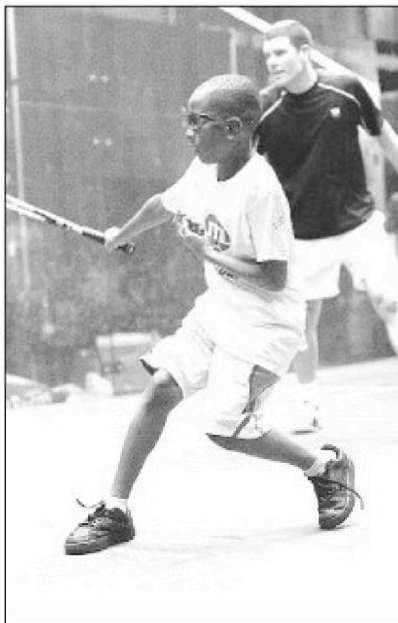


Students learn squash, see improved grades



Jordan Collins shows his talent

By Nykeya Woods

One sixth grader at Kozminski Elementary Community Academy has credited the sport of squash with helping him improve his grades.

Twelve-year-old Darryl "DJ" Jackson, along with 23 other students from Kozminski and Reavis Elementary School, are part of a program called METROsquash. The program, which is collaboration between Chicago Public Schools and the two-year-old organization, combines academic instruction three days a week after school and the indoor racquet sport for students.

DJ said that he learned about METROsquash last year when friends talked about how great the program is. When flyers about the program were passed out at Kozminski, they intrigued him even more.

"I told my mom that I wanted to try out," DJ said. "All the sixth graders that were already in it were telling me how fun it was and the things that they get to do. So I thought that would be fun."

While the students are learning something new about the "fun" sport, their grades have made a dramatic improvement. Working with METROsquash's Academic Director Christine Boukamp and other volunteers have given DJ hope.

"I feel good [about the improvements]; because at first I didn't think that I was going to be able to improve. But then someone helped me and I was able to improve my grades," DJ said.

Khadijah Muhammad, 11, said that METROsquash has helped her improve her behavior in class.

"Now that I know that I am not that person who makes the bad problems," Muhammad said. "If I tell the class to shut up, I can get myself in trouble, too. So I just remain quiet."

Besides growing academically and athletically, students also participate in community service, said Clare Muñana, METROsquash advisory board member and CPS vice president.

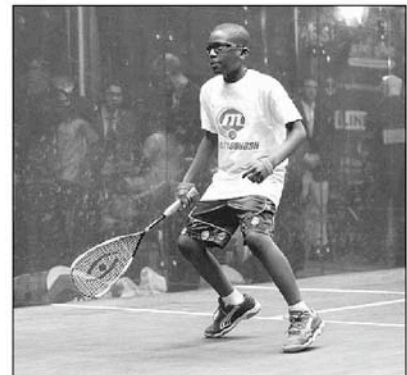
"They are helping in service projects and learning fist hand about

the Hyde Park community, which they live, study, and play in. It is encouraging to see the enthusiasm with which the students participate and their interest in doing more to better their community," Muñana said.

In April, the team traveled to Boston for the U.S. Urban Squash Individual Championships. More than 40 children competed in the Boys Under 13 category, where METROsquash finished with four of the top six players.

The champion, Jordan Collins, added the individual trophy to his team championship and earned an all-expense paid scholarship to the Princeton Summer Squash Camp.

METROsquash is planning to include students from Price Elementary School, 4351 S. Drexel Blvd., in the fall.



Christian Williams*

*Caption has been changed to match the correct name.