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VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

206

New CPS instructional teams take to the field

Principals rate
year 1 efforts in
a *CATALYST* survey



Finally focus shifts to principals

In more than 13 years of reporting on school change in Chicago, *CATALYST* repeatedly has been drawn into writing about school principals. Regardless of the topic, we have found that programs and policies make headway in schools only if they have good local leadership. So we cannot help but applaud the Chicago Public Schools' new focus on instructional leadership, as tentative as it is.

Chicago is following in the footsteps of New York's widely heralded Community School District 2, which has inspired urban districts around the country to act on the belief that whole groups of low-achieving schools can be turned around.

A year ago, Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins rolled out a districtwide reorganization plan that, in the mold of District 2, provided support and training for principals to become leaders of instruction. Schools were grouped into 24 smaller subdistricts, each headed by an "area instructional officer" who would visit classrooms with teams of specialists and then offer advice and specialized assistance to principals and teachers. This practice is called a walkthrough.

A *CATALYST* survey of 300 principals found that walkthroughs generally have been well received. However, a Harvard University professor who has studied District 2 cautions that walkthroughs can be deceptive.

"Walkthroughs are incredibly easy," says Richard Elmore. "But if you don't rebuild the [school] culture, ... it isn't going to have an impact." To have impact, he says, teachers must be open to and provided with help in the subjects they teach.

The second step in the CPS plan to cultivating instructional leadership moves in that direction. Beginning this year, instruction teams will work with principals to use student work and test scores to pinpoint areas for improvement. Concurrently, a new Office of Principal Preparation and Development will come on line to ensure that programs for aspiring principals are in sync with the system's needs, which include hiring 50 new principals a year.

Meanwhile, the University of Illinois at Chicago has asked state education officials to consider a proposal to create a new doctorate level principal training program that emphasizes field study over traditional coursework, and aims to produce 20 graduates a year who have "demonstrated knowledge and skills to improve the per-

formance of low-achieving urban schools."

"It's terrific that a university is looking at gearing its program toward CPS and toward practice," says Jonathan Schnur, co-founder of New Leaders for New Schools, an alternative principal certification program. San Diego's school district already has a similar partnership with a local university, and Boston is looking to launch one this year with Harvard and Boston universities, Schnur notes.

Back in New York, business and foundation leaders are pooling their resources to underwrite a \$30 million Leadership Academy that will train 90 aspiring principals each year. A key administrator from District 2—which as of this spring succumbed to another district reorganization—has been charged with developing and overseeing curriculum.

As a well-informed outsider, Schnur offers some solid recommendations for improving the performance of Chicago's principal corps:

- Set clear, substantive selection criteria for principal candidates. "A problem in the past was allowing anyone who wanted to be a principal to become one," Schnur says.
- Training must give aspiring principals practice and feedback. Job shadowing is not enough; everyone learns by doing.
- Establish standards for what principals ought to know and be able to do and use those standards in developing coursework and residency programs. "Sometimes universities have offered a buffet of courses that weren't really tied to what it takes to become an outstanding principal," Schnur explains.

Eventually, of course, the move to create instructional leaders will have to include the thorny issue of hiring and firing, which continues to be the elephant in the middle of the room for school reform. Nobody wants to talk about it publicly.

ABOUT US This month, *CATALYST* welcomes two new members to our editorial board: Victor Harbison, a social studies teacher at Chicago Vocational High School, and Carol D. Lee, a co-founder of Betty Shabazz Charter School and an education professor at Northwestern University. As we celebrate the arrival of the newcomers, we bid farewell and say thanks to John Ayers and Jane Moy, who served four years apiece, and to Jody Becker and Rosa Martinez, who are stepping down to fulfill other obligations. They provided valuable insights that helped guide our reporting.



Veronica Anderson

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VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

VOLUME XV NUMBER 1
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CPS INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS

- 4 CPS formula for change**
New instructional teams aim to improve teaching.
- 8 Principals rate efforts of AIO teams**
A *CATALYST* survey finds walkthroughs worthwhile, training mixed.
- 10 Take a walk on a walkthrough**
How it worked at one Albany Park elementary school.
- 12 New York's District 2 paved the way**
Other urban districts follow suit.



- 16 Portraits**
Peer jury program gives Luis Gonzalez a new sense of purpose
- 18 Updates**
Sneak peek at high school offers some freshmen a leg up ... Transfers barely a blip on school's radar ... Reading initiative makes strides in high schools ... New reading effort targets pre-school, primary grades
- 14 Grants**
- 24 Comings & goings**

Cover illustration by Tom Herzberg



2002, 1997 International Reading Association
2001, 1998 Sigma Delta Chi for public service
2001, 2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Public Service
2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Online Reporting
2001 Peter Lisagor Award, Editorials
1998 Chicago Association of Black Journalists

1998, 1993 Peter Lisagor Award, Best Newsletter
1999, 1995 Peter Lisagor Award, Reporting
1996 Education Writers Association
1997, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993 Distinguished
Achievement Award; 1994, Best Newsletter,
Educational Press Association of America

CPS formula for change

CPS organizes schools into 24 areas and hires instructional teams to support—and pressure—principals to raise the quality of teaching. A *CATALYST* survey finds school leaders are responding favorably, but some wonder how much difference it will make.

by Elizabeth Duffrin

Last spring, while Deloris Jackson was leading a phonics drill for her 1st-graders, the door to her classroom at Altgeld Elementary quietly opened. In slipped the principal, the assistant principal and four strangers holding clipboards. Uneasy, Jackson went back to work, pointing to the “ou” and “ow” sounds on the chalkboard while the visitors watched, whispered questions to students and inspected bulletin boards for the next 10 minutes. Then, as quickly as they came, they left.

Jackson had experienced her first “walkthrough,” the centerpiece of a districtwide initiative launched a year ago to encourage schools to use a team approach to improve teaching. The idea is to break down barriers that isolate teachers and principals from peers and each other, and make use of the best teaching strategies systemwide.

To accomplish this, Chicago Public Schools set its sights on providing more support for principals, specifically training and mentoring them to become instructional leaders for their schools. It hired 24 “area instructional officers” to replace six region officers, who previously had supervised principals, and

charged the AIOs with leading school walkthroughs, running monthly professional development workshops and supervising specialists who provide direct support to schools.

But the new AIOs have gotten off to an uneven start. On the plus side, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is increased communication among educators—the first step toward improving instruction, according to research—and changes in classroom practice prompted by walkthroughs.

A *CATALYST* survey of more than 300 schools found the district’s new instructional teams so far have won widespread support among principals, who say 4 to 1 that walkthroughs are worthwhile. (See related story, p. 8.)

At Altgeld, for instance, teachers began sharing teaching strategies and became more diligent in following the district’s reading framework after a walkthrough. “We have a wealth of information from the walkthroughs,” says Principal Vera Williams-Willis. “And I’m not just saying that.”

However, some principals say AIOs demoralized their staff during school walkthroughs or never visited the school at all. Others question whether AIOs’ efforts will create systemic change or superficial compliance. Teachers at one

elementary school adopted “word walls” (posting new vocabulary related to a lesson) at the suggestion of an AIO. “They have an increase in their word walls,” reports the principal. “Not that it’s making any difference.”

Also widely questioned is the cost, particularly in light of this spring’s disappointing test results. (District reading and math scores declined across the board on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, although state scores were up at some grade levels.) CPS says the additional \$3.7 million being spent on administrative salaries was offset by staff cuts at central office, but that doesn’t include the cost of hiring additional instruction support staff who work with area offices. (See chart, p. 6.)

Inspiration from New York

Chicago’s instructional initiative was inspired by similar ones that made a difference in San Diego and Boston and New York’s District 2, a pioneer in using walkthroughs to improve teaching.

Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins began considering adopting the practice here soon after she was promoted to the district’s top education post two years ago. After reviewing

research on District 2, she contacted Anthony Alvarado, the former District 2 superintendent, who by then had imported his ideas to the San Diego Unified School District as chancellor of instruction.

In January 2002, Eason-Watkins traveled to San Diego and shadowed a district administrator on a walkthrough. She was impressed by how fast administrators could assess the delivery of instruction across classrooms and pinpoint where teachers needed extra support. "I thought it was a very useful and powerful tool."

To lead walkthroughs at 600 schools, Eason-Watkins knew she would need more than six region officers. In the end, the district settled on 24 area instructional officers—18 for elementary schools and six for high schools.

Adjusting the size of CPS subdistricts was nothing new—the number had ranged from 27 in the 1970s to 11 in the early 1990s to six. This time, however, the top administrator would focus almost exclusively on instruction, Eason-Watkins says. AIOs would be backed by one or two deputies, called management support directors, who would handle day-to-day operations issues. She split elementary and high schools into separate instructional areas to better target the academic concerns of each.

Eason-Watkins and Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan scoured the ranks of well-regarded principals to hire the first crop of AIOs last summer. Some former principals also were recruited from central and region offices. During that summer, the new hires attended training workshops on topics ranging from conducting walkthroughs to analyzing school data to organizational change.

Impressions of year 1

After a year in the field, AIOs are generally getting positive reviews from principals. Most of them report that their AIOs have inspired schools to cross-pollinate ideas and focus more sharply on instruction. "I'm working better with the teachers as a team," says Carl Woodruff, principal of Harvard Elementary. "Before it was not a team effort; each teacher had his or her own ideas."

Sharper focus on instruction has been achieved largely via walkthroughs, which AIOs use to provide principals with a snapshot of their schools' aca-

demie strengths and weaknesses. AIOs typically suggest what observers should look for during walkthroughs—student engagement or evidence of higher-order thinking, for instance—but often, they allow the principal to decide.

Walkthroughs have also opened the lines of communication between classrooms and between schools. English teacher Deanna O'Brien says that in her seven years at Byrne Elementary in Garfield Ridge, she had never visited another classroom in her school or elsewhere. When she participated in a walkthrough last year, she saw classrooms where teachers had replaced textbook assignments with small group activities and was amazed by how absorbed students were in their work. "I thought, 'Wow, I'd like to do more of that.'"

In Area 11, AIO Rebeca de los Reyes took walkthroughs a step farther, organizing teams of teachers and principals to visit other schools. After visiting Pasteur, Principal Ruby Coats of Hurley says she was impressed by the level of teacher collaboration and parent involvement.

Ultimately, the goal is for principals to regularly conduct walkthroughs in their own schools. At the district's request, a division of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association has trained more than 200 principals over the last year to use the technique.

Besides walkthroughs, AIOs convene principal meetings once a month. The meetings are not new, but the smaller size—anywhere from 12 to 43 principals—is more conducive to discussing school issues.

Often, the lines of communication remain open after monthly meetings have ended. A novice principal in Area 6 calls on her colleagues for advice. A group of Area 7 principals decided to form a monthly support group. Still another group in Area 2 decided to open magnet programs for all students within their collective attendance boundaries. "If we hadn't been in a smaller group working together all year, I'm not sure it would have happened," says Principal Karen Carlson of Boone Elementary in West Rogers Park.

Increased access to support staff was another plus cited by principals. One elementary school principal says the former region officer had never set foot in her school, and in six years, region support staffers had visited only twice.

By contrast, the AIO has visited at least four times in the last year, and spe-

Rollie Jones

Area 8 Instructional Officer
26 West Side elementary schools



CHRISTINE OLIVA

Previous positions: executive assistant to the chief accountability officer, principal of Kellman Elementary.

Things schools need to do:

- Improve teacher recruitment and retention. Teacher shortages are particularly acute in the high poverty area where her schools are based, she notes.
- Create a culture of high expectations for students. "We cannot use excuses about the socio-economic surroundings."
- Continue to train teachers in the Chicago Reading Initiative so they know how to teach all components of the district's framework: comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and writing.

Things principals need to do:

- Get into classrooms more often to observe instruction. "[That's] the only way you're going to know what's going on."
- Create leadership teams comprised of teachers, school support staff, and LSC members whose input can lead to better decisions.
- Tap into community resources. For instance, some schools in her area found groups that provided health clinics, food pantries or tutoring at no cost to the school.

What's next:

To retain more new teachers, Jones' area is piloting a mentoring program developed in cooperation with the Steans Family Foundation and the University of Illinois at Chicago in eight schools. Another new program will train new teachers to effectively handle student discipline problems.

Audrey Cooper-Stanton

Area 17 Instructional Officer
34 South Side elementary schools



CHRISTINE OLIVA

Previous positions: Region 3 administrator, principal of Hughes Elementary

Her approach to walkthroughs:

Cooper-Stanton allows principals to select what the walkthrough team should look for, based on the school's priorities, such as tailoring instruction to a variety of learning levels. Where schools fall short, walkthrough teams offer support—"What can my office do to help you? What kind of professional development can we suggest?"—rather than criticism, she says.

Things schools need to do:

- Make sure professional development is aimed at the school's greatest needs.
- Adjust instruction to meet a variety of learning levels in the same class.
- Enrich classrooms with libraries, technology and visual aides on the walls that reinforce the curriculum, not just "commercial things" to decorate the room.

Things principals need to do:

- Analyze standardized test data and classroom assessments to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in both students and teachers. "That should help drive the instruction and the professional development."
- Create leadership teams to lead school improvement. Include administrators, reading specialists, classroom teachers, parents and LSC members.

cialists in reading and technology have worked on-site with teachers five times or more. A special education coach stops by every month. "There's a difference between assistance and support," the principal says.

Some AIOs misstep

However, not all principals are satisfied with the performance or frequency of contact with their AIOs.

In the *CATALYST* survey, principals in Areas 1 and 2, which have the most schools, report having less frequent contact with area instructional staff than their peers elsewhere in the district, and were more than twice as likely to dislike the area structure, according to *CATALYST*'s survey. With 38 schools to cover, Area 2 AIO Jeannie Gallo explains that she must concentrate on the neediest schools. "The ones that are achieving might get a little less attention, which isn't fair," she says. "What can you do?"

(Schools with the highest poverty rates, many on the South and West sides, were organized into the smallest areas. Eason-Watkins says principals at better-off schools in Areas 1 and 2 resisted being broken into smaller groupings "because they were already working together.")

Some principals cited brusque or ineffective management styles among some AIOs as another cause for distress. One recounted that an AIO told principals that low-performing schools would not get positive feedback after a walkthrough. "If your school is not on level, then we have to ask the hard questions," the principal recalls her saying.

Eason-Watkins says pointed criticism may be necessary to create a sense of urgency for schools that need it. But Dave Peterson of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association cautions that criticism is often counterproductive. To avoid a defensive response, AIOs should focus on suggesting improvements, Peterson says. "If a school is on probation, you don't need to beat them over the head," he argues.

Several teachers complained to their union that AIOs had disrupted lessons with questions or criticism. One AIO interrupted a reading lesson and insisted that a child reread a passage more slowly, reports one teacher. In another case, a high school teacher who was observed for five minutes was told by an AIO, "The next time I'm here I better not see you standing in front of the class lecturing."

"There was no meeting with the teacher beforehand [to find out] whether group work would follow," recalls Deborah Lynch, president of the Chicago Teachers Union.

Lynch says she and other union representatives brought such complaints to Eason-Watkins, who says she spoke to the AIOs involved. One AIO who provoked the most serious complaints departed mid-year on medical leave. By the end of the school year, most AIO problems had been resolved, according to union officials.

Lynch believes some confusion could have been avoided had the district included teachers in the process from the outset. Walkthroughs were well received by teachers in New York's District 2, where the union had input, but were problematic in San Diego, where

How much do AIO's cost?

When CPS split six regions into 24 areas, it quadrupled the number of top administrators—and raised their salaries 11 percent to boot.

District officials say the initiative is "revenue neutral" because it cut or plans to close 62 central and region office positions to offset the additional costs. (Among them, 30 from the Office of Schools and Regions and 11 Drug Free program coordinators.) However, those calculations do not factor in the salaries and benefits paid to reading coaches, technology specialists and other support staff who work directly with schools.*

Area offices employ twice as many administrators and office support staff than did the regions, costing an additional \$4.5 million.

Area Instructional Officer

Management Support Director
Business Managers
Office Support

Total:

*For now, funds to pay expanded support

SOURCE: CPS Department of Management

the union was shut out, she notes.

In January, Eason-Watkins agreed to meet with the union and a union officer from New York. "We wanted to prevent a situation here in Chicago where [walkthroughs] were causing too many problems for our members," Lynch says.

At a follow-up meeting in March, central office staff explained the walkthrough process to union staff. Finding that team members were selected at the discretion of AIOs and principals, the CTU asked the district to include a union representative on every team. Also, AIOs were asked to reassure teachers at their schools that walkthroughs were not intended to evaluate their teaching.

The new practice did not get underway until late winter and, even then, generally involved only a handful of classrooms at each school.

Many teachers contacted by *CATALYST* had not yet experienced a walkthrough. Among those who had been observed, they found walkthrough teams polite and professional, but, in some cases, unnerving. "It was a bit intimidating initially," says Deloris Jackson at Altgeld. "I wasn't sure if they were looking at me or looking at the kids."

Creating lasting change

Some principals and teachers found the walkthrough feedback superficial, however. Walkthrough teams tended to focus on general questions, such as whether students could name the purpose of the lesson, whether teachers provided small-group activities, and whether classrooms had vocabulary and lesson objectives

posted. "They're only looking at the structure of the room," one principal contends. "They are not looking at whether the children actually understand what is going on."

Many also questioned how much insight a walkthrough team could provide following a five- or 10-minute visit. "Getting a snapshot can be a good thing, but only if it's complemented by a longer observation," says Meg Arbeiter, who recently taught English at Hirsch High. More frequent visits could determine whether the curriculum goes anywhere or the teacher is teaching a random book, she adds.

Victoria Bill, a professional developer for mathematics with the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, says Chicago's general questions about instruction and classroom environment are fine for a start, however, the observations need to go deeper.

The Institute is now helping 10 large urban school districts, including New York, Los Angeles and Denver, learn how to conduct "learning walks" similar to Chicago's walkthroughs. Learning walks help schools assess the impact of what teachers learned in their professional development. In a middle school math classroom, says Bill, a learning-walk team might investigate whether students are able to explain why two solutions to the same math problem are the same, or whether they understand the relationship between the same information presented in a chart and in a table.

To ask relevant questions, principals and sub-district supervisors must become familiar with the same teaching strategies

See AIO page 9

Richard Gazda

Area 20 Instructional Officer
12 North Side high schools



PHOTO: CHRISTINE OLIVA

Previous position: principal of Von Steuben High

His approach to walkthroughs:

After hearing that teachers in other areas were complaining about walkthroughs, Gazda adopted a softer approach. During the first year, his team only visited the classrooms of teachers who volunteered, and observers noted what teachers were doing right. He hopes that creating a good buzz initially will lead to more teacher buy-in.

His goal:

Since CPS only provided high school AIOs with two days of walkthrough training, Gazda went in search of his own. He heard about successful use of walkthroughs at Feinstein High in Providence, R.I., and CPS paid for him to go there and see for himself. Teachers in each department at Feinstein organized their own professional development based on walkthrough findings. "I'd like to see that happen here, too," he says. "I'd like to see the principal share their leadership with all the teachers in the building. That can only improve instruction."

What's next:

Every high school principal in Area 20 must lead a monthly walkthrough with a team of teachers at their school. Gazda plans to join them periodically.

Areas vs. Regions

Total FY04		Total FY02	
Positions	Salary/Benefits	Positions	Salary/Benefits
24	\$ 3.4 million (\$142,766 each)	Region Education Officers	6 \$775,000 (\$129,167 each)
24	\$ 2.5 million	Administrators	15 \$1.5 million
6	\$611,000	Business Managers	6 \$580,000
30	\$1.6 million	Office Support	15 \$777,000
84	\$8.2 million	Total:	42 \$3.7 million

staff come other departments. For instance, reading coaches are paid out of the Chicago Reading Initiative budget.

Principals rate efforts of AIO teams

Improving teaching starts with the principal. That's the idea behind an ambitious initiative the School Board launched a year ago in August to help principals become better instructional leaders.

To support the initiative, the board reorganized the district into "area instructional offices" that were small enough to influence schools' instructional programs. By contrast, the old region offices handled day-to-day management, such as busing, building operations or emer-

gencies, for 100 or more schools, leaving little or no time for schools' academic issues.

The new areas are led by area instructional officers (AIOs), who train principals at monthly meetings, coach them individually, and conduct "walkthroughs" of classrooms to provide feedback on instruction.

So, what do principals think of the new structure? Do they believe it will help them change teaching? *CATALYST* surveyed more than 300 CPS principals to find out.

Area structure works better

Principals most often cited smaller size and the focus on instruction as reasons why they preferred the new area structure. "[Principals] meetings have focused on teaching and learning. The walkthroughs are focused on teaching and learning and it helps the principal to keep an eye on the No. 1 issue."

A sizable minority said a better investment of district funds would be professional development, reading specialists, and classroom teachers. "There's no amount of [new] administration that can help a classroom with 40 kids," one principal complained.

The new area offices will help improve instruction at my school more than the former region offices.

Agree	81%
Disagree	19%

AIOs and their support staff are worth the investment of School Board funds.

Agree	78%
Disagree	22%

Walkthroughs worthwhile

Most principals agreed that the walkthrough team provided new insights, and some who disagreed said the feedback was on target. "It confirmed what the [school] management team knew," says Principal Julio Rivera of Hammond. "It wasn't, 'These people don't know what they're talking about.'"

Principals who said the walkthroughs would significantly improve instruction often praised their AIOs for understanding how to critique without demoralizing school staff. Principal Gary Moriello of Gladstone recalls members of the area 9 instructional team tempered their comments with the phrase, I wonder. For instance, "I wonder if cooperative learning is taking place" and "I won-

Walkthroughs give me additional information on the strengths and weaknesses of our instructional program.

Agree	80%
Disagree	20%

der why a 5th-grade classroom had 18-year-old encyclopedias."

Those who thought the walkthroughs would have only a modest impact saw the process as one piece of a much larger puzzle. "You have to have vision, you have to have everyone on the same page, you have to have follow-up, you need materials, you need parent involvement."

The few who called walkthroughs useless generally found them infrequent, superficial, or too critical. "My teachers were very upset," says one principal. "I had to calm them down and tell them it was an opinion."

Ultimately walkthroughs will help improve instruction at my school ...

Significantly	42%
Somewhat	49%
Not at all	9%

Principal training mixed

Overall, principals gave the area professional development mixed reviews. Some said the monthly workshops provided useful information; one first-year principal says she immediately shared with teachers the new strategies she learned for teaching reading, such as posting vocabulary to create "word walls."

Experienced principals, however, often found the "one-size fits all" single-topic sessions didn't meet their individual needs. Instead, they suggested AIOs offer several workshops—such as budgeting, grant writing or teacher evaluation—and let principals choose. "By this point in your career, you know what kind of help you need and what help you don't need," one elementary school principal remarks. "It's just as hard for teachers to individualize instruction as it is for central office and for the area. But they should be doing it."

Under the old region structure, principals

The professional development I get from my AIO will improve my skills as an instructional leader

Significantly	44%
Somewhat	44%
Not at all	12%

would meet monthly in an auditorium with 100 or so colleagues and listen to presentations. Now they meet each month with 25 or so colleagues from their area and discuss instruction.

But some say that they already had a network of peers with whom they talked frequently. Some said professional development programs offered through the local principals association gave them more time to interact with colleagues than the highly structured, fast-paced sessions lead by AIOs. “It’s frustrating,” says one elementary school principal. “It’s not the assistance I was looking for.”

Under the new areas, I spend more time talking to other principals about instruction.

Agree	66%
Disagree	34%

Unclear teaching will improve

Some principals who thought that the area offices would improve teaching praised walkthroughs and the individualized support they received from AIOs. “I asked for help with my dual language program and the AIO

I expect that the area offices will help improve instruction at my school . . .

Significantly	38%
Somewhat	51%
Not at all	11%

came in with her staff and made priority lists and quick fixes,” reports Principal Suzanne Dunaway of Andersen.

Others who saw a limit to what the AIOs could accomplish, cited factors—from neighborhood violence to overcrowding—that affect schools. “Saying that the AIO is going to significantly impact what happens in the classroom is putting an awful burden on that individual.”

Those who felt the area offices would not improve instruction tended to say walkthroughs and principal training were uninformative and “a waste of time.”

Operations support is status quo

Some principals said that with fewer schools to supervise, area staff responds to management issues more quickly than the former region staff. Most found both the old and new offices equally competent.

Under the new area structure, my day-to-day management issues are handled . . .

More effectively	27%
Less effectively	11%
About the same	62%

Elizabeth Duffrin with reporting contributions from CATALYST interns Thaddeus P. Hartmann and Ann Stratton, CATALYST office assistant Santee Blakey and Chicago Reporter interns Meredith Voegtler, Lisa Balde, Angela Caputo and Hiroko Abe.

AIO

continued from page 7

that teachers are learning. This is a more manageable goal in districts that have common programs and practices, she observes, than in a decentralized district like Chicago. Although Chicago now has a general framework for reading—lessons must include work with vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and writing—each school selects its own reading programs and professional development.

Given the complexity of school improvement, some observers see a limit to the changes AIOs can bring about first-hand. “I know from experience that there is no way on earth that a willing and competent [area] team would be able to influence instruction at 33 schools,” says one administrator who has mentored principals at schools on probation.

Even a full day of mentoring every week was not enough to turn some principals around, she adds. At best, AIOs can point schools in the right direction, and hold principals accountable for following through, she says. Some of her schools failed to improve until central

office removed the principals, the administrator recalls.

Eason-Watkins says that CPS is prepared to remove principals if necessary. In the meantime, the district has a number of new supports for them.

Like the former region officers, AIOs evaluate principals—the first round of evaluations is due on Sept. 30. Unlike the former region officers, AIOs have time to coach struggling principals and may pair them with colleagues who serve as mentors.

In a first for the district, a new Office of Principal Preparation and Development, headed by former Area 6 AIO Nancy Laho, will open this fall to train aspiring, new and experienced principals.

Area staff also will work intensively with 44 schools on a pilot program that, among other goals, will teach schools to analyze students’ class work. That practice will give staff detailed information about student progress and where instruction needs fine tuning, Eason-Watkins explains.

CTU’s Lynch hopes that the district and area officers will also begin to ask for more input from teachers. “The bot-

tom line is, ‘Are the helpers asking the helpees what they need?’”

Some AIOs are already advising principals to create leadership teams that include teachers and parents to guide school improvement efforts. “The principal being the only person in the building making decisions—that is obsolete,” says Area 8 AIO Rollie Jones.

Victoria Bill of the Institute for Learning agrees that administrators need teacher leaders with expertise in their subjects to help them analyze teaching. “The most exciting thing for the teachers is being asked genuine, interesting questions about their content area.”

Principal Merverlene Parker, for one, already conducts walkthroughs with her staff at Hirsch, and is training department chairs to coach the faculty based on the findings in those walkthroughs.

That’s exactly what teachers need—an experienced colleague to observe and coach them to reflect on their teaching strategies, agrees Arbeiter, the Hirsch English teacher.

“Then it could be exciting,” she adds. “Then we could really talk about improving instruction.”

Take a walk on a walkthrough

AIO Jeannie Gallo and her crew observe instruction at an Albany Park elementary school.

by Jody Temkin

“I thought I was a good principal,” says Jeannie Gallo, Area 2 AIO who last year supervised principals at 38 North Side elementary schools. “But I would have been better if I’d known about the walkthrough process.”

Gallo, who oversees more schools than most AIOs and will add another this fall, visited each of them informally early last year to meet-and-greet with principals and staff, tour the buildings and introduce the concept of using a process called walkthroughs—the signature of a districtwide initiative to improve the quality of teaching.

On her next round of school visits, Gallo conducted walkthroughs. She completed 27 of them between March and June and plans to begin picking up the final 11 schools this month.

Gallo says some AIOs who conducted walkthroughs earlier in the year were met with skepticism because they neglected to meet with teachers first to describe the process. Some of those teachers complained to their union, and ultimately, the CPS chief education officer issued a mandate that AIOs meet with school staff before they conduct walkthroughs.

“So, actually, I was glad I started a little later,” says Gallo.

The walkthrough: Wednesday, May 28

At 8 a.m., Gallo and her Area 2 team meet Carl Dasko, Bateman’s acting principal, and several teachers in a conference room for coffee and rolls. At 8:30, everyone goes to the library, where Bateman’s staff is gathered.

Gallo tells the teachers that before becoming Area 2 AIO, she spent 12 years as principal at Smyser Elementary, where test scores and the student population doubled under her leadership.

“Like Bateman,” she says, “we had to build a big addition.”

She describes the walkthrough as a qualitative look at a school. The principal picks several teachers to participate, Gallo explains, and as a group they will decide which classrooms to visit and what to look for in each of them. After each classroom visit, the team will spend three to five minutes discussing what they’ve observed. Then, at the end, they will meet in the conference room to debrief. The Area 2 team members will later write up their findings and suggestions, and deliver the one-page report to Bateman.

“These are quite useful little snapshots that will start a dialogue about what you value,” Gallo notes. “We’re not here to scrutinize. I evaluate principals, not teachers. We’re here to offer suggestions. You can take them or not, but we’re hoping you take them.”

Besides Dasko and Gallo, the walkthrough team consists of three Bateman teachers—reading resource teacher Sharon Deutsch, bilingual teacher Mushtaq Ali Khawaja and 2nd grade teacher Nydia Dalmau—and specialists in reading, special education and bilingual education from Area 2.

Once Gallo completes her presentation to the staff, the team meets to decide what to look for during the walkthrough. Dasko has two suggestions: Assess the level of teacher-student interaction (which he also describes as student engagement) and the physical set-up of

the room. With a variety of learning levels represented in the school, Bateman has been working to create stations or learning centers in its classrooms, he says. This way, students can work independently while the teacher meets with individuals or small groups.

The group decides to focus on both of these. Area 2 reading coach Harlee Till helps them clarify what to look for: How are teachers interacting with the students? Are there any learning centers? How are student desks arranged? What’s posted on classroom walls? Is the teacher moving around the room or standing stationary in front of the class?

Before heading out, Dasko wants to know when staff will get the area team’s report. “They’ll want to know how they did,” he says.

“This is not about evaluating them,” Till reiterates.

“I’ve told them more than once that it’s not a show we’re putting on,” says Dasko. Still, he says, they’ll be anxious to get the report.

The first stop is a primary special education class. An audio tape is playing as the teacher holds up pictures. She holds up an image of a monkey when the tape plays a monkey song. Children make the “mmm” sound. The visitors circulate and take notes on clipboards. The visit lasts three minutes.

Out in the hallway, Gallo begins first, praising the word web chart on one wall and a list of “words to know” on a chalkboard. However, the room could be better organized, she says, noting materials scattered around that could be stored in bins. Till suggests the room could use more labels on objects, especially since this is a special education class.

Area 2 team members do most of the talking, but Bateman staffers chime in. Bilingual teacher Khawaja, for instance, notes that the students were gathered in one group despite their range of abilities. Deutsch, the reading specialist, says students in this classroom usually are organized into groups, but the walkthrough team happened to catch them at a time when they’re all together.

The next stop is a four-minute visit to a 3rd-grade class. Students are sitting in rows of desks. The teacher is standing at the chalkboard, writing vocabulary

At a glance

Newton Bateman Elementary
4220 N. Richmond
Albany Park

Grades pre-K to 6

48 teachers

800 students

ITBS scores:

51% at or above on reading

62% at or above on math

words and discussing their meaning. In the hallway, the observers describe the classroom as “very traditional.”

“There was not a whole lot of engagement,” says Till. “Maybe she could have had the students write the words on the board.” More charts around the room would support the instruction, says Gallo. A Bateman teacher remarks that the student work on the bulletin board was several months old.

The third visit, to a 4th-grade classroom, renders only positive comments. The room has a math center, a writing center and a well-organized library. Charts on the walls support instruction. One of them lists the steps for writing a summary—the topic of the teacher’s lesson. The students were engaged, the observers decide.

A 6th-grade class is the next stop, and again, team members like what they see. The teacher sits at the front of the room, reading a novel, with students seated in chairs scattered around her, listening and answering questions. The room is organized into learning centers, the students are paying attention to the story and to the teacher’s questions, which are relevant to the text.

Visits to the last three classrooms proceed in a similar fashion and the walkthrough, which took about two hours, is finished by 11:15 a.m. Team members head to a conference room to wrap up. Till and Gallo cite the team’s overall impressions:

- Students generally were engaged in learning.
- With one exception, desks were arranged in groups, not in rows.
- Most rooms were well organized and teachers had attempted to create learning centers.
- Two rooms had old student work on the walls.
- Every classroom had computers, but some were not turned on or plugged in.

Gallo mentions two elementary schools, Jahn and North Kenwood/Oakland Charter, where teachers have been successful creating classroom learning centers and using them effectively. Teacher field trips to those schools are discussed.

Before the area instructional team leaves, Till says she hopes the teachers won’t view the walkthrough as a negative experience. Dasko answers that most teachers will welcome the feedback but “the key is how you approach it.”



JOHN BOOZ

AIO Jeannie Gallo discusses walkthrough findings with Carl Dasko, principal of Bateman Elementary.

Postscript: ‘We’d like to experiment’

The following day, Bateman receives the team’s one-page report. Dasko makes copies to distribute to every teacher, and they discuss it at a staff meeting two days later. Over the next few weeks, he also meets individually with the teachers whose classrooms were visited.

The report is divided into two sections: Findings and suggestions. Among the findings are “most rooms grouped students for instruction” and “in some rooms, environmental print (what teachers post on the walls) supports current instruction.” Suggestions include “use more manipulatives” and “use more effective cooperative group techniques and strategies.” Individual teachers are not named.

According to Dasko, teachers were receptive to the walkthrough and the feedback, and several teachers confirm his impression.

“It’s another pair of eyes to see what we’re doing,” says Deutsch, the reading resource teacher. “The teachers I talked to afterwards felt fairly positive about it.”

Juanita Martinez, a 3rd-grade teacher who was observed by the walkthrough team, says the experience motivated her to make some changes. For one, she plans to buy containers to sort the books in her classroom library into categories. “It was something I was going to do but never got around to,” she says. “I appreciated getting some feedback. I’d like to try it again next year.”

Dasko says he was mostly satisfied by what he saw during the walkthrough

and felt that the short time spent in each class was enough to pinpoint a few strengths and weaknesses. The walkthrough also reaffirmed a few priorities as Bateman’s instructional leader: Post timely student work, set aside money to buy more manipulatives and make sure every classroom has learning centers.

After experiencing a walkthrough with the AIO, principals are expected to do them on their own, Gallo says. “We’re asking the principals to continue the process with their own teams,” she says. “You can do a half-hour a day—make a little schedule and get into those classrooms.”

Dasko says he has not yet conducted his own walkthroughs, but is looking at the possibility of picking up the practice this school year. “It’s something we’d like to experiment with,” he says.

Much of Gallo’s summer was spent meeting with principals and writing their evaluations, but she has not yet evaluated Dasko, who was named contract principal in July and comes up for evaluation next summer, after a year on the job.

As an AIO, Gallo is responsible for improving instruction in schools and for training principals to be instructional leaders. “We’re supposed to provide professional development, mentor them and help them through the bumpy times,” says Gallo, who declined to discuss how many of her principals were being steered toward extra supports.

However, Gallo says her clout is limited when it comes to principals, who are hired and fired by local school councils or the School Board. “I don’t select principals,” she says. “I really don’t have any control over them. I’m going to evaluate them but [have no recourse] if they’re doing a poor job.”

New York's District 2 paved the way

As other districts follow suit, a researcher warns: Without a culture change, walkthroughs are about supervision rather than improving teaching.

by Jody Temkin

Lily Woo, the principal at P.S. 130 in New York City, tries to visit every classroom in her school for a few minutes each day. "If I miss a day or two," says Woo, "a teacher will say, 'You haven't stopped by. I want the children to show you something.' I'm invited in."

That wasn't always the case. When Woo was hired as a principal 14 years ago by Anthony Alvarado, then-superintendent for New York's Community School District 2, most principals were infrequent classroom observers. Alvarado changed that.

Reforms he introduced in the 1980s included walkthroughs—brief classroom visits by combinations of district administrators and educators—and other sharing practices such as pairing new teachers with mentor-teachers for several weeks, and convening principals and teachers to work jointly on curricula and staff development projects.

Principals were asked to become instructional leaders for their schools. Monthly principal meetings under Alvarado, for example, focused primarily on instruction, with only brief mention of administrative issues, says Woo. "I put in 14-hour days," she says. "There was major professional development for everyone."

By the mid-1990s, District 2 test scores jumped from the middle of the pack of 32 districts to 2nd, leading other urban school systems around the country to take notice. Chicago, Boston and San Diego are among those attempting to replicate District 2's success.

It's not easily done. Richard Elmore, a Harvard University professor who has written extensively about District 2, says school districts trying to copy its model often implement superficial quick fixes, such as walkthroughs, that won't work if done in isolation.

"Walkthroughs are incredibly easy," Elmore says. "All you have to do is walk around, and it looks like you're doing it. But if you don't rebuild the [school] cul-

ture and you just put the practice down on top, it isn't going to have an impact."

Without a culture change, he says, the walkthrough is about supervision and evaluation rather than improving teaching. When walkthroughs are poorly conceived, "teachers are being evaluated on the spot by someone who typically knows little about good teaching," he explains. "Walkthroughs aren't going to do anything if you don't have work going on around instruction. Someone has to be in the classrooms working with these teachers in content-specific ways."

New practices evolved from joint effort

Walkthroughs in District 2 evolved; there was no preconceived plan, says Tom Nardone, a former District 2 principal. Being part of that evolution made it easier for District 2 principals to buy into the practice, says Nardone, who as a consultant has helped Chicago and Boston train instructional leaders to conduct walkthroughs.

"When Tony was developing the walkthrough," he says, "we were co-developing it with him. It wasn't someone coming in and saying, 'Here's how to do this.' We all developed it together."

The collaboration of district administrators and educators in District 2 gave it an advantage Chicago doesn't have, Nardone notes. "In District 2, I was part of a professional community that already had a vision. We had an opportunity to bring new people on board and start from the beginning. In Chicago, you're working with people who are already in place and that's sometimes a very different kind of approach."

Woo estimates that 70 percent of the schools in District 2 had new principals within Alvarado's first five years as superintendent. Some retired, others left because the demands were so great, and still others were forced out. Many of the replacements were high-performing

teachers who had not previously been principals.

"They only did it because Tony asked them to do it," Elmore says. "The district needed people who knew about instruction."

The teaching ranks also were overhauled, with the teacher turnover estimated to be as high as 50 percent during Alvarado's tenure. While Elmore agrees that District 2's success was, "heavily influenced by the strategy of bringing in new people," he doesn't think it's a prerequisite for other school systems copying its school improvement model.

"Huge turnover is not necessary to make this work," Elmore says. "You do have to make quality judgments and be willing to tell people at the bottom if their work isn't satisfactory, you'll get rid of them."

New York schools reverse course

What is necessary, say several people who worked in District 2, is the kind of collegial culture that developed under Alvarado's leadership. That culture received a shake-up early this year, when the New York City schools announced it would consolidate 32 districts into 10 "instructional leadership divisions," each led by a region superintendent. Divisions are split into networks of 10 to 12 schools, which in turn are led by local instructional supervisors.

According to a press release, the reorganization reduces the staff at the district offices from 4,800 to fewer than 2,400, saving the city more than \$100 million.

However, the trend is just the opposite in large urban school districts, which are being subdivided into smaller clusters, not larger ones, and are providing those clusters with instructional support, not just administrative support. Chicago, for example, expanded from six regions into 24 areas a year ago and hired area instructional officers to lead each one.

Boston's public schools are divided into groups of approximately 15 schools, which facilitates communities of principals and teachers who work together on instruction. Ideally, they will visit each other's buildings and share best practices, says Juliette D. Johnson, Boston's deputy superintendent for clusters and school leaders.

Within the clusters, Boston's principals, teachers and cluster leaders perform walkthroughs, which they call learning walks, in their own and each other's schools. Learning walks allow for visits as long as 20 minutes per classroom, depending on what's being observed. (By contrast, CPS walkthrough teams visit classrooms for no more than five minutes.)

Johnson wants principals to spend a third to half of their day in classrooms, but most aren't there yet, she says. "We're working with them to prioritize their time so that good, quality time is spent in classrooms every day," Johnson says. "We aren't going to realize the kind of change we want until we get principals in the classrooms."

The Boston Plan for Excellence, a nonprofit group that partners with the Boston district on professional develop-

ment and literacy, has been working for two years with a group of 26 "effective practice" schools, named for their success in working on reform, says Senior Program Officer Lisa Lineweaver.

Learning walks have been helpful in getting those schools to focus on instruction. "It gives you a new set of eyes on the work going on in your building," Lineweaver says, "and it's a great focusing tool. It's been very powerful."

Reforms get mixed response in San Diego

San Diego also has attempted to duplicate District 2's reform model, but reaction from educators has been mixed, at best.

Alvarado left District 2 in the late 1990s to become San Diego's chancellor of instruction, a position he retired from this summer. Upon arriving, Alvarado grouped San Diego schools into nine divisions, each with an instructional leader responsible for about 25 schools. Principals received extensive professional development, teaching coaches were hired for every school and walkthroughs became a staple.

Researchers from the University of Washington's Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy found a gradual rise in San Diego test scores, and a survey of principals found most of them valued walkthroughs, teacher coaches and their roles as instructional leaders.

Teachers, on the other hand, were resistant to what they viewed as a top-down approach that left them out of the loop. "There was a climate of distrust in the district," says Amy Hightower, a former Stanford University professor who studied San Diego's reforms. "The union wasn't happy about a number of things, including walkthroughs." Among teachers' concerns were whether walkthroughs were evaluative, how principals would use the notes they jotted down during classroom visits and how the practice would affect promotion or tenure, she adds.

Although Alvarado has left San Diego public schools, his reforms will continue this year, and other districts around the country continue to copy them.

"A number of districts," says Hightower, "now are focusing not only on the walkthroughs, but on the whole role of the principal in instruction. You're seeing it more and more." ●

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- \$12,500 to the archi-treasures to recruit students for workshops that explore the ecosystem around Clemente High.
- \$10,000 to the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) for an environmental project with Juarez High.
- \$8,000 to the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum to work with teachers from its Science Teaching Network to develop a service-learning project focused on biodiversity.
- \$7,500 to the BOLD Chicago Institute to work with Bowen, Washington and Harlan high schools through the Calumet Is My BackYard (CIMBY) project to examine plant species and restoration of wetlands.

Broad Foundation

- \$1.875 million to Teach for America to increase the number of teachers it places in under-served communities.
- \$200,000 over two years to The Broad Residency in Urban Education, which trains young people for administrative positions in urban school districts in the U.S.

Chicago Community Trust

- \$200,000 to Strategic Learning Initiatives for schools in the Pilsen Education Network, a professional development program for teachers and parents.
- \$150,000 to the Center for School Improvement at The University of Chicago for professional development in CPS and for research and operating support.
- \$150,000 to Designs for Change for its work with local school councils on principal evaluation and selection.
- \$92,000 to Alternative Schools Network for its youth joblessness and school drop-out initiative.
- \$50,000 to Associated Colleges of Illinois for its College Readiness Program that helps prepare at-risk CPS students for college.
- \$50,000 to the Chicago School Leadership Cooperative for its work with local school councils.
- \$25,000 to the Community Media Workshop for the Chicago Successful Schools project, which showcases how local school councils are improving public schools.
- \$20,000 to the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform for site visits to Chicago schools and CPS participation in its urban schools conference.

Chicago Public Education Fund

- \$382,000 to the National Board Certification Give-Back Incentive, which rewards teachers who achieve National Board Certification and schools with teachers seeking certification.
- \$150,000 to New Leaders for New Schools, a principal preparation program for career changers.

The Coleman Foundation

- \$161,750 to The Institute for Entrepreneurship to support teachers and young entrepreneurs, to fund grants and scholarships, and to pay for an annual conference.
- \$50,372 to Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurship Education for operating support.
- \$35,000 to the Entrepreneurship Small School at South Shore High for operating support and teacher training.
- \$25,520 to North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter High for the Young Entrepreneurs Program that will introduce 25 students to the basics of free enterprise, market principals and how to start and run a business.

Girl's Best Friend Foundation

- \$16,500 to the Coalition for Education on Sexual Orientation, a group of organizations that ensures the safety and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth in Illinois schools.
- \$16,500 to the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health for its Healthy Choices Campaign, a leadership program designed to build advocacy skills and inform young women.
- \$16,500 to Project Exploration to support Sisters for Science, an after-school and fieldwork program that combines leadership development with paleontology and natural science explorations for girls at the Young Women's Leadership Charter School and Triumphant Charter Middle School.
- \$16,500 to Young Chicago Authors for GirlSpeak, a program for high school-aged young women to be held at Clemente and Prologue high schools.
- \$16,500 to the Young Women's Empowerment Project (YWEP), a nonjudgmental, safe and respectful space for girls and young women aged 11 to 21 who are impacted by prostitution.

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- \$30,000 to North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter High for Phoenix Rising, a summer enrichment program that offers experiential learning, promotes equitable access to higher education, and fosters leadership and academic development.

■ \$7,500 to Art Resources in Teaching for an artist-in-residency program at a North Lawndale school and for the Umoja Student Development Corp.

Intel Foundation

- \$50,000 to the CPS Office of Professional Development, Department of Instructional Technology for project and administrative costs.

Joyce Foundation

- \$150,000 to Designs for Change to continue its policy reform initiatives in Chicago, assist local school councils with principal selection issues and provide assistance to Milwaukee Catalyst, an education reform coalition. The coalition is not related to *CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform*.

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

- \$2,025,000 over three years to the Consortium on Chicago School Research to support an analysis of CPS.
- \$90,000 over three years to Sullivan Elementary to support partnership activities between the school and the foundation.

McDougal Family Foundation

- \$65,000 to the University of Illinois at Chicago for Changing School Leadership Preparation, a performance-based preparation program for principals and administrators in urban schools.
- \$62,995 to the CPS Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline (CMCD) Pilot for Golden Teachers, a program for 12 schools in Area 8 that helps teachers create positive learning environments in their classrooms.
- \$30,000 to *CATALYST* for general operating support.

Morgan Stanley Foundation

- \$150,000 to "Good Cents," a computer simulation that teaches CPS middle school children about personal finance.

Compiled by Thaddeus P. Hartmann

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Portraits

Peer jury program gives Luis Gonzalez a new sense of purpose

by Ericka Moore-Freeman

When Luis Gonzalez was a freshman at Senn High, he frequently cut classes to play videos at a friend's house. "It was a ditching game," Luis says of his truancy.

His conduct finally landed him in the discipline office, where he faced possible suspension from school. But he got a reprieve from the peer jury, a school program that offers an alternative to school suspension and expulsion.

Before the peer jury session, Luis says he was bored and uninterested in school and got failing grades. But talking to the jurors—fellow Senn students—helped put his self-described lack of direction and motivation into perspective.

The experience was a turning point. "Seeing other students doing good made me want to do good," he says. "I started to really think about where I'm going in life." Now a senior, Luis is conscientious and focused—he has perfect attendance, a 3.5 GPA, and a sense of purpose. He says the peer jury gave him the enthusiasm to funnel his competitive streak into academics.

Today, he sits on the opposite side of the table—as a peer juror who dispenses advice to wayward peers like "Daniel," who has racked up 24 first-period absences as a junior.

"We're not here to judge or punish," Luis tells Daniel during a peer jury proceeding. "We're here to help you take responsibility for your actions and avoid [trouble] from happening in the future."

In 1996, Senn launched the city's first public school peer jury program where student jurors review minor infractions of their peers, and agree on non-punitive sanctions other than suspension or expulsion. Two years ago, the Chicago Public Schools adopted the

model, which currently operates in 25 high schools.

The initiative was born out of a partnership with Alternatives Inc., a non-profit youth agency located in the Uptown neighborhood that runs school and community-based activities at Senn.

"These were students that were into school, but some had challenges in certain areas," says Pat Zamora of Alternatives Inc. Students who were suspended usually had poor attendance records and grades and "suspension kept them out of class and isolated them from the school, putting them further behind," she explains.

The CPS goal is to have alternative discipline solutions in all of its high schools. The Board of Education even rewrote its Uniform Discipline Code in 2001 to include peer jury as an alternative to suspension and expulsion for minor infractions such as absenteeism and truancy, not complying with school uniform rules and unauthorized use of cell phones and pagers.

Peer juries are also known as youth courts, and there are nearly 900 such programs nationwide, according to the National Youth Court Center in Lexington, Ky. More than 50 percent of the programs operate in conjunction with the justice system, while 5 percent, including the CPS model, are school based.

The CPS model is based on the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice (BAJR), a philosophy that justice is best served when it focuses on action and accountability rather than punishment. With peer jury, students learn from their mistakes by listening to peers, victims and others who were impacted by their inappropriate behavior.

"It's not dissimilar to how we raise our children and families," explains Dee Bell, project administrator of the Community Justice Initiative at Florida

Atlantic University in Ft. Lauderdale. "One sibling hurts another, you bring the two together, talk about who was harmed and how, who's accountable and how to prevent another occurrence. [Then] you move forward together." Bell heads the Balanced and Restorative Justice Project, a decade-old federal initiative to implement BAJR in juvenile justice programs across the country.

Court systems support the BAJR model. Sophia Hall, administrative presiding judge for the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Resource Section of the Circuit Court of Cook County in Chicago, says peer juries can prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

"When youth act out it usually starts in the schools before it starts in the streets," says Hall, who sits on a citywide committee that supports the CPS program. "Peer jury can be a way for youth to be diverted long before they come to the court's attention."

As well as fostering a new attitude toward discipline, peer jury has made a dent in suspensions at Senn. Before the program started, 93 percent of disciplinary referrals resulted in suspensions; today, only 9 percent go to suspension, according to Alternatives Inc. Last year, 46 students escaped suspension through peer jury, and 12 served as jurors.

Jury of peers

Luis participates in peer jury proceedings twice a week after school and may hear up to six cases each week. Sessions last about three hours. Although juries are generally comprised of six students, today Luis is joined by two others, seniors Marcos Erazo and Krystal Johnson. An adult coordinator supervises jurors, but doesn't participate in the proceedings.

During Daniel's hearing, Luis and the



During a peer jury hearing at Senn High, jurors Luis Gonzalez (center), Marcos Erazo and Krystal Johnson arrive at a solution to help a student make amends for his excessive tardiness and avoid suspension.

other jurors warn that he risks getting kicked out of school for class cutting. To uncover what's behind his truancy, the jurors probe Daniel for details about his grades, his home life and his future aspirations.

Daniel recounts a recent troubling experience when he was chased to school by young men he assumed were gang-bangers. As the facilitator for this session (jurors alternate between sessions), Luis listens intently, then suggests that Daniel take a new route to school. Luis also writes a reminder note to himself to talk to Senn officials about school safety. As a panel, the jurors discuss Daniel's difficulty waking up in the morning and other factors that may be contributing to his failing grades. Daniel simply says he "doesn't wake up in time" to get to school and he concedes that he is not completing schoolwork because, in some cases, he doesn't understand the material.

Jurors spend 15 minutes reviewing facts and background, then they collaborate with Daniel on a final agreement. Daniel resolves to arrange for a wake-up call each morning, attend tutoring before school and, for motivation, participate in a morning basketball program. He signs a confidential, written document and vows to adhere to its

terms. After Daniel leaves the room, the jurors confer before signing off on the pre-printed agreement they will submit to school administrators, who will monitor Daniel's compliance.

Luis and other students attended a six-week training program developed by Alternatives Inc., where they learned to ask insightful questions, analyze the facts of an offender's case and determine effective remedies. Topics included listening skills, the CPS disciplinary code and the importance of confidentiality.

Students must have at least a 2.0 GPA to participate—a CPS requirement for extracurricular activities—and may earn service-learning credits.

Luis says serving on the peer jury is a way of giving back. "Some students have actually come back and told me, 'Thank you' for helping open their eyes to the right thing to do," he says. "It feels good to help people and let them know that they're not alone."

That's why peer jury was the right alternative for Luis, who cut class, but had not become a chronic discipline problem, says Assistant Principal Joseph Ruiz. "He needed some type of program or service to help him with school work, attendance and just his focus in school," Ruiz says. "He really got hooked into

school and he's just blossomed."

As a motivated student, Luis has ditched his ditching friends and has raised his grades through tutoring. He also plays soccer and volleyball, and is a member of the Junior Honor Society and the city's Gallery 37 arts program. Outside of school, Luis studies martial arts (he has a black belt in tae kwan do) and works part-time at a neighborhood movie theater.

The oldest of four siblings, Luis realizes the impact his negative behavior could have had on his younger brothers and sister, and prefers to set a good example. A younger brother in 8th-grade is already an honors student in math. "I really try to encourage him to listen and pay attention to his teachers," Luis says. "I tell him, 'Look, I didn't pay attention and I got Ds and Fs and had to go to summer school.'"

Luis uses a similar personal approach with students who come before the peer jury. He shares his own experiences, but realizes it's up to the offenders to change their behavior.

"If we don't listen and do what we're supposed to do, we'll get left behind," Luis says. "Just because I give you an apple doesn't mean that you'll take a bite." ●

Sneak peek at high school offers some freshmen a leg up

by Thaddeus P. Hartmann

At a press conference last May, Mayor Richard M. Daley and schools CEO Arne Duncan unveiled a new voluntary summer school program designed to help some incoming high school freshmen stay on track.

"Step Up to High School," as it was called, would be aimed at 4,000 8th graders who had scored below average on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, but above the cutoff for promotion to high school. The idea was to get students into the high schools they plan to attend before classes begin in the fall so they could get acclimated to their new surroundings, take math and reading classes to reinforce these skills, and meet and make connections with teachers and classmates.

CPS officials could not provide a figure for the number of students who participated in the program.

During the four-week program, students spent three hours a day on math and reading instruction, and another 45 minutes learning high school "survivor" skills, such as team building, time management, and study and organizational methods.

The survivor component provided an important introduction to the high school experience and helped "students with the transition from 8th grade to high school," says Rosemarie Nichols, who oversees Step Up at Robeson High.

Step Up's ultimate goal is to reduce the dropout rate. Local researchers have found that CPS freshmen who fall behind earning credits are five times more likely to drop out than students who advance to the sophomore level and

fail no more than one core course. (See *CATALYST*, June 2003)

"The actual goal was to try to keep kids in high school," says Rickey Murff, a facilitator in the CPS Office of Math and Science. "When they come to school [in September], they'll know some of their teachers, a counselor or two and some peers."

Murff says Step Up students' progress will be tracked throughout high school. "We're hoping for lower dropout rates, and we're hoping students will see improvement in math and reading."

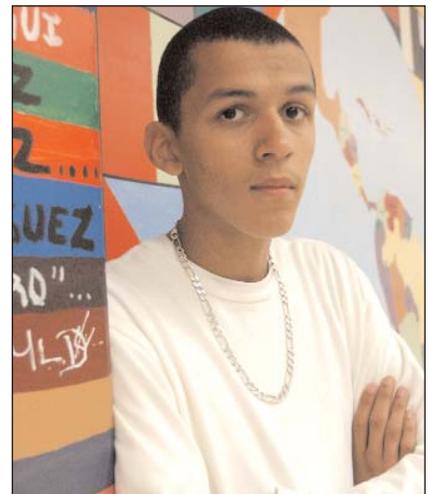
The new program was not without glitches. For example, pass or fail grades were to be assigned, but officials later switched to letter grades so that students could earn credit toward high school graduation. Some teachers thought this grading was not representative of what is expected in high school.

CATALYST interviewed six incoming freshmen who attended Step Up at Robeson and Clemente high schools, where drop out rates are higher than the district's 2002 average of 14.4 percent.

"It's a very good step forward [in] helping the numbers at our school," Robeson Principal James Breashears says. "Certainly just becoming acquainted with the high school culture will be beneficial." Approximately 26 students of 103 who were eligible enrolled in Step Up at his school. Last year, Robeson's drop out rate was 23.5 percent.

At Clemente, 66 attended out of 152 incoming freshmen who were eligible for Step Up; the school's drop out rate was 17.5 percent last year.

CATALYST will track the first semester progress of the six students, and will publish an update in February. Here are profiles of three of them.



Steven Beaudion
Clemente High

At Darwin Elementary, Steven Beaudion earned Cs and Ds and had to repeat 8th grade. Still, he had his doubts about participating in Step Up. "At first, I didn't want to come," he says. "I was planning on spending my time with friends, hanging out all day. I thought it would ruin my summer."

But he felt the program might be useful preparation for high school, and he decided to enroll after all. After the first day, he was sold.

"The teachers are real cool. The things we did on the computers were fun," says Steven, who adds that he spent most of his math period in the computer lab and learned how to write essays in reading class.

Steven knows he'll have to buckle down if he wants to make progress in high school, but expects the extra work this summer in math and reading will

improve his grades. "At first, math was real hard, so I could imagine that the next four years were going to be even harder," he says. "I know what it's going to be like now." He got a C in math and says he thinks he got the same in reading. (In late August, he hadn't received a reading grade.)

Steven says he also learned teamwork by working with other students. One day in survivor skills class, the students broke up into small groups and made a pact to stay in school and graduate. "Since we made it, we should really follow up on it," he says.

As the four weeks slipped by, Steven felt more comfortable in his new environment—meeting new students and teachers and learning what will be expected of him. Step Up provided "a taste of what high school is going to be like," he says. "I think I can handle it."



JOHN BOOZ

Theresa Velazquez Clemente High

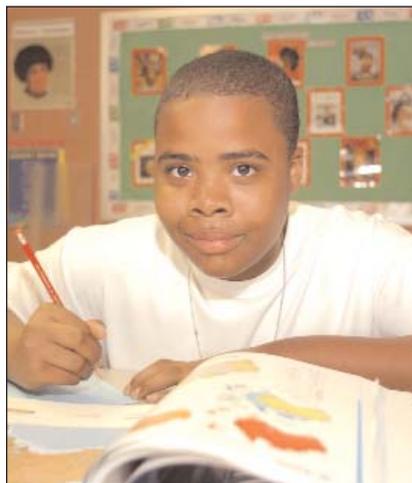
Theresa Velazquez's mother, Connie, thought the summer Step Up program would be helpful for her daughter. "I figured it would give her some kind of advantage in the fall," Velazquez says.

Theresa, who got As and Bs at Telpochcalli Elementary in Little Village, thought Step Up would be easy, but soon learned that the high school experience would be different. "It's more work and, to have good grades, you have to work harder. You have more classes." She got a C in math, but hasn't received a reading grade.

Theresa was surprised with the amount of independence she was given. In a reading project with other students, she had the opportunity to select the method of presentation—videotape, PowerPoint or poster boards. The exercise allowed her to make decisions.

Theresa says the early introduction to the high school environment made her realize that she will have to participate in classroom discussions because her teachers will not hold her hand through each assignment. "It's more serious here. I do have to speak out more [in class]. You have to let people know that you're there," she notes.

As an 8th-grader, Theresa says she was shy and scared about going to high school, but the Step Up program gave her confidence. Since she has "switched classes, met some teachers, met some counselors," she says she feels comfortable at Clemente. "I'm already used to coming in and going through the metal detectors," she adds.



JOHN BOOZ

Lonnie Gray Robeson High

Lonnie Gray is a quiet student with grand goals. He wants to graduate from high school early, so he was eager to earn the half credit that Step Up offered. He hopes to pursue a career in environmental science or biology.

Lonnie was dealt a blow last year when he got an F in 8th-grade science at Deneen Elementary. He says that his science teacher didn't have control of the classroom, which made it hard to learn. He could not concentrate on lessons because his teacher spent instructional

time trying to discipline disruptive students. His grades in other subjects ranged from Bs to Ds.

But having completed Step Up at Robeson, Lonnie thinks he can turn things around in science. "I know I'm going to do better than in grammar school. I'm not going to have as much distraction," he says. While he says he's still a little worried about biology, he's confident that he'll perform better. Also, a brief visit to the environmental science lab reinforced his interest in science.

Lonnie says Step Up was no harder than grammar school, and now he feels better prepared for high school. "I thought high school was going to be real hard, but once you pay attention, it's no problem," he notes.

Earning As in math and science made Lonnie's mother, Laverne Everhart, proud. "It's been a long time since I've seen that," she says. "He came home and did research on the computer instead of playing video games."

He also improved his algebra and public speaking skills, areas he had trouble with in grammar school. "We learned how to stand in front of the class and how to speak, instead of stumbling on words and getting nervous," he says.

Lonnie says his new excitement for school was prompted by watching bad examples of other students. "[I worked harder] so I wouldn't have to be like some of my other friends," he says.

While Lonnie says he is worried that high school will get tougher, he notes that he settled into Robeson's environment with ease this summer, and felt like a pro in the hallways. "Once it becomes September, some kids might not even think I'm a freshman because I know my way around," he boasts.

And Lonnie's mother is especially pleased. "My boy hates to go to school," Everhart says. But during the Step Up program, "he told me, 'I want to attend summer school every year.'"

More profiles can be found online at www.catalyst-chicago.org

Correction

The article, "Freshmen who fail usually drop out" (CATALYST, June 2003), listed an outdated failure rate for algebra. The correct statistic is 28 percent of CPS freshmen failed algebra in the 2001-02 school year.

Transfers barely a blip on school's radar

Felipa Mena and her children—(from left) Edgar, Daisy and Marlene—wouldn't think of leaving Andersen Academy even though it posted low test scores and must offer choice. It's "wonderful," Mena says of the school.



JOHN BOOZ

by Alexander Russo

Last year, faculty morale slumped at Hans Christian Andersen Community Academy on the Near West Side when the school learned it was among 50 schools that had to offer its students transfers to other schools under the No Child Left Behind act.

Then, when the School Board announced the schools Andersen children could attend—Sabin Magnet and Lozano Bilingual Academy—it was like pouring salt in the wounds. Sabin and Lozano both have specialized academic programs that make them popular with parents from around the city.

At Andersen, the faculty views this as unfair competition. “We take everyone,” explains Vice Principal Sherry Whitmore. “It’s not fair that those other schools get to choose who they take.”

To make matters worse, some of the school’s most academically able students were among the first to request transfers, according to Whitmore.

But as it turned out, the new transfer program had little impact on the school of some 760 students. Only 19 transferred to Sabin and Lozano, and several of them returned by the end of the school year. “They missed it here,” says Whitmore.

With that experience under its belt, Andersen barely flinched at the School Board’s latest round of No Child announcements, especially since there will be fewer seats available for transferring students this year. “I imagine that the impact will be small,” says Principal Suzanne Dunaway, whose school will again have to provide choice. “What’s new is that [students] are going to be offered tutoring.”

Dunaway’s forecast likely will hold true throughout the district. In August, state school officials announced that 365 Chicago schools had run afoul of No Child’s school performance requirements and that some 240,000 students enrolled in those schools would be eligible to transfer. However, Chicago school officials announced that only about 1,000 places at 38 schools would be available to receive students.

The remaining 200 or so schools in the city performed well enough to receive transfers but were exempted by the school board because they are either selective enrollment schools that require testing or are considered overcrowded.

For Andersen parents, last year’s transfer options, Sabin and Lozano, are now off limits because they failed to

meet the NCLB guidelines. Three other nearby schools that did better—Columbus, De Diego, and Pritzker—are among those exempted. Burr Elementary is the only school from the area, Area 5, accepting students.

Regardless, many Andersen parents remain loyal to the school.

“I like Andersen,” says Felipa Mena, who has three children currently at the school. Calling the school “wonderful,” Mena says the principal and teachers are open to the community. She says that parents are more likely to leave the school because of rising housing costs in the neighborhood than the quality of the school.

Under the federal rating system, the school is in the second year of choice because it failed, for a third year in a row, to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) in scores on the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT).

Under an AYP measure that is in some ways more stringent than last year’s, schools this year had to have at least 40 percent of their students—both as a whole and among each of eight demographic subgroups—at or above the state standard in math and reading. The subgroups are blacks, Hispanics, whites, Asians and Native Americans; low-income students; students with disabilities; and students with limited ability in English. Last year, the minimum performance cutoff was higher—50 percent at or above standards, but subgroups were not considered separately.

Andersen, a largely Hispanic school that is 95 percent low income, has so few students in half the subgroups that they don’t count for accountability. The groups that do count at Andersen are blacks, Hispanics, limited-English students and low-income students.

For the student body as a whole, Andersen did best in math, with 35 percent meeting the requirement. Among demographic subgroups, it did best with Hispanic students—38 percent met the requirements.

In reading, 26 percent of Andersen students met the state standard. On this measure, black students did best.

While some Chicago schools required to offer choice did well on Chicago’s own accountability measures, Andersen was not one of them. In 2002, Andersen was rated as a school of “challenge,” the district’s second-lowest designation.

**No
Child
Left
Behind
Update**

Meanwhile, at Sabin

Officials at Sabin say that the 16 students who transferred last year from Andersen encountered some difficulties, but that they were not overwhelming.

The transfer students tended to be in the higher grades and did not necessarily buy into the school's dual-language program, according to Sabin Assistant Principal Beatrice Colon. They had "a lot of catching up," she says. But she adds, "Sixth grade is a hard year anyway."

Edna Arroyo, a member of the Sabin local school council, says she was frustrated by the choice program. Some of the Andersen students struggled academically and, in her opinion, should not have been moved. And some parents had "unrealistic expectations" for their children's success at Sabin, she says. Even at the best schools, learning is not automatic, she says.

While Sabin continues to perform relatively well among Chicago schools, with

44 percent of students at or above state standards in reading and 49 percent in math, it wound up on the other side of the choice list this year because of the performance of one subgroup on one subject—only 31 percent of limited-English students met the mark in reading.

Lozano also became a sending school. While all groups made the grade in math, none hit 40 percent in reading.

Flavia Hernandez, the area instructional officer for Area 5, which includes Andersen, Sabin and Lozano, says that the choice program posed few problems last year. "I think principals in this area have been very good about accepting children," she says. "If the school is being run well, I don't think [taking in students] should hurt them."

According to a CPS spokesperson, the district has "no way of knowing" whether the No Child transfers have had an impact on test scores.

Movement of students among schools has been a widespread feature of Chicago schools since well before No

Child Left Behind. About 25 percent of CPS students move in or out of a school during the school year, according to the district's annual report card. More than 90,000 elementary school children, roughly a fourth of the total, attend schools outside their neighborhoods due to magnet programs, desegregation efforts or overcrowding, according to CPS. Slightly more than half of high school students attend schools outside their neighborhoods, according to a *CATALYST* analysis.

A key difference with No Child is that, in cases where the demand exceeds the supply, preference is to be given to students with the lowest income and lowest achievement levels.

While opinions about choice vary, few Chicago officials or advocates believe it will improve schools.

"If a parent is not satisfied with the quality of the education at a local school, one can argue that the parents should have some sort of recourse," says 1st Ward Ald. Manuel Flores, whose ward includes Andersen. "But that doesn't solve the problem."

Last year, Madeline Talbott, head organizer of ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), said CPS was not providing enough choice under No Child. Now she says the choice requirement holds "no promise" for improving the education of children most in need. "If all you can do is transfer into another school that isn't necessarily doing much better than your school, that's ridiculous and a waste of money," she says.

Others blame CPS for failing to provide enough choice to make a difference. With only one spot for every 240 students, "it's more like the lottery than a choice program," says George Clowes, senior fellow at the Heartland Institute, a nonprofit that advocates choice. "I think they could have made significantly more space available."

In the meantime, Principal Dunaway at Andersen reports in mid-August that she has received just "a few" calls about transfers, many of them unrelated to No Child Left Behind and some from parents who want to transfer their children into the school. "I can see us achieving 40 percent [the federal minimum] next year," she says. As for the year after that, when the cutoff increases to 47 percent, she's not so sure.

By the numbers

SCHOOLS

Sending schools

	Last year	This year
Schools that fell short of "No Child" test standards:	191	365
Schools that CPS required to provide choice:	50	365
Schools required to provide choice and extra tutoring:	25	207
Schools subject to restaffing, closing, etc.	0	24

Receiving schools

Schools designated as eligible by CPS:	100	38
Schools exempted from receiving "No Child" transfers by CPS:	309	200

STUDENTS

Students eligible to request a transfer under "No Child":	125,000	240,000
Students CPS permitted to request a "No Child" transfer	29,000	238,000
Seats available for "No Child" transfers:	2,500	1,035
Students requesting "No Child" transfers:	2,400	19,000
"No Child" transfer requests approved by CPS:	1,165	NA
Students who finally transferred under "No Child":	800	NA
"No Child" transfer students who stayed in new school:	400	NA

TRANSPORTATION

Cost of transporting "No Child" transfer students:	\$700,000	NA
Federal money for "No Child" notification and transportation:	\$11 million	\$12 million
Total district transportation costs:	\$90.5 million	\$110 million

SOURCE: Chicago Public Schools, U.S. Department of Education, Illinois State Board of Education.

Reading initiative makes strides in high schools

by Maureen Kelleher

As the Chicago Reading Initiative gears up for its second year in the high schools, most people involved agree it has made strides in bringing teachers up to speed on teaching reading in their subject areas and in creating better teacher training. However, central office officials, principals and teachers have different views about what to expect in year 2.

Looking back on the first year, most say the initiative has made headway. “I definitely think [the reading initiative] had some positive effect,” says Meg Arbeiter, who taught English last year at Hirsch High. (She is now with ACT Charter School.) “I wouldn’t say it was revolutionary, but there was evidence of teachers practicing what was being preached. There actually was discussion of some really cool strategies and ideas.”

A year after it was introduced in elementary schools, CPS launched its reading initiative in high schools last September with the goal of improving students’ reading achievement by boosting teachers’ knowledge of reading and instructional skills.

The result is that all high school teachers now know they need to help students read strategically and decipher difficult texts and must enhance their own training in reading instruction. The price tag for the 2004 fiscal year is \$2.9 million, up from \$765,000 last year, which will pay for additional professional development for reading coaches, tuition to teachers to underwrite reading coursework and a pilot reading program in 6th through 8th grades.

But while reading officials have ambitious goals for year 2, high school principals and teachers warn the initiative may be moving too fast for teachers to keep up. For example, teachers say they were exposed to the four-part literacy

framework—word knowledge, fluency, comprehension and writing—for only a semester before they moved on to other topics.

During the first-year rollout, high schools created literacy teams, made up of one teacher from each core subject area (English, math, science and social studies), a special education teacher, and the principal or assistant principal. The teams completed summer training sessions that introduced the literacy framework, and later met monthly for follow-up workshops.

Teams also provided 40 hours of training to teachers in their schools. Though only core subject teachers were required to attend this training, some principals extended it to all staff. “We brought it back for everybody,” says Principal John Butterfield of Mather High. “We’re all in this together—let’s get busy.”

A challenge the initiative faced in high schools was finding staff with the appropriate background in reading. Currently, each high school area has a team of content specialists with reading credentials, but identifying those people and assembling the teams took some time, says Jennifer Hester, director of secondary reading for the Chicago Reading Initiative. Few literacy team members in high schools have extensive backgrounds in reading, unlike reading specialists in elementary schools.

Hester stresses that high school teachers are not expected to teach reading per se; rather, they should be using the reading framework and associated strategies to give students the tools they need to read material in core subject areas.

Unlike the elementary school reading component, which requires teachers to teach reading for two hours daily, the time requirements are more flexible for high schools, says Hester. Teachers must integrate all four aspects of the literacy framework throughout their lesson

plans, and principals are expected to hold teachers accountable as part of their routine reviews of the plans.

Like many new efforts, implementation of the reading initiative varied considerably by school. “Our area officers were very impressed with how we were going about this,” says Sarah Spachman, literacy team member at Curie High. But “we still feel like we’re very much in the learning stages.”

That’s fine by Hester. “We realize that this is a developmental process. We don’t expect them all to be in the same place at the same time.”

Area instructional officers are pleased with the initial progress. “We really brought a lot of coherence and just good, solid professional development, and set a solid structure in all of our high schools,” observes Cynthia Barron, who oversees high schools in Area 24. She says teachers are much more aware that they need to use explicit strategies to help students through challenging, content-heavy reading, such as in science and social studies.

Schools, especially those on probation, are shifting away from emphasizing timed readings for test preparation, instead giving students tools they need to analyze text, notes Barron. But an in-depth review of strategies didn’t happen during the first year, she adds.

Program praised by some

Some literacy team members praise the initiative for giving them a leg up on helping students read. This year, Hester hopes that impact will expand beyond the literacy teams to more high school teachers. However, the teams are expected to provide training in areas related to reading strategies and go beyond that to train teachers to analyze student work and create assessments.

But some team members were afraid to tackle this new topic since they had just gotten their feet wet working with colleagues on the literacy framework.

Hester acknowledges the initial workshop that taught teams to assess student work was flawed. “That did interrupt our process last year,” she says. “We went back in February and redid the workshop.” But she insists it was necessary to make an immediate connection

to student work. "The real telling isn't in teacher implementation, it's in student work that reflects solid progress," she says.

This fall, Hester says teams will expand professional development into additional arenas, such as how to use reading and writing to assess student progress in their disciplines and how to help students analyze their own thinking when they encounter reading and writing roadblocks.

Also this year, all freshmen who scored below the 50th percentile on their 8th-grade Iowa Tests of Basic Skills must take a new yearlong course titled "Reading in the Language Arts." Hester says the course will help struggling freshmen read expository texts across a variety of subjects. Students will earn a full elective credit for completing it.

The next step is to develop a formal evaluation for high school reading. Hester is working on the project with Daniel Bugler, chief officer of CPS Research, Evaluation and Accountability.

Reading officials are already encouraged by initial feedback. Douglas Buehl, a Wisconsin-based consultant who led reading workshops for CPS, has received e-mails from principals and teachers asking for more information about integrating reading strategies into teaching their subjects. "That's rare," he says, contrasting typical professional development workshops. "You [usually] never hear from these people again."

Despite the accolades they've received for getting on board with the initiative, principals and teachers say they need time to assimilate what they've already learned. "You can teach old dogs new tricks, but it does take some time," remarks Mather's Butterfield. "This year, hopefully, we don't have to come back with six or eight new ways [to teach reading]."

Hester acknowledges these sentiments. Though teachers may feel overwhelmed by what lay ahead, she says she is confident they will soon see connections to what they learned last year.

She also points out that some schools are ready and eager for more instruction. "You had some schools that had well-developed reading programs in place," she says. "You need to have a developmental continuum where people can have a place to go." ●

New reading effort targets pre-school, primary grades

by Debra Williams

To get a head start preparing young children to read, and ultimately be successful in school, CPS is expanding its reading initiative to include pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and 1st-grade.

The move stems from an analysis of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills that showed younger students were coming to school with limited literacy skills. "In the primary grades, we found that word knowledge is a deficiency, so we want to make literacy a larger part of our younger children's time," says Albert Bertani, chief officer of professional development.

The district's efforts to improve early childhood literacy skills will focus on teacher professional development, cross-training of faculty and coaching reading specialists.

CPS started its primary reading initiative in August, hosting a four-day literacy conference for early childhood teachers from 75 public schools and a half-day workshop on early literacy teaching strategies. The latter was attended by 4,000 pre-K and kindergarten teachers from CPS and some state-subsidized early childhood programs.

Schools that participated in the four-day conference sent teams of pre-K, kindergarten and 1st-grade teachers to learn how to cultivate children's literacy skills through story-telling activities and integrating play and the arts. Back at their schools, the teams, with the assistance of a reading specialist, are expected to share the strategies with their early childhood colleagues.

CPS expects all preschool and primary grade teachers will be trained in three years.

The primary reading initiative does not mandate a certain amount of daily reading instruction. (Grades

2 through 8 are required to teach reading two hours a day.) However, teachers are being asked to infuse their daily lessons with literacy skills, says Lucinda Lee Katz, chief officer of early childhood education.

Principals and area instructional officers will monitor reading progress at each school, and districtwide results will be tracked by the CPS Office of Curriculum Development.

"We want to make literacy a larger part of our younger children's time."

*Albert Bertani, chief officer,
CPS Professional Development*

Assessment tools that evaluate reading skills will be used to review progress, Katz says. And the district's Early Literacy Framework, which focuses on goals like reading fluency, knowledge and comprehension, will guide teachers' work, she adds. The framework was created last year by CPS administrators and teachers and emphasizes the Illinois Early Learning Standards, state benchmarks for what children should know at early stages of their development.

The district's decision to target primary grade levels "is a good thing," says Donna Ogle, a reading and language professor at National-Louis University and former president of the International Reading Association. "The first few years are critical, and there are so many things that can be done to develop literacy. Schools and teachers are now building on that."

CONTRACT TALKS The Chicago Teachers Union advised its 35,000 members to return to their classrooms on Aug. 27 even though it had not reached a collective bargaining agreement with the Board of Education. (Students return to school Sept. 2.) While the union and school board have not publicly discussed the status of the negotiations that began in early May, union officials announced in late August that the two sides had reached agreement on several issues, but that they continue to negotiate over economic issues including salary increases, pensions, health insurance and the length of the school day. The teachers will continue to work under the old contract that expired June 30.

NEW TEACHER HIRES The Chicago Public Schools' efforts to hire 3,000 new teachers for the 2003-04 school year have yielded 1,854 new hires through mid-August, with 125 applicants receiving job offers after attending a Teacher Career Fair at Navy Pier on July 24. Roughly 1,900 candidates attended the job fair, which was the district's largest to date. (See *CATALYST*, June 2003)

MOVING IN/ON **Shazia Miller**, formerly of the Consortium on Chicago School Research, is the new associate director of research and evaluation in the CPS Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability. ... **Gretchen Crosby Sims** was named program officer for education at The Joyce Foundation, filling a year-old vacancy for that position. ... **Anne Hallett**, executive director of The Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, is leaving at the end of the year. A replacement will be named by December. ... **Mark Rodriguez**, who previously oversaw recruiting and admissions for New Leaders for New Schools, an alternative principal certification program, was named director of Changing Worlds, a nonprofit that promotes diversity. A replacement has not been named. ... The presidential election of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association has resulted in a run-off. **Clarice Jackson-Berry**, principal at Fiske, and **Linda Layne**, retired principal of Brooks College Prep, will face off on ballots sent to members on August 25.

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS Interim principals who have been awarded contracts: **Ale-**

jandra Alvarez, Roosevelt High; **Gloria J. Fullilove**, Ericson; **Kenneth Hunter**, Prosser High; **Arthur Slater**, Kenwood Academy; **Sunday Uwumarogie**, Hinton. ... **Karen L. Kerr**, Bond; **Richard D. Kerr**, Nash; and **Paul G. Ramirez**, Stevenson have had their contracts renewed for four years.

PRINCIPAL RETIREMENTS **Sandra Renee Satinover**, Jenner; **Zelma Woodson**, former assistant principal, becomes acting principal. ... **Pierce N. Vaughn**, Overton; **Loretta Dent**, former assistant principal, becomes acting principal ... **Richard A. Alexander**, Woodson North, which closed in June. ... **Ronald C. Beavers**, Chicago Vocational; **Dolores Pidgeon**, former assistant principal at Marshall High, becomes acting principal. ... **Franklin L. Blair Jr.**, Haley; **Barbara Sims**, former assistant principal, is contract principal. ... **Delores Rease**, Schmid; **Linda Langhart**, principal administrator for Area 18, is interim principal. Langhart, who was awarded a principal contract at Songhai, will remain at Schmid until a replacement is named.

Thaddeus P. Hartmann

WebExtra

Who are the **key players** in Schools CEO Arne Duncan's administration?
 Their names, pictures and bios are listed on *CATALYST's* web site.
 Go to **www.catalyst-chicago.org** and click on **"CPS organizational chart."**



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