Union agreements falling into place

Analysis by Linda Lenz

The chances are that teachers will return to school with their seniority rights only slightly altered and with more money, if not this year, then next. But they likely will be putting in more hours. Further, the work force will be reduced through attrition, and all employees will contribute to health insurance premiums.

As CATALYST went to press Aug. 17, that's where rhetoric, reality and the lessons of past school crises were pointing.

The outline of this year's financial fix has long been clear: It will include union concessions, more School Board cuts and new money. (Despite talk of an income tax hike, the money probably will be borrowed.) The biggest question is whether the details will be hammered out without a school shutdown.

At an Aug. 11 press conference, Jacqueline Vaughn, president of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), said it was
In This Issue:  
Shoring up kids’ lives

"The greatest obstacle to improved student achievement is apathetic or irresponsible parents." That’s what city teachers claimed when CATALYST surveyed chairs of professional personnel advisory committees and Chicago Teachers Union delegates last year.

Their answer is understandable. If a child comes to school with an untreated illness, can’t read because he needs glasses, falls asleep in class because she’s been up all night or hasn’t done her homework, it’s logical for teachers to ask: Where are the parents? Indeed, a lot of parents would ask the same question.

But sometimes parents don’t have the resources or the know-how to care for their children in a way that promotes healthy development. Sometimes they need help, too.

So where does that leave schools? They can simply complain about the "baggage" children bring to school, but that pretty much means writing kids off. Or they can try to unpack some of that baggage so that kids have a better shot at learning and growing into healthy adults.

In this issue, CATALYST takes a look at some Chicago schools that, with the help of partners, have opted to try to unpack the baggage. The stories are not all upbeat. Some schools have found that creating and maintaining their partnerships takes so much time and energy that educational change takes a back seat.

School collaborations have become a national trend. Indeed, Congress is considering a proposal that would allow schools to use some of their federal Chapter 1 money to coordinate services for their children. But schools can’t do it all, and a number of cities and states have recognized that. Next month, CATALYST will explore what they are doing. In November, we will look at the varied roles played by Chicago’s community organizations in creating a new extended family for children.

A more immediate concern is whether the school system can weather this year’s financial crisis. This past spring, many feared a "train wreck" that would throw schools into chaos. But the atmosphere has changed since then, with Mayor Richard M. Daley figuring out how to get money to schools without raising taxes (i.e., borrowing tied to gambling). Gov. Jim Edgar saying he is willing to call a special legislative session and the unions playing it exceedingly low key. Our analysis indicates how it all might turn out.

WORTH READING Is education reform an impossible task? How are nuts-and-bolts issues, such as curriculum development, working in practice, not just in theory? In From Risk to Renewal: Charting a Course for Reform (285 pgs., Editorial Projects in Education, Washington, D.C.) the editors of Education Week have compiled articles examining these topics.

Part One examines how reform has proven to be more complex and arduous than reformers first believed, due to politics, institutional intransigence, deep differences over academic standards and other issues.

Part Two explores how schools and districts are grappling with nuts-and-bolts issues like curriculum and staff development.

Part Three includes an in-depth look at Kentucky, which overhauled school governance, finance, curriculum and assessment in 1990; and a transcript from a roundtable discussion with nationally prominent reformers. An appendix includes a chronology of major education news since 1982, and a comparison of test scores and other data from the 1970’s to 1992.

ABOUT US As you’ve no doubt noticed, we’ve made some changes. We selected a new typeface for the text, one we believe you will find easier to read. We’ve expanded our table of contents and moved it from page 1 to page 3 to make it easier for you to find what interests you. And we’ve launched Front Lines, a section that will feature schools, people and organizations that are making concerted efforts to change. Finally, we are planning our first advertising section, tentatively scheduled to appear in February.
PARTNERS: PART I

“When I see a child who’s crying because he’s ill or in trouble, it’s nuts to say to him, ‘Just get in that classroom.’ No learning is going to go on.”

4. Schools reach for partners, sometimes pay a price
Hooking up with other resources can help schools help kids. But partnerships leave schools with still more problems to solve.

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How a high school reached out to its feeder elementary schools and ended up touching the broader community. But under a new principal, that school now is changing course.

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Partners: The New Extended Family

Schools reach for partners, sometimes pay a price

by Michael Selinker and Dan Weissmann

Mattie Tyson, principal of Johnson Elementary School in North Lawndale, is infuriated by the state of her students' lives. Somebody—anybody—has got to take responsibility for these children.

"Our children have needs," Tyson says emphatically. "I'm seeing ringworm, pinkeye and other silly infections wreaking havoc in my school because they go untreated. There is absolutely nothing for the children to do after the school doors close. Our families are shattered."

And shattered families need a tighter net of social services, Tyson and other educators say. There are hundreds of programs in Chicago that would appear to address the needs of their students' families, but very few are coordinated in any way.

"I've seen families who have gone through 10 to 12 agencies and are still falling through the cracks," says Tyson. "We need the families to be able to get help without having to run all over town. These kids shouldn't have to die before we attend to them."

Tyson isn't just being good-hearted; these problems can't be separated from her job as an educator. "When I see a child who's crying because he's ill or in trouble, it's nuts to say to him, 'Just get in that classroom,' " Tyson explains. "No learning is going to go on."

In the absence of a coordinated government strategy to address the needs of poor children, Johnson Elementary has built an impressive array of partnerships, linking itself to dozens of organizations. With these partners, Tyson hopes to fulfill more of her students' needs, becoming a surrogate extended family around her children.

But the work leaves Tyson and her staff so over-extended that they can't make the educational improvements they want. Meanwhile, the kids are still just treading water, academically and otherwise. She wonders, Is she helping?

Pulling in resources

Partnersing is widespread; there's even a state grant, the Urban Education Partnership (UEP), to promote it. But while schools get resources, the relationships are often problematic, require huge amounts of energy to build and maintain, and fail to solve all the ills of troubled schools and communities.

For some schools, making partners is basic to their educational approach. "We recognized early on the importance of pulling in every resource possible to help these children," says Pat Harvey, principal of Hefferan Elementary in West Garfield Park. "Most of our children come to school with all kinds of baggage, which they are not able to check at the door. The easiest thing in the world when we were creating our school's philosophy was making a commitment to care for the whole child."

Starting with a $10,000 Ameritech grant that kept the school open after hours, Hefferan has used its partners—cor-
porations and parents alike—to enhance both academics and social services. Turner Construction and Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke’s Medical Center, which came in as sponsors for after-school clubs, wound up joining forces in 1991 to build Heffaran a new science lab, valued at more than $500,000.

Parent involvement is just as impressive. Harvey estimates that every week the school’s 670 students see about 100 volunteers, who work with students, monitor the halls, write newsletters, answer phones and raise money. And in return, parent Doreen Vaughan says she’s picked up valuable job skills. “It beats sitting at home,” says Vaughan. “It’s like it’s a big family.”

Heffaran also works to integrate internal and external resources. For example, students earn “Heffaran Dollars” when they exemplify any of the seven principles of the African-American cultural festival Kwanzaa (e.g., “umoja,” or unity); 225 Heffaran Dollars buy a school jacket. The jackets were donated by a businessman, the currency was designed by a parent volunteer and the incentive program was crafted by eighth-graders.

“People are empowered here,” Harvey says. “When you fully embrace site-based management and shared decision making, then you draw on the expertise of everyone. One thing we’ve done very well is to gel as a team.”

The first step toward such team-building for Hoyne Elementary School in Calumet Heights was to figure out what the school needed, and then seek out partners to address those needs.

For instance, Hoyne’s tiny building lacks a gym, so it solved that problem by calling on outside help. Now, Hoyne students use gyms at nearby parks and the swimming pool at Chicago Vocational High School.

“Our staff is involved every night, so our teachers are wiped out by the end of the school year.” —Michael Alexander, principal

But Principal Barbara J. Martin identified a more central need. “Most of what we need is counseling, to have somebody the child can come in and talk to.” So she formed a relationship with United Charities, which refers students to service providers in the area.

“But the help we get from United swimming activities—there’s nothing.”

Alexander got an after-school activity for the school’s male students—with some counseling thrown in—by offering a quid pro quo to neighborhood men who wanted to play basketball in the school’s gym.

“I went to the guys and said I will

Urban partnerships bring higher test scores, but not yet in Chicago

In 1990, Springfield’s Matheny Elementary School scored a dismal 185 on the state’s writing test, the lowest performance in town. Just two years later, its writing score had soared to 319, the highest in the capital, and stayed there.

Elizabeth Nelson, principal of the overwhelmingly low-income school, credits her partnerships, specifically those arising from the state’s Urban Education Partnership (UEP) grant program.

Since 1987, UEP has paid to link schools with community resources. Grants are made for one or two years and up to $25,000 a year.

Matheny used its money to secure a networked computer center and the help of the local power company, CILCO, which provides dozens of tutors.

“Many of our children come from single-parent homes where individual attention is impossible,” Nelson says. “Our children in this building just have not suffered from that deficit because of the manpower CILCO has provided. Our children for the most part are from dysfunctional homes, but you can’t tell that by walking in here.”

Similarly, there are UEP schools in Aurora, Danville, Elgin and Peoria that have registered significant test-score gains. So far, that hasn’t happened in Chicago. Joseph Frattaroli, the UEP program’s former manager, speculates that the program may work better in districts where poverty is not as endemic as it is here.

In April, the Illinois State Board of Education examined UEP schools and found that many had established only superficial partnerships, says Frattaroli, now an executive at the Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science.

“Some schools defined partnerships as going to a candy store and asking them to give the kids lollipops for perfect attendance,” he says.

But other schools, like Chicago’s Hoyne Elementary, have found that the UEP program “changes your way of thinking,” as Principal Barbara J. Martin says. “It expands your horizons. Now I’m able, say, to contact a local church and ask for whatever I need: audio-visual equipment, choir robes, you name it.”

Michael Selinker, Dan Weissmann

pay to open up the gym on Saturdays if you will work two or three times a week counseling younger kids the ways fathers and uncles used to,” he recalls. And so was born the Male Responsibility program: Guggenheim boys shoot hoops with the older mentors and learn lessons of life.

But this program has costs. Not only does it cost money to keep the building open, it also leads to staff burnout. “Our staff is involved every night, so our teachers are wiped out by the end of the school year,” Alexander says. “It’s to the point where I sometimes feel guilty asking my teachers to come in that extra Saturday. But we’ve got to try to fill that void in our kids’ lives.”

To minimize burnout, Darwin Elementary in Logan Square had to scale back its attempt to fill such a void. Its after-school homework center initially depended on staff volunteers. But the program was almost too successful, with 400 to 500 kids staying after school each day. Teachers and others volunteering time after hours were hitting the wall and not getting any reward other than their students’ progress.

“We had so many kids coming in, we couldn’t believe it,” says former Principal Audrey Donaldson. “Teachers would say, ‘Where are all these kids coming from? Isn’t school over? Why are you here?’ ”

So Darwin reorganized the program, with help from a UEP grant. The school limited participation to 250 kids, cut class size in half, brought in a community group (Second-generation Organization for Youth) for tutoring and counseling, expanded the role of parents and student-tutors, and paid teachers a stipend. “And yes, they’re tired,” Donaldson said in May, “but at least we’re not saying, ‘Well, just do this.’ ” (She has since moved on to Gage Park High School, and the future of Darwin’s after-school program is in doubt.)

Even when a partnership is struck, it might, for various reasons, go sour. Sometimes a great notion is derailed by a change in commitments. Raymond Elementary in the Douglas community got its kids involved with an athletics-based program from the University of Chicago’s Special Programs Office. When the university staff became more focused on an astronomy-based program, the relationship faltered. But Raymond found other partners, and the Special Programs staff currently is working with 19 other Chicago schools.

Sometimes a great notion is thwarted by distance. Sabin Elementary’s first partnerships proved hard to sustain because the link required outside funds to get students and partners together, literally. The West Town school’s relationships with Lincoln Park Zoo, Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium and other similar groups worked fine as long as Sabin had UEP money to bus children to its partners’ sites. But the grant has a two-year limit, and when the money ran out, Sabin had to look for partners who were closer or could come to the school.

Sometimes a great notion in one place just doesn’t fit somewhere else. The Boys and Girls Club at 51st and State streets used its computers and staff to supplement academic programs at local schools after school hours; however, when McCorkle Elementary tried to work out a similar deal with the

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**Business partners turned Bret Harte inside out**

For Timothy Hooker, founder and chief executive officer of Tim’s Print Shop, all he ever needed to know about running a business he learned in elementary school.

Hooker has nine part-time employees who fill about 50 orders a month for signs, banners, greeting cards, business cards and the like.

Not too spectacular, except for the fact that Hooker is only 16 and a junior at Dunbar Vocational High. He got his management skills just a few years back at Bret Harte Elementary School. Computer teacher Lucy Kaplan taught him to use his Apple ImageWriter II; Claudette Rogers taught him small-business finance.

“The Bret Harte’s business program gave me the knowledge on how to run a business,” Hooker says. “After the last class, I looked ahead to Dunbar and said, ‘Okay, time to make some money.’ ”

The business program, which begins with kindergarteners learning how to make change for a dollar and progresses to lessons on the role of economics in world affairs, is a product of Bret Harte’s extensive links to the Hyde Park business community.

The school’s list of partners reads like a Who’s Who in Chicago Finance: Hyde Park Bank, South Shore Bank, Northern Trust, University National Bank, the American Institute of Banking, the Hyde Park and South Shore chambers of commerce, the Hyde Park Development Commission, the Southeast Chicago Commission and Junior Achievement—to name a few.

When Principal Diana Rochon arrived at the school in mid-1990, she found enrollment had dwindled, “due to years of poor curriculum.” With local business leaders on its local school council, Bret Harte abandoned its ineffective programs and crafted a business, finance and global economics program.

One out-of-town partner, McDonald’s Corporation’s Hamburger University, provided critical staff development for teachers. “We’re producing the consumers of the future,” says Rogers. “Our goal is to produce wise consumers.”

So Rogers oversees the issuance of debit cards allowing students access to a student-run bank; under supervision of their co-signing parents, students can make deposits and withdraw their own money. “They know that if they spend all the money, it won’t be there for them in the future,” Rogers says.

Bret Harte also has a student-operated store, the Harte Enterprize School Store, which sells notepads, book covers and Trolls pencils, all for a dollar or less. Two years ago, the store’s operators made some bad decisions, such as purchasing scented pencils, and ended up $200 in the red. So last year, the new operators conducted customer surveys and checked competitors’ prices; as a result, they made a $150 profit.

Even so, they do have a few lessons
club's 43rd Street chapter, the relationship fizzled.

Here's the difference: McCorkle tried to make the computer lab at the 43rd Street club part of the school, installing school-owned computers at the club and sending kids across the street to use them during the school day. McCorkle Principal Jerry Johnson had to recall the computers when parents complained that the school was endangering their children by sending them across a gang-controlled street in the Robert Taylor Homes.

A drop in the bucket

And even when all this effort works to make healthy partnerships, the results may seem like a drop in the bucket.

Crane High School's impressive partnerships weren't enough to halt its decline. Since the mid-1980s, the Ounce of Prevention has run a clinic at Crane, which now sees 25 to 30 students a day; and Youth Guidance has operated a center featuring counseling and after-school activities. "If you want to talk to somebody, they're here," says junior LaVondra Hinton.

But those programs didn't stop enrollment at the Near West Side school, troubled by gangs, from declining from 3,131 in 1986 to 774 in 1993. The school repeatedly has shown up on lists of schools to be closed.

When only about a hundred kids graduate each year from a school built for 2,500 students, "it gets kind of discouraging," says Youth Guidance staffer Karen Williams. Eight hundred students were enrolled last year, but 200 or so are absent every day. In June, says Williams, "we had an assembly with only about 400 people there."

To stop the enrollment slide, Principal Melver Scott sent a team of teachers out to elementary schools to sell the high school and its programs. This new hard sell seems to be working: 325 freshmen are entering Crane this year, up from 170 last year. Crane made "a big turnaround" in the last year, according to senior Jeff Robinson, who attributes a decrease in violence at Crane to the presence of metal detectors and increased security staff.

But nobody's kidding themselves. The area around Crane—the Henry Horner Homes—is a disaster, and its effects permeate the school. Crane's attendance rate is barely 70 percent, and two-thirds of entering freshmen drop out.

A 'Christmas tree' school

The constant barrage of problems from outside is causing several schools with many partnerships to rethink the approach. These schools say that more is not necessarily better.

"Some schools are just taking programs for the sake of having programs, and they're not connected to anything else," says Joseph Fratarioli, former manager of the state's UEP program. "With the advent of the [local school] councils, there's pressure on the principals to get something, and they reached out to anything they could find. Often schools have 10 or 12 programs that are incompatible."

Mattie Tyson's Johnson Elementary currently embodies what a recent Consortium on Chicago School Research report disparagingly labeled "Christmas Tree" schools. Its list of partners goes on and on and on, ranging from Aronco to the Chicago Park District to the Lawndale Mental Health Center to the House of Branch Mortuary. But all the partners still couldn't get kids to school healthy, safe and ready to learn.

"Our needs were being met in terms of things—we've gotten new computers, science equipment, textbooks, monetary types of things," says Tyson. "But the human needs were not being met—the need for support, for encouragement, for role models. You feel you just have to help."

Johnson, with help from the UEP program, is now planning to abandon its scattershot approach and form an "integrated services model" school. If all goes according to its five-year plan, Johnson will become the hub of a sys-
Grandmas come calling at Norwood Park

"I always say, 'Call me Grandma,'" says Emily Cvikota, a resident at Norwood Park Home and a volunteer tutor at Norwood Park Elementary School.

"Some of the kids don't even have a grandma of their own. I had one little boy—he was Filipino—and he said, 'I don't even know if I have a grandma.' Isn't that sad? So I said, 'Well, you can call me grandma.'"

"The grandmas," as they're known by Norwood Park students, started coming to the school last year, at the invitation of Principal Jane Rosen and the school's PTA. "We asked them if they just wanted to sit with a child and talk, say for an hour the next week," Rosen recalls. "We didn't want to call it tutoring, because some of the senior citizens might have been intimidated. But that's what it is."

The Grandmas are one of a number of partner groups at Norwood Park. Rosen also recruited engineers from nearby Safeco Electric, to mentor groups of students in a science contest last year. "Some of the engineers said that they had wanted to be teachers when they were younger," says Rosen, "but they had also wanted to be engineers. This gave them a chance to do both."

On a visit to Norwood Park School last spring, it was clear that the grandmas, too, were enjoying themselves.

"I always wanted children," says Norwood Park Home resident Jackie Smith. "My husband, he didn't want them. So I love children. All children need three things: Understanding, loving and some help."

Introducing first-grader Macho Isidoro, she says: "He has a poem." Then, she and Macho recite a nursery rhyme together. "He has something," says Smith. "He just needs it drawn out of him."

"The kids get such a kick out of it, you can tell," says first-grade teacher Carrie Rollings. "I don't know how much good it does in terms of test scores, but now they associate reading with a very special experience, something that's very individualized and caring."

At first, the seniors only worked with kids who were having trouble in reading, but Rollings says, "I didn't want it to be a kind of segregation, like: 'Oh, you're in this group because you're low in reading.' But also, the other kids were really jealous of the kids who got to go."

Cvikota and the other grandmas have been recruited by other local schools, too, including Onahan and Ebinger Elementary schools, where they worked with 12-year-olds. The other children have taught her things, says Cvikota. things she wished she didn't know. "Some of them tell you that gangs are asking them to join. I tell them, 'You mustn't join a gang. What comes after that is drugs; that's the next thing you get into.'"
Sabin's business partners learn some lessons

Partnerships with Sabin Magnet School in West Town have taught local businesses a surprising lesson: It's harder for a business to paint a school's cafeteria than for a school to help a business remodel its lobby.

Leaf Confectioners and Pioneer Bank were the students in this case. Leaf offered to give Sabin's cafeteria a much-needed makeover, but found that getting the job done would take more than painters and paint. Getting a go-ahead from central administration would take almost three months, under current Board of Education guidelines.

"We just didn't see any need to go through that kind of garbage," says Jim Lemonides, head of Greater North-Pulaski Development Corporation, which hooked Sabin up with its business partners.

So, one Saturday morning in November 1991, Principal Edward Peacock opened the building, "and we had the engineer play see-no-evil, hear-no-evil," relates Lemonides. "He was afraid he was going to get in trouble with the union. That guy's a lump, if you ask me."

"I'm more comfortable living with established rules," says Sabin engineer William McHugh. "I like to do what I'm supposed to do."

Even so, he did let in the paint crew. "It seemed like a common sense thing to me," McHugh explains. Since the candy company was donating the materials as well as a union crew. "It was like somebody giving you an orange: You can let them throw it in the garbage, or you can eat it."

In contrast, Pioneer Bank readily accepted some architectural consultation from a class of Sabin third-graders. Bank executive Jay Lytle, who works with Sabin teachers to link curriculum with real-life banking issues, invited students to help make the bank's lobby more accessible to people with disabilities.

"The curriculum project was mapping," says Lytle, "so I thought, I'll give each of the kids a blueprint of this part of the bank and ask them for their thoughts on how we could improve access for the handicapped. I went through and explained the blueprint and explained the relationship between a blueprint and a map."

Next, the kids came to Pioneer equipped with tape measures, pencils and a wheelchair, borrowed from a local hospital, to get a better idea of the problems people with disabilities face in getting around the bank. Then the kids mapped out their changes.

The result: "Some of the changes we've gone through with," says Lytle, including the creation of a wheelchair-accessible banking station in Pioneer's main lobby. "The kids came up with some ways of dealing with customers that I thought were pretty ingenious. And it's helpful to the bank. You have a different perspective when you're that age, and when you're coming in from the outside."

- Dan Weissmann

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Orr network keeps expanding while Orr turns inward

by Michelle Martin

Kenneth Van Spankeren, the recently retired principal of Orr Community Academy High School, was a visionary and a widely acknowledged "genius" at writing grant proposals.

During his 17 years at the West Humboldt Park school, he brought in programs from agencies all over the city, including a health clinic and an infant development center, to help make Orr a vital center for a long-suffering community.

But, still, Orr failed to make significant progress with its students. "No matter what we did, we found that about one-third of our students were well below the norms," Van Spankeren recalls. "It was more than the programs. We decided that in order for the high school to improve, we would have to look at the kids coming to us from the elementary schools."

So, in 1989, Orr and its Adopt-a-School partner, Continental Bank, reached out to Orr's 12 feeder schools—Cameron, Casals, Lowell, Marin Primary, Morse, Morton, Nobel, Piccolo Elementary, Piccolo Middle, Ryerson, Laura Ward and Wright—to form the Orr School Network.

The long-range goal was to cut Orr's staggering dropout rate—65 percent for the Class of '89— and raise student achievement. The strategy was to connect schools with each other so that they could work together on common problems and to connect schools with outside resources to improve academic programs and to bring more services to children and their families.

"Schools were isolated. There was no neighborhood organization," says Nancy Brandt, Continental's manager of educational programs and coordinator of the network. "The neighborhood had been abandoned by the governmental agencies because there was no one there to work with."

Today, the community still has enormous unmet needs, but it now boasts...
the West Humboldt Park Family and Community Development Council, a network outgrowth that has established a health clinic at Ryerson Elementary, brought the first state-funded preschool programs to the community, made plans to construct a day care center and tentatively arranged for a bookmobile to visit all 13 network schools regularly. The council's long-range goal is to bring jobs to the community, where the unemployment rate is 19 percent and more than 50 percent of adults lack a high school diploma.

The early days

It all began with school safety patrols. When Brandt conducted the network's first needs assessment in 1989, she found that schools "needed everything" but that the need for safe passage for children between home and school was near the top of the list. So she enlisted the services of BUILD (Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development), an anti-gang agency that was forming parent patrols at schools elsewhere in the city.

Further, responding to principals' complaint that there was "nothing beautiful" in their schools, Brandt arranged for Urban Gateways to stage an arts festival at Orr. She also tapped DePaul University's Center for Urban Education, which launched parent involvement and innovative math education programs. And when the Shedd Aquarium sought funding from Continental Bank for school outreach, Brandt steered it toward network schools.

By the end of year 2, Brandt's match-making had spawned 20 programs.

Linda Wilson, curator of educational programs at Shedd Aquarium, says that working through the network accomplished two important things for outside institutions. First, it got their message across. "One of the things that teachers in needy schools face is almost too many resources," says Wilson. "They get so many things thrown at them, they need to pick and choose."

Now everyone in the network has some awareness of what we are and what we can do." Second, the network made it possible for institutions to help more than one school without having to take on the whole school system. "It's almost impossible to affect the entire Chicago public school system," Wilson explains.

Similarly, the network has made its member schools known to outsiders who want to help. "It's happened so many times, from computer programs to peer pressure programs, where we get something because people hear about us," says John C. Mazurek, principal at Casals.

Also by the end of year 2, the network itself had taken an important step in institutional development: It created its own leadership, with co-chairs and an executive committee, and principals began proposing programs of their own, rather than relying on Brandt. Within another year, schools began using their own discretionary funds for programs rather than relying on Continental Bank, which contributed about $325,000 last year.

Meanwhile, representatives of area...
Currently, the Ryerson clinic serves only Ryerson students and their families, but in two years it will move to a new building where it will share space with other community agencies and see all area residents. The staff mostly treats minor injuries and does lead screening and other testing. It offers health education classes, but Wagner says it’s hard getting parents to attend. It’s also hard getting parents to bring in children who aren’t sick.

Still, the clinic does catch some problems early. “We saw a child with bacterial conjunctivitis [pinkeye], and she needed eyedrops every four hours,” Wagner recalls. “Normally the child would leave the medication at home and maybe get it twice a day; then, there would be that long stretch while she was at school. But she brings it here, and we can give it to her.”

Meanwhile, Hazel Steward, principal of Tilden High School on the Southwest Side, is determined to get a clinic like the permanent ones at Austin, Crane, DuSable and Orr high schools. Steward says that one of the reasons only about a fourth of Tilden’s freshmen make it through graduation is that illness often keeps them away from school.

The closest health provider that will serve her students is almost a mile away, she says. Some students won’t go because of gangs; others, because they think it’s too far.

“I look at the kids who are out of compliance [with state requirements] on medical examinations, and sometimes it boils down to something as small as carfare,” she says. “If I had a clinic here, I could solve that problem, and my attendance wouldn’t drop so far because students are sick.”

Steward is hoping that her service on the board of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois will pay off with a clinic. With the assistance of Roosevelt University, she also is writing a grant proposal for a child care center, which could provide some health services. And if that doesn’t work, she says, she’ll take another tack.

New focus

That, in turn, freed up the network to focus on school improvement.

If children of poverty are going to learn more, stresses Brandt, adults must work to improve both schools and children’s environments. “You’ve got to do both,” she says. “One without the other just doesn’t cut it.”

The network’s elementary school principals also had come to place a higher priority on academic issues. Brandt notes that when the network conducted its second needs assessment in 1992, “staff development” topped the list.

There are signs, too, that Orr’s new principal, Cynthia Felton, will concentrate more on school affairs. For example, one support program that Van Spankener recruited for Orr moved out this summer because Felton wanted the space for high school activities, according to Frank Haggerty, a program coordinator at Orr. The organization, Lekotek, helped Orr’s student moms learn how to play with their youngsters in ways that foster healthy child development.

“He [Van Spankener] was, frankly, a genius at coming to agencies and saying, ‘Help, we need you,’” says Sandy Bernstein, a coordinator at the National Lekotek Center, Evanston. “We are leaving Orr with regret.”

But Lekotek is staying in the community. Its new outpost is eight blocks away at the Chicago Commons Employment Training Center. Lekotek officials believe they will serve more residents there, but nobody knows whether Orr’s teen mothers will show up.

Last year, Orr also lost another high-

profile program Van Spankener initiated, an after-school “school” for dropouts and potential dropouts, which in its last year saw two-thirds of participants return to regular classes. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation had provided major funding for five years, but says it never received a proposal from Felton for continued funding. “I never heard from the LSC or the new principal,” says MacArthur’s Peter Martínez. An Orr teacher said the word at the school was that MacArthur changed its priorities.

Van Spankener believes his retirement had something to do with the program’s demise. “The Lighthouse was my personal statement in solving some of the problems students from that community have when it comes to finishing high school,” he says. “It was an innovative program, and it needed leadership.”

Felton declined to speak to Catalyst, referring questions to Frank Haggerty.

Haggerty’s main project this year was a grant proposal to link science teachers at network schools by electronic mail so they can share resources.
Teachers’ enthusiasm wins over skeptics

by Debra Williams

"Birth pangs.” That’s how Connee Fitch-Blanks of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) Quest Center sums up the initial days of change at Revere Elementary School in Greater Grand Crossing.

The principal and a core group of teachers had decided that the school needed an overhaul. The staff was working as hard as it could, says Principal Dean Gustafson, but its some 630 students were not making significant gains. Student motivation and test scores were low and not getting better.

The group knew it had to do something different, but it wasn’t sure what. “We weren’t so afraid of making a change as we were of not knowing what to change into,” says Kathryn Peecher, Revere’s science lab teacher.

Then, Joaquina Green, the school’s librarian, spotted an ad in the CTU newspaper seeking proposals for school restructuring grants and support from the union’s newly established Quest Center. With Gustafson’s backing, about 15 teachers met with Quest Center staff and got a handle—and pep talk—on how they could retool their school.

With only two weeks left before the proposal deadline, Green and her colleagues worked frantically to craft a plan for restructuring Revere’s school day, curriculum and the way teachers teach.

“We’d come in some mornings before school and stay late to work on it. It was very intense,” Peecher recalls. “The staff would even stop in and see me during their break or during lunch to offer ideas.”

Revere came up a winner, snaring one of eleven $3,000 start-up grants and continuing monthly visits from Quest Center staff, who help their colleagues carry out the changes of their choice.

Not surprisingly, not everyone at Revere was eager to replace lifelong teaching practices. With 45 teachers and a majority with 20 years or more of service, says Gustafson, there was a lot of uncertainty and some power struggles.

“We have a good staff,” he adds, “but they weren’t used to working closely together, mainly because in the past, they were not given the support they needed.”

“All of a sudden we were talking about cooperative learning, hands-on instruction and teachers working closely together,” recalls third-grade teacher Kathleen Bragg. “Even though I kept an open mind, I was scared to death.”

For her 30 years of teaching, notes Bragg, she’s worked in virtual isolation. “You went in your classroom, closed the door and you taught. Changing all that hasn’t been easy.”

René Cap, a 24-year Revere veteran who teaches upper grades, looks back philosophically. With any kind of change, some people go along immediately, some stand back and watch, and others just don’t want to change, he says.

But as reluctant teachers started to see good things happen, they joined in. “After only six months, teachers reported seeing an increase in student attendance, and teacher and student morale had gone up too,” says Fitch-Blanks. “Where only 15 or 16 teachers were initially involved with the school’s restructuring, the whole staff is involved now.”

Fitch-Blanks describes the phenomenon as “contagious enthusiasm,” which some teachers say has spread to the children.

“There is noise in the classroom, but it’s good noise,” says Bragg. “Our children are learning to work together cooperatively.”

Green says that as librarian she sees the children reading more, and reading informational books, not just fiction. The staff has also seen improved discipline.

Learning to collaborate

One of the Revere faculty’s first moves was to learn about cooperative learning, a teaching technique that encourages children to help each other learn. (See story on next page.)

Similarly, Revere quickly began to move toward “ungraded” classrooms, where children from two or three grade levels are grouped together.
Revere staff note that studies have shown that this arrangement is good for both younger and older children. The younger children benefit because they get help from their older classmates; the older children benefit because as "teachers," they are pressed to acquire a deeper understanding of what they're studying.

To get used to working together and prepare for this phase-in, teachers are divided into seven core groups. Six are by grade level (for example, kindergarten and first) and one is ancillary—art, music, science, gym, library, counseling and guidance. A special education teacher is included in each core.

The cores discuss current lessons, plan future lessons and share strategies on what works and what doesn't. Some have found that the cores carry another advantage, too.

"Core groups help build in unofficial accountability," says Green. "What are you going to say if someone asks, 'Okay, I have your students next year, what did they learn?' Are you going to say nothing? Also, it looks bad if you are working in a group and never have anything to contribute."

To promote school unity, Revere adopts a schoolwide theme each year that teachers integrate into their assignments. Last year, friendships was the focus; this year, the theme is communities. One teacher says the theme of friendships helped her students get used to the idea of working together through cooperative learning.

Revere teachers also are learning and practicing alternative student assessments, such as requiring students to demonstrate what they have learned. Fitch-Blanks says when students have to show what they know, they become more attuned to what they're learning.

"The teachers not only assess their students but also themselves," says Fitch-Blanks. "And they videotape everything, so they can show parents and the community what they are doing."

The local school council has been very supportive. Norman Shipp, a parent LSC member, says the council's part in the restructuring was strictly advisory; teachers were given the reins to do what they felt was necessary, and so far they've done a good job.

The positive feedback has given the school the confidence to seek other outside help. For example, it won grants from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation ($10,000) and Marshall Field's ($20,000 over two years) for staff development in areas ranging from conflict resolution to whole-language reading instruction.

Community agencies play a role at Revere too. The Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore (CIESS), a community group, has worked with Revere for a number of years, initially with LSC training and now in curriculum development.

Cooperative learning transforms class

Teachers at Revere School all give cooperative learning a big thumbs up. They report that by working together in groups, children are more excited about learning, discipline is better and students are thinking, not just remembering facts and figures.

Here's what cooperative learning looks like. The scene is Tamnie Matthews' third-grade classroom, during language arts time.

Three boys are sprawled out on their bellies on a carpeted area of the floor. They quietly write stories and illustrate their books, oblivious to the low chatter around them.

Across the room, Marguita Turner asks her "editor," a classmate, to check for typos and clarity in her story, "The Good People."

Another girl asks a classmate to sign a permission slip that says it's okay for her to use him as a character in her story. He signs, but stipulates that his character cannot be a bad person or be killed.

Matthews says many of her young authors will give her a role in their stories; her only stipulation is that she can be anything except fat.

"Cooperative learning has had a very positive effect on my students," says Matthews, who has taught only two years—one at a suburban school and the other at Revere. "A lot of my kids were not used to cooperating and working together. They did a lot of yelling and screaming at each other. They had to learn not to say 'You're stupid.' or 'Never mind, I'll do it.'"

Once the children's stories are complete, the whole class sits on the carpet to listen to authors read their work.

Some stories are funny, like the one about two classmates who get married; others are a little scary, like the one about a student who thinks someone is shooting at her but then discovers the noise was from a firecracker.

"Some of these kids were only writing a few sentences; now they are writing long paragraphs," Matthews observes. "They also love to read their stories and listen to them, too. Look at them, I can't believe these are the same kids."

D.W.

Wanted: more time

The school's appetite for change is growing. When one person learns something new that will benefit the children, says Fitch-Blanks, they share the information with the rest of the staff. When a staff member learns a new teaching technique, they train the others.

"An hour and a half is not enough time for what we are doing," says Pecher. "We still have to meet on our own time." She suggests that the Board of Education pay teachers to stay at school longer. The board wants a longer school day, but has not offered raises.

"Yes, it's rough," says Cap. "We meet, meet, meet, and it's hard when you have other obligations like having a family. But we do it."

For additional information about Revere's change efforts, contact Dean Gustafson or Joaquina Green at 335-0618.
Schools eligible for corporate matching gifts

A number of major Illinois corporations have no-strings-attached dollars available for Chicago public schools, but, so far, there have been few takers.

The money would come in the form of matching grants that augment contributions by employees to individual schools.

With the help of Matching Gift Details, a publication of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, CATALYST identified 15 Illinois corporations whose matching grant programs include Chicago schools. However, few employees have made contributions to Chicago schools in order to generate the matching grants, spokespersons said.

Waste Management, Inc., based in west suburban Oak Brook, even makes contributions to “match” volunteer work. If an employee volunteers two to five hours per month for an entire year, the company will donate $250. If the volunteer works more than five hours a month, the company will donate $500.

“We are committed to education, period,” says Sheila Young, the company’s charitable contributions administrator. “We will match employee donations made to public schools, K through high school, dollar for dollar.”

At Motorola, in northwest suburban Schaumburg, 25 to 35 percent of company matching gifts go to private schools, reports Herta Nikolai.

“Private schools have alumni bases that they can work from,” she explains. “They also make more of an effort to see what is available to them, although now some public schools are aggress-

ively looking for resources, too.”

Kemper National Insurance, in Long Grove, says most of its matching grants go to organizations outside Chicago because most of its employees live in Lake County.

Harriet O’Donnell, former executive director of the Chicago Public Schools Alumni Association and a local school council member at Amundsen High School, believes, however, that Chicago schools could snare some of the money.

Her suggestion: The Board of Education or some other organization should ask a city or state business group to poll its members to determine whether they have matching grant programs open to Chicago public schools.

“It wouldn’t have to be more elaborate than a postcard,” she notes.

The list of companies could be given to every local school council, for distribution to school staff and parents.

National trend


Nationally, there is a trend for companies to add public elementary and secondary schools to their matching grant programs, which traditionally have been restricted to colleges and universities, hospitals and cultural institutions.

With the debut of the school reform movement, reports Corporate Philanthropy in its April issue, 49 percent of gift-matching companies now include public schools in their eligibility criteria.

Debra Williams

Oriole Park kids take cargo ship to Russia

In late October, fourth- through eighth-graders at Oriole Park Elementary School will “board” a cargo ship and “travel” to Russia.

While the kids will meet the crew in person and explore the ship from its living quarters to engine room, their journey will be by fax, computer modem and satellite communications.

As the ship makes its way east, students and crew will discuss the ship’s course, weather conditions, traveling speeds and longitude and latitude.

Meanwhile, Oriole Park’s teachers will work math, reading and social studies lessons around the voyage.

The project is funded by a $20,000 grant from Ameritech’s Superschool program, which encourages schools to use electronic communication in creative ways. Oriole Park was one of 12 Illinois applicants to win an award, which will cover the costs of personal computers, modems, a laser disc player and satellite use. (Brennan Elementary, the other Chicago school to win a grant, was awarded $19,068 for a homework hotline.)

“Oriole Park’s program won hands down,” says Jane St. Pierre at Ameritech. “It’s a perfect example of what we are trying to do—help children learn beyond the walls of the classroom.”

Oriole Park studies a different country each semester. But Principal Gail Szulc credits her husband, a member of the Polish Merchant Marines for many years, with planting the idea for the electronic journey. He often talked about his adventures and criticized American education for failing to teach children much about geography, she recalls. “I remember him saying that American children didn’t even know what city they lived in.”
Oriole Park already had used telecommunications to enrich their program. Last year, 25 fifth- and sixth-graders became pen pals with students in a school outside London. For a year, the students wrote to each other; later, with the help of Sprint Communications, the pen pals met in a teleconference.

"The kids loved it," says Szulc. "They studied England's government, clothing, entertainment and other aspects, which helped them in their letter writing. We think they really learned from the experience."

Once the Russian ship reaches port, a crew member will link the Norwood Park school to a Russian school. Social studies teacher Hedy Hirsch says the plan is to have the schools query each other weekly about clothing, entertainment and daily schedules. She and Szulc would like the children to become pen pals and to continue to communicate electronically.

"Next year we'd like to take them to Africa," says Hirsch. "We want to show them the world."

Debra Williams

Real-life learning

Oriole Park's journey has the makings of what classroom reformers call "authentic instruction," that is, instruction based on real-life activities and all their complexities.

To challenge students to think, solve problems and fully understand what they are learning and why, teachers must involve them in activities that have value and meaning outside the classroom, according to advocates of authentic instruction.

Fred M. Newmann, a leading proponent who is a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, cautions, however, that even the most innovative projects can fall short. Implementation, he says, is the key.

His advice to Oriole Park: Teachers should make sure children are doing more than just memorizing facts. They also should ask themselves these questions: Does the lesson allow students to use their minds? Does it promote higher-order thinking? Are the children reading, writing and talking about issues of substance? D.W.

Arts partners off and running with plan grants

Retailer Marshall Field's and 12 other corporations and foundations have awarded 14 planning grants totaling nearly $450,000 for the Neighborhood Arts Partnership program, which aims to enhance arts education by pairing schools with arts institutions and community groups.

The initial grants will allow schools and their partners to prepare five-year plans for improving arts education. Plans deemed worthy will be eligible for a projected $60,000 a year for each of five years, says Field's spokesman Arnold April. Programs will be reviewed before grants are renewed each year, he adds.

The arts community is enthusiastic about the approach.

"This is the first real sustained attempt to integrate arts into the curriculum of the public school system," says Woodie White, executive director of Dance Center of Columbia College.

"It's really quite innovative."

Sharon Faust, program director for the Sherwood Conservatory of Music, says the magnitude of the initiative makes it unique. "This is a long-term engagement. The schools will be truly changed."

The 14 new partnerships are:

■ ARTS CENTERED EDUCATORS, $40,400. Pulaski and Barneker elementary schools will develop an arts focus to their curricula. Partners are Whirlwind Performance Company and the Coalition of Essential Schools.

■ ASSOCIATION OF HOWLAND SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AND ARTS PARTNERS, $30,000. This program aims to better integrate Howland's arts program into the rest of its curriculum, expose students to the city's cultural institutions and provide summer classes for teachers, parents and artists. Partners are Child's Play Touring Theatre, Community TV Network, Dance Center of Columbia College, the People's Music School and publishing company Scott Foresman.

Branch/Chicago Public Library.

**CASA AZTLAN PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP,** $30,000. Pilsen, Ruiz and Walsh elementary schools will develop arts-based education programs for after school and the summer. Partners are Pros Arts Studio and Dvorak Park/Chicago Park District.

**CHICAGO TEACHERS’ CENTER/LAKEVIEW SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP,** $30,000. Lake View High and Audubon and Blaine elementary schools will teach playwriting, improvisation and other ways to incorporate theater into the curriculum. Partners are Northeastern Illinois University/Chicago Teachers’ Center, Beacon Street Gallery, Joel Hall Dancers, Pegasus Players Theatre, Sulzer Regional Library and the Lake View Chamber of Commerce.

**ETA/MUNITU ARTS IN EDUCATION CONSORTIUM,** $28,500. It aims to increase cognitive and social skills of students through study of the arts at the Metro Program at Crane High and at five elementary schools: Brownell, O’Keefe, Black, Carroll and McCosh. Partners are ETA Creative Arts Foundation, Munitu Dance Theatre, Community Film Workshop, Jazz Units, African American Arts Alliance of Chicago, New Concept Development Center, Catholic Charities, the Chicago Housing Authority, The Neighborhood Institute and the Chicago Public Library.

**HAWTHORNE/AGASSIZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ARTS PARTNERSHIP,** $30,000. Agassiz and Hawthorne elementary schools will develop an arts curriculum. Partners are Joel Hall Dance Studios, Lookingglass Theatre Company, DePaul University School of Music, The School of the Art Institute and the Junior League.

**LINCOLN PARK HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP,** $30,000. Aims to make arts a part of the regular curriculum by matching arts partners with individual curriculum departments. Partners are Victory Gardens Theater, Textile Arts Center, Lookingglass Theatre, the Chicago Jazz Institute, Art Encounter, Hedwig Dances, Xsight Performance Group and the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

**MCORKLE/HARTIGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP,** $30,000. Will expand the arts curriculum at the two schools. Partners are Najwa Dance Corps, Textile Arts Centre, Child’s Play Touring Theatre, the Erikson Institute and the Chicago Urban League.

**MEXICAN FINE ARTS CENTER MUSEUM PARTNERSHIP,** $30,000. Will establish an arts curriculum, based on the art and culture of Mexico and of Mexican-American communities, at Jungman, Orozco, Salazar and Spry schools.

**ORR SCHOOL NETWORK PARTNERSHIP,** $35,000. Will integrate arts programs into the basic curriculum and expand preschool, summer school and community-based education programs at Orr High and its 12 feeder elementary schools: Cameron, Casals, Lowell, Morse, Morton, Nobel, Piccolo, Ryerson, Ward and Wright elementary, Muñoz Marin Primary Center and Piccolo Middle.

**PARTNERSHIPS ARTS RESOURCES in Teaching, the Art Institute, Child’s Play Touring Theatre, Dance Center of Columbia College, Merit Music, Marwen Foundation Community Program, West Humboldt Community Arts Council, Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago, Chicago City and School, Chicago Commons Preschool Program and DePaul University Center for Urban Studies.

**SOUTH SIDE ARTS PARTNERSHIP,** $30,000. Will develop new approaches to teaching and integrating the arts into the curriculum, as well as provide internships at arts institutions. Schools are Ray and Murray elementary and Kenwood High. Partners are The Goodman Theatre Group, Hyde Park Arts Center, Chicago Children’s Choir, Xsight Performance Group, DuSable Museum of African American History and the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art.

**URBAN GATEWAYS/NORTHSIDE SCHOOLS ARTS CONSORTIUM,** $30,000. Designed to improve arts programs at Armstrong, Decatur, Hayt, Pierce and Rogers elementary schools. Partner is Urban Gateways Center for Arts in Education.

**WEST TOWN ARTS PARTNERSHIP,** $41,025. Will develop long-term collaboration among arts institutions, the community and students at Mitchell, Otis and Peabody elementary schools and Wells High School. Partners are Sherwood Conservatory of Music, Northwestern University Settlement Association, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Community TV Network, The Goodman Theatre, Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre, Marwen Foundation and Partners in Mime.

Partnership contributors are: MacArthur Foundation, $120,000; Kraft General Foods, Inc., $60,000; Marshall Field’s, $57,900; Chicago Community Trust, $41,025; Reva and David Logan Foundation, $27,500; Prince Charitable Trusts, $25,000; Sara Lee Foundation, $25,000; Richard Driehaus Foundation, $25,000; Pulk Bros. Foundation, $23,500; Arie and Ida Crown Foundation, $15,000; WPWR-TV Channel 50 Foundation, $15,000; Continental Bank, $10,000; Fel-Pro/Mecklenburger Foundation, $5,000.

Fred Krol
Grant Briefs

American National Bank
- $45,000 for a Saturday math and writing program for graduates of Sabin and Goldblatt elementary schools.
- $15,000 each to Sabin and Goldblatt for Great Books staff development and materials.

Chicago Community Trust
- $125,000 to Designs for Change for its Network for Leadership Development Program.
- $80,000 to CATALYST.
- $25,000 to the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund to support advocacy, monitoring and litigation in the areas of bilingual education and resource allocation.
- $25,000 to Roosevelt University’s Institute for Metropolitan Affairs for production costs incurred by WTTW/Channel 11 for “Chicago Public Schools: At The Crossroads.”
- $20,000 to the Parent/Community Council School Reform Monitoring Project for its leadership program.
- $10,000 to the Rochelle Lee Fund to expand its literature-based reading program into District 4.

Chicago Foundation for Education
- $161,671 to help 437 Chicago teachers implement innovative projects.
- $21,400 to encourage 107 Chicago teachers to adopt successful projects initiated by colleagues.
- $8,850 to help 42 teachers share successful projects from their classrooms.

CNA Insurance Companies
- $25,000 to the DePaul University Principal Center.
- $20,000 to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for performances for Chicago public school children.
- $20,000 to the Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science.
- $17,000 to the Chicago Urban League for Math Counts.
- $15,000 to Skinner Elementary for general operating expenses.
- $5,000 each to the Goodman and Steppenwolf theaters, Lyric Opera and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago for performances for Chicago public school children.
- $5,000 each to the Algebra Project, Designs for Change and the Marcy-Newberry Association/WESCORP.
- $3,000 each to the Cabrini Green Tutoring Program and CATALYST.
- $2,500 to the Chicago Citywide Math League.

Ario & Ida Crown Memorial
- $1,000 to Byrd Community Academy for arts-related programs.
- $250 to Andersen Elementary for its “Book Talk” club.

Fei-Pro/Mecklenburger
- $2,500 to the Chicago Neighborhood Organizing Project for a parent-involvement program.
- $2,500 to the Academic Development Institute to help schools implement reform and help parents help their children with school work.
- $2,500 to the Learning and Education Alliance of Rogers Park Neighbors for supplemental programs for students of Gale Elementary.

GATX Corporation
- $10,000 to the Academic Development Institute for its Alliance for Achievement Network, which works to build value-based school communities.

J.D. and C.T. MacArthur
- $49,000 to the Center for School Improvement, University of Chicago, to support development and testing of whole school restructuring at two schools.
- $30,000 to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning to support an initiative on workforce skills.
- $30,000 to the Consortium on Chicago School Research for research at 40 schools with significant reform activities.
- $120,000 to Roosevelt University for help at five Chicago public schools that are restructuring instructional programs.
- $110,000 to CATALYST.
- $100,000 to The Woolworth Organization for development and field testing of the parent-involvement portion of a whole-school restructuring program in eight schools.
- $66,000 to the Board of Education for superintendent search activities.
- $50,000 to Roosevelt University’s Institute for Metropolitan Affairs to support “Chicago Public Schools: At The Crossroads.”
- $6,000 to the Chicago Association of Local School Councils (CALSC) to organize a forum for the two superintendent finalists.

Northern Trust Charitable Trust
- $10,000 to Designs for Change.
- $7,900 each to the Academic Development Institute and Parents United for Responsible Education.
- $5,000 to Art Resources in Teaching for a program at Wells High School’s feeder schools.

- $5,000 to Project Education Plus, an independent non-profit organization that works with children from the Cabrini Green housing complex.

- $5,000 to the Chicago Neighborhood Organizing Project for the Working Together to Succeed in School program.
- $4,000 to Inroads/Chicago for a pre-collegiate program.
- $3,500 to the Institute of Cultural Affairs for technical assistance to Chicago public schools.
- $3,500 to the Rochelle Lee Fund to promote literature-based reading.
- $2,500 to Kuhl Children’s Museum for city school outreach.
- $2,500 to Learn, an “intersession” program for students at Gale Elementary, a year-round school.
- $2,500 to Northwestern University Settlement House for a retreat for Wells High students.
- $2,500 each to the Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore, the Daily News Reading program, the Chicago Young Authors program and the Working in the Schools program.
- $2,500 to Youth Guidance for Project Prepare at Wells High.

Palk Brothers Foundation
- $50,000 to WTTW/Channel 11 for producing five segments of “Chicago Tonight” on educational issues.
- $50,000 to Roosevelt University’s Institute for Metropolitan Affairs for a partnership program.
- $15,000 to the Chicago Metro History Fair to strengthen and expand participation of inner-city schools.
- $15,000 to Chicago Youth Success Foundation for co-curricular and sports programs.
Nominating Commission risks overhaul by rejecting board incumbents

by Michael Klonsky

When the current school financial crisis goes to the Legislature for resolution, one victim may be the School Board Nominating Commission.

The commission brought heat on itself in May when it rejected three incumbent board members—Stephen Ballis, a key strategist in the board's handling of its fiscal crisis; Saundra Bishop, a long-time school activist with roots in the Chicago Urban League; and Juan Cruz, a retired School Board administrator—for another four-year term on the Board of Education. A fourth incumbent, the Rev. Nathaniel Jarrett, did not seek a second term.

The commission's action increased speculation that Mayor Richard M. Daley and perhaps some reform groups will push the Legislature to restructure the nominating process or even eliminate it.

Ballis, Bishop and Cruz are part of a board block that has taken a number of positions that anti-Daley forces opposed, including the withdrawal of support from former Supt. Ted Kimbrough, the rejection of interim Supt. Richard Stephenson for the permanent post and the ouster of Florence Cox as board president. Ballis in particular is perceived as representing the mayor's views, a charge he scoffs at.

Given the incumbents' track record, their rejection by the Nominating Commission was widely viewed as a political slap at the mayor, a charge denied by most commission members.

"It had nothing to do with politics," maintains commission chair Lafayette Ford, who contends the incumbents were rejected because they lacked support at the grassroots level and had failed to accomplish much during their first terms.

Commission member James Deanes, representing Subdistrict 4 on the West Side, also points to a lack of visible support for the incumbents from their colleagues. "Not one board member came forward to speak for their three fellow board members," says Deanes, "even though some of them were right there in the meeting room."

But others in the school community feel that Ballis, who chairs the Operations Committee; Bishop, who chairs the Education Support Committee; and Cruz, board vice president, were among the political casualties of a factionalized struggle within the broad school reform movement.

In final voting, none of the three received more than four votes from the 21 commissioners present and voting, and Bishop didn't even make it to the final round. Deputy Mayor for Education Leonard Dominguez, also a commission member, called the rejection "political intimidation." A group of commissioners, he claims, "were out to get the sitting board members."

Dominguez, who supported the incumbents, says the selection process was marred by subdistrict and superintendent politics. He insists that the purpose of the commission is to get good people before the mayor and "to give him a chance to decide on whether a board member has done a good job." Not giving him that chance, says Dominguez, "took the commission beyond its scope."

The commission made its nominations while the nationwide search for a new superintendent was underway. The search culminated in the selection of Argie Johnson, a New Yorker, over any of the local candidates, including board member Clinton Bristow, whom many
believed was the mayor’s choice.

Two commission members who declined to support the incumbents, Mark Allen and Ronald Mitchell of Subdistrict 8, were outspoken in their opposition to the selection of an “outsider” for superintendent, favoring Interim Supt. Stephenson instead. Allen and Mitchell also opposed D. Sharon Grant’s election as board president.

But several other commission members distanced themselves from politics and said they opposed the incumbents for other reasons. Member Kevin Lamm, for instance, criticized Ballis, Bishop and Cruz for a lack of leadership in board politics.

Some from Ballis’ own Subdistrict 2, like Deborah Sawyer, were at odds with him over local issues, like the board’s shutting down Metro High School and continuing to rent Green Elementary to a private school while nearby Rogers Park schools are overcrowded.

“It’s not about the mayor,” explains Sawyer. “I just didn’t feel that the incumbent board members served the cause of reform.”

**Daley stalling?**

Mayor Daley responded with a sort of pocket veto of the new nominees. He was supposed to have acted on the slates the Nominating Commission presented on May 26—either choosing new members from them or rejecting them—within 60 days. As CATALYST goes to press, however, he has done nothing.

Dominguez, whose job includes interviewing the nine slated candidates in advance of the mayor, denies that the delay is political. “The mayor is simply waiting for background checks.”

The new nominees—three for each opening—came from a relatively small pool. The commission couldn’t find enough qualified candidates to form four slates and had to extend its deadline to attract just 46 applicants. And even then, it couldn’t muster a slate for the post being vacated by Rev. Jarrett. It reopened the process and will take applications through mid-September.

Several potential candidates reportedly have declined to take part in what they consider an increasingly politicized selection process that would put them in a no-win situation: If they are critical of the mayor’s policies, he will reject them, but if they appear soft on the mayor, the commission will oppose them.

Several applicants, in fact, were asked their views on political independence from the mayor during commission interviews.

Most of the commission members present at a July 27 meeting defended the process as well as the anti-incumbent consensus. “Why is there all this uproar now?” asked Sawyer. “When [former board members] Anna Mustapha and Albert Logan were not reappointed, there was no big uproar.” Sawyer also denied that race played any role in the selections. “It wasn’t white against Latino or black against white,” she said. “We put a lot of weight on the interview process.”

Commission member Carlos Valave criticized the mayor’s delay: “We met our schedule; why can’t the mayor meet his?”

Other commissioners accused the mayor of stalling, saying it forced members as well as nominees to cancel vacation plans while awaiting his decision. Nominees selected by the mayor must appear before the City Council. If the mayor rejects an entire slate, the commission must forward a new one.

Mayor Daley has criticized the present nominating process, and many school-community members are displeased with it as well. A survey by the corporate reform group Leadership for Quality Education found that two-thirds of local school council members want to scrap the process.

Daley administration insiders say the mayor will push for a restructuring in any legislative special session called to solve the financial crisis.

Three proposals have emerged:  ■ Giving the mayor more appointments to the Nominating Commission itself. Currently, he has five, and each subdistrict council has two, for a total of 27 commissioners.
■ Requiring the Nominating Commission to send the mayor one large group of nominees rather than requiring them to group candidates into three-person slates. That would give the mayor a wider choice.
■ Permitting the mayor to select several School Board members directly, with the remainder coming through the Nominating Commission. Also discussed is reducing the number of board members from the current 15.

“I don’t think the commission will be killed,” chairman Ford predicts. “The process has too much support and works better than most governmental bodies.”

Ford notes that Daley has chosen from commission slates 72 percent of the time, which he considers a sign of success. “Whatever happens in the Legislature will be purely political, and there is nothing we can do about that. We are only one part of a three-pronged system to choose candidates, but our part is doing its job reasonably well.”

The Nominating Commission will be reconstituted after the October local school council elections—if the current system isn’t overhauled by the Legislature. The terms of current commission members run until Dec. 1.

### School Board nominees

Following are the slates of School Board candidates the Nominating Commission sent to Mayor Richard M. Daley on May 26.

**Slate 1:** *Ada M. Fisher, M.D.*, an African American who is employed by Amoco Corp.; *Ken Goldberg*, white, known as an activist lawyer with Kenneth J. Goldberg & Associates; and *Regina Valsamis*, white, an attorney in private practice and a Subdistrict 2 council member.

**Slate 2:** *John Callahan*, white, a Subdistrict 2 council member and chief executive officer of RJE Data Processing Inc.; *Harriet O’Donnell*, white, a self-employed education consultant and member of the Amundsen High School Local School Council; and *Debbie Willis*, an African American and director of community planning and development at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Slate 3:** *Brendan Daley*, white, the son of former board member Patricia Daley (no relation to the mayor) and a student at Roosevelt University; *John Filan*, white, an accountant with Pandolfi, Topolbski, Weiss & Co. Ltd.; and *Eddie Gillis*, an African-American minister and a supervisor for the Chicago Transit Authority who is local school council chair at Brownell Elementary.
"very likely" schools would open on time. Also, the non-teaching unions were reported to be close to a tentative agreement that would include both financial sacrifices and work-rule changes. (See story below.) Such an agreement would increase pressure on the CTU to follow suit.

But Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on School Policy, was pessimistic. "The [teachers'] union won't move until there is a special session [of the General Assembly], and the governor doesn't have the guts to call a special session until the union moves." A special session is needed because all possible borrowing schemes require legislative action.

He said all parties need the "cover" of a strike to act.

However, several factors tipped strongly in favor of a peaceful settlement. One is that, if schools don't open on time—either because the Board of Education fails to balance its budget, as required by law, or because unions strike—the unions would suffer as much as anyone.

In the case of an unbalanced budget, union contracts would return to the purview of the Chicago School Finance Authority. Because of the financial guidelines the Finance Authority must follow, unions would run the risk of winning approval for only one-year contracts instead of the multi-year contracts they prefer.

That preference for multi-year contracts is shared by Gov. Jim Edgar and Mayor Richard M. Daley because one-year agreements would expire—and trigger another financial crisis—uncomfortably close to the gubernatorial and mayoral elections.

The School Board could balance its budget after union contracts expire Aug. 31 by slashing salaries drastically. That would force a strike and put unions in the position of negotiating out of an enormous hole rather than trying to stave off the lesser concessions the board is now seeking.

At her press conference, Vaughn provided a sketch of things to come.

Although she rallied against the sacrifices proposed by the School Board and Mayor Daley, she made clear the CTU would take cuts. Once the board makes a "formal proposal," she said, "we will take it back to our members, and we will see what they're willing to sacrifice."

Vaughn said a clear-cut "no" to only three items.

One was dropping seniority protection for teachers who lose their positions at schools because of declining enrollment or program changes—they're called supernumeraries. "We will not, have not and have no intention of ever giving [that] up under the guise of school reform, education reform or deficit reduction," said Vaughn. The union has talked about modifications, though.

Another item that drew a "no" was the proposed freeze on bonuses teachers already have earned for taking college courses that advanced them on the salary schedule.

The third was requiring high school teachers to teach more during their school day—280 minutes instead of 200—which would allow the board to close some 1,000 teaching positions and save $50 million. Last spring, the Legislature paved the way for such action by enabling the board to use non-teachers to supervise study halls.

From a public relations standpoint, it would be difficult for Vaughn to reject work day restructuring out of hand. According to a survey conducted for the School Board, the average daily teaching time of high school teachers in 10 other large districts, including New York and Los Angeles, is 299 minutes, or 50 percent more than Chicago's.

With normal teacher turnover and the number of teachers taking advantage of a new early retirement plan, it's likely that the staff cuts could be made through attrition.

While Vaughn said the proposal was "unacceptable," she added, "We are willing to make some suggestions."

Unions never want to give up job positions, but the CTU is in a relatively comfortable position to do it. Since 1987, its bargaining unit has grown 20 percent because schools have used their new state Chapter 1 money largely to hire teachers and teacher aides.

Meanwhile, the maintenance workforce has been shrinking and hearing increased calls for "privatization," which helps explain why those unions are quicker to compromise.

One reading of Vaughn's press conference remarks suggests that her goal is not so much to avoid give-backs as to get something in return and to ensure that this year's new money is not yanked away when contracts expire.
"We do not want to be part of another shell game, such as the lottery," she said. She was referring to the fact that when the Legislature earmarked lottery proceeds for schools, it scaled back appropriations from other sources.

Daley has proposed selling bonds that would be repaid by admission fees to a gambling and entertainment complex. When a reporter suggested that the mayor eventually could grab the admission fees, Vaughn said: "You understand what I'm talking about."

The issue of a quid pro quo came up at two points, first in regard to the longer school day and year the board is seeking. Here, Vaughn was direct. "We have told them we will work longer days, longer nights, longer weeks and a longer year—with appropriate compensation."

The other point was when Vaughn complained about the proposal to require school employees to help pay health insurance premiums. Vaughn noted that when city workers agreed to contribute to their health insurance costs, they also got raises. "They weren't asked to take a freeze," she said.

However, city workers got a raise of only 3 percent while teachers saw their salary schedules rise 7 percent last year and a total of 17 percent over the past three years. Also, Chicago is one of only nine school districts in Cook County that picks up health insurance premiums for both individuals and their families, according to a CATALYST analysis.

However, if the board grants raises this year in return for union concessions, it would only aggravate its core financial problem: Having ongoing, escalating expenses with no permanent source of revenue to cover them.

CTU bargaining history suggests a way out: bonuses, which give teachers more money without raising the salary scale. Where would that money come from? The mayor would have to come up with more than the $120 million in borrowed funds he has proposed. Schools likely would have to wait longer to get discretionary money now coming due. And the board likely would have to scale back building repairs and upgrading its computer system, two steps it has taken repeatedly at the 11th hour.

Finally, the CTU would have to accept another temporary diversion of $55 million from the pension funds to prop up teacher salaries. The CTU has stood in the way of legislation to accomplish that.

However, the Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund is one of the best funded public pension funds in the state; in 1992 its funding ratio was 82 percent, compared to 59 percent for the fund covering teachers outside Chicago, according to the state’s Economic and Fiscal Commission. "Continuing the diversion for the short term does not impair the health of the Pension Fund," the commission said.

The financial health of the Board of Education will be impaired by the financial solution now in the works. That's because the pension diversion and the borrowing will have to stop at some point, and then the board will need new money just to hold even.

School advocates are counting on the state to raise the income tax in two years and use much of the proceeds for schools. But it's far from clear whether even that would generate enough money to fill the holes that school, union, city and state officials continue to dig for the school system.

Union negotiations in other cities

Here's what's happening with union negotiations in some other cities:

**NEW YORK CITY** For the past two years, teachers (and many other municipal employees) have worked without a contract, and without raises, because of the city’s dire financial straits.

Teachers have authorized the union to call a strike if a settlement isn’t reached before the first day of school, Sept. 9. So far, union leaders are taking a "wait-and-see" attitude, says United Federation of Teachers spokeswoman Susan Amlung.

The city wants all municipal unions to take an 8.75 percent raise, spread out over 39 months; that would mean an annual raise of about 2.7 percent. Teachers would like a "slightly higher" raise, Amlung says, but the union hasn't put a price tag on it.

Money isn’t the only sticking point, though. For one, schools are suffering from a "tremendous shortage" of certified teachers, and the union wants the school system to beef up recruitment.

The union also is resisting proposals to eliminate the five-month paid sabbaticals teachers can take after 14 years, to convert some teacher preparation time to class time, and to convert the five-day midwinter recess into extra school days.

**CLEVELAND** The board is calling for a wage freeze and give-backs that include reducing the number of paid holidays by two, eliminating some teacher bonuses, and lengthening the school day. Teachers also are being asked to chip in for health care, which is now free.

Cleveland Teachers Union spokesman Richard DeColibus says the board and union likely can come to agreement on these items, but that management-rights are the biggest stumbling block. For example, one board proposal would give principals the authority to assign a teacher to hold parent conferences "anytime, anywhere, and you must go," he explains.

The union also wants schools that have qualified for the system’s site-based management program to have more autonomy, including control over their budgets.

**BALTIMORE** Teachers have won raises ranging from 3.5 percent to 8 percent. "We're now much more competitive with the surrounding suburbs," says Baltimore Teachers Union spokeswoman Linda Prudente. Beginning teachers and those already at the top of the pay scale will get 3.5 percent; those in the mid-range, where salary discrepancies were greatest, will receive 6 to 8 percent.

The new contract was signed two weeks before the July 1-15 "window" during which individual teachers can break their employment contracts and take a job with another system. In previous years, Baltimore had suffered a steady stream of teachers deserting the school system for higher-paying positions.

The union also won out in its opposition to board proposals to require teachers to take on non-teaching duties, to lengthen the current 6-hour, 50-minute school day, and to drop Blue-Cross/Blue Shield—the most expensive option—from its list of health care providers.

Lorraine Forte
Black students no longer a majority by 2000

by Devri Whitaker

By the year 2000, African-American students will no longer be the majority in Chicago public schools, while Latino enrollment will rise to over a third, according to a recent Board of Education report.

The sharp decline in white enrollment since 1980 will slow because of an influx of Eastern European immigrants, the report states.

Overall, total Chicago public school enrollment is expected to climb from 411,000 to 421,000. Black enrollment is projected to decrease from 56 percent to 50 percent, Latino enrollment is expected to increase from 29 percent to 35 percent and white enrollment is expected to dip slightly from 12 percent to 11 percent. (Asian-American enrollment will increase by about 2,000 students.)

The rise in Latino enrollment and the influx of new white students will further aggravate overcrowding in schools on the Northwest and Southwest sides, the report predicts. At the same time, predominantly black schools on the South and West sides, some of which are already under-capacity, will see their student populations shrink further.

“We and the community have to be creative in the use of available space,” says Juan Rangel, director of education for the United Neighborhood Organization. But, he adds, “If schools become vacant, closing them is not the solution.” One solution, he suggests, is renting space to social service agencies.

Carlos Heredia, director of Por Un Barrio Mejor, says that overcrowding is “not just a question of space, it’s a question of the denial of educational opportunities….Parents that demand their kids go to school in their own communities are denying their own kids opportunities.”

Does the decline in black enrollment signal a loss of black bargaining power in the school system? No, says James Deanes, director of the Parent/Community Council reform group.

“I don’t think we have even tapped into the power of the black community,” Deanes says. “How can you lose what you have never used?” Hispanics will rightly gain more power and influence in the system as their numbers increase, he adds.

Rangel, noting that most black and Latino students live in very segregated communities, sees the coming changes as “an opportunity for a close working relationship” between blacks and Latinos. “But tensions are bound to rise when people simply don’t know each other,” he adds, and schools, parents and community groups should work harder to bring African Americans and Latinos together.

Overall, the trends are expected to have little impact on school revenues and expenditures, the report contends. But the rising proportion of minority students is expected to lead to increased need for bilingual and remedial education.

Perks preceded Ag School’s recent woes

by Rick Asa

When Mayor Richard M. Daley finally dropped his opposition to the expansion of the highly regarded Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, he stressed that it would grow to no more than 600 students.

That enrollment limit is part of a state law that gives the Ag School benefits that no other school in the city has: a property tax rate of its own (to spare it from the Board of Education’s frequent cutbacks in building maintenance) and a lock on $20 million in construction bonds to pay for expansion.

The Board of Education may impose a tax rate of up to two cents per $100 assessed valuation but has used just over a penny, generating about $2.7 million a year for the Southwest Side school.

The law reflects the high-powered backing the school enjoyed until Ald. Ginger Rugai (19th), doing the bidding of the school’s neighbors, got the Chicago Plan Commission to bottle up the expansion. Daley initially sided with Rugai but did an about-face in early August, offering no explanation.

The mayor’s switch followed protests from the African-American community and the filing of a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union, which charged racial discrimination. The school’s enrollment is 70 percent black and 15 percent minority, while surrounding Mt. Greenwood is about 98 percent white.

The law giving the Ag School special treatment sailed through the Legislature in 1988 under the sponsorship of Senate President Philip Rock (D-Oak Park) and House Majority Leader Jim McPike (D-Alton).

Former Supt. Manford Bryd says that Board of Trade President Thomas Donovan and other city economic leaders were involved with the school from the outset because of its curricular ties to agribusiness. These leaders had attended early planning meetings and “pushed for a means of expansion. They were helpful in getting legislation through.”

“It’s certainly fair to say the Legislature’s decision reflected the perception there was strong community support,” says Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago).

The school, opened to fanfare in March 1985, has saved the city’s last farm, owned by the Board of Education, from possible development. The 73-acre farm, which had produced vegetables for the tightly-knit community since 1863, had the support of community leaders, local business owners and a relentless, effective media blitz orchestrated by local historian Joe Martin. Nine thousand residents signed a petition to spare it from destruction.

By 1989, when the first four-year class graduated, the school was an urban success story, with numerous students winning awards and college scholarships. Donovan gave the commencement speech that year.

Rugai has conceded the school is overcrowded, but has maintained the community did not want the school when it opened and that the school does not show a commitment to Mt. Greenwood now.

Rugai, who has denied that her opposition is based on race, did not return CATALYST phone calls.

Rick Asa is a Chicago writer.
Recruitment under way for LSC elections

Candidate filing for local school council (LSC) elections is scheduled to open the first day of school, whenever that is. Currently, the date is Sept. 8; if schools don’t open on time, the date will be delayed until they do, according to board officials. Under the Reform Act, elections must be held “not later than the 6th week of the school year.”

Meanwhile, candidate recruitment efforts are underway. The Board of Education has set aside $260,000 for advertising, radio announcements and English and Spanish posters for CTA buses, according to Chis Warden of the corporate reform group Leadership for Quality Education.

“There has been an incredible change of attitude at the board,” says LQE President Diana Nelson, who credits, in part, new leadership in the superintendent’s office. In 1991, the School Board spent no money on outreach.

And in get-out-the-vote efforts, corporations and foundations again are contributing funds, although the sum is less than two years ago. Privately, some reform watchers say corporations are reluctant to continue funding for election campaign activities that they believe should be financed by the board.

To date, 16 corporations and foundations have pooled some $200,000 for campaign grants to 27 community organizations throughout the city. For the last election, foundations pooled and distributed $252,000 to community organizations. The organizations, chosen on the basis of their track record in working with LSCs, are using the funds for recruitment and training.

The special funds also will be used to hire an election resource coordinator who will work out of LQE’s office and serve as a liaison among the board, community-based organizations and other groups involved in the election.

LQE also has recruited 12 corporations to help organize candidate recruitment and get-out-the-vote drives in school subdistricts or within their own companies—just as it did two years ago.

The corporations and their subdistricts are: CNA Insurance, 4; AT&T, 5 and 6; First National Bank of Chicago, 6; and Harris Trust and Savings, 9. At CATALYST press time, Eastman Kodak, Motorola and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce had not yet committed to a particular district. Helene Curtis, Illinois Bell, Quaker Oats, Sears Roebuck and Amoco will work internally to train or recruit employees.

Debra Williams

Boycott planned against amendment opponents

Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) has called for a boycott against the top corporate contributors to the campaign against the proposed Education Amendment, defeated last November. The amendment would have required equitable school funding.

“These companies contributed money to help defeat the amendment,” says Joy Noven of PURE. “We are asking parents to boycott these companies and their products.”

Picketing is planned for each

Monday until schools open, with protesters planning to march between the James R. Thompson Center (formerly the State of Illinois Building) and the Walgreen’s store at State and Randolph. PURE also plans to picket at the Board of Trade to confront stockholders of these companies.

Corporate contributors who gave $10,000 or more to the anti-amendment campaign, according to PURE, are: Manufacturer’s Political Action, Caterpillar, Baxter Healthcare, CNA Insurance, Philip Morris Mgt., FMC, Illinois Bell, Amoco Corp., Ameritech, Commonwealth Edison, NALCO Chemical, First Chicago, John Deere, and Helene Curtis. Debra Williams
A third of elementary schools making gains, says major study

A third of Chicago's elementary schools are using democratic politics to advance systemic change in their schools, according to the most recent study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Finding a strong connection between the breadth of participation in school decision making and the quality of local reform efforts, the consortium's steering committee concludes that "enhanced democratic participation can be an effective lever for systemic educational change."

The consortium includes area universities, research organizations, the Board of Education and the Chicago Teachers Union. "A View from the Elementary Schools: The State of Reform in Chicago" was released in July.

The following is a CATALYST summary of the section dealing with elementary schools citywide. The consortium's 45-page report also takes a close-up look at six schools—Bass, Ebinger, Field, Hefferan, Hoyne and Spry—undergoing active restructuring; it also proposes "next steps" for the school system and reform community to consider. Copies of the full report are available from the consortium, 5835 S. Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60637, (312) 702-3364.

DATA USED

■ Responses to a survey of elementary school teachers conducted in May, 1991 by the consortium.
■ Responses to a survey of principals conducted in June, 1992 by the consortium.

METHODOLOGY

■ Based on teachers' and principals' responses to selected survey questions, schools were classified by their type of governance and their approach to school change. The classifications were derived from an analysis of case studies conducted over the last three years at 22 schools by the University of Chicago's Center for School Improvement and the Chicago Panel on School Policy. Another 19 case studies by the Board of Education and the North Central Regional Laboratory were used to verify the classifications.

The percentages represent the minimum and maximum number of questions on which principals and teachers must agree to warrant a classification.

CATEGORIES, PART I: POLITICS

■ CONSOLIDATED PRINCIPAL POWER, 39 percent to 46 percent of schools. "Neither the parents/community nor faculty is able to sustain active involvement in school decision making. By default, power consolidates in the principal," who is either an autocrat or paternal/maternal figure to whom parents and faculty defer.
■ ADVERSARIAL POLITICS, 4 percent to 9 percent of schools. "Communities are factionalized and continuously at war about control and power. The fights tend to have little substantive content. Instead they focus on personalities and allegiances—first, who will be elected to the local school council, and then who the LSC will select as principal."

■ MAINTENANCE POLITICS, 14 percent to 24 percent. "Parents, teachers and the principal are basically satisfied with existing arrangements and are not strongly motivated to change them. Much of the principal's activity in such schools mediates among competing interests, for example, placating the demands of parents who want the best for their own children and responding to the requests of teachers who wish to advance their own individual interests."
■ STRONG DEMOCRACY, 23 percent to 32 percent of schools. "This happens when there is dissatisfaction with current operations, sustained debate about school change and shared interests emerge across the three sites of power [principal, teachers, parents/community] to promote school improvement." Principals, teachers or parents may take the initiative.

POLITICAL PATTERNS

■ PERCENT LOW INCOME In relatively higher-income schools (less than 50 percent low-income students), adversarial politics occur less often, and strong democracy occurs more often than it does in the system as a whole. Schools that are 50 percent to 90 percent low income are more likely to have adversarial politics than does the system as a whole.

Schools that are more than 90 percent low income are less likely to have adversarial politics than does the system as a whole.

■ RACIAL COMPOSITION Hispanic schools demonstrate a marked tendency toward strong democracy, with 52 percent so classified. African-American and integrated schools are less likely to have adversarial politics than does the system as a whole.

Predominantly minority and racially mixed schools experience adversarial politics at considerably higher rates than other racial/ethnic types. "These schools have students from many different backgrounds, which may contribute to the diversity of interests in the school and make conflict more likely.

■ SCHOOL SIZE Schools with fewer than 350 students are considerably less likely than the system as a whole to have adversarial politics.
■ STUDENT MOBILITY No patterns.
CATEGORIES, PART II:
APPROACH TO IMPROVEMENT

■ SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE “During the first two years of reform, a large portion of the system focused on environmental order and improving the social relations [e.g., security, attendance, building improvement] in schools.” Now, virtually all schools have moved into one of the other four categories.

■ UNFOCUSED INITIATIVES (either “peripheral changes” or a “Christmas-tree” approach), 26 percent to 35 percent of schools.

“Funds are used to add programs and personnel haphazardly to the periphery of the school. While these add-on programs, such as computer centers and art and music programs, may be valuable additions, they neither enhance the core instruction provided to most students nor improve the classroom practice of most teachers.

Christmas-tree schools “are showcases. Their entrepreneurial principals become well known for their ability to garner new resources for their schools. . . . Unfortunately, this pursuit of new initiatives distracts the school community from a systematic examination of core operations. Additionally, there is little time to scrutinize the quality of the new programs or their cumulative effects on students’ learning.”

■ SYSTEMIC APPROACHES to restructuring (either “emergent” or “sustained”), 36 percent to 45 percent of schools.

“Emergent restructuring schools spend time discussing change initiatives, trying out new ideas and seeking to involve an ever-growing core of faculty and parents in these efforts. Principals strive to connect the school with outside sources of expertise—professional development for faculty that focuses on core academic areas of literacy, math and science, and also programs and people that can help the school to better support its families.

“Schools characterized by sustained systemic activity are essentially new organizations. . . . Structures are in place to ensure that teachers have time for planning and professional development. Also, instructional leadership is no longer the sole responsibility of the principal; teachers now have new lead-

ership roles that are fully accepted among faculty. . . . More generally, adults in the school community share responsibility for students’ achievement and well-being.”

■ MIXED Displaying features of focused and unfocused approaches, 15 percent to 25 percent of schools.

“These schools may begin to move toward systemic change and perhaps suffer a setback. Or a subgroup of teachers may have begun working together, but their efforts have not yet broadly affected the school.”

■ NOT CLASSIFIED, 11 percent to 13 percent of schools. There is inconsistent information on these schools in that they report strong characteristics of both systemic and unfocused approaches.

SCHOOL CHANGE PATTERNS

■ SCHOOL SIZE Schools with fewer than 350 students were more likely to pursue systemic change and less likely to pursue unfocused change, compared with all other schools.

■ STUDENT MOBILITY A fourth of elementary schools have a mobility rate of over 45 percent. “These schools seek to educate a transient student population with a changing parent community. This is quite daunting, and yet these schools do it.”

■ RACIAL COMPOSITION “The racial composition of the school is the only student background factor that differentiates school improvement approaches. Predominantly African-American schools are more likely than other schools to have some features of both unfocused and systemic approaches. Predominantly Hispanic schools, in contrast, are less likely than others to have an unfocused approach and more likely to be pursuing a systemic agenda. . . . Integrated schools display a pattern similar to that of the Hispanic schools except for a strong underrepresentation in the ‘some features of both’ category. The more racially heterogeneous schools (‘predominantly minority’ and ‘racially mixed’) are more likely to have an unfocused approach to school improvement.”

■ OTHER FACTORS School location, percent low income and achievement level. Statistically, none of these factors had an impact on schools’ approach to change. “In general, both unfocused and systemic restructuring initiatives can be found in a diverse array of schools, regardless of where they are located and what types of students they enroll.”

THE POLITICAL CONNECTION

■ Of the schools with adversarial politics, 80 percent report unfocused approaches to school improvement.

■ Of the schools with consolidated principal power, 43 percent report unfocused approaches to school improvement and another 18 percent report features of unfocused and systemic efforts.

■ Of the schools with strong democracies, 66 percent show systemic improvement efforts and an additional 16 percent show at least some features of a systemic approach. Only 9 percent reported unfocused improvement.

THE INSTRUCTION CONNECTION

■ Use of “authentic learning” practices. Sixty-four percent of systemic schools but only 31 percent of unfocused schools report practices associated with authentic instruction, that is, deep engagement of students in subject matter and use of assessment techniques that emphasize student production of knowledge rather than recall of facts.

■ Innovative teaching and curriculum. Over 25 percent of systemic schools but only 6 percent of unfocused schools report that almost all their students participate in cooperative learning. Forty-six percent of systemic schools but only 22 percent of unfocused schools report that almost all students write in every subject. Forty-two percent of systemic schools but only 22 percent of unfocused schools report that almost all students engage in hands-on math. Systemic schools also were more likely to engage students in hands-on science.

What report’s critics say.
See page 26.
Report racially biased, ignores students, critics charge

“"A View from the Elementary Schools: The State of Reform in Chicago” drew nods of approval throughout Chicago's school reform community.

Generally, people working in schools found that the study's findings reflected their own experiences. However, a number of activists also leveled criticism at the steering committee of the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which conducted the study. All critics asked that their names not be used so that they would not appear to disagree with the study's main conclusion: that reform is progressing well but remains a very fragile operation.

The study's handling of race caused the most stir. Racially mixed schools were more likely to experience “adversarial politics” than were racially segregated schools, the report says. And Hispanic schools are singled out for demonstrating “a marked tendency toward strong democracy.”

One West Side community activist asks: "Through whose eyes were these schools being looked at?" While appreciative of the good faith and hard work of the researchers, she senses some "innate bias" in the steering committee. No African Americans are listed as members.

Consortium Director Penny Sebring reports there is one African American on the committee, Rachel Lindsey, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Chicago State University, but that her name was inadvertently omitted from the report. Sebring says several other African Americans reviewed the research or served as consultants. They included Barbara Sizemore, dean of the School of Education at DePaul University; Al Bennett, dean of the Evelyn Stone College at Roosevelt University; and Lauren Young, a professor at Michigan State University.

If the local school councils are political bodies, asserts one critic, "you can expect them to reflect a broad range of politics, and it's too soon to tell whether the Consortium's model of democracy will produce the desired results."

The key point, Sebring stresses, is that every type of school politics can be found in every Chicago community.

While agreeing that it is extremely difficult to assess the progress of reform at such an early stage, most people offering criticism yearn for more information on reform's impact on children. One researcher called the study, "a Chicago-style evaluation of Chicago-style reform—it barely mentions students."

Some critics proposed case studies that would show the initial impact on students of new approaches to teaching. Consortium researchers say future studies will look more closely at children.

Some question the report's emphasis on the leadership role of principals. "While it's true that reform can't happen with an obstructionist principal," observes one university teacher-educator, "there is something new and significant taking place in schools—change driven by groups of teachers."

Sebring responds that the report does underscore the importance of the faculty. "In schools engaging in systemic approaches to restructuring, there is broad teacher engagement."

Michael Klonsky

Legislature puts limit on lame-duck councils

A bill requiring new principals to finish the uncompleted term of their predecessors before receiving full four-year contracts was passed this spring, but is expected to be amended into a temporary measure this fall.

The bill was passed with the expectation that many principals would take advantage of the new early retirement law, leaving the hiring of successors in the hands of local school councils whose terms expire this fall. (LSC elections are scheduled for Oct. 14; current principal contracts begin expiring next summer.)

Reformers who backed the law "thought it could cause a problem with lame-duck councils choosing the next principal," explains Richard Guidice, the Board of Education's chief lobbyist. But they wanted the bill to apply only temporarily because of the special situation, he adds. An amendment will be offered in the fall session to limit it.

Bruce Berndt, head of the Chicago Principals Association, maintains the law will make it hard to attract new principals because they will hesitate to give up seniority for a short-term agreement. Under the Reform Act, principals give up their seniority rights as teachers.

Also passed this spring was a bill allowing schools to use non-certified personnel, such as teacher aides, to supervise study halls. The law paves the way for the board's proposal to require high school teachers to spend more of their scheduled work day teaching.

Further, the Legislature amended the Reform Act to permit the School Board to reduce the number of high school teachers on the first day of the second semester if enrollment declines from the beginning of the year, which it usually does.
Comings and goings

Among some 50 central office employees taking advantage of early retirement are Robert Saddler, deputy superintendent for operations, Margaret Harrigan, associate superintendent for human resources, Thomas Corcoran, board secretary, and former interim Supt. Richard Stephenson. Bruce Berndt, also taking advantage of early retirement, is stepping down as president of the Chicago Principals Association. Steve Newton Jr. has resigned as principal of Farragut Academy High School, a site of racial and community conflict, to take over as principal of Marshall High School. The Chicago Board of Education Policy and Finance has changed its name to the Chicago Panel on School Policy.

TEACHERS ACADEMY

Lourdes Montagudo, former deputy mayor for education, succeeds Jon Thompson as executive director of the Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science, while Joseph Frattaroli, former manager of urban education for the Illinois Board of Education, becomes chief operating officer.

Nobel Neighbors

Through the efforts of a group that started out as a parent patrol at Nobel Elementary, abandoned buildings are being demolished or renovated in Humboldt Park, according to an Aug. 5 article in the Chicago Tribune. Formed in 1985 to escort children through gang territory, Nobel Neighbors expanded its scope in 1989, persuading the city to demolish a number of abandoned buildings that had been taken over by gangs or invaded by squatters. It convinced the non-profit group Habitat for Humanity to spend nearly $2 million to renovate other buildings into low-income housing units, and won charges of criminal housing management against one absentee landlord.

Law Group

Zarina O'Hagan, a former attorney with Sidley & Austin, succeeds Peggy Gordon as director of the Lawyers' School Reform Advisory Project, which provides free legal assistance to local school councils. Thomas F. Golz, former education program manager for The Volunteer Network, replaces Ann Stapleton as assistant director.

Finance Authority

Sara Spurlark, former principal of Ray Elementary School, has become the first educator to serve on the Chicago School Finance Authority, which oversees the School Board's reform plan and finances. Spurlark and Don Haider, a former Republican candidate for mayor who is now a program director at Northwestern University's Kellogg Graduate School of Management, were appointed to the FPA in June and will serve until January 1996. Spurlark, appointed by Mayor Richard M. Daley, replaces attorney Maxwell Griffin. Haider, appointed by Gov. Jim Edgar, replaces attorney Deborah Pardini.

Quest Center

Fifteen schools have won $3,000 grants from the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center, which also will provide support and resources for teachers. This year's winners were selected from among 30 schools that submitted restructuring proposals. They are Bremen, Bunches, Byford, Cuyler, Foster Park, Erikson, Gladstone, Rice, Woodson, South elementary schools, Southside Learning Center and Carver, Harper, Lincoln Park and Phillips high schools.

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and work together on projects. This will complement Science Connections, a staff development program that began three years ago as a summer workshop for two dozen teachers and now serves three times as many teachers every year. The goal is to overhaul science teaching at network schools.

"Our original emphasis was trying to get together with the elementary schools," says Haggerty. "But some of the more creative principals have really taken the ball and run with it."

Among them is Casals Principal Mazurek, co-chair of the network's executive committee. "In my 26 years with the Chicago public schools," says Mazurek, "I think the Orr School Network is the best provider of support to a school. It brought the 12 schools very close together."

In fact, the 12 elementary schools share more network programs and resources with each other than with Orr. That's only natural, their principals say, because these schools have more in common. Also, Orr's new principal has focused on learning the ropes there, they add. But Orr believes the network still serves the goal of improving its academic standing.

"We want to attract students who are above the 50th percentile [national average]," says Haggerty, noting that it's been five years since Orr conducted a class for gifted students despite having qualified teachers and facilities.

Part of the reason has to do with race, he says. While many of Orr's feeder schools are predominantly Hispanic, Orr is predominantly African American and is situated in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. The brightest Hispanic students go elsewhere because they are afraid of Orr, Haggerty explains. In addition, talented black students also tend to avoid Orr.

"In Chicago, general high schools tend to get a general population that is low-achieving," he says. "Then we get resources to fit a student body that conforms to a standard bell curve. The results are predictable."

Meanwhile, Orr's achievement record remains below even city averages. Whether the network can change that remains to be seen. "We haven't solved all the world's problems yet," says Mazurek. "But this is exciting. It's important. It's going to make a difference. It already has made a difference."

Michelle Martin covers education and municipal issues for the Daily Herald.
Davis students work out at their own club

Natalia Alfaro's doctor told her she needed to exercise. Her school, Davis Elementary in Brighton Park, has made this 'medicine' easy to swallow. Two years ago, noticing that many students were overweight or unfit, Davis created a fitness center and program for students.

Natalia, a seventh-grader, works out three days a week on all the center's equipment and says exercising has made her feel better and stronger.

Davis spent $12,500 in state Chapter 1 funds to buy equipment, including a universal weight station, rowing machine, treadmill and stationary bike. The American Medical Association, which adopted the school because it is named after AMA founder Nathan Davis, kicked in $3,000 for a top-of-the-line stairmaster.

"The children in the program work on developing their cardiovascular system and large muscles," says physical education teacher Robert Swiech, whose program is based on research by a University of Illinois doctor who says lifting weights and toning muscles is not harmful for adolescents.

Each year, Swiech gives a physical ability test to all 1,000 Davis students.

Those who score very poorly, are obese or appear to have poor skeletal muscles are candidates for the fitness program. "Sometimes students need more than going to gym once a week. They need additional activity," says Swiech.

Students in the program can work out for a maximum of 20 minutes a day, three times a week, in a room next to the gym, open before, during and after school. Over half the school's teachers also use the center.

Even the little ones in kindergarten get to participate. "There are certain guidelines for each age group," explains Principal David Gardner. "For the younger children, the speed of the equipment is slowed down, the tension is adjusted. We make modifications so that all ages can participate."

Swiech also works with the school counselor to identify children with low self-esteem. "The center is so popular that we have a waiting list. I put these kids at the top of the list," says Swiech. "Exercising helps them experience success. If their goal is to walk for five or ten minutes and they do it, they feel good about themselves."

Swiech is also teaching his students to be responsible for themselves by letting them keep track of their own exercise programs.

Because the school has so many students, Swiech also trains sixth- through eighth-graders to work with other students, teaching them to chart the number of repetitions of each exercise, the proper use of equipment, safety procedures and how to do warm-ups and cool-downs. He gives each student an oral and physical training test before they supervise other students.

Seventh-grader Robert Waitekus was trained when he was in sixth grade. In addition to helping younger students, he loves the benefits reaped from working in the center.

"Sometimes I get stressed out from homework and let off a little stream by working out," Waitekus says. "It's relaxing and stimulating at the same time. I'm glad we have it."

Debra Williams

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