imposed 60-day deadline, with one notable exception: charter schools.

Unlike other GOP bills on the priority list, the House and Senate passed different versions of the legislation creating 45 charter schools across Illinois (including 15 in Chicago). Senators delayed sending a House-approved version to Gov. Jim Edgar, but legislators from both chambers said that doesn't mean they've soured on the concept.

"We just wanted to take a look at the House bill," explains Sen. Dan Cronin (R-Elmhurst), who chairs the Senate Education Committee. "Charter schools will be enacted in this ses-

sion. There's no doubt about that."

The delay may have been ego-driven. Most of the GOP school reforms sent to Edgar have come from the Senate, but the preferred charter bill originated in the House. While both chambers are controlled by Republicans, there is a certain pride of authorship among lawmakers.

The Illinois Education Association, the state's largest teachers union, signed off on the House version after sponsors agreed to include provisions protecting charter-school teachers. Most importantly, teachers would be given a five-year leave of absence from their regular school. They also could return to a "comparable" position in their former school district.

Michael Hawthorne

# Comings and . . . . . goings

**AT PERSHING ROAD** John Easton, interim director of Research, Evaluation and Planning has been named director. . . . **Lucila Ramirez** is a new staff writer in the Department of Communications. . . . **Robert Stevens**, teacher at Lenart Regional Gifted Center, has been named administrator, Department of Special Education and Pupil Support Services. . . . **Joan Agnew** and **Donna Leak** are new assistant attorneys. . . . Assistant attorney **Margaret C. Fitzpatrick** has resigned.

**PRINCIPALS** The following acting principals have received contracts expiring June 1998: **Sandy Anast**, Clark Middle; **Mary Cavey**, Spry Community; and **Florencia Valignota**, Cameron Elementary. . . . **Clifton Burgess**, principal of Newberry Math/Science has resigned.

**CONTRACTS RENEWED** The following principals have received new four-year contracts: **Thomas Avery**, Carnegie; **Alan Berger**, McKay; **Charlotte Blackman**, Chalmers; **Frank Blair Jr.**, Brenan; **Lee Brown**, Shoop; **Nancy Carter**, Pirie; **Camille Chase**, McPherson; **James Cosme**, Otis; **Rosemary Culverwell**, Reilly; **Hellen DeBerry**, Earhart; **Gerald Dugan Jr.**, Marsh; **Patrick Durkin**, Goudy/Jose Marti; **Anthony Forst Jr.**, Gunsaulus Scholastic; **John Frantz**, Sutherland; **John Garvey**, Foreman High; **Elizabeth Gearon**, Greene; **Ida Givens-Simmons**, Deneen; **Robert Guercio**, Bell; **Hulon Johnson**, Bradwell.

**MORE RENEWALS** **Terri Katsulis**; **Holden**; **Andrea Kerr**, Mollison; **Richard Kerr**; **Nash**;

**Constatine Kiamos**, Steinmetz Academic; **Harold Kiehm**, Von Steuben MSC; **Margaret Lalley**, Dawes; **Kevin McCann**, Jamieson; **Frederick McNeal Jr.**, Mayo; **Mary Ellen Mongoven**, Peabody; **Jim Murray**, Joplin;



Aiko Boyce



Phyllis O'Connell



Michael Sailes



Rosa Sailes

**Noreen Nagle**, Prosser Vocational; **Margaret Niedermaier**, Chappell; **James Pawleski**, Falconer; **Paul Ramirez**, Stevenson; **Linda Randolph**, Carver Primary/Wheatley CPC; **Constance Roberts**, Rogers; **Erasma Rodriguez**, Gallistel Language; **Edward Ruyack**, Coonley; **Betty Smith**, Douglass Middle; **Clement Smith**, Collins High; **Alvin Solomon**, Budlong; **Hattie Spires**, Ellington; **Albert Sterling**, Stagg; **Hazel**

**Steward**, Tilden High; **Larry Thomas**, Coles; **Victor Tocwish**, Bright; **Virginia Vaske**, Murray Language; **Sharon Wilcher**, Ward; **Denise Winter**, Stone Academy; **Harold Zimmerman**, Murphy; **Christ Kalamatas**, Von Humboldt, contract expires February 1999; **Beverly Hides**, Goethe, contract expires June 1995.

**GOLDEN APPLES** Four Chicago public school teachers are among 10 winners of the 1995 Golden Apple Teaching Award. They are: **Aiko Boyce**, an art and journalism teacher at Taft High; **Phyllis O'Connell**, who teaches cognitively disabled students at Southside Occupational Academy; and a husband and wife who both teach at Carver High, **Michael Sailes**, computer and accounting teacher, and **Rosa Sailes**, English. **Mark Larson**, an English teacher at Evanston Township High and son of **CATALYST** publisher emeritus **Roy Larson**, also won a Golden Apple this year.

**TEACHER WEEK** The week of April 24, the Teachers Task Force of the CityWide Coalition for School Reform will host special events for teachers, including visits to schools and a discussion with Supt. **Argie Johnson**. For more information, call (312) 341-3610.

**RETHINKING SCHOOLS** Editors of the urban educational journal *Rethinking Schools* will discuss "Teachers and Parents: Reorganizing our Schools" at noon April 1 at 57th Street Books, 1301 E. 57th. For more information, call (312) 684-1300.

Lynnette Richardson

## OPTIONS

continued from page 27

"It creates one more layer of bureaucracy and one more unfunded mandate at a time when the governor and Legislature say they are trying to free us up from bureaucracy and state mandates," says board lobbyist Richard Guidice. "Look at the School Finance Authority," he adds. "It started out at \$350,000, and now is around \$2 million, coming right out of our operating budget."

"Learning zones are a way of avoiding the real problem, which is inadequate funding for schools," Guidice maintains.

While learning zones are an Illinois invention, waiver laws can be found in other states. However, "hardly anybody uses them," reports Kathy Christie, who runs the information clearinghouse for

the Education Commission of the States.

A recent commission report surmises that "few schools are sufficiently far along in the change process to have run into policy barriers." Many schools are simply satisfied with what they are doing, according to state, district and school officials interviewed for the report. Schools also hesitate making changes on the basis of a waiver that is good for only several years, the officials said.

Christie adds that schools pursuing innovation often find that state mandates aren't an obstacle. Sometimes, union contracts are a problem, she says, but schools can't get waivers from them.

The Chicago Teachers Union does grant waivers, requiring first that 63.5 percent of CTU members at a school approve; waivers last only a year but may be renewed. (Beginning in September, only 51 percent of a school's union members will have to

approve—a percentage the Legislature forced on the CTU when it approved more borrowing to keep Chicago schools open in 1993.)

Last year, the CTU granted about 60 waivers, nearly all dealing with use of time, reports CTU spokesperson Jackie Gallagher. For example, teachers at some schools "bank" a little preparation time each day so that they can hold longer staff development sessions on a monthly or semimonthly basis. Other faculties have approved year-round scheduling or double shifts.

At schools where the relationship between the principal and staff are strong, teachers sometimes don't bother with the waiver process. As the principal of a substantially restructured elementary school put it: "We do what we have to do to improve our school and wait for someone to file a grievance." So far, no one has. ■

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# Bright Ideas

## Pen pal program aims at better race relations

Katherine Geddes and Andrea Cervantes are 2nd-graders at schools that are only a few miles, yet in some ways worlds, apart. Katherine attends Herzl Elementary in North Lawndale, a neighborhood that is mostly African-American, and Andrea attends Spry Elementary in Little Village, a neighborhood that is mostly Hispanic.

Since September, the two girls, along with some 400 other 2nd- and 3rd-graders at the two schools, have been writing letters to each other on a monthly basis. Recently, the two met for the first time when Herzl hosted a Black History Month assembly and pizza party for the Spry pen pals.

By arranging such experiences, the two elementary schools hope to help prevent the racial and cultural clashes that repeatedly have erupted at their neighborhood high school, Farragut.

"It was in the news every day," Herzl Principal Betty Green says of the Farragut disturbances. "We felt it was probably because they didn't know each other. So, we wanted to give them a chance to meet."

In 1993, Green and Carlos Azcoitia, then principal of Spry, decided a pen pal



Herzl student Katherine Geddes (right) shares a confidence over pizza and soda with penpal Andrea Cervantes of Spry Elementary.

program could help bridge cultural gaps while improving students' communication skills. After exchanging letters, the children would meet face-to-face at a special event.

Days before this year's event, a few Herzl 2nd- and 3rd-graders are gathered in Green's office.

"I can't wait to meet my pen pal," says Katherine Geddes. "The first thing I want to ask her is, What are her favorite persons in history? I got four: Malcolm X,

Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks and Jacqueline Vaughn."

"I remember my pen pal from last year—her name is Lisa," says Serita Jenkins, a 3rd-grader. "She said I was the best pen pal she ever had. She told me, 'Don't ever forget me because I love you.'" Serita, pauses, smiling as she recalls the moment. "I think that was the most wonderful thing I ever heard in my life."

"I'm going to tell my pen pal when I meet her that I hope our friendship will

not end," Katherine adds. "That we have hope that our hearts will never be broken and we'll stay together forever." Geddes' best friend, Ashley Agnew, agrees. "I hope we'll be friends forever, and maybe she can teach me some Spanish, too."

After the assembly, when Katherine and Andrea Cervantes meet, the conversation is more restrained, touching on favorite colors and TV shows. After a long silence, Katherine shows the more reticent Andrea her African-American Barbie doll, pointing out that the doll is wearing traditional African clothes. Andrea shows some interest while she eats her pizza.

After lunch, however, when all of the pen pals gather in Herzl's new indoor play room, they immediately start screaming, running and laughing as though they always have been friends.

Says Mary Cavey, Spry's new principal, "I hope that these seeds that have been planted will grow so that when they do go on to Farragut, they will be friends."

For more information about the pen pal program, contact Herzl Principal Betty Green at 534-1480 or Spry Principal Mary Cavey at 534-1700.

Felicia Morton

# Catalyst

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