

"There is screening for kindergarten. You have to know colors. You have to know how to hold a pair of scissors. Many parents don't teach kids this stuff. So they walk in cold. They have standards before the kid even gets to school.

"The kids start out behind. If they don't run faster they'll always be behind. If they don't have a running start, they can't do the work and they are segregated from day one."

Franklin said the problem gets worse as the students move through the school system. Because the high schools don't have learning-disabled classes, students who are behind are put in classes with emotionally disturbed students.

"The kids are trapped," Franklin added. "If the kids' parents don't go out and get tutors or someone to really overwhelm them, they'll never catch up."

Black students make up approximately 10 percent of the school district's population. However, blacks account for about 30 percent of the suspensions.

One way to cut that suspension rate is to get more parents and community members involved in the school system, Franklin said. She said her group is working on strategies to get more churches and ministers involved in the education of black youth. They also want to use neighborhood centers as informational networks.

"You've got to get involved," said Franklin, who attended many school board meetings this year.

Travis said the district administration and the school board are concerned about the report.

"We need to examine the reason for these numbers," Travis said. "We need to do some staff work to analyze the data. My intent is to get the staff together and react to the report."

School board member Jerry Smith Jr. represents the board on the study committee. He said parents, the school board and the community must get together to help boost black students' success.

"While we don't have the devastating situations of large urban areas like Milwaukee and Chicago, it is a devastating situation according to Madison standards," Smith said of the report. "It's something we want to alleviate so the kids can get the best we have to offer in this school system."

Smith said he is concerned that only 3.68 percent of teachers in the school district are black.

"We have to have teachers who are capable of dealing with different groups," Smith said. "We have to take a look at our non-minority staff. But that is not to suggest that every minority staffer is going to be effective. I think teachers and the administra-

tion should be familiar with black culture, home structure and value systems."

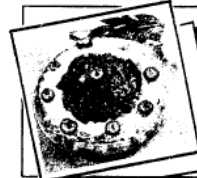
Travis said the report gives the district something to focus on as it continues to work on the achievement of minority students and all at-risk students.

"The report has some eye-opening information," Travis said.



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High school blacks 'not measuring up'

By ROBB JOHNSON
Capital Times Staff Writer

You can see the pain in Betty Franklin's face as she looks over the numbers. The executive director of the Madison Urban League doesn't like what she sees.

Black students in the Madison Metropolitan School District's high schools are not achieving grades equal to those of other students in the district.

That was the conclusion of a report prepared by Janet Bauer, a University of Wisconsin-Madison social work student who interned at the Madison Urban League last year.

Bauer collected the grade-point averages and studied records of all black students in regular education programs in the four Madison high schools for the fall semester of 1986-87.

"It definitely demonstrates that black students as a group are not achieving on a par with any of the other students, whether they are Hispanic, Asian or white," Franklin said. "Our children are not measuring up."

The report also concluded that:

- Black students are disproportionately represented in Exceptional Education classes.
- Black students are disproportionately represented in the number of student suspensions.
- Black student enrollment in high-level math and science courses is low.
- There is a disproportionately low number of black teachers.

Franklin, who also heads the Committee on the Academic Achievement of Black Students, said the group's main goal is to improve the academic achievement of black students in

Madison's public schools.

"Out of the 22,000 students in the district, there are only about 1,900 blacks," Franklin said. "They can easily get lost."

Black students comprise about 10 percent of Madison's elementary school students, 11 percent of the middle school students and six percent of the high school students.

According to the report, black students were low achievers in all grades at East and La Follette high schools; in the 9th and 10th grades at Memorial; and in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades at West.

"The grades of black students are a real concern," said Madison Superintendent of Schools James Travis. "But we have to be careful because it would be a real disservice to leave the impression that this report characterizes all black students. Obviously there are

some very successful black students."

Franklin said she was also concerned that many black students are funneled into exceptional education classes. Often those students never get off that track during their entire public school experience.

"I think some schools are more notorious than others," she said. "A minority kid who is significantly behind in terms of academics and demonstrates different behaviors is going to be categorized."

The whole process starts in kindergarten, according to Franklin. "The parents I've talked to don't really understand," she said. "They are very threatened. They sign any paper the district says is in their best interest."

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