Will Reform Bring Real Change?
To our readers:

CATALYST wants and needs to hear from you, the voices of Chicago school reform. We need to be informed by your experiences and needs as we choose topics for articles and reviews. We need to know about your problems and successes, so that the content of those articles can help resolve the former and multiply the latter.

We want to hear about the innovative or clever practices you have adopted to move your students, your council, your school, or your community forward. These we will share with other readers through our Bright Ideas section. You provide the tips, and we’ll do the follow-up and writing.

We want to put your words into print, through opinion essays and letters, so that you can speak, even argue, with each other about the many complex issues tied up with school improvement. And we will be happy to publicize reform-related activities and events that are open to people throughout the city.

The staff and editorial board of CATALYST are now planning issues for the 1990-91 school year. Six issues will be in newsletter format and be aimed primarily at helping grassroots reformers improve their school communities. Topics we are considering include parent involvement, school security, instruction in reading and writing, math instruction, and community networking. If you have or are aware of exemplary programs in these areas, drop us a line. Let us know, too, what topics you believe we should address during Year 2 of school reform.

Three of our issues will be in journal format, like this one. These will deal more with questions of policy at the city, state, and national levels and with the progress of reform, overall.

Here, too, we welcome your suggestions.

Timing, of course, is important. We want CATALYST to deliver news, information, and commentary that pertain to the needs and issues of the moment. To get to us in time, keep in mind that CATALYST is scheduled for delivery around the 23rd of each month. Articles often are assigned three or four months in advance. For issues delivered in August, September, and October, most assignments must be made before the end of the school year.

We must receive opinion pieces no later than five weeks before our delivery date. It is advisable as well, to call first to discuss your idea. We look forward to receiving letters and bulletin items at least four weeks before delivery, but will try to squeeze in last-minute, topical submissions.

CATALYST also is looking for parents, teachers, and others who would like to review books, curriculum materials, videos, and the like. If you are interested, send us some writing samples and a note indicating your area of expertise. Let us know, too, if you would like to join our corps of diarists, who are writing about their experiences with and reflections on school reform. We will bring new people into the mix from time to time.

The next issue of CATALYST will arrive in late August. Have a relaxing summer. See you then.
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Complacency could blow ‘grand opportunity’

by Chester E. Finn Jr. and Stephen K. Clements

School reform in Chicago is off to an encouraging start in terms of structure, process, and community energy. The time has come to focus on what the actual education of Chicago’s children will look like in the future, given this extraordinary opportunity for big departures from the past. In this domain, we think there is reason for concern—and for vigorous new effort.

What concerns us is whether this new system, once fully born, will be able to put into place a radically altered educational vision, a profoundly different set of ideas about teaching and learning, school organization and process, curriculum and pedagogy, student assessment and parent participation.

AN ANALYSIS

We do not plead for change for the sheer sake of innovation. Rather, we believe innovation is essential for attaining a nonincremental increase in learning levels among the schoolchildren of Chicago. We say “nonincremental” because it’s our sense that the community and legislators will judge the reform to have succeeded only if large improvements are visible in the performance of boys and girls throughout the city.

We are not just talking of tests scores (though it would be naive to pretend that they won’t matter). Nor only of attendance, promotion, and graduation rates (though these are important, too). We also have in mind the breadth and depth of students’ learning, their creativity and compassion, their citizenship and imagination, their leadership and reliability, and much, much more.

School reform in Chicago means that each school has the obligation to develop its own vision of what well-educated youngsters will know and be able to do in the future. But this is far more easily said than done.

And what puzzles us, after several recent “reform reconnaissance” trips around the city, including visits to a half dozen schools and two dozen interviews with participants in the reform process, is where that vision is going to come from and, when it comes, whether it will be different enough from the status quo to prompt those “nonincremental” increases in learning that Chicago’s children so urgently need.
Theodore Sizer, who in his book Horace's compromise laments the "service delivery" mode of American schools, has been working with dozens of schools around the country that have volunteered to "re-invent" themselves as part of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Philosopher Mortimer Adler's "Paideia" schools embody another kind of vision. Under both approaches—which several Chicago schools are attempting—teachers help awaken students to the questions behind the answers. Teachers do not simply serve up facts.

But most of the nation's 100,000 schools are much more alike than different. Complex public institutions are innately conservative entities, accustomed to—even if not very successful with—their routines, wary of change, and harder to redirect than an aircraft carrier. It has proven extremely difficult, everywhere that it has been tried, to take an existing school, with all the customs, norms, procedures, accommodations, constraints, tradeoffs, and interpersonal relationships that have taken root inside its walls over the years, and transform it into a wholly different sort of educational institution.

We fear that the imagination, creativity, and boldness needed to devise and implement radically altered educational visions will not come easily to many Chicago schools, at least not quickly enough to generate those whopping increases in attendance, completion, and cognitive learning levels.

Though the specific circumstances align differently in each school, it's our impression that several general categories of circumstances are visible today. Let us describe them as we observed them in schools, while also stipulating that each of the "examples" to follow is actually a composite based on more than one school—and that each has been simplified (and perhaps exaggerated) in the interest of clarity.

Alpha, the self-satisfied magnet school

Long before the reform law was enacted, Alpha Magnet School was known around town as a "good school," one that helps retain the middle-class children of professionals in the public schools (and the city) while affording extraordinary educational opportunities to able youngsters from less advantaged circumstances. Alpha boasts a charismatic principal, a stable group of dedicated teachers, and high test scores.

Its local school council (LSC) is composed of uncommonly committed individuals, most of whom are well-educated, who like what the school has been doing, and who view the staff as competent professionals. The parents now serving on the LSC were active in PTA and the local school improvement council, forerunner to today's LSC, for many years. Recently, they and the principal made the time and found the resources to go on a "retreat" to work on Alpha's school improvement plan, and there they gathered data from a recent survey of the school community, one with a return rate that any professional pollster would envy.

Several years ago, Alpha's parents and community members established a private "foundation" to make it simpler for the school to raise funds—and receive donations—for special programs and activities. Because of the school's strong academic credentials and excellent reputation, it has an able and stable student body and a school community seriously devoted to high-quality education and steady improvement.

For all these reasons, however, the school community senses no need for radical change. "If it ain't broke," says the aphorism, "don't fix it." There is plenty of sentiment for limited, incremental change, primarily to enhance what the school is already doing. We heard calls for one or two new specialists on the staff, some more computers, new multicultural curriculum materials, a special program to honor high achievers, and an extra period in which teachers can meet with each other and work on lesson plans. But it is simply beyond the ken of Alpha's dedicated LSC members, administrators, teachers, and parents that the school should be recast along fundamentally different lines.

Schools like Alpha, we believe, are unlikely to change very much even if their principal or LSC chairperson is creative and articulate enough to describe a vision of a better educational delivery system. The school community likes it essentially the way it is.

But another factor is involved, too: the lack of time and energy needed for any new conception of education even to be designed by the administrators, teachers, and LSC members. Running a school like Alpha is draining, time-consuming, all-encompassing. There is already so much going on, and such pains being taken with it, that those in charge are not likely to be able to muster the intellectual resources or energy needed to conceptualize a new education program.

Perhaps the structural features of schools that leave their leaders with little capacity to press for big changes will need to be addressed before we can expect today's good schools to become significantly better.

Chester E. Finn Jr. is professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University and director of the Educational Excellence Network. Stephen K. Clements, formerly associate director of the Network, is a graduate student in political science at the University of Chicago.
If high-visibility places like Alpha do not change character, however, the rest of the city’s schools will have neither the inspiration nor the models to change themselves.

At Beta ‘not bad’ is OK

Beta School also feels pretty good about itself, but it has less reason to than Alpha does. In this high school, more than 70 percent of 11th-graders score below the national average on tests of math, science, reading, and social studies—and that was on the old editions with their “easier” norms. Fewer than 8 percent place among the top 25 percent nationwide, even though some 35 percent of Beta’s students are in the “college prep” track. Daily attendance is okay, and the student population fairly stable, but Beta’s graduation rate is no better than the citywide average.

The school has a magnet program that accounts for about one quarter of the students, but the youngsters in this program, drawn by lottery from around the city, apparently do not significantly increase the academic rigor of the school.

Administrators and faculty seem none too alarmed about the present state of affairs, or at least they see no way of significantly altering it. The school’s top staff have been at Beta for many years, in several cases for decades, and have settled into a deeply ingrained routine with regard to their expectations concerning students, facilities, and the school’s academic program and standards. Little outside pressure has been applied to the school to change.

“‘Gamma’ is the kind of school that needs to improve hugely”

The entire Beta school community tends to construe “reform” in terms of minor alterations, actually not very different from those contemplated at Alpha: a couple of new teachers, an attendance and lunchroom monitor, another teacher aide, a bit of overdue building maintenance, reorganization of the counseling staff, and the like.

Nor will school leaders get much inspiration or vision from the Beta LSC. Organizationally, this council is strong, enjoys a cordial working relationship with the principal, and is full of decent, conscientious men and women. But the LSC has displayed scant interest in the particulars of Beta’s education program. The council has received some training, but primarily about how to carry out its basic functions, not about how to visualize a different kind of education.

Here is a school that needs a complete overhaul, a top-to-bottom reconceptualization of its mission. But nobody in Beta’s school community seems able to conceive of, much less agitate for, a very different sort of institution than the one they have known so well for so long. Yet so long as new ideas about education fail to catch on at Beta and its many counterparts throughout the city, we cannot expect much by way of improved learning.

Gridlock at Gamma

Gamma Elementary School has a decent achievement profile. Its 3rd-graders are spread fairly evenly across the four quartiles, or nationwide performance groups, in reading and math achievement, and about 70 percent of the 6th-graders occupy the two middle quartiles in those subjects. This is not bad, given that nine in ten of Gamma’s students come from low-income homes, almost one in three has limited English proficiency, and about a third change schools during a given year.

Gamma is the kind of school that needs to improve hugely if the citywide reform effort is to be judged worthwhile. Yet Gamma is in a condition of organizational stalemate. There is an enormous amount of infighting and bad blood between the principal and the LSC. The principal is a veteran of the system, now nearing retirement age, and has developed her own style of administration which she admits she cannot—or will not—change. In opposition, we find a teacher LSC member dedicated to ousting the principal, and willing to engage in a protracted behind-the-scenes campaign to turn other LSC members and teachers against her.

In a situation like this, where everyone’s energies go into bickering, turf-fighting, and political maneuvering, it is almost beside the point to talk about the capacity of the school community to conjure a fresh educational vision.

To be sure, the design of Chicago’s school reform plan means that this situation will not continue indefinitely. Either the principal’s contract will not be renewed next year, or enough LSC members will mobilize to quash the dissenting teacher. Meanwhile, however, little will change at Gamma. And even when the school community works through its present difficulties, there is going to be a residue of distrust.

The climate being what it is, it is hard to imagine the incumbent principal, even were she a person of rare vision, leading the school community to a consensus about radical change. But it is almost as difficult to imagine a successful search for a new principal with those qualities who would also be willing to come to work in the politically charged and organizationally dysfunctional atmosphere of Gamma.
Delta a wasteland

Visiting Delta is a sobering experience. Located in an immigrant ghetto, Delta is a fortress-like structure, horrifically overcrowded, and seriously dilapidated. Low test scores are the least of its problems. Rival gangs rumble across the playground. Classes meet in the auditorium and gym. Basic supplies are scarce. Certainly there is no choice among textbooks and practically nothing with which to supplement them. Dispirited teachers exit the parking lot as soon as the school day ends. The principal, a wary, beaten person, keeps the office door locked. Altercations with the teachers' union representative are one of the more frequent occasions for unlocking it.

Delta's LSC has met only irregularly and, so far as we can tell, ineffectually, rarely getting beyond parliamentary process and managerial issues. (One member told us, for example, of a big discussion about whether students arriving at school early on cold mornings might enter the building before the "official" start of the day.) The Professional Personnel Advisory Committee, to all intents and purposes, does not even exist.

At Delta we sensed that few would recognize an educational vision if it leaped up and hugged them. They have other matters on their minds, not the least of which is getting through the day in the face of considerable adversity of a kind that Chicago school reform has scarcely touched. Recently announced plans to renovate or replace some buildings like Delta will eventually improve the physical surround-

ings, but nobody we met is holding his or her breath. Meantime, hundreds of children are attending a sorely troubled school.

Doubtless there are a number of splendid exceptions that we have not encountered—perhaps quite a few. But it is our sense that the good schools out there will tend to "prove the rule" by their very exceptionality.

We believe that the four "archetypes" sketched above are broadly representative of many schools in Chicago and that, with sundry variations and in various combinations, they illustrate the factors that militate against articulation and execution of new visions for the schools, against fresh ways of imagining and delivering education that might lead to non-incremental changes in student learning.

Those who devised and enacted the law that radically altered the school system's structure and governance knew it would not per se lead to radically altered teaching and learning. Rather, they understood the former to be a precondition for the latter. The former is now in place, however, and it's time to attend to the latter.

We fear that the dynamics that lead schools to tolerate their accustomed condition and time-worn practices, whether the present level of student achievement, are probably stronger than most people realize and may provide a greater barrier to sharp improvements in student learning levels than we had supposed.

More vexing still, even when key figures at the building level are discontented with the status quo, it is a very long leap to being able to visualize, to talk others into, and then to

An outsider's view: Year 1 a success

The city's accomplishments in school reform are, thus far, remarkable. Despite the muttering of doubters and the hand-wringing of fretters, last fall's LSC elections elicited an impressive turnout of both candidates and voters. Since then, most councils have been operating in a workmanlike manner. Half of them made it through the stressful business of selecting principals with less overall trauma than might have been expected.

Though the shortage of timely, relevant, and high quality training— for local school council members, teachers and principals alike—remains vexing, the situation has been eased by the remarkable cross-fertilization occurring around the city as practitioners, activists, and academics pool their intellectual and financial resources in conferences, seminars, retreats, and other forums for learning about and fostering reform.

This is not to say the reform process is any rose garden. Money is short. Certain LSCs are floundering. Some of the deadlines they have faced for important decisions (including selecting their principal) have been unreasonable. The division of responsibility between them and the central board (and superintendent) is murky. The role of district councils and superintendents is, to put it gently, ill-defined.

As we write, the much-sought three-year contract with the teachers' union is hung up over the cost of health insurance. The process of nominating the permanent central board was overlaid with more racism than is good for any city. At least a few strong principals lost their jobs, and at least a few weak ones got retained. And so on.

Regrettably, to be sure, and certainly painful for those directly affected. But from the perspective of the outside observer, most of these look like the predictable labor pains of a community giving birth to a wholly new school system. They hurt plenty, but they won't last forever.

Chester E. Finn Jr. and Stephen K. Clements
Students pledge allegiance to the flag at Gray Elementary School.

put into practice nonincremental changes.

The greatest single challenge for Chicago may turn out not to be the implementation of structural reform in the operations and power relationships of the education system, which has understandably been the city’s preoccupation thus far. Rather, the really momentous task may be figuring out how to instill visions of new approaches to schooling at hundreds of institutions that are fairly resistant to change. This amounts to nothing less than altering the assumptions, ideas, and practices of nearly 600 separate organizations.

The way to begin, it seems to us, is to acquaint school teams—both LSC and PPAC members—with other ways of doing things, drawing examples from around the world, from those countries whose children learn a lot, from the most successful schools to be found within our own borders, from the private sector as well as the public, from commerce and industry, colleges and universities, perhaps even the Air Force and the Coast Guard. Lay out an entire smorgasbord of unfamiliar examples.

And bring in ideas, too, including those controversial, far-out, blue-sky, futuristic notions that overturn educators’ hoary assumptions and defy their encrusted doctrines.

The field of education is not very good at opening its windows to admit fresh breezes and the occasional gale-force wind, and it’s folly to think that each school in Chicago (or anywhere else) can do this by itself. But what a grand opportunity for the “reform community” now to shift its energy from bold visions of structure and governance to presentations to the community of a dazzling array of arresting visions of what teaching and learning could be.

For more reading:

Ratzki, Anne & Fisher, Angela (December 1989) "Life in a restructured school: Cooperation and teamwork are a way of life at Holweide School in Cologne, Germany." Educational Leadership, pp. 46-51.
School reform, black leaders: Their impact on each other

by Alex Poinsett

In Chicago, school improvement has been championed longest and loudest by leaders of prominent black community organizations. But the issue got away from them with the death of Mayor Harold Washington and the ensuing political infighting among blacks. The city's current experiment in school reform, which gave more power to the grassroots, was constructed instead by a coalition of school and business groups with primarily white leadership.

In interviews with dozens of black leaders-reform proponents and reform critics—Alex Poinsett, contributing editor for Ebony magazine, found a unifying element: a zeal to regain the lead. He begins his account with the question of whether school reform is yielding a new generation of black leaders.

Tall, bespectacled G. Alfred Hess Jr., a prime mover in Chicago's school reform, sips coffee in his downtown office while quoting the late French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre: “You come to know the world by seeking to change it.” And so, Hess, an anthropologist and executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, deftly paraphrases: “People will know their schools better by trying to change them than by griping about them.”

The change that Hess and others vigorously promote through newly empowered local school councils (LSCs) has spawned—or so he claims—new grassroots black leaders who are not completely in sync with traditional black community leaders such as the West Side's Nancy Jefferson, the South Side's Leon Finney, and James W. Compton of the Urban League. These veterans will have to pay heed to Hess's new leaders—or so he says.

The veteran black leaders had struggled together for 30 years on civil rights, Hess explains, as he sits framed by a window overlooking State Street's hustle and bustle. “That was one of the reasons that the [1987] school strike was so difficult [for them] to deal with. You had for the first time a black president of the Board of Education, a black general superintendent, a black president of the teachers union, and a black mayor. All had worked together...on creating a more just society. Suddenly, their interests are no longer common. Their interests are now divided.”

Drawing on years of hobnobbing with African American leaders and his 1986 stint as a consultant to Mayor Harold Washington’s staff during the first of two education summits that the mayor convened, Hess, who is white, embellishes his thesis: “You look at the nonpolitical black community leadership—the Urban League, the Midwest Community Council, The Woodlawn Organization—and they were paralyzed by the necessity to take sides... You could not cut the issues in that strike into civil rights versus noncivil rights.”

### Black leaders end strike

In the fourth week of the strike, these leaders finally confronted both the Board and the teachers union with an ultimatum: Resolve your differences or we'll open schools ourselves. The differences were resolved. In the meantime, says Hess: “The results of that paralysis among black leaders was that you had a whole bunch of people at the local level complaining that their kids were getting the shaft.”
Council chairperson sees new leaders emerging

When Herman W. Baker Jr., 46, was elected last October as chairperson of the local school council at Harlan High School, 9652 S. Michigan, he forged another link in a lifelong chain of leadership roles.

Baker had been the chief debater on his grade-school team, captain of the patrol boys, a prep baseball, basketball, football, and track star, and president of the student government at Olive-Harvey Community College. In Vietnam, in 1964, Baker was part of an Army “pathfinder” team that sneaked into combat zones at night to light the way, literally, for helicopters landing and unloading troops.

Today, the divorced single parent is a pathfinder in a different kind of life-or-death struggle, one for the future of his people. Although school reform did not make him a leader, having been one virtually all his life, it did coax him into the public arena.

Baker believes traditional black leaders must respond to the grassroots leaders who are surfacing through the LSCs. “I think current leadership is obsolete for the 1990s,” he says. “Traditional leaders will have to understand what leadership will be all about in this decade. It will not be about one person selected by somebody else to represent all black people.

“We have looked to ministers and certain other people for leadership,” he continues. “But everybody has leadership qualities and abilities. If we identify only one or two people as leaders and something happens to them, then we have to regroup and it will take us years.”

Soft-spoken but direct, committed but cautious, at once athletic and scholarly in his bearing, Baker did not rush to his latest leadership role.

“School reformers were talking about more than 6,500 candidates for council posts,” he recalls. “I kept asking myself ‘Who are going to be these people? Where are they coming from?’ I hadn’t seen any of them surfacing. So instead of asking ‘Why doesn’t someone else do it?’ I thought, ‘I have a son at Harlan. Why don’t I do it myself?’”

Afro-centric curriculum

Garnering 107 of 800-plus votes cast, Baker came in second among 28 contenders for the six parent slots on the Harlan LSC. For council chairperson, he was unopposed. Because Baker works nights supervising 25 buildings and grounds people at Olive-Harvey College, he is able to devote time to the LSC during the day.

Under Baker’s leadership, Harlan is exploring development of an Afro-centric curriculum for African-American stu-
Hermon W. Baker with son Malik and daughter Makeba.

dents. It would stress communalism, cooperation, feeling, spirituality, interdependence, and co-existence with nature—in other words, the polar opposite of the Eurocentrism that has dominated public school education with its emphasis on individualism, competition, rationality, self-reliance, and conquest of nature.

Baker endorses numerous African-American scholars who say black children should be heavily exposed in school to their pre-slavery heritage and culture. Personal experience has taught him that such nurture from cultural roots helps build self-confidence and self-esteem.

wide leadership remains untested, has not moved from Aristotle’s potentiality to actuality, and, on the contrary, floats aloft in Plato’s transcendental realm of ideas. Timuel D. Black, retired Chicago City College professor, long-time political independent, and training consultant for Hess’s Chicago Panel, explains: “If you visit the school councils and listen, you may detect the possibility of this new leadership. But it certainly has not matured to the point that you can call it real leadership that can take hold of issues and move them in a coherent and cohesive fashion that will be acceptable to the masses of people.”

‘We choose our leaders’

“I didn’t emerge from anything!” snaps James Deanes, referring to Hess’s facile description. “I was already here.” Indeed, for 17 years he had worked with various parent groups while closely monitoring the public schooling of his five children. As one-time president of a subdistrict advisory council, then chair of Mayor Washington’s Parent/Community Council and finally chair of an LSC, Deanes fits Hess’s description of a grass-roots leader speaking for a constituency.

But Deanes will accept a leadership mantle only from fellow blacks. “Fred Hess can’t speak for blacks,” he argues passionately. “He isn’t black. He can’t describe black leadership. What he’s talking about is what he heard somebody say. He cannot choose our leaders. We choose our leaders!”

The school reform entangling Hess and his critics did not begin with Mayor Harold Washington’s 1987 call for a second education summit. Indeed, Leon Finney places it with the centuries-long Civil Rights Movement. “The whole question of school reform for whites had been born in the 19th Century with the advent of public education,” he explains. “Subsequently, it was extended to women. The remaining issue was whether African Americans were going to have education. It was a question of equity. Every major African-American leader focused on the question of education.”

While the Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision underscored the necessity for school
reform, desegregation designed to remedy the mediocre education available to disadvantaged youngsters remained a major Chicago issue throughout the '60s and '70s. As whites fled to suburbia, the city's schools rapidly became 60 percent black, and civil rights leaders clamored for their own black superintendent.

By March 1981, Mayor Jane Byrne, through the School Board she appointed, had brought in Oakland's school superintendent, Ruth B. Love, as Chicago's first black superintendent. Four years later Love was replaced by a black Chicagofan who had repeatedly eyed the job, Manford Byrd Jr. Last year, the Interim School Board appointed by

The blacks who participated didn't represent black groups

—Rev. Kenneth B. Smith

Mayor Richard M. Daley went outside the city again and tapped Ted D. Kimbrough of Compton, Cal., another black.

Meanwhile, research studies from Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel indicated that 43 percent of the city's high schoolers never graduated. Among those who did, only a third could read at the national norm, and their math abilities were even worse. In short, except for magnet schools, Chicago's schools were dumping an unconscionable number of functional illiterates into the city's underclass.

"School officials stonewalled these studies," charges Earl Durham, a black University of Illinois professor and DFC board member. "It was no different, negotiation-wise, than it was under the old administration. The usual argument was that there wasn't enough money or staff, that 'We're doing the best we can.'"

Adds Warren Bacon, who recently retired as executive director of Chicago United and served on the School Board from 1963 to 1973: "Some of the black teachers and administrators were as bad as some of the white racists who felt that poor black kids could not learn. Because many of these students had come from homes where learning was not considered important, school officials didn't expect much of them and didn't provide much for them."

With school reform already decades overdue, it came to a head with Mayor Washington's second education summit, which included representatives of virtually every interest group in the city, parents, unions, corporations, the School Board, universities, civic and community groups. The summit's charge was to reach consensus on a reform plan to submit to the Illinois General Assembly.

"At the beginning, the summit had committed to having all its members go to Springfield together," recalls its co-chairman, the Rev. Kenneth B. Smith, president of the Chicago Theological Seminary. "We did not all go together. Just a few groups, such as representatives from Designs for Change and Chicago Panel, went to the State Legislature. That's partly why some people said the black community was cut out. The blacks who participated didn't represent black groups."

Designs had submitted reform legislation in the spring of 1987—before the strike, before Mayor Washington expanded his original business-community-School Board summit to include parents, community groups and others. The bill's chief sponsors were then-Rep. Carol Moseley Braun and Sen. Miguel del Valle. Later, as the summit deliberated, Designs resubmitted its package and Hess's Chicago Panel lined up legislative sponsors for its proposals.

By late June, House Speaker Michael Madigan had met with a number of summit participants in his office. Then in four days of eight-hour-a-day haggling, the reform bill was rewritten by Hess, Donald Moore (the Harvard-educated researcher who heads DFC), and leaders of several business groups and newly formed parent groups. The Board of Education, the Chicago Teachers Union, and the mayor's office were, for the most part, bystanders. The city's most prominent black community leaders were focused elsewhere.

In addition to creating elected councils to govern schools, the Chicago School Reform Act also established a grassroots nominating commission for School Board members, put a cap on administrative and overhead spending, and revised the formula for State Chapter I money so that more would go to low-income schools, a measure long sought by black legislators.

When the package was presented to the General Assembly, 12 black legislators voted for it, after having staved off an attempt by business leaders to create a powerful independent school oversight body. Their support ranged from ardent to reluctant. Their critics contend that Speaker Madigan had merely called in his chips. Chicago Democratic Reps. Monique Davis and Arthur Turner were the lone dissenters in the black caucus.

Timing questioned

For 10 years, Turner has been representing Lawndale, Garfield, and one-third of Cicero. Looking much younger than his 39 years, an amalgam of street smarts and master's degree training, he questioned control of schools by people who lacked economic control of their communities.

"My wife and I run a children's clothing store," Turner explains in his sparse, Ogden Avenue storefront office, located on the ground floor of their residence. "I read the statistics
about teen pregnancy and infant mortality. But it wasn't until we opened up the store that I started seeing 12- and 13-year-old mothers come in, not once a week but every day.

“We’re saying, ‘Hey, this young girl who’s 13 today, whose kid will be in school five years from now—we’re telling her that she can run the local schools. She will determine whether the principal is qualified and what the curriculum is.’ Mind you, she has already dropped out of school. I didn’t think this concept would work in Lawndale/Garfield or any other extremely poor community. In upwardly mobile communities, it has a better chance of working.”

Turner also questioned the bill’s timetable: “In three months, we were going to reform a system that had been going down for the last 20 years. I thought the bill needed more time and more community input. The legislative leaders said it had to be done right now, that we couldn’t wait, and that if any more money was given to the Chicago schools we would have to reform the system first.”

The feisty legislator believed that money and reform should ride the same train. He was prepared to accept the challenge from colleagues threatening to refuse money to the state’s largest school system, that is, to the city which sends the most tax dollars to Springfield. He dared that to happen.

Meanwhile, Erwin France, the point man for Mayor Sawyer and the education summit he had inherited, argued that to be serious about education reform, proponents would have to deal with curriculum, class size and other issues.

But DFC’s Don Moore saw the change in governance as a necessary first step. And he was in a hurry. He insisted that if school reform was piecemealed on a pilot basis, entrenched school bureaucrats would squash it. To stop them, he claimed, school reform would have to be initiated in one fell swoop.

Moore’s haste may waste yet another generation of under-educated black school children, Turner believes. Then, if school reform fails, it would beckon a voucher system. “I think school reform has something to do with the voucher system,” Davis says, suspiciously. “There are people who want their children to attend private institutions at state expense. If that happens, it will certainly water down the dollars available to those who attend public schools.”

Meanwhile, even though Turner voted against the reform bill, he wants to make it work, that is, make the best of what he believes is a bad situation. He recalls: “I met with community groups, principals, and LSC members to organize a cluster of West Side schools to train our LSCs rather than have Designs for Change or others tell us how to run our schools. We want to make the training available over the summer.”

Turner is not likely to receive any cooperation from Nancy Jefferson, president of the Midwest Community Council, courageous West Side leader for 45 years, and everybody’s model grandmother. “School reform in Chicago is the biggest

Continued on page 43

**Designs for Change, Chicago Panel: Who they are**

Here are sketches of Designs for Change and the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, whose leaders crafted key parts of the Chicago School Reform Act.

- **Designs for Change.** Staff of 18. Founded in 1977 by five researchers who dealt with big-city schools. Became an advocacy group after conducting research on school reform advocacy groups around the country for the Carnegie Foundation. First major Chicago findings: the misclassification of thousands of black children as mildly retarded. In the early ‘80s began organizing and training parents mainly on the Near South Side and in Little Village to push for reforms at their schools.

  - Formed coalition in 1986 to begin crafting citywide reform legislation; won legislative sponsors in spring, 1987; organized support during fall, 1987 teacher strike; helped write the final bill in 1988; and in 1989 trained 150 volunteers, two-thirds of them black or Hispanic, to train others on the law.

- **Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.**

  - Staff of 11. Founded in 1980 by 14 civic and community groups to keep track of School Board finances following the Board’s near bankruptcy in 1979.

  - Conducts annual studies on spending and personnel. Quickly expanded into policy issues. Research has dealt with drop-out rates, schools’ misuse of study halls, how the Board’s distribution of State Chapter I money shortchanged low-income youngsters. Now conducting extensive analysis of the impact of school reform.

  - Sponsoring organizations now are:

Councils stick with insiders in picking new principals

by Tom Andreoli

The first round of principal selection under school reform brought only a few drops of new blood into the country's third largest school system. As of May 1, only four of the 70 local school councils looking for a new principal had tapped someone from outside the school system.

Those schools are Cregier Vocational, which picked an assistant principal from North Chicago; Taft High School, which picked an assistant principal from west suburban Summit; Pope Elementary, which picked a principal from south suburban Hazelcrest; and Prescott Elementary, which chose a former Chicago teacher who most recently worked as a supervisor in Northbrook.

Earlier, 226 schools, or 82 percent of those chosen by lottery to launch the first cycle of four-year principal contracts, had decided to keep incumbents. (The remaining 244 schools will begin the contract cycle next year.)

Although the overwhelming majority of councils stayed with school system insiders, the city does have a goodly number of new principals.

Since the Chicago School Reform Act was adopted in July 1988, 154 newcomers have assumed school leadership, according to a March 1990 study by Designs for Change, a nonprofit research and advocacy group.

The total stems largely from the Interim Board of Education's decision last fall to give some 48 branch schools their own principals and from a jump in principal retirements. Thirty-four principals retired or resigned in 1988; 43 in 1989. The totals were lower earlier in the '80s—10 in 1984, 30 in 1985, 21 in 1986, and 29 in 1987. So far in 1990, 15 principals have left the system.

Local school councils may well have had very good reasons for sticking with the status quo or insiders. But they also received little encouragement to shop outside the city.

Initially, the system's central office refused to carry principal vacancy notices in its weekly personnel bulletin. And it apparently did nothing to bring outsiders into the mix or assist outsiders who approached Chicago.

For example, Gordon Hill, until January the principal at North Chicago High School, mailed his resume to the personnel office last winter as a test case. When he later stopped by Pershing Road headquarters and asked to see his file, no one even could tell him who would keep track of such information, says Hill, now a consultant to the ABCs reform coalition.

Five years ago, Hill, a former U.S. diplomat with graduate degrees in education from Columbia University in New York, went to work in North Chicago because he couldn't get a job as a principal in Chicago. "I've been on that merry-go-round," Hill says. "The word for it is 'frustration.' And I live in Chicago, and I am certified, and I have a track record. So imagine what the obstacles would be to someone coming in from the outside."

National ad campaign

In this round of selections, the ABCs coalition did what it had hoped the central administration would do: mount a national advertising campaign. During the week of March 25, ads ran in the Chicago Tribune, Education Week, the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times. So far, 125 resumes have come in. The ABCs invited 25 of the applicants to a lun-
cheon with LSC representatives on April 4.

These hand-picked candidates—who traveled to Chicago at their own expense—represent the best educators available, Hill says. “What you’re getting with these candidates is professionals heretofore who wouldn’t even have wanted to be a part of the Chicago Public Schools,” he adds. “These are the real movers and shakers. And now they want to be a part of reform.” They included principals from Evanston and Hinsdale, a former supervisor at Boys Town in Omaha, Neb., a former teacher at Boston Latin School, and numerous educational award winners.

However, only one LSC plucked a principal from the ABC’s candidates: Cregier, 2040 W. Adams, chose Alfred Clark, assistant principal of North Chicago High School.

Hill blames bad timing for councils’ lack of interest in the ABC’s candidates. The coalition delayed its advertising campaign until the last minute in the hope that the Interim Board of Education or the central office would publicize the openings for principals. By the time the resumes and other materials on the ABC’s candidates finally became available, virtually all the LSCs had stopped accepting applications. ABC’s plans to act sooner next year and add a jobs fair for out-of-town principals.

Meanwhile, Hill frets over unresolved questions about the principalship under reform. Crucial, for example, is whether incoming candidates will receive credit for prior administrative experience. Or must they start at the first-tier principal’s salary established for each school? According to officials at Pershing Road, it’s the latter. However, by mid-May the School Board was to have considered a proposal to permit councils to supplement the standard salary.

Perhaps more critically, Hill wonders: Will the LSCs really support radical changes in their schools that principals new to the Chicago system likely would demand?

At Cregier, putting a newcomer in charge reflects a desire to make big changes. LSC Chairperson Nathaniel Howse says the council looked first at credentials, but he added that being an outsider didn’t hurt Howse.

“He had no connections, no political motivation that would prevent him from moving forward without hesitation,” says Howse, a community member and attorney. “There was nothing with Clark to stand in the way of change.” In choosing

“These are the real movers and shakers. They want to be part of reform”

—Gordon Hill

Clark over 50 other contenders, Howse adds, Cregier’s LSC members bucked pressure from public school administrators to select a candidate from within the system.

Clark appears to have no reservations about the willingness of his LSC to take chances. Already, he is planning to implement an unorthodox, if voluntary, “no pass, no play” policy at Cregier, intended to encourage academic achievement among athletes. Clark, incidentally, is head coach of the Lake County Viking semi-pro football team. Cregier stopped playing football 1.4 years ago.

At Taft High School, 6445 W. Hurlbut, the LSC also selected a principal from outside the Chicago system. Here, as at

### 10 councils deadlock, turn to district superintendents

So far, 10 local school councils have failed to generate the required seven votes to select a principal and have bucked the choice to their district superintendent.

In response, the system’s 11 district superintendents have created their own selection process. For each school, the “home” superintendent invites two colleagues to sit on an interview panel, which uses a standard set of questions the DSs compiled.

“We’re jokingly calling these a ‘rainbow coalition’ of district superintendents,” says Dolores Engelskirchen of Subdistrict Five on the Near Southwest Side. With four referrals, she has the most “home” schools to please. She also is on the panel choosing a principal for Wildwood Elementary on the Far Northwest Side.

“These choices are anything but easy because all of the candidates submitted by the LSCs are qualified people,” sighs Engelskirchen.

The one benefit this format won’t deliver is speed. Engelskirchen estimates she may go to the June 1 deadline before finishing. Meanwhile, the DSs are trying to ease the wait for the candidates.

“You definitely stagger the interviews, so [they] don’t have to sit and watch each other,” Engelskirchen says. “The interviews are enough of a nerve-wracking process.”
Cregier, the potential for local control under reform holds a strong appeal for the new principal. "If you listen to people like William Bennett, the Chicago schools aren't just bad, they're the worst," says William Watts, currently an assistant principal at Argo Community High School in southwest suburban Summit. "But with reform, apparently, the bureaucracy is being dismantled. So it looks promising."

Watts is no stranger to Chicago. Prior to Argo, he had been an assistant principal for 10 years at Chicago's Gordon Tech parochial high school. Still, Watts's neighbors in Naperville can't believe he's going to work in a Chicago public school. "They ask just what you'd expect them to: Why in the world would you do that?" Watts says. "But kids are kids, just about the same everywhere." Watts is doing it because he wants to be a principal, not an assistant principal.

For Taft's LSC, the selection process was grueling, requiring more than 400 hours per member to read resumes, interview candidates, and attend meetings, according to LSC Chairperson James Grundy, a parent member and staff instructor at the Chicago Police Training Academy. Watts, selected on a 9-to-0 vote, won over 21 applicants, including one other candidate from outside the Chicago system.

Taft publicized its principal's slot extensively outside Chicago, mostly through professional associations. "The fact that Watts came from outside the system really was secondary," says Grundy. "What we were interested in was the individual leader."

Suburbanite working already

The Taft LSC and Watts are already working together. He used his vacation time to participate in drafting Taft's three-year improvement plan and budget. As important, interim principal Tony Vasquez, who was an assistant to the superintendent before cutbacks sent him to Taft, has been amenable to having Watts around. "We really couldn't ask for much more than the way things are going," Grundy says.

Other LSCs have not been so lucky. For instance, at Wildwood Elementary, 6550 N. Hiawatha, the LSC had to work on its improvement plan and budget without knowing who its principal would be. The LSC had deadlocked in trying to pick a new principal and had to submit three names to the district superintendent. Wildwood is fortunate, though, in that Interim Principal Luis Perez, who declined a request to stay, plans to remain in his post through June.

A 21-year veteran of the school system, Perez declined at Wildwood, a school with only 200 students, out of ambition. "I was looking for something a little larger, somewhere I can expand," he says. Perez was a finalist at one of a handful of schools where he applied but wasn't offered the principal's job. As for his decision to finish the school year at Wildwood, he says: "I have a commitment. With us right in the middle of the budget and improvement plan, it wouldn't be good practice not to stay."

Yet it appears most principals who resigned or were not retained have moved on quickly. Indeed, they have little motivation to stay put. Virtually any former principal can secure a teaching job within the system right away through the personnel office. And doing so before the school year ends secures an ex-principal's benefits coverage through summer. Principals who stay on through June risk losing these benefits, both interim and assigned.

"Such a person at the outside could get a summer teaching assignment," says Raymond Principi, acting as head of personnel at Pershing Road. "But technically speaking, that person is without employment in July and August."

Interim Principal Marcella Blatnick resigned in February at Dore Elementary, 6018 S. Natoma, after realizing that she probably would not be retained. She'd heard that interims who lost their jobs might be in for a bad time. "Everyone I talked to said, 'Don't hang around,'" she recalls.

From Blatnick's perspective, the main strike against her was that she had been thrust into the school just before Labor Day. "There's a lot of things about reform that people aren't sure of," she says. "The one thing everyone is sure of is they get to choose the principal." In any case, Blatnick was able to find a position as a counselor at Lakeview High School, where she'd worked prior to her stint at Dore. At least two former assigned principals have secured positions at Pershing Road. After six years at Yale Elementary, 7025 S. Princeton, Millicent Tolbert left in January to become director of curriculum development. She had applied when the position became available last fall. "I decided it would be unfair to even be considered for a contract if there was a good chance I would leave," Tolbert says. "It was a very hard decision to make."

Hedged his bets

Five-year principal Manny Sosa of Clemente High School, 1147 N. Western, was a bit more cagey. Last November, Sosa applied for a central-office position in bilingual education, but he didn't accept it until his LSC decided to look for a new principal. "I couldn't know which way [the LSC vote] would go," Sosa says. "I didn't want to be without a job."

Traffic between central office and schools has been two way. Diana Rochon, the first principal installed under the new system, is one of a number of central office administrators to return to the field. Prior to her selection in March by the LSC at Harte Elementary, 1556 E. 56th, Rochon had been a cur-
Spry parent unfazed, optimistic

by Maria Arevalo and Lynda Gorov

The 6-3 vote of the local school council at Spry Elementary School, 2400 S. Marshall, not to renew the contract of its principal of 12 years, Benedict J. Natzke Jr., pitted parents against parents, teachers against teachers and, in the process, landed the school on the front page of the New York Times. Two Natzke opponents had their car windows smashed; at least one had angry parents visit her home.

In a conversation with reporter Lynda Gorov, council member Maria Arevalo, one of the opponents, reflects on the tumult and explains why she likely will not seek reelection.

"The big protests weren't a surprise for us because there had already been demonstrations at our meetings. People came to the meetings and wanted to express their opinion in favor of against the principal. There weren't people fighting. There was just strong talk, people saying 'You people are not prepared to choose a new principal.'"

"There were many people who were against the council and there still are. They wanted to stop classes. But there were also a lot of parents who didn't want classes to stop and who brought their children to school anyway. Some of this was because they didn't know anything about reform. According to the rumors, they thought we wanted to get rid of this principal and put in another one who wasn't qualified. But these people didn't know we were taking training sessions."

LSC members had sought advice from and attended workshops offered by a half dozen training groups, including the Parent Education Center and Designs for Change.

"They didn't know what we were doing was positive. No, I wasn't afraid. I had already taken the classes, and I was sure it was for the better. I'm still sure. Before, if principals hadn't known their jobs were secure every year, the schools would have been better. But since they could stay as long as they wanted, education didn't improve. I voted against the principal because I wanted new things and I wanted to see if we could find them.

"At first we weren't united about the principal. Some of us who had gone to study about reform were the ones who decided we wanted another chance. Those who were undecided were the ones who hadn't studied the law. Now it's 100 percent."

The council chose as its new principal Carlos Azcoitia, director of the bureau of vocational support services in the central office.

"When we were interviewing (Carlos Azcoitia), he said it would take a year, a year and a half, to see any difference. I think it could be less. The new principal has a positive attitude. We have to work together. He doesn't want to impose himself on us. He wants the teachers to decide for themselves if they want to stay."

Next on the agenda was Spry's school improvement plan.

"This should be the best because the future of the school depends on it. I don't think there will be big problems. The parents know it's the law. We're getting support from parents who didn't support us before.

"Slowly, parents who were scared off by the principal protests are showing up at Spry again. Before, many parents didn't come to the school because of all the fighting going on. They did agree that the children should have better programs, better studies, more opportunities. But they didn't want to have any problems. It's better now. Before parents didn't dare give opinions about the school. Now they do."

Arevalo, whose daughter is in third grade, plans to step down when her term expires in 1991.

"Maybe I will run in another school, but not here. I want to give other parents a chance to participate so that they, too, can make decisions and find out about reform. If they come in and get training, they're going to find out this is a positive thing. And they're going to work for the education of their children, which is what every parent should do."
### Permanent principal retention

**Schools where council majority is black**

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<td><strong>Percent retained</strong></td>
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**Schools where no group has a majority**

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<td><strong>75%</strong></td>
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Source: Designs for Change

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**PRINCIPALS Continued from page 14**

riculum coordinator and writer for five years.

"Many people I know felt I was foolish to submit to this process," Rochon says. "They'd ask me, 'You've gone this far in your career and you're going to subject yourself to that? But I knew if I went through it I would have people who believe in me, who support my philosophy. You put yourself through that and you'll go in with a very secure feeling."

Several principals who were rejected by one school subsequently were embraced by another. Betzaida Adorno Figueroa, who has a doctoral degree from National College of Education, was thrust into an interim principalship last fall, at Morton Education and Vocational Guidance Center, 441 N. Troy. "I hadn't made an application anywhere," Figueroa says, "but as long as opportunity [to serve as interim] was knocking I wasn't going to turn it down."

When principal selections came around, Figueroa applied at her own school and several others. On April 4, her LSC selected the assistant principal from the Morton Upper School as its new principal, terminating Figueroa's contract effective the following Monday. Figueroa immediately began searching for a teaching job.

On April 7, the LSC at Kelvyn Park High School, 4343 W. Wrightwood, notified Figueroa that she'd made semi-finalist. On the 11th she was interviewed; on the 12th, a half-dozen Kelvyn LSC members showed up at her apartment to congratulate her on winning the job.

"It had been such a terrible week," Figueroa says. "I'd lost my job, after I'd worked so hard for the kids [at Morton]. No one seemed to appreciate that. Then, the people from Kelvyn showed at my door. I don't know which was a bigger shock. I just had to pinch myself."

At least one council, Lincoln Park High, returned to its own interim principal, Hamilton McMaster, after looking around.

For Bruce Berndt, president of the Chicago Principals Association, the predicament of some of his members reflects exactly what's wrong with school reform. "You just can't go around treating people like that," he says.

Overall, Berndt praises the LSCs. "There's only been a half-dozen real problems, where the LSCs have not represented their constituents really well," he says. However, Berndt remains unconvinced that the local selection process will produce better candidates than the old Chicago principals exam.

Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, is convinced that the new process will revitalize leadership at individual schools, even if the leadership comes from within the system. "I'm not so concerned if they [new principals] were in the system before, if they're more energetic and if they've made a positive decision to function under the new rules," he says.

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Tom Andreoli is a Chicago freelance writer.
Candidates play musical chairs

While almost all the local school councils looking for principals are choosing school-system insiders, few are picking people from within their own schools.

Only a fourth have selected someone from their own staffs, according to information CATALYST collected on 43 of the 53 schools that had signed up new leaders as of May 1.

So far, assistant principals have been the favorites, nabbing 18 of the 43 slots. They were followed by teachers, 10; assigned or interim principals, 10; central or subdistrict staffers, 4; and one full-time doctoral student.

There was a wide range in the number of applicants schools received—from 15 at Clemente High to 100 at Harte, Kanoon, Mayer, and Sauganash elementary schools, according to council spokespersons.

Councils generally chose candidates whose race or ethnicity matched that of the council majority or plurality. This happened in 36 of the 43 cases. However, in only 13 of the 36 did the school initially have a principal or interim principal from a different racial or ethnic group. In other words, most black-dominated councils replaced a black principal with another black principal. White-dominated and Hispanic-dominated councils tended to follow the same pattern.

Similarly, principals whose race or ethnicity matched that of the council majority were more readily retained in the first place. Only 11 percent of the councils that had principals of the same race rejected those principals last winter, according to Designs for Change, a research and advocacy group. Meanwhile, 24 percent of the councils that had principals of a different race rejected those principals.

Designs said two other factors weighed more heavily, however. Hispanic principals failed to win retention much more frequently (50 percent of the time) than did white principals (15 percent) and black principals (12 percent). And relatively more interim principals were rejected (32 percent) than were assigned principals (11 percent).

As a whole, there was little change in the racial makeup of the new group of principals, compared with those they replaced. The new group includes 18 African Americans, 13 whites, and 10 Hispanics. The old group included 15 whites, 14 African Americans, and 12 Hispanics.

The new group does include more women than did the group of principals working in the same schools during the 1989-90 school year. The percentage of females rose from 44% to 64%.

Linda Lenz and Charlotte Smorte-Foal

Interim principal retention

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Source: Designs for Change
Council membership

Racial, ethnic groups fairly represented

by James H. Lewis and D. Garth Taylor

Chicago's first local school councils, on the whole, are fairly representative of the race and ethnicity of eligible candidates and voters. The racial breakdown of council membership varies by fewer than five percentage points from the racial composition of the pool of individuals eligible to run or vote in the election.

Blacks account for 53 percent of council members. Had all eligible voters participated in the election and voted only for candidates of their own racial or ethnic group, the black portion would have been about 50 percent. Whites account for 29 percent of council members, or 2 percentage points more than would have been "expected." Hispanics account for 17 percent of council members, or 3 percentage points fewer than would have been "expected." Members of other racial groups account for 1 percent of council members, or 2 percentage points fewer than would have been expected.

The racial composition of the councils do not, of course, reflect the racial composition of school system enrollment, which is 59 percent black, 26 percent Hispanic, 12 percent white, and 3 percent other. The disparity arises from the greater proportion of whites among teachers, principals, and Chicago residents in general than among public schoolchildren. The discrepancy amounts to 17 percent.

Each council includes six parents elected by parents at the school, two community residents elected by residents in the school's attendance boundary, two teachers elected by staff at the school, and the principal. High school councils also have a nonvoting student member, elected by students.

Although the councils as a whole are fairly representative, there are small but significant differences in each of the elected groups:

- Parents. Whites constitute 20 percent of parent LSC members but only 12 percent of the parent pool—a disparity of 8 percentage points. The white advantage came largely at the expense of blacks, who constitute 55 percent of parent LSC members but 59 percent of student enrollment. Hispanics constitute 23 percent of parent LSC members and 25 percent of student enrollment.

The over-representation of whites exists mainly on the Northwest, Southwest, and Far Southwest sides, which have high white residential populations and comparatively high numbers of racial minorities transported in to their schools. These schools tend to have high achievement test scores, magnet or specialty programs, and fewer than average low-income students.

Whites live closer

Because we do not know the racial breakdown of individuals who actually voted, we cannot know precisely why whites are over-represented on LSCs in racially mixed schools. White voters live closer to the schools in question and probably voted in higher proportions than minority parents, who live considerably farther from these schools. It also could be that mixed or even predominantly minority electorates voted for white candidates.

To ensure that distance between home and school does not skew future elections, we recommend that numbered ballots be distributed to all parents whose children live outside their school's regular attendance area.
Community representatives. African Americans won 50 percent of the community representative seats even though they make up only about 40 percent of community residents. Whites won 38 percent of the community seats, while comprising 43 percent of community residents. Hispanics won 10 percent of the community seats, while comprising 14 percent of community residents.

In community representative contests, blacks won a disproportionately large number of seats in most areas of the city and in most types of communities where they reside. Only on the Northwest Side, where few blacks live, did blacks fail to win over-representation.

With only two community seats per council, the chances of under-representation of a racial or ethnic group in these contests is more likely than in the parent contests, where six seats are at stake. For example, on the Northwest Side, whites won seats at the expense of Asians and other smaller minority groups. Along the lakefront and southwest, blacks won seats at the expense of Hispanics. On the West Side, both blacks and whites won over Hispanics.

The relative failure citywide of whites and especially Hispanics to win their share of community seats has several likely causes: Voting citywide in community contests was probably around 3 percent, meaning that apathy was widespread. Hispanic candidates in mixed areas probably suffered from language barriers. White candidates may have suffered because of a strong identification among whites to the city's many parochial schools.

### Racial/ethnic composition of LSCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligible voters</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates elected</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community (2 seats)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible voters</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates elected</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers (2 seats)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible voters</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates elected</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principals (1 seat)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible voters</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (11 seats)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible voters</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidates elected</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chicago Urban League

### Black teachers dominate

Teachers. The greatest difference between results and "expected" results occurred in teacher contests, where blacks won 58 percent of the seats while comprising only 48 percent of the candidate pool. Whites won 33 percent of the seats, while accounting for 44 percent of teachers. Hispanics won 6 percent of the seats and make up 7 percent of the teaching force.

There is no discrepancy among principals because their LSC membership is 100 percent, or 56 percent white, 37 percent black, and 7 percent Hispanic.

Press reports following the election highlighted several cases of block voting that deprived a racial or minority group of representation, especially among parent members. These were exceptions, however. In general, racial majorities did not vote in blocks that shut out minority groups from representation in their schools.

There are 268 schools with enough racial diversity that at least one minority-group parent should have been elected. At 67 percent of those schools racial and ethnic representation was on the mark. At 33 percent of those schools, a racial or ethnic group "warranting" at least one seat failed to win one.

James H. Lewis is a research specialist for the Chicago Urban League. D. Garth Taylor is the League's director of research and planning. The racial breakdown of LSC membership was provided by the Board of Education and covers 503 of the 540 councils. Schools with incomplete data appear to be randomly distributed. A copy of the full report, "Racial equity and local school council elections," can be obtained from the Chicago Urban League (312) 283-5800.
Time for teachers to take risks

by Laura Downey, Karen Grover, and Christine Ramos

Teachers—we who are on the front lines, who are second parents to your children, who have detailed experience of what works and what doesn't—we are the vehicle through which educational reform must happen. But where have we been in this extraordinary effort called school reform?

For years we have been voiceless within a massive bureaucracy; isolated within our schools and our classrooms; labeled troublemakers when we made suggestions, tried new teaching methods, or went beyond what we were told to do by our principals and the central office. Some of us are still discouraged or afraid.

But more and more of us are looking for new roles and new answers, beginning to talk to each other and to the broader community. School reform, we hope, offers us an opportunity to become the kind of teachers we want to be in schools that support us and our students.

More than 300 of us—Chicago public school teachers—came together April 7 to talk about our role in school reform. The conference was the first on the reform law that was organized by and for teachers. It was sponsored by our organization, the Teachers' Task Force, a group of teachers and educators working with the City-wide Coalition for School Reform.

This was a unique chance for teachers to be honest and outspoken with each other. Some pointedly asked that all tape recorders be turned off. Some were angry. Why had teachers not been trained for reform? Why were they once more being neglected? Many were hungry for information about the reform law. What were their roles and responsibilities under the new reform, and what could they achieve?

Our conference, called "Teachers as Leaders," addressed the two most critical issues facing teachers: first, how to build our role in school reform through the professional personnel advisory committee (PPAC); and second, how to use the new openness to make the kind of educational changes that will truly help our students learn.

Reform's 'big secret'

For teachers, the PPACs represent a tremendous opportunity. School reform has not ended personality conflicts and arbitrary actions by principals in all schools. Nor has it put an end to counterproductive orders from central office. But something has changed. Before, those of us who had opinions about curriculum or other issues in our schools were considered troublemakers. Now, under the reform law we have an official role—the PPAC. We must learn how to use it.

The reform law calls for teachers and other staff in each school to elect a PPAC to advise the principal and local school council (LSC) on curriculum, school improvement plan, and other educational matters. Each school decides how the PPAC is organized, and how many people are on it. In
theory, the PPAC, local school council, and principal all work together to improve the school.

Don’t be surprised if you’ve never heard of the PPAC. It’s the big secret of school reform. The press doesn’t cover PPACs. Teachers have received no training on how to make them effective. Some schools don’t even have them yet. But still, some PPACs are moving forward. And they must serve as positive examples for the rest of us.

Here are a few examples we heard at the conference:
- PPACs are making recommendations on textbooks and educational materials.
- When one PPAC’s recommendations were ignored by the principal, 15 teachers made a presentation to the LSC and got results.
- In one school, 23 faculty members attend every council meeting.
- One PPAC wrote the school improvement plan and got it approved by the LSC.
- Another wrote a discipline code that the LSC adopted.
- In order to increase parent involvement, one PPAC set up field trips for parents and held meetings on the buses.
- Another PPAC invited parents and community people to workshops, where they brainstormed about school problems.
- One PPAC rewrote the science program, persuading the LSC to hire a full-time science teacher for the next year.

This is just a beginning. But in Chicago’s public schools, such participation and activism by teachers is new and exciting. Most importantly, through the PPACs, teachers can begin to work with the LSCs and principals to reform the quality of teaching and learning that goes on in the classroom.

During the past decade, while Chicago schools have by and large stuck to traditional methods, a national movement for educational reform has developed a new consensus about what works in the classroom, what excites and interests students. It is time for Chicago catch up. In every school we must begin to talk about how to make learning active, experiential, personally meaningful, interactive, and rigorous. Some of the major proposals are:
- Reorganizing our classrooms and our school day, giving students more responsibility and teachers more time to learn from each other.
- Exploring new ways of teaching reading, writing, math and science that engage our students and make the work real to them.
- Curriculum that reflects community values and history.
- New, more useful testing methods.
- In short, there is much to be done. It cannot happen without teachers.

Teachers, in order to become full and respected partners in this effort, we must break down our old mindsets. We must rebuild our trust in ourselves and our experience, our knowledge of what is best for our students. We must take risks, and we must use our imaginations about what is possible.

Principals, LSCs, and the broader reform community, we need your support. We need training for our PPACs. We need opportunities to grow as educators. We must be a vital part of your partnership for change.

Parents and community members, you need to reach out to teachers, for without teachers the changes you dream about for your children will never happen. We need your collaboration as we begin to take initiative, to regain our voices as important educational leaders, and to rebuild the respect for teaching and teachers in a revitalized school system.

The authors are co-chairs of the Teachers’ Task Force. Laura Downey teaches at Dumas Elementary School and will take inquiries at home (312) 384-5531. Karen Grover teaches at Libby Elementary (312) 471-4650. Christine Ramos teaches at Darwin Elementary (312) 292-5110.

For more reading:
"Best practice," a summary of current thinking on creative ways to teach reading, math, science, and the like. Published by the Chicago Project on Learning and Teaching. Available free from Designs for Change (312) 922-0317. For more information on the Chicago Project contact Arthur Hyde, National College of Education (708) 691-9390, or Steven Zemelman, Roosevelt University (312) 341-3860.
Commission gave mayor excellent Board choices

by Sara L. Spurlark

Like the city's 540 local school councils, the School Board Nominating Commission is a unique exercise in democracy.

By law, the Commission consists of 23 parent or community LSC members, chosen by their peers, and five individuals appointed by the mayor. Its charge is to recommend slates of candidates from which the mayor must choose School Board members. In effect, those people who are most interested and involved in schools have the authority to pick the people who make important decisions for all schools. That happens nowhere else in this country.

Unlike the LSCs, the Commission and its work have gone virtually unnoticed—until its candidate slates were unveiled. And then most of the attention was on the Commission's decision to group candidates by race and ethnicity. More recently there were protests over Mayor Daley's handling of appointments.

There is much more to our story. And it's a story that should give the public a good measure of confidence in the process and its results.

When the 28 members of the School Board Nominating Commission first met on Dec. 16, they were, for the most part, strangers. Indeed, many were wary of each other. However, after logging 100 hours each in three months—and getting an outside assist on consensus building—the members became one body with a common agenda, nominating the best possible candidates. (Most members also learned and grew in ways that make me more hopeful for the eventual success of the councils they represent.)

Here is what we did in those three months:

- Elected officers and established committees.
- Studied our role as mandated by law.
- Reviewed the process used by previous, advisory-only nominating commissions.
- Contacted business, educational, and governmental agencies to support the Commission's work—the legislation made no provision for funding or staffing.
- Encouraged, through subdistrict and local school councils, press conferences, and public hearings, all citizens to participate in the nomination process.

- Prepared and distributed brochures, applications, and questionnaires.
- Reviewed applications.
- Interviewed applicants.
- Selected applicants for slates that went to the mayor.

Through the generosity of the Joyce Foundation, the Institute for Educational Leadership, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., guided us toward consensus. Operating as a neutral observer, IEL seeks to promote the development of strong and informed leadership for the nation's public schools and has especially good credentials in the area of school board training and consulting.

Race not first consideration

Initially, 279 people expressed an interest in serving on the School Board; 178 completed the application process by submitting the Commission's questionnaire. We evaluated these applicants solely on the basis of qualifications for serving on a school board with the responsibilities outlined by state law. Each application, resume and questionnaire was read by at least a third of the Commission members. We selected 113 applicants for interviews.

Only then did we take up the mandate of the law to "consider the demographics of the student population." One suggestion called for creating one slate from each of the city's 10 elementary subdistricts and five at-large slates. We could not go that route, however, because not every subdistrict produced three qualified applicants. Unfortunately, the media...
and religious and business communities had not worked to
generate candidates for the School Board as they had last
tall for local school councils.

Some commissioners felt strongly that their constituencies
expected them to attempt to ensure that the racial and ethnic mix
of School Board membership reflect that of the student
body. Thus, by a slim majority, the Commission decided to
select and slate candidates according to the school system's
Oct. 31, 1989, racial and ethnic survey. The Commission
also was guided by the law's mandate to consider "candidates' expertise in business management and finance."

Fifteen three-member slates—nine African American, four
largely Hispanic, and two white—were presented to Mayor
Daley on March 23. Background checks regarding citizen-
ship and residency had been completed. Additional creden-
tial checks were to be done by the mayor's office.

The Commission believes that the 45 nominees provide an
excellent pool from which the mayor can appoint 15 School
Board members, subject to confirmation by the City Council.
Though some do not have high, citywide name recognition,
all have articulated a vision for the role of a Board of
Education in a decentralized school system.

I would hope, however, that as the terms of members
expire, more citizens come forward to offer their service.

Sara L. Spurlark recently retired as principal of Ray Elementary
School in Hyde Park. She was one of Mayor Daley's appointments
to the School Board Nominating Commission.

Add poor people to Board
by Carlos Heredia

Students from poor families make up an
overwhelming majority of Chicago's public
school enrollment, about 70 percent. It is
their presence that generates thousands of
administrative, teaching, clerical and ser-
vice jobs, and hundreds of millions of dol-
ars in contracts.

Yet the parents of poor children have rarely, if ever, served
on the Board of Education. That is a mistake.

Poor people deserve a voice in the shaping of systemwide
policies that have a profound impact on their schools. But
more than that, poor people would bring to the School Board
experiences and insight that must be taken into account if
those policies are to address core issues and work effectively.

School reform has opened up the process of appointing
School Board members. A grass-roots School Board
Nominating Commission, composed largely of parent and
community LSC members elected by their peers, recommends
candidates to the mayor. Every part of the city is represented
on this commission. There is reason to hope that the new pro-
cess will be more amenable to poor people.

Yet the biggest obstacle remains. Poor people can't afford
to serve on the Board.

A friend recently decided against being considered for a
Board seat. As she tore up the nomination form she
remarked, "There's no way the Commission will consider me.
I'm just a working parent. I don't have a college degree. I
don't work for a prestigious law firm. Even if I were appoint-
ed to the board, how would I support myself? My employer
would not allow me to attend meetings during working hours,
so what's the use in trying?"

The answer to this dilemma is clear, if controversial: Pay
members of the Board of Education who have a proven need.

The kinds of people who traditionally have served on the
Board—college professors, union and corporate executives,
attorneys, mothers whose families did not need a second
income—do not need extra compensation, and should not
receive it. But a blue collar worker, a welfare recipient, or a
member of the working poor must have a means of support if
serving on the School Board is to become a reality.

I know there is much resistance to this idea. I recall bring-
ing it up two years ago as a member of the late Mayor
Harold Washington's Education Summit and being met with
cries of: "We don't need to pay more people more money.
We need to use the same money we have on fewer people."

Not surprisingly, this attitude was—and in many cases still
is—prevalent in many circles. More efficient use of existing
resources—not more money—is seen as public education's
major need. Stripping or even eliminating the bureaucracy is
seen as the cure for the school system's ills. No extra money
should go to anyone or anything outside schools, the argument goes.

I see this argument as a form of misguided populism, which in its desperation and haste to change a public school system with serious problems proposes solutions that only partially give parents the power they need.

Paying members of major governmental boards actually is a well-established practice in Chicago. Members of the Chicago Transit Authority, the Regional Transportation Authority, the Water Reclamation District, and, of course, the City Council, all get salaries. Why should people who oversee public education, a $2 billion operation that has more to do with the future of the city than any other public entity, be an exception?

Ensuring that poor people have a place on the Board of Education is a logical extension of reforms under way in this city. The school system has, by and large, adjusted, at the School Board level, to the racial changes in student enrollment. The attitude in the city's neighborhoods and government and financial circles is one that expects fair representation of the racial and ethnic groups in the public schools. As a result, Latin Americans, African Americans, whites and Asians serve as Board members and help shape the course of public education.

Through local school councils, poor people have gained significant new powers to shape their local schools—and reverse the unfortunate effects of having had a benevolent dictatorship rule our school system. Even though the traditional powers of the Board and central administration have been reduced, these bodies can make or break reform and need to be informed by representatives of the poor. And that means pay must be available for Board members who need it.

Carlos Heredia is executive director of Por Un Barrio Mejor.

CTU hardly 'lukewarm' on school reform

I was surprised to read in the April CATALYST ("Reformers jockey to shape training") that the Chicago Teachers Union is perceived as being "lukewarm" on school reform. Since the article was about training, let me outline what the CTU has done.

We have just completed our School Leadership Workshops, where we provided training in group dynamics, shared decision-making processes, formulating school improvement plans, lump-sum budgeting and structuring a professional personnel advisory committee. Our own trainers conducted the workshops for 534 teachers, 13 principals and 33 council presidents at 134 schools. And, the program was evaluated by faculty from the University of Illinois-Chicago, who observed the training of workshop leaders, sat in on workshops, and reviewed participants' evaluation forms.

Recently, under a grant from the Chicago Community Trust, a collaborative planning effort produced a voluntary staff development program for PPACs. We are hoping that this program will be supported by the Trust and the Board of Education so that it can begin next September.

Additionally, we have a planning team, funded through the MacArthur Foundation, that is working to establish a School Restructuring Academy that would provide direct services and incentives for teachers and schools willing to take on bolder education initiatives.

We are also seeking to place a professional practices school in Chicago through the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers under an Exxon grant. This is just in the formative stage but we are grateful for the possibility that may arise through a joint venture with Chicago-area universities and the University Professionals of Illinois, AFT Local 4100.

We've been working with the Foundation for Excellence in Teaching in its Academy Scholars Program in hopes that this will finally get the Board of Education to sit down with us and establish an internship program. We established a lecture series, "Teacher Leadership in School Restructuring," in cooperation with the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Now I ask you: Does all of that sound lukewarm?

Maybe the reason why some people perceive us as lukewarm toward reform is because we have a different view of where schools ought to be headed. Actually, we are at a crucial fork in the road.

School reformers have committed much of their political and psychic energy to a set of reforms that contain a fair amount of prescriptive regulation, most of it concerned with school governance, parent involvement and down-sizing the bureaucracy. They have placed a lot of political capital in a local governance process with little consideration for the direct involvement of teachers or staff.

In all this something is still being overlooked—how do we enable teachers to more appropriately respond to the instruc-
COUNCILS, PRINCIPALS UNJUSTLY ACCUSED

There is no question that the Chicago Public Schools need to change, as Diana Azcoita said in "Too few councils opened door to change" (CATALYST/Opinions, April 1990). The essential question councils must ask is: What shall the changes be? Another important question is: Must we change something just because we have been empowered to do so?

A parent may not have to be an educator to know whether or not his child is learning, but he or she will need to develop some understanding of the educational process in order to take responsibility for the form and content of children's education. As LSCs begin to study curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching methods and styles, they will find a mind-boggling range of conflicting theories and philosophies.

While remaining open to new ideas and experimentation, they must learn to avoid selecting a plan or a program (or a principal) only because the decision represents change.

Critics have, indeed, suggested that council members may not be qualified to make essential decisions about their schools. It is also true that the LSCs faced with the decision this year did not have enough time to evaluate their principals. Some councils may have lacked confidence in their own ability to make such a momentous decision and wished to wait until they better understand their schools and their responsibilities. Some councils may have been manipulated by principals and teachers who like the status quo.

Many LSCs, however, feel that the principals in their schools—even the ones who have been there as long as, to quote Azcoita, 100 years!—will, with the support of a council committed to excellence, continue to pursue the goals they share with the parents, children and communities they serve. It is unjust to imply that the LSCs that retained their principals do not have the improvement of their schools in mind.

Cynthia B. Dougal
Teacher member, Bodinean LSC

ALL PARENTS NEED INFORMATION ON REFORM

Despite all the problems I have seen and we read about, I believe that school reform is going to work. But I don't think it is working right now. I get very depressed to see some of the people who ran for the local school councils being harassed, threatened and verbally abused—when I remember how happy we were when we got elected.

I partly blame the administration for not taking action sooner when a school starts to have problems with its teachers, who lead children to get completely out of control.

I also blame the media for blowing things out of proportion, and printing only one side of the story, usually the one that is critical of council members.

We have to educate our constituencies. I think that people are not informed about what the councils are supposed to be doing. We worry about training council members—and we need the training—but nobody provides material for training the rest of the parents, where most of the resentment comes from.

I think we are going to make it, not in one year or two years, but we are paving the road for others that will come behind us.

Elena Duran
Chairperson, Subdistrict 5 Council

LS Cs OFFER GOOD NEWS, TOO

The Fuller Elementary Local School Council felt the need to write because so much negative is printed about local school councils. We feel there are many positive stories to be told. We would like to share the attributes that make the Fuller LSC a positive story.

We are a family. That means we care about each other. We can disagree with an opinion but not with a person. Love is a key component. We love each other and we love the children. And we have a caring, experienced, and dedicated principal.

We are hardworking and committed. We are forever going to workshops and growing through training. And we divide our work among committees—budget, discipline, curriculum, human and public relations, etc. Each committee is chaired by an LSC member, but other parents, staff, community representatives and students serve on the committees.

And we all believe that all children can learn.

Judith Riggins
Teacher member, Fuller LSC

APATHY, NOT RACISM, SEEN AS PROBLEM AT JONES

I don't believe racism is at the core of the problem Adolfo Mendez described in "Racial tension in schools calls for student solution" (CATALYST/Opinions, April 1990). The problem is apathy. Members of local school councils are voted in to do a job and then they are expected to create miracles by correcting all the problems immediately.

People complain but they are "too busy" to sign up to committees, answer surveys, write down their ideas for a suggestion box, or volunteer their time to help. The attitude is to let someone else do it.

To Mercedes Burgos, the student LSC member at Jones Commercial High, I give a hearty pat on the back. She is doing all she can. Easier said than done, but you must take all comments in stride and make decisions. You can't please everyone and there is bound to be someone who questions your actions. It's not only in your school.

Everyone is experiencing the same difficulty. Reform is change. Some don't want change, some want it immediately. We as council members must strike a balance between the two.

Cheryl Liskov
Member, Palmer LSC
It's been a tough year. The pioneering members of Chicago's local school councils have repeatedly encountered unexpected obstacles as they blaze trails toward, in many cases, points unknown. Days have been too short. The terrain has been rocky, overgrown. Maps have been nonexistent. Guides have led councils astray. Groups have grown restless, quarrelsome, contentious. Yet the pioneers remain determined, though sobered by their experiences.

This is the picture that emerges from the diaries that 20 grassroots school reformers are keeping for CATALYST. In this issue we bring you excerpts from 14 of those diaries, written by teachers, principals, a student, an academic, and civic and community leaders.

Each of the first seven sections encapsulates the experiences and reflections of a single diarist over time, giving a sense of his or her journey. The remaining eight sections gather the thoughts of two or more diarists on a variety of topics, including curriculum, school funding, principals and outstanding council actions, both the good and the bad.

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Optimism fuels work

ABBIE

Feb. 12 There's a lot of work to be done and a lot of learning of how and why. I never thought I'd need to know terms like mutons and lexon, but we're getting Public Building Commission money for rehab. Working with an architect and the Chicago Board of Education is certainly an experience.

We are an informal and friendly council. We also have an interested support group—persons who ran in the election but lost. They're really wonderful people who care about our school and our students and are willing to help us by volunteering their time and expertise.

Our LSC meetings have been great. Those who are there reach agreements with little discussion, and so far we've voted unanimously on everything. Taking care of business and doing resolutions have been exciting. New and fun things are going to come out of our LSC.

Our council passed three resolutions we hope the Interim Board will approve and provide monies for: (1) That for English-speaking and bilingual students we establish summer school for remediation and enrichment classes in English and math. (2) That there be in-school alternatives for students 16 years or older, giving credit for classes and tutorial services offered during the extended-day or half-day schedule. (3) That mid-year graduation be allowed, beginning in 1991.

Also, another matter: Local businesses and organizations have given us some grants for specific items to be purchased by the school. However, some of the Board people argue that the grants should be deposited in their central account. We passed a resolution that all grants are to be kept in our school account and that decisions about use of the monies are to be made by our LSC.

The unfortunate part of being a council member is information that isn't available. The law seems to be a matter of interpretation, and by whose interpretation are we supposed to abide? The same goes for guidelines. In this brief period of being on a council, it has been confusing.

The time constraints are very serious, and we're all trying to meet deadlines with little or no information. The amount of homework put upon us is staggering and difficult to keep up with. Things are changing at a rapid pace. One doesn't know what's going on until it's changed again. I feel that the process is to hurry, catch up, make up your mind, study, and then change things again. Workshops, law suits, public hearings, nominations, meetings—this is happening and that is happening. Most of our council members work and have families. That doesn't leave a lot of hours to give to all the events. There's no system set up whereby we are informed of what's going on.

On a district level, it was voted that we ask the Board to permit us to use the $1,500 allotted for council training as an operating fund instead. I think this is an encouraging step toward being able to get and give information. Taking it another step further, I think the Interim Board should staff a clerk in every district office as a resource person and liaison just to keep the locals informed and to help the councils keep on top of things. Also, every school should be supplied with a FAX machine; information could be exchanged quicker and more efficiently, and we wouldn't have to rely on rumors or "I've heard" or "Did you hear?"

Renewal of the principal's contract. We've not received any information on how the process is to begin. "I've heard" that the reform committee of the Board was to come up with guidelines, but we've not seen them as yet.

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Diaries

CATALYST/MAY 1990
Principal struggles with role

OLIVIA

Jan. 17 Our local school council held its second meeting. We did not meet in December, although we tried twice. We just could not get a quorum together. I am concerned that some LSC members do not fully realize yet what they have gotten themselves into.

Our school did. I think, an excellent job last September and October informing our parents and community about the LSC and the upcoming election and enlisting their interest in school reform. A good-sized slate of candidates ran. We called parents at home in the evenings and explained the elections and the LSC idea. Teachers discussed with their students the importance of the LSC elections and then had students write what the LSC elections meant to them. These essays were sent home, read and signed by parents, and returned to school. On the day of the election we had more parents respond than to any other school event in memory.

The parents and community members of our council are family-oriented, hard-working immigrants who have a sincere desire to better the educational opportunities for their children and their neighbors’ children. I see no egos at work here. I see no power struggles, no desire to manipulate or control the situation. What I see is a lack of information, a lack of awareness of the responsibilities involved. They are intelligent people who will have little trouble grasping concepts once they are presented. But there is so much they need to know.

The school improvement plan problem. Neither I nor our LSC was prepared to deal with the SIP at our first meeting in early November, so we reasonably scheduled it for later. (The principal), with my teachers, developed a SIP draft, something the LSC could react to and work with, so they wouldn’t have to start from scratch. This was for our December meeting. But this was the December meeting we didn’t have.

Therefore, I would wait for our January meeting. However, (associate superintendent) Robert Saddler’s office did not share my willingness to wait. I was instructed to submit a SIP by Dec. 15, even without the signature of the LSC president, so that our school’s name could be added to the report that was to be approved by the Board of Education on Dec. 20 and submitted to the state. First I was told that if I did not comply, our school would be cited as being in noncompliance. I said, “All right, we’ll noncomply.” I would rather take my chances with the state than submit a plan that had not yet been approved by my LSC. But then I was told I did not have that option. I was to submit a plan, period. So I did.

In January, when classes resumed, I received a form letter from Saddler’s office indicating that our local school improvement plan had been received and was complete. My LSC chairperson received a copy of that letter and asked me what the letter was referring to. I was able to explain to him the situation and the pressure from Saddler’s office. He understood and accepted my action. However, I shall not do this again.

Jan. 26 Attended a workshop for the principals in my district. One thing that came up was the fact that principals receive no extra pay no matter how many hours they put in. Recently the Board reached an agreement with the engineers’ union that allows schools to remain open during the evenings so LSCs and others can hold meetings. Engineers receive compensatory time, to the tune of time and a half. When teachers participate in extended-day activities, such as remedial reading programs or social center activities, they receive additional pay. Principals receive zilch, nada, nothing extra, even though they are required to be on hand in a supervisory capacity. Somehow that does not seem fair, but who will speak for the principals?

Feb. 21 We had our monthly LSC meeting today. I haven’t been able to get in touch with the chairperson for several days, so I had to put an agenda together myself.

When the meeting started, I had to assume the leadership role in the chairperson’s absence. Because the LSC members are new to this business and because I am a take-charge person by nature, I end up running most of the show. I have control, but it is taxing to have to handle everything myself.

So why don’t I give it up? Because my LSC members are not trained to run meetings, set agendas, discuss issues, and resolve problems. I am working on setting up some training for them, but most of them work full time, so finding the hours to do it as a group has been difficult. In the process of running the show, I am demonstrating by example, and therefore I feel I am on the right track. I would not feel right leaving everything up to the chairperson and the secretary. After all, I did promise them when I asked them to run for office that I would support them and help them out if they won. So I do. But I look forward to the day when I can sit on the sidelines and serve as a resource person and not have to run the show.

Emotional roller coaster

VALESKA

Nov. 9 The first meeting. We elected the officers to serve in the council this year, and we very briefly spoke about some important points concerning the school. Even though I advised the principal about the Open Meetings Act, we did a closed meeting.

I am sure that the LSC members can’t do a good job until we receive effective training.

Nov. 30 Extraordinary meeting. The principal scheduled a
special meeting because of the Open Meetings Act; our first meeting was indeed invalid. We elected the same people again. After that the principal explained about the budget the LSC had to approve. After a lot of questions and discussion, I asked if we were going to vote on that budget today (since the agenda just called for a discussion). The answer was No; so since I had another meeting to attend, I left.

After some time they decided to vote approving the budget, as suggested by one of the teacher LSC members. It's incredible! These people just started working and learning about school, yet were able, in less than two hours, to approve a budget for thousands of dollars.

I am convinced that if we don't get effective training we are going to get lost.

Dec. 14 I felt terrible about the budget decision. This money should benefit children with low incomes, but instead only one or two things were included for them.

After this meeting I went to look for some help and get the council back to the budget they approved. I went to Pershing Road, and they called my school and said that since the agenda in that meeting was broken we have to vote again on the budget.

Jan. 11 I felt very emotional awaiting the budget presentation. When the bilingual budget was presented by the principal, I was very satisfied to see that it was approved unanimously. This is the only budget that, in my opinion, spends the money appropriately. All the expenditures will directly serve the students, providing all the materials needed to provide a good program. In addition, a fund was allocated for an international event to depict the different ethnic backgrounds at the school; this is important in developing positive self-image not only for students but also for parents—and the community itself. I felt good! This budget was made with parent input.

Jan. 30 Special meeting to approve a process to develop the school improvement plan. After this, LSC members started talking about voting on our principal's contract. I was bothered. This matter was not on the agenda; besides, not all LSC members were present. And most important, why rush it? We have almost a month to do some serious work on evaluation. All I got was to have the voting postponed for 10 days.

Sometimes friendship is established between members of an LSC and the principal, and personal interests interfere in the decision making. This undermines the impartial manner that should be crucial in the healthy functioning of the decision-making body and the functioning of the school itself. Too often instead of careful decisions we have only emotionally based friendship patterns.

Feb. 8 Finally we had the opportunity to visit our school. Unfortunately, one of my suspicions was confirmed: The school environment does not motivate our youngsters to love and respect the place where they are sent everyday to acquire knowledge and develop character. The school is deficient in many ways, in many instances those little things that although simple mean so much: cleanliness, proper equipment, decent furniture, and the overall look that invites students to come in and stay.

I have found also that it is almost impossible to know who is responsible for the poor conditions of some of our schools, since nobody seems to accept the responsibility; rather, fingers are pointed in different directions.

This school reform gives us the opportunity to create change, so that the disorder and the apathy observed in some of the school personnel do not become part of the educational agenda in the classroom.

Contention gets her down

AMELIA

Jan. 13 Our local school council committee on bylaws, our committee on the school improvement plan, etc. have been at work since the fall. There were various committees: SIP, curriculum, security, morale, and so forth; everyone worked very hard, even during Christmas vacation—meetings, meetings, meetings; conversations with faculty and staff. By January the SIP committee had ready a draft plan, incorporating an abundance of input. The committee also compiled a special, multi-page summary assessment of problems at our school, explaining how the plan's specific proposals arose out of this overall assessment.

Our LSC has been meeting weekly since early December. Next week we discuss the SIP draft.

Jan. 15 The SIP committee met today with the principal. He requested that a couple of items be deleted from the plan because he was already taking care of them. These were things that addressed problems that would look particularly bad to the community. If nothing ever comes of the plan, at least by getting it written up with so many specifics in it, we are already seeing changes, even before the council has discussed it.

Jan. 20 The first meeting of the council to consider the plan was such a disappointment. Some council members had obviously not read the draft plan, and virtually no one had read any of the background material regarding the problems at the school. There were such picky criticisms of the plan instead of trying to work in a positive frame of mind.

One LSC member criticized the SIP committee for not getting enough participation in writing up the plan. Can you
imagine that! Here was a committee with more than two dozen members, and everyone who had expressed any interest at all was called, many times, and all the teachers and staff were invited to meetings as well as specifically solicited for their input at PPAC meetings, at department meetings, and in a questionnaire, as well as on subcommittees where they could vote and be chairpersons. Twenty-five members of a committee is more members than most PTAs in this city have.

These weekly meetings are going on forever, it seems, and nothing is accomplished except to send everything back to committee to rework the goals into positive statements and rewrite the philosophy and vision statement. The chair of the SIP committee decided not to go over the list of needs and problems at a public meeting because she did not want us airing our dirty linen. And it is clear we cannot rely on council members themselves to ever read the background material, so now we are jumping with both feet into the plan and stamping around in the mud of ignorance about what the committee and subcommittees working on the plan think of as basic facts, which are not even known to others.

Sadly, there is way too much contention on this council. Contentiousness and distrust. I feel the school council fray has reduced my own equilibrium somewhat, so that now I get royally mad at other council members when, indeed, I ordinarily do not get angry. There is this funny attitude on the part of some people, especially parents, that all have hidden personal agendas. In truth, I do believe the parents do not, any of them, have hidden personal agendas. Everyone looks from his or her own point of view at the problems, but we all want to solve them. Still, it would have been useful to have some cooperative teachers who could refrain from being excessively rude and nasty to the parents on the council.

We needed group process training desperately in the fall, but the person appointed to set up training is one of the teachers suspected of trying to sabotage council efforts, and she did not provide us with anything. So we have had no training, except what individual members have grabbed on their own.

Jan. 27 There are meetings still every week: at least one for the whole council, and for those of us on committees many other meetings or phone meetings. Then, if one wants to talk to particular members about things going on, there are other times when one has to get together for coffee. For people who also have jobs and families, this is a problem.

Another problem is costs. There is no money for the ongoing work of the council. I have put out at least $60 for photocopying so far; so have a number of others. I remember in the fall there was no money for photocopying some crucial documents.

Another problem is the flood of paperwork and homework if one is to do a decent job. Not to mention the continual complaints from various staff and faculty that the council is not visible enough or up at the school enough.

Finally we will be able to have officers beyond the chairperson, secretary, and district rep now that the bylaws have passed; and we can set up committee chairs for the standing committees. There were to be additional committees as well, but those did not make it into the bylaws, so who knows how long it will take to get those underway. We had serious problems getting the whole bylaws passed anyway. The chair of the bylaws committee was not satisfied with the bylaws her own committee drew up, so she unilaterally wrote up her own proposals and presented them at the last minute when the council met to vote on the bylaws.

The LSC members blocked a few of them, but most votes
of a public high school we would ever get consensus. It is hard enough to get majority rule.

I talked with a parent about this governing idea. He had a different perspective from the teacher. He said that all schools that are public are "democratically" run. It is just a fact. School boards are elected or appointed by public, elected officials. The only difference is that we as LSCs are trying the grass-roots variety carried into small local areas. We should be the school board; however, we are not. We are still being told what to do or not to do by a central office that knows little of what ought to be done.

And our job seems to be primarily one of bucking up administrators so they can generate courage to do something for a change without worrying about downtown. The timidity on the part of administrators and the total apathy on the part of most teachers has been a major disappointment, next to the difficulties of getting along in a quarrelsome group.

Feb. 3 The SIP will obviously not be presented to the community this month. The committee feels disappointed that the deliberations have been so slow. It is absolute torture to sit through these meetings. We have had many hassles. People have been very picky, and I feel sorry for the chair. He has done his very best under extraordinary time pressure to consult every possible person and group and involve as many people as possible. The parents who refused to help earlier are now the loudest complainers. Same for the teachers.

At least the bylaws are done, imperfect as they are. We went nearly three months with no bylaws. Now we will go another three with no plan, it appears. However, the faculty and the principal have responded to the ideas in the draft already and also have definitely looked at the assessments, unlike the council members. So maybe the plan has served its purpose. New programs, new discipline, new courses are already in the works.

Feb. 10 We still have no SIP, and I am beginning to see that the specifics will have to go back to the teachers and be totally done by them, or nothing will happen. The council is incapable, indeed a committee of any kind seems to be incapable, of agreeing on anything publicly.

The group that developed the draft had no trouble coming to a consensus. Those who put into the plan. But now we have nothing but vague generalities, some nice-sounding fancy phrases. This is why everything that a political party or an elected body does reads like pablum labels. I now see: no one can agree on anything more interesting. We are guilty of the same thing. The plan must be gotten out of the council and back to the teachers. Then whoever cares can do the work, and something will be drafted and the principal and the council can pass it knowing that anything the teachers write will have more chance of being put into effect than anything else.

On the other hand, the more I learn about the faculty, how apathetic the majority are, how negative great numbers are, and how much we need a more positive point of view and more upbeat atmosphere, the more I can appreciate the principal. The teachers are fed up with the system, and on the whole have no desire to serve on committees or work on schoolwide things. They do their own classroom work and then leave the organizing up to their elected council members who are feisty enough to make serving on the LSC as a parent a real learning experience.

Feb. 18 One thing that is starting to happen to all of us, I think, is fatigue and loss of enthusiasm. We got on the council thinking things would be better for the school, that downtown red tape would be eliminated, that the council could do great things to push the principal and the rest of the administration to get a grip on the running of things at the school. Instead, we are discouraged. Downtown has given few instructions and still has its red tape.

My husband says it is the winter weather and the lack of daylight that has us all depressed. Perhaps the spring will be better. In any case, this seems the hardest time of all—this winter of our discontent with school reform and council work and the ravages on the personal stamina of members by the
infighting and nastiness that some are dishing out to others. Our student rep is rightly shocked at the obnoxiousness of the adult members on the council and everyone’s inability to act in a civil manner. He himself is the epitome of graciousness and consideration and wisdom for the most part.

Feb. 28 I am losing track of all the meetings. We are still working on the SIP, trying to get it passed and in shape for the March public meeting. There are all sorts of bad feelings still emerging among council members — because of the lack of group-process training, I suspect. The chairperson and the secretary have done some of this team building training on their own and are careful to always give the contributions and points that others make, drawing on them and restating them to encompass their own points. It is a lesson the rest of us could learn.

Instead, we have had some very nasty attacks; and one member who started out to be very effective now seems to have drawn the wrath of some of the most disruptive members — because he says what he thinks, and they are working very hard to attack him as much as they can and cut down his influence. I do wish that person could learn to be a bit more tactful because his ideas are excellent and he is very hard working, but under all this attack he seems to be giving up and withdrawing from the fray.

I had a talk today with one of the other council members who drew fire as well, and she is so hurt that she does not want to put out much any more. This was fire from one of the disrupters who never has lifted a finger to do anything, who has done nothing but attack the basic SIP.

The secretary is also flagging. She has had it with the work on the minutes. She wishes she could be off the council next year. I have a feeling if there is an alternative for her child, she will put him in another school in order to get off our LSC.

We voted to send copies of our school improvement plan to every parent in the school and mail out invitations to the meeting as well. I just wish the plan had some more teeth in terms of specifics. The details have all been cut because no one would have ever been able to agree on them.

March 8 This week we had another weekly LSC meeting, this time to make final plans for the “well-publicized meeting.” We also will be meeting again next week. There was also a meeting of the finance committee, which is the place the SIP will make it into reality or fizzle for lack of funds.

March 15 We are ready to roll on the well-publicized meeting. The literature and copies of the plan look terrific. No one would suspect what torture we have all been through over this thing. People are expecting a couple hundred parents to turn out with all the effort we have made. I cannot imagine that there will not be 200 parents who care enough in a school of this size to show up and hear what local school reform is doing. Although, maybe when they see the vague generalities in the plan they will figure, “Well, it’s business as usual, so why bother.” The original draft of the plan with all its detail would bring them out if only to fuss.

March 19 We presented our plan to our public. A small turnout — only 50 or 60 in the audience.

A number of parents took offense at the philosophy that used some high-flown ideals, and they objected that the plan talked about “happy atmosphere” for learning and so on. Parents wanted academic emphasis and not so much “happy” sounding things. They wanted “motivated” but not necessarily “happy” children in school. This is all very interesting because I think it points to a conflict within the parents’ minds. The idea that learning can be fun and happy children can be orderly and behave well seems to be a foreign idea.

March 28 In reflecting on the experience of the past three months, I suspect our council has done better than most; yet members who have been working are tired and demoralized. Issues are very complex, and training has not been provided. And the faculty and the community at large are remarkably apathetic.

I am concerned about the general unconcern of council members regarding our responsibilities to do this work. And yet I understand the problem. There has been so much bitterness and dispute that those who have worked the hardest have no heart left. The excitement for school reform is gone. I can see that to be a truly effective council member one needs a lot of free time. Perhaps working parents are not the best choices for councils. We do not have time to do all the phone calling and infighting and negotiating and strong arming and plotting and planning to accomplish much of anything in the face of forces of negativity and outright hostility.

However, I am resolved to think positively and to try and do my part to regain this spring what was lost in the winter. The initiative, the momentum, the excitement, the hope, the promise, the genuine intelligence that surfaced in the fall should be able to change something.

Principal walks tightrope

JORDAN

I have the advantage of being a new principal. Not having known the old ways before reform, I am able to more readily adjust to the demands of participatory school management.

Our LSC generally works quite well together, especially compared to other schools. It is taking on responsibilities in good faith and in a serious manner. It has, as a group, an excellent attendance record. I sense that we have a collective mission and share a common vision for our school.

There are small problems. One problem, ironically rooted in the very success of our LSC, is the perception held by some of our teachers that because the LSC and I are working quite well together, there was some grand conspiracy to get the
Meetings upon meetings

RAYMOND

Jan. 5 Today I attended a meeting of a local school council chairperson association held at the Chicago Urban League. These meetings so far have been vitally important and informative because they allow local leadership of councils a forum and a vehicle for shared learning and an idea exchange. Reps from about 14 schools attended.

Jan. 10 I attended a school finance seminar at the Urban League with chairs from other LSCs. It was informative. Tonight we had a very good—but long—LSC meeting. Some new faces present. We still have not met in our school.

Although we have a comfortable, convenient place, it’s not our school!

Jan. 11 Today I got a copy of the “Sunrise Manifesto.” Over all, it was a good document. Promoted by the ABCs Coalition to present as a platform under new Supt. Ted Kimbrough. My concern is that it targets (too narrowly) the bureaucracy and lets the Interim School Board off the hook. The Board remains unaccountable to anyone, especially the LSCs. The “Sunrise Manifesto” does capture the sentiments of a lot of parents and community persons on the LSCs.

The City-Wide Coalition for School Reform went off to a two-day retreat. The 11 district council chairs were invited through district superintendents. This isn’t bottom-up participation. Few LSC persons were invited.

Jan. 18 I attended the district meeting tonight. I wanted to see how our LSC reps are conducting business. They are still debating bylaws. They have the same problems as the LSCs—looking for funds, facilities, and meeting places. This is outrageous. It was good to hear and interact with many people from other schools. I guess we’re doing all right relative to some other schools. The danger I see here is that many people are more concerned about narrow political aspirations than about serving district schools that are not progressing well. A lot of posturing is going on.

Jan. 24 LSC met tonight. Bylaws draft is produced and distributed. We focus on a reading of each paragraph. My charge is to rewrite and type corrections for next meeting.

Jan. 31 Bylaws completed and approved. This is great. Now we can talk about planning for the kids!

Feb. 8 Had a long strategy session with the LSC chairperson at a sister school. Her biggest concern was the fact that at least four of the six LSC parents were still working in an after-school program and, contrary to policy, receiving Board stipends. She feared conflict of interests.

She was also deeply concerned that the council as a whole, as well as most of its members, were reluctant, even resistant, to receiving training at this critical time.

We decided she should contact the Reform Implementation Unit at the Board of Education.

This evening I was invited by a council chairperson at another school to attend their meeting. They were working smoothly. Committees had been organized. The principal appeared cooperative and supportive of the council. I said to myself, “Maybe I should not be alarmed that in addition to the council there is only one parent and the school clerk in attendance.”

This council’s primary concerns were with training, a needs assessment, and school improvement. I shared with them some of my experiences with training providers. I assured the group they were not alone and other councils were experiencing similar concerns.

Feb. 14 Our LSC meeting tonight was excellent. We laid out our school improvement plan process and agreed on a train-
ing schedule involving Designs for Change, specific training for the budget and for curriculum, and attendance at an upcoming Citizen’s School Committee workshop.

Feb. 15 Two school reform meetings I’d planned to attend today were postponed by the snowfall.

Feb. 21 Another training session for our council, this one on our vision statement. Although I tried to avoid having to draft the results of our work, I got selected to do it. Is the council too dependent upon me? I wonder. Well, I don’t think so because most members have exercised a lot of initiative in terms of standing committee work.

Feb. 22 At the invitation of our principal, I attended a meeting of Chicago African American Consortium for Quality Education (CAACQE). The discussion focused on resolutions and preparing a slate of amendments for strengthening the school reform legislation. CAACQE appears to have a positive agenda—but very little energy in the room.

Feb. 23 I consider myself fortunate. My employer supports the work I’m doing on school reform. I wonder whether meetings are being deliberately scheduled in the middle of work days to discourage active, meaningful participation. Is there a conspiracy? Why aren’t more meetings held in the evenings and on weekends? But then that wouldn’t be convenient for bureaucrats who have the information, would it?

Feb. 27 The principal organized an open house and tour at the school for our LSC. Wasn’t this a break through? The PPAC was invited to a meeting to explain a model school improvement planning initiative by a big international research outfit. What’s up? Why the sudden change?

The PTA met tonight. I went. Officers were nominated. Attendance was good. Some new faces. The principal made a presentation on the status of the school, the report card, and key areas of need. The PTA and LSC members present received kits of information.

Feb. 28 Today the council and about a dozen other persons participated in an “effective schools” training workshop. It was great. The information was well received. Enthusiasm for the tasks ahead is very high!

March 14 Our council, perhaps influenced by the principal retention/dismissal outcome of the past two weeks, passed a resolution calling on the principal to support the council’s efforts to institute school reform. Second, it was announced that student performance citywide on the Iowa tests was inflated and must be adjusted downward.

March 16 The principal phoned me to announce her resignation. She was making a career change and saw it as a promotion. (It seems similar resignations happened at several other schools at about the same time.) I was shocked senseless. Now we are going to have to gear up for a principal search right in the midst of student testing and school improvement planning. What a load!

March 24 The council appears to have drawn closer together in the aftermath of the principal’s sudden resignation. We are determined to forge ahead.

April 5 It’s 6:15 in the morning. Never thought I’d be up at 5 preparing for a 7 a.m. LSC meeting. We are exhausting people’s evening calendars. Now we are starting on our morning breakfast time.

It’s disconcerting to hear people attack school reform by parents and see administrators snicker at our efforts.

High hopes eroded

ELIZABETH

In early 1989, when rumors were flying about what school reform would mean and how it would affect the various participants, I wanted as many facts as I could get. Therefore, in April 1989, in downtown Chicago, I attended workshops sponsored by the Chicago Educational Partnership, an umbrella organization bringing together many groups, from UNO to CTU, from the Urban League to the Chicago Principals Association.

I was duped into believing that all those impressive organizations meant I would be rewarded for my Saturday efforts with more knowledge on school reform than anybody needed or wanted. Reality killed my optimistic expectations. I learned almost nothing—except what the purpose of these workshops presumably was: not to furnish me with facts but only to brainwash me into believing that reform was necessary to the Chicago schools.

My hope for reform was not diminished, however. During the spring and summer I talked it up and encouraged parents to run for their LSC. Most fellow teachers at my school were so negative about these elections that I moved among them quite aware of whom to avoid. This majority believed the idea of one of our parents wishing to run for LSC was laughable, let alone six parents.

Our school is largely populated by minority public housing students whose parents have for years been sold short by my school faculty. But I knew that our parents and community leaders would not let us down. And they didn’t. There were almost 20 parent names on the ballot to fill 6 positions and half as many names of community leaders to fill 2 positions.

Furthermore, I felt that my colleagues and support staff had given me their vote of confidence in electing me a teacher rep to the LSC; after all, my ethnicity does not reflect the racial makeup of staff or students, and our school has a long history of racial tensions on staff.

My faith in the parent and community reps was soon tried, however. At the first LSC meeting I realized two things about some of them. One, they had the notion that they could use school funds to finance their own hidden agendas. Two, they...
had their own hit list of teachers to get rid of. Seniority, objective criteria for rating performance, etc.—these considerations were foreign to some of the council members.

By the third LSC meeting, my faculty colleague and I were doubting that we had made the right decision about being council members. The group was no closer to resolving the budget issue, one of our key LSC problems. Finally, a motion was made to accept the original budget as suggested by our principal. The motion was seconded, a vote was taken, the budget was approved, and the meeting was adjourned. A dissenting voter claimed the motion illegal and the vote illegal, and he began campaigning that evening by telephone to meet again to “revote.” He did not prevail. He and another member left the council permanently.

Our LSC muddled through many situations. We had no training. We did not know the law. Consultants provided to us to interpret the law did not know the law. The only solace was in the fact that many other councils were floundering also. Some had to hold second elections. Some had fist fights between feuding factions in the corridors during school hours.

Making reform work is predicated on the concept of volunteerism. That concept is dead at my school. Nobody wants to meet after school. Nobody can meet prior to 8:30 a.m. Heaven forbid someone should mention a Saturday. The legislation was written to afford committees to make educational plans, interview principal candidates, and spend millions of dollars creatively. Teachers and parents alike seem reluctant to extend themselves, so little gets done. It is the end of January, and our LSC has no bylaws and still only nine members, who do a very good impression of oil and water.

By February our council had Designs for Change training. Our attendance at training sessions was worse than our attendance at regular meetings. Maybe greater participation in training sessions will come only when all concerned know that they don’t know. I can’t balance my checkbook from month to month, and believe me when I tell you I’m kind of afraid of tackling a multi-million dollar budget. I don’t care if there are formulas.

Just yesterday my greatest fears were not only realized but compounded by a typical Board of Education presentation on lump-sum budgeting. I attended a meeting at Pershing Road especially designed for LSC reps. The rhetoric was beautiful. “Goals and priorities march hand in hand with dollars available.” Our LSC agree on goals and priorities? We can’t agree on anything—if we can ever get a quorum together. We need group consensus training, if we could get people to a training session.

“Textbook money must be spent on textbooks.” My LSC members will ask, “Does this mean we can’t buy chairs with those dollars?” Yes, it does! “How will they know?” They will know. Unfortunately, my LSC colleagues are manipulative—in personal matters, in budget matters, in life matters. There are always ways around everything, they contend.

Feb. 27 The budget must be completed by mid-April. The budget will be based on our local school improvement plan, which ought to be written based on a needs assessment. Given full cooperation of an 11-member LSC, all of whom have prior training, who are working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at nothing else but LSC business, the budget might be ready by June.

The eternal optimist, yours truly, will not be cowed by what seems an insurmountable pile of problems currently confronting this council. It can work! It will work! It must work!

Dropouts plague councils

ABBIE

Jan. 15 The school reform law doesn’t address the removal of an LSC member who doesn’t show up. One of our members was at the first meeting but has not returned or contacted anyone on the council. In his campaign speeches he said he was committed to being there and doing the work.

RAYMOND

Jan. 24 A concern was expressed at our meeting that one council person has not met with us since late October or early November.
ELIZABETH

On our LSC, the chairperson’s brother was the other parent rep. This problem was “solved” in December when, angry at a council vote that went against their budget proposal, they left the council. We broke for the Christmas holidays with the understanding we would fill these two positions upon our return. But how? That was our new problem.

In January we discovered we were prey to the whim of the infamous school reform hotline. It appears to be staffed by persons knowing little more (if at all) than inquiring LSC members. We phoned more than once and got different answers each time about how to fill our vacant LSC positions. But by the end of February, we had added only one of our two replacement members. Add to this the problem that by March one of our elected parents had never attended an LSC meeting, and a community rep had attended only once.

ROBIN

Jan. 20 A parent member of a high school LSC resigned because his child transferred to another school. A council committee interviewed three candidates to replace him. Two of those were present tonight and were asked to speak in support of their selection. The council voted afterward, and the elected woman immediately became an active participant in the meeting. The principal proposed that the second candidate be asked to chair one of the council’s standing committees; she appeared happy to do so. It was clear that those present were much concerned to extend and welcome parent involvement in the LSC.

LAZARUS

At another council, members voted themselves teacher aide positions, thereby making that LSC defunct.

At one training session I attended, several people in the room held more than one official position related to the CTU and reform. Some occupied three positions simultaneously: school union delegate, chairperson of the school PPAC, and teacher representative on the LSC.

OZZIE

Jan. 6 One of our LSC parents asked to have the meeting time changed to an earlier time because she was a member of another council and needed to have time with her family. This should have been considered before running for more than one council. There are many reps in this school reform effort who hold more than one council seat. The law should be amended so that a person can hold only one seat, even if the person has children in more than one school.

Council action: Great to awful

LAZARUS

Among those elected in the October LSC election were many familiar faces from the local school improvement council (forerunner to the LSC), including the president. So accustomed to running the LSC meetings like PTA meetings was the principal, who was elected LSC chairperson, that the first LSC meeting was run the same way. Interaction was between council members and persons in the audience. At one point an audience member made a motion from the floor. Although the substance of the motion was innocuous in itself, the impropriety of the motion slipped past the chairperson, the principal, and a faculty member present in the audience who had a background as a parliamentarian. The measure was put to the audience for a vote and carried.

By the next meeting the members had done their homework on procedures. It operated like a mini-board of education. In short, the LSC members were the decision makers responsible for formulating proposals, voting on them, and implementing them. Interaction was among LSC members. Audience members were limited to two-minute presentations at the end of the meeting, or longer presentations if in writing. Some audience members felt locked out because of the change in format. To meet their concerns, the LSC later provided open hearings on specific school problems, such as security.

OZZIE

Feb. 13 The school council meeting took 45 minutes to vote on where to hold the March meeting. So much time is spent on nonschool issues that very little else is done. Our LSC should plan the agenda well in advance of the meeting. The principal shows very little interest in council matters.

SCARLET

Jan. 8 Our principal vacancy was advertised today in one of Chicago’s major newspapers. When did the council make this decision? Were there meetings held to come to this deter-
Council members present and an audience of about 30 parents and community residents present, it was not evident from his chair to the students that this was a good civics lesson for the son. What those students learned was:

- The debate that followed was quarrelsome. No evaluation of the principal was considered, even with a high dropout rate, low scores, and 350 absences a day at our school.

With more than 60 students, 35-40 teachers, and a small group of parents and community residents present, it was not a good lesson for the students, even though the principal stated from his chair to the students that this was a good civics lesson. What those students really learned was: It is right to set rules, and it is OK to break them whenever the occasion calls for it. No wonder the discipline code is frequently violated.

This is an elementary school on the Northwest Side. There was a good turnout at the LSC meeting tonight, with all council members present and an audience of about 20, including 3 teachers. I was impressed with the efficiency and seriousness of the council; the chairperson moved things along, not always with polish, but with good humor and a sense of the need for giving everyone their say and then making decisions. An announcement was made of a training session for LSC members to be held on a Sunday at Truman College, and every member expressed the intention of attending.

The chair of the professional personnel advisory committee was asked to report and indicated that all the teachers had been approached and all had agreed to be involved in committees of the PPAC—in fact, lunchroom and janitorial staff had also said they would help out, though it wasn't clear exactly what the committees would be about. Still, the chair and members of the LSC were quite encouraged by this expression of support.

The principal of this school gave a very effective and knowledgeable report. In fact, my overall impression of the meeting left me with a question. In schools where there are no large controversies and there is an effective principal, will the LSCs be able to sustain interest? Might not the situation come to resemble that in many institutions with lay boards, where the professional staff essentially makes decisions which are duly ratified by the board? If that is all an LSC does, will parents think it worth giving up the time for?

At another school, there was such active interest in the LSC that the principal recruited a community advisory board and a parent volunteer association from the defeated candidates, but now complains about having to take so much time out of his busy schedule to attend all the meetings. And, of course, the elected LSC complains that its role is diluted by the existence of these "competing" groups.

Feb. 22 Principal selection is a major issue at the high school. Vote to retain the principal was 5 to 3 (motion failed). The vacant looks of the principal and council chairperson were highly visible. Then came a motion to consider the principal along with other applicants. That vote was unanimous.

Instead of considering the principal along with other candidates, as mandated, another vote was cast to retain the principal without considering any other candidates. The debate that followed was quarrelsome. No evaluation of the principal was considered, even with a high dropout rate, low scores, and 350 absences a day at our school.

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ten to the students' input? Sometimes the whole idea of school reform is a big joke.

Other student reps are in the same boat. It helps to know I'm not the only person going through this. We meet once a month to discuss the problems we are having. I just hope things get better in the coming months.

March 14 The LSC meeting went very well. I got accomplished what I wanted to. I presented the results of my survey of student opinion. Kids talked about how they disliked the food. A lot of them said they wanted the physical plant improved. How can someone learn when the ceiling is coming down on your head? The issue of student reps voting on the councils is a hot one. The Local School Council Student Representative Coalition is working on lobbying in Springfield. We want the legislators to pass a bill that gives the student rep a vote on an LSC.

New hands on purse strings

LAZARUS

Jan. 9 With reruns of "Hill Street Blues" in the background, I am typing budget requests submitted to the PPAC by faculty members for the 1990-91 school year. Similar requests appear from page to page: the need for basic textbooks to provide basic services for the students, photocopy machines to replace archaic hand-operated ditto machines, etc. Until these requests are met, many of us will continue to draw on our own resources to make up the difference.

Feb. 24 On the day-to-day level at our school, a great change has taken place. Purchased with State Chapter I funding, the copying machine in our department office is installed and functioning. Current events are now jumping out of the newspaper and into the classrooms instantaneously. A dimension of freshness has been added that our dog-eared, dilapidated, and often obsolete textbooks could never have. We are moving into the 20th Century just in time for the 21st. Gone are the days of endless hours of typing and retyping tests and materials on purple masters to run off on the ditto machine (which still occupies its customary corner of the office, ready to give service if needed).

So little to ask—the tools to do the job.

Teachers are beginning to take seriously requests for their needs for equipment and supplies. Brochures advertising supplementary materials such as videos, booklets, and tapes are no longer summarily tossed into wastebaskets when teachers find them in their mailboxes.

Requests are being compiled for the whole school and will be brought before the LSC, which has decision-making power over the school budget. With luck that budget for 1990-91 might be ready close to the April 1st deadline. By then, LSC members must be knowledgeable about it. So much to learn in so little time. Our LSC is wasting none of that time.

For every student in the free- or reduced-lunch program, the school receives $137 in State Chapter I funds for supplementary purchases. (At some schools, assistant principals are assigned to "beat the bushes" to get every possible eligible student into this program. To date, I know of no concerted effort at our school to increase enrollment in this program.)

At our first LSC meeting last fall, the principal presented us with the supplementary budget and told us we were to accept or reject it on the spot. Our initial reluctance to do so was overcome when it was explained by one teacher rep that much of the budget was based on teacher input and contained many items necessary for teachers to do an effective job. While expressing the hope that we would not be placed under such pressure in the future, the majority of the LSC members voted unani­ mously for the budget.

A month later, the LSC was again confronted with an imminent deadline. We were given five days to approve an "Options for Knowledge" proposal for $100,000 in federal money. Distressed at being put on the spot again, members balked at the proposal, not for its own sake—because they expressed great respect for the faculty members who had written it—but for the lack of time to consider it and its full impact on the faculty and other school programs. The majority of the LSC members voted "No" to the proposal. The principal was visibly shaken at being out of the running with the program. But the story does not end there.

A call was made for an extension to the deadline, and LSC members drafted a counter-proposal which included requests for, among other things, improved security and an effective class-cut policy. As the follow-up meeting commenced, an assistant principal sitting next to the principal remarked, "These demands are not unreasonable." Both the LSC chairperson and the principal were able to sign off on a document that left both feeling they had won something significant. Not a bad precedent. Somewhat surprised at his own conclusion, the principal said, "This is the way it ought to be—people working together."

Remarked one observer from the faculty: "If this is what reform is all about, I'm for it."

Special information-gathering meetings have been held on school days to ask the administration about funding sources—pop machine, lost-book fund, student fees. How are monies being spent? In particular, are monies being spent for those things for which they were allocated?

In many schools, principals, long the exclusive keepers of the purse, are experiencing the wrenching trauma of having to share. No pocket is left unturned. The altar is now a table;
Emergency meetings have been called frequently. It is not unusual for LSC members to be in the building early several mornings in a row for such meetings, often called by the principal because of a crisis in funding or a proposal that had to be approved and filed before a "yesterday" deadline.

Other meetings, less urgent but no less important, involving many staff members, might be called by the LSC chairperson to provide an update on a special project, disclosures on funding and budgets, or some other matters that could not be accommodated during regular meeting time. Whatever the hour of the day, the chairperson seems to possess uncanny knowledge about the topic, asking questions that clearly illustrate she has done her homework—despite an apparent language barrier.

Although it is difficult to judge the impact these additional meetings have on the administration, it seems to me they have a calming and fruitful effect. The contact is generally positive and constructive, not confrontational. The meeting room is almost a sanctuary against the hustle in the halls outside. It is a quiet place where alternatives can be considered, where a moment can be taken out to breathe for a while.

In my own life I now find there is very little purposeless time. Demands of LSC, PPAC, CTU, etc. are great, but how can I turn away from these demands when I see a parent rep, dead on her feet from working the late shift, come to an early morning meeting?

LANETTE

The past two weeks were more hectic, with the meetings on the school improvement plan and lump-sum budgeting. After all of the years of having no idea what amount of monies were available for the school, our heads are spinning with the astronomical sums we are required to spend in the coming school year.

The sums we dealt with in October for State Chapter I are chicken feed in comparison with the mind-boggling sums we are faced with now. Now I understand quite well why the Board of Education was not happy to relinquish much of its control to the local school level. When you think about what our school is entitled to and multiple that by [the number of schools with similar numbers of low-income students], the figures blow the mind, especially for those of us who actually work for our paychecks.

There may be many problems that have derived from school reform, but lack of finances should not be one of them. There may be improper use of funds as a result of little or no LSC training, but the money seems to be there in large numbers. If school reform does not succeed, it won’t be due to a lack of funding.

Curriculum gets fresh look

ROBIN

March 4 LSCs have been so busy with organizing themselves, with budget matters, with principal selection, and so forth that hardly any time has been available yet to look at the curriculum. However, one promising venture has begun on the North Side. Three LSCs and a community organization formed the Committee of 100, a group that is reviewing the social studies curriculum in their elementary schools. Parents have been reading their children’s textbooks and visiting classes. And this week they sponsored a public meeting at Truman College—with experts discussing the latest approaches to history and parents, students, and teachers presenting their views. Two hundred people showed up—roughly equal numbers of Hispanic, African Americans, and whites. A resolution to the Board of Education was unanimously passed; also approved was a Plan of Action to promote an “awareness” curriculum to make social studies relevant to the students.

True, the meeting was organized with a particular point of view in mind, but openness and inclusiveness were operative throughout the meeting. And, after all, who could imagine 200 people coming out to talk about the social studies curriculum? It’s a great success for reform!

March 10 This week I sat in on a PPAC meeting. The major topic was the school improvement plan, which led to an interesting discussion of the social studies curriculum—and then back to what should be in the curriculum as a whole. Then we were fairly quickly into the question of whether the school can actually decide its curriculum. As the assistant principal commented, “This is all new to us; it will take us a while to get used to it.” And many teachers seemed to concur.

An acquaintance of mine is interested in linking area universities with Chicago schools; he hopes to form groups of teachers with common interests who would call on university people for consultation. For example, sitting in the PPAC meeting, I realized that a social studies review group would be a natural for such a coalition.

But the old problem of “outsiders” is ever present. A few days later I accompanied my friend to a high school, and he was reflecting on the difficulty of establishing a relationship with a school without being seen simply as coming in and “delivering” something. As if to prove his point, only a few
minutes later he introduced himself to a teacher who immediately replied, “Oh yes, you’re going to come and do great things for us.” He hastily assured her that he counted on their doing great things for themselves, perhaps with some support from the university. After all, even if one can “do great things,” they don’t last once the outsider is gone—unless the teachers have turned the project into their own.

High marks for training

LAZARUS

The Chicago School Reform Act calls for 30 hours of training for LSC members. It is less clear about the content of that training. At another school the LSC voted for a saturation training plan that took large blocks of members’ time over a relatively short period. A leading Chicago bank assisted with the training. For our group, training was initially catch-as-catch-can. Later the United Neighborhood Organization ran sessions in the community—for us to learn how to run a meeting, to set an agenda, to put together the supplementary budget, and to develop a school improvement plan.

I attended a Saturday morning UNO session on SIPs. I was delighted to see that, despite the snowy weather, most of our school’s parent and community members were also in attendance.

The Chicago Teachers Union also mounted a helpful program. They recruited 20 teachers to act as trainers. One of three sites chosen for the CTU leadership workshops was the Chicago Urban League building at 45th and Michigan. Inside the new building is open space accented with green plants and cool colors. There were all the amenities for the trainer: flipcharts, markers, screens, and projectors. The director and his staff were accommodating, following up on last-minute details to make their guests comfortable.

Sixteen people showed up on the first Saturday morning. They were principals, chairpersons of PPACs, school delegates, and teacher reps on LSCs. Perhaps one was an LSC parent.

When asked how they felt about reform, they said: “Between a rock and a hard place,” “Like a foreigner who does not know the language,” “Like Al Pacino in ‘Justice for All’,” “Like Indiana Jones, a new adventure every time I turn around.” Such responses brought laughter from the group. Everyone admitted this was one of the first times they had been able to laugh about reform. How good it felt.

The group returned the next Saturday, and then the following week another round of CTU training began. During all of these sessions only two or three persons were found who had knowledge of group process techniques—feedback, brainstorming, consensus building. And almost no one had had any content training to speak of. But commitment and enthusiasm were high. Out of this CTU training, participants tailored programs to cover two 3-hour training sessions for schools volunteering for the programs.

As fruitful as it was, the CTU project was run on a shoestring. Funding for a more thorough training program was simply not available. Nor were there funds for materials such as handouts which the CTU trainers would be using. One of the saddest commentaries on our society is that the schools lag light years behind business and industry in knowledge and technology. And there is very little evidence the powers that be are interested in closing the gap. Can you imagine asking IBM employees to bring their own paper and other office supplies to work with them? For that matter, have members of the State Legislature ever been asked to contribute to have snow plowed from their parking lot?

My LSC is mostly Hispanic, mostly women. Working with them has been an inspiration. Accommodation. Consensus. Again and again verbs like “participar” and “ayudar” are heard. As the full implication of those terms washed over me, I felt the release of an energy deep inside that would sustain me through the late night hours reading, preparing, typing agendas and other materials needed for the next meeting. This is the way we work together.

Much of my free time is spent watching good drama and ballet, especially a company like the Joffrey. I appreciate and sometimes envy the ensemble work that turns individual performances into a shared celebration, as, for example, when Christian Holder extends his arm in invitation to fellow dancers and audience alike to participate in “Trinity.” Too many years of being isolated in a classroom with my own frustrations had led me to believe that such transcendence was impossible in my profession. But the behavior of these LSC women led me to believe it might be possible.

When our LSC discussion turned to training for the entire council, one member suggested that the whole community be invited to attend; that way the next time LSC elections were
Spotlight on principals

RAYMOND

March 1 Oh man! The press is really doing a job on LSCs and principal retention. “Racism or Reform?” Etc. A few councils fire a few principals and it’s racism? If our schools are doing so poorly, it might be that more firings are in order. The big story was in fact that more principals were retained than was perhaps justified.

March 12 Two weeks of uproar. It is a commentary on the times that the press coverage of the outcome of the principal selections would lead the police to over-react in the Morgan Park situation. Black students were attacked by the Chicago police when it was the white students who were protesting. A few white principals are fired and it’s racism. A few whites protest and blacks are blamed for it even when they were not being provocative.

OLIVIA

In the course of our meeting today, we discussed training for the LSC. The hot training topic these days is the evaluation and selection of principals. I reminded them that I was not due for a contract until 1991, so they did not have to rush to get training on principal selection. However, I suggested it was not too soon to learn what goes into evaluating a principal. The sooner they understand what they should consider when evaluating the principal, the easier it will be to determine if they want to keep the one they have.

One member, new to the school this year, said he was concerned that many LSCs had been asked to evaluate and select principals with very little lead time. He said that if my contract was up for consideration this year, he would abstain from voting because he did not know enough about me or the evaluation process to be able to make a decision either way. I am grateful to have this man on my LSC. I know that when the time comes to vote, he will give very serious and deliberate thought to the task, whatever his decision.

VALESKA

Feb. 10 At this LSC meeting we resolved to give our principal a letter of intent to renew his contract. I wonder how well prepared any of us is to make such a critical decision. We decided to renew the principal’s contract based on the opinion of a few teachers, one parent, and one community member. It is ironic that the few teachers present described the principal as a “nice and wonderful person.” Should we choose principals who are “nice” and “wonderful” or principals who are effective and capable of developing a school environment conducive to learning?

The principal, on the other side, describes the teachers as “marvelous.” If the principal and the teachers are so wonderful and marvelous, why are our children failing? As a parent I feel that efficiency and effectiveness are not shown with words of praise, but rather in the quality of education acquired by our children.

Fortunately, not everything is bad. Some councils have decided to accept the challenge and open the principal selection process. They want to be sure they provide our children and our society the best administrators possible. Bright idea! Smart people!

AMELIA

Feb. 3 Another problem looms large this week. We are going to have to decide about retaining our principal. Many teachers feel he is quite a weak principal; others are very fond of him. We are very likely to get a worse one, much worse, if we let him go. Also, the big reason he is a good choice is that he is accessible to the council and tries to listen to all sides. We could have someone who goes into his private office and refuses to come out. Basically, everyone likes him, even if they think he is weak. And maybe, just maybe, when downtown regulations can be limited and the council support has credibility and clout, he will be emboldened to...
lead. Talked to several other council members about it. I think there will be unanimous support because half of the council is incredibly enthusiastic and the other half is not really opposed or even willing to look at others.

Feb. 18 The principal is retained. Originally we all thought we had until April, that there would be plenty of time to do a real evaluation, but... What we have now is at least a known quantity. We could do much worse.

ELIZABETH

There is the case of the interim principal who is bent on his LSC offering him a permanent contract. To this end Mr. Fly Catcher spreads the honey. It is quite open, common knowledge that several times a week he wines and dines LSC parents and community reps. The staff of this school is livid, but what can be done? This is one of the flaws of the law. It is possible for the weakest of educational leaders to become a principal in the city of Chicago if he or she buys 7 votes!

OLIVIA

When I am alone, in my building, doing what I do daily, I do not experience much anxiety about my future as an elementary school principal. I feel relatively secure that my LSC members approve of my performance and that I will stay where I am until I decide to make a change. I am not threatened by reform as much as I am frustrated by the lack of information made available to my LSC members and to me, by the reluctance of the bureaucracy to relinquish control, and by the almost daily bombardment by the press which instead of enlightening us serves to fuel the fires of dissension and distrust between the general public and school employees.

When I get together with other principals, I am usually confronted with high anxiety. Many of my colleagues are having a difficult time with their LSCs. Some face hostility and general mistrust. Some are operating under such adverse conditions that their mental and physical health has suffered. Some are seriously questioning how long they can afford to stay in this game. Some very good and effective principals are totally unappreciated by the community they serve, and their morale is understandably low. Older principals close to retirement are counting the days. Younger principals are looking elsewhere for a job or are considering a career change.

I fear that competent, caring, effective, and progressive principals will find the working conditions in Chicago such that they will leave not only the city but the profession. Who will replace them? Oh sure, we have many individuals working for the CPS who have the required certificates; in fact, there are many people in the state who have the necessary paper credentials to qualify as principals. But the experienced ones may not want to put up the hassles and the politics involved. Some communities may find their field of candidates limited to people with no administrative experience, or, worse yet, no school-related experience that has any bearing on providing the necessary functional leadership to run a school effectively.

In the end, who pays the price? Local school communities need to remember that how they relate to their principal will, in the long run, directly affect the quality of the educational programs for their children. In the end, if the local school does not work, the State Legislature can, and will, point the finger at the local community.

SCARLET

Feb. 26 This morning I received a phone call from a teacher LSC member at another school. Would I serve as their interim principal for a year? The present principal’s contract doesn’t expire until 1991, but she has decided to resign this year. My response is a definite “No.” My choice is never to serve as an interim again; the insecurity is too great. There is always the fear your actions may be misconstrued: Am I doing this to win favor, or if I don’t do it am I being true to myself? One makes a decision and hopes it is consistent with one’s own professional philosophy. However, the fact that one must question oneself is still a burden.

Back to the teacher council member’s request. That she thought the LSC could not select a permanent principal for an entire year points to a need for clarification and/or training.

March 2 The teacher from the other school called back. They have found they can offer a contract this year. I am asked again if I would come as an interim—but only until the council can meet me and decide on a permanent principal before April 15. This teacher knows me and my qualifications; she feels the council would offer me a contract after meeting me and seeing me at work in their school. I am still not convinced this is the right thing to do, but I am tempted. What do I have to lose?

March 14 The other council voted for me to come. Even though nothing is guaranteed, it is still such a relief to be leaving this school.

March 16 The other council vote is to be taken again. The March 14 vote was 6 in my favor, a majority but not the required 7. Some council members were absent. Again, this points out the need for training in all aspects of process and content. This is not a unique situation among LSCs.

March 23 I am scheduled to report to school #2 next week.
The second vote was 8 to 2 for me to come as interim principal. I am a bit apprehensive, but I do believe I have much to offer. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

ROBIN

Jan. 27 The principal's contract is up this year. He received invitations from other schools asking him to apply, but would like to stay. Therefore, he asked his LSC to tell him soon whether he is to be retained. Generally there is a sympathetic attitude toward the principal, but the council tonight was not prepared to decide in his favor without more deliberation. He was clearly affected by this.

I walked down the hall with the principal after the meeting and expressed my sympathy about his situation, and he spoke with some bitterness about having his "head on the chopping block" and seeing his whole life passing before him. He felt that no one appreciated the position principals are in, and that people feel principals have had it too easy. But, he said, "The teachers will be next—then they'll find out what it's like."

A friend of mine, who has many contacts with principals, has expressed the view that now principals have to become public relations people, spending time cultivating members of their councils instead of concentrating on the real work of the school. But another observer says she understands now, though she didn't agree with it at the time, why the reformers wanted a majority of parents on the LSCs; she has noticed that principals "have to think differently" about the goals of their schools because of their accountability to parents.

There is certainly a wide range of responses on the part of principals, from disbelief and an effort to control the process, to panic and defensiveness, to trying to capitalize on the positive energy created by reform.

April 1 Having settled, one way or another, the issue of the principalship, the schools that aren't interviewing candidates are frantically trying to finish their school improvement plans and budgets. One principal said he's all for local control, but the way it's going now it's keeping him from doing what he sees as his job. He was talking about the amount of time he's been putting into the politics of getting along with his council.

Politics aside, reform has increased the workload of principals and teachers without giving them much sense of benefits. Another principal, referring to the task of putting together a budget, said, "Oh, I could do it without too much trouble, if I just had a room I could go into and work for a week." She was particularly annoyed that the actual physical task of putting the budget on the computer had been given to the schools, where the clerks lacked appropriate training.

LAZARUS

At one school, LSC members were given an evaluation form used for rating bank employees and told to evaluate their principal.

JORDAN

April. One aspect of the school improvement plan that has really excited our LSC is commitment statements that each group in the school family will be asked to sign. The principal felt that she should not be the only person held accountable for growth and improvement in the school. Therefore, every administrator, teacher, parent, student, career service, and engineer/custodial staff member will be asked to sign a pledge committing him or herself to the improvement of this school. The LSC in its mission statement has made its pledge. A majority of our LSC members want to have accountability from all.

HARRY

April. I attended a three-day retreat for elementary school principals at the Interlaken Resort near Lake Geneva, Wis. It was sponsored by the Center for Urban Educational Research and Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Leadership for Quality Education. The Center is working to develop a principals' institute that would help prepare principals for the move from a directive to a supportive and collaborative role.

One speaker stressed that authority is an earned process. "One must demonstrate accountability to get authority—authority is derived from accountability and comes after it."

Another stressed that the best strategy to change institutions is to apply external pressure to create internal motivation to do things differently. "Bureaucracies tend to serve themselves rather than their clients."

We also were told that the skills required to implement reform are learned during its implementation. "Learning comes from doing rather than waiting to be trained to do it."

Another speaker said the most important relationship for a principal is the one with his or her LSC. "Make your LSC look good. Play to your LSC and become indispensable to it and its success....Find a support group and get together regularly to vent feelings once or twice a month."

Roland Barth, founding director of the Principals' Center at Harvard University, said the ground is more fertile today in Chicago for a center than it was in Boston 10 years ago: "The Chicago School Reform Act has created a crisis that has motivated principals to act....There is new enthusiasm for the principal as learner."
A very difficult year

RAYMOND

April 1  At City Hall it's business as you usually find it. At Pershing Road it's old wine in new bottles. In many LSCs people have put in a great deal of time and energy and been frustrated to the point of desperation by the demands, challenges, and responsibilities of school reform while being obstructed by design or effect by the public education leadership centered in Pershing Road but directed from the command centers in the Loop. I think a showdown is near.

ELIZABETH

March 17  Last Thursday evening I received at home the most disturbing phone call I've ever experienced. It was a threatening message fraught with ethnic intimidation. This just doesn't happen to real people in the real world. I have given half of my life on earth to this school and this community. Does reform mean that if a teacher is of a different ethnicity than a parent, that parent can come forward to intimidate the teacher, hoping she will transfer?

I made many calls and had some conferences. Police report. Notifications to the CTU, to the Board's security people. Talks with my lawyer, with the State's Attorney's office. I found out that ethnic intimidation is Criminal Code 12-7.1 of Chapter 38, Criminal Law and Procedure. It is a Class A misdemeanor. Where is reform leading us?

That old 60s optimism, which was resurrected at the beginning of this reform struggle, is starting to wane. Each scandalous incident I personally experience, read about, or hear about drives our goal of quality education in the city of Chicago a little farther from reality.

LAZARUS

By February, reform activity is heating up in schools. There is no apparent direction from the central office. Decentralization is an excuse for washing one's hands of reform. Meanwhile, LSCs struggle along on the good will and hard work of their volunteer members. The legislation provides no funding for the most basic supplies like paper on which notices for the public meetings required by law are publicized to the community.

In the center of Warsaw stands the square of the Old Town rebuilt in the postwar period by the Poles themselves, despite their domination by hostile Soviet forces. Turning school reform into success will be no less a feat."

BLACK LEADERSHIP  Continued from page 11

model grandmother. "School reform in Chicago is the biggest sham that has ever been perpetuated on black Americans," she declares, heatedly. "We should make the Board set up another system, another process, otherwise we're kidding ourselves. Better yet, we should shut the schools down, because we aren't doing anything anyway."

Though a Nancy Jefferson disciple, Turner gently rejects her proposal. "I think it would be a bad idea to shut the system down," he says. "It takes too much effort to get it going again. The system will hear you, but in the end we'll lose."

James Deanes concurs. "I'm not worried about school reform at this point," he says. "I'm worried about how we get the people to buy into it so that they can define it themselves. If they don't, you'll have Fred Hess thinking he's an authority and challenging you when you disagree. About 80 percent of what we discussed in the Education Summit is in the reform bill. That's why I support it. But I don't support the way it's being implemented by the Interim Board."

Deanes is chagrined by the Board's mass firings of veteran school officials, firings which Monique Davis estimates are about 90 percent black and characterizes as political firings under the guise of school reform. "Fred Hess and like-minded persons said there was too much fat in the bureaucracy," declares Deanes. "We have to cut the fat. That sounds good. But when you look, it's evident that they didn't cut fat. They cut black." [The School Board has no statistics on the matter.]

Deanes's dislike for Don Moore, Fred Hess, et al., springs from his belief that they are experimenting with black school children. But he also has "strong disappointment in blacks who have identified the problem and haven't put one thing on the table. We have so many black educators who could shoot a hole in almost everything Don Moore says," he insists. "But instead of putting it on paper, designing a package, and taking it to the various schools, they're sitting back philosophizing and criticizing. And the white boys are making millions of dollars on the backs of our children. That troubles me."

Says Moore: "Our staff people work 60 hours a week. If we were primarily motivated by making money there are a lot easier ways to do it."

Some black activists fear that current events in the $2.9 billion Chicago school industry may be part of a larger scenario to rid the city of any vestiges of black political power. Never again a black mayor, they fear. Never again a black superintendent, unless he/she is a figurehead. Never again a black Board president, unless he/she only fronts for other interests. Never again the substantial concentration of power in the hands of black bureaucrats. And so, as critics charged early on, school reform may turn out to be, at best, "school deform."
Bright Ideas

Beethoven gift shop is math in disguise

Sixth-graders at Beethoven Elementary School, 25 W. 47th, will insist that no math is involved in running the Get Real Gift Shop at their school—they’re just making sales.

Supplied with candlesticks, vases, and the like donated by the merchants association at the Merchandise Mart, the gift shop is open every Tuesday for students and every Friday for teachers and parents. Since it was established in September, the shop has generated $3,500 in profits.

Students are now shopping for a savings institution where they can invest the money in a certificate of deposit and, in the process, learn about interest rates.

The 75 students who run the enterprise, doing everything from accounting to arranging shelf displays, don’t feel like they’re doing school work, says math teacher Cathy Schaller. “They see it as a fun thing,” she says. “Some come to school just to do this.”

Through working at the gift shop, many of these students, who live in Robert Taylor Homes public housing, are coming to see that math has meaning in real life, she stresses.

Vera Stevenson (312) 545-9584.

Colman students huddle for learning

At Colman Elementary, 4655 S. Dearborn, groups of students are sent into huddles to tackle classroom exercises, and they all come out winners.

Under a version of cooperative learning, four or five students work together to complete a given assignment. Each student is encouraged to contribute. If there is disagreement, students must sort out the problem and come to a final agreement before the assignment is considered complete, for any of them.

Once the assignment is finished, a member of the group will report to the teacher to find out if more work is necessary or get confirmation that the exercise has been successfully completed.

Fourth-grade teacher Erma Jones says that the method is especially helpful for groups of students with mixed academic ability. “It allows less academically capable students to learn through interaction with those more academically inclined,” Jones explains.

Erma Jones (312) 536-5530.

College students ‘teach’ at Gray

Gray Elementary School, 3730 N. Laramie, added a new twist to tutoring programs by using some of its State Chapter 1 money to hire college students as tutors.

A committee including Principal Stuart Gold and a parent, community, and teacher member of the local school council contacted the University of Illinois at Chicago and Northeastern, Loyola, and DePaul universities to put out the word that Gray would pay tutors $6 an hour. A total of $20,000 has been earmarked for the program.

Seventeen college students are now working under the direction of class-

room teachers to help low-achieving students with reading.

Launched in late February, the program has been so successful, says Gray, that the LSC is considering expanding it to include math and writing.

Stuart Gold (312) 794-8320.

Pupils make ‘filmstrips’ to retell stories

At Greene Elementary School, 3537 S. Paulina, students are learning how to read stories for meaning by making their own “filmstrips” depicting those stories.

Children first read stories or novels out loud in groups. They then draw a series of pictures that retell the stories, in effect, making their own filmstrips. This exercise forces them to think about what information is essential to convey so that their classmates understand the story as they did.

“They get to use higher-level thinking skills by evaluating, synthesizing, and applying information,” says teacher Mary Dunn. “It makes school more fun,” she adds.

Mary Dunn (312) 650-4560.

McKay students learn parenting skills

McKay Elementary School, 6901 S. Fairfield, is giving all its students, from kindergartners to 8th-graders, a new look at parenthood through monthly visits by mothers and their infants or young children.

During the visits, students ask the mothers questions, which have ranged
from how often diapers are changed to how having children can change a parent’s life. Teachers moderate the discussions.

Students see first-hand how children grow, how their needs, abilities, and responses change. And they begin to learn how to care for infants or toddlers.

Principal Alan Berger says the program, a joint project with Southwest Women Working Together, a nonprofit organization, can lay a foundation for good parenting skills, which children in disadvantaged families are less likely to acquire.

“Our goal is to teach children that it’s not always easy to be a parent and that becoming a parent is something they should plan,” says Elida Oettel of Southwest Women Working Together.

Sawyer forms LSC babysitting club

The local school council at Sawyer Elementary School, 5248 S. Sawyer, is growing its own babysitters. As a result, LSC members are freer to attend meetings and Sawyer pupils are learning how to be responsible babysitters.

Boys and girls in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades who have at least a C average are eligible to sign up for lessons and one-to-two-hour “assignments,” which pay $10 each. Students get first-aid and CPR training from the local fire department. So far, eight students are participating.

LSC members Pat Nowakowski and Kim Beck say the program has sparked so much interest that other councils are asking for recommendations for sitters to use outside of school. State law prohibits a school from hiring “outsiders” for in-school babysitting, says Nowakowski.

Pat Nowakowski (312) 737-9245
or Kim Beck (312) 436-2797.

Gompers parents join teaching teams

At Gompers Elementary, 12303 S. State, necessity once again has proven to be the mother of invention.

Earlier this school year, Principal Blondean Davis called on members of the Gompers Local School Council to help in classrooms during two weeks when a number of teachers were attending a conference.

The LSC members were so fascinated by their “teaching” experience, that they subsequently formed grade-level teams to work with teachers on uniform standards and procedures and a curriculum guide for parents to use at home with their children.

“They came to understand for themselves just what goes on in the classroom,” Davis says. “It bridged a gap between teachers and LSC members and opened up dialogue.”

Blondean Davis (312) 821-2875.

Garvey gets LSC safety patrol

In addition to attending meetings, seven members of the local school council at Garvey Elementary, 10309 S. Morgan, also attend to safety at the school, filling in gaps that teachers could not cover.

With walkie-talkies in hand and red and white jackets on their backs, the council members patrol the school and playground before and after school hours and during lunchtime. They received training from the local police department.

“Before, it was difficult to give teachers their lunch period [and keep the school patrolled],” says Principal Eleanor Temple. “Now some of the LSC members even walk some students home from school.”

Eleanor Temple or Shelly McLaughlin (312) 881-5263.

Chopin uses algebra in aide equation

When Principal Salvador Gonzalez drew up a proposed budget for Chopin Elementary, 2450 W. Rice, he made provision for two new teacher aides.

When the Chopin Local School Council got the budget, it decided instead to hire 10 part-time teacher aides, from among Chopin parents. Gonzalez now figures that with these parents involved more deeply in the school, Chopin will be getting more than its money’s worth.

He adds that the move also helps parents by enabling some of them to earn extra money, up to $1,000. Teachers train the aides in skills ranging from tutoring to classroom management. Parents choose their own hours.

Salvador Gonzalez (312) 292-5060.

Charlotte Smarte-Faal

Send descriptions of bright ideas to CATALYST/Bright Ideas, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, Ill., 60604. Include the name of a contact and a phone number.
SUPPLEMENTAL MONEY FOR POOR CHILDREN TO TRIPLE FOR '90-'91

The amount of supplemental money that schools will receive for the education of low-income students will almost triple for the 1990-91 school year.

The allotment of State Chapter I funds will rise from $137 per low-income student in 1989-90 to roughly $420 in 1990-91, according to preliminary estimates by the Board of Education's budget office.

The per-pupil amount will increase substantially each school year through 1993-94, at which time 100 percent of these funds will be funneled to schools for use largely at their discretion.

Before the Chicago School Reform Act was adopted, the Board of Education used virtually all of State Chapter I funds for basic programs as kindergarten and libraries. The Act mandated that the money be freed up for supplementary programs and that the dollars "follow" the low-income children who, in effect, generate them.

The shift in the money's use puts new pressure on the Board to win revenue increases to provide salary raises and cover the costs of inflation.

Last fall, the School Board forecast, optimistically, a $51 million revenue shortfall for the 1990-91 school year. The number was based on a number of now questionable assumptions: the temporary income-tax increase becomes permanent, that no property-tax relief is granted, and that health insurance costs hold even. Further, no provision was made for expected employee salary increases.

COALITION SEeks EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR ILLINOIS SCHOOLS

Ways to rectify the inequity in funding from one school district to the next are being explored by the EdEquity Coalition.

Per-pupil funding varies widely in Illinois, largely because the state relies heavily on the property tax to pay for public education. Among unit districts (those with students in kindergarten through 12th grade), per-pupil funding ranges from $2,605 to $4,624, not counting the top or bottom 10 percent of districts.

Funding alternatives being studied include 100-percent state funding of public schools, uniform funding among districts in each county, raising the minimum level of state funding to $5,000 per pupil (which is more than Chicago now spends from all sources), and raising the state income tax and lowering property taxes.

Other alternatives are replacing the local property tax with a state property tax on commercial, industrial, and other nonresidential property and dividing the proceeds among schools, and redirecting "excess" property tax revenue from property-wealthy school districts to property-poor school districts.

For additional information contact the Coalition's conveners, the Chicago Urban League (312) 285-5800, the League of Women Voters (312) 939-5935 or the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance (312) 939-2202.

PRINCIPALS EXEMPTED FROM RESIDENCY RULE

The Interim Board of Education has exempted principals from the city residency requirement adopted by a predecessor School Board in 1981.

It granting the exemption, the Board cited the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act, which prohibits the Board from imposing criteria other than state certification when hiring principals. When adopted, that prohibition was aimed at ending the Board's long-standing practice of testing principal candidates.

The Board also was to have considered in mid-May a proposal by member Joseph Reed to permit local school councils to supplement salaries that principals automatically receive under the Board's administrative compensation plan.

At least one council had complained that it had difficulty attracting candidates from outside the school system because their pay would start at the bottom of the scale.

WELLs PRINCIPAL CHALLENGED IN COURT

The controversial actions that re-instated David Peterson as principal of Wells High School, 936 N. Ashland, are being challenged in court and at the Board of Education.

The outcome, say a number of leading school reformers, could determine in large measure the limits of local school councils' power.

Late last year, Peterson failed to get the six votes he needed to keep his job, in part because teacher Olga Sulbaran abstained. In March, Peterson and his five supporters on the local school council ruled that the November meeting at which members had chosen
Sulbaran to fill a vacancy violated the State Open Meetings Act. Sulbaran was then replaced with a pro-Peterson teacher, and the council voted 6 to 4 to retain Peterson.

Saying Peterson and his group may have violated the Open Meetings Act, Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough ordered the council to take yet another vote. The council sustained previous action to reinstate Peterson.

Michael Radziilowsky, attorney for the dissenters, said that anyone seeking reversal of action taken at an allegedly illegal meeting must file suit. The council “did not have jurisdiction” to invalidate Sulbaran’s appointment, he said. Further, he charged, Sulbaran was ousted only because she abstained on Peterson, and that is a violation of her right to free speech.

In addition to filing suit, the dissenters have asked the School Board to overrule Kimbrough and the Peterson faction.

**REFORM-MINDED PRINCIPALS DRAW UP OWN DEMANDS**

Full-time assistant principals, more office clerks, and school-level vetoes over bus companies are among the requests of a new coalition of principals who have pledged support of school reform.

More than 65 principals, with the support of their local school councils, have signed the We Care Coalition’s “manifesto.”

The coalition’s 23 requests include bookkeeping changes that would speed and simplify budgeting, giving schools more complete and timely information; a purchasing policy that allows schools to get supplies quickly and order directly from vendors; more direct and timely communications to the local schools; improvements in the system-wide computer program to allow schools to access budget and personnel information; and a more responsive central office staff.

**KIMBROUGH SUSPENDS PICKARD PRINCIPAL**

In an unprecedented move, Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough suspended a principal without pay for allegedly inciting student walkouts.

Sylvia F. Aslani of Pickard Elementary, 2301 W. 21st st., was suspended for 25 days for allegedly encouraging truancy in violation of state law.

Parents and pupils at the school were protesting a School Board decision to transfer 80 students immediately to a new school that had opened to relieve overcrowding at Pickard. Aslani had granted those students permission to remain at Pickard until the end of the school year.

A number of reformers contend Kimbrough and the Board overstepped their authority by ordering the transfers and punishing the principal.

**COALITION STUDIES DESEGREGATION PLAN**

The equity task force of the City-Wide Coalition for School Reform is searching for a “more equitable” enrollment policy than the one that has evolved in response to the School Board’s desegregation consent decree.

The city’s system of magnet schools and programs has created a “two-tiered” school system, its critics contend. And a recent report by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance said that Chicago has gone as far as it can in desegregating its schools, given that whites make up only 12 percent of enrollment. The Panel said more money should now go into improving education at the hundreds of schools that remain segregated.

The Coalition’s task force says its first goal is to increase the number of “attractive” schools in the system. Its set of principles includes: keeping restrictive school entrance requirements to a minimum, equalizing resources between students who attend their neighborhood schools and those who transfer, increasing information available to parents on school choices, and opposing vouchers that could be used for attendance at nonpublic schools.

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Changes sought in reform law

Dozens of amendments are being prepared for the Chicago School Reform Act. But one influential reform coalition is urging legislators to just say no, for now.

The City Wide Coalition for School Reform, made up largely of community and civic groups, would like to see some changes—giving student LSC members a vote, for example—but they fear that recommending any change now would open Pandora’s box.

“I don’t think we would be the gatekeepers [for amendments],” Ronald Sistrunk of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization told Coalition colleagues at a recent meeting. Added Diana Lauber of Leadership for Quality Education: “Legislative leaders don’t want to deal with amendments.”

Sen. Arthur L. Berman (D-Chicago), the Reform Act’s chief sponsor, did not rule out changes, but he said no one should expect anything “major” this session.

Meanwhile, organizations are compiling wish lists. Here is a sampling:

- The Chicago Principals Association (1) would bar teacher LSC members from voting on principal contracts, (2) would permit nonrenewed principals to return to positions comparable to those they held before their appointments as principal, (3) would set Feb. 1 as the deadline for LSCs to tell principals whether their contracts will be renewed, with failure to act guaranteeing principals at least one more year of service, and (4) provide for replacing LSC members who don’t attend meetings.

Unlike some reform groups, the principal’s association would not make school engineers and lunchroom managers answerable solely to principals. Instead, the association would give principals and LSCs a say in the evaluation of school engineers and lunchroom managers and require them to develop maintenance and food service improvement plans for inclusion in school improvement plans.

- The Chicago African American Consortium for Quality Education, a new group convened by Madeline Sanders, would (1) require that the racial/ethnic mix of each LSC reflect that of the school’s students, (2) provide operating budgets for LSCs and subdistrict councils, (3) set July 15 as the deadline for Mayor Daley to appoint a permanent School Board, and (4) charge the School Board Nominating Commission, rather than the Chicago School Finance Authority, with monitoring the progress of reform.

The Consortium also would delete a provision directing the Illinois State Board of Education to develop incentives for parents to choose schools within the district. “Open enrollment or choice will usher in another layer of selective schools,” the group reasons.

- The Chicago Region PTA would (1) permit schools to increase the size of LSCs, (2) stagger the terms of LSC members, (3) reduce the size of the new permanent School Board to 9 or 11 members, from 15 members, (4) forbid LSCs and subdistrict councils from fundraising outside of submitting grant applications, and (5) give community organizations a voice but not a vote on subdistrict councils. 

Linda Lenz

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ALUMNI

Helping alma mater.
The Chicago Public Schools Alumni Association is offering free training for alumni who want to form alumni and friends associations at their elementary and high schools.
Topics include networking—with local businesses, civic groups, local school councils, alumni, parents, and school staff—and setting goals, planning events, fundraising, and recruiting members.
For more information call Harriet O'Donnell, executive director, (312) 902-4707.

TEACHERS

Reform in New Zealand.
Chicago teachers can learn more about school reform from their New Zealand counterparts next summer through the Visiting Teacher Program of the Foundation for International Education.
New Zealand, widely regarded as the most literate country in the world, decentralized its school system last fall, granting complete local control. New Zealand also is a leader in whole-language reading instruction.
Under the Visiting Teacher Program, teachers work for three weeks with fellow teachers and can earn graduate credit.
For more information, contact Dr. Ross Korsgaard, Foundation for International Education, 1231 Cascade Court, River Falls, Wis., 54022 or call (715) 425-2718.

FORUMS

Building self-esteem.
Jeff Howard, a nationally recognized social psychologist and president of the Efficacy Institute of Boston, next month will discuss practical approaches to nurturing self-esteem in inner-city students.
Organized by the National Alliance of Business and the Industry Liaison Group, Region V, his presentation also is intended to plant the seeds for an Efficacy program in Chicago, which would enlist black adults to serve as role models, teachers, and cheerleaders for black schoolchildren.
The program's intent is to show children that their skin color and relative poverty need not prevent them from becoming successful.
The Howard workshop will be held twice: From 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. June 8 in the Amoco Building, Indiana Room, 200 E. Randolph, and from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. June 9 in the Fairmont Hotel, 200 N. Columbus. For additional information call (312) 341-9766.

The future of reform.
Both the history and the possible future of Chicago school reform will be the topic of a July 20 forum at the Community Renewal Society.
Anne C. Hallett, executive director of the Wieboldt Foundation, will be among the panelists. Roosevelt University is co-sponsor.
The forum will be held from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 332 S. Michigan, Suite 500. For more information, call Nelson Ndove (312) 427-4830, ext. 258.

RESOURCES

Census education. A kit designed to help teachers teach students about the U.S. census and show how math is used in real life is available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
The kit was developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in conjunction with the 1990 Census Education Project at the Census Bureau.
Material for upper-grade students, for example, requires the calculation of medians, averages, and percentages as students gather information from fictitious cities.
For more information contact the 1990 Census Education Project, Data User Services Division, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. (301) 763-1510.

Black contributions.
The Real McCoy: African American invention and innovation, 1619-1930, which highlights important contributions of African slaves and African Americans to the country's development, is available from the Smithsonian Institution Press.
The book describes, for example, the difficulties Elijah McCoy had in patenting an engine lubricator he invented and then in protecting his patent. The marketing of inferior imitations forced customers to insist on buying "the real McCoy."
The Real McCoy can be ordered from the Smithsonian Press; Dept. 900, Blue Ridge Summit, Penn. 17294-0900.