



Dangerous situations for many special education children... **Children in danger**

By George N. Schmidt

(CHICAGO) On October 31, 2006, Halloween, a little after lunch hour, the teachers, staff, and students at the Blair Early Childhood Center on Chicago's southwest side heard the fire alarm. Within a few minutes, most of the disabled children in the school were out of the building, but several were still being moved. The time had long elapsed when the fire alarm would have indicated a disaster had there been a real fire.



April 26, 2006. Seven weeks before the Chicago Board of Education announced a budget that would cut \$26.5 million from special education funding based on questionable claims of a "deficit" for the 2006-2007 school year, parents of children from the Blair Early Childhood Center brought their children in wheelchairs to the Chicago Board of Education meeting. Wearing buttons that read "No Cuts at Blair," they asked that CEO Arne Duncan end plans to cut services to Blair's children, among the most fragile in the 400,000-student Chicago public schools system. Duncan and his staff repeatedly assured the families of special education children that the cuts would not harm their children, using bureaucratic doubletalk and carefully parsed phrases. Seven months later, by October 2006, the children at Blair were in danger because of the cuts Duncan had proposed in June and the Board had approved at its June 28 meeting. At Blair alone, more than a half dozen staff had been cut, while the school has added more than 30 children. The Blair cuts were part of more than 200 teachers and 700 aides who were cut across Chicago from programs for the city's most needy special ed students. More photos begin on Page Six of this Substance. Photo by George Schmidt.

For six years, ISBE stated the Chicago needed to hire more special ed teachers and aides. In June, CPS cut 200 teachers and 750 aides and said no one suffered!

Despite the fact that Blair serves children with some of the most extreme disabilities known, Halloween was a festive occasion at the school. Every room was decorated, the children were often in costume in their wheelchairs, and the teachers and other staff, all of them fiercely dedicated to serving the special children of Blair, kept the Hal-

loween spirit alive.

On November 1, 2006, another fire alarm was sounded at Blair. This time, a large number of students didn't make it out of the building. Had there been a real fire at Blair, a disaster would have swept quickly through the quiet bungalow-lined streets on the edge of Chicago's south side, remembered forever.

Since the current school year began, Blair has lost six Child Welfare Attendants (called "CWAs" by the school system). The CWAs do the most menial jobs with special education children: changing diapers, placing the children in the wheelchair, feeding. Teachers and Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECAs) are supposed to provide the instruction and instructional support to Blair's children, who range in age from three to seven. But because their disabilities are so severe, the children also need adults who can hold them up to eat, carry them to the toilet, wipe them after they are "toileted" (a verb in this context), and, in case of a fire, make sure that they get out of the building in the less than two minutes fire officials say a school has to be evacuated before disaster becomes tragically real.

Although Blair lost staff this year, it gained children.

And Blair is as good a place as any to see the inhumanity and callous indifference that sets the current Chi-

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CPS Budget claims 'lack credibility'

In December 2006, Chicago Schools Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan is expected to proclaim another massive budget 'deficit' when he delivers his annual "State of the Schools" speech at the Chicago City Club.

Among the many things Duncan will ignore is the fact that the Chicago Board of Education is losing more than \$200 million per year to Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) without objecting to the practice, because it is a major policy of Mayor Richard M. Daley.

Duncan will also ignore many of the realities of school funding in Chicago, especially the fact that the increase in local property taxes has made Chicago one of the most prosperous school districts in Illinois, not one of the poorest (as Chicago traditionally views itself).

On June 30, 2007, all of the contracts with the unions representing the more than 40,000 organized workers in CPS expire. Much of what Arne Duncan says about the budget between now and June will be aimed at negotiations, not at explaining accurately to the public the state of Chicago's schools. Beginning next month, Substance will regularly present a 'BudgetWatch' feature highlighting the serious questions about Duncan's budget credibility. 🍏

Credibility of oversight challenged in court

By George N. Schmidt

At the beginning of November, attorneys for the children plaintiffs in the "Corey H" litigation filed an unprecedented motion before U.S. District Judge Robert Gettleman. In their motion, the attorneys asked that Gettleman remove Chicago Board of Education attorney Kathleen Gibbons from the case because she has illegally acted both as

October 4 hearing was a set up when judge refused to ask for evidence from those in court itself

an advocate for her client and as a witness on behalf of her client.

The motion represents the latest twist in the case, which began in 1992, and which has been under a consent decree since 1998. In essence, the Corey H case enforced the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Chicago by putting both the Chicago Board of Education and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) under a federal monitor because both had failed to



October 25, 2006. Seven weeks after the 2006-2007 school year began, demonstrators from Advanced Youth Leadership Training (AYLP), above, joined with parents, other students, and members of SEIU Local 73 to continue protesting the Chicago Board of Education's cuts in special education services. Above, AYLP demands that CPS stop flushing special education down the toilet on the sidewalk in front of the school board's headquarters at 125 S. Clark St. in Chicago. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

comply with the federal law requiring that disabled children be educated in the least restrictive environment.

For six years, an annual review of Chicago's compliance with the con-

sent decree conducted by the ISBE has found that Chicago failed to comply. The most recent review, provided to

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Editorials

Substance™

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Renee Grant Mitchell



Richard M. Daley



Pedro Martinez



Arne Duncan



Patrick Rocks



'All governments lie...' — but the lies have to be repeated as 'facts' to be dangerous

The respected reporter I.F. Stone (who would rarely have referred to himself as a "journalist") used to say "All governments lie" and show how it was the duty of the press and reporters to point out the lies. Now there is a decent book about Stone, who is one of the role models for this newspaper. The book is entitled "All governments lie."

Stone added, year after year, through his work, that the lies required liars to repeat them. Long before the Bush administration utilized an Internet Age version of the traditional Big Lie to promote the horrible war in Iraq, Stone was holding the liars accountable regularly in his publication, I.F. Stone's Weekly.

How the lies are told and spread is as important as the lies themselves.

In courts of law, and on legal documents, a person states that he or she will "swear or affirm under oath that information is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Outside of the Bush administra-
tion, few public officials directly lie. In-

stead, they manipulate facts, leave out important facts ("the whole truth"), or add information that has nothing to do with the question ("nothing but the truth").

For the past three years, Chi-
cago has listened to Michael Scott, Arne Duncan and other top officials of its public school system lie about their plans for special education (and about many other things in public education, which we'll return to in future issues). Spalding High School sits vacant, three years after it was closed and nearly two years after more than \$2 million had been spent on rehabbing it. The world famous program for children with autism at LeMoyné was likewise closed.

Every parent knows the sim-
plest rules for children. For example: *If you don't want to be called a liar, stop telling lies.*

It's too bad that Rufus Williams and Arne Duncan — along with all of the members of the Chicago Board of Education and their executive staffs — can't go back to kindergarten and first grade until they learn these lessons.

Since June, when the Board of Education passed a budget that hid an increase of more than \$50 million in charter school funding while cutting special education by \$26.5 million, Rufus Williams, Arne Duncan, Renee Grant Mitchell, Kathlenn Gibbons, and dozens of others at CPS have been lying to the public about the cuts in special education. Generally, the lies are couched in evasive or legalistic wordings ("no IEP will be violated...", etc.)

They say the cuts were a bud-
get necessity. But other areas of the bud-
get — charter schools, which are discre-
tionary — were increased by amounts
greater than the "necessary" special
education cuts. So we say the cuts were
a choice, not a necessity. Duncan and
Williams chose to greatly expand
privatization, while choosing to vi-
ciously cut special education. That's not
the same as being broke. That's like go-
ing to the casinos and then telling the
children there's no money for food.

This month, instead of our
usual editorial cartoon, we publish six
photographs of interest. 🍏

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Resistance News

LA teacher fights transfer

By Susan Ohanian

According to the subhead to an LA Times article, "Supporters say the popular union activist at Crenshaw High is being punished by the district for butting heads with the principal." But it's more than that. For starters, Caputo-Pearl is more than a "union activist." Alex Caputo-Pearl is the founder of CEJ, the Coalition for Educational Justice <http://www.cejla.org>, <http://www.cejla.org>, and with this amazing grass roots group has worked to challenge the high stakes tests of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

With less than two weeks before the beginning of the new school year at Crenshaw High School, LAUSD decided to forcibly transfer this elected Chapter Chair and respected teacher away from his chosen school and the school community he has worked in for the past five years.

The Keep Alex Caputo-Pearl at Crenshaw High School website, <http://www.keepalexatcrenshaw.org/civic/index.php> > <http://www.keepalexatcrenshaw.org/civic/index.php>, is dedicated to the struggle to return Alex to Crenshaw and to support the High Needs Schools Campaign.

Visit the Coalition for Educational Justice <<http://www.cejla.org>> website and you will see why the Standardists are running scared. CEJ describes itself as "a multi-racial grassroots organization made up of over 350 active parents, students, and teachers fighting racist and class biased educational policies." The website states that "CEJ has a vision to transform public education and to build an anti-racist social movement, embodied by our 10 Point Program." See the website for a description of the program in English and Spanish.

CEJ says that "as part of its larger vision, CEJ, now beginning its fifth year, has helped to lead a campaign against high-stakes standardized testing including the Stanford 9, the CAT6, and the California High School Exit Exam (aka CAHSEE)".

Here's the LA Times article about the transfer.

Los Angeles Teacher's Transfer Is Protested

Supporters say the popular union activist at Crenshaw High is being punished by the district for butting heads with the principal.

By Mitchell Landsberg
Times Staff Writer

August 25, 2006. A year ago, Crenshaw High School had a new principal and a mandate to dig itself out of a hole so deep it had lost its accreditation.

Principal Charles Didinger, who arrived with a reputation as a problem solver who worked well with teachers, got the school in South Los Angeles back in good

standing within six months, but at a price: Months of wrangling with the teachers union left him frustrated and exhausted and contributed to his decision to take early retirement this summer.

On Thursday, in what some saw as an act of revenge, the Los Angeles Unified School District began proceedings to transfer a teachers union activist at Crenshaw who was among those butting heads with Didinger.

Furious union leaders organized a demonstration outside the hearing and promised to throw the full weight of their organization behind the teacher, Alex Caputo-Pearl, the chapter chairman at Crenshaw for United Teachers Los Angeles.

"The district had better pay attention, because we are not going to let this happen," union President A.J. Duffy said in an interview Wednesday. "We are going to rock the very foundations of this district if that is what is necessary to make it clear that they cannot target our leadership."

Caputo-Pearl, 37, and two UTLA officials spent a bit less than half an hour meeting with district officials at offices across the street from Hamilton High School. They emerged to chants from about 150 parents and teachers, most wearing red union T-shirts: "Hey hey, ho ho, attacks on Alex have got to go!"

"Let's be very clear," UTLA Vice President Linda Guthrie told the demonstrators. "If we, UTLA, allow them to take one of our chapter chairs, they'll take all of our chapter chairs ... So the gauntlet has been thrown down today."

District officials said they couldn't comment on specifics of the case because it involved a personnel matter. But they made clear that they considered Caputo-Pearl to be a disruptive influence at Crenshaw who probably played a role in Didinger's decision to leave.

Supt. Roy Romer said the district needed to ensure that there was "an effective, cohesive unit" at Crenshaw that works. He said the transfer was not "retaliation against any cause or individual."

"Look," he said, "the Crenshaw High School issue is a matter of accreditation."

Although the school's accreditation was restored in February by the Western Assn. of Schools and Colleges, it was only for one year, which district officials say is tantamount to "probationary" status. It will be up for renewal next winter, and district officials hope to win at least a three-year accreditation. Full accreditation is for six years.

Caputo-Pearl and other teachers say the school lost accreditation only because district bureaucrats failed to send in a report on time. Didinger and top district officials countered that it was one of numerous reasons.

More substantively, they said, the school was cited for being insufficiently rigorous academically, having too many students out of class and improperly reporting the campus budget.

The clash at Crenshaw may be about accreditation, as Romer said, but it has many layers and touches some deep nerves in South Los Angeles.

There is the issue of race, which Caputo-Pearl tackled head-on Thursday, calling his transfer from the predominantly African American school "an attack on people of color." Although Caputo-Pearl is white, he was referring to the wider school community that he represents.

There is politics. The transfer comes as UTLA has sided with Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in his campaign to take partial control of the district. In return, the union would be given more of a voice in curriculum. Caputo-Pearl said he believes Romer is lashing out at him as payback before he leaves his job this fall.

"He, in his last couple of months, is trying to do some damage," Caputo-Pearl said in an interview before his hearing. Romer strongly denied that his anger at the union has anything to do with the teacher's case. But it is true that relations between the district and the union are strained.

Then there is this odd fact: Didinger, the outgoing Crenshaw principal, used to be Duffy's boss. Didinger was principal at Palms Middle School until last year; Duffy, now union chief, was a teacher.

"He was highly regarded as a principal who built collaboration," Duffy said. He added, however, that Palms—one of the highest-achieving middle schools in the city—"practically ran itself" and was a much easier place to administer than Crenshaw.

Caputo-Pearl said he "felt like the relationship we had was all right. Was it great? I didn't think it was great ... But I felt like it was respectful." He seemed surprised that Didinger would have seen him as a problem.

Didinger, 61, a lifelong swimmer and surfer, said he decided to retire in large part because he was told he needed surgery on an ear that had been damaged by frequent exposure to water. Still, he didn't deny that his problems with the faculty at Crenshaw played a role

"They did not trust anybody who was an administrator," he said. "You know, 'Give me this in writing,' or 'Give me that in writing.' I'd never dealt with this before. My word was always good enough ... It kind of wore me out."

In the end, the trouble that engulfed Didinger, and now

Caputo-Pearl, may have its roots in misplaced expectations: a failure by each side to understand the history of the other.

Michael Kaplan, the union's chapter chairman at Palms, said of Didinger: "He's the best principal I've ever worked with." Teachers, he said, "just believe in him." But, he added, "At Palms, the administration and the teachers and the parents are all on the same page; we all want the same thing."

It was evident, he said, that at Crenshaw there was a history of mutual mistrust and acrimony.

Eunice Grigsby, a parent who helped start the Crenshaw Cougar Coalition, an organization of parents, teachers and students, said the school "had issues" with previous administrators who made oral promises they didn't keep. As a result, she said, it was natural that the union wanted things in writing.

Several teachers at Crenshaw gave Didinger high marks for improving academics at the school, and some described him as a collaborative principal who sought advice from his faculty.

And they praised Caputo-Pearl as a passionate, dedicated teacher who wanted only the best for his students and colleagues. He was so committed to Crenshaw, several noted, that he recently bought a house a short walk from the school.

"He made learning a fun thing for me," said Eric Redd, a 16-year-old student who spoke at the demonstration. "He's one of those great teachers."

Now, if the district has its way, he will teach at Emerson Middle School. Meanwhile, the new principal at Crenshaw will be Sheilah Sanders, who had been an assistant principal.

Union officials said district officials offered no evidence against Caputo-Pearl at the meeting Thursday but promised to send him a written form containing the reasons for his transfer. The union plans to continue fighting the transfer.

In a speech to supporters, Caputo-Pearl said: "I love Crenshaw. I want to be at Crenshaw. And at this minute, I am not at Crenshaw." 🍏

Regular updates of resistance news.

If you want to learn more about the widespread national resistance to high-stakes testing and inhuman 'education reform' policies, visit Susan on her website:

**WWW.
susanohanian.
org**

Detroit teachers dragged back to work, California pros issue a warning

By Rich Gibson

After a 16 day illegal job action that won picket line solidarity across their ranks and with the community as well, Detroit teachers returned to work in mid-September under a sellout contract, facing all the working conditions they sought to fight including the absence of books, supplies and lower class size. In addition, elementary teachers lost the prep periods that were a legacy of a decades' long fight, about half the bargaining unit lost 10% in health payment costs, and they faced a three year period in which the contract guarantees they will consistently fall behind inflation.

The contract, which the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) leadership deceptively called a "no wage concessions deal" was ratified by a three-to-one margin by teachers exhausted by a long and costly struggle. Days later, Detroit Public Schools (DPS) management announced the loss of a minimum of 15,000 students, or about 8 percent of the district total, and the projected lay-off of 430 educators, targeting counselors in particular. DPS had won provisions in the contract that will make it easier to replace tenure track teachers with substitutes. It is quite likely that the real numbers of students lost from DPS are greater than what was announced—and the announced figures were only made possible by a massive media campaign to lure kids to school on "count day," offering toaster ovens, dinner with rappers, lotto tickets, play stations, and nearly everything but an education in exchange for appearing as a dollar amount.

Rank and file teachers complained that the same conditions prevailed in the schools that they struck against: no books, no toilet paper, no working lavatories, no supplies, bulging classes, and the only consistency from administration — disrespect. One long term secondary teacher said, "I had an eleven year plan for teaching excellence, then retirement. Now I need a three year plan to leave." A senior elementary teacher complained that while she has some books for her third grade students, she does not have books for all, and the books she has are falling apart. Comments from Detroit are notably similar to comments researchers hear in third world nations, centering on hopelessness.

Suburban parents began to complain about the presence of Detroit kids in their classrooms as DPS kids flocked out of the city. Some school systems take the youth selectively, only accepting those with high test scores and no record of behavior problems, while other districts simply take any child with the state's \$7200 attached. Oak Park classrooms bulged and, at Oak

Park High, there just was no place to put the 500 additional Detroit kids who had enrolled, so they watched movies in an auditorium.

Two dissident slates are running against incumbent DFT boss Janna Garrison, chiefly responsible for the concession contract. One slate, led by veteran teacher and DFT member Virginia Cantrell, promises rank and file control of the union, transparency in the union budget (questioning Garrison's salary and the purchase of a \$5 million dollar building in 2006 as the union lost members by the hundreds), open negotiations, and close ties with the community.

Another slate, led by Steve Conn, a key leader in the 1999 Detroit wildcat teacher strike, offered links with the radical By Any Means Necessary organization, calling for a Washington DC demonstration in December.

Rouge Forum (www.rougeforum.org) promised a conference in Detroit, the first weekend in March, that would address the social conditions of schooling and, above all, the question of what to do.

In 1967, following the Detroit Rebellion in which thousands of citizens rose up against racism, joblessness, the police, and an apartheid education system, the Kerner Commission was established and issued a remarkable report, which clearly laid the blame for the uprising on white racism and police oppression.

Following the rebellion, welfare rules softened, thousands of jobs opened up for black youth, and health agencies reintroduced programs which had been abandoned by 1965 (up until about 1956, Detroit offered free health and dental care to all residents who could not afford it, through the Children's Fund of Michigan).

Below are promises that the Kerner Commission made to black Detroiters, every one of them hollow today, 40 years on.

To implement these strategies, the Commission recommends

- * Sharply increased efforts to eliminate de facto segregation in our schools through substantial federal aid to school systems seeking to desegregate either within the system or in cooperation with neighboring school systems.

- * Elimination of racial discrimination in Northern as well as Southern schools by vigorous application of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- * Extension of quality early childhood education to every disadvantaged child in the country.

- * Efforts to improve dramatically schools serving disadvantaged children through substantial federal funding of year-round compensatory

education programs, improved teaching, and expanded experimentation and research.

- * Elimination of illiteracy through greater federal support for adult basic education.

- * Enlarged opportunities for parent and community participation in the public schools.

- * Reoriented vocational education emphasizing work-experience training and the involvement of business and industry.

- * Expanded opportunities for higher education through increased federal assistance to disadvantaged students.

- * Revision of state aid formulas to assure more per student aid to districts having a high proportion of disadvantaged school-age children."

California Education Profs Issue a Warning—Better Late than Never

A decade ago, Substance activists and members of the Rouge Forum warned that the regimentation of the curricula, noosed by high-stakes standardized testing, in the k12 world, would soon find its way to colleges and universities through colleges of education, which are frequently at the end of the pipeline for liberal studies undergraduate programs,

That admonition is true in California now, where college of ed (COE) profs are directed to align their syllabi with the demands of the k12 exams. Notably, the majority of profs are acquiescing, and in the California State University system, many undergraduate departments are calling their COE colleagues, wondering how to align their syllabi as well, in order to get students. It is not unfair to say that ignorance, opportunism, cowardice, and racism, guide much of academic life today. At issue, however, is not so much the description of a frozen reality, but what changes it.

The Teacher Education Caucus of the California Faculty Association passed the motion below in October 2006. While the motion, predictably, follows the NEA path of not criticizing the racist and imperialist motives of those who want to regiment education today, by not merely regulating what youth know, but how they come to know it, and the resolution only calls for funding of the initiative, and not its abolition, it does at least call attention to the "injury to one only precedes an injury to all," nature of Big Testing.

CFA Resolution

As part of a massive movement by the State Commission on Teacher Credentialing to reform credential programs in California (SB2042, 2000), new accountability measures have been

implemented, some without financial funding. As part of these mandates, the State of California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing has mandated that all teacher education programs implement Teacher Performance Assessments for credentialing candidates (TPA) by July, 2008.

The TPA as an assessment tool is based on reductive, corporate-driven teacher performance expectations (TPEs). As an assessment tool, it is even more simplistic and rigid than these expectations, requiring the development of lower-level teaching skills needed to teach the scripted curriculum regulated by the high stakes tests required under No Child Left Behind. It may be inferred from the content of the TPA that programs employing this tool will lose quality in terms of equity and social justice as well as critical thinking, creativity, and the holistic growth of all participants: faculty, student teachers and teachers. These requirements imposed upon teacher education are only the beginning of state and national efforts that are currently referred to as student learning outcomes, assessment and accountability. These efforts are directed towards corporate control and standardization of all disciplines of higher education.

Whereas, the CFA values the development of complex processes of accountability for teaching and learning if these processes are not framed in terms of reductive standards;

Whereas, the current move towards accountability contributes to the standardization of higher education from the 'top down';

Whereas, this standardization has serious implications for the academic freedom of all CSU faculty;

Whereas, the development and implementation of assessment tools are unfunded mandates that have serious workload implications, as well as implications for faculty, students, student teachers and teachers in terms of educational goals, practices and experiences.

Be it resolved, that CFA encourage faculty to become involved in a dialogue with others on campuses to learn more about these unfunded mandates, and

And be it further resolved that the CFA encourage faculty to decline to participate in the development and implementation of unfunded, reductionist assessment tools.

(October 21, 2006. Unanimous support from Teacher Education Caucus. Majority support from the Peace and Justice Caucus)

CTU retirees finally meet

By Lotty Blumenthal

The Chicago Teachers Union leadership finally allowed a retiree meeting to occur on October 18th at 10:30 a.m. With no meeting since the June luncheon and with no meeting for two months before that, one would think that the leadership had time to finally start with enough chairs and tables for those attending. They did not. There was a great deal of talk about how the

present union leadership seems to disrespect retired union members.

The featured speaker, Joan Simpson, a Regional Vice President sent by the VALIC Corp, talked about "Preparing for Your Financial Future" to those who already are retired. Simpson did not know about pay outs for Roth IRA's, and did not know about the latest laws passed about pay outs for those reaching age 70 (There's been a change in the amount that must be taken out at the year after being 70 and 1/2. Because of the change in the life expectancy, only 3.8167 of the account. So interest can still accumulate on the remaining 96.+ %

balance in the IRA or other accounts).

The talk bored most people until Kevin Huber of the pension fund appeared. She did know that there are different rules for pay outs for money put in before 1986 and after.

Huber told us what many considered the terrifying news that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is responsible for making payments instead of the State of Illinois into the pension fund. They tried not to properly fund it last year, he said. They are supposed to fund it at 90 percent, but have been asking a "pension holiday" instead. Currently, and for the first time, the Chicago fund is only

funded it at 79 percent. One of the former Board representatives to the pension board, Rufus Williams, is now Board President. The amount that should be paid by CPS is almost double, so CPS will be trying harder this year not to make payments.

Letters should be written, he said to legislators who also have not increased state moneys since 1987. So far, the CTU has announced no retiree meeting in November, and the December luncheon will be on December 7 at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza. 🍏

Union News

As contract expiration nears, Chicago Teachers Union meetings remain droll

November CTU House of Delegates meeting

By Michael H. Brownstein

I came in just when the union spokesperson was trying to stop someone from talking. Something about Fresh Start Schools. Can't tell you much more because the person was not allowed to ask their question. Can't tell you why they were stopped either.

Other questions were obviously more germane. Can principals change teachers' position numbers when they move a teacher from a primary position to an upper grade position? (Yes.) When you are moved, why do you receive a letter requesting proof of highly qualified status? (It's on the Internet.)

Even though correspondence states all appeals on highly qualified status has to be in by November 1st, an extension has been made. No one knows to what date.) Can teachers be paid all of the hours they work even if the principal gave them a set number of hours? (File a grievance.) We have heard rumors the union is asking for a one year contract? Is this true? (Yes, but...)

The meeting started promptly at 4:30. Marilyn Stewart gave her president's report — a mish mash of a number of items: She passionately commanded us to unite. "It's a unity thing we are engaging in. Principals and the Board are terrorizing new teachers. When they can pick us off one by one, we have lost. But they can't beat us. We have always been strong. Everyone's looking at us."

Community relations: "You cannot separate the student from the teacher. We must educate the community that we are helping the community. We are on their side. Let the parents of your students know what you are purchasing from your own pocket. We buy duplicating paper, we buy ink, we buy clothes for our students. We are starting an ad campaign to encourage parents to come to school. We want to get the public on our side. We're being

painted as a mean— " and she looked around and changed the subject.

The Count Me In Campaign: "We do not have a vested interest in incompetence. We have a vested interest in due process. We have to protect our new members. They are the life of this union in the future. With the Count Me In Campaign, we are starting a force for unity." All of the delegates were given unity stickers to give to their member to wear on Report Card Pick-Up Day. "We have a right to wear these unity stickers just like we have a right to wear pins supporting a cure for breast cancer or crosses for religious reasons."

Lawsuit against the Virtual Charter School: "There were a lot of objections from the Board attorneys, but the judge ruled the lawsuit can be filed. This is a great victory for the Union. Why would the Board give five laptops to a family that home schools their children, but we can't get any laptops for our classrooms?"

The Lead Dinner: "The corned beef was delicious." Then she listed all of the politicians and other celebrities who attended and told us she had a meeting that morning with the governor.

Union's 70 Birthday: "Next year the Union turns 70. We will celebrate for the entire year."

Back to Community Relations: "Every teacher should come to the Bud Billiken Back to School Parade. The teachers are always in the back of the line. We should be the grand marshals. It's a back to school parade. We should be in the front."

Medicare issue: "This is another major snafu the Board has done. This is a major mess up." Then she asked one of the members on the stage to explain the problem further. The spokesperson said: "Our attorneys have looked into the situation and they have found many errors. The Board is taking money from the wrong groups. Even if you did not return your letter, the Board may still be taking a deduction from your check. The Board has now sent out a new letter. Sign it, but add the following: 'Signing this letter does not waive my rights.' Do not check any of the boxes. If you receive a refund, deposit it immediately.

Back to Stewart. "The Board

may be taxing money that has already been taxed. Check out your pay stub carefully."

Quest Center: Stewart gave a three minute advertisement for the Quest Center.

Back to the unity issue: "The contract we now have is brutal. We want to attract the best and the brightest, but when we do, the Board jumps all over them. Residency requirements, meetings, no assistance with their classrooms. We have to protect our new members."

Retirement: There will be two retirement options this year—the Early Retirement Option for teachers with 33.95 years of service and are under the age of 60 and the PEP." (Stewart did not explain the PEP.) "The deadline to apply is March 1st."

Special education: "We have a petition on our website (ctunet.com). Please go there and sign. The Illinois Board is trying to cut more and more special education programs. We need them to stop the cuts."

Elections: "Vote for the Union endorsed candidates."

Grievance department: Stewart gave them a three minute advertisement for good work.

Blue ribbon award: "Jones College Prep won the Blue ribbon Award. The Union and our contract did not prohibit them from succeeding. The majority of our schools are succeeding."

Paraprofessional Recognition day: "We are trying to get the Board to approve a Paraprofessional Appreciation Day. We would like it to be on November 15th."

Fresh Start Schools: Stewart handed this issue over to Mark and Connie.

The Mark and Connie Show:

Mark: "We have restored the rights to all of our staff at the fresh Start Schools. No principal can click off any of them." (My question: If this is a Union initiative, why did this concern come up at all? Fresh Start Schools give a school a new beginning—not a chance for the Board to change all of the rules.)

Connie: "We are the conduit between the schools, the Union and the Board. We go out everyday. We are always out visiting schools and solving

problems."

Stewart: "Thank you."

(My second question: I remember when the Union introduced the mentors for the Fresh Start Schools amidst a lot of applause and candor. Why has the Board been allowed to throw glue into what is a successful program throughout the country? How is it the Union came to the rescue after major damage was done—the lack of protection for the Fresh Start teachers?)

Back to the president's report:

Stewart: "The Board is famous for starting something, wasting lots of money and never finishing anything."

After her report, the delegates were asked to approve two motions. The first, approval of the CTU Unity Days, was approved anonymously. The second, a Member Activist Network, was motioned, debated by one side, a second motion to close debate (this motion was never voted on, but Stewart did allow one other member to speak to the issue), and then a vote on the resolution — not on closing debate — was taken. It passed, but not unanimously.

Raymond Wohl, a delegate from the Irving Park Middle School, was against the resolution. "We need to know the impact of this resolution on the delegates and on the field reps. How much will this project cost the union? We always rush to do things. What is the cost? How will it affect the delegates and field reps? I feel we need another month to consider."

After the vote, we went to the officers' reports. I don't stay for that portion of the meeting because all we do is listen to the chairperson of each committee tell us to go into our packet and pull out the gold colored paper or the red paper or the stapled gray papers or—you get the point—and then they read what is on that paper to us.

I'm a teacher. I already know how to read. So I took my gold paper and red paper and stapled gray papers and all of the other papers in the packet and read them on the subway on my way home.

(Michael H. Brownstein is the author of a classroom blog, A Teacher's Day at <http://ateacherslog.blogspot.com/>, the life of an urban teacher.)

McQuirter

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education process which was precisely what McQuirter and Concerned FTBs had forced Chicago to end.

After Chicago's Concerned FTB strike, which took place one year before the first official strike of the Chicago Teachers Union, the plight of FTBs became central to the agenda of the Chicago Teachers Union. In fact, the union's strongest days, under former President Robert Healey, would not have been possible without a coalition leadership cobbled together by Healey, on the one hand, and the leaders of the union's Black Caucus (especially Hudson Wadlington and Lester Davis, both now deceased) on the other. It was the CTU Black Caucus that provided the base for the union career of Jacqueline Vaughn, who became the first black president of the union in 1984, and who was forced

to lead the strikes of 1984, 1985 and 1987.

"He was a strong black man, a warrior who never wanted to walk away from the battle field until victory had been won," the Rev. Dr. Jon McCoy, of St. Mark, told the mourners on October 7, 2006. McCoy also reminded everyone that McQuirter had throughout his life been active in his church, devoted to his family, and committed to the public schools.

I first met Jim McQuirter when I ran for recording secretary of the Chicago Teachers Union on his ticket in 1980. The last time we saw each other was when he showed up at a meeting of the Chicago Board of Education representing the Park Manor Elementary School Local School Council about a year ago. There was a problem at Park Manor, and McQuirter addressed the Board, asking them to solve it. I doubt anyone on the Board of Education or among the administrators assembled there knew how much James McQuirter

had contributed to the city's public schools as we know them today. Certainly Michael Scott and Rufus Williams haven't read about Jim McQuirter and the union struggles he led in their official versions of CPS history.

After Jim McQuirter spoke to the Board about Park Manor, I went out back and we talked for a few minutes. It had been a quarter century since we had worked together on CTU politics when I ran under his leadership in my first major union campaign. By the time he spoke on behalf of Park Manor, he had been retired from teaching for more than 15 years. But his commitment to the public schools was still there.

One of the things we talked about was how we had to sit down and record these histories before they are "whited out" of the history books. I reminded him that Hudson Wadlington, Jacqueline Vaughn, and Lester Davis had all died before they had a chance to fully record their reflections, and that

how at every Black History Month I continue to be shocked that the city's daily newspapers can white out men like Jim McQuirter, women like Jacqueline Vaughn, and the history of Chicago's civil rights struggles as part of the struggle for better public schools. A city that can include Marva Collins — who attacked public schools and was sponsored to preach for privatization — in its official Black History Month materials is a city that is trying to undermine its historical memory.

And now James Brownie McQuirter has left us, leaving behind part of the memory of what he accomplished back in the years when Martin Luther King lived here — but too little of the important details.

Don't let them 'White Out'

Chicago's History. Send your e-mail Letters to Substance every month at Csubstance@aol.com. If you have historical materials, call our office: 773-725-7502.

'Will fragile children die in a fire before Rufus Williams changes his policy?'

Continued from Page One

Chicago public schools administration apart from its predecessors, even the worst of them. At Blair, all of the children suffer from the most extreme disabilities. All of the adults — including the school's active parents — are among the nation's most knowledgeable and dedicated special education advocates. And they've all been ignored by Chicago's schools CEO Arne Duncan and the wealthy members of the Chicago Board of Education who voted on June 28, 2006, to cut the special education budget to the tune of \$26.5 million (out of a total budget of more than \$5.1 billion) because, Duncan and his staff claimed, there was a "deficit" that had to be closed.

Parents and staff at Blair had warned early last spring that the cuts would undermine Blair's programs and could endanger the fragile children served at Blair.

The warnings, both in writing and at the school board's monthly meetings, have continued regularly since April. Contrary to what lawyers for the Board of Education told a federal judge in October, the Board had been informed, in numerous ways and on more than a dozen different dates, at public meetings and in private communications, of the dramatic impact of the cuts on children with special needs.

In this issue of Substance, we have given a great deal of space to some of the documentation of those warnings. Leading off our back page, in AfterThoughts, we present the full Designs for Change study of the cuts. In a special section "The Blair Letters," we present some of the eloquent letters that were written at the beginning of the school year by Blair teachers, parents, and staff to Board of Education and CEO Arne Duncan about the devastating impact of the cuts. Our regular Letters section also includes letters about the most recent protests against the cuts.

As this issue of Substance goes to press, the school year is entering its second quarter in Chicago. School officials who ordered the cuts on the pretext of a budget "deficit" have now deprived the children who were impacted by the cuts of one-quarter of their schooling this year. And the adults who once served those children have been out of jobs while in courtrooms and board rooms, well-dressed people claim that none of this has happened. 🍏



October 31, 2006. Above: Chicago Fire Department trucks at Blair school on Halloween 2006. Seven months after Arne Duncan and the members of the Chicago Board of Education promised the Blair parents and staff that the cuts would not reduce services to the children, two successive days of fire alarms proved the lie Chicago school officials had been telling all along. On Halloween, it took twice as long as in the past for the school to get its fragile children out of the building. The following day, some of the children couldn't be gotten out at all because of the cuts ordered by the Board on the basis of Duncan's budget claims. As the holiday season began, Blair was facing a large increase in students while trying to cope with an enormous decrease in staff. All Substance photos on this page by George N. Schmidt

Court

Continued from Page One

CPS in May 2006, again found massive non-compliance. Nevertheless, on October 4, Gibbons claimed before Judge Gettleman that no one had brought evidence to CPS of the impact of the additional cuts. Details throughout this Substance, including the photos below, show otherwise. 🍏



first of three annual budget hearings, which was held June 20 at Lincoln Park High School. **Far Above. June 20.** Amber Smock of the Advanced Youth Leadership Pro-

Chicago asked for 'merit pay' money, not special education help, from feds



November 2, 2006. Above: Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley (above, on right side of check) played "Principal for a Day" at the Orr High School "campus" on Chicago's north side. A media event at Orr announced that the U.S. Department of Education was awarding a \$27 million grant to CPS for a controversial merit pay plan for inner city schools. No one at the press conference asked why the Bush administration was giving Chicago \$27 million for a dubious "incentive" program (that was not required under federal law) while Chicago had just cut nearly \$27 million in programs (that are required under federal law, specifically the IDEA — Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Duncan administration officials bragged they put in countless hours developing the proposal for the merit pay plan. They made no request for additional federal funds to cover special education services after Duncan first announced the school system's "deficit" in January 2006.



June 20, 2006. Above: Former Chicago Teachers Union president Deborah Lynch, now a special education teacher at Gage Park High School, testified in opposition to the budget cuts during the



gram testifies at Lincoln Park against the cuts. **Above. June 22.** Tallib-Din Ziyad of SEIU Local 73 testified against the cuts at the budget hearing at Harlan H.S.



Above. June 20. Frank Klein of SEIU Local 73 testifies against the cuts at the Lincoln Park H.S. budget hearing. In June, more than 40 people testified at public meetings against the cuts.

Leader of first Chicago teachers' strike — a major 1968 civil rights event — dies

By George N. Schmidt

There were more than 250 people in St. Mark's United Methodist Church at 85th and St. Lawrence in the heart of Chicago's South Side on Saturday, October 7, 2006. Fewer than a half dozen of those mourners were white. Middle class for the most part, the well-dressed mourners — which included 20 children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of the deceased — were dignified and deeply saddened. And many of them were well aware that in another city at another time, the funeral they were attending should have been as large and celebrity studded as, say, the burial of Rosa Parks just about a year earlier.

But while the death of Rosa Parks in Detroit on October 25, 2005, drew presidents and former presidents to the media event that became the memorial service, the death of Chicago's James B. McQuirter on October 2, 2006, at Chicago's Mercy Hospital didn't even merit a mention in the city's major daily newspapers until the day of his funeral (when the Tribune woke up to part of the life of the man). As a result, Jim McQuirter's memorial service was spared the hoopla that often accompanies media events when public officials and public figures scramble for camera time and the whole thing becomes something that bears little of no relationship to the life of the person being mourned. Additionally, Jim McQuirter's memory was generally spared the hypocrisy that often accompanies the death of someone who has done great things and shown great courage in the face of the status quo, only to be hijacked by a history that wants a story to be told otherwise.

For those who care about public education in Chicago, Jim McQuirter is one of the great leaders in the struggle for desegregation, public schools, and racial justice, and given his contribution, that's probably the reason why his memory has been largely erased from the official versions of history.

If there were a Trivial Pursuit game about Chicago's public schools, a couple of the question would be as follows:

1. How many strikes have Chicago teachers engaged in since 1960?
2. Who led the strike that resulted in Chicago having the largest number of African American teachers and administrators of any school district in the USA?

This is a city whose top TV journalist still thinks that the school lock-out of 1993 was a "strike" (it was actually caused by the refusal of the School Finance Authority under Martin Koldyke to approve a three-year financial plan for CPS). So it's not surprising that most people (including the leaders of the Chicago Teachers Union) might answer "eight." Officially, there were school strikes in 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1980, 1983, 1984, and 1987. (That's right. It's now been 20 years since Chicago had a school strike, despite attempts by some to make it seem like only yesterday that the city was facing regular strikes).

And if anyone tried to answer the second question, they would probably try "Jacqueline Vaughn?" That's because Jacqueline Vaughn was the first African American woman to serve as president of the Chicago Teachers Union (from 1984 until her death in 1994).



But Jacqueline Vaughn was actually the beneficiary of the work of Jim McQuirter and thousands of others who struggled for racial justice in Chicago's public schools during the 1960s, as she herself would have acknowledged had she been blessed with the long life McQuirter had lived. Today, like McQuirter, Vaughn is being erased from much of Chicago's history, even during Black History Month. That's when the Chicago Sun-Times features Marva Collins (who attacked public schools on behalf of corporate school reform and privatization) in its educational materials for little children, and ignores both Vaughn and McQuirter (as well as thousands of others who organized in those early days).

In 1968, Jim McQuirter led the first major strike by Chicago teachers, a strike that totally shut down nearly half of Chicago's (then about 500) public schools and affected all of the others. McQuirter led a strike that was organized by groups of black teachers against the blatantly discriminatory hiring and certification practices of Chicago. Although many white teachers were part of the strike, "Concerned FTBs" (as the group was called) was overwhelmingly black and black led. McQuirter was both the leader of the strike and a teacher at Hess Upper Grade Center (west side) at the time. He went on to teach at Hess, then at Peterson Elementary School (on the far north side) before retiring in 1988.

During the memorial service for Jim McQuirter, the various eulogists asked that people who had been part of his lives stand. The DuSable High School Class of 1945 stood. Supporters of the arts stood. Concerned Methodist Men stood. Unfortunately, no one addressing the group asked that members of Concerned FTBs or the Chicago Teachers Union stand.

The 1968 FTBs strike in Chicago had dramatic results. Prior to 1968, Chicago had already created the largest number of segregated all-black schools in any school system outside the South. Precisely and block-by-block, Chicago's public school leaders and real estate interests resegregated the city's west and south sides as tens of thousands of children arrived with their families in the "Great Migration" from the South that is memorialized in the history books.

At the time, Chicago not only had the most segregated school system in the north for children, but was de-

veloping the most segregated faculties in the north as well. New black college graduates (and young "hippie communists" like myself) would be assigned to teach in the all-black schools. Others (almost never black) would go to the white schools that were retreating in the face of ghetto expansion and the push out of white people. (I've never been able to use the term "white flight" because it doesn't describe what actually happened in those changing neighborhoods).

Those who ran Chicago's public schools into the 1960s (under a number of mayors, culminating in Richard J. Daley) segregated both children and staff. In order to maintain the maximum segregation of children, they overcrowded schools along the borders in the expanding black community, flipping one school after another from white to black, usually in a period of five years or less. (How that was done during the 25 years when resegregation in Chicago was at its worst is another story for another time).

In order to maintain the segregation of staff, the city's leaders created a two-tiered system of full-time teachers. One system was for (mostly) white teachers and one for (mostly, but not all) black teachers. By the mid-1960s, there were black teachers in Chicago who had been teaching full-time in the same (almost always, ghetto) school for ten years or more and who were still officially classified as "substitutes."

How was this done? A system of discriminatory examinations (touted, then as now, as "standards"). Teachers back then had to pass a written examination (depending upon the level and subject, it varied; English teachers had to know different content area information from shop teachers — who didn't have to hold the same certifications if they were trade certified). If they passed the written exam, then they had to pass an oral examination in order to get "fully certified." Teachers who were less than fully certified were eligible to teacher (as "day to day" or "full time basis" substitutes) but were frozen in both pay and benefits (and frozen out of tenure). Year after year, most black teachers (and no one ever knew how many candidates) would either fail the written examination (despite the fact that they were deemed fit to teach in all-black schools) or, if they passed the written examination, "fail" the oral examination.

Concerned FTBs organized around the obvious. If a teacher was qualified to teach, year after year, then that teacher should not be discriminated against via an examination system that was obviously biased against black people. During the years of the most widespread civil rights organizing in Chicago's schools, Concerned FTBs grew alongside the broader movement against racial segregation in the city's public schools. Some of the impetus for the growth of Concerned FTBs came from the massive boycotts of the public schools organized by Al Raby (and others) that fed into the Civil Rights marches commemorated this year (the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s time here in Chicago).

Not all black teachers were flunked regularly on their written or oral examinations, nor were all the members of Concerned FTBs black. But overall, by the time Concerned FTBs called Chicago's first teachers' strike in 1968, the overwhelming majority of those who had been failed on their certification exams were black, and the core of Concerned FTBs (including virtually all of the leadership) was black.

One of the eulogists during the October 7, 2006, service for James Brownie McQuirter noted that the appearance of McQuirter on television during those years was a major event for black Chicago. "It was, as some of you remember, a rare thing to see a black man on TV back then..." he said.

"Jim made history in this city," retired Judge William Cousins, a neighbor and longtime friend of McQuirter, said. Cousins reminded the crowd of mourners not to forget what Jim McQuirter had contributed to Chicago.

Five years after graduating from DuSable High School, Jim McQuirter graduated from Tuskegee Institute, then from law school at South Carolina State University. Unlike his eulogist William Cousins, McQuirter chose a career in teaching, not law. By the time he was organizing Concerned FTBs, he and his wife Lonnie had six children. In their eulogy, the children noted that the house was always well organized, and it was precious time that they got to hear about the world from their father.

The Concerned FTB strike led eventually to the certification of thousands of black teachers in Chicago. Many of them were eventually able to go on to careers in the classroom or in administration. By the time I became very active in local and national union politics in the 1970s, McQuirter's legacy was obvious in Chicago, and even more so in national union politics. The first time I attended a national convention of the American Federation of Teachers, in 1977, I was struck by the fact that few of the delegates from major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Pittsburgh (all of which were leading locals in the AFT in those days) had so few black delegates. In fact, more than half the black delegates to AFT conventions came from Chicago, with most of the others coming from five locals: Detroit, Gary, Newark, and Washington, D.C. The Concerned FTB victory in Chicago had changed Chicago forever, but it hadn't resonated elsewhere. During the 1970s and 1980s, New York's union president, Albert Shanker, joined the city's school board in keeping a certifi-

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Massive special education cuts and privatization became a Daley administration policy by 2003



October 2006. Although the sign still announced that the building is the Jesse Spalding High School, the Chicago Board of Education building located at 1628 W. Washington Blvd., has been vacant for three years. Originally claiming that they were closing the nationally acclaimed program for special education students because the building was going to get major rehabilitation, the Chicago Board of Education spent a few million dollars on the building, then abruptly stopped work.



October 2006. Construction materials are piled behind Spalding, awaiting further work on the building, which needs a great deal of additional work before it can be reopened for students and staff. While teachers, principals, engineers, and other school workers are often disciplined for the slightest infractions, the waste of millions of dollars by the top executives of the Chicago Public Schools is subject to no 'accountability' at all. All Substance photos this page by George N. Schmidt.

By George N. Schmidt

(CHICAGO) When the Chicago Board of Education voted to "temporarily" close the Spalding school, at the corner of Washington and Ashland, three years ago, some skeptics predicted that the closing would be permanent. The school, which was designed and built to educate students with disabilities, was in need of rehabilitation, and

always had in public education in Chicago. Duncan also promised that the students who were transferred from Spalding to other schools would receive the same full services they had received at Spalding. Neither of those promises was kept.

After a flurry of expensive construction activity that put more than \$2 million (by some accounts) in the Spalding rehab during the first year after the closing, Duncan halted all work on the building nearly two years ago. Since then, even construction supplies (see above, right) have been sitting around on the school's grounds, while work has been stopped. Despite a massive capital improvement program taking place this school year and an early November announcement that the Board of Education would be opening many more new schools during the 1007-2008 school year, Duncan has kept the Spalding rehabilitation on hold.

The claim that the children who

were moved from Spalding to other schools would receive the same or better services was also a lie. High school students were sent to Clemente and Julian high schools (among others), where there were no advanced preparations for receiving them and where many of the staff who had worked with them were not provided. As a result, a federal monitor had to chide the Board and some parents withdrew their children from school out of fear for their safety.

The rumor mill, always active in Chicago, has it that the Duncan administration is keeping Spalding out of use as a school because developers want the land for other uses, and it's only a matter of time before the Duncan administration declares Spalding ready for sale. In the past two years, the Board has disrupted the education of special education students because of developer demands. In January 2005, Duncan told parents from the LeMoyné program for

children with autism that their program would not be dismantled. Like the program at Spalding, the LeMoyné program had been hailed nationally.

Within five months after first telling the parents that the LeMoyné program would not be dismantled, Duncan recommended that the Chicago Board of Education place the InterAmerican Magnet School into LeMoyné, allowing the Board to sell the InterAmerican building, less than a mile from LeMoyné, to developers. Although the parents from both LeMoyné and Inter American objected to the consolidation of the two schools, by September 2006, Inter American had been moved (amid great confusion caused by poor central office planning by Duncan), the program for autistic children was being dismantled, and the Chicago Board of Education's subservience to real estate developers had moved to other parts of the city. 🍏

News analysis

at the time CEO Arne Duncan stated that the rehabilitation was so massive that it couldn't be done while the educational program was going on inside the building. He promised the the rehab would be speedy and Spalding would return to the special place it had

Lincoln Park students continue protests

By George N. Schmidt

(CHICAGO) More than a dozen students from Chicago's prestigious Lincoln Park High School took their protests to the October 25, 2006, meeting of the Chicago Board of Education when earlier attempts at the school's Local School Council failed.

The students joined librarian Bernice Eshoo, who had been terminated in September by Lincoln Park principal Bessie Karvelas. Karvelas's action was the subject of protests by more than 200 students, teachers and parents at the October meeting of the Lincoln Park LSC. [See Substance, October 2006, now available on the Substance website at www.substancenews.com].

At the October 25 Board meeting, the students challenged the Board's right to leave the school with only one librarian, when both Board rules and accrediting agency requirements require that a school with more than 2,000 students have at least two librarians. They also noted the irony of the Board's refusal to allow Eshoo to continue working at the school while she serves as a "reserve" teacher at full pay. 🍏



October 25, 2006. Lincoln Park High School librarian Bernice Eshoo, (center, holding papers) told the Chicago Board of Education that she was willing to work at Lincoln Park during the 2006-2007 school year as a "reserve" teacher. Student speakers noted that the school's one remaining librarian has told colleagues that he intends to retire at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. The students gave examples of the problems that have resulted from the reduction in library services at Lincoln Park High School,

which is the only Chicago public school on Newsweek's list of America's "Top 100" high schools. As of Substance press time, the Lincoln Park administration had failed to respond to a Substance request under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for information regarding statements by the school's principal that she was required to cut staff positions and the additional claim that she had to cut the position of Ms. Eshoo, who had served as Lincoln Park librarian and union delegate for 16 years. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

The Blair School Letters

Blair cuts hurt most needy children

September 22, 2006

Dear Mr. Williams:

We are writing this letter to express our profound disappointment and disapproval of the staff cuts at Blair Early Childhood Center. Blair is a self-contained instructional program for children ages three to seven years old with physical and other health impairments. Many of our children have severe and profound physical, cognitive, and health impairments. All of our children require adult assistance to access their educational programs and for health and safety purposes.

The elimination of several child welfare attendants, CWA, positions had had a detrimental effect on our academic program school-wide and poses a real threat to our students' health and safety on a day-to-day basis.

In my classroom, we have one attendant and one school assistant for twelve children. Our children range in functioning from mild cognitive and physical impairments to severe and profound. Many have significant health issues that must be monitored closely — such as seizure disorders, respiratory problems, and/or feeding/swallowing issues. Many are not ambulatory and must be positioned from standers to specialized chairs to wheelchairs. Those children typically require a two-person lift for safety purposes. Some children are in the process of toilet training (two to three times per day), as specified by his/her individualized education plan (IEP), resulting in additional time and assistance needed outside of the classroom. Some of our students have behavioral issues that require close monitoring to prevent harm to themselves or others. All our students require assistance/supervision feeding, toileting (toilet training and diaper changes), and for all other activities of daily living, such as mobility, dressing, and transitioning — to speak nothing of their academic needs.

For instance, our students arrive at school at 7:30 a.m. There are days that we do not finish feeding until 9:00 a.m. because there are only two adults (teachers) in the classroom. Our classroom attendant is not available to assist because she is unloading buses and toileting children. Our classroom school assistant is not available to assist because she monitors the buses for arrival and dismissal, two hours a day. Then she must assist our CWA with toileting the children that require two people. Children who are dependent for feeding must wait and students red already are not engaged in learning because we cannot provide the adult assistance they require to access their educational programs. We have no control over the impact these cuts have had on our academic program because many of our students need an adult to feed them and feeding must not be rushed due to choking/swallowing concerns. Health and safety must come first.

Unfortunately, health and safety are also compromised when there is insufficient adult supervision. Monitoring students for signs of distress is very difficult when fewer adults are in the classroom. Many of our students are non-verbal and cannot express or indicate a need for help. It is very easy to

The true story of the Blair school protests against the cuts



April 26, 2006. Four months after officials of the Chicago Board of Education's Office of Specialized Services informed the staff of the Blair Early Childhood Center that the staff would be cut as for the 2006-2007 school year, one of the most dramatic protests in the history of Chicago's public schools took place at the Board of Education's regular meeting of April 26, 2006. As the name of the first speaker from the Blair school was called for public participation, more than a dozen wheelchairs were wheeled up to the railing in the Board chambers. For the next 15 minutes, parents, some of them in tears, asked the Board not to make cuts in services at Blair, which serves children who have multiple handicaps. Despite the presentations and subsequent appeals, on June 28, 2006, the Chicago Board of Education voted unanimously to approve a budget that increased the funding for charter schools by more than \$50 million but which decreased spending on special education by \$26.5 million. Subsequent appeals both in public and in court failed to stop the cuts, and when school opened in September, Blair's children were facing a crisis that many of them couldn't understand, although their parents and teachers had argued and petitioned for months to avert it. On October 4, 2006, attorneys for the Chicago Board of Education and the Illinois State Board of Education told U.S. District Judge Robert Gettleman that nobody had informed the Board of any problems resulting from the cuts. The letters on this page and on the following pages were sent to Board President Rufus Williams in September 2006 and have been provided to Substance by the advocacy group Designs for Change. Although Williams had not himself visited Blair as of press time for this issue of Substance, his predecessor, Michael Scott (below, presiding over the April 26 Board meeting) visited the school in May and told staff that he was not aware that Chicago provided such services to such severely disabled children. The record of Scott's visit, as President of the Chicago Board of Education, was also known to the CPS administration on October 4, 2006. Substance photos accompanying this series of letters by George N. Schmidt.

miss seizure activity or a need for suctioning when your attention is diverted. Just transporting all twelve students throughout the school building is a threat to safety because we do not have enough hands. Depending on the specialized equipment a student is using we have needed to make two trips or manipulate two wheelchairs to transition from one room to another. Even students that can walk need adults guidance, hand holding, or direct assistance, due to an unsteady gait, lack of safety awareness, or the use of a walker. Charlene Cristler (CWA)
Lucy (School Assistant)
Deanna E. Dalrymple (Classroom teacher)
Therese Schuld (Classroom teacher)

'Most of our students require two adults to lift them...'

September 19, 2006

Dear Mr. Williams:

We want to bring to your attention a violation of students' civil rights and potentially hazardous health/safety situation in our classroom at Blair Early Childhood Center. Due to the lay-off of six Child Welfare Attendants



April 26, 2006. Chicago Board of Education President Michael Scott (above) listens to the appeal of the Blair school contingent on April 26, 2006. Scott later visited the school and remarked on the amazing job the staff was doing. As one of his last official acts, he voted in favor of the budget that cut the school's staff.

(CWAs), our classroom is understaffed to meet the needs of our students, all of whom have severe and profound multiple handicaps.

Our students individual Education Program (IEP) goals at not being consistently addressed due to a shortage of adult support to engage in some portion of the pre-kindergarten curriculum we have designed to meet the specific IEP goals. As you know, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federally based civil rights law that states that children with disabilities are legally entitled to free appropriate public education (FAPA). The FAPE mandated by the IDEA provides for the specific needs of the child through the IEP. An IEP is a "comprehensive statement of the educational needs of a handicapped child and the specially designed instruction and related services to be employed to meet those needs." As professionals, it is distressing to fall short of providing consistent specially designed instruction for each of our students as mandated, despite our best efforts to do so, due to a lack of staff.

For example, as our students' severe and profound handicaps prevent them from being educated in a standard school setting at this time, it is important that they interact with the community and their peers. We have created time in our program to take our children to the school playground and take walks in the neighborhood, where our students can interact with non-disabled children. However, due to lack of staff, we are unable to do this as we do not have enough adults to push wheelchairs and supervise the students adequately. Because our students need assistance with eating, all of the staff in our class are feeding and supervising two or more students at mealtimes (breakfast and lunch). Half of our students need to be spoon-fed and have oral-monitor and/or swallowing difficulties. These children can easily choke on their food if not fed and/or supervised correctly. Several students have IEP goals relating to attainment of self-feeding and or language skills (requesting food items using a picture communication system). It is difficult to teach these students to achieve their goals every day while insuring that their classmates do not choke while feeding. On a daily basis, we have to choose between safely feeding some students and teaching others due to staff shortages. The times we have attempted to do both, mealtimes lasted well over ninety minutes!

As our students have severe and profound physical disabilities, they require adults to lift them from their wheelchairs and place them in their school chair, standers, tumbleform chairs, and on the floor (for floor play) up to nine or ten times a day. The students require these moves and positioning to access the curriculum. The students also must be lifted onto a changing table at least two times a day for diaper changes (all of our students wear diapers). Most of our students require two adults to lift them because of weight and safety issues. Because our students cannot efficiently move themselves, we must do it for them. If the students are not moved, positioned, and have adequate diaper changes, they will develop muscle weakness and contractures as well as wounds from skin breakdown. The cuts in staff have hindered us from adequately performing these basic duties in a timely fashion.

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The Blair School Letters

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ion without interruption to the curriculum.

Finally, last week the school had a fire drill. Our classroom was the last one to evacuate the building, more than three minutes after the drill bell began to ring. At the time, all of our students were out of their wheelchairs, on the floor of the classroom, engaged in floor play. We simply did not have enough hands to pick up all the students, safely strap them into their wheelchairs and evacuate the building in a timely fashion. We are deeply concerned that our ability to safely conduct our students out of the building in an emergency is compromised due to the lack of sufficient staff.

At the beginning of the school year, six CWA positions were cut at Blair Early Childhood Center. We request that these six positions be reinstated as soon as possible. The civil rights, health and safety of our students are compromised due to lack of sufficient adult assistance in our classroom. Restoring these positions will give us the aid we need to provide the mandated educational program our students need and deserve.

Respectfully,
The Staff of Room 111
Blair Early Childhood Center
Frances Bazelle,
Child Welfare Attendant
Pamela Kisala,
Special Education Teacher
Mary Claire Prendergast,
Special Education Teacher
Tahani Wolkiewicz, Teaching Assistant

'We continue to fail fire drills'

September 20, 2006

Dear Mr. Williams:

We are writing this letter to express our dismay and dissatisfaction with the Child Welfare Attendant cuts for the current school year. The CWA cuts have tremendously impacted our program. As you may know, Blair Early Childhood Center is a school for multiply handicapped children ages 3 - 6 years. Our children come to Blair from a geographical area that covers nearly one-third of the city. Most of our children are in wheelchairs and many are "classified" as SPH. This means that even though the children are 3-6 years old, they function cognitively from bright to six months. Many of our children have catastrophic medical needs that must be address so they can access the educational program at Blair. Each student is different and follows a curriculum driven by their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

We teach in a pre-kindergarten classroom. Currently, we have two teachers and have one Child Welfare Attendant assigned to our classroom. At this time, we have 12 students in our classroom as the enrollment continues to increase rapidly. Our CWA is overwhelmed as she has several duties in her job description, let alone the many things she is going above and beyond to do to make our students comfortable in their surroundings.

As the classroom teachers our job includes developing a curriculum that is adapted to meet each child's individual needs. his year, we feel as though we cannot do our jobs to the fullest because a large portion of our day is taken up by assisting our CWA with necessary daily living skills. These things include preparing meals and feeding, positioning, transferring children in and out of



April 26, 2006. Parent from Blair comforting her son during the unprecedented appearance of the Blair children at the Board of Education meeting. Substance photos on this page by George N. Schmidt.

wheelchairs, and adapted equipment, dressing/undressing, and prepping the child for toileting.

Currently, we have a student with severe hydrocephalus. This three-year-old child has a head weighing 27 pounds. He requires two adults to lift him due to his physical disability. He is transferred in and out of his wheelchair two times a day into his adapted chair. He is transferred in and out of this chair at least four times a day. This means there is one adult to eleven students when this takes place.

Two of our students (one with Down's syndrome and the other having Cerebral Palsy) have potty training goals stated in their IEP. As you know, an IEP is a legal document. Being such, it is imperative that these goals are worked toward. As with any "normal" child, potty training is a difficult task. Imagine having to potty train a child who needs to be transferred in and out of his wheelchair and who needs an adult to actually hold him on the toilet. This can take more than ten minutes and up to four times a day. With these two students alone, our CWA needs to spend almost 80 minutes out of the classroom



April 26, 2006. Rufus Williams, who at the time was one of the members of the Chicago Board of Education, listened to the Blair parents (above) and watched the children during the Blair protest. Williams voted in favor of the \$26.5 million special education cut on June 28 and began his term as President of the Board on August 1 after Michael Scott resigned. When his office was contacted by Substance for a response to the letters published here, a spokesman said he had not received them. At the October 25 Board meeting, a Blair parents made certain that the letters had been reproduced and distributed to all Board members.

(being legally binding) to accomplish this goal.

One of our students has Cornelia Lange syndrome and has two webbed fingers on one hand and a thumb and index finger on the other hand. He is visually and hearing impaired. He is non-ambulatory and needs to be pushed in a wheelchair. He, too, requires a two-person lift for all transfers to the prone stander and adapted corner chair. He has feeding goals which require hand-over-hand assistance (being very difficult considering his defects).

All of our students have IEPs stating (Section 11) there are to be paraprofessional support to access the curriculum and assist with personal care needs such as mobility, toileting, and feeding. With the shortage of CWAs we (the teachers) have short-changed our academic program to assist with these duties on a daily basis.

Safety is our biggest concern when considering the physical and cognitive limitations of our students. We continue to fail fire drills. This is a direct result of the CWA cuts as there are a limited number of adults to assist with getting the children out of the building safely. Day-to-day mobility throughout the building has proven to be a safety factor because there simply are not enough hands to supervise these children.

We beg that you consider reinstating our six CWAs. By doing so, you will provide a safe school environment for our students as well as allow the teachers to focus on the individualized education for each child and center on their academic goals and offer a quality education. We invite you to come and see our students. It will be clear to you that the CWA cuts have impacted Blair's program tremendously. Our students need your support.

Sincerely,
The Blair Staff in Room 112/212
Julie Kajawa, Janet Miernicki
Mary Davis

Add your voice to the chorus of truth

Additional letters and information on the problems facing children, teachers, and other staff since the cuts in special education are available at www.substancenews.com and at www.designsforchange.org. If you would like to add your voice, send a letter to Csubstance@aol.com.

From the parent of a child with hydrocephalus

September 22, 2006

Dear Mr. Williams:

I'm writing from a parent's perspective to express my dismay regarding the recent staff cuts at Blair Early Childhood Center. As the parent of a special needs child, I feel his safety is compromised by cutting much needed staff members at Blair. Extra staff is essential at a facility such as Blair for every day activities, such as, transporting the children to gym, art, the bathroom, and throughout the school building. One person cannot transport three wheelchairs, two children requiring walkers and one or two that need hand-held assist or close monitoring. In addition to the concern of not having staff for normal day-to-day activities, my biggest worry is what happens during a fire drill. Although Matthew is ambulatory, the slightest bump can knock him over. Matthew has hydrocephalus and has a shunt in his brain, so for obvious reasons, as a parent, I am concerned about head injuries. Please reconsider these cuts and reinstate these much needed staff members.

Sincerely,
Mary Kay O'Loughlin

'Ours students' safety has been compromised...'

September 21, 2006

Dear Mr. Rufus Williams:

We are writing to you on behalf of our students here at Blair Early Childhood Center. Safety is of utmost importance to administration, staff, and parents, but due to the recent cut of six CWA positions, *our students' safety has been compromised.*

On a daily basis, educational activities are delayed or students must join in late because it is taking additional time for our shortened staff to perform all the IEP-required daily living needs for each child. These tasks depend on the severity of the child's disability but range anywhere from monitoring a child's eating and toileting to total assistance with eating and toileting. Each of these tasks, with minimal to maximum assistance, takes time and we simply do not have enough staff to ensure that all of these daily living needs are safely fulfilled as per their IEP's.

In addition to taking care of needs of the students officially assigned to our classrooms, our CWAs are now being asked to help in other classrooms when needed. Many of our children require a two-person lift to ensure the safety of both the child as well as the adults. Some children also must be carried/transferred by a two-person lift because of the additional medical equipment that they are attached to during the

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The Blair School Letters

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school day. For example, some of our children are fed through a tube inserted directly into their stomach via long tubing that attaches to an IVAC machine. Other children are on oxygen for parts of even the entire school day while others are sometimes even on ventilators. These tubes that carry these vital materials cannot be tangled or detached and the utmost care and deliberation must be exercised while moving these children. Even children who are not attached to medical machines throughout the day need to be positioned into different equipment. Many times it takes two adults just to properly position a child in a piece of therapeutic equipment as well as to ensure a safe transition, proper positioning, and the comfort of the child. When our CWAs leave to assist another room, our children might have a longer wait to get positioned, toileted, etc. This may ultimately delay educational activities and impede safety.

By far the greatest concern for our children's safety is during a fire drill. Sometimes, it is no easy task to get all the students go gym, art or other classrooms which are located inside the building. It is very difficult to get all the children outside the building to our designated spot. Recent fire drill times reflect the significant impact the staff cuts have had on our ability to exit the building. Unfortunately, we fear that the situation may become even worse as the school year progresses, as we are always enrolling new students.

Mr. Williams, in order for our students to learn in a safer environment, our students must have the assistance of additional CWAs. *After all, sir, we would not want for any child to be left behind.*

Mrs. Jacqueline B. Lynch
Mrs. S. Kate Susami

Teacher:

'I now spend much more time during the day assisting with daily living tasks and much less time teaching...'

September 18, 2006

Dear Chicago Board of Education:

I have over 22 years experience teaching Special Education for Chicago Public Schools. For most of these years, I have taught at an exceptional school, Blair Early Childhood Center. I have been at Blair since the first day it opened and have seen it grow into a unique haven for children with special needs. I believe it grew into such a wonderful place for children because of the leadership of Dr. Usher and an ex-



October 25, 2006. Seven months after she and other parents first brought the problem of cutbacks in special education teachers and aides to the attention of the Chicago Board of Education, Danilyn Rutherford, above right, parent of a special education child at Blair Early Childhood Center, returned to speak about the impact of the cuts to the school board. Parents were among those who wrote the letters to Rufus Williams and Arne Duncan regarding the impact of the cuts since the 2006-2007 school year began. As of press time for this Substance, neither Williams nor Duncan had responded to the letters. Substance photos on this page by George N. Schmidt.

tremely dedicated staff.

I am writing to you today because I am extremely concerned about the staff cuts that have been made at our schools. We have lost teaching positions and six child welfare attendants. *The results of these cuts are not only impacting the quality of education at Blair, but also the very safety of our students!*

With larger numbers of students in my class and less support staff, I am unable to give my stu-

dents the same individualized attention and quality care that I have always given them. There are now 14 special needs children aged five and six in our classroom and almost all the children have *multiple disabilities*. One new child in my classroom has brittle bone disease and has already had 40 fractured bones in her six years. How do I give her the quality education she deserves and keep her safe with these large numbers of students in the classroom and less sup-

port staff? As a National Board Certified Teacher, I want to give her the very best education and keep her safe, but the recent cuts have made this task extremely difficult, if not impossible. I now spend much more time during the day assisting with daily living tasks and much less time teaching!

I hope that you will reevaluate the staff cuts at Blair and truly see the unsafe environment that has been created.

Thank you for your consideration,
Theresa M. Karstrand
Kindergarten Teacher



October 25, 2006. Even after being confronted with several examples of how the budget cuts in special education were violating the rights of students with disabilities — and, as one parent pointed out, simple morality — Chicago schools CEO Arne Duncan (above, responding to special education speakers at the October 25 Board of Education meeting) simply continued repeating his talking points to the effect that “no IEP would be violated.” By the end of the second month of school, the students who had faced the cuts had missed two months of their education because of the budget cuts originally proposed by Duncan in January 2006 and approved without debate by the Board in June 2006. IEPs were being violated in unprecedented numbers. Hundreds of special education children across Chicago had lost two months of school, while IEPs were being cynically stalled and manipulated by Duncan's staff. Also in October, Board attorneys appeared in court and maintained that there was no evidence that the cuts had harmed any disabled children. At Substance press time, neither Duncan nor Williams had responded to the letters published here for the first time.

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Boardwatch

September 27 Chicago Board of Education meeting... Special ed cuts, violence, overcrowding

By Lotty Blumenthal

Rufus Williams called the Public Participation Portion of the Board meeting to order at approximately 10:30 a.m. on September 27, 2006. He first welcomed Mayor Daley's appointee, Peggy Davis, to the Board. Formerly Duncan's Chief of Staff, Davis has a law degree from the University of Wisconsin and works as director for diversity at the Exelon Corp.

Next, he welcomed the winners of the Celebrity Sports Challenge. 28 schools responded to challenges from sports entities to improve attendance on the first day of school, thereby winning such prizes tickets to sports events.

He then welcomed members of the Taft H.S. Navy ROTC program. They had won appointments to military academies by having excellent performance. The principal, Art Tavardian was thanked by the instructor for his support.

Barbara Eason Watkins read resolutions for retiring administrators.

Then Williams directed Duncan to read a memorial for former President of the CTU, Thomas Reece. Accepting on behalf of Reece's family was Marilyn Stewart, current CTU President, saying that he will always be remembered as a great negotiator and voice of reason."

Then Williams read a memorial for Clinton Bristow Jr., Board President of the Board of Ed from 1990 to 1992 and member from '92 to '95. His widow, Joyce, a former AIO, accepted the memorial on behalf of the family. Williams then said that the death of a 9-year-old child who was murdered with his mother in a van affected him. He asked all to save the date of Dec. 6 for a program about prevention of such acts. He does not seem to be affected by the victims of the demographics department's "boundary changes." Are they collateral damage?

The public participation began with Bonita Parker representing Jesse Jackson of Operation Push asking all to join them on October 14 for a program about funding for urban and rural schools.

After Parker, Perry Stevens, a security guard at Morrill School, asked CPS to investigate the difference in application of the discipline code to African-American and non-African-American students, the disrespect to their parents and such incidents as passing out 1,200 calendars for Black History Month with monkeys on the cover

Neal Resnikoff of the Save Senn Coalition told the Board about the community meeting (the night before) at which over 90 people attended, including Don Pittman, High Schools Chief of CPS and the two principals of the schools (the Rickover Naval Academy and Senn High School) in the Senn building. Resnikoff asked if the dialogue between the community — which is overwhelmingly against military education in their school — and CPS would result in Rickover ending. Williams talked much over what Resnikoff said and stated he had been told there were ten applicants for each space in the Rickover freshman class. Pittman said there was a full freshman class.

Resnikoff disagreed with the claim, saying that he talked with a parent who called in mid August about transferring into the naval academy and



September 27, 2006. Four months after he had testified at the Board of Education's budget hearings (on June 20 and June 21, at Lincoln Park High School and Finkl Elementary School) and warned that the cuts in special education would deprive the city's most fragile children of legally required special education services, Frank Klein, of Service Employees International Union Local 73 returned to the Board to outline some of the impact of the cuts. When Klein began listing the services that had been taken away — including one instance where a male teacher was being asked to "toilet" a female student — Board President Rufus Williams abruptly cut off the remarks. With Klein is Taalib-Din Ziyad, also of SEIU Local 73. Klein and Ziyad had warned the Board that cutting the special education budget by \$26.5 million would create havoc in the schools, while also noting that the cuts were not necessary from a financial point of view, despite statements from the Board. SEIU Local 73 represents the Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECAs), Child Welfare Attendants (CWAs) and school bus aides who bore the brunt of the cuts of more than 700 special education aides. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

was told there were spaces available — with no waiting list! Williams agreed they should continue to meet about on-going changes.

The Save Senn members have continued to mention the disparity of money spent per child in the two schools. Such unfairness as all science labs used by the military academy for 250 students while 1,400 students learn science from a cart that travels from room to room at the general high school. Save Senn can be reached at Save Senn, P.O. Box 60365, Chi. Il 60626 or at SaveSenn.org.

Janice Freeman, newly elected LSC Chair of Price Elementary, who spoke of horrendous teacher staffing problems of 36 students in a class split with 5th and 6th grades. A central office staffer (Ms Anderson) responded for Williams by trying to blame this condition of the Chicago Teachers Union. The



September 27, 2006. CTU President Marilyn Stewart ignored the massive special education cuts, instead taking the floor in memory of former union president Thomas Reece, who had died earlier in the month. Schmidt photo.

claim that the union contract forces split and overcrowded classes is a lie that was unchallenged during the September school board meeting. Because. The CTU does not sanction classes of 36 or split classrooms. Freeman had asked for a meeting with the AIO or someone to resolve the problem. She said that if it can raise test scores one more year, Price would leave probation status. Anderson said she'd meet outside to explain things to Freeman and would contact the principal.

Lillian Hampton of Herzl on the West Side appeared with a group to talk about the absence of either security or police protection of their school in a high crime area. Hampton provided a brilliant explanation, which included statistics from many sources about the crime in the area and the effect on learning. She noted that police protection was withdrawn without notification. CEO Arne Duncan replied that he'd look into the situation and resolve it within a week.

Darnell Glover, Chairperson of Wadsworth's LSC, gave a packet to the Board members with his concerns and speech. Wadsworth is being squeezed out of its space by a charter school affiliated with the University of Chicago.

Frank Klein, a Service Employees International Union (SEIU) local 73 speaker, appearing with a group. Klein gave a list of specific schools where budget cuts foretold at budget hearings (in June) and at the Board meeting (in August) had developed into a total breakdown in some places for individual students with severe disabilities. For instance: a male employee being the only

one left had to take female teens to the washroom (because of cuts in Child Welfare Attendants); an unsupervised student disrobed and ran naked on a bus because the bus aide had been cut; bus attendants had to change diapers between bus routes as free volunteers and other problems.

After the two-minute warning, Williams cut Klein short — something he never does with those who do not irk him. Klein asked that CPS work with SEIU to investigate each case and the questionable way in which the cuts were made.

Williams said it would, but did not designate anyone to do it.

Kim Armstrong (with Shanetta Underwood, who did not sign up to speak) talked of miseducation of five children. She said her child almost died at birth, and she would not let anyone take her education away which would be jeopardizing her life again.

She said that the parents had gone to each case manager and talked about the lack of meeting the special education needs. She said that they had written confirmation from the Illinois State Board of Ed that the Ariel School was not in compliance with standards of special ed care. She said the principal of Ariel Elementary said she was "the blankety blank principal and could do the blankety blank" as she pleased because she was on the Board of Ariel. She asked Duncan to come in person since he was instrumental in creating the schools.

Barbara Eason Watkins said that Renee Grant Mitchell, whose title is "Chief Specialized Services Officer," would talk to her. Armstrong said she'd already talked to her. She asked if there were some secret arrangement with the principal through Ariel. Duncan said he'd look into it. So did Board member Roxanne Ward, who is secretary of Ariel Capital Management Corporation (where Arne Duncan also worked before going to work for CPS).

Elaine Reeves-Haywood of the Chicago South Side Autistic Group (and Owen elementary school) talked about a special need for health and sex education programs and classes geared to autistic children who have special needs in this area. She had asked that the autistic children be given sex education like all others, but geared to autistic children in May. She was told that she'd be notified.

Even though she asked again during the summer, she received no response to her certified letters except from Renee Grant Mitchell who told her to ask a Jane Ryan who said the committee had not been formed yet. She asked, "How long does it take to form a committee?" Barbara Eason Watkins said they had to concentrate first on the beginning of school. Apparently, CPS can't do two things at the same time. Williams restated the answer and that a committee would be formed in October.

Clarice Hill, Vice Chair of the LSC of Ashe, said she represented the majority of the LSC, the teachers, parents, community and everyone connected with the school in wanting to retain the principal. The previous month some dissident LSC members (who had not attended since spring of 2005) were removed with due process for non-at-

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Boardwatch

dominate monthly agenda

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tendance. Hill said the few dissidents had not told anyone what their issues were. Williams thanked them for coming.

Melvina Davis had a different problem with the administration of the Ariel school. The same principal (she could do whatever she wanted to because she had Ariel clout) harassed her by making her pick up her son from across the street, not allowing her on school grounds, in the building, and charging her son more money than other students for some items. Duncan said he would look into it.

Rodney Estvan of Access Living of Metro Chicago eloquently stated that CPS is spending \$765,000 for a one day program (not even a full day) for the "New Teacher Project" to train 100 principals in the lowest performing schools to "pick teachers that best fit their schools, primarily by resume' reviews and interview processes." (I imagine that they are currently using crystal balls and with the violence rampant in our schools they will be told to look for teachers with a martial arts and self defense class as part of a new teacher's past). That money breaks down to \$7,650 for each principal for one day. But \$26 million was cut from special ed? CPS spends taxpayer money with free abandon. Some think that principals are looking for teachers who will not file police charges anywhere when attacked.

Estvan cited that even with the reduction of 229 special ed teachers there were still about 200 unfilled teaching positions in special ed among the 856 teaching vacancies (filled by uncertified people often day by day?). He also said, "we have the ongoing fiscal crisis of the CPS which has been well publicized." He asked, "If you were a counselor at a college of education would you recommend to young, newly certified special education teachers to take a position with the CPS, when there are...openings in school districts... (with) teacher contracts with 4 percent to 8 percent salary increases per year?"

He said that a letter of September 15, 2006 to President Williams has not yet had a reply. The data that was in the computer system is now missing and has to be requested by Freedom of Information (FOIA) request. When asked where the data was, he was told "I don't know where the data is." He ended by stating that training principals will not solve the problem of retention of teachers. He said that's the responsibility of the Board and CEO. Williams responded that he was not aware of this fact. Estvan said that this day they were approving a \$5 million dollar upgrade of the computer system which is losing the data that is supposed to be included. Williams said "We're trying to do better" but did not say how he and the Board were trying to do better or for whom.

Teacher Connie Holmes spoke about the injustice of her firing from Harper High School for a single incident. Like many other teachers, she became flustered when several large violent students began fighting in front of the door, blocking her from going for help and of course there was no "all call" button functioning. She said she threw a plastic lid from something in her art class against the wall, but it missed and hit one of the combatants. She had



September 27, 2006. Rodney Estvan of Access Living Chicago detailed the contradictions in the Board's budget policies and its contradictory explanations of the special education cuts. Like many of the others who spoke in September, Estvan had testified in June at the CPS budget hearings. At the time, he stated that the cuts were unnecessary from a financial point of view and would have a devastating impact on services to the city's most needy children. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

charges placed against her by the administration and, to her knowledge none of the combatants was punished or admonished. She, of course, was suspended and would be fired. She told how this would change her life which she wanted to dedicate to students. She said teaching art was both her passion and vocation. She provided written testimony from both teachers and parents about the incident and her successes in the classroom. She felt her record was unjustly blemished. DCFS had investigated and found her record unblemished. [The Board did table the motion to fire her at this meeting, but fired her in October.]

The Board has no program as exists in some cities to teach teachers how to react in stressful situations of violence against students or themselves which is only one of the reasons why violence against staff and students is increasing in many of the schools overcrowded by the changes wrought by the demographics dept. The main technique for reducing violence is that old standby — deter staff from filing any charges. Thus, the question exists if staff who are assaulted and battered do not file a charge, did the violence occur? CPS doesn't think so.

Phyllis Jones had returned because the problem of her daughter's program had not been resolved. In May her daughter and eight others passed the entrance test for an LPN program (one Board member asked what that was). Even though the program dovetails with a city college program and graduating students receive both a diploma and college certificate, the counseling staff of Payton College Prep High School lied to the students and parents and said it didn't lead to college, did not tell them about waivers, etc. and said that Payton students don't take these programs. They did not have the programs set up in September and three of the students weren't cowed into giving up.

Damian Zavala translated for Maria Huerta and Esperanza Zavala, who talked of the problems at Peck School. The school was built for 500. They have over 1002. Even though there is controlled enrollment, there are only six classrooms for more than 200 kin-

dergartners, well over the rule of 20 or so students at this level. In addition, the electrical system in the school is inadequate and dangerous (sparks fly), computers can't work at the same time as other items, there's no longer a library — it's now classrooms. The gym and auditorium can't accommodate all children during a one-week schedule. They wondered why they have schools where there's no overcrowding (remember the charter in the midst of ten schools of decreasing enrollment in Pilsen?) and not where there is. Duncan and Williams said they send investigators. Then a staffer said that two new teaching positions for kindergarten were created than day.

Elizabeth Gonzalez on behalf of both Bogan High School and Dawes Elementary School asked for more security positions. She related an incident where some Bogan students were attacked and ran into the dispersing Dawes children, endangering the students. Bogan security did not help since they were involved with another incident on the other side of the school.

The parents of the victims were with Gonzalez who reported two more parents have taken their students out of Bogan. These confrontations have been happening since last Spring. Board Security Chief Andres Durbak was called on by Williams. He said that the expanded security camera system had not been installed because the roof had to be fixed first from the fire, and an additional security person was added last spring when troubles started. He said he'd give Williams a date for the finished camera system. According to news reports, in October there was another large fight among Bogan students.

Wanda Hopkins of PURE said that she had letters from Moses Vines (one of the small schools at Orr High School) asking to have a traditional LSC. The previous members of the Gates sponsored school's "Board" have long gone.

Hopkins added that at the Lewis Elementary School, where she served on the LSC, students are in classes of 40. Although there has been some repairs at Lewis, water is still leaking into the gym, making it unusable at times. Williams said he was aware of Moses Vines (small Orr school) and asked someone to look at the roof. He said nothing about the overcrowding.

Finally, John-Paul Jones of Neighborhood Capital Budget Group (NCBG), appeared with representatives of Harper, Gage Park, and Westinghouse high schools with suggestions on use of TIF and other funds in creating priorities in expenditures. He asked attention to stopping the overcrowding in the high schools be a first priority. He gave the example of the closing of Englewood and Calumet high schools (which are being converted into charter schools) and the demographics department deploying these students to other schools that caused the receiving schools to be overcrowded. The board seems to "forget" to also send additional teachers, books, security, desks, aides, and all items that should go with the students in a timely manner; deplorable conditions result. Jones also asked that as more capital improvements or changes result from the mayor's TIF money that CPS administration find ways to broaden community involvement in the expenditures. They used to

have a community panel that made such recommendations.

Jones asked if some of the others with him could speak since the charter scheduled to be located at Englewood ("Urban Prep," an all-boys' school) was moved to the Lindblom site before even Board approval — and without any community involvement. Williams gave a reply about trying to make all schools better and hitting "bumps" in the process. Duncan went into his stock whine about not getting more money from the State of Illinois for capitol improvements for three years. He hoped Jones and NCBG would help in his lobbying the State for more cash. Jones said yes. The overcrowding has been strange since students at risk in area of attendance have been transferred to schools five- to eight-miles further away from home with no help in transportation, creating absenteeism and violence.

After the public participation ends, the regular meeting of the Board begins.

In the official meeting, the Human Resources gave what Board Member called "a very Comprehensive" report about the fact that at the onset of the school year, CPS had 97 percent certified teachers in the classroom. In addition to the whole process of hiring teachers, they said, when asked, that there were over 2,500 hires during the summer — of which 1,400 were from outside the system. In special education, over 250 new special education teachers were hired. Strangely, this was about the same number let go. Some suggested that many of the new hires receive less pay than those who were let go. In addition, some of these numbers seem in conflict with statistics cited earlier by speaker Estvan.

Renee Grant Mitchell, Chief Specialized Services Officer, gave a brief report of a policy change making CPS in compliance with a new law allowing some children in special circumstances to carry anti-allergy medicine and applicator.

Cynthia Greenleaf talked of the changes to the volunteer policy. New guidelines are to be issued telling that volunteers on any overnight field trip or any ongoing program will have to sign as a regular volunteer and have a background and fingerprint test. Volunteers for a single field trip event or parents simply going to see their child in an away activity as a sport or drama event would not have to.

Upon return from closed session, settlement for lawsuits were approved, including one with the CTU; principal contracts were approved; including the fourth principal in two years for Wells High School. Warning resolutions were given to two teachers, and three tenured teachers were fired. They also fired (dismissed) four teachers who did not yet have four years of service and were not tenured. They also voted to hire a new person in the office of the Secretary of the Board and approved virtually all of the items on the agenda that had been posted prior to the meeting unanimously. 🍎

Are you already a photo journalist?

Every day, incidents in Chicago's schools that should be 'news' are unreported because the daily newspapers are propaganda organs for the 'Daley Miracle' story of CPS. If you have photographs and stories that tell the truth behind the hype, call Substance: 773-725-7502. If you have photographs, you can e-mail them to us at Csubstance@aol.com. If we publish, you get credit.

Letters

Special ed violations widespread

October 24, 2006

Dear Substance:

I was in the audience in Judge Gettleman's courtroom on October 4, 2006 and was very disappointed at all the lies and misrepresentations that took place.

First, although the Corey H. attorneys had put together some fairly good arguments, they failed to back them up with specific cases of students or families that had been directly impacted by the cuts. Even though some people are afraid to go public, there are still many specific examples that are a matter of public record and people that are willing to testify.

Second, Kathleen Gibbons, the Board's attorney, stated that she was unaware of any schools or children that were negatively impacted by the cuts. I have a really time believing that she said this with a straight face when I know for a fact that schools and parents have contacted the Board with the problems that have arisen. I also know of several Due Process cases that are pending because positions have not been filled. I am glad that she said several times that she is committed to making sure that all services written into IEPs are provided and we need to hold her to that promise.

Third, I know when the State [Illinois State Board of Education] came to the school that I taught at last year to do a Corey H. audit, they told me that they were going to cite the Chicago Board of Education for not providing an aide and other support to an EBD student who is a danger to himself and others. That position has not been filed. *An aide who has responsibility to two other students as a one-on-one is expected to support him and another student — who is also supposed to have a one-on-one aide!* An aide cannot be expected to provide support to that many students at once and cannot be in the General Ed setting of all the students to provide support during Inclusion activities.

The State said that they do not have any direct evidence that there will be a negative effect from the cuts. This is impossible to understand when just last year, they said there were too many unfilled positions and that IEPs were being violated. How can fewer staff members meet the needs?!

I hope that more people make sure that the State, Board attorneys, Corey H. attorneys and Judge are aware of the negative impacts of the cuts.

As your readers should know, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is also preparing to modify special education rules. I also hope that people contact their senators and representatives — as well as the governor — to urge them to stop the proposed amendments to the state regulations governing special education. The proposed changes would eliminate class sizes in special education and raise the percentage of special education students in general education classrooms to 40 percent. If this happens, there will be fewer and fewer protections for the neediest group of students.

Margaret Wilson

Retired special education teacher
LSC Parent Representative, Boone Elementary School
Marricat@msn.com

Saddened by Lincoln Park library purge

October 8, 2006

[The following was forwarded to Substance and then approved for publication by the writer, a Lincoln Park alumna.]

Mr. Arne Duncan,

I am writing to express my extreme disappointment with the CPS system, and in particular, with the changes that have been made at Lincoln Park High School as of late.

Since I have graduated and moved on to Duke University, I have become the best spokesperson for LPHS. I extoll the virtues of my public school education to whomever will listen. I tell them of how for the two years prior to my entrance into the IB program at Lincoln Park, I attended one of the most highly funded public schools in the nation, (Nicolet High School) in suburban Wisconsin, most like New Trier in Illinois, and I even attended the CPS pet school Walter Payton for a week. I tell them that although Walter Payton is showered with funds, and given such necessary items as simultaneous internal broadcast TV systems, (highly necessary I can see, seeing as there aren't two sections of the same class at the same time that would benefit from playing the same videos) there was not the same support and welcoming that LP instantly offered, and although the teachers had degrees from fabulous places, my confidence in their curricula and teaching experience was severely shaken as several of them routinely told their classes to aim for 2s or 3s on AP tests, and correspondingly built their class around this lofty goal. This statement is not intended to bash Walter Payton, as I wholeheartedly agree with the goal of an inner city magnet school. I simply mean to say that Lincoln Park High School gave me the best education I have ever experienced, and by letting go of Ms. Eshoo a horrendous mistake has been made.

Please do not disregard this e-mail as ill-formed, ill-advised and ill-directed protest because I speak in superlatives. I have had experience with school systems world wide, I immigrated to the United States from Australia and wherever I moved within the United States I chose the best schools based on the expertise that I acquired from my parents. My father taught teachers how to teach at the number one university in Australia, Melbourne University, for over 10 years, and my mother after being the head of the Australian Psychological Society (and a union representative in her days as a high school teacher, and professor of psychology) has held several key positions in the education system in the US, first as the Dean of Continuing Education at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and currently as the President of Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science, in Los Angeles.

I flatter myself that I know a fair deal about education, dealing with budgets, and dealing with unions from my background, and I can tell you that Ms. Eshoo is a priceless resource that Lincoln Park High School can ill afford to lose, particularly in such a shameful way as escorted out of the building like a common criminal by one of the many assistant principals. In my estimation, there are two people that made the

greatest difference to my education at Lincoln Park: Mrs. Eshoo and Mrs. Tookey. (This is not to say they are the only ones, just that without them my education would have been severely lacking.)

As the co-captain of the debate team at Lincoln Park, I was always in the Library on the hunt for new evidence, and Mrs. Eshoo was always there to help, without fail. Seeing that we could not raise in time the necessary funds to register for more competitive suburban tournaments, she found a scholarship we could apply for and managed to secure us the funds. She was one of the few people that believed in the debate team and what (if successful) it can do for a school's reputation, and for that she has my undying gratitude. She also worked tirelessly to make sure that we had access to Questia and taught us how to correctly research for our Extended Essays (IB) and was always available with ideas for additional places to search to get information. I think debate, and the access to Library resources had a lot to do with my admission to Duke, and my twin sister and co-captain's admission to Cornell University, and my debate partner's admission to Harvard. My experiences with Ms. Eshoo starkly contrasts my experiences with the other librarian, who actually hurled insults and yelled obscenities at me when I accidentally went in the (recently instituted) "out" door and out the "in" door.

The fact that the school has lost its most dedicated librarian, and that in an institution of learning the already meagerly stocked library is now off limits is deplorable. Ms. Eshoo would have taken a reduction in hours, and I believe this is another personally motivated dismissal from Lincoln Park, and not wholly unrelated to the fact that she was a union rep. There are other ways to deal with budget cuts, "There was no other choice" is not an acceptable explanation for depriving needy students of access to Library resources before and after school. In the period that my mother lost her job, and our phone lines were cut off, my sister and I were in the library in the morning and during lunch using our only access to the internet, and typing up papers for school. Do you really think it is acceptable for students to be forced to make the additional journey to the public libraries to use computers, when there are these resources at their own high school?

Everyone's education will suffer. The loss of Ms. Eshoo means that I will no longer be an outspoken advocate for CPS, the system has lost my respect. From now on all the other Duke students claims that their private academies gave them better than public education will illicit only censure and condemnation.

Please reply, I want to know why my beloved Lincoln Park is hurtling full force down this self-destructive path. I do not want some stock letter alluding to my lack of understanding of the pressures of budget cuts, an honest reply will suffice.

This will not be my last communication concerning this particular judgement failure.

Regretfully,
Petra Kelly

**Give a gift of Substance
this holiday and spread
cheer the whole year.
See back page for details.**

Beware of bureaucrats bearing 'gifts'

October 20, 2006

I always thought winning an award would be a great honor so when it was announced through district e-mail that I'd won the Detroit Public Schools Calendar slogan naming contest, I was excited. I got a phone call from the media representative asking my schedule to see when I would be available for a photo shoot to get my picture taken with — as Substance coined the term — the Super Dupe. Continuous calls and e-mails to inquire about my schedule followed but no date was set. Finally, when I returned a call I received on the Friday before Spring Break, I was given a date to come to the Board of Ed — May 10th at 5 p.m. This would be on my own time and since I had announced to my Dept. head that I would donate the award of \$100 to the Speech and Hearing Clinic, I would gain only the honor and a certificate.

I was the first award winner to arrive at 4:30. Families started to arrive and I managed to recruit an interested artistic 8th grader for my fine arts high school, which is new and has very fine programs and a fantastic college acceptance rate for its graduates — 99 percent last I checked. We were all quite warm, as the lobby was not air conditioned but the offices behind the big doors were.

After fanning ourselves and going on 5:15 for a 5 o'clock photo shoot, we were asked if we wanted to go into the cooler office area and given a large conference room. I inquired about the delay and was told the photographer was on another photo shoot and would be here shortly. He arrived about 5:31. He took photos of us individually and as a group and we waited another five minutes for the Superintendent to join the final photos. He did so quietly and followed the photographer's instructions. At the end, this Superintendent said "Congratulations", to no one in particular and picked up his briefcase heading to an elevator.

The whole experience felt more

Continued on the following page

Publish your letter in the next issue of Substance

Regular readers who wish to publish letters in Substance are encouraged to do so.

Letters should be submitted by e-mail to Csubstance@aol.com and be as brief as necessary to cover the topic chosen.

All letters must be signed and are encouraged to include an e-mail or other address so that interested readers can communicate.

Anyone who wishes to know how our Letters policies are implemented can browse the letters available on our website (www.substancenews.com) or e-mail the office for examples.

Because of our limited budget, we generally do not find the space to publish letters which come from those who are not regular readers. When we are in doubt, we check with our subscriber list before making a decision.

**Letters
Csubstance@aol.com**

Letters

Bureaucrats bearing 'gifts'

Continued from the previous page

like a punishment than an award to me. I decided that our Super Dupe may be a shy guy or just lack people skills. I was amazed that he did not thank the parents for bringing their families down and that he said nothing about their individual accomplishments. I was given an envelope with \$100 cash, and the Substance reporter in me, questioned where it had come from. The good part is that I am donating this \$100 right back into the school funds.

So, if you dream about winning an award, remember that you may be asked to give up your own time and energy to receive it. If you do not know where the cash award came from do you just not look a gift horse in the mouth? Brenda L. Burack/Dearborn, MI

Viet vet subs: Recruiters pile it on thick

October 23, 2006
Hello Substance:

I was a substitute teacher at our local public school system recently. The following took place at Jackson County Intermediate School District Career Center, in Jackson, Michigan, on September 21, 2006. [Jackson's web site is www.jcisd.org].

That day, they assigned me to a JROTC class. I did data entry vs. teaching — but I was itching to jump out of my seat and say "this is BS". It was "Army Recruiter Day"!

Here's what they're telling these kids — in their best drill sergeant type voice with the young troopies yelling back their "hoo-yas".

1. They showed a video of weapons systems with rock music playing in the background. At one point it showed a guy firing a 50 cal [a heavy machine gun which fires bullets each of which is more than one inch long], and the recruiter said "Think of this as your long distance phone company. You can really reach out and touch someone!"

2. "Enemy" was used incessantly.

3. "Only 13 percent of the population is qualified to be in the military" (implying that these kids are the elite).

4. "Serve your country" was used incessantly.

5. "The Army is the only branch that guarantees that you'll get the job you want". He later added that if you're not qualified you can chose dishonorable discharge or reassignment.

6. "The death reports in Iraq are exaggerated".

7. He placed big stress on "giving back to your country", rolled in with "freedom", and "rights".

8. "We're in Iraq to give rights to the people — especially women the right to vote."

9. Stressed "values".

10. "Everyone in the military is a warrior first".

11. "You'll represent the U.S. in the world."

12. "In time of war you must serve your country."

13. Said that colleges have to accept you after the military.

14. "You can take courses in Baghdad."

15. "Iraq is safer than most US

cities."

16. Lots of talk about \$\$ for college.

17. Said the Army pays \$10K for college. If you only use \$5K, you keep the rest.

18. "Leadership opportunities".

19. Healthcare is 100% covered.

20. You will not go to Iraq after basic training.

21. Join the Army and lead your own life (vs. what your parents want you to do).

22. Women are equal to men in the military.

23. If you came out as a diesel mechanic, you'll have a guaranteed interview at John Deere.

24. The military has a responsibility to contact 100 percent of high school students.

The recruiter started with his list of medals and certificates. He said he helped restore democracy in Haiti in 1994 (I wonder if the Haitians know that?)

I spoke with the Lt. Colonel who ran the class. He said he was in Kosovo and his team tested for DU (Depleted Uranium) contamination. He said none was found. He said DU is harmless and the reports to the contrary are not true. I wear a pin that says "Real men don't use violence". I told him I was in Vietnam — he was skeptical. I served in Vietnam from January 1970 to March 1971 with the 52nd Infantry.

It was interesting. Oh yea - as I came in the door there was a life size cut out of Bush — blue suit, white shirt, red tie — with a JROTC patch on his shoulder. I almost lost it.

Peace,

Arnold Stieber

Jackson, Michigan

StieberA@aol.com

New Albany Park school a contrast to Aspira Haugen charter school

October 27, 2006

Dear Substance:

I read Jim Vail's article, "Community Victory..." [September Substance] with great interest. I have lived within the nightmare as well as with the consequences of sending my children to the Aspira Haugen Charter Middle School Campus. Eventually, I found refuge for my children at Albany Park Multicultural Academy (APMA).

Without deliberately undermining the APMA community effort and its successful outcome, I can't help but ask why they succeeded where the Haugen Elementary community failed. Both took the same steps to prevent a charter school in their midst. Both required tremendous effort in the form of community involvement. Why one effort succeeded while the other failed miserably and continues to fail when attempting to shed light on the Aspira mess is not that baffling of a question to answer.

Aspira happens to be well connected and as your readers surely know, some of their board members hold positions within the political arena that would, at best, be considered conflict of interest. While APMA had to compete with North Park University, I wonder if

that university has the same political influence on a local level as does Aspira. This sole point may be the answer to my question. Of course, I might also cling to the optimistic hope that CPS is using hindsight this time around because the reality is that Aspira at Haugen Campus would be a huge embarrassment to all of its supporters should they decide to remove their blindfolds.

On a more positive note, the article didn't mention how well APMA is doing in the new building. The contrasts to our experiences last school year at Aspira Haugen are stark. As of now, APMA is a success and moving forward towards higher achievements. Parents are welcome as involved members of the school community. They have an active LSC. The student's academic, extracurricular and social needs are being met. Our children are safe both inside the school and on the school grounds. The school opened its doors prepared and ready to educate their students on the first day for the simple reason that educating children is the primary focus and intention of our public schools. You will not find fluff and hocus pocus theories behind this success. What you *will* find is experienced and certified administrators and teachers as well as a high degree of professionalism and ethics. Needless to say, some of these qualifications as well as the general philosophy were lacking last year at Aspira Haugen Campus.

I commend the community, the administration, the staff and the faculty for the work that they did to save APMA from an uncertain fate. Without their diligent efforts, the new building could have become just another waste of time, money and resources.

Linda Moran, Chicago
morantribe@sbcglobal.net

Residency rule hurting staff as taxes price teachers out of Chicago

[The following letter was sent to Chicago Teachers Union President Marilyn Stewart and forwarded to Substance as well. As of Substance press time, Stewart had not responded. See also our Subscripts this month — Page Twenty-Three — for additional information on Chicago's residency rules].

August 21, 2006

Dear President Stewart,

As you know, the City of Chicago recently sent real estate tax notices to its homeowners. The notices included substantial tax increases for a preponderant number of Chicago residents, with the average increase exceeding 26 percent. While thousands of residents have appealed these skyrocketing assessments, the Assessor's Office has denied most claims for reductions. Those residents who cannot afford these increases, or choose not to pay them, have one option available to them that City employees do not. That is, non-City employee residents can move out of Chicago.

Because the City of Chicago requires virtually all of its employees to live within the City limits, teachers, firefighters, police and other Chicago workers have almost no recourse but to appeal and then pay these hefty tax assessments. Should those who appeal lose their cases, they are faced with the

unpleasant choice of either paying their increased real estate taxes or changing jobs. Undoubtedly, for many of our members and many of our brother and sister Union members who work for Chicago, these tax increases are a crushing economic burden.

Clearly, this is an issue that should galvanize the Chicago Teachers Union, as well as the Unions that represent the Firefighters, Police and other City personnel. Collectively, we have the strength to achieve tax relief for those of us who live in Chicago, in part, because contractually, we are obligated to do so. For this reason I am submitting the following motion as an agenda item for consideration at the September House of Delegates meeting.

I move "that the Chicago Teachers Union leadership actively pursue working with the Unions of police, firefighters and other City personnel in an effort to press for a moratorium of real estate tax increases for City employees."

Submitted by Jay Rehak,
Whitney Young High School Associate Delegate
Sincerely,
Jay Rehak

cc: Vice President Ted Dallas; Recording Secretary Mary McGuire; Treasurer Linda C. Porter; Financial Secretary Mark Ochoa; George Schmidt, Substance Newspaper

AFT is corrupt on its version of 'reading'

October 27, 2006

Dear Substance:

Recently, there has been a great deal of discussion about the American Federation of Teachers publication "American Teacher" and its conservative approach to "No Child Left Behind" and reading instruction. This is not new, or news. AFT has long been aligned with the most conservative people in education.

When AFT put out an issue of their magazine several years ago totally devoted to an extreme phonics approach — at the peak of the "reading Wars" I offered to put together a response issue written entirely by AFT members. I didn't even get the courtesy of a response though months later I saw an oblique reference to only two negative responses — one from Ken Goodman.

The director of the issues department at AFT Ruth Wattenberg, now editor of the AFT magazine, is Ruth Wattenberg, the daughter of Ben Wattenberg, long a key person in the American Enterprise Institute. It is no coincidence that the positions AFT has taken on reading are identical to the AEI positions.

The movement conservatives who put together the whole NCLB/Reading First show have as a key part of their campaigns coopting potential enemies. They've developed a number of means of doing so — only part of which is the use of their unlimited funds. They are making the same mistakes in their war on public education that they are in their war in Iraq — they are arrogant and have left themselves no way out now that the greed and corruption of the folks they put in charge of Reading First is being exposed.

Continued on the following page

Letters

AFT 'reading' corruptions

Continued from the previous page

It's too bad that will mask the absurdity of calling the mishmash of recycled phonics programs and tests scientific. Ask yourself why two scandals broke at the same time one about a few teen age pages and the other involving millions of American children with absurd programs from which millions are being made by those with power to mandate them and yet the second has hardly caused more than a ripple in the election while the other may well change which party controls of Congress. and the irony is that with the flagrant conflicts of interest in Reading First the Democrats are no more to put an end to Reading First Absurdities than the Republicans.

Ken Goodman
University of Arizona
Kgoodman@u.arizona.edu

Counter recruiting continues at Senn H.S.

October 23, 2006

Dear Substance:

We had a good counter-military recruitment at Senn H.S. on October 23 in the cafeteria during the lunch hours. Most of the Chicago police stationed in the school know us from last year, and some actually sympathize, [as one has flash backs from Iraq and another feels he was manipulated into joining a war for a corporate military, etc.

Many of the students also know us, both from the counter-recruitment work as well as from the work with the Save Senn Coalition. One said she remembered the apple she got from us last year, and wondered why we didn't have apples this year. Some other students came to the table and helped us out, telling certain other students to come over and sign up with us, take literature, etc.

Other students came to the table to talk, including a few thinking seriously about joining the military. Others wanted to know more about how to avoid the military. And still others just picked up some of the literature we had.

Several filled out opt out forms, which they gave to us to send in for them.

Several also left their contact information. One student reported that a number of Rickover Naval Academy students have transferred out and into Senn, and that others may be about to do that.

The news of the day is, on good authority, that Navy Commander Michael Mullin (one step below Secretary of the Navy as Chief of Naval Operations) will be at the Rickover Naval Academy on Thursday, October 26. Students have been practicing drills and such in preparation.

We're not sure if people are available for a protest of the continuing presence of the military academy in the Senn H.S. facility, but we will see.

Neal Resnikoff, Chicago
NealBetty@aol.com

Curriculum fair

October 24, 2006

This is a reminder.

Those who are thinking about,

considering... "presenting" at the Sixth Annual Teaching for Social Justice Curriculum Fair — which basically means sitting at a table during the Fair with your tri-fold board (if you want one) with lesson plans, student work, etc. — you have only till November 1 to submit your form (on the website, <http://teachersforjustice.org/>). There are still places open!

It is really not a high-stress thing to do...and as we always say, there are no blueprints to social justice teaching, we make the path by walking, and we're in this together...so take the plunge, share your work/thoughts, get genuine feedback from like-minded folks, and present!

PS—Presenters get 6 CPDUs!!

PPS—We still need volunteers to help out (see website), including on the day of the Fair as general-purpose helpers.

SIXTH ANNUAL
TEACHING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
CURRICULUM FAIR
SATURDAY, NOV. 11, 2006
11:00-5:00
Orozco School
1940 W. 18TH ST.
Chicago, IL 60608
Rico Gutstein
Teachers for Social Justice (Chicago)
<http://teachersforjustice.org/>
teachersforjustice@hotmail.com

AYLP vows to continue protest until special ed cuts end

October 26, 2006

Dear Substance:

Yesterday Advance Youth Leadership Power (AYLP) went to the Board of Education to protest and testify about the special education budget cuts in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). We are a group of young people with disabilities, most of whom gradu-

ated from CPS and received special education services. We want a full restoration of the \$26.5 million cut in special education personnel. We know that kids with disabilities usually have to fight their way to an education. The system does not work for us!

Formula funding is not appropriate for students with disabilities. When CPS chose to apply formulas to special education in the name of efficiency, a lot of kids lost out on valuable services and a lot of teachers and aides lost their jobs. CPS does not understand what people with disabilities go through. CPS thinks that using a formula is easy, but it's better to listen to students and teachers to figure out what is needed.

For example, some kids can't get to class on time or go to the bathroom unless an aide helps them. By cutting teachers, kids won't be able to learn at all. According to the latest state report card, Chicago students with disabilities are dropping out of high school at a rate of 40 percent. Also according to the same source, only about five or six percent of Chicago juniors with disabilities can read at grade level. CPS must improve things before it's too late!

We WILL keep fighting until we get all of the money back in the special ed budget.

Sincerely,
Advance Youth Leadership Power (AYLP)
c/o Veronica Martinez
5811 S. Troy
Chicago, IL 60629

October 25 Board meeting showed courage of Chicago's service workers and disabled youth

October 27, 2006

Dear Substance:

The October 25 AYLP Board of Education protests need to be noted before the historical memory is erased.

On October 25, the Chicago Board of Education held their monthly meeting. Advance Youth Leadership Power (AYLP), a group of young people with disabilities, was present to protest and testify. Since April, AYLP has been opposing a budget cut of \$26.5 million in special education positions for this school year. As of October 4, the Chicago Public Schools filed documents in federal court to the effect that they had "restored" \$10.8 million in special ed positions. AYLP continues to press for a full restoration of the money.

So, at 6:45 in the morning on October 25, I showed up at the CPS Central Office at 125 S. Clark to get in line to register to testify. I was joined by Jose Ocampo, Jason English, Curtis Harris, Vincent Smith and Damian Ellis. This was the core of AYLP's "inside team." The group registered Jose and Curtis to speak as members of AYLP. I was to speak for Access Living. There was one noteworthy improvement in the registration process: for the first time, CPS had an ASL interpreter present to assist

with registration. Many thanks to all the ASL users who had made the need for that accommodation evident in the past.

After registration, the AYLP members present went up to the Board room to hold seats. We were joined by Tim Sullivan and later, Lauren Bean. Members of Local 73 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) soon arrived on the scene. Today, they would not only be testifying on behalf of their special ed Child Welfare Attendants (CWAs), School Bus Aides, and Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECAs) who had been laid off, but they would be AYLP's allies as well. Many thanks to "Z" (Taalib-din Ziyad), Amisha (Patel), Bridget and Tabetha in particular.

Around nine a.m., members of AYLP's outside team began assembling on the sidewalk at 125 S. Clark St. They brought fliers, posters, and were ready to do some street theater. We would like to thank the following members of the outside team: Rahnee Patrick, Ana Mercado, Christine Wilk, Michael Price, Damian Ellis, Tom Wilson, Donna Shaw, Earl Smith, Mary Delgado from FRIDA, Interpreter Julie Krug, Charity Tolliver, Larry Biondi and Gary Arnold who provided extremely helpful PR support.

At about 9:30 or so, the AYLP inside team went down to demonstrate with the outside team. They went back up to the Board room on the 5th floor at around 10:15. While they were downstairs, I held seats and reviewed parts of the CPS Board Report. I found that as of this month, only five of the 36 interpreters working for CPS are reported as able to meet state standards. All are required to meet state standards by July.

Outside, they're going crazy chanting and doing media interviews and street theater. A few local news station TV cameras show up at that point, one station going upstairs to the Board room. The theme of the outside demo is "CPS Budget Cuts=Flushing Away Our Futures." So there are a lot of signs with toilet seats on them, and stats. There is also a real toilet seat, which they use as the basket in "Futures Basketball." They had a bunch of papers with different futures on them like, "I want to own my own home", "I want to be financially independent", "I want to go to college", whatever, and they crumple them up and then threw them into the toilet seat ring. On the bullhorn they chanted "Duncan, You're Flunking, Our money's not for junkin!" Damian Ellis, Christine Wilk, a father from Blair and a mother from another school testified. Michael Price flied for hours.

At about 10:45 upstairs, the Board meeting is called to order. They honor some people who are retiring or who have won awards. Then they start public participation. The President of the Board, Rufus Williams, stated over and over how important it is to a) remain civil and b) stay within the two-minute time limit. The Board Secretary says that only two speakers are allowed per group and they will group comments according to topic. However first they call up Alderman Manuel Flores, who happens to be my former alderman, and he talks about some things going on with schools in his district — and he mentions that his high schools need more special ed teachers. Cheers to Alderman Flores!

The Board then called up Jose Ocampo, Curtis Harris and Amber Smock. We go up there with all our AYLP youth and SEIU allies, about 20

Continued on the following page

Can we afford to let a truly free press die?

Unlike every other magazine currently reporting on school corporate "reform" in Chicago and the USA, Substance receives no corporate subsidies, foundation controls, or Education Department kickbacks. Our independence frees us to report critically on corrupt projects and personalities that others praise, but it also places us in a precarious position financially.

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Letters

AYLP and SEIU Local 73 lead protests

Continued from the previous page

people in front of the mike. It was great because people just kept pouring down the aisle. So Jose Ocampo, who is a power chair user, is first and unbuckles his seat belt. Holding his testimony, he began reading as he slid out of his wheelchair. Jose's main message was that AYLP is pressing for full restoration of the money cut from special ed staffing. He tied personal experiences to the AYLP demand and held the room captive as he appeared to lose control of his seat. He said that AYLP would continue to keep coming back till the money was fully restored. Williams tells him he wants all special ed speakers to go and then he will respond. Jose said, "No! I want an answer now!" Williams tells him he doesn't have an answer at that time. Jose said "Why not? I want an answer!" Williams repeated himself and asked to move to the next speaker, but Jose persisted tenaciously. AYLP was very proud of him for holding his ground. Williams got irritated.

Finally Jose let the mike go to Curtis, but there was a big delay as two CWAs laid off from Blair Elementary School help him get in his chair. They held the room captive! Curtis then spoke his piece about autism programs, with AYLP and SEIU still standing up front behind him.

AYLP and SEIU continued to hold their ground as the mike was passed to me. I began my testimony in ASL. First, I stated that the interpreter before me was from an outside agency and she voiced pretty well. I told the Board that I wished that all "terps" in CPS were at the same level, but from personal experience in visiting schools I felt that CPS was not providing quality interpreters to all students. I then switched to the mike and began voicing for herself. I told the Board that AYLP was aware that in early October CPS filed documents — and stated — in federal court saying that \$10.8 of the \$26.5 million originally cut had been reinstated. What was the source of that money? AYLP wanted to know.

Williams said, again, that the Board would respond when all testimony is done. I interrupted him to say that this was a hot issue so someone in this room should know where that money is coming from, and that if they can get \$10.8 that's great, but we have another \$15.2 to go (people in the audience laughed) and AL believes CPS has access to more funding. Williams asked Me to finish. I said, "Hey, I've been here since 6:45 to ask you this question, and I saw you walk in the door so I was here before you, and my point is that after all this drama people deserve to know where the money is coming from because they are being yanked around." Williams again asked me to go.

At that point, Renee Grant-Mitchell, head of the Office of Specialized Services, moved up next to me and grabbed the mike. She wanted to respond to the comments. She stood next to me, looking at me, while I had to look at the interpreter in front of her. She said that her office was trying to make things more efficient, that teachers and aides were working very hard to make sure that students got what they needed and if I contacted her she would give AL the info about the funding source. I had the

impression that Dr. Grant-Mitchell was talking very loudly. So I informed Dr. Grant-Mitchell that I would contact her (and will on October 26). At this point AYLP and SEIU left the front. AYLP headed out the door to rally our troops downstairs.

So then it's outside to the troops, to cheer and report what we did, and do some more basketball, and then someone from the Sun-Times came and got our story. Keep your eyes peeled for the next action by AYLP. If we have missed anyone who assisted, we apologized as we know a number of people contributed to AYLP's success.

Note on CPS: On October 24, the Chicago Sun-Times published a letter to the editor from the chief of the Office of Specialized Services (OSS), Renee Grant-Mitchell. The original text of the letter is at the end of this report. Dr. Grant-Mitchell characterized the original \$26.5 million cut in special ed personnel as an efficiency move. She stresses that CPS has worked to make sure that every student with a disability had their needs met, and she also said that the media was unfairly reporting only one side of the story when they talked about the special ed cuts and that they were working to resolve individual cases when brought to them. She said that a federal judge had declared that since July 1 the court monitor had found no significant impact on special ed due to the budget cuts. She invited public scrutiny of how OSS works.

Please note that according to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), in 2005 there were around 58,000

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Every month.
History of
Chicago special
education cuts and
resistance on
Substance website
www.substancenews.com**

Chicago's other media ignored the dramatic appearance of a dozen disabled children at the April meeting of the Chicago Board of Education, but you can see the photographs in our Board report in the May 2006 Substance.

Chicago's corporate media and propagandists for corporate "school reform" ignored the protests against the special ed cuts at the Board budget hearings and Board meeting on June 28 when the budget was passed.

Chicago tried to ignore the destruction of one of the foremost programs to educate autistic children by Arne Duncan and the Chicago Board of Education in 2005, but you can still find the truth of those unconscionable attacks at www.substancenews.com (see Past Issues, June 2005, "Autistic children facing ruin under LeMoyné changes?").

Where else can you read about the cynical policy of Chicago's public school officials to undermine special education services. This policy goes all the way back to the closing of Spalding school so that CPS could turn the building — and the valuable land under it — over to developers who contribute millions to Mayor Daley and his campaign funds?

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See back page for details.**

students with disabilities in the Chicago Public Schools. The ISBE reports that the dropout rate for students with disabilities in Chicago was about 40%. If that trend holds over the next 13 years, that means 23,200 students with disabilities will not complete high school. The latest state report card for CPS also notes that only around 5 to 6% of high school juniors with disabilities are able to read at grade level.

Amber Smock

Advanced Youth Leadership Program
Access Living, Chicago

Below: Renee Grant Mitchell's October 24, 2006 Letter to the Chicago Sun-Times

Only one side of story

by Dr. Renee Grant-Mitchell

October 24, 2006 Chicago Sun-Times

As head of the Office of Specialized Services at Chicago Public Schools, my goal is to provide the best educational opportunities possible, in the least restrictive environment possible, to all of our students — including those with disabilities. That's a sentiment shared by hundreds of teachers and staff who are passionate about serving our students every day.

Recently, our office launched an effort aimed at making our services for students with disabilities more efficient and equitable across the district. Unfortunately, the painstaking efforts have been discounted

and labeled simply as "budget cuts."

In the article "Disabled kids left in lurch after CPS' budget cuts: suit" [Oct. 4], it was reported that a student had not been provided a full-time paraprofessional since the beginning of school. We looked into this report, and found this assertion was completely not true. A full-time paraprofessional had been assigned to the student, but the parents were checking into who that person was, as any concerned parent should.

Few families or schools have reported problems to our office since we reallocated staff, a move that allowed about 100 schools to gain positions. In the end, the teacher-to-student formula for students with disabilities still remains more generous than that called for by the state.

Even more recently, a federal judge ruled against a group that alleged that the "budget cuts" had harmed students with disabilities, saying he couldn't find anything that supported that notion. That story was not reported in the Sun-Times.

This kind of imbalanced reporting has gotten in the way of a genuine examination of the truth. We would welcome such an examination. But we would hope that in the future, such reports would seek to include all sides in a fair manner and drill down for real facts.

Renee Grant-Mitchell, chief officer, Office of Specialized Services, Chicago Public Schools

Happy Halloween: Blair Early Childhood Center, Chicago



October 31, 2006. Eight weeks after new school year began, the Chicago Board of Education had still not restored six Child Welfare Attendants who had worked at the Blair Early Childhood Center on Chicago's far southwest side. Meanwhile, the number of children in the school had increased by more than two dozen this school year. The CWAs, who are generally paid between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per year, are responsible for helping the school's three- to seven-year-old children in and out of wheelchairs and other apparatus, feeding, toileting, and speeding the evacuation of the children in emergencies such as fires. As part of its budget cuts, the Board of Education cuts hundreds of CWAs and SECAs (Special Education Classroom Attendants). At the same time, the Board did not cut one person paid more than \$100,000 per year in its central offices, and since July 1, the Board has voted to create several new executive positions, staffing them at salary ranges in excess of \$90,000 per year. The photograph above was taken on Halloween 2006 at Blair, showing some of the devices that the children use to sit, eat, or move around. The decorations on the wall are the school's Halloween decorations. Substance is not publishing photographs of the children (except Page One of this Substance, from the April meeting of the Chicago Board of Education, which was a public meeting). Substance is awaiting permission from families to do a photo essay on the devastation of special education services in Chicago and the dangers the latest round of cuts is creating for the city's most needy children. On October 31, 2006, and November 1, 2006, the Chicago Fire Department came to Blair because of fire alarms. The understaffed school was unable to evacuate all of the children in the time lines set for safe evacuations during real fires. In early September, CPS organized a "fire drill" about which the staff of the school was informed. The data from that "fire drill" was used, by people from the CPS Office of Specialized Services, to claim that there was no danger to the Blair children because of the cuts in staff. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

Chicago school officials are on a cruel campaign to

Continued from Page Twenty-Four

fication for these staff cuts and analyzes their initial impact during the first four weeks of school:

Section 2. What are the key educational rights of children with disabilities in Chicago?

Section 3. How well is the school system achieving key educational results for students with disabilities, as reflected in test score results and high school graduation rates?

Section 4. What is the evidence about the actual impact of the staff cuts from the first four weeks of school?

Section 5. What are key implications of this evidence for needed future actions?

NOTE: The parents of all children described in this report are willing to talk with reporters on the record. Their schools have been identified. Their children have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

2. THE EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN CHICAGO AND ILLINOIS VARIED NATURE OF CHILDREN'S DISABILITIES

Children with disabilities must overcome a variety of different challenges in their efforts to succeed in school and to graduate from high school. The Chicago school system reported that for the 2004-2005 school year, Chicago had the following percentages of students with disabilities in each disability category:

- Learning Disability (55%)
- Cognitive Disabilities (14%)
- Speech/Language Disabilities (12%)
- Emotional Disabilities (10%)
- Autism (3%)
- Developmental Delay (3%)
- Hearing Impairment (1%)
- Other Health Impairment (1%)
- Physical Disability (1%)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (less than 1%)

Further, most of these disabilities may be mild, moderate, or severe, and many children have more than one disability.

SOME KEY LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Before 1975, schools in most states were simply allowed to exclude most or all students with disabilities. In 1975, a new federal law gave children with disabilities a range of new legal rights to help ensure that they received a good education.

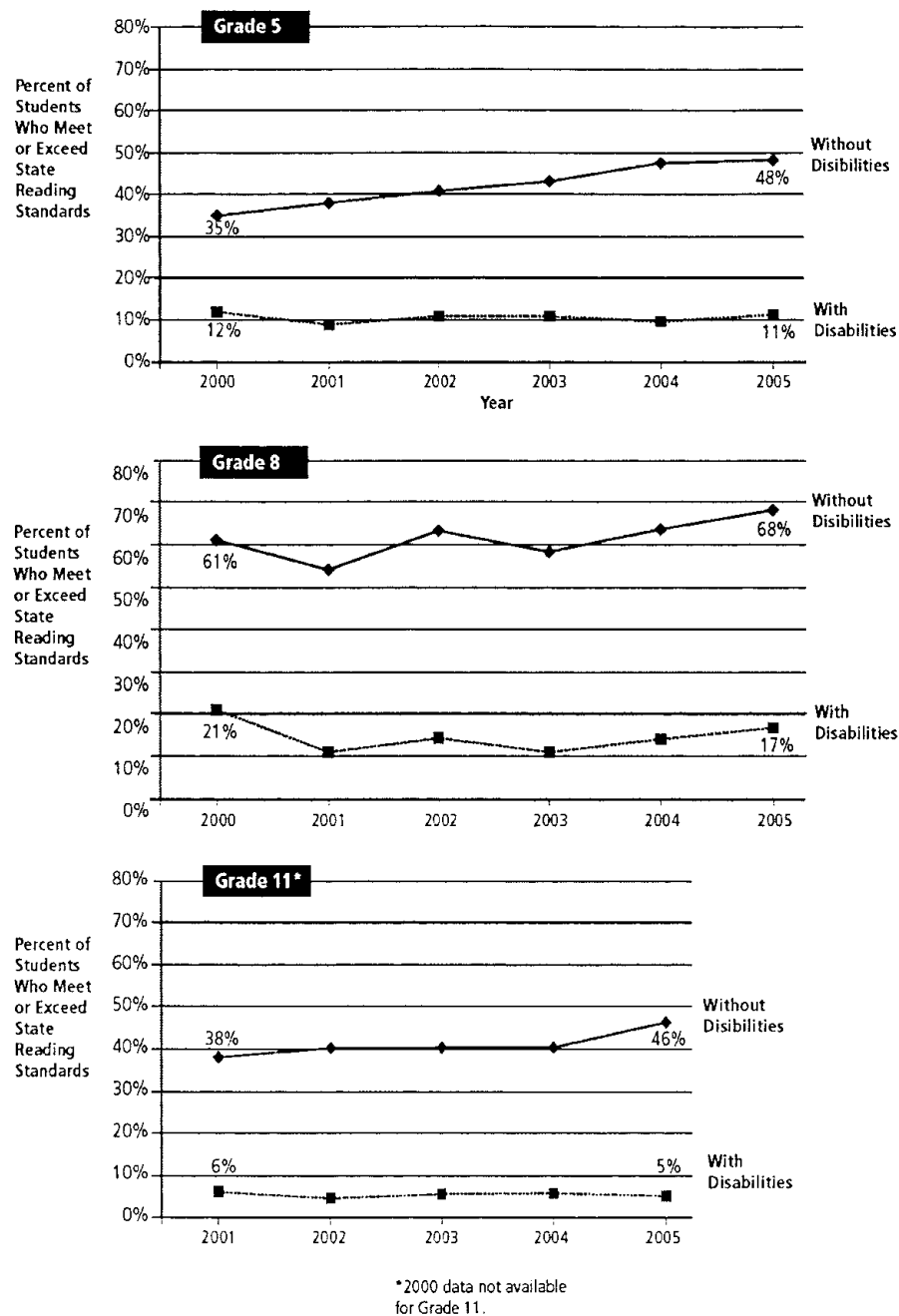
If an evaluation of the child indicates that the child has one of the disabilities listed above, the school system is required to provide the child with a "free appropriate public education." To design this education, school staff and parents must work together to develop an "Individualized Education Program" (or IEP) for the child, which sets objectives for what that child will accomplish during the school year and describes the additional and/or different services that the child will receive that will enable the child to reach these objectives.

Students with disabilities have a legal right to Individualized Education Programs that provide a free appropriate public education. A school district cannot disregard this requirement by claiming it does not have the resources to carry out a child's agreed on Individualized Educational Program.

EDUCATION IN THE LEAST RE-

Table One

TABLE 1. State Reading Test Results for Chicago for Grades 5, 8, and 11



STRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

For children with disabilities, their educational program must be provided in the "least restrictive environment," the learning situation that maximizes the student's contact with non-disabled peers. Further a disabled child's education must be provided in the school that the child would attend if he or she were not disabled, to the greatest extent possible.

The law requires that students must be given "supplementary aids and services," in order to succeed in the least restrictive environment. The child must not be just "dumped" into the regular classroom and left to flounder.

The "least restrictive environment" for a child is not always the regular classroom. It may, for example, be a separate classroom for students with disabilities or even a separate day school or residential school. Whether the student is in the regular classroom, a separate classroom, or a separate school, a student with a disability may need a part-time or full-time aide or other supports and modifications (such as special technology or modification of learning materials) in order to succeed.

GROWING EMPHASIS ON HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE FOR RESULTS

Media Watch

Why haven't I read about this in...?

In April 2006, reporters for Chicago's two main daily newspapers heard from the parents and children at Blair school and did not report the story.

On June 20, 21, and 22, 2006, more than two dozen advocates for the disabled testified at the Chicago Board of Education's annual budget hearings in opposition to the cuts in special education services. None of the testimony was reported in Chicago's two major daily newspapers, despite the fact that their reporters were informed of the testimony and the serious problems that were arising.

On June 28, 2006, hundreds of people protested at the Board of Education meeting against the special education cuts. Prominent civic groups and

budget analysts noted that the school board's annual budget was "murky" and that claims that cuts had to be made in special education were not credible. Chicago's two major newspapers again ignored the story.

On October 4, 2006, an attorney for the Chicago Board of Education, Kathleen Gibbons, stood in federal court and told U.S. District Judge Robert Gettleman that "nobody" had brought any problems with the special education cuts to the attention of the Board. Gibbons's statement, which bore no relationship to the facts, became the dominant narrative in news reports that the Board had "won" in court. Tired of the lies? Subscribe to Substance. See the back page for details on how to. 🍏

As an outgrowth of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, schools are being held accountable to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, meet specified minimum scores on standardized tests and graduate from high school at specified rates.

The testing and graduation standards that students with disabilities must meet increase regularly through the year 2014. Each year, students with disabilities are expected to meet the same standards as their non-disabled peers (with some modest differences). Schools and school districts are responsible for ensuring that adequate services are provided to students, so that students with disabilities can meet these test score and graduation standards.

KEY STATE OVERSIGHT ROLE IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATION

By accepting federal special education funds, Illinois accepts the responsibility to carry out federal special education laws and related rules (currently based primarily on the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004). Illinois must also pass state laws and rules consistent with the federal law and related rules.

The Illinois State Board of Education is responsible for monitoring schools and school districts and for ensuring that all deficiencies in carrying out federal and state special education laws are corrected.

THE COREY H. LAWSUIT AND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS

In 1992, parents of students with disabilities filed a lawsuit charging that Chicago was illegally segregating students with disabilities (that is, failing to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment). The lawsuit is called Corey H., et al. vs. Chicago Board of Education and Illinois State Board of Education. Further, the lawsuit charged that the Illinois State Board of Education was failing to carry out its enforcement responsibilities to end Chicago's illegal segregation. Illinois was one of the five most segregated states for children with disabilities when the lawsuit was filed, and Chicago's pattern of segregation mirrored the state as a whole.

In 1998, the Chicago Public Schools entered into a detailed Settlement Agreement with the plaintiff parents, spelling out how Chicago would end illegal segregation and effectively educate children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. In 1999, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) also entered into a Settlement Agreement with the plaintiffs, spelling out how they would monitor Chicago's implementation of the steps it had agreed to take, and would act to correct any deficiencies.

The plaintiffs in the Corey H. lawsuit and their attorneys viewed Chicago's June 2006 action to cut special education staff as a blatant violation of the Corey H. Settlement Agreements.² In August 2006, the plaintiffs' attorneys filed a request for a preliminary or permanent injunction to reverse the budget cuts in special education made by the Chicago Board of Education in June 2006, arguing that this Chicago action violated the law and the Corey H. Settlement Agreements by undermining Chicago's ability to provide an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment.

Federal Judge Robert Gettleman denied this request for an immediate

Continued on Page Nineteen

eliminate services to the most vulnerable children

Continued from Page Eighteen

injunction, and instead set a schedule for an exchange of legal briefs by the plaintiffs and defendants that will now culminate in a hearing before Judge Gettleman on October 4, 2006.

THE DEPLORABLE ACHIEVEMENT AND GRADUATION RATES OF CHICAGO'S CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

One important set of indicators for judging Chicago's decision to cut teachers and teacher aides who assist Chicago's children with disabilities are the patterns of test scores and graduation rates for Chicago's students with disabilities, as compared with their non-disabled peers. Both the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 were designed to reinforce each other and to create conditions for teaching and learning in which high percentages of students with disabilities would master challenging academic skills and subjects and would graduate from high school.

As reviewed in Section 3, the best current data (gathered before Chicago's June 2006 special education staff cuts) indicate that Chicago is failing miserably in meeting these objectives.

CHICAGO RESULTS ON STATE READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

The Illinois State Board of Education has determined the minimum scores that students must achieve at various grade levels to be considered competent readers.

Table 1 [this page] shows the State Reading Test Results for Chicago at Grades 5, 8, and 11 for the period from spring 2001 to spring 2005 for Chicago students without disabilities and Chicago students with disabilities. As you review Table 1, remember that the stated federal goal is that students with disabilities improve steadily to approach 100% on these tests by the year 2014.

At grade 5, the percentage of students without disabilities who met state standards rose from 35% to 48% from spring 2001 to spring 2005. In contrast, the percentage of students with disabilities who met standards remained very low and actually declined from 12% in spring 2001 to 11% in spring 2005.

At grade 8, the percentage of students without disabilities who met standards rose modestly from 61% to 68% from spring 2001 to spring 2005. In contrast, the percentage of students with disabilities who met standards basically remained at a very low level and declined from 21% in spring 2001 to 17% in spring 2005.

At grade 11, the percentage of students without disabilities who met standards rose modestly from 38% to 46% from spring 2001 to spring 2005. In contrast, the percentage of students with disabilities who met standards remained at an extremely low level and actually declined from 6% in spring 2001 to 5% in spring 2005. In other words, 95% of eleventh grade students with disabilities failed to meet state reading standards in spring 2005.

The extremely low grade 11 achievement results are even more disturbing when one considers that a large percentage of students with disabilities had dropped out before the eleventh grade test was administered (see below), and that those eleventh graders with disabilities still enrolled in school are likely to be relatively higher achieving than those who have dropped



June 20, 2006. Budget hearing at Lincoln Park High School. Despite claims by members of the Chicago Board of Education and CEO Arne Duncan, from beginning to end the cuts in special education have been driven by those wielding spreadsheets, not children's IEPs. Beginning in September 2005, Tyra Newell (above left) and Pedro Martinez (above right) were in charge of forcing a reduction in special education services out of the Board of Education's Office of Management and Budget. No consideration was paid to the actual needs of disabled children. The process was driven by the "bottom line" on a spreadsheet, not by anything to do with special education laws or practices. After the cuts were implemented in the budget beginning in July 2006, both Newell and Martinez received promotions, with Newell receiving a substantial raise as well. Newell and Martinez presided over the Board of Education's annual budget hearings in June 2006 at Lincoln Park High School (above) on June 20, Finkl Elementary School (June 21) and Harlan High School (June 22). Apparently Newell and Martinez did not communicate the unanimous opposition to the budget and to the special education cuts voiced by more than two dozen speakers over three days to the Board's Law Department, because on October 4, 2006, Board assistant attorney Kathleen Gibbons stood in front of U.S. District Judge Robert Gettleman and stated that no one had brought any problems with the cuts to the attention of the Board. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

out.

CHICAGO GRADUATION RATES

For years, Chicago and other Illinois schools and school districts have been permitted to report four-year high school graduation rates to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in a manner that is fundamentally flawed and that greatly inflates graduation rates.(3).

In January 2005, Elaine Allensworth of the Consortium on Chicago School Research released a report documenting graduation rates in Chicago that (unlike the ISBE graduation

rate calculation system) was based on tracking individual students from year to year: Graduation and Dropout Trends in Chicago.(4)

At the request of Designs for Change, Allensworth has used this database to calculate the four-year graduation rates for Chicago students with and without disabilities who entered high school in fall 1999, fall 2000, and fall 2001. If they had completed high school in four years, these students would have graduated, respectively, in spring 2003, spring 2004, and spring 2005.

The Chicago results for the ISBE four-year graduation rates and the four-year rates calculated by Allensworth are shown in Table 2. [This page].

Allensworth's method divides the number of students with disabilities who graduated from any Chicago high school in four years by the number of first-time ninth graders originally enrolled in a particular class, minus students who transferred out. In her report, she explains why the ISBE method for calculating a four-year graduation rate is flawed and inflates the resulting rates.(5)

Table 2 compares Allensworth's results (which are based on the actual tracking of students) with the flawed ISBE results. Table 2 makes two points obvious:

Based on Allensworth's analysis, only about 40% of students with disabilities who enter Chicago high schools graduated within four years. This low four-year graduation rate has only risen slightly for the three classes of students for which the most recent data analyzed by Allensworth are available.

The falsely inflated ISBE results show a major jump from the 2003 graduating class to the 2004 graduating class, while this difference is not reflected in Allensworth's results (see Table 2). It is true that between 13% and 15% of students with disabilities are still enrolled after four years for the three classes of

students analyzed in Table 2. Assuming that these students who are still enrolled graduate, drop out, or transfer at about the same rate as those students in their cohort who have already graduated, dropped out, or transferred, the final graduation rate for students with disabilities who began high school in a particular year would be about 6% higher than the four-year graduation rate (for example, a 48% graduation rate for the class that entered in 2001, assuming that enough time passed so that no one from the class was still enrolled).

EXTREMELY LOW PERCENTAGE OF WELL-PREPARED GRADUATES IN CHICAGO'S SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

If one analyzes the percentage of eleventh grade special education students who meet standards in reading in combination with the 42% of students with disabilities who graduate after four years (or the roughly 48% who may graduate over a longer period), one is left with an extremely low percentage of special education students who both graduate and are achieving at the level that ISBE has characterized as having "proficient knowledge and skills in reading."

The system is producing only 2% to 2.5% of such capable graduates from its special education programs. Thus, of the 4,947 special education students who entered high school in the ninth grade in 1991, only about 125 will both graduate and have adequate reading skills, including students who take more than four years to graduate.

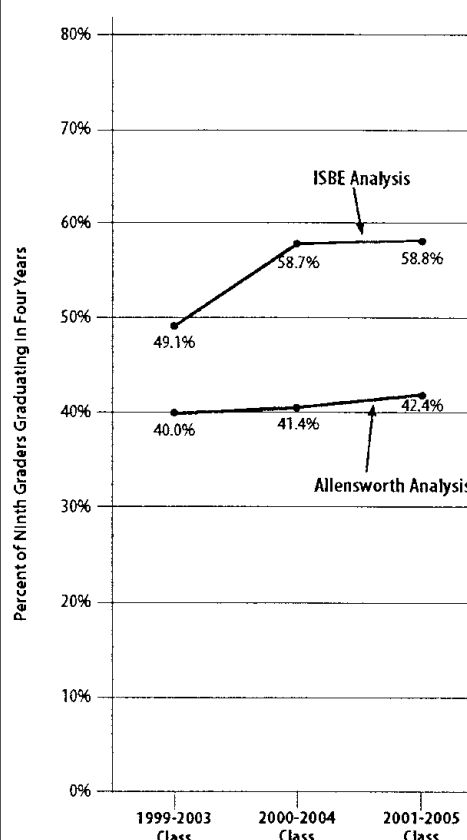
IMPLICATIONS

Reading achievement rates at fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade for Chicago students with disabilities are extremely low and declined at each grade level from spring 2001 to spring 2005.

Even interpreting Allensworth's

Table Two

TABLE 2. Four-Year Graduation Rates for Chicago Students with Disabilities



In an unusual act of courage for CPS employees, teachers and aides at Blair have

Continued from Page Nineteen

graduation data in the most favorable light, only about 48% of students with disabilities who enter high school are graduating from high school.

Of 4,947 special education students who entered high school in the ninth grade in 2001, only about 125 will both graduate and have "proficient knowledge and skills in reading."

To take resources away from these vulnerable students, rather than focusing on improving services to them, is unconscionable.

4. CHICAGO'S CAMPAIGN TO CUT SPECIAL EDUCATION COSTS AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN

The dramatic cuts in special education staffing carried out in June 2006 were fore-shadowed in the 2005-2006 school year by the refusal of school system administrators to grant special education teacher aides for students who had a desperate need for them.

During the first four weeks of the current 2006-2007 school year, evidence of major harms to students that result from the staff cuts are becoming apparent at schools across the city, as parents and educators impacted by the cuts encounter resistance in having children's Individualized Educational Programs carried out.

After finding the school system out of compliance with the Corey H. Settlement Agreements for inadequate staffing year after year, the Illinois State Board of Education is refusing to take meaningful corrective action to reverse Chicago's staff cuts. These main points are elaborated and illustrated below.

A MAJOR SCHOOL SYSTEM COMMITMENT TO CUT BACK TEACHER AIDES WAS EVIDENT DURING THE LAST SCHOOL YEAR

Chicago schools have characteristically resisted promising services to students with disabilities in their Individualized Education Program document if they did not have these services readily available or if the word had gone out that these services were going to be cut back.

Thus, during the last school year (2005-2006), schools were often resistant to provide teacher aides even to students who desperately needed them, because the message had been sent out to avoid making commitments for new aides and to reduce the minutes of aide time committed to individual students.

EXAMPLE: ANDREA

Andrea was in third grade at Yale Elementary School last year and is autistic. She has done reasonably well in most academic subjects and received pull-out special education services in math last year. However, she spent the majority of her time in the regular classroom without an individual aide. Andrea often acts impulsively — for example, by rolling on the floor and climbing on cabinets. She has a strong desire to make friends with other children, who have frequently encouraged her to engage in inappropriate behavior. In one of the incidents most upsetting to her mother, Andrea was given a condom by a fellow student and told to walk around the classroom and say it was hers.

Andrea's mother sought help from school staff in obtaining an aide for her last year. They were unwilling to help her and said that she would have to advocate for an aide on her own.

EXAMPLE: MEGAN

Megan is an autistic child who



Renee Grant Mitchell (above) has repeatedly told the Chicago Board of Education and the public — in carefully worded bureaucratic phrases about "individual IEPs" — that children's services were not being reduced by the massive cuts. Meanwhile, teachers, parents and children were finding it more and more difficult to get individual services into IEPs — and then to get the required services at their schools when the paperwork was completed. Senior CPS staff, beginning with CEO Arne Duncan, since June have repeated carefully phrased talking points when asked how the Board of Education could cut \$26.5 million from special education services after state inspectors had found, for six years, that the services were already inadequate, in violation of federal law. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

was being educated last year in a self-contained special education classroom at Dore Elementary School on the South Side. As a result of Megan's disability, she engaged in a variety of behaviors that posed a danger to herself and constantly disrupted the learning process for other students. She would leave her seat, lick the floor and other objects in the room and put almost anything in her mouth and attempt to eat it (for example, pencils). Her teacher, Kathleen Cleary-Powers, was constantly monitoring Megan's behavior because she was concerned that Megan might choke.

It was a constant challenge for the teacher to teach the rest of the class because of Megan's disruptions. Other children in the class were easily distracted and were often crying and agitated. Parents of other children in the class complained frequently about these problems. Ms. Cleary-Powers fought for seven months to get an individual aide in the class for Megan, repeatedly communicating with various levels of the Chicago school system bureaucracy and with the Illinois State Board of Education. A representative of the regional office who came to observe Megan concluded that an aide was not necessary, because Megan was "containable," and that the veteran teacher was "tough enough to straighten her out."

Finally, Megan received an aide late in the spring, as a result of her parents pursuing a due process complaint. At the end of the school year, the family moved to the suburbs.

Ms. Cleary-Powers, an experienced teacher, is exceptional in her willingness to fight with the bureaucracy for needed services for her students and to speak out publicly.

RESISTANCE TO PROVIDING APPROPRIATE SERVICES DURING THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR

Contrary to the claims made by Rene Grant-Mitchell, Chief Specialized Service Officer, Designs for Change,

working with concerned parents, educators, and advocates, documented a range of situations in which harmful cuts that had been made in services to children with disabilities were not corrected. We cite several examples below of situations where parents or educators are willing to speak to reporters on the record. As noted earlier, the names of schools are included in these descriptions, but the names of students have been changed to protect their privacy.

EXAMPLE: BLAIR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Blair Early Childhood Center on Chicago's South side serves children ages 3 to 7 years with severe physical and multiple disabilities. The school has built an outstanding national reputation for the quality of its program, under the leadership of a principal who retired at the end of the last school year.

However, Blair has lost six child welfare attendants this year, and it is now a constant challenge to meet the most basic needs of the severely disabled students at Blair (for example, many Blair students require hand-feeding, regular lifting in and out of their wheelchairs, and diaper changes). The dedicated staff's ability to provide quality education has suffered substantially because the staff cuts have required teachers to spend much of their time on tending to their students' basic physical needs. In the last two weeks, 41 Blair staff members have written 17 letters to Board President Rufus Williams, detailing the harm that the staff cuts he voted to approve have had on the Blair's severely disabled students. [Editor's Note: Some of these letters are published for the first time in this Substance, at pages nine through eleven].

For example, a small portion of one letter states the following: Our students arrive at school at 7:30 a.m. There are days that we do not finish feeding until 9 a.m. because there are only two adults (teachers) in the classroom. Our classroom attendant is not available to assist because she is unloading buses and toileting children. Our classroom school assistant is not available to assist because she monitors the buses for arrival and dismissal, two hours a day. Then she must assist our CWA with toileting the children that require two people. Children who are dependant for feeding must wait, and students fed already are not engaged in learning because we cannot provide the adult assistance they require to access their educational programs. We have no control over the impact these cuts have had on our academic program because many of our students need an adult to feed them and feeding must not be rushed due to choking/swallowing concerns.

One extremely disturbing danger that Blair now faces is the inability to quickly evacuate all of the students from the building in the event of a fire. For instance, in one classroom, a single teacher is now responsible for evacuating four children in wheelchairs (who are not always in their wheelchairs and need to be lifted into them).

In a fire drill in September, teachers reported that the administration came to several classrooms—particularly those with a number of students in wheelchairs — to warn the staff that a fire drill would be taking place (contrary to proper procedures). [Editor's note: As noted in the article on Page One of this Substance, unannounced fire drills on October 31, 2006, and November 1, 2006 resulted in evacuation times that would have resulted in tragedy had they taken place during a real fire].

Further, a number of therapists

and specialists who work with students at Blair also serve students in other schools and are not present at Blair every day of the week. Even though the most recent fire drill was held on a day when the majority of these therapists were at Blair, the school still failed to meet the evacuation time limits.

Staff and LSC members conclude that the loss of six child welfare attendants contributed significantly to Blair's inability to evacuate the school quickly enough, and they have grave concerns about the potential disaster that Blair will face in the event of an emergency.

EXAMPLE: ROBERTO

Roberto is a fifth grader with autism at George Rogers Clark Elementary School on the West Side. He has learned successfully in a regular classroom with the support of a full-time aide since kindergarten. This teacher aide was assigned to help Roberto by modifying the classroom curriculum to address his disability, to ensure that he stayed on task and could follow the lessons, to assist Roberto with social skills and appropriate interactions with his classmates, and to protect Roberto's safety (because he sometimes acts impulsively and without sound judgment).

Contrary to Roberto's Individualized Education Program approved last May, his full-time aide was replaced this fall with a child welfare attendant (CWA). A CWA is trained to provide general supervision for children with disabilities and to assist with physical tasks, such as toileting, mobility, and feeding. The CWA assigned to Roberto is not trained to deal with Roberto's unique learning needs, which are spelled out in his IEP. Roberto's mother confronted the school about their lack of compliance with Roberto's IEP. She was informed that a child welfare attendant (CWA) is "the best we can do." Roberto's mother, who is a bilingual special education teacher in Chicago, observed her son in the classroom on September 21st and confirmed that the CWA is not providing the attention and assistance that is spelled out in Roberto's IEP. Roberto had difficulty following directions and keeping up with the class activities and was not redirected by the CWA to stay on task. Without direct assistance, Roberto had difficulty following even simple instructions from the teacher. He was missing out on class work and is not participating in activities with his classmates. The CWA is providing minimal supervision at best.

As a special education teacher, Roberto's mother is aware of how difficult it is to get individualized services for students in Chicago, and the way that schools and teachers are discouraged from promising these services during IEP meetings. She is particularly upset that she now has to continue to fight for these services, even after they have been written into her son's IEP.

EXAMPLE: ADAM

Adam has muscular dystrophy, a severe degenerative muscle disease that requires Adam to have the full-time assistance of a classroom aide to function effectively in school. He has achieved well in the selective educational program at Whitney Young High School with a full-time aide in the past.

Adam's IEP requires that the aide help him with all physical tasks during the day, which include assistance in moving from the bus to school, moving his wheelchair from one class to another, placing the learning materials he needs on his desk, feeding him, and toileting

Continued on Page Twenty-One

signed letters to President Rufus Williams documenting the impact of the cuts

Continued from Page Twenty

him.

Adam can write if his arms are on the desk, but if his arm falls off the desk, he can't pull it back up. If he needs something from his book bag, he can't get it himself.

Although his IEP calls for a full-time individual aide, he has been required to share a series of aides with a second student since school began. At one point, the school planned to assign him a female aide, despite the inappropriateness of a female aide assisting a 16-year-old male with toileting.

After his parents complained, he was assigned another aide who is shared with a student in a self-contained special education program at Whitney Young. This aide basically moves Adam to his class, and then leaves to attend to the other student for whom he is responsible.

It is imperative that Adam has the constant help of an aide, due to the severity of his disability and the unpredictable problems that can arise if he is left alone without assistance.

EXAMPLE: STEVEN

Steven has a cognitive disability that makes it hard to him to stay on track in carrying out multi-step learning tasks, such as solving a mathematics word problem. Now in fifth grade at Reinberg Elementary School on the Northwest Side, Steven has had a full-time individual aide at his side to tutor him and help him steer through such problems since kindergarten.

This year, he has been cut to a half-time aide. Steven's mother has observed his classroom. She says that, "the half-time aide works with Steven 10 times a day for 15 minutes at a time, running in and out. This aide is a bus aide, who is not trained to help Steven in the classroom. Steven is constantly distracted by the lack of regular consistent help. It's not practical, and it's not working. He was finally getting into the process of learning last year, but now he is constantly distracted and loses his way. It breaks my heart."

DISRUPTIVE IMPACTS OF TEACHER AND TEACHER AIDE STAFF REDUCTIONS

The examples described in Section 4 from the first four weeks of the school year and the resistance to providing needed services to special education students during the last school year concretely illustrate a number of

negative impacts on the quality of education. These problems that result directly from the staff cuts maintain the abysmal achievement and graduation rates for children with disabilities documented in Section 3.

Several types of negative impacts on the quality of education are occurring, based on the examples summarized above, which document the efforts of educators and parents to obtain adequate special education services, consistent with staff and federal laws and consistent with students' Individualized Educational Programs.

- **Negative Impacts on Individual Children.** Obviously, the reductions in teacher aides or the refusal to provide an aide adversely impacts the quality of the education of the individual student who is denied needed services.

- **Negative Impacts on the Classroom as a Whole.** When a child with a disability is not provided with a full-time individual aide or with other needed assistance, their often disruptive behavior undermines the teacher's ability to teach the rest of the students effectively.

- **Negative Impacts on the Ability to Provide Education in the "Least Restrictive Environment."** Individual aides are one of the key supplementary services that enable students with moderate to severe disabilities to function effectively in the regular classroom and to gain the benefits of learning with a broad range of students.

- **A Patchwork of Inequitable Decisions.** While decisions reached in June 2006 about the levels of individual school staffing were supposedly "final," some schools have subsequently gotten most or all of their staff restored, while other schools where substantial cuts were made have gotten nothing. The families of some students were told "We don't provide full-time aides anymore," while other students received full-time aides. Parents with the means to hire lawyers have had services restored, while students whose families cannot afford legal help have gotten nothing.

- **A Focus on Instruction is Undermined by the Need for the Teaching Staff to Carry Out the Responsibilities of Staff Who Have Been Eliminated.** This impact is most clearly illustrated by the situation at Blair Early Childhood Center. With the loss of six child welfare attendants, dedicated teachers must spend much of their time lifting children, changing their diapers, and feed-

ing them. This allows much less time for educational activities.

Possibilities for Serious Physical Harm to Children. Individual children who carry out impulsive actions (such as attempting to eat pencils and possibly choking) illustrate the types of physical dangers to individuals that result from inadequate staffing. The possibility that Blair Early Childhood Center will not have enough staff to evacuate students quickly enough in the event of a fire raises dangers that can impact large numbers of children.

Teacher Burnout and Turnover. It is obvious that even dedicated teachers without adequate support are at risk of transferring to a better-resourced school district or leaving the profession. When the Chicago Board responds to the level of dedication at a school like Blair by cutting critically needed staff or tells a veteran teacher that an autistic child can be "contained" without a teacher aide, they undermine the commitments of some of the system's most dedicated and talented teachers to remain in Chicago.

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION REFUSES TO TAKE MEANINGFUL ENFORCEMENT ACTION

For the past six years, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has cited the Chicago Public Schools for failing to provide adequate numbers of paraprofessionals (aides) to support special education students, as required by the Corey H. Settlement Agreements.

Yet ISBE has never taken enforcement action that have effectively corrected these violations.

This pattern of identifying the same violations year-after-year, but not taking effective action to correct them, was the central reason that ISBE was found to have violated the special education law in the Corey H. lawsuit in the first place.

In the past, Chicago's excuse for

its continuing failure to find enough special education staff was that, despite aggressive recruitment efforts, additional staff could not be successfully recruited. Yet the June 2006 Chicago Board action represented a deliberate effort to cut 200 special education teachers and 750 special education aides already employed by the Chicago Board. Despite these deliberate staff cuts, which were totally under the control of the Chicago Board, ISBE has again refused to take any meaningful enforcement action.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEEDED ACTION

It is obvious that neither the Chicago Board of Education nor the Illinois State Board of Education will take meaningful action to reverse the June 2006 elimination of 200 special education teachers and 750 teacher aides.

Therefore, Designs for Change supports the request of the plaintiffs in the Corey H. lawsuit (1) to enjoin Chicago from implementing these staff cuts and (2) to appoint a Special Master to ensure that needed corrective action is taken. Further, regardless of the federal court's ruling, it is essential for parents of children with disabilities, educators, and special education advocates to pursue these same objectives through organizing and advocacy with the Chicago Board of Education, the Illinois State Board of Education, the U.S. Department of Education, and elected officials at all levels.

NOTES

1 Rosalind Rossi (2006, June 29). Disabled students protest cuts, but board OKs school budget. Chicago Sun Times.

2 Plaintiffs' motion for preliminary or permanent injunction. Corey H., et al. vs. Chicago Board of Education and Illinois State Board of Education. Case No. 92 C 3408. August 4, 2006.

3 Elaine Allensworth (2005, January). Graduation and dropout trends in Chicago: A look at cohorts of students from 1991 through 2004. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, pp. 62-64.

4 Allensworth.

5 Allensworth, pp. 62-64.

A Grim Fairy Tale

Continued from Page Twenty-Two

Back at the opulent riverfront offices of the CTEwe, the leadersheep had been comfortably ensconced in the aforementioned conference room, twirling around in their new Italian leather chairs, engaged in an extremely consequential discussion.

"But I wanna be Superman this year," whined Teddy, the Obsequious Toady. "Pammy got to be Superman the last two years in a row, and it's not fair!"

"Oh, please," snapped Pammy Pretty, erstwhile CTEwe lobbyist. "Grow up, Teddy."

"Oh yeah?" he retorted. "Maybe YOU should wear the Blaaaagojevich outfit this time. It's hard to tell who spends less time down there in Sssspringfield, you or him. And I am not doing any Elvis impersonations, either."

President Mumbles tried to re-

gain control of the meeting. "Can't we all discuss this calmly?" she suggested. "I'm willing to be flexible and wear any costume that's left over."

"And that's a good thing," said Mercenary Mary through her perpetually clenched teeth. "We have to be watchful of our spending this year. Some troublemaker has been threatening to call for an independent audit."

"Whaaaat??" they all shrieked, except for Victor the Vain, who was still perusing the list of Halloween outfits.

"I wanna be Antonio Baaanderas," he announced, oblivious to the activity around him.

"I wanna be Marie Antoinette," added Linda Loudmouth. "You know, with a really fancy dress and lots of jewels."

"SHUT UP RIGHT NOW. That means everybody!!" yelled Pammy Pretty. They did.

"Did someone just mention an

independent audit?"

"Yes, I did," admitted Mercenary Mary.

"How did that happen? Have I taught you nothing?" shrieked Pammy Pretty, as they automatically covered their ears. "Sit up straight and repeat after me."

They all sat up straight, except for nasty Nicky, the biggest field drip of them all.

He had been showing off with his expense account, ordering fancy champagne for lunch, and now he needed a quick nap. Unfortunately for him, Pammy was making too much noise for him to sleep.

"We. Do. Not. Allow. Independent. Auditors. Got it??"

"But what if—?"

"Don't let them in!!"

Once upon a time the CTEwe leadersheep did not want anyone to see the actual CTEwe budget — you know, the one that was passed amidst protests and confusion at a House meeting in a

Reader word-of-mouth is key... Will Substance survive?

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dazzling display of business as ewesual — and they were prepared to obfuscate the issue as long as possible. Extra accountants and lawyers, all from Larry the Low-Bidders empire, were called in to cook additional sets of books.

"They're putting out a cookbook?" asked Ewenice. "What a great idea! I just love those Bored of Ed butter cookies. They were wonderful. And do you remember that sheet cake they used to make, with the vanilla icing?" she continued. "I can taste it right now. I would love to have the recipe for it. I'll buy two books, as a matter of fact."

Millicent sighed. "Ewenice, they are cooking the books. It isn't a cookbook."

There was a pause. "Oh," she said, disappointed. "I see."

O.I.C. 🍏

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A Grim Fairy Tale

Let Us Give Thanks

By Sister Grim



Once upon a time it was fall in the windy city of Chicago, located in the sorry scandal-ridden cheapskate state of Ill-A-Noise, and the membersheep of the CTEwe were even more worn out than ewesual. The weather was unseasonably cold and rainy, and the autumn leaves of red and gold had already come and gone, drifting by the leaky schoolhouse windows that had been installed by the typically no-bid alleged low bidders. It was a depressing time to be a teacher.

In the local nightly news, stories about government corruption at every level competed with incessant, annoying campaign commercials, wherein everyone made promises that could not, or would not, be kept. In some circles, the election results were already a foregone conclusion, since the famous deceased voters of Chicago and Crook — oops — Cook County had heretofore cast their baallots. Sort of like the typical CTEwe election, if one thought about it.

School was lurching along, but it was becoming more difficult every day. Most of the problems were not new. They were the constant realities of urban public education, including, but not limited to: class size (too big); special education aides and school security guards (endangered species, with only a few remaining); books and materials (too old and too few), and buildings (far too many) that were always in disrepair, owing to decades of neglect.

"Complain, complain," said Nancy Naive. "You know, when I was first invited to join the CTEwe, and especially when I was pledged by that nice EwePeeCee sorority, I remember how everybody was talking about Our Pal Paul, and how he fixed up the schools. I don't understand how anyone could criticize all of his efforts."

"Oh yeah?" said Les Izmore. "Are there windows in your classroom?"

"No," she admitted reluctantly. "I mean, there are windows, but they wouldn't stay open, so I filed a grievance with the CTEwe, and the engineer nailed them shut. I got a nice new air conditioner the very next day. As a matter of fact, my field drip came by to see it being installed. It's great to have such a wonderful ewenion behind us," she sighed.

"And the fences, too," she added.

"Fences? You mean the guys who buy up all the stolen computers and band instruments?"

"No, silly. I mean those beautiful wrought-iron fences around the

schools. Our Pal Paul did that, too, with the guidance of the EwePeeCee. It's really no wonder that Philadelphia stole him from us. Our loss is their gain," she concluded. "I mean, our Arne is great in is own way, but he's no Paul."

Millicent Militant and Ewenice, who was still Toonice for her own good, were flabbergasted, and just stood there, speechless. There were many pressing problems that they wanted to talk about, least of which concerned the rapidly rusting pseudo wrought-iron fences running around the perimeters of most of the school buildings. Rumor had it that Larry the Low-Bidder was none other than Larry the EwePeeCee Lawyer.

There was the incessant infusion of so-called new teachers, who were actually graduates of the Big Baad Bored's 8-week fast-track course in classroom methods, many of whom were embarking upon a career in education until the next politically correct fad came along. Most of them simply quit once they realized what a challenging chore teaching could be, and they left vacancies that were almost impossible to fill once the school year had begun.

And, lest we forget, there was the issue of a huge new crop of administrators. A veritable plethora of psychotic prince- and princessipals had been let loose on the CTEwe membersheep, and it wasn't pretty. It could have validated the excessive number of field drips but for one little fact. None of them cared one whit about the membersheep.

It was also an interesting fact of life for the membersheep that the CTEwe dues kept going up. And up.

Except for the little calendar book, most of the membersheep wondered where all that money went once it was liberated from their take home pay.

"They have lots of expenses," volunteered Nancy, naively. "They have to have nice offices, like all important world leaders. And they have to have nice clothes and nice cars in case they have to go to meetings and things. You wouldn't want them to dress like teachers and look shabby, would you?"

"Wouldn't bother me too much," said Millicent.

Several of the more alert membersheep had also noticed a curious correlation between the ever-escalating CTEwe dues and the decidedly diminished CTEwe treasury; there was an obvious relationship to the number of newly appointed special assistants to

the assistants to the directors of the CTEwe leadersheep. Many of them were newly retired double and triple-dippers, having previously been teachers and field drips and special special assistants, already receiving sizable pensions. Now they were on the CTEwe payroll once again, with many serving as retiree delegates who could skew votes at House of Dull-a-Gates meetings. Of course, that never was necessary, since the sergeants-at-arms always used the Reece method of counting, which was simple and foolproof: pick a number out of the air, stick with it, and yell louder than anyone else in case of a protest.

At the same time, the stable of field drips kept expanding. Once a EwePeeCee member earned enough Pammy Points, they immediately aascended to the rarified world of field dripdom. They were relieved of classroom duties, were immediately transferred to the opulent CTEwe offices at the Merchandise Maaart, and began making twice as much money as a lot of teachers. Whether they had the requisite knowledge or skills for such a position was totally beside the Pammy point, so to speak.

Just then, back at the faculty lounge, Scott Skeptic, journalism teacher-in-exile, dropped by for his weekly visit. "Pssst," he said, brandishing a small leather-bound booklet. "Look what I found."

"Oooh, how cute," said Ewenice. "What is it?"

"It's a manual on earning Pammy Points," he said. "I sort of found it."

Millicent grabbed it from him. "Let me see that."

Everyone gathered around as she flipped through the pages. "It's amazing," she finally concluded. "I wasn't paranoid after all. They do get points for being mean to us at meetings, and being rude and pushy, and totally ignoring Robert's Rules of Order."

"Who's he?" queried Nancy.

"So, with all that dues money we donate from every paycheck, why isn't there ever anyone around to defend us?" wondered many of the membersheep as the news media embarked upon yet another series of teacher-bashing articles.

And it was true, saaadly enough.

Headlines screamed about excessive teacher absenteeism.

Millicent Militant shook her curly head in disgust. "This is so unfair," she observed. "And misleading, too."

"Right," agreed her friend

Ewenice. "You really have to get almost to the end of the story to find out that not all teachers are abusing the sick leave policies of our benevolent Bored of Education. It's some of the teachers, some of the time."

"Right. Some of it is pretty egregious, but over all, most teachers are there most of the time."

"But that's not what people see when they pick up the Scum-Times, or the Scabune," said Millicent. "I've been doing some independent research on my own, and guess what? There are lots of legitimate reasons to be absent."

"Especially in elementary schools," added Clara Clark, the clerk. "I have friends there, and they can have as many as 35 to 40 little kids in class. Do you know how many germs they are exposed to every single day?"

"Absolutely," agreed Ewenice. "And I know that most of them keep on working until they just can't do it anymore. But that's not good, either, because they might be passing something contagious along to other people in the building."

"And don't forget one other thing," said Scott. "They will use the teacher absence rates to explain poor test results. Then they can totally ignore all the other problems."

"Well," observed Millicent, "maybe there's a good side to it. At least they're not accusing us of cheating on the tests, for a change."

"But why don't our leadersheep defend us?"

"Why don't they send letters to the editors of the newspapers?"

"Why don't they hold a news conference from their fancy new conference room? Isn't that what is was intended for? That's what they said when they installed all the plasma tvs and that elaborate super-satellite hookup."

"They are our elected leadersheep. It's their job to stand up for us," concluded Les.

"Well," Nancy interjected, "maybe if more of you had voted for them last time, they would feel a bit more obligated to help you now. But since lots of members really didn't —" she stopped abruptly, hand over her mouth.

"Tales out of secret meetings??" asked Scott.

Well, once upon a time it was the end of October-tober, and the selected leadersheep of the CTEwe were engaged in something far more important than writing letters or defending the membersheep, for whom they had nothing but contempt.

Subscripts



...One of the mysteries of the past three years is who is behind the attack on special education services in Chicago's public schools. Everyone in town knows that Mayor Daley is ultimately responsible for every major policy at CPS, so it's safe to target the mayor with the blame. But within the system there has to be someone driving such an inhuman policy. And it is a policy that's coming from the top. It first became visible with the closing of Spalding three years ago and was well into implementation when Arne Duncan attacked the widely praised program for children with autism at LeMoyne Elementary School two years ago. Rummaging through out files, we came across the picture above, showing our two prime candidates (after Daley and Duncan). On the left is Pedro Martinez, the CPS budget chief. Behind Pedro is David Vitale, variously titled "Chief Administrative Officer" and sundry other things since Arne breathlessly announced his appointment nearly four years ago (in February 2003). Hailed for his "business experience", Vitale has caused most reporters to go brain dead in his presence because he has been working for \$1 per year (honest, it's in the budget) at CPS since 2003. Vitale and Martinez are not the only CPS officials who worship at the altar of "the bottom line," but they are the most important...

...In the New Age of the New Media, everyone knows you can cover Chicago news best from New York City. Just ask Catalyst guy Alexander Russo, who also runs the blog "District 299.com." Russo recently said good-bye to Chicago, but continues to believe he can cover the news about CPS from his new home. Apparently, Catalyst does, too. Our boy's still a "Contributing Editor" at the voice of corporate "school reform" in Chicago...

...Speaking of corporate "journalism", we'd also like to note that Catalyst has reappointed Peter Cunningham, out of "external affairs" and back into "communications" (sort of). It turns out that despite last summer's Catalyst report that Cunningham was getting a promotion, nothing of the sort took place, sort of maybe. According to the latest Catalyst, Mercedes Laing — who has no teaching experience and no credentials to work in any Illinois public school district except Chicago — is now "chief of internal and external affairs" for CPS and has become one of the top 50 executives (in terms of pay) in the third largest school system in the USA. To be more specific. On September 27, 2006, less than three months after it voted to gut special education services and a large number of necessary central office people (don't believe us: check out the mess from last summer in Human Resources, for example), the Chicago Board of Education voted unanimously, without discussion or debate, on a mo-

tion from Arne Duncan to appoint a "New Employee" named Mercedes A. Laing to the position of "Executive Officer of External Affairs" in the Office of External Affairs at an annual salary of \$132,500. According to the Board Report, signed by Arne Duncan and co-signed by the Board's lawyer and Chief Financial Officer, Laing's \$132,500 annual salary was in the budget all along. "The expenditure involved in this report is not in excess of the regular budget appropriation," Duncan wrote. Trouble is, there is no appropriation for such an officer or office in last year's budget, and this year's budget is such a mess (try and read 1,000 pages on a CD in PDF format if you don't believe us) that nobody will ever know...

... As we watched Lincoln Park High School principal Bessie Karvelas try to double talk and Newspeak herself out of the truth, it was interesting to note that one of the crazy things done at Lincoln Park in the aftermath of the Great Purge was the interruption (via the intercom) of the I.B. student's Theory of Knowledge examination. Fans of classical thought know that the I.B. has the kids read real texts (as opposed to sound bites, talking points, and text message babble) like Hegel's "Phenomenology of Mind." It struck us that another good reading from that general era would have been Goethe's Faust — all that stuff about "Zwei seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust..." and so on and so forth. The theology part. The question that keeps coming up as we watch Chicago evolve and bring new levels to our definitions of "craven" is what was the price of a person's soul in the late 1990s and early 2000s? Clearly, a 5,000 square foot house in Downer's Grove (a step up from Glen Ellyn?) and the right to demand that people call you "Doctor" (give us a break — Nova University's ed leaders program? The same one pioneered in Chicago by that pedophile whose name we've finally forgotten) isn't enough. Soul price? As in Faust; or "The Amazing and Tragical History of Dr. Faustus" or even "The Devil and Daniel Webster". We think in Chicago it's six figures. That's right. From the Mayor's Press Secretary to Chicago's principals, anyone with status anxiety and a craving to crawl the mall spending without guilt has set the current price of a soul at around \$100,000 a year. We'll leave it to others to dissect that one. In the current world of wealth, a \$100,000-per-year gig like a Chicago principalship pales by, say, comparison with one day's capital gains and dividends on, say, the Bush family portfolio (the real one; not the abbreviated version released at tax return time). Goethe and Hegel would have recognized the type. Hopefully, the teenagers who are studying the original classic texts (and realizing what a joke the people who think Cliffs' Notes does the job are) will write up a version or two of this year's "Faust". We suspect, however, that it will be more comic than tragic, because people who sell their souls (or whatever else) for a few pennies deserve more ridicule than remorse....

... "Blog" (as a verb, derived from the original "Web Log", which was shortened to "Blog" in Cyberspace) has now entered the dictionaries at cyberspeed. Given the usual evolution of jargon, there are probably already variations on "Blog" (re-blog; un-blog?). We suggest another: **Deblog**. Beginning this month, Substance will present a

monthly summary of stuff that gets "deblogged" on Chicago's more famous Weblogs. Deblogging takes place when the emperor of a blog removes the stuff he/she/it doesn't like. Three months ago, Substance editor George Schmidt began joining the blogosphere at "District 299.com", operated by a Catalyst guy named Alexander Russo. "District 299.com" became especially interesting when it became a regular forum for a lot of exotic spin meisters. There is Mike Klonsky (the small schools guy who can never explain why wealthy white kids get to go to large comprehensive public schools, while in Chicago's ghetto "small" (and segregated) is a great "progressive" idea. Soon after Klonsky, came Peter Cunningham (chief of propaganda for CPS). Finally, there was Phil Hansen (former CPS "accountability" chief). Hansen was dubbed "Chief Perjury Officer" by Substance after he lied under oath in federal court about the amount of damage caused by Substance's 1999 publication of the CASE tests. Within a month, Blogmeister Russo was miffed at the content of Schmidt's posts (although he claimed it was the length). By October, Russo was simply "deblogging" everything Schmidt put up. Another example of corporate "school reform" censoring content that's outside the narrow range of official debate? You be the judge. Head over to "District299.com" for a visit, then ask what's been left out of each thread (and why). There has already been a good bit of discussion in media circles about the way that most bloggers hide behind "anonymous" fig leaves and whether it is ethical for a reporter to quote a blogger who is not identified. (Answer seems to be: If the reporter can get away with it). Anyway, we'll figure out how to make the "Deblogged" information available here and on the Substance website each month. Eventually, since this is science, not spin, we'll see what categories of commentary are most likely to be deblogged...

...Everybody who pays attention to Chicago's mayor knows that Chicago has a "residency policy" that requires every cop, firefighter, teacher, teacher assistant, garbage truck driver, etc., etc., etc. to live in the city. Heck, without the residency policy, the 19th, 11th, 45th and 41st wards would probably empty out. Chicago would be like the movie "Coptown" (about New York City, where all the police officers live across the river in New Jersey or up the river in Yonkers). No Siree! Chicago has a RESIDENCY POLICY. Just ask Chicago's imperial mayor. Elmwood Park, Norridge, DesPlaines, Evergreen Park and even little Calumet Park don't have to worry about being swarmed by armed men and women from Chicago's northwest and southwest sides moving out to the safer suburbs and for better schools. Chicago has a RESIDENCY POLICY. Right. Except for... At its October 25 meeting, unnoticed by our colleagues in the rest of the media, Chicago's Board of Education passed exceptions to the "Residency Policy" that would ultimately apply to more than 10,000 employees of the Chicago Board of Education (rough estimate; read on) if Chicago ever tried to enforce the policy against one of the people currently in a "special needs" area who was caught living, say, in Orland Park. The list of "special needs" areas stretched from "a" to "m" in the Board Report. That means you don't have to follow the

residency policy if you're being hired in a special needs area. As of October 26, 2006, the CPS residency policy does not apply to: *special education teachers; math teachers; science teachers; librarians; school psychologists; guidance counselors; speech pathologists; school nurses; reading teachers; bilingual teachers; physical education teachers; ROTC military instructors; and sign language interpreters*. That's all in Board Report 06-1025-RS2, which was approved without debate by the Chicago Board of Education on October 25...

...According to the Chicago Sun-Times, nothing worth reporting happened at the October 25, 2006, meeting of the Chicago Board of Education. According to the Chicago Tribune, the only thing that happened that day was that Arne Duncan proposed a new "writing" program. Somehow, you'd think that spending \$45 million on "supplemental educational services" would be worth at least a small note, but that wasn't reported (except here). That's right. During public participation, there were protests about the Lincoln Park High School library being decimated (to save the cost of one teacher salary), special education services being gutted (as part of a "necessary" cut of \$26.5 million), and security being reduced to the point where schools (reporting October 25 — Penn and Harper; having a gang riot the next day, Bogan) are more dangerous than ever. At every point, Board President Rufus Williams and CEO Arne Duncan (who is speaking less and less at Board meetings) kept repeating that refrain about money being tight. Then, when everyone was gone, the Board voted (as usual without discussion or debate) to approve Board Report 06-1025-ED2 to hire 53 different companies and individuals to provide tutoring and other after school services. Since some of those companies are in trouble elsewhere for ripping off the taxpayers, you'd think our press colleagues would show at least some interest. But they didn't. Anyone who counts on the city's two daily newspapers to let them know what's happening in the schools or at Board of Education meetings should think twice about how Chicago comes to "know" what's going on...

...Oh, and another thing. The high cost of Mayor Daley's privatization projects continues to bankrupt CPS. Fifteen years ago, most CPS computer work was done in-house by Board of Education employees, with a few contractors helping out. Now most of it is done out house. Take Board Report 06-1025-PR7, which was approved October 25, to pay \$5.4 million to various consultants for computer consulting for: "Application development, support and ongoing maintenance... Data management... Database support and ongoing maintenance... It infrastructure design and management... and Management consulting..."

...Last but not least. While most of the facility abandoned by CPS at 1819 W. Pershing Road is still open space, the Chicago Board of Education has been paying millions of dollars for document storage to a vendor. On October 25, CPS agreed to pay another \$540,000 to "Recall Total Information Management, Inc., a division of Brembles USA, Inc." for "off-site document storage, document pick-up and retrieval services, other associated services, and storage supplies to the Board..."

AfterThoughts

A detailed analysis of the impact of Chicago's cuts in special education...

Slashing Budgets: Destroying Children's Futures

A Designs for Change report, October 2006

[This report and related materials are available at: www.designsforchange.org 814 S. Western Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612, 312-236-7252 (phone) 312-236-7927 (fax). Transforming urban education on a scale that matters © Designs for Change All Rights Reserved]

Acknowledgements: Designs for Change would like to thank the parents, students, and educators who have analyzed the impact of the current special education staff cuts in their own schools and for their own children. We also express our appreciation to the organizations that have been active in analyzing the impact these cuts citywide, including Access Living, Chicago Southside Autism Support Group, Equip for Equality, Family Resource Center on Disabilities, Service Employees International Union (Local 73), and South Side United Local School Council Federation.

Introduction: In June 2006, the Chicago Board of Education cut 200 special education teachers and 750 special education teacher aides, and set a process in motion that is destroying the futures of many of Chicago's most vulnerable children.

Top school system officials claimed that all of the legally-mandated Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) that guide staffing and services for children with disabilities would be hon-



October 31, 2006. Three months after the Chicago Board of Education cut \$26.5 million (out of a budget of more than \$5 billion) from its special education budget, the Blair Early Childhood Education Center, 6751 W. 63rd Place, was unable to provide all of the services necessary to its severely handicapped children, ages three to seven. Blair was one of dozens of examples across Chicago of the cruel impact of the special education cuts. The cuts were done as part of a four-year-campaign of the Duncan administration to reduce special education costs — despite danger to children and federal law. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

ored, despite these cuts. However, experience in the first four weeks of school indicates that this promise is being repeatedly broken. This report describes specific examples of the following:

- Children who were guaranteed

full-time instructional aides are receiving part-time aides, which destroys vital continuity for children with learning or emotional problems. (Roberto)

- Children who need help with instruction are being assigned bus aides and others with no instructional expertise. (Steven)

- Severely disabled students are losing large amounts of instructional time, because their teachers must take over responsibilities to hand-feed or toilet their fellow students. These jobs used to be performed by child welfare attendants (Blair Early Childhood Center).

The cutbacks began last year, when children who were a danger to themselves were denied aides. Megan, an autistic child who licked the floor and would attempt to eat anything she could put in her mouth (such as pencils), was denied an aide because a bureaucrat told Megan's teacher that she was "containable."

The cutbacks in special education services have taken place despite the extremely low achievement and graduation rates for students with disabilities. The percentages of students with disabilities who met state reading standards dropped from 1990 to 1995 at grades 5, 8, and 11 and remain extremely low. In spring 2005, the percentage of students with disabilities who met state reading standards was 11 percent at fifth grade, 17 percent at eighth grade, and 5 percent at eleventh grade.

Accurate graduation rates calculated for high school students with disabilities by Elaine Allensworth of the Consortium on Chicago School Research (and released in this report for the first time) indicate that only 42.4% of students with disabilities who entered high school in fall 2001 graduated in four years and only about 48% will graduate with more time.

When achievement and graduation rates are considered together, 4,947 students with disabilities entered high school in 2001, but only about 125 will both graduate and have "proficient knowledge and skills in reading."

To take resources away from these vulnerable students given these shocking results, instead of improving

their education, is unconscionable.

One casualty of these cuts is the ability of students with disabilities to succeed in the "least restrictive environment," which is often the regular classroom. Skilled teacher aides are vital to enable students with moderate or severe disabilities to succeed in regular classes.

Taking such vital support away leads to the illegal segregation of students with disabilities, of which the Chicago Board and Illinois State Board were found guilty in the late 1990s in the Corey H. lawsuit.

While the State Board has repeatedly cited Chicago for providing insufficient numbers of teacher aides in past years, the State Board refused to aggressively enforce the law when Chicago cut 750 of these vital staff this summer.

Thus, we strongly support the action of the Corey H. lawsuit plaintiffs to reverse these staff cuts through an injunction and to have the federal court appoint a "Special Master" to ensure that needed corrective actions occur. It is also vital that parents of children with disabilities and educators, press these issues with appointed and elected officials at all levels of government. To get involved, contact Laura at Designs for Change (312-236-7252, ext. 242)

1. FOCUS

Approximately 13 percent of the students attending the Chicago Public Schools are classified as having a disability and receive some form of special education services (about 55,000 students). In June 2006, the Chicago Board of Education cut 200 special education teachers and 750 special education aides (special education classroom assistants — SECAs — and child welfare attendants — CWAs) for the 2006-2007 school year, in order to help balance its \$4.7 billion operating budget. This action will potentially save \$27 million, or about .5 percent of the total school system operating budget. [Editor's Note: The Board of Education's total budget, including capital budgets, is well in excess of \$5.1 billion, but there is not space in this article to discuss the decision this year by the Board to eliminate the capital budget from its budget for the first time in more than a decade].

These teachers and teacher aides help fulfill Chicago's legal obligation to provide a good education for Chicago's disabled students, according to federally-required "Individualized Educational Programs" (IEPs) that are developed for each disabled child with the involvement of their parents.

When these special education staff cuts were proposed, special education parents, educators, and advocates argued that these cuts would have a devastating impact on the education of Chicago's most vulnerable children. The school system leadership brushed off their repeated testimony before the Chicago Board of Education, calling their concerns "alarmist." Rene Grant-Mitchell, Chief Specialized Service Officer, asserted before the cuts were formally adopted by the Chicago Board that "...Individual educational plans, designed for each special education student, will continue to be met....As long as we are aware a student is not getting appropriate service, that student will get appropriate service."1

This report analyzes four key questions that help illuminate the just-

Continued on Page Eighteen

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