State Quality Reviews test 49 schools

by Dan Weissmann

Teams of state inspectors swept through 49 Chicago public schools in February, as Illinois' new school accountability program made its local debut—as a work-in-progress.

The going was rough. Not only is the process new, but it's not yet final; the state changed some requirements only two weeks before coming to Chicago, and a crucial set of guidelines is still being written. And, timing aside, it quickly became apparent that the state's expectations clash with requirements of the Chicago School Reform Act.

As a result, some schools that spent weeks preparing for the visits found that they didn't have what the state wanted. And local school councils were unsure of where they fit in.

"I would be surprised if there weren't anxiety," says Mary Jayne Brancato, the state's associate superintendent for programs and accountability. Aside from the last-minute changes, she reasons, "We're asking [schools] to do something they've never done before."

State inspectors have been coming around for decades, but their questions had little to do with school performance. Did teachers have teaching certificates, they asked. Had the students been immunized? Was the building still standing?

Basically, the state's people looked the building up and down, walked through the halls, checked a few files, and left.

Now, Quality Review teams are heading straight for the principal's office, where they spend a day holed up with the principal, perhaps a few staff members and stacks of documents. There, they scour the school's School Improvement Plan for clues to a pair of tricky questions: Is the school working to serve all the kids who come there? Are they all learning?

As Illinois Education Supt. C. Robert Leininger puts it, the state has switched from "been counting" to "assessing the quality of education being provided to our children."

The new accountability program is an outgrowth of 1985 legislation that called, first, for state adoption of learning goals.

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In This Issue: Breaking the ‘blame’ logjam

Accountability in education is one of those apple-pie things that everyone wants—for the next guy. Politicians want Chicago educators to be held accountable for children’s learning, but refuse to acknowledge that Chicago’s schools need more money. Chicago’s former superintendent, Ted Kimbrough, said he couldn’t be held accountable for children’s learning because he had no control over schools. Principals say they can’t be held accountable because they can’t fire teachers. Teachers say they can’t be held accountable because parents don’t do their part. And on and on.

Indeed, educating children, particularly children from poverty, is a job in which all of us—not only educators and parents, but also voters, legislators, neighborhood businesses and corporate giants—have a role to play. But regardless of what the next guy does—or doesn’t—do, each of us can play our part better.

So, how do we achieve educational accountability in a messy world? Taking a deep breath, we suggest that the state’s new accountability program, described by CATALYST writer Dan Weissmann in this issue, is a good place to start. The deep breath is for our fear that, without more help for schools, more time for principals and teachers to plan and some relief from other bureaucratic requirements, the program will become nothing more than a paperwork nightmare.

The state’s program, like Chicago school reform, focuses on individual schools and requires them to show, in their school improvement plans, what kinds of students they have, what help these students need most and how the school plans to meet those needs. Not an easy task.

With well-considered school improvement plans in place, schools can begin to set specific expectations for what teachers, parents, community members and, yes, even students should do.

As for legislatures, they are responsible not just for providing schools with enough money to do the job but also for enacting laws that make educational sense. As our articles show, the Reform Act’s get-tough talk about test scores—requiring half the kids at each school to score above national norms by 1994—is unrealistic and doesn’t jibe with the new accountability law. No wonder some educators are cynical about reform.

**REFORM NOTES** In reporting recently on the brief tenure of big-city school superintendents—now averaging about two years—Washington Post reporter Mary Jordan noted recently that reform often goes down with the chief. Now that New York Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez has lost his job, she writes, his efforts to lower the dropout rate and to allow parents and pupils to choose schools outside their neighborhoods are in jeopardy.

Chicago has been a revolving door for superintendents, too. But because reform here arose from a wide variety of groups outside the schools, it’s in a much better position to survive—however factious the groups are and no matter who the superintendent is.

Fernandez’s ouster, stemming from controversial programs such as giving condoms to high school students, also illustrates a strength of Chicago’s unique brand of reform. By giving local communities substantial control over their own programs, reform has not been sidetracked by such emotional, social issues.

**WORTH READING** In Crossing the Tracks: How ‘Untracking’ Can Save America’s Schools, [New York: The New Press, 1992], author Anne Wheelock mixes real-life stories of schools that eliminated tracking with a readable dose of educational theory on how tracking hurts kids, particularly minorities. Wheelock also includes “how-to” suggestions from the schools she visited, a list of contact names at schools that agreed to serve as resources and a list of references.

Linda Terry  Lorraine Forte
for all children and, then, creation of tests, called the Illinois Goals Assessment Program, to measure attainment of those goals. In 1991, the Legislature, with strong backing from the business community, followed up with an accountability law that outlines new ways for the state to get local schools to do a good job.

To make sure local officials pay attention, the law gives the state the authority to shut down or take over schools and districts that fail to shape up. However, the possibility of state takeover or shutdown looms only at the end of a long road; it will be years before state officials can even consider such actions.

Not yet binding

Indeed, this year’s visits from the state’s Quality Review Teams aren’t binding, since the state is still figuring out how best to carry out the law. The state even broke its first 50 appointments with Chicago schools when its Quality Review staff decided to spend the month of January revising the process. Revised procedures went out to schools Jan. 20.

On Feb. 2, Volta Elementary School in Albany Park became one of the first Chicago schools to be inspected. “We said, ‘Well, we just got this outline [of state expectations] a week ago.’ They said, ‘Well, we just got it two weeks ago ourselves,’” reports Principal Nancy Wallace. “They were learning on the job, which they freely admitted.”

The continuing changes in the state’s process are evidence of “a new approach to state government,” according to Brancato. When the state’s staff saw ways they could improve the process, they immediately worked to make the changes, cancelling the school visits. Brancato sees that kind of flexibility as a model for what she is asking schools to do: always be looking for ways to improve.

Volta is scheduled to receive a report from the state around March 1, outlining any problems the inspectors found. The school then will have a year to amend its plans according to the state’s suggestions. Based on the school’s revised Improvement Plan, the state will issue Volta one of four ratings: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Does Not Fully Meet Standards, or Does Not Meet Standards.

As the program got under way in Chicago, one of the first findings was that Chicago schools are being pulled in two different directions: one way by local requirements that stem from the Chicago School Reform Act, and another way by the state’s Quality Review.

“The bottom line was that the Chicago Board of Education and the State Board of Education are not in sync,” says Marshall Wolf, Volta’s school counselor, who was present at the Quality Review.

A subcommittee of the Chicago Board of Education is working to align local requirements with the state’s new expectations. “We’re having a great deal of trouble trying to integrate them,” reports Linette Fu, director of the board’s Bureau of Planning. “They are fairly divergent.”

Specifically, the Reform Act requires that every school work toward the goal of having at least 50 percent of its students score at or above the national average on a standardized test. However, the state’s Quality Reviewers want schools to make sure that all students are learning by devising their own tests, especially suited to the kids at that school.

Schools may have a harder time passing the Quality Review standards if they “get too tied up in achieving the [50 percent] target,” says Fu. “If half our kids made the national norms, what about the other 50 percent?”

For instance, a program at Terrell Elementary School in Washington Park singles out kids who are close to scoring at national norms, giving them “an extra nudge,” reports Principal Reva Hairston. She was perplexed to find that state inspectors “were not interested in that approach.”

Instead, says Volta’s Wolf, “They would like to know, if we’re talking about a subgroup like bilingual kids who are just coming out of self-contained bilingual classrooms, what goals do we have for that particular group of students, and what are we doing to help them reach those goals?”

The main obstacle to reconciling the two testing approaches is the Reform Act’s requirement of a nationally normed test, Brancato says. Nationally normed tests compare students with each other; an individual score represents how well a student did compared with all the other kids in the country who took the test.

In contrast, the Quality Review process asks schools to develop their own criterion-referenced tests—tests that measure just how much of a particular batch of skills and knowledge a student has picked up, not how much more or less she/he knows than the “average” student.

“I feel like I’m serving two masters. The state wants it one way, and the Chicago Board of Education is telling me they want it another way.”

—Nancy Wallace, principal

“I feel like I’m serving two masters,” says Wallace, Volta’s principal. “The state wants it one way, and the Chicago Board of Education, my employer, is telling me they want it another way.”

A ‘herculean’ task

Schools have also been jolted by the depth of the analysis the state expects.

At Volta, for instance, school officials had carefully charted the gains of each student in an after-school reading program. The inspectors, recalls Wolf, “looked at it and said, ‘Statistically, can you show us that these kids wouldn’t have made these gains if they weren’t in the program?’”

Volta’s staff had not “charted” the proof that the gains were due to the reading program. The state inspectors said they would look at that information once it was on a chart. Says Wolf, “They get picky.”

“A team of people worked for four weeks compiling this material—what we thought the state’s team would be looking for,” says Wolf. “To still fail short was disheartening to say the least, when you spent so much time preparing for them.”

“The job they want us to do has really expanded,” says Jerome Laz, principal of...
Evergreen Academy in McKinley Park. "They're talking about total communication and total documentation. It's just a very involved process. It's a herculean job."

At Terrell, Hairston questions whether it's worth the time and effort. "Time I should be spending in classrooms, I'm spending on this," she said as she prepared for the state's visit. "We've got four or five new teachers, who are just learning to teach, and we don't have time to work with them."

But time spent preparing for the visits is just the tip of the iceberg. The state expects each school's staff to design tests for every level of every subject, tailored to its student body and curriculum. And the state expects a school to use sophisticated statistical analysis both to design tests and to evaluate results.

"Schools are not set up with the time for teachers to do that stuff," says Raphael Guajardo, principal of Disney Magnet School in Uptown.

And teachers haven't been trained to do it either, adds Fu. The state expects schools to have everything in place by September, which Fu says is too soon.

A few days after the state's visit to Terrell, Hairston speculates that she may have to use some of the school's discretionary funds to hire a statistical analyst to help the teachers design and evaluate tests.

A role for LSCs?

The state's first round of visits also raised a question about the involvement of local school councils.

"They should be bringing in the LSCs, but we seem to be the last ones to know what's going on around here," John Aguña, the LSC chair at Disney, said as his school prepared for its Feb. 2 inspection.

Disney's principal, Raphael Guajardo, had held several faculty meetings on the process but had not briefed the LSC, according to Aguña. The LSC had asked Guajardo if it could sit in on the state review. When Guajardo said he didn't think it was a good idea, Aguña started calling state and district officials, trying to secure himself a place at the table.

"My biggest concern is that we not deviate from the school improvement plan," Aguña explains. "It may not be perfect, but it's the SIP. I don't want to have principals be able to make changes on the fly."

Council members have good reason to request access to the Quality Review meetings, according to Joy Noven of Parents United for Responsible Education. "If we're going to be involved in developing the SIP with the principal, we should be present to hear what the problems are with it."

The day before Disney's scheduled inspection, Aguña called Richard Basden, the state's Quality Review chief, to see if he could attend. At first, says Aguña, Basden was adamant that LSC members not appear at the meeting. "He threatened to cancel the meeting several times," if LSC members showed up, Aguña says.

Eventually, though, Basden relented but set conditions. "He said," claimed Aguña, "'If you want to be an observer, that's fine. But the minute anything comes out of the observer's mouth, the meeting is cancelled.' In other words, he's telling us that we can be there with tape over our mouths."

Basden's version is slightly different: "I had threatened to cancel the meeting if it was going to be nothing but a hot confrontation [about] issues that we have no control over. Board-administration conflicts, that's a fact of life. . . . We can't afford to get in between the two."

The state inspector who visited Disney backs Basden's reasoning. "We never get involved with a political thing between a principal and a council," says Quality Review Inspector Susan Rivera.

Rivera also points to another reason that she might discourage LSC members from attending: "Obviously, we don't want a lot of people there, because we want to get our work done. The smaller the group, the more efficient it is."

"We really try to limit the participation of people outside of the school setting," says Brancato, but "there was never any intention to exclude LSC members."

When Disney's inspection day came, "I attended the meeting. It went off," reports Aguña. His advice to other LSCs: "Be there. It's good experience. It shows council members if the school is really doing its job with the kids. It gives council members an understanding of how the school really works, of how teachers determine what to teach."

"I think definitely that's going to have to occur," agrees Evergreen's Laz in the wake of his visit from state reviewers. "The reform law is not asking the LSCs to be a rubber stamp for anything. You're working together on a local level on everything."

Program good or bad?

Not surprisingly, opinions about the worth of the entire Quality Review program vary widely.

Robert Brazil, principal of Sullivan High School in Rogers Park, believes it is valuable. "If we didn't have this—principals are so busy—we wouldn't look at these statistics. It's why the North Central Evaluation is a good idea; it's why preparing a Chapter 1 application is a good idea. It forces the administrator to look at what he or she has done over a period of time."

But Hairston says the approach is severely flawed. "I need people who are familiar with the community—and not just what they read in the paper. I wish they would spend a week, or at least three or four days walking around the school and then one or two days talking with me."
A guide to the state's new accountability program

Quality Reviews are the key to the state's new accountability process. Starting this year, the state will use these one-day visits to check up on schools and determine whether they need further monitoring or assistance.

What is the state looking for in its Quality Reviews? What are the standards?

Each school is expected to set its own standards. State reviewers will ask a school to show (1) why those standards are appropriate, (2) how far or fast the school is achieving them and (3) what plans the school has for improvement.

The main document reviewers will use is the school improvement plan, which surveys students and their needs, outlines a plan for meeting those needs and makes predictions about how much better students will do when the plan is operating.

The state says it is looking at two questions: Are all children at a school learning? Are all children being served? The state review also hinges on a third question: How do you know?

A school will have to provide evidence that its assessments are the most appropriate ones to measure whether the particular kids at that school are learning the particular things that the school says it is teaching.

Most of the evidence the state asks for will be test scores and demographics, e.g., the number of students who are from low-income families, the number who are in bilingual education programs but nearly ready for "mainstreaming," the number who have disabilities, etc.

"The idea is not to catch people doing things wrong and punish them, but to help them find ways to improve and serve all the kids in the state," says Mary Jayne Brancato, the state's associate superintendent for programs and accountability.

How do the IGAP tests fit into all of this?

The official requirement is that, in order to get the state's seal of approval, half of a school's scores on the IGAP must fall into a range that the state considers acceptable.

Brancato says that in practice, though, the state is unlikely to penalize a school solely on the basis of low IGAP scores. The state looks at IGAP scores only when it conducts a Quality Review; if those scores don't look good, state officials will look more closely at the school's own assessments.

Does this mean the state will tell us how to run our school?

No. The state wants schools to decide how to run themselves; the Quality Review process just checks to make sure that a school's decisions are based on good evidence and sound reasoning. The state is asking schools to make a good argument that they know what they are doing.

What happens if we don't pass this one-day Quality Review?

This year, schools aren't in any jeopardy, says Brancato. State officials will just send a report to each school visited, outlining any problems the review turned up. The school will then have a year to file a report with the state, showing how it has dealt with the problems the inspectors found.

Using that report, the state reviewers will assign the school one of four ratings: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Does Not Fully Meet Standards or Does Not Meet Standards.

Beginning next year, however, the state will assign a rating based only on the Quality Review visit. Then, if a school receives the rating Does Not Meet Standards, it may be on the road to losing state funds ("non-recognition"); the state might eventually take over entire districts, too.

However, such drastic actions would be the last step in a very long process. The state won't pull support from struggling schools, Brancato says; only schools that "refuse to cooperate" would be in danger.

What are the steps to a state takeover?

PROBATION A school that does not meet standards will get a letter from the state describing what the school needs to do to clean up its act and setting a deadline for doing so. If the school doesn't meet its deadline, it gets another state visit and moves on to the next step.

WATCH LIST Unless the second visit reveals "extenuating circumstances," the next step is getting put on the state's Academic Watch List. At this point, the school and the district will have to produce a new school improvement plan that addresses the problems the state found and contains provisions for evaluating progress within two years. It takes at least a year of supervision by the state to get off the Academic Watch List.

STATE PANEL After two years on the watch list, the state starts to get directly involved, appointing a School Improvement Panel to help the school and district revise the school improvement plan and to report regularly to the state. The state-appointed panel will also "have the authority to review and approve or disapprove all actions of the [local] board of educa-

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tion that pertain to implementation of the revised School Improvement Plan,” according to the state accountability law. The state-appointed panel will have to include at least one member of the school’s LSC or district council.

**FULL-SCALE INVASION** If a school spends four years on the Academic Watch list, the state has two options: (1) It can cut off state funding to the school. (2) If the problem seems to be at the district level, the state can remove school board members and “appoint an Independent Authority” to run things for as long as the state thinks it will take to bring the district up to speed. The state also can withdraw recognition from the entire district.

**What happens if my school passes the Quality Review?**
Your school won’t be reviewed again for three or four years, which is how long Brancato estimates it will take for state inspectors to visit every school in the state. As everyone gets used to the new arrangements, the pace may pick up, she adds.

**Are the Quality Reviews costing a lot of money?**
Not much, according to Brancato. The state has spent about $230,000 per year on the program since fall 1991, mostly on advisory councils and staff retraining, she says.

**Will my school face any other inspections?**
This year, the Cook County school superintendent’s office is making inspections to verify that schools are complying with state laws and regulations, such as having teachers who are properly certified, students who are properly immunized and a school day that provides at least 300 minutes of instruction.

When the county office is abolished in 1994, however, the state will take the Chicago Board of Education at its word that schools are abiding by laws and regulations.

“Quite frankly, we feel the assurance system will work better than the old inspection did,” says Dick Haney, who is in charge of compliance for the state board. To be official, a local district’s assurances have to be introduced, discussed and signed by local school board officers in an open meeting.

If a district’s schools are violating the law, Haney doubts that board officers would be bold enough to lie about it in public.

For instance, “You’ll have teachers’ union reps right there,” he says, “and they have a stake in making sure that all teachers are certified.”

Categorical programs, such as bilingual education, special education and federal Chapter 1, will continue to have their own independent reviews. The state Quality Reviews don’t change the schedule or content of those reviews.

**There was talk that all students in bilingual education would have to take the state IGAP tests. Will that happen?**
No. The state had considered testing all children, regardless of English fluency, with the state’s IGAP tests, which are written in English. But it quickly dropped that idea following protest from both inside and outside the state education office. The state now is looking for ways to measure whether children in bilingual education are learning English as well as basic skills and content.

“The underlying issue in accountability is that we need to demonstrate to the world that kids are learning basic skills,” says Maria Medina Seidner, the state’s manager of bilingual education. “But language is such an important variable in any form of testing. You can give a foreign nuclear physicist a test with lots of idioms and he might do quite poorly, but that doesn’t mean he hasn’t learned physics.”

Options now under discussion are finding tests in students’ native languages—tests are readily available in Spanish but not in most other languages—or translating the IGAP, which would be very costly.

Dan Weissmann, Michael Selinker
We went through hell for a couple of years,” recalls Joe Rice, superintendent of one of the few school districts in the country that has suffered a state takeover.

“They came in with an Impairment Committee, picked by the state,” he explains. “And they were instructed not to find anything good going on in your district.”

Rice is the superintendent of schools in Bowman, a town of 1,000 in the lower Midlands of South Carolina. (His district is called Orangeburg II.)

South Carolina is one of 17 states, including Illinois, that threaten to shut down or take over failing schools or districts, according to the Education Commission of the States. Most of the states are still putting their plans in place. Only three—South Carolina, Kentucky and New Jersey—have gone so far as to issue declarations of academic bankruptcy, and then only to a very few districts.

That’s as it should be, according to Jack Foster, a consultant who helped design Kentucky’s recently enacted comprehensive reform package. The point of a takeover law isn’t to give the state direct control over local schools, he says: “What would the state do with, say, a third of Chicago’s schools?” Rather, the point is to pressure local communities into solving their own problems.

“Now, when you tell the people in a community that their school is so sick that we’re gonna shut it down, all hell is gonna break loose,” Foster explains. “As draconian as the law sounds, we think they’re the ones who are going to make the changes, and that the state’s just going to keep the pressure up.”

According to Orangeburg II’s Rice, the theory works.

“It was a hell of an embarrassment to the kids as well as the community,” he says. “And your peers are looking at you as though you are dirt. But I’ll tell you one thing: it gets results. Ultimately, it helped us.”

The state’s Impairment Committee left Rice with a 45-page report outlining problems in 14 areas, from the professional relationship between the board of trustees and the superintendent to children’s “time on task,” which is educational jargon for the amount of time children spend engaged in learning activities.

The report specifically asked board members to refrain from interviewing job candidates. “It stopped board members from stopping people on the street and saying, ‘Tell Doc I gave you a job,’” says Rice.

The state action also goaded the community into passing a $2 million bond issue. “We remodeled our schools,” says Rice. “They were a wreck. Now, all our buildings have air conditioning, and there are new carpets.”

Meanwhile, the state sent a team to monitor progress in the district’s two schools; it also sent staff development specialists to help teachers upgrade their skills.

“At first they didn’t even give us any money, but I raised such a ruckus they gave us $80,000,” says Rice.

Since South Carolina adopted its accountability plan in 1984, eight districts have been branded with “total impairment,” a label recently softened to “highest priority for technical assistance.” None has seen state intervention in the last three years, according to state administrator John Suber.

“What we’ve done over the last couple of years is to go up to a district that’s right on the line and said, ‘You’re close. Do you want us to try to help you?’” says Suber. All the districts approached by the state have either accepted the state’s help or gotten things together on their own.

State incentives

South Carolina also has an incentive program for schools that are doing especially well. Every year since 1984, the legislature has set aside $5 million to be split among all the schools whose students achieve a certain average score. Last year, 248 of the state’s 1,019 schools got rewards.

This year, the number went up to 308, and one of them was Orangeburg II’s high school. “Test scores have gone up considerably,” since the state came to Bowman, Rice reports.
Kentucky launched its accountability plan the same year South Carolina did, but its experience has been far different.

In 1989, the state intervened in the Whitley County Public Schools, calling the local school board “educationally bankrupt.” Before the year was out, Whitley County sued, charging the state had chosen Whitley arbitrarily from among dozens of districts in similar disarray.

Further, Whitley noted, the Legislature never funded the provision requiring the state to lend technical assistance to any district that was in danger of being declared “educationally bankrupt.”

Ruling in favor of Whitley County, Circuit Court Judge William Graham borrowed a line from the cartoon character Pogo: “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” He went on to admonish the state never to set up a program and then “forget” to fund it.

By the time Judge Graham had ruled against the state, a legislative panel was redesigning Kentucky’s entire system of education, which had been declared unconstitutional in another lawsuit. The state did not appeal Graham’s decision.

Despite its successful challenge, Whitley County admitted that the state’s help had done its schools some good. The dropout rate was cut almost in half, student attendance was up, and average student scores on national tests gained several points.

**School Board disbanded**

When New Jersey passed its academic bankruptcy law in 1989, it had its eye on Jersey City, according to Jerry Graber, the executive assistant to the state-appointed superintendent in Jersey City.

“After five years of monitoring by the state board, the district was still in total disarray and educationally bankrupt,” Graber says.

Once the law was passed, the state immediately dissolved Jersey City’s board of education and central office, firing the superintendent and chief executive officer. The state then appointed a new superintendent, who had six months to reorganize the central office. The state-appointed leaders will be in charge through 1994.

“The only intervention that would have been of any benefit to kids in Jersey City was takeover,” says Graber. “You have no idea. I’m telling you, I had no idea.”

“The educational system in Jersey City had been politicized to the point where it, in effect, became one huge patronage plum to be carved up and dolled out regardless of actual need,” says a recent state report.

For one, there was, despite five years of state monitoring, “more than a handful” of people with jobs in the central office who had “absolutely no designated responsibilities,” says Graber. There were 250 people no longer employed by the district who were still getting medical benefits; three of them were dead. There were another 300 people with family medical benefits that covered “dependents” who were 35 to 40 years old.

In addition to fiscal and political reform, the state-appointed administration has started free lunch and breakfast programs, dramatically expanded early-childhood programs and developed new “magnet” tech-prep programs in the district’s high schools.

Since takeover, the district has shown signs of new life. Enrollment is up by about 2,500—to 31,000. And for the past two years, according to Graber, the district has led the state in student attendance, with a rate over 90 percent.

While state takeover may have jump-started a few districts, what about the rest? Does the program yield widespread improvements? “I don’t think anyone has looked at that empirically,” says Tom James, an education professor at Brown University. Other experts agreed that the question remains unanswered.

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**National standards in the making**

Educational accountability has become an issue on the national scene, with politicians from both parties calling for national standards.

Here’s a snapshot of the leading proposals and of the debate over national standards:

Since 1991, the Education Department has given out several million dollars to professional and educational groups to develop standards in seven academic areas. The goal is to create a complete picture of what kids should know and be able to do.

Meanwhile, another national group, the New Standards Project, has collected $22.5 million from state governments and foundations to develop a national system of tests. New Standards doesn’t get federal money, but it is politically well connected.

Currently, there is no plan to create a single, mandatory national test. The New Standards Project serves only its 18 member states, and it intends to produce a variety of assessments from which local districts could choose. Illinois is not a member.

Advocates of national standards claim that well-designed standards and assessments will become a “lever” for other education reforms, such as improved textbooks and even equitable school funding.

Critics like Theodore Sizer, founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools, contend that applying a single set of standards doesn’t make sense until all kids have equal access to educational funding and other resources. Otherwise, says Sizer, any new accountability measures “will once again end up proving that poor kids score not as well as rich kids.”

New Standards co-director Lauren Resnick agrees that current tests work to sort kids by race and class. Such exams as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills also “provide an absolutely terrible model of the kind of learning we want,” notes Resnick, a prominent cognitive psychologist.

Those tests are our current national standards, she argues; she wants to replace them with New (improved) Standards.

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Tests a big issue
in Chicago hearings

by Michael Klonsky

Nervous over the failure of test scores to rise by the third year of reform, the Board of Education has begun searching for a way to distribute accountability for student achievement.

So far, a series of meetings with teachers, principals, parents and outside experts has generated lots of questions and concerns, but board plans have yet to gel.

One of the biggest concerns expressed by those who testified before the School Board's Educational Support Committee is the test-score goal in the School Reform Act. Under that goal, at least 50 percent of all students—"regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or income"—in each school are supposed to score at or above the national norm on a standardized test by 1994.

At the outset of reform, the percentage of elementary schools meeting the goal was only about 8 percent. It's still about 8 percent. Citywide, only some 23 percent of elementary pupils score at or above average in reading.

Contending the Reform Act's goal is unrealistic, many involved in reform are calling instead for an emphasis on year-to-year progress, with special attention given to such variables as student mobility, truancy, disabilities and lack of fluency in English.

Many also question the use of a nationally standardized test—Chicago uses the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills—when Illinois has its own set of tests, the IGAP, designed to measure attainment of state learning goals.

"The IGAP should be the paramount testing system," says Donald Moore, executive director of the reform group Designs for Change. "It is more reflective of recent consensus about what should be taught. It will be the key basis for state action against underachieving schools."

Regardless of the test, adds Moore, even the best examples of school improvement around the country have taken up to five or six years to produce improved test scores. He cites the experience of Dr. James Comer, a nationally prominent school reform expert, at King Elementary School in New Haven, Conn. Comer documented major changes in the behavior of teachers, students and parents as a result of his work there but found that achievement scores did not begin to rise significantly until the fifth and sixth years of his involvement.

Other questions raised at the hearings include:

□ Can principals legitimately be held accountable when they don't have control over their staffs? "All staff should all be on a three- or four-year contract," says Powhatan Collins, principal of Whitney Young Magnet High School. "The [teacher] rating system is much too cumber-

some. I can't replace building engineers either. All these things affect student achievement." (Principals work on four-year contracts.)

□ What should the board do about schools that are not making progress? The School Reform Act requires subdistrict superintendents to monitor implementation of school improvement plans. If a school is not progressing, the subdistrict superintendent, with the subdistrict council's approval, can take action ranging from drafting a new school improvement plan to replacing the principal and ordering new local school council elections.

Saundra Bishop, chair of the board's Educational Support Committee, says she knows of no district that has taken such action.

□ What good is accountability if there's no time or money for teachers and schools to learn new ways of doing things? "If you sit down with teachers and ask them how they should be held accountable," says Bishop, "you will find that most teachers want to do more to improve their skills but don't have the chance to work together or for badly needed staff development."

While teachers have testified at the board's hearings, the Chicago Teachers Union has declined to participate, viewing accountability issues as central to upcoming contract negotiations. The union generally has opposed measures that would give principals sole authority in teacher evaluations or staff selection, favoring instead measures, such as "peer review," that treat teachers as professionals.

Even though Bishop convened the accountability hearings, she doesn't think accountability should dominate the landscape of school change. "If accountability were the only thing," says Bishop, "it wouldn't make much of a difference in the schools. We are addressing accountability first because it's important to define everyone's role in the educational process."

The board is due to conclude its discussion of accountability in March and is expected to recommend that schools be held accountable for year-to-year progress. It also is expected to push for more staff development time for teachers.

CATALYST/MARCH 1993
Good teachers need to step out front

by Barbara Kato

I'd like to make my perspective clear. I'm a teacher. In fact, I'm a pretty good teacher, and although I can't say I represent every good teacher in the Chicago public schools, hopefully this piece will speak for many of them. Our role under School Reform has changed, and as we begin 1993, it seems to be a good time to look back and look forward.

During the strike of 1987, I stood among a throng of parents and children, some of whom I'd invited, outside the State of Illinois building holding a sign that said, "Teachers for Reform." Later that year, after we had returned to school and after the School Reform Act had been passed, I was glad I'd had a photograph taken of me with the sign because it didn't seem that teachers were viewed as supporters of reform.

There were only two teachers on the 11-member local school councils (LSC). The role of the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC) was vaguely designed and only advisory. Unlike LSCs, there were no guidelines for PPAC elections, and no training sessions offered. With no district-level PPAC, we were each reinventing the wheel.

Teachers, like everyone else, have reacted to reform in different ways. Some tried to ignore it and pretend that things would go on as they always had. Others took early retirement. A few embraced reform and sought outside organizations to work with.

Most, I believe, were open to reforming the huge bureaucratic machine we worked in and tried to "go with the flow" at their individual schools. They attended the numerous meetings scheduled, dutifully served on several committees and generally ran themselves ragged. Most of the conscientious teachers I know fell into this category and, in fact, admitted their classroom teaching actually suffered because of all the time they spent working on schoolwide curriculum, budgets and policies. These were teachers who were already putting in an additional 5-12 hours each week.

Stop going with the flow

It's now 1993, and the kindergartners who came with me to the State of Illinois building in 1987 are in sixth grade. I think it's a good time for all of us, especially good teachers, to reassess reform. What was its goal? While reform has clearly restructured the decision-making power in our system and in our schools, has it improved the education of our students? If not, then why not? This area is not so clear.

I think we would all agree that there are certainly some individual success stories under reform. Many schools would not have been able to implement new programs or reallocate funds without reform. However, if reform ultimately is to impact and improve the education of most of our students, it must reach the classroom; and there is only one person in the classroom besides the students who can make that happen—the teacher.

When the discussion of school reform gets to this point, things seem to break down. Some people feel the Chicago Teachers Union will not admit there are bad teachers, while others argue there are no good ones. This inevitably leads into a discussion of teacher competency, test scores and other important but distracting issues. Having taught in remedial, gifted and average classes, I find it amusing that being acknowledged a "good teacher" might depend on student test scores. Does teaching gifted students make one a gifted teacher? I'd like to get beyond this impasse by saying I think a classroom teacher can support the best learning when he or she is motivated, knowledgeable, organized, caring and able to transmit a love of learning to students. I hope I've done that because, as I said, I'm speaking as a pretty good teacher.

It's time for good teachers to reassess our role in the larger school reform movement, to stop merely "going with the flow" and, instead, to begin to help direct the flow. I believe that's what has happened at the schools where reform has been most successful. Parents, community members and principals have sought teachers' cooperation, advice and even leadership because they know

Barbara Kato is a teacher at Norwood Park Elementary School.
good teachers don’t threaten their own power or position. There are definitely enough problems, issues and subcommittees for all of us.

At the school level, good teachers need to help prioritize the myriad number of good ideas offered; sometimes we need to be the ones who say “enough.” When the extra programs, clubs and performances begin to impede the regular curriculum, we need to tell the most well-intentioned LSC member or cooperative parent, “I’m sorry, but to be successful, our regular instructional program takes this much time.”

We need to help design a school schedule that supports more instructional depth and student reflection rather than a fast-paced potpourri overview of academic subjects. We need to organize systems that will improve communication among faculty without adding untold numbers of staff meetings. There are more efficient and more timely ways to share information, such as using telecommunications, weekly bulletins and PPACs.

At the systemwide level, we should be more ambitious and more vocal. No one who has been investing their time and energy—not our kids, our parents or our LSCs—should want to see us pinning all our hopes on a Super-Superintendent to “do it all.” Instead, let’s rethink this position and get someone who will make it possible for each of us to do what we can do best to save the system ourselves.

The Chicago Teachers Union plays a vital role for teachers with its focus on conditions of our employment and workplace. However, there is a need for another kind of teacher leadership. There should be good teachers on the superintendent interview committee, asking questions about educational vision and evaluating responses. There should be teachers on an advisory board that meets regularly with the superintendent. There should be teachers released on a rotating basis to help develop a curriculum and staff development center that schools could use as a resource. There should be teachers released to help evaluate and recommend educational programs, textbooks, supplies and equipment that they feel are of the best quality and best price. There should be district-level PPACs—led by teachers, not district superintendents—to promote collegiality and networking.

School reform has reached a plateau. We need to step back now and make sure we’re all on the same mountain. If not, each school will remain on its own hill still reinventing its own wheel. We need to start sharing the best designs. I still support reform, but without the active input, participation and leadership of good teachers, it appears we’ll remain on this plateau for quite a while.

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Racist pedagogy hurts black children

by Sisi Donald Mosby

The greatest problem confronting African-American students today is a racist pedagogy—based upon white, middle-class ways of doing and thinking—that has been established as the norm for American education.

This institutionalized racism thrusts African-American students daily into classrooms where they are completely devalued.

Before ever entering a school, African-American children have achieved a marked success in developing critical cognitive and language skills that enable them to communicate and participate in their own society very well.

Instead of building upon this success, many teachers, both black and white, toss it aside, thus telling children their lifelong language is “wrong” and insisting they learn to speak the “right” language correctly.

Directly and indirectly, the children are told that everything they accomplished in learning to talk, walk and think is worthless unless the teacher deems otherwise. Thus, very early, they learn “white is right.”

More insidious, the forms of teaching that predominate in American schools pay no heed to how African-American children learn.

Lest there be any doubt about this, consider a study by Sandra Graham, a black psychologist at the University of California at Los Angeles. Graham reviewed 14,000 research articles that were published in the journal American Psychologist between 1970 and 1989. She found that virtually none of the research focused on nonwhite children. Even so, the articles were written on the assumption that the findings applied to all children, regardless of their cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. (See “Most of the Subjects Were White and Middle Class: Trends in Published Research on African Americans,” in the May 1991 issue of American Psychologist.)

Black professor Barbara J. Shade of the University of Wisconsin at Parkside has found that, in general, African-American and European-American children learn in different

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Sisi Donald Mosby is a research associate at Chicago State University and a history teacher for National-Louis University at Stateville and Joliet prisons.
ways. African-American children learn best, she says, when they are presented with items that require the use of a variety of stimuli simultaneously. But European-American children seem to be socialized to tolerate monotony or unvaried presentation of subject matter, such as lectures.

In an essay in the Summer 1992 issue of Review of Educational Research, Shade explains that differences in achievement between the two groups of children “may well be the result of cognitive or perceptual preferences.”

Black social psychologist Claude M. Steele contends that schools teach much more than the so-called basics to black children, in not-too-subtle ways. In the April 1992 Atlantic Monthly, Steele writes that “for most African-American students, school is simply the place where, more concerted, persistently, and authoritatively than anywhere else in society, they learn how little they are valued.”

Meanwhile, Steele continues, “the particulars of their lives and culture—art, music, literature and political and social perspectives—are ignored by the mainstream curriculum. Instead, such cultural and historical basics typically are consigned to special days, weeks or months.”

“By channeling their lives and culture thusly, African-American students receive a clear message that the particulars of their culture and lives are not valued,” Steele says. Each school day, African-American students must discard their learning styles and cultural values so they can become “temporary white, middle-class students.”

And they have no recourse, for, again, white middle-class norms govern the interactions between teachers and students. There are specific codes for participating in white “culture power,” and black Morgan State University researcher Lisa Delpit says that, for the most part, black children don’t even know such codes exist.

In an essay in the August 1988 Harvard Educational Review, Delpit writes that when there is confrontation, African-American children are destined to lose. When they fail to respond “properly,” they are deemed insubordinate and often consigned to special education classes. This is especially true for African-American males, who are assigned to special education classes at a higher rate than any other group.

Despite these horrendous obstacles, many African-American children achieve a qualified success. I cannot imagine at what price.

While some African-American schools are changing their curricula to address these concerns, this alone will not ensure success. Teaching techniques must change and a culturally specific pedagogy must be developed for African American children. Every teacher who instructs them must be retrained, and the training of future teachers must be redirected, too.

When the pedagogy becomes relevant and teachers become adept at using it, the success of African-American children will be fully comparable to that of their European-American peers.

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**Letters**

**Schools pick principals based on race**

In the December 1992 issue of CATALYST you featured a report about Chicago Public School principals sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

The section entitled “Principals’ Roles and School Leadership” starts out with a concept that everyone can agree with—“Good schools have good leadership.” It concludes with, “Significant school improvement seems highly unlikely without active leadership from principals.”

I believe that the report has glossed over the most significant problem of school reform. When 98 percent of African-American schools select an African-American principal, and 92 percent of Hispanic schools select a Hispanic principal, the process of selecting principals is not just race-sensitive. Let’s call it what it really is, racial discrimination.

Principal candidates have been the victim of racial discrimination for the last several years. White candidates are only considered in integrated schools. Hispanic schools interview Hispanic candidates, and African-American schools interview African-American candidates.

Unfortunately, the single most important criterion in the selection of a new principal is skin color. What is the message that we send out? Teachers throughout the system look at their new principals and realize that they may not have been the most qualified candidate for the position. We talk about improving human resources in the schools, but how do we do that when a teacher looks at the new principal and knows that he or she has been selected because of skin color.

Principals are using their new authority to hire teachers. One-third report hiring 20 percent or more of their faculties in the last three years. The Consortium report suggests this as a substantial influx of "new blood." Let’s be honest, if the local school council is selecting its new principal on the basis of skin color, who do they want working in their schools? Could it be that "new blood" actually means more African-American teachers in African-American schools and more Hispanic teachers in Hispanic schools?

As a teacher and a principal candidate, I have seen firsthand the racial discrimination and how it affects the children, the faculty and the future. This is not school reform; it is a crime. CATALYST should conduct its own investigation. The Chicago Public Schools principal selection process needs reform.

David Avadik, teacher
Chicago Public Schools

**Sampieri’s departure a great loss to reform**

When Ted Kimbrough arrived in Chicago four years ago, we all had high hopes for the future of school reform and the Chicago public schools. However, now
we find that the partial dismantling of central office that took place under his reign was just that—only partial and only dismantling. Many parts of the old bureaucracy still remain, only they work less efficiently. Essential departments were eliminated or left with no one in charge. Kimbrough left no plan for a new structure to replace the old. Our major concern is not the vacuum of leadership at the top, if any, caused by Kimbrough's absence. Instead, we are voicing our concern caused by the departure of Robert Sampieri, who, at Kimbrough's request, left his home, friends and career in California to come to Chicago.

In his position as the board's chief operating officer, Sampieri got the unenviable job of being "hatchet man" when departments and personnel had to be cut, which won him few friends. However, speak to anyone who worked with him closely, and the consensus is that Sampieri was forthright, conscientious, intelligent and capable. His background was in curriculum as well as administration, and as a former junior high teacher, he was sensitive to teachers' concerns. He sought input from PPACs, LSCs and principals when working on projects that involved them. More importantly, he was the one most sought after to "get things done." His accomplishments range from releasing old computers to schools so that their staff could use the board's telecommunications network, to interceding when proposals, purchases or personnel decisions were caught somewhere in the bureaucratic mire.

It's a worrisome time when a person like Sampieri, who proved himself supportive of school decentralization and was exemplary in his job, is brought down by unfounded allegations of an ongoing superintendent whose record is unremarkable at best. Who do we turn to now for answers? Do reformers, teachers, parents and members of the community want to start over again with a new superintendent and top staff every four years? We hope not. It's time to realize that reform will not succeed and our Chicago schools will not improve if we allow those who are trying to help us within the system to fail.

Holly J. Parker, Annette V. Bradley, Carolyn T. Harris teachers, Chicago Public Schools

Chapter 1 problems haven't changed in 27 years

Twenty-seven years ago, the National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children sent a 27-member team to observe federal Chapter 1 programs (then called Title I) in 44 states.

Their findings are distressingly similar to what today's Chapter 1 evaluations are uncovering. (See CATALYST, February 1993.)

Consider these excerpts from the 1966 report:

"The projects are piecemeal, fragmented efforts at remediation or vaguely directed "enrichment." It is extremely rare to find strategically planned, comprehensive programs for change based on four essential needs: adapting academic content to the special problems of disadvantaged children, improved inservice training of teachers, attention to nutrition and other health needs, and involvement of parents and assistance to school programs.

"For the most part, we have not yet learned to group projects into total programs and to spread such programs throughout the whole school areas where disadvantaged children are concentrated.

"Paralleling the almost universal failure to involve parents adequately, there was found to be an almost universal lack of involving community organizations and agencies. When these 'outside' community agencies show interest in the school life of disadvantaged children, some school administrators, out of old habit, react defensively, even negatively."

When will schools learn?

Joseph Rosan, retired district superintendent Chicago Public Schools

Public library cuts hurt schools as well

As a reference librarian for the Harold Washington Library's Social Sciences and History Division, I wish to sound the alarm about the recent deep cuts in the public library system. This is an urgent school reform issue because for decades the public libraries have served unofficially as surrogate libraries for public and parochial schools and the City Colleges. Many public and parochial schools don't have libraries worthy of the name. Many do not have certified librarians on staff, a separate budget within their schools or sufficient books, periodicals and other materials. Even as the Board of Education cuts back on school library services, there is little coordination between the schools and the public library and little official recognition of the CPL's role as a surrogate school library.

Unable to meet many of the research needs of students, or even to supply multiple copies of books assigned as class reading, the desperately understocked and understaffed branch libraries must refer students to regional libraries or the downtown main library. And yet, we too are operating with skeleton staff, and with budgets for books and materials that are ridiculously small for a city this size. With the recent deep cuts in staff and hours, we are further weakened in our ability to serve students and other patrons who end up downtown at the library-as-refuge.

Everyone will agree that the school system, along with the libraries, are a vital part of our human and cultural infrastructure, especially at a time when Chicago ranks near the bottom in educational achievement nationwide. Instead of glitz and costly "big-ticket" projects, our city government should be investing more in this infrastructure. The recent budget cuts at schools and libraries must be reversed. Doing so will take a broad grassroots mobilization to put pressure on City Hall and raise the political costs of such governmental malfeasance.

Such a coalition is now coming together under the auspices of the Chicago Committee of Library Users and the Chicago Public Library Advocates—a joint effort of community organizations, library friends groups, librarians, teachers and others concerned with this situation. A petition drive is being launched to gather at least 100,000 signatures in favor of restoring library cuts, to be presented to the mayor and City Council. A march and other activities are being considered.

Continued on page 31

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This month, Carlos returns after several months' absence to tell CATALYST readers about his first demanding, yet rewarding, months as a new principal. A parent tells how politics has set his local school council at odds and brought school progress to a halt. And a teacher explains how a colleague's union grievance, a principal's oversight and an LSC's unfamiliarity with union contract provisions could all combine to create a scheduling nightmare for faculty at his school. As for the good news, two diarists tell how their schools have formed new partnerships with community groups and social service agencies, thus providing medical care, educational workshops and other extras students would not otherwise get. And two teachers applaud their schools for offering more opportunities for staff development. As always, CATALYST diarists write anonymously.

Forging community ties

ROBIN, observer

Dec. 12 School A is experiencing success with a project funded from the state—an Urban Partnership Grant. The upper grades have been reorganized as a middle school, with all teachers working together on integrated units of study, each of which involves contacts with partner organizations in the community. The parents have been particularly supportive of this reaching out to the community. For example, they have turned out in unprecedented numbers to assist with transporting children on visits to senior citizens at various retirement homes. The teachers report a change in the attitude of the children as a result of their visits and interviews with the seniors; they seem more open to helping out in the school and having more of a "service" attitude.

LAZARUS, teacher

Dec. 18 Our Cluster Initiative work (see Diaries, February 1993) continues to bear fruit: various partnerships between our school, schools of higher education and community facilities and organizations. Each link fosters a sense of commonality of purpose, often evoking a reaction from members like, "Well, of course!" as if the cooperative venture were a natural process. Old walls are breaking down. Possibilities are limitless.

Because of our involvement in the cluster, our students have access to programs ranging from environmental internships to writing workshops that we would not otherwise have. In addition, we are beginning to look at community and city resources in a new light.

One current development: The cluster is bringing medical facilities together with the schools to begin to address the problems of immunization, especially for the feeder elementary schools; and possibly optical care, which is greatly needed by our students. Convenient procedures will help maximize student immunization for September and guarantee that fewer attendance days will be lost by the schools. A former LSC member, through the medical facility where she works, is assisting in this project.

A cantankerous council

DEAN, parent

Jan. 4 The public was invited to participate at the first LSC meeting of the new year. Among the issues brought up was the concern with lack of personnel in the discipline office. As at many schools, it remains difficult to administer parent conferences effectively and to notify guardians about problems if there are not enough people to do the work. And the union contract prohibits expanding the existing duties of a teacher.

The chair nodded thoughtfully and quickly dismissed this issue. When his response was challenged with a suggestion that this is a legitimate action item, the veteran council member was looked upon with severe consternation. Unfortunately, contentiousness continues in our LSC between the old and new members. (See Diaries, February 1993.)

This peevishness is indeed pervasive. For example, at the first meeting in the fall of 1991, when the newly elected council members took their seats, this disdainful dismissal of the old minority by the new majority was immediately exhibited: All existing committees were cancelled by a majority vote. No review of past performance was conducted, nor was there any discussion on developing continuity. Nothing.

We had had more than a dozen standing and ad-hoc committees to focus on specific issues and concerns. Although some might argue that such a large number of committees was cumbersome, the fact was that it worked. Now we suddenly had two committees, with more than 25 members each, to discuss all school-related issues. And none of the old committee members was among the new 50 or so.

This committee restructuring turned out to be ineffective. With everyone wanting to be in charge, nothing productive happened. Soon, attendance dropped off dramatically; finally, meetings ceased to occur.

District councils dying?

ROBIN, observer

Jan. 5 School A LSC meeting. The retiring representative to the district council reported they hadn't had a quorum for the last several meetings; there haven't even been enough members present to choose a new chair—and no one seems to want the job anyway. Furthermore, the LSC
can’t find a regular member who is willing or able to attend all the district council meetings, so they’ve decided to divide the rep job between two alternates, one of whom will attend daytime meetings and one who will go to night meetings. I wondered whether the purpose for the district council might have withered away, but the retiring rep spoke favorably about it as a source of information.

A new principal takes charge
In October, Carlos told the story of his move from teacher to principal. This month he returns as a diarist after a few months’ absence.

CARLOS, principal

Jan. 8 Being the principal of this school is the most satisfying position I have ever had with the Board of Education. I am working with a predominantly experienced staff. The LSC has given excellent support to my initiatives. The students and the parents are great.

I spent the first two months observing, listening, creating, leading. I have met with all my community organizations to introduce myself and my programs for the school. I see myself as an elected official who has four years to implement a sound and creative instructional program. I have a three-part strategy: staff development, parental participation and shared decision making.

I don’t want to sound too idyllic. The school had problems. A certain amount of disorder was found in all management areas. Purchase orders were not followed through. Special programs had audit exceptions. Internal accounts were not under procedure. Each room was run as an autonomous unit fairly unrelated to the rest of the school. Staff came and went at will, and so did the students.

My first administrative move was to secure the building, to create a safe environment. We developed policies on student discipline, attendance, truancy and keeping records in an orderly fashion.

The teachers, staff and parents have cordially participated in teams to discuss our most pressing needs, including (in addition to discipline and security) curriculum, classroom management, multiculturalism, evaluation of programs, student activities and relationship with the community. We also set up textbook and staff development committees. We are talking about creating a reading and math center within our school. We are implementing partnership with a community hospital to bring aboard a full-time social worker.

The hardest part of the job is the huge amount of paperwork central and district offices still, still, still require. I have decided I am the point person for my school. I must find ways to bring in materials, supplies, equipment and personnel to make for a better school, regardless of the bureaucracy.

It is also very easy to get caught up in day-to-day operational issues rather than educational issues. Handling teacher tardiness, teacher absences, teacher substitutes, changes in daily scheduling, etc., sometimes seems to bury the important matters of why we’re here and how best to educate.

However, when I’m not dealing with the fact that we just ran out of photocopy toner, human relations problems loom the largest. That is where a principal’s skills are most necessary. Sometimes it appears that the staff and the LSC members see only their little angle of what happens in the school, missing the big picture. I often act more as a negotiator than a principal.

All in all I feel the school has turned the corner, and I have turned the corner. Originally I felt like the baseball player who had skipped spring training and went directly to the All-Star game. It took me months to catch up.

We are continually improving our work as a team. We are involved now in plans for an after-school program for students and parents, a homework-helper program at night, parent survival class at night, comprehensive reading and writing staff development and, of course, next year’s lump sum budget and state Chapter 1 proposal.

Metal detectors idle

LAZARUS, teacher

Jan. 9 Metal detectors are in place at our school, but we await training in their use. At another school where a shooting death occurred recently, a lawsuit has been initiated against the school; it had metal detectors, but did not use them on a regular basis.

Such security procedures do slow down the entrance of students into the building, causing loss of precious classroom time. And easy access to the building through other entrances, where metal detectors are not installed, can cancel out the effectiveness of these monitoring devices.

DEAN, parent

Jan. 13 At an earlier LSC meeting, a teacher in the audience voiced her concerns about our two metal detectors and wands that are not being used. This issue sparked genuine interest among all council members present, and a special ad-hoc committee meeting was called to discuss the problem. We still have no official methods or procedures in place that support the use of metal detectors. The “specialists” at central office have effectively evaded all our questions.

I personally view this situation as analogous to giving Nintendos to a
Third World nation. The giver would revel in his or her generosity while the recipient wouldn't have a clue what to do with them.

In many schools across the city, there is fear of legal ramifications if "procedures" are not followed in accordance with approved policy. But, of course, getting "approved policy" is incredibly difficult. We all agreed that if no direction is provided, we'll move forward on our own and take the risk.

The most encouraging aspect of this committee is that for the first time we seem to be working together! And, more important, the students are finally the focus of concern.

Parents want to clean up

ROBIN, observer

Jan. 16 School A LSC meeting. A parent came to complain about a classroom window. It's been broken since 1991, and the plastic used to cover it isn't staying in place; so there's a huge draft. Other parents, in this case council members, also had concerns about the building; and teachers too have been complaining about the janitorial service.

Therefore, a committee of parents from the LSC had made an inspection tour of the school last week and for tonight's meeting had compiled a long list of cleanliness problems. The principal had asked the engineer to come to this meeting so all complaints could be reviewed in his presence.

The parents were seriously concerned, not just about the failure of the janitorial staff in doing their job but by the fact that some of what they saw reflected a lack of respect for the school on the part of the children. The parents volunteered to help clean up—to show pride in the school. The engineer, however, said it's his responsibility to supervise effectively; and because there's a paid staff to do the job they should do it, and the parents should use their energies on issues that would be more rewarding to them. He will take their criticisms to the janitors. The principal suggested the council invite the engineer to next month's meeting. The parents also wanted the teachers to do all they can to insure that students love and respect the school.

During the years, I've heard complaints from teachers in schools all over the city about janitorial service. I wonder if this approach of the council applying pressure will be more effective than teacher and principal pressure has been in the past. If so, it would be a plus for reform.

Teacher learning

MIROMIRO, teacher

Jan. 22 "I came to teach but remained to learn" is a motto I have adopted as my own. Our own principal and assistant principal have a genuine interest in staff development. A couple of afterschool workshops are in the works. And it was announced that money will soon be available for teachers to attend conferences and workshops outside our own school building. Interested teachers are already making plans.

LAZARUS, teacher

Jan. 23 State Chapter 1 funds have made it possible for faculty members to attend conferences in large numbers this year. Almost half of our faculty have availed themselves of the opportunity. Our teachers are beginning to feel like professionals in that regard, encouraged by their organization to learn and grow. In the past, teachers had to attend on their own time and pay for conference fees out of their own pockets.

Withholding information

QUESANA, teacher

Jan. 22 Article 40-1(2) of the CTU contract states that "ability and qualifications being equal, [the principal] shall follow the policy of rotation among qualified personnel in the matter of sessions, teaching building assignments...and division rooms."

We have an angry teacher at our school who claims she is the victim of the violation of this contract provision. This teacher has had the same duties and divisions seven years in a row, notwithstanding her complaints year after year. Now she is filing a grievance in order, she hopes, to force the principal to follow the policy of rotation of teacher assignments—for the entire faculty.

The principal's position is that rotation of the whole faculty is impossible because some faculty members are paid under government-funded programs, which stipulate that the teachers be freed of all non-teaching duties. One of these programs was approved by the LSC, and to disregard its requirements would not only lead to loss of funds but to anger and bitterness within the LSC.

What is the principal's position vis-a-vis the LSC? Presumably he never informed the council that the teachers' contract requires rotation. If he does so now, he would have to admit he goofed earlier in not telling them when they voted to accept the government program. Or perhaps, likely and maybe more charitably, he does not believe the contract covers government-funded teachers.

This is quite a mess we are in, a kind of no-win situation. If the grievance prevails, our school may lose government funds and positions, and put the principal in the LSC's doghouse (with principal selections coming up). If the grievance fails, an unfair policy will be perpetuated, and teacher morale will suffer.

Copies of the grievance went to the principal, to Employee Relations, and to the union's field representative. The CTU contract states that a reply must come within ten days. The 10-day waiting period came and went. No response to the grievance. It now goes from Employee Relations to the general superintendent, who has another 15 days to reply.

The grievant was grousing that the administration probably won't resolve the grievance to her satisfaction, and that the union will have to go to arbitration. Such cynicism. Yet, she is a 13-year veteran of the wars and should know what she talks about.

The superintendent's 15-day waiting period expired. Still no answer, not even a note. The grievance must now go to the Board of Education, which again has 15 days to respond. I'm becoming a bit cynical myself.

The 15 days passed. The union's field rep called the board about a
response and was given a new deadline. It too passed sans response.

What next? The union is taking the grievance to court to support an ongoing union suit claiming that this kind of buck-passing and closing of the ears is a continuing practice with the public school administration.

I ran into the CTU field rep and got to talking about this matter. I mentioned the LSC and how the principal stood to lose face if he lost the grievance and the government funds. He said that unfortunately this was one of the drawbacks of school reform. "When you have a group of laypersons running a school, you have to expect oversights like this. In this case, none of them knew the contract or the law or where to get info on either one. Should we be surprised by the situation?"

He is right. Most LSC members have not even seen the CTU contract. The two teacher members have, and likely know about the rotation requirement. But come to think about it, both of these teachers are in government-funded positions that prohibit their being given duties and divisions! As for the principal, it's probably asking too much that he be expected to keep the LSC in the know always and about everything that could affect decisions leading to possible pitfalls.

ROBIN, observer

Jan. 23 During the past few years of reform, I have visited dozens of schools, attended scores of LSC meetings at different schools and talked with many principals, teachers and parents. One question that recurs (not always explicitly) and needs to be examined in the context of Chicago school reform is: What happens when the administration of a school controls the information available to LSC members and in this way controls the decisions the council makes? Obviously, the administration and the teachers know more about curriculum and pedagogy than parents, and have ready access to new sources of information about school matters that parents do not. For example, what about curriculum developments or instructional strategies—gifted programs, tracking, whole language, multiculturalism, etc? Parents are not likely to hear full arguments pro or con if an administration is opposed to or committed to a particular point of view.

This information gap appears in larger organizations anywhere when a lay board ostensibly sets policy for professionals to carry out, but when the administrators/professionals control the information on which decisions might be made, and the board ends up rubber-stamping the policies initiated by the administration. In such a case, if board members eventually feel the administration has strayed too far from their interests, their only recourse is to get rid of the administration. I hope other observers will be alert to this problem and consider how it might be addressed.

Money is time

LAZARUS, teacher

Jan. 24 The recent proliferation of copying machines in our department offices through state Chapter 1 funds has made it possible for teachers to use supplementary materials without the inconvenience of having to wait lengthy periods of time for copies—or of having to pay out of their pockets for the photocopying. I know one school that charges its teachers for reproducing materials to be used in class. I know another school that rations the number of copies any individual teacher can have. Do our downtown banks charge employees for copying printed materials required for doing their job? How about central office?

MIROMIRO, teacher

Jan. 26 Good news. We received a notice in our school mailboxes that each teacher will receive money for a free field trip. The trip has to have educational values (of course). Our department chair plans a trip to the circus; it usually stimulates much excitement, and is a rich source for classroom writing. Students can create and write amazing stories about their experiences. Teachers will showcase the student writing on bulletin boards, in assemblies and with student-written and -produced plays.

LAZARUS, teacher

Jan. 30 Budget cuts the past couple of years have forced us to do without and scrounge for funds. In April we'll know if our carefully written proposal won a Marshall Field's Neighborhood Arts Partnership Planning grant. This week we are submitting a proposal to the CPS Department of Human Services to restore some of the social services we once took for granted at our school. Proposal writing is becoming almost as common as lesson plan writing.
Total Quality Management goes to school

Sparked by a new program designed by Northwestern University, students at Bass Elementary School in Englewood are getting a voice in how to improve their school.

"We hadn't thought about getting the kids involved, but one of the ideas [of the program] is to have everyone 'buy into' the process" of changing and improving the school, says Bass Principal Marcella Gilley. "So I went to [students] to ask them what they think makes a good teacher, a good principal and a good student. We want to use the definitions to develop benchmarks to help students see how they're doing" against their own standards.

Gilley is one of over 60 Chicago principals, teachers and local school council members who are learning to apply corporate management techniques to improve their schools. Designed by faculty of Northwestern's Kellogg Graduate School of Management, the program is an adaptation of Total Quality Management, a philosophy embraced by Motorola, Xerox, Proctor & Gamble and other large corporations.

For businesses, the goal is to focus on customer service and high-quality products as the route to success. For schools, the goal is to identify "quality goals"—such as improving poor attendance and reducing tardiness—and then find ways to achieve them.

The 23 participating schools sent "leadership teams"—the principal, LSC chair and a teacher—to a one-week seminar at Kellogg the week of Jan. 31. Schools are now being visited once or twice a week by a consulting team that includes four to five graduate students, a volunteer corporate executive and a Kellogg faculty member. Beginning in April, participants will meet every other month for six half-days of additional training.

The program is funded in part by a $66,000 grant from the Polk Bros. Foundation. Kellogg is absorbing about one-third of the costs, and schools are paying $1,000 for each of their three team members.

Gilley is one of five principals who went through a week-long trial run of the program last summer, essentially as consultants to help refine the program's design. If participants judge the program a success, Kellogg hopes to offer it next year, says Marc Landsberg, assistant to Kellogg's dean.

Participating elementary schools are Agassiz, Bass, Bateman, Beethoven, Brentano, Chalmers, De La Cruz, Ebinger, Edison Gifted, Hammond, Hinton, Johnson, Kasciusko, Lloyd, Muñoz Marin, Prescott, Pulaski, Seward, White and Whittier. Participating high schools are Taft, Washburne and Morton, located in Cicero. These schools were chosen from 28 applicants.

Arts programs get funds from Field's

With the help of a $250,000 program sponsored by retailer Marshall Field's, up to 10 schools will be paired with local arts organizations to help shore up arts programs that have fallen victim to budget cuts.

"The arts have been credited in reaching students who don't have any desire or motivation to learn. Yet arts education continues to decline,"
Grant Briefs

Mott Foundation

- $50,000 to the Latina Institute of Chicago to continue the ongoing Latino School Reform project, which is tracking the progress of reform at two predominantly Latino schools. The project also offers training to LSC members.

National Science Foundation

- $739,000 to the Museum of Science and Industry to set up science clubs in Chicago schools and other community organizations.

Children's Care Foundation of Chicago

- $107,235 to National-Louis University's Latino Outreach Program to expand its English-language education for immigrant Latino adults and their pre-school children. The program includes home-based and evening classes in Evanston and Rogers Park.

Illinois State Board of Education

- $56,180 to Taft High School to develop plans for involving its entire instructional staff—both academic and vocational—in preparing students for jobs in highly technical fields. Chosen through competitive applications, Taft is one of seven schools in the state's Secondary Tech Prep Demonstration Project.

Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) grants, through which the Illinois Board of Higher Education funds programs in public schools aimed at encouraging minorities to stay in school and attend college.

- $15,000 to the Audubon School for an ongoing American Indian role-models program aimed at helping students set career goals.

- $120,000 to Northwestern Illinois and Roosevelt universities for the University Scholars Academic Enrichment Program at Crane and Lake View high schools, to encourage minority students to attend college.

- $105,000 to the University of Illinois at Chicago for college clubs and early-outreach classes at Englewood, Fairgates, and South Shore high schools, aimed at average students who might not otherwise consider pursuing a college degree.

- $100,000 to the University of Illinois at Chicago for math and science classes at Benito Juarez and Roberto Clemente high schools, aimed at encouraging Latino students to pursue health-related careers.

- $175,000 to Chicago State University, to offer college-prep classes in math, reading and writing to Chicago public school students who are likely to attend CSU.

Foundation personnel

The Joyce Foundation: Warren Chapman succeeds Regina Dixon-Reever as education program officer. Previously, Chapman was director of the Illinois Alliance of Essential Schools, a division of the Illinois State Board of Education.

Amoco Foundation: Mariciente Broadwater, a member of the Illinois State Board of Education, takes over as education program officer, succeeding Judy Kaminsky.

Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation: Denise Carter replaces Phyllis Braezy as education program officer. Braezy is now the executive director of the Howard Area Community Center.

People's Gas Light and Coke Company: Kenneth Gogias is the new manager of corporate contributions.

says Dan Skoda, president of Marshall Field's.

The pilot program, funded by Field's owner Dayton-Hudson Corp., will give schools and their arts partners grants of $10,000 to $25,000 to design arts programs and write curricula for the entire school. Called Neighborhood Arts Partnerships, the program will pair schools with dance groups, ethnic museums, theater groups and other organizations. The program is the brainchild of arts consultant Mitchell Korn, who, in a study commissioned by Field's, showed how lack of resources has dealt severe blows to arts education in the public schools.

Schools and their prospective partners will be interviewed through March. Grants will be awarded in April for the 1993-94 school year.

Trust grant helps schools spruce up

A $625,000 grant from the Chicago Community Trust will help 25 Chicago schools get a facelift this year through the efforts of their own students.

Each of the schools will get $25,000 to design and implement a program that combines plans for physical and aesthetic improvements with classroom instruction; for instance, students studying horticulture might design a project to plant trees or a garden on school grounds.

The pilot program is loosely modeled on a similar project in Philadelphia's public schools. This year, grants will be awarded to five high schools and up to two elementary schools in each of the city's 10 elementary subdistricts.

Grant workshops

Saturday workshops on "The ABCs of Proposal Preparation and Writing" will be offered by the Donors Forum of Chicago on April 17 and 24. The cost is $150 per participant, which includes breakfast, lunch and materials. For more information and to register, call the Donors Forum at (312) 431-0264.

Grants is a cooperative project of CATALYST and the Donors Forum of Chicago. It was compiled by Veronica Anderson and Lorraine Forte.
Education secretary vows help for cities

The new U.S. Secretary of Education hails from a state that doesn't have a single city in the country’s biggest 100. But in one of his first interviews since assuming office, Richard Riley, former governor of South Carolina, signaled a special interest in the problems of urban schools.

Speaking by phone with CATALYST writer Michael Selinker, Riley said he favors targeting federal Chapter 1 money to areas with high concentrations of poverty and indicated he would work to protect Chapter 1 from budget cuts.

Following his election as governor in 1979, Riley forged a coalition that won legislative adoption of a comprehensive school reform package including more state funding, mandatory kindergarten, higher standards and state intervention in failing districts. When he left office in 1987, he joined a law firm in Columbia, S.C., and co-founded a policy group on disadvantaged children.

Here are excerpts from CATALYST's interview with Riley.

What in your experience with school reform in South Carolina gave you insight into urban education?

My experience in South Carolina was working with people—parents and children, who very often had not had an opportunity to have a quality education themselves. It caused me to pay special interest to at-risk areas of my state and to deal in a special way with children in difficult situations. Urban areas have those problems in greater quantity, but they are the same kinds of problems that we dealt with in our pockets of poverty.

I think anyone from South Carolina will tell you that I had a very strong personal interest in trying to give all children a fair chance and a quality education, and all of my education policies have reflected it.

What can the federal government do to help improve urban school districts such as Chicago's?

This year we are having a reauthorization of Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and all the other parts of that act, which is a major part of the involvement of the federal government in the public schools.

Urban advocates want more of that money targeted toward concentrated areas of poverty like Chicago. Do you favor that?

That definitely would be a Chapter 1 issue, and I do favor that. We have had some very serious, almost devastating deficit situations put on us, not only from the national federal deficit but things like the Pell Grant program, which is $2 billion in deficit. And those realities make us realize that we have to work on doing more with the dollars we spend.

It’s also important for us to put the education issue in all of the budget decisions. Part of my effort will be to see that programs like Chapter 1 are properly considered when difficult budget decisions are made.

Bill Clinton believes in investing dollars in people. His chief slogan was, “Put the people first.” By that, he means all people, but especially children, who, through no fault of their own, have special needs as a result of poverty. He's for trying to level the playing field for them, and that I hope will mean more emphasis on Chapter 1 dollars.

Illinois has wildly disparate funding levels between its districts. How would you work to reduce state inequalities in spending?

Thus far, that has been more of a state problem. It's been very difficult to have a federal program to equalize the tax structures in states. You can have some incentives, and we certainly will be looking at ways to do that. That's been a problem in public education in this country, especially when you depend upon the property tax. Generally, though, that has been perceived to be a state problem.

In some states, like Kentucky, it's gotten bad enough to have heavy court involvement, and you have seen major reforms take place under the pressure of the courts.

But there are a lot of people in Chicago and other urban areas who believe the only way equity is ever going to come about is if there is considerable federal pressure put on states. Do you feel that's necessary?

I don't want people to think that we in the federal government can come in and change around the tax structure in a state to be more equitable. I will say that that's a concern of mine, and as we look at all of the programs under Chapter 1 and other areas, we will try to develop incentives that would encourage states and communities to equalize their tax structures.

Mayor Richard M. Daley has called on the federal government to reduce its bureaucratic mandates on the cities. For example, federal Chapter 1 regulations burden principals with extensive, redundant paperwork. Is relief on the way?
I'm a friend of Mayor Daley, and I understand what he's calling for. Bill Clinton supports that concept, and I do too. Bill Clinton talked a lot about waivers in the health care field when the governors were here. I would have the same concept about education bureaucracy. Where state or local creative, innovative strategies seem to be working, commensurate reductions in federal regulations should be called for.

In Chapter 1, I especially believe that. There's a lot of interesting research dealing with Chapter 1 being more flexible, using the same dollars for better schools instead of taking students out of their classes for extra help. Better to have fewer pupils per teacher to help that child—and also the other children in the class. In other words, more flexible use of those Chapter 1 dollars is something I'm very interested in.

Chicago educators have found that federal accountability requirements fit their hands in pursuing innovation. How can you help reform efforts and still assure accountability?

You can do it by having a results-oriented, systemic education reform, and that's what we're all about. That might sound bureaucratic, but it really means having all the parts be in sync, from curriculum to teacher training to textbooks to school management.

If you have a system that measures results with high standards and goals, then you can determine what's working in terms of results. That is accountability. If the results are there, you can begin to relieve those areas of unnecessary restrictions and bureaucracy. Again, if you have a bankrupt school system that isn't working, you have to have certain safeguards and regulations for the protection of the children.

Do you agree with former Secretary William Bennett's assessment of Chicago's schools as the "worst in the nation"? What message would you send to Chicagoans working to improve their schools?

I am not personally knowledgeable about all of the intricacies of the Chicago schools. Most of the inner-city schools in this country are having difficulty; so are the inner cities, with other problems like crime and drugs. It is something that we in this nation have to deal with, that we have to respond to and respond to in a meaningful way. I will be very interested as we develop our concepts and priorities here to help devise special programs for dealing with the urban schools in this country.

I don't think it does a school system any good to divide up the people and bash each other and continually talk about how bad things are. You need to do that to get people's attention, but then you need to turn that negative feeling to positive. That means measuring improvement, giving incentives for doing better, getting teachers excited along with principals, superintendents, administrators, parents, businesspeople and schoolchildren working all in a common purpose for self-improvement.

That can happen in Chicago or any other urban area, but it's going to take special attention. It's going to take local and community leadership, along with state and national leadership that I hope we can provide.

Urban advocates cautiously optimistic about Riley, prospects for change

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Former South Carolina Gov. Richard Riley is far from the urban educator whom many urban school advocates had hoped would become the new secretary of education. But so far, urbanites have greeted him with open arms and guarded optimism.

Before Riley was even confirmed, he met with the Council of the Great City Schools, an organization representing large school systems, including Chicago’s. “The group was encouraged by his visit, especially after the long national education nightmare of the last 12 years,” says interim executive director Michael Casserly. "He said he was looking forward to working with us. However, he said what he knew about urban schools, he knew from groups like us."

"The political alignment couldn't be better for change: Clinton, Riley and a Democratic Congress," says Jack Jennings, the Democratic staff leader of the House Education and Labor Committee. "The deficit is the only impediment. We'll have to see how creative people get in overcoming that impediment."

Urban school advocates have a long wish list, including money for rehabbing or replacing crumbling schools, money for teacher training and pressure on states to fund schools equitably.

High on the list is more urban-targeted federal Chapter 1 money. "Everyone seems to realize that this is the one opportunity we will have to make sweeping changes in Chapter 1," says Bob Schireman, education advisor to Sen. Paul Simon, who is on the education subcommittee of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. "And there is a feeling on the Hill that funding school reform is not completely separate from reauthorization of Chapter 1."

The House Education and Labor Committee includes one Illinois congressman, Rep. Harris W. Fawell (R-Naperville). Chicago no longer is represented on the committee that initiates education legislation, since Rep. Charles Hayes (D-Chicago) was defeated by Bobby Rush in the last primary election.

Encouraged as Jennings is, he cautions, "This presidential vote had a majority of suburban votes for the first time. The inner cities don't have the votes they used to have, and it's always difficult to ask someone to do something out of noblesse oblige."

Michael Selinker
Lack of money and Chicago public school staff members who don't believe the school system can succeed are among the biggest obstacles confronting the Chicago public schools, according to their new interim superintendent.

"We've got to turn that around," Richard Stephenson said in a CATALYST interview the week he was tapped to head the school system.

As CATALYST went to press in mid-February, Stephenson maintained he had not decided whether to seek the permanent post. But the 35-year veteran of the school system, who most recently served as superintendent of Subdistrict 9 on the South Side, did not hesitate to talk about how he would exert leadership.

The following are excerpts from Stephenson's conversation with CATALYST writer Alex Poinsett.

**Why did you accept your interim post, given what you know about the Chicago Public Schools and the politics of the superintendency?**

I think that I am well-known enough and know enough of people both in and out of the system to bring some cohesion to it. We're at a critical stage, and it's going to take all of us—school people, community people and the children—to pull it together.

**Do you see your selection as a step forward in healing factionalism at the board?**

I certainly hope so. I won't put myself on the back. I don't know how I'm perceived by different factions on the board, but I don't think I have too many enemies. I like to feel that people will give me a chance to work with them, and I think that goes a long way toward promoting unity.

**Do you want to become the permanent superintendent? If not, what advice would you give to the next superintendent?**

I still haven't made up my mind. If I feel that I can bring something to this system that will get it moving in the right way, I'll go for it.

Apart from money, what's needed most in the system is training, a positive attitude about what can be done for school children and a need to demythologize the system. There are 100 school systems in Illinois that are in worse shape financially than Chicago's. It is not a black hole into which you dump money. Some children here are achieving at a very high rate. In the Academic Olympics we have consistently taken first place in the state, and for the past three years we have taken third in the nation.

**What will help you decide whether you want to become the permanent superintendent?**

Consensus within the community, board and staff about how to reach our goals. I'm not hung up on who has the answers. But I am hung up on whether people dig in their heels and say, "If it doesn't go my way, I'm not going to play." I can't deal with that.

Do we have some kind of consensus? Do we have consonant views of the goals, but not necessarily consonant views of the approaches? There are lots of ways to the Loop. We can go down Michigan or take Lake Shore Drive, but we'll ultimately get there. As long as we're all going to the Loop, that's the thing—not somebody headed for Joliet.

**Do you understand that the superintendency involves both political and educational leadership?**

You have to be a savvy political animal in any organization. You don't necessarily have to be linked to the mayor or the governor or anybody.

**Is there a contradiction between the board saying support for decentralization is the first requirement for a new superintendent and your saying that decentralization has gone as far as it can go?**

I'm not sure that contradiction exists. I'm going to study all of the various reports and, to the degree possible, continue to decentralize and try to do what is best for the system.

**How do you reconcile demands for more decentralization—meaning more paperwork, etc. for principals—with the need for more focus on educational improvement?**

It's difficult unless you give principals someone to deal specifically with that kind of thing, and considering the budget deficit, that's not going to happen. Ideally, a principal should spend at least 51 percent of his or her time in classrooms working with teachers. Unfortunately, classrooms often are the last places that principals can get to. By the time they deal
with all the crises of the day—an injured child, an irate parent, something from the district office or central office, reports that have to be gotten out, etc.—they simply don’t have much time for the classroom.

**Can central administration be reduced anymore?**

I don’t know.

**What’s right with Chicago school reform as it now exists?**

The local schools can address their needs. Red tape is being cut and discarded. We articulate more effectively within the system the schools that are successful. Parents, who are the best resource that schools can have, are coming out and supporting schools. Because of its enlightened self-interest, the business community is also supporting schools.

**What’s wrong with Chicago school reform as it now exists?**

LSC members do not have overlapping terms; hence, the collective wisdom of a school can disappear in one election. People who should not be on the councils cannot be removed effectively. Challenges are too long, arduous and complicated. Training, though mandated, is not always done. Therefore, the councils are sometimes ineffective. About 47 percent of the principals in the system now are relatively new. In my own district, two-thirds of them have three years or less experience.

**Is the superintendent a cheerleader, an inspirational connector between federal and state forces? Is his major responsibility to promote school reform without having the power or authority to make people do at the local level what they’re supposed to do?**

A superintendent is all of the above. He or she also has some power with regard to people at the local level. The Reform Act mandates the board and superintendent to meet certain requirements. At the same time, it tells the local schools that they are relatively autonomous.

**What are the most important things that a superintendent can do to help schools improve?**

Imbue the system with a positive attitude about what children, parents and teachers can do to improve student achievement. Everybody in the system ought to be about that. Everything we do, from ordering supplies to whatever, ought to be looking down the road at what it will do to improve student achievement.

Teachers who come into public education and do not expect to motivate students are in the wrong field. Children often come from dysfunctional homes, and teachers must believe that they can learn, that they are intelligent, sentient beings who have something to contribute to society. Teachers also should understand that they have to match different learning styles with different teaching styles.

**What are the three biggest obstacles facing Chicago schools?**

Lack of money, faculty members and staffers who don’t believe that we can succeed and thus don’t give us the help that we need, and Chicagoans who also don’t have faith in their schools. We’ve got to turn that around.

**How do you structure a system in which taking risks, being innovative, trying new things, etc. is rewarded?**

I like to think that exists now. I take risks all along as an administrator, and I think I have been rewarded. I don’t always follow the book. I do what I think will fit the situation. That’s taking risks.

**Have you had any experience in changing the course of an institution or organization?**

My first principalship was at Forestville Upper Grade Center between 1967 and 1970. Some 7,000 students were going to school within one square block. About 2,000 of them were mine. I can’t take credit for all the good things that happened because I had a superb group of teachers. When I went to Dunbar High School in 1971, the kids that fed into that school for the next few years became some of the top students. I think I contributed very strongly to that. Dunbar was cited as one of the top schools of its kind in the country. It also had a superb teaching staff.

**How should the school system deal with schools that are not making any effort to improve?**

The district superintendent is required to monitor schools in his or her district. Those that do not [improve] may be placed on “school watch.” The district superintendent can require that schools redo ineffective improvement plans. If this does not work, then he, with approval of the district council, can place the school on remediation. If there still is no progress, schools can go on probation.

**Did you take any of those steps?**

I didn’t go so far as probation. But I did threaten remediation with a couple of schools. It was a matter basically of the councils and principals going in different directions so that their energies were unfocused and the task just wasn’t being done. But when they united and focused their energies, they took care of the problem.

**What is your approach to management/union negotiations? Is it possible to rethink how we even think about teacher contracts?**

I’m not a labor negotiator, so I don’t know. I don’t think I’m qualified to answer that question.

**Do you support putting teachers on performance contracts?**

The amount of mobility in the schools makes this difficult. In certain schools, student turnover would almost kill a teacher, so that would have to be taken into consideration. Even if there was no turnover, you would have to have a two- or three-year performance base before you could evaluate a teacher. So I can’t give a “yes” or “no” to the question.

**How should the system go about finding new candidates for principal?**

All vacancies should be well advertised.

**How would you relate with (a) traditional reform groups like Leadership for Quality Education and Designs for Change, (b) Mayor Daley and (c) the Urban League and other community organizations? How would you unite all of these forces?**

I would appeal to their rationality. But before that, I would appeal to their love of the children and our attempt to improve their educational achievement. If we start with that as a base and proceed to rational approaches, then maybe we have a chance for all of us to sit and talk about how to get to the Loop.
School Board, reform groups campaign for union concessions

by Michael Klonsky

Don't be surprised if school union leaders seem a little jumpier these days. Though only two months old, 1993 is shaping up as the year of Taking-on-the-Unions.

First came the SAVE Plan drafted by School Board member Stephen Ballis. The plan proposes giving principals more control over teaching and maintenance staffs and building operations, and asks teachers to work more without extra pay.

Next came 12 organizations, ranging from the Chicago Urban League to the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce, armed with petitions to eliminate school engineers and firemen in order to save some $20 million.

The coalition's main target is the engineers, who under state law supervise maintenance staff in the schools. "We are not against the school custodians," says John Ayers of the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club, a coalition member. "In fact, we want to replace the engineers, who are anachronism left over from the '50s, with a head custodian."

A third prong in the march on the unions is WESCORP, a cluster of West Side schools and local school councils. This group has drafted legislation that would give LSCs the power to ratify all union agreements. The initiative's brochure says it is "anti-Board," not "anti-union."

"We just think that LSCs should have the same kind of voice over contracts as union members do, in order to prevent sellouts," says WESCORP Executive Director Coretta McFerren.

While union give-back efforts are nothing new, they seem better organized than in the past and are unfolding in a political climate that puts Chicago school unions at greater risk than ever before.

At the city level, Mayor Richard M. Daley has become a fan of "privatizing" governmental services and has signaled his support for the far-reaching SAVE Plan. At the state level, the Senate majority has switched from Democrat to Republican; and the new Senate president, James "Pate" Philip, would like to subordinate the Chicago school system and, thereby, break up its unions.

The SAVE Plan asks for financial sacrifices from all quarters, including state taxpayers, the School Finance Authority and LSCs, in order to overcome a projected $383 million shortfall in the 1993-94 school budget. It also includes a wide variety of restructuring initiatives, many contrary to union contracts, aimed at improving school programs.

The main thing the SAVE Plan offers unions is the on-time opening of schools. In addition, new three-year contracts would include "modest raises" in the second and third years.

Leaders of the Chicago Teachers Union say their members would sacrifice most. As one CTU official put it: "Principals aren't sacrificing. They get more control over the schools. The board isn't sacrificing. It's the teachers who will have to work an extra month and longer hours without compensation."

Feeling the heat, the union representing Chicago's school engineers has enlisted the Chicago Labor Education Project, based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, to improve the communication skills of its members. The aim is to shore up relations between the engineers and the rest of the school community.

While the program has been dubbed a "finishing school" for engineers, project director Stanley Rosen says it's a very serious matter. "The old power structure on which many unions rose may be eroding as a result of the financial crisis. The unions now must rely more on the good will and improved relationships they build with others in the school community."
LSC complaints

The unions aren’t the only ones complaining about sacrifice under the SAVE Plan. LSCs and school reformers don’t like its proposal to defer schools’ receipt of $70 million in Chapter I funds, which serve low-income children. Under the Reform Act, the money is to be moved out of the board’s basic budget, thus contributing to the board’s revenue shortfall.

The proposed deferral drew heavy criticism at a Feb. 6 breakfast meeting of 46 LSC representatives.

“It is unfair to take money away from the poorest kids in the system and use it to pay for raises for teachers and administrators,” says Eric Outen, who sits on two LSCs and a subdistrict council.

Some LSC members are insisting that any deferral be accompanied by legislation guaranteeing that schools eventually get the money, with interest, according to Outen. Others, he says, want LSCs themselves to decide where cuts could be made to generate $70 million in savings.

“Chapter I was difficult enough to get in the first place. We just don’t trust the system enough to think that they will restore the money at a later date,” says Outen.

But SAVE author Ballis argues that deferring money “is better than taking money out of classroom programs or cutting music and art.”

Other critics of the SAVE Plan criticize its strategy for obtaining more state aid. “What reason do legislators have to agree to additional state support if we give up everything in advance?” asks community activist Slim Coleman.

“The plan is not carved in stone,” responds Ballis. “If someone has a better plan, we’d love to hear it.”

SAVE Plan highlights

To overcome deficit:

$12 mil The Board of Education would pare administrative costs through cuts and greater efficiency, such as computerizing the requisition system.

$46 mil Gov. Jim Edgar would continue the practice initiated in 1985 by his predecessor, James R. Thompson, of speeding up state aid.

$44 mil The School Finance Authority would ease what it calls a restriction calculation, which prevents the board from spending reimbursement money owed by the state until the money actually comes in. In recent years, the amount due at the end of the board’s fiscal year has been around $150 million.

$61 mil The Legislature would make it possible for the board to continue using—for another two years—money from its pension tax to help pay teacher salaries. Three years ago, the Legislature approved this diversion of funds as part of an agreement that produced a three-year teacher contract. The diversion expires Aug. 31.

$70 mil The Legislature would defer for two years the final installment in the transfer of state Chapter I money from the board to individual schools. For each of the past four years, 20 percent of state Chapter I money has been taken out of the board’s basic budget and given to schools for use on supplemental programs. Currently, the total is $230. Under the SAVE Plan, schools would not get the final 20 percent until 1995.

$150 mil The Legislature would appropriate more money for Chicago public schools.

Other initiatives:

- **SCHOOL YEAR** Increase teachers’ school year from 39 weeks to 43 weeks, with the four extra weeks set aside for staff and curriculum development. (The plan provides no extra pay.)
- **SCHOOL DAY** Increase the length of teachers’ school day by a half hour. Under the current contract, elementary teachers are required to work six hours—high school teachers, six hours and six minutes—not counting lunch. The extra half hour would be used for planning and parent conferences.
- **OVERTIME** Eliminate overtime payments for maintenance staff, which make after-hours programs costly. Instead, assign staff to staggered shifts.
- **VOLUNTEERS** Enlist the cooperation of Chicago employers to encourage parents with jobs to volunteer up to three days a year at their children’s schools.
- **SALARY SCHEDULE** Cut back the current system of financial incentives for taking graduate courses; that is, reduce the number of “lanes” in the teacher contract. Also, compact contract “steps,” which bring extra pay for extra years of service in the system.
- **20TH DAY** Get partial relief from the Reform Act’s prohibition on cutting a school’s teaching staff after the 20th day of school. Under the SAVE Plan, the central office could dismiss high school teachers up to the 20th day of the second semester as well as the first.
- **MORE LOCAL CONTROL** For example, letting principals and LSCs arrange the school day without getting an union waiver, and permitting principals to restructure their schools once, dismissing teachers they don’t want.
- **READING PLAN** Mount a campaign to encourage all parents to read to their children at least 30 minutes every day.
- **REFORM ACT CHANGES** Remove School Finance Authority from reform oversight. Stagger LSC terms; hold elections in spring.
Groups split on Stephenson for long term

by Michael Klonsky

The appointment Feb. 1 of Richard Stephenson as interim superintendent was one of those rare events in school reform that brought agreement from almost all factions.

The choice of a coalition of African-American groups, Stephenson, 63, quickly received an official vote of confidence from the Chicago Principals Association and unofficial support from the Chicago Teachers Union.

Both groups are vying for more authority in the upcoming legislative session and contract negotiations. And each is hoping to get a sympathetic ear because of Stephenson's 35 years within the system as a teacher, principal and, most recently, subdistrict superintendent.

Even some school reformers who generally distrust anyone who made it in the "old" system view Stephenson's appointment as a hopeful step away from the instability of Ted Kimbrough's era. He will make "a good caretaker," says Coretta McFerren, who leads a West Side reform group.

McFerren's remark shows the limits of Stephenson's broad-based support. As CATALYST went to press in mid-February, only his initial community backers and the principals association were behind him for the permanent post. Board sources said former board president Clinton Brustow, an ally of Mayor Richard M. Daley, was the front-runner.

Reform group leaders were looking for someone who clearly meets the top criterion listed in the School Board's brochure advertising for superintendent: Enthusiastic support for decentralization and site-based management. Stephenson's comments on decentralization at his first press conference on Feb. 3 were not what these leaders wanted to hear. Stephenson said that the system had been decentralized as much as it could be. "Bones, that's all that's left," he added.

However, Stephenson does meet the top priority of LSC members who responded to a random-sample telephone poll. What these members called for more than anything else was knowledge of Chicago's school system. (See story on page 27.)

Meanwhile, the board hired a head-hunting firm to advance its national search for superintendent candidates.

How he emerged

The board's 10-to-3 vote on Stephenson followed days of intense debate and late-night meetings in which the nine-member faction that had engineered the buy-out of Supt. Ted Kimbrough's contract broke ranks.

Initially, this faction wanted someone who clearly would not be a candidate for the permanent post. A prominent search committee had been empaneled to evaluate candidates, and a majority on the board did not want to run the risk of derail ing that effort by installing an heir apparent. This group's first choice for interim was chief financial officer Charley Gillispie. It also talked to Kimbrough special assistant Olivia Watkins, a Chicago school veteran.

When those overtures failed, the board settled for a "collective leadership" team. But a review of state law showed that the system needed one leader. In addition, the notion of government-by-committee did not sit well with the business or school communities. The move also was criticized by African-American community groups because it excluded Deputy Supt. Adrienne Bailey.

In the end, only three of the nine board members who voted against Kimbrough—James Flannigan, John Valinote and Bertha Magana—voted against Stephenson, who was seen as a likely candidate for permanent superintendent.

The ousted-Kimbrough faction shattered under pressure from a coalition of black and predominantly black community organizations, including Operation PUSH, the National Black United Front, the Chicago Urban League and the Parent Community Council (PCC).

Led by PCC Chair James Deanes, this coalition had been meeting for weeks in order to unite around one candidate. It settled on Stephenson only after Deputy Supt. Robert Saddler declined to bid for the post for fear of being associated with the anti-Kimbrough coup, which was perceived by the Deanes group as having been launched by the mayor's office.

The African-American coalition also is reported to have exerted heavy pressure on board member Clinton Brustow not to take the job.

Several board members who were uncomfortable with Stephenson finally voted for him in the hopes of minimizing political strife during the upcoming legislative session and union contract negotiations.

Mayor Daley apparently wasn't happy with the outcome, grimly telling a City Hall press conference, "Well, they moved ahead on it."
A majority of local school council members say school reform must lead to higher test scores, lower dropout rates and other measureable student gains before it can be judged a success, according to a survey sponsored by Leadership for Quality Education.

A third of principals and teachers, however, say they won’t consider reform a success until local schools have more authority. And a fifth of teachers say they want more parent involvement as well.

The telephone survey, conducted in November 1992 by Richard Day Research, asked a random sample of 705 principals, teachers, parents and community representatives on LSCs a range of questions on school reform and education. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points, with larger margins for responses by each subgroup.

MORE OPTIMISM Compared to 1990, when LQE conducted a similar survey following the first round of LSC elections, principals and teachers are much more likely to say their schools have improved since reform began. In the latest survey, over 80 percent of principals and over 60 percent of teachers felt their school had improved; in 1990, about half of principals and only a third of teachers saw improvement.

SCHOOLS GETTING BETTER Most LSC members report that their schools have improved in specific areas, with nearly three-fourths reporting improvements in safety and discipline, parent/staff relations, volunteer and parent involvement, and budget development.

SUPERINTENDENT WISH LIST Knowledge of Chicago schools topped the list of qualities LSC members want in a new superintendent. Support for decentralization—the School Board’s main criterion—ranked much lower.

LSC ELECTIONS Overall, a majority of LSC members said they plan to run in the upcoming third round of LSC elections, slated for October. Parents were most likely to say they will run again,

teachers the least likely. Most of those who do not plan to run said LSC work had been too time-consuming.

The best way to find more candidates and encourage citizens to vote in the elections, according to those surveyed, is to stress the value of education and make public appeals.

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS? About two-thirds of LSC members want to scrap the current School Board selection process, which allows the mayor to pick members from a list of candidates submitted by a nominating committee made up of LSC members. Nearly half favor citywide elections.

(Of 47 major cities belonging to the Council of the Great City Schools, 41 have elected school boards.)

LOCAL CONTROL Asked in an open-ended question to name areas over which they want more control, LSC members were most likely to say that they already have enough power. But when given 11 specific areas and asked whether local schools should have authority in them, respondents overwhelmingly said yes.

STATE CHAPTER 1 Nearly three-fourths of parents, but only a third of principals, want to use Chapter 1 funds to replace regular programs cut from the budget.

UNION CONTRACTS Overall, respondents voiced little support for radical changes to union contracts, such as merit pay for teachers and cutting overtime for custodial workers. However, about a third of principals want more control over teacher hiring, and close to 20 percent want to eliminate so-called supernumeraries, teachers who sometimes are assigned to schools against principal’s wishes.

CORPORATE SUPPORT Partnerships are the best way for businesses to help schools, LSC members say. But less than half gave high marks to Chicago’s large downtown corporations for supporting reform and education.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL FINANCE AUTHORITY Some reformers have criticized the SFA as a “second school board,” but most LSC members support the SFA’s authority.

Lorraine Forte

### What LSCs think about reform, running for re-election

**“How will you know when you’ve achieved [reform]?”**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher test scores, other signs of improvement</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When LSCs have more power</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More parent/community involvement</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New curriculum, better teaching methods</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**“Since the first LSC elections, do you feel your school is operating better, worse or the same?”**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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**“Will you run again next year?”**

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<tbody>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For those who said no, “Why won’t you run?”**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ineligible</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much work, time</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated with LSC</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Done my part</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Leadership for Quality Education.
What LSCs think about unions, the School Finance Authority

"The Chicago Teachers Union contract expires in August [1993]. What changes, if any, would you like to see made in the next contract?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better pay/benefits</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More LSC control over hiring</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less union control</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit pay</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate tenure, supernumeraries</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiyear contracts</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit class size</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut salaries, benefits</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No changes/other</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The custodial, engineers and other laborers' contracts expire next August [1993]. What changes, if any, would you like to see made in their next contracts?"

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More principal control</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accountable</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More LSC control</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut salaries, overtime</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer hours</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better pay/benefits</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatize</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many/cut firemen</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire more</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No changes/other</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

"Do you think the Chicago School Finance Authority should play an active role in pressuring the Board of Education to move money and authority to the local school level?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More LSC opinions

"Has your council made any significant improvements at your school in ..."

- Safety and discipline: 78%
- Parent/staff relations: 77%
- Budget development: 74%
- Volunteer, parent involvement: 73%
- More instructional materials: 72%
- Revising curriculum: 70%
- Building improvements: 63%
- Ast scores: 56%
- Reducing class size: 43%

"What are the two most important characteristics the board should look for in selecting a general superintendent?"

- From Chicago/knows the system: 25%
- Business/management background: 23%
- Dedicated to children: 19%
- Teaching, education background: 11%
- Legal/leadership background: 11%
- Dedicated to reform, decentralization: 1%
- From large urban system: 7%
- Experienced in general: 6%
- Honest, fair: 5%
- Political skills: 4%

"Should members of the Board of Education be ..."

- Elected by all Chicagoans: 48%
- Selected in the current fashion: 28%
- Appointed by the mayor: 11%
- Other: 13%

"What authority and responsibility, if any, do you wish your LSC had, but doesn't currently have?"

- Have enough as is: 27%
- More control over budget: 23%
- More hiring/lifting staff: 18%
- Supervise, set rules for custodial staff: 6%

"Should the authority and responsibility to select, supervise and evaluate the following rest with the central office, the subdistrict office or your local school?"

- Bus company/transportation provider: 44%
- Central or subdistrict office: 44%
- Local school: 54%
- Developing curriculum: 24%
- Central or subdistrict office: 24%
- Local school: 74%
- Staff development: 28%
- Central or subdistrict office: 28%
- Local school: 70%
Board-CTU impasse kills early retirement for teachers

Chicago teachers, principals and other teacher-certificated administrators were left out of a new early retirement law when the Board of Education and Chicago Teachers Union crossed swords over supernumerary teachers and other controversial issues.

The new law gives clerks, engineers and other non-teachers in the Chicago schools, who belong to a municipal pension fund, an incentive to retire as early as age 50 by allowing them to "buy" up to five years of age and experience credit. The law also applies to suburban and downstate teachers, who belong to the Illinois Teachers' Retirement System.

But teachers and other members of the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund weren't included because legislators, working under the "agreed-bill" process, said they would adopt only those provisions on which all parties—in this case, the board, the CTU and the pension fund—agreed. The CTU and the pension fund balked at conditions the board said it needed to help pay its share of the pension deal. The conditions, however, were largely a resurrection of legislation the board has lobbied for previously. The board wanted:

- An end to the Reform Act's prohibition on dismissing supernumeraries, teachers whose positions have been cut because of declining enrollment at a school and who have not been hired at other schools. Rather than create make-work jobs, former Supt. Ted Kimbrough assigned many supernumeraries to teaching positions, violating principals' rights (under reform) to fill their own vacancies.

Richard Guidice, associate superintendent for governmental relations, says that firing supernumeraries would save money because they likely would be replaced by less senior teachers. Currently there are about 300 to 400 supernumeraries, or about 1.5 percent of the teaching staff.

- Permission from the Legislature to offer early retirement to teachers, rather than make it a teachers' right. That way, it could have been used as a bargaining chip in contract negotiations.

- Partial relief from the Reform Act's ban on cutting teaching staff after the 20th day of school. The board wanted the right to dismiss high school teachers up to the 20th day of the second semester as well as the first.

Before reform, the board closed teaching positions throughout the year as enrollment fell off. But this practice disrupted classrooms when teachers with more seniority "bumped" less senior teachers from their teaching positions.

- An extension of the current pension tax levy diversion, amounting to about $61 million. The board has used the diverted pension tax levy to help pay for teacher salaries. Three years ago, the Legislature approved the diversion as part of an agreement that produced a three-year teacher contract. The diversion expires Aug. 31.

Joseph Lowery, president of the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund, calls it "completely unrealistic" for the board to ask for an extension. The fund is solvent now but "would be broke in 20 years," he maintains.

The new retirement plan was approved in January before the new General Assembly was convened; it expires on March 1, 1994. About 9,000 Chicago teachers would have been eligible; up to a third could have retired in a single year.

The plan saves employers money as retirees are replaced by younger workers with lower salaries. But estimates of savings for the Chicago board, had teachers been included, varied widely. The board estimated the likely savings this year at $13 million; the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund, at $32 million; and the Illinois Economic and Fiscal Commission, at $44 million.

Lorraine Forte
Principals, other administrators win 7 percent raises

Principals and other non-unionized school employees have won their first raises in 18 months. March 1, their salaries will rise 7 percent.

Unionized employees got 7 percent raises on Oct. 13. Last school year, only members of the Chicago Teachers Union got raises—3 percent, effective Dec. 2, 1991.

The pay hike for about 2,700 non-union employees, including administrators, accountants, lawyers, central-office clerical staff and some 500 principals, will cost $2.4 million for the remainder of this fiscal year. The money will come from a greater-than-expected year-end cash balance, says Charley Gillispie, the board's chief financial officer.

The Board of Education granted the raises Jan. 27, following a show of force by principals; more than 200 showed up at the board's public presentation session to demand pay hikes.

"We feel we should be paid more than those we supervise," said Ellen Jones, principal of Burnham and Anthony schools.

Principal pay is geared to the size of a school's staff; at small schools, it has been possible for a teacher to make more than the principal.

The new salary range for principals is $54,350 to $80,200. Top pay for a teacher is $48,460, which applies to teachers with a doctorate degree and 12 years of experience. However, the standard work year for a teacher is 39 weeks while principals work 47-49 weeks.

Most principals at the meeting seemed satisfied with the 7 percent increase. "We're not greedy," said Tommy Brown, principal of Yale Elementary School. "We're glad we got something."

Nationwide, principal raises averaged about 2 percent this school year, according to the National Association of Secondary School Principals; the increase was the lowest since the association began tracking salaries in 1973. Last school year, raises averaged about 4.5 percent, the association said.

Daley promotes school-business partnerships

In last year's round of budget cuts, the Board of Education eliminated staff who coordinated its 12-year-old Adopt-A-School program.

Now, Mayor Richard M. Daley has stepped in with the School Partners Program, which asks local businesses to donate $30,000 over three years to the public school of their choice. So far, 16 companies, including Illinois Bell, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Illinois and Xerox Corp., have signed up to serve 19 schools.

Schools and their partners will decide together how to spend the money. In addition, businesses are encouraged to set up tutoring and other after-school programs aimed at raising achievement and keeping students in school, and to send executives into classes to teach.

The goal is to find partners for all 600 Chicago schools. At last count, for the 1990-91 school year, about 237 schools had partners from the Adopt-A-School program, according to the Board of Education.

A committee of business leaders will match schools and businesses and raise money to help small companies that want to participate.

Deputy Mayor Leonard J. Dominguez and Xerox executive Karen Murphy, on loan to the city for six months, are coordinating the program.

For more information, contact Murphy at (312) 784-9850.

Dana Phillips

Upcoming events

In March, the Teachers' Task Force of the City Wide Coalition for School Reform and Roosevelt University will continue with their series of panel discussions being held as part of a course on Chicago school reform.

Time: 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Place: Room 244, 430 S. Michigan.

■ Mar. 2 A picture of whole-school change. Panelists from Washington Irving School, including Principal Madeleine Maraldi, teacher Marni Nissen and LSC members.

■ Mar. 23 The major institutions. Panelists are Florence Cox, president of the Board of Education; Martin Kolodyke, head of the School Finance Authority; Diana Nelson, president, Leadership for Quality Education; and a Chicago Teachers Union representative.

■ Mar. 30 Teachers' roles and opportunities. Teachers' Task Force members.

The public is also invited to the 1993 Joyce Lecture Series, "Urban Educational Reform: Federal, State and Local Initiatives."
LETTERS continued from page 13

to coincide with National Library Week, April 12-24.

We urge you to get in touch with us by calling Laura Powers [312] 404-5825 or Kang Chiu [312] 973-6277 to receive and begin circulating petitions and fact sheets and to find out about upcoming planning meetings and other events. Don't mourn—organize!

David L. Williams, reference librarian
Harold Washington Library, social sciences and history division

Principal survey uncovers time bombs

Based on an extensive survey of Chicago principals, "Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspectives" (CATALYST insert, December 1992) shows that principals generally are positive about school reform and the new governance structure. However, the report also shows there are many potentially severe problems lurking in the background. I would like to highlight some of these so that they can be addressed before they do serious damage.

Thirty-eight percent of the principals indicate that since reform, they are less optimistic that their school will improve. This is a staggering number, coming out of what are supposed to be locally controlled schools.

Fifty-nine percent of the principals do not feel better about working in their schools. This is probably attributable to the fact that while principals have become totally accountable for everything that occurs in the school, they still do not control their staffs, their budgets and the purchase of instructional materials.

Staff selection, supervision and evaluation are tightly controlled by union contracts. While there is more flexibility in the use of state Chapter 1 money, all "board-funded," or general, programs are rigidly controlled by staffing guidelines and union contracts. In addition, principals' increased workload, lagging salaries and, in many cases, multiple bosses add to the frustration.

Other troubling findings are: 40 percent of principals say their LSCs do not have a clear understanding of their role as policy makers; 89 percent report that administrative demands (paperwork, reports, providing information, etc.) have increased; and 81 percent report that they have been too busy dealing with administration, LSC relations, central-office assignments and other requirements to give curricular issues the attention they deserve.

Possibly most worrisome is the finding that at least 47 schools have been "left behind." These schools are characterized by ineffectual LSCs and PPACs and have generally low student achievement. These schools desperately need assistance to move forward.

Hopefully, the General Assembly, the Chicago Board of Education and all other interested parties will use this survey to increase good practices and to address and correct problem areas.

Bruce Bennett, president
Chicago Principals Association

CATALYST welcomes guest editors and letters to the editor. Send them to CATALYST/Opinions, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, Ill. 60604. They may be edited for clarity and space.

Parents United for Responsible Education is offering a series of classes on how to become an effective local school leader, covering the history of school reform, LSC roles and responsibilities, school improvement planning, principal evaluation, local school budgeting, how to run a meeting and how to run and win in the next LSC election. Time: 10 a.m. to noon on four consecutive Saturdays beginning Mar. 27. Place: Truman College, 1145 W. Wilson. For more information, call PURE at [312] 907-4727 or [312] 784-PURE.

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Mar. 5 Public choice and success: lessons from New York. The speaker is Anthony Alvarado, superintendent of Community School District 2 in New York City. Time: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Mar. 10 Stable leadership at the top: the Philadelphia story. The speaker is Constance Clayton, longtime school superintendent in Philadelphia. Time: noon to 1:30 p.m.

Both lectures will be held at the American National Bank, One N. LaSalle, 2nd floor auditorium.

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New school a symbol of community activism

Interim Principal Luis Molina rounds up his students for a photo on opening day of the new District 3 Middle School.

When the doors of the new District 3 Middle School opened for the first time on Feb. 1, Logan Square community activists saw the fruit of four years of struggle for a solution to the severe overcrowding in their neighborhood schools.

Over those four years, they learned to navigate the maze of city and school bureaucracies and fought a constant battle to convince officials of their commitment to creating a school the community could truly call its own.

"LSCs are often unaware of how much input they can have," says Trina Bliss, chair of the new school's interim local school council and a member of the Avondale Elementary LSC. "We tried for as much as we could get."

The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), which persuaded the Interim Board of Education in 1989 to build the new school, was instrumental in guiding the effort, says Bliss.

Unhappy with the board's proposal to build another K-8 school on the same block as Avondale, a committee organized by the LSNA proposed that additions be built at Avondale, Darwin and Monroe elementary schools.

But the board rejected the proposal, contending that additions would not solve the problem over the long term. So the committee, which wanted a school that all children in the area could attend for some period of time, proposed constructing a new middle school and converting Avondale to K-5. The board agreed.

With the site selected, representatives from each of the three schools chose members for a planning committee, which adopted operating and voting rules and eventually became the new school's interim LSC.

One of the committee's first activities was to visit six newly constructed schools. After talking with principals, teachers, engineers and other staff at these schools, the Logan Square group set design priorities for its school, including wider stairways, an afterschool community center and extra plumbing and electricity for future lab expansion.

In all, the new $5.5 million building, located at 3212 W. George, has 18 classrooms, a full-size gym, a multipurpose room, computer, art and science labs, a large, light-filled library and a cafeteria and kitchen.

Weekday evenings, the multipurpose room will be open for community activities, with maintenance staff from the razed Avondale field house tending the building.

The interim LSC also selected the school's curriculum and chose an interim principal, Luis A. Molina.

About 406 of Avondale's 1,100 students are attending the new school, along with 10 students each from Monroe and Darwin. Another 100 students are expected at the new school next year. With Avondale now a K-5 school, it could accept about 75 students from Monroe and Darwin.

Deciding attendance boundaries was the biggest hurdle, with representatives from the three schools accusing the others of grabbing seats for children in their area.

But, Bliss says, "We had to come to a consensus because that's where our strength was."

Dana Phillips