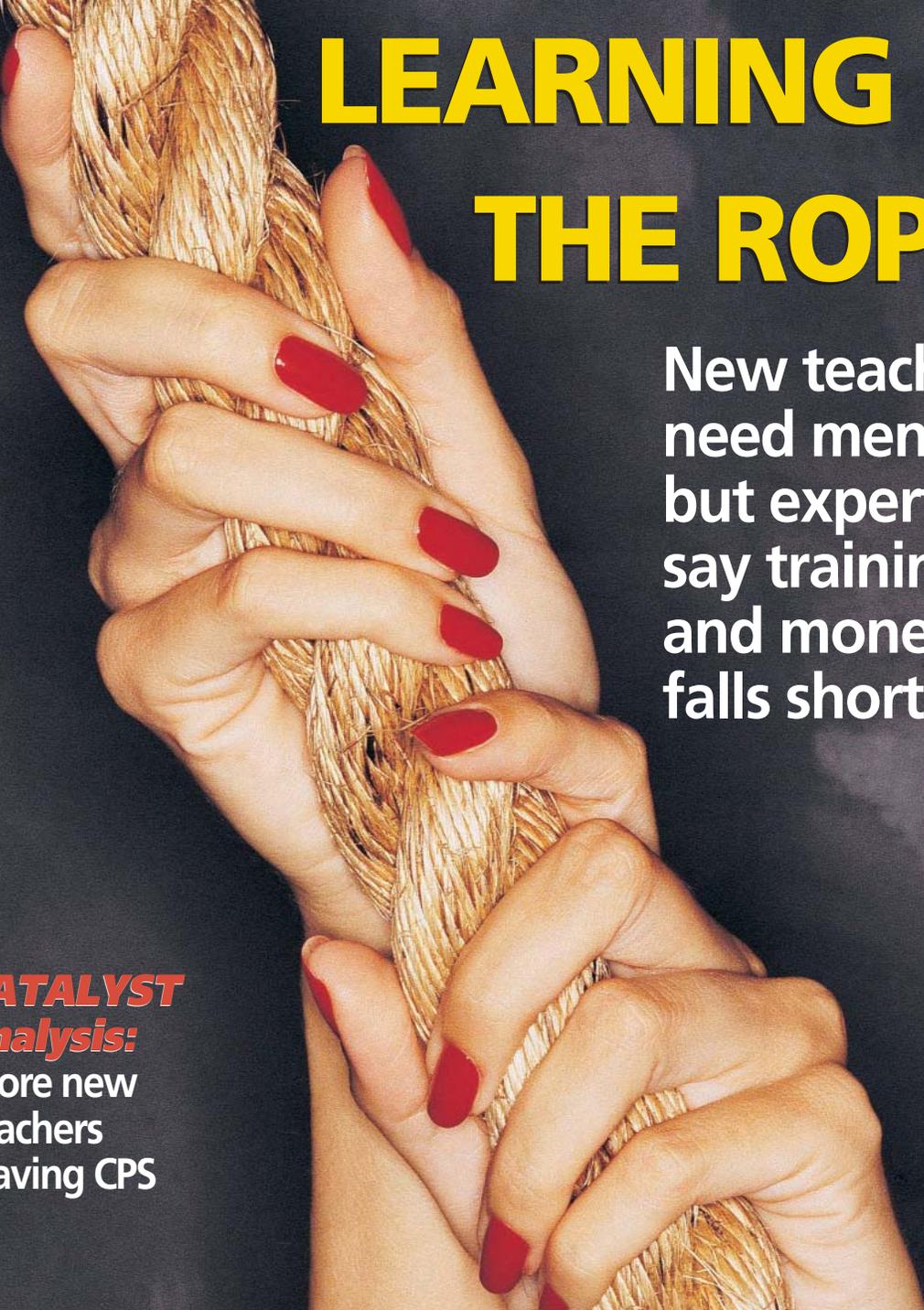


VOLUME XV NUMBER 3 November 2003

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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM



LEARNING THE ROPES

New teachers
need mentors,
but experts
say training
and money
falls short .

CATALYST
analysis:
More new
teachers
leaving CPS

Mentor, principal support are keys to keeping new teachers

Kelly McNamee, a recent college graduate, landed a teaching job this fall at May Elementary in Austin. A native of downstate Belleville, Kelly was nervous about moving to Chicago and, being white, about teaching in an inner-city public school. But McNamee was determined to make a go of it—even when friends wondered why she took such a job at all.

A unique orientation program for new teachers in West Side schools eased her fears. The four-day orientation included visiting students at their homes, getting to know them and their parents, and learning her way around students' neighborhoods.

When it was over, Kelly says she felt more comfortable and even enthusiastic about the new school year ahead. She was further heartened when, on the first day of school, a student she had met on the one of the home visits recognized her and gave her a welcoming hug.

Yet weeks later, Kelly quit, becoming another statistic in a long-standing city challenge: hanging on to new young teachers.

In an analysis of school district hiring and retention data, *CATALYST* Associate Editor Debra Williams found the problem is getting worse. New teachers are leaving the district at a faster rate than they were five years ago. This fall, a whopping 31 percent of teachers hired two years ago had left, up from only 18 percent over the two-year period beginning in 1996-97.

While Kelly got a better-than-average head start, she hit a brick wall when she stepped inside May. The school had 10 new teachers, and, at the time Kelly left, Principal Sandra McCann-Beavers had not taken advantage of a recent Chicago Public Schools initiative to pair every new teacher with a mentor to help guide them through the difficult first year inside a classroom. By the end of September, at least half of the newcomers were gone.

The CPS program calls for every principal to appoint a lead mentor to create and oversee a support plan for new teachers. Yet the program lacks the teeth and funding that could force or entice schools like May to follow through.

Meager funding is one reason why the number of mentor training days was cut down from four to two. Schools don't get extra money to pay substitute teachers to cover mentors' or new teachers' classrooms when they observe each other teaching or go to training. Difficulties like these make follow-through tough even for schools that make mentoring a priority.

In the end, children pay the price through loss of continuity and having a string of novices teach them. And while money is a big part of the solution, it won't fix the problem entirely.

Early this summer, when teacher contract talks were in the early stages, the Chicago Teachers Union released the findings of a study it had commissioned to find out why teachers leave CPS. Respondents, who tended to be older and more experienced members of the profession, pointed strongly to lack of principal support, particularly when related to student discipline.

If those things drive out seasoned teachers, it's fair to assume that they are a major factor in the loss of young blood. So once again, the quality of principal leadership takes center stage. The School Board, along with its external partners, can move none too quickly to bring coherence and vision to the task of improving that leadership through training and support, expectations and accountability. Working more closely with local school councils would make a difference, too.



Veronica Anderson

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Catalyst

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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

Shock absorbers

Mentors help new teachers survive their first year—and stay in the classroom

by Debra Williams

With 39 percent of teachers new to Chicago resigning within five years, top administrators under Schools CEO Arne Duncan know the district has a problem with teacher turnover. It has increased both the staff and money devoted to the mentoring of new teachers, but local and national experts say the program falls short of what's needed.

"I would commend Chicago for embracing mentoring, however, the training for mentors is not sufficient," says Tom Carroll, president of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

Research shows that new teachers stay around longer with mentoring—having veteran teachers show them the ropes, act as a sounding board and help them perfect their teaching practices. But, mentoring is only as good as the mentor, and that's where training—and the money to pay for it—comes in.

The School Board is spending \$3.2 million on the districtwide mentor program. (The previous administration reportedly kicked in the same amount.) However, there's no money to hire substitute teachers to cover the mentors' classes during training, let alone during the time they work with their charges.

"We ask principals to provide subs," says Amanda Rivera, director of CPS Teachers Academy for Professional Development. "This is a challenge."

Pushed by two Chicago foundations, with the help of a local university and the Chicago Teachers Union, former CEO Paul Vallas launched a mandatory new-teacher mentoring program called MINT

in 1997. Short for Mentoring and Induction for New Teachers, it provided four days of training in such mentoring skills as working with adults, giving feedback and effective communication. In its fifth year, 480 schools participated.

However, many principals complained that releasing teachers for training placed a big burden on their schools. They didn't like having so many teachers, especially teacher leaders, out of the building at the same time or having to pay for substitutes to cover their classrooms.

Mentoring revamped

Last year, under new leadership, MINT was revised and its name changed to GOLDEN (Guidance, Orientation and Leadership Development Empowering New Teachers). Administrators doubled the size of the staff and increased funding for the program, and sought to involve all 600 schools. Training for mentors was reduced from four days to two—one in the fall and one in the spring—and teachers were required to attend both.

In October, 751 veteran teachers—mentors for first-year teachers and coaches for those in their second year—attended one of the six-hour training sessions conducted over a two-week period by CPS's Teachers Academy. Last spring, nearly 400 schools sent a "lead mentor"—someone who would create new teacher support plans for their schools—to a four-day session that coached them on teaching practices, classroom observation, how adults learn and strategies to provide constructive feedback.

"Mentor development is key to a successful induction program," stresses Ellen Moir, director of The New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Optimally, mentor training takes place before school begins and continues through the year, explains Moir, whose center runs a nine- to 12-day mentor academy during the school year.

Education leaders complain that the training under GOLDEN is not enough. Shervia Randall, the lead mentor at Coles Language Academy, agrees. "I was a MINT mentor, and I think four [training sessions] are better than two. Getting together is a time for sharing and

reflection, and we need to know what is working in other schools. If there is a problem that we need to work through, by the next meeting in March, the year is almost over.”

Carroll says that, based on the national teaching commission’s experience, “Two days is not sufficient. Based on our experience of what is effective, there should be two days of training in the summer, followed by two days of training during the year and additional time throughout the year to work with other mentors.”

But Teachers Academy Director Amanda Rivera says it’s hard enough to get good attendance for the two sessions. “Principals have told me, ‘I’m not sending anyone because I have too many to send out.’ We do not have money to pay for subs.”

Ravenswood Elementary Principal Joy Donovan says no one from her school went to the spring training session, and no one is attending the current training programs either. “It’s a very busy time for my teachers, plus the money just isn’t there for something I don’t consider a necessity. My current mentors have been trained.”

Some schools are so large and have so many new teachers that mentor training would seriously deplete the staff and require substantial funding to pay for substitutes. For example, Lane Technical High, which has an enrollment of 4,235 students, has 22 mentors and coaches. Steinmetz High has 30. At rates that range from \$75 to \$100, subs would cost Steinmetz between \$2,250 and \$3,000 a day.

Rivera says that some principals have asked if the Academy can send people to train mentors after school or during a common prep time. “We don’t have the capacity to do this for everyone,” she says, and when she does hold on-site sessions, they do not provide a full six hours of training. She adds: “Money would make a difference. We had hoped to get funding from the state. They set aside dollars for this, but that didn’t happen.”

State funds evaporate

Last year, the Illinois General Assembly acknowledged the importance of mentoring by allowing teachers to count participation in so-called induction programs toward earning full certification. However, the funding proposed for induction

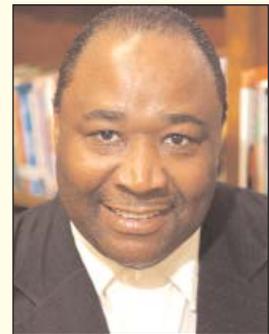
Learning the ropes

When veteran teachers were tapped to be lead mentors, one of their tasks was to create new teacher support plans at their schools. Most plans call for introducing new teachers to the staff, loading them up with supplies and other tools, and providing them with a school handbook. But some enterprising mentors and principals included novel ideas. Here are a few of them:

Larry Thomas, principal **Coles Elementary**

Make sure new teachers do not get the least desirable classrooms as well as the most challenging students.

“Around May or June, all the teachers get together at each grade level and we balance out the kids. We know the personalities of our kids—who’s doing well, who needs additional help—and we do an even distribution so that our new teachers do not have all the lowest-performing students.”



Sarah Janega, lead mentor **Morgan Park High**

Hold a scavenger hunt to acclimate new teachers to the building.

“We had 25 new teachers. We divided them up into teams, gave them a map and a list of names and office numbers. They had to find the room and get their list signed at each room.”

“We have two three-story buildings. It is critical that new teachers know where everything is so they can direct students, especially freshmen. It was also a way for them to work as a team, get to know each other and build relationships. It took about 45 minutes and they were awarded prizes.”



Thomas Little, principal **Black Magnet**

Give new teachers 10-minute breaks during the school day.

“We offer our new staff two 10-minute breaks, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Sometimes they just need to sit down. Or sometimes they use that time to have someone listen to their concerns. All they have to do is buzz the office and say, ‘I need a little break.’ I’ve gone in and taken over their classes.”



Annette Dluger, lead mentor **Taft High**

Host an ice cream social for new teachers a few weeks after school begins.

“This was something new this year. After four weeks, teachers are really stressed out, so our assistant principal [decided] to throw an after-school ice cream social for first- and second-year teachers. The second years were [invited] so they could assure the new ones that things would get better. They loved it and said they needed it.”

PHOTOS BY JOHN BOOZ AND JASON REBLANDINO

Technology boost

Beginning this fall, teachers, principals and the CPS central administration will be able to conduct much of their mentoring business online. Here's what the new system, called GOLDEN Teachers Online, will track:

- Principals can use the system to report pairings of mentors with first- and second-year teachers, and to monitor new teachers' progress and interactions with mentors.
- Mentors can track how much time they spend with their charge, as well as log detailed information on classroom observations, discussions with new teachers and suggestions to improve teaching.
- New teachers can keep a log of their progress toward fulfilling 15 hours of professional development coursework, which can be taken at a university, a professional organization or CPS workshops. The system will also allow new teachers to register for such courses online, and view their mentors' comments after meetings and observations.

Besides cutting the amount of paperwork, the new system also will serve as an accountability measure. "We'll be able to see when matches were made," says Amanda Rivera, director of CPS' Teachers Academy. "Principals will be able to see how many new teachers they have and if mentors are working with new teachers and how often. [Area instructional officers] will get an overall perspective of what's going on at each school."

GOLDEN Teachers Online is one element of a larger CPS online network that tracks teacher professional development.

Debra Williams

programs, \$8.5 million, was cut from the budget. Rivera does not know how much CPS would have received.

Currently it costs \$3.2 million to run the program. The primary costs are for mentor fees. Mentors who work with one new teacher receive a yearly stipend of \$750; for two new teachers, \$1,500.

Effective induction programs cost about \$5,800 per new teacher per year,

says Moir. The investment is worth it, she adds, because "there is no way to quantify the negative effects on a classroom when teachers leave."

In addition to training mentors, Rivera says, "We need to provide professional development for principals [so they] understand how critical their role is. We need more dollars for substitute coverage, so all mentors can be trained properly. Having access to people has been hard."

Still, Rivera is hopeful. Given the number of schools and teachers that have participated in training, awareness of the need to acclimate new teachers into the system has increased, she notes. "But we still have a long way to go," she adds.

Her goal is to get 100 percent participation in GOLDEN, make sure every new teacher gets two years of support, and offer professional development to all mentors and principals.

Another area she expects to improve is data collection. Administrators do not have a clear picture of teacher attrition and retention rates, which schools have the largest teacher turnover or which schools could serve as models because they are training the most teachers.

"If you don't have this data, you don't know if what you are doing is working," says Doug Timmer, a researcher at Chicago ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), which conducted its own study of teacher retention in selected schools. "You have to know who is going and who is staying."

Rivera says a new web-based tracking system will improve data collection and make mentor assignments more efficient. For example, last year many principals did not match new teachers with mentors until after the first crucial weeks of school. Now, Rivera says, principals will be able to go online and see how many new teachers they have and whether mentors are working with new teachers and how often. (See story at left.)

"We've had our glitches," she says. "But this is our first year, so that's to be expected. "In time, this system is going to help us keep better track of our new teachers, where they are and how they are doing. And it will help get us away from so much paperwork."

Besides money, mentoring new teachers takes time, and some mentors say they don't have enough of it. The first quarter of the year requires a lot of paperwork and other activity for veterans and new teachers alike, including five-week failure notices, filling in atten-

dance books, planning remediation for children who score below the national average on the standardized tests, arranging the first report card pickup and conducting open houses.

"The first week and the last week are more harried, and that's when new teachers need you," says lead mentor Holly Brown of Marsh Elementary, who is mentoring two teachers. "By the time we talk to new teachers about what they need to turn in and how it should be turned in, our own stuff is late. We meet before and after school, but by that time you are tired and you want to go home."

Area Instructional Officer Cynthia Barron says leadership is the key to resolving many of these issues. "The role of the principal is to think creatively and come up with ways to bring everyone together," she says. "Principals must sit down and make sure mentors have the time for new teachers."

More support

In October, the University of Illinois at Chicago received a five-year, \$5.5 million federal grant to hire full-time mentors for student and first-year teachers assigned to public schools on the West Side.

The program goal is to learn how to support new teachers who have no experience working at schools in low-income, African-American communities, says Victoria Chou, dean of UIC's College of Education. "We'll gather teacher and mentor assessment and data on what works best."

CPS is working with the Illinois Retired Teachers Association to hire retired teachers to support mentors and new teachers in hard-to-staff schools. Retired teachers would cover mentor and new teachers' classrooms to give them time to observe each others' classes and work together. A \$200,000 pilot program is slated to begin in January in up to 12 schools in Austin, Englewood and Little Village.

At central office, the district has charged the newly created Office of Principal Preparation and Development with recruiting and training new principals who will make new teacher support a priority.

"Principal development is critically important," says CEO Arne Duncan. "Our goal is to support our new teachers. Good principals do a great job of nurturing teachers." ●

CATALYST analysis:

More new teachers leaving CPS

Teachers new to Chicago Public Schools are leaving the system at a higher rate than they were 10 years ago, according to a *CATALYST* analysis of School Board data.

The increase comes at a time when schools are under increasing pressure to improve test scores and as the Baby Boom generation heads into retirement.

“Obviously we are looking at this long-term trend and trying to do specific things about it to address this issue,” says Schools CEO Arne Duncan. “We’ve recruited a high number of [high] caliber teachers. But if we don’t understand the importance of the retention side, we’re kidding ourselves.”

The *CATALYST* analysis found that 39 percent of teachers hired in 1998-99 left within five years, compared to 28 percent of teachers hired in 1993-94.

The increase was even more dramatic for teachers leaving within two years of being hired. Of the 2,475 teachers hired in 2001-02, 31 percent had left after a couple years. Of those hired in 1996-97, only 18 percent were gone within two years.

“I don’t know why,” says Ascencion Juarez, CPS’s chief officer of human resources. “It could be any one of a number of reasons.”

“I’m speechless,” says Allen Bearden, director of the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center. “This means we need to look at the induction procedures and see if we need to provide different kinds of support.”

The most recent study of teachers’ attitudes about Chicago’s public schools may offer insight. Conducted biannually by the Consortium for Chicago School Research, the survey of 12,000 CPS teachers measures their level of trust and sense of shared leadership with principals, their commitment to schools, and their influence in curriculum decisions.

Between 1999 and 2001, those measures of teacher climate—which had been stable since 1994—declined, says Sue Spote, the researcher who conducted the survey.

Spote speculates that the new accountability policies, such as probation and intervention, may have some-

thing to do with the higher rate of new teacher attrition. “It sometimes takes time for the downside of these things to become apparent.”

Another researcher, who was recently commissioned by the Chicago Teachers Union to study CPS teacher attrition, says *CATALYST*’s analysis bears out the findings of his report. “The organizational situation in schools is bad,” says Robert Bruno of the Institute for Labor and Industrial Relations at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “Teachers don’t feel supported by principals or feel the environment is conducive to their professional development.”

Bruno surveyed 3,706 teachers who left the system between 1991 and 2002, not counting retirements; 371 responded. Survey respondents tended to be older, more experienced teachers—the average age was 33 and 62 percent had master’s degrees—who continued to teach after leaving CPS.

Teachers cited such problems as student behavior, a lack of principal support, poor parental involvement and inadequate salary.

At the time, CTU President Deborah Lynch said the union would develop a

training program for members who sit on professional personnel leadership committees in schools. She also called for a joint task force with the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association.

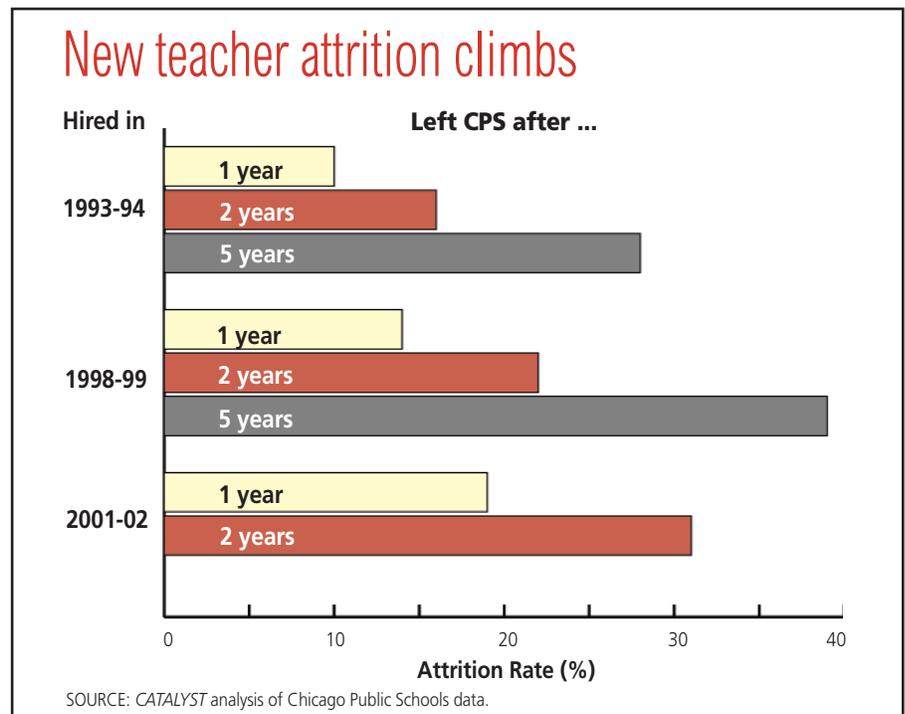
Bearden says other issues may need to be looked at as well. Eliminating the city residency requirement may keep more new teachers in the system, he suggests. “Some of this could be for financial reasons or because we don’t provide the necessary support,” he adds.

Nationally, teacher attrition numbers have remained constant. “It is a chronic situation,” says Richard Ingersoll, a professor at the University of Georgia who studies teacher attrition. “It is relatively high in general and high among beginners. Why it has gotten worse in Chicago, I’m not sure what is going on there. Given the state of the job market, the numbers surprise me.”

Duncan points to a revamped induction program and new office of principal development as evidence that the district is addressing new teacher attrition.

“Our goal over the next four or five years is to improve these numbers and reverse this trend,” he says.

Debra Williams



Even training by master teachers didn't prepare Kyle Miller for year 1

by Debra Williams

I'm here. I'll be right there," yells Gretta Steadman, a 3rd-grade teacher at Kohn Elementary, as she breezes past Room 608 and into her own classroom next door to put away her belongings.

It's 8 a.m., and she has promised to meet with Kohn's new 3rd-grade teacher, Kyle Miller, before school starts at 8:45.

Sabrina Anderson, the school's reading specialist, will also sit in.

Once settled, Steadman begins. "You mentioned you needed an idea for language arts. Take the basal [textbook] and the lesson plans and work on parts of speech for the first 10 weeks," she tells Miller.

"I know this is a foreign language to you right now," she adds, "so I'm going to make you a list."

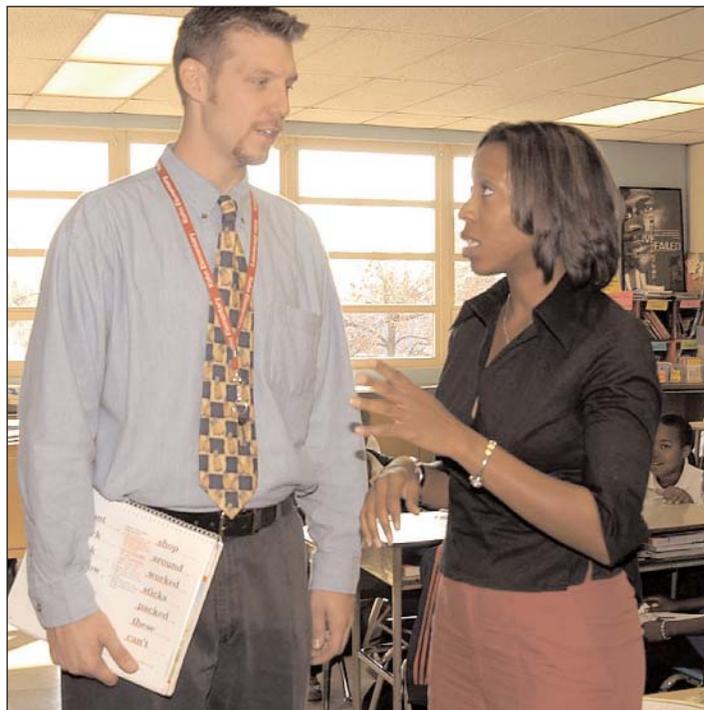
Miller nods and thanks her, and they move to his other concerns, including how to maintain a grade book and classroom management.

By the end of September, Steadman and Miller will have had seven meetings like this one.

This is Miller's first teaching assignment, and he thought he'd be prepared. He spent last year in a classroom as part of his training at the Academy for Urban School Leadership, a CPS professional development school staffed by master teachers. (See *CATALYST*, May 2003.) "I got to see what happened from start to finish," says the 32-year old. "I was able to learn about best practices."

Since his arrival at Kohn, however, Miller has been challenged by issues that have nothing to do with best practices, such as grading, filling out report cards, pacing lessons and managing classroom behavior. "Even with all the things I learned last year, it can be overwhelming sometimes," says Miller.

Indeed, the first year of teaching, particularly in an urban setting, often makes or breaks a new hire. It is not uncommon for new CPS teachers to leave the



JUDY FIDKOWSKI

Kohn Elementary 3rd-grade teacher and mentor Gretta Steadman, right, checks in with new teacher Kyle Miller to see whether he needs assistance. Steadman and Miller meet before and after school and informally during the day.

system for suburban districts, private schools or quit teaching altogether.

Under CPS' mentoring and induction program, called GOLDEN, Steadman became Miller's mentor the second week of school. The hope is that with support and guidance, he will remain at Kohn and in the public school system.

A mentor's job

Steadman, who has been teaching for six years, vividly remembers her first year. "I felt alone and isolated. I was an emotional wreck," she recalls. "I took the entire summer after my first year to prepare myself for the next year. By my second year, I started helping new teachers any way I could because I know what I went through. That's why I decided to mentor Kyle when I was asked."

By mid-October, Steadman had not yet attended a mentor training class. "It has been hard to get a sub," she explains. "We're working on it."

At Kohn, lead mentor Dina Everage tried to pair each of the school's six new teachers with a veteran from the same grade.

Steadman says she sits down with Miller about 30 minutes or more each day to talk about his problems. She sometimes looks into his classroom to see how he's doing. Teaching next door, she'll pay a visit if the noise level gets too high. "I don't do it often, and I look from a distance and talk to him about it

Miller's first year

Biggest challenges

- Managing student behavior
- Pacing instruction

Who's helping

- Mentor: 30 minutes daily
- Reading specialist: checks in daily
- Direct Instruction coordinator: daily check-ins

later,” she says. “I don’t want the kids to lose sight of who is in charge.”

That’s important for Miller because one of his biggest concerns is managing his students’ behavior. “I am struggling with classroom management,” he says. “The challenge for me is learning what is acceptable behavior. What’s an acceptable level of noise? How do I encourage my kids to raise their hands when they want to talk instead of yelling out, which is instinctively what they want to do?”

Steadman’s advice during one of their meetings: “They will test you. You are going to have to set an example with a few of the students to show you are not joking. Then, I will help you with grouping. You can get a lot out of small-group instruction.”

Later, Steadman praises him and reports that while his class can still be unruly, it is getting better.

The new teacher also worries that he is not managing his time well enough to allow him to adequately cover every subject each day. He thinks he spends too much time on reading and math. “I need to get myself a timer,” he says.

Miller says he doesn’t know what he would do without Steadman’s assistance and the support of other staff members. Before pairing him with Steadman, lead mentor Everage would check in with Miller every day to see if he needed help and even gave him her home phone number. The school’s Direct Instruction coordinator, Shannon Shockley, also checks in daily to see if he needs help. And reading specialist Anderson checks once a day to see if everything is going okay.

“Everyone I work with at Kohn has been very helpful,” Miller says. “They have gone out of their way for me. They told me they are committed to my having a successful year.”

Reality of teaching

Miller, a Rolling Meadows, Ill., native, received his bachelor’s degree in business communications from Roosevelt University, and before going into teaching, spent 12 years in a variety of positions at Motorola. His last stint was in human resources. “I did a lot of volunteering in that job, and I realized I was getting more fulfillment out of the volunteer work than the job,” Miller explains.

So in January 2002, when there was a possibility he would be laid off, he



Kyle Miller, 3rd-grade teacher, on the challenges of his first year:

I am struggling with classroom management. The challenge for me is learning what is acceptable behavior. What’s an acceptable level of noise? How do I encourage my kids to raise their hands when they want to talk instead of yelling out, which is instinctively what they want to do?

Gretta Steadman, 3rd-grade teacher, on why she agreed to be a mentor:

I felt alone and isolated [my first year teaching]. I was an emotional wreck. I took the entire summer after my first year to prepare myself for the next year. By my second year, I started helping new teachers any way I could because I know what I went through. That’s why I decided to mentor Kyle when I was asked.

started looking for another career, and kept looking even when his Motorola job became secure. In July 2002, he signed up for the Academy program, which results in a master’s degree in elementary teaching from National-Louis University. He was placed in a 7th-grade class the first semester and a 3rd-grade class second semester. “I feel [it] prepared me for handling the urban environment,” he says.

But Steadman believes Miller’s experience did not fully mirror the realities of urban teaching.

“As a new teacher, you feel like you are going to do all these wonderful things that you learn in school, and you are going to change everything,” says Steadman. “But the reality is he had three teachers in a classroom [at the Academy]. They touch on classroom management, but not much. Now he’s all alone, so the techniques don’t turn out like they did when there are three adults in the classroom.”

The demographics are also different. The student population at the Chicago Academy was a mix of Latino and Polish. Kohn’s population is almost 100 percent African-American.

“Yes, culturally, it is different,” says Miller, “but good teaching is good teaching. The practices I learned there were helpful, but the environment was different.”

Sticking it out

By the end of September, Miller was still struggling with classroom management, and Steadman goes to bat for him to lessen his load. For instance, Miller has 20 boys and two girls and many of his students are repeating the 3rd grade. “That many boys together spells trouble, and will create a chaotic classroom,” says Steadman. “And because many of his kids have been retained, they are not motivated. I’m talking to the principal about this so some of his kids will be staffed to other classrooms.”

Steadman says that during her first year, she had 30 students and 27 had been retained—15 of them twice. “That’s been the history of teaching. They tell you in college that you will get the worst class.”

But Miller plans to stick it out. In addition to the Kohn staff, he is able to turn to fellow Academy graduates. “I talk to one about three times a week, and I have good relationships with the other new teachers there, too. We’ve gotten together Friday evenings.”

Also, the Academy has pledged to support its graduates for five years and assigns a staff member to meet with them at least five Saturdays a year.

“We all have our days,” says Miller. “But when I have them, I reach out and talk to someone.”

Summer program aims to retain teachers at West Side schools

by Debra Williams

Last school year, Johnson Elementary in North Lawndale lost five teachers—four who were new to teaching—in six months. One moved to another state and four transferred to other schools.

Such turnover is not uncommon in the schools of poverty-stricken North Lawndale.

“They can bring them in,” says Madeline Talbott, director of Chicago ACORN. “However, when candidates were hired, they left almost immediately.”

In a survey of predominantly low-income schools, including many in North Lawndale, ACORN found a turnover rate of 22 percent for new teachers hired in 2001-02. The citywide average that year was 19 percent.

Now, with a program called Ignite the Light-Teach, ACORN, CPS and a local foundation are tackling the three problems that principals and veteran teachers cite for new-teacher flight: apprehensions about personal safety, isolation and a lack of classroom management skills.

Aimed at new teachers in 25 West Side schools, the program provides four days of workshops in cultural diversity, classroom management and effective communication with students and parents. It features a trolley ride through several West Side neighborhoods and a visit to student homes. And it all happens before the first day of school.

The thinking behind it is that if teachers get comfortable with new surroundings early on and have a support system in place, they will be more likely to stay.

“Absolutely,” says Susan Udelhofen, co-author of “The Mentoring Year,” a guide to professional development that CPS will use this year. “This not only encourages teachers to stay, but to become knowledgeable about the context of where their kids are coming from.”

Launched in 2002, the program has served 65 new teachers. This year, 30 participated, 10 of them from May Ele-



CHRISTINE OLIVA

In August, new teachers assigned to schools on the West Side board a trolley to tour the neighborhood.

mentary in Austin. The program just now is beginning to track participants to see if they remain in their schools.

What teachers learn

On the first day of the program, new teachers get a crash course in cultural diversity and working with students in the classroom, then take a two-hour trolley tour of the North Lawndale.

In the morning, two speakers share tips. Give students an interesting reading assignment during the first week and assess how well they do, suggests Barbara Radner, director of the Center for Urban Education and Assessment at DePaul University. Break the curriculum into weekly chunks, she suggests, to help students get a handle on what they are supposed to learn.

The next speaker, poet Oba King, gives a short lesson in African-American culture and advises new teachers to create lessons that allow students to celebrate diversity.

“I felt a lot more confident my first day,” says Kelly McNamee, a new 7th-grade teacher from May Elementary. “I’d

never seen anyone go through what should be done on the first day of school or the first week before.”

In the afternoon, teachers hop on a trolley and head south on Sacramento Street. Sites along the way include neighborhood elementary schools where many of the new teachers will be working, Manley and Collins high schools, Mt. Sinai hospital—“Where many of your students were born,” says the guide—a YMCA, the technology resource center at the new Homan Square Community Center and recent commercial developments. The tour ends in Douglas Park, where Michael Scott Jr., son of the School Board president, led a tour of the park’s recreational facilities, including an outdoor pool and 18-hole miniature golf course.

Teachers say the trip vanquished some preconceived notions. “Before the tour, I thought the West Side would be poorer than the South Side,” says Ashanti Howard, a new 2nd-grade teacher at Dvorak and a life-long South Sider. “But that’s not true.”

On the second and third days, new teachers participate in an intensive workshop in classroom management, called Consistency Management and

Cooperative Discipline. The program was developed by researchers at the University of Houston and is being piloted in 12 North Lawndale schools this year.

The course offers techniques for teachers to create a positive learning environment and avert discipline problems. For example, teachers were instructed to make small, hand-held signs on Popsicle sticks that say “Stop” and “Quiet, please” and hold them up for control of the classroom. Another idea was to create mail boxes for students to communicate with the teacher, and brag boxes for them to praise each other’s work. Finally, instructors suggest setting open and closed times for the pencil sharpener, a popular way for students to disrupt class.

“I used all of these techniques in my first week of school,” reports Howard. “And they work. I have very few interruptions in my class.”

The last day begins with communications coach Kenneth Robinson, who challenges new teachers to examine their own beliefs and ideas about teaching to improve their own communication with school staff, students and parents. A teacher’s own fears about his or her performance may cloud perceptions and interactions with others, he warns.

Visiting families

After wrapping up the communications session, teachers embark on a walking tour of the community and visit potential students at home.

ACORN tried to pair each teacher

“Many [new teachers] are from the ‘burbs and have never been on the West Side.”

Sallie Pinkston, mentor teacher, Johnson Elementary

with a family with children from that teacher’s assigned school and grade level.

“Many of them are from the ‘burbs and have never been on the West Side,” says Sallie Pinkston, a teacher and mentor at Johnson. “Visiting the neighborhood helps them get a deeper understanding of the neighborhood and the children they will serve.”

Talbott agrees and adds, “New teachers need to know that the folks behind the door are not what they see on TV. These are not people lurking behind these doors, but people who will respond positively to them.”

McNamee, who moved to Chicago from Belleville, Ill., only two weeks before the orientation, says the home visit put her more at ease.

“When I told people I was going to teach in an inner city school, they said, ‘Why?’” says McNamee. “I didn’t know how I was going to be received by parents or how the kids would respond to me, especially because I’m a white teacher. Being able to walk around and meet a family and some of the other kids helped.”

On the first day of school, one student whom McNamee met during a home visit recognized her and gave her a hug. “That made me feel great,” she says. Even so, by

mid-September, McNamee had left May for a job in sales. (See page 2.)

Putting it together

The summer program was developed by the Steans Family Foundation, which concentrates its education grant making in North Lawndale. Steans tapped two community groups—Chicago ACORN and the North Lawndale Learning Community—to plan the program content. This year, the MacDougal Family Foundation kicked in funding for classroom management training, which was piloted in six North Lawndale schools six years ago and extended to include six more this year.

The summer institute costs \$20,000, which covered the costs of a teacher coordinator, speakers and other resources. Staffers from ACORN volunteered their services as tour guides.

“This program could definitely be duplicated citywide,” says Susan Adler-Yanun, senior program officer for education at Steans. “It seems like a no-brainer. It doesn’t cost much, and the costs would not increase if we had more participants.”

Program planners concede that they did not track last year’s participants to determine whether they remained on staff at their schools. However, they plan to do so beginning this year. “We decided to assume this role this year,” says Russell. “We also want to make sure to keep up with all the teachers that attended the institute throughout the year to see if they are being supported.”

In the meantime, ACORN would like to see the program duplicated in other neighborhoods that it works with like Englewood, West Englewood and Little Village.

“We’ve raised the idea to CPS and they are very interested,” says ACORN’s Talbott.

For more information on the “Ignite the Light” program, call Cheryl Russell, executive director of the North Lawndale Learning Community, 773-722-0950.

Late hires miss out

Twenty-five schools were invited to send new teachers to this year’s Ignite the Light program, but only 10 did.

“The problem is many principals were still hiring teachers after our orientation was held in mid-August,” says Cheryl Russell of the North Lawndale Learning Community, a network of 13 public schools.

Principals say late notice from retiring or transferring teachers sends them scrambling to fill vacancies as late as the first week of school. (A provision in the tentative new teacher contract would give retiring teachers a bonus if

they notified the system in March.)

“I hear the program is wonderful, but we haven’t participated yet,” says Principal Robert Pales of Henson Elementary, who hired two teachers after the orientation.

Principal Betty Green of Herzl Elementary hired five new teachers just before school opened. “I wanted to get them involved in the program, but ... these were all last minute,” she says.

Green suggests postponing the program, but organizers say that would conflict with the School Board’s new teacher orientation and the first day of school. Says Russell, “We’ll keep looking at what we can do.”

Debra Williams

Reporter turned teacher offers tips and advice for first-year peers

In 1999, Leslie Baldacci, a 25-year veteran reporter with the *Chicago Sun-Times*, quit her job to go back to school to become a teacher. Five years later, Baldacci, a 5th- and 6th-grade social studies teacher at Dixon Elementary in Chatham, talks to *CATALYST* Associate Editor Debra Williams about what new teachers need to stay in the system. Baldacci recently published a memoir, “Inside Mrs. B’s Classroom: Courage, Hope and Learning on Chicago’s South Side.”



Social studies teacher Leslie Baldacci, a former newspaper reporter, selects books with her 5th-graders at Dixon Elementary. Her new book encourages new teachers to stay the course.

Q: Talk about your first year of teaching at a school in Roseland. In your book, you say you did not get much support from the school's administration.

A: It was difficult. I was 45 when I did this, so I could deal with it. Frankly, it was harder for me to deal with the disrespect from the children, which was something I was not used to. But I was determined. Plus the children needed me. My 2nd-graders had been through four teachers the year before. They were a mess when I got them.

Q: What do new teachers need to keep them teaching in their schools?

A: When a new teacher comes in, they need someone at their elbow, another grownup, helping them get into their routine. I so wish that I had had a student teaching experience with a generous and capable leader teaching me. Teachers leave because we grow discouraged and we lose faith in ourselves. We need extraordinary support not to lose that faith.

Q: Do new teachers need something else besides a mentor?

A: Time for planning. Time to observe another classroom in the same grade level with an experienced teacher. They need those friendships that reach out down the hall and say, “Let’s have your kids read to my kids.” They need to see some cre-

ative connecting of the schedule to see how we can make things work better if we work together. And sometimes they just need someone to listen.

Those relationships are hard to build because we can never go out to lunch together. We can never talk on the phone. We can barely go to the bathroom. We basically come to our job and spend the day with children by ourselves.

Q: Talk about the importance of principal support for new teachers.

A: Leadership is everything with a school. It sets the tone. A strong leader encourages teachers to do what they do in impossible situations.

Q: What advice can you offer to new teachers, especially if they are at schools where they don't feel supported?

A: They can repeat this mantra to themselves: “I work for these children. I’m here to serve these children.” I encourage teachers to support each other. Reach out. Ask for help from your other teachers. They want to help you. Buy the expensive stapler—the kids break the cheap ones. Sing every day.

Q: In the classroom or outside the classroom?

A: Wherever you need to.

States mandate, pay for mentoring

Other states, districts use long-term mentors, career ladders, and even lighter work loads to train and keep new teachers.

by Jeff Kelly Lowenstein

In the last 25 years, 30 states have passed legislation that requires school districts to provide new teacher induction programs, but only 16 of them pay for it. And today's tough economic times across the country are threatening some of those.

Districts that provide such programs, whether they are mandated or not, have realized positive results—fewer new teachers leave, and teaching skills are developed and improved.

Legislators and academics recognize mentoring as a strategy for boosting student achievement and a key tool for reducing the exodus of new teachers in urban schools, nearly half of whom leave before reaching their fifth year, according to Michael Knapp of the University of Washington.

Last spring, the Illinois State Board of Education recommended that legislators allocate \$11 million to pay for a required two-year mentoring program for new teachers. (A law mandating the new teacher induction program was signed this summer.) But funding was cut in the final state budget.

At best, the national landscape for mentoring is “uneven and muddied,” observes Barnett Berry, director of the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. The following are snapshots of the national terrain for model programs to support new teachers.

Thibodaux, La.:

Program doubles retention

One of the more successful programs is in Lafourche Parish Public Schools and it was recently adopted as a model for the entire state. Since 1996, when the program began, Lafourche Parish's annual teacher retention rate has increased from 50 percent to 93 percent. Test scores and the number of qualified

teachers in the district of more than 15,000 students have risen, too. The cost of the district's program, which continues through teachers' third year on the job, runs \$50,000 a year.

Nearly 80 new teachers enter the school district each year. “We assume they don't know how to teach,” says Annette Breaux, who coordinates the induction program in Thibodaux, La.

But Breaux says the system addresses the novices' lack of knowledge in an intensive four-day orientation in August that is a “crash course in classroom teaching and effective management.”

Once school begins, mentors observe new teachers every nine weeks, and help them develop individual improvement plans to use as self-evaluation tools. New teachers have daily access to on-site curriculum support, monthly meetings with peers, and a full-day retreat in April.

Each of these activities emphasizes integrating the new teachers into the school community—an approach that some novices find surprising, Breaux says. “The biggest punch initially is that people are welcomed with open arms,” she says.

Delaware:

3 years required

This year, Delaware adopted one of the strongest new teacher support programs. For the first time, districts are required to provide mentors for new teachers during the first three years on the job.

This commitment is one of the nation's longest, according to Mary Ellen Kotz, who oversees professional accountability for the Delaware Department of Education. For every first-year teacher, Delaware spends \$1,700 on mentor stipends, consultants' fees and district grants, Kotz says, and nearly \$2 million on the program.

Initially piloted in three districts in 1994, Delaware's one-year mentoring

and induction program expanded to each of the state's 19 districts by 1999. The new law added an additional two years of mentoring and expanded the mandate to 13 charter schools. First-year teachers must attend regional district level workshops, observe experienced teachers, and spend 30 hours a year with their mentors.

Delaware's program is unusual in that it mentors administrators and it defines school nurses, counselors, librarians and school psychologists as teachers. Since its inception, the program has produced plenty of anecdotal reports that document its impact, but “no hard data,” says Susan Fioravanti, a lead mentor in the Colonial School District in New Castle County.

Oklahoma:

Budget slashed

Mentoring has been required for more than two decades in Oklahoma, but this year mentors will be working for free. Legislators in Oklahoma have already informed mentors that they have slashed the budget by \$1 million.

In the past, mentors have received stipends of up to \$500 per year, says Ramona Paul, assistant state superintendent, who expects the payments to resume next year.

The program was largely viewed as a success. Created by the state's Teacher Reform Act of 1980, the mentor program was first implemented during the 1982-83 school year. While the state does not collect data on the program, surveys of first-year teachers have shown positive results, according to Linda Ruhman, director of the state's Resident Teacher Program.

A committee comprised of a mentor, an administrator and a representative of a teacher education institution guide beginning teachers. The committee meets three times a year, and each member observes the new teacher in the

classroom three times. At the end of the teacher's first year, the committee decides whether to award the teacher certification or require a second year in the resident program.

California: Big state, big spending

In California, state and local monies combine for one of the most extensive mentoring programs in the country—each incoming teacher automatically enters a two-year mentoring program.

Districts receive more than \$3,400 per new teacher from the state to spend on assessment and training materials, and to hire substitute teachers to fill in when new teachers are collaborating with colleagues or taking professional development classes. Each school district is required to kick in another \$2,000 worth of teacher supplies and services. On a per-teacher basis, California's program is the most expensive in the nation, says Jaymee Kjelland, a consultant for the California Department of Education.

Statewide retention rates for first- and second-year teachers rose to 91 percent by the end of the 1990s, say department officials.

But since then, the program has struggled to maintain quality while serving the rapidly growing number of uncertified teachers who were hired since the state legislature mandated reducing class size, says Ellen Moir, director of the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

The New Teacher Center mentors about 600 novice teachers each year and studies best practices in teacher induction, but is not connected to the state's new teacher program.

Rochester, NY: Career ladder, mentors retain more new teachers

In Rochester, a district with 36,500 students and 3,600 teachers, mentoring is tied to decisions about whether to keep new teachers.

Each mentor, responsible for one to four new teachers, observes his or her charges as many as 45 times per year, according to Martha Keating, first vice-

president of the Rochester Teachers Association. To compensate them, mentors are released from up to half of their teaching load, or receive an additional 10 percent pay. Rochester attempts to match every first-year teacher with a mentor, but is not required to do so. Mentors may work with teachers during their second year if necessary.

Along with district administrators and input of mentors, Rochester has devised a four-step career ladder in which teachers move through intern, resident, permanently certified and professional stages. Keating says the system retains 80 percent of its mentored teachers.

Since its inception in 1987, union and school district officials have joined together to make the program work, Keating adds. A panel composed of six members of the teachers union and six school district officials, reviews principal and mentor evaluations of first-year teachers. If a principal wants to fire a new teacher and the mentor disagrees, the panel discusses subsequent options for the teacher. Often, interns who are doing poorly at one school are given a second chance at another school, where many have "gone on to be very successful," Keating notes.

Susan Villani, senior program associate at WestEd, a federally funded education research center, says mentors who are also evaluators face two challenges. Their dual role could "make it more difficult to have a trusting relationship," says Villani, who wrote the book "Mentoring Programs for New Teachers: Models of Induction and Support." At the same time, the mentor's relationship with a new teacher could make it difficult for them to say the novice is not doing a good job.

Columbus, Ohio: More retained, released

As in Rochester, N.Y., sometimes teachers can be tougher on each other than outsiders. The Columbus Education Association steps in when its teachers are not teaching effectively, according to President John Grossman. But first-year teachers also receive support through graduate courses at Ohio State University that are tailored to their individual needs.

The school district dismisses up to 7 percent of first-year teachers annually

for poor performance—far more than district officials fired when it had sole responsibility for teacher evaluation, Grossman says.

But Columbus, which participates in the Peer Assistance and Review program, also retains as many as 80 percent of new teachers every year, he notes.

Every first-year teacher is observed at least 20 times by a mentor, generally a colleague who teaches the same subject and grade level. After each observation, the mentor gives the new teacher written feedback, and meets with him or her to discuss interactions with students and teaching strategies. The regular first-hand observations usually guarantee that principals and union members will agree on whether to keep or fire the new teachers by the end of the year, Grossman says.

Minneapolis: Full-time teacher, part-time schedule

Collaboration between one high school in the Minneapolis School District, the teachers union and the University of Minnesota has produced a unique teacher residency program.

After graduation, about 15 residents have an opportunity to carry a lighter teaching load while earning full-time pay. Their modified schedule calls for them to spend 60 percent of their time teaching class, and the rest of their time preparing lessons and taking professional development courses.

Beginning teachers receive regular support from a school mentor, other new teachers and the school's principal, says Steve Yussen, dean of the university's College of Education and Human Development. It seems to make a difference. The tiny program has an 82 percent retention rate over a 12-year period, and now, about a third of the high school's 100 teachers are former residents, Yussen says.

Teacher stability is a key factor for students' success, he notes. "There's a fair amount of information that shows schools that beat the odds ... have [similar] characteristics," he said. "One of them is stability."

Jeff Kelly Lowenstein is a freelance writer.

Letters

District 2 mistakenly gets credit for walkthroughs

I read with interest your September issue of *CATALYST*. Thanks again for your commitment and dedication to school reform and school improvement. With great surprise I noted that credit for the idea of the walkthrough was given to District 2 in New York. This continues a long line of false credits to this district.

In November 1992, the *Atlantic Monthly* published an article by David L. Kirp that said District 2 schools in East Harlem (then called District 4) had become famous among educators for their quality relative to that of other inner city schools. Then he notes the following:

“Comparisons with other districts do show that from 1978 ... to 1989, District 4’s reading scores rose by 14.2 percent, as compared with 2.3 percent for the city as a whole. That was the second biggest improvement recorded in all of the city’s districts. (The biggest improvement, 14.5 percent, occurred in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a Brooklyn district that is 98 percent black and Hispanic, whose school system combines choice at the junior high level with a strong emphasis on scholastic drills and testing.)”

The emphasis on the word “second” is mine. The first-place district was District 13 where J. Jerome Harris was community district superintendent and Argie Johnson, former superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools, was his deputy. It was in this district where the walkthrough started as a strategy developed by those using research on high-performing, high-poverty schools conducted by Ronald R. Edmonds in the late 1970s.

J. Jerome Harris taught the walkthrough strategy to me, and we adopted the technique as one of 10 daily routines for principals used by the School Achievement Structure (SAS), a comprehensive school reform model that I developed.

You will find the most sophisticated

practice of SAS’s walkthroughs described in a report on CPS external partners published by the Consortium on Chicago School Research in July 2003.

Lois Weiner of New Jersey City University takes on this myth in her study, “Research or Cheerleading? Scholarship on Community School District 2, New York City.” She argues that District 2 schools do not appear to be superior when compared with schools which are demographically similar in District 25 in Queens, and criticizes the researchers for their close relationships with school and district leaders.

Lauren Resnick of the University of Pittsburgh responded that the cooperative work between researchers and District 2 officials was by design and intended from the start to link scholars and practitioners in a then-new form of research and development. Resnick had a harder time disparaging the findings about achievement.

Only research done in schools that are 90 percent African-American, 90 percent poor and 10 percent high-achieving will yield strategies which gain maximum academic achievement in those schools. Researchers get funded for exploring universals; therefore, they seek schools which are integrated, but the experience of African-Americans is particularistic. When high poverty, low achieving schools become high achieving, they are classified as outliers and eliminated from studies.

In her editorial in the September issue of *CATALYST*, Editor Veronica Anderson says, “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.” Anderson only had to ask Rollie Jones or Audrey Cooper-Stanton, both of whom appear in this issue. As principals, they used walkthroughs and were exceptional

instructional leaders.

Lastly, one of the tragedies of present day research is the inclination of researchers to set up experiments as either/or situations when practitioners in high poverty, low-achieving schools need to do both. For example, didactic methods may be necessary for teaching some skills, but interactive methods will facilitate the learning of others. Phonics and whole language provide another example. Teachers must cope with discipline problems, irate parents and sometimes with superiors who actually know less about what to do than teachers. Conditions set the stage for strategies. If researchers do not experiment under those conditions, their research may not be as useful.

Barbara A. Sizemore, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita

School of Education, DePaul University

Principal initiative not new to CPS

I read with great interest your articles “Take a walk on the walkthrough” and “CPS formula for change.” While I highly endorse the systemic direction, this initiative is not entirely new to CPS. As early as 1991, the School Achievement Structure (SAS) and its 10 routines, a program formulated by Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore, conducted walkthroughs at the schools it serviced as external partner. Following this direction, Region 3 continued the practice in over 40 schools that volunteered to take part in our initiative, the Region 3 Achievement Structure.

I also note with great interest that two of the area instructional officers interviewed, Dr. Audrey Cooper-Stanton and Dr. Rollie Jones, participated in Region 3’s program when they were principals. Dr. Cooper-Stanton oversaw the program.

Chicago educators have a rich history of leading educational initiatives and have been called upon by school districts in other states to share our experiences.

Hazel Steward
Retired
CPS Region 3 Officer



Chicago International Charter

Charter expands with Gates grant

by Leslie Whitaker

Just a few weeks into the semester, half of the juniors in Sean Lawler's basic English class at Northtown Academy, a new charter high school, were flunking. "The workload [is] a lot more than they're used to," Lawler says of his students.

However, after calling the parents of the 20 students with failing grades, he is hopeful that things will improve. The parents pledged to try to motivate their children to do their homework, he reports. "If they would do it," he adds, "most of them would be fine."

Megan Quaile, Northtown's director, sees the difficulty as a normal part of adjusting to a new school with a new curriculum and new teachers, many of whom are themselves new to teaching.

"The first few weeks will involve understanding where the kids are coming from and what they need," she says.

Quaile previously was principal of Good Counsel High School, which closed in May and reopened in August as Northtown. Nine of Northtown's 32 teachers also came from Good Counsel; others are from other charters and private and public schools. Two are graduates of Teach for America, a national program that recruits college graduates to teach in inner city schools.

Northtown is the seventh campus to open under the charter held by the Chicago Charter School Foundation. It selected its 215 freshmen by lottery from 30 feeder elementary schools and filled out its sophomore through senior classes with 185 students from Good Counsel and the remaining 55 from high schools across the city.

In August, a total of 455 students dressed in crisp, new blue and white uniforms walked into the newly secularized Good Counsel, which had been stripped of religious statuary over the summer.

(An enormous stained glass window remains in what once was a chapel.)

Together, the campuses of the charter foundation serve 4,200 students and are known as the Chicago International Charter Schools.

Northtown also has the distinction of being the first of four high schools that the foundation plans to open with the help of a \$4 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The charter foundation is now scouting sites for the other three.

Curriculum an experiment

The charter foundation has selected a largely untested instructional program for the four new high schools. Created by Charles Venegoni, head of the English and Fine Arts Department at John Hersey High School in northwest suburban Arlington Heights, the program involves a highly structured curriculum designed to progressively deepen skills and understanding over time. It stresses basic skills, especially reading and writing, and weaves in popular topics, including political and economic rights; racial, class and gender identity; and current events.

Central to Venegoni's design are units that teachers coordinate across disciplines. A freshman unit on citizens' rights and responsibilities, for example, requires students to create a Department of Environmental Quality and Research in their biology class, to draft a set of laws and envision an enforcement system in their Social Science class, and to discuss censorship in English class.

"The teachers do have some freedom, but they can't close their doors and do what they want to do," says Quaile.

Venegoni's design has been implemented on a limited basis, mostly in the language arts and social science departments at Hersey, but the results have been positive. While the most recent

Management groups

American Quality Schools Bucktown

2235 N. Hamilton
Year opened: 1997
Grades: K-8
Enrollment: 655

Prairie

11530 S. Prairie
Year opened: 1998
Grades: K-8
Enrollment: 427

Washington Park

6105 S. Michigan
Year opened: 2001
Grades: K-7
Enrollment: 406

West Belden

2245 N. McVicker
Year opened: 2002
Grades: K-7
Enrollment: 455

Chicago Charter School Management

Basil

1816 W. Garfield
Year opened: 2002
Grades: pre-K-6
Enrollment: 472

Northtown

3900 W. Peterson
Year opened: 2003
Grades: 9-12
Enrollment: 455

Edison Schools Longwood

1309 W. 95th
Year opened: 1997
Grades: K - 12
Enrollment: 1,370

Prairie State Achievement Test results have yet to be released, Steve Cordogan, director of research and evaluation for School District 214 in Arlington Heights, confirms that Hersey's latest scores show "remarkable" progress. The percentage of students meeting state standards in reading rose from 68 percent in 2002 to 77 percent in 2003. In writing, scores rose from 72 percent to 87 percent over the same period.

The question is whether the program will work well across the entire spectrum of courses and among the wide variety of students at Northtown. While Hersey's students are not as well off as those at, say, New Trier High School on the North Shore, they have more advantages than those at Northtown. Only 5 percent are considered low-income, compared to 30 percent at Northtown.

The charter foundation acknowledges it is taking a risk. "We're in the innovation business, so we have to be ready for failures," says foundation President Gerald Jenkins. "[Venegoni's model] has worked, and what he described makes sense. We have to try things like that. Whether or not it's a success, I'll tell you next year."

Venegoni's connection with the charter foundation comes through David Ferrero, a former Hersey colleague who is now the Gates foundation's director of evaluation and policy development for education. (See story, page 18.)

Charter is a mini-conglomerate

The Chicago Charter School Foundation was the brainchild of Chicago options trader Jim Murphy, who wanted to honor the memory of his father, who made financial sacrifices to send him to private schools. After several years of raising scholarship funds to allow underprivileged students to go to elite college preparatory high schools, Murphy decided that he could help more students by creating more school options inside the Chicago Public Schools system.

To do this, he recruited a prominent board of directors, including Gerald Jenkins, a lawyer and former school board member in north suburban Highland Park, and Herbert Walberg, an education professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Their approach was



Sean Lawler, an English teacher at Northtown Academy, Chicago International's newest site, answers a student's question in an 11th-grade writing class.

to have the foundation provide financial and development expertise, while contracting out the day-to-day operating services to experienced educators. Unique among Illinois charters, this approach opened the door to for-profit participation in charters, even though Illinois law prohibits for-profit companies from holding charters.

After six years at the helm, Murphy surprised observers by leaving abruptly this summer. "As the organization grew, it became more institutionalized," says Murphy. "I have a style of doing things. I'm more do-it-myself."

Greg Richmond, CPS director of New School Creation, which oversees charter schools, remarks, "His personal work ethic drove the organization for quite a while." But as Chicago International matured, it needed different types of skills, he adds.

Before he left, Murphy hired Elizabeth Delaney, a former education professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, as the foundation's executive director. What she took on is a mini-conglomerate, with three management companies running seven schools:

- Edison Schools, a for-profit organization that provides educational services to 132,000 schools in 20 states, operates Longwood. Before Northtown opened, Longwood was the only campus serving high

school students.

- American Quality Schools, a non-profit school company founded by Michael Bakalis, a former state superintendent of education, operates Bucktown, Prairie, Washington Park (formerly St. Edmonds) and West Belden.
- Chicago Charter School Management, which the charter foundation itself created, runs Northtown and Basil.

While the management companies are largely in charge of curriculum and personnel, the board did get Edison to drop Everyday Mathematics, an experiential program developed at the University of Chicago, in favor of Saxon Math, a more structured approach favored by Bakalis' group.

Some decisions, such as uniforms, schedules and discipline policies, are made at the foundation level.

Although charter schools enjoy freedom from most city and state regulations, they are subject to accountability measures. Richmond pioneered an assessment program that compares charter schools' outcomes to comparable schools within the CPS system. It looks at multiple performance measures, including absolute performance on standardized tests, as well as student and school gains, and then rates the school at one of six levels, from schools



Megan Quaille

of distinction (highest) to schools on probation (lowest).

The Chicago International campuses combined performed better than the comparison school averages on 22 of 28 measures, which earned the charter program a “school of distinction,” one of only four charter schools to merit the highest rating.

Chicago International did receive

four low ratings. Students at the Washington Park campus, for instance, scored lower than those at a comparison school on the reading and math components of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. They also made fewer gains in reading.

The State Board caps growth

The foundation’s original charter agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education put a ceiling on Chicago International’s growth by limiting its enrollment to 5,000. With Chicago International only 800 students shy of the cap, the three Gates schools yet to come could enroll an average of only about 266 students each.

One option under consideration is converting Longwood into a Gates school, which would mean gradually introducing Venegoni’s curriculum into the high school grades, starting with 9th grade and adding the next higher grade

each year. Whether Edison would continue to manage the school in that event is an open question.

In the meantime, Delaney has approached Richmond and asked his help in persuading the State Board to lift the foundation’s enrollment cap. She says that if the cap on the number of students isn’t raised, the charter foundation may consider serving disadvantaged students by opening charters in surrounding communities, such as Evanston.

However, Delaney says the foundation is more interested in quality than quantity. “We’re trying to create a balance between growth and excellence,” she explains. “It’s more difficult to run one school than multiple schools, which allows for economy of scale. If a boiler goes at one school, I can fix that. With just one school, I wouldn’t have enough money. But I’m more focused on outcomes than growth. We need to look at what we’re doing and do even better.”

Leslie Whitaker is a freelance writer.

Friendships help charter tap into mountain of money

The \$4 million Chicago International received from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation arguably is a lot of cash, but it is only a pile of pennies in comparison to the mountain of money—nearly \$2 billion—that the foundation has committed to educational reform since its inception in 1994.

Concerned about national high school graduation rates that hover around 70 percent and drop to 55 percent for African-American and Hispanic students, the foundation has focused a large part of its efforts on secondary schools, including projects involving the replication of successful small school models. New York City, a pioneer in the small-schools movement, has been a major recipient. Just last month, it got \$51 million to create 67 more small high schools.

The Gates initiative at Chicago International is the foundation’s first involving a Chicago charter school. It follows a \$7.7 million award last April to support the creation of 12 new “small high schools” inside Chicago’s regular public

school system.

In some ways, Chicago International seems an odd recipient for the Gates money, as it has relatively little experience with high schoolers. Before Northtown, only one other campus, Longwood, stretched beyond 8th grade. Yet offering a comprehensive curriculum for grades K through 12 “has always been central to its stated mission,” says Elizabeth Delaney, executive director of the Chicago Charter School Foundation, the nonprofit foundation that manages Chicago International.

As with other charters, the bulk of Chicago International’s funding comes from the state.

When Chicago International submitted its proposal to Gates, it was building on a couple of personal connections. For one, charter foundation treasurer Craig Henderson plays online bridge at a site frequented by Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates and once played against him, notes Ben Lindquist, former co-director of the charter foundation. “That served as an

impetus for submitting an inquiry,” he says. For another, Charles Venegoni, co-author of the grant, is well acquainted with David Ferrero, the Gates Foundation’s director of evaluation and policy development for education. The two taught together at John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, where Venegoni still works, between 1990 and 1996.

At the Gates Foundation, “we attempt to work with school systems and to work at the margins by supporting new school models,” Ferrero explains. “Chicago International seemed to be successful with elementary and middle schools, and I bought their argument that they needed high schools for their students to feed into. I like Chuck’s model, and I told Chicago International that I thought [his model] had the best of their schools: rigor, ethics, structure and innovation.” Not surprisingly, when Venegoni and Chicago International executives met, they hit it off.

Leslie Whitaker

Grants

Chicago Community Trust

- \$200,000 to the Center for School Leadership at the University of Illinois for a training program for CPS principals and other urban district leaders.

- \$170,000 to Teach for America for general operating expenses.

- \$150,000 to Logan Square Neighborhood Association for a project that will encourage parents to read to their children at home.

- \$133,000 to Steans Family Foundation for its new teacher support initiative.

- \$125,000 to the Consortium on Chicago School Research for a study on CPS classroom instruction.

Chicago Public Education Fund

- \$200,000 to Summer Fellows, a teaching internship for junior and senior education majors that introduces them to CPS.

- \$200,000 to the Center for School Leadership at the University of Illinois for a training program for CPS principals and other urban district leaders.

- \$200,000 to CPS to support an initiative to promote data-based decision making throughout the school system.

- \$150,000 over two years to Golden Apple Teacher Education (GATE), an alternative certification program to prepare post-collegiate professionals to teach in urban schools.

CNA

- \$15,000 to Skinner Elementary for general operating expenses.

- \$15,000 to After School Matters, a program that offers extra-curricular activities to high school students.

Coleman Foundation

- \$86,800 to Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurship Education to train teachers in the entrepreneurship programs at South Shore High.

Field Foundation

- \$19,500 to Nash Elementary to aid in providing professional development for 20 CPS science teachers.

- \$15,000 to Burley Elementary to support professional development provided by the staff of Suzuki-Orff School for Young Musicians.

- \$15,000 to North Lawndale Learning Community to support professional development in language arts for CPS elementary school teachers.

- \$15,000 to the Erikson Institute to support continued professional development in child assessment for early childhood teachers.

Fry Foundation

- \$20,000 to East Village Youth Program for a college readiness program for high school students.

- \$20,000 to Designs for Change for training and support of local school councils.

- \$20,000 to Chicago Academy of Sciences to expand science education training for teachers at four CPS elementary schools.

Harris Bank Foundation

- \$30,000 to North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter High for support of a summer student development program.

- \$20,000 to L.E.A.R.N. Charter to build a new school facility.

Japanese Chamber of Commerce

- \$5,000 to Chicago Academy of Sciences' Peggy Notebaert Museum for an after-school education and community outreach program for 50 CPS students.

- \$5,000 to Friends of the Chicago River for a river curriculum project to train K to 4th-grade teachers.

- \$5,000 to Pegasus Players for artist residency programs at six CPS elementary and high schools.

- \$5,000 to Waters Elementary for salary support for a director of ecology programs.

Joyce Foundation

- \$780,000 over two years to the Consortium on Chicago School Research to support its school reform research.

- \$400,000 over two years to Community Renewal Society to support the publication of *CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform*.

- \$150,000 to Neighborhood Capital Budget Group to support community involvement activities related to CPS facility planning and design.

- \$110,000 to Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) to help LSCs advocate for improved teaching and learning in CPS.

McCormick Tribune Foundation

- \$6.2 million to eight institutions to support early childhood education programs in Chicago and Illinois. Grantees include Kohl Children's Museum (\$2.5 million); Dolores Kohl Foundation (\$994,000); University of

Chicago (\$804,000); Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (\$750,000); Chicago Metropolitan Association for the Education of Young Children (\$570,000); Erikson Institute (\$330,000); National-Louis University (\$175,000); and Loyola University Chicago (\$78,000).

Midwest Generation

- \$250,000 to Juarez High to build a performing arts center that will be part of the school's \$25 million expansion.

Morgan Stanley

- \$25,000 to After School Matters, a program that offers extra-curricular activities to high school students, for general operating expenses.

Polk Bros. Foundation

- \$80,000 to Arts Matter/Gallery 37 for an after-school arts initiative for special needs students in up to 14 CPS elementary schools.

- \$75,000 to Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education to train and support CPS teachers to work with artists on integrating fine arts into core subjects.

- \$70,000 to Organization of the NorthEast for a parent leadership and involvement project in CPS schools located in Uptown, Edgewater and Rogers Park.

- \$70,000 to Teach for America for general operating expenses.

- \$50,000 to Chicago Foundation for Education for a small grants program to support CPS teachers who develop innovative classroom projects.

- \$40,000 to Erie Neighborhood House for an after-school program for CPS elementary and middle school students.

- \$40,000 to Near Northwest Neighborhood Network for a technology integration program for CPS students.

- \$40,000 to Urban Gateways for an arts exposure program for students at 17 CPS elementary schools.

Washington Mutual

- \$35,000 to the Illinois Business Roundtable to advance a statewide teacher education program that aims to increase the number of National Board-certified teachers in Illinois.

Compiled by Sabrina Strand

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

Strike votes and what they've brought

By late October, teacher unions in 28 Illinois school districts had voted to approve strikes. In 17 of those districts, settlements had been reached, three of them following walkouts, according to the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board.

Teachers in two districts, Hononegah in the far northern area of the state and Freeburg in the southwest, were walking picket lines at press time.

A *CATALYST* survey of 10 of the districts where contracts had been signed found a wide range of raises, from an annual average of about 1.6 percent to an annual average of about 8.25 percent—not counting increased pay for extra years of service or the compounding that comes with multi-year contracts.

The tentative agreement rejected by members of the Chicago Teachers Union

called for raises of 4 percent for each of five years, offset in varying degrees by increases in employees' contributions to health-care costs.

The raises in Gurnee's Woodland District 50, which had a 13-day strike, were the highest reported, but they were targeted at teachers with five years' experience or less, who make up 60 percent of the district's faculty.

Gail Purkey, spokeswoman for the Illinois Federation of Teachers, says that raises typically are tied to the vitality of local property taxes, which are the main revenue source for Illinois school districts. "Everyone likes to look at another district and say, 'Oh, look what they got' or 'Oh, look what they didn't get.' And that's local property taxes," she says.

Rising health care costs are a key issue statewide, she says. "In virtually every set of negotiations, health care costs are at the table. It's becoming a bigger and bigger problem."

Chicago Public Schools spending on health care rose from \$192 million in 2001-02 to \$223 million last school year, a 16-percent increase, according to a CPS spokesperson. The district paid 98 percent of both individual and family coverage. This year, costs are forecasted to rise another 15 percent.

As for contract length, Jerry Glaub, deputy director for communications at the Illinois Association of School Boards, notes that school boards try to get long ones but, given current economic constraints, they are having a hard time offering raises that are large enough to get their unions to accept long contracts.

In a 2001 association survey, only 29 percent of 500 districts reported contracts of more than three years. Glaub says that the current economy augurs against more long term agreements.

Maureen Kelleher

For more on insurance costs, go to www.catalyst-chicago.org

Talks continue in other big cities

New York City Contract expired May, 2003

What teachers got: Previous contract talks lasted 19 months, resulting in raises of 16 to 22 percent over 30 months.

Why they got it: Political pressure to compete with the suburbs for better teachers.

What they gave: A longer school day, averaging 20 extra minutes per day. No reduction in school year.

What now: Opening bargaining session held Sept. 17. No sessions since then.

What they said: "I think the absence of anyone [at the table] who has responsibility for instruction once again shows their underlying disrespect for the people who work for the schools," says Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers.

Los Angeles Contract expired June, 2003

What teachers got: Status quo on compensation this school year while contract talks continue. The School Board dropped plans for furlough days, which would have reduced salaries about 1.25 percent.

Why they got it: Enormous state budget crisis.

What now: Audit of the health benefits system to reduce costs.

What they said: "We're trying to get it to soak in [with members] that there's only so much in the pot of money, and if you take it all for benefits, don't look for any cost-of-living increase," says Sam Kresner, executive assistant to the president, United Teachers of Los Angeles.

Contracts following strike vote

Districts	Contract length	Avg. yearly raise
That struck		
Benton HS (103)	3 yrs	2.3%
Woodland Ele. (50-Gurnee)	2 yrs	8.2
That didn't strike		
Auburn Unit (10)	3 yrs	4.4
Sparta Unit (140)	3 yrs	1.6
Community Unit 300 (Algonquin)	3 yrs	2.4
McHenry HS (156)	2 yrs	3.0
Red Bud Unit (132)	2 yrs	2.2
Zeigler-Royalton Unit (188)	2 yrs	4.0
Olympia Unit (16)	1 yr	6.5
Elgin Unit (46)	1 yr	2.0

NOTE: *CATALYST* calculations do not include seniority pay or the compounding that occurs in multi-year contracts. In Woodland, 8.25% went only to less senior teachers; senior teachers got lower raises.

SOURCE: District personnel

Choice at charter schools

No Child law labels some failing; nearly half required to offer students transfers or tutoring.

by Alexander Russo

Gwendolyn Lones, mother of two students at ACT Charter, reacted immediately when she got a letter in August from the Chicago Public Schools saying that the school had been deemed failing and she could request transfers for her children.

However, Lones, like most other parents whose children attend charters, had transferred her child into a charter to escape neighborhood public schools.

Six of Chicago's 14 charter schools are on the failing list, and parents like Lones were being offered the chance to transfer back to so-called "non-failing" public schools, not schools in their neighborhoods.

Some jumped at the offer. According to CPS, the parents of 169 eligible charter school students—roughly 5 percent of the eligible charter school popula-

tion—applied for transfers. Only 10 were approved. (Fewer seats were available to choice transfer students compared to a year ago.)

One of the six charter schools initially required to offer choice, Octavio Paz Charter, has since been removed from the list. Another, Chicago International Charter, was not required to offer choice—it fell short in a couple subgroups this year, but has another year to catch up—but received a transfer request at one of its seven campuses. Other schools may be added or removed from the list in November, when the state releases its final analysis of test scores.

In Illinois, schools must have at least 40 percent of students overall meeting or exceeding state standards in reading and math. Subcategories of students—broken down by race or income, for instance—must come within three points of the 40 percent bar to pass. Schools that have not made adequate

progress for two consecutive years must offer choice; after three years, they must also offer tutoring.

For charters, the impact of the choice letters has been moderate.

At Perspectives, the parents of only seven of 155 students applied for transfers; one was approved. "We got some concerned calls—some of them thought the school was closing down," reports Assistant Director Glennese Ray, who notes that the parents of higher-achieving students did not apply for transfers.

At Triumphant, the only charter required to offer choice as well as extra tutoring, 15 students applied for transfers. None was approved.

Octavio Paz, the highest-performing school among charters on the failing list, was hit hardest by transfer requests—74 students applied. CPS approved 6 transfers, but the school lost more than 50, according to Principal Kimberly Briscoe, who, like most principals, did not track why they left or where they went.

"We lost good students," Briscoe says. "There was a lot of misunderstanding about the letter, and many parents thought that you had to go." Others interpreted the notice as an indication that Paz was "going down the same road" as the neighborhood schools they had tried to avoid, she notes. Now, some

See **NCLB** page 23

Final tally

This month, the Illinois State Board of Education will issue school report cards that will include final test scores for the total population of each school and by student subgroup.

Those scores could amend the status of schools that had been previously designated as passing or falling below federal standards set by No Child Left Behind, according to CPS officials.

Three additional factors that have not previously been factored in will be included in the final analysis:

- Whether at least 95 percent of students were tested.
- Whether high schools have at least a 65 percent graduation rate.
- Whether elementary schools have at least 88 percent daily attendance.

Schools that do not meet these additional requirements will be considered as failing to make adequate yearly progress, even if their overall and subgroup test scores hit the 40 percent mark.

SCHOOL	NCLB STATUS	% STUDENTS WHO MET STATE STANDARDS	TRANSFERS	
			REQUESTED	APPROVED
ACT	Choice	27 reading 11 math	35	3
N. Lawndale	Choice	12 reading 1 math	9	0
Octavio Paz*	Choice	38 reading (subgroup) 39 math (subgroup)	74	6
Perspectives	Choice	34 reading 2 math	7	1
Triumphant	Choice & Tutoring	28 reading 9 math	15	0
Youth Connection**	Choice	25 reading 13 math	29	0
TOTAL			169	10

* Removed from state list of schools that must offer choice due to three percent allowance for margin of error.

** Charter with more than one campus.

SOURCES: Chicago Public Schools, Illinois State Board of Education

Undocumented valedictorian fights for law to ease college aid

by Irasema Salinas-González

At a political rally in Little Village on a crisp October morning, a high school valedictorian nervously steps to a microphone. He is anxious to share his dream of getting a college education but not to share his full name. Fernando is an undocumented immigrant.

Fernando and some of the other students at this morning's rally are members of the youth group, Hey-U (High Empowered Youth United). They are at Our Lady of Tepeyac school to fight for the DREAM Act, proposed federal legislation that could be a lifeline to college for low-income, undocumented students. DREAM stands for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors. (See story, page 23.)

Despite an impressive academic record at a Chicago public high school, Fernando has had to turn down many opportunities—among them a summer program at Harvard University and a four-year scholarship to Benedictine University in suburban Chicago—because he is ineligible for a Social Security number. And while he didn't need the number to enroll at Northeastern Illinois University, he will need one to obtain financial aid.

"This is a country of dreams, but at the same time it's a country that stands in the way of your dreams—especially if you're an immigrant," says Fernando.

Crossing the border

Fernando was 12 years old when he and his mother jumped a fence at the Mexican border in 1996 and entered the United States illegally. Like many immigrants, they believed Fernando could get a better education here.

Fernando enrolled at Lozano Ele-



Ald. Manny Flores urges young activists to lobby for a new law that would help undocumented students get financial aid for college. "It's in your hands," he says at the rally, which was held at a Catholic school in Little Village. "The DREAM Act gives you a fighting chance, it's your future."

mentary in West Town and learned English by reading bilingual books from the school library. In high school he excelled, earning a 4.0 grade-point average and a place in the National Honor Society. He was named captain of the soccer, volleyball and academic decathlon teams, and editor of the school yearbook and newspaper. When he graduated valedictorian of his class in 2001, he was recruited by several colleges.

Fernando chose Northeastern because it is affordable and close to home. He pays his tuition—\$2,000 a semester—by working at a janitorial job. A \$1,000 scholarship from his employer helps offset tuition. Now a 20-year-old sophomore, he's in the honors program.

Hey-U was organized a year ago by several organizations, including West Town Leadership United, Build Inc. and Latinos Progresando, to teach leadership and advocacy skills to area youth. Referred by a high school counselor,

Fernando became involved just as the group was forming. As it developed and its young members took charge, they decided to focus first on the DREAM Act and House Bill 60, a state measure to lower the tuition rate for undocumented Illinois students attending state universities. They saw success with HB 60, which has been signed into law.

And they are hopeful about the DREAM Act. Last summer, Fernando and other Hey-U members canvassed Latino neighborhoods, going to block parties, parades and parishes to collect more than 5,000 signatures to petition U.S. Sen. Peter Fitzgerald (R-Ill.) to support the measure. While U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) is a co-sponsor of the bill, Fitzgerald has taken no position on it.

Fernando says he enjoys the opportunity to fight for rights and is heartened to know that he's not alone. "There are students like me who fight and struggle and don't get tired of trying...even if you put

Bill would help undocumented students get money for college

Undocumented immigrant students would find it easier to pay for college and achieve permanent residency under federal legislation expected to reach the Senate floor soon. The DREAM Act would remove barriers that prevent undocumented students from applying for financial aid for college.

Under DREAM, undocumented students could achieve conditional status as a permanent resident if they:

- Do not have a criminal record.
- Arrived in the United States before age 16.
- Have lived in the U.S. for more than five years.
- Obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Meeting these criteria would allow them to get a Social Security number, a requirement for applying for college scholarships and loans. To become eligible for permanent residency, students would have to earn a college degree or be a student in good standing for two years in a degree program; enter the armed forces; or perform 910 hours of community service within six years of getting conditional status.

Since school districts are barred from asking students about immigration status, there is no solid count on the number in Chicago who might benefit from the act. A study by the Center for Urban Economic Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago suggests that about 20,000 undocumented high

school students live in Chicago, and that roughly 3,500 of them graduated from high schools last June.

The lack of legal status makes undocumented students ineligible for activities that most youths take for granted, such as getting a drivers license, applying for jobs and participating in city youth programs. However, Farragut High School Counselor Eileen Ortiz believes the most serious obstacle these students face is the barrier to college financial aid.

Ortiz estimates that nearly one-third of Farragut's 2,000 students are undocumented. "It saddens me because some of these kids want to go to college, and you know they would make it. They value education, but they can't go because they don't have the money," she says.

Critics, including the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a Washington, D.C.-based group, say the measure would encourage illegal immigration.

"The responsibility for their education is on their parents and their foreign government," says Jack Martin, the group's special project director. Martin also says the DREAM Act would siphon money and college spaces from U.S. citizens.

Members of Hey-U, a Chicago youth group that supports the DREAM Act, point out that the families of many immigrant students have jobs and pay taxes, and now call the United States their home.

Irasema Salinas-González

a thousand hurdles in front of us," he says.

Without the DREAM Act, which also provides a path to legal residency, Fernando has an uncertain future: Until his siblings, who were born in this country and are U.S. citizens, turn 21, he has no one to sponsor him for residency.

While Fernando understands the ever-present risk of being deported, he

thinks he will live in the U.S. the rest of his life. He lights up when he shares his aspirations to pursue a medical or business career.

"He's a great visionary who does not allow his status to be a barrier," says Idida Perez, executive director of West Town Leadership United. "Instead, he uses his story as fuel by sharing it." ●

NCLB

continued from page 21

parents who left are trying to re-enroll their children at Paz, she says.

In late August, Paz was pulled off the list of failing schools, along with three regular CPS schools (G. R. Clark, Murphy and Zapata elementaries), when further analysis found the schools' test scores fell within the margin of error for meeting the academic standards.

Paz met the math and reading requirements overall but missed by a hair in three subgroups: reading and math scores for African-American students, and reading scores for low-income children.

Proponents of charter schools say the process is unfair. They note that, in many cases, the numbers of charter school students being tested, particularly in subgroups, is small enough to make test scores results highly variable, and that some charter schools, like Triumphant, are specifically targeting low-achieving students. A CPS report on charter school accountability found those schools generally outperform other public schools [where children would otherwise attend], and often have waiting lists of families who want to enroll their children.

Proportionally fewer charter schools (43 percent) were required to offer choice compared to CPS schools overall (61 percent).

"Some day there will be competition between and among charters and district schools," says John Ayers, president of Leadership for Quality Education, a charter school proponent. "Until CPS is offering more quality choices, most charter parents will stay put."

Lones was one such parent. After making a call to the school director, who explained what the letter meant, she decided to stay put. "ACT is a good school," she says. "I don't think there is any reason to leave." ●

Correction

The student featured on the October cover was misidentified. His name is Adelade Akisanya. He graduated from Manley last June and is now attending Columbia College.

AT CLARK STREET Peggy Davis, chief of staff to CEO Arne Duncan, has resigned to return to Winston & Strawn, the Chicago law firm where she previously was partner. A replacement has not been named. ... **Alfred Williams** of the Office of Accountability has been named director of a new program to help struggling students make the transition to high school. ... **Analila Chico**, principal of Healy, was named area 12 instructional officer, replacing **Emil DeJulio**, who is now Area 6 AIO. **Mary Jo Nyhan**, former principal at the now-closed Arts of Living Alternative School, replaces Chico as acting principal. ... **Andrea Kerr**, an administrator reporting to the Chief Education Officer, has retired after 36 years with CPS. A replacement has not been named.

MOVING IN/ON **Reginald Jones**, former program officer at The Joyce Foundation, has joined the Steans Family Foundation as executive director, a post that was vacated last spring by **Gregory Darneider**, who left to head the new CPS office of post-secondary education. ... **Sylvia S. Gibson**, former Chicago director of New Leaders for New Schools, an alternative principal certification program, was hired by School Board President Michael Scott to oversee student test score improvement at Westcott Elementary in West Chatham. New Leaders co-founder **Benjamin Fenton** is the interim director.

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS The following interim principals have been awarded contracts: **Lucille Denmark**, Reed; **Zaida Hernandez**, Jungman; **Linda Langhart**, Songhai; **Ana Martinez-Estka**, Avondale; **Henry R. Thompson III**, Colemon; **Gail D. Ward**, Payton College Prep; **Zelma Woodson**, Jenner. ... **Cynthia Miller**, assistant principal at Curtis, is interim principal at Fiske.

Assistant principals who have been awarded contracts: **Coralia Barraza**, Orozco; **Lee Jackson**, Crown; **Barbara B. Sims**, Haley; **Cora J. Suddoth**, Field.

Acting principals who have been awarded contracts: **Gwendolyn Boyd**, Marshall; **Jacqueline Buford-Gage**, Farren; **Pamela G. Dyson**, Brooks College Prep; **Barbara Kent**, Burley; **Beverly Ann Martin**, Swift; **Paula Rossino**, Peirce; **Linda Sienkiewicz**, Audubon; **Shelby Taylor**, Revere.

Principals whose contracts have been renewed: **Alford G. Bridges**, Gresham; **Frank Candioto**, Foreman; **Keith P. Foley**, Lane Tech; **Jerryelyn L. Jones**, Curie High; **Sandra Jones**, West Park; **Rebecca McDaniel**, Suder; **Angelena Smith**, Carroll/Rosenwald; **Miguel Velazquez**, Whitney.

Other new principal contracts include: **Ceola Davis-Barnes**, formerly principal at now-closed Terrell, is contract principal at Neil; **Phyllis M. Hodges**, teacher coordinator for CPS human resources, Fenger High; **John S. Katzberger**, assistant principal at Hamline, Graham; **Rudy Lubov**, formerly principal at Bateman, Gale; **Jarvis Sanford**, New Leaders for New

Schools intern, Wendell Smith.

PRINCIPAL RETIREMENTS **Patricia Miznerka**, Irving; **Rita Ortiz**, assistant principal at Norwood Park, becomes principal. **Shirley J. Woodard**, William H. King; Assistant Principal **Shelton Flowers** becomes acting principal. Principal **Kent Nolen** of Harper High has resigned; **Ronn Gibbs**, management support director of Region 5, becomes principal.

SERVICE FOR DOLLARS Illinois Gov. **Rod Blagojevich** plans to introduce legislation next spring that would require state merit scholarship winners to complete at least 50 hours of community service before receiving a \$1,000 cash prize. Blagojevich says he aims to extend the requirement to all students, which would make Illinois the second state in the nation with such a policy.

AWARDS The leadership team of Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) Chicago—**Johnny O. Holmes**, **Wanda Hopkins**, **Ismael Vargas** and **Julie Woestehoff**—and **Arnold Aprill**, director of the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, are winners of Ford Foundation leadership awards. The honor recognizes outstanding leaders who successfully tackle tough social problems. Each organization will receive \$100,000 to advance their work, and another \$15,000 for support activities.

Sabrina Strand



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