

Walter S. Segaloff

Founder and Chairman
An Achievable Dream

Nominated by

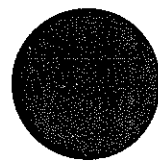
Richard A. Coleman

**WHERE YOU DON'T
WANT TO BE**

*Drugs
Disappointment
Early Parenthood
Poverty
Shame*

**WHERE YOU WANT
TO BE**

*College
Career
Family
Success
Pride*



YOU

Make the Right Decision

Contents
of
Nomination Packet
for
Walter S. Segaloff
Chairman and Founder of An Achievable Dream

Respectfully submitted by
Richard Coleman

1. Nomination letter
2. Articles (Samples that trace progression of program over 10 years)
3. Sample of letters from students and parents
4. Letter written by Walter Segaloff to Virginia Legislators in support of Standards of Learning (SOLs)
5. Essays about An Achievable Dream written by students

About the Cover:

Walter Segaloff is always thinking about how to make An Achievable Dream better, how to support our students and help them achieve their goals. For example, the graphic on the cover of this nomination packet represents a concept developed by Walter with a pen and a paper napkin in a restaurant. He wanted a symbol to which students of An Achievable Dream could relate on an “everyday” basis when it comes to making decisions – a symbol that would flash before them if they were thinking of doing something that could interfere with their goals, their dreams. From that, the concept grew to what’s on this cover; on posters and banners throughout the school; on the backs of their uniforms; and in the form of a “cool” hand symbol that they use among themselves.

Walter S. Segaloff

Business: Warwick Group, Ltd.
10858 Warwick Blvd.
Newport News, VA 23601

Telephone: Home 757-365-4281
Office 757-599-9470
FAX 757-873-4887

Education: Associate of Business, Nichols Junior College, Massachusetts, 1952
BBA, University of Michigan, 1954

Military: Army Reserves, 8 years.

Professional Experience:

TELEVERDE COMMUNICATIONS CORP/WILD BLUE COMMUNICATIONS, INC..

In 1995 Walter Segaloff started Televerde Communications Corp. with a partner, David Drucker. Each owned 50% interest in KaStar. KaStar owned two KA Band Satellite spots.

The acceptance of KaStar's application for satellite spots led to the start of a new company in 2000 named **WildBlue Communications, Inc.**, whose applications and efforts in proving the Ka-band two-way platform support the company's planned offering of two-way broadband Internet access via satellite. WildBlue plans to deliver satellite Internet access services direct to U.S. homes and offices via a 26-inch satellite dish.

WARWICK GROUP LIMITED

In December 1992, Walter Segaloff formed Warwick Group Limited as an investment group organized to develop and manage real estate and medium size businesses.

AN ACHIEVABLE DREAM, INC.

In 1992 Walter Segaloff founded An Achievable Dream, Inc., a program especially designed for children who are considered educationally and/or socially "at risk" for school failure. In 1992 the program started as an eight-week summer program for 100 rising fourth grades with educational enrichment activities, field trips, and intensive tennis instruction. With the support of the business community, Newport News Public Schools, City of the Newport News, and various state, federal, and private grants, the Fall 1999 program began with approximately 700 students in a year round program. July 2000 began another year of the year-round program with the extended day and Kindergarten through 2nd grades were added as an Achievable Dream Academy preparatory school with students in grades K through 12. In June 2001, we had our first graduating class. All 17 graduates were accepted and started college in August, 2001.

VIRGINIA SPECIALTY STORES, INC.

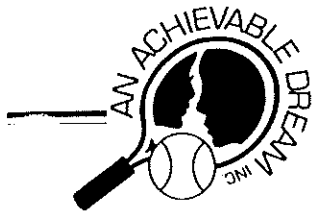
Walter Segaloff was the President and Chief Executive Officer for Virginia Specialty Stores, Inc., which was a woman's specialty store chain operating 107 stores throughout the Eastern United States trading under the names Added Dimensions, Other Dimensions, and The Answer. Walter's father, Charles Segaloff had started the company in 1947 with one store in downtown Newport News, Virginia. Walter Segaloff became associated with the concern in 1954 as Vice President and Treasurer. From July 24, 1959, to December, 1992, he was President and Chief Executive Officer. In December, 1992, the company was sold to Catherines Stores Inc., based out of Memphis.

REAL ESTATE

Additionally, Walter is a real estate developer. Some of his investments included:

Apartment house developer for 1200 apartments -- Park South, Alpine, Stratford Hall, and Williamsburg East

Land developer for tracts of land for residential use -- Barcroft, Merry Oaks, Charter Oaks, SpringHill, and West Bank.



An Achievable Dream Preparatory Academy
An Achievable Dream Academy

726 - 16TH STREET • NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607-5799 • 757-928-6827 • FAX: 757-247-1720

June 26, 2003

Trent E. Gabert, Ph.D.
Chair, Executive Committee
Brock International Prize in Education
College of Liberal Studies
University of Oklahoma
1700 Asp Avenue, Room 226
Norman, OK 73072-6400

Dear Dr. Gabert and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to nominate Walter S. Segaloff, Founder and Chairman of An Achievable Dream, Inc., for the Brock International Prize in Education. The name of the organization that Walter founded sums up what An Achievable Dream is about: helping poor and minority youth from inner-city neighborhoods claim the American dream.

An Achievable Dream is something remarkable in public education: it is truly a public-private partnership that operates a public school that is much more than just a school. The collaboration of partners that Walter Segaloff has formed is a unique program that incorporates the non-profit, government, and business sectors, and can be modeled for education reform.

Walter's business approach to education, beginning in 1992, has resulted in the evolution of the program from a small summer and after-school program into a comprehensive year-round, K-12 program that in recent years has sent 80 to 90% of its first three graduating classes to 2 or 4 year colleges. The remaining students have joined the military.

An Achievable Dream is based in and operated as a public school, but its goals and services extend beyond education. There is no mistaking that An Achievable Dream focuses on preparing young people from low income families for college and economically productive adult lives. It is, however, distinguished as much by its commitment to preparing young people to be contributing citizens, responsible and nurturing members of their families and communities, and individuals who will have satisfying internal lives.

I have organized this summary of An Achievable Dream, founded by Walter Segaloff, to reflect the criteria by which you will evaluate nominees.

1. Collaboration Model: Sharing of power, resources, and control

When it comes to public education, the lines have been sharply drawn – and are fiercely defended. It's up to the professionals – school boards and superintendents, teachers and state agencies – to run public schools. They decide what will be taught and how, how learning will be assessed, and how the massive infrastructure of education – schools, schedules, and budgets – will be organized. The public's job is to supply two things: students and resources (money, volunteers, and support). But not to determine, generally, how those resources will be spent. Like all bureaucracies, the public school establishments are generally loath to relinquish, or even share, power and territory.

But what if the power to shape public education were truly shared? What if all aspects of education, from the schedule to school culture, from instructional offerings to staff selection, were determined in collaboration with the stakeholders in education? And what if the entire collaboration were born not in a spirit of dissatisfaction and

confrontation, but in a shared appreciation of the fact that the community has a responsibility to be actively involved in the design and operation as well as the support of its schools?

These questions were being asked in Newport News, Virginia by Walter Segaloff. And the answer they are discovering is this: Schools can serve all students well, black students can succeed at levels that approach or equal those of white students, disadvantaged students can pursue the same goals as their affluent peers, and schools will produce competent students who will become productive workers and citizens.

What makes this partnership remarkable?

- *The impetus for reform came from outside the school system.* In 1992, businessman Walter Segaloff vowed to do what he could to staunch the loss of young people to crime, drugs, hopelessness, and failure. The solution, he was convinced, must involve the public schools, for only they have the power to reach every child. Segaloff assembled a coalition of corporate leaders, educators, and city officials. They launched a summer education and tennis program for at-risk children, saw it flourish, and began to expand it. Over time, they identified what worked – like the summer program – and built it into a year-round program. They identified things that weren't working – like having children scattered among many schools – and made changes like gathering them into a self-contained school. They figured out what else was needed – tutors, character education, parental involvement, health services – and added it.
- *An Achievable Dream is a collaboration of public and private organizations that runs a comprehensive K-12 public school program.* Newport News Public Schools provides the instructional and support elements common to all schools in the city, including curriculum, student services, basic staffing, transportation, food service, and maintenance. The private arm, through the mechanism of the non-profit An Achievable Dream, Inc., raises funds for and operates all the additional components that contribute significantly to the program's effectiveness: the extended school day, longer school year, uniforms, tennis, curriculum enrichments, technology, parent involvement, uniforms, and program evaluation.
- *Collaboration is broad-based.* The private non-profit arm, An Achievable Dream, Inc., is the mechanism for recruiting and coordinating the involvement of a host of partners in this collaboration. The City of Newport News supports the recreation component and provides volunteers from the sheriff's office. The U.S. Army installation at Fort Eustis supplies a daily contingent of volunteer soldiers who play a key role in the morning exercises and serve as role models of respect, responsibility, and civic involvement. Corporations and civic groups contribute volunteers, money, and in-kind services. The Peninsula Rotary, for example, raises \$200,000 a year for the program. Private donors pledge to provide college scholarships. Private Riverside Regional Medical Center operates a health clinic at the school.

The Commonwealth of Virginia offers the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) tax credits that promotes partnerships between the private and public sector to assist the economically deprived. An Achievable Dream is an active participant in this program that provides state tax credits as incentives for businesses and individuals to contribute directly to an approved non-profit organization that is designed to benefit impoverished people. (Note: 100% of An Achievable Dream students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch upon entering the program.)

- *The public schools and a private organization have achieved the unusual: They share power, authority, and accountability.* The lead private partner, An Achievable Dream, Inc., doesn't just fund the enhancements that make this an effective and unusual program, it operates them. Always working closely with the public school staff, the private arm designs and oversees the character education, conflict resolution, public speaking, parent involvement, and tennis programs; intersessions; and program evaluation.
- *So close is the collaboration between the public and private sectors that to teachers, students, and parents the lines are blurred – or irrelevant.* The lead staff of the public schools and private arm are in constant communication, coordinating the operation of what is essentially a joint undertaking in which they share responsibility for the outcome. Teachers are employees of the school system, but when the clock shifts

beyond the normal school day into the after-school session or the extra 30 days a year, their salaries and benefits are paid by the private partner. So seamless is the programming, so carefully are the private-funded elements like character education infused throughout the program, it isn't clear where the public school ends and the private support begins.

- *The collaboration integrates elements and professionals from many disciplines:*
 - Health: A school-based clinic serves students and their families
 - Community service is a two way street: Students are involved in community service during their intersessions, and community groups, from the soldiers at Fort Eustis to the corporations who donate expertise to individual volunteers, are involved in providing service to the school.
 - Higher education: The College of William and Mary is conducting an evaluation of the program. Many of the tutors hired to work with children are students at nearby universities.
 - Recreation: The City of Newport News supports the tennis program.
 - Law: Deputy sheriffs volunteer daily in the morning program and serve as role models.

2. **Integration of evidence from research in the program and evaluation**

The theoretical framework for An Achievable Dream is based on fundamental principles of educational reform and youth development. Program design is based on elements that have been found to be crucial to educational success in its broadest interpretation, which includes the development of responsible citizens:

- Clarity of purpose
- High expectations for students and teachers
- Alignment of the curriculum with clear and high standards and valid assessment
- A school culture that is orderly, secure, and nurturing, that fosters respect and responsibility
- Involving parents in the school and their children's education and strengthening families

The selection and integration of specific design elements is based on available evidence of strategies that are effective at promoting the educational success of minority and low income students, as garnered from professional research, observation of effective programs, and an understanding of best practices. Among those that have the most influence on program design are:

- Evidence that in urban schools, minority and low-income students are more likely to achieve at lower levels, need remedial services, be retained, and drop out and less likely to take advanced courses or apply to college. They are less likely to receive health care and more likely to become involved in the justice system, bear children during adolescence, and, as adults, be unemployed or underemployed and depend on public assistance. Equally compelling is evidence that with appropriate supports and high expectations, they can achieve and succeed at levels consistent with those of white and affluent students.
- Consistent evidence that teacher expectations can make a huge difference in student achievement. At An Achievable Dream, expectations are uniformly high, clearly articulated, and consistently reinforced.
- Evidence that students lose academic ground in the summer. An Achievable Dream is a year-round school, with its extra 30 days organized into three intersessions between regular quarters.
- Evidence that extended instructional time can yield results in student achievement. An Achievable Dream's day is 2 ¼ hours longer than the city norm and the year 30 days longer. This schedule makes time available for more intensive instruction in basics, as well as for curriculum enrichments (foreign language, technology education, the arts) and special offerings like the peaceful conflict resolution program.

- Evidence that students who are involved in extracurricular activities tend to perform at higher levels in school and are less likely to drop out. Dreamers participate in many activities, from the tennis team to a string ensemble, the choir to the chess club.
- Evidence from Israel, where tennis is used as a tool to assimilate immigrant children, that it can help children from disadvantaged backgrounds develop social skills and integrate into a world of success.

Evaluation is essential both to identify areas in which modifications are needed to strengthen the program and to demonstrate its effectiveness to other communities seeking evidence-based strategies for serving inner-city youth.

Outcome evaluation focuses on two areas: educational achievement, as measured largely by standardized testing and college acceptance, and behavioral performance, as measured by the incidence of infractions of school policies (ranging from cheating, lying, and insubordination to those involving weapons, alcohol and drugs).

The program has contracted with the School of Education at the College of William and Mary for continuing, objective, and systematic evaluation. In assessing outcomes, An Achievable Dream students are compared to a control group of students matched by age, gender, socioeconomic level, and academic status. William and Mary researchers also assess parent satisfaction through focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys.

The key findings from a two-year study by William and Mary, issued July 2002:

- *Compared with the match group, An Achievable Dream students in grades 3 and 5 scored higher on every portion of the Standards of Learning academic tests and on a standardized reading test.*
- *The number of disciplinary referrals for An Achievable Dream students was less than half that for the match group. Dreamers miss less school, an average of 18.4 days, versus 29.8 for the match group.*
- *Parents involved in the program are extremely satisfied with their children's learning, the performance of teachers, communication and relations with the school, and the school environment.*

The most significant finding is that An Achievable Dream is effective at closing the achievement gap between white and black students. On statewide tests, Dreamers – 96% of whom are African American and all of who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches – outperform other minority students in the city. They pass the Virginia tests at rates approaching or identical to the rates for white students. On some tests and grades, they closed the racial gap typical in most schools and on other tests narrowed it to only a few percentage points, compared to the 15 – 30 percentage point gap between black and white students in the city as a whole.

3. Advancing the principles of positive youth development

An Achievable Dream is designed to develop young people – into successful students, responsible citizens and family members, and gratified individuals. That focus is taken in two forms:

- On one level, the program strives to prevent problems that compromise the prospects of poor and minority students: academic failure, dropping out, crime and delinquency, teenage pregnancy, economic dependency, and under- and unemployment. And the core that infuses them all: diminished expectations.
- Beyond that, the positive thrust of the program is on youth development, on going beyond preventing problems to creating a setting in which children flourish, in which they develop the aspirations, confidence, and skills, and receive the sustained support they need to succeed.

An Achievable Dream does this through:

- Surrounding children with high, clearly articulated, and consistently reinforced expectations. It is blatantly clear: these children are preparing for college, for careers, and to become contributing members of their families and communities. These expectations are reinforced in daily morning exercises and classroom discussions, and proclaimed from banners in the hallways.

- A simple focus, revealed by the program's name: helping each student develop a dream of his or her own, a dream both challenging and achievable, and translating it into a plan that will motivate and guide the student in all the decisions of life. *This focus on goals, and on how academic achievement and personal decisions translate goals into reality, permeates An Achievable Dream.*
- Focusing on decision-making and developing in students an awareness that every decision, big or little, takes them further from or closer to their goals. This emphasis is reinforced in the character education program, which engages children in exploring what it means to act in concert with each value studied.
- Equipping children for the world of success through programs like etiquette classes and the "Speaking Green" program, which fosters poise, public speaking skills, and fluency in standard English. The "Peaceful Conflict Resolution" program teaches non-violent ways to resolve disputes.
- Fostering a sense of identity with a positive group that is an antidote to the lure of street gangs. From the earliest years, students identify themselves as Dreamers, an identity that is bolstered by uniforms, daily group exercises, and the distinction of attending a school that has a high profile in the community.
- Requiring and supporting the involvement of parents, one of the strongest weapons in the quest to develop strong children. All parents must sign a pledge to volunteer in the school and make education a priority at home. They review children's binders daily and can take a variety of classes in the parents' night school. This program works because it is welcoming and addresses parents' own needs as well as those of their children.

Risk reduction is also part of the program.

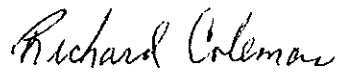
- The longer school day and year-round calendar not only allow for more intensive and enriched instruction and extracurricular activities but, for inner-city children, provide a safe and positive alternative to time that would otherwise be spent unsupervised or in idleness or on the streets.
- A number of program features – paid tutors, remedial programs during intersessions – ensure that children get extra help before they have a chance to fall behind and start down the downward slide to failure.
- Students sign a pledge promising not to get involved in drugs or alcohol or become parents, some of the highest risk behaviors of teens. They also pledge to come to school, pay attention, and do their work.
- The program incorporates services to prevent and treat health needs and promote students' well being. An on-site health clinic serves students and their families, and the "Healthy Living" curriculum emphasizes healthy habits and living, including nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and healthy daily schedules.

In a recent report on An Achievable Dream following a site visit by the U.S. Department of Justice, observers wrote: "The achievement gap between children living in poverty and their more affluent counterparts (the related gap between black and white students) is a grave concern of both the educational and juvenile justice systems in this country. While programs of varying types exist to address this gap, evaluation data are not conclusive as to their effectiveness. Because AAD may potentially eclipse that gap and snap the cycle of poverty's enduring and generational effects, a wide audience including educators, law enforcement, policy makers, and funders would undoubtedly be interested in findings from a rigorous evaluation of the AAD program."

In conclusion, it is my pleasure to nominate Walter Segaloff for the Brock International Prize in Education. His vision and fortitude to develop a program such as this deserves recognition from the education community. Perhaps An Achievable Dream cannot be replicated in its entirety in many places, but components of the program that have data-proven effectiveness can be implemented in schools and systems throughout our country. In addition, Walter has created a non-profit/government/business partnership model that provides unique resources, such as Virginia's NAP tax credit program, to improve public education, and which can be implemented in thousands of communities across the nation.

Following this letter is a compilation of summaries and reports on An Achievable Dream, newspaper and magazine articles, awards, letters and other documents to support my nomination of Walter Segaloff. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting with you in September.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Coleman".

Richard Coleman
Principal
An Achievable Dream Academy

Enclosures

Businessman takes a swing at giving hope

Walter Segaloff didn't predict the riots that rocked Los Angeles last week. But the Newport News businessman was working on a local solution to the hopelessness and despair that helped fuel them six months before the jury in the Rodney King case delivered its verdict:

Tennis.

That's right, tennis. Segaloff, a wealthy wholesaler of women's clothes, has made tennis the centerpiece of a new experimental program predominantly for poor black children. He calls it "An Achievable Dream."

"Tennis takes these kids out of the world they know into a world they have never known," says the brochure Segaloff put together to raise money for his program. "Tennis can be a barrier breaker and a dream maker for kids that need to build confidence and self-esteem. Because tennis has traditionally been a rich man's sport, providing inner-city children with tennis equipment and skills makes them feel big; it raises them. It gives them a bridge to break barriers and move into the larger world of employment and academic/professional satisfaction."

Right now Segaloff is working with four Newport News elementary schools to pick 100 underprivileged kids to test his theory.

Then, he will join forces with the school system and the city's recreation department, as well as volunteers and workers paid with private donations, to teach the kids tennis three hours a day, five days a week from June 22 to August 14. The children will also get three hours of reading, writing and arithmetic each day in classes that will have one teacher and one teacher's aide for every 10 students. There will be mentorships with successful people in the community along with a field trip a week.

2 Eventually, he intends to ask for federal and state grants. But first, he realizes he has to have commitments from the private sector.

"I presented this idea to 70 business leaders the other day at a lunch at the shipyard hosted by Pat Phillips," the shipyard president, Segaloff said.

"This idea" includes 100 children this year, 300 next year, 500 the year after that and 1,000 the year after that.

"What the heck," Segaloff said. "We've got tennis courts all over the city."

We also have "a whole segment

2 But tennis is the hook.

"We'll give them the right clothes and equipment," Segaloff said, "and show them the sportsmanship that goes with tennis."

Segaloff got his idea from a tennis program that has operated in Israel for 14 years. It was designed for socialization as much as physical education, Segaloff said, and it has succeeded in cutting crime and juvenile delinquency in areas where it has been tried.

In Newport News, Segaloff's vision extends far beyond that into an interlocking network of programs to carry children from the fourth grade through college.

He has assembled a core working group of 20 individuals, including School Board Chairman McKinley Price and Commonwealth's Attorney Howard Gwynn, both of whom are black, to try to pull it off.

"We'll keep the kids for two or three years and then, hopefully, pass them on to another program," he said. "One local college has agreed to do an inventory of what's available so we don't duplicate services."

Also involved, according to Segaloff, is a set of standards, measured in two-year increments, that will lead to a literacy passport for high school graduation that is much tougher than the failed one the state has tried to implement.

Down the road, too, Segaloff is depending on the state to pay for a plan that would guarantee tuition to a state trade school or college for any child who maintained a certain grade point average and standardized test score and who stayed drug free and out of trouble with the law.

But for now the businessman has committed his time and money to taking the first step, the tennis program.

He already has raised enough private money for the summer. By August he expects to have the balance of a \$200,000 budget that will let him carry the tennis program year-round.

and can't live up to expectations," he continued. "Somehow we have to reinfuse family values in this part of our population. We have to reinstitute moral and religious values into this part of the community."

A couple of days ago, in reaction to the Los Angeles riots, the Wall Street Journal printed an editorial that reflected what Segaloff has been telling people around here for months:

Surely the answer now does not lie with another flood of federal guilt money into institutions and ideas that have already failed. The solution will be found among a newer, largely local black leadership that is determined to create functioning schools (based on

erty ownership, families with fathers and a justice system that clears the streets of the most dangerous criminals.

"This is a war," Segaloff explained. "We have to attack it with that in mind."

He realizes that using a white man's sport, clothing and values in the point of that assault might strike some as condescending. But to those folks he issues this challenge:

"Last week Los Angeles looked like a banana republic. There were American soldiers and American people in the street. There was frustration and a lack of a dream. We need people to roll up their sleeves and do something. So don't tell me why my plan won't work."

FRIDAY, MAY 8, 1992

JIM SPENCER



Dreams coming true



Charlene Daren, 11, gives her coach, Avis Mann, a high five as she runs off the tennis court.

Joe Fudge/Daily Press

Program achieves first year

One-time at-risk kids show marked gain

By Janette Rodrigues
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Ten-year-old Dale Womack, a glib youngster with a 100-watt smile, has no problem rattling off the changes he has made in his life in the past year.

He behaves in school. He stays away from guns — he thought they were cool before. He no longer picks fights. He doesn't butt in front of other kids in the lunch line. And he listens when others are trying to talk.

And Dale has no question about what turned him around: It was, he says, the help he received from the program called An Achievable Dream.

It's even taught him "to be polite and hold the door for some of the ladies," he says.

He is one of the 200 youngsters from Newport News who spend five days a week playing tennis, strengthening study skills and learning how to treat others with respect on the tennis court, the classroom and in life.

Dale was at risk of dropping of school, falling through the cracks, before a teacher at Riverside Elementary School suggested he apply for entry into the Achievable Dream program last year.

When he was told about the program last year, Dale was far from interested in spending his summer letting someone tell him what to do. "I thought 'bump this.' I wouldn't be able to go out and play."

Dale said his attitude changed because of what he has learned over the past year — self-esteem, patience and respect.

IN BRIEF

Who? At-risk fourth- and fifth-graders.

What? Youngsters play tennis, strengthen study skills and learn how to treat others with respect.

When? Summer and after school.

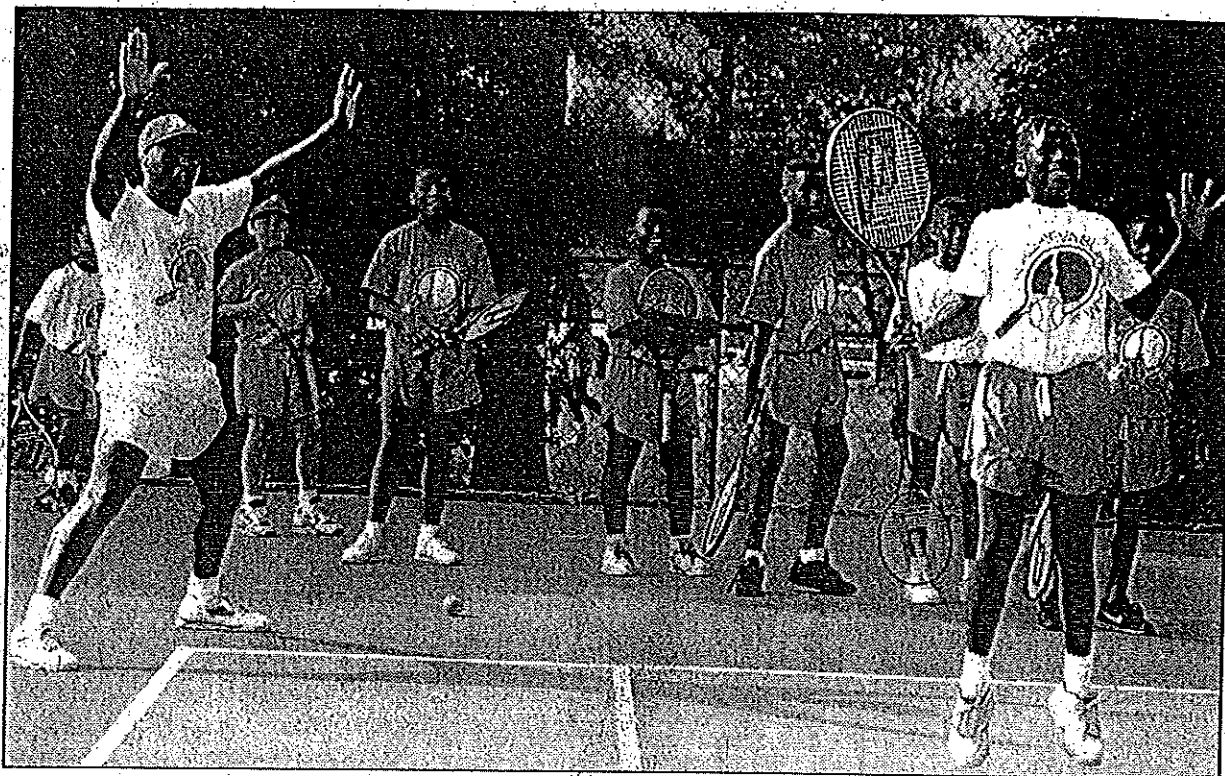
Where? Carver, Seedgefield, South Morrison, Riverside, Dunbar-Erwin and Hidenwood elementary schools.

Why? Designed to turn around potential dropouts into academic achievers.

How? Professionals, parents, volunteers and teachers work with students.

■ Individuals — contributing time, talent, money or services — will determine the success of An Achievable Dream. Editorial, A6.

Please see Dream/B2



Coach Avis Mann, left, works with An Achievable Dream students on the court.

Joe Fudge/Daily Press

■ Dream

Continued from B1

The students learn these lessons from the racially diverse group of professionals and volunteers they come into daily contact with, from concerned parents and educators to Gov. Doug Wilder and Virginia's Republican U.S. Senator, John Warner.

A year has passed since local civic leader and businessman Walter Segaloff started An Achievable Dream, a summer and after-school enrichment program for at-risk children who aren't performing up to the academic potential they show in test scores.

The Achievable Dreamers, as they have become known around the city, are at risk of dropping out of school, come from low-income homes and attend one of the elementary schools channeling students into the program.

Local schools that placed students in the programs include: Carver, Sedgefield, South Morrison, Riverside, Dunbar-Erwin and Hidenwood.

Teachers and principals from those schools identify students who could benefit from the program, which is designed to turn a child's academic life around in five years.

Though it is too soon to compile statistics showing a correlation between the program and improved test scores, Sedgefield Principal Jake Wilson said he has seen improvements in the Achievable Dreamers attending his school.

According to Wilson, the students participating in the program have improved their school attendance records this year, are better behaved and have more confidence in themselves.

"They look you in the eye," said Wilson, adding the Achievable Dreamers are role models for other students at his school.

Karen Womble is one of the

Achievable Dreamers who attend Sedgefield.

A tall girl with a baby-blue barrette in her hair, Karen is quick to talk about how she begged a teacher to get her into the tennis and tutoring program last summer.

Karen used to participate in another summer program offered in the city, but the rising fifth-grader wanted to do more with her summer vacation than spend it at a local recreation center.

So she became an Achievable Dreamer.

"I like writing," said the 10-year-old Newport News resident, who was still a little sweaty from playing tennis on a hard-surface court in the summer heat. "And it sounded like fun."

She wouldn't change a thing about An Achievable Dream.

"They are doing just fine," she said before pausing to add, "I'm glad they brought more kids into the program."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1994

At-risk students achieve dream with NN's after-school program

Test scores, behavior improve after first year

By Leslie Postal
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Eleven-year-old C.J. Reid has just one real complaint about the An Achievable Dream program he joined last year: "I wish it started like when I was in second grade.

"They make school seem better for us," said the fifth-grader at South Morrison Elementary School in Newport News. "We're very, very lucky."

Students in the enrichment program for disadvantaged children are doing better, according to An Achievable Dream Inc., the private Newport News organization that runs the program.

The organization announced Wednesday that after a year in the program the first 84 participants boosted achievement test scores, increased their ranks on the honor roll and improved their academic performance even after the summer break. School officials reported students behaved better, too.

"We're offering hope, real hope," said founder Walter S. Segaloff, speaking at a fund-raising luncheon for the program.

An Achievable Dream began in June 1992 as a summer and after-school program for Newport News children who seemed almost destined to fail in school. Most children in the program live in poor, single-parent families and have had behavioral problems at school.



Starr Ashley, 11, giggles during a tennis match.

Almost half have been held back a grade, although most are capable students.

An Achievable Dream uses tennis as its "hook" — something fun to build students' self-confidence and teach them how to behave. But its main focus is on building skills needed for aca-

■ An Achievable Dream founder wants to expand the program. C2.

ademic success. So students get help with their homework, work in computer laboratories and take field trips in addition to hitting the courts.

The program, financed by private and corporate donations, now serves 200 students and hopes to serve 500 by 1996. The students join in the summer as rising fourth-graders and can remain through eighth grade.

Eighty-three percent of the students tested after a year improved on at least one of three standardized tests, said Vikki Maida, a Newport News principal who evaluated the tests. The tests judged reading and math skills.

By comparison, Maida said, most "at-risk" students typically lose many of their academic skills over the summer. By third or fourth grade they are falling behind rather than making improvements, she said.

But in Achievable Dream, she said, "The kids are succeeding academically."

Charlotte J. Patterson, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia who studies performance on standardized tests, said the program's results sounded encouraging, especially on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

"The results, at first glance, sound good," Patterson said.

Forty-one percent of the students

Please see Dream/C2



Teacher Ann Robinson, left, helps An Achievable Dream student Tennessee Roberts, 10, with her science work. The organization announced Wednesday that the first 84 participants boosted achievement test scores, increased their ranks on the honor roll and improved their academic performance even after the summer break.

Photos by Kenneth Silver/Daily Press

Dream

Continued from C1

improved on the Iowa reading test and 69 percent improved on the math portion.

In other results, 23 Achievable Dream students showed up on the honor roll this fall, compared to seven the year before. About a third made more than a year's gain in reading skills.

Superintendent Eric J. Smith said he was first skeptical about whether the program would work but has changed his mind. "It is a program that does the right thing for children," he said.

Maida said she also noticed behavioral improvements.

"One little boy, he was probably in my office 50 times," she said. "Now, he's in there saying, 'This is happening to me, I don't want to fight.'"

Quentin Bowens, 10, a fourth-grader at South Morrison, said he liked staying after school for the program because it was "boring at home." He liked playing tennis and loved taking a field trip, by train, to Richmond. "It was great," he said, breaking into a wide grin. "That was my first time."

Founder proposes an all-day Dream

By Leslie Postal
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

An Achievable Dream, the privately funded program for disadvantaged Newport News students, would like its own school, or at least its own wing in an existing school, so it could transform its after-school and summer activities into an all-day affair.

Walter S. Segaloff, founder of the program, recently made that proposal to the Newport News School Board. The board said it would consider the idea.

Neither Segaloff nor school officials would comment further on the proposal, saying it would be premature while they negotiate a possible arrangement.

"It's work in progress now," said Superintendent Eric J. Smith. But, Smith said, the idea has "some potential."

An Achievable Dream now serves about 200 elementary school students considered at

risk of failing in school.

The program helps them in their academic subjects, takes them on field trips and teaches them tennis, all part of the program's effort to help these children become "not a criminal statistic, but a high school graduate and hopefully a college statistic."

Most of the students live in poor, single-parent homes and have had behavioral problems in school.

Wednesday, the program announced that the first 84 students to participate have shown improvements on standardized achievement tests.

Segaloff said the program, now run out of three Newport News elementary schools, loses some of its impact when the staff has the students for only three hours a day. And, he said, it has become difficult to transport students from 13 different schools to the three sites.

School would serve those at risk

Proposal to expand Achievable Dream

By Felice Belman
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School in the East End would be turned into a special school for 300 disadvantaged children this fall under a plan the School Board will discuss Wednesday.

The idea comes from Newport News businessman Walter S.

Segaloff, founder of An Achievable Dream, an after-school support program for students who are considered at risk of failing school.

The proposed all-day program would serve third-through-fifth graders. A new principal would be chosen, and teachers would be specially screened.

Committees would be established to decide who gets in, what gets taught, who teaches it and how the school is financed and governed.

■ The Newport News School Board meets Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the School Administration Building on Warwick Boulevard.

The proposed school would be an expansion of the afternoon and summer program run by An Achievable Dream, which is privately financed. The current program, run out of three Newport News elementary schools, tutors

children in academic subjects, takes them on field trips and teaches them tennis.

Segaloff says children need stronger ties between their daily academic program and their after-school and summer programs.

"Students are currently attending half a dozen schools, and their teachers are not aware of the field trips, the lectures and the extension activities, which need to be followed up through mathematics, science, writing and

reading activities," Segaloff said in a written proposal to the School Board.

So far, Segaloff said Monday, there is no estimate on how much the program would cost. The Achievable Dream finance committee, he said, is still trying to figure out details, including how much of the funding would be public or private.

Kenneth Murov, School Board chairman, said the idea will need

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School

Continued from C1
a lot of discussion — but his initial impression is positive.

"At first blush, the plan makes sense," he said. "Having it all at one school, the logistics would be easier. We'd spend less time worrying about the mechanics of it."

One challenge, Murov said, would be making sure students

from all over the city are considered for the program — even though Dunbar-Erwin is in the East End.

"Families from other parts of Newport News might be willing to accept a longer bus ride because it is such a compelling program," Murov said.

Last week, An Achievable Dream announced that after a year in the program, the first 84 participants boosted achievement test

scores, increased their ranks on the honor roll and improved their academic performance.

"There's no magic dust, just love and caring and support. It's sort of like an extended family," Segaloff said.

The board will not vote Wednesday. Rosalynne Whitaker-Heck, Newport News schools spokeswoman, said the proposal may involve zoning changes, and public hearings must be scheduled.

DAILY PRESS; SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1994

Achievable goal

Expansion of 'Dream' program sounds promising

Social planners often use the term "investment" to describe programs that will have long-term benefits for the participants. In Newport News, An Achievable Dream is an investment in salvaging about 200 fourth- and fifth-graders who had shown signs they were not likely to stick it out through 12 years of school and graduation.

Early returns on this investment — about \$450,000 this school year in public and private contributions of money and services — have been good. The first students enrolled in the 2-year-old after-school and summer program have shown improvement on tests, have begun making the honor roll and have cleaned up their behavioral problems.

An Achievable Dream combines academic instruction with field trips and tennis lessons to stimulate the children. A couple of problems have emerged: the limitations of having the students for only

three hours a day and the absence of a tie between the students' normal school-work during the day and what they cover in the Dream program.

Walter Segaloff, the program's founder and tireless booster, envisions a larger program to resolve these problems and help more children. The School Board has shown some interest in his proposal to make An Achievable Dream an academically complete, all-day program for 300 third- through fifth-graders in a magnet school to be located at Dunbar-Erwin Elementary. We agree that the plan has potential.

Questions about how much more money the program will require, what the curriculum will look like and which students will qualify need to be answered. But there's no question An Achievable Dream has shown the promise necessary for a larger investment.

DAILY PRESS; WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 1994

Enlarging the dream

School Board should expand innovative program

Saving underachieving children and increasing parental interest in the schools are two issues candidates in the first Newport News School Board election have been talking about. The current board members aren't standing for election, but they can get a jump on addressing those campaign issues by approving an innovative proposal tonight.

The proposal is to expand the Achievable Dream after-school program into a full-day magnet school at Dunbar-Erwin Elementary. The program provides academic instruction and a tennis curriculum to motivate impoverished, underachieving children into performing up to their ability. It is operated as a partnership between a private group and city schools.

The program helps children in the third through fifth grades who are falling behind. The magnet school will have some tough rules. Children will have to

pledge to respect teachers and adults, pay attention in class and stay out of trouble. Parents will be required to spend some time in the program as volunteers. A couple of other rules, while not on the front burner of the campaign this spring, address longstanding concerns: Children won't be competing with expensive designer blue jeans because they will be wearing uniforms, and they promise to do their homework.

The proposal to expand An Achievable Dream has met with some criticism, such as that it doesn't reach the neediest children. But it's better to show the expanded program can work before broadening the range of children it's intended to help; 1,500 kids meet even the limited criteria. We think Walter Segaloff's brainchild has been a welcome spark for Newport News, and the School Board should proceed with plans to expand it into a magnet school.

NN school a 'dream'



Students head for buses outside Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School recently. The Newport News School Board will vote on a plan to turn the school into An Achievable Dream magnet school. **Buddy Norris/Daily Press**

Board questions entry requirements

By Leslie Postal
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Newport News' newest magnet school would drill elementary students in discipline, requiring uniforms, 40 minutes of homework a night and near-perfect attendance.

The school's proposed curriculum, heavy on reading and writing, calls for frequent field trips, computer work and interdisciplinary courses like "The Earth We Live On."

The plans for the An Achievable Dream magnet school were outlined in a proposal given to the Newport News School Board last week. Sever-

al board members said they like the blueprint but have questions about who would get to attend the new school and who would ultimately be in charge of it.

After more discussion, the School Board could vote on the proposal Wednesday. If the board approves the plans, it would set up what officials believe will be the first school of its kind in Virginia. The new magnet school, with its selective admissions policy, would be run as a partnership between the city's public school system and the private An Achievable Dream Inc. organization.

An Achievable Dream now runs an after-school and summer enrichment program for 200 disadvantaged stu-

A sample day

8:30 to 9:30 a.m. - Breakfast and morning routines
9:30 to 10:30 a.m. - Morning activities to be supervised by primary volunteers

10:30 a.m. - Classes begin. It will include:

- Two hours of language arts, including public speaking and creative writing
- One hour of math
- 30 minutes of physical education (tennis one day a week)
- One hour of health, science, social studies, music or art
- 30 minutes of study hall for test preparation or learning study skills
- 45 minutes of computer work (once a week)
- 20 minutes for lunch

1:00 p.m. - School day ends

4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - After school activities to include chess, table tennis and tutoring sessions for students who need extra help.

Student contract

I want to be in the Achievable Dream Program and I agree to:

1. Come to school on time every day unless I am sick.
2. Pay attention in class.
3. Ask questions and answer questions in class.
4. Do my homework every night.
5. Follow the rules of the Achievable Dream Program.
6. Treat my classmates as I would like to be treated.
7. Be responsible for my schoolwork and behavior.
8. Show respect to my teachers and other adults.
9. Stay out of trouble and obey the law.

Other rules

Students must wear uniforms, which are still being designed, and keep them neat and clean.
Students must do at least 40 minutes of homework each night, which will include reading a library book.
Parents must also sign a contract promising to support the program and to volunteer at least eight hours each month at the school.



Community leaders debate whether the neediest students should be enrolled. **A2.**

Please see Dream/A2

Dream

Continued from A1

dents considered at risk of failing in school. Walter Segaloff, the program's founder, said he proposed the magnet school because he thinks An Achievable Dream loses some of its impact when the staff has the students for only a few hours a day.

The school would focus on discipline, Segaloff said, because that is a key to education. It would offer a challenging curriculum for the students with the goal of having everyone able to read as well as they should by fifth grade.

As planned, the magnet school would be housed in Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School on 16th Street and would serve 300 students in third through fifth grades. The An Achievable Dream school would operate as a "school within a school" and Dunbar would continue to host a separate, more traditional kindergarten through second grade. School officials have not decided whether Dunbar, which now serves kindergarten through third grade, would continue to house a regular third grade.

The new school would target the same group of students now in An Achievable Dream: children from low-income families who seem capable of eventually going to college. Officials say these children, burdened by broken families, poverty and violence, probably won't make it without some extra help. cont.

VIEWS OF THE PROPOSAL



Superintendent Eric J. Smith wants to reach elementary students who are likely to be enrolled in remedial classes by the time they reach high school.



School Board member Thaddeus B. Holloman says some residents worry about a private organization taking over a public school.



Program founder Walter Segaloff says he doubts the school would work as well if students with more serious problems were enrolled.



School Board member Sarah L. Whittington says leaving out the neediest kids raises the question of whether, "You're also building in a lot of success."

To apply to the new school, students must be eligible for the free or reduced school-lunch program and be no more than one grade level behind in reading. Preference would be given to students who live with just one parent and live below 39th street. School officials estimate that 1,500 students would be eligible to apply next year.

Some School Board members raised concerns about the reading-level requirement.

"You're going to eliminate a lot of kids," said board member Sarah L. Whittington. "You're also building in a lot of success."

Board member Robert Ulrich agreed that many needy children would not be helped.

"If I'm a parent of a child who reads two years below grade level, I want to know what you're going to do for my kid," he said. "Not to be flip, but I'm concerned that we're setting up a program for kids that don't need it."

But Superintendent Eric J. Smith said the population targeted is one that needs help.

Students like those An Achievable Dream wants to teach now fill the remedial classes in the city's high schools, Smith said, and they rarely enroll in college-preparatory classes.

"We're talking about some students with some pretty serious difficulties," Smith said.

An Achievable Dream was designed to help children who need encouragement and reinforcement but not the special skills of special education teachers, Segaloff said. That was the reason for the reading-level requirement, he said, adding that he doubted the school would work as well if students with more serious problems were enrolled.

But maybe the seriously struggling students also need a different program, he said. "We'd be happy to look at it as a separate program later," he said.

Board member Thaddeus B. Holloman said residents who are familiar with An Achievable Dream generally favor the proposal for the school. But he has also heard some

residents express fear that the private organization is taking over a public school.

Holloman said he, too, wants to be reassured on that count.

"I want to make sure, as I've said before, that this is ours," he said as the board reviewed plans for the school at a work session last week.

Whittington agreed there had been some "disquiet in the community" when the proposal was first announced. But she said many of those who were worried initially seemed reassured after school administrators held several meetings for parents and community leaders.

Cleveland Mayo, president of Dunbar's PTA, agreed. In fact, most parents he knows are now excited about the program.

"I'm all for it," said Mayo, adding that he would be happy for his 6-year-old daughter to attend when she is old enough.

With nearly 95 percent of Dunbar's students classified as "at-risk" of failing in school, there is a need for something new, something that challenges students to do well academically, he said.

"To me it would be a great asset to the area," Mayo said. "If we don't put the time and effort in now this generation will be lost."

At Dunbar, school officials said they would remain in control of the An Achievable Dream school, even though it would have its own principal and staff. These positions would be filled by school system employees, and the school would follow all the rules that apply in other city schools, they said.

School officials and Segaloff's organization are still working out a plan that will detail the day-to-day decision-making process for the school. He said he knows the School Board will be the final authority and doesn't expect any major problems about who is in charge.

"Common sense," he said, "will see us through the rough spots."

Segaloff said he expects his

group would have an office in the school and that someone from his staff, though not necessarily him, would be in the building every day. He said he would expect to spend time in the school, but that the school would be run by the principal, someone he hoped would "have a burning desire to do this."

Under the proposal, the magnet school would follow the school system's basic curriculum but also would provide such extras as monthly field trips, weekly computer classes and daily study hall, as well as a host of extracurricular activities. These would include chess club, choir and tennis — the game that has been the program's "hook" since it began two years ago.

The new school also would emphasize citizenship and discipline; officials hope military men and women will volunteer at the school as supervisors and club sponsors. Students might even eat breakfast and attend "open ceremonies" every morning with the volunteers. They would wear uniforms, and both they and their parents would sign contracts promising they would do homework, attend school and behave.

Despite his questions, Holloman said he recognizes the program could help students. "We know the Achievable Dream has had some kind of success," he said.

In February the program reported that its first 84 participants boosted their achievement test scores and showed up on school honor rolls more often.

Smith said the new school could help the school system solve one of its worst problems: its low-income and minority students do far worse academically than their wealthier, white classmates.

"There is no one who is going to assume that serving 100 students at each grade level is going to solve the world's problems," Smith said. "But I do feel this provides us an opportunity to make a good first step."

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1995

A day in the Dream

An Achievable Dream aspires to give a future to Newport News children who otherwise might not have one. In doing so, it has been recognized nationally as a school that breaks the mold.

By Mark Di Vincenzo
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Five in the morning is a tough time for anyone to wake up, let alone a kid. But that's when 9-year-old Robyn Center starts her day.

It's always dark and silent then, and sometimes it's cold. The place to be at 5 a.m. is under sheets and blankets, but Center rises out of necessity.

By 6 a.m. every weekday, she must be on a bus, where she sits for 75 minutes or so on a north-to-south tour of Newport News, from the Denbigh neighborhood where she lives to the East End school she attends.

No one is forcing Center to do this, to attend An Achievable Dream. Like the 353 others at the school, she is one of those children who experts say may flounder as an adult if she doesn't get special attention now.

Flounder because all of the school's students come from families that don't have much money. Because 80 percent of them live in households with one parent.

Because some practically run their households and raise their younger siblings. Because many live in parts of the city where the streets are unsafe for children, or anyone else for that matter.

Thousands of children in Newport News fit this mold, but school officials decide who may attend the school, which consists of grades three through six. It comes down to this: They look for poor kids who are deemed "college material." After all, the dream — the achievable dream — is free college tuition for students who maintain a "C+" average through high school, stay away from drugs, abide by the law and don't get pregnant or father a child.

In a special section of the Oct. 30

SOUND OFF

TODAY'S QUESTION: Should more schools be like An Achievable Dream?
CALL 928-1111, 1222 to respond.



Coach Harvey Robinson and Gernita Powers shake hands as the student departs from gym class at An Achievable Dream.

Joe Fudge/Daily Press

Please see Dream/A4

Dream

Continued from A1
issue of Business Week, An Achievable Dream, located on 16th Street in the city's East End community, is featured as one of six schools in the nation that just won an award for being innovative.

"At all six schools there are high expectations, a concentration on the basics — reading and writing — and help from the business community," says Charlotte K. Frank, a vice president with the McGraw-Hill Educational Publishing Group, a co-sponsor for the award.

Frank, the former curriculum chief for the New York City public schools, says of An Achievable Dream during a recent visit, "The kids like being here. It's a happy place. There's an orderly life to this institution."

Robyn Center has been up for two hours when her bus and 10 others pull up to the front of the school at a few minutes past 7 a.m.

As the students step off the bus, Darrin Wills, a school administrator, greets them at the curb. They stay in lines as they walk toward the building and encounter Gordon Jones, another administrator, who stands just outside the doors where the children enter and exit the school. Jones shakes every child's hand and greets them — by name.

"Good morning, William."

"Good morning, Christopher."

It goes on and on.

On a recent morning, a boy tries to sneak by without shaking hands, but Jones sees him and says, "Excuse me! Where's my handshake?"

The boy obliges.

Handshakes are important here. Teaching students the proper way to greet a stranger — or a friend, for that matter — is just something else that they learn here. It's a part of teaching respect.

Jones is also there to check uniforms. An Achievable Dream administrators believe their school is the only public school on the Peninsula where uniforms are required. Girls wear blouses, buttoned to the top, navy blue and green checked skirts and black shoes. Boys wear either khaki or navy blue pants, with golf shirts, also buttoned to the top, and black shoes. Sixth-grade boys must wear button-down shirts and ties — no clip-ons — except on Fridays, when they, too, may wear golf shirts, buttoned to their Adam's apple.

with Jones, they shake hands again — all of them — with Vikki Rehnback, the school's principal, who bends over to look them in the eyes and say either, "bonjour, mademoiselle" or "buenos dias, senorita" to the girls, and "bonjour, monsieur" or "buenos dias, senor" to the boys.

They've heard this morning greeting many times before, but most look at Rehnback as if she has three heads. She just laughs.

After they leave her, they proceed to the cafeteria, where all the students are eligible for free- or reduced-price breakfast and lunch.

As they enter the cafeteria, soldiers from Fort Eustis Army Base greet them with more handshakes and "good mornings." The soldiers, who are assigned to groups of students, come here as part of a mentoring program, to expose the kids to the military, to serve the community and to make friends.

"Hey, I hear you're doing better in math," Sgt. Lonnie Stanford says to one boy. "I'm proud of you."

The boy smiles and nods.

As the students eat breakfast, Stanford, a stocky man with a booming voice, blows his whistle, a sign that the chatting is to stop and the chanting is to begin.

"Believe in yourself," Stanford yells.

"Believe in yourself," the students yell back.

"I will say no to drugs," Stanford yells.

"I will say no to drugs," the students reply.

The chants continue. As the students finish eating, the high-pitched voices of more than 300 preteen students become louder and louder, and Stanford shouts, "Your behavior is unacceptable to me."

A couple of minutes later, the soldiers begin escorting students to the auditorium.

"Get in line and look straight ahead," one soldier says to a fourth-grader.

It's Friday, so they walk to the gymnasium and gather for their weekly "town meeting," where classes are recognized for perfect attendance and students listen to a guest speaker, who is meant to inspire students and tell them how to behave.

This week it's the Norfolk State University tennis coach, who talks about his team and the importance of respect.

If it weren't a Friday, students would be in their character education class with the soldier assigned to their class.

As the town meeting ends, Stanford, who grew up "at risk, like these kids" in Atlanta, says the soldiers love the students. "They may not be our kids by DNA," he says, "but they are our kids."

By 8:45 a.m., the soldiers are on the road, returning to their base, and the day's classes are about to begin. But not before another inspection, which reinforces the importance of having a neat appearance.

"Who's going to hire you if your pants are hanging down to your knees," says 11-year-old Jarrell Cousins, a sixth-grader who is wearing khaki pants, a light blue button-down shirt and a black tie.

Outside fourth-grade teacher Darren Reed's class, two lines form. Girls in one, boys in the other. One by one, the girls step up to Reed, open their mouths — so he can check for gum — then turn around so he can see if their shirts are tucked into the back of their skirts. They all pass inspection.

The boys aren't as tidy this day. A large boy steps in front of Reed and turns around, exposing an untucked shirt.

"Fix the back of your pants," Reed says, smiling, "and get to the back of the line."

"Damn," the boy says after he turns away from Reed. "I thought I'd make it."

The next boy, a squat youngster not much taller than a yardstick, steps up.

"Button your top button, tuck in your pants," Reed says.

The boy, the only one left in line, obeys, furiously forcing his shirt in his pants, a sight that triggers giggles from Reed.

The boy passes inspection. Class begins.

Down the hallway, Robert Berry's class of sixth-graders are in the computer lab, using a mouse and arrow keys to move outlines of Middle East countries into their proper order on a map.

There is one computer for every six students at An Achievable Dream, a ratio better than any other school in the city — public or private. Next year school officials hope to have one computer there for every four students.

This couldn't happen without extra money.

While the state and city together now chip in about \$5,400 to educate a Newport News public school student, about \$7,200 is spent on each student at An Achievable Dream. The extra \$1,800 or so comes from a private foundation — supported by local businesses — that pays for computers, uniforms, teachers' aides, field trips, after-school clubs and the school's tennis program.

An Achievable Dream, now in its second year as a full-day school, started as a summer tennis program three years ago.

Walter Segaloff, a local businessman who founded the school, got the idea from a similar school in Israel. Tennis not only teaches sportsmanship, but it's a sport that students can play the rest of their lives, says CaSandra "Coach P" Perilliati, one of the school's tennis teachers.

All students must play tennis — once a week during the week, one Saturday a month and during the

summer — at the city's Huntington Park courts, but only a few own their own rackets. The foundation provides them as well as tennis shorts and shirts.

Robert Berry's class returns to the classroom and begins balancing algebraic equations.

As he asks questions, most of his 17 students, hoping to be called on, say, "oooh, oooh, oooh" to get Berry's attention and raise their hands so fast they risk dislocating their shoulders.

"There were school officials who said our sixth-graders wouldn't understand pre-algebra," says Rehnback, the principal, who sports an I-told-you-so grin. "I think they get it."

After a science class, Berry's students line up to use the bathrooms, then walk to the cafeteria for lunch.

On the way, a group of boys, all 12-year-olds who live in the city's predominantly black East End community, talk to a visitor about An Achievable Dream.

Mostly they like it.

Anthony Bemby learned to tie a tie here. Kenneth Williams said he learned about respecting women from books male teachers gave him. Charles Butler — not to be confused with his identical twin brother, Charlie Butler, the one with the chipped tooth — said teachers have taught him "how to be a man in the real world."

Butler said he likes the school's uniforms because "some of us are less fortunate than others and can't afford nice clothes. Here, we all look the same. No one is better than anyone else."

Like several of the boys here, Butler said the school has too many rules. "The discipline is too tough."

The boys say they don't mind the extended school day, which starts at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 4:15 p.m. — about 1 hour and 45 minutes longer than most kids in Newport News spend in school.

As Segaloff, the school's founder, explains during a recent interview, their school day is longer "because

in most cases school is a better place for them to be than where they are. I want them here as long as I can keep them here."

In the cafeteria, as students wolf down applesauce and soft tacos stuffed with ground beef, 11-year-old Jana Hungate, another sixth-grader, says the only thing she doesn't like about the school is the uniforms. "I'm not a skirt person," she says.

Uniforms curb peer pressure, say the students — third-, fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders. The "dreamers," as they are called, stay in the An Achievable Dream program even after they leave the school on 16th Street and start seventh grade at a middle school elsewhere in the city.

They still must play tennis, and of course, they must keep their grades up and stay drug free. They no longer must wear uniforms, but others associate the program with elementary school. And the dreamers who stick with it after sixth grade often are teased by their peers.

In all, 47 of the 100 students in the school's first class — current seventh-graders — are still dreamers. This shows how hard it will be for the students to fulfill the "achievable dream" of free college tuition, school officials say.

School officials say peer pressure causes many seventh-graders — the oldest dreamers to date — to drop out. Others have moved out of Newport News; some have been kicked out.

In an attempt to separate An

Achievable Dream students — and expose them to less peer pressure — school officials plan to bring seventh- and eighth-grade dreamers into the 16th Street school building.

School officials say An Achievable Dream works.

■ Test scores are up for students who have been in the school longest. For example, 74 percent of the school's sixth-graders last school year passed all sections of the Literacy Passport Test, compared to 67 percent of the city's other sixth-graders.

■ Absenteeism is down. This year's daily attendance rate is about 95 percent, compared to 92 percent last school year.

■ Goals and dreams are alive.

On a wall is a display with the photos of fourth-graders and a list of goals they developed at the start of this school year.

Calvin Butler wants to be a lawyer, a barber and a basketball player. Josh McDaniel wants to play football for Notre Dame, teach history in college and "be a good citizen." Jesse Johnson wants to play professional football, read 500 books by the end of the year and get straight "A"s "at least once."

Isaac Brown's goals may be less ambitious: improve his handwriting, play football and "do my work better."

Across the hall from the display, Darren Reed's fourth-grade science class begins. The topic: plants that produce seeds.

But first, a lesson about life.

"Who do you have to respect before you can respect others?" Reed asks. Hands shoot up.

"Yourself," a girl says.

"What else should you respect?" he asks.

Students answer, "property," "your community," "the environment," "your family."

Then Reed asks, "Is it good to be different?"

"Yes," the class responds.

The students hold up pictures they drew of themselves; then read aloud brief essays about what makes them different.

"Remember," Reed says, "our differences make us strong."

On to the science lesson, which continues until 4:15 p.m. The school day, which began at 7 a.m. when students arrived, is about to end.

Robyn Center, the 9-year-old who rises at 5 a.m. to make it to school on time, is in Reed's class.

Center, who says she likes that An Achievable Dream is harder than any school she has attended before, adds that she dreads the ride home from school. The bus usually gets stuck in rush-hour traffic, and it can take nearly two hours to get home on some days.

She stuffs her books in a backpack and walks in a line to her bus.

At 4:25 p.m., her bus pulls away from the curb. She hopes to be home by 6 p.m., when she will start her homework, then eat dinner, then lie down and watch TV for a half-hour or so, then go to sleep.

"I get real tired after school, but I think it's all worth it," she says. "I'll stick with this. Until the end."



Marquis Pope, 10, signs out books he will use at An Achievable Dream Magnet School. Adrin Snider/Daily Press

Uniforms make Dream different

By Leslie Postal
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Miriam Harrison returned home from night-shift work to take her 9-year-old daughter to school Wednesday morning. When she spotted her child waiting outside with a friend, she couldn't get over the sight.

"It took my breath away," she said. "They just look so sharp."

The girls were smartly dressed in new, navy blue skirts and sweaters. Bright white polo shirts, white socks and black sneakers completed the look.

Like 300 other Newport News students, the two trooped into the first

day of classes Wednesday wearing these uniforms, required at the city's new An Achievable Dream Magnet School.

The school is the first, and only, public school in Newport News to mandate the special outfits, which include navy blue pants for boys.

"It puts some type of confidence in them," said Harrison as she waved goodbye to her daughter, Jennifer Joyner. Uniforms also end morning worries about what to wear. "We don't have to go through that rigamarole," Harrison said.

The An Achievable Dream school is designed to help bright but disad-

Please see Magnet/A2

Magnet

Continued from A1

vantaged children and it promises that its more disciplined approach will extend beyond clothes. The program offers longer school days, detailed behavior rules and morning assemblies with an emphasis on citizenship.

The result should be "self-disciplined, academically assured kids," said Marilyn Lovett, the school's assistant principal.

The magnet school opened Wednesday as some 31,000 Newport News students returned to their classes. The new school is housed in Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School on 16th Street and serves 300 students in third through fifth grades.

Eight-year-old Shaun Powers said he didn't mind wearing the uniform. "I like how they put in the style," he said, pointing to the An Achievable Dream logo on his shirt.

But Tory Kendall, 11, wasn't crazy about the short-sleeved shirt. "I can't wait until wintertime because I can wear my turtleneck," she said.

Besides the uniforms, what makes the school unique is that it is run as a partnership between the school district and the private An Achievable Dream foundation. School officials say they know of no other like it in Virginia.

Two years ago, An Achievable Dream started an after-school and summer enrichment and tennis program. Now it is helping to run the school, chipping in about \$500,000 to pay for uniforms, extra computers and field trips, among other perks.

Students will study the school system's basic curriculum but will get extras like twice-a-week computer classes, daily study halls and after-school activities like chess club, choir and tennis — the game that's been the program's "hook" since it began in 1992. Both students and their parents must sign contracts promising the students will do homework, attend school and behave.

The typical student at the school is part of a low-income family with just one parent, and most of the spots in the school



Miriam Harrison walks her daughter, Jennifer Joyner, right, and Shanell Evans to Dunbar-Erwin Wednesday.
Adrin Snider/Daily Press

were filled by students already in the after-school and summer program. Some 15 students are still on the waiting list.

The school, and the program, looked for students who have the ability to go to college but, because of their home life, might not be able to without extra help, said Principal Jacob M. Wilson III.

"I love the program," said Robin Cook-Hunter, whose 8-year-old son is in the school's third grade. "It's different. It's like a little private school in the public schools."

The biggest difference is the discipline, she said. "The rules are going to be strict," she said, and that is fine with her. "Nowadays it's like the kids are just getting into trouble in school."

The emphasis on discipline was obvious as students arrived Wednesday.

"Line up and go right to the gym. Stay in line," said Walter Segaloff, the program's founder, as he greeted the students. "You look great."

Once inside, the children were met by volunteer Fort Eustis soldiers, who will be there every morning to take attendance, monitor breakfast and attend a brief assembly. The school day, with breaks for breakfast and lunch, runs from 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

"Now my daughter wants to be in," Cook-Hunter said. The 6-year-old, a first-grader at Dunbar-Erwin, has been asking her mother, "What do I have to do to get in?"

School monitors parents

Nine-week report cards grade involvement

By Mark Di Vincenzo
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Jo Tyson, report card in hand, bounces into Luvella Bryant's fifth-grade classroom at Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School and says, "See?"

Tyson wants to show everyone her report card. She did well. Her name, as she proudly and repeatedly notes, is on the honor roll bulletin board, just down the hallway from Bryant's classroom.

Tyson is 30-something. It is her 11-year-old son, William, who is taught by Bryant. But the elder Tyson gets a report card every nine weeks, as do all the parents of children who participate in the Achievable Dream magnet school program at Dunbar-Erwin.

Grading parents — which may not occur anywhere else in the nation, education experts say — represents the ultimate in parental involvement at school.

Parents of students in the Achievable Dream program must sign contracts that stipulate they will:

- review homework assignments every night;
- participate in a home reading program;
- provide notes for absences;
- sign report cards;
- attend parent-teacher meetings;
- assure that their children attend school and dress appropriately; and
- spend eight hours per month at school.

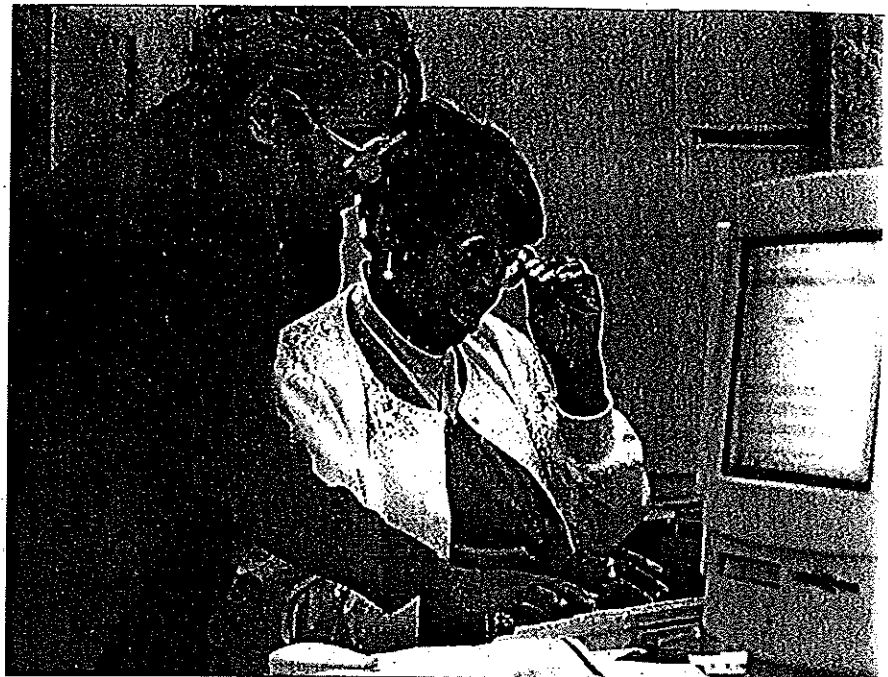
What's more, the students' family members, siblings included, are asked to spend another 16 hours at the school during each nine-week grading period.

School administrators first began grading parents this school year. And they have their own honor roll bulletin board, where their children's names automatically appear if they — the parents — make the honor roll.

"I want to make sure I'm on it so my son isn't disappointed in me," Tyson says. "If he can't get his name on his honor roll, at least he can get his name on my honor roll."

William points to the parents' honor roll bulletin board and says, "My mom's name is on there, and so is mine."

Dunbar-Erwin Principal Jacob M. Wilson III says the best thing about grading parents is it forces parents to talk with teachers and administrators.



Lola Dixon and Cordis Bunch, parents of students in the Achievable Dream magnet school at Dunbar-Erwin Elementary in Newport News, work on their basic computer skills at the school. Parents of students in the program get report cards reflecting their involvement at the school.

Joe Fudge/Daily Press

"If they're not doing so well," Wilson says, "they call and say, 'How can I become more involved?'"

There are many programs elsewhere in which parents sign contracts promising to involve themselves at their children's school. But it isn't easy to find a program that grades parents on their involvement.

No one at the National Education Association's National Center for Innovation has heard of a similar program. Neither has anyone at the U.S. Department of Education or at the National Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning.

Not everyone thinks grading parents is such a grand idea.

"I thought I had heard everything," Joyce Epstein, co-director of the Baltimore-based families and schools center, says upon hearing about the program from a reporter last week. "Maybe now I have. It's hard to judge something I haven't studied — and this might be a noble effort — but it sounds rather amusing to me, like the grades are a gimmick."

Epstein, widely regarded as a leading expert on creating partnerships between schools and communities, says she doesn't think schools should grade parents.

"It's appropriate to create partnerships," Epstein says. "But partnerships are based on relationships, and relationships are fragile. Grading, I'm afraid, can get in the way."

If school officials insist on grading parents — and "if they want a true partnership," she says — they should allow the parents to grade the school.

Wilson says he and others involved with the Achievable Dream program decided to grade parents to hold them accountable to the contract, though there

COMING WEDNESDAY

■ California schools blur the line between proper upbringing and school curriculum by teaching kids manners in the classroom. In *LifeStyles*.

are no consequences if they don't do well.

Christopher McLaughlin, an administrator who works to develop relationships between parents and the school, says he expected some parents to resist being graded.

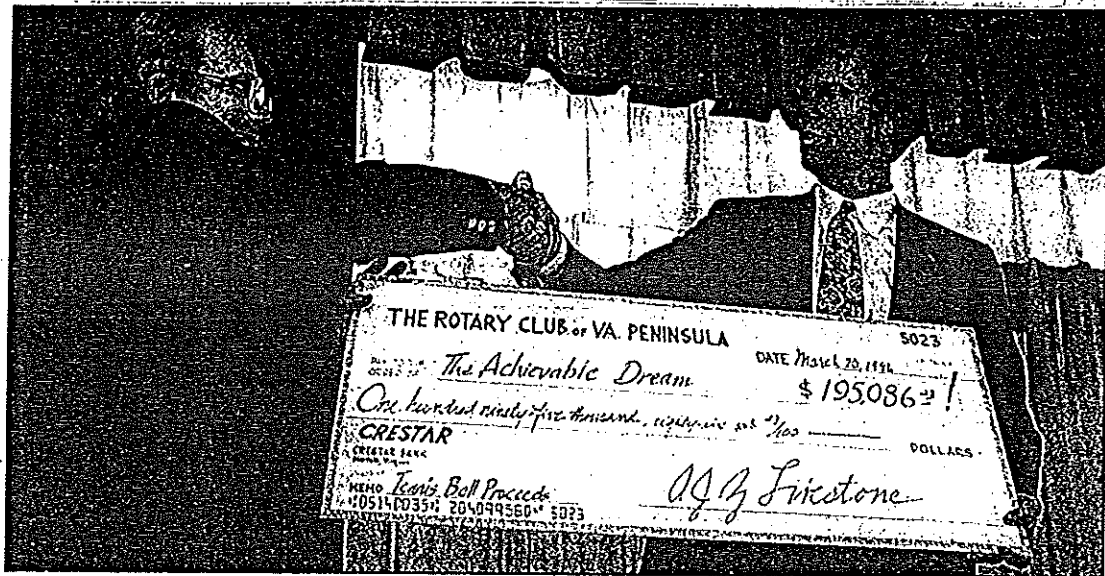
"When this came out, we thought there would be a lot of friction and negative reaction," McLaughlin says, "but there was nothing. I was shocked."

Parents don't mind, administrators say, partly because of how they are graded. Administrators decided not to use traditional letter grades — A's, B's, C's and so on — in favor of excellent, satisfactory and needs improvement grades. Wilson says about 30 percent of the parents receive the top grade, another 30 percent receive a satisfactory and 40 percent need improvement.

"We don't fail anyone," he says. "It's really a non-threatening report card. We wanted to answer the question: How do we present this in a way that will not turn parents off, in a way that will be palatable to them?"

Parents say they don't mind being graded because they are asked to do things good parents should do.

"It's the stuff I'm supposed to do anyway, and they've told me I'm doing a good job," Jo Tyson says, looking down at her report card. "You really do need someone to tell you how you're doing from time to time. You really do."



DREAM ACHIEVED. Walter Segaloff, left, founder of the Achievable Dream program, gets a check for more than \$195,000 from Evan Peterson, chairman of the 1995 Tennis Ball, an annual fund-raising social and auction for Achievable Dream. The program, which began as an after-school program and now is a Newport News Public Schools magnet school, is attended by hand-picked, academically at-risk students from throughout the city. The "dream" is free tuition to college for students who do well in school and stay out of trouble. Joe Fudge/Daily Press

An impossible dream no longer

Sponsors of educational program meet students

By Nigel D. Hatton
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

As if businessman Bill Grace needed one more reason to support the An Achievable Dream program, he was given hundreds Thursday — in the form of excited, respectful and grateful students — at the school's first annual technology sponsors day.

"I feel better about my money being spent here than taking my tax dollars and seeing them spent in public schools," said the owner of Grace Industries, a facilities maintenance company. "Why aren't public schools taking lessons from this? It works."

Grace was among the 70 business, city, state and military representatives — sponsors, they're called — who took a peek at Achievable Dreams' innovative use of technology and computers in the classroom. The school, nestled on the second floor of Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School on 18th Street, boasts a state-best ratio of one computer per six students.

"Our goal is to get that down to four in two years," said An Achievable Dream founder Walter S. Segaloff.

In its second year as a year-round school for at-risk yet bright kids in third through eighth grade, An Achievable Dream has surfaced from a unique partnership — the school system shaking hands with the private sector.

The system provides regular funds, a building and teachers; the An Achievable Dream foundation,

backed by anywhere from 150 to 200 sponsors, chips in for amenities such as improved computer-to-student ratios and cutting edge software.

"We want to get our school ahead of the game," said Dunbar-Erwin's director, Jacob M. Wilson. "A lot of our kids are coming in with a playing field that really isn't at level."

In the end, educators hope a dream is achieved. The "dream" says that if students stay with the program from third through 12th grade, remain drug free, don't have children and maintain a C+ grade average, they can obtain a free education from a state university.

Segaloff is banking on funds from the Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program, established four years ago for students whose only roadblock to college is financial.

"CNU and Thomas Nelson have already guaranteed them a seat," he says.

An Achievable Dream has roughly 400 students at Dunbar-Erwin and 40 seventh-graders at middle schools throughout the city. Another third-grade class will enter next year and rising sixth-graders will remain at Dunbar-Erwin until the eighth grade. Segaloff says An Achievable Dream plans to expand to 975 students within the next two years.

"It's a unique relationship," said Newport News Schools Superintendent Eric Smith, standing next to his lunch partner for the day, third-grader Jessica Banks, 8. "At

Butler, 13, shared the afternoon with Vice Mayor Joe Frank. Afterwards, teachers and administrators guided sponsors on tours of classrooms, computer labs, the library and the media center, home of the school bank and store.

At the bank, Macintosh computers were set up to keep track of the bank. Students served as tellers. Sixth-grader Terrance Bryant, 11, works there from 12:45 to 1:15 p.m. during the week.

Every student has a checkbook and an account. They receive merit points for good behavior. One merit point equals one cent. They can purchase things such as school supplies and baseball cards at the school store.

Students did schoolwork as usual during the tours, only today they gladly welcomed the interruptions of inquiring sponsors.

"Thank you, nice to see you," was the usual greeting from fifth-grader Dontae Martin, 10, as he used a Macintosh to improve his keyboarding speed.

"I like all of them," said the aspiring doctor, complimenting the sponsors who mingled in and out of the computer area. "They paid for us to be here and get our education."

In Anita Cuffee's fifth-grade class, sponsors witnessed students learning science without science books. Cuffee, with a remote control in hand, taught a lesson on coastal lands using a television monitor, a laser disc player and a program called Science for Win-dows.

A library demonstration showed how students can use CD-ROM instead of hardback encyclopedias to do research for papers. One advantage: Students can find information on topics, such as the 27th

Amendment (prohibiting mid-term congressional pay raises), which have yet to be printed in history books. The school's homepage also was displayed.

State Deputy Secretary of Education Wilbert Bryant was so impressed with An Achievable Dream that, on more than one occasion, he stopped in the middle of demonstrations to convey his views to fellow sponsors.

"They're educating young people the way they should be," he said. "This is a really fine school."

Sandy Stoddard, director of the Circuit City Foundation in Richmond, left with a rave review to give the trustees of her organization.

"Our focus is systemic reform to public education. What we're seeing happen here is a success story," she said. "We're taking a look at so many programs that don't have results. This program has results. We're talking about academic results as well as making the kids feel good."

With each boast, faculty members told sponsors of the need for more contributions to keep the "dream" alive. Cuffee said they need more laser disc players. Another teacher noted that more students next year mean they'll need another computer lab.

As technology sponsors day wound down, Bill Grace stood in the doorway of a classroom and watched Zakia, the fifth-grade girl with whom he had lunch. Zakia is one of the hundreds of reasons he gives to An Achievable Dream, he said.

"I know she's going to make it. Nobody's going to change her mind," he said. "That's what's happening here. I'm very supporting of this concept. It's way overdue."

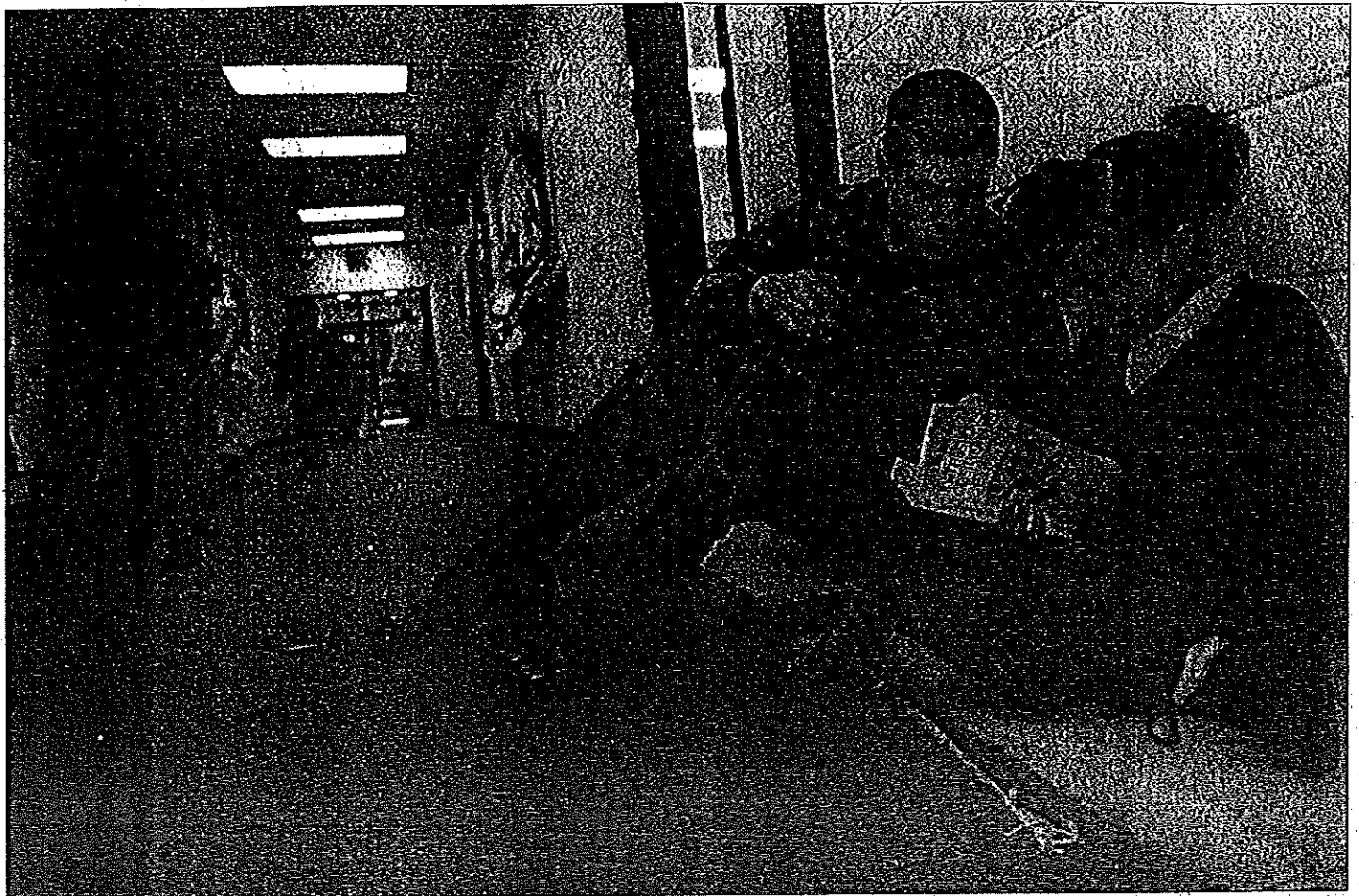


Teacher Barbara Dudley, 9-year-old third-grader Anthony Amoroso, and Lt. Col. Donna Simkins from Fort Eustis have a chat at An Achievable Dream's technology sponsors day.
Buddy Norris/Daily Press

Thursday, sponsors ate lunch with students, filling the auditorium with a colorful array of business suits and military and school uniforms.

Fifth-grader Zakia Williams, 10, dined with businessman Grace. Fellow fifth-grader Chris Parker, 11, sat across from CNU professor Robert Doane. Sixth-grader Charles

PHOTO BY
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N&M DIVISION
Torrance CA 90503



U.S. Army Pvt. Rudy Sage works with 9-year-old LaToya Manning as she reads a book under his supervision at the Achievable Dream Academy at Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School in Newport News. Fort Eustis soldiers work in partnership with the school in assisting with morning breakfast activities and classroom duties. *Adrin Snider/Daily Press*

School 'heroes' honored

NN program national award pick

By Mark Di Vincenzo
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

One father comes home drunk, throws toys at his child and beats his wife. Many fathers don't come home at all. They are in jail or are nowhere to be found.

Walter S. Segaloff sits on a couch in his office and reads aloud from letters written by the children of these fathers. The children attend An Achievable Dream Academy, a school Segaloff founded in 1992 for academically at-risk Newport News students, many of whom are smart but are at risk of failing because they are poor or neglected or both.

"Some of the baggage is..." Segaloff says, pausing to come up with the right word. "Some of the worlds they live in are..."

"If you met these kids," says Jacob M. Wilson III, director of the school that houses

"We have been successful in bringing hope where there was little hope."

Walter S. Segaloff



"Walter comes up with these ideas — these wonderful ideas — and my role is to make them happen."

Jacob M. Wilson III



es An Achievable Dream and Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School, "you wouldn't know they were going through these things."

Segaloff and Wilson know. They have just been given a Reader's Digest American Heroes in Education Award for their efforts to run the school. An Achievable Dream is different — and has gotten a lot of national attention — because it receives all of the public money other public schools receive, plus money and in-kind support from local businesses, individuals and other private sources.

This year's 12 award recipients, whose names were released Wednesday, beat out more than 700 other nominees nationwide. The winners and their schools will share

\$150,000. Segaloff and Wilson will split a \$5,000 prize, and An Achievable Dream will receive \$10,000.

While An Achievable Dream was Segaloff's idea, Wilson worked to make it a reality.

"Walter comes up with these ideas — these wonderful ideas — and my role is to make them happen," says Wilson, who has been with the program since it began.

The two of them recently met in Segaloff's office to talk about An Achievable Dream and the challenges it faces. On the coffee table before them was a newspaper article about five Achievable Dream

■ Dream

Continued from A1
students who won the Atlantic Coast Chess Championship and are on their way to National Chess Championships in Knoxville, Tenn.

Walter Segaloff: This is what the whole program is about: Our kids have been stigmatized, told what they can and cannot do. And here, these kids are winning chess tournaments. Chess! They wouldn't have been exposed to that if it weren't for the program. We've got kids playing the violin. Some of them sound like (expletive), but that doesn't matter. They're playing. That's what's important. ...No business would survive if it was run like a public school district. Not everyone agrees with that. But the schools are graduating functionally illiterate people. They are not doing their job. Too large a percentage of kids aren't prepared. We hear that from business people. Kids can't do basic math. They don't know how to act during a job interview.

Jacob Wilson: Schools are the last institution to save the masses.

Daily Press: Do you agree with Mr. Segaloff that no business can survive if it is run like a school district?

WS: You're putting him on the spot.

JW: I don't know. I know the business community deals with issues much quicker. They don't have the layers of bureaucracy.

DP: Mr. Segaloff, how has your role changed since An Achievable Dream began?

WS: It has been not so dissimilar from someone at any young business that grows. We started with one class of 100 fourth-graders four years ago. Now we have 500 kids. In the fall, we'll have 600. ...We're a growing business. Raising money is a much bigger task. We need more and more as we grow. (The school spends \$1,500 in private money and in-kind support per student per year.) Instead of schlepping 20 kids to the Virginia Opera, we're taking 100 kids.

DP: If someone came up to you on the street and asked you for three examples to show how the program is working, what would you tell him?

JW: I would say kids are involved in positive activities, like chess, like the strings program (in which students play the violin). Second, look at attendance and good grades. It is so important for these kids to be on the honor roll. They're into positive activities.

WS: We have been successful in bringing hope where there was little hope. We're helping these kids' hopes and dreams become reality. My three things are, one, walk through the school. Smell it. Look at it. You'll see an orderliness to it that doesn't exist in any other school. Two, come on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon and watch the kids with their electives: their chess, their Odyssey of the Mind, the stock market club. Third, go to the Achievable Dream night school for parents. We have 80 to 100 parents involved in night school. We don't have many empty seats. Forty-two percent of our parents are involved in the school in some volunteer capacity. I think those are good barometers.

Achievable Dream
Does Not Allow
Me to Say
"I Can't."

One of many motivational signs hangs from the ceiling on the second floor of the Achievable Dream Academy as third-graders line up to go to another part of the building.

Adrian Snider/Daily Press

WALTER S. SEGALOFF

Born July 1, 1939, in New York City.
 Education: New York News High School, State Junior College, Massachusetts, the University of Michigan.
 Occupation: Founder and president of an Achievable Dream Academy, was a maintenance man for the president and chief executive officer of Virginia Specialty Steels, Inc., a chain of women's clothing stores founded by his father.
 He called on his fellow young people to form a group of business and professional people who would meet to help bridge the gap between black and white in New York News, organized all the homes coming over to the soldiers who fought in the Gulf War, served on the New York News Planning Commission, 1984-75.
 Family: wife, Ann, Robinson, two sons, Peter, a real estate developer who lives in Norfolk, and David, a politician in Ann Arbor, Mich.

JACOB M. "JAKE" WILSON III

Born Jan. 23, 1941, in Hampton.
 Education: Wythe Elementary School, Alton Lindsey Junior High School and Hampton High School, all in Hampton; College of William and Mary, where he received a bachelor's degree in geology in 1969 and a master's degree in educational administration in 1970.
 Occupation: Director of Dunbar Elementary School, which houses an Achievable Dream Academy former middle and high school science teacher and assistant principal of Jefferson Davis Middle School, Hampton.
 Family: wife, Linda, daughter, Alexandra.

DP: One of you mentioned test scores, but isn't it true that some students who don't do well are dropped from the program, thereby raising the school's average test scores? I know there are people involved in the program now and people who have been involved with it who are troubled that some of the students who really need the program the most are being dropped from it. Does this also trouble you?

JW: You can't be all things to all people. One of the things we do is we have a longer school day and an accelerated curriculum. We are really not a program for the academically delayed or for special education students. That is one big misconception about us, that our students are all slow and we try to bring them up to speed. You have to have the ability to make it in the program. It all moves very quickly.

WS: The number one reason we lose kids is the longer day. They have to get up early, and some of them have a very long bus ride here. It disrupts the family. Some kids may leave the house at 6 o'clock and get home at 6 o'clock, and dinner is at 5. Another thing is we are becoming more and more strict. If a kid doesn't want to be there and is disruptive, he may be dropped. We are not for special education students. We are not for delinquents. We're for the kids on free or reduced lunch who may be up to a year behind in reading, but no more than a year.

JW: A child below grade level gets an extensive amount of support and tutoring. ... We are for bright kids who, because of their life situation, may not be all that they can be.

DP: The oldest group of Achievable Dream students now are eighth-graders, right? What size was that class when they started in the program and how many remain?

WS: 95, and 30 are left. (Of those 65, Segaloff says 18 quit, 17 moved, one transferred to the city's talented and gifted program and the rest were "deslected," dropped from the program.)

DP: Does that worry you, that so many have quit or been dropped from the program? Was it anticipated that a small percentage of students will stay in the program through graduation?

JW: That was a special class.

WS: They didn't start out in our building (on 16th Street). They were spread out at a number of schools. That was our biggest mistake, not having them under one roof. It's hard enough to maintain the culture we're looking for, with the uniforms and the character education, if you have them under one roof. But they were spread out, getting peer pressure from other students. Another thing is, that first class wouldn't meet the criteria we have today. They were picked for the program by their teachers. Some didn't know exactly the kind of student we were looking for. We were getting a lot of students with discipline problems who were far behind (academically).

DP: So, other than that first class, what are the other class' retention rates?

WS: Anywhere from 78 percent to practically 100 percent. We're gonna lose some. Kids' interests change. But we're growing. We'll have 600 kids in the fall (in grades 3 through 9), and we expect to have 1,058 by the time our ninth-graders become 12th-graders. That's with a 75-percent retention rate in high school and 85 percent below that.

DP: Can this program work if it was expanded further than that and to other schools in NN? Or does it work because it is relatively small and therefore easier to manage?

WS: If you have the money, you can do it. You need the money, the private support, the involvement of business. It can work in other places, anywhere

it is tried because there is a need for it. Students come to school without a moral compass, in need of direction and discipline. ... We see possibilities! This is nothing that's going to happen any time soon, but I would like to see an Achievable Dream prep school for (grades) k(indergarten) through 2. That's a dream. Just a dream.

DP: Is there a demand and need for another Achievable Dream elsewhere in the city right now?

JW: If we could have another site — possibly another elementary school site — in the mid to upper city, we could fill it.

WS: If we told the people what really goes on in our program and asked them, 'Would you pay an extra 3 cents on your real estate taxes for a program like this?' most would pay for it willingly if they knew it was going for education, not to a general fund. That's why this award is so important to us. It sets us apart. It opens doors to private (grant-giving) foundations. It brings recognition to the city, to the school system.

DP: What have you learned about running the program that you never thought about when you planned it?

WS: We do a lot of counseling. A lot.

DP: But didn't you anticipate this, given the types of kids you pick for the program?

JW: The program has grown so fast.

WS: It's hard to keep up with everything. We've had our failures. We had a 13-year-old girl get pregnant. We had to drop her from the program. (Students who get pregnant or father a child cannot remain in the program.) It was devastating.

DP: You consider that your failure?

WS: Yes, if we had a better sex education program, maybe it wouldn't have happened. We're working on that. We had a student father a child. We've only had two in five years. But we have to have zero tolerance for that.

(Segaloff picks up the article about the chess team's success.)

WS: This is a win. These kids are going to Knoxville, (Tenn.) for a national chess tournament. It may be the highlight of their lives. Please God that it isn't. (Pause.) Business has a role to play in education. It better play it. The schools better let them in.

Daily Press

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Will F. Corbin
Vice President and Editor

Will Mollneux
Editor of the Editorial Page

Jesse E. Todd Jr., Susie L. Dorsey, Thomas K. Rowe Jr.
Associate Editors of the Editorial Page

EDITORIALS

An Achievable Dream

National recognition for a very special program

Since Walter Segaloff founded An Achievable Dream five years ago, many people on the Peninsula have recognized what a special program it is. Segaloff saw the need to provide a special educational — and emotional — environment to help bright young students who, because of difficult home situations, were at risk of failing in school. Segaloff has done that, succeeding by drawing on support from the community, business and the military and with the hard work of people such as Jacob M. Wilson III, director of the school that houses An Achievable Dream and Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School in Newport News.

So it is rewarding to see An Achievable Dream receive national recognition. On Wednesday, Segaloff, Wilson and An Achievable Dream were named one of 12 recipients of the Reader's Digest American Heroes in Education Award. They were chosen from more than 700 other

nominees nationwide.

An Achievable Dream is special in several ways, but a critical aspect of the program is how it supplements the resources of the public school system with money and other forms of assistance from a variety of sources. The program's success reflects well on the businesses and individuals supporting it. The Newport News Public School System also deserves praise for having worked with Segaloff to make An Achievable Dream a reality.

Some young people come to school with all the intellectual, emotional and financial support they need to succeed. They can succeed even if the public schools are bad. But not all children are so fortunate. They need special help even in a good school system. An Achievable Dream provides that special help. The result is going to be fewer lives scarred by failure and more blessed with fulfillment.

Daily Press

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Editor of the Editorial Page

Jesse E. Todd Jr., Susie L. Dorsey, Thomas K. Rowe Jr.
Associate Editors of the Editorial Page

EDITORIALS

A group effort

With the recent announcement of the Reader's Digest "American Heroes in Education" Award, I was embarrassed by the publicity focused on me rather than on the unsung heroes that make An Achievable Dream Academy what it is. The academy is a separate, unique school within the Newport News School System. It is for children who are on the free or reduced lunch program and who could be successful but may not live up to their potential because of the socioeconomic demographics in their lives.

There is no way that co-recipient Jake Wilson or I could do this alone. We continue to be encouraged with the support and confidence of our new superintendent, Wayne Lett, and staff and the support of the School Board, the city and the business community. The vision of our principal, Vikki Rehnback, has been instrumental in our significant academic progress over the last two years.

These students who remain with us from third through 12th grades, meet our standards and those of the state college they wish to attend, remain free of drugs and major crimes and do not get pregnant or father a child will achieve the dream portion of the "Achievable Dream" — the state providing their tuition to the state school of their choice.

The most important heroes are the dedicated teachers, coaches, aides, assistants and administrative staff with whom I will share the honor and the financial award. We should be very proud as it is a total community whose tireless work and ongoing contributions play such a critical role in developing and sustaining one of the most unique educational programs in the United States.

Walter S. Segaloff
Newport News

AVERY™

Newport News' Achievable Dream wins national character award

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Each day at An Achievable Dream, a dozen or so Fort Eustis soldiers arrive prepared to inspect. The clock strikes about 8:40 a.m., and elementary students dressed in school uniforms file into the gym to find these soldiers equipped with a clipboard and list of student names. Have the students tucked in their shirts? Are their shoes tied?

The soldiers look at each child and note the answers.

The students are learning about respect and responsibility.

This kind of lesson helped earn An Achievable Dream an award given to just 10 schools and one school district in the nation. Today, at a news conference in Washington, D.C., An Achievable Dream will be named a 1999 National School of Character in recognition of its work to encourage social, ethical and academic development of students through character education, said Josie Plachta, spokeswoman for Character Education Partnership.

The National Schools of Character is an annual awards program that recognizes kindergarten through 12th-grade. Character Education Partnership, a national non-profit coalition in Washington, works with Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character to hold the awards program, which is in its second year.

An Achievable Dream was selected as a National School of Character out of 108 applications. It is the second Newport News school to receive the honor. Last year, Newsome Park Elementary earned the national recognition.

That's quite amazing because all together that is 21 locations throughout the country in two

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Achievable Dream is a third-through eighth-grade academy for students who can benefit from a longer school day and stricter discipline. Students go to school from 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

The longer day allows teachers to spend 15 to 25 minutes, depending on grade level, solely on character education, said Richard Coleman, the school's principal.

Along with the regular curriculum, students at An Achievable Dream learn about 11 character traits — things like honesty and integrity, respect and courage, loyalty and perseverance, Coleman said. Each month, the school focuses on one trait.

For example, a teacher might read a book to young students and discuss whether a character acted responsibly. At the middle school level, students might act out roles related to a trait.

"I find it critical to our success that the students who come to Achievable Dream are students who, in many times, have challenges in their lives," said Coleman. "And our goal is to reduce those challenges and focus on how good they are and how good they can be."

years," Plachta said, "and to have two of 21 in Newport News, that's pretty good."

An Achievable Dream will get a \$2,000 grant to support character education. Most of the money will go toward books and to pay for ban-

ners that highlight character traits, said Richard Coleman, the school's principal. But money isn't necessarily what matters to Coleman.

"For me, it's the realization that we are doing some things right," he said.

Plachta said An Achievable Dream earned recognition mainly because of the school's "very comprehensive focus" on character education.

"What you find with character education is once a school implements character education, if they do it right, the academic part improves dramatically," Plachta said, "because you are creating an environment that is conducive to learning. Children feel safe and secure because they don't have the distractions other students may have in other schools."

In fact, the Virginia Department of Education recently recognized An Achievable Dream as one of 75 schools showing the most improvement on the state's Standards of Learning tests.

In addition to rising test scores, Coleman said he sees few disruptions in class. Students are respectful of one another, he said.

Students get merit points for behaving well or, for example, passing morning uniform inspection. Merits can be cashed for things like pencils and paper at a school store. Last week, students had an extra incentive. For 30 merits, they could get a ticket to Disney on Ice. There were 200 available.

The school has high expectations for students, Coleman said. "We reward them with merits when they achieve the high expectations."

Stephanie Barrett can be reached at 247-4740 or by e-mail at sbarrett@dailypress.com

Thank You!!

Without You – Our Friends and Sponsors – There would be no Achievable Dream!

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EDITORIALS

Year-round school

An Achievable Dream wants to lead the way again

With two elementary schools and one middle school already operating under a year-round schedule, Hampton is the local pioneer of the extended school-year format. Other localities should follow suit. Newport News has the opportunity to do just that under a proposal presented to the School Board Wednesday night.

An Achievable Dream wants to become a year-round school and should be allowed to do so. The exceptional and successful program has well proven it knows what's best for its students.

Founded in 1992 with the goal of giving at-risk children a better shot at staying in school, An Achievable Dream is a special academy for third- through eighth-grade students. The program boosts the self-respect of young people while teaching discipline and social responsibility right along with academics. Serving about 550 students and housed in a public school building — Dunbar-Erwin on 16th Street — it runs on public and private funds.

Naysayers thought the original notion of teaching tennis to boost self-esteem wouldn't work. They were wrong. A few years down the road, they balked when An Achievable Dream wanted to initiate a school uniform policy. Wrong again. Not only has that plan worked, but other elementary and middle schools in the city have adopted uniform dress codes.

Now, An Achievable Dream wants to go again where no other Newport News school has gone: to a year-round schedule of 210 days instead of 180 classroom days.

Why is this important? The ramp-up at the start of each school year is always slow as students struggle to get back into the swing of things after the long summer break. Eliminating the drag of back-to-school review creates more time for new learning and more time for special attention throughout the year.

Opponents claim the longer schedule is free babysitting for working parents, that the extended school calendar disrupts family vacations and will end up costing school districts and therefore localities more in teacher and staff salaries. The only legitimate argument, about the price tag, has already been addressed. An Achievable Dream says it will pay any additional costs.

Studies show that students who attend year-round schools retain more. That's important in the overall learning process. It's also pretty significant when it comes time for standardized tests like the Standards of Learning.

Time and again, An Achievable Dream has shown that its initiatives work. The School Board should give it the opportunity to do it again with a nod for a year-round calendar.

Achievable Dream program goes year-round

School board sets 2000-01 calendar

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS
Achievable Dream students will go to school year-round starting this summer.

The Newport News School Board voted Wednesday night to send Achievable Dream students to school 210 days starting July 31. The traditional school calendar runs about 180 days.

Achievable Dream students will be the first in the city to attend year-round school. It's a change that school officials believe will help improve student achievement.

Some schools in the area already have taken the step, including two elementary schools and one middle school in Hampton.

At An Achievable Dream, students in kindergarten through eighth grade will attend classes year-round. The board also voted at its Wednesday night meeting to include Dunbar-Erwin kindergarten through second-grade students in

the Achievable Dream program. An Achievable Dream, housed in the Dunbar-Erwin building on 16th Street, is a specialty academy that has served third-through eighth graders who can benefit from longer school days and stricter discipline. It is financed through public and private money and raises funds locally.

Achievable Dream students are required to follow a dress code and attend school from about 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Now, kindergarten through second-grade students will be a part of the program. They will be students of An Achievable Dream Preparatory Academy. Though these students will attend school year-round with their older schoolmates, their school days will not be lengthened. They will continue to attend classes from about 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The young students will, however, begin to follow a dress code. That will likely mean that they will wear shirts with An Achievable Dream's logo.

Newport News school officials estimate that it will cost an additional \$689,651 to extend An Achievable Dream's schedule. That's the

expense for staffing, transportation and school materials for the longer school year. An Achievable Dream will pay for that.

The additional expense brings the total school cost to about \$4.4 million. The regular school-year calendar costs, paid by Newport News Public Schools, total \$3.7 million.

As part of the 210-day school calendar, Achievable Dream students will be get a break from their regular school schedule three different times during the school year for "inter-session" periods that last about 10 days.

Students needing extra help would get reviews of subjects in which they have problems. Students who need more time to understand lessons will get a head start on lessons to come. And students doing well will join in any number of activities, from sailing to job shadowing.

Local school officials will need to get approval from the state Board of Education for An Achievable Dream to open before Labor Day.

Stephanie Barrett can be reached at 247-4740 or by e-mail at sbarrett@dailypress.com

ACHIEVABLE DREAM CALENDAR

The Newport News School Board (school closed) on Wednesday night voted July 23 to start the year-round school calendar also starting with the conference day (half-day) beginning in August. The board also agreed to include Dunbar-Erwin in the program through second grade students in the Achievable Dream program and the extended school year.

An Achievable Dream is housed in the Dunbar-Erwin school building on 16th Street and was enrolled third through eighth-grade students who can benefit from longer days and stricter discipline.

Some key dates:
 July 21-22 Teacher report
 July 31 Student report
 Sept. 1 Labor Day (school closed)
 Oct. 6 Conference day (half-day for students)
 Oct. 9-20 Inter-session (all students report)
 Oct. 23-27 School closed
 Nov. 1 Election Day (school closed)
 Nov. 28-29 Thanksgiving holiday
 Nov. 29-30 Teacher report

Jan. 15-16 Jackson-King (will be a state holiday)
 Jan. 17-18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day (school closed)
 Jan. 23-24 State development (student break)
 Feb. 7-22 State development (student break)
 Feb. 18-19 Presidents Day (school closed)
 April 6 Conference day (half-day for students)
 April 13-14 Inter-session (all students report)
 April 15-20 Spring break (school closed)
 April 23-24 Inter-session (all students report)
 May 28 Memorial Day (school closed)
 June 28 Conference day (half-day for students)

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2000

Local

Soldiers teach students discipline

By Richard William Rogers
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Spc. Matthew Jones might not wield much authority at Fort Eustis, but in the halls of Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School on a rainy Tuesday morning he is The Uniform Enforcer.

Don't even try walking past him with a shoelace untied or a shirttail sticking out. A batting-practice fastball has a better chance of getting by Mark McGwire.

"Excuse me, young man, your shoe is untied," said Jones, 19, to a child who never broke stride and flipped his blue stocking cap over his shoulder in a classic forget-you brushoff. It might as well have been his tongue.

"Hey," said Jones, who grew up in Hampton, and the child stopped dead, knelt and tied his sneakers.

"Now, that's no way to act. We're going to have a great day today," said a coaxing Jones.

Welcome to An Achievable Dream Academy, kind of a school within a school. The Academy includes students in grades three through eight, but Achievable Dream supports academic programs for about 600 students through high school.

Every morning of every school day for the past five years, soldiers from Fort Eustis have volunteered to take part in the program that is billed as a unique partnership of Newport News public schools, the business community and the city of Newport News.



One way that Spc. Matthew Jones works with Achievable Dream students at Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School is to help keep order in the hallway, where students are required to walk along the wall while in between classes.

In the process the soldiers have become an integral part of the school, as much a school trademark as the uniforms the students wear or their morning routine that's heavy on discipline and patriotism.

"The soldiers are the ones who really make this program work," said Alexander Norwood, administrative

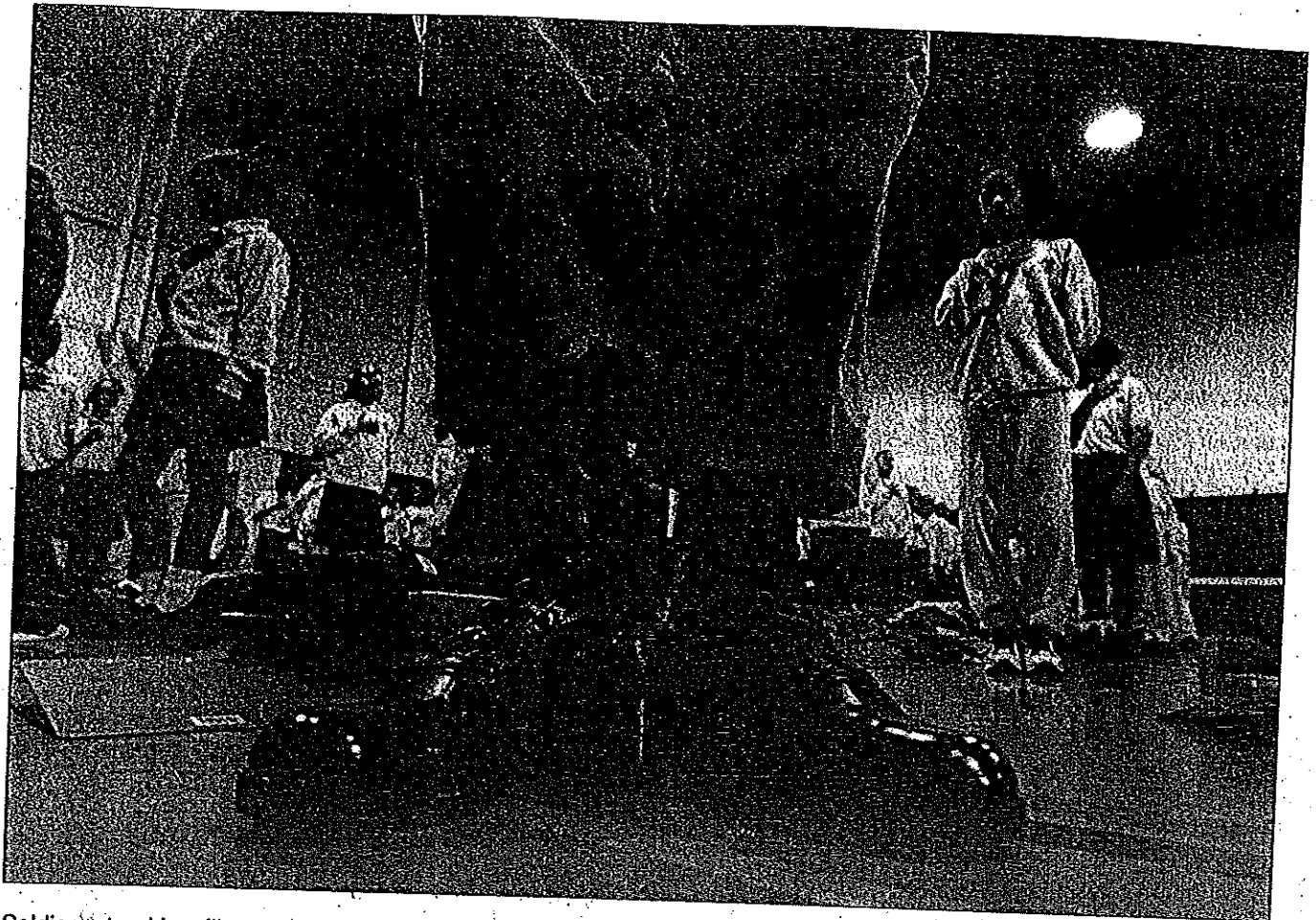
coordinator for the Academy.

"I think there is something about the uniforms that is very attractive. I just think the kids really look up to them, and the soldiers here are very approachable."

"I don't think you can quantify what the soldiers mean to the school. Even

Please see **Students/C2**

Uniformed enforcers



Soldiers stand in military form, setting an example for Achievable Dream students during the Pledge of Allegiance. Photos by **Adrin Snider**/Daily Press

Students

Continued from C1

when they have four-day weekends, the soldiers often come to school anyway, even though technically they are off duty. It gives me hope that people want to help. It shows me what is possible," said John Hodge, director of An Achievable Dream Inc.

About 300 third- through fifth-graders, some of whom are considered at-risk to fall into the rut of poverty, crime and jail, are bused to this magnet school from throughout Newport News.

Daily, about 15 troops, roughly one for each class, are ready to take care of their charges for the morning.

After the children are greeted at the door and fed, they file into the gymnasium, where they recite the Pledge of Allegiance, sing the National Anthem, talk about the word of the month — this month the word is "cooperation" — and then line up for inspection.

Inspection is taken seriously. The students earn bragging rights and points that are redeemable for

books and other school store items by standing tall and looking good.

Pvt. Paul Robinson, 19, clipboard and pen in hand, is moving down a low row of third-graders. Most of the students are getting perfect scores for dress and appearance.

Then comes the question that everyone who has stood ill-prepared for an inspection dreads to hear:

"Where's your belt?" Robinson asks Brandon Terry, 8.

"I forgot," says Terry in a sheepish voice.

"You going to wear one tomorrow?"

"Yeah."

"OK"

The old line in the Army is "stand in the rear and don't volunteer," but these soldiers have decided for largely personal reasons that they have a responsibility to help their community.

"I came from right around here," said Jones. "When I was growing up, I saw a lot of underprivileged kids. When I'm here, I'm tough on them like the world is going to be tough on them. I'm here to prepare them for the world."

"I experienced a lot of dropouts

where I came from," said Robinson, who is from Morton, Miss. "I couldn't do anything about that there, but I can try to do something here."

While the soldiers are doing their best to mold the students, the students have molded some of the soldiers.

Sgt. 1st Class Diane Robinson, who coordinates the soldiers' visits here, wants to be part of this program, or one like it, when she retires from the Army, and she is pursuing a graduate degree in elementary education.

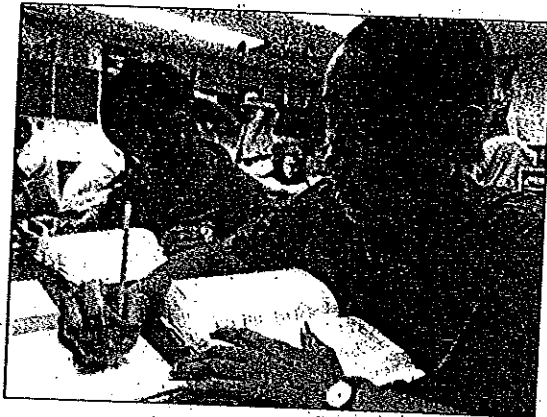
"This program is all about helping high-risk kids. If we reach them at the age they are now, we can divert them away from drugs and gangs," she said.

For their part, the students said they were glad that the soldiers are here.

"I think of them as a friend," said Angela O'Malley, 10.

"I really like them," said Elijah Jackson, 10. "They've always been by our side."

Richard William Rogers can be reached at 247-4629 or by e-mail at rrogers@dailyypress.com



Buddy Norris/Daily Press
Eighth-grade science students Whitney Stevens and Alicia Brown look up words in the dictionary during the Achievable Dream class.

Achievable Dream starts off school year

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Eighth-graders Trina Brevard and Devon Nazareth heard the teasing as Monday approached:

"Have a good day in school," friends joked.

The comments frustrated the two Achievable Dream pupils. But they remained upbeat Monday.

"It will keep me out of trouble," 13-year-old Devon said.

"You'll get ahead," 12-year-old Trina said. "You'll get to learn more stuff."

The pupils were talking about year-round school. Monday marked the first time that their school opened

Please see Dream/C2

Daily Press

TUESDAY, AUGUST 1, 2000



Third-grade teacher Angie Robinson, at left facing away, listens as her 8-year-old pupil Ramon Kearney talks to her during lunch Monday.

Buddy Norris
Daily Press

Dream

Continued from C1

its doors under such a schedule. Achievable Dream at the Dunbar-Erwin building on 16th Street is the first Newport News school to follow the extended-year calendar.

About 650 kindergartners through eighth-graders arrived for their first day of school. Achievable Dream is a specialty academy that serves pupils who can benefit from longer school days and stricter discipline. It's financed through public and private money.

Achievable Dream is one of about eight area schools to start the 2000-01 school year this summer. Most of those area schools are going to the year-round calendar for the first time. Three Hampton schools have operated that way since 1998.

Achievable Dream's calendar runs 210 days — 29 of those days are for intersession classes and activities.

Intersession periods will be conducted three times a year between the pupils' regular classes. They will last about 10 days each and come in October, January and April. Pupils who have problems in their classes will get extra help during those times. And pupils doing well will get to join in any number of activities, ranging from sailing to job-shadowing.

"Our intersession is mandatory for our children," Principal Richard Coleman said. "It will be a full day."

Pupils will no longer have a long summer break. Instead, they will get vacation time in October, January and April. Their school year will end June 29, 2001.

Coleman noted that many students around the world attended school on longer schedules than the 180-day calendar typically followed in the United States. He recently traveled to San Antonio for a conference on international model schools. He learned that school schedules in Japan, China, Germany and Russia last more than 200 days.

At Achievable Dream on Monday, pupils and teachers appeared ready to start their long school year.

"I was happy because I didn't want to stay at home and get fussed at," said 7-year-old Esa Hunt, a third-grader. She said she often helped take care of her younger siblings when she's home.

She's looking forward to learning Spanish this year. Her third-grade classmate, 9-year-old Devin Osborne, said he's excited to learn Spanish and French. They think that they'll be able to trick their parents by speaking to them in a foreign language.

This is the first year that the school's kindergartners through fifth-graders will learn Spanish and French, Coleman said. Also this year, sixth-graders will take Latin classes for the first time. Coleman said that might help students with the vocabulary sections on the PSATs and SATs.

Another first at the school: The kindergartners through second-

graders will be a part of the Achievable Dream program and will be following a uniform dress code, like their older peers.

Second-grader Sherrice Cottle, who attended Magruder Elementary last school year, was adjusting to both her new school calendar and her outfit.

"I feel funny," 7-year-old Sherrice said, "because I never had a uniform."

But she thought that she looked pretty. She wore an Achievable Dream gray collared shirt and a navy pleated skirt with the letters "AD" ironed on at the bottom.

Teacher Mandral Blackmon began his classes by telling his seventh- and eight-grade pupils that he had high expectations for them. "In return," he said, "I expect them to push me."

His pupils taught him something in one of his first classes of the day. He played a vocabulary game with them, and pupils had to find words that started and ended with a certain letter.

Trina Brevard was in his class. Looking for a word that started with "r" and ended with "i," she found "rani" in a classroom dictionary/thesaurus.

She read aloud that it could mean a "wife" or a "widow."

"That's something I just learned," Blackmon said to Trina and her classmates. "I'm learning, just like you."

Stephanie Barrett can be reached at 247-4740 or by e-mail at sbarrett@dailypress.com

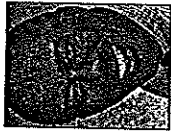
Program for at-risk kids shouldn't be put at risk

Residents Day morning was bitter cold. Most Newport News public schoolchildren had the day off. I bet most of them were buried under bed covers at 8:15 a.m.

But nearly 800 elementary- and middle school-age children were streaming into Dunbar-Erwin school at 16th and Marshall. School was in session. The students take part in an extended year partnership between Newport News Public Schools and An Achievable Dream academy.

These students don't just stroll into the building. Their day must start with a "Good morning" greeting with an adult and a handshake. It was amusing to watch children shake off drowsiness or the cold to make eye contact with director John Hodge and greet him.

While a number of students performed the ritual and then staggered away to assembly, a 10-year-old girl stood out in the crowd. She was alert. She looked forward to the greeting.



Wayne Dawkins

On my mind

A younger boy was frowning. Soon he forced a smile after encouragement from Hodge.

The "speak and greet" ritual helps the instructors get a read on the students. What traumas are they coping with outside the safe cocoon of the extended school program?

An Achievable Dream is beloved because with some extra care, poor, urban children are achieving. For example, on the Virginia Standards of Learning exams, the statewide passing rate for white students is about 25 to 30 percent higher than black students. At An Achievable Dream, where 96 percent

of the kids are black, the achievement gap has narrowed to 8 percent.

An Achievable Dream is a decade old. Last year, the program produced the first class of seniors. Fifteen of 17 were accepted to four-year colleges. This year, there are 84 seniors. So far, 27 have been accepted to colleges, according to officials.

Gov. Mark Warner and House of Delegates Speaker Vance Wilkins have praised an Achievable Dream's results.

Yet the program is in trouble. It faces a \$900,000 loss in state support — \$450,000 next year and an identical hit in 2004. With a nearly \$4 billion budget deficit, even programs that deliver remarkable returns are vulnerable.

Businessman Walter Segaloff, founder of An Achievable Dream, will fight to the end to save the funding.

"All is not lost. The game is not over," he told me. "The admitted best at-risk program in Virginia should not be at risk."

In the meantime, An Achievable Dream has put every program on the table for possible elimination or reduction. No decision has been made, however, on what to cut, because the state funding has not been cut.

Segaloff is holding out hope that the blow could be less severe than \$450,000. Here is what's at risk:

- The "Speak and Greet" program; Saturday classes for students needing additional instruction;

- Night classes that about 200 adults, or 20 percent of An Achievable Dream parents, attend. Also child care for the parents attending classes;

- The extended-school-year session. It costs \$500,000 for salaries, transportation and other needs to extend the school year from 180 days to 210 days.

Segaloff told me that the projected \$450,000 cut in state aid amounts to \$450 per child. Of 1,000 students, about 800 children are at Dunbar-Erwin and 200 teen-agers are at Heritage, Warwick and

Woodside high schools.

In the final days of the General Assembly Segaloff will ask lawmakers to compare that \$450 per child investment with the many thousands spent to house inmates, pay for drug treatment or support families on welfare.

The public-private An Achievable Dream partnership, Segaloff will keep telling lawmakers, is growing productive citizens.

Segaloff hopes the ax won't fall mightily. The current senior class won't feel any cuts, but next year's senior class could. Unlike the 34 seniors this spring, 57 teen-agers are projected to be seniors next year. Supporters of An Achievable Dream want those children to benefit from the program that currently exists.

Dawkins, associate editor of the editorial page, can be reached at 247-4623 or by e-mail at wdawkins@dailypress.com. His column runs Fridays.

Local

The fruits of their gift

Sponsors see school at work

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

An Achievable Dream students and about 100 business, education, military and community leaders gathered side-by-side in the school's auditorium where signs of the school program surrounded them.

"Proper business English is spoken here."

"Dreaming is hitching your wagon to a star."

"Think you can and you can."

"Hard work is the price of student success."

The visitors were about to see how Achievable Dream students take these motivational words to heart.

The large blue banners hung above the students and their visitors as they ate lunch together. Students offered words of thanks. The visitors listened and watched. They were there to learn about Achievable Dream and, for most of them, to see firsthand where their contributions are going.

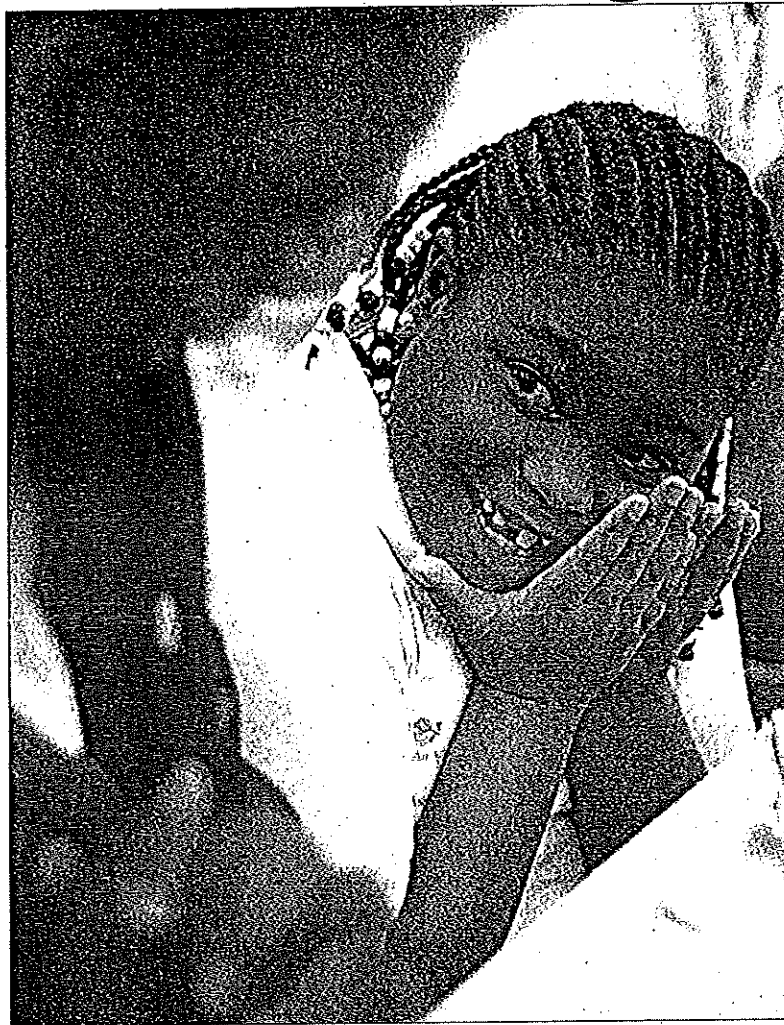
Achievable Dream held a Sponsors Day program Thursday afternoon. Those who have donated their money and time to the school arrived to meet Achievable Dream students and see them in action.

Achievable Dream is a specialty academy that serves elementary and middle school students who can benefit from longer school days, an extended school year and stricter discipline. It's financed through public and private money.

From classroom to classroom, the visitors traveled in small groups to get a look at how that money is spent.

They went to Agnes Spruiell's kindergarten class and saw students learning the fundamentals of geometry with the help of an oval-shaped robot, called ROAMER. The students programmed the machine to move in the shape of a rectangle.

The visitors then stepped into Megan Williams' class where student Kevin Moody greeted them with a handshake. He and his classmates then belted out a tune to demonstrate their knowledge of Spanish. They sang about the months of the year. Williams guided the students to begin their next



Photos by Buddy Norris/Daily Press

Gene Mason, a member of the Richmond School Board, and third-grader Ashley Stokes share a smile before they say grace together over their lunches at the Achievable Dream Academy's Sponsor Day.



Left: The Achievable Dream choir sings the National Anthem for Sponsor's Day. The choir is led by director Dione Williams.

■ Sponsors

Continued from C1

Spanish lesson — counting in the foreign language. "Uno, dos, tres," the students said in unison, all the way to 10, "diez."

And the school's guests next visited seventh- and eighth-graders in Luvella Bryant's class. The subject: etiquette.

Bryant, acting as a *maitre d'*, led the group to a table where they would dine for lunch. Soft music played. The boys walked behind the girls as appropriate. And the boys pulled out the chairs for the girls. Bryant asked what would be the first thing they would put their hands on. They knew it was the napkin. The etiquette lessons shifted to appropriate manners on a date, for example, to the theater.

"I didn't know anybody taught etiquette anymore," said Charlie Spencer, senior vice president-invest-

ments for Legg Mason.

He was pleased with what he saw. Jim Griffith was also among the sponsors who toured the school.

"It's important to show the children there are business people in the community who care about them," said Griffith, area manager for Verizon. "This is one of the ways for them to see the support for them in what they are doing."

Griffith gave an example of his company's contribution.

Verizon this year gave the academy \$20,000 to develop a computer training program for Achievable Dream parents. In a class that will last several weeks, Griffith said, parents would learn about computers and the Internet.

The program, he said, is intended to close the digital divide — the gap that exists between those who have access to technology and those who don't.

The vast majority of Achievable Dream students receive free and reduced price lunches. The percent

of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch is used as a measure of poverty.

Griffith highlighted the importance of the business leaders getting involved with schools, especially Achievable Dream.

"It makes a community better," he said. "If they are better prepared to come to work for us, then we benefit."

Sponsors play an integral role in making An Achievable Dream's program work, said Walter Segaloff, the school's founder.

"You are helping make a difference in closing the achievement gap," Segaloff told the visitors when they gathered for lunch.

"You help keep the hope alive," he said.

And without hope, Segaloff said, there's nothing.

Stephanie Barrett can be reached at 247-4740 or by e-mail at sbarrett@dailypress.com

HAMPTON ROADS



Suffolk officials hear from residents angry over recreation plan. Page B5

Academy nurtures dreams of the poor

Excellence in education achievable, innovative Newport News public school finds

BY DENISE WATSON BATTS
STAFF WRITER

NEWPORT NEWS

Jazsym Short bounced excitedly on her tippy-toes. She couldn't wait for her favorite class's latest lesson: the forehand stroke.

At An Achievable Dream Academy, tennis lessons are mandatory to teach self-discipline.

"I like when you hit the ball over the net," said the third-grader, still grinning broadly after 20 minutes of drills in August heat.

The academy was built as an incubator for New-

port News's poorer students and their dreams. The school, which sprouted from a tennis camp in 1992, taps children who come from neighborhoods with high rates of crime,

unemployment and uneducated parents. The school tries to break that culture through a structured one of its own:

Longer school days. Mandatory foreign lan-

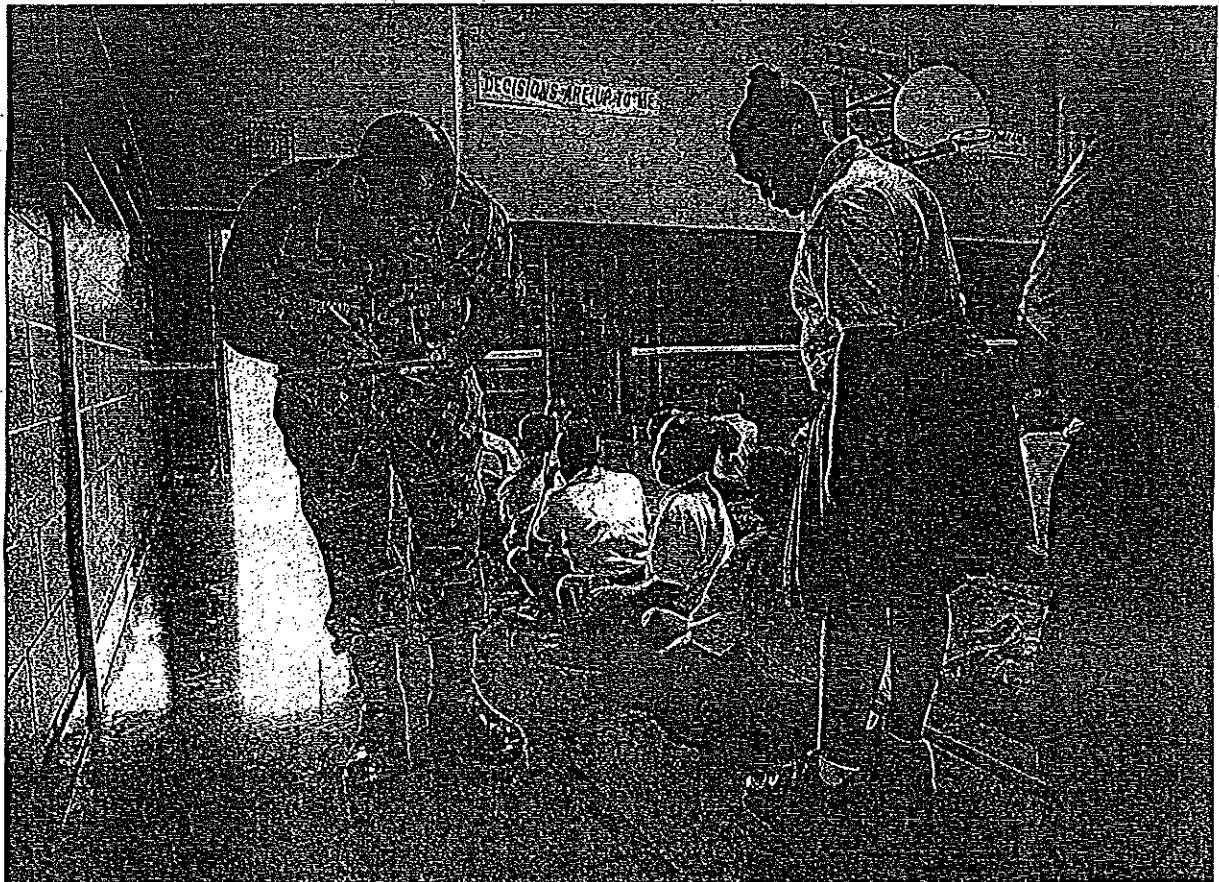
guage instruction that begins in kindergarten. Student uniforms which are inspected every morning by Army personnel. Required morning classes on character and etiquette.

Some results have been encouraging. This past spring, 76 percent passed the algebra Standards of

Please see Dreams, Page B6

*"You have to have hope.
If you don't have hope, you have nothing."*

Walter S. Segaloff, Achievable Dream founder



Sgt. 1st Class Spragan Gerald from Fort Eustis checks over the uniform of 10-year-old Gwendolyn Haykins to see if her socks are the proper color. L. TODD SPENCER/The Virginian-Pilot

Dreams: Academy nurtures the poor

Continued from Page B1

Learning test, better than the divisionwide rate of 63 percent.

The public school serves about 700 kindergartners through eighth-graders in Dunbar-Erwin School, which is bordered by older homes and stormy-gray public housing units.

Norfolk administrators are studying whether to create a similar academy, which has won national acclaim for its business support and focus on character.

Norfolk's Schools Superintendent John O. Simpson visited the school and was impressed by the emphasis on etiquette and life beyond school.

"It was more than etiquette, it was development of real social skills," Simpson said. "It dealt with a number of things that are important but sometimes the school setting has moved away from."

Achievable Dream began in 1992 during a luncheon attended by some of the city's business leaders. Employers complained that the local labor pool was lacking.

"There was a concern about honesty, morality, problem-solving," said Achievable Dream founder Walter S. Segaloff. "They found there were a lot of problems."

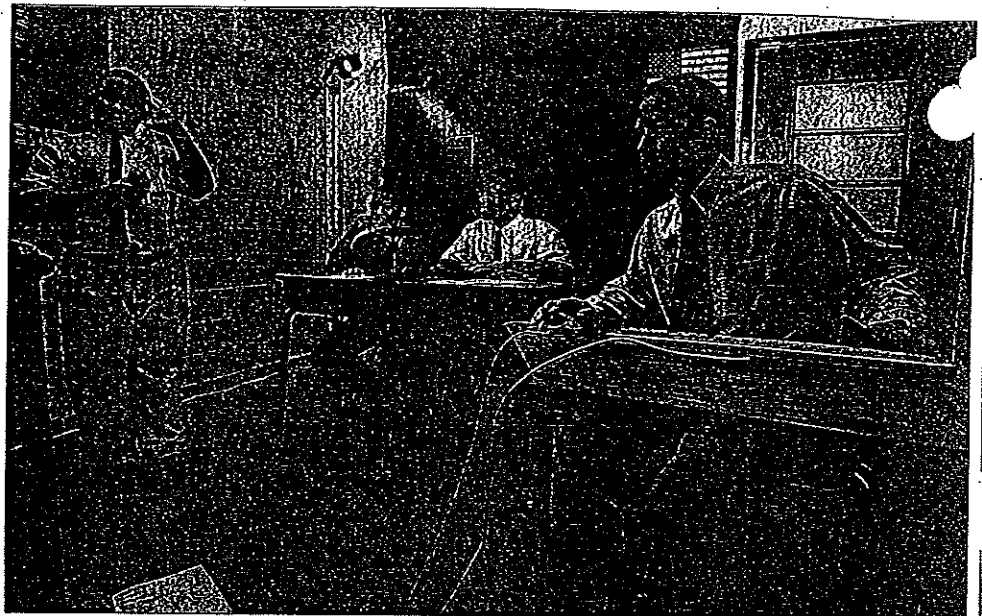
Segaloff formed Achievable Dream Inc., a nonprofit group that brings businesses, schools, and the city together to help children. He began a summer tennis camp for about 100 students after he saw programs in Israel bridge cultural differences among players. Tennis lessons taught strategy and focus. The students then spent three hours on school work. The program became popular and was approved as a school program for third- through fifth-graders during the 1994-95 school year.

Other grades were added during the next two years.

The Newport News school division spends \$6,543 on each student and the academy adds \$2,000 per child to buy uniforms, teaching staff and computers. Funding also supports the costs of a medical clinic, night classes for parents and the year-round schedule which began July 31. The academy is dependent on fund-raising but the business partnership allows it to be a "specialty academy."

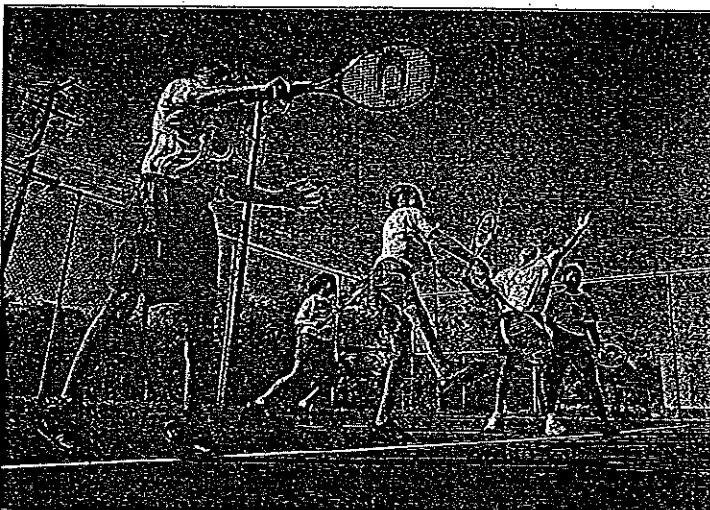
The academy looks for students at risk of failure and selects kids on a first-come, first-served basis.

Students must qualify for free and reduced price lunches, the government's measure of poverty. About 80



Students at An Achievable Dream Academy have a broadcast class, led by Lee Hoff, at right. Participants include, from left,

Ryan Williams, Trina Brenard and Timothy Watkins. Character education and military inspection are conducted daily.



All students at An Achievable Dream Academy from right, instructs Torro Huggins, left, Chelsea Britt, Passion Crawley and Jasmine Jones.

percent of Dream's children are from single-parent households.

A Dream day is a long day. By 8:15 a.m., students file in and shake hands with administrators before lining up for the daily pep talk and inspection. Students read aloud the blue and white banners on the auditorium walls, "Proud to be Drug Free!" and "Be Cool, Stay in School!"

Fort Eustis soldiers go student to student, noting hair neatness, if the student is wearing a belt, appropriate shoe color. Good inspections

earn merit points which the students track in checkbooks and use for school store credit.

Poor inspections warrant attention.

"If the clothes are consistently dirty, we can wash them here or I can call home to see what's going on," said John W. Hodge, program director.

Students are expected to leave their MTV at the door. No earrings or cornrows for boys, no platform shoes or bright nail polish for girls.

"We tell them, 'You can talk with a dialect out on the street but there's no street language spoken here,'" Segaloff said. "Only business talk here."

The state's curriculum is bolstered with technology and math. Academy is one of the most technologically advanced among the city's elementary schools. The school's aim is to have students in high-school-level Algebra I before they leave.

"I think it will help me a lot," said 13-year-old Cordero Ellis, who's taking pre-algebra now. Cordero said his commu-

"They have to have hope. If you don't have hopes or dreams, you have nothing."

Walter S. Segaloff
Achievable Dream founder

nity friends used to joke about going to a "different" school.

"They used to tease me but I don't care. I want to go to college."

The school day ends at 4:40. Academically, the school scored near and sometimes exceeded the division's average on most of the latest Standards of Learning tests. Third-graders were close to the 70-percent passing rate in all core academic subjects the state will require to retain accreditation after 2006.

Segaloff considers the scores excellent considering the academy's 100 percent poverty rate; the division's rate is 45 percent. Administrators look at other statistics, such as middle school students earning three or four high school credits, as good signs.

"They have to have hope," Segaloff said. "If you don't have hopes or dreams, you have nothing."

Reach Denise Watson Batts at 222-5121 or dwatson@pdofaa.com

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Daily Press

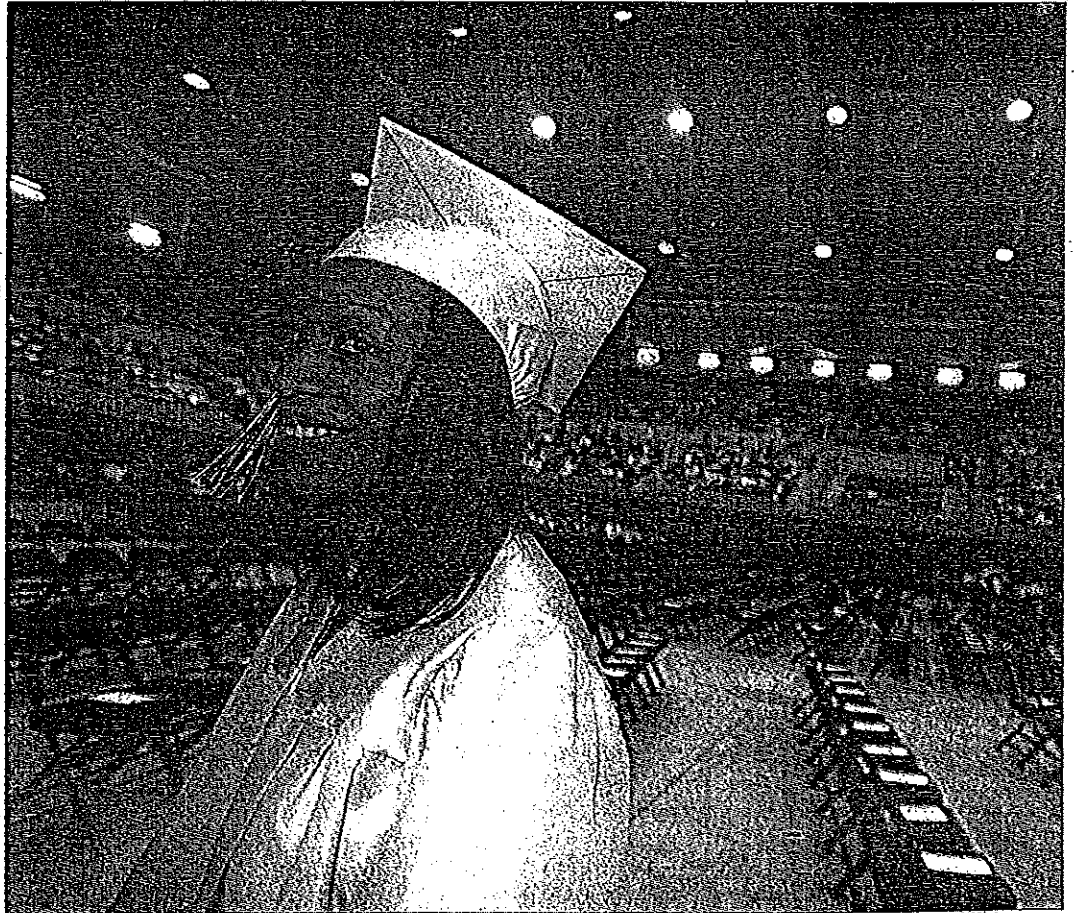
FINAL

MILESTONE FOR A DREAM



ABOVE: Latoya Nicole Finnell in 1993.

RIGHT: Heritage High School and An Achievable Dream graduate Finnell last week at commencement ceremonies.



Adrin Snider/Daily Press

College just beginning of students' visions

■ **TODAY:** Students from the original class of An Achievable Dream graduated this month. They were among 95 students who began the program in 1992.

Was the program successful? What are the graduates' plans for the future? And why did so many of the original "dreamers" leave the program?

■ **MONDAY:** An Achievable Dream is not the same program today as the one the first participants knew. It's



evolved from a tennis and tutoring camp into a full-time school.

Take a look at how An Achievable Dream changed over the years.

By **Stephanie Barrett**
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

Tim Spruill took his first roller coaster ride as a third-grader — and that's when he found his dream.

"I said, 'I've got to make these,'" the 18-year-old recalls.

He spent the next nine years in a program that helped him stay focused on that dream. Today he leaves for Virginia Tech to start studying engineering.

He's the first person in his immediate family to go to college. He's from the Southeast Community, where his family has lived for three generations. And Spruill was once one of a group of students labeled at-risk — a term he disagrees with and dislikes.

Spruill is one of 17 students who are the first high school graduates of An Achievable Dream. They are members of the original class of "dreamers" — Newport News students who joined An Achievable Dream in 1992 when businessman Walter Segaloff founded the program as a summer tutoring and tennis camp.

They were among 95 students who began the program in the summer before fourth grade. The 17 are the first success stories of a program that encouraged them to follow a dream and go to college or a trade school.

The University of Virginia. Mary Baldwin College. Virginia State University. These are just some of the schools they will attend.

A doctor. A lawyer. An entrepreneur. These are a few of the dreams they're taking with them.

Most of them graduated from Heritage High School on June 15. The others graduated June 16 from Warwick High School. Though they graduated from different high schools,

they stayed connected as students of An Achievable Dream.

These are 17 students who wanted to remain "dreamers" and fulfilled a pledge to remain drug-free and crime-free, not to become pregnant or father a child, and to maintain at least a C average. They did so with the expectation they would receive help in school and money for college.

Segaloff — who owned and was president of a retail chain that specialized in women's clothing — says he launched An Achievable Dream hoping to make a difference in the lives of students who faced more "risk factors" than other children. He wanted his program to help, for example, low-income students, those who lived in high-crime areas and children of single-parent homes.

WHY SO FEW?

Over the years, the original 95 dwindled until this year just 17 remained. Ten dropped out of the program the first summer. And as time passed, others moved from the area, failed to fulfill the pledge or just decided to leave the program.

Segaloff says with new classes of dreamers — there are 10 classes today — the number of students who stick with the program grows. For example, there are 41 high school juniors who remain in An Achievable Dream. That class started with 89 students.

Principals recommended students for the first class. The students were mainly from low-income families. The class included students with problems such as chronic truancy, low self-esteem and serious behavior and academic problems that were beyond the program's ability to help, Segaloff says.

Later classes benefited from being able to go to class together as An Achievable Dream evolved from a tutoring program to a full-time school. And officials set new criteria to make sure the students who are admitted can benefit from the program. They must score no more than one year below their grade level on a standardized reading exam; they must qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, an indicator of family income; and they cannot have serious behavior or attendance problems.

THE EARLY YEARS

The original An Achievable Dream students spent the first half of their summer days at the Huntington Park tennis courts and then went to a local school for tutoring.

During the rest of the year they went to different elementary schools in the city. But they met after school and on weekends with counselors and program directors for field trips and tutoring.

They recall thinking as young kids that An Achievable Dream was just something fun to do.

"I needed something to occupy my time, to keep out of trouble," says Stephon Hines, one of the original dreamers who plans to go to Montgomery College in Maryland. "It was just something to do. And then I started to like it. It gave us something to look forward to."

Shukita Whitaker says it was fun because most children didn't have the chance to learn tennis.

"We felt kind of special," she says. "We felt like we had something to do. A lot of kids didn't have anything to do. A lot of kids had to go to a baby sitter for the day."

Shukita is going to Mary Baldwin College in Staunton to fall to study business and major in political science. She wants to practice law.

As young dreamers, the class of 2001 liked learning tennis, meeting new students and taking field trips. And the tutoring sessions didn't seem to bother them.

"In the long run you see it helps you," says graduate Christie Roberts, who will go to Mary Baldwin to study business. Christie wants to open a business that would provide a range of services for women, from massages to nutrition classes.

The original dreamers vividly recall summer days when they read from banners posted around the courts before they launched into their tennis lessons. Together, they shouted phrases such as "I am somebody special" and "I can go to college if I work."

"It's just something that has stuck in our heads until today," Shukita says. "It just instilled sort of a hopefulness for yourself that you could do anything, you know. It's not set by anybody. There were so many opportunities for you."

The students say that from tennis they learned values such as control, self-discipline and grace.

"It was fun, but it was a lot of work," Tim says. "I was a tired young little boy."

Growing up in the program gave students an opportunity to meet people and visit places they might never have seen otherwise. Politicians and business leaders visited them. They went to the opera, the symphony and museums, such as the Baltimore Aquarium. They learned how to set a table and about dining etiquette.

"I liked the fact they were introduced to the opera," says Shukita's mother, Angela Whitaker. "You never know where that may take you. I probably would have never taken her to the opera."

"I would have never been able to afford it," says Tim Spruill's mom, Deborah Spruill, about the trips. "It teaches them to know the other side of things. I think

they're more aware of what's out there."

As the students got older, the program became more focused on their future. They went on field trips to college campuses. They met lawyers and doctors.

"It got me excited early on about where I could end up," says Michael Banks, who will go to the University of Virginia to study biology.

By high school, tennis was optional. Program counselors and directors kept tabs on students, helping keep them focused on college. As graduation neared, counselors helped students find scholarships, gave them the forms to fill out and the program picked up the cost of application fees.

The program's organizers arranged for parents to attend a workshop on preparing to send their students to college.

"I was so happy about that," says Deborah Spruill, the mother of two younger boys also in Achievable Dream. "I think without that I would have pulled my hair out. I'd never gone to college, so I didn't know the tools I needed to help get him started. This is new to me, having a kid go to college."



An Achievable Dream campers practice their tennis strokes in the summer of 1992.

Buddy Norris/Daily Press

THE "TOTAL PACKAGE"

Shukita describes it as a good program. "Achievable Dream program is basically a program that does just what it says," she says. "It helps you achieve your dreams."

Michael, who plans to be a doctor, is a stronger supporter of the program.

"It had a large effect on shaping our character and making us think about goals at an early age, thinking how we wanted to plan and live our life," he says. "Even though it was early, it's never too early to think about the future."

He recalls a trip to a local hospital. He looked at doctors in amazement, thinking he, too, could end up helping people.

"It turned out to be a total package," Banks says of the Dream. "It covered everything we could have needed or wanted in preparing for the future."

Segaloff gives his program an A for character development and a B for academics. "We'll do better," he says. "We're learning."

Today the program serves about 750 kindergartners through eighth-graders year-round at the Dunbar-Erwin Elementary building. The state has honored the school for closing the achievement gap between minority and white students.

Thinking of the 17 graduates, he says he's proud an Achievable Dream has come so far. "I'm excited and pleased and gratified we've been able to carry it out," he says.

All 17 of the original dreamers who remained in the program plan to go to college. Altogether, they will get \$275,000 in scholarships.

Tim Spruill alone was offered \$20,000 worth of scholarships and grants, taking into consideration all the different colleges that offered him money to go to their schools. Virginia Tech is giving him \$11,000 each year, more than enough to cover college expenses.

When he starts his engineering studies there this summer, it will bring him even closer to his goal of making roller coasters. And now he's dreaming even bigger. He's going to start his own roller coaster firm, working his way up from making them with his own hands to designing them and selling them for millions of dollars.

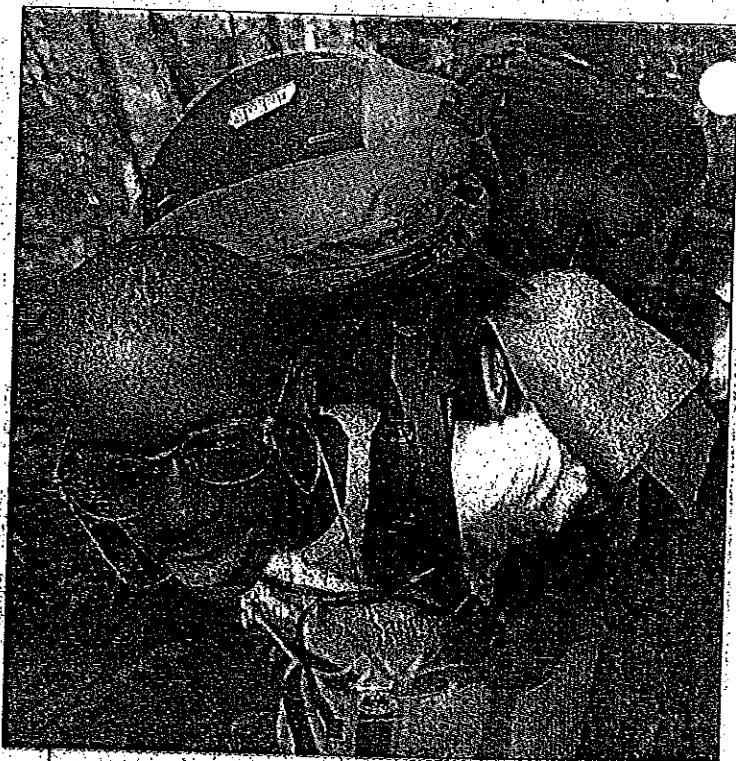
"It really has paid off," he says, "and I really did achieve my dream."



Tim Spruill, left, and his prom date Teunsha Vick, 2nd from left, and Michael Banks and his date, Marlis Samuel are ready to head off to dinner and their big night last Sunday. Joe Fudge/Daily Press



Spruill in 1996



Michael Banks led a group of students in August of 1996 during much of the week they spent hiking in the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina. Daily Press photo

Daily Press

Etiquette,

tennis musts for serious Dreamers

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

One by one they look up at him, shake his hand, and greet him.

"Good morning Mr. Joseph," one young girl says.

"Good morning Coach Joseph," another girl says, smiling wide.

Tennis coach Joseph Holloway wishes them each the same. "Good morning," he says with a grin.

This routine opens each day at An Achievable Dream. It's a trace of how the program began nine years ago.

While this and other original features of An Achievable Dream still exist today, the program has evolved into much more than it was when Newport News businessman Walter Segaloff found

ed it.

In 1992 An Achievable Dream started as a summer program. Students entering fourth grade gathered at Huntington Park to learn tennis and afterward went to an elementary school for tutoring.

Today, An Achievable Dream is a year-round school housed in the city's Dunbar-Erwin Elementary building on 16th street. It moved into the school in 1994.

About 750 kindergarten through eighth-grade students attend school there. They come from low-income families and were chosen because school officials and their families thought they could benefit from a longer school day and stricter discipline.

Students wear uniforms. Soldiers from Fort Eustis, dressed in

Please see Dream/A6



Mary Watford, left, and Toren Hall work on the Achievable Dream Morning Show under the direction of Linda Zorumski, at right. Participants in the program can expect to be involved in more than just tennis.

■ Dream

Continued from A1

camouflage fatigues, inspect the students' outfits each morning. All children — including the kindergartners — learn tennis.

The most important part of the program is character development, Segaloff says, and that's remained true since its inception.

From day one, for example, students have started their day by firmly shaking hands and making eye contact with adults.

Segaloff envisioned this from the start because he found that too many young people failed to make good first impressions while trying to get jobs with his company, a retail chain that specialized in women's clothing.

■ ■ ■

The students and Holloway greet each other — each one making eye contact — at 8:15 a.m. as students file into the cafeteria for breakfast.

The third- through fifth-graders then head to the auditorium for their morning program.

Athletic director Richard Navickas is waiting. The students form lines and sit down with their legs crossed, book bags on their right.

"Good morning, dreamers," Navickas says to them.

"Good morning," they shout back.

Together they stand and say the Pledge of Allegiance, then sing the National Anthem.

It's a daily ritual that has its beginnings with the original class of An Achievable Dream. The first dreamers stood on the tennis courts to recite the pledge and belt out the anthem. Those students also sang Mariah Carey's song, "Hero."

They shouted out motivational mottoes from banners hung along the tennis court fences. "I will work hard." "Achievable Dream loves me." "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice."

The practice continues today. Navickas calls up a student to lead the group in their inspirational reading of the banners that line the gym walls. "Be cool stay in school." "I am someone special." "Believe in yourself." "I will say no to drugs."

Fort Eustis soldiers stroll past the lines of students to check their attire. "Got your shoes tied?" Spc. Martin Davy says to one boy.

Davy looks down and sees they are. "Looking good," he says.

From the moment Segaloff launched An Achievable Dream, he says, he knew he wanted members of the military involved to serve as role models. In earlier days, soldiers visited students and greeted them as they started their days.

Their role became more formal in 1996. Achievable Dream Principal Richard Coleman encouraged soldiers to perform a daily uniform inspection after noticing some students looking disheveled. He talked to the students about integrity, but he figured soldiers would show students firsthand what that meant.

Davy and other soldiers spend about a half-hour of their morning with the students. The students keep quiet, showing respect to the soldiers.

Meanwhile in another part of the building, the older students are watching a morning school television show from their classrooms.

Television is a new element for Achievable Dream students as of late last school year.

"Mr. Segaloff saw the possible benefits, to begin with, in the avenue of English," says Lee Heft, the school's broadcasting coordinator. Heft also says it's a way to build character and get students thinking about careers.

He requires students to report on both school news and current events.

A student anchor for the morning broadcast tells his audience: "The carrier Harry S. Truman returned to Norfolk yesterday morning following its six-month deployment to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. The rest of the Truman Battle Group comes home tomorrow. Family and friends greeted the Truman when it arrived at Pier 12 at 9:05 a.m."

In another part of the school, some of the youngest students are singing in a classroom trailer. They are members of a choir for kindergarten through third-grade students. The group is new this school year.

They stand in a line in front



Adrin Snider/Daily Press

Lisa Simpson, 8, gets direction along with other second-graders at An Achievable Dream tennis lesson.

of their choir director, swaying to side and singing: "Music is nice. Music will let you do. Music will let you sing it. Music is nice. Music will let you do. Music is nice. Music will let you play it."

The children gesture as if they are playing horns.

The school launched the choir to help boost students' confidence, explains An Achievable Dream Chief Operating Officer Thelma Spencer.

Another self-esteem builder takes place in a classroom back in the main building. It's etiquette class with teacher Luvella Bryant.

It's just after 9 a.m. and she's working with fifth-graders. Students are perusing books such as "How To Be A Gentleman," and "Raise Your Social IQ."

They are talking about how to handle different situations, using words such as sensitivity, respect and compromise. One scenario they discuss: What to do when friends want you to go to a restaurant you cannot possibly afford. The students also practice setting a table in this class.

This, too, is one of the foundations of the program. Original dreamers recall lessons on dining etiquette in middle school. They met to play tennis at an indoor tennis center in Newport News and afterward went to an upstairs room to learn how to set

a table or practice public speaking.

Students today have a more formal etiquette class that lasts a week to two weeks.

Bryant retired in 1997 after teaching social studies at An Achievable Dream. She'd made etiquette classes part of her students' lessons on different parts of the world and started an etiquette club. When she retired, she stayed on to create and run the etiquette program for the school.

Bryant says students will often misbehave in scenarios where they do not know what to do. "We want to give them the skills they need to be comfortable in a variety of situations," she says.

As Bryant's class with the fifth-graders ends, a handful of parents gather in the school's library.

They are there to attend a meeting for parents applying to send their children to Achievable Dream starting in third grade. Achievable Dream director John Hodge greets them.

He warns the parents their students are likely to complain about the demands they will face — like going to school year-round and having a longer school day.

For the students' good, he says, the parents must say, "I don't care."

"Let's not joke," he says. "We

know what's outside the dream."

He talks about gangs and drug dealers. "I don't think we do our children any good if we don't talk about these things," he tells them. "We want to help you raise your child."

A parent interrupts: "Thank you."

Hodge tells them about one of the original dreamers who has earned about \$80,000 in college scholarships. "We just put the things in place so if you work hard you'll be successful," he says. "We don't promise a college degree. We don't promise a full ride to college. We want to embrace the family."

He tells the parents school officials want to learn if they are doing the right things, so they've asked some education experts to examine the program. Hodge introduces Brenda Williams, associate professor of education at the College of William and Mary.

She's working on a study for An Achievable Dream that will last about one year.

Most of the parents in the room tell her they have at least one child in the program. They like the discipline, including the uniforms. They like the emphasis on character. One parent talks of how considerate her son is in public. Another talks of how the school keeps students involved. "It keeps them from playing

About the series

■ **SUNDAY:** Students from the original class of An Achievable Dream graduated this month. They were among 95 students who began the program in 1992. Was the program successful? What are the graduates' plans for the future? And why did so many of the original "dreamers" leave the program?

■ **TODAY:** An Achievable Dream is not the same program today as the one the first participants knew. It's evolved from a tennis and tutoring camp into a full-time school. Take a look at how An Achievable Dream changed over the years.

around the streets," she says. "It keeps them busy, giving them something to do."

Tennis is one of the ways students are involved.

Just as the parents finish their discussion, a class of sixth-graders completes their hour-long tennis class with Coach Joseph in a new indoor tennis center built next to the school.

The center opened to Achievable Dream students this past spring. It will be open to city residents after school hours and weekends this summer.

Tennis has remained an integral part of An Achievable Dream from the start.

Segaloff says it supported his idea of character education. It's a "gentleman, ladylike" sport.

He figured it would help students in the future. It's a sport that can bring the students and their future bosses together. "It's upwardly mobile," he says.

"I didn't want a team sport because I wanted something that was life changing," Segaloff says. "Tennis is a life changing sport, something children could take with them the rest of their life."

A glance at An Achievable Dream Academy

A glance at An Achievable Dream Academy

The school on 16th Street that houses kindergarten through eighth-grade students.

Grades	K-2	3-5	6-8	Total
Enrollment	305	291	169	765
Average teacher/student ratio	1:17	1:20	1:21	
Race of students:				
■ White	1%	7%	7%	
■ Black	97%	89%	91%	
■ Asian	1%	2%	2%	
■ Hispanic	1%	2%	2%	
Less than 10 days absent	64%	82%	77%	
Students reading at grade level	73%	61%	77%	
Students on free/reduced lunch*	98%	96%	83%	
Violent incidents, past school year	0	0	1	
PTA membership: 482 families				
Percent of PTA members who attend meetings: 64 percent				

*All students qualify for free and reduced price lunches — an indicator of income — when they apply to the program, according to An Achievable Dream founder Walter Segaloff.

What's An Achievable Dream?

In 1992, Newport News businessman Walter Segaloff founded An Achievable Dream. It opened mainly as a summer tutoring and tennis camp.

Segaloff — who was president and owner of Virginia Specialty Stores, a retail chain of 137 stores specializing in women's clothing — modeled An Achievable Dream after a similar program in Israel.

The program moved into the city's Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School building in 1994. The school now houses about 750 kindergarten through sixth-grade students.

An Achievable Dream is paid for with public and private money.

The program receives a per-student average of \$6,598 from the school district, the same average

amount for all city students. It also receives another \$800 from special state grants. And An Achievable Dream provides an additional \$2,000 for each student. Extra money goes toward such items as tutoring, uniforms and field trips as well as costs to operate the program year round.

An Achievable Dream receives support from local businesses and the community. The annual Tennis Ball dinner, dance and auction has become a premier Peninsula social event. It costs \$150 for an individual ticket and \$250 for a couple. Some of the items that have gone up for bidding include a motorcycle, car and boat.

— By Stephanie Barrett,
Daily Press

Chronology of a dream

1992

An Achievable Dream is founded as a summer tutoring/tennis program and after-school program for 95 students entering fourth grade.

1993

Summer and after-school program for 200 students who will be fourth- and fifth-graders. The Rotary Club of the Virginia Peninsula sponsors first Tennis Ball fund-raiser to benefit An Achievable Dream.

1994

An Achievable Dream becomes a full-time, extended-day school for 400 children in grades three through six. It is housed in the Newport News school system's Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School

on 16th Street. In the summers, students still play tennis and receive tutoring.

1995

An Achievable Dream adds middle school at Dunbar-Erwin school.

1996

A formal student uniform inspection program begins. Fort Eustis soldiers spend each morning with students, inspecting the children's outfits.

1997

Founder Walter Segaloff and Principal Jake Wilson receive National Reader's Digest American Heroes in Education Award. They beat out 700 others nominees nationwide. There are 12 recipients of the award.

1998

An Achievable Dream receives \$1 million, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

1999

An Achievable Dream is recognized as a National School of Character. It's one of 10 schools and one district in the nation to win this honor in recognition of work to encourage social, ethical and academic development. Richard Coleman becomes the school's principal. Coleman formerly served as the school's dean of students, program director and assistant principal.

2000

An Achievable Dream becomes a

year-round school. State education officials recognize the program for outstanding progress in closing the achievement gap between black and white students. Kindergarten through second grade becomes a part of An Achievable Dream Preparatory Academy.

2001

An Achievable Dream has its first high school graduating class. Tennis center opens in the spring for students and the surrounding community. Second-graders will begin an extended-day schedule in the fall.

FUTURE PLANS

Start An Achievable Dream for 3- and 4-year-olds. Open a high school program.

Donor says 'proven winners' an easy group to support

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

They've done their part; they deserve it.

That's what Libby Blechman David says about providing \$2,000 a year for college tuition to An Achievable Dream's first 17 high school graduates.

She is president of the board for the Franklin O. and Marie Blechman Fund, a foundation named in honor of her parents, who were active in the Newport News community.

David's board agreed in July that the fund should help pay college tuition for An Achievable Dream's first class of high school graduates.

"They've been fighting for themselves and succeeding and have proven they are winners," David says. "All they need is a little help. What a wonderful group to back."

From the fund, students will get \$2,000 each year for four years. All 17 graduates plan to continue their education after high school.

David says her board knew it wanted to do something for these students from the day Newport News businessman Walker Segaloff founded An Achievable Dream in 1992 as a

done and being done well.

"Nothing in the program is taken for granted. There's so much evaluation and self-criticism and demand for excellence — not just from the kids, but from the staff and everybody in the program," she said.

David explains the money for the Achievable Dream students comes from a fund that friends and family of Franklin O. Blechman established after he died in 1986. The fund was later also named after Blechman's wife when she died in 1989.

The fund has provided college money for certain Newport News high school students who went on to Christopher Newport University.

Mr. Blechman, who practiced law in Newport News for more than 50 years, was a member of the President's Advisory Council for Christopher Newport College, now Christopher Newport University.

He worked throughout his life to develop the Newport News port and attract industry to the Peninsula, David says. He was honored by various organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, which presented its first Outstanding

"Nothing in the

program is taken

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so much evaluation

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excellence ..."

Libby Blechman David

Giving tuition assistance to dreamers

tennis and tutoring camp. Segaloff is a member of the board and knew the Blechmans well. He asked the board to consider sponsoring the class of 2001.

"I have been so deeply impressed with the way Walter has run his program," David says. "There are so many educational initiatives that look great on paper and after a very short period of time they exist only on paper."

There was so much attention given to making sure that what they intended to do was being

Post high school plans for 17 original dreamers

Graduate	College/university	Field of study	Career goal
Michael Banks	University of Virginia	biology/pre-med	obstetrician or pediatrician
James Bland	St. Augustine's College	computer electronics	
Kenneth Cain	Lincoln Technical Institute, Md.	mechanical program for master's degree and certification for automotive mechanics	
Kevin Davis	Undecided	Spanish interpreter/translator	
Shamara Eley	Virginia Union University	undecided	
LaToya Finnell	St. Augustine's College	computer engineering/business	
Eric Heckstall	Livingstone College	Chemistry	pharmacist
Stephon Hines	Montgomery College	psychology, journalism	psychologist or newspaper editor
Brian McGowan	Old Dominion University	education, minor in music	teacher
Christie Roberts	Mary Baldwin College	business administration	entrepreneur
Jacque Robinson	Virginia State University	business management/accounting	entrepreneur
Jamel Robinson	Virginia State University	computer science/engineering	computer engineer
Almonie Scott	Thomas Nelson Community	undecided	
Christine Slawson	James Madison University	biology/pre-med	pediatrician
Timothy Spruill	Virginia Tech	engineering/doctorate	designer of roller coasters
Shukita Whitaker	Mary Baldwin College	political science/law school	U.S. Attorney General
Levada Wilson	St. Augustine's College	psychology/music minor	psychologist or famous person in music industry

The first class

Citizen Award to Blechman, according to David.

Mrs. Blechman was active in the community, serving as president of the National Council of Jewish Women, for example, and serving on local school PTAs.

Stephanie Barrett can be reached at 247-4740 or by e-mail at sbarrett@dailypress.com

What happened to the first 95 Achievable Dream students?

- 10 dropped out of the program during the first summer in 1992
- 24 moved out of the area
- 44 were either "de-selected" or voluntarily left the program
- 17 remained in the program through their graduation from high school

An Achievable Dream has not kept records on what happened to the students from the original class who no longer remain in the program. Achievable Dream officials do not know how many of them are graduating from high school or going on to college.

Program's retention rate keeps improving

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS
It started with 95 students. Today, 17 remain.

An Achievable Dream lost the bulk of its first class of students over the past nine years. Some moved away. Some got pregnant. Some lost interest in the program.

Ann Segaloff attributes much of the loss to the fact that these students never attended school together. Segaloff is the wife of an Achievable Dream founder, Walter Segaloff. She served as a volunteer the first year of the program, and in the second year she became the program's director. She ran just the tennis part of the program for several years after that.

She notes the first class of students came to An Achievable Dream when it was mainly a summer tennis and tutoring program. During the school year, it was an after-school program.

An Achievable Dream has done better with retaining students in every class that followed. Of this year's freshmen, for example, about half are still involved.

An Achievable Dream offi-

Grade	Original enrollment	Current enrollment
12	95	17
11	35	10
10	92	30
9	65	50
8	36	52
7	27	51
6	20	66
5	20	57
4	120	91
3	120	116

like retention.

The first class of An Achievable Dream students went to different Newport News elementary, middle and high schools. "It was not a united program where the kids were all together in one school," she says. "That makes a big difference. They were all in different schools, had different friends and different peer pressures."

The program became a burden to them and their parents, she says. The students wanted to stay after school for sports or other activities — not join in An Achievable Dream's program.

An Achievable Dream became a full-time school program in 1994 when it moved into the city's Dunbar-Erwin Elementary School building. The first class of students never went there. All of the classes after them attended the school.

An Achievable Dream organizers wanted the first class of students to attend the school, Ann Segaloff says, but families threatened to leave the program if that was a requirement.

"They were getting ready to go off to middle school," she says, "and they didn't want to

change this."

When students reached middle school, some wound up dropping out of the program. Mostly, it was a mutual decision by those students and the program, for them to leave, Segaloff says. "Some of the kids raised a little Cain because they were in that growing-up state," she says.

Segaloff recalls a group of girls who started acting more grown up and didn't want to wear their tennis uniforms. They were 14 and 15, and would come out of the locker room wearing high heels, miniskirts, tube tops and lots of makeup. "We'd say, 'Hey, while you are in the program and on the tennis court, you have to follow the rules,'" Segaloff says.

The girls left the program, Segaloff says, adding it "was sort of a mutual de-select."

Many students left the program over the years because they moved out of Newport News. Some failed to fulfill the pledge that allowed them to stay in the program in return for money for college.

The students vowed they would remain drug-free, crime-free, not become pregnant or

An Achievable Dream pledge

- Remain drug-free
 - Remain crime-free
 - Not become pregnant or father a child
 - Maintain at least a C average
- Students agreed to this pledge under the expectation they would receive help in school and money for college.

father a child and maintain at least a C average. Segaloff says she thinks three girls got pregnant, and one boy fathered a child. She couldn't recall any of the original class leaving the program because of illegal activities.

An Achievable Dream has not kept records that show specifically why each student left the program, Hodge says.

Through the first class of dreamers dropped down to 17, Segaloff says she believes the program had positive influence on more than just those 17.

She recalls a time about a year ago when she happened to

see a former student from the first class at a local tennis match. He was visiting some old friends.

She says when the boy started in An Achievable Dream, he lived with one parent who had major problems. And that was causing him a lot of troubles. He left the program after just a few years.

Segaloff says she learned that he wound up later moving in with his other parent, who lived in another county. When Segaloff saw him at the tennis match he'd become a successful athlete and was on his way to earning scholarships for college.

She recognizes that the other parent helped this child succeed, but she says people in the program were there for him when he was having troubles at home. He told her that was the case when he saw her at the tennis match.

"I personally believe there were a lot of kids out there where we were there for them at the right time," she says. "I think we made a difference in a lot of kids' lives over the past several years."

Stephanie Barrett can be reached at 247-4740 or by e-mail at sbarrett@dailypress.com

Closing the Achievement Gap

Walter Segaloff

By
Kathy
Hornsby

"The time was right for business people to get involved in public education."



Trying to convince Walter Segaloff to talk about philanthropy wasn't easy. At first his schedule was full. Then he offered the names and phone numbers of other people I should contact. Meeting in his Newport News boardroom, he was uncomfortable talking about himself and just stared at me, humbly. After a long pause, he started at the beginning. He even drew a picture.

"There's a teaching from the Talmud: 'It is not incumbent upon us to finish the work, but we are not at liberty to neglect it.'... I was raised that way." In his boyhood home, there was a *tzedakeh* box, blue, with slots. "We put coins in the slots, to buy trees for Palestine," he explains as he draws a picture of the box. His mother and father, his most influential role models, complemented one another, running a business with integrity, stressing ethics, and teaching *tzedakeh*, Hebrew for "charity."

He took his parents' lessons to heart. Segaloff is perhaps best known for his tireless work with An Achievable Dream, the nationally recognized educational program he began a decade ago with the goal of helping at-risk students succeed. And while the work may not be finished, it has made an enormous impact on hundreds of children and families.

An Achievable Dream began as an 8-week summer camp for 100 at-risk fourth-graders to receive instruction in tennis and benefit from educational enrichment opportunities. The program worked.

It grew. Now, nearly 1,000 "Dreamers" in grades K-12 participate in a year-round program in specific Newport News public schools where students wear uniforms, have longer school hours, receive instruction in etiquette and core values, and are greeted each day with a firm handshake from Fort Eustis soldiers. They also play tennis. The result? Higher test scores, fewer behavioral problems, and increased college enrollment.

Of An Achievable Dream, Segaloff states simply, "It was a well-conceived idea, and the time was right for business people to get involved in public education." He's much too modest. Segaloff was the visionary, an indefatigable fund-raiser and public relations master driven by his abiding commitment to close the achievement gap caused by poverty. He is dismayed that proper resources are not always given to the schools that need them most, and invokes wisdom sometimes attributed to Thomas Jefferson: "There's nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals."

There was no singular incident prompting Segaloff's life of giving. "I just lived in an interesting time. I remember the stories of the Holocaust, where I was on December 7, 1941." In 1949, Segaloff and Mennonite dairy farmers transported over 2,000 cows and seven bulls on a ship to Israel to jump-start dairy production. He returned and finished high school.

After college, in 1954, Segaloff returned to the Peninsula, embarking upon a successful business career — building his family's retail store to a 107-store specialty clothing retail chain (which includes Added Dimensions, Other Dimensions and The Answer) and developing real estate. But business did not keep Segaloff from attending to charitable work begun both locally and abroad. He admits pride in the "very small part" he played in helping to build Israel. Over a 20-year period, Segaloff traveled the U.S., organizing young leadership groups for the United Jewish Appeal and making over 20 trips to Israel.

His proudest moment? After quiet reflection, Segaloff smiles and cites the 1991 Desert Storm Homecoming Celebration he spearheaded, where over 1,000 Vietnam veterans in attendance were honored. Their overdue recognition, he says plainly, "was the right thing to do."

Walter Segaloff has been the deserving recipient of an impressive list of distinguished awards and recognitions. Despite his uneasiness about all this talk of philanthropy, he is a true philanthropist — one who has great affection for mankind as manifested by donations of money and work. His boyhood lessons from the Talmud have endured. Walter Segaloff has never neglected the work to be done.

○

MONEYWORK
INSIDE

SECTION C

Hard work yields results

Achievable Dream will likely earn full accreditation

By Stephanie Barrett
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS — After Saturday classes, long school days, and pep rallies to motivate and prepare students for Standards of Learning tests, An Achievable Dream Academy in Newport News will likely earn Virginia's best accreditation label.

Businessman Walter Segaloff founded An Achievable Dream, a program for low-income students supported by both public and private dollars. It opened as a summer tutoring and tennis camp with fifth-graders.

The program expanded and today operates at Newport News' Drumbar-Erwin Elementary building on 16th street. The school runs year-round

Daisy Blowe is a volunteer at An Achievable Dream Academy in Newport News. Her daughter, Danyelle, 14, attended the school last year.



Dream

Continued from C1

and houses more than 800 kindergarten through eighth-grade students who attend school, each day from 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Tennis and character education are an integral part of the program.

Students must qualify for free and reduced meals — a measure of family income — to enroll in the program. Ninety-six percent of the students are black.

"All of the victories that our kids have and our staff have is just further proof that every child can learn," Segaloff said. "Demos, graphics or economics play a role, but they can be overcome by the hard work, commitment and dedication of a staff."

Schools must have, for the most part, 70 percent of their students passing SOL tests in the

tests from the past academic year indicate the kindergarten through eighth-grade academy will meet the state's standards for full accreditation, according to An Achievable Dream Foundation, which supports the publication, which supports the private school partnership.

It would be a first for the academy which after spring 2001 SOL testing earned the state's second-

Preliminary SOL test results for An Achievable Dream

Subject	% passing
English	75
Math	75
History	84
Science	77
Computer Tech.	91
Third grade	
English	94
Math	81
History	71
Science	85
Fifth grade	
Writing	86

A school is fully accredited for the most part when 70 percent of students pass SOL tests in core subjects of English, math, science and history.

After 2001 SOL testing, 11 Newport News schools earned full accreditation. An Achievable Dream may earn that label for the first time based on 2002 testing and preliminary results. The Newport News public school system does not release

core subjects of English, math, science and history to earn full accreditation. Students in grades three, five, eight and high school take the state tests. Achievable Dream's preliminary results show pass rates much higher than the 70 percent mark.

Segaloff attributed the school's success to strong leader-

school year and ample opportunities to get extra help beyond the classrooms.

"The kids don't have time to get in trouble," she said. "They are pretty much focused on their education."

Blowe knows the program well. Both Danyelle, 14, and another daughter, 16-year-old Chavon have been involved since third grade.

Involving parents in education is a major part of An Achievable Dream, she said. The program offers night classes to parents and calls on them to volunteer with Achievable Dream. "I feel encouraging parents to continue to learn is the key to encouraging students to continue to learn because students emulate their parents," she said.

Stephanie Barrett can be reached at 247-4740 or by e-mail at sbarrett@dailypress.com

Please see Dream/C2

LOCAL NEWS

RESHAPING THE NORM

Achievable Dream tests single-sex education

By Justin George
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS

The first experiment, placing sixth-grade girls into a math class separate from boys, failed at Achievable Dream Academy.

David Creamer, assistant principal at the specialty academy, had heard that sixth-grade girls tend to be left behind in math and science at this age, and why to speak up in mixed classrooms, uninterested in learning.

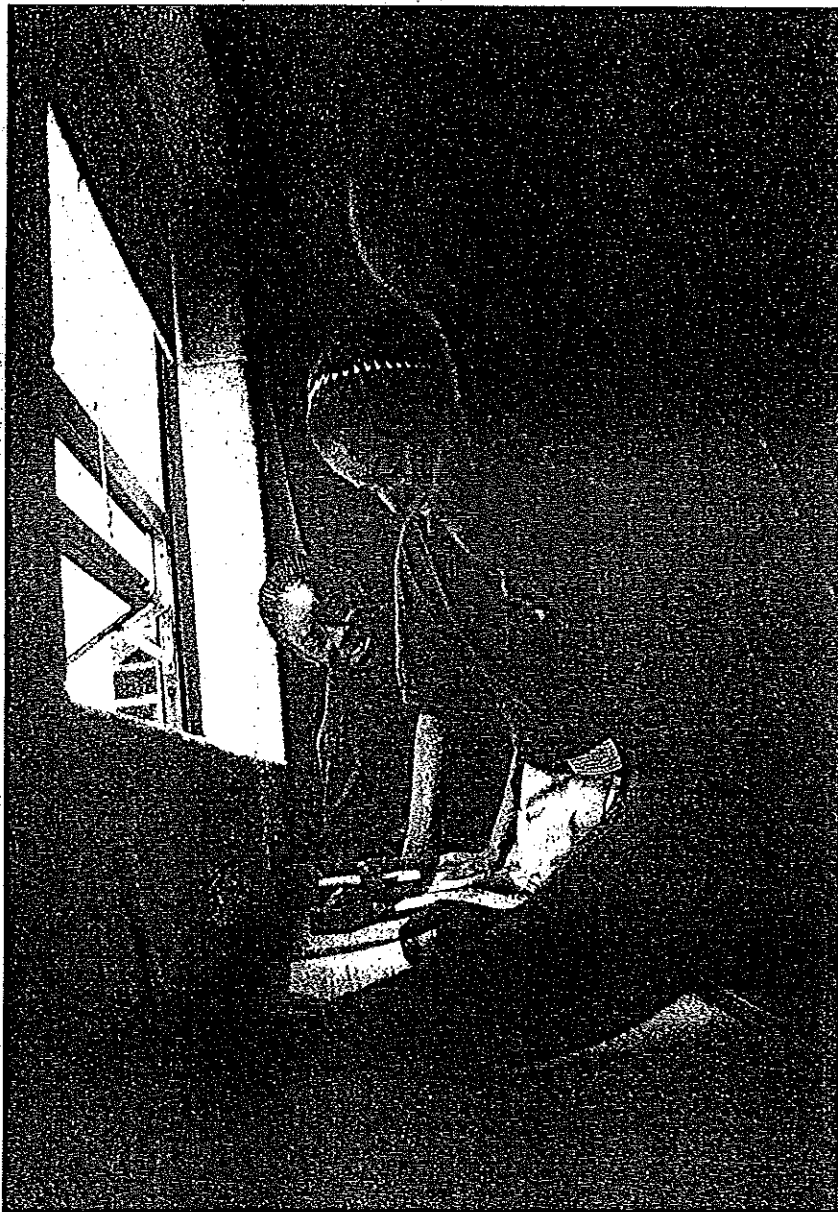
"So we tried it and, to be honest," Creamer said, "nothing seemed to stand out in our minds. The kids did all right."

But after enrolling 18 girls in single-sex classes for the entire school day for the last 10 months, results have been dramatic.

"It's been amazing," Creamer said. "We're really pleased."

The academy is one of just a handful of schools in the state that have tried single-sex education, which supporters say eliminates distractions and gives students a more comfortable learning environment. The issue has garnered national attention during the last two years as the U.S. Department of Education wrestles with how to change a 1970s law banning sex-segregated public schools — as a senate amendment has called for — giving public schools more flexibility to switch to that format.

At Achievable Dream, 61 percent of the girls in single-sex classes made the honor roll



Heather S. Hughes/Daily Press

Ashante Holden, 12, left, peeks around her classmate Shayne Floyd, 12, to check her lab notes before their science class began Thursday at Achievable Dream Academy in Newport News.

Please see Separate/C2



Heather S. Hughes/Daily Press

The all-girls group at Achievable Dream Academy waits in the hallway after English class before going to science class. After enrolling 18 girls in single-sex classes for the entire school day for the last 10 months, results have been dramatic, says David Creamer, assistant principal at the academy.

Separate

Continued from C1

in the last grade period and earned average grade-point averages of 2.78.

In pre-algebra, 89 percent of those girls received As or Bs, compared to 71 percent of girls in dual-sex classes. Science scores were about the same and the school did not track performances in other subjects.

The girls, who make up 26 percent of the school's sixth grade, have had three disciplinary referrals — 5 percent of all problems in sixth grade overall. Last year the same group, then in mixed classes, had 24 percent of the referrals overall.

"There's no doubt it's better," Creamer said. "They're all willing to take risks in class and speak out; all situations girls and boys are reluctant to do in sixth grade."

But opponents to single-sex education, including the National Education Association, say there is no consistent research that demonstrates that a single-gender education produces significant results. Smaller class sizes, quality teachers and parental involvement, however, has proved to be as successful, if not more so, according to a letter the education association sent to the U.S. Department of Education in July.

Creamer said he plans to con-

tinue the same program at Achievable Dream next year and possibly add single-sex classes for boys. Boys, he said, don't do as well as girls in language arts and also enroll in less advanced classes than girls.

Sixth-graders are chosen for the experiment because officials felt 11- and 12-year-olds are at an age where learning gaps begin to widen and the students are transitioning to harder course-work. This year's girls were randomly chosen for the most part and could choose not to enroll in the single-sex classes.

Creamer was able to try the experiment because the school had more sixth-grade girls than boys. The school could easily split the girls off without having to hire more teachers.

The National Association for Single Sex Public Education, based in Maryland, reports there are 47 public schools in the United States which offer some form of single-sex education, including Bailey Bridge Middle School in Chesterfield County and Williamsburg Middle School in Arlington.

The association's director, Leonard Sax, said studies show single-sex education is most effective with low-income students, which Achievable Dream serves. It creates a sense in children that education is important.

"The reason it matters is because boys and girls learn differently," Sax added.

Students in the single-sex

class at Achievable Dream say there are fewer distractions without boys.

"They mess with you," said Aqhante Holderi, 12, an A-B honor roll student this year after earning mostly Bs last year. "They take your attention off your work."

She said girls feel more comfortable in the classes discussing "girl issues."

"Since we have an all-girls class, we don't have a lot of drama like other classes," said Olivia Linzy, 12. "Boys don't like to learn. They like playing and stuff. Most of us make As and Bs all the time."

But Breanna Hargraves, 11, who is in a mixed-sex class at the school, is also on the A-B honor roll. She said the only advantage the all-girls class has is less trouble. She said she has no desire to attend all-girls classes.

According to a survey, 47 percent of the girls in the single-sex classes wanted to continue, 37 percent were undecided and the rest did not want to re-enroll in the classes. Most said the classes are more effective, however.

"By and large, the girls seemed to realize that it was a better atmosphere," Creamer said. "But they're not sure they want to continue doing it, and I think a lot of that has to do with socialization and peer pressure."

Justin George can be reached at 247-4793 or by e-mail at jgeorge@dailypress.com

Mr. Segaloff,

3/28/96

My daughter, Kelly Williams, has been in the Achievable Dream program since she was a rising 4th grader. She is in the 6th grade now.

Before Kelly entered the program she did not put forth much effort in her school work. I had her repeat 3rd grade because she did so poorly. She basically just sat in class with no interest in learning.

Things are different now. I see the excitement within Kelly about wanting to achieve and to do the best she can do. If she doesn't do well on a test or receives a grade on her report card that she is not happy with - she doesn't give up - but strives to do better. I am very proud of Kelly.

I sometimes wonder how Kelly would be doing academically in school if she wasn't in The Achievable Dream Program.

I sincerely want to thank you for all the work and effort you have put into this program for making it a success that it is.

Sincerely, Arlene Counts

September 27, 2000

Dear Mr. Segaloff,

My son, Isaac Brown, is now a ninth grader at Heritage High School. He attended An Achievable Academy from grades 3-8. I have seen an extremely shy child blossom into a confident student who strives for excellence. He takes his education seriously, and truly believes that his dreams can become reality. This is a direct result of being a student of AADA!

I am thankful that the vision placed in your heart is producing many, many students who, without a doubt, will make a difference in this world.

On behalf of all of the "Brown" family who have ^{attended} and are still in The Achievable Dream program (Tyechia Cooke, Isaac Brown, Alicia Brown, LaKeia Brown, Margaret Jones, and Creighton Jones), THANK YOU!!

Sincerely,
Frances M. Brown

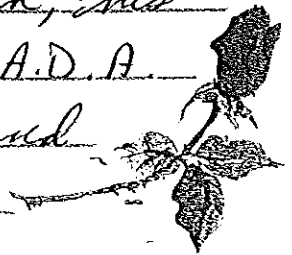


March 10, 1997

Dear Mr. Seaguloff and Sponsors of A.D.A.,

I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for giving my son, Seth Tege, the special opportunity to achieve. Seth participated in the Virginia Scholastic Chess Championship on March 8th and 9th with their chess coach Mr. Tom Phillopune, and chess instructor Mr. West. I was surprised to find that Seth was the top rated primary student participating in the tournament, he was the only primary student with a rating over 1000. Although, Seth did not take first place, he helped lead the third grade team from A.D.A. to a 2nd place standing in the state. I am so very proud of Seth, his team members, and the A.D.A.

With out your support and all the support from the






area business, military, and the school staff my son would have never had the opportunity to achieve in life at such a young age. You and your associates have given my son and our family something money can not buy. You have given us the gift of pride, the gift of accomplishment, and even the gift of learning defeat without losing one's self esteem and self worth.

I wanted to send you, Mr. Seaguloff, your associates, the military and the staff at A.D.A. a special thank you from the mother of a very special young man.

I was told by doctors not to expect much from Seth, you see Seth as a small child suffered with epilepsy and still faces many challenges with his






health. You have given my son something he most desperately needed and I could not give it to him. At A.D.A., Seth has found the opportunity to believe in himself and achieve what he believes.

I hope in the future to see my three younger children follow Seth's fine example, meet the challenges of the A.D.A. and learn life is what you make out of what God gives you.

Thank you Again & God Bless
Ms. H.A. Tegge.
(757) 875-1819

If I can be of any help whatsoever please call on me.



Letter from a *Dreamer*

May 31, 2001

Dear Mr. Segaloff and Dr. Spencer,

I am writing this letter to thank you for the hard work, dedication, and contributions you have put into the Achievable Dream Program. Your hard work and dedication helps me realize the success I will one day become. An Achievable Dream helps me to not only become a better student, but a better person as well. I would like you to know that I really appreciate the wonderful opportunities I have been granted because of the Achievable Dream Program.

First, Erica Grant and I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to attend the Multicultural Conference at Williams and Mary. There, I was able to experience an array of people with different cultures. I also met new people and I learned about the importance of communication. Also, at the meeting, there were several speakers who emphasized the importance of loving yourself, coping with other, and how to be a leader. This trip will always remain in my memory because of the speakers' advice and their life long lessons. However, this experience would not have been made possible if it were not for the kindness that you two generate.

Because of the motivation, encouragement and rewards I receive through An Achievable Dream, I continue to work hard for success. The things that this program does let me know that there are people outside of my family, friends and teachers who actually care about the direction of my future. The encouragement to succeed is only one aspect of the Achievable Dream; the field trips, guest speakers and their emphasis on education are very vital to me as well.

Being An Achievable Dream student changes my life everyday. I know the importance of a good education and this enables me to receive and live a good life in the future. I am able to understand the essence of a good education and ways to utilize my knowledge. I am also able to say no to peer pressure because I want my future to continue to stay bright with the many successes that I plan to accomplish. I could never repay you for the things that Achievable Dream has done for me, but I will try by continuing to strive for success and overcoming any obstacle.

Sincerely, a Dreamer
Zakia Williams

Nir Segaloff,

I just wanted to let you know what a positive impact the AADA has been for my son Christopher.

He is now beginning High School and is so excited about going to school.

He feels he looks good and feels good about himself; and has a positive attitude when he walks out the door each morning. In fact I had to go out and buy clothing for him because he wants to keep that AADA image of looking good at school. I am so proud of him.

Thank - You for all that you and the school have done for my son.

Ellen B. Quirk

Aka

Christopher Quirk's

mother

Ms. Veeland,

I want to thank you and the Achievable Dream program for being supportive and caring since the beginning.

I can honestly say I don't know where I would stand if I wasn't in the program.

But because of you'all, I

successfully completed high

school and I am prepared

for the real world. I thank

you and the entire Achievable

Dream family for the many

opportunities you presented. If

truly believe all of my dreams

are achievable!! Thank you

"You have

truly made

a difference

in my life."

Thank you

Achievable

Dream

Debra D. Lee

September 18, 2000

Dear (Elected Official),

As you know, the education community – parents and students included – is abuzz over the Standards of Learning (SOLs). Controversial response to the subject covers every inch of the proverbial spectrum.

During the 2000 General Assembly, several bills were proposed to “gut and backslide” on the SOLs, but they were killed in committee. We believe it may take up to three to five years of educational and public acclamation before the rewards of SOLs surface, but we already recognize the benefits at An Achievable Dream (AAD) in Newport News.

SOLs are raising the standards of excellence in education while raising the expectations of students from all economic levels of society and of their teachers. Our education system must be accountable. For the first time ever, we have a standard way of measuring and evaluating how we are educating our children.

Of the 975 students in An Achievable Dream, 100 percent are on the free or reduced lunch program and 96 percent are African American. Among the 800 children at An Achievable Dream Academy (grades K through 8), SOL results are fair to excellent. The passing rate of our 3rd and 8th graders on this year’s SOLs were 75 percent and 62 percent respectively. This gives us a gauge by which to evaluate our successes and make improvements where needed.

Our teachers at An Achievable Dream are revered and many serve on state boards. They are committed to align their instruction with the standards set by SOLs. SOLs have strengthened our school.

Please do not judge SOLs too quickly or too politically. If you do, it would create a gross inequity for our children. We salute you if you support SOLs. If you do not, we encourage you to reconsider and talk to Virginia’s leaders in education. Kirk Schroder, president of the State Board of Education, has done an exemplary job and we all need to work with him and members of the Board to adjust that which needs adjusting. Kirk is a man of genuine commitment and dedication to improve education for our children. You can take what he says to heart.

Please call me if I can be of any assistance. Thank you for your continued support. We would love to show you An Achievable Dream program and make the SOLs come alive in a real school setting. Let me know when you can visit.

Sincerely,

Walter S. Segaloff
Chairman



211

Lacey Bullock
March 11, 2001
Ms. Smothers, Room 318
3 Grade



What An Achievable Dream Means To Me

The word Achievable; means to succeed in doing, to accomplish, to bring about a desire. The word Dream; thoughts, imagination, desire, to be better.

An Achievable Dream means to me to be prepared for the future for everything I might come in contact with and help me to survive to make a living and be able to make the right decisions. Being respectful and responsible for my own actions.

It also will help me to be want I want to be in life and to give me the opportunity to be a Doctor, Teacher or Nurse and be able to help other people to improve themselves so they can become a better person.

An Achievable Dream, teaches me to be strong and know right from wrong so I don't get involved in drugs, the use of guns and other bad things that can get you in trouble.

An Achievable Dream to me is something as a young person, I think about and wonder if my hearts desire will come true, but being apart of The Achievelable Dream Academy and learning more than just math,english, science and more I have a real chance in making my Achievable Dream come true.

Sp. Sp. 1/1/01
1ST PLACE
Sgt. Smith
W.A.T.A.

Tance Stafford

Mar. 10, 2001

class: Mrs. Luter

Essay

What An Achievable Dream means to me?

An Achievable Dream is a home to me. It is special to me because the teachers are nice and they will never let you down. Achievable Dream shows that I can make a difference in myself and also be confident. It shows that I can be respectful to others and show cooperation. It also tells you how to make the right decisions in life, at hard times. They also have wonderful role models. They tell us while we are young not to do drugs. They also tell us that if we do drugs we will have a hard time through life. And if you cheat on a test they say your not lying to anyone but yourself.

The End!

3rd Place
SGT. D. Smith
SGT. [unclear]
SFC. [unclear]

Terenn S.

3-10-01

What An Achievable Dream 5th
means to me. . . . Mrs. Robinson

An Achievable Dream means a lot to me. The name of my school is extraordinary itself. But more than that it's full of wonderful teachers, volunteers, and other adults that care about me and my future. They show us how to respect others and property. They also show me how to be confident of myself. They teach me character ed. titles that will make me successful the rest of my life such as respect, perseverance, and self-control.

1ST PLACE

5th English

5th Science

5th Math

5th PE, Art

Grade 4

Herbie Liddie

Mar. 9, 2001

Mrs. Luter

What Achievable Dream Means to Me

Achievable Dream means so much to me because of the work we do. The character we show, learn, and do. The reason why I love this school is because of our character we show. I love everyone in the school. Some of the adults in this school are so kind. Soldiers are at our school to make sure we have on the right clothing, and the correct shoes. Mr. Noarwood gives us a lesson on some character traits. They are Justice, loyalty, Punctuality, Perseverance, lawfulness, and most of all Respect. Respect is the number one thing in our school. We show this type of character everyday. One of the soldiers name Sargent Smith is a man that is kind and the best soldier I've seen. But Achievable Dream means much to me because of the way we are. We do lots of things in Achievable Dream. This school out of all other schools I know the one I'm in we all know everyone loves us. Sargent Robinson is so kind enough to buy Smith t.v's, cassette players, even CD and cassette radio players. These soldiers care about us. But Sargent Smith is the one who sings to us. People may not have good ability or hearing but we have to respect them and help them. Some people don't have alot of responsibility but they can call on me. And this is what Achievable Dream means to me. I love everyone and gabbles you and Sargent Robinson.

HONORABLE MENTION
SGT
Sgt. Herbie Liddie