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Next up: Reform in the classroom

by Alex Poinsett and Linda Lenz

Teaching must change—not simply rise to a higher level of its old self but change in fundamental ways.

The math experts have said it. The science experts have said it. So, too, have the experts in history, in geography, in reading and writing.

It's not that schools of today are worse than those of yesterday, says Philip C. Schlechty, a teaching researcher and president of the Center for Leadership in School Reform, Louisville, Ky. "They're better than they used to be at doing what they used to do," he contends. "But [we] don't want them to do that anymore."

Schools and teaching need to change because pupils and the demands of society have changed.

"If our standard of living is to be maintained, if the growth of a permanent underclass is to be averted, if democracy is to function effectively into the next century, our schools must graduate the vast majority of their students with achievement levels long thought possible for only the privileged few," states A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, a 1986 report of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy.

The typical lesson, where teachers do most of the talking and students complete worksheets at their desks, will not fill the bill, the experts say. This approach fails on two grounds: (1) it does not address the varying needs of an increasingly diverse student population and (2) it does not develop the reasoning and analytical skills students need to become thoughtful, economically viable adults.

"The task of teaching," says Rand Corp. researcher Linda Darling-Hammond, "is less a matter of 'covering the material' than of connecting with the student in whatever ways are necessary to make knowledge the possession of the learner, not just the teacher."

"Until you know the background of the kids you're teaching, you're talking to people out of context," agrees

Teachers cashing in on study incentives

Some teaching courses offered through the Board of Education have drawn more than 100 applicants for 30 seats, as teachers rush to cash in on new incentives for continuing their education.

Under the new Chicago Teachers Union contract, teachers have more opportunities to increase their pay by taking additional graduate-level college courses or School Board teaching courses, which range from using calculators in math instruction (1 semester credit) to choir chimes and hand-bell ringing for elementary school teachers (2 semester credits).

Henceforth, salaries rose at each of three levels: master's degree, master's plus 36 hours and doctoral degree. Now they rise at five levels: master's, master's plus 15 hours, master's plus 30, master's plus 45 and doctoral degree.

In addition, teachers will receive a $6,000 bonus, paid over five years, whenever they earn enough credits to move to the next highest level, or "lane."

More than 700 teachers applied for lane changes through November, equaling the annual total for previous years, school officials said. The fast pace is expected to continue as teachers follow the CTU's advice for ensuring they qualify for the bonus: Take an additional course now even if you accumulated enough courses for a "new" lane change before 1990.

"Many teachers got wind of this early and chose to take courses over the summer," said one administrator.

While continuing education generally is viewed as good for teaching, this form has some critics. "It's a salary scam," says Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance. "There is no evidence that teachers taking courses in graduate school produces change in the school system."

And one instructor of a lane-credit course offered through the School Board said a number of her students seemed drawn more by the convenient hour of the course than its content, which had nothing to do with their jobs.

Teachers have wide latitude in choosing courses.

Barbara Radner, director of the Center for Urban Education at DePaul University,

Typically taught by professors who had no experience with pupil diversity or the workaday problems of urban schools, most teachers entered the classroom unprepared for reality, adds Barbara Bowman, director of graduate studies at the Erikson Institute.

Similarly, few teachers have received training in the kind of hands-on, cooperative, exploratory lessons that develop higher-order thinking skills. And those who have, typically teach "gifted" or advanced pupils, who, arguably, have less need than those at the bottom of the class.

Further, teachers need to develop new attitudes about their roles, says Judson Hixson of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory in Elmhurst.

"Traditionally, they were viewed as people who gave out knowledge," he explains. "Kids showed up, sat down and we gave them some stuff. The kids who didn't get it, we failed at the end of the year."

Under the "new definition of learning," says Hixson, all children can learn if they are properly taught.

Updating teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes so that all children do learn will require many things, including leadership, time and money. Despite the pressing need to invest in teacher development, however, the Chicago School Reform Act put a spending limit on it. Along with financial services, transportation, maintenance, security and a number of other "overhead" items, teacher development falls under the "administrative cap" created to deflate the bureaucracy.

While some reformers now consider the spending limit a mistake, others are delighted that the central administration is barred from providing more of the same teacher training.

In a recent poll of local school councils, 90 percent of the teacher members said they would rather receive money to mount their own professional development activities than have additional inservice from central or district offices.

Poorly funded and poorly coordinated, teacher development in Chicago has come in three forms: (1) centrally-planned, one-day conferences and workshops, (2) instructional coordinators from central or district offices and (3) courses that count toward salary increases.

The one-day conferences have reached the most teachers but are generally disparaged.

Dialogue needed

"We assume staff development is most effective when teachers are involved in the planning, development, discussion, etc.," says Jerry B. Olson, director of the Chicago Teachers Center at Northeastern Illinois University. "And it's best to have that tailored to individual schools and even classrooms."

While teachers may not have been trained to work with diversity, Olson says their experience with it puts them in a better position to define solutions. Therefore, staff developers must explore teachers' assumptions, values and attitudes about curricula, he says.

"Unless there's a genuine dialogue, teachers are not going to buy into [staff development]," Olson says. "They might think it's a nice idea. They might even enjoy the presentation. But they're not going to relate it to what they're already doing."

Try Pittsburgh approach

Olson and the teachers center have been engaged in this kind of collaborative staff development since the late 1970s. Other Chicago area universities have joined in in recent years. Yet most projects are supported by grants rather than an ongoing revenue stream, and many schools—no one knows how many—receive no help.

Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School
Policy and Finance, argues for "massive retraining that involves all teachers." Hess points to Pittsburgh for a model but says Chicago teachers should plan and operate any local version.

In Pittsburgh, each of the city's 2,700 teachers took a minisabbatical during the late 1980s at a city school that doubled as a teacher training center. Visiting teachers attended seminars, carried out independent projects, observed and evaluated expert teaching and had their own teaching evaluated by colleagues called "clinical resident teachers." A specially trained cadre of substitute teachers filled in for the visiting teachers while they were absent from their home schools.

The results? Achievement has risen impressively in Pittsburgh's public schools, with black students moving up closer to their white classmates. However, the teacher centers were only one of many innovations there.

Replicated in a system as large as Chicago's, an undertaking such as Pittsburgh's would cost tens of millions of dollars a year for several years.

The new Academy for Mathematics and Science Teachers in Chicago, the brainchild of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Leon Lederman, borrows from the Pittsburgh model and embellishes it with flourishes that reflect Chicago's emphasis on school-based planning. For example, the academy will tailor its programs to the needs of each school and offer programs for families, to encourage their understanding and support for a new direction in teaching. Members of local school councils also may attend.

During initial training, teachers will alternate between the academy and their regular teaching assignments, so that they can immediately practice what they have learned and get help with problems they encounter. The academy will remain on call for follow-up assistance once the training period is over.

Interest in the academy is so keen that during its first two weeks of operation—devoted to training a substitute cadre—170 schools requested applications.

Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers, nationally recognized staff development researchers, envision another form of massive staff development. "If we had our way, all school faculties would be divided into coaching teams, that is, teams who regularly observe one another's teaching and provide helpful information, feedback and so forth," they wrote.

The Bruce/Showers recommendation is based on research showing that neither lectures nor opportunities to practice new teaching techniques changed what teachers did in their classrooms. Only with coaching, did teachers regularly put new knowledge and skills to work, they found.

While the method of staff development is important for transforming instruction, so too are the conditions under which teachers work, most experts agree.

'Nothing changes'

"You cannot get teachers to take on new ideas and new behaviors in the simple, top-down management style that they're accustomed to," says William Ayers, who teaches prospective teachers at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"We pull teachers out of their classrooms and get a good guru in to give them a good idea. Everybody feels good for about an hour and then they return to the same old social conditions, the same old system of rewards and punishment that get them into the mess they're in—and nothing changes. So teach-

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Carving out time
for teacher renewal

Regardless of its form, teacher development takes time — time for teachers to meet to share ideas, time for teachers to observe one another, time for teachers to learn new approaches. A number of Chicago schools are making time for these activities. Here are some examples, followed by examples from other cities and countries.

Examples here at home

- At Louis Pasteur Elementary, 5825 S. Kostner, teachers gather once a month to share ideas, develop curriculum or talk with parents while students are on day-long field trips or at half-day assemblies funded by a grant from The Joyce Foundation. The school recruits parents to chaperon.

- Murphy Elementary School, 3539 W. Grace, uses State Chapter I money to pay teachers $8 an hour to attend a weekly, hour-long planning meeting before or after regular school hours. The school also pays registration fees for professional workshops and conferences.

- At Crane High School, 2245 W. Jackson, each department meets for one class period a month to review and update curriculum so that it reflects state learning goals. Teachers from other departments cover classes as necessary. Department chairpersons meet monthly for 45 minutes before or after school. The school also has hired a curriculum coordinator to guide the project. The money comes from State Chapter I.

- Albany Park Multicultural Academy, 5039 N. Kimball, has extended the school day by 10 minutes so that children can be dismissed early the last Friday of the month. Teachers meet then for planning and inservice education.

Examples from afar

In the June 1990 issue of Basic Education, a publication of the Council For Basic Education in Washington, D.C., educational consultant Grant Wiggins offers suggestions for creative use of time. The following is an excerpt from his commentary.

- At one school, the faculty has two hours every Wednesday morning in which to meet, plan or experiment. Where are the kids? Out doing their community service requirement under the guidance of three program leaders and parent volunteers. No cost is involved beyond the people charged with running the community-service program.

- At any number of middle schools where teachers are organized by teams, the team has an hour per day of common planning time to design interdisciplinary units, trouble-shoot current practice or meet about problem kids. This is not "after" school, but built into the day while students are doing things like sports, special electives or eating lunch.

- Where is it written that every teacher and department has to test during the same week? Why must all grades be reported to parents from all departments at the same time? Why not have a staggered schedule through the year in which after a major test, that department is free from classes for three days while the student continues with all classes, minus the one? There's a P.R. bonus: Parents would then get more frequent reports from the schools.

- In German middle schools, every teaching team has one extra person (often an administrator who also teaches). That means there is someone always free to do something: help a teacher do oral assessments by covering the class, meeting regularly with representatives from other teams to share common concerns, act as an informed and effective substitute in case of a team member's absence, team up with someone on an interdisciplinary project.

- In England and Canada, three to four inservice days are devoted exclusively to assessment in regional meetings where teachers compare student work (and recalibrate grades, if need be, based on consensus) in a process called "moderation." This is much like what happens at Advanced Placement readings or statewide writing assessments. This is not only essential for improving the quality and ownership of local assessment, but it provides valuable professional development and ongoing collegiality on the subject of setting and upholding standards.

- At many schools and colleges, a small fixed period of time (often in January or May) is devoted to special intellectual experiences or projects. "But we lose teaching time," say the naive, who believe that learning unravels if a day is missed. We need to break out of the habit of having every week look like every other week. Why not a one-week intensive minicourse, with each student and teacher having only two three-hour courses? As I know from teaching in such blocks for many summers with high school juniors in an enrichment program, you can't avoid seeing kids and teaching in a new light—and that's the point.
Making schools places for teacher learning

At Dumas: Principal leadership

by Alex Poinsett

One recent morning the 25 teachers at Dumas Elementary School, 6650 S. Ellis, gathered in the second-grade classroom of Susan Kilbane for their monthly staff development forum.

Kilbane got the discussion rolling by reviewing steps she had taken to fulfill a vision statement she had written last fall for her classroom—a Dumas requirement.

"We had a watermelon," she recalled. "We guessed its weight, described it and ended up weighing it. We guessed the circumference and then measured it. We wrote about that."

Kilbane's watermelon "lesson" was one of many aimed at creating a classroom where "we (1) work cooperatively, (2) make what we do meaningful, worthwhile experiences that are real for the children and (3) make our classroom a safe place where children can feel free to learn, make mistakes and not worry about failure."

Kilbane's opportunity to talk about her vision and teaching with colleagues is one of many experiences Principal Sylvia Peters has lined up to promote continual learning by her staff.

"I'm trying to get an educational environment here where children and parents and teachers really learn," says Peters, one of 20 Chicago principals who recently won a Whitman Award for outstanding educational leadership.

"You have to have consistent, ongoing staff development," she continues. "It can't be here one year and gone the next, because that doesn't make things stick."

Peters often takes her cue from the three teacher-dominated design teams she established to plan the school's math, language arts and staffing programs. Her consultations with the math team, for example, led to Dumas's adoption of the Teaching Integrated Math and Science program run by the University of Illinois at Chicago. (See separate story on page 8.)

Other outside resources have included Project CANAL, a Board of Education development program for entire school communities (CATALYST/November 1990); the Paideia Program, a teaching approach that uses Socratic seminars and coaching; workshops by Open Court Publishing Co., and visiting educators.

"Off-site staff development is fine, but on-site is better," says Peters. "Universities are remiss when they run into the inner city, decide you're not doing it right and invite you to their ivory tower to tell you a few things that you're supposed to be able to run back and do.

"We want university people to come and stay at Dumas and learn from the teachers and children," she continues. "Teachers haven't been given enough credit for being able, nor treated like learners. Somewhere we lost the connection between teaching and learning. By staff developing on-site, you bring it full circle—in the school where learning and teaching go on simultaneously."

Peters has made teaching and learning a matter of morality, as well.

"I thought the children needed to get into their center, their reservoir of inner spirit, in order to begin to value knowledge," she explains. "I dia-
In Glenview: New roles for teachers

by Lynda Gorov

In north suburban Glenview, school reform thrust teachers center stage. Under a unique, three-year contract called a constitution, teachers have become true partners in governing their schools and the district as a whole.

"I firmly believe that the best decisions are made by the people who have to implement them," says Supt. William Attea. "I also firmly believe that teaching is a profession and teachers should be well paid."

At each of the district's seven schools, four teachers join four parents and two administrators on a local school council that sets "broad goals and expectations" and evaluates progress. Through membership on building councils, teachers help shape budgets, staff selection and assignments and other important aspects of school operation.

At the district level, four teachers join three administrators on committees dealing with salaries and fringe benefits, teacher evaluation and welfare and the educational program.

Teachers also serve on a district coordinating council that provides binding arbitration in cases where lower-level committees do not reach consensus. If this council cannot agree, the superintendent and teachers union president resolve the dispute.

Instead of holding out a carrot, Glenview's constitution makes demands: Every new teacher must obtain a master's degree within five years, and every teacher must earn three graduate-course credits every three years.

Glenview teachers routinely take graduate courses, Miller explains, and were more interested in negotiating opportunities to use new knowledge and skills.

As in Chicago, school reform in Glenview was born of rancorous contract talks. Unlike Chicago, Glenview's School Board, administration and teachers union worked out their own solution. Promoting Excellence in Education through Recognition (PEER), a program developed in cooperation with the University of Illinois at Chicago, provided the foundation.

Under PEER, teachers participated in research projects and realized they could improve their skills, Miller says. One group of teachers decided to group kindergarten and primary-grade students for social studies instruction. Another adopted "whole language," a form of instruction that weaves together reading, writing, spelling and literature.

Working until job done

PEER continues as a district-level committee. A curriculum subcommittee is responsible for "maintaining a well balanced, up to date, comprehensive program for the district." A staff development subcommittee develops districtwide plans, including "effective utilization of institute days.

And a PEER selection subcommittee chooses staff members for specialist and other nonadministrative career development roles.

In some cases, Glenview's constitution is remarkable for what it doesn't say. For example, teachers no longer are required to check in by 8:15 a.m. and stay until 3:45 p.m. Instead, they come and go as they believe necessary. "There is an understanding that you have a job to do and you will do it," says Miller. On a recent afternoon, many teachers were still at their desks long after their pupils had gone home.

Lynda Gorov is a Chicago writer.
At Moos: An outsider pitches in
by Lorraine V. Forte

If I am to be appreciated for anything, it’s for the grungework,” educational consultant Jill Bradley says with a laugh.

In a typical day at the Rocha Early Childhood Center of Moos Elementary School, grungework has Bradley running in many different directions: Tracking down material for a teacher who wants the latest research on presenting basic math concepts. Videotaping a class for a teacher who wants to watch herself in action. Leading a curriculum workshop. Arranging for a presentation by an outside expert. Casually suggesting that a teacher visit a colleague’s class to pick up valuable tips.

It’s through responding to the requests and hints of teachers that Bradley and other consultants of the Erikson Institute, 25 W. Chicago, are working to improve instruction at six Chicago schools. Funding for the three-year-old project comes from the Borg-Warner, Kellogg and Joyce foundations.

“What we’re doing is trying to create an atmosphere of change,” says Barbara Bowman, the institute’s director of graduate studies. “We don’t have a formula that says do this and children will learn.... We don’t want to change the schools. We want the schools to change themselves.”

Although Erikson consultants don’t promote a specific recipe for change, they do bring expertise in child development and early childhood education, which the institute sees as the key to academic achievement.

What works at one school won’t necessarily work at another, notes Bradley, who commutes between Moos on the Near Northwest Side and Carter Elementary on the South Side.

For example, at Moos, Bradley assists a committee formed to bring science instruction in line with state learning goals. When she mentioned the committee to teachers at Carter, which has a full-time science teacher, the idea “just didn’t transfer.”

Moos Principal Alice Perez Peters and Rocha head teacher Karen Schlenbecker say Bradley’s help has been invaluable in giving teachers a new sense of control and competence.

Kindergarten teacher Consuelo Marcus, for one, has changed her teaching style after 12 years in the classroom. “I used to be very structured, very regimented, but now my priority is to make my kids love school [and] give them a good experience,” she says.

Bowman of Erikson stresses that giving young children a positive environment is an integral part of achievement. “We want to engage the interest of young children [and] help teachers choose material that’s appropriate for their [developmental] level.”

Peters is hopeful that the momentum is strong enough so that when funding runs out next year, “teachers will become self-directed [and] changes continue.” Schlenbecker says she believes teachers will continue to share information and tips among themselves. “Now it’s just kind of part of our [teaching] process,” she says.

Lorraine Forte is a Chicago writer. After this article was written, the Chicago Housing Authority hired Jill Bradley to direct its child-care services.
Model programs focus on math, science, writing

In TIMS, 'doing' leads to learning

by Alex Poinsett

Last summer, the nation's governors joined a chorus of academic and business leaders clamoring for a new, improved brand of math and science teaching.

"What is required are far more Americans who can understand mathematical and scientific principles and can apply them to everyday problems on the factory floor and in the executive suite," the governors said.

TIMS (Teaching Integrated Math and Science), a five-year-old staff development program based at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), addresses that demand. It teaches elementary school teachers the basic concepts of math and science, including area, volume, mass, time, velocity, density, acceleration, force and friction.

Shunning standard textbook approaches, TIMS turns its teacher-students into amateur scientists who draw pictures of experiments, conduct the experiments, collect data, organize the data into tables and finally array the data on graphs. Then they interpret the results.

Such a hands-on approach not only teaches teachers more about math and science, but also shows them how to instruct their pupils more effectively. For example, teachers introduce the sophisticated concept of random sampling as early as second grade. Youngsters take handfuls of variously colored cubes from a grab bag, group them by color and then arrange the groups by size.

"The kids don't know this experiment demonstrates random sampling," said Susan Kilbane, who teaches at Dumas Elementary School on the South Side. "To them it's just fun."

Active learners

"The more TIMS experiments that kids do, the more gains they make in math/science problem-solving skills," says UIC program associate Martin Gartzman. "Results have been very positive. But hands-on math/science is very difficult for teachers because it is more rigorous than traditional mathematics."

TIMS comes in several forms. Under one model developed by the National Science Foundation, two teachers per school receive 20 hours of tuition-free instruction at UIC and later run staff development activities in their schools.

At McCosh Elementary School, UIC staffers are teaching 17 teachers directly. "You can't teach science from a textbook," says Principal Barbara Watkins. "Children have to be active learners, curious about what they're involved in. They can't do that flipping pages." Watkins credits TIMS for a 20-point increase in her school's state math scores.

TIMS's best model will be used in the city's new, independent Academy for Mathematics and Science Teachers, says Gartzman. Teachers will attend the academy several days a week, returning to their home schools to try out what they have just learned.

For more information on TIMS, contact Martin Gartzman, University of Illinois at Chicago (m/c 249), Box 4348, Chicago, Ill. 60680. For more information on the academy, contact Bruce Rickley, outreach liaison, Academy for Mathematics and Science Teachers, 10 W. 35th St., Chicago, Ill. 60616.

Alex Poinsett is a Chicago writer.
Writing catches on in CAWP

by Liane Clorfene Casten

Mary Jane Riopelle, a teacher at Colman Elementary School, 4655 S. Dearborn, signed up for a summer writing institute "because my principal told me it sounded as if I should be doing it."

Her mild interest quickly burst into passion, however, as she discovered the joy and power of writing and passed them along to her pupils.

"I got turned on during those first 30 hours and haven't stopped," said Riopelle, who now helps fellow teachers teach writing as part of the Chicago Area Writing Project.

CAWP was launched in the suburbs in 1979. In 1989 Betty Jane Wagner, CAWP director and professor in the Reading and Language Department of National-Louis University, was invited by the Board of Education to offer a summer writing institute to Chicago teachers. Since then, 50 institute graduates have become "continuity leaders" who conduct 30 hours of teacher training in schools throughout the city.

"We build a climate where teachers can take risks and feel supported," said Wagner. "Forging words and meanings and then sharing these newly-wrought words becomes a bonding experience, which culminates in our own published book."

No longer a chore

Riopelle recalled, for example, how "each of us had to interview someone we didn't know. Then we created a written narrative about that person and, using the narrative, introduced that person to the whole group."

In another exercise, teachers wrote about moments or events that had changed their lives and then shared their accounts in a small group. The group then selected one account that each member had to write about as if it were her own. "The exercise helped us walk in someone else's shoes," Riopelle said.

"The experiences are watersheds," said Wagner. "Teachers learn the power of writing. They get off the traditional notion of seeing writing as a chore—memorizing spelling and punctuation and grammar rules. They find the freedom to express themselves."

Teachers who attend workshops at their schools may apply for the summer institute and eventually join the network of continuity leaders, who meet bimonthly with Wagner to share teaching ideas and plan workshops. Continuity leaders do not work at their own schools, on the theory that internal politics and resentments may diminish their effectiveness.

Teachers may apply individually for similar workshops offered through the Board of Education's staff development program.

For more information on CAWP, contact Betty Jane Wagner at (708) 256-5150, extension 2577.

Liane Clorfene Casten is a former English teacher.

Teachers form science group

by Tanya Bonner

A three-week summer workshop filled Rosemary Douglas with ideas and enthusiasm for making science come alive for her 32 fourth-graders at Cameron Elementary School, 1234 N. Monticello.

They would grow grass by sprinkling seeds on a wet sponge. They would get to observe the insects described in their textbooks. They would ever take a regular sheet of paper and make it grow taller.

"The more you do these activities, the more they get excited—and the more I get motivated," says Douglas.

But putting exciting ideas into practice has not been easy. Douglas has spent many hours tracking down materials. And at times, preparations have kept her at school until 7 p.m.

Douglas is about to get an assist, however, from a new science council linking her with other workshop participants from nearby schools—specifically, those from Orr High School and the 13 elementary schools, of which Cameron is one, that feed into Orr.

Funded by Continental Bank and operated by the Golden Apple Foundation for Excellence in Teaching, the council aims to usher hands-on science into elementary schools where science is "virtually nonexistent," explains Dren Geer, the foundation's executive director.

Fighting sciencephobia

Three obstacles—fear, lack of resources and lack of time—must be overcome, says Bernard Bradley, council consultant and an award-winning science teacher at Newberry Math and Science Academy.

By enabling teachers to share their successes, difficulties and discoveries, the council itself is a way to reduce "sciencephobia." Council members hope to reinforce in-person sharing by creating a computer network, which also would allow children from different schools to work together on projects.

Participants in the summer workshop received $2,000 to buy equipment and visited museums and other places where supplies are sold. Seeing the benefits of this investment, the council plans to push for science readiness in other classrooms, as well.

As for time, Bradley recently pleaded the case to principals of network schools. "The time it takes to prepare a good hands-on science curriculum is double or triple, compared to other subjects," he said.

"You have to give teachers the time to teach science."

"I am really excited about what is about to start," says Bradley. "The teachers are starting to look beyond their own classrooms to the science program in their schools."

For more information on the council, contact Dren Geer at (312) 407-0006.

Tanya Bonner is CATALYST's intern.
Reform rides rollercoaster, picks up speed for next big hill

by Linda Lenz

Patched up for the short term, Chicago school reform faces an uncertain future in the Illinois General Assembly but has a new head of steam at home.

"I think you will be hearing some more voices. More people will be involved," said Gwendolyn Laroche, education director of the Chicago Urban League.

Laroche’s prediction stems from the debut of a new player on the education scene, the African American Education Reform Institute. In quiet formation for a year, this loosely knit coalition covers "one end of the spectrum to the other, from Bob Starks [of the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment] to the Chicago Urban League," said Laroche. "And that’s wonderful."

On Jan. 5, three dozen community, civil rights, political, educational and religious leaders, all of them African American, gathered under the institute’s umbrella to forge a legislative position. At issue was how the 86th Illinois General Assembly, which adjourned Jan. 8, should respond to the Illinois Supreme Court’s ruling on Nov. 30 that the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act is unconstitutional.

“We hammered away for six hours without letting anyone out of the room until we got something we all could agree on," said Laroche, adding that the agreement was the first for such a group in a “long, long time.”

By then, the well-oiled Alliance for Better Chicago Schools (ABCs), a multiracial coalition powered by Designs for Change, had pressed its position in two mailings to members of local school councils. Some ABCs critics in the black community had taken issue with that position. Some black legislators and ABCs allies had shouted insults at each other under the bright lights of television cameras. And the grapevine was abuzz that black legislators had forced a deal that would give ABCs only part of what it wanted.

Agreeably disagreeing

The morning of Jan. 7, the African American Education Reform Institute went public. Like ABCs, it wanted the Legislature to (1) ratify past actions by the Board of Education and local school councils, (2) provide for the mayor to appoint members to the School Board, School Board Nominating Commission, subdistrict councils and LSCs and (3) re-enact the reform act with no other substantive changes.

Unlike ABCs, the institute wanted the Legislature to hold off on fixing the LSC election process, which the Supreme Court said violated the principle of one person, one vote.

Perhaps as remarkable as the black leadership consensus, the institute took pains to underscore its points of agreement with the ABCs coalition. "We’ve said that with those things we agree on, let’s go to the public so the public can see we’re not just fighting each other, we’re fighting on issues," said James Deanes, chairman of the Parent/Community Council. "I’m learning that," added Deanes, whose
blunt talk has fanned flames in the past.

Meanwhile, the ABCs had invited Deane's to its strategy sessions. And the ABCs rhetoric had cooled. Asked about black resistance to an immediate election fix, Dan Solis, executive director of the United Neighborhood Organization, said, "I don't think there's malicious intent." (Leading Hispanic groups stayed in old political alliances, therefore splitting on the election issue.)

A possible solution

Despite the ABCs' overtures, however, most black leaders looked on the group as people "who seek to solve this problem for us rather than with us," in the words of James W. Compton, president of the Chicago Urban League.

"The puzzling thing to me," said Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, "is that I don't see where the substantive difference is."

After intense research by lawyers with Sidley & Austin, ABCs proposed to fix the LSC election process by allowing all adult residents in a school's attendance area to join the school's parents and staff in voting for six parents, two community members and two teacher members. Under the original reform act, parents had voted for parents, community residents for community members and school staff for teachers.

While this mechanism would dilute parent power (as the court insisted) and increase opportunities for political manipulation, it was the only mechanism anyone had thought of that seemed to pass constitutional muster.

"We're not stopping anybody from acting in the spring session to bring the elections closer to what existed before," said Moore, adding that ABCs would support such a change.

Nevertheless, the afternoon of Jan. 7, Mayor Richard M. Daley, Senate President Phillip Rock (D-Oak Park) and House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) lined up behind the position of the fledgling African American Education Reform Institute.

Shortly after 9 p.m. on Jan. 8, the Legislature followed suit, putting Chicago school reform back in business. The vote was unanimous in the Senate and 107 to 5 in the House.

The two black opponents of the original act split. Rep. Arthur Turrer (D-Chicago) voted yes, saying "my people want me to support this." Monique Davis (D-Chicago) voted no, citing the absence of blacks on the conference committee that presented the deal; she later said she wanted the bill to pass. The only other Chicagoan to vote against it was Rep. Mary Flowers (D-Chicago).

The Legislature gave itself until July 1 to fix the LSC elections, which means school reform will have to compete in Springfield with heavier political concerns, including legislative redistricting and extension of the temporary income tax surcharge.

Echoing other legislators, Rock offered reassurance to the some 300 LSC members who descended on Springfield to lobby for an immediate solution to the election problem.

"Both sides of the aisle in both houses are interested in the success of Chicago school reform," he said.

"I think that's true," said Moore of Designs for Change. "But it may come down to a situation where they need somebody's vote on McCormick Place and he says: 'I'll do that only if you make this change in school reform.' It could be one of so many things. It could be something to do with the operating engineers, who have a very, very powerful lobby."

Suburban legislators will get into the act as well, one lobbyist said.

Meanwhile, the Board of Education is seeking some kind of citywide consensus. "We will have hearings and call a summit," said President Clinton Bristow.

The purpose, said Supt. Ted Kimbrough, is to achieve a legislative package that "everyone can be informed about, agree upon...and buy into."

Linda Lenz is editor of CATALYST. Charlotte Smarte-Faaf, managing editor, contributed to this report.

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**Group dedicates itself to truth, accountability**

Still in its infancy, the African American Education Reform Institute is a gathering of people, not a place.

Members come from a wide variety of black and multiracial institutions and groups, including some that have drawn fire from black leaders. When members meet, they look to a common agenda item, promoting the education of black children.

Their manifesto sets forth 11 principles, including:

- Be dedicated to truth.
- Faithfully represent the interests of the African-American community, avoiding even the appearance of serving any other interest and be sufficiently inclusive of the various elements of our community to be truly representative.
- Be accountable to the African-American community.

- Bring to bear in the analysis of educational issues the historical perspective our community has gained from years of neglect in the education (or miseducation) of its children.
- Be capable of thoroughly researching such issues in connection with their comprehensive analysis.
- Develop and articulate criteria for sound educational policies relative to the needs of black children.
- Develop credibility both within and outside the black community.
- Be willing to operate within coalitions, provided that the circumstances will permit valid assumptions and unresponsive positions relative to African-American educational needs to be effectively challenged.

For more information on the institute, call Ken McNeil at the Chicago Urban League (312) 285-5800.

**Who challenged the Chicago School Reform Act and why?**

The Chicago Principals Association filed suit largely to regain tenure, which the act replaced with four-year contracts. The Illinois Supreme Court agreed that principals could not have their tenure withdrawn without due process. But it said that the legislative process itself constituted due process.

Association president Bruce Berndt insists that his group would not have attacked the law if the Legislature had addressed such concerns as early retirement incentives for principals. “If we don’t get something out of this that improves the lot of principals, we will be back in court,” he says.

The association would challenge the court’s opinion that the legislative process constituted due process. Asked about that aspect of the opinion, Jeffrey Shaman, a constitutional law professor at DePaul University, said he found it “a bit surprising.... It’s not common.”

The principals association acknowledged that the Legislature can abolish tenure prospectively, that is, for people who become principals after the effective date of the act.

**What else did the Supreme Court say?**

The court ruled that the local school council elections were unconstitutional because parent voters, who could cast ballots for six parent members on the 11-member council, had a bigger say than did community residents, who could cast ballots for only two community members. This system violated the constitutional requirement of one person, one vote.

The defendants and intervenors—including the School Board, the city and a parent group formed by Designs for Change—had argued that LSCs have such limited authority that one-person, one-vote did not apply. The court disagreed: “The councils do not have such responsibilities as levying taxes and issuing bonds, but the legislature has given them the primary responsibility for school governance and improvement.”

Further, the community at large has just as great an interest in schools as do parents, the court said, noting that “property taxes are imposed on all residents regardless of whether they have children attending the schools.”

Because the LSC elections were unconstitutional, the entire Chicago School Reform Act—including the redistribution of State Chapter I funds, the cap on overhead spending and new teacher dismissal procedures—is unconstitutional, the court said. “It is clear that the General Assembly would not have enacted the statute without the portion held to be unconstitutional [the LSCs],” it explained.

The court also expressed the opinion that the School Board Nominating Commission, which forwards slates of candidates to the mayor, is unconstitutional because it “is simply too closely connected to the unconstitutionally selected local school councils.” All but five of the 28 commission members are drawn from subdistrict councils, whose members come from local school councils.

The city had argued that the nominating commission was advisory to the mayor. The court read the law differently, saying the mayor must appoint School Board members from nominating commission slates.

**Didn’t the reform act’s authors know what they were doing?**

“We knew what the issues would be,” said Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change. “We felt confident these councils would fall under the exception to one man, one vote....They don’t levy taxes. They control only one job.”

**What about appealing the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court?**

Defendants have indicated they will not appeal. A number of independent legal experts have said the state high court was on sound legal ground in its one-person, one-vote ruling.

**What did the Illinois Legislature do to correct the reform act?**

On Jan. 8, the last day of the 96th General Assembly, it passed the act again with several changes aimed at keeping reform going until the high court’s objections could be met. The vote was unanimous in the Senate and 107 to 5 in the House. The revised act is retroactive to May 1, 1989.

The act gives the mayor seven days to appoint members to the School Board, the School Board Nominating Commission, subdistrict councils and local school councils. It provides that the mayor cannot remove members during their terms. LSC members are to serve until elections are held in October.
The act sets a July 1 deadline for enacting “procedures for the election of local school council members” that “maintain the composition and not diminish the powers of the local school councils.”

**Is this acceptable to the Supreme Court?**

The court hasn’t said. However, in its Nov. 30 opinion the court was supportive of school reform: “The Act’s expressed intention to encourage interest and action at the local school level is unquestionably to be encouraged and properly developed.”

And it seemed not to be in a hurry: “In proposing corrective legislation that our decision requires, the City and citizens will have the opportunity to consider the experience to date under the Reform Act and can propose changes which, in light of experience and reflection, would be desirable.”

From a legal standpoint, the best response would be to fix the election process and hold a special election as soon as possible, said Jeffrey Shaman of Depaul.

The court is now considering requests from the City, Board of Education and other defendants for a rehearing of the case, filed largely to buy time for legislative action. The court also is considering petitions to make its order effective only after it rules on the rehearing requests.

Legal scholars expressed confidence that past actions by the School Board and LSCs would not be overturned.

**What would it take to make LSC elections constitutional?**

Under a proposal by the Alliance for Better Chicago Schools, all adults residing inside the attendance boundaries of a school would join the school’s parents and staff in voting for six parents, two community members and two teachers. Under the old act, parents voted for parents, community residents for community members and school staff for teachers.

ABCs considered other approaches, but its lawyers said they would not pass constitutional muster. Other groups have not made formal proposals.

**Won’t general elections “politicize” the schools?**

All elections are inherently political. Opinions vary on whether opening local school council elections to whole communities would increase the likelihood of damaging politics.

James Compton, president of the
Chicago Urban League, warned: "One can imagine a local politician mobilizing his or her political organization to elect a controlling bloc on one or more local school councils. That politician would then have the power to hand pick school principals, and through the control of those principals, have resort to the instructional staffing of the schools as a source of patronage positions."

Don't count on it, say Ald. Patrick O'Connor, chairman of the City Council Education Committee and an LSC member, and political consultant Jacky Grimshaw.

"Elected officials who want to get involved in school issues have to be right or they will get a lot of people angry at them," said O'Connor. "LSC elections are not for people who want to dabble in politics. If people see you're in it for personal gain, the retribution would be great."

"I don't see LSCs having a lot of power or influence that ward committeemen would be interested in," said Grimshaw. "They're not worth the ward committeemen's efforts to try to take control. What would they get except a lot of headaches?"

Further, each ward has an average of 11 schools, many with attendance boundaries that lap across into other wards.

"I see danger more from the unions," said Grimshaw. "They could put money behind slates."

Are there other problems with open elections?

A third of Chicago's schools draw more than 40 percent of their students from outside traditional geographic attendance boundaries. The parents of those students, who typically are traveling to more distant schools as part of desegregation, would have to campaign in unfamiliar and likely racially dissimilar areas.

An analysis by the Chicago Urban League found that even under the old election system, white parents held proportionately more council seats on the Northwest, Southwest and Far Southwest sides than white enrollment at their schools. For example, white enrollment at Canty Elementary School, 3740 N. Panama, is 64 percent but an all-white council was elected. However, it was not known whether proportionately more white parents ran for election in the first place.

At a number of schools, candidates created multiracial slates, noted Donald Moore of Designs for Change. The LSC elections were "almost an exception to the Chicago pattern" of race-based voting, he said.

James Deanes, a school activist who is black and lives in Austin, countered: "People around Taft High School [on the Far Northwest Side] would not have to be racist not to vote for me. They just don't know me."

Robert Howard, the School Board's desegregation lawyer, predicted racial imbalance will grow if whole communities are permitted to vote for parent members.

To tember that, he suggested resurrecting a proposed provision that at one stage of the legislative process was part of the old reform act: At schools with large percentages of bused-in students, the community-member seats could be filled by appointment to ensure that all racial and ethnic groups are represented on the councils. In these cases, "community" could include parents of bused-in children. District councils could do the appointing, Howard added.

What would happen at the 70 multiarea schools, including citywide magnet and vocational schools?

Under the ABCs proposal, those LSC elections would be citywide or otherwise conform to attendance boundaries. The coalition contends that they would be citywide in name only. "In the first LSC elections, roughly 6 percent of all eligible community residents [excluding parents] voted," ABCs says. "Consistent with school board elections in suburban Cook County and across the nation, community residents with no special ties to the schools typically failed to vote."

Will residents who are not U.S. citizens continue to be able to vote?

"That's no problem," said law professor Jeffrey Shaman of DePaul. "If a state wants to permit noncitizens to vote, it may."

In the amended school reform act adopted Jan. 8, the Legislature indicated its intention to permit the practice to continue. New election procedures "shall maintain the voter eligibility requirements established" in the original act, the revised act says.

Dan Solis, executive director of the United Neighborhood Organization, is not worried the Legislature will change its mind. "We don't think that's an issue at all," he said. "It would be political suicide for a majority of the Legislature to even talk that way. But we're ready to go all out if it does."

Is there a silver lining here?

"The lawsuit was a good one to 'lose,'" maintained Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance. The Supreme Court's ruling that LSCs are general governmental bodies strengthens their hand in battles with the central administration, he said. Further, it is now clear that the mayor cannot go outside the recommendations of the School Board Nominating Commission in appointing the School Board, he added.

Moore said he is thankful the court did not rule sooner. "The farther along in the process, the more public support there is for continuing it," he explained. "Now there are 6,000 people who have put in hundreds of hours to make this work."

Jacqueline Simmons, principal of Robeson High School, agreed: "People have gotten a taste of school reform. With or without the law, schools will never go back to where they were. Schools will be reformed."
Even more need now for fair, uniform elections

by Arlene C. Rubin and Richard K. Means

When the Illinois Supreme Court declared Chicago's local school council elections unconstitutional, CATALYST asked Project LEAP, an independent election watchdog, to follow developments and write a commentary. We welcome responses and alternative proposals. Our regular Opinions section will return next issue.

Now that there is time to do more thinking about the legislative changes needed in the School Reform Act, a reexamination of how LSC elections are conducted is in order. With greater voting weight being given to the population at large, it may be that tighter procedures will be called for than originally envisioned.

Project LEAP (Legal Elections in All Precincts) volunteers participated in all aspects of the historic first LSC elections in October 1989. LEAP provided technical assistance in the design of the election, election judges to conduct balloting, attorney troubleshooters as monitors and a public hotline for reports of alleged irregularities.

What Project LEAP observed was an election designed by well-meaning but inexperienced community groups and professional educators, administered by people with little understanding of the checks and balances that make for honest elections, advised by School Board attorneys with no expertise in election law (a specialty mastered by only a handful of Chicago attorneys), and run by an accounting firm which, when asked about pollwatcher credentials, answered: "What's a pollwatcher?"

Some of the worst elements of old-time Chicago elections were resurrected for the LSC elections: paper ballots counted by hand, judges of election who were close relatives or spouses of candidates, lack of privacy for voters, potential for voting in someone else's name (ghost voting), etc.

Most basic of all, the election was conducted by the very parties with the highest stake in the outcome: the principal and the existing council at each school. Imagine putting an incumbent alderman with 17 challengers in charge of the Feb. 26 election in his own ward, determining who votes and who doesn't, what pollwatchers will be allowed to observe and where ballots are stored!

Naïve expectations

Putting LSCs in charge of LSC elections was amateurism of the highest order—with the naïve expectation that voluntary honesty would prevail. As it turns out, the elections did actually take place in most schools without significant manipulation in 1989. But will that basic honesty hold up for the next election, much less in 1999?

Fearful of tying the LSC elections into legal knots, a number of school reform groups have proposed that the Legislature exempt the LSC elections from the Illinois Election Code and rely on election guidelines set by the Board of Education. We propose instead, that more emphasis be put on the well-understood principles of the Election Code and that a professional agency with experience in such matters, such as the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, administer the elections.

Let's examine the objections of school reform planners to the professionalization of the LSC election process, and the pros and cons of using the Illinois Election Code and the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners.

First, it is feared that the specific rules in the Election Code would impair two important distinctions from regular elections that are critical to the LSC election design: (1) allowing nonregistered and noncitizens to participate and (2) allowing candidates to nominate themselves rather than gather signatures on petitions, which creates problems of ballot access.

In our view, both broader franchise and self-nomination can be preserved and, at the same time, the advantages of the Election Code can be utilized. Sec. 9-1 of the School Code provides that the general election law of Illinois applies to school elections, except when the School Code specifies different procedures. Thus, the significant principles of privacy in voting, pollwatcher rights, enforceable penalties for illegal behavior, etc. already apply to LSC elections. Unfortunately, the adminis-

Arlene C. Rubin, executive director of Project LEAP, has been involved in election issues in Chicago since 1968. Richard K. Means, a lawyer in private practice, was an election expert in both the Cook County State's Attorney's Office and the City Corporation Counsel's Office. A member of Project LEAP's Advisory Committee, he wrote the handbook and conducted training sessions for LEAP's troubleshooters in the 1989 LSC elections.
Electors of the 1989 elections ignored rather than utilized the principles of the Election Code.

A second concern of school reformers is for local control, even of the election process. In our view, however, a harmful lack of uniformity results unless an election authority even-handedly administers the election so that candidates across the City have the same experience running for office and so that voters are treated equally.

One way to achieve uniformity of elections throughout the city is to have the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners conduct the election. Suburban school boards are elected under the jurisdiction of the County Clerk’s Office, the administration of all public elections in Cook County. There have been great strides toward professionalism in the Chicago Board of Elections (CBOE) in the past several years. The CBOE has the equipment and means of distribution to provide for privacy of voting and accurate computer ballot counting. They have the experience and the established methodology in setting up a fair ballot. They are sensitive to the need for ballot security before, during, and after voting. They produce, with editing input from Project LEAP, clear and concise judges manuals to assure consistent and uniform procedures.

The third fear is that political office holders will step in and use old ward heeling tactics to influence LSC elections. We suspect these fears to be unfounded. After all, what is at risk and what is to be gained by the politicians? An LSC only covers a small number of precincts, has a say over a modest budget, and controls one job—the principal’s. The issues are so complicated and so parochial as they apply to each school that the politicians may make more enemies than friends by taking sides in these disputes.

There are those, however, who might be inclined to campaign vigorously, put together slates and endorse candidates: activists in community organizations, PTAs, alumni associations, block clubs and neighborhood groups. These are the people with educational or local agendas. The debate they produce is a healthy step toward one of the ultimate goals of reform: increased citizen (and particularly, parental) participation in the schools.

Elections aren’t scary

Nobody runs for any office without seeking endorsements, producing persuasive literature and banding together with others who are like-minded—in other words, campaigning. And that’s how it should be—as long as the rules of the game are uniform and impose penalties for infractions.

School reformers have been anxious to have LSC elections look as little like regular elections as possible in order to encourage the participation of everyone—even those who don’t (or can’t) vote in a regular election. We respect that effort, but we question their reasoning. They postulate that many people don’t register and vote because voting is an intimidating experience.

We disagree. Voting isn’t so scary. For those who do vote in regular elections, the process is a familiar one. For those who don’t, the process is uniform, even-handed and easy to learn. There’s a flag outside and live neighbors inside at a couple of folding tables. You sign your name and give your address, get a ballot, go inside a private booth, punch holes next to your candidate choices and leave. And it’s the identical system throughout the city.

We believe that people who don’t register and vote act as they do because they have no hope their lives will be changed for the better. But with school reform there is hope. Let’s allow that hope to express itself in elections that are conducted fairly, honestly and uniformly.
**REFORM UPDATES**

**School funding lawsuit.** In 1986-87, the Illinois elementary and high school districts that spent the most money outpaced those spending the least by more than $2,300 per pupil.

The reason, according to a lawsuit filed late last year, is the vast differences in local property wealth backing the high spenders and the low spenders. On a per-pupil basis, the ratio of property wealth was 9.3 to 1 in the case of elementary districts and 4.8 to 1 in the case of high school districts.

For unit districts like Chicago's, which include grades kindergarten through twelve, the spending gap between the top 10 percent and bottom 10 percent was $707 per pupil, and the property wealth ratio was 6.3 to 1.

The lawsuit, filed by Chicago and 46 other districts, contends that the state's school finance system, which relies heavily on property taxes, violates the education article and the equal protection clause of the Illinois Constitution.

While the suit seeks a specific solution, the districts want the Legislature to increase funding so that children attending schools in property-poor areas are not penalized.

The outcome of the case could turn on whether the Illinois Supreme Court deems education to be a fundamental right, according to Charles Ward, associate dean of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana. Ward says the court has repeatedly declined to do that.

However, William J. Holloway, an attorney for the plaintiffs, says the high court's recent ruling that the system of electing local school council members in Chicago was unconstitutional "just about says education is a fundamental right."

Meanwhile, a national organization campaigning for school vouchers is seeking to become a party to the case. "Until the state achieves the system the Constitution guarantees, we are demanding the state take the funds it makes available to local schools and give them to the parents," said Clint Bolick, director of the Landmark Legal Foundation for Civil Rights, Washington, D.C.

Holloway, a partner in Hinshaw and Culbertson, contends the group does not "come within a country mile" of qualifying to intervene.

How long will this case take? Holloway's "optimistic" projection is two years; Ward's is four to six. In New Jersey and California, says Ward, the cases took 20 years.

In a related development, the Chicago-based Heartland Institute released a study of Illinois high schools showing that average scores on the ACT college entrance exam are tied to family income, parents' education and the ethnic composition of the community, not to per-pupil spending.

"The relationship between spending and school achievement is weak because how much money is spent is significantly less important than how it is spent," said DePaul University economist William Sanders, who conducted the study.

Also arguing for vouchers, he said, "Increasing overall spending on equalizing current spending on education will do little to improve the performance of public school students in the State of Illinois."

**Training solution?** The challenge of providing uniform, ongoing, citywide training for members of local school councils could possibly be met by the City Colleges of Chicago, according to Paul Vega, the Board of Education's reform chief.

Training for council members and candidates could be offered through the colleges' adult education program, which provides noncredit courses funded largely by the state, he recently told a group of school reform activists.

Vega, a former vice president of Malcolm X College, is exploring his idea with City Colleges officials.

**LSCs lobby PBC.** The Public Building Commission (PBC) is feeling the effects of Chicago school reform, according to The Neighborhood Works, a newsletter published by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

A number of local school councils have been pressuring the PBC to break up a logjam that has stalled rehabilitation projects at their schools, the newsletter reports in its October/November 1990 issue. The projects are on hold because the PBC and Board of Education have been unable to agree on the price to pay for asbestos removal, which must come first, the newsletter says.

Leading the LSC effort is Edward Tanzman of the Nettelhorst Local School Council (312) 348-3257.

**New phone numbers.** Prefixes to the telephone numbers of all Board of Education offices and schools are being changed to 535 or 534 as they are hooked into a citywide Centrex network. In most cases, the last four digits will stay the same.

**Algebra Project.** Robert Moses's Algebra Project (CATALYST/October 1990), which uses a city's subway system to give sixth-graders an understanding of algebraic concepts, is coming to Chicago.

Instruction is scheduled to begin this month in six schools—Araki, Clark Middle, Harte, Koscisusko, Reavis and Van Vlissengen. In addition, a number of community organizations will provide complementary after-school programs.
Funding is from the MacArthur Foundation. For more information, contact Michael Hayes (312) 535-7996.

RESOURCES

**Principal evaluation.** A form for evaluating principals in 11 areas, including leadership, staff development, flexibility, innovation and communication, is available from the Bogan High School Local School Council.

To obtain a copy, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Richard R. Renik Sr., LSC chair, Bogan High School, 3939 W. 79th St., Chicago, Ill. 60652.

**Free mediation.** Local school councils that cannot resolve disputes can get help from the Lawyers’ School Reform Advisory Project. Fourteen volunteer lawyers trained in mediation are available.

“The goal is to avoid debilitating disputes that distract LSCs from their real business—setting education policy for their schools,” said Peggy Gordon, project director.

Mediators will help councils settle specific disputes that cannot be resolved by majority vote. A request for a mediator must be put in writing and copies sent to all members of the LSC. The project’s office is at 17 E. Monroe, Suite 212, Chicago, Ill. 60603. For more information, contact Gordon at (312) 332-2494.

**Parent, student training.** Developing students’ study habits and test-taking skills and making parents’ academic partners is the goal of training offered by the Chicago Neighborhood Organizing Project.

A video accompanies the five-part training series, which includes a variety of exercises aimed at helping parents and students learn together. Schools interested in the series may obtain more information by calling the Chicago Neighborhood Organizing Project (312) 545-8064.

**Principal selection guide.** The second edition of *Rating and Selecting a Principal* is available from the Lawyers’ School Reform Advisory Project (312) 332-2494. Included is a supplement on the most frequently asked questions concerning principal selection.

**Curriculum pointers.** Curriculum Guidelines, a checklist for reviewing and evaluating curriculum models, is available from the Parent/Community Council (312) 427-8999. The checklist is aimed at helping local school councils set goals and objectives that focus on student achievement and develop clear instructional strategies for meeting those goals.

**Drug-free kids.** A kit to teach parents how to keep their children drug free is available from the National PTA. Common Sense: Strategies For Raising Alcohol and Drug-Free Children includes information on how parents can minimize a child’s risk of becoming involved with drugs, pointers for conducting parent meetings and a 15-minute video on parent-child communication skills. Limited copies are available to groups for $44. To order, call 1-800-225-5483.

RESEARCH

**LSC meetings reviewed.**

During the first year of local school council meetings, principals had the best attendance and participated most in discussions, according to a study of 12 councils by the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

The panel reported findings in three areas:

- **Attendance.** Average attendance ranged from 6.8 members at one school to 9.6 at another. Principals attended most often, 97 percent of the time, followed by the council chairperson, who is a parent, and teacher members, who both had an 88 percent attendance rate. Next came community members (67 percent), parent members other than the chair (62 percent) and, at high schools, student members (52 percent).

- **Content of council meetings.** Two general topics—school programs and LSC organization—were discussed most often, 29 percent and 28 percent, respectively. Next came the school building, security and safety (13 percent), finance (11 percent), personnel (11 percent) and parent and community involvement (4 percent).

- **Participation in meetings.** On average, principals participated in 66 percent of discussions, chairpersons in 43 percent, teachers in 32 percent, community members in 28 percent, other parents in 17 percent and students in 4 percent.

Overcrowding, school improvement planning, principal selection and contracts and safety, security and discipline generated the highest participation, with an average of four members joining in discussions on these topics.

For more information, contact the panel at (312) 939-2202.

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS

**Mainstreaming.** The future of special education programs and their relationship to “regular” education programs and teachers will be the topic of a forum scheduled for Feb. 9.

Sponsored by People United for Responsible Education, the forum will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Novar Hall at Truman College, 1145 W. Wilson. Speakers include officials from the Chicago Public Schools, the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, the Illinois State Advisory Committee for Special Education and Project Choices.

For principals only. Alternative sources of funding and proposal writing will be discussed at the fourth in a series of “principal fellowships” being held at the Community Renewal Society, 332 S. Michigan, Suite 500. The session will be held from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Jan. 23. For more information, call Nelson Ndove, (312) 427-4830.

**LSCs vs. bureaucracy.** Conflicts between local school councils and central office will be the topic of a forum scheduled for 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Feb. 22 at the Community Renewal Society, 332 S. Michigan, Suite 500. For more information, call Nelson Ndove (312) 427-4830.
GRANTS

**School improvement.** Jan. 31 is the application deadline for grants of up to $20,000 offered by the Illinois State Board of Education to schools with outstanding improvement plans. A total of $400,000 will be distributed.

For details, write the Department of School Improvement Services, ISBE, 100 N. First St., Springfield, Ill. 62777-0001 or call (217) 782-0322 or (217) 7825728.

TELEVISION

**Eye on reform.** “School Reform Chicago Style,” featuring a panel of reform participants and observers, will be broadcast at 9 p.m. Jan. 22 and 29 on Chicago Cable Access Channel 21.

The show, which includes interviews with Leonard Dominquez, principal of Whitney Elementary School, and Calvin Pearce, LSC chair at Morgan Park High School, was produced by The Publicity Club of Chicago.

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**REFORM IN THE CLASSROOM continued from page 3**

ers are cynical about staff development, and they should be.”

A study of eight revitalized high schools conducted by the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools in Madison, Wis., also speaks to the need for a supportive school environment. Mutual respect and shared values and goals were essential precursors to change, the center found.

“A faculty that feels they can trust one another, trust the administration without being criticized behind their backs—that faculty can go very far,” researcher Karen Seashore Louis writes in the center’s fall 1990 newsletter. “They are freed up to do different things, to talk to one another without hesitation.”

Leadership important

On a more tangible level, Louis reports that teachers at the revitalized schools stress the need for “a clear mission that staff can own” and a schoolwide action plan.

“Administrative leadership was even more important to the quality of worklife than we expected,” she adds. “Teachers agree that no matter how talented the staff, a school with an ineffective principal is unlikely to generate professional excitement and commitment.”

Louis outlines these characteristics of effective leadership from the viewpoint of the eight faculties who dared to change:

- Principals “make teachers invent solutions to problems” by delegating responsibilities. Principals aren’t the only problem solvers.
- Principals are attuned to the details of school life, anticipating problems and encouraging teachers to drop by their offices to share thoughts and observations.
- Principals themselves take risks, “biting the bullet” on tough decisions and confronting bad teaching with support for improvement.
- Principals insist on ethical behavior and “don’t keep the faculty guessing about what is important.”

Meanwhile, the Chicago Public Schools have a new instructional leader. Adrienne Bailey, deputy superintendent for instruction and formerly head of the Educational Equality Project of The College Board, says staff development is a top priority for her and Supt. Ted D. Kimbrough.

“We want to see how we can provide more effective assistance to teachers,” she says. “It may mean reshaping some of what we do, identifying new models, new delivery systems and ways to utilize and coordinate funding better. My agenda is to encourage collegiality and collaborative work among teachers and to enable them to build curricula as part of their school reform.”

Alex Poinsett is a contributing editor at Ebony magazine. Linda Lenz is editor of CATALYST.

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Bright Ideas

Celebrities become guest readers

When WMAQ-TV reporter Ray Suarez recently stopped by Darwin Elementary School, 3116 W. Belmont, he wasn’t chasing a story. He came to read a storybook.

Suarez is part of a string of local celebrities who have visited Darwin to demonstrate the fun and importance of reading.

“We want them to serve as role models for the children,” said Principal Audrey Donaldson. “These people are successful adults because they learned to become good readers.”

Darwin’s guest readers have included Chicago authors Elaine Kittredge, Greg Larson, Vivian Scufranz and Marlene Targ-Brill; principals John Martin of Senn High and Diana Scallon of Morrill Elementary, Northeastern Illinois University Prof. Jeanne Baxter, District 3 Supt. Noel Rosado, District 3 Administrator Julio Cruz, Aspire coordinator Jose Morales and members of the school’s custodial and lunchroom staffs.

Audrey Donaldson (312) 292-5110.

Cards that say: ‘professional’

In the little-things-count department, Marcello Gillie, principal of Bass Elementary School, 1140 W. 66th, has bought business cards for her staff.

“It helps them feel more professional,” Gillie explained.

Teaching assistant Alex L. Emanuel said he exchanged business cards with a salesman when he was shopping for a car. “A lot of time you do not get a chance to tell people where you work and what you do,” he said. “I felt great about having the card, and it made things easier.”

The cards have a space where staff members sign their names and check whether they are teaching or career service employees.

Marcello Gillie (312) 962-2875.

High schools share resources

Five high schools—Tilden, Englewood, Westinghouse, Phillips and DuSable—are pooling resources to promote staff development.

The schools jointly hired a coordinator who helps teachers motivate and teach talented and gifted inner-city students. “We’re trying to help children,” said Tilden Principal Hazel Steward. “We’re willing to share the resources we have to maximize what we’re doing.”

The group also plans to work together to improve teachers’ classroom management skills and to ward off gang recruitment.

The Tilden staff development cluster is one of several developing throughout the city.

Hazel Steward (312) 268-2300

Catalyst welcomes guest editorials and letters. They may be edited for clarity and space. Include your address and phone number.

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