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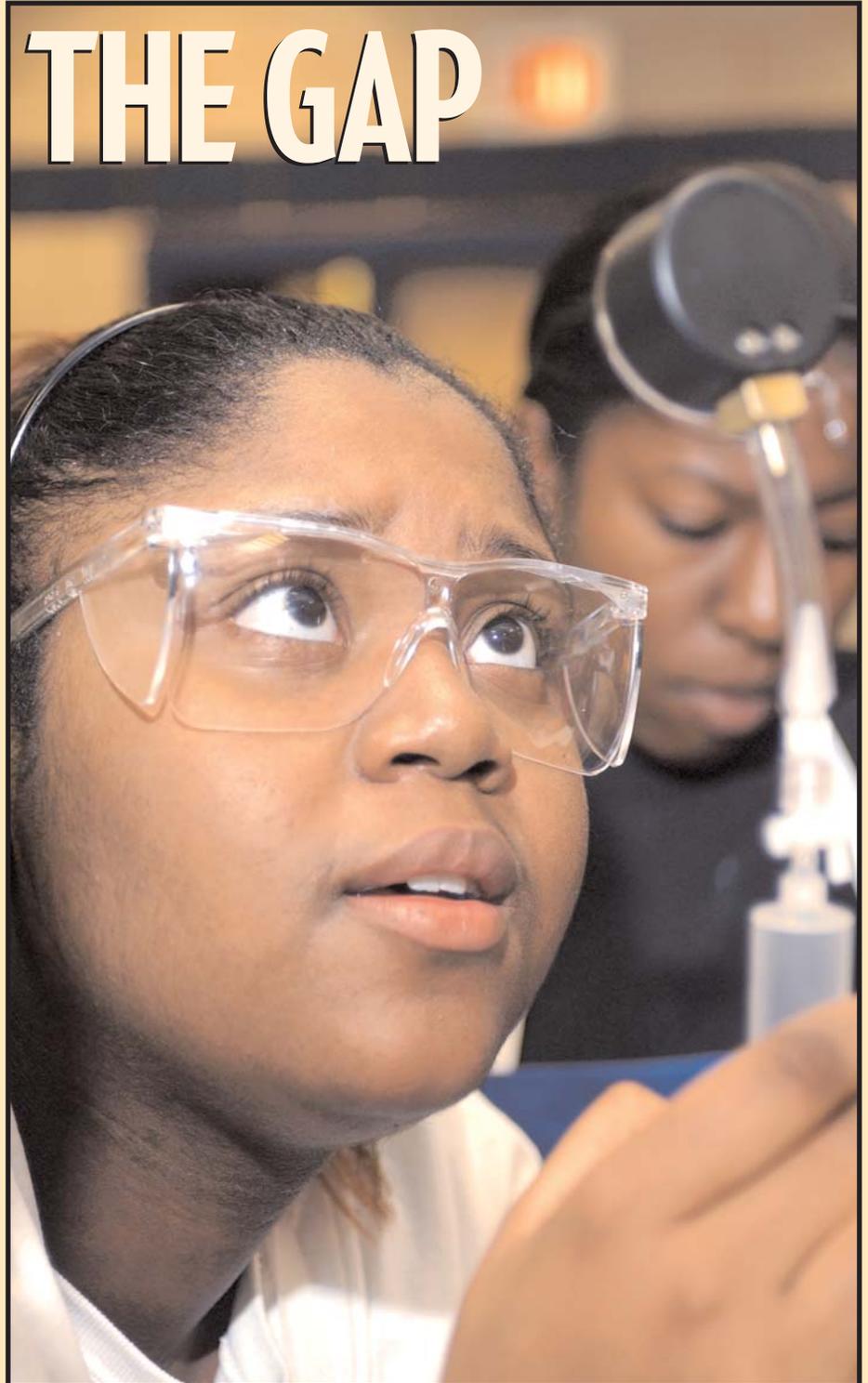
JUNE 2004 INDEPENDENT REPORTING ON URBAN SCHOOLS

CLOSING THE GAP

**CPS TRIES TO RAISE
BLACK, LATINO
ACHIEVEMENT BY
PUTTING MORE
ADVANCED PLACEMENT
COURSES IN
NEIGHBORHOOD
HIGH SCHOOLS**

**Mid-South:
Transforming
communities,
remaking schools**

PAGE 16



Extreme makeover: school edition



Veronica Anderson

An unprecedented experiment in school reform is underway here. Piggybacking on the city's plan to tear down a glut of high-rise public housing and replace them with mixed-income communities, Chicago Public Schools has committed to remaking the schools in one area.

Mid-South is a composite of four poor communities that covers just over three square miles along Lake Michigan between 31st and 47th streets. It is home to some 80,000 people, 25,000 of them children under the age of 18. It is also home base to 25 public schools, few of which are filled to capacity—three are closed, four more will be this summer.

A comprehensive plan for those schools, with input from an impressive roster of civic, academic, philanthropic and community leaders, will be released this summer. Early word on what's in it sounds like a recipe for enticing the middle class. More early childhood programs and specialty programs in math and science and the arts. Allowing community residents to have access to school facilities by keeping them open longer hours. Closing some schools and reopening them later as charters or contract schools, something the district did successfully a year ago with nearby Williams Elementary School.

Seizing the opportunity to perform a gut rehab on public education in tandem with a housing stock overhaul is commendable. A successful turn would have a positive impact on thousands of Mid-South students, particularly those whose schools are not serving them now. The project could become a model for urban districts across the country.

One looming obstacle, however, is

fear. Attracting more middle class families to move into Mid-South isn't the problem. "People tend to forget about what the area once was," says one Mid-South developer. Getting them to enroll their children in a neighborhood school populated by a majority of poor children, however, is.

Mid-South homeowner Patricia Dowell sent her son to a private school elsewhere rather than enroll him in a neighborhood high school. "We looked at several schools," she says. "You just would not send your kids there."

Studies have shown that middle class students do worse in schools where the poverty rate exceeds 50 percent. Given the fact that Chicago's public schools overwhelmingly are populated by low-income children—85 percent—it will take a huge influx of middle-income families to achieve socioeconomic balance. In Mid-South, only one school, Pershing Magnet, comes close with a 54 percent poverty rate.

Besides persuading the middle class that Mid-South public schools will be academically rigorous, the district must also allay poor families' concerns that they will be shut out or shortchanged when existing schools are reopened. "There are rumors out there," says Doolittle East Principal Lori Lennix, whose middle school twice took in children from nearby elementary schools when they were

closed. It will have to do so again next fall, when it absorbs some of the children who will be displaced by the closure of its sister school, Doolittle West.

Attending schools that are integrated by income will benefit poor children, contends Richard Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation who has written extensively on the subject. "Having an economic mix gives low-income kids the chance to experience what middle-class kids take for granted—high quality teachers, supportive peers and active parents," he explains.

He notes that academic success can happen in high-poverty schools. One example is Mid-South's Beethoven Elementary, which offset the negative effects of its 100 percent poverty rate with a succession of strong principals, committed teachers, an extended school day and lots of extra resources. However, schools like Beethoven "are the exceptions," he says. "The odds are heavily stacked against them. The whole point of making sure poor kids go to school with middle-class kids is that poor kids can learn if given the right environment."

Fears on both sides could be assuaged by an income integration policy, like the one set in the Wake County, N.C., school district, where no school's enrollment may be more than 40 percent low-income.

Improving the educational prospects for a sizeable number of poor children in Mid-South is a start. Raising expectations, standards and supports for all children—in Mid-South and across the city—is the goal.

Veronica Anderson

ACHIEVEMENT GAP

CPS a leader in AP growth

Chicago has become a leader among urban school districts in bringing more Advanced Placement courses to neighborhood high schools. But racial disparities still exist. African American students are least likely to take AP courses, while Latino participation is surging. **COVER STORY: PAGE 6**

LOW PASS RATES ON AP EXAMS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT TEACHING

Minorities taking more courses, but is instruction rigorous? **PAGE 10**

AP NO LONGER JUST FOR THE ELITE

But schools, teachers split on whether to enroll low-achievers. **PAGE 11**

HELPING STUDENTS HELP THEMSELVES

AVID gets students of color into college by teaching 'how to do school better'. **PAGE 12**

IB GIVES STUDENTS A LEG UP IN COLLEGE

International Baccalaureate program helps minority freshmen succeed at DePaul. **PAGE 14**

'ENCOURAGEMENT SPARKS EFFORT'

What Harvard University researcher Ronald Ferguson says about closing the achievement gap. **PAGE 15**



JOHN BOOZ

ON THE COVER: Cassandra Davis takes a pressure reading in an AP chemistry lab at Simeon Career Academy.



JOHN BOOZ

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- Leadership fund half way to \$15 million goal

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ON THE WEB

Go to the *Catalyst* web site, www.catalyst-chicago.org, for news and resources on Chicago school reform, including:

- Spanish translations
- Citywide data from the 1980s
- Calendar of events

Most of the **Ida B. Wells** public housing development is still standing, but it will eventually be replaced by mix of subsidized and market rate housing.

Notebook

Q&A with...

Principal Sarah Howard, ACT Charter

TIMELINE

May 3: Summer jobs

To encourage struggling 8th-graders to sign up for Step Up to High School, CPS announces it will provide two-week, \$5-an-hour summer jobs to participants. Step Up is for 8th-graders who meet promotion standards but are still performing below national averages on standardized tests. Students will tutor younger children and perform other work. CPS says freshmen who enrolled in Step Up were more likely to pass algebra and English than students who were eligible but didn't participate.

May 13: Deseg plan

A federal judge rebukes CPS lawyers for failing to meet an April 1 deadline for submitting materials to the U.S. Department of Justice on its desegregation consent decree. U.S. District Judge Charles Kocoras rejected CPS' claim that it met the deadline by submitting drafts of material. The board must finish a list of actions, including a review of magnet school admission policies, by the end of the 2005-06 school year. Kocoras will decide then whether to end the decree.

May 24: Budget cuts

CEO Arne Duncan announces that 2,180 teaching positions will be eliminated to help trim a \$100 million budget deficit. Duncan says the positions will be cut at schools that are being closed or have declining enrollment. Officials say the net loss will amount to only 130 jobs, since 2,050 vacant or new teaching positions have yet to be filled. Another 1,300 non-teaching positions in schools will be cut. The announcement sparks protests at the School Board meeting two days later.

In March, the School Board bowed to pressure from parents and students and renewed the charter for the Academy of Communications and Technology in impoverished West Garfield Park, after threatening to shut it down because of low test scores. Principal Sarah Howard talked with Consulting Editor Lorraine Forte about the experience and the school's plan for raising achievement.

The board wants charters to outperform neighborhood schools. Is that fair?

It's part of the deal—autonomy in exchange for student performance.

Is there a particular philosophy you have at ACT?

There are three things that quickly come to mind. One of them is size. We're intentionally small. I can say hello to every kid by name. The kids know the teachers beyond the ones they see in the class and they are constantly pushed to do their best. Second, we tell students, 'You're going to have to work hard and be persistent, and when you don't do it right the first time you're going to have to do it again.' We have a completion-based grading system, so you only get points for things you complete successfully and you have to accumulate a certain number of points in a year in each class. It holds [students] accountable in a way the traditional grading system doesn't.

What is the third thing you do differently?

Support teachers. That includes significant planning time, money for staff development and supplies that doesn't come out of your own pocket, a business card. It's all kinds of little things that say, 'I think you're a professional.'

What can other charters learn from your experience?

Every school needs to make time to develop strong relationships with their kids and parents and the community they serve. And we undervalue the sense of safety that parents are looking for. Safety is a huge first step and you cannot successfully educate kids if you don't first have that.

What have you been working on to get kids to where they need to be academically?

One is teacher development and accountability. Teachers create an annual plan that

ELSEWHERE

Voucher schools unaccredited

FLORIDA—Ten of 34 schools that received vouchers this year under an education bill touted by Gov. Jeb Bush were unaccredited, according to the May 26 *Palm Beach Post*. Last year, six of 24 voucher schools were unaccredited. Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings says the law does not demand accreditation. But members of Bush's own Republican party are demanding an investigation. "I know what I meant. The schools had to be accredited," said Sen. Anna Cowin, who sponsored the bill.

Reading readiness improves

ARIZONA—Kindergarteners in the state's 63 lowest-performing schools showed dramatic improvements in reading readiness over the school year, thanks to new reading programs and intensive teacher training, according to

the May 20 *Arizona Republic*. Last year, only nine percent of full-day kindergarten students at the 63 schools had adequate pre-reading skills. Nine months later, more than half those students had improved their skills and were ready for 1st grade.

Teacher tests may be dropped

NORTH CAROLINA—Lawmakers are considering dropping subject-area exams to make it easier for more out-of-state teachers to obtain in-state licenses, according to the April 28 *News & Observer*. Gov. Mike Easley opposes the idea, saying he does not want to lower standards to meet federal No Child Left Behind mandates, which state that schools must have fully licensed teachers in every class. A third of some 10,000 middle and high-school teachers hired every year in North Carolina are recruited from out of state.

IN SHORT

"Arne, your projections of 20 years of labor peace are premature.

You're not going to fund our contract on the backs of teachers."

Chicago Teachers Union President Deborah Lynch to Schools CEO Arne Duncan at his May 24 press conference to announce a plan to cut 2,180 teaching positions.



JOHN BOOZ

defines the goals they want to focus on. We plan our staff development around the goals they set, and we push people to establish goals based on what the kids need. We have peer review and observation, and a common planning time every Wednesday, spent on classroom practice. We've also been doing curriculum mapping, assessing our students and what it is that they need to do well. Our mistake in the past was we had very high expectations because we wanted them to do what they needed to do to be college-eligible.

Do you think that's unrealistic?

We didn't have a clear bridge built. We were throwing them into the deep end of the pool and hoping they would swim. With curriculum mapping, we look at the scope and sequence [of courses] in each subject area and make sure it creates a bridge, starts students where they are and moves them towards college.

Will you eventually be able to take students who come in at 6th-grade level and have them ready for college?

We're already doing that, but it's got to be realistic. It might be that they're going to [a two-year college]. With one exception, all of the kids from the last graduating class are now in school.

Anything else you would share?

We wanted to be a school that takes kids from the neighborhood, even a kid who didn't do well at another high school, and find a way to make school work for them. We're struggling with important issues [and] it would be good for us to talk with the district about what's worked and what hasn't, but the board doesn't want to talk to us because it doesn't see us as successful. In a couple more years our numbers will look different and maybe the conversation will be different. We're right on the verge of greatness. ■

ASK CATALYST

I was told my daughter, whom I identified as Asian, was not selected for a magnet school because so many minorities applied. Why are all minorities lumped together in the lottery?

An anonymous parent

For years, CPS did consider each racial or ethnic group separately in magnet school lotteries and selected students according to the school system's demographics. But in 2002, the district placed all minority applicants in one category. That practice is consistent with U.S. Supreme Court rulings prohibiting quotas for specific racial groups in hiring and school admissions, according to the CPS Law Department.

Under the 1980 federal desegregation consent decree, CPS magnet schools must strive for student enrollment that is 15 percent to 35 percent white and 65 percent to 85 percent minority. Since only 9 percent of CPS students are white, whites generally have an advantage in magnet school admissions.

E-mail your question to askcat@catalyst-chicago.org or send it to Ask Catalyst, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 500, Chicago, IL 60604.

CAPITAL DISPATCH

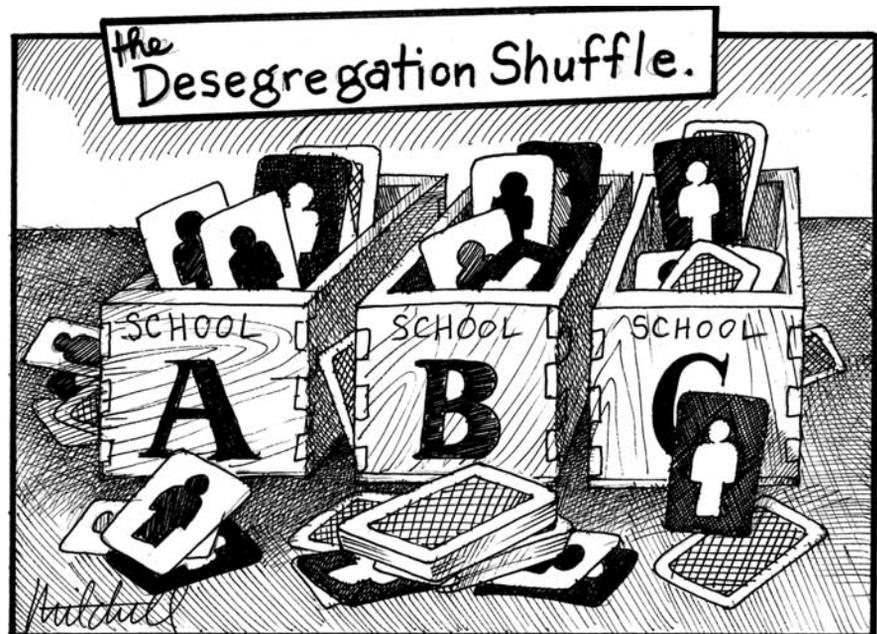
Lawmakers haggle over state aid for schools

SPRINGFIELD—Despite last-minute negotiations over the Memorial Day weekend, the House and Senate remained at odds over how much to raise the basic 'foundation level' of per-pupil funding for schools and how to pay for it. Earlier this spring, lawmakers passed a bill that would increase the level by \$250. But a second bill that would pay for the increase by closing corporate tax loopholes passed in the Senate, then failed in the House by a vote of 23

to 81, despite support from House Speaker Michael Madigan. Opponents said they feared the bill would alienate businesses. At Catalyst press time, Madigan had proposed a spending plan to keep state government operating, but the plan did not address school funding. Increasing the foundation level to \$5,060 from \$4,810 would provide another \$105 million for Chicago schools next year.

Daniel C. Vock

FOOTNOTE



KURT MITCHELL

CPS a leader in AP growth

By Maureen Kelleher

As a freshman at Kennedy High in Garfield Ridge, Rocio Barba knew she was good at math and thought she might become a computer technician. Now she's valedictorian for the Class of 2004, heading to the University of Chicago next fall and planning to major in math. Her eventual goal is to become an engineer.

Rocio credits the six Advanced Placement courses she's taken at Kennedy with helping her set her sights on a top-notch university and a more demanding career. Kennedy began making a concerted effort four years ago to expand AP course offerings, recruit prospective students and prepare them for challenging coursework.

"I was in favor of the push. Kids need to be challenged," says Principal Fanchion Blumenberg, under whose leadership AP course offerings at Kennedy quadrupled from three to 12.

Kennedy's push is in line

with a district-wide drive by Chicago Public Schools to help close the achievement gap by giving students of color in neighborhood schools more access to Advanced Placement and other strong curricula, including the International Baccalaureate program (see story on page 14). As a result, Chicago is now a national leader in expanding access to AP, according to the College Board, which administers the Advanced Placement program.

BETTER COLLEGE PREPARATION

"We're seeing amazing, amazing things in Chicago—growth far outstripping other urban districts," says Trevor Packer, the Board's executive director for AP.

Jack Harnedy, academic enhancement officer for CPS, says the system wants to expand AP in neighborhood

schools to push kids to prepare for college and make those schools more attractive academically. "The research was always telling us that most kids do better when they have access to those courses," Harnedy says. "The tougher classes you take, the better off you're going to be in college."

Despite CPS' success, racial disparities are still a problem. While African American and Latino students have dramatically increased their participation in AP, black students continue to lag behind other racial and ethnic groups and remain disproportionately under-represented in AP participation.

Between 1998 and 2003, the number of Latino and African American students taking AP exams increased by 227 percent and 176 percent respectively, according to the College Board. Those figures compare with national

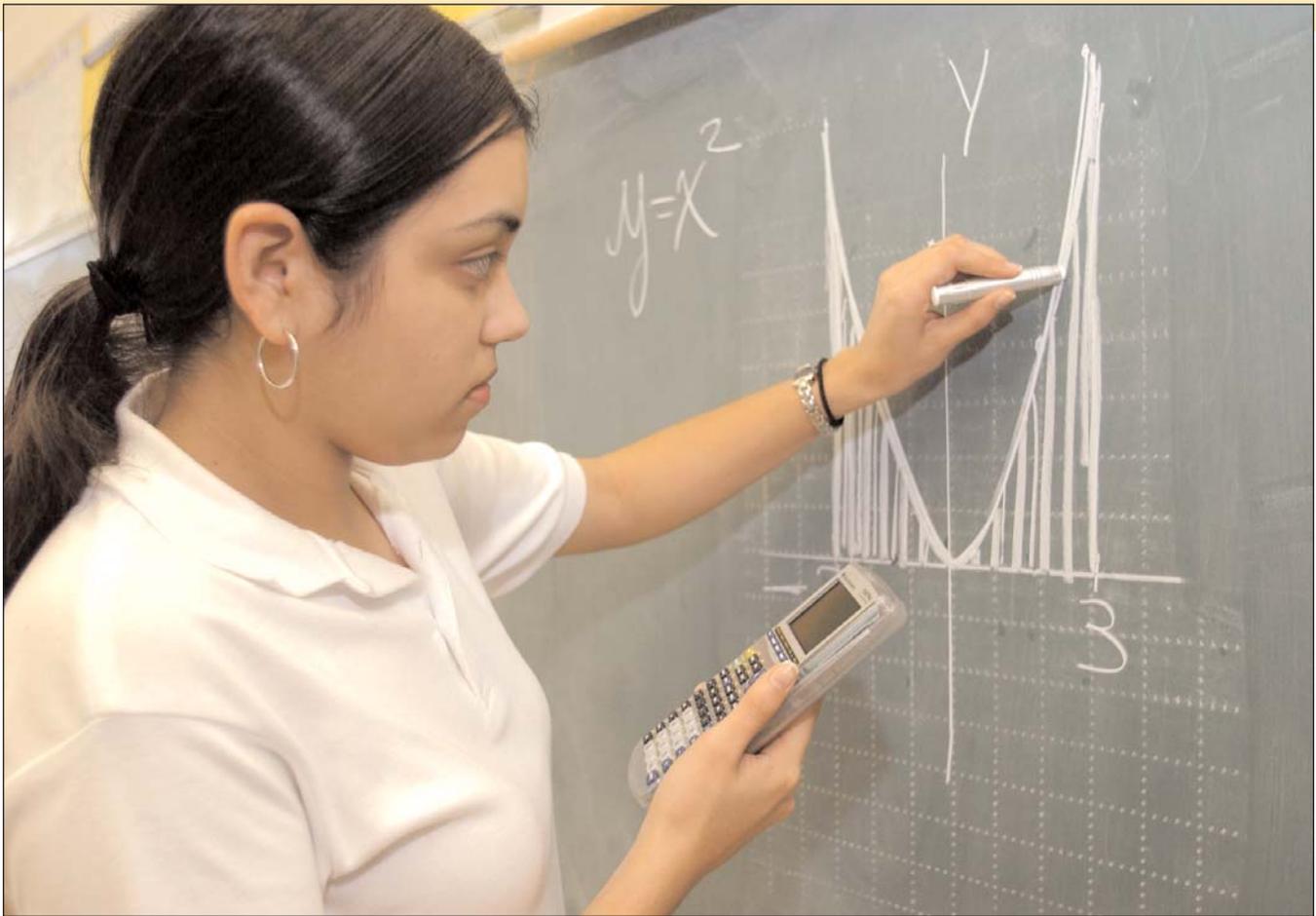
increases of 143 percent for Latinos and 111 percent for African Americans during the same period.

However, black students in Chicago comprise only 25 percent of test-takers, far below their 52 percent share of high schools enrollment, according to *Catalyst's* analysis of College Board data on test-takers and CPS enrollment data. In comparison, Hispanics make up 32 percent of test-takers and 34 percent of high school enrollment.

One reason black students are behind is access. *Catalyst's* analysis of courses at the 56 high schools that offered AP classes in 2003 shows predominantly black high schools had the fewest AP courses.

Schools that are majority-black offered an average of five AP classes, compared to an average of six in majority-Latino high schools and 14 in

Minority students are getting more access to challenging courses, as neighborhood high schools add Advanced Placement classes. But black students still trail other racial groups.



JOHN BOOZ

Kennedy High senior Rocio Barba works out a problem in her AP calculus class, one of six AP courses she has taken. Rocio, who is valedictorian of her class, says taking AP courses helped push her to apply to the University of Chicago and aim for an engineering career.

schools with integrated enrollment, *Catalyst* found. And in those integrated schools—typically selective-admissions and magnet schools with stronger academic offerings—African American students comprise only 22 percent of enrollment, while Latinos are 34 percent of enrollment. (Whites and Asians together make up the remaining 44 percent.)

'APARTHEID EDUCATION'

Majority-black, low-income schools are more likely to be on academic probation and less likely to offer AP, says G. Alfred Hess, director of the Center for School Policy at Northwestern University. "You can't just mandate to those schools that they start having more AP courses. We've got an apartheid system of education here. If you put all the least well-prepared 8th

graders in one set of high schools, you wouldn't expect to find many AP course takers."

Barbara Sizemore, former dean of DePaul University's School of Education and creator of the School Achievement Structure improvement program, says majority-black schools typically face three major problems that reduce AP participation.

She blames a lax academic climate, difficulties finding and keeping strong teachers and the need to concentrate on instilling discipline to keep students focused on academics.

"The enforcement of standard operating procedures—getting to class in four minutes—this takes a lot of energy and a lot of time," Sizemore says. "In some of these schools, teachers and administrators have given up."

"These schools do not attract the teachers who want to teach the [AP] courses. It's not the overriding problem but it's one problem," Sizemore adds. "If you have a school with a core of teachers committed to the academic [focus] you have a stronger chance of recruiting students" to take AP.

One teacher who hasn't given up on bringing AP to a predominantly black school is Durrell Anderson, AP chemistry teacher at Simeon Career Academy in Chatham. Anderson brought AP to Simeon three years ago and gave himself a year to recruit; his first class had 18 students.

Now, lack of time during the school day to complete labs is a challenge. But Anderson remains committed, offering extra lab time after

school twice a week and during lunch periods.

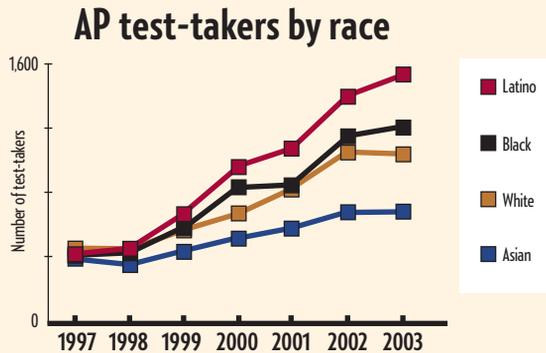
"Is AP needed? Yes, big time, especially in African American communities, where you often have students not going on to college or starting college and then dropping out," Anderson says. "The better prepared they are the more success they're going to have in post-secondary education. That's one of the biggest goals, to make sure African American children or children in underserved communities have the proper education, no matter what.

As more Latino students jump on the AP bandwagon, he "immigrant factor" may play a role, suggests Louise Cainkar, a sociologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago who studies immigration and ethnicity. For example, undocumented students attending

COVERSTORY **ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

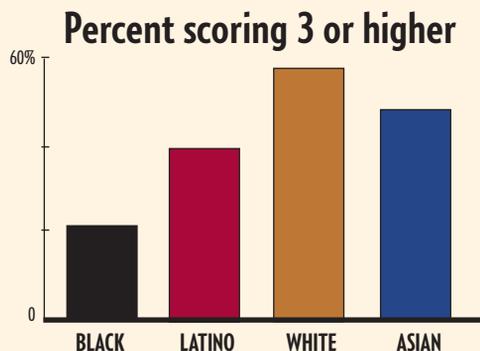
LATINOS RUSH TO AP COURSES

Since 1997, Latinos in Chicago Public Schools have outpaced other racial and ethnic groups in AP participation, which the College Board measures by the number of students taking exams. African American students are also making substantial strides, but remain the most underrepresented group.



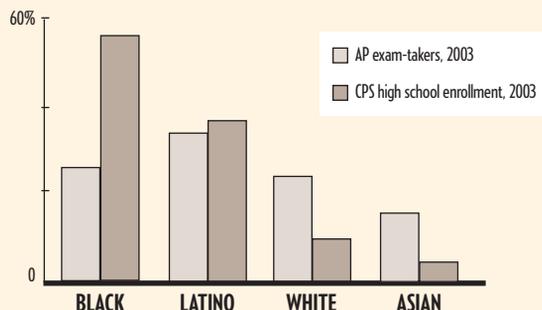
ACHIEVEMENT GAPS PERSIST

Pass rates for AP exams taken in CPS schools in 2003 show wide racial gaps. Nationally, 60 percent of AP exams taken last year earned scores of 3 or higher on a 5-point scale, the usual benchmark to earn college credit.



RACIAL GAPS IN PARTICIPATION

Latinos are the only group whose AP participation, as measured by the percentage of students who take the AP exam, is in proportion to their high school enrollment.



Source: Chicago Public Schools, The College Board

Illinois state colleges and universities were required to pay out-of-state tuition rates until last year, and enrolling in AP courses and doing well on the exams “would boost their chances for scholarships and private aid,” explains Cainkar. “In general, this predicament, and the much fewer opportunities for higher education in their parents’ home countries, set a context for excelling. Children who are smart are highly motivated to get the most they can out of the educational system.”

Senior Donovan Stinson of Jones College Prep, who is African American, says Latino students at Jones tend to strive, while African Americans remain more complacent. “We’ve become satisfied with what we have, and they’re looking for more,” Donovan suggests.

However, part of the problem is lack of preparation, he adds. Stinson says he declined when one of his teachers tried to recruit him for AP English, telling himself that honors courses were enough of a challenge given that his former West Side grammar school “didn’t really push you that much.”

AP CAN HAVE ‘RIPPLE EFFECT’

Research shows that enrollment in tougher courses, like AP, is the most reliable predictor of college success, especially for students of color.

The U.S. Department of Education’s 1999 landmark study, “Answers in the Tool Box,” helped spark a national push to expand access to AP among underrepresented students. The report found that completion of a strong academic curriculum correlated more strongly with bachelor’s degree completion than high school grades, test scores or class rank. The positive effect of a high-quality curriculum

was most pronounced for African American and Latino students. Whether or not a student took Advanced Placement courses was one factor used to rank the quality of that student’s curriculum.

Advanced Placement courses push teachers to hold students to a higher standard, experts say, and can also create a ripple effect that raises the bar in earlier courses.

“One of the most devastating things we do in public education is to have lower expectations for students from low-income families and students of color,” says Ross Weiner, policy director for the Education Trust, a Washington think-tank dedicated to closing the achievement gap. “When we envision those students as AP students, it drives a whole set of changes in our expectations and in the way that we serve them.”

At Kennedy, Rocio Barba’s freshman algebra teacher encouraged her to double up on math courses as a sophomore, taking both geometry and advanced algebra with trigonometry in preparation for calculus in her senior year. “It was a challenge,” Rocio says. “I like a challenge.”

Now, AP Calculus is her favorite class. And while Rocio hasn’t scored high enough on any AP exams to earn college credit, she says the exposure to college-level material and support from AP teachers helped her prepare better for college.

“The teachers go up to you and say, ‘If you’re the type of person who wants to go to college, you might as well get a feel for it, so when you’re a freshman you won’t be stressing out as much about the pace,’” Rocio says. “They encourage us to do as much as we can, to do more.”

AP teachers say having an external, college-level benchmark exam to shoot for raises



Wendell Gonzalez and Nikki Bansky examine a model of a DNA molecule in an AP biology class at Kennedy High, a neighborhood school which has quadrupled its AP offerings since 1999.

JOHN BOOZ

their standards. Angelique Smith, now in her second year of teaching AP biology at Kennedy, says she now expects more from her students.

"I wasn't sure what they would be able to accomplish until the first year [was over]," Smith says. "I move much faster than I did last year. They have to do more outside work, more research. They're more responsible for learning on their own." This year, she also ordered a college-level textbook to replace the usual high school text.

IMPROVING CURRICULUM, LABS

As CPS strives to expand AP course offerings, the district is also working to improve its elementary school curriculum. One example is in math. In 2003, the central office created an algebra task force to find ways to increase the number of students taking algebra—a gateway to higher-level math and science—before 9th grade. Nationally, about one-

third of students take algebra before high school, compared to about seven percent in CPS.

Early access to algebra is critical, says Martin Gartzman, chief officer of math and science for CPS. "It gets them into an AP track so in senior year they would take AP calculus or AP statistics," he says.

To prepare teachers, Gartzman's office is partnering with three local universities—DePaul, University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois at Chicago—to offer a one-year training program for elementary teachers who need to learn how to teach a high-school level algebra course. Currently, 80 teachers are enrolled.

Students who pass algebra courses with these specially credentialed teachers will be able to enroll in geometry in 9th grade. "They would begin their high school career in geometry and then culminate their career in an AP course," says Gartzman.

CPS is also working to

overhaul its long-neglected high school science labs. "There had been no major investment in science laboratories since the 1960s as far as anyone could tell," says Gartzman. "You'd almost have to be heroic to [try to] teach laboratory-based science."

Under former Schools CEO Paul Vallas, CPS began adding one new chemistry lab to each high school per year. Current CEO Arne Duncan's administration has stepped up that pace and is upgrading all the labs at five to six high schools each year, at a cost of about \$10 million annually. In June, CPS was scheduled to kick off a \$75 million capital campaign to raise funds from corporations to complete the renovation effort.

CPS is also investing in better textbooks and curriculum materials. "The AP tests are really hard and they're tough courses to teach," says Michael Lach, director of science for CPS. He acknowledges the dif-

ficulties teachers face trying to teach AP without labs, materials or well-prepared students, and says his office is intent on solving the problems.

Putting money into curriculum is "one step in a long process of ratcheting up the quality of instruction in our high school science programs," Lach says.

Harnedy says AP sparks better alignment between elementary and high schools.

"We're really zeroing in on 6-12 and getting the elementary kids prepared to take AP in high school," he says, citing meetings with area instructional officers and efforts to create discussion among teachers across the high school-elementary divide. "We're really pushing that big time right now."

Interns Dan Eder, Giselle Fuentes and Heather Gillers contributed to this report.

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Low pass rates on AP exams raise questions about teaching

According to the College Board, Chicago Public Schools has done more than any other urban district in the country to expand its Advanced Placement course offerings over the past several years.

But while the number of AP courses has increased, pass rates on AP exams remain substantially below the national average. Pass rates are the number of exams—students may take more than one—that earned scores of 3 and above, considered the threshold for college credit.

In 2003, Chicago's pass rate was 42 percent, compared to a nationwide rate of 60 percent, the College Board reports. And pass rates in CPS showed wide racial gaps: 60 percent of exams taken by white students had scores of 3 or higher, compared to 40 percent of exams taken by Latinos and 22 percent of exams taken by African Americans.

Overall, Chicago's pass rate has not reached 50 percent since 1973, the year after the system began tracking the data.

A recent report from the highly regarded Education Trust states, "A huge variability in the proportion of [exams] that earn a 3 or greater should raise questions about the quality of instruction or educational resources provided in courses labeled Advanced Placement."

TEACHER TRAINING NEEDED

Chuck Powell, central division director of AVID (Achievement Via Individual Determination), a college-prep program that encourages students to take AP and honors courses, agrees. "A focus on the scores can be a detriment to access, but ignoring the scores altogether can be a detriment to quality."

Teachers who are new to AP instruction often see their students earn mostly 1's and 2's for the first four or even five years, Powell notes.

"The common wisdom has been it takes about three years for things to get to a steady state," says Mike Johaneck, executive director of K-12 professional development for Advanced Placement. He adds that this may take longer in schools with high mobility and high teacher turnover, often the case in CPS.

CPS officials say they plan to provide more training to improve instruction. But, says Academic Enhancement Officer Jack Harnedy, "[If] a kid scores 1 or 2, it doesn't mean they didn't get anything out of the course. Just taking the course is the first step."

CPS now offers a handful of workshops over the summer and during the school year. But training is not mandatory. And neither the College Board nor CPS formally monitors instruction in AP courses.

Not every course is covered by CPS training, either, teachers say. "AP government [and politics] is one of the newer entrants into Chicago," says Jason Bujak of Brooks College Prep in Pullman. "There has never been a Chicago [workshop] for AP government." Bujak says he was interested in a workshop held last summer in Michigan "but it was seven hours away and you had to pay for your own housing," though CPS would have paid the workshop fee.

The experience of students like

Hyde Park Academy graduate Alea Huggins illustrates the problem. "I definitely did not feel prepared for those [AP] exams at all," says Huggins, now a senior at Northwestern University. "They were a lot more difficult than I expected."

She describes her AP biology class as "a joke," with unchallenging assignments, too little lab work and too much socializing among students. Her AP calculus class had a strong teacher, she says, but college calculus was still frustrating. "A lot of the kids here [went] to private schools or they went to very good public schools," Huggins says. "There were people in my class who had taken AP calculus in high school and they seemed a lot more prepared than I was."

Heriberto Acevedo, a junior at Kelvyn Park High, says his class did not adequately prepare him for the AP English language and composition exam because it focused primarily on vocabulary building, even though the exam also requires writing extensive essays.

Some veteran teachers note that it can be more difficult to bring today's students up to AP standards.

Barbara Galvin of Kennedy High, a 36-year veteran and AP English literature teacher, says, "I work harder now and I think I'm a better teacher. The students who are enrolling are the best we have, yet they can't compare with the students of 20 years ago." Many of her students, she notes, speak English as their second language and do not always pick up on nuances of language in readings.

Still, Galvin requires all her students to take the exams and says the scores provide important feedback. "It lets you know how you're doing. It keeps you on your toes."

Maureen Kelleher

AP no longer just for the elite

But schools, teachers split on enrolling low-achievers

For many years, schools, teachers and even the College Board considered Advanced Placement courses to be only for elite high-achievers. But that attitude is changing, as education policymakers point out that more high school students are heading to post-secondary institutions and need tough classes to prepare them.

“Certainly we encourage students to have taken prerequisites,” such as algebra and trigonometry courses leading to AP calculus, says Mike Barry, the College Board’s program associate for AP. “[But] we encourage anyone who is willing to take on the challenge to be included.”

In Chicago, central office allows schools to set their own AP admissions standards. *Catalyst* interviews with teachers, counselors and administrators at 26 schools found that, in general, less-competitive neighborhood high schools are more likely to give lower-achieving students a shot at AP, while selective-admissions schools have higher standards.

AP teachers, individually or with other members of their department, typically make the final decision and give the most weight to recommendations from previous teachers or counselors. They also consider previous grades in the same subject area and test scores. In some instances, teachers may give a placement test or ask students to write an essay.

But letting faculty make the call “allows in a lot of assumptions, biases and stereotyping of youngsters,” warns Eric Smith, a 2002 finalist for National Superintendent of the Year. In his former district, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., Smith sent letters to parents of all students who met a moderate test score threshold on the PSAT (Preliminary SAT), inviting them to meet with counselors

and learn more about AP courses.

Smith says he successfully recruited more students to AP and is now following the same process as superintendent in Anne Arundel County, Md. The idea works, he says, by “taking the educator bias out of it and really pushing kids to do more when they might not push themselves.”

Barry supports Smith’s approach, but stresses, “We don’t want to exclude kids [who] didn’t get a certain PSAT score.”

Catalyst interviews indicate many schools do consider students’ scores on the ACT and its pre-tests; some set minimum thresholds. At Brooks College Prep in Pullman, for instance, AP U.S. history teacher

Academy in Chatham. “If the goal is to send them to a post-secondary institution, why not offer them a course? If they don’t pass the exam, they are at least [somewhat] prepared for college.”

Anderson notes that some of his former students who earned 1’s and 2’s on the AP exam nevertheless passed the placement test in chemistry at the University of Illinois at Chicago, making them eligible to take introductory chemistry without first taking remedial math classes.

Others disagree. “If a kid is getting D’s in regular chemistry and wants to take AP chemistry, I don’t have to look into my crystal ball to see what’s going to happen,” counters Barry Rodgers, science department chair at Northside College Prep in West Ridge.

Aaron Davis, a junior at Morgan

“If the goal is to send them to a post-secondary institution, why not offer them a course? If they don’t pass, they are at least prepared.”

Durrell Anderson, AP chemistry teacher, Simeon Career Academy

Hubert Jackson only accepts students with at least an 18 on both the ACT composite and its English test. Even so, that score is modest compared to the national average, 21.

“If a student does not read well, he does not belong in the class,” says Jackson.

But Sharon Butman, English department chair at Senn, says “desire works far better than test scores” as a criteria for admission. “Sometimes you have a kid who has a really high test score but is not motivated.” At Senn, students with an ACT of 15 or higher are recruited for AP English classes.

“If they’re motivated and willing to take the course, why not offer it, especially if they are a D or C student?” asks Durrell Anderson, AP chemistry teacher and science department chair at Simeon Career

Park, says that for hard-working students, “to have kids in those classes who aren’t serious about it is disturbing.” His AP English language and composition course this year has been a disappointment, Davis adds, because many students “joke around, and they don’t care what grade they get.”

Sometimes, teachers hope an AP course will stimulate underperforming students.

“Some of the kids who are in regular classes aren’t challenged,” says Jason Bujak, who teaches AP government and politics at Brooks. “If there’s a student I know I can work with who may not have the test score or the GPA, I can sign them in. I’m the person who keeps fighting and saying we should let anyone who wants to take AP in.”

Maureen Kelleher

Helping students help themselves

AVID pushes students to tackle challenging courses, teaches them ‘how to do school better’

By **Maureen Kelleher**

Last fall, grassroots pressure helped bring a nationally recognized college-prep program for low-income and minority students to eight Chicago high schools. Next year, that number will more than double.

The program, called AVID, for Advancement Via Individual Determination, focuses on students who have average grades and test scores and need more skills and savvy to prepare for college.

“AVID is for smart students who need to learn how to do school better,” says Venessa Woods, AVID coordinator at Evanston Township High School, which has had the program for six years. “Imagine students coming into high school in mid-level courses and graduating in honors and AP courses, with accolades to boot. We are doing it.”

The drive to bring AVID to Chicago began in 2002, when student members of the Southwest Youth Collaborative found out about AVID

from young people in San Jose, Calif., who were lobbying to save it from budget cuts. At the time, the Collaborative was searching for ways to reduce tracking in neighborhood high schools and raise the achievement of average students.

Just before the 2002-2003 school year began, the Collaborative asked the School Board to create 10 pilot schools; CPS agreed to create eight. Three of them—Bogan, Gage Park and Kelly—are on the Southwest Side.

“A lot of times we’ll take an idea to the board and they’ll say, ‘Oh, great idea,’ but they’ll end up doing about one-quarter of what we asked for,” Collaborative organizer Jeremy Lahoud says. “We were happy they took the idea and ran with it.”

This September, with the help of a \$168,000 grant from the Dell Family Foundation, 20 schools will have AVID programs. The grant will pay for materials and training from the California-based AVID Center International, which runs the program.

CHANGING TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS

Launched in 1980 by Mary Catherine Swanson, former chair of the English department at Clairemont High in San Diego, AVID was designed as a way to level the academic playing field for students of color, who were entering the school through court-ordered desegregation.

AVID’s success comes largely by helping students help themselves. The core of the program is an elective course that functions as a peer support group and teaches study skills as well as how to work with teachers and peers to succeed.

“We have to teach [students], ‘No, you’re not a victim.’ There is a way they can take control of what’s happening in the school system, but they don’t know how,” Swanson explains.

“When students sit in the front of classes and they take notes and they ask questions, teachers’ perceptions change. They won’t really believe kids can do things differently until they see it, and in AVID, they see it.”

Schools are required to recruit a team of teachers to work with the AVID coordinator and encourage kids to keep up their grades and take a more demanding academic load. Tutoring is provided by college students, some of them former AVID participants, who have been trained in Socratic questioning so they can help students develop their own understanding of the material. Students learn the Cornell method of note-taking, which entails going back after class to jot down key ideas and questions alongside in-class notes. And students are required to take notes in every course, critiquing each others’ work during AVID class.

Swanson says schools virtually never teach good note-taking skills, critical to success in college. “Teachers assume students know how to do it, and they don’t.”

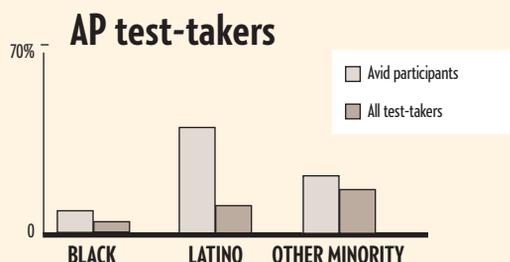
In Chicago, AVID’s first year “has been a struggle,” acknowledges Ron Raglin, special assistant to CEO Arne Duncan. Raglin, a King High graduate, was recruited by Duncan to come back to Chicago and give up his job as an AVID coordinator in California. Raglin reports initial signs of success; for instance, 24 percent of AVID students took an honors course this year, compared to only 6 percent of their peers not in AVID.

First-year struggles are normal, says Chuck Powell, director for AVID’s central division, which includes CPS. “I get worried if someone doesn’t have challenges. Generally, that tells me they’re serving kids who were going to college anyway.”

One common problem was

LATINOS TAKE MORE AP TESTS

Nationally, AVID participants, who are primarily minorities, are more likely to take Advanced Placement courses, and 77 percent of them attend four-year colleges.



Sources: AVID Center International, U.S. Dept of Labor, College Board



AVID encourages students to develop analytical questions about material. Here, Earnest Smith (right) helps Kaneka Lloyd brainstorm questions to help her solve math problems.

JOHN BOOZ

recruiting. Crane High on the West Side postponed starting AVID until the second semester, Raglin reports, since the school was undergoing renovations in the fall.

Orr High in West Humboldt Park had to recruit “under the gun” at the last minute, says coordinator Angela Collins. Time constraints forced her to skip the parent interviews AVID encourages to assess applicants’ motivation and home support. But Collins says she won’t go another year without them because “you need to have some support from the home or it just doesn’t work.”

Bogan High solved the recruiting problem by choosing AVID students from Step Up to High School, a voluntary summer program for underperforming 9th-graders. “AVID caters to students who may not have that skill level just yet,” but really want to work, says Bogan’s AVID coordinator, Theodosia Harris. “That’s what Step Up kids are.” Showing up for voluntary summer school proved their drive, she points out. “Who wants to go to summer school if you don’t have to?”

Woods notes that start-up recruiting can be difficult at some schools because of students’ mistaken perceptions. At Evanston, “no one want-

ed to be part of the new program that targeted students of color who were not in honors courses,” she says. “I clearly remember one student stating that she was in AVID because she was black, poor and stupid. That was my first task, to debunk the myth that programs for students of color had to be remediation-based.”

Finding tutors also proved tricky. Raglin says college students sometimes did not find it worth their time to travel to high schools far from campus to tutor for one class period, which was all that schools needed because of the small size of their programs. Next year, he hopes to solve the problem by requiring AVID schools to recruit at least 100 students each, enough to provide multiple class periods for tutors.

NOT A QUICK FIX

Despite the roadblocks, students praise the program. For instance, Bogan High freshman Gerald Evans says learning to ask in-depth questions in peer study sessions helped him pull his World Studies grade from a C to an A.

Gage Park High sophomore William Comfort says AVID-sponsored college trips taught him how to plan better for higher education.

Before AVID, he says, “I’d never really been [to a college] or knew what it was like. Now I’m thinking about going to a four-year college and making it through.” He also raised his grades in biology and geometry from D’s to B’s.

Orr’s Collins says some of her students initially rebelled against higher standards because “they’re not used to people kicking them in the butt.” Despite her best efforts, some students still are not taking the required notes in their courses.

One student, Earnest Smith, says Collins at one point gave him an ultimatum—shape up or ship out. Now he has the only A in the AVID class, and made the honor roll last quarter.

“I wanted to be in the class,” says Earnest, who knows he needs AVID’s extra help to make it to college. “I knew if I made a B in it before that I could do it again. Then I motivated myself [to do even more].”

Swanson warns that typically, it will take three years for students to earn top grades in higher-level courses and improve their college prospects. During that time, they may be working harder, but “they don’t value the fact that the courses are tougher,” she says. “That’s really hard for kids. AVID is no quick fix.” ■

IB gives students a leg up in college

By Maureen Kelleher

During the past seven years, a dozen Chicago schools have become members of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), earning authorization to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate program and diploma. And preliminary results from a study at DePaul University shows students are reaping the benefits of IB's intensive program.

This summer, a 13th school, Collins High in North Lawndale, expects to join IBO as well.

"No large-city school system has embraced the IB as Chicago has," says Ralph Cline, head of school services for International Baccalaureate North America, based in New York City. "Chicago presents to us an opportunity to offer our programs to a very large number of students, some of them students who are underrepresented in rigorous pre-university programs."

TEACHING 'WHAT TO EXPECT' IN COLLEGE

DePaul University officials tracked 26 former IB students from CPS and found those students performing better than expected, given that the students had lower ACT scores than the average freshman, according to Brian Spittle, assistant vice-president of enrollment management. Twenty of the 26 are black or Latino.

So far, the group has earned an average GPA of 3.1 and has a retention rate of



JASON REBLANDO

The Middle Years Programme prepares students for the International Baccalaureate high school curriculum. Here, McPherson Elementary student Lemus Obed plays Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower in a play about the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. McPherson is one of 23 elementary and high schools to offer the program.

100 percent. That's higher than DePaul's overall rate of 82 percent; for African Americans and Latinos, retention is 79 percent and 83 percent respectively.

"You've got a high proportion of minority students doing extremely well," Spittle says. He sees expanding access to IB programs as a way to offer colleges a pool of diverse applicants who have been prepared to handle college-level work.

"There's an old problem in higher education: access versus equity. IB cuts right through that," Spittle explains.

DePaul student Fiona Jackson, a Morgan Park graduate, has a simple explanation for why she and other former IB students are doing well: "Persistence. We've already worked hard and we know what to expect."

Jackson did not score high enough on the IB exams to earn an IB diploma. But she did earn college credit for an IB course in philosophy and says taking IB courses prepared her for higher education.

"Most of the kids who took history had to remember dates and specific events," Jackson explains. "In my history class, we

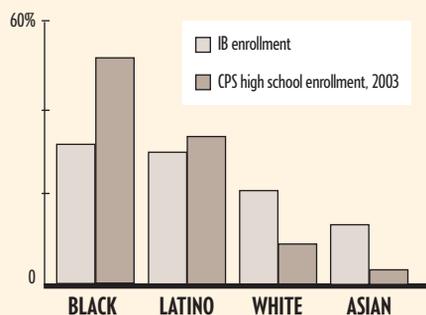
had to analyze why the events took place, who was involved with it, see how it really affected America or whatever region we were studying. Now, when I come to DePaul, it's just like that: How can you analyze the situation?"

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the IBO offers a curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking and exposure to a variety of cultural viewpoints. Students who have taken IB courses can earn credit at about 800 American colleges and universities; 150 of those schools accelerate students with IB diplomas by as much as one year.

To join IBO, schools must complete a demanding, multi-year application process. Among other requirements, teachers complete intensive training and develop detailed course outlines that must be approved by IBO, which make site visits to determine whether the school has earned authorization.

Overall, Jackson explains, the IB program taught her to analyze material, write essays and manage a heavy workload. "I can look back and say, wow, that was really college work." ■

BLACKS, LATINOS LAG IN IB ENROLLMENT



Source: Chicago Public Schools

'Encouragement sparks effort'

For the past few years, public policy lecturer Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government has researched racial achievement gaps. In a 2002 report on racial disparities in high-achieving suburban high schools, Ferguson uses survey data from thousands of middle and high school students of all races and ethnic backgrounds to examine why students of color often underperform, and what schools can do about it. Ferguson also helped launch the Tripod Project, which helps schools strengthen curriculum, teaching and teacher-student relationships. He spoke with *Catalyst* Associate Editor Maureen Kelleher.



What were the key survey findings?

We did not find [racial] differences in student's attitudes about how much they want to achieve, in peer support or the amount of time they report spending on homework. But there were differences. The black students went home to fewer resources [such as books and computers].

The second difference was the way students answered the question, "When you work really hard in school, what are the most important reasons?" There were 14 [choices]. On 12 there wasn't much racial difference. But on two of them, there was. About 45 percent of the black students, but only about 30 percent of white students [checked], "When I work hard, it's because my teacher encourages me." And only about 15 percent of the black students but about 30 percent of the white students [checked] "Because my teacher demands students work hard."

Third, about half the black students reported understanding half or less of their lessons, compared to about 30 percent of white students.

We also did find differences in self-reported homework completion rates and behaviors, with black students not behaving quite as well on average. If teachers look at that and assume kids just don't want to learn, you end up preaching to them about the importance of working hard. But the data shows they already believe that. What they really need is help with managing their peer relations, themselves and their time, being organized and resisting the impulse to joke around in class.

What issues might affect black students' understanding of lessons?

Skill gaps. There are gaps present at the very beginning of kindergarten and those seem to have something to do with parenting. Then the question is whether schools identify the disparities and take measures to remediate. It's not only school. It's not only parents. It's a combination.

You talked about encouragement. What behaviors from teachers appear to encourage students?

First, the teacher assures them that they can do it. Second, the teacher lets them know that they're available to help. Third, the teacher lets them know that their achievement really matters.

How do demands differ from encouragement?

If a teacher is demanding, pushing students to do their best and that same teacher is encouraging in the ways that I just described, that's the best combination. But if a teacher is pushing kids to work hard but doesn't seem available to help, that doesn't work very well. You need both.

What does research say about teacher expectations and whether they play a role in the achievement gap?

Teachers generally have lower expectations for black kids. If we think certain kids don't have the potential to do much better, then we're not going to spend a lot of time and effort trying to find a better way to teach them. Teachers might expect

these same students could do better (with) a more effective teacher, but they don't have enough confidence in themselves to believe that searching for ways to do better is going to pay off very much. So they don't bother.

Do you have any evidence the Tripod Project is having an impact?

Anecdotally, yeah. The Tripod Project is built around a set of ideas about what promotes strong social and intellectual engagement in the classroom, and we ask schools to send in reports and tell us what they [accomplished]. One school in Ohio asked each teacher to go back and take something they were going to teach and then redesign the lesson to be sure that it meets three conditions: the lesson is feasible, that there is a reason for the students to learn it and that it is enjoyable. The teachers did it and reported positive reactions. Students were writing more, remembering longer what they had learned and asking to do the assignment again.

How is the project going to work on teaching the hard stuff?

We're going to ask each teacher to chose one task that their students have struggled with and think about why. Is it that they lack prerequisite skills? Don't know key concepts [or] strategies? Then, review how they prepare students—basically, teach it differently. Then share what it was that you worked on and what you did differently. Ultimately, some of the better teaching ideas that come out of this we'll test to see which ways are effective. ■

MID SOUTH



CHICAGO

Lake Michigan

31ST STREET

PERSHING

MEADOWS PARK

DOOLITTLE WEST

DOOLITTLE INTERMEDIATE

35TH STREET

ELLIS PARK

37TH STREET

DONOGHUE

PERSHING ROAD

OAKLAND BLVD

FULLER

LAKE PARK CRESCENT

43RD STREET

WOODSON NORTH

ROBINSON

MOLLISON

PRICE

KING

WOODSON SOUTH

ARIEL

WOODSON SOUTH CPC

47TH STREET

BRONZEVILLE BLUE GARGOYLE

NORTH KENWOOD CHARTER

ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

DOUGLAS CHICAGO MILITARY

POLICE HEADQUARTERS

MAYO

RAYMOND

ATTUCKS

PHILLIPS + WELLS

THE DAN RYAN

HARTIGAN

GREEN LINE CTA

ROBERT TAYLOR HOMES

McCORKLE

MARTIN LUTHER KING DR

DREXEL BLVD

MICHIGAN AVE

BURNHAM PARK

SOUTH LAKE PARK AVE



COLMAN

BEETHOVEN

Linking schools, communities

Optimistic planners embark on a journey to refashion four neighborhoods, and the schools in them, from dumping grounds for poverty into models for economic diversity. Can it work?

By Debra Williams

Five years ago, the Chicago Housing Authority began moving residents out of the infamous Robert Taylor Homes, a two-mile stretch of high-rise buildings saturated with crime and intense poverty.

The goal for this and other areas in the Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation: To remove concentrated public housing structures and replace them with mixed-income communities.

Known as Mid-South, the area encompasses four neighborhoods—North Kenwood, Oakland, Douglas and Grand Boulevard, where much of Robert Taylor was located before demolition began—and sits along the lake from 31st Street to 47th Street, stretching west to the Dan Ryan Expressway.

As buildings come down, a host of developers are changing the landscape with a mix of new houses, town homes and condominiums.

Soon, it became apparent that the school system needed to be brought in. The Chicago Public Schools responded with a vision and process aimed at revitalizing public education in this transition community, now served by 21 elementary and four high schools.

"This is an unprecedented approach to educational planning," CEO Arne Duncan said at a press conference. "Never before has there been this type of link between community revitalization and school development."

CPS' vision is to create a variety of schools that focus on strengthening early math and reading skills but still offer parents a choice of specialized curricula. The schools would have preschool programs for every child, after-school programs and direct links to colleges, universities and the working world. And they would be staffed by outstanding principals and teachers. The hope is that, with outstanding programs, middle-income parents would be willing to send their children to

schools with low-income children.

With no model to look to, the district assembled a group of advisers—representatives from foundations, universities, area businesses and community groups—to weigh in on what it will take to realize the vision.

"In Mid-South, we are talking about only 3,000 or so students, so this is not a big transformation in terms of the size of it," says John Ayers, executive director of Leadership for Quality Education. "But bringing in middle income families, that's what's drawing all the attention."

By 2014, the district expects to enroll some 11,800 children in Mid-South schools, up from the 8,600 enrolled this year.

According to one insider, remaking schools is an important positioning tool for CEO Arne Duncan and Mayor Daley.

"This is a key opportunity to do something bold, to show the middle-class families that these schools are for you, and to show that the mayor can undo his father's legacy—which were high-rise ghettos," says one person who helped plan new schools for Mid-South.

However, revamping Mid-South schools will be a challenge. Among the 25 schools, 11 are either on probation now or have been in the past. Enrollment is dwindling across the board.

As CPS continues to flesh out a solid plan, to be unveiled in June, critical questions remain. Some local leaders who've provided input wonder whether enough middle-class families will move into the area and live alongside public housing residents. They are skeptical that schools can be recast to appeal to middle- and upper-income families, and at the same time, serve the needs of low-income families.

"CPS is offering an excellent time to reexamine how we educate our children," says Patricia Dowell, a Mid-South resident. "How that gets rolled out is the question. And education for whom?" ■

This is the sixth installment in an occasional series examining schools from a community perspective. Previous neighborhood reports can be found online.

Balancing needs of poor students with demands of middle class

Skeptics wonder whether CPS can serve both without caving in to the 'squeaky wheel'

By Debra Williams

This summer, Chicago Public Schools will unveil an ambitious initiative to reinvent 25 schools in Mid-South to serve the economically diverse community that urban planners hope to create.

The plan, according to two sources who have been briefed on it, calls for reopening some schools that are already closed, like Donoghue Elementary, and closing others for low enrollment.

Indeed, in early June, CPS announced it would close four Mid-South elementary schools—Doolit-

tle West, Douglas, Hartigan and Raymond.

Schools slated for reopening would do so in a variety of formats such as charters, contract schools and schools with specialty programs such as math and science, or performing arts. The plan also envisions more early childhood education programs and facilities that serve students as well as the communities they're based in by remaining open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

CPS officials declined to comment on details of the plan.

The concept of closing and reopening schools got a trial run in 2002 when CPS closed Williams Elementary on the Near South Side and opened it a year later as three smaller schools housed in the same building. If it works on the larger scale envisioned for Mid-South, CPS stands to become a national model, city officials predict.

But some educators are skeptical that the district will be able to muscle enough resources to complete the project, and community residents worry that low-income families will get short shrift or be left out.

"[The] communities' fears about being forgotten are justified," says one adviser who provided input for the plan. On the drawing board now are ideas for schools that would serve students from a variety of backgrounds; however, the district's track record indicates that it "responds to the squeaky wheel and the people in power," the adviser says.

CPS cast a wide net to devise a plan, seeking advice from more than 150 outside experts. In December, advisers were tapped from CPS, City Hall, foundations, universities

and local banks and corporations, then divided into six working groups that would make detailed recommendations. The groups discussed issues ranging from early childhood education to professional development for teachers and principals to after-school programs and clubs for students.

'WE WANT BOLD, INNOVATIVE'

At the first meeting, Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins gave the marching orders. "We want bold and innovative. We want you to think outside the box."

Meanwhile, CPS also convened focus groups with principals, teachers and community leaders to gather their ideas, and held two community meetings, inviting parents and community residents to attend.

"I've seen a lot more inclusion on this than I've seen in other places," says Timothy Knowles, executive director of the Center for Urban School Improvement. "It has been an open door to the point of excess. There have been plenty of opportunities for everyone to weigh in."

Still, one community leader says the formal process should have included more parents and teachers, who have insight into problems that affect education, like poor health, unemployment, crime and drugs. "These realities were not vividly included," says Greg Washington of the Grand Boulevard Federation. "These groups were looking at pedagogy and academic enhancements, not the nitty gritty things on what keeps kids and teachers from being successful."

The Mid-South school plan encompasses "three big ideas that are

Oakland



Population, 2000:	6,110
10-year Trend:	-25%
No. Children <18:	2,405
No. Children <5:	641
Median Income:	\$10,739
Poverty:	52%

REAL ESTATE

PRIVATE

Home Sales, 2003: 19 units
Median Price: \$265,000

PUBLIC (Lakefront Homes)

Demolishing: 640 units
Rebuilding: 441 units

SCHOOLS

Elementaries: Robinson; Closed: Donoghue

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, Ward 4: (773) 536-8103
N. Kenwood-Oakland Conservation Community Council: (773) 285-8496

potentially very powerful,” Knowles says: Attracting good teachers and principals, building systems that support them and hold them accountable for results, and creating a portfolio of new schools, he explains.

Offering more school choice has been a priority for CPS under CEO Arne Duncan. “We want families to be able to look out their window and say, ‘I think I’ll send my child to the school across the street.’ Or, ‘My child has an interest in math and science, I should send him to the school two blocks away.’” says Lisa Schneider, who is overseeing the Mid-South project for CPS.

However, the notion of shutting down existing schools does not sit well with some.

“We certainly are not doing handstands over charters, and we are concerned about contract schools,” says James Alexander, financial secretary for the Chicago Teachers Union. Instead of closing schools, the union is pushing CPS to improve security, Internet access and school leadership. “There are schools where principals are not doing their jobs,” he says. “We’d like to see all the schools get the proper resources.”

Also, educators are concerned that it will be difficult to serve kids from a variety of academic and economic backgrounds in a single school.

The goal can be achieved, but it is

GETTING MIDDLE CLASS BUY-IN

Mid-South resident Patricia Dowell, a former director of the Mid-South Planning and Development Commission, says the area has a lot to offer middle-class families who are looking to move in—convenient location, public transportation, historic and cultural significance. But public schools in Mid-South have a way to go, she says.

In exploring possible schools for her son, she checked test scores, school enrollment and school poverty rates. “All this plays into whether you send your kids to a particular school. Someone who is paying \$200,000 or more for their home is going to look at that.”

Another resident notes the importance of resources, equipment and programs. “I want a school that offers more than just a general curriculum—I want music and art and languages,” says Cynthia Love, who lives in Grand Boulevard with her husband and 18-month-old daughter. “Otherwise, I would look for a magnet or a new charter school.”

Harvard University Professor Gary Orfield says it will be a challenge to get middle-class families who move into Mid-South to take the extra step and enroll their children in neighborhood schools. “Many middle-class African American families prefer interracial schools—that is

“A school has to be good enough for the gifted kid who walks in off the street and for the child who is at a lower level academically.”

Anthony Bryk, founding director, Consortium on Chicago School Research

complex, says Anthony Bryk, founding director of the Consortium on Chicago School Research. “What they are trying to do is a very complicated issue,” he says. “A school has to be good enough for the gifted kid who walks in off the street and for the child who is at a lower level academically.” North Kenwood Oakland Charter School, which Bryk helped launch, is working to solve the dilemma. “It doesn’t happen overnight.”

why many move to the suburbs,” says Orfield, a former Kenwood resident. “And white families, they won’t say it, but they don’t want to have their children be the only white kids in the schools and be isolated.”

However, some will if the conditions are right, he notes. When Orfield, who is white, lived in Washington, D.C., for instance, he enrolled his children in an all-black school in a gentrifying neighborhood and

Douglas



Population (2000):	26,470
10-year Trend:	-14%
No. Children <18:	7,075
No. Children <5:	2,094
Median Income:	\$24,835
Poverty:	41%

REAL ESTATE

PRIVATE	PUBLIC (Wells, Madden, Stateway)
Home Sales, 2003: 166 units	Demolishing: 3,796 units
Median Price: \$166,000	Rebuilding: 1,439 units

SCHOOLS

Elementaries: Attucks, Doolittle West, Doolittle East, Douglas, Mayo, Pershing, Raymond, Wells

High Schools: Chicago Military, Phillips

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

Alderman Madeline Haithcock, Ward 2: (773) 924-0014

Alderman Dorothy J. Tillman, Ward 3: (773) 373-3228

Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, Ward 4: (773) 536-8103

Mid-South Planning & Development Commission: (773) 924-1330

recruited other white parents to do the same. The school had good programs, he says, and “we had a principal that we trusted with our kids.”

A core of supporters among those who are vested in quality public education are rooting for success in Mid-South.

“The foundation community will work hard to step up to the plate on this,” says Terry Mazany, newly named CEO of the Chicago Community Trust. “I don’t have a ballpark sense of how much all this will cost, but I think it would be shared broadly.”

CPS’s Schneider points to two reopened “renaissance” schools and other new schools opened in the last two years to show that the district will see the project through completion. “Even skeptics would have to admit that we made good on our commitments,” she notes.

The plan is expected to be released by the end of June.

To contact Debra Williams, call (312) 673-3873 or e-mail williams@catalyst-chicago.org.

Poor residents fear they'll be left out

CHA concedes its transformation plan is 'not an equal split, but an equitable split'

By Debra Williams

Signs of change abound in Mid-South. Some are as subtle as the flower-filled concrete planters that decorate the otherwise bleak landscape where high-rise public housing once stood.

Others are overwhelming. A new \$65 million headquarters for the Chicago Police Department on the corner of 35th Street and Michigan Avenue. Two new buildings on the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), one of them, the McCormick Tribune Campus Center,

straddled by a dramatic 530-foot, concrete-and-steel tube encasing the CTA Green Line El tracks at 33rd and State Street.

Sprouting like wildflowers are private housing developments, growing on lots where public housing has been leveled. In a three square mile area that encompasses four neighborhoods, over 6,800 public housing units have been razed in the last five years. Ongoing demolition of Robert Taylor Homes—once the world's largest public housing project—and Stateway Gardens has already ripped out most of the 36 buildings that once lined State Street from 31st to 55th streets. By late May, only four were still standing.

The Chicago Housing Authority's Plan for Transformation calls for doing away with high-rise public housing and replacing them with mixed-income communities to be built by private developers. New public schools are an integral part of the overall Mid-South redevelopment plan, which community groups and institutions like IIT have pushed for more than 10 years.

But longtime advocates are concerned that the focus on attracting middle-income families will detract from efforts to house poor residents, many of whom are being displaced. In fact, CHA's plan for Mid-South calls for rebuilding 2,800 units of public housing, instead of the 9,227 that previously existed. Fewer units of public housing in Mid-South will be offset by more in other areas, according to CHA.

"This is a real fear [for the community] because of all the changes that are happening," says Leroy Kennedy, associate vice president of community affairs at IIT. "These changes have been talked about for a long time but now it is happening."

"We have the same agenda, but have different ways of arriving at

them," says Shirley Newsome, chairman of the North Kenwood Oakland Conservation Community Council.

Still, despite verbal commitments, community residents and others are concerned that low-income families will be pushed aside.

FORMULA CAN VARY

Mid-South is five years into CHA's 10-year plan, which specifies a formula for the mixture of housing: One third each of market rate, affordable and public or subsidized housing.

However, that formula can vary at individual developments. Jazz on the Boulevard, for example, is a development of three-story townhouses, duplex condominiums and three- and six-flat rental apartments along Drexel Boulevard near 41st Street. The housing mix is 50 percent market rate units, 25 percent affordable and 25 percent public.

A rental-only property at 46th Street and Woodlawn Avenue built by the same developer, The Thrush Companies, is 74 percent market rate, 15 percent affordable and 11 percent subsidized.

"We like to say it's not an equal split but an equitable split," says CHA spokesperson Kim Johnson.

Some Mid-South residents remain wary. Wanda Taylor, who chairs the local school council at Price Elementary in North Kenwood, says she knows families that were displaced by CHA demolitions. "They are afraid they are not going to be coming back," she says. "Many parents see the changes and the first thing you hear is 'This isn't for us. They are bringing in all this new housing and programs, but this is not for us.'"

The redevelopment history of some blighted communities would substantiate such fears. When it was built in the 1950s, the Lake Meadows apartment complex revitalized the

North Kenwood *



Population, 2000:	18,363
10-year Trend:	+1%
No. Children <18:	4,051
No. Children <5:	1,179
Median Income:	\$36,612
Poverty:	24%

REAL ESTATE

PRIVATE	PUBLIC (None)
Home Sales, 2003: 160 units	Demolishing: NA
Median Price: \$225,000	Rebuilding: NA

SCHOOLS

Elementaries: Ariel, North Kenwood Charter, Price
High Schools: King

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, Ward 4: (773) 536-8103
Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization: (773) 548-7500

*Note: Population trends reflect figures for Kenwood, which includes North Kenwood and other areas outside Mid-South's boundaries.



JOHN BOOZ

Only one of eight buildings are still standing at Stateway Gardens (left). Farther east, new townhouses are springing up along Lake Park Avenue.

Near South Side, recalls James Alexander of the Chicago Teachers Union, who lives in the area. But some residents lost their homes. "I know people who were not able to come back into the area, even though they were told they could," he says.

And one Mid-South resident believes developers are not above tactics that may lock out working-class residents.

"There are all kind of marketing switcharoos," says Patricia Abrams, who moved into Mid-South when she bought a home there 10 years ago. "Developers may say, 'Sorry, we don't have any more \$120,000 homes anymore, but we have plenty that are \$220,000.'"

"In some cases the fear is justified," says Newsome, who also sits on the board of the Quad Communities Development Corp., a new group headed by Ald. Toni Preckwinkle.

Residents worry that private developers will convert low-income housing into market rate units. But CHA officials note that developers have signed 99-year leases for the land that prevent them from doing so as long as those contracts are in effect.

AIMING FOR DIVERSITY

While some residents are fearful they will eventually be forced out, others may be oblivious to the

changes in the area.

"Many people in the area don't know what's going on," says Taylor, Price's LSC chair. "And people deserve to know."

Taylor is working with the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO) to launch a door-to-door public awareness campaign. "We plan to talk to them about gentrification, the schools, everything," says Taylor.

"We'd like the area to look like it did 35 years ago," Newsome says. "We want to see diversity along age, race and economics. Years ago, the doctors, teachers, people who worked downtown, lived in the same community [with the poor]. We're trying to replicate that."

IIT, an institutional supporter of developing Mid-South since the 1980s, is offering its staff and faculty \$7,500 bonuses if they decide to take up residence in a new, mixed-income development under construction on the site that formerly housed Stateway Gardens. So far, 100 people have expressed interest.

IIT's Kennedy says longtime residents, churches and community groups bear some responsibility for making sure low-income families are not swept out. "It is up to people to organize and make sure this doesn't happen." ■

Grand Boulevard



Population, 2000:	28,006
10-year Trend:	-22%
No. Children <18:	9,987
No. Children <5:	2,785
Median Income:	\$14,178
Poverty:	47%

REAL ESTATE

PRIVATE	PUBLIC (Robert Taylor)
Home Sales, 2003: 220 units	Demolishing: 4,312 units
Median Price: \$183,000	Rebuilding: 851 units

SCHOOLS

Elementaries: Beethoven, Fuller, Hartigan, Mollison, McCorkle, Woodson South; Closed: Colman, Woodson North

High Schools: Bronzeville Alternative

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

Alderman Dorothy J. Tillman, Ward 3: (773) 373-3228

Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, Ward 4: (773) 536-8103

Grand Boulevard Federation: (773) 548-8140

The Chicago Urban League: (773) 285-5000

Sources: U.S. Census, CPS Office of Accountability, CPS Dept. of Research and Evaluation, *Chicago Tribune*, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, Bronzeville Blue Gargoyles.

Research

Freshmen bypass extracurriculars

Fewer than a third participate in after-school activities despite CPS efforts to improve quality

By Dan Eder

Ronald Stewart, a freshman at Gage Park High School, has a busy spring schedule. He runs track, plays baseball and is a member of the Beta Club, an academic team that competes against other schools.

But Stewart is exceptional, judging by the results of a recent study of how Chicago 9th-graders spend their after-school hours.

Among 16,000 students surveyed last year, only 27 percent were involved in structured activities such as school, community or religious programs in the four hours after-school, according to the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

High schools have a tougher job recruiting kids for after-school programs than elementary schools do, says Beth Swanson, director of CPS after-school programs. "You really have to have a quality program, because teens are brutally honest. If they don't like it, they're not going to show up."

In fact, organized sports and clubs were among the least popular after-school activities, according to the survey. Students were far more likely to spend time alone, hang out with friends, supervise younger children, or do homework.

But kids who bypass extracurricular activities miss opportunities to bond with adult mentors who can help shape their career and education goals, says Georgia Hall, a research scientist at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. These kids are also more prone to risky behavior if left unsupervised, she adds.

Not surprisingly, spending time with adults was one of the least common reasons kids gave for participating in after-school activities. Being with friends and having fun were the most common. Stewart says he joined the track team at Gage Park to have fun. "I didn't know any-

body when I started, but I met people on the team."

Some students, 14 percent, said they wanted to participate in extracurricular activities but could not. Some cited homework as the reason; others said there were no safe parks or community centers to go to. (The latter does not explain why those students do not join in-school extracurricular programs.) Over a third of them offered no specific reason.

Family responsibilities may be another reason some who want to participate are unable to. Almost 30 percent of those surveyed said they had to supervise younger children after school. Domonique Williams, another Gage Park freshman, watches a 10-year-old sister and 12-year-old brother. Between fixing them meals and putting them to bed, she says she finds time to do homework.

Williams insists babysitting her siblings is not hard. However, another study finds that childcare helps teens mature but the additional responsibility may make it difficult for them to develop social connections outside of their families, and may increase their chances of living in poverty as adults.

Robert Goerge, the research fellow at Chapin Hall who led the survey, says schools need to do a better job of recruiting kids for clubs and sports. "[Kids] need to know what's available. It's not a case that, 'If you build it they will come.' You have to get them to come."

About four years ago, Maggie Daley, wife of Mayor Richard M. Daley, created a local non-profit to team up with CPS schools and do just that. After School Matters links teens with clubs and sports at parks and libraries. Currently, 35 CPS high schools are affiliated with the initiative. After School Matters is looking to add 10 more schools in the next two years.

Improving the quality of and access to high school athletics was one of Arne Duncan's early goals when he was hired as CEO

RESEARCH SUMMARY

WHO CONDUCTED IT: Robert M. Goerge and Robert J. Chaskin, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

WHAT THEY FOUND: Freshmen were more likely to spend time alone, with friends or doing homework than they were to engage in structured after-school activities. They also were slightly more likely to be supervising siblings or other kids.

WHO WAS STUDIED: Nearly 16,000 9th-graders from 60 high schools in Chicago responded to a survey about what they did after school. Survey results were weighted to accurately reflect the city's racial and ethnic makeup.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Goerge suggests that more can be done to get kids to participate in after-school programs. "If there were more marketing to kids about after-school programs, we might see more participation," he says.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: The study "What Ninth Grade Students In The Chicago Public Schools Do In Their Out-Of-School Time" can be found online at www.chapinhall.uchicago.edu.

in 2001. The high school athletic program is now undergoing "a complete overhaul" that aims to increase high school student participation in interscholastic sports by 25 percent next year, reports Calvin Davis, CPS sports director. The effort includes adding new teams, improving training for coaches and providing study plans for students whose grade point averages are too low to participate.

"Our big goal is to provide every child in the district with the chance to go to a quality after-school program," Swanson adds. "But the choice when the school bell rings lies ultimately with the student."

"It has to be something I want to do," says Gage Park freshman Lawanda Coleman. "And what I want to do is sleep."

To contact Dan Eder, call (312) 673-3884 or send an e-mail to eder@catalyst-chicago.org.

GUEST COLUMN/JASON ROTHSTEIN

'Wall of indifference' deters LSC candidates

In March, I read a *Chicago Tribune* article about the shortage of local school council candidates. Thinking I might run for community representative, I called two nearby high schools to see in which attendance area I lived. At the first school, I was referred to an office worker who cut me off saying, "The election is April 22."

I explained that I just wanted to determine if I was in the school's attendance area.

"Why do you want to know? Who is this?"

After several more exchanges, she finally asked for my address. I gave it. Without hesitation, she told me I was in another attendance area and hung up.

I got a similar run-around from the second school, but finally reached someone reportedly in charge of the election. He confirmed that I was in their attendance area. At the school office, I registered as a candidate. A woman inspected my forms and handed me a receipt.

Eager to prepare, I decided to contact current parent or teacher LSC members, against whom I would not be running, to learn more about the school. When I called the school to get their names, the woman who answered insisted that she could not release that information. She suggested I call the area office. They, of course, told me that I would have to contact the school.

I then called the Office of Community Relations, where a pleasant man offered to fax the list of names. I asked if he might also tell the school to provide such information, but this was clearly more than he was willing to do. I attempted to reach a few council members, who generally wouldn't return my calls and in one case, refused to speak with me, screaming, "How did you get my number?"

But I was undeterred. "This," I thought, "is the reason I'm running."

The next day I got a letter with the date of the school's candidates' forum. It was scheduled on Passover and four days past the deadline CPS set. I called the school to object, and after fruitless conversations with office staff and the man "in charge" of the elections, I left a message for the principal. The next day I left two. The next, three.

After four days, the principal left a voicemail but not regarding my messages. Instead, she said: "Mr. Rothstein, I'm afraid you've been disqualified. You're not in our attendance area." I was in the other school's attendance area after all.

I reached the principal late that afternoon. I told her about my calls to both schools and about having my forms checked in person. "Well, I'm sorry, but I don't think there's anything we can do," she said, and added that the man who I was told was in charge of the election was "just an aide" and that "he wouldn't know anything about attendance areas."

I told her that I still wanted to discuss why the forum was scheduled for Passover, which could prevent participation by Jewish candidates, parents and community members. There was a long pause. "Well, that's unfortunate," she said. Our conversation didn't get much further.

I again contacted the man from community relations. Regarding my disqualification, he could help.

Apparently, schools often misinform candidates about attendance areas, and we could transfer my candidacy to the other high school. As for the candidates' forum, he confirmed that schools were required to adhere to the CPS schedule, but he didn't think anyone enforced it.

After my ordeal, I hesitated to transfer to a new ballot but decided to give it a shot. My candidacy was transferred on a Monday; the forum was scheduled for the next evening. Out of 12 candidates, two of us showed up. We nearly outnumbered the spectators. Absurdly, we spoke through loudspeakers. Our speeches echoed through hundreds of empty seats.

Afterwards, I stayed for an LSC meeting. I was impressed. These were serious people trying to do a good job despite enormous difficulties. This would be a team to join.

In the end, I didn't win, but I don't regret running. However, few people I know can believe that I persevered. Indeed, I know other candidates facing similar challenges who withdrew rather than beat their heads against a wall of indifference.

I don't believe LSCs are beyond repair. If I did, I wouldn't run. But it's clear that not everyone in the system is committed to the LSC model. And until that model of reform is embraced—or at least enforced—the future of LSCs remains uncertain. ■

Jason Rothstein is a freelance consultant who manages web and training projects for corporate and non-profit clients.

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Teacher-led school reform gets another year of funding

The impact of an effort to turn around low-scoring schools is uncertain, but some with low enrollment will close anyway

By John Myers

Ten public schools are nearing the end of a last-ditch effort initiated by the Chicago Teachers Union to keep them open despite low test scores.

The 10 “partnership schools” were selected last spring to receive additional resources from the union and the School Board to jumpstart student performance.

While the results are not yet in, Schools CEO Arne Duncan has earmarked \$2 million in next year’s budget to keep the experiment in joint responsibility going. “I really think we’re onto something,” he says. “If things are going in the right direction, then yes, [schools will] be open.”

“To be fair, we’re not looking for miracles,” Duncan says. “We’re looking for incremental change. Most of the visits I’ve been on, I’ve been very encouraged.”

Even so, a cloud hangs over the effort. Nine of the partnership schools are underutilized, meaning enrollment is less than 65 percent of building capacity, according to a report by the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group, a nonprofit watchdog organization. That makes them subject to closing for low enrollment.

Three elementary schools located along the State Street corridor, where public housing demolition is nearly complete, will be consolidated this fall. Raymond and Hartigan, both at

less than 30 percent capacity, will close and send their students to Attucks. (See related story, page 16.)

Only Bass Elementary in Englewood is fully utilizing its space, according to the report.

Duncan says he’s more concerned with academic progress than enrollment at partnership schools. One union official is not surprised by the closings.

“We know about the gentrification of the city,” says Saungktakhu Richey, who oversees five partnership schools for the union. “We know that the [School Board’s] focus isn’t necessarily on educating the population that is currently in these neighborhoods. We have to serve the teachers and the students as best we know how.”

SCORES MAY DECLINE INITIALLY

This month, researchers from the University of Memphis will release the findings of their evaluation of the partnership school initiative. The report, based on surveys, interviews and classroom observations, will assess school climate and changes in teaching practices.

CPS will consider those findings along with this year’s test scores to determine whether partnership schools have shown enough improvement and commitment to remain open.

On paper, partnership schools are required to hit a complicated mix of

accountability targets set by CPS and the Illinois Board of Education. (See related story on the *Catalyst* web site—www.catalyst-chicago.org.) However, experts say it is unlikely any of the schools will meet them.

Occasionally schools undergoing reform may see an immediate spike in test scores, but “it’s unrealistic to expect that,” says Steven Ross, who led the evaluation research team. Generally, elementary schools can expect to see test score gains faster than high schools, where student discipline and knowledge gaps are bigger issues, and scripted, reading-based programs tend to boost scores faster than holistic models, he adds. Two partnership schools are high schools.

Reform expert Sam Stringfield of Johns Hopkins University warns test scores could drop initially as teachers struggle to master reform practices in the first year. “You’ve got to go through neutral,” he says, noting it usually takes two to four years for reform to take hold.

Partnership schools are expecting, at best, modest progress this year.

The partnership deal called for faculties to approve by majority vote which reform model their school would use.

Among the elementary schools, five picked Success for All, a school-wide overhaul of reading instruction; two opted for Direct Instruction, a phonics-based, scripted reading program; and one chose Comer School Development Project, a community-based program that focuses on students’ social and psychological health.

The high schools—Collins and

To read more about the academic targets for partnership schools, visit the *Catalyst* web site.

Richards—chose High Schools That Work, a model that blends traditional college prep coursework with vocational skills.

Last summer, the union hired Richey, a former instructor for Success for All, to oversee the five schools using that program, and it tapped Martin McGreal, a former teacher working at the union's Quest Center, to work with high schools and the remaining elementary schools.

During the first year, partnership schools focused on training school faculties to use the models and fine tuning teaching based on assessment data and classroom observations, says McGreal.

EXTRA EFFORT FOR 'HOT LIST' STUDENTS

Schools using Success for All meet monthly at union headquarters to discuss their efforts and analyze students' test results. Every eight weeks, students take a reading test and the schools use results to estimate how test scores on state and national exams may change overall.

Each school has created a "hot list" of students who are closest to meeting state and district standards, and then paired them with more experienced teachers and provided extra tutoring. Using these strategies, Hartigan Elementary hoped to get off probation, says Principal Betty Greer.

Probation status is no longer an issue for Hartigan, which is facing closure. Still, its reading scores on this year's Iowa Test of Basic Skills went up 10 percentage points.

Principal Frederic Metz is looking for Medill's test scores to improve after stagnating in recent years. The school's Success for All facilitator has made sure teachers follow guidelines for reading instruction and use assessment data to target instruction.

Schools using Direct Instruction have focused reform on changing teaching practices, too, says McGreal. Chalmers, which has adopted the Comer program, hired a reading specialist and counselor to complement efforts to upgrade teachers' skills.

However, the High Schools That

Work program downplays changing instruction, focusing instead on getting schools to share best practices, says McGreal. Collins High School, for instance, recently sent nearly 30 teachers to visit a high school in Ohio to learn how to integrate English and social studies courses with shop class.

UNIQUE ROLE FOR UNION

Since 1995, low-performing schools have undergone a host of district-imposed reform initiatives, including intervention and reconstitution.

Such efforts usually failed because teachers were left out, say union officials. The last straw for teachers union President Deborah Lynch was Duncan's abrupt decision to close three schools in 2002.

Seeking to avoid another round of school closures in 2003, the union inked a deal with CPS to delay closing any of the 51 schools languishing on probation and allow teachers to call the shots at 10 of them.

The agreement casts the teachers union in what is believed to be a unique role in school-wide improvement.

In Memphis, the teachers union endorsed a district reform effort in the 1990s, but did not participate in the process, says Ross. Chicago's effort may see positive results if it receives adequate funding, regular evaluations and strong support from teachers and the community.

Duncan's \$2 million commitment for next year may satisfy the funding needs, but school closings and a plan to add new schools to the partnership will change how the money is distributed, says Richey.

She says the partnership can add up to four new schools, possibly more given the school closings.

Duncan has not committed to expand the program, and he says CPS may ask schools to compete for any new slots.

To contact John Myers, call (312) 673-3874 or send an e-mail to myers@catalyst-chicago.org.

Partnership schools, programs

CPS earmarked \$2 million to fund teacher-led reform in 10 partnership schools, each of which selected a research-based improvement model. Here's what they chose:

SUCCESS FOR ALL

THE APPROACH: An elementary school reform model anchored by 90-minute blocks of daily reading instruction. Students are grouped across grade levels according to reading skills and tested every eight weeks to measure progress. Tutoring and family support efforts round out the model. Success for All generally requires 80 percent approval from a school's teachers, but that requirement was waived for partnership schools.

SCHOOLS USING IT: Attucks, Burke, Hartigan, Medill, Raymond

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

THE APPROACH: A scripted, phonics-based approach to reading instruction that requires students to practice basic strategies and skills repeatedly. Teachers must adhere strictly to lesson plans. Frequent assessments help identify learning deficiencies.

SCHOOLS USING IT: Bass, Delano

COMER SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

THE APPROACH: Addressing school climate and social issues are priorities under this model. Teams of parents and school leaders craft school improvement plans that tailor curriculum to individual student needs and assessments.

SCHOOLS USING IT: Chalmers

HIGH SCHOOLS THAT WORK

THE APPROACH: Combines traditional college preparation courses with vocational and technical skills training. Students are required to take four years of English and three years of mathematics and science. Teachers work collaboratively to find ways to integrate vocational skills into the core subjects and evaluate the effect on learning. Focus groups define the school's professional development and counseling needs, and schools network to share best practices. Partnership high schools use this program.

SCHOOLS USING IT: Collins, Richards

SCHOOL	1ST YR FUNDS	PROBATION	ITBS	ISAT
Attucks	\$197,300	No	32%	35%
Bass	\$194,750	Yes	21%	22%
Burke	\$226,400	Yes	18%	19%
Chalmers	\$223,000	No	25%	26%
Delano	\$246,300	Yes	26%	18%
Hartigan	\$157,400	Yes	15%	17%
Medill	\$214,100	Yes	10%	14%
Raymond	\$215,000	No	27%	23%
PRAIRIE STATE				
Collins High	\$159,700	Yes		6%
Richards High	\$163,200	Yes		10%

Note: Test scores are the percentage at or above standards, 2003, and reflect ITBS Reading, ISAT composite and Prairie State composite scores.

Overhaul moves closer for 22 schools

By Alexander Russo

As many as 22 Chicago schools could be converted into charter schools, taken over by the district or state, restaffed with new teachers and administrators, or turned into contract schools for the 2005-06 school year, according to CPS officials.

The 22 schools are those that have already gone four years without making what the federal No Child Left Behind Act calls “adequate yearly progress” in reading and math, putting them into what is called “corrective action.” If they don’t hit test score targets either this year or the next, “restructuring” is to take place in year six.

The schools have not yet been formally notified that they are in danger of being closed or converted, according to Xavier Botana, the CPS official in charge of implementing No Child Left Behind. However, initial planning for restructuring between school and board officials is scheduled to begin this summer and fall.

Most of the schools are already well aware that their performance is considered sub-par and have taken actions to improve student achievement, according to Botana

For example, three schools—Collins

and Richards high schools and Medill Elementary School—have new curricula and shared governance by CPS and the Chicago Teachers Union. These schools were identified in 2003 as some of the lowest-performing in the city and threatened with closure.

At the start of the school year, two schools—Bethune and Cather—had their principals removed for academic reasons by the Board of Education. (See *Catalyst*, October 2003.)

The remaining 17 schools—Carver, Farragut, Harper, Marshall, Orr, Tilden, Wells and Manley high schools, and Carver, Faraday, Howland, Hamline, Farren, Pope, Tilton, Doolittle East and Morton elementary schools—have taken some action as a result of being on CPS probation or not making adequate yearly progress in the past.

Critics of No Child Left Behind, like Harvard Graduate School of Education Professor Richard Elmore, suggest that putting the screws on struggling schools is not going to generate improvement. “‘Corrective action’ does nothing about increasing knowledge and skills,” he says.

Northwestern University Professor G. Alfred Hess Jr. notes that restaffing

schools has failed in the past and that school improvement depends on whether school faculties take restructuring threats seriously. “The real question is what people at the local schools are thinking,” he says. “Does [the threat] really get the attention of the faculty?”

He speculates that the law may be softened before any closings take place.

“Everybody agrees that there are problems with the way the Act is put together, even though it has spurred a lot of school districts into doing important things for minority kids,” Hess says.

If the law isn’t changed, however, the number of schools in danger of being closed or converted will soon grow dramatically. According to Botana, more than 200 additional schools are likely to enter corrective action next year, giving them until 2007 to improve or face closure.

Schools CEO Arne Duncan has used authority granted by the state to close low-performing schools regardless of No Child Left Behind. However, the federal law requires closing or converting schools that fail to make progress after six years.

Alexander Russo is a Catalyst contributing editor. E-mail him at editor@catalyst-chicago.org.

Teachers rate principals, union digs into the findings

Now that some 9,000 CPS teachers and support staff have passed judgment on their principals, the Chicago Teachers Union is attempting to see if the ratings correlate with school performance.

Robert Bruno, an associate professor of labor and industrial relations at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is comparing results of the union’s Principal Performance Survey to 10 years of school data, including staff attrition, student test scores and student

turnover rates. Results from the new analysis are expected to be released in June.

The CTU hopes to use the study to “identify areas of concern and use the scores as indicators of serious problems,” says CTU President Deborah Lynch. “We are trying to elevate discussion on the qualities of school leadership,” she adds.

However, the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association considers the survey invalid, claiming there is no way to know if it is repre-

sentative. “Basically, we think it’s garbage,” says association President Clarice Berry.

Surveys were sent to 24,273 teachers and support staff who work full time in a single school. The response rate was 34 percent.

The survey asked teachers and educational support personnel to grade their principals on 28 measures, including instructional leadership and allocation of resources. It also asked them for an overall grade. About 49 percent gave

their principals an A or B, 17 percent gave them a C, and almost 34 percent gave them a D or F.

The union published school-by-school results on its web site, www.ctunet.com, for schools that had a response rate of at least 15 percent.

“There’s certainly been an impact on public awareness that wasn’t there before that has generated discussion on what’s happening in schools,” says Bruno.

Giselle Fuentes

Leadership fund half way to \$15 million goal

The Chicago Public Education Fund has raised more than half of a new \$15 million funding initiative that will continue its work to improve leadership in the city's public schools.

The new fund will help support leadership training for teachers and principals in new schools, financial rewards for school leaders who improve student achievement, a new principal preparation system for CPS and efforts to encourage teachers in troubled schools to take on National Board Certification.

It also will promote the use of data to make decisions.

Fund II, as the new funding initiative is called, will build on the work of Fund I, which raised \$10 million to support such leadership development programs as LAUNCH (Leadership Academy and Urban Network for Chicago), Teach for America and the Academy for Urban School Leadership.

Leadership Fund II will add to those efforts by providing incentives to teams of teachers and principals who agree to work in the city's lowest-performing schools. "Teachers and principals who agree to tackle the toughest challenges—and then rise to meet them—ought to be compensated accordingly," says Fund President Janet Knupp.

The Chicago Public Education Fund was formed four years ago to serve as a strategic investment partner with CPS. "Our board wanted to create a vehicle for the private sector

to meaningfully contribute to public schools, both intellectually and financially," says Knupp.

Another goal was to bring new resources to school improvement in the city. About one-third of the \$10 million for Fund I came from individuals, corporations and foundations that had not given to CPS improvement efforts in the past, says Mike Sanders, the Fund's communications manager. He predicts the same for Fund II.

The Pritzker Foundation launched Fund II with a \$1.4 million contribution, bringing the foundation's total giving to \$2 million and pushing the Fund's total-to-date to over \$8 million. Fund board member Penny Pritzker, who is president of Pritzker Realty Group and chairman of Classic Residence by Hyatt, is heading up a task force to help CPS develop a system for grooming principal candidates.

"We have worked with CPS to fundamentally improve the way the system recruits principals and teachers, and I think they would say that as well," adds Knupp.

Sandra Guthman, president and CEO of the Polk Bros. Foundation, attributes the Fund's fundraising success to heightened civic interest and the Fund's decision to focus on leadership development. "[Donors] can understand the impact that leadership can have on a system," she says. "Leadership is something that resonates with them."

Giselle Fuentes

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"CITY VOICES" Consulting Editor Lorraine Forte hosts this public affairs program at 6:30 a.m. the second Sunday of the month on WNUA-FM, 95.5.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Include the writer's full name, title and contact information for verification. Letters should be limited to 200 words and may be edited for space and clarity. Send them to the attention of the Editor.

MOVING IN/ON TERRY MAZANY, chief operating officer of the Chicago Community Trust, will step into the top spot when CEO **DONALD STEWART** relinquishes the post on July 1. Stewart, who has led the foundation since 2000, will continue as president until January 2005, when Mazany assumes both titles. **MARK RIGDON**, formerly a senior program officer at the Spencer Foundation, has joined the Trust in a similar capacity and will be responsible for grant proposals from CPS. ...

The Chicago Public Education Fund elected three new members to its board on April 29. They are: Education Fund President **JANET KNUPP**; **FRANK TECHAR**, president and CEO of Harris Bank; and **PATRICIA SALDANA NATKE**, president and co-founder of Urban Works, a minority women-owned architecture and planning firm in Chicago. They join the following board members who were elected last fall: **JUDY DIMON**; **DEBORAH BRICKER**, president of Bricker Partners LLC; and Jana Schreuder, executive vice president of Northern Trust. **TIMOTHY SCHWERTFEGER**, chairman and CEO of Nuveen Investments, will succeed *Chicago Tribune* Publisher **SCOTT SMITH** as the board chair next year. ... **BARBARA HOLT**, who was 5th Ward Alderman in the late 1990s, was named education director for Chicago Urban League.

AT CLARK STREET BARBARA BOWMAN, a professor and co-founder of the Erikson Institute, will oversee CPS early childhood programs beginning June 1. She replaces **LUCINDA LEE KATZ**, who moved to California and will head the Marin Country Day School. ... **HOSANNA MAHALEY**, who previously reported to Chief

Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins, was named chief of staff to CEO Arne Duncan. ... Mayor Richard Daley named **MARY ELLEN CARON**, previously a special assistant to Arne Duncan, to head the city's new Department of Children and Youth Services. Caron, who founded and directed Francis Xavier Warde, a pre-K to 8th-grade Catholic school, will oversee city programs for children and teens, including federal Head Start.

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS Two interim principals have been awarded contracts: **DYRICE GARNER**, Beethoven, and **DAVID PINO**, McAuliffe. Contracts for the following principals were renewed: **AURELIO ACEVEDO**, Lozano; **YVONNE AUSTIN**, Plamondon; **JOSE BARILLAS**, Marshall Middle; **BERNADETTE BUTLER**, Agassiz; **FLORA E. DANGERFIELD**, Gary; **DAVID J. DOMOVIC**, Alcott; **VIVIAN EDWARDS**, Schneider; **CHARLES GIGLIO**, Linne; **CHARLOTTE GRAY**, Dumas; **CHRIS N. KOTIS**, Beaubien; **PATRICIA KENT**, Penn; **SHIRLEY MIGGINS**, McDade; **ROBERT J. PALES**, Henson/Olive; **GINO PESCE**, Sayre; **TOMÁS E. REVOLLO**, Waters; **MARCY G. REYES**, Seward; **GLADYS. B. RIVERA**, Lowell; **JACK W. ROCKLIN**, Cleveland; **SYLVIA A. RODRIGUEZ**, Nathan Davis; **GAIL W. SZULC**, Oriole Park.

ELECTIONS Chicago Teachers Union President **DEBORAH LYNCH** received 42 percent of the 21,439 votes cast in the May 21 election, not enough win a majority. Instead, she will face second-place challenger **MARILYN STEWART**, who got 31 percent, in a run-off election to be held June 11. ... **CLARICE BERRY** has been elected to serve a full term as president of the Chicago Principals and

Administrators Association after serving out the term of her predecessor Beverly Tunney, who died last year. About 900 of the group's 1,400 eligible members voted by mail-in ballots.

NEW SCHOOL CEO Arne Duncan broke ground on a new school that was designed to be friendly to the environment. Tarkington Elementary, to be built at 3330 W. 71st St., is registered with the U.S. Green Council, which so far has certified four public schools nationwide as "green." Tarkington will enroll 1,000 students in grades K-8 and is slated to open in the fall of 2005.

LSCs **DERRICK HARRIS**, director of the North Lawndale LSC Federation, was removed as a community representative on the Herzl Elementary LSC for living outside the school's attendance boundaries. Harris challenged his ouster, but CPS lawyers dismissed his claim. Harris says he will continue advocating for parent involvement and local community control through his work with the Federation.

NEW BOOK The May issue of Teacher Magazine features a profile of **TANYA BILLINGSLEY**, a teacher at ACT Charter High, who is also one of the subjects of a soon-to-be-released book about minority educators in Chicago. "See You When You Get There: Young Teachers of Color Working for Change" (Teachers College Press, 2004) was written by **GREGORY MICHIE**, co-director of an alternative teacher-certification program at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dan Eder, Giselle Fuentes

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