

Madison schools await feds' reactions to pairing plans

By David Stoeffler
Education reporter

While the Madison School District is not standing still in its planning for desegregating schools next fall, it is waiting for the federal government to bestow its blessing on the chosen method of school pairings.

The federal Office for Civil Rights is continuing its review of the district's plan, according to John Fry, assistant civil rights attorney for OCR.

Whether OCR's opinion will be favorable to the board's controversial plan, and whether the federal govern-

News background

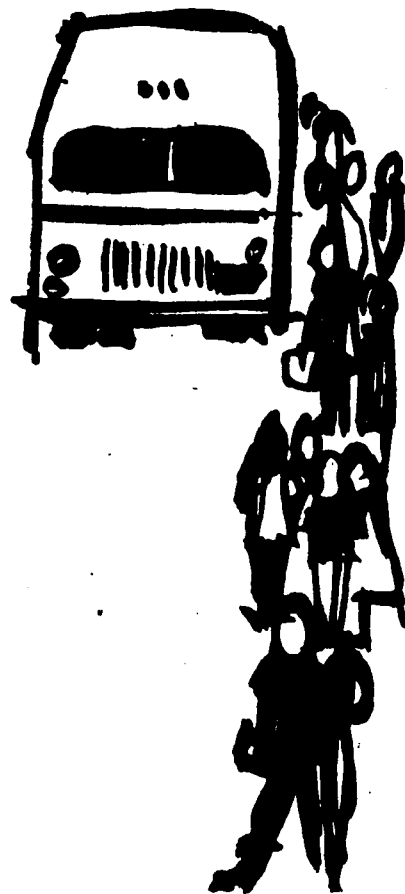
ment can or will do anything if it doesn't like all of the plan, is still up in the air.

What is clear is that the OCR will be judging Madison mainly on whether the plan for school pairings and boundary changes fulfills the voluntary agreement reached last summer in resolution of a complaint filed against the district by groups unhappy with school closings in 1980.

Some of those same groups are maintaining that the district's pairing plan is unfair to minorities. They are asking the OCR to veto the plan and have suggested that restoring a middle school to South Madison would be a better answer to the segregation problems at Lincoln and Franklin elementary schools.

Fry said that the OCR would contact the district directly about the extent to which the plan fulfills the agreement adopted by the board last summer.

He said the agency was not prepared to discuss its response and that given the positive working relationship between OCR and the district, he saw no need to speculate on the range



of options available to OCR if it was unhappy with the plan.

Yet, OCR does have options. Under federal law, the agency could refer the case to the U.S. Department of Justice for prosecution under the Civil Rights Act or it could seek administrative action to suspend federal aid to the district.

The agreement between OCR and the district did not limit the board's discretion in choosing a plan, as long as the plan met certain conditions. Among those conditions are that the plan:

- ✓ Meet the stated objectives of reducing minority populations at Lincoln and Franklin to 35 percent next fall and to 15 percentage points above the district elementary average for

minorities in 1985-86 and the years following.

- ✓ Does not place a disproportionate burden on minorities. In particular, the OCR said closing Franklin or Lincoln as part of a plan "may be considered presumptively discriminatory."

- ✓ Provides for community involvement, staff training and other measures to contribute to the stability of student populations after achieving a better majority-minority balance.

- ✓ Does not interfere with special language services offered to students.

The OCR did not require the board to include any other school in the plan, except as necessary to improve the racial and ethnic balance in Lincoln and Franklin.

It did note that the district was pursuing use of voluntary means during the 1983-84 school year, including a computer lab and full-day kindergarten, in an effort to attract white students. OCR noted though that "while it may be desirable that a better racial/ethnic balance be achieved entirely through voluntary transfers, these measures alone may not be sufficient to resolve this matter."

Nowhere in the agreement is the district asked to address the problems of middle-school access in South Madison. The chief criticism of pairing opponents, though, centers on the lack of a middle-school solution, the now-stated main reason for filing of the original complaint with OCR.

In fact, OCR provided an example in its findings that would have called for school closings as adopted by the board, including the closure of Lincoln Middle School. OCR suggested segregation could have been avoided if Lincoln remained closed, rather than being re-opened as an elementary school as the district did. Then, different boundaries could have been adopted in order to avoid the racial isolation created at Lincoln and Franklin, OCR said.



More for Stocking

Jack Hammerli, president of the Rounders Club, second from left, presents a \$250 check for The Wisconsin State Journal's Empty Stocking Club to publisher J. Martin Wolman at the Rounders St. Patrick's Day party Thursday at the Elks Club.

Lela Josephson, left, secretary/treasurer of Roundy's Fun Fund, and Leona Sonderegger, financial advisor, assist Hammerli, who was honored at the noon luncheon for "his many years of devoted service" to the club.

—State Journal photo by Carolyn Pfisterer

St. Pat's Day marked

By Desiree Thalley
Of The State Journal

Irish or not, nearly everyone at the state Capitol Saturday wore at least a little bit of green — a green carnation, a pair of green earrings, or a shamrock pin — at the Dane County Shamrock Club's St. Patrick's Day celebration.

Some were outfitted in green from head to foot. One man wore a bright green bowler, jacket and bow tie, green-and-white checked shirt and pants, and carried a shillelagh-like cane.

About 600 people gathered beneath the green, white and orange flag of the Republic of Ireland at the Capitol Rotunda to hear the bright, bouncy strains of Irish tunes and watch dancers perform Irish jigs and reels.

Club president Tom Green's proclamation of "Erin go bragh," (Ireland forever), and the singing of the Irish national anthem began the 14th annual ceremony marking the celebration of St. Patrick's Day by Madison's Irish community.

Gov. Anthony Earl and his wife, Sheila, attended the celebration. Earl, who is half-Irish, joked that he made up for the other half when he married the former Sheila Coyle, who is of full Irish ancestry.

The one-hour celebration ended with the crowd spontaneously joining in with the singing of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling."

The crowd-pleaser of the afternoon's activities was a spirited Irish jig performed by club member William "Bill" Quin Murphy to the tune of "Turkey in the Straw."

The 67-year-old Murphy said he learned the Irish jig when he was 8. He said his father used to play the fiddle at house parties, and he picked up

the steps by watching his father dance.

He has performed the jig for the club's annual celebrations since its first St. Patrick's Day flag-raising ceremony in 1971, he said.

The club's 22-member dance group also performed three dances Saturday, one an adaptation of American square dance patterns using Irish steps and music.

"We don't pretend we're the June Taylor Dancers or the Ballets Russes (de Monte Carlo, an early 20th-century ballet company). But we dance because we're Irish," said dance director Virginia O'Brien.

Ms. O'Brien said the choreography of the group's dances, especially the reels, is "pretty authentic." She said she took a three-week study trip to Ireland in 1977, sponsored by the club, to study authentic Irish dancing.

All the same, she said she has occasionally taken some "poetic li-

cense" with the dances.

The dancers rehearsed every Wednesday beginning in September to prepare for Saturday's performance, she said. The group also learns at least two new Irish dances every year to help keep the culture of Ireland alive in the United States, she said.

Murphy said the club's main purpose is to preserve and promote the history and culture of the Irish people. The club is not a political organization, he said.

Green said the club's Dane County chapter has 423 members, most of them second- and third-generation Irish whose ancestors settled in the United States after fleeing Ireland's potato famine of the early 1840s.

He said he did not know how many people make up Madison's Irish community, but he estimated that about 20 percent of the city's population is of Irish ancestry.

School plan brings concern on burdens for minorities

A key point of contention in judging the Madison School District's desegregation plan is in the extent to which minority students are burdened by school pairings.

The district and the federal government agreed that the burden of desegregation should not fall "disproportionately" on minorities.

What was certain from the beginning was that any plan would involve the dispersal of some minority students from Franklin and Lincoln, where minorities represent about 58 percent and 51 percent of the students, respectively. Given the limited size of the buildings, minorities needed to be moved in order to reduce the percentage to 35 percent by next fall.

There are a variety of statistical ways to evaluate the burden. Here are some:

Total involvement: A total of 1,450 students are involved in the school pairing and boundary change plan of which about 29 percent are minorities.

The 420 minority students involved represent about 28 percent of all district elementary minorities, while the 1,030 white children involved represent about 13.5 percent of all elementary white students.

Burden of change: Based on current estimates, 921 students will at-

tend different schools next fall under the plan, including 262 minorities, or 28 percent of the total number of students changing schools. That means 17.3 percent of all district elementary-school minorities and 8.7 percent of all elementary whites will be changing schools next fall.

An estimated 294 students will be moved permanently to Allis or Glendale schools as a result of boundary changes. Of those, 96 students, or 32.6 percent, will be minorities.

That leaves 1,156 students, including 324 minorities (28 percent), involved in the school pairings combining Franklin with Randall School, and Lincoln with Midvale School.

On a school-by-school basis (using estimated attendance-area populations, not actual school enrollments):

- ✓ 366 students out of about 500 in the Lincoln area will be moved, including 160 minorities, or 43.7 percent of those moving. About 185 Lincoln children (56 percent of them minorities) will be involved in the pairings.

- ✓ 199 students out of about 280 in the Franklin area will be moved, including 86 minorities, or 43.2 percent of those moving. About 86 Franklin students (53 percent of them minorities) will be involved in the pairings.

- ✓ 164 students out of about 320 in the Randall area will be moved, including eight minorities, or 5 percent

of those moving.

- ✓ 192 students out of about 350 in the Midvale area will be moved, including eight minorities, or about 4 percent of those moving. About 39 students from Midvale (including six minorities) will be moving to the Randall area and will be part of the pairings there.

Busing burden: In all, about 1,013 students will be bused next fall as part of desegregation reassignments, including 342 minorities, or 33.8 percent of the total busing. Many of the minority students are being bused to Franklin or Lincoln now. Among those 428 total students not already riding the bus, 43 (or 10 percent) are minorities.

Of the 437 students involved in the pairings who will be able to walk to school, 85 are minorities. That means that 26.2 percent of the minorities in the paired schools will be able to walk to school, while 42.3 percent of the whites in the paired schools will be able to walk.

—By David Stoeffler

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Join us to celebrate "Children and Hospitals Week" on Sunday, March 18th, at Madison General Hospital. There will be an **Open House on the Pediatric Unit on 7 North**. Children and their families will have the opportunity to tour the unit, handle equipment, and meet the nursing staff. There will be treats and lots of fun!

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