



Catalyst Vol. XVII Number 8 CHICAGO

MAY 2006

INDEPENDENT REPORTING ON URBAN SCHOOLS

DANNY
GLOVER AT
A RECENT
BENEFIT
FOR BETTY
SHABAZZ
CHARTER

\$**TAR** **POWER**

WHO YOU ARE AND WHO YOU KNOW
MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN RAISING
PRIVATE MONEY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.
HOW SOME SCHOOLS—AND THE
DISTRICT—ARE CASHING IN.

Also: New district dropout
policy not enforced. *PAGE 16*

Wealthy schools that raise money should share with poorer schools



Veronica Anderson

Next year's round of budget cuts are on the table and according to one watchdog group, Chicago Public Schools has whittled its shortfall down to \$45 million. A few months ago, the projected deficit was over \$300 million. An increase in base level funding from the state is expected to net the district \$100 million.

The rest is a combination of raising lunch fees, reducing costs at central office, tapping cash reserves and, the worst part, cutting programs in reading, math, special education and early childhood education.

The belt-tightening climate certainly makes a case for stepped up efforts to raise money from other sources. And since Arne Duncan has been sitting in the CEO's chair, the district has done just that.

As our cover story reports, CPS has raked in close to \$29 million from private sources so far this year—four times the amount the district collected in outside grants last year. These figures don't include all of the money that donors like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation give directly to schools. It also doesn't take into account extra funds coming from competitive federal grants the district has won, a strategic move by Duncan to vie against other districts nationwide to win bigger grants.

Duncan makes raising money look easy. His likeable personality and collaborative leadership style have sealed partnerships between the district and a number of local foundations that are now steady supporters. Arne is the fundraising face for CPS.

Schools, too, are feeling squeezed, but for most of them, raising lots of outside money is an unreachable goal unless principals and parents are motivated, connected, lucky or some combination of the three. There's certainly nothing straightforward about it. Imagine their challenge: Who do you know? And who do those people know? What does this person or that institution think about you and what you're trying to do?

As always, the playing field is tilted and, as one administrator points out, favors schools that already have a lot going for them. Schools that do well are the ones that have better connected fundraising groups, says Principal Paul Zeitler of Sheridan Math and Science Academy. In fact, a *Catalyst Chicago* investigation into public school fundraising groups found only 30 of the city's 600 plus public schools have parent or affinity groups that raise more than \$25,000 a year, the level that requires they file tax returns.

All of the top fundraising schools

have poverty rates far below the district average of 85 percent, and each of them raised more than \$140,000, according to the most recent tax filings. The top fundraising school is LaSalle Language Academy, which hosts a formal dinner-dance every year that nets an average \$80,000.

At the other end of the scale are schools like Bateman Elementary, where 90 percent of students are poor and parents struggle to keep a PTA going, much less raise money for events and extras.

A few high-poverty schools have done well. At Pirie Elementary, a bank president who is the principal's father helped the school raise \$23,000. Around the corner, Dixon Elementary collects \$24,000 a year in rent for the cell phone tower perched on its roof.

But these few don't make up for a lot more schools, some serving very needy children, that can't tap the private funding vein at all. Diana Nelson of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform suggests that the district consider pairing top fundraising schools with those that are struggling to show them how it's done.

Taking her idea a step further, how about asking these schools to share their wealth? Adopt another school serving mostly poor kids and give them some of the annual proceeds. There really is no way to teach people how to raise money when connections and a hefty bank account are your fundraising aces in the hole.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Anderson".

ABOUT US *Catalyst* editor Veronica Anderson won a Peter Lisagor award for her April 2005 editorial, "Game of chance would do a better job of distributing funds to schools." The contest is sponsored by the Chicago Headline Club.

PRIVATE FUNDRAISING

Chicago-style reform sells

Since CEO Arne Duncan took the helm, private and government grants have skyrocketed from \$2 million to \$29 million. Funders say that steady leadership and a focus on crafting long-term improvements is what's paying off for the district. **COVER STORY: PAGE 6**

NYC'S GLITZY FUNDRAISING MODEL

With two different approaches, the Big Apple and the Windy City are taking fundraising to new heights. **PAGE 8**

'A PLACE YOU CAN CALL YOUR OWN'

Renaissance Schools Fund forges partnerships between private donors and newly created schools. **PAGE 9**

'CASHING IN, GETTING EXTRAS'

At 18 wealthy schools, fundraising has topped \$50,000. Yet most schools lack the connections and know-how to follow suit. **PAGE 10**

WHAT A DIFFERENCE DEEP POCKETS MAKE

Norwood Park Elementary raises more than \$100,000 to give students plenty of "big-ticket items." **PAGE 11**

PTO PUTS THE 'FUN' IN FUNDRAISING

At Owen Scholastic Academy, money for activities—not making up for budget cuts—is the focus. **PAGE 12**

PRINCIPALS HAVE DIFFERENT TAKES

One relies on connections, another relies just on what the district provides. **PAGE 14**

CHARTER FUNDRAISING VARIES WIDELY

Some charter school leaders caution against becoming too dependent on private money. **PAGE 15**



JOE GALLO

On the cover: Movie star Danny Glover was the featured guest at an April 29 benefit for Betty Shabazz Charter School.

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- Road to college paved with top grades

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ON OUR WEB SITE

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

- Spanish translations
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For more information, contact Brian Foster at (312) 673-3867 or e-mail foster@catalyst-chicago.org.

Notebook

Q&A with...

Dan Zaragoza,
Kennedy High Senior

TIMELINE

April 11: Safety survey

Citing a survey at six hand-picked, high-performing schools, district officials say Chicago students feel safer and are less likely to fight than students in other urban districts. Critics blast the findings, saying the schools did not adequately represent the student population. The survey results were announced days after students at Kennedy High held a rally demanding more security to combat school violence. The study's author says Chicago was supposed to pick schools that reflected the district's economic, racial, academic and geographic mix.

April 27: Dismissed

More than 1,000 new teachers will not be rehired for the coming school year. Under the union contract, principals can dismiss any non-tenured teacher without explanation. The district says the policy allows principals to shape their school community. But Chicago Teachers Union President Marilyn Stewart says the dismissals may be cause for a strike during the next round of contract negotiations. The most common reason for firing: poor classroom management. Last year, 1,100 non-tenured teachers were fired, but 700 found jobs at other schools.

April 27: Sex Ed

Starting next year, all students in 6th grade and beyond will have to take a sex education course that includes information on birth control. The course will teach abstinence as the "expected norm," but will include information on contraceptives, the responsibilities of parenting and similar topics. Currently, individual schools set the parameters for sex education. Teen health advocates say such a course is long overdue, and students who have called for more comprehensive sex education say too many schools teach inaccurate information.

Problems with violence and discipline are nothing new at Kennedy High, says senior Dan Zaragoza, who participated in last month's student-led protest for better security at the Garfield Ridge school. This year's freshmen, including transfer students from the attendance areas of schools that closed, were especially disrespectful and unruly, he says. Zaragoza, vice-president of student government, talked with writer Cassie del Pilar.

There was a lot of press coverage of the protest. How was it organized?

By a student. She, I guess like most of the students here, was just fed up with all of the crap that's going on. She came to groups of kids saying, "Let's try to meet in front of the school on this day to do a protest." It got spread by word of mouth.

Since the protest, has there been a change in the administration?

Oh, yeah.

How?

The protest was to get the School Board's attention, which we did because the next day, a few board members came to school and wanted to meet with student leaders. They have been coming since the incident, talking to us, trying to [coordinate] a student development team.

One of the things that a lot of students said was that they feel they need more outlets, more clubs or more classes. [Principal James] Gorecki said to us, "If you guys have any ideas for clubs or classes or anything, just tell me and I'll look into it and try to get it for you."

Which do you think is more effective: security guards who are friendly and can relate to students or who are strictly authority figures?

Strictly security guard figures. You can't be too friendly with kids. Otherwise they're going to feel like they're going to get away with stuff. You don't want some stiff guy, but then again, you don't want them [saying], "Hey buddy, what's up?" That way freshmen and sophomores will know these guys really mean business.

Some people believe that to decrease violence, teens need better counseling and better relationships with adults.

ELSEWHERE

Boston: Charter switch?

School district officials are trying to persuade charter schools, which in Massachusetts are under state jurisdiction, to join the city's public school system, according to the April 10 *Boston Globe*. The district loses millions of dollars when children enroll in one of the 14 charters rather than a district-run public school. The charters would become pilot schools, which are autonomous and freed from a number of district rules. A letter was sent to teachers and principals urging them to consider the switch. The head of the state's charter school association said educators who enjoy the flexibility of charters are not likely to choose to join a traditional school system. Some principals also expressed skepticism about the idea.

New York City: Restructuring

Consultants are helping city education officials to develop a plan for restructuring the district, with an eye toward giving principals more autonomy and outsourcing support programs such as counseling, according to the April 9 *New York Times*. Three years ago, Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and Mayor Michael Bloomberg overhauled the system—centralizing much of its operation, reorganizing 32 community districts into 10 regions, setting strict standards for promoting students, creating small high schools and providing more help for struggling students. Recently, the chancellor hired the consultants to examine everything from purchasing to teacher training to evaluation of students, teachers and principals.

IN SHORT

"Grades, grades, grades, grades, grades ... and college choice."

Responding to a question about her study showing CPS grads do poorly in college, researcher Melissa Roderick of the Consortium on Chicago School Research notes what high school educators should pay attention to.



CASSANDRA VINOGRAD

Yeah, kids are always going to need their parents, other adults. We have counselors, but they're busy a lot. Students know they can talk to teachers—if you have a teacher whose class you like.

What else needs to be done?

I tell my little brother, who is a freshman, that we actually need more student involvement. Mr. Gorecki tried to hold a parent forum, so parents could come in and ask questions about anything. Unfortunately, it didn't turn out like that. More or less it was the parents coming up, yelling, saying, "Why don't you do this, why don't you do that?" Honestly, I thought the parents were ruder than any student.

[I got up and] told parents, "Go home, tell your kids, 'If you see something wrong, go say something. If you see a kid smoking in the bathroom, go to security and they will do something about it.'" I try to do that every day, because I don't want to come out of the bathroom with my clothes smelling like smoke.

I know the parents wanted something right away. It's going to take time. I can quote Gorecki saying 90 percent of the kids are good and then there's that 10 percent that screws it up for everybody else. That 90 percent has to speak up.

Anything else you want to add?

Just that our school has gotten a lot of bad press, but the newspapers failed to mention that last year's juniors raised [Prairie State Achievement Exam] scores. Last year we were on academic probation and they pushed us to raise them, and we did. And unfortunately, they don't report that the students say Mr. Gorecki is doing his job. The whole thing is going to take time, with not only teachers and the principal and the Board involved, but the students too. All four of those are factors that you need to make something better. ■

ASK CATALYST

The district currently faces a huge budget shortfall for 2006-07, yet I see glossy district newsletters and a new ballroom dancing program. What criteria does CPS use to make budget cuts?

An anonymous teacher

To save \$25 million, cuts are expected in all central office departments next year, says Schools CEO Arne Duncan. Departments may be spared the worst if they suffered deep cuts last year, demonstrate outstanding performance or target one of the district's priorities, including literacy or creating new schools. Duncan is also considering a salary freeze for central office employees to save another \$5 million.

Once the School Board approves an overall budget, department managers will decide on specific cuts, explains Pedro Martinez, CPS budget director. "Whether it's staffing, consultants, printing, publications—all of that is on the table," he says.

There's not much fat left to cut, notes Christina Warden of the Cross City Campaign, yet it will be impossible to verify how cuts are made because the district's \$5 billion budget is so unclear. Funds are sorted into general categories with no detail spelling out what's included, she adds. The ballroom dancing program cost \$200,000, a relatively minor expense, Martinez notes. Civic and corporate partners will raise funds to continue the program next year.

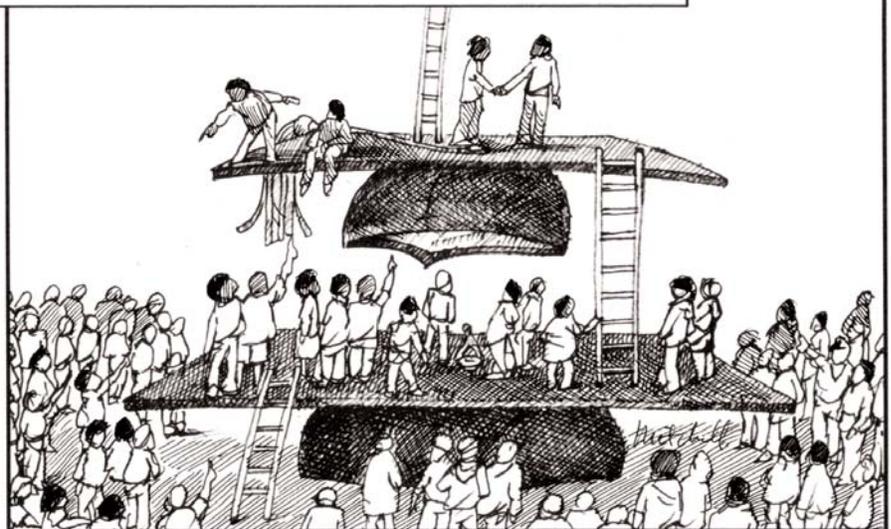
E-mail your question to askcat@catalyst-chicago.org or send it to *Ask Catalyst*, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, IL 60604.

MATH CLASS

African American students are more likely than Latino or white students to enroll in charter schools, according to the **2005** Student Racial/Ethnic Survey. Charter enrollment is **66%** black, **27%** Latino, **3%** white and **4%** other minority, which includes multi-racial students. CPS enrollment overall is **49%** black, **38%** Latino, **9%** white and **4%** other minority.

FOOTNOTE

WHERE ARE ALL THE COLLEGE GRADS?



KURT MITCHELL

Chicago-style reform sells

By Maureen Kelleher

Budget crisis and state funding reform aside, when it comes to fundraising, Chicago Public Schools is on a roll.

So far this year, the district has raked in some \$29 million in private and competitive government grants, up from \$7 million a year ago.

In the five years since Schools CEO Arne Duncan took control of the district, revenue from outside grants has skyrocketed more than tenfold.

And these figures don't include millions more, most notably from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, donated directly to schools and not recorded in the district's central bookkeeping system because CPS is not the fiscal agent for these grants. Nor does it include a recent windfall from government grants. A few weeks ago, Chicago won a five-year, \$24.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education—one of only eight districts in the country to win

the award—to expand a project helping struggling middle-grades readers.

Other urban districts, most notably Los Angeles and Portland, Ore., lack the supportive local philanthropic community that Chicago enjoys, says William Porter, executive director of Grantmakers for Education.

The culture of philanthropy that supports major school reform efforts is not “unique to Chicago, but it's certainly far more advanced in Chicago,” says Greg Simoncini, senior Midwest regional vice president of the Alford Group, a consultant to nonprofits. Funders here “have a very skilled eye on what works and what doesn't,” he explains. For example, many have invested in teacher training programs, especially those that recruit career-changers who do not

have traditional teacher education backgrounds.

In contrast to Chicago's soaring private support, education giving in Illinois rose only about 1 percent between 2001 and 2003, according to the most recent edition of “Giving in Illinois.”

STRATEGIC MOVE

Meanwhile, Illinois lawmakers have yet to supply school districts with the ideal amount of base funding, and the federal government has cut back on education funding as well. For Chicago school leaders, this has meant annual pilgrimages down to Springfield to lobby for extra funds and a strategic shift to go after more competitive grants offered by U.S. Department of Education. Over the last four years, the portion of the district's budget covered

Steady, personal leadership and targeted school improvements are winning **increasing private support** for the district. Meanwhile, state funding is barely keeping pace with inflation.

FUNDRAISING GROWTH

Since CEO Arne Duncan has led the district, private foundations and corporations have provided a steady stream of contributions.

FY2001	\$2 million
FY2002	\$3.6 million
FY2003	\$10.5 million
FY2004	\$9.5 million
FY2005	\$7.2 million
FY2006	\$28.9 million

Source: Chicago Public Schools

by state aid has hovered between 36 percent and 37 percent, says CPS Budget Director Pedro Martinez. State money is “barely keeping pace with inflation,” making it necessary to cut costs, he says.

“Historically, Chicago didn't

apply [for federal grants] or was universally unsuccessful,” says Duncan. “There was a perception that we couldn’t compete. I really wanted to break through that.”

Duncan created the office of external partnerships and grants and chose Alyson Cooke, a former Capitol Hill staffer and Chicago Community Trust senior program officer, to oversee federal grants.

Cooke says she encouraged the district to stop chasing so many small grants, especially at the state level, and target its efforts to score bigger awards. “I said to Arne, ‘Do you want all these little grants at the schools, or do you want to impact the system?’” Cooke recalls.

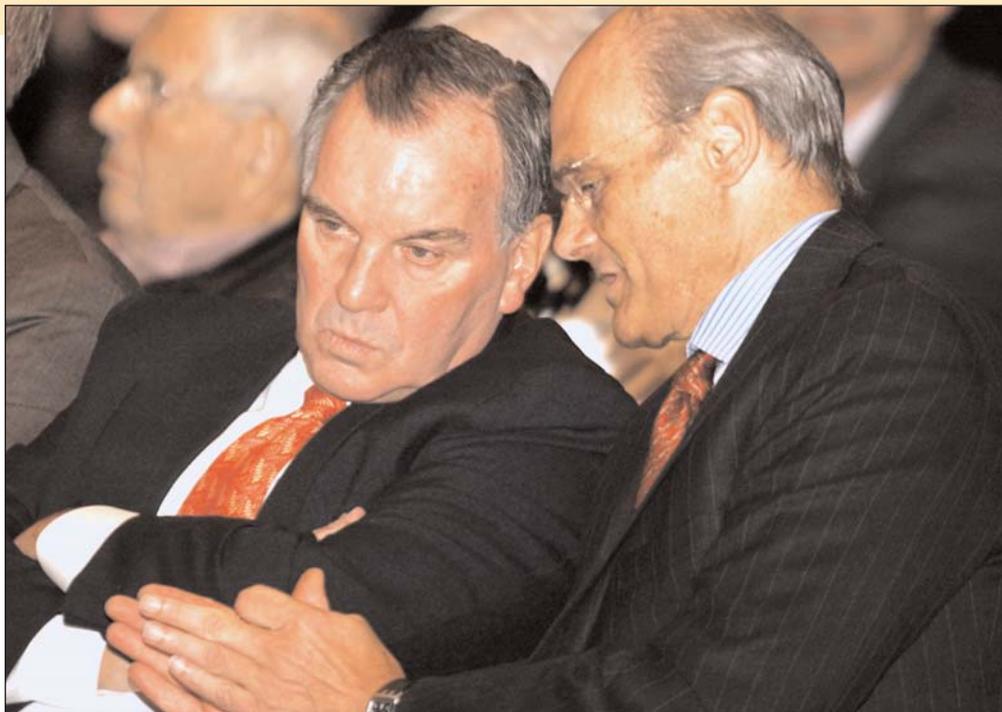
The first breakthrough was a three-year, \$8.9 million grant in 2004 to open five magnet schools. Since then, other significant federal competitive grants include \$3.2 million for early literacy programs in preschool and kindergarten and \$1.9 million for teacher recruitment and hiring, especially to bring in career-changers.

Winning these grants is also “a huge sign of people’s confidence in the job we’re doing,” Duncan notes.

WHO’S IN, WHO’S OUT

The Gates Foundation has also signaled its confidence in CPS leadership and reform efforts by investing tens of millions in high school initiatives. The four-year, \$21 million grant Gates awarded to Chicago in mid-April is the largest grant the foundation has ever made to a school district. Previously, funds would go directly to schools or outside entities.

“We really see Arne as one of a few leaders in the country who is really thoughtful and groundbreaking in making sure students are prepared for college, work and life,” says Margot Rogers, the Gates



JOHN BOOZ

When the Chicago Public Education Fund talks—here, through the voice of Chairman Timothy R. Schwertfeger who is also CEO of Nuveen Investments—Mayor Richard M. Daley listens. The two are at a reception honoring teachers who’ve earned National Board certification, which the Fund is pushing to increase teacher quality.

Foundation’s deputy director of education programs.

Also easing into Chicago’s education reform arena are other national funders who are seeking their own ways to make a splash. In the last three years, the Broad Foundation in Los Angeles has contributed more than \$537,000 to the district’s Chief Executive Office, most recently to underwrite a residency program for business and consulting professionals.

Another national funder, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, awarded the district \$1.2 million last summer to expand AVID, an initiative to offer rigorous college prep curriculum to average students, to 80 schools.

Chicago’s largest local foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, is taking a backseat in local education funding. It remains involved in high school redesign and has supported strategic planning efforts. However, the foundation has stepped back from other CPS initiatives since a

plan to close and reopen public schools in several gentrifying communities known collectively as Mid-South was scuttled under pressure from the Mayor’s Office and grassroots groups, who complained that they had been shut out of the planning process.

BRAIN TRUST

Still, the lovefest between Arne Duncan and local funders is stronger than ever.

Early on, funders were drawn to Duncan’s collaborative leadership style, a big switch from his predecessor, and accepted his invitation to help the district craft a long-term improvement strategy. The Chicago Community Trust President and CEO Terry Mazany found himself working pro bono once a week in the district’s central office back during his days as education program officer.

“It proved to be very beneficial,” Mazany says. “It gave me a crash course in the realities and opportunities in central office. It developed a

lot of relationships.”

It also laid a foundation for a \$7.5 million grant for a literacy program that brings teams of university experts to mid-tier elementary schools to help teachers improve instruction. Currently the Trust is helping participating schools find ways to hang on to their university partners once the grant money runs out.

The Trust also has invested \$1 million to expand Duncan’s vision of creating more community schools (prompting other funders to give \$6 million), and \$1 million toward improving math instruction in the upper elementary grades.

The district also has an especially close working relationship with the Chicago Public Education Fund, which was created in 1999 based on a venture philanthropy model. Most notable are its commitment to principal training and increasing the number of National Board-certified teachers.

“If we said ‘X’ had to happen, ‘X’ happened, and Arne made sure it happened,” Pres-

NYC's glitzy fundraising model

Fundraising for public schools in New York City has reached unprecedented heights over the past three years. But Chicago has nothing to be ashamed of, district officials say.

"New York is much bigger," says Alyson Cooke, director of external resources for the Chicago Public Schools. "They ought to be able to generate more money."

Indeed, New York is home to one-fourth of all the philanthropic dollars given in the United States, giving the district a deep pool from which to draw. Both Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein are bona fide members of the city's wealthy elite. Within weeks of his own appointment, Klein tapped the star power of his wife's friend, Caroline Kennedy, first appointing her to the Office of Strategic Partnerships and later to vice-chair of the district's charitable foundation, Fund for Public Schools.

However, the recent departure of the district foundation's director has raised questions about whether the city's fundraising hot streak will continue. Before Kennedy and former Chief Executive Officer Leslie Koch (no relation to the former mayor) took over the foundation, New York donors were "relatively reluctant" to give to the district, notes New York-based fundraising consultant Norma Rollins. "It got sexy when Caroline got there."

Splashy events like an outdoor concert featuring the Dave Matthews Band, a giant tag sale in Central Park and clout-heavy hobnobbing led by wealthy city leaders have netted over \$150 million over three years for district initiatives and New York's Fund for Public Schools.

As more and more school districts seek to supplement public funding with private dollars, New York's efforts have been held up as a model for other urban districts. The political leaders in New York realize they can't do this alone, notes Greg Simoncini of The Alford Group, a consultancy to nonprofits. "This has got to be a public-private partnership," he says.

CIVIC DUTY VS. COMPETITION

A closer look at New York's donor culture, however, reveals a unique environment where giving is driven more by competition than by civic duty.

In New York, large institutions are more often targeted for contributions and donors have more opportunities to have something named after them, says Simoncini.

Even so, the Big Apple is not big enough for some New York donors who are looking to make their mark on a national or international scale. "There are many, many funders in New York who don't give a dime to the city," observes Rollins.

Yet in Chicago, philanthropy has long had a direct tie to the city and its needs. "Chicago has a deep history of the business community being involved in major development initiatives," says Nuveen Investments Chairman and CEO Tim Schwertfeger, who sits on the boards of the Chicago Public Education Fund and Renaissance Schools Fund.

Improving public education in Chicago has long been a priority for local philanthropists, who have "played a major role" in changing schools, explains Paul D. Goren, vice president of the Spencer Foundation.

Differences in each city's economy also influence how fundraisers target proceeds. There's not as much concern in New York as there is in Chicago about growing a strong local workforce. Shortly before leaving her job as director of the Fund for Public Schools, Koch told the National School Foundation Association, "In New York, companies recruit internationally. The failure of our school system to produce well-qualified workers doesn't hurt their bottom line."

Here, some education giving "is economic," says Simoncini. "You can't retain a middle class without good schools."

COMMON GROUND

Despite cultural differences, New York's and Chicago's school districts have key strengths that draw funders in. Both districts are under mayoral control and boast stable leadership that has earned public confidence, in part by setting clear priorities to improve schools.

Top priorities in both cities are better teachers and principals, and much private funding has been channeled into initiatives designed to address them. The Chicago Public Education Fund has invested \$4.8 million in teacher and principal training; the New York City Leadership Academy, a principal training program, has gobbled 40 percent of the monies (some \$70 million) raised by the district's foundation.

Even structural similarities are apparent. Both districts have set up their own in-house foundations. Both have Principal for a Day programs, which aim to cultivate relationships between donors and schools.

But where New York has devoted staff time and energy to cultivate wealthy individuals and high-profile corporations, Chicago has focused on donors who have already demonstrated a commitment to funding public education and who, in many cases, have spearheaded their own programs.

"There's a broader involvement in Chicago than in New York," says Cynthia Greenleaf, CPS director of partnerships.

Maureen Kelleher

ident Janet Knupp observes. "The fact that we've had consistency in that role is key. He's been able to own those goals and priorities with us."

The Chicago Community Trust and the Chicago Public Education Fund are investing in two of Duncan's top three priorities: literacy and human capital. The third priority is expanding school choice, which has taken shape as Renaissance 2010. Another group, the Renaissance Schools Fund, is backed by the city's business and civic leaders and aims to raise \$50 million to support school startups.

The Joyce Foundation is one of seven local foundations working with Gates alongside district, union and City Hall leaders on the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative. The team approach is facilitated by shared knowledge. "It's not just the district setting its priorities," notes Gretchen Crosby-Sims, education program manager for The Joyce Foundation. "We're all looking at the same research. There are a few key areas to focus on."

She points to Renaissance 2010 as a strategy that grew from the redesign team's experiences trying to convert large high schools. "Maybe new schools are a more successful way to go than conversion schools," she observes.

GROWING COMPETITION

CPS is facing more and more competition for the city's pool of private dollars. Civic groups that serve Chicago youth are tapping the same foundations and corporations that the district is courting. Abbott Laboratories recently gave \$500,000 to develop a science program for After School Matters, a public-private partnership for Chicago teenagers, and \$500,000 for a new Renaissance school focused on math and science.

'A place you can call your own'

By Maureen Kelleher

Nearly a year ago, management consulting firm Ernst & Young agreed to underwrite startup expenses for Perspectives Charter's expansion this fall to a second campus at the former Calumet High facility.

In addition to pledging \$750,000 over five years, the firm put a representative on the charter's board, dispatched volunteer tutors to current Perspectives students and picked up the tab for a part-time volunteer coordinator.

"We got tired of just writing checks around town, not seeing what our dollars do," says Managing Partner Jim Hassett of Ernst & Young's Lake Michigan area. "We wanted to get more connected. It's a place you can call your own."

This mindset is driving corporate-school partnerships to the forefront of donor cultivation strategy at the Renaissance Schools Fund, the fundraising arm of Mayor Daley's showcase program, which aims to raise \$50 million for startup grants. Two years into the initiative, Renaissance Schools Fund has passed the halfway mark. It is making headway by focusing most of its resources on matchmaking new school operators directly with donors, and taking a backseat once those relationships are made.

"It's always been part of the vision," says President and CEO Phyllis Lockett. The days when corporations wrote checks and gave blindly have disappeared, she explains. "They want to give to something that's tangible, where their employees can get involved."

Renaissance Schools Fund's immediate goal is raise to \$26 million, enough to cover \$500,000 startup grants for future new schools. So far, it has raised \$30 mil-

PARTNERS GIVE BIG BUCKS

Of the money Renaissance Schools Fund says it has given to schools to date, over \$4.7 million went directly from corporations to schools, and a sizeable chunk of the rest was targeted to particular schools through the group's matchmaking efforts. For a complete list, go to www.catalyst-chicago.org.

Northern Trust	\$3 million
Chase Bank & Anonymous	\$2 million
The Boeing Company	\$1 million
Deloitte & Touche USA LLP	\$1 million
Sara Lee Corporation	\$1 million
Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal	\$1 million

Source: Renaissance Schools Fund

lion, but some of those funds are earmarked for districtwide efforts, such as The Boeing Company's \$1 million grant for principal development and \$500,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for community relations.

A tall order for tough fundraising times, say observers. A number of big-name institutions, including the University of Chicago and the Art Institute, have high-profile campaigns in full swing.

The new strategy has produced at least half a dozen direct partnerships, including Ernst & Young's pact with Perspectives. Two companies, Abbott Laboratories and Motorola, have pledged \$500,000 each to schools that have yet to reach the drawing board.

SCHOOLS GET MONEY FASTER

The first batch of 10 Renaissance schools traveled a less direct path to get startup money. After getting approved by the School Board, they applied individu-

ally for grants through Renaissance Schools Fund, then known as New Schools for Chicago. Operators complained that the multi-step process was cumbersome, and two that applied received no money at all.

Overall, less than \$750,000 was awarded in the first round of grantmaking, about \$125,000 per school.

A few operators pursued private funding on their own or in the case of Legacy Charter, the brainchild of law firm Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal, had a built-in funder. Erie Neighborhood House board members dug into their pockets to support the organization's namesake charter school. University of Chicago, which already ran one charter before Renaissance 2010, partnered with Bank One (now Chase Bank) and received a \$2 million grant to support a new charter. (Tim Knowles, a member of the Renaissance Schools Fund board, also runs the group that operates University of Chicago's charters, and has not applied directly to the Fund to avoid a conflict of interest.)

Since Renaissance Schools Fund streamlined the application process and shifted to a matchmaker approach, schools have received more money sooner. All but one of the schools that applied received grants.

This year, 10 schools will get more than \$1.5 million in startup funds. One of them is Metropolitan Academy of Sciences, with a five-year, \$600,000 pledge from Exelon Corporation, which is also helping line up a university partner. Peggy Davis, formerly chief of staff to Schools CEO Arne Duncan, now works for Exelon and will sit on the new school's board.

Renaissance Schools Fund will continue its work, says Lockett, "until we have enough money for 100 quality schools." ■

Simoncini calls this "a perfect example" of competition within the city for the education dollars of one company. He says though companies may fund multiple initiatives, "they'll have to choose or split the difference" eventually.

Suburban school districts are just beginning to join the fundraising game. "Those are being met with some limited success, and a lot of initial resistance," Simoncini says. "Parents in those districts think their tax dol-

lars should be enough."

As a result, suburban districts will be targeting wealthy CEO's who live in their area, who are also the same CEO's who run large companies that CPS will be targeting with a workforce improvement pitch.

Chicago is up to the challenge, Simoncini says, then warns, "It's just going to be competitive and difficult."

To contact Maureen Kelleher, call (312) 673-3882 or send an e-mail to kelleher@catalyst-chicago.org.

Cashing in, getting extras

By Sarah Karp

It's around 2 in the afternoon before the big event, and a dozen or so mothers whose children attend LaSalle Language Academy move purposefully around the lobby of the South Shore Cultural Center. There is much to do.

Table clothes must be spread across three lines of folding tables. Boxes filled with more than 100 items for the silent auction have to be unpacked and artfully displayed. Then, once everything is set up, the moms have to rush home and swap their sweat suits for formal attire.

This evening soiree, which draws more than 300 guests and nets more than \$80,000, is one of two main fundraising events put on every year by Friends of LaSalle Language Academy, a non-profit affinity group that exists to give the school a variety of extra programs. Proceeds from the dinner-dance and other efforts—like a candy sale in which children sold more than \$50,000 in chocolate pecan clusters,

and even interest on money sitting in a bank account—add up to more than \$170,000 of extra cash for the Lincoln Park magnet school.

LaSalle Language Academy uses those funds to offer its 563 students a full array of extracurricular activities, performances by professional dancers and artists, and overseas exchange programs. They also buy the teachers classroom supplies and treat them to lunches during professional development days.

The extra money also makes LaSalle Language Academy the envy of almost every other Chicago public school.

Only 18 of the city's public schools—less than 3 percent of some 600 elementary and high schools—have parent or community affinity groups that have raised more than \$50,000 in any of the past

Fundraising at 18 wealthier schools has topped \$50,000 in recent years. Yet schools in poorer communities must rely on the district to help level the playing field when it comes to raising private money.

three years, according to a *Catalyst Chicago* review of charitable tax documents for 41 public school fundraising groups. (About 249 elementary schools and 43 high schools have parent groups that registered as charities but weren't required to file tax returns because they raised less than \$25,000. Other such groups may exist, but have not registered with the Illinois Attorney General's office or filed federal tax returns.)

There's a vast difference in bottom-line impact between such well-heeled and connected groups and the parent organizations in most other schools. Most of the latter are traditional parent-teacher associations or parent-teacher organizations that don't raise even a fraction of the money that LaSalle does. Many of them would like to do more,

TOP FUNDRAISING SCHOOLS

SCHOOL	RAISED	POVERTY
LASALLE	\$239,500	21%
LINCOLN	\$225,500	15%
ALCOTT	\$201,300	50%
HAWTHORNE	\$180,800	14%
NORTHSIDE	\$142,300	31%

Source: GuideStar

but don't have what's needed to do so, such as parents with disposable income and free time to organize events. A number of schools, many of them in poor neighborhoods with a student body that is overwhelmingly low-income, have no active parent group.

Raising big money is almost exclusively the purview of a few handfuls of North Side schools, with significantly higher enroll-

What a difference deep pockets make

ments of white, middle-income students and test scores above the district average. Among the top five fundraising schools, three are in Lincoln Park, three have at least 90 percent pass rates on standardized tests and all but one have poverty rates lower than 50 percent. Overall, the district's average pass rate is 40 percent; the average poverty rate is 85 percent.

Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan argues that all city schools are underfunded, even those in relatively wealthy North Side neighborhoods like LaSalle. Still, for the overwhelming majority of schools that do not have the capacity or external connections to tap private funding, the district provides assistance through its partnerships programs, Duncan says. "We need to work through Principal for a Day, local churches, local businesses, to get them to really step up," he says.

Businesses that partner with schools contribute an average of \$10,000 a year, says Cynthia Greenleaf, director of partnerships for CPS' Office of External Resources and Partnerships. And schools on the South, West and North sides have partners, not just the ones in well-to-do areas.

"Clearly we try to put businesses in schools that need help," Greenleaf says. "Businesses usually want to be in those schools."

However, efforts like these that attempt to level the field do not address what some see as an advantage for schools that already have a lot going for them. "Schools that do well already are the ones that have better [connected] groups," says Principal Paul Zeitler of Sheridan Math and Science Academy, where a parent fundraising group pulls in about \$10,000 a year that has

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NORWOOD PARK ELEMENTARY

ENROLLMENT: 363

STUDENT POPULATION: 68% white, 19% Latino, 1% black

POVERTY RATE: 12%

READING PASS RATE: 77%

PARENT FUNDRAISING: \$96,100

Parents at Norwood Park Elementary, like those at any public school, worry about whether Chicago Public Schools has enough money to provide the best education for their children. But unlike others, they have someplace else to turn: local businesses and their own deep pockets.

The parents' fundraising efforts are apparent outside the school. The dark-red brick building—the center of a nine-acre triangular park—is surrounded by light poles bearing green banners with fancy script. Each lists the name of a local business that paid \$1,000 alongside the slogan, "Supporting Our Future." A local bank branch gave the school \$5,000.

Inside, hallway ceilings are strung with hundreds of "passports," this year's fundraising gimmick that builds on the spring dinner-dance theme, An Evening in Europe. For \$5, parents can buy a passport that will display their child's picture and gets stamped as if they've visited various countries.

Behind it all is the Norwood Park Foundation, created a year ago by the school's PTA.

"We are interested in the big-ticket items," says Mark Pullman, who sits on the foundation board. "We only want to do things that will raise real money."

Real money for Norwood Park means netting about \$100,000 or more a year—enough to make sure the school can retain a full-time, certified librarian, band and chorus programs and paid monitors to relieve teachers while students in 1st through 3rd grades take recess. Real money also helps defray costs for math and language arts enrichment for students performing above average.

A survey of parents revealed that they wanted their children to learn Spanish, so the school hired a Spanish teacher this year. Previously, when a number of students had deaths in the family, those extra funds paid for extending a part-time social worker to a full-time schedule.

Nearby families might not consider sending their kids to Norwood Park if it didn't offer the programs that parent fundraising pays for, says local school council Chair Jonathan Jedd. "They know their child is getting the attention they need," he says.

\$800 FOR 3RD-GRADE ART

In the past decade, the community surrounding Norwood Park on the Far Northwest Side of the city has increasingly become well-to-do. Older couples who move out of faux Victorian homes are replaced by families with young children. Houses that sold for



JASON REBLANDO

Parents of Norwood Park Elementary students buy "passports" for \$5 to support the annual fundraising event sponsored by the school's charitable foundation.

\$200,000 in 1990 now go for three times that.

The neighborhood's transition has meant a richer and whiter student body for Norwood Park. During the 12 years that William G. Meuer has been principal, fewer students had to be bused in as more families living in the school's attendance area enrolled their children. White student enrollment grew, while black enrollment shrank, and the poverty rate declined.

Now Norwood Park is eligible for only a token poverty grant. Parent fundraising accounts for any other discretionary money the school has, and it is successful because of parents' experience and connections. One mother is a full-time event planner and has organized black-tie events for big downtown charities.

Parent's own financial resources are a boon, too. Jeanne Stahmer, president of the PTA, says she paid \$800 to buy her daughter's 3rd-grade art project at last year's silent auction.

Charitable tax documents from the 2003-2004 school year show that the PTA raised \$133,900 and netted \$96,100.

Meuer says CPS does not keep close tabs on what parent-sponsored fundraisers are paying for, but in the past, the district has pitched in extra money if he can demonstrate parents' financial commitment to particular projects. For example, when the PTA bought a sound system and new lighting for the auditorium in the late 1990s, CPS contributed some funds for the equipment.

Parents' fundraising is a teacher recruitment tool, of sorts, says Meuer, who boasts that 90 percent of Norwood Park's teachers have master's degrees, two are pursuing doctorates and two others won Golden Apple Awards.

Says Meuer: "When I interview teachers, they say Norwood Park is the promised land."

Sarah Karp

PTO puts the 'fun' in fundraising

OWEN SCHOLASTIC ACADEMY

ENROLLMENT: 251
STUDENT POPULATION: 80% black, 10% Latino
POVERTY RATE: 53%
READING PASS RATE: 72.7%
PARENT FUNDRAISING: \$12,000

Inside a skating rink, flashes of light bounce across the floor as loud music thumps a rhythmic beat and children skate in clumps, squealing as popular songs play.

Karla Hylton and other mothers who belong to the parent-teacher organization (PTO) for Owen Scholastic Academy watch the commotion from a table near the door, where they collect \$5 admission from skaters and their parents. In just a couple of hours, they will collect enough to cover the \$450 expense of renting the rink.

"This is just a fun activity for kids," Hylton says.

Owen's PTO sponsors after-school activities for students and their families every month, and at the end of the year they host events to congratulate students and teachers for doing good work. Sometimes these events make a profit, but those proceeds are ploughed back into other fun things to do, never spent on supplies, teachers or equipment for the school, which members believe should be covered by public education funding.

"It is very tempting, but we have to be clear what our responsibility is and what is the responsibility of the board," says local school council member Barbara De Kerf-Simoda, whose son is in 5th grade. "The PTO only pays for extras."

In many ways, Owen's PTO harks back to an earlier era, when parent groups hosted bake sales and volunteered to help teachers in classrooms. And while it is more active than most, Owen's PTO is typical among the 292 PTAs and PTOs in CPS schools that have registered as charitable organizations. An overwhelming majority—some 86 percent—have not filed tax returns because they are only required for organizations that raise \$25,000 or more.

PTAs and PTOs have similar missions to organize parent involvement at individual schools. The difference is PTOs are independent, whereas PTAs pay dues and are affiliated with a national organization. The National PTA organization focuses on child advocacy, but its leaders realize that fundraising is increasingly important and they are making strides to sup-



JASON REBLANDO

The PTO at Owen Scholastic Academy treats the students to four skating parties a year. The aim is not to raise money, just for the kids to have fun.

port those efforts. "While education budgets shrink, more schools are relying on fundraisers to make ends meet," say National PTA officials in a statement on the organization's web site.

Owen's PTO, however, doesn't try to help with the school's overall budget difficulties. Instead, they raise just what they need to put on the events and provide the extras that bring cohesiveness to their school—about \$30,000.

Among the events it holds every year are a mother-daughter fashion show, a fun fair complete with the Jesse White tumblers and a dance contest. They've also bought books for a special reading program in which students compete to accumulate 1 million minutes of reading at home. If they accomplish the task, the PTO puts on a pizza party for the students.

Principal Stanley Griggs, who has worked at Owen for three years, says he's impressed by parents' enthusiasm. Parents at the school where he last worked were very poor and unable to spend as much time helping out. Ashburn, the community where Owen is located, is better off economically and has been slowly changing over the last decade from an enclave for Eastern Europeans to a neighborhood of black and Latinos.

The small magnet school is eligible for

some extra funding through poverty and desegregation grants. Griggs is using a chunk of the \$89,000 the school got this year to pay for a full-time music teacher. If there were more money, he would hire a lead math teacher and a literacy specialist, he says.

Griggs, however, says he has never thought to ask the PTO to pay for these positions. In fact, he has never been in an environment where parents have contributed that way to a school. Yet he said he would consider asking. "I could use the extra funds," he says.

De Kerf-Simoda says the answer would be no. She gained a better understanding of Owen's budget situation when she swapped her PTO position for a seat on the LSC. During her tenure on the council, the school has lost funding for some staffers, including a special education teacher last year.

Still, she doesn't think the council or the principal should ask the PTO to raise money to make up for lost funds. De Kerf-Simoda says former PTO presidents drew a line between what the PTO should and should not pay for. Those lines should remain intact, she says.

"We have been stringent and that didn't always make the [former principal] happy," she says.

Sarah Karp

EXTRAS *continued from page 11*

covered the tab for drawing boards and televisions. “They are already the haves, and then, they have more.”

Though concerned about equity, few advocates or school officials would suggest limiting fundraising or trying to persuade donors to give to a general fund for all schools. “People want to be able to see where their dollars are going,” says Diana Nelson, executive director for the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform.

However, Nelson argues that central office could be proactive in encouraging schools that have well-developed fundraising machines to partner with those that are struggling and show them how it’s done. “Too often we go to other cities to look at examples of excellence when we could be sending study teams to schools across town,” she explains.

ESSENTIALS VS. EXTRAS

Nearly every school gets some state and federal poverty money for low-income students, but those in areas with better-off students, such as Lincoln Park and Hyde Park, don’t get much. In these cases, “we’re really pushing and encouraging families to support what is going on in their schools,” Duncan notes.

None of the district’s top fundraising schools gets any federal poverty money and seven of them have lost state poverty funds over the past five years.

Poverty grants were created to bridge the financial gap between the basic costs of public education and the additional resources schools need to educate poorer children, who arrive at school with fewer academic skills than children from middle-income families. On the other hand,

private funds are often raised to pay for “extras” that enhance students’ overall education experience.

For instance, compare how poverty funds are spent at Sheridan, where the poverty rate is 70 percent, to Norwood Park Elementary, a neighborhood school where only 12 percent of students come from low-income families.

Zeitler says he feels compelled to spend nearly all of his school’s \$342,000 poverty money on teacher’s aides for kindergarten through 3rd-grade classrooms because research shows that lowering student-teacher ratios helps raise performance among poor children. At Norwood Park, however, the principal uses all of the \$96,100 raised by parents to pay for extras including enrichment programs that allow above-average students to be pulled out of class for accelerated lessons.

Poverty grants pay for academic essentials like tutoring that help students catch up and keep up, while the extras afforded through fundraising

especially when they’re earmarked for educational expenses. Parents at some schools in gentrifying neighborhoods, like Audubon Elementary in Roscoe Village, are feeling pinched, but they are quickly learning that following the fundraising footsteps of LaSalle Language Academy will not be easy.

The community surrounding Audubon has been changing for some time. Old apartment buildings are now hip condominiums and wood frame houses are renovated and attracting young, middle-income families who are beginning to move in as working-poor families move out.

Gentrification has taken a toll. In the past five years, enrollment at Audubon has declined as families who replace those who move away are less likely to choose public schools. Audubon has lost basic and poverty funding, says Principal Linda Sienkiewicz, who wants to hang on to all her staff and programs.

At the top of her wish list is a partnership with Redmoon

Neighborhood Group to donate \$30,000 for one teacher’s salary for next year. And when the kindergarten teacher wanted new classroom rugs, Sienkiewicz suggested asking parents to buy them. They did.

But volunteers to raise larger sums of money are lacking. An LSC member who spearheaded a direct mail solicitation last year that brought in \$3,000 has since left, and no one has picked up the ball. Linda McBride, an active parent volunteer, says raising money is not her strong suit. “I am a little overwhelmed,” she says.

Parents who can raise big bucks are usually well-connected professionals with time on their hands, McBride explains. Audubon is in transition—the poverty rate has dropped from 90 percent to 69 percent over the past five years—but still does not have a critical mass of middle-income parents.

Meanwhile, the need for someone to help bring in more money grows every year. “CPS covers the basics,” McBride says, “but the basics keep getting redefined. To me, some of the basics are reasonable class sizes and art integration.”

While Sienkiewicz says she is willing to take on the task of raising outside money, she has some misgivings. “It takes a chunk of time and we are supposed to be instructional leaders,” she argues.

Sienkiewicz is retiring next month. As LSC members search for her replacement, they’re keeping an eye out for a good fundraiser.

‘GREAT IF WE COULD DO MORE’

While Audubon council members are waiting for more parents with deep pockets to arrive, parents at Ebinger Elementary are coming to terms with the idea that they might never get there.

“Let’s put it this way, we aren’t raising the kind of money that will buy you a teacher.”

PTA President Lisa Sabres, Ebinger Elementary

pay for things that may help keep children engaged in school, Nelson says.

“Kids need some passion in order to stay in school,” she says. Students whose parents don’t raise a lot of money may also attend schools that have no recess, no music and no chess club. “Little is there to keep them coming.”

FEELING THE PRESSURE

No matter how well-off families or communities are, some are finding it difficult to make up for lost school funds,

Theater, an eclectic theater group that uses puppetry, acting and music to help teach reading and language arts. But the partnership will cost \$21,000 and at the moment, more fundamental needs are on the chopping block. “By next year, we will lose half of the time of the counselor, the music teacher and one special education teacher,” Sienkiewicz says.

Supportive parents are helping make up the difference. Sienkiewicz has already persuaded Roscoe Village

Principals have different takes

As school budgets shrink, two CPS principals whose schools are just a couple blocks apart on the South Side have decidedly different approaches to how they fill in the gap.

Principal Senalda R. Grady of Pirie School in Chatham says going after private dollars is the only way to get what she thinks her students need to be successful. That includes items that the district doesn't pay for, such as listening centers, computers and hands-on materials for science.

Parents are chipping in by organizing a candy drive and sponsoring a bazaar that is expected to bring in about \$2,000. But those efforts won't begin to pay the bill for the equipment that Grady is looking to supply, and with an 84 percent poverty rate, Pirie must seek deeper pockets.

This year, Grady asked for help. She contacted her father, Walter E. Grady, president and CEO of Seaway National Bank and Pirie's Principal for a Day for the past 10 years. He sent a letter to 34 associates asking for them to support the school. Sixteen of them responded with checks, netting more than \$23,000.

That's how Principal for a Day—a program created to help fundraising efforts for schools where parent's don't have access to large sums of money—is supposed to work, say CPS officials. While there is no set amount, participants are encouraged to donate money or resources, says Cynthia Greenleaf, who oversees the program.

Grady says she plans to continue tapping these connections to raise money, and is pulling together teachers to write grants.

"Parents go to other schools and see things that they have," Grant observes. "The parents want their children to have the best education possible. So we have to continually look for ways to get the money. Fundraising is an ongoing, everyday thing."

Around the corner, however, Principal Joan Crisler of Dixon relies on the rent from a cell-phone tower perched on the school's roof, the result of a deal between the district and T-Mobile, USA. The arrangement nets Dixon an additional \$24,000 a year. The school also runs a gift-wrapping paper sale to raise extra money.

Crisler says she uses funds from both efforts to buy gift certificates and trophies to reward students for good behavior or attendance and to support parent involvement activities.

Parents at Dixon do not get involved in fundraising, she says. Instead, the PTA hosts training events for parents about curriculum, instruction and family literacy. Some years the PTA has awarded students with savings bonds.

Crisler says she works with whatever amount of funding the district provides and does not actively seek outside financial support, such as grants or corporate sponsorships.

"We don't put the responsibility on anyone else," she says. "I don't spend a whole lot of time bemoaning what we don't have. It would sound foolish for me to say that I don't welcome whatever resources are available. I am just saying I can only control what I can control."

Sarah Karp

PIRIE ELEMENTARY

ENROLLMENT: 556
STUDENT POPULATION: 100% black
POVERTY RATE: 84%
READING PASS RATE: 50%
PARENT FUNDRAISING: \$23,050

DIXON ELEMENTARY

ENROLLMENT: 700
STUDENT POPULATION: 100% black
POVERTY RATE: 81%
READING PASS RATE: 53%
PARENT FUNDRAISING: \$0

Five years ago, they had hopes of raising enough money to give their children's Edison Park school a boost. Looking down the road at other public schools in the area, such as Norwood Park, they saw what a boon parent fundraising could be.

In 2000, they created the Ebinger School Foundation and got to work. But the money has yet to materialize. "Let's put it this way, we aren't raising the kind of money that will buy you a teacher," says PTA President Lisa Sabres, whose daughter is in 5th grade. The foundation raised just over \$35,000, according to the group's 2004 taxes.

On paper, Ebinger is like other schools in Norwood Park or Sauganash—mostly white, low poverty, high test scores. The difference is that Ebinger families, who aren't poor, are not wealthy either. "We are a working, middle-class neighborhood," says Michele Atkinson, president of Ebinger's foundation. "We have a lot of firemen and policemen. In most families both parents work just to pay the bills. If the wife doesn't work, then they are struggling on one income."

Ebinger's foundation hosts an annual fundraising event, but instead of a formal affair, it organizes a casual dance party with an open bar. Tickets cost \$10 and in place of a silent auction, there's a raffle with a \$5,000 grand prize. Last year, the event netted \$6,000.

With proceeds from previous events, the foundation bought computers for classrooms and lighting for the school auditorium. But the facility could use sprucing up, Sabres says, and a \$500 donation from Home Depot for paint and bathroom caulk "didn't really make a dent."

Schools with high poverty rates, though, would still

rather be in Ebinger's position. Even with a hefty poverty grant, Bateman Elementary still cannot afford to buy all of the new books, equipment and staff that it needs, says PTA member Virginia Hansen.

Ninety percent of Bateman students are low-income but because fewer students overall are enrolled, the school lost \$110,000 in poverty funding over the past five years. But looking to parents to raise extra money is not feasible, Hansen says. "Just to get parents to come to meetings, we have to give out treats like cookies and juice," she says. Two of the most active members of Bateman's PTA, whose membership totals four, have already seen their children graduate. Hansen, who works in the school's cafeteria, is one of them.

"I went to fundraisers for other schools and I was just wowed," Hansen says. "We do what we can, but it would be just great if we could do more."

Back at LaSalle Language Academy, Principal Amy Weiss Narea says parents' fundraising provides the extras that help her school flourish. Students are admitted by lottery and 93 percent performed at or above grade level on last year's standardized reading tests. The school is considered the gem of its neighborhood.

"One of the keys to our success is the tremendous family involvement," Narea says. "It really helps us out. Parents are very generous, [but] I don't think they would be as generous if the money went into a general pot for all schools. Because it goes to their children, and all the children at this school, they go way above and beyond."

Intern Cassie del Pilar contributed to this report.

Sarah Karp is a Chicago-based writer. E-mail editor@catalyst-chicago.org.

Charter fundraising varies widely

By Mallika Ahluwalia

This school year, Chicago's 22 charter schools plan to raise some \$12 million in private contributions. But their dependence on fundraising varies widely, from about 4 percent of the budget at the Chicago International schools to 40 percent at Young Women's Leadership Charter School.

The monetary differences reflect differences in philosophy and program as much as fundraising muscle.

For example, Chicago International, which raised about \$730 per student in private money, believes that greater fundraising cannot be sustained over the long haul. Young Women's, which raised about \$3,600 per student, believes that spending more money is necessary to prepare its students for success beyond high school.

"In any given year, we believe that we should not be dependent on fundraising for more than 5 percent of our operating costs," says Elizabeth Delaney-Purvis, executive director of the Chicago Charter School Foundation, which oversees the 10 campuses of Chicago International.

If each campus counted on philanthropy for even 15 to 20 percent of its revenue, she says, they would have to raise \$10 million a year. They might be able to do that for the first four to five years, she says, but not in perpetuity. This year, the campuses raised \$4 million.

Purvis adds that with 10 campuses, Chicago International is able to achieve some economies of scale—in contracts, for example—that are unavailable to other charters.

Betty Shabazz Charter, which operates three campuses, also has resisted big-time fundraising. A parents' council at one campus raises \$40,000 a year to pay for the sports program. Community members provide in-kind services and goods—one campus recently received 50 refurbished computers. To keep payroll down, the school looks for teachers with multiple skills. For example, one teacher also serves as the technology coordinator.

But now that the cost of health insurance, utilities, salaries and the like is out-

pricing its public dollars, Shabazz too is asking for bigger bucks. Actor Danny Glover was the headliner at a recent fundraiser that brought in \$40,000.

However, Anthony Daniels-Halisi, the charter's director of business operations, stresses that the charter doesn't want to become so dependent on philanthropy that it would have to cut core programs, should those extra dollars not come in. He sets a goal of no more than 5 to 10 percent of the budget

SUSTAINABILITY A CONCERN

At the other end of the spectrum, Joan Hall, board president at Young Women's Leadership, says extra money makes a difference. "Our school recently ranked No. 1 in college admissions and graduation rates of all non-selective high schools," she notes. "We spend \$10,000 per pupil, and we believe those rankings indicate that's what it costs to properly educate a high school student in Chicago."

Chicago Public Schools provides charter high schools with \$6,075 per pupil in base funding plus additional funds depending on the size of the school and the student population. Illinois Network of Charter Schools estimates it adds up to about 82 percent of what traditional high schools get on average.

Hall concedes that "sustainability is a legitimate concern" but says that board members "are completely determined" to raise the money." They personally contributed 25 percent to 30 percent of the \$1.2 million they have raised for each of the past four years, she says.

Perspectives Charter also is engaged in major fundraising. It is conducting an "Open Doors" campaign that has already raised \$3.6 million to pick up some of the cost of building a new school and will help pay for planning future growth (potentially adding three more campuses by 2007). Dianne Campbell, director of external relations, says the charter hopes to house its new campuses in CPS buildings, which is cheaper.

"Our long-term plan is to raise \$200,000 annually per school, which will be about 4 percent of the budget," she says.

THE DARWINIAN EFFECT

Clive Belfield, associate director at the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education at Columbia University, says that in the long haul, schools cannot rely on fundraising or volunteer help.

"Philanthropists are not in the business of providing education, but of stimulating it," he says, "so it's short-lived."

He argues that the enthusiasm of parents and communities is short-lived as well. "In early years it works, but nothing systemic has been integrated into school," he says.

However, John Ayers, vice president of communications at the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, says Chicago has enough money to meet the charters' needs. "Chicago is an extremely wealthy town, and there's a lot of good will for schools," he says. "And these charters know how to market themselves."

Ayers stresses that it's not "advantaged people providing extra dollars for advantaged kids. They're getting wealthy people and businesses to give extra dollars for poor kids."

Seventy-nine percent of charter students receive a free or reduced-price lunch, a *Catalyst* analysis shows.

Ayers challenges the charters that aren't fundraising. He says they should be asking: "What are we doing wrong that we aren't getting money? What could we do with 20 percent more revenue?"

However, it is a challenge that not all can meet. The Children's Choir Academy, located in McKinley Park, started in 2001 as a school that integrated music into its academic program. Difficulties raising enough money for its program soon led to the initial board's disintegration.

Geoffrey Stone, president of the Chicago Children's Choir board, which holds the charter for the Choir Academy, estimates that it would take at least an extra \$1,000 per child for an adequate choral program, "and a good deal more for a full-scale program."

Chicago Children's Choir is not up for that and is now trying to transfer control

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Dropout policy not enforced

No count of consent forms or monitoring of student 'push-outs'

By Cassie del Pilar

After the Illinois Legislature raised the compulsory school attendance age to 17 from 16, the School Board launched a media blitz to announce a new attendance and truancy policy that included a controversial provision requiring parents to sign a consent form before a child drops out.

Bill Leavy, executive director of Greater West Town Community Project, says he believes the law has at least lit a fire under schools to do more to keep kids from leaving.

But some kids who tried to get back in school initially had a difficult time doing so, he adds. "Sixteen-year-olds had issues with where to go, who had the legal obligation to accept them back. They were batted around the system."

Meanwhile, the board acknowledges it is doing little or nothing to monitor whether schools comply with its new policy, which also banned the practice of "pushing out" kids with excessive absences.

"I can't say we have a system that strongly enforces [the policy]," says Linda Goodwin, the district's interim director of dropout prevention and recovery, blaming "lack of manpower."

But Goodwin declined to say how many consent forms the office has received, saying "what we have is not the true number." Goodwin added that schools were instructed to fax completed and signed forms to the dropout office. At the end of each month, the forms are supposed to be compiled into a report. The board declined to provide those reports.

Technically, under the new policy the number of dropouts should equal the number of forms the district has in hand. Central office could not provide a count

of dropouts to date, saying the board only collects the information at the end of the year.

Of 10 high school attendance coordinators surveyed by *Catalyst Chicago*, only one (Catalina Cardena at Graham High School, a special-education school) says she knew of or followed the protocol. Several coordinators said they mailed in the forms, kept them in students' files at school or gave them to area instructional offices.

'IT'S NOT AS EASY TO WRITE THEM OFF'

In 2004, the board provided \$1.7 million to nine social service agencies to work with schools to solve attendance and truancy problems. Since then, Ada S. McKinley, which was assigned to work with 12 schools, has dropped out of the initiative. Five agencies declined to return calls about the program.

Despite the CPS policy's ban on "pushing out" students, at least one school acknowledged continuing the practice.

"Just before the end of the period, students with exceptional numbers of absences—20 or more—are dropped from the rolls," says Eugene Matthews, attendance coordinator at Crane Tech Prep on the Near West Side. Those students are encouraged to come to an "attendance summit" at the school. "Students come with their parents, and if they sign an attendance contract we accept them back," Matthews says.

Renee Joiner, vice president of human resources and community development for ChildServ, says schools are making "more effort to engage these students and families ... and to get the kids re-enrolled." ChildServ is working with Corliss, Washington, Chicago Vocational and Austin high schools; schools at the DuSable Campus; and Parkside, Gold-

blatt, Calhoun North, Marconi, Henson and Bradwell elementary schools.

The law forcing schools to keep students another year provides "more opportunity to work with them," says Joiner. "It's not as easy for the school and the parents to write these students off."

But Valerie Pickett, a parent advocate who works on attendance at Michele Clark High School, says while social service agencies are doing a good job of setting up achievement plans for students and checking on them during home visits, the agencies need to do more, such as offering more counseling and after-school programs. "Don't come in and slap their hands—give them something," she says.

Another challenge is finding ways to help at-risk 16-year-olds who can no longer be sent to alternative programs. Juan-Carlos Ocon, dean of students at Juarez High School, says schools need better counseling to catch at-risk students earlier. Otherwise, he says, "It's very difficult to bring them back."

Returning dropouts typically have poor academic skills, giving schools a major disincentive to re-enroll them, says Jack Wuest, executive director of the Alternative Schools Network. "You need to have ways to measure their progress separate from No Child Left Behind [requirements], or no one wants to deal with these kids"

Leavelle Abram, attendance coordinator and disciplinarian at Hirsch Metro High, says the school is now trying to keep kids in school by being proactive. "We try to identify kids at an earlier age, and we try to use preventative measures before its get to that point."

Hirsch has local police and community residents come to school to talk to students about the importance of good attendance. And kids considered at-risk of dropping out or truancy receive weekly progress reports on academics and attendance. ■

Road to college paved with top grades

The news that only 6.5 percent of Chicago Public Schools graduates earned a college degree by their mid-20s grabbed front-page headlines for the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which tracked college participation rates for the classes of 2002 and 2003 using data from the National Student Clearinghouse.

The report is the first to follow graduates of a major urban school system to find out how many go to college, where they enroll and how many graduate.

Beyond the dismal college graduation rate, the Consortium found that:

- **GRADES ARE KEY.** Top grades were more likely to lead to college enrollment than high ACT scores. Graduates with lower grades but high ACT scores had a 68 percent chance of enrolling in college, while graduates with lower scores but top grades had an 82 percent chance. The gap was most significant among students who enrolled in the most selective colleges: 36 percent vs. 53 percent, respectively.
- **NO GRADE INFLATION.** Researchers found little or no evidence of what they termed the “urban folktale,” of students in inner-city schools who earn straight A’s but find themselves under-prepared in college. Only 21

percent of graduates earned a GPA higher than 3.0 in their core subjects. The achievement gap between African-Americans and Latinos vs. white and Asian graduates was striking: 14 percent of African-American and 20 percent of Latino graduates earned a GPA higher than 3.0, compared to 36 percent of whites and 50 percent of Asians.

- **NOT ENOUGH ADVANCED COURSEWORK.** Nearly half of graduates—46 percent—had taken only the standard high school curriculum and did not enroll in any honors or Advanced Placement courses. Of those who did, 25 percent took three or fewer honors courses and only 9 percent were enrolled in what researchers considered a rigorous college-oriented curriculum with regular enrollment in honors, AP or International Baccalaureate classes.

The latest data from CPS shows that African American and Hispanic students are underrepresented in AP and honors classes. In 2005, only 25 percent of black students and 30 percent of Hispanic students were enrolled in at least one AP or honors course, compared to 49 percent of whites and 61 percent of Asians. (Neighborhood high schools in

minority neighborhoods are likely to have fewer AP courses.)

- **LOW ACT SCORES.** Less than a third of Latino and African-American graduates scored an 18 or higher on the ACT; an 18 is generally considered the benchmark score showing readiness for college-level work.
- **LEAST COMPETITIVE COLLEGES.** Less than 10 percent of African-American and Latino graduates had enough rigorous preparation in high school to gain admission to the country’s most selective four-year colleges and universities. Overall, 56 percent of graduates attended either two-year or non-selective four-year colleges. Latinos were most likely to do so; 64 percent of Latino girls and 69 percent of Latino boys attended a two-year or non-selective institution.

The Consortium plans to conduct related research including a more detailed study of the impact of AP and other challenging coursework on college performance, and how social and academic support in high schools affect students’ success in college.

To get a copy of the report “From High School to the Future,” go to our web site at www.catalyst-chicago.org.

Lorraine Forte

CHARTER *continued from page 15*

of the school to another operator.

Belfield says that this Darwinian effect operates nationwide, with financially weak charters going under.

In Chicago, three of 36 campuses have closed in the last eight years, and at least one of those for financial mismanagement. Beatriz Rendon, executive director of new school support at CPS, says the district’s approval process includes a thorough review by the Illinois Facilities Fund, which examines the financial plan, including the fundraising objectives, to ensure that the operators have the “financial capacity and wherewithal.”

Fundraising, she elaborates, is encouraged and supported by her office.

“We never say you’re fundraising too much money!”

PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING

Belfield and Ayers agree that charter quality is important for fundraising.

Belfield argues that nationally charters have not exceeded the performance of traditional public schools and that contributors are beginning to notice that their dollars aren’t going very far.

Ayers, on the other hand, applauds the performance of charters in Chicago, saying that as long as charters “continue to be successful academically, they will continue to raise the money.”

Elaine Allensworth, associate director at the Consortium on Chicago School Research, says that while there has been

no formal study of the performance of charters compared to regular schools in Chicago, “there are a number of charter schools that look exceptionally good.”

Even after controlling for the backgrounds of the students, these schools post impressive graduation rates, test scores and student attendance, she says.

However, even those comfortable with charter fundraising argue that, ultimately, the state needs to increase funding for charter schools.

“We are hopeful that the Illinois legislature will recognize the need to increase funding,” says Hall of Young Women’s Charter.

To contact Mallika Ahluwalia, call (312) 673-3874 or e-mail mallika@catalyst-chicago.org.

Viewpoints

GUEST COLUMN/BRIAN SPITTLE

Students doing better than report suggests

More high-quality coursework spells a brighter future for CPS grads

The recent report from the Consortium on Chicago School Research about the aspiration-attainment gap in the Chicago Public Schools highlights many important issues that deserve careful consideration. Unfortunately, the mainstream media's reporting did not fully reflect the positive developments that have emerged in recent years that are worth noting.

Overall, the report keeps the focus where it should be, on providing students with the academic preparation they need to succeed in college and to be full participants in today's knowledge society.

The report's finding that only a third of CPS graduates who enroll in four year colleges complete a degree within six years is indeed sobering, particularly in the context of enduring concerns about the distribution of educational opportunity by class and race in the United States.

While some questions have been raised about this finding, the report's emphasis on the importance of quality coursework makes a great deal of sense. Unfortunately, some of the more promising program investments were implemented too recently to have shown up in the recent analysis.

At DePaul, we have started to track the progress and performance of students emerging from two of these programs, CPS College Bridge and the International Baccalaureate (IB). While it is too soon to have data on graduation rates, our experience confirms the report's stated faith in the importance of quality coursework. It also provides a small corrective to those who might see the

report as simply another damning assessment of public school failure.

The College Bridge program allows CPS students to take advanced courses at local universities, while the prestigious International Baccalaureate has been established in more than a dozen neighborhood high schools. In their own ways, both programs deliver high-quality coursework to students who might otherwise not have access to it. They form part of a wider quality initiative that also includes an expansion of Advanced Placement (AP) offerings and the implementation of the national AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, which takes average students and places them in higher level courses.

The report recognizes such initiatives, particularly AP and IB, and argues that these are indeed the sorts of steps CPS should be taking to enhance both college access and success. We would certainly echo that recommendation.

The International Baccalaureate program offers a comprehensive curriculum that challenges students in a variety of subject areas, requires them to write a great deal, engages them in community service and stimulates international awareness. It's a very traditional curriculum in many ways, and yet what could be more relevant today?

Certainly, the performance of the IB students from CPS at DePaul has been very impressive. Their retention through to the third year of undergraduate study is about 90 percent, and hardly any appear to be experiencing academic difficulty. And this

is despite the fact that their ACT scores are consistently below those of the average incoming freshman at DePaul. Clearly, standardized test scores remain very imperfect predictors of college success, especially for low-income students and those whose first language is not English.

This raises important questions about the measurements that are used both to demonstrate progress in the public schools and to identify students who are likely to succeed at the college level. As the report makes clear, coursework and grades are better predictors of college attainment than standardized test scores. Still this has yet to be fully reflected in the overriding direction of national or local school reform, or in the admission policies and practices at many universities.

Indeed, one of the major issues concerning educational opportunity today has to do with the way in which standardized test scores limit the ability to resolve the tension felt by so many universities between student access on the one hand and widely accepted measures of academic quality on the other. In the CPS context, programs such as IB, AP, College Bridge and AVID stand at the very intersection of access and quality and to that extent offer the best hope we have to narrow the gap between student aspiration and attainment.

Let us hope that the Consortium's report will further encourage innovative curriculum at the high school level and more open-minded approaches to admissions at the college level. Such concrete steps will surely help us make significant progress in helping more disadvantaged students achieve significant progress in attaining college educations. ■

*Brian Spittle
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Small schools are 'launching pad' for improved teaching

Thanks to *Catalyst* and Alexander Russo for stirring the pot and keeping the small schools discussion alive. I am perplexed, however, by the gaping disparity between the one-sidedly negative "Improving Teaching Is a Low Priority at Small High Schools" and the actual conclusions of the Consortium on Chicago School Research study.

Many of the problems both Russo and the Consortium study describe are what happens when any reform gets captured by a top-down bureaucracy and is taken "to scale" by the big foundations.

The problem is, Russo's article and the Consortium study don't jibe.

The study is more balanced in its assessment of the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative and looks at possibilities vs. realities. It reaffirms what many of us small-schools educators and activists have been saying for years: Small schools are the launching pad for improved teaching and learning—not the rocket ship. Small schools can create optimal conditions for teachers to develop a professional community and instructional improvement, but are not a panacea.

Quite a difference here between small schools making improved teaching a "low priority" and small schools being hindered or undermined by administrative policies.

Small school proponents argue that small learning communities may help improve instruction by creating strong and vibrant teacher professional communities focused on teaching and student learning.

If small-school and large-school principals "don't understand what good classroom instruction looks like," as Consortium leader John Easton says in Russo's piece, then there is a systemic problem that should be

considered before launching an initiative on the scale of Renaissance 2010. It is not a "failure" of small schools, as Russo seems to indicate. Rather, leadership capacity should be considered carefully before you launch a plan for 100 new small schools.

The study points to several examples of things that small schools find more difficult to do, such as "running an after-school detention program" because "nobody wants to do it." (Maybe it's just me, but if none of the teachers want to do it, maybe after-school detention is not such a hot idea).

The real point of the study is that small schools are generally great at some things and not so great at others. There are always trade-offs that educators, parents and students need to consider. Breadth for depth in curricula and course offerings. Department structures for teacher teaming. Lots of programs for safety and strong personal relationships. Top-down accountability for more autonomy. We have found that the small schools that make these trades do well.

Finally, the Consortium study wasn't as much about small schools as it was about the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative, which involves large high schools trying to transform into smaller learning communities and trying to carry the weight of a largely unsupportive bureaucracy at the same time.

This is what I call the predictable failure of top-down reform. But it is not a "failure" of small schools, which cannot and should not be expected to be "a cure" for the system's ills, as Russo says.

Mike Klonsky
Director, Small Schools Workshop

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"CITY VOICES" Consulting Editor Lorraine Forte hosts this public affairs program at 6:30 a.m. the second Sunday of the month on WNUA-FM, 95.5.

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.

NEW TEACHERS DISMISSED Principals are not renewing the contracts of 1,062 untenured teachers next fall, angering the Chicago Teachers Union. Under the current contract, which was negotiated by the previous union leadership, teachers can be dismissed without cause during the first four years on the job. Last year, about 1,100 untenured teachers were dismissed, but 700 of them later found jobs in the system. CTU President Marilyn Stewart warned of a potential strike unless the issue is resolved in next year's contract negotiation.

SEX EDUCATION REVAMPED The board approved a new sexual education program for grades 6 to 12 that is drawing fire from abstinence-only advocates and overwhelming support from students and parents. The new curriculum will still teach abstinence as "the expected norm" but also mandates previously optional topics such as school-age parenting and contraceptive use. Teachers will be required to receive special training; parents will have the option to decide whether their child will participate.

MOVING IN/ON **JAMILAH R. JORDAN**, president of the Partnership for Quality Child Care, was elected vice president of the governing board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. ... **MICHAEL KLONSKY**, director of the Small Schools Network, was named a visiting professor at Nova Southeastern University's Fischler School of Education and Human Services in North Miami Beach, Fla. He will maintain his position at the Small Schools Network. ... **DOMINIC BELMONTE**, director of teacher preparation at the Golden

Apple Foundation, is now the president and CEO. He replaces **ELAINE SCHUSTER**, who retired. His replacement has not been named.

AT CLARK STREET The board extended a contract with the Erikson Institute that will allow **BARBARA BOWMAN**, a professor at the institute, to continue as the district's chief officer of early childhood education for another year. Bowman has served in that position for two years while continuing to teach. ... **KATHI SEIDEN-THOMAS**, former director of development for Girls in the Game, is now the director of external affairs for Renaissance Schools Fund.

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS The following assistant principals have been awarded four year contracts at their schools and will replace their current principals who are retiring: **DOROTHY ARMOUS**, Hampton, will replace **CAROL LOVELY**; **ARIEL CORREA**, Chavez, will replace **SANDRA TRABACK**; **JEREMY FEIWELL**, Cardenas, will replace **SYLVIA ORTIZ**; **CHRIS PAGNUCCO**, Clay, will replace **JOHN POTOCKI**.

The following principals have had their contracts renewed: **SANDY M. ANAST**, Clark; **HIRAM BROYLS**, Burbank; **CHRISTOPHER BRAKE**, Bridge; **DEBORAH M. CLARK**, Skinner; **STEPHANIE E. DUNN**, Burke; **JOSEPH W. EDMONDS**, Columbus; **HERMAN ESCOBAR**, Nixon; **ROBERT ESENBERG**, New Sullivan; **SCOTT FEAMAN**, Lake View; **CYDNEY FIELDS**, Ray; **JAMES B. GILLIAT**, Pasteur; **SALVADOR GONZALEZ**, Chopin; **SAUNDRA GRAY**, Edison; **EDWARD GUERRA**, Farragut; **MARY LOU GUTIERREZ**, Everett; **BARBARA A. HALL**, Dunbar; **CAROL J. HABEL**, Belding; **CAROL A. HARDIN**, Abbott; **ARLINE HERSH**, Armstrong;

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AFTER SCHOOL SCIENCE The non-profit After School Matters received a \$1 million grant from Abbott Laboratories to add a science program to its existing courses in the arts, technology, sports and communications for Chicago teens. The after school life-science program will be piloted next year at a new as yet unnamed science academy opened under Renaissance 2010. The program will later expand to other Renaissance 2010 high schools.

NATIONAL AWARD **JANET KNUPP**, president of The Chicago Public Education Fund, received an award from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards for her work to promote National Board certification for Chicago teachers.

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