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COMMUNITY
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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Off the radar screen

Every year, some 1,500 grade-school students drop out of CPS. Until now, they've gone undetected.



Also:

^{the} College Challenge

What it takes to get in and stay in—
through the experiences of 9 students

Solid footing for city's new school leaders

To outsiders, it must seem foolhardy that Mayor Richard M. Daley nudged out an education team that made Chicago the envy of many other urban school districts. Most cities would die for the consistency of purpose and track record of accomplishment that CEO Paul Vallas and School Board President Gery Chico provided. To repeat the litany: financial stability, labor peace, new and rehabbed schools, higher expectations for students and staff, a sense of accountability and a new public confidence in the public schools.

Yet the dynamic duo seemed at a loss over what to do with the next major challenge, improving leadership and instruction school by school. For the past two years, the administration merely has offered more of the same measures to advance student achievement, mainly more time in class and more school monitors. Intervention, for example, was presented as a new and improved Reconstitution, but it failed just the same. Something needed to change, and the mayor decided that it would be the men in charge.

Bringing in an entirely new team does not mean starting over. The underpinnings of the Vallas and Chico accomplishments—the mayor's commitment to improved schools and state laws that give him the power to impose his will—remain in place. Chicago's broad-based school reform community—including corporate leaders, universities, foundations, education groups, community-based organizations and many teachers and administrators inside the school system—remains actively involved, providing hard-earned knowledge as well as continuity. The Consortium on Chicago School Research, unique in the nation, has copious data to help guide the way.

And, with exquisite timing, members of the Chicago Teachers Union have elected a president with reform credentials. For eight years, Deborah Lynch-Walsh researched education reform for the American Federation of Teachers; she then opened the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center. Making the talk-show rounds as president-elect of the CTU,

Lynch-Walsh sounded as much like a reformer as a union leader, advocating a greater investment in the regular school day so less time and money are spent on remedial teaching. With so much reform having been “done to them,” as Lynch-Walsh puts it, teachers probably are ready to step into school-improvement leadership roles.

There also is a remarkable consensus about what School Reform: Phase III should look like. Earlier this year, *CATALYST* interviewed 52 education leaders inside and outside the school system about the direction reform should take. Overwhelmingly, they talked about improving instruction by investing in people: Recruiting good teachers, administrators and local school council members, and supporting them with intensive training and professional development.

The complete change in leadership also allows for new and improved relationships among the major players and a re-examination of old problems. Vallas was both enormously receptive to good ideas and a hot-tempered overseer who brooked no criticism. As a result, a thousand flowers bloomed, but debate about complicated issues dried up. Fear became the prime motivator inside the system. Fear worked for a while, but it won't take the school system to the next level. That's a lesson we all should hope the mayor has learned as well.

ABOUT US There are changes coming at *CATALYST*, too. It is with great pleasure that I announce that, effective July 1, Veronica Anderson will become editor of *CATALYST*, assuming responsibility for all day-to-day editorial operations and all editorial staff. Mario Ortiz will become managing editor. As publisher and editor in chief, I will continue to have over-all responsibility for the publication but will focus more on fund raising, marketing and special projects. Before joining *CATALYST* as managing editor almost five years ago, Veronica was a reporter for *Crain's Chicago Business*. Mario joined the staff a year ago after covering education for newspapers in Detroit, Cleveland and Milwaukee.



Linda Perry

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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

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1998, Sigma Delta Chi for public service
1998 Chicago Association of Black Journalists
1998, 1993 Peter Lisagor Award,
Best Newsletter
1999, 1995, Peter Lisagor Award, Reporting
2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Public Service

2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Online Reporting
1997, International Reading Association
1996, Education Writers Association
1997, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993 Distinguished
Achievement Award; 1994, Best Newsletter,
Educational Press Association of America



Grade-school dropouts with nowhere to go

by Elizabeth Duffrin

Fifteen-year-old "Juan," a dropout from Back of the Yards, struggled throughout elementary school but always intended to finish. But last Spring, as his classmates at Lara Academy paraded in caps and gowns, Juan was facing another year of 8th grade. Instead of enrolling at his assigned transition center, he chose to put his troubled school career behind him. "I just quit going," he says simply.

Juan is but one of 1,548 Chicago Public Schools students who dropped out or disappeared from the 6th, 7th and 8th grades last school year, according to numbers provided by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Blaming sloppy record keeping by schools, the School Board contends that the number of elementary school dropouts is fewer. However, it does not have a number of its own. (See story on page 9.)

While the exact number of elementary school dropouts remains in question, educators and attorneys say such children are out there and most likely headed for trouble.

"They've been the silent dropouts that no one really talks about," observes Patricia Preston, director for alternative education at City Colleges of Chicago, who has tried to get the Illinois Legislature to fund programs for this neglected group. "I don't believe they have an advocacy voice yet other than those of us in alternative schools," she says.

By the Consortium's count, at least 75 percent of pre-high school dropouts in Chicago were under 16, the age when dropping out is legal. They stopped showing up at their elementary schools or disappeared between 8th and 9th grades.

The other 25 percent departed from "transition" schools for students aged 15 and older who are repeating 8th grade. At least some of these dropouts likely had turned 16.

Sixteen-year-olds who quit school have productive alternatives to high school, such as full-time employment, job training programs and GED programs.

For the younger, illegal dropout, these options are closed. "There's no structured program for them," Preston of City Colleges says. "What do they do? Sit around until they're

16, get involved in criminal activity, get involved in drugs." That's what happened to Juan. (See story on page 10.)

In recent years, the School Board has given unprecedented support to dropout recovery programs, but, consistent with state law, these, too, exclude children under 16. Youth Connection Charter School, an umbrella for private alternative schools partnering with CPS, gets district money for 1,550 dropouts aged 16 to 21.

Yet younger students occasionally come knocking at the alternative school door, staff say. Principal Pa Joof at Prologue Alternative High School in Uptown can think of two such kids who are now serving jail time. "The funny part of it is that they can't do a program like this until they're 16, but they can put them in jail," he remarks.

Attorney Angela Coin of the Northwestern University Legal Clinic invariably finds that her juvenile clients charged with the worst crimes have been truant or expelled for a year or more. That fact has become a standard part of her defense: "Judge, he hasn't even had the benefit of school for awhile."

Elementary school dropouts are indeed over represented in the criminal justice system: While only five percent of juveniles



Father Bruce Wellem of Holy Cross/Immaculate Heart of Mary Church talks to a couple of parishoners in his Back of the Yards neighborhood. To get young dropouts off the streets, he helped found the Irene Dugan Institute, an alternative high school.

JOHN BOGZ

who entered state prisons in 1997 were under 16, 28 percent had no high school education, according to a U.S. Department of Justice report.

Social services needed

The dropout rate for elementary school children is small compared to that for high school. The Consortium finds that 1.6 percent of 6th- to 8th-graders left school last year. The School Board reports last year's high school dropout rate as 15.2 percent.

Kids drop out of elementary school for primarily the same reasons as they drop out of high school, school staff say. Academic failure tops the list.

To reduce academic failure, the administration of CEO Paul Vallas has spent millions on after-school tutoring, summer school and university partners for low-performing schools. At some schools, principals were replaced.

The extra help and pressure boosted standardized test scores but, so far, has had limited impact on dropout rates in both elementary and high schools. (See story on page 8.)

Melissa Roderick of the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration says that to keep more students in school, the school system needs to pay more attention to social services. Her research has found that even with "fantastic teachers in the best schools," some students fail to progress.

Recently she studied 102 low-achieving 6th- and 8th-graders at five CPS elementary schools to see how they responded to the School Board policy requiring minimum test scores to earn promotion to the next grade level.

While the policy motivated many of them, the most troubled students made little effort and were ultimately retained, she observed. "When I talk to these kids, they have so many problems out of school—it's almost like they're not present in school."

Over-age students with low academic skills are at the greatest risk of dropping out, research has shown. "Kids don't get double retained [or] drop out at 15 because they don't care," Roderick explains. "Those are kids that have significant problems in multiple dimensions."

The underlying reasons for academic failure and dropping out often are complex: depression, neighborhood violence, family dysfunction. For some kids, gangs, drugs or pregnancy contribute to the downward spiral.

However, troubled students rarely are unreachable, says Dr. William McMiller, who directs a community mental health clinic at the University of Illinois at Chicago. McMiller believes that if he had a team to counsel children whose parents were entering or being released from jail, he could prevent many from dropping out or being placed in special education. "Just that specific focus would go a long way," he says.

Counseling services for children in crisis are few. In Chicago elementary schools, one full-time counselor serves up to 1,200 kids. The student load is even heavier for psychiatrists and social workers, who typically split their time among several elementary schools.

For all three positions, special education services—not mental health counseling—get top priority, school staff say.

At Randolph Elementary School in West Englewood, for example, special education testing and paperwork are "so cumbersome, time consuming and directed by laws that specify deadlines" that the social worker has no time for anything else, says Principal Joan Forte. "Which is really terrible and a shame."

Schools have state and federal poverty funds to purchase extra staff, but adding a social worker can mean sacrificing a teacher. "I can't even afford enough teachers," insists Principal Patricia Kent of Penn elementary in North Lawndale.

Short-term grants or free services from neighborhood agencies can fill some gaps in social services. But counseling, the most needed service, is also among the hardest to find, according to Tara Raju of Communities in Schools, a non-profit that solicits free social services for 100 schools in Chicago. "There is counseling out there, but is it free of charge? Probably not. Can they come to the school? Probably not."

One professional who works with schools says the need for social services is so great that meeting it would cost a fortune. SuAnne Lawrence of the Youth Guidance Comer Project, a nationally recognized school reform model now in 20 CPS elementary schools, once calculated that just one of her schools would need 15 social workers to do the needed individual counseling. "It's fiscally impossible," she says.

The Comer Project deals with this reality by helping teachers learn strategies for reducing student misbehavior and apathy.

When students in crisis act out, Lawrence explains, frustrated teachers often alienate them further. For instance, during a recent school visit, a school social worker was telling her about a boy whose family had just been evicted. Just then, the boy's teacher burst in, complaining that he was driving her crazy. "She wanted the social worker to do something about it right now [and] to have him suspended."

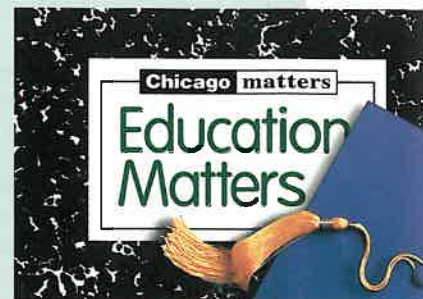
Lawrence adds that efforts to improve teacher-student relationships are most successful when principals expect and model caring behavior. "Leadership is key," she says.

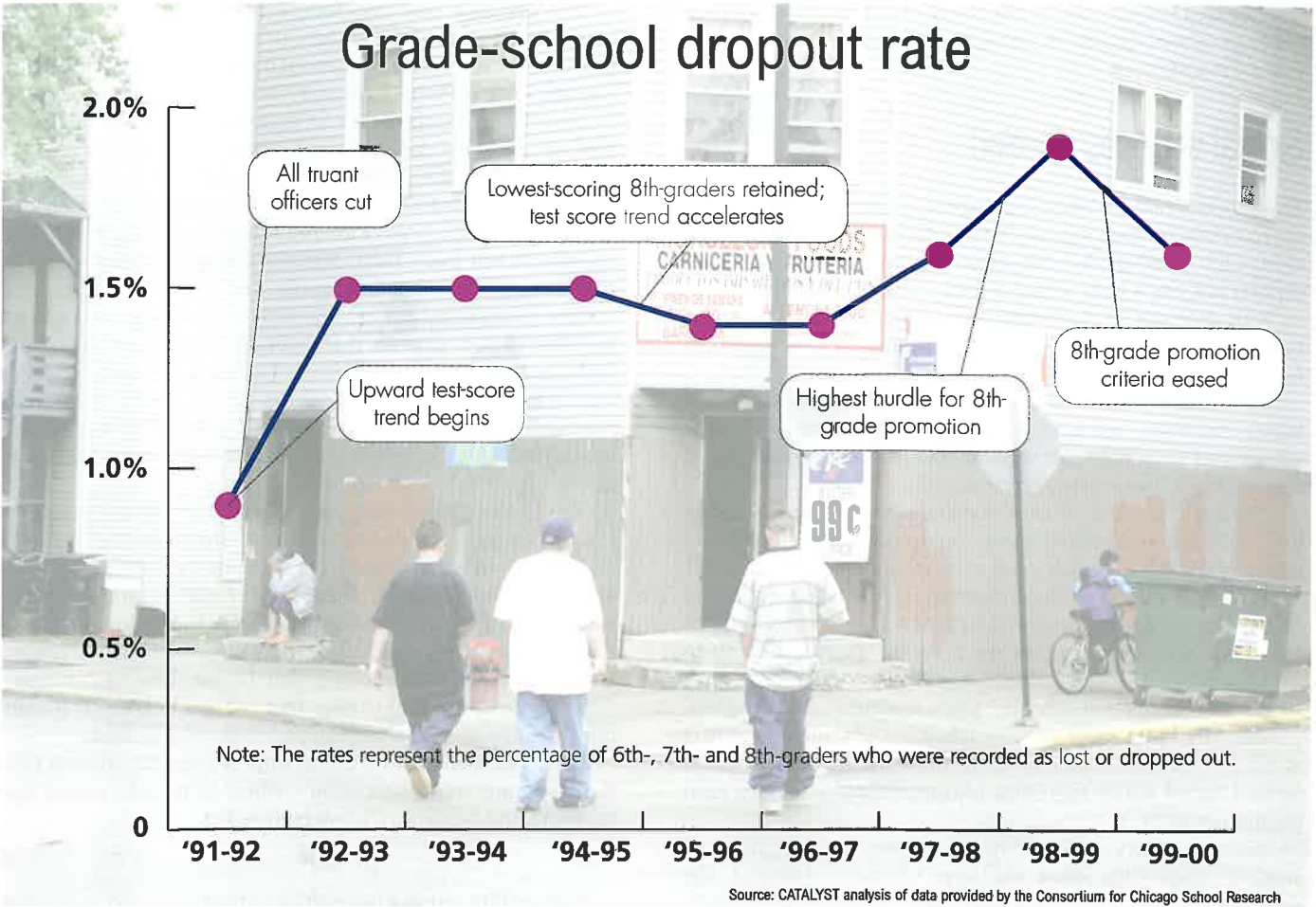


Elementary schools not only are short on social services to help keep kids in school, they also lack staff to go looking for the ones who have left. In September 1992, the School Board eliminated the district's 153 truant officers to save \$4 million and balance the budget.

That school year, the number of missing elementary students shot up 70 percent—from 825 in 1991-92 to 1,408 in 1992-93,

This is the last installment of a three-part joint investigation by **CATALYST** and *The Chicago Reporter* into major challenges confronting the Chicago Public Schools. The reporting is part of *Chicago Matters*, an annual public information series initiated and funded by The Chicago Community Trust, Chicago's community foundation, with programming by WTTW Channel 11, WBEZ Chicago's public radio station 91.5 FM, the Chicago Public Library, and *The Chicago Reporter*. With this year's focus on education, **CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform** serves as a special participant.





according to the Consortium's analysis. The annual total subsequently has bounced up and down but never returned to its 1992 low.

Chronic truancy in CPS elementary schools also jumped the year truant officers were laid off. It continued to rise for a number of years but by 1998 had returned to 1992 levels, according to a CATALYST analysis of data posted to the School Board's web site. It has been creeping upward since then, hitting 2.4 percent last school year, CATALYST finds.

After 1992, both the state and city launched initiatives to curb truancy, but most have been dropped or scaled back. High schools continue to receive some money to help compensate for the loss of truant officers, but elementary schools are left largely to their own resources. Many are short-handed, principals report.

For example, Libby elementary in New City uses every aide and teacher to phone the homes of truant students or mail parents official warnings, according to Principal Beverly Blake. The school's chronic truancy rate was 16 percent; last year, 126 students had 18 or more days of unexcused absence.

Like many schools, Libby tries to help families solve some of the problems that keep children out of school; for instance, it donates needed clothing.

However, it has a hard time making home visits. The school's full-time community liaison can't do it alone, says Blake. Parent volunteers pitch in but are afraid to go to certain areas. Regional office staff will help hunt down missing students; but with some 100 schools to cover, their assistance is limited. "We don't give up [but] sometimes we have chronic

truants that we can't get back in," she says.

Court is the last resort for dealing with parents of truant students. Last year, 93 cases of elementary school truancy were prosecuted, according to Samuel Davis, a School Board administrator who handles those cases. This year, the number dwindled to 25 to 30 as other priorities took his time.

Principals say that the threat of legal action often get results from previously uncooperative parents. However, they complain that, in practice, the process has no teeth. No Chicago parent has ever been fined, jailed or ordered to perform community service because of children's truancy, according to Davis.

Typically, a judge gives parents 30 days to improve their children's attendance before returning to court, says Rickey Dorsey, director of high school truancy prevention. Once attendance improves, the judge generally drops the case, he finds. Then, if attendance slips again, the school must refile the case, which is likely to have the same outcome, he observes.

Presiding Municipal Court Judge Jacqueline Cox counters that truancy is a social problem that doesn't belong in court. "What do you want to do? Put a mother behind bars? Then [students] are really going to miss school." If the schools have a better system in mind, she says, "We'd like to see it."

See **DROPOUTS** page 8

8th-grade dropouts tell their stories

Maribel, 16

Dropped out: At age 16 from Olive Academic Preparatory Center, a transitional school for older students repeating 8th grade.

Why: Felt threatened by other girls at school. Mother thought she would be safer at an alternative school her brothers and sister were attending.

Now: Enrolled at Latino Youth Inc.'s alternative school

School history: "[At Latino Youth], you learn something. In other schools, there wouldn't be much attention toward one student; there's like 23 in one room, they'd all be laughing, screaming, doing whatever they wanted, throwing pencils, paper, then the teacher would get mad. ... But here, they pay attention to you."

Plans for the future: Wants to be a nurse or a lawyer.



Frederick, 17

Dropped out: At age 16 from a transitional school for older students repeating 8th grade.

Why: Says he had a fight with a security guard and decided to leave.

Now: At an alternative school for dropouts

School history: Frequently in trouble in elementary school. Says his mother refused to reinstate him once after a suspension so he stayed out of school for a year. Home problems distracted him from schoolwork. "I'd just be sitting in class, wandering off, and end up doing no work."

Family history: Mother had a drinking problem, he says, and left him and his siblings at home alone. His uncle called the police, and they were placed in foster care. A grandmother and an aunt took them in. "My grandma, that's the lady in my life right now."

Plans for the future: "I want to be someone sitting behind a desk in a suit, getting calls, like 'Mr. _____, you got a call.'"



Eric, 16

Dropped out: At age 16 from Harvey Academic Preparatory Center, a transitional school for older students repeating 8th grade.

Why: Harvey dropped Eric for poor attendance, says mother Denise Williams. "He just told me, 'Momma, school ain't for me.' I guess you get-frustrated sitting in the same grade for two years in a row, and you still ain't going nowhere."

Now: Out of school.

School history: Repeated the 6th grade at Douglas Middle School in Austin because of low standardized test scores. Posted low test scores again after 8th grade and was repeating the grade at Harvey. Liked 6th grade because teachers played educational games. Later got tired of school, and his behavior grew worse. "When I was 14, 15, I felt they weren't teaching me no more."

Family history: Has a stable home life. Lives in a three-bedroom apartment in Austin with a younger brother, two older sisters, their children, his mother and his stepfather, a mechanic. All the adults in his household dropped out of school, but his mother and stepfather are urging him to re-enroll at Harvey.

Plans for the future: Went to orientation for Job Corps, a federal residential education and job-training program for dropouts, but decided it looked tougher than school. "You can't wear no braids, no earrings." Now he's thinking about returning to Harvey. "It's boring being at home."



Yesenia, 18

Dropped out: At age 14. Graduated from Saucedo elementary but never went to high school.

Why: Got pregnant. Sister told high school truancy staff that Yesenia had left for Mexico. "By the time the baby came, I didn't really want to go to school."

Now: Enrolled at Latino Youth Inc.'s alternative school

School history: Had a personal trauma in elementary school that she never revealed to school staff. "I didn't really like the social worker. I was afraid, telling her things that were somewhat personal."

Family history: Older sister also dropped out after becoming pregnant. Older brother dropped out, a younger one still attends, a third one is a lawyer. Ran away from home after learning she was pregnant. "I left at night ... through a window."

Plans for the future: Wants to be a chef and a licensed daycare worker.



by Elizabeth Duffrin, Mick Dumke and Christina Pellett

DROPOUTS

continued from page 6

Truants can slip through another crack in the transition from elementary school to high school: There is no clear policy for tracking down no-show 9th-graders.

Elizabeth Elizando, who oversees truancy prevention in elementary schools through the Office of Schools and Regions, says that high schools are supposed to find such students. Dorsey, who oversees high school truancy prevention through the Office of High School Development, says that, officially, it's the elementary schools' job. However, in an effort to boost their official enrollment and, thereby, the size of their faculties, high schools often do search for missing freshmen, he says. The search typically ends at the 20th day of school, which is when the official enrollment count is taken, he adds.

High School truancy staff who spoke with CATALYST say they do indeed look for missing freshmen, sometimes with help from

staff at their regional office. But most agree with Dorsey that the chase ends by late September. "When the child doesn't appear after 20 days, we put them down as a no-show and drop them off the rolls," reports Crane High attendance officer William Harvey.

Regardless of the precise number of students who never make it into high school, the group is relatively small, advocates and researchers acknowledge. However, Melissa Roderick of the University of Chicago notes that many 8th-graders who make the transition fall apart in the first weeks of high school and soon drop out. "And that's a huge group," she observes. Beefing up social services in elementary schools, says Roderick, would help both groups stay in school.

Mick Dumke, a writer for The Chicago Reporter, and CATALYST intern Christina Pellett contributed to this report.

CATALYST gives a special thanks to Elaine Allensworth, a senior research associate at the Consortium on Chicago School Research, for providing the data on pre-high school dropouts.

A decade of reform brings dropout rate down only slightly

A new, more comprehensive calculation of the CPS dropout rate finds a slight decline in the past decade. Considering the various circumstances of Chicago school reform, some view the change as disappointing, while others see it as surprisingly good news.

The new rate includes students who previously had been ignored—teenagers who never made it to high school. Tracking groups, or cohorts, of students from age 13 to 19, the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that the dropout rate declined from 44.3 percent to 41.8 percent.

The former, higher number is for students who were 13 in fall 1991; the latter, lower number is for students who were 13 in fall 1994.

The dropout rate for students under 16, when compulsory school attendance ends, also decreased, from 8.1 percent to 7.3 percent for students age 15 in fall 2000.

G. Alfred Hess Jr. of Northwestern University expected more improvement. "It's discouraging," he says, considering that elementary test scores have risen substantially since the early 1990s. Fewer students are entering high school with test scores in the lowest percentiles, he explains, so "you would expect a big drop in the dropout rate, and their data don't show that."

Hess did not expect to see any decline in dropouts due to high school innovation. In his recent three-year study of Chicago high schools on academic probation, he witnessed little improvement. Chicago high schools "look an awful lot like they did 10 years ago and probably 30 years ago," he says.

Four-year, high school dropout rates calculated by the dis-

trict reflect the stagnation Hess observes, and correlate closely with the Consortium's figures. For example, the dropout rate for the Class of 1982 was 42.5 percent. After rising briefly in the early 1990s, the rate returned to that plateau—for the Class of 1998, the most recent available, it was 41.7.

Melissa Roderick of the Consortium agrees with Hess about the state of Chicago's high schools. But she had expected the dropout rate to rise because, under the School Board's promotion policy, more students are being retained. "I'm still shocked," she says. Typically, the higher the retention rate, the higher the dropout rate, she explains.

In Spring 1996, the School Board began to require 8th-graders to earn minimum standardized test scores for promotion to the next grade. The next year, it brought 3rd- and 6th-graders under the policy. Roderick, who is conducting an ongoing study of the policy's impact, speculates that hers will be the only study of student retention "that does not find a negative effect on dropout rates, and I do not know why."

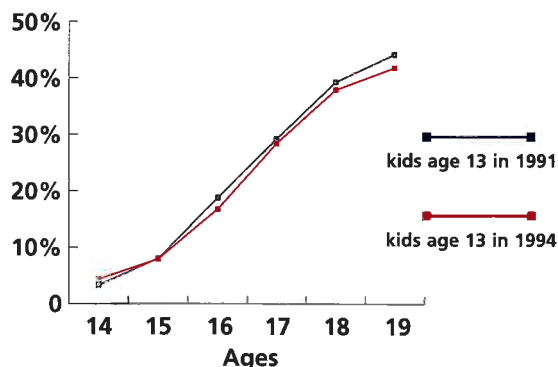
According to Elaine Allensworth, author of the soon-to-be released Consortium study, both higher test scores and the higher

retention rate are affecting the dropout rate. "To a large extent," she says, "the two effects are canceling each other out."

Her analysis supports Hess' and Roderick's view that high schools are not getting any better or worse at keeping kids in school. Given an incoming student's age and standardized test scores, she says, "They are just as likely to drop out now as they were four years ago."

Elizabeth Duffrin

Percent dropped out by each age



Source: Consortium on Chicago School Research

A 'likeable' kid gets into trouble, drops out at 14

by Elizabeth Duffrin

As a 6th-grader, "Juan" racked up 24 days of suspension for disruptive behavior and finally an expulsion from his Back of the Yards elementary school. Still, Assistant Principal Rhonda Hoskins, Seward Elementary's disciplinarian, remembers him fondly. "He was a likable kid," she says with a half-smile, both wry and wistful. "We all liked him."

Sixth-grade teacher Robert Zarnowski admits he often needs a photo to jog his memory of a former student. "But Juan, he's a standout. Juan was a good guy. If Juan walked down the street, I'd be the first one to greet him, and the last one to want to see him leave."

Juan, not his real name, left Seward in May 1998 to face his year of expulsion. A year and a summer later, he resumed his troubled school career as an 8th-grader at nearby Lara Academy. That school year left him without an 8th-grade diploma, and Juan left school altogether.

Now 15, Juan often speaks of his past with surprising candor. Talking excitedly about life on the street, the brushes with danger, the easy money, his words tumble out, and an occasional grin crinkles up his round face. Considering his future, however, he grows somber. "I could have been the next biggest lawyer in the world, the biggest cop," he reflects, "but now I'm going to be the biggest gang-banger that died in the world."

Zarnowski considers 6th grade a fork in the road for many troubled kids, a last chance to get themselves on the right path. If only Juan had come to Seward sooner, or stayed with them longer, that might have made all the difference, he thinks.

A veteran teacher, he mourns for all the children who start school full of enthusiasm and gradually lose hope. "In this case, it breaks my heart."

Juan doesn't remember much about his early years of school, except for getting into trouble. "I would *always* go to detention, man," he says with a short laugh. "Mostly everyday," and mostly for fighting. "I was a bully."

Recalling his early home life, he avoids specifics and talks philosophically about how too many children are exposed to "guns or drugs or somebody getting shot or somebody getting beat up."

Scenes like this play through a little kid's

mind, he says. "He keeps seeing and seeing and seeing," Juan explains, turning his head back and forth as if viewing a stream of images.

Juan moved to Chicago in 1989 at about the age of 4. His mother, "Maria," says she wanted to escape a hard life in rural Texas where she had been born, the daughter of Mexican immigrants. She followed a girlfriend north, taking Juan, a younger daughter and a son of about 6. She left behind Juan's father, also a Mexican immigrant, and two older sons.

Maria had dropped out of high school after giving birth to her second child. For a time, she worked cleaning houses but eventually went on disability. In Chicago, she moved from apartment to apartment. Juan would attend four elementary schools—one on the North Side and Hammond, Finkl and Spry on the near Southwest Side—before enrolling at Seward.

Juan's kindergarten year went smoothly, Maria recalls. "I never had no complaints." But from 1st grade on, he was in trouble—"for not listening, for not sitting down, for talking too much, having tantrums."

A school counselor talked to him, she says. "But it didn't do no good."

Juan doesn't remember any counseling. "Just detention."

Outside of school, Juan was into more serious trouble. When he was 10 or 11, his mother recalls, some older boys "gave him the first pistol to hide. He was dumb enough to carry it," and the police nabbed him.

By 5th grade, Juan was so frustrated with school work that



JOHN BOZ

he often wanted to hit somebody or yell out: "Leave me alone, I want to do it by myself, stop telling me how to do it!"

He discovered that marijuana soothed him and so began to smoke a joint on his way to school and hide it in his sneaker. "When I'm high, I don't see the board, I don't see the teacher," he explains. "I just see myself, one table, and one pencil, right there with my paper and just doing the work."



Judging by his math and reading scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Juan fell behind early and never caught up. At the

"I could have been the next big lawyer ... but now I'm going to be the biggest gang banger that died in the world."

"Juan," age 15

end of 3rd grade, he was about two years below level. During 4th grade, he made a two-year gain in reading and over a year in math. But in 5th grade, he showed almost no progress at all.

By the time he arrived at Seward, he was still two years behind in both subjects. But Zarnowski encouraged him, Juan says. "He would be like, 'How you doing, Juan?' with a big smile. 'Yeah, Juan! You've got the next question.'"

Reading that question would be a struggle. "I would be mumbling through the words, and he would be like, 'Come on, come on. A little louder now.' So I would try. He would help me with the words. But it never worked."

Praising Juan's one academic strength, Zarnowski says, "He was verbal. He could discuss things." Despite low skills, the teacher says Juan made an effort in class, although he never turned in homework. Zarnowski suspects Juan had limited support at home. "I think getting here was all on him."

Even so, the boy maintained fairly good attendance, school records show. Juan was suspended that year for disruptive behavior outside his 6th grade classroom, but Zarnowski cannot recall a single incidence of misbehavior in class, until the day in mid-February when Juan brought a knife to school.



Once each semester, Seward conducted a security sweep with assistance from central office security personnel. Students in grades 6 to 9 would pass through a metal detector at the front door, and security would check each bag. Juan's knife did not set off the detector. Security did not find anything in his book bag, Assistant Principal Hoskins later testified at his expulsion hearing.

Upstairs in his classroom, Juan could not resist the urge to boast.

"And of course it came to me, 'Juan has got a knife,' " Zarnowski recalls sadly. "'Juan do you have something?' 'Yeah, I've got a knife.'"

Following district policy, Seward filed a police report and notified the regional office, which would set the expulsion pro-

ceedings in motion.

The knife, Hoskins would later testify, had a three-inch blade that flipped out of a brown suede holder. "I don't think he considered it a weapon, maybe," she suggested at the mid-April expulsion hearing at Pershing Road.

Juan's mother described it that day as a pocket knife on a key chain, a memento that his father (actually a stepfather) had given to him before recently leaving the family.

"It was kind of depressing," Juan says of his stepfather's departure. He carried the knife with him every day after that. He knew it was wrong to bring it to school, he confessed at the hearing.

Dr. William McMiller, a professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago, says he has seen many boys like Juan "who are just yearning for father figures." If the knife represented his stepfather, McMiller explains, school rules were not going to keep him from carrying it.

Juan had the misfortune to appear before the School Board's hearing officer in the early days of the district's Zero Tolerance Policy against drug and weapon possession.

A 1996 state law made expulsion the standard penalty for carrying a weapon to school,

with exceptions permitted. Expulsions in CPS soared from 80 in 1995-96 to 668 in 1997-98, the year Juan was expelled.

"Clearly a weapon and clearly a dangerous weapon," the School Board attorney said in his closing statement, adding that the boy "needs to be dealt a lesson about the bad judgement he has displayed."

A year later, a student with the same violation might have been referred to the School Board's new SMART program (Saturday Morning Alternative Reach out and Teach). Students caught with small amounts of drugs or weapons other than firearms may be spared expulsion if they attend this eight-week program.

Juan's disciplinary record also may have figured into the decision to expel him. He had been suspended a total of 14 days on top of the 10 he had earned for carrying the knife. His mother told the hearing officer that the other suspensions were for back-talk and cursing. Hoskins was not asked to confirm that account, and she has declined further comment.

The board attorney recommended a year of expulsion and alternative school placement. Juan's mother readily agreed, insisting that alternative school was what she had wanted for him all along, anyway.

Juan didn't protest either, according to the transcript. "I do want to go to alternative school," he told the hearing officer. But today what he remembers saying is, "F—you. I won't go to school."

In a letter dated May 28, 1998, the School Board formally expelled him for the entire 1998-99 school year.

Had he remained in school, his low ITBS scores would have landed him in summer school. He also would have been tested for special education placement, Zarnowski says.

Instead, Juan was referred to a "safe school" for expelled students, a program the board launched in 1996 in anticipation of its zero-tolerance crackdown.

Of the safe schools operating in 1998-99, four enrolled students Juan's age, and all provided round-trip bus service. Juan's mother doesn't recall the name of his school, remembering

only that the neighborhood seemed dangerous. "No way he was going to go there."

The School Board does allow safe school students to switch campuses, according to the Office of Specialized Services. Legally, however, expelled students are not required to attend school, nor is the School Board obligated to educate them.

Fall came, and Juan stayed home. Judging from various accounts, his misbehavior quickly escalated. In 1998, he came under a parole officer's purview. He acknowledges four felony convictions for what he and his mother describe as non-violent offenses such as drug and weapon possession.

Maria says she sent Juan's older brother back to Texas after he joined a gang and nearly lost his life. Juan also joined a gang but declines to give specifics about when and how, saying only that he considers them "*familia*."

"Once a Saint, always a Saint," he declares. "Even though you're retired, you got your kid and you moved away, you're still a Saint, you still got your love. You come back to the hood. You still know how to shake up." Juan demonstrates the gang shake with both hands, one turned upside down. "You be like, 'What's up doc?'"

JOHN BOOZ

In spring 1999, Juan's family spent several months in a small town in California as Maria and her partner seem to have briefly reunited. Juan and his sister attended school there, the family says. With no gang bangers around, Maria recalls, Juan spent afternoons skating or at the movie theater.

That fall, they returned to Back of the Yards, and Juan enrolled at Lara Academy, a few blocks from Seward.

Records from Juan's California school never appeared at Lara, so they placed him in 6th grade. In October, Lara promoted him to 8th grade due to his age, school records show, and referred him for after-school tutoring.

Juan's probation officer approved of the switch. "It was good for his self esteem," she says.

By Juan's standardized test scores, he was now about four years below his assigned grade level in reading.

From November on, school staff wrote him up for a string of incidents, including failure to wear a school uniform, classroom disruptions, profanity towards teachers, and disrespect to staff. Mid-winter, he spent two weeks in juvenile detention for an outside incident.

Lara suspended him four times for a total of 21 days and repeatedly called Maria in for conferences. Maria says she rarely attended.

"Parents get burned out by their own kids," notes UIC's McMiller. "They get tired of being embarrassed, if they care. And

if they don't care, what's the point [of a conference] anyway?"

Suspending a troubled student repeatedly also tends to backfire, he adds. "He doesn't feel like he's part of the classroom anymore. So he's going to act up again." McMiller recommends counseling instead.

Lara Principal Louise Eggert and two of Juan's 8th-grade teachers declined requests for interviews.

Juan thinks teachers should work harder to see "what's kicking" in a kid's brain. "They ought to talk to him, 'Is there anything wrong with you? Can I help you?' Get to know a kid. Sometimes all they're there for is to teach and leave."

By the end of 8th grade, Juan again missed his test score cutoffs by a wide margin; he was still four years below in reading. He sat and watched Lara's graduation ceremony "just to see how it looks," but it left him near tears. "I wanted to cry so bad and grab one of them and ... just slice somebody."

He didn't bother with summer school, and remembers hearing he was headed to a transitional school at 51st and Princeton, one of nine that CPS opened in 1997 for older students repeating 8th grade.

The school at that location, Olive Academic Preparatory Center, says that although Lara Academy does refer students to them, Juan never appeared on their list, and so they never went looking for him.

In any case, the school's location in rival gang territory still would have kept him away. The would have been true for Kelly High School, he says, had he been promoted.

Juan's probation officer doesn't blame him; she works with many children in his neighborhood who avoid those schools because of gang harassment. "As soon as they step out of the school, they can get killed, they can get beat up," she explains.

Irene Dugan Institute, an alternative high school, opened in fall 1998 across from Seward largely to give kids in Juan's neighborhood a safer option. She would love to send him there, but as with other alternative schools for dropouts, students must be at least 16, the age at which compulsory attendance ends.

"So what do I do with him?" she asks. "Just wait. That's a shame, because he's wasting his time. He's not getting educated."

Ask Juan where he sees himself in five years, and he replies "To tell you the truth, probably dead." Marijuana helps him cope with that fear, he says. "It's not right," he acknowledges, "but for somebody like me, you could say it would be good to block it out. Hide the pain away."



Thousands of kids 'disappear'

Researchers, CPS tussle over stats

Last year, 7,166 CPS students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades dropped out, disappeared or transferred to nobody knows where, according to numbers provided by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Of those missing elementary students, about 5,600 were coded by their schools as "unverified transfers." That means that family members told schools their children were transferring, but the schools never received requests for student records from receiving schools or, if they did, didn't record the requests.

If these students had been in high school, the School Board would have counted them as dropouts. However, the board contends that unverified transfers from elementary schools should not be included in new dropout calculations by the Consortium.

"There is just not an urgency in the elementary school to update the records to reflect where the kids transferred," says Chief Accountability Officer Philip Hansen. In contrast, high schools have more reliable record keeping because they are held accountable for dropout rates, he says.

Donald Moore, executive director of the research and advocacy group Designs for Change, maintains the same standards should apply so that elementary schools aren't tempted to disguise dropouts as unverified transfers.

The Consortium sparked a debate about elementary school dropouts when preliminary results of its new dropout study were published March 19 in *Crain's Chicago Business*. In a first, the Consortium counted elementary-school dropouts, including students with unverified transfers.

CPS protested, arguing Hansen's point about poor record keeping in elementary schools. After discussions with the School Board, the Consortium agreed to strike unverified transfers at all grade levels from the final version of the study, which has not yet been released. That reduced the rate by about five percentage points for every year in the study (see story on page 8.)

The Consortium study looks at ele-

mentary students beginning at age 13, the age of most 8th-graders. *CATALYST* requested the analysis of 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders.

Meanwhile, CPS scrambled to determine what had happened to the 520 8th-graders marked last school year as "lost." The board called the schools, homes and relatives of 300 of those students. In 80 percent of the cases, Hansen reports, it was told that the students had transferred to suburban or private schools. "Rarely was the story, 'He's dropped out, and he's living at home.'" However, CPS did not contact the schools to which the students reportedly had transferred.

"I'm sure many of the kids who have 'lost' codes have transferred to other school districts," says Consortium Deputy Director John Easton. "Unfortunately, there isn't good systematic data to verify this." The Consortium's study will not take the board's phone calls into account, he says.

Hansen says that central office recognizes that school clerks need better training in student records. "And we have to find a way [to make] elementary schools realize the importance of this data," he adds.

Elaine Allensworth, author of the Consortium study, doubts that Chicago's record keeping is any worse than that in other large, urban school systems. "If you can't trust these dropout rates, then you can't trust any dropout rates that you might read," she says. "It's difficult to keep student records clean."

Elementary schools contacted by *CATALYST* had varying responses to the Consortium's findings about their dropout/lost student rates. (The Consortium compiled school-by-school data from 1997-98 to 1999-00 at *CATALYST*'s request; the data are posted online at www.catalyst-chicago.org.) Some principals talked about the difficulty of keeping troubled kids in schools. Some declined to comment. Others insisted that students recorded as lost had, in fact, transferred.

Principal Helen Johnson of Anderson Middle School in Chicago

Lawn finds students are most likely to drop out "where the family has broken down, and the youngster is left to fend for himself, or the family is totally dysfunctional." Anderson lost 40 students over three years, or about 2 percent of its 7th- and 8th-graders.

Principal Louis S. Hall Jr. of Raymond elementary in Douglas has seen kids refuse to come even when their parents tell them to. "These kids will seldom tell you the truth: They've joined a gang. Some kids will be honest with you, 'I've fooled around all these years, and now the work is too difficult for me.'" Raymond lost 19 students over three years, for an average rate of 5 percent.

Principal Mary Ann Pollett of Montefiore, a Near West Side school for boys with emotional and behavioral disorders, finds her kids are easy targets for gang recruitment. "They can attract them with drugs, clothes, fancy sports shoes," she says. Montefiore lost 12 students in three years, for an average rate of 9 percent.

The four-campus Chicago International Charter School had one of the highest elementary dropout/lost rates in the city, about 8 percent. Over the past three school years, it lost a total of 66 6th- 7th- and 8th-graders. Ben Linquist, who handles public relations for the charter, declined to comment.

Arai Middle School in Uptown lost 69 students, for a 4 percent rate. Principal Patricia Monroe-Taylor also declined to comment.

Dixon elementary, an award-winning school in Chatham, recorded 60 "lost" students from grades 6 to 8, for a 6 percent rate. Most of them were 8th-graders, and over half were over-age for their grade level, according to the Consortium.

Principal Joan Crisler says that many of her students transfer to suburban or private schools without notifying Dixon, and that the school often does not receive requests for student records from those new schools. "I have never had an experience of someone 8th grade or younger just dropping out of school," she says.

*Elizabeth Duffrin with Mick Dumke of
The Chicago Reporter*

Transition students

Most go to high school but then drop out

by Jody Temkin

Last fall, Patrick Davis seldom made it to class at Sengstacke Academic Preparatory Center. The problem, says the 16-year-old, was dragging himself out of bed at 6:30 a.m. in time to catch an early bus to school.

On those days he did show up, Davis didn't put much effort into his studies, says Principal Janell Taylor. Sengstacke's two truant officers tried to help him. They called when he was absent, visited his home in North Lawndale and met with his mother at school conferences.

Nothing worked. In January, the school dropped Davis from its rolls, and Taylor suggested he enroll in an alternative school. But Davis—a low-scoring student who was sent to Sengstacke because he was too old to remain in 8th grade—dismissed the idea outright.

He pleaded with Taylor to change her mind. "I begged her to let me come back," Davis says. "I was sitting at home watching TV most of the time. I had a long talk with both sides of my family, and they said if I didn't go to school, I wouldn't go nowhere in life."

Taylor relented, but set two conditions. He could return, she said, if he found several teachers to mentor him and if he agreed to buckle down and get serious about schoolwork. Since he returned to school in February, Davis' attendance and class work have improved significantly.

For now, at least, Davis has escaped becoming a dropout statistic. He earned passing scores on his Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in January, and he plans to attend Manley High School this fall. But the odds are against his ever graduating from high school.

The School Board first launched its transition center program in 1997 to better prepare low-scoring students for high school work. The goal was to

increase such students' chances of graduating. However, though most students eventually pass the test, they gradually fall by the wayside. After entering high school, many drop out.

Roughly three-quarters of transition center students eventually get "passing" scores on the ITBS and move on to high school, reports Joyce Bristow, who oversees CPS transition centers and middle schools.

And the percentage of transition center students who move on to high school is creeping up, she adds. "These are 1,600 children [each year] the system has almost given up on."

However, CPS does not track students after they leave transition centers. Using CPS data, the Consortium on

"They don't want to be here, and they're angry. There's a lot of pressure from peers to drop out."

Valerie McKinney, social worker, Sengstacke

Chicago School Research took a headcount in the fall of 2000 and found that 24 percent of students who entered transition centers the previous year, 1999-2000, had dropped out. Of students enrolled in transition centers in 1998-99, 43 percent had dropped out of school. Of those enrolled in 1997-98, more than half, 57 percent, had left school. (See chart p. 14)

Retrieving truants

Keeping chronic truants, like Davis, in school is a constant effort, say truant officers. To retrieve wayward Hernandez Academic Prep students, truant officer

Frances Cook has driven to their homes, marched into their bedrooms and pulled the covers off their beds. "You have to go and get them," Cook says. "Some of these students need that extra push."

CPS provides students free bus service, and each transition center has a social worker, a counselor and a nurse on staff. Early in the school year, much of their time is spent persuading students to view transition centers as support, not punishment.

"They don't want to be here, and they're angry," says Valerie McKinney, a social worker at Sengstacke. "There's a lot of pressure from peers to drop out. I try to help them think it through. I ask 'What will you do? How will you take care of yourself?' They don't really know. Most stay. Once they feel connected here, it's easier for them."

McKinney adds that the smaller class sizes (a maximum of 20 students) and the low enrollment (about 200) make it easier for staff to develop close ties to students.

McKinney recalls one truant student. "I kept talking to him and saying I expected to see him here. I'd call [when

he was absent] and touch base with him whenever he was here. He saw somebody cared enough to keep tracking him down." He began coming to school regularly, she says.

In September, Sengstacke had 226 students on its rolls. By May, enrollment had declined to 196. Hernandez started the year with 200 and fell to 180. Hernandez Principal Anthony Finger points out that initial enrollment figures include students who never show up at all. "I'm not sure the children were ever at the grammar school, either," he says. "We make an effort to find them, and sometimes we can't."

Some students enroll briefly, then drop out. Transition center principals

cite a number of reasons, including pregnancy, juvenile delinquency and peer pressure.

Yovanny Matias, 16, who has spent two years at Sengstacke, says he knows at least 10 students who dropped out because they got pregnant, become involved in gangs or had problems at home.

Matias, whose family emigrated from Mexico in 1995, passed math but failed reading on the ITBS as an 8th-grader at Orozco Elementary in 1998-99. It took him until January 2001 to score high enough in reading to go on to high school. Before passing the test, he often considered dropping out, getting a job and eventually trying to get a GED. But his parents and transition center teachers helped keep him on course. "The teachers here really care about you and take time to talk to you," he says. "When I said 'I can't do this,' they said 'You can.' I'm glad I didn't drop out."

Transition centers permit truant students more leeway than high schools, in some cases, allowing 30 to 40 absences before dropping a student. Every year, though, a few students get kicked out. Finger dropped nine students from Hernandez this year.

Counter to expectations, students who fail to pass the ITBS in January typically do not drop out, say principals. By then, they've developed connections with other students and staff that keep them tied to the school. About 10 per-

cent of transition center students fail the test again in May. Facing a second year at the transition center—and watching peers get promoted to high school—they are more likely to quit school altogether.

High school credit

In 1999, the School Board experimented with sending transition center students to high schools mid-year if they passed the ITBS in January. The experiment lasted only a year. "We felt the kids did better if they stayed a full year in the smaller setting with the extra nurturing and mentoring," Bristow says.

Instead, those students can earn high school credits by passing transition center classes in English, math, social studies, physical ed and computers. Science is not part of the transition center curriculum, so teachers encourage students to a summer course before starting high school.

"In a perfect world, we could have children who enter high school as sophomores," Finger says. But most often, transition center students enter high school as freshmen.

At transition centers, students get double periods (90 minutes) of reading and math every day. A heavy dose of test preparation work—which teachers bemoan, yet feel is necessary—is part of the curriculum as well. Activities to

boost self-esteem fill out the program. At Sengstacke, for example, Thursday physical education classes are led by motivational speakers who discuss a variety of social and emotional topics.

Doris Clay, an English teacher at Sengstacke, says the transition centers' focus on basic skills leaves no time for other educational activities. "There were times I would have liked

to take a field trip or bring in a speaker ... but I don't want to take time away from reading or math. That hurts."

Declining enrollment

Next year, fewer students are expected to be sent to transition centers. A change in the promotion policy last spring allowed teachers discretion to promote 8th-graders with borderline ITBS scores. Eighth-graders who scored 8.0 get promoted automatically; those who score at least 7.0 may still go to high school if other factors, such as class work, weigh in their favor. "I do anticipate lower enrollment next year," Bristow says.

Two transition centers—Dorsey and Olive—are being closed, saving the system \$3 million. In 2000-01, the program cost a total of \$13 million, says Bristow.

No one tracks transition center students once they move on to high school. Some transition center staffers keep tabs on former students informally. Hernandez truant officer Cook has a list of about 30 former students whom she calls periodically to see how they're doing.

Of those, about half, she estimates, are still enrolled in high school. A couple are in jail. A few have had babies and dropped out of school. Many have dropped out of school to take jobs. "They say they have to help support their families," says Cook.

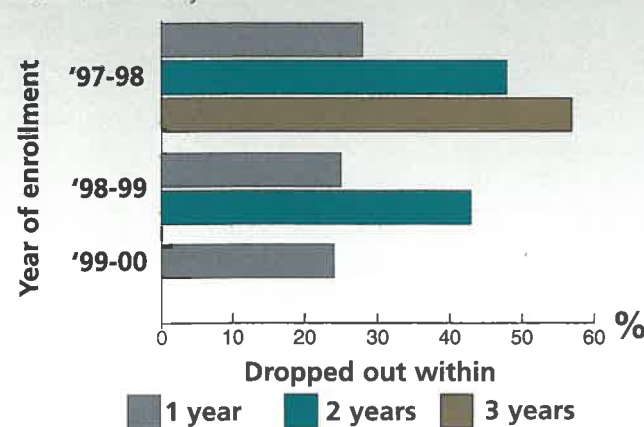
It's not unusual for former students to show up at their old transition center school to tell teachers they wish they could come back, say some staffers. "There's a comfort level that develops here," said principal Finger. "This isn't a place kids are clamoring to come to at first, but as the culture develops during the year, they feel safe here. When they get out into the larger high school, they struggle."

Sengstacke P.E. teacher Bob Faire says transition center students could use more support, such as mental health counseling, vocational training and mentoring. The latter, he believes, would increase the number who stay in school.

"Some of these kids aren't getting parental guidance," Faire says. "We need to do some kind of outreach, so they have someone to turn to when they leave here."

Dropout rates for center students

Low-scoring students, like those who attend transition centers, are more likely to drop out of high school. While close to 42 percent of all CPS high school students drop out, well over half of students who enroll in transition centers drop out within three years.



Source: Consortium on Chicago School Research



the College Challenge

What does it take to get a college education? The simple answer is hard work and money. But the real answer is far more complex. The hard work starts in high school with earning a grade-point average and entrance exam scores that are high enough to gain college admission. Then, the hard work shifts to making academic and social adjustments to collegiate life. Along the way, key decisions must be made about the college to attend and the major to pursue. Getting the money typically requires hard work, too: identifying and applying for scholarships and financial aid.

For many minority students, navigating the transition from high school to college is especially difficult. Blacks and Hispanics are graduating from high school in greater numbers, but still lag behind whites in college enrollment; 43 percent of white high school graduates but only 35 percent of African Americans and Hispanics enroll, according to the College Board.

And then, blacks and Latinos are less likely to complete college. According to the American Council on Education, 14 percent of African Americans and 11 percent of Hispanics who are 25 and older have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 29 percent of whites.

A contributing factor to the disparity is that African-American and Hispanic students are still far more likely to attend low-performing high schools that don't do enough to prepare them for the rigors of college work. Further, a recent College Board report found that only a third of colleges and universities have launched outreach efforts and programs aimed at recruiting and retaining disadvantaged students.

With these statistics in mind, *CATALYST* begins "The College Challenge," a series of periodic reports that will examine the bumpy road to a college degree through the lives of nine black and Latino students.

In this issue, *CATALYST* Associate Editor Debra Williams introduces the students, who range from a high school junior to a college sophomore. Next school year, she will provide updates on their progress and the problems they encounter. The series will conclude in the fall of 2002 with a survey of several hundred similar students, as well as a review of efforts that can smooth the path to college achievement for minority young people.

About this series

*"The College Challenge" reporting project is being done in cooperation with Future Teachers of Chicago/Illinois under a grant from The Joyce Foundation. Through clubs in high schools and colleges, Future Teachers recruits and assists minority students who are interested in becoming teachers. Each of the students *CATALYST* is following is a club member, although not every one is pursuing a teaching career. The project editor is Lorraine Forte, a Chicago journalist.*

the College Challenge

by Debra Williams

Dannielle Dungey Social isolation

As a freshman at Northern Illinois University last fall, Dannielle Dungey quickly racked up sky-high telephone bills by making daily long-distance calls to her mother. At least twice a month, Dannielle's mom drove two hours to DeKalb to pick up her daughter, then traveled back to their home in south suburban Chicago.

At NIU, academics have not been a problem for the honors student from Hazelcrest High, who had a 5.2 GPA (on a 6.0 honors scale). So far, she's earned a 3.8 GPA at NIU.

But Dannielle—like many students who attend racially-isolated high schools and enroll in mostly-white colleges—has struggled to adjust socially. She feels isolated and lonely. Opportunities to meet other African Americans were limited, she

says, since most of the other students in her honors-level classes have been white males. (NIU is 75 percent white, 12 percent African American.)

"The first week I went to class, I thought, 'Where are all the black people?'" says Dannielle, a history major who is also studying political science so she can be "endorsed" to teach both subjects.

She sought out African-American peers at the school's Black Student Center, but the center was more focused on providing academic, not social, supports. Go to parties, a representative of the center told her. But Dannielle says she's not a party-goer. One college official told Dannielle that it's generally tough to make social connections at NIU because many students go home to Chicago every weekend and don't make new friends at school.

Dannielle also found that many students—black and white—have formed cliques. "I've been to other campuses

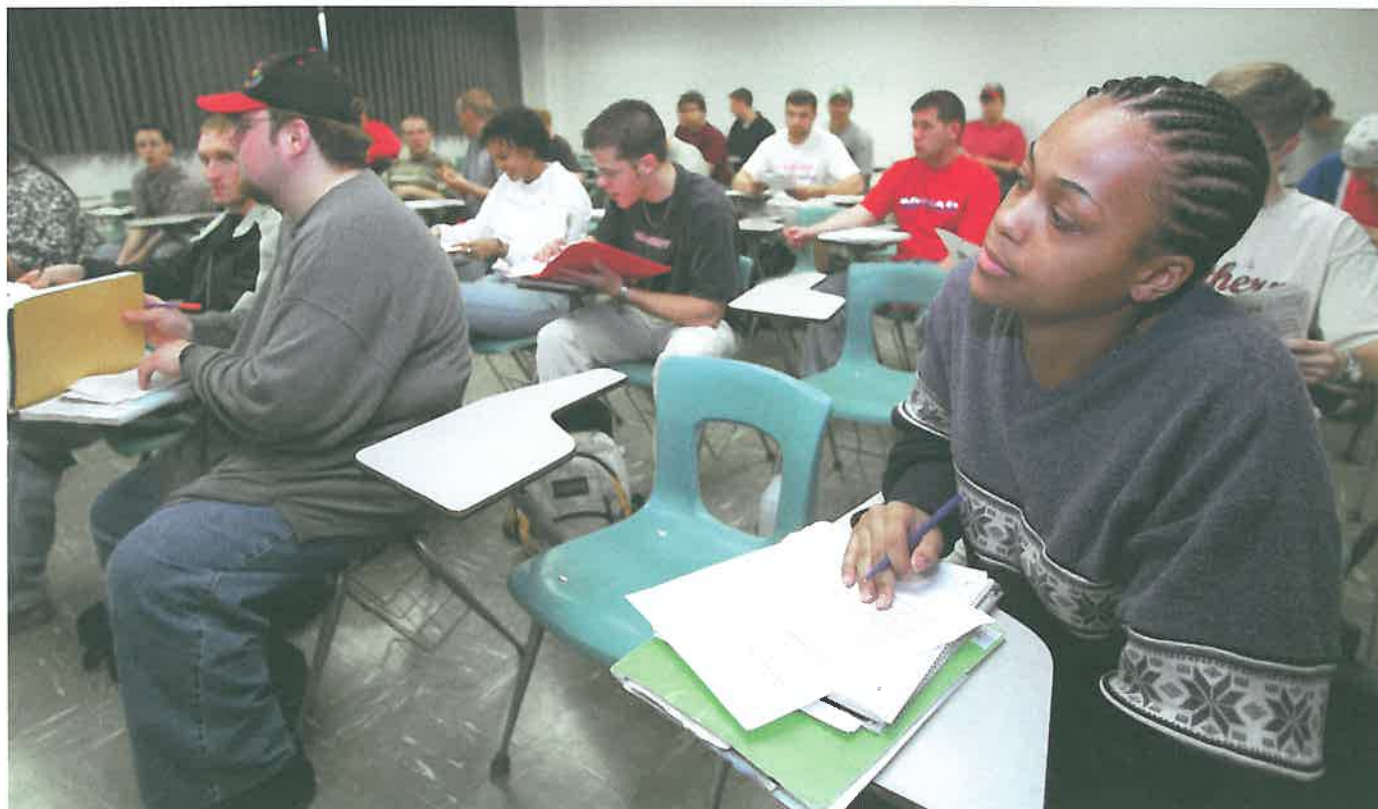
where people were really friendly, but my school is different," she says. "I thought there would be more socializing, but here, people form these little groups just like in high school."

For a while, the isolation made her think she'd made a mistake in deciding to go away to college, even though learning to live on your own is part of the traditional "college experience."

"I kept thinking, 'What have you done? You've made a big mistake,'" says Dannielle, who chose NIU because it awarded her a four-year, full-tuition scholarship.

Still, she thinks her first-year experience has taught her to be more independent, and she has high hopes. "Next year will be better," Dannielle says. "I know the school now. I will know what to expect, and I'll probably feel more comfortable."

Next: Coping in year 2.



Dannielle Dungey, a freshman at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, listens intently to the instructor in her American foreign policy class. She is only one of two African Americans in the high-level class.

James Snowden

Paving the road to success

By the time he reached 8th grade, James Snowden had been in and out of 10 elementary schools. Family problems kept him, his mother and a younger brother on the move. Such high mobility usually breeds a lifetime of bad grades and academic struggles, but James is an exception.

The Chicago Vocational Career Academy junior is an honor student with a 4.6 GPA. He belongs to the National Honor Society, competes in the Academic Decathlon, sits on the student council, runs track and plays basketball and football. He is president of the Beta Club for high-achieving students.

Already, James, a math whiz who's interested in computers and international business, is laying the groundwork for college. "Purdue University, Florida A& M, even Yale, Harvard and Princeton—I'm going to apply to all of them," he says with conviction. "My ACT score will show schools what I can do."

James took the ACT a year early as a sophomore and scored 21. "I wanted to get a feel for the test," he says. "And I didn't study for it because I wanted to see how good I could do without trying, so I'd know what I have to do later." (The average ACT score at CVS is 15.)

James "has been thinking about college since he was a freshman," says Margaret Fyfe, who teaches his Advanced Placement U.S. history class and coaches him for the Academic Decathlon. "He is a kid who is very focused." His challenge won't be getting into college, she says, but paying for it.

But James is already mapping his college finance strategy, too. "I'm making sure I take care of business [academically] because I know my mother won't be able to give monetary support," says the mature 17-year-old, who aims to qualify for athletic and academic scholarships. Chuck Chambers, his football coach, says he's got a good shot at a sports scholarship.

James is out to shatter another myth:

College jocks can't be good students.

"If you play sports, you have to be dumb; if you're smart, you can't play sports," says James, echoing conventional wisdom. "I plan to prove people wrong. I want to be the best in both areas."

Next: Senior year.



At school, James Snowden pumps iron. The high school junior is banking on academic and athletic scholarships to pay his way through college.

Lekena Figueroa-Forman

Self-support takes a toll

Monday through Friday, from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Lekena Figueroa-Forman works as a teller at Corus Bank in Lincoln Park. Four days a week at quitting time, she rushes home, rests for 20 minutes, gathers her belongings, catches a bus and heads to Northeastern Illinois University, where she takes three-hour-long evening classes until almost 8:30 p.m.

On Saturday mornings, she's back at the bank until 1:30 p.m. Afternoons are for studying, running errands, washing clothes and cleaning her apartment. On Sundays she sleeps—all day if she can get away with it.

The exhausting pace has muscled into her schoolwork and makes it tough for the self-supporting 19-year-old sophomore to maintain high grades as she works toward her goal of becoming a high school history teacher.

"I wish I didn't have to work," she says. "I know I can do better with

grades, but I'm tired. I had a 3.3 grade point average at Lane Tech. Now my GPA is 2.8."

Initially, Lekena lived at home with her mom, dad and five-year-old brother. But a month and a half before she started school, problems at home forced her to move into her own apartment in Uptown and support herself.

Next year, though, something will have to give. As early as spring 2002, Lekena may begin student teaching, which would require her to quit her bank job and spend days in the classroom.

"My financial aid takes care of my tuition, but if I don't work, I can't pay my rent or my other bills," she says, troubled at the thought of having to move back to a difficult home situation.

For now, her next challenge is to pass the test required to be admitted into Northeastern's College of Education. She also wants to boost her GPA to a 3.0 so she can take honors English

courses. And she's planning to increase her schedule from four to five classes to remain on track to graduate in four years, then step into the classroom as a teacher.

"I love kids. I love reading. I love history," says Lekena, who is African American and Puerto Rican. "That's why I've always wanted to be a teacher, and I want to be good at it."

Next: Student teaching



Working full-time and carrying a full load of classes is exhausting, says Lekena Figueroa-Forman.

JOHN BOOZ

JOHN BOOZ

the College Challenge

Brooke Ray

Dream college comes through

Throughout high school, a hectic schedule of studying and extracurricular activities has been the centerpiece of Brooke Ray's plan to win acceptance to her "dream college."

The Orr High School senior, who has GPA of 4.5 and belongs to the National Honor Society, is editor of the school newspaper, producer and director in Orr's TV and radio program, teen ambassador to Australia and New Zealand for People-to-People (a group that promotes world peace), homecoming queen and senior class president. She also works part time

to earn money.

In March, Brooke achieved her dream. She was accepted at the prestigious University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where she plans to study international business.

But rather than basking in the glow of her accomplishment, Brooke is biting her nails. Orr—one of the lowest-scoring schools now undergoing intervention—may not have prepared her for the rigors of a top university, she worries. At Orr, she sometimes feels as though she's reviewing, not learning.

"Sometimes, I feel like I'm being robbed of my education," she says. Classes at Brooke's previous high school, Providence St. Mel, were more challenging, she says. (She transferred to Orr when family problems forced her to miss a month of school in 1999.) "We did a lot more writing there," she says. "St. Mel's gave out way more work. I almost broke my back carrying St. Mel books back and forth."

Brooke's brother, Everett Jackson, an associate director of admissions at USC, says his sister has legitimate concerns. As a college freshman, she will have to cut back on extracurricular activities and keep her head in the books, he says.

"I'm an Orr alum," says Jackson. "When I went to Notre Dame, it was a very difficult transition. I was not as prepared as the other students." He also notes that Brooke's ACT score of 21 is nearly 10 points lower than the average incoming USC student.

But USC, he explains, looks at a prospective student's extracurricular accomplishments as well as test scores and grades. USC is also seeking to boost its black enrollment (now only 7 percent) and to attract students from a wider geographic area. (Jackson says he was not involved in the decision to admit

Brooke.)

In addition to academic concerns, Brooke, a child of a single parent, knows she'll need money. Last year, out-of-state tuition at USC was \$31,000. She applied for financial aid in February and began searching for scholarships in March. But by then, she had already missed some deadlines.

Next: Going to college.

Adam Ramirez

Teachers to the rescue

In his junior year in high school, Adam Ramirez decided he wanted to become a teacher. But he almost didn't make it into college.

Although Adam was earning A's and B's at the time, he had years of poor grades behind him and a low score of 16 on the ACT college entrance exam. After being rejected by two colleges and denied a scholarship, he wanted to throw in the towel. But a teacher coaxed him to apply for one more scholarship.

Adam's last try landed him a four-year STAR scholarship at Roosevelt University. STAR is given to aspiring minority teachers, a group that colleges of education are desperate to recruit, given chronic teacher shortages, especially in black and Latino communities.

Now, Adam is living on campus and finishing his second year. "I almost didn't get here," says the 20-year old, who's made a smooth transition to college by making new friends, mastering the work load and learning to live independently. "I often wonder what I'd be doing with my life right now, where I would be."

"What a scary thought, that he might not be where he is now and doing so well," says Linda Pincham, who heads the scholarship program.

Adam's GPA and ACT score were low



JOHN BOOZ

Brooke Ray kicks up her heels at the senior prom at the Westin Hotel, the day after her 18th birthday. In August, she hopes to start at USC in Los Angeles.



Adam Ramirez began tutoring students at Pulaski Elementary to fulfill his scholarship requirements; he continued because he loved it.

after-school tutoring program.

Determined to bring up his grades, Adam attended faithfully, putting in two hours three days a week for two years. The result: His English improved, and his grades rose dramatically. By his junior year, Adam was getting A's and B's.

"When I saw what a teacher did for me, I knew that's what I wanted to do, too," says Adam, who tutors Hispanic youngsters in his spare time.

**Next:
Learning to
be a teacher**

the test but earned B's in the course and thought she would have no problem with college-level classes. But at Loyola, she was assigned to English 100, a remedial class, after she did poorly on a placement test.

"My instructor said my sentence structure was bad, my writing needed a lot of work and I had a lot to learn. I was so embarrassed," Anna recalls.

Juarez's curriculum coordinator, Richard Gelb, says Anna's situation isn't uncommon. "AP English is not writing intensive. It's literature-based," says Gelb, who three years ago started a writing-skills program for freshmen at Juarez. "Then you go to college and it's writing intensive. Students fail."

Anna also struggled in math. She earned A's and B's at Juarez in algebra, geometry, trigonometry and calculus, but got an F in pre-calculus her first semester at Loyola.

Anna's self-confidence plummeted when she fell to a C-average at Loyola. She says she didn't know how to ask for help, so she studied harder on her own. "I felt like everyone was smarter than me and I just didn't fit in," says Anna, who also was coping with family problems that made it difficult to focus on academics.

This year, Anna moved away from home and into a dorm apartment, but she's still struggling in her classes. Even so, she's confident that she'll do better next fall. "I now know I'm capable of the work if I work hard," Anna says.

Next: Anna's third year.

even for STAR standards, says Pincham, but his recommendations from teachers were glowing. In addition, because he was a young, Hispanic man with an interest in teaching—a rarity—the university decided to take a chance.

Pincham says Roosevelt made a good decision. "Adam has excelled in everything he's done," she says. "He's really remarkable."

Adam is the first in his family to go to college. His parents immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico, and his two older brothers completed only high school.

For a while, it looked like Adam would follow suit. By 8th grade, he had attended four elementary schools, including one in Mexico. With the constant mobility, Adam struggled academically and could earn no better than D's and F's on his report cards.

"When I came back from Mexico, I was really behind in my grades," Adam relates. "My English skills had decreased. It was hard to keep up with the work. I really struggled to keep up."

Those struggles followed him to Hubbard High, where math teacher Blythe Olchan-Findley saw that he needed help and got him to enroll in her

Anna Salinas

Overcoming poor sendoff

As a little girl, Anna Salinas loved to play "teacher." Early on, she knew that's the career she wanted. But as she finishes her second year at Loyola University, Anna's found the path to becoming a real teacher rough going. Academic difficulties, coupled with problems at home, made her first year "horrible," says Anna. "I thought of dropping out all the time."

First, the Juarez High School graduate found that she hadn't been prepared academically for college-level work, despite earning A's and B's and being told by teachers she'd have no problems in college.

English was a major problem. Anna took Advanced Placement English. She failed



Anna Salinas looks forward to her third year at Loyola University, following a rough start.

the College Challenge

Angela Serrano

Breaking from tradition

She's got three birds, one cat and one dog. All her life, Angela Serrano's been surrounded by animals. So when the Hubbard High senior started thinking about potential careers her junior year, she immediately thought of veterinary medicine.

However, when she talked about going to college, her mother, an immigrant from Mexico who had not attended college, discouraged her. So Angela shelved her dream that year, when students thinking about college should begin preparing in earnest.

"She told me that I didn't have good grades and we didn't have the money," says Angela, a C student. "That really got into my head, so I stopped caring

about going."

Then, Angela got critical support from two other quarters. An older co-worker at her part-time job—a woman with children of her own—and a Hubbard counselor, Aidah Shabazz, both encouraged her to keep pursuing her goal.

"I don't think my mother meant any harm, but she never went to college," says Angela, an only child. "When she was younger, she had to take care of her siblings. College is just not important to her."

Angela has applied to 10 colleges, but she's set her sights on the University of Illinois at Chicago. She would like to major in biology and eventually transfer to the veterinary program at the main U of I campus in Champaign-Urbana.

But with a GPA of 2.24 and a low score of 15 on the ACT, Angela knows that getting into college and completing college-level work will be challenging. The ACT cut-off score at UIC's

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is 16, and students must be in the top 15 percent of their class.

Still, Shabazz believes Angela can succeed. "She's a smart student. She'd be a fine [vet] student, but I think testing is a challenge for her. She freezes."

If she's not accepted, Angela says she may attend Daley Community College, bring up her grades and apply again later to UIC. Fernando Planas, UIC's assistant admissions director, says that's a good alternative.

In the meantime, Angela's also gotten a late start on finding financial aid. But her co-worker and Shabazz again have stepped in to help.

Says Angela, "If I don't get anything, I'll look into getting a loan, and I'll just have to work it off. Then next year, I'll start looking for scholarships, nice and early."

Next: Does she get accepted?

Aaron Price

Good prep at Kenwood

Kenwood High senior Aaron Price hasn't made up his mind about what career he'll pursue. But he's already picked out a college because of its reputation—Morehouse, the historically black men's college in Atlanta—and a major and minor—math and education.

Aaron, whose parents both hold college degrees, has the advantage of having grown up in a household where it was simply assumed he'd pursue higher education. Students whose parents attended college are far more likely to enroll themselves than students whose parents didn't attend.

"The decision was made a long time ago that I'd go to college," says Aaron. "I didn't have much to do with that."

Aaron's father, the Rev. Jerome Price,



JOHN BOOZ

Angela Serrano talks to her parakeet, Baby Birdy. Having pets is what inspired Angela to set her sights on studying veterinary medicine.



Aaron Price, who sings and plays piano at his father's South Side church, has his heart set on becoming a "Morehouse man."

presides over the St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in the Fuller Park neighborhood and holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in Christian education. His mother, Pamela Price, has a bachelor's in criminal justice and a master's in public administration.

Aaron began a serious college search his junior year and got the help that many aspiring college students, especially student who aren't automatically considered "college material," don't receive.

Kenwood counselor Don McCord, Aaron says, "sat down with me, asked me what I was interested in, what majors I was thinking of taking, and then he gave me a list of colleges and told me to look them up to see what they had to offer."

McCord discussed colleges with Aaron and made sure he didn't forget any pending deadlines. His parents encouraged him to create a "tickler" file to keep abreast of deadlines and information on financial aid, scholarships and grants.

Still, Aaron is not guaranteed smooth sailing. His next challenge might well be tougher than getting into college: finding money to pay for it. Morehouse's tuition, room and board in 2000-01 was over \$28,000.

In January, Aaron completed and mailed his FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Financial Aid), which is used to apply for grants and work-study funds and is also used by most states and schools to award aid packages. He's also

interviewed and applied for scholarships (including smaller ones from local businesses). As an honors student taking Advanced Placement courses, Aaron is an ideal candidate for academic scholarships.

But like many middle-class families, the Prices will have to consider loans.

"I'm looking forward to college," says Aaron. "I know it's going to be very different from high school, but I'm confident I'll do well."

Next: Finding the money.

Vernon Payne Balancing dreams, reality

When Vernon Payne was a small boy, he was always painting and drawing. He now dreams of becoming a portrait artist and will begin studying art this fall at Columbia College.

"I'm really good at art, and I plan on selling it," says, Vernon, a June graduate of Morgan Park High School.

Vernon is good at art, confirm Sari Breslin, his high school art teacher, and Ellen Bedoe, his counselor. However, both are advising Vernon to study graphic arts, a field with more career options than fine arts.

In addition, Breslin says that Vernon will have a tough time in college if he doesn't learn to pay attention to the basics, such as turning in assignments on time, following directions and paying better attention in class.

"I think he is naturally talented, and certainly has an artistic ability, but there's more to it than that," says

Breslin. "He needs to take these other things more seriously."

To set him on that path, Breslin steered Vernon to Gallery 37, a summer art and youth employment program run by the city. Breslin says that Gallery 37 not only helps students build their artistic skills and portfolios, but also teaches them life skills.

"He'll have to pay attention to the little details like getting to work on time and completing assignments," says Breslin, who plans to mentor Vernon over the summer.

At Columbia, Vernon also will have to take core academic courses required of all students, such as history and biology. As a C student, Vernon admits to frequently doing just enough work to get by, and neglecting courses that aren't related to his interests. "My grades would be a lot better if I wanted them to be. I'd have straight A's if I wanted," he says.

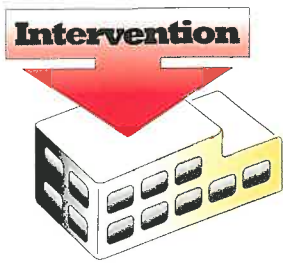
Tim Long, a career advisor for art and design students at Columbia, says studying graphic arts is practical because the field is an easier nut to crack. "I advise students to sample stuff. Take fine arts. Take graphic arts. The core [arts] courses will offer all this, and students won't lose credits while they're exploring."

The advice Vernon is getting seems to be sinking in. "I guess at first, I only thought about selling my artwork, but I'm finding out there's a whole art business out there, and I want to find out more about it."

Next: Vernon enrolls at Columbia



Vernon Payne has been dabbling in paint since he was about 7 years old. He plans to study art at Columbia College this fall.



Year end review:

Amid dismal first year results CPS plans for year two

Despite dismal test scores and an exodus of teachers at intervention schools last year, the School Board's get-tough experiment to improve failing high schools is slated to continue next fall.

As *CATALYST* goes to press, CPS plans to keep intervention teams in place at the five intervention high schools next fall, says Chief Education Officer Cozette Buckney. However, she admits that incoming board president Michael Scott and the system's new chief executive officer will likely have their own vision for the program—including possibly ending it.

Next year's budget includes \$750,000 to fund 10 central office positions in the Office of Intervention.

Intervention Officer JoAnn Roberts, who often clashed with local school administrators this year, will continue to oversee the effort, says Buckney. The intervention teams, which consist of a leader and four core subject specialists, will remain on staff at intervention schools next year.

Principals, however, will no longer be required to complete five evaluations for every teacher on staff, she adds.

At a meeting later this month, the board is expected to review intervention data, including test scores that for the most part continued to drop. Reading scores dropped at three of the five intervention schools. Math scores dropped at four, with the fifth posting a gain of only a tenth of a percentage point.

Buckney says it was no surprise that during a year of generally declining high school test scores, intervention schools declined, too.

Other factors contributed to the poor showing at intervention schools, Buckney explains. For instance, intervention teams did not have enough time to make substantive changes to teaching and curriculum in the classroom. "Nothing has been accomplished," she admits, adding that the program should fare better next year.

At a recent press conference, outgoing CEO Paul Vallas told reporters that intervention will need more time to show results. "You're going to need to give it two or three years," he says. Vallas declined to comment further on intervention.

By March, only seven tenured teachers—out of some 180 at five intervention schools—had received unsatisfactory ratings and were subject to dismissal. (See *CATALYST*, April 2001.) However, by the end of the academic year, none had been fired, and Buckney could not say whether any would be.

Since intervention was imposed last July, about 85 teachers have left the intervention schools.

Some of the veteran teachers who left may have done so because they were unwilling to accept new principals and other changes, Buckney says. On the other hand, changes during the second year of intervention are likely to go more smoothly with staff and principals already in place, she adds.

The upside

Nonetheless, CPS officials declare the first year of intervention a success. Attendance rates are up at all five schools, with DuSable High making the biggest gain from 74 percent to 83 percent.

Overall, the policy created stronger school leaders and brought critical infrastructure improvements, such as new textbooks and updated computer technology, to each school, says Buckney. "The goals for [intervention] have been to raise the level of these schools. All we've done is to stabilize these schools."

Roberts claims credit for physical repairs made to all five facilities, such as new windows and floors, and installing Internet connections, including a wireless system at Collins. "It's just insurmountable the work that needs to be done in these schools," she says.

Another intervention staffer says the policy brought parents, teachers and community partners together to plot the schools' strategic plans. Intervention schools were each required to write a mission statement and draft a three- to five-year

Year one results

While Intervention was aimed at raising test scores, only two of the five schools made progress on that front. Meanwhile, attendance gains were reported at all five schools.

Percent at/above norms in reading

	Reading		Math	
	2000	2001	2000	2001
Bowen	13.5%	10.4%	21.5	21.6
Collins	10.9	4.9	27	12.2
DuSable	8	9.5	19	16.5
Orr	12.5	10.7	16.5	15.9
S. Shore	13.5	14.5	18.5	12.2

Attendance (as of May)

Rates %:	2001	2000
Bowen	84.23	83.5
Collins	83.9	81
DuSable	83	74.3
Orr	77.3	76.2
South Shore	85	79.5

Source: CPS Office of Accountability, intervention schools

plan. Since January, groups of 18 or so have been meeting weekly at each school to devise the plans, says Maureen Cleary, intervention plan manager. Plans are due by the end of the month.

Principal Larry Thomas says intervention helped a handful of South Shore High School's newest teachers to learn how to handle their classrooms and organize lesson plans. Also, the frequent classroom observation that intervention required of principals helped him get to know his staff better. Still, small benefits were canceled out by the harsh tone set by intervention, which turned off a number of good teachers who left the school, he concludes.

The downside

As the last days of school approached, the uncertainty over the future of intervention was taking a toll on some teachers, says DuSable team leader Gladys Jones. Her team is just beginning to make inroads, she adds. "It would be painful if the intervention team were pulled."

One critic contends that intervention is yet another example of a hastily planned and poorly implemented sanction policy imposed by the board. Don Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, recalls the board's attempt to shake up seven poorly performing high schools in 1997 with reconstitution—a policy that yielded few positive results. "How many times do we have to see this movie before we see it doesn't work?" he asks.

Under reconstitution, the board had the power to replace teachers on the basis of brief interviews and a number were reassigned to other schools. By comparison, intervention is a more stringent accountability measure, allowing the board to replace principals, disband LSCs and dismiss teachers and other staff who received negative evaluations but failed to improve before the end of the year.

Buckney says teachers could realize benefits from the evaluation once they "got past the idea that they were being picked on." However, one teacher found the evaluations both unfair and unhelpful.

A 20-year veteran in the classroom, she says she had never received less than an excellent performance review from previous principals. But the first time the intervention principal visited her

classroom, a number of students, who did not have a permanent teacher, had just been reassigned to her class. The class did not go well and she received her first negative evaluation. The next time the principal sat in, students were working in groups and the room was noisy. "It wasn't my best class," she admits. "But it was a decent class."

"How many times do we have to see this movie before we see it doesn't work?"

Don Moore, executive director, Designs for Change

Nonetheless, she was written up. The principal's recommendations were vague and "too subjective," she says. Still, she moved ahead with two suggestions: Relocating her desk and redecorating a bulletin board. She was later taken off notice. "[The principal] thinks he did this wonderful job of turning me around but I haven't changed my teaching," she says.

Further decline at Collins

Of all the intervention schools, Collins fared the worst. TAP scores in reading dropped from 11 percent to 5 percent; in math, from 27 percent to 12 percent. "We were very disappointed with the scores," says Principal Diane Dyer-Dawson. "They were not what we expected." The low scores will make it tough to recruit students and teachers next year, she adds.

Dyer-Dawson says she had set internal goals for the TAP, but she also went along with Roberts' goal of 75 percent in reading and 78 percent in math. All the intervention schools had set similarly lofty goals.

Intervention was a "work-in-progress," she says, which sometimes kept teachers guessing. The scrutiny and voluminous paperwork added to the tensions, she says. "This is such an intense process, I'm not just talking about just for bad teachers, but for good teachers."

Parent John Reynolds says one year of intervention at Collins High was enough. Reynolds, who resigned last fall as

Collins local school council president, says this school year was "chaotic" for his two 9th grade sons. He plans to transfer both his sons to North Lawndale College Prep, a charter school.

Teacher departures led to many problems, he says. Many classes had revolving-door substitute teachers and students were left frustrated, he adds.

And athletic teams failed to attract players after popular coach-teachers left.

Meanwhile, the LSC ceased to operate after several members resigned. Reynolds admits that his resignation fed the councils demise, but he says morale and hope evaporated as the year went on.

The final straw came with reports from his sons. "They were complaining to me that they didn't feel challenged," he says. "That's kind of strange coming from kids."



Collins Principal Diane Dyer-Dawson says intervention was tough "not just for bad teachers, but for good teachers."

11th-hour cancellation: CASA on hold for now pending new leader lineup

by Brett Schaeffer

The School Board has put a hold on its \$18 million Comprehensive Approach to Student Achievement program (CASA), which was to begin with staff development sessions June 14 and 15.

In a June 11 letter to providers of school services, Ana Espinoza, interim officer of curriculum, instruction and professional development, explained that it was “imperative that the new leadership team be able to determine the direction for our schools.”

CASA was intended to improve reading scores at 200 elementary schools by requiring them to select instructional programs that have the board’s seal of approval.

However, a *CATALYST* survey of schools singled out for the effort indicates that most schools already are using board-approved programs and had planned to continue doing so.

CATALYST interviewed principals at 59 of the 200 CASA schools; 33, or more than half, selected one program, or in some cases two, that they already are using; an additional 7 schools reported choosing one new program and one program already in use. Out of those 40 schools, only four chose to continue with programs that were not on the CASA list.

“We had a model we’d been using — the Comprehensive Literacy Initiative — for kindergarten through 3rd grade,” said Carl Lawson, principal of Price Elementary School in North Kenwood. “Now I can do 4th through 8th grade and get some money to do it.”

Each of the 200 schools was to receive up to \$60,000 for books and materials, plus \$40 per student. In addition, the board was recruiting administrators or teachers with principal certification to form three-person monitoring teams.

With less than 26 percent of its students scoring at or above national norms in reading last year, Price is categorized as a “low performing school.” It started using the Comprehensive Literacy Initiative this school year; the program is run by the University of Chicago’s Center for School Improvement.

Doolittle Intermediate School in the Oakland neighborhood chose Direct Instruction, a scripted reading pro-

gram. “This is our third year with Direct Instruction,” said Principal Lori Lennix.

Doolittle is on academic remediation, which means that for three years in a row, at least 50 percent of its students failed to meet state testing standards and its scores were declining rather than improving. Lennix said this year’s Iowa test results, up 6.5 percentage points from last year, show that Direct Instruction, a scripted curriculum, is having a positive impact.

“I don’t know if it’s the No.1 model, but it works for us,” she said.

Familiarity was the main factor other principals cited for sticking with certain models.

Sandra Lewis of Washington Elementary said her school chose Structured Curriculum, a complete set of lesson plans developed by CPS teachers. “We’ve been using it before, and its focus has worked well for us, so I want to stick with it,” she said.

Joan Forte, principal at Randolph Elementary, gave similar reasons for staying with two models already in

CASA sampler

In a survey of 59 of 200 CASA schools, *CATALYST* found that programs sponsored by the School Board were selected most often. The board-approved list included 22 curriculum models, which range from K-12 to 1st-grade-only. Schools also could choose a curriculum not on the board’s list. Here are the top four models selected:

Model	Source	Scripted Lessons	Schools using	New to the school
Structured Curriculum	CPS	Yes	13	4
Direct Instruction	University of Oregon	Yes	1	6
Read, Write Well	CPS	No	11	2
Connections	DePaul U.	Yes	6	3

Note: Two schools are using both Direct Instruction and Structured Curriculum.

Source: CPS school principals

place at her school: DePaul University's Connections and Direct Instruction. "I knew them and researched them, and had experience with them," she said.

Washington is on the CASA list because its reading scores slipped last year. Randolph is on the CASA list because of a two-year decline in scores.

CPS model popular

Under the CASA program outlined in April, each school was to select one of 22 board-approved curriculum models. However, CASA Executive Director Rollie Jones said last month that schools also would have the option of staying with a program they currently are using even if it's not among the 22.

Among the 59 CASA schools *CATALYST* contacted, programs created by the School Board (Structured Curriculum and Read, Write Well) were among the top three picks.

Foundations, a small school located in the Creiger Mutliplex, is one of 19 schools that told *CATALYST* that they would add new curriculum programs. The school chose the School Board's Technology Infusion Planning, or TIP, said Sylvia Gibson, director of the Creiger Mutliplex. The computer-based model includes staff computer training and allows the school to purchase new computers, according to Gibson.

She said the teachers were especially enthusiastic about the model because the training will be more structured than what they've received in the past. "I wish we had know about TIP earlier," she said.

Visit the *CATALYST* website (www.catalyst-chicago.org) throughout the summer for updates on summer school programs.

CORRECTION

In the May issue of *CATALYST*, the correct number of test takers in the 1999-2000 academic year is 3,258. In 1997-98, there were 1,965 test takers. In a graphic on the status of International Baccalaureate programs, Washington High should have been listed as an "affiliated" school.

High-school vote heavy for Lynch-Walsh

Deborah Lynch-Walsh won an overwhelming majority of high school teachers and more than half of elementary school teachers in her victory last month over Tom Reece, president of the Chicago Teachers Union.

A *CATALYST* analysis of school-by-school vote totals shows that Lynch-Walsh won a whopping 72 percent of the high school vote and 53 percent of the elementary school vote. Overall, she got 57 percent of all votes cast in the election.

Traditionally, high school teachers have shown more militance, which grew as the School Board swept into a number of low-performing schools with its reconstitution and intervention programs. Elementary teachers were believed to have been more comfortable with the status quo. This election is the first in which school-by-school tallies were made public, a change Reece supported under pressure from Lynch-Walsh and her ProActive Chicago Teachers & School Employees Caucus (PACT).

Lynch-Walsh completely shut Reece out at 14 schools, Addams, Ames, Ariel, Holden, Kilmer, Morrill, Mt. Greenwood, Otis, Pickard, Rodriguez, Salazar, Stevenson, Stewart and Wacker.

This was the third run against Reece for Lynch-Walsh, a teacher at Marquette Elementary. Her slate of candidates also took 39 of the 48 seats in the union's legislative body.

"We were simply getting out there and telling teachers that the election was about respect, recognition and resources," Lynch-Walsh says. She credits PACT's success to running a visible campaign—circulating literature and visiting schools to talk to teachers about issues she's most passionate about, including reducing class size, raising teacher salaries and

the need for the board to recognize teachers as professional and partners.

At Otis Math & Science Specialty School, one of the schools that Lynch-Walsh swept, Yolanda Smith, a first-year union delegate and Lynch-Walsh backer, says she had to do very little campaigning for her. Teachers were more receptive to her than Reece because she's recently been a teacher, she says.

"She's in the trenches with us," says Smith. "She's involved with the parents, the community, the administration. She relates to us directly."

Meg Conroy, a second-year teacher at Morrill, agrees. "She'll be more effective because she knows what's going on in the classroom today. It makes sense to support her."

"This was more of a vote against Tom Reece than for Deborah Walsh," says Jeraldyn Saines, a teacher at Nia Community School. "He was not in touch with his constituents."

Other teachers interviewed by *CATALYST* expressed a desire for greater union activism in school reform and for higher pay.

Carol Gaul, a teacher from Cameron Elementary, supported Tom Reece in the last election, but changed her vote



Deborah Lynch-Walsh toppled a dynasty in her successful third bid to become president of the Chicago Teachers Union.

JOHN BOOZ

this year. She says she felt that concerns with teacher shortages, teacher quality and classroom size should be addressed by the union leadership. "It's time for us to be more pro-active about education and not just keeping jobs," she says. "We have to think of what's best for our students."

In the weeks leading up to the election at Morrill Elementary, some teachers wore buttons that read "Dump Reece." One teacher cites concerns about salary and benefits as the main reason. "We're not getting our due," she says. Under the current four-year teacher contract, teachers received a 3 percent increase the first year, and get 2 percent each year thereafter.

But Stacie A. Wilson, a teacher at

Black Magnet, says Reece is getting an unfair shake from teachers. "Everyone wants to compare Tom Reece to [the late] Jackie Vaughn, and he's not," she says. "He just goes about doing things another way. He still worked for the best interest of the teachers. With him, we always got something." Wilson's father, Melvin Wilson, is the current CTU treasurer and lost re-election to PACT candidate Maureen Callaghan, a school clerk at Stevenson Elementary.

A Lynch-Walsh supporter agrees that Reece suffered from the comparison to Vaughn, whom he succeeded when she died in 1994. "I think teachers thought that if he was part of the Jackie Vaughn regime, that his thoughts and his way of doing things

would be in line with hers."

Lynch-Walsh says the union plans to make a case for reducing class size to boost student achievement. She also plans to suggest that the board lift the city residency requirement in an effort to remedy the teacher shortage. Another primary goal is to establish an effective working relationship with the school administration.

"They started reform with the premise that it's the teacher that's the problem in low-performing schools, and we question that premise," she says. "Involving us in improving our schools will be much more successful than just imposing reforms on us. We as professionals need to have a say as partners."

Ericka Moore-Freeman

Protest over delayed opening of King College Prep



MARC MONAGHAN

On May 18, about 40 students and parents protested the one-year delay in converting King High School into a college preparatory school. The school already had admitted 53 students to launch the college prep program in September and held an orientation for them and their parents. At CATALYST press time, parents had not yet received notices from CPS with school reassignments.

The change of plans was announced at a meeting that was hastily arranged at King the day prior to the protest. There, school officials explained to parents that King had not generated enough freshmen for a fall class and the school needed more time to complete construction and repair work.

(Plans to convert King began in 1998, giving the school more time to prepare than any other college prep.)

"This whole situation has been a nightmare for me," says parent Valoria Robinson. "We either have to accept where they decide or go with our neighborhood school, which is either South Shore or Chicago Vocational. I don't want my daughter at either."

Also joining the protest were King seniors who expect to graduate next spring but fear the school will be closed if the college prep conversion is delayed. At the meeting, Jeff Gray of CPS Schools and Regions Department said King would remain open.

Debra Williams

Comings and goings

AT CLARK STREET Mayor Richard M. Daley named Chicago Park District Chairman **Michael W. Scott** as president of the Chicago School Board. At a press conference, Scott told reporters his priority would be improving reading and math test scores. Scott, a government relations executive for AT&T Broadband, has served three Chicago mayors and had a brief stint on the School Board in the early 1980s. He succeeds **Gery Chico**, who resigned abruptly in late May, amidst reports from City Hall sources that the mayor wanted a new school leadership team. Shortly after Chico left, CEO **Paul Vallas** stepped down from his post. The two had served together since they were appointed in 1995. At press time, Daley had not announced Vallas' successor.

MOVING IN/ON The Chicago Community Trust has hired **Terry Mazany** as director of its education initiative, expected to be unveiled this fall. Mazany was most recently associate superintendent for planning and data systems for a suburban Detroit school district, and has previously worked as a consultant for one of the partnerships sponsored by the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. . . . **Samuel J. Meisels** will succeed Barbara Bowman as president of the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development. Meisels is currently a professor and research scientist at the University of Michigan's School of Education. Bowman, the institute's founder, will remain an active member of the Erikson faculty. . . . **Jane Mentzinger** is the new executive director of Chicago Communities in Schools. She formerly served as senior vice president for Common Cause, a D.C.-based non-profit government watchdog group. Mentzinger replaces **G. Marie Leaner**, who left CCIS for health reasons. . . . **Peter Martinez** is leaving the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation after 10 years to become director of the Center for School Leadership at the University of Illinois at Chicago. At MacArthur, he oversaw grants for Chicago school reform. At the Center, he will develop a training program for urban school leaders, including superintendents, principals, teachers, union officials, parents and local school council members.

NEW PROGRAMS Jose Rodriguez, president/CEO of Aspira, Inc., of Illinois, has announced the creation of the **Chicagoland**

Latino Educational Research Institute (CLERI), to be headed by **Virginia Valdez**. Previously, Valdez was the fiscal analyst at the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), which last year published her report on student overcrowding in CPS schools. The program, to be funded by The Joyce Foundation, will provide Chicago policymakers with ongoing research-based information on the Latino student community. The Institute will focus mainly on dropout and graduation rates, alternative schools, and pre-elementary and post-secondary school readiness.



Peter Martinez



Terry Mazany

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS **Joan Forte**, formerly assistant principal at Austin High, has succeeded James Felton as contract principal of Randolph. **Shirley Talley-Smith**, assistant principal of Lafayette, succeeds Carlos Munoz as principal at Carpenter, and **Carol Ann Lang**, assistant principal at McCutcheon, is contract principal of that school. Other principals who have received contracts are: **Maureen Connolly**, Kellogg; **Wilhelmina Kenan**, Mollison; **Linda Layne**, Brooks College Prep (formerly Southside College Prep); **Janice Ledvora**, Woodson South; **Nathaniel Mason**, Lincoln Park High; **Parasine Moore**, York Alternative High; and **Anthony Spivey**, Corliss. The following principals' contracts have been renewed: **Ginger V. Bryant**, Sexton; **Beverly D. LaCoste**, Phillips High; **Christina Gonzalez**, Zapata; **Mary T. Malone**, Whittier; **Sandra L. Morrow**, Graham Training Center; **Janice Ollarvia**, Fenger High; **Casey Scott-Rzechula**, Reilly; **JoAnne Grey**, Burnham Academy; **Linda McCarthy**, Hale; **Joy Panko-Donovan**, Ravenswood; and **Lucille White**, Caldwell.

HONORS/AWARDS **Maria Blank** of the Daley College Child Development Lab School and **DeCarla Burton** of Ms. "D's" Jump Start Group Home Day Care were two

winners of this year's Kohl/McCormick Early Childhood Teaching Awards. Winners were chosen for their "best practices of quality early childhood teaching." . . . The following Chicago high school students were named National Merit Finalists: **Rachel C. Hohner** and **Nicola M. Wells**, Lincoln Park; and **Sanjay P. Shah**, Whitney Young. . . . **CPS Health Services Management Program**, the **Illinois Partners in Care and Education**, and the **Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois** have been named semifinalists in the 2001 Innovations in American Government Awards program. Fifteen finalists will be chosen in September; five winners will be named on Oct. 17. Winners will each receive a \$100,000 award; each finalist will get \$20,000. . . . Five CPS teachers were among 10 winners of the Chicagoland Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. First Lady Laura Bush presented awards to: **Murray K. Fisher**, Southside Occupational Academy; **Jacqueline Gnant**, DuSable High; **Elizabeth Kirby**, Kenwood High; **Sarah Levine**, Curie High; and **Tracy Van Duinen**, Austin High.

PRINCIPAL RETIREMENTS **Louis Armstrong** Principal **Margaret O'Keefe** will be retiring in August after seven and a half years with the school. Succeeding her will be Assistant Principal **Eugenia Bradfield**. **Karen Gyenfie** will replace her as assistant principal.

OUTSTANDING PRINCIPALS The Chicago Principals and Administrators Association and CPS honored the following 22 principals with Outstanding Leadership awards at a ceremony held on May 7: **Aurello Acavedo**, Lozano; **Patricia Bauldrick**, Bontemps; **Beverly Bennett**, Simpson Alternative; **Lona Bibbs**, Westinghouse High; **Linda Coles**, Keller; **James Conway**, Sutherland; **Sandra Crosby**, Hay; **Deborah Esparza**, Stockton Specialty; **Joyce Jager**, Eberhart; **Johnetta James**, Kilmer; **Glenda Johnson**, Brighton Park; **Linda Layne**, Brooks College Prep; **Darlene McClendon**, Northside Learning Center High; **Leonard Moore**, Dvorak; **Virginia Rivera**, McCormick; **Faye Terrell-Perkins**, Tilton; **Effie Vinson**, Melody; **Lucille White**, Caldwell; **Fran Williams**, Powell; and **Denise Winter**, Stone. Also receiving leadership awards were **Roger Prietz**, assistant principal of Whitney Young High; and **Armando Almendarez**, chief, CPS Office of Language, Cultural and Early Childhood Education. *Christina Pellett*

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