Berg pushes new integration plan

By Joyce Dehli

Education reporter

Madison School Board member Rick Berg wants the school district to drop its current integration plan after next year and replace it with a new one.

"My plan does not fully re

state the same in parents," Berg said about the proposal he sent to fellow board members Tuesday. Berg said his plan has three major goals: to improve the academic achievement of minority students; to improve participation in magnet programs statewide, and to more evenly distribute the resources now offered in the six magnet schools.

Berg said the district should continue its current integration plan for another year to give school officials time to determine whether magnet schools.

Under Berg's plan, the district would create at least four magnet schools. Berg cites their "lightweight" status but says they correspond to what are traditionally termed magnet schools.

Each magnet school would offer special programs, such as full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes and flexible school times, to attract students from across the district. Each school would receive a certain number of spaces for minority students, and at least one of these magnet schools would be on the South Side, where many minority students live, Berg said.

"I believe there are plenty of peo

ple who would be willing to send their

children to these schools," he said. "The special resources would be a powerful incentive.

Superintendent James Travis recommended Monday that the board continue its current integration program without major structural changes.

But Travis also said the plan's top priority should become improving minority students' academic achievement rather than creating a racial mix in classrooms.

Berg, who has opposed the current integration plan since its start in August 1984, called Travis "a Jimmy Carter" who has "dropped its current integration plan after realizing the concentration of minority students at Franklin and Madison's elementary schools on the South Side.

Under Berg's plan, each of the four schools would return to teaching kindergarten through fifth grade by 1988, as much will have been completed by August 1984. Berg said he would try to magnet schools and perhaps some elementary schools for minority students in any case.

The district should consider retrenching the boundaries of Lincoln, Franklin, Randall and Midvale for that reason, he said.

The school board is scheduled to make a final decision on integration by Feb. 15.

Teachers say current plan is OK

Most teachers and other staff in Madison's six integration-plan schools think the plan is working without significa

nt problems, according to a school district survey.

The survey, given last spring, shows 66 percent of the staff mem

bers found no problem, or only minor ones, with the integration plan. Twelve percent believed there were severe serious problems and 2 percent found many serious problems with the plan.

In addition to creating a Lincoln-Madison magnet committee, Travis said he wants the school board to give those schools more staff members, equip

ment and instructional materials to help meet the needs of students who don't think the plan is working or have other special needs.

According to the district's report, the surveyed teachers generally de

scribed interracial relationships as "tension free," and those at mid-

dle schools reported many interracial friendships. In addition, 20 percent reported a few friendships, but said overall interracial relationships were good, 13 percent reported no friend

ships but good academic relationships, and 1 percent described the relationship between races as "tense.

"Getting up in the middle of the night and attending to the baby's myriad needs is rough," he said. "But it's a job,

not a hobby, to make you feel really fully human," Kasten said. "Becoming a father means the most sacred mystery of life."