

## P.S. 20 GETS AN A+

**W**hen confronted with the challenge of running a New York City public school, a principal has two choices: wait around for more federal funding, or plunge in with courage and creativity. At Public School 20 on Manhattan's Lower East Side, the principal for the past 26 years has been Dr. Leonard Golubchick, and his school is a model of the heights to which a public school can rise.

PS. 20 is one of the poorest schools in the country—99 percent of students are in the free lunch program and more than half do not speak English as their native language. But as *The New York Times*' Michael Winers reported, students at PS. 20 have shown stunning improvement on state reading scores. In 1999, 27 percent of the school was reading at grade level; now it's 51 percent. The arts are an integral part of the curriculum, as are computer skills: Students created PowerPoint presentations of new designs for the World Trade Center.

How does Dr. Golubchick do it? Instead of waiting for the money to come to him, he goes out and finds it, pursuing grants to hire extra teachers and substitutes. The teachers hired by Dr. Golubchick have high expectations for the students and as such are often the first adult ever to believe in them. The principal also pointed to reduced class size as crucial to the school's success. "My philosophy is you can't have a good education with 30 to 35 per classroom," he told *The Times*.

Like many public schools in New York, PS. 20 has benefited from a 1999 state program which devotes \$140 million to reducing class size. Prior to the legislation, two-thirds of city kids in grades K-3 were in classes of more than 25; currently just one-quarter are. But Gov. George Pataki is killing the program to save money. While the Governor's budget concerns are all too real, maintaining low class sizes for New York public-school kids allows brilliant educators like Dr. Golubchick to offer a future to thousands of children. It would be difficult to find \$140 million that is being more wisely spent, or that is a better investment in the city's future.