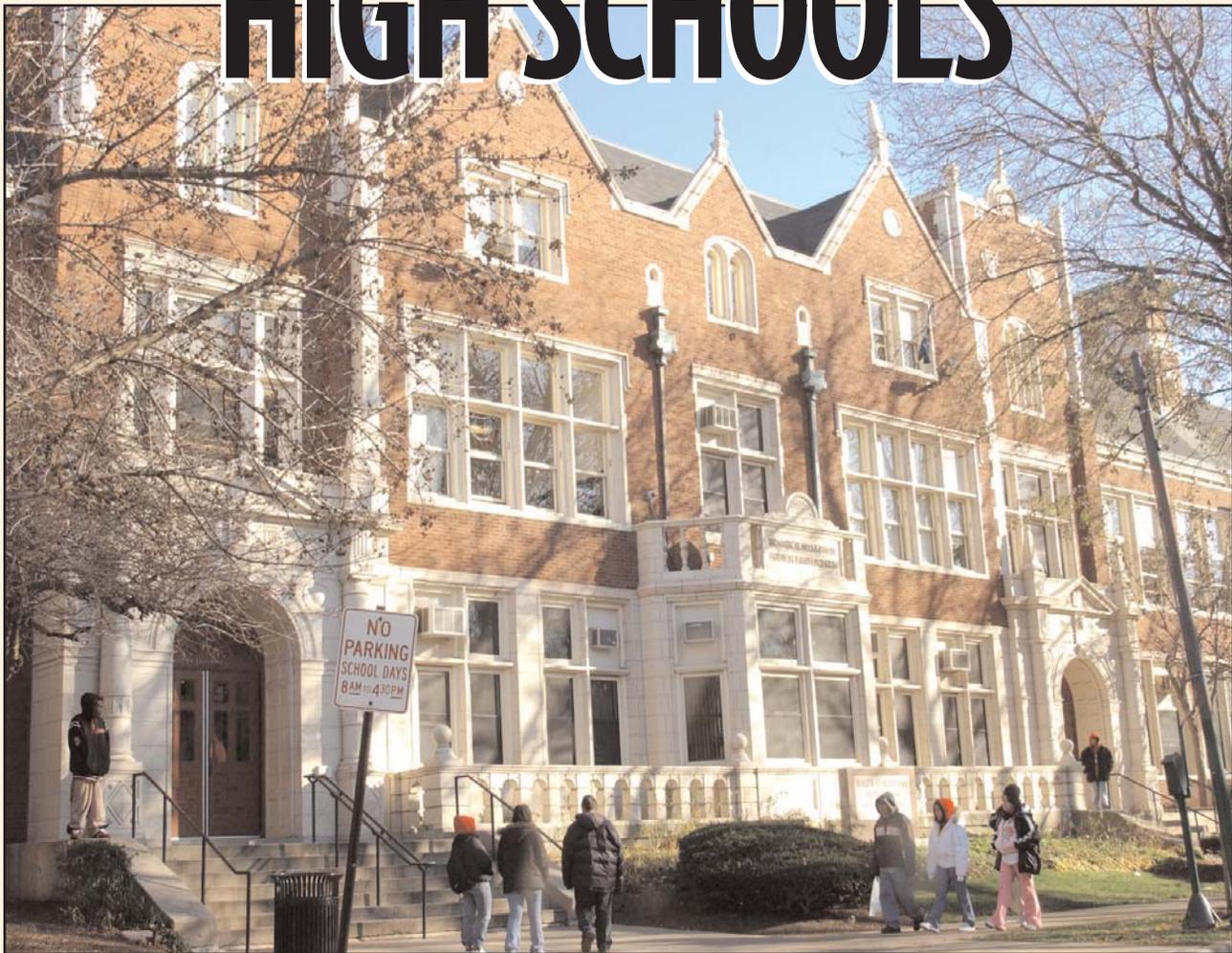


# Catalyst CHICAGO

Vol. XVII Number 4

DECEMBER 2005 INDEPENDENT REPORTING ON URBAN SCHOOLS

## REINVENTING HIGH SCHOOLS



**THE DISTRICT IS BETTING ON OUTSIDE EXPERTS TO BRING  
BETTER CURRICULA AND TEACHING TO SCHOOLS**

**Analysis: Which schools get more money for teachers? PAGE 11**

# Using economics to influence where teachers go to work



Veronica Anderson

**T**he balance of teacher talent and experience in the city's public schools is often mixed, but for some, the scales are more likely to tip in one direction or the other. A *Catalyst Chicago* analysis of teacher salary data found that certain types of schools—catch-up high schools for kids left behind and schools with the highest poverty rates—tend to have the lowest-paid teachers on staff. By comparison, selective high schools and elementary gifted centers and magnets have more higher-paid teachers.

Translating pay to experience is fairly straightforward on most union pay scales: Teachers with entry-level credentials and little or no experience earn low salaries; those with more degrees and experience earn more. There is no special consideration, or extra money, awarded to teachers who demonstrate that they are more skilled or effective at their jobs than their peers. Nor are there any financial incentives for those who choose to take on tough assignments in schools where kids are behind and need a lot more support.

A recent survey of teachers in three states found overwhelming support (77 percent) for paying higher salaries to teachers in hard-to-staff schools. Younger teachers, those with 10 years or less experience, were more likely than 20-year veterans to favor this strategy, sometimes referred to as combat pay, and another that would reward teachers whose students made the highest gains on tests.

So it is not surprising that, perhaps with only one exception, teachers unions led by experienced leaders oppose most schemes that would use financial incentives to shift the

balance of teacher quality among schools. Chicago Teachers Union President Marilyn Stewart cites a conventional wisdom of the profession: That the real incentive for teachers to work in tough schools is a sense of duty and the chance to use their talent to make a difference where it is most needed. Providing extra funds to schools where the least-experienced teachers work will not necessarily attract more veterans to work there, she says.

Yet that's exactly what Chicago Public Schools is considering doing as it moves deliberately toward a more equitable method of allocating its resources. One of the options on the table is to make schools pick up the full tab for the cost of their teachers. Currently, schools like Jones College Prep, where 80 percent of teachers have 10 or more years of experience, do not feel the pinch of paying higher-than-average salaries. By contrast, Crane Achievement Academy, a school for low-achieving students who are not ready for 9th grade, is staffed mostly by teachers with less than five years on the job.

By shifting money around, the

thinking goes, schools that have the most difficulty attracting and retaining teachers would have extra funds to hire more experienced teachers or to train and develop the faculty already there. So far, Oakland, Calif., is the only school district that has tried it. More than half of the district's 105 schools are getting more money now—the second year of this experiment in lump-sum budgeting—than they did previously under the old system.

Here, only charters and a few new Renaissance schools are operating under this version of lump-sum budgeting, also called per-pupil or student-based budgeting, where how much teachers cost matters. Converting the entire district to this system would be a labor economist's dream come true.

But as budgeting experts rightly point out, it is merely a starting point. More effective, they say, would be a concerted effort between districts and unions to link pay and teacher performance. Shifting money around in school budgets would address an important issue of equity, but alone it may do little to balance the talent scale.

**MEA CULPA** In this column a couple of months ago, I did not recognize the valued contributions of two outgoing *Catalyst* editorial board members—Principal **Joan Forte** of Randolph Elementary and Washington, D.C.,-based journalist **Anne Lewis**—each of whom served for four years. Thank you both for your support and apologies for the oversight.

*Veronica Anderson*

## HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

# No small plans for high schools

**A**rne Duncan recently outlined a series of reform projects to the city's civic leaders. First up: hiring outsiders to bring in new and improved curricula and intensive coaching for teachers. But those working in schools are skeptical, fearing that the board's plan will end up as a passing fad. **COVER STORY: PAGE 6**

### SCORE CARD OPENS NEW WINDOW ON HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

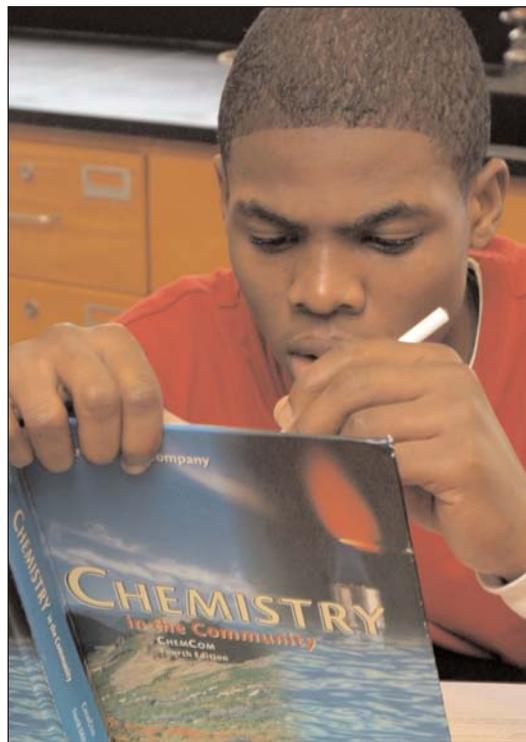
Cards show student gains on test scores and how schools rank. **PAGE 8**

### MATH, SCIENCE PLANS FACE HURDLES

Better curricula is a step forward, but schools will also need better technology. **PAGE 9**

### LOW-LEVEL READING SKILLS SHOW NONFICTION IS NEGLECTED

New English curriculum may not do much to teach better analytical skills. **PAGE 10**



JASON REBLANDO

**Jerome Johnson at Phillips High** studies "Chemistry in the Community," one of the textbooks in the district's model science curriculum.

**ON THE COVER:** The district has plans to remake neighborhood high schools like Sullivan High in Rogers Park. PHOTO BY JOHN BOOZ

## DEPARTMENTS

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### ON OUR WEB SITE

Go to the *Catalyst* web site, [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org), for news and resources on Chicago school reform, including:

- Spanish translations
- Citywide data from the 1980s
- Reform history news highlights

15 years  
of reporting  
excellence

## In review

**1990:** The school system and area universities and research organizations launch the Consortium on Chicago School Research, a unique collaborative that has been tracking school reform efforts ever since. It is based at the University of Chicago and can be found online at [www.consortium-chicago.org](http://www.consortium-chicago.org).

**1995:** The school system emerges from a construction drought with a

\$787 million borrowing plan to construct 30 new schools and 45 additions in five years and to rehabilitate existing schools. Rehab projects include building repairs, lead abatement, lockers, energy efficiencies, play lots, parks and other improvements.

**2000:** State school officials announce that beginning the following spring, all high school juniors in the state will be required to take the ACT college entrance exam. Illinois is the first state to adopt that requirement.

For a school reform timeline stretching back to 1985, go to [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org) and click on "reform history."

# Notebook

## Q&A with ...

Elizabeth Kirby  
Principal, Kenwood Academy

Earlier this year, former teacher and assistant principal Elizabeth Kirby became principal of Kenwood, taking over from Arthur Slater, who was initially sent to the school by central office. Kirby, who taught at Triumphant Charter and Olive-Harvey Middle College before coming to Kenwood, talked with Consulting Editor Lorraine Forte about the lessons she learned from charter schools, leadership and plans to make the school more academically competitive.

### How did teaching prepare you to be principal?

The charter experience teaches you that you can do almost anything in a school if you're creative enough. Probably most importantly, I saw strategies for reaching kids who are difficult to teach in a normal school setting, or who haven't experienced success. So when I came [here] as a teacher, I had a skill set of different, out-of-the-box practices to really engage kids in learning and empower them. I taught kids at Olive Harvey who had gone to Kenwood and weren't successful. It's been interesting coming back here, experiencing the school as a teacher and administrator and seeing how structures that you put in place within a high school are important to nurture [students].

### What are some of the ways you reach a kid who's not been successful?

With constant contact—conversation with the kids and the parent and the teacher, feedback and accountability, and helping the kids feel like they can do it. Relationships are one piece, and school structure is another. So for those freshmen that fail courses, we have mandatory after-school tutoring and advising for 10 weeks—maybe even 20 weeks so that we can assure that they're passing their classes.

### There was a drive to have more kids from the area go to Kenwood. Has that turned out to be the case?

Probably about 60 percent of our population currently has addresses in Hyde Park. We're focusing on raising achievement because that's what's going to make the school attractive to people both in the neighborhood and outside.

You mentioned budgeting earlier. The district is talking about student-based budg-

## TIMELINE

### Nov. 14: Deseg dollars    Nov. 16: Capital money    Nov. 16: New schools

An additional 13,000 students will get after-school tutoring, and racially isolated schools will get more classroom staff, under an agreement between the district and the federal government over desegregation spending. CPS will set aside another \$8.5 million for tutoring and \$1.5 million to hire aides and teachers. Most of the money will come from federal grants. The district has been under a desegregation consent decree for more than two decades. A hearing on whether to release the district from the decree is set for next year.

The district announces plans to borrow an additional \$75 million for capital projects, bringing the 2006 capital budget to \$325 million. But board President Michael Scott won't specify which capital projects will benefit, saying "we have 600 schools and a lot of needs." This past spring, cuts were announced in the capital improvement budget after the state cut \$110 million in funds, putting a number of school additions and new construction projects on hold. The 2005 capital budget for new projects was initially \$369 million.

A school modeled after a parochial school and an online school are among the Renaissance 2010 proposals accepted by CPS. Providence-Englewood, modeled after Providence-St. Mel, will require some students to take admissions tests, and parents to attend workshops. It is slated to take over the shuttered Bunche Elementary building at 65th Street and Ashland. The company that will run the online school was co-founded by William Bennett, the former U.S. education secretary who recently came under fire for making racially insensitive remarks.

## ELSEWHERE

### Iowa: New evaluations

A new teacher evaluation program that requires most teachers to put together portfolios of their work and submit to more classroom visits is getting mixed reviews, according to the Nov. 5 *Des Moines Register*. Some teachers applaud the idea, but others say the program—especially the portfolios, which must document how a teacher's instruction meets learning standards—just creates more work without raising pay. The program was originally supposed to include salary increases tied to better performance.

### Connecticut: Funding lawsuit

A group of educators and city officials plan to file a lawsuit to force the state to overhaul school funding based on an "adequacy formula" that accounts for different needs among children, according to the Nov. 7 *Hartford Courant*. Since 1989, the state's

share of education spending has declined to about 38 percent, down from almost 46 percent. The Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding commissioned a study that found 145 out of 166 districts fell short of funding needed to bring achievement up to standards set by the federal No Child Left Behind law.

### Kentucky: Foreign language

The state is considering requiring high school students to show foreign-language proficiency in order to graduate, according to the Nov. 1 *Lexington Herald-Leader*. The plan would include testing to determine how well students speak, read and write a foreign language. The state Board of Education is expected to vote on the proposal in December and implement it by 2010. Illinois does not have such a requirement, but Chicago Public Schools students must earn two credits in a foreign language to graduate.

## IN SHORT

### "School has to have a purpose, be a pathway to the future for them."

Michele Cahill, senior counselor for education policy for The New York City Dept. of Education, on how to help at-risk teens succeed in school. She spoke at a Nov. 2 luncheon co-sponsored by Business and Professional People for the Public Interest and Catalyst Chicago.



ANTONIO PEREZ

eting, giving schools a certain amount per kid. Would that be to your advantage?

Probably not. That's what they did at charter schools and charters always felt strapped.

Assume you'd also get extra for special education and low-income kids. It's still not going to be the same?

Not at all. Unless it's \$5,000 additional.

What's your take on the high school reform plan?

It's good in that it sets some clear outcomes and goals for schools and I think it brings transparency to the system. But what I hear a lot from veteran teachers—not only at Kenwood, but all over—is that this is just another thing that the system is doing. The way that [the district] supports it is really important and critical.

Tell me what you're doing to improve the school academically.

We have AVID [Advancement Via Individual Determination]. As assistant principal, I pushed for that because I knew that would really give kids the academic background to be successful from high school all the way through college. That should expand the Advanced Placement enrollment because those kids take least one AP class. Second, my whole administrative team and I do two hours of classroom observation a day. That makes a world of difference in knowing the strengths and the weaknesses of teachers, and also seeing how the students are. There's so much information that you get by doing that because it helps set priorities and shows ways that the school in general needs to improve.

Anything else?

Another thing that I'm trying to do is expand leadership. I do not have a philosophy that I'm the chief and everybody else is an Indian. We have so many talented educators in the building who are already leaders and if they're not, we push them into leadership. ■

## ASK CATALYST

I'm interested in the elementary magnet programs. I was told by the Office of Academic Enhancement to go online to find the application. I spent one hour searching the website. Please help.

*Anonymous Parent*

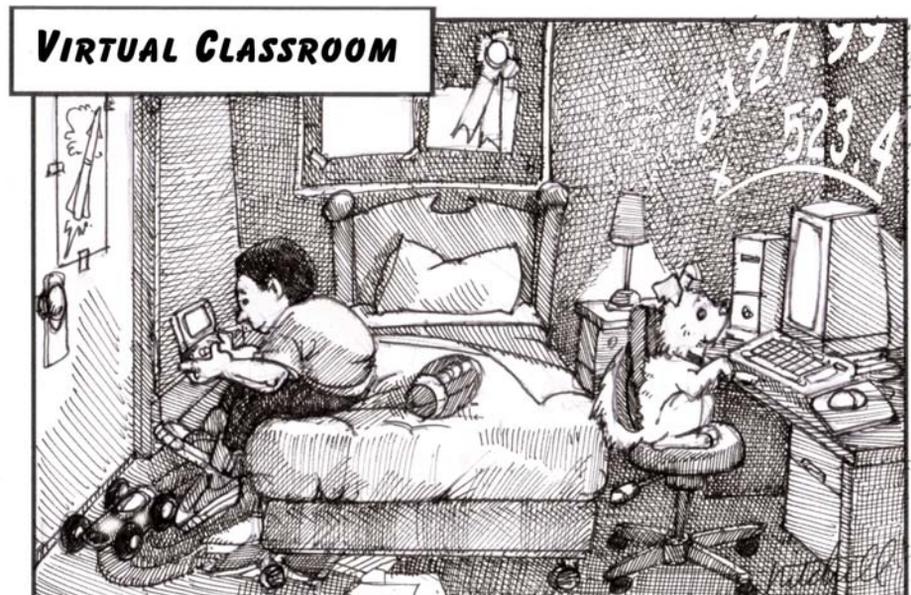
The most direct route to a magnet application is [www.chicagomagnetprograms.org](http://www.chicagomagnetprograms.org). Applications must be postmarked by Dec. 16th. The main CPS website ([www.cps.k12.il.us](http://www.cps.k12.il.us)) also contains numerous links to the magnet schools' web pages, but as you discovered, they may not be easy to locate. (For instance, look under "School News" in the right hand column, click on "Types of Schools," scroll down to find "Magnet Schools" and click on the magnet website link.) If you need an application to a regional gifted center, classical school, academic center or International Baccalaureate prep program, call the academic enhancement office at (773) 553-2060. CPS has introduced a new application that, for technical reasons, cannot be downloaded. However, the new applications, which can be read by a computer, should shorten processing time and move up the date for notifying parents of acceptance, to early or mid-March, according to Jack Harnedy, who heads the office.

E-mail your question to [askcat@catalyst-chicago.org](mailto:askcat@catalyst-chicago.org) or send it to Ask Catalyst, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, IL 60604.

## MATH CLASS

This fall, a consortium of local colleges and universities received a **\$49 million** grant for the Gear-Up (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) college-preparation program. The test scores of Gear-Up students have risen faster than scores districtwide, but still remain below city averages, according to data from Gear-Up and CPS. In 2002, **29%** of Gear-Up 6th-graders were at or above national norms in reading, while **31%** were at or above norms in math. Citywide, 6th-grade scores were **38%** in reading and **42%** in math. But **2** years later, scores for Gear-Up 8th-graders had risen **16** and **20** percentage points, to **45%** in reading and **51%** in math. Citywide, 8th-grade scores rose **16** and **15** percentage points, to **54%** in reading and **57%** in math.

## FOOTNOTE



KURT MITCHELL

# No small plans for high schools

By Maureen Kelleher

**O**n a sunny late-September morning, Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan stood in front of a large crowd of the city's business, civic and educational elite and laid out his plan to jump-start low-achieving neighborhood high schools.

Duncan promised to help schools raise their expectations for student performance. He promised to help elementary schools do a better job of preparing students for high school, and to help high schools support students better once they arrive. He vowed to continue opening new high schools and searching for the best teachers and principals.

To make these goals reality, Duncan envisioned a series of projects over the next decade. Two are already under way: a school score card and new model curricula for teaching math, science and English. He also noted plans for projects down the road, including new schooling options for under-

achievers and improved middle-school curricula.

"We're not out for a quick fix here," Duncan told the capacity crowd at Chase Tower on South Clark Street. "What we need is a fundamental re-examination of what our high schools are doing and how they can serve our students better."

**High schools have been performing poorly for decades, and district officials admit there's no 'quick fix.' Can CPS pull off any fix at all?**

If history is any indication, Duncan's plan—however well-conceived—probably won't exist in 10 years. The last grand plan to reform high schools, in the late 1990s, produced one change that stuck: increased graduation requirements.

But this time around, the board took a different approach, fueled by a \$2.3 mil-

lion planning grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which this year began giving grants to help districts develop comprehensive strategies to raise graduation rates and increase college readiness.

For one, top officials acknowledged that improving high schools is a monumental task that they can't do on their own. So the administration brought in two high-powered consultants to help craft a strategy: Boston Consulting Group, which specializes in large-scale overhauls of organizations; and American Institutes for Research, a veteran social science research group that recently began educational consulting.

Second, the district sought input from those in the trenches. In focus groups, the district forced teachers and principals to take a hard look at data, such as the discrepancy between course grades and the results of college entrance and place-

## **VYING FOR A SLICE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL REFORM PIE**

In early November, three teams of district officials began reviewing proposals submitted for the centerpiece of CPS's high school reform plan: providing new curriculum models and instructional support for math, science and English courses.

Educational publishers, university-affiliated curriculum developers and test preparation companies submitted most of the 20 proposals. Three organizations have confirmed they submitted proposals to oversee management of the entire curriculum revamp:

- American College of Education, a new teachers college opening a Chicago campus this fall in the former Barat College in Lake Forest.
- American Institutes for Research, a Washington, D.C.,-based social science research organization that helped craft the high school reform plan.
- Lesson Lab, the professional development arm of publisher Pearson Education.

The Board of Education will vote on the final contracts at its meeting on Dec. 21.

For a complete listing and more information on the companies that submitted proposals, go to our website at [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org)

*Maureen Kelleher*



JASON REBLANDO

**Sima Faik, science department chair** at Phillips High in Douglas, teaches a junior chemistry lab that is already using a textbook recommended by the district as part of its curriculum project. The book, “Chemistry in the Community,” is part of ChemCom, a curriculum designed by the American Chemical Society.

ment tests, then asked for suggestions on strategies. CPS officials say more than 300 teachers and administrators attended the “visioning sessions” as part of data-gathering to create the high school plan.

CPS also held focus groups with parents and students to get their views on what’s wrong with high schools and what needs to happen to make them work.

Third, schools are being given the choice of whether or not to take part. (The district expects a total of 45 schools will participate.) Previously, CPS tried a top-down approach to standardizing curriculum by forcing schools to use the now-defunct CASE (Chicago Academic Standards Exams) tests as course finals. But when teachers rebelled, saying the exam was poorly constructed, the district had to scrap the effort.

### **‘NO ONE HAS DONE IT’**

At its Dec. 21 meeting, the district will award the contracts for the curriculum

revamp. Twenty organizations submitted proposals.

The district won’t know how much the project will cost until early next year, but Melissa Megliola, a special assistant to Arne Duncan, says it’s “safe to say that CPS will be spending millions over several years” on intensive classroom coaching for teachers, development of curricula and model lessons, textbooks and other materials, assessments and professional development and networking.

District officials also say they will protect the project from budget cuts, but history contradicts them. “We’ll get money,” says Peter Cunningham, CPS director of communications. “If we have to cut something to do it, we will. This is what’s important.”

Yet last year, textbook money wasn’t that important. The Office of Math and Science offered dollar-for-dollar matching funds to help schools that decided to adopt its recommended curriculum (the

basis for the models the district is now promoting). But budget cuts forced them to drop the match. As a result, “we didn’t get that many schools on board,” says Martin Gartzman, director of math and science.

Beyond money, success this time around also depends on whether the district sticks with the plan. That’s what worries Martin McGreal, curriculum coordinator at Gage Park High, who helped evaluate the curriculum proposals. “On paper, this is put together extremely well,” he says. “But I’m still not convinced the commitment will be there all the way through.”

Like Chicago, districts from San Diego to Boston have begun trying to change and improve their high schools, with little significant success.

“Let’s be clear, no one has done it,” warns Joseph Olchefske of the American Institutes for Research, one of three groups that submitted a proposal to assist the district with supervising the curricu-

lum project. “It’s not like you come in with a magic bullet.”

A recent report on the Gates high school initiative points out the difficulty of transforming high schools. In examining some of the new and redesigned high schools supported by Gates grants, evaluators found mixed results. While schools were making some progress raising achievement, classroom assignments were often not rigorous enough, especially in mathematics, and the quality of student work was often low. (The report was co-authored by the American Institutes for Research and SRI International, a research group based in Menlo Park, Calif.)

### **NO SCRIPTED CURRICULUM, BUT PRE-PACKAGED TESTS**

Some high school principals balked at the district’s initial plan for the new high school score card (see story on page 8). And they’re also wary about the curriculum overhaul, which will include hiring outside managers and, possibly, outside coaches for teachers.

Most administrators *Catalyst* spoke with in late October and early November said they did not know enough about the curriculum project to say whether they would opt to participate. Those few who were more familiar with the plan approved of the idea in principle, but wonder whether schools will be given enough leeway to adapt the curriculum to their own schools’ needs.

“Having a scripted curriculum won’t work,” warns Principal Al Pretkelis of Kelly High in Brighton Park.

Principal John Butterfield of Mather High in West Ridge says he is “big on creativity in the classroom. You want to be able to tell teachers [to] add to it.”

The new curricula will also come with pre-packaged

*Continued on page 19*

# Score card opens new window on high school performance

Parents will find out test-score gains, what happens to grads, results of student surveys

By Maureen Kelleher

In December, the district unveiled a new high school “score card” that aims to give parents more information to help them pick the best high school for their teenagers.

Among other indicators, the score card shows the gains high school students make on standardized tests, which the district is now calculating for the first time. The goal, says Xavier Botana, chief of accountability for the federal No Child Left Behind law, is to determine whether schools are “moving kids at the same rate that schools nationally are moving their kids.” Botana supervised the development of the card, which is intended to report more in-depth statistics than the state’s school report card.

Because the state’s high school test—the Prairie State Achievement Exam—is administered only to juniors, the district is analyzing the gains students make as they move through ACT’s college testing

with its students. “It levels the playing field,” says Peter Ballard, a member of the district team that developed the card. “It doesn’t look at where the kid starts but how much they progress in a year.”

For that reason, showing gains is also likely to provide a wake-up call to high-scoring schools, which typically have selective enrollments, if students do not progress much from year-to-year, or if minority students make less progress than whites.

“I think that’s going to challenge us in ways we haven’t been challenged before,” says Donald Fraynd, principal of Jones College Prep in the South Loop. “It’s a more accurate measure of what we are doing in our schools. We shouldn’t be celebrated for just beginning with a strong student. We should be celebrated for what we do to move that student forward.”

Among other indicators, the score card reports the number of graduates who enroll in college, the number of students who take Advanced Placement

to progress as well as just snapshots.”

Next year, the district will add the results of student surveys about school climate, teacher expectations and support from school staff. Data that is disaggregated by race also will become available online.

## PARENTS NEED MORE HELP

At first, some principals in neighborhood high schools balked at the score card idea because central office said it planned to rank all schools together, whether neighborhood-based or with selective enrollment.

“You’re just not starting from the same point,” notes Richard Norman, principal of Senn High in Edgewater and former director of admissions at Northside College Prep. “Principals wanted to be compared with their peers.”

The district agreed to have separate rankings, Botana says. The main rationale for the score cards is to give parents better information about high schools. “If you’re a parent and you’re looking among five schools, and you really care about attendance, you can see how they rate,” Botana says.

But one mother of five says it will take more than a score card to help parents make the best schooling choices.

Until she attended a community forum, Jackie Dukes was not considering alternatives to Hyde Park High in Woodlawn for her youngest son. But “listening to the panel” convinced her to consider the University of Chicago’s new charter high school, which will open next fall. Dukes, who is still weighing high school options, says her son “will need a lot more of a push to go from high school to college,” and liked the university’s plans for preparing all students for post-secondary education.

The card is available at schools and at [www.cps.k12.il.us/schools/scorecard](http://www.cps.k12.il.us/schools/scorecard). ■

**“We shouldn’t be celebrated for just beginning with a strong student. We should be celebrated for what we do to move that student forward.”**

*Donald Fraynd, principal of Jones College Prep*

sequence: the 9th-grade Explore, 10th-grade PLAN and the 11th-grade ACT. The gains students make in each successive year are compared to the gains made by students across the country who scored at the same level on the first test. The score card reports the percentage of students in each school who meet or exceed the expected gains.

Showing test-score gains is a more accurate way to demonstrate whether a neighborhood school is making progress

courses and pass course exams and the number of freshmen on-track to graduate at the end of 9th grade. For some indicators, the district is including three years’ worth of data to show trends.

Paul Reville, a lecturer at Harvard Graduate School of Education and president of the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, a Massachusetts-based think tank, says the card is a good idea. “It broadens the information that usually is talked about,” he says. “It’s also attending

# Math, science plans face hurdles

By Maureen Kelleher

If math teacher Delora Washington had her way, Corliss High in Pullman would be first in line to join the district's initiative to prod schools to adopt new, improved math curricula.

In fact, at the top of her wish list is one of the three mathematics curricula the board has already selected.

"I've been trying to get Cognitive Tutor (a highly regarded math curriculum that includes extensive computer-based learning) for the last three years," says Washington, who teaches calculus and advanced algebra with trigonometry, and recently won the prestigious Milken Family Foundation Educator Award. "It really makes students think about math [concepts]."

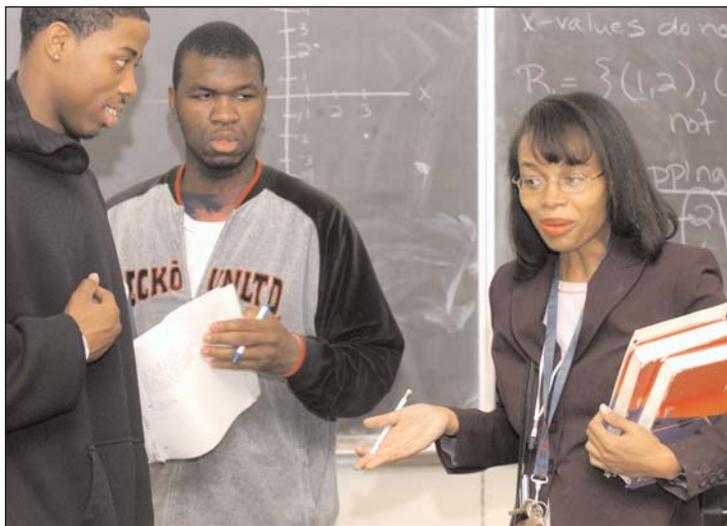
But Corliss doesn't have the technology and manpower Cognitive Tutor requires, and that's a problem other schools are likely to face if they decide to participate in the initiative.

"We don't have a math lab," Washington explains. "You can't use it with just five computers in the classroom." In any case, budget cuts forced the school to reassign its technology coordinator to teach a full load of classes, leaving Corliss without anyone to do computer maintenance quickly. "If you have to wait a month [for repairs], then it's not going to work," Washington observes.

Corliss had already adopted another math curriculum that is on the district's preferred list, Agile Mind. But in mid-November, teachers were still undergoing training and waiting for the video projectors Agile Mind uses to show interactive animations of algebra equations. "A lot of them have reverted to using the textbook, which I was afraid they were going to do," says Washington.

Like Washington, other teachers and curricular experts applaud the selection of high-quality math curricula that will engage students in learning. But unless teachers are trained and given adequate resources, schools will be hamstrung trying to adopt any new curricula.

The models in math and science evolved from recommendations the Office of Math and Science issued last spring. As



Delora Washington, math department chair at Corliss High, says she wants one of the district's math curricula, but needs better technology to support it.

JOHN BOOZ

an incentive, the office promised to match dollar-for-dollar any discretionary funds schools spent to buy the recommended materials, but the money dried up in the final budget. As a result, not many schools bought them, says Martin Gartzman, the district's chief officer for math and science. Though the district plans to offer schools some money this time around, how much is still up in the air.

Two of the three math curricula require computers, software and other equipment. Cognitive Tutor pairs classroom discussion and problem-solving with individual, computer-based tutoring. Agile Mind is used with a textbook but works best when classrooms have LCD video projectors to enlarge charts, graphs and animations shown on a computer screen. The third model, Interactive Mathematics Project, doesn't come with technology, but to meet the district's requirement for a technology-based approach, software programs could be incorporated to help kids build and manipulate geometric objects or create charts and graphs using data.

## SCIENCE TEXTS NOT UP TO PAR

In science as well as math, lack of resources could also be a problem for schools.

National science standards promote what is called an inquiry approach, in which students learn by asking questions

and developing experiments. "That's what we're all trying to push right now no matter what grade level or level of ability," says Lois Jackson, science department chair at Manley High in East Garfield Park. Yet many high schools have sub-standard labs or no labs at all, hindering teachers and students from conducting experiments. (See *Catalyst* November 2004)

The district is promoting one model that relies more heavily on textbooks. But national experts say science textbooks generally cover too many topics and don't help students gain a deeper understanding of key concepts. "There are serious problems with just about everything we've looked at," says Jo Ellen Roseman, director of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Project 2061, which advocates for better science education and has reviewed biology, chemistry and physics textbooks.

To augment the textbook-based approach, the district is asking prospective curriculum developers to provide professional development to help teachers lead thoughtful class discussions. Trainers will also be expected to conduct model labs. But Victor Simon, high school science coach for Area 22, isn't convinced that's what they'll deliver and wonders how a second set of trainers, brought in by outsiders, will work with area coaches, already in place. "So where does [the developer] fit in?" he asks. ■

# Low-level reading skills show nonfiction is neglected

By Maureen Kelleher

While the district's curricular models for math and science have won praise from teachers and experts, the models chosen for English have earned criticism.

Many students enter high school with below-average reading skills, skills that are particularly crucial when it comes to reading and analyzing nonfiction text. The current English curriculum does little to address the problem, teachers note. Yet the new curriculum models may not do much more: The district's request-for-proposals states only that new curricula should be developed "with attention to nonfiction text."

Charles Cooper, an English teacher at Gage Park High, says the district pays the price for neglecting the teaching of nonfiction. On standardized tests, he says, "we get hammered over and over and over again, because [students] can't make sense of the questions in science and math. We're not taking seriously what our data show. [English teachers] need to be much more focused on nonfiction reading."

Some experts criticize the district on another front. When CPS selected the models, it chose three that it said would provide different but equally valid methods of teaching English—similar to the approach it used with math and science.

One model is focused on inquiry, with units centered on a theme or guiding question. The second is based primarily on a textbook—in this case a literature anthology—with supplemental texts and help for teachers to support inquiry and discussion. The third model focuses on workshops in which students choose what to read and write about, work frequently in



JASON REBLANDO

**Gage Park High English teacher Charles Cooper, who prefers teaching freshmen so he can encourage them to stay in school, worries that his students do not get enough instruction in how to read and understand nonfiction.**

groups and receive lots of individual feedback from the teacher.

But Jeff Wilhelm, an associate professor of English education at Boise State University and an expert on adolescent literacy, says that the three options "are not equal." For example, he notes, the textbook-reliant option "seems like a punt for teachers who find actually thinking about assignments a little too tough."

## THEMES AND WORKSHOPS

By requiring schools to choose among the models, the district has turned complementary strategies into options pitted against each other, says Sharon Butman, a veteran English teacher at Senn High in Edgewater.

Wilhelm agrees. He'd prefer to see the district focus on a model that relies primarily on thematic units, with workshops for students to practice

skills independently. "Once you've taught kids new skills, you can put them in a workshop, where they are asked to apply them."

"Kids need both of those experiences," agrees literacy consultant Jennifer McDermott, previously with the University of Chicago's Center for Urban School Improvement, who works with teachers in Long Beach, Calif. and Highline, Wash., a suburb of Seattle. Thematic units provide the critical thinking and content, she says, while workshops provide independent practice.

Wilhelm suggests the real question isn't what curriculum to adopt, it's how to help teachers plan and deliver instruction. "If the problem is the teachers are not up to snuff, then the challenge is to give the teachers the support they need to do this the right way." ■

# How much should schools pay for teachers?

By Mallika Ahluwalia

**M**ore than 80 percent of the teachers at Jones College Prep—one of Chicago's highest-performing schools—have 10 years or more experience. With so many teachers at the top end of the union pay scale, Jones' faculty payroll is higher than average for a district high school.

Just the opposite is true at Fenger Achievement Academy, a catch-up high school program for low-scoring students who are too old to be retained in 8th grade. Only 20 percent of its teachers have 10 or more years of experience.

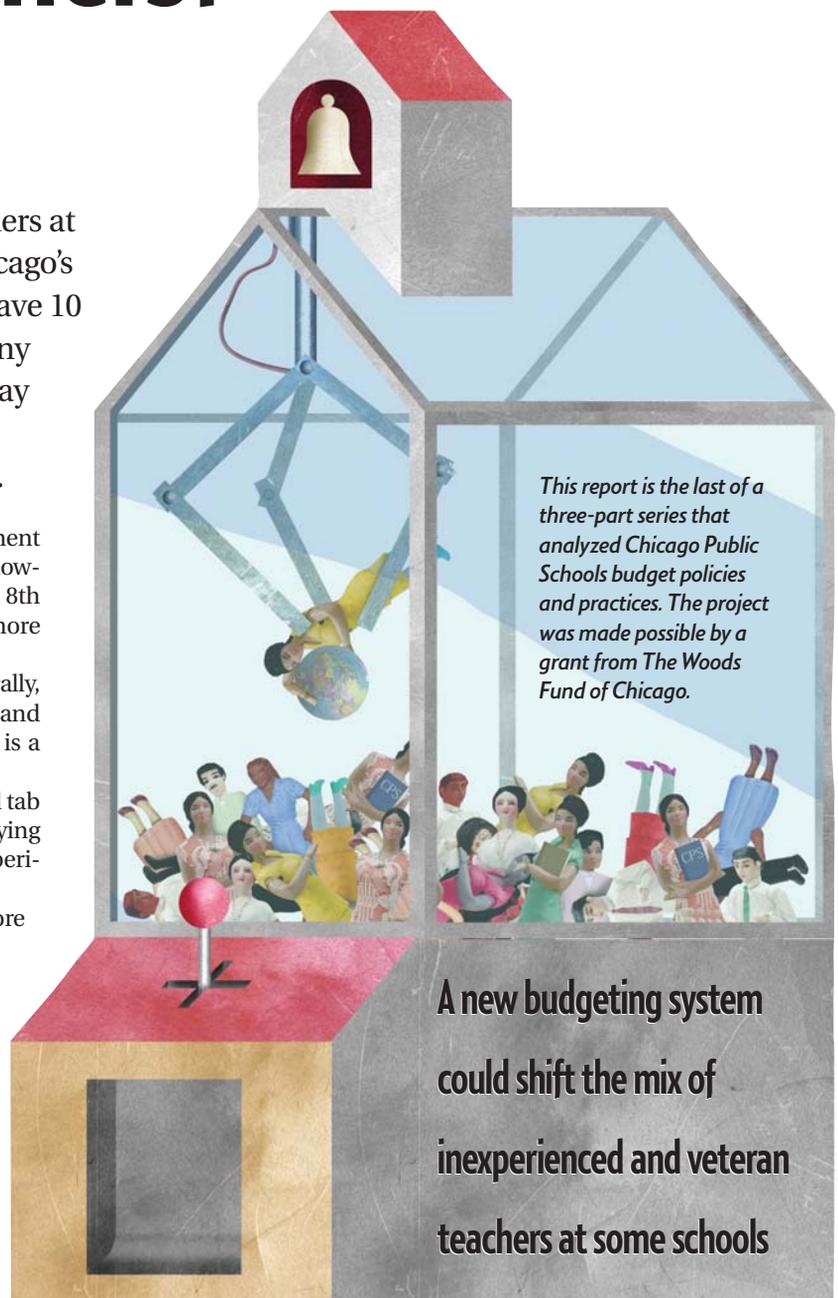
However, since teacher salaries are paid centrally, Jones doesn't feel the pinch of higher salaries and Fenger has no surplus. And whether they should is a matter that sparks considerable debate.

Some think that making schools pick up the full tab for teachers salaries would level the financial playing field and may even raise teacher credentials or experience at hard-to-staff schools.

Charging schools actual teacher salaries "is more equitable, and equity has to be the first consideration," says Diana Lauber of Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, a group that advocates for local control of schools.

Others argue that this strategy is too politically volatile, as it can create seismic monetary shifts, and may create incentives for principals to base teacher hiring decisions on salary rather than quality. There are other ways to better distribute highly qualified teachers, they say, such as linking teacher pay to performance.

*Continued on page 15*



*This report is the last of a three-part series that analyzed Chicago Public Schools budget policies and practices. The project was made possible by a grant from The Woods Fund of Chicago.*

**A new budgeting system could shift the mix of inexperienced and veteran teachers at some schools**

DENNIS NISHI

# \$25K spread in average teacher pay

**T**eachers with the most and least experience are unevenly distributed across Chicago's public schools, according to a *Catalyst Chicago* analysis of school-level budgets and teacher salary data.

Schools that employ more teachers at the low end of the pay scale tend to be those with high poverty rates or predominantly black or Latino enrollments. Schools that serve students who are not ready for 9th grade, are most likely to be staffed by newer teachers.

Almost all of the teachers at Crane Achievement Academy have less than five years experience, and only four of 15 are veterans, notes Director Ingrid Jackson.

More experienced teachers are concentrated at schools that are mostly white, have poverty rates lower than 50 percent or serve gifted students. Schools that serve only special education students tend to be staffed by more veterans, too.

All told, the analysis shows average teacher salaries range this year from a high of \$69,600 at Montefiore

Special School to a low of \$43,700 at Infinity Math and Science Academy.

Upwards of 70 percent of teachers at Montefiore have 10 years or more experience, says Assistant Principal Carmelita Austin Berry. Another reason the school's average teacher salary is so high is its year-round schedule, which entitles teachers to more money. At the other end, Infinity is one of four small schools that opened this fall in the new Little Village high school complex.

Viewed from an equity perspective, these findings are cause for concern because teacher salaries "constitute the bulk of spending" in school districts, says budget expert Marguerite Roza. "We're putting money into certain teachers and it's following them to high-performing schools. We should realize that there are other uses for those dollars, [like]

closing the achievement gap."

Chicago Teachers Union President Marilyn Stewart says the findings, particularly those related to high-poverty schools, come as no surprise. "These are less stable communities, so newer teachers are coming there," she says. "In more stable communities, teachers stay on for 20 to 30 years."

Schools with the lowest average teacher salaries tend to be new schools, says CPS spokesman Mike Vaughn, who notes the district's own analysis of teacher salaries produced similar results. Achievement academies "have an additional recruiting challenge because it's hard to find teachers to teach children who are clearly behind," he says.

Still, CPS finds nothing wrong with the current distribution of teacher experience. "I'm not convinced that a staff of entirely experienced teachers is better than a staff of mostly young teachers," Vaughn says, though a diversity of staff experience at schools is preferable.

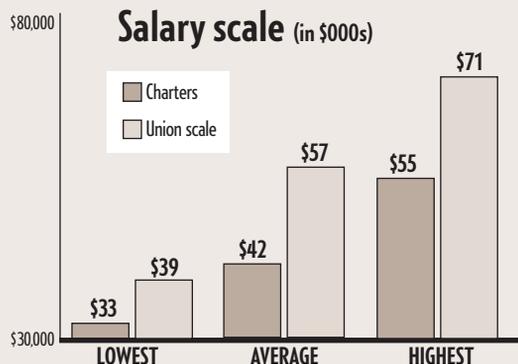
*Mallika Ahluwalia*

## Charters pay less, employ least-experienced

*With no requirement to adhere to the union scale, Chicago charter schools pay teachers \$15,000 a year less on average than the district, according to a 2004 salary survey.*

Among the 15 charters that participated, there were 647 teachers on staff, and they had an average of five years experience. CPS teachers have an average of 11.7 years of experience. \$22,000 separates the lowest- and highest-paid charter school teachers, the survey finds. On the union scale, the difference is \$32,000.

Source: Illinois Network of Charter Schools, Chicago Public Schools

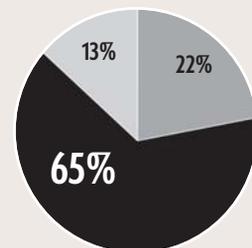


Note: High and low charter schools salaries represent averages of those extremes as reported by individual schools. The lowest and highest CPS teacher salaries are union scale for teachers working a regular school year.

## AVERAGE TEACHER SALARIES

Despite the wide range of average teacher salaries, most schools fall within close range of the district average. Charging schools the full price for teachers would create more winners than losers, with 22 percent getting extra money.

Legend: Below average (light gray), In range (dark gray), Above average (white)

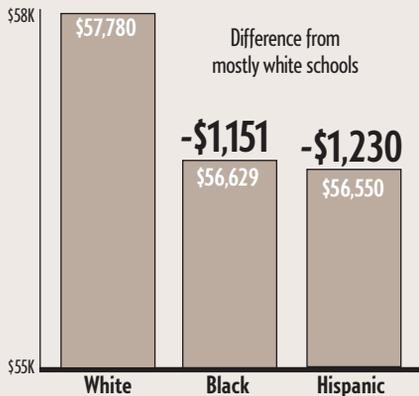


Note: Schools with average teacher salaries that were up to 5 percent higher or lower than the district average were considered to be within range.

## Higher-paid teachers at mostly white schools

Teachers at schools where enrollment is predominantly white earned higher salaries, on average, than their counterparts at mostly Latino or African American schools. Roughly \$1,200 separates the average annual salary of teachers at Latino schools from those at white schools. While the difference does not amount to much on an individual basis, schoolwide it can add up, enough to hire—or lose—a teacher. For instance, a predominantly Latino school with 50 teachers currently loses out on nearly \$62,000 in teacher salary dollars schoolwide.

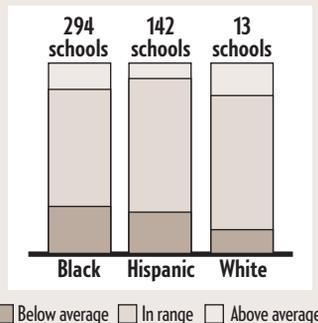
### Average annual salary



Note: Schools with average teacher salaries that were up to five percent higher or lower than the district average were considered to be within range.

### TEACHER EXPERIENCE

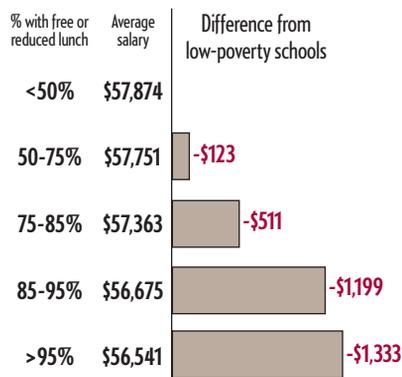
Some predominantly Latino or African American schools attract teachers with above average salaries. However, disproportionately fewer schools with predominantly white enrollment have below average teacher salaries.



## Poorest students taught by lowest-paid teachers

By federal law, low-income children are entitled to extra resources to supplement their education. When it comes to teacher salaries, however, schools with more poor children get thousands of dollars less than schools enrolling better off students.

Schools with the highest number of children receiving free and reduced-price lunch are the most likely to employ young, inexperienced teachers. The trend is consistent across the board—as the percentage of poor students at a school increases, teacher salaries, on average, go down.



## How we analyzed the data

Catalyst Chicago calculated the average teacher salary at each school with data obtained from the Office of Management and Budget that lists, for each job code, the number of full-time positions at each school this fiscal year and the total budget for teacher salaries.

For this analysis, only job codes that represented teachers who spent the majority of their time in classrooms were included. Assistant principals, for instance, who may or may not teach classes, were excluded.

Excluded from this analysis were alternative schools that serve kids who are disruptive or dropouts and charter schools, which did not have readily available budget data.

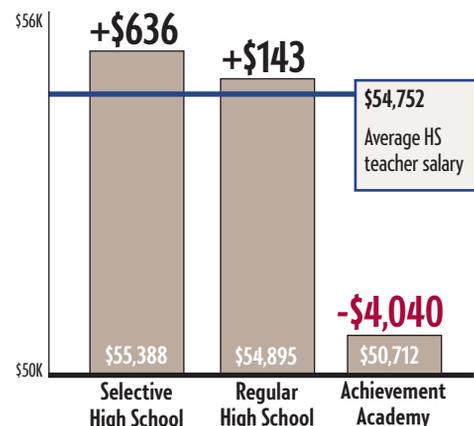
## Elite schools have more experienced teachers

If there were a contest to get the most experienced teachers on staff, classical elementaries and regional gifted schools would clearly win. Coming in a close second and third are magnets and selective enrollment high schools.

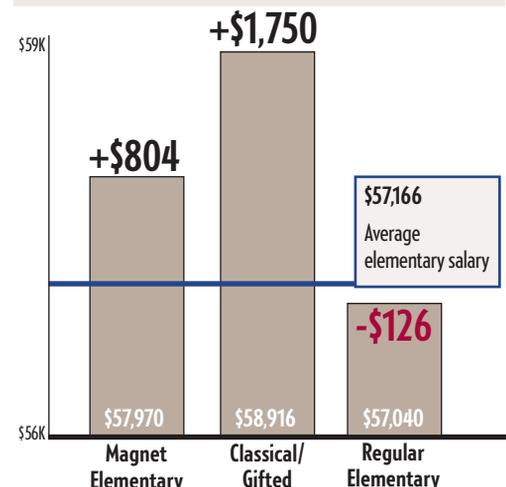
All of these schools are paying average teachers salaries that are higher than the district average, a clear indication that many or most of their teachers fall at the high end of the salary scale.

Achievement academies, on the other hand, whose retained students would likely benefit from the expertise of veteran teachers, must make do with some of the least-experienced teachers in the system. Teacher pay at all nine achievement academies was below the district average.

### HIGH SCHOOLS



### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



Source for all graphics: Catalyst analysis of Chicago Public Schools data

# Oakland: Schools pay for pricey staff

District leaders are banking on a unique budgeting strategy to get better teachers in the toughest neighborhoods

By Ed Finkel

**O**akland Unified School District charted a new course when it converted to a new budgeting system last year.

Most urban districts that have switched to student-based or so-called lump-sum budgeting do not charge schools the full tab for teacher pay, charging them a flat rate per teacher instead. But Oakland—in a move calculated to level the financial playing field, particularly for teacher hiring—decided to make schools pick up the full cost of teachers' salaries.

"They're the only [school district] that is not blind to the costs of different teachers," says Marguerite Roza, an assistant professor at the University of Washington Center on Reinventing Public Education. "They're trying to make it matter for schools."

District leaders argue that the new budgeting system will help even out long-standing inequities in teacher quality and experience. Historically, more experienced teachers have clustered in schools that serve wealthier neighborhoods, areas known as "the hills," says Barak Ben-Gal, the district's budget director.

Meanwhile, schools serving the poorest students, located in a topographically defined area known as "the flatlands," end up with less experienced teachers and more of a revolving door as teachers gain experience and then leave for the more well-off areas in the hills, he says.

"Our students are not getting the same opportunities at every single school, and they should be," Ben-Gal says. "You've got these flatland schools that, until now, were underfunded."

But teachers union officials, who remain staunchly opposed to this effort to redistribute teacher talent, foresee a rocky transition over the next several years. "Teachers are told, 'We're not going to be able to afford you,'" says First Vice-president Trish Gorham of the Oakland

Education Association. "These are the senior, experienced teachers that most of our schools benefit from."

And extra money won't make it any easier for hard-to-staff schools to attract better teachers because the real problem is poor leadership, she argues. More experienced principals also tend to flock to the jobs in schools in the hills area, she adds.

Pressure for districts to do a better job of spreading around teacher talent is coming from efforts to enforce the federal No Child Left Behind law. In an Oct. 21 letter to state education officials, Education Secretary Margaret Spellings wrote that the federal government "is reviewing the steps states are taking to ensure that highly qualified and experienced teachers are distributed equitably between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers."

## WINDFALL FOR SOME, OTHERS PINCHED

This school year, 60 of Oakland's 105 schools are getting more funding than they had previously, and because many of them employ less expensive teachers, a smaller portion of their budgets are earmarked for salaries. As a result, flatlands schools have more dollars to spend on staff development, new computers and field trips, Ben-Gal says. He believes the extra goodies will stem teacher turnover in the poorest schools, and eventually, "over time, salaries at the flatland schools will rise."

Those feeling the pinch are schools in the hills and elsewhere with a preponderance of experienced teachers. They are not getting enough money under the new budgeting system to cover their erstwhile payroll. To help cushion the blow, the district set aside transitional funding—proceeds from a bond measure passed by voters. The subsidy will be phased out by 2007. Last year, schools received \$3.5 million; this year, \$1.7 million; and next year, about half of that amount.

Thirty-seven elementary schools with

higher-than-district-average teacher salaries have received subsidies this year, making it easier for them to keep at least some veterans on board. "You can't just get rid of teachers," Ben-Gal explains. "We wanted to make sure we moved to a student-based budgeting program that didn't hurt the quality of those programs."

Put another way, the funding ensures these schools "don't have to do what the Oakland Athletics do, and trade away all their players with seniority," says Brian McKibben, an administrator with the district's High School Network.

Claremont Middle School got a financial break last year, when subsidies helped it bridge the \$5,000 gap between the average \$58,000 salary among its 20 teachers and the district average. However, Claremont didn't qualify for a subsidy this year, says Principal David Chambliss. "It's not clear to me why," he says. "It's a little bit murky."

(District officials say subsidies are only for elementary schools.)

Nonetheless, Claremont Middle saved some money when an experienced librarian took a position at district headquarters and "a few" teachers resigned, says Chambliss. Some of those savings were offset by the rest of the faculty inching up the salary schedule. He expects the crunch to ease over the next couple of years as five or six more veteran teachers retire. "That's why I need the bridge money," he says.

Chambliss does see an advantage to getting new blood on his faculty. Newer teachers are more likely to take on duties—such as parent outreach and evening meetings—that require them to work longer hours, he notes. And a mix of experience will allow schools to have teachers who are mentors as well as mentees, Ben-Gal says.

The district also argues that new teachers are not as cheap as many think. Additional expenses for training and classroom aides add up, Ben-Gal points out. But principals say veteran teachers still hit the bottom line harder.

*Ed Finkel is a Chicago-based writer. E-mail him at editor@catalyst-chicago.org.*

## SALARY *Continued from page 11*

Both these views weigh heavily in deliberations at Chicago Public Schools over how to structure the district's new budgeting system, to be rolled out over the next five years, to ensure that it is more equitable and that funding is more closely tied to the students a school serves. Such a system is already in place at charter schools; and this fall, three non-charters that opened under Renaissance 2010 were also given lump-sum budgets and have to pay full price for the teachers they hire. (See *Catalyst* November 2005.)

But all of these schools were brand new and built staff from the ground floor. Trickier will be converting existing schools where veteran principals already have staff in place and fear that they will no longer be able to afford to keep teachers at the top of the pay scale.

Principal Katherine Volk of Pershing East says such a system would put pressure on a school to justify hiring a veteran teacher. "You'd really have to ask the hiring committee, 'Is this worth the extra expense?'" she explains. "We're talking of a big sum here, around \$12,000."

A more palatable version of lump-sum or per-pupil budgeting for many would involve holding schools harmless for teacher pay, much like the current system does. Nearly every school district across the country that uses lump-sum budgeting has opted for this route.

Teachers salaries are the lion's share of a school's budget, and forcing CPS schools to pick up the cost would have significant consequences, according to a *Catalyst Chicago* analysis of this year's budget.

Schools with more inexperienced teachers are losing out on as much as \$660,000 in salary funding because those teachers earn lower than average pay. Likewise, schools that employ more teachers at the top of the pay scale are getting as much as \$500,000 extra in salary funding because their teachers get paid more. (See related story on page 12.)

### 'NOT A NEW CHALLENGE'

Principal Don Fraynd says he's not worried about the new budgeting system having a negative impact on Jones, whichever way the district goes. Private schools, where he spent time as a teacher, juggle teacher pay and other educational expenses all the time and find a way to

### THE LINGO

There are two ways to charge schools for teacher pay in a lump-sum budgeting system.

- **ACTUAL** Schools pay sticker price for every teacher on staff. Hiring a teacher with a high salary means the school will have less money to spend on other expenses.
- **AVERAGE** This is the *prix fixe* version, where schools pay the district a set price for every teacher no matter how much, or how little, experience she has.

hire older, higher-paid staff. "This is not a new challenge," he says.

He points out that increased spending flexibility under lump-sum budgeting could free up money elsewhere. "We could do a cost-benefit analysis and cut something else to hire a teacher who really stood out in the hiring process," he says.

Charter school operators say they have been doing this balancing act for years. According to Chris Kelly, dean of operations at North Lawndale Charter, the school always hires the best person for the job, regardless of salary.

When schools have to pay for their own teachers, dollars are spread more evenly across schools and it creates "fiscal equity," says budgeting expert Marguerite Roza, a senior researcher at the Center on Reinventing Public Education. But the real problem, she says, is skewed distribution of teacher quality.

"If we want to make a more equitable system then we should have equal talent [across schools]," says Roza. Charging schools for actual teacher salaries "would resolve the fiscal component, but we don't know to what extent it would resolve the distribution of talent."

So far, Oakland, Calif., is the only school district that has tried this method of lump-sum budgeting to force the redistribution of teacher talent. Teachers union officials there argue the policy gives principals incentives to hire cheaper teachers.

Volk speculates that lump-sum budgeting with actual salaries creates disincentives for teachers to climb the existing career ladder, which is based on extra pay for advanced degrees and earning credits in professional development. "Teachers who make higher salaries won't be as attractive," Volk says. "If they go higher, their job may be in jeopardy."

However, some CPS principals argue

that teacher quality will not suffer if schools are given such a budgetary trade-off. "[Principals] don't look at veteran teachers and new teachers," says Jose Barrera, principal of Columbia Explorers. "They look at right teachers." *Catalyst's* analysis found that teachers at Columbia Explorers earned approximately \$5,000 less a year, on average, than the district average for elementary schools. It stands to gain more funds for teachers under a per-pupil system.

### ROCKY ROAD AHEAD

The path of least resistance—pairing lump-sum budgeting with charging schools a fixed price for teachers—may be the safest route for the district. Consultant Karen Hawley Miles, who has been hired to help Chicago develop a more equitable budgeting system, cautions that rolling out a new system that charges schools for teachers could be unfair when it's done in existing schools.

The district ought to move in that direction in the long run, Miles says, but such a move should be paired with efforts to link compensation more closely to teacher quality.

"We need to equalize the mix of teacher quality but that requires more flexibility and better connections between teacher salaries and actual quality, maybe changes to the compensation system in the long-term," Miles says.

CPS is considering both options, and is examining how each method would affect schools. J R Tomkinson, a project manager in the CPS administrative office, admits that they had "more flexibility" to use the more radical budget approach at three non-charter Renaissance schools because they are new.

"But when we roll out to the entire district, there are a number of schools that have teachers that are more experienced," he explains. "So [converting them] will be a significant challenge."

Fraynd concedes that, given a choice, he would opt out. From a school perspective, "we want the most money possible. If there is a choice on this, I'm not going to switch because I know what a sweet deal we're getting. But as a CPS principal, if I put on my hat as a company man, I would say this is a good thing."

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# Research

## High school magnets don't boost achievement

Students who are admitted into magnets by lottery do not achieve higher test scores or graduation rates, a new study finds

By Jody Temkin

Each fall, guidance counselor Joyce Caito becomes a bit of a salesman, trying to convince 8th-graders of the merits of their neighborhood high school. And each fall, she becomes frustrated when so many students put the neighborhood school, Roosevelt High, at the bottom of their wish lists.

Caito, a counselor at Bateman Elementary in Irving Park, says it was the same story at two other CPS elementary schools where she previously worked. "It's almost frowned upon if you want to go to your neighborhood [high] school."

CPS 8th-graders have a Dec. 16 deadline for high school applications, and under Chicago's open enrollment system, they have many options. But having choices doesn't necessarily mean better academic achievement in the long run, according to a study released earlier this year.

Attending a high school that enrolls higher-achieving kids makes no difference in the long-term academic success of individual students, the study found.

The study looked at a group of 19 Chicago magnet schools and programs that admit students by lottery, provided that they have met any minimum requirements, such as grade level test scores. (It did not include the elite college prep magnet schools or other programs that accept only the most qualified applicants.)

Researchers compared the long-term academic success of lottery winners and losers. It found that students who won random lotteries to these magnet schools or programs did no better years later on a range of academic achievement measures—standardized test scores, graduation rates, and credit accumulation—than did lottery losers who went to the neighborhood high schools that the winners had bypassed.

### NO ACADEMIC ADVANTAGE

The results of the study are surprising, says co-author Brian Jacob of Harvard University, because both policymakers and parents believe magnet schools and programs provide an academic benefit. Despite their popularity, these schools "don't seem to help kids in at least one big way that we hope schools will: achievement and graduation."

David Gilligan, principal of Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, says that some of his students struggle despite having met a test score requirement to enter the school's random admissions lottery. Sometimes it's a lack of parental support, poor organizational skills or difficulty juggling multiple courses with different teachers, he says.

Lottery winners in the study did fare better than the losers in some ways—they were significantly less likely to face disciplinary action at school and 40 percent less likely to be arrested. Jacob says this

### RESEARCH SUMMARY

*The Effect of School Choice on Student Outcomes: Evidence from Randomized Lotteries*

**WHO CONDUCTED IT:** Julie Berry Cullen, assistant professor of economics at the University of California, San Diego; Brian Jacob, assistant professor of public policy at Harvard University; Steven Levitt, professor of economics at the University of Chicago

**WHAT THEY STUDIED:** Using data from admissions lotteries at 19 CPS high schools, they compared the high school careers of lottery winners who attended a magnet school or program to lottery losers who enrolled in their neighborhood high school.

**WHAT THEY FOUND:** The study found that students who won lotteries to attend CPS magnet high schools or programs did no better academically than those who lost the lotteries and attended their assigned neighborhood schools. Even attending sought-after programs with high-achieving peers conferred no academic benefit, as measured by graduation rates and standardized test scores. However, they did find that lottery winners reported lower incidences of disciplinary action and fewer arrests.

finding suggests that students may be opting out of their neighborhood schools for safety or other non-academic reasons.

### WHY WINNERS LOSE

Chicago high schools admit students in a variety of ways. Neighborhood high schools are open to all students living within their attendance boundaries. Selective enrollment high schools, such as the college preps, admit the highest-ranking students based on academic or

## The study suggests that in seeking out high school programs, parents may be overestimating the academic benefits of magnet schools.

other qualifications. Some magnet programs within neighborhood high schools also select the best-qualified applicants. Other magnet schools and programs admit students by random lottery, although in some cases they set minimum criteria for entering the lottery.

Researchers had several reasons for using the lottery programs to study school choice. Since the lotteries are random, the losers and winners have essentially the same characteristics, making it easier to compare the outcomes of one group to another. Also, the winners and losers begin high school with similar motivation levels since they all wanted to leave their neighborhood schools.

Researchers analyzed 19,520 applications to 19 high schools with random lotteries in 2000 and 2001. Some of these schools, such as magnet high schools Von Steuben and Chicago Agricultural, admit almost all of their students by random lottery. Others, such as Lake View and Wells, hold lotteries for admission to magnet programs within the larger school. (Lotteries that ended up admitting all applicants because too few applied were not included in the study.)

In the long-run, some lottery winners actually fared worse. Overall, high school graduation rates were about five percentage points lower for lottery winners than for the losers. Winners who attended the better lottery magnet programs, such as those at Curie High in Archer Heights and Kennedy High in Garfield Ridge, graduated at the same rate as lottery losers. Winning a lottery also appeared to hurt certain groups of students. For example, winning the lottery lowered the graduation rate about 11 percentage points for black students and seven percentage points for males.

### CHOICE CAN HURT

If these findings are accurate, they look “problematic” for CPS efforts to improve student achievement by increasing school choice, says Elaine Allensworth, an associate director of the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

On the other hand, she notes that students who lost lotteries and attended neighborhood schools didn’t perform any worse as a result, undermining the argument of some critics that choice hurts students who are left behind.

Allensworth says this study counters previous studies which show that students do better when they are surrounded by higher-achieving peers. But she wonders if the similar outcomes for lottery winners and losers are the result of attending schools that are not much different on measures such as standardized test scores and graduation rates.

Jacob agrees that some magnet programs and neighborhood schools in the study enrolled similar students. However, even in cases where lottery winners bypassed neighborhood schools with significantly lower achievement, they failed to outperform lottery losers who attended those schools.

In fact, selecting a school with high-achieving peers not only didn’t help some lottery winners, it actually seemed to hurt. The lottery winners who gained the most in peer quality, as measured by standardized test scores, were the least likely to graduate.

Jacobs speculates that perhaps those students didn’t benefit from higher-achieving peers because they didn’t associate with them. “Maybe they maintained peer networks from their old school or neighborhood,” he says.

An earlier study by the same researchers examined the impact of high school choice on graduation rates for all CPS students, not just those who applied to magnet programs that use a random lottery.

They found that choice did not increase the chances of graduating, except for those who enrolled in career academies, also known as vocational schools. (See related story.)

Chicago offers a unique setting for studying school choice because of the large-scale open enrollment system in which more than half of all high school students opt out of their assigned high

## Career academies raise graduation rates

Many Chicago 8th-graders hope to bypass their neighborhood high school and find a better future elsewhere. Their best bet is to enroll in one of the city’s career academies, also known as vocational schools, where their chances of graduating are higher, according to researchers.

In an earlier study that compared graduation rates of students who were CPS freshmen between 1993 and 1995, researchers found only those who had enrolled in career academies—also called vocational schools—were more likely to graduate than similar students who remained at their neighborhood schools.

Career academies are often organized as small career-themed schools within a larger school, which may account for their higher graduation rates, according to co-author Julie Berry Cullen, an economist at the University of California, San Diego. Research has shown that reorganizing a large school into small schools lifts student achievement, she explains.

Jody Temkin

school, says co-author Julie Berry Cullen, an economist at the University of California, San Diego. Still, she doesn’t think it’s fair to conclude that school choice can’t impact student achievement. For one, she says it’s possible that choice would have a larger impact on elementary school students, because you’re reaching them “earlier in the game.”

Still, the study suggests that in seeking out high school programs, parents may be overestimating the academic benefits of magnet schools, she says.

Adrienne Hubbard, a guidance counselor at Greeley Elementary, finds that students want to enroll in high schools with strong reputations but sometimes aren’t academically prepared for them. “I stress that it’s not the school, it’s the programs at the school, who your friends are, what you do,” she says. “I make sure they research their home school and know all it has to offer.”

Jody Temkin is a Catalyst contributing editor. E-mail her at [editor@catalyst-chicago.org](mailto:editor@catalyst-chicago.org).

# Higher pay not enough to get teachers for troubled schools

Survey finds that better recruiting, strong principals and adequate support would bring teachers to hard-to-staff schools

By Debra Williams

To attract and retain teachers in hard-to-staff schools, districts need to do a better job of matching teachers to schools and providing adequate support and training, as well as financial incentives, according to teachers from Illinois and two other states.

These are some of the suggestions teachers made in a survey by Learning Point Associates, a nonprofit education research organization that asked teachers what it would take to hire and keep high-quality teachers in the neediest schools. Until now, none of the research on teacher recruitment and retention included the views of classroom teachers, says the organization.

From focus groups and a survey of 130 teachers in Ohio, Wisconsin and Illinois, researchers found that teachers favored:

- **Online recruiting.** Teachers say online questionnaires would serve as a screening tool, allowing teachers and schools to find the best fit by addressing basic issues such as pedagogy, educational philosophy and classroom environment. If used before face-to-face interviews, online questionnaires could help cut turnover by giving teachers a safe way to honestly discuss their expectations and by letting them share information that is not usually asked during the recruiting process.

A districtwide online recruiting tool could shorten the hiring process by eliminating the need for teachers to submit multiple applications. A study conducted by the New Teacher Project, a New York-based nonprofit, found that hard-to-staff schools receive five to seven applications for each available teaching position, but don't make timely job offers and lose qualified teachers to districts that recruit earlier.

- **Better support, more authority.** Teachers say they are attracted to schools that have strong, supportive principals and an environment that allows them to make important strategic decisions about their schools.

- **Mentoring, training.** Teachers said extensive mentoring and training tailored to their individual needs would help them do their job, and are critical to their success and satisfaction in the classroom.

- **Financial incentives.** Overall, teachers say that they are poorly paid and favor salary increases as well as bonuses. They also suggest other financial incentives, including free tuition for graduate school, student loan forgiveness, increased pension contributions with immediate vesting and reduced tuition for their children at state colleges and universities. Only a few teachers supported the controversial idea of pay-for-performance.

With the exception of performance pay, a Chicago Teachers Union representative says the survey's results reflect what CPS teachers say they want.

Researchers "got this from the horse's mouth," says Connie Fitch-Blanks, who oversees special projects and training in the union's Quest Center. "However, I am surprised that teachers didn't mention strong parent involvement. We hear this from our teachers all the time. That is the only element that appears to be missing."

"Most of these are great ideas," says Amanda Rivera, CPS director of the CPS Teachers Academy. "Do teachers want extensive mentoring? Yes. Training, mentoring and professional development? Yes. Shared leadership and strong leadership? Yes. We are working on all of these now."

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## VIEWPOINTS/LETTER

# Special ed discipline abused, too

Bravo for addressing such a sensitive topic! ("With inclusion, best intentions often go awry," October 2005) While I could write a novel on how fully I agree, I will refrain. Please continue to look into and bring forth the opinions and experiences of teachers and students who are affected by the indiscriminant mainstreaming of many students who would be better served in a more controlled, attentive environment.

I would also ask that you look into the problems faced by teachers and administrators when attempting to discipline students with special needs. Too often, students who may have a slight learning disability and who require some support are using their status as special needs students to avoid consequences that should follow their unacceptable behavior. At what point did we allow students who might have a problem learning math to hide behind their individual education plans (IEPs) after assaulting a teacher either verbally or physically?

I am tired of watching students (and their parents) scream "special ed" or "IEP" when they have committed a violation of the uniform discipline code in both minor and major offenses. LD means that one might have difficulty learning or assimilating new information in a content area. It does not mean that a student does not know how to act or control themselves unless they are so designated.

Charles Stephenson  
Teacher, Clemente High

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## REFORM *Continued from page 7*

assessments, although the district decided against creating graduation exit exams, as some districts and states have done. "You shouldn't hold the students accountable for learning before you hold the adults accountable for teaching," explains Megliola.

Gage Park's McGreal, a former teacher at Curie High in Archer Heights and one of a dozen Curie faculty members who refused to give the controversial CASE test, is already worried about the quality of the assessments. He wonders why the district does not just rely on the Prairie State and the ACT sequence of college-readiness tests.

"I just don't trust what it will be turned into through a bureaucracy," McGreal says.

However, if done well, McGreal admits pre-packaged tests could save teachers from reinventing the wheel. His teachers are currently struggling to write tests specifically aimed at helping to better gauge student progress, he says. "We're not experts at this."

### WHO WILL COACH TEACHERS?

Recognizing the need for high-quality training to assist teachers with improving their instruction, CPS is asking prospective curriculum developers to provide "intensive, low-ratio, classroom-based coaching." The goal: one coach for 15 teachers. In contrast, the district's area coaches are asked to work with teachers at up to a dozen schools.

"This coaching piece is really tough stuff. Everybody is struggling with this," says Cynthia Barron, area instructional officer for small schools, who has been closely involved with the high school reform plan. "We want to do it right."

But one of the district's area coaches questions the wisdom of handing coaching over to non-district staff. "I would say it would become one more layer of red tape," says Victor Simon, science coach for Area 22. Teachers would be less likely to trust or listen to outside coaches.

"I'd rather have my department chairs," says Principal James Breas-

hears of Robeson High in Englewood. Though he wouldn't mind access to outside expertise, it's more important to win the trust of faculty, who are likely to be skeptical that the plan is just another passing trend. "You know teachers are going to say, 'Oh, no, here we go again.' But coming from department chairs it's going to take a whole new meaning. They know what we're up against."

However, literacy consultant Jennifer McDermott, formerly with the University of Chicago's Center for Urban School Improvement, says coaching can work well either way and that working with an outsider can be a better catalyst for change. "When you're in town for five days, sometimes priorities become clearer," she observes.

Districts should also set ground rules for principals to work with consultants, such as participating in meetings with coaches and teachers and sitting in on the coaching itself, McDermott adds. "Set up expectations—'Here's the consultant, if you want them, this is how you have to play,' " she says. "It gives the principal permission to make attention to instruction a priority."

Cathleen Kral, director of literacy coaching for the Boston Public Schools, says coaching "works better" with insiders. And she doubts that educational publishers can provide high-quality training.

Coaches, she says, "need to have relationships within the schools, as people who build relationships around teaching and learning, not coming in to coach around a program."

Publishers have become more responsive to districts' demands for better professional development in the last few years, says Zalman Usiskin, director of the University of Chicago's School Mathematics Project. And the chance to win a contract in a large market like Chicago could be a strong incentive to design an effective coaching program, he adds.

"They will do what they need to do, if the school system puts the screws on them," Usiskin says.

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#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Include the writer's full name, title and contact information for verification. Letters should be limited to 200 words and may be edited for space and clarity. Send them to the attention of the Editor.

**MOVING IN/ON VIVIAN LOSETH** has been promoted from assistant director to executive director of Youth Guidance, a social service agency that works with Chicago Public Schools students in low-income communities. ... **MARK LARSON**, former director of education for Lincoln Park Zoo, is the new director of partnerships for the National College of Education at National-Louis University.

**AT CLARK STREET BONNIE ROELLE** is the new director of state-funded preschool and tuition-based preschool in the Office of Early Childhood Education. Roelle was an administrator in the office.

**FUNDS FOR SCHOOLS** The Chicago chapter of DonorsChoose.org, a national education nonprofit, has won the Amazon.com Nonprofit Innovation Award for raising the most money in an online contest. The group raised \$790,000 and will receive a matching grant from Amazon.com. Donors who want to choose a classroom project to support, and teachers who want to submit projects to receive funding, should go to [www.DonorsChoose.org](http://www.DonorsChoose.org).

**NATIONAL BOARD INCENTIVES** The Chicago Public Education Fund will spend up to \$3 million to provide incentives of up to \$3,000 to CPS teachers who earn certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Candidates who successfully complete the year-long preparation process will receive \$1,000, and those who go on to earn full certification within two years will receive \$2,000.

**PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS** Interim principals **PAULA JESKE** at Casals and **ROBERT DECKINGA** at Byrne have been given four-year contracts. ... **MICHELE BARTON** at Metcalfe has had her contract renewed.

**AWARDS BARBARA BOWMAN**, CPS chief early childhood education officer and co-founder and former president of the Erikson Institute, has won a Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education. Each winner receives \$25,000. ... Students from three Chicago public schools have won prizes at the National History Day competition in College Park, Md. **MARISSA SUCHYTA** of Quest Academy won 2nd place and \$500 for her documentary on the "Dewey Defeats Truman" Chicago

Tribune headline mixup of 1948. Roosevelt High School senior **ARUJ CHAUDHRY** won 3rd place and a \$250 prize. **LAURA MULLER-SOPPART, TOMAS MANGHI, ELIZABETH MAY** and **SEBASTIAN PROKUSKI** of Lincoln Elementary and **ZOE NETTER, CHARLOTTE COOK, ERIC JACOBSON, DAVID GAINSKI** and **LUCY HONOLD** of Hawthorne Scholastic Academy won special recognition.

**NEW BOOK JOHN SIMMONS**, president of Strategic Learning Initiatives, has written a new book, "Breaking Through: Transforming Urban School Districts." The book offers guidance for those involved in helping schools raise achievement. Contributors to the book include **LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND** of Stanford University, **RICHARD ELMORE** of Harvard University and **MARC TUCKER** of the National Center on Education and the Economy. The book is published by Teachers College Press.

**NEW LOCATION** Designs for Change has moved to 814 S. Western, Chicago, Illinois, 60612. The group's phone number is (312) 236-7252. The fax number is (312) 236-7927.

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