

**SEPARATE BUT EQUAL THE FINANCING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS WORKS
LIKE THIS: DUSABLE SPENDS \$6,000 PER STUDENT, NEW TRIER SPENDS \$12,000**
[CHICAGOLAND FINAL Edition]

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Author: Richard Krieg & Charles Wheelan. Richard Krieg is executive director of Roosevelt University's Institute for Metropolitan Affairs. Charles Wheelan is a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago.

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In the fall of 1992, the principal and administrators at New Trier High School in north suburban Winnetka recognized that as a result of state early retirement incentives, they would have to replace more than 60 faculty members by the following fall. Residents of the upper-crust suburb began to worry publicly that the school would suffer a "brain drain" despite the deep pockets and attractive working conditions at one of America's pre-eminent public high schools.

Their fears were misplaced. By the time New Trier had finished advertising the positions in newspapers and professional journals, more than 10,000 applications had come pouring in from across the country. "File cabinets, boxes of materials," recalls New Trier Principal Dianna Lindsay. By spring, most of the hiring had been done, all without moving beyond the pool of candidates that New Trier administrators considered to be "exceptionally qualified."

Roughly 25 miles south, Charles Mingo, principal of DuSable High School, was wrestling with the same early retirement challenge, though he faced a tougher sell. The average teacher salary at DuSable is \$21,000 dollars lower than at New Trier, despite the difficulties of teaching in one of the nation's most impoverished neighborhoods.

Prospective applicants would certainly be deterred by rumors of gang activity, including girls fighting with hammers and boys recruiting freshmen into gangs by pointing guns at their heads in DuSable lavatories. Mingo used every trick he knew to persuade high-quality teachers to consider the 17 vacancies he had to fill. "At one point," he recalls, "I wore a sign on my sports jacket when I visited central school headquarters. The sign said we needed dedicated teachers to come and teach at the high school." In the end, about 90 teachers applied.

New Trier High School in Winnetka and DuSable High School on Chicago's South Side may not be the polar extremes in American education, but they are certainly close. Roughly one of every two DuSable students will drop out; only a handful will go on to higher education of any kind.

In sharp contrast, New Trier graduates 100 percent of its students in most years and sends 98 percent of them on to four-year colleges. New Trier graduates are aimed at leading the next generation, DuSable graduates will scramble to find jobs at all.

The schools represent a two-tiered public education system that began with the advent of suburbanization. More important, they reflect a two-tiered system of opportunity. Wealthy suburban districts provide, in the words of New Trier principal Dianna Lindsay, "every possible way to give our kids a competitive edge in adulthood." Urban districts, on the other hand, limp from crisis to crisis, never pretending that their students will have any special advantages.

DuSable is the home to some remarkable and gifted teachers and students. With charisma, street smarts and a committed local school council, Charles Mingo has raised the horizon at DuSable and offers hope where little existed before. "We're not the suburbs, but we've got Mr. Mingo," says chemistry teacher Eugene Stampley. "What we've got came from him."

Realistically, though, the vast majority of students leave the school--whether they graduate or drop out--unprepared to compete on a level playing field with the rest of society. The mean ACT composite score at New Trier in the 1992-93 year was 25.2, placing the school in the highest one percent of high schools across the nation. The mean composite score at DuSable was 14.1, firmly at the opposite end of the national distribution.

The gap between the two schools is about poverty. Eighty percent of DuSable students live in the Robert Taylor Homes, a housing project that HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros has described as the worst urban misery in America.

It's also about segregation. Forty years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, DuSable High School is 100 percent black. New Trier is 86 percent white and 11 percent Asian.

It's about school finance. In the 1992-93 school year, New Trier spent roughly twice as much per student as DuSable: \$12,000 versus \$6,000.

And it's about the failure of a sprawling urban school system to use the resources it does have as efficiently as possible. DuSable is one of 554 schools run by the Chicago Board of Education. New Trier is the only school in its district: one principal, one superintendent, one board of education.

However complex the source of the chasm, it exists. And it shapes the lives of the students who leave DuSable, New Trier and thousands of schools like them across the nation. Left unchecked, the education gap will continue to produce social problems, compound the cost of dealing with these issues and make a mockery of public education as a source of equal opportunity a fact recognized by Walter Annenberg in his recent \$500 million gift to America's public schools.

"These kids are normal teenagers. They just happen to have been born in the wrong neighborhood," says DuSable counselor Phyllis Davis. "They weren't born with silver spoons in their mouths. They weren't born with supportive parents in a lot of instances. They're human beings and they need a chance."

DuSable High School sits literally in the shadow of the Robert Taylor Homes, the 16-story housing projects that stretch along State Street from 39th Street to 54th Street. In the era of legal segregation (and before public housing), the neighborhood was the anchor for a thriving African-American community. Over several decades, DuSable graduated the late Mayor Harold Washington, NBA star Maurice Cheeks, jazz musician Nat "King" Cole and a host of other luminaries.

Time has not been kind to the neighborhood, however, and in 1994, the community from which DuSable draws its students is one of the most isolated and impoverished in America. The average per capita income in the DuSable enrollment area is less than \$5,000, and more than 80 percent of the student body is low income. The despair of the neighborhood is reflected in the DuSable physical plant. A custodian spends eight hours every Monday cleaning up the trash that has accumulated over the weekend on the athletic field. (DuSable has only one high-tech machine that would dazzle its suburban counterparts: a tractor that sucks up broken glass and turns it into sand.)

On Wabash, directly opposite the main entrance to the high school, one of every four houses on the block is boarded up and abandoned.

For many DuSable students, this is their world. "We have a lot of kids who have never been out of the community," says McKinley Dillingham, a DuSable counselor. "Never. Never been down in the Loop. Their shopping is done between the perimeters of their world. It's not even safe, but it's the comfort zone." In such an environment, DuSable High School is a haven. The high ceilings, wide hallways and newly painted lockers create a warm environment that Charles Mingus describes as "a rock in the weary land." School is often safer or more fun than home, and in many cases, it is the place where students receive both of their major meals.

"We have to be a more caring place. We have a number of kids who would prefer to stay here at DuSable until 9 at night if we let them," explains Mingo.

The school represents a certain stability, even for students who have run afoul of society. "We get phone calls from the kids who have been incarcerated," says counselor Phyllis Davis. "(They ask,) 'When I get out of here, can I come back to school?' We have kids who have been discharged from jail, say at 6:30 that morning, who come straight to school."

However inviting the inside of DuSable may be, students bring with them the codes of the street. "Just about all the students belong to a gang--either the BDs (Black Disciples) or GDs (Gangster Disciples)," says a Chicago police officer. "If you're not in a gang, you're left open-no one to protect you."

Security officers agree that gangs have put out the word to keep their business out of the schools. "Gang bangers come in, walk around, get bored and leave," says student Bashound Taylor.

Nevertheless, problems spill over. "If there's something going on in the projects, they bring it to school," says one officer. "So if someone got stabbed or got in a fight over the weekend, if they didn't catch them and beat them up, then they'll catch them at school. It's an opportunity to catch them."

According to a DuSable sophomore, gang recruiting sometimes takes place inside the school. Gang members walk the halls, find freshman, and take them into the bathroom, he says. "They say, 'You gonna be GD, ain't you?' Sometimes if they got a gun, they pull it out and say, 'You gonna be GD, ain't you?' " The problem became particularly acute in the spring of 1993, when a longstanding gang truce broke down. "We had reports of kids running through the halls with guns in hand," says a police officer. "(Principal Mingo) was saying there were no guns in the school. Someone had to politely inform him that this was not true. His own staff was telling us there were guns in the school."

Ironically, DuSable is one of the few schools in Chicago without metal detectors. Mingo maintains that the detectors would be ineffective due to the number of doors to the school, which he is not allowed to lock and cannot afford to monitor. Insiders say that Mingo does not want the negative publicity of weapons being found in his school.

"I'd have somebody on all the doors, all the time. I would have metal detectors. I would search them every day," says a Chicago police officer.

Mingo acknowledges the gang presence. "What is remarkable is that they keep it (violence) out of the school. They're in gangs, but we manage to keep it out of here," he says.

New Trier High School, nestled in a quiet residential area, serves Kenilworth, Glencoe, Winnetka, Wilmette, Northbrook and Northfield, some of the nation's richest communities, places where being average is a stigma, not the norm. "We don't have a valedictorian," says principal Dianna Lindsay. "There's too much competition here to begin with."

According to the 1990 Census, the average per capita income in Winnetka is more than \$62,000, and the average house in neighboring Kenilworth is worth nearly half a million dollars (more than 90 percent of the school's budget comes from local property taxes). In New Trier's enrollment area, roughly 80 percent of residents are college graduates.

"I think we are very, very fortunate to have the community we have, and I would put that No. 1," says Lindsay. "By community I mean the adults, the parents, the students. The adults being both the ones who are teachers and the ones who just plain pay their good taxes. The parents who are always here when we need them. The students who come to school ready to learn."

The New Trier campus is beautifully landscaped; in several places the school has dedicated and erected original sculptures (a concept foreign to DuSable, where engineers have stopped watering the athletic field

because the sprinkler heads were repeatedly stolen.) The building and campus could easily pass for a small Ivy League college.

New Trier exudes a sense of calm concentration. The majority of the school is "open," meaning that students can lounge or study in the halls. Throughout the corridors, students sit on the floor in front of their lockers, working alone or quietly in groups. Students walk the halls carrying Starbucks coffee cups.

The building mirrors the expectations of the community around it. "I like clean glass. I like shiny floors. I like the cosmetic things that parents will see," says Lindsay. "I make no apologies for it. A school should look like a model home."

New Trier spends twice as much money on every student as DuSable does. Much of that differential is spent on people--the asset that New Trier considers most important. Experienced teachers at New Trier earn as much as \$25,000 more than their counterparts at DuSable.

The differential is also reflected in the number of advanced placement courses offered, the sparkling science laboratories, the 85 clubs from which students can sample, the artwork on virtually every exposed wall, the electronics classroom with more computers than the entire DuSable library.

A supreme irony, though, may be auto mechanics. In a community where parents may have nightmares about raising a child who repairs cars for a living, New Trier has a fully functional auto shop, including hydraulic lifts and modern electronic equipment. (The DuSable auto shop was closed years ago and is now used for storage--despite pleas by a local Toyota dealership for mechanics.)

But Lindsay's special pride is the performing arts. "I don't believe you can ever have an excellent high school--ever--without an excellent arts program. And I think every place you go and see excellence in academics, you will always see excellence in the arts--without exception," she explains.

Accordingly, the New Trier faculty includes six dance instructors, eight music teachers, seven speech and drama teachers, a costumer and make-up artist.

When the school produced "West Side Story" last year, New Trier did it first class. All of the costumes came from New York, some from the original Broadway production; students used real switchblades in the opening scenes. The costly production, involving 150 students, ran four nights in New Trier's cavernous Gaffney Auditorium.

Senior Matt Fletcher, the play's lead actor, said: "There are just so many performing arts options at New Trier, and you want to reap all of the benefits. So a lot of kids go to science class before school in order to take more performing arts classes. Not only that, you go outside of school and you take your private voice lessons, your private dance lessons, your private music lessons."

"We have no plays," says DuSable music teacher Tim Galloway. DuSable's drama club was terminated four or five years ago. Nor does DuSable have an orchestra or a dance program. The school has a first-rate student newspaper and a student-produced yearbook. But even there, the realities of the neighborhood intercede. Only 89 students in the graduating class were pictured in the 1993 yearbook, in part, says Assistant Principal Tom Siedis, because the Chicago police often use the yearbook to identify criminal suspects. "The police come to see me all the time. In fact, the commander has been over three times already this year," says Siedis. The disparity between the two schools in the fine arts is mirrored on the athletic field. Contrary to stereotypes, New Trier, not DuSable, is the athletic powerhouse of the two.

New Trier offers 27 varsity sports, including coed fencing. DuSable offers seven, and fencing is not one of them. Though DuSable is the school that produced NBA star Maurice Cheeks, NFL All-Pro Ernie McMillan and basketball legend Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton (widely recognized as the first player to dunk in the NBA), the luster is long gone from the DuSable athletic program. New Trier is the school that has won more state championships than any other high school in the state (60 team titles in its history; 22 since 1980 alone). The DuSable football team had only 15 players at the start of the season; New Trier had 45. The appeal of the DuSable football program is not immediately apparent. There is no home field. Instead DuSable plays at a

regional stadium 24 blocks away--a cost-saving measure of the Board of Education. The practice field next to the high school is evacuated several times a season because gunfire erupts from the surrounding high-rises. And the practice field is pitted with holes. "That field needs help. I twisted my ankle twice this year," complains captain Tion Williams.

Ben Koldyke has had a foot in both worlds; he was a starting quarterback at New Trier and later an assistant football coach at DuSable. "The kids that are out there (at DuSable) are so directed. Why they come out there, I don't know, because if I were a student, I'm not sure I would come out. You're guaranteed of having a losing season. You're guaranteed of having no fans. It's just amazing that they even show up. And so they don't expect anything out of the program. Whereas if you're playing in a good program, you expect the world from it," says Koldyke.

Captain Tion Williams laments the lack of interest in sports among his classmates. "They're too busy gang-banging and running the street." For Williams, football is part of a larger plan to graduate and play in college. Next fall, he hopes to enroll at Tennessee State, Florida A&M, or Iowa. "Tion's prospects for college are very good," says his counselor Melvin Goodman.

"I set a goal for myself. Most of it is for my mother," explains Williams. "You can't go to high school and drop out. I want her to see me graduate." Tion's father will not see him graduate. When Tion was 3 years old, his father returned from fighting in Vietnam only to be shot dead on a West Side street corner.

The resource gap between DuSable and New Trier mirrors a growing gap between rich and poor across the country. Since the 1970s, the U.S. income distribution has been shifting, the poor getting poorer and the rich richer.

"The affluent increasingly sought to live apart from the poor, and income segregation rose," explains University of Pennsylvania sociologist Douglas Massey. "As low income people got poorer, so did the neighborhoods where they congregated; and as the rich got richer, the places where they clustered also grew more affluent. As a result, poverty and affluence both became concentrated geographically," he says. According to Massey, the geographic concentration of poverty among blacks in America's 100 largest cities has reached record levels. By 1990, 42 percent of poor blacks lived in what the census bureau calls "extreme poverty census tracts," up from 28 percent two decades earlier. Similarly, the percentage of blacks living in very high poverty areas exploded from 13 percent in 1970 to 47 percent in 1990.

"The experience of living in an area with multiple social and economic problems moved from being a rare situation affecting a small minority of the black poor, to being the typical experience for a near majority of poor blacks," says Massey.

In Illinois, where the state contribution to education funding is relatively low, school financing exacerbates the economic segregation. The dependence on property taxes favors children in affluent communities, where local funding is available to pay for extra-curricular programs, higher teacher salaries, better facilities, etc. Rather than compensating for the effects of poverty, Illinois' school finance favors privileged students more than most states'.

"It's in the local share of the education dollar that the big differences occur," says University of Chicago education professor Ken Wong. "Here in Illinois, about 60 percent of education dollars come from local property taxes. Affluent suburbs generate more dollars from the property base than poorer districts." "There's been a backsliding in Illinois," Wong says. "The state now pays about 34 percent of school costs, far below the national average of 48 percent. In 1978, Illinois' contribution was 48 percent." If only the problem were as simple as money. Neither common sense nor academic evidence suggests that dollars alone will narrow the gap between New Trier and DuSable. The sources of the chasm are more complex and deeply rooted.

The freshman students who arrived at DuSable in early September are different from their Winnetka counterparts in key respects. "If their parents were successful, would they still be living in the projects?" one DuSable administrator says privately. "So we already know the hand we've been dealt."

Many extraordinary students do emerge in this environment, but they are often siphoned off by the Catholic schools or magnet schools like Whitney Young. Of those who do enroll at DuSable--not necessarily on the first day of school--many have already dropped out of school in all but body. Of roughly 400 entering freshmen this year, more than 100 were absent 30 or more days in the 8th grade. A few have been absent 80 days (the school year is 180 days long).

In some cases, DuSable is forced to accept students who have not completed 7th or 8th grade. Illinois law requires that any student of high school age be admitted to high school, regardless of educational attainment. "Any student born after September 1979, who does not die, can come to high school, whether he's gone to school ever or not," explains Mingo. "That is a disgrace. There should be standards at every grade level." DuSable teachers and administrators are left not only with the task of educating students, but of convincing them that education matters. "Our students are in a mental state where there has to be immediate gratification of some kind," says counselor McKinley Dillingham. "Going to school and education are future-oriented. So it's hard for them to really get a grasp of what this is going to mean to you when you're 23, 24, 25 years of age," he explains.

DuSable teachers also lament the lack of parental involvement. According to counselor Phyllis Davis, low-income parents are often intimidated by teachers and administrators. "The parents usually look at teachers as being 'those Greek gods and goddesses,'" she says.

Many parents do not have high school diplomas themselves; some feel threatened by their children's accomplishments. The school is constantly pleading with parents not to keep students home to care for younger siblings or to do domestic chores.

Even when students have done extraordinarily well at DuSable, the neighborhood sometimes proves to be a ball and chain. About half of DuSable's graduates every year are accepted by some institution of higher education. "We like to assume they go, but come September, we see many of them around here," says counselor Melvin Goodman.

"That's one of our big problems," says Assistant Principal Odis Richardson. "When we've done everything we can do to get them in school and ready for college, many of them--that last step they take over the summer, to get yourself together and to meet those deadlines and to get the things you need for school--there is nobody to help them with that. And then they fall through the gap."

Some members of the DuSable staff have gone to great lengths to get students over that threshold--delivering students to college, dropping them off at the train station, or purchasing one-way bus tickets out of their own pockets. Sometimes it works--often it doesn't.

Counselor Goodman recalls the case of four basketball players accepted by a junior college in Jackson Hole, Wyo. All four were going to be starters, and all four had full scholarships for two years. "We put them on a plane on Friday," says Goodman. "Tuesday morning they were back. Why? They said, 'There's nothing to do there. It's too quiet.'"

Educational preparation and expectations are dramatically different on the North Shore. "When (students) come to us from the elementary districts, they are ready to learn and they are excited and motivated. There is support from the parents, and I think that continues on through their school history," says New Trier geography teacher Jesse Markow.

New Trier parents are seldom reticent in speaking to teachers. More than 400 parents are actively involved in committee work and as volunteers. According to Doug Chase, a social studies teacher and president of the New Trier Teachers' Association: "The parents are not afraid to make phone calls--to the teacher, his supervisor or anyone else. That's part of the culture here. The parents want to get face-to-face with the teaching staff. Attendance on parent-teacher nights is staggering. It is just amazing," says Chase. In fact, New Trier's affluent, educationally credentialed parents can be intimidating--especially as students approach their senior year and college looms. "When you pass a paper back, kids get out their calculators to see how it will affect their grade point average," says English teacher Sherry Medwin.

She relates the story of a student who desperately wanted an "A" but continued to do "B" work. "He re-wrote papers and did everything possible, but it still wasn't quite 'A' work," she recalls. "He ended up with a 'B.' "His mother called me over the summer, got me at home," says Medwin. "I don't know how she found me because my phone number isn't listed. She insisted on meeting me at the school. She was very upset. She said that because of the 'B' grade he wouldn't get into a particular college. She said that with this GPA he could get into the following schools, and now with this lower GPA, he's going to have to settle for these other schools. I practically started crying because I thought that it was pathetic."

As a result of these kinds of pressures, adolescence on the North Shore carries its own challenges. "When you aim for excellence," says social studies teacher Doug Chase, "you tend to think of the advanced placement courses, the state championships, the music awards and the colleges they're headed toward, and you forget that not everybody is going to achieve all of those things. What do the others feel like?"

"The typical New Trier student is white and upper middle class," says Chase, a 21-year New Trier veteran. "The family is involved in business or a profession. Parents believe in the work ethic, and the kids are hypermotivated. They come from homes where that's expected. But that can cause some problems. It's a squirrel wheel, and everybody here is on it. It's the faculty and the kids--everyone wants to do a little bit more--and the more you do the more there is."

"If there's one word to describe New Trier, it's competition," says senior class president Andrew Turner. "It's there at all levels: academic competition, physical competition with sports and competition in the drama department. There's even competition at lower levels, like recreational activities after school. Everything focuses on success. At times, it gets rough--it's a lot to handle. At this school, you can never take a break." Supersuccessful parents expect nothing less than Ivy-League acceptances; students are often convinced that they can never equal their parents' accomplishments. Says Chase: "Some kids are just not going to manage, and it's going to hurt them. And we do have our share of kids who either tune out or leave. Since the parents tend to have resources, this often means going to a smaller, private prep school."

In her book, "Children of Fast Track Parents," Andree Brooks points to a string of disorders--ranging from depression to anorexia--that may be precipitated by parents whose careers and outside interests alienate them from their children. Students do not turn to gangs, but they may turn to other common substitutes for a genuine sense of well-being: drugs, alcohol and sex.

According to New Trier social work director Thomas Golebiewski, "The struggles of upperclassmen typically involve family conflict, runaway behavior, intense turmoil in the household, whereas with freshmen, we see a variety of adjustment issues. The perception of being desperate and depressed crosses all of the grade levels."

New Trier was involved in more than 70 crisis intervention episodes last year, more than one a week, says Golebiewski. Although there were no student suicides during that period, the school experienced two parent suicides.

Both New Trier and DuSable deal with adolescent problems, but the resources available for meeting those needs are dramatically different. DuSable has two social workers. If a student's problems become acute, he or she must wait to see a Board of Education psychologist who schedules appointments at the school only two days a week and is responsible for two other schools.

New Trier students, on the other hand, routinely draw upon an armada of services available through the school's psychology and social work departments. The psychologist is on site full time; the social work department has a staff of 10, seven of whom are trained social workers. A range of individual and group counseling services are offered, including specialized sessions for the children of divorced parents and group counseling to handle the transition into the 9th grade.

Is it fair to place DuSable side by side with New Trier? Certainly not if one draws superficial conclusions about the quality of the two schools. How would students from Winnetka score on the ACT if they attended

DuSable? Probably quite well--and there lies the difficulty of determining how much education takes place in each of the two schools.

"DuSable may be teaching students a tremendous amount, but they start at a much lower level than students in Winnetka," explains University of Chicago education professor Rob Meyer, who has devoted much of his research to developing an indicator system that would measure "value-added" in schools rather than just outcomes. "In the end, all the statistics are going to show is that New Trier students are doing better, and that really doesn't tell us much about how much learning is going on in either school," says Meyer. Those qualifications notwithstanding, the fact remains that New Trier and DuSable produce radically different outcomes. How can the education gap be narrowed?

Any solution must recognize that differences between schools are driven by resources, expectations, institutional culture and parental involvement. "In many suburban communities, students would do well on standardized tests even if they went to school and sat in a closet every day for four years," says University of Rochester economist Eric Hanushek, an expert on school inputs and student outcomes.

Money can't buy all of the things that make New Trier one of the nation's preeminent schools. But it would help. Issue for issue and service for service, DuSable students face double jeopardy: They begin behind the starting line but are denied the tools needed to catch up. When they walk through the school's front door, they find fewer counselors, shoddy classroom equipment, a skeletal extracurricular program and teachers who are poorly paid in comparison with their Winnetka peers.

Inner city schools like Du-Sable could use a higher infusion of state education funds. Illinois ranks 43rd among all states in education spending as a fraction of personal income, producing one of the widest funding gaps between rich and poor districts.

More than a dozen states have taken radical steps to narrow the finance gap between school districts. Almost every case resulted from state court action. The U.S. Constitution is silent on the issue of school finance, but many state constitutions have been interpreted to require either a minimum level of spending in poor districts or the equalization of spending across all districts. To date, finance cases in Illinois have not succeeded.

One bright light for DuSable is philanthropist Walter Annenberg's \$49.2 million gift to Chicago's public schools, which must be matched 2 to 1 locally.

Mingo has been an active participant in the Brown University think tank that will oversee these funds. He has already created the school-within-a-school structure favored by Annenberg and is poised to benefit from the infusion of funds.

While new financing is necessary, it isn't sufficient. Chicago's public school system needs to be fixed, perhaps radically. For many schools, especially at the elementary level, school reform is on the right track. Across the city, aggressive local school councils have achieved some remarkable improvements.

But despite these advances, the system still bears more than a passing resemblance to the former Soviet Union. Work rules are antiquated. Accountability for student performance is diffuse. The financial rewards for being an outstanding teacher or administrator are negligible. And many of the most important managerial decisions for 514 schools are made in one central office, the Board of Education headquarters at 1819 W. Pershing Rd.

"I think sometimes our coordinators and program directors (at Pershing Road) get so far removed from the children that they forget what it's about," says DuSable Assistant Principal Odis Richardson. "They remember the business of what they're doing, why they're moving these papers, but they forget the whole idea that it's all for the children."

School improvement has thus far eluded most Chicago high schools. In 1993-94, the percentage of high school students meeting national reading and math norms actually dropped. Here, more extreme solutions are required. Provisions of the Chicago School Reform Act to put individual schools on "remediation" should be fully invoked. If a school fails to meet performance criteria, teachers and the principal can be replaced. Barring further progress, the school can be shut down.

The board ought to seize the opportunity to privatize or radically reform the work rules for engineers, custodians and other building personnel. Should Charles Mingo have to pay his engineer \$256 just to open the building on Saturday?

A more dramatic confrontation, however, will be with the Chicago Teachers Union. Current rules lack the teeth to separate the good teachers from the bad. Whereas Dianna Lindsay can and has terminated deficient teachers, Charles Mingo's hands are tied by a union contract that makes it extremely difficult to remove deadwood.

Those are changes within the system. Given a high school dropout rate of nearly 50 percent city-wide, the system itself may need overhauling. To date, there is no demonstrably successful model for transforming urban schools, though ideas such as vouchers, charter schools and privatization are considered far less radical than they used to be. For example, both Baltimore and Hartford have signed contracts to turn their schools over to private management. While all of these approaches hold promise, they remain experimental and unproven.

In the long run, the problems of DuSable can't be separated from the larger problems of the community. "Poverty is a bitch," says Principal Mingo. "Nobody wants to be around the poor. Then, when they built Robert Taylor, they concentrated all poor people together."

The Robert Taylor Homes and the dense concentration of poverty they have created are a failed social experiment; no school can function effectively in that kind of environment. What incentive is there to graduate in a neighborhood where the adult unemployment rate is more than 90 percent? Chicago Housing Authority chairman Vincent Lane's plan to demolish the high rises in favor of scatter site housing is one solution that makes sense.

"Our students are nice. Our students are pleasant. Our students want to learn," says Mingo. "The only problem with them is that they had the audacity to be born poor."

They also live at a time when escaping poverty will require greater skill than ever before. Students who leave DuSable, as graduates or drop-outs, do not disappear. Some will go on to do great things. But with sharply limited options, many will succumb to the streets. In one way or another, society will pick up the tab.

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Corrections and clarifications. In an article about DuSable and New Trier High Schools in the Sunday Magazine, Andrew Turner was identified as the New Trier senior class president. He is the president of the Student Alliance, the school's student government. Margo Zaslavsky is the New Trier senior class president. The Tribune regrets the error.