

GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Greenwich, Connecticut

Date of Meeting: September 26, 2013

Title of Item:

Facility Utilization and Racial Balance Update

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION OR PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION ITEMS

 Action Required

 X **Informational Only**

Submitted By: William McKersie, Ph.D.

Position: Superintendent of Schools

I will be present at Board Meeting to explain if called upon:

 X **YES**

 NO

Synopsis of Proposal:

Recommended Action (if appropriate):

**Continuation of the Facility Utilization & Racial Balance Discussion
And a Call to Action**

William S. McKersie, Ph.D., Superintendent
September 26, 2013

Background

At the September 12, 2013 Board of Education Meeting, the Board continued its review and discussion of the Superintendent and Administration's August 29, 2013 proposal regarding Facility Utilization & Racial Balance. The August 29 proposal articulates a strategic direction for the district and a collaborative, school based approach for addressing the priority concerns of *Student Achievement, Facility Utilization and Racial Balance*.

The August 29 proposal outlines a long-term and multifaceted solution to address the educational needs of our students within a choice based system. It provides a problem statement, context explanation, larger strategic rationale, a specific approach and a detailed work plan. It clearly reflects the community's strongly expressed preference for choice over redistricting.

The Board raised a series of questions in response to the proposal. The administration grouped the questions into seven sets:

1. How Do We Resolve Unique School Question?
2. What are the Educational Effects for Students in Concentrated vs. Diverse learning Environments?
3. What is the Benefit of a Flexible Enrollment Management System and How Does it Work?
4. What is the Correct Definition of a Magnet School, How does it encourage a Successful Choice Based System and What Does Research Say about Magnet School Effectiveness?
5. What is the Process for Designing or Strengthening Magnets and How Will the Community Be Involved?
6. What is the inventory of support programs within school and before or after school for Hamilton Avenue School and New Lebanon School?
7. What are the cost estimates for transportation options?

At the September 12 Board Meeting, the administration presented responses to the issues of Unique Schools, educational effects, support programs at Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon, and transportation costs (i.e., issues #1, 2, 5 and 7). The balance of questions is addressed in this memorandum.

Call to Action

We recommend that the BOE approve the direction proposed by the administration so that we may move forward with research, planning and design in a timely and thoughtful manner. The administration recognizes that there are several proposals and approaches under consideration, including the effort to determine whether or not Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon qualify as Unique Schools.

We believe that it is imperative to begin work as the Board resolves questions raised by the alternative proposals. District staff, students and families need clarity on direction as soon as possible to mitigate growing confusion across the district and community, as well as to ensure an effective planning and implementation process.

Additional Analysis

For the September 26, 2013 Board Meeting, the administration is presenting additional analysis on the issues of Flexible Enrollment Management Systems, Magnet School Definitions and Research, and the process for designing or strengthening magnets (issues #3, 4 and 5).

In addition, we attach our updated work plan. The work plan is step by step outline of the approach the central administration would pursue in collaborating with schools and parents to design a choice based solution that facilitates enrollment management and fosters innovation that can be scaled throughout the district. There are critical touch points for review and decision making by the Board as we work through the process and address specific questions related to implementation. This work plan has been revised since its submission on August 29 to reflect the current status of decision making; it can be revised again depending on the Board's final decision timeline.

ISSUE #3: What is the Benefit of a Flexible Enrollment Management System and How Does it Work?¹

There are two approaches to managing enrollment issues:

- 1) Periodic adjustment of school attendance areas through redistricting;
- 2) Providing controlled choice through a magnet program.

Given the strong community preference for maintaining neighborhood attendance areas as they currently exist, choice is the preferred option in Greenwich. Most districts typically

¹ To repeat, this memorandum examines issues #3, 4 and 5. The September 12 Board Meeting Memorandum examines issues #1, 2, 6 and 7.

use redistricting to redistribute the student population to and from racially imbalanced schools, or to shift students from overcrowded to underutilized schools.

A system of partial magnet schools based on choice gives Greenwich the flexibility to adjust to demographic shifts as they happen. Contrast this with mandated redistricting, which is a static solution that can only be adjusted through further redistricting.

The mechanism for redistributing students voluntarily from their neighborhood attendance area to magnet schools is a lottery similar to the one already in operation within the District. Parents file an application to place their child in a magnet school. When applications exceed the number of magnet seats available, a lottery is used to place students in the magnet school.

Since magnet schools operate based on choice, there is no guarantee that the parents and students who choose to participate will meet the capacity and diversity objectives of the program. Giving magnet applicants preference based on geographic or demographic factors (a weighted lottery) is our recommendation for increasing the chances that students enrolling as magnet students will help to alleviate overcrowding in their home schools and ensure that the diversity in each school mirrors the overall diversity of the District. It is important to note that recent court decisions prohibit the use of the race or ethnicity of an individual student as a factor in school placement.

Based on our experience over the last five years with magnet school guidelines, the following revisions in the magnet guidelines are suggested for consideration:

- **Require registration in the student's home school prior to applying for admission to a magnet school.** The bulk of the magnet applicants are enrolling in Kindergarten. Magnet applicants are currently required to establish residency, but not register in their home school. As a result, it becomes difficult to ascertain actual enrollment and determine the number of magnet seats that are available in magnet schools.
- **Revise the timing of magnet school open houses and the magnet school lottery to better anticipate enrollment patterns and balance enrollment.** The current system allocates magnet seats based on projected rather than actual enrollment. However, delaying magnet selection is problematic given the spring Kindergarten open house schedule and the desire of most parents to place their children in a school as soon as possible.
- **Set an optimal number of sections per grade level for each of the 11 elementary schools based on the constraints of the facility.** Calculate the District average class size for each grade. Multiply the number of sections in a grade in a school by the District average to establish building "target enrollment" for that grade. If the average class size in a grade in a school exceeds the target enrollment in that grade, then students enrolled in that school and grade would receive preference in the magnet lottery. Magnet schools, by definition, should be operating

considerably under capacity based on attendance area enrollment in order to provide seats for magnet students. This magnet lottery preference would increase the efficiency of the neighborhood schools as well as the magnet schools by decreasing the variance in class size across the District and reducing the number of sections employed at the elementary level to the minimum required to operate within the Board of Education class size guidelines.

- **Give preference to students based on their free or reduced price lunch status and/or dominant language to achieve a better balance of diversity within each school.** The current magnet school lottery guidelines do not consider demographic factors. While race or ethnicity cannot be considered when placing individual students, there is no prohibition to giving preference to students based on their socio-economic status.

Underlying the rationale for a Flexible Enrollment Management System is the research-based recognition that high concentrations of low-income students in one or more schools is a major problem for Greenwich's mission to help all students achieve educational success. Irrespective of state mandates, the administration has concluded that Greenwich must promote greater racial (socio-economic) balance through a choice-based enrollment management system.

As presented at the September 12th Board meeting, the research on the impact of high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students on achievement is clear: **Statistical and qualitative research strongly supports the conclusion that low-income students are far more likely to perform well academically in schools with diverse socio-economic levels than low-income students in schools with high concentrations of low-income students** (Welner and Carter, 2013; Orfield, 2013; Tyson, 2013; Rothstien, 2013; Heckman, 2013; Bryk et al., 2010; Schwartz, 2010; Hanushek, 2009; Vigdor and Ludwig, 2008).

We have indications that the concentration effect applies in Greenwich. Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon have concentrations of low income students that constitute over 50% of their enrollment. These schools are the lowest performing elementary schools in the District as measured by the percentage of students achieving at the goal level or above on the Connecticut Mastery Test. Furthermore, a disaggregation of test scores by school indicates that low income students enrolled at Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon lag behind the achievement of their low income peers in other Greenwich elementary schools.

We must assume that the District and the community have a compelling interest in reducing the socio-economic isolation of low income students attending Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon. This could be addressed by giving preference to magnet applicants based on socio-economic status. Magnet applicants to Julian Curtiss, Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon Schools (Title 1 Schools with high concentrations of low income students) would receive preference based on their lack of qualification for free or reduced price

lunch. Magnet applicants to International School at Dundee, North Street and Parkway would receive preference based on their qualification for free or reduced price lunch.

Since African American and Hispanic students disproportionately qualify for free and reduced price lunch, giving magnet school preference based on socio-economic status should result in better racial balance as well.

ISSUE #5: What is the Correct Definition of a Magnet School, How Does it Encourage a Successful Choice Based System and What Does Research Say About Magnet School Effectiveness?

There is no “official” definition of a magnet school. In practice, most magnet schools have no neighborhood attendance area and fill their seats through an application process. A magnet theme or instructional model is used to induce students and parents to choose the magnet school rather than the school serving the area in which they reside. *Interdistrict* magnets draw students from outside as well as inside the school district in which they are located. *Intradistrict* magnets draw students from different schools located within a school district. Greenwich currently operates four *intradistrict* partial magnet schools.

Instructional innovation at the school level within overarching District Commitments is a key District strategy for raising the achievement of all students while closing the gaps in achievement among students. Magnet programs allow schools to more formally differentiate instructional models to meet the needs of a specific population. Parent choice allows for a better match between student learning styles and the instructional model. Successful innovations can be scaled to the district level at which point they would cease to be a magnet feature.

The research on magnet schools is far reaching and points to the following conclusion: **When well designed, implemented and supported, magnet schools can make a measurable difference in student learning. However, magnet schools in and of themselves are not the reason; rather, when they make a difference in student learning, it is because they ensure the necessary conditions are present to advance student outcomes, including: coherent and focused principal-led teams of teachers; standards with aligned curriculum, instructional plans, formative and summative assessments, and professional development; parent choice and support; extracurricular programs and supports; and community partners and supports. Essential to effective magnets is district level support via a well-designed and publicized school choice system; marketing and parent education programs; evaluation and monitoring; and transportation.**

Genevieve Sigel-Hawley and Erica Frankenberg, of the National Coalition on School Diversity,² in an October 2011 Research Brief (copy attached to this report) highlighted the following major findings on the effects of magnet schools:

1. Older studies suggest that magnet schools are associated with increased student achievement, higher levels of student motivation and satisfaction with school, higher levels of teacher motivation and morale, and higher levels of parent satisfaction with the school (p. 1). (See Note #2 in Sigel-Hawley and Frankenberg.)
2. Magnet school students are more likely to enroll in racially and economically diverse environments than charter school students. “[This] trend matters because research continues to indicate that enrollment in high minority segregated school environments is linked to harmful educational outcomes, while enrollment in racially integrated schools is associated with myriad educational benefits” (p. 2).
3. “Connecticut’s inter-district regional magnet schools: Higher levels of racial diversity, better academic and social/emotional outcomes compared to non-magnet schools...based on pair of peer-reviewed 2009 studies” (p. 2). (See Note #4 in Sigel-Hawley and Frankenberg; Bifulco, Cobb & Bell, *Can Interdistrict Choice Boost Student Achievement? The Cause of Connecticut’s Interdistrict Magnet School Program*, 31 Education Evaluation & Policy Analysis 323, 2009.)
4. One of the most widely-cited studies on magnet schools and achievement is by Adam Garmoran of the University of Wisconsin (1996) finds magnet schools more effective at raising reading and social studies achievement than regular public schools, Catholic or secular private schools (p. 3). (See Note #6 in Sigel-Hawley and Frankenberg.)
5. Studies from large, urban districts in California find higher levels of racial diversity, math achievement and graduation rates in magnet schools, according to a 2007 study in the San Diego Unified School District and a 2008 study in the Los Angeles Unified School District (pp. 3-4). (See Notes #9 and #10 in Sigel-Hawley and Frankenberg.)

² Founded in 2009, the National Coalition on School Diversity seeks a greater commitment to racial and socioeconomic integration in Federal K-12 education policy and funding. NCSDD has a Research Advisory Panel to ensure that its advocacy efforts are informed by the “most current, methodologically sound research on school integration.” Member organizations include the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund; American Civil Liberties Union; Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund; Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School; Civil Rights Project at UCLA; University of North Carolina Center for Civil Rights; Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University; Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at UC Berkeley School of Law; Education Law Center; Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota; Education Rights Center, Howard University School of Law; Campaign for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University.

6. A 2011 study using econometric analysis shows that magnet schools effectively create racially diverse student bodies and are linked to beneficial academic outcomes (p. 4). (See Notes #11 and #12 in Sigel-Hawley and Frankenberg.)
7. Magnet school faculties are more racially diverse and more stable than regular public school faculties, pointing to the important positive effects that magnet schools can have on the stability and experience of teachers (p.4). (See Notes #13-16 in Sigel-Hawley and Frankenberg.)

Additional research can be presented as the Board deems necessary. For now, however, the administration finds this research summary to be compelling. The sponsoring group, National Coalition for School Diversity, has an advocacy agenda, but its work is framed by high level research and a highly regarded Research Advisory Panel.

As noted above, the basic lesson from research on magnet schools is clear: **when well designed and implemented, with clear focus on the attributes of effective schools, magnets can make a measurable difference in student academic and social/emotional success.**

ISSUE#6: What is the Process for Designing or Strengthening Magnets and How Will the Community Be Involved?

The process for designing and strengthening magnet schools centers on representative work groups who will collaborate to develop a sustainable model. The approach will be iterative, with clearly defined touch points where the BOE will review, endorse and/or modify the evolving model.

At the system wide level, a District work group will be responsible for developing plans for educational outreach, transportation, and District lottery guidelines. At the individual schools, magnet school work groups will identify program elements and learning models that would encourage parents to voluntarily move from their neighborhood school to a magnet school including:

- Assess learning needs of target population (both students residing within the school attendance area and potential magnet students);
- Research innovative practices;
- Use survey data to develop a magnet student profile;
- Develop an instructional model that will attract students from outside of the magnet school attendance area and raise achievement for all students attending the magnet school.

The District work group will act as the guiding team, linking the work of the magnet school work groups to ensure consistency, collaboration and the coordination of choices. Ideally, the system will offer a full complement of learning models and can support parents and students in evaluating and choosing the schools that best align with their particular learning interests and preferences.

The plans developed by the work groups will be subject to community scrutiny and Board review. The attached updated work plan details the action steps and opportunities for public discourse as a plan is developed.

SECTION III: UPDATED WORKPLAN

This work plan is organized around five major tasks. We delineate specific work and delivery dates within each of the five areas.

- I. Board Review and Public Engagement
- II. Market Research
- III. Magnet Planning & Implementation
- IV. Expansion of New Lebanon School
- V. Residency Verification

BOARD REVIEW AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An iterative process using public engagement, research and development to address: • Rationale and Approach • Model Design • Process for Magnet Lottery Guidelines • Transportation • Logistics, including marketing, communications and lottery timing • Budget: R&D and ongoing expenses • Potential Impact on FURB • Potential Impact on Middle School Enrollment • Budget Proposal for October approval to fund development of magnet models • Budget projections for 2015-16 and ongoing costs • Feasibility Study regarding New Lebanon Renovation • Performance Measures 			
Task	Responsibility	Due Date	Status
Present Revised Preliminary Proposal to BOE for approval	McKersie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/26/13 to BOE • 8/27/13 Public Posting 	Complete
Public Hearing at BOE Meeting	McKersie	8/29/13	Complete

Public Forum / Hearing in Spanish	McKersie, Ospina / Kail	9/3/13	Complete
Update on Market Research/BOE review of FURB team work and public comment	McKersie	9/4/13 BOE Distribution	Complete
Public Hearing at BOE Meeting	McKersie	9/12/13	Complete
Update on Market Research and BOE review of FURB team work and public comment	McKersie	9/23/13 BOE Distribution	In Process
Public Hearing at BOE Meeting	McKersie	9/26/13	
Update on Market Research and Projected Enrollment	McKersie	10/3/13 BOE Distribution	In Process
Public Hearing at BOE Meeting; BOE vote on Proposal plan	McKersie	10/10/13	
Proposal to CT State Board of Education	BOE/McKersie	TBD	
Updates on Design and Development from Magnet Coordinating Team and School Based Work Teams	McKersie	TBD	March 2014 is target date for magnet model selection

MARKET RESEARCH

METIS to perform market research to assess elementary school community needs and interests and ability/readiness to choose neighborhood schools versus magnet models

Task	Responsibility	Due Date	Status
Metis/Superintendent/FURB Team Conference calls to plan and guide focus group protocols	Metis/McKersie	8/19/13	Complete
Initiate Survey Research	Metis/McKersie	8/30/13	Complete
Initiate Focus Group Research	Metis/McKersie	9/3/13	Complete
Metis Preliminary Report Based on Survey Research	Metis/McKersie	9/6/13	Complete
Metis Final Report Based on Survey Research and Focus Groups	Metis/McKersie	9/23/13	In Process

MAGNET PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION			
Progress updates provided monthly to BOE through implementation Fall 2014			
Task	Responsibility	Due Date	Status
Establish school based work teams (to include parents and school faculty and administration) to address all proposal elements and open questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Learning Model/Magnet Themes ✓ Strengthening and coordination of existing magnets ✓ School Level Budget – Three Year Projection ✓ School Level Performance Management ✓ Integration of Digital Learning and other initiatives 	School Based Teams (SBTs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Street • Parkway • Existing Magnet Team 	10/17/13	Review with BOE
Prepare and Present process guidelines and objectives for School Based Teams	Magnets Coordinating Team	10/2013	Review with BOE
<u>Transportation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a system for transportation to and from magnet schools using a “hub” system rather than traditional bus stops. 	Magnets Coordinating Team	10/2013	Review with BOE
Evaluate Market Research and Develop School Based Research to Develop Understanding of interests and Preferences and Propose Options	School Based Work Teams	11/2013	Review with BOE
<u>Budgeting & Finances</u> Develop a district-wide budget addressing three primary areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A District level budget for implementing an educational outreach plan, hub transportation system and revised lottery system. • School budgets for of both developmental and ongoing costs, based on a Budget Template (see prototype in Appendix) • New Lebanon Architectural and Engineering Study and 	Magnets Coordinating Team School Based Work Teams	12/2013	Review with BOE

New Lebanon Capital Improvement Plan Proposal			
<u>Parent & Community Outreach</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a sustained magnet school marketing plan so that parents can make an informed choice between their neighborhood school and a magnet school. 	Magnets Coordinating Team School Based Work Teams	12/2013	Review with BOE
<u>Multiple Performance Measurement System</u> Develop a performance measurement system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design & Implementation Measures Innovation and Scale Measures Formative Measures of Student Outcomes Summative Measures of Student Outcomes 	Magnets Coordinating Team	12/2013	Review with BOE
Research, Develop and Test Options for Magnet Designs/Details with internal and external stakeholders	School Based Work Teams	12/13-3/14	Review with BOE
<u>Enrollment Management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the timing of magnet school open houses and the magnet school lottery to better anticipate enrollment patterns and balance enrollment. Revise the guidelines for the magnet school lotteries 	Magnets Coordinating Team	01/2014	Review with BOE
Select and begin creation of magnet school for implementation academic year 2014-15	Magnets Coordinating Team with School Based Work Teams	3/14-9/14	Review with BOE

NEW LEBANON EXPANSION			
Task	Responsibility	Due Date	Status
Develop a plan to take advantage of the Connecticut Statutory provision for 80% reimbursement of building costs for "Diversity" schools.	Magnets Coordinating Team	10/2013	
Develop a CIP Proposal for the renovation of New Lebanon School would be developed in fall of 2014.	Branyan	9/2014	
Renovation of New Lebanon School	McKersie	2013-2015	

RESIDENCY VERIFICATION			
Students Entering Grades K-5 and 9			
Task	Responsibility	Due Date	Status
Verification Process Implemented	Branyan	7/1-10/1	In Process
Weekly Status Update to Superintendent, BOE and Community	Branyan/McKersie	8/1-10/1	In Process
Contingency Planning for Non-Compliance as of 10/1/13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>Staff Changes</u> – Will be none. Contractually set for the 13-14 School Year ✓ <u>Class Size Changes</u> – Will be determined on case by case basis ✓ <u>Student Notice and Support</u> – Develop system for notifying families and students of removal from school in a positive way ✓ <u>Legal Review</u> – Review legality of all actions related to residency and school registration ✓ <u>Communications Plan</u> – Staff, Parents, BOE, Community 	McKersie/Flanagan/Principals/ Eves	10/1	In Process

Research Brief

Magnet School Student Outcomes: What the Research Says

By Genevieve Siegel-Hawley and Erica Frankenberg

This research brief outlines six major studies of magnet school student outcomes. Magnet schools are programs with special themes or emphases designed to attract families from a variety of different backgrounds. They were originally established to promote voluntary racial integration in urban districts.

The following studies are located within a much broader body of research that documents the benefits of attending racially and socioeconomically diverse schools. Some of what we know from the literature on the benefits of racial diversity indicates that students of all races who attend diverse schools have higher levels of critical thinking, an ability to adopt multiple perspectives; diminished likelihood for acceptance of stereotypes, higher academic achievement, more cross-racial friendships, willingness to attend diverse colleges and live in diverse neighborhoods, access to more privileged social networks, higher feelings of civic and communal responsibility, higher college-going rates, more prestigious jobs.¹

The research discussed here is relatively recent, but older studies suggest that magnet schools are associated with increased student achievement, higher levels of student motivation and satisfaction with school, higher levels of teacher motivation and morale, and higher levels of parent satisfaction with the school.²

A note about magnet school enrollment and segregation trends³

Before delving into the research, however, we quickly review the current demographic breakdown of magnet schools. Enrollment data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, a reliable and wide-ranging federal dataset, show that, in 2008–09, more than 2.5 million students enrolled in magnet schools across the nation, up from just over two million students five years earlier. Magnet programs enrolled more than twice the number of students served by charter schools, making magnets the largest sector of choice schools.

Compared to regular public schools, both charter and magnet programs enrolled a larger share of black and Latino students (mainly due to the concentration of magnet and charter schools in more urban locales). Magnet students were slightly less likely than charter school students to attend intensely segregated minority schools, where 90–100% of students were nonwhite, and also slightly less likely to enroll in intensely segregated white schools (0–10% nonwhite students). Beyond these two extreme ends of the spectrum of white student enrollment, large differences emerged in the shares of magnet and charter students attending majority nonwhite (more racially diverse) and majority white (less diverse) schools. Forty percent of magnet students attend majority nonwhite school settings, compared to just 23 percent of charter students. Conversely, almost 35 percent of charter students attended majority white settings, compared to 20 percent of magnet students. In terms of school

poverty composition, white students experience markedly lower levels of exposure to low income students in the charter sector compared to the magnet and regular public sector, suggesting that some charters may be serving as places of white flight from poverty in other public schools. Of course, a wide diversity of school environments exists within these broad patterns for the magnet and charter sectors.

A brief comparison of the two largest choice sectors reveals that, in general, magnet school students are more likely to enroll in racially and socioeconomically diverse environments than charter school students. Further, in contradiction to concerns related to whether magnet schools “cream” more affluent students, white students attending magnet schools are *more* exposed to low-income students than are white students in charter schools. These trends matter because, as noted above, research continues to indicate that enrollment in high minority segregated school environments is linked to harmful educational outcomes, while enrollment in racially integrated schools is associated with myriad educational benefits. The following research synopsis discusses recent studies dealing specifically with the benefits associated with magnet schools.

Connecticut’s inter-district regional magnet schools: Higher levels of racial diversity, better academic and social/emotional outcomes compared to non-magnet schools

In a 1996 ruling, the Connecticut Supreme Court held that as a result of racial and economic isolation in Hartford and racial segregation in the 22-district region, Hartford public school students had been denied equal educational opportunity under the state constitution. The remedy called for a system of magnet schools to help bridge district boundary lines, a vital policy development since most school segregation today exists between different school

districts, not within the same district. Today, the state has a system of more than 60 interdistrict, regional magnet schools to help comply with *Sheff v. O’Neill*. A pair of peer-reviewed 2009 studies from Connecticut sought to examine the effectiveness of these educational settings, asking two questions: 1. Do regional magnets integrate students, and 2. what is the impact of magnet schools on student achievement?

These studies addressed the critical issue of selection bias, or the idea that students and families who choose magnet schools (or any other schools of choice) are fundamentally different from students and families who don’t choose their educational setting, with two different sophisticated statistical methods. The research team examined magnet school lottery winners and losers, in addition to carefully controlling for pre-magnet school experiences in order to determine the exact impact of magnet schools on achievement. Importantly, the two different methods each produced similar results, which suggested that the findings were reliable and valid.

The first article published from this research found that attendance at a regional magnet high school had positive math and reading effects for central city students, and that attendance at inter-district middle schools had positive effects on reading achievement.⁴

The second study by the same authors found that magnet school students generally reported more positive academic attitudes and behaviors than students in non-magnet schools. These academic and social benefits of magnets included the following:

- Peer support for academic achievement was stronger in magnets than in non-magnet city schools;
- Twelfth-grade magnet city students perceived more encouragement and support for college

attainment than 12th grade city students in non-magnets;

- Magnet students were less likely to be absent or skip classes than non-magnet city students
- Minority students in magnet city schools reported feeling significantly closer to whites and were more likely to have multiple white friends than minorities in non-magnet city schools;
- White magnet students felt more connected to minority students and were more likely to report multiple minority friends than white students from the non-magnet suburban school; and
- Magnet school students expressed stronger future multicultural interests and were significantly more likely than students in the suburban non-magnet schools to report that their school experience helped them understand people from other groups.⁵

Together, this pair of recent studies from an innovative, inter-district magnet arrangement in Connecticut indicates improved academic and social indicators for magnet school students.

National study finds magnet schools more effective at raising reading and social studies achievement than regular public schools, Catholic or secular private schools

One of the more widely-cited studies regarding magnet schools and achievement was published by Adam Gamoran of the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1996. The study remains one of the few large-scale, national studies of magnet school effects.⁶

Gamoran took a sample of urban students from the federal National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS) to estimate differences in 10th grade

achievement for students attending magnet schools, regular public schools, Catholic schools, and secular private schools. He also controlled for an extensive list of family background characteristics—including 8th grade achievement. Significantly, the study showed that magnet schools were more effective than regular public schools, Catholic or secular private schools at raising student achievement in reading and social studies.

Gamoran's research supported an earlier, U.S. Department of Education (ED) study that found that over 80% of surveyed magnet schools had higher average achievement scores than the district average for regular public schools.⁷ A follow-up summary of the 1983 ED report highlighted four school districts (Austin, Dallas, San Diego, and Montgomery County, Maryland) where, after controlling for differences in student backgrounds, magnet programs had positive effects on achievement test scores.⁸

Studies from large, urban districts in California find higher levels of racial diversity, math achievement and graduation rates in magnet schools

A 2007 study out of San Diego Unified, the nation's 8th largest school system, examined the district's four systems of choice—magnets, Voluntary Enrollment Exchange Program (dating back to voluntary desegregation plan), open enrollment and charter schools.⁹ Both VEEP and the magnet programs contain civil rights considerations, including transportation and outreach; and the study found that they produced more racial integration than the other two systems of choice. Beyond magnet schools' ability to foster diverse learning environments, the authors found that winning the magnet lottery at the high school level increased math achievement two and three years after entering the program, which the authors suggest is likely a causal relationship (in other words, magnet schools caused math achievement effects).

Another California study looked at magnet programs in Los Angeles Unified, the second largest district in the nation.¹⁰ As early as 1982, school desegregation in Los Angeles was limited almost entirely to a system of magnet schools. Nearly three decades later, in 2008, UCLA researchers tracked the individual data records of 48,561 students through their high school experience. After controlling for a variety of student-level factors (like race, gender and absenteeism) and school-related factors (magnet or non-magnet, poverty and racial concentrations, teacher quality), the research team found that students enrolled in LAUSD's magnet programs graduated at *much* higher rates than non-magnet students. Specifically, 73% of students attending a magnet high school in the district graduated, compared to 43% of non-magnet students. Stated differently, attending a magnet more than doubled the probability of a student earning a high school diploma.

A study released this month shows that magnet schools effectively create racially diverse student bodies and are linked to beneficial academic outcomes

Finally, a new study using an econometric analysis of long-term outcomes for magnet schools in a mid-sized urban school district led researchers to conclude that “magnet programs are effective tools for attracting and retaining households and students.”¹¹ By carefully analyzing the impact of winning or losing the magnet school lottery, as well as decisions to stay or leave the school district, the team of researchers found that magnet schools were able to retain significant groups of white students from higher income and more highly educated communities. The data also indicated that students in the district's high school magnet programs had better attendance records than non-magnet school students.¹² The first finding is extremely significant, since it suggests that magnet schools are continuing to carry out their original mission.

Across multiple dimensions then—achievement, of course, but also social/emotional indicators and graduation rates—we see that magnet schools are linked to very desirable outcomes for students.

An important note about teachers: Magnet school faculties are more racially diverse and more stable than regular public school faculties

Teaching is strongly related to student outcomes—indeed, teachers are the most predictive school factor related to student performance.¹³ We also know that stability and experience of teaching faculties is critical. Importantly, a Civil Rights Project study found that magnet school faculties are more stable than non-magnet school faculties, in addition to being more racially diverse.¹⁴ Further, another Civil Rights Project study on the Clark County/Las Vegas school district found that magnet schools were more successful in retaining experienced teachers than non-magnet programs in the district.¹⁵ Again, these findings are situated in a larger body of work documenting the exit of experienced and highly qualified teachers from schools that are resegregating by race and socioeconomic status.¹⁶

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley is a research associate with the Civil Rights Project and a doctoral candidate in Urban Schooling at UCLA. **Erica Frankenberg** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Pennsylvania State University. Prior to this, she was the Research & Policy Director for the Initiative on School Integration at the Civil Rights Project.

Endnotes

- 1 For summary of research on benefits of racially and socioeconomically diverse schools, See generally Gary Orfield, Erica Frankenberg & Liliana Garces, *Statement of American Social Scientists of Research on School Desegregation to the U.S. Supreme Court in Parents Involved v. Seattle School District and Meredith v. Jefferson County*. 40 URB REV. : Issues and Ideas in Public Education 96 (2008); Robert Linn & Kevin Welner, *Race-Conscious Policies for Assigning Students to Schools: Social Science Research and the Supreme Court Cases*, (National Academy of Education, 2007). See also a series of the Diversity Coalition's policy briefs summarizing latest research at www.school-diversity.org.
- 2 See Rolf Blank, *Educational Effects of Magnet High Schools*, National Center of Effective Secondary Schools, (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989); Crain et al., *The Effectiveness of New York City's Career Magnet Schools: An Evaluation of Ninth Grade Performance Using an Experimental Design*, (1992); Adam Gamoran, *Student Achievement in Public Magnet, Public Comprehensive, and Private City High Schools*, (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1996); Marilyn Musumeci & Ronald Szczykowski, *New York State Magnet School Evaluation Study: Final Report*, (MAGI Educational Services, 1991); Amy Heebner, *The Impact of Career Magnet High Schools: Experimental and Qualitative Evidence*, 20 J. VOCATIONAL EDUC. RES. 27 (1995); Mary Haywood Metz, *Teachers' Pride in Craft, School Subcultures and Societal Pressures*, 1 EDUC. POL'Y 115 (1987).
- 3 Data from this section is drawn from a forthcoming book chapter on magnet school trends by the authors. Genevieve Siegel-Hawley & Erica Frankenberg, *Designing Choice: Magnet School Structures and Racial Diversity*, (forthcoming). Further information can be found in Erica Frankenberg & Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, *The Forgotten Choice? Rethinking Magnet Schools in a Changing Landscape*, (The Civil Rights Project at UCLA, 2008); and Erica Frankenberg, Genevieve Siegel-Hawley & Jia Wang, *Choice Without Equity: Charter School Segregation and the Need for Civil Rights Standards*, 19 EDUC. POL'Y ANALYSIS AND ARCHIVES 1 (2011).
- 4 Robert Bifulco, Casey Cobb & Courtney Bell, *Can Interdistrict Choice Boost Student Achievement? The Case of Connecticut's Interdistrict Magnet School Program*, 31 EDUC. EVALUATION & POL'Y ANALYSIS 323 (2009).
- 5 Excerpted from Casey Cobb, Robert Bifulco & Courtney Bell, *Evaluation of Connecticut's Interdistrict Magnet Schools*, The Center for Education Policy Analysis, (University of Connecticut, 2009), available at <http://www.education.uconn.edu/research/cepa/assets/Final%20Magnet%20Report.pdf>.
- 6 Adam Gamoran, *Student Achievement in Public Magnet, Public Comprehensive, and Private City High Schools*, 19 EDUC. EVALUATION AND POL'Y ANALYSIS 1(1996).
- 7 Rolf Blank, Robert Dentler, & D. Catherine Baltzell, *Survey of Magnet Schools: Analyzing a Model for Quality Integrated Education*, Final Report for a Nat'l Study for the U.S. Dep't of Educ. (1983).
- 8 Rolf Blank, *Educational Effects of Magnet High Schools*, National Center of Effective Secondary Schools, (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989).
- 9 Julian Betts, et al., *Does School Choice Work? Effects on Student Integration and Achievement* (Public Policy Institute of California, 2006).
- 10 David Silver & Marisa Saunders, *What Factors Predict High School Graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District?* (California Dropout Research Project, Report #14, 2008).

- 11 John Engberg, Dennis Epple, Jason Imbrogno, Holger Sieg & Ron Zimmer, *Bounding the Treatment Effects of Education Programs that Have Lotteried Admission and Selective Attrition*, (Colum. Univ., Center for the Study of Privatization in Educ., 2011) p.26.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Patricia Gándara & Frances Contreras (Eds.), *The Latino Education Crisis: The Consequences of Failed Social Policies*, (Harv. Univ. Press, 2009).
- 14 Genevieve Siegel-Hawley & Erica Frankenberg, *Designing Choice: Magnet School Structures and Racial Diversity*, (forthcoming).
- 15 Veronica Terriquez, Jennifer Flashman & Sarah Schuler-Brown, *Expanding Student Opportunities: Prime 6 Program Review*, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada, (The Civil Rights Project, 2009), available at <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/expanding-student-opportunities-prime-6-program-review-clark-county-school-district-las-vegas-nevada/terriquez-expanding-student-opportunities-2009.pdf>
- 16 C. Kirabo Jackson, Student Demographics, *Teacher Sorting, and Teacher Quality: Evidence from the End of School Desegregation*, *Journal of Labor Economics* 27.2 (2009), available at http://www.nctq.org/docs/cornell_charlotte.pdf.

Further Reading on Magnet School Research Outcomes

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Bifulco, R., Cobb, C., Bell. Can Interdistrict Choice Boost Student Achievement? The Case of Connecticut's Interdistrict Magnet School Program. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* (Vol. 31, No. 4, 2009): pp. 323–345.

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For more information on the National Coalition on School Diversity, go to www.school-diversity.org