

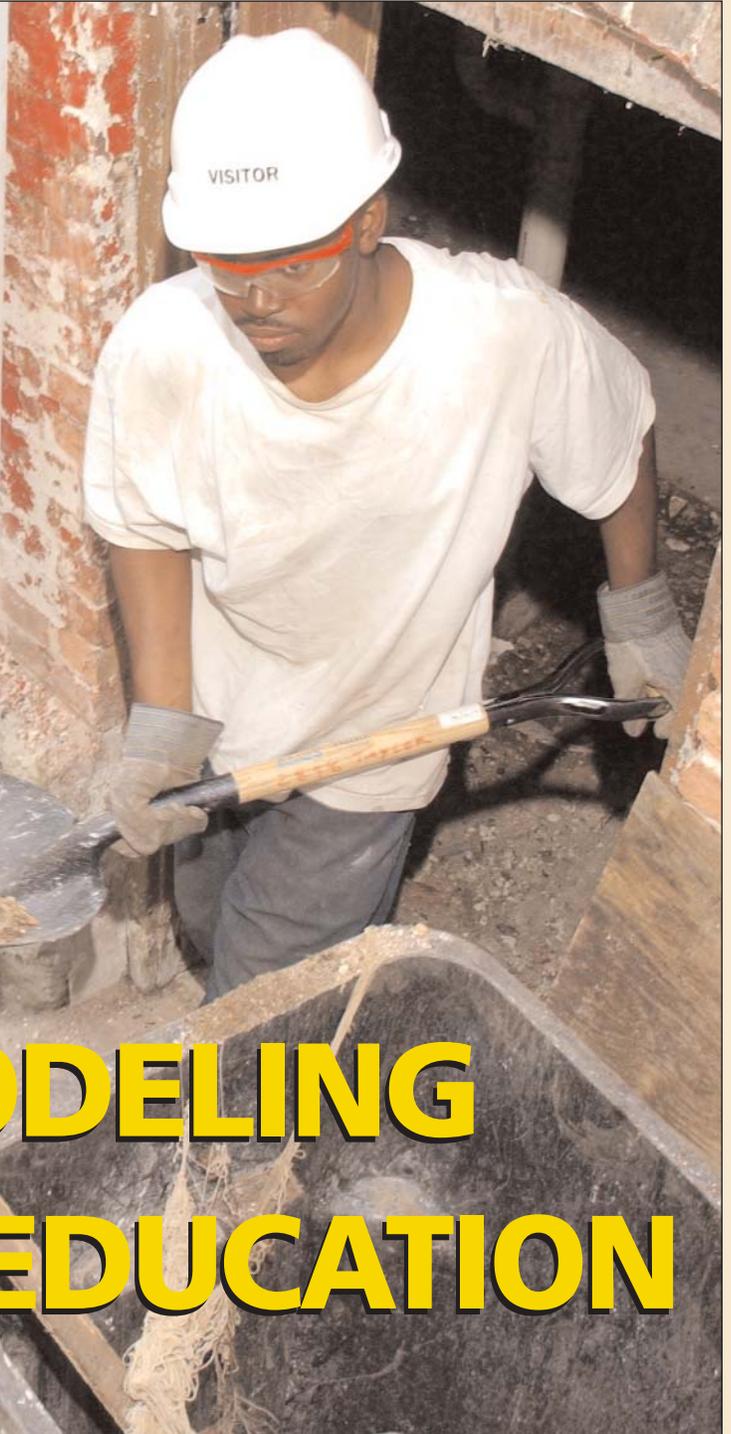
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# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

**CPS alum  
Adelade  
Akisanya is  
in college  
and on track  
to get a job.  
The district  
wants that  
for all its  
graduates.**



**REMODELING  
CAREER EDUCATION**

# Career education one remedy for 'boring' high schools

Mayor Daley sounded like a teenager a few weeks ago, saying the problem with high school is that it is "boring."

Now that he has found common ground with the kids, he should ask them what they would do to make it more interesting. Judging from some students Associate Editor Maureen Kelleher has talked to recently, we suspect he would be surprised by their answers.

Ervin Makalaj, a 2003 graduate of Amundsen High School, was enrolled in a training program to earn certification in CISCO computer systems. With the promise of a paying job, the program was *very* interesting—until his senior year, when an ailing teacher and a trainee were assigned to teach the class. According to Ervin, he and most of his classmates flunked the certification exams they took in June. Now a freshman at University of Illinois at Chicago, Ervin is unable to earn extra money for school at the higher wages that CISCO certification would justify. His advice to the mayor would be to hire good teachers.

Another kid the mayor should consult is Samella Watson, a senior at Marshall High School. When Samella was 13, her grandmother turned her on to baking cakes. In high school, she opted to study culinary arts and had the opportunity to job-shadow chefs at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Marriott Hotel. Then last year, a kitchen renovation project at Marshall stalled, leaving kids in the program without working ovens or stoves for two semesters. "Without the kitchen, we can't have the hands-on experience we need," Samella says.

Samella would advise the mayor to ensure that classes have the materials and facilities they need.

Both students were enrolled in what theoretically should be some of the least boring programs in the system, yet they both ended up twiddling their thumbs. If the school system can't make its career education classes interesting, there's scant hope for the rest of its programs. Picked apart and patched together under pressure from the federal government and two administrations, career education is a dilapidated program in need of an overhaul.

According to Jill Wine-Banks, the newly installed education-to-careers chief, both the mayor and CEO Arne Duncan have charged her with making career programs

work, but also ensuring that all high school students are workforce-ready by graduation.

Wine-Banks' initial efforts have been focused on the bare basics—making sure every high school has picked a staffer to serve as its education-to-careers coordinator, and weeding out dead-end vocational courses such as barbering and travel agency.

For the bigger challenges, Wine-Banks can look to Boston, where a heavily engaged business community has made solid connections between schools, jobs and continuing education, and to the city's own Manley High School, where a nonprofit program called the Umoja Student Development Corp. has done the same. Since Umoja was launched at the West Side school six years ago, graduation rates have improved, and more students are going to college. More than 70 percent of the 2003 graduating class was accepted into colleges compared to only 10 percent in 1997. Observers of the program say Umoja gets much of the credit.

According to a Johns Hopkins researcher, two key characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs are setting students sights on an attainable future and empowering them with the skills and knowledge that will get them there. That's what Umoja strives to do.

Evaluating facilities and teacher qualifications are on Wine-Banks' long-term to-do list. However, as the experiences of Ervin and Samella show, those exercises can come none too soon.



*Veronica Anderson*

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# Catalyst

VOICES OF CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM

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2002, 1997 International Reading Association  
2001, 1998 Sigma Delta Chi for public service  
2001, 2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Public Service  
2000 Peter Lisagor Award, Online Reporting  
2001 Peter Lisagor Award, Editorials  
1998 Chicago Association of Black Journalists

1998, 1993 Peter Lisagor Award, Best Newsletter  
1999, 1995 Peter Lisagor Award, Reporting  
1996 Education Writers Association  
1997, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993 Distinguished Achievement Award; 1994, Best Newsletter, Educational Press Association of America

# Career programs under construction

Traditional vocational programs have been phased out, and CPS is looking to integrate academics with career opportunities that connect to real jobs.

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by Maureen Kelleher

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**F**or Latifah Pierce, a senior at Prosser High School, a metalworking course in machine shop is opening the door to an array of career options. The program offers Pierce an opportunity to earn one of seven certification credentials created by the National Institute for Metalworking Skills. Prosser launched its technical certification program two years ago, and it is gaining the attention of employers, some of whom pay certified entry-level machinists an additional \$5.25 an hour on top of base pay.

“I was going to transfer, but I liked my shop so much I stayed,” says Pierce. “With this, you can go out and get a job.”

Good jobs for graduates is exactly what new Education-to-Careers Chief Jill Wine-Banks wants for more Chicago Public Schools students. But it won't be easy.

When the district phased out traditional vocational programs, it failed to replace them with curricula that integrated higher academic requirements with career and technical skills. While some career programs have clear connections to real jobs—information technology, construction and health, for instance—others, such as travel and tourism, are tied to fading industries.

Compounding the challenge is an inadequate tracking system that is unable to keep tabs on what high school students do after graduation. Meanwhile, Wine-Banks is just beginning to establish cooperative relationships with the business and industry groups that can connect students with jobs.

About 30 percent of the more than 100,000 students in CPS high schools are enrolled in career and technical education courses. More than half of them attend one of the city's 11 career academies, one of which is Simeon High in Chatham, which opened a new \$40 million building in September.

This is the third time since 1990 that

CPS has tried to shake up vocational education. In 1990, the district was spurred to action by the federal Carl Perkins Act, which required schools to beef up the academic component of vocational programs and prepare students for postsecondary training in community colleges.

In 1997, former CEO Paul Vallas closed the door on dead-end vocational courses and opened up other ones through joint programs with area colleges. Notable was College Excel, a program that allows average high school students to enroll in technical college courses and earn dual credits. (See article, p. 8.)

He also beefed up high school graduation course requirements, mandating that all students pass three years of math and three years of laboratory science. High school reformers say tough graduation standards pave a path to college for students in career education programs. "Career and technical students must take a real academic core," says Gene Bottoms, director of High Schools that Work, a reform model that requires four years of math.

Now CEO Arne Duncan has put education-to-careers, the new moniker, on the drafting board once again. In April, he hired Wine-Banks, a lawyer and former business executive, and charged her with ensuring that every CPS career education graduate walk out of high school with the credentials that employers are seeking for entry-level jobs.

"The mayor and Arne are very interested in making sure we train our students to go into the workforce immediately after graduation, either as a career path or as a way to earn money while they go on to further education," says Wine-Banks.

## Enrollment declines

Chicago's struggles to revamp career education programs mirror the national scene. Pressure to raise high school students' academic performance has diverted attention from career programs, which are suffering from declining enrollment and poor image.

"It's too early to tell what's taking its place," says Richard Kazis, executive director of Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based policy and advocacy organization for youth workforce development. "A big question mark is how much of our technical education will take place in high schools versus colleges."

Wine-Banks says getting a handle on the quality of existing education-to-careers programs is her first priority as she attempts to integrate high school course work with practical, job-training skills. Integrating academics with a vocational curriculum has been a long-standing challenge. While some vocational teachers may try to work subjects like geometry and even trigonometry into their courses, building bridges with academics continues to be difficult.

Today, CPS career training consists of three-course sequences in 11 industries, which are available to varying



JOHN BOOZ

*Prosser High seniors Latifah Pierce (right) and Ashanti Carter are using a lathe to make a machine part in shop class. Both girls are seeking certification to become entry-level machinists.*

degrees in every high school. Students may choose to apply to one of 11 "career academies," where every student declares a career major.

A recent national study shows at-risk students who attend career academies are more likely to stay in school. In Chicago, dropout rates at career academies in 2002 ranged from a low of nearly 6 percent at Prosser High to a high of 35 percent at Tilden High.

Over the next 12 months, Wine-Banks will assess career course offerings with the goal to shut down outdated pro-

grams. (She's already eliminated barbering and consolidated travel and tourism into hospitality, which includes culinary science and hotel management.)

In a letter sent last month, CPS gave high schools with low career education enrollment rates the choice between closing their programs or building enrollment. Decisions will be made in December.

Eventually, Wine-Banks plans to evaluate facilities, equipment, internship opportunities and teacher qualifications in every high school career

program. She also wants to determine how career program graduates are faring on post-secondary licensing tests, and how many jobs are available in those industries that CPS offers course work.

## Schools innovate

Since shedding traditional vocational programs, some CPS high schools have replaced them with innovative initiatives that connect students with career options.

Since small business is a leading source of new jobs, high schools are partnering with outside groups to teach students entrepreneurial skills.

Juarez High, for instance, offers two programs: Headstrong Enterprise, which created and launched a shampoo product this summer, and Bikes for Chicago, which repairs and services bicycles at local cycling events. This summer, teachers from Juarez and seven other CPS high schools attended training sessions sponsored by the National Foundation for Entrepreneurship Education.

“These kids are getting exposure at an early age,” says Bonnie Keyes, program director of the Illinois Manufacturing Foundation, which helped Juarez develop its entrepreneurship programs. “They’ve got something real to put on their resume.”

With help from the Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurship Education, the education-to-careers office is revamping its business curriculum to include more

instruction about creating a business from scratch. “Most of the teachers have been teaching some kind of business planning, but up to now there has been no mandate that they implement the business plan and see if it works,” says Zira Smith, director of teacher training for the Institute.

Outside partners are also working with schools to fill gaps in career education and counseling. Chicago Women in Trades exposes middle and high school girls to nontraditional occupations, and often finds girls have had little counseling about their futures.

“We provide college information and general career counseling to make up the slack,” says Melissa Barbier, director of girls’ programs.

One model is the partnership between Manley High and Umoja Student Development Corp., which seamlessly integrates college and career awareness, says Barbier. (See article, p. 10.)

Meanwhile, Wine-Banks is making connections with the business community, and is recruiting industry leaders to serve on a new career education advisory board.

Experts support the idea of industry leaders making program recommendations, but add that they also need to get their hands dirty. One example of how this works comes from Boston, where the nonprofit Boston Private Industry Council assigns one career specialist to every high school to help students land internships and set goals. (See article, p. 13.)

## CPS eyes grassroots models

Other career education models are cropping up in CPS small high schools and charters. Gage Park High is home to a small school that focuses on manufacturing technology. A trade group, Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades Council, is looking to open a charter school next fall where students would be exposed to at least 16 different trades over four years of high school. The group is exploring sites and recruiting a committee of labor leaders and contractors to serve on its board, says President Michael O’Neill.

With an eye on grassroots models, Wine-Banks has a number of initiatives on the drawing board, including:

- **Improving career education and awareness in earlier grades.** “I’d like to see career exploration start in grade school,” she says.
- **Identifying students’ interests earlier.** “Kids pick their high schools, and sometimes they don’t have the program they want,” she notes.
- **Tracking students who graduate from high school.** CPS is developing a partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse to determine which colleges its graduates attend. Wine-Banks anticipates the system will produce its first report next year.

### Career academies at a glance

School	Neighborhood	Enrollment	Graduation Rate (%)
Calumet	Auburn Gresham	999	53
Chicago Vocational	Avalon Park	2164	69
Curie	Archer Heights	3068	76
Dunbar	Douglas	1710	45
Farragut	South Lawndale	2331	63
Flower*	East Garfield Park	338	70
Manley	East Garfield Park	650	62
Prosser	Belmont Cragin	1357	77
Richards	New City	526	70
Simeon	Chatham	1535	67
Tilden	New City	1254	54
Westinghouse	Humboldt Park	1412	72
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>17,344</b>	<b>65%</b>

\* Flower High closed at the end of the 2002-03 school year.

SOURCE: Chicago Public Schools, 2002-03 data

### Industry categories

	Enrollment	Sites
Information Technology	6,341	55
Business and Finance	5,121	43
Hospitality	4,024	34
Construction	3,585	35
Communications	3,001	29
Manufacturing	2,092	18
Transportation	1,785	17
Health	1,382	41
Agriculture	968	5
Public Safety	527	40
Human Services	479	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,305**</b>	

\*\*Reflects enrollment at all high schools

SOURCE: Chicago Public Schools, 2002-03 data



*Students in a computer class at Kelly High share a laugh with Jill Wine-Banks, the new education-to-careers chief. She recently visited the school to meet with local business leaders to discuss internships and job training for students.*

- **Expanding opportunities for career education students to earn industry-recognized credentials by the time they graduate.** Some CPS career programs—nursing, computer networking and cosmetology, for instance—already offer such credentials. But no credential exists in other industries, such as business. “Anything that doesn’t already exist is trickier,” she notes.

Last year, Prosser High’s machine shop became the first in the city to become accredited by the National Institute for Metalworking Skills. Students who wish to take the Institute’s certification exams are not required to complete an accredited program, but doing so gives them a leg up, says Executive Director Stephen Mandes. Most programs with this credential are found in postsecondary training programs and colleges.

Prosser’s Latifah Pierce is hoping to earn it. If the lathe part she’s fashioning is approved by a committee of industry experts, and she passes a written test, she will earn one of seven entry-level certifications for machinists. “It’s challenging,” she says, “but as long as you work hard for it, you can do it.” ●

## Student internships

**T**his summer, John Battista, a machine shop teacher at Prosser High, landed internships for three of his students at S & C Electric. Marius Kryska is still there, working after school, earning \$10.18 per hour and looking forward to college next year on the company’s tab.

But not all CPS seniors are so lucky. Last year, only 1,439 seniors in career education had access to a program that combines job preparation classes with workplace internships. Education-to-careers coordinators say good internships are hard to find. “With the poor economy, adults are taking the jobs high school students would do,” says Joseph Cotey, Harper High coordinator.

Most schools are unable to devote

the time and resources necessary to find internships for large numbers of students. According to Cotey, up to 90 percent of his seniors get some work experience, but many are not long-term, paid internships, which he says have the most power to transform students. “It’s miraculous,” Cotey says. “Internships do a lot for children’s belief in themselves. It also opens up a whole new world of people.”

Some small high schools have made securing student internships a priority. At Best Practice High, all students spend a half day every week at unpaid internships, and are required to keep a journal. A full-time internship coordinator spends as much as \$30,000 a year to transport students to work sites. “This was a priority for the founders of the school,” says coordinator Carla Mayer. “A lot of money for buses is just a fact of our budget.”

*Maureen Kelleher*

# Program lets students take college courses and earn credit

Research finds that students who have early exposure to college are more likely to earn a degree

by Maureen Kelleher

Following a setback last year, a small but successful Chicago Public Schools program that allows high school juniors and seniors to earn college credit for career and technical courses is regaining strength.

Called College Excel, the program gives students a taste of college course work, for which they earn dual high school and college credits that generally transfer to any institution. It was designed in part to motivate average students to stay in school.

Last year, student participation dropped by 1,200 to 1,836 students from the previous year because of funding problems. CPS planned to use federal funds appropriated under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act to pay for students' college tuition. But the Illinois State Board of Education, the fiscal agent for the Perkins funds, ruled that out, saying the money is meant to help students succeed in high school. District administrators subsequently found \$1 million for the \$2 million program.

Some local private colleges also stepped up to cover some tuition costs. Robert Morris College paid the second-semester costs for 406 students. "Obviously we are not going to be able to do that forever," says Candace Goodwin, senior vice president for enrollment. DeVry University also funded about 14 continuing students through second semester.

But City Colleges of Chicago, where nearly 37 percent of Excel students were enrolled in 2002, could not underwrite



JOHN BOOZ

*Last spring, John Rivera, left, then a senior at Foreman High, studied computer architecture and design at DeVry University through a CPS program called College Excel. Today, Rivera is a freshman at DeVry who's on track to graduate early.*

the program for students enrolled.

Since CPS was unable to fund the program at previous levels, it raised the entrance requirement from a 2.0 to 3.0 grade point average, thus disqualifying average students.

When new Education-to-Careers Chief Jill Wine-Banks arrived at CPS last April, high school education-to-careers coordinators were quick to take up Excel's cause. The message got through. Despite the tight CPS budget, College Excel got \$1.8 million this year.

As a result, the admissions bar will be lowered to a 2.5 grade point average

for students joining the program in the second semester this school year. "That was a very good move," says Steve Hayward, who recruits College Excel students for Olive-Harvey College. "It affords an opportunity to a larger pool of students."

## Positive results

Although College Excel reaches only about 5 percent of CPS high school students, it has produced positive results. Last year, 65 percent of Excel students

passed their college courses with grades of A or B. DeVry and Robert Morris College report that they are more likely to stay in college and graduate than CPS students who did not participate in the program.

Dual-enrollment programs like College Excel have sparked national interest because they can save students time and money toward a college degree, expand access to technical training and ease the difficult transition from high school to college. "The idea is catching like wildfire," says Richard Kazis, senior vice president of Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based nonprofit that promotes youth workforce development. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 38 states have adopted policies supporting dual enrollment.

Preliminary research, while limited, suggests that these programs help students succeed in college. A 2001 study by the University of Arizona found that the grade point averages of dual enrollment participants entering the university dropped less than those of other entering students. Another study by the Center for an Urban Future, a New York City-based public policy group, found entering freshmen at the City University of New York who had participated in the public schools' dual enrollment program were more likely than other students to graduate from college on time and less likely to need remedial coursework.

## Colleges get involved

College Excel was born in 1997 under the Paul Vallas administration, which favored outsourcing career and technical education to businesses, colleges and other job-training institutions. The program began with three colleges that worked with 360 students from 20 high schools.

Last year, 1,836 juniors and seniors from 60 high schools participated in College Excel at 10 area colleges and universities. (The current year enrollment hasn't been finalized, but figures comparable to last year are expected at 11 colleges.) Students who meet the attendance and grade standards or have a school recommendation and pass the college's placement exam have access to a range of career and technical courses, including accounting, business administration, electronics, drafting or computer information systems.

When College Excel started, students could take multiple courses, but funding restrictions have limited the number to one per semester. "If they start as juniors, they can take four college courses by the time they graduate. That's a big savings," notes Romelia Mercado, manager of high school partnerships for DeVry.

## Grouping students

The structure of College Excel varies, but the most successful efforts share some common elements: They steer students into a coherent sequence of courses and create classes where groups of high school students learn from college instructors, says Davis Jenkins, a senior

sequence of courses in accounting and business administration, computer networking or medical assisting.

College administrators insist the curriculum is not watered down to a high school level. But students need to feel comfortable with an instructor, so colleges strive to choose faculty who won't intimidate high school students, says DeVry's Mercado.

The Daley College high school group grew from a partnership between Gage Park High and the Associated Equipment Distributors Foundation, the training offshoot of the professional association for businesses that distribute construction equipment. In 1998, Gage Park created a school-within-a-school for students who wanted to combine challenging academics with technical

*"If they start as juniors, they can take four college courses by the time they graduate. That's a big savings."*

*Romelia Mercado, DeVry University*

fellow who researches workforce development at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute. DeVry, Robert Morris and Daley College use this approach, he says.

Both DeVry and Robert Morris decided to separate high school students from regular college students for practical reasons—they allow the schools to align their Excel courses with the CPS calendar. In addition, both colleges also use semester breaks (when professors are not teaching) to offer Excel students workshops in time management and college and career preparation. For example, at DeVry, students pretend to be college recruiters and examine prospective students' applications to gain greater insight into how college admissions offices make decisions.

Learning college material from college professors provides students with an ideal bridge from high school to college, says Angela Jordan, vice president of student affairs at Robert Morris. "It's the best of both worlds," she says. "They're still being taught the same curriculum," but they're with other high school students.

Excel students at Robert Morris start in their junior year and take a two-year

training. These students attend courses at Daley through Excel, as well as on weekends and in the summer. Since 2000, when the first group graduated, the small school's graduation rate has consistently topped 80 percent, while Gage Park's overall rate ranges from 63 percent to 69 percent.

"We found the whole group [of students] moving together has a tremendous effect on each other. They are pals together, they do homework together," says Prem Sud, executive director of the Manufacturing Technology Institute at Daley College.

John Rivera, a June graduate of Foreman High, says College Excel gave him a leg up. Credits from two computer engineering classes he took at DeVry while in high school were accepted at DeVry, where he's now enrolled. Rivera says the As and Bs he received in his Excel classes helped him gain admission and win a scholarship to the university.

"A lot of people in their first year of college decide it's not for them," says Rivera, who appreciated Excel's early introduction to college coursework. "But the experience of DeVry made me want to go even more." ●

Making college and careers real

# Umoja blends counseling, academics, real-world experiences

by Maureen Kelleher

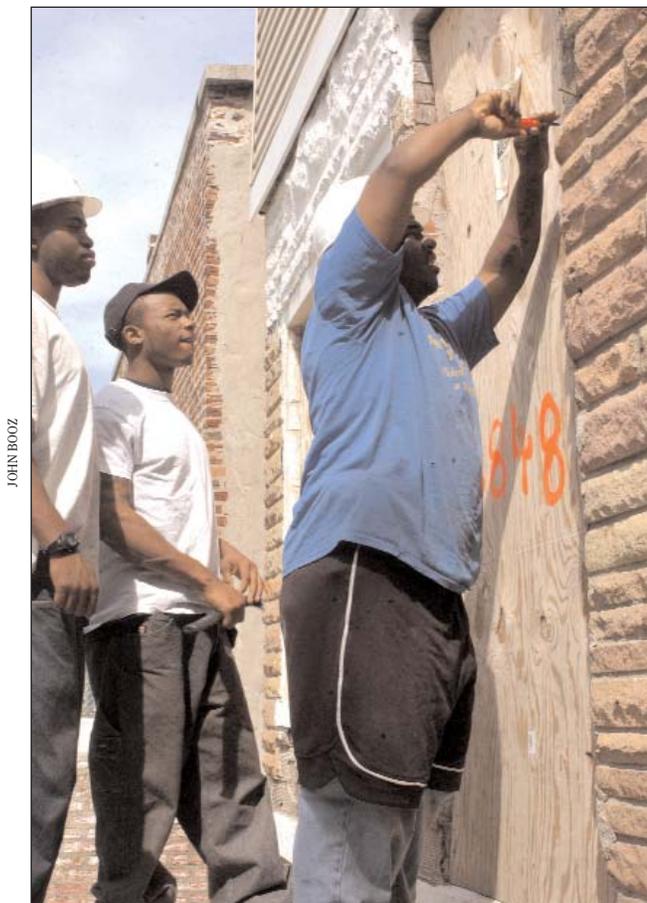
**A**t first glance, Larry Doss and Ashley Banks don't seem to have much in common. Doss is a quiet young man who struggled to get average grades, "but the effort is still there," according to Mike Dimitroff, one of his teachers at Manley High School. The talkative Banks, now a senior with a B+ grade average, is considering majoring in architecture at a top-level university.

But Doss and Banks both love to work with their hands. This summer, they both won places on a demolition crew for a home rehabilitation project. As a result, Doss, who graduated in June, made key contacts that could help him land a coveted apprenticeship in the building trades; and Banks, who entered her senior year this fall, got a bottom-up view of architecture.

The house rehab project was organized by the Umoja Student Development Corp., a nonprofit agency based at Manley. It's but one link in a chain that Umoja has forged to lead more students into college and careers. In addition to providing real-world projects that blend work experience, community service and leadership development, Umoja also provides students with support to meet their academic and personal challenges. In the process, it removes the barriers that have separated college-bound students from those looking only to get a good job.

Along with the city's Gallery 37 arts program and the related Tech 37, Umoja, which means unity in Swahili, is the newest wrinkle in what traditionally was known as vocational education. As schools narrow their focus on academics, these outside partners are bringing academics to life and helping students explore the workplace.

"We're definitely making college and careers real for students," says Carmen



*Manley High students involved with the Umoja Student Development Corp. house rehab project begin another day of demolition. The summer crew prepared the house for renovations that started this fall.*

Mahon, Umoja's career and college counselor. "They weave into each other."

In the six years Umoja has been at Manley, the West Side school's graduation rate has improved and more of its graduates enroll in college. The graduation rate for the class of 2002-03—62 percent—was an 8-year high. (Official data for 2003 are not yet available.) More than 70 percent of Manley's 2003 graduates were accepted to college, compared with less than 10 percent in 1997.

A student achievement report found that seniors who were highly involved in Umoja-related activities were more likely to enroll in a four-year college than those with lower participation levels.

"This is extraordinary for an inner-city, low-income, minority high school," according to the 2002 report by G. Alfred Hess of the Center for Urban School Policy at Northwestern University. The authors credited Umoja for contributing to the college enrollment gains.

## A unique partnership

Umoja is the brainchild of Lila Leff, a youth services worker whose credits include Edge/Up, a North Side partnership among high schools and community agencies to improve access and job training for CPS students. (See CATA-

LYST, November 1996.)

(Despite evidence of success, the program was discontinued when federal funding dried up.)

Leff brought the idea for Umoja to Manley Principal Katherine Flanagan, who bought into the vision.

Through traditional youth development activities like discussion groups and tutoring, Umoja staff and mentors build relationships with Manley students who want to participate. These activities feed young people into career exploration, networking, summer jobs and college preparation, including college visits. "We're not only saying it. We're showing them a picture of college, career, community work, service," says Leff. "It's the whole picture."

From the beginning, Umoja has worked closely with a school-within-a-school at Manley that is devoted to construction technology. "It was my goal to push carpentry, to get [students] into the trade school track," says Dimitroff, who arrived in the middle of Umoja's first house rehab in 1998.

A near disaster that year proved to be a blessing in disguise. A break-in resulted in the near destruction of the almost-completed house, which prompted The Enterprise Companies and its subcontractors to start what would become an ongoing partnership. They donated more than \$10,000 in materials and labor to repair the damage and complete the rehab. In 1999, the house was sold to a North Lawndale resident for \$75,000.

In 2001, Umoja and Enterprise began a second house rehab project. As with the first one, the Steans Family Foundation provided a \$45,000 loan to purchase the property, a one-story house on Taylor Street just west of California.

Enterprise brought in two architects from Pappageorge/Haymes Ltd., who worked with students from the construction tech small school to design the rehab, using the original blueprints. The students also surveyed neighborhood residents to find out what they wanted in a house. "We had to ax the swimming pool," jokes Carl Groesbeck, development manager for Enterprise.

The final plans took shape in July at a design workshop, or "charrette," at Pappageorge/Haymes offices. "It was real cool," says Ashley Banks, who served on the design team. "They combined a lot of stuff from all of us. When we came to the design charrette, it was exactly what we wanted, and all we had to do was give



Foreman Johnathan Hayes, right, reviews blueprints with Carl Groesbeck of The Enterprise Companies, a developer that is partnering with Umoja to complete a house rehab project. Groesbeck uses his industry connections to help Umoja students get trade jobs.

JOHN BOOZ

them some suggestions."

Enterprise then brought in Kenney Construction Co., which is lending Umoja a superintendent and project managers.

Meanwhile, Dimitroff used his intimate knowledge of students to select the summer demolition crew. "I knew they wouldn't be supervised 100 percent of the time," he says. "I picked them on work ethic. I knew which kids would step up to the plate."

Groesbeck said he succeeded. "All the kids delivered."

This fall, students will put in a new foundation to expand the house another 350 to 400 square feet, erect walls and do preliminary work on plumbing, carpentry and the electrical system. They hope to complete the job in the spring. As many as 70 students are expected to take part in the rehab and groundskeeping around the area. When completed, the property will be sold to a North Lawndale resident for about \$85,000.

## Project links into curriculum

Dimitroff says the overarching skills he wants to teach are logic, sequencing, application and problem solving. The rehab project, he says, feeds into this curriculum "like a baseball into a glove. It's the embodiment of everything I want to do." Though the math required of students is fairly basic, they need to use sound judgment to plan ahead and anticipate next steps. For example, students will have to estimate the quantity

and cost of materials.

Groesbeck says he wants to introduce subcontractors to students who might work with them. Currently, he is trying to find a sponsor for Doss to enter an apprenticeship program in tuckpointing. Meanwhile, Banks is applying to the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, New York University and the University of Michigan, and planning to major in architecture and civil engineering.

The rest of the summer crew members are also going on to college or planning to go after they graduate next June.

Umoja's relationships with students don't end at graduation. Mahon regularly calls graduates from the classes of 2000 through 2002, and has begun calling 2003 grads to see how they are doing. With the help of Umoja and Enterprise, Johnathan Hayes, a summer crew foreman who graduated from Manley in 2002, and is now self-employed, hopes to enter a program in occupational health and safety. "Now it's become this network. We work with a lot of students to help them get jobs, help with resumes," Mahon says.

Umoja itself is expanding its horizons. It is starting a second partnership at Gage Park High, and has trained teachers there on ways to improve advisory sessions, the school district's main strategy to build student-teacher relationships and provide postgraduate guidance. The nonprofit is also applying to run a charter school.

Umoja's Leff says changing high school culture is the key to improving advisory. "Schools don't know how to be student centered and look at kids as whole people," she says.

# What are the jobs of the future

For higher pay or cutting edge, college degree and technical skills go hand-in-hand

by Maureen Kelleher

Only one thing is certain about the jobs of the future—the best ones will require more than just a high school diploma. Nationally and locally, the workers of tomorrow likely will need an associate's degree or higher to get a good wage.

Nationally, jobs requiring an associate's degree are expected to grow by 32 percent, the fastest rate of growth at any educational level. All but two of the 50 highest-paying occupations require a four-year college degree—only air traffic controllers and nuclear power reactor operators can get entry level jobs with less education.

The following snapshots offer a glimpse into projected local demand for the workforce of the future:

### Fastest-growing jobs

Ten years from now, eight of the top 10 projected fastest-growing occupations in Cook County will require expertise in computers, from desktop publishing applications to engineering software.

Entry level candidates will be required to have an associate's or bachelor's degree. Two job categories—social and human service assistants and medical assistants—call for only a high school diploma, combined with training.

### Highest paying occupations

Today, a college degree and often graduate studies are necessary to earn top dollars in Cook County. The jobs that paid the highest wages in Cook County in 2002 included chief executives, whose median salary is the equivalent of \$71 an hour; pediatricians at \$63; lawyers at \$55; and psychiatrists at \$49. Wage projections for Cook County for the next 10 years are not available.

### Largest number of jobs

Most of the occupations that are expected to produce the largest number of jobs in Cook County in 2010 may not require a high school diploma, much less a college degree. Service-sector jobs such as retail sales, cashiers and maids comprise half the top 10 jobs. Only two—registered nurses and operations managers—require a college degree.

## Highest-paying jobs, Cook County

Occupation	Median Hourly Wages
<b>Chief Executive</b>	<b>\$71</b>
Pediatricians, General	63
Lawyers	55
Psychiatrists	49
Anesthesiologists	46
Optometrists	45
Computer Managers	41
Physicists	41
Engineering Managers	40
Petroleum Engineers	40

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Employment Security, 2002

## Fastest-growing jobs, Cook County

Occupation	Projected growth over 10 years (%)	Projected employment 2010	Hourly Wages 2002-2003, entry-level	Required Education Level
<b>Computer Software Engineers, Applications</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>19,343</b>	<b>\$24</b>	<b>bachelor's degree</b>
Computer Support Specialists	79	20,084	12	associate's degree
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	75	9,471	18	bachelor's degree
Network Systems & Data Communications Analysts	73	4,031	19	bachelor's degree
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software	70	6,852	22	bachelor's degree
Database Administrators	59	4,765	16	bachelor's degree
Desktop Publishers	58	1,786	10	H.S. diploma w/ training
Computer Systems Analysts	54	20,969	22	bachelor's degree
Social & Human Service Assistants	50	7,936	7	H.S. diploma w/ training
Medical Assistants	48	6,213	9	H.S. diploma w/ training

Note: These are the top 10 fastest-growing jobs, ranked by projected percentage growth. Textile bleaching and dyeing machine operators would have ranked sixth, but they were dropped from the list because though those jobs will grow, they are projected to have less than 1,000 openings in 2010.

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Employment Security

# Boston pioneers school partnership

**M**ore than 20 years ago, the business community in Boston initiated an agreement with the education community that promised priority hiring of Boston students in return for improved school and student performance. While school reform proved to be a much more complicated equation than that—and is still a work in progress—the “Boston Compact” set the stage for one of the country’s most extensive school-to-career programs. Carried out under the auspices of the Boston Private Industry Council, the program integrates the business and school communities in a variety of ways. *CATALYST* intern Thaddeus P. Hartmann explains some of them.

**JOB PLACEMENT** The council has placed at least one career specialist in every public high school to help students land summer and after-school jobs in the city’s major industries, especially health care and financial services, and to help them with goal setting. The jobs include customer service, tracking orders for financial firms and doing EKGs at hospitals. Last summer, about 1,000 firms employed about 4,000 students, a fifth of total high school enrollment.

**MULTI-YEAR COMMITMENT** Under a program called ProTech, employers in four industries make multi-year commitments to selected students at five of the city’s 23 high schools. In the fall of their junior year, students do job shadowing in various departments. About half the students return in the spring for part-time jobs, which convert to full-time jobs during the summer. Employment continues through senior year and often beyond.

**TECH FOCUS** TechBoston is a department of the public schools that supports advanced technology courses in 10 middle schools and 20 high schools. The courses include Cisco Networking, Sun Java, advanced web design and robotics. More than 2,500 students and 150 teachers participated last year. With the help of the Private Industry Council, TechBoston places about 200 students annually in internships. TechBoston students built the council’s web site: [www.bostonpic.org](http://www.bostonpic.org).

**WORKPLACE CLASSROOMS** Research conducted by the council in the late 1990s found that school-to-career activities correlated with lower drop-out rates and higher attendance, graduation and college-enrollment rates, but that the activities had no impact on test scores. With the state on track to require students to pass state tests in order to graduate, the school system opened classrooms at summer and after-school job sites to increase instruction in reading, writing and math. A council study found that the test scores of students participating in these classes jumped an average of 1.2 grade levels. ●

## Largest number of jobs, Cook County

Occupation	Projected employment 2010	Base year employment 2000	Hourly Wages 2002-2003, entry-level	Required Education Level
<b>Retail Salesperson</b>	<b>74,551</b>	<b>69,813</b>	<b>\$6</b>	<b>on-the-job training</b>
Office Clerks	74,346	64,662	7	on-the-job training
Cashiers	66,629	61,656	6	on-the-job training
Janitors (excluding maids, housekeeping)	65,985	57,790	7	on-the-job training
Customer Service Reps	64,192	50,049	9	on-the-job training
General & Operations Managers	59,992	53,508	15	bachelor’s degree or higher
Registered Nurses	58,229	49,063	16	associate’s degree or higher
Laborers and Movers	57,097	51,041	7	on-the-job training
Production Workers	53,793	40,381	6	on-the-job training
Truck Drivers	51,119	42,508	12	on-the-job training

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Employment Security

KIPP slogan: 'There are no shortcuts'

# National middle school model launches two sites in Chicago

by Brett Schaeffer

**L**ong hours, daily homework and Saturday school. This regimen has attracted low income and minority families to enroll their children at KIPP, a growing chain of mostly charter schools that are proliferating from Houston to New York to Los Angeles.

This fall, KIPP, which stands for Knowledge is Power Program, expands to Chicago, and some educators believe the model—which aims to get all students to college—is the answer for boosting student achievement in some of the city's under-performing schools.

"They go into some really difficult areas where we've struggled and kids have struggled," says Greg Richmond, who oversees CPS charter, contract and small schools. "We haven't had as much success at high school as we've had at the elementary school level. So if we can develop some solid programs [such as KIPP] at middle school, that will help at high school."

Two KIPP schools opened last month—one on the West Side in Austin and another on the Near South Side in the former Williams Elementary, which was closed a year ago, then reopened this fall.

Both sites adhere to KIPP's basic schedule and tenets. The school day begins at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 5 p.m. Every other Saturday, students attend a half-day of extracurricular programs, such as dance or theater, and summer school is mandatory.

The extra hours allow teachers to spend more time reinforcing reading



Choral leader John Swenson, right, rehearses a song with a group of 5th-graders at KIPP Ascend Charter. Extracurricular classes such as chorus are held every other Saturday.

and math skills without sacrificing other subjects, such as science and social studies, says KIPP co-founder Michael Feinberg. Every student must sign a contract pledging to complete homework, wear clothing as stipulated in a dress code and arrive on time every day. Parents and teachers must also sign contracts pledging their support for the students.

Students who break the agreement—by not turning in homework assignments, for instance—are typically separated from their classmates and placed at a table in the back of the classroom and at an isolated table during lunch. At the KIPP school in Oakland, Calif., this exclusion is known as being sent to the "bench." To leave the bench, students must write a letter of apology to their classmates and then read it aloud.

This is tough love, KIPP style. The program was created in 1994 by two Teach For America teachers, Feinberg and David Levin, who struggled to raise test scores and achievement in 5th-grade classrooms in Houston. (See story, p. 16.)

They devised a model centered on five academic principles, or pillars, that include high expectations for students and a school day that was three to four hours longer than average. Every KIPP school follows them. "You can dress them up any way you like," says Feinberg.

Since then, KIPP has gained national attention for turning around student achievement in tough circumstances.

Carefully selecting and training school leaders works in KIPP's favor, says John Ayers, the director of Leadership for Quality Education and a strong advocate

of charters. Ayers compares KIPP's approach to Edison Schools, a for-profit education management firm. "KIPP has done the right thing by focusing on leaders, which Edison didn't; they picked principals off the Internet," he says.

But one potential trouble spot is teacher turnover. KIPP's demanding daily schedule and extended school year may wear out some teachers, Ayers says.

The issue is on the School Board's radar, too. "Clearly, they have this model that is very demanding on teachers," says Richmond.

However, he's not convinced that it will be a problem. KIPP tends to attract young, energetic teachers, and having enthusiastic teachers cycling in and out of a school may not be a bad thing. It may even be desirable, Richmond adds.

Young and energetic are characteristics observers would ascribe to the two leaders of Chicago's new KIPP schools.

## KIPP Ascend Academy

If Jim O'Connor, principal of KIPP Ascend Academy Charter School, had created a school on his own, he says it would have been similar to KIPP. "I grew up on a farm, so I like hard work," says O'Connor, who's 30.

KIPP Ascend is housed in three classrooms at McNair Elementary, 4820 W. Walton St., in Austin. Ninety 5th-grade students are enrolled this year; the goal is to expand one grade level each year up to 8th grade, with no more than 400 students.

After a year of training, O'Connor, who grew up in Wilmington, Ill., a town roughly an hour south of Chicago, was looking to open a school here, close to his hometown. When state legislators passed a law in April to expand the number of charter schools in Chicago, O'Connor jumped on the opportunity to open one on the far West Side.

KIPP seeks to open schools in urban communities where families are low-income and minority and students are struggling to learn. "Austin fit that profile," O'Connor says.

O'Connor recruited most of his students from a handful of public elementary schools in Austin—May, DePriest, Key, Hay and Spencer—where more than 90 percent of students are poor and close to 100 percent are African American. Last year, none of the schools bested citywide

# Year 1: What to expect

**A**mong the 32 KIPP schools across the country are 32 unique first-year experiences. However, few have gone through the spectrum of setbacks and victories as has the school in Oakland.

KIPP opened a school in the Oakland Unified School District in the summer of 2002. Since then, the school has survived a districtwide deficit of \$100 million, nearly a quarter of the overall \$450 million operating budget; a state takeover of the district; principal and teacher turnover; a facility relocation; and a name change.

In Chicago, two new KIPP schools can look forward to more stable central leadership and a balanced districtwide budget. However, Oakland can provide a cautionary tale at the school level.

## Beware of teacher turnover

At the end of its first year, KIPP Bridge in West Oakland lost its founding principal and two of the school's four teachers. (One is slated to return in a year.) New Principal David Ling hired an Oakland public school teacher and a high school teacher from a nearby district. He also hired two others who completed teaching stints with Teach For America. The six-member faculty oversees instruction for 146 5th- and 6th-graders.

Some teacher turnover is expected, admits KIPP co-founder Mike Feinberg. The school mandates long hours for students and staff—7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and half-days twice a month on Saturdays. The model is not for everyone, he says.

KIPP also pays teachers salaries that are 15 to 20 percent higher than the home district, says KIPP spokesman Steve Mancini. It also recognizes outstanding teachers with awards and offers a national network of colleagues—a feature most local charters lack, he adds.

Greg Richmond, who oversees CPS charter, contract and small schools, is aware of the teacher retention issue.

## Plan to relocate

This fall, KIPP Bridge moved from an old woodshop classroom into a more spacious second-floor space in another building on the same middle school campus. The new digs will accommodate the school until next school year when it adds up to 90 students. Then it will likely have to find suitable space to house up to 350,

the school's ultimate goal.

As a contract school—the principal, faculty and staff are employees of Oakland Unified School District—KIPP Bridge can rely on the district to find suitable space for the school. Charter schools, which are responsible for securing their own facilities, don't have that luxury.

The KIPP model, whether the school has a charter or contract arrangement with its host district, calls for it to open with 5th-graders only, and expand year-to-year into 8th grade. Often this means schools must relocate one or more times.

Chicago's Ascend Charter is already looking for a new—and hopefully permanent—home for next school year. Its sister school, Chicago Youth Village Academy, is a contract school and has all the space it needs in reopened Williams Elementary.

## Immediate bottom line results

Test scores at KIPP schools, particularly those in Houston, New York and Washington, D.C., have shown significant gains in just one year.

With only one year of California test scores, Oakland KIPP used its own assessment to determine that students had improved a full grade level in reading in four months last year.

A word of caution for local parents: "We're all looking for a quick fix that's not out there," says Vivian Loseth, who oversees another school improvement model for nonprofit Youth Guidance. Loseth visited the KIPP school in New York and admired the program. "We have to give these models an opportunity to work."

## Word of mouth works

David Ling, an Oakland resident, was planning to open a KIPP school in East Oakland in 2004, but when the principal of the KIPP school in West Oakland left earlier this year, Ling was tapped to fill the post. Fortunately for Ling, parents helped the school recruit students by spreading the word throughout the community. "That's the best advertising," Ling says.

This year, nearly all of last year's 5th-graders returned for 6th grade, and Ling had a full class of new 5th-graders.

If Chicago follows a similar path, a successful first year will guarantee KIPP schools a flood of applications for subsequent years.

*Brett Schaeffer*

reading scores of 39 percent of students at or above national averages.

"The parents needed another option," he notes. "We handed out flyers to kids coming home from school. We went door to door, into laundromats, hair salons, barbershops, and churches."

Denise Cobb is one of those parents. Last year, her son, Emmanuel, attended May, which has been on probation for low test scores since 2000. Cobb tried to

get him transferred into a CPS magnet school, but he wasn't selected in the enrollment lotteries.

"I was looking for a school ... period." One day last spring, Emmanuel gave his mom a brochure on KIPP that he picked up on his way home from school. The school sounded "too good to be true," Cobb recalls.

Cobb already sees results. Emmanuel's reading skills, which were below grade

level, improved after several weeks in summer school at KIPP. "His pace is speeding up," she notes.

O'Connor hired five teachers—two of them from CPS. But he hit a couple snags in finding a home for the school, a common problem for charters. Space in a West Side parochial school fell through in June, and summer school was held in temporary quarters at Noble Street Charter in West Town. In Septem-

## Founders 'not used to losing'

It's graduation day for this year's crop of leaders-in-training and KIPP co-founder Michael Feinberg is wearing a special outfit: brown cut-off shorts, a dark blue T-shirt with a torn white T-shirt poking out below the waist, and bare feet.

At the KIPP Foundation's office in San Francisco, Feinberg, 34, says his shabby dress conveys a message to the new graduates: "You're not done yet."

And, in truth, they're not. This group of 11 former teachers who have finished a yearlong program at the Haas Business School at the University of California-Berkeley will spend the next three months shadowing leaders at existing KIPP schools. Afterward, they craft plans for their own schools, then work toward getting them approved by their school districts.

Feinberg knows from experience what it takes to start a school from scratch. Ten years ago, he and fellow Teach For America alumnus David Levin did just that in Houston, where they first hatched a model for urban middle schools.

In the first year, Feinberg and Levin were overwhelmed teaching 5th-graders in some of the city's most depressed neighborhoods. "We weren't used to losing, and we were losing bad," says Feinberg, a University of Pennsylvania graduate.

By the second year, both believed their teaching skills had improved, and they were seeing positive results in the classroom. The bubble burst, though, when former students began calling to ask for homework. Feinberg describes a typical

conversation. "It would go like this:

'Mr. Feinberg, can you give me homework?'

'Why should I give you homework?'

'Because they don't give us any.'

'Why not?'

'Because we can't take the books home.'

'Why can't you take the books home?'

'Because they're afraid we'll lose them.'"

Feinberg feared all of the work the kids had done the previous year would be wasted, and he and Levin, like many young entrepreneurs, hatched a plan in the wee hours of the morning.

The two persuaded a principal and several district officials to allow them to run a pilot 5th-grade program, and in 1994, the first KIPP classroom was established. By the following year, the program had expanded to three 5th-grade classrooms in a Houston public school and two classrooms in a New York public school in the South Bronx. A total of 122 children were enrolled.

Their driving premise was amazingly basic: There are no shortcuts. Today, that slogan is plastered on classroom walls in every KIPP school, where children spend nine and a half hours a day in class, and teachers spend more time on reading, writing and math than traditional public schools without having to sacrifice other subjects such as science and social studies.

"I think what surprised us," says Feinberg, a native of River Forest, Ill.,



Michael Feinberg

"was that when we could run the classroom the way we wanted to, what a powerful force and culture we could create in and outside the classroom."

Feinberg and Levin's work did not go unnoticed. In 2000, philanthropist Donald Fisher, who co-founded the Gap Inc. with wife, Doris, donated \$15 million to launch a program to train educators to run KIPP schools. Since then, the couple have contributed another \$10 million. "What appealed to me was the whole concept," says Fisher. "They developed a formula that works."

This year, graduates of the program opened 17 new schools, including two in Chicago. A total of 32 KIPP schools are operating in 27 cities and towns, from Washington, D.C., to Gaston, N.C. Next year, this year's graduates are expected to open another 11.

When a new KIPP school opens, Feinberg, swaps his average-day garb—khakis and a button-down shirt—for a modified tuxedo vest, covered with KIPP logos and slogans.

On those days, he says, he is "the sharpest dressed man in the building."

Brett Schaeffer

ber, the school moved to McNair, a facility it will outgrow next year when enrollment doubles.

Frequent moves are typical for KIPP charter schools, says spokesman Steve Mancini. "The original KIPP school in Houston is in its sixth location," he says.

O'Connor is looking to relocate the school to South Austin next year, and has hired a fundraiser to raise money to pay for the move. "Most KIPP [charter] schools wait a little, but it's important to start now," he says.

True to the KIPP mission, O'Connor's ultimate goal for KIPP Ascend is to set students firmly on the path to college. "If you have high standards for the teachers, kids and parents, you can really change the trajectory of those kids' lives," he says.

## KIPP Chicago Youth Village Academy

In another part of town, KIPP Chicago Youth Village Academy opened as a contract school. Unlike charters, which are publicly funded schools that operate free of many state and federal mandates, contract schools are governed by the same laws and policies as regular public

schools. The arrangement is somewhat unusual for KIPP, which until it opened a contract school last year in Oakland, Calif., only ran charters.

"We are a regular CPS school, but our training and model have been through KIPP," explains Principal Sarah Abella, a former CPS teacher and Hyde Park native.

The school is one of three housed in the former Williams Elementary at 2710 S. Dearborn St., which was closed and reopened under the Renaissance Initiative, a School Board effort to restructure schools that are deemed to be failing. A primary grade school is contracted to the Erickson Institute, a contract high school will be run by Rhode Island-based Big Picture Company.

This fall, KIPP enrolled some 87 4th- and 5th-graders, most of them former Williams students who live in Dearborn Homes, a nearby public housing project. Eventually, it will grow to admit 350 students in 4th through 8th grades.

"I've seen a lot of good stuff on paper," says Sheila Garrett, a community activist who has talked with families whose children are enrolled in KIPP. "I want to see it happen in the classroom."

Having a stable base of operations is one benefit of being a contract school, says Abella, who expects to remain in the

## KIPP's pillars of education

- High expectations
- Choice and commitment
- More time
- Power to lead
- Focus on results

current facility for some time. A steady source of support from the school district is another, she adds. Among her faculty are two CPS teachers and a recruit from Boston.

Officials at KIPP will monitor how the model fares under a contract agreement.

Charters are preferable because it allows greater autonomy, says KIPP's Feinberg.

Meanwhile, Abella says she is looking forward to working with a group of kids who live so close to each other. "We have the opportunity to impact a targeted community," Abella says. "Our biggest fear is that Dearborn Homes will be gone."

*Brett Schaeffer is a freelance writer based in San Francisco.*

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## Bilingual students gain literacy skills as family translators

by Irasema Salinas-Gonzalez

**A**driana, 14, is working on a task more challenging than her high school assignments: Her mother, an immigrant from Mexico, has asked her to translate a jury summons. When Adriana struggles with unfamiliar vocabulary, such as summons and *jurado* meaning jury, her mother fills in real-world savvy to help her daughter make sense of the legal document.

Translating for family members is often considered a burden on bilingual children that can distract them from schoolwork, says Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, now an education professor at the University of California at Los Angeles. But her study of nearly 300 bilingual students in Chicago, including Adriana, found just the opposite was true.

Most children who serve as translators for relatives are comfortable in the role and improve their own literacy skills. In fact, students who translated for their families every day scored significantly higher on standardized tests compared to bilingual peers who rarely translated, the study found.

However, teachers often do not recognize translating skills as an opportunity to build literacy even further, Orellana explains. Encouraging parents to read to their children is generally good practice, but working immigrant parents may not have easy access to books in their native language, she observes. "Many practices that take place every day in immigrant homes have literacy value, and teachers could learn to build on these," she says.

Orellana says scant research exists on the experiences of immigrant youth as

translators, and little is known about how they learn from translating. In conducting her study, Orellana wanted to know what children do when they encounter complicated ideas, or unfamiliar vocabulary and how their parents helped them make sense of it.

Two years ago, Orellana and a team of Northwestern University researchers surveyed 280 students at one Northwest Side CPS elementary school, most of whom were bilingual, and observed 18 bilingual students at home and in class. Those students were asked to keep a journal about their translating tasks and to tape record some sessions with family members.

The 18 students were predominantly the children of Mexican immigrants; all of them spoke Spanish at home. About 80 percent of the 65,000 bilingual CPS students are Spanish-speaking. The rest speak 17 other languages.

Regardless of the language spoken, the skills children gain through translating are essentially the same, Orellana explains. "They have to make sense of words and ideas in one language and explain them in another. They have to choose words that make sense for their audiences."

Children who were tracked in the study translated conversations ranging from parent-teacher conferences, to doctor appointments, to commercial transactions in stores and restaurants. They also translated a variety of written documents, including medical forms, greeting cards and letters, and television guides. The reading children did at home was often more challenging than their schoolwork, researchers found. "School texts carefully control vocabulary and readability levels, but 'real

### At a glance

#### Lead researcher:

Marjorie Faulstich Orellana,  
Northwestern University

#### Key findings:

Children of immigrant parents often perform translating tasks for their families that are more complex than educators realize. They also may build a range of literacy skills that can boost their test scores.

#### Who was studied:

Researchers surveyed 280 children at a predominantly Latino elementary school on the Northwest Side, and observed 18 of them at home and school.

#### Recommendations:

Teachers need professional development to understand the link between family translating and literacy skills. They also need to view children's primary language as a resource rather than an obstacle.

#### For more information:

The study, "In other words: Translating or 'para-phrasing' as a family literacy practice in immigrant households," can be found in *Reading Research Quarterly*, Jan./Feb./Mar. 2003, published by the International Reading Association. See the CATALYST web site for a link to the author's outline.

*“Many practices that take place everyday in immigrant homes have literacy value, and teachers could learn to build on these.”*

*Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, researcher*

world’ texts don’t come in neat grade level packages,” Orellana observes.

Active translators—children who translated daily or those who regularly served two or more relatives—performed the best on standardized tests. Compared to other students who rarely translated (about half of those surveyed), active translators scored 16 points higher in reading and 12 points higher in math on the 5th- and 6th-grade Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

They were also used to decoding a variety of difficult texts, such as bills and bank statements.

According to Orellana, student translators draw on skills that are employed by good readers and writers.

**Summarizing.** Translating involves more than exchanging an English word for a Spanish one. Since many words and idioms in one language have no direct equivalent in another, the translator must first make sense of the information, and then interpret how to phrase it in the second language.

To make sense of unfamiliar information in a textbook or story, good readers apply the same strategy, pausing to mentally sum up what they’ve learned.

Teachers in the study, however, often summarized textbook information and instructions for their students, rather than allowing them to figure it out for themselves.

**Building Vocabulary.** Searching for words in two languages makes children aware that words with similar spellings often have similar root words and meanings. For instance, the Spanish word *jurado* and the English word jury both come from the same Latin root—*jur*. To draw on students’ bilingual skills, teachers can simply ask if a new word looks or sounds like one in their native tongue.

**Building background knowledge.**

Children often lack the life experience to make sense of the legal, medical and financial material that adults need translated. Translating then becomes a team effort where children supply their English skills and adults fill in their real-world expertise. Developing a wider knowledge base builds children’s reading comprehension.

**Audience awareness.** Children who translate for relatives learn how to communicate effectively with adults. They learn how to vary word choice and tone depending on who they’re speaking to. Talking to someone in the doctor’s office requires more formal diction than translating social conversations.

**Reading with purpose.** Because family members are depending on them, young translators are particularly resourceful and persistent in deciphering difficult texts. One girl had to translate directions on bathing a baby to her mother, and looked up the words she didn’t understand, “fussy” and “drafts,” in an English dictionary. A boy who had to translate the label on his grandmother’s medication studied the words until they made sense to him.

Teachers who do not realize the complexity of the translating that students do at home may view the child’s primary language as an obstacle to overcome rather than a resource, Orellana says.

To better draw on a child’s translating skills, teachers need to first understand it, she adds. They might ask children to bring samples of written materials they have translated at home or to keep journals describing their translating experiences, she suggests.

Some officials from the CPS Office of Language and Cultural Education say

## Teacher Resources

### *In Chicago*

**Illinois Resource Center** offers workshops for teachers who want to learn more about educating English language learners. It also hosts an annual statewide bilingual conference and has a library with resources for teachers. [www.thecenterweb.org/irc](http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc)

**Illinois State Board of Education** and the **Illinois Resource Center** created a web site that lists teaching tips and recommended books and educational materials for teachers working with English language learners. [www.irc-ekits.org](http://www.irc-ekits.org)

**Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/ Bilingual Education (ITBE)** offers teacher workshops and hosts an annual convention. [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org)

### *National*

**National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE)** hosts a national conference and publishes the *Bilingual Research Journal*. Its web site provides state-by-state legislation and policy information on bilingual education. [www.nabe.org](http://www.nabe.org)

**Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)** produces three publications, hosts conferences and conducts professional development. [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)

Orellana’s study raises an important issue that could be addressed by providing professional development on the subject to teachers.

However, Manual Medina, who oversees CPS bilingual education programs, was wary of burdening students with too many sensitive translating tasks, such as medical records.

But Orellana notes that there’s nothing school officials can do about that. “No matter how we feel about it, families are going to draw on their children,” she says. “Let’s work with it.” ●

## Tuition-based preschools falter in South, West side communities

by Debra Williams

**T**he Chicago Public Schools' tuition-based preschools, aimed at middle-class parents who can afford to pay, have become a North Side phenomenon. And this year, the district is subsidizing expansion to the tune of \$2 million a year.

While the number of classrooms north of Madison Street continues to grow, the number south of the city's north-south dividing line is dwindling.

"I'm having a hard time getting schools and parents south of Hyde Park interested," says Marsha Brown, who this summer assumed responsibility for CPS tuition preschools. "Parents on the North Side say, 'Cool.'"

Priced at nearly \$7,000 a year, the program is too expensive for many families in communities like South Shore and South Chicago, say some principals.

"Money was an issue," says Principal Robert Esenberg of Sullivan in South Chicago, where the program had dwindled to five families before it closed in 2002. "Our parents said they could find child care in the area for a lot less. This program didn't work in our community."

CPS needs to look into cutting the tuition, says Marie Cobb, community development director for the Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore (CIESS). "We haven't done much work around early childhood education, but \$145 a week is steep."

However, the School Board says it can't cut costs. The weekly tuition pays only part of the expenses for staff salaries and programs such as music, art and

museum partnerships, explains Armando Almendarez, who oversees CPS curriculum development.

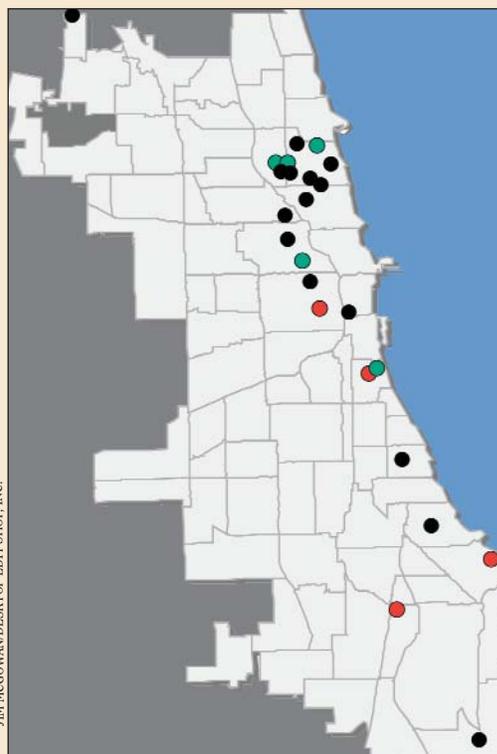
The program runs daily from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. and boasts such extras as classroom computers, field trips, fine arts projects and, in some schools, the well-regarded Suzuki-Orff music program. Classrooms are limited to 20 students and each is staffed by a certified

teacher, a trained teacher's aide and a parent tutor.

Tuition runs \$145 a week for 48 weeks. Last year, the fee was \$135 a week, or close to \$6,500 a year.

Tuition preschools were created in 2001. The first sites opened in affluent communities on the city's North Side. District officials say CPS responded to complaints that there were no programs

### Tuition-based preschools concentrated on North Side



#### ● Schools with existing tuition-based preschools

Agassiz	Jahn
Alcott	Oscar Mayer
Andersen	Nettelhorst
Blaine	Ray
Bouchet	Skinner
Burley	South Loop
Clay Branch*	Stock
Drummond	

#### ● New tuition-based preschools in 2003-04

Audubon	Pershing
Hamilton	Otis
LeMoynes	

#### ● Tuition-based preschools that were closed

Douglas	Schmid
Galileo	Sullivan

\* Closed one classroom

SOURCE: CPS Office of Early Childhood Education

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## By the numbers

CPS tuition-based preschool space, enrollment:

2001-02: **340** kids in **330** seats

2002-03: **360** kids in **360** seats

2003-04: **n.a.** kids in **540** seats

### Budget (in millions)

FY02: \$1.9

FY03: \$2.5

FY04: \$5.7

SOURCE: CPS Office of Early Childhood Education

on the South Side by opening sites in those communities, too.

However, those programs have not fared as well. More than two-thirds of the 30 tuition-based preschool classrooms are located on the North Side, with the highest concentration in Lake View, Lincoln Park and North Center.

Even with the tuition increase, some parents in these communities say the program is a bargain compared to private preschools, which cost an average of \$10,000 a year.

Yet, some educators predict the higher fees will drive away parents in less affluent areas, causing more schools to discontinue tuition preschools.

Bouchet Elementary in South Shore lost four of its 20 tuition preschool students. "With the rise in tuition, I don't know how many we will have this year," says Principal Robert Lewis.

A tuition-based program at Douglas Elementary, located in a middle-class area on the Near South Side, closed this summer because of under enrollment. "There is something about the culture over there," says Velma Thomas, a senior assistant to the early childhood education chief officer. Middle income families who live east of King Drive will send their kids to Pershing, but not to Douglas, which is nearby, she explains. "King Drive is a dividing line," she says.

Two other tuition preschool programs—Sullivan in South Chicago and Schmid in Pullman—were shuttered a year ago. Clay Elementary in Hegewisch also closed one of its two classes last year.

"There is a lot of unemployment in these areas, and the parents wanted subsidies, which we don't have," explains Thomas.

Galileo on the Near West Side asked the board to remove its tuition preschool, citing conflicts with its schedule, says Thomas. Another tuition-based program was later opened two miles away at South Loop Elementary to accommodate parents in that area.

## More families enrolling

This fall, tuition-based preschool programs have been opened in communities where space was available and parents possessed the desire and economic wherewithal to support them, say CPS officials.

The district anticipates serving 540 children this year, 50 percent more than last year, and it has budgeted \$5.7 million to pay for the program. It anticipates tuition fees will recoup \$3.7 million.

Five schools are new to the program this year: Audubon (North Center), Hamilton (Lake View), LeMoyné (Lake View), Otis (West Town) and Pershing. Only Pershing is on the South Side. Four other schools, Nettelhorst, Ray, Mayer and Alcott, each will add one classroom; Blaine, the system's most popular site, is adding two, for a total of five.

Blaine Principal Gladys Vaccarezza says the new classrooms were sorely needed. Recently, a pregnant woman came to inquire about a slot for her unborn child. "We have people call us on a daily basis about the program," she chuckles. "I have a waiting list already for next year."

Pershing's new program is expected to relieve South Loop, where last year parents camped out a day ahead to snare one of the school's 40 tuition preschool seats. "One person was set up in a lawn chair with food and water," laughs Almendarez. CPS began registering parents a day early, signing up families until 11 p.m. and opening at 7:30 the next morning, he notes.

## Politicians ask for more

Demand for the program remains strong in some areas, says Lucinda Lee Katz, CPS chief officer of early childhood education. Two aldermen have approached her about opening tuition-based preschools and other early childhood programs in their wards. "They want parents to stay in their communities," she says.

To serve less affluent areas where parents can't afford the tuition, Katz is mulling a scholarship fund that will partially offset the expense. "The money would come from foundations, alumni and other groups," she says. "We'd have to raise it."

## Sold on CPS?

Created three years ago with the encouragement of Mayor Daley, tuition-based preschool was another way for the district to attract more middle class families into the system. So far, the plan is working.

More than 63 percent of the 161 5-year-olds who were enrolled in tuition-based preschool last year stayed at the same school for kindergarten this fall.

"These numbers show the program has been successful," says Lucinda Lee Katz, chief officer of early childhood education.

Principal Gladys Vaccarezza of Blaine Elementary reports three out of four tuition-paying preschoolers who were eligible for kindergarten stayed at Blaine. "Of our 21 students, 15 stayed at Blaine and four went to other public schools," she says. "The other two—one went to a private school, the other moved out of state."

At Ray Elementary in Hyde Park, the tuition-based preschool program has become a pipeline for the school's kindergarten classrooms, which recently expanded to three, says Principal Cydney Fields. There, 10 of 12 students stayed on. "Most of our tuition-based preschoolers go to our kindergarten," she says. Filling another classroom has not been a problem, she adds.

Other schools note that some tuition-paying preschoolers enroll elsewhere in the system. Stock Elementary in Edison Park has kindergarten only for special education students. Many of its preschoolers have enrolled in nearby Ebinger Elementary, says Stock Principal Richard Smith.

Principal Robert Lewis says families in Bouchet Elementary's tuition preschool are going elsewhere for other reasons. "The design of these programs is to get [middle-class] children in CPS schools. After kids have this well-grounded, enriched program here, they leave us and go to magnet schools."

Debra Williams

# Firings anger principals group, which asks, 'Why these five?'

by Elizabeth Duffrin

Last year, the School Board shut three schools with low test scores, displacing teachers and drawing fire from the Chicago Teachers Union. In August, the board cracked its accountability whip once more, removing five principals from low-performing schools, this time provoking the principals association.

Ousting principals at under-achieving schools is nothing new. Under former Chief Executive Officer Paul Vallas, the School Board removed about 40 principals for inadequate school performance over a six-year period beginning in 1995.

But years later, many of those same schools are still on probation or were among those closed last year by CEO Arne Duncan for low performance, observes Dave Peterson, who recently retired from the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association. "I don't see removal as the answer. It's a simplistic response to a complicated problem."

The five probation schools that lost principals in August have a history of low test scores and generally perform below average on other indicators such as student attendance or dropout rates. They are Truth, Bethune, and Cather elementary schools and Gage Park and Austin high schools.

(Principals at two other elementary schools, Linda Ross-Hutchinson of Morgan and Pamela Strain of Ruggles, were also recently removed from their schools pending disciplinary charges unrelated to school performance.)

CPS spokesperson Peter Cunningham, says that the five low-performing schools have been on probation for years, and that the board has provided extra supports such as university partnerships and tutoring programs. "It's not like we haven't tried, and we're kicking the principal out," he says.

But Peterson observes that many other probation schools had even lower test scores and attendance rates and higher drop out rates but did not lose their principals. "Why these five?" he asks.

Two of the ousted principals—Will Stigall of Truth in Near North Side and Gregory Wiley of Cather in East Garfield Park—had fewer than two years tenure, Peterson adds. "If they failed, it's because they weren't adequately prepared or supported," he insists.

Nancy Carter-Hill, the Area 7 Instructional Officer who oversees Cather, disagrees that the School Board dismissed new principals without adequately training them. Last year, for instance, new principals received workshops on everything from school budgets to leadership, she says. Carter-Hill says struggling principals are paired with more experienced colleagues for mentoring. She notes that Cather Principal Wiley got the same training as other new principals, "and they're still in their schools."

## Firings may be challenged

Clarice Berry, the principals association's newly elected president, reports

that all the removals are under an attorney's review and may be challenged. In dismissing principals, especially new ones, the board is leaping to the most serious consequence without taking intermediate steps, such as those teachers are entitled to, she says.

The other principals removed from probation schools were Learnna Brewer-Baker of Austin High, Katherine Smith of Gage Park High, and Warren Franczyk of Bethune Elementary in East Garfield Park. All the dismissed principals have been reassigned to administrative jobs in the central or area offices for the remainder of their contracts.

Duncan explains that the board considered a range of factors, including test scores, test score gains, student attendance, dropout, probation history "and whether there was a sense that those situations had a possibility of turning around."

To judge the likelihood of a turnaround, the board relied on recommendations from area instructional officers and their own informal observations, he explains. "I spend a fairly large amount of time talking to principals, talking to community members, talking to teachers," he says, "Others do that as well."

Principals were likely dismissed primarily for reasons other than achievement data. At Truth, Duncan says that "tension and animosity" had developed between parents and the first-year principal. "It was a situation that we felt was broken, and it didn't need a band-aid, it needed a dramatic change," he says.

LSC Chair Latina Knight says parents felt brushed off by Stigall, who appeared increasingly overwhelmed. "[It] seemed he lost interest in his job," she says. "If he had to go, he had to go."

At Bethune, the LSC had just renewed 18-year principal Warren Franczyk's contract. However, some parents and LSC members found him auto-

cratic, according to Derrick Harris, president of the newly created North Lawndale LSC Federation. Harris says he brought those concerns to the attention of Area Instructional Officer Rollie Jones. “We like to think we were able to provide some influence,” he says.

Parents United for Responsible Education had received complaints about the principals at Bethune, Truth and Austin, reports parent advocate Wanda Hopkins. But the group gets complaints about other schools as well and it’s not clear why these schools were singled out, she notes.

## History of dismissals

By a number of accounts, the two high schools also had management problems.

At Gage Park, teachers had complained that Principal Katherine Smith pressured them to raise grades, sources say. (Duncan would only report “tension and animosity” between teachers and administrators.)

*“It was a situation that we felt was broken, and it didn’t need a band-aid, it needed a dramatic change.”*

*Arne Duncan, CEO, Chicago Public Schools*

Austin High had security and discipline problems, reports Kymara Chase of DePaul University, the school’s former external partner. Also, the area instructional officer was based inside Austin last year, where such problems would have been easy to observe, she adds.

The board has dismissed principals from both schools in the past. In 1995, Austin Principal James Williams was replaced by high school principal Al Clark, who was yanked several months later when Arthur Slater, then an assistant principal, was installed. Test scores rose during Slater’s tenure, but he left in 2000. Lerna Brewer-Baker was the board’s pick to replace him as interim;

the LSC hired her a year later.

At Gage Park, the board removed Principal Frank Lacey in 1999, replacing him with Katherine Smith, a reading specialist who had helped raise test scores as an associate principal at DuSable High. Under Smith, Gage Park’s test scores remained flat. She served as interim principal for four years without a contract until the board removed her this summer.

## Board names principals

Once the board removes a principal, it usually does not allow LSCs to hire a replacement as long as the school remains on probation, according to Philip Hansen, the board’s former chief accountability officer. Interim principals serve at the pleasure of the board and are easier to remove if the school fails to make progress, he adds.

The board has named Clementine Smith, former director of Harvey Academic Prep, a school for overage 8th-graders, as Austin’s interim principal. Wilfredo Ortiz, who lost his job as chief officer of high school programs in the recent central office reorganization, is interim principal at Gage Park.

With the exception of Ortiz, the board recruited interim principals from LAUNCH, a leadership training program it runs in partnership with the principals association and Northwestern University. Other interim principals include: at Truth, Arnold Bickham, former assistant principal at Copernicus; at Cather, Hattie King, former assistant principal at Clark High; and at Bethune, Charlotte Stoxstell, former reading coordinator at Hirsch High.

Duncan says more principals may face dismissal next year when probation schools undergo a similar review. “Where we need to make some significant change, we’re going to do that,” he says.

## How schools stack up

School performance data at five schools where principals were ousted generally was similar to many of the other 45 elementary schools and 30 high schools on probation, according to a CATALYST analysis.

In spring 2003, Cather and Bethune elementary schools posted higher reading scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills than a dozen or more probation elementary schools. Bethune, in particular, has posted higher overall gains since 1997 compared to most of its probation peers.

Only Truth posted scores that were significantly lower than most other probation schools. During Will Stigall’s one-year stint, ITBS reading scores plummeted from 22 percent at or above norms to 10 percent. However, the kindergarten to 3rd-grade school last year retained twice as many 3rd-graders as ever before, which might account for the sharp drop, notes

Elaine Allensworth of the Consortium on Chicago School Research. More low achievers in the 3rd grade tends to depress test scores, she explains.

On the 2002 Prairie State Achievement Exam, 15 probation high schools posted lower scores than Austin, while 24 fared worse than Gage Park. The 2003 scores have not yet been released.

Austin had one of the district’s highest annual dropout rates, but Gage Park’s dropout rate was 15 percent last year, only slightly above the citywide high school median of 14 percent, according to a CATALYST analysis of CPS data.

*Elizabeth Duffrin*

*\* The dropout rates used for this analysis are those calculated by the School Board’s Office of Accountability. Dropout rates posted on the board’s web site are calculated by the state, and are somewhat higher.*

**CONTRACT AGREEMENT** The Chicago Teachers Union and School Board reached a tentative agreement on a five-year contract that provides 4 percent raises each year. Under the agreement, announced Sept. 23, teachers will work a longer school day, a shorter school year and pay more for health benefits. The proposal also calls for the board to commit \$1 million to examine and remedy large class sizes. The agreement must be approved by CTU delegates and ratified by the union's 35,000 members. If approved, the contract will be the longest multi-year contract in the district's history. The old 4-year contract expired June 30.

**AT CLARK STREET** **Pedro Martinez** is the new CPS budget director, replacing **John Maiorca** who became chief financial officer of School Financial Services. Martinez previously served as a finance director for Catholic Charities of Chicago. ... **Wilfredo Ortiz**, former chief officer of high school programs, was named principal of Gage Park High. He replaces interim principal **Katherine Smith**, one of seven principals removed from their schools in August. (See story, page 22) ... **Nathaniel Mason**, former principal of Lincoln Park High, was named area 23 instructional officer; **Phyllis Wright**, assistant principal, becomes acting principal. ... School

Board President **Michael Scott** has been appointed to the Public Building Commission of Chicago, which oversees public construction projects, including schools, libraries and parks.

**MOVING IN/ON** **Clarice Berry**, principal of Fiske, was elected president of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association in a special election held to fill the vacancy left when long-time President **Beverly Tunney** died in June. Jackson-Berry beat three opponents in a run-off held in August. ... Chicago lawyer **Gerald Jenkins** was named president of the board of the Chicago Charter School Foundation, a nonprofit that operates seven CPS charter schools. He replaces **James Murphy**, who founded the group in 1997. **Elizabeth Delaney**, formerly assistant professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was named executive director of the foundation, replacing **Heidi McDermott**. ... New co-chairs of the Donors Forum of Chicago's education funders group are **Sandra Blau**, executive director of the George M. Pullman Educational Foundation, and **Kaberi Banerjee Murthy**, a program officer of The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation.

**PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS** The following interim principals have been named contract principal: **Dyanne Alexander**, Cregier

Multiplex; **Granzlee Banks**, Bass; **Gail Brakie**, Deneen; **Tyrone Dowdell**, Green; **Frank Embil**, Woodlawn; **Donald Fraynd**, Jones College Prep; **Rolland Jasper**, Joplin; **Geraldine Laury**, Avalon Park; and **Patrick MacMahon**, Gallistel. Acting Principal **Doris Hobson-Staples** at Grant has become contract principal.

The following principals have had their contracts renewed: **Shirley Antwi-Barfi**, Jensen/Miller; **Roscoe Beach Jr.**, Buckingham; **Beverly Bennett**, Simpson Alternative High; **Fanchion Blumenberg**, Kennedy; **Lennette Coleman**, Ariel; **Leon Hudnall Jr.**, Morse; **Joyce Kenner**, Whitney Young; **Geraldine Moore**, Beidler; **Juana Rivera-Vidal**, Washington High; **Lawrence Turner**, Mann; **Rita Ware**, Robinson.

**PRINCIPAL RETIREMENTS** **Mary Margaret Bloom**, Ebinger; **Marilyn LeBoy**, former assistant principal at Gray, is the acting principal; **Patricia Grissett**, Harlan High; **Gertrude Hill**, former interim principal at Cregier Multiplex, becomes acting principal.

**TALES FROM THE CLASSROOM** **Leslie Baldacci**, a CPS teacher and former *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter, has published a book detailing her two-year classroom internship in the Teachers for Chicago alternative certification program.

*Faye A. Silas*



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