

School Reform in Chicago

Lessons and Opportunities

A Research-Based Framework for Developing
High-Impact Funding Strategies

A Report for The Chicago Community Trust
August 2001

Executive Summary

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- Looking at the Data - John Simmons
- The Effort to Redesign Chicago High Schools - G. Alfred Hess
- Effects of Elementary School Reform - Donald Moore
- High-Stakes Testing - Mathew Hanson
- Chicago Annenberg Challenge - Ken Rolling

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 - Urban School Reform and Urban Finance: Implications for Chicago- Larry Picus
- Improving Student Achievement Through Labor-Management Collaboration - Adam Urbanski
- Small Schools: Going to Scale or Going to Jail? - Michelle Fine
- Whole School Reform: Problems and Promises- Michael Fullan

Key Elements of a Successful School-Based Management Strategy - Penny Wohlstetter and Kerri Briggs

Offering Choice

Voices of Chicago Charter School Leaders - Leadership for Quality Education

Strategy and Philanthropy for Big-City Education Reform - Paul Hill

The Charter Schools Movement: What's Been Learned, What Needs Doing - Joe Nathan

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Developing School Leaders: Issues and Ideas in Professional Development - Kent Peterson

District Superintendents

School District Leadership in a Time of Accountability - Susan Moore Johnson

Successful Superintendents Talk About Urban Reform and Effective Philanthropy- Alexander Russo

Improving Teaching Quality

Voices of Chicago Teachers - School of Education, University of Illinois Chicago

Urban Teaching: Strategies for Quality - Linda Darling-Hammond

Alternative Teacher Certification - Susan Moore Johnson

Improving Student Learning by Enhancing Teacher Quality - Charlotte Danielson

Teacher Quality: Findings from Recent Research - Daniel Humphrey and Patrick Shields

Accelerating Early Childhood Development

Early Education, Care and School Success - Marge Wallen and Gail Goldberger

Redesigning Urban High Schools

Transforming Urban High Schools - Leslie Siskin

High School Reform within the National Context - Valerie Lee

Parent Issues

Voices of Chicago Parents

Parent Engagement Issues - Parents United for Responsible Education

Parent Involvement Opportunities - Chicago Panel on School Policy

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Improving Reading and Math Results

Voices of Chicago Practitioners - Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform

Improving Reading Outcomes: Getting Beyond Third Grade - Catherine Snow

Developing a Mathematically Proficient American Public - Deborah Ball

Cultivating Accountability: Creating Conditions for All Students to Achieve High Standards - Kate Jamentz

Full Service Schools: Making a Difference - John Simmons

Catholic Schools and Student Achievement - Tom Hoffer

Foreword

During my first year at The Chicago Community Trust it has become increasingly clear to me that education must be a top priority for Chicago. Through a comprehensive strategic planning process, the Executive Committee of the Trust affirmed its commitment to this priority. We have begun to embark on a large-scale effort to support those groups and individuals in our community who are working to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. We are especially mindful of the life chances that fall to Chicago's youngest citizens who lack the social and financial means to exercise true choice regarding their educational options.

To this end, the Trust is committed to a major education initiative spanning at least five years, and I hope, beyond. We launched this initiative by commissioning a series of reports from leading practitioners and scholars, both locally and nationally, to establish a baseline for what we know to be true about school reform in urban education. I do not believe that we have a minute to waste when we consider the stakes, and therefore I wanted to ensure that the Trust's Education Initiative would build on the best thinking, as well as experiences, to date, and then move with deliberate haste to support improvement in academic achievement.

We have assembled these reports in two comprehensive volumes that I believe represents a very complete and compelling look at the state of our knowledge about what it takes to improve urban education. I am most appreciative of the contributions from each of the authors, and I am particularly grateful to John Simmons for his editing skills. I find that their clear thinking and insights add significant dimensions to our understanding of the problems before us.

As events have unfolded this year, it is propitious that the Executive Committee of The Chicago Community Trust has chosen to step up its leadership in education. We will begin this next school year with virtually an entire new leadership team, both at Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union. These changes in leadership provide us with a wealth of new opportunities to build on the successes of the past as well as chart bold new courses of action that are clearly needed to address the tough challenges that lie ahead.

Donald Stewart • President and CEO • The Chicago Community Trust

Preface

Over the past 13 years, school reform in Chicago has touched the lives of a million students and their families and more than 50,000 teachers and principals. The purpose of this report is to draw lessons from this experience and explore the opportunities for Chicago's future.

The report is intended as a catalyst for the Executive Committee and staff of The Chicago Community Trust as they think about how to influence the next act of school reform in the city. The information also could encourage the many Chicagoans who are stakeholders in the success of reform, people from various organizations and neighborhoods, to take the time to reflect on what has been learned about improving the quality of teaching and learning. Working together, how can we best take advantage of the opportunities ahead for continuously improving the quality of the school experience for our children, parents, teachers, and principals?

In preparing this report we spoke with Chicagoans who have been leaders in school improvement, from the schools to the boardroom, and we looked at the research data. We have asked nationally recognized scholars, many of whom are familiar with the Chicago experience, to review the results, draw lessons and make recommendations. Focus groups of people working daily in the schools met to reflect on what they have learned and what should be done. While there is remarkable agreement among them, there are also important differences.

The information is organized in two volumes – the Executive Summary and the Collected Papers. The Executive Summary includes a research-based framework for high-impact funding strategies and a summary of the Collected Papers.

In the Collected Papers, the first section focuses on the Chicago experience. Section Two looks at the school reform experience in six large cities and discusses five national models for improving schools. Section Three draws on the national experience with strategies for improving classroom quality and student achievement. The strategies include scaling up best practice, whole school change, reinventing the central office, achieving adequate school funding, labor-management collaboration, offering choice, including small schools, contract schools, and charters, and site-based management.

Section Four looks at the tools for implementing the strategies. They include leadership lessons and opportunities, improving quality teaching, accelerating early child development, redesigning urban high schools, improving parent engagement, improving reading and math results, creating full service schools, and lessons from Catholic schools.

Many people have contributed to this effort. The authors receive special thanks for working under tight deadlines and taking the time to reflect on the lessons from their decades of research. Donald Stewart and Patricia Alberg Graham provided early inspiration and support. Warren Chapman, Peter Martinez, Paul Goren and Peggy Mueller generously shared their experience and insight. Tony Bryk and Penny Sebring helped us review the data from Consortium on Chicago School Research. Don Moore and Matthew Hanson assisted with the data from Designs For Change. Terry Mazany provided thoughtful advice. Cindy Richards and Jennifer Burklow provided excellent editorial suggestions. Laurie Glenn, Bill Paige and the Lipman Hearne team lent their creativity and skill, which helped make the difference. The team at Strategic Learning Initiatives, including Jo Anderson, Catherine Siebel, Jo Snyder and Kristina Ward, put in many extra hours preparing the manuscripts. You all made it possible.

We would appreciate the reader's feedback on what must still be called a "work in progress" – the understanding of Chicago school reform.

John Simmons • August 2001

The Promise of Chicago School Reform: • Improving Student Performance

A Research-Based Framework for Developing High-Impact Funding Strategies

John Simmons

In April 2001, surrounded by reading experts from around the country and flanked by the Chairman of the School Board and the Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools, Mayor Richard M. Daley offered closing remarks to a morning of discussion. "I am very frustrated," Daley said. "Doesn't anyone feel the sense of urgency that I feel about a school on the South Side where the reading scores have been at 14 percent for eight years?"

In those words Mayor Daley captured a growing feeling among Chicagoans about their schools: frustration and urgency. Parents are frustrated that after 13 years • of school reform, too many children still cannot read, too many drop out, and too many are sentenced to a life of poverty, crime, prison, or an early grave.

During the last 13 years, Chicago Public Schools have implemented the most sweeping educational reforms in the nation. These reforms have produced a mix of results for the system's more than 435,000 students, ranging from significant improvement to virtually no change. Because some of the system's 600 schools have experienced dramatic improvement during this time, parents, teachers, employers, and taxpayers have a growing expectation that change is possible. They are starting to express a sense of urgency about spreading these positive results to the tens of thousands of CPS students who are left behind each year. They are saying that it is time to rethink school reform in Chicago.

The first seven years of Chicago school reform were shaped by an important shift in responsibility from centralized, bureaucratic control to the individual school community in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. During the last six years, the CPS leadership has focused on a strategy of centralization that was designed to provide schools with improved quality of services while instituting uniform learning standards and accountability.

While some of the results are impressive, the limits to what has been achieved are sobering. Of the students who entered ninth grade in Chicago in 1996, only a little more than half subsequently graduated in the spring of 2000. And of these graduates, fewer than half had mastered the level of reading and math skills needed for most jobs with a middle-class wage. In Chicago in 1998, 49,000 young people 16 to 21 years old identified themselves as dropouts in a U.S. Census Department survey, and 86,000 16- to 24-year-olds were neither employed nor attending school. The school system is failing about 75 percent of our high school students each year (Sum 2001).

With the changes in leadership in early June at both the Chicago Board of Education, CPS Central Administration, and the Chicago Teachers Union, the curtain is about to go up on the third act of Chicago school reform. What will the audience of different stakeholders of school reform see? How will the system's \$3.5 billion budget be reallocated?

Hopefully the new leaders will build upon the positive lessons learned in Chicago and elsewhere about the importance of improving the quality of classroom instruction and teachers' and parents' participation in decision making, while also understanding the need for systemwide equity.

The third act is a remarkable opportunity. Will the leadership of the city, from the office of the mayor and the school board to the stakeholders in business, labor, neighborhood organizations, universities, foundations, and school assistance groups be able to take full advantage of it? Will they be able to work together in the "City That Works" to provide the ideas and energy needed to accomplish those results that no other large city has yet been able to do?

The purpose of this report is to provide a framework to help The Chicago Community Trust establish a high-impact funding strategy for its Education Initiative. It is defined in the Education Initiative's mission statement, guiding principles and programmatic goals. The Education Initiative is designed to support both the consolidation of past gains, and the charting of a new course of action for the Trust, based on both national experience and the local knowledge gained during the past 13 years.

What is most important at this time is the need to transfer to all schools the experiments, pilots, and initiatives that have proven successful in raising both the expectations and achievement of some CPS students. The Education Initiative could serve as a catalyst for future school reform by focusing on strategies that already have been shown to accelerate academic achievement for all students.

Chicago is not alone in its interest in and pursuit of improved educational achievement for children, to increase their life chances and opportunities. Across the country—from the classroom to the boardroom—teachers, principals, parents, policymakers, and researchers have invested significant time and resources to address the problems of failing schools and raising standards. For this report, many people have generously shared with us their experiences about what works and what doesn't work in creating and sustaining school reform.

The experiences of those working in the trenches of school reform are documented in these papers, assembled through research initiated by the president and executive committee of The Chicago Community Trust. This report aims to provide information and a framework that will be useful for the leadership of the Trust as it seeks to formulate a research-based funding strategy that will best serve both the goals of the Trust and the interests of the greater Chicago community.

High-Impact Strategies for Grant Making

No large American city has yet been able to provide a quality education for all its children. This problem has not been solved because it is complex and because the traditional leadership of urban school districts has had neither the incentive, the understanding nor the political support to solve it. These leaders also have lacked a framework for looking at how to change large organizations.

Based on the research and experiences we have examined for this report we propose a framework for developing a set of funding strategies that could be effective for Chicago public schools. This framework has four components:

- The goal of scaling up best practices found in Chicago's exemplary schools and from other research.
- To achieve the goal, 10 high-impact strategies for grant making.

- To increase the chance of successfully implementing the 10 strategies, a process of increased collaboration among the stakeholders in the success of public school education.

- An understanding of the methods of organizational redesign that are needed to help transform all of the under-performing schools in the city and reinvent the central office to achieve the goal.

From the information compiled in this report, 10 promising strategies emerge for consideration by The Chicago Community Trust. The first five core strategies would improve the cost-effectiveness of the school system, and provide a strong base for five additional support strategies. These strategies would accelerate the rate of improvement at the level of the family and at school. Effectively applying these 10 strategies (concurrently, to benefit from the synergy that would be generated among them) would highly leverage the Trust's resources and have a significant impact on improving student achievement and other outcomes. In order to reach most schools, the goal would be to take to scale the best practice offered by each strategy.

A common frame of reference that shapes each of these strategies is that the individual school community is the critical unit that should improve and then sustain the changes. Each school community needs to carry out coordinated initiatives to improve, receive support in carrying out the improvement process, and be held accountable for its performance.

The core strategies include:

- Achieve adequate and equitable financing of public education so that the children attending urban schools have the same access to resources as children in suburban schools. (Odden; Picus)
- Improve the quality of the leadership at all levels of the system from teacher leaders and principals, to members of Local School Councils and the Central Office. (Coddling; Johnson; Peterson & Kelly; Russo)
- Reinvent the policies and management practices of the central office that are now barriers to improvement so that it more effectively serves the educational needs of the people closest to the problems: the teachers, parents, LSC members, principals, and students. (Elmore; Dolan; McBeath; Urbanski; Viteritti)
- Improve the policies and practices of the system to enable leaders to accelerate the quality of classroom teaching and the retention of effective teachers. (Ball; Danielson; Fullan; Darling-Hammond; Humphrey & Shields; Snow)
- Engage parents more effectively so they can support their children's education from birth through high school graduation while enhancing their own life skills. (Goldberger)

The support strategies include:

- Improve the readiness of children to learn from birth to age five. (Wallen & Goldberger)

- Focus additional resources on pre-kindergarten to third grade in underperforming schools. (Duhl; Russo; Wallen & Goldberger)
- Transform the typical high school experience for most Chicago students to one that assures them a link to higher education, good jobs, and effective citizenship (Fine; Lee; Siskin).
- Improve accountability systems, especially at the schools, so that they can provide coherent and effective support for both assessment and learning. (Jamentz)
- Enhance the amount of choice that parents, students, teachers, and principals have to improve the quality of the learning experience. (Hill; Nolan; Fuller)

For the resources of the Trust to be most effective, the basic issue now facing Chicago is not only what strategies to use, but also how to implement them. A pervasive message from past research and experience is that promising strategies fall apart in the process of implementation. Most people are neither informed nor skilled to lead effective school improvement.

What the Experts Say

Applying the experiences of both Chicago and national experts would have a high payoff in terms of improving student achievement, increasing graduation rates from both high school and four-year colleges, securing higher-paying careers for urban students, and assuring more effective citizens. Our report presents nine findings that can be used in shaping new strategies for school reform:

1. Schools in the poorest Chicago neighborhoods have transformed themselves, from low performing to continuous improvement. (Moore)

In cases where teachers, principals, and parents are working together, schools have dramatically improved student performance on the Iowa reading test. By 2000, more than 80 elementary schools in low-income neighborhoods had become exemplary schools. (By exemplary is meant that they are excellent examples of schools that have made substantial changes in their strategies for teaching and learning, and are continuously improving.) By 2000 Iowa reading scores had doubled, increasing from 22 percent at or above the national average to 45 percent. (The national average is 50 percent). Research about these schools shows that they have applied best practices to transform the school culture from one of alienation, isolation, disrespect, and low expectations into a caring, collegial, reflective community of learners who expect the best of their students and themselves. The quality of leadership, teaching, and parent engagement has improved, although they have operated under all the constraints of other low-achieving schools in their neighborhoods that have not improved significantly in the past decade.

2. Applying the Five Essential Supports, research-based principles for continuous school improvement used by a growing number of CPS schools, has contributed to the transformation of the neighborhood schools. (Simmons: Data)•These exemplary schools differ substantially from failing schools, for five reasons that are revealed by Chicago research. These reasons reflect a strategy for school transformation that was developed in 1993 and subsequently implemented through a partnership between CPS and the school reform groups. The Five Essential Supports for Student Learning are:

- Shared leadership and teamwork
- Staff development
- Parent, school, and community partnerships
- School culture of mutual caring and high expectations
- Instructional focus

The Five Essential Supports are based on the results of numerous studies over 35 years, like the one done by Ronald Ferguson, which looked at 900 Texas school districts. He found that the most powerful predictor of high and low math scores were parent factors and teacher qualifications. Figure 1 shows that 49 percent of the improvements in math scores for grades 3-5 were due to parent factors, 43 percent were due to teacher qualifications, and eight percent were due to class size. He also found that, "every additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers netted greater increases in student achievement than did less focused uses of school resources." When parents in Chicago schools get more engaged, and when the teachers are better qualified, the student achievement increases (Darling-Hammond 1997).

3. High schools have shown little progress. (Hess)

While some individual high schools have improved substantially, most have proved highly resistant to change. Recent research indicates that improved high school test scores result almost entirely from the fact more higher-achieving eighth graders have been entering the high schools than before.

4. The transformation of failing schools into exemplary schools demonstrates that children and parents are not an insurmountable problem. (Darling-Hammond; Goldberger)

Too many people, including some teachers and principals, have believed that children from low-income families are the problem and cannot achieve at high levels. In reality, the Chicago results on the more than 80 exemplary schools demonstrate what many teachers and principals have always known: Children from low-income families can learn when they are in quality schools where adults have high expectations of the students and themselves.

Too many people have believed that parents who were low-income, non-English speaking, or recent immigrants, posed virtually insurmountable barriers for student progress. The experience of exemplary schools shows that most parents, regardless of background, can become part of the solution for high student achievement.

5. Compared to those schools that are succeeding, a larger number of schools have not made significant gains in student achievement. (Moore)

Despite the efforts of their leadership—the LSC, principals, and the Board of Education—the lessons learned by the exemplary schools have not spread across the school system. For example, the best efforts to improve the 82 failing elementary schools placed on probation in 1996 (as measured by Iowa reading test results), have resulted in gains that are no different than those realized by the 310 low-achieving schools not on probation.

6. Other urban districts appear to be further along in their efforts to scale up best practice for schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods. (Duhl; Elmore; Fine; McBeath; Odden; Russo)

New York City's District 2 has achieved systemwide success with a combination of professional development practices and school reculturing based on mutual care and commitment, plus a decentralization of the school budget and administrative responsibility to the principal. This district has achieved impressive results with students that average 50 percent below the poverty level. Over a span of nine years, the district went from ranking 10th in the city in reading (out of 34 districts) to second.

Similarly, three years ago the San Diego school board adopted an instructional focus policy for the entire district and is already realizing impressive improvements in student performance—an average 18 percent increase in reading test scores in two years at the early elementary grades where the district concentrated additional resources. Other high-impact strategies include a focus on pre-kindergarten, and the systemic decentralization and diffusion of innovations that have occurred in Edmonton, Alberta.

7. Site-based management works well in Chicago, as it does across the country. (Wohlstetter & Briggs; Simmons: Data) In Chicago it could work even better if the Central Office would reinvent itself, and provide the support that is needed. (McBeath)

Site-based management encourages schools to take control of their future and meet or exceed state academic standards. The improvement in student achievement during the first phase of school reform demonstrated that the Chicago form of site-based management worked well. This is despite the early elimination of funding for the training of LSC members, one reason why some of the LSCs do not function as well as they should. During the second phase of school reform, the central office leadership tried to significantly reduce the role of the LSC in school decision making with new legislation in Springfield, but the bill was not passed. Strengthening site-based management by using the best practice of Edmonton, Boston, and other cities would further strengthen student performance (Duhl, Six Exemplary Cities). Every school that can take care of itself is one less school the central office has to worry about.

8. Compared to 13 years ago, Chicago now has a greatly improved capacity to support an expansion of improvement efforts. (Peterson & Kelley; Rolling)

One byproduct of reform has been the creation of the capacity to support school improvement. As a result of CPS initiatives, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, the Consortium on Chicago School Research, the Golden Apple Awards for outstanding teaching, other foundation-sponsored grants, and activities led by the business community, neighborhood groups, local reformers, and universities, systems are in place to develop and support best practice in the classroom. For instance, during the past six years we have witnessed the establishment of the Chicago Academy of School Leadership, LIFT (Leadership Initiative for Transformation) and LAUNCH (Leadership Academy and Urban Network for Chicago) for principal training and support, a partnership of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association and the CPS. The Chicago Teachers Union QUEST Center for teacher training is another example.

9. To achieve continuous improvement in the quality of student performance, more attention needs to be paid to the organizational development aspects of school reform, from the central office to the schools, and less attention paid to blaming the people, from parents to principals, caught in mediocre systems designed for another era. (Dolan; Viteritti)

The schools and the school system are organizations that are perfectly designed to get the poor results they are getting. A growing number of leaders have learned that ordinary people can get extraordinary results when they better understand how some organizations, from private firms to public agencies, have rescued themselves from stagnation or failure and begun to redesign themselves. They have achieved impressive results by benchmarking against the best organizations in their field, which are focusing all employees on improving the quality of services and products through better teamwork and other strategies. In Chicago this is happening in several of the high schools and in a larger number elementary schools (Daniels, Bizar, Zemelman 2001). These schools are building on the lessons learned over the past 30 years by thousands of American organizations, from the Ford Motor plant on Chicago's South Side and General Motors' Saturn Corporation to the Girl Scouts of America and the Bureau of Motor Equipment, New York City (Dolan, Russo, Urbanski and Viteritti; Dolan 1994; Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Simmons and Mares 1983). Teachers are not adequately respected, recognized or supported for the work they do. They don't participate in decisions that affect their own staff development (Walsh 2000). Most parents have little contact with their children's teacher. Central Office mandates often bring resentment, not change, to schools.

These nine findings suggest that while all schools can change, many have not yet been able to. Successful schools have a Local School Council and a principal who build a community of adult learners. They have found ways to attract and retain quality teachers, and they have engaged parents in meaningful roles that support the education of their children. They report that they have often worked around central office policies to achieve the results that they got. While people throughout the CPS and the city see how much needs to be done, many are encouraged and motivated to take on new challenges by the positive results already achieved.

The Story So Far

There have been many important changes in the Chicago school system over the last 13 years, including the establishment of Local School Councils (allowing parents and teachers to select principals and allocate Title I funds); labor peace (no strikes threatened in five years); increased salaries for teachers and principals; financial stability; expanded credit capacity in order to fund new school construction, and reduced corruption at the Central Office. Still, improvement in student achievement and quality instruction is, at best, mixed.

Key changes in the classroom have taken place in only about 25 percent of elementary schools in low-income neighborhoods, and a small number of the 77 high schools.

Further, only a handful of neighborhood high schools and some new small and charter high schools have demonstrated high-quality education. Almost 50 percent of students in the more than 80 exemplary schools are reading at or above the national average of 50 percent on the Iowa test. These schools have doubled their Iowa reading scores in nine years (Figure 2).

The changes in these the schools go beyond test scores. Change is also measured by improvements in the school culture, which include high expectations and caring adults, lower dropout rates, changes in classroom teaching practices, and more engaged parents. Educators around the world who are interested in transforming urban schools visit these exemplary schools, which include Beethoven, George Washington, and McCosh on Chicago's South Side.

Five years ago the school board placed the lowest-performing elementary schools on probation, at the same time providing extra funding, about \$100,000 per school, and outside assistance selected and managed by the Central Office. However, the data show they are performing no better than nonprobation schools that were also low-achieving schools in 1990 (Figure 3).

The results from most high schools are not positive either. In a recent study funded by the CPS, Northwestern University Professor Fred Hess found that the test scores for the average high school have improved during the last 10 years. But when the data are adjusted to account for the students who are better prepared coming out of elementary school, and the increased number of low-performing eighth graders who are not tested and do not enter high school, there is no change in what students are learning. In other words, the high schools have not "added value" to student performance in the past decade. (Hess)

Low-Performance Management Strategy

If the Chicago results show that neither the children nor the parents are primary causes of the children's limited progress, then what are the reasons? One of the reasons is the low-performance management strategy that has often been used by the Central Office leadership. It chose to mandate the changes it wanted implemented in the schools rather than using an involvement process that would help people in the schools learn what best practice was, see how exemplary schools had overcome similar problems, and decide for themselves what would work best for their school communities. In addition, in some schools on probation, teachers were removed from their jobs after 10-minute interviews, which further lowered both morale and mutual respect. Principals, teachers, and LSC members want to improve their schools; they often have neither the information they need nor a process for designing and implementing a plan that is based on best practice. As a result, reading achievement is difficult to accelerate.

Most CEOs in the private sector have learned during the past 30 years that mandating these kind of changes in the American workforce does not work. While an authoritarian strategy may achieve some improved results, the economic research demonstrates that these results are less impressive compared to the results achieved when people are internally motivated to achieve the objective (Blinder 1990; Lawler, Mohrman and Ledford 1995). This has also been demonstrated by those Chicago schools that have transformed themselves like Chicago Vocational High School, Best Practice High School, and a host of elementary schools that all used a high-performance strategy of quality improvement and stakeholder involvement in designing and implementing the changes.

The initial High School Design Plan, chaired by the central office leadership, was approved in 1996 by a steering committee of principals, teachers, central office leadership, foundations, and external partners. The Plan created a strategy to involve teachers, parents, and students, but as described in Fred Hess' paper, it was not implemented. One of the reasons for the election of a new CTU President in May 2001 was that teachers throughout the system were not adequately involved in decision making. Teachers who had been involved in probation schools, both at the elementary and high school levels, felt that the process was poorly designed and implemented, and lacked respect for them.

The Challenges Ahead

Given the experience of the past 13 years, the future holds important challenges. They include:

- The Central Office needs to find a successful strategy for redesigning under performing high schools. The high schools that carried out the most successful redesigns like Chicago Vocational or Best Practice did so outside the probation program, which did not improve student achievement. The results of probation in elementary schools are not any better (Figure 2).
- The gains in Iowa test scores achieved through extensive test preparation both during the school year and in summer school are already beginning to plateau. High school TAP scores

declined in May 2001, as did math scores in elementary schools. Test score gains may not be so easy to achieve in the future.

- The city could benefit from a process that regularly brings together key stakeholders to review policies and progress, and to suggest improvements. The Boston Compact and successive groups provide this process in Boston. Participants there include the superintendent and key school staff, businesses, universities, community groups, and reform groups.

The national research and Chicago experience suggest that in the future each school or network of schools will need to assess what their needs are, identify best practice to address those needs, and then consider developing a strategy that redesigns the way teaching and learning takes place. This has to happen both in the classroom and with parents supporting their children's learning. The strategy should consider the results already achieved by the application of the Five Essential Supports in the exemplary elementary and high schools (Fullan; Hill; Moore; Elmore). The redesign should focus on improving the quality of instruction through the professional development of teachers that is sustained over a period of years (Danielson; Humphrey & Shields; Siskin; Lee; Darling-Hammond). They should also provide sustained training and coaching for school leaders, including the principal, teacher and parent leaders, and members of the LSC.

The research and experience also suggest that substantial effort should be invested in creating new schools, usually in old buildings. The most convincing data for this come from the small-school experience, and from new schools that are not part of a special model but are started by a group of teachers, often joined by parents, including the Key School in Indianapolis, the Common School in Amherst, Massachusetts, and the Francis Parker Charter School in Fort Devons, Massachusetts. These schools follow a design and implementation model that emphasizes three years or so of planning and then adding one grade at a time beginning with kindergarten when school opens. Some small schools in New York City and Chicago and charter schools have followed a similar model. (Fine; Nathan)

The lessons and opportunities from Chicago and across the country serve to focus future deliberations, both within the Trust and across the city, that could help chart a new course for the third act of school reform. The uneven nature of these results, and the mix of high-performing schools located virtually next door to low-performing schools, strongly suggests the need to rethink, redefine, and refocus the reform strategies of the Chicago Public Schools. Based on the conclusions drawn from these deliberations, The Chicago Community Trust can implement a grant making strategy that will contribute to further this more effective new course of reform.

Charting the Course for High-Impact Grant Making

Central to the formulation of a grant making strategy for The Chicago Community Trust is the development of a theory of action to guide this strategy. Given direction from the Executive Committee of the Trust, this theory of action should focus on issues of scale and can be guided by several key questions:

- Is it possible to scale up best practice to reach all children in public schools?
- What is the most effective process for designing and implementing strategies to scale up best practices? Who are the stakeholders that should be involved throughout Chicago's decentralized system?
- What are the objectives, leadership qualities, organizational supports, and resources needed to assure successful implementation of the scaling-up strategies?

The Chicago reform experience also presents the stakeholders in Chicago school reform with seven fundamental dynamics of the system that must be better understood, defined, and managed in order to design and implement a third phase of school reform.

Centralization and decentralization

There is a need to better understand and align the most productive role and function of the Central Office and the most productive role and function of the individual school in supporting high-performing strategies that result in improved student achievement for all students. To achieve better results there should be an alignment of mission and strategy plus coordination and community between the center and the school, which is now lacking.

Autonomy and accountability

The roles and functions of the Central Office and the school are most profoundly realized in the determination of domains for decision making autonomy and requirements and consequences for accountability. Put simply — who is responsible for what aspects of the educational enterprise, and under what circumstances? When does a school deserve broad autonomy and when is intervention needed? How can outside intervention encourage the spread of the best practices of successful schools, rather than create a climate of apprehension and passivity?

Mandates and participation

There is a need to better understand when it is best to mandate what the system leadership thinks is needed and when it is best to consult with—and treat as partners—people who will have to implement the decisions. The stakeholders need to study best practices in both the private and public sector, and make recommendations based on these.

Instruction and infrastructure

While many Central Office reform initiatives in the past six years have concentrated on arrangements of infrastructure like facilities, funding, and after-school programs, there must be a greater imperative to focus on creating challenging classroom instruction.

Isolation and collaboration

As Richard Elmore states in his paper, isolation is the enemy of improvement. Within a school, successful practices are not shared from classroom to classroom. Chicago has witnessed good results in a growing number of schools, and networks of schools. However, the system has not been able to take the success to most schools in the district by using strategies from other districts and the private sector. We need to learn together and from the experience of others.

Uniform and unique

The shifts in power between the center and the school sites has much to do with expectations of uniformity and the need for unique solutions that are tailored to the needs of individual students and communities. On one hand, there is the misunderstanding that scaling up best practice means one-size-fits-all. On the other hand, the evidence strongly supports a strategy that places key decisions within the hands of the local school community. (Wohlstetter & Briggs; McBeath) This latter approach will necessarily result in a diversity of solutions to improve teaching and learning. The challenge remains, however, to ensure that students do •have equitable opportunities to achieve at high levels across all schools. The Chicago stakeholders need to discuss together these issues and visit districts •and corporations that would provide lessons.

Internal capacity and external capacity

Today, most of the better quality capacity for school improvement resides outside the CPS in the centers established by the teachers' and principals' unions, universities, foundations, consulting firms, and the neighborhood and reform groups. (Simmons: Data Paper) For long-term effectiveness, the quality of the services provided by the CPS should improve while outsourcing other services. Schools should improve their capacity to provide high-quality and sustained professional development to their teachers, parents, and other staff. To do that, we must - determine what the internal and external providers should offer.

These issues need to be on the agenda for discussion among the stakeholders of Chicago school reform.

Possible Next Steps

Since Mayor Daley asked people to "think outside the box," how can the leadership of the Chicago Public Schools, with its unions and other stakeholders, design and implement the strategies the schools need? The Chicago Community Trust could support the Chicago Public Schools as the new leadership studies the lessons of other cities and large organizations (both educational institutions and private sector companies) to build a reform strategy and congruent grant making strategy.

For example, the Trust could support the Central Office, Chicago Teachers Union and the Principals' Association in convening a design team of stakeholders to look closely at the experiences of the school boards and schools in New York, San Diego, Edmonton, and other cities. The design team also could study the transformative experiences of the nation's larger corporations over the last 30 years. Many companies have substantially improved their performance and significantly improved their results by embracing the key high performance strategies:

- Meeting and exceeding the needs of customers;
- Continuously improving the quality of products and services;
- Empowering everyone in the organization to meet customer needs;
- Encouraging employees to work in teams;
- Recognizing and rewarding their results;
- Developing an organizational culture based on trust, respect, fairness and cooperation; and
- Providing all employees with the skills they need to do the job.

While these characteristics of high-performance firms are consistent with the Five Essential Supports used in some Chicago Schools, they have been slow to spread in urban school districts. Rethinking school reform strategy is only one aspect of the puzzle that now challenges school leadership and the Trust with its commitment to improving student achievement. The stakeholders also could address the question of how best to assure the strategy will be implemented. There are a number of principles that ultimately will shape this discussion:

- Leadership is needed to create a vision for the scaling up process, a vision that all stakeholders in the community could share and support with their best energies and ideas.
- The more than 80 exemplary schools can serve as demonstration sites for best practice.
- The stakeholders responsible for the implementation of strategy need to own the strategy and understand its implications for them and their constituents.
- Current policies and practices of the CPS should be reviewed to determine if they represent barriers to scaling up best practice, and what new policies would promote the adaptation of best practice.
- A partnership should develop among the key stakeholders, including the mayor's office, school board, the Chicago Teachers Union, the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, business, foundations, neighborhood organizations (including churches), LSCs, universities, and school reform groups.
- These partners need to work together, learning from the experience of the stakeholders in Boston, to define the major issues and develop solutions that are mutually agreeable.
- Essential to implement the solutions will be political will.

Conclusion

The new Education Initiative at The Chicago Community Trust plus the new leadership at the Board of Education, CPS Central Administration, and the Chicago Teachers Union provide an opportunity to review the lessons of Chicago school reform and explore the needs of the future. Also, new research on best practices from around the nation can inform the important decisions that the Executive Committee and staff at the Trust will make around grant making for education.

This report presents the Executive Committee and staff with important lessons and opportunities from both Chicago and the nation. Through reflection and discussion, it could create a shared understanding among the key stakeholders across the city about what works. In the 44 papers, practitioners, scholars, and writers have reviewed the results that school reform has achieved in Chicago and across the country, the barriers that stand in the way of progress, and the implications for grant making.

This is an opportunity not only for the Trust board and staff, but also for other stakeholders in the city, to develop the nation's boldest vision for school reform. This is especially true not only for people in the schools and Central Office who often do not have the time to reflect on what they have been learning, but also for people in business, foundations, universities, school reform groups and neighborhoods.

A change in leadership at the Board of Education, Central Administration, and the Chicago Teachers Union could provide an opportunity for people across the city to come together and develop a common understanding and commitment. Everyone involved could revisit their vision of what they want for their child, classroom, school and neighborhood, and come up with bold, new plans.

One of the lessons of the past has been that the plans that have the best chance of being implemented are those in which the stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in the planning and decision making, before they are asked to implement new strategies (Dannemiller, et al, 1999; Lawler, et al, 1995). A city-wide rethinking of what works and what needs improvement could increase the number of people helping to improve our schools and deepen the commitment of those who are already hard at work (Dolan, 1994).

It may take a village to raise a child, but it takes stakeholders across the city to reinvent the system. We hope that this information will assist the Education Initiative of the Trust in designing the strategic support essential for these efforts.

This overview of the lessons and opportunities for Chicago school reform provides the information and a research-based framework that should be useful for considering how Chicago's education past can shape its future, and how grant making can assist. Our report suggests that there is a combination of experiences from Chicago and other cities that, if applied well over the next few years, could both support exemplary schools and improve and reach out to those principals, teachers, parents, and students whom reform has so far left behind.

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The View From Inside: Focus Group Data

After more than a decade of school reform, much about the Chicago Public School system has changed, but far too much remains intractably the same inside the city's schools. To understand what school reform looks like from the inside, Strategic Learning Initiatives commissioned a series of focus groups. More than 140 people from neighborhood schools across the city took part in 15 different focus groups conducted by seven organizations that work in Chicago schools. The organizations that convened the groups and wrote the reports are the Chicago Panel on School Policy; Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform; Designs for Change; Leadership for Quality Education; Parents United for Responsible Education; the School of Education at the University of Illinois and Strategic Learning Initiatives. Complete reports appear in the Collected Papers, the companion volume to this Executive Summary, but here we provide an overview of what was said during these group discussions. We asked principals, teachers, parents and others to tell us how their schools have improved, what still needs to change and the obstacles that stand in the way of improvement. Here are their voices.

What the principals are saying

Principals are asked to don a myriad of hats during the school day. They are expected to be the instructional leaders for the school while also serving as administrator, chief financial officer, staff motivator, community liaison, disciplinarian, counselor, transportation manager and maintenance supervisor. Of those, three of the most important are instructional leader, budget manager and parent motivator, the focus group participants said.

Helping teachers understand that they have to teach differently to be effective is the key to becoming an instructional leader, but it requires overcoming the teachers' resistance to change. "The quality of training offered within or mandated by the Chicago Public Schools is very poor, and teachers are not interested in participating," said an elementary principal. "Because they are uninterested, they don't benefit from attending. The issue is not quantity of staff development opportunities, but quality and relevance."

Another elementary principal noted: "Random workshops are not the answer for staff development. The school must come together as a team to decide which areas of staff development are a priority. Teachers must buy into the development they are receiving. Neither students nor teachers will learn unless they are engaged." To ensure that staff development programs meet the needs of individual schools and teachers, funding for teacher training should be increased and principals should be given control over how the money is spent, they said. In addition, more time should be set aside during the school day for staff development.

Lack of resources came up over and over during discussions. Principals lamented a lack of money to buy quality training programs, to pay substitutes, to maintain the physical plant, to serve the many needs of low-income students and to meet all of the other demands of an urban school. The high school principal needs a technology coordinator to maintain the equipment. One elementary school principal needs an "interventionist" to focus on attendance, academic, and behavior problems. Another has children with "great emotional needs, but we have minimal staff to deal with them. I need a full-time counselor, social worker, nurse, and psychologist." Another elementary school is "overcrowded, the auditorium ceiling collapsed and hasn't been repaired, we need 10,000 books for a real school library, 200 books for a library in each classroom," according to the principal. Yet another needs reading coordinators, math coordinators and assistant principals who can help create schools within a school to improve educational quality.

Despite the demands on principal time, "The Central Board provides schools with a very limited number of administrative staff," said one elementary principal. "In managing a school with 1,400 students, I must do the administrative work that is usually done by four or five senior staff members in a suburban school. If I want extra help, I must use my State Chapter 1 money. But it has been frozen for six years, and it is totally inadequate."

Engaging parents in their children's education has required the principals to overcome the feeling among many uneducated parents that they do not have much to contribute to the school or their children's education. Among the strategies tried by these successful principals: education offered to parents, such as GED and English as a Second Language classes; training parents to work with children in the classroom or to be more effective teachers at home, and asking parents to sign pledge cards agreeing to set aside study time and take their children to the library. One school that found parents were reluctant to come into the building conducted a series of meetings in parents' homes to recruit school volunteers and parent patrols.

What the teachers are saying

Ask teachers about the most important conditions that support effective teaching and they have three primary answers: 1. A school culture in which there is a shared education philosophy, colleagues who support each other, policies that are consistent and an environment that is safe; 2. School leaders who support teachers while holding them accountable and who set high academic standards and 3. Committed teachers who love to teach and who work collegially.

Those three factors would provide the basics for effective teaching. Then there is a “dream” teaching assignment. In that, teachers would work with fewer students, enjoy the support of committed parents, teach motivated students and be awash in technology – from computers and printers to overhead projectors and copy machines. They would teach in attractive classrooms that had real, operating windows through which the sun would shine. (“We can’t see through our windows. It’s horrible,” said one teacher. “There’s not enough light in my room for kids to read,” said another.) They would have a teacher’s assistant to handle such routine work as grading papers, and a restructured school day that gave them more time for planning and collaborating with other teachers. And they would have well-stocked classroom libraries and tutors for students who fall behind.

Few CPS teachers work in such a utopian environment, however. Ask them about the biggest obstacles to effective teaching and teachers point to school culture (no shared education philosophy, no teacher collegiality, inconsistent policies, lack of assessment rubrics and a culture of low expectations); inadequate physical resources and books; unprepared or unmotivated students; unsupportive school leaders and parents; and a lack of committed teachers.

In addition, several teachers talked about the adverse impact of standardized testing and overall educational standardization on their ability to teach. “Ten years ago, teachers were deciding what was the best program for them to teach reading to their kids. Whenever you get this centralization...there’s a pervasive disrespect that the teacher [doesn’t know] what they’re doing.” They would like to see fewer standards in the early grades. “There are so many standards, you have to be selective. I would like to see some of them done away with, because in a 40-week school year, I don’t see how it can be done,” said one teacher. Said another: “I like that they raised the bar, but if you expect us to reach those standards, you can’t do that in a half-day kindergarten. A lot of the kids in first grade are retained because they’re so far behind. I don’t know what they learned in kindergarten – maybe it was more social – but they don’t recognize their letters and they’re not reading.”

Collaboration across class, grades and schools is high on the teachers’ agenda. They see it as a way to ensure that children are able to build on what they learned the year before rather than sit through repetitious lessons. “In theory, the curriculum is seamless now – we have the curriculum frameworks and the state goals, but what one school does with those goals and framework statements differs immensely from what another school does,” one teacher said.

Several teachers talked about their desire to be treated like professionals. They would like a one-hour lunch, versus the current 20 minutes. ("You can't keep pushing people like they've got unlimited energies. I think we're burning out staff terribly.") They would like to be allowed to do their jobs. ("I'm the reading specialist, but mostly I'm [used as] an overpriced sub. I'm the first person they call when a teacher's not there.") They want the time to collaborate with colleagues. ("For example, I sit and do conflict resolution with my students, but once they leave me and go to someone else, if that person is not consistent [in philosophy with me], then the kids are not consistent; they don't know what to do next year with Miss Whoever.") They want to work for inspirational bosses. ("I've never been at a school where there's been anyone close to that, [who] not only has the intelligence and the capability to understand complex pedagogical issues, but who has the power to make sure that whatever has been decided is implemented on a lasting basis.")

Among the other complaints were too much red tape and not enough time to wade through it. "It was decided by the Board this year that department heads didn't need an extra prep period. I'm a department head, so I have five classes, and a division, and I'm the department chair on top of this, with no other benefits. I mean, I don't need more money, but I need time to do the job. I don't have time to teach, let alone do the other jobs you're asking me to do." Said another: "I came out of the Marine Corps [where] everything is geared toward the front line troops. The people who are burdened are the people in the back – the supply. Here, it's the opposite; they make it very convenient for the Board and very difficult for the grunts."

What the parents are saying

While parents are widely recognized as key players in the education process, they have not been a focus of CPS policies under school reform. The Central Administration endorses parent involvement at home and in school, but offers no clear guidelines, expectations or resources targeted for increasing parental involvement. Ask a group of involved parents what a great school looks like and the answer is disheartening: "I hate to say this, but the schools where the white people are," said one. "Yeah, where the white people are, where there's more money, more computers, better teachers, and a better education," added another.

School reform hasn't been a panacea, but it has empowered some parents. "Our principal wanted to forbid students speaking Spanish in the hallways (in a Spanish-speaking neighborhood). I found out and threatened to bring a lawsuit against him. I knew I could do that and that he could never enforce such a thing, and so it didn't happen. Parents learned they could say no to a principal."

It doesn't always work that way, said one parent. "We found out that principals have enormous power and run everything. And if parents can't organize their meetings, principals won't pay attention to them." Many parents still have the old pre-reform philosophy: "I let my kids go to school, and school is the school's business. I go and get the report card, but I have no power in any other respect." At another school, there are only a few parents willing to volunteer. "We have very young parents in our community, and they are drug users. We can't get them to participate. Since our group is small, we are not very powerful, and our school uses us. They use us as parents were always used, as volunteers. In fact, they even ask us to act as substitute teachers if we are there and the real sub doesn't show up!"

Understanding school budgets is key to increasing parents' power, they said. "We learned how to understand budgets, and this really helped us understand how budgets affect programs. We got rid of what wasn't working. We got computers into our school, which help foster more improvement. We found out that two teachers had \$150,000 for a reading program, \$50,000 of which was going toward travel to conferences. We got that budget fixed! We also found out that a principal was getting funding for failing students, and had no incentive to improve student performance. We got rid of that principal! We also found out that a principal was getting kickbacks from a publishing company for buying books. Now, the principal has to get bids for books, and we are getting more for our money." So, what makes a good school? "A good school is a good building (Northside Prep), a good parent base (Hawthorne) where the curriculum stresses thinking not test scores (Disney). A good school is a smaller classroom size, science and math labs, computers in every classroom, staff who are friendly to parents, a clean environment that smells good, parents in the building every day, schools being open to parents and the community to help them learn, to help them complete their GEDs and get better jobs. A good school is where everyone is accountable, children too." Said another: "Parents are key. Everything starts with parents, house by house. They need engagement and training."

What Local School Council members are saying

Each of the city's nearly 600 Local School Councils consists of six elected parents, two elected community residents, two elected teachers, the school's principal, and (in the high schools) an elected student. LCSs have major authority over the hiring of a principal and, at the end of a four-year contract, decide whether to retain or replace the principal. They help develop and approve the school improvement plans, and help and approve a school budget. About 3,500 elected parents, 1,100 elected community representatives, and 1,100 elected teachers serve on the LSCs. LSC members are proud of the contributions they have made to their schools. In some cases, they point to academic successes or after-school programs. One LSC sees increased enrollment as proof that the neighborhood believes the school is improving. Another points to increased parental involvement. In several cases, they consider their choice of a principal who serves as an instructional leader as their most important act.

The LSC's ability to control Chapter 1 funds was key to its success. In one school, the money was used to hire more primary grade teachers to reduce class size to 20. But another school lamented that cuts in fund hamstringing LSC's ability to innovate. "State Chapter 1 was at one time a source of funding used to supplement education, but now we must use these funds to replace basic programs that would otherwise be cut. State Chapter 1 funds have been frozen for six years, and we have to cut back on the additional staff they used to buy," said one LSC member. "Schools need to be provided with a growing pot of money each year, because it is nearly impossible to create and sustain change with dwindling funds," said another.

Dwindling funds aren't the only problem they face, the LSC members said. The local schools set their budgets in the spring, only to have the Central Administration make changes in the summer – and the school doesn't find out until school is ready to start in the fall, said a high school LSC member.

Several LSCs voiced their frustration over inadequate or dilapidated buildings. But, they said, they can't get CPS to commit to a construction timetable. "The system needs an objective way to judge the relative needs of schools, so that priority is not given to the people with the most political clout," said one LSC member.

A study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that half of the LSCs are high functioning, another third are performing well but need support and the rest have serious problems. LSC members said there are several types of training they need to do their jobs better. They need to learn more about budgeting (to ensure that they don't have to rely on the principal for all budget decisions); advocacy (to learn how to wade through the CPS bureaucracy); principal selection and evaluation; data interpretation and networking with other schools. The most beneficial training is focused on an individual school, rather than offered as a one-size-fits-all program.

What charter school leaders are saying

Charter schools, schools that operate outside of many state and local education regulations in return for a "charter" agreement, have proven to be a big draw for Chicago families, who are lining up to get their children into one of the schools. Unlike selective magnet schools, charters are required to take all applicants, choosing students by lottery when demand is greater than supply. Most charters are small, mission-driven schools that have the autonomy and flexibility to respond to parents' demands and students' needs. They attract and keep highly motivated teachers who are empowered by their feeling of ownership over the school and the support they receive from the school community. In some cases, charter teachers are paid more than their counterparts who are members of the Chicago Teachers Union; many charters consider establishing financial incentives and innovative pay programs for their teachers.

Focus group participants see many public schools as devoid of the positive culture that once drove the school, creating expectations of work and achievement levels for adults and students. Charter schools, however, have been created based on a sense of community and a shared vision. Charter school cultures are derived from unique programs, such as a focus on an Afro-centric approach to history and culture, internships and mentors, a set of guiding principles for daily life, and graduated students who return to share stories of success. The focus groups acknowledged that these are all ideas and practices that could be incorporated back into traditional public schools.

But the group of charter school teachers and administrators said they face two big obstacles: inadequate facilities and the CPS special education bureaucracy. Efforts to find good facilities are hampered by funding limitations, lack of access to tax-free instruments, and the dearth of suitable buildings available for school use, they said. CPS will not provide adequate resources to handle special education children. The bureaucratic special education process in CPS is a bad fit with innovative, mission-driven charter schools. Both areas demand outside assistance and collective action, participants said.

Charter schools also face a constant struggle for money to compensate for the shortfalls of Chicago Public Schools funding. As a result, some charter schools find that higher achieving students leave to attend schools where they can find more extracurricular activities and course offerings. The charter school leaders called for equitable funding, which they say is deserved, in part, because they toil under a higher level of accountability to CPS and the community.

The tasks of finding adequate space and funding are arduous and time consuming for school directors who must turn their attention away from student learning and put it on fundraising and financial development. The issues have other ramifications as well. For example, it's difficult to keep class sizes small when new students enter a school that already has outgrown its building. In some schools, safety concerns are left unaddressed. Like their CPS counterparts, charter schools are in need of asbestos removal, fire safety improvements and new windows. They need money for buses, security, and garbage pick-up. In addition, they need some special charter-specific help, such as training on how to start a school and a bank of advisors who have been through the charter process and can answer questions about concerns, support and advocacy. The participants suggested that a non-profit charter school association could provide this and other services.

The focus groups expressed the need for a shared support structure and expanded resources for charter schools. Some see the future of the public school system as becoming entirely charter-based. Charter schools need resources for programs that would track students once they leave the school as a means of demonstrating school success to the community, and to inspire students at the school. All were optimistic for the prospects of their school, and hopeful that the charter movement can have a positive impact on reform in Chicago.

What external partners are saying

External partners have been key players in Chicago school reform and are confident about their potential to contribute, despite some uneven results.

Overall, external partners are optimistic regarding their role, and many believe that their resources would be most effectively spent in schools on one of three areas: capacity-building, sustained teacher support, and collaborative leadership. All agree that an external partner cannot be effective unless they build a sustained capacity across an entire school. "It's not just about building capacity, it's about *leaving* capacity," said one. Helping schools sustain their support for teachers begins with finding and keeping new teachers. One provider insists on a two-week commitment for teachers to attend a professional development site, where they observe and participate in high-quality teaching practices and curriculum development. Then there is collaborative leadership. "School reform can't be left only to staff. Everyone has a role. Things work best where you see high degrees of adult collaboration."

One significant roadblock to the success of external agencies is gaining the trust of the schools. As one provider commented, "It's an issue of trust. Many schools and teachers don't trust us when we come in with an attitude of, 'we're smart, you're not'." In addition, external partners often come into a school asking schools to take a big risk in terms of curriculum or professional development. As a result, external partners are pushed into the role of proving their merit to schools if they are to gain any ground.

Building a relationship is much easier if the external partner arrives with the blessing of the central administration. "The difference between external partners with CPS and without CPS is clout," said one participant. Another added, "Once the district pulled out, lots of programs ended." Most partners believe that CPS refuses to commit to a genuine partnership with a wide array of outside organizations. Thus, schools that are required to select partners from a list of vendors are under pressure to choose the first available partner, rather than one that fits with their own interests and philosophy. Often, the external partners that have the CPS seal of approval are seen as agents of accountability rather than sources of assistance.

Foundation funding has complicated this relationship-building process. Although it takes three to five years to establish an effective program, most foundation grants are for one year. That means organizations spend their time developing new sources of funding when they should be developing their program.

Most external partners doubted the ability of the system to take a single, cohesive program to scale. One barrier is that many teachers across the system think that students can't learn. "How can anything that's taken to scale address that?" Another is that smaller schools are at a disadvantage when it comes to allocations.

In the end, however, it comes down to this: "We are 75 partners strong! We have 10 years of valuable experience and collaboration, more than in most other urban districts. We represent a large infrastructure of support to the school system."

What parent support groups are saying

Parental involvement can take many forms, said a cadre of community groups and others who work to increase parental involvement. It can be defined as providing the basic physical, emotional and social needs of the child. It can include serving on a Local School Council or in some other school governance capacity. Or, it can mean participating in education-related activities.

More than 60 leaders involved in parent outreach and advocacy participated in three focus groups seeking systemic solutions to increase parent involvement. Important avenues for increasing involvement are brokering pre-existing resources, programs and organization; disseminating information; training; sustained funding, and broad participation from community-based organizations, schools, parents, educators and others. Among the goals: Create district wide policies on parent involvement; increase efforts to distribute information, activities, and resources about the role of parents in student achievement; hire a parent coordinator at every school; make resources more accessible to parents; and encourage employers to allow workers time off to visit their children's school.

A key barrier to parent involvement is a lack of public awareness about the important role parents play in their children's education, the participants said. They had a number of ideas to combat that problem. For example, they suggested a Parent Newsletter, written as a template that includes articles and events of interest to all Chicago school children and suggestions for home-based activities and local parent resources. The newsletter would include space for local schools to insert information about their own events before distributing it to parents. Another suggested a traveling Parent Resource Mobile, a parent-friendly resource center that would travel daily to several schools, distributing general information, brochures, advice for creating parent-friendly schools and ongoing support for parent involvement activities. The service would include a toll-free phone number. Other participants offered suggestions for home-based parent activities (public service broadcasts that highlight activities parents can do with their children), school-based events (Bring Your Parent To School Day, fun nights, parent patrols), and community-based events (Back to School Parade, church-based events).

System wide, participants discussed the need for training both parents and teachers. They suggested Parent Taskforce Meetings in which citywide leaders and parent advocates meet regularly to generate ways to share parent involvement information across all sectors, to identify and promote companies that are parent-friendly and to advocate for more resources for parent involvement activities.

Participants noted that a system wide approach would present its share of challenges. There are more than 1,500 social service agencies across the city that offer assistance to parents of school-aged children as well as a host of others – from City Hall to the museums – that offer programming, events and training. In addition, new parents come into the system daily who need to understand the importance of their role. The groups also discussed the need for an Annual Action Plan for Parent Involvement to give structure and consistency to parent involvement activities. It would create a basic plan, but be flexible enough to add new elements as are they are recognized.

What other practitioners are saying

In a series of focus groups conducted during the winter of 2001, the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform asked a group of stakeholders what policies •or practices most enhance the quality of classroom instruction needed to raise achievement. Their answers fell broadly into several categories: hiring and retaining the best teachers; hiring and retaining the best principals; staff development; resource allocation, and time management.

Hiring and keeping the best teachers: CPS policies seem to discourage principals from attending university job fairs where they might find the best new graduates. While some schools receive unsolicited resumes, those that do not (generally the lower-performing schools) must hire from a CPS list of candidates. Participants suggested allowing principals from the lowest achieving schools to join Central Administration recruiters at college job fairs. They also suggested new teachers be offered incentives to work in lower-performing schools for three or four years. Other participants cited district policies that discourage suburban teachers from applying to work in Chicago, encourage schools to wait until the last minute to hire teachers and make it difficult to replace teachers who leave mid-year. Meanwhile, innovative teachers leave CPS in search of schools with adequate resources and less restrictive classroom policies.

Hiring and keeping the best principals: Training is the key to improvement here. The LSCs that are charged with hiring a principal need training in how to find the best candidate. Principal candidates need training in how to be inspirational leaders – not how to fill out CPS forms correctly. Once a school has a good principal, keeping them requires an adjustment in the way principals are compensated. Since salary is commensurate with size, principals are encouraged to move on to bigger schools where they will supervise more people in return for a bigger paycheck.

Staff development: The Central Administration mandates how professional development time should be spent and determines which workshops teachers will attend, an approach that is contrary to what teachers and principals say works best. As one principal stated, "If I could change one thing in the CPS it would be the way staff development and professional growth opportunities are handled for all employee groups. There must be more school input, better designed programs, more capable consultants and more time allocated for quality programs."

Resource allocation: Schools that are not "on the radar zone," (defined by one former principal as any area not targeted for gentrification or already upscale) are permitted to, literally, crumble. Capital improvements – for instance, new windows to replace ancient ones that let in the "snow and rain" according to the aforementioned principal – might appear in a school budget, but never materialize.

"It is usually the squeaky wheel that receives the oil! Many of the schools 'not on the radar zone' have inexperienced or unmotivated principals and non-functioning LSCs that are not pushing the board for needed improvements, or they are too overwhelmed with other problems to have time to push. It is difficult if not impossible to figure out what the formulas are for repairs/rehab."

Also, principals often run into a problem when they attempt to transfer funds from one budget line to another. For example, a principal who wants to tap into a capital improvement fund that's going unused to pay for needed art supplies must submit a waiver to the Central Office. It's not uncommon for months to pass before the Central Office approves the waiver.

Time Management: Instead of collaborating with staff, or watching teachers at work, principals spend the bulk of their day filling out what they often perceive as useless paperwork ordered by the Central Office. Time and again, participants characterized the Central Office system as a chaotic and the people obstinate. They described the Central Office as a poorly functioning machine whose very culture and structure constitutes a tremendous impediment to supporting good schools.

Conclusion

Whether you ask principals, teachers, parents, LSC members or external partners what is wrong with the Chicago Public Schools, their answers are remarkably similar. Lack of effective leadership. Overbearing regulations. Conflicting policies. Too little collaboration. Inadequate resources. Ineffective training. Too much red tape. We've heard it all before. But, somehow, hearing it in the voices of the people who toil inside the schools each day gives the words new meaning. How can anyone be expected to learn to read in a classroom that lacks adequate lighting? What should be most heartening is that despite their view from the inside, none of the participants in the focus groups is without hope that things will continue to improve. School reform has empowered parents, community residents and principals. Teachers, the group probably least empowered by school reform to date, have concrete ideas about how they and their colleagues can become more effective.

With new leadership at the Board of Education, the Central Administration and the Chicago Teachers Union, the suggestions presented in these focus groups offer a road map to the third wave of school reform in Chicago. At its heart, the next wave must find a way to attract and retain the best school leaders and the best teachers and it must find a way to make parents feel welcome in the schools.

Pulling It Together: An Executive Summary

Thirteen years of school reform in Chicago have brought •considerable success to about one-third of the city's nearly 600 public schools, some success to another third and •little or no change for the rest. The more than eighty low-income elementary schools that have shown the most substantial and sustained improvement since the 1988 reform law was passed now have 45 percent of their students reading at or above the national average, up from 22 percent in 1990.

But the story for the rest of the system is much less •encouraging. The middle third of schools, those that have improved somewhat, continue on a slight upward trend. About one-third of their students now read at national norm levels, up from fewer than 20 percent in 1990. The final third, however, have shown little or no improvement—about one-quarter of their students have reached national norms, up from about 18 percent in 1990. About 20 schools actually are turning in worse performances today than they were in the pre-reform years.¹

¹Considering all the 445 elementary schools that reported Iowa Reading Test data for every year from 1990 to 2000, the patterns of Iowa Reading Test gains from 1990 to 2000 broke down as follows and compare to the categories in Figures 2 and 3 in the preceding section of the report which looked only at schools in low income neighborhoods with low scores in 1990:

- 145 elementary schools gained 15 percent or more from 1990 to 2000 (and thus can be considered similar to the 84 "Substantially Up Schools"). (Moore)
- 100 elementary schools gained at least 10 percent but less than 15 percent from 1990 to 2000 (and thus can be considered similar to the 66 "Tending Up Schools").
- 150 elementary schools gained less than 10 percent between 1990 and 2000 but did not suffer a net loss. Twenty elementary schools that were below national norms in 1990 had lower scores in 2000 than they did in 1990. (These 170 schools can be considered similar to the "Limited Progress Schools.")
- 30 elementary schools did not gain or lose significantly from 1990 to 2000, but remained above the national average of 50 percent over this 10-year period.

Thus, 56 percent of Chicago elementary schools, 245 of 445 schools, improved •10 percent or more on the Iowa Reading Test for the period 1990-2000.

Such uneven results have left school reformers in Chicago asking the same question being asked by large urban school districts across the country: How can we take what we know works in one school and make it work in the school down the street? The answer remains elusive.

In the pages that follow we offer a brief overview of the thoughts, research, and ideas of some of the country's •foremost scholars on school reform. We will look at the •lessons Chicago and other urban systems have learned from their school reform efforts, consider what needs to change, look at the opportunities for change, learn from other cities, and discuss ways in which foundations can impact systemwide improvement.

What We Have Learned

Foundations from Chicago and across the country have spent tens of millions of dollars during the first 13 years of Chicago school reform. Reform efforts have received •\$40 million from the MacArthur Foundation; \$49 million from the Annenberg Foundation, \$40 million from the Joyce Foundation, and millions more from the Tribune Company, Wieboldt, Polk Brothers, Spencer, and other foundations in Chicago. That investment has generated a wealth of information about our school system.

Leadership makes the difference

Visionary district leaders, good principals, a committed corps of skilled teachers, an involved group of parents, and a dedicated cadre of Local School Council members are the keys to turning around a failing school. Don Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, studied the highest-performing schools from low income neighborhoods in the Chicago Public School system and consistently found that the most improved schools had strong leadership from principals, teachers, and LSC members. *Catalyst*, the highly respected publication that covers Chicago school reform, polled new teachers and asked what would make them stay in a profession where few last more than five years. The results showed that “new teachers would bail out of their schools if it was badly run or had a bad principal,” said publisher Linda Lenz. “You can get teachers in bad neighborhoods if you have a principal who knows how to run a school.”

The Chicago Annenberg Challenge, the \$49.2 million effort to help Chicago schools help themselves, found that professional development for teachers, more time for collaborating with other teachers, and supportive outside partners lead to significant school improvement. In some cases, schools that were testing as much as half a grade behind before receiving a grant later tested one-fourth of a grade level ahead of students attending schools that were not involved in the challenge. Other challenge sites in 15 cities across the country reported similar results, according to Ken Rolling, executive director of the Chicago Challenge.

At the district level, successful superintendents in Boston, Memphis, and San Diego told journalist Alexander Russo that they see their role as setting a vision for how the central administration, individual schools, and local communities should all work together in the best interests of the children.

Whether to operate under the control of a strong central administration or as a decentralized school-based system is an ongoing issue for many urban school districts, including Chicago's. But, effective school leadership should not be a forced choice between centralized control and decentralized management, writes Harvard Professor Susan Moore Johnson, a former high school teacher and administrator. The most effective central administration is one that is lean, flexible, and organized to support the schools. The most effective superintendent is a collaborative leader who identifies strengths and shortcoming throughout the district and works with schools to improve their performance.

Training matters

It should come as no surprise that students learn more when they are taught by well-trained teachers. What may come as a surprise, however, is how critically important a good teacher is. Researchers Daniel C. Humphrey and Patrick M. Shields report that the difference between a good and a bad teacher can be a full level of achievement in a school year. A Tennessee study of low-achieving students found that those with the most effective teachers gained •53 percentile points in a year on state achievement tests, while those with the worst teachers gained just 14 percentile points.

Yet, Chicago schools have failed to invest in improved teaching, writes Stanford University Professor Linda Darling-Hammond. The system requires underperforming students to repeat a grade, but does little to ensure they are not subjected to a second round of ineffective teaching. Increasing the supply of high-quality teachers is key to educational improvement. She recommends a systematic approach that would set high standards for teacher preparation and certification, offer incentives to attract high-quality candidates, provide teacher mentors to new recruits, ensure professional development opportunities are sustained and relevant, and redesign schools to support student and teacher learning.

Studies also show that students in failing schools are far less likely to have teachers who are the best at what they do. In many cases these teachers are not academically certified to teach the grade level or subject they have been hired to teach. A Northwestern University study found that 48 percent of teachers in some Chicago Public High Schools have such poor skills that they reached just five or fewer students out of twenty. Even when the teachers are academically qualified to teach a certain subject, high school social studies, for example, they are expected to do much more: They are being asked to teach those high schoolers how to read before teaching them social studies.

A key component of improving teacher quality is improving access to and the level of ongoing teacher education, writes Charlotte Danielson, a development leader at Educational Testing Service. To do that, school leaders must first change the perception of ongoing teacher education from that of fixing bad teachers to one of the need for lifelong learning. The process should begin with the first step into a classroom, which should come under the watchful eye of a teacher mentor, she believes. "Teaching is the only profession without a built-in apprenticeship period. No newly licensed architect would be asked to design the World Trade Tower the first week on the job and certainly not alone! And yet teachers, from the moment they assume their first class, are considered full professionals, with the same responsibilities (and frequently more challenging assignments) as experienced veterans of the field," she writes.

Equally disturbing is the poor quality of training provided nationally to the principals who run the schools. Judy Coddling's research for the National Center on Education and the Economy shows that universities have little motivation to train principals to meet strategic management challenges. Instead, she found that the "training of school and district administrators, to the extent that it takes place in the university, might just as well take place in Siberia for all the relationship it might have to the needs, culture, or goals of the school district in which the school administrators work." Again, however, there is positive news for Chicago: The Chicago Academy for School Leadership, a principal training program developed through the Principals' Association, is considered a national model of good principal training.

Return to the classroom

Real reform means an emphasis on instruction, not the color of the carpet or the number of computer-ready electrical outlets, according to Harvard researcher Richard F. Elmore. Too often, school administrators define "instruction" as curriculum in the faulty belief that a new mathematics program will result in better math scores. But that doesn't take into account the abilities, skills and desire of the teacher in the classroom. "[T]eachers exercise substantial discretion in their use of curriculum, making decisions about what to emphasize, augment, and omit," said researcher Deborah Loewenberg Ball of the University of Michigan. "They make decisions about the order of topic presentation, and adapt the book's treatment of a topic in order to meet their students' needs... [T]here is no such thing as completely 'following the text.' "

To improve the quality of teachers, school districts must first undertake a very basic task, Danielson said: They must define what good teaching is. Without a common definition, teachers don't know what's expected of them and administrators don't know how to evaluate them. Of equal importance, schools must develop a common language for teachers to use when they talk about alternative methods of instruction, student needs and other concerns—a problem cited often by professional development experts.

Isolation is the enemy of good teaching

Working in a collegial environment to plan, learn, and trade information about students and teaching methods is the best way for teachers to become better at their craft. But, conditioned as they are to fearing outsiders, Chicago Public School teachers often are reluctant to take advantage of opportunities to work in concert with one another. Consider the experience at one school in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood: A handful of teachers had been working for a year to become peer coaches who would then work with other teachers at the school. One teacher asked a peer coach to observe whether she was treating boys and girls equitably. But, when the volunteer coaches offered to perform a similar service for their colleagues, not one teacher agreed to have them come and observe their class. "Teachers are afraid to open themselves up," the teacher/coach said. "They think they will be criticized or talked about."

Of equal importance is developing a more collaborative working relationship with school administration, a process that can occur at the union bargaining table, writes Adam Urbanski, vice president of the American Federation of Teachers. He believes the recent changes in leadership for the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union present a fortuitous opportunity to forge a real partnership between labor and management in the schools that will focus on doing what's best for the students.

Smaller is better

Whether you're talking about class size or school size, principals, teachers, and researchers all agree; the fewer students, the better. University of Wisconsin professor Allan Odden believes class sizes need to be really small—no more than fifteen students in the kindergarten through third grades, and no more than 25 students in the fourth through 12th grades. Students in smaller classes are more likely get individual instruction and less likely to be able to hide their shortcomings. Smaller schools are more likely to create a feeling of community among students as well as faculty. Students are less likely to be anonymous, teachers are less likely to operate in isolation, and parents are more likely to be involved—each a key predictor of educational success.

The research of Michelle Fine, City University of New York, also supports the “smaller is better” concept: “Small schools are economically more efficient than large schools, are educationally more productive than large schools, more satisfying to educators, more engaging for parents, and far less likely to breed violent behaviors. By creating small schools, districts create public settings in which a community of adults takes seriously the strengths and needs of youth, can collaborate with parents and community, are willing to be held accountable for student outcomes, and can engage in meaningful professional development directed toward enhanced academic achievement.”

Parents are important

Despite a wealth of research on the important role that parents play in their children's education, most teachers are not trained in how best to bring parents into the education process. Only half of the states mandate new teachers learn about parent involvement before they can become certified to teach. Illinois is not one of them. Writer and editor Gail Goldberger's research shows that successful parent involvement plans share several core principles. The school reaches out actively to parents and communicates what their children need to get results in school. The parent-teacher relationship is respectful and collaborative. Parent leaders are identified and supported, as are teachers who reach out to parents. Schools provide the time needed to allow teachers and parents to meet.

Investing in parents should be an important part of the education process. Research finds consistently that family characteristics are the best predictors of a child's development and success in school. The level of education attained by the mother is a particularly powerful predictor. Therefore, she notes, "investing in parents, whether exclusively or as part of a children's program, can yield significant returns not only for the target child and mother but for other children born into the family across generations."

Funding matters

What we know to be true about creating high-performing schools comes with a price tag. Class-size reduction costs money. Social services and counseling supports for children striving to overcome a number of obstacles costs money. When these services and supports are in place, students perform at higher levels.

What Needs to Change

Most public school systems today are governed the same way they have been for nearly a century, according to Joseph Viteritti of New York University. The model, developed to meet the needs of the early twentieth century, uses a centralized administration, put in place to combat the widespread political abuses in urban settings, and offers a one-size-fits-all education, designed to socialize immigrants into the American way of life. Today, the system needs a new model. Viteritti argues that mayoral control is an important component because it clarifies the line of political managerial accountability between city hall and the public schools and clarifies the performance expectations for a superintendent who serves just one master. In Viteritti's model, the superintendent would set and enforce standards for schools, have the authority to hire and fire principals, and monitor school performance. Power would be decentralized at the point of delivery: parents would choose among several education options, injecting competition into public education. It is, Viteritti notes, a good theory that has never been "tried to the fullest."

The Edmonton schools in Alberta, Canada, have been working toward that hybrid of decentralizing within a centralized system, writes Angus McBeath, acting superintendent. The key is to give local school personnel enough control over crucial variables for them to have a sense that success is possible.

"[I]n Edmonton, the principalship really is the most crucial leadership position in the district and the most important work of the district takes place in the classroom," McBeath writes. "In 1995 and '96, we moved all the service dollars for consulting, inservices, maintenance, marketing, technology services, administrative support and several other service areas out to the schools. We also gave principals the flexibility to purchase services and products from outside the system. That move - along with having principals report directly to the superintendent - changed the attitudes and perceptions of central office staff. Now they had to serve the schools, and they had to make sure their skills were finely honed so that principals would buy their services."

The schools get 92 cents of every district dollar. Principals are in charge of their buildings and everything that happens in them. In turn, they are held fully accountable for student performance.

With so much decision-making and responsibility moved out to local schools, the central administration had to reinvent itself. Today, 75 percent of central office employees work for what is called "cost-recovery central," a service operation offers technology support and other services to schools that are free to shop around for the best deal, whether inside or outside the school system.

More than a decade after the Illinois State Legislature established Local School Councils to run each of the system's schools, the struggle to create a working balance in operations, authority, and responsibilities between local schools and the central administration in Chicago continues. The local schools and the central administration still hadn't worked out a system when the second reform legislation passed in 1995, giving Mayor Richard M. Daley control of the central administration. The struggles faced in Chicago are hardly unique. Researcher Penny Wohlstetter of the University of Southern California has studied school governance issues and found that the best results are derived from a power-sharing arrangement in which the central administration sets broad policy objectives and accountability goals and the local schools work within those policy parameters to find the method that works best for each school.

Alexander Russo's report on four successful urban superintendents found several common attributes. Successful district leaders have a clear focus on improving classroom learning and student achievement. They take a systemic view of the district and are willing to delegate and empower staff to meet the needs of people in the schools. They focus on reform priorities despite conflicting demands and have the ability to communicate and popularize reform programs. They have developed strong alliances with community leaders and reform advocates.

For example, the central administration could and should set a policy that teachers attend high-quality and sustained professional development programs, but it should not mandate which workshops teachers attend. In a focus group, Chicago Public School principals said the schools should determine which training programs are offered, as well as the personnel to attend training sessions. The system often works exactly the opposite, however, with CPS directing who attends and what training will be offered. It is little wonder, then, that the administration had little to show for its \$8 million investment in teacher training in an effort to improve the performance of its woefully poor high schools, according to the findings of researcher Alfred G. Hess.

In Edmonton, the central administration sets the standards and leaves it up to principals to determine how best to achieve them, McBeath writes. "[U]nder site-based decision making... we say, 'Here are the results you are responsible for achieving and if the processes are not immoral, illegal, unethical; if they won't 'dis-elect' the board of trustees or disenchant the staff, students and parents, then go ahead.'" Equally important, when one principal makes a public blunder, the central administration sees it as a one-time problem to be addressed with that individual, not as the reason to create another sweeping new central administration policy.

Such school-level freedom is far from the reality of Chicago Public Schools. Too often, the overbearing hand of the CPS Central Administration gives good principals little choice but to resort to subterfuge (or worse) to get what they need for their school. Consider the example of the principal at a school with a 97 percent attendance rate and out-of-date electrical wiring. She spent several days figuring out how to fashion an attendance-boosting program that would convince CPS administration to release some attendance incentive money, which she planned to use to upgrade her school's deficient wiring.

Sometimes central administration policies run counter to what we know is good educational practice. For example, it is widely accepted that smaller schools are better. But principals in Chicago Public Schools are compensated according to school size — the bigger the student body, the bigger the paycheck. Where is the incentive for a principal to break her school into a group of small, independently run schools? Likewise, seniority allowances for veteran teachers and city residency requirements discourage suburban teachers from applying to teach in a Chicago Public School. Staffing rules make it difficult for principals to replace teachers who leave midyear. A lack of quality substitutes discourages good teachers from leaving their classes to attend professional development programs.

Finding and overcoming such barriers to improvement should be the work of a district-level team, suggests •W. Patrick Dolan of Dolan and Associates consultants. He would include five members of top central administration management, five members of the teachers' union executive committee, five principals, and five community leaders. They would be charged with meeting and visiting schools regularly to find out what help the schools need, what obstacles stand in the way of school improvement, what the schools have learned, and what assessments they use to measure progress. The team's main goal should be to overcome the isolation of individual schools and keep both union and management officials out in public in a joint declaration supporting best educational practice, Dolan writes.

The imbalance of funding

Increasingly, discussions over school finance have shifted from questions of equity to questions of adequacy, reports researcher Allan Odden. In other words, policymakers are beginning to ask not whether each district gets the same amount of money, but whether each district is getting a •sufficient amount of money to allow its students to meet achievement targets. Illinois is not there yet. The state sets its minimum per-pupil funding level at the rate needed to adequately educate students in nonmetropolitan districts of average size and relatively homogeneous demographic characteristics. A large urban district with a high percentage of minority, low-income, and learning-disabled students simply needs more money to help its students hit those •performance targets, Odden said. He recommends setting minimum funding through an approach that identifies state-of-the-art educational strategies, determines how much they cost, and then adds money according to the needs of individual districts. Since research shows that good preschool programs and full-day kindergarten programs have a significantly beneficial effect on the performance of low-income students, districts should be paid for providing those services. The same would apply to other widely accepted practices for improving student achievement, such as smaller class sizes, smaller schools, more time for teacher preparation and professional development, and programs to encourage parental involvement.

But more money is not be the only way to fund new programs. Lawrence O. Picus, professor at the University of Southern California, argues that more creative uses of the money schools already have might serve the same purpose. For example, schools can increase the number of fully qualified teachers, thus reducing class sizes, by reallocating discretionary federal Chapter 1 money. Instead of using the money to pay teachers' aides or fund other school needs, they could use it to hire another teacher or two, which a growing number of Chicago schools are already doing. Conversely, some schools might choose to reduce the number of teachers, a choice that would increase class sizes but also increase access to more professional development programs. Or districts could rethink the use of incentives for performance. Rather than using negative incentives—schools that under-perform face the threat of intervention or remediation—use the money to encourage improved performance.

Where the Opportunities Are

As Harvard's Richard Elmore noted, when a school district is in bad shape, "getting short-term performance gains [is] like shooting fish in a barrel. What comes next is much harder."

Take the need to improve reading scores, for example. For years, researchers have been looking for the magic pill of reading curriculum — the one program guaranteed to help students learn to read. Just as researchers are distilling 50 years of research into how best to teach a child to read, researcher Catharine E. Snow of Harvard University finds that simply teaching students to sound out or recognize words isn't enough. The system still is failing at teaching them to adequately understand what they have read. American 11th graders, as a whole, read at a level below that of their peers in Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, and other Third World nations, she noted. The U.S. educational goal to have all children reading at the third-grade level by the time they finish third grade simply isn't enough, she said. To be successful, children must move beyond recognizing words to begin comprehending the meaning of a text.

Even if the problem were merely teaching children to read words, finding the right curriculum isn't necessarily the answer. Give a good reading program to a lackluster teacher and little good may come of it. Give a mediocre reading program to a dynamic teacher and watch the students learn to read.

Considering what we know—that good leaders are imperative, good training is necessary, collegiality is important, and what happens in the classroom is the key—opportunities for improvement center on influencing those variables.

Leadership development

Forty percent of the nation's 80,000 principals are nearing retirement, and the turnover rate is 10 to 20 percent a year. In Chicago, the numbers could be even higher. Sixty percent of the system's principals are 52 years of age or older. With an early retirement that allows employees with long tenures to retire at age 55, the potential exists for an exodus of experienced principals in the next few years. The need for such a staggering number of new school leaders in the near term offers a huge opportunity for revising policies to attract visionary leaders to urban schools.

Chicago has one of the best principal development programs in the country in CLASS, the Chicago Leadership Academies for Supporting Success, composed of four programs that serve aspiring, first-year and experienced principals, write Kent Peterson and Carolyn Kelley of the University of Wisconsin. The program, operated out of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, offers a research-based curriculum aligned with the needs of the Chicago Public Schools. The programs involve a multitude of learning formats and strategies, treat participants as professionals, require hard work, promote the development of a professional community, foster a commitment to ongoing professional development, and a focus on school improvement. Unlike many programs that string together a group of one-shot workshops, most CLASS programs provide in-depth, sequenced training combined with follow-up, practice, and coaching. Continued refinement, development of materials, curriculum mapping, linkage with other programs, and use of newer information technologies could significantly enhance their impact. The program could be developed to serve a larger number of Chicago principals, Peterson and Kelley believe.

With significant support, CLASS also could be made available to other districts around the country, where the need for quality principal training is great, according to researcher Judy Coddling. She offers a scathing review of the current state of principal training and points out the lack of incentives to provide quality instruction. Under the current system, most principal trainees are teachers who enrolled in classes because they wanted a few extra bucks on payday, not because they are visionary leaders who want to make a difference in a child's life. Thus, Coddling found, trainees demand little of their graduate-level studies. Universities, in turn, deliver exactly what the trainees want: a relatively easy program that demands little from its students. To remedy the situation, Coddling recommends that states change the rules by imposing tough licensing requirements and performance assessments on principal candidates. Once that happens, Coddling said, states would have to dangle juicy incentives to get the best and brightest to apply—pay raises of 50 percent or more, the right to hire and fire staff, and more control over how the school operates—all of which she admits are unlikely to materialize.

Equally important is the need to recruit and retain quality teachers. In some areas, particularly urban school districts, as many as half of new teachers leave the profession within three years. Charlotte Danielson argues passionately that new teachers need a support system to help them acclimate to their new role. "To say that beginning teachers need a well-designed support system is not to criticize the programs that prepare them; instead, there are many aspects of teaching that simply cannot be learned until one is the teacher of record. Learning to teach, in that respect, is similar to learning to drive a car; one must actually be doing it."

A focus on instruction

Unfortunately, as Elmore has noted, too often urban school systems suffer from a conglomeration of programs that lack coherence. He recommends a new approach: "The treatment for this pathology is a focus on direct accountability of professionals and the schools they work in for the quality of instructional practice for all children and the construction of deliberate strategies of instructional improvement in schools and school systems. Deliberate improvement requires breaking the norm of privacy of teaching practice and the construction of face-to-face networks of practitioners engaged in the common task of improving instruction, subject to the discipline of measured student performance."

School districts can, however, go too far in efforts to measure student performance, according to an assessment of Chicago's reliance on standardized tests conducted by Designs for Change. Researcher Matthew R. Hanson found that "the effects of CPS' test-based accountability policies to 'end social promotion' and to sanction low-performing schools can be felt throughout the school system and permeate most Chicago classrooms, as teachers feel constant pressure to raise their students' Iowa test scores." Thus, rather than focus on quality classroom instruction, teachers are motivated to substitute intensive drill exercises, often using materials specifically geared toward the content of the Iowa tests, including old versions of the test itself. In addition, Hanson writes, CPS has used the test score results inappropriately. For example, the system bases its decision of whether to promote or retain a student primarily on that student's Iowa scores—a violation of both generally recognized testing standards and specific instructions for the appropriate use of the Iowa test by its publisher.

Expanding the community of concerned adults

In her review of the benefits of school-based management—a system in which the schools are empowered to make decisions about staffing, budgeting, curriculum, and instruction—Penny Wholstetter, director of the Center for School Governance at the University of Southern California, found that success occurred in schools where leaders had a laserlike focus on student learning and where there was a sense that everyone had a key role to play in attaining that vision.

This shared vision is a basic tenet of charter schools, new public schools that are created under a contract or "charter" from the Chicago Public Schools that gives them freedom from many state regulations and teachers' union requirements, in exchange for meeting specific performance targets within a limited time frame. Generally, the schools are founded by a group of like-minded teachers, administrators, and parents, and built around a central vision of education. The charter school movement started only a decade ago, so it is too early to draw conclusions from their relative success or failure. Researcher Joe Nathan of the University of Minnesota points out, however, that one thing is already clear: The innovations of charter schools have rarely been exported to their public school counterparts. Once again, large urban school systems have failed to take the success of one school and make it work in another school down the street.

Charter schools have gotten much of the public attention, but there are a number of other school choices options. Alternative schools offer educational opportunities to students considered to be at risk for dropping out. Contract schools give for-profit organizations contracts to run public schools. Interdistrict transfers give parents the option of enrolling their children in another school district, while intradistrict transfers allow them to enroll their children in another school within the district. Magnet schools, a popular option in Chicago, generally offer a specific theme—an advanced math and science curriculum, for example—and require students to meet stringent entrance requirements. Howard Fuller of Marquette University writes that school choice offers great hope for improving education in Chicago, although huge barriers remain. Among them: funding for these schools tends to be inadequate.

Catholic high school students regularly achieve more than their public school counterparts on verbal and math skills, but not on science studies. The performance gap is even greater for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mainly because Catholic school curriculum is more academically oriented. There is no difference between the achievement of students in Catholic and public elementary schools, writes Thomas B. Hoffer.

Theories about why Catholic high schools consistently outperform public schools abound. Among them: there is no reason for the higher performance other than the higher caliber of student who chooses to attend Catholic school; students perform better when their peers are high achievers; competition forces the schools to be more responsive; the schools traditionally have expected all students to complete an academic curriculum, and the schools do better because the parents are part of the school community. In cases where the child attends a school that is not linked to his or her community, the benefit of the community support dissipates.

More time

Time is an important variable in the development of strong leaders, better teachers, and a collegial school environment. With a longer school day suburban school teachers spend more time with their students and colleagues than Chicago Public School teachers do. Principals must have time away from paperwork to observe teachers and act as instructional leaders. Teachers must have time away from class to plan, attend training, or work with other teachers. All of the adults involved in running a school, including parents and Local School Council members, need the time and opportunity to learn new skills and understand the best practices for helping children to learn and schools to succeed. Future negotiations between the leadership of the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers' Union could explore the time issue.

A broader approach to student assessment

Each year, Chicago Public School students sit down to take nationally normed tests that give policymakers and taxpayers a snapshot of how Chicago students are faring against their counterparts across the country. It's been that way for years. But the tests have taken on even more importance in the wake of school reform, which looks to standardized test results as the primary measure of student promotion and school improvement.

For more than seventy years, private schools have used a range of assessment methods to measure the progress of their students. Now, a host of critics within the public school system contend that there should be more to assessments than standardized tests. One example is the Evaluation Report for Assessment and Accountability developed by the LSC Summit. Officials at various nontraditional schools, including charter schools, small schools, and schools-within-a-school, argue that accountability deserves a broader definition that could include a variety of measures ranging from graduation rates to student and parent involvement. To be successful, those schools need “some autonomy in planning their curriculum and their students’ experience with it,” said researcher Valerie E. Lee of the University of Michigan. That need is “fundamentally undercut by a focus on more frequent and higher-stakes testing and a standardization of the curriculum to align with the tests,” she noted. Deborah Lowenberg Ball, University of Michigan professor, would like to see student assessments that are “designed to provide useful information to teachers connected more intimately to students’ progress.”

Kate Jamentz, program director at WestEd, echoes those concerns. She argues for a standards-based accountability system that offers a “multilayered, standards-based assessments systems that provides useful and credible data to all critical decision-makers; a system for monitoring the appropriate uses of assessment and the appropriateness of the consequences of their use; a sophisticated data-management system accessible to all critical decision-makers.” Achieving that, she said, requires the school to establish a set of indicators of school quality, collect and share the data on those indicators, seek input on progress toward the indicators and provide opportunities for joint problem-solving around those indicators.

The benefits of an early start

A few years ago, the Chicago Public Schools made waves by announcing that a disturbingly high percentage of the children entering the first grade could not count to 10 or distinguish red from orange. The focus on whether children have specific skills is misplaced. It is far more important that children enter school as curious young people who can trust adults; regulate emotions, attention, and distractibility; exercise skill in social relations with peers; take an interest in problem solving; communicate effectively in the language of the school; and know the meanings of commonly used words and concepts. That is most likely to happen if a child has attended a high-quality child-care center or early childhood program, one in which there is a stable staff of teachers or caregivers who possess the relevant education and specific skills needed to work with young children, and where children and adults work together in small, age-appropriate groups.

The need for more quality day care is growing as welfare reform sends more mothers of young children into the workforce. Money is a huge issue. It costs about \$8,000 to keep a child in a quality day care setting for a year. And it is generally acknowledged that \$1 spent on early childhood education saves \$7 that would have been spent later on a range of government programs, from special education programs to prison building.

Illinois does better than many other states in providing early childhood education and still the state lacks the resources to provide quality childcare for thousands of children each year, write Marge Wallen and Gail Goldberger. Yet, the benefits of early childhood education cannot be overstated. Five highly regarded research studies offer compelling reasons for investing in early education.

For example, the Perry Preschool Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan, provided intensive learning experiences to a small group of three- and four-year olds from low-income families for thirty weeks, and compared the group with other children growing up in the same neighborhood. In every elementary school grade, the Perry children did better than the control group. By high school, 71 percent of the Perry children graduated, compared to 54 percent of the control group.

The largest long-term study of preschool effectiveness is taking place right here in Chicago. The Child-Parent Centers project provides stimulating experiences for children ages three through second grade in tandem with educational opportunities for their parents. It requires that parents participate in preschool learning activities with their children. Since 1985, the project has followed 989 graduates and 550 pupils. At age five, CPC pupils had a 10 point increase in IQ compared with a control group. At age 19, CPC graduates had a 25 to 30 percent lower rate of special education needs, a 30 to 40 percent reduction in grade failure, and a 25 percent reduction in high school dropout rates. This was the first study to document the effect of early intervention on crime: CPC graduates and pupils had 35 percent fewer arrests than the comparison group.

Lessons from Other Metropolitan Schools

Intending to solicit a variety of perspectives from those on the “front lines” of reform, Joanne Duhl of The Philanthropic Initiative looked at the recent school improvement experiences of six U.S. cities: San Diego, Boston, Seattle, Houston, Memphis, and Philadelphia. Each city is considered a national leader in school improvement efforts and was chosen because of its potential to inform school change in Chicago.

San Diego is being watched closely because of a new leadership team that includes Alan Bersin, former U.S. attorney for Southern California, and Anthony Alvarado, formerly a New York City school superintendent known for achieving impressive accomplishments in students’ basic skills achievement among a highly diverse population. The city has implemented a rigorous and controversial plan, “The Blueprint for Student Success,” which focuses on literacy and mathematics instruction and enhanced professional development for teachers and principals.

Boston's attempts at school improvement also include a comprehensive plan, "Focus on Children," under the direction of a strong superintendent, Thomas Payzant (formerly of San Diego). Boston is focusing on school-based reform and seeking to reorganize its bureaucracy to be more responsive. Extra funds and support are going to help children in danger of failing the statewide high-stakes test. All Boston public schools are taking part in "whole school change," which includes the choice of a literacy model and other instructional schoolwide strategies. Finally Boston is successfully mobilizing extensive and high quality resources in cooperation with the central office.

Seattle received national attention in 1995 when it chose retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. John Stanford as its superintendent. With no background in education, Stanford proved to be a creative and successful school leader. The current superintendent, Joseph Olchefske, also comes from a non-education background. Seattle is also in the process of fully implementing a districtwide K-12 literacy initiative and expanding professional development. One of Seattle's unique challenges is the administration of a \$25.9 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, aimed at creating a model school district.

Houston has recently received a great deal of attention because of the appointment of former Supt. Rod Paige as U.S. Secretary of Education. Paige was initially a member of a reform-minded Houston School Board that is credited with dramatic changes in the system's governance—including the outsourcing of many school management functions as well as some special education services—and a new focus on achievement for all students that resulted in real gains. In Houston, the larger community played a key role in reform efforts (called PEER—Peer Examination, Evaluation and Redesign) that looked at every aspect of the school system with the goal of improving service delivery to schools and students.

Memphis is notable for its mandate that every school adopt one of several "whole school reform" models, including nationally recognized models and others created locally. To support teachers, Memphis created a state-of-the-art, privately funded Teaching & Learning Academy.

Philadelphia also adopted a comprehensive plan, "Children Achieving," under a strong superintendent, David Hornbeck. A massive public outreach campaign accompanied the plan, including citizen education on the school budget. Philadelphia's ambitious efforts took place against the backdrop of animosity between the superintendent and state officials, with Hornbeck suing the state for discrimination against minority students based upon fund distribution.

What are the results of these systemic urban school improvement efforts? Researcher Duhl admits that overall, the jury is still out. However, as she has noted, Houston points to increases in overall student achievement and in minority student achievement. In Boston, results on standardized tests are up across all grade levels and subject areas. Progress also is seen in test score results in San Diego, and in Philadelphia there were gains for some grades and schools. Memphis also can point to gains in scores of students in elementary schools where a redesign model had been well implemented. However, Seattle has a relatively high percentage of low-scoring students, and the rates for minority students continue to lag behind those of whites. Furthermore, even in cities with impressive gains to point to, the high schools have proven more intractable to improvement than the elementary schools.

The greatest challenge for urban school improvement is to stay the course, to give efforts time to take root, according to Duhl. True change requires commitment from the top and support and training for school-based faculty and leaders. Unfortunately, urban superintendents generally have short tenures and there is great demand for those who earn national recognition, such as Rod Paige and Gerry House of Memphis. The history of school reform in the United States has too often been one of the “the program du jour,” without the opportunity to learn from experience and have impact. These systemic efforts hold promise, but only time and the flexibility to adapt and refine will achieve the kind of dramatic turnaround capable of effectively reaching all students.

Experience from Five National Reform Programs

A separate report by Duhl summarizes a variety of approaches to teaching and learning that have been adopted by schools and districts throughout the United States. These ideas and models present diverse philosophies concerning how schools should be structured and how students learn.

Accelerated Schools, developed by Dr. Henry Levin, formerly of Stanford University, is based upon the conviction that “at-risk” students should be accelerated as opposed to held back. Schools that adopt this philosophy involve the larger school community in creating a local vision that guides changes in organization, staffing, and administrative support. While full implementation of Accelerated Schools is a lengthy process, those schools that have achieved it have demonstrated positive results. These include increased mastery of basic skills and higher-order thinking skills and changes in student attitudes and school climate.

ATLAS Communities (Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students) is a collaboration of four organizations: Education Development Center, the Coalition of Essential Schools, Project Zero, and the Comer School Development Program. It is a comprehensive approach to school reform that seeks to integrate the work of the four involved organizations. Central to the ATLAS design is the creation of a K-12 pathway that ensures a coherent educational program for all students. ATLAS Communities are committed to teaching for understanding, using authentic assessments to evaluate student work, and involving families and community members in the life of the school. ATLAS also stresses the importance of teacher study groups. While ATLAS is a relatively new approach, there is data showing increased achievement on standardized tests in districts with the longest implementation history.

The Coalition of Essential Schools, founded in 1984 by Ted Sizer, then of Brown University, is based upon 10 “common principles” around which schools are structured. These include personalized instruction, a focus on a limited number of essential skills, “student as worker,” and demonstration of mastery through “exhibitions.” Some schools that have adopted the coalition’s principles have received national recognition for their success in creating high aspirations among “at-risk” students. However, there is no rigorous research on student achievement in coalition schools and the approach has been criticized for being too vague.

The Comer School Development Program grew out of the work of child psychiatrist Dr. James Comer of Yale University. The approach seeks to address the social and emotional needs of children and to connect the school and the family to ensure deep understanding of where children come from. The original Comer schools in New Haven were cited for raising student achievement, and there have been interesting studies citing significant changes in student self-concept that persisted beyond leaving a Comer school.”

Success for All may be considered the most prescriptive of the ideas presented in Duhl’s report. Developed by Robert Slavin and others from Johns Hopkins University, Success for All focuses on literacy, particularly in high-poverty schools. The curriculum includes a minimum of 90 minutes of daily reading instruction that is highly structured, as well as required daily at-home reading. Formal student assessments are conducted regularly. Results show that the approach does improve reading performance, particularly for students in the lowest quartile of the distribution of student test scores.

Duhl notes that the success of any particular approach depends upon context, because individual teachers and administrators are responsible for “delivering” new ideas and materials, and their efforts take place within the larger framework of school districts. As Dr. Jane Walters, head of the local Memphis education fund says, “Many models will work given highly motivated and trained leaders.” The importance of implementation is supported by a recent RAND Corporation report on the progress of the New American Schools’ seven design models. According to the report, “districts varied greatly in the degree to which they were implementing the programs,” with variations occurring within schools, rather than from school to school. The RAND study found that:

- Smaller schools and elementary schools adopted programs more fully.
- Teachers who cited their students’ lack of basic skills, parental support, or discipline behavior as significant problems were less likely to embrace the models.
- Having a stable team of consultants from the model programs to work with the whole school bolstered implementation.
- The active support of principals and systems with consistent support tended to result in more fully enconced school programs.

Comprehensiveness is Key

There are no quick fixes in public education. The University of Toronto’s Michael Fullan estimates that it takes about three years to turn around a failing elementary school, six years to turn around a high school, and eight years to turn around a district. Even when school systems do the hard work of remaking themselves, it is a fragile process that can be “undone almost overnight when two or three key leaders leave,” he writes.

School reform efforts across the country have been plagued by two problems, writes researcher Paul T. Hill of the University of Washington: They lack a strategy that takes into account all of the factors that keep a school from operating at a consistently high standard; and they lack the political will and financial resources to sustain reform over a long period. In most cases, reform proposals have a “zone of wishful thinking” that provides a strategy for change in one area without providing for changes that are needed beyond that zone. For example, reforms based on teacher-training models do not include strategies for overcoming the reluctance of the least committed teachers to put in the time and effort to improve their knowledge and skills. Changing the entire school would require a three-pronged approach, Hill suggests: It would need incentives for school performance, ways of increasing school capabilities, and opportunities for school staff to change how they serve students.

Whole school change can be even more difficult at the high school level, where instructional departments often operate independently. "Pockets of improvement within departments cannot...improve the whole school," writes Leslie Santee Siskin of Harvard University. "[A]nd if they are isolated pockets, they tend to provoke resentments and micropolitical conflicts across the organization. Having an exceptional English department not only does not improve the work of science or voc ed—it often makes it harder."

Beyond whole school change is the idea of the full-service, or community, school. Under this heading comes a wide range of models. Full-service schools can be as little as a program of after-school recreation and academic enrichment, or as comprehensive as a one-stop-shop school that stays open late into the evening and offers everything from mental health and job training to tutoring and youth development for students, parents and the community at large, writes John Simmons.

"Boiled down to the basics, a community school is both a set of partnerships and a place where services, supports and opportunities lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities," said Martin J. Blank, director of the Coalition for Community Schools. "Using public schools as a hub, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities-before, during and after school, seven days a week ... Using public schools as a hub, inventive, enduring relationships among educators, families, community volunteers, business, health and social service agencies, youth development organizations and others committed to children are changing the educational landscape-permanently-by transforming traditional schools into partnerships for excellence."

A study of 49 full-service schools found that 46 of them had shown positive results on one or more outcome areas, ranging from improved academic performance to increased parent involvement to safer neighborhood streets. The biggest barriers to better performance: lack of time and money for planning, coordinating and managing full-service schools.

Issues for Grant Making

Foundations have had a dramatic impact on Chicago schools during the first 13 years of reform. The opportunity now lies in taking what we have learned from those early years and discovering ways to jettison the failures and institutionalize the successes. Building upon the successes of those early years will maximize gains in a way that starting fresh may not.

The key is a focused effort. Without focus, \$50 million could become a proverbial drop in the \$4 billion bucket that is the annual CPS budget. With a focused program geared toward measurable outcomes, \$50 million in foundation money can be leveraged for an exponential impact.

Superintendents in other large urban districts have worked hard to make foundations their partners in reform. While there is a danger in Chicago of aligning too closely with a central administration that has not yet come to grips with its role as a policy setter rather than a micromanager, foundation grants will have more impact if they mesh with systemwide priorities, according to Russo's report on the efforts of successful superintendents in Memphis, Boston, New York City, and San Diego.

Researchers have pored over the highest-performing schools trying to understand why reform has succeeded in one school and failed in the next. As we have discussed, they have come up with some answers, which are summarized in Chicago's Five Essential Supports. People are the key. The most successful schools have good principals, inspiring teachers, committed Local School Council members, involved parents, and motivated students. Training is imperative to help each of them to be the best they can be. Time and flexibility are needed to allow teachers and principals to take the training. Peer support is necessary to battle the sense of isolation that so often plagues teachers. Teamwork is needed to help one another become better teachers as well as share information on a particular student or program. Teachers also need a bigger vision of education, one that can be developed by creating partnerships among schools. These new networks can encourage learning and sharing across schools and help reduce staff development costs.

But how can a foundation most influence a \$4 billion school system? Is it possible to effect systemic change? Or is it enough to take one ailing school and turn it around? Is money the answer? Can an infusion of cash have a systemic effect? How much is enough to turn around an ailing school?

Would the money be better spent outside CPS, attempting to create change at the policy level? Would it be more helpful if the Illinois State Legislature were convinced to take another stab at making school funding in Illinois more equitable?

Is it more effective to focus on school leadership issues? If so, where do you start? Is it better to increase the supply of quality principals, assuming they will attract and keep the best and brightest teachers? Or is it better to focus on getting the highest-quality teachers in the classroom, hoping their inspiration will reverberate throughout the school? Or, would it make more of an impact to improve LSC training to ensure that LSC members know how to recruit and retain the best principal? Or would a more informed and vocal set of parents drive everyone to improved performance?

And if you're spending money on teachers, is it better to spend the money on current teachers, hoping to improve their performance? Or would the money be better spent at teachers' colleges hoping to raise the bar on the quality of graduates they're turning out?

How important is return on investment? We know that money spent on pre-kindergarten programs provides the biggest return on investment. So would it be more cost-effective to make sure that every child in the city of Chicago has the option of enrolling in a CPS pre-K program, rather than simply languishing on a waiting list?

How do you become a leader in funding while ensuring your work complements that of other major funders of education reform? How can one grant be leveraged to its greatest potential and encourage others to come to the table?

Ask 20 people involved in Chicago school reform each of those questions and you are likely to get 20 different sets of answers. Following are a few of the answers journalist Cindy Richards heard when she asked such questions:

John Ayers, executive director, Leadership for Quality Education, would like to see money spent to study experiments in school choice—charters, vouchers, contract schools—to figure out what's working and why. Even charter schools, the favorite alternative of the business community, aren't always successful. One of the original Chicago charter schools already has failed and Ayers said he expects one or two more will be closed when their charters come up for renewal at the five-year mark. "Schools are very complex things to make happen," said the ever-optimistic Ayers. "Three of 15 may fail, but that will make the rest of them stronger because it will focus these schools on the fact that if they don't succeed, they go out of business." Ayers believes there is power in starting new schools because it brings together like-minded teachers who are energized and empowered.

Donald Feinstein, principal at Dett, believes that improving teachers is the key to improving education. "Ninety cents of every dollar we spend goes to the individual. We can't say, 'Let's replace the people with a computer program.' The only way to get more out of your dollar is to get more out of that human being." He believes smaller class sizes and additional teacher training are the two best ways to get more out of the human being. In particular, he would like to see a longer period of student teaching. "Residents spend a year or two in the hospital before they become a full-blown doctor so they don't have five patients die the first week. [With more student teaching], we won't lose so much time when they assume sole leadership of a classroom and maybe we can start closing that gap between grade level and performance."

Linda Lenz, editor and publisher of *Catalyst*, believes that good principals are the first step toward an improved school. So she would spend money first to determine which of the handful of principal training programs is the best. Then, she would hire some researchers and facilitators who would work with the schools. They would first ask the schools what they need—more staff teamwork or better methods of teaching remedial reading, for example—and the research team then would identify programs that are working to overcome that particular problem. Finally, she would provide money for the school administrators to study the successful program and implementation of the program in their own school.

Andrew Wade, executive director of the Chicago School Leadership Cooperative, agrees that principal and teacher development are important approaches to school improvement. But, he noted, "They're getting a ton of resources already." In the belief that parent volunteers serve as a farm team for future Local School Council candidates, he would like to see more money and effort put into finding and promoting programs that increase parent involvement in schools. Then, he would increase the resources available to LSC members, giving each member the option of choosing six or seven training programs, or allowing them to receive regular briefings on school issues of note.

Mike Klonsky, executive director of the Small Schools Workshop, said he would focus on high school restructuring. "That's going to be the locomotive in the next decade that drives comprehensive school reform. I think high schools are a social powder keg in society. I also think they are the place where things are bombed out so badly that you can really make some improvements in a hurry." First, he would make the schools smaller, dividing the huge buildings into schools of fewer than 350 students each. The smaller student bodies would ensure that all the average kids can be known just as well as the best and worst kids are known in a huge school. It also would increase the ability of the teachers to work together in a collegial environment across subjects, grades, and disciplines. Foundation money could be used in several ways, ranging from training teachers to work together to sponsoring an architectural competition to finding the best way to turn a huge building into a collection of small schools.

Martin J. "Mike" Koldyke, chairman of Frontenac Corp., cautions that the foundation should move slowly. His idea is to build a school that would serve as a teacher training academy. Once a critical mass of teachers has been trained, he would take over the five worst performing schools on a contract basis, staffing them fully with graduates of the teachers' academy. Koldyke admits that his idea is likely to raise the ire of the Chicago Teachers Union at those schools taken over by the academy graduates.

Warren Chapman, program officer for the Joyce Foundation, believes foundation grants would be most effective if they were used to build CPS' educational infrastructure. And he believes employing new technology in the form of an online teacher-resource center would provide the biggest return on investment. "You've got to think about infrastructure. Otherwise, you're putting money on the street, and it gets sucked up by the vacuum cleaners."

Donald Moore, executive director of Designs for Change, would use foundation dollars to influence policy in favor of the city's top-performing schools. Specifically, he would like to see those schools given some independence from the central administration and turned into a separate sub-district. Then, he would provide the resources they need to work with one another and to help underperforming schools learn from their example.

In addition, a number of the scholars who contributed to this comprehensive document offered their own suggestions for grantmaking opportunities:

Michelle Fine, an advocate for small schools, echoes Moore's contention that a foundation can play a role in rethinking whether a school district can be organized on a basis other than geography. Would students be better served by a Chicago Public School district overseeing only schools that teach a multicultural college-bound curriculum and another composed of schools that teach whole-language or phonics? Further, she suggested that a public foundation could spearhead efforts to renew public support for public education at a time when vouchers, privatization, and other nonpublic school options are gaining favor.

Joe Nathan, an advocate for charter schools, believes the foundation should use its role as a neutral convener to seek ways to export charter school successes to the wider public school district. In addition, the foundation could bring together policymakers, legislators, educators, and others •to seek solutions to common charter school problems, such as finding the right space to house the schools and creating new assessment and accountability models, and to strengthen Illinois' weak charter school law.

Allan Odden, the school finance authority, would like to see the foundation fund research that would determine the appropriate funding level for students across the state and in Chicago and quantify current funding inequities. He also believes the system would benefit from research into teacher salary benchmarks and incentives for preschool as well as K-12 teachers.

Judy Coddling, a former principal in the Los Angeles school system and vice president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, points out several ways for policymakers to raise the quality of principal leadership: Increase principal pay, vastly improve the quality of university-level training, and develop a method for identifying those teachers most likely to become visionary school leaders.

Kent D. Peterson and Carolyn Kelley offered a number of ideas on improving the quality of school principals. Among them: Expand CLASS to serve more CPS principals; fund research to determine which are the best training models around the country; increase the use of technology, including web-based approaches to training; convene annual meetings with program leaders, researchers on school leadership, and nationally recognized urban practitioners to examine new ideas in principal training; host meetings of university preparation programs and CLASS to map their offerings onto CLASS programs; develop a grants program for CLASS graduates to receive additional training, materials, or coaching; and begin a Chicago Communities Trust Fellows program to recognize leaders who have done exceptional things with their schools.

The three district superintendents interviewed by journalist Alexander Russo suggest that foundations in their districts were most successful when they worked collaboratively with district personnel. Grants that don't mesh with district goals influence only the margins of public education, the superintendents said. Regular communication between school and foundation officials in the form of monthly "working group" meetings, or more formally in terms of a public school principal working as the "loaned executive" of one foundation's education program, ensure the foundation and the school district are working toward similar goals.

Catherine E. Snow, a Harvard professor who studies literacy education, believes that foundations can and should do more to support research into what works best. Deborah Lowenberg Ball, University of Michigan professor, sees a similar need for research into the most effective ways to teach mathematics and to upgrade the skills of math teachers. In addition, she would like to see student assessment used as more than a way to compare student progress against national norms. Instead, she believes that "assessments should be designed to provide useful information to teachers connected more intimately to students' progress."

Experts on early childhood learning believe that foundations have several opportunities for impacting the quality of preschool education. Among them, a foundation could provide a bridge between pre-K and kindergarten teachers, encouraging them to find ways to collaborate rather than criticize. Similarly, a foundation could convene groups of early childhood experts and elementary school educators to seek common ground on strategies that would ensure children enter school ready to learn and leave elementary school ready to succeed. On a broader policy front, foundation support could bring some coherence to the plethora of government grants for early childhood education. The lessons already learned in Chicago could be useful in urban centers across the country where officials also are trying to overcome bureaucratic obstacles to make pre-K education more effective.

Paul T. Hill, who has studied school reform efforts in urban school districts across the country, believes foundations should play a key role in formulating and supporting a school reform strategy. He proposes forming a school "takeover team" staffed by university and business consultants as well school staff. The team would be charged with monitoring the system's performance, assets, and human and physical resource needs. Foundation money would be used to support the work of the team, at a cost of between \$200,000 and \$300,000 annually. Hill also sees a need for foundation support of data collection, such as that conducted by the Chicago Consortium on School Research, an incubator for new schools, an inspectorate to make objective judgments about whether low-performing schools are capable of improvement, and a real estate trust to develop and maintain school buildings and lease them at fair prices to all publicly funded schools.

Jane Quinn, assistant executive director for community schools at the Children's Aid Society in New York City, (as quoted by Simmons) believes that foundations can use the bully pulpit to pressure public policymakers into creating public funding streams that would institutionalize full-service schools-or into using newly created funding streams, such as tobacco settlement dollars-toward this end. In the same paper, Martin J. Blank, director of the Coalition for Community Schools, says the schools have the most difficulty coming up with time and money for planning, coordinating and managing full-service. They need flexible funding to draw potential partners to the table for discussion-that money is "the pot of honey with which you get the bees to come,' he said.

Marge Wallen and Gail Goldberger urge that foundations support organizations that advocate for policy changes and increased funding of early childhood programs. In addition, the Early Care and Education Assembly convened by Illinois Governor Ryan agreed on seven overarching goals for improving early childhood education in Illinois: raise public awareness about the value of early childhood education; ensure that programs enrich the social, emotional and cognitive development of children; increase and reward professionalism; develop financial support from employers; provide information on quality childcare to parents and others; improve facilities, and target specialized services to rural areas, children with special needs and after-hours care.

Ken Rolling, executive director of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, suggests that foundations would be most effective investing in three areas: professional development for teachers that is sustained, followed-up, and emphasizes classroom teaching practices; interactive instructional practice at schools; and relationships with external partners for schools.

Howard Fuller, an expert on school choice, recommends using foundation dollars to support existing programs that have delivered promising results for low-income students, through teacher training, longitudinal studies, facilities improvement, higher teacher pay, more technology, or •special programs for students. Other options include •establishing a scholarship fund that would enable low-income students to attend private schools, creating a •charter school resource center, funding organizations that provide legislators and policymakers with the information they need to make sound decisions about education, and supporting groups that organize parents and community residents to press for more educational options for low-income children in Chicago.

Lawrence O. Picus believes The Chicago Community Trust should use a four-pronged approach to support the next wave of school reform: 1) research on better approaches to resource reallocation in schools; 2) creating incentives for improved school performance; 3) using available resources as “venture capital” to be invested in programs or activities that will lead to dramatic improvements in student learning; and 4) where appropriate, relying on market-based alternatives. These approaches represent a fundamental change in the way schools receive and use grant resources, and Picus hopes they will establish successful models that can be implemented across the district to enable its leadership to continue to make additional “investments” to improve schools.

Edmonton school officials believe that decentralization can be implemented successfully even in a district the size of Chicago, which is more than five times as big as Edmonton's. A key recommendation: bring in an experienced administrator as a “coach,” as Edmonton did. Such a coach should have experience in the decentralization process and should remain 'behind the scenes' to minimize fears and concerns about an 'outsider' coming in to tell the district what to do, writes acting superintendent Angus McBeath. This coach should come in two to three days each month and provide advice not just on *what* to do—moving money from central office to schools isn't a complicated task—but *how* to do it in a way that minimizes politics.

Joseph Viteritti believes that foundations should fund training programs for principals and school administrators, provided the money is conditioned upon results. Principal training would be supported only in conjunction with organizational reforms that permit principals to practice what they learn and function like real leaders. Administrators should be trained in the best methods of intervention in failing schools, but the funding should be contingent upon the school district developing a sound curriculum, tied to standardized tests, and provide remediation for students who aren't making the grade.

Gail Goldberger sees numerous opportunities for philanthropists to increase the level of parental involvement in schools. Among them: fund training and resources for school districts to facilitate parent-teacher collaborations; help schools communicate more effectively with parents and communities; support school efforts to experiment with different structures, philosophies, and programs; and fund the creation of a parent involvement program for teacher certification in Illinois.

Susan Moore Johnson, author of two studies in this report, provides two sets of funding recommendations. The Harvard educator believes it is possible to effect change in district leadership by supporting research into what works and why—for example, a study comparing centralized and decentralized approaches and another that explores how successful schools operate within the confines of the district. She also would like to see funding for a study that would identify the most successful superintendent training programs. Separately, she argues that The Chicago Community Trust can impact the supply of high-quality teachers by sponsoring research into the current alternative certification programs to identify and analyze the salient features of design and challenges of implementation. The research would fill a critical need as these programs proliferate, often with little attention to what actually works in recruiting teachers and what is needed to retain them over time. Other options for supporting quality teaching include funding positions for expert teachers within the schools to head a school-based mentoring program or providing supplementary funds to enable new teachers to team-teach part of their schedule with experienced teachers. She cautions, however, that the programs will only work if there also is enough money to pay for release time for both new and experienced teachers to observe classes and confer.

Wrap Up

This review of the lessons and opportunities of Chicago School Reform provides information and analysis for the staff and the Executive Committee of The Chicago Community Trust. It is part of the Trust's process to establish a grant making strategy and guidelines for the Education Initiative that will maximize its impact on student performance.

The recent changes in the leadership of the Board of Education, the Central Administration of the Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Teachers Union, plus the growing realization that the rate of improvement in most schools is slowing down, means that the school system and its stakeholders have a unique opportunity and imperative to rethink school reform.

While the opportunities for ensuring that Chicago school reform remains on track are widespread, the Trust should make careful choices if its resources are to be put to effective use. As the first 13 years of reform have shown, there are many pitfalls to funding school reform and many ways to waste money. An unfocused approach to funding that is not research-based will do little to further the reform process. A focused plan should take into account the priority needs of the school system, the needs of individual schools, and other foundations' funding priorities. Such a focus could have a significant impact on Chicago's public schools and their students who rely on them to learn the skills they need to be productive citizens of the world.

Implications of the Lessons and Opportunities

What could the next 10 years look like? What is needed to accelerate the rate of improvement of teaching and learning in Chicago classrooms? How can The Chicago Community Trust and other stakeholders support rethinking school reform to develop and implement a new strategy? What should the quantifiable objectives be? Good answers to these questions could place Chicago in the vanguard of urban school reform, and increase the impact of the Trust's grants.

The "View from the Inside" of the school system provided •a review of the problems as seen by more than 140 Local School Council members, teachers, parents, principals •and external partners, whose key concerns were consistent across the groups. Lack of effective leadership. Lack of respect. Overbearing regulations. Conflicting policies. Too little collaboration among the stakeholders. Too much red tape. Ineffective training. Inadequate resources.

The lessons provided in the "Collected Papers," written by 46 authors and organizations from Chicago and around the nation, are consistent in pointing to opportunities for the future. Chicago needs to scale up what works. The lessons include:

- A reform strategy that can overcome a school system's entrenched resistance to change must take into account all the factors that keep a school from operating at a consistently high standard. That includes ensuring there is sufficient political will and adequate financial resources to sustain reform over a long period. Effective reform efforts also need to look outside of education to see how other large systems, such as corporations, have reinvented themselves.
- The research and experience in other cities indicates that the better the alignment among stakeholders on a shared vision of school reform, the better the results. The stakeholders include the people in the schools, the school board, the teachers' and principals' unions, universities, community groups, school assistance organizations and foundations.
- To achieve the significant changes that this report suggests at both the school and the Central Office will require a new level of collaboration among stakeholders. A first step the leadership of the CPS and the unions could take is to jointly ask their employees and members to contribute ideas to a "Dumb Rules Committee," like the one chaired by the Edmonton superintendent to decide which dumb rules to eliminate.
- Experience in Chicago shows that there are Local School Councils, teachers and principals who know how to transform schools in low-income neighborhoods. The school system would benefit from developing an effective strategy for scaling up this best practice to all schools by using the experience and expertise of the leaders and stakeholders of the effective schools.
 - More than 80 elementary schools have steadily improved their results by using a model for whole school change based on the Five Essential Supports •for Student Learning. This model demonstrates the value of improving leadership, improving the quality of teaching and professional development, and engaging parents in the child's learning. The schools also benefited from sustained relationships with external partners, participation in networks with other schools, and long-term foundation support.

- The excellent results achieved by these formerly low performing schools during the seven years immediately following the passage of the school reform law in 1988 demonstrates that empowering the parents and teachers to have greater influence over the operation of their schools, including the selection of the principal and the dispensing of state and federal funds, made a difference.
- Refining the role and relations of the Central Office with the individual school is, perhaps, the next biggest challenge facing the public school system. Schools need Central Office support and recognition for their work, not more mandates. When the decision making is decentralized to the schools, which are then held accountable for their results, the Central Office should see its primary role as supporting the schools and holding failing schools accountable. As Edmonton demonstrates, the people in the schools who are closest to the problems also need to have the authority and resources for solving them.
 - The leadership at every level in the system, from the classroom to the boardroom, needs to rethink its approach to how to encourage people and their organizations to improve what they do on a daily basis so that the rate of student performance accelerates. To accomplish this, the CPS needs a better approach for designing, leading and managing change than it has used in the past. The process for effective redesign of the system needs to be based on a proven method that gets participation and commitment of the people at all levels who will implement redesign plans. All stakeholders need to participate in workshops, site visits and other learning opportunities that will enhance their knowledge of school improvement strategies.
 - To help achieve the significant improvements in student performance that are now possible, Chicago children need the same funding as suburban children, not the 40 percent of suburban levels that they now receive. Given the resource gap, is it fair to compare Chicago children with suburban children on the same state and national tests?
 - Since school reform is difficult, and takes years to accomplish, leaders need to set appropriate expectations for realistic progress so that people do not get discouraged.

A strategic planning process that includes all stakeholders could help shape and implement CPS priorities, especially if it could reach out to and motivate people across the system. If well designed, the process could make a difference in accelerating the rate of change in Chicago classrooms and the Central Office. It could encourage greater collaboration among foundations, and more effective sharing of lessons learned among external partners, thus leveraging the impact of all funding. Such a planning process could help achieve Mayor Daley's goal of getting people "to think outside the box," and help them "feel a sense of urgency" about school improvement.

We need to remember that “change is disturbing when it is done to us, exhilarating when it is done by us,” as Rosabeth Moss Kantor, professor at the Harvard Business School, has pointed out. Boston and other cities have a team of stakeholders including the superintendent and Central Office staff who meet regularly to identify and solve problems as they implement their strategic plans. Their experience provides insight on how to design and manage an effective collaborative process.

Implications for Grant Making

The grant making program for the Education Initiative of the Chicago Community Trust can build on the lessons and opportunities described in this report. Each of the authors has made important suggestions for the Trust staff to consider.

The information also shapes a common agenda that can strengthen the partnerships that the Trust has with other foundations, school assistance organizations, the university community, the labor organizations, and the administration of the Central Office of the school board.

The research on the Chicago and national experience suggest 10 high-impact strategies for grant making that include:

- Advocating for adequate and equitable financing of public education so that the children attending urban schools have the same access to resources as children in suburban schools.
- Improving the quality of the leadership at every level of the system, from teacher leaders and principals, to members of Local School Councils and the Central Office.
- Reinventing the education policies and management practices of the Central Office that are now barriers to improvement so that it effectively serves the needs of the people closest to the problems: the people in the schools.
- Accelerating the improvement of classroom teaching and the retention of effective teachers.
- Engaging parents more effectively so they can support their children’s education from birth through high school graduation while enhancing their own life skills.
- Improving the readiness of children to learn from birth to age five.
- Focusing additional resources and staff development in proven strategies on early literacy on pre-K to third grade in under performing schools.
- Transforming the typical high school experience for Chicago students to assure them a link to higher education, good careers and effective citizenship.
- Improving accountability systems to be effective for both assessment and learning.
- Enhancing the amount of choice that parents, students, teachers and principals have through expanding small schools and charter schools.

Intensive and high quality work on improving literacy readiness and skills from early childhood to 12th grade is a high priority for most schools. Literacy, with the professional development and parent engagement that a well-designed process would require, could provide a focus that could involve all of the 10 high-impact strategies.

The 10 “high-impact strategies” should not be implemented piecemeal. Getting the best result depends on the synergy that is created when the strategies are implemented at the same time. A well-designed, city-wide literacy effort could help accomplish simultaneous implementation.

While the Trust needs to focus its resources, it should work with others to assure that synergy is achieved through the simultaneous implementation of the 10 high-impact strategies. If the leaders from the city and state, the CPS and •the unions can work together with LSC members, parents, teachers, principals and school assistance organizations, the possibility for dramatic improvement in the performance of the Chicago Public Schools can become reality.

Implementing the lessons from Chicago and other cities could bring the improvements in the Chicago schools that children and their families deserve. It could bring what the teachers, principals, CPS and union leadership, the Mayor and the people of Chicago hope for: excellent schools for all children. It will not be easy, but it can be done.

EXCERPT

“Urban Teaching: Strategies for Quality”

Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford University

Growing evidence indicates that teacher quality is one of the most powerful influences on student achievement—more powerful than almost any other school resource and as influential as student background factors like poverty or family status.

The fact that the least qualified teachers typically end up teaching the least advantaged is particularly problematic. In fact, disparate educational outcomes for poor and minority children are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and quality curriculum, than they are a function of race or class.

In Chicago, the failure to invest in improved teaching was an unrecognized problem in the city’s reform strategy, which tried to rely on highly scripted, centrally developed curriculum and grade retention as its major tools.

Developing a systemic approach to improving the quality of teaching requires setting high standards for teacher preparation, licensing and advanced certification; recruitment incentives that ensure a supply of well-qualified candidates; preparation that ensures knowledge of content, effective teaching strategies, curriculum and assessment; induction that ensures mentoring by expert teachers; professional learning opportunities that are sustained, continuous, curriculum-embedded and linked to problems of practice, and school redesign to construct settings that support student and teacher learning.

EXCERPT

“Chicago Test Score Research Shows That School-Level Initiative Brings the Largest Sustained Reading Gains”

Donald Moore, Designs for Change

Low-achieving Chicago elementary schools that have made large, consistent reading score gains over the last decade carried out a distinctive set of practices that reflect five essential supports for student learning:

- **School leadership.** Substantially up schools had significantly more effective Local School Councils, principals who were instructional leaders and teachers who were more involved in decision making.
- **Family-community partnerships.** Substantially up schools reported significantly more outreach to families.
- **School environment/culture.** Students in substantially up schools reported higher levels of personal safety, and teachers reported a much stronger commitment to their school.
- **Staff development and collaboration.** Teachers in substantially up schools believed that their school encouraged teacher innovation and reported significantly higher levels of teacher collaboration, collective responsibility, shared norms, and trust.
- **Instructional program.** Teachers in substantially up schools reported a significantly higher staff priority on student learning.

••EXCERPT

“Teacher Quality: Findings from Recent Research”

Daniel C. Humphrey & Patrick M. Shields, Stanford Research Institute International

Over the past decade, efforts to improve the nation’s schools have been dominated by standards-based reform. When students don’t meet those standards, teachers are often blamed.

The research points to the importance of a qualified teacher for every student, and standards for adults as well as students. Our research suggests some starting points:

First, a qualified teacher for every student requires understanding how qualified teachers are distributed in the district.

Second, reformers need to identify weaknesses in schools and classrooms.

Third, improved instructional practice requires that school and district leaders gain consensus on what good practice looks like.

Fourth, reformers need to reallocate existing resources to build a coherent system of professional development for teachers.

Finally, reformers need to prioritize the investment of additional resources in the immediate improvement of the instruction of low-performing students.

In an era of accountability and high stakes testing, providing all students with the supports necessary to meet standards is a moral imperative.

EXCERPT

“Improving Student Learning Through Enhanced Teacher Quality”

Charlotte Danielson, Education Testing Service

Very few schools or districts get the most from their systems of teacher evaluation. There are many reasons for this, but the most fundamental is that they tend to lack a clear definition of what is being evaluated.

This has been, remarkably, left to the individual and idiosyncratic discretion of each teacher and administrator. Consequently, administrators, when they evaluate teachers, comment that they “don’t know what they should be looking for,” and the judgments of different administrators can be wildly different from one another. Furthermore, teachers must infer what an administrator values in the classroom. Therefore, a comment such as “I’ll come back when you’re teaching” – overheard from a principal entering a classroom for an observation when the students were engaged in a somewhat messy but productive science lesson – speaks volumes. The teacher’s response, predictably, is to “play it safe,” to conduct the next lesson with the students in their desks, engaged in something quiet (and quite possibly boring.)

The first step in enhancing the quality of teaching is to determine what constitutes quality. And when a school or district (or state) has determined what good teaching is, what are the benefits of such a coherent definition?

EXCERPT

“Large-Scale Improvement in Urban Public School Systems: The Next Generation of Reform”

Richard F. Elmore, Harvard University, Graduate School of Education

As any good artist will tell you, there is a critical moment at which an expressive composition becomes a muddy mess... in the name of creativity. This is the metaphor of American public schooling at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Whatever one might think about the idea of standards- and performance-based accountability for schools, this idea is countercultural. Performance-based accountability systems have a “black box” approach to schools. States set performance targets for students and schools, they administer assessments, they collect and publish data by school, they often administer rewards and sanctions based on school performance, and they sometimes provide assistance to failing schools. The accountability model that pertains to what schools are actually supposed to do to improve their performance is left unspecified in a box labeled “and then a miracle happens.”

[S]chools are unlikely to succeed in meeting external demands for demonstrable student performance unless they have their own accountability system. Internal accountability consists of the clear expectations about what constitutes high-quality instruction and a reasonable system for getting teachers engaged in learning how to meet those expectations, as well as a system for monitoring whether they are meeting expectations.

EXCERPT

“Chicago Education Reform and Illinois School Finance”

Allan Odden, University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Education

[T]he key finance question today is whether each district and each of its schools has an adequate level of resources, and uses those dollars to educate its students to high standards, i.e., to produce a quality school. This is the basis of most new school finance legal cases, and was the basis of the recent Supreme Court decision in New York on the adequacy case brought by New York City.

But any management approach needs to make sure that once the state has allocated adequate revenues for each school, the city and the Chicago school district successfully deliver those revenues. This requires two steps.

First, the city budget process must be structured so that the district receives all the adequate revenues the state intends it to receive.

Second, the district must create a needs-based system of providing adequate resources for each school site. If the state uses some version of the state-of-the-art, the district could simply use the same procedure to pass those resources and revenues to each school site based on the site’s need.

[O]nce adequate funds reach the school, they must be used for the most effective educational strategies. This will require substantial resource reallocation in many schools.

EXCERPT

“Improving Parent Engagement”

Gail Goldberger, Writer

Research shows that when family and community members are directly involved in education, children achieve better grades and higher test scores, have higher reading comprehension, more positive attitudes about school and homework, graduate at higher rates, are more likely to enroll in higher education, and demonstrate fewer behavioral problems.

Successful parent engagement strategies build respectful, collaborative relationships between schools and families—relationships that allow both parents and teachers to exercise judgment, responsibility and control. Successful programs facilitate an ongoing exchange of information between all parties concerned with student success and make room in the school for parents to comfortably gather.

The morale boost that teachers receive from active, supportive parents and community members helps them feel more positive about their jobs and schools. Parents form stronger relationships with each other, their communities, and their children.

Effective collaborations share a core principle that sees parents as key to a successful educational process, and attempts to meet and engage them on their own terms, in ways that make sense to them, and work for them. Another core principle is that the school cannot be passive, but must actively reach out to parents and be welcoming and supportive of their participation.

EXCERPT

“Governing Big City School Systems: A Model for the New Century”

Joseph P. Viteritti, New York University

The model of school governance currently in operation is an artifact of another era that was designed to correct widespread political abuses in the urban setting of the early 20th century, while meeting the needs of a large and growing population of new immigrants. To meet the needs of a new century, schools must undergo fundamental change, including devolving a large portion of managerial autonomy to the schools and outsourcing non-instructional services to private providers.

Parents would have a large variety of educational institutions from which to choose. Schools and students would be held to a high level of accountability. The superintendent would function like an executive with a clear line of responsibility to the mayor.

The role of the urban superintendent would be determined by a new model of governance that shifts power to the schools and allows the chief executive to focus more strategically on the core mission of the system. There is no way to prepare such an individual for that role once they have the job. School districts and mayors must identify the appropriate talent and put it in place.

EXCERPT

“Key Elements of a Successful School-Based Management Strategy”

Priscilla Wohlstetter, University of Southern California, Rossier School of Education

Kerri L. Briggs, University of Texas-Austin, Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts

A key issue for both policymakers and educators... is whether school-based management is an effective strategy for improving schools. Recent research suggests school-based management can improve instructional programs and produce higher levels of student learning.

In successful SBM schools, the development of knowledge and skills is an ongoing process oriented toward building a schoolwide capacity for change, creating a professional learning community and developing a shared knowledge base.

These successful schools selected professional development activities that directly addressed their students' needs and fit in with the school's particular reform agenda.

In contrast, some struggling schools either lacked a plan for professional development or allowed staff to individually select and design their own training.

Successful SBM schools discovered ways of sharing authority that helped schools achieve their goals and that utilized the skills and abilities of many individuals.

[R]esearch suggests that when leadership is shared, the role of principals and other school leaders changes. Researchers concluded that principals were the single most important factor in promoting reform in schools.

EXCERPT

“The Silence of the System, or Why Organizations Can’t Learn”

W. Patrick Dolan, Consultant

In the last ten years of educational reform, one of the most puzzling issues is the inability of the school system to transfer known success to other sites. The inability to transfer learning within a system is not new, and it is not particular to education.

There are powerful forces that prevent the system from learning from its successes.

1. The less the central office knows, the better. The central office does not set off to suppress. But it routinizes and standardizes with a vengeance, all in the name of fairness.
2. The union also has an enormous stake in its own “one size fits all” principle. Any exception is seen as weakening the solidarity of the whole.
3. Parents ironically feed this behavior. When they hear of any practice that works, they naturally demand the same, whether or not it makes sense academically.

Overcoming this culture of distrust requires a district-level team of 20 people: five top management, five members of the teachers’ union executive committee, five principals, and five community leaders. This group’s job is to keep the central office and union in the public eye supporting good practice and moving their systems quickly to support it.

This committee ought to visit schools and ask questions. Where could you use more help? What are you learning? What’s in your way?

EXCERPT

“Urban School Reform and School Finance: Implications for Chicago”

Lawrence O. Picus, University of Southern California

The Chicago Community Trust should use a four-pronged approach to Chicago school reform: 1) Researching better approaches to resource reallocation in schools; 2) Creating incentives for improved school performance; 3) Using available resources as “venture capital” to be invested in programs or activities that will lead to dramatic improvements in student learning; and 4) Where appropriate, relying on market-based alternatives. These approaches represent a fundamental change in the way schools receive and use grants.

Regardless of what impact additional funds might have, it is important that existing resources be used as efficiently as possible.

For example, in a large district with 10 middle schools, each with a budget of \$10 million, the initial start-up costs for restructuring would be \$25 million. However, if the program were started in two schools a year, the annual cost would be \$5 million, and since the money would be for start-up purposes only, once appropriated the first year, the \$5 million could be transferred to two different schools each year until all 10 schools had implemented the program. Then, the district would have \$5 million to put to some other good use.

EXCERPT

“Improving Reading Outcomes: Getting Beyond Third Grade”

Catherine E. Snow, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Addressing the educational needs of children beyond grade three requires that we think about three initiatives: putting what we now know about improving reading comprehension into practice, building the knowledge base for improving reading comprehension, and developing policies to support improvements in practice and in research.

Initiatives to improve practice operate most effectively through teacher education and professional development programs. A number of practices designed to improve comprehension and vocabulary have been demonstrated to be effective in experimental studies. Now we need to . . . get practices like these implemented more widely, and to support teachers who wish to use them.

There are many domains within which more research is needed if we are to make sweeping improvements in practice.

Researchers [also] have identified a number of instructional techniques that improve reading comprehension outcomes. Going to scale with instructional improvement necessitates a systematic research effort . . . to expand the repertoire of instructional practices demonstrated to be effective.

In order for the changes we envision to occur, institutional structures and policies must change. For example, teachers . . . are used to working on their own, often with little help and assistance from their peers. But teamwork [is a] . . . prerequisite to good outcomes.

EXCERPT

“Developing School Leaders: Issues and Ideas in Professional Development”

Kent D. Peterson and Carolyn Kelley, University of Wisconsin

School leaders play a pivotal role in shaping organizational structures, directing and motivating teachers and staff, and creating and nurturing organizational cultures that enable student success. The press for educational accountability adds to the variety of roles principals must play, and the knowledge, skills and competencies they must possess.

In recent years, there have been numerous attempts to delineate the specific knowledge and skills needed for principals to be effective. The importance and difficulty of the principalship have heightened concerns about a potential shortage of qualified applicants.

Professional development programs serve a variety of purposes, including developing the knowledge and skills unique to the organization; keeping up with the rapidly changing knowledge base, and giving principals needed time for reflection. There are many barriers to development of school leaders, including lack of coherence in leadership programs, poorly linked training activities, and training that is neither cumulative nor sequential.

Among the quality programs is Launch and Lift, one of the Chicago Leadership Academies programs. The content of CLASS programs is research-based, aligned to the needs of the Chicago Public Schools and based on a clearly defined set of standards. There is both attention to visionary leadership skills and effectiveness in urban settings.

EXCERPT

“Recruiting and Training Effective School Leaders: What Will It Take?”

Judy Coddling, Vice President, National Center on Education and the Economy

Districts all over the United States report that it is increasingly difficult to recruit school principals with even minimal qualifications to serve in inner-city and rural schools. Even in the wealthy suburbs, applications are way below prior levels and trending down.

The challenge for school leaders is how to produce greatly improved student achievement

What is driving good people away from this job in greater numbers than ever before is the new state accountability systems and their consequences for school principals. The principal is caught in a vise. Produce results—but you cannot select your staff. You cannot fire anyone who is already on your staff. You cannot award or withhold a bonus from anyone. Seniority rights for teachers means that you can lose people you have made an enormous investment in and have them replaced by people who couldn't care less about your agenda. The list of constraints goes on.

Yet, despite all this, if your students do not make progress on the state accountability measures, your school is likely to be put on a public list of low-performing schools. If performance does not improve, your school could be closed, the faculty disbanded, and you fired.

EXCERPT

“High Stakes Testing: Its Impact and Implications for Education Reform”

Matthew R. Hanson, Designs for Change

Chicago school reform is now at an important crossroads. The Chicago School Board's emphasis on the high stakes use of the Iowa tests over the last six years has led to some short-term Iowa test score increases, but has limited schools' and students' potential to sustain multi-year educational improvement.

Evidence shows that both low- and high-achieving students can learn basic skills and higher order skills simultaneously when they are given challenging, authentic intellectual work.

One of the most critical issues the new school system leadership will take up is whether to initiate a new system for assessing student achievement that conforms with professional standards and that will support quality instruction and enhance student learning. The approach to student assessment that will be most helpful in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Chicago should entail:

- Halting the use of the Iowa test.
- Using multiple measures to assess school and student progress (such as analysis of student work).
- Using the ISAT as an important part of a multi-method assessment system, while taking steps to ensure that the ISAT tests are not used as the predominant criteria for high stakes decisions about students and schools.

EXCERPT

“The Charter School Movement: What’s Been Learned, What Needs Doing”

Joe Nathan, University of Minnesota

It started with a napkin and a vision...and [since then] the charter school movement has spread farther and faster than most advocates ever imagined.

[Charter schools operate under] a contract, or charter between the school and the group authorizing the school. The contract describes the expected performance goals for the school’s students, and other key elements of a performance-based contract. Failure to reach goals...would lead...to the school’s contract being terminated.

[E]ducators describe three major reasons for starting charters: realize an alternative vision, serve a special population, and gain autonomy and flexibility.

The charter movement has helped spur broader public school improvements. When [an Arizona] charter started requiring all students to make public presentations before graduating...Within a year, the district had adopted the public presentations requirement.

University of California researcher Eric Rofes found that strong charter laws tend to stimulate system improvement, but weak laws do not. Illinois has what charter advocates view as a weak law. Relatively few charters are permitted (only fifteen in Chicago) and only local school boards can authorize them. This, predictably, has severely limited both the number of charters that can operate in Chicago, and the influence charters can have on the broader education system.

EXCERPT

“Developing a Mathematically Proficient American Public”

Deborah Loewenberg Ball, PhD, University of Michigan

This is an important moment for mathematics education in the United States. For the first time, widespread agreement exists that mathematical proficiency matters on a wide scale.

Most well educated adults cannot...make judgments about orders of magnitude, estimate the likelihood of particular events, or reason effectively about quantitative relationships.

That is not the worst of it. Mathematical failure is disproportionately associated with race, poverty, and gender

Our problems lie with teaching and learning, not with teachers. Replacing the teachers and learners in our schools would leave those new people with the same problems.

[T]eachers need a kind of flexible knowledge of mathematics that permits them to “unpack” ideas and procedures to make their reasons available to students.

They need to be able to modify a problem to make it easier or more difficult. They need to ask the right mathematical question at precisely the crucial moment. And they need to be able to develop and deliver explanations that are comprehensible to learners.

It is time to take the investments and learning of the past century to make this the century when mathematical proficiency in the United States is as common as competent reading and writing.

EXCERPT

“Cultivating Accountability: Creating Conditions for All Students to Achieve High Standards

Kate Jamentz, West Ed

While the American public seems enamored with politicians who promise greater school accountability and build such systems through legislative mandate, they are also deeply suspicious of systems built so far away from home.

While some argue that performance should be marked in relation to an absolute standard, others want normative information that compares performance to other students and schools. While some systems define school quality in terms of raising the average score on state assessments, others demand that improvement be defined in terms of “closing the achievement gap.”

Accountability plans that pretend...to seek clarity on these issues run the risk of alienating the people they are designed to motivate. Accountability systems designed as “system of use” would necessarily require public and professional engagement processes that would involve local actors in defining the indicators of school quality and forging agreements on how progress...would be measured. Local decisionmaking would not supplant a centralized system, ...but would necessarily require a review and understanding of that infrastructure, and then allow for justifiable local variation.

[C]ommon sense suggests that the odds for improving performance... are greatly increased by coordinating the efforts of the school, parents, and social and community services.

EXCERPT

“Successful Superintendents Talk About Urban Reform Including Lessons for Philanthropy”

Alexander Russo, Writer

While professional development has long been the neglected stepchild of urban school reform, [several school superintendents have] dedicated significant time and energy to create high-quality, well-coordinated programs to improve teaching in the classroom.

Based on programs developed by schools chancellor Anthony Alvarado in New York’s District 2, [San Diego Schools Superintendent Alan] Bersin has established a comprehensive professional development program focused on helping teachers teach reading effectively.

To support the whole-school reforms taking place throughout the district, [Memphis Schools Superintendent Gerry] House renovated a shuttered business school and established a state-of-the-art Teaching & Learning Academy dedicated to helping train teachers in the proven models that they were adopting.

The facility has technology labs, and care is taken to assure that professional development is closely aligned with the specific curriculum teachers are using.

Based on a report showing that 75 percent of the [Boston school] district’s professional development resources were not being effectively coordinated with district priorities, [Superintendent Tom] Payzant is now revamping the way it distributes and focuses professional development efforts. The plan shifts \$3 million in administrative funds toward professional development that is closely aligned with reading and math priorities.

EXCERPT

“Looking at the Data: The Results of Research on Chicago School Reform”

John Simmons

More data have been collected on Chicago public schools, than in any other city in America. So what do these numbers show?

1. Given the tools they need, children from low-income families can make significant academic gains.
2. There are five basic reasons why some schools do better: shared leadership; parent engagement; school culture that promotes student learning; an emphasis on building professional capacity, and high-quality instruction.
3. The way teachers teach matters. Teaching methods that emphasize teacher-student interaction, for example, were linked to increased learning and higher standardized test scores.
4. Professional development for teachers has increased, but the quality and availability remains uneven.
5. Classroom work that demands complex thinking about issues important in students’ lives improved student results.
6. The stability of a school’s instructional program plays an important role in school improvement and allows schools to avoid competing improvement efforts.
7. Students who are held back do no better than those who are socially promoted.
8. Most Local School Councils are viable organizations.
9. Dropout rates among high school students remain very high. The end to social promotion means that more students drop out before high school.
10. Elementary teachers see their schools in a positive light while high school teachers are plagued by low morale.

EXCERPT

“Changing the Rules and Roles in Edmonton: A Primer on School-Based Decision Making”

Angus McBeath, school administrator

School-site decision making, by itself, doesn’t improve student achievement; but it allows the school to control enough variables that the principal and staff have a chance to succeed. Under most central office configurations, most principals don’t control staffing, technology, standards, curriculum, textbooks, physical plant or ancillary activities that determine how well schools perform.

Edmonton schools get 92 cents out of every dollar allocated by the district. That changed the whole accountability structure. Our principals know that they have much more control over how well their schools perform and they have an enormous sense of accountability because the buck stops with them.

The change to a site-based system means a new role for central office. In Edmonton, we have two kinds of central office units: "central-central," which gets an allocation from the district budget, and "cost-recovery central," which only makes money if their services are bought by the schools.

When we handed the money to the schools in 1979, the district had to do a better job of defining what authority and responsibilities schools had and what authority and responsibilities central office had. Now we have a sophisticated monitoring system to know what's happening at each school.

EXCERPT

"Strategy and Philanthropy for Big-City Education Reform"

Paul T. Hill, University of Washington

Every big city school reform effort studied by Brookings tries to transform the whole public education system by intervening in part of it. Each has a "zone of wishful thinking," in which its proponents assume but do not provide for complementary changes in individuals and society. Taken together, these proposals might be combined into effective strategies. However, mutual suspicion prevents collaboration on hybrid strategies that could draw from the strengths of different reform proposals.

A promising hybrid strategy would need three elements: (1) incentives for school performance, (2) ways of increasing school capabilities, and (3) opportunities for school staff to change how they serve students.

These three elements must work together. Without incentives, teachers and administrators who are comfortable in their routines see no reason to change. Without increasing school capabilities via new ideas, new methods of instruction, teacher training, and recruitment of new teachers, schools that are poorly organized or weakly staffed cannot improve. Without relief from rules and contractual constraints, schools that see better ways to serve students find that every new idea runs afoul of some regulation.

EXCERPT

"Setting High School Reform in Chicago Within the National Context"

Valerie E. Lee, University of Michigan

There seems to be a strong consensus... that U.S. high schools are in serious trouble. The complaints center around several features common to America's comprehensive high schools: students... feel anonymous; the curriculum is fragmented, stratified, and unresponsive to students; many students are unengaged and uncommitted to school; and... high schools [are] overly bureaucratic. Accompanying this bevy of complaints is a general sense that most high schools are too large.

Over the last few years, calls for reform in high schools have focused on fundamental change. The idea is that big problems call for drastic change. [M]ost often they [reform efforts] are lumped under the heading: restructuring.

Highly restructured schools [are] engaged in several reform practices. Traditionally structured schools also engage in reform practices, but [do not fit parameters established by] the Center on the Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Comparing restructured schools to traditionally structured schools, we found that:

- Students learned more in restructured than traditionally structured high schools.
- Not only was learning higher, it was also more equitably distributed in restructured high schools.
- Learning was greatest in schools that had only a few restructuring practices in place.
- Restructuring effects were sustained over students' four years in high school.

EXCERPT

"The Hard Work of Transforming High Schools"

Leslie Santee Siskin, Harvard University, Graduate School of Education

Researchers have repeatedly pointed to the "resistance" of high schools to reform efforts. In state after state, the conclusions are strikingly similar: high schools are consistently reported to be showing much less (if any) progress toward meeting the new standards; high schools that were the "target" of reform are showing the least progress, and a new accountability market allows higher achieving students and teachers make the rational choice to move to higher ranked schools.

Successful high schools confront the design solutions of the past that create problems in the present. This is an issue of organizational capacity and redesign: high schools today need to change their organizational structures and routines in order to more systematically do what they had not been designed to do in the past: 1) to reach students, providing a sense of scale, purpose, and possibility; 2) to develop capacity to teach those students academic content; 3) to develop leadership as an organizational quality; 4) to define a reasonable leadership role for the principal which includes the micro-political strategies to implement change; and 5) to navigate the larger complexities of district and state resource and accountability systems.

EXCERPT

“Whole School Reform: Problems and Promises”

Michael Fullan, University of Toronto

It is impossible to get large scale, sustainable school reform without a dramatic improvement in the infrastructure—the key elements outside the school, including the community, the school district, and state policies and entities. Currently, not only does the infrastructure not help, it actually produces fragmentation and overload.

The overarching point is that large-scale reform requires an “accountability pillar” and a “capacity-building pillar”. The former refers to standards of performance, transparency of results, monitoring of progress, and consequential action. Capacity-building concerns training, resources (time, expertise and materials) and incentive-based compensation. These pressure and support pillars must act in concert in order to produce large-scale reform.

Districts that organize their efforts around student achievement (e.g. literacy and mathematics), and mobilize all schools towards this show remarkable progress. District 2 in New York City, Memphis and San Diego all show what this process looks like. In these cases, it is the district’s infrastructure that has been realigned and strengthened to propel, support and respond to school development. Thus, large-scale improvement requires new and different two-way relationships between each school and the district, and new relationships across schools as the district develops a new professional learning culture in the entire district. This involves, if you like, reculturing the district.

EXCERPT

“Improving Student Achievement Through Labor-Management Collaboration”

Adam Urbanski, Rochester, N.Y., Teachers Association

Random acts of innovation have limited impact in improving student learning. We already know that it is possible to create an exemplary school or an exemplary program. Our challenge, however, is not to just create more exceptions; it is to make the exceptions into the norm. The key in doing so is to create good systems and good relationships.

It is in the context of a caring community and labor-management collaboration that I offer the following recommendations:

1. Negotiate “Living Contracts” that focus on raising student achievement through on-going negotiations that adopt a problem-solving approach to issues.
2. Focus on improving what matters most – the knowledge and skills of teachers.
3. Create a system of differentiated staffing and differentiated pay for teachers.
4. Develop a system of professional accountability for teachers and administrators.
5. Inject more incentives to do right by students – and a system-wide process for shared accountability.
6. Create learner-centered schools that are more conducive to effective teaching.
7. Make public schools more like private – without privatizing public education.

While any one of the recommendations may be worth considering on its own merits, improvement in student learning can best be achieved if reforms are systemic.

EXCERPT

“Learning from Chicago’s Results: Thirteen Years of Reform”

Cindy Richards, Journalist

When the first school reform bill passed in 1988, it was rare to find a Chicago Public School with more than one quarter of its students reading at national levels. Since reform, the data show consistently that test scores in about one-third of Chicago's elementary schools have improved steadily since 1992.

The CPS of today is a collection of various experiments in urban schooling: charter schools, small schools, schools-within-a-school, military academies, math academies, and magnet schools.

What there is not, so far, is a proven method for taking what works in one school and effectively exporting it to the school down the street.

Researchers have pored over the highest-performing schools trying to understand why reform has succeeded in one school and failed in the next. People are the key.

But people aren't the only piece of the education puzzle. Even the best people will founder without adequate support.

Thirteen years of school reform has shown clearly that schools can be made better by increasing the supply of talented people... and by giving those talented people the best materials to work with.... But no individual school changes will succeed unless they are accompanied by some significant systemic changes.

EXCERPT

“Alternative Teacher Certification: The Case of the Massachusetts Signing Bonus Program”

Susan Moore Johnson, Heather Peske, Edward Liu, Susan M. Kardos, David Kauffman, Sarah Birkeland, Harvard University, Graduate School of Education

Wholesale teacher retirements, high levels of teacher attrition, increased immigration, and changes in class-size policies lead analysts to project a need for 2.2 million new teachers by 2010. The teacher shortage, already acute in high-poverty schools and certain subject areas, is generating intense competition to recruit the best-prepared teachers.

When districts and states face shortages, they often resort to issuing emergency licenses to teachers who lack required credentials. In response, states and districts are creating alternative certification programs designed to attract candidates by allowing them to leapfrog traditional preparation programs and move directly into paid teaching positions after brief pre-service training.

While there is some evidence that alternative certification programs attract an academically strong, diverse pool of candidates, critics fear the programs will compromise the quality of the teaching force.

To prevent that, programs must ensure candidates receive sufficient pre-service training to deal with the initial challenges of teaching. Schools must support them as they learn to teach. The new teachers need easy access to the wisdom of expert teachers and ongoing, meaningful professional development courses. They should be observed regularly and get sustained support in becoming effective in the classroom.

EXCERPT

“The Effort to Redesign Chicago High Schools: Effects on Schools and Achievement”

G. Alfred Hess Jr., & Solomon Cytrynbaum Northwestern University, School of Education & Policy Reform

Shifting the way a city looks at its high schools is a significant accomplishment, with virtually no parallels across the country. Urban high schools have been widely castigated for low student performance and high dropout rates. They have been particularly resistant to efforts to change them.

The long history of low performance by students in urban high schools has led to adult-student “bargains” on what will be taught and what students should be expected to learn, which have significantly lowered expectations for students and schools.

Traditionally, urban teachers... have been known for working independently.

Under the Design for High Schools, and its emphases on providing support for teachers to change their practice and for schools to organize smaller learning communities, teacher interdependence has been fostered.

In fewer sites, the efforts to reorganize schools into smaller learning communities has fostered cross-disciplinary cooperation of teachers and a collegial sense of responsibility for a smaller group of students, with teachers sharing information about individual students across their day and across subjects taken. In small schools, career clusters, and junior academy “pods”... teachers work interdependently, coordinating instructional units across subjects and determining support for individual students.

EXCERPT

“Small Schools: Going to Scale—or Going to Jail?”

Michelle Fine, City University of New York, Graduate Center

The small schools movement is alive and well in pockets throughout urban, suburban, and rural America. For educators and activists concerned with the achievement gap, lack of opportunities for high school dropouts, school-based violence and alienation among youth, small schools have emerged as a compelling answer. Yet we have still failed as a nation to produce a district in which small schools are the norm rather than the exception, and in which small schools enjoy support and development opportunities systemically.

Small schools represent a reform strategy that is easy to imagine going to scale.

Small schools are economically more efficient than large schools; are educationally more productive than large schools; more satisfying to educators; more engaging for parents; and far less likely to breed violent behaviors.

If small is better than big... we also know that small is not enough. In Chicago, those “small schools” housed in and still governed by the larger school ran into many logistical, instructional, and professional problems, never yielding the academic promise of small, independent public schools. Independent small schools are far more successful in achieving strong student outcomes. Autonomy is key, especially when sharing a building.

“Early Education, Care and School Success”

Marge Wallen and Gail Goldberger

Thirty years of research conclusively correlates quality early childhood education with greater success in school and in work.

A Chicago study shows impressive results from Child-Parent Centers’ work with children age three through second grade and their parents. At age five, CPC pupils had a 10-point increase in IQ. At 19, CPC graduates had a 30 percent reduction in special education needs, a 40 percent reduction in grade failure, a 25 percent reduction in high school dropouts and 35 percent fewer arrests. •

Chicago and Illinois have a great opportunity to move the system of early childhood care and education forward. A recent poll of Illinois voters shows strong support for preschool education.

Illinois lacks a coherent system of coordinated early care and education. Different state and federal funding streams, as well as parents and corporations, support current programs, but funding is insufficient to meet the need. Half-day programs which could be linked to provide full-day programs are not funded so that they can be combined in a way that makes sense for children and parents, and provide consistent care. Income eligibility requirements knock many middle class parents out of the care arena altogether. Early care providers are not trained or paid well, are not offered benefits and are not unionized. Their turnover rate is very high, leading to poor quality of care.

EXCERPT

“Catholic Schools and Student Achievement: A Summary of Theory and Research”

Thomas B. Hoffer

Theories about the difference in performance of Catholic schools and public schools are cast in terms of competitive markets, the communities in which the schools are embedded, and the historically-institutionalized purposes of the schools.

The main points from the review of empirical research are: (1) Catholic high schools have positive effects on verbal and mathematics achievement, but no discernable effects on science; (2) Catholic school effects are greater for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially with respect to family structure and functioning; (3) The main “schooling” mechanism accounting for the Catholic school effects is the greater concentration of academic courses taken by Catholic school students.

The theories behind the numbers are: (1) Catholic school performance merely reflects differences in the kinds of individual students attending public and Catholic schools; (2) Catholic school students will learn more if they have higher-achieving peers; (3) Competition forces Catholic schools to be more responsive and accountable; (4) Unlike public schools, Catholic schools historically have expected all students to complete an academic curriculum, and (5) Catholic school advantages accrue in essentially accidental ways from factors such as the greater social capital available to them from their parents’ social networks.

EXCERPT

“School Choice in Chicago: The Possibilities and the Challenges”

Howard Fuller, Marquette University

The school reform debate has been a part of the fabric of American society for more than 150 years. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the debate about school reform included a spirited difference of opinion in various quarters about school choice, or more specifically, vouchers.

The school choice movement today presents great hope and great possibilities for improving education in Chicago. At the same time there are huge barriers to overcome in bringing a viable set of options to the city, including:

- Opposition to options such as vouchers, public/private partnerships, and some form of tax credits can be quite intense. The opposition has a very clear strategy. The opposition is well financed, focused, relentless, and vicious.
- Funding for these programs tends to be inadequate.
- There is a shortage of educators who are not only committed to underserved children and their families, but who also have the capabilities to provide the quality of educational services they need and deserve.

While vouchers are certainly a key option of the school choice movement (and its most controversial), there is much more to school choice than vouchers.

EXCERPT

“The Annenberg Challenge: Results and Lessons”

Ken Rolling, Chicago Annenberg Challenge

The goal of the \$49.2 million Chicago Annenberg Challenge was to improve the ability of Chicago schools to improve themselves by investing in 250 schools working together in 45 networks, and by investing in significant research which would ultimately help all schools.

As a result, the Challenge became the single largest source of professional development support for teachers in Chicago; parental involvement increased; the community of external partners expanded and we made important discoveries about the factors most significant to improving schools.

To build on our work, we recommend CCT invest in professional development for teachers that is sustained, followed-up, and emphasizes classroom teaching techniques; furthering interactive instructional practice at schools, and building relationships with external partners for schools.

The Chicago Challenge was part of a \$500 million national effort. From those 15 cities, we learned several things:

1. Nothing is more important than giving teachers opportunities to enhance their professional skills.
2. Schools cannot succeed without strong support from parents and communities.
3. Smaller is better.
4. If you set high standards, students' work will rise to higher levels.

5. TEACHERS MUST REGULARLY EVALUATE STUDENTS' WORK AND TAILOR INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION TO THE RESULTS.

EXCERPT

“School District Leadership in a Time of Accountability”

Susan Moore Johnson, Harvard University

[E]ffective school district leadership should not be a forced choice between centralized control and decentralized empowerment of schools. School-based reforms, such as those prompted by school reform in Chicago, reveal the potential of some individual sites to succeed at high levels, while instructional reforms . . . demonstrate how a well-organized district effort can build instructional capacity in the schools. [T]he superintendent should have a deep and extensive understanding of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development.

[T]here is much to gain from having a central office dedicated to instructional expertise and assistance. Both schools that are improving on their own and schools that require prodding can benefit from administrators who know about curriculum and instruction.

[T]he central office should be lean, flexible, and organized . . . to send clear messages to the schools and the public about the goals and values of the district.

[W]hile competency-based tests will provide an important measure of progress, district leaders should recognize that effective education is broader than what tests can measure.

[I]n order for schools to learn from the successes and difficulties of others in the district, principals should be organized by teams and share responsibility for each other's schools

EXCERPT

"Full Service Schools: Making a Difference"

John Simmons, Strategic Learning Initiatives

A wide range of school models come under the label "full-service schools" (also known as community schools, extended-service schools or full-service community schools.)

Programming and approaches at these schools can fall on a continuum from recreational and academic enrichment after-school activities to full-blown, one-stop-shop schools that stay open well beyond traditional after-school hours and offer everything from mental health and job training to tutoring and youth development for students, parents and the community at large.

In a community school, youth, families and community residents work as equal partners with schools and other community institutions to develop programs and services in: quality education, family support, family and community engagement, youth development and community development.

Almost by definition, even within a given model, schools look different because they are defined by local context. "These are not cookie cutter schools," says Martin J. Blank, director of the Coalition of Community Schools.

Outcomes are difficult to measure, but Joy Dryfoos, who compiled an overview of recent research for the Coalition, found positive results across many indicators. In 46 of the 49 programs, some positive changes were noted in outcome areas ranging from improved academic achievement to safer streets in the community.

Contributors

Deborah Loewenberg Ball is Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Mathematics Education and Teacher Education at the University of Michigan. Ball's work, which focuses on studies of instruction and teacher learning, draws on her many years of experience as an elementary classroom teacher. She also investigates efforts to improve teaching through policy, reform initiatives, and teacher education. Ball has received the American Educational Research Association's Cattell Early Career Award for Programmatic Research, and the Association of Colleges and Schools of Education in State Universities and Land Grant Colleges and Affiliated Private Universities Award for Outstanding Scholarship on Teacher Education. Ball's publications include articles on teacher learning and teacher education; the role of subject matter knowledge in teaching and learning to teach; core challenges of instruction; and the relations of policy and practice in instructional improvement.

Kerri Briggs, Ph.D., directs the Evaluation Division for the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests are school improvement, particularly as it pertains to reading instruction and students at-risk of failure; the effect of state policy on instruction; and school leadership. Dr. Briggs currently leads an evaluation of the *Student Success Initiative*, a program under the *Texas Reading Initiative*. She has directed and participated in multi-site studies of charter schools, reading instruction, and school-based management. She has published articles about charter schools, school leadership, and school-based management, and is co-editing a book about reading observation studies.

The Chicago Panel on School Policy is non-profit organization advocating for quality education on behalf of Chicago's public school children. Since its founding in 1982, the Panel has steadfastly maintained its outstanding record for affecting public education policy. It plays key roles in Chicago school reform as an advocate, a research provider, and an agent of positive change. The Panel focuses on: evaluation of policies, programs and initiatives; disseminating practical applications of longitudinal research; encouraging parent involvement throughout the school system; and reporting on important educational issues. It has also worked on such important issues as: the drafting of legislation which established local school councils; research on high school drop-out rates; identification and documentation of the effects of mobility from school to school; management of Chicago's school-to-work initiative; progress and struggles of school-based management; and strategies and action plans for improving schools.

The Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, a national network of urban school reform leaders, was organized in 1993 to learn together, to share strategies for successful practice, and to work together across sites. Participating cities to date include : Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Seattle. Our mission is improved quality and equity in urban public schools so that all urban youth are well prepared for post-secondary education, work and citizenship. We produce analytic publications and other tools, convene strategic leaders to work on critical issues, carry out research as a basis for action, conduct leadership development training with parents and community leaders, and support school reform work in each participating city. We currently work in four program areas: teaching and learning; accountability; school-based management and budget; and schools and community.

Judy Coddling is vice president for programs and chief operating officer for the National Center on Education and the Economy . Among the programs for which she is responsible are the America's Choice School Design Network, New Standards, the America's Choice Curriculum, The American Choice Literacy Institute, and the America's Choice Leadership Program, for school principals and district central office staff. Before assuming her present position, Coddling was the award-winning principal of Pasadena High School in Los Angeles. Coddling previously was a teacher and principal of Bronxville High School and Scarsdale High School in New York. Coddling was a charter principal of the coalition of Essential Schools. She was an associate in education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Coddling co-author with Marc Tucker of *Standards for Our Schools: How to Set Them, Measure Them, and Reach Them*. She served as an education consultant to the Ministry of Education in the People's Republic of China and the US Department of Defense schools. She also served as a commissioner on the California Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Standards.

Charlotte Danielson is a development leader at Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey. She has taught at all levels of school from kindergarten through college, has worked as a consultant on curriculum planning, performance assessment, and professional development. At Educational Testing Service, Danielson served on the design team for Praxis III: Classroom Performance Assessments and coordinated the development of the assessor training program. In addition to writing *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, Danielson developed the ASCD Professional Inquiry Kit *Teaching for Understanding* and has written several *Collections of Performance Tasks and Rubrics*, published by Eye on Education. Most recently, she has written (in collaboration with Tom McGreal) *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice*, to be published by ASCD in July 2000.

Designs for Change (DFC) is a 24-year-old educational research and reform organization. The group's basic mission is to serve as a catalyst for major improvements in the public schools serving Chicago and other major cities. DFC carries out high quality applied research and policy analysis that guides our direct involvement in reform. DFC's major reform initiatives in Chicago include long-term assistance to principals, teachers, and Local School Councils to improve educational quality and student achievement at specific Chicago schools, organizing and advocacy for policy reforms that foster school-level improvement, and creating an independent Associate of Arts program to prepared active parent and community leaders to work long-term for educational reform.

W. Patrick Dolan lives in Kansas City where he has built a consulting group over 20 years working on labor management approaches to systemic change. The work has included long relationships with Ford and the UAW, Goodyear and the URW, the Federal Aviation Administration and the NATCA and PASS. In 1989 Patrick began to use that history and experience to approach public education in a systemic fashion. Dolan and Associates is working with over 200 school districts and has state-wide efforts in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Washington and North Carolina. He has taught both high school and college, was a dean at Georgetown University and hold a doctorate in organization behavior from Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

Joanne Duhl senior associate, has spent over twenty years working on education and human services issues. At The Philanthropic Initiative, Duhl has been responsible for the design and implementation of grants programs supporting systemic school improvement. On behalf of clients she has designed request-for-proposals processes for the awarding of public school grants and has administered multiyear grants programs. Duhl also conducts issues research and policy analysis on behalf of a number of corporate and family funders. Specific projects have focused on the needs of children and families in selected communities; arts education for young people; animal-assisted therapy; and community development in low-income communities. Before joining TPI, Duhl was the chief education and human services analyst for the secretary of administration and finance in Massachusetts. Her responsibilities included oversight of state spending on education, public welfare, social services, mental health, and mental retardation. Duhl is a graduate of Clark University, and received her masters in education from Harvard's Graduate School of Education in 1984.

Richard F. Elmore is a professor of education at Harvard University and a senior research fellow with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. He is currently co-director, with Leslie Santee Siskin, of a CPRE research project on school accountability. He is also co-principal investigator of a multiyear study of instructional improvement and professional development in School District 2 in New York City. He has served as co-editor or co-author on several books, including his most recent publications, *When Accountability Knocks, Will Anyone Answer?* and *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Whitman College, a master's degree in political science from the Claremont Graduate School and a doctorate in educational policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Michelle Fine is a professor of social psychology, urban education and women's studies at the Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York. Her research interests revolve broadly around the questions of social injustice: When do you perceive social arrangements as unjust, and when do you blame victims? What are the contexts in which injustice is most pronounced and what are the ideological conditions in which unjust arrangements appear simply fair or deserved? These are the questions she asks in her work with public high schools, prisons, and youth in urban communities. More specifically, she is a social psychologist engaged with qualitative and quantitative methods, studying when injustice is perceived, when it is resisted, and how it is negotiated by those who pay the most serious price for social inequities. Her research is typically participatory, with youth and/or activists, drawing from feminist, and critical race and critical theories. All of her projects are collaboratively conducted with graduate students, and one of her great professional pleasures is helping to nurture the next generation of critical intellectuals.

Michael Fullan is the dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. He has developed a number of partnerships designed to bring about major school improvement and educational reform. He participates as a researcher, consultant, trainer, and policy advisor on a wide range of educational change projects with school systems, teachers' federations, research and development institutes, and government agencies, both in Canada and internationally. His most recent books are *Change Forces: The Sequel*, *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*, the *What's Worth Fighting For* series, and *The New Meaning of Educational Change*.

Howard Fuller is a distinguished professor of education and founder/director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University. He served as the superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools from June 1991 to June 1995, when he became nationally known for his unending support of fundamental educational reform. His prior positions have included dean of general education at Milwaukee Area Technical College, associate director of the Educational Opportunity Program at Marquette University, and a senior fellow with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Fuller received his B.S. degree in sociology from Carroll College, his M.S.A. in social administration from Western Reserve, and his Ph.D. in sociological foundations of education from Marquette University.

Gail Goldberger is a writer and editor specializing in not-for-profit communications and policy and issues journalism. She has published feature articles in publications as diverse as *Travelers' Tales*, *Chicago Wilderness*, *Chicago Arts and Communications*, *JUF News*, and the Chicago Audubon Society's *COMPASS*. She was a fundraising professional for vanguard social and health related programs, and is currently assisting a start-up environmental task force on the Southeast side of Chicago. She was one of the first interns ever hired by The Chicago Community Trust, in the summer of 1974. Ms. Goldberger holds an M.A. from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration and a B.S. from the University of Illinois, magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa.

Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Teaching and Teacher Education at Stanford University. Her research, teaching, and policy work focus on issues of school restructuring, teacher education, and educational equity and her most recent book is *The Right to Learn*. She is also executive director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future whose 1996 report, *What Matters Most*, has been widely acclaimed as a blueprint for guaranteeing access to high-quality teaching for all children. Prior to her appointment at Stanford, Darling-Hammond was co-director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching. Darling-Hammond is past president of the American Educational Research Association, a two-term member of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and a member of the National Academy of Education. She received her B.A. magna cum laude from Yale University in 1973, and her doctorate in urban education, with highest distinction, from Temple University in 1978.

Matthew Hanson received his Ph.D. in Educational Measurement and Program Evaluation at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1999. He has served as an assessment consultant to the New Standards Project, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the Voluntary National Tests in Reading. Dr. Hanson also directed a research project for the Delaware Department of Public Instruction to identify appropriate testing accommodations for students with disabilities, and has served as an evaluator for the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). Currently, Dr. Hanson is the Senior Research Associate at Designs for Change (DFC), a non-profit research and reform organization based in Chicago. DFC conducts applied research, policy analysis, advocacy for educational reform, and direct assistance to schools.

G. Alfred Hess, Jr. is a research professor at the School of Education and Social Policy, the director of the Center for Urban School Policy, and the executive director of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance. His areas of expertise include school policy, urban public education, and school finance. He is currently concluding a three-year evaluation and monitoring of systemwide high school redesign for Chicago Public Schools. In 2000, he conducted a comparative study of elementary schools serving predominantly African-American students in Chicago; between 1996 and 2000 he directed an research project that sought to strengthen the linkages between elementary schools and other organizations in their communities. He sits on the editorial boards of several academic journals and is a senior advisor for the *Brooking Institution Papers on Education Policy*. Hess holds a bachelor of arts degree from the College of Wooster and a bachelor of sacred theology from Boston University and earned a Ph.D. in educational anthropology from Northwestern University.

Paul Hill is research professor in the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs and director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education, which develops, tests, and helps communities adopt alternative governance systems for public K-12 education. Hill's recent work has focused on reform of public elementary and secondary education. He is a co-author of *Reinventing Public Education: How Contracting Can Transform America's Schools*, and is currently leading studies of the education leadership pipeline, charter schools, and school accountability. Before joining the University of Washington faculty, Hill worked for seventeen years as a senior social scientist in RAND's Washington office, where he conducted studies of site based management, governance of decentralized school systems, effective high schools, business-led education reforms, and immigrant education. As a government employee he directed a congressionally mandated assessment of federal aid to elementary and secondary education. Hill holds a BA from Seattle University and a Ph.D. and MA from Ohio State University, all in political science.

Thomas B. Hoffer is a senior research scientist at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. He works primarily on the design, execution, and analysis of large-scale education surveys. He has worked on analyses of national surveys comparing public and Catholic high schools since 1980, and has co-authored two books and written several refereed journal articles and chapters in edited volumes on the subject.

Daniel C. Humphrey is a senior policy analyst in SRI's Center for Education and Human Services. For nearly 30 years, his career has been devoted to educational reform as both practitioner and researcher. Humphrey began his career as an elementary school teacher and then principal. Currently, his research interests include teacher development, education policy, urban education, and education reform. Humphrey has directed major national evaluations, including the current evaluation of Title II of the Higher Education Act: State and Recruitment Grants. Humphrey was also a senior researcher on the recent and influential study of *Teaching and California's Future*. As a senior researcher for the evaluation of the Pew Network for Standards-Based Reform, Humphrey concentrated on urban education reform and teacher development issues in this four-year study. Humphrey holds an Ed.D. in history and education from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Kate Jamentz is director of programs in professional and organizational learning at WestEd (formerly Far West Laboratory). She has been both a teacher and principal at the elementary and middle school level. For the last four years she has headed up a project called the Western Assessment Collaborative. WAC works with districts and schools to better understand what it takes to support them in implementing standards-based practice and in becoming increasingly accountable for improved student performance. She is the author of *Standards: From Document to Dialogue, Charting the Course Toward Instructionally Sound Assessment* and several articles about standards and assessment reform. Before joining WestEd, Jamentz served as director of a statewide project studying the development and use of performance assessments.

Susan Moore Johnson is the Carl H. Phorzheimer Jr. Professor of Education in Learning and Teaching at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. A former high school teacher and administrator, Johnson studies school organization, educational policy, leadership, and change in school systems. Johnson is the author of many published articles and three books: *Teacher Unions in Schools*, *Teachers at Work*, and *Leading to Change: The Challenge of the New Superintendency*. Her recent research on charter schools, appeared in a recent volume of *Teachers_College Record*. She is currently heading up a multi-year research project on the next generation of U.S. public school teachers. She received her A.B. degree in English literature from Mount Holyoke College, her M.A.T. degree in English and her Ed.D degree in administration, planning, and social policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Carolyn Kelley is an associate professor of educational administration at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a senior research associate for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Her expertise is in educational policy, organizational theory, teacher compensation, and the preparation of school leaders. Recent publications include the articles, “Leveraging Human and Fiscal Resources for School Improvement,” “The Kentucky School-Based Performance Award Program: School-level Effects,” and the book *Paying Teachers for What They Know and Do: New and Smarter Compensation Strategies to Improve Schools*. She has conducted extensive research on the effect of teacher compensation in schools. Her current research examines the structure and scope of human resources management, principal preparation and leadership, and the role of the principal in schools. She received her Ph.D. from Stanford University in educational policy, a master’s in public policy from the University of Michigan, and a bachelors in communication (journalism) from the University of Illinois-Urbana.

Leadership for Quality Education is a business-backed non-profit that supports innovation in education, brings business ideas and resources to the table, empowers new leaders to rethink and restart schools, and partners with others to improve opportunities for children to succeed in the Chicago Public Schools. Through its Charter School Resource Center, LQE has brokered the creation of more than a dozen high-quality charter schools in Chicago.

Valerie Lee began her career teaching math and science in a series of private and public schools, both nationally and abroad. Besides her faculty appointment in the School of Education at the University of Michigan, Lee also serves as a faculty associate at the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research. Her primary research interest is educational equity, with emphases on: high school size and its effects on students; minority and disadvantaged students in secondary schools; school-based social capital; tracking and ability grouping; comparisons of public and private schools; comparing students in single-sex and coeducational schools; the effects of school restructuring on student outcomes; and the long-term effects of Head Start. Her work on Catholic schools, which began when she was in graduate school, culminated in a co-authored book with Anthony Bryk *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*. Although the majority of her research has been quantitative, recently she has been engaged in in-depth case studies of high schools. Lee received her doctorate in 1985 in the administration, planning and social policy program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, with a specialization in quantitative research methods.

Angus McBeath has devoted his career to public education in Canada. With strong roots in teaching and subsequent years as a principal, McBeath moved into central administration as director of program development and later, superintendent of continuing education services and department head of School and District Services. Today, he is acting Superintendent in Edmonton, Alberta. The Edmonton public school system has been decentralizing K-12 education for 25 years and is internationally recognized as an innovative leader, allowing individual schools the right to choose alternative programming and instructional styles. Angus McBeath holds two Bachelors degrees in English and Education and a Masters degree in Educational Administration.

Donald R. Moore is the executive director of Designs for Change, a Chicago-based educational research and reform group that he founded in 1977. His major focus has been on identifying and implementing research-based strategies to improve the quality of urban education, especially for low-income children, minority children, and children with disabilities. He has directed five major research studies on such topics as the practices of successful inner-city schools that teach children to read effectively, the effects of student tracking, the practices of groups that provide effective on-site assistance to help educators improve, and the practices of advocacy groups that are effective in changing urban education policy. In 1998, Moore was recognized as the year's outstanding alumnus of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and received the school's Outstanding Contribution to Education Award. He also received a Community Service Fellowship from The Chicago Community Trust. Moore holds a doctorate in human development from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

Joe Nathan directs the Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota. Nathan was born in Chicago, attended and graduated from the public schools in Wichita, Kansas. He earned a B.A. from Carleton College, an M.A. and PhD from the University of Minnesota. During his senior year in college, Nathan was an intern for a Chicago city council member and participated in workshops at Chicago's Industrial Areas Foundation. Nathan has been a public school teacher and administrator in St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, winning awards for his work from student, parent and professional groups. He has also been a local PTA president and a site council member at urban public schools his children attended. Twenty-two state legislatures have invited him to testify about education reform issues. The National Governors' Association asked Nathan to direct a project which produced recommendations about how the nation's state governors can improve education. *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Atlanta Constitution* have asked him to write guest columns. Since 1989, Nathan has written a column on education issues which appears in three of the four largest daily newspapers in Minnesota. Nathan has written four books, two of which were selected by the *American School Board Journal* as "must reading" for local school board members. His latest book (which was recognized by the *American School Board Journal*) is entitled *Charter Schools: Creating Hope and Opportunity in American Education*.

Allan Odden is professor of educational administration at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition, Odden is the co-director of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education; director of the CPRE Education Finance Research Program and principal investigator for the CPRE Teacher Compensation project. Odden was a mathematics teacher and curriculum developer in East Harlem for five years. He was formerly Professor of Education Policy and Administration at the University of Southern California and Director of Policy Analysis for California Education. He served as research director for special state educational finance projects in seven states, and has also worked on teacher compensation changes both at the state and district level. Currently Odden is directing research projects on school finance redesign, resource reallocation in schools, the costs of instructional improvement, and teacher compensation. Odden has written widely, publishing journal articles, book chapters, research reports, books and monographs. He received his Ph.D. and M.A. degrees from Columbia University, a master's of divinity from the Union Theological Seminary and his B.S. from Brown University.

Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) is an organization whose mission is to help parents become more involved in their children's education. PURE offers a wide variety of informational materials and workshops in English and Spanish on topics such as LSC roles, parent involvement, learning standards and student testing. A parent-run group founded in 1987, PURE played a key role in writing the 1989 school reform bill and continues to bring parents' voices into Chicago education policy making.

Kent Peterson is a professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and works with the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center in Region VI. He was the founding director of the Vanderbilt Principals Institute and the Co-director of the Wisconsin LEAD Academy. He was the Director of the National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development and was a researcher for the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. His research focuses on the realities of principals' work, school improvement, school culture building, and effective leadership. He has published articles in several predominant education journals and currently writes a monthly Internet column "Reform Talk" for the Comprehensive Center for Region VI. Peterson has also co-authored three books with Terrence Deal that probe into the complexities and challenges of school leadership, including *The Principal's Role in Shaping School Culture*, *The Leadership Paradox: Balancing Leadership and Artistry in Schools*, and *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*.

Lawrence O. Picus is professor and chair of the department of Administration and Policy in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. He also serves as the director of the Center for Research in Education Finance, a school finance research center housed at the Rossier School of Education. CREF research focuses on issues of school finance and productivity. His current research interests focus on adequacy and equity in school finance as well as efficiency and productivity in the provision of educational programs for K-12 schoolchildren. Picus is past-president of the American Education Finance Association. Prior to coming to USC, Picus spent four years at the RAND Corporation where he earned a Ph.D. in public policy analysis. He holds a Master's Degree in social science from the University of Chicago, and a bachelor's degree in economics from Reed College.

Cindy Richards is a freelance journalist who has been covering Chicago school reform since the mid-1980s, first as a reporter and member of the editorial board of the *Chicago Sun-Times* and later as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Ken Rolling is the Executive Director of Chicago Annenberg Challenge. As Associate Director of the Woods Fund of Chicago, he was responsible for community organizing and school reform programs. Rolling has also served as: the Director of Financial Management and Coordinator for International Issues for Citizen Action; and the Staff Director for Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition and the Administrator and Legislative Coordinator for the Justice and Peace Center. In addition, he was an elected national board member of Common Cause, as well as the National Advisory Committee of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of Needmor Fund. He has a B.A. from St. Joseph College and a Master's in Theology from St. Francis Seminary School of Pastoral Ministry.

Alexander Russo is a freelance education writer and former advisor to the U.S. Senate Education Committee. He has written about for-profit higher education, alternative principal certification, and education technology. He is a contributing editor for *The Title I Report*, a regular contributor to *Catalyst Magazine*, and has written for national publications including *Teacher Magazine*, *National Cross Talk*, and *The School Administrator*. His clients have included the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the National Association of State System Heads, the National Commission on Entrepreneurship, and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, for which he authored a case study on the Chicago Annenberg Challenge as well as a forthcoming follow-up to that report about making philanthropy more effective. Russo served as an education advisor to Sen. Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, a senior member of the Senate Education Committee, and an aide to Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California. He was a high school English teacher. He received a B.A. from Stanford University and an M.A. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Patrick M. Shields is Associate Director of the Center for Education and Human Services at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) International in Menlo Park, California. He co-directs evaluation for the Pew Network for Standards-Based Reform, and is principal investigator of *Evaluation of Title I Accountability: Systems and School Improvement Efforts*, and *The National Science Foundation's Statewide Systemic Initiatives Program*. These projects focus on understanding the role of standards, assessment and accountability in the reform process. Shields is also Senior Methodological Advisor to the Office of the President, University of California and holds a Ph.D. in educational policy from Stanford University.

John Simmons has worked in the field of education for the past 35 years in the United States and abroad. His recent work focuses on improving student performance by bringing together the best strategies and tools from education and corporate experience. Simmons is the president of Strategic Learning Initiatives, a nonprofit organization serving public schools, and Participation Associates, a management consulting firm. As a member of the policy planning department of the World Bank, he helped revise the Bank's investment program in education. Over the past ten years, he has worked with over thirty Chicago public schools and the CEO of the CPS. He helped establish a national research collaborative for Looking at Student Work, and helped design the Chicago Academy School Leadership, established by the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association and the Board of Education. Since leaving the World Bank, Simmons has consulted for more than 300 private firms, public agencies, and unions in the United States and abroad. Clients have included AT&T, Phillips Van Heusen, Cincinnati Bell, Columbia Aluminum, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, and the World Bank. Simmons has worked in Russia to help privatize and restructure firms. His publications include: *Working Together: Employee Participation in Action*, *Better Schools: Lessons from International Reform*, *Transforming Russian Enterprises: From State Control to Employee Ownership*. Simmons is an adjunct professor of management at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University. Previously, he was a faculty member in economics at Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Massachusetts (Amherst). Simmons received a bachelor's degree in history from Harvard University where he graduated magna cum laude and a doctoral degree in economics from Oxford University.

Leslie Santee Siskin, associate professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, conducts work in the sociology of organizations and organizational change. A former teacher, administrator, and school board member, and still a parent, Siskin maintains an active interest in school reform. Her research focuses on the structuring and restructuring of high schools, and the socio-cultural and political contexts of teachers' work. In *Realms of Knowledge*, she explored subject departments as sites where school structure, curriculum subjects, and teachers' lives intersect; in *The Subjects in Question*, she co-edited a volume questioning the possibilities of alternative configurations. Her current research includes two large federally funded projects. The first, on accountability and the High Schools, examines the interactions between external policies and internal practices in different kinds of high schools, and in different subjects. In the second, she is working with CPRE and with NCEE to look at the issues involved in Comprehensive School Reform Design as it takes on the challenge of the comprehensive high school.

Catherine Snow, professor of education at Harvard University, is an expert on language and literacy acquisition and development in children. She focuses on the role of social interaction with adults in facilitating development of children's language and literacy skills. Snow recently chaired a National Academy of Sciences committee that prepared the report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Her current research activities include a longitudinal study of language and literacy skills among low-income children who have been followed for 12 years since age three; an attempt to develop consensus among teacher-educators concerning what pre- and in-service reading teachers need to learn about language; following the language development of young children participating in the Early head Start intervention; and studying the vocabulary development of first- and second-language learners. Snow has also written about bilinguals and its relation to language policy issues like bilingual education in the United States and in developing nations.

Strategic Learning Initiatives is a nonprofit organization whose president, John Simmons, has worked with schools for more than 35 years. The organization was formed to help develop high performance learning organizations through employee participation, continuous improvement of organizational processes, and the introduction of best practices in the organization. Its work is based on state of the art research on high performance organizations, including leadership, quality, teamwork, training, and change, and a belief in developing human potential through organizations.

The University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Education is committed to leadership in advancing education that promotes the well-being of diverse communities in local and global urban environments. The College's 60 faculty span the areas of Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Psychology, Policy Studies, and Special Education. Through traditional and non-traditional routes, the College contributes to the full spectrum of teacher and school leader development, from recruitment to preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development. In addition, UIC's College of Education has developed numerous working relationships with schools, community-based organizations, and other formal and informal institutions, all in service of students' learning. Finally, the College's faculty engage in ground-breaking scholarship that integrates disciplinary fields of study with the social, cultural, and political strengths and needs of the urban context. During the academic year 2000-2001, 200 undergraduates and 650 graduate students were enrolled in the College of Education.

Adam Urbanski is the president of Rochester (New York) Teachers Association and a vice president of the American Federation of Teachers. He earned his Ph.D. in American social history from the University of Rochester. Urbanski is the director of the newly established Teacher Union Reform Network aimed at creating a new vision of teachers' unions that supports needed changes in education. He was trustee of the National Center for Education and the Economy and a Senior Associate to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Urbanski has served on the advisory Board of Harvard University's National Center for Education Leadership, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the National Assessment Governing Board.

Joseph P. Viteritti is a Research Professor of Public Policy in the Wagner School of Public Service at New York University, where he is Director of the Program on Education and Civil Society. He has served as a senior advisor to the heads of the New York, Boston and San Francisco public school systems. The author of more than one hundred publications, his books include: "City Schools: Lessons From New York" (ed) (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); "Choosing Equality: School Choice, the Constitution and Civil Society" (Brookings Institution Press, 1999); "New Schools for a New Century: The Redesign of Urban Education" (ed) (Yale University Press, 1997); and "Across the River: Politics and Education in the City" (Holmes & Meier, 1983).

Marge Wallen has staffed Governor George Ryan's Task Force on Universal Access to Preschool since June 2001. She has worked for the past six years on early childhood care and education issues at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, a non-profit public-private partnership that invests in the healthy development of babies, children, adolescents and families. Her work has focused on promoting partnerships between school district PreKindergarten, Head Start, and Child Care programs to improve the early education experiences of young children while meeting the varied needs of their families. She has worked in coalitions, forming strong working relationships with state government officials, members of the Illinois General Assembly, business leaders, and law enforcement personnel. She is a frequent presenter at conferences and has contributed to numerous reports and papers. She has also served as a member of the Illinois Department of Human Services' Child Care Advisory Council and the Illinois State Board of Education's Early Childhood Advisory Council. Prior to her tenure at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, she worked in the Bureau of the Budget and state government human service agencies for 12 years. Margie holds a Master's Degree from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration.

Priscilla Wohlstetter is the Diane and MacDonald Becket Professor in Educational Governance at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education where she also directs the Center on Educational Governance. Her research focuses on improving the productivity of elementary and secondary schools through studies of educational governance and management. Wohlstetter has conducted regional, national, and international studies of school-based management and charter schools. She recently completed a large-scale study of the Annenberg Challenge in Los Angeles that examined the impact of school organization and classroom reform on school performance and student achievement. Wohlstetter is recognized for her work on decentralized management and was named one of the nation's leading experts on school-based management by the U.S. Department of Education. Wohlstetter has co-authored two books on school-based management and has published widely in a variety of journals on the subjects of school-based management, charter schools and school networks.