

# A School Study—2 Years Later

By PHIL HASLANGER  
Of The Capital Times Staff

When Dorothy Holden read in the newspaper a few weeks ago that the Madison Public Schools were about to start random interviews of teachers and administrators as a way of studying poor achievement by black students, she thought the idea sounded familiar.

In early 1974, Holden had put together a proposal for a project to look at the problems black students face in school, by interviewing parents and teachers about their relationships to each other.

Out of that proposal came a Madison Public School committee to study minority achievement, but the proposal itself was stopped short and the original committee disintegrated.

Holden compared her frustration in dealing with the school bureaucracy to that other black parents feel in dealing with the educational system.

Lee Hansen, the school system's director of research and development and the person Holden blames for stymieing her project, suggested that it was not so much a problem of parent versus bureaucracy as of a broadly-based committee wanting to go in a somewhat different direction than Holden, its chairman.

"The last thing I want to do is get into a debate with Dorothy Holden," Hansen said. "She should be credited with having initially brought the attention of the school system to this problem."

The problem is black students in the Madison Public Schools getting lower scores on standardized tests than white students.

Holden was working in the University of Wisconsin affirmative action office when she began to develop her proposal.

"What do black parents want from public schools? What are the attitudes of black high school students toward public schools? What are the attitudes of teachers and administrators toward the parents of black children and their education?" were the questions Holden thought needed some answers.

She worked with people at the University and in the school system to line up funding for her proposal and to design a research project. She went to Harvard, Atlanta and Mississippi to get ideas for her project.

Holden designed a questionnaire and tried it out on a dozen white and a dozen black parents. "The whites expected so much more from the teachers than the blacks — and some of the blacks were teachers themselves," she said. That confirmed in her mind the relationships between teachers and parents should be explored.

The heart of Holden's theory is that if teachers and parents relate well, the children will do well in school. If they have no relationship or a poor one, the children will do poorly.

The school system formed a committee to work with Holden and Hansen sent her a letter pledging his support. The committee first met in September, 1974, and began thrashing through how they wanted to proceed.

Holden's proposal began to hit roadblocks, and she blames Hansen, who she says, "decided he didn't really want a parent-teacher study, but said he wanted to look at the children."

Holden argued that there have been too many studies of black children and almost none of the adults that run their world.

Hansen said he is opposed to accepting any "one hypothesis" study of the minority student achievement problem, noting that it is a complex problem that needs to be examined from many angles.

Holden's proposal as it stood was a "one-hypothesis" study, he said. But he also said several times in an interview that he was not acting unilaterally.

"Throughout that period, I believe I was consistent in saying I was willing to be guided by whatever direction the committee gave Dorothy Holden," he said.

Holden charged that Hansen blocked her project by pulling one of his staff people off the project and by not responding to requests for data. "I don't recall that at all," Hansen said.

By March, 1975, the committee had come to a standstill. People within school administration complain that Holden would not meet with them, although she said that there was just difficulty in arranging a time for a meeting, not a basic unwillingness on her part to meet.

Last July, Holden pulled out of the committee and the committee itself was reorganized. The committee has been

analyzing achievement scores of black students in third, fifth and eighth grades.

Hansen gave a report to the board March 29 on his impressions of the committee's work to date and indicated at that time that the committee planned to pursue the study of teacher and administrator's attitudes toward minority students.

The committee itself will make a report to the board later this month.

Hansen said the biggest problem facing the committee now is money to do the study. He said that the personality conflicts on the committee had been fairly well worked out.

In the post-teacher strike budget cuts, large chunks of the research and development budget were cut. To do the study, Hansen said the board will have

to reallocate some priorities within his department.

Holden, meanwhile, thinks the school administration has lost valuable time. "Here another year has passed and nothing has been done," she said.

That is disappointing to her, but she still hopes the people concerned about minority student achievement will use her proposal.

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The informational meeting will be held in the Cottage Grove Township Hall starting at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 20, 1976.

At that time, staff engineers will be available to answer questions and ascertain public opinion regarding the proposed project. Maps and other exhibits will be on display.

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Information concerning the proposed improvement, including studies made by the Division of Highways, is available for inspection and copying at the Division of Highways District Office, 1317 Appleton Road, Madison, Wisconsin, 53713. Additional information may be obtained by writing or visiting the district office or by calling 608-266-6919.

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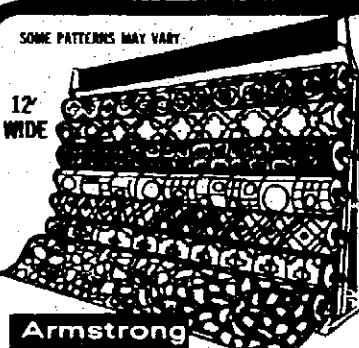
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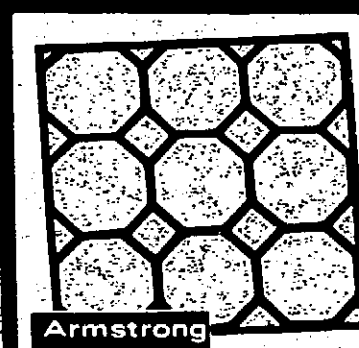
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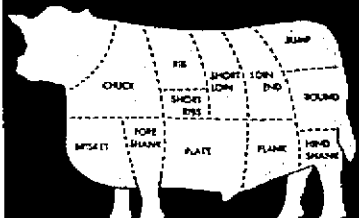
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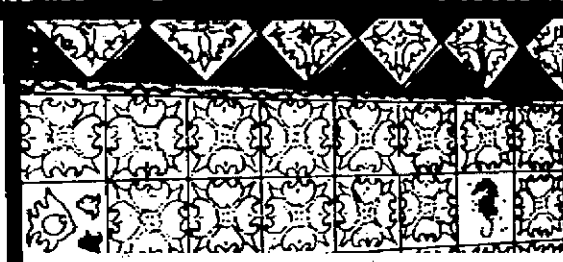
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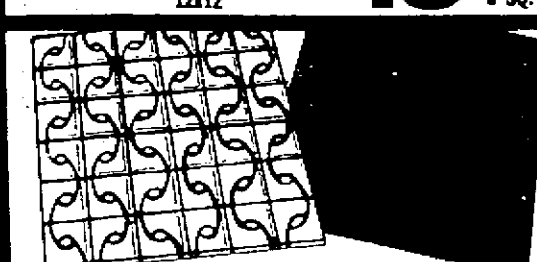
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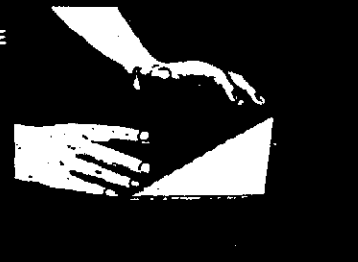
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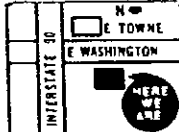
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