

Unwrapping 'perks' for the holidays

A well-placed source who will fly into Madison late Wednesday night on a toy industry junket has once again leaked an advance copy of his "perks" list.

Here is what the good boys and girls will find in their Christmas stockings, but they'd better not pout and they'd better not cry if the state Ethics Board asks why gifts were delivered at midnight down the chimney.

Gov. Tommy Thompson: What to give the chief executive who has everything? How about some poker chips to swap in his "fish for chips" gaming compact talks with Wisconsin's Indian tribes. For \$24 in beads and trinkets, he could get... zilch. These guys have been fooled once before. Better yet, let's give the guy a six-pack of "Billy Beer" to remind him he's not the only politician in America who ever had problems with a good ol' boy brother.

Democratic candidate for governor Ed Garvey: By his own choice, there's a \$100 limit on gifts to Ed during the campaign season. Actually, that's \$100 per person, so a family of four could contribute \$400 to the Garvey for Governor campaign before next September's primary and \$400 afterwards. Remember, only 317 shopping days left until the November election.

U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold: Last year, Wisconsin's junior senator wrote to Santa asking for peace in Bosnia, East Timor, the Middle East and Africa, but was told that Santa does gifts, not miracles. "OK," Russ responded, "then give me campaign finance reform in Congress." Santa scratched his beard and replied, "Let me see that world peace list again..."

This year, Russ trekked to the North Pole and discovered that Santa looked suspiciously like Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. "You want what?" ho-hoed Santa as he rolled off his chair. "I'll give you a vote in the spring. And if you believe that, I'd like you to meet my red-nosed lobbyist..."

U.S. Rep. Mark Neumann: Feingold's Republican opponent in next year's election got his Christmas present early last week when Thompson and U.S. Rep. Scott Klug hosted a fund-raiser for him on Madison's West Side, within a mile of so of Feingold's Middleton base. Janesville's Neumann still needs a small stocking stuffer: a pack of pencils with erasers for recalculating the federal debt.

U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl: Wisconsin's senior senator is someone who likes to give more than he likes to receive, as evidenced by Madison's new Kohl Center and his scholarship program for Wisconsin youth. But everyone needs a gift: How about a healthy backcourt for his long-suffering basketball team, the Milwaukee Bucks?

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Chvala: With special elections coming in the spring, Madison's not-so-cuddly Chvala (pronounced "koala") would love to keep the "majority" in his title. It won't be easy. Veteran Democrat Lynn Adelman is leaving his Senate seat to become a federal judge, which means the balance could tip to the Republicans. Speaking of Adelman...

U.S. District Judge-to-be Lynn Adelman: President Clinton's nominee has been confirmed by the Senate, but now he's being accused of trying to steal a petition against one of his legal clients from a drug-store counter. The petition sought the maximum penalty against a man convicted of killing three dogs. Adelman's gift: a recording of Three Dog Night's greatest hits.

U.S. Rep. Scott Klug: another year to read the "Help Wanted" column.

Rick Phelps, Democratic candidate in the 2nd Congressional District: more time to raise money for his campaign.

Tammy Baldwin, Democratic candidate in the 2nd Congressional District: more time to stop raising money for her campaign.

Joe Wineke, Democratic candidate in the 2nd Congressional District: the good sense to stop beating up on the W-2 welfare reform program. A year from now, he might need a little retraining.

All of the Republican candidates in the 2nd Congressional District: a few words of advice — be yourselves. There is only one Scott Klug.

The members of the state Supreme Court: a good lawyer to argue their case that they're being shortchanged by \$98.23 a week on their paycheck. With luck, they'll get an early date in Dane County Circuit Court... like 1999.

Madison Mayor Sue Bauman: a light bulb that goes on before someone thinks of an idea like turning off city streetlights.

Former City Affirmative Action Officer Eugene Parks: the telephone number for former mayor-turned-investment counselor Paul Soglin, for advice on how to invest his half-million-dollar legal settlement.

Former Mayor Paul Soglin: gene Parks' number, for advice on how to make a half-million dollars.

The University of Wisconsin Field House: a sign that reads, "Abandon Hoops. All Who Enter Here."

Still is associate editor of the State Journal.

FORUM

ISSUES • INSIGHTS • IDEAS

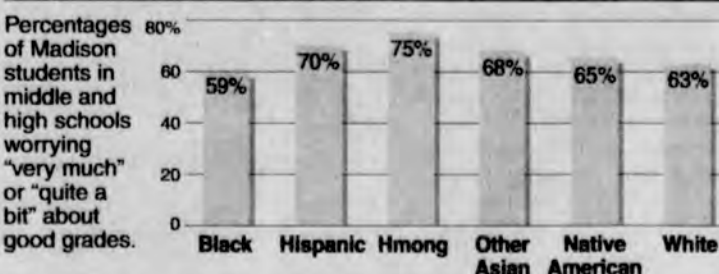
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Sunday, December 21, 1997

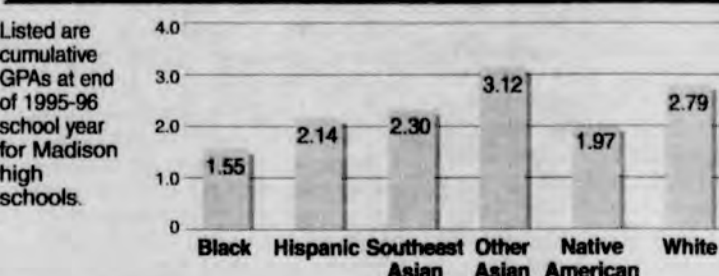
JUNE, 1997

Students share desire to succeed, but grades vary by race

Grades top worry of teens

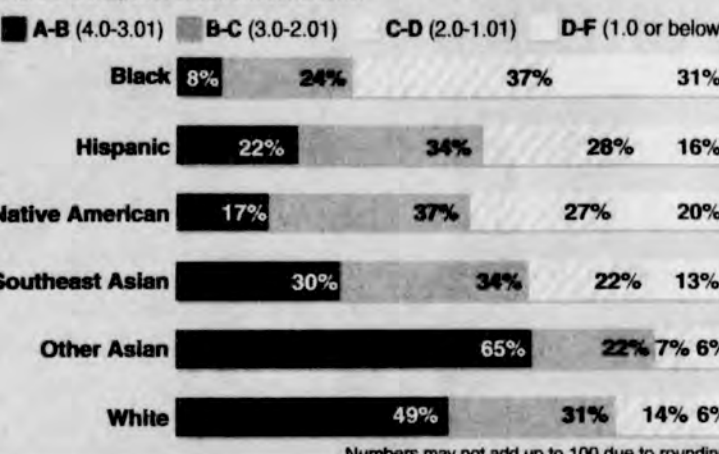


Grade-point averages, by race

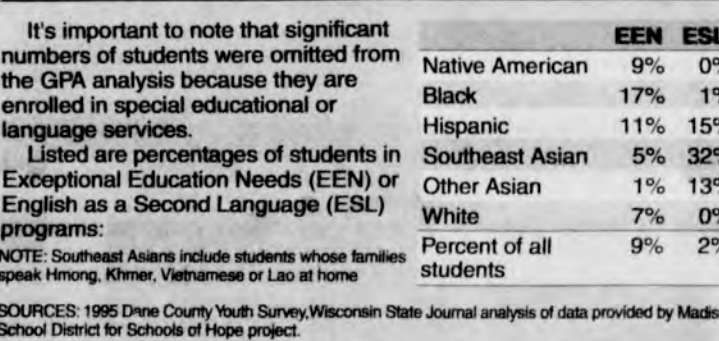


GPA patterns vary widely by race

Schools of Hope committees of community residents have set a goal of increasing the portion of students of every race attaining at least a 2.0 grade-point average. Here's a snapshot of current conditions.



Many students enrolled in special programs



WSJ graphic/LAURA SPARKS

Here's what you can do

Here are some tips on how families and community members can become involved in education.

15 ways to show children that you care

Simple steps can bring adults and children closer together — a shift that can lead to a stronger community, stronger families and stronger students. Here are some things adults can do for children:

- Notice them.
- Learn their names.
- Remember their birthdays.
- Ask them about themselves.
- Play with them.
- Listen to their stories.
- Ask them for their opinions.
- Delight in their discoveries.
- Contribute to their collections.
- Laugh at their jokes.

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Parents are always there for Memorial senior

Anna Benson is among more than 50 Madison high school students who wrote *Schools of Hope* diaries over the past two years to help the public understand their perspectives. In this entry, Benson, a senior at Memorial High School, writes a tribute to her parents, Tom and Sandy Benson, for being involved in her education.

I am a fortunate child who realizes I have been blessed with two of the best parents in the world. I give my parents a lot of credit for making me who and what I am today... My parents have always been involved in my school life. They have driven me



Benson

to countless school events, including dances, athletic events, banquets, meetings, etc. They've done tons of volunteer work such as running basketball clinics, chaperoning and acting as representatives for many clubs and teams. Having my parents involved so much has influ-

enced a lot of things in my life. When other kids know your parents, they are likely to be more comfortable talking with you. It makes getting to know people much easier. Teachers know where you come from and are more likely to start out respecting you and knowing you, rather than taking you for granted.

Parental involvement keeps parents from having unreal expectations. They know, for instance, although the idea of being in bed at 8 or 9 o'clock sounds nice, it's a near impossibility if you're involved in any extracurricular activities. It is

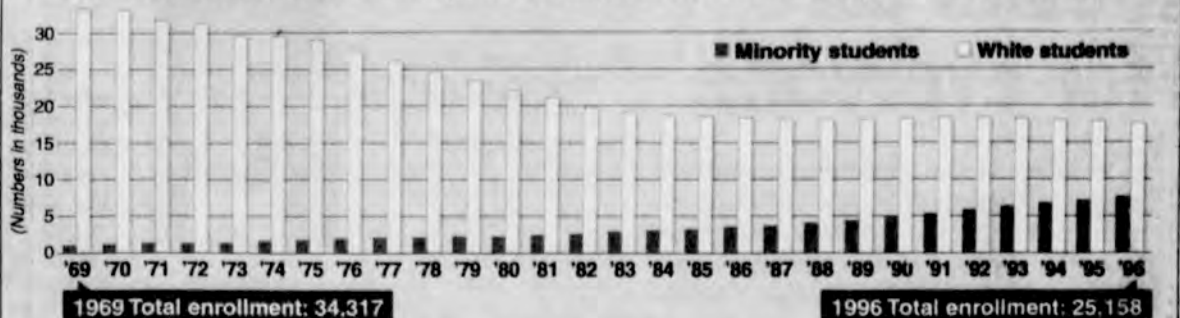
impossible if you are involved in sports and you still are a serious student. They come to realize no matter how well you manage your time, you have to sacrifice sleep many, many times for good grades. The same is true for reasonable GPA's (grade point averages). It's unfair for a parent to say you need a certain GPA unless they know *exactly* what's going on in your classes. Not many parents can say they know all the units their children go through or the way teachers grade. My parents know that, because they are always involved in what I do, and they always

support me in my work and decisions...

My parents' involvement in school has influenced even my personal behavior. Being friends with my teachers has helped keep me out of trouble because I know I am constantly being watched by people close to me. I do not do drugs, smoke, drink, steal or skip school, because, not only have I been brought up to be against those things, but because I know my parents would somehow find out. I don't ever feel compelled to lie to my parents, because I know they will always know the truth.

White enrollment drops as minorities increase

Total Madison School District enrollment peaked in 1969. Below is the breakdown, by race, from 1969 to 1996.



Here's what we have found

Two-year project examined five key areas

During the past two years, the Wisconsin State Journal's Schools of Hope project has examined five major issues in the Madison School District.

Schools of Hope based its reporting on what Madison residents said concerned them most about their public schools: academic achievement, school costs, discipline and safety, race and culture, and family involvement with schools.

Here are some highlights from the main findings of the two-year project:

April 1996: Academic achievement

■ African Americans are falling farther behind whites despite nearly a decade of efforts to boost their achievement levels. Freshman and sophomore blacks now trail whites by more than a full grade point (on a four-point scale).

Struggle at school is closely linked to poverty, single-parent households, low levels of parental education, truancy, high rates of suspensions and mobility — moving repeatedly while school is in session. Institutional racism is acknowledged to push down blacks' performance.

■ Although the racial achievement gap plagues every urban school district in America, Madison's gap is particularly large because white students' performances on standardized tests are among the highest in the nation.

■ A 20-member Schools of Hope leadership team, upon hearing the State Journal's findings, promised to unite the schools and community to attack the racial achievement gap. A wide-ranging effort now is underway to improve student achievement.



■ Many Madison graduates — and local employers — say public schools should do more to help students prepare for the work world.

■ Three-fourths of Madison graduates opt to continue their educations. UW-Madison officials say the graduates are well-prepared; Madison Area Technical School officials offer a mixed review, saying some graduates don't know how to read a ruler.

■ Standardized tests are imperfect and remain the subject of charges that they're biased against racial and cultural minorities. But for the foreseeable future, they'll remain a key to getting advanced classes, scholarships, college admissions and good careers.

Madison is adding a new layer of standards — performance assessments — intended to tell parents, teachers and students just what a student has mastered or has yet to learn.

■ In addition to preparing students for college or work, schools are expected to help students learn to survive in the world, and how to be responsible citizens.

Survival skills such as eating a balanced diet and balancing a checkbook are learned mostly through elective courses; students say they value the classes and wonder why more don't sign up.

■ A Schools of Hope survey suggested Madison students receive plenty of old-fashioned civ-

ics knowledge.

Discipline, safety

The Madison School District's five-year drive to make schools safer and more orderly is beginning to succeed.

■ Problems that had festered since the late 1960s are being handled, winning praise from longtime critics such as teachers union chief John Matthews.

Some schools, such as Cherokee Middle School on Madison's West Side, have reversed troublesome trends, finding new ways to keep students busy and reducing disciplinary trips to the principal's office.

■ Suspensions from school are concentrated among poor students, African Americans and males, threatening the academic success of many students already in danger of failing.

■ Spending on security measures, while still a tiny portion of the district's budget, is growing rapidly, using money that otherwise could be spent on education.

■ In situations arising outside of school property, district officials and security officers lack the authority to send truant students to class, so the students skip and neighbors of schools fume about noise, wasted tax money and wasted lives.

■ One-fourth of the teachers responding to the district's annual "climate survey" said they spend too much time in class "coping with disruptive student behavior." And an additional 45 percent described it as somewhat of a problem.

Race, culture

Four decades after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed "sepa-

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File photo

Schools of Hope has grown from schools such as East High into a community project.

Types of incidents at Madison schools

Incidents handled by city of Madison police and Madison School District security officers during the 1994-95 school year.

MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT

TOTAL INCIDENTS: 1,862

"Crimes, emergencies" 342

Disturbances 511

Traffic 194

Property 504

Persons 45

Health & safety 62

Miscellaneous 204

SCHOOL SECURITY

TOTAL INCIDENTS: 3,131

Assisted police* 105

Campus security** 1,786

Student conduct*** 1,240

*Witnessed or intervened in theft, accident or battery.

**Parking, vandalism, trespass, loitering, gang or weapon incidents.

***Violations of schools' student conduct and discipline plans - tardiness, altercation, smoking, truancy or disruption incidents.

SOURCES: Madison School District, WSJ
Madison Police Department

Hope

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rate but equal" schools, growing numbers of minority students in Madison are finding a way to have more control over extracurricular events. In their view, it's a case of separate but better.

■ Relatively few minorities are found in advanced math, science and language classes, leading many students to conclude that although they attend the same school, they're still not studying in an integrated environment.

■ Nine in 10 teachers in the district are still white, according to a State Journal analysis of district staff records, while nearly a third of the students are minorities. The gap is especially pronounced in those schools where the minority population is much higher than the district average: Midvale, Lincoln, Glendale, Thoreau, Mendota and Shorewood elementary schools.

School costs

Much of the debate over school costs focuses on payroll. With a base annual salary of \$24,938 for someone fresh out of college, becoming a teacher in the Madison School District is hardly lucrative. But teachers quickly overtake most city employees, including some police officers and firefighters, under a salary schedule that

automatically raises their pay every year for 15 years and every third year thereafter.

And the combination of a generous salary schedule and a highly experienced, highly educated teaching staff puts the annual salary for the average teacher in the district at \$42,543.

Family involvement

An extensive, scientific survey of Madison parents, teachers, principals and students found some challenges in efforts to increase parent involvement in public schools:

■ Parents say work obligations are the biggest barrier to getting more involved in education.

■ Six in 10 Madison teachers, and nearly half of principals, believe most parents don't know how to help their children with schoolwork. Many parents also said they want more information from schools on how to help their children with schoolwork.

■ Although parent involvement levels are high while children attend elementary school, they drop sharply as children head on to middle and high schools.

But survey respondents also mapped possible directions toward tighter school-family ties. The Schools of Hope survey found widespread support for:

■ Improving communications, such as report cards, between schools and families.

■ Honing parents' skills in raising their children and getting them ready to learn.

■ Increasing parents' effectiveness when helping their children with homework.

■ Making teachers better skilled in involving families in education.

■ Using homework to raise students' achievement levels and to draw parents more closely into their children's schooling.

■ Using a broader range, and larger number, of volunteers to

boost students' achievement levels.

■ Changing workplace conditions that discourage many parents from being involved with their children's educations.

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All children deserve consideration — especially now.

Since 1919, the Empty Stocking Club has been a friend to needy children at Christmas, providing new toys to youngsters who would otherwise be disappointed.

That includes some 5,000 needy children who need just a little help to complete Christmas, and some who would have no Christmas at all without the kind-hearted people whose contributions make our year-round projects possible.

For 79 years The Empty Stocking Club has felt that every child in the Madison area should have a happy Christmas.

The Empty Stocking Club is a Yule project of the Wisconsin State Journal Youth Services, Inc., which, besides its toy program, now works throughout the year. This holiday season a record 148 youth oriented groups will share more than \$200,000 in grants.

The Empty Stocking Club depends upon its friends now more than ever — for the whole Christmas season as well as for the whole year.

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