

Black student performance still low

By Richard Haws
Of The State Journal

The Madison School Board faced the emotional issue of black student performance Monday night as reports were released showing low achievement levels but high attrition rates for Madison's black students.

Lee Hansen, director of research and development, reported that black student achievement test scores in the third, fifth and eighth grades were "considerably poorer" than test scores of the entire student body or the national sample. Madison uses standardized tests in only the third, fifth and eighth grades.

In addition, Marvin Meissen, of the research staff, reported that the percentage of black seniors who were not expected to graduate with their class this year was projected to be about the same as last year.

In 1975, 44 percent of the 38 black students did not graduate with their class, while in 1976, 18 or 42 have "credit concerns" and are not expected to graduate in June. The overall failure-to-graduate rate for Madison seniors last year was 6.7 percent.

Concern for black performance in the public schools surfaced last year when the initial attrition report was released.

While neither Hansen nor Meissen was prepared to make any firm recommendations to the board Monday, the two preliminary reports did touch off some heated debate on how to attack the problems.

"The educators said 'lack of attendance' was the primary reason for the seniors failing to graduate, with East High School Asst. Principal John Strothers saying he was 'profoundly shocked' at the large number of skippers when he first began his administrative duties at the school.

He urged the board to look at "tightening up" the open campus at the schools because "we are losing a lot of kids, a lot of good minds."

While the open campus differs from school to school, it generally means students are given a substantial amount of freedom to leave the school when their classes are not in session.

The committee which is studying the attrition rate is also considering recommending a "regular preventive program," in which the students would receive assistance long before their senior year.

Another option under consideration is improving the communication between home and the school.

In discussing the achievement report, the board learned that not only did Hansen consider the test scores "disturbing," but that Hansen had had substantial difficulty in working with the committee.

The test results showed that black achievement had declined in all three grades from 1973-1975, with the exception of eighth grade reading.

In third grade reading, for example, the average score for black pupils dropped from 27.4 in 1974 to 24.9 in 1975. For all Madison third graders, reading scores increased from 33.3 in 1974 to 33.5 in 1975.

Generally, as the students advanced in the grades, the study found "there is some tendency" for the achievement disparity to widen.

But while Hansen said the data "demonstrates conclusively" that black students are underachieving, he remained unsure of how to proceed.

"This is a serious, sensitive problem," he said, "but there seems to be an inability on the part of all of us to take a candid, objective look at this."

He explained that teachers and administrators tended to blame the children for the low achievement, while the black parents tended to blame the schools.

Hansen said "there is a continuing lack of trust between many of the representatives of the black community sitting on the committee and the representatives of the schools. As the head of the committee, I regret that some of that lack of trust lies between members of the black community and myself."

"My interest is not in placing blame or finding fault," Hansen emphasized to the board, "but my concern is that things get better."

Hansen conceded that the full committee — which includes black parents — had not seen the report he was making to the board, and he was criticized for the unilateral action by board member Mary Wilburn.

Complicating the dilemma, he said, were the recent budget cuts in his department, which had limited the resources he has to spend on the problem.

The board took no firm action but discussed changing the priorities in Hansen's department so he would have more resources to spend on the problem of black achievement.

Hansen did say the committee, in attempting to determine the factors which may be contributing to the low achievement, is planning a series of random interviews with teachers and administrators.

Meditation seminar

A five-week seminar on transcendental meditation and Christianity will begin tonight at the Heritage Congregational Church, 610 S. Segoe Rd.

The seminar will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. on the following four Tuesdays.



Off to early start

An early season sailboat passes by the University of Wisconsin-Madison lifesaving station on Lake Mendota as the watchful gaze of Joseph Schwarz, station supervisor, surveys the situation. The station, located just west of James Madison Park, normally begins operation in mid-April, but the water rescue service moved up its opening date because boaters, canoeists

and sailors have gotten the season off to an early start. Hours will be from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. for the first two weeks, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Apr. 15 through 25 and from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. after Apr. 25. Boating reports for Lake Mendota are available by calling 262-4567.

—State Journal photo by Joseph W. Jackson III

HHH urges doctors to take part in national health plan debate

By John Keefe
Of The State Journal

Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.) told Wisconsin doctors Monday to forget about outright opposition to a national health insurance program and start participating in the planning for it.

In a blunt assessment in a speech before the Wisconsin State Medical Society Delegate Assembly, Humphrey said Congress would not act on a national health plan this year, but he added:

"One thing is certain. We will have a health program which will go well beyond anything the government has

done in the health field in the past.

"That's the handwriting on the wall," he continued at a luncheon address. "I don't think you ought to look on it as a curse. I'm here to challenge you to become involved in this great debate."

"Learn about the alternative proposals and actively participate in the debate," he exhorted.

The physicians attending the luncheon received the challenge politely, a challenge that said in polite language, "put up or shut up."

A staff aide to Humphrey said the reception here was in direct contrast to

the first time the senator gave the speech a year ago before doctors in Minnesota. There, the aide said, the reaction was hostile, but within several months Humphrey began receiving apologies as his predictions began coming true, the aide said.

Time after time Monday, Humphrey told the doctors they had to participate in the national debate on national health care. There was no way politicians could avoid that debate, he stressed.

Public opinion surveys in recent years have repeatedly shown that 80 percent of the citizens want some kind of comprehensive national health

program.

"You think politicians are going to miss that?" Humphrey asked. "I'm surprised they haven't picked it up already."

The primary question to be decided, he added, was "will it be written by legislators over your protests, or will you join in writing it?"

To emphasize the growing public demand for health care, Humphrey reminded the doctors that the only vetoes of President Ford that Congress had been able to override dealt with that issue.

Federal health insurance: An Edsel?

By William R. Wineke
Of The State Journal

Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) F. David Matthews warned in a speech here Monday that the nation, in its desire for national health insurance, should make sure "we don't buy an Edsel dealership."

Speaking to the State Medical Society, Matthews said a federal takeover of the health care delivery system might cause many more problems than it solved.

"I'm afraid we have confused improved national health insurance with improved health care delivery," he said. "That's not the case; we could spend \$20-million or \$30-million and still not buy one more tongue depressor or train one more doctor."

The answers to improved health care and to limiting health care costs are going to take some time in finding,



Secretary Matthews

Matthews suggested.

"In the field of medicine, you've had some great victories," he said, citing the conquest of smallpox as an example.

"Those victories tend to lead us to think of solving the problems of health in a miraculous manner, but that won't happen."

Matthews also warned the doctors that, while he thinks the government "has enough problems" and doesn't need the additional problem of socialized medicine, "I point out to you that our ability to maintain that position rests on our ability to solve the problems" confronting health care.

Matthews also confirmed that Wisconsin is one of several states which may be investigated for Medicaid fraud — but he said that is because Wisconsin has a good record of managing its programs.

"The basic thrust of the effort is constructive," he said. "We're not operating on the assumption that the medical profession is incompetent or that some agency is incompetent, but we're trying to find ways to find fraud before it gets out of hand."

The physicians also learned the society's insurance company, Wisconsin Physicians Service (WPS), plans to lift its freeze on doctors' fees Thursday. The freeze was initiated last fall because WPS was losing money.

In other actions, the delegates adopted a policy statement calling for the decriminalization of marijuana possession.

The statement said the doctors do "not condone the production, sale or use of marijuana," but do "recommend that the personal possession of insig-

nificant amounts of that substance be considered at most a misdemeanor with commensurate penalties applied."

The statement parallels one by the American Medical Assn. (AMA).

The doctors also defeated resolutions which would have severed WPS's ties with the society and which would have made membership in the AMA optional for SMS members.

They backed enthusiastically the society's new Wisconsin Physicians Alliance, a political action money agency seeking to give doctors more clout in the state Legislature, but defeated a proposal which would have taken the Alliance from the supervision of SMS Secretary Earl Thayer.

Four city doctors honored by peers

The State Medical Society (SMS) honored four Madison physicians Monday for 50 years of service as doctors.

They are Drs. Waldo B. Dimond, 16 N. Carroll St.; Ovid O. Meyer, 1806 Summit Ave.; Mark Nesbit, 22 Fuller Dr.; and John L. Rens, 1659 Capital Ave.

The Madison physicians were among a group of 27 initiates to the society's Fifty Year Club, and were honored at a banquet Monday night in the Edgewater Hotel.

Students to be made aware of vandalism in Sun Prairie

By Marian Peterson
State Journal correspondent

SUN PRAIRIE — The School Board Monday night directed School District Administrator Kenneth Iverson to initiate a student awareness program on school property vandalism.

Board President John Bogle suggested that a series of assemblies be planned with the board present to inform students of the severity of the problem.

He proposed maintenance head Ray Laufenberg take pictures of the damage and show slides at the assemblies.

Board action followed a report by Laufenberg, who said damage at two elementary schools in three days during the last two weeks of March was over \$3,000. In an earlier report, Laufenberg said there had been over \$2,400 in interior damage the last three months and over \$7,600 in exterior vandalism and burglary insurance claims from February to June, 1975.

Iverson said a means should be devised to recover costs from parents for damage done by their children.

In other action, the board approved a resolution encouraging the City of Sun Prairie and the townships within the school district to seek ways and means of attracting additional industrial tax

base and study the possibility of establishing industrial parks.

Board member Jane Hoepker said the Town of Burke has attempted to bring tax base to the township but whenever it happens the land is quickly annexed by Madison. She said East Towne, a Holiday Inn and a Howard Johnson's restaurant-motel would have been part of the township if not annexed.

Hearing set on water rates

The Madison Water Utility Board will hold a public hearing Apr. 8 on its proposed 33 percent increase in homeowner's water costs.

Despite widespread publicity on the increase which would raise the average homeowner's monthly bill by about \$1, from \$3 to \$4, customers have thus far registered no protests to city officials, according to Water Utility Manager Larry Russell.

The hearing is scheduled for Room 404 of the Hill Farms State Office Building, 4802 Sheboygan Ave., at 9 a.m.



All the gnus fit to print

There is such a thing as "a meeting of the minds," but this is ridiculous. Photographer Edwin Stein calls the photo "Nose to Nose Gnus." The gnu, also known as the wildebeest, is an African antelope with a tail like a horse and horns like a buffalo.

A cornered gnu is considered one of the most dangerous fighters of all hoofed animals. These two are residents of the Vilas Park Zoo.

—State Journal photo by Edwin Stein