

# Catalyst CHICAGO

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APRIL 2006 INDEPENDENT REPORTING ON URBAN SCHOOLS

## SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS

A large, realistic-looking hand is shown from a high angle, palm up. Inside the hand, a large crowd of small, diverse people is gathered. Some people are standing on the fingers, while others are in the palm. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a road or pavement, with shadows cast by the people and the hand.

**CPS IS MAKING SOME HEADWAY IN KEEPING NEW TEACHERS. BUT INTENSIVE SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS IS LIMITED, AND A CASH CRUNCH KEEPS THE DISTRICT'S MENTORING PROGRAM FROM BEING MORE EFFECTIVE.**

**Also: New policy will let more schools off the hook. PAGE 18**

# Ounce of prevention for teachers worth a pound of cure at schools



Veronica Anderson

**O**n the frontlines of public education, three new teachers are singing the praises of those who helped them learn the ropes. Derrick Kimbrough, a new 5th-grade teacher at Tarkington Elementary, credits a teaching coach who visits and keeps in touch regularly for helping him do a better job teaching language arts and reading.

At Castellanos Middle School, 7th-grade teacher Julie Voynovich says she relies on her “troubleshooter”—a retiree with 23 years of teaching experience—whenever she needs to know anything. Another new teacher, Shanteau Williams at Abbott Elementary, learned from her mentor how to tailor assignments to individual students. “It’s like a light bulb has gone off,” she says.

For certain, many more novices can point to more experienced teachers who have made the difference between their staying and leaving. These three are participating in hands-on mentoring and induction programs that provide them with social supports with peers and instructional safety nets from experts. This year, some 300 newly hired teachers in Chicago Public Schools are gaining the benefits of these programs.

As good as that sounds, though, there are a couple thousand more new public school teachers who do not have access to these supports and are left on their own to flounder. Well, not entirely on their own. The district does require that new teachers take part in a program called GOLDEN, an acronym that stands for Guidance, Orientation and Leadership Development Empowering New Teachers. Despite its unwieldy

full name, GOLDEN is a bare bones operation that offers new teachers a two-day orientation, pairs them with mentor teachers (who typically have classes of their own) and tracks how often they meet.

The problem is that no one is making sure those meetings are worthwhile. No one knows whether new teachers are picking up useful tips or insights that they can then take back to their classrooms and put to good use. And nearly everyone who knows anything about GOLDEN—inside and outside the district—knows it’s ineffective, not worth the bother or expense of an outside evaluation.

Even Amanda Rivera, the former principal who runs GOLDEN, concedes that at the current spending level—about \$800 to \$1,000 per teacher—it’s not enough “to do what we need to do.”

To install a more substantial induction initiative, the district would have to spend at least three times that amount; top-notch programs cost upwards of \$6,000 per teacher. The additional expenses go toward in-depth training of mentor teachers and pay that allows them to do that work full time or carry a reduced teaching load. That’s how the New Teachers Center structured its induction program, which is being piloted here in 12 CPS schools and is part of a

national, federally funded study.

Facing down a \$300 million plus deficit, CEO Arne Duncan doesn’t have cash to spare, not even for worthy pursuits like providing a reliable helping hand for the newest teachers. (Already, the district is proposing to carve meaty academic programs down to the bone.)

Some have suggested that the district concentrate its teacher induction dollars in hard-to-staff schools, those that struggle to achieve and maintain a quality faculty. Yet CPS has so far resisted targeting GOLDEN’s \$3 million annual purse, preferring instead to spread the money around as widely as possible. All schools have new teachers who need mentors, says Rivera. “It doesn’t matter where they’re at.”

One national expert begs to differ. Tom Carroll, president of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, notes that high-turnover schools cost more on a per-teacher basis than quality induction programs do. “The cost of losing a first-year teacher is on the order of \$12,500,” says Carroll, who is conducting a study on the cost of teacher turnover in five school districts, including Chicago’s.

There is, however, a ray of hope. U.S. Sen. Barack Obama is seeking \$1.5 billion to create 20 “Innovation Districts,” where, among other school improvement initiatives, raising teacher quality would be a priority. Considering the myriad work being done to improve our schools, Chicago ought to be a shoo-in for one of these grants.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Anderson".

## SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS

# Mentoring not so GOLDEN

Chicago spends an estimated \$800 to \$1,000 on mentoring and support for new teachers. Experts recommend spending \$5,000 to \$6,000 to give the kind of intensive support needed to keep teachers on the job in a tough urban district. **COVER STORY: PAGE 6**



From left, Brenda Humphrey, Mary Hanson and Margaret Evans talk about what it takes to survive the first year of teaching. **See story, page 14**

JOHN BOOZ

### MAKING NEW TEACHERS BETTER

Improving instruction is the goal of the New Teacher Center, now working with 18 teachers as part of a federal study on induction. **PAGE 8**

### CULTIVATING CROP OF URBAN TEACHERS

The New Teachers Network offers meetings, coaching and online help. But the network says 100 percent retention isn't its goal. **PAGE 9**

### RETIREES BECOME 'SOUNDING BOARD'

Former CPS veterans provide a voice of experience for new teachers at hard-to-staff and newly created schools. **PAGE 11**

### COMMUNITY GROUPS FIND TEACHERS IN THEIR OWN BACK YARD

With the help of a state grant, paraprofessionals and parents go back to school to become teachers. **PAGE 12**

### THREE VIEWS FROM THE TRENCHES

A first-year teacher and two veterans talk about the challenges—and rewards—of stepping into the classroom for the first time. **PAGE 14**

**“You need more mentors with more time to work with new teachers, because the payoff is clearly there.”**

*Tom Carroll, president, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY DENNIS NISHI

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### ON OUR WEB SITE

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

- Spanish translations
- Citywide data from the 1980s
- Reform history news highlights

# Notebook

## Q&A with...

### TIMELINE

#### March 3: Attendance

Attendance inched up to 92.8 percent this year, compared to 92.6 percent in 2005. The district unveils more attendance incentives. Students with perfect attendance during March and April will be eligible to win family vacations, courtesy of radio station WGCI-FM. CPS also challenged 10 schools with some of the worst attendance to improve by the end of April, offering students from the two schools—one elementary and one high school—that improve the most a chance to win new athletic shoes.

#### March 22: Reading

Chicago Public Schools will receive \$24.5 million in federal funds to help struggling readers in 6th through 8th grade at 32 schools. The five-year grant will pay for teachers, tutoring, professional development, technology and materials. District officials say the initiative will be modeled after a pilot program conducted in 13 schools last year; 12 schools reportedly improved their reading scores. Chicago received the most money of all eight grant recipients. The list includes Memphis, Tenn.; Newark, N.J.; and San Diego school districts.

#### March 23: Health

Some 2,400 schoolchildren will receive sacks of groceries to take home each weekend through a district partnership aimed at improving academic performance by ensuring poor kids have adequate nutrition. The program, Nourish for Knowledge, is operating in 16 schools, but officials hope to expand it if it's well received by parents. "There are so many kids whose parents just don't have the means to provide enough nutrition," says Mike Mulqueen, executive director of the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the district's partner.

### ELSEWHERE

#### Colorado: Principal qualifications

Prospective principals would have to have three years of teaching experience and a master's degree under a new law passed recently by state legislators, reports the Mar. 17 *Rocky Mountain News*. Some Republican critics say the state faces a critical shortage of principals and the bill would drive away prospective candidates from other fields such as business and the military. Supporters, mostly Democrats, say principals need classroom experience to have credibility with teachers.

#### Texas: Student "passports"

Foster children in the state will soon get student "passports," with critical information such as classes the student has taken, that will move with them if they change schools, according to the Mar. 20 *Austin American-Statesman*. The state's department of family and protective services is also working to

keep children who change foster families in their home neighborhood or school district. The department also acknowledges it needs to develop an electronic system to track statistics on foster children's dropout and graduation rates, test scores and special education placements.

#### New York: Mayoral advice

Reiterating his plan to take control of Los Angeles schools, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa traveled to New York to meet with Mayor Michael Bloomberg to discuss Bloomberg's schools takeover, reports the Mar. 21 *Los Angeles Times*. Villaraigosa also met with Schools Chief Joel Klein, business leaders and the head of the teachers union. Villaraigosa wants to keep an elected school board, but is seeking the power to appoint a superintendent and manage instruction and the budget. Some Los Angeles board members criticized his plan as "obsessed with power and control."

*Tio Hardiman, director of gang mediation services, Chicago Project on Violence Prevention*

The best way to deter violence in schools is to develop relationships with kids, says Tio Hardiman of the Chicago Project on Violence Prevention at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Hardiman, who spoke candidly of running away from home as a teenager and eventually moving to another side of town to avoid gangs, advocates using former gang members to work with kids. He talked with Senior Editor Elizabeth Duffrin.

#### How can schools prevent gang violence?

I'll tell you, that's hard. The schools need to allow programs that are more unconventional, that are tailor-made for what [kids] are going through right now. My message is pretty much [to] enter their world and then bring them into my world. We talk about how hard it is for a kid to get up in the morning and have no food in the refrigerator, then he gets to school and somebody tries to bully him and he knocks the guy out because he's starving and really he just wants to get in the classroom and eat. We talk about [times] when guys didn't sleep all night because the father was beating up the mother and the guys have no way to express their anger. We talk about how one guy had his father beat up, and how the other guy didn't respect his mother because she might be getting high on drugs.

#### Is there a lack of counseling in schools?

You need effective counselors. ... The Chicago Public Schools are going to have to get people in there that understand those dynamics that have such an impact on these young men. [They're thinking], "You're telling me to come to school today and learn when I'm 16 or 15 and I've just gone through this traumatic experience at home just last night, and on top of that I haven't eaten anything, and on top of that I got four or five guys up in my face telling me to join the street organization?" If you can't deal with that, you can't teach that [kid].

#### So it's about building relationships?

It's about building relationships. When I tell my [life story], I don't spend a lot of time on it because what I'm trying to do is talk about mobility. I talk about how I traveled, how I met so many different people. I talk about becom-

### IN SHORT

#### "We can't overlook that important first step—getting a little angry."

*MarySue Barrett, president of the Metropolitan Planning Council, on strategies for activists working toward equitable school funding, at a March 16 policy luncheon.*



CASSANDRA VINOGRAD

ing a real citizen. A lot of people don't talk to them about this stuff, and they need to actually believe they can do it. Some of these young kids don't even go off their block.

**Are schools doing enough to counteract all the temptations kids have?**

Schools are doing the best they can, but like I said, the missing link that's out there is the community. [Kids] get out of school every day and they have nothing to do. That's not the school's responsibility, that's the community's responsibility. Schools do have to be open-minded. A lot of people that have been thrown [out of] the system have felonies in their background and can't really work in the schools. [But] these are some of the guys and women that can get through to these guys potentially. We may have to hire a guy who has a [gang] background, but who is no longer active. We might have to begin to say "Look, put this guy on your security."

**What support have you received from the district?**

Arne Duncan has told us that we're going to get a list of schools to work in. We're going to expedite that as soon as we can.

**What's the plan?**

To do group sessions with students to talk to them about the issues [and] to identify the activities that will be most beneficial. For example, keep the school open from 6:00 to 9:00 or 10 p.m., and don't just have basketball. Mix it up. But the most important part is getting former gang members to give them a lecture that they're not used to hearing. You got these guys who these young people look up to, we need them. We can't get around it. ■

**ASK CATALYST**

**I'm the principal of a small school. The district allocates only half-time positions at some grade levels, which forces my young teachers to instruct children in multiple grades. I was told I could not hire additional teachers with my state discretionary funds. What are my options?**

*Jacqueline Baker, Pope Elementary, North Lawndale*

Discretionary money can't be used to pay for a full-time teacher if the district only funds half a position at that grade level, according to Kayleen Irizarry of the CPS Budget office. Doing so is considered "supplanting" district funding, which state law prohibits.

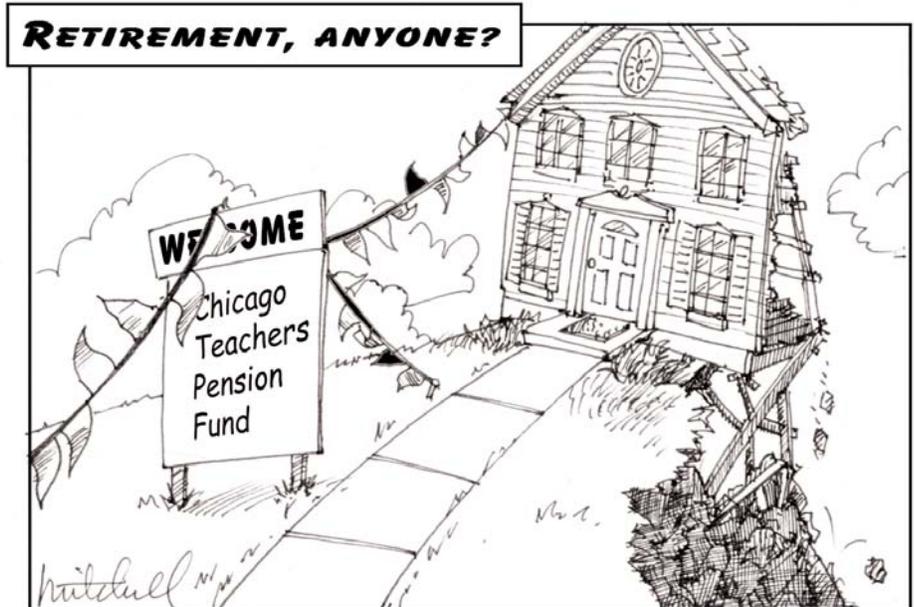
But principals don't always know all their options, Irizarry adds, and there is a budgetary trick to getting the teachers you need. Say the board pays for half-time positions in both 1st and 2nd grade. Use your discretionary money to pay for two more half positions. Each teacher would then fill two half-time positions at the same grade. "You have to think outside of the box," Irizarry says.

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

**MATH CLASS**

The school readiness gap between Chicago schoolchildren and those elsewhere in Illinois is shrinking, according to data from the Illinois State Board of Education. In **2005, 25%** of Chicago kindergartners were deemed below average or deficient in school readiness skills, compared to **17%** outside Chicago. In **2000, 28%** of Chicago kids had poor readiness skills, compared to **15%** of kids elsewhere. Kindergarten readiness levels were determined by assessments and teachers' judgment regarding the child's skills.

**FOOTNOTE**



KURT MITCHELL

# Mentoring not so GOLDEN

By Ed Finkel

**L**ast school year, Chicago Public Schools hired over 2,700 new teachers. Before the end of the year, nearly 200 had quit, leaving not just their schools but the district.

A similar scenario has played out for each of the last several years. In 2003, *Catalyst Chicago* reported that new teachers were leaving the district at a faster clip than 10 years ago (See “More new teachers leaving CPS,” Nov. 2003). Since then, while attrition in teachers’ second and third years has slowed somewhat, more new teachers are quitting before their first year is complete.

Good mentoring can make a critical difference in keeping new teachers on the job. But CPS’ core mentoring program, called GOLDEN, has not lived up to its name and needs a substantial increase in funding to fulfill its potential, say outside observers. Pending legislation in both Congress and the Illinois Legislature would address the funding

issue, although CPS would not automatically benefit.

Launched in 2003, GOLDEN—which stands for Guidance, Orientation and Leadership Development Empowering New Teachers—has had its budget cut from \$3.4 million in 2003 to \$3 million now. One expert notes that Chicago’s budget is about one-tenth of what New York City spends on mentoring.

More mentors have been trained and are now working through GOLDEN, but the number of schools served has dropped.

The decline is due to school closings and an increase in the number of schools participating in alternative support programs, says Karen Cushing, program coordinator at the CPS Department of Learning and Development.

Those alternatives—including

a support network for newcomers and an initiative that matches retirees with first-year teachers—offer intensive training and support. But only about 280 newly hired teachers are currently involved with the alternatives. In contrast, 1,742 first- and second-year teachers are participating in GOLDEN.

Through GOLDEN, mentors receive two days of training in topics such as content knowledge and pedagogy, adult learning theory, communication skills, strategies for providing constructive feedback, classroom observation skills, problem-solving skills, formative assessment and self-assessment, Cushing says.

But some observers say one-on-one time between mentors and new teachers is lacking because of inadequate funding.

“The district seems deter-

**Chicago spends \$3 million per year on its mandatory mentoring program. Observers say that’s far too little to provide new teachers with enough support to keep them in the classroom.**

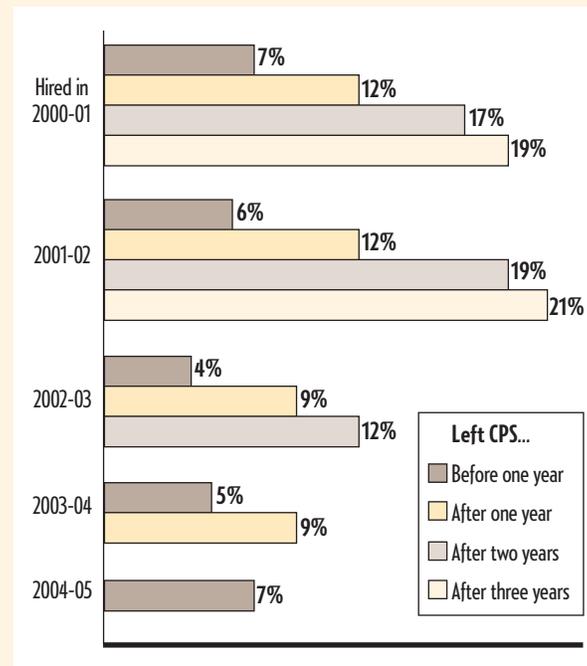
mined to support its first-year teachers with really scarce resources,” says Timothy Knowles, executive director of the Center for Urban School Improvement at the University of Chicago. “That’s really, really hard work given what we know nationally about what good teacher support requires, and the costs of it.”

Knowles estimates that GOLDEN spends about \$800 to \$1,000 per teacher. Meanwhile, organizations like the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future and the New Teacher Center at the University of California-Santa Cruz believe mentoring programs need to spend closer to \$5,500 to \$6,000 per teacher to be effective.

“At \$800 per new teacher, you have to stretch those dollars really far,” Knowles says. As a result, GOLDEN “probably

# Retention stuck in neutral

*Between 2,500 and 2,800 new teachers join CPS each year. While the number of new hires quitting after their first year is declining, the number of newcomers leaving during their first year is on the rise.*



Source: Chicago Public Schools Human Resources

doesn't provide the kind of direct support in the classroom for new teachers that can make the biggest difference in terms of whether they stay."

Amanda Rivera, CPS director of learning and development, doesn't foresee the district approaching anywhere near the recommended per-teacher funding without more state money. The district's current spending "is not enough to do what we need to do," she acknowledges. One-on-one time between mentor and mentee and more in-depth training are needed, Rivera says.

Tom Carroll, president of the national teaching commission, credits CPS for establishing training, networking opportunities and a "clear structure of interaction between the mentors and the mentees." He believes GOLDEN has had a modestly positive effect.

"It's going in the right direction," Carroll says. "You need more mentors with more time to work with new teachers because the payoff is clearly there." The program "needs to be much bigger, much more intensive [with] more contact time between the mentors and the mentees."

Illinois requires districts to establish mentoring programs, which new teachers must complete to gain full professional status, says Audrey Soglin, director of the Center for Educational Innovation at the Illinois Education Association. Programs must include observation of the new teacher by the mentor, an opportunity for the new teacher to observe other veterans and "some way of giving formative feedback," she explains.

Soglin also serves as executive director of the Consortium for Educational Change, a network of 56 districts (not including CPS) that helped develop criteria for the programs.

But, says Soglin, accountability is lacking. While districts may have "the right stuff on paper," she points out, many may not follow through because the state does not provide funding and many districts are strapped for cash.

An infusion of funding would help provide relief time for mentors to observe new teachers, for new teachers to observe veterans, and for both to attend training sessions and participate in networking, Soglin says. "One of the things we find challenging is taking on mentoring on top of a full [teaching] load," she says.

A \$4 million proposal pending in the Illinois Legislature would fund between six and 12 pilot programs in selected districts, providing up to the recommended \$6,000 per teacher spending level. A similar program is now in place in California, Soglin says.

"The intent [is] to show the effect a high-quality, well-funded mentoring program can have on both teacher retention and student achievement, to try to urge [lawmakers] to broaden funding beyond the pilots," she says.

One provision in the program would allow mentors to be released from classroom duties either full time or part time. Mentoring "would be a teacher's job, instead of trying to do everything he or she is already trying to do," Soglin says. "They could then mentor between 12 and 16 new teachers."

## INNOVATION DISTRICTS

While Carroll estimates that Chicago's investment in mentoring is similar to that of other large urban districts, he notes that New York City, which is working with the New Teacher Center, has

invested \$30 million per year.

"It's probably the biggest mentoring program in the country," he says. "They have more training, and they have more contact time between mentors and teachers."

Carroll notes that a few other cities have launched innovative mentoring programs: Boston, which has received significant foundation support; and Chattanooga and Memphis, Tenn., both of which have received state support, along with foundations in Chattanooga. "We think those are interesting models," Carroll says. "They're happening only in a few places, but they're very effective."

To expand and support such models nationwide, U.S. Sen. Barack Obama has introduced legislation to create 20 "Innovation Districts" that would focus on improving teacher recruitment, training and retention. The legislation would provide \$1.5 billion, and would provide raises for higher-performing teachers and financial incentives to those willing to work in low-income schools.

Having a strong plan to mentor and retain new teachers would be a major determining factor in selecting the 20 districts, says Steve Robinson, a high school teacher who is serving as a one-year fellow in Obama's office.

"If you want to have good teachers, you don't place them in a classroom with a bunch of kids and let them sort it out for the first few years," Robinson says, adding that doing so leads to greater turnover and, in turn, higher costs. "It's pretty expensive to bring in new teachers every couple of years. If you can cut down on that, then a proposal like this, after awhile, is not that expensive."

*Ed Finkel is a Chicago-based writer. E-mail him at editor@catalyst-chicago.org.*

# Making new teachers better

## A federal study brings intensive support and full-time mentoring to 18 first-year teachers

By Debra Williams

Most teacher induction programs have a similar design: Send beginning teachers through an orientation and then a few workshops during the year, and assign them to a mentor—typically a more experienced teacher who is still working in the classroom.

But the teacher induction program run by the highly regarded New Teacher Center at the University of California-Santa Cruz goes beyond these basics to provide intensive support for both mentors and beginning teachers. The goal is to not only keep teachers in the classroom, but to improve teaching as well by introducing newcomers to best practices.

New mentors are selected through an exhaustive interview process conducted by teachers union representatives, veteran teacher-leaders, current and former mentors and district administrators.

Once selected, mentors receive extensive training before being assigned to new teachers, and ongoing training throughout the year. Training includes lessons on teaching and working with adults, using student work and data to guide teaching practices, collecting and analyzing data and building leadership skills. Mentors are required to meet weekly with colleagues during the two years of the program.

Perhaps most critically, mentors are released from their classrooms to work full-time with their new charges.

“Beginning teachers have someone to help them every step of the way,” says Ellen Moir, executive director of the New Teacher Center. “Our philosophy is that mentors have to have time to get into the [newcomer’s] classroom and that is why we release teachers for this job full-time, not just after school.”

Tom Ganser of the College of Education at the University of Wisconsin-White-water, says the Center “has a comprehensive picture of mentoring. It reflects where we should be, seeing mentoring as some-

thing that can influence teachers beyond psychological support and survival, as a way of becoming a great teacher.”

The Center now has partnerships in 28 states and in Puerto Rico, using an induction model created in the late 1980s as part of the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project. Studies have found that 88 percent of teachers who participated are still in their classrooms, and 94 percent are still in the profession, according to Moir.

This year, as part of a federal study, the Center has brought a small-scale, one-year version of the program to 17 districts, including Chicago. In CPS, two mentors are working with 18 teachers in 12 schools until June.

The U.S. Department of Education commissioned Mathematica Policy Research based in Princeton, N.J., to conduct the five-year, \$10.3 million study to examine the impact of high-quality induction programs on teacher retention and student learning.

As the study got underway last year, Mathematica chose the New Teacher Center and a similar program run by Educational Testing Service for the study.

Districts were selected based on size and poverty level, as well as willingness to participate and whether the district had an ongoing need for intensive teacher induction. Schools were randomly selected.

Other participating districts include Atlanta, Birmingham, Ala., Boston, Miami, Milwaukee and Philadelphia.

### ‘BEST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT I’VE HAD’

Mentors Helen Massey and Meghan Zefran say their training was rigorous and rewarding.

Massey, a former GOLDEN mentor who most recently taught at Nicholson Math and Science Elementary in Englewood, says new mentors learned, among other things, how to establish relationships with teachers and how to analyze student work with formative assessment.

“It was the best professional development I’ve had,” she says. “The support has been phenomenal.”

Meghan Zafran, also a former GOLDEN mentor, says the hands-on training held with mentors in California was especially effective. “They would go through scenarios with us. They really tried to work through those scenarios to help us understand the tools we were learning.”

Shanteau Williams, a new 4th-grade teacher at Abbott Elementary in Armour Square, says Massey taught her a small-group strategy to help her tailor instruction for students at varying academic levels. After dividing students into small groups according to ability, Williams then gave them different assignments. When teaching fractions, for example, Massey suggested giving struggling students just a few problems, along with objects like blocks to help them visualize and solve the problems. Students who understand the concept should be given more problems, Massey explained, and Williams should guide them to solve the problems on their own.

“Now, it’s like a light bulb has gone off,” Williams says. “Because I work with small groups, I can tell who gets it and who doesn’t. I couldn’t see that before.”

Jennifer Mapes, who teaches a 4th-grade program for gifted students at Beaubien Elementary in Jefferson Park, says Massey taught her to create project-based assignments, develop questions to prod students to use higher-order thinking skills and provided other techniques to guide students to complete their projects.

“My struggle was getting my students to take responsibility and be accountable for their work,” Mapes says.

The New Teacher Center hopes to continue its work in Chicago after this year.

“This has been a great opportunity for us,” says Mimi Appel, outreach coordinator for the center. “We look forward to building a partnership with CPS.”

*Intern Cassie del Pilar contributed to this story.*

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

# Cultivating crop of urban teachers

Meetings, coaching and online discussions help retain new teachers 'in a system that is incredibly frustrating'

By Debra Williams

**O**n a Wednesday night in February, first-year teacher Derrick Kimbrough and about three dozen other new teachers gather in a room at the University of Chicago. As they trickle in, they greet each other and share hugs and tidbits of news from the day. This is their 12th meeting as a group and they have grown comfortable and relaxed around each other.

Today, each of them will get a copy of the children's book, "Tar Beach," a story about a young African-American girl in New York who, while sitting on the tar-covered roof of her building, imagines "flying" over bridges and buildings that are special to her.

For the next two hours, they learn how to use the book in class to talk about communities, families and landmarks. They also learn techniques for teaching skills such as picking up context clues, making inferences and writing. Students will need all those skills to ace the upcoming ISAT test.

"I love these meetings," says Kimbrough, who left the corporate world for the classroom and is now a 5th-grade teacher at Tarkington Elementary in Chicago Lawn. "I know I am going to leave with one or more good things to use in my curriculum or to help me take my students to another level."

The meetings, held bi-weekly for first-year teachers and monthly for those in their second year, are just one strategy of the New Teachers Network, a two-year induction program that is a project of the Center for Urban School Improvement at the University of Chicago. Along with the



JASON REBLANDO

**Derrick Kimbrough, a first-year teacher at Tarkington Elementary, takes notes as he observes a reading lesson being modeled by his coach, who taught him how to help his students identify personality traits of characters in stories.**

camaraderie of working with other newcomers and learning new teaching techniques, the meetings also provide a place to pick up practical tips to ease day-to-day life in classrooms and schools.

Ultimately, the network's goal is to retain newcomers who are committed to teaching in urban schools and have the potential to make a positive impact in their classrooms and schools.

The network was launched in Area 15 (which includes Bronzeville, Douglas, Hyde Park, Kenwood and Woodlawn, as well as one school in Englewood and one in South Shore) as a replacement for GOLDEN, the district's mentoring and induction program. A few teachers from other parts of the city, who heard about the network and wanted to participate, have been included.

Last year, 101 teachers participated in the network; 89 of them remain in Chicago Public Schools this year.

"Our goal is not 100 percent retention," says Lisa Vahey, one of the program's co-founders. "Urban teaching is not for everyone. But for those who want to do this, we help them make it through."

As of April, 114 first-year and 75 second-year teachers were participating.

## FEEDBACK, COACHING AND 'LITTLE THINGS'

Kimbrough, 37, became so frustrated with the business world that he enrolled in the Academy of Urban School Leadership to become a teacher and says he received a solid foundation in teaching there.

But when Academy staff recommended the network, he decided to give it a try. "I love teaching. I often question why I hadn't been doing this sooner," Kimbrough says.

"Being at the Academy was definitely a plus, but I found that [feedback] is something I need every two weeks. I like to hear, 'Hey, Derrick, you are doing a good job' or, 'You might want to do this a little differently.'"

Along with such feedback, meetings include talks about classroom management, literacy, race and culture in the classroom, and new policies and programs in the district. There's also discussion of the "little things" that will make a new teacher's life easier.

For example, newcomers are cau-

Derrick Kimbrough, with 5th-graders (from left) Isaias Cervantes, Alexis Medina, and Johan Esparragoza, says the New Teachers Network helps keep him in the classroom.



JASON REBLANDO

tioned to expect discipline problems the day after report card pickup day from students who didn't do well.

"We tell them, 'Kids get a spanking and they are going to hold it against you,'" says Ken Kern, the director of the network.

Another example: Newcomers are also told that in February and March, students usually become even more unmanageable. The reason: Cold weather keeps students from going outside to burn off energy, and with the holiday season over, kids have little to look forward to until summer.

"We have high expectations for our teachers. We don't want their first year of teaching to be a throw-away year," says Kern, who believes that without support, a teacher's first year usually is a loss for students because newcomers don't have the experience to anticipate and handle tricky situations.

## INTERNET HELP, CLASS VISITS

The network uses two additional strategies: an online discussion group and coaching from veterans.

"You can't afford not to use the online group," says Kimbrough. "You get immediate feedback from coaches, facilitators and colleagues. Whether it's ways to deal with parents, celebrating holidays in the classroom, how to use a story—you get a response."

Past posts on the site include queries like "What can I do about tattling in my classroom?" and "I need an assignment on Rosa Parks." Teachers also receive practical information, says Vahey, such as online bookstore coupons and information

about low-cost massages to ease stress.

As the third strategy, coaches visit classrooms to model lessons, observe new teachers and provide new instructional techniques. New teachers from Area 15 receive visits six times a year; teachers from outside the area are visited three times.

Kimbrough says his coach was invaluable; for one, showing him how to teach students a way to identify the personality traits of characters in stories.

"My kids could read a text and tell you who the character was, but they couldn't tell you if the character was brave or strong or something else," explains Kimbrough. "I had difficulty teaching them this."

His coach modeled a technique that involved guiding students through a story. The coach had students follow along in their own copies as she read the story out loud, stopping at relevant passages and pointing out how the text illustrated traits such as courage or intelligence. The coach then gave Kimbrough a similar follow-up assignment to do with his students.

Now, he reports, his students "have such a good grasp that they are now doing character sketches. They create a character, create character traits and build a whole story around that character."

## PIZZA AND TEARS

The network's humble beginning was in 1998, with nothing more than pizza and tears, says Vahey.

At the time, she and colleague Kavita Kapadia were leading a teaching seminar at Northwestern University. Young teachers began to approach them about how

hard it was being a new teacher.

In response, the two, along with another colleague, pooled money for pizza and began holding get-togethers where new teachers could talk about a host of issues: handling report card pick-up, building a classroom library or deciding what to teach.

Almost a dozen teachers attended, recalls Vahey. "We knew them real well. They were a well-educated [group] of folks that we were helping survive. Our thing was, 'How do you keep smart people working in a system that is incredibly frustrating?'"

Eventually, what became known as the little "boutique" program caught the eye of Tony Bryk, the former director of the Center for Urban School Improvement, where Vahey and Kapadia were enrolled in professional development classes. (Bryk is now with Stanford University.)

Vahey says Bryk eventually helped them fund the program and sent her to a conference at the highly regarded New Teachers Center in Santa Cruz, Calif. There, she realized "that what we had been doing had a name: induction."

Since then, the staff has grown to include three full-time and one part-time coach, and 17 facilitators who guide the evening meetings. While the coaches are former teachers, the facilitators are still in the classroom and have three to 10 years of experience.

The annual \$690,000 price tag is currently funded by the Boeing Company, The Joyce Foundation, the Fry Family Foundation, the Arie and Ida Crown Memorial and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

"I would love to have more money, to have more coaches, to give teachers more than six visits a year," says Kern. "I'd like to have them in the classroom every week. We always hear, 'We love your program, we wish we could see you more.'"

The network hopes participants eventually become teacher-leaders in their buildings.

"We want them to be on the [school improvement planning] committee," says Kern. "We want them on a local school council. We want them to write grants and lead workshops. We want them to develop as learners and leaders."

"If I could bottle [the network] and give it to all new teachers in the world, I would," says Kimbrough. "It is the antidote that new teachers need to stay in schools." ■

# Retirees become 'sounding board'

By Ed Finkel

Every fall, John Green watches the looks on new teachers' faces fade from sunny and warm to cloudy and chilly along with the weather.

"They come in with all this anticipation. You look around in October, November, and it wanes," says Green, a 23-year retired veteran of Chicago Public Schools who taught 8th grade at Fuller Elementary in Grand Boulevard and served as assistant principal at three schools.

New teachers "need someone to direct them as far as [school] culture, parents, attendance books, problem-solving, professional growth, technology, self-assessment, classroom management," explains Green, a mentor at Castellanos Middle School in Little Village. "All of these things are hitting them at the same time, and none of that is addressed in college. There, they get content knowledge."

Julie Voynovich, a 7th-grade language arts and reading teacher who worked with Green last year, agrees. "College really does not prepare you for teaching," she says. "John was my troubleshooter. If I needed to know anything, John would know where to go."

Green and other former teachers are guiding rookies at 80 schools through the Retired Mentors Program, a two-year-old partnership with the Chicago chapter of the National Retired Teachers Association, the educator wing of (and precursor to) the American Association of Retired Persons, which pays some of the costs. Mentors earn \$200 per day for 20 half-days of work.

Chicago's project, part of a national initiative launched in 2002, is serving 163 new teachers this year (71 of the newcomers are special education teachers). Some of the schools were identified as hard-to-staff. Some new schools without many experienced faculty also asked to participate.

The program attempts to match mentors with mentees by grade and subject matter. But those factors are not overriding.

## DISILLUSIONMENT AND DISCIPLINE

The University of California at Santa Cruz is working on an evaluation of the

program, to be completed in 2007. So far, according to a report from the national teachers' group, a university survey found that 75 percent of participating new teachers say they benefited from the program.

Evidence that the program is helping to keep teachers on the job is beginning to surface, although the data involve small numbers of teachers. Of the 68 newcomers who began working with mentors in spring 2004, 62 stayed in the district and 43 stayed at their schools.

In 2005, the number of participating teachers more than doubled. Of 154 teachers, 122 stayed in the district, 97 of them in their schools.

Karen Cushing, program coordinator for the CPS Department of Learning and Development, notes that some new teachers from the schools served in 2004 quit before mentoring got underway. "They realize, 'This isn't what I thought it was going to be,'" she says. "Part of the reason for this program is to help them through what we call 'the time of disillusionment.'"

**"College really does not prepare you for teaching. [My retired mentor] was my troubleshooter. If I needed to know anything, [he] would know where to go."**

*Julie Voynovich, 7th-grade teacher, Castellanos Elementary*

Mae Coen, a 36-year veteran who taught at Austin and Steinmetz high schools and has mentored at Douglass Middle, May Elementary and Clemente High, says some first-year teachers badly need confidence.

"Very little praise is given to these new teachers. They become very frustrated," Coen says. "That's where the mentors come in, to be the sounding board, to be the crying shoulder."

Because student misbehavior is often the most difficult problem new teachers face, classroom management is a key component of the training provided to both mentors and new teachers; other topics include data-driven instruction

and multicultural awareness.

## RACE, CULTURE CLASH

Mentors can also help newcomers to bridge racial and cultural divides with their students.

Alvin Lubov, former veteran principal at Frederick Douglass Middle School, remembers one disillusioned young woman who was teaching at a school in a troubled minority neighborhood. Several teachers had been assaulted there.

"She really needed someone to talk to and vent," says Lubov, who's serving as a mentor this year at Mose Vines, a small school in the former Orr High campus in Humboldt Park.

The young woman, who is white, said her parents were apprehensive about the situation, so Lubov called to talk to them as well. A mentor can provide new teachers with "safety in an emotional sense," he says. "People need to know that there's somebody out there looking out for them."

Christopher Stralkowski, who taught

7th and 8th-grade math as a new teacher at Ruggles Elementary in Greater Grand Crossing two years ago, says mentor Catherine Boyd-Morgan helped him to communicate with his students at the predominantly black school.

"There is an idea that, 'You're an outsider coming into our school, coming into our neighborhood,'" says Stralkowski, who now teaches 3rd grade at Ruggles. Boyd-Morgan, who is African American, talked with students and "was very helpful in making it clear that teaching and education are based on students' minds," not race or culture, he says.

"Lo and behold, come January or February, it was a non-issue." ■

# Community groups find teachers in their own back yard

Initiative is 'a community solution to a broader educational problem'

By Emily Horbar

**T**ahesha Orji, a teacher's aide at two elementary schools in Auburn-Gresham, works with 2nd- and 3rd-graders who are struggling in reading, writing and math. For years Orji longed to one day become a full-fledged teacher, but she didn't know where to start.

Then Orji discovered Grow Your Own Illinois, a program that could help her make that dream a reality. She quickly signed on. The initiative, modeled after a program that started six years ago in Logan Square, provides teacher training for parents, community leaders and para-professionals who are already active in schools.

"I love the program because it will prepare me to go in and teach in a classroom that is all mine. That's my ultimate goal," says Orji, who is enrolled in an online college to obtain her bachelor's degree in organizational psychology and will begin taking education courses this fall.

"I will have the experience and training to make sure students end up at the level they need to be," she adds. "Who can better talk to a child from the neighborhood than an adult from that same neighborhood?" Orji plans to begin teaching within the next two years and hopes to become a school counselor as well.

Grow Your Own aims to solve the perennial problem of high teacher turnover in low-income schools. A study by the nonprofit organizing group ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform



JASON REBLANDO

**At Barton Elementary** in Auburn Gresham, teacher-in-training Mary Ann Peterson goes over work with 2nd-grader Daimere Mister. Peterson is with Target Area Development Corporation, a partner in Grow Your Own.

Now) found that over three years, approximately 40 percent of first-year teachers did not return for a second year at 64 neighborhood schools in Englewood, Lawndale and Little Village.

After supporters of the program successfully lobbied state officials, Grow Your Own received \$1.5 million in the governor's 2006 education budget. The money will cover expenses for five neighborhood-based programs in Chicago, along with five more in other districts across the state.

"We want to help regular people in the community become powerful teachers," says Anne Hallett, director of Grow Your Own Illinois. "It's a community-based solution to a broader educational problem. Normally, you have teachers come, see the situation and run the other way. The people we're working with understand the communities they're working in, so you don't have that problem."

## 'NUEVA GENERACION'

Grow Your Own was inspired by Project Nueva Generación, developed by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association. The project got its start with mothers who were working as parent mentors in schools.

"[They] were doing a great job in the classroom and brought a lot of understanding of the issues of bilingualism," says Joanna Brown, director of education organizing for the Logan Square group. "[They were saying] 'I don't want to go back to the factory or cleaning floors. I want to stay in the schools.'"

The association partnered with Chicago State University's bilingual education department in 2000 and won a grant to start Nueva Generación, which helps parents and paraprofessionals obtain a bachelor's degree and a bilingual education certificate. The project also provided tutoring for parents who needed extra



Tahesha Orji (right) with 3rd-grader Shanina Benjamin. Orji says Grow Your Own is helping her reach a longtime goal of becoming a teacher.

JASON REBLANDO

help with math and learning English. Some classes were held in the neighborhood, and for those that were not, participants carpooled to campus.

Mutual support was key to keeping the participants—many of whom were working and caring for families—from quitting, says Brown. “If anyone thought of dropping the program or a class, they would get calls telling them, “Don’t do it, we’ll help you,” she says.

Several years later, the idea for Grow Your Own was hatched when the Logan Square group and other organizations were discussing ways to improve teaching. Project Nueva Generación “was a really great model and had a great retention rate, so we dove in headfirst,” Brown recalls. Local state Sen. Iris Martinez agreed to be chief sponsor of the bill establishing Grow Your Own.

In January, Grow Your Own came to Auburn Gresham on the South Side. Approximately 30 candidates are working together to become teachers in their local schools. Three other groups—ACORN, the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and the Southwest

Organizing Project—are working to develop programs throughout the city. Citywide, Grow Your Own hopes to add 1,000 new teachers to low-income schools by 2016.

Grow Your Own works by targeting low-income neighborhoods with a high need for teachers, then helping community organizations that have experience in education advocacy create partnerships with at least one school that is identified as “hard-to-staff” and one higher education institution.

“The program is like a bridge,” says Angelique Orr, executive board member for the Target Area Development Corporation, which participates in Grow Your Own.

Like candidates in Project Nueva Generación, students in Grow Your Own take some classes close to home, taught by a faculty member from a partner college or university, in space provided by community groups. Higher-level education classes are taken on campus. Tuition is paid through grants and loans that are forgivable if graduates teach in their communities for five years

“Some people cannot afford to attend school and the cost can prevent them from going,” says Mary Ann Peterson, an outreach worker for Target Area Development. “This helps them to not have to worry about that. They can just focus on getting their education.”

Attracting more teachers of color is another goal of Grow Your Own.

“It’s great for the schools because kids are gaining teachers who know how to deal with them, have high expectations and like the neighborhood and don’t have plans to leave,” says Madeline Talbott, head organizer of ACORN.

Evelia Mucino, a Logan Square parent who is participating in Project Nueva Generación, says it’s important to be a role model for other adults as well as children. “I have a big responsibility and they look up to me,” says Mucino. “For other parents within the community, when they see I’m in school to become a teacher, they are inspired.”

*Emily Horbar is a Catalyst intern. E-mail her at editor@catalyst-chicago.org.*

# Three views from the trenches

Research shows that teachers who receive support from mentors are more likely to stay on the job than those who are left to struggle through their rookie year on their own.

Consulting Editor Lorraine Forte and Associate Editor Debra Williams spoke with veteran teachers Mary Hanson and Brenda Humphrey and newcomer Margaret Evans about the challenges of being a first-year teacher, what good mentors provide and what keeps teachers in the classroom. Hanson recently won the Kohl-McCormick Early Childhood Teaching Award and is a National Board-certified preschool teacher at Healy Elementary in Bridgeport; Humphrey mentors new teachers, is a facilitator for the Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center and teaches 4th grade at Woodson Elementary in Grand Boulevard; and Evans, who came to the district this year through Teach for America, teaches 6th grade at Pope Elementary in North Lawndale.

## In your first year on the job, what was most frustrating, and what kind of support did you get?

**EVANS:** My principal is very supportive of what I'm doing in the classroom. She definitely has a vision for how our school should be run and makes sure we're always working together. She's very supportive of me being able to reach parents, or intervening with students that I've had classroom management issues with. Most frustrating to me is the students have come to trust me and share with me some of the issues that they have outside of school, and I really want to help them.

**HUMPHREY:** When I was a newcomer, I found it extremely difficult. We didn't have the support like teachers have now in terms of mentors. But the principal was very welcoming and inviting. She took me under her wing and showed me the ropes in terms of the rules and regulations of the school, how to talk to parents and things like that. I did receive some of that information in pre-service [training] but it was not what I had expected. I also had the help of some of the other teachers.

## What do you mean when you say training wasn't what you expected?

**HUMPHREY:** Pre-service education prepared me, but not to the extent that I could come in and feel comfortable with what it was that I was

supposed to do, [such as] lesson plan design, not to mention discipline problems and communicating with parents.

## Does this sound like what you hear from new teachers?

**HANSON:** Absolutely, along with getting kids motivated and convincing them that [education] is important and making it interesting and exciting. Kids are easily distracted and to really light a fire under them and have them take ownership of their learning is a challenge.

## Have any of you considered quitting and if so, what changed your minds?

**HUMPHREY:** I never considered quitting. I was willing to fight the fight. I engaged in a lot of professional development and did a lot of reading and research on my own. I was willing to stay because I truly thought I could make a significant difference.

**HANSON:** Exactly. There hasn't been a time when I wanted to quit, but there's definitely been days I've gone home and just cried. But ... I really felt the bond was starting to come with my students and that's why I wanted to stay committed to them.

## What does it take to be a good mentor?

**HANSON:** Taking people from where they're at, looking at them as equals, finding out what they need and listening and not having your

own agenda. Find out where they want to go and what you can possibly do to help them. Or just encourage them. I've taken away so many fantastic ideas from the classrooms of [teachers] I've worked with. I'm not coming in as an expert. I'm coming in as a colleague and somebody with a little bit more experience.

**HUMPHREY:** Mary made a good point. It's important that you give your mentees the feeling that you're coming in to facilitate them colleague-to-colleague, not to judge them. You learn more from them than they learn from you. New teachers come in with a wealth of knowledge. With my expertise and what they're coming in with—that's a dynamite package.

## Do you have a mentor?

**EVANS:** Yes. I actually have kind of a team of mentors. (Laughter) I can go to different people for different things. And I agree with everything they just said. Take people where they're at and try to figure out their goals. I have one mentor who is always accessible. She has given me her cell phone and home phone and I can call her whenever. I've taken advantage of that.

## What can other teachers do if they're not formal mentors but want to help out new teachers?

**EVANS:** I've had fellow teachers come in and help me set up my classroom or get the bulletin boards done. The gym teacher at my school is so supportive. She'll just come in on her own time and observe me and give me exactly what you're talking about—encouragement, support, answers to questions that I have about what went wrong in a lesson or what went well.

**HUMPHREY:** That's fantastic. She knows what you're experiencing [because] you're in the same environment dealing with many of the same children. That really is a helping hand that you need to get through this exhausting job.

## Do you think paying teachers more to work in hard-to-staff schools would help keep them there?

**HUMPHREY:** Money might help, but it's not a major issue. What would really help teachers to stay is having mentors in place. You need to develop a sense of community within those schools. Then and only then, I think, will new teachers stay.



PHOTOS BY JOHN BOOZ

## Mary Hanson

**SCHOOL:** Healy Elementary  
**YEARS TEACHING:** 30 +

**ADVICE TO NEW TEACHERS:** If you're thinking about quitting, don't. Maybe the school's not the right fit. Don't write off the whole profession because of one bad experience.

## Brenda Humphrey

**SCHOOL:** Woodson Elementary  
**YEARS TEACHING:** 30+

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER:** Dedication and understanding ... a whole lot of love. You have to find out what it is that students like and use that to build upon, to help you facilitate their learning process.

## Margaret Evans

**SCHOOL:** Pope Elementary  
**YEARS TEACHING:** <1

**FIRST PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING:** It's exhausting. I never realized how many hours it takes to plan the next day. I'm literally up until 2:00 in the morning and running until I go to bed at night.

**HANSON:** Money might attract teachers initially to go into more challenging situations. But unless there's support once they get there, I don't think all the money in the world is going to keep them. When you look at schools with long stability, teachers there 15, 20, 25, 30 years—there's a good reason. The [principal] is crucial to what happens in setting the tone. I'm also a union delegate and so many times I've seen principals look at teachers as though they're the enemy. That makes for a bad teaching environment.

**EVANS:** I take classes with fellow first-year teachers and really the make-or-break [issue] is safety. If the school is not safe, no matter what you're being paid, teachers are not going to want to stay there.

### Has your experience made you want to stay in teaching?

**EVANS:** So far, I love my students. I'm very fortunate with the leadership at my school. I think I will stay in it, but it's exhausting. I never realized how many hours it takes to plan the next day. I'm literally up until 2:00 in the morning and running until I go to bed at night.

**HUMPHREY:** It will get easier. (Laughter)

### What have you learned about how to deal with parents?

**HUMPHREY:** The more they yell and the more they become angry, you just lower your voice. You have to let them know that you're not the enemy. Most parents have fears of school. You have to be calm and let them know that you hear what they're saying and you just want to help.

**EVANS:** That has really made the difference with my parent relationships. In the first two weeks of school I called every parent [to say] I'll be teaching your child, and this is something great that he has done. Ever since then, I really try to maintain a balance by making sure that every conversation starts off with something positive about their child. That has helped parents be open with me about what's going on and how I can work with them.

### What personal qualities are important for a new teacher?

**HUMPHREY:** Dedication and understanding. You have to show a whole lot of love. You have to find out what it is that students like and use

that to build upon, to help you facilitate their learning process.

**HANSON:** You have to love children. I know some people may disagree with that, but I agree with Brenda. Your heart has to be there. When kids know you care—I don't care what age they are, if it's pre-K or high school—they will come around, they will respond to your respecting them and listening to where they're at. The more challenging they are, the harder I have to try.

**EVANS:** Definitely. Caring is number one. You have to care about your students. They can tell whether you do or not. You have to be an excellent problem-solver and really perceive yourself as the leader, telling them that we're all going to do this together.

### Any parting advice for newcomers?

**HANSON:** If you're thinking about quitting, don't. Maybe the school's not the right fit. Don't write off the whole profession because of one bad experience.

**HUMPHREY:** I agree. Just because that particular school is not working out for you, don't leave the profession. Each school has its own culture and if you like working with kids, stick with it. ■

## Improving teaching is a low priority at small high schools

Despite a \$26 million investment in Chicago's small high schools, efforts to improve instruction fall short, a new study finds

By Alexander Russo

Creating small public high schools was supposed to cure much of what ailed Chicago's large, failing ones. Breaking through the isolation and anonymity common in large buildings, small schools staff would band together around an essential mission: improving classroom instruction. National and local foundations pledged \$26 million toward Chicago's small high school initiative.

But reality fell short of expectations, a new study finds. Despite the collegial atmosphere, efforts to improve teaching are minimal, according to a report released in January by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Most professional development in these new schools is aimed at solving immediate problems with a particular lesson or student rather than long-term professional growth. Small school size creates extra responsibilities for staffers, who are too focused on day-to-day survival to plan together for ongoing improvements. Instructional leadership is also lacking, researchers find.

Just as in large high schools, many small school principals don't understand what good classroom instruction looks like or how to advance it, says John Easton, executive director of the Consortium.

"The leadership's not there and the vision's not there."

Small high schools do have advantages, according to earlier Consortium research. Teachers report more trusting relationships and a stronger commitment to school improvement than do those at larger Chicago high schools.

But their size also creates obstacles to improving instruction, the researchers found. A smaller staff means a heavier workload, which reduces time and energy available for organizing teacher training.

Small school teachers must often teach a wider variety of courses, which requires more preparation. There are also fewer of them available to divvy up tasks such as supervising detention, running after-school clubs and serving on school committees. Principals are also stretched thin with a bare-bones support staff. Most have no assistant principal and many share a clerk with other small schools.

District and foundation officials say they have taken new steps to support staff development at small schools, which they agree is lacking. In March, they hired coaches to provide more leadership training for small school principals and their lead teachers. Creating quality staff development is one of the topics, and Allen Bearden, who formerly ran the Quest Center at the Chicago Teachers Union, is one of the coaches.

Michael Klonsky, director of the non-profit Small Schools Workshop, thinks the last thing that principals need is more coaches, especially with all the mentoring already provided to rookie principals. "Some of these new principals have more coaches than a pro athlete does," he says. "They're going to so many coaches meetings that there's no time left to be an instructional leader." He advocates a stronger role for teachers in directing instruction.

But the study authors see training for principals as part of the solution, along with identifying teachers with the skills needed to lead professional development. Overwhelmed small school staff also need help to better manage their time, they say.

### LEADERSHIP NEEDED

The Consortium interviewed principals and teachers and observed professional development at seven of the small high schools during 2004-05. Those schools were among the 23 opened since 2001 by the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative (CHSRI), a partnership between the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, local funders and CPS.

Most schools scheduled adequate time for professional development, the researchers found—with regular grade-level, departmental, and whole-staff meetings, as well as planning periods. But these meetings were often spent on administrative concerns such as book orders and standardized testing. Discussions about teaching were spontaneous, unstructured, and not usually followed up.

Only one school in the study engaged

teachers in ongoing, in-depth discussions about their own classroom strategies in a way that might lead to improved student achievement, the researchers found.

At that school, which they declined to identify, the principal would organize a series of workshops on a given topic, such as how to better align the curriculum with state standards. Teachers debated, for instance, whether certain standards were too broad or narrow and how to best use them to plan lessons. They also analyzed each other's classroom assessments on whether they tested only literal knowledge or the higher level thinking skills required on state exams.

Despite the demands on their time, teachers will devote the extra work needed to improve instruction, researchers concluded, but only if someone leads them in a sustained effort.

Leadership appears to be the key to the sustained efforts observed at Al Raby High, a new small school in East Garfield Park. Raby builds a 90-minute block of staff development time into its schedule each week, when students leave early for internships. The lead teacher and the principal structure the discussions, but also draw on others to lead them. Administrative concerns are given lower priority and left until the meeting's end.

A recent workshop led by one of the school's teachers included a steady mix of ideas, conversation and small-group sharing on how to evaluate your own teaching and adjust it to better engage students.

Absent was the interminable Power-Point monologue that often passes for professional development elsewhere. Even better, no one graded papers or read the newspaper, a sight not uncommon in many Chicago high schools.

But Raby has advantages over more established schools in finding time to plan worthwhile sessions. So far, the school has the old Lucy Flower building to itself. Most small schools share a building, forcing principals to spend time coordinating logistics. Raby only has two grade levels enrolled at the moment, which leaves the principal and lead teacher with fewer staff and students to supervise. When it's time to meet, the entire faculty can fit around a library table.

### PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS 'SWAMPED'

Staff at other small schools, however, say the report's critique rang a few bells.

## Research summary

**WHO CONDUCTED IT:** W. David Stevens, senior research analyst for the Chicago Consortium on School Research; Joseph Kahne, education professor at Mills College in Oakland, Calif.

**WHAT THEY STUDIED:** Researchers evaluated the quality of professional development at seven of 23 small high schools that are part of the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative. During 2004-2005, they interviewed 59 principals and teachers, observed 47 staff meetings and conducted case studies at three schools.

**WHAT THEY FOUND:** Despite good working relationships and frequent meetings, small school teachers rarely engaged in long-term, in-depth efforts to improve instruction. Meetings were instead consumed with administrative matters; discussions about teaching were confined to immediate concerns, such as a particular lesson. Researchers identified a lack of instructional leadership and heavier workloads at small schools as obstacles to planning high-quality professional development.

*Look for the full report, "Professional Communities and Instructional Improvement Practices: A Study of Small High Schools in Chicago," online at [www.consortium-chicago.org](http://www.consortium-chicago.org)*

At Chicago Discovery Academy on the Bowen Campus, English teacher Ira Abrams says that the professional development he's experienced has often been ill-planned and of little long-term benefit.

It was the same story at his previous small high school, Abrams adds. Given the administrative demands placed on small school staff, planning quality professional development is "an almost impossible task" for a principal, he says. "They're swamped."

But this year he convinced his principal to let him lead some of the sessions himself, he says. Now teachers are beginning to examine examples of student work to identify which skills students have mastered, and whether the assignments are clear and rigorous enough.

At the School of Entrepreneurship on the South Shore campus, teachers often share ideas informally, but are still reluctant to discuss classroom practices in front of the whole faculty, says Principal Bill Gerstein. Staff meetings tend to get eaten up with administrative matters instead, he says. "We haven't used our

## Other studies in this series:

### "CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN INITIATIVE: A SNAPSHOT OF THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION," AUGUST 2003

Researchers interviewed staff and students at the five small high schools that opened in 2002 inside three large high schools, Bowen, Orr and South Shore. Students reported receiving more personal attention in their new small schools than they had at the larger one. Teachers described more enthusiasm for teaching and greater participation in school decision-making. But schools also complained of inadequate facilities and equipment and tension with their host school. They also reported insufficient planning time for their new programs and little schoolwide focus on improving instruction.

### "NOTES FROM THE GROUND: TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS AND STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN INITIATIVE, YEAR TWO," SEPTEMBER 2004

Researchers interviewed staff at the five small high schools opened in 2002, and six more that opened in 2003. Teachers and principals reported high levels of trust among staff and fewer violent incidents among students than they had experienced at their larger schools. However, teachers had still not defined as a group what high-quality instruction should look like, and students reported that some classes challenged and engaged them while others did not.

time to improve instruction as much as I [had hoped]."

Cynthia Barron, who became area instructional officer for some of the district's small high schools last August also agrees with the report's main findings. "The majority of our schools have not been focused on building strong courses and doing the hard work of examining their own practice."

Barron says that as AIO she wants to avoid mandating specific professional development practices, such as Raby's 90-minute weekly workshops, that might result in superficial compliance rather than a real commitment to learning.

Instead, she is running an intensive summer program for her teachers on how to plan more rigorous coursework. She hopes that working in structured teams will influence how they approach professional development at their own schools. "I would hope it would look much better next year."

*Alexander Russo is a Catalyst contributing editor. E-mail him at [editor@catalyst-chicago.org](mailto:editor@catalyst-chicago.org).*

## New probation policy lets more schools off the hook

Schools with mediocre test scores may be spared if they show signs of progress on other measures, such as leadership and teaching

By Elizabeth Duffrin

**N**ext year, it will take more than number crunching to determine which schools are placed on probation. For the first time, district officials will allow for judgment calls that will likely land fewer schools on probation.

The revised probation policy approved in March will use different criteria to rate schools. For elementary schools, the big change is that math and science test scores now weigh as heavily as reading test scores do. For high schools, freshmen and sophomore progress on standardized tests will be weighed along with juniors. And all schools will be rated on student attendance.

Critics charge that the new system still relies too heavily on test scores. But others support the revised policy for more closely scrutinizing schools that score in the middle range of the new rating system.

Those schools will be judged on additional factors, such as the quality of teaching, leadership and community partnerships. Those passing muster with their area instructional officers (AIOs) may be spared probation, at the discretion of the chief executive officer.

Such ground-level scrutiny will

help the district more accurately identify the most troubled schools, explains Xavier Botana, who oversees the CPS Office of Accountability. "There isn't a perfect way of measuring everything on a spreadsheet."

Clarice Berry, president of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, reports that her governing board, although it still objects to probation as unfairly stigmatizing, is in favor of the change. "It's very important to principals that movement in the right direction be given credence by central office."

CPS projects that fewer schools will land on probation under the new policy, based on calculations of this year's data. Currently, 226 schools are on academic probation; under the new policy, only 150 of these schools would have automatically been placed on probation. Another 115 would have been referred to AIOs for review, and most would likely have gotten a pass, according to school officials.

Area 19 AIO Linda Pierzchalski says she would move four or five of high schools in her area off of probation for making "constant, steady progress."

High standards are good, because otherwise "we would get complacent," Pierzchalski says. But hard-

working teachers get burned out when their efforts go unrewarded. "If you take [schools] off probation, it will help with motivation," she adds.

Area 13 AIO Yvonne Womack would like to reward elementary schools in her South Side area that stand to make steady, long-term progress by focusing on teamwork, strategic planning and outside partnerships. The new system encourages schools to take such a long-term approach to school improvement rather than looking for quick-fixes to boost test scores, she says.

Julie Woestehoff, executive director of Parents United for Responsible Education, thinks all schools should undergo a similar review to determine their probation status. "They're acknowledging that there are better ways to evaluate schools," she says. "They're just refusing to use that process on the most challenged schools, which makes no sense."

The most challenged schools are still judged by the percent of students who pass state tests, she continues. That pressures teachers to focus on kids who barely missed the mark, at the expense of the rest, she adds. "That's educational triage."

Barbara Radner, director of assessment at DePaul University's School for New Learning, says the district's new probation policy could lead to more school improvement because the criteria for probation is now aligned with the new school improvement plans that schools are required to develop each year. "It's

extremely focused," she says of the new system. "There is no question about what is important."

Below are highlights of the new CPS probation policy.

#### **COMPLICATED RATING SYSTEM IS OUT**

Schools had been sorted into six performance categories—with probation schools at the bottom and "schools of distinction" on top. Now schools are either on probation or they're not.

#### **EIGHT-POINT RATING SYSTEM IS IN**

Schools earn one point for each of four performance goals. They also earn up to four additional points for making progress on each goal. (See related chart.) Three points or less lands a school on probation; six points or more gets them off. Those in the middle with four or five points may fall into either category at the district's discretion.

#### **PROBATION TIME IS CURBED**

Under the old policy, schools that landed on probation stayed there for at least two years, even if they improved the second year. Now a school's status will be reviewed annually. The only exception is for schools like Sherman in New City that are "reconstituted," meaning that they remain open but the staff is replaced. Those schools will stay on probation for at least five years, allowing central office to maintain control over the school's budget and principal selection. Berry of the Principals Association argues that the probation stigma will ward off "bright and talented young teachers."

#### **STUDENT ATTENDANCE COUNTS**

Absent from the old policy, attendance will now count for 25 percent of a school's accountability score. Higher student attendance leads to better performance across the board

on standardized tests, course credits earned and high school graduation, explains Botana.

#### **SCIENCE AND MATH COUNT MORE**

The new system gives equal weight to three state tests—reading, math and science—administered in elementary school. Those tests count for 75 percent of an elementary school's accountability score. (Under the old system, a school could avoid probation with a high reading test score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, regardless of its performance on the three state tests.) Science had been a low-priority at many elementary schools, but the new policy should remedy that, says Womack.

#### **FRESHMEN, SOPHOMORE PROGRESS COUNTS**

Previously, only juniors' scores on the Prairie State Achievement Exams—the only state tests administered to high school students—counted toward probation. Now schools will also be judged on whether individual students make the average national gain on a series of tests leading up to the Prairie State, a portion of which counts toward college admission.

#### **ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS IS DROPPED**

Schools had been judged on whether they made "adequate yearly progress" on state tests as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. (That law set the goal of having all students meet state standards on reading and math tests by 2014.) But the measurement failed to distinguish between schools that missed the target by a point for one subgroup, such as special education students, and those that performed poorly across the board, according to Botana.

#### **HOLDING STEADY MATTERS**

## Performance goals

Under the new probation policy, schools are rated on an eight point scale. Three points or less lands a school on probation; six points or more gets them off. Those in the middle may fall into either category at the district's discretion.

Schools earn points for meeting each of four performance goals. They also earn points for improving or holding steady on each of those measures, compared to their previous three-year average. Schools with exceptionally high performance, such as 85 percent meeting standards on a state exam, can earn an improvement point even if performance declines.

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

40 percent or more of students must:

- Meet standards on ISAT in reading, math and science

And:

- Student absentee rate does not exceed 15 days a year.

### HIGH SCHOOLS

- At least 60 percent of students graduate within five years
- At least 30 percent meet state standards on the Prairie State Achievement Exam composite score for all subjects.
- At least 35 percent post average national gains on the Explore, Plan and ACT tests.
- Student absentee rate does not exceed 15 days a year.

Elizabeth Duffrin

low-performing schools could escape probation only by substantially raising test scores. Now they can earn points by maintaining test scores or attendance, compared to their previous three-year average. The idea is to zero in on the most troubled schools, explains Daniel Bugler, chief accountability officer. "Our aspirations for schools are far higher than the standards that we are setting," he adds. "We're defining the minimum level of performance."

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**On the web**

# New Pilsen charter sparks protest

Activists say more pressing needs are preschool and alternative high school

By Maureen Kelleher

A recent School Board decision to green light a new charter school operated by United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) has inflamed existing tensions in the Pilsen community.

Community activists in Pilsen learned of the deal in late March, about a month after the district approved it and three months after UNO officially requested that the board expand its charter to accommodate two more schools, one in Pilsen and one in Avondale. Currently, UNO runs two charter elementary schools: Octavio Paz in North Lawndale and Rufino Tamayo in Brighton Park.

Because its charter was granted before 2003, state law allows UNO to simply file a request to amend its original agreement and hold a public hearing, bypassing a more involved process for community input that is required for new school operators under Renaissance 2010.

“We did everything the law required,” says Jose Alvarez, director of new school operations, noting that the hearing was advertised in daily newspapers a few days in advance. Alvarez says 34 people showed up for the district’s public hearing in February.

That wasn’t enough to satisfy community activists. More than 150 turned out for a protest meeting held at Orozco Elementary a month later. “We are very concerned about the lack of public input on such a major project,” local school council Chair Elvia Rodriguez of Pilsen Elementary testified at the March School Board meeting.

Opponents of UNO’s Pilsen charter school say enrollment is declining in

## How schools stack up

CPS officials explain that UNO’s new charter in Pilsen will relieve overcrowding and provide a high-quality choice for parents. Yet community activists argue that all but one of Pilsen’s elementary schools have empty seats and that several of them post higher student gains than UNO’s flagship charter, Octavio Paz. One school, Perez, has less than 50 percent of its seats filled.

SCHOOL	CAPACITY STATUS	ENROLLMENT	% PASSING ISAT
<b>RUIZ</b>	<b>overcrowded</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>De La Cruz</b>	at capacity	2%	45
<b>Orozco</b>	at capacity	11%	59
<b>Pickard</b>	at capacity	6%	48
<b>Cooper</b>	space available	-1%	62
<b>Jungman</b>	space available	3%	38
<b>Perez</b>	space available	-6%	49
<b>Pilsen</b>	space available	-30%	54
<b>Walsh</b>	space available	8%	57
<b>Whittier</b>	space available	-19%	48

Note: According to CPS, “overcrowded” schools are operating above 80 percent of their design capacity. For this chart, “at capacity” indicates schools where enrollment reaches between 75 percent and 80 percent of design capacity. Schools where student population is below 75 percent have “space available.”

Source: Chicago Public Schools

many Pilsen elementary schools and the community needs a comprehensive education plan. At press time, they were preparing to meet with Schools CEO Arne Duncan.

“My goal is to have Arne realize that what they are doing at this point is not what is needed in the community,” says Orozco Elementary Principal Corelia Barraza. If the district had conducted a needs assessment and talked to school leaders, they would learn that Pilsen needs an early childhood development center and an alternative high school more than it needs yet another elementary school, she explains.

Of the 10 elementary schools in Pilsen, four have experienced enrollment declines in the last five years and only one is officially overcrowded. (See chart.)

Neighborhood political divisions are playing a role in the conflict. Pri-

or to his becoming alderman of the 25th Ward, which includes Pilsen, Daniel Solis was co-founder and executive director of UNO. Solis wrote a letter of support for UNO’s new Pilsen charter. Behind opposition of the charter are two community groups—The Pilsen Alliance and Pilsen Neighbors Community Council—that have been at odds with Solis on other projects, such as condominium developments.

Meanwhile, the controversy is forcing CPS to re-examine how to make sure community voices are substantially included when older charter holders open new schools. “We have to get better at it,” says Alvarez, who attended the meeting at Orozco. “We’re going to work with the community,” he promises.

To contact Maureen Kelleher, call (312) 673-3882 or e-mail [kelleher@catalyst-chicago.org](mailto:kelleher@catalyst-chicago.org).

# No boundary change for Little Village

Attendance boundaries for four Little Village high schools will remain as currently drawn despite a recently passed referendum that calls for changing them, say officials of Chicago Public Schools.

Last month, voters passed an advisory referendum that calls for CPS to redraw attendance boundaries for the high schools and limit enrollment to Little Village residents. Existing boundaries for the schools encompass the western portion of Little Village, a Latino neighborhood, and a slice of North Lawndale, a predominantly African-American community.

The referendum, sponsored by state Sen. Martin Sandoval, was approved in a 55 percent to 45 percent vote.

Critics of the measure say it exploits racial and ethnic tensions at the expense of equal access to public schools. Jaime de Leon of the Little Village Community Development Corporation, which was instrumental in getting the district to build the Little Village high schools, charges that the referendum is “based on

the notion that African-American students from North Lawndale are taking slots that should go to [Latino] kids from Little Village.”

Prexy Nesbitt, a multiculturalism and diversity expert who is serving as a consultant to Little Village High Schools, argues that Sandoval “turned to race-baited information to try to win political capital.” In last month’s primary, Sandoval beat challenger Eduardo Garza in a hotly contested race.

After the referendum passed, Principal Rito Martinez of Little Village’s School for Social Justice posted a letter to the school’s web site that said: “We will not stand for the countless lies and divisive racial tactics being waged toward our school. [Attendance boundaries] will not change. We believe in a school that can provide a safe, nurturing, and hopeful place for students from Little Village and North Lawndale.”

CPS officials insist that the referendum will have no bearing on decisions

related to who is admitted to Little Village high schools. “The chances of the Board approving any Little Village high school boundary change prior to the beginning of the [next] school year are very small,” says James Dispensa, CPS director of demographics and planning.

The district expects that at least 90 percent of next year’s freshmen will live in the schools’ attendance area, and if any seats need to be filled, a lottery will be held, as was done last year, Dispensa explains.

A move to limit enrollment to Little Village residents would work against a mandate to promote desegregation in the district, notes Dispensa. This year, the student population is 71 percent Latino and 28 percent African-American.

Like other start-ups, Little Village opened this year with 400 freshmen, 100 in each of the four small high schools, and plans to add another grade each year until it enrolls 1,400 students through 12th grade.

*Maureen Kelleher*

## Principals survey

### LSCs support school reform

Despite ongoing concerns about waning interest in local school councils, a survey of 350 CPS principals shows that an overwhelming majority (83 percent) believe their LSCs contribute to school improvement.

Yet with a record number of schools on academic probation, which shifts powers to hire principals and approve spending of discretionary funds away from councils to central office, some fear LSCs are being systemically weakened.

LSCs have a clear vision for improving schools



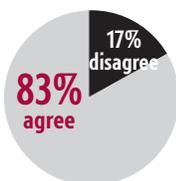
LSCs contribute to academic improvement



LSCs are effective policymaking bodies



LSCs contribute to overall improvement



Source: Consortium on Chicago School Research

## Test scores drive instruction

In this era of accountability, student performance on standardized tests is a top priority for principals whose schools face repercussions such as probation and restructuring.

Nearly three out of four principals surveyed say they used test scores “to a great extent” to set schoolwide goals for student achievement.

### PRINCIPALS WHO USE STANDARDIZED TESTS TO:

Set schoolwide achievement goals.....	73%
Examine trends in school performance.....	69%
Set goals for individual student achievement.....	54%
Evaluate programs.....	53%
Examine trends in teachers’ performance....	46%
Compare their school to other schools.....	29%
Teacher evaluation.....	26%
Compare grades and classrooms.....	25%
Compare performance of groups of students by race, gender or special education.....	24%

# Viewpoints

GUEST COLUMN/SHERRYL MOORE-OLLIE

## Is it fair to ask poor kids to 'do more with less?'

According to national reports, Illinois is ranked the second worst in the country in terms of shortchanging its low-income students

**A**s an educator and an administrator, I'm always thinking of ways to provide children with the best education possible. Public education is supposed to be "free" in Illinois, but we know this isn't true. Someone has to fund it. Part of this responsibility lies with the state, which provides only 36 percent of school districts' total revenues. The rest of the funding comes from local property taxes. When schools rely on property taxes then it stands to reason that schools in poor neighborhoods will be drastically underfunded.

*Sherryl Moore-Ollie is an assistant principal at William Penn Elementary School in North Lawndale. She is working toward a doctorate degree in educational leadership at Argosy University.*

This year, CEO Arne Duncan and Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins challenged Chicago's public schools to "do more with less." The statement made me think about the challenges I'm faced with as an administrator of an elementary school located North Lawndale.

I'm one of those people who came from a poverty-stricken neighborhood. I grew up in a single-parent household and lived in a two-bedroom apartment with three other siblings. My background is typical in the world in which I live and teach. I see myself in the children at school and in the community where I work and have lived most of my life. These children's circumstances are different compared to those who are more fortunate—living in neighborhoods where homeownership and two-parent families are the norm.

Yet, they come to school every day with the potential to change their lives. I consider it my responsibility to

help them to do this. It isn't an easy task. Many of them move from one foster home to the next. Others are reared by grandparents—even neighbors—because their parents are incarcerated or strung out on drugs and alcohol. Doing more with less isn't a novel idea in North Lawndale. We have been doing more with less all along, and not because we thought it was a great idea. We've been forced to.

Now, the recent round of school closings is threatening to take away more of what little we have. Students who have the bare minimum when it comes to educational resources are being punished for poor academic performance. They already do without art, music, computers and Internet accessibility because of inadequate funding. Now, Mayor Daley threatens to take their schools away from them. He is, however, providing funds to build new Renaissance 2010 schools every year, despite a projected \$328 million deficit.

### WRITE TO CATALYST, BE A CATALYST

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Am I missing something? Why can't dollars that are being spent to build brand new, state-of-the-art schools be given to schools that lack adequate resources to be successful? How will closing these schools help children to be more successful on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test?

My greatest fear is that poor students will be left without any resources for a quality education. Parents in poor communities rely on their neighborhood schools because they are close to home. Many simply can't afford to send their children to schools outside of the communities.

Schools that have been targeted for closing or restructuring are the foundation of our communities. They have developed, molded and educated successful people like myself. They aren't just educational institutions. They are our homes away from home. Teachers and staff are a part of our extended families.

I welcome change, but when change tears away the fiber of my existence, it makes me uncomfortable.

Aren't we faced with enough challenges? Haven't we fought enough battles without having to fight for our schools to remain open, without having to fight for adequate funding for computers, art, and music—all the things that others seem to come by easily?

Do more with less? Isn't it obvious that we've been doing more with less all of our lives? Many of us have beaten the odds and become productive citizens despite the obstacles put before us. It's about time that some of these obstacles were removed. But if they aren't, we'll continue to fight as we always have for fairness and justice in a society that seems to be inherently unjust. ■

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Renaissance school's success not supported by test scores

Thank you for the powerful stories in your March 2006 issue about the impact of the Chicago Public Schools' Renaissance 2010 program. ("Slow progress amid strife") We need more careful analysis like this before any Renaissance 2010 programs are proclaimed models. It was therefore frustrating to see the editorial characterization of the Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL) as a "proven program." ("There's got to be a better way to make schools better for kids")

Let's take a closer look at the new Dodge, currently AUSL's only school serving a predominantly minority, low-income student body. The only other AUSL school that's been open long enough to have a track record is the Chicago Academy, whose students are 48 percent white and 52 percent low-income. That hardly

school, than they were in 2005 (1.39 in reading and 1.25 in math in 2002 versus 1.32 and .81 in 2005). Iowa test scores in math were actually higher at Dodge in 2002 than in 2005. We also learned that the good news about big gains for the "old" to "new" Dodge students is based on the scores of 12 children.

In addition, the new Dodge's overall ISAT scores dropped from 33.5 percent meeting standards in 2004 to 25.5 percent in 2005, a fact not mentioned in the memo but easily found in the most recent state school report card. It seems that CPS is working awfully hard to make lemonade out of lemons.

And keep in mind that the public was promised "dramatically better" schools under Renaissance 2010.

PURE is disturbed by the media's willingness to overlook facts like these in what has essen-

**"PURE is disturbed by the media's willingness to overlook facts ... in what has essentially become a partnership with CPS to promote Renaissance 2010."**

qualifies as a comparison school for these purposes.

But Chicago Public Schools is already touting the "new" Dodge as a Renaissance 2010 success, claiming that students who attended both the old Dodge and the new Dodge are making greater achievement gains at the new school.

PURE reviewed the internal CPS analysis on which this claim is based and found some unfavorable statistics the district is not talking about. For example, overall yearly student gains at Dodge were higher in 2002, when CPS closed the

tially become a partnership with CPS to promote Renaissance 2010. We are even more concerned because CPS has declared the planned 2006 takeover of Sherman Elementary by AUSL to be the system's first official restructuring project under the No Child Left Behind Act. Pretty soon the Renaissance will seem like the good old days.

*Julie Woestehoff  
Executive Director  
Parents United for Responsible  
Education (PURE)*

*Catalyst Chicago is an independent publication created to document, analyze and support school improvement efforts in Chicago's public schools.*

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### 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.

**CPS REORGANIZATION** Central office will undergo yet another reorganization, this time in an effort to cut \$25 million in administrative costs. To streamline the bureaucracy, Chief Executive Officer **ARNE DUNCAN** will have fewer people reporting to him directly. The top management position held by **DAVID VITALE**, who serves as chief administrative officer, will be eliminated. He will serve instead as a senior adviser. When the reorganization is complete this summer, central office will have trimmed its management hierarchy from nine layers to five.

**AT CLARK STREET ALLEN ALSON**, Superintendent of Evanston Township High School, will move to CPS in July to lead the high school transformation project, the Gates-funded effort to improve high school instruction. His title has not yet been determined. Along with consultants from the American Institutes for Research, Alson will oversee the development of new curriculum and assessments in English, math and science that will be used in 15 CPS high schools in September and will expand to 45 high schools by 2008. ... **MARTIN GARTZMAN**, CPS chief science and mathematics officer, has returned to the University of Illinois at Chicago as the associate provost for high school development. **MICHAEL LACH**, CPS director of science, is serving as interim until a replacement is named.

**MOVING IN/ON JOBI PETERSEN**, former CPS director of special projects and accountability, was tapped for a new position as policy and advocacy consultant for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. She will resign as executive director of the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health in June; a replacement has not been named. ... **JEANINE JIGANTI** of Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America Inc. was elected to the board of directors

at the Young Women's Leadership Charter School.

**PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS DAPHNE STRAHAN**, former assistant principal at Moos Elementary, has been awarded a principal contract for Mt. Vernon Elementary. She replaces **GREGORY STRICKLERPOE**, who retired.

**CHARTER NEWS** The University of Chicago's new charter high school received more than 500 applicants for 160 slots in its incoming 6th- and 9th-grade classes. Some 69 Woodlawn residents who live within the new school's attendance boundaries were admitted. ... The School Board approved two new charter schools to be operated by the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO), which already runs two elementary charter schools. UNO's Carlos Fuentes campus will be located at the former Resurrection Academy at 2845 W. Barry; the Bartolome de las Casas campus will be housed in the shuttered St. Adalbert Catholic school at 1641 W. 16th St.

**GOLDEN APPLE TEACHERS** Four Chicago Public School teachers won Golden Apple teaching awards. They are: **KRISTIN ZIEMKE-FASTABEND**, Burley Elementary; **ERICA HODGES-HILGART**, Piccolo Specialty; **SANDY L. LUCAS**, Murphy Elementary; and **ZIOMARA PEREZ**, Jahn Elementary. Winners will receive \$3,000, an Apple personal computer, a tuition-free sabbatical at Northwestern University and induction into the Golden Apple Academy.

**TEACHER 'PAY FOR PERFORMANCE' AMY TREADWELL** at Newberry Elementary has been named to a national task force of 18 "expert" teachers who will examine a variety of proposals under consideration in various states to pay better-performing teachers more money. The

task force, which was convened by the North Carolina-based Center for Teaching Quality, will develop recommended models for school districts to adopt.

**REFERENDUM** On March 21, residents of the 48th Ward passed a referendum (69 percent to 31 percent) advising the Chicago Board of Education to "establish a formal process to receive community input regarding the removal of the Rickover Military Academy of Senn High School." The naval academy opened last November despite opposition from neighborhood groups and Senn's local school council.

**AWARD WINNERS** Principal **BEVERLY HIDES-MORIELLO** won national recognition for "extraordinary efforts" to build community partnerships for Goethe Elementary. She will receive \$5,000 from the MetLife Foundation to continue her work. ... Three CPS teachers are winners of the Kohl McCormick Early Childhood Teaching Award: **MARY HANSON**, Healy Elementary; **MAEVE KANALEY**, Inter-American Magnet; **HERTHA RAMIREZ**, Belmont-Cragin Early Childhood Demonstration Center. They will each receive \$5,000 and their schools will get \$1,000 and a class field trip to the Kohl Children's Museum.

**HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULES** High schools will be given the option to sign students up for six classes instead of seven next year and lengthen class time from 45 to 50 minutes. Principals requested the change to allow freshmen extra time in each class, and to reduce an unnecessary course load for seniors, according to CPS Budget Director Pedro Martinez. Chicago Teachers Union members at each school must vote to approve any proposed schedule change, he says.

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NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS  
PERMIT NO. 87

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