Districts told to target failing schools for help

by Michael Klonsky

Under pressure from Supt. Arnie Johnson, superintendents of the school system's 11 subdistricts have set the wheels in motion to begin intervening in struggling schools.

The 1988 Chicago School Reform Act spells out a process for placing floundering schools on a watch list and offering them outside help, but not one Chicago public school has undergone such remediation, much less been placed on any sort of probation. But change is in the wind now that the board is certain to feel heat from a new, Republican-dominated, conservative Legislature that is preparing to vote on continued funding and possible restructuring of the public school system.

Also, Johnson is a proponent of remediation and is trying to light some

See FAILING SCHOOLS page 26

Solutions sought for fall staffing turmoil

by Kim McCullough

Every fall, thousands of Chicago students see their teachers come and go as the Board of Education closes and opens teaching positions to accommodate shifts in enrollment from the previous June. In schools where enrollment is growing, students may sit for weeks in classrooms without teachers, or in hallways and auditoriums without classes.

Between the 1st and 20th day of the 1994-95 school year, the board closed 574 positions in schools across the city and opened at least as many in others, according to the Department of Human Resources, which was still tracking changes in mid-November.

Last school year, the numbers were far higher. By the 20th day of the 1993-94 school year, the board had closed 796 positions because of declining enrollment and another 1,056 because of job cuts the School Board made to help balance its budget. At the same time, hundreds of positions were opened at schools whose enrollments had swelled.

"At all schools, you seem to have three months go by before students..."
From the Editors

Encouraging news emerging on staffing

Violent neighborhoods. Dilapidated housing. Parents ill-prepared for parenting. These are some of the problems that mess up the lives of many Chicago children and make it more difficult for them to learn. Schools have no control over those problems, as school officials are quick to point cut. But revolving-door teachers—at the beginning of the school year no less? That's something school officials most certainly do have control over. And it's time they did something about it. As Melanie Lischer, a programmer at Kenwood Academy High School, told CATALYST writer Kim McCullough, the perennial fall staffing turmoil is just another reason for [kids] to walk away.

The Board of Education is caught between a rock and a hard place on this issue. When the board writes its budget, it includes only as many classroom teaching positions as are warranted under the class-size limits of the Chicago Teachers Union contract. Then, to live within its budget, the board grants schools only as many teaching positions as their official enrollments warrant.

This would work fine in a school district where enrollment at individual schools is relatively stable and where parents enroll their kids before classes start. But that's not Chicago. Many Chicago schools experience annual changes in enrollment, and many parents don't enroll their children until after the school year begins. Last school year, for example, 30,000 kids didn't enroll until October. As a result, the board is forced to add and subtract teaching positions after the school year has begun, wreaking havoc in many classrooms.

Carlos Azcoitia, new head of the Office of Reform, suggests a publicity campaign to encourage parents to sign up their kids earlier. But he'd also like to see more flexibility in the board's staffing procedures. One proposal is to base September staffing on August enrollment projections rather than actual June enrollment—while retaining the board's authority to cut positions from schools during the first 20 days of class. Schools whose enrollment is indeed rising could then enjoy a smooth start to the school year. If their predictions of growth are wrong, they would suffer the penalty of having teachers yanked away during the first month of school.

It's schools with declining enrollments that pose a larger problem. Will they give up teachers before they're forced to? It's worth a try to find out. If experience shows they won't, the board then could automatically reduce initial staffing at schools with histories of shrinking student bodies.

Meanwhile, the administration of Supt. Argie Johnson has begun to rectify another staffing problem, the increasing segregation of school faculties since the beginning of reform. Under the School Board's 1980 desegregation consent decree, the percentage of whites and minorities on each school's faculty should generally reflect their percentages systemwide. Legal requirements aside, it's simply good for children to work in a multiracial environment, especially in a city with such segregated housing. Johnson's staff is issuing warnings to schools that are out of compliance that their next hires will have to move them toward compliance.

Now it's time for the board to speak up—by adopting the staffing guidelines it's been talking about for more than a year. No one wants classrooms to go without teachers because teachers of the "right" race don't apply. Judicious application of the guidelines will prevent that while making it clear to schools that racially integrated faculties are a priority.

Lorraine Forte
TEACHER STAFFING

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One suggested alternative is basing initial staffing on projections made in August. And Azcoitia suggests adding flexibility to the class-size limits in the teachers contract—e.g., permitting a school to retain a teacher even if enrollment falls one or two students short of the prescribed number.

“At least you would know you have some room to play with,” says Azcoitia. “I think there are real problems whenever you have a position closing by such-and such a date and then, two days later, enrollment opens up again and you get a position back.”

Azcoitia stresses that parents must be targeted, too, to encourage them to enroll their children as soon as possible. Last school year, board reports show, enrollment citywide jumped by 30,000 children from September to October, rising from 371,000 to 401,000. Enrollment continued to climb until February, when it hit a peak of 408,000; then it subsided to 401,000 by June, primarily because of dropouts.

Histrically, the board has been reluctant to base staffing on principals’ projections because principals were known to pad enrollment reports.

“I can understand why the board wouldn’t want to go along with projections,” acknowledges Lischer of Kenwood.

“There are many, many hidden positions at schools. There are phantom enrollments, students who were never taken off the books even though they’re transfers, dropouts or—fill in the blank.”

In 1992, the board cracked down, insisting on proof of enrollment. At the time, it estimated that student rolls were inflated by about 7,000 names, which translated into 260 teachers at a cost of $13 million.

In this atmosphere of distrust, schools that played it straight suffered. “If Lakeview says ‘We have 1,100 students,’ the board will only send teachers for 900 because they assume you’re lying,” recalls Lorraine Straw, former local school council chair at Lakeview High School. “The people who are hurt are the students.”

One school programmer, who asked not to be identified, says schools still fudge their numbers—to ensure they have enough teachers come September.

Under one scheme, class schedules are drawn up for students “you know won’t be back next fall,” including dropouts and transfers. “When new students come in, you can drop the old [departed] students,” the programmer explains. “If you don’t do something like that, then you have 40 to 50 students in a class, with no teacher to accommodate the overflow.”

One principal says she builds in staff for anticipated enrollment increases by hiring regular classroom teachers in June under special education position numbers. Then, when the board adds regular classroom positions in October, she transfers those teachers to regular slots. Then, however, she must make do with substitutes or reserve teachers in the special ed posts until she finds certified special ed teachers.

Underlying all these contortions is the instability of school enrollment in Chicago:

■ Some communities, especially on the Near Northwest and Near Southwest sides, are experiencing population growth.

Manierre Elementary School on the Near North Side, for example, saw its enrollment rise from 507 two years ago to 615 last year to 660 this year, due largely to the remodeling and reopening of apartments across the street. “We knew before September we’d have a larger enrollment with those apartments,” says Principal Marlene Szymanski. This
school year, class organization was still in flux in mid-October. “We still don’t have the rooms opened,” said Szymanski. “We’re trying to organize and are shifting rooms.”

- Many families move in September and October.

“You want to have all students in school at the beginning of the school year,” says Azcoitia. “But sometimes families move the first week of school. . . . It all has to be part of a community campaign for the role and responsibility of parents to take their vacation another week, or when they move, the first thing they do is enroll their child in the community school. Let’s not waste any time.”

- Some immigrant families who visit their native countries don’t return until the fall.

At Dawes Elementary School in Ashburn, for example, about 50 students who had traveled to Mexico didn’t show up at school this year until after the first day, reports Principal Margaret Lalley. “We had kids this year that didn’t show up until Oct. 5 or 6.” A number of Arab students who leave for the summer follow a similar pattern, she adds.

“Our problem is that the kids go to Mexico, so we count them absent,” Lalley says. “Some schools take them off enrollment; but if you take them off, you lose teachers. But if you just mark them absent, that knocks down your attendance. It’s no-win either way you go.”

More fundamentally, Lalley worries about how Dawes, whose student body has grown by 100 students in the last two years, will accommodate students if growth continues. “We have every room used,” she says. “Where are we going to go?”

- Some students who apply to magnet schools don’t find out until summer whether they have been accepted; if they haven’t, they must re-enroll at neighborhood schools.

Richard Parker, principal at Harper High School in West Englewood, estimates that each year 100 to 125 magnet-school applicants hold off enrollment at Harper until September. In addition, Harper’s enrollment has been on the rise. Parker says he’s been able to get additional staff two or three weeks into the school year, using substitutes in the interim. But substitutes can be a problem, he adds.

**Last-minute resignations**

“In one class, the kids basically ran the subs out,” he says. “The people we were getting from the district did not have certification in the areas we needed. They couldn’t do anything much more than babysit.”

Szymanksi of Manierre says that last-minute teacher resignations add to opening-day confusion. “Sometimes teachers may call the day before school starts and say, ‘I’m not coming back,’” she says. “I don’t know how to get around this.”

And “once Sept. 1 comes,” says Beverly Tunney, president of the Chicago Principals Association, “the teachers who are going to get jobs have jobs. It’s hard to recruit teachers after that.”

The next crop of candidates doesn’t become available until later in September, when the board closes positions at schools with declining enrollment, sending new “reserve” teachers job hunting within the system.

Last year, the Reform Act was amended to permit the board to close positions in high schools on the first day of the second semester, too, and thus reap a couple million dollars in savings.

A Chicago Teachers Union subcommittee recently recommended that the union bargain for a ban on all high school staff cuts after the first day of school. The subcommittee also urged the union to demand that high schools initially be staffed for the number of students programmed by the end of August.

Union spokesperson Jackie Gallagher declined to speculate on whether these proposals would be included in contract talks.

Asked about Azcoitia’s proposed early-enrollment campaign, Gallagher was skeptical. “[It] is so difficult in our city because parents themselves are so transient,” she observes. “It could be policy, but you have so many families moving the first of September, and the last thing on their minds is getting the kids in school.”

*Kim McCullough is a Chicago writer.*
So far, 37 teachers assigned ‘off certificate’

Nearing the end of the first quarter this year, teacher Rebecca Porter wasn’t certain about whether she’d have to go back to school to get recertified after 20 years in the Chicago public schools.

Certified to teach business, Porter became a reserve teacher in June when her position with the CANAL (Creating a New Approach to Learning) program was cut after federal funding dried up. She began job hunting but had not lined up a new job by Oct. 3, the 20th day of school. That’s when the Board of Education temporarily assigned her to teach in a food service program at Phillips High School. In mid-November, she hoped to learn within a couple of weeks whether the board would keep her there or transfer her to another position.

“They’re telling business [reserves] to go into special ed, from what I hear,” Porter said. “I don’t want to recertify for that.”

Porter is one of 135 reserve teachers the board has placed in schools so far this year, and one of 15 it has placed in jobs for which they aren’t certified. These numbers are down slightly from 1993-94, when the board placed 167 reserves who had not been able to find jobs on their own, including 22 who were assigned “off certificate,” according to the board’s personnel office.

Historically, the Chicago Teachers Union contract has guaranteed jobs for reserve teachers, formerly called supernumeraries, even if no school needed someone in their area of certification. Such teachers still receive pay and benefits while awaiting a new position.

Before the School Reform Act was adopted, the board placed all reserves directly into job vacancies. Now, however, reserves must apply to at least three schools before the board can assign them itself. This change was made to bring the reserve-teacher policy more in line with the Reform Act’s provision allowing principals to select teachers to fill vacancies.

And, a year ago, the union agreed to a limit on how long a teacher can be employed off certificate. Now, such teachers have 20 months to get recertified in an area of “critical systemic need” as determined by the board—or lose their jobs. Currently, those areas are special education, bilingual education, library science and early childhood education.

Beverly Tunney, Chicago Principals Association president, said, “Reserves, especially off certificate, can be a problem if they’re placed with you and they don’t want to be there. But I don’t think we [principals] are as uptight about [board-assigned reserves] as we used to be. Maybe we’re just getting used to the system.”

But some union delegates haven’t gotten used to the process; they contend it’s “designed to get rid of teachers.”

When teachers are notified of their position closings in September, “can they enroll in a fall semester class?” asks Karen Knudstrup, a union delegate at Kenwood Academy High School. “No. Not at most public universities.” If a reserve is forced to wait until the second semester to begin recertification, “that gives you spring semester, the summer, the fall semester and not much more,” she adds. “That assumes you can [still] take the courses in sequence, and many classes with prerequisites are offered only once a year.”

Board-union tradeoff

In return for the new time limit on off-certificate teacher assignments, the School Board agreed to a new rule that makes more jobs available to reserves. That rule says that a principal can hold a job open for no more than 60 school days before the board can permanently assign a properly certified reserve to the position. In other words, principals’ power to fill teaching vacancies on their own has a 60-day limit.

“Sometimes, people were put in positions for months and months and were never made permanent, and the principal never hired anyone else,” recalls Tom

Different rules apply in suburbs, Downstate

Suburban and downstate schools rarely, if ever, endure the rounds of teacher transfers that afflict Chicago schools each fall. A key reason is that state law prohibits them from yanking a job away from a teacher on a moment’s notice and from downsizing the teacher force in the middle of a term or semester, as happens in Chicago.

Indeed, all other Illinois school districts but Chicago’s must notify teachers by certified mail at least 60 days before a position is closed; typically, so-called pink slips go out in February or March.

Take, for example, Elgin District U-46. With 30,000 students and 43 schools, it is less than a tenth the size of Chicago’s; yet it is the largest Illinois school district outside Chicago. Enrollment there has been rising by about 750 to 800 students for each of the last several years, but lack of money has forced Elgin to lay off teachers—50 in 1992-93 and 318 last school year.

Last January, as Elgin administrators began planning their 1994-95 budget—their fiscal year begins July 1, two months earlier than Chicago’s—they knew they would face a revenue shortfall; so they decided to cut their large elementary art, music and physical education programs. “We decided to cut . . . all three in half,” notes Bob Gilliam, assistant superintendent for human resources.

Then administrators identified the least senior art, music and P.E. teachers in the district as a whole, sending them reduction-in-force (RIF) notices in March.

Here, too, the procedure is different from Chicago’s, where teachers are cut from schools on the basis of seniority within the school itself, not within the district as a whole. Such “reserve”
Feeley, an analyst for the union.

The 60-day requirement has not proven an inordinate burden to principals like Patricia Grisset at Wendell Smith Elementary in Roseland, who says she jumps at the chance to hire reserves with years of inner-city teaching experience. Last January, Grisset hired two reserve teachers.

Knudstrup of Kenwood and George Schmidt, a Bowen High School union delegate, speculate, based on conversations with other teachers, that the number of reserves being placed by central office is relatively small because teachers are quitting rather than seeking recertification.

Schmidt, a writer for Substance newspaper who has long campaigned for stricter adherence to seniority, maintains that the current set of rules gives little protection to teachers with 10, 20 or more years in the system.

The teachers’ contract says that when a position at a school is cut, the least senior teacher certified for the position is the one that becomes a reserve.

But Schmidt’s position at Amundsen High School was closed in September 1993, a cut he maintains was not based on seniority. “Of 95 to 100 teachers, I was somewhere around 35 to 40 in seniority,” he says. “How could it possibly have been on the basis of seniority? . . . . Basically, there are—given the results—no checks on the principals to prevent them from getting rid of me.”

Twenty other positions besides Schmidt’s were eliminated from Amundsen’s roster in the fall of 1993, Principal Ed Klunk said. He declined further comment on Schmidt’s cut, citing a lawsuit filed by Schmidt.

In October 1993, Schmidt sued Klunk and board personnel administrator Maurice Bullet, contending his dismissal from Amundsen violated his constitutional rights. The suit is pending in U.S. District Court.

After being dropped from Amundsen High, Schmidt unsuccessfully applied at three schools with vacancies. A Portage Park resident certified in English, he was assigned to teach algebra at Bowen High on the Far Southeast Side. Principal Gloria Walker hired him during the second semester; when a position opened up for which he is certified.

Kim McCullough

teachers, previously called supernumeraries, are guaranteed jobs somewhere in the school system, even if no school needs someone in their area of certification. That’s a benefit that no suburban or Downstate teacher enjoys.

Last spring, Elgin also saw nearly 100 teachers apply for early retirement. Combined with the art, music and P.E. reductions, the early retirements caused a mass of teacher transfers. But, again, the procedure was different: Central office did the rearranging. In Chicago, under the School Reform Act, principals get to select teachers to fill vacancies, which draws out the process.

In planning its teacher transfers, the Elgin district also was guided by an enrollment report compiled by an all-volunteer citizens’ advisory council, which annually collects information from the district’s municipalities on population trends within the school district. Meanwhile, state law requires that the district bring back, in order of seniority, dismissed teachers for any jobs that open up the next school term or within a year from the beginning of the new term—so long as the teachers are qualified for the jobs. After school registration in early August, the Elgin district added positions where needed.

Finally, schools opened quietly on Aug. 25.

Could city follow suit?

Given the school district’s size, the transiency of its population, parents’ tardiness in enrolling youngsters and the decentralized hiring of teachers, Jackie Gallagher, spokesperson for the Chicago Teachers Union, thinks not.

“There is talk that if we do things the way suburban districts do, it might provide more peace of mind,” Gallagher says. “But the bottom line is, it’s very difficult to talk about those types of changes in our system. All of this is kind of whistling in the wind at this point, especially with the new legislative administration in Springfield.”

Also, Chicago typically doesn’t know how much money it will have until after the Legislature adjourns at the end of June each year—and sometimes later. It is only then that gaping budget holes are plugged. This year, for example, the School Board is projecting a $230 million financial shortfall for 1995-96. That projection isn’t going to change much until next summer. If the Chicago school system were required to send out reduction-in-force notices the same way other districts do—that is, in February or March—it likely would have to send out thousands.

Kim McCullough
Consent decree violated

Faculty integration back on agenda

by Kim McCullough

More than a year after Board of Education members publicly acknowledged that school faculties have grown steadily more segregated—in violation of a federal consent decree—the board still has not acted to correct imbalances.

Last November, board member Charles Curtis told CATALYST that the board was "aware of the situation" and considering adopting teacher hiring guidelines for principals. Curtis commented in reaction to a CATALYST finding that the number of schools violating faculty integration requirements had grown from 216 in 1987 to 336 in 1992. (See CATALYST, December 1993.) Central office subsequently reported that, by early 1994, the number had grown to 392; staff proposed guidelines last spring, but the board repeatedly deferred action.

Now, the board is scheduled to resume the discussion at its December meeting according to Alvin Peterson, appointed earlier this year to head the board's Office of Equal Educational Opportunity.

As a result of the delay, last summer, principals were able to fill close to 2,000 teaching positions left vacant by early retirements without regard to a teacher's race or ethnicity.

"The school district is responsible for compliance [with the consent decree], and it deserves to be sued," says former Chicagoan Gary Orfield, who is now director of the Harvard University Project on School Desegregation. It's "disgraceful," he adds, that the U.S. District Court here has not monitored and enforced the decree.

Robert Howard, an attorney who has represented the School Board in desegregation matters, maintains that the school district has "done what it can to maximize student desegregation over the past 14 years. . . . The only remaining element that the district has control over is teachers." Thus, he says, "The teacher integration requirement takes on, shall we say, added significance in trying to maintain a desegregated school system:"

Orfield, whose children attended Kenwood Academy and whose wife was a local school council member there, concurs: "Faculty integration . . . is the only chance for students in Chicago to have educational exposure to adults of other races. Otherwise, there is very little positive interaction among adults and students of different backgrounds."

Housing segregation cited

Echoing many principals, Beverly Tunney, president of the Chicago Principals Association, says, however, that schools are hamstrung by Chicago's segregated housing patterns. "They want black teachers getting sent way up north or white teachers sent way down south. That's fine if that's where they want to teach, but in most cases, they want to be closer to home."

Under the School Board's 1980 desegregation consent decree, the percentage of whites and non-whites on each school's faculty should fall within 15 percentage points of the citywide average and, eventually, should fall within 10 percentage points. Whites make up 42 percent of all teachers in elementary schools, according to 1993 data (the most recent available); so the percentage of white teachers at each elementary school should fall between 32 percent and 52 percent. Whites make up 49 percent of all teachers in high schools and should therefore make up between 39 percent and 59 percent of teachers at each high school.

However, about a fourth of the city's schools have faculties that are less than 25 percent white—that is, more than 75 percent minority—and about 15 percent have faculties that are more than 75 percent white, according to 1993 data.

"[The schools] have an obligation to achieve compliance, even if teacher transfers are necessary to do it," says Orfield.

That's what happened in 1977, after a federal administrative law judge found that the Chicago Board of Education engaged in faculty segregation, assigning black principals and teachers largely to schools with predominantly black enrollments and white principals and teachers to schools with predominantly white enrollments. That year, thousands of principals and teachers were transferred to integrate faculties throughout the city. Three years later, the faculty integration requirements were incorporated into the board's student desegregation consent decree.

Justice Department warned

Until the School Reform Act was passed in 1988, central office assigned principals and teachers to schools, which made it relatively easy to keep faculties properly integrated. Under the Reform Act, however, local school councils select principals, and principals select teachers.

Howard, the board's desegregation attorney, says the U.S. Justice Department was notified that the Reform Act would strip the board of its power to

Proposed rules

The administration of Supt. Argie Johnson has proposed the following guidelines for reversing the trend toward more segregated school faculties, in violation of the School Board's desegregation consent decree:

- Requiring principals at schools that are out of compliance to fill vacancies only with teachers whose races would bring them closer to compliance.
- Tightening procedures for allowing schools to apply for waivers from the decree.
- Banning teacher transfers that would put either the “sending” or “receiving” school out of compliance.
Most segregated

The following 12 schools have the most segregated teaching staffs in the school system, according to Oct. 31, 1993 data, the most recent published data available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dixon</td>
<td>100% black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock</td>
<td>100% white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doolittle</td>
<td>96.9% black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dulles</td>
<td>95.6% black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parkside</td>
<td>94.3% black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carnegie</td>
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<td>Mann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>91.5% black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beard</td>
<td>91.3% white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashe (Shabazz)</td>
<td>91.3% black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryn Mawr</td>
<td>91.3% minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gershwin</td>
<td>90.7% black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Jason Trinidad, a 21-year-old bilingual education teacher, finding a job was no easy task even though there is a shortage of teachers in that area. He attributes his difficulty to his lack of teaching experience.

Even so, Peterson says the odds are stacked against complete faculty integration in Chicago. "The biggest problem is demographics," he notes. "I don’t know if the system will ever come into full compliance."

"We as administrators and teachers are willing to do everything we can to bring minorities into the school," says Lena Talley, acting principal at Lakeview High School in Lakeview, whose faculty are African-American, 18 percent are white and 2 percent are of other backgrounds, including Asian.

James Menconi, principal of Monroe Elementary in Logan Square, says he and other principals are "perplexed all the time" about what they should be doing to comply with the integration requirements. Monroe’s faculty is 64 percent white, 12 percentage points out of compliance. "That’s not in compli-

"The school district is responsible for compliance, and it deserves to be sued."

—Gary Orfield, Harvard University

enforce teacher desegregation. As far as he knows, he says, federal attorneys never responded.

The board files annual desegregation reports with the Justice Department, he adds, but has not received a response "for quite some time, maybe not since the mid-1980s."

Pershing Road administrators were aware of the growing segregation of faculties under reform, but didn’t take any action until Argie Johnson became superintendent.

"It’s something personnel had been concerned with and something the superintendent had been concerned with," says Peterson of Equal Educational Opportunity. "We began work on it right away."

Peterson sends notices to schools that are not in compliance with the requirements. Then, if a principal petitions to hire a teacher of the "wrong" race, Peterson presents a list of eligible teachers of the "right" race for the principal to interview. If the principal insists on his or her original choice, Peterson warns that the next teacher vacancy must be filled by someone of the "right" race.

"We have passed them because we didn’t want classrooms to go empty," he explains. "But once we give the waiver, we tell them the next time they hire people, [the teacher] must be of the desired ethnicity."

is 74 percent white, or 15 percentage points out of compliance. "At the same time, you have to fill the position . . . . It’s a problem finding someone who does want to come to your school and is a minority and fits the improvement needs of your school. Is it supposed to come down to getting a teacher who is able to satisfy the needs of the children just because they’re a minority?"

Of the 16 teachers that applied and interviewed for 16 Lakeview openings this past fall, only one was a minority, says Talley. Of the school’s 1,200 students, 60 percent are Hispanic, 20 per-
Job winners, losers tell their tales

Veteran graphic arts teacher Bill Marshall has been bounced from one teaching job to another. He is now on a leave of absence and is not sure whether he'll return.

Veteran runs into revolving door

Ten years ago, the job that Bill Marshall held at Bogan High School was eliminated. "I went to the board and they says 'OK, here's a list of schools with vacancies. You chose one, you went out there and that was that," Marshall recalls. "It was definitely easier."

Today, Marshall, a graphic arts teacher with 23 years experience in the Chicago public schools, is still searching for a job after losing his post at Cregier Vocational High School last February.

"The principal just crossed off graphic arts and put in business," Marshall says. "I came to the Chicago board, and they gave me an English position number to teach under. I taught [graphic arts at Cregier] under that for a while. And then the principal eliminated the students from my class. So my enrollment dropped, and they decided to get rid of me."

Marshall again went to Pershing Road for reassignment and was told there was no place to put him; the board sent him back to Cregier as a substitute. "They says there was no sense in changing schools because there were no schools for me, so I could stay there and substitute. So I subbed there for two weeks, and the principal told me he didn't want me as a sub there either," Marshall says.

His next reserve assignment was a two-week stint substituting at Garvey Elementary. "It was rough to prepare for that because you have to carry everything from 1st to 8th grade with you," Marshall says. "[The principal] finally hired someone to fill his vacancy, and that's what eliminated me there."

Then, Marshall was off to a 5th-grade position at Locke Elementary, as one of two teachers for 83 students. "There was no room for another class, but the contract says there was room for another teacher," Marshall explains. As a reserve there, "I'd sit in the back, grade papers, cut out things for the bulletin boards. Not a bad job."

"I'd ask the other teacher if she needed help. When it came to math, teaching things like rulers and circles, I asked if I could teach. She hated math, so I could teach all the math I wanted."

After ending the 1993-94 school year at Locke, Marshall left seven resumes at Chicago's high school job fair, held on June 6. He interviewed with Englewood and Austin high schools, but received no job offer. During the first week of September, the board assigned him to Dodge Elementary, where "the principal had no idea where to put me," Marshall recalls. On the second day of school, Marshall began teaching 7th- and 8th-grade spelling and reading with two classroom teachers.

That lasted until the end of October, when Marshall decided to take a five-month leave of absence to care for his mother, who is in poor health. He's not sure when or if he'll return to teaching in Chicago.

"If they had a graphic arts position that opened tomorrow, I'd take it," Marshall says, adding that he would consider recertifying in library because he has a master's degree in library science. "But since I'd be put in a 'dump' position if I went back, I'll stay with my mom."

She knew someone who knew someone

When the Board of Education decided to give up the district's adult education program to City Colleges of Chicago, Iris Sabree's position went out the door with it.

Certified in business education for grades 6 through 12, Sabree had taught business, reading, math, literacy and GED courses for adults at Michelle Clark and Jackson schools for 10 years.

After going on the district's reserve-teacher list June 1, Sabree obtained from the board's personnel office the names of three schools with vacancies she was certified to fill.

Of the three schools where Sabree applied, "one says they didn't have anything," she says. "One wanted a math major. The other, I called several times, and I could never get through, so I had
my principal [from Michelle Clark] call. The school says it wasn't really a job or something; whatever it was, it wasn't available."

Striking out with those three schools, Sabree called other schools near her home and distributed 12 resumes. She interviewed with one principal in late July.

In August she landed a position teaching business at Hyde Park Career Academy and was able to start on the first day of classes. At Hyde Park, teacher retirements opened three business positions. "There were four, but one closed after enrollment declined," Sabree notes.

"I was lucky. The only reason I got it was because I knew someone who knew someone over there," Sabree says, adding that her colleague's contact was able to give the principal there a good recommendation for her.

Reflecting on the experience, Sabree concludes: "It's hard to get hired."

**Recent grad lands job in 2 weeks**

Within two weeks of his first-ever attempt to find a Chicago teaching position, recent college graduate Bob Mankiewicz got what he wanted.

He was hired as a social studies teacher at Chicago Vocational High School (CVHS), the third school he talked with at the School Board's teacher job fair, held July 6 and 7. CVHS was only the second school to which Mankiewicz applied.

"They called me the next week, and we set up [an interview]," recalls Mankiewicz, who received his certification to teach kindergarten through 12th-grade social studies from DePaul University this year. "I met with them a few times, and [the principal] gave me the job. The only time I really spent [searching] outside the place I student-taught was the day I spent at the job fair."

Mankiewicz says he talked to about 20 principals at the job fair, most of them during the event's first hour. He found that principals from schools on the South and West sides "where there is a major African-American popula-

ation, seemed more receptive to talking to me than principals from what you'd call the more predominantly white schools. I don't know if that's just a coincidence or perception or what."

Mankiewicz says he was unfamiliar with specifics of the district's faculty integration guidelines that principals are to follow when filling vacancies. "I heard rumors of that," he says.

Although hired as a social studies teacher, Mankiewicz is concentrating his skills on a program for incoming freshmen. "It's more of teaching test-taking skills, study habits, critical thinking, that kind of thing," he says.

**Permanent post eludes 20-year veteran**

Rebecca Porter is a business education teacher whose position was cut at the end of the 1993-94 school year. A Chicago teacher for 20 years, she was still searching for a permanent assignment in November.

On Oct. 3, Pershing Road assigned her to fill in, at least temporarily, as a food service instructor at Phillips High School. It's not what she hoped for, but "at least it's a vocational program," she says.

Porter began job hunting in earnest over the summer, attending the district's job fair and following up on informal leads. She was confident that her experience and background would lead to a new job.

By the end of August, Porter had still found nothing despite four interviews. "One, they told me I was overqualified for the position," she says. "One says my background and experience wasn't what they were looking for, and they chose someone else."

At the time, Porter did not intend to work toward recertification to hold onto a job. "Too old to do that," she said then. "No way, that is not me. Not even if it's free tuition."

Porter says she had heard that the board was paying tuition and fees for teachers willing to recertify in special education, an area with a severe teacher shortage. That's not true, but the board will grant teachers interested in special education temporary certification and assign them to special ed classrooms while they complete the required coursework. But Porter says she does not want to teach special education.

"Maybe I'll go back and get recertified in computers," she says now, after five unsuccessful months of job-hunting. "Most other business people I know, they took the special ed [recertification classes]."

*Former intern Molly Meltsner contributed to this story.*

*First-year teacher Robert Mankiewicz had no problem finding a teaching position. In two weeks, he was hired by Chicago Vocational High School.*
The Brownell formula: Let a thousand programs bloom

by Grant Pick

It happens to the most famous of divas. Tara Williams, a 4th-grader at Brownell Elementary School in Woodlawn, developed laryngitis a couple days before her big moment, a star turn in last June's student opera, "The Golden Bird."

On the night of the performance, Tara went on stage at Kennedy-King College like a trooper. Tara was three minutes into a big aria when her soprano voice failed her, and, overcome, she broke down crying. Spontaneously, the audience of 400 parents, teachers and students began to clap for the girl. The boy playing the bird, the opera's title role, flapped his wings, and people began to shout, "Come on. You can do it." The Brownell chorus picked up the melody, and soon Tara sang once more, albeit faintly.

The opera had other high points, notably the opening act, which saw the primary-grade students pantomiming the seven principles of Kwanzaa. At the end, Mary Jane Riopelle, Brownell's librarian and writing teacher and the opera's impresario, was overcome with emotion. "I couldn't have felt more exhilaration if I'd had my first appearance at Carnegie Hall."

Multidisciplinary is watchword

The opera, and the doings that produced it, are just one feature of Brownell School under the stewardship of Principal Linda Ford. Ford, a small, smiling, persistent woman in her early 40s, has stumped the small neighborhood school full of multidisciplinary programs. "We don't teach in isolation," says Ford. "I'm an adult, and I do everything in concert. Why shouldn't my kids?" Yet Brownell has also stuck to the straight-laced—Ford likes standardized tests, and Brownell students wear uniforms.

The approach seems to be working. There is some evidence that Brownell's achievement scores are rising, and the school community is excited. "There's an atmosphere of working together," says Jacqueline Neiman, a kindergarten teacher. "The teachers and parents are so accepting. No one has a 'give-me' attitude. And we are affording the students a view of the real world—when they study plant growth, they can walk two blocks away and see the real thing in our community garden."

Brownell School, which serves 370 students in prekindergarten through 6th grade, sits on the north end of Park Manor, at 67th and South Michigan Avenue; it is sandwiched between the Dan Ryan Expressway and the Chicago Skyway. The outwardly stable neighborhood of single-family houses and small apartment buildings is filled with daughters—without husbands or boyfriends—raising children under their parents' roofs, according to a Brownell study.

Nearly all of the school's students come from families whose incomes qualify them for free or reduced-price lunch. But "there aren't a lot of hardcore problems here," says Dorothy Sanders, who has taught at Brownell for 15 years. At worst, she says, "Parents on drugs come back home and start to cause a fuss, and you might hear kids cussing in the hallways."

Playwright Charles Moore and Brownell students check some locations on the world map before plunging into their next playwriting venture.
Dating from 1869, Brownell is named for Charles S. Brownell, president of the Board of Education in the town of Lake, where the school first sat. In 1960, when the Dan Ryan was built, the facility was relocated from its site in the highway's path to its present location. Some students still troop across the expressway to get to school. The two-story building, made of pink brick, looks worn. Several letters are missing from the school name affixed to the front wall. Inside, dusty prints by Diego Rivera, George Bellows and Pierre Auguste Renoir hang on the green-tile walls, many gifts of the class of 1956.

Green thumbs

Yet, the building pops with curricular extras. Walk out front in warm weather, and you'll find gardens blooming inside the greenward. Through an outreach of the Chicago Botanic Garden, uppergrade students have planted the north portion with five maple trees, plus roses, daffodils, tulips and 80 different prairie plants.

"The children decided they wanted that area to reflect the trees and gardens native to the Brownell neighborhood," says Elizabeth Tyler, a Botanic Garden staffer who supervised installation of the gardens. To the south, lies plants speaking to the heritage of African Americans—peanuts, cotton, sorghum and more.

Meanwhile, the Botanic Garden and the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service have helped Brownell pupils cultivate an abandoned city lot two blocks away as a vegetable garden; in season it brims with tomatoes, green onions and radishes. A Botanic Garden educator also directs a plant-science curriculum in six Brownell classrooms, each outfitted with a grow lab—lights, pots and seeds—that recall the work of black botanist George Washington Carver.

Another signature of Brownell is playwriting with Charles Michael Moore. An actor, director and playwright based at ETA Creative Arts Foundation on South Chicago Avenue, Moore gets 4th- and 5th-graders to

The Student Body

A small world
Brownell enrolls some 370 youngsters, from prekindergarten through 6th grade. Sixty-five percent of the youngsters are from single-parent homes, according to school officials. 100% black, 94% low-income.

IGAP reading scores are above the city average, but math scores lag behind.

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The Neighborhood

Park Manor and Woodlawn on the South Side
Brownell sits on the western edge of Woodlawn, but the problems of drugs, alcohol abuse and gangs still affect the attendance area. The neighborhood is composed of single-family houses and small brick apartment buildings, kept tidy by the senior citizens—many of them Brownell grandparents—who own them. The school has close ties to two social centers, the Parkway Community House and FORUM.

The Educational Program

Key Objective
To enrich the curriculum with programs—in the arts, science and music—that incorporate several curriculum areas. The goal is to inspire the students to learn more.

Main Changes

✓ Projects in the arts, notably playwriting and opera, conclude with student-generated productions.

✓ A strand of the curricula involving plant science has children cultivating everything from beans in class to full-scale gardens out front.

✓ Parent involvement is up, due to encouragement by the principal and a Fathers' Club.

Charles Malone shows off a spider plant grown in his classroom's grow lab to classmate Eboni Pittman.
brainstorm, research and then pen plays that are mounted twice a year. “We never know where we’re going until we get there,” says Moore, a boom-voiced man of 46 who charms his young Shakespeares into going some interesting work. Last June’s production, staged in ETA’s 200-seat theater, dealt with African Americans from Hannibal to Malcolm X. The June show consisted of vignettes of community life, from a school talent show (featuring an uproarious rap welfare line) to a social center facing extinction without an influx of federal dollars.

Playwriting has turned up as a key ingredient in a consortium among ETA, the Muntu Dance Theatre and seven schools, including Brownell, underwritten by the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE). CAPE, a function of Marshall Field and Co. and 20 other local funders, is backing 13 such consortiums in the city.

As part of last year’s opera project, 4th-graders listened to operas, wrote a research paper (despite a slim amount of children’s literature available on the subject), toured the Lyric Opera of Chicago and saw a road-company version of Johann Strauss’ “Die Fledermaus” at the University of Chicago.

**Opera authors**

In January, the youngsters got down to writing their own opus. Toil in groups, they came up with characters and settings, honed in on the most likely candidates and originated plots. “One had to do with a tall girl and a short girl,” recalls Riopelle. “The short girl wanted to play basketball, but the coach told her she was too short. She solved her problem over the weekend when she found some pills that made her 10 feet tall.” Another story line saw President Clinton coming to Brownell to solve all the problems afflicting the community.

The eventual plot, hammered out by the youngsters, involved a golden bird who couldn’t fly, yet had magical powers. “He would grant wishes to anyone who asked,” says Riopelle. “He was being exploited until a girl named Jasmine [played by Tara Williams] said, ‘I want nothing for myself. I want you to be a normal bird.’” It took music teacher Stephen LaFlora two months to fashion music to go with the students’ libretto, a romantic score that grew more contemporary as the opera progressed. A parent, Theresa Dickens Tucker, did the choreography, and special education students made most of the scenery. “There were many nights when we were at school until 9 or 10 o’clock,” says Riopelle.

“Brownell had always been a very nice school, but everybody was very complacent. I wanted a school that I’d envision sending my own children to.”

—Linda Ford, principal

The programs at Brownell don’t stop with opera. James Stone, president of a Loop management consultant firm, was struck by Savage Inequalities, Jonathan Kozol’s vivid book about the gap in resources between advantaged and poor schools. To test his theory that more material and staff can pull up the disadvantaged, Stone has funneled extra staff and materials into a 2nd- and a 4th-grade classroom at Brownell, as well as two classrooms in the Emmett School in Austin. At Brownell, Stone’s contributions translate into computers, a set of encyclopedias, a couple teacher aides and a chance for teachers and students to interact with Stone. (Ford has especially enjoyed her relationship with the businessman, calling him “my mentor.”)

Character education comes through the Academic Development Institute, a non-profit group based in downtown Lincoln. Brownell also supports a fathers club. Men who live in the neighborhood, as well as dads who don’t, take their children on camping trips to Illinois State Beach Park in Zion and participate in the Field Museum’s “overnights” under the dinosaurs.

It’s easy to see Brownell as a so-called “Christmas tree school,” its skeleton hung haphazardly with programs, but Ford disagrees: “We don’t have any more programs than a magnet school. If we had a title for Brownell, this wouldn’t be an issue. Besides, everything we do is interdisciplinary. Playwriting falls under language arts and social studies. We don’t try anything in science that doesn’t take in several curriculum areas. As long as there’s a thread, a vision, it’s OK to have a zillion programs.” Indeed, the Botanic Garden’s Tyler sees the creation of the Brownell gardens as encompassing social studies, science, spelling, geography, history and math.

Before coming to Brownell, four years ago, Ford, who grew up in Woodlawn, was assistant principal at McDade Classical School. Before that, she was the computer resource teacher at South Loop School as middle-class Dearborn Park parents and nearby residents of public housing battled one another for the facility’s soul. “That’s where I learned diplomacy,” says Ford. “I talked to all the factions.” In the spring of 1991, she was under consideration for principal at two other schools when she decided she wanted the post at Brownell. “When I walked in the door, I just felt I belonged,” she says. “I knew I could do the job.”

To Ford’s mind, the job demanded change. “Brownell had always been a very nice school,” she relates, “but everybody was very complacent. I wanted a school that I’d envision sending my own children to.” Come the fall, she set out to remake the place. She called up Abena Joan Brown, ETA’s president, who had been Ford’s psychology professor at Mundelein College (and whom she now
calls "my political mother") and got the playwriting program going with a $10,000 grant from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

Elizabeth Tyler of the Botanic Gardens says, "She pursued us hard." Adds Anne Reichel, who brought the grow labs into Brownell, "Mrs. Ford knows absolutely what she wants, and she gets it."

Brownell came to James Stone's attention through Ford's husband, Lafayette Ford, chair of the School Board Nominating Commission. Linda Ford insists she does not use her husband's position and connections to benefit Brownell. "I didn't want anybody to know we were married," she says.

Ford's tactic, then as now, is to get outside groups to lend technical assistance or financing—Jim Stone's outlay at Brownell is some $50,000 over three years—rather than to adopt programs that cost Brownell money. "If we need to offset things with Chapter 1 money, we do it," says Ford, "but we prefer not to." Much of the school's roughly $300,000 in Chapter 1 funds support, totally or in part, the school's resource teacher, its librarian/writing teacher and its music teacher, who also teaches math. Chapter 1 also pays for the work of ETA and Urban Gateways at Brownell, as well as such mundane resources as books and supplies.

"We brought in the bulk of the programs during the first year, and everybody was shell-shocked," Ford recalls. Many teachers left for other positions or retired early; today, about half the faculty are new since Ford's arrival. To fill the openings, Ford sought "grownups, people who know who they are," people who are flexible and stay abreast of educational issues. Betty Ladipo, who ran (and still owns) a tutoring center on the North Side, was wooed heavily by Ford, an old acquaintance, and is now Brownell's resource teacher. Both Riopelle and kindergarten teacher Jacqueline Neiman came to Brownell through their involvement in the Chicago Area Writing Project, affiliated with National-Louis University.

As a boss, Ford tends to be disorganized and run late; she rarely encounters a visitor she won't see, if they're willing to wait. "This is why we made a good pair," says Rita Pedone, the assistant principal, who recently left to take over Mt. Greenwood School. "I'm the organizer, and she's the creative, dynamic super-salesman." On the way out the door in October, Pedone had to spend a Saturday afternoon teaching her superior about internal accounts.

Typically, Ford is also tenacious.
"She doesn't let up," says Ladipo. "She

"She doesn't let up. She does it in a quiet manner and with a smile, but she never stops asking."

—Betty Lapido, teacher

does it in a quiet manner and with a smile, but she never stops asking, and when you say 'no,' she comes back with a different rationale on why you should do what she wants."

Notwithstanding, teachers say Ford has fostered a cooperative atmosphere, enlisting them, for instance, in preparing a 100-page school improvement plan, a document that sounds the theme for all the academic disciplines being interrelated. And she has encouraged innovations of teachers' own mak-
at the school, both because nine parents are now employed part-time as aides and because Ford encourages family participation. "Her door is always open," says Marilyn Piggee, the LSC chairman. "She always has time to talk to you."

Enthusiasm for Ford runs high among the outsiders who interact with the school. "She has good judgment and tries out new ideas," says Jim Stone. "She's the kind of manager you'd like in a corporation." Says Arnold Aprill, executive director of the arts partnership, "Linda Ford's a visionary. She understands that the arts can't flourish in isolation."

'Got to move slow'

Such praise makes Ford feel uncomfortable: "We've got to move slow. When people move too fast, the expectations are too great, and you have too far to fall—you won't get a good grade. I want to be this hidden gem of a school, not a place that keeps appearing in the newspapers. I want to get an A—when I'm through."

As she speaks, Riopelle and LaFlora, now teaching opera using a textbook, are planning a second production. Moore's playwriting classes are moving to create a show based on government officials from various states and countries. Ford is looking to freshen the hallways with new art prints. Under a $25,000 beautification grant from the Chicago Community Trust, Brownell is putting a rainforest mural outside, striping the playground and painting a map of the United States on the asphalt. The grant will also pay for replacement letters for the school name in front, where the gardens will bloom again in the spring.

For more information on Brownell School, call Principal Linda Ford or Acting Assistant Principal George Huff at (312) 535-3035. Outside partners include the Chicago Botanic Garden (708) 335-5440, ETA Cultural Arts Foundation (312) 732-3955 and the Academic Development Institute (217) 732-6462.

Grant Pick is a Chicago writer.
The Chicago Public Schools recently released its student performance data for standardized test scores. While I was pleasantly surprised by the overall results of these exams, I also realize that significant improvement is still needed. We can do better. We must do better.

Despite many disruptions last year, Chicago Public School students held their own on these standardized tests. Overall, our elementary school students showed steady progress in their writing skills during the past five years. More than 75 percent of our third graders, 85 percent of our sixth graders, and 62 percent of our eighth graders met or exceeded state standards in writing.

There has been a general increase in the percentage of Chicago students meeting or exceeding state standards in mathematics. About three out of five of our elementary students met or exceeded these standards. And, our elementary school students in third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades have demonstrated a general increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding national norms in reading and math.

However, our students did not show steady progress across the board. Chicago Public School students showed inconsistent progress in reading during the past five years. About half of our sixth and eighth graders met or exceeded state standards in reading. Unfortunately, the percentage of third and tenth graders meeting these standards fell in the last three years. And, our high school students experienced a drop in the percent meeting national norms in reading and math.

There appears to be a significant difference in the performance between our elementary school and high school students. With some exceptions, the overall trend for our elementary school students is generally upward, while the reverse is true for our high school students.

Several strategies already have been put into place to improve academic achievement and test scores for students. These initiatives fall into three basic areas:

- making our operations more effective and efficient;
- establishing measurement and accountability systems; and
- continuing to improve our educational processes.

Work on the Three-Tiered Process: Pathways to Achievement has already begun. The self-analysis guidelines that schools can use to examine their strengths and weaknesses will soon be released. A school’s self-analysis will look at test scores as well as its learning climate, school-community leadership, parent-community partnerships, professional development and student learning experiences.

The Three-Tiered Process uses a holistic approach with a balanced emphasis on improvement processes, school practices, and student outcomes. The intent is to help schools focus energies, obtain the needed support and achieve real results, including improved test scores.

Also a plan for remediation that coordinates with the Three-Tiered Process has been developed. It provides support for some of those schools that are currently in crisis. Subdistrict superintendents have been working with their subdistrict councils to recommend schools for remediation.

The push to improve our test scores and overall student achievement is multifaceted. The Chicago Systemic Initiative is already working with 100 schools to improve their math and science instruction.

And we’re continuing to work with the Chicago Teachers Union on the Learning Outcomes for Improving Teaching and Learning. The test results in writing and math demonstrated the improvements that can be accomplished when subject areas are supported across disciplines. The Learning Outcomes will build upon that success.

A critical question that needs to be asked, however, is how are we working to help high schools? Overall our elementary school students are showing greater progress than our high school students. There is a significant drop between eighth grade and tenth grade scores. We are looking for ways to smooth the transition from elementary school to high school for all students. This past summer, we offered special transition programs to about 800 high risk students who were entering ninth grade. While it is too soon to analyze the results of this effort, anecdotal evidence suggests that these students are making a better transition to high school than was originally expected.

These encouraging results also demonstrate that reform is becoming institutionalized throughout the city. Despite a host of disruptions last year, teachers, LSC members, and parents were able to maintain and focus on instruction that enabled our students to progress. We must continue to build upon that progress.
Dear GOP leaders,

You’ve been with us so far, don’t abandon us now

The following was written as an open letter to Gov. Jim Edgar, Senate President James “Pate” Phillip (R-Wood Dale) and House Speaker-elect Lee Daniels (R-Elmhurst).

by Ken McNeil

The people of this state made a very clear choice on Nov. 8. They chose to complete the transfer of legislative power from the Democratic Party, which began with the Republican capture of the Illinois Senate in 1992. They chose to keep state government under the stewardship of a governor who kept the commitments he made to the voters when he first ran four years ago.

Perhaps most significantly, they chose to end divided government. To a degree not realized at the national level, with the White House still under Democratic control, the people of Illinois have chosen to entrust their future to the leaders of just one party.

In sum, they chose you. Now the campaigning has come to an end, and the difficult job of governing must begin.

From your different vantage points in state government, each one of you has grappled with the seemingly never-ending problems of the Chicago public schools. As you confront the question of what is to be done with this ailing school system, you know that its problems took many years to develop, and have continued in existence for a great many more.

Those problems have included an entrenched and often unresponsive school bureaucracy. They have included strong and predominantly self-interested unions that have up until now maintained a stranglehold on not only the school system, but also certain parts of state government. Middle-class families have largely abandoned the Chicago public school system, leaving behind a large number of poor children who frequently begin their school experience ill-equipped by their background and social circumstances to succeed in the absence of a high-quality school system.

Given these circumstances, we cannot reasonably have expected our local school councils to reverse the situation overnight. This is especially true in light of the obstacles and disruptions school reform has faced.

The initial implementation of school reform was interrupted when the Illinois Supreme Court declared the school reform law invalid. For much of the 1990-91 school year, our movement was plunged into internal chaos as we grappled with the question of how the local school council election process would be refashioned to meet the
demands of the Constitution.
The law required the Chicago Board of Education to implement a systemwide plan for school improvement that would be acceptable to the Chicago School Finance Authority by the beginning of the 1989-90 school year. However, such a plan was not achieved until years later. As non-parties to the plan development and approval process, our local school councils and the school reform, civic and community organizations that support them could do little achievement up to national norms was unrealistic to begin with?
Before rejecting Chicago school reform for more radical approaches, you owe the parents and concerned community residents of our local school councils more time to demonstrate the value of their efforts, especially now that we are finally beginning to make progress. While many instances of this progress could be cited, let me focus on just one: the change in leadership at the central administration.

"We cannot reasonably have expected our local school councils to reverse the situation overnight."

to hurry the conclusion.
And then, last year, the school budget problem dragged on through the first two months of school and into November, causing uncertainty and confusion as schools first opened, then closed, then opened again under a series of temporary court orders. The time and attention we lost in our schools in those first several weeks made it virtually impossible to achieve test results any better than the modest improvements shown in the 1993-94 scores.

When I served in the present administration as a member of Lt. Gov. Kustra's staff, I know that we considered the accomplishments of the governor's first term to be but a good beginning.

A good beginning

The process of turning state government in the right direction would begin with keeping faith with the voters. The governor held the line on taxes as he promised. It would also begin by trimming waste and forcing government to live within its means. However, this was just a beginning.

If it has taken more than four years to accomplish the governor's vision for state government, is it not apparent that with the starting point of reform having been a school system that former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett called "the worst in the nation," a five-year timetable for bringing student

In the brief time that she has been at the helm, Supt. Argie Johnson has brought into her administration some of the best and brightest principals that the early years of reform have produced. Pat Harvey, Carlos Ascoitia and Lula Ford (the superintendent's new executive assistant, assistant superintendent for reform, and assistant superintendent for funded programs, respectively) are school leaders fresh from the trenches in the battle to transform our schools.

The continued promise of Chicago school reform can be seen simply by visiting the schools that these reform principals produced before assuming their new duties. The successes they achieved at Heffrnan, Spry and Beethoven schools bode well for a central administration that can be expected to be much more aware of how site-based management can be made to work at the local school level.

You have been school reform's allies in many fights over the years to increase principals' authority over school personnel, make schools and teachers more accountable for their performance, and shift the locus of power from central office to the local school level. I believe that this alliance can be maintained in the difficult months ahead if state and school reform leaders will make a genuine effort to reconcile their differing perspectives on (1) the state of Chicago school reform and (2) the question of whether more radical approaches to reform are necessary.

For your part, before you reach any conclusion that Chicago school reform cannot succeed in its present form, you must visit Heffrnan, Spry and Beethoven to witness for yourselves the progress that school reform is poised to achieve under new leadership at the central administration. You should also examine the work that Supt. Johnson has initiated to dramatically restructure the central administration to support reform.

For our part, the school reform movement must be more receptive to experimentation with alternative approaches to reform. We must be prepared to work with you to fashion reasonable criteria for experimentation with concepts such as charter schools, learning zones and the grouping of schools into smaller administrative districts. I propose that those criteria should include at least the following elements:

- The authority of local school councils over local school operations should

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Letters

Article wrong on PURE's remediation stand

Michael Klionsky's article in the November 1994 issue of CATALYST ("Schools to share $20 million pool") incorrectly suggests that Parents United for Responsible Education resists remediation of schools. In fact, we were pleased when Pat Harvey, executive assistant to the superintendent, asked us to share our position on criteria for identifying schools needing remediation.

We have also developed a user-friendly "tip sheet" for subdistrict council members to use as they consider schools in crisis. Our overall concern has been that the criteria and process used in remediation be consistent with the School Reform Act rather than a reflection of political or personal conflicts. Remediation has been an element of the reform law since 1989, and we agree with Gen. Supt. Argie Johnson that it is time schools in crisis begin to receive the support this law provides.

Julie Woesthoff, associate director Parents United for Responsible Education
100 schools get math, science money

by Lynnette Richardson

By the time students graduate from 8th grade, they should have completed a full year of algebra; by the time they graduate from high school, they should have finished three years of math and three years of laboratory science.

These are among the goals of the Chicago Systemic Initiative (CSI), a five-year, $15 million effort funded by the National Science Foundation as part of a nationwide campaign to upgrade math and science teaching in urban school districts. The foundation also wants to see more minority students represented in math and science courses, regardless of the career choices they make.

"We are striving to create a new science and mathematics paradigm that becomes the existing [school] system, rather than an appendage to it," says Luther Williams, the National Science Foundation's assistant director for education and human resources.

Eight other cities are receiving five-year, $15 million grants from the foundation: Baltimore, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, El Paso (Tex.), Miami/Dade County, New York City and Phoenix.

This school year, 100 Chicago schools will each receive $7,000 in CSI funds to train a design team that will plan how to upgrade math and science teaching in order to meet the project's goals. Next year, another 200 schools are to join the effort.

By the 1997-98 school year, all schools are scheduled to have received training and planning money. Subdistrict superintendents select the schools each year, mainly on the basis of applications.

In Chicago, each school must earmark an additional $14,000 to $18,000 to help pay for the training of a design team, staff development and materials needed to put its plans into place. The money can come from its budgets, from grants or in the form of "in-kind" contributions (e.g., free services).

Blondean Davis, superintendent of Subdistrict 10 on the Far South Side, says that should not be a problem. "There's already a lot of money for technology development and hands-on science and math," she says, noting state and federal grants, state Chapter 1 and the $10-per-pupil allocation the Chicago Board of Education made to schools from last year's surplus.

Nine schools in Subdistrict 10 are among the first-round participants, and all are working with the Teachers Academy for Mathematics and Science—"because we think we need a coordinated focus in terms of our staff development," Davis explains.

Davis intends for all students in her subdistrict to take an introductory algebra course by 6th grade. Schools are developing a mathematics "track" that begins in preschool.

At Pullman Elementary School, a Subdistrict 10 school, Principal Mary Goosby says the design team has come up with a list of 21 goals for its first year in the CSI project, including identifying new computer software for classroom use, having the Teachers Academy conduct a workshop for parents on at-home math instruction, and having some teachers go back to school to become certified in math and science.

On the north side of the city, Amundsen High School Principal Edward Klunk is pushing for his local school council to raise the school's math and science graduation requirements again.

The Board of Education requires only two years of math and one year of science or two years of science and one year of math. Three years ago, Amundsen upped its requirement to two years each of math and science, necessitating the hiring of five additional science teachers. Now, Klunk would like to see the requirements go to three and three.

"We had already been doing things to improve science and math scores," he says. "CSI is going to help me do more of those things."

In general, Klunk believes that CSI is a boon to neighborhood schools.
because it will help them compete for higher achieving students.

Other high school principals contacted by CATALYST, however, said they didn’t think they had the authority to increase their school’s graduation requirements. Adrian Beverly, assistant superintendent of instructional support, assures that they do. “Schools have been changing their requirements all over the city,” he says.

Whitney Young Magnet High on the Near West Side already requires three years each of math and science. But Principal Powhatan Collins says CSI will give his school the opportunity to improve the way that science and math are taught, and to increase science and math requirements to four years each.

Amundsen and the nine other high schools selected for the first round of CSI grants are working together and have selected a design team with members from each school.

Jesse Butts, principal of Lovett Elementary in Austin, says CSI “gives staff the chance to sit down and meet together to work on improvement plans without doing it because of a crisis.” But, she adds, “We need ongoing administrative support for detailed things,” like selecting computer software.

To keep schools informed about the project, the School Board will make available copies of a videotape of a recent public access cable TV broadcast about CSI. Also, a CSI newsletter will debut in December.

The board also will provide information—in both English and Spanish—on consultants, workshops, staff development and student services, says Eric Hamilton, a Loyola University math professor who is on loan to the board to work on CSI.

For more information about CSI, contact Adrian Beverly at (312) 535-8850.

Grant Briefs

Chicago Community Trust
$125,000 to Community Youth Creative Learning Experience (CYCLE) for support of the Future Teachers of Chicago program.

$64,000 to the Teachers’ Task Force for general operating support.

$40,000 to Mid-Town Educational Foundation for general operating support.

$30,000 to the Chicago Metro History Education Center to pay for a program coordinator for the Latino History Project.

Northern Trust Bank
$31,500 to CYCLE for a dozen $750 scholarships, plus $2,500 for administration costs.

$10,000 to the Inner City Educational and Recreation Foundation for scholarships for students in ABLA Homes.

$10,000 to the Chicago Panel on School Policy for support for technical assistance and information programs.

$8,500 to Erie Neighborhood Home Team for a tutoring program for Wells Academy High School students.

$6,000 to Leakeatek for a Preliteracy for Preschoolers Program.

$5,000 to Chicago United for the Family Learning Centers Project.

$3,500 to the Teachers’ Task Force for general operating support.

$3,500 to Youth Communication for general operating support.

$3,000 to the Chicago Area Writing Project for general operating support.

$2,500 to Cabrini Connections for a tutoring/mentoring program for disadvantaged youth.

$2,500 to the Young Chicago Authors for general operating support.

Sara Lee Foundation
$15,000 to Harper High School for general operating support.

$10,000 to the Citizens Scholarship Foundation for college scholarships to Harper High students.

$7,500 to Aspire, Inc. for general operating support.

$7,500 to Junior Achievement to support programs for low-income Chicago public school students.

$5,000 to the Chicago Panel on School Policy for general operating support.

$5,000 to Designs for Change for general operating support.

$5,000 to the Golden Apple Foundation for Excellence in Teaching to support Chicago public school students in the Scholars Program.

Harris Bank Foundation
$10,000 to the Chicago Panel on School Policy for general operating support.

$10,000 to Designs for Change for general operating support.

$5,000 to Chicago Cities in Schools for general operating support.

$5,000 to the Fund for Educational Reform for general operating support.

$5,000 to the Citizens Schools Committee for general operating support.

Chicago Youth Success Foundation
$65,000 to 13 Chicago public high schools to support athletic and co-curricular programs. The schools are: Austin, Bowen, Calumet, Clemente, Collins, Fenger, Hyde Park, Kelly, Lakeview, Marshall, Mather, Roosevelt and Wells.

Wieboldt Foundation
$5,000 to the Fund for Educational Reform for general operating support.

$10,000 to Parents United for Responsible Education for general operating support.

$5,000 to West Side Communities Organizing for Restructuring and Planning (WSCORP) for general operating support.

Fel-Pro Mecklenburger Foundation
$5,000 to the Fund for Educational Reform to provide grants to organizations to train LSCs and improve operations of governance.

$5,000 to the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (through the Illinois Alliance for Arts Education) to plan and deliver arts-integrated curriculum through innovative approaches. Another $7,500 for grants to neighborhood partnerships.

$3,000 to Chicago Neighborhood Organizing Project for Working Together to Succeed in School, a parent and student training program.

$2,500 to Academic Development Institute for the Alliance for Achievement Network to enhance implementation of school reform through teacher training and parent support programs.

$1,500 to Good News partners for the Intercessor Reading Clinic at Gale Community Academy, a year-round school.

$1,000 to Chicago Metro-History Education Center for expanded teacher training, curriculum development and literacy programs integrated with the annual metropolitan fair.

Grants is a cooperative project of CATALYST and the Donors Forum of Chicago. It was compiled by Lynnette Richardson.
Chicago, Not Hartford, Should Lead the Nation on Education

By Deborah Walsh, Director
Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center

Since all the hoopla here in Chicago over the Hartford School System's hiring of the private management firm, Education Alternatives Inc. (EAI), several very telling things have happened. First, right after the deal was announced, EAI proclaimed that it had made a mistake in reporting the test scores in the nine Baltimore schools it runs. The scores turned out to be worse than they thought. An innocent mistake? A deception to secure the Hartford deal? Possibly. Firms like EAI do not have to operate by the "open meetings" requirement and other checks put on public administration. More bureaucratic? Maybe. But however imperfect, mechanisms do exist to protect public dollars.

Following this incident, we heard about the downfall of Chris Whittle, head of the Edison Project and major competitor of EAI. While Whittle was being accused of unchecked fraud and mismanagement, his empire backers, who were intended to run public schools, started to mysteriously disappear. These fly-by-night operations are driven by profit, not principle, with no guarantees they’ll be around tomorrow.

All of this brings us to the real issue — why desperate board of education members and others try to find magic bullets, only for them to explode later. Our children aren't achieving to the levels necessary to succeed in today's workforce. Despite our efforts to justify poor performance, most children are not learning to read critically or think mathematically and scientifically. Painting the walls, searching the budget for fat and firing teacher aides — all cuts that EAI proposes — are not going to make the difference we need.

In their recent book, Thinking for a Living, former U.S. Department of Labor secretary Ray Marshall and co-author Marc Tucker offer a set of principles for restructuring American education which merit serious attention:

1. Establish clear academic goals for students and use international standards as a reference point. (For instance, 25 percent of Canadians know as much chemistry as only one percent of Americans. Why can't we achieve this?)

2. Create an accurate measurement of progress toward these goals.

3. Push the decisions concerning curriculum and instructional strategy down to the school level. (Chicago's reforms set the stage for this, however, roles of faculty are still more "advisory" than of professional control.)

4. Reward school staffs who produce strong student progress. (If we desire fundamental change, then we need to provide incentives by rewarding staff members for investing themselves deeply in the slow, painful, scary process and then producing results.)

5. Ensure the financial resources to get the job done. (We must use existing resources more effectively while, at the same time, fight for essential increased school funds.)

6. Abolish all rules and regulations except human and civil rights. (While we wouldn't go this far, the Chicago Teachers Union has one of the only waiver clauses in the country that allows faculty to make changes in the contract if there's a majority in favor.)

7. Set higher performance standards for the education profession. (We are proposing a professional graduate school which will offer a masters degree in teacher leadership and education reform. Our contract also has a little known clause that gives incompetent teachers 45 days to improve or be released.)

8. Provide the necessary training. (A teaching force of 23,000 requires a deep commitment, one we haven't yet made, to investing in the infinitely skilled teaching reform requires.)

9. Organize employers and colleges to reward student performance. (The teaching profession must do its part but society must also play an active role in making it worthwhile for students to stay in school and work hard. Currently, there are no rewards for good work and attendance. What if transcripts really counted in getting a job? What if every student who needed a job could have one with pay based on effort and achievement?)

The issue of incentives for schools, teachers and students for the hard work of change is a neglected one. The dialogue on these issues are critical if we are serious about children having the quality of education that right now only about 15 percent are getting.

Our challenge is to make enormous improvements in educational achievement. We must give our children an education of value.

Reader correspondence is invited. Write to the CTU Quest Center, 222 Merchandise Mart Plaza, Suite 400, Chicago 60654.
MICHIGAN

Charter law overturned. A Michigan judge has ruled that the state’s charter school law is unconstitutional because it usurps the state’s power to oversee public schools, according to an article in the Nov. 9 Education Week.

The ruling jeopardizes the fate of eight charter schools that had been given final approval by the state’s superintendent of education, Robert Schiller. The eight charters had received start-up loans to allow them to open, but now cannot receive state aid because of the decision by Ingham County Circuit Court Judge William E. Collette.

Michigan’s charter law, enacted last year, gave public universities, community colleges and local school districts the power to grant charters. But the lawsuit that prompted Collette’s ruling charged that granting such powers to institutions other than the state Board of Education sidestepped its authority to oversee public schools. The suit also argued that the new charter schools would not meet the state constitution’s definition of a public school as one that is “ultimately and immediately” controlled by a local school board.

Proponents of the charter law disagreed, countering that the new charter schools would be under public control because the entities given power to grant charters are either elected by the public or appointed by elected officials.

Gov. John Engler, a champion of the law, plans to appeal the ruling.

The lawsuit was filed by the Michigan Education Association, several members of the state School Board and the Michigan Council About Parochiaid, an organization that advocates the strict separation of church and state. The suit was filed soon after the Berlin-Orange Township School Board approved a charter for the Noah Webster Academy, a computer network of home-schooling families that espoused a strict “back-to-basics” curriculum combined with instruction in morals. (See CATALYST, Elsewhere, June 1994.)

State Supt. Schiller recently denied final approval for the Webster Academy’s charter, saying the network did not qualify as a public school because students are not taught at a single site and are not necessarily taught by certified instructors.

BALTIMORE

Private venture under fire. A private, for-profit school management firm has come under fire because of declining test scores at eight schools the firm runs, according to articles in the Oct. 18-20 Baltimore Sun.

Opponents of the private-management venture called on the city and the School Board to pull the plug on the five-year, $140-million contract with Minneapolis-based Education Alternatives Inc., known as EAI.

Critics also charged that the board knowingly misled the public by reporting in June that test scores at the eight schools were on the upswing. At the time, EAI was in the midst of negotiating a contract to manage the entire 32-school district in Hartford, Conn., and critics said the board reported the misleading data to help bolster EAI’s chances to win the contract.

Several school officials reported attending meetings at which administrators discussed “extremely discouraging” test results and how to present those results in the best light.

“Everybody knew the results were disastrous, and the idea was to go public and put the school system’s spin on it before anybody else got a hold of the results,” one unidentified source told the Sun.

Reading scores at six of the eight EAI-managed schools declined an average of 2.6 points, math scores at two schools fell an average of 1.1 points, and language arts scores at three schools declined an average of 1.6 points. (Baltimore students must take the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, for which scores are reported on a scale of 1 to 99, with 50 as the average.)

Linda Prudente, spokesperson for the Baltimore Teachers Union, said the finding “sends up a lot of red flags to us because we have long been concerned with the lack of oversight for these schools. There’s nobody minding the store. There’s nobody watching so [EAI] can do anything they want.”

Mayor Kurt Schmoke said he would end the venture as early as next school year if scores continued to decline and if an independent evaluation by the University of Maryland, scheduled for spring 1995, fails to show progress.

School Supt. Walter G. Amprey, however, said test scores are only one measure of student progress and blamed "special interests and politics" for jumping too hastily to end the venture.

Phillip E. Geiger, EAI divisional president, said the company plans to release more detailed test data for the eight schools, documenting how many students had improved test scores and how many students had declining scores.

NEW YORK CITY

Bilingual failings? A New York City Board of Education report has found that non-English-speaking students who take most of their classes in English learn English much more quickly and perform better academically than students in traditional bilingual programs, according to an article in the Oct. 20 New York Times.

"At all grade levels, students served
in ESL-only (English As A Second Language) programs exited their programs faster than those served in bilingual programs," the report stated.

In ESL programs, students receive instruction primarily in English; in bilingual programs, students receive some English instruction, but most teaching is conducted in a student’s native language. Students enter ESL programs only if their school has no bilingual program in their native language, or if their parents opt for it.

Overall, about 79 percent of students who entered ESL classes in kindergarten gained enough English fluency to test out of the program in three years, compared to 51 percent of students who entered bilingual classes in kindergarten.

**Difference among groups**

Students who tested out of ESL programs within three years consistently scored higher on the city's reading comprehension exam than their peers in bilingual programs, reports an article on the same report in the Nov. 2 Education Week. But after four years, former bilingual students scored as well or better than former ESL students.

The report also found that students from different cultures learn English at varying rates, most likely because parents from different cultures place more value on having children learn English.

Overall, about 9 of 10 Korean and Russian students, and 8 of 10 Chinese students, tested out of both ESL and bilingual programs within three years. But only 6 of 10 Creole-speaking students and 5 of 10 Spanish-speaking students tested out in the same time.

The report angered some bilingual education advocates, who criticized it for focusing primarily on how quickly students learn to speak English.

"They've skewed the results by looking only at those measures," said Migdalia Romero, a professor at Hunter College of the City University of New York. "The effects of bilingual education don't show up right away, they're long-term."

However, Schools Chancellor Ramon C. Cortines said the report represents only the initial results from an ongoing study of the effectiveness of programs serving limited-English-proficient students.

**DETROIT**

**Bonds for new schools.** In a surprise victory, voters have approved a $1.5 billion bond issue that will pay for new schools and new technology for students, according to an article in the Nov. 16 Education Week.

The bond issue is the largest ever passed by a school district; it won without the support of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, Mayor Dennis Archer and other city leaders.

Supporters relied on a grassroots campaign. "We went door to door. We telephone banked. We went school to school, church to church—everything," said Delores Smith, head of the Citizens for Bond Committee. "We felt our schools needed to be brought up to the 21st century so that our children would have the same opportunity as any other children throughout the state."

The Committee encouraged voters to visit schools to see for themselves the rundown conditions students face.

However, the head of the teachers union and the president of the city’s Chamber of Commerce said they still question whether the Board of Education will manage the bond money wisely.

**NEVADA**

**Pass test or lose job.** A judge has ruled that the state Board of Education has the right to require that teachers pass a basic academic skills test before receiving a state teaching license or getting a license renewed, according to the Nov. 2 Education Week.

The ruling came in response to a lawsuit filed by the Clark County Teachers Association after a group of about 60 teachers from across the state failed the test and were in danger of losing their jobs.

The suit argued that the exam was designed to test the skills of new, not experienced, teachers and that the test included material that is irrelevant to teachers’ actual work.

The suit had asked the court to ban state education officials from requiring experienced teachers to take the test as part of the license renewal process, and from denying a license to a teacher solely because the teacher failed.

But District Court Judge Don P. Chaires said teachers who failed the test will have until June 15, 1995, either to pass it or to complete related college courses. After June 15, teachers who don’t meet either of those requirements will lose their licenses and their jobs.

**NEW YORK CITY**

**Whittle’s woes.** School districts are beginning to balk at signing contracts with the Edison Project, a for-profit school management venture launched by media entrepreneur Chris Whittle, according to an article in the Oct. 24 Wall Street Journal.

So far, the firm has only one contract in hand—to run a new elementary school in Mt. Clemens, Mich. And Edison has not yet received the financial commitments it needs to launch more new schools next year. Meanwhile, Whittle has been forced to sell off parts of his media empire, including the controversial in-school television venture, Channel One.

"There’s no doubt that I personally thought this was going to move faster," said Chester E. Finn, a nationally known school voucher advocate who, along with six other executives, recently resigned from Edison.

Rodney LeBoeuf, school superintendent of Charleston County, S.C., said he ended negotiations with Edison this past summer after the firm failed to release financial data he requested. Deals also have collapsed or are in jeopardy in Texas, Colorado and Ohio. In Massachusetts, two of three prospective Edison schools slated to open next year have not yet found sites.

However, school officials in Wichita, Kan., remain committed to having Edison take over a few schools in 1995, according to an article in the Nov. 16 Education Week. "It would be unfair to public education if we don't get a chance to try," said Supt. Larry R. Vaughn.

Chicago School Board President D. Sharon Grant said in October that she has had informal talks with Edison about launching a pilot project here. (See CATALYST, Updates, November 1994.)
'You can’t create new districts that are more segregated'

by Lorraine Forte

Dividing the Chicago public school system into smaller, separate districts—as Republicans recently proposed—would violate federal civil rights laws, according to three experts.

"You can't create new districts that are more [racially] segregated than the old one," said Thomas Glass, professor of educational administration at Northern Illinois University (NIU). "You can just kiss that idea right off."

Given Chicago's racially segregated housing patterns, "it's obvious that [more segregation] would be the effect," said Gary Orfield, a former Chicagoan who is now director of the Harvard University Project on School Desegregation. "That... would put the state at risk of a lawsuit."

Courts have interpreted the federal Civil Rights Act as prohibiting the creation of new, more segregated districts, agreed Jeffrey Sharman, a professor at DePaul University's School of Law and an expert on constitutional and civil rights law.

In 1971, the Michigan Legislature, as part of a financial bailout for Detroit's public schools, carved up the system, creating eight semiautonomous districts that were more segregated. The Detroit Board of Education sued the state on civil rights grounds, eventually winning its case before the U.S. Supreme Court, Orfield said. The area districts were soon abandoned for other reasons.

Also, Sharman noted, any attempt to create racially integrated districts in Chicago likely would lead to strangely-shaped districts that the U.S. Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional in minority voting-rights cases.

It's unclear whether a plan to divide up the district could pass legal muster if the current busing program were maintained or a new one designed in order to achieve integration.

"It would put them in a vastly stronger position," Orfield said. "But it seems to me that it's hard to keep these [complex] plans from falling apart." In the Detroit case, the district did not have a busing plan in place when the school system sued the state.

Glass contends that Chicago could legally be split up—but only if school districts from surrounding Cook County were included in the plan. That move would add more white students to the mix and create new districts that would be no more segregated—and probably substantially more integrated—than the current city system, which is 12 percent white and 88 percent minority. Political reality, however, pretty much rules out that alternative, since suburban politicians aren't likely to go along with it.

Township school districts?

A GOP proposal to break up the district came to light recently when Gov. Jim Edgar's staff acknowledged that Edgar is considering using the boundaries of Chicago's eight townships as the boundaries of eight new school districts. (The city's townships are little-known configurations used for property tax assessments.)

Lt. Gov. Bob Kustra gave the idea a lukewarm reception, while Mayor Richard M. Daley, mayoral challenger Joseph Gardner, the Chicago Teachers Union and Supt. Arig Johnson went on record opposing it.

Mike Cys, spokesman for House Majority Leader-elect Lee Daniels (R-Elmhurst), acknowledged there are desegregation concerns with any plan.

"When it comes to actually implementing it, it's a very complicated process."

Dividing the system would also create serious problems of funding equity, Cys and others noted. Under the township plan, the downtown district would be the richest in the state, while two others would be among the poorest.

Cys conceded that a breakup "may not be the most feasible choice." Alternatives such as charter schools and learning zones will be on the table as well.

Bureaucracy is another concern.

When the Detroit schools were carved up into eight districts in 1971, the new districts remained under the control of a central administration and school board and operated under a single teachers union contract. However, each area district had its own elected school board—whose top vote-getters sat on the citywide board—and a new assistant superintendent and business manager.

The plan was scrapped—by a 4-to-1 margin in a referendum—after about 10 years, when interest groups across the political spectrum conceded the experiment had been "a disaster," said Jeffrey Mirel, associate professor of education at NIU and the author of a recent book on Detroit schools, The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System.

Test scores remained low, Mirel said, and the public felt the area school boards were nothing more than a breeding ground for would-be politicians.

The biggest controversy arose when some area districts tried to transfer white teachers to other districts "because they felt they couldn't teach black kids," Mirel said. The transfer plan precipitated "the worst strike in the history of the city," lasting 43 days. "After that, things were never the same."
Failing Schools

continued from page 1

fires under subdistrict superintendents to get them moving on the issue.

As one subdistrict office worker who answered a CATALYST telephone query said: "Oh yes—remediation. That's got everyone in a spin around here."

Under the Reform Act, subdistrict superintendents, with the approval of their subdistrict councils, are responsible for taking action on schools that are not living up to school improvement plans. So far, though, no subdistrict superintendent has risked singling out a school.

Now, under a directive from Johnson, subdistrict superintendents are drawing up lists of schools as part of a campaign to bring sorely needed training and resources to struggling schools. Under the law, poorly performing local school councils, principals and teachers eventually could be replaced, and schools even could be closed.

"We have already identified three schools in our district," says Alan J. Smith Jr., superintendent in Subdistrict 4, who calls the process "intervention—not remediation." But, Smith adds, "Names of schools won’t be turned in until January." The next step, he says, will be to visit LSC meetings at these schools and help develop an improvement plan.

The three schools are being targeted, Smith says, because "they were in disarray." At one school, a new principal needs assistance in handling some rocky relationships with the local school council, Smith says. (Eighteen of the 45 schools in Subdistrict 4 have new principals this year.) Test scores were considered, he says, but they were not the main measure. "If scores were used as the main criterion, out of 45 schools in my subdistrict, I would have to pick 40 for remediation."

James Deanes, a member of the Subdistrict 4 Council, says he supports the remediation process, "as long as all factors, not just test scores, are considered, and as long as help is offered to the schools." He maintains that some principals are looking forward to remediation so they can get outside help. However, principals of several possible remediation targets, contacted by CATALYST, said they knew nothing about the process.

In August, Supt. Johnson launched a hurried, if low-key effort that would have had central office draw up its criteria for placing dozens of dysfunctional schools on remediation. However, Johnson changed direction after a Sept. 27 meeting of subdistrict superintendents, subdistrict council chairs and school reformers, convened to discuss her plan. Reform group members expressed skepticism at any plan for top-down intervention by the board.

Rodney Esteban of Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE), for example, argued that the steps for remediating schools already exist in the Reform Act and that no new plan was necessary. PURE's associate director, Julie Woestehoff, said she would like to see "equal emphasis placed on remediating subdistricts which are not performing" since subdistrict councils are required by law to monitor the progress of their schools. Had they done so, said Woestehoff, "schools might be five years farther along in improvements."

Pat Harvey, the former Heffernan Elementary School principal who is becoming Johnson's get-things-done trouble shooter in central office, agreed that the Reform Act provides the criteria for remediation. But behind the discussion of criteria was a lack of confidence some reformers have in the board's ability to help schools.

However, PURE's Woestehoff also said she was concerned about some subdistrict superintendents who have been unwilling to remEDIATE schools because "it would make them look bad by exposing problems in their own subdistricts." She also warned that subdistrict superintendents could use the remediation process as a political weapon against LSCs they don't agree with. "That's why we should stick to the letter of the reform law and try to help them rather than punish them."

In a "Tip Sheet for Subdistrict Councils," PURE warns against remediation being used as a punishment: "Be very sure that this recommendation is not directed at one side or another of a political conflict at the school. Watch out for issues such as unpopular LSC decisions, references to personality conflicts, unsubstantiated accusations, etc.

Subdistrict 1 Supt. Joan Ferris, for one, doesn't think punishment will be an issue. "First of all," she says, "the criteria for remediation are clearly spelled out. I have to show my [council] that there is a need for remediation based on things like a failed school..."

What the law says

Under the Chicago School Reform Act, there are four criteria for placing a school on remediation:

- Failure to develop or implement a school improvement plan.
- Failure to make adequate progress toward complying with a school improvement plan.
- Failure or refusal to comply with its school improvement plan.
- Failure or refusal to comply with the Reform Act, other laws, union contracts, court orders or board rules.

A remediation plan may provide for the subdistrict superintendent to mediate disputes, apply to the School Board for additional money for local school council training, direct implementation of a school improvement plan or develop a new plan.

If this process fails, the school may be placed on probation, which requires a plan "to correct deficiencies specified by the Board." If, after one year, the school fails to make adequate progress, the board may call for new LSC elections, replace the principal or faculty members or close the school.

"DS’s are being put in the impossible situation of having to place on remediation the same people who offer them a contract."

—School Board insider (name withheld on request)
improvement plan or dysfunctions in other areas. Secondly, the subdistrict council wouldn’t allow remediation to be used as a punishment. They must approve of any remediation plans.”

At a Nov. 17 Subdistrict 1 Council meeting, about 150 attendees heard Ferris’ report on remediation, which did not name any schools. Council Chair Charles Fanucchi told the gathering that a committee had been looking at potential problem schools for years, but never recommended any schools for remediation. “We were always able to intervene and help solve problems before remediation was necessary,” Fanucchi said.

Jobs, schools on the line

Until now, many district superintendents have objected to the remediation process. As one put it: “Why single out one bad school over any other?” Others, like District 7’s Donald Pless, responded cautiously, saying only, “I support the superintendent.” The subject is a touchy one and, unlike matters involving personnel, where a council can meet in closed session, schools must be evaluated in public sessions; anyone, including the press, can attend. Still, an air of secrecy prevails because reputations, jobs and even the existence of schools are at stake.

One new principal whose school is being considered for remediation told CATALYST that he hadn’t been notified by his subdistrict superintendent about any formal process. “This bothers me,” he said, adding that he would welcome remediation if it brought more resources and outside help to his school.

Central office has greater leverage to force subdistrict superintendents to act since legislation last year gave the general superintendent a voice in the renewal of subdistrict superintendents’ contracts. Under the new law, the general superintendent of schools, as well as subdistrict councils, evaluates subdistrict superintendents. And a subdistrict council cannot renew its superintendent’s contract if the general superintendent gives him or her a negative evaluation.

Failure to carry out the remediation process now could lead to bad ratings, which could lead to loss of a job. “The problem,” said one subdistrict council member, “is that Johnson’s enthusiasm for remediation doesn’t carry over to the subdistrict councils.” In other words, some subdistrict superintendents are going to have to decide which evaluation means more—their council’s or their superintendent’s. As one resistant subdistrict superintendent told CATALYST: “I don’t work for them [central office], I work for the schools in my district.”

Subdistrict superintendents, noted one board insider, “are being put in the impossible situation of having to place on remediation the same people who offer them a contract.”

For a copy of PURE’s “Tip Sheet,” call (312) 784-PURE.

Test scores mixed

Math test scores rose and reading scores declined for Chicago public school students in 1993-94.

As educators point out, test scores typically fluctuate slightly, making year-to-year comparisons tricky. Since reform began in 1989, however, math scores have generally increased while reading scores have declined. Elementary writing scores have consistently gone up.

Science tests were first given in 1992-93, while social studies tests were first given in 1993-94, so no trends have yet emerged.

Overall, Chicago’s scores remain far below state averages.

This year, the Illinois State Board of Education refined its methodology for calculating elementary reading and math scores; the 1994 scores shown below were recalculated by the Chicago Board of Education in order to be comparable to 1993.

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New federal Title I law addresses many Chicago gripes

by Michael Selinker

Beginning next school year, Chicago schools will have more flexibility in using their federal money, thanks to the Improving America's Schools Act.

The act, which returned Chapter 1 to its original name of Title I, makes it easier for schools to use federal money for schoolwide programs and paves the way for schools to pool different kinds of so-called categorical funding for use in comprehensive programs. It also paves the way for removing the penalty for improved test scores; currently, schools whose scores rise can lose some of their money.

Last school year, about half of Chicago's public schools shared $168 million from Title I, the nation's largest federal education program. This year's allocation will be the same, but after that, Chicago might receive a slight increase.

"In general, people here are really excited about the directions this legislation is going," says Anne Hallett, executive director of the Cross-City Campaign for Urban School Reform. "The progressive philosophy, the increased flexibility and the increased use of schoolwide funds give us a chance to get away from the segregation of poor children [within a school]."

Currently, only schools whose enrollment is more than 75 percent low income can use federal Title I funds schoolwide; because of the way the Chicago Board of Education determines low income, relatively few Chicago schools qualify. (See CATALYST, February 1993.) The vast majority have to put qualifying students into separate classes, which many educators believe stigmatize and discourage low-achieving children.

Next school year, the low-income threshold for schoolwide use drops to 60 percent; the year after, to 50 percent—encompassing most Chicago schools that receive Title I money.

Schools also will be able to apply through the Chicago Board of Education to the U.S. Department of Education for permission to combine different types of federal funding for comprehensive programs. Currently, for instance, students receiving help through federal bilingual funds cannot also be helped through Title I. In the future, a school might be able to use its federal bilingual and Title I funds to help the same students.

"Schools don't have to worry about proving that they're spending each and every dollar they receive on serving this [Title I-eligible] population," says Charles Barone, an advisor to Sen. Paul Simon (D-III.), who promoted many changes in the education law.

"The way the regulations get written [determines] whether this legislation is constructive or destructive for Chicago schools."

—Anthony Bryk, Consortium on Chicago School Research

In calling for "high-quality assessments and standards" in at least eight subject areas, the new federal law also points toward a testing program different from what Chicago currently uses. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, which Chicago has used for decades, are multiple-choice and focused on basic skills. Anthony Bryk, co-director of the Consortium on Chicago School Research and an advisor to Supt. Argie Johnson, even wonders whether the state ICTAP tests, which focus more on critical analysis skills, will suffice.

While the new law has set a direction, the precise impact on schools will not be known until the U.S. Department of Education issues regulations. In an uncharacteristic move, the department sent notices across the country asking for input, especially on testing and schoolwide funding. But the department expects all opinions by the end of the year.

A gathering of Chicago education heavyweights has formed to respond to this solicitation; it includes leaders from Cross-City, Parents United for Responsible Education, the Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the Illinois State Board of Education. In addition, Bryk is working with the Washington-based Council of Great City Schools to inform the department on urban concerns, such as easing bureaucratic regulations on use of schoolwide funding.

"Whatever they do on this creates policy for the Chicago Board of Education, since we have so many poor kids," Bryk says. "The way the regulations get written goes a long way toward determining whether this legislation is constructive or destructive for Chicago schools. I think Chicago should become more active in influencing this to make it more progressive toward what we've been doing in school reform, rather than wait for the federal government to give us rules on top of what we are already doing."

President Bill Clinton and some Democrats had wanted to shift substantially more Title I money into densely low-income school districts like Chicago, taking the funds from wealthier districts like Schaumburg. On the eve of an election, however, Congress balked, earmarking only a small amount of new money for such targeting. As a result, Illinois might get an increase of less than 2 percent for the 1996-97 school year.

Clinton also wanted to punish states, like Illinois, that spend relatively little on education per taxpayer. Again, Congress passed only a watered-down version of his proposal. At this point, the possible impact on Illinois is unclear.

Mike Selinker is a Chicago writer.
OPINIONS
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be maintained, but under circumstances that make them more accountable for school improvement. The continuation of local school councils is not inconsistent with any of the alternative approaches to school reform that have come out of the Republican caucuses in recent years. (For example, the charter school bill that was introduced last year required LSC consent to the granting of any particular charter.) However, the remediation and sanctions provisions of the School Reform Act must be revisited to make them more effective when individual councils have proven themselves incapable of moving their schools forward. (See related story on page 1.)

- State Chapter 1 funds must continue to be utilized to support the supplemental programs of the local school councils. These funds are the lifeblood of reform. If these funds were taken away, our local school councils would be utterly without the means to create the supplemental programs that have begun to transform their schools.

- Any further reforms must be subject to the State Mandates Act. In essence, the State Mandates Act prohibits state government from imposing unfunded mandates on local governments. During his first term, Gov. Edgar consistently applied this rule to the legislation submitted to him for his signature. This recognition of the proper relationship between state and local government must be continued. Indeed, much of the financial difficulty now besetting the Chicago public schools can be traced to the specific exemption of the reform law from the requirements of the act.

- Any further reforms must be piloted before broad-scale implementation. This is the approach we took with Project Success, one of the more promising of the governor’s education initiatives of the first term. Piloting the present school reform effort in a small number of schools would have uncovered some of the more difficult obstacles we have faced in implementing site-based management.

The people of Illinois have chosen you. Unified control of state government under Republican leadership now offers you a rare opportunity to enter Illinois history not merely as successful politicians, but as statesmen who led a healthy and vibrant Illinois into the 21st century. To do so, however, you must strive to become leaders for all of the people of this great state, including the families served by the Chicago public schools.

We who have toiled in Chicago school reform stand ready to work with you to help you realize your place in history. Let us begin.

UIC house of reform

The University of Illinois at Chicago has dedicated a recently renovated building to university outreach programs, including three school-reform efforts led by education professor William Ayers.

The building includes space for the Small Schools Workshop, started by Ayers two years ago, and for the Chicago Forum for School Change, a collaboration with the national Coalition of Essential Schools that was founded in July by Ayers and former Lindblom High School Principal Lynn St. James.

The university also has set aside space for the group that would administer an expected $50 million, five-year grant from publishing mogul Walter Annenberg. Ayers was a leader of a collection of local reformers who recently submitted a proposal to Annenberg and his advisors. (See CATALYST, Grants, October 1994.) The reformers expect a response to their proposal sometime in December.

Dan Weissmann

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MOVING IN/ON Jessica Clarke, a research fellow for the Chicago Urban League, has been promoted to director of education. . . . JoAnn Harper, a member of the TIME (To Improve Management of Education) Project's core planning team and a Chicago Teachers Union field representative, has been named to the newly created CTU position of director of education issues. Harper, also a member of the Teachers for Chicago Executive Committee, will coordinate activities among the union, the Quest Center, local foundations and education reform groups, which was the job of the late John Kotsakis. . . . Diana Sheffer, also a CTU field representative, has been named to the new position of assistant to the president for administration and research. . . . Fred Hess, executive director of the Chicago Panel on School Policy, is stepping down as president of the Coalition for Educational Rights, a statewide organization that lobbies for equitable school funding. The resignation stems from an internal dispute regarding the Coalition's strategic direction.

AWARD WINNERS Janice Ozima, a 2nd-grade teacher at Boone Elementary, and Carol Fisher, an 8th-grade teacher at George Rogers Clark Elementary, have received the 1994 Illinois Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching, while Sylvia Gilbert, a teacher at Rogers Elementary, has received the 1994 National Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching. Both awards are sponsored by the National Science Foundation, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Illinois Science Teachers Association.

AT PERSHING ROAD Jinhak Tak-Lau, staff anchor for the board’s communications department, has been appointed public relations assistant. . . . Delores J. Brooks, assistant marketing director at the American Bar Association, has been appointed manager of communications. . . .

Diane Romza-Kutz, assistant supervising attorney for the board, has resigned. . . . Jean Choi, a lawyer with the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, and Jerome Marconi of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, have joined the law department as assistant attorney and senior litigation assistant attorney, respectively. . . . Gilbert Sanchez has moved from special education to the department of special education and pupil support services. . . . Reginald J. Ward has been promoted to director of special education and pupil support services. . . . Dorothy S. Strong has been appointed regional coordinator for the National Science Foundation's Chicago Systemic Initiative (see story on page 16); Strong previously served as manager of mathematics and science curricula in the Department of Instructional Support.

IN THE FIELD Ruth D. Wallace has moved from coordinator to administrator of Subdistrict 6.

LSC CONVENTION Workshops on school leadership, classroom improvement, school improvement planning and advocacy will be held at an upcoming convention for local school council members, sponsored by the Chicago Association of Local School Councils (CALSC). Other events will include an education policy forum and an exposition of programs and services for schools. The convention is scheduled for Jan. 7-8 at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans. For more information and to register, call CALSC at (312) 986-9506.

'PILOT' PROGRAM To help upgrade the school improvement planning process, Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) is offering a new, free training program for local school leaders, called "Parents Involved in Learning Options with Teachers," or PILOT. At least one teacher must be included in any school group that signs up for the program. For more information, call PURE at (312) 907-4727 or (312) 784-PURE.

NEW PRINCIPALS The following acting and acting principals have received contracts expiring June 1998: Thomas Cunningham, Taft High; Frances Oden, Beethoven. . . . The following acting and interim principals have received contracts expiring June 1995: Yvonne A. Bennett, Bryn Mawr; Kathleen Bowman, Mitchell; Zoran Petrovich, Ogden; James L. Williams, Austin. Debra Williams

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English and certified as a bilingual teacher, is one example. Trinidad thought his Hispanic background would help him quickly land a job near his North Park home. Also, because there is a shortage of bilingual teachers, schools typically can hire them without regard to race; the same is true for special education teachers. However, after 20 applications and 10 interviews with Chicago school principals, by Oct. 1 the only offer Trinidad got was for a part-time night position at nearby St. Augustine, a parochial school.

Trinidad speculated that his age, 21, and lack of experience were why principals passed over him. "They are looking at people with 15 years' experience," he says. "I've only had one year at a private school."

By mid-October, Trinidad had landed a job as a bilingual teacher at McPherson Elementary in Lincoln Square.

At the time the Reform Act was passed, says Orfield, "I pointed out that there would be tension between civil rights compliance and the decentralization plan. I think the Chicago school district desegregation plan is extremely weak at best, and this reform has made it even more difficult. Unless it's properly monitored, it's extremely unlikely to make progress."

Orfield blames the federal government for not enforcing its decree and for not requiring that an entity be created to monitor the system. "Many places have very thorough investigative procedures with good monitoring provisions," he says. "The cases with strong oversight and plaintiffs have results. And when the Justice Department [which initiated legal action in Chicago] is not active, there is no plaintiff." (Chicago has a desegregation monitoring commission, but it is not independent; members are appointed by the School Board.)

Lee Douglass, a spokesperson for the Justice Department division that oversees school desegregation compliance, says the department generally does not set up local monitoring entities and instead relies on the district's annual reports. "If we receive complaints or have knowledge of non-compliance, then we investigate," she says.
It's About Time

This is the fourth in a series of monthly columns about T.I.M.E., one of the Transformation Initiatives of the Chicago Public School System to improve student academic achievement. T.I.M.E. stands for To Improve Management of Education. Members of the T.I.M.E. Project seek to "reengineer" administrative and support processes that serve the city's 550 public schools.

By Cozette Buckney
Project Manager, T.I.M.E.
Principal, Jones Metro High School

Last September in this space I answered some commonly asked questions that my core team members and I have been asked about the T.I.M.E. Project.

By way of explanation, I wrote then that the purpose of the T.I.M.E. Project was to develop an efficient, service-oriented administrative system focused on student learning and achievement.

We were going to do this, I wrote, by "reengineering" key processes throughout the school system. "Reengineering," I said, meant "radically changing the way work gets done so that significant improvements in speed, cost and quality — consistent with the vision of the school system — were achieved."

And, I said back in September, we were going to enlist the participation of a lot of people from the school system's work force before we made recommendations of any kind.

Finally, I wrote that at the end of the first phase of the T.I.M.E. Project, we would make recommendations for changing key processes to the General Superintendent, the Chief Financial Officer and the Board of Education.

I am very pleased to be able to use this space again to tell you of our progress — and of the four key processes we have identified for reengineering. They are:

• The process for managing and maintaining school facilities. This involves creating an outstanding physical learning environment and maintenance process. We call it the Conducive Environment.

• The process for staffing. This means attracting, budgeting, hiring and compensating the best qualified individuals to work for the Chicago Public School System. We call it the Perfect Match.

• The process for training and development. This means providing on-going training and development for everyone working within the school system. We call it Continuous Growth.

• The process for communicating within and outside the school system. This means, among other things, developing a way to effectively communicate internally and externally so everyone gets the same message at the same time. We call it Straight Talk.

These four recommendations come after several months of talking with more than 4,000 people to gather facts, opinions and ideas during informal discussions, interviews, presentations, town meetings and workshops.

For example, during two months in the Fall we invited local school council members to provide us with input into the changes they want to see to improve the school's administrative system in support of individual schools. This happened during a series of district-wide meetings held throughout Chicago.

By the way, during this first phase of work, we looked also at process changes that didn't require major technology or redesign — areas could provide solutions sooner rather than later. For example, over the summer an "Action Team" of cross-functional school system representatives shared existing resources to pilot an effort to resolve issues that otherwise could prevent accurate and timely payment to CPS employees. As a result, opening of the schools this year was significantly improved.

What's next?

Each of the four reengineering initiatives has a set of goals and objectives that will be tested during the second phase of the T.I.M.E. Project. Results are expected in each area by May.

Other results expected from this next phase include a reengineered design of each of the four new processes, implementation of early breakthroughs where possible and a smooth transition into broader implementation of the initiatives.

At the end of the T.I.M.E. Project's anticipated overall two-year duration, we're expecting to see substantial changes made to improving the management of education within the Chicago Public Schools. But, the biggest and most satisfying outcome will be an improvement in student achievement.

More information is available on how reengineering will change the work processes in these four areas. Write the T.I.M.E. Project, 606 South State Street, Chicago, IL 60605. Or call us at (312) 534-8686.
Bright Ideas

Program boosts minorities’ success in math

Through a mathematics program designed by faculty at the University of Illinois at Chicago, minority students at seven high schools are enrolling in more advanced math courses—and passing them.

Students in the College Preparatory Mathematics Program, or CPMP, take double-period classes in algebra, geometry, advanced algebra with trigonometry, precalculus, transition to college mathematics and Advanced Placement calculus.

CPMP, begun in 1990, emphasizes cooperative learning and the use of projects, such as constructing a kite, to teach math concepts.

According to Roberta Dees, associate professor of mathematics and co-director of the program, 85 percent of CPMP students have graduated, compared to a districtwide rate of about 50 percent. Seniors from the program who graduated last year all took at least three years of math; districtwide, only about 15 percent of graduates take more than the required two years of math.

Students in the program pass the advanced courses at a higher rate, too.

Among the seven schools, the percentage of participating students who passed advanced algebra/trigonometry and pre-calculus courses ranged from 39 percent to 87 percent; the number of regular students at those schools who passed such courses ranged from 13 percent to 68 percent.

CPMP recruits 8th-graders in the spring to participate in summer programs before their freshman year and, then, each year throughout high school, Dees explains. Teachers, who team up to teach the double-period classes, are trained in cooperative learning techniques and attend summer planning sessions for the upcoming school year.

The program is funded by the National Science Foundation. Currently, 1245 students from Bogan, Englewood, Lakeview, Lane Tech, Senn, South Shore, Taft and Whitney Young are participating; Taft High recently signed up to join the project.

Recently, participants at South Shore worked in groups to help solve a math problem assigned by teacher Mark Jackson. "Once he explains it, then if we don't understand, Mr. Jackson will explain it to us more," says junior Gerome Bailey. "If you don't know the answer, then maybe someone in your group knows the answer."

Some students may feel apprehensive at first because "they're afraid to get anything wrong," says Jackson. But, he adds, "if they show work, they get the credit whether their answers are right or wrong."

South Shore math chair Shirley Ross adds that, through cooperative learning, "students have learned how to work together and resolved some of their conflicts as a result."

For more information on the program, contact co-directors Roberta Dees or John Baldwin at (312) 996-3381.

Lynnette Richardson

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