In this issue, its first in newsletter format, CATALYST focuses on principals. Pointers for selecting them begin on page 4.

A program for assessing candidates' skills is described on page 7.

Muddling through principal selection

by Lynda Gorov

Members of the Local School Council at Oscar Mayer Elementary School were reeling off qualities that the perfect principal would have. Two members of the audience raced to write down the traits. By the time they had finished, the council's wish list covered an entire blackboard and two poster-sized sheets of paper.

Scanning the list, one father concluded: "Yes, God will apply to be the principal of Oscar Mayer."

However humorous, the quip underscored the frustrations and anxieties LSCs across Chicago are experiencing as they decide who will be their schools' principal for the next four years. The council at Oscar Mayer, located in the gentrified North Side neighborhood of DePaul, is considered among the savviest in the city. Yet even its members seemed bewildered by their new responsibilities. In early March they were ploughing through 100 applications.

The selection of a principal is the most important decision the city's 540 parent-led school councils will make. Under the Chicago School Reform Act, half will pick their principals this year and the remainder will choose theirs in 1991. As an April 15 deadline approached for the first group, LSCs complained they had received little or no direction from the central administration.

"We have not gotten any guidelines yet, none at all," said Harriet O'Donnell, an LSC member at Amundsen High School, 5110 N. Damen, and executive director of the Chicago Public Schools Alumni Association.

Too little too late

That was the case until Feb. 13, when the administration held the first of six workshops. At that time, the Board was declaring a Feb. 28 deadline for schools to decide whether to keep their current principals. Under pressure of a lawsuit filed by a reform organization, it eventually conceded that the date was more a target than a deadline.

By the first week of March, 216 councils had voted to retain the incumbent, reported Bruce Berndt, president of the Chicago Principals Association. Another 43 councils had voted to dismiss the incumbent, who in most cases was an interim assigned last September, he said. And at 16 schools, the incumbent either had retired or was being considered for retention, along with other candidates. Typically, councils made their decisions without the benefit of professional advice.
Some private, nonprofit groups
did provide assistance upon request,
and the Lawyers’ School Reform
Advisory Project distributed a 20-
page booklet of suggestions on how
councils could proceed and stay out
of trouble.

At first, the central administration
declined even to act as a clearing-
house for job candidates and
schools. When the Amundsen LSC
asked to place its help-wanted ad in
the weekly Superintendent’s Bulletin,
the request was ignored, said
O’Donnell. The Bulletin is now
accepting notices.

Like community groups, the
Board’s school reform implementation
office provided guidance on request.
Field coordinator Tomas Revollo said
up to 25 calls each day concerned
principal selection. The most frequent
question was: “How do we do it?”
LSC members needed information
on everything from advertising to
interviewing. One member at
Trumbull Elementary, 5200 N.
Ashland, wanted reassurance that
she would not jeopardize her child’s
education by opposing the principal.
Callers frequently complained about
insufficient time to evaluate current
principals and recruit new ones.

Out of a job

“They have not been given
enough time to decide the future of
someone who has been in the system
for a while,” Revollo agreed.
“Remember, a principal whose con-
tract is not renewed will not be trans-
ferred anywhere. He will be out of a
job. The LSCs have questions about
this and about everything else.”
Ousted principals may bid for
other administrative jobs or be
placed on a teacher eligibility
list—and hope a former colleague
picks them for a classroom post.

Even confident, smoothly running
councils have questions. For example,
must they abide by a longstanding
Board rule that puts principals who
are new to the system at the bottom
of the principal salary schedule? The
Amundsen council, which received
applications from as far away as
Alaska, wants to be able to offer
more than $57,000, the minimum for
a school its size.

The council also is requiring appli-
cants to be or become city residents.
“I hope it’s legal,” said O’Donnell.
Board attorney Patricia Whitten said
that, in her view, it’s not. The Reform
Act bars special hiring require-
ments for principals, she said.

“We’re asking the councils to rein-
vent the wheel, and I shudder to won-
der how the Board can monitor this
process,” said Berndt of the prin-
cipals association.

While the overwhelming majority
of councils quietly muddled through
their first major challenge, media cov-
erage of protests and lawsuits at
eight schools created the impression
that chaos prevailed and that racial
politics was to blame.

Students were the core of protests
at four largely Hispanic schools
where white or black principals failed
to win retention—Burns Elementary,
2524 S. Central Park; Marquette
Elementary, 6550 S. Richmond; Spry
Elementary; 2400 S. Marshall; and
Wells High, 936 N. Ashland.

Council members who opposed the
principals were accused of maneuver-
ing to replace them with Hispanics.

“IT isn’t a one-way street. IT’s a
two-way street.”

—Charles Vietzen, principal

It should come as no surprise that
Hispanic parents want to “consid-
er—not necessarily hire—but consid-
er” Hispanic candidates, said Carlos
Heredia, executive director of Por Un
Barrio Mejor, a community group.
But he challenged the allegation of
Hispanic racism. Some LSCs in
Hispanic neighborhoods kept white
principals while others dismissed
Hispanic principals, he noted. “Anyone
who is not renewed is claiming it’s just
because they are not Hispanic,” he
said. “That’s very simplistic.”

At Wells, for example, the coun-
cil’s eight Hispanic members were
evenly divided over Principal David
Peterson. (See accompanying story.)
And Revollo, of the School Board’s
reform team, said the Burns council
was planning to retain its principal
until he did something the council
considered an affront.

Lawsuits filed

At Kelly High, 4236 S. California,
another predominantly Hispanic
school, the council dismissed an
Hispanic interim principal and
replaced her with another Hispanic
interim principal. The former filed
suit, charging lack of due process.

The Kelly lawsuit was one of two
that principals had filed by early
March.

Naomi Nickerson, who was dis-
missed from Cameron Elementary,
1234 N. Monticello, charged in a
$1 million federal lawsuit that LSC
chairperson Myra Perez sought her
removal because she is African-
American and Perez wants an
Hispanic principal. Perez accused
Nickerson of acting against the coun-
cil’s will. The school’s enrollment is
53 percent Hispanic and 45 percent black.

“There are some serious black/
Latino conflicts, which reflect what is
happening citywide,” said Joseph
Gardner, chairman of the Illinois
Rainbow Coalition. “These conflicts
are literally polarizing certain schools.”

Principal fights back in

One principal won back a
job he had lost by ousting an
opponent from his council.

David Peterson, of Wells
High School, initially fell one
vote short of retention, in part
because of a “no” vote by a
teacher the council had selected
to replace another teacher who
had resigned.

At his comeback meeting,
Peterson joined his five support-
ers in ruling that the meeting at
which the replacement was cho-
sen violated the Open Meetings
Act. These members then seated
a teacher who gave him the
sixth vote he needed to hang on
to his job. The School Board
was investigating.
But he added: "It is important for emerging minorities to have their ethnic group represented in leadership positions. It isn't mandatory, but it is preferential that they have a role model. It's a natural tendency for LSCs to try to find a principal that reflects the student body."

Some disgruntled parents and principals have accused the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO), whose membership is primarily Mexican, of orchestrating ousters of non-Hispanic principals. Last year, UNO did stage protests at Bowen High, 2710 E. 89th, in an unsuccessful attempt to get the principal removed. The principal is white and seemed then to have the support of black parents.

UNO Executive Director Daniel Solis denied that his organization is trying to install Hispanic principals. "It is important to have a black or Hispanic principal, but it's not absolutely necessary," he said. "The school system is set up in such a way that it's already very segregated. The polarization is more between the parents and the community on one end and the professional educators on the other."

Heredia, who has had differences with UNO, backed Solis. He and other Hispanic leaders said school staffs seemed to have organized the protests that sparked the accusations of racial and ethnic bias.

**Teachers accused**

I was at all the [LSC] meetings except Wells and it was crystal clear that teachers were taking on roles they shouldn't be taking on," said Heredia. "And the principals are either tolerating or promoting their behavior."

Violence erupted at one school, but it seemed only indirectly related to the principal's ouster. A small group of students was picketing outside Morgan Park High, 1744 W. Pryor, when a false fire alarm emptied the school. A scuffle broke out as police tried to get students back into the school and several students and policemen sustained minor injuries. The school's student council subsequently accused police of using excessive force, which police officials denied.

Meanwhile, some principals are concerned they will be held accountable for problems they cannot solve:

"There are some things a principal can't control, no matter how visible he is in the community," said James Ahern, principal of Bowen. "Generally, and I'm not talking about myself, it seems to be coming down to race, ethnicity, politics and personality."

At most schools, however, reform has created an opportunity for parents to reaffirm support for their local administrator. In Subdistrict 2 on the North Side, for example, several LSCs already have issued letters of intent to principals whose contracts do not expire until 1991. Other principals were being wooed by LSCs familiar with their good reputations.

"It isn't a one-way street. It's a two-way street," said Charles Vietzen, principal of Hubbard High School, 6200 S. Hamlin. "The principals who have good images have schools trying to hire them away."

Vietzen himself received several offers. He said the most gratifying came from the LSC at his own Hubbard High. Vietzen is staying put.

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Lynda Gorov is a Chicago writer.
Selecting a principal: Some pointers

by Martha C. Brown

For the 276 local school councils that don’t have to pick a principal until next year, April 15, 1991, may seem to lie in the far distant future. It doesn’t. Considering the work it takes to do the job right, today is not too soon to start.

To help you get going—and give some last-minute guidance to the schools facing an April 15, 1990 deadline—CATALYST solicited information and opinions from more than a dozen principals and education leaders and reviewed more than a dozen studies and guides on principal effectiveness and selection. The following are the key points that emerged from this survey.

First, set your sights high. “We thought no one could measure up to our requirements,” said a search committee chairman in another Midwestern city. “Wrong! We had to turn qualified people away.”

Picking a principal is not an isolated task. It is very much tied to setting goals for your school and developing school improvement and spending plans. In each area, you first must pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of your school and its programs. And you must learn what improve-

ments staff, parents and even students want to see. Only then can you move forward with confidence.

✓ Pinpointing needs

Interviewing your current principal is one way to begin the evaluation of your school. A sample set of interview questions is contained in “All our kids can learn to read,” a booklet published by Designs for Change (312-922-0317), a nonprofit child advocacy group that helped draft the Chicago School Reform Act. The booklet also contains suggestions for getting “second opinions” from others at the school. A pamphlet on conducting a survey on school needs can be obtained from the National Committee for Citizens in Education (1-800-638-9675).

While different schools have different needs, all good principals have some traits in common. For example:

▪ They believe and communicate through their actions that all children can learn. They support good teachers, help weak ones improve and move to dismiss those who don’t. They look for and introduce programs known to increase achievement.

▪ They maintain an atmosphere that is orderly without being rigid. One West Coast principal went so far as to put her desk in the girls’ washroom, replacing gang fights there with counseling sessions. Some principals forbid infringements on teaching time, such as announcements over the public address system.

▪ They’re highly visible, spending at least half of their time in hallways and classrooms. Sometimes they teach a class.

Additional characteristics to look for are described in “Rating and selecting a principal,” published by the Lawyers’ School Reform Advisory Project (312-233-2494).

✓ Getting organized

The full local school council is responsible for hiring the principal, but a hiring subcommittee can be formed to do the groundwork. It might include three parent members, a teacher member and a community member, as well as two persons outside the LSC. Don’t let your subcom-
mittee get too big; seven members is a good size.

After the council agrees on the traits and experience it wants in a principal, the search committee should draw up rating forms so that all candidates can be measured with the same yardstick. "Rating and selecting a principal" has a sample. Different forms may be needed for interviews, resumes, and references.

Your council also would be well advised to read, at the outset, the section on illegal discrimination in "Rating and selecting a principal." The booklet warns: "An LSC may not consider any of the following characteristics when reviewing its principal or hiring a new one: race/color/ethnicity, national origin, religion, age (if 40 or older), marital status, parental status, physical or mental handicap (if unrelated to ability to do the job) or sexual orientation."

The booklet also cautions: "Watch your tongue." It says that discrimination can be read into such comments as "Only a black [or white or Hispanic] principal would understand the problems we face in our community."

Also from the outset, keep signed and dated notes on your activities, to avoid misunderstandings and protect yourselves against unjustified accusations. At Inter-American Magnet School, 919 W. Barry, principal selection committees photograph applicants and, with their permission, tape record interviews—to avoid confusion over who said what.

Looking around

With standards in hand, your council or subcommittee is ready to begin its search for a school leader. Look first at the one you already have. Interview and assess your current principal with an eye to how well he or she meets your standards. "Rating and selecting a principal" offers suggestions on how to do this. Some councils who are not sure whether their current principal is the best person for the job have posed openings and invited the incumbent to reapply. The down side of this approach is that the councils may lose their principals to other schools.

There are several ways to look beyond your school. You can place a notice in the school system's weekly personnel bulletin (312-890-7625). Phone orders should be followed up with a written confirmation signed by the council president. You can contact placement offices at universities that have principal preparation programs. And you can place an ad.

The Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), the Illinois Principals Association (IPA) and the Chicago Principals Association (CPA) publish job notices for free in bulletins they mail to members. For IASA, notices should be typed on official stationery, signed by council chairpersons and mailed to IASA at 230 Broadway, Suite 200, Springfield, Ill., 62701. For IPA, notices should include the name of a contact and a phone number and be sent to Viccie Russell, IPA, 430 E. Vine, Springfield, Ill., 62703. To place a notice with the CPA, call 312-263-7767.

Education Week (202-686-0800), a national newspaper based in Washington D.C., charges 95 cents per word for small-type ads. The Board of Education’s Office of Reform Implementation (312-890-3710) has sample ads.

At this point, it is unclear whether new principals must live in Chicago. In 1980, the School Board adopted a requirement that all future board employees had to move into the city within six months of their employment. However, the 1988 state reform law prohibits special "criteria" as a condition of employment for principals. The measure was designed to end the Board's testing program for principal candidates. But Board attorney Patricia Whitten said she believes it also nullifies the residency requirement for principals.

Checking records

Applicants from Illinois must have a State of Illinois administrative certificate with an administrative endorsement. The School Board's Bureau of Employment Eligibility (312-890-8262) has a record of certification held by board employees. Applicants from outside the system should bring their certificates to their first interview. Councils should copy both sides. A successful out-of-state applicant would have nine months to take the basic skills and administrative tests Illinois requires and two years to meet Illinois' course requirements.

The Board’s Bureau of Employment Eligibility (312-890-8262) also makes required criminal background checks and maintains files on required physical examinations.

Ask applicants to supply a resume that includes schooling, professional experience and references, people who will share their knowledge about the applicants. Ask applicants to submit a letter describing their current work and how they plan to return to the state. Check for clear, concise writing. That's a must for principals, who must communicate with teachers, parents and the community and should be models for their students.

Checking references

Ask references to supply letters attesting to applicants' skills. Follow up with phone calls. People may say something that they won't put in writing. Ask for the names of others who know the applicant. Try to talk to students, parents, teachers, and custodians at the schools where applicants work.

When considering a principal from another Chicago public school, ask the subdistrict office to supply that school's test scores and attendance and dropout rates. But look beyond the numbers. The dropout problem doesn't begin in high school. And some schools with low test scores have excellent principals, just as some schools with high test scores have laggard leaders.

The Chicago Teachers Union can supply the number of grievances filed at a school for alleged violations of the contract. But again, look beyond the numbers.

If an applicant has not been a principal, find out if he or she has had other management experience—heading a department or a committee, for example. Look for evidence of good teaching and interest in the community. Ask supervisors and fellow teachers, "What strengths and weaknesses would she have as principal?" Ask the applicant to discuss strong and weak principals he or she has worked with.

Gather all written information and notes you have collected. Meet in private to rate the candidates and decide which ones you want to interview. Send prompt, courteous letters to those you don't.
✓ Conducting interviews

Plan interviews carefully, laying out the same questions for all candidates and deciding what kinds of answers you want to hear. First-round interviews can run as short as 15 minutes. All committee members should attend all interviews. Arrange the interview schedule and candidates’ entrance and exit routes in a way that they don’t run into each other. Observe your time limits.

Once finalists have been identified—five is a manageable number—all LSC members should join in for longer interviews. Plan for at least 45 minutes for each candidate.

Rehearse your interviews, with LSC members taking the role of applicants. Be on the lookout for confusing questions. Change the wording of questions that get only a “yes” or “no” for an answer. For example, ask “What have you done with ineffective teachers?” instead of “Have you ever dismissed an ineffective teacher?”

Include questions that deal with the problems at your school. For example, “Our children don’t do well in math when they get to high school. How would you improve math instruction in Grades 7 and 8?” Probe further: “Is there evidence this approach works for most students?” To see how applicants handle stress, some interviewers ask an extremely detailed question, one calling for minute knowledge of attendance laws, for example. Beware of applicants who bluff their way through.

At interviews for finalists, ask applicants to expand on issues mentioned earlier: “Tell us more about the discipline plan you mentioned last time.” Ask for evidence of success. If an applicant started a writing improvement program, ask to see “before and after” writing samples from students. A good wrap-up question is: “Is there anything you want to tell us that we didn’t ask about?”

Sample questions and topics for questions are contained in “Rating and selecting a principal” and two other publications distributed earlier this school year to all councils, “Best practice: teaching and learning in Chicago” and “Rethinking urban schools: The Chicago agenda.” To prevent getting rehearsed answers from candidates familiar with these publications, come up with your own questions.

Throughout each interview, look for signs that indicate the candidate would work well with your council and believes that all children can learn.

✓ Making visits

If possible, observe applicants on the job. Committee members can make brief visits to applicants’ schools before or after the first round of interviews. Different members could show up on different days. LSC members should make more extended visits to the schools of finalists. One highly regarded Chicago principal reported: “Observers shadowed me for a week—even at sports events. I never knew when they’d show up.”

Examine a principal’s “paper trail.” Daily bulletins, staff memos, and notes to parents show management style and priorities.

Again, meet in private to rate your finalists. To maintain good working relationships with each other and the person you pick, do not repeat in public what your colleagues said in private.

The official vote for principal must be taken at a public meeting. To win appointment, an applicant needs seven of the council’s ten votes (the current principal does not vote on this matter). If no candidate gets seven votes, the subdistrict superintendent will choose a principal from among the LSC’s top three candidates.

✓ Writing contracts

The council and the new principal then negotiate a four-year contract. Before signing it, the council should read it aloud and discuss it at an LSC meeting. Additions may be made to the basic contract drawn up by the School Board, but they need approval from Board of Education attorneys.

For more guidance, plan to attend one of the workshops being offered around the city on March 24 and 31. Sponsored by the Citywide Coalition on School Reform, they will deal with principal contracts, school improvement plans and budgets. Make reservations by calling Gwen Griffin at (312) 922-0317.

Some reform groups suggest that instead of trying to add details to the contract, councils should lay out expectations for their principals in their school improvement plans, which will serve as educational road maps for the next three years. The contract states that the principal “is responsible” for carrying out the plan, which must win council approval.

Further, the Chicago School Reform Act directs the principal to write the plan “in consultation with the local school council, all categories of school staff, parents and community residents.”

✓ Setting goals

Dariel Lortie, a professor of education at the University of Chicago, cautions against setting detailed, arbitrary goals, such as raising test scores a specific number of points. Plan instead to introduce one of the new elementary-school math programs that have proven to be successful, for example. At the high school level, grading and returning more homework might be a goal.

Don’t set too many goals at once. The principal more likely will gain the support of teachers by focusing on a few related goals. If the principal says something “can’t be done,” ask for an explanation. Then ask yourself: “Is that explanation reasonable?” And remember, to improve teaching, a principal must learn about new programs and arrange for staff development activities. These, too, should be part of the plans.

Lortie suggests an orderly, “stepped process” for developing a school improvement plan. For example, the LSC could present preliminary suggestions in writing. The principal would then respond in writing before starting work on the plan. Misunderstandings could then be nippec in the bud. “At the end of the process,” said Lortie, “both parties should be clear about the expectations.”

Martha C. Brown is a Chicago-based education writer and author of Schoolwise: A parent’s guide to getting the best education for your child.
Would-be principals show their stuff

by Paul W. Hersey

The challenges we face in all aspects of American society today not only call for, but demand high quality leadership. In economics, in defense, in government, in medicine, and in business, whether the United States moves forward is determined to a great extent by the nature of its leaders.

In schools, too, outstanding leaders are needed.

"Over the years, as a reporter, I have never seen a good school with a poor principal, or a poor school with a good principal," said Fred Hechinger, president, The New York Times Foundation, and a veteran commentator on education.

We at the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) naturally have always believed that principals and assistant principals are central to quality schools. But almost 15 years ago we asked ourselves an important question: If principals are so important, are we doing the best job possible in selecting them?

Superintendents typically have had little to go on when naming principals: written applications in which candidates summarize their experiences and perhaps write philosophical statements of beliefs, a fairly short interview and, perhaps, the results of paper-and-pencil tests.

Better way needed

It became clear to NASSP that if the job is as important as we know it is, a more effective selection process was needed. We could no longer assume that colleges and universities could guarantee that graduates with administrative degrees were ready to be instructional leaders. The job was too complex, changing too rapidly.

Our goal—and a necessity for school systems—is to find school leaders who are visionaries. We need "idea" people to lead our schools, not just managers who keep the roof on the place. To find these people we launched the NASSP Assessment Center Project.

Assessment centers are moveable laboratories in which job candidates, confronted with simulated trials and tribulations, demonstrate their skills under the watchful eyes of trained assessors. The U.S. Army used assessment centers during World War II to pick intelligence officers. More than 3,000 businesses use them today to select managers. And school districts in 34 states, Canada, England, West Germany, and Australia use our model to help select principals.

Assessment centers grow

In some cases—indeed, in some states—would-be or new principals are required to go through an assessment center. In others, individuals decide whether they want to add the experience to their portfolio. Over the last eight years, 58 centers run by school districts, universities, educational associations and state departments of education have assessed 12,000 potential administrators.

Here's how the NASSP model works. Candidates are placed in large groups and small groups to solve problems. They are asked to respond to an "in basket" brimming with typical school correspondence. They are sent on a fact-finding mission with an assessor who plays the role of a "resource person." They undergo a scripted two-hour interview. Meanwhile, a team of rotating assessors, typically professors or administrators from other districts, watches their every move. This process takes two days.

For the next three days, the assessors review their copious notes and decide on scores for each candidate in each of 12 areas, ranging from decisiveness and sensitivity to personal motivation and educational values. Candidates then receive a confidential report on their performance.

We have discovered that many people simply didn't realize that some of the skills were essential for success as a school leader. Sensitivity

Paul W. Hersey is director of the NASSP Assessment and Development Center Project.
What makes a good principal: 12 generic skills

Through research and extensive interviewing, NASSP identified 12 generic skills that are important for principals to have as they carry out their daily responsibilities:

- **PROBLEM ANALYSIS:** Ability to seek out relevant data and analyze complex information to determine the important elements of a problem situation; searching for information with a purpose.
- **JUDGMENT:** Ability to reach logical conclusions and make high quality decisions based on available information; skill in identifying educational needs and setting priorities; ability to evaluate written communications critically.
- **ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY:** Ability to plan, schedule, and control the work of others; skill in using resources in an optimal fashion; ability to deal with heavy demands on one’s time.
- **DECISIVENESS:** Ability to recognize when a decision is required and to act quickly.
- **LEADERSHIP:** Ability to get others involved in solving problems; ability to recognize when a group requires direction, to interact with a group effectively and to guide people to the accomplishment of a task.
- **SENSITIVITY:** Ability to perceive the needs, concerns, and personal problems of others; skill in resolving conflicts; tact in dealing with persons from different backgrounds; ability to deal effectively with people concerning emotional issues; knowing what information to communicate and to whom.
- **STRESS TOLERANCE:** Ability to perform under pressure and during opposition; ability to think on one’s feet.
- **ORAL COMMUNICATION:** Ability to make a clear oral presentation.
- **WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:** Ability to express ideas clearly in writing; ability to write appropriately for different audiences—students, teachers, parents.
- **RANGE OF INTEREST:** Competence to discuss a variety of subjects—educational, political, current events, economic, etc.; desire to participate actively in events.
- **PERSONAL MOTIVATION:** Need to achieve in all activities attempted; evidence that work is important to personal satisfaction; ability to be self-motivated.
- **EDUCATIONAL VALUES:** Possession of a well-reasoned educational philosophy; receptiveness to new ideas and change.

All principals need to continue working on skills

Identifying skilled individuals for principal jobs is only the first step toward ensuring high-quality school leadership. Providing help and support for principals, both new and old, to grow in their jobs must follow.

In 1982 NASSP launched a program to do that. We called it Springfield because virtually every state had a city by that name and our goal was to ignite change in every state. Springfield focuses on the skills of problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability, decisiveness, leadership, and sensitivity.

At an opening three-day seminar principals participate in simulated school trials and tribulations, just as candidates do in assessment centers. With feedback from colleagues and trainers, they then draw up plans to shore up areas of weakness.

Over the next 16 to 20 weeks, a trained mentor—a colleague, not a boss—visits the school of each principal to provide support and advice. For example, a principal who is working on sensitivity and listening skills might ask a mentor to sit in on faculty meetings. This follow-up is the key to change. At a concluding seminar, principals review progress and set new goals.

Last year, NASSP introduced Leader 123 to upgrade instructional leadership. It hones the skills of planning, developing, implementing, and measuring. With this program, the take-home project is a plan to involve school staff in the creation of a new instructional program in, say, math or science.

"From the Desk Of," a program on written communication, will be ready in June. We will unveil a development program for mentoring and coaching in July. And a program on oral communications is in the works.

Along the way, the association also changed the name of our project. It is now called the NASSP Assessment and Development Center Project.

is one example. To be a leader, to work with and motivate people, one has to be sensitive to the needs, experiences and styles of others. We show candidates just how sensitive they are to others.

The American Psychological Association and a committee of industrial psychologists helped us develop the assessment center. A three-year study by researchers at Michigan State University found that principals who had scored well in the center went on to get good reviews on the job. The study, completed in 1981, showed the assessment center to be a valid procedure for selecting school administrators.

It is not the only way, however. Interviews, resumes, and job history all have a place in the selection process. The assessment center adds valid, unbiased information on how candidates behave.

For additional information contact Paul W. Hersey at NASSP, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091 (703-860-0200).
Opinions

Principals should pave way for teacher leadership

by Roland S. Barth

A few months ago, I heard a teacher recite from memory an unusual and haunting piece of poetry:

And one day, lying alone on the lawn on my back, hearing only the moon and groan of some far off train on a distant track, I saw above me, 2000 feet or more, something to which this clay, I must say, I've never seen anything like before.

The head goose, the leader of the "V" suddenly swerved out, leaving a vacancy that promptly was filled by the bird behind. The leader then flew alongside, the formation growing wide, and took his place at the back of the line—and they never missed a beat! [Stonberg, 1982, p.1].

In the piece, two important ideas emerge—leadership and community. It is not difficult to see an analogy between the geese and schools, each implying a "community of leaders."

Students as leaders

Students can be school leaders. When we think of student leadership, we usually think of elected student councils. But all too often, they become preoccupied with the senior prom or become a transparent attempt to co-opt students into the service of teachers’ and administrators’ goals. Seldom are they a forum in which students make what they believe in happen.

Currently, much is being said about the value of "community service" for students, particularly for adolescents who harbor so much energy, idealism, and moral outrage. Academic credit is given for some high school students to work in hospitals, libraries, and nursery schools. But as yet, few students and schools have turned the concept of community service to improving their own school community.

In an elementary school where I was principal we welcomed visitors. Yet none of us had time to give tours, answer delicate questions, and mediate between teachers and visitors. We decided to turn for help to fifth- and sixth-grade youngsters. Two teachers developed a "training program" that acquainted prospective tour guides with every nook and cranny of the school. Students talked with each adult who worked in the school about what they were doing and how they would like to receive visitors. We helped students anticipate tough, hypothetical questions.

When that first group of visitors, student teachers from Brandeis University, arrived, the guides were ready. They have one-hour tours of the school. The college students and their supervisor were impressed. The college teachers were impressed. I was impressed. And most important, perhaps, the youngsters were impressed—by how much they know about their school and by the responsibility with which they had been entrusted.

Teachers as leaders

Shortly after my arrival as principal of an elementary school, a veteran teacher sent me a memo indicating his intention to stay out of school until the "deplorable and illegal fire safety standards have been corrected." A challenge to the new authority? Perhaps.

After a long discussion with the teacher, I asked him if he would accept responsibility for the fire standards of the entire school and assume the position of "fire marshall." He was appropriately suspicious. But the next day he agreed. I gave him the key to the fire alarm system and pledged my support for any plan he proposed. I asked that he talk with me from time to time as his plan developed. A risk—for both of us. Somehow, in addition to his full-time teaching responsibilities, this teacher devised a most incredible school fire safety system.

Developing leadership

Successful principals, like successful college presidents these days, are successful less as charismatic authorities than as coalition builders. What, then, can principals do to develop a community of leaders within a school?

Articulate the goal In order to move a school from where it is to where one's vision would have it be, it is necessary to convey what the vision is. A community of leaders and the involvement of teachers, students, and parents in school leadership is more

Roland S. Barth is a senior lecturer at Harvard University and the founder and former director of the Principals Center there.
likely to occur when the principal openly articulates this goal in meetings, conversations, newsletters, faculty memos, and community meetings.

☑ Relinquish authority to teachers

There are lots of lists of behaviors exhibited by “effective principals.” They include continuous monitoring of performance, exercising strong leadership, and involving parents. I have never seen the “ability to relinquish” on such a list. Many principals feel they have too little authority over a tottering building. To convey any authority to others is illegitimate. It is against human nature for us to relinquish power when we will probably be held accountable for what others do with it. However, to release the creative powers of teachers, principals must relinquish.

☑ Involve teachers early

It is common in the world of teachers and principals for a problem, like inadequate fire safety, to emerge, and for the principal to quickly reach a solution and then invite a teacher to “handle” the situation. This is an opportunity for maintenance, not leadership, which few teachers will embrace. The energy, the fun, the commitment around leadership comes from brainstorming one’s own solutions and then trying to implement them. For a community of leaders to develop, tough important problems need to be conveyed to teachers before, not after, the principal has played them out.

☑ Look beyond “trusted few”

Wanting desperately to resolve a problem, the principal often selects a responsible, trusted teacher who has successfully handled similar challenges. But, by relying on the tried and proven teacher, the principal rewards competence with additional hard work. The tried teacher is a tired teacher.

Too often the criterion for bestowal of the “key” of leadership is evidence that a person knows how to do it. Yet the innovative solutions come more often from teachers who do not know how to do it but want to learn how. This is where leadership and staff development intersect. The moment of greatest learning for any of us is when we find ourselves responsible for a problem that we care desperately to resolve. Then we need and seek out assistance. We are ready to learn.

☑ Share responsibility for failure

If the principal conveys responsibility to a teacher for an important schoolwide issue and the teacher stumbles, the principal can blame the teacher or become the lone lightning rod. Neither is a good response. If the principal bets on this horse and it runs poorly, “we” are responsible, for together we have given our best efforts.

Usually the world of schools deals more kindly with mistakes made by a coalition of teacher and administrator than when either errs alone. The important question to ask is not “Whose fault is it?”, but “What happened, what can we learn from it, and how might we do it better next time?”

☐ Give teachers credit for success

It is equally important that success reflect on the teacher, not the principal. The principal has many visible occasions during the school day and year to be the “hero.” For the teacher, there are precious few opportunities to experience and enjoy recognition from the school community.

☑ Set high expectations

Just as high expectations that “all children can learn” have been associated with unexpected learning on the part of children whose background might not predict such achievement, high expectations on the part of principals and others that all teachers can be responsible, committed school leaders make the emergence of leadership tendencies that all teachers possess more likely.

How might principals’ expectations for teachers as leaders be raised and conveyed? Principals can articulate a community of leaders as a goal, ask teachers to think about a piece of the school for which each would like responsibility, and then look for and celebrate examples of teacher leadership.

☑ Say “I don’t know how”

A principal is hired from among 100 candidates because the selection committee supposes he or she knows how to do it. Therefore, for principals to admit that they do not know how is a sign of weakness, at best, and incompetence at worst. Many principals succumb to the burden of presumed competence by pretending, and sometimes even convincing themselves, that they know how. This can kill the development of a community of leaders.

The invitation for a teacher to take on fire safety may often be framed, then as a veiled challenge to see if the teacher can do it as well as the principal.

“The moment of greatest learning for any of us is when we find ourselves responsible for a problem that we care desperately to resolve.”

Teachers know that principals do not know how to do it all. Surprising results are achieved when a principal initiates conversations with a teacher by announcing honesty, “I’ve never set up a fire safety system before. I’ve got some ideas, but I don’t know how.” I don’t know how.

Communities of leaders

Several secondary schools—including the Cambridge School of Weston and Brookline and Andover high schools in Massachusetts and Hanover High School in New Hampshire—have been working to create what they call “democratic schools.” A town meeting form of government provides teachers and students a structure for participating in the major decisions confronting these schools. The principal has one vote in the assembly, but may veto its actions, subject to an override by a two-thirds vote of the whole. These assemblies are demonstrating that schools can not only teach about democracy, they can be democracies.

Alaskan small schools are places to watch, too. Their isolation makes them promising laboratories, uncontaminated by the rest of the world, for growing all sorts of unusual cultures. For instance in Alaska, where one
might routinely find a K-12 school staffed by three or four adults, no one knows that the teachers are not supposed to be leaders.

Many parochial schools thrive under what is often referred to as servant leadership. Principals, like parish priests, lead adults by serving adults. This invariably means involving teachers in important decisions of the schools.

Quaker schools, too, have traditionally worked with great success by creating for students and adults a culture of participatory leadership. They assume that everyone has an “inner light,” something to offer the group, if given the opportunity. Members work together as equals, sharing ideas, planning, giving feedback, and supporting each other in new efforts.

Every school faces the task of constructing an effective educational and intellectual community around a unique set of issues and individuals.

What is needed is leadership from within, from, parents, teachers, principals, and students. Coalition building and the replacement of competitive relationships with collegial ones does not occur easily, let alone naturally.

Schoolpeople need skills, insight, and vision that will equip them to assume responsibility for their schools. Such tools are seldom won through experience as classroom teachers or principals, or in courses at schools of education.

Leaders need to be able to set general directions and create environments and structures that enable everyone in the school community to discover their own skills and talents and thereby be free to help students discover theirs. For students’ needs will not be fully addressed until teachers and administrators together have worked out their own. This role must be one of enabling rather than controlling. Shared school leadership is a volatile and, I think, very promising issue for the improvement of schools from within. It also is timely: Public schools are strapped for adequate personal resources at the same time that extraordinary personal resources lie unacknowledged, untapped, unrewarded, and undeveloped within each schoolhouse.

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Teachers, parents and principals can make a difference
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Kids in conflict try mediation, adults should too

by R. Olomenji O'Connor

Wendell Phillips High School has some advice for any local school council that has gotten bogged down in conflict. Try mediation.

Phillips, 244 E. Pershing, is turning to mediation as a way of resolving disputes between students, which typically end in violence.

Conflict is a natural part of human life. It demands expression. And it is an agent for change. Depending on how it is resolved, it can be productive or destructive.

The program we will put into effect next month at Phillips is aimed at turning conflict into social progress and giving young adults a measure of responsibility and authority to resolve their own problems.

Here is an example of how it might work: Ken and Ray have been arguing because Ken allegedly called Ray bad names in class. The two are sent to the assistant principal in charge of discipline, who selects two classmates to hear both sides of the story. Ray brings in witnesses who testify that Ken had called him names and that he never reciprocated.

By listening openly to both sides, the mediators acknowledge the concerns of both students and, in the process, come to be trusted by both Ken and Ray.

Without taking sides, they use their knowledge of the situation and of Ken and Ray to offer suggestions for resolving the dispute in a way that both young men can live with. They point out that the name-calling not only bothers Ray, but also distracts their teacher and other classmates. And this gets in the way of learning.

Finally, Ken, Ray, the mediators, and the assistant principal sign an agreement stating that the two boys will not speak to each other in class. The assistant principal is charged with checking adherence to this agreement on a weekly basis.

Too often in our society people in conflict take an adversarial approach to resolving their differences, as in a lawsuit. With a win-lose situation,
people are encouraged to strive to win at all costs, if only to save face. Competition is pursued at the expense of healing.

Too often, too, the competition ends in violence.

Mediation is a powerful instrument offering disputants an open, non-threatening forum to lay down differences and form instead a relationship of cooperative problem-solving.

This relationship is especially important for adults working in schools, because their conflicts affect more than themselves. They spill into classrooms and hamper children’s growth into responsible, educated adults.

We adults must show appropriate behavior to children, not just talk about it. Schools cannot afford deadlocks among adults. What lessons do they teach?

Council members, teachers, community organizations and other groups interested in pursuing mediation as a way to resolve disputes and move forward can get additional information from Neighborhood Justice of Chicago, 28 E. Jackson Blvd., Suite 1700, Chicago, Ill., 60604. The nonprofit organization was created more than a decade ago by the Chicago Bar Association to mediate community disputes and offer mediation training.

R. Olomenji O'Connor is a training coordinator in the Resident Services and Programs office of the Chicago Housing Authority, co-sponsor of Project Peace at Phillips High. For additional information call O'Connor at (312) 791-4768.

A prediction: Chicago won't go way of New York

by Michael Bennett

Some veteran community organizers were talking recently about the state of organizing in this city. “C.O. is virtually dead,” said one. “Too many organizers were lullled to sleep by four years of a friendly City Hall [under Mayor Harold Washington].” Another countered: “Yes, but the art of organizing is about to resurface. This school reform movement is going to bring the Chicago School of organizing back from the grave.”

By “Chicago School,” he meant the confrontational approach of the late Saul Alinsky, a one-time labor organizer who turned his energies to poor and working-class neighborhoods. Alinsky organizers acted on the premise that power is never given, that it must be taken. The very process of confronting and winning was seen as a way to enhance the self-esteem of rank-and-file citizens and provide them opportunities to expand their potential as leaders and participants in a democratic society.

Recent conflicts over principals suggest that the Chicago School is, indeed, on the way back. But I don’t believe that confrontation will be the rule, for community organizing has changed greatly since Alinsky’s days.

Community organizing is a natural part of school reform. As with most large bureaucracies, educational professionals have little use for the ideas of lay people. If parents and other people in the community are to have a meaningful voice in determining what and how our children are taught there inevitably will be some wrestling for power.

The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 is a launching pad for Chicagoans seeking lasting changes in the power relationships among school personnel, parents and other community activists. It has excited community organizers while making education professionals fearful. History justifies both responses.

Recall, for example, Ocean Hill-Brownsville, a community in New York City that burst into the headlines in 1969. To be sure, Chicago has a rich history of community organizing. In the mid-1960s, the late Al Raby and Coalition of Coordinating Community Organizations (CCCO) mobilized civic, religious and civil rights groups around issues of de facto segregation in Chicago’s public schools. In the late 1960s, Woodlawn residents agitated for and won a Woodlawn Experimental Schools Program that ushered creative curriculum enhancements into some neighborhood schools. However, it was in Ocean Hill-Brownsville that parents and community residents gained national attention as they struggled for control of their neighborhood schools. School strikes, parent sit-ins, and student walk-outs dramatized the quest.

The result was state legislation that created 32 subdistricts for the city’s elementary schools. Each would have an elected board that would hire its own superintendent, choose textbooks from a centrally approved list and let contracts of up to $250,000 a year for repairs. As in Chicago today, some New Yorkers felt reform went too far while others supported it reluctantly.

Naomi Levine, in her book Ocean Hill-Brownsville: New York schools in crisis, documents the experience for reformers seeking to “chart a path bypassing the pitfalls that turned an experiment into a disaster.” Levine
lists questions that New Yorkers asked in 1969 and resurfaced in Chicago 20 years later: "What can be done about the present unmet needs of slum children for the kind of schooling they must have to escape the vicious circle of poverty, neglect and ignorance? Is decentralization an effective answer? Does it provide genuine educational advantages or is it merely a method of redistributing political and economic power? Can it be achieved without anarchy? Does it institutionalize racial segregation?"

There are no clear answers to those questions. Some who have studied the New York experience proclaim it a success, while others shout "failure." Still others argue that New York cannot provide the answers because the Board of Education, through bureaucratic maneuvering, deprived citizens of the full power the law intended them to have.

Sidestepping these questions, community organizers applauded parent victories that increased their access to the school governance process. And psychologist Kenneth Clark, a pioneer in New York’s citizen participation movement of the 1960s, said increased access made parents better able to engage in constructive dialogue with professional educators about issues affecting their children’s learning environment. Nevertheless, the experience created more disillusionment than it did healthy alliances. Upon reflection, all factions agreed that there must be a better way.

Characteristic of Chicago, much of the school reform debate here focused on the political questions of structure and process. There have been too many meetings where these topics monopolized the discussion. Now there are reports of councils being run by aggressive community activists and of councils doing battle with manipulative principals. But, these "horror stories" seem exceptions to the rule.

**New maturity here**

In my view, Chicago will not be a rerun of Ocean Hill-Brownsville. For one, the structure of reform is different: in vast New York City, community control was at a subdistrict level while in Chicago it is at the school level. More important, community organizers have grown more mature, more sophisticated in the last 20 years. The Chicago Reform Act itself stands as testimony to collaboration among community organizers, education experts, citywide civic associations and enlightened legislators.

Though historic in its scope, this collaboration should not have come as a surprise. Since the late 1960s, community organizers have expanded their repertoire of tactics beyond direct action. For example, the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO), which made its mark with militant tenant organizing against slum landlords, today works closely with real estate developers to provide affordable housing in its Near South Side neighborhood. KOCO also has provided leadership training for neighborhood residents who sit on local school councils.

Still younger organizations like the Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore (CIESS) have matured rapidly. The group was formed three years ago with the goal of ousting a particular principal. Now it is working with education consultants to train 10 neighborhood LSCs.

KOCO and CIESS are not alone in reshaping their roles as community organizers. That is not to say that tomorrow these groups won’t see a need to take to the streets. However, the realignment of institutional relationships and the emergence of new leadership suggest Chicago might provide a new and refreshing model of community empowerment and school reform.

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Michael Bennett, vice president of Shorebank Corp., teaches community organization and economic development at the University of Chicago.

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**Letters**

I write to express my concern over the failure of the Chicago Board of Education and the “reformers” of the Chicago Public Schools to develop an education mission statement that includes systemwide standards of performance for the student, teacher, administrator, and parent.

In this day and age of high technology and fierce market competition, no successful, profitable corporation operates without basic standards of performance and achievement. I find the Board’s “Guiding Principles on School Reform” (Catalyst: February, 1990) most frightening. In the business world of creative accounting, it is a classic example: “Facts are facts and figures don’t lie, but liars can figure.”

Cliches like, “The purpose of the Chicago Public Schools is the education of the whole child,” and “Each school is unique and functions as an individual entity,” are graphic illustrations of the historic refusal of all large metropolitan school systems to provide the personnel and resources necessary for quality, systemwide education once that metropolitan school system becomes predominantly black.

My suggestion is that the Chicago Board of Education and each local school council adopt a basic, standard mission statement that simply and clearly defines, on a citywide, systemwide basis, the basic standards and objectives that must be present in any modern effective educational system.

For example:
- All students can learn the reading, writing and arithmetic defined for their grade level.
- All students will be expected to learn the reading, writing, and arithmetic defined for their grade level.
- All teachers can teach the reading, writing, and arithmetic defined for their grade level.
- All teachers will be expected to teach the reading, writing, and arithmetic defined for their grade level.
- All parents can support their children as they learn the reading, writing, and arithmetic defined for their grade level.
- All parents will be expected to support their children as they learn the reading, writing, and arithmetic defined for their grade level.

Benjamin C. Duster
Greater Grand Crossing

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CATALYST/MARCH 1990
ENROLLMENT

City enrollment stable.
Enrollment in the city's public and Roman Catholic schools changed little this school year.

Public school enrollment dropped by 1,788 students, to a total of 408,442. Catholic school enrollment dropped 2,279 students, to a total of 93,697.

The following is the racial and ethnic breakdown, with the figures for Catholic schools in parentheses: blacks 58.8 percent (24.3 percent); Hispanic 26.1 percent (20.5 percent); white 12.1 percent (49.3 percent); Asian and Pacific Islander 2.9 percent (4.5 percent); American Indian and Alaskan native 0.1 percent (.01 percent).

In the public schools the percent of blacks went down one point while the percent of Hispanics went up one point. The breakdown among Hispanics is 66 percent Mexican, 26 percent Puerto Rican, 0.7 percent Cuban and 7 percent other.

Members of racial and ethnic minority groups are in the majority in every high school. Proportionately, Mather High School on the North Side has the most white students, 48.8 percent.

Chicago Public School enrollment hit a high of 583,093 in 1968.

School systems take racial and ethnic headcounts on Oct. 31 each year.

REFORM UPDATES

Help with budgets. More than 90 accountants have volunteered to help schools craft their first ever lump-sum budgets. The accountants were trained by CPAs for the Public Interest.

The Board of Education wants councils to approve budgets by April 15. Under the Chicago School Reform Act, principals must consult with their councils, their professional personnel advisory committees and other school personnel in putting their spending plans together for council approval.

Budgets should reflect priorities outlined in schools’ three-year school improvement plans, also targeted for completion by April 15. In early March, several reform groups were pushing for later deadlines.

For more information on the school volunteer program of CPAs for the Public Interest, call John Knoff at (312) 715-0666.

Book group joins in. An organization devoted to increasing the discussion of literature in classrooms is taking advantage of decentralization of the Chicago Public Schools.

The Great Books Foundation has sent notices to local school councils offering workshops on its Junior Great Books program, which trains teachers and parents to help children develop their own interpretations of literary works and support these interpretations with evidence from the text.

“This is not just for ‘gifted’ students,” said Great Books editor Steven Craig. “It’s for all students.”

The foundation recently developed a program to help poor readers learn from better readers through group discussions. The pilot program is being used in 60 schools in 9 cities.

For more information, call Illinois coordinator Henrietta Perlman, at (312) 332-5870.

TEACHERS

Empowerment forum. Use of time during the school day, student grouping and multicultural education are among the topics of a conference scheduled April 7 for teachers and members of their professional personnel advisory committees.

The conference also will feature a curriculum resource fair spotlighting teacher development programs in the city, such as the Chicago Area Writing Project and Integrated Math and Science.

Sponsored by the Citywide Coalition on School Reform, the conference will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Juarez High School, 2150 S. Laflin. For reservations and more information, call Steve Zemelman at (312) 341-3860 or Art Hyde at (708) 691-9390.

RESOURCES

Youth service programs. A brief pamphlet aimed at helping schools, universities and other institutions develop youth service programs is available from the Johnson Foundation, Racine, WI, 53401-0547.

“Principles of good practice for combining service and learning” includes examples of programs across the country and lists additional references.

Focus on the black child.

“Excellence and equity, quality and inequality: A report on civil rights, education and black children” is available from the National Black Child Development Institute.

The 33-page report, which costs $4, includes recommendations for parents, advocates, schools and policymakers. Other Institute publications cover such topics as adoption services for black families, the impact of school-based child care on black children and selecting appropriate teaching materials for black girls.
SUMMER JOBS

**More jobs for teens.** Up to 3,300 jobs will be available this summer for disadvantaged Chicago teenagers through Chicago Hire the Future, a nonprofit organization formed by area businesses.

Last year the program lined up 2,900 jobs for young people.

To apply, students must have at least a C average, be able to read at the eighth-grade level and be enrolled in a public, parochial or private high school in the city.

Applicants also must have a recommendation from a guidance counselor or teacher. For more information, call Mark Thennes at (312) 580-6789.

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To our readers:

The editorial board of CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform would like to share with you the mission statement it adopted at its first meeting, Feb. 10, 1990:

**CATALYST seeks to be an agent of beneficial change in the Chicago Public Schools, a vehicle for encouraging not just the current experiment in school reform, but a continuous process of reform. The means to this end is journalism, the diligent attempt to report, document, analyze and critically examine the decisions and activities of all involved in making the schools work.**

As an editorial board, we see our function as assuring that CATALYST meets the highest professional journalistic standards for fairness and accuracy. In the Chicago context, those standards require special efforts to assure that the publication reflects, in tone, content and selection of contributors, the fact that 88 percent of the students in Chicago's public schools are members of racial and ethnic minority groups.

We shall be liberal with our suggestions and, at appropriate times, with our constructive criticism. In all of this, our criteria will be first the journalistic ones of fairness and accuracy. But in the last analysis, CATALYST, like school reform itself, will be judged by whether it contributes to better education for the children of Chicago.

Jeremiah A. Wright Jr.
Chair, CATALYST editorial board

CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform is an independent publication created to document, analyze, and support school improvement efforts in Chicago's public schools.

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Bright Ideas

Terrell ends day on positive note

Students at Terrell Elementary, 5410 S. State, go home each day with good news ringing in their ears.

Under school policy, students and teachers must say something nice to each other between 3 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. each day. Students must exchange compliments with each other as well.

For some students, it's the most positive moment of the entire day, said Principal Reva Hairston.

"A student might tell the teacher he or she liked the day's lesson," said Hairston. "Some of the students give the teacher hugs and tell them, 'I love you.'"

For details, call Reva Hairston at (312) 536-7420.

Reluctant readers get to shine

Gray Elementary, 3730 S. Laramie, is helping reluctant readers enjoy reading by having them read to younger children.

By reading books at a lower grade level, the children who have not been reading at their own level get a chance to shine. In the process, they gain self-confidence and become more enthusiastic about learning, said Principal Stuart Gold. "They no longer look on reading as a chore," he added.

Fifteen youngsters are chosen every five weeks to read stories to classes of younger children twice a week. Kindergartners are treated to daily readings.

For details, call Stuart Gold at (312) 794-8320.

Send descriptions of bright ideas to CATALYST/Bright Ideas. Include your name and phone number.

Jessica Kraszewski, a fourth-grader at Gray School, captivates a third-grade class.

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