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IN THE MIDDLE

CPS PILOT BRINGS STRONGER CURRICULA AND
TEACHER TRAINING TO PREPARE MIDDLE-SCHOOLERS
FOR THE RIGOR OF HIGH SCHOOL

Also: Fewer black students land at elite high schools. *PAGE 21*

High school starts in 6th grade



Deputy Editor
Lorraine Forte

Lorraine Cruz had been an assistant principal at a school in Little Village for only eight days when CPS officials recruited her to take over Ames Middle in Logan Square, where a revolving door of principals had come and gone in recent years.

Since then, Cruz has instilled order at the school, even resorting to having her own nephew escorted from the school in handcuffs to show she meant business. However, Cruz had a deeper strategy for improvement: Train teachers to meet the unique needs of adolescents, something Cruz says is a must-have for middle-school teachers.

Training is the linchpin of the district's pilot Middle Grades Project, quietly launched last year (with funding from The Chicago Community Trust) to make school better for kids who are not quite teenagers but no longer youngsters. The majority of CPS elementary schools are K-8, and until the pilot, the special needs of adolescents in grades 6 through 8 have been too often lost in the educational mix. At this age, when kids' cognitive development is taking a leap forward and high school is fast approaching, it just doesn't work to keep students locked in the one-teacher-for-all-subjects, one-classroom-all-day model.

So far, teacher training has focused on beefing up content knowledge in math and science. That's a great first start, since most elementary and middle-grades teachers don't have degrees in or deep knowledge of these subjects. The district also should plow ahead with efforts, like Cruz's, to train teachers to meet students' developmental needs—no easy task, given the myriad emotional and physical

changes that “tweens” experience.

The pilot is a much-needed effort that must bear fruit if another initiative, High School Transformation, is to have a chance at real success. You can't wait until 9th grade to start “transforming” school for kids who

Too often, inferior education at neighborhood elementary schools means that black kids aren't ready for the rigors of a Payton or Northside.

haven't had any exposure to algebra or been taught how to read for content and not just “how to read.”

ACCESS TO THE BEST

Better middle-grades education, especially in lower-income black neighborhood schools, would help reverse a disheartening trend: the decline in the percentage of black enrollment in the city's elite public high schools. These showcase schools are becoming less diverse, as Associate Editor Sarah Karp reports in this issue. That's a tragedy, both for those black kids who aren't getting a shot at a top-tier high school education, and for the white, Hispanic and Asian kids who are getting fewer opportunities to mix with black students on an equal footing in the classroom.

But the problem isn't that these schools are becoming too white (the percentage of Hispanics in selective

schools has held fairly steady, as has the percentage of Asians). Nor is the problem high admissions standards—there's no reason why black kids can't meet entry standards if they have the right background. That's the real issue: Preparation. Too often, inferior education at neighborhood elementary schools means that black kids aren't ready for the rigors of a Payton or Northside. Ensuring seats for them at these schools won't help much if they don't have the educational tools to succeed once they arrive.

It's anyone's guess how the situa-

tion will shake out should the district win its battle to kill the desegregation consent decree, which at least requires some measure of integration in selective schools. But the district should take a serious look at one solution crafted by Jones College Prep, which is recruiting kids from communities that send few students to the school—making geography, not race, an admissions factor. Another solution is to ensure that newer selective schools in minority neighborhoods provide the best of educational options. Or, make selective school admission a true lottery: All kids who meet the test score threshold or have top grades get an equal shot at admission.

ABOUT US: Editor-in-Chief **Veronica Anderson** is on sabbatical until mid-November. Deputy Editor **Lorraine Forte** is serving as editor-in-chief during her absence.

MIDDLE YEARS

Building up the middle

Nationally, urban school districts are searching for strategies to improve middle-grades learning. CPS is banking on three principles: academic rigor, social support and orientation to high school. **COVER STORY: PAGE 6**

HOW MARSHALL MADE THE GRADE

The Irving Park middle school wins acclaim from a national education group for its strong curricula and team building. **PAGE 9**

BOYS WIN ACADEMIC RACE AT MAYS

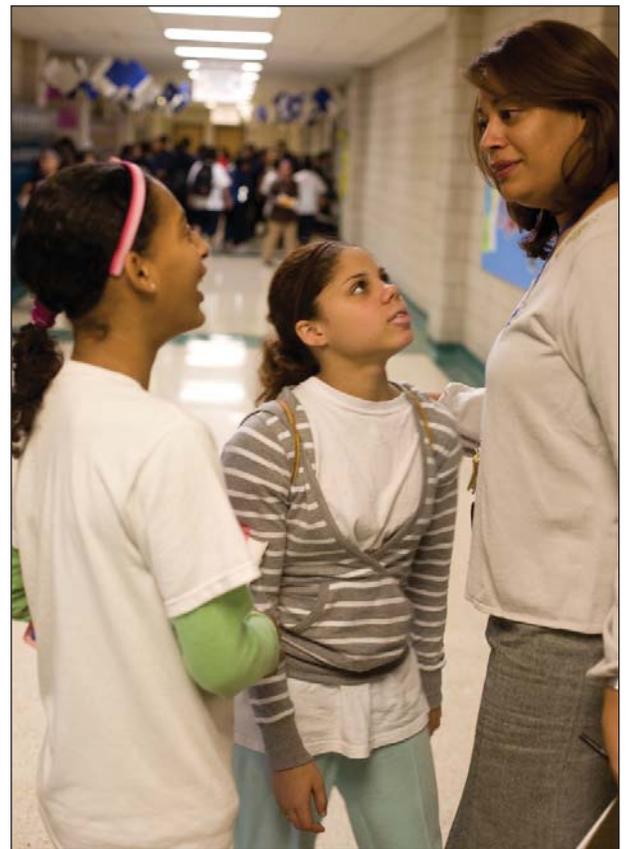
Single-sex classrooms help test scores in the middle grades surpass scores in other Englewood schools. **PAGE 10**

TAILORING SCHOOL FOR 'TWEENS'

The intellectual and physical changes of adolescence demand that schools differentiate instruction and support for adolescents, says professor Stacey Horn. **PAGE 12**

FINDING THE RIGHT APPROACH

Los Angeles, New York and Boston are among the districts experimenting with strategies to help middle-graders do better in school. **PAGE 13**



ON THE COVER: Students change classes at Ames Middle School. Above: Two of them stop to chat with Principal Lorraine Cruz. PHOTOS BY JASON REBLANDO.



JOHN BOOZ

Roosevelt students fire up their handmade robot. The school is the focal point in an effort to bolster educational options in Albany Park. See stories, beginning on page 14.

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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
- Reform history news highlights

Notebook

Q&A with...

David Kirp

Author, professor of public policy,
University of California-Berkeley

David Kirp is an outspoken critic of policies—like those in Illinois—that promote quantity over quality in preschool education. Kirp was in Chicago recently to discuss his engaging new book “The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics” at a conference on early childhood education hosted by the Erikson Institute. He spoke with Consulting Editor Cindy Richards about why Chicago is, as he calls it, “the epicenter of the pre-k universe.”

Why is the first chapter of the book about Chicago?

Chicago is a place that shows pre-k at its best and shows its problematic sides as well. Chicago has the best, ablest community of activists I know of in the country. Folks like Maria Whelan [Illinois Action for Children], Jerry Stermer [Voices for Illinois Children], Harriet Meyer [Ounce of Prevention] and others gather behind closed doors, blood leaks out from under the door, and they emerge and say “This is what we’re going to do.” Then they mobilize tens of thousands of parents to head to Springfield. Chicago also has one of the most powerful concentrations of thinkers about early education—Peter Huttenlocher [neuroscientist at the University of Chicago], Nobel Prize winner Jim Heckman [University of Chicago economist], Greg Duncan [professor of public policy] at Northwestern and the Erikson Institute.

What’s working in Chicago?

Child-Parent Centers, which have been around for 40 years. One group of kids from that program was tracked into their 20s. They spent less time in jail, earned more money, were more likely to graduate high school. The best estimate is a return on investment of \$7 for each dollar spent. But instead of being justifiably proud of the best urban preschool program in the country, CPS has been killing it off one small cut at a time. What made the program great was it involved parents very deeply. That is gone. It was a full day, now it’s a half-day.

Let’s talk about quality vs. quantity. Why isn’t more pre-k better?

This is not one of those cases of invest a little, get a modest return; invest a lot, get a big

TIMELINE

Oct. 9: New schools

CEO Arne Duncan unveils plans for 15 new Renaissance schools in the fall of 2008 and four more in the fall of 2009, including six high schools, three combined middle-high schools, one middle school and nine elementary schools. The elementary schools will include two franchise schools. Disney Magnet II will offer intensive art projects, Chinese classes, monthly teacher training and Disney animation technology. Burroughs II will offer cooking, English classes for parents, drama, sports and longer school days.

Oct. 14: Julian protest

Students rally against the dismissal of 10 teachers at Julian High following a drop in student enrollment of more than 200 students. Some students blamed the decline on negative publicity following violence that touched the school last year, when three students and one teacher were killed in incidents that occurred near blocks from the school. Several programs at the school were axed and student schedules had to be reworked because of the cuts. The school’s projected enrollment was about 1,900, but just 1,688 students showed up.

Oct. 15: Recruiting?

CPS dedicates its Marine Military Academy on the Near West Side a few days after officials announce plans to open an Air Force Academy high school in 2009. The news causes critics to charge that the district, which has five military academies serving 11,000 students, is becoming a recruiting center targeting poor and minority teenagers. Although Chicago has the largest Junior ROTC program in the country, Mayor Daley says, “This is not a [military] recruitment effort.” Students are not required to enlist after graduation.

ELSEWHERE

Minnesota: Teacher mentoring

A public policy think tank wants school districts to beef up their efforts to provide mentoring for new teachers, according to the Oct. 15 *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. Minnesota 2020 says districts must find a way to hold on to newcomers because of teacher shortages in rural areas and in subjects such as chemistry, physics and special education. State education officials say they are addressing the problem with a performance pay program and a new initiative to help mid-career professionals become teachers. They also want legislators to renew funding for a new teacher induction program and are considering a program that would provide tuition-free education courses to college students studying math and science who might want to become teachers.

New York: Teacher housing

The city is helping finance two apartment buildings in the Bronx that will provide lower-cost housing for public school teachers and other educators, according to the Oct. 5 *New York Times*. The project is being funded with \$28 million in bonds sold by the teachers pension fund and \$20 million in loans from the city. The apartments will be made available through a lottery, but many teachers may earn too much to be eligible: Applicants can’t earn more than 110 percent of the area’s median income of \$76,000 for a family of four, and starting salaries for teachers are now \$42,512. The apartments will also be available to teacher aides, as well as teachers in private and parochial schools.

IN SHORT

“The reason why black youth feel they receive a poorer education is because they do.”

Stephanie Posey, a student at Chicago Military Academy-Bronzeville, at an Oct. 9 panel hosted by the Chicago Urban League, explaining why most black teens surveyed by The Black Youth Project said blacks receive an inferior education compared to whites. Posey says her textbooks are old, while those at premier schools such as Northside are new.



GAN BAI

return. Invest a little and, at best, you get nothing. The best/worst example is Texas. It does not set any limits on enrollment in pre-k classrooms, so you have upwards of 35 children in a room with one teacher. At best, these kids are safe from the sun and sleet. At worst, you have recreated "Lord of the Flies."

Why should there be universal free pre-K when wealthy parents can afford it?

Kids who need pre-k the most are getting the least amount of it. At Ray School, one side of the hallway is a half-day class for at-risk children, which is free. Across the hallway is a full day pre-k for children whose parents pay \$8,000 to the district. Imagine if 30 feet down the hall there was a half-day free kindergarten and across the hall a paying class. Parents would revolt, lawyers would be running to the courthouse to sue the district. If free education for all children makes sense for 5-year-olds, doesn't it make sense for 4-year-olds?

How do states build the political will to fund universal preschool?

Pull together a coalition that includes all the expected allies—early childhood professionals, child care and early education advocates and public schools. Then add unlikely allies, such as economists and the Business Roundtable, Federal Reserve, police chiefs and district attorneys.

We've got all of that here. Why hasn't it worked?

Here you have strong support from advocates for quantity. But more than 70 percent of Chicago children are in unlicensed child care programs. We know from the research that quality early education plus parent involvement benefits kids the most. In Chicago, the choice has been for a place that kids can go while their parents are working. It's about the needs of working parents, which are real, but not about the needs of kids, which are equally real. ■

ASK CATALYST

This year, 1st -, 2nd- and 3rd-graders at Bell will get a report card with letter grades instead of symbols to show whether they meet, exceed or are still developing toward meeting standards. Why?

Ross Hyman, parent, Bell Elementary

Principal Robert A. Guercio says the school made the change because of IMPACT, the district's new student information software, which requires schools to assign letter grades that follow students throughout their school years. The school's former report card was used because teachers and administrators believed it better reflected the fact that young children learn at different rates, Guercio says. Bell's old card also gave teachers plenty of space for comments, while IMPACT requires teachers to choose one of 20 standard comments. Teachers do not have to use the IMPACT report card, says Antonio Acevado, senior assistant to the chief of elementary education. But schools that stick with symbols must figure out how to translate those into letter grades that can be entered into IMPACT at the end of the 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

Some bright spots appeared in the **2007** National Assessment of Education Progress report, including shrinking achievement gaps between black and white students. But the gender gap is proving stubborn. Girls outperform boys by large margins on reading tests, scoring an average **7** points higher in **4th** grade and **10** points higher in **8th** grade. The gaps have narrowed slightly since **1992: 1** point smaller in **4th** grade and **3** points smaller in **8th** grade. In Illinois, the gap is smaller. Here, girls scored **5** points higher than boys in **4th** grade and **8** points higher in **8th** grade.

FOOTNOTE



Mitchell

KURT MITCHELL

Building up the middle

By Debra Williams

Veteran educator Marietta Beverly got this telling response when she told colleagues at a seminar

years ago that she was the principal of a middle school: “Oh, you poor thing, you!”

“That’s how many people think about middle school,” says Beverly, former principal of Michele Clark Middle School (now a high school) and a retired area instructional officer. “When children get to that level, there are so many things happening to them—their bodies are changing, their emotions fluctuate. They are big little people.” Beverly is now one of two former middle school principals who are coaching principals and providing guidance on how to best help students in these critical early adolescent years.

For students, the middle grades are a landmine that can sabotage their chances for high school success: Performance in math and science typically levels off, attendance

drops and students must master more challenging curricula, educators say.

“It is a time of promise and of peril,” says Linda Wing, deputy director of the Center for Urban School Improvement at the University of Chicago. “If we don’t get them right then, we start losing kids at this time.”

Nationally, urban school districts such as Boston and Los Angeles are beginning to understand the need to improve middle-grades education. (See story on page 13.) Indeed, a report by the Government Accounting Office released in September shows that a majority of middle school children are not making adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. And U.S. Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) has introduced a bill called the Success

Nationally, 40 percent of students take algebra by 8th grade.

In CPS, just 7 percent do. Raising that figure is one goal of a district initiative to shore up middle-grades education.

SUCCESS FOR THE MIDDLE

The district’s Middle Grades Project relies on three core principles:

- Provide a strong curriculum
- Train school leaders in the needs of early adolescents
- Expose students to high school experiences

in the Middle Act to provide federal support to low-performing middle schools.

Chicago is taking steps in the same direction. Last year the district launched a pilot program targeting middle grades learning in tandem with the related goal to improve high schools, raise graduation rates and send more students to college. On their own, schools such as nationally recognized Marshall Middle

School in Irving Park and Mays Academy in Englewood have found creative ways to educate their “tweens.” (See stories on pages 9 and 10.)

The Middle Grades Project focuses on getting schools to departmentalize in grades 6 through 8—that is, have students in subject-specific classes like those in high school—as well as increasing teachers’ content knowledge, especially in math and science. Schools are prodded to use rigorous, research-based curriculum and give students experiences similar to high school before they arrive there.

“Chicago is doing great stuff,” says Debby Kasak, the executive director of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. “Chicago has been very astute about what it is doing and they are making a commit-

ment to recognize the older learners in a K-8 building.”

RIGOR, SUPPORT, EXPOSURE

The Middle Grades Project began last year with 24 schools in Areas 10, 12 and 13 on the South and Southwest sides of the city. This year, the project added 10 more schools from those areas. The final target: every school in the district.

“[Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins] said to us, ‘Let’s use this as a laboratory to see what we can do with all the schools,’” says Michael Lach, former director of math and science, which had oversight for the project. (Lach has since joined the Office of High School Curriculum.)

The project is driven by three principles, chosen based on research spelling out what middle-grades education should look like.

First, middle-grades education should be academically rigorous. To that end, schools need to have teachers on board who have endorsements in math and science (most elementary teachers do not have degrees in those subjects), and the curriculum should be engaging and challenging.

Second, school leaders and teachers need to understand the dynamics of early adolescence and be trained to meet the social and emotional needs of these students.

Third, students should be exposed to high school-type experiences, such as juggling multiple classes, early on. Part of that exposure should include taking algebra, another goal of the project.

Nationally, 40 percent of students take algebra by the 8th grade; in CPS, only 7 percent do, CPS officials report. Passing this course, the gateway to higher math, is considered key to students’ prospects for college. In fact, statistics show that when students fail



JASON REBLANDO

Students at Ames Middle School have lockers and change classes to give them a taste of high school before they get there.

algebra, they are less likely to graduate from high school.

To support the project’s work, CPS approached the Chicago Community Trust and received a \$2.45 million grant.

“The district talked about what they wanted kids to do after high school, but students who don’t do well in algebra often don’t graduate and go to college,” says Gudelia Lopez, a senior program officer at the Trust and a former administrator in the CPS Office of Post-Secondary Education. “The key piece is that teachers didn’t have content knowledge or an endorsement in math and science.”

Indeed, most of Chicago’s elementary schools are K-8, with self-contained classes taught by one teacher. Often, math and science are not taught well this way, CPS officials note, because teachers are

not specialized in those two subjects. (The district has just 16 middle schools.) Among elementary teachers, only 5 percent have a math endorsement and only 6 percent have a science endorsement.

Many teachers don’t feel comfortable with math and shy away from it. “People have learned mathematics as a list of rules to be memorized,” says John Baldwin, a professor who runs the math program at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where CPS teachers from schools participating in the Middle Grades Project are undergoing training to teach math. “They fear being asked to think about mathematics.”

The same could be said of science.

With the Trust grant, teachers in the pilot project are returning to school to get math and science endorsements.

Classes in the sciences are being taught at Loyola University and math classes, in particular algebra, are being taught at UIC. The district’s goal is to have at least one teacher endorsed in science and a teacher endorsed in math in each school in the pilot.

According to a research study conducted by CPS, out of 168 teachers in schools in the project, only 11 percent have a math endorsement and just 10 percent have a science endorsement.

At Fuller Elementary in Grand Boulevard, three teachers pursued math endorsements and four pursued an endorsement in science.

“This is moving us toward the ultimate goal of [raising] student achievement,” says Principal Patricia Kennedy. “Our teachers have been very excited.”

At Sherwood in Englewood, Principal Charles McGehee coaxed one of his 4th-grade teachers, whose students were doing well on the science portion of the ISAT, to get an endorsement in science and move up to the middle grades.

“Here was my middle-grades science teacher right under my nose. I called her in, buttered her up and told her she’d never regret it,” says McGehee. “She tried it and she loves it.” Sherwood’s math teacher has also signed up to get an endorsement in science.

PRINCIPALS’ PARADIGM SHIFT

In addition to making sure teachers are better-prepared in these core subjects, administrators say that middle-grades success is heavily dependent on the principal and school leaders.

As a solution, CPS hired Marietta Beverly and Rosa Ramirez, another former middle school principal, to provide leadership training to principals whose schools are part of



JOHN BOOZ

De La Cruz teacher Carol Pocica, who shares computer time with 7th-grader Mark Escamilla, says the school has a family atmosphere and students know that teachers care.

the project. “Principals need to know how to do middle school in a K-8 building,” says Lach.

“We are trying to help principals see their middle-grades students as a group that needs a different type of teacher and instruction,” says Beverly. “We are asking teachers to work together as teams. They need time to plan and meet. Children need rigor in the middle grades.”

“This is a paradigm shift, but principals are excited about it,” Beverly adds.

Once a month, leadership teams from each school—the principal and teachers from math, science, reading and other areas—meet with other schools in the project for professional development, to share best practices and talk about what is working and what isn’t.

“The benefit of being in the project is meeting as a team,” says Katherine Konopasek, the principal of De La Cruz. “There are issues with this age

group, and you can meet as a group and talk about them.”

The project covers the costs of substitutes to make it easy for school staff to get away.

Schools must also select a research-based math and science curriculum recommended by the district (curricula for social studies and literacy are in the works) and choose one of four middle-grades schedules, devised by the district, that are similar to a high school one.

“Our children have been going home saying that it is just like high school,” says Principal Janet House of McCorkle Elementary in Grand Boulevard. “They love it.”

“Last year, our first year to do this, we had a problem with our 6th-graders,” says McGehee from Sherwood. “It took them awhile to get the hang of it. But this year, as 7th-graders, they got it. And our 5th-graders had been watching them, so they’ve got it, too.”

The schedules also elimi-

nate the double period of reading adopted under the Chicago Reading Initiative. “At this age, students should be reading to learn, not learning to read,” says Lach.

Reading is still front and center, Lach says, but is incorporated into all subjects.

Other high school experiences are being added, too. Some schools have adopted AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a college-prep program that teaches students how to organize material, formulate and ask questions, improve study skills and take notes. And schools are also adding an advisory period for middle-graders, similar to a division period in high school.

“The plan is to make sure that middle-grades students have ‘12 touches’ of high school before they get there,” says Lach. That could also mean high school visits or filling out high school applications.

The Middle Grades Project

has yet to devise a comprehensive strategy to meet the social and emotional needs of students. Teachers are encouraged to take adolescent psychology and adolescent methods courses, which are required to earn a middle school endorsement.

“We are still working on this,” says Lach.

Some schools have developed strategies on their own. At McCorkle, middle school students are allowed to sit where they want at lunch instead of having to sit with their class.

“Letting them move from classroom to classroom and sit where they want at lunch is letting adolescents function in a different way,” explains House. “And now my lunchroom is not nearly as noisy as it was.”

McCorkle teachers regularly discuss adolescence, which House says has helped them cope “with the antics of the middle school. You don’t get angry, since you know what it is [stemming from].”

Principal McGehee says he’s learned it is OK for students to be noisy and burn off extra energy, typical behavior with middle school students.

“I taught math years ago and the philosophy then was, ‘Shut up and learn,’” says McGehee. “But my sister taught at Powell and her classroom was always noisy, yet she always won the CPS science fair. So I learned something.”

Meeting students’ developmental needs is as important as academics, says one principal.

“Our staff has been trained in the social and emotional needs of our students,” says Lorraine Cruz, the principal of Ames Middle School in Logan Square (the school is not a part of the project). “It is a must-have for anyone who is teaching middle-schoolers.”

Contact Debra Williams at (312) 673-3873 or williams@catalyst-chicago.org.

How Marshall made the grade

A neighborhood school gains national recognition for strategies to promote adolescent learning

By Debra Williams

In 2000, four schools in the country were named “Schools to Watch” by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, a group focused on improving middle school education. Tucked away in Irving Park is one of them, Marshall Middle School.

“We created a vision of what we thought a quality middle school should look like,” says Debby Kasak, the Forum’s executive director. “Marshall was making good inroads in that direction.”

Marshall, a predominantly Latino school, was selected from among 40 schools nominated by Forum members; the winners were chosen based on applications explaining their school’s approach and site visits. In 2005, Marshall received another “School to Watch” award, this time from the state.

“We trained them in our philosophy and Marshall was chosen again,” says Kasak.

Here’s what separated Marshall from the pack:

EVERYBODY KNOWS EVERYBODY

Experts in adolescent behavior say middle school is the time when students need to feel like they belong. At Marshall, they do. Students belong to one of four teams—the Idealists or the Discoverers in 7th grade and the Pathfinders or the Inspirations in 8th grade. There are approximately 90 students in each group.

“It’s like having four small schools in one big building,” says Principal Jose Barillas, who adds that the school created the teams based on training from the Carnegie Foundation.

Each team has three core teachers in math, science and social studies; each teacher also teaches language arts. (Ancillary staff work with students as a whole.) Students stay with the same teachers for 7th and 8th grade.

“We know these children, we know their families and they know us. And our students also know what we expect of them,”



JASON REBLANDO

Assistant Principal Wilma Newchurch lends a hand as Marshall 8th-grader Wafa Yusuf builds a replica of the John Hancock building out of straws for a citywide science competition.

says 8th-grade math teacher Clare McCarthy about her team, the Pathfinders.

At least three times a week, teachers in teams get together to discuss their students and plan lessons. “There may be doors on the classrooms, but the doors don’t exist between the teachers,” says Barillas. “They manage their teams as a group, and the communication among teachers is very good.”

Communication is essential, says Kasak. “It is not enough to just be departmentalized. We want to know if schools organized [and] created smaller learning communities. Are the schedules configured to allow teams to have common planning time? There is good research that backs this up.”

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

One minute, they’re happy; the next minute, they’re sad. That is the nature of an adolescent. “With the advent of

MARSHALL BY THE NUMBERS

Good scores are evidence that Marshall’s educational strategies are paying off.

ISAT SCORES (% meet/exceed)	2006	2007
7th-grade reading	55%	64%
7th-grade math	71%	74%
8th-grade reading	70%	74%
8th-grade math	81%	74%

Source: Illinois State Report Card

puberty and the insurgence of hormones, you see adolescents become moody. They don’t want to talk, and the next minute, you are best friends,” says Stacey Horn, a developmental psychologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Teachers at Marshall understand this and don’t take it personally. Every teacher

Continued on page 23

Boys win academic race at Mays

Single-sex classrooms for middle-grades students are winning over parents and giving boys a leg up on grades, test scores

By Debra Williams

The 7th-graders in Nikkol Palmer's classroom at Mays Academy are quiet and respectful as they slowly trickle in, take their seats and open their textbooks to the short story they've been reading.

"OK, what was the last event in the story? Where did we leave off?" asks Palmer, who teaches language arts and social studies. The story, "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi," tells the adventures of a young mongoose who protects his "human family" from a set of deadly cobras.

Hands shoot up to answer. "We stopped where Rikki-Tikki killed Nag (one of the villains in the story)," says one student. As Palmer begins to read, every student pays rapt attention, their heads in their book.

In the course of the reading, they laugh aloud at the funny parts and answer questions from Palmer, such as "What does 'cunningly' mean?" "What do you think will happen next?" What is 'personification?'"

In this class, participation and attention are the order of the day, in part the fruit of Palmer's efforts to keep her students engaged. But there's a twist that makes the orderly behavior more remarkable: All the students in her class are boys.

"Oftentimes, boys at this age don't want to participate, especially black males," says Palmer. "It is considered nerdy or lame to show you are smart. And around girls, well they are like 'Let me be the class clown to impress them.'"

Girls have similar issues at this critical age: Their bodies are changing and, like boys, they are trying to fit in and gain a sense of belonging with their peers.

Students are also more likely to engage in social aggression, says an expert on early adolescence.

"You see a little bit of an increase in

bullying and peer harassment at this time," says Stacey Horn, an associate professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, who teaches new teachers how to work with middle-school students.

Some proponents of same-sex education believe that single-sex classrooms cut down on the behavior problems that crop up with young adolescents. Mays Principal Patricia McCann is one of them, and spearheaded the school's switch to single-sex classrooms at the middle grades six years ago. The goal: help students focus more on academics and less on each other.

BOYS VERSUS GIRLS

Staff at Mays say that boys in the middle grades are earning higher grades on their report cards than girls. By 7th grade, boys usually fare better on the ISAT.

ISAT SCORES (% meet/exceed)	BOYS	GIRLS
6th-grade reading	42%	59%
6th-grade math	63%	85%
7th-grade reading	73%	40%
7th-grade math	85%	45%
7th-grade science	69%	40%
8th-grade reading	87%	90%
8th-grade math	80%	90%

Source: 2007 Illinois State Report Card

Nationally, the number of same-sex classrooms and schools has grown. In 1998, there were only four same-sex classrooms in public schools; this year, there are 363, according to the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education. The No Child Left Behind Act allows states to use public school funds to create them.

At Mays, middle-grades students now outperform their counterparts in other Englewood schools and school leaders

attribute the gains primarily to single-sex classes. (The school has also adopted a year-round schedule to keep students on track academically.) And boys are outshining the girls, the school says, even though historically, girls do better in school.

"We don't have ISAT scores broken down by sex, but we looked at classroom grades and [the boys] were better than our females," says Principal Patricia McCann. "All our boys are also being accepted at the better schools—Whitney Young, Kenwood, Urban Prep Academy."

The boys are more likely now to ask questions in class, says Palmer. "They are not afraid to inquire because they've gained confidence. They are competitive with each other and they are trying to be the smartest in the classroom. They give me a run for the money."

ACADEMICS—AND LIFE

As a middle school teacher at Schiller near the Cabrini-Green public housing development, McCann had to constantly redirect her pre-teen students to keep them on track with the lesson.

"They were noticing each other. They were distracted," she says. "The girls were doing what they see women do. I'd have to keep them off the boys. And the boys were becoming stimulated and didn't know how to stop it or what to do about it."

To add to the problem, McCann says students live in a society that is very sexually charged. "The music is inappropriate, the TV programs and movies, too," she says.

And students themselves were often treated like adults at home, given charge of younger siblings, and found it hard to turn that role off and step back into "a child's shoes" once they got to school, she says.

In class, students often didn't put their best foot forward. The boys didn't want to speak out for fear of being labeled a nerd and the girls wouldn't either, she says.

McCann took these observations to heart when she became principal at Mays, creating a separate middle-grades entity, Mays Excel Academy, and grouping students into same-sex classrooms. In addition to providing a better atmos-



JOHN BOOZ

Mays Excel Academy operates all-boys and all-girls classes. Top: Teacher Manal Farhan offers some one-on-one help to student Jamel Jackson. Bottom, from left: Farhan explains a math problem to Torres Bagby. Nikkol Palmer checks a student's work. Delisa Carter leads her all-girls class.

phere for learning, separating students also provides a safe place for students to talk about the physical changes they are undergoing and what is happening in their lives, she says.

"Sometimes in the upper grades we need to talk to students without the boys or the girls listening in [on each other]," says McCann.

McCann has also mulled over whether to assign male teachers to the boys' classrooms, and female teachers with the girls.

"I'm not sure yet. I've thought about it and find myself rethinking it," says McCann. "Boys need mothering too, and they respect women. And if there are positive black male figures in the building, this is good. Maybe they don't have to have same-sex teachers."

The same-sex classes have allowed students to open up and talk about life experiences, regardless of the gender of their teachers.

"They are asking about life questions," says Palmer. "For instance, we were reading a book called 'The War of the Wall,' and the boys talked about territory, and what happens when someone comes into their space."

HELPING WITH RECRUITMENT

Word of the school's success with its middle-grades students, in particular with its young African-American males, has trickled out into the broader community and attracted parents willing to go out of their way to get their children into Mays.

"I don't know how they found out, but

parents came from other schools to put their children here because, in particular, they'd heard boys do better here," says McCann. "We get kids from Avenue O [in Hegewisch] and Jeffery Boulevard in South Shore."

This year, McCann is aiming to do more to help girls at Mays. While the young men have benefited from programs such as the Boys to Men mentoring program, too few similar programs are in place for girls, she notes.

"The boys have blossomed, and before the girls outperformed them," says McCann. "We are looking at ways to give more support to our girls. Many of them are parenting younger siblings, but they need to know they can go to college and have careers, too." ■

Tailoring school for ‘tweens’

Anyone who has ever raised an adolescent knows that from one day to the next, you never know what you’re going to get. One day everything is fine, but in the blink of an eye, the world is coming to an end. Stacey Horn, associate professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, teaches adolescent development to prospective and current teachers to help them navigate this terrain. Horn talked to Associate Editor Debra Williams about what makes middle-grades students different, what teachers can expect and what schools and teachers can do to meet their needs.



JOHN BOOZ

How are middle-school students different from younger kids and those in high school?

The changes start with puberty, which leads to physical and biological changes. There are also cognitive changes that restructure how students think, so you get emergent abstract thinking, multi-dimensional thinking, like the ability to understand sarcasm and, hopefully, better decision-making. Second to early childhood, the most significant growth, both physically and cognitively, happens now. But in the early adolescent years, they don’t yet know how to necessarily apply their thinking all the time. They’re getting used to these new cognitive skills. They’re also making more bids for autonomy and freedom. Puberty hits at different times for different kids, so you get real variability in [development]. It’s probably one of the only times when it’s better to look at developmental stage, rather than age, as a marker of maturity.

How does that play out in the classroom?

Day-to-day changeability. The other thing that happens is the social stratification of the peer group—who’s popular and who’s not—and this intensifies quite a bit. You see an increase in bullying and peer harassment, and kids get smart about it.

How so?

Kids know if you physically bully somebody, they’re going to get in trouble, right? But if you spread a rumor about someone and they don’t know who started the

rumor, you’re less likely to get in trouble. But you’re also just as likely to cause a lot of damage to that person potentially.

All this has got to be tough for teachers.

Since grades are organized by age, it makes the task of the teacher and the school really complicated. So the education they get can’t be like it was in elementary school. And it shouldn’t be like high school, because they’re not quite there yet.

What can teachers do?

As a teacher, you have to be able to differentiate instruction [and] the norms of the classroom—who are you extending autonomy to and who are you not, who can handle it and who can’t. And how do you help kids understand how to negotiate all of these physical and cognitive changes, while at the same time treat each other nicely?

What can schools do?

Schools should try to separate them [from their younger counterparts] so there’s some acknowledgment that, “Yes, you are going through these changes, you’re getting older.” The best model in a K-8 building is to have the middle school run differently. You probably want those students to be taught math by an expert math person. The middle school model should be a team of teachers who work with a group of kids and determine the curriculum. The kids know who their team is and who their teachers are, so

they have continuity. You can, as a team, provide a safety net for kids.

What do you think about treating them like young adults?

A lot of our students in Chicago are faced with responsibilities at home really early on in their life. Both parents are working, or mom is working, and so they’re responsible for younger siblings. So it can get complicated in middle school because of the need for autonomy. Kids are getting it at home by necessity, but there’s a disconnect when they get to school and you need to walk in line to go to the bathroom.

What can teachers do about this?

The teacher’s job is to figure out how much autonomy kids can handle and how to negotiate the authority relationship with students. Part of the process is rethinking how to invite students into the decision-making process [regarding] what they’re going to be doing in class.

Do teachers understand this?

Some do; some just inherently naturally get it. Still, a lot don’t because [they think] “I’m the teacher—I should be in control.” There’s a developmental process for teachers. When you’re a new teacher, you want control because that’s how you feel safe. As you get more experience, you’re able to let go of control a little bit.

Do you have tips for schools?

Have students do problem-solving activities. Educationally, this is critical. ■

Finding the right approach

Districts around the country are searching for the best way to reach middle-grades students

By Kristin Maun

Chicago is not alone in targeting middle-grades students. Other urban districts are doing the same, hoping to give students a better foundation heading into high school. Here's a sample:

MORE TIME FOR LEARNING

At Boston Public Schools, administrators believe time is the key to success. In 2005, three of the city's 17 middle schools extended the school day by 11 hours each week. While most of the extra time is spent teaching reading and math, the longer school day also gives students the chance to take electives such as arts, music or physical education.

Despite a school day that starts as early as 7:20 a.m. and ends as late as 4:30 p.m. for four days each week (the fifth day is shorter), principals are reporting higher attendance, reduced tardiness and improved morale. The longer school day also has improved test scores. After one year, 32 percent of 6th-graders at Edwards Middle School met state standards in math, up from 15 percent the year earlier.

STRONGER BONDS, BETTER PERFORMANCE

When Kansas City, Kan., Public Schools looked for a way to improve the performance of its middle schools, it decided smaller would be better. Ditto for the Los Angeles Unified School District. Both systems were faced with low test scores, pressure from No Child Left Behind and large middle schools where adolescents could be lost in the shuffle.

For the last 10 years, Kansas City has been creating small learning communities, in which small groups of students are paired with a group of teachers. Those groups stay together, moving between classes and grades, throughout the students' middle-school years. The idea is to create bonds between students and teachers, teachers and

families, and schools and communities, says spokesman David A. Smith.

In 2006, 47 percent of 7th-graders met or exceeded the state standard in math, up from 36 percent in 2004.

Los Angeles is just beginning to explore the small team approach. The system is creating personalized learning environments of between 150 and 500 middle-schoolers each.

This year, schools are developing the goals. Next year, they will submit their plans. By the third year, all middle schools will implement the personalized learning environments. "They're building a common vision and looking at their data to see what's in the best interest of the kids," says Larry Tash, director of the Office of School Redesign.

HELPING STRUGGLING SCHOOLS

New York City middle schools have been struggling with high drop out rates and low academic performance, especially among minority students, for many years. "It took us too long to recognize that students in those grades need a specific approach," says Maibe Gonzalez-Fuentes, spokeswoman for the New York City Department of Education.

In August, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced an initiative to raise academic performance in middle schools, "where too many of our students begin to lose their footing." The city created a \$5 million fund to be distributed on a per-capita basis to the 51 lowest-performing middle schools. The schools can use the money to train teachers, hire additional guidance counselors or for other needs, says Gonzalez-Fuentes.

OPTING FOR K-8

School districts in Kansas City, Mo., and Philadelphia have given up on middle schools altogether. Both are reverting to a K-8 system.

Philadelphia already has closed most of its middle schools; Kansas City's will close over the next three years.

Kansas City Supt. Anthony Amato points to research that shows middle-grades students in K-8 schools get expelled significantly less often and are much more likely to come to school than their counterparts in middle schools. Research also shows students lose as much as 15 points in their reading levels when they move from an elementary to a middle school, he says.

The transition from the controlled, nurturing environment of elementary school, where a child has just one teacher, is problematic, Amato says. In middle schools, "teachers become teachers of a subject area versus teachers of children. That makes a significant difference in the way they behave with kids, their expectations and results," he says.

The district will provide leadership training to turn 8th-graders into mentors for younger kids, and require middle-grades students to perform community service. Keeping the students in grammar school also helps keep parents connected to the school, a key component of improved student performance.

Parents and students at Garfield Elementary School seem to like the change, says Principal Gwendolyn Squires. "Most of the parents are happy they're going to remain in the same setting they spent their K-5 years." And 6th-graders love it, she says. "Most of them had fears of going on, so they're glad to be here."

Philadelphia has also been developing ways to keep its 2,300 over-age students from dropping out. In its Middle Grades Acceleration Program, students were given more instruction in core subjects and required to attend tutoring sessions. Advisors made the biggest difference by helping students both in school and at home.

"What students commented on most was having that person there in the classroom who believed in them," says Nancy Bratton, executive director of middle-grades education.

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ALBANY PARK



BRYN MAWR

MONTROSE CEMETERY

BOHEMIAN NATIONAL CEMETERY

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

ST. LUKE'S CEMETERY

BERWYN

NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY

FOSTER

GOMPERS PARK

EUGENE FIELD CULTURAL CENTER

CENTRAL PARK

ALBANY PARK COMMUNITY CENTER

VON STEUBEN

ALBANY PARK

LEGION PARK

VOLTA

WORLD RELIEF-CHICAGO

HIBBARD

LAWRENCE

ASPIRA-HAUGAN MIDDLE

PVLASKI

ROOSEVELT

BROWN LINE CTA

OUR LADY OF MERCY

HAUGAN

NORTH RIVER

ROD BLAGOJEVICH'S HOME

MONTROSE

MUSLIM COMMUNITY CENTER

KIMBELL

HENRY

BATEMAN

HORNER PARK

ELSTON

IRVING PARK

KEDZIE

CALIFORNIA

Neighborhoods

ALBANY PARK

A legacy under pressure

A working-class, immigrant community bands together to save its neighborhood schools

By John Myers

With two youngsters in tow, Pedro Mendoza and Veronica Solis moved from Mexico City to Albany Park in the early 1990s, part of a surge in foreign-born residents that led to a 17 percent increase in the neighborhood's population between 1990 and 2000. Here, they started a business hawking boiled maize from a street cart seven days a week.

Now with five children, the Mendozas are a quintessential Albany Park family. Like some 30,000 other immigrants, they came to the nation's third most diverse area for its ethnic shops, affordable housing, good public transportation and extended family connections.

But the working-class, global legacy is under assault. A condo boom and rising real estate prices are eating away at the supply of affordable housing.

"The wallet is just getting smaller," Solis says in Spanish. Her street-cart sales, once averaging around \$400 a week, have been cut in half.

The average price for a single-family home here has jumped 190 percent since 1994, according to the Multiple Listing Service of Northern Illinois. Condominium construction increased nearly 14-fold between 1989 and 2004, according to a study by Loyola University researchers.

The changes are displacing the large, immigrant families whose children fill up neighborhood schools, heating up competition for a dwindling pool of students.

"A sign goes up [for a condominium conversion], and we know we're losing students," says Roger Johnson, principal at Volta Elementary.

Schools such as Volta compete for students as the district opens more "schools of choice"—charters, magnets and selective schools that draw enrollment from neighborhood schools. A school construction boom that followed the 1990s population surge has left plenty of seats to fill; several building additions and two new schools opened.

Reacting to these pressures, the neighborhood schools have banded together to align curricula and boost community engagement. The grassroots organization wants to improve schools before the district begins closing those that perform poorly, says Jenny Arwade, executive director of the Albany Park Neighborhood Council.

But the effort took a hit in August when Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who lives in the ritzy southeast corner of Albany Park known as Ravenswood Manor, cut funding for the council's tutoring and parent workshop programs, key components in the efforts to bolster neighborhood schools. Other grants to neighborhood outfits such as CeaseFire were axed. The anti-violence program had been working to stem gang violence in Albany Park since 2001.

Kurt Lewis, who ran the CeaseFire program through the Albany Park Community Center, says shootings fell to zero during the program's tenure. He also credits increased police presence, after a new area police station was built in 2003, with easing residents' safety concerns, despite strained relations over the status of undocumented workers.

Still, the area remains rich in immigrant services and, consequently, is still a point of entry to the United States. As Lewis puts it: "It may not remain this way for much longer, but for now it is." ■

This is an occasional series examining schools from a community perspective. Previous neighborhood reports can be found online.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- Albany Park has the highest concentration of foreign-born residents in Chicago and is part of the nation's third-most diverse ZIP code.
- Some 40 languages are spoken in Albany Park schools.
- After a 1990s population surge, CPS spent more than \$60 million on new schools and additions in the area.
- As the surge subsides, an increasing percentage of students in Albany Park schools come from outside the area (13 percent, up from 5 percent in 2002).

For more statistics about the schools and residents in Albany Park, visit our Web site at www.catalyst-chicago.org.

Tying schools together at the roots

Students, parents, teachers and principals network Albany Park schools to avoid 'top down' reforms

By John Myers

Scott Doolittle, an English teacher at Roosevelt High, sits in one of his students' chairs on Sept. 26, the first professional development day of the school year, and looks at a circle of educators. Three are teachers he sees every day at Roosevelt. Four others he's just met. They're from Albany Park Multicultural Academy, a nearby middle school.

Bluntly, he asks, "What do they do in the grammar schools? These kids can't put a sentence together." Then he adds diplomatically, "If we're saying that, imagine what the college teachers are saying."

Nine other groups are in similar meetings around the high school. Roosevelt teachers and educators from four of its feeder schools are gathered into groups organized by subject area. Their assignment: To discuss so-called "vertical integration."

Simply put, they're trying to pinpoint key problems that Roosevelt teachers inherit from the middle schools, such as writing deficiencies or reading lists that overlap with freshman courses.

In Doolittle's group, however, talk soon turns from curricula to another thorny issue: Roosevelt's lowly academic reputation. One teacher tells the group he's even heard students say their elementary teachers use the high school as a threat: Slack off, and end up at Roosevelt.

The conversation is kicking off what promoters hope will be a series of teacher powwows aimed at aligning curricula and forming a tighter community of schools. The unusual professional development project, organized by the Albany Park Neighborhood Council, a collective of North Side community groups, essentially asks teachers to figure out how to network Roosevelt and its feeder schools in productive ways.

Encouraging organic relationships between teachers is part of a larger initiative to build parental engagement and student leadership in this largely immigrant, working-class community. Some

also see the project, dubbed the Greater Albany Park Education Coalition, as a way for neighborhood schools to band together in the face of competition from selective high schools and new schools being created under Renaissance 2010. Without a game plan, existing neighborhood schools could lose students and, eventually, face closure.

As Jenny Arwade, executive director of the Albany Park Neighborhood Council, puts it: "It's a really effective, proactive way to combat top-down initiatives with a strong grassroots approach and strategy."

Chicago Public Schools administrators are interested. Looking for better curricular alignment, the district is drafting initial plans to "cluster" middle schools around neighborhood high schools. It may take cues from the Albany Park project, one of the first places to try it solo.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Conspicuously missing from the neighborhood coalition's invitation list are Von Steuben Metro, a magnet high school that's just blocks from Roosevelt, and Haugan ASPIRA, a new charter middle school in the heart of the neighborhood.

Albany Park Neighborhood Council has not invited either school—yet—because, organizers say, they want to keep the coalition to a manageable size. But several area educators admit neighborhood politics may also be in play.

The council, launched in 2000, played a major role in attracting school construction dollars to Albany Park for overcrowding relief. In 2005, near the end of construction on the \$18 million Haugan middle school, an advisory council of community advocates recommended the school be run as a unionized neighborhood school designed by parents and teachers. The group, however, flip-flopped late in the game and CPS turned the new building over to ASPIRA, a politically connected charter.

The community outcry included charges of union-busting and fear of a potential lockout that would prevent neigh-

borhood kids from attending Haugan.

To the charter's credit, says Demian Kogan, the council's education coordinator, ASPIRA has since worked with neighborhood groups to identify community needs, setting up computer classes for parents and other services that extend beyond the classroom. And for the first time, CPS instituted attendance boundaries for a charter to ensure local kids get a seat; as a result, nearly 90 percent of the school's students live in the area.

Still, many educators involved in the Albany Park coalition see it as a way for traditional neighborhood schools to fend off pressure from Renaissance 2010 and other school options such as Von Steuben.

The magnet high school draws about 8 percent of the students living in Roosevelt's attendance area. Nearby selective high schools such as Northside College Prep and Lane Tech also take a slice of the area's top students, and ASPIRA just opened a new high school that attracted 40 percent of Haugan's graduating middle-schoolers this year.

The stakes are high under Renaissance 2010. In the district's sink or swim system, schools that cannot attract enough students are shuttered.

It's a real fear in Albany Park, where gentrification is leading to demographic changes. As the stock of affordable housing dries up, the immigrant families that tend to have more children are moving elsewhere, which further saps enrollment, notes one area principal.

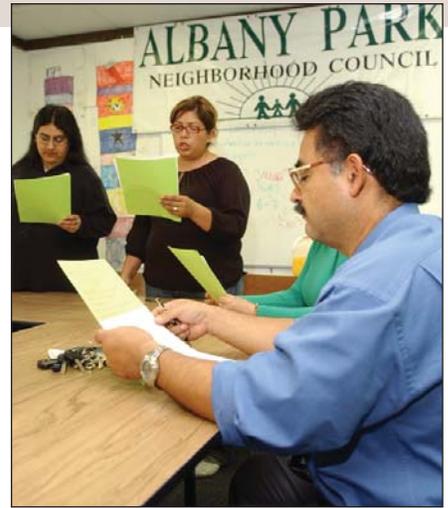
FORGING CONNECTIONS

It was the Albany Park Neighborhood Council's work on overcrowding relief that laid the groundwork for the new coalition. Fresh off the successful drive to build schools, the council hosted an education summit last spring to kick off its new rallying point: overcoming school isolation.

Principals immediately saw the benefit in forming tighter connections for support, says Roger Johnson, principal at Volta Elementary. Likewise, teachers such as Karoline Sharp of Albany Park Multicul-



JASON REBLANDO



JOHN BOOZ

Left: Students practice a traditional Indian dance at Volta. Above: Albany Park Neighborhood Council volunteers craft ways to improve parent-teacher relationships.

tural Academy wanted to work more closely with parents and peers. Higher education joined the mix. Three nearby universities—North Park, Northeastern Illinois and DeVry—are hoping to increase enrollment from the community and are on the docket to provide professional development to schools.

Roosevelt has become the natural core of the coalition. The other schools feed into it, and the transition to high school can be particularly rocky for students, making it a good place to focus the coalition's energies, notes Alejandra Alvarez, Roosevelt's principal.

"We're the common ground," says Alvarez. "Meaningful articulation is going on, and we need the teachers to interact."

Johnson says it's been critical for the coalition to maintain "looseness," however. At first, people were concerned that the council was pushing a standardized curriculum and expected teachers to teach the same way. That would soon break down in a community as diverse as Albany Park, he contends. Instead, he adds, articulation happens only in schools that share particular areas of interest.

Volta, for example, recently certified a teacher in algebra and is working with Roosevelt to find ways to accelerate students into higher-level math. Volta identified 20 students who will take algebra this year, with the goal of having them skip it at Roosevelt. That fits Roosevelt's ambitions to ready every student for at least one Advanced Placement course.

Teachers see a range of benefits from connecting with their counterparts at

other schools. Some envision partnerships that might bring high school students to the grade schools to read aloud and sharpen their skills. Others see discipline improving if students sense some continuity between their grade school and high school teachers. Still others want to inform their teaching by getting a closer look at the projects and assessments their students will face in high school.

ENGAGING PARENTS

The coalition wants to network with parents and students as well, an effort that takes on particular weight in a community of immigrants in which undocumented parents or parents who cannot speak English face unique challenges.

With help from State Rep. Richard Bradley (D-Chicago), the community secured nearly \$250,000 for tutoring and parent workshops. The council used some of the money to hire Norma Gonzalez as a parent coordinator, who would train parents to run their own workshops aimed at boosting parenting skills.

The effort picked up steam when parents began crafting a contract listing mutual responsibilities for parents and teachers, to be signed by both and guide their relationship throughout the school year.

But the floor fell out when Gov. Rod Blagojevich vetoed nearly \$400 million in individual grants, including money earmarked for Bradley and for Gonzalez' job.

Veronica Solis, who has children at Von Steuben and Hibbard, was crushed. "It's a way to motivate the parents by having these workshops. It's not just learning

how to help their children, but for them to better themselves."

Bradley says he believes the money may be restored to the state budget (which had not been finalized at *Catalyst Chicago* press time). "This program shouldn't be held hostage because of the political goals of the governor," Bradley told dozens of protesting parents and students on Sept. 27, just before they marched the few blocks to Blagojevich's home in a wealthy pocket of Albany Park called Ravenswood Manor.

In the long run, the coalition's success depends on teachers, principals, parents and students taking action, a tough goal given the demands on educators.

In fact, Doolittle says no one in his group of teachers has yet contacted one another without guidance from the Neighborhood Council, though they exchanged email addresses at their Sept. 26 training session.

If teachers don't do it themselves, CPS might force them to work together as part of its new middle-school cluster project. That's frightening to Albany Park organizers, who prefer to do things their way.

Says Kogan, "CPS puts very little value on the input and ideas that the folks in the classrooms and the folks in the community have."

For more information, visit the Albany Park Neighborhood Council's Web site, www.apncorganizing.org, or call (773) 583-1387.

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Roosevelt High gets a makeover

By John Myers

As Alejandra Alvarez neared the end of her third day as principal at Roosevelt High in 2002, one of her students was stabbed on the front steps. The student survived, as did three other teens shot just outside Roosevelt earlier that year. But the school's reputation was flat-lining.

"It's devastating, just devastating," says Alvarez. "People take one incident and, even though there are 100 other [positive] things going on, they focus on that one incident."

The school has spent the ensuing years working to resurrect its reputation in the Albany Park community. It's been an uphill battle. Roosevelt has revamped its curriculum, increased security, boosted its graduation rate and raised the number of graduates it sends to four-year colleges. But many residents still see Roosevelt as the school of last resort.

The school sits just blocks from Von Steuben Metro, a magnet high school that kids aim to get into. Other nearby prestigious schools, such as Northside College Prep and Lane Tech, also accept many of the area's top students—sapping academic motivation and students' self-confidence, according to several Roosevelt teachers.

"Some of these kids come in here and it's a self-fulfilling prophecy," contends English teacher Scott Doolittle.

When Alvarez took over, the school's graduation rate was a dismal 55 percent and just 15 percent of students met standards on state tests. Last year, the graduation rate rose to 64 percent and 20 percent of students met state standards. Tighter security and new initiatives are at work, including programs funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

In 2005, Roosevelt was named one of 11 "EXCElerator" schools by the foundation. Those schools had promising turnarounds afoot and were rewarded with \$16 million to split on college readiness programs.

Roosevelt is using the money to revamp its English and math curricula. The school opted for SpringBoard, a suite of rigorous and integrated lessons that prepare students for Advanced Placement courses. The



JOHN BOOZ

WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

Fewer than half the students living within Roosevelt's attendance area actually go there.

Roosevelt	48%
Lane Tech	10%
Von Steuben	8%
Amundsen	7%
Lake View	4%
Northside College Prep	3%
Other	20%

Source: Consortium on Chicago School Research, May 2006

Antony Espino tinkers with a robotic car at Roosevelt, where the robotics club participates in annual competitions that pit their creations against obstacle courses and other challenges.

grant also funded AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), an elective that teaches mid-tier students effective study habits and the value of a college degree.

Sumeera Nazmeem, a 16-year-old sophomore who emigrated from India seven years ago, says AVID completely changed her career aspirations and she now has her sights set on college.

"I was thinking that after high school, I was going to work at Subway, because I work there now. But now I have changed plans. I'm thinking about college," she says.

Roosevelt also has reached out to the community, most visibly through its musical program, which lay dormant for 40 years before being resurrected in 2002. Cliff Gabor, who helps run the program, says it helps Roosevelt challenge its stereotype as a dangerous, lackluster school.

Shows are open to the community and the school buses in nearby elementary students to watch for free. It provides parents and prospective students with a chance to see that the school functions safely and offers unique enrichment programs, adds Gabor.

Prior to Alvarez' hiring, Roosevelt was headed by Miguel Trujillo, a principal chosen by the School Board who cleaned house and hired new teachers. One of

them, Michael Kroski, says that when he was offered the job in 2000, the school's reputation was so bad that his peers advised him not to take it. But he wanted the challenge and the chance to help run the school's popular robotics club.

Kroski says Alvarez has taken the school to higher ground, asking teachers and students to take a larger role. Upperclassmen now mentor incoming freshman, and student leaders are put in charge of organizing school assemblies and what's called "International Night"—a well-attended extravaganza for the community that shows off the school's rich cultural heritage.

Students see the school improving.

"There are still gangs in the school, but there are gangs in every school," contends John Tacuri, a 17-year-old sophomore at Roosevelt who participates in the robotics club. "But there are no shootings anymore. There hasn't been any in six years. That's really all there is to say."

Still, teachers are painfully aware just how difficult it is to change a school's image. Kroski says he has heard rumors that elementary teachers tell students they need to score well on standardized tests or they'll get stuck going to Roosevelt.

Says Kroski: "Unfortunately, our reputation is really hard to get rid of." ■

ASPIRA overcoming a bumpy start

By John Myers

Millie Segura planned to send her son to ASPIRA Early College High School, but changed her mind after the charter operator was slow to inform her of its own change in plans.

The high school is temporarily sharing a building with another ASPIRA-operated school, Haugan Middle School, in a new \$17 million facility in the heart of Albany Park. Early College's permanent home will be a renovated floor inside Northeastern Illinois University's satellite campus near Pulaski and Belmont, but it won't open until January, four months later than parents expected.

The temporary arrangements are controversial, and underscore the mixed feelings in the community toward ASPIRA.

Some parents don't like mixing middle school and high school students. Some don't like a charter operating in a new Chicago Public Schools building. But Segura and other disgruntled parents are most upset that the change in plans for Early College was sprung on them at the 11th hour—evidence of the charter's disorganization and pattern of "broken promises," they say.

Supporters, however, say ASPIRA is reaching out to Albany Park families and improving communication. Haugan recently formed a parent-teacher organization, for example, and launched a series of educational programs for adults.

Mary Escobar, president of Haugan's parent-teacher organization since its November 2006 inception, says parents—mostly Mexican immigrants who are reluctant to criticize the school—now have an avenue to voice dissent and demand change.

Community groups such as the Albany Park Neighborhood Council also see improvements. English and computer-training courses are being offered to parents. Haugan's parent coordinator has brought in police and child development experts to talk to parents about gangs and parenting strategies. And test scores have inched up, with at least 60 percent of students passing tests in math, science and reading last May.

Haugan's two principals (one runs the



JOHN BOOZ

Children swing outside the new \$17 million Haugan Middle School, built in 2004 to relieve overcrowding. CPS tapped ASPIRA, a charter operator, to run the new facility; a move that has mixed support in the community.

math-science academy, the other the technology academy) credit those gains to small classes and teaching strategies that emphasize project-based learning, putting students to work on collective showcase assignments that tie in to their regular classroom lessons. For one project, students built a large papier-mâché Statue of Liberty that now adorns the school's foyer; the project was done in conjunction with their classroom lessons on United States history and social studies.

A STORMY HISTORY

The bright spots, however, have been overshadowed by ASPIRA's bumpy start.

Teachers, parents and community leaders were stunned when the Board of Education announced it had chosen ASPIRA, not Chicago Public Schools, to run the school that would be housed in the neighborhood's new \$18 million showcase building. Those same community members had fought for the new building to relieve overcrowding at nearby Haugan Elementary, a CPS-run school.

Upper-grade teachers at the original school, which now ends at 5th grade and feeds into ASPIRA, thought their proposal for a regular middle school was a lock. Most of the teachers from the old Haugan believed that pressure from Mayor Richard M. Daley and Ald. Margaret Laurino (39th) steered the deal to the politically connected ASPIRA, says Mary Orr, a kindergarten teacher at the elementary school who was active in crafting the

ASPIRA-HAUGAN BY THE NUMBERS

Scores inched up in ASPIRA-Haugan's second year of testing—except in reading.

ISAT SCORES (% meet/exceed)	2006	2007
Reading	61%	60%
Math	59%	67%
Science	60%	65%

Source: Illinois State Report Card

teachers' plans for the new school.

The school struggled with logistical problems early on, running late on efforts to open the school library as well as a program to give incoming students their own computer. Recently, a teacher allegedly lashed out at students with a racial slur and drew heaps of bad publicity.

School leaders are trying to put all of that behind them. ASPIRA is in the midst of creating an education path that stretches seamlessly from Haugan Middle's 6th grade, through 12th grade at the new Early College High School, and then into higher education; high school courses are to align with offerings at Northeastern. Through its partnership with the university, ASPIRA hopes to offer Early College students a chance to earn college credit while still in high school.

Notably, the articulation effort starts in grade 6. The charter has yet to reach out to Haugan Elementary on its alignment plan. ■

Viewpoints

GUEST COLUMN/STEVE ZEMELMAN

'Models' resented more than copied

School success will remain isolated without more common planning time and school networks grounded in trust and accountability

We create school report cards, compare schools, and hope American-style competition will spur change. But while there are schools making a difference in the poorest neighborhoods, few of their neighbors imitate them. Why?

Well, spreading good ideas from one school to another is challenging. There's no tradition for it, and it's not clear anyone really knows how to do it. Individual schools are worlds unto themselves, and this isolation has hobbled school reform efforts repeatedly over the past 100 years. We ignore it at our peril.

One problem: models engender as much resentment as imitation. Outsiders are sure the model school has extra resources or better-prepared kids—whether true or not. “Why don't we get those programs? Great ideas, but they wouldn't work with my kids.” These are sometimes excuses, but the issue of fairness is legitimate. A teacher at one innovative Chicago public school remarked, “Our [area instructional officer] is always saying how great we are and having us present to the other schools. I'm sure those teachers are saying, ‘Oh no, here they come again.’”

Meanwhile, change in any school takes a skilled leader and committed faculty. Imposing a new program gets grudging compliance, but rarely leads to inspired learning for kids. At the other extreme, laissez faire leadership can be equally demoralizing. A teacher or team may develop some new effort, but without the principal's real commitment, other teachers may

ignore or undermine it. As the Consortium on Chicago School Research has found, a professional climate of trust, shared decision-making and shared responsibility are crucial. Trust is needed between schools as well. No one hangs out dirty laundry with strangers. If schools are to work together, the staffs must build long-term relationships.

Further, change requires focused effort, on top of teachers' intense everyday classroom work and the endless crises and bureaucracy that beset their principals. CPS—like most school systems—simply doesn't schedule sufficient common planning time for a major change effort, an issue for another day. Lack of professional time for Chicago schools is a serious obstacle to their improvement, though gaining more without giving up teaching time will require serious dollars and meaningful plans for how to use it well.

Some sharing strategies are great for individual teachers, but don't alter whole schools. Best Practice High School, at its prime, offered all-day visits for teachers from Chicago and across the country. NKO Charter School offered two-week visiting residencies, as long as funds were available.

At the Chicago Schools Alliance, we are working to build a community of shared learning in a diverse network of charter schools, in-district schools, and elementary and high schools. Alliance sponsors are Business and Professional People for the Public Interest and the Illinois Network of

Charter Schools. Each of the 10 schools pursues an in-depth project of its choosing, on a high-priority need. But common themes run through them. Widely distributed teacher leadership, for example, has emerged as a key to successful projects and is now a network focus. Weeklong “Practice Based Inquiry” (PBI) visits by peer educator teams—now in use throughout the state of Rhode Island—help schools pinpoint the issues they need to focus on. Next, we are looking at how to meaningfully share professional learning with schools beyond the network. The keys to success are trust and mutual accountability.

One example of how good ideas spread: The principal and a teacher from Namaste Charter School participated on a PBI team at an in-district school, where, as part of the protocol, each team member shadowed a student for a full day. The Namaste participants found this so valuable they proposed that every teacher in their building get to do it. Namaste teachers will tell you they learned things about their school, both good and imperfect, that they'd never been aware of.

We believe long-term networks and partnerships are central to school improvement in Chicago. A number of such networks are now developing, and are sharing their thinking. These include the Network for College Success, the Urban Schools Improvement Network, the CPS Autonomous Management Performance Schools (AMPS), and the Principals Network in the Urban Education Leadership Program at UIC. Groupings like these should be nurtured by CPS and given flexibility to advance their work. There's a lot to learn, but without real communities of schools working together, we believe change will remain limited and isolated. ■



Steve Zemelman is Director of School Innovation and Planning at the Illinois Network of Charter Schools and a facilitator of the Chicago Schools Alliance. He can be reached at szemelman@incschools.org.

Top schools grow less diverse

More white students opt for selective high schools, and black students are most likely to be left out

By Sarah Karp

Jones College Prep is aggressively trying to turn the tide on a quiet but alarming trend: the dwindling population of black students at the South Loop bastion and other elite city high schools.

African Americans account for half of CPS students, but only 29 percent of those in selective high schools, down from 37 percent in 1995. And the biggest drops are in the highest performing schools—Young, Jones, Lane, Payton and Northside—where the black student population has declined by 10 percent since 2000.

The result is that black students are being left out of the few public high schools in the city with highly competitive students and decidedly rigorous curricula, says Wanda Hopkins, who works for Parents United for Responsible Education. While other schools have selective programs, these eight schools are the only ones in which admission is based on an entrance exam given only to students with high standardized test scores.

Hopkins, who has a daughter in 3rd grade, says that when she has visited schools such as Northside Prep, she's been awed by the top-notch programs—and appalled by the absence of black students.

"These are the schools that send students to Harvard and Yale," says Hopkins, who is African American. "If our students are shut out, they won't be able to compete."

Principals of selective enrollment high schools are concerned for another reason: Losing diversity will hurt the overall quality of their schools. As much as their black students benefit from the quality education, their white, Latino and Asian students can only get a "world-class" experience in an



JOHN BOOZ

Eugene Lockhart, head of Targeted Recruitment and Support at Jones, counsels minority students at the school. His job is to recruit low-income black students and help them fit in once they enroll.

environment in which they interact with people from different backgrounds.

"We guarantee it," says Ellen Estrada, principal of Walter Payton, noting that her Near North Side school is a "unique and extraordinary" place.

While Estrada and other selective enrollment principals say the issue is on their radar screen, the only school actively tackling the problem is Jones.

GEOGRAPHY, NOT RACE

Jones transitioned in 1999 from a secretarial school into a college preparatory selective school. As a result, it has recorded the greatest decline in African-American enrollment among the eight selective high schools, from 41 percent black students in 2000 to about 24 percent in 2007.

In the first stage of the transition, black and Latino students took a chance on Jones while smaller numbers of white

students applied. But as the school's reputation improved, more white students applied and were admitted based on their grades, attendance and test scores.

Last year, because of the large number of white students that applied, the school had to resort to using Chicago's desegregation consent decree to maintain racial balance and turn away white applicants. The decree allows schools to pass over white students and admit lower-scoring minority students as soon as whites make up 35 percent of the student body.

But the decree's days may be numbered. In June, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected voluntary integration plans in Seattle and Louisville. The decision does not immediately affect Chicago because the system is under a court order. However, CPS tried unsuccessfully last year to get the decree lifted and might try again in the future.

“We decided that we needed to get ahead of this,” Jones Principal Donald Fraynd says.

Recruitment and support based on geography rather than race seemed to be the best strategy, he says.

To that end, the school identified four poor, mostly black and Latino communities—Englewood, Grand Boulevard, Austin and South Chicago—that send few students to Jones. Last year, Jones hired Eugene Lockhart to convince children in those communities to prepare for and apply to the school.

Lockhart spent the last year combing through the test scores of all the 7th graders at the elementary schools in the four neighborhoods. He sent letters to those with scores in the competitive range, encouraging them to pursue the process. He also held informational meetings for students and parents, who he says often don’t know much about these schools or the process to get into them.

As a result, Jones enrolled eight students from the target areas in September. In October, Jones institutionalized the process as the Targeted Recruitment and Support Program.

ARTIFACTS OF RACISM

This undertaking was not without controversy. Though CPS paid for one year of Lockhart’s salary, district administrators have been standoffish about taking a more active role.

“This is something Jones is doing on their own,” says CPS spokesman Mike Vaughn.

He says the district has concentrated on putting more rigorous offerings in neighborhood schools, such as International Baccalaureate programs and Advanced Placement classes. He also says more black students are applying to selective high schools, though he didn’t comment on why enrollment is down.

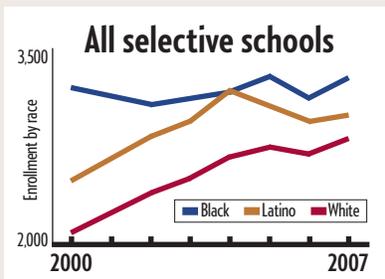
Even some black parents and advocates question the value of integration in the face of other realities. Considering that so many Chicago students attend racially isolated schools, they say the system should do more to make neighborhood schools better rather than bolstering special schools.

Bonita Carr, national director of education for the Chicago-based Rainbow PUSH Coalition, says it is imperative that CPS do a better job both at making the

DWINDLING DIVERSITY IN ELITE SCHOOLS

With the addition of five new selective enrollment high schools since 1998, the number of available spots has increased by 3,766 seats. But black students have taken only 327 of them—less than 10 percent.

SCHOOL	% BLACK ENROLLMENT			
	2000	2005	2007	Decline
Lindblom	99%	99%	81%	-18 pts
Jones	41%	29%	24%	-17 pts
Payton	34%*	27%	20%	-14 pts
Whitney Young	41%	35%	31%	-10 pts
King	100%	91%	91%	-9 pts
Brooks	88%	80%	80%	-8 pts
Lane Tech	15%	16%	13%	-2 pts
Northside	6%	7%	6%	none



*Note: Enrollment is for 2001, the year Payton opened. Source: CPS racial surveys and demographic information

neighborhood schools better and making sure that black students have access to selective high schools. Just look at Advanced Placement offerings in the schools, she says. Dunbar has six AP classes and Harlan has two, while Northside Prep has 20, Carr says.

“I have renamed the achievement gap the opportunity gap,” she says. “These neighborhood schools don’t have the resources and because of that, their schools don’t have the kind of high expectations and rigorous curriculum that is needed.”

Other selective school principals now support Jones’ effort and say they are watching it closely.

At Jones, some teachers expressed dismay that the school administration was worried about the issue. Sometimes subtly and other times overtly, they would make racist comments. “You would be surprised at the artifacts of racism,” Fraynd says. “Race is something you don’t talk about in Chicago.”

Fraynd says he moved the issue forward by getting a host of people, from local school council members to students to teachers, to agree that diversity and social

justice were key values at Jones. He then got to talk about how they would ensure it.

PREPARATION OR STANDARDS?

The supposition of the Jones Targeted Recruitment and Support Program is that there are students who could do well in a selective school, but for one reason or another don’t attend.

But Whitney Young’s Principal Joyce Kenner, who is African American, says the drop in black students brings up another hot button topic: the lack of qualified African-American students. Many reasons exist for the dearth of these students, but top among them are lack of quality elementary schools to prepare students for top-notch high schools and a lack of parental involvement, she says.

Elementary school counselors, however, say their students can’t win a seat because the standards are so high.

Charles Brown from Bethune Elementary in East Garfield Park says about 12 of his students have taken the test in the last three years, but none was offered a space. The better students from the school (where just 4 percent of students exceeded state standards in 8th grade last year) go to Steinmetz, which has an International Baccalaureate program, or Michele Clark, which is a magnet school.

“I think there need to be more slots for my students,” Brown says.

These are hard issues that need to be addressed, says Debra Miretzky, a University of Illinois at Chicago researcher who is chairing the targeted recruitment steering committee at Jones.

She wants to know if students who don’t meet the strict eligibility can compete at the school with some support and, if so, which supports are most important. This summer, the eight students admitted to Jones under its new initiative participated in a summer program and are receiving tutoring.

If they can “fit in” and succeed, Miretzky says, it begs the question of whether the admissions cut-off point should be altered to maintain diversity.

“I want to ask, ‘What is the criteria and how do we justify it?’” she says. “How do you balance whether kids qualify to come here against the fact that some kids don’t have the same opportunities?”

To contact Sarah Karp, call (312) 673-3882 or e-mail karp@catalyst-chicago.org.

MARSHALL *continued from page 9*

in the school has had training in middle-school philosophy and adolescent behavior.

"You pick your battles in terms of behavior," says 8th-grade social studies teacher Christa Alvarez. "It starts from the inside out. They feel pressure from society and school and all the while, their bodies are erupting."

To keep a pulse on how students are doing emotionally, teachers discuss behaviors they see in the classroom during team meetings. Should the need arise, teachers talk about issues with the student or can call a "town meeting" with the team.

"The kids and the faculty can call a meeting whenever they want. We have two auditoriums that can be used for that," says Barillas. "Maybe there is a project they are all working on and they all need the same information. But also, they can call one if there is a behavior problem, say bullying, that has surfaced and needs to be addressed."

Marshall also has a partnership with Youth Guidance, which sends a social worker four days a week to counsel students. Teachers also employ various strategies in their classrooms to keep the emotional climate healthy. One example: 8th-grade science teacher Julienne Backstrom uses "circle time."

"If I say 'circle,' we sit together. We see everyone's faces and we talk about issues that are going on in the classroom or outside of it," says Backstrom. "Or, I use it to tell them they have really improved and are doing a good job." Backstrom says students now sometimes confide in her about difficulties they are not comfortable sharing with someone else, like problems at home.

MAKING STUDENTS THINK

In addition to emotional support, experts say, adolescents need a challenging curriculum to prepare

them for high school and beyond.

"What do we need to do to make the learning experience really outstanding? How do we get students engaged?" says Kasak, noting questions that middle schools need to answer. "We want children to think and know they have options beyond high school. A good middle school does that."

To that end, Marshall has brought in several programs. One is GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), a federally funded initiative that prepares students for post-secondary education. There's also AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), another college-prep program. And Marshall also uses the College Board's Springboard curriculum, which emphasizes critical thinking, reasoning and writing.

Intellectually, middle school students are moving from concrete to abstract thinking, and Marshall's teachers create projects and assignments to promote this development.

For example, Alvarez assigns students to develop a project that focuses on real-life world problems. Students research and choose their own topics, which puts decision making in their hands.

In one case, Alvarez's students concerned about disappearing wetlands did research, found a group in England that sells small parcels of land to save them, collected money and then bought a parcel of land in the rainforest of Guatemala.

Says Alvarez, "At this age, students are 'all about me,' and these projects not only make them think and learn, but make them look outside themselves, which will help them become involved citizens later on."

For more information on the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, go to www.mgforum.org or call (217) 351-2196.

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"CITY VOICES" Deputy 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.

For more in-depth reporting on school change, visit

www.catalyst-chicago.org

HIGHER ED INITIATIVE The Department of Postsecondary Education, CEO Arne Duncan and a group of universities have established the Higher Education Advisory Taskforce (HEAT) to develop college admission, financial aid and student support initiatives to increase the number of CPS graduates who enroll in higher education. Participating schools are: **CHICAGO STATE, ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY, KNOX COLLEGE, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, MALCOLM X COLLEGE, NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, the UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO** and the **UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN**.

NEW BROAD RESIDENTS The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems has named five new Broad Residents in Urban Education to work at CPS for the next two years. **AARTI DHUPELIA**, formerly a manager at Marakon Associates, **JACQUELINE STATUM**, formerly a senior associate brand manager for Hershey Co., and **WENDY THOMPSON**, formerly an assistant vice president with Aon Corp., will work as project managers in the chief administrative office; **DIANA MATTHEWS**, a chemical engineer who worked in the pharmaceutical industry, is working on a per-pupil budgeting initiative; **KATHLEEN WEAVER**, formerly a consultant, will be a senior manager in the Office of New Schools. They join 12 other Broad residents already working at CPS.

MOVING ON **CAROL JOHNSON**, member of the *Catalyst Chicago* Editorial Board and formerly of the anti-violence group CeaseFire, is now director of community building for Bethel New Life.

SOCIAL WORKER AWARD **VIVIAN LOSETH**, executive director of Youth Guidance and chair of the *Catalyst Chicago* Editorial Board, has

been named Social Worker of the Year by the Chicago district of the National Association of Social Workers-Illinois. Loeseth has been with Youth Guidance, a social service agency that works with CPS, for 30 years and is also director of the Chicago Comer School Development Program, an initiative that aims to improve the educational environment for at-risk children.

AT CLARK STREET **MICHAEL LACH**, formerly director of math and science, has been named director of high school curriculum.

NEW HOME FOR ERIKSON The Erikson Institute has launched a \$30 million, five-year fundraising campaign for the construction of its new home at 451 N. LaSalle St. Half of the money already has been raised—\$12.1 million from the 42 trustees and the rest in grants from the Irving Harris Foundation, the Polk Bros. Foundation and LaSalle Bank. Erikson broke ground Jan. 18 and is slated to move in late summer. The new space will include a library, a clinical area for children and families and increased space for the Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy.

CPS E-MAILS Starting Nov. 1, school-based staff will have new e-mail addresses ending in @cps.edu. Principals and assistant principals will have addresses ending in @cps.edu as well as an address ending in @cps.k12.il.us. Administrative staff members at the central office will keep their current addresses. CPS students eventually will have e-mail addresses as well.

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS The following interim principals have been awarded principal contracts: **SEAN CLAYTON**, Marconi; **SANTOS GOMEZ**, N. Davis; **ALBERTO JUAREZ**, Gary; **LEONARD KENEBREW**, Clemente; **MACQUILINE KING**, Dumas; **DOUGLAS MACLIN**, School of the Arts High School at South

Shore; **LINDA MIMS**, Best Practices High School at Cregier Multiplex. These principals have had their contracts renewed: **FRANK EMBIL**, Woodlawn; **ROLLAND JASPER**, Joplin; **MARILYN LEBROY**, Ebinger.

PURE TURNS 20 Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) will celebrate its 20th anniversary from 6-9 p.m. Dec. 3 at Lazo's Restaurant, 2009 N. Western Ave. City Clerk Miguel Del Valle will speak. For more information, visit www.pureparents.org or call (312) 491-9101.

RENAISSANCE GRANTS The Renaissance Schools Fund, the private partner to Renaissance 2010, announced \$3.9 million in grants to new schools: **BRONZVILLE LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER, CATALYST CHARTER-HOWLAND AND AUSTIN CAMPUSES; PROVIDENCE ENGLEWOOD CHARTER-BUNCHE; UNO CHARTER-BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS, CARLOS FUENTES AND DONALD J. MARQUEZ CAMPUSES; AUSTIN BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACADEMY; CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL CHARTER-RALPH ELLISON AND IRVING PARK CAMPUSES; NOBLE STREET CHARTER-PRITZKER, RAUNER AND GOLDR COLLEGE PREPS; URBAN PREP ACADEMY FOR YOUNG MEN CHARTER-ENGLEWOOD; POLARIS CHARTER ACADEMY; ASPIRA EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL; COLLINS ACADEMY HIGH; MARINE MILITARY MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY, NORTH LAWNDALE COLLEGE PREP CHARTER, PERSPECTIVES CHARTER-CALUMET MIDDLE SCHOOL; FRAZIER PREP ACADEMY; and TEAM ENGLEWOOD COMMUNITY ACADEMY. The Fund reports it has raised \$41 million since 2005.**

PROMOTING ATTENDANCE WGCI and KISS-FM will send radio personalities to eight high schools throughout the year to motivate students to come to school. Schools that will receive visits are **MICHELE CLARK, CLEMENTE, WELLS, CRANE, FARRAGUT, WASHINGTON, PHILLIPS** and **TILDEN**.

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