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METRO

SECTION

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1989

Blacks demand Clark apology for remark

□ Leaders of Portland's black community give the mayor a deadline and say he can expect political heat if he doesn't comply

By JAMES MAYER
 of The Oregonian staff

Frustrated black leaders demanded Friday that Mayor Bud Clark apologize by Tuesday for what many feel was a racially offensive remark — or face political reaction ranging from boycotts to demonstrations.

"The cat has turned back the clock on civil rights," said Ron Herndon, a community leader and co-chairman of the Black United Front.

The Tuesday deadline will coincide with a national conference of black educators meeting next week in Portland. The National Alliance of Black School Educators Conference is expected to draw 2,000 visitors to the city.

Although the timing is coincidental, Herndon said Clark would be "making a statement to the entire country about race relations in Portland" if he failed to act

on the group's demands.

Clark can expect "rallies, boycotts, demonstrations, sit-ins, wait-ins, you-name-it," Herndon said.

"He can view it as a gun to his head — or any other part of his anatomy," Herndon said. "But it's going to go off Wednesday."

Most City Hall offices were closed Friday. Neither Clark nor his executive assistant, Tim Gallagher, could be reached for comment Friday.

Herndon said Clark has not taken advantage of several opportunities to apologize for the remark and that the black community's patience has run out.

In the wake of Clark's firing of Ollie Smith as his liaison to the black community, Clark told a group of black leaders that he would serve as his own liaison and that he would try to get a suntan to darken his skin.

Instead of apologizing after leaders called the remark insulting, Clark told a cable television audience last week that it was no joke. He did not elaborate.

Joining Herndon at Friday's press conference at the King Neighborhood Facility were representatives from community groups including the Black United Front, the Albina Ministerial Alliance and the Coalition of Black Men.

In a statement, the group also demanded that Clark hire a black aide to replace Smith or have a hiring process under way by Dec. 1.

The group also wants Clark to respond publicly by the same date to a Metropolitan Human Relations Commission report critical of the city's affirmative action hiring practices.

The commission's recommendations included mandatory affirmative action training for the city's managers.

The commission's report came on the heels of a warning by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development earlier this year that the city could face a cutoff of federal money if it didn't improve its affirmative action efforts.

The city is in the process of restructuring and improving its affirmative action program. Clark released a seven-point plan last month dealing with the affirmative action program.

Under Clark's plan, the city's personnel director has to approve every appointment in bureaus the mayor controls. The bureaus must have at least one "minority



The Oregonian/STEVE DIPAOLA

Ron Herndon, co-chairman of the Black United Front, issues a demand Friday to Portland Mayor Bud Clark.

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CLARK, Page E5

Clark: Mayor also draws affirmative action criticism

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advocate" on each job interview panel and must justify their hiring decisions in written, job-related explanations. The city's affirmative action office will monitor the appointments to detect patterns of not appointing qualified women and minorities.

But black leaders said that plan didn't go far enough.

"The mayor is asking his bureau heads to be more assertive, but he's unable to lead by example," Avel Gordly of the Black United Front said, adding that Clark has no blacks on his staff.

Problems with the affirmative action program have been known

for some time, Herndon said, but it was Clark's suntan remark and, perhaps more importantly, his failure to apologize or take community reaction seriously that has truly hurt relations between the black community and the mayor's office.

"If we don't respond to this, what do we respond to," he said.

The mayor may be close to using up his credit of good will with the black community.

The Rev. John Jackson, co-chairman of the Black United Front, said that during the last few years, he had doubts about Clark's abilities as mayor but that he always believed Clark was "not a bad fellow."

"I'm not so sure he isn't a bad fellow, now," Jackson said.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1990

METRO

Group threatens boycott of schools

□ The Black United Front wants the Portland School Board to adopt a plan to improve the achievement of black students

By **BILL GRAVES**
of The Oregonian staff

Black leaders Monday vowed to boycott Portland schools unless the school board adopts a plan to boost the low academic achievement of black students.

The Black United Front will urge all parents in the Portland School District to keep their children out of school on selected days

beginning sometime in February, said Ron Herndon, co-chairman of the community-action group.

"We will no longer allow black children to be sacrificed on the altar of Portland School Board complacency," said Herndon at a news conference in a Northeast Portland church Monday morning. "The majority of black students are at the bottom of the academic ladder. In spite of this, the Portland School Board has callously refused to adopt the community's Education Improvement Action Plan."

But school officials said they have carried out most elements of the plan, which advocates school management teams, student achievement plans, school evaluations by parents and the use of national experts as consultants. The district regularly brings in

education experts and has more than 100 citizen advisory committees, said Superintendent Matthew Prophet.

Herndon's ideas "are very good and very sound, and we've adopted more than 90 percent of them," said Prophet. "I cannot in good conscience do 100 percent of what anybody wants."

The front and a dozen other community and business groups in North and Northeast Portland sent the improvement plan a year ago to then-school board Chairman Stephen Griffith. He and other members of the board met with Herndon last winter and spring.

"I spent a lot of time going through that plan," said Griffith, still a member of the board. "I really felt I had given him my best thinking or best reaction to it."

But the board never formally responded

to the proposal, Herndon said. Until it adopts the plan, he said, the front will push for boycotts. If those don't work, he added, the group will organize demonstrations and other actions.

"It is going to be wide open — all of the methods we have used in the past," he said. "We have not forgotten them."

Board members, however, said they saw their meetings with Herndon as a fitting response to the front's plan.

"We will likely sit down with them and say, 'We thought we were on board together on this issue,'" said Carol Turner, board chairwoman.

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BOYCOTT, Page B12

Boycott: Officials claim city compares favorably

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Everyone agrees that black and poor students are failing to make sufficient academic progress in Portland's schools. District officials are quick to add, however, that these students are making bigger gains in Portland than in most urban districts.

Only about half of the black children in the district read at their grade levels, compared with 80 percent of white children. Even more troubling, said Herndon, is that 56 percent of black students are below grade level in math while 77 percent of white students are above grade level.

"Few black students can read with comprehension, possess critical math and science skills or write with the skill demanded by business and industry," Herndon said.

Only a small percentage of black high school students takes upper-level sciences, algebra, geometry or physics, he added. Herndon and school officials agree that these academic problems have more to do with the social and economic status of students' parents than with race. The low academic achievement of poor white students compares to that of black students, all of whom face bleak prospects for finding meaningful careers.

"They are being consigned to the worst jobs in the work force," Herndon said.

But Prophet — president of Large City Schools Superintendents, a group representing 63 urban districts — said only two or three other districts in the nation can match Portland's success in increasing the academic achievement of poor and black students.

Gains, however, mean little when students are still so far behind, Herndon said. What's worse, he added, the gains may be reaching a

plateau. Reading and math scores of students entering the third grade dropped slightly last fall after years of steady increases.

Richard Brown, a coordinator for the front, pointed to a graph showing student achievement by race and asked, "If your youngster was at the bottom of this graph, how would you feel?"

Principals elsewhere in the country are successfully educating minority and low-income children, Herndon said, and that leaves Portland schools no excuse for failing to do the same.

"We'd like to go faster," Turner said. "What we are saying is we are going faster than any other school district in the nation now."

The Black United Front will describe its boycott plans in a community meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday at 1627 N.E. Alberta St.

The group has led boycotts before. On May 19, 1980, about 5,000 of 8,000 black students stayed home from school to comply with the front's protest of the district's new desegregation plan. Among other things, the front wanted minority parents to have a voice in selecting teachers. The following year the front called for a boycott to protest the lack of middle schools in predominantly black neighborhoods of Northeast Portland.

Prophet said a boycott would only create what it is designed to prevent by denying children a chance to learn.

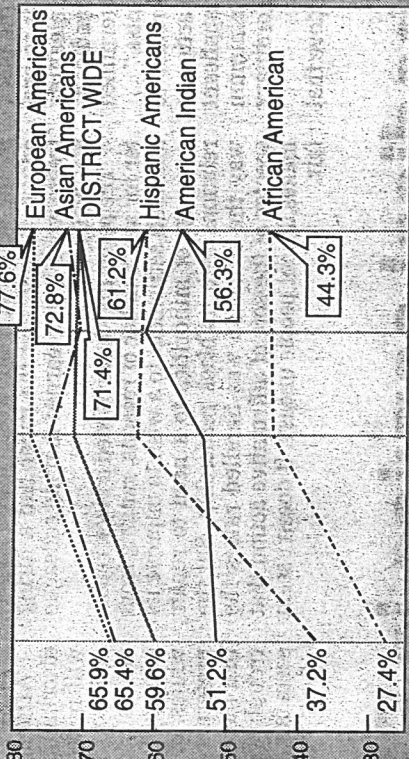
The front will turn churches and community centers into makeshift schools for children who participate in the February boycott, Herndon said.

But given the quality of instruction in schools, he added, students will not miss much if they simply stay home for a day.

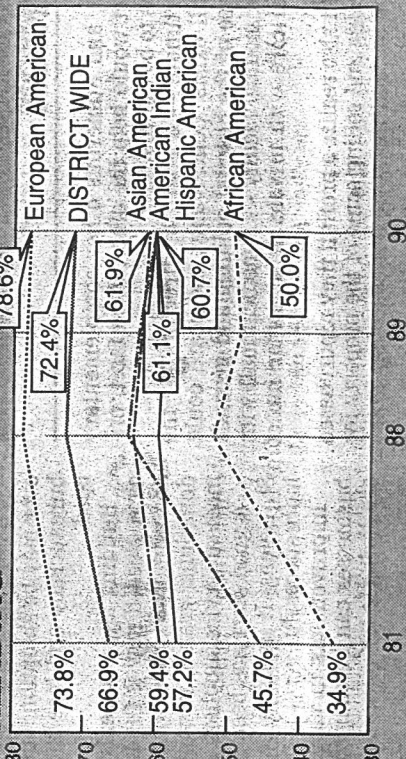
A CONTINUING GAP

Though black students in the Portland school system have made steady progress in test scores for reading and math in the past 10 years, they still lag behind white students and the overall district average. Charts show the percentage of students who score above a national test publisher's norm.

MATH



READING



Source: Portland School District

Portland schools reply to Black United Front

□ The response contends that most of the group's plan for improvements has been put in place

By BRIAN T. MEEHAN

of The Oregonian staff

The Portland Public Schools on Friday presented a 45-page response to the Black United Front's plan to close the academic achievement gap among poor and minority schoolchildren and their white middle-class peers in the 55,000-student school system.

The document, accompanied by letters from the Portland School Board and Superintendent Matthew Prophet, essentially buttresses the district's contention that it already has put in place most of the front's 12-step Education Improvement Action Plan.

"There is an extraordinary coincidence of your priorities and those of the Portland School Board. This should be a cause for both to take heart — not to take up arms," stated a letter to Ron Herndon, co-chairman of the Black United Front, that was signed by all seven board members.

On Friday morning, Prophet delivered the response to Herndon, who has called for a series of one-day school boycotts unless the district adopts the plan.

"I believe your plan to establish a student boycott of Portland Public School classes in February is ill-advised and potentially harmful to our students," Prophet wrote in a seven-page letter accompanying the response. He added: "The ideas, suggestions and comments in your proposal are not new to us. The direction you have suggested is in large part a road on which we have already been traveling."

Herndon said he would examine the response and respond to it in detail at a news conference next week. But he said a quick review of the district's response showed the two sides were still far apart.

"Given a cursory review of the

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BOARD, Page C5

Meetings possible

■ Continued from Page C1

material, we are so far apart it's not funny," Herndon said. "We are poles apart when we're talking about what needs to be done very quickly to improve the academic achievement level of poor children," he added.

Herndon, Prophet and Carol Turner, board chairwoman, indicated they would like to sit down and discuss the dispute over how to speed the academic progress of poor and minority children. Achievement scores show that poor and minority students trail middle-income white schoolchildren.

"I would think that clearly there may be some meetings to follow," Prophet said Friday. "We've done our best to address each and every point. We have done our best to present the facts of what the district is accomplishing."

The district emphasized that while poor and minority schoolchildren still lag in achievement scores, the Portland system has made unparalleled gains in closing the gap.

The Black United Front and about a dozen groups in North and Northeast Portland submitted the education plan to the board in fall 1989. The plan advocates a central committee for academic excellence, school management teams, student achievement plans, the use of consultants with records of educating poor and minority children, and the evaluation of teachers and principals on student performance.

District officials believe they have enacted all 12 of the front's steps except the evaluation of teachers and principals on students' achievement test performance.

"I think that's the only item we've not done in the manner he may propose it to be done," said Prophet, who added that principals are partly evaluated on the performance of their students.

The teachers' contract bars evaluation based solely on student performance.

Vicky Barrows, president of the Portland Association of Teachers, said that since teachers can't control the factors outside the classroom that affect student performance, it would be unfair to judge them solely on achievement test results.

"There are so many things that go into a test score that I don't think you have an adequate way or a fair method to judge how well they teach," said Barrows.

Herndon believes the system lacks accountability and is hypocritical in that it rates students based on test scores but is unwilling to evaluate teachers on the same

■ **Page 3** - a three-page document drafted by Superintendent Matthew Prophet. The document praises much of what the Black United Front has proposed: "Given the large domain of agreement, we should be able to find a mutually supportive way to continue advancing the academic performance of our children." Here is a summary of the district's response to the 12 steps the front urges.

■ **Item 1:** Establish a committee for academic excellence that would monitor lagging schools and students' ability to compete abroad. It would develop teacher incentives and would include parents, representatives of business and the community, and members of the school board.

Response: The district says the school board serves the function of the "committee for academic excellence." The district has teacher incentive and volunteer programs as well as the Desegregation Monitoring and Advisory Committee. And the lack of common standards prevents international assessments.

■ **Item 2:** Establish building management teams for each school that would set educational goals and measure progress. The team would include teachers, parents, administrators and a consultant with an outstanding record of educating the same socioeconomic group of students that the school serves.

Response: Local School Advisory Committees and a program called Star, the Portland Blueprint: Success for Students at Risk, already involve the community. Principals seek the advice of the advisory committee, which includes teachers, parents, students and community members, in revising school improvement plans and setting goals. The Star program enlists parents and educators in helping students at risk.

■ **Item 3:** Require specific improvement plans for all students who are not achieving at or above grade level.

Response: The district directs students with problems to programs designed to meet their needs, including: Reading Recovery, Project Read, Writing to Read, integrated language arts, Math Their Way, peer tutoring and foster grandparents.

■ **Item 4:** A clear statement of administration, principal and teacher accountability for student academic achievement and performance.

Response: The district mission statement, adopted in 1987, says: "The primary responsibility of the Portland Public School District is to instill certain knowledge, skills and values in the children enrolled in Portland schools, thereby helping them to become successful individuals, family members and citizens." Since 1989, each school has been asked to implement an educational improvement plan.

■ **Item 5:** Evaluation of administrators, principals and teachers strongly based on student academic achievement and performance.

Response: The teachers' contract bars evaluations based solely on student performance on achievement tests. Performance is influenced by societal factors beyond a teacher's control. Prophet says principal evaluation does take into account student performance, but that it is only one of many criteria.

■ **Item 6:** Establish specific, high academic expectations from the superintendent's office, projecting the number of years it will take 90 percent of the students in each school to achieve at or above grade level and when students would meet international competition.

Response: The district cited 10 goals from its "district educational effectiveness subgoals." Most of the

goals do not set specific targets. They focus on things such as increasing the graduation rate, raising achievement in reading, writing, math and science, increasing the number of children going on to college, developing multicultural awareness and increasing the number of pupils served by preschool programs such as Head Start. Two goals do set specific targets: by June 1993 all third-graders must meet or exceed districtwide achievement levels set by third-graders during the 1981 school year. Another goal requires schools by June 1993 to have an effective plan that identifies areas for improvement in student learning and incorporates testing to measure student progress.

■ **Item 7:** Establish a system of accountability that provides the superintendent with data regarding the academic status of every elementary, middle and high school.

Response: Twice a year Prophet receives reports on student academic progress on achievement tests. The reports detail test results by ethnic group, district cluster and individual school. By 1992, the district hopes to implement its new Computer Adaptive Reporting and Testing System, which will allow teachers to test students on computers at the schools.

■ **Item 8:** Leadership training for principals.

Response: Principals receive ongoing training from the director of instruction, the district's Principals' Academy and from departments, including curriculum, research and evaluation, career and technical education, employee relations and personnel.

■ **Item 9:** Ongoing staff development for all school personnel in areas indicated by building needs assessments and academic performance of students.

Response: The district has a variety of staff development options based on the interests and needs of teachers, principals and support staff.

■ **Item 10:** Boost enrollment of low-income and minority students in talented and gifted programs.

Response: Three new programs are under way to boost minority enrollment in the talented and gifted program: Friday TAG serves about 300 minority students from 17 schools in North and Northeast Portland. About 87 percent of the pupils are black with 13 percent being American Indian and Hispanic. A science program for elementary schools operates in the Grant cluster, and science enrichment clubs will begin meeting in Irvington and Sabin in January.

■ **Item 11:** Give schools greater freedom and reward for innovation and success in meeting district goals.

Response: A program called Impact II offers financial incentives for innovative teachers. The 20/20 program allows schools more leeway and more financial resources.

■ **Item 12:** Survey parents twice a year regarding their "consumer satisfaction."

Response: The district says that it conducts annual public opinion surveys to gauge "consumer satisfaction." It also taps parental opinion through a variety of committees, such as the local school advisory and desegregation monitoring panels.

that affected poor students in the district regardless of race.

Prophet said his contact with leaders in the black community indicated some were not in favor of the boycott.

On Thursday, Portland's Rainbow Coalition announced its support of the boycott, saying that lagging academic achievement was a problem

but he said the league will review position at a board meeting next month.

"We don't want to see a boycott," he said. "We do feel the school board should pay serious attention to what's going on in the community and we are prepared to offer assistance to get a dialogue going."

Darryl Tukufu, president of the Urban League of Portland, said his group opposed a boycott at this time

death. He had confessed a day earlier to a friend, Todd Maas, who gave the information to Portland police.

Hessel then gave a detailed confession interview. Based largely on his statements, jurors convicting Dozler to hide his identity for an assault and for kidnapping.

nd of a five-day sentencing d "no" to three of four ques have led to a death penalty. they concluded there were umstances in Hessel's back-acter that should give him a le after 20 or 30 years.

who imposed the sentence aid the minimum term calls i prison. But he said Hessel le to apply for parole after 20

all five members of the state Parole Board that he has been rehabilitated.

Prosecutors contended that Hessel hates women and had a history of rude and sometimes assaultive behavior towards them. His prior crimes involved drugs, drunken driving and one charge of public indecency.

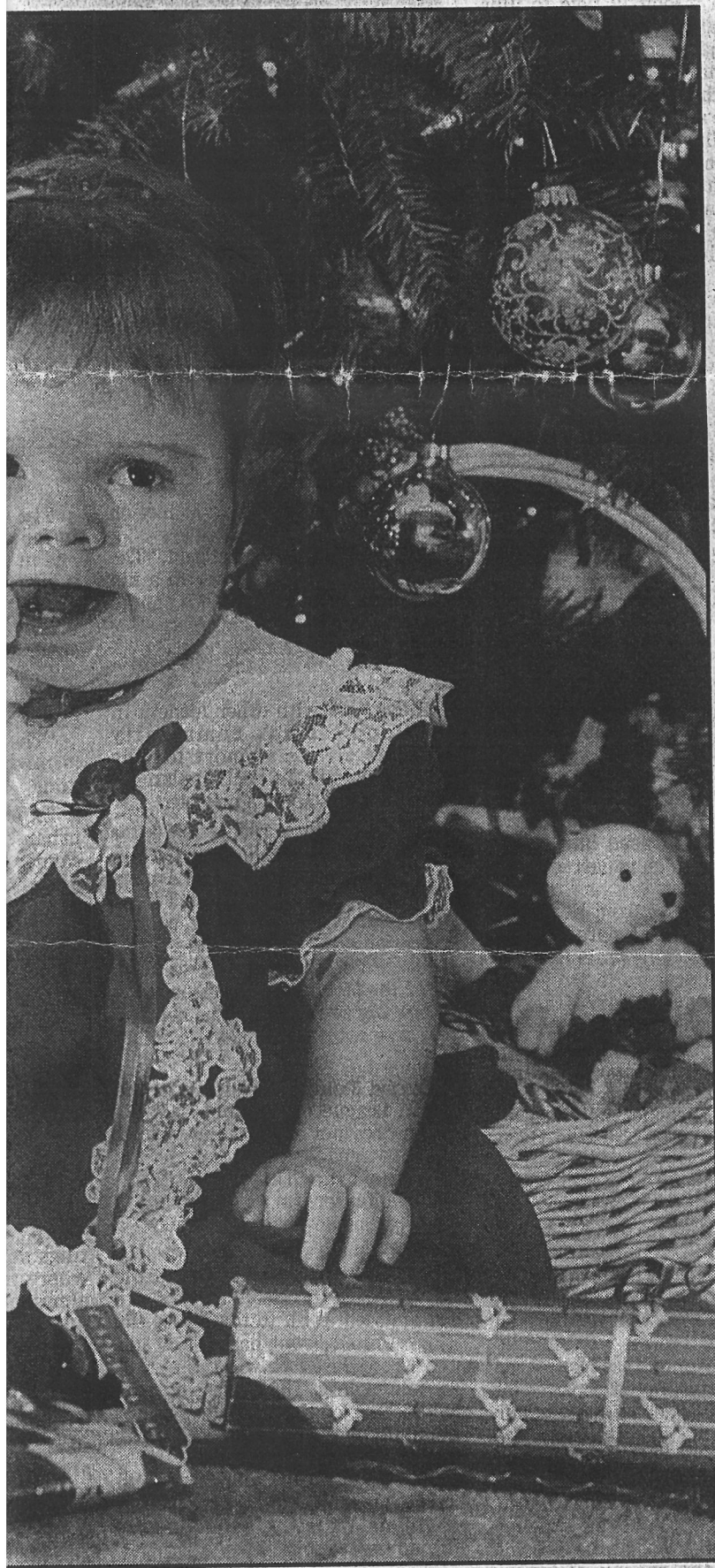
Defense lawyer Kenneth Morrow told jurors earlier Saturday that the death penalty was not intended for crude or boorish behavior. He said Hessel was spoiled as a child and had difficulties stemming from his parents' divorce when he was 10.

"He is not aware many times what his actions and words mean to other people," Morrow said.

According to Morrow, Hessel's mother suffered for many years from alcoholism, and his father didn't take enough time away from his successful heavy equipment business to provide the youth with guidance.

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HESEL, Page C4

iracle' of baby's life



The Oregonian/ROGER JENSEN

for black students? *IS DISTRICT DOING JOB*

☐ The Black United Front doesn't think so and is calling for a boycott, but school officials say they're doing the best they can

By **BRIAN T. MEEHAN**
of The Oregonian staff

The final refrain of the black national anthem rang through the big room at the Royal Esquire Community Events Center.

*"Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
"Let us march on till victory is won."*

Joyce Harris and about 40 others had come to the hall on Northeast Alberta Street to plan the Black United Front's third boycott of the Portland Public Schools in 10 years. Harris and others believe city schools are not serving poor black students, who lag behind white students in academic achievement scores.

"I'm concerned about the academic level as a parent and an educator," said Harris, director of the private Black Education Center. "I see the impact of education on their future. We know that a lot of the problems, dropouts and gangs — almost to the last one, those kids have had problems in school."

For Harris and other members of the community-action group, a "new day" in public education can't come soon enough. They indict the school district with its own data. The numbers show minority students leading whites in dropout rates and suspensions and trailing in achievement scores for mathematics and reading.

The Black United Front rejects gains made by black students on achievement tests in the past nine years, saying the advances are insignificant in a marketplace that will demand technological skills. Ron Herndon, the group's leader, brought 22 urban principals from around the country to



HERNDON

Oregon for a conference. Herndon says the principals, who have succeeded in educating the same groups that are struggling in Portland, are proof that minority children can succeed despite the problems of poverty.

Why can't it happen in Portland? he asks. Why can't it happen today?

"It's tragic that we've gotten to this point," said Herndon, who 10 years ago organized the first boycott to protest district busing plans. "The institution we've all looked to impart the skills to immigrant children that would allow them to move out of poverty and oppression, it's not working. It's not working for poor children."

District studies show that poor white students do just as badly on achievement tests as poor minority students, said Walter E. Hathaway, director of research and testing. While the district lacks the data to track along income lines, Hathaway says poverty, not race, appears to be the common thread of failure.

"For every inner Northeast school that's having trouble I can point to one in outer Southeast that is just as low," he said.

On Friday, the school district issued a 45-page response to the Black United Front's Education Improvement Action Plan. Both sides said they want to meet and discuss their differences, which the board described as minimal. But after a quick review of the response, Herndon pronounced the front and the board far apart.

"What they have produced won't get us there, whether it's for poor children or for all children in town to meet international standards," he said.

"These children are not getting the skills necessary for them to perform the tasks

required in an increasingly technological world," Herndon said. "I'm waiting for the majority of white parents to understand their kids cannot compete with kids from around the world."

Herndon, a longtime critic of Portland schools, runs the Head Start program in North and Northeast Portland. He accuses the Portland School Board of being complacent about the progress of poor and minority students. The charge upsets board members and Matthew Prophet, the superintendent of schools.

"I'm very proud of what Portland has done," said Prophet, who rejects Herndon's call for a boycott. "We know there is a discrepancy between black and white students. We also know that discrepancy is less now than it ever has been."

Carol Turner, school board chairwoman, says Portland schools are a national leader among large urban school districts. She believes the argument hinges on how one views the data.

"Herndon and I agree on the facts, but he's looking at the glass as half empty and I see it as half full," Turner said. "We both agree we have to do more."

□

The dispute between the school board and the Black United Front comes down to a collision of expectations. The group and others in the North/Northeast Portland community are frustrated. They want the achievement gap between poor and affluent, black and white closed. They also believe the school board lacks the sense of urgency they feel. They see time, and children, passing by.

"The level of achievement has been so low for so long we are losing whole generations of students," said Kanau Sadiki, an engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who helps tutor students in Northeast Portland.

"The boycott is the most radical thing to let the board know we are genuinely concerned," he added. "I realize they are concerned, too, but they have had a lot of time."

Prophet views the situation differently. He looks at society's landscape and sees his school system as one of the few institutions moving in a positive direction.

"We've done so many things that other institutions have been incapable of doing," he said.

He said he is unhappy that poor and minority students have not caught up but he also is buoyed by the progress that has been made.

"We don't think we can conquer Rome overnight," he said. "We have to recognize these problems of making all these kids equitable is not something that's going to happen this year or the next. We're talking about a couple of decades. These problems go far deeper than schools, and all the ills of society cannot be laid at the school's doorstep."

□

Portland's 55,000-student school system is 27.5 percent minority, making it one of the few urban districts in the nation where white students have not fled for the suburbs. The statistics, as in every other large American city, portend a bleaker future for Portland's minority students than for their white peers.

Portland minority students are more likely to be suspended than white students. Minority students also are more likely to be placed in special education, learning disabled or remedial classes. Last year, nearly a quarter of the district's black students were in remedial math, four times the percentage of white students. Seventeen percent of black students and 12 percent of American Indian students were suspended last

year. Prophet calls these figures the envy of every other urban district in the country.

The comparison rings hollow, though, for some black parents. At the Black United Front meeting, Halim Rashaan, a member of the district's desegregation monitoring committee, said: "You hear how we're doing better than the kids back East. Well, my kids don't go to school back East. They go to school here."

But signs of progress are hard to overlook. Portland's dropout rate for black schoolchildren is below the district average and falling, and the district's overall dropout rate is half that of other urban districts. More Portland students take the Scholastic Aptitude Test than the national average, yet the district's combined math and verbal average was 906 last year, 6 points above the national average.

"I can tell you there's not a single other urban school district that has reported to any of us they have SAT scores above the national average," Hathaway said.

Few districts, too, can match Portland's progress on achievement scores, district leaders say.

Prophet uses the metaphor of a footrace on a football field to illustrate the gains black children have made in reading scores.

"If you started a race in 1981, you would put the white students on the 74-yard line and the blacks on the 34-yard line. Nine years later, the white students are at the 78-yard line and the black students are at the 50-yard line. ... How can you say that the schools are less effective for black kids when their growth is four times greater?"

However, since 1988, gains in achievement scores have leveled off.

Hathaway says the district is puzzled by the trend. He attributes it to the fact that the higher a child moves on the achievement scale, the more difficult the material becomes.

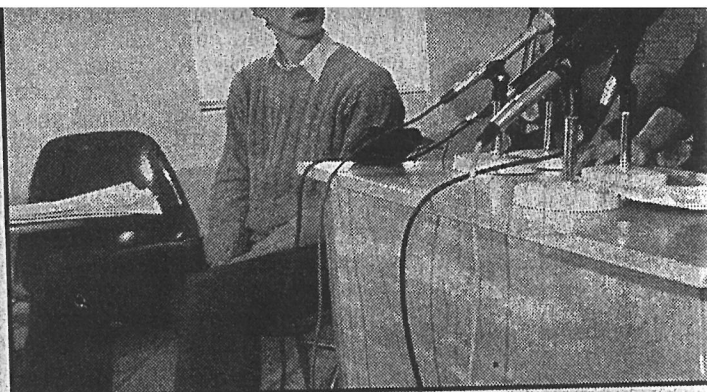
"Secondly, our principals are reporting that we are getting more children that are more difficult to educate," he said. "People don't like to hear that, but we are getting more children with problems."

The Black United Front has called for a series of one-day school boycotts in February unless the district adopts the group's Education Improvement Action Plan. The 12-step plan calls for the creation of a district oversight committee, school management teams, student achievement plans, hiring consultants with proven records in educating poor minority students and evaluating teachers based on student performance, which is barred in the teachers' contract.

The plan springs from Herndon's experience with Partners for Success, a conference he organized that brought 22 educators to Oregon to draw a blueprint for effective schools. Herndon says the educators all had outstanding success in educating poor, minority students despite urban poverty.

On Friday, Prophet delivered the district's formal response to Herndon. Included was a 44-page response to the 12 proposals urged by the Black United Front. The document essentially reiterates the school district's contention that it already has incorporated most of the recommendations.

"We would hope that neither you nor any other citizen would advocate a boycott simply because the board has not adopted a plan you have proposed, when so many of our ideas run parallel to each other," the board wrote Herndon in a letter accompanying its response. "You would not have taken the time to explain your thoughts in writing unless you believed that the force of reason, not the reason of force, should guide the conduct of this community."



minute talk to district personnel on the subject last week.

Of the boycott, Prophet said, "The last thing I could ever say to a kid was 'don't go to school.' We should not plant in their minds that skipping school is a positive event."

□

Interviews with other leaders in Portland's black community revealed strong support for the Black United Front's action plan but mixed feelings about a boycott.

"I think the boycott is just a response to what folks feel the district is not doing," said Amina Anderson of the Black United Fund of Oregon, a co-signer of the education action plan and a boycott supporter. "They're trying to bring home the fact they are serious about improving education in this community and want to see some commitment."

Darryl Tukufu, president of the Urban League of Portland, said his group does not support the boycott but is reviewing the matter, and the Portland branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has not yet taken a position.

Robert Phillips, president of the local NAACP branch, said: "We're not opposed at all to the issues the Black United Front has raised, nor are we opposed to what they are recommending. The things they are requesting of the district are not that difficult for the district to implement if they have the will to do it."

But Phillips, like Prophet and school board members, believes the problems afflicting education go beyond the schools.

"It's not a popular thing to say, but a lot of problem associated with education concerns what is happen-

The issue of parental responsibility for education is a constant one in the black community. It is sometimes viewed as a product of racism, of a "blame the victim" attitude among the structure.

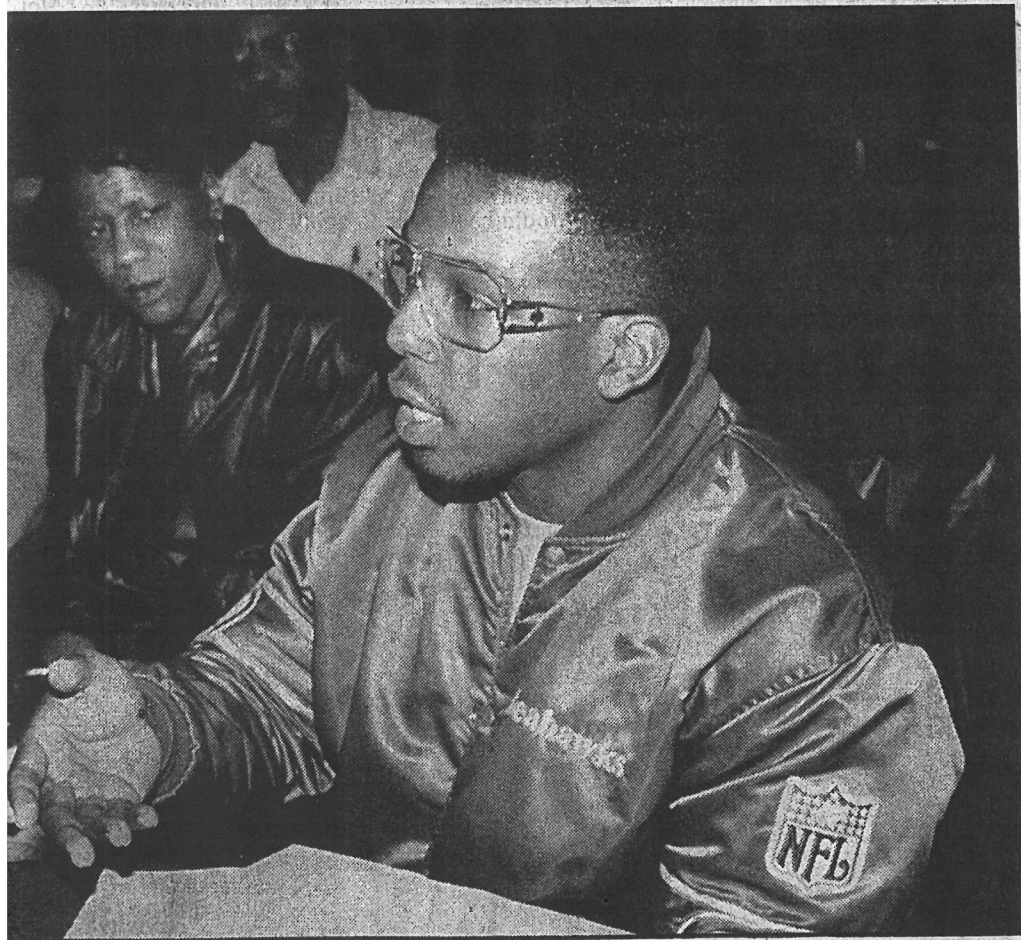
Herndon and Rashaan believe the district is too quick to cite problems for troubles in schools. "They're blaming family failures of the system," said.

Experts on school reform in urban education say schools cannot solve the problem: poverty. They stress that urban schools have the involvement of parents and communities. And they caution simple solutions to a complex problem.

"I think there's a tendency to want to reach for a silver bullet, find a magic answer," said Rawley of Vanderbilt University Institute for Public Policy.

"There's no magic bullet, afraid," he added. "The principals will save us one of those Wizard of Oz results where the principals are doing wonderful things where they occur the same almost always unique and just take what they are transfer it."

Stanford University's Levin, an ardent school reformer and the architect of Stanford's Urban Schools Program. Levin's program has achieved results with poor minority students at 53 schools around the country. Levin, a critic of remedial education, says his program treats students as if they were talented. The program creates a momentum for the school, bringing in resources and



Top: Jan Mihara, co-chairwoman of Portland's Rainbow Coalition, speaks to the press at a news conference Thursday in Southeast Portland. The coalition, a justice advocacy group, announced its support of the proposed school boycott, saying that lagging academic achievement was a problem that affected poor students regardless of race. Flanking Mihara are coalition members Marina Anttila (right) and Jamie Partridge. **Above:** Matthew Prophet, superintendent of Portland schools, defends the district's record of minority achievement. **Left:** During a Black United Front meeting to plan a proposed boycott, Jonathan Richardson makes a point about what he considers discrepancies between Wilson and Jefferson high schools and the educational expectations at each. He attended both, graduating from Wilson in 1984.

The Oregonian/JIM WARNER

talk to district personnel on Oct. 1 last week.

Matthew Prophet said, "The only thing I could ever say to a kid is 'Don't go to school.' We should not put in their minds that skipping school is a positive event."

□

views with other leaders in the city's black community. He received strong support for the Black United Front's action plan but expressed concerns about a boycott.

"I think the boycott is just a reaction to what folks feel the district is not doing," said Amina Gordon of the Black United Fund. "I'm a co-signer of the action plan and a boycott. The fact they are serious about improving education in this community is what we want to see some commitment to."

Yl Tukufo, president of the League of Portland, said his group does not support the boycott. "After reviewing the matter, and the other branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has not yet taken a position."

Robert Phillips, president of the NAACP branch, said: "We're not opposed to all of the issues the Black United Front has raised, nor are we opposed to what they are demanding. The things they are asking of the district are not unreasonable. It's up to the district to implement what they have the will to do it." Phillips, like Prophet and other board members, believes the problems afflicting education go beyond the schools.

It's not a popular thing to say, but a lot of problem associated with urban education concerns what is happening at home," Phillips said. "I think schools can't be blamed for the problem. I think parents have some responsibility. There has to be a team approach to developing solutions to the issue."

The issue of parental responsibility for education is a controversial one in the black community, where it is sometimes viewed as a byproduct of racism, of a "blame-the-victim" attitude among the power structure.

Herndon and Rashaan believe the district is too quick to cite societal problems for troubles in school.

"They're blaming families for the failures of the system," Herndon said.

Experts on school reform and urban education say schools alone cannot solve the problems of urban poverty. They stress that effective urban schools have the strong involvement of parents and communities. And they caution about simple solutions to a complex problem.

"I think there's a tendency to want to reach for a silver bullet, to find a magic answer," said Willis Rawley of Vanderbilt University's Institute for Public Policy Studies.

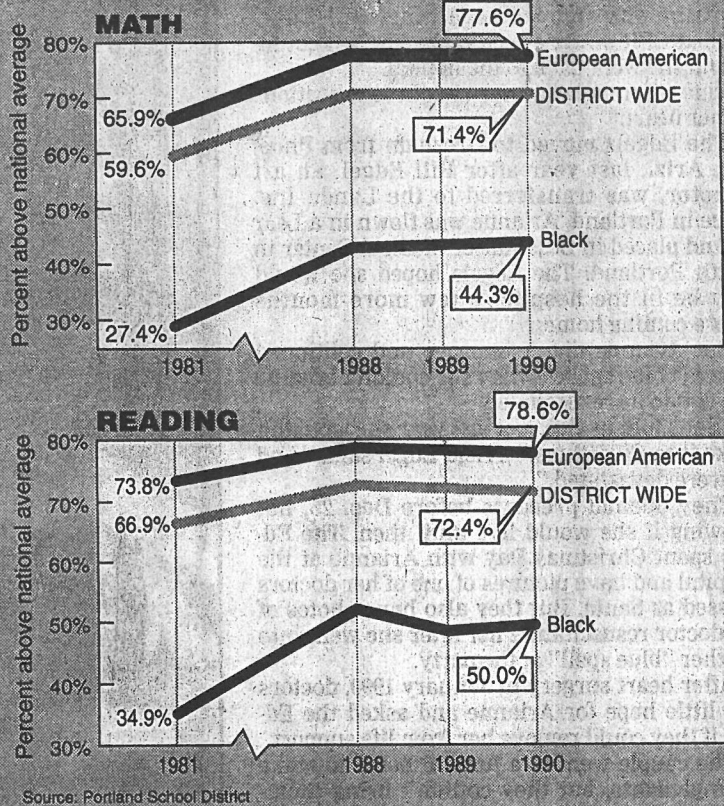
"There's no magic wand, I'm afraid," he added. "The idea that principals will save us is another one of those Wizard of Oz pursuits. There are principals working in settings doing wonderful things, but where they occur the situation is almost always unique and you can't just take what they are doing and transfer it."

Stanford University's Henry Levin, an ardent school reformer, is the architect of Stanford's Accelerated Schools Program. Levin says the program has achieved dramatic results with poor minority students at 53 schools around the country. Levin, a critic of remedial classes, says his program treats all children as if they were talented and gifted. The program creates a mission statement for the school, bring decision-making down to the local level and trains students to take responsibility for their learning. But Levin warns the program would be a flop without parental support.

"Any parent that just parks his

A CONTINUING GAP

Since 1981 Portland Public Schools has given pupils in grades 3-8 locally developed achievement tests in reading and mathematics twice a year. School officials point to big gains in the number of minority students testing above the national average in reading and math. Critics, though, point out the continuing gap between minority schoolchildren and their white peers and note that achievement gains have leveled off since 1988. Walter E. Hathaway, director of research and evaluation, says the district lacks the data to chart test scores based on income level. However, he says that poor white students have the same academic performance problems as minority students.



The Oregonian

kid in front of a TV set and doesn't work with their child has no business picketing the school," he said.

Portland's board chairwoman, Carol Turner, believes the problem of lagging achievement among poor and minority schoolchildren demands society's attention.

"I think it is the challenge of

urban education to find what we can do to fill the gaps," she said. "I also think it's the challenge of our whole nation and our community to recognize that these children are our future citizens and we all have a responsibility. We all have to own a part of the problem and a part of the solution."

12/20/90

Front's call for boycott gets backing

□ The city's Rainbow Coalition says the poor lack quality education

By BRIAN T. MEEHAN

of The Oregonian staff

Portland's Rainbow Coalition on Thursday announced its support of the Black United Front's plan to improve education for minority and poor schoolchildren and said it would support the front's call for a boycott of Portland Public Schools.

"This boycott to win quality education has been widely seen as a 'black-only' struggle," Jan Mihara, coalition co-chairwoman, said in a statement released at the Southeast Portland news conference. "However, the Portland Public Schools are undereducating nearly all Portland's racial minority and low-income children."

The coalition, a loosely organized justice advocacy group that sprang out of Jesse Jackson's Democratic presidential campaign, urged the Portland School Board to adopt an Education Improvement Action Plan drafted by the Black United Front.

Boycott: Groups should pool energy, school board head says

Continued from Page D1

Last week, Ron Herndon, chairman of the Black United Front and also a member of the coalition, accused the school district of becoming complacent about the academic achievement of its minority and poor students. Herndon called for a series of one-day boycotts in February unless the board adopts a 12-step plan.

The school district, which has been preparing a formal reply to Herndon, has said that it has already adopted much of the improvement plan.

Board members have pointed out that Portland has made bigger gains in closing the achievement gap between white and minority students than any other urban school system in the nation. And board

members have denied they are complacent about the academic performance of poor and minority students.

"I do wish the Rainbow Coalition had requested to meet with board members about their concerns about schools," said Carol Turner, board chairwoman, who said she thought the controversy was diverting attention from the threat she believes Measure 5 poses for education in

Oregon.

"I wish we could harness the energy of the Black United Front and the Rainbow Coalition and get all of us joined together working with the legislature and putting the pressure on people to help resolve this crisis," she said.

At the news conference, Jamie Partridge, a member of the coalition, praised the leadership of the Black

United Front.

"Why should we as parents be satisfied with disparity between poor and middle-class students?" Partridge said. "The school district has made some progress, but at this rate it will be 50 years from now before we'll have parity."

Mihara stressed the coalition's support of the boycott was not a comment on teachers in the system.

Black United Front continues boycott call

Justice Department mediator to help resolve dispute

By BILL GRAVES

of The Oregonian staff

School officials so far have failed to stop the Black United Front from pushing for a districtwide boycott by all students of Portland Public Schools next month.

Unless school officials more fully embrace the group's plan for helping poor and minority students learn more, the Front will lead the one-day boycott, Ron Herndon said during a news conference in Northeast Portland on Wednesday. Herndon is co-chairman of the Black United Front.

In a 45-page response to the boycott warning, Portland School District officials last month argued they already are carrying out most of the Front's 12-step Education Improvement Action Plan. But the Black United Front and other groups that endorsed the plan disagree, Herndon said.

"The board's response to the community's plan," he said, "is a recitation of school district programs and policies that failed to raise black children's test scores to district averages; failed to raise Hispanic, Indian and low-income white children's test scores to district averages; and failed to acknowledge that all Portland school students are far behind schoolchildren from the rest of the industrialized world."

The Black United Front will announce in two weeks the date it will set for a boycott, and it will have a community meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Royal Esquire Community Meeting Room, 1637 N.E. Alberta St.

The Front also is seeking support for a boycott from other groups. It already has the backing of Portland's Rainbow Coalition, and it seems to be drawing more support than it had for two previous boycotts in the early 1980s, said Halim Rahsaan, chairman of the Front's education committee.

Both the Front and the Portland School Board have asked the U.S. Justice Department's Northwest community relations service in Seat-

tle to help them find common ground. Bob Hughes, mediator for the agency, said he expects to meet with both sides this month.

"Half the battle is won when you get them to the table together," Hughes said.

Board Chairwoman Carol Turner said discussions that include the board, the Front and other community groups should be the next step in resolving the conflict.

"The issues the Black United Front is raising are very important issues, and are clearly broader than those that only involve race," Turner said. "Perhaps more people ought to be involved."

At the heart of the dispute are differing visions between the Front and the Portland School Board about what is possible. The board notes that boosting academic achievement of all students, particularly the poor and minority students who lag behind, ranks among its top priorities. And it argues it has made more progress with those groups of students than nearly every other urban school district in the nation.

"What we are saying is, 'That is not good enough,'" Herndon said. "There is no reason for us to accept

failure of such a large number of students."

Herndon also said the district should raise its sights for its white, middle-class students who are learning far less than their peers in other countries.

The board has not, as the Front's plan recommends, set dates when it intends to see 90 percent of students performing at grade level or meeting international standards, Herndon said.

"What would cause any institution to hesitate in doing that?" he asked.

The board agrees that students, particularly poor and minority students, are not learning as much as they should. About half of the black children in the district, for example, read at their grade levels, compared with 80 percent of white children.

The Front's plan calls for a committee of academic excellence to monitor student achievement. The board argues that it fulfills that role. Herndon calls that argument "laughable."

"If that's the committee of academic excellence," he said, "we have a divergence of what we think excellence means."

BUF to Slate Boycott Date

The Black United Front will announce the date of a school boycott day in February during a meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday in the Royal Esquire Community Meeting Room, 1637 N.E. Alberta, BUF Co-chair Ron Herndon announced Wednesday.

"We're also going to explain how a school system can be turned around," Herndon said. "It can be done. We've seen it done."

The BUF leader also predicted that other organizations will shortly endorse the boycott of Portland Public Schools. It recently drew the support of the Rainbow Coalition.

Herndon said BUF would evaluate the results of the one day boycott, and possibly schedule other boycott days in coming months. He said the group might also use demonstrations, pickets and sit-downs.

BUF would consider the boycott a success if the school district adopts an educational improvement plan put forth by a coalition of community groups. School Superintendent Matthew Prophet on Dec. 20 sent Herndon and BUF a letter regarding the boycott and the plan. He said the boycott "is ill advised and potentially harmful to our students" because it cuts into regular school attendance.

Prophet also said the district is implementing plans to improve the achievement of ethnic and poor students. "Any examination of the resources dedicated to particular schools and to programs demonstrates that commitment," he wrote.

The district's "response to the community's plan is a recitation of school district programs and policies that failed to raise Black children's test scores to district averages," Herndon responded.

Group gives reason for school boycott

By BRIAN T. MEEHAN

of The Oregonian staff

The Black United Front explained its proposed boycott of Portland Public Schools to about 40 persons who gathered in Northeast Portland on Thursday night to hear why the community action group was organizing its third school boycott in 10 years.

"We are concerned about black youngsters in this community, but

we are concerned about other youngsters, too," said Richard Brown, the co-chairman of the group. "And the gains will be gains that can be shared."

Ron Herndon, co-chairman of the community-action group, called for the boycott earlier this week after accusing the school district of becoming complacent about the academic achievement of its minority students. Herndon wasn't able to attend Thursday night's meeting.

Last year the group submitted a 12-step action plan to the Portland School Board that was aimed at improving education for the city's minority students, who lag behind white students in achievement scores.

"We need to produce youngsters who have the skills to do this high-tech work employers are demanding," Brown told the crowd gathered in the Royal Esquire Community Events Center on Northeast Alberta Street. "Our youngsters are getting out of school today with a diploma that's not worth the paper it's written on," he said.

Herndon has said the Black United Front will urge parents to keep schoolchildren home on designated days in February unless the school board adopts the group's education improvement action plan.

Halim Rashaan, chairman of the group's education committee, said a boycott could be averted.

"I think that if the school board would meet with us and was sincere in implementing our plan with goals and timetables, that in itself would satisfy our needs," he said. "But I think there's a certain arrogance on the part of the board that we can't

pull this off."

Rashaan reminded the audience of school boycotts the group staged in 1980 and 1981 to protest school busing plans and the siting of a middle school. He said the school board had not yet responded in writing to the action plan.

School officials have said they have enacted elements of the action plan.

Carol Turner, board chairwoman, said Thursday: "Generally the plan was received well. We talked with him (Ron Herndon) and met with him last year. We responded as he requested, which was in person. I think it contains many good ideas, but there are some ideas we may never agree on."

The plan is intended to eliminate achievement gaps between students from different races and economic groups, spur rapid gains in test scores, increase graduation rates, decrease suspension rates for minority students and enable students from North and Northeast Portland to compete with students abroad.

Among its 12 proposals, the plan calls on the board to establish:

- A "committee for academic excellence," which would comprise parents, school board members and people from the business and local communities. The panel would develop incentives for teachers, students and parents and would monitor schools where students score below grade level.

- School management teams, which would include teachers, parents, administrators and a consultant who has had success in educating students in the socioeconomic group the school serves. The team, which Herndon believes must have real authority over the school, would set goals, implement a school improvement plan and monitor student performance.

- A process of evaluating administrators, principals and teachers on the basis of students' academic performance.

- Leadership training for principals and specific goals designating when the majority of students will perform at grade level or above.

"In the year 2000, I don't want to be sitting in a meeting talking about boycotting the school district," Brown said. "I want us to come back and have a party."



RASHAAN



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

501 North Dixon Street / Portland, Oregon 97227

Phone: (503) 249-2000

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OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Matthew W. Prophet
Superintendent

December 20, 1990

Mr. Ron Herndon
Black United Front
P.O. Box 3976
Portland, Oregon 97208

**Re: Your Education Improvement Plan and
The Threat of Boycott**

Dear Ron:

I believe your plan to establish a student boycott of Portland Public School classes in February is ill-advised and potentially harmful to our students. We know that one of the things essential for high achievement is regular school attendance. A major goal of this District and its community is to keep kids in school.

I want to comment on your assertion that you have not received a **written** response to your Education Improvement Plan. Please recall that our first knowledge of your plan came through the Neighborhood Revitalization Management Panel. You distributed copies of a larger plan to that panel. Mr. Voboril, a member of the panel, shared his copy with me. When you presented an explanation of that larger plan to the panel on June 5, 1989, Mr. Voboril did distribute to you, members of your presentation group and members of the Revitalization Management Panel a copy of my written commentary on your Education Improvement Plan. Thus a written response to your plan came from the District to you in June of 1989, within a week of our first knowledge of it.

Your more recent request for additional response was made directly to the School Board. Several School Board members have since met with you. Because your request was to the School Board and since they responded promptly and thoroughly, I did not feel that any additional response was needed or expected. Indeed, I thought the level of personal Board response and the meetings you had

Ron Herndon

Transmittal of Response

Page 2

with Board Members to discuss your "Improvement Plan" constituted an unusually strong answer. It is difficult to change that substantial response being characterized as "ignoring" your plan.

Your work to instigate a student boycott and your public assertions about the lack of dedication and progress of the District in improving education for African-American and other minority and low-income students now make this concern specifically mine.

In offering this detailed written response, at the request of the Board and in consultation with its members, it is not my intent to disparage what I know is a sincere attempt by you and your associates to give helpful inspiration and instruction to the District. I do, however, intend to be as clear as possible about how I understand public school governance must work, how I feel the School District should respond to constructive criticism, and what the District is doing, has done and will be doing about the issues raised in your "Improvement Plan."

The ideas, suggestions and comments in your proposal are not new to us. The direction you have suggested is in large part a road on which we have already been traveling. You are making use of some of the Effective Schooling Research which we have been contributing to and implementing in this District since before 1980. When I arrived in 1982, I brought with me a rich background of personal work with Dr. Ron Edmonds, the premier thinker and researcher in this arena. We worked together in Lansing on some of his original studies. I am very intimately acquainted with his work and that of his successors in the field. Our principals and DOI's were trained very early in his goals and principles. They have been expanded and permeate much of what we do in schools. You will see evidence of them in the Board's goals and objectives and in our District's programs and services.

This District has led the way nationally on the application of measurement and accountability for enhancing student performance, especially the achievement of poor and minority youth. We are widely known for our use of sophisticated methods of evaluation that are applied to individual students, classrooms, schools, clusters, programs and the District as a whole. We are visited frequently by other national and international school systems which want to emulate our system. The results of our student assessment program, disaggregated by ethnic group, are shared regularly with the community. That is what has given you and your associates the information with which you have criticized our progress.

We also have a wide variety of advisory committees and other avenues for parent and community involvement in District decision making. When I am at national meetings, representatives from other districts cannot believe the level of our openness and the seriousness with which we take our invitation to the community to participate with us. We have citizen committees which work with professional staff on curriculum, on instructional programs and on delivery methods for special programs and student services. We have a number of citizen budget committees to assist in establishing our fiscal goals and in developing building, office, and department budgets. Our Desegregation Monitoring Committee is one-of-a-kind on the national scene. Our STAR PLAN, "The Portland Blueprint: Success for Students At Risk," requires every school and program to work collaboratively with community and business representatives to develop fully accountable means to improve learning for low achieving students. Through this extensive community involvement structure we open ourselves to scrutiny and to extensive citizen participation. What we do not and will not do is allow our principals and other professional staff to be weakened or diminished in the instructional and program leadership they provide. I want each teacher to be ultimately accountable for his or her classroom instruction, each principal to be accountable for what happens in his or her building, and each Director of Instruction to be accountable for improvements within his or her cluster.

Ron Herndon

Transmittal of Response

Page 4

While the accompanying response primarily pertains to your criticisms and recommendations and spells out those actions that are already being taken, generally unilaterally, by the Portland Public Schools toward improving the overall status of students in our schools, I want to also invite your attention to what I regard as another very important initiative which recently has been undertaken by the State of Oregon. I refer specifically to the Oregon Progress Board which is comprised of Neil Goldschmidt, Governor and Board Chair; John D. Gray, Vice Chair; Robert W. Chandler, Irv Fletcher, Gussie McRobert, Peggi Timm, Ed Whitelaw, Diane Williams, Fred Miller (Ex Officio) and myself.

The Oregon Progress Board was appointed in late 1989 by the Governor and confirmed by the Oregon Senate. Its primary purpose is to improve the overall status of our State to a position whereby Oregon becomes the best State in the Union by having *exceptional people*, an *outstanding quality of life* and a *diverse, robust economy*. I am proud of the contributions I and others on the Board have made toward the development of certain Benchmarks and essential education elements.

To quote from our document:

During the next twenty years, we will work toward this goal in three ways. First, we will raise Oregonians' fundamental skills. These will include our ability to read and understand, to solve problems, to learn, to function in the work place and to take advantage of occupation-specific training. Second, we will provide superior access to that occupation-specific training. Third, we will foster stable, nurturing families and other pursuits fundamental to our quality as a people.

We are collaborating in the development and implementation of these Benchmarks to which we expect the State will dedicate considerable energy and fiscal resources. I believe your review of these objectives, developed by literally

Ron Herndon

Transmittal of Response

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hundreds of organizations and individuals throughout our State, will cause you to conclude that the State and we are on the right path to alleviate the conditions that impede student learning.

One last thought -- because so much of what the Progress Board is attempting to do relates specifically to poor, minority and at-risk youth, I regard this as being a landmark effort, and as constituting real hope for the future. I hope that you agree with the thrust of the Progress Board and know that you, too, recognize the global nature of the problems permeating America, and Oregon, as well as being present to some degree in the Portland community. I encourage your cooperation with this effort.

There can be no question that this School District is committed fully to improving the learning and opportunities of students from low-income families and neighborhoods and especially students who are ethnic minorities in north and northeast Portland. Any examination of the resources dedicated to particular schools and to programs demonstrates that commitment. We intend to maintain and improve on that effort.

Your Education Improvement Plan is a valuable and well-developed document. But, it is only one of several that come to the District in one form or another each year. The legislature has members who have their own version of what school structure and services should look like. Individuals, business community representatives and other groups have their versions. No **single** source of suggestions or criticism can or should be our guide. It is the Board's task to sort out what can and should be the policy and direction of this district. It is their obligation to do what is best for all the citizens, all the voters, all the taxpayers, all the parents and, most of all, all the students. The obligation I share with them for delivery of equitable, quality education for our youngsters is taken seriously.

Ron Herndon

Transmittal of Response

Page 6

What follows is a detailed, written response to your assertions and claims in your call for a boycott. I have evaluated each of the suggestions that were made in your "Improvement Plan." If you and your followers will examine my comments, you will see that our goals for students, especially for African-American and other minority or low-income students, seem essentially the same, and that we hold many common principles in seeking to educate each student up to his or her potential. Indeed, many of the specific action steps we take to pursue our goals are exactly or very much like what you are now proposing. In some cases, however, our training and experience as professional educators has led us to create and pursue different courses of action. The endeavors we are engaged in do not come under the name of Ron Herndon's Education Improvement Plan. Neither should they be called Matt Prophet's Education Improvement Plan. This District's plan is to encourage community and business people to come forward and work side-by-side with our teachers and administrators to design and deliver an educational program that works for all students. The Board, I and our capable and experienced staff regularly evaluate what is done. Our progress in improving student achievement, enhancing parent involvement, and engaging community and business people, all testify to our success.

I want to close this letter by saying I am not yet satisfied; I know more can be done: more is needed for African-American students and more for all other students. I am not resting. I welcome any proposals that you or any other citizen of Portland will offer. What I cannot and will not do is turn the District over to others to lead and manage. Nor will I be less passionate about what we need. The Board, with my full support, has set policy by establishing goals and objectives for the District. The staff have designed programs to meet those goals for better education. With our highly qualified staff, I constantly review our efforts. We will continue to fulfill our charge to provide a full, free and equal education opportunity to all our students.

Ron Herndon
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The attached commentary, together with this letter, constitutes a written response to your plan. I hope and expect that you, and your supporters, will reconsider any need for a boycott.

Cordially,

Matthew

The Portland Public Schools
Response To
Mr. Ron Herndon's
Educational Improvement Action Plan

December 1990

Matthew Prophet
Superintendent

**"WE CAN, WHENEVER AND WHEREVER WE CHOOSE, SUCCESSFULLY
TEACH ALL CHILDREN WHOSE SCHOOLING IS OF INTEREST TO US.
WE ALREADY KNOW MORE THAN WE NEED IN ORDER TO DO THIS.
WHETHER WE DO IT MUST FINALLY DEPEND ON HOW WE FEEL
ABOUT THE FACT THAT WE HAVEN'T SO FAR."**

Dr. Ron Edmonds

**(Pioneer of Research
on Effective Schools)**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Ross Dey

Stephen Griffith

Marty Howard

Stephen Kafoury

Forrest Rieke

Carol Turner

Joe Voboril

**Some Key Facts about Student Performance
in the Portland Public Schools
December 1990**

- o Portland's African-American student scores in reading improved more than 40 percent from 1981-1990 while their math scores rose by more than 60 percent. The District increases were 8.2 percent and 19.8 percent respectively.
- o For Portland Hispanic-American students, reading scores improved more than 30 percent and math scores more than 60 percent during the last decade.
- o Basic skills achievement of Portland Public Schools' students ranks among the highest in the nation. In Spring of 1990, over 70 percent of Portland's students were above a commonly used national norm in both reading and mathematics.
- o During the last decade, Portland's students have dramatically increased their achievement in the basic skills. Today's fourth graders, for example, know as much math as fifth graders did ten years ago.
- o More than 70 percent of Portland's high school seniors report that they plan to go on to college or to other significant post-secondary education.
- o While a higher percentage of Portland students take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than nationally (52% vs 40%), our average SAT scores are above the national average (906 vs 900).
- o During the past decade, the state reported Portland School District's dropout rate has declined significantly until a point that the current 7.3 percent annual dropout rate is lower than the state average. This is an especially unique status for a large urban school system. It is also the case that our African-American student dropout rate has declined to the point at which Black children are leaving school early less often than white children.

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Introduction

The leadership and staff of the Portland School District share with Mr. Herndon, and many members of the Portland community from all ethnic groups, a sense of urgency about meeting the challenge to create schools where every child receives an excellent education in a context that assures equity. We not only are pursuing the same goals, but we also are choosing very similar means on many issues to achieve our common vision. This makes the unexpected threat of a boycott doubly painful.

In the pages that follow, in Part I, I will review the claims and the conclusions that the Black United Front has reached and will share information about the facts in each arena. It will be seen that much progress has and is being made toward our common goals, but that much work remains to be done, and as rapidly as possible.

In Part II, I will review each aspect of the "Education Improvement Action Plan." It will become clear that while there is significant agreement on the principles that underlie that action plan, there is also some disagreement on the specifics of the best means to realize those principles.

PART I

Claims and Conclusions In Black United Front Call for a Boycott

Seven claims about the levels of Black student achievement in the Portland Public Schools have been made by the Black United Front (BUF) as justification for their threatened boycott of the Portland Public Schools. The demand is for a 12-point Education Improvement Plan to be implemented immediately. In this section I respond to each part of your plan and evaluate the validity of each claim against the facts. I hope your review of this response will cause you to question whether or not the student-damaging action of a boycott is warranted and is the most constructive course of action.

The Black United Front and the Portland Public Schools have a common goal -- excellent education with equity for all students. We also share many principles of action and we even embrace many similar specific action steps. Given the large domain of agreement, we should be able to find a mutually supportive way to continue advancing the academic performance of our children and preparing them for productive, satisfying and responsible citizenship.

1. READING SCORES

The Claim:

Only 50 percent of Black students read at grade level, nearly 80 percent of white students read at grade level.

Mr. Herndon's Conclusion:

Black students will not be able to compete for decent jobs.

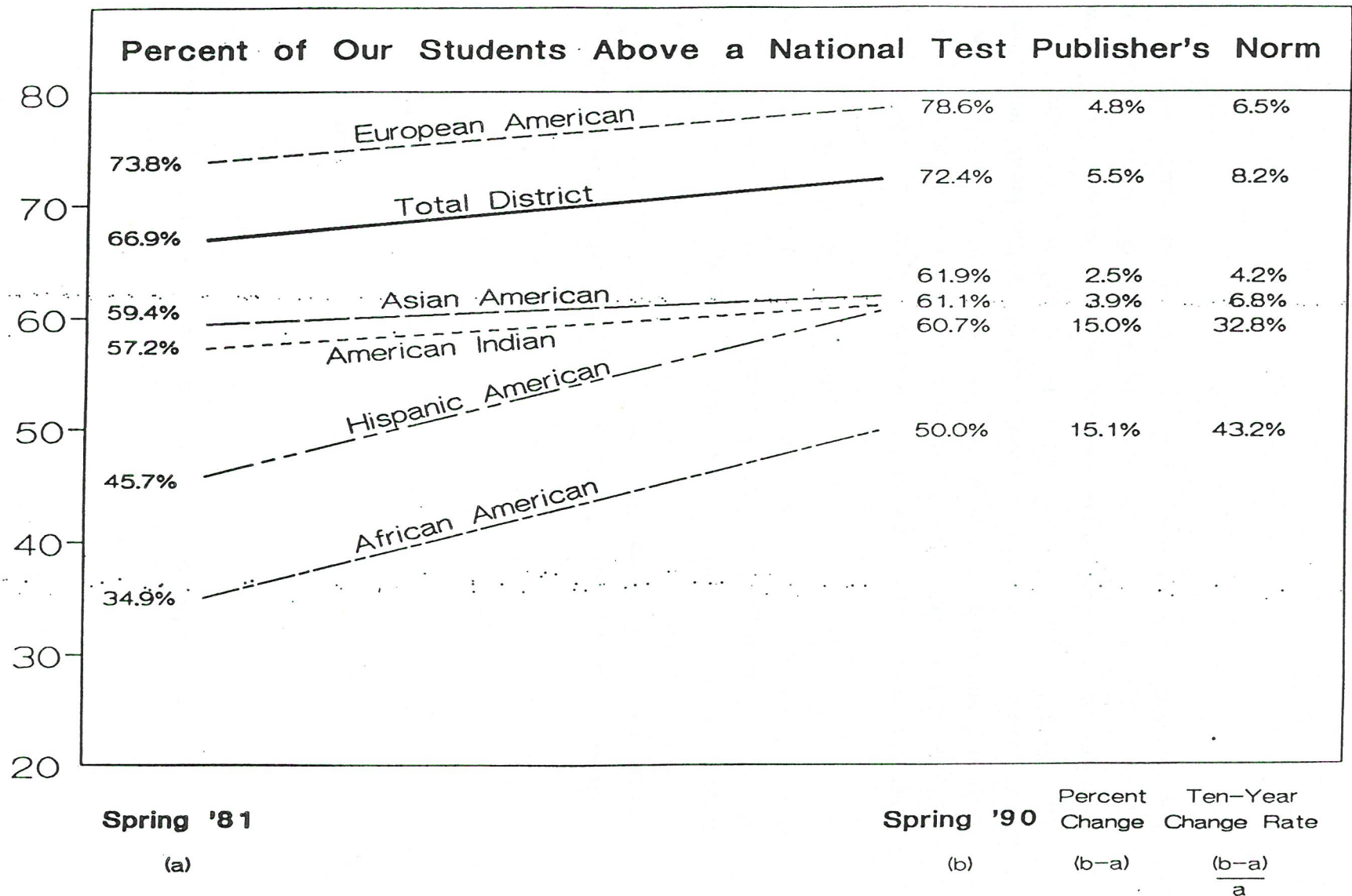
The Facts:

It is true that an average of our Black students are now reading at or above their national average grade level. This current level (with 50 percent at or above grade level and the average at grade level) is up from only 34.9 percent a decade ago. This represents a gain of 15.1 percentage points and a gain rate of 43 percent. Here in Portland, 78.6 percent of white students are now reading at or above grade level. This is up from 73.8 percent a decade ago, and thus represents a gain of 4.8 percentage points and a gain rate of 6.5 percent.

These phenomenal gains in Black students' learning and these resultant unprecedented levels of Black student achievement are indicative of the strength and success of our commitment to educate all our students. Such changes have taken place in no other school district in the United States. Our students, as an urban group, have closed the gap faster and further than in any other district. Additionally, while Black students are the primary beneficiaries, other minority and low-income students have also made major improvements. I will not rest until the day when no poor and minority child is held back by the attitudes and expectations of society.

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN READING



2. MATH SCORES

The Claim:

60 percent of Black students are BELOW grade level in math, 80 percent of white students are at or ABOVE grade level in Math.

Mr. Herndon's Conclusion:

Black students won't be able to compete in a world that now demands more math and science skills.

The Facts:

It is true that 55.7 percent of our Black students are now below a national average level, so the average of the whole group is little more than five percentage points away from grade level. This is up from 27.4 percent a decade ago, and thus represents a gain of 16.9 percentage points and a gain rate of 62 percent. In Portland, 77.6 percent of white students are now performing at or above grade level. This is up from 65.9 percent a decade ago, and thus represents a gain of 11.7 percentage points and a gain rate of 17.7 percent.

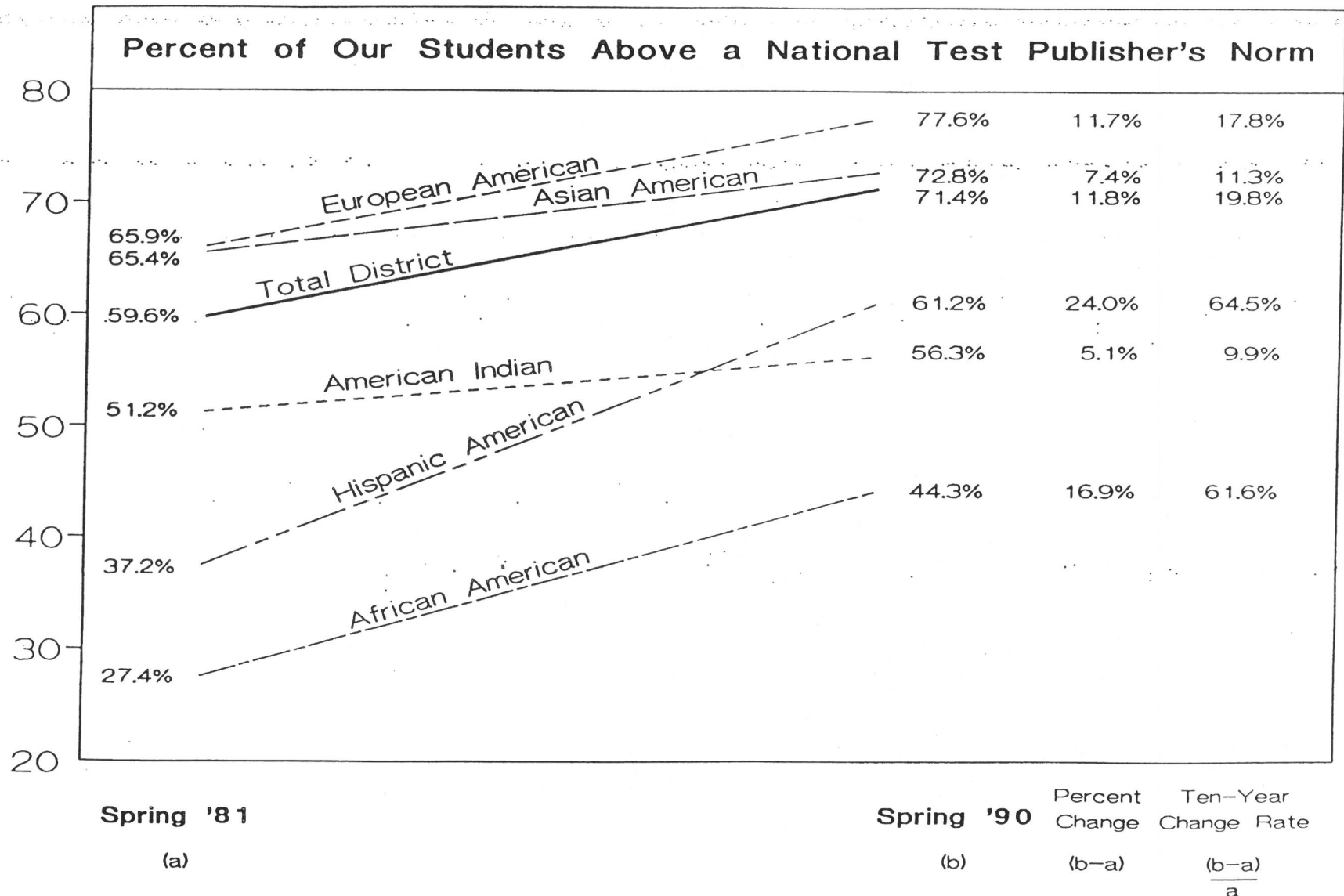
Few other major American city reports a level or rate of growth in reading and math achievement for Black students comparable to Portland's. While Portland's Black students are performing at or nearly at grade level, due to very strong gains over the last decade, the typical African-American student in other city systems is still far behind. For example, according to the Southern Regional Education Board, their Black 11th graders are performing at a 7th grade level, or four grades behind white students, whereas our Black students have closed the gap to typically less than two grade levels and often as little as one. This is more than a 100 percent positive difference. We have done well and we will do better.

Among the current priority responses to the need for improvement of student performance by low achieving students in math and other subjects are Board of

Education Goals and Objectives calling for the development of new and more challenging education requirements and raising all students to high levels of basic skills by the end of the third grade. A strong focus on multicultural and multiethnic education is yet another of our District priorities for improving learning for all students, especially poor and minority students.

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN MATH



3. SCIENCE AND MATH

The Claim:

Only a very small percent of Black students are enrolled in algebra, geometry, physics or calculus.

Mr. Herndon's Conclusion:

Without this knowledge, Black children cannot compete for decent jobs.

The Facts:

Over 55 percent of the African-American 11th and 12th grade students are enrolled in mathematics at the level of pre-algebra and above (which includes algebra, geometry and calculus). This percentage is comparable to the 58 percent of European-American students enrolled in mathematics at this level and showcases the efforts that have been made in Portland Public Schools to keep large numbers of all students enrolled in mathematics throughout their high school careers. Data is also being collected on the numbers of 11th and 12th grade students who are enrolled in advanced math courses beyond that required for entry in an Oregon university. These students, enrolled in such courses as trigonometry, math analysis, statistics and calculus, are judged to be those with the greatest opportunity for success and leadership in the U.S. work force. At this time over 7 percent of African-American 11th and 12th grade students are in this category. Efforts to increase this percentage are underway at schools throughout the district. One of the school-based efforts in this regard is the installation of statistics and discrete math courses, which have been developed to encourage enrollment and allow for success of minority students.

Other efforts to improve the teaching of math courses include the institution of new

and promising teaching methodologies such as cooperative learning, attention to different learning styles, visual mathematics, the use of graphing calculators and computer graphing programs. Math teachers are attending workshops and receiving training from well-known experts in the areas of multicultural math education such as Claudia Zaslavsky, author of *Africa Counts, Number and Pattern in African Culture*, Dr. Abdualim Shabazz of Atlanta Clark University and Dr. Uri Treisman of University of California, Berkeley.

Efforts have been made to improve the opportunities for African-American students to obtain physics credit. For example, several high schools offer physics credit for a newly developed course, concept physics. Science teachers have been trained to teach concept physics from a more holistic point of view, which is less dependent on advanced math skills and is more consistent with typical African-American students' preferred learning styles. This course has been developed based on the successful program introduced to minority students from inner city schools in California. Another science course, applied physical science, has been created to provide opportunities for minority students to receive necessary preparation for entry into physics courses. This course provides successful experiences, and builds confidence for those minority students who normally may not show interest in higher level science courses.

The Curriculum Department is working with business alliances to establish business partnerships in schools with high minority enrollments. One example, the Options Program, at Tubman Middle School is sponsored by Battelle Northwest. Other efforts are being developed with Bonneville Power Administration and the American Gas Association to encourage involvement of minority students. Coordination also occurs between Portland Public Schools and the M.E.S.A. program at Portland State University, which sponsors increased participation of minorities in secondary math and science courses, especially physics and engineering.

The Institute for Science and Mathematics at Grant High School has been developed to foster increased enrollment of minority students. Goals of this project include many of the research-based strategies for increased participation of minority students; e.g., hands-on concrete learning experiences, uses of computer

and technology, promotion of interdisciplinary studies, development of positive attitudes, increased enjoyment and confidence in math and science learning. Classes are being offered in Interactive Mathematics, Conceptual Physics, Research Methods and Independent Studies in math and science.

4. FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The Claim:

Few Black students are enrolled in foreign language courses.

Mr. Herndons Conclusion:

In today's global economy, they will be lost.

The Facts:

In Portland high schools, 4,708 students are enrolled in foreign language; 508, or 10.8 percent of these, are African-Americans. This represents 26 percent of the total African-American high school population compared to 38 percent of non-African Americans who are enrolled in foreign language. At Lincoln, well over half of the enrolled African-American students are enrolled in foreign language classes.

In Portland middle schools, 1,878 students are enrolled in foreign language; 108, or 6 percent of these, are African-Americans. This represents 6 percent of the total African-American middle school population compared to 18 percent of non-African Americans who are enrolled in foreign language.

The District offers two elementary foreign language immersion programs; Japanese at Richmond School and Spanish at Ainsworth School. Twelve of the 104, or 12 percent of the students who originally enrolled in the Japanese program, are African-American. (Two African-American students have left the program; one to move to another city, and the other to join a sibling at another school. These two departures have brought the percentage of African-Americans to 10 percent.) Each year the Japanese program staff attempts to fill a minimum of eight places in the new kindergarten class with African-American children and advertises the

program extensively in the north/northeast community. The Spanish program currently enrolls fifteen African-American students among its 265 students in grades K-4, or 5.6 percent. Transportation from North and Northeast Portland is provided to students in both programs.

These percentages are lower than we want them to be, therefore, we have begun several new efforts to increase African-American enrollment in foreign languages. Several schools have in place conscientious programs to encourage minority enrollment through contact with the middle schools. The International Studies Program at Lincoln High School holds a "Hello" day assembly with Tubman Middle School to generate and encourage enrollment of minority students into the International Studies Program and foreign languages. Tubman students have also been invited to greet visiting Soviet students and partake in their International nights. In addition, the foreign language classes at Tubman and Lincoln are linked through a computer network.

This year the International Studies Program at Lincoln will be sending ten students to the national Global Summit in Taos, New Mexico. Of the ten students, four are minority students; two African-American. This is the third year they have participated.

Grant High School encourages all students to study a foreign language and extends the opportunity to Fernwood Middle School students to attend foreign language classes at Grant. Grant students teach French to elementary students at Hollyrood School.

5. DISCIPLINE

The Claim:

Black students are suspended from school far more frequently than white students.

The Facts:

This claim is correct. The district-wide rate of suspension in 1989-90 was 4.1 percent, down from 4.4 percent in the previous year. The Black student suspension rate was 9.0 percent, down from 9.8 percent a year ago. The white suspension rate was 3.2 percent a slight reduction from last year's 3.3 percent.

According to Junious Williams, the District's external discipline consultant:

"The District has several major program initiatives underway which address the issues raised by (his) report. For example, the programming emphasis on conflict resolution, violence prevention and gang avoidance, all address the concerns related to the heavy concentration of physical safety offenses leading to suspension. Given the impact of these offenses on minority students, especially African-American students, efforts in this area, if effective, should have an impact on reducing the rates of suspensions for African-American students as well. Since the District has so many programming and staff development efforts targeted on this category of offenses, my only recommendation is that the District continue with these activities."

The Portland School District's discipline policy and procedures as outlined in the handbook in Students' Responsibilities, Rights, and Discipline have been developed with the involvement of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the School Board. The District handbook is published in both a primary and upper grades edition. Individual School Discipline Plans are revised and distributed to students annually.

The intent of our discipline procedures is to treat all students fairly. Our goal is to ensure that students charged with similar offenses are receiving similar treatment.

We also are implementing a variety of prevention and intervention programs and will continue to search for other effective ways to help students manage their behavior appropriately. These include in-school suspension, student incentives, alternative schooling, time-out rooms, Positive Alternatives to Suspension (PASS) and time-out from class. We will continue with planning and implementation of activities designed to guarantee equity of treatment and reduce the occurrence of behaviors endangering the safety of people.

6. UNEQUAL EDUCATION

The Claim:

There is an alarming gap in academic achievement between children from low and high income families, and between white and Black students in Portland.

Mr. Herndon's Conclusion:

The majority of Black students are not reaching their academic potential and are not successfully competing academically with white students, or with students from other industrial countries.

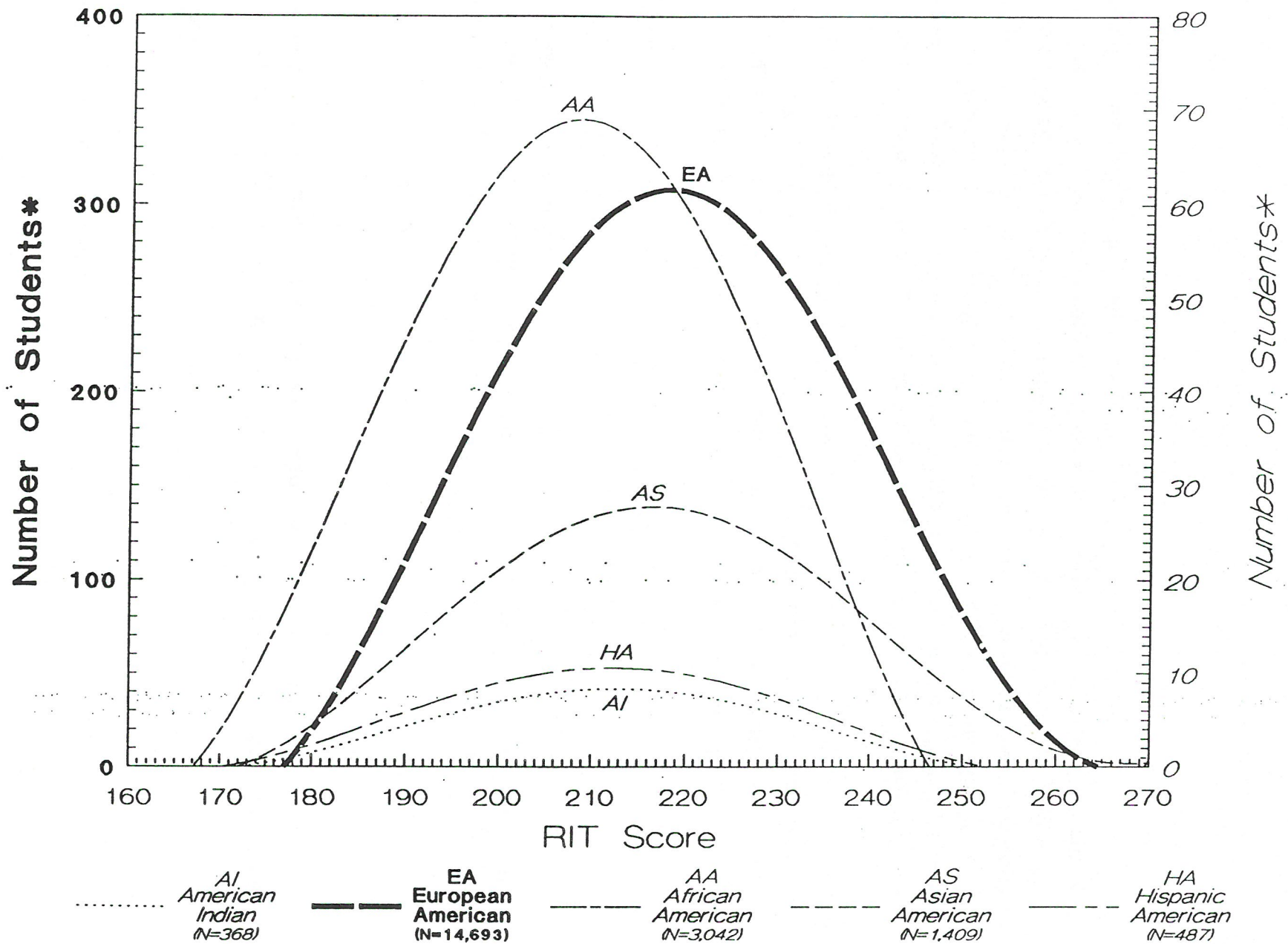
The Facts:

As pointed out earlier, there are academic gaps remaining between children from low and high income families, and between white and Black students. But those differences in Portland are smaller and are being closed more rapidly here than in any other comparable American urban center.

It is also important to note that the differences within each group are many times (about seven) greater than the differences between groups as the following graph illustrates. Please note the similarity of the Black and white students' distribution of scores (the bell shaped curves). Note also that there are many Black students performing at the higher levels and many white students performing at the lower levels. The areas of major concern in the case of all students are those represented by the left-hand sides of the distribution.

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

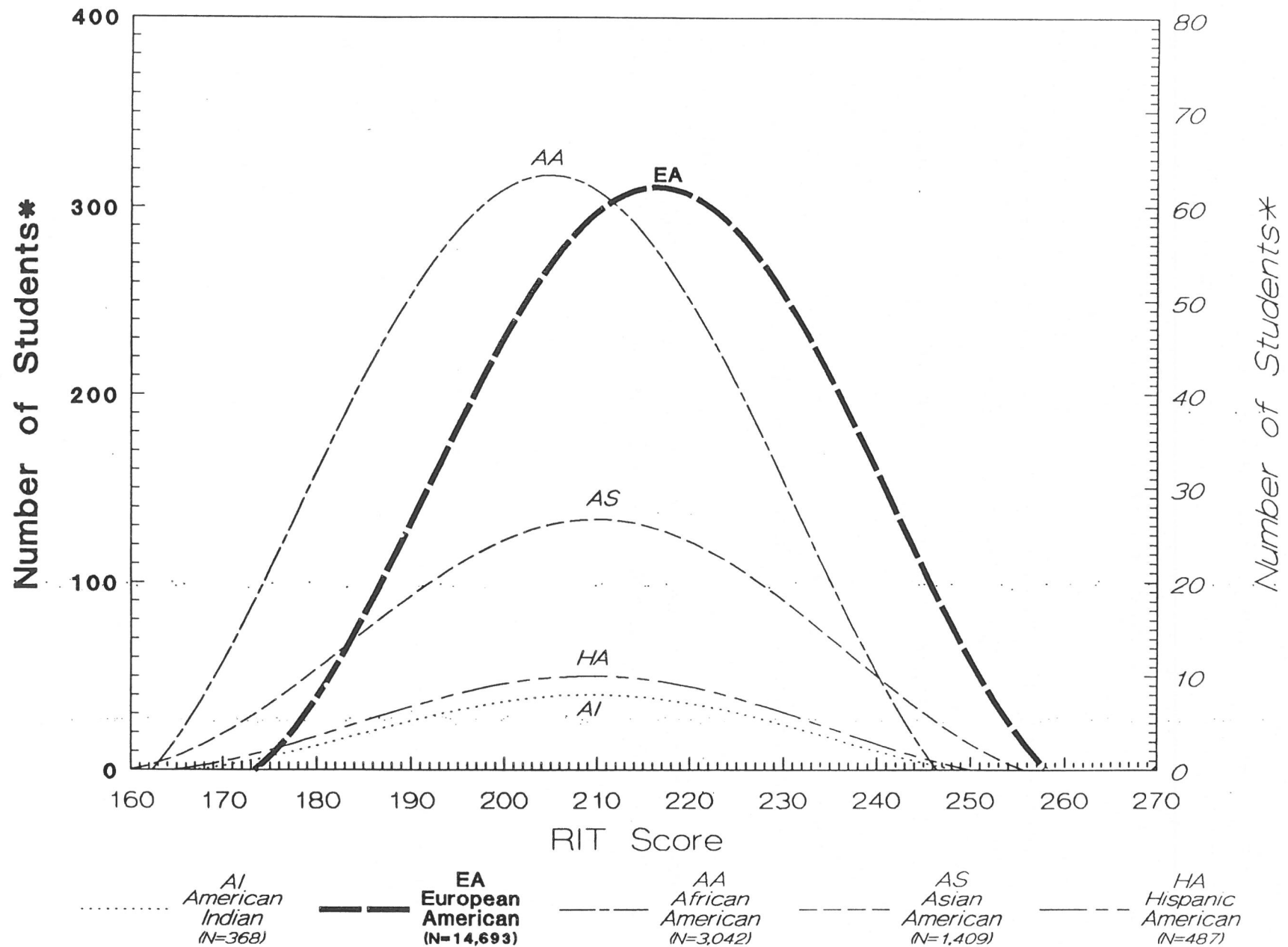
Distribution of Spring 1990 Math RIT Scores by Ethnicity



* All groups except European American are graphed on right axis. European American is graphed on left axis.

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Distribution of Spring 1990 Reading RIT Scores by Ethnicity



* All groups except European American are graphed on right axis. European American is graphed on left axis.

7. HISTORY AND CULTURE

The Claim:

Most Black children learn little about Black history and culture.

Mr. Herndon's Conclusion:

It is difficult for our children to feel good about themselves if they don't learn about Black people's historic worldwide contributions.

The Facts:

We agree and have agreed with both this claim and the conclusion. Because of this shared belief, the District has had as one of its major long-term Educational Effectiveness goals to:

"Develop in all students a better understanding and appreciation of the history and culture and contributions to society of various ethnic groups and cultures."

The District's philosophy and purpose for multicultural/multiethnic education is to lead toward the personal development of all students; the achievement of harmony within our community; and the stability and success of our nation. An expected outcome is for students to have an awareness of and respect for their own cultural and ethnic heritage as well as that of others.

In respect to African-American children, Portland Public Schools is "the" recognized national leader in the development and implementation of curriculum which infuses holistic and thematic history of the culture and contributions of African-American people. We recognize that these District initiatives thrust us into uncharted territories and have created extensive national academic debate.

Nevertheless, we do not apologize for this; we feel we are correct. We are proud to be recognized as the "best in the nation" in helping Black students, as well as all other students, learn Black history and culture and the historic world-wide contributions of Black people.

At the same time, we acknowledge and appreciate the very positive role that the Black United Front and Portland's Black Community have played in leading and guiding the District to its pre-eminent position in this critical arena.

PART II

Education Improvement Plan

PRINCIPLE I: Collaboration with the Community

It is essential that the District's level of responsibility for educating our children be a collaborative effort between the community and the school system.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Establish a "Committee for Academic Excellence" composed of parents, representatives from the School Board, businesses and the community at-large which will:

- A. monitor schools where students score below grade level;*
- B. monitor progress in students' ability to successfully compete internationally; and*
- C. develop incentives for exemplary administrators, teachers, students and parents.*

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

District-level parent, community and business monitoring and control of the school system is through the seven elected Board of Education members. Evidence of district-level success and failure, and that of its programs to help students achieve at and above grade level, is not only the task of the School Board, the Superintendent, the Executive Deputy, the Directors of Instruction and many other

departments, but also to a large extent it is a task of the District and program advisory committees, including the budget committees and the Desegregation Monitoring and Advisory Committee.

- A. The District's School Education Improvement Planning Process is keyed to the trends in student progress through the District's curriculum as reflected in our curriculum referenced educational achievement measures. Directors of Instruction, teachers, staff, students and parents all participate in efforts to find the causes of both success and failure so that the former can be replicated and extended, and the latter remedied.
- B. It is currently difficult to accurately assess our students' abilities and achievements internationally due to a general lack of valid and reliable international measures and standards at this level. The fact, however, that over 70 percent of all our students are achieving above a national level, and over 50 percent of our minority students are performing about at or above national levels, should indicate that our students are certainly competitive internationally as well as nationally. The work of the Oregon Progress Board and the National Assessment Governing Board, on which I serve, should move us toward a more competitive stance and toward more valid international assessments of our progress.
- C. There are numerous incentives and rewards in Portland Public Schools for exemplary administrators, teachers, students and parents such as the "Teacher of The Year" program and business-based incentives for students. One of the four goals of "The Portland Blueprint: Success for Students at Risk" (the STAR plan) is "to provide recognition and incentives for responding to the needs of students at risk." Additionally, various community groups provide incentives and recognition to outstanding students and staff.

"Impact II" is a good example of a district-sponsored teacher incentive and recognition program. It was established five years ago as a cooperative program

between Portland Public Schools and the Portland Association of Teachers. Although Impact II is a national model, Portland is the only District in the nation that has established it in this collaborative way. Each year, 45 teachers are recognized and receive financial incentives for their exemplary program development. Several of these projects each year are specifically targeted to multicultural education. Each year an additional 90 teachers receive financial incentives to adapt the 45 exemplary projects.

Since the 1969-70 school year, incentives have led parents and community members to participate in the Volunteers In Portland Schools Program. During the 1989-90 school year, 15,326 volunteers contributed 351,043 hours of volunteer service. The reported utilization of volunteers was categorized as to their level of involvement which included 24 percent as instructional assistants, 30 percent as resource volunteers, 6 percent as advisory committee volunteers, 34 percent as organizational volunteers, 2 percent as mentors, and 4 percent as volunteers in other activities. The Program offers optional program participation to ECE, elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as many special programs. Most schools choose to participate; in 1989-90, 79 schools reported using volunteers. While 11 schools did not return their statistical report, it is assumed that all schools in the District have some volunteer participation. The Program has worked to revise its policy and include administrative regulations that state the use of volunteers is a Board priority, and encourages parent and community involvement in our schools and programs.

The Volunteer Program is also responsible for Grandparents and Special Friends Week, which is an opportune time to invite a large segment of the community into the schools to observe first-hand the quality of education and various programs within Portland Public Schools. Last year, 14,723 guests visited our schools. The Jefferson and Grant clusters reported 3,319 guests attending.

To offer incentives to schools to utilize volunteer efforts, particularly as instructional assistants and resource volunteers, the District Volunteer Coordinator offers training and skill-building sessions to the persons who serve as volunteers and coordinates the local school programs, as well as to community

agents and District staff who coordinate the use of volunteers in their respective schools or programs. Opening day packets request volunteer assistance and invite all parents to get involved in school. The District Volunteer Coordinator works cooperatively with other community agencies, parents and community members to place volunteers in our schools and programs, often making referrals to the Whitney Young Learning Center and the Black United Front's Saturday School.

The most important incentives are those provided by each of our schools to encourage our students to strive for academic success.

School incentive programs are designed to give recognition to students who demonstrate responsibility, to reinforce improved behavior, to promote school climate, and to encourage academic achievement. This may include daily or weekly reinforcements: charts and banners in halls and on cafeteria walls, bulletin boards highlighting pictures of recognized students, buttons and certificates, and letters sent home to parents. Students may be conflict managers, self-managers, "All Stars," student council members, or student of the month. Many school have attendance and behavior improvement programs for identified students to encourage them and to help them become more successful. Monthly awards and recognition assemblies and/or parties honor students for academic and behavioral efforts and achievements.

Many opportunities are provided for parents to become involved in providing incentives for their child's education. In addition to conferencing with teachers and consulting with other building specialists regarding their child, parents receive newsletters and flyers on current school happenings, and resource referral information for community agencies. Parent education classes and workshops such as "Preparing for the Drug (Free) Years," family activity nights (including family math and family science), and support groups for parents are offered. Parents may also become involved with the local school advisory committee or the parent/teacher organization.

Schools are encouraged to have active advisory boards of students, staff, and parents to help define program direction and to plan appropriate incentives.

PRINCIPLE II: Shared Responsibility

It is also essential that school level education be a shared responsibility.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Establish Building Management Teams with representatives from teachers, parents, administrators, support personnel, business and a consultant who has had outstanding success with the socioeconomic group of students being served. The team will develop a comprehensive profile of each building to ascertain current status to include the school's academic, social and environmental strengths and needs. From this data the team can set and revise goals, develop and assist implementation of an improvement plan, and measure and monitor student progress and performance. The teams will frequently report progress to the "Committee for Academic Excellence."

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

Every building is required, under the Board's Goals and Objectives, to have an annually updated Building Improvement Plan. Community people, through local advisory committees, staff and others, are used by the principal in devising these plans. The principals and staff of each school constantly receive feedback on their students' needs and their success in meeting them, including standardized district-wide data on rate of gain and level of achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Study skills, listening and literature will be added this spring through the state assessment program, and health, physical education, social studies, art and music will be added on a cycle in future years. This information, and much more, is shared with parents, especially through teacher-parent conferences and grade reports.

There are two primary avenues for community involvement in local buildings' education goals and programs. The primary opportunity is through the Local

School Advisory Committee (LSAC). A second opportunity is through a STAR planning committee, which exist in about one-third of the schools.

In order to assure systematic participation of parents and other citizens in the education of young people, each school has a Local School Advisory Committee (LSAC). This committee represents as many segments of the community as possible, including parents, nonparents, students, businesses and neighborhood associations. Membership representation is open to all interested volunteers. Staff members serve as resource persons. Staff members who are parents of students in the school may have full voting privileges.

The LSAC advises the principal on matters pertaining to the school and its program for students. The principal carefully considers the advice and recommendations of the committee and uses or passes the recommendations on to the appropriate school District personnel. The principal informs the LSAC about the disposition of LSAC recommendations and asks them to provide follow-up progress reports relating to issues discussed and/or decided.

The LSAC is given the opportunity to provide advice, input and/or response to reports from the school principal on educational programs, assessment of educational needs, and establishment of priorities.

The LSAC contributes to the determination of the school's educational goals and reviews with the principal progress toward the attainment of goals. The LSAC provides the principal, and other school officials, information unique to the community in order that the school can more readily identify the educational needs within the community.

The LSAC designates or acts as a budget subcommittee to review with the principal the school's allocated budget and to discuss the assignment of resources within the building, thus participating at the local level in the budget review process.

The second major avenue of sharing responsibility is provided by The Portland

Blueprint: Success for Students At Risk (STAR). This plan is based on Representative Gus Hawkins' work with a group of outstanding national African-American education researchers and practitioners.

The STAR resource document summarizes the extensive research which reminds us of the warning signs that indicate students' special needs for support. But it does more. It puts hope into the picture by detailing concrete actions for helping all our children be successful in school -- and in life.

The work that led to this STAR resource document began in January 1988, when a district-wide steering committee of students, parents, educators and community leaders began to draft a local strategic plan following a promising national model. That model was created by the National Conference on Educating Black Children and is founded on the research of Dr. Ron Edmonds. The resulting draft of The Portland Blueprint: Success for Students At Risk was revised using suggestions from school staff, students, parents, and community and business representatives.

This Portland Blueprint includes suggestions for action by each of the groups who are key participants in this effort: students, parents, teachers, administrators and support personnel, policy makers, and business and community members. Suggestions for action by members of each group are organized around four goals that can guide us in providing services to students who need them most:

- Goal 1 To increase family involvement with students at risk in school and other learning activities.
- Goal 2 To help students at risk set high personal goals and empower those students to achieve them.
- Goal 3 To increase capacities of teachers and other school staff members to identify and respond to the special needs of students at risk.
- Goal 4 To provide recognition and incentives for improvement in responding to the needs of students at risk.

PRINCIPLE III: Special Students

Students with special needs require special attention and help to realize their full potential as learners. The more intense the need, the greater and more formal the response must be.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Require school achievement improvement plans for all students who are not achieving at or above grade level including specific time lines for implementation, improvement, evaluation, modification and consequences.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

The District identifies and singles out for special attention and help all students who are not already at a level of proficiency which would allow them to complete the eighth grade fully competent in the basic skills. Children with particularly special needs are directed to Special Education for assessment and possible referral, including development and monitoring of an Individual Education Plan. This is done in consultation with the parents.

We have an extensive system for assisting each student to achieve mastery of basic skills. Once identified through our student assessment system, each student behind the expected level receives special attention from his or her teacher targeted at bringing those skills to expected minimal competency.

Although programs offered may vary from building to building, schools are involved with such personalized programs as Discipline Based Art Education, Reading Recovery, Project Read, Writing to Read, Integrated Language Arts, Math Their Way, computer-assisted learning, peer tutoring, elementary magnet programs for Spanish, Japanese, and Arts, HOSTS (Helping One Student to Succeed), adult volunteers, and foster grandparents.

PRINCIPLE IV: Accountability

Student learning is the primary responsibility of professional educators.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

A clear statement of administration, principal and teacher accountability for student academic achievement and performance.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

Our commitment to the accountability for student academic achievement and performance could hardly be conveyed more strongly or clearly. The District's Mission Statement adopted in 1987 serves as the basis for annual goal and objective development and evaluation. It establishes that: "The primary responsibility of the Portland Public School District is to instill certain knowledge, skills and values in the children enrolled in Portland schools, thereby helping them to become successful individuals, family members and citizens." It also includes a statement about how essential the partnership between school and family is for continued improvement in student achievement.

These statements are followed by a dozen specific areas of targeted student skill acquisition, which form the basis for the District's curriculum, staff development, testing, monitoring and reporting activities.

In its annual planning process, the Board and administration have each year reaffirmed the first of our four long-term goals, the educational effectiveness goal. It is "to improve student achievement in knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the district." Specific subgoals and objectives are developed annually to support this goal and to assure accountability at all levels of the organization as they direct the attention, resources and efforts of administrators, principals and teachers. For 1990-91 there are 27 subgoals and 41 objectives. Since 1989-90

there has been a Board objective calling for development, approval and implementation in each building of a School Educational Improvement Plan in each building. This is a powerful, current focus of the Board.

The above multifaceted and layered set of commitments and action plans constitute the core of the Portland Public School District's current annually renewed Education Improvement Plan.

PRINCIPLE V: Personnel Evaluation

Evaluation of staff should result in recognition of and encouragement for strengths, and in targeting areas requiring improvement.

Herndon's Recommended Action:

Evaluation of administrators, principals and teachers strongly based on student academic achievement and performance.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

Performance evaluation in Portland Public Schools is established by state law and Board policy. The statement of purpose of personnel evaluation says: "The goal of evaluation is to improve the quality of instruction being provided to students of Portland Public Schools. The evaluation process is the fundamental basis used to identify exceptional performance, areas where performance can and should be improved, and marginal and substandard performance." In accordance with this purpose, while student achievement gain is one tool used, District policy and contractual and other agreements wisely prohibit the formal evaluation of administrators, principals and teachers based upon the **sole** criterion of student academic achievement and performance. Personnel evaluation, to be fair, must focus upon only those things over which the evaluated has control. Accordingly, the evaluation of administrators, principals and teachers must account for the efficiency of other efforts to create an appropriate and stimulating learning environment for their students.

The universal professional opinion and experience in America is that "high stakes" testing and evaluation, based solely on student achievement gains, results in demoralization of staff who are thus held accountable for results over which they do not have complete control. It further results in diminished educational

performance by the very students it seeks to serve. Our student achievement measures in Portland are primarily a tool for teachers, principals and Directors of Instruction to use to diagnose student learning needs. Program planning, policy formation and resource allocation decisions are also well supported by appropriate student group reports.

Probationary teachers receive a thorough evaluation two times per year for the first three years. Once a teacher is admitted to permanent status, he or she is evaluated once every other year. School administrators are evaluated on their performance on each of 108 goals and objective every year.

Principals' annual evaluations examine categories such as: personnel management, staff development; curriculum/instructional development; supervision/staff evaluation; pupil management; leadership, organizational and communication skills; and personal/professional growth responsibilities. Teachers' performance is also evaluated thoroughly. Their evaluation addresses a variety of competencies including professional preparedness and growth; planning, demonstration of principles of teaching-learning, multiethnic education; organization, use of resources and student assessment.

The specific areas of school and principal performance evaluated are generated by District educational goals, which are translated into cluster goals, and which form the basis of each school's individual improvement plan. Results of student performance are used to determine where modification of instruction is required.

Even though the initial selection/hiring process is very well developed and results in Portland being able to hire well qualified educators, some individuals experience difficulties in performing their professional role. There are several ways of addressing performance deficiencies in addition to supervisory evaluation -- in-service activities are developed, specific course work is taken, instructional specialists and other personnel resources are made available, and formal plans of assistance are developed, implemented and monitored.

Each year many educators leave their employment with the District due to their lack of success in enhancing student achievement and performance. This decision often is the outcome of a series of efforts to address performance deficiencies without total success.

PRINCIPLE VI: Time Horizons

In Educational Improvement Planning it is a good thing to have your time horizons clearly in mind; i.e., not only what expectations you plan to meet but also by when.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

The establishment of specific, high academic expectations from the Superintendent's Office, projecting the number of years it will take 90 percent of the students in each elementary school, middle school and high school to achieve at or above grade level, and also project the number of years it would take to meet international competition.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

The Board's and the administration's annual planning process begins with a review of updated trends in student achievement outcomes. The following ten high academic expectations for the school are the 1991-92 District Educational Effectiveness subgoals. Progress toward attaining each goal is assessed in the most thorough and objective manner possible. Goals 5 and 6 have a specific time identified (by 1993) while the others are five-year goals. All the annual objectives set to support accomplishment of the goals are on a year-to-year time horizon. The ten goals are:

Educational Effectiveness Goal: To improve student achievement in knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the district.

During 1991-1996, the District will accomplish these long-term subgoals in aid of this goal:

Goals:

1. Increase the achievement of every student in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, and science.

2. Increase the percentage of students making satisfactory progress toward meeting the District's basic skills standards for high school graduation.
3. Increase the percentage of students graduating from high school.
4. Increase the percentage of students continuing education beyond high school through admission to such institutions as universities, colleges, community colleges, vocational schools, and corporate training programs.
5. Educate children so that the basic skills achievement levels of the third grade class in every elementary school equal or exceed the district-wide basic skills achievement levels for the third grade in 1981 (June 1993).
6. Ensure that each school develops, obtains approval for, and implements a plan, based on the findings of effective schools' research, that identifies a set of desired improvements in student learning that can be measured through the use of test data or other indicators; provides for the use of these measures in determining actions to effect the desired improvements; and specifies ways to evaluate progress in realizing the improvements (June 1993).
7. Develop in all students a better understanding and appreciation of the history, culture and contributions to society of various ethnic groups and cultures.
8. Develop in all students a greater awareness of career opportunities and the skills and knowledge that will be required for these careers. The emphasis in grades K-5 will be placed on career awareness; in grades 6-8 on exploration of career horizons; and in grades 9-12 on skill development and preparation for appropriate post high school training or education.

9. Ensure that teachers in grades Pre-K through 2 are primarily using developmentally appropriate practices in their classrooms.
10. Increase the number of students served by state and federally funded Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs.

PRINCIPLE VII: Progress Assessment

The District's educational leaders need to have comprehensive, frequent and specific information about the results being achieved by District and cluster-wide, as well as by each school.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Establish a system of accountability which provides the Superintendent with frequent, specific data regarding the academic status of every elementary, middle and high school.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

The Portland School District has an excellent district-wide survey achievement testing program. The program includes curriculum aligned, instructionally sensitive measures twice yearly in the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and language usage. Direct writing and science testing programs have been developed and are being implemented grade-by-grade as resources permit.

Twice each year the Superintendent and his Executive Deputy receive comprehensive reports on student academic progress by ethnic group by district, cluster and school. Directors of Instruction and each principal receives similar reports for their schools. The district-wide results are published in our Annual Report from the Superintendent to the Board of Education and the community, and the Multicultural/Multiethnic Student Report. The school-by-school reports are published at the end of each school year in the "Elementary and Middle School Profiles" and the "High School Profiles." The reports contain both evidence of educational results and other useful contextual data. The main tool for assessing success is the amount of gain made by students in each grade in a school, by subject matter area, by goal and by ethnic group. Areas with insufficient progress are addressed in the building's annual School Improvement Plan.

Developed by our principals with the support of the Research and Evaluation and Information Services departments of the District's new integrated Computer Adaptive Reporting and Testing System (CARAT) is one of the most significant actions taken over the past five years to respond to the growing needs for student assessment readily available to teachers and administrators.

The CARAT system will allow teachers, counselors, and school administrators to test students for whom they need interim assessment of basic skills progress or who are new to their schools at any time they wish -- in about 20 minutes per subject at microcomputers located in their schools. An additional 20 to 30 minutes at the terminal will yield indicators of the major curricular goals on which the student needs further diagnosis and possible special assistance.

The reporting part of the system will give school personnel a user friendly means to analyze the report test results over time. It works with the test data arising from both the district-wide testing system and the computerized adaptive building testing system. It allows building-based test result users to arrange the test results in the groupings and patterns of most use to them and to analyze the test data. Teachers, administrators and support personnel in each school will be empowered to become more self-evaluating, self-renewing, and self-improving professionals.

The Board of Education has committed the District to the implementation of the CARAT system district-wide by the 1992-93 school year. The Board of Education's investment in this critical aspect of the educational process has the potential to yield great returns in student learning. It motivates, empowers, and focuses the day-to-day efforts of all the key front line participants in the educational process. It helps teachers, principals, and support staff lead students to greater academic successes.

PRINCIPLE VIII: School Improvement Planning

School leaders need accurate feedback on the success of their school and opportunities for growth and development in instructional and managerial leadership.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Leadership training and periodic monitoring of building principals, recognizing that strong instructional and managerial leadership is the key element to school success.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

Building principals play a key role in recognizing, implementing and facilitating learning experiences for Portland students. The cluster organization provides the monitoring of school progress as the Director of Instruction meets with each principal in setting annual goals, assisting in monitoring the goals throughout the year and evaluating the progress on the identified goals.

Building principals receive ongoing training by the Director of Instruction of their cluster and annually in connection with the Principals' Academy. Other departments, such as Curriculum, Research and Evaluation, Career and Technical Education, Personnel and Employee Relations and other such support departments, offer the additional training in specialized areas. In addition to district-provided training opportunities, principals have access to their own professional organization training with the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, which is a state-wide organization, and with their respective local organizations focused at the high school, middle school and elementary school levels.

PRINCIPLE IX: Staff Development

All school personnel require appropriate, quality, ongoing staff development based upon assessment of building needs and student academic performance.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Appropriate, quality, ongoing staff development for all school personnel in areas indicated by building needs assessments and academic performance of students.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

The District has a rich variety of staff development options based on teachers', principals', and support staffs' interests and needs. Although many offerings are available to all on a voluntary basis, principals and DOI's, with involvement of teachers and instructional specialists, design professional staff development programs to address specific building goals, or to shore up perceived deficiencies. An important consideration in these decisions is the assessment of student achievement profiles in specific buildings and clusters. These data are analyzed annually, goal by goal, as well as subject by subject, by principals and Directors of Instruction to determine trends or potential problems in curricular or instructional areas which might be addressed through staff development activities.

PRINCIPLE X: Talented and Gifted

School districts need to take affirmative actions to ensure that the talents and gifts of low-income and minority students are appropriately identified and nurtured.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Examine procedures for, and enhance identification and enrollment of low-income and minority students in talented and gifted programs.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

The District currently has underway three major new initiatives aimed at improving the identification and enrollment of low-income and minority students in the Talented and Gifted Program.

Friday Tag

The purpose of the Friday TAG Program is to identify and nurture the gifted potential of minority students who have been overlooked by traditional identification methods. The program, in its second year, serves approximately 300 minority students from 17 schools in North and Northeast Portland. Approximately 87 percent of the students are African-American, while the other 13 percent are American Indian and Hispanic. Another very important purpose of the project is to develop **new and appropriate** identification practices that will ensure that gifted minority students will be identified for TAG special services in proper demographic proportions to the general school population (i.e., since 15 percent of the District student population is African-American, one would expect that roughly 15 percent of the TAG population would also be African-American). Presently, about 15 percent of the total TAG population is African-American, compared with five years ago when it stood at only 5 percent.

To date, the Friday TAG program has produced the balance of students described above. And the work that has been done to develop new identification policies and practices will mean that future groups of TAG students will be pluralistic, with all groups of students fairly represented.

Another key feature of the Friday TAG program has been in the area of curriculum development and modification. Three consultants (Joyce Harris of Portland's Black Education Center; Floy Pepper, a retired specialist on Indian education; and Al Aragon from the Northwest Regional Lab) worked with TAG staff and a team of curriculum writers to overhaul the TAG curricular framework to include the important contributions and work of all ethnic and racial groups. The new curriculum is used in all TAG offerings. The inclusion of Friday TAG students and the revised curriculum have greatly enriched the overall TAG program.

Grant Cluster Enrichment

The TAG program, based on recommendations from consultant Dr. Richard Benjamin, is expanding its services with a pilot science enrichment program for the Grant cluster elementary schools. The goal of this project is to support classroom teachers in providing activity-based, problem-solving science experiences for elementary students. By helping classroom teachers enrich science experiences, we hope to assist in creating an environment which will nurture interest and success in science for all students. Each school, working with the TAG Program Development Specialist, has identified the grade levels involved and the type of services which would be most useful to support enriched science instruction in the classroom. Some examples: Irvington - TAG provided a geologist to help plan for a two-day field trip and went with students and teachers as their on-site "expert." Sabin - 4th grade students became "engineers" for a week when they operated a mining railroad yard of a hundred years ago. Hollyrood - A science specialist plans with teachers and does demonstration activities every week. We plan to expand this kind of support to other schools in the future. Future planned development includes these same types of efforts in mathematics.

MESA - TAG Elementary Science Enrichment Partnership

TAG has been seeking opportunities to explore ways to work with other programs that are working successfully in developing talent in minority students. MESA has an extremely successful math/science program for middle and high school minority students. Both of our programs shared the interest in developing a MESA-type model for the elementary grades. A partnership, a sharing of resources, will make this possible. In January, Irvington and Sabin will begin MESA - TAG Enrichment Science Clubs which will meet weekly. The TAG department is developing a plan for a four-week summer science enrichment program for these students to be offered this summer.

PRINCIPLE XI: School Team Empowerment

Learning is greatest when school teams are trusted and empowered and when innovation and success are valued and rewarded.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Afford building teams greater freedom and reward for innovation and success in meeting District goals.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

One of the strongest and most persistent messages given to cluster and building leaders is appreciation for autonomy in selecting strategies for pursuing District goals.

District teachers and administrators take great pride in being recognized locally, regionally, and nationally, as prolific innovators and imaginative implementors.

Portland has never had a more enviable reputation than at present for such a wide variety of innovators which address: student assessment, instructional planning and delivery, parent involvement, staff development and participatory input from students, staff, parents and community regarding individual school and cluster operation.

Teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders frequently report that our building personnel not only feel a sense of trust and freedom in selecting implementation strategies needed to address District goals, but also have, and continue to experience, an exceptionally high degree of success associated with their efforts.

Two specific district-wide programs aimed at enhancing and benefiting from school professionals' freedom and empowerment are the Impact II program and the 20/20 Program. In Impact II, 135 teachers each year receive financial incentives and rewards for developing (45) or adapting and implementing (90) especially innovative and successful classroom practices. In the 20/20 Program, the principal and the school receive both freedom from state and local restrictions and are given financial resources. They create with data-based teams, innovative programs and exploit the broader possibilities for action and results aimed at helping kids learn more and learn better.

PRINCIPLE XII: Parent Involvement

The District needs to keep its parents informed of the what, why and how of the education of their children and must seek out and respond to their concerns and recommendations.

Mr. Herndon's Recommended Action:

Portland Public Schools will survey parents twice a year regarding their "consumer satisfaction" and suggestions for school improvement in their community via a "parent report card." Results will be sent directly to the Superintendent and the "Committee for Academic Excellence." They will take appropriate action with regard to parental concerns and recommendations.

District's Actions Already Underway and Planned:

The Public Information Department has regularly commissioned public opinion surveys to determine "consumer satisfaction." Polls of public attitudes toward Portland schools are conducted on an annual basis. The results of the surveys are examined carefully and used by the Superintendent and the Board of Education in the annual development of the School District's short and long-term goals and objectives. The frequency of the survey is expected to increase as a result of the passage of Measure 5. It should be noted that individual schools survey their parents and school community to determine expectations and satisfaction. Membership in Local School Advisory Committees and PTA's also provide a vehicle for community/parent input into the local school decision-making process. Parents also serve and are represented on Cluster Advisory Committees and many other district and program advisory committees, such as Budget Review, Special Education, Talented and Gifted, Student Services, Multicultural/Multiethnic Education, Staff Desegregation Advisory Committee, Desegregation Monitoring and Advisory Committee.

The District has just completed a round of well-attended meetings where parents, community members, and District staff worked together to identify the best ways for parents to be meaningfully involved in and supportive of their children's learning. The report and recommendations that emerged from this process are a focus for Board and administrative planning and accountability for the coming year.