

Research and Evaluation in the Chicago Public Schools: A Plan for the Future



Presented to
Arne Duncan, Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Public Schools

Prepared by
Laurence Stanton and John Q. Easton for the Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee,
with assistance from the Consortium on Chicago School Research

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Executive Summary

Improved teaching and learning is the top priority of the new CPS administration. Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan and Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins have introduced a number of initiatives intended to strengthen instruction and student performance, including a system-wide reading initiative supported by extensive professional development.

The District's new Education Plan lays out strategies to improve the quality of instruction to students. Making informed, research- and information-based decisions is critical to the success of the plan. While the plan is being implemented, the system's top leadership, including the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Education Officer, need access to accurate and useful information that will help them understand its strengths and weaknesses and make mid-course adjustments accordingly. To an equal or even greater extent, leaders with hands-on responsibility for school improvement—principals, area instructional staff, local school councils, and teachers—need information and assistance in understanding their successes and their problems. As currently resourced, the Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) does not have sufficient capacity to provide the information needed to inform and advance instruction and evaluate program initiatives.

In the fall of 2001, John Q. Easton, the new Director of Research and Evaluation for CPS, initiated this study to develop a plan for building the department's capacity. Based on interviews and focus groups, advice from experts in the field, a limited literature review, and research on other large urban school systems, the Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee recommends that the Department of Research and Evaluation reorganize around three priority areas—instructional support, data analysis, and data management—and undertake the following:

Instructional Support

- Support the 24 Area Instructional Officers (AIOs) and others in the use of data, including standardized test results, to improve instruction.
- Support the implementation and ongoing operation of the Grow Network program for grades 3-9 in all schools.

Data Analysis

- Provide the analytical capacity to support the CPS accountability program.
- Provide CPS with an internal program evaluation capacity.
- Lead development of an annual CPS research agenda.
- Coordinate research and analysis in other units within CPS.
- Coordinate and monitor all outside research on CPS.



Data Management

- Support the system-wide testing program.
- Respond to requests for data from outside CPS.
- Develop and manage a data warehouse to support teaching and learning.

The committee also recommends that DRE maintain its relative independence within the CPS by reporting directly to the CEO, and that the department's staff increase commensurate with its new responsibilities.



Introduction

In June 2001, Arne Duncan was named Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools. Mr. Duncan replaced Paul Vallas who had been the district's CEO for the previous five years. Under Mr. Vallas's leadership, the Chicago Public Schools made substantial progress in improving student performance on standardized tests, particularly in the elementary schools. The major emphasis of the Vallas administration was on holding both students and adults accountable for academic achievement.

Mr. Duncan, while continuing to emphasize accountability, has focused attention on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This past year, CPS has undertaken a Reading Initiative, to support reading in all schools, and a Human Capital Initiative, to improve the quality and preparation of teachers and principals. This summer, CPS will announce a reorganization that will create 24 Area Instructional Officers (AIOs) responsible for working with teachers and principals to improve teaching and learning.

Each of these initiatives is complex and will require a sophisticated system for monitoring progress and evaluating success. CPS currently lacks the capacity to conduct substantial research or evaluation. Although the system continues to emphasize testing, Mr. Duncan is committed to greater use of test results and other forms information to inform and improve instruction. Currently, CPS does little to support the systematic use of data to improve teaching and student learning.

As one of his first appointments, Mr. Duncan named John Q. Easton Director of Research and Evaluation. From 1994 to 1997, Dr. Easton served as Director of Research, Evaluation, and Planning under Arnie Johnson and Mr. Vallas. Since then, he

has been Deputy Director of the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. The Consortium is a unique collaboration between local universities and education policy centers. It has been the system's major source of outside research and has been generously supported by local and national foundations.

In January 2002, Dr. Easton initiated this project to develop a plan for building DRE's capacity to better support CPS initiatives. The Chicago Community Trust made a grant to support the project. At the same time, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation approved a request from the Consortium to redirect previously awarded funds to this study. In addition to its financial contribution, the Consortium has also lent considerable intellectual support to the study based on its substantial experience conducting research in Chicago Public Schools. In 1995, the Consortium conducted a more extensive, in-depth study of the research and evaluation needs of CPS. The experience and expertise gained in that prior study proved beneficial to this current study.

The purpose of the project is:

- To develop an organizational structure for research and evaluation that can be sustained over time. This includes addressing the financial, human resource, and political challenges inherent in research and evaluation – particularly the difficulty of providing the system's leadership with news that it does not want to hear. It also assumes that, although CPS needs a robust internal research and evaluation capacity, some research and evaluation functions may best reside outside.
- To define the roles of the central office, individual schools, and outside researchers in commissioning,



conducting, disseminating, and utilizing research and evaluation studies.

- To build support for the plan with major stakeholders within CPS, among civic leaders, and within the higher education research community. Because civic leaders are involved in developing the plan, they will be more likely to support its implementation.

Planning Process

In February, a project Advisory Committee was formed to provide direction and advice. The committee includes senior CPS central administrators, a CPS principal, foundation program officers, a representative of the teachers union, and researchers. The members are listed on the inside cover of this report.

The Advisory Committee met three times during the project. At the first meeting, in February, the committee reviewed the project purpose and work plan. In the second meeting in April, the committee discussed the findings of the project interviews and developed a set of priorities for the Research and Evaluation Department. The final meeting in early July included a review of this report and a discussion of implementation issues.

Dr. Easton oversaw the project. Laurence Stanton, a management and planning consultant, and Beth Swanson, a graduate student at the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, staffed the project. Professor Albert Bennett of Roosevelt University also assisted.

Project staff conducted interviews with approximately thirty-five individuals, including principals, senior CPS central office and region staff members, researchers, advocates, and civic leaders. A focus

group with ten CPS teachers was also conducted. They also interviewed nearly all current DRE staff members (see Appendix A). The basic question in the interviews and the focus groups was: Given the system's priorities, what does CPS need from a research and evaluation department?

Project staff members also gathered information and prepared reports on the structure, responsibilities, and operation of the research and evaluation function in six other large urban school districts: Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Diego (see Appendix B). They shared information on four of these districts with the Advisory Committee at the April meeting.

Context for Planning

During the past fourteen years, Chicago has been a laboratory for change in urban public education. In considering the district's future research and evaluation needs, the following are particularly significant:

- In 1988, the Illinois legislature mandated Local School Councils (LSCs) in each Chicago school. LSCs—made up of parents, teachers, and community representatives—were given the authority to hire the principal, develop annual school improvement plans, and determine the use of discretionary funds. The 1988 reforms increased parent and community involvement, but also made it more difficult for the central office to mandate specific activities in schools. In 1995, the Illinois legislature gave control of the schools to Chicago's mayor. A second wave of reform which followed, focused on accountability, particularly in lower performing schools. Schools that failed to meet standards were placed on probation, intervention, and even reconstituted. Students who failed to meet



standards were retained.

- The new CPS administration's plan for the third wave of Chicago school reform combines decentralization with accountability, and adds a new emphasis on support for teaching and learning in schools. CPS is announcing a major reorganization plan intended to support the new priority. The six regions will be divided into 24 areas, each with an Area Instructional Officer (AIO). The AIOs will be responsible for working with all area principals to improve teaching and learning. Responsibility for the administrative tasks that occupied most of the time of the Region Education Officers (i.e., transportation, food services, facilities), will be shifted to other staff.
- The 2001 Federal No Child Left Behind legislation's emphasis on data will require a robust research and evaluation capacity within CPS. The system will need a greater capacity to analyze test data and teacher qualifications and link them to instruction in the schools. The system will also need a much stronger capacity to assess and report on the progress of subgroups of students. The CPS administration is in the process of developing plans to combine its emphasis on teaching and learning with the accountability mandated in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.
- The Consortium on Chicago School Research is nationally recognized for applying university research expertise to address the challenges of an urban school system. The Consortium is an independent federation of Chicago area organizations, comprising public school educators and administrators, university professors, reform group leaders, and foundation representatives. It conducts research on Chicago's public schools,

the problems they face, and the mechanisms for improvement. The Consortium has conducted a number of research projects that have had a substantial impact on the Chicago Public Schools. John Easton, the Director of the CPS Department of Research and Evaluation, also serves as Deputy Director of the Consortium.

Recently, Mr. Duncan appointed two nationally recognized experts to co-chair a task force on student assessment. Professor Sam Meisels, President of the Erikson Institute, and Donald Stewart, President of the Chicago Community Trust, will lead this effort to recommend a student assessment system to better serve improving student learning in the Chicago Public Schools. Although the recommendations of this task force will have major implications for the DRE, it is too early to predict what these might be. Therefore, the Advisory Committee makes no specific recommendations about student assessment.

Similarly, the Advisory Committee did not address DRE's role in accountability, again anticipating changes in CPS plans for school accountability. The Advisory Committee does recommend that CPS address this issue in a timely manner.

Even though the committee made no formal recommendations on assessment and accountability, the Advisory Committee members recognize that since the new Department of Research and Evaluation will be focused on making data and information usable and useful for school practitioners and policymakers, it's essential that the research and evaluation staff work closely and collaboratively with their colleagues in Assessment and Accountability to develop and operate the best systems possible.



Recommendations

What Should Be the Department's Major Responsibilities?

Based on the feedback from practitioners and experts collected during this planning process, the committee recommends that the Department of Research and Evaluation develop substantial new capacity to support the district's increased emphasis on teaching and learning through better and greater use of relevant data and information. Building this new capacity will require adding staff and resources to the department, but the Advisory Committee strongly believes that such an investment will pay off for CPS as it attempts to improve instruction across the school system.

Further, the Advisory Committee recommends that DRE strengthen its ability to analyze data, conduct evaluation studies, develop new statistical indicators, and develop stronger relationships with outside researchers and research organizations.

Finally, DRE must continue its current work in data management—clearly of major importance for the system. However, these data must be made more usable and useful to the school system. A new, technologically up-to-date data warehouse will greatly facilitate this expansion.

The department will then be organized around three major strands with three corresponding sub-units: Instructional Support, Data Analysis, and Data Management.

Instructional Support

Support the 24 Area Instructional Officers (AIOs) and others in the use of data, including standardized test results, to improve instruction. Although supportive of data use by principals, LSCs, and school staff, DRE's primary orientation will be to

work with school staff through the AIOs, who will serve as intermediaries. The 24 AIOs and their staffs will work directly with principals and teachers to improve instruction. As the major sources of information about student performance in CPS, DRE will provide this information to AIOs to assist them with developing greater instructional capacity in their schools. At the most basic level, DRE will provide assistance in understanding test score and gain results, in interpreting reports, and in downloading and analyzing data files. At more advanced levels, staff in this unit will help AIOs working with school staff to formulate and conceptualize questions about student performance and then design inquiry strategies to pursue them.

Although the initial contact with AIOs is likely to be around the use of test score results, DRE will also help AIOs and their staffs identify other information needs, obtain access to other data sources, and provide analytic support for understanding and using these data sources. For example, DRE could assist AIOs with the following types of questions:

- What is the impact of student mobility on schools that exchange large numbers of students?
- How do transition rates of students out of bilingual programs differ from one school to another and how is this related to school improvement?
- What is the relationship between students' classroom work and their standardized test scores?

DRE may also be called on to provide technical assistance for collecting, analyzing, and scoring representative samples of student work; to help schools conduct self-evaluation studies; and to develop and implement quality review protocols and procedures. DRE will also identify and disseminate tools and



products (e.g., Grow Network, Quality Schools Portfolio) that will help schools use data from standardized tests and other sources to improve instruction to students. The area reorganization plan includes data analysts working with one or more AIOs. DRE staff will work closely with these new staff members.

Specific responsibilities:

- Working with the Office of Professional Development, educate AIOs on how to use test data to diagnose instructional problems and prescribe solutions.
- Provide timely class-level student test score data in several formats on a class-by-class basis, including gain scores for each cohort of students.
- Offer assistance on how to engage school leaders in the use of data.
- Link the student database with a teacher database to better study the relationship between teacher practices and teacher learning and student learning.
- Provide technical assistance to AIOs to support local school use of data for planning, self-study, and program evaluation.

Support the implementation and ongoing operation of the Grow Network program for grades 3-9 in all CPS schools. Despite the importance of testing, test results are often delivered to teachers and parents in ways that are difficult to understand, have no clear relation to state and local standards, and offer no guidance about how students can improve. As a result, a pivotal opportunity for action is lost, and schools and parents often turn to inadequate test-preparation solutions to try to raise their students' scores. The Grow Reports™ provide a distinctive reporting system in print and online that trans-

forms assessment results into clear and effective tools for action by principals, teachers, and parents. The Grow Network reporting system includes:

- Customized printed reports for teachers and principals showing student performance in clear, actionable topics that express state and local standards.
- Personal web accounts for teachers, principals, and other instructional leaders that provide a range of tools to support standards-based instruction flexibly adapted to students' needs.
- Instructional materials in Math and English Language Arts to address students' needs at different levels, as well as specialized resources to help school leaders plan grade-wide conferences and professional development on specific topics.
- Printed reports and online resources for parents that explain their children's strengths and weaknesses and provide sound strategies for helping them grow.

CPS, through DRE, has contracted with the Grow Network to provide help to all CPS elementary schools beginning in September 2002. DRE will oversee and coordinate Grow Network's work.

Specific responsibilities:

- Provide Grow Network with all necessary data.
- Assist Grow Network in designing reports.
- Serve as liaison between Grow Network staff and the Office of Professional Development and the AIOs.
- Evaluate the usage of the Grow Network system by schools and teachers.



Data Analysis

Provide the analytical capacity to support the CPS accountability program. Although the Office of Accountability has responsibility for monitoring school performance and identifying and helping under-performing schools, DRE provides the analytical capacity to support the CPS accountability program. This year, DRE has worked with Accountability to develop the elements of the new CPS School Report Card, increasing the number of measures on which schools are evaluated.

Specific responsibilities:

- Working with other CPS units, identify indicators for measuring the progress of all students, including students with limited English proficiency and special education students.
- Monitoring the quality and validity of system-wide student assessments and the use of assessment data.
- Leading the development of indicators for evaluating schools—indicators should be simple and transparent, should not be subject to manipulation, and should anticipate the requirements of the new federal education legislation.
- Leading the development of system-wide performance measures that are linked to system-wide goals. Advocating for the use of the performance measures in planning, evaluating, and reporting on system activities.
- Assisting in developing ways of measuring the contribution of school and central office staff to the achievement of school and system goals.

Provide CPS with an internal program evaluation capacity. CPS does not have the capacity to conduct in-house quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, program evaluations. As a result,

it often lacks evidence to support decisions to expand, contract, or eliminate programs. CPS needs the capacity to evaluate a limited number of key programs each year. In addition, plans for new programs should include an evaluation component.

Specific responsibilities:

- Provide targeted qualitative and quantitative evaluations to identify, strengthen, and replicate programs that work and end programs that do not.
- Help central office units reflect on and evaluate what they are doing by providing technical assistance on formative and summative evaluation and, when appropriate, identify and assist external partners to conduct evaluation studies.
- Link the work of the Planning, Project Management, and Research and Evaluation units by utilizing a planning, implementation, and evaluation feedback loop built around system performance measures.

Lead development of an annual CPS research agenda. Decision-makers at every level of CPS – teachers, principals, Area Instructional Officers, central administrators, and the Board – need better information on which to base decisions. Some necessary information can be obtained through research, both quantitative and qualitative. Fortunately, there are many people within CPS, at local colleges and universities, and in local, state, and national policy centers who are willing and able to conduct research that could be helpful to the district. There are also state and federal agencies and foundations willing to fund good, relevant research. To maximize likelihood that research will be useful, CPS needs a research agenda that identifies the research questions that are central to advancing the



teaching and learning in CPS. With a CPS research agenda in place, the administration and Board will be better able to encourage research that contributes to the understanding of how to improve instruction in schools and the accomplishment of CPS goals.

Specific responsibilities:

- Engage in a process to develop an annual CPS research agenda. This process should be led by CPS education staff and include outside researchers and funders, such as the Consortium, the Illinois Education Research Council, and the North Central Regional Education Laboratory. These external researchers can help insure that CPS research is theoretically based and grounded in sound conceptual frameworks
- Encourage all researchers to provide direction for policy and inform CPS plans for professional development.

Coordinate research and analysis in other units within CPS. Several units within the central office collect, analyze, and issue reports on student data (e.g., Specialized Services, High Schools, and Early Childhood Education). Central office units also hire outside researchers to conduct research projects. To avoid duplication of effort and inconsistent use of data, and to ensure that units get the best research possible, DRE should coordinate and oversee all research within the system.

Specific responsibilities:

- Set standards for internal and external research.
- Serve as clearinghouse for research requests.
- Periodically convene researchers and data analysts from central office units to share information, coordinate work, and avoid duplication and mistakes.

Coordinate and monitor all outside research on CPS. The Chicago Public Schools are a rich source for research projects in urban education by students and faculty at Chicago colleges, universities, and education policy centers. Although CPS wants to continue to be open to outside researchers, it also needs to ensure that the research that takes place within the schools is appropriate and as useful to CPS as possible. The district also needs to encourage the best researchers available to address the system's critical research questions.

Specific responsibilities:

- Manage the relationship between outside researchers and the CPS administration and Board.
- Emphasize to researchers that data without ideas for how to use it is not helpful to the schools or the system.
- Include outside researchers on research and evaluation projects to ensure quality and independence.
- Encourage outside research and de-emphasize the gatekeeper role.

Data Management

Support the system-wide testing program. Current DRE staff spends nearly all its time supporting the testing program – ITBS, TAP, ISAT, Prairie State Exam, the Miscue Analysis for the primary grades, and CASE for high schools. This work is extremely complicated and demanding. The department must first identify students who need to be tested, print answer sheets for them, score tests, analyze and report scores, and conduct essential quality assurance at every step. This essential work will continue as the district shifts to a greater reliance on the ISAT under the No Child Left Behind legislation. In fact, it may be necessary for



DRE to assume responsibility for ISAT processing.

Specific responsibilities:

- Identify the students eligible for testing.
- Score tests in a timely manner, either internally or through external contractors.
- Develop, produce, print, and distribute reports on testing.
- Maintain test data archives.
- Produce, print, and distribute data and reports.
- Experiment with new ways of collecting and providing data to schools including web-based reporting and test administration.

The testing process requires cooperative work among several departments at CPS (Information Technology in particular, as well as the Offices of Accountability, Language and Culture, Specialized Services, and Schools and Regions) and external organizations and vendors (ISBE, testing companies, optical scanning specialists). Although the procedures are routinized and documented, the overall process needs to be examined to ensure that it is as efficient as possible and that the expectations are clear – both at the schools and the DRE. The consultant on this project, Laurence Stanton, will work on this with Dr. Easton as a follow-up to this project.

Respond to requests for data from outside CPS.

CPS receives hundreds of data requests each year from outside researchers, advocates, and the press. Responding to those requests takes substantial staff time because most requests are unique.

Specific responsibilities:

- Determine what data are required to fulfill requests for information, and when directed by the appropriate administrator, prepare, and distribute the necessary reports.

- Insure that all FERPA confidentiality requirements are met.
- Develop standard reports for frequently requested information.

Develop and manage a data warehouse to support teaching and learning.

As the system develops a capacity to support teaching and learning through the new Area Instruction Officer structure, it will also need to identify and collect the information necessary to support the effort and then make it available to schools. As of now, except for ITBS data, there is no source of data to inform and support local or system-wide efforts to improve teaching and learning. The data are located in a variety of places – the student information system, school databases, teacher grade books, and teacher personnel records. All this data has to be identified, put together, maintained, and made easily accessible to the people who need it for their work to improve teaching and learning.

Developing and managing a data warehouse will be an expensive, long-term project, but it will yield substantial benefits over time. Members of this Advisory Committee and other experts consulted during the study urged that this be a priority for the department. An integrated database, especially one linking students and their teachers, will greatly facilitate the kind of research needed to support instructional improvement in CPS.

Specific responsibilities:

- Identify the contents of and then begin to build a database that supports teaching and learning, including student, teacher, and school-specific information.
- Redesign the CPS web site to make data more accessible to CPS principals and teachers as well as partner agencies and outside researchers.



Organizational Structure, Staffing and Budget

Where Should the DRE Be Located Within the Central Administration?

Since the appointment of Dr. Easton in October 2001, the Department has reported directly to CEO Duncan. The department also works closely with the Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins and her staff and with the Chief Accountability Officer Phil Hansen and his staff. Before that, DRE was part of the Accountability Office and reported to Mr. Hansen.

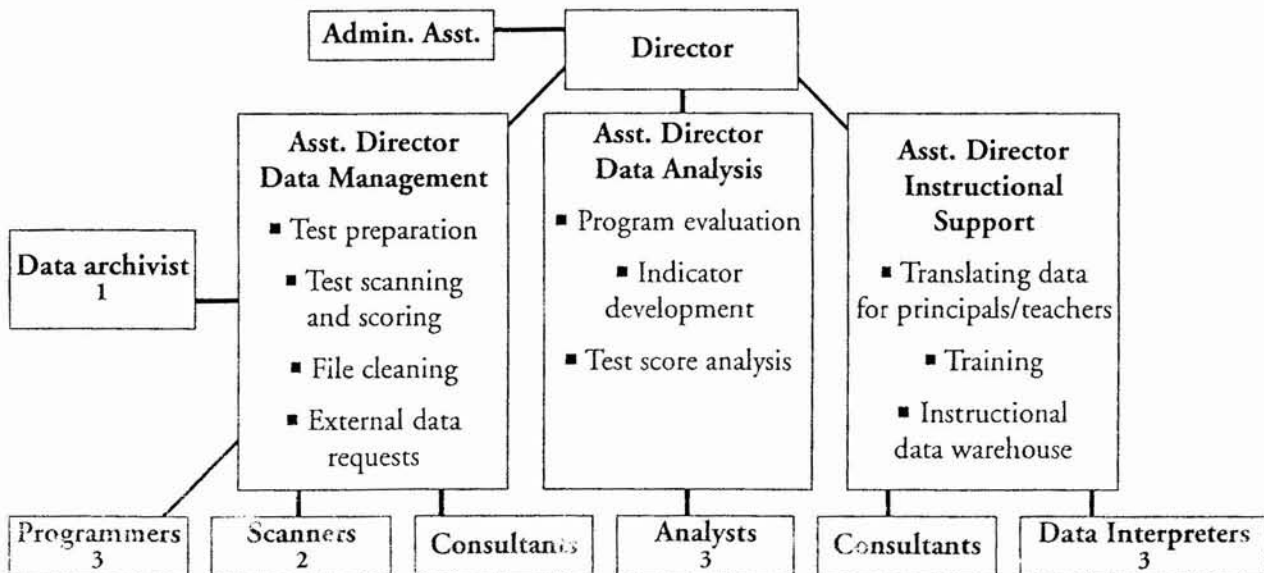
The department's location within the organization was a subject of discussion in several of the interviews and with the Advisory Committee. There was agreement that having DRE report directly to the CEO is ideal because it increases the likelihood that information and knowledge will inform district policy. Separating DRE from the departments that operate the programs that are the subject of DRE's research and evaluation work supports DRE's independence and its ability to be honest.

The 1995 Chicago School Reform Act established the Academic Accountability Council (AAC) to "establish and implement an evaluation system of the academic achievement of schools." The AAC reports directly to the Board of Trustees, not to the CEO. The Board recently appointed new members and a new Executive Director to the AAC. Although it may be possible for DRE to work with the AAC in the future, until the AAC identifies priorities DRE will work independently. Care should be taken to avoid overlap and redundancy in the research, both for reasons of efficiency and to avoid producing similar projects with conflicting or inconsistent results.

How Should the Department Be Organized?

The department should be organized around the three functions described above: data management, data analysis, and instructional support, although staff in all three functional areas should be conversant with the work of the other two areas. Each unit should be led by an Assistant Director with expertise in the area and responsibility for specific research and evaluation functions:

Proposed Organizational Chart: Department of Research and Evaluation





How Will the Department Be Staffed?

As of June 1, 2002, DRE had seven full-time staff and several part-time consultants. Dr. Easton works eight-tenths time for CPS as a consultant. Although DRE will attempt to cross-train and share staff across functional areas, it needs staff with particular expertise in each of the three areas of focus. Because most current full-time staff will be in the Data Management unit, the Data Analysis and Instructional Support units need to be staffed with people new to the department. An Assistant Director, reporting to the Director, will lead each unit.

Because of the technical nature of the work, DRE needs highly skilled staff with special qualifications. The Data Management staff members need highly developed computer programming skills and the ability to work on multiple computing platforms. They must also be able to keep pace with – or ahead of – technological change, especially as DRE moves more toward web-based reporting. In addition to programming skills, staff members in the Data Analysis unit must have highly developed statistical skills and training in designing research and evaluation studies. Staff members in the new Instructional Support unit proposed for DRE need a different skill set. Instead of actually writing computer programs and conducting statistical analyses, these people need strong communications and listening skills. They must be able to understand research findings, statistical analyses, and reports. They must communicate fluently with on-the-ground educators struggling with “real life” questions and problems.

For FY 2003, which began on July 1, 2002, the department has approval for three new positions, a research specialist who will lead the Data Analysis unit, a statistician/programmer who will be a mem-

ber of the Data Analysis unit, and an administrative assistant. Additional growth will be phased in with a priority on staffing the instructional support unit as soon as possible. Staff will be distributed as follows:

- **Instructional Support.** The Instructional Support unit will have to be built with new staff members because there is no one within DRE with the appropriate skills. The FY 2003 budget does not include any positions for this unit. Assuming that the new AIO plan includes providing one data analyst for every four Areas, the Instructional Support unit within DRE can be staffed initially with an Assistant Director and three data analysts with an expertise in data analysis, instruction, and training. Rather than working directly with schools, the staff in this unit will spend most of their time providing the AIO staff with data and training on the use of data. Because these positions will not necessarily require programming or statistical skills, educators with non-technical backgrounds could fill them.
- **Data Analysis.** During the past nine months, Dr. Easton has begun to develop the data analysis function within DRE. This unit will be led by a new employee who began work on July 15. He is an experienced and well-trained researcher who recently worked in the accountability office at a state education agency. Other staff will include a recently hired consultant who will take a permanent full-time position early in FY 2003. She is a highly trained statistician with strong programming skills. A third member of the unit who is an experienced programmer was hired in November 2001. After an existing but vacant statistician/programmer position is filled, the unit will be fully staffed.



- **Data Management.** Because most of DRE's work has been data management, the Data Management unit will be almost fully staffed with existing staff – an Assistant Director, two statistician/programmers, a head scanner, and an assistant scanner and consultants. The only addition will be a data archivist who will lead development of the data warehouse.

What's the Budget for the Department?

The FY 2003 DRE budget is approximately \$1.1 million (including \$250,000 in part-time computer programming staff). Fully staffing the department as described above will increase the budget by approximately \$650,000. The increase includes six new positions: a full-time Director of Research and Evaluation, one research specialist to lead Instructional Support, three data interpreters for the Instructional Support unit and a data archivist for the Data Management unit. In anticipation of increased demand for data resulting from the AIOs work in the schools, the funds allocated for part-time programming staff should also be increased by \$100,000 for a total department budget of \$1,750,000.

The responsibilities of the DRE described above are essential to the system's success, and as such, need to be supported with CPS funds. Although the department may pursue foundation or government grants to support special projects or new initiatives, the basic operations described above should be part of the CPS budget. To the extent allowed under particular grants, a portion of grant funds could be allocated to support DRE research and/or evaluation and related administrative expenses. Once a research agenda is in place, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement may be a source for research funding.

How Should CPS Utilize Outside Researchers?

DRE cannot possibly do all the research and evaluation needed to support improvement in more than 600 CPS schools. Although the department needs to provide the schools and central office with the basic information described above, CPS should continue to encourage university and policy center researchers to conduct longer-term, future-oriented research projects. For example, outside researchers are better able to conduct longitudinal studies or simulation studies of the impact of new indicators. They have demonstrated a capacity to produce work that can be essential to improvement in urban schools, for example, the Consortium's work on school productivity and the intellectual quality of work in classrooms.

The committee recommends that CPS, through DRE, establish and maintain good working relations with the Consortium on Chicago School Research and other school and educational research units. The Consortium should be viewed as a resource for the department, as a source for specialized technical assistance, and on occasion as an "emergency back-up." The Consortium and DRE should explore the feasibility of collaborative efforts, for example on the development of statistical indicators, or data archiving and documentation strategies. (There are precedents for this kind of collaboration. In Spring 2001 staff from the consortium and DRE together developed criteria for defining dropouts.)

Longer term, there may be opportunities for staff exchange programs or joint appointments between the two organizations. Such a relationship would not preclude partnerships and collaborations between DRE and other research organizations that could provide assistance to the department.



What Are the Critical Challenges to Implementing this Plan?

As DRE begins its work, the administration should pay particular attention to the following:

- ***Recruiting and retaining staff.*** DRE staff will have to be very skilled in research and evaluation as well as communication. Recruiting and retaining top staffers for DRE should be recognized as a system priority directly linked to the CEO's commitment to improved instruction.
- ***Utilizing the work of outside researchers.*** Outside researchers, like those who work with the Consortium, can help CPS generate new ideas and new ways of looking at data. DRE has to maintain strong relationships and keep open the lines of communication even when the outside researchers are delivering news that may be unwelcome or poorly timed.
- ***Remaining focused on serving the schools.*** Bureaucracy naturally seeks to compartmentalize and divide, so teachers teach and researchers research. The work of DRE is about integrating

and informing instruction in the schools with data. DRE and district leadership will have to continually insist that the department's work stay relevant to what's happening in the classroom. The department should not be allowed to become a place that just prepares required reports and evaluations that are filed away and never looked at again.

- ***Convincing principals and teachers that data can make a difference.*** If principals and teachers don't use the data that DRE produces, it will be wasted. Success will require that the Area Instructional Officers and their staffs be prepared to show school staff how data can improve instruction. Systems for disseminating data to the AIOs need to be devised and the people who are hired to work in the Area offices need to be trained so they understand and are able to explain the significance of the data that DRE provides. Depending on the backgrounds of the AIO staff members, this may require more DRE staff members than described above. ☺



Appendix A Interviews and Focus Groups

Teacher focus group

Annette Daum, Portage Park
Betty Geisen, Mayer
Victor Harbison, CVS
Tiffany Humphrey, Chavez
Czeslawa Kolak, Foreman H.S.
Carol Leverenz, Schurz H.S.
Charlene Kutz, Quest Center
Archie Moore, Collins H.S.
Brian Pfaff, Ogden
Jay Rehak, Quest Center

Interviews

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Anthony Pitruzello, High Schools
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Barbara Buell, Chicago Panel
Gina Burkhardt, NCREL
Vicki Chou, UIC
Lynne Curry, ISBE
Jill Darrow Seltzer, Fry Foundation
Fred Hess, Northwestern
Don Moore, Designs for Change
Peter Martinez, UIC
Carolyn Nordstrom, Chicago United
Jennifer Presley, IERC
Randi Starr, McDougal Foundation
Andy Wade, Chicago School Leadership
Cooperative
Julie Woestehoff, PURE



Appendix B

Summary of Research and Evaluation in Other Major Urban School Districts

As part of this project, Beth Swanson, a graduate student at the Harris Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, conducted research on the structure, staffing, and budgets of six large urban school districts: Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia, and San Diego. The following information on Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, and San Diego was presented to the project Advisory Committee in April. Although the Advisory Committee members discussed the structure and staffing of the other districts, the recommendations for CPS were not directly modeled on any of the other districts.

Los Angeles

Program Evaluation and Research Branch (PERB)

- Department work comes primarily from district program and management interests.
- Formative and summative evaluations of district, state, and federally funded initiatives.
- Assists schools with reporting requirements and data interpretation.
- Any group providing educational programs in LAUSD is required to work with PERB.
- Consults on program implementation and development of appropriate evaluation tools and procedures (for both external partners and other district departments).
- Thirty projects annually conducted within the department. Typical study: large-scale, five-year study. Samples of 30-50 schools or 150-200 classrooms/teachers.
- No analysis of standardized data.

Staff and Structure

- Thirty-two staff members/three units: Access and Equity, School Reform, and Literacy and Language Acquisition.
- Graduate students, retired teachers, and “off-track” teachers hired as hourly workers and trained to observe classrooms and collect data. Approximately 100 workers are in the field at any time (30-40 per unit).
- Budget of \$5.2 million annually, primarily district funds.

Minneapolis

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (REA)

- Research priorities are established by the District Improvement Agenda, Board of Education, and the Superintendent.
- Reports primarily written for and disseminated to the schools, but also creates reports for the Board of Education.
- Provide schools with support and technical assistance.
- Publish teacher information report: breaks down the evaluation results and offers explanations for the statistics within REA reports.
- Work with administrators and teachers regarding the interpretation of data.
- Assist school personnel in linking evaluation results with strategies for improvement.
- Majority of projects focus on determining the “value added” of different programs, instructional methods, and other school initiatives.



Identify schools and teachers that “beat the odds” and report gains in achievement for typically underachieving populations.

Staff and Structure

- Eleven staff members: director, eight full-time employees, and two part-time employees.

Other: Evaluation Institute [within the Teacher and Instructional Services (TIS) department]

- Conducts and oversees evaluations of small, district-wide initiatives and grants.
- Ensures that all district grants have an adequate evaluation component.

New York

Office of System-Wide Evaluation and Accountability

- Approximately 10 annual projects, 5-7 one-year projects and at least 15 requests per year from the Chancellor.
- Projects consist primarily of city, state, and federally mandated evaluations (some research designed by staff).
- Responsible for designing and disseminating management tools to assist teachers and school administrators in the interpretation of statistical information regarding student performance.
- Office is also “hired” by other district offices to assist with creating and conducting program evaluations.

Staff and Structure

Eight full-time staff members, divided into two units:

- Program Evaluation and Research: manager and three full-time analysts.
- Data Analysis, a manager and three full-time analysts.

- Office contracts regularly with outside researchers, but considers all projects as being conducted internally. Fifteen to twenty consultants typically working with each unit and they are strictly monitored by department staff. All reports produced by consultants are published as the department’s work.

San Diego

Standards, Assessment, and Accountability Department

Research and Reporting Office

- Processing, analyzing and reporting on achievement, assessment, and demographic data.
- Federal and state-mandated reporting, School Accountability Report Cards, and district and state assessments.

Program Studies Office

- Program evaluation.
- Monitoring the evaluation component of all program grants within the district.
- Staffing: 50 percent in-house and 50 percent contract.
- Coordinated with the curriculum offices; evaluations or “mini-studies” are developed to accompany various instructional initiatives.

Staff and Structure

The Standards, Assessment, and Accountability Department consists of five offices:

- Research and Reporting: ten staff members.
- Program Studies: seven staff members.
- Accountability.
- Program Monitoring.
- Standards and Assessment.