

Boys & Girls Club, Madison schools team up more to boost achievement

Recommend 0 | Tweet 0 | +1 0 | [Pin it](#) | [Share](#) 7 | [Print](#) | [Email](#)



M.P. KING — State Journal

East High School senior Ma Yang leads a group discussion of an algebra problem during an AVID/TOPS class on Thursday. The program, a collaboration between the Madison School District and the Boys & Girls Club, is a key part of the organization's planned \$15 million, six-year expansion. Also pictured clockwise from Yang, program coordinator Langston Ewers, tutor Margaret Swaney, and seniors Awa Fofana, Jennifer Arroyo-Olvera, Herne Yawo and Kyla Porter.

March 10, 2013 7:00 am • [MATTHEW DeFOUR](#) | Wisconsin State Journal | mdefour@madison.com | 608-252-6144

[1](#) Comments

Boys & Girls Club of Dane County plans ambitious program to improve graduation rates



The Boys & Girls Club of Dane County plans to raise \$15 million over the next six years to improve the graduation rates of low-income and ... [Read more](#)

During her sophomore year at Madison East High School, Awa Fofana was facing a personal health crisis and her parents' divorce when a teacher recommended she join the AVID/TOPS program.

Now a senior and headed to UW-Madison next fall to study nursing, Fofana credits the program, a partnership between the Madison School District and Boys & Girls Club of Dane County, with helping her succeed where other students facing similar challenges at home often do not.

"It's hard to find someone who would support you through times like that," Fofana said. "AVID/TOPS) has been that push to do the things I need to do."

AVID/TOPS — a college preparatory program for students in the academic middle — is one of the central pieces of an ambitious \$15 million expansion the local Boys & Girls Club is planning over the next six years.


The expansion represents a shift for the organization from recreational after-school programming to academic support services. It comes as the School District renews its focus on raising low-income and minority student achievement, and reflects increasing ties between the club and the district.


The organization has already raised more than \$2.2 million toward its goal, including \$2 million to fund AVID/TOPS for three more years from School Board member Mary Burke's family's foundation.

"We have great needs in this community," Burke said. "The more funding and support we can bring to educating our students, the better off we'll be."

The \$15 million won't go to building new clubhouses in under-served areas, like the Boys & Girls Club headquarters that opened in 1999 in the former South Madison Neighborhood Club or the Allied Drive community center opened in 2006.

 [Futuristic Technology makes Dumb Appliances Smart](#)

 [Get quotes from up to four pre-screened, licensed, & insured contractors for new windows.](#)

 [See surfer Aiana Blanchard and 19 other female athletes to keep an eye on this year.](#)

Advertisement

Most Popular

Articles | **Comments** | Shared

- [Scott Walker in talks with HMOs on shifting state employees to self-insured program](#)
- [Philly Fed says Scott Walker, WMC offer misleading data on Wisconsin economy](#)
- [Surgery reduces autism-related screaming](#)
- [Tom Oates: Big Ten crown appears destined to be passed to bigger, faster, stronger Ohio State](#)
- [Badgers football: Mistakes, breakdowns cost UW in another close-call loss to Ohio State](#)

Latest Local Offers

[View More...](#)

[If it must be yoga, it must be Well Within Center For Yoga and Health](#)

[Beaver Dam Girls Volleyball on October 3rd](#)

[Farwell Pools & Spas Has the Supplies You Need to Keep Your Pool Water Crystal Clear](#)

[\\$13.99 All You Can Eat Fish Fry](#)

[Don't be a scruffy-looking nerf-herder - Get your new Star Wars Garb at Kryptonite Collectibles NOW!](#)

Featured Businesses

[Welhouse Flooring](#)

[Cluck The Chicken Store](#)

[Legendary Construction](#)

[Free Spirit Travel](#)

[The Gardner Company](#)

Find a local business



Vote! Today's poll

Loading...

Instead, the funds will pay for tutors and other club staff to provide more academic support services at schools and community centers, during and after the school day and as part of an expanded summer program.

Last fall, the national organization designated Madison's four main high schools as club extension sites, requiring them to have a Boys & Girls Club office and staff member and making them eligible for national grants. They join about 1,300 other school-based Boys & Girls Club sites, many of which are in larger cities, said Jim Clark, president of Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the former head of the Milwaukee chapter.

"They are definitely a leader in terms of where they are for the size market and size organization," Clark said. "They are an innovator and a leader in the country in many ways with what they're doing around their academic success model and expansion of that."

Life saver

Dane County club CEO Michael Johnson credits a Boys & Girls Club in Chicago with saving his life, but for all the evenings he spent there, he still grew up not being able to read or write.

Johnson, who was recently named one of the top five Boys & Girls Club executives in the nation, wants to quadruple the number of young people receiving club services to 10,000. In addition to adding hundreds of students to AVID/TOPS, which provides in-school paid tutoring, the growth is expected to come from mergers with other similar-sized organizations, providing academic programs in local schools and contracting with local municipalities to operate programs out of existing community centers.

When Johnson took over the organization three years ago, he oversaw a \$1.1 million budget. That amount has grown to \$3.1 million this year and is projected to grow to \$7 million by 2018.

The Boys & Girls Club model has provided young people a safe, after-school environment to counter negative influences like gangs and drugs. Johnson also sees the organization filling in the gaps for low-income students who don't have stable, two-parent households with the resources for private tutors, summer programs or college tours.

"As an after-school provider, we're not going to transform these kids' lives by just providing services at the school," Johnson said. "We have to be with them during the school day to support their academic needs as well."

The Boys & Girls Club is one of several community organizations focusing more resources on local schools. The United Way of Dane County plans to spend \$4.7 million on education-related programs this year. It also deploys about 1,750 volunteer tutors whose time is estimated to be worth another \$1.4 million.

"The Boys & Girls Club's increased ambition and focus on aligning education strategies with their after-school programming makes sense with the success they've had with AVID/TOPS," United Way president Leslie Ann Howard said.

But Urban League of Greater Madison president Kaleem Caire, who sought unsuccessfully for School District support to launch a charter school for low-income and minority students, said the Boys & Girls Club should be careful not to deviate from its recreational mission.

"If it focuses too much on academics, then these kids who grow up poor, all they're doing is going to school — but going to school for what?" Caire said. "(The Boys & Girls Club) can play an essential role in addressing the achievement gap by doing what it's doing well."

Johnson said the organization will continue to offer recreational programming, but students need a holistic approach that also emphasizes good citizenship, healthy lifestyle and academic excellence.

"We're not deviating from kids coming in to shoot pool and play basketball," Johnson said. "They're still going to have those opportunities to participate in a fun environment. But when they come here, we make sure they can read and write."

Early results promising

Unlike Caire's charter school proposal, the School Board and district officials have embraced the AVID/TOPS program. The Verona School District also has adopted the unique model.

AVID, or Advancement Via Individual Determination, is a national model developed in San Diego in 1980 and geared toward students in the academic middle whose parents may not have college experience.

TOPS, or Teens of Promise, is a Boys & Girls Club of Dane County program that provides tutoring, internships and college visits to AVID students. The program employs 47 paid tutors and seven full-time staff in schools.

East was the first school to use the AVID/TOPS model in 2008 and the other four high schools added it the following year. It now serves 563 students.

The district expanded the AVID program to middle school this year and paired it with the Boys & Girls Club's College Club program, which began in 2010. Participants as early as first grade take field trips to UW-Madison and other campuses to get them thinking about college. The program employs five full-time staff and 17 paid tutors.

Last week the district released the latest results of a UW-Madison study that has found low-income black and Latino students who participate in the AVID/TOPS program have higher grades and attendance rates, lower behavioral referrals and are more likely to participate in advanced placement courses than similar peers.

Eleni Schirmer, a graduate student and author of the study, said early results suggest the program is having an impact, but additional research is needed.

"The students frequently talk about what it's like to be in the AVID family," Schirmer said. "You're spending time together, you're struggling together, and sometimes that makes a difference."

Tags Achievement Gap, Education, Boys And Girls Club, Madison East High School, Boys And Girls Club Of Dane County, Boys And Girls Clubs Of America, Michael Johnson, Awa Fofana, Kaleem

Win free stuff!

FREAKFEST 2013 TICKET GIVEAWAY!

ROBERT RANDOLPH AND THE FAMILY BAND -- "transcending the expected"

HARRY CONNICK, JR. -- "music full of character, energy, personality"

TOAD THE WET SPROCKET -- "clean, memorable, transcendent songs"

THE LONE BELLOW -- "folk, gospel and blues influences into straight-ahead roots rock"

POLICA -- "moody music that will stick to your bones"

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND -- "a massive wall of sound that is a blend of blues, roots and soul"

TAKING BACK SUNDAY -- "a celebration of great music, unforgettable memories, and lasting friendships"

THE HEAD AND THE HEART -- "impeccable, sweet-voiced folk-pop songs"

FATHER JOHN MSTY -- "a fiery stage presence"

TORO Y MOI -- "an emotional presence"

WALK THE MOON -- "a sense of imagination that shoots through the clouds"

BILL MAHER -- "unflinching honesty and big laughs"

MADISON.COM \$100 AMAZON GIFT CARD GIVEAWAY

THE CAP TIMES GIFT CARD GIVEAWAY: Win \$100!

Win \$500 in our BUMP 'N' RUN football picks contest!

Win free movie tickets and stay on top of Madison's movie scene!

View (1) Comments

More Local Education Stories

Madison teachers union ratifies contract for 2014-15

Bill would allow UW schools, technical colleges to authorize charter schools



School Spotlight: School nurses have a new resource on chronic issues

Facilities still a high priority for Columbus School Board

TRENDING OFFERS AND ARTICLES



These 2 foods quietly destroy your metabolism, forcing on ugly belly fat fast. Never eat these...



ObamaCare: if you really knew what was coming, you'd be as angry as I am.



New Rule in New Jersey: If you pay for car insurance you better read this...



These 5 Signs Warn You That Cancer is Starting Inside Your Body Right Now! Watch Video

ADVERTISEMENT

Recommendations

Tampa Bay Buccaneers release QB Josh Freeman (Sports Illustrated)

Then & Now: Target's Store Design Philosophy (A Bullseye View)

Prep girls golf: Middleton, Verona ranked 1-2 in Division 1; Madison Edgewood tops Division 2 coaches' poll : Prep-zone (Madison.com)

Hot Pictures of Female Golfer Blair O'Neal (Rant Sports)

13 Things Your Bartender Won't Tell You (Reader's Digest)

Tammy Baldwin shuts down because of shutdown : CT (Madison.com)

Stunning Photos Of Leonardo DiCaprio's For Sale Home (Lenny Magazine)

Woman robbed on bike path : Wsj (Madison.com)

Benjamin, Ralph M. Jr. : Madisondotcom (Madison.com)

Column: An open letter to the Atlanta Braves : Daily-cardinal (Madison.com)

Scrapbook honors, class reunions : Wsj (Madison.com)

Hot Pictures of Texas A&M Cheerleaders (Rant Sports)

Sponsored Links

Sponsored Results

New Rule in NEW JERSEY: (SEP 2013): If You Drive 35 mi/day or Less You Better Read This... www.ConsumerFinanceDaily.com

Mortgage Rates Hit 2.87% If you owe under \$729k you may qualify for 3.12% APR Govt Refi Plans. www.MortgageRatesExperts.com

Mortgage Rates Hit @ 3.5% If you owe under \$729k you may qualify for 3.12% APR Govt Refi Plans! www.Refinance.LowerMyBills.com

Copyright 2013 madison.com. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Advertisement for ChoiceHotels.com featuring a 30% OFF SALE banner and a 'Book Now' button. The text includes 'FALL FOR CHOICE HOTELS 30% OFF SALE ONLY AT CHOICEHOTELS.COM AT PARTICIPATING HOTELS' and logos for ChoiceHotels.com and various hotel brands.

FEATURES	GET IT	ADVERTISER SERVICES	CAPITAL NEWSPAPERS
News	Shop	Download a media kit (PDF)	Madison.com
Sports	Classifieds	Photoshop Color Settings	Wisconsin State Journal
Entertainment	Coupons	BW Guidelines	Capital Times
Events	Deals	Color Guidelines	Sports
Weather	Newspaper Ads	Submit a celebration	Wisconsin Prep Zone
Communities	Business Directory	Legal Notices	77 Square
Obituaries	Place an Ad	Submit digital files for ads	Daily Cardinal
Games, Puzzles	Homes	Place a classified ad for print or online	Nursing Matters
E-mail	Jobs		WiscNews
Archives	Careers		
Blogs	Rentals		

