

April 27, 1981

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OVERALL PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT
~~EXHIBIT B~~

MAGNET SCHOOLS

Due to limitations of space, time and personnel this report is largely limited to magnet programs in court designated minority schools.

Six dedicated monitors under the leadership of Chairman C. B. Schroeder, Jr., spent well in excess of 300 on-site hours during the 1980-81 school year monitoring magnet programs at various secondary and elementary schools. As indicated above their time was predominantly spent at court designated minority isolated schools. The monitors' summary of their conclusions follows:

Report from Magnet Monitors:

1. At the elementary school level, total school magnets, not magnet programs within a school, provide a much better system for producing quality integrated educational programs.
2. Geographical location including attractiveness of site and the appearance of the physical plant are very important to the success or failure of a magnet program.
3. To develop and maintain a quality magnet, it is necessary to have a total effort by the whole school staff. It is also important to have parent involvement and commitment within the magnet. There must also be an ongoing program for recruiting new students at all levels of the magnet program and this program must be totally honest in explaining all options available to the student.
4. Continuation of the individual magnet program from elementary to secondary is essential to the maintenance of the whole program.
5. The quality of education can be as high or higher in the magnet schools as in any other schools.
6. Early and complete planning by the District will enable the school (magnet) to function better.

In general the ITF agrees with the monitors six points although it would further face reality and stress point 5 by changing it to read as follows:

5. The quality of education must be at least as high or preferably far higher in the magnet programs if they are to have any chance of attracting substantial numbers of majority students to minority isolated schools or even to schools that are no longer minority isolated but have been until recently.

Magnet programs are born with problems in the San Diego program. On the one hand they must provide a specialized quality education program that is not available in the neighborhood schools and this program has to be attractive enough and well enough merchandised so that it will entice students to enroll in it notwithstanding some inconvenience to children and their parents. On the other hand the magnet program has to be physically located so and hedged in with restrictions as to who may attend that it at least improves the desegregation numbers to say nothing about improving the true integration numbers and attitudes which should be the true goal. Structuring magnet programs to achieve both of these sometimes conflicting and sometimes incompatible objectives is difficult at best. Programs that succeed in spite of these inherent handicaps are beautiful to behold.

Prime examples of such successful programs that appear to be truly contributing to quality education and some true integration at minority isolated sites are Fulton, Johnson, Valencia Park and Webster at the elementary level Gompers at the secondary level. The School of Performing Arts which cuts across elementary and secondary lines has been very successful under adverse circumstances while sharing a campus with Roosevelt. It will for the 1980-81 school

year have a home of its own as a total site magnet at O'Farrell Jr. High, a minority isolated site. This is the result of a courageous decision by the School Board in the face of some neighborhood opposition and it will be interesting to see how the program will fare and how the waiting list will hold up now that the supporters and proponents of the Performing Arts Magnet have been given most, if not all of what they said they needed to make an outstandingly successful program. This program is the closest thing to a true magnet in the old pre-integration magnet sense that this district has.

These successful magnet programs have made a real contribution but it is our opinion that it is highly unlikely that magnet programs, as such, on a voluntary basis can ever succeed alone in truly integrating all the other minority isolated sites that now have no real magnet or integration program.

Additional magnet programs may be able, with careful planning and staffing and lots of effort, to effect a change in some of these schools in several years time. The Chollas Total School Math-Science Magnet planned by the Board for the 1980-81 school year could turn Chollas around. A similar program at Encanto (a tipping but not a minority isolated site) has been a resounding success.

This conclusion seems to be supported by the fact that in the 4th or 5th year of the present integration plan magnet programs in court designated minority isolated schools were projected by the School administration to enroll only about 1850 majority students

and in this school year actually enrolled only about 1450 for a short fall of over 20% or 400 students.

Some notes of caution about even this modest progress must be mentioned however:

1. There was in the 1980-81 school year and as yet unexplained 20% downturn in majority enrollment at Valencia Park.

2. Fulton and Webster tend to draw an exceptionally large percent of their majority enrollment from just a couple of schools. If the reasons for this were corrected at the sending schools it could have a very adverse effect on the ethnic balance at Fulton and Webster.

3. Webster and Johnson both base their appeal to majority students on fundamental basic education and discipline. As stress on fundamentals, discipline and basic education returns to more and more schools through the spread of AGP and other basic programs the incentive for the parents of majority students is lessened and this could have an adverse effect on ethnic balance at Webster and Johnson.

4. The "standards/screening/dumping ground" problem for magnet programs mentioned in the ITF report of June 7, 1979, still remains largely unresolved. The overall conclusions and comments of that report still seem in general remarkably valid today, two years later.

A capsulized report on ten of the magnet programs in minority isolated schools is attached as Appendix 1 to this Exhibit E. It was prepared by ITF's Judy McDonald on the basis of her own observations and monitors' reports.

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APPENDIX 1 - EXHIBIT E

FULTON (Academics and Athletics)

Comments: Exceptional Principal and staff; Good plant and extended day program.

JOHNSON (Academic Academy)

Comments: Very good community involvement and basic education, time on task program.

WEBSTER (Fundamental School)

Comments: Very good staff and strong parent and community support.

VALENCIA PARK (SDSU University Lab)

Comments: Good plant and location, SDSU Lab, 20% reduction from last year in majority enrollment.

BAKER (University Lab)

Comments: Very poor geographical location.

EMERSON (Fundamental School)

Comments: Poor geographical location. Transitional lab program.

HORTON (Intercultural Language)

School within a school

Comments: K-3 magnet, hard to make program work. Slight impact on total school.

KNOX (Intercultural Language)

School within a school.

Comments: French magnet is not a strong magnet. Slight impact on total school.

LOWELL (Bilingual)

Comments: Very poor geographical location and poor physical plant.

SHERMAN (Individualized Instruction)

School within a school

Comments: 4-6 magnet, Benchley extension. This is a very large school and magnet can make only a slight impact on enrollment.