

Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspective

Report on a Survey of Chicago Public School Principals

Sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research

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Principals' Survey Work Group: Chair, **Albert L. Bennett**, Roosevelt University; **Bruce Berndt**, Chicago Principals Association; **Albert Bertani**, University of Chicago, Center for School Improvement; **Anthony S. Bryk**, University of Chicago, Center for School Improvement; **John Q. Easton**, Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance; **Janet Fredericks**, Northeastern Illinois University; **Bruce McPherson**, University of Illinois at Chicago; **Siegfried G. Mueller**, Chicago Public Schools, Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning; **Penny A. Sebring**, Consortium on Chicago School Research; **Salvatore A. Vallina**, National-Louis University; **Darryl J. Ford**, staff to the Work Group.

Report authors: **Albert L. Bennett**, Roosevelt University; **Anthony S. Bryk**, University of Chicago, Center for School Improvement; **John Q. Easton**, Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance; **David Kerbow**, Consortium on Chicago School Research; **Stuart Luppescu**, Consortium on Chicago School Research; **Penny A. Sebring**, Consortium on Chicago School Research.

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Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspective

Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspective is the result of a collaborative project sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. In all, 457 (out of 550) Chicago Public elementary and high school principals responded to this survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 83 percent. (A technical report and public use data file will be available in the near future.) Survey response rates of this magnitude are rare unless respondents are strongly motivated. We provided no tangible incentives to principals for completing the survey, and thus we interpret the high response rate as indicating their desire to express their views on school reform and school improvement to the general public.

Altogether the survey contained fifteen pages of questions that required forty-five to seventy-five minutes to complete. The survey was administered in June of 1992. In most cases, principals completed the surveys during district service center meetings. In other cases, surveys were mailed directly to principals' homes and returned to the Consortium in self-addressed stamped envelopes.

Prior to the development of the survey, the Consortium held focus groups with principals, teachers, and administrators in the system as well as representatives from business, philanthropic and community-based organizations about the types of information that should be gathered.

A principal advisory committee devoted considerable time, energy, and expertise to the project, offering valuable advice about the survey, how it should be administered, and how the results might best be distributed. The principal advisory group, along with other groups involved in the development of the survey, had an opportunity to comment on the statistics presented in this report and helped us to interpret and improve the presentation of findings. We express sincere thanks to all who generously gave of their time to make this project successful. A list of the principal advisory committee members follows.

Principal	School	Principal	School
Theresa Byrd-Smith	Hearst Elementary	Charles Mingo	DuSable High
Ida Cross	Mayo Elementary	Yvonne Minor	Dyett Middle
Ralph Cusick	Schurz High	Karen Morris	Saucedo Magnet
Audrey Donaldson	Darwin Elementary	Richard Morris	Burroughs Elementary
Cydney Fields	Ray Elementary	Pernecie Pugh	Truth Elementary
Jeannie M. Gallo	Smyser Elementary	Barbara M. Pulliam	Harper High
Sherye Garmony	Gregory Elementary	Ruth Robertson	Ruggles Elementary
Reva Hairston	Terrell Elementary	Edis Snyder	Gale Academy
Georgia Hudson	Lathrop Academy	Janis Todd	Byrd Elementary
Clarice Jackson-Berry	Fiske Elementary	Beverly Tunney	Healy Elementary
Michael Kroll	Young Elementary	Mattie Tyson	Johnson Elementary
Maude Lightfoot	Pershing Magnet	Alice Vila	Barry Elementary
Madeleine Maraldi	W. Irving Elementary	Muriel K. Von Albade	Barnard Elementary
Barbara Martin	Hoyne Elementary	William Watts	Taft High
Larry McDougald	DeDiego Academy	Dorothy Williams	Lucy Flower Vocational
		Cynthia Wnek	Schubert Elementary

The following area researchers also assisted with this survey: Lascelles Anderson, University of Illinois at Chicago; Marilyn Bizar, National-Louis University; Stephen Brown, Northeastern Illinois University; and Benjamin D. Wright, University of Chicago. Special thanks to our external reviewer, Kent Peterson, University of Wisconsin.

Editor's note: Some survey questions have been shortened in this report because of space limitations. The original survey is available from the Consortium on request.

This report reflects the interpretations of the authors. Although the Consortium Steering Committee provided technical advice and reviewed an earlier version of the report, no formal endorsement by these individuals, organizations or the full Consortium should be assumed.

The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 substantially changed the Chicago Public Schools. Few individuals or groups were affected more directly than principals. Not only did they lose their job tenure, but they became accountable to a parent- and community-dominated local school council, which, among other things, had “hire and fire” authority over them. Given the principals’ key role in promoting improvement, it seemed important at this juncture to take a closer look at Chicago school reform from their perspective.

Our report is organized around four major topics: principals’ reactions to school reform and its new governance structures; principals’ assessments of their teachers and efforts to improve the human resources of their schools; the restructuring activities occurring in their schools; and, finally, a section on the principals themselves—who they are, how they spend their time, the roadblocks they face, and their feelings about their job.¹

Reactions to School Reform and Its

New Governance Structure

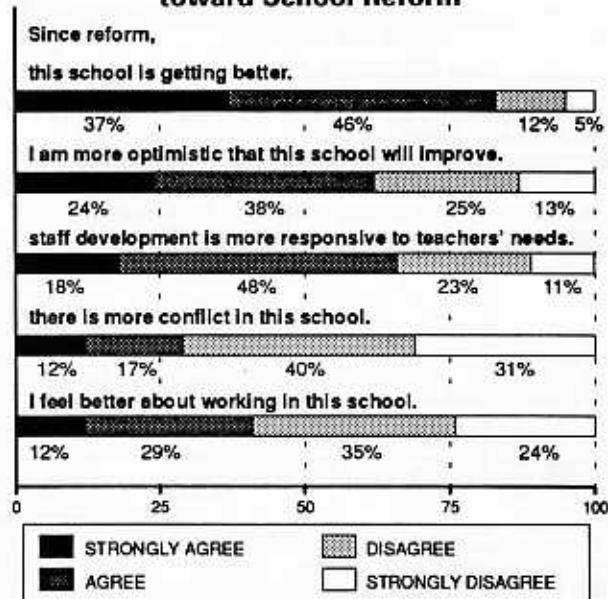
Principals’ General Attitudes toward School Reform

Charting Reform: The Principals’ Perspective asked a series of questions about principals’ general reactions to school reform and the impact it has had on their school communities. (Only those respondents who were Chicago Public School principals prior to September 1989 answered these questions.) In general, principals were quite positive. Well over three-quarters believe that their schools are getting better since reform and almost two-thirds are more optimistic that their schools will improve. Principals also report that some positive practices have emerged since reform. For example, two-thirds agree that staff development is now more responsive to teachers’ needs. Quieting some early fears, most principals do not report increased conflict in the school (only 29 percent do).

There is one discordant note, however. Only 41 percent of the principals report feeling better about working in their schools since reform. Although a large proportion of principals express optimism about their schools, this is not always accompanied by personal good feelings. These responses signal a general theme running throughout this report—principals report many positive developments in Chicago’s schools, but their work and their role have become much more difficult.

By combining principals’ responses to questions just discussed with several related items, we created a composite index of principals’ overall reactions to school

Principals’ Attitudes toward School Reform



Principals' "Report Card" on School Reform: General Attitudes*

very positive	36%
moderately positive	31%
somewhat negative	22%
very negative	11%

*Based on principals hired prior to September 1989

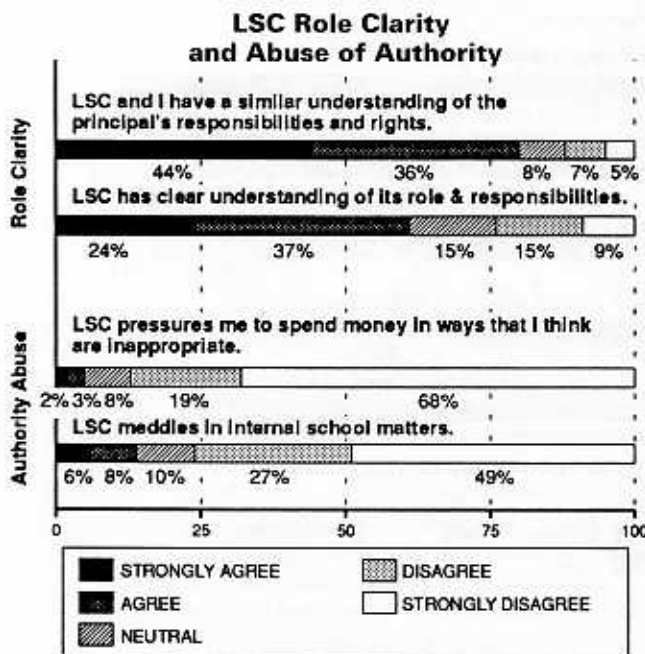
reform.² Approximately one-third are very positive, another third are moderately positive, and the remaining third are split between somewhat negative (22 percent) and very negative (11 percent).³

In general, principals' reactions to school reform appear similar regardless of a school's racial composition, percentage of low-income students, percentage of students transferring in and out of the school (mobility rate), and pre-reform achievement level. Elementary and high school principals also report similar views. Moreover, both male and female principals and principals of different races view the reform similarly.

Principals' Views on Local School Governance

In addition to soliciting general reactions to school reform, the survey posed a number of specific questions about the key governance features created by reform: the local school council (LSC) as a basic policy-making body; the professional personnel advisory committee (PPAC), composed of teachers who advise on matters of curriculum and instruction; and the School Improvement Plan (SIP), developed to guide action toward sustained improvement. Responses to a sample of items

from ten different facets of local school governance (five on the LSC, three on the PPAC, and two on the SIP) are reported below.⁴



Local School Councils

Role Clarity. Two years ago, when we held focus groups and interviews to develop the Consortium's research agenda, *Achieving School Reform in Chicago: What We Need to Know*, many individuals commented that the precise role of the LSC was unclear. They described considerable uncertainty about the division between local and central office responsibilities, and between the policy-making functions of the LSC and the administrative responsibilities of the school principal. Two years later it appears that, at least from the principals' perspective, this second concern has been largely re-

solved. For example, 80 percent of the principals indicate that they and their LSCs have similar understandings of the principal's responsibilities and rights;⁵ 61 percent believe that the LSC has a clear understanding of its role and responsibilities. More generally, most principals believe that their LSCs grant them sufficient autonomy to do their jobs and respect the principals' view about how things should be done in the school.

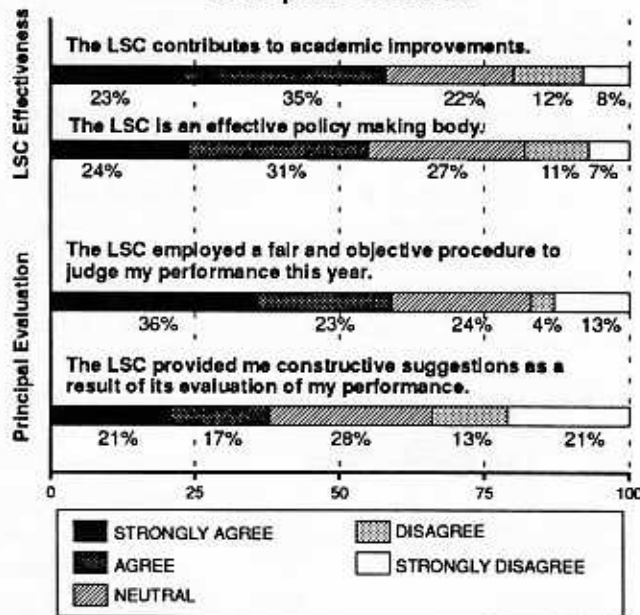
LSC Abuse of Authority. Concerns were also raised during the early days of reform that LSCs might attempt to exceed their authority and coerce principals to take improper actions. We found little evidence of such abuse of authority in this survey. For example, only 14 percent of the principals claim that their councils meddle in internal school matters, and only 5 percent feel pressured to spend money inappropriately. In general, the boundaries of proper LSC action appear to be respected in all but a small number of schools, according to principals.

LSC Effectiveness. Principals are somewhat less positive in their responses about LSC effectiveness, although they are still more positive than negative. Fifty-eight percent of the principals believe that the LSC contributes to academic improvements in the school, 20 percent disagree, and 22 percent give a "neutral" response. Fifty-five percent report that their LSC is an effective policy-making body, but 18 percent do not, and 27 percent are neutral. Although more than half of the principals give their LSCs positive marks on a range of questions of this sort, about 20 percent typically do not, and about one-quarter give "neutral" responses.

Principal Evaluation Process. One of the major responsibilities of the LSC is to evaluate the principal each year. Almost 60 percent of the principals report that their LSCs have employed fair and objective procedures to judge their performance (24 percent responded "neutral" and 17 percent disagree). Fewer than 40 percent, however, indicate that their LSC provided constructive suggestions as a result of the evaluation process. In fact, the most common response to this question was "neutral," suggesting that many principals have doubts about how effective councils are at this task. Sensitive and insightful personnel evaluation is difficult even under the best of circumstances. The kinds of ratings reported here are not markedly different from what teachers said in *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn* about the adequacy of the evaluations they receive from school principals.

LSC Activity. Most principals report that their LSC met six to ten times in the period between January and June of 1992. This amounts to one or two meetings a month. About half of the council meetings have between four and ten guests, about a quar-

LSC Effectiveness and Principal Evaluation



LSC Activity

Since January 1992, how many regular meetings has your LSC held?

1 to 5	18%
6 to 10	75%
11 or more	7%

What is the approximate average attendance of adult guests in the audience at LSC meetings?

0 to 3	25%
4 to 10	49%
11 or more	26%

How many committees does your LSC have that meet regularly (more than twice a year)?

None	15%
1 to 2	28%
3 to 4	40%
5 or more	17%

ter have almost no outside participants, and about a quarter have more than ten. The typical LSC operates with three or four subcommittees, although about a sixth of the LSCs have no subcommittees; another sixth have five or more. Combining these statistics, we find a considerable range in the level of LSC activity across Chicago's schools. Principals report extensive LSC activity in approximately 19 percent of the schools. In these places, LSCs meet at least once a month and eight or more adult guests attend each meeting. These schools also have at least three active LSC committees. In another 54 percent of the schools, the level of LSC activity is lower, but still regular. LSC meetings are held at least monthly, but with fewer guests and two or less active committees. In the remaining 27 percent of schools, only minimal activity is occurring, and LSCs meet less frequently than once a month. (This does still meet the requirement of the legislation, which only calls for a minimum of two meetings each year.)

LSC Summary. Overall, most LSCs meet regularly and most principals are comfortable with how their LSCs are functioning. The majority of principals feel that they have developed a viable working relationship with their LSCs, and that the boundaries between policy-making and administrative roles are relatively clear. However, the principals are somewhat more divided about the effectiveness of their LSCs and how well the LSC evaluates them.

We combined the information in the five LSC indicator clusters described

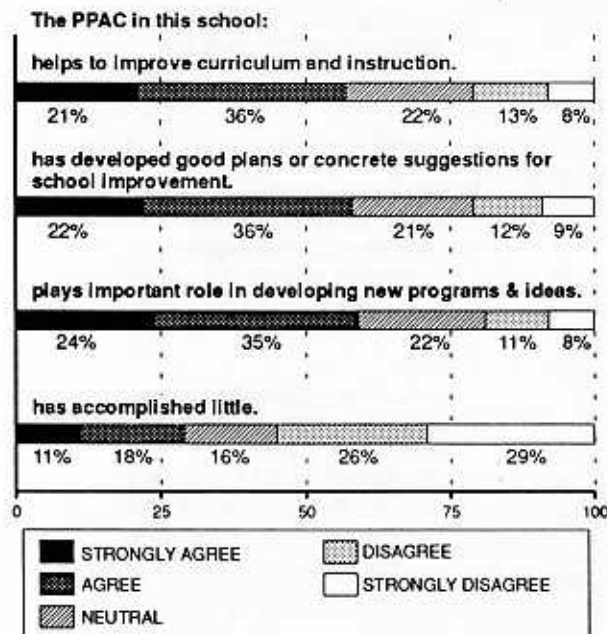
above to create a summary measure of principals' ratings of their LSCs. By this summary measure, 36 percent of the principals report that their councils are working very well. Principals in these schools give very positive reports on at least three of the five LSC indicator clusters and positive reports on the remainder. Another 50 percent of the principals give their LSCs somewhat positive ratings. Principals in this group typically offer moderately positive responses on most of

the clusters, with perhaps a negative report on one dimension. Only 14 percent of the principals give consistently negative ratings across three or more of the five clusters. Principals in these schools are adamant that their LSCs are not working effectively.

Principals' "Report Card" on School Reform: LSC Performance

very positive	36%
somewhat positive	50%
negative	14%

PPAC Effectiveness



Professional Personnel Advisory Committee

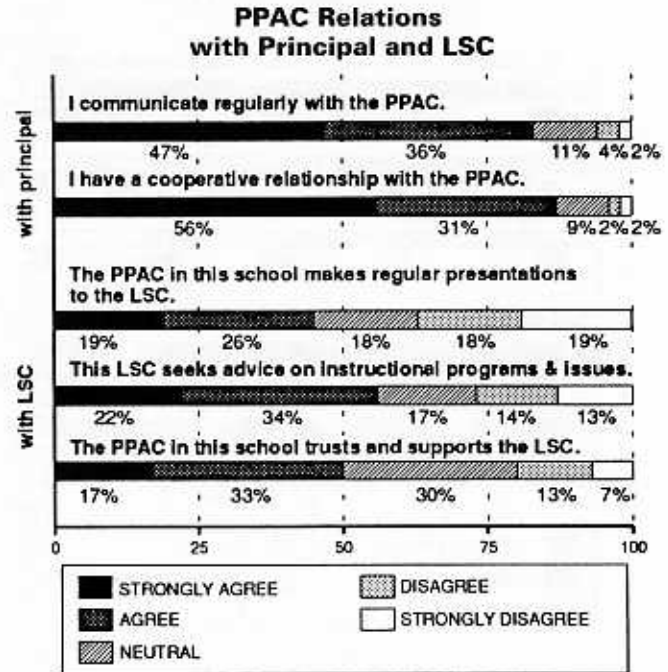
PPAC Effectiveness. Principals are mostly positive about the effectiveness of their PPACs. For example, almost 60 percent report that the PPAC helps to improve curriculum and instruction in their schools and about an equal proportion indicate that the PPAC has developed concrete suggestions for school improvement. In contrast, about 20 percent of the principals indicate negative

responses on these items, indicating that not all schools have effective PPACs to advise on curriculum and instructional issues.

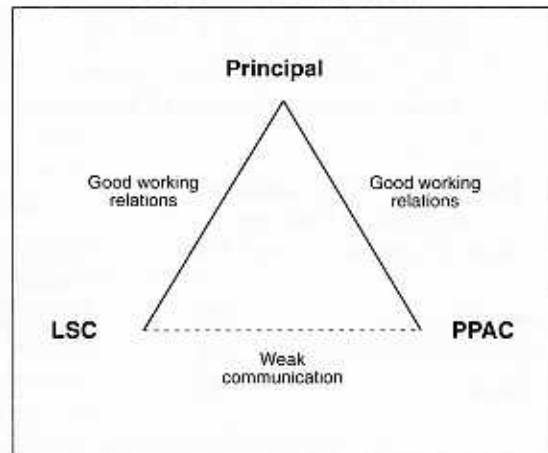
PPAC-Principal Relations. Regardless of whether principals view their PPACs as effective, they almost unanimously report positive relationships with the PPAC. Over 80 percent communicate regularly with the PPAC, and over 85 percent describe their relationship with the PPAC as cooperative. Survey reports indicate that negative PPAC-principal relations exist in only about 5 percent of the schools.

PPAC-LSC Relations. Principals' reports about PPAC-LSC relations are more uneven. Fewer than half (45 percent) report that the PPAC makes regular presentations to the LSC. Slightly more than half (56 percent) agree that the LSC seeks advice from the PPAC on instructional programs and issues. These data indicate that in a substantial number of schools the working relationship of the PPAC and LSC may be cordial but weak. Since the PPAC was intended as a major source of advice on instructional improvement, and since faculty participation in formulating policies on such matters is widely viewed as a key to their successful implementation, LSC-PPAC relations need to be strengthened in many schools.

PPAC Summary. Combining the information from the three PPAC clusters, we find that 31 percent of the principals assign high ratings to their PPACs. In addition to having very good working relations with their PPACs, principals in these schools give positive marks for PPAC effectiveness and PPAC-LSC relations. The PPACs in these schools appear well integrated into local school governance activity. Another 54 percent of the principals give somewhat positive marks to their PPACs; 15 percent are generally negative. While the principal and PPAC may have a good working relationship in these latter cases, principals typically report that the PPAC does not have regular communication or interaction with the LSC and is relatively ineffective.



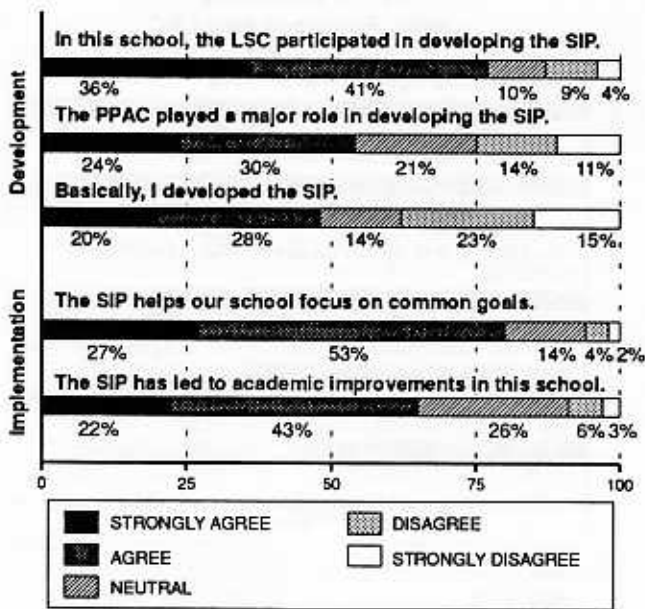
Typical Pattern of Governance Relations



Principals' "Report Card" on School Reform: PPAC Performance

very positive	31%
somewhat positive	54%
negative	15%

School Improvement Plan



here, which consists of five items like the three reported above, measures the overall inclusiveness of the planning process.

SIP Implementation. In general, principals offer very positive reports about the implementation of the SIP. For example, they overwhelmingly agree (80 percent) that the SIP helps their schools focus on common goals. Similarly, almost two-thirds report that the SIP has already led to academic improvements. Less than 10 percent offer negative assessments of the utility of their school improvement plan.

SIP Summary. Overall, 18 percent of the principals give very positive ratings to both the development and implementation of the SIP in their schools. We classified another 63 percent of the reports as somewhat positive. The remaining 19 percent offer a clearly negative assessment of the development process, and no better than a weak positive assessment on implementation.

Principals' "Report Card" on School Reform: School Improvement Plan

very positive	18%
somewhat positive	63%
negative	19%

Principals' "Report Card" on School Reform: Overall Assessment of Local School Governance

very positive	25%
positive	44%
mixed	21%
negative	10%

School Improvement Plans

SIP Development. More than three-quarters of the principals agree that the LSC participated in developing the SIP. About half report that the PPAC played a major role in developing the SIP. About half of the principals also said, "Basically, I developed the SIP." Because all of these could occur simultaneously, these items are difficult to interpret individually. The law stipulates that the SIP must be developed by the principal with advice from the PPAC and is subject to formal approval by the LSC. The intent was an inclusive process that engaged parents, teachers, and community members under the leadership of the school principal. The indicator cluster that we developed

Overall Progress on the Major Governance Elements of School Reform

In order to summarize the information on school governance described so far, we created a composite governance indicator based on the ten measures of LSC, PPAC, and SIP performance. We find that 25 percent of the principals give their schools very high ratings on two or more aspects of local school governance. Another 44 percent give very high responses in one area with moderately positive ratings in the other

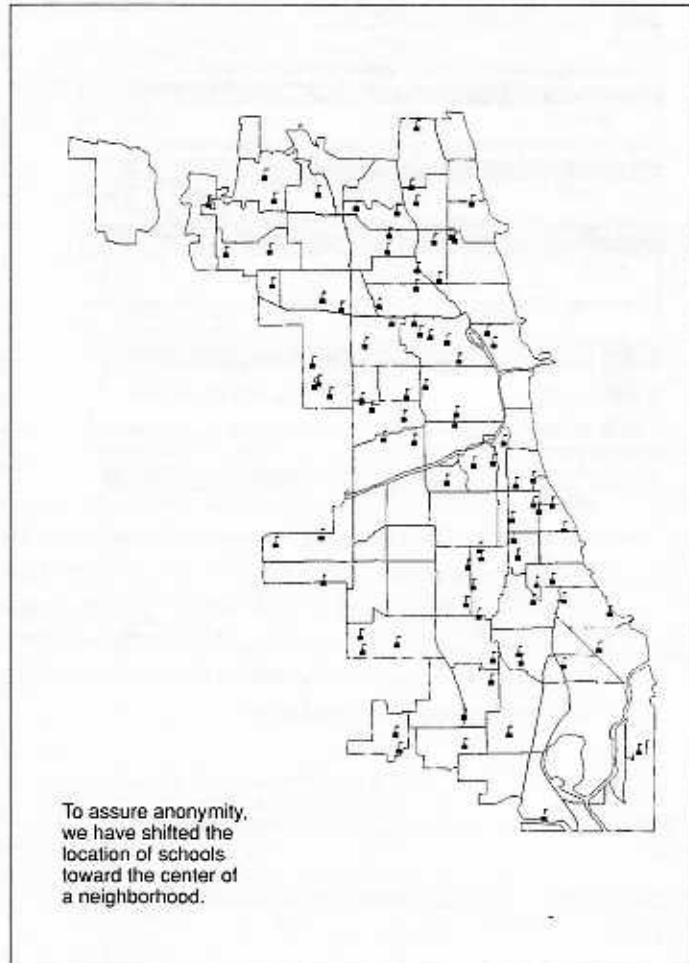
two. Twenty-one percent offer mixed views, positive about some aspects but negative about others. The remaining 10 percent of the principals offer consistently negative responses about their LSC, PPAC, and SIP.

In *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn* we found that teachers' views about school reform did not depend on the neighborhoods in which their schools were located. A similar finding emerged here. In the map on the right the "very positive" elementary schools are widely dispersed across the city. (Because there are relatively few high schools in each of the four groups, we have excluded them from this display.) None of the basic compositional characteristics of schools (percentage low income students, percentage limited English speaking students, racial composition, or student mobility rate) are significantly related to the overall school governance rating. In general, the principal ratings of school governance are relatively consistent with teacher ratings of the LSC, the PPAC, and the SIP from the teacher survey—that is, on average, the schools that received high ratings from teachers also tended to receive high ratings from principals.

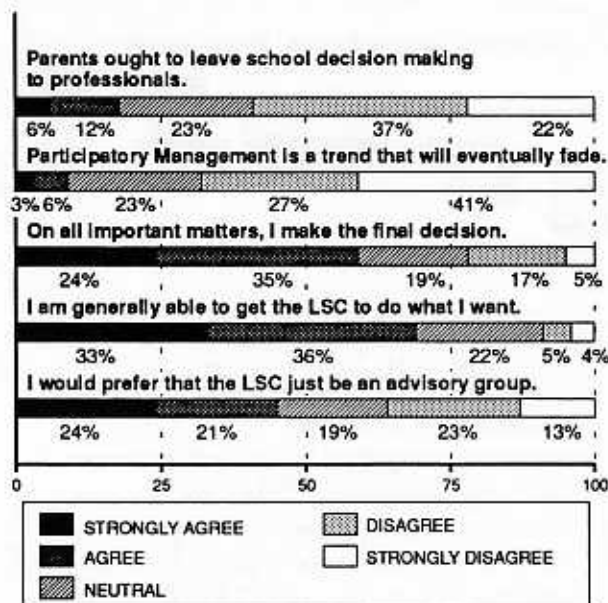
We undertook a number of analyses to better understand the characteristics of elementary schools where principals are more likely to report effective governance arrangements. A few key findings stand out. These schools have higher levels of teacher collegiality and positive school-community relations (as reported in last year's teachers' survey). They also are more likely to be smaller schools. That is, the elementary schools with the lowest ratings have significantly larger student enrollments than elementary schools with higher ratings.

The results of the principals' survey are generally consistent with those reported last year in *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn*. Small school size facilitates the successful implementation of the local school governance provisions in Chicago's school reform. The reported higher levels of teacher collegiality and school community relations can also be viewed as resulting from this smaller structure. It is easier to maintain in smaller schools the personal, trusting relationships among parents and professionals on which effective local school governance and, for that matter, good schooling itself depends.

Elementary Schools with "Very Positive" Overall Governance Rating



Personal Views about School Governance



them. Almost 60 percent of the principals report that on all important matters, they make the final decision. Similarly, more than two-thirds of the principals indicate that they are generally able to get the LSC to do what they want. Even so, 45 percent of the principals would prefer that the LSC be just an advisory group. Thus, although principals appear comfortable working with and seeking advice from the LSC, some are still reticent about fully accepting the council as a decision- and policy-making body.

Finally, although the overall thrust of principals' reports about local school governance is generally positive, we note that a significant number of principals are still somewhat uneasy about sharing power with both parents and teachers. While well over half (59 percent) of the principals reject the statement, "Parents ought to leave school decision making to professionals," 23 percent are neutral on this issue, and 18 percent endorse it. Similarly, while 68 percent disagree that participatory management is a trend that will eventually fade, 23 percent are neutral and 9 percent agree. Moreover, even though LSCs have a super-majority of parents and community members, principals still exert considerable influence over

Human Resources in Chicago Schools

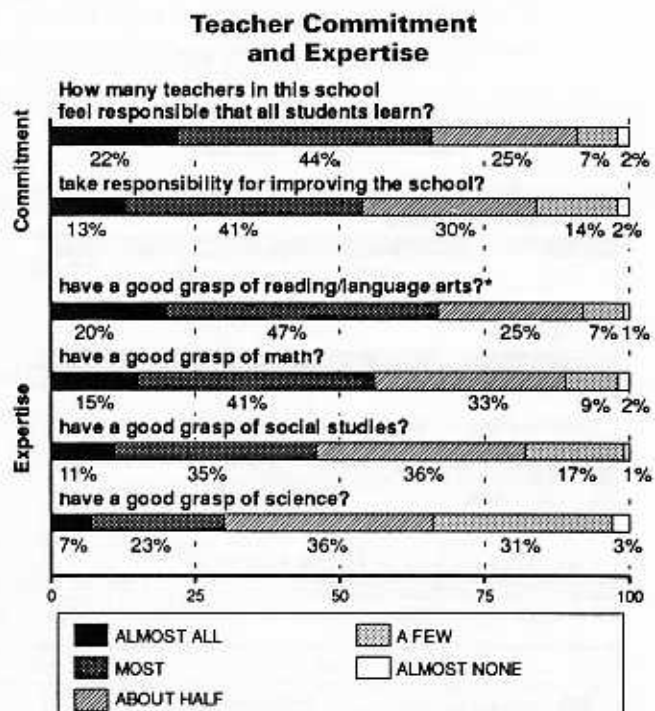
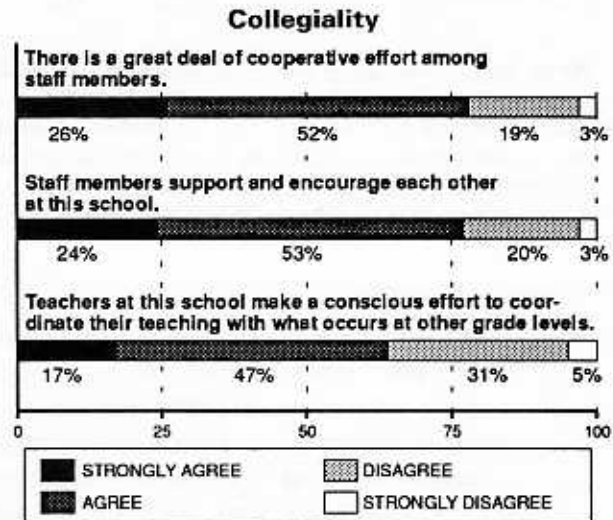
We asked principals a number of questions about their staff, including the degree of cooperation and collegiality among teachers, their level of commitment, subject matter expertise, and activities to improve the overall quality of school staff. Their responses are described in this section.

Collegiality, Commitment and Expertise

In most schools, principals report that working relationships among teachers are collegial and supportive. More than three-quarters of the principals agree that there is a great deal of cooperation among staff members and that staff members in their schools support and encourage each other. (Principals in about a quarter of the schools do not characterize their staffs in this way.) Translating positive feelings into specific collaborative behaviors, however, is a bit more difficult. For example, slightly less than two-thirds of the principals report that teachers make a conscious effort to coordinate their teaching with what occurs at other grade levels. This means that, according to principals, cross-grade articulation is not a common practice in a significant number of schools.

Principals are divided in their assessments of teachers' commitment and expertise. Two-thirds of the principals believe that most or almost all of their teachers feel responsible that all students learn. Slightly more than half of the principals report that most or almost all of their teachers take responsibility for improving the school. One-third of the principals, however, judge that half or fewer of their teachers take responsibility for all students learning, and almost 50 percent of the principals report that half or fewer of their teachers take responsibility for school improvement. Thus, many principals still express significant concerns about the level of commitment among a substantial portion of their staff.

Elementary school principals were also asked to rate the subject



*Only elementary school principals were asked about teachers' grasp of subject matter.

What Principals Think of Their School Support Services

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Engineering and custodial staff are responsive to my requests.	63%	14%	23%
Local police are responsive to my requests.	75%	15%	10%
Food service staff is responsive to my requests.	77%	14%	9%

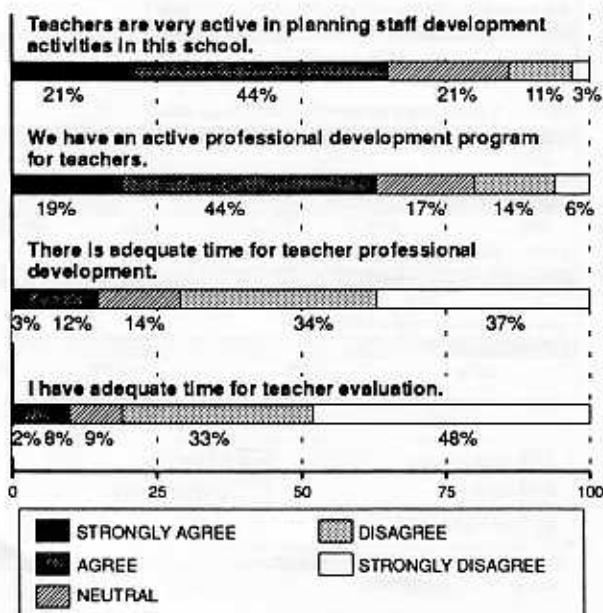
While the percentage of principals who agree is relatively high, it is important to remember that each of these services is essential for a school. The fact that approximately one-quarter of the principals do not feel that engineers and custodians are responsive to their requests suggests that these schools face significant operational problems.

matter expertise of their teachers (high school principals did not have a comparable set of questions). These principals generally show the greatest confidence in teachers' grasp of reading and language arts. Two-thirds report that most or almost all of their teachers have a good grasp of these subjects. Yet one-third of the principals express doubts about the competence of a significant portion of their faculty in this area. Since reading/language arts is essential subject matter, and since the teaching of other subjects depends on students' skill in this area, such reports are cause for concern.

Slightly over half of the principals feel that most or almost all of their teachers have a good grasp of mathematics. The picture is worse for social studies and science. In both cases over 50 percent of the principals indicate that only half or fewer of their teachers have a good grasp of these subjects. Although the results are somewhat difficult to evaluate because many elementary schools are departmentalized in the upper grades, with teachers specializing in the subjects they teach, principals nonetheless appear to be expressing concern about the teaching competence of a substantial proportion of their faculty. Particularly salient is the discrepancy between principals' views and teachers' views on this issue. In last year's teacher

survey, *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn*, 95 percent of the elementary school teachers indicated they felt confident teaching reading, writing, and mathematics. Principals, however, do not reflect the same confidence, implying a need for sustained staff development in the content and pedagogy of particular school subjects. The lack of a common understanding here among teachers and principals may make difficult the planning of meaningful professional development activities.

Opportunities for Teacher Development



Improving Human Resources

There is a growing recognition that as reform moves from governance issues to school and classroom issues, much ongoing professional develop-

ment will be needed. When asked about such efforts, most principals indicate that there are active professional development programs in their schools and that teachers are involved in planning these programs. However, they also report that not enough time is being set aside for either professional development or teacher evaluation. Seventy-one percent do not think there is adequate time for professional development, and 81 percent feel the same about teacher evaluation.

Improving Human Resources in Schools*

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
↑ More likely effect of reform	<u>Since reform.</u>					
	I have more autonomy in selecting teachers	28%	41%	14%	9%	8%
	More creativity has been released within the school staff	16%	36%	29%	10%	9%
↓ Less likely effect of reform	It's easier to get new staff hired	21%	32%	20%	15%	12%
	Helping teachers improve more has become an important part of my job	14%	28%	26%	18%	13%
	The quality of the teaching force has improved.	12%	25%	37%	14%	12%
	New remediation procedures have improved teaching	3%	3%	27%	34%	33%
	It's easier to remove non-performing teachers	2%	5%	20%	31%	42%

*Based on principals hired prior to September 1989

Principals have three basic avenues for developing their staff. In addition to establishing ongoing professional development, they also can try to hire talented teachers and dismiss teachers who are performing poorly. Several questions probed principals' views of these options.

Principals were most positive about the new authority granted them under school reform to hire teachers of their own choosing. Over two-thirds of the principals agreed with the statement, "I have more autonomy in selecting teachers," and only 17 percent disagreed. Moreover, principals in many schools appear to be using their new authority actively. One-third report hiring 20 percent or more faculty new to the school in the past three years. This suggests a substantial influx of "new blood" into a significant number of schools across the city, with principals able to select the teachers they wanted.

Recruiting New Teachers

% of Faculty Hired since Reform	% of Schools
less than 10%	31%
11% to 20%	36%
20% to 30%	18%
31% or more	15%

Principals are most negative about their ability to dismiss non-performing teachers. Virtually none of the principals feels that the new remediation procedures introduced by reform are helpful. Neither do they feel that the new procedures make it easier to remove non-performing teachers. It is important to note that principals appear concerned in this regard about a relatively small number of teachers. For example, when asked about the number of teachers they would like to see leave, 60 percent of the principals indicated 10 per-

Percent of Teachers that Principals Would Like to See Leave

5% or less	23%
6% to 10%	37%
11% to 20%	31%
More than 20%	9%

cent or fewer. In a typical elementary school, this amounts to three or perhaps four teachers.

Finally, principals are fairly divided on the question of whether the quality of the teaching force has improved. Thirty-seven percent of the principals report that the quality of the teaching force has improved since reform, 37 percent are neutral, and 26 percent do not report improvements in the teaching force.

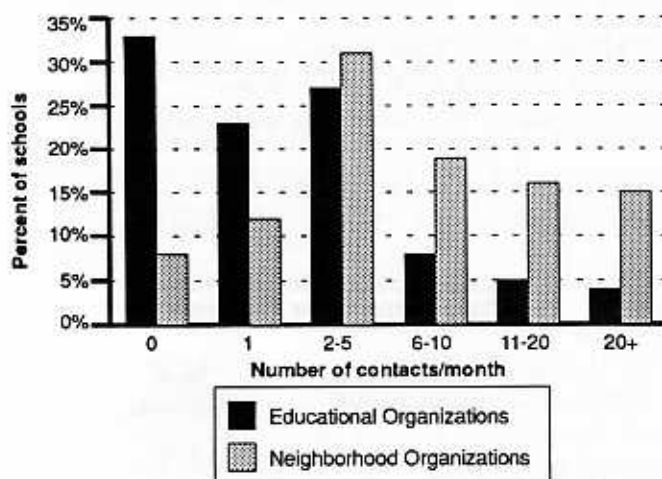
Taking Advantage of External Resources

As local schools begin to take on responsibility for their own improvement, it is important to consider the external resources available to support these efforts. Principals were asked to list the various organizations with which they have contact—social service, community, education, advocacy groups, etc.—and to note whether each is within the immediate neighborhood of their schools. Contact with neighborhood organizations is quite frequent. About half the principals report working with neighborhood organizations six or more times per month.

We also asked principals to list the educational organizations with which their

schools have regular, ongoing relationships. It is significant that one-third of the principals do not list any educational organizations, including colleges and universities, educational advocacy groups, federally funded educational programs, national restructuring organizations, professional educators' organizations, and so on. Moreover, 23 percent of those who do say their schools have regular contact with educational groups indicate that such contact is fairly infrequent—as little as once a month. At the other end of the spectrum, however, 9 percent of the schools have almost daily

Contact with External Organizations



contact or even more with some external educational group.

These results indicate that although reform has catalyzed a considerable amount of activity on the part of Chicago's educational and community organizations to assist schools in the change process, a large number of schools still do not have regular, ongoing relationships with external groups who can help support the development of their educational programs. As the focus of reform shifts to instructional improvement, it is difficult to envision how such schools will be able to make significant progress without sustained external assistance in this area.

School Restructuring

Although school reform did not mandate specific new educational programs, it created opportunities for innovative initiatives to emerge. The principals' survey contained a series of questions designed to assess the scope of restructuring activity in three areas: classroom teaching, teachers' work, and community ties. Principals reported on the changes that have occurred in their schools, specifying whether these changes were initiated prior to or since school reform.

Prevalence of Various Restructuring Activities

Classroom Teaching. Principals were asked about a range of new instructional practices that might be developing in their schools. Computers, the most frequently mentioned tool added since reform, are now reported to be in use in over 75 percent of the schools. Small group work is also now reported as a regular practice in almost three-quarters of the city's schools.

Restructuring Classroom Teaching

		Initiated prior to reform	Initiated since reform	Under con- sideration	Not a priority
1	Students extensively use computer technology	40%	37%	22%	1%
	Use of small group work in classrooms	50%	21%	26%	3%
2	Academic disciplines integrated in the curriculum	36%	25%	36%	3%
	Learning tasks aim for depth rather than broad exposure	36%	20%	39%	3%
3	Students have access to and serve as peer tutors	34%	27%	31%	8%
	Emphasis on student production rather than reproduction of knowledge	34%	21%	41%	4%
4	Learning emphasizes "multiple intelligences" and multiple cultures	28%	23%	39%	10%
	Students involved in the planning, conduct, and evaluation of their work	9%	7%	47%	37%

Several items in this inventory asked about practices associated with "authentic learning." Features such as deep engagement of students in subject matter, making students active participants in the learning process, and assessment that emphasizes student production of knowledge are becoming more prevalent. Principals report that about one-third of the schools initiated these activities prior to reform, and another quarter indicate moving in this direction since reform. However, one key dimension of authentic learning—student involvement in the planning, conduct, and evaluation of their own work—is reported by only a small percentage of schools.⁶

Teachers' Work. Restructuring the school as a workplace—to encourage meaningful collegial interaction and to extend teachers' roles—is a complex undertaking. The activities about which we inquired tended to separate into two groups. The first group contains the three most prevalent practices: program decisions based on student performance, coordination between teachers and other service professionals, and staff development. More than 60 percent of the principals reported that these activities are taking place. The more innovative workplace practices that require changes in teachers' basic roles and encourage them to expand

Restructuring Teachers' Work

		Initiated prior to reform	Initiated since reform	Under con- sideration	Not a priority
More prevalent initiatives	1				
	School makes program decisions based on student performance	44%	26%	23%	7%
	Teachers work closely with parents and human service professionals Staff helps to design staff development based on local needs assessment	42% 29%	20% 35%	32% 31%	6% 5%
Less prevalent initiatives	3				
	Staff participates in collegial development, time allocated during school day	19%	26%	41%	14%
	Teachers encouraged to experiment, develop new programs, curriculum	19%	27%	40%	14%
	Staff functions in extended roles with students, e.g., mentoring, advising	25%	18%	39%	18%
4	Differentiated roles for teachers: curriculum direction, supervision of peers	17%	17%	44%	22%

their activity beyond the classroom are much less prevalent. They have been implemented in fewer than half of the schools.

Community Ties. Reform provided the opportunity for schools to expand relationships with outside organizations, including parents and community members, community agencies, and educational institutions. The principals overwhelmingly reported that formal parent and community volunteer programs are active in their schools (79 percent). Programs involving parents in the students' academic lives are somewhat less prominent (55 percent). Contact with an institution of higher learning is also less common; only 50 percent of the schools have such an arrangement. However, these relationships have increased considerably since reform. The final item, external mentoring programs, is a scarce resource that must be sought out diligently by a school. Not surprisingly, this is the least prevalent activity, with only 20 percent of the schools reporting such a program.

Restructuring Community Ties

		Initiated prior to reform	Initiated since reform	Under con- sideration	Not a priority
More prevalent initiatives	1				
	School has formal parent and community volunteer program	48%	31%	18%	3%
	School has formal mechanisms for coordinating with community agencies	33%	27%	31%	9%
Less prevalent initiatives	2				
	School has a program for parent involvement in students' academic life	28%	27%	38%	7%
	School has arrangements with a university for professional development	22%	28%	38%	12%
	School offers adult education programs for the community	18%	16%	25%	41%
4	School participates in an external mentoring program	8%	12%	37%	43%

School Efforts at Restructuring: Prior to Reform and Now

After tabulating the responses of the elementary school principals, we are able to categorize the degree of reported restructuring in instruction, teachers' work, and community ties within each school, both prior to reform and currently.⁷ Four levels of restructuring are identified: minimal, limited, moderate, or extensive. Schools classified as "minimal" are likely to have the practices in category 1 (see the three restructuring displays), but less likely to have those in categories 2 through 4. Schools classified as "limited" are likely to have implemented the practices of categories 1 and 2 but not 3 and 4. This same logic holds for schools denoted as "moderate" and "extensive."⁸ The resulting distribution of schools is described below.

School Efforts at Restructuring: Prior to Reform and Now*

	Classroom Teaching		Teachers' Work		Community Ties	
	Prior	Now	Prior	Now	Prior	Now
Extensive	15%	36%	9%	20%	13%	35%
Moderate	9%	16%	6%	15%	13%	25%
Limited	21%	25%	19%	35%	18%	22%
Minimal	55%	23%	66%	30%	56%	18%

*These percentages include only elementary schools.

Classroom Teaching. Elementary school principals report considerable recent development in this area. Prior to reform, less than one-fourth of the schools had engaged much in other than the most prevalent restructuring practices—introducing computers and small group work. Since reform, however, the percentage of schools which report incorporating more authentic learning methods into classrooms has increased substantially. Fifty-two percent of the schools currently report moderate to extensive activity in this area. Nevertheless, 23 percent of the schools continue to report only minimal instructional change. Although the shift toward new practices is encouraging, the percentage of schools that have yet to introduce any restructuring activity may be cause for some concern.

Teachers' Work. According to the principals, the organization of teachers' work has not changed as extensively since reform in comparison to the other two areas of restructuring. Thirty percent of the schools continue to report only minimal restructuring in this area with another 35 percent still reporting only limited restructuring in teachers' work. That is, their efforts have been limited primarily in the more traditional activities, such as developing relationships with human service professionals and enhancing teacher participation in selecting in-service topics.

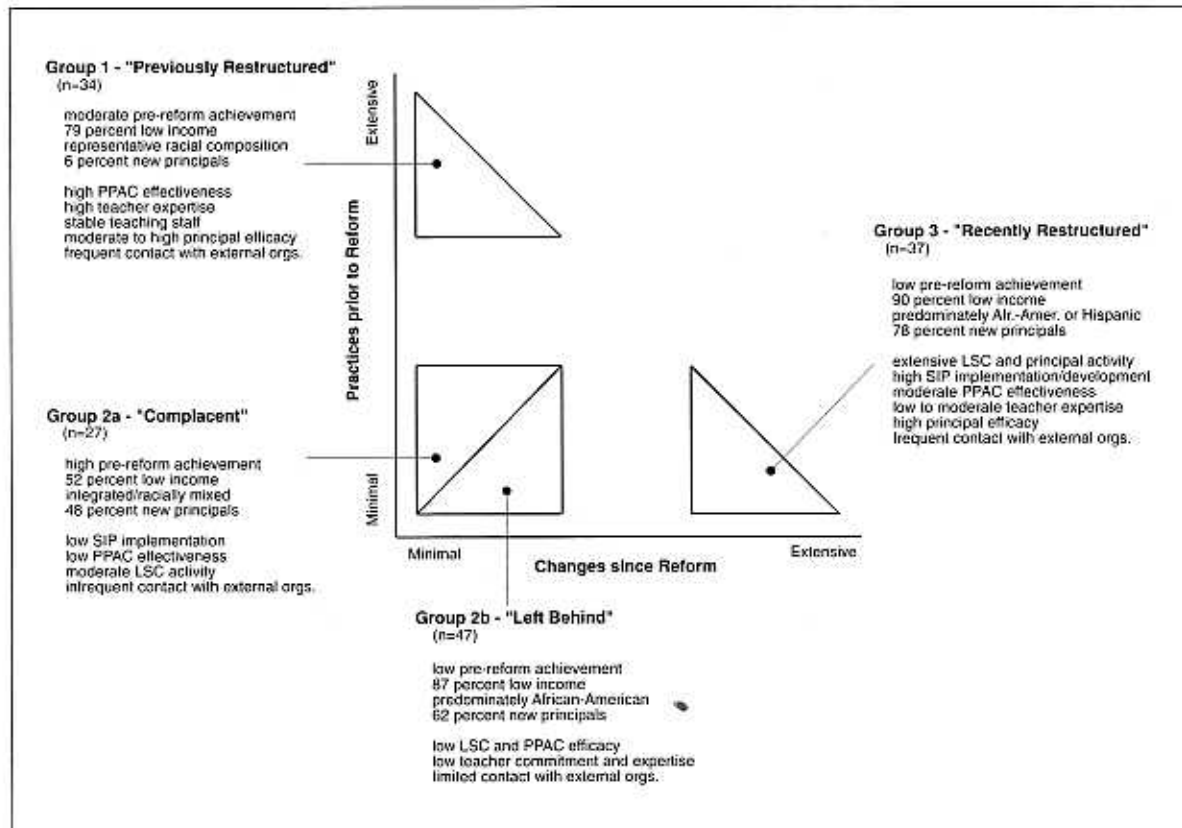
Such a small amount of reported change is perhaps not unexpected since the more innovative practices necessitate deep structural reorganization of schools. Teachers traditionally conduct their work in relative autonomy within the classroom. To extend teachers' roles and to engage them in cooperative work involves not only changing activities but also changing normative conceptions of their roles. Established school codes and collective bargaining agreements may also impede these new efforts.

Community Ties. The most dramatic shifts are reported in the area of school ties. Sixty percent of the principals currently report moderate to extensive activity in this area—twice as much as prior to reform. In addition, fewer than one-fifth of the schools remain in the minimal category. Reform sought to encourage schools to look into their communities for resources and solutions to local problems. In this regard, the principals' reports indicate that reform has been highly effective.

Differences among Schools in the Progress of Restructuring

Schools exhibit contrasting patterns of restructuring. Some report extensive activity prior to reform, others report minimal activity prior to reform but significant restructuring in the last three years, and a third group indicates minimal activity both before and since school reform. The heuristic graph **Patterns of School Restructuring** displays these groups of schools, where the vertical axis represents the level of restructuring prior to reform and the horizontal axis represents the amount of change in practices since reform. The "previously restructured" schools (group 1) report extensive reorganization initiated prior to reform in at least two of the three areas of restructuring. In contrast, "recently restructured" schools (group 3) report minimal activity prior to reform but have changed extensively since then. It appears that reform catalyzed restructuring in these schools. Group 2 contains two subsets of non-restructured schools: a group of relatively high-achieving schools (average pre-reform score on the Illinois Goals Assessment Program [IGAP] is 234) and another of very low-achieving schools (pre-reform IGAP is 177). We label the former group as "complacent" and the latter group as "left behind."

Patterns of School Restructuring



These four groups of schools differ from each other in several interesting and systematic ways. The previously restructured schools look ordinary in terms of basic characteristics. Their pre-reform achievement scores were about 200 on the IGAP (the same as the citywide average but below the state average), and 79 percent of their students are classified as low income (again, like the citywide average). The racial composition of these schools is also generally representative of the school system.

The previously restructured schools are distinctive in certain vital respects, however. Almost all of them have had stable principal leadership dating back to the period prior to reform. The principals report that their PPACs are very effective. They also rate their teachers' commitment and expertise highly. In short, these schools are characterized by stable, committed professional leadership from both principals and teachers. These schools also report consistent contact with external educational organizations. Over 63 percent have communication with an educational group two or more times each month. Thus, their restructuring efforts are supported by both internal initiative and external resources.

In contrast to this portrait, the recently restructured schools (group 3) are some of the most disadvantaged schools in the city. Their pre-reform test scores were very low (IGAP average of 178), and 90 percent of their students are classified as low income. Both predominantly African-American (65 percent) and predominantly Hispanic schools (14 percent) are over-represented in this group.¹⁰ The most dramatic difference lies in the proportion of new principals. Seventy-eight percent of these schools have hired new principals since reform (compared to only 6 percent in the previously restructured schools). These new principals report a high sense of satisfaction and believe that they are making a difference in the academic development of their students. (See final section of the report for more on this topic.) So again, principal leadership appears significant, but in the recently restructured schools new leadership is the force that appears to have catalyzed change.

Also significant, these principals offer the most positive reports about their LSCs. These are active councils that have clearly defined roles and understand their responsibilities as policy-making bodies. Principals also give high ratings to their own relationships with their LSCs, and they believe they have sufficient authority to perform their jobs. They see the SIP as an important tool for charting changes and directing school improvement efforts. Unlike the schools where substantial restructuring was reported prior to reform, however, the teachers and the PPAC are not considered strong assets. Principals in these schools give teachers only low to moderate ratings on expertise. Thus, the leadership for change appears to come from an active, effective LSC working cooperatively with a new, energetic principal hired by the LSC.

The recently restructured schools also report extensive connections with external organizations. Forty-five percent have contact with an educational group at least twice monthly. In addition, two-thirds of the schools have weekly communication with neighborhood organizations, including social service, health, and police programs. These contacts undoubtedly provide essential technical advice and basic support services to bolster the process of reform.

The complacent schools (group 2a) were faring relatively well compared to other schools in the system prior to reform. They had relatively high pre-reform achievement (above the citywide average and close to national norms). This group includes many of the more advantaged schools in the system, which have fewer

low-income students (52 percent). Many of these schools (70 percent) are either integrated or racially mixed rather than racially isolated. However, these schools do not include restructuring strategies among their priorities; apparently they have a more traditional agenda that they continue to pursue.

None of the basic governance elements of school reform are particularly vital in the complacent schools. PPAC effectiveness is rated lower in this group than in either of the restructured school groups; LSC ratings are only moderate; and principals do not see the SIP as a strategic instrument for improvement. In addition, the schools have developed few ties to external organizations that might promote innovative practices. As far as we can discern, these schools appear to run under fairly traditional forms of professional, mainly principal, authority.

The left behind schools (group 2b) are remarkably similar in basic demographic characteristics to the recently restructured schools where reform has catalyzed change (group 3). They serve 87 percent low-income students, and many are racially isolated (61 percent predominantly African-American, another 18 percent predominantly minority). This group of schools also has low achievement (IGAP average of 177). The conspicuous difference between the two groups is the amount of restructuring activity. The left behind schools report minimal or no restructuring.

Principals in these schools also give consistently lower ratings to both their LSCs and their PPACs, and are particularly negative about the quality of the evaluations they received from their LSCs. In addition, they report only limited interactions between the PPAC and LSC over curricular and instructional matters. These indicators suggest relatively ineffectual LSCs and PPACs, two of the major elements of the reform process. The principals also give low ratings to their teachers' levels of commitment and expertise. Finally, the schools' ties to external organizations—both educational and neighborhood—are considerably less than either of the restructured school groups. Taken together, these schools appear to have very low levels of human and social resources both in their professional and their parent communities. Although 62 percent of the left behind schools have new principals, little else appears to have changed.

Summary of School Restructuring

Principals report extensive changes, particularly over the last three years, in classroom instruction, the organization of teachers' work, and school ties with the community. While considerable work in each of these concerns was initiated in some schools prior to 1989, it also appears that much activity has been catalyzed by local school governance reform and the new resources it brought into many schools. We caution, however, that all of the information presented in this section is based strictly on principals' reports. As a result, we do not know how teachers, parents, and students experience these new practices nor do we know how effective such practices actually are. We hope to take a closer look at these issues in subsequent Consortium studies. Nevertheless, the sheer expansiveness of the reported efforts—the fact that they touch so many schools—suggests broad commitments toward change.

Principals' Roles and School Leadership

It is widely held that good schools have good leadership. Thus it seems especially critical at this juncture in school reform to examine more closely the role and work of the principal. This section discusses changes in the principalship over the last three years: the characteristics of the new people who fill these roles, how principals spend their time, and how they feel about their work.

The Changing Principalship

Newcomers to the Job. One of the specific intents of school reform was to bring new leadership, more responsive to the needs of local schools, and the communities and families they serve, into Chicago's schools. The authority of the LSC to "hire and fire" principals was key in this regard.

It is clear from the responses to our survey that substantial changes in leadership have occurred. Of the current principals, 43 percent have been hired since reform. Almost all of these individuals are new to the principalship (94 percent); almost all previously held jobs in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) (95 percent), typically as either a freed assistant principal (43 percent) or a district or central office employee (23 percent). Over 65 percent of these new principals either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, "School reform created the opportunity for me to become a principal."

Thus, it appears that a substantial number of new people have been brought into the principalship and, at least for some previous employees of the CPS, school reform has created new opportunities to lead.

The demographic composition of the principalship also appears to be changing. More female principals are being hired than males. There are

also substantially more new African-American and Hispanic principals as compared to the number hired prior to reform and retained by their LSCs. New principals are also considerably younger than the senior colleagues they are joining.

Location of New Principals. We undertook a variety of analyses to determine if schools that hired new principals share any common features. One factor—the racial composition of the school—stands out as the only clear predictor of whether or not a school hired a principal in the last three years. New principals are much more likely to be found in racially isolated schools, both African-American and Hispanic, and less likely to be found in integrated schools.

We also examined the changing interconnections of the race/ethnicity of principals and

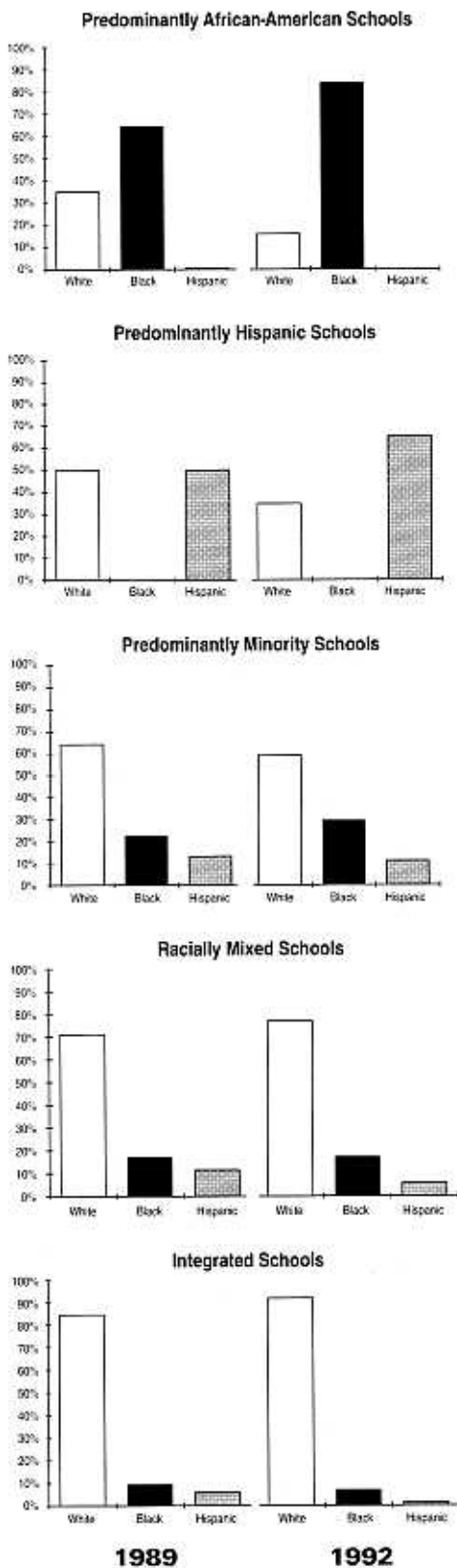
Principal Background Characteristics and Hiring Status

	Principals Hired prior to Reform	Principals Hired since Reform
Female	45%	57%
African-American	37%	58%
White	61%	32%
Hispanic	3%	11%
Average age	52	46

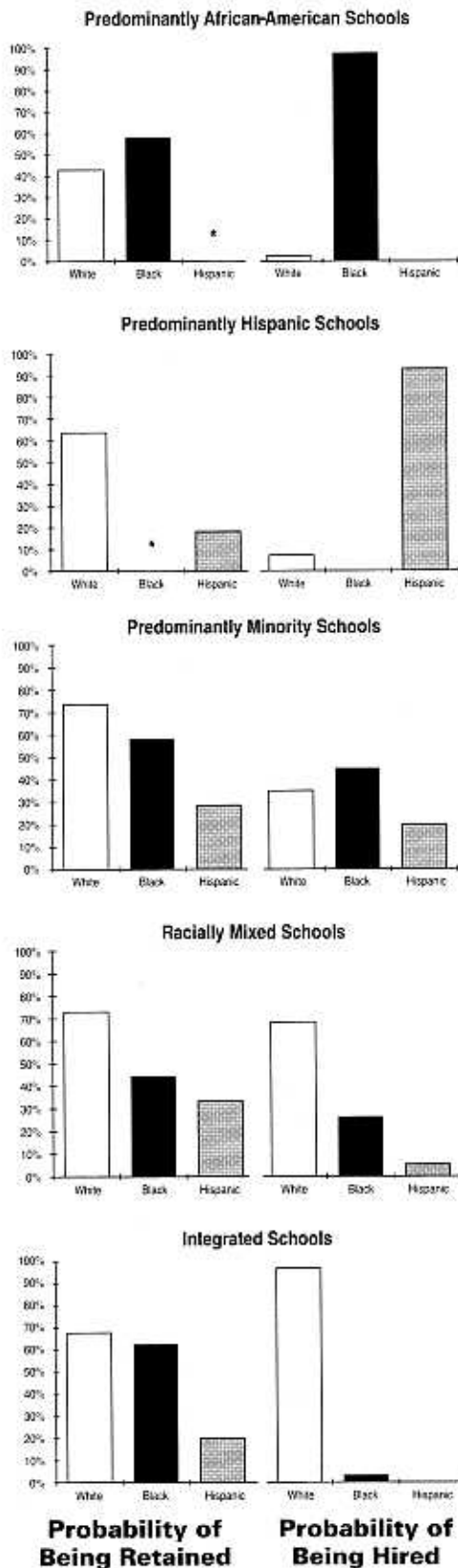
Percentage Hiring a New Principal by School Racial Type

Predominantly African-American	48%
Predominantly Hispanic	63%
Predominantly minority	39%
Racially mixed	39%
Integrated	37%

Changes in the Principalship from 1989-1992



Patterns of Retention and Hiring



Probability of Being Retained **Probability of Being Hired**

*None were originally in this group of schools.

the racial/ethnic composition of schools. Over the period from 1989 to 1992, an increased amount of racial/ethnic matching of principal with school appears to have taken place. Today one is more likely to find an African-American principal in a predominantly African-American school, a Hispanic principal in a predominantly Hispanic school, and a white principal in an integrated or racially mixed school. Two very different processes have been at work here. During the first two years of school reform, each LSC made a decision whether or not to retain their existing principal. There is little evidence that the race/ethnicity of the principal played much of a role in these decisions. In fact, in all categories of schools, except racially isolated African-American schools, white principals were slightly more likely to be retained than their minority colleagues. Hispanics were actually under-retained. Many of these individuals had been placed in schools during the fall of 1989 as interim principals to fill vacant positions. Hence, these principals were in their first year at their schools when they came up for review by their LSCs.

In terms of the decision to hire new principals, however, a more race-sensitive⁷ process appears to be working. In both the predominately African-American and Hispanic schools, LSCs almost uniformly chose (98 percent and 92 percent respectively) principals whose racial backgrounds match the racial composition of the school. Similarly, integrated schools almost uniformly chose white principals.

Some caution is required in interpreting these findings. Prior to reform, the central office directly influenced the relationship between principals' race/ethnicity and school racial composition. This bureaucratic decision-making has now been replaced by a market mechanism influenced both by LSC preferences (the "consumers") and principal applicants (the "suppliers"). Without more detailed information about the specific processes in each individual school (for example, the racial composition of the pool of applicants), it is difficult to characterize the actual factors at work here.

How are Principals Spending Their Time?

	Hrs/week ¹	% saying since reform I have spent [*]		% saying I should spend	
		more	less	more	less
School management	18.9	55%	11%	18%	43%
LSC, parents, community	13.2	51%	15%	25%	17%
Central and district office	3.7	39%	19%	4%	49%
Instructional leadership	15.9	31%	28%	71%	3%
Professional development	3.2	17%	43%	77%	1%
Student discipline	5.9	14%	11%	12%	42%
Student activities	10.6	12%	24%	43%	7%
Average hours per week	57.6				

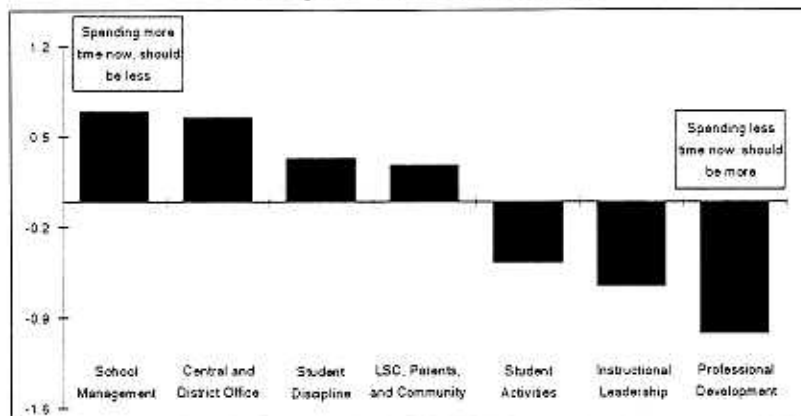
^{*} Percentages for time spent since reform are based on principals hired prior to September 1989
¹ The average hours per week for the individual categories sum to a number greater than the average number of hours worked per week given at the bottom of the table because the categories overlap

How Principals Spend their Time

Principals report that school management issues make the largest claim on their time, followed closely by instructional leadership efforts, working with local constituencies, and student activities. On average, principals report spending more than ten hours per week on each of these activities.

More than half of the principals hired prior to reform report that they are **now spending** more time on school management including SIPs, budget, and basic office paperwork (which is not surprising since more administrative authority devolved to them), and working with local constituencies, including parents, community

Principals' Role Discomfort



reform feel they should be spending more time on their own professional development, instructional leadership in their schools, and activities that bring them into more direct contact with students. Although principals report that they should spend more time on instructional leadership, given the demands on their time and the choices they must make, there is no certainty that if they had more time they would actually devote it to this activity.

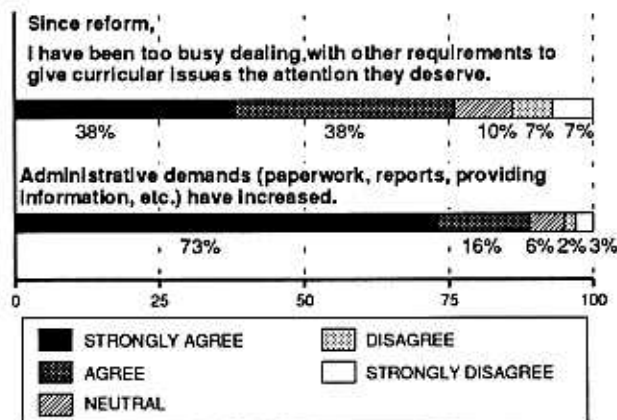
We have combined these two reports about time use into an overall indicator of principal role discomfort: work demands that are taking more time from principals than they should, and those activities that principals feel that they should be spending more time on but are not. In general, principals sense that they are now spending more time than they should on local school management and central and district office functions. Administrative aspects of their job divert effort away from those concerns that principals believe deserve more attention—their own professional development and instructional leadership. This is especially important since

school reform legislation states that principals should devote 51 percent of their time to instructional leadership.

Principals indicate that they are working on average almost sixty hours per week, yet they feel that their most critical concern—leadership for instructional improvement (and enhancing their own capacities to lead)—is being displaced by managerial issues. The time demands of such activities appear to limit the effort principals can devote to school improvement.

More generally, these data indicate that school reform has increased the principals' work load as well as expanded the repertoire of skills they need to function effectively. Chicago's principals appear to be working quite

Administrative Burden of Principals*



*Based on principals hired prior to September 1989.

hard in response to these new demands, but it remains unclear whether there are sufficient time and resources for them to become the school-site leaders envisioned under the reform. To date, at least, principals are saying that instructional development is not getting the attention it deserves.

Principals' Feelings about Their Job

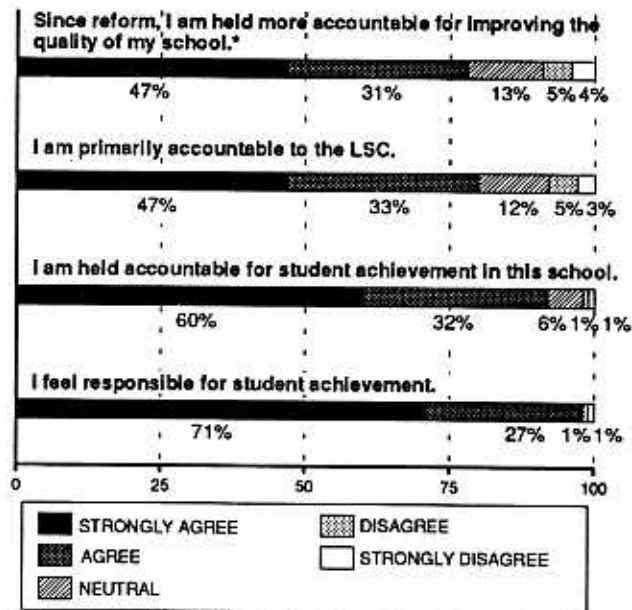
A sense of principals' frustration becomes clear when we turn our attention to some other questions we asked regarding the principals' role and their reactions to their job. Principals feel overwhelmed by administrative demands (display opposite page). Almost three-quarters of the principals hired prior to reform strongly agree that administrative demands have increased since reform. Similarly, about three-quarters of all principals either agree or strongly agree that they have been too busy dealing with other requirements to give curricular issues the attention they deserve.

One explicit intent of school reform legislation was to make principals locally accountable for instructional improvement. School reform appears to have been highly successful in this regard. Well over 90 percent of the principals feel responsible for student achievement and feel that they are held accountable for achievement in their schools. Over three-quarters of the principals hired prior to reform indicate that their accountability for improving their schools has increased since reform.

Nevertheless, principals continue to doubt that they have the necessary resources to effect improvements. More specifically, we asked principals to rate a list of factors that might act as "roadblocks" to doing the job they want to do. Six issues stand out as serious obstacles for a majority of principals. The most prevalent concerns, shared by two out of every three principals, are inability to provide time for teacher planning or professional development and the difficulty in removing poor teachers. Other roadblocks are the time taken by administrative detail, inability to obtain sufficient funding, parent apathy, and constraints imposed by collective bargaining agreements.

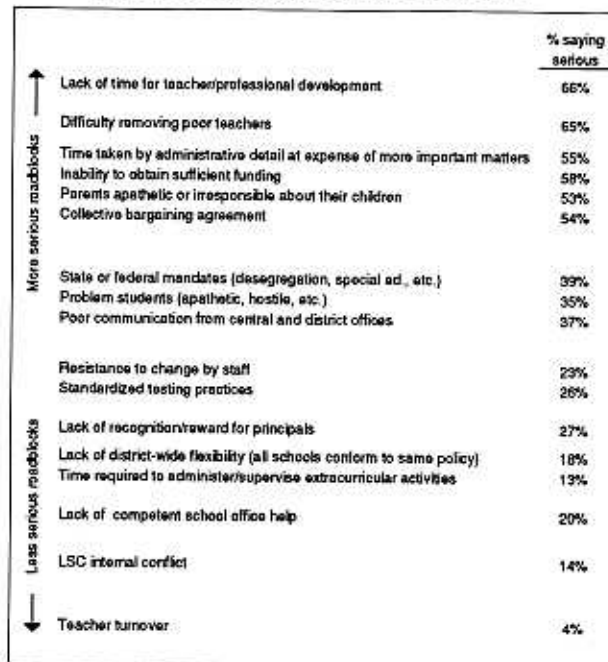
These same issues emerged when we asked principals, in an open-ended question, about the most frustrating part of their work. Thirty-four percent mention paperwork demands and cumbersome

Principals' Perceptions of Accountability



*Based on principals hired prior to September 1989.

Roadblocks Facing the Principal



Principals' Voices

The most frustrating part of my work is...

"Not enough time in the day/night to read, analyze, initiate, digest and implement all that needs to be done."

"Continually doing added 'Central Office' tasks without additional staff. Fighting the bureaucracy over purchasing and paying bills! Paperwork! Lack of understanding of what running a post-reform school takes."

"Having too many groups trying to give direction that they come into conflict with each other."

"Having to deal with uncooperative, uncaring, unprepared tenured teachers who have been allowed to remain in this school system for 20+ years."

What would be your priorities for changing or adding to the current contract with the Chicago Teachers Union?

"Removal of incompetent teachers by a better procedure than E-3 — it's too lengthy, too involved."

"Adding time for instruction, planning and curriculum, and staff development."

If there were one thing you could change to improve your school (other than money), what would it be?

"Hire innovative, creative, and energetic staff (certified and career service) who have a genuine concern for the education and well-being of our youngsters — those who do not watch the clock every day."

"More frequent opportunities for teachers to participate in each other's teaching and plan together about school-wide issues."

"Building improvements — replacing windows. Children have to wear coats during the winter; teachers threaten to go home."

"All teachers would work on a one-year contract and their evaluation each year would not be contingent on any previous evaluation."

procedures for purchasing, facilities, and personnel. Another 21 percent cite not enough time and too much to do. Completing the list of frustrations are community politics (12 percent) and problems with entrenched, incompetent, or uncaring teachers (7 percent).

Concern about poor teachers appeared particularly strongly in principals' responses to another open-ended question, "What would be your priorities for changing or adding to the current contract with the Chicago Teachers Union?" One major issue (mentioned by 42 percent of respondents) clearly stands out—make it easier to remove incompetent teachers.

Similarly, when we asked principals, "If there were one thing you could change to improve your school (other than money), what would it be?" three of the four most frequently mentioned items concern teachers. Twenty-three percent mention a need to replace incompetent staff; 15 percent call for more time for curriculum and staff development; and 7 percent mention constraints of union contracts and collective bargaining agreements. In addition, 12 percent mention improvement of facilities.

School reform has created considerable role conflict for principals. Their sense of local accountability and responsibility for school improvement has certainly been heightened, but principals feel that their ability to move aggressively toward their goals is constrained. Administrative demands distract them from instructional improvement. There are insufficient resources to engage the staff development needed for large portions of the faculty, and they are unable to effect the removal of the relatively small number of teachers whom they believe should not be teaching. Promoting substantial school improvement under such conditions is surely a difficult task. In this light, the amount of new school

improvement activity reported to be occurring is remarkable.

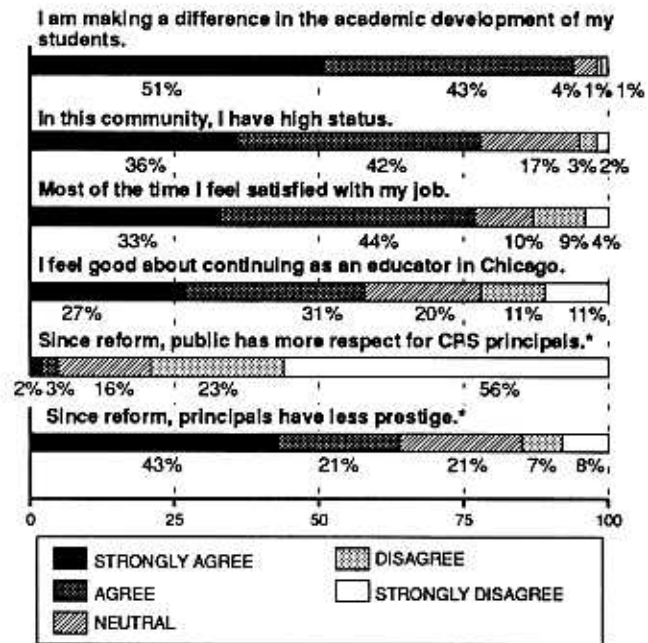
Not surprisingly, principals' sense of efficacy and role status are mixed. On the one hand, they overwhelmingly believe they are making a difference in the academic development of their students (94 percent either agree or strongly agree); they believe they have high status in the community and feel satisfied most of the time (78 percent and 77 percent respectively). They are somewhat less positive, however, about their continuing careers as educators in Chicago. Moreover, 64 percent of those hired prior to reform agree or strongly agree that since reform they have less prestige, and 79 percent disagree or strongly disagree that since reform the public respects them more. Also relevant in this regard, some 40 percent feel that their success or failure is due primarily to factors beyond their control.

These data take us back to the principals' attitudes toward school reform with which we began. Principals are optimistic about their schools and see positive practices emerging, but they do not necessarily feel better about their own work. While they feel they are helping their students and are valued in their own communities, doubt remains about the role they are being asked to fill. When we combine this doubt with the very real constraints of time, resources, and personnel discussed above, a very challenging picture of school leadership emerges.

This idea is certainly driven home when we look at principals' reports about how long they expect to remain in the principalship. Over 40 percent are planning to leave the principalship in five years; and 75 percent expect to be gone in ten years or less. About one-third plan to leave at the "early retirement age" of 55 and another third by age 60. Even among what should be the most favorable group (principals less than 45 years of age and hired since reform), 57 percent plan to be out in ten years or less.

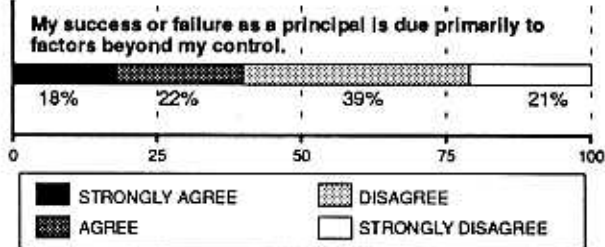
A good school system must reach a balance between stable institutional leadership and promoting initiative through new leaders. It seems clear that a great deal of energy has been catalyzed in the Chicago Public Schools through the new principals hired over the last several years. Much less clear, however, is whether the current career plans of principals will promote the institutionalization of positive initiatives or just contribute to a repeated cycle of innovation which is never fully implemented, and then abandoned as new leadership arrives. This stands as a critical question in charting the future progress of Chicago's school reform.

Efficacy and Role Status



*Based on principals hired prior to September 1989.

Principals' Sense of Control



Concluding Comments

Charting Reform: The Principals' Perspective has given elementary and high school principals the opportunity to express their views about current efforts to improve our city's schools. Principals offer a generally positive account of the state of school reform. Local governance appears to be working well in the majority of schools. Principals also report that, for the most part, PPACs are functioning and that principals have been able to select a substantial number of teachers of their own choosing.

Reform has triggered a burst of restructuring activities in a large number of schools. Many principals report a variety of expanded relationships with community agencies and educational institutions as well as increased efforts to change the nature of classroom teaching and teachers' work. Although some of this activity began prior to reform, there seems to be little doubt that reform has catalyzed a significant amount of new activity. This burst of initiative is particularly prominent in schools where local school councils have hired new energetic and committed principals. Yet a significant number of very poor schools (perhaps 10 to 20 percent of the system) remain relatively untouched by school reform. These institutions are isolated from external educational institutions, who could provide the needed assistance to promote meaningful educational improvements.

As we move away from governance and restructuring efforts toward human resource issues, however, the picture becomes more problematic. Principals report that although they and their teachers need sustained staff development, current resources are inadequate to meet these needs. Principals also feel that the current processes for removing incompetent teachers are overly constrained. These human resource development issues merit careful consideration because they are inevitably at the heart of most efforts to improve classroom instruction and student learning.

Perhaps most worrisome is the way the principals perceive their role. By all ac-

Principals' Voices

Despite the drawbacks and difficulties associated with the principal's role in Chicago, there are reasons for principals to persist, too. In their view, the most rewarding part of work is:

"Watching children that I call the 'walking dead' come alive in my school and begin to learn."

"Seeing teachers change, and growing involvement in solving major problems of low performance by students. The willingness to look at ourselves as part of the problem, our need to change."

"Children, children, children — they make my day."

counts, most principals exhibit enormous energy and dedication. Despite working long hours, they are still unable to devote enough time to instructional leadership. Moreover, we wonder how long they can sustain such effort, given the constraints under which they work. This concern becomes especially important when we look at the realities that principals face. They have received no salary increases in the last two years, and in a growing number of schools there are now teachers who are making more money than the principal.

Principals are held personally accountable for improvement in student achievement, but they lack critical resources and authority to advance such improvement. The time demands associated with school management and working with local constituencies have increased substantially, but little change has occurred in cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. In fact, the increased uncertainty about the conduct of routine business has probably made matters worse. Significant school improve-

ment seems highly unlikely without active leadership from principals. Thus, their generally positive accounts of school reform are tempered by their reports about the conflicts and constraints in their new role.

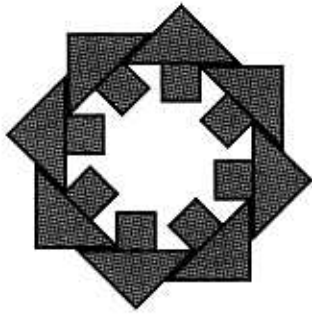
Endnotes

1. Unless otherwise noted, the reports described here are based on responses from all 457 principals who completed the survey. For those statistics based on subgroup comparisons, the following sample sizes apply: 250 principals hired prior to school reform vs. 202 hired since reform (status unknown for 5); 400 elementary school principals vs. 57 high school principals.

Although the overall response rate is very high, we nevertheless undertook a range of analyses to explore possible non-response bias. We found no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents in terms of either basic demographic characteristics of schools or background characteristics of principals. We conclude that the results presented here are representative of the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of principals in the Chicago Public Schools.
2. A technical appendix, available from the Consortium, provides a detailed description of all indicator clusters used in this report.
3. As noted in the table, the data in this discussion are based on reports of principals hired prior to 1989. Nevertheless, we believe these data are generally representative of all principals in the CPS. We have conducted extensive analyses of other items pertaining to the implementation of local school governance, examining possible differences between principals hired pre- and post- reform. In general, observed differences are small and mostly related to differences in the kinds of schools that retained vs. hired new principals. (See last section of the report.) There is little evidence in principals' responses to the survey of significant differences in the perceptions and attitudes of new principals as compared to their more senior colleagues.
4. This report is built around a set of key concepts which provide a scaffold for our discussion on each of the four major topics. A set of items was included in the survey to measure each of these concepts. We refer to these item sets as indicator clusters. In general, indicator clusters ranged from 2 to 13 items with a typical cluster having 4 or 5 items. We used a statistical technique called Rasch analysis to ensure that all of the items included in a cluster measure the same underlying concept and arrange in a meaningful order, from most likely to be endorsed to least likely to be endorsed. For some of the indicator clusters, which involve a relatively large number of items, only a subset are displayed in the report. A technical appendix, available from the Consortium, provides further details about all of the items used in each cluster and the psychometric properties of these clusters.

In addition, in order to provide a summary description of principals' views about a particular indicator cluster, we occasionally categorize the Rasch measures produced for that indicator cluster. Loosely speaking, a "very positive" principal is likely to endorse most of the positively-worded items included in a cluster and disagree with most negatively-worded items. A "positive" principal endorses a majority of the positively-worded items and disagrees with a majority of the negatively worded ones. In contrast, "negative" reports tend to reject the positively-worded items and endorse the negative ones. The precise decision rule used for making these classifications is based on the Rasch analysis.
5. These and many subsequent questions have five response categories, including "neutral." It is important to look at all the responses in the tables to get an accurate understanding of the results.
6. A general caveat about this section is required. It is important to emphasize that all information contained here is based on principal reports. In prior research with items of this type, principals have tended to over-report the scope of restructuring activity actually occurring in their schools. Thus, the reports offered here are probably somewhat too positive as precise factual description and should be verified through observations to determine the amount of actual restructuring. They are useful nonetheless in indicating the relative amount of attention being devoted to various initiatives and should serve as reasonable indicators of the relative amount of effort across schools.

7. The analyses reported in this section are based only on elementary schools. In general, the issues of restructuring are different in the high schools, requiring separate analyses for this subset of schools. There is an insufficient number of high schools in the data set for this purpose. Plans for future analysis of high school restructuring include qualitative field work within select schools.
8. The procedures for creating these classifications are described in more detail in the report's technical appendix, available from the Consortium.
9. For more information on these groups, see the technical appendix, available from the Consortium.
10. —Predominantly African-American: 85% or more African-American students.
—Predominantly Hispanic: 85% or more Hispanic students.
—Predominantly minority: 85% or more African-American and Hispanic students, but neither alone.
—Racially mixed: 15-30% white students.
—Integrated: 30% or more white students.



The Consortium on Chicago School Research

Directors

Anthony Bryk

*University of Chicago
Chair of the Steering
Committee*

Penny Sebring

*The Consortium on Chicago
School Research*

Albert Bennett

Roosevelt University

John Easton

*Chicago Panel on Public
School Policy and Finance*

Steering Committee

Maxey Bacchus

Chicago Public Schools

Larry Braskamp

*University of Illinois
at Chicago*

Janet Fredericks

*Northeastern Illinois
University*

John Kotsakis

Chicago Teachers Union

Jim Lewis

Chicago Urban League

Rachel Lindsey

Chicago State University

Bruce Marchiafava

Chicago Public Schools

Don Moore

Designs for Change

Jeri Nowakowski

*North Central Regional
Educational Laboratory*

William Pink

National-Louis University

Sylvia Puente

Latino Institute

Al Ramirez

*Illinois State Board
of Education*

Background/Acknowledgements

The Consortium on Chicago School Research is an independent federation of Chicago area organizations which have come together to undertake a range of research activities designed to advance school improvement in the city and assess the progress of school reform. It aims to: (1) encourage broad access to the research agenda setting process; (2) advocate for the collection of systematic information on the condition of education in the city; (3) collaborate on selected studies; (4) assure high standards of quality in research design, data collection and analysis; and (5) promote wide dissemination and discussion of research findings.

The Consortium is deliberately multi-partisan. Its membership includes faculty from area universities, research staff from the Chicago Public Schools and the Illinois State Board of Education, researchers in advocacy groups, as well as other interested individuals and organizations. The Consortium views research not just as a technical operation of gathering data and publishing reports, but as a process of community education advanced through sustained public discourse.

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