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## Pairs were created to help counter segregation

By Susan Troller  
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Creating the Midvale-Lincoln and Franklin-Randall pairs was originally part of a desegregation plan aimed at reducing the disproportionate number of minority students at Lincoln and Franklin elementary schools on Madison's south side in the early 1980s.

The pairing plan, adopted by the Madison School Board in December 1983 and implemented on Aug. 28, 1984, was a voluntary response to a three-year investigation by the Office of Civil Rights in Chicago. That investigation, the result of a suit filed by south side parents angered by the school district's decision in 1979 to close several schools, found that the district's actions had the effect of creating and perpetuating racial and ethnic isolation at Lincoln and Franklin schools.

At the time, about 58 percent of the students at Franklin and 50 percent of the students at Lincoln were minority students. Minority enrollment in all Madison schools was just below 13 percent at the time; minority enrollment at Midvale was 8.2 percent, and at Randall it was 7.5 percent.

The goal of the pairing plan was to reduce the minority population at both schools to about 30 percent, or no more than 15 percentage points above the district average for elementary schools.

The pairing plan had originally recommended pairing Lincoln with Thoreau, and Franklin with Randall. Thoreau and Lincoln share a common boundary, as do Franklin and Randall.

During December 1983, public hearings drew hundreds of parents and citizens, mostly opposed to pairs that would involve their children. The Thoreau PTO weighed in, 37-0, against the pair that involved their school with Lincoln. At the same meeting, the representative for a group of about 150 Midvale parents expressed support for a plan that would send children in the area of Bayview Apartments to Midvale, and would create two pairs joining Franklin with Randall and Lincoln with Thoreau.

The School Board, in a 5-2 decision, gave the nod to the Franklin-Randall and Midvale-Lincoln pairs on Dec. 19, 1983. Approximately 1,600 elementary-age children were affected.

In order to preserve the desired percentages, the district put a temporary freeze on its policy of allowing parents to send their children to their choice of any school in the district as long as they provided transportation.

Ironically, Franklin, once known as the elementary school with the highest proportion of minority students, today has significantly more white students than any other racial or ethnic group. During the 2004-05 school year, more than 65 percent of Franklin's students were white.

During the same period, white students made up 30 percent of Midvale's population and 27 percent of Lincoln's.

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