



# *Catalyst* CHICAGO

Vol. XIX Number 4

DECEMBER 2007

INDEPENDENT REPORTING ON URBAN SCHOOLS

## ¿HABLA INGLÉS?

BILINGUAL PROGRAMS ARE FALTERING, A NEW COMMISSION SAYS. BUT A MAJOR OVERHAUL MAY BE IN THE WORKS.

Also: Where grads from 'The College Challenge' ended up. *PAGE 14*

# Rising to meet the challenge



Deputy Editor  
Lorraine Forte

**F**ive years ago, *Catalyst Chicago* published the last of a series of reports on the struggles and successes of nine African-American and Latino graduates working toward a college degree. This month, we revisit “The College Challenge” to find out what happened to those students.

Happily, six of the nine have graduated. (One did not finish school and two could not be located.) Their stories provide real food for thought as the district continues to roll out its High School Transformation Project.

While the former students stressed that they had to work hard and stay focused to reach their goal, another common theme emerged: Support made a critical difference.

Indeed, one young woman, a former valedictorian at Orr High who landed at the University of Southern California, now says her years at Orr were the best thing that happened to her. In one sense, that’s surprising, given the school’s not-so-stellar reputation and the young woman’s acknowledgment that Orr didn’t prepare her for college-level work. But, as Brooke Ray told writer Kristin Maun, at Orr “people believed in me and what I could accomplish.”

**“People [at Orr] believed in me and what I could accomplish.”**

*Brooke Ray, Orr High and University of Southern California alumna*

That’s an invaluable lesson for neighborhood high schools. Transforming these schools shouldn’t focus solely on bringing in stronger curricula and better teaching. It should also include efforts to ensure that teachers, counselors, coaches, aides and administrators give kids the same sense of self-empower-

ment that Orr’s staff gave Ray. Students, especially African-American and Latino kids from poorer communities, need to believe that they can make it in the larger world and succeed at prestigious institutions like USC.

With better academic preparation and more support and encouragement from adults, more high school graduates would end up as success stories like those we profile—and the district could catch up with the rest of the nation in the percentage of graduates who earn degrees, instead of lagging behind.

## LEARNING TWO LANGUAGES

Almost every year, the media reports statistics showing how U.S. students compare to those in other countries in reading and math. But one statistic that isn’t reported—one that would show a clear gap in favor

of foreign students—is the number of children who are studying a second language.

In Europe and other foreign countries, learning English is either compulsory or widespread, often starting in elementary school. Consequently, it’s far more common to find foreigners who speak English

than Americans who speak Chinese or French—and that puts American students at a disadvantage in a world in which business, and society, are becoming increasingly connected across national boundaries.

With that in mind, a new CPS-led commission is on the right track with its goal to shift bilingual education toward a dual-language approach (in which non-English-speaking students build literacy in their own language and also learn English) and have more English speakers learn a foreign language.

Having all kids achieve at least basic fluency in a foreign language might seem like a lofty goal in a district where many children are still reading below grade level in their own language. But too often, kids in CPS are stuck with just the bare skeleton of a real education, with little or no exposure to music, art and other so-called “extras” that are plentiful in wealthy districts and ought to be considered core subjects. One of those is foreign language instruction

**PUBLISHER’S NOTE:** We are delighted to now bring you freelance writer **Alexander Russo’s** blog, “District 299: The Chicago Schools Blog.” Since its launch, the blog has become the talk of Chicago’s broad-based school community. Now you can read it online at [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org).

District 299 brings you unfiltered news and views from people involved in public schools. The viewpoints are a mix, and no one minces words. Also, each weekday morning, Russo posts links to education stories in local, and sometimes national, media.

We encourage you to weigh in. And look for more upgrades to our Web site, which we will unveil in the coming months.

## BILINGUAL EDUCATION

# A makeover for bilingual ed?

**C**PS is not doing an adequate job of preparing English learners to tackle the same work as their classmates, a new commission says. Meanwhile, these students are facing new assessments under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. **COVER STORY: PAGE 6**

### NEW TEST BRINGS MORE ACCOUNTABILITY

Illinois is one of a group of states to adopt a new English proficiency test based on state learning standards. **PAGE 10**

### TEACHING IN TWO LANGUAGES

A handful of schools use dual language. The goal: Kids who are fluent in both English and Spanish. **PAGE 11**

### A DOUBLE HURDLE FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS

Educators say teens need more support as they learn a new language while trying to master academic content. **PAGE 12**

### BILINGUAL TEACHERS SCARCE IN PRESCHOOLS

The pool of potential teachers is small; few Latinos go to college and those who do choose higher-paying professions. **PAGE 13**



JOE GALLO

**Kindergartner Julissa Ramos**, whose first language is Spanish, gets extra help with her vocabulary. At Sawyer Elementary in Gage Park most instruction is carried out in English.

**ON THE COVER:** Camila Maeses, a 3rd-grader at Whittier Elementary in Pilsen, will receive some instruction in her native Spanish all the way through 6th grade. PHOTO BY JOE GALLO



JOHN BOOZ

Jill Prout, who got her alternative teaching certification through CPS' Chicago Teaching Fellows program, works with 3rd-grader Marcus Thomas at Mahalia Jackson Elementary. **See story, page 21.**

## DEPARTMENTS

### UP CLOSE Page 14

- The College Challenge revisited

### UPDATES Page 19

- Ren10 still missing the mark in some areas
- Alternative certification: Not just for poor schools

Notebook	4
Viewpoints	18
Comings & Goings	24

### 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
- Reform history news highlights

# Notebook

## TIMELINE

### Nov. 10: Test troubles

A decline in scores on high school tests prompts Illinois State Board of Education officials to say they plan to hire an independent consultant to look into the results. CEO Arne Duncan suggests that too many juniors blew off the second day of the two-day Prairie State exam. Day two includes a test of workplace skills; day one includes the ACT, which is needed for college admission. Overall scores declined in CPS, from 31.2 percent to 29.7 percent meeting or exceeding standards.

### Nov. 12: Certification

Just two months after passage of a new teachers contract that ensures a \$1,750 annual salary boost to National Board certified teachers, the district announces that more than 660 teachers are on track to obtain certification. They would join 652 teachers who already are certified and another 400 who are waiting on their scores. The process can require as many as 400 hours of work over three years. Board certified teachers also get \$3,000 from the Chicago Public Education Fund.

### Nov. 14: Opt-outs

The School Board declines to vote on a proposal to limit military recruiting in schools. The previous week, parents of high school students were given military opt-out forms on report card pick-up day, allowing parents to refuse access to their child's contact information. CPS says activists have complained about aggressive recruiting, and says 11,767 students have returned the forms, up from 8,018 earlier this year—but still just 17 percent of students in grades 10 through 12. (See Updates, April 2007.)

## ELSEWHERE

### Missouri: Merit pay

The Missouri State Teachers Association and Missouri National Education Association—the state's two major teachers organizations—might consider linking salaries to performance evaluations, according to the Nov. 8 *Columbia Tribune*. But first, the state must boost the minimum starting salary for teachers, give teachers a key role in developing the evaluation used to determine performance and ensure teachers have the right to bargain collectively, the organizations say.

### Ohio: Online shame

The Ohio Department of Education now posts online the names of more than 1,700 teachers, coaches, administrators and other licensed educators who have been reprimanded for misconduct since the Office of Professional Conduct was created in 1999, the Nov. 2 *Columbus Dispatch* reports. The

Web listing follows a 10-month *Dispatch* investigation which found the state did not always notify school districts about reprimanded teachers, so some superintendents had unknowingly hired teachers with histories of misconduct.

### Washington D.C.: Student input

Mayor Adrian Fenty and Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee are asking students to help solve problems such as school violence, crumbling facilities and unqualified teachers, the Nov. 4 *Washington Post* reports. In response to student suggestions at a series of youth forums, Rhee promised safer and cleaner schools, better-qualified teachers, more extracurricular activities and tastier lunches. Rhee says she attends student events because “when you want to find out what's happening in a school or classroom, you have to push the adults aside and ask the kids.”

## IN SHORT

### “It's an easily game-able system.”

*Thomas Cook, education and social policy professor at Northwestern University, on testing standards under No Child Left Behind. States can make tests easier, lower passing scores and do other things to make it easier for schools to improve under NCLB. Cook, a member of the Independent Review Panel for NCLB, spoke at a Nov. 7 breakfast sponsored by Northwestern's Institute for Policy Research.*

## Q&A with ...

*Jenné Myers, executive director,  
Working in the Schools*

For the last 15 years, Working in the Schools (WITS) has been recruiting volunteers to read with CPS students. Now, volunteers work with students in 28 schools. The Power Lunch program sends workers from Loop offices to nearby schools for lunchtime reading sessions with 2nd- and 3rd-graders. Older students are invited into the workplace for a mentoring program, and preschoolers and kindergartners cuddle up with volunteers who read to them. Writer Jazmenda McNabb sat down with Executive Director Jenné Myers to talk about the program.

### How did WITS start?

We started 15 years ago with a basic need recognized by our two wonderful founders, Joanne Alter and Marion Stone, who walked over to Cabrini-Green [a public housing development on the North Side] and into Byrd School saying, “How can we help?” Now we serve 2,500 students with 1,300 volunteers.

### What is your goal?

If you can get a child who, in their free time, will pick up a book instead of an iPod or PlayStation, we have come a long way. It's teaching the child the habits of reading, which hopefully down the road will impact test scores.

### How do you know whether it's working?

We use an extensive evaluation matrix, [including] a look at standardized test scores. I am trying to persuade my board to use more quantifiable measures: Is the child more apt to read? Are they excited to read? Are they reading at home? The teachers say yes.

### How do you identify students and schools?

We look at schools that have 80 percent and above minority and low-income students. We try to focus on 3rd grade, because they have to take the ISAT. We don't want them to be intimidated by the test, so we try to instill the joy and love of reading.

### How does Workplace Mentoring work?

It's an after-school tutoring and mentoring program. Once a week, 4th- and 5th- graders get on a bus and come downtown to meet volunteers. There is a group that goes to the Chicago Board Options Exchange. Those kids



## ASK CATALYST

### Why does Chicago Public Schools continue to push for better computers and software while virtually ignoring art, music, physical ed and extracurricular activities?

*Jill Allison White, parent, Murray Language Academy*

Others share your concern. In 2005, a Chicago Community Trust report called attention to uneven arts programming in CPS. In response, the Arts Education Initiative was created and CPS created a new Office of Fine and Performing Arts. Currently, the office is developing a Web site showcasing arts organizations that want to work with CPS schools. Emily Hooper Lansana, CPS theater and literary arts curriculum supervisor, says the office merely offers opportunities to schools—it doesn't provide the art programs. In CPS, principals and local school councils decide whether their school has arts programs, a lab full of new computers, or both. The district provides some money for resources, which principals can use to purchase technology, and pays for staff to teach art, music and physical education. Principals typically use discretionary money to augment arts programs.

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.

all want to be traders. They put on the jackets, they follow stocks—it's so cool for them. Before, that was never in their realm of possibilities.

#### How do you screen and train volunteers?

The Erikson Institute and the Chicago Public Library train volunteers. We are required to screen volunteers only once, but for the safety of our children, we pay the extra money to screen our volunteers every year. They are screened by CPS through the Illinois State Police.

#### Your volunteers keep returning. Why?

Overall, we have an 80 percent retention rate, which means if you've done it before, you are coming back. I have had so many volunteers say, "It's the highlight of my week." And we make giving back easy. For our Power Lunch program, the volunteers board a big yellow school bus and travel to their schools, so we provide the transportation. Our pitch is about convenience.

#### Do volunteers ever form deeper relationships with a school or kid?

Those corporate people start to see [a need] and say, "How can we help out here?" Law firm McDermott Will & Emery, which is partnered with Brown School, has installed a new scoreboard and helps with grounds cleanup and landscaping projects. They give students books and gift certificates for clothing. This year, McDermott launched Lawyers in the Classroom, which mentors 8th-graders. LaSalle Bank, UBS, Pepper Construction have all done things at their schools.

#### Where do you want WITS to be in the next five years?

I would like to see a total presence in the 28 schools. Children would have WITS from early childhood, to Power Lunch, then Workplace Mentoring. They go to the workplace and get the opportunity to dream big and say, "There is a career for me outside of what I see in my neighborhood." ■

## MATH CLASS

The lack of a high school diploma has a lifelong negative effect on earnings, a report by economists at Northeastern University in Boston says. Working-age high school dropouts fare worse in the Illinois labor market than their credentialed peers: **55%** of those without a diploma have jobs versus **69%** of high school grads and **82%** of college grads. Statewide, some **55%** of 16- to 19-year-old dropouts are employed, but just **24%** of their Chicago counterparts have found work. The average dropout will earn **\$355,000** less in his lifetime than a high school graduate in Illinois, and cost the government nearly **35%** more for services.

## FOOTNOTE

### ALTERNATIVE TO THE STREETS



KURT MITCHELL

# A makeover for bilingual ed?

By Sarah Karp

**A**s the president of a Chicago-based company that conducts business internationally, Clare Muñana looks for interns who can speak Spanish, take notes in English and then fire off a memo in both languages.

Muñana, president of the management consulting firm Ancora Associates, Inc., and a School Board member, says she's not the only executive searching for personnel with those language skills. Chicago companies competing in the global market are desperate for well-educated employees with fluency in more than one language.

Yet Muñana worries that the district's schools are failing to produce workers with those skills. So she and fellow board member Alberto Carrero decided to tackle the issue. They spearheaded the formation of the Bilingual Education and World Language Commission, bringing together top-level CPS officials, community

advocates, parents, principals and teachers to discuss the state of bilingual education in CPS. (The commission is funded by The Chicago Community Trust.)

The commission, armed with data that illustrate how bilingual programs are short-changing English-language learners, may be laying the groundwork for a major shift in the goal of bilingual education: Instead of pushing children to learn English as quickly as possible, programs would aim to build students' literacy in their native language as well as in English. The approach is called dual language. (See related story on the performance of bilingual students on page 8.)

Muñana says it is not just Spanish-speaking students who should be learning two languages, but all children. Still,

**Armed with data that illustrate the lagging academic performance of bilingual students, a CPS commission is considering a new approach: Help children build fluency in their native language as well as English.**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- The National Association for Bilingual Education provides advocacy for English-language learners and bilingual educators. Contact the group at 1313 L St. NW, Suite 210, Washington, D.C. 20005 Ph: (202) 898-1829 [www.nabe.org](http://www.nabe.org)
- Illinois Resource Center provides training for teachers and administrators who work with bilingual children. Contact the organization at 2626 Clearbrook Dr., Arlington Heights, Ill., 60005-4626 Ph: (224) 366-8555 [www.thecenterweb.org/irc](http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc)

she notes, it doesn't make sense to overlook those children who already speak a foreign language; schools should help them continue to develop it.

"Kids do lose their native language if they don't receive any instruction in it," Muñana says. "What I don't want to see is a child who can't speak English well or Spanish well. It is a disservice to them."

Nancy Villarreal-Adler, the interim director of the Wash-

ington D.C.-based National Association for Bilingual Education, says other districts are moving toward dual language instruction—among them, Fort Worth and other districts in Texas. Here in Illinois, several districts, including Highland Park, Evanston and Crystal Lake, have some form of dual language instruction, according to the Illinois Resource Center, which provides professional develop-



JOE GALLO

**Sawyer Elementary School kindergartners**, most of whom are Spanish speakers, listen to a lesson presented in English. Their teacher uses simple language, gestures and songs to help students understand. The approach used in the Southwest Side school is called sheltered instruction.

ment for bilingual teachers.

Muñana also points out that a Chicago Council on Global Affairs task force recommended last year that school districts in the six-county Chicago metro region do more to improve bilingual education and help students learn two languages.

Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins, a commission member, told the group she wants suggestions for major changes in instruction, not just tweaks. Any changes, however, face hurdles, such as a shortage of bilingual teachers and possible resistance from some parents who prefer that their children focus on learning English.

And the commission will have to tread lightly with its recommendations. While English learners in CPS speak 110 languages, about 85 percent are Latinos, and the state

of bilingual education is a politically charged issue that often becomes intertwined with discussion about Latino immigration or nationalism versus assimilation.

### PRO AND CON

Currently, 22 elementary schools in Chicago offer some type of dual language program. (See story on page 11.) Some 400 have traditional bilingual or English as a Second Language programs.

Advocates say that dual language programs do a better job of developing students' higher-level thinking skills and ability to master difficult content. The reason: English learners continue to receive instruction in their native language, in which they have more fluency and resources. Without these higher-level skills, advocates add, students' academic performance

will suffer, particularly when they get to high school.

Tamara Witzl, principal of Telpochcalli, a dual language school in Pilsen, says brain research shows the value of developing fluency in two languages. She notes that middle-class and wealthy parents of English-speaking children push their children to learn a second language. Meanwhile, children in bilingual education are pushed into speaking only one language, she contends, and bilingual programs give Spanish-speaking students the impression that what happens in their community is bad.

"We want to build on what they bring to us, not take away," Witzl says. "A big piece of [bilingual education] is to invalidate their culture. They feel diminished and trashed."

Some parents, too, are dissatisfied with bilingual education. Compared to parents

elsewhere in the state, a higher percentage of CPS parents refuse to place their children in bilingual programs or withdraw them before they pass the proficiency test.

Still, it's unclear whether these parents would embrace dual language—or instead, veer toward English immersion.

A lot of parents and community members want more English instruction because they see learning the language as essential to achieving the American dream, says Juan Rangel, the executive director of UNO, a Latino community organization. "These are families that aim to have their young people succeed," he says.

The UNO Charter School Network has embraced an English immersion curriculum. "We want to challenge CPS to look at different models for language acquisition," Rangel says.

## English learners falling short

**A** driving force behind the creation of the new Commission on Bilingual Education and World Language is the concern that Chicago is not doing a good enough job educating its non-English-speaking students.

That concern is well-founded, since English-language learners comprise 14 percent of the district's enrollment, or nearly 58,000 students (85 percent are Spanish speakers). And these figures only include students who are currently in bilingual programs, not the thousands that have transitioned into English-only classes.

Given the large numbers of English-language learners in the district, the quality of bilingual education affects the overall performance of the district, says Diane Zendejas, the new director of the Office of Language and Cultural Education.

Under the current guidelines, students should, in a best-case scenario, pass a language proficiency test within three years of entering bilingual education, then transition out to English-only classes and perform well enough to meet state standards.

CPS officials note that in 2007, transition rates and achievement showed some improvement. And for the first time, the district met the performance standard set out in the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Still, data from the Illinois State Board of Education show that the best-case scenario happens too infrequently:

- In 2007, about 45 percent of the 4,500 students who transitioned out of bilingual education in CPS met the three-year benchmark, compared to 70 percent in the rest of the state.
- More than 16 percent of students have been in bilingual education for five years or more, a small percentage for as many as seven years.
- In 2006, 71 percent of students who had transitioned out of bilingual programs two years prior still failed to meet reading standards, and 60 percent failed to meet math standards. That compares to 53 percent in reading and 35 percent in math for transitioned students elsewhere in the state. (State law requires that districts monitor transitioned students for two years. 2007 data are not yet available.)
- Of the 255 schools subject to NCLB performance standards for English-language learners, 55 did not make adequate yearly progress.

Clare Muñana, chair of the bilingual commission, says she's especially disturbed by the numbers of students who linger in bilingual education.

"After four or five years in the [bilingual] program, they have lost ground in other subjects and they can't catch up," Muñana says. "I do not want these children being held prisoner to this program."

Commission members, many of whom are principals and teachers, have talked about children coming into 4th and 5th grade speaking "Spanglish" and unable to write well in either Spanish or English, says Beatriz Ponce de León, the commission's project manager.

"They don't seem to be grounded," Ponce de León says.

CPS researchers are currently trying to figure out how former ELL students fare long-term on measures such as the ISAT, dropout rates and college performance.

A related issue is teaching quality, and some principals and administrators note that it is extremely difficult to find good bilingual teachers.

Zendejas plans to work with area colleges of education to find new teachers. She also wants to provide more professional development.

"This is another area where some have been left out through the years," Zendejas says.

*Sarah Karp*

Still, the majority of studies show that students given some instruction in their native language do slightly better than those in English immersion programs, says Timothy Shanahan, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, who edited a 2006 book that took a comprehensive look at studies of bilingual education.

But the benefit is not dramatic, he notes. "Either way, it is not going to be a huge disaster," he says. "You are not condemning the student to total failure."

### IS IT DOABLE?

Some educators question whether it's feasible to implement dual language programs on a large scale in a big district such as Chicago, given logistics and other barriers.

The longstanding shortage of bilingual teachers would likely be exacerbated by a shift toward dual language, which would require more teachers who are able to lead classes in students' native language. In some schools, that would mean finding teachers who can lead classes in Arabic or Bosnian, languages for which it is more difficult to find teachers. Even schools that already have bilingual teachers on board might have trouble finding the additional teachers needed to continue with native-language instruction throughout the grades.

Maria Vargas, a former board member who chairs a legislative advisory committee on education for Chicago's 2nd District, spoke at the bilingual commission's first public hearing in October and noted the serious shortage of bilingual teachers. In some classes in overcrowded Latino schools, the student-to-teacher ratio is 31 to 1, Vargas said to the group.

"At the minimum, you need to monitor compliance," Vargas added. State law calls

for bilingual class sizes to be 10 percent less than the average class size in the school.

But Witzl and other principals at dual language schools say lack of staff should not be a significant barrier. At Telpochcalli, only about a third of the staff is bilingual. "It is very doable and very sound," Witzl says.

Another potential barrier is how schools would teach children who are not literate in their own language. Janet Zaccariello, director of instruction for Sawyer Elementary in Gage Park on the far Southwest Side, considered adopting dual language when she and other faculty became frustrated that English learners weren't succeeding in traditional bilingual programs.

But many of Sawyer's students come from poorly educated families and walk in with limited Spanish vocabulary, Zaccariello says, and so she concluded that dual language instruction wouldn't work because students had so few resources in their native language—and therefore had few literacy skills to build upon. Children would reach 5th or 6th grade without strong skills in either language.

As a solution, the school adopted an approach called sheltered instruction, a form of English immersion that uses gestures and simple vocabulary to communicate to non-English speakers. Zaccariello and other teachers say the approach is working.

Rita Soto, a 2nd-grade teacher, says her incoming students now know enough English to allow her to teach at grade level. "I don't have to water things down," Soto says.

### WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Witzl notes several changes that would have to take place if the district were to adopt dual language instead of traditional



JOE GALLO

**Maria Catalan, a teacher at Whittier Elementary** in Pilsen, reads a book with her 3rd-graders. In this dual language school, students are taught in both English and Spanish, depending on the subject.

bilingual education. For one, the district would have to get around state policy, which mandates an approach that aims to transition children into English-only classes.

There's also the question of assessment: Standardized testing is especially difficult for students who are getting virtually no English in the early years, and with the recent decision to scrap the IMAGE (Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English), English learners will face the more difficult ISAT.

Beatriz Ponce de León, project manager of the commission, and Muñana both say the commission is aware of the various challenges. The commission plans to hold more focus groups and public hearings, and gather additional research. Once they've done so, their recom-

mendations could range from changes in state law to launching a pilot for a new approach.

Officials might also want to look toward curricular changes. Shanahan says many studies note that English learners might know how to read and speak a second language, but they don't fully comprehend it. He says English learners need intensive vocabulary lessons.

"Everybody needs a daily dose of vocabulary, but these students need a double dose," he says. "Setting aside time to do vocabulary is a smart move, and it will pay off."

Shanahan says he understands why officials are investigating a new approach, given the increasingly international focus of the business world.

"There's no question, knowing two languages is a good thing," he says. "There

are obvious benefits to the individual because they can earn more if they know two languages, and to society because the workforce will be more employable."

Diane Zendejas, the district's new director for the Officer of Language and Cultural Education, is hopeful that the commission's work will elevate the status of bilingual education. Bilingual programs are sometimes considered remedial, she says, and the needs of bilingual students are typically not taken into account when new curricula or initiatives are put in place.

"For too long, it has been an afterthought," Zendejas says. "I hope this takes us to the next level."

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## Taking the ISAT

Starting next year, English-language learners will have to take the same achievement test as their English-speaking peers.

The move, forced by the federal government's rejection of the test the state had been using to assess English learners, has educators worried.

Minerva Garcia-Sanchez, deputy director of the Office of Language and Cultural Education, is incredulous. "It is hard enough for native English speakers to do well on the ISAT. I am worried about how a student who just came to the country a year ago will do," she says.

The U.S. Department of Education ruled recently that the state would have to change the IMAGE (Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English). State officials then announced that they will develop a new test, but that meanwhile, English learners would have to take the ISAT.

Many principals quibbled with the IMAGE because it is in English, although the language is simpler than on the state's regular tests and more pictures and graphics are used. No Child Left Behind allows states to develop tests in students' native language, but Illinois has as yet not done so.

This fall, a group of CPS principals concerned about the IMAGE test lobbied the district and won an amendment to the promotion policy: English learners who fall short of meeting standards in benchmark grades will still be promoted if they have good grades and attendance, although they will have to go to summer school.

Linda Salinas, principal of Hammond School in South Lawndale, says that as soon as students understand English well enough to do better on the IMAGE, they are on their way out of bilingual education. Occasionally, Salinas has seen good students fail to pass achievement tests because they are focused on learning English.

# New test, more accountability

Fewer than 25 percent of bilingual students passed English proficiency tests this year. Educators say more scrutiny will mean better education.

By Sarah Karp

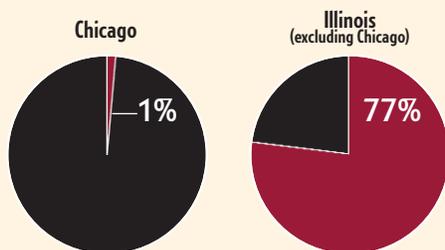
For decades, teachers and parents had little formal data about the English skills of bilingual students and how well they were likely to perform when they transitioned into an English-only class.

Now, the state's two-year-old English proficiency test, called ACCESS, is providing that missing piece of the puzzle. But the news is mixed. Fewer than a quarter of CPS bilingual students reached benchmark proficiency levels this year, according to data from the Illinois State Board of Education. (The number could be higher since the state does not have complete data for another 22 percent of CPS students who took the test; the district still transitioned most of those students.)

## LOST IN TRANSITION

Chicago is doing a poor job adapting to a new English proficiency test that is supposed to determine when a student is ready to exit bilingual education. State guidelines say students should exit only if they achieve a composite score of 4 or above on all four sections of the test (listening, speaking, reading, writing). But in Chicago, virtually none of the students who transitioned out in 2007 had composite scores reported. CPS disputes the state's figures and cites reporting problems with the new test.

### TRANSITIONING STUDENTS WITH A PASSING SCORE, 2007



Note: Scores are on a 1-to-6 scale.  
Source: Illinois State Board of Education

However, English learners could end up staying in bilingual programs for up to seven years since test scores have become the main factor that determines whether and when a student transitions out, says Office of Language and Cultural Education Director Diane Zendejas.

State and district policies include provisions allowing children to be in bilingual programs for up to six years if school officials say a student needs the extra years of native-language instruction. Zendejas says she will let students stay in for a seventh year if their scores warrant it. In 2007, only 34 percent of students in their sixth year of bilingual education transitioned out, according to CPS data. Chicago has consistently lagged behind other parts of the state when it comes to moving bilingual students into English-only instruction.

Before ACCESS was adopted, districts used one of a number of English proficiency tests on a state-approved list. Scores on those tests, the length of time a student had been in bilingual education and the teacher's impression of a student's ability all factored into the decision about when to transition a student out of a bilingual program.

Paula Stewart, bilingual lead teacher at Juarez High School in Pilsen, says relying primarily on a formal measure of a student's English proficiency is a better way to make transition decisions. She also likes the fact that ACCESS is given every year, giving teachers and administrators a regular check on how students are progressing.

"I like the idea of measuring the student to make a decision," Stewart says. "It is good that we are finally looking at it."

The federal No Child Left Behind Act sparked the closer look that bilingual students are now receiving with

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The WIDA Consortium, which developed the English proficiency test now used in Illinois, is based at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 W. Johnson St., MD #23, Madison, Wis. 53706. (608) 263-4216. [www.wida.us](http://www.wida.us)

ACCESS. The law calls for English-language learners to take proficiency tests to show their progress in learning English and signal when they were ready to leave bilingual programs.

In line with that requirement, Illinois developed learning standards for English learners and began using ACCESS in 2006. The test was developed by the nonprofit WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) Consortium, a group of 15 states that collaborates on developing standards and standards-based tests for English learners.

## WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW

Tim Boals, executive director of the consortium, says older language proficiency tests tended to focus on basic, conversational English and "when students left ELL classes, they fell on their face."

The consortium focused on what students need to know to be successful in a class taught in English. "We asked ourselves, 'What does the language in math look like? What does the language in social studies look like?'"

To determine what students need to know, the consortium used the member states' learning standards. "If you are teaching to the standard, you should do better on the test," he says.

Accordingly, scores on ACCESS should have some correlation to performance on state exams, such as the ISAT, once students are in English-only classes. Maine, one member of the consortium, is doing research on the issue and has found that there is a correlation.

Robin Lisboa, Illinois State Board

*Continued on page 13*

# Teaching kids in two languages

By Sarah Karp

**W**alk into a 5th-grade class at Whittier Elementary in Pilsen and students are reading about the U.S. Constitution and the establishment of democracy—in Spanish.

At other schools that serve large numbers of English-language learners, the same lesson is almost guaranteed to be in English. Children who need bilingual education are placed into separate classes for English instruction and would receive some content-area lessons in their native language. The goal is to transition into all-English classes as quickly as possible.

But Whittier and 21 other schools rely on dual language instruction; the goal is to have children become fluent in two languages. At Whittier, students are taught in both Spanish and English throughout the grades. In some schools, English-speaking students learn Spanish, Polish or Chinese, while their classmates learn English.

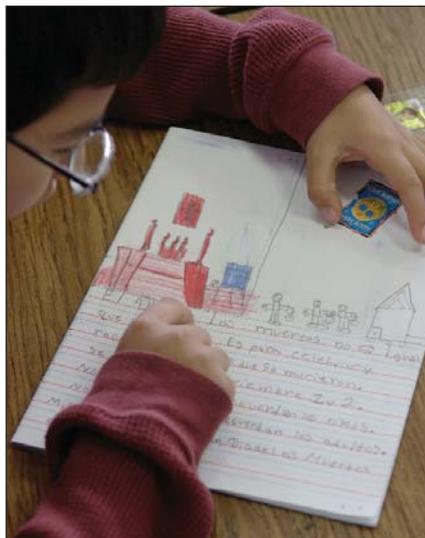
Members of the CPS-led Bilingual Education and World Language Commission are leaning toward endorsing dual language programs as a better alternative to traditional bilingual programs. They say that dual language teaching has two advantages: Students more readily develop higher-level thinking skills since they learn social studies, math and other subjects in the language with which they are most familiar; and students also develop more literacy in their native language, an advantage in the workplace.

“If you have the opportunity to speak two languages, why give one up?” says Whittier Principal Zoila Garcia.

Parent Virginia Guevara, who has lived in Chicago for 20 years, was glad to find Whittier’s program for her son, Alex. “We thought it would be the best for him so he wouldn’t lose his Spanish,” she says.

## ONE CONCEPT, MULTIPLE STRATEGIES

Different schools use different strategies for dual language instruction. At Inter-American Dual Language School in Lakeview, the student body is evenly divided between native speakers of English and Spanish, and teaching is done in the two languages so students gain fluency in both.



JOE GALLO

A student at Whittier writes a story in Spanish about the Day of the Dead. The goal is for students to gain fluency in English and Spanish.

At Ruben Salazar Bilingual Education Center on the Near North Side, students also learn Spanish and English, regardless of their native language (76 percent of students are Latino and 21 percent are African American). The goal is to have English-speakers walk into high school able to take at least a second-level Spanish class, and for the Spanish-speakers to do high-level class work in English, says teacher Debra Griffith.

Garcia, who worked at Inter-American, is quick to point out that Whittier’s program focuses on maintaining students’ native language (two-thirds of students are native Spanish-speakers).

“We don’t have a lot of models of English in this community,” Garcia says. “What we do is give kids literacy in Spanish and [then] we bring in English, so it is an easy transition.”

At Whittier, kindergarten classes, reading and math are taught in Spanish. By 3rd grade, students spend half their day learning in English, but continue through the years to get much of their lessons in other subjects in Spanish. Still, Garcia insists that the school provides enough English instruction to equip graduating 6th-graders with the skills to

tackle high school subjects in English.

Sixth-grade teacher Craig Segal points to a poem the class is reading and notes that knowing Spanish well sometimes helps students understand English words that may have similar origins or roots.

For example, one student was having trouble with the word “flourish,” until she realized the Spanish word “florecer” had the same definition. “It is amazing how much being biliterate really helps them,” he says.

By continuing to learn Spanish, Garcia says, students develop critical thinking skills in their native language and can transfer those skills to English more easily. Without such a base, a student will struggle all the way through school, Garcia says. Inadequate bilingual education that fails to help students develop these thinking skills may contribute to high dropout rates in the Latino community, she adds.

“The hardest thing for kids is to walk into high school when they haven’t developed the habit of reading with understanding,” Garcia says.

There are challenges to implementing the dual language approach, Garcia notes. Parents who see learning English quickly as the key to school success can be hard to convince. The district has no dual language middle schools or high schools, so English learners eventually must function in an English-only environment. There are no dual language training programs for teachers.

Mobility is also a difficult issue. When a new English-speaking child shows up in 5th grade not knowing any Spanish, it is hard to get him up to speed with students who have been learning the language since kindergarten.

Federal officials recently rejected the IMAGE test (Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English), forcing the state to scrap it and have English learners take the ISAT. That decision will hamper students, Garcia says.

“I have had students who have been here for a year and learned a lot of English, but still do not meet standards,” she says. “It is really discouraging for that student.”

*For a list of schools with dual-language programs, go to this story online.*

# A double hurdle for high schoolers

## Teens who are still learning English have a tougher time mastering other academic subjects

By Sarah Karp

**Y**oung children are said to be sponges, able to quickly pick up and become fluent in a new language. But what about the young man who walks into Sullivan High School two months after coming to Chicago from Ethiopia? Or the young woman who shows up at Juarez High who is still struggling to speak English five years after arriving in the U.S.?

Academic progress is often tougher for high school English-language learners, who comprise about 10 percent of all bilingual students in CPS. Educators note that older students face two hurdles: learning to speak a new language while also learning high-school-level academic content.

Even those students who have transitioned out of bilingual programs may have trouble mastering subjects taught in English, educators say.

"It takes five to seven years for a second-language learner to become proficient," says Kathy Khoshaba, chairperson of the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages/Multilingual Department at Senn High in Edgewater, where 21 percent of students are English learners. "Most of these students don't have that much time."

The data available paint a decidedly mixed picture of how high school English learners are faring in CPS. They are more likely than their peers to be on-track to graduate as freshmen, but those who remain in bilingual programs are less likely to graduate and to enroll in four-year colleges, even if they have a high GPA. And in one CPS survey, high school English learners rated teacher support and safety at their schools lower than their peers did.

### A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Principals and teachers say high school is where gaps in comprehension between English learners and their peers become most apparent. Diane Zendejas, the new director of the Office of Language

### BY THE NUMBERS

In 2006, there were **5,675** high school students enrolled in bilingual education; **870** were in their first year of the program. Here's how their performance compared to high school students overall, according to CPS data:

**FRESHMAN ON-TRACK RATE:**  
65 percent vs. 56 percent

**GRADUATION RATE:**  
46 percent vs. 50 percent

**COLLEGE ENROLLMENT:**  
46 percent vs. 66 percent

**COLLEGE ENROLLMENT, GPA AT LEAST 3.5:**  
53 percent vs. 78 percent

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Latino Education Alliance promotes improved education and higher graduation rates for Latinos. Executive Director: Bertha Magaña. 750 S. Halsted, Rm. 604, Chicago IL 60607 (312) 413-4013, [www.latinoeducationalliance.org](http://www.latinoeducationalliance.org)

and Cultural Education, says the academic difficulties faced by English learners may contribute to high dropout rates among Latinos (who make up 85 percent of bilingual students). As a result, she says bilingual educators should be at the table when the district implements new initiatives aimed at lowering the dropout rate.

There's also a larger issue, Zendejas adds: What extra support should the district provide for English learners after they transition out of bilingual programs?

"Do we just stop and say 'Now we are done?'" she says. "Or do we ask, 'What more do these students need to be successful in the future?' I am not interested in looking only at high school, but at college, too. Shouldn't that be our goal?"

There are signs of progress. David Gilligan, chief high school officer for CPS, is a member of the CPS-led Bilingual Education and World Language Commis-

sion. And Beatriz Ponce de León, project manager for the commission, says plans are in the works for a focus group with high school bilingual teachers to find out what is happening with programs.

Paula Stewart, a National Board-certified bilingual lead teacher at Juarez, says the challenges high schools face with bilingual students are not unique. High schools usually don't have the resources to deal with any student who can't read well or is performing way below grade level.

Sometimes Stewart has a student who is struggling, but it's unclear if the problem stems from language difficulties or other needs. "We just feel like we are scrambling to figure out what this child needs," she says.

At times, Stewart will let students continue to take classes in their native language throughout high school, though she warns parents that their child will graduate without becoming proficient in English. Sometimes, Juarez teachers who speak Spanish will have to modify the curriculum for students who are still learning English.

A small number of high school English learners were in their first year of bilingual education in 2006, suggesting they were newcomers to the country. Some of these students may have attended school in their home country, while others are refugees from war-torn lands and haven't been to school in years, says Bertha Magaña, executive director of the Latino Education Alliance, which recruits teenagers who have been in the U.S. for a while to act as peer tutors to newcomers.

"High schools all assume that elementary should have done the work," Magaña says. "But what happens when there was no elementary school or the elementary school had the student for less than a year?"

Overall, Magaña suspects a lack of English skills is not the root cause of school failure among English learners, but adds to it. "If they are not doing well in school, they might not see a point to staying, and see more meaning in getting a job." ■

# Bilingual teachers scarce in preschools

By Debra Williams

Getting young children ready for school by exposing them to language, equipping them with reading readiness skills, and instilling a love of exploration and learning is the key to preparing them for school success.

But that task is more difficult for youngsters whose native language is not English—primarily Spanish-speaking students, who are the vast majority of non-English speakers in Chicago—because of the lack of bilingual preschool teachers. The problem is particularly acute in preschool programs operated by community organizations that partner with Chicago Public Schools.

“We don’t have numbers, but we hear from programs about the difficulties of recruiting certified bilingual and bicultural teachers,” says Maricela Garcia, the executive director of the advocacy group Latinos United.

CPS principals have an easier time attracting those candidates who have the necessary language skills and the certification in early childhood education.

“I was very fortunate. I have enough teachers in my school,” says Jose Barrera, the principal of Columbia Explorers Academy, a well-regarded neighborhood elementary school in Brighton Park. Advertising open positions has paid off, he adds. “I guarantee people will come and work here.”

Ricardo Estrada, the executive direc-

tor of Erie Neighborhood House, cites three reasons for the shortage in community preschools.

For one, the pool of potential teachers is small because not enough Latino students are attending college, says Estrada. “And the best and brightest are not choosing the [teaching] profession because of the pay.”

Finally, Latino college students who do become teachers typically opt to work for the district for monetary reasons: Salaries for CPS and community preschool programs are comparable, but community preschool staff work longer hours.

In CPS, “they work nine and a half months. We work year-round,” says Estrada.

## RECRUITING FROM WITHIN

Thus far, Erie House’s solution has been to ‘grow their own’ by encouraging staff to obtain training and a degree in early childhood education.

“We have one bilingual person in every classroom,” Estrada explains. “That doesn’t mean that every lead teacher is bilingual, but somebody—an assistant teacher, an aide—is bilingual. And currently, 80 percent of our staff is working towards some kind of degree.”

Garcia applauds the move. She advocates a model currently being used at El Valor, a nonprofit group in Pilsen. For the last 15 years, El Valor has taken groups of people from the community and helped them obtain their degrees in early child-

hood education and other areas. Residents can also take classes to help them brush up for the basic skills test, which they must pass to get a teaching degree.

Most of those in the programs are women who have been out of school for years and need to improve their basic skills, Garcia notes.

The partner universities provide instruction at El Valor in the evenings and on Saturdays, and also provide child care.

Vincent Allocco, the executive director of El Valor, says the program started when Northern Illinois University approached the organization about creating an early childhood education program called Touch the Future.

Since then, the organization has partnered with the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago State University, Daley College, Kendall College, Governors State University, Southern Illinois University, National-Louis University and Olive-Harvey College to provide instruction for a degree in other areas such as business, speech therapy and counseling. Participants receive a reduced tuition rate.

Currently, 17 people are in an early childhood education bachelor’s degree program and 15 are in a program to help them pass the basic skills test to gain admission into an Illinois teacher preparation program.

Allocco says the organization hopes to provide a way for residents to earn a master’s degree in early childhood education soon. ■

## ACCESS *continued from page 10*

of Education division administrator for English-language learners, says having the test aligned to standards has changed what happens in the classroom. Having standards for English learners also helps college and university education schools know what bilingual teachers should be teaching.

“It has helped not just bilingual teachers, but also mainstream teachers to understand where the child is and what the child needs to be learning,” she says.

On a scale from 1 to 6, Illinois requires

that students score a 4 on the ACCESS to be transitioned from a bilingual program. Boals notes that a child who scores a 4 still is not fully proficient in English and should get additional support.

Timothy Shanahan, a professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago who edited a book on studies of bilingual education, says he is not so sure proficiency tests that focus on classroom vocabulary will produce better results. If they are teaching very specific vocabulary, such as “rhombus,” it might even be a waste of time. What students need, he says, is higher-level vocabulary that goes

beyond conversational English.

“Technical vocabulary will be covered in the classroom,” Shanahan says.

But Nancy Villarreal-Adler, interim director of the National Association for Bilingual Education, says any state that is using standards to help set its bilingual curriculum is heading in the right direction.

Before NCLB, she says, English learners were in the shadows of education.

“These children did not count,” Villarreal-Adler says. “No one was accountable for them and what happens when no one is accountable? People don’t make much of an effort.” ■

# Up Close

The College Challenge revisited

## Support, perseverance are key

Grads find it's not easy to stay on track in college, but encouragement from adults can make the difference

By Kristin Maun

**W**hat does it take to get a college education? Six years ago, *Catalyst Chicago* began to examine that complex question in “The College Challenge,” a series of periodic reports on the struggles of nine black and Latino students from Chicago Public Schools who were aiming to earn a college degree.

Associate Editor Debra Williams profiled the nine as they coped with the myriad challenges of making the transition from high school to college: difficulty finding financial aid, inadequate academic preparation and social adjustment.

Since 2001, the district has taken steps to boost college admissions, creating a Department of Postsecondary Education and dispatching college coaches to a dozen schools to motivate students to apply for postsecondary education and help them through the process. Earlier this year, the district released data showing that college attendance now stands at 48 percent. (See “College-going rates inch higher,” May 2007.)

Yet once in college, students face a tougher hurdle: graduation. Just 45 percent of CPS graduates who enroll in a four-year college end up with a bachelor's degree within six years, compared to 64 percent nationally, according to a 2006 study from the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

With this report, *Catalyst* checks in with five of the nine students to find out whether they graduated and if so, what made the difference in helping them surmount the hurdles. Although the students *Catalyst* was able to locate and interview each stressed that hard work and perseverance were important to their success, another critical factor emerged: support from outside, whether from a parent, a high-school mentor or the university they attended.

PHOTOS BY JOHN BOOZ

Brooke Ray

HARD WORK PAYS OFF



PHOTO COURTESY OF BROOKE RAY

**THEN:** After graduating from Orr High School in Humboldt Park, Brooke Ray was accepted to her dream college: the University of Southern California. But the transition to college was a shock. Though she had been Orr's valedictorian, Ray struggled in college, and her freshman GPA fell to 2.8. Finding the money was a struggle, too. She had financial aid, took out loans and got support from her mother, but still had to take part-time jobs to pay the hefty \$36,000 annual tuition, room and board.

**NOW:** Despite the heavy financial burden, Ray graduated from the University of Southern California in 2005 with a major in international relations and a minor in business. Although her high school classes did not prepare her for university-level

work, Ray maintained a B-average GPA by studying hard and asking for help from her professors and teaching assistants.

Ray also says she relied on the emotional support of her high school teachers and administrators to keep going when things got rough. "I think attending Orr High School was the best thing that ever happened to me," she says. "There are people that believed in me and what I could accomplish."

Hard work in the real world and skills she learned in an after-school program also paid off.

Ray says she had to work two or three jobs at a time to pay her bills, including stints in USC's admissions office and architecture department and outside jobs in modeling and event planning. "It was hard to find an academic balance as well as work and have a social life," she says.

But after graduation, a full resume and the connections she made through employers and the USC alumni association quickly led to a job she loves: director of product development for eForce Media, Inc., a marketing company. Ray manages the design and marketing of the company's Web site using skills she learned in high school and college.

Ray first learned about Web design through Tech 37, a city-sponsored after-school program that teaches high school juniors and seniors to troubleshoot computer equipment, use new technology and create "Webliographies" to help people find information on the Internet. She saw the program as a link to her future. "I knew that computers interested me. I knew that there would be a life in technology and there would be a demand for it."

In January, Ray will begin classes for computer programming and Web design to continue to build her skills. Ultimately, she wants to start a marketing company to build Web sites for small businesses, a dream she has had since high school. "I was always a business-minded person and I always knew I would own my own business one day," she says.

Now, Ray encourages other CPS students to do what she did: Get a job as soon as possible and start learning about potential careers. The part-time jobs she held and the connections she made through them taught her more than she learned in the classroom, she says. "It's life experiences and interactions that prepare you for the real world."

## Vernon Payne

ART, TOUGH LOVE LIGHT A SPARK



**THEN:** Vernon Payne had little academic direction as a student at Morgan Park High School. He was a talented artist but a mediocre student who admitted he did only enough schoolwork to get by. Recognizing his talent, his family and teachers encouraged him to enroll at Columbia College—known for its arts programs—to study fine art. At first, he was disorganized and rarely showed up for class. When *Catalyst* last spoke with him in 2002, he vowed to make school a priority.

**NOW:** Although he had a rocky start, Payne graduated from Columbia College in 2006 with a bachelor's degree in fine arts.

Freshman year and the beginning of his sophomore year were the toughest, Payne says. "That's when I had my worst grades. But eventually I got the hang of college life."

The second semester of his freshman year, Payne rarely showed up for class and ended up failing the only two classes he was taking. He says anxiety kept him from concentrating and admits he had poor organizational skills.

But pressure from family, friends and teachers to do better helped get him on track. And his mother ended up laying down the law: She said she would no longer pay for his education if he didn't try harder.

He considered dropping out and returning to school later. But if he did, his mother, who was footing his tuition, told him he would have to pay her back for the

## The others

*Catalyst Chicago* was unable to reach all the students featured in the College Challenge series. **Angela Serrano**, who graduated from Hubbard High, enrolled at Morton Community College and wanted to be a veterinarian, and **Lekena Figueroa-Forman**, who graduated from Lane Tech, enrolled at Northeastern Illinois University and wanted to be a history teacher, could not be found. Based on public records and interviews with college administrators and other acquaintances, *Catalyst* found out what's happened to two others:

### AARON PRICE: FROM STUDENT TO PRISONER

Kenwood Academy graduate Aaron Price made a promising start to college and career. With help from his family, Price amassed some \$65,000 in scholarships; he graduated in the top 10 percent of his class. But the auspicious start ended abruptly and Price did not achieve his dream: In his sophomore year at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Price was convicted of aggravated assault and aggravated battery for attacking another student with a baseball bat. Price was expelled from Morehouse and sentenced to serve 10 years in a Fulton County, Ga., prison. In August, he was paroled to a halfway house.

### JAMES SNOWDEN: AN ACADEMIC ATHLETE

At Chicago Vocational Career Academy, James Snowden was an honor roll student and a talented athlete in track, basketball and football. In 2002, he graduated as valedictorian and won enough money to pay for about 70 percent of his tuition at the University of Chicago. Still, Snowden was concerned he would not be prepared for the rigors of an undergraduate curriculum. To smooth his transition into college-level courses, he participated in the Chicago Academic Achievement Program during the summer before his freshman year at the University of Chicago. In June 2006, Snowden graduated from the U of C with a major in law, letters and society. While there, he played football as a wide receiver and a defensive back.

classes he had failed before she would help pay his tuition in the future.

The threat worked. Payne got organized and studied hard. Ultimately, he graduated with a 2.9 GPA.

"I didn't believe in myself, especially in the beginning," he says.

(Students at Columbia College, an open-admissions school in the South Loop, often lack the academic background needed to succeed at a more competitive institution. The school offers programs to help freshmen who need an

## UP CLOSE THE COLLEGE CHALLENGE

extra boost, including the Conaway Achievement Project for students who are first-generation college students, come from low-income families or are disabled; and the Bridge summer program for incoming freshmen who lack the academic skills needed for college work.)

Once he committed to school, Payne took classes in everything from performance art to ceramics. He discovered a passion for printmaking and painting and developed confidence in himself.

"I had an identity crisis because I didn't know who I was," he says. "The whole experience of college helped me realize who I really am."

While still a student, Payne started working at an art supply and frame store in Morgan Park. He is now a manager and loves his job. "I order, I frame, I do it all. I worked my way up from the bottom all the way up," he says proudly.

Payne has set up a Web site to sell his artwork, [www.vernonpayne.com](http://www.vernonpayne.com). He also has plans to launch his own business, an online art supply store. Down the road, he hopes to pursue a graduate degree in art.

His advice to other students: Work hard. "You got to want it," Payne says. "If you don't want it, it's not going to come to you."

### Adam Ramirez

#### WHAT HE DIDN'T LEARN IN COLLEGE



**THEN:** In 2002, Adam Ramirez was a senior at Roosevelt University earning top grades and about to earn a degree in elementary education—a substantial accomplishment after struggling at Hubbard High in West Lawn. Despite low grades and a low ACT

score, the Scholars Teach and Reach (STAR) scholarship program for aspiring teachers took a chance on him. STAR provides financial aid and mentoring for students, and the support paid off: Ramirez became a model college student—STAR requires students to maintain at least a 3.25 GPA each year, but Ramirez had a 3.8 upon graduation—and was a volunteer at Pulasaki Elementary in Logan Square.

**NOW:** After graduating in 2003, Ramirez is now living his longtime dream: He's teaching 7th- and 8th-grade math and 8th-grade reading at Eberhart Elementary in Chicago Lawn, where he started in 2004. But after several years in the classroom, Ramirez says flat-out, "I don't think any school prepares you for the actual teaching experience [and] the issues these kids are bringing into the classroom," he says, noting that his students have dealt with significant problems such as abuse and rape.

"How do I expect these kids to learn how to add integers when they're going through so much personal trauma inside?" he adds.

Ramirez says he achieved success in college, despite poor preparation in high school, because he discovered his ethnic identity as a Native American. "I joined ethnic dancing and from that I met many people connected to their roots," he says. "I found who I was as an indigenous person and that made all the difference in the world."

Now, Ramirez advises high school students to study their ancestry, like he did, to find the self-awareness they need to succeed. "If you don't know your past, you're not going to know your future," he says.

In October, an Eberhart student was murdered and Ramirez turned to his Native American roots to help students cope. He used the tradition of "talking circles" to allow students to discuss the loss and the consequences of decision-making. He also read to them from "It Doesn't Have to Be This Way," a book by writer and former East Los Angeles gang member Luis Rodriguez on the devastating consequences of gang violence and the importance of making good choices.

Ramirez says he has been disappointed because of a perceived lack of compassion for students among his colleagues. "My goal was to keep these kids out of gangs," he says. "I was so enthusiastic. But

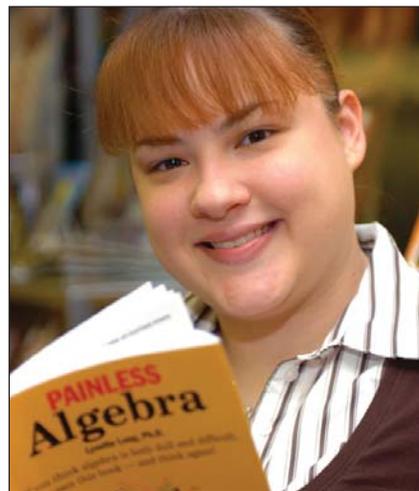
now that dream is just dying. The teachers around me are killing that spirit."

His answer to that challenge is to pursue a graduate degree in school administration. Then, Ramirez says, he'll have more power to fix a school by hiring teachers who care about the kids and by implementing a Native American approach to discipline that is similar to the concept of restorative justice—asking kids to make restitution when they do something wrong instead of kicking them out of school via suspension or expulsion.

Even with the difficulties, Ramirez has never considered quitting his job. "When I was going to school, I would often ask myself what I would do if I wasn't teaching," he says. "And I still can't answer that question. I have to keep teaching."

### Ana Salinas

#### A ROLE MODEL FOR STUDENTS



**THEN:** At Juarez High School in Pilsen, Ana Salinas earned good grades and took Advanced Placement classes. So it came as a big surprise to her when she failed a pre-calculus class during her first semester at Loyola University and then had to take a remedial math course. Despite inadequate preparation in high school, Salinas had a passion for numbers and was determined to succeed. With support and hard work, she got good grades—even in math.

**NOW:** Today, Ana Salinas teaches math to 7th-graders at Ruiz Elementary in Pilsen, the same grammar school she attended. She is now working toward a master's degree in bilingual education and plans

to earn a master's degree in mathematics. Both degrees will make her a hot commodity in the teaching field.

Salinas, who graduated from Loyola University with a 3.0 GPA in 2003, earned a bachelor's degree in education with a concentration in mathematics. Support from her mother and former teachers (who had encouraged her to pursue a teaching career) kept Salinas on track personally as well as academically.

"I kept talking to my old teachers from high school," says Salinas, who thought at times that she might not be smart enough to graduate. "It kept inspiring me to complete my studies."

One of those teachers is Dana Butler, now principal of Ruiz Elementary.

"We see people from all walks of life [become teachers], but I think it's an added bonus when you can have someone from your own community," Butler says. Salinas' success shows the students that a college diploma is achievable for them, too.

Salinas sees herself as a role model for students, but the transition from Ruiz student to Ruiz teacher has been difficult. Although her former teachers now are peers, Salinas is hesitant to call them by their first names. "I still feel like a student," she says.

Ruiz teachers, however, have had no difficulty accepting Salinas as a colleague. Theresa Kevorkian, an 8th-grade teacher, says she is thrilled to see Salinas grow from an insightful teenager into a talented educator.

"She's an amazing math teacher," Kevorkian says. "She knows how to break it down—she's effective. The kids are focused, she gives them a real strong foundation and they end up really understanding the language of math."

Salinas says her difficulties with math in college made her a better teacher. "I did struggle, and I saw what did work for me, and that's what I work into my classroom," she says. "I'm one of those visual learners. You have to show me. I have to understand the reasons behind it. And that's how I teach my students."

Salinas is earning a master's in bilingual education from Concordia University, where she maintains a 4.0 GPA and is scheduled to graduate in December. She plans to apply to the Illinois Institute of Technology to earn another master's in mathematics. She also wants to write children's math books.

"When I first started teaching, I thought that was it—I was done," Salinas says. "I still love teaching, but I feel that I need to do more."

## Danielle Dungey

### CAREER EXPOSURE WOULD HAVE HELPED



**THEN:** When *Catalyst* last spoke with Danielle Dungey in 2002, she was in her third year at Northern Illinois University, wondering whether she should have chosen another major besides history. The prospect of higher pay lured her to consider other careers—she planned to become a teacher—but she worried that changing that plan would mean losing her grants and scholarships. "I wish I could have been exposed to other careers," she says now. "There are so many careers out there I didn't even know about."

**NOW:** Dungey ultimately stuck with her major, and her decision to become a teacher, because she already had dedicated so much time and money to that career path. In 2004, she graduated from NIU with her teacher's certification as well as her bachelor's degree.

By the time she began having doubts about her career path, Dungey says, "I was already a junior and had already started my [major] program and I just didn't want to quit. There were so many people who had invested in me."

Outside support, from peers and adult mentors, made a critical difference for Dungey. The Golden Apple Foundation, an organization that provides scholarships for teachers, created a support system for

her. "It helped me network and meet people, like other scholars," she says.

While Golden Apple provided emotional support, Dungey knew to reach out to get the academic support she needed at NIU. Whenever Dungey struggled, she went to the university's writing center to have her papers proofread, or made an appointment to talk with her professors.

Dungey now is teaching history to juniors and seniors at Eisenhower High School in south suburban Blue Island. She felt academically prepared for teaching, and remembered from her own high school classes what made learning fun. But she wasn't ready for the challenge of teaching unmotivated students.

Dungey says she tries to inspire her students and give them the same passion for education that she had by offering extra-credit options and giving a motivational speech at the end of each class. "If you're not smiling, I encourage you to put a smile on your face. Live every day to the fullest with no regrets. And always remember life is what you make of it," she says.

It's also her job, Dungey says, to prepare her students for college by teaching them to be responsible. For one, she does not accept late assignments. "I tell them I do this because when you go to college, professors aren't going to go to your dorm and knock on your door to ask if you're coming to class," she says.

Beyond the classroom, Dungey assists students who want to go to college the same way her high school teachers helped her: by nominating them for scholarships.

Dungey also has earned a master's degree in school leadership from Concordia University. She wants to become a dean of discipline and sees it as a way to work in educational policy while still inspiring young people.

"There's always a good and a bad choice, and the choices you make affect you," Dungey says. "I want them to understand that there are consequences to everything they do."

She also wants students to understand that there is potential in everything, too. "I'd love it if they remembered, 20 to 30 years from now, everything I taught them about history," Dungey says. "But if they don't remember anything else, I want them to remember they can do anything if they want to."

Contact Kristin Maun at [editor@catalyst-chicago.org](mailto:editor@catalyst-chicago.org).

# Viewpoints

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### School violence report needs context

I applaud *Catalyst Chicago's* coverage of school violence in its October 2007 issue. Having spent many years in and around schools on the West Side, however, I think you failed to provide some critical context.

You mention in a sidebar that Manley High School was ranked the most violent high school last year, with 24 violent incidents per 100 students. In addition, *Catalyst* reported that while overall violent incidents dropped by 10 percent, a third of schools experienced a 20 percent or more increase in the rate of serious fights. What you failed to do was offer analysis or perspective on what might explain these trends.

In the case of Manley, the level of school violence is at an all-time high, having nearly doubled since 2003. The recent spike stems in large part from the fact that when CPS closed Austin High and Collins High, it redirected freshmen to Manley (which at the time was underutilized). With hun-

dreds of new students arriving from across the West Side, across gang territories and cultural divides, Manley has paid a significant, if predictable, price in school safety. While CPS has provided additional resources in the face of this demographic shift, and the new principal has worked to find creative ways to respond to an inherently difficult situation, the environment at Manley initially went from stable to scary.

In light of this situation, and others like it playing out across the city, CPS is now looking to find ways to shut down failing schools without dislocating students. If this works (and such efforts are notoriously difficult), it will not only benefit the students and families who are able to stay in one place, but also will ameliorate the situation at neighborhood schools such as Manley.

It is also worth noting that despite a continued influx of freshmen from closed schools, the climate at Manley has dramatically improved this year. The calmer

atmosphere at the school is attributable to the efforts of Sean Stalling, the principal, and the support work of Umoja Student Development Corporation (an organization housed in Manley and committed to providing counseling, programs and support to help prepare students for college). The leadership at the school has worked tirelessly to develop relationships with its expanded student body, and to help incoming freshmen find a constructive place. These efforts to build social support into the daily schedule and life of students are paying off—as they were prior to the surge in enrollment—and they underscore the overall theme of last month's issue: Building relationships with students is and should be at the core of school safety.

*Robin M. Steans  
Trustee, Steans Family Foundation*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For stories on the impact of school closings, see *Catalyst*, March 2006.

### Collaboration is 'the real story' in Albany Park

The education reform leaders of the Albany Park Neighborhood Council feel that the article "Tying Schools Together at the Roots" (Neighborhoods, Nov. 2007) fell short of truly communicating the mission and the work that is being done by a local group of education leaders through the Greater Albany Park Education Coalition.

As the leaders who have been involved in crafting this initiative, we felt it was necessary to accurately convey to *Catalyst Chicago* readers what we see as the valuable story to tell about our initiative. The real story here, which was watered down by attempts to capture controversy, is the story of a group of school teachers, principals, parents and students who are establishing learning communities that extend beyond their own school buildings. It is the story of

a collaboration that holds the potential to be a powerful transformation in the culture of education in one Chicago neighborhood. And it is the story of how this process has been started despite many obstacles that schools encounter on a daily basis.

Though not reflected in the article, we have found that the teacher dialogues during the shared professional development time pushed the conversations beyond finger-pointing and began addressing the root causes of challenges faced in our schools and crafting creative solutions to improve student achievement. Also, while frequent top-down initiatives from CPS are a backdrop, and sometimes a struggle in our work to educate our students, we are pleased that Chicago Public Schools has been supportive of the coalition's work to date. It is our hope that CPS will continue

to learn from our experiences in Albany Park so that they can figure out ways to support this type of collaboration in this neighborhood, and beyond.

*GAPEC Leadership Team, Albany Park*

*Principal Eileen O'Toole, teacher Karoline Sharp, parent Veronica Solis—Albany Park Multicultural Academy; Principal Carl Dasko, parent Claudia Gutierrez—Bateman Elementary; Principal Debbie Ward, Cleveland Elementary; Assistant Principal Wilma Newchurch, teacher Dan August, program coordinator Mary Ann Brandt—Thurgood Marshall Middle School; Principal Alejandra Alvarez, teachers Joel Piotrowski and Scott Doolittle—Roosevelt High; Principal Roger Johnson, teachers Jaime Perez and Naseem Umar—Volta Elementary; Principal Gil Sanchez, parent Maria Elena—North River Elementary*

*Viewpoints continued on page 23*

## Ren10 still missing the mark in some communities

Neighborhoods on the South Side have lost out so far in the district's signature program to create better new schools.

By John Myers

Chicago Public Schools is closing in on its goal of opening 100 new schools under Renaissance 2010, but almost half of the communities identified as most in need of high-performing schools have yet to get them.

After the fourth round of new schools approved recently under the district's controversial program, 10 of the 25 "priority communities" identified in a 2004 report by the IFF (formerly the Illinois Facilities Fund) have yet to get the new schooling options they need.

The IFF, which provides below-market rate loans and real estate consulting for nonprofits in low-income communities, created the report in collaboration with CPS. Neighborhoods were ranked according to their need for better educational options, based on school performance and overcrowding. CPS has used the ranking as a roadmap for Renaissance.

Most of the still-unserved communities are predominantly black South Side neighborhoods. Some of the communities still may get one of the schools approved recently. CPS has yet to choose a site for five schools approved in this year's round; they could go anywhere, district officials say.

### Still waiting for better schools

Chicago Public Schools has yet to place new Renaissance 2010 schools in 10 priority areas, including top-ranked South Shore. Soon after Renaissance was launched, CPS and IFF (formerly the Illinois Facilities Fund) identified 25 priority communities where the need for higher-performing schools is greatest. Some of those areas still may get a school; five of the schools approved recently have yet to be assigned a site.

- New Renaissance school
- School approved for opening by 2009
- Priority community

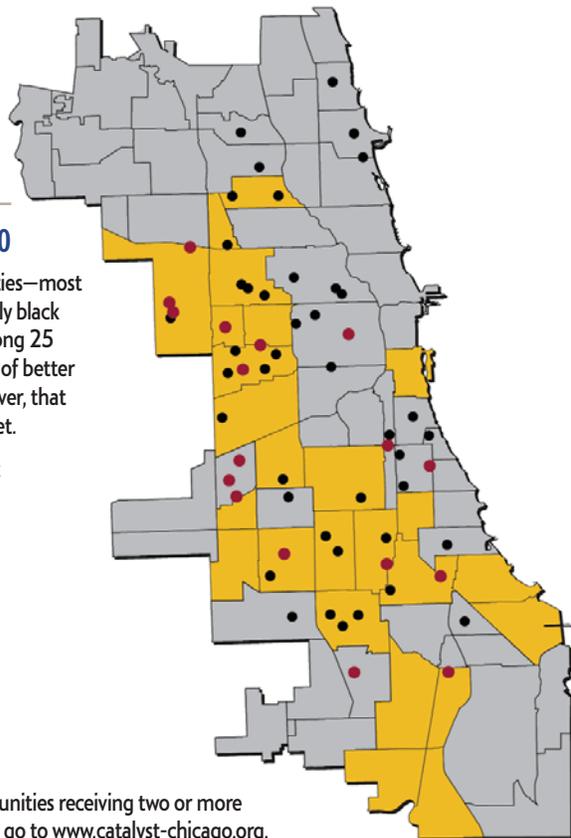
#### LEFT OUT OF REN10

These 10 communities—most on the predominantly black South Side—are among 25 identified as in need of better schools. So far, however, that need has gone unmet.

- East Garfield Park
- Near South Side
- Riverdale
- Roseland
- South Chicago
- South Shore
- Washington Park
- West Elsdon
- West Lawn
- West Pullman

For the list of communities receiving two or more Renaissance schools, go to [www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org).

Note: Some schools share a single campus  
Source: Chicago Public Schools



"We scoured the city with the RFP [request for proposals] distribution," says Jaime Guzman, director of external relations for Chicago's New Schools Department. "But we're still trying to figure out who has the capacity [to build successful schools] down there."

To date, 54 new Renaissance schools are up and running. Another 24 are scheduled to open in 2008 and 2009. Although some of the new schools have shown promising results, it's unclear as yet whether Renaissance 2010 will provide significantly better school options for a substantial number of students.

## WHAT COMMUNITIES WANT

In gathering new school proposals this year, CPS specifically requested ideas that would serve the 13 communities that had yet to be assigned a Renaissance school. Just three of the proposals fit the bill; the district says it received no proposals targeting the 10 other areas.

The three proposals are for Kwame Nkrumah Academy, a contract elementary school for Pullman; a new charter high school in Greater Grand Crossing operated by Noble Street Charter; and a

really have in the schools that are coming into our neighborhoods?"

Some community leaders, however, don't necessarily want the new schools the district may offer up.

"We need a [high]-performing school because kids have to travel great distances to get to better schools," says Les-tine Byars, executive director of the Coalition for Improved Education in South Shore. "But we need quality people coming in rather than just another cookie-cutter [replicated charter] school."

South Shore tops the list of needy communities. The community nearly got a Renaissance school in 2005 when Chicago International was cleared to open a charter elementary there. But the proposed building—an aging Catholic school—proved too costly for the charter to rent. Instead, it found another facility across Stony Island Avenue, and now serves the Avalon Park neighborhood.

Byars wasn't bothered. South Shore needs selective-enrollment schools, not charters, she says, if it wants to keep the community's top students enrolled at home.

That's shortsighted, says Elizabeth

"The only reason we're not in more neighborhoods is that we can't find facilities," says Purvis, noting the difficulties Chicago International faces when searching for affordable buildings zoned for schools. "We want to be where there's a need for a high-performing school."

The group's go-anywhere mentality has been unique among charter operators, though the latest round of new schools suggests that's changing. Noble Street will branch out from the city's West Side to Greater Grand Crossing on the South Side next year.

Most charters have deep ties to particular communities: United Neighborhood Organization runs five charters in heavily Latino areas on the Southwest and Northwest sides of town, and plans to open three more in Archer Heights next year.

The tendency for charters to clump together explains, in part, why some communities have yet to get Renaissance schools. Up against a state cap on new charters, the district has been meeting demand for charter schools by granting additional campuses to existing, and generally territorial, operators.

Availability of school buildings is another key factor, officials say. Several Renaissance schools have gone into the mid-south communities where public housing demolition has led to a plethora of empty school buildings.

The district, short on cash for school construction, has favored new school operators with enough money to build or rent their own schools. This year, CPS has identified a group that has the money and wants to build in one of the far South Side priority communities.

Iva Carruthers, one of the principal designers behind the Nkrumah elementary planned for Pullman, says the school's placement depended primarily on where Trinity United Church of Christ, a large, well-known church, was able to find land.

"[I]t's not like we sat at a map and said, 'Pullman needs a school,'" she says.

The school will anchor a 40-acre housing and business development project that has been 30 years in the making, says Carruthers. Nkrumah, named after Ghana's first president, will offer a rigorous, Africa-centered curriculum designed to put students on a college-bound path, she says.

## "The process for establishing the schools doesn't always feel community-based. What voice do we really have?"

*Jay Travis, executive director, Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization*

new charter elementary in West Garfield Park operated by LEARN charter school.

Madeline Talbott, head organizer for Chicago ACORN, says she believes the district has focused on getting new schools into gentrifying neighborhoods and done little to ensure poorer communities get the schools they need.

"We're organizers. We understand how to do this. We go in first and organize the invitation," she says. "CPS does the same thing. If it was a community they cared about that needed a school, they would go in and organize it."

CPS needs to talk with residents to get a better idea of what kind of schools they want, says Jay Travis, executive director of the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization, who also sees gentrification as the catalyst for new schools.

"The process for establishing the schools doesn't always feel community-based," Travis says. "What voice do we

Delaney Purvis, executive director for Chicago International. Selective enrollment schools serve only a sliver of the neighborhood's best students, whereas charters open their doors to all, she says.

Even without Renaissance schools, meaningful reform is happening in communities such as South Shore, say district officials.

The area's high school was converted to four small schools in 2002, but with mixed results. The district plans to erect three new buildings to house South Shore's small high schools and two elementary schools as part of its \$1 billion Modern Schools construction initiative.

Byars expects the building spree to create room for selective-enrollment schools, since old schools would become vacant and the new buildings might house more than one school.

But new space could open the door for charters, too.

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# Not just for poor schools anymore

Teachers trained through alternative certification programs can now teach anywhere they like

By Debra Williams

**T**he district's alternative certification initiative has changed dramatically over the last three years: Some programs that worked with CPS have ceased operating or been scrapped, and prospective teachers no longer receive tuition subsidies.

But perhaps the most significant shift has been in the district's mission for the initiative, which CEO Arne Duncan has lauded for bringing experienced career-changers into the classroom. CPS' original goal was to use the programs to bring teachers with expertise in high-needs subjects such as math, science, special education and foreign languages into the poorest, hardest-to-staff schools.

Now, the district is no longer steering graduates into those schools—and that means some of the city's highest-performing schools, including Walter Payton and Jones College Prep, are snapping up graduates. (A majority of alternative certification teachers still wind up in low-performing schools, CPS data show.)

The shift illustrates CPS' new philosophy: Get the most qualified teachers into the system, regardless of which school they end up in, to benefit the district as a whole. A similar philosophy is taking hold in other urban districts, says one expert.

"These teachers are really sharp," says Jones College Prep Principal Donald Fraynd, who hired two science teachers from alternative certification programs last year. Other new graduates have landed at Andrew Jackson Language Elementary, Michele Clark Preparatory Magnet High, Kenwood Academy and Northside College Prep.

"We are putting teachers into the marketplace and giving our principals a greater selection from which to choose [their faculty]," says Nancy Slavin, director of teacher recruitment, who shares oversight for alternative certification and notes that "99 percent of these teachers go to high-needs schools."

"But principals can select who they



JOHN BOOZ

**Jill Prout, who earned her teaching certification through CPS' Chicago Teaching Fellows program, gets an enthusiastic response from her 3rd-graders at Mahalia Jackson Elementary.**

want," she adds. "We don't say 'Walter Payton, no, you can't have them.'"

Previously, new teachers who trained through alternative certification programs offered at partner colleges and universities promised to teach in the poorest schools for at least three years; in exchange, CPS paid a portion of their tuition.

## A NATIONAL SHIFT

Like poorer schools, high-performing schools also need teachers in subjects such as math and science, Slavin notes. For example, Lane Tech High, which hired seven math teachers, took a hit when 1,800 teachers retired last year districtwide, she says.

"The school had four or five math vacancies," says Slavin. "Should I say to Lane, 'No, you can't have anybody?'"

Nationally, other districts also are beginning to shift in this direction, says Timothy Daly, head of the New Teacher Project in New York City. Districts initially required alternative-certification teachers to go into a subset of schools, mainly high-needs schools. But when principals from less-needy schools wanted to know why they couldn't hire these teachers, districts didn't have a good answer, he says.

Also, Daly says, teachers who are told they can only teach in certain schools resent it and are less likely to stay on the job.

## Programs cut, added

Three years ago, prospective teachers looking for a fast track to the classroom in CPS could choose from among 14 alternative certification programs. Now there are only seven.

### GONE ARE:

- **Golden Apple Teacher Education.** This well-regarded pioneer certification program was run by the Golden Apple Foundation from 1998 until 2007. But it was losing money and its funders believed CPS, as the chief beneficiary, should pick up the full cost of the program, says Foundation President and CEO Dominic Belmonte. Now Golden Apple serves as a consultant to the Chicago Fellows Program and provides support for fellows during the summer. “We couldn’t get the funding to do what we think needed to be done,” says Belmonte. “We still have our hand in it, but in a different way.”
- **University of Illinois Middle Math and Science Alternative Certification.** This program was created to address the shortage of teachers in these subjects. But, says Celina Sima, associate dean for academic affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago, “We found we are addressing the math and science teacher shortage quite well through our traditional teacher education program.”
- **Elementary teacher certification at Governors State University.** The program no longer meshed with CPS, says Kathy Gillespie, recruitment coordinator at Governors State. The district wanted programs to offer a master’s degree; at the time, the school did not. And the university had no economic incentive—CPS paid tuition for students, but that already was covered by a grant, she says. “It was an amicable and mutual dissolution,” Gillespie says.
- **Chicago State University’s alternative program for physical education teachers.** This program fell by the wayside when the person who oversaw it retired. A university administrator says Chicago State is contemplating whether to revive the program and try again to work with CPS.
- **The First Class Special Education Teacher Preparation Program, known as FACE.** FACE operated six alternative certification programs to train special education teachers through six different universities, including Roosevelt and UIC. But the graduates worked as CPS cadres at a lower salary without benefits because the Illinois State Board of Education had not approved an alternative certification program for special education teachers, says Cleo Aquino, manager of CPS’ teacher pipeline programs. Since then, FACE has been folded into Chicago Teaching Fellows. Graduates get the salary and benefits of a first-year teacher.

### ADDED IN THE LAST YEAR ARE:

- **Chicago Teaching Fellows.** Created by CPS, this program, which turned out 100 of the 350 new alternative certification teachers last year, is a partnership with National Louis University and the well-regarded New Teacher Project based in Santa Cruz, Calif.
- **Bilingual Transitions to Teaching.** This program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered through the Illinois State Board of Education.

In addition, four programs survived the cuts: The Academy for Urban School Leadership, Urban Impact through Education, the Associated Colleges of Illinois program and Teach for America.

“Basically, we tell teachers now, ‘We have prepared you. Now it is your job to find a job.’ We found that most still end up in the low-income schools,” he says.

Veenay Singla, senior associate at the Chicago Public Education Fund, which funds CPS’ alternative certification programs and focuses on putting quality teachers in underperforming schools, says she is comfortable with the district’s new stance.

“The culture has shifted so that alternative certification programs are now

seen as being a viable route to bring quality teachers into the system, regardless of where they teach,” Singla says.

But Dominic Belmonte, head of the Golden Apple Foundation, a pioneer in alternative certification programs in Illinois, has mixed feelings

“I am a believer in the market place, but our mission has always been to try to bring quality education to deserving children. Our teachers have always had to commit to work for five years in schools with the most need,” Belmonte

says. “It is not our mission to be a farm for resource-rich schools.”

### A NEW WAY TO MENTOR

The district revamped alternative certification in 2005, splitting oversight between Slavin and Amanda Rivera, director of professional development. (See *Catalyst*, Sept. 2004.)

Under the reorganization, Slavin was put in charge of managing the programs and working with partner universities, and the number of training programs subsequently was cut to seven from 14. One of those programs is the Chicago Teaching Fellows, a revamped version of CPS’ First Class program. Chicago Teaching Fellows turned out 100 of the 350 new teachers last year. (See sidebar.)

Mentoring, too, has undergone changes. Previously, each new teacher was mentored by a colleague at the school assigned through the district’s GOLDEN program. Now, teachers can take advantage of the two full-time mentors now working system-wide to coach new teachers who ask for additional help or are referred by a principal or university. About 30 new teachers have asked for the help so far, so each mentor works with about 15 rookies.

The additional help is paid for with a \$1.3 million Transition to Teaching federal grant designed to help prepare career changers to teach in high-needs districts.

As for the subsidized tuition, CPS is saving more than \$250,000 a year since scrapping it. Instead, the district offers an interest-free loan for four years in exchange for a four-year teaching commitment.

Sometime this month, results of a three-year study of alternative certification programs will be released. Researchers from the University of Illinois at Chicago and Learning Points Associates, a nonprofit education organization that works on teacher quality issues, surveyed teachers to find out what they liked about their program, what they didn’t like, whether they thought they were prepared well and how prepared they actually were. The study also will look at test scores and whether alternative certification teachers have the same impact on student learning as teachers from traditional education programs.

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

## Pre-k does focus on quality

As advocates for early childhood education and care throughout Illinois, we were glad to see David Kirp's interview by Cindy Richards in the November 2007 Q&A column. We agree with David Kirp that low-quality early childhood programs are not the best use of scarce resources. We wish to address the mischaracterization of Illinois' early childhood education policies as "promoting quantity over quality."

Our organizations are dedicated to promoting quality early education that will prepare all children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. With the passage of Preschool for All, Illinois leads the nation in its commitment to provide evidence-based early childhood learning opportunities to our children. Preschool for All requires parent involvement, research-based program models that employ certified and

competent educators and includes rigorous evaluation to ensure that public dollars are effectively spent.

As Preschool for All enters the third year of a five-year roll out, we continue to advocate for increased funding, awareness and accessibility so that our state can meet the need for quality early childhood education for all children.

*Harriet Meyer, president  
Ounce of Prevention Fund*

*Jerry Stermer, president  
Voices for Illinois Children*

*Maria Whelan, president and CEO  
Action for Children*

*Editor's note: The introduction to the interview should have made clear that the characterization of Illinois programs was Kirp's, not that of Catalyst Chicago.*

# WHAT'S HOT? WHAT'S NOW?

To find out, check out Alexander Russo's  
"District 299: The Chicago Schools Blog."

You can now find it on the home page  
of the revamped *Catalyst Chicago* Web site:

[www.catalyst-chicago.org](http://www.catalyst-chicago.org)

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

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**OUR SUPPORTERS:** *Catalyst* is made possible by grants from The Chicago Community Trust, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, McDougal Family Foundation, Oppenheimer Family Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, Prince Charitable Trusts and The Spencer Foundation, and by subscriptions and contributions from individual supporters.

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

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

**MIDDLE SCHOOLERS DEBATE** Twenty students from six schools—**ALCOTT, BRIGHTON PARK, KELLOGG, SMYSER, OWEN SCHOLASTIC** and **LINCOLN**—participated in the first After-School All-Stars Chicago Middle School Urban Debate on Nov. 17. After-School All-Stars (an organization that supports after-school programs), the CPS Office of Extended Learning Opportunities, the CPS Office of High School Programs, the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues, and the Chicago Debate League sponsored the competition. Additional debates are scheduled for Dec. 15 and Feb. 2; the championship competition will be March 8. For more information, go to [www.cpsafterschool.org/OASCSPmanual.06.pdf](http://www.cpsafterschool.org/OASCSPmanual.06.pdf) and see pages 18-19.

**SCIENCE INITIATIVE** The district's new Science Resource Center, geared toward kindergarten to 5th-grade CPS teachers, will provide teacher guides, supplies and materials (such as beakers, seeds and bugs) free each quarter to approximately 100 teachers. Teachers will have to complete professional development. For more information, visit <http://cmsi.cps.k12.il.us/> and search keywords "Science Resource Center."

**MAGNET MAKEOVER** Ten of the district's lowest-performing schools will be turned into magnet schools—five of them focused on technology—with \$21.8 million in federal funds. None of the schools has been identified yet. CPS says none of the magnet schools will be selective-enrollment; each will either accept students citywide or have neighborhood attendance boundaries.

**HEALTH CENTER** A new school-based health center has opened at Little Village Lawndale High,

3120 S. Kostner Ave. The clinic will provide pediatrics, primary care and health education services for students and residents of North Lawndale and Little Village. The center was opened in conjunction with the Little Village Community Development Corp. and funded by a \$400,000 grant from CITGO.

**PRINCIPAL CONTRACTS** **GAIL BAKER**, interim principal at Ronald Brown, has been awarded a full contract. Contracts for **DARLENE POLLARD** at Carnegie, **SUZANNE VELASQUEZ-SHEEHY** at Clissold, **JORONDA CRAWFORD** at Foster Park and **SHIRLEY DILLARD** at McNair have been renewed.

**AT CLARK STREET** **JODI DODDS KINNER**, acting director of the Office of Elementary Literacy, has been named director of the Office of Literacy. ... **CHANDRA JAMES**, former elementary science manager, has been named acting director of the Office of Mathematics and Science.

**TEACHING ARCHITECTURE** The Architecture Handbook: a Student Guide to Understanding Buildings, a new curriculum developed by the Chicago Architecture Foundation in conjunction with architects and teachers, will serve as the official curriculum for CPS 10th-graders enrolled in drafting courses. The 400-page book follows the foundation's K-8 curriculum, *Schoolyards to Skylines: Teaching with Chicago's Amazing Architecture*, winner of two national awards. For more information, visit [www.architecture.org/education.html](http://www.architecture.org/education.html).

**AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM** Chicago Youth Centers has launched the McCormick Tribune Language Arts Media Center at Centro Nuestro,

3222 W. Division St. The center provides instruction and resources to help children ages 3 to 18 build literacy and critical thinking skills. It was funded by a grant from the McCormick Tribune Foundation.

**TEACHERS COUNCIL** Twenty-four teachers who won the CPS DRIVE (Delivering Results through Innovative and Visionary Education) Award will receive \$2,500 each, plus \$1,000 for their school and membership on the Teacher Leadership Advisory Council, which meets with CEO Arne Duncan four times each year. Winners are: **KELLY HINDS**, Stock; **NIKKI KRIEGER**, Nettelhorst; **CHUCK LEATHERWOOD**, Sayre; **WENDY JACKSON**, Yates; **LILLI REYES**, Talcott; **CHARLENE CLAY**, Rudolph Learning Center; **RUDOLPH COUTAIN**, Lawndale; **NAYRAM ADADEVOH**, Williams Prep; **DELFINO GUERRERO**, Castellanos; **JUDITH O'HARE**, Blair Early Childhood Center; **ALEXANDRA COFFEE**, Claremont Academy; **MICHAEL BROWNSTEING**, Mollison; **BRANDI WHITFIELD-LEWIS**, Johns; **CATHERINE TANNER**, Pershing East Magnet; **KIMBERLY OWENS**, Keller Regional Gifted; **RONA SIMMONS**, Ninos Heroes; **SHERRI BRADFORD**, Owens; **DAVID RIVERA**, Kelyvn Park High; **CAROL WILLIAMS**, Marshall High; **TIMOTHY RUBY**, Community Links High; **KIMBERLY ENCK**, Harlan High; **JEANNE WALKER**, EXCEL Academy; **VIRGINIA HILTZ**, Andrew Jackson; and **MARTHA MULLIGAN**, Northside College Prep.

**MAPPING EARLY ED** The Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, which collates data on state-funded pre-k, Head Start, licensed child care centers and birth-to-age 3 programs across Illinois, is now available online at <http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu>. The interactive map also shows where daycare services are available.

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