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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

Universal Preschool



The new common cause

In Research:

Leadership key to moving off probation

Early education needed to close learning gap

What's the difference between a 4-year-old child whose family is on welfare and one whose parents are college-educated professionals?

Eight million words a year.

This is one of the compelling findings of a landmark study that quantified for the first time the large knowledge and skill gap that can occur between young children from higher-income homes and those from lower-income homes. Over a 2½-year period, researchers recorded naturally occurring conversations in the homes of families with 1- and 2-year-old children. Not surprisingly, the children whose parents talked to them more developed bigger vocabularies and were more able to think conceptually—skills that make it easier to learn how to read. And higher-income parents talked to their children more than lower-income parents did.

The study confirms what educators in low-income communities see all the time. "Our kids come to school and don't know their real names or even how to speak in complete sentences," says Joan Forte, principal of Randolph Elementary in the impoverished West Englewood community.

It doesn't have to be that way. High-quality programs for children from birth to 5 years old can make up for at least some of the slack. As most of us know by now, infants and toddlers have amazingly flexible brains. During the first few years of life, the potential for learning outstrips that of later years. These years provide a pivotal opportunity to stimulate young minds and expose them to as much of the world as possible. If society fails to take advantage of that opportunity, it only increases problems down the road and perpetuates inequality.

Once considered a pioneer in early childhood education, Illinois is playing catch up to a number of other states, most notably Georgia, which already offers a successful version of universal preschool.

A growing coalition of diverse groups—from day care providers to corporate leaders to law enforcement officials—is making the case for universal access to affordable,

high-quality early childhood education. Their plan calls for low-income families to get priority, but eventually preschool would be available to all 3- and 4-year-olds.

Currently in Illinois, close to 160,000 3- and 4-year-olds are in preschool or child care programs for low-income or at-risk kids. Many more whose parents want access to early education programs are barred by artificially low income eligibility requirements, or get lost navigating a maze of confusing and disjointed programs.

While financial times are not ripe for full-scale expansion, it is not too early to begin restructuring the system to get the kinks out and to begin planning for the day when money will be available. For example, teacher training programs will have to expand, and ways must be found to upgrade home-based programs.

Mayor Daley took a step in the right direction by hiring a former University of Chicago Laboratory Schools director to devise an early childhood plan for the city. Despite a huge state budget shortfall, Gov. Blagojevich says his budget proposal will earmark \$25 million for early childhood education.

Meanwhile, a grassroots campaign is underway to create enough political pressure for lawmakers eventually to make the necessary financial investment in a program that promises to pay big dividends across the board. Unlike many education issues, this is one that everyone can support with confidence. To find out how you can get involved, call Early Learning Illinois at (312) 516-5575 or visit www.earlylearningillinois.org.

THANKS This issue on universal access to preschool and early childhood education was made possible by generous grants from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation and Bank One.

ABOUT US I am pleased to unveil in this issue a new feature on education research, which will run several times a year. This month, Senior Editor Elizabeth Duffrin talks to researcher Jennifer O'Day about her study of CPS elementary schools on probation. The results raise questions about the likely effects of the new federal accountability system, No Child Left Behind.



Veronica Anderson

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Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

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APRIL 2003

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2001, 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
2001, 2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Public Service

2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Online Reporting
2001 Peter Lisagor Award, Editorials
1997 International Reading Association
1996 Education Writers Association
1997, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993 Distinguished
Achievement Award; 1994, Best Newsletter,
Educational Press Association of America

Demand, but

NO MONEY,

for universal preschool



by Debra Williams



Until recently, Chicago Public Schools and the state of Illinois have been viewed as leaders in early childhood education.

In the 1960s, CPS was one of a few pioneering school districts to create child-parent centers in low-income communities. As their name indicates, the amply staffed centers worked with children and their parents.

In the 1980s, Illinois joined a handful of other states in launching a state-financed pre-kindergarten program for youngsters who were considered at-risk of educational failure due to poverty or other socioeconomic factors.

However, in the 1990s, other school districts and states, including Georgia, New Jersey and Oklahoma, shot ahead by offering early childhood education to all 4-year-old children and some 3-year-olds in their states.

Now, Illinois is playing catch up, and it's playing hard. Not since the Chicago

This issue on early childhood education was made possible by grants from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation and Bank One.

School Reform Act was passed in 1988 have so many diverse groups rallied around a single issue in Springfield. Early childhood advocacy groups have joined forces with child care providers, school

districts, state board of education officials, business leaders, even police organizations to map out an early childhood education system and build the public will to make it happen.

"This place has an embarrassment of riches," says Harriet Meyer, president of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. "Right now, everyone is interested in early childhood—the state, the business community, foundations, Chicago Public Schools, the Mayor. Fifteen years ago, Ounce was the only game in town."

Indeed, in September, Mayor Richard Daley lured Lucinda Lee Katz, then the director of the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, to City Hall to create an early childhood education plan for the city, which will be unveiled in mid-April.

The long-term goal is to make it possible for parents, if they choose, to enroll their 3- and 4-year-olds in an affordable, high-quality program taught by qualified teachers. Child care would meld into early childhood education.

"Parents are interested in options and choices," says Jerome Stermer, president of Voices of Illinois Children. "They need to have quality child care and preschool organized together."

Estimates of the cost of fully implementing a universal preschool program in Illinois range upwards of \$441 million per year, a fraction of the \$2.3 billion that a 1 percent hike in state income taxes would raise.

Renovating and outfitting suitable facilities would be an additional expense.

More than a third of the state's 3- and 4-year-olds—about 148,500 children—are enrolled in government-funded preschool or child care programs. Of those, 56,000 are in state pre-k, 36,400 are in federal Head Start programs and 55,500 are in state-subsidized child care.

"A universal preschool program makes sense," Stermer says. Drawing on a long-term study of children who attended a model preschool in Ypsilanti, Mich., in the 1960s, Stermer says that every dollar spent on preschool saves \$7 down the line on special education, welfare and criminal justice.

Another compelling reason for universal preschool is narrowing the knowledge and skills gap between children from low-income families and their middle- and upper-income counterparts.

"We do know that disadvantaged kids lag behind," says Steven Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research. "When a whole class of children [is] lagging behind, those kids are not getting the same kinds of opportunities."

Unfortunately for the advocates, their campaign is coming to a head as the state's projected revenue shortfall approaches \$5 billion.

The short-term outlook for universal preschool is not good, says state Sen. Miguel del Valle (D-Chicago), recently appointed chair of the Senate Education Committee. "These groups alone don't have the strength. The political will doesn't come from us, it comes from the people."



Child-parent centers, like this one at Stockton Elementary in Uptown, were created in the early 1960s to support parents and boost the skills of low-income children.

And while people may generally support the concept, “the public has no appetite for new taxes,” says Sen. Barack Obama (D-Chicago), who supports universal preschool. “One of the hardest things for politicians to do is invest long term, because they think short term. The public is going to have to tell them they want this.”

Fanning the fires

Early childhood advocates like Voices and the Ounce of Prevention Fund have been teaming up to lobby for universal access to preschool since the early 1980s. “It’s always been on the agenda,” says Voices spokesperson Julie Parente.

By 2000, though, their efforts gained momentum.

“A lot of things were happening at the same time,” says Margie Wallen, an early childhood education consultant to former Gov. George Ryan. Brain researchers had scientific proof that the ability to learn begins at birth, and polls showed that Illinois voters believed access to high-quality preschools was important, she explains.

In the fall of 2000, the concept gained momentum when former first lady Lura Lynn Ryan, chair of the state’s “Future for Kids” initiative, convened an assembly on early child care and education. The group voted to make universal preschool for 3-

and 4-year-olds a top priority.

In June 2001, Gov. Ryan followed up by naming a task force of early childhood experts, educators, advocates and legislators to craft a framework for ensuring that all 3- and 4-year-olds in Illinois have access to high-quality early education.

Later that year, the task force unveiled a 10-year plan to roll out universal preschool. The first year would be devoted to improving existing preschools to meet higher standards of quality for 3,400 low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. By 2012, up to 202,000 3- and 4-year-old children would have access to a high-quality program. Recognizing that not all parents want their children in a preschool program so early, the plan was not intended to serve all preschool children in the state.

The Illinois State Board of Education set aside \$5.2 million to launch the plan in six school districts, including Chicago, last fall. However, before the fall’s gubernatorial election, Ryan put the roll-out on hold.

While Ryan was bowing out of office, the man who would succeed him emerged as another early childhood advocate. During his campaign, Rod Blagojevich pledged to earmark \$90 million of his first budget for early childhood.

However, by the time he gave his State of the State speech in March, the

new governor had pared that figure to \$25 million.

“It’s a very hard time,” Wallen said before the speech. “We’re looking at homeland security, going to war, K-12 problems. We know what to do. It’s just that the priority is difficult.”

Creating public will

The campaign for universal preschool became more focused and professional as the November election approached.

During the state budget cycle last spring, school reformers at Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) coordinated a telephone campaign to lobby against cuts to the Early Childhood Block Grant.

“We contacted every preschool classroom in Chicago public schools,” says Laurie LeBreton, a consultant with PURE.

In June, early childhood advocates’ efforts in Illinois caught the eye of the Philadelphia-based Pew Charitable Trusts and the Trust for Early Education, a new group working with advocacy groups in four states to push an early education agenda.

Illinois was one of the four chosen because of its strength in organizing and advocacy. The others are Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey.

“Advocacy—this is one of the things

Illinois preschool universe

Population of 3- and 4-year-olds: 356,000

Enrollment

Head Start	36,400
State pre-kindergarten	67,000*
State subsidized child care	55,500
Private preschool/ unsubsidized child care	Unknown

Average teacher compensation

Subsidized child care	\$17,077
Pre-kindergarten	\$44,431
Head Start	\$22,912

* Includes children in special education programs.

Source: Ounce of Prevention Fund, Illinois State Board of Education

Preschool proposal

Key elements:

- Certified teachers in every class
- Teacher salaries aligned with local school district
- Expanded training for early childhood educators
- Curriculum that prepares children for kindergarten
- Affordable and accessible programs
- Including parents as children's first teachers
- Integrating early education and child care systems

Source: Illinois Preschool Task Force

we looked for when choosing what states to work with," says Susan Uran, director of education programs for the Pew Charitable Trusts. "We see this in other states, but Illinois is out in front."

Three local advocacy groups—the Day Care Action Council of Illinois, the Ounce of Prevention Fund and Voices for Illinois Children—got funding and launched a campaign for universal access to preschool called "Early Learning Illinois: Access, Options and Opportunities."

"While all three groups do a little bit of everything, they each bring particular strengths to the table," says Kathy Stohr, who spearheads the campaign.

Specifically, the bailiwick of the Day Care Action Council is grassroots organizing, the Ounce handles research and policy and Voices runs campaign communications and public relations.

The campaign has two major goals: Persuading the governor and state lawmakers to make universal access to preschool a top priority, and organizing parents, educators and community groups to lobby for early childhood programs.

In October, more than 280 educators, community leaders, child care directors and parents converged on the Standard Club for a conference on early childhood education. One by one, leaders from organizations such as The Children's Project, took the podium and made the case for improving the state's early education system.

Though the speakers were singing to the choir, their purpose was to mobilize the choir into action. Those in attendance were asked to fill out two pre-

stamped postcards to send to gubernatorial candidates. The message: We will give our votes to those "who would best represent the early learning interests of Illinois' children."

Since then, the campaign has focused on getting constituents to write letters or call the governor, primarily through radio ads.

Diverse supporters

The Early Learning Illinois campaign has attracted backers from inside and outside educational circles.

The Chicago Teachers Union took up the issue in February, when it formed an early childhood education committee to advise the union on issues that teachers think are important.

The Illinois chapter of a national coalition, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, is lobbying in Springfield for universal preschool. The coalition includes more than 2,000 police, prosecutors and crime victims who aim to prevent crime through better public policy for children.

"There is a whole slew of research that shows early childhood education cuts crime," says charter spokeswoman Lena Parsons.

The chapter's legislative agenda includes increasing funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant, updating income eligibility guidelines for families and supporting creation of a preschool advisory group for the governor's office. Parsons notes that the group has caught the attention of legislators, who are more accustomed to advocates lobbying

for better preschools. "Law enforcement is an unexpected voice for early childhood education," she says.

The business community, which helped push school reform in Chicago, has taken up the cause for early childhood education, too.

"We've been talking to, calling and writing legislators as needed," says Adele Simmons, vice chair of Chicago Metropolitan 2020, a policy advocacy group organized by the Commercial Club of Chicago.

"You have businesses themselves who have wonderful early childhood education—Abbott Labs, Northern Trust. They are finding it makes a tremendous difference not just on the kids but on their employees," she adds.

Budget constraints

Despite the economy, early childhood advocates are heartened by the response.

"I've been in this field for 10 years," says Stohr, "and I see a shift from 'We'll not talk about this because mothers should be at home with their young children' to 'This is a good idea.'"

"Some of these new legislators are young guys with young children," she notes.

Still, legislators are unlikely to take action until a steady funding stream is identified, says Stermer, who often hears them say, "Show me the money, and I'm there."

The Ryan task force explored funding strategies, including shifting the burden of education funding to income rather than property taxes, but it made no recommendations, Wallen says.

Advocates are now waiting to get details on Gov. Blagojevich's budget proposal, which will be released this month. Some of them, though, believe it's possible to make headway this year.

Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan is confident the governor will find a way to make good on his pledge to increase funding for universal access to preschool. "The state budget's deficit is real," he says. "But I've learned that when the budget is tough, it focuses you. You prioritize, you reallocate."

Even California, which has the largest deficit in the country, has found money to advance its universal preschool program, notes Uran of the Pew Charitable Trusts. "There is a good chance that Illinois can make this move forward, even if it is baby steps," she says.

Top priorities

Better teachers, more space, easier access for parents



Advocates of universal access to preschool are not looking to simply create more programs. Rather, they want to improve the quality of early childhood programs by hiring better teachers, finding enough suitable space and making it easier for parents to use them.

This message repeatedly came through in CATALYST interviews with more than 40 early childhood educators, researchers and leaders from Chicago and across the state.

Associate Editor Debra Williams takes a closer look at the three priorities mentioned most often.

Quality teachers

In Illinois, the preschool playing field is decidedly uneven in both teacher training and pay.

"You can have gorgeous facilities, but if teachers are not trained and compensated, you don't have good programs," says Paula Jorde Bloom, director of an early childhood teacher training program at National-Louis University.

Teachers in pre-kindergarten programs funded by the state, as well as all preschool teachers in the public schools, are required to have a bachelor's degree and a Type 04 early childhood teaching certificate. To earn the certificate, teachers must pass a basic skills test, clock 100 hours of observation in an early childhood classroom and complete a supervised student teaching stint.

By contrast, Head Start teachers need only two years of college, including six hours of early childhood coursework,

although a new federal mandate stipulates that 50 percent must have at least an associate's degrees by September 2003.

Credentials for teachers in state-subsidized child care programs are even less demanding. They need only one year of child development experience and 30 college credit hours, including six hours in child development.

According to educators, early childhood teachers should know how to teach all preschoolers. That means being able to teach children who are just beginning to read alongside those who are just making the connection between sounds and letters in the same classroom, with the same activity.

"A good teacher teaches children about their own feelings, socializing, math and reading, all at the same time to children on different levels," says Steven Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University. "We see teachers who would like to do this, but don't know how because they don't have the training."

Gillian McNamee, director of undergraduate teacher education at the Erikson Institute, says that the state's certification program teaches what preschool teachers need to know. "Licensed teachers learn methods of dealing with a variety of children, even those with special needs," she says. "Certification also requires a general education background, a good strong background in liberal arts, math [and] science."

Barnett agrees that a general education background is important. "We've seen teachers say cabbage grows on trees."

Advocates propose that a statewide universal preschool program require that all teachers have Type 04 certification and a bachelor's degree.

Besides aligning credentials, supporters of universal preschool want to eliminate disparities in teacher pay. Ideally, child care center teachers would

have a bachelor's degree and the aides would have an associate's degree, says Judith Walker-Kendrick of the Chicago Coalition of Site Administered Child Care Programs. "But the pay is so low, you can't demand higher qualifications."

As it stands now, pay disparity among early childhood teachers is broad. According to a report on Illinois' early childhood workforce, teachers in state pre-kindergartens and CPS child-parent centers earn at least \$26 an hour. At the other end of the scale are Head Start teachers outside CPS, who make about \$12.30 an hour, and child care workers at the state's subsidized programs who are paid as little as \$8.21 an hour.

Low pay and uneven salary scales also generate a lot of turnover, which is bad for kids. Those who upgrade their credentials, often jump ship for a higher salary.

For instance, if a terrific state-subsidized child care teacher has an associate's degree, then struggles to earn a bachelor's, she is likely to move on to a public school for better pay, Bloom says.



Under the proposed universal preschool plan, the state would allow educators to get time to complete the necessary course work and it would provide financial incentives, such as grants and scholarships, to help them through school. With additional training, salaries would increase and be commensurate with those of the local school district. Appropriations for salaries would be built into the preschool plan budget.

Two programs funded by the state currently provide such incentives:

Great START, which stands for Strategy to Attract and Retain Teachers, provides a wage supplement to licensed child care providers who attain additional education and stay in their jobs. Current funding for the program is \$2.4 million a year.

TEACH, which stands for Teacher

Education and Compensation Helps, pays up to 80 percent of tuition and books towards an associate's degree with child development credentials for child care and Head Start teachers. The current budget is \$3 million. Universal preschool advocates want to extend the benefits of TEACH to all early childhood professionals, including teachers seeking master's degrees and child care center directors pursuing leadership and management credentials.

"Many of these day care provider directors are operating programs as complex as a principal at a Chicago public school," Bloom says, but a director doesn't have to have a bachelor's degree.

Advocates are encouraging directors to participate in the Illinois Director Credential Program, a voluntary program for child care center directors. So far, 70 of the state's 3,800 child care center directors have finished the program, which is administered by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies. Another 130 are in the pipeline.

Still, part of the challenge is upgrading the status of teaching over all.

"We need to get rid of the [financial] disincentive to stay in the public sector," says Bloom. "The attraction of higher salaries in other fields takes away the cream of the crop for teaching."

"There is a lot of room for good public relations in this area," says Erikson's McNamee. "This is a marketing challenge. Large school systems need to make teaching an honorable profession."

Then, there is also the matter of retention.

A great number of new teachers leave after the first two years because conditions are dreadful and they don't get support from school administrators, says Anne Mitchell, president of Early Childhood Policy Research in Washington, D.C. "We can do a fair amount of closing the gap by being nicer to teachers."

Sokoni Karanja, president of Centers for New Horizons, suggests using money and accolades to attract and retain good preschool teachers. The mayor could recognize a "preschool teacher of the month," he says. "We need to create excitement about it."

Suitable facilities

For now, the availability of space for preschool programs around the state is uneven.

"In Chicago, some areas are gentrifying and there is space, but no kids," says Margie Wallen, a universal preschool policy consultant to the state. "Other communities are bulging with kids and have no space."

While advocates eventually aim to tackle this problem, the task force plans are focusing on enhancing existing programs for now.

Lucinda Lee Katz, former director of the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, is pulling together an early childhood plan for Mayor Daley. One of her assignments is to look at areas in the

city, community by community, for capacity.

"One of the things the mayor wants to do is to provide families with children from zero to 5 with early childhood resources," says Katz. "We are looking at what resources are available in the city and what needs to be realigned to provide better service."

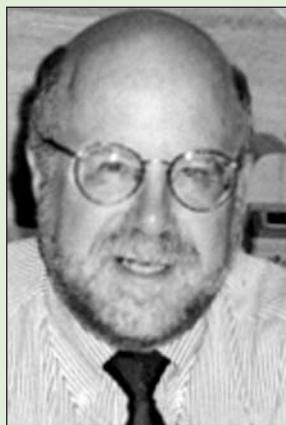
"Space is certainly a challenge we face in Rogers Park," says Kate Sachnoff, who runs a network for early child care providers in Edgewater and Rogers Park. "There is just not enough. And the cost of rehabbing buildings to fit the needs of little kids is expensive."

Indeed, creating space is not cheap. Unlike their older counterparts, young children need more physical space to move around, take naps and eat. Bathrooms should be either in the classroom or close by.

The cost to build 10 new preschool classrooms to serve 200 children is roughly \$4.6 million, about \$23,000 a child. Retrofitting an old building is about the same, says Joe Neri from the Illinois Facilities Fund.

The Chicago Public Schools is scouting for space in the backyards of other city departments. "We've been in conversation with the park district about this," says CEO Arne Duncan. "Parks are empty during the morning. This fall, we may have pre-k programs in park facilities. We are trying to stretch our resources."

However, advocates of community-based programs worry that an expansion



Jerome Stermer

President, Voices for Illinois Children

"As a state, we know what we want: The child care program has to be fixed. We want more zero to 3 programs. We want more programs for parents."

Harriet Meyer

President, the Ounce of Prevention Fund



"What would it take to get a universal preschool program in Illinois? The easy answer would be money, money, money. However money is not separate from political will."

of CPS programs could squeeze them out of business. They caution that an expansion of building capacity must include the community child care programs.

“Creating space is not about more programs in schools,” says Joan Lomardi, an early education policy specialist in Washington, D.C. “It is about partnerships. In New York and New Jersey, the school districts partner with community-based organizations.”

Under any space expansion, Duncan says CPS has no intentions of excluding community-based organizations. Indeed, he says CPS has been meeting with such groups to find ways to collaborate. Currently, CPS subcontracts with community child care centers to provide half-day preschools for 4,300 children. The arrangement costs the district \$11 million.

Seamless programs

Advocates want to streamline preschool program guidelines to make them easier for parents to use. Now, some requirements make it difficult for families to qualify or remain eligible when family circumstances improve. Advocates also believe parents need access to full-day programs if they need them.

Combining existing funding streams for Head Start, state-subsidized child care and state pre-kindergarten would be a start. This would align family eligibility requirements and pave the way for an extended day.

“We want families to be able to walk off the street and be able to put their child in a good, quality early childhood education program and not have to worry about if they qualify,” says Harriet Meyer, president of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. “But there are plenty of barriers.”

In fact, eligibility requirements are markedly different for Illinois’ three largest early childhood programs—state pre-kindergarten, Head Start and subsidized child care.

To qualify for state pre-kindergarten, children are screened for developmental delays and must be considered at risk of academic failure. Head Start mandates that families earn below federal poverty income levels, which range from annual earnings of \$12,120 to \$18,400 a year, depending on family size. Both programs are free.

Subsidized child care is targeted for low-income parents who are working, in school or in a training program. The state pays a portion of the expense and parents make a co-payment based on income, family size and the number of children in child care. To be considered eligible, families can earn no more than 50 percent of the state median income based on 1997 data.

According to the Day Care Action Council of Illinois, this means a family of three can earn no more than \$24,243 to qualify. (See chart, p. 17) And families that lose eligibility can go from paying a small portion of their income to devoting more than half of it to non-subsidized child care.

“If families get even the tiniest raise, they lose eligibility,” says Maria Whelan, executive director of the Day Care Action Council of Illinois. “And their salaries are reassessed every six months.”

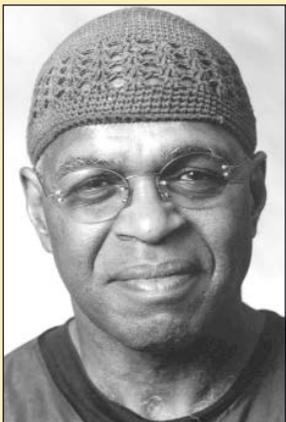
(Advocates propose updating the guidelines to 2003 income figures. That way, a family of three could make up to \$31,787 and remain eligible.)

Blended funding across programs would make it easier for families to qualify and would provide families with greater choices, like full-day, full-year programs.

“Families’ needs are closely aligned with children’s needs,” says Tom Layman, who heads the Chicago Metropolitan Association for the Education of Young Children. “Many families are working, so they shuffle kids to child care, to an educational setting and then back to child care. Blending funding eliminates this.”

Some Chicago child care centers and public school programs are blending child care funds with Head Start or state pre-kindergarten money. In some cases, they’re combining all three. But the practice is a feat for administrators to pull off, and new federal guidelines for Head Start threaten to eliminate blending entirely. (See sidebar, p. 17.)

Structural barriers are unnecessary obstacles for early childhood programs, Whelan says. “I wish federal and state policies were developed with families and children in mind first, instead of being driven by the need to pigeonhole funding streams.”



“Our mantra to increase the quality of child care programs has been teacher training, higher requirements, better salaries.”

Sokoni Karanja
President, Centers for New Horizons

Maria Whelan

Executive Director,
The Day Care Action Council of Illinois



“We have world-class [early childhood] programs, but we have this brick wall around income eligibility that keeps families from getting to them.”

Pre-preschool an option for children birth to 3

by Debra Williams



Barbara Abel takes offense when people use the word “baby-sitting” to describe the new infant-toddler program at Chicago Public Schools’ gleaming new National Teachers Academy.

Someone did just that during a recent tour of the new school facility led by Abel, who oversees the infant-toddler program. The comment stopped Abel dead in her tracks.

“That drives me crazy when people say that,” she says. “I told them, ‘Let me make this perfectly clear: We do not do babysitting. What we do is a lot of hard work. What we do takes a lot of knowledge.’”

What Abel and other early childhood educators do is help children begin

learning how to learn. The goal is to lay a foundation for children to feel comfortable in their surroundings and begin building social relationships.

Programs for children aged zero to 3 are a response to recent brain research that shows learning begins at birth and that brain development makes quantum leaps during their first three years of life. “The brain is like a sponge during this time,” says Harriet Meyer, president of the nonprofit Ounce of Prevention Fund.

The academy’s program is one of 70 in Illinois that are funded with \$21.7 million in state funds. In 1997, early childhood advocates succeeded in getting state legislators to earmark 11 percent of the Early Childhood Block Grant for birth-to-3 programs.

The federal Early Head Start Program funds programs run by 23 community-based organizations that serve more than 2,100 families in Illinois.

Now, some advocates are pushing for a universal-access program for children in this age group, too.

“We would be remiss to overlook these important years,” says Samuel Meisels, president of the Erikson Institute.

The National Teacher Academy program is the first one in the country set up by a public school system. The program began operating in February with 24 children (who range in age from 6 weeks to 2 years) and plans to double enrollment by fall. Most children are the offspring of teen parents.

Strategies for teaching babies differ markedly from those used for preschool and school-aged children. You won’t see flash cards or alphabet

drills in an infant-and-toddler classroom. Rather, teachers will lead activities that establish routines, build relationships and encourage discovery.

The goal is to cultivate trust, create a comfortable environment and build supportive relationships with the children, which is necessary for them to feel at ease to explore the world around them.

“There is no such thing as a curriculum,” Abel notes. “You will not see me write a lesson plan, ever. A zero to 3 program focuses on routine, transition and trust. I am a child developmentalist, not an educator.”

A few miles south, the staff at the Ounce’s Educare Center in Grand Boulevard focuses primarily on babies of teen parents.

On most mornings, 10 o’clock marks the beginning of “circle time” for children in Mildred Ebietomiye’s class of 1-year-olds. That’s when teachers sing songs, read books and play music. Often, as soon as the teachers begin singing, the children automatically start crawling or toddling over to the circle in the center of the room.

“When children are free to trust and feel comfortable and have confidence in relationships, the door for learning is then opened,” Ebietomiye explains. “They gain confidence and start to show mastery of skills.”

Family focus

In the south suburbs, Governor State University created a family development center to go with its zero to 3 program, Smart Start.

The parent education component teaches parents how to “play smart” with their children.

For example, if a child is lining up blocks like a train, the parent can encourage him or her to build a tower, which teaches the concept of “on top.”

Parents also learn that age-appropriate behavior for 2-year-olds is to move



Mildred Ebietomiye, a zero to 3 teacher at the Ounce of Prevention Fund’s Educare, holds two of her tiny students, Sean Booker, left, and Camael Collins.

JOHN BOOZ



During a sing-a-long, toddlers Daylon Evans, right, and Riccayah Norris make a beeline for teacher assistant Eileen Sawaryn as aide Shannell Marshall waves in the background. Routine activities help children in Educare's zero to 3 program learn to explore.

from one activity to another and leave a mess behind.

"First time parents might not understand this and wonder why they are unsuccessful when they try to get them to clean up," says Director Susan Kinsey. "We tell them it's okay."

Two days a week, the center offers free activities—art and reading, for instance—for families with infants and toddlers. Smart Start is staffed by college of education graduates and works in partnership with Crete-Monee School District 201-U. State funding covers \$350,000 a year in operating expenses.

Getting families involved in zero to 3 programs encourages parents to cultivate an environment at home where their youngster feels comfortable and safe enough to focus on exploring and learning, says Kinsey.

Parents are also a crucial element of early literacy. Two University of Kansas researchers found children from poor

and middle class families had vastly different vocabulary growth, an indicator of intellectual development.

The study found that by age 4, a child from an advantaged college-educated family may have been exposed to 45 million words. By contrast, the same aged child whose family is working class may have heard 26 million words and one whose parents are on welfare only 13 million.

Educare hosts support groups for parents, and the National Teaching Academy holds parenting classes for teens to learn about child development. "Involving the entire family is crucial," says NTA's Abel.

Educare master teacher Rima Malhorta shares that philosophy. "Parents need to be supported, so they can support their babies."

The ultimate goal among early childhood advocates is that Illinois families have universal access to preschool and

zero to 3 programs.

"We envision universal access from zero to 5 that is high quality and fits parents' needs and schedules," says Sean Noble, senior policy associate for Voices for Illinois Children.

However, the cost of infant-toddler programs is steep and it's unlikely they'll be included in universal preschool programs anytime soon. Program costs run about \$200 a week per child, says Marsha Engquist, president of the National Child Care Association. A facility to serve 140 infants and toddlers would cost roughly \$4.6 million, or \$33,000 per child.

Nationally, the number of zero to 3 programs has increased in the last seven years, according to Tammy Mann of Zero To Three, an early learning advocacy group based in Washington, D.C.

States have been slow to take charge with zero to 3 initiatives, says Mann. "There have been pockets of good things happening [but] we're not there yet." ●

Fiscal woes threaten access to universal preschools



The concept of universal access to pre-kindergarten has been slow to take hold across the country, and in some pioneering states, fiscal crises are threatening to cut back or eliminate the programs entirely.

Here's an update of recent events in selected states with existing or proposed universal preschool programs.

Georgia

Former Gov. Zell Miller gets credit for creating the nation's first universal access pre-kindergarten program in 1997.



His vision of providing preschool to all 4-year-olds began to take shape during the 1992-93 school year with a pilot program serving 750 4-year-olds from low-income families. To support the program, Miller created a lottery to supplement funding, and a new state agency, the Office of School Readiness, to regulate it.

By September 1995, the program officially opened to all 4-year-olds, regardless of family income. Enrollment that year was 44,000—nearly three times higher than it had been the previous school year. By the 2002-03 school year, 65,000 children were enrolled, and the program's annual budget was \$128 million.

Georgia's Office of School Readiness contracts with public schools, tuition-based for-profit and nonprofit preschools and Head Start centers—all of which must use an approved curriculum and adhere to strict guidelines on teacher certification.

Children spend six and a half hours a day in class, and receive instruction that emphasizes three key elements of school readiness: good health, rest and nourishment; ability to verbally communicate needs, wants and thoughts; and enthusiasm and curiosity about new activities. The curriculum focuses on language and literacy, math, science, art, physical devel-

opment, and personal and social skills.

Since the program started, the Department of Early Childhood Education at Georgia State University has conducted frequent evaluations of it. The results have concluded that in several measures of academic and social achievement, kindergarteners who completed Georgia's pre-k program surpassed those who did not have the preschool experience. One study found that pre-k children scored more than three months higher on achievement tests—including the Iowa Test of Basic Skills—than children who weren't in such programs.

California

Thanks to smokers and the initiative of actor-director Rob Reiner, Los Angeles County is \$100 million closer to providing pre-kindergarten to every 3- and 4-year-old child.



Studies showing the positive long-term effects of early education motivated Reiner to craft Proposition 10, a 50-cents-per-cigarette-pack tax that won voters' approval by a thin 1 percent margin five years ago.

Last year, a commission charged with distributing Los Angeles County's portion of the funds decided to use its \$100 million share to plan a universal preschool program over the next 10 years.

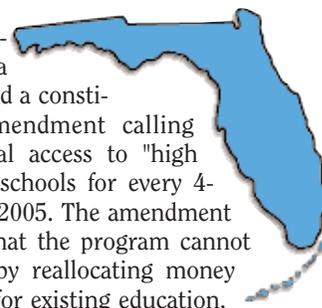
Roughly \$300 million in state funding already provides half-day preschool through public, private or Head Start

programs for one-third of the county's 300,000 3- and 4-year-old children from low-income families. Another 100,000 of those children, however, do not have access to day care or early education programs.

In recent years, Proposition 10 revenues have decreased steadily, as smokers found ways to avoid the tax through Internet or black market purchases. An advisory committee of child care experts and community leaders began meeting in February to address strategies to sustain future funding.

Florida

Last November, Florida voters passed a constitutional amendment calling for universal access to "high quality" preschools for every 4-year-old by 2005. The amendment stipulates that the program cannot be funded by reallocating money earmarked for existing education, health and development programs.



State officials are looking to imitate some aspects of Georgia's universal pre-kindergarten, but have not yet determined whether to adopt its lottery-based funding structure or to create a separate agency to run it. Projected annual cost for the program is \$450 million to \$650 million.

Once state officials clear the considerable funding hurdles, Florida's universal preschool plan could serve as many as 70 percent of the state's 217,000 4-year-olds, predicts Florida's Council for Education Policy Research and Improve-

ment. (The remaining 30 percent include children whose families may not favor preschool.)

New Jersey

New Jersey's version of universal access to preschool resulted from a series of lawsuits that called for state-funded programs for poor children. In one of the lawsuits, plaintiffs argued that state-funded preschools were needed in the poorest school districts to level the educational playing field between inner city and suburban children.

By 1998, the state Supreme Court ordered a "well-planned, high-quality" full-day preschool for all 3- and 4-year-old children living in the state's poorest school districts, dubbed "Abbott" districts after the lawsuit that created them. This year, the Abbott districts are serving approximately 15 percent of the state's 230,000 3- and 4-year-olds through state pre-kindergarten programs.

Another 102 school districts where at least 20 percent of students are low-income get state money to operate half-day preschool for 4-year-olds. Roughly 6 percent of New Jersey's 117,000 4-year-olds are enrolled.

Sixty percent of school funding in New Jersey comes from property taxes. The 1998 court order requires the state to fill in the financial gap between low-income and wealthy school districts. This fiscal year, the state allocated \$3.5 billion—more than half of the total line item for state aid to public schools—to Abbott districts.

For the next fiscal year, New Jersey Department of Education officials are proposing a 6 percent increase in funding for its universal preschool program. Despite the depressed economic climate, state education officials say they are optimistic that the department will get



the additional revenue, in part because of support from Gov. James McGreevey, and, they add, because a preschool program that isn't fully funded would violate the Abbott court order.

New York

In 1997, the New York Legislature approved a measure that established a universal pre-kindergarten program for all 4-year-olds in low-income districts. But the program began losing steam when its state funding was frozen at \$200 million—the aftermath of the economic downturn and Sept. 11. Now, projected shortfalls in state revenue have thrown a wrench into next year's budget that could decimate the program.

If state legislators approve Republican Gov. George Pataki's proposed fiscal 2004 budget, state funding for universal pre-kindergarten would end in June. The cuts would leave state-funded programs, including subcontracted Head Starts and private nursery school centers, scrambling to find funding elsewhere to avoid shutting down.

While observers say it's unlikely that the program will be eliminated, in part due to legislative Democrats' strong support for it, significant reductions may occur. Critics say the governor should consider raising income taxes to salvage universal pre-kindergarten and other state education initiatives.

Last year, the universal pre-kindergarten program served about 25 percent of the state's 260,000 4-year-olds. Funding per child varies. The state uses a sliding scale to determine how much preschool revenue to allocate to each district, with the poorest districts getting the most money. Those districts will be the biggest losers if funding is eliminated.

Most school districts offer the



required half-day program, but districts with sufficient funds operate full-day preschools. Until 2001, children who qualified for federally funded lunches had enrollment priority. Since then, children were accepted on a first come, first served basis.

New York's program requires school districts to contract out at least 10 percent of the slots to eligible community agencies. Head Starts, licensed home day care, child care centers and tuition-based schools account for 60 percent of the program's slots.

Oklahoma

The only thing holding back Oklahoma's indergarten program is the lack of a stable funding source, though that problem may soon be solved. Gov. Brad Henry is pushing lawmakers to authorize a referendum to create a lottery to fund public education, and the state legislature was considering a bill this spring.

Previously, projected revenue shortfalls this year had forced Henry to declare a state of fiscal emergency and persuade legislators to pass a bill that shifted \$25.5 million from a rainy-day fund to elementary and secondary school districts.

Since 1998, when Oklahoma increased funding to open pre-kindergarten to all 4-year-olds, enrollment has climbed steadily. Last school year, more than 60 percent of the state's 47,000 4-year-olds were enrolled in state pre-kindergarten or a state-subsidized Head Start or child care center.

Though 91 percent of Oklahoma's school districts provide state-funded pre-kindergarten programs for 4-year-olds, space is still limited and enrollments are on a first come, first served basis.

Genevieve Lill



For a list of early childhood education organizations and agencies, go to the **CATALYST** web site at www.catalyst-chicago.org

Correction

Ald. Patrick O'Connor's ward was listed incorrectly in the February and March issues. He is alderman of the 40th Ward.

Navigating the maze

In system of disjointed options, tailoring the right formula for early childhood education is a challenge for most families. Associate Editor Debra Williams interviewed several to find out what works best and what needs to be fixed.

Tuition-based program fits bill for family

The tuition-based preschool program at Blaine Elementary has been a blessing for Beth Ryan, the mother of a 4-year-old with special needs.

"This program is fabulous," says Ryan. "The school has a magnet curriculum, a Suzuki music program, a computer lab. Blaine is very progressive."

Chicago Public Schools launched full-day, tuition-based preschools two years ago to lure middle class families to enroll their children in district schools. Currently, there are 16 programs serving 360 students.

Last year, when Ryan's son, Trevor, was 3, Blaine was filled to capacity, as were other area tuition-based preschools, where 4-year-olds get preference over kids who are 3. Instead, Ryan patched together a full-day program that shuttled Trevor between a half-day state pre-kindergarten and a private child care center.

"It was a crazy schedule," she recalls. "There were some mornings that we didn't know what we were doing."

Many early childhood advocates are not surprised.

Finding a full-day program for a special needs preschooler is "extremely hard," says Tamar Heller, who heads the Disabilities and Human Development Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "There is one study that shows 80 percent of mothers of special needs children have to give up their jobs because there are very few resources for these parents."

When Trevor was born 22½ weeks premature, the Ryans paid for a nurse to care for him at home until he was 18 months. After that, he stayed at a private home day care. The family also qualified for an early intervention program funded by the federal government that covers the cost of special services, like speech or physical therapy, for premature or special needs babies until they are 3.



JOHN BOOD

Tuition-based preschool fit the bill for Beth and Pat Ryan, whose son is enrolled at Blaine. The Ryans were on a waiting list for months before a slot became available last fall.

When Trevor turned 2, his pediatrician recommended that he be placed in a formal child care setting so he could interact with other children.

Ryan began searching for programs close to her North Center home, but pickings were slim. Most centers would not take children younger than 3 unless they were potty trained. "Trevor was not," Ryan says. "I got put on waiting lists."

Finally, Ryan lucked out with Apple Tree Learning Center, located just four blocks from her home. Under the early intervention program, Trevor would continue receiving therapy for his developmental delays and speech.

About the same time, Trevor would soon be turning 3 and the Ryans learned that special education services would then be available only through a Chicago public school. "That's when we started putting ourselves on [waiting] lists," Ryan says. "We went to Blaine, Jahn and others, but they were full."

Meanwhile, Ryan had Trevor tested for special education services at Coonley Elementary, their neighborhood school. The school compiled an individualized educational plan for him, and explained the school's offerings. Its state pre-kindergarten program partially fit the

bill, and the Ryans enrolled their son.

But the program was only 2½ hours long. Ryan went back to Apple Tree to persuade them to take Ryan for the rest of the day. At first the school was reluctant because it didn't want to be responsible for getting Trevor safely off the bus that brought him there.

"Apple Tree told me, 'We love you and Trevor, we know he needs these services, but who is going to do this?'" recalls Ryan.

Eventually, Apple Tree caved in. The Ryans would pay the full-day rate—\$125 a week—even though Trevor would attend only five hours a day.

Once, Ryan asked Coonley's principal to consider opening a tuition-based preschool program. A survey was sent to neighborhood parents, but there was little interest.

Last June, Ryan got a call from Blaine about an opening in the fall. "Trevor is the only child there with special needs, but that hasn't been a problem," she says. A therapist works with him at the school, and he is in classes with children who do not have disabilities.

"The board really needs to open more of these programs in this area," Ryan says. ●

Grandmother fills in for working parents



Aminah Muhammad makes three trips a day chauffeuring her grandchildren to Randolph Elementary in West Englewood.

At 8:50 a.m. she drops off Jamil, 7, who is enrolled in 1st-grade and Aaisha, 4, who's in state prekindergarten. By 11:30 a.m., she returns to pick up Aaisha, then she's back again at 2:30 p.m. for Jamil. Another grandchild, 2-year-old Rashad, rides along each trip.

Muhammad's daily routine is the sacrifice she makes for her son and daughter-in-law, whose work schedules make it impossible for them to shuttle the children around themselves. The problem is common for parents who juggle full-day work schedules with half-day early childhood programs, which often are not aligned with regular school schedules.

"This family's story is more common than people realize," says Sean Noble, senior policy associate for Voices for Illinois Children. "And this is very frustrating for parents."

Noble says universal access to preschool means making sure families have options to fit their schedules, whether it is full-day early childhood programs or child care and educational programs in the same building that can be strung together creating a full day.

Either setup would help the Muhammads. "It's tiring," says Muhammad, 50. "I wish my granddaughter's preschool program were all-day."

"I could get more accomplished and the children would have more time to learn. Two and a half hours is not a lot of time."

Aminah Muhammad's day begins at 4:30 in the morning because she has to get to her son's house, only six houses away, by 5, when her daughter-in-law leaves for work. Muhammad's son—a manager for Southwest Airlines—travels a lot and has an unpredictable schedule.

"I get the kids up at 7:30, and then drop them off," says Muhammad, who drives even though the school is only three blocks away.

When she returns home, she squeezes in some time to home school her 2-year-old grandson, Rashad. "I work on colors, ABCs, numbers and some spelling," says Muhammad. "Sometimes we sing songs."



Aminah Muhammad shuffles three grandchildren, (from left) Aaisha, Rashad and Jamil, into the car for the first of three daily trips to Randolph Elementary.

In a couple of hours, she and Rashad are heading back out for their first pickup. Muhammad says even though her granddaughter could stay home with her, the family really wanted Aaisha to interact with other children to get her to overcome shyness.

Back home again, Muhammad feeds Rashad, gets an early start on dinner, allowing Aaisha to take over teaching her brother. Just before 2:30, she's hustling both kids out the door.

The winter months are the hardest. "I'm taking off the boots, putting the boots back on; pulling off the clothes, putting the clothes back on," she laughs. "And I'm going through menopause."

Early childhood education advocates sympathize.

To create full-day programs, many child care programs cobble together funding earmarked for pre-kindergarten, child care and Head Start, says Judith Walker-Kendrick, policy coordinator for the Chicago Coalition of Site Administered Child Care Programs.

Chicago Public Schools has blended Head Start with both state pre-kindergarten and Child Parent Center funds to create a handful of full-day collaborative programs that serve 620 children. None are in Muhammad's neighborhood.

There are, however, 396 half-day state

pre-kindergartens in Chicago public schools that serve 13,900 children.

"Children should have a [full] day instead of two and half hours," says Aaisha's preschool teacher Shaun Holt, who explains that lessons must be sandwiched between two meals and bathroom breaks.

Principal Joan Forte has asked district officials about paying for full-day state pre-kindergarten at Randolph. "Our kids come to school and don't know their real names or even how to speak in complete sentences," says Forte. "If we are to play catch up with them, we need a full-day program. I'd like a full-day kindergarten, too. We have room."

By September, Rashad will be old enough to attend Randolph's preschool, but a consequence of his grandmother's harried schedule could hold him back.

"To get in the program, children must be potty-trained," Muhammad laments. "I'm trying to potty train Rashad but things like that take time, and with this schedule, I haven't been able to really work with him."

Still, Muhammad's son, who is also named Jamil, appreciates his mother's efforts. Without her help, "only one child, Jamil, would be in school, or my wife would have to stop working." ●

JOHN BOOZ

Salary raise means losing child care

Single mom Adela Reyes has two children under 5 and scrapes to support them on \$20,400 a year. She's due for a raise in June, but instead of eagerly anticipating it, Reyes is considering turning it down.

The reason: At the higher salary, Reyes would no longer be eligible to send her children to the subsidized child care program that they're enrolled in. And the higher salary will not cover the cost of the non-subsidized care.

"For my kids to stay in their program, I can't make more than \$21,819," says Reyes. "I can't afford to pay the full cost of my children's child care. My only other option would be to ask a relative to keep my kids."

In the push to get people off welfare and into the workplace, many low-income families find themselves in a Catch-22: If they advance on the salary scale, they lose government benefits and, therefore, can't get ahead financially.

In the case of subsidized child care, the situation is compounded by outdated guidelines. To qualify, a family's income must fall below 50 percent of the state median income. However, the state is still using income data from 1997. Since then, median income in Illinois has increased 31 percent, according to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, which monitors the program. If the guidelines were adjusted to current income levels, a family of three like Reyes could earn as much as \$31,787 and remain eligible.

"This is disturbing," Reyes asserts. Under these guidelines, families are told they make too much when, in reality, they don't make much at all, she explains. Parents who work overtime or receive pay raises risk losing eligibility, and the program reassesses family income every six months.

Attorney Dan Lesser of the National Center on Poverty Law estimates that an additional 20,000 children in Illinois would be eligible for subsidies if state median income figures were updated. "The program was created in 1997, and there was nothing put into place to update the figures annually," Lesser explains. "It would have cost the state \$7 million a year to update the program.



Adela Reyes spends a few minutes playing with her children, Jacob and Miranda, at the Carol Robertson Center, the preschool where she also works as an intake coordinator.

Now it will cost \$44 million."

In February, the Day Care Action Council of Illinois drafted a bill to update eligibility to 2003 income levels, and to adjust those figures annually. As *CATALYST* went to press, the measure had passed the House and was pending in the Senate.

"This problem is one of our No. 1 issues," says Maria Whelan, director of the Day Care Action Council of Illinois. "We have these world-class programs, but these outdated figures create a wall of income ineligibility that is keeping families out."

If the measure passes, it could be effective as early as July, the beginning of the fiscal year.

In the meantime, Reyes sends her children—4-year-old Miranda and 2-year-old Jacob—to the Carol Robertson Center in Little Village, where Reyes works as an intake coordinator, determining whether families are eligible for any of the center's three child care programs.

They are enrolled in full-day subsi-

dized preschool at Carol Robertson, which also operates a half-day Head Start and an infant-toddler program. The center also offers before- and after-school programs and summer camp for kids aged 5 to 12.

"I love the convenience," Reyes says. "Plus the teachers do a great job here. My kids have learned so much. This is like a second family for them."

However, in June she's scheduled for an evaluation that could mean a raise. But an increase of just \$28 a week would make Reyes ineligible for subsidized child care, but wouldn't come close to covering the additional expense of footing the bill for child care on her own.

With the subsidy, Reyes' monthly co-payment for the program is \$190.65 for both children. Without it, the full rate would run \$307.40 every week or roughly \$1,300 a month.

"It's kinda hard to decide," Reyes worries. "I want to keep my children here, but I have to live and provide for my family, too."

Tougher income eligibility

Daycare operators like the Carol Robertson Center that run full-day programs by combining state funds for subsidized care with federal funds for Head Start are facing a new rule that is squeezing out many families.

Last October, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services mandated that new families applying for such blended programs must meet the income guidelines set for Head Start, which are even lower than the outdated guidelines set by the state for subsidized care.

For example, the income cutoff for a single mother who is working full time and has one child is \$12,120 under Head Start rules but \$19,626 under state rules. By having to use the federal rules, the Carol Robertson Center could not offer subsidized care even to a woman earning the minimum wage of \$5.75 an hour.

And families would still be expected to kick in a co-payment for child care.

"If I were to come off the street today

and apply for the full-day program my children are currently in, I would be ineligible," explains Adela Reyes, a single mother of two. "My salary couldn't be more than \$15,260."

Dan Lesser of the National Center on Poverty Law says the city has been skating on thin ice for a long time by using the higher state cutoff for kids also enrolled in Head Start. "Chicago didn't have authority to use subsidized child care guidelines for Head Start programs," he says.

Ruby Smith, director of child services for the Chicago Department of Human Services, estimates there are about 6,500 slots in blended Head Start/state-subsidized child care programs citywide.

Some child care centers are responding by sorting children into separate classrooms for Head Start and state-subsidized child care, Smith adds. The move allows families that are not eligible for Head Start to qualify for subsidized child care.

Debra Williams

Determining eligibility

To qualify for state-subsidized child care, parents must:

- Work, attend school or enroll in a training program
- Earn no more than 50 percent of 1997 state median income
- Co-pay for the program based on a sliding scale

To qualify for Head Start, a family must:

- Earn below poverty-level income **OR**
- Receive welfare or Social Security benefits

Family size	State subsidized (salary only)	State subsidized (salary & benefits)	Head Start (Income)
2	\$19,626	\$17,663	\$12,120
3	\$24,243	\$21,819	\$15,260
4	\$28,861	\$25,975	\$18,400

Source: Day Care Action Council of Illinois

Network connects neighborhood preschools

by Genevieve Lill

The Edgewater and Rogers Park communities have roughly seven state pre-kindergartens, seven private preschools, eight Head Start centers, 64 licensed home day cares and a multitude of social service agencies serving 2,300 children ages zero to 5.

Four years ago, the leaders of many of those services began talking with each other for the first time as part of a program that was the brainchild of state Sen. Carol Ronen (D-Chicago).

Called the Early Childhood Network of Edgewater and Rogers Park, the program provides a meeting ground, training and information about common concerns such as legislation and insurance. It also has produced a directory of community resources that is used by a wide variety of individuals in the community, and it has distributed grants that have helped improve and expand services.

"It's been a fabulous experience," says

Ronen. "The real great benefit is that it's brought together people from all around the table. By working together, they've been able to share resources and experiences and thus improve the quality of care and services for the children."

The network grew out of Ronen's concern about the stagnant supply of day care slots in the community. Besides the 2,300 children in group care, Edgewater and Rogers Park have 6,000 preschool-age children who are cared for by relatives or by so-called license-exempt providers, who serve three or fewer children, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

A study of the network by Loyola University's Center for Urban Research and Learning suggests that it has paid dividends in both program quality and expansion. For example, providers who participated added 75 percent more day care slots than did those who did not participate, reports Christine George, the lead researcher. George stresses, however, that correlation does not mean cause. Those who participated may simply have been the go-getters, she notes.

Even so, George says the program could and should be replicated.

Kate Sachnoff, the network's executive director, agrees. "This is really a low-cost, community-building, quality-enhancing project, and it can set up a community for future success," she says.

The network has been funded by state and philanthropic grants. In cooperation with state Rep. Harry Osterman (D-14th), Ronen secured two cycles of grants totaling \$170,000 from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, recently renamed the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. And the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation made an award of \$150,000 over three years. However, those grants are running out.

The Chicago Public Schools and City Hall are looking into possibly replicating the networks in other areas of the city.

For examples of how the network has helped early care providers, go to www.catalyst-chicago.org.

Catalyst

Briefing page:

Access to universal preschool

The issue

Brain research shows children's greatest opportunities for learning begin before they reach kindergarten.

Based on those findings, early childhood advocates in Illinois want to make it possible for all 3- and 4-year-olds to have access to affordable, high-quality preschool and birth-to-3 programs that accommodate parents' schedules.

More than a third of the state's 3- and 4-year-olds—about 148,500 children—are enrolled in government-funded preschool or child care programs. Of those, 56,000 are in state pre-k, 36,400 are in federal Head Start programs and 55,500 are in state-subsidized child care.

Two years ago, a task force of educators, advocates and legislators crafted a plan for universal-access preschool that would be high quality and staffed by certified teachers. The plan calls for 202,000 3- and 4-year-old children to be served by 2012.

This year's budget called for Chicago Public Schools to increase by 64 the number of classrooms in state pre-kindergarten, Head Start, child-parent centers, subcontracted child care agencies and tuition-based programs.

The problem

Fully implementing a universal preschool program would cost an estimated \$441 million a year. However, a state budget crunch—projected revenues are expected to fall \$5 billion short—and a tough economic climate limit the outlook.

Before he was elected, Gov. Rod Blagojevich pledged to spend \$90 million for early childhood education. But when he delivered his State of the State speech in March, the new governor had pared down that figure to \$25 million.

"Children don't vote. So adults have to speak loudly to create a public will, which creates a political one."

Adele Simmons, vice-chair and senior executive, Chicago Metropolis 2020

Besides funding, the universal preschool concept has infrastructure problems, as well.

Advocates are not looking to simply create more programs; they want to improve the quality of early childhood programs by hiring better teachers, finding enough suitable space and making it easier for parents to use them.

However, in Illinois, the preschool playing field is decidedly uneven in both teacher training and pay. Suitable space for preschool programs is scarce. And eligibility requirements for state- and federally funded programs make it difficult for families to qualify or remain eligible when family circumstances improve.

Actions underway

Three local advocacy groups—the Day Care Action Council of Illinois, the Ounce of Prevention Fund and Voices for Illinois Children—received a grant to launch a grassroots campaign for universal access to preschool called “Early Learning Illinois: Access, Options and Opportunities.”

The campaign has two major goals: Persuading the governor and state lawmakers to make universal access to preschool a priority, and organizing parents, educators and community groups to lobby for early childhood programs.

The Early Learning Illinois campaign has attracted backers from inside and outside educational circles.

The Chicago Teachers Union formed an early childhood education committee

to advise the union on issues that teachers think are important.

The Illinois chapter of a national coalition of police, prosecutors and crime victims, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, is lobbying in Springfield for universal preschool. The business community has taken up the cause for early childhood education, too.

In February, CPS became the first public school district in the country to offer a birth-to-3 program when the National Teachers Academy launched its infant-toddler initiative.

Mayor Daley hired a former University of Chicago Laboratory Schools director to design an early childhood plan for the city.

Resources

⇒ For more information on the Early Learning Illinois campaign, call Kathy Stohr at (312) 516-5575 or visit www.earlylearningillinois.org.

⇒ For details on family income eligibility, child-care subsidies and programs available in Illinois, call the Day Care Action Council of Illinois at (773) 561-7900 or visit the web site at www.day-careaction.org.

⇒ For information on government policies and community efforts for children, call Voices for Illinois Children at (312) 456-0600 or visit www.voices4kids.org.

⇒ For information on zero to 3 programs and research, call the Ounce of Prevention Fund at (312) 922-3863 or visit www.ounceofprevention.org.

LSC role important in principal selection

The February *CATALYST* article “Principal training program scores average in placements” raised a number of important issues, but only provided a partial view of the role that local school councils play in principal selection. LSCs have many responsibilities, but none so important as the authority to evaluate and select principals. The value of this role has been demonstrated by research and 13 years of experience.

We were disappointed the article did not discuss why LSCs have this responsibility, or solicit more LSC perspectives on the challenges of principal leadership. Too often, the relationship between LSCs and principals is negatively stereotyped as “political” without seriously examining the reasons the legislature gave LSCs this authority in the first place.

LSCs are about accountability. LSC principal selection has played a major role in diversifying the principal corps, enlivening schools with new leaders and making sure that schools connect to communities. In fact, community leaders in New York City are pushing for a similar model in their reform efforts. Overall, the LSC-principal-teacher partnership can and does work.

CATALYST did a good job describing the understandable frustrations of candidates who have not yet achieved their goals. It is true that some LSC members may see things differently than their principal. Yet those differences can be valuable assets when applied constructively to the dialogue about school improvement, which should be the foundation of any principal selection process.

Former CEO Paul Vallas’ unsuccessful 1999 attempt to strip councils of principal selection authority established a clear reality—in Chicago, elected LSCs choose the principal. The big question is whether we are adequately supporting our LSCs to be successful in their duties. This should be a key aspect of any school leadership story.

We have come a long way since 1999. The current CPS administration has

helped by being more open to collaboration with LSCs and their supporters. The recent Human Capital Initiative exemplifies the potential of this approach

Initially, the conversation focused only on principals and teachers. When advocates made the case that LSCs are a key part of the leadership equation, the administration responded by inviting veteran LSC members and supporters to join a committee to support LSC principal selection. This helped win administration support for the

every Chicago school. To achieve this, we need to create an adequately funded LSC Leadership Institute to work with the principal and teacher professional development community to make the partnership between principals, teachers, LSCs and the broader community thrive.

There are 600 Chicago public schools. In a system this big, it is unrealistic to believe that any selection process will work flawlessly every time. But overall, LSC principal selection has proven its value.

Studies show that the city’s most effective schools are those where principals, teachers and LSCs understand each other’s roles and work together to meet high expectations.

EXCEL and PENCUL programs, which provide independent assistance on the principal evaluation and selection processes. Recognizing the need to do more, the Human Capital Initiative also sparked the creation of a new “LSC Roundtable” to engage the LSC community in policy development and problem solving.

LSC support groups, CPS and principal training organizations (including Leadership Academy and Urban Network for Chicago and New Leaders for New Schools) have also increased their collaboration on professional development, conflict resolution and even held a mixer to connect would-be principals to LSCs. These are extremely important developments.

Clearly, more needs to be done. Studies show that the city’s most effective schools are those where principals, teachers and LSCs understand each other’s roles and work together to meet high expectations. Yet many leaders have yet to master that worthwhile challenge. Collaborative training is a good first step, but LSCs cannot be a junior partner to this process. We need well-supported, elected LSCs in each and

Think about it: Are principal candidates who cannot convince parents, teachers and community members to hire them likely to succeed in mobilizing the larger community of parents, teachers and neighbors to help a school succeed?

All school leaders must work together effectively—and be accountable if they don’t. The interplay of different kinds of leadership is an important aspect of school improvement. We hope future articles will include a more extensive examination of the roles and needs of LSCs in supporting school success.

Andrew G. Wade
Executive Director

Chicago School Leadership Cooperative

Brenda Bell
PENCUL Training Director
Chicago School Leadership Cooperative

Editor’s Note: EXCEL stands for Evaluation Expertise for Councils and Educational Leaders, and PENCUL stands for Partnership to Encourage the Next Century’s Urban Leaders.

Some schools harmed, others helped, by district's probation policy

by Elizabeth Duffrin

Probatation kick-started some of Chicago's lowest-performing elementary schools, but left others floundering, and in some cases may have made them worse, a new study has found.

According to author Jennifer O'Day, now with the American Institutes for Research, the findings raise questions about the new federal accountability system known as No Child Left Behind. The federal system has many of the same merits and drawbacks as Chicago's, she says.

In 1996, the Chicago Board of Education placed 109 schools with low reading test scores on academic probation. Where schools failed to improve, staff faced possible reassignment or dismissal. The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act holds a similar threat for schools that fail to meet goals on state tests.

The upside of both accountability programs is that they draw attention to neglected, low-performing schools. "That's an important plus that shouldn't be negated," says O'Day. For schools that simply need to work a little harder and smarter, those policies provide a needed "kick in the rear," she believes.

The downside is that both rely almost exclusively on the threat of negative sanctions to motivate change and on bureaucratic controls to direct it, while failing to provide the level of support teachers need to improve teaching.

In Chicago, this threat was often enough to spur improvements at better functioning schools, she found. But where staff could not figure out how to raise test scores, probation only demoralized them, she says.

Under stress, teachers and administrators sometimes grasped at ineffective solutions, she continues. Meanwhile, they blamed parents and students for their school's continued failure. "When you threaten negative sanctions, you often get dysfunctional responses," she notes.

O'Day's research team studied Chicago's elementary schools on probation from spring 1999 through spring 2001. It also examined the work of "external partners," typically a university or non-profit group, which assisted probation schools.

With a few exceptions, partners did not provide the in-depth training that research shows teachers need to significantly change instruction, explains

O'Day. Visiting each school an average of one or two days a week, most partners presented a hodge-podge of teaching strategies that lacked a coherent focus on reading, she says. The district did not closely monitor external partners and may have under-funded them, she adds.

Philip Hansen, the district's former accountability chief, says that the School Board contracted with area schools of education to serve as external partners because, at the time, the board itself lacked the capacity to provide staff training. "We relied on them to know what they were doing," he says.

At first, central office paid for most of the extra help—\$250,000 to each school

during its first two years of probation. The money partners got allowed most to spend three or four days a week in each school. In subsequent years, schools had to pay for their own training.

The federal government, likewise, has created a situation where thousands of schools are identified as failing, but it has not invested enough money to improve them, in O'Day's opinion. Now states face the daunting challenge of trying to fund the initiative at a time of massive budget shortfalls, she notes.

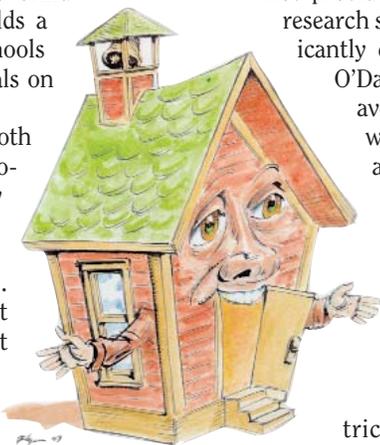
Providing inadequate support while demanding higher standards is likely to demoralize rather than bolster the teaching corps, she says.

Some Chicago schools, however, were able to compensate for the lack of external help with their internal collegial support. Schools where teachers reported that they trusted and worked well with their colleagues were more likely to get off probation within the first two years, according to her team's analysis of survey data collected by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

The desire to participate in a professional community and make a difference for kids can be powerful motivators, notes O'Day. "That's why a lot of people go into teaching in the first place."

In her view, the most promising accountability systems are those that tap into teachers' intrinsic motivation by building collegiality around improved student learning. In Baltimore City Public Schools, for instance, consultants work with a group of low-performing schools on team building and analyzing student work, among other practices, she says.

By contrast, the Chicago program, which recently was modified, and No Child Left Behind assume that threatening to sanction a school is enough to



motivate individuals to improve, she says. At many low-performing schools, probation did prompt teachers to work harder but not always more effectively, she says.

Where staff did not work as a team, expertise inside the school building went untapped, she found. At one school, a teacher with expertise in literacy instruction became so frustrated with the disorganized management in her school that she chose not to collaborate with her colleagues. "She thought it was counterproductive," says O'Day.

Lacking strategies to improve instruction, staff at some schools grasped instead at quick fixes, such as drilling students on the test format, her study found.

O'Day says other research shows that low-performing organizations in crisis typically fall back on tried methods, however ineffective, rather than new ones.

"Test preparation is a prime example of that," she says.

Such organizations also tend to become compliant rather than reflective, she says. In long-time probation schools, that pattern became evident when schools filled out their corrective action or school plans each year. A team would dutifully brainstorm a list of school weaknesses but then neglect to craft a clear plan for addressing them, she says. "All the boxes were filled in. When you read the plan, you don't get the sense of a coherent strategy."

Leaders at organizations under fire also tend to become more controlling, research has found. At some of Chicago's long-time probation schools, administrators mandated classroom activities with little teacher input and then construed any differing viewpoints as resistance, she says.

Some principals simply lacked the skills to motivate staff, O'Day observes. For instance, at one school a principal told an energetic young teacher that she could not earn an "excellent" rating because if the school had excellent teachers, it would not be on probation. As a result, the teacher became demoralized and considered transferring, she says.

Not surprisingly, O'Day says, principals played the most crucial role in mov-

ing their schools off probation. In 10 Chicago elementary schools she selected for a case study, the first two to get off probation had strong instructional leadership. Two more got off soon after a leadership change. The four schools still on probation at the end of the study had the weakest leadership. For instance, one principal bombarded teachers with new programs, while another micro-managed them.

External partners played a marginal role in the 10 case study schools, she says. In the two cases where they did transform instruction, the change seemed to be due in large part to the principal's support.

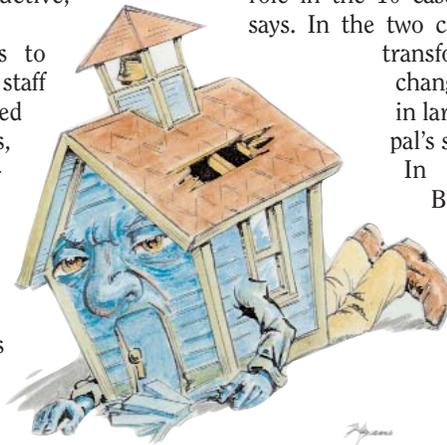
In 2001, the School Board took a new direction, providing full-time reading specialists at the 51 schools still on probation and at another 63 with low scores. Now, specialists lead workshops and coach

teachers in their classrooms based on a district-wide reading framework. Other cities, including Boston and San Diego, have adopted similar initiatives with encouraging results, O'Day notes.

Hansen agrees that reading specialists likely will have more impact on teaching than did external partners alone. But without that initial threat of sanctions and the resulting test score gains at some schools, fewer teachers would think it possible to raise student achievement, he maintains. "We had a system that was plagued with low expectations. I think what we did was right for the times."

O'Day thinks that public officials need to consider all the tools low-performing schools need to raise achievement, including incentives to attract the best teachers to those schools. Across the country, she says, schools are asked to meet increasingly higher standards with dwindling resources. "Even with all these accountability systems, I don't think there's political will to improve the education that poor kids are getting."

Links to related CATALYST articles and Jennifer O'Day's study are attached to the online version of this story. Go to: www.catalyst-chicago.org.



Leadership, trust make the difference

In 1996, Chase and McNair elementary schools were both placed on probation. Chase got off probation in 1997, but McNair is still on. These two schools, chosen by CATALYST, are examples of a pattern identified by researcher Jennifer O'Day: Test scores rose more sharply at schools where teachers trusted their colleagues, collaborated and took responsibility for all students—not just their own.

Chase elementary:

When Chase elementary in Logan Square landed on probation in 1996, teachers were upset and frustrated, recalls librarian Kathy Lynch, then a 4th-grade teacher. The faculty already worked well together, but under probation they became even more serious and focused, she says. "We're a very cohesive group."

Mary Mack, who was principal at the time, gave them input on decisions and tried to keep their spirits up, Lynch adds.

Two years later, the school's reading test scores rose enough to lift the school off probation. Since then, reading test scores have continued to climb, reaching 41 percent of students at or above grade level in 2002.

"In retrospect, [probation] was a good thing," says Lynch.

McNair elementary:

McNair elementary in Austin also landed on probation in 1996. Today, test scores are up, but the school remains on probation with 23 percent of students scoring at or above grade level in reading.

Last spring, probation-weary teachers complained of disorganized school leadership and negative school politics. "At McNair, we're more interested in getting someone in trouble than in educating the child," one teacher remarked. "We're not a team here," another agreed.

This fall the principal retired, and the School Board appointed Gloria Archbold, formerly principal of Leland elementary, as McNair's interim principal. Brenda Martin, a 3rd-grade teacher, says that the school climate is improving already. "We're talking together more. We help each other. There's no back-biting."

Elizabeth Duffrin

Portraits

Mom takes slow but steady route toward a teaching certificate

by Irasema Salinas-González

When Leticia Barrera left her home in Mexico 12 years ago, she had been teaching little children for five years. In Chicago, she had to settle for factory work, assembling an assortment of plastic gadgets.

"I waited for something to happen because I felt that my place was not there," Barrera recalls. "My vocation was always to teach."

Lightening didn't strike. But Barrera took advantage of one small opportunity after another and grew into a school leader in her community, Logan Square. Today, she is an education organizer for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) and one of several dozen parents from the area who are studying to become bilingual teachers through a program organized by LSNA. Called *Nueva Generación*, the program holds afternoon classes at the Monroe Community Center in the Monroe School Annex.

"Leticia is a perfect example of a person in the community who is capable but just needs the opportunity," says Elizabeth Skinner, program coordinator.

"I'm very lucky to have found this program," says Barrera. "This is what I was waiting for."

Barrera first got involved in Chicago schools in 1997, when her son, Ricardo, enrolled in kindergarten at Monroe Elementary. She signed up for the Parent/Mentor Program, which was created by LSNA to train parents to work with children in the classrooms and to develop their own skills.

"I saw parents going into the school and began asking questions," she recalls. "I sought out LSNA as a resource to get involved in the school."

Next, Barrera became an instructor in Parents as Teachers First, a Chicago Public Schools program that helps parents prepare their children for preschool. She made home visits in the morning to six mothers and their young children, modeling age-appropriate educational activities. In the afternoon, she returned to the school to help in classrooms.

Last year, Barrera went to work for LSNA as an education organizer. In that role, she provides support and guidance to the parent leaders at three other schools that have the Parent/Mentor Program—she is the parent/mentor leader at Monroe. Her big project at the moment is implementing a Literacy Ambassadors program that will encourage parents to read to their children at home.



On a Tuesday morning in March, Barrera begins her workday with an 8 a.m. local school council meeting at Monroe. When the group disperses, she heads to her office to work the phones. At 10, she drives to Funston Elementary School to meet with the school's parent/mentors. There is one agenda item: Literacy Ambassadors.

Barrera quickly gets down to business, opening a planner that is filled with notes. As the moms report positive results of phone calls they made to line up host families, Barrera takes notes and smiles her approval.

"Instead of having Tupperware parties," pipes an excited Theresa Manruffo, "we'll have literacy parties."

Barrera asks whether participating teachers have made their book selections and then makes some suggestions of her own. When the conversation digresses, she gently guides it back on track. At the end the meeting, she

thanks the mothers for attending and reminds them of the time and topic for their next meeting.

It is clear that the moms have great respect for Barrera. Indeed, as she gathers her belongings to leave, two pull her aside and quietly ask her advice on personal matters. "She's a beautiful person," says Manruffo.

Nueva Generación

Four afternoons a week, Barrera is the student, taking classes to obtain a bachelor's degree and a certificate to teach bilingual education.

Joanna Brown, lead education organizer at LSNA, says the idea to start a teacher training program grew out of the realization that graduates of the Parent/Mentor Program, mostly Latina mothers, wanted to continue working in the schools. Like Barrera, many women said they did not want to continue working in factories or cleaning homes.

LSNA then looked for a university partner, which it found in Chicago State University. "It was an untapped source that would be great for the community," agreed Maria Teresa Garreton, head of the university's bilingual education department.

The partners submitted a funding proposal to the U.S. Department of Education, winning a grant of \$1.23 million over five years. The money covers the cost of university instructors, tuition and books, making the program free for participants.

Informational workshops in the winter of 1999 drew more than 150 people; 50 met the requirements (a high school diploma or GED and legal residency), filled out applications and were accepted.



Swirling a full skirt, Leticia Barrera teaches a traditional Mexican dance to students from Monroe Elementary. Barrera, an education organizer, is studying to become a certified bilingual teacher.

Nueva Generación held its first class in the fall of 2000. Students are enrolled part-time, taking only a few afternoon classes at a time. Recently, some started taking Saturday classes on the Chicago State campus to speed up the process. Barrera did not opt for this because she reserves weekends for her family.

The first year was a steep challenge for participants, who had to learn how to juggle family and school responsibilities. A family counselor was brought in to help them resolve their issues.

Also, many students were not prepared for college-level work or for instruction conducted in English. They had to take catch-up academic classes and English as a Second Language first. Last summer, Barrera made arrangements for ESL tutoring to help with English composition.

“We know this is a long-term goal because we are working with non-traditional students,” says Garreton.

Barrera jokes that she may walk up to accept her degree with a cane. Her serious forecast is about 2010 at the earliest.

Thirty-nine of the original 50 students remain in the program. Some of those who left moved, and others dropped out because of child care issues.

“We don’t think we need to go to Spain or Peru to recruit teachers,” says Brown, referring to School Board

recruitment efforts. She predicts that because of their school and community experiences, graduates of Nueva Generación will stay in teaching and stay in Logan Square.

Perseverance

On Thursday nights, Barrera gets into her element, teaching traditional Mexican dance to 28 children and weaving in some Mexican history and culture as well. “Children should be proud of their culture,” she says, noting that Mexican schools often emphasize art and culture.

Barrera studied dance at the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, but none of her colleagues knew it until she filled out the application for Nueva Generación. LSNA then swung into action and arranged for her to teach the dance class. “She is a very charismatic teacher,” says Brown.

Barrera applauds American schools for their openness to parents, including the opportunity to observe classrooms. “In Mexico you do not get a parent involved in that manner,” she says.

“The best thing a parent can do is get involved,” she says. “If all parents were involved, the education of our kids would be so much better.”

Now 35 and the mother of a 4-year-

old daughter as well as a 9-year-old son, Barrera is proud of her accomplishments. She enthusiastically shares her tales of perseverance in the hope that they will motivate the mothers she works with.

“If they see that it’s going to take me 10 years to get my teaching degree,” she says, “they can then realize that six months for a GED is not that much.” ●

Resources

National PTA: For Spanish-language resources that promote parent involvement, go to www.pta.org.

Logan Square Neighborhood Association: To learn more about Literacy Ambassadors and other parent leadership programs, call 773-384-4370.

CPS Human Resources Office: Teachers with foreign credentials may obtain transcript information from Teacher Recruitment, 773-553-1045. www.cps-humanresources.org.

For a Spanish translation of this story, go to www.catalyst-chicago.org.

AT CLARK STREET **Jill Wine-Banks**, a former Watergate prosecutor and general counsel for the U.S. Army, was named director of the CPS Office of Education to Careers. She will be responsible for aligning district programs to job market needs. She succeeds **Creg Williams**, who left last summer to become deputy chief academic officer for the School District of Philadelphia. ... The exodus of top managers at CPS continues. Chief Fiscal Officer **Kenneth Gotsch** resigned and accepted a position as chief financial officer for the Los Angeles Unified School District, and CPS director of intergovernmental affairs **Robin Black** has been named chief of staff at the Illinois Department of Transportation. No replacements have been named for either position.

MOVING IN/ON **Kris Torkelson**, previously of Urban Gateways, was named director of operations for Project Exploration, a nonprofit science education group.

PRINCIPAL RETIREMENTS **Linda McCarthy**, Hale; **Ida G. Simmons**, Deneen. ... **Anna Correa** is acting principal at Hale; **Carolyn Palmer** is acting principal at Deneen.

BARGAINING RIGHTS The Illinois General Assembly approved in March a bill

that restores some bargaining rights to the Chicago Teachers Union. The measure, which has Mayor Daley's support, requires the School Board to negotiate the impact of workplace decisions, such as layoffs or class size, with the union. Passage of the bill paves the way for contract negotiations to begin. Gov. Blagojevich is expected to sign the bill this spring. (See *CATALYST*, October 2002)

SCHOOL FUNDING CEO **Arne Duncan** and board President **Michael Scott** traveled to Springfield to lobby lawmakers to allocate an additional \$250 million for CPS. In early March, Duncan ordered central office departments to trim budgets by 15 percent, savings that would amount to \$30 million. The district is also looking to save another \$800,000 in busing costs by shifting drop-off and pick-up service for 7th and 8th grade magnet students to designated locations. ... CPS expects to get an extra \$600,000 in federal funding for after-school programs and enhanced reading instruction.

MORE SMALL SCHOOLS Four new small schools will open this fall at Bowen, Orr and South Shore high schools, all of which began the process of breaking up into smaller units this year. Last fall, these schools created five small schools with

grants from the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative, which is funded by local foundations and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Curricula at the schools, slated to open in September, will be based on the following four themes: leadership, technology, foreign languages and international studies and the Paideia program, which uses Socratic seminars to teach analytical thinking.

SCHOLARSHIPS The University of Chicago announced it would provide full-tuition scholarships every year to five CPS graduates, beginning with this year's graduating class. University tuition is \$27,324 a year. The university also launched Collegiate Scholars, a summer school and year-round academic enrichment program for 50 CPS 9th-grade students.

GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS Four CPS teachers were among 10 in the Chicago area who received a Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. The teachers are **Mary Bianchi**, 5th-grade special education at Christopher; **Elizabeth Giesen**, 4th grade at Oscar Mayer; **Carolyn Grantham**, pre-kindergarten at Woodson South; and **Paula Ann Sprecher**, kindergarten and 1st grade at Farnsworth.

Genevieve Lill



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