



## Daley continues attack on public schools... Anatomy of a murder

By Grady C. Jordan

I fully realize that murder is a very strong term. But what mayor Daley, Arne Duncan and the Board of Education are proposing to do to Collins High School evokes very strong reactions from me. Many people are aware that I was the first or "Founding" principal of Collins High School. What is not known by most people is the fact that I was deeply involved with the North

akin to a mission. To now see how Mayor Daley and his Board of Education are going about destroying it in

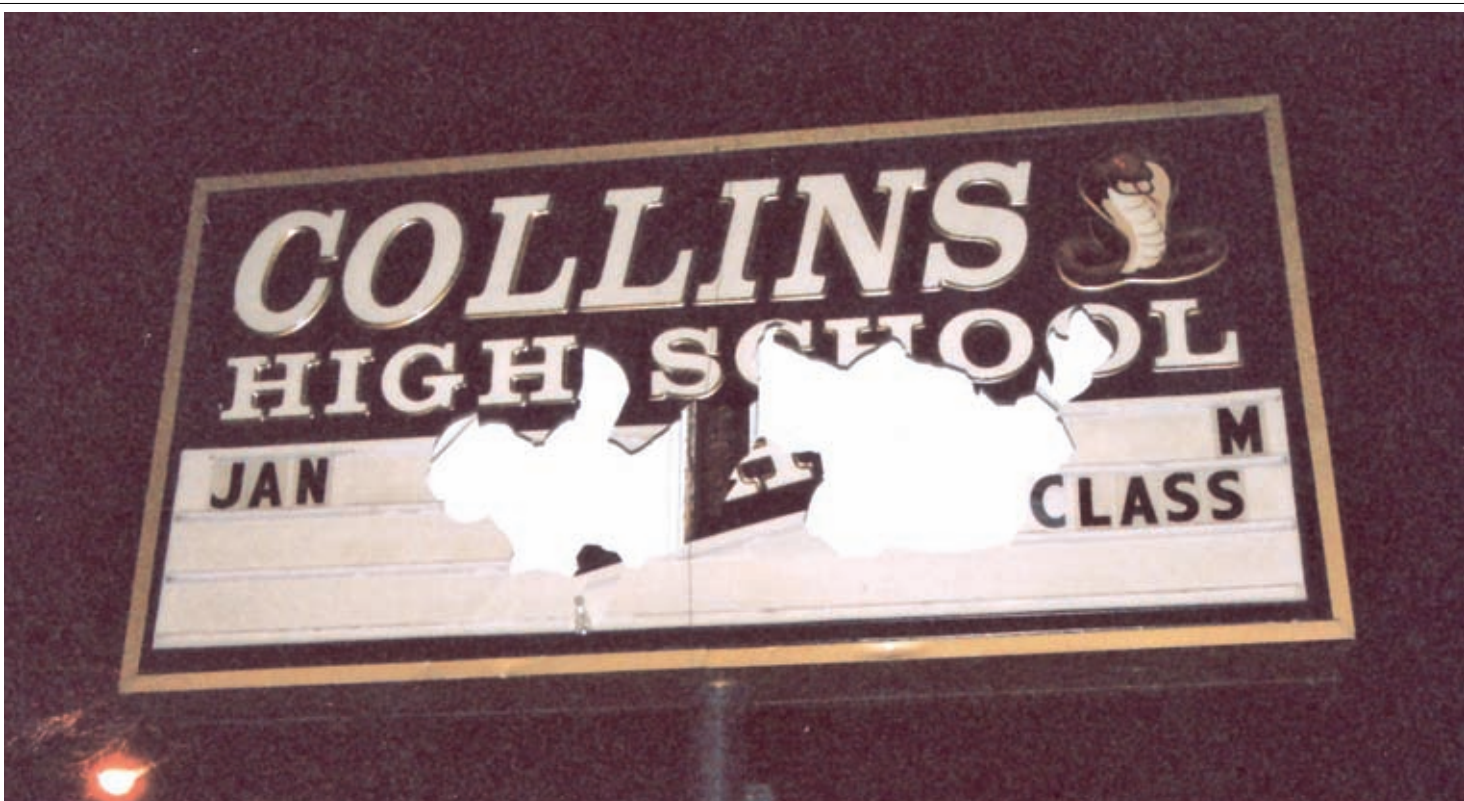
and help from Assistant Principal Learna Brewer, retired. Central office sent in an acting principal with no high

do not understand how Black members of the Principals Association, especially those in leadership positions went along

### Collins High School sabotaged by the Duncan administration

Lawndale Community in their long struggle to get a high school for their children. Then, as now, the Board of Education showed very little respect for the people of North Lawndale. However, those were very strong, determined people, and they refused to quit.

At the time, during the early 1970s, I was director of the Lawndale Urban Progress Center. In that position, I took some actions that were very decisive in securing the final victory. At the time, I had no idea that I would be principal of any Chicago school or if I would ever work for the Chicago Public Schools again. Around that time, I took I took and passed the Principal exam and was then more or less drafted by the community to be the first principal. So for me, being principal of Collins was not "just another job". It was something



Above: After hearing that Collins High School was being closed because it was one of Chicago's "worst" high schools, vandals attacked the sign in front of the school on February 2, 2006. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

such a cavalier fashion angers me.

In 1999, just seven years ago, Collins High School came off probation, one of the few to do so. What happened over those seven years and who has been primarily responsible? The responsibility for the downward slide can be laid squarely on the CPS central office. The principal, Clement Smith, who led the way off probation, with valuable

school experience. The LSC finally selected a contract principal. Paul Vallas, who was CEO at the time, and the Board of Education refused to allow the contract principal to assume the job.

This was the seventh instance that I am personally aware of that Vallas and the Board refused to follow the law. All of those principals so denied were Black. For that and other reasons I still

with naming the Principals Association Headquarters for Beverly Tunney who sat there and did nothing to protect those members jobs.

Over the next few years CPS sent a number of people lacking in experience as high school leaders into the principals office at Collins. Over the past ten years, Mayor Daley and his team

Continued on Page Twelve

### Privatization and Catholicization in the inner city... Englewood High School becomes 'Urban Prep'

By Jackson Potter

Even with the recent federal court ruling lambasting the decision by school board officials in Dover, Pennsylvania to permit the teaching of intelligent design, the Chicago Public Schools decided to treat the holiday season as a time to be holy.

In an act of extraordinary kindness, school CEO Arne Duncan granted new life to the Catholic School System, giving a number of Catholic school based charter proposals the green light. One of the schools, scheduled to replace Englewood High School located at 6201 S. Stewart, is "Urban Prep," a charter school run by former Hales Franciscan principal, Timothy King. Instead of having to raise money to meet his \$1 million dollar annual operating costs at Hales, King has effectively maneuvered to get CPS to pay his bills.



A year ago, on February 10, 2006, dozens of community activists testified against Board of Education plans to phase out Englewood High School. Above, community organizer Hal Baskin, protests the attacks on Englewood. Despite widespread opposition to the plans, the Duncan administration appointed a "Transition Advisory Council" consisting mostly of business executives and politicians with no ties to the school and voted to turn the school over to a Catholic charter school operator. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

The school board voted to close Englewood came almost a year before the vote to give Englewood to Timothy King and his colleagues. As a teacher at Englewood, I have personally witnessed how the closure decision has negatively affected us. We have lost 20 staff members and substantial discretionary funds in less than a one-year period.

The decision to replace an institution that is over 100 years old and serves a community dependent on its services with an untested charter pro-

gram, strikes many impacted by the decision as flawed. While some defend Mr. King, pointing out his roots in the community — both of his grandfathers and his mother attended Englewood High School — others, who were key players in the process, are yelling foul.

One such critic, Etta Davis, is a lifelong community resident and member of the Transitional Advisory Council (TAC). The TAC is the "team" created by the Board to represent the community in the Renaissance 2010 transi-

Continued on Page Thirteen

### Union postpones contract vote... House of Delegates rejects Stewart ploy

By Theresa D. Daniels

CHICAGO. The Chicago Teachers Union House of Delegates convened January 11, 2006 at Plumbers Hall, 1340 West Washington Boulevard.

Continued on Page Six



Irving Park Middle School delegate Ray Wohl and Marquette art teacher Sarah Loftus celebrate the January victory. Substance photo by George Schmidt.



# Editorials

## Substance™

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Closings attack poor children and their teachers again...

## Chicago's cowards and bullies demand you call them heroes

For the fourth year in a row, Mayor Daley's handpicked school board and handpicked school executives — none of whom would be allowed to serve as teachers (let alone executives) in any school system in Illinois outside of Chicago — have told the world it has to close schools in order to save them.

In 2003, Arne Duncan, then in office a little over a year, patted himself on the back and dictated fulsome praise from the reactionary editorial boards of the Chicago Sun-Times and Chicago Tribune, by announcing the closing of Williams, Dodge and Terrell elementary schools. Despite the facts showing that two of the schools (Dodge and Williams) should have been given additional assistance, Duncan and the Board destroyed the schools, and with them the lives of the majority of teachers and students in them.

In 2004, the targeted schools in question were a dozen on the near south side, plus others for a variety of pretexts. Ignoring warnings that the freezing of 9th grade at Austin and Calumet high schools would set off a chain reaction disrupting more than a dozen other schools, Duncan attacked Austin and Calumet and got away with it. The predicted fallout is still being felt by schools as far from the original blasts as Clemente (on the north side) and Chicago Vocational (on the south side). Both of these, and dozens of others, have had to cope with the problems created by the addition of students from the schools that have "frozen" out their freshmen classes.

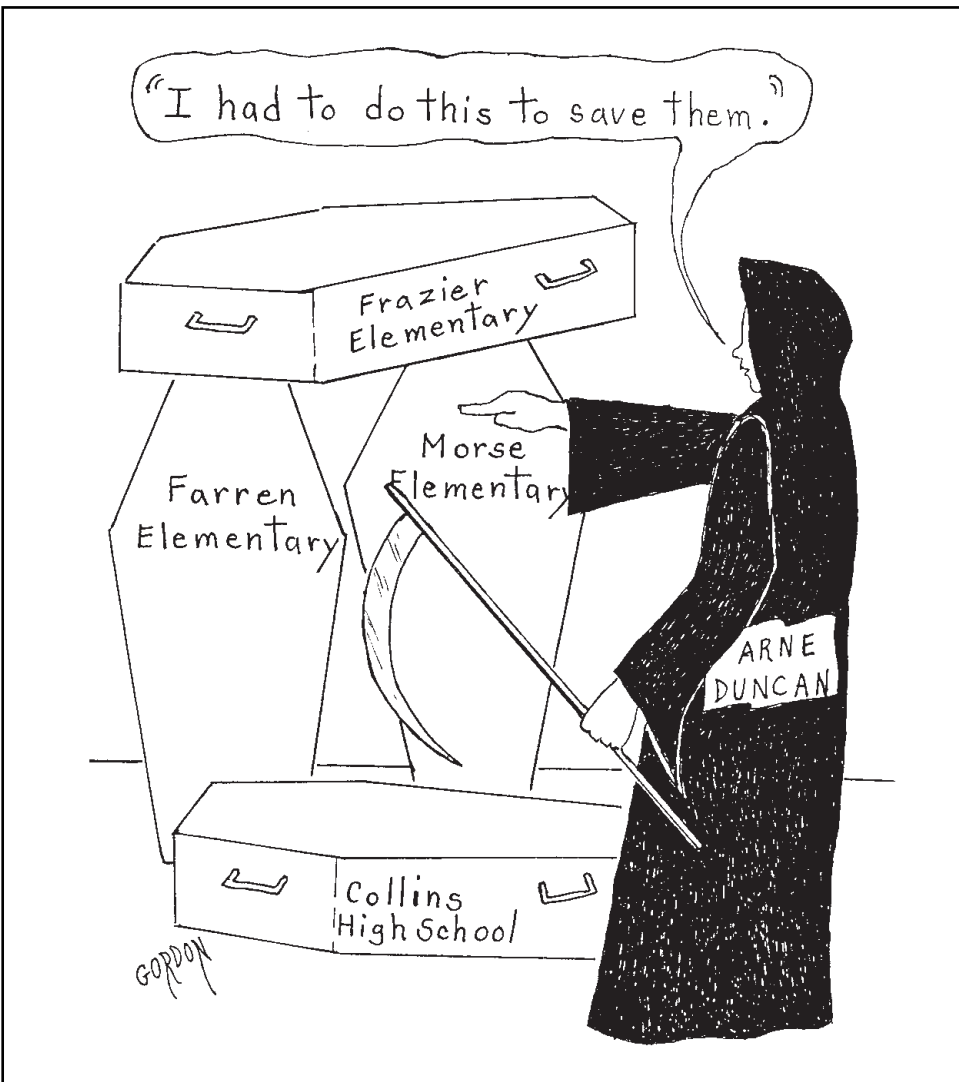
In 2005, the victims were another list of inner city schools, most of them segregated for African American children.

And now it's 2006, and another group of schools are slated for closing. The victims are (mainly) Morse, Faraday, and Farrezn elementary schools and Collins High School. Again, Duncan has told the world that he has to do this for the children. Amid another round of lurid talking points, Duncan, Board of Education President Michael Scott, and their public relations handlers claim that the only way to "save" the children at these schools is to close the schools, disperse the children, destroy parental power (in the form of Local School Councils), and lie about the results.

Yes, lie.

Every time Duncan has done this, the majority of the children and teachers have had their lives and careers disrupted or even destroyed. The first year of this fiasco, when children were transferred from Dodge to Grant (among other schools) one of the first things that happened to the Dodge children was that they were attacked — physically — by the children from Grant. The Grant kids, not knowing any better, blamed the Dodge kids for making their school "dumber." After all, the logic went, the kids who were being closed out because their school was "dumb" were not about to help another struggling school get "better."

Less than two years after Grant was used by Duncan to "save" the kids from Dodge, Duncan closed Grant. A few months ago, Duncan turned the Grant building into the "Phoenix Mili-



tary Academy". The attempt to keep "Phoenix" inside the "Orr High School Campus" (another story, for another time) had failed, and Duncan had shuttered Grant just in time to accommodate Phoenix, another of Mayor Daley's fascist fantasies.

A month ago, Duncan claimed that the closing and reopening of schools had "helped" the kids.

This is a lie.

What Duncan has done, with the help of his corporate friends, is purchased a couple of reams of dubious "research" which he trots out to prove his points until people demand that he provide all the information and details. Then Duncan says: "I'll get back to you

on that" and never does. At this point in history, the number of "research" mercenaries available to cook the educational books to fit Duncan's mendacious version of reality is dwindling almost as fast as the number of CIA analysts who will tell the world that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction three years ago.

Duncan's lies are many, but the biggest and most ugly at this point in history is the lie that claims that the children who have been destroyed by his school closings have actually been helped. If this month achieves nothing else, ending that lie will make all the effort worth it. 🍏

## Obama should avoid 'No Child' mistake

No sooner was the January Substance in print than we received calls and messages asking whether we were serious in our unequivocal opposition to a renewal of 'No Child Left Behind.' One person asked whether we were ready to debate Illinois Senator Barack Obama on the issue.

Blessedly, Senator Obama was not in Washington the last time 'No Child Left Behind' came before the U.S. Congress. Sadly, his colleagues from Illinois voted for the terrible legislation, even while some of them were opposing things like the Iraq War, which we place at the same level of mistakes of the Bush Years. 'No Child...' is not going to get better with age, and no tinkering can improve it.

Obama and other so-called 'progressive' political leaders should break with 'No Child...' this year. By the next time it comes up for renewal, the damage will have been so vast that it

will take decades for public education to recover.

If Obama and his progressive colleagues want us to assemble testimony from a dozen or two reputable critics of 'No Child Left Behind' we can do so. But an even better, and less expensive, way of handling the problem can be done within Obama's own family. As most people in Chicago know, Obama's wife, Michelle, is a proud graduate of Chicago's Whitney Young Magnet High School. Here is our suggestion: Mr. Obama should ask his wife for a list of the best high school teachers she had while at Young. Many of them are still teaching. Then Sen. Obama should call us for a list of some of the best high school teachers working within three miles of Young. We'll supply that. If Obama finds one decent teacher in support of 'No Child...' we'll go to Washington. If not, he should drop the idea and oppose NCLB. 🍏



# Resistance News

## Do we need to emulate the librarian of Basra to save books for children? Ohanian speaks in Chicago area

By John Whitfield

Susan Ohanian spoke at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Statewide Conference for Teachers of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students on January 25th and 26th in Oakbrook, Illinois. She spoke on the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy (DIBELS) Madness and the threat of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Susan's presentation was a call to action, as she presented her insider's look at the inadequacy of the NAEP reading assessment, and why you should care.

Ms. Ohanian, the author of more than a dozen books, representative of the Vermont Society for the Study of Education, and the "Resistance News" editor for Substance, spoke of the motives and the real agenda of corporate America, and why they are bashing our public schools. Much of her talk has also appeared in her book (with Kathy Emery) "Why is Corporate America Bashing our Public Schools?" and in her monthly articles here in Substance.

One of the first things Ohanian did was remind "Blue State" listeners from places like Illinois that the problem we face with high-stakes testing has had bipartisan support. Long before a bipartisan coalition made "No Child Left Behind" the law of the land, the same pressures to misuse standardized tests in the name of "school reform" had already swept Chicago, which began this regime in 1995 when Mayor Daley took over the city's public schools.

"The "Testocrats" have not arisen from a right wing conspiracy," Ohanian said. "Though George Bush Sr. had a plan in the late 1980's, Bill Clinton, as governor of Arkansas, took part in Bush senior's 'Education 2000 Summit.'" Clinton wanted something national, and now the NCLB with teeth is just a reinforcement of those previous agendas. The original votes for "No Child Left Behind" came from Republicans and Democrats. Clinton praised Richard Daley's Chicago version of "school reform" in his State of the Union messages in the late 1990s, long before "No Child Left Behind" had a name and more than a thousand pages of text.

Susan pointed out that professional levels ("standards") that were way too high were as much an attack on public schools that serve all children as the testing programs ("accountability") that enforce them. She also maintains that the majority of teachers and parents oppose these perversions when they are presented honestly, but that our voices are drowned out by corporate media voices and manipulation when we dare complain.

"They talk about, 'jobs for the global economy', but in reality jobs are basically the same," she said. As she and other critics have noted, many of the high-tech jobs that supposedly require strict high school "standards" are being outsourced to Asia. They are leaving the USA not because there are more trained people in other nations, but because (mostly) American corporations can pay people in places like India or China far less for the same work. In her work, Ohanian challenges people to think behind every cliché currently being spread as part of corporate "school reform."

Ohanian took on many of the



Above: Susan Ohanian presented two sessions on January 25 and January 26

for Illinois bilingual educators. Substance photo by John Whitfield.

critics of American public education who are funded by the same corporations. In particular, she cited the "Education Trust" which constantly is quoted in the corporate media about the "Achievement Gap."

"Education Trust says a high school diploma is worthless," she said. But, Ohanian counters, "the rest of your life may be worthless without one." She notes regularly that many of the strict "standards" now mandated under "No Child Left Behind" are simply forcing students who once followed vocational and other tracks to leave high school.

Though Susan agrees that college education isn't for everybody, a huge number of kids are being pushed out, and not allowed to pass. And people in the service industries are not being paid a living wage.

She cites an example familiar to readers of Substance. For example, 522

African American students in Birmingham, Alabama were pushed out of high school after the state of Alabama threatened to take over their schools because of high numbers of "failures" on standardized tests. Test scores went up because the kids who were scoring lowest were kicked out of school. In response, one Birmingham activist protested and was fired from a teaching job there. He went on to found an alternative school called "World of Opportunity" (WOO) to serve those students who were pushed out by Birmingham to raise the public high schools' test scores.

Susan said she learned from her friend, Steve Orel (who speaks five languages) not to use the word "dropout." Many kids drop out because of poverty and many are forced out, as they were in Birmingham. [A discussion of this question began in the Letters section of the January Substance].

She also warned her audiences to beware of the current national move to use DIBELS with young children. To take a closer look at DIBELS, go to <http://usse.net/dibels> (not the official), and / or "DIBELS, What it is, and What it does", edited by Ken Goodman, to find out how this instrument has impacted children's lives. The DIBELS information is free and can be downloaded.

The Orwellian abuses of language are not limited to discussions of national security or the War in Iraq, but are also a major part of the current situation facing public schools. One needs to watch out for "weasal" (suspect) words such as "highly qualified teacher", and "education reform". "Just what are they reforming?" Ohanian asked her audience.

One thing that hit home for me was Susan saying beware of the word "rigor." Many of us in Chicago have been told to make our classes more rigorous. Is "rigorous" always what children need? If you think "rigor" is a good thing look it up, as Ohanian did. You'll find it defined, "a cruel act, cruelty, severity of life." Her discussion got me to thinking about my ESL classes from the previous year, misleadingly trying to ratchet up the English class work because of administrative orders, which only turned the kids off. I wore them out, and they lost interest.

She pointed out that a major problem facing all teachers is the use of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As she has reported previously in Substance, she noted that Florida Governor Jeb Bush was on the NAEP board. NAEP — the National Assessment of Educational Progress — is unthinkingly called "the nation's report card" by many in the media who don't examine what NAEP reports and why. It is a matter of anything that will allow the private sector to take over public education. What is happening needs to be documented. Susan thinks the tide is turning, because more people are speaking out.

Susan ended talking about "the Librarian of Basra", by Jeanette Winter, an account of how a heroic librarian who saved some books. The book was passed around. The scene was March 2003. "Shock and Awe" was in full swing in Iraq. Everyone knew, thanks to the American media monopolies, that Saddam Hussein had to be overthrown because he had "WMDs" (weapons of mass destruction). "Embedded" reporters travelling with soldiers turned the death and destruction into something like a high-adrenaline video game.

Iraq — under various names — has been a place with a history that can be traced back more than 2,500 years. Books and historical records have always been treasured there. The Bush administration's main ally in the Iraq invasion and occupation, Great Britain, was moving on the city of Basra in southern Iraq. Knowing that British troops were coming and that Iraqi soldiers were on the roof top of her library, the librarian knew that the library would be the scene of a battle. Though the library burned to the ground, the librarian of Basra managed to save 30,000 books.

Susan Ohanian was in Chicago to remind us that now it is for us to rescue our profession. Her website is: [www.susanohanian.org](http://www.susanohanian.org)

### "A means F, B means G, C means H, and D means J. ..." Massive screw-up on New York City tests

By George N. Schmidt

A January 18, 2006, article in The New York Post reminded anyone paying attention once again that the companies that produce high-stakes tests make more mistakes than the average classroom teacher, but never have to say "We're sorry" because the tests themselves are considered sacrosanct.

"Stressed-out seventh-graders taking a standardized exam to determine whether they'll be promoted got an unusual English lesson yesterday," the Post reported. "A means F, B means G, C means H, and D means J. The lecture was repeated by teachers for about 72,000 pencil-gnawing city students who sat for the state English Language Arts test — and were given answer sheets rife with errors."

The problem? For five of the exam's 26 multiple-choice questions with answer options of A, B, C and D, the bubble sheet for answers offered students choices of F, G, H and J.

"The mistake was magnified by

the fact that the test for the first time is being used by the city to determine whether a student should be elevated to the eighth grade," the Post reported.

Students across the state took the test, but the answer sheet blunder was confined to New York City. The city, like other school regions, devised its own answer sheet and got approval to use it from the state. State and city education officials said testing coordinators in the city caught the error about a half hour before the 50-minute test was to begin at 9:15 a.m. In most cases, they said, teachers were told of the error in advance of the exam.

"Randi Weingarten, president of the United Federation of Teachers, said the error wouldn't be so significant if the exam wasn't so important, and called on the city to end high-stakes testing," the Post reported. Every state and city that has closely examined high-stakes tests has found major problems, but the tests remain sacred and, in most cases, secret from the public.🍏

# Resistance News

## Strategic thoughts... A Better World is Possible, But Justice Demands Organization

By Rich Gibson

My last article in Substance ended with this, “So how do poor and working people end the soldiering, answer the social crises in schools and out? Pivotally positioned in the centripetal organizing point of civic life, school workers must go well beyond the schools to fashion an answer to war, racism, and the relentless attacks on wages, benefits, working conditions, and life itself.”

To reiterate the thoughts that led to that question:

(1) There is an international war of the rich on the poor intensifying every day,

(2) In the U.S., this truly class war appears as an invasion of the world by U.S. elites to win key raw materials, cheap labor, and above all, social control through military might and the predictable divide and rule maneuvers that elites have used for centuries,

(3) Within the U.S., this means an assault on all aspects of life, that is, on conditions of work, on human relationships, on reason itself (rising irrationalism, as in the Intelligent Design movement), and on freedom and creativity (constant surveillance coupled with daily regimentation),

(4) Poor and working people resist these attacks on our lives, as we must, as demonstrated by worker action from the California grocery strike to the Detroit teachers’ wildcat strike,

(5) But the resistance is often thwarted by the betrayals of union leaders, bogus community leaders, quislings, who see their own interests more closely tied to elites than to the rank and file—and consistently not only sell us out, but disorganize, disarm, us,

(6) While no one without a crystal ball can really predict where poor and working class resistance will break out next, or exactly where it will lead, it is reasonable to suggest that the key choke points in U.S. society today are (a) the military, (b) the medical system, and (c) schools, as jobs in these sectors are absolutely pivotal to U.S. society, each is under severe pressure, and none can be really outsourced, unlike industrial work,

(7) It is not possible to say that one choke point is primary over another, i.e., that the military is more important than schools, for example, as one feeds into the other; it is easy to trace a kid’s career from school to a military recruiter to a war and on to a hospital (over 18,000 severely wounded in Iraq so far alone),

(8) Even so, schools play a special role in that, on the one hand, schools hold out a peculiar promise in society, that is, if you do a lot of it you will benefit from the experience—even though the primary role of schools in the U.S. is hardly to fashion critical citizens, and, on the other hand, work in schools still offers more freedom than any other wage-work, as evaporating that freedom may truly be. Furthermore, the majority of people in the U.S. organize their lives around schools, not only for education, but for medical care, social services, friendships, sports, and so on. Since no ruler can rely on force to rule in any society where the majority are tyrannized by the few, the velvet glove of schooling over the iron fist of the military is pivotal,

(9) School workers are therefore centripetally positioned to forge social

change in the U.S., though, beleaguered by the current test-frenzy, robbed of their own freedom and skills, driven by the shortage of time that seems inherent to the job,

(10) But passivity is now the main tendency among school workers, i.e., “as long as I am a monk, I’ll toll the bell,” soldiering through the day, allowing racism, opportunism, ignorance, and cowardice appear to be the bywords of the profession to the general public, when the daily struggle to learn in an environment hostile to reason is a notably courageous act. Even so, bogged down in the struggle to maintain a daily life, it is easy to fail to see the relationship of, say, kids’ low test scores and the war in Iraq, to be unable to recognize the relationship of a forthright battle for an ethical daily practice, and the broader fight for a better world where people can lead reasonably free, connected, creative lives.

Let us also review some events from the last two months:

— auto-workers from Delphi demonstrated at the Detroit auto show, picketing both their union and the auto executives, demanding a no-concessions contract.

— New York City transit workers staged a spectacle of a strike, were ordered back to work by their union bosses, then rejected a concessions-based, sellout, contract, by seven votes.

In California, the Oakland “Growing Children,” a charter elementary school principaled by test-resister Susan Harman, was threatened with closure due to low test scores (meaning, 93 % of the kids are on free lunch), by a superintendent imposed on the Oakland community, yet another superintendent/trainee from the Broad Foundation,

— while at Downer school, test resisters were disciplined and transferred, merely for speaking against the Big Tests, and, as we all know, school workers everywhere are besieged with huge classes, decaying facilities, hungry kids, no supplies, the regimentation of every move in the classroom, and relentless demands for high test scores

— College loan funding was cut by \$13 billion,

— Many medical benefits for seniors were privatized. Pensions for auto-workers, airline workers, were gutted, while congress staggered from yet another corruption scandal, and

— Jonathon Kozol released yet another book noticing that U.S. schools are segregated, borrowing the term “apartheid schools,” while Kozol remains utterly muddled as to what to do about it — and California schools were exposed as more segregated than ever by Harvard professor Gary Orfield,

— A teacher strike in Oregon, initially targeting the No Child Left Behind Act, demanding more academic freedom, abandoned that demand in favor of modest wage and benefit increases,

— Gas prices skyrocketed again as the war in Iraq staggered along, the Taliban made a resurgence in Afghanistan—and Israel threatened to attack Iran’s nuclear plants,

— China experienced more worker and peasant uprisings than ever before, over 70,000 on the public record, mostly stemming from the continued enclosure movement that drives peas-

ants from the land only to arrive homeless in big cities, being polluted beyond recognition by the drive for profits.

All these events are but folds in the same cloth. They have the same source; a very real crisis of capital around the world, intense imperial competition, and the class war noted above. We do not have to live this way. Change is possible, both a massive change of mind about the ways we wish to live, and change in the ways we resist. In sum, what is it that we need to know, and how do we need to come to know it, in order to be free — a pedagogical and practical question of life and death.

Resistance to the assaults, however, is piecemeal, none designed to counter the whole of the problem, rather, framed to oppose its parts, its appearances. Even the best school worker unions (and few locals can be considered worthy of the name union) address only their members’ issues (as that is where their money comes from), when school workers desperately need the leadership and knowledge of parents, kids, and community people. As such, the resistance will lose, stripped of its ability to take the strategic initiative, defending one well-deserving martyr after the next, as elites are able to play with foresight on their game-board.

So, what to do? I think there are three interrelated things the resistance must take up: Organization, ethics, and direct action — all drawn from a very careful examination of concrete conditions. This month I will focus on organization and direct action.

### Justice Demands New Forms of Organization

The unions, the common community organizations, like the PTA, etc., are structurally unable, and strategically unfit, to meet this crisis. They are structurally unfit since they divide people far more than they unite them (along lines of job, craft, race, industry, sex and nation), and their internal leadership has a stake in preserving these divisions—in order to preserve their own privileged positions.

They are strategically unfit because they have no desire, no plan, and no potential, to take on a transformational role in the crisis, that is, they all want to preserve the system that created crises. For example, every major union in the U.S., and the school worker unions, openly declares that they will subordinate their own members interests to the interest of the “nation,” i.e., that they will support imperial wars, wage and benefit cuts, concessions, in order to preserve the system itself—abandoning the idea that people form unions because, above all, workers and bosses have contradictory interests.

It follows that new kinds of organizations must be grown. These organizations must structurally be designed to cross false boundaries of nation, race, sex/gender, language, disability, and so on, to unite people as a social class, to do research on existing conditions, and to be sufficiently action oriented to make the research meaningful — and in order to base further investigations on the lessons of social action.

Organization helps to combat the opportunism that is rampant in the work force, in schools and out. Opportunism is chasing the carrot, selecting

the interests of a few and pitting that against the interests of the many. Opportunism pops up in an infinite variety of ways: from abandoning solidarity with other school workers in order to win a slim benefit for ones self, to administering, without complaint, the Big Tests that torment schools, to ignoring the military recruiters (vampires) on campus, to allowing the school system to be sold to a soda company to poison the kids for profits, to aligning the curricula to dishonest state standards. Organization can limit opportunism if it holds people to account, through discussion, struggle, and collective social action. Moreover, organization across boundaries can demonstrate the commonalities of our daily problems, to show their common source, a profit system which alienates all from all, and to give us a collective look at how we might join to solve those problems.

With that kind of structural shift, in schools for example uniting teachers, other education workers, kids (who are usually the activists in social change), parents, and community people, a basis is set for some kind of activity—and the possibility of defending dissidents under attack, solidarity won through the practical knowledge that an injury to one really does just precede an injury to all.

Direct Action is the key for these kinds of organizations in the foreseeable future as Direct Action transforms not only immediate situations (as in high stakes tests), but it also calls upon people to define themselves, as we are what we do, and to change themselves and others as we collectively learn from the actions we take. Direct action is supremely democratic as it tests leaders in full view of others, and demands that leaders take the same risks, or more, than everyone else.

Direct action is vastly superior to legislative or legal action as what is won can be defended over time, and it calls on people to take responsibility for their own lives, rather than searching for others to be conscious and active for us.

In schools, over time, the tactical goal of direct action is the control of work places and communities, not for merely community control, but in order to spread the action to other areas. Let the working people and students, who do the work, hold the reins.

In the immediate future, Direct Action could be aimed at any number of problems, from walkouts and boycotts aimed at high stakes tests, to picketing homes of oppressive bosses, to wildcat strikes, to filing freedom of information requests to demand open release of all rewards made for the many grants that are used to impose discipline on schooling, to cheerful activity like hoot-ins at school board meetings, to leafleting against recruiters, to pouring coke down the drain, or whistle-outs at corporate board meetings, and so on. The point is to involve peoples’ bodies in bold creative action against the empire, for freedom and equality—even if the group is very small.

So far, we have addressed some key trends in school and society, suggested that organization and direct action are key to transforming not only the situation we face, but ourselves, and even pointed to some possible actions—to stop the soldiering and help foment



# ‘Choice’ rhetoric attacks public schools from Florida to Chicago... Florida Supreme Court strikes down voucher law

By George N. Schmidt

On January 5, 2006, the Florida Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional under Florida law a voucher plan supported by Florida Governor Jeb Bush, brother of President George W. Bush.

The Florida Supreme Court struck down the statewide voucher system that allowed children to attend private schools at taxpayer expense — a program Governor Jeb Bush considered one of his proudest achievements and which was promoted by conservatives for other states to emulate. The Florida plan was the nation’s first statewide voucher program.

“In a 5-2 ruling, the high court said the program undermines the public schools and violates the Florida Constitution’s requirement of a uniform system of free public education,” the Associated Press reported.

Voucher opponents had also argued that the program violated the separation of church and state in giving tax dollars to parochial schools — an argument a lower court agreed with. But the state Supreme Court did not address that issue.

About 700 Florida children have been attending private or parochial

schools through the program, the Associated Press reported. But the ruling will not become effective until the end of the school year.

Bush and other opponents of public schools continued to cast the issue in terms of “choice” for poor children, even though voucher and other choice programs have generally favored the wealthy. “I think it is a sad day for accountability in our state,” Bush said. He said the voucher program had a positive effect because it “put pressure on school districts to focus on the underperforming schools.” No studies exist that show that the Florida program was improving public schools.

The voucher plan was a part of one of the most ambitious conservative programs in the nation. Bush’s education program also includes testing (the infamous FCAT test) at virtually every level and a school grading system that offers performance-based rewards and punishments.

Bush said he will look for ways to continue the voucher programs, such as finding private money, changing state law or amending the Florida Constitution. “I don’t think any option should be taken off the table,” the governor said. “School choice is as American as

apple pie in my opinion. ... The world is made richer and fuller and more vibrant when you have choices.”

Under the 1999 law, students at public schools that earn a failing grade from the state in two out of four years were eligible for vouchers to attend private schools.

Chief Justice Barbara Pariente said the program “diverts public dollars into separate private systems parallel to and in competition with the free public schools,” which are the sole means set out in the state constitution for educating Florida children.

The ruling was a victory for public schools across the state and nation, said Ron Meyer, lead attorney for a coalition that challenged the voucher program.

“Students using vouchers will now be welcomed back into Florida public schools,” Meyer said in a statement. “It decides with finality that the voucher program is unconstitutional.”

Anticipating the possibility of an adverse ruling, the governor has been working on a backup plan to keep voucher students in private schools by providing tax credits to corporations that give students scholarships. A form of tax credits are already in place in Illi-

nois and other states where parochial school interests have a major influence on state policies.

The rhetoric of the right continues whether the argument is being made by Arne Duncan in Chicago or by Bush aides in Florida. School that serve high-poverty areas facing challenges on standardized tests are labeled “failing” and then tarred in the media and in the public mind. Clark Neily, an attorney who argued the case for voucher advocates, called the decision “a setback for those parents and children trapped in failing schools.”

At the behest of President George W. Bush, the U.S. Justice Department had filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support the state. Voucher opponents included the state teachers union, the Florida PTA, the NAACP and the League of Women Voters.

The ruling did not directly affect nearly 30,000 students in two other voucher programs for disabled and poor children, but it could be cited as a precedent. The complete decision can be read at the Florida Supreme Court website: <http://www.floridasupremecourt.org> 🍎

## Bush federal budget: Privatization, vouchers, attacks on public schools

By Jim Horn

For those desperate enough to continue to cling to the failed lie of No Child Left Behind, even a quick scan of the neo-conservative proposed federal budget should convince anyone of the misguided and counterproductive nature of that support. Of the 141 programs on the elimination wish list this coming year, 42 of them are at the Education Department.

Here are a few other facts to weigh, while re-considering, perhaps, the continued support of this cynical manipulation called No Child Left Behind:

- \* A reduction in spending for Title 1 in 29 states and flat funding for the rest. The exception is a new \$200 million to smooth the transition of watch-listed schools toward privatization models noted here by the Times: “The single biggest item in the Education Department’s budget, Title I grants to high-poverty schools, would

increase by \$200 million, but that money would go exclusively for school restructuring under No Child Left Behind. For the remaining schools, the money would remain flat, and 29 states would see their Title I allotments decline.”

- \* For those students who don’t wish to go to college or who are not academically fit for the AP track, vocational education has been eliminated to the tune of \$1 billion

- \* Almost half that, \$412 million, will go to the fraudulent ACI (American Competitiveness Initiative), with \$125 million planned for more AP classes (a 280% increase)

- \* Almost a billion and a half (\$1.475) for mandating NCLB testing in the high schools so that, they, too can be demonstrated as failures

- \* \$100 million for private and church school vouchers (America’s Opportunity Scholarships for Kids). Remember the lie, “this is a one-time deal,” when almost a half-trillion went to the

Gulf Coast in vouchers after Katrina? From the Post: “Woven through the budget are several initiatives favored by social conservatives. For instance, the Education Department budget, while proposing to eliminate 42 programs, revives an effort to create vouchers that would subsidize tuition for private or parochial schools. Bush broached the idea in 2001, but it was defeated when Congress passed the major No Child Left Behind legislation that year. The new version would be voluntary and would pay for private tutoring, as well as tuition.”

Not mentioned here are all the other cuts aimed at services for those people who need them the most, from America’s farmers who think that gay marriage is more important than losing their crop subsidies to Connecticut’s NAACP who see the chain gang schools planned by neo-cons for black children as the only alternative to the status quo.

In the meantime, the pressure is on from K Street lobbyists to the White House to keep intact forever all the tax cuts for those rich folks who never needed them in the first place.

**Combined Issue:**  
**The next issue of Substance will appear during the first week of April. This combined February - March issue was made necessary by our reorganization and financial situation. Deadline for letters is March 15, 2006. Deadline for all articles is March 20, 2006. If you are interested in helping sell subscriptions to the print edition of Substance, call the office at 773-725-7502 or e-mail us (Csubstance @ aol.com)**

## Organization

Continued from Page Four

change.

The Rouge Forum and Substance both serve as discussion centers where we can gain and test ideas about organization and action—and perhaps new organizations will grow from that.

Next month, we will address the relationship of means and ends—organizational ethics and the question: Toward What End? And, the following month, we will return to where we began, with a piece on the key trends in school and society — and how to analyze and change them. 🍎 Rich Gibson, teaches at San Diego State University. He is a co-founder of the Rouge Forum ([www.rougeforum.org](http://www.rougeforum.org)), serves on the board of Substance, and is the author of, “How Do I Keep My Ideals and Still Teach?” now available through Heinneman online, free.

## Walton Foundation backing Chicago charter school push

By George N. Schmidt

The Walton Foundation, controlled by the Walton family that owns the majority interest in Wal-Mart, has been contributing to the proliferation of charter schools in Illinois.

According to the foundation’s website, grants have included \$425,000 to the Illinois Network of Charter Schools; more than \$1 million total to various KIPP charter schools (including the KIPP Ascend in Chicago);

The foundation has also been a major supporters of “Teach for America” to the tune of \$1.3 million. “Teach for America” has been widely criticized as a en elite missionary approach to urban public school teaching, where wealthy graduates of elite universities spend a year or two teaching

in the inner city before pursuing their careers elsewhere.

One report stated that more than \$1 million from the Walton Foundation had gone to Aspira’s Chicago charter schools. The controversial schools, which were supposedly modeled on San Diego’s High Tech High School, have so far failed to offer even the most rudimentary technical programs for which they were awarded their charters. The Chicago Board of Education’s procedures for reviewing the performance of charter schools have so far been ignored in the cases of both the Mirta Ramirez Computer Science Charter High School on Western Ave. or at the new Aspira Haugan middle school on Leland Ave. Despite complaints by parents and some community

residents, the Chicago school board continues to criticize regular public schools while ignoring problems that are growing in many of its charter schools.

Aspira leaders have repeatedly refused Substance’s request to tour their schools and interview their leaders, which include two directors at the new Aspira Haugan Middle School and Aspira CEO José Rodriguez. 🍎

**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.susanharian.org](http://www.susanharian.org)**



# Chicago union delegates reject attempt to railroad contract demands before member discussion...

Continued from Page One

In a stunning reversal of business-as-usual, where the Union administration of President Marilyn Stewart is virtually always able to ram through its pre-set agenda and stifle input from delegates, the House of Delegates succeeded in stopping the administration's motion for a rushed approval of the contract proposals for 2007 at this meeting.

The new date set for the consideration of this proposal package is the House meeting of April, 2006.

Supporters of the administration's motion argued that "It's always been done this way," that plenty of time had been given for members' input, that these proposals had gone through all the committees, and that these were only proposals — some of which wouldn't even necessarily appear in the final contract after negotiations.

Despite these arguments, the majority of the delegates voted their conviction that the time they had been given to study the mailed proposal package (possibly as little as three days), let alone discuss it with their constituencies, was inadequate time.

Worse yet, delegates argued, it was only at this meeting that delegates were given separate pages of corrections and changes to the original mailed package of contract proposals. Therefore, delegates said, they had no time at all to study these corrections and changes. Delegates complained that contractual language in general was already minefield enough without the confusion of this type of presentation.

Delegate Ray Wohl, of Irving Park Middle School, argued against the passage of the motion to approve the contract demands. He said that good teachers needed to read the document in its totality before making a decision.

"Even after the Union Professional Problems Committee's (PPC's) and the Executive Board's hard work to get these demands out a year in advance, 10, 11, 12 items were found needing correction....All of us know more than any one of us," Wohl said. He asked for another month to read the document, asking also for the corrections and changes to be incorporated into a new document for teachers to read. He urged that we wait till at least the February meeting to work on approving the contract proposals.

Wohl suggested that the House of Delegates could work on fine-tuning the proposal package at the February, 2006 meeting, and perhaps ratify it at the April meeting, since the March meeting was cancelled because of the Delegates Workshop March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. He added that possibly the proposals could be discussed beneficially during the meetings at the workshop. Other delegates at the microphones voiced similar concerns and proposals.

## President Stewart calls new parliamentarian "an outsider"

After Delegate Ray Wohl spoke, President Stewart threw the meeting into a parliamentary confusion that ensued despite the December, 2005 appointment of a new parliamentarian, Barbara Hillman, who replaced Attorney Larry Poltrock's daughter, Attorney Jennifer Poltrock, as parliamentarian.

While President Stewart has called new Parliamentarian Hillman an "outsider" in her President's Report in the January, 2006 issue of the Union



At the union's January meeting, CTU president Marilyn Stewart claimed that the Chicago Board of Education was beginning to see the light on school closings. Two weeks later, the Board approved another round of closings and Stewart sent vice president Ted Dallas (above) to the Board's January 25 meeting without a prepared statement from the CTU to complain. When challenged by reporters to back up the remarks he had just made, Dallas (above outside the January Board meeting) was unable to provide details. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

newspaper, it is evident that the Poltrocks are definitely insiders.

Attorney Larry Poltrock had to take a leave from serving as General Counsel to the AFT (American Federation of Teachers) to be the lawyer for the UPC (President Stewart's United Progressive Caucus) during the contested Union officer election of 2004.

The AFT then sided with the UPC against PACT (former President Deborah Lynch's caucus Pro-Active Chicago Teachers & School Employees). The Poltrocks are now the firm that does the legal work for the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU).

My calls to the Union officers regarding the new parliamentarian went unanswered, but Parliamentarian Hillman returned my call. She told me she didn't know why she had replaced Attorney Jennifer Poltrock as parliamentarian, but that she was installed just before the December, 2006 meeting.

Hillman told me that the parliamentarian can advise the president during a meeting *only when asked by the President*. She said that she cannot just step in to help direct parliamentary procedure at the meeting. Attorney Hillman said that she had served as General Counsel for the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) for almost forty years.

Stewart did not seek out her advice when needed at this meeting nor the last.

The appointment of a parliamentarian who came from the IFT raised the hope among delegates that the Union parent organization was concerned about the flagrant disregard by the Stewart administration of Roberts Rules of Order, the Union Constitution and the By-laws which govern these meetings.

## President Stewart misrepresents the role of the parliamentarian

In the January, 2006 issue of the Union newspaper, in her President's Report, Marilyn Stewart said regarding the new parliamentarian, "It is unfortunate that we have to use the services of *an outsider* [italics added] in this way; however, the more important task is to make sure the House does the business of the members in a constructive and orderly manner, rather than succumb to the political goals of a few."

Stewart completely misrepresented what a parliamentarian could do at our delegates meetings when she said in the newspaper, "Again, we have made real progress in making sure the House meetings keep to the agenda, and we now have engaged an official professional parliamentarian to assist in that regard."

As if the parliamentarian, who can advise Stewart only if Stewart asks, has the latitude to step in and tell

Stewart that Stewart is running a meeting that does not respect the rules of order. As if President Stewart's agenda isn't to keep the House delegates from bringing up any Union business that is critical of her administration or contradicts the party line she is trying to enforce.

One example of Stewart's mendacity is that while she stated in this written report that one of her major headaches last year was the Lynch budget deficit, she nonetheless managed to hire a greater number of staff and give Christmas bonuses of one or two weeks' salary to staff members last year and this year, something which Stewart does not deny. This was a practice eliminated by former President Lynch during her administration.

Those Union members who went to the Union offices based on Stewart's promises that anyone could make an appointment and come to see

Continued on Page Seven



**Why not legal strategy against Ren 2010?** Despite repeated claims that the Chicago Teachers Union opposes the expansion of Renaissance 2010 and the proliferation of Chicago charter schools, during the past 18 months the union has spent more than \$100,000 on legal fees to promote the policies of the United Progressive Caucus — and nothing on litigation to block charter school expansion or the school closings which are now a centerpiece of Renaissance 2010. CTU attorney Lawrence Poltrock (above left, in white shirt) abolished the union's law department when the UPC returned to power in 2004. Poltrock again receives the union's legal business to his outside firm. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

## CTU website — www.ctunet.com — speaks for itself as another example of UPC incompetence

More than a year-and-a-half after taking office in August 2004, the United Progressive Caucus and CTU president Marilyn Stewart finally updated some of the union's website in early February 2006. The largest amounts of content on the CTU website, however, still come through links with the Chicago Board of Education and the Chicago Teachers Pension Fund. More than half the sections on the new union website are effectively blank, while the website blocks any attempt to communicate directly by e-mail with union staff and officers.

The scandalous elimination of the CTU's own history is one of the major features at the new CTU website (www.ctunet.com). Rather than provide the union's readers (or other Internet visitors) with the actual record of the years (2001 -2004) when Deborah Lynch was union president, the official CTU website simply ends "back issues" of the union newspaper in September

2004. Nothing is available prior to that date — as if union history begins with Stewart's election in 2004.

The Chicago Teachers Union now has the worst website of any major local in the American Federation of Teachers. But readers don't have to take the word of Substance for it. The New York Local website (www.uft.org) is available for anyone to read. Other local unions (Philadelphia Federation of Teachers; United Teachers of Los Angeles) are also easily available. Just Google.

In an age when any computer literate student can immediately check out facts and confirm or refute the claims of public officials, the CTU website may eventually provide humorists with hours of fun. More dishonesty than just historical distortions? Consider: One link at ctunet.com leaves the impression that the annual Chicago White Sox Teacher Appreciation Days are "CTU" events. Not true. Why lie?

— George N. Schmidt



# CTU leaders make speeches against privatization, ‘Ren 2010,’ and charters but take no legal action to stop them...



Above: Despite increasingly dangerous conditions (gang members beating up students outside the school, while the school’s patronage “security” staff does nothing) inside the new \$18 million “Aspira Haugan Middle School”, CTU officials have made no effort to organize the school’s staff. Substance photo February 2006 by George N. Schmidt



Above: Community residents fear the Mayor Daley and Alderman Margaret Laurino plan to give the new Albany Park Middle School to politically connected private contractors, just as Laurino and Daley engineered the giveaway of the Haugan Middle School a year ago. Substance photo February 2006 by George N. Schmidt

Continued from Page Six

staff contracts were never shown contracts which spelled out the perks they received, like possibly as much as 21 percent Union paid annuities added to their already inflated salaries. Other perks that members suspect — unlimited expense accounts, car allowances (of \$750 or more per month), cell phone allowances (at least \$100 per month), Union paid medical and life insurance policies, annual bonuses, “overtime” salary arrangements, and who knows what else since no one was allowed to see the contracts. Prior to the 2001 election of Deborah Lynch, for example, one perk of union staff was a monthly expense account of \$1,500 — \$18,000 per year (as much as some union members earn working full-time) — that didn’t require receipts or other proof.

Other examples of Union business that Stewart works hard to suppress abound. She fears any number of motions by the delegates and so works hard to keep the mikes out of delegates’ hands as much as possible through the “parliamentary maneuvering” with which she charges others in her written newspaper report.

### Parliamentary confusion reigns again

After the delegates spoke at the January meeting saying they needed more time and an orderly presentation of the corrections and changes on the contract proposals, a motion was made to put a time limit for the consideration of each page of the proposal package. “Ten minutes? Fifteen?” some administration-supporting delegates said. When it was pointed out that first the Item for Action (C) itself on the proffered procedures had to be voted up or down, the vote was taken. The No’s had it.

Before the “No” vote took place, as frequently happens at these meetings, President Stewart attempted to take a “Yes” vote of the delegates to close debate for a “Yes” vote to consider the motion on the time the House would allot to each page of the proposal. The first times this happened, some delegates attributed it to inexperience. By January 2006, most delegates had begun saying otherwise.

After the “No” vote on the pro-

cedures, President Stewart skipped over some speakers at microphones, including me, in order to call on Veronica Rieck, delegate from Lafayette School

(and part-time employee on the Union newspaper). Reick was allowed by President Stewart to speak out of turn at her mike several times during the

meeting.

Rieck made a motion that the consideration of the contract proposals be deferred to the February meeting. Without following parliamentary procedure on that motion, Stewart herself then proposed that April would be the best month for this. The delegates agreed, since that’s what they had been saying they wanted. No orderly parliamentary procedure was at work during this part of the meeting.

Stewart said that the contract proposals fully integrated with corrections and changes would be on the Union website for the convenience of the Union members.

Many delegates saw the refusal of the House to be forced to rush through an approval as an index of the Union members’ dissatisfaction with and distrust of President Marilyn Stewart’s administration.

### Meeting again adjourned early

Giffen Trotter, delegate from Burr School, moved to adjourn the meeting just four questions into the official Question Period, a move frequently used to stifle the voice of the delegates during this administration’s tenure. The official Question Period should be given the full title of Question, Comment, and Motion Period because comments and motions, as well as questions, must be allowed.

In these reports, I always try to name the delegate (or in one case Union staff member) who moves to adjourn the House of Delegates meeting before business can be fully conducted.

The official Question, Comment, and Motion Period has already been shunted to the end of the meeting by President Stewart, with the last two items on the agenda, the Committee Reports and “New Business” treated like throw-aways that the House never gets to when meetings are adjourned early.

Ironically, for over 30 years the leaflet included in the delegates’ meeting packet titled “Procedure for House of Delegates Meeting,” while allowing the President to set the agenda, also allowed the House of Delegates to change the order of business. The constitutional

## Harold Washington was model for this... Marilyn Stewart has had a standing invitation for a Substance interview for the past six months!



Hardly a day goes by in Chicago without someone telling us that they “heard” that Substance “lies.” How do they know? Someone called them. Or told them. Or they just “heard.” The people charging us with “lying” are usually getting paid \$100,000 or more per year working for Arne Duncan (example, “Chief of Staff” David Pickens), Mayor Daley, or Marilyn Stewart (whose field reps and other staff spend more time lying about “dissidents” than they do servicing members).

It’s time to set the record straight. More than six months ago, Substance offered to run a lengthy on-the-record interview with CTU president Marilyn Stewart. I told the CTU publicist that this offer was ongoing. As we have reported regularly, Stewart and her staff refuse to return Substance phone calls or clarify issues when we ask.

Some of Stewart’s less resource-

ful supporters simply go around saying that Substance is “racist” because we criticize her and she is a black leader, etc., etc., etc., etc.

For half a year, Stewart has had an opportunity to speak for herself in the pages of Substance. We have repeatedly asked CTU to make Marilyn Stewart available for a Substance interview. The terms are the same we have always offered (see above: Harold Washington in January 1983, interviewed by George Schmidt). (a) The interview must be scheduled before the 15th of the month. (b) We will return a complete transcript by the 20th, so that (c) it can be returned to us by the 25th for publication the following month.

Copies of the exclusive January 1983 interview with Harold Washington (conducted before he became a “serious” candidate for mayor) are available for \$2 from Substance. 🍎

Continued on Page Eight



# Marilyn Stewart has violated union rules for more than eight months trying to avoid a referendum on the mailed ballot...

Continued from Page Seven

by-law that still allows this has been omitted from the recently changed version of the leaflet. This is a moot point, however, since the Stewart administration won't allow delegates to the microphones during the times one would change the order of business.

And with the Question, Comment, and Motions Period (what it should be called) frequently truncated by early adjournment, no independent delegate motions get to be made. Many delegates are disenfranchised by this maneuver.

The meetings are adjourned early if there are delegates at the microphones the administration doesn't want to allow to speak.

I pose this information in contrast to President Stewart's claim in her President's Report in the January, 2006 issue of the Chicago Union Teacher newspaper. President Stewart claimed that one of her major headaches were "dissidents" at the House meetings who used parliamentary maneuvering to cause disruption. By "parliamentary maneuvering" by "dissidents," she must be referring to delegates who desperately try to get her to follow Roberts Rules of Order so that they could have their fair say.

If you examine the names of those using parliamentary maneuvering to disrupt the meeting by ending it, you will find that they are supporters of the Stewart administration, often with committee appointments and sometimes part-time union jobs. I have not been able to catch a "dissident" doing it.

The official Question Period is virtually the only time during the meeting that delegates can possibly make comments and motions on Union business without being called out of order by the Stewart administration. Or at least they should be able to do so.

In past practice, delegates had been able to ask questions and make motions after the President's and other officers' reports, as well as during the agenda's Items for Action. Now the microphones are hi-jacked by the administration to the very front of the hall where they are guarded by the sergeants-at-arms during those parts of the meeting.

Nowadays, even comments that are made legitimately by delegates during the Question Period, if they are comments that the Stewart administration doesn't like, are almost always interrupted by the administration's unruly supporters with shouts of "What's your question? What's your question?"

[UPC insiders who wish to remain anonymous say that UPC members are assigned to boo "dissidents," especially former President Deborah Lynch. Hard to believe, but since the booing happens without Stewart asking for order or chiding certain shout-outs, I have to wonder.]

### Motions, input by delegates suppressed even in House minutes

Motions — when a "dissident" can squeeze one in before the Question Period is prematurely adjourned — are also hijacked even when the House passes them overwhelmingly, like the motion made by Devon Morales of South Shore High School at the December, 2004 meeting. His motion was not reported in the minutes of the following meeting, and it was reported to be "unconstitutional" in the January, 2005

issue of the Union newspaper. The Morales motion was that the House would have to approve any new Union staff whose salary was over \$100,000.

Well into this second school year of the Stewart administration's term of office, the delegates were still receiving minutes from Recording Secretary Mary McGuire that were a mere copy of the previous meeting's agenda. Through the work of delegates like myself and others, McGuire has now learned to add the "d" to the word "approved" so that the minutes reflect that something happened to the motions made by the Executive Board in the Items for Action, but since delegates are rarely given the opportunity to make a motion, we can't know if she has learned to add a motion not made by the Union Executive Board to the minutes.

McGuire hasn't learned to ask for corrections, even though at the last meeting in December, the parliamentarian answered a question passed to her in writing by Delegate Allegra Podrovsky. Parliamentarian Barbara Hillman wrote that the Recording Secretary should ask for corrections. I guess Hillman is not at liberty to volunteer this to McGuire unless the parliamentarian is asked for this advice.

### Stewart Administration still stalling on the referendum for a mailed ballot

A motion feared by the Stewart administration is one that would pin them down to finally conducting the referendum for a mailed ballot. At the May 2005 meeting, they were handed a PACT petition signed by 2,400 members asking for a referendum on the mailed ballot. This is a ballot that would be mailed to the homes of school employees in an attempt to ensure an honest election process.

To date, they have been stalling on this referendum, while they try to get together their own petitions to have ballots mailed to school employees at their schools, rather than at their homes. This procedure would offer far less security for ballots.

When asked in September, 2005 about the referendum, the Union officers said that it was a long process to verify the signatures on the petitions. In November, they said the signatures were verified, and the petitions were legal, and that the question would now go to the Rules-Election Committee.

At this January meeting, Delegate Larry Milkowski of Carver Military Academy said during the unofficial question period before the beginning of the meeting (when motions cannot be made and the full body of the House has not yet assembled) that the members at his school wanted to know if the Stewart administration was putting off this referendum because they feared an honest election. Financial Secretary Mark Ochoa answered that while the signatures had been verified, there were certain legalities that were being investigated to make sure that the referendum was done correctly.

[Had Delegate Milkowski asked, "What legalities?" he would have been told, or a member of the booing clique would have yelled, "Your question's been answered. You get only one question." Such is the sad state of discussion at these meetings.]

### January Meeting's President's Report

Dealing with very much the same issues as in her December report,

President Stewart again decried how in the wake of Hurricane Katrina the political agenda is profit for those in power and their friends. [I join her in decrying such havens for patronage, of which I'm sorry to say our Union is one.] She said that the contracts to rebuild New Orleans and contracts for charter schools are going to the politically connected.

She said that only two public schools remain in New Orleans, with 126 schools made into charters to be run by friends of the Bush administration. She said that at the end of the month of December all union bargaining members were fired and must find jobs. Seven thousand applied for relief. The Relief Fund gives each applicant \$500.

She said New Orleans residents are scattered throughout all the states and won't even be able to vote for mayor and governor in the coming elections because it is said that they can't be found.

Stewart said the good news was that the Supreme Court declared the vouchers in Florida unconstitutional. Before the ruling, \$400 million had gone to religious and private schools, but "Public funds should be used for public schools," she said. Public schools are not inherently bad, she added.

Stewart took up what she called an old-fashioned collection for the victims of Katrina because the AFT goals for donations have not been met, and the sergeants-at-arms passed through the rows of delegates with buckets.

[I had argued at the September, 2005 meeting that the Chicago Teachers Union should give more than the \$10,000 they were moving to give. I said that the amount was as insulting as President Bush's first offer to the victims of the tsunami. I talked then about how Union staff giving up a possible \$100,000 or more in Christmas bonuses could greatly enhance the Union's donation. I was overridden.]

President Stewart again addressed the issue of public schools buildings in Chicago, some recently built at great public expense, being turned over to charter schools. One example was the new Haugan Middle School which was turned over to the "Aspira charter school group", even though the teachers at Haugan had written a plan that had been accepted by the Chicago Public School Board. Three members on the Aspira Board are close to the Mayor, she said.

The Union and others are watching closely, she said, to what will happen to the beautiful, huge school built for the new Albany Park Middle School, currently housed on the third floor of Von Steuben High School. Albany Park Middle School has 300 students, but the new building is being built to the east of Hibbard Elementary School for a thousand. In a point of information, Delegate Dr. George Drellos added that he had worked there for eight years as a psychologist and that the principal of the school was very anti-union and had made it a practice to get rid of teachers who were Union delegates.

Coordinator Nick Cannella was asked to address the question of why the traditional Union/Board Food Drive had not occurred at the time of the holidays. He said the Greater Food Depository had been involved with Katrina and other disasters, so the food drive had been postponed to January when donations are typically slow. He said the food would go to neighborhood deposi-

tories.

Educational Support Personnel (ESP) Field Representative June Davis was called upon to clarify questions raised by a December 14, 2005 issue of the Chicago Tribune. She said there was "a lot of untruth" in the article which had said that only ESP's hired after 2002 would have to meet No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards. She said, No, all ESP's must take the test or have sixty college credits.

President Stewart again defended the "Toledo Plan" in the Fresh Start Schools which would have master teachers assigned to new teachers as mentors and who would write up their observations of the teachers in their first year. She found herself defending it throughout the meeting. Many teachers say they are highly dubious of this Union involvement in teachers evaluating teachers.

Stewart claimed that the Toledo Plan will work. She said the Union wants to change how teachers are evaluated. She said that principals fail to do a good job because they don't have time and are not doing it correctly. She said that evaluations are subjective and based on no standards. She said that mentors would be "someone familiar with your area to coach you to make you the best teacher you can be."

Earlier, in the question period before the meeting, Delegate Vince Macina from Steinmetz High School, said that Chicago teachers degrade their peers in this pilot program of the Toledo Plan. He asked, "When did the Union get in bed with the Chicago administration?"

President Stewart rose to answer his question and said—besides what's already been reported here—that the Toledo Plan has been around for a long time.

Stewart said, "We have to monitor our profession. We've all worked with teachers who should not be teaching....These teachers should be weeded out....The process is wrong....flawed. We're in the process of shaping the process."

There was no guest speaker to take up the time at this meeting, possibly in anticipation of the lengthy review of the contract proposals.

### Other Items for Action on the agenda

Item A, an executive motion to cancel the March delegates meeting because of the Delegates Workshop March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> was passed by the House. In the past, there has been a March delegates meeting held on the first evening of the workshop before dinner, but no delegate proposed that change to the motion. No doubt the \$45 stipend delegates won't get for March will greatly help to pay for the sleep-over workshop which far fewer delegates attend. The event this year will be held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza.

Retiree Delegate Barbara Baker asked Financial Secretary and Retiree Officer Liaison Mark Ochoa after the meeting if the retiree delegates would be able to attend the workshop. The Question Period had been cancelled by early adjournment while she stood in line to ask the question.

Ochoa said No, according to Baker, the retiree delegates would not



# Retiree and Pension News

## Winter misery for many retirees...

By Al Korach

Many of us felt that after we retired it would be sun, sand and good times. I'm reminded of that old saying. I believe it started out as "The best laid plans of mice and men... I never thought I'd hear that a large number of retirees up north would be confronted with the choice of freezing to death or unable to afford their medications.

We heard that for many the choice was food or medications. We now have to throw another item into the mix. What now confronts many is the choice of food, fuel or medications. It's three hard choices for those on fixed incomes or pensions or for some that have lost their pensions.

While hundreds of Chicago area retirees are trying to make ends meet we read about Chicago City Clerk James Laski. It seems that Laski has been accused of bribe taking. It seems that his name has been added to the long list of corruption involving city hall employees. Possibly the mayor should distance himself from the school system and first straighten things out around him.

This morning I read the Florida paper and found out that Broward and Palm Beach Counties have both begun to hire new teachers from South Korea. North Carolina and Pennsylvania also have employed South Korean educators. Will they just add to the cars, clothing, electronics and other things we import that affect the American economy? Do you want to ask a question regarding TV, computer and income tax? The odds are you will be connected to someplace in India.

When I first saw the choices regarding the government's new drug plans, I thought that "Here we go again." The average individual is going to need a financial and pharmaceutical expert to help guide them to a correct choice. Or is there a correct choice? The only thing I think for certain is that the largest benefit will go to the pharmaceutical companies. Why the full-page ads and phone calls?

Those teachers enrolled in a Chicago Teachers Pension Fund health care plan should note that they are already enrolled in Blue Medicare Rx. By enrolling in a commercial Medicare D program they may endanger their pension fund health care program.

Those of us that are retired planned for the best and hoped for it. No matter how hard we try we still are connected to our financial problems, children and then our grandchildren while trying to plan our own lives and retirement. While in my 20's I never thought much about medical plans, drugs, co-pays, heating costs. My main thoughts centered on how I could purchase an \$800 new Chevrolet sedan.

I was a Depression child, and I soon learned to do without. As time went by, I understood that my family could not afford Yale let alone Harvard. I completed my college education first at Herzl Junior College and the old Chicago Teachers College on the south side — all the time working at various part-time jobs. In June of 1947 I enlisted as a private in the 108<sup>th</sup> Medical Battalion, Illinois National Guard. With a wife and three children, I received my Masters at the UofC while still teaching full-time and working part-time.

While doing all of this, my wife and I planned for a good retirement without financial worry. Many of my

past articles have dealt with this. With this in mind, I still find it inconceivable to realize that with pensions so important only about 50 percent of both active and retired teachers never even bothered to vote in the pension trustee elections. When the trustee election was over, three paid employees of the union are now on the board.

I think that many children today are not too realistic about the cost of educational goals relative to family income. Aside from the few that can receive a college scholarship, the majority of those aspiring to a college degree may have to set their goals a little lower or saddle themselves, parents and possibly grandparents with a large amount of debt at a time of their lives that they can least afford it. I have read that thousands have taken out government loans and have failed to repay them. Did parents or relatives cosign?

I was gratified to hear that the three endorsed retirees from RTAC won the retiree positions on the pension board. This will help to balance the three CTU employees on the pension board. While congratulating themselves on their victory they seemed to have overlooked the large amount of retirees that did not vote. I think some education is needed.

The change in the U.S. bankruptcy laws has contributed greatly for corporations to get out of their pension obligations. V.K. Brown very well covers this situation in the January 2006 issue of the RTAC News Bulletin. I suggest you get a copy or enroll.

A recent article by Sun-Times columnist Terry Savage pointed out a comparison of the costs of three college choices. The comparison of the Ivy League institutions as opposed to well regarded institutions and a state university showed the relative costs. The comparisons included tuition, room and board, supplies and personal expenses.

The costs broke down as follows: Ivy League \$44,592, well regarded institution \$26,226, state university \$18,452 per year. If we take the lowest amount and figure 4 years the total would come to \$73,808 yearly. You now have to ask yourself, "What about any other children?" Maybe it's time to have that family talk with your children before they get you into escape proof debt. Going to college should not be the issue. Rather the issue should be where and how to best pay for it.

I find some of the most interesting news relative to local and world conditions on the papers financial pages. I often wonder how many large corporate companies are now trying to dump their pension obligations while they are listed in the Fortune 500's. Have you noticed how many companies are fined millions without admitting to any guilt? They then have the resources to pay these fines without making a corporate ripple. It seems that the rich are becoming richer and the poor could be losing their pensions and medical benefits.

I just read that Eli Lilly & Co. pleaded guilty to a "misdemeanor" and agreed to pay \$36 million to settle criminal and civil complaints over its Evista osteoporosis drug. Evista had sales of \$1.01 Billion in 2004. Did anyone see any ripple? Wal-Mart is now fighting a suit of over \$100 million. They also have to contend with a state law covering their need to contribute toward health care

for their employees.

AARP just wrote an article regarding the coming of the Million-Dollar Medicine. While we retirees are trying to decide on a pharmaceutical plan will we soon be confronted with a top end cost of \$250,000 to \$500,000 a year and mid end plan of \$10,000 to \$100,000 a year? A study has shown that the VA drug program is better than Medicare's.

Now that the holiday season has passed, the sounds of "Give! Give! Give!" have faded. Or have they? Like many middle class families, Marlene and I have contributed to a number of charities and soon discovered that they have sold their contributors' lists. What does this mean? It means that other charities will soon inundate your mailbox and telephone with solicitations to contribute.

Don't you sometimes wonder where all that money goes? How much is spent on "Administrative expenses"? There now is a number of ways to check where your money goes. The Web site CharityNavigator.org will help you navigate through 5,000 charities by name and geographic location. The Better Business Bureau's [www.Give.org](http://www.Give.org) provides charity reports and details government actions and complaints.

Those of you that have retired on small fixed incomes at times become targets for so called charities. Do not be fooled by the use of religious letterheads as they are sometimes utilized by the unscrupulous. Marlene and I have not stopped contributing, but are now a bit more cautious.

For the time being Delta Airlines and their pilots' union have avoided a strike. They struck a temporary deal that will include pay cuts thus "saving" the airline \$152 million a year. It amounted to a 14% across the board pay cut. Deltas pilots average \$170,00 a

year — almost as much as some CTU staff bring home. It seems that many unions are stuck between a rock and a hard place when given a choice of a cut or no company to work for.

The pilots' union and the Delta pilots have agreed to the pay cut. This should bring the average salary down to about \$140,000 a year and give Delta some breathing room. Word has it that Delta will go after the pension plan next.

As the U.S. becomes part of a global economy, competition between union workers and non-union workers becomes evident. At the door of the local Cosco wholesale store in Florida was a display of brand name electronic and manual grand pianos. I asked the salesperson, "How can you sell them so cheap?" He replied, "The Company's president moved the company to China, and the workers in China work cheap." I wondered if the workers, their medical plan and pensions also moved to China.

I'd like to leave you with a thought from down south regarding Chicago up north. I just read that Berghoff's Restaurant will close its doors. There are only nine unionized restaurants left in the area. When Berghoff shuts down what will happen to the unionized workers' benefits? Will health, and pension benefits also shut down?

Florida is a state full of retirees and communities geared to their needs. We soon notice that most of the drivers seem to be the wives driving their spouses. My wife and I went to a birthday party where I felt that the candles on the cake would soon set off the fire alarm. I told my wife, "What am I doing here with all these old fogies?" She replied, "Because you and I are now one of them." 🍎

## Luther Bedford Passes From Us

By Lotty Blumenthal

In 1963 Luther Bedford came to Marshall High School, where he became football coach, basketball coach, athletic director, founded the Chicago Public League Basketball Coaches Association, became its President, was an active officer in Illinois Basketball Coaches Association and was a member of the American Legion. He became one of the famous teachers at Marshall for the film "Hoop Dreams," which chronicled two high school basketball teams. He, like most Marshall faculty, were active unionists, especially during the strikes in the more proactive days of the CTU. In an unusual memorial, the memorial service was held in the auditorium of Marshall High School with speakers from the organizations to which he belonged, Arne Duncan, Michael Scott and Marshall's Principal, Gwen Boyd. A selection was played by a student violist from the school and a viewing of Coach Bedford was held with his family present. The entire auditorium was filled, and as the evening lengthened, the crowd increased to long lines.

Many members of the Substance staff, including this reporter, editor George Schmidt, and columnist Grady Jordan worked with Coach Bedford at various times during his career. "One of the highlights of my career was the year I taught at Marshall High School," said Schmidt. "One of the

heartbreaking things about today is that the Daley administration is destroying Chicago's great public high schools — and wiping out their traditions — with each passing year. Marshall High School's gym still holds the banners from the great basketball teams of the 1940s, as well as the teams coached by Luther Bedford and Dorothy Gaters during the 1970s and later. But it's now clear that Arne Duncan will destroy Marshall on orders of Mayor Daley — just as he has begun to destroy Collins and has already destroyed Lucy Flower, Austin, Bowen, Calumet, Lindblom, and others."

Some of the thousands of mourners noted that Luther Bedford became the "good guy" in the movie "Hoop Dreams", which followed the careers of two high school basketball players from the west side. While suburban coaches exploited the talents of west side athletes, Bedford and his colleagues at Marshall High School treated the students almost as members of their own family. Some suggested that a viewing of "Hoop Dreams" would be appropriate as part of any memorial to Luther Bedford.

A few weeks after Luther Bedford died, his colleague, Dorothy Gaters, was noted in the Chicago Sun-Times as the winningest coach in Illinois history — at either high school or college level. 🍎



# Gates Foundation bankrolling attack on inner city Chicago public schools

By George N. Schmidt

The most wealthy foundation in the history of the world is pouring tens of millions of dollars into Chicago to help fund campaigns promoting the privatization and charterization of the ctiy’s public schools.

The \$28 billion Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation also funds several right-wing think thanks (such as the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation) and other corporate opinion makers (such as the Education Trust and the Education Writers Association) that promote corporate versions of “school reform.” These “reforms” include vouchers, charter schools, small schools and other attacks on traditional democratic public schools.

Between January 2001 and December 2005, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation poured more than \$45 million into Chicago. Virtually all of that money has gone to promote the privatization of public schools and various other corporate versions of “school reform.” Gates dollars directly fund certain charter schools (Noble Street; Perspectives; the University of Chicago charter schools) that are used to attack public schools, while fundamentally undermining the city’s traditional public schools, local school councils, and democratic forms of schools governance.

A chronological listing of Gates

grants to Chicago entities for the past four years shows the extent of the influence:

-- On October 31, 2005, Gates granted CPS \$4.6 million “to support the implementation of strategic planning efforts to transform Chicago high schools.”

-- On August 10, 2005, Gates gave a grant of \$960,000 to Martin Koldyke’s “Academy for Urban School Leadership.” The academy has been used by the Duncan administration as part of its recent attack on public schools.

-- On May 9, 2005, Gates granted \$2.3 million to CPS to “support a business planning process for current reform efforts to improve performance in Chicago public high schools.”

-- On February 8, 2005, Gates gave \$6 million to the University of Chicago “to fund two new schools and assist other organizations in the design and incubation of new schools.”

-- On November 19, 2004, Gates gave \$553,000 to Perspectives Charter School in Chicago “to support the establishment of Perspectives New Schools Initiative and the creation of the first Perspectives-style school.”

-- On November 16, 2004, Gates awarded \$1.4 million to the Noble Street Charter School to fund “two new, small schools in Chicago and share successful practices with other educators.”

-- On August 26, 2003, Gates granted \$9.8 million to the Big Picture Company “to support creation of 38 small, personalized urban high schools based on the ‘Big Picture’ principles and pedagogy over the next five years.”

-- On April 9, 2003, Gates granted \$7.6 million to the Chicago Community Foundation to “support the creation of 12 new small high schools in Chicago.”

-- On October 10, 2002, Gates granted \$4 million to the Chicago Charter School Foundation “to support creation of two charter school campuses and two contract schools in the Chicago Public School system.”

-- On September 21, 2001, Gates awarded \$12 million to the Chicago Community Foundation “to support restructuring high school education in Chicago.”

The only Chicago critic of the Daley administration that has received any money from the Gates Foundation in the past four years is PURE. On November 16, 2004, Gates granted \$200,000

to PURE “to promote effective parent-school partnerships in the Chicago school system.”

The Gates Foundation not only funds the promotion of charter schools, small schools, and other privatization attacks on public schools, but it also funds the writers and researchers whose reports and op ed pieces routinely promote these corporate “reforms.”

A major beneficiary of Gates grants is the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, run by conservative pundit Chester Finn. Finn got part of his start as a corporate “school reform” expert in Chicago (where he was hired by Martin Koldyke as the school reform consultant to the Chicago School Finance Authority 15 years ago). Finn is now routinely cited in the press attacking public schools. Members of the Education Trust and Education Writers Association promote corporate versions of “school reform” in Chicago (via Catalyst magazine) and elsewhere. In the past five years, Fordham has received more than \$5 million from Gates. 🍏

## Teachers not paid for ‘staff development’ Nonpayment for Services

By Michael H. Brownstein

“The last professional development I went to, everyone was complaining,” said Lisa Provost, a Chicago Public School teacher. “The general consensus among all the teachers was they rarely, if ever, get paid for these extra hours.

“We’re mandated to go or we can lose our job. People were complaining about never getting paid for any of the programs they attend. This particular professional development was mandatory for an after school enrichment program. If I didn’t attend, I could not work the program.”

Mike Vaughn who works in the Chicago Board of Education’s Communication Department stated: “The Board’s policy is clear. We try to correct payroll errors as quickly as possible.”

“When a professional development is on a Friday during school time, we are on the Board’s time,” said Antoinette Sigler disagreeing with Vaughn. “But when it’s on a Saturday, we want to receive a stipend for the time we spend, and this seldom occurs.

“I don’t mind giving up my free time to attend professional development, but I do mind when I am promised a stipend and I never receive it. Especially one that’s on a Saturday. I do have other activities that are important too. My family, for instance.”

A payroll worker for the Chicago Board of Education who trouble-shoots payroll and payroll correction problems for teachers and wished to remain anonymous stated that the Board will pay a teacher anytime. “If there is a correction submitted with an open bucket number, we will pay,” she said.

Is there a time limit? For instance if the money is owed from September of 2004, can that teacher still apply to get paid?

“It does not matter how long ago it happened,” she explained. “If there was an open bucket number, we can still issue a check.”

An open bucket is how the Board opens accounts for its employees. For example, in an after school program,

teachers do not receive compensation until the money is posted to the school on-line and a bucket number is given for that employee.

What if the claim is made five years from now?

“Like I said, it does not matter. If money was placed to pay an employee and there was a bucket opened to pay that employee, we will honor our commitment to pay them,” she said.

“But they don’t pay us in a timely fashion,” Sigler stated. “Even with an open bucket number. I am waiting for payment for services rendered during the winter of 2003-2004.

“The Board mandates professional development and I go because I want to be a better teacher, but I also know I probably will never be compensated for my time.”

A business manager at a south side elementary school who told this reporter he had to remain anonymous because of his relationship with the payroll department agreed with Sigler. “Sometimes I have to make corrections three or four times before the problem is resolved. And that’s not the problem,” he added.

“The problem is that each time I have to submit a correction, I know it will take payroll two to three weeks before I find out if payment will be made or if I have to submit a correction again.”

“File a grievance!” a field representative from the Chicago Teachers Union said. She would not give her name because she was not from the public relations department. “Nonpayment is a grievable offense.”

“If teachers or coaches do not receive compensation for professional development — especially mandated professional development — or contracted over time, we ask our membership to definitely file a grievance. Every teacher or coach who attends professional development conducted by the Board should get paid.

“Let your field rep. know. They will assist you in every way possible.” The union phone number is 312-329-9100. 🍏

## School closing nonsense

Continued from Page Twenty-Four

The truth is that ONLY in the case of Farren will all students have the opportunity to attend a significantly better-performing school (Beethoven).

In all other cases, the choices are mixed. Most of the receiving schools have failed to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind law. And the state scores of many of the receiving schools have dropped, not risen, from 2004 to 2005.

Here are the facts from the 2005 State School Report Cards.

**School to be closed – Collins High School:**

Overall reading scores, 2005 state tests 21.2% “meeting/exceeding>”

Overall math scores, 2005 state tests 1.7%

Receiving school – Manley High School:

Overall reading scores, 2005 state tests 21.1% meeting/exceeding

Overall math scores, 2005 state tests 3.3%

Manley’s overall state scores dropped from 2004 to 2005 from 10.4 to 9.1.

Some Collins students will go to Crane, which has somewhat better test scores. But how many will go to Crane and how many to Manley? And what is the benefit to students to be forced out of one low-performing high school and into another?

**School to be closed – Frazier:**

Overall reading scores, 2005 ISAT 22.8%

Overall math scores, 2005 ISAT 22.7%

Receiving school – Henson:

Overall reading scores, 2005 ISAT 29.2%.

Overall math scores, 2005 ISAT 19.8.

Henson’s overall ISAT scores dropped from 2004 to 2005 from 27.2% to 23.8%.

Again, some Frazier students

will go to Webster, Gregory, or Sumner, which have somewhat better test scores. But how many will go where? And how does it benefit students to be forced out of one low-performing school and into another, or even into one that is only somewhat better, when we know that any school move sets children back?

**School to be closed – Morse:**

Overall reading scores, 2005 ISAT 15.6%.

Overall math scores, 2005 ISAT 18.7%

Receiving school – Morton:

Overall reading scores, 2005 ISAT 21.6%,

Overall math scores, 2005 ISAT 10.8%

Morton’s overall ISAT scores dropped from 2004 to 2005 from 18.9% to 16.8%.

Receiving school – Ryerson:

Overall reading scores, 2005 ISAT 26%.

Overall math scores, 2005 ISAT 21%.

While Ryerson’s ISAT scores are higher than Morse’s, they are actually lower overall than Farren’s (reading 25%, math 25%), which CPS is closing!

Again, some Morton students will go to Lafayette, which has significantly better test scores. But the African-American parents of Morse students should be told that there is a very large achievement gap between the Hispanic and African-American students at Lafayette. For example, overall reading for African-American students is 33.3% but for Hispanic students it’s 60.9%.

So, how does it benefit students to be forced out of one low-performing school and into another, or even into one that is better but which may not be so good at serving African-American children?

It’s time to stop the Renaissance 2010 hoax! 🍏

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**Testy teachers:**

# A growing anti-CSAP movement fuels debate in Colorado

**By George N. Schmidt**

A January 26 story in the weekly "Rocky Mountain Bullhorn" updated a report that was published in the January issue of Substance regarding the growing resistance to the Colorado state testing program. The article follows:

"On Monday, January 16, five signs informing parents how to opt their kids out of taking the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) test were posted on bus-stop benches throughout Greeley. Two days later, the signs were taken down at the city's request.

"And two days after that, the city said they would go back up again.

"I went and cried that night," Angela Engle says, remembering when she heard the signs had been removed. Engle is a member of the Coalition for Better Education, the state's most active anti-CSAP group. CBE paid for the advertisements on the bus benches.

"According to Chuck Esterly, public works director for the city of Greeley, the sign debacle was the result of a misunderstanding. Questions arose over a contract the city holds with media company NextMedia Outdoor Inc. Esterly claimed the contract was "not clearly understood by city staff members" and that the city regretted the 'premature removal' of the signs, according to a January 20 press release.

"CBE, however, alleges that a member of the Greeley-Evans School District 6 school board was responsible. So far, no one is giving up the name of the suspected board member.

"This particular school-board person went to the city attorney and wanted the city attorney to look [at the bench signs], because this person thought that those bus benches were government property and these signs had no business being put on government property," says

Susanne Villarreal, CBE spokesperson.

"The incident comes on the heels of a controversial decision by district administration to place students' CSAP scores on their report cards and permanent records. Advocates of the rule change say it will deter parents from excusing their children from the test.

"There's also uncertainty around the letter of the law in regards to the CSAP. While some maintain that taking the test is mandated by state law, others argue that the Colorado Revised Statutes allow parents to opt out.

"These differing interpretations of law, as well as the effects of education reforms implemented in the late 1990s, have breathed new life into a growing faction of teachers and parents who oppose the CSAP, and its federal counterpart, the No Child Left Behind Act.

"Don Perl, professor of Hispanic Studies at the University of Northern Colorado, founded the Coalition for Better Education in 2001, after spearheading a boycott of the CSAP while he was a teacher at a Greeley middle school. Three years later, Perl and other volunteers gathered signatures for a citizens' initiative designed to eliminate the CSAP, but the group failed to collect enough names to win a spot on the November 2004 ballot.

"[The CSAP] tells us what we already know, and since the results are published in papers and broadcast on the media, we are marginalizing our students even more," Perl says. "So those schools that do well, they're generally in affluent areas. Those students have a tendency to wear certain smugness as a label to act like they're superior.

"Those schools that don't do well, they're generally in poorer neighborhoods; they wear another label. ...

More vulnerable students — that is, those who are in poorer communities — have much more to lose, because those schools will focus in on the test much more than the schools in affluent areas."

"In 1983, a commission appointed by the Reagan administration released the results of a national education study. The report, titled A Nation At Risk, garnered considerable publicity for its call for major reforms and national schooling standards.

"It also played a key role in the creation of current federal policy, especially President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was signed into law in 2002. Its passage cemented the shift toward yearly progress evaluations and accountability measures for students—as well as consequences for schools that don't make the grade.

"At the state level, CSAP trials for fourth and eighth graders began in 1997, with the goal of determining whether students were meeting state standards. The assessment test was adopted for all elementary and middle school students in 2000, as part of Gov. Bill Owens's education-reform bill.

"The CSAP is mandated in all of Colorado's public schools, and institutions that continually fail to improve are considered for privatization. Critics of both NCLB and the CSAP say the tests set impossible standards for teachers and students by creating an atmosphere of racial and economic bias, and waste valuable classroom time as teachers abandon regular coursework to prepare students for the test. These sentiments and others were aired at an anti-CSAP forum on January 21 in Aurora. Colorado Rep. Morgan Carroll, a Democrat from Aurora, and Bill Winter, a candidate for Colorado's Sixth Congress-

sional District in the U.S. House of Representatives, were among the attendees.

"Engle, of the Coalition for Better Education, was a presenter. "The problem with [the NCLB] is it's all great in some kind of imaginary world, but this is a trap, because it's not feasible for us to have 100 percent proficiency for children who are unique and diverse," she told the audience, adding that rural schools or those with limited resources are at a clear disadvantage compared with larger, wealthier schools.

"So already you have tremendous bias in the kind of abilities kids are demonstrating—not because they're not smart, not because they don't have the knowledge or the ability...but they haven't had the experiences," she said.

"This year, the CBE will not pursue an anti-CSAP ballot initiative, as it did in 2004. It will instead focus on guiding policy and bolstering community support and education. It is also backing a state-level bill from Rep. Judy Solano of Eastlake and Sen. Suzanne Williams, a teacher from Aurora, that would allow parents to choose whether their children will take the CSAP.

"There need to be a lot of alternatives, because children are three-dimensional. They bring with them all kinds of talents, needs, and multi-dimensional ways of looking at the world. So we need an entire tool box," Perl says. "We thought better to focus our resources on parents, that is, informing parents, enlightening parents, and community leaders, to the horrors of standardized testing. And when the word gets out little by little, parents will be the ones to make the difference."

<http://www.rockymountainbullhorn.com/main.php?module=article-detail&articleId=491>

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# Anatomy of the murder of Collins H.S.

Continued from Page One

have run one gimmick after another at the high schools. In addition to probation, there has been reconstitution, reengineering, etc. In addition, Collins was one of those school selected for Intervention. Intervention was an absolute, unrealistic farce. It was under the direction of some one who had never run a high school. At Collins, a former kindergarten teacher was brought in to call the shots and supervise the principal. Maybe you are beginning to understand why I say CPS murdered Collins High School.

Assuming that Mayor Daley and his school team want to improve the quality of education in our high schools, it is clear that they do not have a clue as to the proper approach. With all of the gimmicks and false starts that they have instituted, a key main ingredient is always missing: Namely, what are the specific problems that are being addressed?

I am not aware of any analysis or diagnosis that has resulted in any determination of the problem(s) that are negatively impacted student achievement at the various high schools. All of us recognize the outward symptoms and manifestations: Poor attendance, discipline problems, etc. But are the problems under girding these symptoms? They have spent untold millions on external partners, probation managers, ad infinitum instead of properly diagnosing the problems. I admit that I do not know the many players at the central office any more. If any one who happens to read this know of some truly high school experts among them, please inform me.

In 2003, CPS drove a stake into the heart of Collins. They publicized that Collins was being phased out. They said that in September of 2003, they would not accept freshmen. Even though they rescinded the action, the dirty deed had been done. The seeds of destruction had been sown. We now see the bitter fruit. By stating in 2003 that Collins would be phased out, they cast a pall of uncertainty over the school. When that happens, many of the better students choose to go else where. Many of the teachers who had worked so hard and effectively to bring the school from probation left for other schools. Every school wants good teachers. I do not mean to denigrate in any way those teachers who are there. But it takes time to build a winning team. Collins is not being given the time. We know this is not an educational decision. This, like most of the decisions of the Daley School Team, is a political/economic decision.

When 2003 decision to close Collins was announced, a group of alumni, parents, and community people came together in an attempt to save the school. A letter dated September 2, 2003 was sent to Arne Duncan. The letter expressed their willingness and desire to work with the school and central administration address the problems. In that regard, they asked for information regarding the nature and scope of the problems. They also asked to be informed of the level of achievement necessary to remain open and other pertinent information. It would seem that the CEO would welcome the enthusiastic support of these stakeholders. Everyone seems to agree that this kind of support is not only crucial but essential if we are going to turn our schools around. Arne Duncan never responded. Daley and his School Team have total contempt for Black communities like North



Above: Grady C. Jordan addresses the audience at Collins High School during the February 2 rally. The three empty seats behind Dr. Jordan were reserved on the Collins stage for the three men proposing the destruction of Collins. None

of them showed up for the meeting, which drew more than 250 participants on short notice (see photo bottom of this page). Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

Lawndale. Arne Duncan is sent often talking to downtown white business people about what they are going to do to schools in the Black community. But in effect he said to those People in Lawndale: Drop dead!

In summary, from the time that Collins came off probation until today it has been under the total control of CPS central office. They have chosen all of the leaders and programs. If it has failed, CPS failed. And now to have the unmitigated gall to say they are going to close Collins because of low performance and send the children to other schools with

low performance is immoral. I looked at the performance records of all of the high schools on the west side — with the exception of Whitney Young. From Ashland to Austin and from North Avenue to 26<sup>th</sup> Street. In overall performance, all are “below 20 percent.” (Collins was not the lowest). I am sure that all of them are working very hard in very difficult circumstances and suspect leadership from the top. The point is, it is ridiculous to consider moving any student from one of these schools to the other for performance. Rather, Daley and his team should stop wast-

ing taxpayers money on gimmicks such as Ren 2010 and bring together some people who know something about high school operation and plan a program and strategy to improve all of the high schools. All of our communities deserve this.

As for Collins, it was born in struggle. I was there. If, unfortunately and as I do not expect, it dies in struggle, I will be there.

Aluta Continua. 🍏



Above: Despite short notice, more than 250 people gathered in the Collins High School auditorium on the evening of February 2 for a meeting to organize protests against the closing of the school. Part of the crowd (above right) con-

sisted of dozens of staff members from the Chicago Teachers Union, who cheered CTU President Marilyn Stewart when she addressed the crowd. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

### Corrections and Calrifications:

In our January issue, Substance reported that Lawrence Poltrock, who was the complaining witness in the June 1, 2005, attempted arrest of Deborah Lynch, was serving as General Counsel for the

American Federation of Teachers. The American Federation of Teachers is now served by a different General Counsel.





Above: On November 16, 2005, the Chicago Board of Education approved the creation of 15 new charter schools, including "Urban Prep." The carefully orchestrated media events leading to the Board's unanimous vote in favor of expanding privatization under Mayor Daley's "Renaissance 2010" program included dozens

of speakers lining up to present their plans in what amounted to free marketing time. Prior to the Board meeting, CEO Arne Duncan had hosted a press event touting what he called the exciting choices coming with the charterization of public education in Chicago. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt

## Englewood

Continued from Page One

tions. Ms. Davis criticized the Board's tendency to switch gears in midstream. She speaks with authority about the numerous attempts by CPS to "solve" school underachievement problems, all of which suffer from a history of failure. In the mid 80s and 90s Englewood experienced a variety of programs and schemes to improve performance, from the efficacy and "children first" plans to the "essential schools" program. By 1997, Englewood underwent "reconstitution." Each time, these magic bullet solutions proposed by downtown failed to deliver. Should we expect different results now that those in charge are turning to the private sector? Indicators and history tell us we shouldn't. In fact, the situation portends to have even more disastrous consequences for at risk youth in the system. Let's take a closer look before passing judgment.

An anonymous source on the TAC says that Urban Prep will probably change the school's student body — even though they claim they are not going to be a "selective enrollment" school. According to the source, "They can determine who will attend their school, unlike Englewood presently. They say they will include students from the neighborhood but students throughout the city can attend. This is a process of elimination, when you can choose which students can attend your school."

In his defense Urban Prep's future principal, Timothy King, says that "by law we have to admit students from the whole district, all of Chicago, but our priority is in the Englewood area and surrounding area. We are recruiting in the immediate area of Englewood and within a five-mile radius of the school."

Joanna Brown-el — a parent of an Englewood student, member of the Local School Council and of the TAC — disagrees. "I was the dissenting vote on the TAC, I don't think Tim King's institution is appropriate," she said. "They are not really doing active recruitment. I haven't heard from people who have been contacted by Urban Prep. We have a preppy school with Catholic origins and needs in the community that can't be met — but if they get students from outside they won't need to worry about not meeting standards."

Hal Baskin, longtime community organizer and former aldermanic

candidate, questions the rationale for bringing an all-boys Catholic school program into the public schools. "The Catholic industry has problems with the pedophile issue with their priests", Baskin said. Speaking to the problem of male socialization he added, "I don't think an all-male program works. Even the U.S. military is coed."

According to DePaul University Associate Professor of Education, Pauline Lipman, TACs were never intended to represent community interests: "The TACs are appointed bodies, unlike LSCs (local school councils) which are elected by community residents and are thus directly responsible to the community." Some members of the TAC, like Ms. Brown-el, agree with Lipman. "TACs do not have to be comprised of community residents."

In 1988, the Harold Washington administration passed the School Reform Law that created Local School Councils to open the door for community involvement and democratic governance of the schools. Prior to the election of local school councils, Chicago public schools had "advisory" councils that no one had to listen to. With the passage of the 1988 law, LSCs had real power. Although the LSCs were being undermined by the Daley administration for some time, according to numerous critics, it was only when Arne Duncan began the privatization of dozens of schools under "Renaissance 2010" that the TACs came into existence and the Duncan administration began ignoring LSCs.

According to Lipman; "The implementation of TACs seriously undermines the 1988 School Reform Law and democratic governance." The story that Etta Davis tells about her experience on the TAC eerily corroborates Lipman's depiction of the board's strategy.

"People are chosen by an application process," Davis said. "They did not advertise it well, if at all. I found out the day before I applied. I noticed that at [Ralph] Bunche [Elementary School] it was all business people and professionals who were applying to the TAC, no community or parents. They had hand picked members of the TAC."

Despite these restraints on community representation, the Englewood High School TAC did have a core of dedicated community members and agreed in the beginning that they did not want to accept any charter school

proposals. This like many other community concerns was pushed aside by Board prerogatives. TACs are just advisory bodies, which seems to buttress Professor Lipman's contention that, "they are a means for the Board of Education to advance its agenda without serious community input but nevertheless give the impression of community involvement."

Regardless of these restrictions, many community members felt that their views about their neighborhood schools should be given strong consideration. Ms Davis explains: "We agreed the process was flawed. Our input should've not been taken just as an advisory [contribution]. Many TAC members are upset because we thought we had more of a voice. The Board representatives kept emphatically saying that we were only advisory. We wrote down that we want a community school. Anything that excludes any of our children I'm not for." So far according to Ms. Brown-el, Urban Prep isn't adhering to its commitment to the community; "We have asked to be part of the board [of Urban Prep] and received nonchalant answers."

There is also the lingering question of teacher quality. The Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU) has waged a campaign against Renaissance 2010 for its anti union components. According to state law teachers at Illinois charter schools are not allowed to be represented by the CTU, and therefore start off as non-union. Many union members worry that charters are a strategy by the Board and the city to rid itself of pesky worker contracts.

In addition to the question of unionization, community members are concerned about the qualifications of teachers. Mr. King acknowledges that only 50 percent of his staff has to be certified, and says he would discourage union organizing. If his staff decided to organize, he would ask whether there was "something that the school was doing wrong." He also fears that his staff would be "distracted by the whole process of organizing," though he says he would support a majority decision to unionize. Most charters are structured in such a way that substantially increases the workload of the teaching staff, while simultaneously diminishing their compensation. At Urban Prep, for instance, teachers will work from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., and since students will be required to do extra curricular activities

after school, teachers will be expected to work overtime. While King has given a verbal commitment to enact a pay scale competitive with CPS, he acknowledges; "Realistically we won't be able to do that in every instance."

Ms. Brown-el points out that there are some other community concerns about the new school's relationship with teachers. "The fiscal practices of Tim King at Hales Franciscan during which teachers lost their health coverage were questionable. He was very extravagant and hired far more secretaries than were needed and bought fancy cars. This man doesn't have a fiscal track record we can trust."

When pressed Ms. Brown-el admitted that she could not prove her charges but maintained that there were far too many questions that the board has left unanswered. We would all do better to follow her advice to speak out and "challenge people to prove me wrong." At least her voice combined with those of Ms. Davis, Hal Baskin and others like them in the community, sends a strong message to the Board that it must change its approach. For Hal Baskin there is no substitute for a strong institutional commitment to our children, "I think they are desperate to have some success stories, the reality is they have to spend money. Every student doesn't have a book, we need security, competent qualified teachers with classroom management skills who understand the social issues that student have coming from Woodlawn, Englewood and other places." At a minimum, teachers and community representatives seem to agree, that charters won't do an effective job replacing schools like Englewood, and they do not offer the considerate and thought through solutions we desperately need. 🍏

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Letters

Lynch contract superior to UPC horrors

January 23, 2006

The current Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) leadership has been very diligent in their efforts to point out all of the negatives that they blame on the “Debbie Lynch” contract of 2003, but they always neglect the positives. In fact, they have even gone so far as to distort most of the history of the union in order to promote their strange version of reality. This morning, a visit to the CTU’s official website ([www.ctunet.org](http://www.ctunet.org)) shows that the union’s history (at least via “CTU News”, which includes PDF versions of the union newspaper) goes back only to September 2004, when Marilyn Stewart, Ted Dallas, and the current UPC reoccupied the union’s offices after a still disputed election (June 2004). Anyone who wants to go to the Internet and read back issues of the union’s newspaper can only find them back to September 2004! This is despite the fact that the union has been in existence continually since 1936! This kind of dishonesty belongs in some of the totalitarian regimes of the last century, not in a time when any child in just about any public school can locate information via the World Wide Web. If this type of thing weren’t so serious, it would have the whole city laughing.

Let’s get some facts straight. As a result of the four-year contract negotiated by Debbie Lynch in 2003, teachers have had their salaries increase by 12 percent (for teachers at maximum) to 35 percent to 40 percent (for teachers receiving step increases). As even the Board of Education’s documents (such as their annual financial reports) attest, this is the highest in at least 20 years — and for some groups the highest in history.

Like the documents on the union website, the actual contract history has been more complicated. The actual record of the UPC for the decade before the Lynch administration shows as much fiction as any recent non-fiction “memoirs”:

**Raises that never took place.** The “raises” published in Appendix A of the old — UPC era — union contracts often never happened. (A “raise” was negotiated to end the threat of a strike, then it was taken back by the Board without a fight from the union).

**Class size maximums that were never enforceable (or never enforced).** Similarly, the class size “protections” published in Article 28 of the “contracts” between 1995 and 1999 did not really exist. In 1995, the UPC had allowed class size (Article 28) to become “Board Policy” — rather than contractually enforceable reality! All of the talk about class size this school year has been the same kind of bunk we hear so often elsewhere.

**Health care costs.** The increase in health care premiums has gone up \$10 to \$25 a year for most CTU members — depending on the options that individuals chose. But the surrender of benefits began under the UPC more than a decade ago and was never stopped during the last time they held power.

Meanwhile, in addition to the largest pay raises in at least two decades, the Lynch administration also brought

many other improvements for the members.

**Life insurance.** Our life insurance has more than doubled — to \$25,000 at no cost to our members. The option of buying additional insurance at a very reasonable cost that equals between one and three years of individual salary is also available to all bargaining unit members. Dental and eye care are now available in all policies for family members. These and other health care options help lessen the cost of other increases that have been brought on *because of double-digit increases in all medical costs across the country.* (That has to be emphasized if honesty matters).

**Added sick days for veteran union members.** Teachers who are at maximum step receive one or two additional sick days that are banked and continue to increase in value with our percent annual pay increases. We are able retire with a five percent increase in our pension thanks to the PEP option added to our contract.

**A sane length to the school year.** And who can forget some of the stranger examples of UPC dishonesty that the Lynch administration began to take care of — such as the UPC claim that by working an extra week we were getting a “raise”? In Debbie Lynch’s first negotiated contract, the school year was reduced by five days with no cut in pay (and to be honest, a minuscule increase in the length of each school day). This has resulted in a longer vacation for all members and more reasonable summer vacations — for the first time in memory — for Chicago children (especially high school children who have to work). Those CTU members who need or wish to work can now earn an additional week salary over the summer and can compete with suburban teachers for jobs outside of education. But anyone who survived the 1990s either as a teacher or student in Chicago schools can still remember “beginning” school in August and ending at the end of June. That was a UPC deal, too.

**Preparation time.** We have an additional elementary prep added to our week every morning and a fourth prep at most elementary schools are guaranteed. Now that the numbers are in, we see that 5,000 teachers who were FTB’s are now assigned and on tenure track and are in a stronger position than two years ago.

When the CTU paper headlines “Debbie Lynch...” the next time, maybe it will be about the positives that the members have received from the only contract negotiated by the Lynch administration. At the least, in an era when Truth is supposed to be coming back into fashion, the union members should be able to get and analyze the facts of the past 20 or 30 years, rather than be lied to by people who had sold them out.

But let’s continue to look at how the union is presenting its version of reality, this time from the point of view of teacher assistants, school clerks, and other ESPs. Does anyone expect to see the UPC admit that the seniority rights of our support staff (ESP’s) are stronger today than at any time since the UPC leadership gave up “career service” protections in 1995? *Yes. The UPC gave them away in a political deal in 1995.* Will there be any official mention of any of the improvements in salary and retirement options for ESPs that the Lynch contract has brought?

I don’t anticipate a push for 5+5 early retirement legislation because that

contract demand is not going to be pushed by Marilyn Stewart and her “team.” Nothing that President Lynch and her team accomplished will be acknowledged by the present administration (not even its existence as a part of union history, if a visit to the union website is to be believed). All the negatives presented can remove by the positives that the membership gained in the last contract.

If Marilyn Stewart and company would enforce the contract — instead of dishonestly attacking it — all of the 35,000 members active duty and retired members of the Chicago Teachers Union would be better served. Brian Sullivan  
Fernwood Elementary School Delegate  
Racine8816@aol.com

Substance for college classes

January 21, 2006  
Substance:

I was alarmed when I read about your financial difficulties and became afraid that this excellent publication would no longer exist. *Your paper is vital because there is literally no alternative that addresses educational issues at the street level.* While publications such as *Radical Teacher* and *Rethinking Schools* are high quality, they do not hit as hard as your paper does. We need this kind of language, especially today.

Even though I do not work in the Chicago Public Schools, the information you provide is quite insightful and pertinent to other labor struggles in districts across the nation. The forces of privatization, made most clear (and spin-free for once) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, are closing in on our schools. I work in higher education and many professors are under the delusion that they are insulated from these same forces. But as we are beginning to see with the NSA illegal domestic spying and NCLB requirements that colleges of education must teach phonics methods in their reading courses, higher education is part of the overall targeting efforts. Where else are students going to hear criticism of the government from people in authority, i.e., scholars? This is why higher education has to be an ally of the K-12 “rank and file” and has to stop fooling itself.

Please accept my contribution towards continuing your important work. I know it isn’t much, but think of it as ten subscriptions without having to print out papers! I can’t tell you how many times I have used articles from your paper in my social foundations classes, both with veteran and beginning teachers. You would be amazed at how many veteran teachers are unaware of the corporate nature of NCLB. The piece you published about the tutoring and unaccountable nature of NCLB funds was so eye-opening that my students kept talking about it for days! If anything, at least they see that government policy isn’t “neutral” or “natural.” Faith Agostinone Wilson  
Assistant Professor of Education  
Aurora University, George Williams Campus  
Williams Bay Wisconsin

Testing steals summer from children

January 23, 2006

A Jan. 22 (2005) Washington Post story “Parents Campaign to Take Back Kids’ Summers: High-stakes Tests Has Cost Some August,” reveals what is clearly the Achilles heel of the billion-dollar high-stakes testing industry — testing-related school calendar change. (See: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/21/AR2006012101005.html>)

The lengthy story is about a parent “backlash” in Florida to earlier and earlier school start dates and legislation pushed by those parents (Save Our Summers gathered 8,000 online Florida signatures) for a start date closer to Labor Day.

Similar actions against school calendar tinkering can be found in thousands of communities across the nation. The week before the Washington Post story, parent opposition in Williamson County, a suburb of Nashville, forced the school board to back off a proposal for a year-round school calendar, which would have opened school doors in mid-summer. Parents there dug deep into their pocket to oppose the calendar change, even renting a kiosk in a major shopping mall where they spent the weekend distributing information to as many people as they could about the detriments of school calendar change for education quality, family life, taxpayers, businesses and the school budget.

As the Washington Post story notes, “Legislators in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama and Pennsylvania are weighing bills this year that would peg school start dates to Labor Day. North Carolina, Texas, Minnesota and Wisconsin passed similar measures in recent years.”

School officials across the nation are finally being forced to admit, as they have in Florida, that the impetus for the school calendar creep is high-stakes testing required by the Bush administration’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) national school accountability law.

Ironically, the proposed Florida law pegging the school start date to Labor Day was drafted by a Democrat and has the support of Republican Governor Jeb Bush, brother of the same President George W. Bush who crafted NCLB. The Republican governor’s support for the measure is not surprising when you realize a later start date cuts even more instructional days before the test date. This could adversely impact test scores and thus reaffirm the Republican portrait of public schools and its teachers as “failures” that need to be replaced by a system of private schools and school vouchers.

As the Washington Post story notes, school officials have been placed in the untenable position by the testing industry of having to move up achievement testing from late spring to early winter — usually February or March — in order to be assured of getting back scores before the next fiscal year, when financial rewards and punishments are handed out based on test scores.



# Letters

## Summer

Continued from Page Eighteen

A testing program that truly measured what was going on in a school (or school district) would test the children in May, not in February or March. Has anyone even asked whether the claims by testing companies that test data from mid-year testing programs are even meaningful in measuring children, teachers, schools and school districts? With so much secrecy about the tests’ content, scoring and other things, how can parents really know?

Parents may not understand all the political subtleties of the school accountability movement and high-stakes testing. Nor do many parents understand the pressure high-stakes testing places on school administrators and teachers, whose very jobs, careers and livelihoods hinge on the outcome of a mere five to rive-and-a-half months of instruction these tests measure. Parents also may not understand the money motives of the Business Roundtable [which represents the CEOs of major Fortune 500 corporations, including test publishers] in their support of high-stakes tests and related school calendar tinkering.

But parents clearly understand the disruptions to summertime family life and family values caused by calendar creep. And in recent years, some schools have incrementally moved school start dates to mid July!

The line drawn in the sand by parents in Florida and elsewhere may very well signal the beginning of the end of high-stakes testing.

It is just a matter of time before the parents realize who the real enemies of summer are and the arrows will really start flying at the testing industry and the network of politicians they fund.

Billee Bussard  
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Billee Bussard is a semi-retired Jacksonville, Florida journalist and editor of “SummerMatters.com” (<http://www.summermatters.com/>), the website where she posts information on school calendar issues she has been researching since 1992. See her article “The year-round mess (despite the hype year-round schools don’t work” in the November 2005 Substance, beginning on Page Forty of the print edition.

## Chicago teachers help New Orleans

January 8, 2006

Bill and I spent the past three days in New Orleans, viewing the devastation first hand and involving ourselves in the work of the People’s Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Committee. Here are some observations: Hundreds of thousands of lives have been uprooted in ways that are unimaginable to most of us. Four months after Katrina, 30,000 people are still living in temporary housing. FEMA is paying hotels \$150 a night to house people, instead of seeking permanent housing solutions. On February 7, those subsidies will stop and thousands will be out on the street.

While we were in New Orleans, a Quality Inn hotel attempted to evict Katrina survivors. We were able to get the eviction postponed, through politi-

cal and legal efforts. About 100 people, called on short notice (picture attached) protested in front of the hotel and spoke with residents, many of whom had no place to go but the streets. The hotel wanted to kick people out because it is beginning to be Mardi Gras season. Driving through the French Quarter, you would never know about the devastation that lay a short distance away. Tourists in the Quarter partied as if the hurricane had never happened.

Meanwhile, in the lower 9th ward, an area where 14,000 mostly poor African-American people had lived, the whole area was uninhabitable. I have pictures which I will share with anyone who contacts me. Block after block of rubble, stench from the conflagration of wastes, no electricity, gas, or water, and no FEMA trailers for people to use while rebuilding their homes. One look at the levee shows why. The concrete part of the levee alongside this neighborhood (and other poor neighborhoods) is less than two feet wide and made of non-reinforced cement. It was no match for the huge surges of water that easily broke through it. In contrast, the levee protecting the French Quarter is a steel-reinforced, half-block wide street with hotels and shopping centers atop it.

During a community meeting in the lower 9th ward, residents spoke passionately about the lack of responsiveness of all levels of government. The Army Corp of Engineers had begun bulldozing in the area, making no attempt to contact owners of the houses they planned to demolish. Again, protest connected to legal action stopped the bulldozing in the lower 9th, temporarily. About 100 people surrounded the bulldozers and threatened to make a “citizens arrest” based on a Temporary Restraining Order granted earlier.

In New Orleans, lives have been devastated by a capitalist system that cares more about profits and oil wars than people’s needs. At least 100,000 people were left in New Orleans to die, and had the hurricane hit directly, they surely would have. As it was, the breaking of the “sand-castle” levees by the water Katrina stirred up killed thousands instead. Fascism is not too strong a word to describe the utter disregard the system is showing for the lives of our New Orleans brothers and sisters.

One of the most striking aspects of our visit was the huge number of volunteers-from college students to retired people, from all over the country/continent. Between these volunteers and the thousands of black and white working class New Orleanians angry at the government, there are many opportunities to organize and help out. I would like you to seriously consider getting involved in this struggle by going to New Orleans, helping to support work in Chicago (or in your city), or in other ways helping to spread the word and contribute to this important anti-racist fight.

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Chicago Vocational High School  
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Or call me at: 773-955-5109.

## Delay on CTU referendum

January 12, 2006

As I left the January meeting of the Chicago Teachers Union’s House of Delegates, I spoke to an opposition insider about the status of the referendum to move from in-school voting to a

mailed ballot sent to the home of all members and supervised by an outside independent agency. The petitions for a referendum were given to the union leadership in May 2005. The petition were finally certified as “valid” by the union officers at the November 2005 meeting after a long, unnecessary delay. The delay came even though no specific objections were brought forward to justify a name-by-name scrutiny, which is the rule in general elections. You wait for objectors to come forward by a specified date and time and certify the petitions if there are no objectors.

My informant said that the opposition is seeking the intervention of the American Federation of Teachers to expedite the holding of the referendum with more than all deliberate speed. It is now January 2006. I had to talk further why I thought this a poor option to pursue, but let me outline it in this letter.

In certifying the 2004 election of UPC officers, the AFT did strongly “suggest” that CTU go to a mailed ballot. However, they have no power to compel a mailed ballot, as they pointed out that in-school voting was mandated in our current constitution and by-laws. Since there was insufficient evidence of fraud or ballot stuffing in their investigation, they OK’d the election of the UPC officers. That is not to say that there could be many opportunities for screw-ups in in-school voting, but only that it is hard to prove. You simply do not have enough poll watchers to supervise the election in more than 600 voting places. The voting only goes on for an hour or so, and teachers must hurry from supervising the voting to their classrooms. In Illinois elections, by contrast, the polls are open 13 hours with four or five judges on duty the whole day. So even if one side or the other thinks some funny business went on, it is difficult to prove. Knowing this, and not wanting to be bothered again with an internal fight, the AFT “suggested” to “to in peace, but sin no more...”

So now we have a petition for a referendum that the people who were put in power — the current UPC officers and staff — by the AFT are ignoring. And the AFT apparently isn’t doing anything about it. It is therefore the duty of the House of Delegates to immediately set a date for holding the referendum. They need not wait for a date to come from the Executive Board and then to vote on it or a substitute. The CTU must set a date to hold the referendum. They cannot stonewall or table it forever while waiting for a second referendum to send some mailed ballots to the schools. The opposition referendum has first priority; none other.

Now if the CTIU through either the House of Executive Board keeps delaying the referenda, the opposition has a good case in court. A referendum must be held on filing of valid petitions. This is the way we went to a school-by-school report on ratification and officers’ voting. Do not delay this referendum to 60 days before the next officers’ election, when there will be a cry of politics. The time is now.

Someone in the opposition need only get to the floor to fix a date. If it is referred to a committee, there must be an objection. The chair must then have the ruling sustained in the House. If the date is defeated, then the opposition has a good case in court for setting the date by the court. The by-laws and constitution have been held by the courts to be a contract with the members and therefore enforceable in court.

A court case might be costly, but a judge would have good reason to set a date, or he could tell the House to set a date and then come back with a status report. If a date is set, there is settlement. But in preparing their case, the opposition might be advised to ask testimony from the AFT in Washington as to why they “suggested” a mailed ballot, which given CTU autonomy in internal affairs was all they could do in the absence of provable vote fraud. I personally never made that charge, though others of my former opposition colleagues did.

It would be relevant to a court case to learn ho many other urban locals comparable in size to CTU use a mailed ballot. If the CTU refuses to give the information, the American Arbitration Association would have that information and I would not consider it confidential.

The worse, silly opposition to mailed balloting is that it would “reveal what teachers are not living at their last known address and who might live outside Chicago in violation of the residency requirements...” This is actually what UPC has been saying to make their case for something other than a mailed ballot sent to all members’ homes. Look up my letter in the January Substance where I suggest that this is a specious argument and only holds true if CTU “rats out” its own members by delivering undeliverable mail to the Board of Education. Certainly I do not think the American Arbitration Association would surrender such material if they were conducting the election. The CPS has other means to learn this information if they want to know it, and other city agencies (especially police and fire) have experience in locating employees who are violating the residency rules, as is widely known in Chicago. Do our union’s officers think they should be playing stool pigeons or Pinkerton detectives at the Merchandise Mart?

Let the House do its work. Set a date to hold the referendum in 60 days and thus stay out of court. It is not necessary for either the AFT to rescue us or for the courts to rescue us.

I see no outbreak of disunity in what I propose. I do see an outbreak of internal democracy if it is implemented. Is CTU immune from democracy which it sometimes acts as if it is a threat to their bureaucratic health and welfare. In fact, democracy is nourishment to the rank and file. Gerald R. Adler, retired member CTU Evanston, Illinois

## Stick to Chicago news

January 23, 2006

I have been reading your paper for over 15 years and used to enjoy the paper greatly. However, now that you have these long — and I do mean long — articles about other states and the mess they are in, I have to ask you: “Who cares?” The article on Colorado and the MLK day protests? Who cares? Why not tie it into something Chicago would do?

And Oakland and small schools don’t have a single thing to do with Chicago. Just give me the crap on how bad the union is and keep after them because they will ruin education here in this town.

Now that Arne Duncan has come out with dire budget warnings



Letters

Chicago only

Continued from Page Nineteen

about the doom to befall the Chicago schools, why not go after him for all the \$100,000 employees who were hired — not to serve the students, but to harass the teachers? No wonder he is short money. The CPS headquarters at 125 S. Clark St. and the — how many are there now anyway — “area offices” have way too many perks that don’t have a thing to do with education or with running a complicated school system!  
Dan Priest  
Bolingbrook, IL

DIBELS mess in the suburbs

January 1, 2006  
I recently wrote to thank Dr. Kenneth Goodman for his article on DIBELS, and he asked that my letter also be sent to you. I am part of a focus group in my school. We are looking at early literacy assessments. I am gathering anti-DIBELS data. It seems an administrator wrote it into last year’s grant proposal...but we (I hope) can decide to discontinue it this year.  
Dr. Manning also sent me her research anti-DIBELS. I’m ready. I wrote a reflection on DIBELS after our initial training session.  
Sincerely,  
Mary Brennan, 1st grade teacher  
Buffalo Grove, IL

‘Business model’ doesn’t apply to public schools

January 20, 2006  
Private, for-profit companies that run public schools have a different mission than their public counterparts. The mission of public schools is to serve students, while the mission of private educational companies is to make a profit. Public schools must answer to the public. Private companies must answer to their investors.  
Now, admittedly, we in the general public are “invested” in the success of children, and we are “invested” in how they will be raised and the decisions they will make. After all, they will inherit the planet after we’re finished. So the future is quite literally in their hands. But being “invested” in schools and children is a far cry from being an investor in schools and children.  
Consider the insights by Wall Street analyst Jerry Herman. Writing in The Wall Street Transcript, Herman says, “NCLB is a big opportunity because it layers in an expanded source of funding. The dollars devoted to Title I now approach \$12.5 billion and are up about 35 percent since NCLB was signed into law. The dollar flow is significant, and perhaps more important, it now appears that the decision makers - principals and superintendents - have an improving understanding of requirements under the law and how to access funding.” Herman concludes, “From an investment perspective, we are more intrigued with the K-12 sector than we’ve been in many years.”  
Herman’s colleague, Robert Craig, agrees. Also writing in The Wall Street Transcript, Craig says, ““We con-

tinue to see estimates of over 10,000 failing schools, and that encompasses an awful lot of kids. These kids and their families have choices in terms of supplemental education services like tutoring or school alternatives if their school continues to fail. Certain areas like testing in assessment, teacher development and supplemental education services are attractive, and each has significant growth potential.” Craig concludes, “Overall, we think that the K-12 business is starting to improve, and we are actively looking for ways to capitalize on it and invest in that segment.”  
The decisions that businesses make are business decisions. When making such decisions, business interests ask things such as, “How can we do this for the least amount of money possible?” versus “How can we do this well?” The decisions that get made are made because they are cheaper and can satisfy a lot of customers and therefore make the business more money. And because large corporations are publicly-traded and are owned by shareholders, they absolutely must show increasing revenues and profits to satisfy shareholders. That’s OK with me. But what’s not OK with me is that the businesses that run schools have their shareholders’ interests ahead of my children’s interests. These companies can say that they are committed to running great schools and they can say they are committed to students and parents. But the interests of students and parents are completely different than the interests of shareholders. When faced with a decision that involves having to choose between students and shareholders, businesses must choose shareholders because shareholders are what keep businesses in business. If a business alienates its shareholders and chooses to serve students ahead of shareholders, that business will go out of business very quickly. Ironically — perversely, even — private, for-profit educational businesses must stay in business in order to do business. And in order to stay in business, they have to do the business that shareholders demand of them.  
There are lots of words we could use to describe schools. The one that’s used most frequently these days is the word “efficient.” This word is used to describe a number of charter schools that appear to produce better learning for less money. Conversely, the word “inefficient” is used to describe traditional public schools, particularly urban schools. The implicit assumption is that inefficient schools need to be made efficient, and that if they are made more efficient, then all will be well.  
While it is altogether appropriate to discuss businesses in terms of efficiency, it is less appropriate to do so when discussing schools. After all, what are public schools supposed to be efficient at? And what does efficiency have to do with it? What does efficiency have to do with learning? If you learned efficiently, what would this look like? If you learned more for less money, what would this look like? If you could learn more by cutting expenses, what would this look like?  
Good teachers worry less about whether they can replicate a particular process and more about producing a valid learning solution for each child. This is primarily due to the fact that each child learns differently and that each child requires a unique approach that is specific to his or her needs. We accept that no two people are exactly alike, but we quickly forget that no two children

are exactly alike. Because no two children are exactly the same, no two children learn in exactly the same way. Children are not widgets, so they shouldn’t be taught in such a way that suggests they are. In other words, teaching is an inherently inefficient process. If your goal is to make teaching and learning efficient, you’ll create mass-produced, one-size-fits-all solutions. In other words, you won’t be teaching at all anymore. And students won’t be learning. You may have achieved efficiency, but you will have done so at the expense of teaching and learning.  
I used to work in the for-profit software development business. As a software developer, I learned that someone may have an extraordinarily good idea for improving a product. And lots and lots of people may have requested this improvement. So you talk to your engineers and programmers. You say, “OK, how long will it take you guys to do this?”  
So they do their analysis and come back with an answer. They tell you that not only will it take x amount of time, but it will also mean that a,b, and c functions will need to change as a result. So you talk to your interaction designers and graphic artists and ask them to figure out a way to accommodate these updated functions through a mock-up of what the tool will look like and how it will work. They come back with an estimate of how much time this will take to do. You then hand all these data off to your folks in accounting and ask them to figure out how much it will cost to make this great new change. The accounting folks do their number crunching and report back to the CIO, the CFO, and the CEO. They come back with the bottom line: “We can’t do this. It will cost too much.”  
As it turned out, the tools I designed for this commercial developer were never built because we could not afford to build them. They were great tools and would have greatly benefited teachers and students. But there was no way to quickly and easily recoup the cost of developing them, and there was no way to ongoingly “monetize” them. So I experienced first-hand that good ideas are not necessarily the ideas that get developed. I learned first-hand that the software development business, like any other business, is about realizing efficiencies, reducing inefficiencies, maximizing profit and productivity, and looking to leverage the buying power of economies of scale.  
Schools are not trying to reduce inefficiencies, cut costs, and maximize profits. They are trying to educate children.  
Peter Campbell  
St. Louis, Mo  
Missouri State Coordinator (Assessment Reform Network, The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest)  
campbellp@mail.montclair.edu  
Transform Education (blog) - <http://transformeducation.blogspot.com/>

Unions’ ‘foreign policy’ needs scrutiny

January 26, 2006  
Some of your trade union readers might be interested in this. Monthly Review’s webzine, MR Zine, has just published my latest article on the AFL-CIO’s foreign policy program.

In it, I also provide amounts of money from the so-called National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to the AFL-CIO’s Solidarity Center for its work in Latin America in Fiscal Year 2005. The NED is a US Government-funded program, and that by the Solidarity Center working with them, is a cancer growing on the very democracy of our labor movement.  
My article, “Workers Rights ARE Human Rights — Not Just in the USA , but around the World,” can be accessed on-line at <http://mrzine.Monthlyreview.org/scipes250106.html> .  
In international solidarity—  
Kim Scipes, Chicago  
[kimscipes@earthlink.net](mailto:kimscipes@earthlink.net)

Stossel wrong on Oakland charter school

January 20, 2006  
Just in time for Christmas, the San Francisco Chronicle hyped a local charter school that was, once again, supposedly proving that there should be “no excuses” for regular schools not performing above “standards” (Simone Sebastian, San Francisco Chronicle, December 16, 2005).  
In less than a month, the same charter school was featured in an attack on public schools by Stossel. The Chronicle story began in the usual way for such stories: “Here’s a charter school, run in a converted church building in Oakland’s Laurel neighborhood, which has been transformed from one of the city’s worst performers into the highest-scoring middle school in Oakland.” If I remember correctly, wasn’t that the same “once upon a time” beginning that Substance first exposed when the right wing began hyping alternative attacks on public schools more than 20 years ago (see “The Marva Collins Hoax”)?  
According to the most recent hype out of Oakland, the American Indian charter has proved you can outperform your community by cracking down and being tough.  
Really? A bit of a reality check on this latest No Excuses school, which is located near my neighborhood. My contention is that the high scores for all of the subgroups at that school is the result of a “pushy parents” selection mechanism. Give me motivated early adolescents, whose parents are on top of them daily and I can do wonders with them. My conclusion is that, despite the bluster of the very obnoxious principal, your average set of Oakland middle school teachers would have done just as well with these kids, maybe better, especially within the small school environment in the fairly quiet Laurel neighborhood, removed from the dilapidated and prison-like conditions of the regular schools.  
This is a charter school, so parents CHOOSE to place their kids there to escape the lousy conditions in their neighborhood Oakland middle schools. A quick look at their state testing data <http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2005/Viewreport.asp> suggests:  
Parent Education: a higher than average parent education level than 3 local middle schools (Brewer, Simmons, Bret Harte). The American Indian Charter has only 130 students, and lists ALL of its parents’ ed levels, while the neigh-

See 'Charter School' Page Twenty-One



# Letters

## Charter school

Continued from Page Twenty

borhood schools “decline to state” approximately 50 percent of the parents’ education levels. In secondary schools, it’s the students, not their parents, who usually fill out this item, and they are notorious for inflating the levels out of embarrassment to admit that their parents have little education. The typical pattern is that almost all of these “decline to states” are for “not a high school grad” If so, then these schools average almost two-thirds of parents with no HS diplomas compared to the charter school’s 18% Further, I suspect that, true to form, the percentages entered for “college grad” and “some college” would be much higher than the parents’ actual education levels. In these categories, the charter school runs about double the percentages for the local schools.

“Asians” - almost all of this charter school’s Asian students are Chinese (38 of 42), and the remaining 4 students are Vietnamese. This matches the demographics of the immediate neighborhood, which is a relatively middle class area with a large percentage of Chinese and Vietnamese families who own extremely high priced houses. By comparison, the local middle schools have at most one half of their “Asians” being Chinese (at Simmons, only 8 students), with most of the other Asian students coming from very low income SEAsian cultural groups.

English proficiency: None of this charter school’s students, NONE, has ever had problems with English fluency. Regardless of ethnicity, none of the students have ever been “limited English proficient,” and only 28% even reported having a non-English language spoken at home (Initial-FEPs). Those 28% entered kindergarten speaking fluent English, which usually means that there was fluent English spoken to them at home. By comparison, the local schools range from one-third to two-thirds of the students having had English proficiency problems in their lives, and a significant number of the tested students in these schools were still not English proficient (47% in Simmons) This is huge. It goes way beyond the English proficiency of the students being tested. It’s a marker for the capacity of the parents to help with schoolwork since kindergarten and to negotiate the system and advocate for their kids in very dysfunctional Oakland elementary schools during the 7 years prior to enrollment in middle school.

“Hispanics”: 28 of the school’s 130 students are self-declared “Hispanics,” yet none of them have ever been “limited English.” This is in stark contrast to the bulk of Oakland’s Latino public school students, whose parents are first generation immigrants who don’t speak English and are overwhelmingly very low-income people with limited education. My knowledge of the local Latino populations tells me that these charter school Latino parents are either second generation English-fluent bilinguals or English-fluent upwardly mobile immigrants, if any Spanish is spoken in these homes. This would mean that the parents, not the teachers, are the key factor in high scores, when doing a comparison study across schools.

There is probably more significant data that explains the school’s high scores, but one would have to spend time at the school to discover that. How-

ever, given my experience in looking at schools with a good b.s. detector, the data I’ve found tells me a lot about how this charter school “succeeds.”

Pete Farruggio  
Berkeley, CA  
pfarr@cal.berkeley.edu

## New Orleans evictions? — Mardi Gras boycott

January 9, 2006

You and your readers are invited to attend an initial planning meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 11 at 6:00 P.M. at Gallery 37 (5th floor), 66 E. Randolph (location of the office of the Young People’s Project).

I’ve just spoken with an attorney in New Orleans and thought you and your readers would be interested in this:

Incredibly, today (January 9) hotels began evicting people who lost their homes to Katrina to make room for Mardi Gras tourists! The Quality Inn Maisson St. Charles was the first to put people out on the street. Concerned residents came out into the streets to try to plan action to stop the evictions. Meanwhile, lawyers for the People’s Hurricane Relief Fund went to court this morning to seek a temporary restraining order to stop the evictions. As of 4:00 P.M. today, they had succeeded! No hotel will be permitted to evict hurricane victims to make way for tourists, and those already on the street will get their rooms back.

This victory is on top of another one in federal court yesterday which put a stay on bulldozing of homes in the Lower 9th Ward without permission of the owners until a court hearing on January 19th. A direct action was necessary on Thursday, when the bulldozers began moving and PHRF and others conducted a citizens’ arrest to stop them.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of New Orleanians are still far from home. Many residents of the 9th Ward are unable to attend to their former homes because they have been flung far from them by FEMA and don’t have the resources to get back, deal with government and insurance companies and/or landlords, etc. Some 8500 evacuees are in the Chicago area. They have temporary housing, most have no jobs, their lives and families have been totally disrupted. We are organizing to try to find and contact these survivors to determine what their needs are and connect them with the people trying to enable them to move back to their homes. This effort will involve contacting churches and other organizations to find people, sitting down with evacuees to get their stories and determine their needs, and help them to negotiate their new lives in Chicago until they can go home (or decide to stay here permanently). Also, we will be organizing support for the efforts going on in the Gulf Coast, such as fundraising, providing volunteers, and getting out the word about the ongoing struggle.

If you’d like to help with any of these efforts, or have other ideas, please let us know. I know this letter will go out to most of your readers after some of the events discussed here, but these struggles will continue and anyone can

get involved at any point. Those who want further information can contact me by e-mail or at 847-475-2960

Please feel free to pass this information on to others whom you feel may be interested in helping!  
In Struggle,  
Kathy Fischer, Chicago  
kathy@kasnet.com

## Democratic Party leaders need to break with NCLB

January 9, 2006

The following letter was sent to Representative Henry Waxman, January 8, 2006, in response to Democrat House Leader Nancy Pelosi’s statement on No Child Left Behind (see below). Sent to Representative Henry Waxman, January 8, 2006, in response to Democrat House Leader Nancy Pelosi’s statement on No Child Left Behind (see below).

Stephen Krashen  
Malibu, California  
skrashen@yahoo.com>  
Dear Representative Waxman,

I have just read Rep. Pelosi’s statement on the fourth anniversary of No Child Left Behind in which she states that the problem with NCLB is that it is underfunded. But more funding will not fix NCLB.

NCLB demands a tremendous amount of testing, which robs students of valuable learning time. Author Alfie Kohn has noted that the pressures of tests have converted schools in the US into test preparation centers.

Also, the kind of testing done discourages creative thinking: Test preparation consists largely of mindless drills and exercises.

All educators agree that assessment is necessary: NCLB, however, requires excessive and inappropriate testing. For sensible alternatives, please see www.fairtest.org.

NCLB also requires a heavy phonics-based approach to reading, and does not allow students to do recreational reading in school. This approach is based on the conclusions of a federal investigation into reading, the National Reading Panel. These results have been seriously criticized by many scholars. Prof. Elaine Garan, for example, has shown that heavy phonics instruction helps children read lists of words in isolation, but does not have a significant impact on tests of reading comprehension given after grade 1. My own research shows that in-school recreational reading has a very consistent and positive impact on literacy development, both in first and second language development.

The current president of the International Reading Association, Richard Allington, has gathered many of these criticisms into a book, appropriately titled Big Brother and National Reading Curriculum: How Ideology Trumped Evidence. Widely published scholar Gerald Coles has published two books on this topic: Misreading Reading: The Bad Science that Hurts Children, and Reading the Naked Truth: Literacy, Legislation, and Lies. Prof. Garan has published a book with the title Resisting Reading Mandates.

I hope your staff and other house Democrats will take a closer look

into No Child Left Behind. Stephen Krashen Professor Emeritus University of Southern California skrashen@yahoo.com *Pelosi Statement on Fourth Anniversary of No Child Left Behind* Sunday, January 8, 2006 Washington, D.C. - House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi released the following statement today marking the fourth anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act, which was signed into law on January 8, 2002:

*“Four years ago, Democrats and Republicans joined together to make a promise to our nation’s children: that we leave no child behind in our educational system. No Child Left Behind was a promise to improve student performance, increase school accountability, and provide students with the resources they need to learn the skills crucial to their future success.*

*“Unfortunately, President Bush and Republicans in Congress have failed to live up to their part of the bargain. Over the last four years, they have shortchanged No Child Left Behind by \$40 billion, leaving states with new mandates, but not enough funding, and leaving children without the necessary resources. Failing to provide a quality education undermines our responsibility to protect our values of fairness and opportunity for all.*

*“Underfunding No Child Left Behind is one in a long line of Republican attacks on our country’s education system. Proposed Republican budget cuts reduce opportunities for young people by cutting funding for student aid by more than \$12 billion and heaping more debt on students. And for the fourth year in a row, Republicans have refused to increase Pell Grants, pricing hard-working students out of a college education.*

*“Sadly, Republican policies continue to leave millions of our children behind. Together, America can do better for our children and for their future.”*

## Union fails to rebut attacks

Feb. 6,2006

In recent weeks Chicago Public School teachers have come under attack from the CPS and Mayor Daley. First the CPS want to balance its budget firing over 1,000 teachers and by not making a mandatory contribution to the Teachers Pension Fund and the Mayor agrees to the extent of calling it a “Pension Holiday”! CPS teachers are some of the lowest paid teachers in the area and now the Mayor, whose sister was a teacher, thinks it’s good idea to further dishearten them by damaging their pension fund. (If CPS offered 5+5 they could solve the budget problem — thousands of veteran teachers would retire and CPS could replace them with new teachers at half the salary!)

Then Arne Duncan announces that more schools will be closed, teachers fired, students sent hither and yon because of low achievement. The Mayor likes this too. These are the schools that the CPS failed; they stripped them of important programs, took their top-performing students and sent them to magnet schools, and they have consistently degraded them by publicly tagging them as failing. (Do they have any idea the effect that kind of label has on the culture of a school?) The staffs of these schools have courageously continued to present consistent and positive educa-



Boardwatch

December 2005 Chicago Board meeting

By Lotty Blumenthal

CHICAGO. The Chicago Board of Education met for its final meeting of 2005 on December 21, 2005. After nearly an hour of pre-holiday festivities and awards, the first phase of the meeting began. Public Participation started at 11:25 and was scheduled to end at 1:25. According to the rules of the board, speeches are to be no more than two minutes long, as the secretary announces each month.

The first speaker was #21 on the speakers' list — Rev. Jessie Jackson Sr. of Operation PUSH. Rev. Jackson spoke of the disparity in school funding from the state which he felt was illegal because of its disparity resulting from the present system and the lack of money from the state both for capital spending and educational needs. He compared Schaumburg with Englewood. He said that those who attend school are being punished by those who don't since Chicago missed \$150 million because of missing attendees. He then talked of the condition of Harper High School, where he has been focusing attention. Among other problems, he said Harper is trying to make due with only three girls toilets working out of six, 200 band members trying to do band with 40 instruments, and a swimming pool which has not been working for ten years. Jackson added that the school had a principal without a contract. The library, Jackson said, had very few books in it. Observers asked whether all schools are given a library budget.

He also asked for a job fair and GED classes for not only students, but parents since 88 percent of the student body has semi-employed or unemployed parents. He asked for truant officers, since Harper is 81 out of 81 in attendance.

The Chicago Teachers Union has asked for the return of truant officers, dismissed by previous school boards, for more than ten years. Since this meeting, U.S. Rep Bobby Rush reportedly has obtained a federal grant for two truant officers. The main themes were that the state is not doing what it should in funding and that the board should help.

However, he didn't to go to the suburbs to see disparity in students quality of learning. He only had to go to Senn where disparity is in the same building. The "Rickover Naval Academy" has a gym, computer room, normal size classes, and one librarian for 125 students. The Rickover librarian is not to work with the other 1,700 children in the building who have no gym, no computer room (a rolling cart program), oversized classes and one librarian to work with the other 1700 students. Can Jessie talk to Scott about it? No one can blame the state Government for this disparity.

Duncan droned a list of fixing of the many broken parts of Harper. Jackson spoke far longer than two minutes. No one called time. The next speaker was called for time.

She was Bonita Robinson, reading specialist at Ellington Elementary School, who spoke about Jonathan Kozol book *The Shame of the Nation* applying to some CPS schools. She also spoke of good, experienced and highly qualified teachers in classrooms being harassed out of classrooms by the usually political appointees in the region offices who go through the "walk throughs" insulting teachers by using



Despite the fact that parents and teachers from InterAmerican Magnet Elementary School made it clear at both the December 2005 and January 2006 Chicago Board of Education meetings that they did not want their school moved into the LeMoyne school building, Board President Michael Scott tried to claim in January that the wishes of InterAmerican

were unclear, while the Board moved immediately to sell the InterAmerican building to developers. Above, InterAmerican teacher Norine Gutekanst (center) joins parents at the December 21, 2005, meeting to protest the planned sale of the building. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

stupid comments about minutia. These people are not only a waste of our budget by not being productive, they are unproductive since they often are causes for losing those who are. Just think, put a truant officer in every region to bring children back instead of their aggravating everyone with "walkthroughs." She made suggestions as all students should have a library card, shutting off television for reading by parents, lessening of hostility by "walkthrough" people, and ending of retaliation. "Retaliation is Real," she said.

Next Queen Searles asked for a quick settlement to her case and a return to work. She was wrongfully removed from her job by one of those trumped-up charges through a psychological exam. Accompanied by members of the community and reports from two doctors who are not Board employees, she asked for faster communication from the law department since not working for two years is about to make her homeless. No board has ever explained why reports from all other doctors except their own have no standing in these cases which usually have women for victims. Queen said that she was a victim of the very retaliation already mentioned.

Next Perry Gibson, a minister from Southside Missionary Baptist Church, spoke on behalf of Queen Searles as have other community members including former students in the past. Reverend Gibson, who has police experience, said he'd seen the evidence possessed by Ms Searles and would trust his own grandchildren to be taught by her. He hoped for a speedy end to the situation. Michael Scott talked about this case being in litigation with much evidence. He said he'd look into it. Many have suggested that he should look at the other cases like it, since this abuse of psychologists has been going on for some time.

Laurie Hasbrook of the Save Senn Coalition told of all of the dispar-

ity for students in the same building: 1600-1700 Senn students and about 125 Rickover Naval Academy students. Naval academy students have empty rooms and supplies. Senn students are in overcrowded classes (40 to 67, depending on who's talking) without the same supplies and facility as naval academy students, although they apparently have better teachers. This disparity is caused by CPS Board and administrators. When Laurie Hasbrook asked Scott to visit, he said "He'd try" to go there. How long will Senn students be deprived?

Helen Murtaugh, a retired Senn teacher, instead thanked the Board, Scott and Duncan, for fixing Senn's roof. She said white parents in feeder elementary schools have expressed interest in sending their children to Senn. However, they'd like an IB or other program in those elementary schools to enhance education.

Matthew Morgenthau of Mary Lyon Elementary and Steinmetz High School told of a meeting of the Belmont-Cragin Neighborhood Association and the Area Instructional Officer. Promises were made. The roof still needed to be fixed. It is scheduled to be worked on in the summer.

Dwayne Truss of Austin asked where the capital improvements were that were promised to be done. Scott promised they'd be done.

Thomas Ramos complained again about the principal of Curie High School refusing to send home to parents the agenda for the NCLB meeting. This complaint is one of many in the struggle with the NCLB group and the Principal. \$20,000 had not been released for adult classes in the evening for computers, GED, and ESL. Also the principal refused sending out notices to the more than 3,000 students with an agenda for NCLB meetings. Both Board member Carrera and James Deanes were attempting to resolve these issues. The LSC is with the Principal.

Mitchell Hutton of Pritzker Elementary School told of three rooms with either no heat or overheating, asbestos in floor tiles all over the building, and one of those mysterious break-ins where thieves seem to know where everything is including the entire set of school keys. Security is one of the biggest problems with people seen on roofs, computers and other valuables stolen amounting to tens of thousands of dollars. Operations Chief Sean Murphy is working with Andres Durbak (the board's chief of security) and will work on three more rooms during Spring break.

Clarice Berry of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association (CPAA) told of problems in salary for administrators. She said they had low moral and felt unappreciated because they did not get a four percent raise like other unionized employees since she felt it would only save \$4.5 million of our tax money. But some critics were skeptical, given the large salaries currently budgeted for principals. Perhaps raises should not be given in percentages any more, but in flat amounts. For instance, which is greater four percent of 35, 40, 45, 50 or 55 thousand dollars — or two percent of \$120,000? Which would you rather have? Michael Scott told Ms. Berry that he and the board appreciated all the administrators.

Viridia Hatchett said the conference for empowering parents was a success despite long distances between rooms. She then asked if a bunch of questions were true or not such as certain courses being required. James Deanes answered two questions and said he'd get answers to the other questions.

Noreen Gutekanst of Inter-American Magnet Elementary School — with a large group of parents — asked that the sale of the current building housing Inter-American be delayed



# January 2006 Chicago Board meeting

By Lotty Blumenthal  
and Mary Beth Foley

CHICAGO. The January 25, 2006 meeting of the Chicago Board of Education began with the introduction of a student from Kenwood High School sitting in with board members reading an original poem with the recurring words "Never Give In." Michael Scott, board president, then lauded Jeremy Robinson, a teacher for a year and a half at Harper High who has become a Rhodes Scholar and will study at Oxford University in England. Scott said he hoped he'd return to CPS. He said he intended to. Next, Dana Washington, math dept chair and teacher at Corliss High Schools, was cited for having won a Millikin Foundation Award for teaching of \$25,000. CEO Arne Duncan said many wonderful teachers are in CPS. In light of Duncan's recent announcement about an alleged budget crisis, observers asked if that's why whenever there's a cash shortfall, teachers are cut before consultants and chiefs of staff who never see a child.

The formalities continued. Next CPS honored "Donors Choose," an organization that donates materials, methods, assistance of various kinds in response to written requests from classroom teachers. It was the one year anniversary of the group's Chicago chapter functioning. Finally, Keller Magnet (Elementary) School was honored with Harlem Globetrotter tickets for having the entire school in perfect attendance the first day after winter break. The principal, who met with the LSC on the day of the games, said that parents, LSC, and



Continuing more than ten months of regular reports to the Board of Education about the Senn High School community's opposition to the Rickover Naval Academy inside its walls, Craig Mousin (above left) and Chris Person

(right) spoke at the January Chicago Board of Education meeting. They then met with Pat Herman (center), assistant to Board President Michael Scott, to set up a time for Scott to discuss the problem. Substance photo by George Schmidt.

staff have a weekly countdown on attendance. If the goal is met, there's a pizza party the last day each week.

Public participation began at 11:00 a.m. Reverend Lewis Flowers of the West Side Ministers Coalition spoke concerning CPS rejecting an after-school program at Austin High School. Flow-

ers noted that the Austin community was where a senior was shot and killed the previous week at 5:00 p.m. after school. He also spoke of the impending stress on classroom teachers because of threats to their jobs, stress on the principal and entire community. He asked that downtown jobs be cut first. Scott

replied that administration is only five percent of the Board's budget, and said he'd meet with him within ten days about the after-school program. Scott did not explain whether consultants, regional workers, and others in non-classroom jobs are wrongfully not

Continued on Page Twenty

## December 2005 Chicago Board of Education meeting

Continued from Page Eighteen

since the parents were not sure that Le Moyne is the correct site for relocation. She said their opposition to the LeMoyne move was because so few people in the gentrified Wrigleyville area are Latinos. They feel to function well, 50 percent of students should be Latino speaking, learning English. Scott said that he felt that there were more groups who had other views, that all was complex, and he would get back to the signed up speaker in writing. Since the December meeting, the sale has not been delayed, the building being sold to developers.

At this point, will the Inter-American group have a selection of sites?

Next Meena Brongel and another parent of minority students at Payton College Prep High School said they felt that their children were being unjustly treated, given no help in order to harass them into leaving the school. They suggested steps that could help the situation. High Schools Chief Donald Pittman, who previously had not responded to parents, was told to solve the problem and the parents to return in 30 days if he didn't respond to them again.

Henry Cervantes, of Telpochacalli Community Education Project, asked about the future of Farragut High School. A recent graduate, he felt that the LSC was being manipulated by the administration. He also asked if the school was to be phased out. Scott emphatically told him that Farragut neither rumor was true.



Clarice Berry, President of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, appeared before the Board for the second time in six months to protest cutbacks in raises for principals. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

Farragut has been steadily improving with some honored programs, and the future look good.

Then Patricia Buenrostro said perhaps Farragut should change. She has worked in charter schools and is in favor of change. If Farragut is to con-

tinue, she wondered how to improve it. Arne Duncan told her to run (as community rep) for the LSC elections coming this spring.

Janice Jeffries came to thank those who had worked hard all year (like Okema Lewis) and delay criticism until January. She said she hoped for great LSC elections and had given James Deanes a list of suggestions to that end. One was that Principals not be present during the election in order to not influence people.

Debra Stigler and Inga Parker (with a large group including teachers from Langston Hughes Elementary School) asked about funding for a building. At present, the walls are leaning, bubbling, with holes in the floor, lunchroom in a sub-basement, many fire violations and overcrowding so that students have no spaces between them seated. The new school was promised by the previous administration. The Alderwoman has made appearances about the problems several times. The parents were eloquent in talking of the promised school. Scott said Langston Hughes was his priority, that he would make an announcement soon, and that they should tell the Alderwoman he had talked to them. He promised to make a personal appearance at the school with any news.

Gwendolyn Talley of the beleaguered Choir Academy of CCC, a charter school which keeps losing its partners, spoke next. She said that the situation has left them in limbo, unable to raise funds, recruit teachers and students. A member of the Department of New School Support said that she'd talked to Tally, those former support organizations, and new support partners. She said they were putting together a package that would maintain the school. As soon as it was complete,

she'd talk to the parents.

Valencia Rias of Designs for Change gave the Board, Scott and Duncan a 'wish list' for the new year. First on the list was reconvening of the "LSC Roundtable" meetings to restore communications between CPS and LSCs so that LSCs would know what's going on with programs before they hit the press. Scott asked if she'd work out a budget. She said it was a no-cost process which only required "commitment and concern." She said the process involves "Logistics, Policy and Law, Conflict Mediation, and Principal Selection and Evaluation Committees as well as a time for updates and announcements." Restoring the Roundtable would provide another method beside Board meetings to discuss issues and problems. She also presented a list of eight items for LSC elections, and three suggestions for bettering CPS and LSC relations. Duncan recited some of the steps being taken for LSC elections. After this speaker, the public participation ended. After the official Board meeting started, James Deanes gave a presentation on the steps being taken for the upcoming LSC elections. 🍎

### Chicago's school board meetings

This month, Substance begins our coverage of the meetings of the Chicago Board of Education the month after the meeting takes place. In addition to our regular report on the public participation section, we will also highlight actions that are approved by the board. Public participation at Chicago's school board meetings is a legacy of the days before the Daley dictatorship took over Chicago's public schools. Democracy once flourished in Chicago's schools. Substance welcomes comments from our readers on this feature. 🍎



# January 2006 Chicago Board meeting

Continued from Page Nineteen

counted as administrators.

Next Amy Lux of Sutherland Elementary School was concerned about discipline implementation. She felt that how discipline infractions were punished varied from teacher to teacher and school to school and more guidelines from the central administration should exist. She based this belief upon differences in teacher opinion about her son’s rule breaking. She was also concerned about the LSC deciding whether or not to hear from the audience during meetings about selection of a new principal.

Next, State Senator Martin Sandoval spoke about overcrowding at schools in Area Five. He said that Governor Blagojevich did not allow enough funds in the budget for school construction and asked CPS administration to join him in asking that the state spend as much on schools in the next budget as on roads. A parent, Nereida Lara, spoke on the subject and invited them to come see the overcrowding at her school, the Sandoval, which was named after the senator’s sister.

Next Sylvester Hendricks spoke about the impending Local School Council elections. He asked Scott to review recommendations from a Board meeting two years before held at Orr High School, where a list of suggestions for improving LSC teacher and community involvement with LSCs was given. He felt these suggestions were still valid.

Anthony Townsend spoke about how wonderful his son’s school — Legacy Charter — was and how its program should be increased.

First Ward Alderman Manny Flores (with speakers 23 and 24, Amy Bilton and Sylvia Ramos) had two topics: capital improvements needed at Pritzker Elementary School and the safety of East Village neighborhood surrounding Wells High School. Alderman Flores noted that increased problems at Wells and Clemente high schools had arisen because of the influx of students from Austin High School following the Board of Education’s 2004 decision to stop taking 9<sup>th</sup> graders at Austin.

The Board’s Operations Chief, Sean Murphy, talked about progress on both the asbestos problem and security problem at Pritzker. He said he’d bring the experts to the next Pritzker LSC meeting on February 9. Flores said he’d be there as well to resolve the problems. He tried to speak to the other problem: the influx of students from “boundary changes” (Austin students) at Wells. He said he had not been consulted before the change.

Strangely, in the eyes of some observers, Scott would not let Flores’s other speaker (Bilton) on the topic of security at Wells. Ms. Bilton was scheduled to speak but was deferred to later in the meeting. Noting the problems at Wells (which had been increased by the influx of Austin students), Alderman Flores mentioned violence to seniors and in the community and criminal damage to property outside the school. He mentioned that boundary changes may have included rival gangs. There was discussion among Board members, with member Clara Muñana stating that she and Alberto Carrera are trying to work with the schools. Scott, who would not let Bilton speak because of time, then continued talking himself for many minutes.

Next Teresa Garcia and Patricia Clark spoke of their opposition to having Inter-American Magnet moved into



Chicago’s First Ward Alderman Manny Flores (above right) told the January 21, 2006 Chicago Board of Education meeting that it needed to solve facilities problems at Pritzker Elementary School and security problems at Wells and Clemente high schools. Board members did not tell Flores that for more than three years, Board policies had caused increased problems at both high schools. In June 2004, despite unanimous opposition at a Board hearing, the Board voted to freeze 9th grade at Austin and Calumet high schools. Warnings from other high schools in the area were unheeded. The resultant security problems spilled into the schools that received the Austin and Calumet students. In June 2005, the Board continued the policy at both high schools, adding to the problems in receiving schools. Substance has copies of the complete transcripts of the hearings on the Austin and Calumet plans, reflecting that the Board was warned of the gang problems that have resulted. Most observers now feel that the plans were intended to enable the Board to transfer programs at Austin and Calumet to privatization organizations under Mayor Daley’s “Renaissance 2010” program. In November 2005, the Austin program became the property of former Illinois School Superintendent Michael Bakalis’s “American Quality Schools”, a private entity. Photo above from the January 2006 Chicago Board of Education meeting. Substance photos by George N. Schmidt.



Above (center). Former Illinois Schools Supt. Michael Bakalis is now part of one of the many privatization moves that form part of Mayor Daley’s “Renaissance 2010” plans. At the November 16, 2005, Chicago Board of Education meeting, Bakalis’s group, “American Quality Schools”, received a contract to run Austin High School’s “Austin Business and Entrepreneurship Academy.” Bakalis’s group was one of 15 charters approved that day. Standing behind Bakalis (right) is Rev. Lewis Flowers, who has been a strong supporter of Mayor Daley’s privatization plans in the Austin community. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

LeMoyne Elementary School and asked for a delay until a better location in their eyes. After telling them that sale of the former building would be approved

that day, Scott disagreed with the parents’ assertion that they had informed the Board of their opposition. The parents started to walk away when Scott

started a dialogue that many thought was unnecessary, telling them that nothing more could be done.

Christopher Persons talked about the Rickover Military Academy at Senn. He said that the signatures of 3,121 community residents had been gathered asking that the question be put on the ballot. That number is sufficient to put it on the ballot as a referendum, and Persons noted that the presence of Rickover at Senn is detrimental to both community and school. He cited Kenwood student Moore’s poem, saying the community would “Never Give In.”

Craig Mousin, a Senn neighbor and member of the Save Senn Coalition, spoke to the same issue raising the problem of costs to an impoverished CPS for a small amount of students compared to the deprived greater number enrolled at Senn. Scott told both of them he would meet with their group for presentation of evidence and further reconsideration of the divided school.

Robert Neenan, LSC of Sauganash, with principal lobbied for the return of a budget cut janitor, a permanent annex instead of mobiles, and updating of requests for a school that’s at 114 percent of capacity with 60 new condos and 35 homes going up one block from the school.

Peter Stewart of “Chicago Virtual Charter” — which is an affiliate of “K12, Inc. — and Leslie Contos spoke about providing more information so that the Board would approve the Chicago Virtual Charter proposal for next fall. They talked about certified teachers and individual home schooled situations. The proposal for Chicago Virtual Charter was the only charter school proposal that the Board of Education did not approve at its November 2005 meeting, partly because of questions at the time about “K-12” chief William Bennett. Stewart said that Bennett was no longer with “K-12.”

Following the K-12 presentation, Ted Dallas, Vice President of the Chicago Teachers Union, representing President Marilyn Stewart, protested the “arbitrary closing of schools” and the opening of schools, sometimes “illegally,” by “private management companies who lack expertise” and for which there is no oversight by the taxpayers who pay for them.

He said, “This Board is doing a disservice to the students, and disrespecting the parents, the community, and the dedicated teachers and paraprofessionals. You are on a collision course with the citizens of this city and with the Chicago Teachers Union. It is not going to be business as usual. You can only get away for so long with deceptive buzzwords like ‘2010.’ It’s not too late to do the right thing for the students of the city and your employees.” Scott thanked him for coming.

Eduardo Garza talked about “budget priorities.” He said that state politicians need to be educated about education. He emphasized that “We need more teachers,” not fewer teachers. He said that if pork barrel projects like unnecessary flagpoles are funded, instead teachers pensions should be funded since it was the least that could be done for the dedication of teachers. He was applauded by the audience.

Alfred Rodgers noted the need for more Latino administrators and then talked of getting no response to several problems at several Southwest schools. Scott directed Sean Murphy to locate and respond to the written requests. Rodgers said he see Scott soon.

Odile Compagnon, a parent



# January 2006 Chicago Board meeting

Continued from Page Twenty

volunteer and architect, and principal Andrew Tinich of Lincoln Elementary were seeking part of the funding for an environmental model program for which they had already raised \$75,000 of the needed \$325,000. DePaul University would be a partner to the project as would governmental agencies. Scott said he favored this project but they needed a one page cost analysis and written funding request.

Donna Thomas of “Phillip/ Wells Prep Academy” spoke of the hostile attitude toward parents of the school. Parent volunteers were no longer welcome; the parent room was closed; there’s only one principal and LSC for both the high school and elementary school, which is not interested in the elementary school. Scott said James Deanes should do some fact finding about the problems before he’d visit again and that the school is not being closed, just shorted teachers. “Wells Prep...” (a special program located within Phillips High School on the south side) is not to be confused with Wells High School, which is located on the north side.

Wanda Hopkins of PURE asked that CPS use more money for more programs in increase the number of LSC candidates for the impending election. After James Deanes stated the budget for the election, the amount set aside for advertising, and history of LSC elections, Scott proceeded to the repeat the whole thing and ask Hopkins to review the budget and suggest improvements.

Marjorie Preston, retired teacher, did a brief presentation about how costs could be cut and achievement raised. She cited six principles which she said would involve multiple departments of CPS administration working together. The basic ideas of her strategies were printed in the Sun-Times (page 62, November 16, 2005). They included specific steps in building skills. She used a hand held chart like manipulative to make her points on teaching methods.

Amy Bilton of CAP, beat 1322 (whose husband is President of the East Village Neighborhood Association) spoke about the violence not only in the school, but in the neighborhood. These have increased since the Board for two years consecutively placed between 150 and 200 students from the closed Austin area into Wells. According to Bilton, Senior citizens have been attacked, graffiti has increased on business walls, patrons of businesses on Chicago Ave. have been terrorized. In short, East Village yuppies have been treated like people in Austin by Austin students who are probably not setting a good example for indigenous Wells students. She asked for a meeting of all community resources to work together to solve the problem, having already recruited volunteers from the community to work on the problem. Scott had her meet with Andres Durbak, the Board’s security chief.

Next EvAngel YHWHnewBN talked about proper pronunciation of her name, educators should not call children kids, and that as founder of the Emmet Till Road Scholars Foundation she wanted the Board to support a resolution or letters to the prosecutor in Mississippi for indictments in the Till Case. After statements by legal council Rocks, Scott asked for forms with the address which he would then distribute to all present and write a letter himself.

Maria Cervantes of Whittier



Amy Bilton (above) registered to speak about ‘CAPS beat 1322’ on the subject of the ‘Safety of East Village neighborhood by Wells High School.’ Despite being pushed out of order after Manny Flores spoke, Bilton was able to document the results of the closing of Austin High School’s 9th grade for two years on the Wells High School community. Substance photo by George N. Schmidt.

Elementary spoke in Spanish with a translator. She asked for aid from CPS is finding ways for getting to use TIF money in their area for constructions for rehab to relieve overcrowding in the area. Scott he was unsure of the rules, needed to investigate them, then assistance Cervantes and the Whittier parents in seeking those funds if it was possible.

He said he would inform them as soon as he knew what those rules might be.

Wanda Taylor, LSC president of Price Elementary thanked administrators who responded to her letters, phone calls and e-mails. She asked for funding and meetings on the Title I Parent Advisory Councils. Scott thanked her



Substance editor George N. Schmidt spoke again about the blacklist that keeps him from resuming his teaching career in Chicago’s public high schools. Schmidt also warned the Board that the proliferation of charter schools and other entities was creating the danger that counterfeit high school credits would become a major problem in Chicago. Substance photo by Mary Beth Foley.

for her bringing attention to staffers who responded in a timely fashion and said there’d be a meeting.

Next Bertrand Murrell talked about being affected by speakers of behalf of homeless children. He felt that CPS should do more to lessen the ill effects on children who are homeless in closing schools or other unstable school situations. He felt that if there were more concern and compassion, these students could be helped.

Yusuf Abuzir talked about his dismissal from his job which he felt was unfair and improperly done. He’d been suspended for 629 days without pay or benefits, affecting his health. He stated he had legal recourse to this problem.

Finally George Schmidt of Substance Newspaper spoke about his own loss of job, the effect of which is being felt in suburban areas where he’s been told of reluctance in hiring him. Scott told him he’d give him a personal letter of recommendation. Board Attorney Patrick Rocks said that he’s communicating with Schmidt’s lawyer and stated that the former process can’t be undone. Schmidt disagreed, noting that the Board regularly rescinds previous motions. Schmidt’s second item of discussion was obtaining information from the board. He said that the Freedom of Information office was doing its best to provide information, but other departments were not forwarding the materials. Schmidt then noted that the Board needed to keep an eye on how high school credits were being awarded with the proliferation of new charter and other “schools” across the city. If rumors about counterfeit credits were true, he said, the problem would soon be massive. 🍏

## Letters

Continued from Page Seventeen

tion programs in spite of the inadequate support of CPS. Now, teachers and staff are blamed and have to find other jobs, and students and parents have to find other schools, AND CPS will send these children to schools with even lower test scores. Does this make sense?

Next, CPS complains that teachers take too many sick days and the Mayor scoffs at the idea that teaching is stressful! Let’s see what might cause teachers’ absences; poor unsafe and unhealthy working conditions; voluminous paperwork exacerbated by new mandates from IEOs, NCLB, the State, the city, anyone’s aunt, uncle, brother, who think they know everything; exposure to all forms of germs, viruses, colds, flu, etc brought in by hundreds of children everyday; low salaries, threats to jobs and pensions; physical threats by students and parents; public ridicule by supervisors (Arne and Richie); etc. etc. etc.

All of these attacks have gone, to all intents and purposes, unanswered by Marilyn Stewart and the Chicago Teachers Union. Gone are the days when the CTU president (Deborah Lynch) was on every newscast defending members against any assault from CPS and the Mayor. Now it seems like every other day we are bombarded with vicious criticism and no one at CTU is doing a thing about it. The Stewart team has given CPS and the Mayor’s office carte blanche, and they’re really taking advantage of it. What a shame!

Sarah Loftus  
Marquette Elementary School



# A Grim Fairy Tale

## Fifteen Minutes of Fame. Or Shame.

by Sister Grim



Once upon a time it was the mispronounced month of Feb-ewe-ary, (or February, as it was generally written) in the city of Chicago, located in the sorry, scandal-ridden cheapskate state of Ill-A-Noise. Of course, it must be noted, in an obvious effort to improve city-state relations by demonstrating imitation as the sincerest form of flaaattery, Chicago was not doing too shabbily in the scandal department, either.

For the local news media, it was a bonaanza. There were weekly revelations about hired trucks and fired mobsters, and lazy workers and hazy deals. There was graft and corruption and nepotism — old-style business as ewesual — and now there were ongoing conflicts about the public schools — new style business as ewesual.

For the membersheep of the CTEwe, the future was fraught with danger. The entire educational situation, what with No Child Left Behind, charter schools, vouchers, school closings, and intensified testing of teachers, was baaad enough by itself. But noooo.

There was more. It was THAT time again — time for contraact negotiations. Well, it wasn't really and truly time for contraact renewal, since the existing so-called "terrible" contraaact didn't expire until June 2007. Nevertheless, the self-selected leadersheep of the CTEwe were plotting and planning to raaam through another loser, and they wanted everything locked up sooner rather than later. They were eager to force the process along no matter what.

"Is this like the time before last?" asked Ewenice, who was still Toonice for her own good.

"You mean 1998? The CTEwe version of 1984?" said Millicent Militant, her long-time friend, who, like Ewenice, was likewise blessed with a remarkable memory. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for most of the membersheep.

"Exactly. I remember how that contract just got railroaded through, and afterwards, everyone insisted that they voted 'no', but the Reece administration passed it anyway. He claimed the vote was almost ewenanimous."

"Well," observed Millicent, "almost is a weasel word."

"Right," agreed Scott Skeptic, journalism teacher-in-exile, who had stopped by for his weekly chat. "They use words like 'almost' so they can't be charged with telling total untruths. It's just another sneaky taaactic."

"They have so many," whined Ewenice.

"Old news," snapped Millicent. "We need to see what we can do to minimize the damage. Let me see the list of demands, please."

Ever-efficient Clara Clark, the clerk, handed over the materials. Interestingly enough, the so-called "new" demands were few and far between, and the "new" contraact looked remarkably like its predecessor in many ways.

"Am I correct in assuming that

they want to restore most of the extra seven school days we just managed to get rid of?" asked Millicent in an uncharacteristically ungrammatical query.

"The leadersheep said we shouldn't have to stay an extra fifteen minutes every day," volunteered Nancy Naive, darling of the ruling Pee-Yu caucus. "It was naasty."

Millicent was desperately trying to control herself. She was torn between baaashing her head against the wall or strangling Nancy. Instead, she asked, "Why do you say that, Nancy?" in her sweetest voice.

"It's abusive. It's all HER fault that we have to get there early and stay late."

"But most of us get there before the bell rings anyway," reasoned Ewenice. "That way, we can hang up our coats, check any notices or bulletins, and get organized for the day before the students come in—"

"Big deal. We are professionals. We can get organized while the kids are sitting there. They have nothing better to do, anyway," said Nancy.

"And most of us take a few minutes after school to put things away—"

"Again. We are professionals. We can do that while the kids are sitting there. They have nothing else to do," she repeated in a parrot-like manner.

Many brows were becoming furrowed in confusion. Most of the membersheep knew that the children had plenty to do, and that there was never enough time in the day to accomplish everything.

The leadersheep, on the other hand, were so far removed from the classroom that the students were merely an abstraction. They were all members of the Pee-Yu caucus, the oligarchy that was currently in power. The Pee-Yu caucus had other priorities, and, given its pronounced propensity to produce a plethora of new and amazingly devious ways to skew voting results, it was seemingly positioned to remain there forever.

Sort of like Tom Reece, former CTEwe President-for-Life, a/k/a Prince of the Prodigious Pension.

"But with the previous Agreement, we had seven fewer days of school. Seven whole days. Seven days for vacation time, or clean-up time at home —"

"Or job-hunting time," interjected Scott.

"—So we don't have to stay until June 47th anymore," said Ewenice. "We can even sign up for summer classes like all the other teachers."

Nancy laughed. It was a nasty little snicker. "That's really lame. Who needs to take classes?"

"Recertification?"

"Oh. Well. That's just another way SHE screwed up. All of us got immediate blaaanket recertification," she bleated. Blurted.

Scott's mouth dropped open in shock. "What did you say?"

"You people are so baackwards, worrying about unimportant little details. You always miss the big picture. That's why the real leaders are back in charge."

"What was that about immediate blaaanket recertification?" Scott asked again, this time with his handy-dandy little reporter's notebook in hand.

Once upon a time it was a little-known fact, but a fact nonetheless, that the CTEwe was veryveryclose to the Ill-A-Noise Federation of Teachers, which in turn was veryveryvery close to Governor Blaaablaa. As yet another matter of fact, the IFT was largely responsible for his election, having dumped tons of money into his primary campaign. No good deed goes unpunished, and therefore Governor Blaaablaa, as evvyboddy knew, was in control of the Ill-A-Noise State Bored of Education.

Once in a great while, a few of the obscenely overpaid IFT leadersheep reluctantly tore themselves away from their juicy jobs, and subsequently retired. Thereupon they accepted their blaatantly bloated pensions, and magically found themselves appointed as membersheep on the State Bored of Education, where they were free to make important decisions on behalf of their special friends.

It was perfectly acceptable. It was sort of legal. It wasn't exactly ethical, but hey. It was Ill-A-Noise.

So, once upon a time, a few short years ago, while the CTEwe was in turmoil following a seriously flawed officers election — the election being flawed, not the officers — well, that's another story for another day — and the leadersheep of the IFT and AFT were assiduously avoiding acting in a fair and impartial manner, some sneaky deals were struck behind closed doors.

It was top-secret. It was sticky. It was perfect.

It was Pammy Pretty, CTEwe lobbyist.

And so, once upon a time, it was sad but true that all CTEwe membersheep were not created equal. There were two lists: one for all currently employed teachers and support staff, and another for the very special teachers and staff who were members of the Pee-Yu caucus. They were given preferential treatment in many ways.

Scott was busy doing research on the recertification scheme-scam, but, with more than 80,000 teachers across the state, each of whom could submit up to 120 individual pieces of verification, it was slow going. It became obvious that Nancy's comment could be correct. There was such a baacklog of recertification materials that anything could be hidden anywhere. Or lost. Or found. It all depended upon the situation and the status of the teacher in question. And, of course, where someone was listed.

Meanwhile, Pammy was pac-

ing around her Chicago suite, which served as her CTEwe headquarters when she was not staying at the Sssspringfield Ritz. (Actually, according to some former insiders, who were now in the witness relocation program, Ssspringfield wasn't very high on her agenda. The shopping was decidedly inferior.) Anyway, the suite was situated within the opulent offices of the CTEwe leadersheep, located in the world-famous Merchandise Maart, overlooking the lovely Chicago River. The multi-million dollar annual lease had just been renewed for another ten years, much to the relief of the leadersheep, who certainly had no desire to work in anything that remotely resembled a public school building. Ugh. The very thought gave them shivers.

Pammy was engrossed in triple-checking the instant recertification list when Teddy, the Obsequious Toady, dared to disturb her. He knocked politely once or twice on the bulletproof door; when there was no response, he tried the doorknob, setting off an alarm that caused him to jump back in terror.

Nope. It was really just Pammy, shrieking "Whaaaaat?! What do you want?"

Ugly rumors, like poison mushrooms, had begun to sprout from sources close to the Big Baaad Bored of Education; teacher cuts and school closings lurked just over the horizon.

"The horizon is here," observed Teddy.

"What are you baaabbling about?" she shrieked.

"It's on the news. The Bored is closing eleven schools!!"

"So?"

Teddy just stood there, mouth agape. That was certainly not the response he had expected. "What about all the members that will lose their jobs?"

"What about them? They should have worked harder. Serves them right," she snapped.

"What about the decrease in dues revenue?"

"See, Teddy, that's why you're not the president," she sneered, jabbing at him with her meticulously manicured index finger. "We already took care of that."

"Who? How?" he whined in confusion.

"We made a deal with Sssspringfield. Signed, sealed and delivered. Anyone working in a Chicago charter school will have to pay dues to the CTEwe," she explained. "So, lose a few teachers here, gain a few teachers there. It's not a problem."

"It might be a problem for the unemployed CPS teachers," observed Teddy in a rare moment of candor.

"Oh, get over that goody-goody act," she replied. "You're not the president, remember? Why are you frowning?"

"It's not enough."



# Subscripts

Yes, Sullivan High School. There is a Santa Claus. The good news was officially delivered on January 3, 2006, when Dr. Andrew Rowlas, principal since September 2004, was finally removed from the embattled Rogers Park school. His tenure was marked by egregious displays of disrespect towards faculty, staff, the LSC, and even the students, who demonstrated their displeasure with a walkout just before Thanksgiving. Watch for a more detailed follow-up. But now that Rowlas has left Sullivan, the question becomes how many other guys like Rowlas — who had very little Chicago teaching experience, if any — are still running some of Chicago’s major schools. And why?...

As we promised last month, Substance will be publishing the true history of the Chicago Teachers Union — using official documents — on our website each month until the CTU stops Stalinizing its version of its own history. By March 15, you will be able to read the May and June 2004 issues of the Chicago Union Teachers in PDF format at [www.substancenews.com](http://www.substancenews.com). Of course, you should be able to read it at the union’s official website ([www.ctunet.com](http://www.ctunet.com)), but that’s as likely, as we’ve already pointed out, as getting an honest curriculum for Russian history in a high school in Tashkent in 1938. Each month, on the 15<sup>th</sup>, we’ll be checking the CTU website to see if it’s still lying and cheating and stealing you out of your right to an honest compilation of the union’s history. On January 15, the furthest back the union’s newspaper archives went was September 2004 (go to the union website and then to CTU News Archive). Right now, our plan is to develop this true history feature at two months of the union newspaper per month on the web. Depending upon the number of hits we get (and the number of subscribers to Substance who thank us by contributing to this effort), we’ll be adding features like House of Delegates minutes and the annual reports of committees. If that goes over, we’ll add a vast array of media reports on union activities from the days when the union had articulate, intelligent leadership, rather than mumbling greedy thugs at the top...

... We were glad to find that the Chicago Sun-Times is finally taking an interest in the resumes and qualifications of Chicago’s most expensive public servants — those who run things at “CPS” — but we have a hunch the sleuthing at the Sun-Times will stop short of most of the incompetent hacks now at the top across CPS. These thoughts we inspired by the story (January 17) that a guy with the wonderful name of Yaov Yaakoby had become a “project manager” overseeing school construction based on the fact that his buff wife works as “personal trainer” for Mayor Daley. No matter how you buff, it, Yaakoby, reported to have a BA in “political science” and no other qualifications to oversee multi-million dollar construction jobs, is not the only incompetent who has risen into a \$100,000 a year job at CPS or its environs (officially, Yaakoby worked for the “Public Building Commisssion”, which is part of the three-card monty game of funding projects in our town). A year ago, CPS denied a simple Substance Freedom of Information request for the curriculum vitae of everyone working as a principal or assistant principal in a CPS school (public or charter). According to Arne Duncan and Michael Scott, the actual

qualifications of CPS administrators are none of the public’s business, even as every parent is getting a letter (or an on-line Internet look) at the “qualifications” of every teacher and teacher aide in the city thanks to “No Child Left Behind.” Now we can understand why the Daley administration wants to cover up this information. After all, if the main reason you got a job overseeing a hundred million in public construction was that your wife was spotting the mayor in bench presses and urging him to grind out another five reps to feel the “burn”, you’d be shy, too. When the information finally becomes public, Chicago will see a scandal in its public schools to make “Hired Truck” sound like sandbox stuff...

...Is it true that Arne Duncan is hatching plans to put a “military academy” in each of the six high school districts, and that next in line for the honors is gang-infested Farragut “Career Academy” High School, a mile west of the beseiged Collins High School? And is it also true that Arne Duncan and Michael Scott (who lives a few blocks from Collins) originally said that Collins students could attend Farragut (which is much closer to Collins than Crane, where the kids are going), but that Mayor Daley’s people blocked the idea because the plans to militarize Farragut are already moving forward? Finally, we are wondering how many of Farragut’s powerful street gangs will be given the right to troll the “new” military school the way they’ve been blessed, with a few minor restrictions, at the current Farragut. When Farragut gets more militarized, it will give a whole new meaning to the term “recruitment” and make “counter recruitment” a lot more exciting than it’s been for the pacifists who are currently organizing against the militarization of Chicago’s high schools...

...Everyone who is paying attention knows that Chicago’s charter schools are already becoming a national model — for how to ripoff public dollars. Deregulation has ruined everything from half of China’s drinking water to the ability of people in Chicago to get low priced home heating fuel during the winter, as profits always come before people. And though Chicago has only a couple of charters that are actually trying to make a corporate “profit”, every charter has a corporate stench already. And already, they are bending the rules. Consider the old Yuppie game of “pump and dump.” Pump and dump was played by stock hucksters and had its heyday during the late 1990s and early 00s, just before the crash in stock prices that gave the world billions of dollars in losses (think ENRON, World Com, Adelphia and a dozen others whose CEOs were indicated for starters, then the hundreds that took your money but never broke the law). In a pump and dump scheme, callers would inflate the prices of a stock, then dump millions of shares when it peaked, leaving the rubes holding worthless pieces of paper. Here’s how Chicago charter schools’ pump and dump works. If a charter schools keeps a kid for 20 days, the charter gets the entire semester’s per pupil funding (roughly 90 days). So the charters pump their numbers at the beginning of each semester, then dump the kids back into the local public schools after the 20<sup>th</sup> day. Since Arne Duncan and his University of Chicago buddies are teary eyed fans of “choice”, “charters,” and similar cons, they don’t even

have audits or controls in place to gather the numbers just in case someone might be doing a pump and dump. It’s like California being cheated out of billions of dollars when ENRON ran up electrical prices a couple of years back, or all of us in Chicago being similarly cheated this winter in a similar scheme by Peoples Energy. The difference is, we have agencies who just might catch the crooks when the energy cons pump up our prices. As long as Rich Daley and Arne Duncan are fronting for the crony capitalism of charters and similar cons, the only people who are gathering the numbers of these pump and dump schemes are local public school administrators and teachers — and Substance...

...We have a couple of questions — among many many many — about those Aspira schools that are proliferating like spring weeds on Chicago’s north side. First, has Arne Duncan bothered to ask whether the students are actually getting those “laptop” computers they were promised (in the case of Mirta Ramirez, more than two years ago). Second, what are the main qualifications for getting a contract to provide “security” at the new Aspira Haugan Middle School? Oh, and one other thought. When a kid at Haugan or Mirta Ramirez is seriously hurt — or worse — because of the expansion of all those street gang problems Aspira Haugan is bringing as the weather gets warmer, will the Chicago Board of Education have to pay damages when the family sues because the Board gave a major new building — and all of its marketing clout — to a group with some very curious community ties?...

...What do that spoiled George W. Bush and Marilyn Stewart have in common? Three points come to mind for starters. (1) With the help of powerful friends and nasty lawyers, they stole an election, then acted as if they had gotten 90 percent of the vote and began lying about and purging all of those who disagreed with them. (2) They can’t handle real questions from the press or anyone else in the real world, so they surround themselves with fawners and stage media events where they don’t have to face real questions. (3) They lie about most things, but most especially about recent history. So they try to rewrite as much history to reflect their lies as possible (don’t you just love the “Chicago Union Teacher” as posted at [www.ctunet.com](http://www.ctunet.com))? That’s where the history of the union’s newspaper begins in September 2004, after Marilyn had stolen power. Send us your suggestions for continuing this exploration into the New Year. Having reread our accounts of last year, we think we could come up with a couple of these each month until January 2007...

...Before parents go gushing around town about how neat it is that their “school” has a lot of volunteers working closely with kids, let’s take a second look at the recent Papal discussion of love. For most of us, the phrase “I love children...” is one of the answers to the question “Why are you teaching in a public school?” That kind of “love” is, according to the Pope, Agapetic — the generalized love you’re supposed to feel for other human beings. It’s one of the things that supposedly separates us from the beasts. But what if “I love children...” means the other kind of love — Erotic love? Then we have a problem. One of the reasons why schools were so

highly regulated, before Arne Duncan and his orgies of privatization and charterization, was that for a pedophile an open door policy in public schools is like opening the candy store to the sugar junky. Unlimited access to children — and “love.” We’re enjoying hearing from parents and teachers who are beginning to wonder about the affections they hear from charter school hucksters and their quickly assembled staffs. But on the far side of the pulic schools, we also hear that some places with some rather exotic viewpoints on diversity are also opening their doors (and promoting on their websites) every Tom, Harry and Dick who wants to “volunteer” to “work” at the school. By the time this round of deregulation and privatization is over, Chicago’s going to have enough scandals to fill a shelf of books. And since sex scandals are always good for selling tabloid newspapers, we can imagine what the Chicago Sun-Times will do the next time (there have already been first, second and third times) somebody is caught with his hands in the wrong place...

...According to the Chicago Board of Education, the salary of every employee of CPS is public information, but the salaries of charter school operators and staff are none of your business. That’s “Freedom of Information” in an era of privatization...

## Sister Grim

Continued from Page Twenty-Two

“That’s true,” she agreed. “But we have a plan for that, too. As a matter of fact, we’re working on home-schooling, now.”

“You mean that parents who home-school will have to pay CTEwe dues, too?”

“We hope so. And maybe we can squeeze private and parochial schools in, too. But don’t say anything about that just yet.”

“Why not?” he asked, innocently.

“Because it’s a secret!!” she screamed.

“Like a surprise?”

“Exactly. Zip your lip or else!!”

Teddy the Obsequious Toady wasn’t certain what “or else” would be, but he knew he didn’t want to find out. He left Pammy’s suite at top speed, grateful to have escaped with his life and some of his hearing intact.

Meanwhile, back at school, everyone was reading: some were comparing the old contraact with the new proposals, some were guffawing through the CTEwe newspaper, which was nothing more than pages of pictures of the leadersheep, and some were marveling at the nerve of the triple-dippers who were running as retired dull-a-gates.

“What do you mean, triple-dippers?” asked Nancy. “They are truly dedicated to the CTEwe.”

“Let’s see,” mused Millicent. “Those are former field drips, special assistants and officers, all with huge pensions based on their former huge salaries and perks and bonuses, who are now big-time salaried CTEwe employees who monopolize the microphones at every House meeting — ”

“So, what’s the problem?” said Scott.

“Right,” agreed Millicent. “They retired before they were rehired. So?”

“Oh. I see,” they said.

“O.I.C.” 🍎



AfterThoughts

School closing nonsense

By Julie Wostehoff

CPS announced four new school closures and a school takeover today, January 26, 2006, with a magical flourish of data that seem to show that they are closing the bad schools, moving children to better schools, and turning another bad school over to better operators.

Hogwash.

Not to say that the schools slated for closure have been providing the high-quality education that our children need and deserve. But the hype and spin coming out of CPS today in order to promote Renaissance 2010 simply does not stand up to scrutiny.

Anyone can spend a couple of hours on the Illinois State Board of Education and CPS websites ([www.isbe.state.il.us](http://www.isbe.state.il.us); [cps.k12.il.us](http://cps.k12.il.us)) and put the lie to most of today's CPS pronouncements. Of course, the media doesn't have that kind of time and what they print tomorrow — based on the positive CPS spin — is what most people think is the real story.

One disclaimer — PURE does not believe that test scores are a very good way to evaluate schools. But CPS has made test scores the gold standard, so we are going to measure them with their own ruler.

Please share some of the "rest of the story" by forwarding this analysis to anyone you think might be interested. Parents and the community need



Above: Despite short notice, more than 250 people assembled in the auditorium of Collings High School February 2 on Chicago's West Side, to hear a series of speakers denounce the latest plan by the Chicago Board of Education to close inner city schools and replace them with privatized charter and other non-union schools. Photo by George Schmidt.

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to know the truth because it is our children and out neighborhoods that are under attack. We at PURE plan to share it with our alderpeople, legislators, and, most importantly, every LSC member.

Handover of Sherman to private contract operators

Let's start with the handover of Sherman school to the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL). AUSL is the project of wealthy businessman Martin Koldyke who runs three contract schools in Chicago already: the Chicago Academy Elementary School, the new Chicago Academy High School, and "Dodge Renaissance Academy" which replaced Dodge school, one of the first three schools closed by CPS for poor performance back in 2002 and the first real Renaissance 2010 school.

AUSL's Chicago Academy boasts high test scores. It is also 48% white and only 52% low-income. The student selection process described on the school web site ([http://www.chicagoacademy.org/student\\_selection.htm](http://www.chicagoacademy.org/student_selection.htm)) sounds as if the administration can pick and choose who attends. But let's acknowledge that AUSL can run a pretty good school for middle class kids. We don't have enough data on the Chicago Academy High School to know how it is doing.

But Dodge Renaissance, like Sherman, is nearly 100% African-American. What's the track record of AUSL in a low-income, minority community? Not so good.

Although the Dodge Renaissance school web site says that there are three teachers in each classroom (imagine how great that would be in any one of our regular public schools!) the results are not so great. In fact, the state report card for Dodge Renaissance looks an awful lot like the state report card for Sherman.

Sherman overall ISAT reading 2005: 29.1% meeting/exceeding

standardsoverall ISAT math 2005: 21.2% meeting/exceeding standards

Dodge Renaissance overall ISAT reading 2005: 31.0% meeting/ exceeding standards overall ISAT math 2005: 19.7% meeting/ exceeding standards

There's more. Sherman's overall ISAT scores ROSE from 2004 to 2005 from 22.3% to 24% Dodge Renaissance's overall ISATs DROPPED from 2004 to 2005 from 33.5% to 25.9%.

So, why is CPS giving Sherman over to AUSL???

Let's see — in the changeover, all teachers and other staff will lose their jobs and the LSC will be disbanded. Could that be a reason? Because the argument that this is for the good of the children just doesn't hold up.

Comparing closing to receiving schools

Now let's look at the other closures. CPS is claiming that all of the receiving schools are better-performing than the schools they are closing and that if the scores of some of the receiving schools seem similarly low, the receiving schools are at least IMPROVING according to the data bites from the CPS data-parsing shop.

Hogwash.

Again, this is not to make excuses for the closed schools or argue that the status quo would be better. The status quo is unacceptable. But it is also unacceptable for public officials to attempt to pull a hoax on the entire city to create the impression that they are making responsible decisions. They are not, and parents and the community have a right to know the truth and not be played for fools by spin, hype, and misleading data bites.

Specifically, while some of the receiving schools do show better results on the ISAT or other state tests than the schools to be closed, others do not.

Continued on Page Ten