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Guest column/2H

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Editorial/3H

## Thompson, governors play second fiddle

SAN DIEGO — Gov. Tommy Thompson saw the handwriting on the wall. On Sunday, a day before the Republican National Convention opened its four-day stand, Thompson told reporters he was afraid the Dole campaign was missing a chance to exploit the ideas and popularity of the nation's 32 Republican governors.

"The Republican governors should be invited out to meet relatively soon with Bob Dole and Jack Kemp to talk about how we're going to run this upcoming campaign across America," Thompson urged. "But I don't see that happening as it should."

A week later, Thompson's misgivings seem prophetic. He and the GOP's governors came to San Diego primed to play glamorous roles at their party's convention. They were a group of skilled politicians with the poise and self-assurance to carry out ambitious experiments in crime control, education and welfare. They seemed ready for "prime time" — high visibility on national television and prestigious assignments for the fall campaign. Instead, they left San Diego with time on their hands.



THOMAS W. STILL

For openers, presidential nominee Dole bypassed the governors in selecting a running mate. After months of speculation centering on Illinois' Jim Edgar, Michigan's John Engler, Pennsylvania's Tom Ridge, New Jersey's Christine

Todd Whitman, Ohio's George Voinovich and Thompson, only Engler reportedly made the next-to-last cut. Thompson was among the top seven candidates.

Next, three prominent governors who had been slated for key speaking spots on the convention program backed out in protest after being told by Dole operatives that their remarks must focus on selected economic topics and not drift into a discussion of their pro-choice views on abortion.

Even California's Pete Wilson, the convention's host governor, balked before agreeing to address delegates in the city where he once served as mayor. Govs. George Pataki of New York and William Weld of Massachusetts initially declined to speak, but at the last moment Pataki agreed to nominate Kemp for vice president. Weld, who is running for U.S. Senate in his home state, never made it to the podium.

Thompson's speech on welfare reform came Tuesday night and was not part of the prime-time network coverage. In fact, only a handful of governors received top billing, with Whitman and Texas Gov. George W. Bush getting the most attention.

It was reflective of the Republican National Committee's belief that the governors, for all their popularity at home, suffer from a "charisma deficit" when it comes to stepping out on a bigger stage. There were doubts even about Thompson, who has served as chairman of the National Governors Association and has become a familiar figure on the Washington talk-show circuit.

For Thompson, who came to San Diego with hopes of being tabbed as one of the party's rising stars, the convention may have been something of a personal disappointment. Except for his Tuesday night speech, (which the Dole campaign rewrote until it was almost air time), Thompson's exposure was limited.

Thompson was summoned along with four other governors to brief Kemp on economic issues, and he was in solid demand as a surrogate speaker to address delegations from other states, especially on his favorite topic of welfare reform.

But for a governor who came to San Diego with whispers of "2000" and "president" in his ear, the convention must have scored as no more than a six on a personal scale of 10. Thompson wasn't overlooked, but he wasn't in the front tier of showcased governors, either.

Sooner more than later, however, the Dole-Kemp campaign needs Thompson and his fellow governors to win the November election. Many of the nation's most populous states — California, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, New Jersey, Ohio, Michigan, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Illinois — are governed by Republicans. In addition, Republican governors hold the statehouses in every state in the Upper Midwest, where Dole must defeat President Clinton in November in order to have a chance to win the White House.

Thompson is too loyal of a Republican and too big a fan of Dole and Kemp not to step up to the challenge. But his memories of San Diego will be of a convention that missed the chance to tout the policy innovations of the nation's Republican governors. For Thompson, it will be remembered as a political opportunity forfeited — for him and his party.

Still is associate editor of the State Journal.

# FORUM

ISSUES • INSIGHTS • IDEAS

1H

Sunday, August 18, 1996

## Gatherings focus on minority achievement

By Phil Brinkman  
Education reporter

Longtime observers of the Madison School District can be forgiven for thinking they've seen this before.

Alarmed by the lagging performance of blacks and Hispanics, a coalition of school and community leaders is looking for new ideas to lift minority student achievement.

In meetings and community forums over the last month, the group has solicited ideas, held brainstorming sessions, developed recommendations.

Tuesday and Wednesday, the Wisconsin State Journal and WISC-TV (Ch. 3) will facilitate several "town hall" meetings to review the preliminary recommendations and suggest others. (See editorial/3H.) Students, parents, teachers and administrators are all invited.

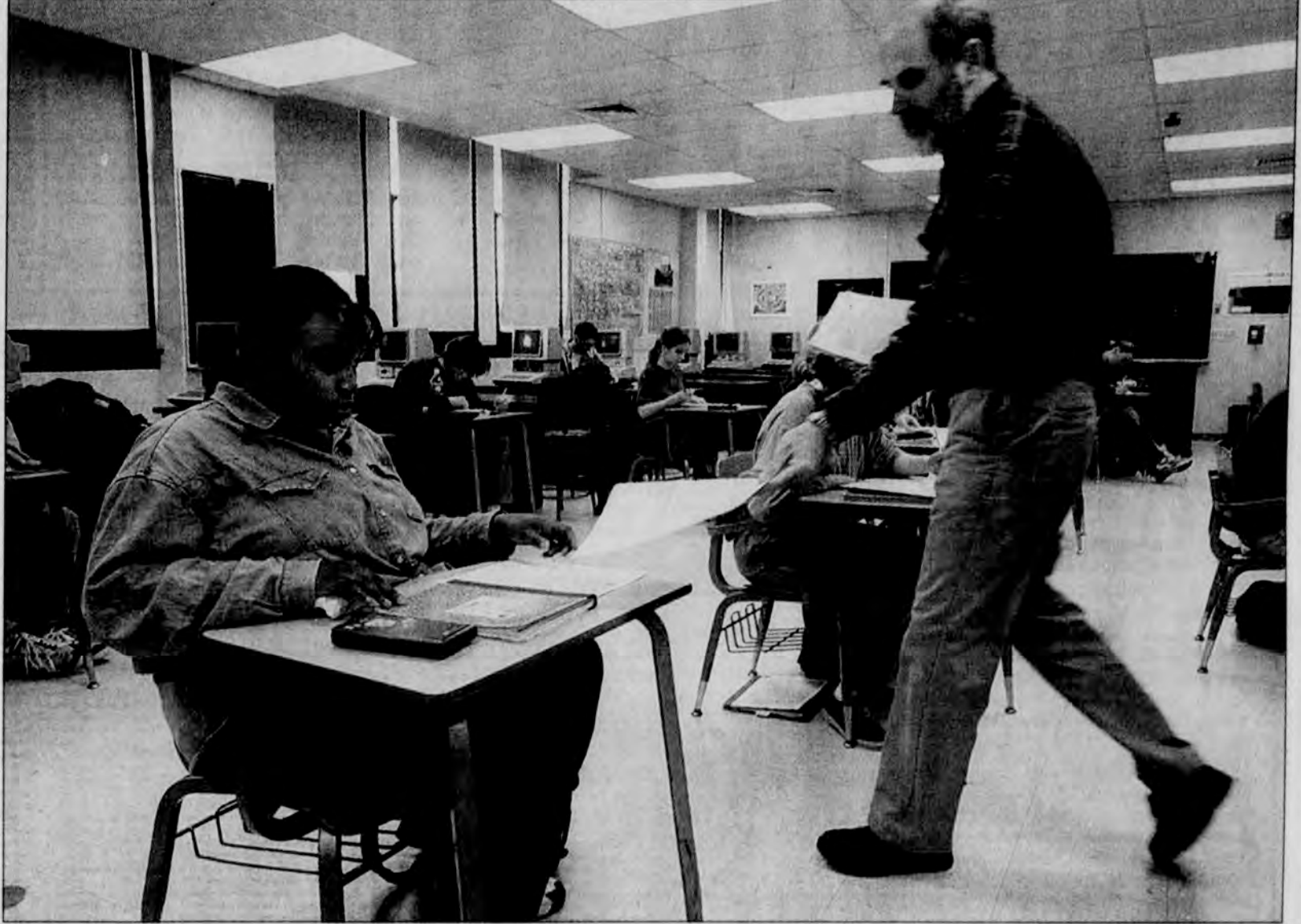
Yet, organizers of the effort could find they're heading down a well-worn path.

For nearly a decade, the school district, sometimes alone, sometimes in consultation with parents and community organizations, has sought to close the learning gap between the races. Among other things, the district:

- Created elementary and secondary Minority Student Achievement Committees in 1988. The committees established goals and made suggestions about a multicultural curriculum, improving school climate and strengthening home-school relations.
- Established parent-school liaisons.
- Tried to teach students to do better on standardized tests through a program known as "test-wise."
- Established "Ready-Set-Goal" conferences at the beginning of the school year for elementary students, initially recommended for minority students and since broadened to include all students.
- Established early childhood programs at Sherman Middle School and in the Allied Drive area, and set up all-day kindergarten at several schools.
- Created a minority student achievement fund, which spent more than \$4 million over six years. The fund was discontinued after an audit turned up several questionable expenditures. However, the district still spends about \$1 million a year on the Resources Integrated for Success and Equity (RISE) fund, which combines money for talented-and-gifted programs with money aimed at improving minority student performance through such things as hiring additional teachers and aides.

This time, however, there is a growing realization that it's not up to the schools anymore. "Even if the schools did all they could do, that's probably 60 (percent) to 70 percent of what needs to be done for the whole child," said Robert Howard, a black parent of two school-age boys and a psychologist at Sennett Middle School.

Howard plans to attend this week's meetings, which are being held as part of the State Journal and WISC-TV's "Schools of Hope" project examining the Madison public schools.



State Journal photo/CRAIG SCHREINER

Timeka Rumph prepares to take a physics exam at East High School this past school year. Rumph, who ranked near the top of her class, volunteers many hours to a community-wide Schools of Hope campaign that

has developed recommendations to close an academic achievement gap that threatens the futures of thousands of African American, Hispanic and Southeast Asian students in the Madison School District.

Participants will be responding to recommendations by a special committee, led by United Way President Leslie Howard and mayoral aide Enis Ragland, president of 100 Black Men.

While many of the group's recommendations are aimed at teachers and administrators, others call for involving parents, volunteers and community organizations through such things as tutoring, driving parents to school functions, and creating an environment that values achievement at school.

**For the full list of recommendations to improve student achievement, see Page 5H.**

"My main hope is we have buy-in from the community and all the stakeholders as we go forward with the recommendations," Leslie Howard said.

Although his children attend St. James Catholic School, Charles H. Brown said he sees the need to pull together to improve minority performance as a tutor for the privately funded Carter G. Woodson Scholarship and Community Service Foundation. But he cautioned against relying too much on volunteers or community organizations, many of which already feel

stretched too thin.

"I don't have volunteers beating down my door," Brown said.

"I think what we're going to have to do is at least spend a reasonable amount of money to support the effort," Brown added.

The district currently has partnerships with a few community organizations, helping underwrite, for example, the Baby Steps program for teen-age mothers, Centro Hispano, and Project Bootstrap, which offers after-school tutoring.

Although several organizations exist on the city and county level to help needy families, the schools may have to spend money to meet those organizations half way, Robert Howard said.

"If we (the schools) were to invest more in those families, you'd have fewer of those critical ones down the road," Howard said.

Area churches, some of which are already deeply involved in helping struggling youth, also could be partners, children's advocates say, despite an often uneasy relationship between the churches and the schools.

"I think there is a role for the church and you would have a lot of parishioners willing to assist," said Brown, a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church. "I think someone needs to initiate the dialogue."

And while many of the recom-

Please see HOPE, Page 5H

## Town hall meetings let citizens have their say

As part of the Schools of Hope project, the Wisconsin State Journal and WISC-TV (Ch. 3) are co-sponsoring four town-hall meetings this week to inspire and collect citizens' insights and opinions on the issue of minority student achievement.

These informal discussions, led by Neil Heinen of WISC-TV and State Journal Associate Editor Thomas Still, are meant for real people like you, not experts or special interests.

Four town hall meetings are scheduled at the Madison Newspapers Inc. auditorium, 1901 Fish Hatchery Road:

- School administrators and staff, Tuesday, 1:30-3 p.m.
- Parents, Tuesday, 6-7:30 p.m.
- Teachers, Wednesday, 10 a.m.-noon.
- Students, Wednesday, 1:30-3 p.m.

Your perspective may be very important in helping the school district find its way on this difficult issue.

Town hall participants will discuss what works, what doesn't, and what can be done differently to raise minority student achievement.

Then, the Schools of Hope subcommittee on minority youth achievement — composed of teachers, district officials and representatives of several community organizations — will bring final recommendations to the Schools of Hope leadership group in September.

The leadership group, coordinated by United Way of Dane County, was formed to advise the Madison School Board and seek out community-based solutions to problems in the schools. The group includes representatives of the school district, teachers union, parents, the School Board and business. Leslie Howard, president of United Way of Dane County, facilitates the group.

The town hall meetings also will be taped for broadcast on CitiCable (cable Ch. 12) and the Madison School District cable Channel 10.

Schools of Hope is a civic journalism project of the State Journal and WISC-TV.

We hope you will be interested in participating in one of the four town hall meetings.

Please call 252-6139 to leave a message, with your name and number, telling us which meeting you plan to attend. Walk-ins also will be welcome.

## Good deed: Price too high for return of artifact

By Mary Daniels  
Chicago Tribune

When Max Rittgers' black Labrador dug up a lead plate from a hillside during a canoe trip through the South Dakota wilderness, the retired family counselor from Florida was more concerned about survival than archeology.

Rittgers and his dog had stopped to rest near the confluence of the Cheyenne and Belle Fourche rivers during their 500-mile canoe trip in May 1995, but bad weather was coming from the west. So he walked down the hill, threw the lead plate in the bottom of his canoe and took off.

When he had pulled the square plate, about the size of a hardcover book, from the earth, he had noticed that there was something inscribed on a corner. But it wasn't until water swishing in the bottom of the canoe washed the plate off that the date 1743 was revealed.

That intrigued Rittgers enough to make him alter the course of the sojourn he hoped would help him recover spiritually from his son's death from AIDS and his divorce from his wife of 33 years.

He made a stop in Rapid City, S.D., where his call to the local newspaper resulted in a short article on his find: a 6-by-7-inch lead plate with the inscription "A

*The story of the discovery of a historic plate turned into a modern parable about the perils of trying to do a good deed, with an ending befitting a Mark Twain tale.*

Miotte Le 7 de Marse 1743."

Rittgers also stopped at the local copying center, made dozens of copies of photos of his find, and sent them out to anyone he thought might help him identify the plate — including faculty he knew from his college days at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Rittgers could not know it at the time, but his innocent discovery and well-intentioned queries would quickly bog him down in a legal, financial and ethical quagmire.

His photocopy mailings struck pay dirt: Tom Kilian,

president of the South Dakota State Historical Society, contacted Rittgers, who took the plate to Kilian's home in Sioux Falls.

After examining the plate, Kilian said it had been placed on the banks of the Cheyenne River on March 7, 1743, during the first incursion of the white man into the Northern Plains by a French fur trader who was part of the (Louis Joseph and Francois) Verendrye expedition seeking a short and profitable route to the Pacific.

He told Rittgers the A Miotte plate, which he described as priceless, predates by 23 days the previous artifact confirming the white man's presence. The Verendrye Plate, found by schoolchildren in 1913 near Pierre, S.D., is now owned by The Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

"The French had a practice in that era of leaving these plates around where their explorers traveled to establish their territorial rights," said Kilian.

"It helped to mark the route of the Verendrye expedition, which was in doubt and under discussion for many years. The discovery of this plate helps to nail that all down."

Having learned the history of the expedition, Rittg-

Please see PLATE, Page 4H



# Recommendations to be discussed at town meetings

These are the recommendations up for discussion at four Schools of Hope town meetings scheduled Tuesday and Wednesday:

## FOR STUDENTS

- Increase expectations of achievement for all students and provide assistance for improving students' achievement.
- Recognize the role of homework in enhancing minority student achievement.
- Work with parents and teachers on ways to help students complete homework that is tailored to their individual performance goals.
- Recruit "homework helpers" and/or tutors for students and provide other forms of homework help tailored to various grade levels, such as homework hotlines. (Our goal is to be able to make this available to all students.)
- Make homework help available at after school and neighborhood based programs.
- Explore use of extracurricular activities as motivation for achievement.
- Have students take the lead in exploring ways for students, student mentors and adult mentors to help students:
- Recognize and actively advocate that it is OK to achieve.
- Understand what they need to do in order to achieve.
- Be motivated to take advantage of what is available to help them achieve.

Develop ways to improve at-

tendance, improve the behavior which causes suspensions, and create student acceptance for attendance standards.

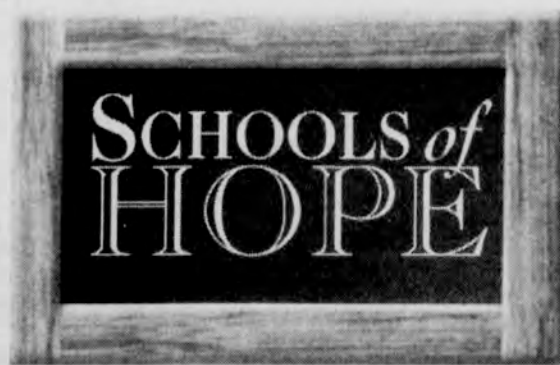
## FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

- Enhance connections between teachers, students and other interested adults in order to improve minority youth achievement.
- Reduce class size (ideally 15 students per class), consider small school size to enable teachers to spend more time with children who need help.
- Provide information to teachers about all resources available to help their students (such as a resource book, online assistance, hotline for teachers to call for community resources, etc.).
- Provide opportunities for student initiated activities within planned lessons.
- Seek student feedback through focus groups regarding positive academic experiences. Share findings with teachers.
- Encourage community-based organizations, neighborhood organizations, business and service clubs to supplement teachers in their attempt to improve minority academic achievement.
- Increase number of student teachers at high school level. Provide incentives or special support systems for teachers to encourage taking on student teacher assignments.

## FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS,

## AND PARENTS

- Improve communication between schools and homes. Work with teachers, parents, students and community-based organizations, such as neighborhood centers to develop methods for improving communication.
- Explore teachers going to neighborhood or community centers to discuss students' progress as appropriate and work with families to support student performance.
- Make sure schools, parents, teachers and students have a way to access translators when needed.
- Provide transportation assistance for families to participate in school activities.
- Provide child care for parent-teacher meetings and other school events.
- Develop informal ways to bring teachers, staff and parents together.
- Develop ways for parents to assist teachers in the classroom.
- Listen to the students. Involve students in helping to engage parents.



Find ways to get parents in to the schools.

■ Ninth-grade should include parental involvement and availability of mentors for youth.

■ Develop support from employers to allow parents time off to attend school-related activities.

Expand parent education and support for families early on so they know expectations before

student starts school.

■ Inform parents of the negative effect of student employment and mobility on student achievement (i.e. 20 hours-plus working per week has detrimental effect on grades).

■ Engage parents in improving student attendance and improving student behavior which causes suspensions

■ Make multicultural training available for teachers and parents.

## FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATION

■ Continue to develop and strengthen school district efforts to improve racial diversity consis-

tent with efforts to improve minority academic achievement.

■ Develop regular opportunities for teachers and staff to learn and share methods that are successful with minority youth; build on current successes (such as develop an online moderated discussion of minority academic achievement)

■ Principals should show leadership in including minority parents in school.

■ Recruit, retain and support minority teachers.

■ Develop a system of multicultural training that engages all staff.

■ Encourage the district to use every opportunity to discuss issues of race as it impacts improving minority youth achievement

■ Stabilize students in this same school for at least one year.

■ Develop strategies that would encourage the consideration of minority academic achievement in the process of developing low-income housing patterns.

## Process for Implementing recommendations

■ Thorough assessment of current programming and progress on minority academic achievement utilizing available staff, Union and university resources.

■ Visit with principals, staff, union leadership, teachers and students to review recommendations, assess what is going on in each school and relative success of various initiatives.

■ Find out what they would add and what they might stop doing.

■ Ask for their support in implementation.

Develop a four year plan to systematically evaluate the progress of these efforts:

■ District and union to engage

the University of Wisconsin staff, faculty, and students in evaluation of the effect of strategies that are implemented.

■ School staff and parents to monitor a school's progress in improving academic achievement for its students.

■ Personalize the goals for minority youth academic achievement for each school and student.

■ Recruit teachers, staff, parents, students, community-based organization staff, business leaders to monitor the progress and make suggestions for change when needed.

■ Plan for celebrating success at each school.

## Goals

Through the combined efforts of students, parents, teachers and interested community members the Minority Youth Academic Achievement Committee looks to accomplish the following goals:

■ Increase by June 2000 the proportion of African-American, Hispanic and Southeast-Asian students who:

■ Score at or above state standards on Third Grade Reading Test.

■ Score at the 50th percentile or higher on Wisconsin Student Assessment System standardized tests in fourth, eighth and 10th grades.

■ Have a grade point average of at least 2.05.

■ Be involved in extra curricular activities.

■ Enroll and achieve in "gateway courses" (algebra, chemistry and foreign language).

■ Graduate and have a grasp of basic skills.

■ Decrease by June 2000 the proportion of African-American, Hispanic and Southeast-Asian students who are absent more than 10 days per semester (definition of habitual truancy); classified as juvenile delinquents; retained at ninth grade.

## Hope

Continued from Page 1H

mendations assume a role by parents, the group needs to do more to make sure parents are more involved from the outset, said Lucy Mathiak, a white parent of a black child in the school district.

"You've got a bunch of people who have far less stake in the outcome than people like me," Mathiak said. "I think it (Schools of

Hope) is well-intentioned, but is it about feeling good about ourselves or really trying to solve the hard problems?"

The United Way's Leslie Howard welcomed the criticism and said the committee may try to meet with more parents at community centers over the next month.

"The nice thing is, we've got a chunk of time here to involve anyone we've overlooked or who couldn't attend," Howard said.

Kid tested. Parent approved.

Tuesday's Daybreak

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL



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