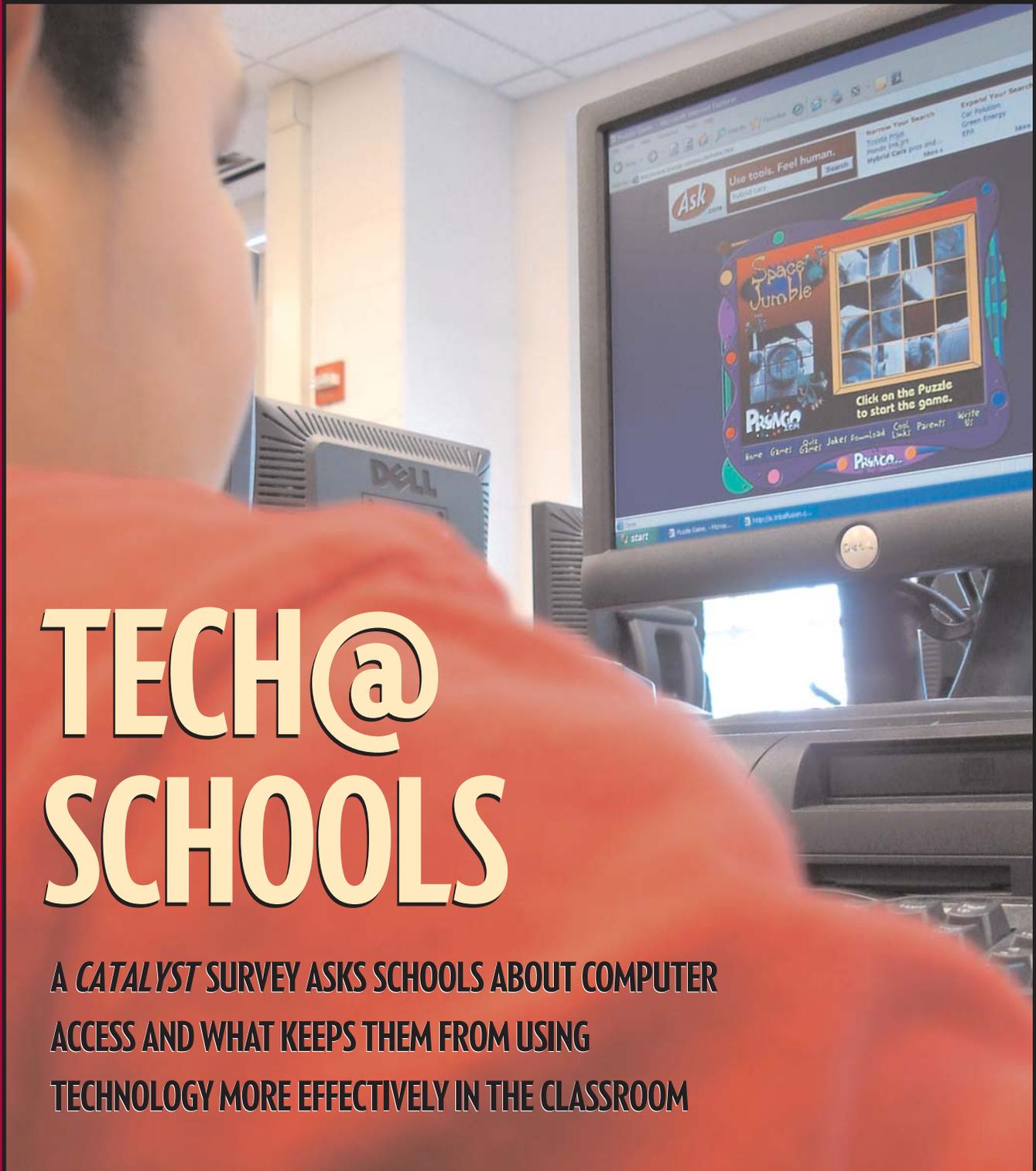


# Catalyst CHICAGO

Vol. XVIII Number 1

SEPTEMBER 2006 INDEPENDENT REPORTING ON URBAN SCHOOLS



## TECH@ SCHOOLS

A *CATALYST* SURVEY ASKS SCHOOLS ABOUT COMPUTER ACCESS AND WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM USING TECHNOLOGY MORE EFFECTIVELY IN THE CLASSROOM

**Also: Principal training programs post 50% success rate. PAGE 15**

# 'Speed dating' for new principals breaks down hiring barriers



Veronica Anderson

**Y**ou wouldn't call it a love connection, but then again, something must have happened between Erick Pruitt and O'Toole Elementary's local school council on a winter evening this past February. That's when the district and school reform group Designs for Change co-sponsored the Leaders to Leaders conference, an annual matchmaking event to hook up new aspiring principals with LSCs looking to hire someone in their schools' top leadership spot.

Pruitt was among 45 candidates who attended and had their pick of 18 schools that were in the market for a principal. Recruited from the city's premier training programs, they had seven minutes to make their pitch. "It's like speed dating," says Pruitt, 33, a former teacher who served eight years in the Marine Corps. "You go around and talk to schools that you're interested in."

Apparently, something clicked. A couple months later, Pruitt, who by then had nearly completed principal training with New Leaders for New

Schools, got a callback from O'Toole to come in for an interview. By May, he had been awarded a four-year contract. Two others in Pruitt's training class who participated in the event got principal contracts, too.

Likely, there were others who were hired as a result of connections made at the conference, but unfortunately, Chicago Public Schools does not keep track. That's too bad because the most often cited barrier to getting talented leaders in schools is local school councils. Comprised mostly of non-educators, LSCs get blamed for casting too narrow a net in the principal selection process and for basing hiring decisions on politics.

Whether or not these assertions are true, council-candidate matchmaking events can overcome both hurdles, and help CPS stay a step ahead of a growing challenge: how to replace hundreds of principals who are expected to retire over the next several years. "Everyone in urban districts is struggling with this now," says Nancy Laho, who oversees principal development for CPS.

This year, 107 schools have new principals; 62 replaced someone who retired. Laho says it is not yet

clear how many more will retire by next June. (Principals have until March to make a decision.)

Things got tough on the supply side a few years ago when the pool of eligible principal candidates shrunk after the district increased standards, aiming for what it sees as the best. Three non-traditional training programs are doing their part, adding some 45 qualified people to the pool each year. But their success rates for getting them jobs, according to a *Catalyst* analysis, ranges from 42 percent to 61 percent. A high-profile principal training academy in New York City was under scrutiny a year ago for, among other reasons, having a placement rate of *only* 77 percent.

Time to step up the game, Chicago.

**ABOUT US** Associate Editor **Maureen Kelleher**, who wrote this month's cover story, is leaving *Catalyst Chicago* to return to her professional roots in the classroom. During her eight years here, she kept an astute eye trained on new schools and high schools, and in 2004, won a national award from the Society of Professional Journalists for a report on the shortage of high school guidance counselors. In her new post at the School for Social Justice at Little Village Campus, she will teach English, journalism and a course in street law. It won't take long for Maureen's new colleagues to find out what we've known for a long time: She walks her talk, knows her stuff, and has an infectious—and very loud—laugh. Good luck, Maureen. We're going to miss you.

## CATALYST WINS NATIONAL AWARD

Editor **Veronica Anderson** and former researchers, **John Myers** and **Mallika Ahluwalia**, won a national Clarion Award for best magazine series for their three-part investigation on school budget equity.

The first report—"How much is this child worth?"—revealed widely varying funding levels, with more than half of CPS schools receiving too much or not enough funding from the district. Part two of the series uncovered inequities in poverty funding; and an analysis of teacher salaries in part three showed that certain types of schools were more likely to employ experienced teachers. To read or download copies of the series, go to [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org).

## TECHNOLOGY

# Equity the goal for technology

Computer access varies widely from school to school, a *Catalyst* survey finds. The district has pledged to level the playing field and provide more equity and better teacher training.

**COVER STORY: PAGE 6**

### STUDENTS LEARN TO CLICK A MOUSE AND END UP WITH THEIR OWN LAPTOPS

At the University of Chicago's North Kenwood Oakland charter, integrating technology into the curriculum is a priority at all grades. **PAGE 10**

### WINNING THE RACE—AT FIRST GLANCE

High schools tend to have more computers than elementary schools, but often fail to integrate technology into core classes. **PAGE 12**

### TECHNOLOGY DIVIDE 'ISN'T IN THE SCHOOLS, IT'S IN THE HOME'

Nichole Pinkard of the University of Chicago's Center for Urban School Improvement tells how schools can take advantage of technology to help close the achievement gap. **PAGE 14**



JASON REBLANDO

**ON THE COVER:** PHOTO BY CHRISTINE OLIVA

## Welcome new local school council members!

*Published by the Community Renewal Society, Catalyst Chicago is an independent newsmagazine that covers the progress, problems and politics of school reform in Chicago.*

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free subscriptions  
to local school council members.

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- *Catalyst* stories when they are posted on the web
- Spanish translations of selected stories
- "Eye on Education," our biweekly e-newsletter of events and resources

### COMING SOON FROM CATALYST:

Post comments to our stories online ... Receive daily links to education stories in other local media

## DEPARTMENTS

### UPDATES Page 15

- Principal programs 'unique'
- Youth advocates putting their stamp on new student conduct code

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# Notebook

## Q&A with ...

State Sen. Miguel del Valle

### TIMELINE

#### Aug. 1: Budget critique

Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform releases a report criticizing the district's 2007 budget, saying its staffing cuts and projections are "unsubstantiated." The group also accused CPS of funneling money away from the poorest schools to schools with few low-income students. CPS counters that its \$4.7 billion budget is transparent and says that central office is using more poverty money for summer school and reading and math programs at schools on probation.

#### Aug. 11: Transfers

Students from recently closed schools will get first priority for 500 open slots in 97 of the city's top-performing schools. In all, 8,200 students are eligible for the spots under the No Child Left Behind law, which allows transfers from underperforming schools. CEO Arne Duncan initially wanted to give the spots to children from three schools closed in June, but the federal government vetoed the idea. Homeless students and students held back are also eligible.

#### Aug. 16: No charter

Global Alliance Preparatory Charter, slated to open this fall in Englewood, is rejected. The School Board rules that its proposed site, a former Catholic school, cannot be renovated and made safe in time for the opening of school. Officials from the charter, which had recruited 225 students and 21 teachers, said two other sites offered by the board were not suitable. The board also approved the charter for an online school, which still must win approval from the Illinois State Board of Education.

### ELSEWHERE

#### Indiana: New rating, more failing

Nearly a third of schools fared poorly in a new rating system intended to measure students' academic gains over time, according to the Aug. 9 *Indianapolis Star*. Middle and high schools performed worst, with the majority falling in the second-lowest category, "academic probation." The new system differs from that used under the federal No Child Left Behind law, which rates schools based on how many students pass tests each year. Education leaders hope to join a federal initiative that would allow a handful of states to bypass the NCLB system.

#### Florida: Preschool prep

Kindergarten teachers will be using a more detailed system to measure children's school preparedness under a new program aimed at judging the effectiveness of the

state's universal preschool program, according to the Aug. 8 *Miami Herald*. Teachers will rate children's performance on activities involving social skills, language and creative arts. Critics say the test will not accurately measure children's learning because there is no comparison data to show what children knew before entering preschool.

#### Alabama: Longer school year

Five days are being added to the school calendar, bringing Alabama in line with the majority of states, which require 180 days of instruction each year, according to the Aug. 3 *Huntsville Times*. Gov. Bob Riley signed a law last spring requiring the additional days and allocating \$80 million to cover the additional salary costs for teachers and other school employees. Illinois requires 176 days of instruction.

### IN SHORT

#### "They think it's like running a Starbucks or IBM, and it's not."

Joan Crisler, managing director of LAUNCH (Leadership Academy and Urban Network for Chicago), on the misconceptions of some aspiring principals. Crisler was a guest on the Aug. 13 broadcast of Catalyst's monthly radio show "City Voices." To download, go to [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org) and click on "On the Air."

The school climate at Clemente High, a receiving school for students shut out of Austin High, has settled down since a spike in violent incidents earlier this year, says state Sen. Miguel del Valle, vice-chair of the Senate Education Committee. Clemente is located in del Valle's ethnically diverse 2nd District on the Northwest Side. The veteran legislator talked with Senior Editor Elizabeth Duffrin about school closings, education funding and what legislators will tackle when they return to Springfield.

#### Will Chicago Public Schools do a better job this year to help students displaced by school closings?

The School Board has to come up with a process that facilitates [school improvement] without causing disruption. I don't know what that process is, but I do know that they haven't found it yet.

#### What are your thoughts about the impact of Renaissance 2010?

We need to create educational options. I see Renaissance 2010 as primarily for that purpose, and for [creating] smaller high schools. So I'm not an across-the-board critic. On the other side of the coin, we've got to improve existing schools, reduce the achievement gap and make sure that all facilities are properly equipped and staffed. We shouldn't see Renaissance 2010 as something that allows us to ignore the needs of regular schools.

#### Do your constituents feel that the new schools are providing better options?

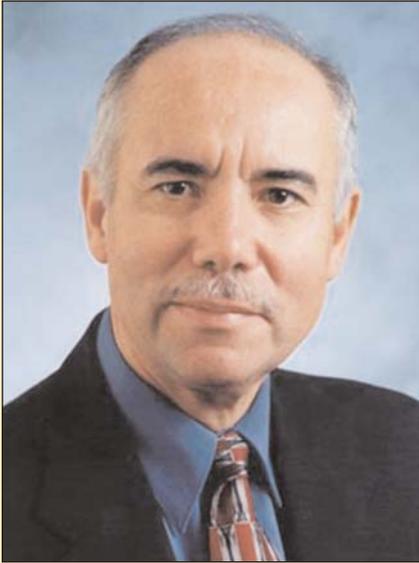
I have constituents who are pleased with some of the charter schools, [such as] Noble Street and Aspira. (Aspira of Illinois operates Mirta Ramirez and Haugan Middle.)

#### Do you want to see more charters?

No. I want to see more academic options for our kids in existing schools like Clemente and Wells and North-Grand. That's my top priority.

#### What do you think about Gov. Rod Blagojevich's plan to sell the lottery to raise money for education?

[It's] not my preference. That is not going to solve the long-term problem. It's a Band-Aid solution. But I guess when you're bleeding, you'll take any type of Band-Aid that comes along.



### What needs to happen to get more people behind school funding reform?

People need to be educated, and elected officials need to give the discussion an opportunity. They need to stop exploiting our natural tendencies as voters to be opposed to tax increases and give the idea a chance so there's an open and honest debate. In the process, people can be educated about, number one, the need, and number two, how it is that our current tax structure is unfair.

I was talking with someone in my district who just got a property tax bill. She's paying almost \$7,000 a year because of gentrification and development in her neighborhood. I have a single-family home that has probably more square footage than hers, and I'm paying \$2,000.

### What other education issues will be coming up in Springfield?

We will continue to talk about reducing the achievement gap. We will continue to be challenged [regarding] our high schools. We're going to have to continue talking about how the unions, local governments, parents, the business community and the legislature can come together ... and acknowledge that we're in this together and Illinois must improve public education. We've done a lot—increased graduation requirements, raised the compulsory school attendance age to 17, increased Advanced Placement courses—but there is still inequity between a city high school and [schools in] the property-rich suburbs.

### What do you think about Chicago's sudden test score increase?

I expected that because there's been a lot of work done to move kids in that direction. But even with 60 percent at grade level [districtwide], you still have, in some of my schools, fewer than 50 percent of the kids at grade level. That's just not enough. ■

## ASK CATALYST

### State poverty funds that go directly to CPS schools have been capped at \$261 million since 1995. But the poverty funds that go to central office have been increasing. How is CPS spending its portion?

*Valencia Rias, Designs for Change*

The state sent an additional \$69 million in poverty funds to CPS for fiscal year 2007, raising the total to \$355 million, according to CPS Budget Director Pedro Martinez. All of the additional funds were spent on raises and benefits for teachers and other school staff, he says. CPS' general education fund includes state poverty money, other state funding and property tax revenue. The general fund pays for everything from salaries to textbooks to central office staff and building maintenance, says Martinez. Schools can only use their portion of poverty funds to supplement basic services.

Directing additional poverty funds to schools above the \$261 million required by state law would force the district to cut basic services, Martinez argues, because overall funding from the state is so low. But without an increase in their portion of poverty funds, schools can't keep pace with salary increases and are forced to cut positions, observes Diana Lauber, managing director of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. Many schools would like the law to be revised so that the \$261 million is increased annually to match inflation, she 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

Illinois, which ranks **47th** in the nation on state education funding, also has one of the lowest corporate income tax rates in the country. Of **32** states with a single, flat tax rate, Illinois has the **3rd**-lowest, at **4.8%**, according to an analysis of tax rates by the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability. Only Kansas, at **4%**, and Colorado, at **4.6%**, are lower. The average flat tax rate for the **32** states is **7.2%**.

## FOOTNOTE

### WEIGHING IN ON EQUAL ACCESS



KURT MITCHELL

# Equity the goal for technology

By Maureen Kelleher

In one way, Woodson South Elementary is ahead in the technology game in Chicago Public Schools. The Grand Boulevard school has enough computers to put it at the national average, according to a *Catalyst Chicago* survey.

More typically, though, most teachers at Woodson are still using only basic software such as Microsoft Word, says Larry Spearman, the school's technology coordinator. One well-known educational software package, Accelerated Reader, "is sitting downstairs," he points out. "The teachers have to be trained on it."

Spearman, however, had little time to train teachers to use more sophisticated software last school year, and will have virtually none this fall. He expects to be back in the classroom, teaching computer basics, because of budget cuts. Even last year, he was strapped for time to do it all—train teachers, do computer repairs and supervise the computer lab. "If I wanted to

get something done, I came early in the morning or I stayed after school," he says.

Woodson South is one of 278 schools surveyed by *Catalyst* to determine the number of computers they had available; how satisfied they were with students' access; whether teachers had adequate training and were using technology in the classroom; and what barriers, such as lack of money

and staff, prevent better use of technology in classrooms.

*Catalyst* found that, overall, Chicago Public Schools trails the nation in student access to computers with Internet capability. The average for schools surveyed is just over five students for every computer; Woodson South's ratio is 3-to-1. The nationwide ratio is 4-to-1, according to the most recent survey by the National Center

for Education Statistics, conducted in 2003. The district's average, calculated by *Catalyst* using data from the Office of Technology Services, is 6.5-to-1. (Including those computers not connected to the Internet, the board maintains its ratio is 5-to-1.)

Among the other findings:

- Not surprisingly, access varies widely from school to school. Some schools, like the Al Raby small school in the former Flower High building in East Garfield Park, and the re-opened Lindblom Math and Science Academy in Englewood, have more than one computer for each student. Others, such as Penn Elementary in North Lawndale and McKay Elementary in Chicago Lawn, have about 20 students for every com-

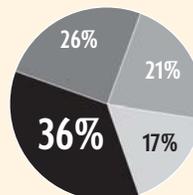
Chicago lags behind the nation in student access to computers, and a *Catalyst Chicago* survey finds that schools believe **more money and staff** are key to better use of technology in the classroom

## WHERE TECHNOLOGY FUNDS COME FROM

The district spent about \$180 million on technology in fiscal year 2006. Here's where the money came from.

■ Federal E-rate program	\$65 million
■ District capital fund	\$46 million
■ District general fund	\$38 million
■ School-level poverty money	\$31 million

Source: Chicago Public Schools





JASON REBLANDO

**Meckael Mallet studies intently on a laptop** in his 3rd-grade classroom at the University of Chicago Charter School's Donoghue campus. The university's charters place a high priority on integrating technology throughout the curriculum.

puter. Overall, 101 schools surveyed are at the national average or better.

"In urban settings, there always is a wide variability from school to school," says Linda Roberts, an education consultant who was director of the Office of Educational Technology during the Bill Clinton administration. Urban districts often have a number of older buildings and have a hard time upgrading infrastructure, such as wiring, to accommodate new technology, she says.

- Schools with higher-than-average poverty rates and more discretionary money tended to have slightly more computers than lower-poverty schools. Schools that are predominantly black also had slightly more computers than predominantly Latino, mixed or mostly white schools. High

schools, in general, have more computers than elementary schools (see story on page 12).

- About half of respondents said lack of money is the biggest barrier to better computer access and tech support. Forty percent of schools said tech support was "inadequate to support teachers' classroom needs."
- Nearly three-fourths of schools reported using technology to teach reading. Almost half reported using it to teach math and science; a third, to teach social studies. (Schools could choose more than one subject.)
- More than half of schools said most teachers had adequate training in technology and were using it in the classroom. Asked about the software teachers were most likely to use, however,

most schools cited common programs such as Microsoft Word. Only about 10 percent of schools cited educational software, such as Accelerated Reader, which quizzes students on books they read.

- Eight schools restricted computer access. Four high schools said students in business, computer or math classes had priority to use the labs; at one high school, overcrowding caused access problems. At four elementary schools, older students took priority over younger students.

#### THE CHALLENGE: SCALING UP

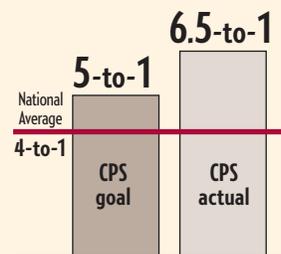
CPS is pushing schools to join their Tech|XL computer leasing program, which allows it to upgrade computers regularly, and says its goal is to level the playing field so that each school has a ratio of five students to every computer.

## Survey says...

### HOW CHICAGO STACKS UP

The city's public schools lag behind the nation in the number of computers with Internet access available for students to use. The district does not have a school-by-school inventory, but says its goal is five students per computer at each of its 600+ schools.

#### STUDENTS PER COMPUTER



Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 (the latest available); and Catalyst analysis of CPS data.

## Survey says...

## SHOW THEM THE MONEY

Most schools reported to *Catalyst Chicago* that they're satisfied with student access to computers or the Internet, but they said it could be better.

**58%** said **money** was the biggest barrier to better student access

**15%** blamed **poor building infrastructure**, such as inadequate wiring

**13%** said there was **not enough space**

**14%** said a **combination of factors**, including time constraints or problems with equipment, were main barriers

## MONEY, STAFF CRUCIAL

The district says it cannot afford to pay for a technology coordinator in every school, but the lack of one is a significant barrier to better technical support.

**45%** said **money**, or a combination of money and other problems, hindered better support

**26%** said they had **no full-time tech coordinator**

**18%** said there was **not enough staff** to provide adequate support

**11%** attributed problems to **something else**

The district is also working to improve training on integrating technology into the curriculum.

"In many large urban districts there are outstanding and highly effective examples of technology use, in a specific school or group of schools," notes Roberts. "The real chal-

## "The board should provide a tech coordinator the same way they hire a gym teacher. The board needs to catch up with the 21st century."

*Principal, elementary school in Ashburn*

lenge is scaling up those islands of excellence to the entire system."

Ann Flynn, director of technology for the National School Boards Association, says Chicago has the leadership to take on that task. Flynn has visited Chicago and served on panels with Sharnell Jackson, chief e-learning officer for the district.

"I'm not going to say Chicago's solved all those issues, but it's going a long way," she says. "In other districts, I see folks who have committed a great deal of funds to technology, who seem to be doing it in a more piecemeal fashion. The vision driving it is not as clearly articulated as [Jackson] has been able to do."

Despite efforts to push Tech|XL, many schools are still buying computers on their own. In fiscal year 2006, schools spent about \$30 million buying computers with poverty funds. Schools that raise private funds can spend them any way they like, and often choose to invest in technology, says Rachel O'Konis, spokesperson for technology services.

At Falconer Elementary in Belmont-Cragin, a high-poverty, predominantly Latino school, Principal James Pawelski uses part of his \$1.5 million in poverty money to free two teachers from classroom duties to coordinate tech support and teacher training.

Teachers use a variety of educational software with students, such as games that reinforce math facts and short videos to explain math concepts. Students use computers to create projects for sci-

ence fairs and cultural heritage festivals.

"A good portion of the 5th- and 6th-grade kids are probably more computer literate than I am," Pawelski observes. Achievement has risen since the school began using technology on a wider scale, but Pawelski points out that "it's just one of many tools."

### 'WE'VE DONE THE MATH'

Although 59 percent of schools said their tech support was adequate, 26 percent cited lack of a full-time tech coordinator as a major barrier to better tech support.

"The board should pay for a tech person," says Principal Maurice Harvey of Jordan Elementary in Rogers Park.

Increasingly complicated software makes it hard for schools to do without an on-site tech person. "CPS doesn't have positions for them and doesn't have salary for them. [Yet] they keep putting new stuff on the computers that can't be handled without a tech coordinator," observes Don York, co-director of the CPS/University of Chicago Internet Project, which aims to help schools do a better job of integrating technology into the curriculum.

The district, however, says it can't pay for a tech coordinator in every school.

"We've done the math," says Robert Runcie, chief information officer for the district. "It would cost over \$40 million a year. The district cannot afford it unless the state improves the overall funding picture."

Runcie says his office is encouraging schools to use the

district's tech support services, then free teachers to do technology integration—a move that requires dipping into discretionary funds. "A tech coordinator should be working with colleagues, not involved in the low-result activity of tech support," he says. "We want to do that for schools and get them out of that business."

Still, about 20 schools surveyed directly criticized the district's tech support. Runcie acknowledges schools are skeptical. "It boils down to trust. OTS has got to continue to win the trust of the schools that we will service."

According to a 2005 survey of principals conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, elementary schools with the lowest poverty rates and less poverty money were less likely to have a full-time technology coordinator than those with the highest poverty rates.

Frequently, tech coordinators double as teachers or even assistant principals.

Spending restrictions on federal e-rate money—it cannot be used for staff or training—contribute to the problem, observes Linda Newsome, technology coordinator at Jones College Prep in the South Loop.

"I would like to see them take 25 percent of whatever they were going to spend on hardware and put it in human resources, including staff development," she advises.

"You can see all the beautiful computers across the city, but without that human support and the training that's needed to keep it going, it is not working," Newsome adds.

## Survey says...

### SOFTWARE 'TOP 5'

While 98 percent of schools reported that teachers are using technology in the classroom, *Catalyst Chicago's* survey found that only one educational software package (No. 5) was among the applications teachers were most likely to use.

1. **Microsoft Word** (36%)
2. **PowerPoint** (27%)
3. **Excel** (21%)
4. **Internet Explorer** (14%)
5. **Accelerated Reader** (5%)



CHRISTINE OLIVA

"It works at Jones because of my tenacity and because of my assistant, but every year I worry which one of us is going to lose our job because of budget cuts."

### TAKE TRAINING SERIOUSLY

Roberts says successful technology initiatives, like Maine's laptop giveaway for middle-school students, take teacher training seriously. "What they focused on first was making sure every teacher in Maine had the professional development and the training to use the computers [with students] when they came into the schools."

In Chicago, even district officials question the quality of training many teachers have received. Jackson says past training was often "one-shots" or worse. For instance, in spring 2002, every high school teacher got a laptop—but no training.

The district's latest assess-

ment of technology proficiency among teachers shows dismal results. A small portion of the test measures teachers' ability to integrate technology, but most of it examines their use of Excel, e-mail or other common applications. Still, only about 14 percent of teachers met proficiency benchmarks.

"At my school, at least 80 percent of the teachers do not

Jackson's office has created a training curriculum, observes Julie Kelley, a tech coordinator at Falconer who also trains other teachers for the district. And training is getting better. "From the board's end, there's been improvement this year," she adds.

Some *Catalyst* survey respondents said more training needs to be offered at teachers'

**"Technology is the future. At this point, we're in big trouble."**

*Administrator, elementary school in Little Village*

know how to integrate technology," observes Gary Latman, who oversees technology at Harper High in Englewood. "For them, the computer is a giant encyclopedia or a very fancy typewriter. We don't even have enough teachers who use PowerPoint or Excel."

home schools. At Falconer, having on-site training made a big difference in teacher interest. "We did a survey," says reading specialist Mary Fran Bubak. "They don't want to go to other schools."

"Teachers are all over the place with what they bring to

the table. But the trend is good," observes Shaz Rasul, managing director of the CPS/University of Chicago Internet Project.

Though teachers may not have learned all the fanciest bells and whistles, what they are using is substantive, says Roberts.

Tools like Microsoft Word and Excel "are ways to amplifying learning across the curriculum," she says "Word is for writing. PowerPoint is a way to present ideas. Excel is a very important tool for looking at data and statistics, especially in the sciences."

One of Jackson's priorities has been to make more online training available, because it is convenient and cost-effective. "In that arena," observes Flynn of the National School Boards Association, "Chicago seems to be a real leader."

To contact Maureen Kelleher, send an e-mail to [editor@catalyst-chicago.org](mailto:editor@catalyst-chicago.org).

# Students learn to click a mouse and end up with their own laptops

**North Kenwood Oakland says creating a technology mecca from preschool to middle school 'helps benefit our students'**

By Maureen Kelleher

**A**t the North Kenwood Oakland campus of the University of Chicago charter schools, even the preschoolers are tech-savvy: Using a simple drawing program, they learn to work a mouse and refine their fine motor skills in the process.

In kindergarten, children listen and follow along onscreen as the computer reads to them. They also practice spelling by clicking on and dragging letters to form words.

In 1st through 5th grade, students use computers to write reports, graph the results of experiments and conduct research.

In 6th grade, each student gets a laptop, paid for with a combination of district funds and payments from parents.

Despite the emphasis on technology, North Kenwood Oakland does not consider it an educational magic bullet. Technology is merely a means of enhancing good educational practice, says Laura Walsh Giesecke, North Kenwood Oakland's technology coordinator and a former kindergarten teacher. The lesson for other schools: Get clear on your instructional philosophy and methods, and then hire people with the same mindset who know technology and let them run with the ball.

Experts endorse that view. "When I'm in a really outstanding school, the educational vision drives everything," says Linda Roberts, an educational consultant who was director of the Office of Educational Technology during the Bill Clinton administration. "Technology becomes a means to accomplishing the vision. That's really important."

Technology is not a panacea, warns Nichole Pinkard, director of technology for the University of Chicago's Center for Urban School Improvement, who helps the university's charters use technology.

"You can't just bring in technology and expect it to solve everything," she says. "We have [educational] practices in place that support it."

The school's educational philosophy is bearing fruit: In 2005, more than 60 percent of students met state standards on the ISAT.

## REPLICABLE IN OTHER SCHOOLS?

North Kenwood's technology-rich environment enhances lessons and keeps kids engaged, but the price tag is steep, says Director Stacy Beardsley. The charter spends about \$400 per pupil on technology, which accounts for five percent of the school's budget, she says.

The school had the benefit of private help to get its technology program off the ground. The University of Chicago provided some funds for technology as part of its startup money for the charter, and continues to help with tech support. The Beaumont Foundation of America, which provides grants for educational technology, provided funds for a laptop cart and 30 laptops. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation provides money for after-school programs that help build kids' technical skills.

Sharing staff with the university's other charters helps cut costs through economies of scale, Beardsley says. In addition, the school relies less on traditional textbooks and workbooks and more on less-expensive trade literature, magazines and electronic resources.

"Integration of technology is part of our mission, so it is a priority," Beardsley says. "This is our direction and we believe it will strongly benefit our students."

The school pays for its middle-school laptop program out of the per-pupil funding it receives from the district (approximately \$5,200 in 2005-06) and money from parents.

"We want it to be replicable" in regular public schools, says Pinkard.

## 'PART OF EVERY UNIT I TEACH'

North Kenwood Oakland didn't start out as a technology mecca. Science teacher Judith Whitcomb, who was a tech maven at her former school, recalls being "a little disappointed when I got here. It was pretty run of the mill." (Whitcomb retired this past June.)

In 2001, the seeds were planted to bring technology to full bloom. Beardsley was hired to teach social studies and coordinate technology. And Pinkard, a former University of Michigan faculty member, came on board at the Center for Urban School Improvement.

In 2004, when Beardsley became director, the laptop program was launched. A full-time tech support staffer was hired, freeing Giesecke, who took over as technology coordinator, to spend her day coaching teachers.

Having two staff members to handle tech support and curriculum integration is the only way to ensure adequate help on both fronts, teachers say. Having instant tech support is "heaven," says Whitcomb, as is easy access to Giesecke as a sounding board for project ideas.

Each semester, Giesecke sits down with curriculum coordinators to find out what projects students will undertake at each grade level and in each subject, then brainstorm how technology can help them. Giesecke also steps into the classroom with teachers and students to show them how to use new tools.



JASON REBLANDO

**Technology coordinator Laura Walsh Giesecke** works with teachers and students at the University of Chicago's charter campuses, including North Kenwood Oakland. Here, she admires the work of 3rd-grader Jonathan Bates at sister school Donoghue.

"Laura does mini-lessons on a topic and we go from there," says middle-grades literacy coordinator Shayne Evans. "If kids don't understand something or I don't understand something about a tool, I talk to Laura."

With Giesecke's support, teachers at all grade levels have designed or modified curricula to incorporate word processing, spreadsheets, computer-assisted design and even filmmaking into their lessons.

Students often use the computers as they move independently through classroom learning centers, a key component of North Kenwood's educational philosophy. Faculty members believe centers are important because they increase students' independence as learners. "Computers can enhance that," Giesecke says.

Tina Keller, a 2nd-grade teacher, didn't know how to incorporate the use of computers into her instruction at all during her first year at the school. Now, says Keller, who finished her sixth year at the school in June, "I make sure it's part of every unit I teach."

In a unit on plants, Keller's students researched the parts of plants on the

Internet, then grew plants and measured them regularly. They recorded those measurements on Excel spreadsheets and learned to analyze the data; for instance, ranking the plants by the dimensions of characteristics such as stem length.

### **BUILDING TECHNICAL SKILLS**

The core of North Kenwood Oakland's efforts is its middle-school laptop program, launched two years ago. The school wanted to make sure its middle-schoolers would continue to have the same access to computers as younger students, and the cost of individual laptops proved affordable.

Parents pay \$250 each year for three years, essentially leasing the laptop for their child; parents can purchase the machine when their child graduates for an extra \$100. Though 75 percent of the school's students are low-income, every child participates. "Families understand the need for this," says Pinkard. (The school offers partial scholarships and a payment plan.)

Shani Edmond used her laptop to show the experiments she videotaped for

a science fair, including one that required using a propane torch (forbidden on school property). Without the laptop, she says, explaining the experiment to classmates and to visitors at the fair "would have been a lot harder."

With the laptops, "the libraries of the world are available at your fingertips," says social studies teacher Darrell Johnson. His students are required to do an extensive research project, but instead of the traditional term paper, students can use a variety of formats to present their work. Many students have chosen to film documentaries and edit them on their laptops, which come equipped with the necessary software.

Last year, when the school entered the Chicago Metro History Fair for the first time, three of Johnson's 8th-grade students won the city-level competition and advanced to the state level with their documentary about the death of Eric Morse and its role in the redevelopment of the Ida B. Wells public housing project. Morse, a 5-year-old boy, was pushed to his death from the window of an apartment in the Wells complex by two older youths in 1994.

Thanks to an after-school program for middle-school students that offers a menu of clubs devoted to technology—such as learning to make movies, record music and even build robots—teachers don't have to spend class time teaching students how to use programs like iMovie to edit video or GarageBand to record audio.

"I could focus on content, writing, research and evidence," Johnson says.

For the future, the school is aiming to take a more structured approach to teaching classroom skills, says 3rd-grade teacher Shannon Justice. For example, 3rd-grade teachers "began teaching typing right away in the fall" last year because they knew as 4th-graders, their students would be expected to write in electronic journals about their reading.

Justice, who worked with a colleague to win the Beaumont Foundation funding, says writing the grant forced them to consider new ways to incorporate technology into their curriculum. As a result, 3rd-graders made a documentary about Chinatown for a social studies project.

Using technology often makes students more enthusiastic about learning, she adds. "It just engages them in a different way [that] you can't tap into otherwise." ■

# Winning the race—at first glance

High schools surveyed by *Catalyst* have better-than-average access to computers, but logistics and lack of staff are problems

By Maureen Kelleher

After a wave of publicity about the lack of equipment at Harper High last fall, the Englewood school received three carts equipped for wireless Internet access and 84 new laptops. The school also received 109 new desktop computers.

The new laptops and PCs augmented Harper's existing computer labs, giving the school a student-to-computer ratio of 3-to-1, better than district and national averages. Harper also has the advantage of a full-time technology coordinator to provide tech support to students and staff.

On the surface, Harper appears to be winning the technology race, as do Chicago high schools as a whole: High schools surveyed by *Catalyst Chicago* had an average of just under four students per computer with Internet capability, comparable to the national average for schools overall. As of last spring, thanks to a project spearheaded by the district's Office of Technology Services, all high schools have Ethernet connections to the Web.

High schools are also doing better with staff: A survey by the Consortium on Chicago School Research shows 62 percent of high schools had a full-time

tech coordinator, compared to 53 percent of elementary schools.

In addition, a *Catalyst* analysis of high school course offerings for 2005-06 shows that all but a handful of high schools offered a course focused on teaching students the basics of computer technology. For instance, a required course for freshmen at Jones College Prep in the South Loop teaches students how to use popular software such as Microsoft Excel, as well as the basics of web design and creating an electronic portfolio (similar to a resume).

But high schools still face barriers—such as logistics, inequity in resources, and lack of training—to successful use of technology to enhance learning.

## SHUNTED INTO A CORNER

Despite the overall numbers, equipment access varies widely. For instance, Dyett Academy in Washington Park has almost six students per computer, while Brooks College Prep in Roseland has three students per computer. A few schools, such as Lindblom Math and Science Academy in Englewood and World Language Academy in Little Village, have fewer than one student per computer.

Access can be a problem even with adequate resources. Last year, one of Harper's two computer labs was exclusively dedicated to ACT and Prairie State test preparation. That hampered teachers' efforts to use technology in core courses, says Gary Latman, who oversees technology. "If teachers can't get into the lab, they get very frustrated."

The machines in Harper's classrooms aren't much help, Latman adds, in part due to mechanical problems. "We do not even have four working computers in every classroom," he says.

Teachers may have to wait up to 10 weeks to make use of the new laptops in class, Latman estimates. He was asked to oversee a summer program, which kept him from spending time loading software and otherwise preparing the new equipment.

Budget cuts have forced some high school tech coordinators back into the

## Learning math the interactive way

At Kelvyn Park High in Hermosa, all freshman algebra teachers use Cognitive Tutor, a well-regarded, interactive program that aims to engage students in mathematical problem-solving at their own pace.

Last year, "our department chair gave us all two days a week in the computer lab," says math teacher Eugenie Alvares, who trained her colleagues to use the program.

Students in Kelvyn Park's Gear Up program, a federally funded college readiness initiative, are also using the program, one of the technology-based components of the district's strategy to lower failure rates in algebra, the most commonly failed high school course.

Mayra Garcia, an entering Kelvyn Park freshman from Ames Middle School, started using Cognitive Tutor on Saturdays last year with Gear Up. During the summer, she used it in Step Up to High School, the district's voluntary program for incoming 9th-graders who posted below-average math and reading scores in 8th grade. Garcia will start Algebra 1 this fall with seven of the software's 33 units already under her belt.

Garcia says she appreciated how the software

breaks problems up into steps, especially word problems, and also likes the variety of problems used to teach a skill. "I'm learning different kinds of things. I get new problems each time."

As part of its High School Transformation Plan, the district's recommended math curricula includes Cognitive Tutor and another program, Agile Mind. Schools that will be participating in the transformation plan this year will receive financial help to buy either of the programs.

Technology is also a component of another strategy the district is using to cut algebra failure rates: Double-period algebra classes, now required for incoming freshmen whose math performance is low.

Still, CPS officials stress that better curricula and teacher training are also part of the package.

"The way [students] catch up is to spend more time on task," notes Bret Feranchak, director of program evaluation for the district, who says kids learning algebra often struggle with skills such as proportional reasoning, graphing and representation of variables. "But if you don't also do things better, not just more, it's not productive."

Maureen Kelleher



Gage Park students (from left) Pedro Valencia, Artemio Perez and Juliana Garcia listen to computer teacher Reza Al-Rifai (middle) and history teacher Jonathan Keith (standing) explain how to create PowerPoint presentations for their online history course.

JASON REBLANDO

classroom, at least part time. “Those of us who had freed positions, meaning you don’t teach, are now getting classes,” says Linda Newsome, technology coordinator at Jones College Prep, who expects to be back in the classroom this fall.

Because high schools are departmentalized, the use of technology often gets shunted into a career-focused corner rather than incorporated into core courses.

“Everything is in its own realm in a high school,” observes Don York, co-director of the Chicago Public Schools-University of Chicago Internet Project, known as CUIP. “The structure isn’t set up to integrate it.” Through the project, the university partners with schools to provide resources, curricula and coaching on technology integration.

Core classes generally take a back seat to career-oriented courses when it comes to scheduling computer lab time, says York. “There’s often [only] one sign-up lab. It’s difficult,” he says.

### ‘YOU NEED SYNERGY’

While most high schools surveyed said half or more of teachers had training in using technology, Latman and others say more high-quality training is needed

to get the full benefit in the classroom.

Many teachers, who may have only a handful of machines, don’t know how to use them to enhance learning in a classroom with 28 or more students. “Too many teachers use computers as candy, as the reward for doing seatwork and handouts,” Latman says.

Bill Gerstein, principal of the School of Entrepreneurship on the former South Shore High School campus, says area instructional officers need to be involved if teachers and principals are to make technology a priority.

Gerstein, who believes schools need two full-time staffers to provide tech support and integration, suggests area coaches should be helping teachers learn to use technology to better engage students.

Gerstein observes that there is no connection between the Office of Technology Services and the offices that work on curricula. “You need synergy between those departments,” he says.

One example of how technology can engage students took place at Gage Park High this summer. Students taking a summer course in U.S. History begged the janitor to let them into the building hours ahead of schedule—because they loved the course’s online format.

Senior Cleveland Seamon accessed the online course at home and on the weekends, too. By the third week of the seven-week session, he was already working on his final exam. “I prefer this class over a regular class any day,” he says. “I see it as a challenge.”

All but three of the 30 students passed the course. Thirteen earned A’s. “I would never have 13 A’s in a class. Half of that, maybe,” says social studies teacher Jonathan Keith, who co-taught the course with technology teacher Reza Al-Rifai.

The class was a radical and welcome change from regular classroom teaching, Keith adds. Links to maps and audio enhanced the text readings, and students learned to use PowerPoint to create presentations for exams.

“The kids come in more enthused,” Keith raves. “I love that they work at their own pace. Kids aren’t being left behind.”

Principal Martin McGreal is eager to continue using online learning. (At *Catalyst* press time, McGreal was dismissed by central office.) “I don’t want this to be an extra,” he says. “This is the beginning of something pretty big.”

*Senior Editor Elizabeth Duffrin contributed to this report*

# Technology divide 'isn't in schools, it's in the home'

**N**ichole Pinkard took her first computer class in 8th grade and majored in computer science at Stanford University, later earning master's and doctoral degrees from Northwestern University. As a professor at the University of Michigan, she became interested in technology and urban youth when she noticed that few kids from Detroit were entering the computer science program. Now, as director of technology for the University of Chicago's Center for Urban School Improvement, Pinkard helps integrate technology into the classrooms of the university's charter schools. Pinkard talked to Associate Editor Maureen Kelleher about her work and how urban schools can make better use of technology.

## How critical is the "tech divide" between schools in poor and well-to-do communities?

The divide isn't in the schools. It's in the home. If I'm in a suburban area and kids come from families where they do a lot of media work [on computers], then the kids are going to bring what they know into the classroom. In urban areas, if kids don't have [the same] access, there's a divide. Our challenge is to figure out ways to bring access and use of technology not just into [urban] schools, but into after-school programs.

## How can technology help close the achievement gap?

It can create access to learning resources that kids might not have in their home life. It can make learning more engaging. For instance, after-school programs are more hands-on and often they include technology. When you look at the grades of some of our kids in the after-school program [you would think], "This can't be the same kid. This kid is creating a robot and doing all these diagrams." Then I look at his test scores and they're real low.

## Technology might be a way to level the playing field for kids in urban schools. But is it financially out of reach?

It's doable. [At North Kenwood Oakland Charter], our goal was to have a model one-to-one laptop program based on a charter school budget. To do that, parents had to participate. We decided to price our program similar to the cost of a video game and PlayStation: \$250.

People thought we were crazy—"You're 75 percent poverty and you're asking people to come up with that money?" We have 100 percent participation. The decision to have a laptop program hasn't scared anybody away from the high school [the university's new charter, opening this fall]. Parents understand how the world is. They're thinking about their kids and what they're going to be doing 10 years from now, and that [kids need] access to using technology.

## What are the most common mistakes schools make in thinking about technology?

Teachers and administrators don't understand the time and resources that need to be put into professional development. ... Also, you need to let your kids do some of the leading. When teachers feel like they have to be the ones to introduce the technology, then you decrease innovation. If you can find a way to make both teachers and kids knowledgeable, and let kids push how technology can be used, you get a much bigger bang for your buck.

## What tips would you offer schools on evaluating software?

Start with a clear understanding of your instructional [and] pedagogical model. You could be a direct instruction school, a whole language school or something in between. One piece of software might be good in one environment and horrible in another. ... We're a balanced literacy school. In some instances, we purposely pick out software that is more [phonics-oriented]. So when I send a group over to work on the



JAMISON NASH

computers, I want to know that they're getting some direct instruction [in phonics].

## What are things schools should do?

Definitely [have] professional development to introduce the tools, but also conversations about the integration of the tools. Let teachers sit with it and then come back [and talk about], "How are we going to use it in the curriculum?" You have to give teachers time to play around with [software], so teachers need laptops. They need to be able to take technology home, get comfortable with it, see all the [problems] kids are going to have with it and then come back and ask questions.

## You mentioned that urban schools often expect to use educational software for drills and not much else. Does that have to change?

Part of the question is, what is your vision about the world kids are going into? We have to become more innovative and move our kids into being more design-oriented. Kids still need to read and compute, but they need to understand how to do it in a context of being creative. When you get kids engaged and get them in a creative mood, they still have to write, they still have to plan [projects] out; they have to think critically. ■

## Principal programs ‘unique’

Still, slightly more than half of all graduates from Chicago’s leading training efforts have landed jobs as principals

By Ed Finkel

Three training programs for aspiring CPS principals have earned reputations and resources that put them ahead of the rest. But when it comes to getting jobs for those who graduate, one effort has an edge over the others.

Nearly two out of every three people who completed principal training with New Leaders for New Schools, a national program that launched in Chicago and New York five years ago and specializes in tapping career changers, have landed jobs as principals.

By contrast, a district-funded principal program, dubbed LAUNCH for Leadership Academy and Urban Network for Chicago, has placed fewer than half (49 percent) of its graduates in principal jobs. The newest entry, University of Illinois-Chicago’s Urban Education Leadership program, so far has a principal placement rate of 42 percent.

Executive Director April Ervin attributes New Leaders’ success to its placement strategy, which focuses on charters and new small schools, many of which opened recently under the district’s Renaissance 2010 initiative. “We’ve worked hard to establish partnerships with charter management and other organizations opening schools,” she says. “That creates opportunities, as well.”

Meanwhile, LAUNCH has seen its principal placement rate slide in the nine years since it was created, from a high of 68 percent for its first class in 1998 to 21 percent for the most recent group. It also has fewer resources than it once did, which has cut the number of people enrolled in half, from 37 in 1998 to 19 this year.

One reason for the dip, says Faye Terrell-Perkins, who oversees LAUNCH and other CPS leadership development programs, is that most candidates in the early years were already assistant principals, who are perceived as “the people who are most ready” to become principals by those who hire them.

By law, principals in traditional Chicago public schools—not charters, special schools or those otherwise designated as exempt—are hired by local school councils, an elected body of parents, teachers and community residents. Exceptions are low-performing public schools that have been placed on probation, whose principals are hired and fired by district officials.

The complicated process can make it difficult for candidates to work their way through the pipeline, says Terrell-Perkins. “The way things work in Chicago just doesn’t afford that kind of rapid movement to the principalship,” she says.

UIC’s Urban Education Leadership program is the latest entry and the only one to offer the opportunity for candidates to earn a doctorate in education. As such, some of those who enter the program are already principals, like Pat Baccillieri of South Loop Elementary who had already completed New Leaders before entering UIC’s program.

Baccillieri says another reason he decided to continue in the UIC program was because New Leaders had not yet developed ongoing support for graduates. (It since has, he notes.)

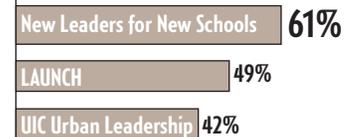
“We are so far just finding our feet, in terms of getting people into principal [jobs] after the first year,” says Steve Tozer, a co-founder of UIC’s Urban Education Leadership program. “I’m not terribly dis-

### WHOSE GRADS GET HIRED

When it comes to snaring the top job at schools, those who come out of New Leaders for New Schools are most likely to succeed.

PROGRAM	completed program	landed a principal job
LAUNCH	246	120
New Leaders	71	43
UIC Urban Leadership	33	14

### Overall principal placement



Source: New Leaders for New Schools, University of Illinois-Chicago, LAUNCH

appointed if, after one year, a teacher moves out of the classroom into an AP position. That may be the best possible developmental step for that person.”

Amy Kotz entered UIC’s program as a lead teacher at Cooper Elementary. Now she is assistant principal at Albany Park. She is still aiming for principal. “That’s the direction they really push for, and I know that’s my next step,” she says.

Districtwide, there is greater pressure to produce more principals right away. This summer alone, 62 principals—some 10 percent of the total—retired. At the same time, CPS is aiming to open 60 or more schools over the next four years to meet its Renaissance goal of 100 new schools.

With about 45 new candidates being funneled into the pipeline each year, many wonder how Chicago Public Schools will be able to meet demand for talented principals.

Continued on page 17

# Youth advocates putting their stamp on new student conduct code

## Board endorses 'restorative justice' but holds off roll-out pending training for teachers and principals

By Maureen Kelleher

The district's new Student Code of Conduct (formerly called the Uniform Discipline Code) is a compromise between two positions: that of youth advocates who wanted more innovative methods of discipline, and principals and teachers who wanted more resources and training to use the innovative practices.

The biggest change is the School Board's embrace of the principle of restorative justice, says Sarah Biehl, a staff attorney at the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago who also runs a legal clinic at North Lawndale College Prep. Restorative justice is a movement that promotes repairing the harm done by misbehavior through such practices as mediation, restitution and community service.

The board has not yet found money to train school personnel, but at least is not mandating that schools use the restorative justice practices, Biehl adds. "I'm glad they're not implementing something they don't have the money or the training to do well," she says. "It would have been doomed to fail."

For the Chicago Teachers Union, avoiding red tape is a top concern. "We understand due process, and we're not against that," says Rick Perrotte, the union's safety and security coordinator. In instances where the revised code requires approval of an area instructional officer before a student can be removed from school, says Perrotte, "we're concerned about time."

Key elements of the revised code:

the wake of controversy over thousands of student arrests at schools, district officials said they wanted to clarify which infractions required calls to police and reduce the number of arrests for minor infractions.

The new code spells out which offenses require a mandatory police call and which do not.

But student advocates were disappointed by the decision to keep vandalism, a common infraction, on the list of offenses that require a mandatory call, says Biehl. Vandalism, in particular, lends itself to restitution because the offender can help clean up the damage, she adds.

However, Perrotte notes that the union contract specifies mandatory calls for certain offenses, including arson, assault on employees and serious vandalism. "Those things we stood very strong on. Those things which are criminal, you cannot decriminalize," he says.

### **SUSPENDED STUDENTS MUST BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO TAKE HIGH-STAKES TESTS.**

"There's a conspiracy theory that schools are suspending students who would pull down their test scores," Biehl observes. While those students now have the right to take the test, "parents are going to have to remind the schools" of that right, she adds.

Perrotte is not convinced the change is wise, fearing that "shepherding" a student in just to take a test could disrupt the testing environment as well as single out the student. "Some tests have make-up periods, and they're far enough afterwards that he or she could take it without disrupting other students," he says.

special education can be referred for emergency placement in an alternative school "if the student commits a serious act of misconduct that presents a credible threat of harm to themselves or others."

"That's really vague," notes Biehl. "I take that to mean, if schools don't want to go through the expulsion process, they can get rid of the student. There is no hearing required, so it seems that parents and students don't get any notice."

In other districts, says Biehl, this practice "has had bad effects on dropout rates."

Perrotte says he understands the concern but believes procedural safeguards (the area instructional officer or CPS Law Department must approve the emergency placement) should prevent abuses.

### **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION DATA MUST BE TRACKED BY RACE, GENDER AND ETHNICITY.**

Biehl says that to get a more complete picture, alternative school placements should also be tracked.

### **KINDERGARTNERS CAN'T BE SUSPENDED WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF AREA INSTRUCTIONAL OFFICERS.**

The district appears to be recognizing public sentiment that suspending a kindergartner is "pretty appalling," Biehl says.

Perrotte warns, however, that some children may be a danger. Once the matter is referred, "the turnaround time is of great concern. We're looking for help early and often for students in need."

### **IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION DAYS INCREASED.**

For certain lesser offenses, students may be assigned to in-school suspension for up to five days; previously the maximum was three.

Perrotte supports the idea. "Any setting where school personnel can help and be a positive influence, that's what we're looking for."

**SCHOOLS WERE GIVEN MORE CLARITY ON WHEN TO CALL POLICE.** Earlier this year, in

**IT'S EASIER TO REFER OFFENDERS TO ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS.** Students who are not in

To contact Maureen Kelleher, send an e-mail to [editor@catalyst-chicago.org](mailto:editor@catalyst-chicago.org).

## MBA treatment

### PRINCIPALS *continued from page 15*

Chicago Principals and Administrators Association President Clarice Berry says she's not worried. She estimates a backlog of 200 mostly "high quality" candidates. "I don't think the shortage is as dire as people expected it to be."

But Kent Peterson, an educational administration professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison who is advising CPS on leadership programs, is more concerned. "Unless the three programs increase the number of students they take in, I don't see how Chicago is going to replace 60 to 100 principals per year," he says.

From a national perspective, Peterson believes Chicago's programs are relatively rigorous, providing support and training farther along the career continuum than most. "That is really unique," he says. "Corporations do that, but there aren't many school districts that have that kind of career-staged program."

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

Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management is looking to carve a niche in educating educators.

In July, a two-and-a-half day pilot, "Leading Successful Schools," drew 20 leaders from Chicago's public schools, mostly charters, for sessions on fundraising, marketing, economics and other business school fare. Courses were tailored to meet the needs of people who are in education leadership positions but do not have management experience.

Representatives from charters new (Namaste) and old (Passages, Chicago Charter School Foundation) attended, as did the Chicago Public Education Fund, which helps manage school improvement initiatives it invests in.

"This is an executive training program for school leaders to improve their management effectiveness," says Liz Howard, associate director of Kellogg's Center for Nonprofit Management.

The program revives aspects of an effort launched in the early 1990s, dubbed "Total Quality Schools," that required teams of administrators, teachers and parent leaders to identify and then solve a particular problem for their schools. Instead, the new program

targets principals and school directors who seek to develop their leadership skills.

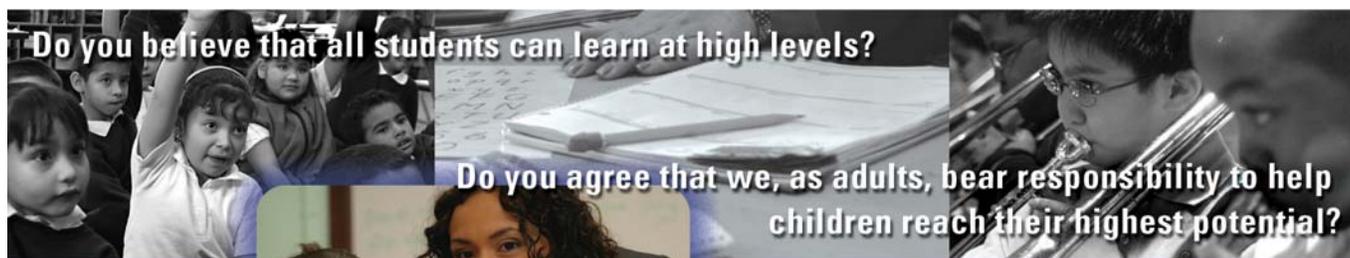
Seed funding from Polk Bros. Foundation and the Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation kept tuition at an affordable \$250 per person.

Initial feedback on the pilot was mostly positive, says Howard. Participant Elizabeth Purvis, who is executive director of Chicago Charter School Foundation, appreciated that instructors adapted their presentations on the spot to meet the needs of their audience.

Drawbacks that participants noted in their evaluations included lectures that were too short, too theoretical and not engaging. A session on negotiation and decision making was an exception and a clear favorite.

As the program is further developed this fall—the Center has hired former Golden Apple Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer Elaine Schuster to review course content and collaborate with local school leaders—advanced sessions on business basics will be offered. Also, participants will have the option of signing up for one or two full-day sessions that will cover a single business topic in depth.

*David Smart*



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We also are grateful for the multi-year pledge payments we received in fiscal year 2006 from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The McDougal Family Foundation and the Woods Fund of Chicago.

We have worked carefully to make this list complete and accurate. If there are any omissions or errors, please accept our apologies. If you discover changes that are needed, please let us know by calling Crescent Muhammad at (312) 427-4830 so we can correct our records.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Foundation disputes story

The MacArthur Foundation has a long history of involvement and investment in reform and improvement of the Chicago Public Schools. As such, we are pleased to see the substantial interest in such efforts by local and other national foundations. (“Chicago-style reform sells,” *Catalyst*, May 2006) It is a testament to Mayor Daley and Arne Duncan’s leadership and demonstrates confidence in their ability to continue to identify and pursue proven and promising approaches to providing a better education for all children.

The characterization of MacArthur’s current involvement and support of district efforts is, however, inaccurate. A \$2 million grant to the University of Chicago’s Center for Urban School Improvement is the initial investment in a network of 20 new well-supported Renaissance 2010 schools. This money helps teachers and students use technology in new ways and provides intensive development for teachers, principals, and student support staff.

Currently, the schools in the net-

work include Urban Prep, Donoghue, North Kenwood Oakland, the new University of Chicago charter high school in Woodlawn, Ace Charter Tech High School, Global Alliance Preparatory School, and the new Perspectives Charter at Calumet. The foundation also supports summer institutes and professional training for all principals in Instructional Area 15 (Hyde Park) and training for literacy teachers across Area 15 schools. We also are providing resources to the Chicago Teachers Union to implement its partnership with CPS in the Fresh Start Schools. Finally, MacArthur funds are helping CPS launch its 2006 pilot summer initiative.

We believe that this is evidence of our continued engagement in the critical task of improving our schools and not of a foundation that has “stepped back from ... CPS initiatives.”

Thank you for the opportunity to set the record straight.

*Jonathan F. Fanton*

*President, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

CORRECTIONS

In June, Comings and Goings erred in reporting that the University of Illinois at Chicago’s teacher quality program no longer exists. Also, a clarification of Allen Bearden’s new position is in order. He now works for the Chicago High School Redesign Initiative, coaching five small high schools on school management and professional development. ... In a separate item, *Catalyst* also mistakenly reported that CPS’s two Big Picture high schools are being phased out. The district is working with the schools to revise their curricula and has not yet made a decision on whether to close the them. Current students will be allowed to remain until graduation; however, neither school is accepting freshmen in the fall. ... Finally, transcripts from an interview with CPS High School Transformation Chief Alan Alson erroneously noted that he has worked in Cleveland.

## Budget fat at CPS

Each year, Chicago Public Schools tells us how the central office has sacrificed to help balance the budget. Yet, Cross City Campaign’s recent budget analysis shows that CPS has at least 600 more central office staff members on the books than it claims to have and that CPS did not cut \$25 million out of central office as it had asserted.

I wish to make this clear because of the comments mistakenly attributed to me in the May 2006 Ask *Catalyst*. I would also like to point out that every dollar spent in central office is a dollar less for classrooms, which have indeed been cut to the bone.

*Christina Warden*

*Program director, site-based management  
Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform*

*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.

**MOVING IN/ON** **MATTHEW STAGNER** has been appointed director of Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. He was formerly director of the Center on Labor, Human Services and Population at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. He replaces **MARK COURTNEY**, who is stepping down to devote more time to research but will continue as a faculty associate at Chapin Hall and as a professor at the university's School of Social Service Administration.

**STUDENT HEALTH** A new wellness policy that the School Board passed at the August board meeting urges schools to provide at least 50 hours of nutrition education each year and to form "wellness committees." Elementary schools also will be encouraged to schedule 150 minutes of physical education each week; middle and high schools 225 minutes for grades 6-10. Schools will not be allowed to withhold gym or recess as punishment. Rochelle Davis, executive director of the Healthy Schools Campaign, describes the policy as "a statement of intention," noting a hope that "there's going to be a lot of work on implementation because that is what will matter."

**NEW DESEG RULES** A federal court revised the district's desegregation consent decree in mid-August, dropping some requirements but adding others. Principals are released from hiring a teaching staff that reflects the system's racial make-up, but CPS is now ordered to maintain a racially and ethnically diverse pool of principal candidates. The district is no longer required to spend \$100 million annually on desegregation although it must continue to integrate students using magnet schools and other strategies. The

court also added a long list of requirements for educating English language learners, including that schools provide them with sufficient books in both English and their native language. Find the complete consent decree revisions online at [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org).

**CENTRAL OFFICE REORGANIZATION** Chief Education Officer **BARBARA EASON-WATKINS** no longer oversees high schools but will continue to oversee elementary schools. **DONALD PITTMAN**, the chief officer of high school programs, will now report directly to CEO Arne Duncan. ... **PETER CUNNINGHAM**, former communications director, is now director of external affairs. Reporting to him are the departments of communications, community relations, external resources, intergovernmental affairs and internal investigations.

**AT CLARK STREET** **BRENDA BELL**, former outreach manager with the Illinois Network of Charter Schools, is the new Transition Advisory Council coordinator in the Office of New Schools. The position is now full time; the previous coordinator was part time. ... **LISA SCRUGGS** has stepped down as senior policy adviser to CEO Arne Duncan but will continue to serve CPS as outside counsel. She worked for Duncan "on loan" from law firm Jenner & Block LLP, where she continues as a partner.

**LOW MARKS ON TEACHER QUALITY** Federal officials say Illinois is among the states that are not meeting requirements to ensure that inexperienced and unqualified teachers are not concentrated in poor and minority schools. States

were required to submit "teacher equity plans" detailing how they planned to direct good teachers to low-income and minority schools, as well as plans for providing highly qualified teachers for every classroom. Illinois was cited for, among other shortfalls, not identifying schools with large numbers of unqualified teachers. Few states submitted complete data and plans, which are meant to fulfill requirements of the No Child Left Behind law; four states did not meet any of the criteria set by the feds for developing the plans; only nine states submitted plans that were rated satisfactory. The Education Trust, a non-profit advocacy group, also said in a recent report that most states fell short with plans for teacher equity.

**CHARTERS RECOGNIZED** Four Chicago charter schools have been honored by the Illinois Network of Charter Schools for developing instructional strategies that resulted in improved student performance. They are: **ALAIN LOCKE**, **NOBLE STREET HIGH**, **NORTH LAWDALE COLLEGE PREP** and **NAMASTE**. Honorees were selected from a pool of 20 applicants.

**PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS** Two principals have had their contracts renewed: **DEBRA CRUMP**, Douglass; **BETTY JOHNSON-ROJAS**, Haugan. ... New four-year contracts have been awarded to principals at 32 elementary schools and two high schools. Among them: **CHRISTINE ARROYO**, Lee; **JOSEPH ATRIA**, Sullivan; **CARMELITA AUSTINBERRY**, Buckingham; **BARTON DASSINGER**, Sabin Magnet; **OTIS DUNSON III**, Brennemann; **MARY ELLEN GARCIA-HUMPHREYS**, McClellan; and **DANIEL GOMEZ**, Hayt. For a complete list, go to [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org).

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