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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

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TOWARD A BETTER START FOR MORE KIDS



CPS is giving money to child care centers to hire certified teachers, but there aren't enough to go around

Also in this issue:

Debate brings intellectual rigor to neighborhood high school *Page 17*

NAEP test shines light on racial gap

Late last year, a federal testing agency released yet another set of scores for Chicago—those on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP for short. They didn't get the media attention that the "Iowa's" or the ISAT do. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a report on the front page of its Metro section, and the *Sun-Times* buried a short on page 12. That's too bad because NAEP provides the best measure of how Chicago's over-all reform efforts are doing.

- First, there are no stakes attached to NAEP and, therefore, there is no incentive for anyone to cheat. Indeed, NAEP is given only to a sample of students who reflect a state's or city's public school enrollment, not to every student.
- Second, NAEP measures high-level skills and knowledge, not just the basics.
- Third, NAEP is given at the same time in the same way all across the country so that its national averages are real-time averages, not references to some prior "test-norming" year.
- Finally, since 2002, the number of students tested in certain large cities, including Chicago, has been large enough to allow comparisons among districts facing similar challenges, such as high concentrations of low-income students.

Among the 10 districts included in NAEP's 2003 urban sample, Boston is the best point of comparison for Chicago because the students tested are most similar on the major characteristics of race and ethnicity, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch and parents' educational level. (New York City is close, but the parent educational level is higher—for example, 43 percent were reported to have graduated from college, compared to 30 percent in Chicago.)

Compared with Boston, Chicago is doing very poorly by its black students. For example:

- The percentage of black 4th-graders who scored "below basic," the lowest achievement level, in math was 61 percent in Chicago but only 45 percent in Boston. For 8th-graders, the percentage of black students who scored "below basic" was 71 in Chicago and 64 in Boston.

- In reading, the percentage of black 4th-graders who scored below basic was 67 percent in Chicago and 57 percent in Boston. However, for 8th-graders, the percentages were virtually identical, 48 in Chicago and 47 in Boston.

In contrast, Chicago does relatively well by its Hispanic students. For example:

- The percentage of Hispanic 4th-graders who scored below basic in math was 45 percent in Chicago but 49 percent in Boston. For 8th-graders, the percentage of Hispanic students who scored below basic was 52 percent in Chicago but 62 percent in Boston.
- In reading, the percentage of Hispanic 4th-graders who scored below basic was similar in the two cities—61 percent in Chicago and 58 percent in Boston. However, for 8th-graders, the percentage who scored below basic was 39 percent in Chicago but 46 percent in Boston.

Dorothy Shipp of Columbia University, an expert on the intersection of politics and education in Chicago, sees social trends at work in these numbers. For African Americans, she says, "Chicago has a lot more to overcome." This includes extreme racial segregation that in previous decades yielded severe overcrowding and untrained teachers in black schools. The overarching problem, she says, was the refusal by the political establishment to respond to the civil rights movement. For schools, the legacy was diminished expectations for what they could do for black kids.

Boston desegregated its schools and in the process underwent tremendous upheaval. But at least its black community got official recognition of the injustice it had suffered. And in recent years, Boston's school leadership has focused on the basics of teaching and learning, not flash-in-the-pan programs.

As for the relative educational advantage that Hispanics enjoy in Chicago, Shipp notes their higher level of political organization than in other cities.

Her observations are a reminder that, to a large extent, communities get the schools that they and their leaders demand. When it comes to the education of poor children, the pickets should never be put away.



The online version of this article contains links to the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment reports.

Linda Perry

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Cover photo by John Booz: Erie House substitute teacher Yvonne Diaz with a pre-k student.



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

Beyond babysitting

Chicago a leader in school-community preschool partnerships: “We are serving kids at a different setting, but they are still CPS kids,” says CPS program manager Christine Ryan.

by Debra Williams

The curriculum at the Love Learning Center, a state-subsidized child care center in Washington Park, is standard preschool fare: learning the alphabet, identifying numbers, building gross motor skills and the like.

Now, though, teachers are paying closer attention to how well youngsters learn those skills and are ready with new activities when they falter.

“We now have a guideline and benchmarks to gauge how well our kids are doing,” says Burchell Love, the center’s owner and director. “And when they are not doing well, we’ve learned all these creative ways to help them. If a child can’t walk a straight line, we create a contest, we’ll take walks around the block. Our curriculum has gotten much more interesting.”

The change came with a \$75,000 infusion this year from the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) that allowed Love to hire a certified teacher with a specialty in early childhood education. The money also opened the door for her

other staff members to participate in monthly professional development sessions conducted by CPS.

The money that CPS funneled to Love comes from the \$50.8 million it receives from the state for programs aimed at preschoolers who lag in school readiness. By sharing these state pre-kindergarten funds with private day care and community-based Head Start centers, CPS is seeking to increase the number of children who come to kindergarten ready to learn.

“We are serving kids at a different setting, but they are still CPS kids,” says Christine Ryan, manager of CPS’ community partnership program.

“The percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds in child care and family care setting is overwhelming,” notes Roseanna Ander, a program officer at The Joyce Foundation, which has made preschool a priority. “One of our emphases is integrating early child care into education programs. Physically, it can’t be just in schools.”

CPS formed its first child care partnership 15 years ago, signing contracts with seven agencies. Today, it has contracts with 71 agencies, making it a leader not only in Illinois but also in the nation.

“Chicago has done a much better job

than some other places,” says Anne Mitchell, president of Early Childhood Policy Research in Washington, D.C. “They get it. The attitude is ‘We are trying to make things better for all kids, not just the kids in our schools.’”

With the academic push of the federal No Child Left Behind law, Illinois school districts increasingly are looking to bolster child care services that their communities provide for poor children, says Portia Kennel, vice president for Program Development and Training at the Ounce of Prevention Fund.

Nancy Shier, a director at the Ounce of Prevention, says their organization encourages other Illinois districts to look at Chicago as a model.

Disjointed system

The practice of school districts contracting with private agencies is one attempt to break through the bureaucratic walls that have kept different kinds of preschool programs—subsidized child care, Head Start and state pre-k—separate and unequal. (See chart.)

The Balkanization is an historical artifact.

Putting the pieces together

Chinese American Service League

Alberta Maineri
Lead classroom teacher
Years at center: 1
Education: Master's in social work

Meredith Chambers
Lead classroom teacher
Years at center: 9
Education: Master's in early childhood education

Shil Lin Yuan
Teacher
Years at center: 9
Education: High school diploma, advanced certificate in early childhood education

Dong Mei Guan
Assistant
Years at center: 3
Education: High school diploma, working on Child Development Associate credential

Liu Zhen Zhou
Foster Grandparent
Years at center: 12

Xiao Hong Li
Assistant
Years at center: 7
Education: High school diploma, working on Child Development Associate credential



JOHN BOOZ

Subsidized child care programs appeared in the early 1900s as a social service organized around low-income, working-class families, who needed day care for their youngsters. At the time, the purpose was to provide a service to parents, not to educate children.

Child care centers rely on state subsidies and co-payments from parents to survive. The reimbursement rates can be as low as \$24.34 per day, per child. As a result, the centers cannot afford to pay their teachers very much. Reflecting this reality, the state requires only that teachers have one year of child development experience and 30 college credit hours, including six in child development. (See chart on page 6.)

In the 1960s, the federal government created Head Start to help communities meet the social and educational needs of disadvantaged preschoolers. Offered

mainly through community organizations, Head Start initially had similarly low requirements for teachers, but it is beginning to upgrade them. Last year, 50 percent of Head Start teachers were required to have associate's degrees.

Then in the 1980s, states began to launch state-financed pre-kindergarten programs for youngsters who were considered at-risk of educational failure due to poverty or other socioeconomic factors. In Illinois, it is the only preschool program that requires teachers to have a bachelor's degree and an early childhood (Type 04) teaching certificate.

Since then, evidence that children advance more quickly when they are in preschools staffed by certified teachers has grown.

Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley recently reviewed eight studies on teacher quality and pre-k pro-

grams conducted across the country. "These reports and studies all echo the same message," says Marcy Whitebook, director of the university's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. "Pre-k teachers who have at least a bachelor's degree, coupled with specialized training in early childhood development [or] education, provide the best preparation for pre-kindergarteners' advancement to the next level."

The review was sponsored by the Trust for Early Education, a national advocacy group.

Combining programs

While early childhood education advocates would love for all preschools to have certified, specialized teachers, they know that is now unaffordable. Instead, they are

pushing what they call blending, or using state pre-k money and its requirements to upgrade the other programs.

This year, Chicago received an additional \$11 million from the state for early childhood programs. Of that, \$7 million is being used to blend funding with child care programs.

Christine Ryan says CPS plans to add 67 classrooms this year, bringing the total to 341. CPS has another 364 state pre-k classrooms inside the system.

CPS lines up partners with a request-for-proposal process. It asks agencies to apply and then screens them on a variety of factors, including whether they are in underserved areas, the quality of their programs, and whether they have the capacity to implement their proposals.

CPS has blended programs with social services agencies, private and for-profit child care centers, hospitals and the City Colleges of Chicago.

“We are not funding full programs,” says Ryan. “This is an enhancement grant.”

Once CPS has selected its partners, it counsels them on how to screen for students and hire staff according to state pre-k guidelines. Each center hires its own staff. Ryan says this creates a buy-in from staff and shows them CPS is not trying to take over.

“If we just stick one of our teachers in their program, that ruffles feathers,” Ryan explains. “We give them the dollars and let them recruit. Maybe there’s someone on their staff that is interested in getting that 04 certificate. We truly want this to be a community program.”

Indeed, the next challenge is for the state to produce more certified early childhood teachers. The state has 14,392; of those, 4,650 are in Chicago.

“We know [centers] are having problems getting staff,” says Ryan. “Child care centers are not just competing with CPS for teachers, but also among themselves.”

“Still, our push is to do as many as we can,” she adds.

Advocates see blending as a stop-gap. The long-term goal is to create a universal preschool program in the state and make high-quality, affordable preschool programs available to any family that wants it. Last year, more than a third of the state’s 3- and 4-year-olds, about 148,500 children, were enrolled in government-funded preschool or child care programs.

Such a program could also require all early childhood teachers to have bache-

Preschool’s patchwork quilt

State-subsidized child care	Federal Head Start	State Pre-Kindergarten
Teacher Qualifications		
At least 19 years old	At least 19 years old	B.A. with an early childhood (Type 04) teaching certificate. This includes:
60 semester hours of college credit and 6 semester hours in child development	2 years college, with 6 semester hours of early childhood courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32 semester hours of early childhood courses successful completion of basic skills test and early childhood subject tests 100 hours of observation and supervised student teaching
OR	By 2008, a two-year associate of arts degree will be required. As of last fall, 50 percent had to have an A.A.	
1 year child development experience, 30 semester hours of college credit and 6 semester hours in child development		
Average Teacher Pay		
\$8.21 to \$9.76 per hour \$17,077 to \$20,301 per year	\$12.32 per hour \$22,912 per year	\$26.72 per hour in CPS \$44,431 per year in CPS

Early childhood programs in Chicago

Program	Funding Level FY03-04	Children Served projected
CPS state pre-k	\$50.8 million	16,000
CPS community partnerships	\$21.7 million	6,100
Head Start	\$34.1 million*	6,222
CPS child-parent centers	\$15.8 million	2,000
Tuition-based preschool	\$6.4 million	540
State subsidized child care	NA	36,079
Licensed home day care	NA	14,779
License-exempt home day care+	NA	19,758

SOURCES: Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Dept. of Human Services, Day Care Action Council, Illinois State Board of Education

* Includes funds for blending with state pre-k and child-parent centers.
+ Care for 3 or fewer unrelated children by a relative or neighbor.

lor’s degrees and Type 04 certification. (See *CATALYST*, April 2003.)

“For years, child care and the education system have been so far apart,” says Tom Layman, who heads the Chicago Metropolitan Association for the Education of Young Children.

Layman says one reason is that the programs were created for different rea-

sons. Because of that, there is a perception that programs in Chicago public schools are better than programs in the community.

“But programs should be complementary and not competitive,” says Layman. “And there should be enough quality programs available to meet the needs of all working families.”

Certified teachers in short supply

Community-based centers compete with CPS, each other

Mary Beltran spent months looking for a certified preschool teacher for her Mary Crane Center in North Center. Once she found one with that precious certificate, called Type 04, she held on tight.

"I nurture her. I care for her. I make sure she has everything," says Beltran. "She's a gem, and I don't want to lose her. Type 04s are so hard to find. I want to make sure she stays."

Thanks to some revenue-sharing by the Chicago Public Schools, community-based preschools have the buying power to add certified teachers to their staffs. They are shopping in a tight market, however.

"There is a huge shortage of early childhood education professionals, period," says Portia Kennel, a vice president at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. "We are suffering a drain in the field. People go into other fields."

Community-based centers are at a competitive disadvantage, she adds. Teachers in the Chicago Public Schools work fewer hours and have summers off while those employed by private child care programs typically work all day,

year round. Kennel says certified teachers also worry about their professional environment.

"Many of them are geared to go to a CPS school," she explains. "They go to college, and this is what they prepare for. They worry about who their colleagues will be and if they will have the same prestige. Going into a community-based program is a relatively new and unknown option for them."

Christine Ryan, manager of CPS' community partnership program, says she has seen community-based centers compete with each other. "We've witnessed a lot of movement between agencies," she says. "They are saying things like, 'We'll change your hours to reflect CPS' hours or we'll give you this kind of time off.'"

Sometimes it takes centers a while to land a Type 04 teacher. In those cases, they are allowed to make do with teachers who have a bachelor's or master's degree in early childhood education.

"We don't grant waivers—a certified teacher is part of the state mandate," says Ryan. "For the first few months, agencies have to show good faith that they are looking, and file a plan for how they plan to structure their program. Everyone finds someone. We haven't had to pull anyone's funding yet."

Centers use their certified teachers in a variety of ways. Those with a good sup-

ply put one in every classroom. Others have them spend time in more than one classroom. Some have them work with teachers as well as students. And some have them work just with teachers, "our least favorite way," says Ryan. "We want the Type 04s to work directly with children."

Mary Beltran's new teacher, Tarah Kandell, wears a couple of hats, including program coordinator and master teacher. In the morning, she works with children in the child care/state pre-k program. In the afternoon, she works with teachers in the child care/state pre-k/Head Start program. She also works with teachers in the center's toddler program.

"The dual role they sometimes have to play is why it is so hard to get them and hold on to them," says Beltran.

In the case of Kandell, a former CPS kindergarten teacher, she fled what she considered a worse situation, pressure from school administrators to teach in ways she considered inappropriate for her young charges.

"The way I was asked to teach was against what I know about child development," she says. "There's all this pressure around test scores, and my administrators were concerned about the 3rd-grade ISAT tests. I took a small pay cut to move here, but I am much happier here."

Debra Williams

Legislative targets

Looking to the upcoming General Assembly, early childhood advocates in Illinois have set two major goals, winning an increase in funding for the state pre-kindergarten program and winning renewal of a program that has helped stem staff turnover in child care centers. Here are summaries of these proposals:

STATE PRE-K Last year, the Early Childhood Block Grant program, which funds state pre-k, received a \$30 million increase that brought preschool services to an additional 8,300 children, according to Lori Schneider, associate director of public policy and advocacy for the Daycare Action Council (whose name will change to Action for Children in March). About 3,100 of the additional slots are in Chicago, which by law automatically gets 37 percent of Early Childhood Block Grant funding. Advocates are pushing for an additional \$30 million statewide this year.

GREAT START Begun in 2000, this program will sunset in July without further state action. Currently funded at \$7.1 million a year, the program gives extra salary to low-paid child care workers who meet two requirements:

- Their educational levels exceed the minimum requirements set by the Department of Children and Family Services.
- They have been at the same site for at least one year.

The bonuses, which are then disbursed every six months, average about \$1,500 per year. More than 5,000 child care workers, whose annual pay is about \$17,000 to \$20,000, have received at least one. An interim evaluation report done for DCFS by the University of Illinois found that the stipends were influential in limiting turnover and promoting further education among child care workers. While full funding would amount to more than \$25 million, child care advocates are not pushing for more money this year.

Alexander Russo

Georgia upgrades teacher standards

by Felicia Oliver

In 1999, Georgia education officials decided that the best way to prepare more preschool youngsters for kindergarten would be to require their teachers to upgrade their own education. To that end, lead teachers were given three years to obtain at least an associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field such as child development, instead of just a certificate.

In practice, Georgia officials got more than they hoped for. Today, the percentage of lead preschool teachers with a bachelor's degree is 81 percent, according to Gary Henry, a Georgia State University professor of education policy studies, who was commissioned by Georgia in 1996 to conduct a study examining the school readiness and primary-grade achievement of children in the state's preschool program.

Henry says several factors led to the sharp increase. For one, he notes, many pre-k programs hired teachers with bachelor's degrees because "they thought the bar would be raised in the future. And [programs] are paid more per child if they

hire teachers with B.A.'s." He also points out that more teachers are available since the state's public universities expanded their early childhood programs.

Marsha Moore, executive director of the state's Office of School Readiness, calls the 81 percent "phenomenal." Lead teachers who chose not to pursue at least a two-year degree were demoted to assistant teacher positions or replaced.

The requirement sparked virtually no opposition and was met with "relative silence" from teachers when it was announced in July 1999, says Tim Callahan, director of membership and public/media relations for the Professional Association of Georgia Educators.

"We really haven't had any of our members say this is an onerous requirement," Callahan says. "I think many of them might have been moving to reach that level or were already there."

"Children's gains across a battery of assessments, including language, communication and cognitive assessments [are] much better if they've been in classrooms where a teacher has a B.A.," says Henry, whose study was completed in 2001. "The magnitude of the effect of having a B.A. is much larger for kids who live

in poverty. We think that [teachers with a BA] are better able to individualize instruction based on where the child is, and better sense how to help the development of that child."

Moore says Georgia is open to raising the requirement to a bachelor's, "which we know would be good, but we're looking at a teacher shortage in our state."

Starting with a two-year degree "prevented us from losing the trained, experienced staff who could not get from [a certificate] to a four-year degree in the time given," Haley says.

State lawmakers did not provide any extra money specifically to help certificate teachers meet the degree requirement. And preschool programs could not use any of their funds to send under-credentialed teachers back to school.

"We expect providers to hire teachers with appropriate credentials, and we expect the teachers to assume [the] responsibility of maintaining the credentials," says Haley.

Teachers with a four-year degree earn at least \$19,107 a year; those with an associate's degree earn at least \$15,769.

Felicia Oliver is a Chicago writer.

Illinois tackles obstacles to advancement

To help more early childhood workers climb up the educational ladder, a coalition of agencies and advocates is developing a sequence of credentials that spans entry-level care givers and teachers with advanced academic degrees. The idea is to create a continuum of courses that will count toward the next credential.

"There is a need for more certified teachers," says Karen Bruning from the Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies. "We want to see how we can get people through these steps and towards that goal."

Currently many early childhood staffers pursue a two-year course of studies that yields an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. This route is heavy on child development, but light on academic courses such as English and math that would count toward a bachelor's degree.

"People end up duplicating courses or taking courses they don't need," Bruning explains. "Part of what we are doing is developing common core coursework that will be taught at the two- and four-year level and be easily transferable."

The Illinois Early Childhood Career Lattice will spell out the knowledge and skills needed for each of five credentials, from basic care givers (such as women who provide home day care) to the top, a master's degree.

Each level would cover child growth and development; health, safety and nutrition; family and community relationships; child observation and assessments; curriculum development; learning environments; and personal and professional development.

Taking the lead in the project, the Illinois Network is working with 50 representatives from early childhood programs,

advocacy groups, state agencies, colleges and universities to develop a core curriculum for each credential and make sure each is recognized by the state.

"We are also developing a career advisors component," Bruning says. "They would assist people who want to move up in the profession by doing things like making sure they are taking the right classes."

The group is also exploring scholarships to give people incentives to move up the career lattice.

"We're going to have to get people to buy into it. People are always interested in 'What's in it for me?'" says Bruning.

The work is supported by a \$750,000 two-year grant from the McCormick Tribune Foundation.

For more information visit:
www.ilchildcare.org

Debra Williams

Three centers show challenges, rewards of 'blending'

by Alexander Russo

Gads Hill has plenty of everything—except certified teachers

Gads Hill is the very picture of a modern early childhood facility. Located in North Lawndale, the center has six preschool classrooms, each with special reading lofts and an abundance of materials. Teachers wear bright blue polo shirts emblazoned with the Gads Hill name. Activities, meals and other services start at 6 a.m. and run till 6 p.m., five days a week, 12 months a year.

In the last 18 months, site Director Burma Weekley has overseen a surge in enrollment, with the number of preschoolers soaring from around 50 to 110.

But there's one thing Gads Hill lacks: teachers with Type 04 certificates for its six new state pre-kindergarten classrooms. Instead, the children in those classrooms are being taught by a Head Start teacher and an aide—none of them with all of the skills, knowledge and expectations that would come with a Type 04 certificate, says Wilhelmina Smiley-Foster, education coordinator for the site.

"The Type 04 teacher is supposed to be the lead teacher that carries on the curriculum, develops the lesson plans, and makes sure everything is being carried out," says Smiley-Foster, who is doing her best to help out in the meantime.

Weekley has posted notices, gone to conferences and sought out recruits through a well-established network of contacts that generated almost half of her current teaching staff. But so far, she's had little luck, and like others in the field, says low pay is largely to blame. Only a newly minted Type 04 teacher, or one with a working spouse, is likely to accept the \$35,000 starting salary she

can currently offer, Weekley says. She's hoping to be able to re-budget at some point during the year, in order to offer a higher starting salary.

In the meantime, Gads Hill is trying to grow its own certified staff. One example is Patrice Crayton, who is scheduled to get her bachelor's degree from Kendall College and take the Type 04 exam in June.

Crayton, who worked at an Ounce of Prevention site on the South Side for six years, says she likes the diverse community at Gads Hill, which includes a mix of Latino and African-American children, and doesn't plan to leave any time soon. But she understands the temptation. "There's a lot of centers, and that makes it hard," she says. "People have choices."

Still, the state pre-k program has brought two distinct advantages. One is professional development. The staff of 12 teachers and aides has been participating in monthly sessions provided by CPS, and Weekley points out that "they're getting so much that they did not get before" state pre-k was launched.

Another plus is a stronger connection to CPS. That's sparked Weekley to plan "more follow-up with the children" who typically enroll in Dett, Plamondon and Chalmers schools.

CPS officials who oversee the program haven't yet expressed concern about the lack of certified early childhood teachers, Weekley says. But Gads Hill could eventually lose state pre-k slots if it can't find at least one or two teachers to rotate among the classroom. "I haven't heard that it's a worry," says Weekley, "but it's in the contract."

She's optimistic about finding the right teachers and getting them in place.

Preschool 'blending'

WHAT IT MEANS: Early childhood centers draw funding from multiple sources, including state-subsidized child care, Head Start and state pre-kindergarten.

WHAT IT ACCOMPLISHES: The centers can improve their offerings by taking advantage of the particular benefits of each source, for example, the social workers required by Head Start and the certified teachers required by state pre-k. Also, half-day programs can be combined to create full-day programs.

HOW IT WORKS: To confirm eligibility for each type of funding, center staff must document such things as children's age and academic risk factors, family income and parents' work schedules. They must follow all program requirements, too.

WHO'S WHO? Not all children are eligible for every program, but the services they receive typically are all but indistinguishable. "The only way to tell the Head Start kids from the pre-k kids is that the Head Start kids brush their teeth after lunch," quips Paula Cottone from CPS.

"I have four resumes right here," she says, tapping a folder she received just that morning. "And they all have Type 04 certification."

Head Start brings raises, more work to Chinatown preschool

The Chinese American Service League has lots of experience with early childhood education—it has run a state pre-kindergarten program for a decade and a state-subsidized child care center even longer. The child care center boasts accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

And all of its lead classroom teachers have master's degrees.

Yet, the League, in Chinatown, hesitated when the Chicago Department of Human Services offered it a Head Start program.

"We knew that [adding Head Start] would be an incredible amount of work, and that their system is a lot more complicated," says child education Director Brenda Arksey.

However, the lure of additional staff, equipment and supplies overcame the League's reluctance. Now their social worker works full time, and they have a new part-time nurse on site as well. "We look at the kids more closely," says Linda Li, one of the lead teachers.

The addition of Head Start also paved the way for salary increases. Under Head Start guidelines, teachers with an associate's degree should make about \$23,000 a year. Those in the League's program were starting at only \$18,000. Lead teachers were starting at a base of \$26,000.

"I basically said, 'If we're going to take this Head Start money, we're going to have to raise the salaries of our teaching staff,'" recalls Arksey.

Giving raises to the teachers was controversial within the League, especially since they wouldn't be entirely covered by Head Start funding. To help justify them, Arksey and site Coordinator Wei Lian Xin came up with lists of additional responsibilities for each teacher.

In the end, all of the classroom teachers got a raise of some kind, with lead teachers starting in the "low 30's," according to Arksey.

Li, who has a master's in early childhood education and Type 04 certification, could earn much more at a neighborhood elementary school but prefers her current work. "At the center, I have a little bit more time with my children to sit down one on one," she says. "I wanted to work with a variety of



A student asks assistant teacher Xiao Hong Li to identify a smell. Teachers engage in the activity with students to help them build vocabulary, differentiate between smells and develop their senses.

[ethnic groups]. Plus, this is in the community I grew up in."

Meredith Chambers, a nine-year League veteran who has a master's degree in language and literacy, says recent salary increases will help the center grow. "I've had a few offers," she says, adding that she has no desire to leave the center.

The raises also encouraged more of the center's assistant teachers to go back to school, says Chambers. "My two assistants are in school," she says. "We all are doing things that will increase us educationally."

As anticipated, Head Start has also increased the workload, requiring an expanded parental involvement program, additions to the curriculum, home visits and an additional set of assessments for each child.

"There is a lot of bureaucratic red tape that takes us away from the classroom," says Li, who spends one day a week doing nothing but paperwork. Each of her two lead teacher colleagues spends a half day a week.

"We had to do two different assessments," says Chambers. "We wish that the powers that be could get it together."

Flexible hours, other perks help Erie House 'grow' teachers

With a mix of generous benefits, a flexible teaching environment and other perks, Erie House in West Town is trying to stem the loss of certified preschool teachers and attract still more.

Over the last year and a half, Erie House lost two certified teachers, including one who took a job in a suburban school district.

Newspaper ads last summer generated roughly a dozen responses, from which the center found two certified teachers, according to Pam Costakis, director of Erie House's state pre-k program. The most recent round of midyear ads has generated only five responses, however. "This time of year, it's much harder," she says.

As a result, the center currently has only two classroom teachers with Type 04 certificates for six state pre-k classrooms. Ideally, each of those six classrooms should have a Type 04 teacher.

Child care Director Sandy Schaefer believes stereotypes about day care programs are a turn-off to prospective applicants, who she says "hear 'daycare' and they think of babysitting. This leads to lots of problems with recruiting."

One way Erie is combating the problem is through "home-growing" certified teachers from among existing staff. Thanks to a variety of tuition reimbursement funds, teachers "don't really have to spend money out of their own pockets" to take classes, says Costakis. Erie allows some teachers to leave early for classes, and offers part-time or flexible hours to staff who are working to further their education. The center has two full-time and one part-time substitute to cover for teachers during these times, as well as during vacation.

With lots of help from the center, one such homegrown teacher earned her Type 04 but then decided not to return from maternity leave.

Currently, four lead teachers, three of whom already hold bachelor's degrees, are working toward their Type 04 certificates. One of them is Salvador Lopez, who has been taking courses at Northeastern for five years. Lopez is upbeat despite the challenges of juggling work and school, and says the coursework is "absolutely" helping him become a bet-



JOHN BOOZ



One of the favorite lessons in Salvador Lopez's classroom is making bird feeders with peanut butter. It develops children's sense of touch and feel—and their affection for making messes. Scooping, sorting, pouring and measuring birdseed are all important parts of getting the birdfeeders ready to go. Then the children go outside and see which birds come to eat, and talk about how they look and act.

ter teacher. "I feel more experienced, I feel very sure about what I'm doing in the classroom, and I'm very prepared to help my coworkers."

Still, Schaefer believes Erie House offers other advantages that can be powerful lures to help reel in new staff. There's a strong parent involvement program, in which parents regularly volunteer and meet at the school to help with projects. Collaborative work among teachers is encouraged, including working on assessments, meeting with parents and leading classroom activities.

Erie also has a full-time social worker on site and 25 to 30 hours a week of speech and psychological counseling services for children who need them. These specialists take children out of the classroom for one-on-one or small

group work, which, according to Costakis, both helps the children and reduces problems in the classroom.

In addition, teachers receive 22 days of vacation each year, 12 sick days and four personal days. It's not enough to make up for the long hours and the year-round work, according to Schaefer, but the time off makes a difference. "They need every minute of it," she says.

Melissa Jacobson, who has a master's degree in education from Columbia University and an early childhood teaching certificate from New York State, was won over by the Erie House approach. "I looked at CPS schools and here, and I got a better feeling from Erie in terms of philosophy," she says. "The work is very different, and comes from the children. It's not a cookie cutter curriculum." ●

Test glut a burden to preschools

But programs don't get data that would help improve teaching, learning

by Alexander Russo

Three times last year, teachers at the Chinese American Service League had to administer two very similar student assessments in its blended preschool program, sending the results either to the Chicago Public Schools or the Chicago Department of Human Services.

And yet, no one can tell the League—or any early childhood program in Chicago—how well it is doing.

“It’s such a waste of time from a teacher’s perspective,” says Teri Talan of the Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University. “You’re using information just to be able to report to an agency. You’re wasting the teacher’s time with the child.”

The Chicago Public Schools recently decided to exempt such centers as the Service League’s from one set of tests. However, the federal government is introducing another set, with the potential for still more on the horizon.

Like 130 other community-based preschool programs in Chicago, the Service League gets money from both the federal Head Start program and from Illinois’ pre-kindergarten program—the latter is funneled through the Chicago Public Schools. Thus, it must follow two sets of rules.

Last year, that meant the Service League had to administer two assessments three times a year: the Child Assessment Profile (CAP) to satisfy the state and the Work Sampling assessment to satisfy the federal government. Conducted through teacher observation and one-on-one with each child, each assessment can take anywhere from a day to a week per child, not counting the time needed to enter the results online. The CAP test alone measures 59 different academic and social skills, which are aligned with Illinois’ early learning standards. The Head Start assessment is even more involved.

“There’s a lot of the same benchmarking in Head Start as in state pre-k,” says Matilde Romero, a teacher in the preschool program at Erie House in West

Town. “We just have to do more recording, more sampling and portfolios.”

All this testing can derail teaching. One program evaluator says that at one Head Start center, she saw 19 children and an aide “wandering around without anything to do” while the lead teacher tested one child. “That’s how assessment runs amok,” says, Talan.

This fall, Head Start started requiring an additional assessment that focuses mostly on academic questions such as colors, numbers and letters. It must be given at the beginning and the end of the school year.

“Somebody needs to give up their rights to all this testing,” says Paula Cotton, a Head Start assessment expert for CPS, who worries about excessive testing and the increasing focus on academics.

For a time, the CAP—a homegrown assessment developed by Chicago teachers and administrators—was considered

sufficiently aligned with both the state’s early learning standards and Head Start’s prescribed outcomes to be used for both programs.

But then two years ago, federal officials told Head Start programs that they had to administer one of three commercially developed tests used throughout the country—Work Sampling, Creative Curriculum, or High-Scope—so that results could be validated broadly and programs could be more easily compared. After a year and a half of administering both assessments, with the addition of a third this fall, CPS decided to exempt state pre-kindergarten programs that are blended with Head Start programs from the CAP assessment.

“I changed the policy,” says CPS’s Lucinda Lee Katz, chief officer for early childhood education. “I don’t want any of our programs assessing kids with two or three different tests.”

This decision, approved in December, will ease the assessment burden on blended sites without endangering over \$30 million in federal Head Start funding that CPS receives each year.

However, there is a downside. CPS will no longer have completely comparable test data for all its preschool centers.

And many centers haven’t heard the news. In late January, Pam Costakis, director of Erie House’s state pre-k program, says she hasn’t heard that they are off the hook.

Early childhood testing

What	Where	When
Child Assessment Profile	State pre-k classes *	Twice a year
Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy	CPS kindergartens	September, beginning 2004
Work Sampling, High Scope or Creative Curriculum	Head Start classes	Three times a year
National Reporting System	Head Start classes	Twice a year

* CPS has exempted community-based preschools with funding from both Head Start and the state pre-kindergarten program from having to administer the Child Assessment Profile

Left in the dark

Experts agree that the data gathered from these assessments can be very useful for individual programs and overall accountability purposes.

“If you think that you’re teaching your students to love books and you find out that no one picks up a book in your classroom, then you need to know that,” says Katz.

But it usually doesn’t work that way. City and CPS officials who collect the data and pass them along to the state or the federal government don’t report them back to the centers, say staff at many centers.

And many centers often don’t have the time or staff members who know how to pull individual results together and analyze them. That’s especially true in community-based centers, says National-Louis’s Talan.

CPS aggregates CAP data but only for such citywide purposes as planning professional development. And even then, the analysis is not timely. Last year’s data are still being analyzed, according to Joan Berger, a preschool assessment expert for CPS. Thus far, the only conclusion she can report is that most children in the city’s state pre-k programs performed at or above average on the CAP last year.

Reporting and using the test data to inform teaching and provide better accountability is “something we need to work on,” says CPS’s Katz. “We are in transition when it comes to assessment.”

In the meantime, centers are left in the dark. Worried that its children are not learning enough English, the Service League is working with an independent researcher to get a better handle on how its children do in school after leaving. Sharon Wilcher, the principal of nearby Ward Elementary, says the dozen or so children she gets from the League’s center each year do as well as the children who attend preschool at Ward.

And just as CPS is reducing the testing burden for some preschool programs, it is increasing it for the primary grades. Last fall, it administered a literacy assessment, the Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy (ISEL), to kindergartners at about 150 schools. Next year, it plans to assess all of them, which will be the first time such citywide testing is administered below 3rd grade. ●

Early learning goals

The Chicago Public Schools has adopted learning goals for preschool children that focus on literacy and math and are aligned with Illinois’ early learning standards and Head Start’s Child Outcome Frameworks. Here is a sample of those goals:

LITERACY

- Understand that pictures and symbols have meaning and print carries a message.
- Understand that reading progresses from left to right and top to bottom.
- Identify labels and signs in the environment.
- Identify some letters, including those in own name.
- Make some letter-sound matches.
- Predict what will happen next, using pictures and content for guides.
- Begin to develop phonological awareness by participating in rhyming activities.
- Recognize separable and repeating sounds in spoken language.
- Retell information from a story.
- Respond to simple questions about reading material.
- Demonstrate understanding of literal meaning of stories by making comments.
- Understand that different text forms, such as magazines, notes, lists, letters and story-books are used for different purposes.
- Show independent interest in reading-related activities.
- Use scribbles, approximations of letters, or known letters to represent written language.
- Dictate stories and experiences.
- Use drawings and writing skills to convey meaning and information.
- Listen with understanding and respond to directions and conversations.

MATHEMATICS

- Use concepts that include number recognition, counting and one-to-one correspondence.
- Count with understanding and recognize “how many” sets of objects.
- Solve simple mathematical problems.
- Explore quantity and number.
- Connect numbers to quantities they represent using physical models and representations.
- Make comparisons of quantities.
- Demonstrate a beginning understanding of measurement using non-standard units and measurement words.
- Construct a sense of time through participation in daily activities.
- Show understanding of and use comparative words.
- Incorporate estimating and measuring activities into play.
- Sort and classify objects by a variety of properties.
- Recognize, duplicate and extend simple patterns, such as sequences of sounds, shapes and colors.
- Begin to order objects in series or rows.
- Participate in situations that involve addition and subtraction using manipulatives.
- Describe qualitative change, such as measuring to see who is growing taller.
- Recognize geometric shapes and structures in the environment.
- Find and name locations with simple words, such as “near.”
- Represent data using concrete objects, pictures and graphs.



Triumphant Charter School

Poor numbers not the whole story

“Scholar culture” helps potential dropouts learn discipline, aim for college

by Maureen Kelleher

At Triumphant Charter School in Back of the Yards, Sheneka Harris isn't just another 6th-grader—she's a “first-year scholar.” As such, she and her classmates are expected to uphold the school's “scholar culture,” a set of tough academic and behavioral standards designed to set early adolescents on the road to success in high school and college.

Triumphant's culture—which includes an eight-hour day, weekly study on a community college campus and grades on behavior as well as academic coursework, among other features—is light-years away from what Sheneka experienced at Henderson Elementary last year. “My class was the baddest class in the whole school,” she says. “We had, like, 17 teachers in one year. They just kept on switching them around.”

Changing the school experience for students like Sheneka has been Triumphant's mission since it opened seven years ago. For more than two decades, founder Helen Hawkins honed her skills for reaching disadvantaged youth by running Olive-Harvey Middle College, an alternative school for dropouts where, last year, 68 percent of graduates went on to four-year colleges and universities.

Hawkins founded Triumphant to keep students from dropping out, but she says getting it up and running has been a greater challenge than starting the alternative school. And after seven years, the school is still struggling to succeed with its 200 students.

On the surface, Triumphant looks like a failure. Its reading scores are comparable to those of CPS schools on probation,



Teacher Jeryl Majors gives his students some last-minute coaching before they perform a scene from Lorraine Hansberry's “A Raisin in the Sun.” The play serves as an end-of-term project, which students must present for their classmates and parents.

and this year, it is the only charter required under the accountability measures of the federal No Child Left Behind Act to offer students both the option to transfer out and extra tutoring. (Only 15 students applied for transfers to higher-achieving schools; none was approved.)

The students who come to Triumphant typically have exceptionally low test scores, as well as attendance and discipline problems. The school also serves more special education students than any other charter in Chicago.

Even so, there are some signs of progress. Since 1998, attendance has risen to 94 percent, up from 85 percent. Mobility has plummeted from 43 percent to 17 percent. The percent of students reading at national norms has risen from 12 percent to 23 percent. And

for the last five years, reading gains have exceeded the CPS accountability target of one year's growth for every year of instruction, according to the Department of Research and Evaluation.

“We're not satisfied. We don't think we've arrived where we need to be,” says Principal Lisa Kenner. “We spent the first six years building a very strong foundation of scholar culture. Now we go to the next level of practice, which is fine-tuning our instruction and curricular planning.”

This year, teachers are examining student work against rubrics, or guides, that are based on state standards, and they are developing school-wide assessments in math and reading, practices CPS is trying to implement citywide. But Kenner doesn't expect overnight

miracles. “We are being very strategic in the use of our time and the examination of data,” she says. “We are not gonna blow off the charts this year.”

Kenner points out that academic success is also about mindset, something Triumphant is aiming to mold with its “scholar culture.” The goal is to change students’ belief that a person either is, or is not, smart by nature. “Smart is something we get,” she says. “Smart is something we learn.”

Scholars—Triumphant never calls them students—are expected to come to class prepared, to ask questions and to show they are actively engaged in learning. Teachers grade them daily on their demeanor and adherence to the school’s dress code. And semester report cards include grades for 15 different behaviors, including listening, exercising self-control and supporting peers.

Though teachers are strict, they are also supportive. “In this school, they treat everybody with respect,” says third-year scholar Karla Chico. She adds that students have a voice in how the school makes decisions.

The school day at Triumphant is far different from that at most elementary schools. For one, it is eight hours long. And it starts with a school-wide morning assembly, during which students complete a short writing assignment on a current events topic or on personal goals. They also recite the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the “scholar pledge” to work hard, act with decency and diligence and strive for excellence in school and in life.

For the rest of the morning, students take math, language arts and foreign languages courses during 50-minute periods, to familiarize them with the structure of high school. “It makes you feel like you’re older than the grade you are in,” says Jasmine Evans, a second-year scholar.

In the afternoon, a 100-minute block allows extended time for instruction in science and social studies, using a theme-based curriculum that also integrates math and English skills. The 100-minute block, coupled with a half-hour silent reading period, forces students to concentrate on one topic for a longer period of time.

The school also offers recess, which staff members say helps students work off excess energy and concentrate better during the demanding afternoon instruction period. Lunch and recess are segregated by gender, and female students say they experience less harass-

‘We were terrible. Now we are great leaders.’

Triumphant students say the school’s “scholar culture” has had a big impact on their educational goals and their interactions with each other and with teachers. Here, 8th-graders talk about that impact.

Q. WHAT’S IT LIKE TO LEARN IN CLASSROOMS THAT HAVE 6TH-, 7TH- AND 8TH-GRADERS MIXED TOGETHER?

Theodore Jackson: Three-year scholars (8th-graders) are able to help new kids.

Jeremiah Murray: They have to set examples of quietness, learning, experience, and so forth.

Theodore: Every age range shows you something.

Deonte Howard: We don’t always have to teach the 6th-graders. Sometimes they teach us.

Q. ARE TEACHERS HERE DIFFERENT FROM THE TEACHERS YOU HAD IN OTHER SCHOOLS?

Jeremiah: They help you whenever you need help. If you don’t understand, they’ll explain it to you.

Theodore: TCS teachers have the time to work with you. They make sure you understand. They’re not worried about getting attendance or about [other] stuff. It’s easier [to learn] because you understand what you’re supposed to do, and it’s fun.

Q. HOW IS YOUR BEHAVIOR HERE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS IN OTHER SCHOOLS?

Tiara Pryor: [The staff] taught us how to respect people. [In her previous school], they didn’t tell us nothing. We were terrible. Now we are great leaders.

Q. DOES THIS SCHOOL PREPARE YOU FOR HIGH SCHOOL?

Tiara: I can’t wait till I go to high school.

Jeremiah: TCS made me like school.

Kendall Ross: Other schools teach you how to go to college, but this school teaches you how to go to college and stay in college.

Theodore: In big division [on Fridays], we learn about college. We listen to long lectures and we’ve got to take notes like college people.

Q. WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT TRIUMPHANT?

Amber Goodman: We all learn on a one-on-one basis. (She also likes the field trips to study other Chicago neighborhoods, like Pilsen and Bronzeville.)

Theodore: When we sing the songs [in morning assembly], it’s time for me to change to my scholarly ways. It wakes me up, brightens my day. I’m really, really focused.

Maureen Kelleher

ment from boys, a common problem in middle schools.

Once a week, on Fridays, the emphasis shifts toward college. Proudly wearing official ID badges, scholars travel to Olive-Harvey Community College to spend three hours with Olive-Harvey Middle College students, listening to lectures and presentations in an auditorium. In the afternoon, students swim or work out and take sign language, music, art and computer classes.

There’s also exposure to the world beyond the neighborhood and the city. Each year, the oldest students go with middle college students on a tour of historically black colleges and universities. And through study trips to such places as Mexico, Costa Rica, Senegal and Canada, scholars get the chance to practice their

French and Spanish. (Money for the trips comes from fundraisers, donations and sales of calendars that students make.)

“We concentrate on developing the complete and total scholar,” notes teacher Spencer Gould, who thinks CPS can learn from that approach. “They will be exposed to two languages, four countries and 25 colleges before they graduate from 8th grade. We don’t stop at the test scores. We don’t stop at the grades. We ask, ‘What is your total learning experience?’ ... We talk to them about their effort and we talk to them about their experience.”

Because many students previously were retained, the school tossed out the traditional single-grade classrooms and developed a curriculum that addresses a wide range of academic needs. “It’s hard,

Spencer Gould: Dropout to teacher

Spencer Gould is one of eight black men who teach at Triumphant, thanks to the extra effort Helen Hawkins makes to recruit them as role models. A 1993 graduate of Morehouse College, Gould has been involved in the school since its founding. After a stint in the Marines, he returned two years ago to teach language arts and social studies.

As a young man, Gould didn't have an easy time in school. He attended Whitney Young but did not graduate. "I was a student who screwed up," he says. "It became clear to me very early that I was smart and I didn't like school. Grades were just letters on a sheet of paper. I knew every grade I got and exactly why I got it." The poor grades were due to lack of effort, he says. "Four years later, three of my best friends graduated, and I didn't. That was my first adult learning moment."

Gould wanted to get a GED and move on to Morehouse right away, but his mother pleaded with him to buckle down somewhere else first. A friend told him about Olive-Harvey Middle College, and he gave it a try. "They taught me all the stuff I missed running the halls of Whitney Young. Morehouse wouldn't have looked at me without Olive-Harvey," he says.

Initially, he was reluctant to sign on at Triumphant, believing the middle college, with its older students, would be a better fit. But the experience at the school left him "so energized, and the kids needed so much. I was here for but three weeks, and I was hooked."

Being an alum of the middle college helps him stay flexible to meet students' needs, he says. He turns classroom interruptions into "teachable moments," showing kids how to transition back to the lesson at hand. He's also flexible with the curriculum.

"With me, nothing's written in stone. If it takes three days to get a point across, I have no problem resetting that until the slowest student in my class can explain it," he says. "That's my benchmark."

Gould says teaching is "humbling" and "a challenge. I respect it and take it very seriously. It's one of the best blessings I've ever had."

Maureen Kelleher

but it's worth it," Hawkins says. "Kids who've been held back two years don't want to be in class with [younger] kids. Here, if a kid is 13 and in the 6th grade, nobody's going to know."

The flexible curriculum and emphasis on scholar culture helps students overcome longstanding fears of failing. That's evident in a language arts class aimed at students who need extra help. As Eric Beach reads his "I am" poem—based on a commonly-used template that helps beginning poets get their ideas down on paper—two other students follow along over his shoulder, ready to help if he gets stuck on a word. He doesn't.

"I am dedicated. I am smart," Eric reads. "I want to be dedicated to scholarship. I am diligent and smart. ... I feel angry about my mom. I touch my faith. I worry about shootings. I understand that I will make history."

"Outstanding," says Kenner, who teaches the class in addition to serving as principal. "Thank you. And I love how scholars supported you." After class, she explains this was the first time Eric had ever read aloud to his classmates.

Building a faculty

Curriculum and structure alone don't make a successful school, so Hawkins works hard to recruit, retain and even grow her own faculty. Finding them has been especially challenging, she says, made even more difficult by her desire to recruit African-American men and create an environment where young African-American boys can thrive.

So far, though, she's had success. Eight of the school's 13 teachers are black men. "Young boys need to see men," says Hawkins. "They don't have fathers at home. They have fathers here." Young girls need that, too, she says, adding that the men on staff are "showing little girls how they should be treated." Many teachers are graduates of historically black colleges and universities, and they engage in a friendly rivalry to see how many students they can interest in their own alma maters.

Several teachers are graduates of Olive-Harvey Middle College, a fact that's particularly pleasing to Hawkins. "They know [the school's] vision," she says. "They saw it work for them."

This year, for the first time, all of Triumphant's teachers came back, Hawkins says. Her daughter, Julie Stanton, teaches math. And Hawkins keeps up her own classroom skills by teaching basic math. "I bought a lot of favor with the teachers," by doing that, she says. "It really keeps your feet on the ground. You [realize you're] not all that great. Kids still talk. If your lesson isn't good, they're gonna talk. It keeps you humble. It makes me less judgmental of teachers."

Hawkins also takes pains to share leadership with her staff. For example, Kenner arrived as a teacher when Triumphant opened, but took on greater responsibilities and finally went through New Leaders for New Schools training to assume the principalship. "I just let them emerge," she says. "I have a lot of assistant heads of school. Those people who want additional responsibilities, you find ways to give it to them."

The future

This summer, Triumphant plans to move to the former Cuffee Elementary building at 84th and Justine, which will provide more space and bring them closer to Olive-Harvey.

And thanks to a \$215,000 grant over three years from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Triumphant can now offer its graduates the chance to go straight to Olive-Harvey Middle College. (Previously, graduates had to go elsewhere until they turned 16, because all the middle college's funding was targeted to serve youth ages 16 to 21.)

About 20 Triumphant graduates are part of the first class to go straight to Olive-Harvey. One of them, Johnny Allen, is grateful he can avoid his older sister's experience. After leaving Triumphant, she enrolled in a regular CPS high school for two years but had a bad experience and transferred to Olive-Harvey as soon as she could.

"I believe that most of the public schools wouldn't fulfill my needs as far as education," says Johnny, who went to summer school to boost his reading scores before starting as a freshman this year. "Ms. Hawkins is my role model. I like [her] one-word mission, and that's college. I'm going to accomplish that goal."

Portraits

Debate helps Christina Marin soar

Kelvyn Park program brings intellectual challenge to a neighborhood school

By Maureen Kelleher

It's the first day of the Chicago Debate League's mid-season tournament, and Christina Marin of Kelvyn Park High is stuck "going maverick," or debating solo. While her partner visits Champaign-Urbana on a college tour, Marin's on her own crafting the arguments she'll present on this year's topic, national ocean policy. And she's on her own devising strategy for the moment when her opponent might make an argument she's never heard before, yet must refute within minutes.

But if Marin is worried, she doesn't show it, putting a relaxed smile on her game face. She and her partner, senior Veronica Casteneda, are considered pros in the debate world, trading tips with fellow debaters when they're not going head-to-head against them. The two are among five young women on Kelvyn Park's 17-member squad.

"I can see they were the students who weren't fierce competitors when they started, but now they are," says Chicago debate alum Perry Green, a recent graduate of Jones College Prep who now debates for the University of Louisville and is a judge for this tournament at DePaul University, the largest in urban debate league history.

Debate is catching fire in urban school districts around the country, and nowhere more so than in CPS, which now has the largest league; 31 schools have teams, and 19 offer an elective course in debate. And young women like Marin have flocked to sign up; 55 percent of Chicago debaters are female, compared to only 40 percent in the National Forensic League, the national high school debate society.

Marin missed three years of school while living on a farm in Mexico but nevertheless is at the top of her junior class. She's taking extra courses in hopes of



Christina Marin helps debate teammate Luis Marrero prepare for a practice round. The Kelvyn Park team practices twice a week and logs evening and weekend hours preparing alone or in groups. Most take debate as an elective also.

graduating a year early, and scored an above-average 25 on an ACT practice test. Always a conscientious student, Marin credits debate with helping sharpen her skills in reading comprehension and analysis, writing and even math.

"In any class or any reading, you're asked to interpret what the author is saying, like Shakespeare. Shakespeare is tricky," says Marin. "I used to read a hard chapter of a book twice, but now I can only read it once. We are reading college-level information [in debate]. It not only helps in English, but in science and any class you do reading. It helps in understanding word problems in math."

Her skills and those of her debate colleagues have been honed this year by reading and analyzing some 200 pages of government and policy documents, scholarly and scientific articles and other material supplied by The National Association of Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL) on national ocean policy. Once students digest that material, they build research skills by doing their own origi-

nal research. At a debate camp last summer at Northwestern University, Marin did just that, using the Internet to find policy documents from think tanks such as The Brookings Institution, and studies from specialized web sites like ScienceDirect, a clearinghouse of journal articles. Marin also practiced detecting bias in sources and analyzing arguments.

By providing these kinds of experiences, debate addresses the lack of intellectual challenge and rigor that young people often experience in urban high schools. "I know Kelvyn Park's not the greatest high school in the world," Marin says. "But there are bright people here." Urban debate was created to reach them.

Chicago's debate league got its revival in the mid-1990s, thanks to a small group of former debaters (including former Illinois Supreme Court Justice Seymour Simon), who banded together to bring back the league after a lapse of more than 30 years. The Community Renewal Society administered the Chicago Debate Commission until CPS

stepped in to support the league through its Office of High School Programs. (The Community Renewal Society publishes *CATALYST*.) Around the same time, billionaire philanthropist George Soros' Open Society Institute began funding urban debate leagues, hoping to reach young people like Marin.

"The competitive dimension of debate prods kids to learn about things they wouldn't otherwise learn," says Eric Tucker, director of publications for NAUDL and a Rhodes Scholar who is researching urban debate as part of his doctoral studies at Oxford University in England. "[Debaters] learn how to research and come to terms with problems in public policy. They learn not to be intimidated by technical language. They learn how to familiarize themselves with subjects with which they have no prior experience."

Many of Kelvyn Park's debaters face an extra challenge and gain an added benefit—their first language is Spanish, and many say participating in debate has improved their English.

Last year, Kelvyn Park's junior varsity debaters dominated their league, taking first and second place at city championships. Those debaters have now leapt to varsity—joining Marin and others who were already at that level—in the tougher AA conference. Coach Mark Mouck gives a blunt assessment of how the team will fare: "This year, I knew we would get our butts handed to us," he says. Still, he emphasizes that students must learn from each round no matter what the outcome; after tournaments he requires them to write an analysis of why they won or lost.

His relaxed yet relentless attitude has helped forge tight relationships among the team members and between the team and coaches. Their camaraderie is evident in the tournament, where Marin helps teammates strategize, and during practice, where she and other varsity debaters coach less experienced teammates.

"We haven't hauled as much hardware home yet this year," assistant coach Darren Tuggle admits. "Our team's going through some growing pains. The level of competition's been raised, but we'll only get better as we go on. Our kids can compete with anybody. I mean that as a larger statement about Kelvyn Park kids generally."

Carrot and stick

Early in the first round, Marin is cross-examining one of her opponents, a young woman from Kelly High. Her questions are aimed at helping her to get a better handle on her opponent's arguments. As she explains later, "You want to understand their argument and also how they interpret it" in order to craft a sound counter-argument.

Marin says debate has taught her not just how to plan strategy in advance, but also to think quickly on her feet. "It's good to have a pre-set strategy, but it's even better to have a strategy in the situation," she says.

After the round, some of her teammates are waiting outside to thank her for a tip and tell her how they used it in the round that just ended. Like Marin, some debaters are hardworking students. But others have far less interest in schoolwork, although plenty of smarts. Sophomore Joshua Rodriguez, who reports scoring a 26 on a pre-ACT test, readily admits to being lazy about his classes. But he says debate is his incentive to keep his grades up to the C average required citywide to participate in extracurricular activities.

Mouck and Tuggle regularly ask the team about their grades and use a carrot-and-stick approach to motivate slackers. The two barred several debaters from today's tournament because of poor classroom performance. And they're dangling the prospect of debate camp to encourage team members to strive for high GPAs that will help them earn scholarships to attend.

On the second day of the tournament, Marin is maverick no more. Castaneda is back, and the two are fired up in their round against two girls from Orr High, which includes plenty of "clash," or point-by-point argument. While waiting to give her team's last rebuttal, Marin bounces impatiently in her seat before offering a spirited review of her main points to persuade the judge that she and Castaneda should win the round.

After lunch, a thorny question regarding equity in the league surfaces when two debaters make a pitch for their peers to join a new student leadership council. Some debaters say the league's structure reinforces inequality among the city's

high schools. Schools are placed in conferences yearly based on a mix of factors that include overall academic performance as well as debate record. As a result, college preps and other top-scoring schools end up dominating the top A conference, leaving less academically prestigious schools in the second- and third-tier AA and AAA conferences.

But schools do have some veto power, says Les Lynn of NAUDL. He adds that the three conferences each end up including roughly one-third of schools, and "We have not put a school in a conference they've made a persistent objection to."

"It's institutionalized racism," counters Green.

When quarterfinal winners are announced, Marin and Castaneda learn they didn't make the cut, despite the judges' praise. No one else from Kelvyn Park does either. On the bus home, they read the judges' ballots and reflect on their rounds. Marin won two of five—one going maverick, another with Castaneda.

Marin believes she will have to do a better job of presenting her materials and using some of the strategies she learned at Northwestern's debate camp. Noting that the rounds she won were judged by college debaters, she theorizes her approach may have gone over the heads of judges who did not have high-level training in debate strategy.

But soon, in keeping with Kelvyn Park's penchant for having fun as well as learning, she and her teammates shift gears. Shooting off the bus and scooping up a handful of snow, she instigates a snowball fight and steps back to watch. Debate strategy ends, snowball-fight strategy begins.

Editor's Note: At CATALYST press time, two pairs of debaters from Kelvyn Park were heading to the semi-finals in another Chicago Debate League tournament. Christina Marin and her partner were not among them.

For more information about urban debate, contact Les Lynn of the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues, (312) 427-8101; or Barbara Edwards of the CPS Office of High School Programs, (773) 553-2104. **En español:** Go to www.catalyst-chicago.org for a Spanish translation of this story.

Grow Network tells teachers, parents what test scores mean

by Ed Finkel

Chicago schools have long been awash in test scores, but the numbers were in such an unfriendly form that neither schools nor parents found them very useful for improving achievement.

The Grow Network is designed to change all that. Imported from New York City at an annual cost of \$2 million, Grow is an Internet-based program that analyzes test scores for teachers and parents and provides suggestions to both on what to do next.

Its report to teachers answers three questions: How did my students do? What do they need to learn? And what learning tools are on the Internet?

“You can click on an individual student and find out not only their [total] score, but their score in each content area,” notes Shazia Miller, the district’s associate director for instructional support. For instance, “they’re good at vocabulary, but in terms of making inferences from the text, they’re struggling.”

Miller says the analysis encourages teachers to see each student’s strengths and weaknesses and not simply label him as a high or low performer. However, teachers also can see how each student and the whole class compare to their peers nationwide.

The reports for parents show how their children scored against national averages, break down the results into categories like “factual understanding” and “inference and interpretation,” and offer suggestions on what help the child needs. A box titled “What you can do at home” provides specific suggestions. Schools receive guides in six languages—Spanish, Polish, Arabic, Bos-

Principals like Grow, teachers are so-so

The Consortium on Chicago School Research reports that teachers felt “moderately positive” about their experiences with the Grow Network during its first year in Chicago while principals were overwhelmingly positive. The consortium surveyed 282 principals and 2,700 teachers of 4th- through 8th-graders in 345 schools.

<i>Teachers who strongly agree or agree</i>	
I used the Grow Web account to see results for my students.	60%
The Grow class profile helped me plan my instruction this year.	54
The Grow reports were a priority at my school this year.	52
The Grow parent report was a useful tool for communicating with parents.	52
I used the Grow Web account to obtain additional resources such as assessments or materials.	50

<i>Principals who strongly agree or agree</i>	
My teachers and I have discussed how Grow materials can help improve instruction at our school.	93%
I strongly encourage teachers to use online Grow resources.	92
I used the Grow Network to see results for our students.	80
The Grow parent report was a useful tool for communicating with parents.	72
The Grow reports were a priority at my school this year.	58

Source: Consortium on Chicago School Research

nian, Chinese and Urdu—that they can reproduce for parents, and there is a resource section in Spanish on the Grow Network Web site.

The school report sent to principals, area instructional officers and other officials provides a bigger picture, says Michael Alexander, senior program officer with the Chicago Public Education Fund, which is chipping in \$200,000 a year to help defray CPS costs for Grow.

“A reading coach on an area team might go to a school, and the conversation would start with, ‘Here’s a printout

of your reading performance. What do you see as the key priority areas, and how is your team planning to address these areas?’” Alexander says. “They’re starting a conversation with data, checking the understanding of that interpretation with the school, and asking the school to talk about its plans.”

Miller says Grow is part of the administration’s push to have schools, area offices and central office make decisions on the basis of hard data. “We need to evaluate programs carefully and make decisions about not only what’s a great

Peirce School gets everyone online

Peirce Elementary is sold on the Grow Network.

"It allows teachers to make decisions about their own curriculum, their own instruction, their own groupings of students," says Paula Rossino, principal of Peirce School of International Studies in Edgewater.

"At grade-level meetings, we've taken a look at the strengths and weaknesses of that grade level," she adds.

Rossino introduced her staff to Grow by arranging a meeting of 10 teachers with network staffers and devoting part of this year's first staff development day to the new program. Middle-grade teachers got a refresher as part of a meeting about upcoming standardized tests.

Haneefa Muhammad, a 7th-grade social studies teacher, uses Grow in place of diagnostic testing. "It separates the testing areas by comprehension skills, interpreting facts, analysis of mathematical problems—that kind of thing," she says. "We can go online and see the number of students who need practice in these skills and the number of students who are advanced in these skills."

With that knowledge, she can work to make sure all students have the requisite reading and math skills for their social studies lessons. Muhammad notes, for example, that she may need to teach graphing before students can analyze a country's spending.

"It has solved so many problems," says Muhammad.

Grow also has eased communication with parents, Rossino says. "At parent conference time, we had our computer lab open for parents to log on and to teach them how to use [the Web site]," she says. "It's a very easy tool."

Ed Finkel

CATALYST ONLINE: See the online version of this story at www.catalyst-chicago.org for a link to **more information** about the Grow Network's Chicago efforts, as well as a **Spanish translation** of this story.

idea, but what's a great idea that panned out after we tried it."

Started in New York

Grow began as a pilot project in New York City in the spring of 2000 and became a systemwide program there a year later. At that point, Grow representatives came to Chicago to talk to principals, the teachers union, foundations and then-CEO Paul Vallas. It got off to an inauspicious start, as Vallas announced his resignation the day before the meeting. But once CEO Arne Duncan's administration was fully in place, Grow representatives resumed the conversation. CPS signed on in the fall of 2002.

"There's a lot of data out there," says Patrick Haugh, a Chicago native and former teacher in New York who is co-founder and executive director of Grow's Chicago office. "As these exams are becoming increasingly important, both for accountability purposes and for other reasons, there's very little being done to make this data useful."

Currently in Chicago, Grow analyzes the results on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, given each May to students in 3rd through 8th grades, and readies reports by the following September.

"When we came back in September, this work was there for us," says Haneefa Muhammad, a 7th-grade social studies teacher at the Peirce School of International Studies in Edgewater, which Haugh and others cite as a leader in implementing Grow.

During the first year, Grow worked mostly to raise awareness of its existence. Now it is doing intensive training in two dozen schools. "We've gotten away from the basic orientation sessions to 'How do I use this in my building? What is the hook? What are the things that are going to make my teachers come back to this?'" says Haugh.

To that end, the network added a new feature, at CPS' request, that allows teachers to update students' achievement in different skills as the school year progresses. "It builds the students' confidence and self-esteem," Muhammad says. "They're not waiting to take [next year's] Iowa test to see how they're progressing in specific skill areas."

CPS also would like to add the capac-

ity to track students' progress over time, Haugh says.

From Alexander's perspective, the most important issue is to continue to promote the program's use in a non-threatening way.

"CPS plans to push deeper implementation throughout the district, but more from a professional development stance, as opposed to, 'You have to do this,'" he says. Continued funding from the Public Education Fund will depend in large part on whether Grow becomes integrated into the regular work of people in schools, he adds. "As long as we see them moving in that direction, we'll continue to support it," he says.

Thus far, principals have embraced the program while teachers are lukewarm, according to a report released in January by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Little enthusiasm

"Last year, people were like, 'OK, if you're around next year, maybe we'll listen,'" Haugh says. "There are a lot of different reforms being thrown at schools, and they have to be selective in what they're going to grab onto."

He says he's confident that more teachers will get plugged into Grow as time and training sessions march on.

Clarice Berry, president of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, agrees that principals find Grow useful, but she says they are not enthusiastic about it either. "There's not a lot of energy around it that I'm getting," she says. "I can't say I've heard people rave about it, but I can't say people are unhappy with it, either. It's a tool. It's not cumbersome and not difficult to use."

Julie Woestehoff, executive director of Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE), says she hasn't heard much feedback about it from parents, who were not surveyed by the consortium. "The advice to parents that is generated out of the test scores is quite generic," she says. "Not that it's dangerous—it's not going to hurt if you help your child do this or that. It is a handy piece that gives parents advice."

Ed Finkel is a Chicago-based writer.

Board may repeat summer program that offers 'step up' to high school

by Sabrina Strand

CPS officials expect to complete in February an analysis of the Step Up to High School initiative, to determine whether to offer the program again this summer.

About a third of eligible freshmen (2,200 out of 7,000) enrolled last summer in Step Up. Eligible students posted scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills that were above the cutoff for promotion to high school, but still below average.

Offered in the high schools students would attend, Step-Up included reading and math instruction and a daily 45-minute "survivor" session to teach skills crucial to success in high school, such as time management and study skills. Ultimately, CPS officials hope Step-Up will help lower the dropout rate.

"The feeling is that in general we want to do the program again," says Ed Klunk, deputy director of the Office of High School Programs. But since Step-Up was fairly expensive—Klunk estimates \$1.6 million, mostly for teacher salaries—CPS wants to make sure it's having a significant academic impact before making a final decision, he says.

To that end, Step-Up students' attendance, grades and credits earned will be compared to those of other freshmen who were not in the program, Klunk explains. The analysis will be completed following the first-semester grading period.

Some school officials, though, fear that by focusing largely on facts and figures, CPS will discount the impact the program had on easing students' transition to high school.

"Though academics are obviously important, many students come in with nonacademic issues that need to be dealt with," says James Breashears, principal at Robeson High. "Step Up made them feel better about themselves, made them

feel that if they really work on it, it's a certain possibility that they'll be successful in high school and graduate with their classmates."

Rosemarie Nichols, who oversaw Step Up at Robeson, says people who are not in schools regularly do not always realize how difficult it can be for students to move from elementary to high school, especially to a large school like Robeson.

"If kids don't make the transition successfully early on, they won't want to come to school," Nichols says.

"We understand that it's important to see how these kids are fitting into their schools," Klunk says; a CPS team has been talking with counselors to get a sense of Step-Up's qualitative impact. "So far, everyone we've talked to about the social benefits of Step Up has reported very positive results."

Following are updates on the progress of three Step-Up students from Clemente High. (See September 2003 *CATALYST* for profiles of 6 students from Clemente and Robeson.)

Theresa Velazquez Clemente High

From day one, Theresa Velazquez felt prepared for high school. She knew the building better than most of her classmates, and she had made friends with some of her peers. She knew tests were going to be longer and harder, and she geared herself up to participate more in class discussions.

"You have to speak up in high school if you don't know what's going on or need help," Theresa says. "Step Up taught me how to voice my opinions in class."

A couple of weeks before the end of the first quarter, she was on track to get all A's. But she says she "let her guard

down," and ended up with B's and one A—a respectable showing, but not what she's aiming for next time. Says Theresa, "I want to get straight A's, and I know I can."

Steven Beaudion Clemente High

Steven Beaudion wasn't thrilled to give up four weeks of his summer for more school, but he now credits Step Up with giving him a head start as a freshman.

"I was ready for anything that came in because I had a taste of what it would be like," he says. Steven also made some close friends, and together they outlined a list of goals, with 'graduate on time' at the top of the list. To do that, he will have to stay on track academically. His first-quarter grades weren't stellar—he earned B's and C's, and one D—but they were an improvement over the C's and D's he says he earned at Darwin Elementary.

Justin Merrick Clemente High

Thanks to Step-Up, Justin Merrick developed a list of ambitious goals: earn a 3.7 overall GPA, participate in sports, have more credits at graduation than anyone else, and go to college to become a lawyer.

"I put a lot into the program, and I'm seeing the results now," says Justin. He's starting to enjoy his least favorite subject—reading—through increased interaction and projects. His first quarter, he earned B's, C's and one D.

"Step Up was to get us to the point where high school could teach us," Justin says. "We had to meet them halfway."

Intern John Myers contributed to this report.

LSC advocates plan summit on equity

Organizers of a citywide education summit scheduled for Feb. 21 plan to tackle the inequities suffered by Chicago's public schools.

"We need to deal with the issue of quality education, but we also need to deal with the issue of equity," says Andy Wade, executive director for Chicago School Leadership Cooperative. The group is coordinating the one-day conference with help from Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform.

More than 30 organizations signed up as summit hosts, including Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union. Key leaders like Schools CEO Arne Duncan, CTU President Deborah Lynch and state Sen. Miguel del Valle are slated to attend.

But planners crafted a community-driven summit rather than one featuring only traditional school leaders. They want active participation by local school council members, principals, teachers, parents, students, various civic organizations and universities.

Their goal is to establish a clear picture of local school concerns for city, state and federal lawmakers as they con-

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Chicago School Leadership Cooperative: office@leadercoop.org or call (312) 499-4800.
- Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform: (312) 322-4800.

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb. 18: Gov. Rod Blagojevich budget address

Feb. 21: "Closing the Achievement Gap" at Roberto Clemente High School

March 16: Illinois primary elections

March 17: Deadline for LSC candidate applications

April 9-18: CPS Spring Vacation

April 21: LSC elections in elementary schools

April 22: LSC elections in high schools

sider new policy initiatives.

Planners dubbed the summit "Closing the Achievement Gap," hoping to focus attention on equity issues like the

school funding crisis and teacher quality. They also designed several workshops to capitalize on interest in the federal No Child Left Behind law and its impact on Chicago schools.

The summit's date marks the 15th anniversary of Chicago's school reform law, which instituted elected local school councils. In part, the event is a look back at the movement's accomplishments and a rally for renewing interest in the councils. (Candidates for local school councils must file by March 17.) It also constitutes the kickoff of the local school council election season. Historically, LSC advocates have had a hard time drumming up enough candidates at many schools.

The event will be held at Roberto Clemente High School, 1147 N. Western, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., followed by a celebration. Registration forms are available online through the Cooperative (www.leadercoop.org). Attendance is free but organizers are asking schools to help sponsor the event with a minimum \$100 contribution, and host organizations to make a minimum \$200 contribution.

John Myers

Actors in school reform turn authors for new book

In a new book, 11 actors in Chicago's ongoing school reform saga join researchers and editors of the Harvard Education Letter for a new look at the key issues and forces that have shaped the past 15 years of work to improve the nation's third largest school district.

"School Reform in Chicago: Lessons in Policy and Practice" was edited by CATALYST Contributing Editor Alexander Russo and published by the Harvard Education Press.

"This book takes a critical and varied look at what really happened in Chicago schools in the years since Mayor Daley took over, and asks whether current school reform efforts are going through a golden era—or a lull," says Russo.

Chapters on the community's role in school reform were contributed by Russo; Ken Rolling, former executive director of Chicago Annenberg Challenge; Andrew Wade, executive director of Chicago School Leadership Cooperative; David Gordon, editor of Harvard Education Letter; Madeline Talbott, head organizer with Illinois ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now); and Richard Gelb, curriculum coordinator at Benito Juarez High School.

The swirling political waters of education policy are addressed by Philip Hansen, accountability chief under former schools CEO Paul Vallas; Michael Sadowski, assistant editor of Harvard Education Letter; G. Alfred Hess, Jr.,

research professor of education and social policy at Northwestern University; Richard Elmore, professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; Timothy Brandhorst, former director of labor relations of CPS; Linda Lenz, publisher of CATALYST; John Ayers, executive director of Leadership for Quality Education; Jacqueline Leavy, director of the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group; and Cozette Buckney, former chief education officer of CPS.

The book costs \$22.95 for the paperback edition. An online order form can be reached through the online version of this article at www.catalyst-chicago.org. Orders also may be placed with the publisher, (617) 495-3432.

John Myers

Board set to vote on 2 new charter schools

Two more charter schools are expected to be on the agenda for approval at the School Board's February meeting, CPS officials report.

In December, the board was expected to grant up to half of 13 new charter slots available in Chicago. But only two, Namaste School in McKinley Park and the Chicago Mathematics and Science Academy in Rogers Park, were approved and are expected to open in the fall.

Thirteen applications were rejected because of financial, curricular or management deficiencies, or because the parent institution did not have a site to house the charter. Six organizations withdrew their applications. Organizations that were turned down will get the chance to reapply during the next application period, running from May through July.

CPS officials say the number of denials should not come as a surprise, because the Board has set high standards for charters. "We learned from experience that to approve a school, the proposal has to be good all across the board," says Greg Richmond, chief officer of new school development.

"It doesn't work to fix things after approval and make up the plan as you go along," Richmond says.

The two charters approved in December were adequately prepared, he says. "Each had a clear educational vision, a strong curricular and assessment plan and all the other pieces that are necessary to exist."

Richmond is leaving the door open for operators who are willing to reapply. "Some had some really neat ideas, and we don't want to lose that. We've encouraged them to keep working and to come back once they rework the lacking areas."

Ericka Moore-Freeman

Next month

Catalyst will have a new look



With new features like **"Ask Catalyst"**

Send us your questions about school issues, problems and programs. E-mail
[<askcat@catalyst-chicago.org>](mailto:askcat@catalyst-chicago.org)

If your question is chosen for publication, we will track down the expert advice you need.

For fax, and regular mail addresses, see the masthead on page 3.

AT CLARK STREET **Connie Bridge**, former executive director of the Council on Teacher Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, has been appointed to the vacant position of chief officer of reading at CPS... **Betty Cittadine**, College Bridge program director for CPS, has been elected chair of the Illinois ACT Council. The 15-member council serves as a liaison between the high school and college communities, and the regional and national offices of ACT. Cittadine has been a member of the council for three years ... **Genita C. Robinson**, former associate director for accountability at Leadership for Quality Education, is the new director of the charter schools office at CPS. She will report to **Greg Richmond**, director of new school creation.

MOVING IN/ON **Peter Mich**, education program officer at The Joyce Foundation, has been named executive director of the McDougal Family Foundation. He will take over from **Randi Starr** ... **Allen Schwartz**, former executive director of the Chicago Metro History Fair, has been replaced by **Crystal Johnson**, former Iowa state coordinator for National History Day. Schwartz relocated to Ohio and is working on several projects as a consultant ... **Warren Chapman**, president of the Bank One Foundation, has joined the Board of Trustees of Columbia College Chicago ... **Susan Kerr**, former director of Ronald McDonald House Charities, is the first

president of the new Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation ... **Marcia Lipetz**, former senior vice president of The Philanthropy Group, has been appointed president and CEO of the Executive Service Corps of Chicago. She replaces **Dennis A. Zovac**, who retired in December.

NEW NAMES FOR NONPROFITS Whirlwind, a Chicago-based nonprofit that provides interactive literacy programs for at-risk children, has changed its name to **Reading In Motion**. ... The Day Care Action Council of Illinois, an organization that works toward ensuring quality day care in the state, will change its name in March to **Action for Children**.

PRINCIPAL RETIREMENT **Joanne H. Davis**, Armour School; Assistant Principal **Shelley Cordova** replaces her.

TEACHER PENSION FUND ELECTIONS In a December election for the annuitant's seats on the pension board, the following were elected to two-year terms: **Carole R. Nolan**, **Walter E. Pilditch** and **James F. Ward**.

ATTENDANCE RECOGNITION AWARDS Twenty-three high schools that either maintained attendance rates of at least 90 percent or posted attendance gains of at least 4 percent over a four-year period, will each receive \$5,000 through the

CPS Attendance Improvement Initiative. The schools are: Gwendolyn Brooks, Chicago Agricultural, Chicago Military Academy, Hubbard, Jones, Lane Tech, Northside College Prep, Prosser, Von Steuben, Whitney Young, Crane, Farragut, Hancock, Manley, Robeson, Carver Military Academy, Corliss, Julian, Kelly, Phillips, Senn, Sullivan and Tilden.

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS **Columbia College Chicago** plans to offer a new scholarship for CPS graduates in fall 2004, providing 45 renewable scholarships totaling roughly \$720,000 over four years. ... An expanded initiative from **The Posse Foundation** will provide 48 scholarships averaging \$100,000 each to CPS students. Information on these and other scholarship opportunities can be obtained through the CPS scholarship database at <http://scholarships.cps.k12.il.us>.

TEACHER AWARD High school students may nominate a teacher who has given extra time and effort to help students succeed, for the Suave Performance Plus Award. Nominations must be received by Feb. 13, and nomination forms are available in schools. Students will select 30 finalists. The six award winners will be announced May 6; the teacher and their school will each receive \$5,000.

Irasema Salinas-González, John Myers



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