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ABSTRACT

Following a brief discussion of the policies which have led to the focus on magnet schools as tools for both school improvement and desegregation, this paper brings together existing research in order to answer the following question: what is the best design for magnet schools to be the most effective for desegregation? Magnet schools have only a limited effect due to the small population which they serve; consequently, they must be part of a larger desegregation strategy. The current challenge for many urban schools will be to develop strategies to attract whites to historically black schools. Usually school features such as an image of excellence, a special curriculum, a charismatic principal, a good faculty, and an attractive facility draw white students. A high rate of community participation, comprehensive plans, clear-cut standards and definite timetables also enhance the possibility for effective desegregation. Creating and sustaining good race relations requires: (1) arrangements that minimize the visibility of low achievement and reward individual effort; (2) a faculty that emphasizes student social relations; and (3) structures that foster interracial contact by school staff and generate collective planning. Desegregation through any method is not merely a planning issue, but requires daily decisions which can either promote or prevent integration. Appendix includes bibliographic sources which provide guidelines for establishing desegregated and integrated magnet schools and three pages of references. (ETS)

USING MAGNET SCHOOLS FOR DESEGREGATION:

SOME SUGGESTIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

by

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INTRODUCTION

The growing enthusiasm for magnet schools as a strategy for both school improvement and desegregation comes at a time when there is a heightened mix of confidence and despair regarding the public schools, their educational and social effects, and their potential impact. The question of how magnet schools will ultimately meet the educational improvement goals being set for them is beyond the scope of this paper. Nor is the intent here to evaluate the potential of magnets as a desegregation strategy. Instead, since magnets are the primary desegregation strategy currently receiving support, the purpose of this paper is to bring together existing research in order to answer the following question: How can we best design magnet schools so that they work most effectively for desegregation?

Unfortunately, studies of magnets are largely anecdotal case histories of single schools or districts. Only two multidistrict studies of magnets exist, one by Royster et al. (1979a & b) and one by Blank et al. (1983a & b). However, much of the enormous body of desegregation research is applicable to magnet schools. Questions of school location, creating appropriate curricula, generating public support, and providing a harmonious and equitable environment within the school remain the same whether the school to be desegregated is a magnet, an ordinary elementary school, or a comprehensive high school. In fact, the more that planners and administrators of magnet schools rely on the knowledge gathered over the years of desegregation, the more likely are magnet schools to achieve their desegregation goals.

Though the result of a data synthesis which draws together information from widely diverse sources cannot be scientifically foolproof, it is hoped that the following pages will offer useful guides for planning. Following a brief discussion of the policies which have led to the focus on magnet schools as tools for desegregation, the paper is organized as a series of research-based answers to questions about how to design magnet schools to achieve the maximum benefits for desegregation.

MAGNETS: THE MOST RECENT DESEGREGATION STRATEGY

Magnets are currently the most popular strategy for decreasing racial isolation in the public schools. First conceived and developed in large urban school districts seeking a voluntary desegregation alternative to the unpopular "forced busing," magnets were inspired in part by such advanced specialty schools as New York's Bronx High School of Science, the Boston Latin School, and Lane Tech in Chicago, and in part by some of the instructional innovations of the alternative schools movement. The original goal of magnet schools was to enhance academic performance through creating a high-interest, specialized core curriculum, at the same time bringing together students of different racial and social groups.

White resistance to participating in racially balanced schools has been a major impetus for creating magnets. As Foster pointedly remarks in an early evaluation of magnets as a desegregation strategy, "the magnet concept is a message to the white community which says in effect: this is a school that has been made so attractive educationally (magnetized) you will want to enroll your child voluntarily in spite of the fact that he will have to go to school with blacks" (Foster, 1973, p. 24). Although a large proportion of magnets are in white neighborhoods, predominantly white schools have actually not had to be "magnetized" to draw black students, even though blacks have increasingly complained about the inequities of having to do the traveling and adjusting to a new school.

The 1976 amendment to the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA), which authorized grants to support the planning and implementation of magnet schools in desegregating districts, heightened urban interest in these schools and strengthened their reputation as a desegregation strategy. By

1981-82, there were 1,019 magnet schools in 138 school districts. Among the ESAA magnet schools, an average of 53 percent of the students were racial minorities, compared with an average of 44 percent minority students in nonmagnet schools. The grade level proportions in ESAA and non-ESAA funded districts were similar: about 62 percent were elementary magnets, 14 percent were middle/junior high magnets, and 24 percent were senior high magnets. Total-school magnets accounted for 60 percent; schools-within-schools represented 21 percent, followed by magnet centers (11 percent) and add-on programs (5 percent). More districts had developed programs without federal support (74) than with ESAA funding (64). Moreover, one-third, or 91, of the country's 275 large urban school districts (with over 200,000 students) had installed magnet schools (Blank et al., 1983a & b).

Although the repeal in 1981 of the amendment supporting magnets for desegregation severely curtained federal funds (from $400 million to $25 million in fiscal year 1982), the Administration's endorsement of magnet schools as an effective desegregation tool was unequivocal. For those schools interested in desegregation, magnets were the only strategy that might receive any support.

Recently, funds have once again been made available under a new Magnet Schools Assistance Program, with $75 million appropriated for fiscal years 1984, 1985, and 1986. Among the stated purposes of the new program are to meet the special needs incident to the "elimination of minority group segregation and discrimination among students and faculty in elementary and secondary schools;" "to encourage the voluntary elimination, reduction, or prevention of minority group isolation in elementary and secondary schools with substantial proportions of minority group students;" and "to encourage the development of courses of instruction within magnet schools that will

substantially strengthen the knowledge of academic subjects and the grasp of tangible and marketable vocational skills of students attending such schools" (U.S. Department of Education, 1985). Though the Magnet Schools Assistance Program appears to have no clear vision of what effective programming might include, both desegregation and integration goals are implied in the grant application form.

What student composition ratio can make a historically black school in a mixed or predominantly black neighborhood attractive to white students?

Schools in middle-class white neighborhoods, with historically white student bodies, have little difficulty drawing white students, and until now have not had much trouble drawing black students if genuine attempts are made to provide transportation and lunch programs and to create an atmosphere of good will. However, the fact that inner city populations have become largely minority makes a desegregation plan that stresses placing blacks in majority white schools somewhat of a phantom. Metropolitan plans allow a greater possibility for retaining white-majority schools, at least in the suburbs. Unfortunately, when the metropolitan plans are voluntary, they are also likely to place the traditional burden of travel and adjustment on black students -- a burden the black community is less willing to tolerate.

The problem for many urban schools over the next years will be to develop strategies to attract whites to historically black schools in mixed or predominantly black, often poor, neighborhoods. These schools raise the anxiety and ire of many white parents whose children are asked to attend. White parents are quick to fear poorer facilities and lower quality of instruction, as well as threats of danger from which their children are presumably safe in the white middle-class schools. According to Rossell, "in desegregation plans with mandatory assignment, on average, 50 percent of the whites assigned to schools formerly above 90 percent black will not show up" (Rossell, 1985, p.9). However, attracting whites to formerly black schools by voluntary methods may be at least as difficult as using

mandatory methods. A survey of parents who had already chosen to put their children in a magnet school in an industrial neighborhood in Philadelphia showed that, while 97 percent of both black and white families said they would have sent their child to a predominantly white magnet, only 52 percent of the white parents, in contrast to 80 percent of the black parents, said they would have sent their child to the magnet if it were in a predominantly black neighborhood (Comerford, 1980). Rossell (1985) notes that the rate of white return to a magnet school in subsequent years is a function of the percentage of minorities attending the desegregated magnet school.

Clearly, a number of school characteristics can be manipulated to make a magnet that is placed in a historically black school in a predominantly black neighborhood attractive to whites. First is the composition of the student body. Taking a sanguine view of the conditions for white acceptance, Rossell argues that for a magnet school in a black neighborhood to succeed with whites, there must be a general sense that whites will, in fact, be in the majority. Her policy reccmmendation is that, "schools in black neighborhoods should be projected, and widely publicized, to be predominantly white, and the more racially isolated the school, the higher this projected white percentage should be" (Rossell, 1985, p.9). Rossell also advises that enrollment be closely controlled so that the predominance of white students in the formerly black school is maintained in subsequent years.

On the other side, Royster et al. (1979a) note the anger of minority community representatives when a previously rundown, predominantly black neighborhood school is turned into a high quality magnet that, because of desegregation goals, many of the neighborhood children are not allowed to attend. Thus care must simultaneously be taken to assure that as many

black students as possible attend the magnet, while those who are forced to leave their neighborhood are given attractive alternatives. Though this cannot possibly resolve all anger and resentment, it is probably better to face these feelings by black community members in the hope that in the long run they will profit from the high quality desegregated school in their area.

What school characteristics can make a magnet in a mixed or historically black neighborhood attractive to white students?

According to the research analyses of Levine and Eubanks (1980) and Rossell (1985), magnets that are successful in inducing white students to travel to a mixed or predominantly black neighborhood have attractive school features such as an image of excellence, a special curriculum, a charismatic principal, a good faculty, and/or an attractive facility.

Similarly, Royster et al. (1979a, p.84) studied magnet school "appeal" for both white and black students. Schools were chosen for their appeal factors in the following order: (1) program, (2) faculty, (3) principal, (4) school location, (5) quality of the school plant, (6) opportunities provided for parent involvement, (7) voluntary nature of the magnet, and (8) opportunity provided by the school for "another chance" for students perceived as having behavior or learning problems.

Taking several of the above factors separately, a little more may be said of each:

The Image of Excellence. Royster et al. (1979b, p.3), who studied magnets in 18 school districts, found that the "image of excellence" was more important to a school's magnetism for both white and black students than was the school's uniqueness in curricular or instructional program.

Rossell (1985) draws together several parent surveys indicating that "selectivity, or perceived selectivity" of magnet schools is more important to many parents, white and black, than the specific magnet theme. In these cases, "selectivity' apparently means a combination of good students and a special program. One survey of Boston and Springfield (both with mandatory desegregation plans) found that 87 percent of the parents did not know the magnet theme of their children's school, and that their attraction to the magnet was based on their perception of it as a "good school." Drawing on this and other surveys, Rossell argues that, "the more racially isolated the school, the greater the selectivity, or perception of selectivity, there should be" (1985, p.12).

Curriculum. A Montgomery County, Maryland, survey of elementary magnets (in a voluntary magnet plan) found that, while nearly two-thirds of the parents knew that their child's school was a magnet, only 47 percent of the whites and 24 percent of the minorities could name a magnet program feature (cited in Rossell, 1985, p.12). Still, a well-considered curricular strategy is important in creating a school's image--and crucial to providing an educational experience suited to students' differing needs.

Royster et al. (1979a) focused on the types of curriculum most attractive to white and black parents in 18 school districts. The authors found that at the elementary level, the magnet schools most successful in attracting whites (most were in minority neighborhoods) were those with nontraditional programs that stressed the need for children to follow their own particular interests and to proceed through the learning process at their own pace. On the other hand, traditional or "back-to-basics" programs were slightly more attractive to minority parents than to whites.

At the senior high school level, Royster et al. found that academic

programs were more attractive to white students than to minorities; they often had difficulty meeting minority enrollment goals, at the same time as overenrolling whites. The authors report that, while their data "do not completely support the contention that minorities are attracted to vocational programs while majorities are attracted to academic programs...there is often enough evidence in this direction to warrant raising the issue." Noting that at two sites, the secondary magnets were essentially private schools for the upper-middle-class community, the authors suggest that "special care may be required to ensure that academic programs do not become a means by which majority students can escape real desegregation while receiving a 'prep school quality' education" (1979a, p.91).

Based on data from Royster et al, as well as several other studies, Rossell (1985, p.12) argues that "magnet schools located in racially isolated minority neighborhoods should be nontraditional at the elementary school and highly academically oriented at the secondary level," and that "magnet schools with fundamental themes should be located in white neighborhoods."

School Staff and Staffing Policies. Over the years, magnet schools have generated a certain controversy over their capacity to operate by special rules, drawing their principals and teachers from a wide pool throughout the school district, and providing a lower student/teacher ratio than do other schools. On the one hand, magnets are felt to offer a better teaching situation than do nonmagnets in the district; on the other hand, they are accused of "creaming" the best of the district's staff and leaving nonmagnets with a student/teacher ratio that seems high and stigmatized by comparison.

The study by Blank et al. (1983a & b) of 15 school districts found that magnets successful in attracting a racially balanced student body were characterized by principals who were strong, innovative, entrepreneurial leaders--a finding not unlike that of the effective schooling research. However, as Rossell (1985) points out, since the very definition of a principal's capacity for innovation and strength of leadership was tied to the school's desegregation success, this finding is not particularly useful.

Of greater use to magnet school planners are the findings of Royster et al. (1979a) that some districts succeed in overcoming white resistance to a magnet in a minority neighborhood by assigning popular white principals and teachers, and that placing popular minority principals and faculty in a predominantly white school makes minority students feel more comfortable and welcome. Drawing on this and other research, Rossell (1985, p.14) argues that:

> Schools located in racially isolated minority neighborhoods likely to have difficulty in attracting whites should have popular white principals and teachers (but no more of the latter than is necessary to have a racially balanced staff).

On the other hand, schools in isolated white neighborhoods "likely to have difficulty attracting minority students should have popular minority principals and teachers (but again no more of the latter than is necessary to have a racially balanced staff)."

Since several surveys indicate that a low pupil/teacher ratio is one of the most attractive features drawing whites to a magnet, Rossell (1985) recommends that:

> Magnet schools should be projected, and widely publicized, to have low pupil-teacher ratios, and the more racially isolated the minority school is, the lower the pupil-teacher ratio should be, at least at the outset when such information is one of the few facts parents may have about a school (p.14-15).

The School as a Physical Place. Research supports the common view that the distance students travel to a magnet, the attractiveness of the facility, and the safety of the school building and its surroundings all contribute to the magnet school's attractiveness.

There is evidence that students object far less to busing when it is to bring them to a "special school" than when it is for the purpose of desegregation (Rossell, 1979). Still, because several studies suggest that distance is an issue, Rossell (1985, p.16) suggests that "magnets should be strategically placed to minimize busing," and that "schools should experiment with limited attendance zones where there is a geographically limited constituency for a magnet school."

As for the physical appearance of the magnet school that awaits students getting off the bus, Rossell summarizes research pointing to an inverse relationship between the importance of a school's attractiveness and other potentially detracting features such as its location:

> The more difficult it is to attract students to a school because of location or other factors, the more attractive the physical appearance of the school plant and the newer the equipment should be, at least at the outset (1985, p.15).

Drawing on questionnaires from parents of magnet school students in Philadelphia, Comerford (1980, p.52) adds the interesting insight that both the attractiveness of the school building and the safety of the school and its surroundings may be more important to lower-class, less educated parents than to middle-class more educated parents. That is, contrary to any stereotype that parents of lower socioeconomic students are less concerned about their children's physical learning environment, attention to attractiveness and safety appear to be very important to this group.

Clearly, security is of concern for all parents, particularly when a magnet is located in a commercial, industrial, or deteriorated

neighborhood, and steps must be taken to assure parents that their children will be safe. Levine and Campbell (1977, p.252) suggest supervised transportation, including "chartered buses" for bringing suburban students to inner city schools.

Does community knowledge of and participation in the planning and operation of magnets increase their possibility of achieving maximum and peaceful desegregation?

Analyses of community knowledge of and participation in magnets focus on all stages, from the design and creation of magnet schools to recruitment and the ongoing operation of the schools. Partly because ESAA required active local advisory committees, and partly because the subject magnets, in particular, lend themselves to community input, magnet schools have come to be associated with greater parent, private, and public sector participation than is the case for other schools.

Measuring participation at the school level, Blank (1984) found that of a sample of 45 magnet schools (41 of which were secondary schools), almost half had higher parent participation than the other schools in their districts. In addition to involving parents in the more traditional PTA meetings and parent conferences, those schools high in parent participation used parents to assist in decisions on program design and development; to develop publicity for the school and help recruit new students; and to give support to instruction through identifying educational resources, organizing special events, raising funds, for arranging for the use of facilities. Thirty-eight percent of the magnet schools also had high or above average participation by business and industry, often through a theme linkage such as "health/science curriculum" and a hospital. Higher education institutions, cultural organizations, and foundations played a part in 47 percent of the magnets in the study.

Similarly, Royster et al. (1979a & b), who analyzed the 18 school districts in their sample for parent involvement, found that even those magnets that were not programmatically different from nonmagnets had greater parent involvement in planning and/or in the daily operations. At the planning end, parents helped choose the school location, design the plant, formulate and organize for community involvement, select the mode of instruction, and recruit potential students, while the actual school year was filled with parents acting as counselors, tutors, and library assistants, as well as assisting with fundraising, transportation, and other activities.

Though the high rate of a range of community participation may well be a good in its own right, it also appears both directly and indirectly to enhance the possibilities for effective desegregation. Most immediately, simply making available positive information about a school and offering support to those who express interest appears to generate a willingness to try an educational environment that would otherwise be strange or even distasteful. In a discussion of the characteristics of three magnet schools in minority neighborhoods that were successful in attracting a significant number of white students, Levine and Eubanks (1980, p.57) include as essential an active recruitment program "involving a variety of ingenious approaches to contacting and impressing potential clients." Among these approaches were providing babysitters for visitors to one magnet, sending letters of appreciation to teachers who nominated students at another, and using professionally designed brochures at a third. Levine and Campbell (1977) also suggest furnishing transportation to the magnet site for interested parents, printing multilingual brochures, and conducting radio and television campaigns.

If positive information generates interest among the reluctant, active

participation appears to decrease resistance even among the diehards. According to Royster et al., some parents in the sampled schools who fight against "forced busing" for their children, when "given the opportunity to have some control over their children's schooling, and knowing that what is at the 'end of the bus-ride' is likely to be the finest educational alternative publicly available to them, are willing, even eager, to put their children on a bus" (1979a, p.37).

Both Royster et al. (1979a & b) and Willie (1984) suggest that active parent involvement can reduce the tensions of desegregation. Royster et al. focus on those tensions generated by mandatory plans, arguing that, with the reduction of tension through parent involvement, students are more likely to remain in the district. According to Willie's analysis of desegregation in four cities (Atlanta, Boston, Milwaukee, and Seattle), community involvement "tends to lessen the violence with which school desegregation plans are received and also tends to promote their acceptance" (p.205).

Clearly, much of the parent participation discussions are implicitly directed to the need for involving white parents. As Royster et al. (1979a, p.58) note, "The attitudes of the majority community consistently appear to be more highly correlated with achieved desegregation than do those of the minority community." That is, it is whites, more than blacks, who must, through information and participation, be sold on the fact that a desegregated magnet is in their children's best educational interests.

Parent and other community participation also appears to be capable of indirectly enhancing desegregation effectiveness. Blank (1984) found that those districts with higher participation rates of parents, business, and cultural organizations tended to have a policy concensus among the school

board giving direction and support to the magnet school program. These schools also tended to have higher ratings on educational quality, as judged by such items as the proportion of students taking more than the minimum course load or active in extra curricular activities; the frequency of social interaction between and within student, faculty, and parent groups; and the existence and use of resources. Since having a policy consensus is related to desegregation effectiveness (Willie, 1984), and a school's educational quality is likely to be reflected in the community's perception of its "excellence," parent participation may well be indirectly related to successful desegregation.

Finally, Willie points to the importance of a clear cut school district policy, administered with understanding, but also with resolution (1984, p.204). Since an absence of meaningful leadership undermines community support, Willie argues that "school desegregation leadership by some authority figure in the community would appear to be necessary even when widespread grassroots support has been cultivated" (p.209).

What are the effects of magnets on racial balance, social class, and achievement in the remainder of the school district?

The best magnet school plans involve some system-wide control so that white middle-class students are not allowed to "flee" into prep school type magnets, and so that more subtle forms of creaming do not take place. Even in the most carefully designed magnets, however, increased expenditures per pupil, lower pupil/teacher ratios, and the selection of good teachers and principals from the entire district tend to create a dual system, as does the fact that those students who volunteer for magnet schools tend, if nothing else, to be more motivated than those who do not. The criticisms of the Church Council for Greater Seattle of Seattle's voluntary magnet

plan (since modified) are easily applicable to a number of other cities. According to the Council, "'magnet schools are elitist and serve families with parents who are sophisticated enough to take advantage of them, but while they offer a superior education to some children... they rob resources from other programs and thus give other children an inferior education'" (cited in Maynard, 1984, p.125).

Though few systems would intentionally use magnets to increase segregation in the district, greater isolation in nonmagnet schools may be a side effect of a desegregated magnet. In Baltimore, for example, where two racially balanced magnets were opened in 1971, the level of segregation in the rest of the system rose from 81.3 percent to 82.3 percent (Rossell, 1979, p.310).

On the other hand, Royster et al. (1979b, p.3) report that, though there was some evidence of "skimming" in the 18 school districts they studied, and some schools did become "havens" for majority and middle-class students, there was also evidence of "reverse-skimming," that is, parents using magnets as a means to give their children with learning and behavioral difficulties a "last chance."

Still, more evidence seems to lie in the direction of the more able students attending magnets. Of the 45 magnet schools studied by Blank et al. (1983b p. 55-63), 90 percent were at least somewhat selective, and close to a third were "highly" or "very" selective. Using a narrower frame, Comerford (1980) notes that the students at the Creative and Performing Arts High School in Philadelphia tended at entrance to have higher reading achievement scores than their counterparts throughout the school district, and that the entrance scores of those students who had previously attended Title I schools were higher in both reading and mathematics than their former classmates'.

Rossell (1979) points out that the problem of skimming students is greatest in magnet-only desegregation plans, where whites may use the magnet to flee from a school in a changing neighborhood. However, while mandatory plans of which magnets are only one component can control the racial balance in each school in the system, there is still the possibility that, since magnets tend to attract/select the more middle-class students, some of the effects of a comprehensive desegregation plan may be diminished by segregating the middle-class, both black and white students, from the working-class students.

How can school districts best use the incremental results of magnets to achieve system-wide desegregation?

As is often said, there is no common agreement about what constitutes school desegregation. Some speak hopefully of a complete mingling of the races, while others talk of schools that are not racially identifiable but just "good American schools." In fact, however, cities and school districts differ in their racial compositions, so that the most plausible goal is a "unitary school system."

A number of more specific, though varied, attempts have been made to suggest guides for evaluating any desegregation strategy. Rossell (1979) offers both an index of dissimilarity between the racial composition of the school and the surrounding community and a measure of interracial contact for evaluating the desegregation effectiveness of magnet school plans. Less exact because of the omission of mathematics, Hawley et al. (1983) offer the following possible outcomes of school desegregation, some of which have not yet been considered:

1. Reducing racial isolation among and within schools.
2. Avoiding resegregation among and within schools.

3. Improving race relations among students.

4. Improving educational quality and student academic performance.

5. Promoting positive public reaction to desegregation that includes avoiding overt opposition to desegregation, increasing levels of racial and ethnic tolerance, and building support for schools.

Though Hawley et al. conspicuously replace clear cut or absolute standards with notions of "improving, reducing, avoiding, and promoting," as desegregation specialists they do not advocate either unplanned shifts without standards or mere incremental change, but rather recommend aiming for "maximum" achievement of desegregation.

In fact, desegregation researchers commonly agree that the effectiveness of any attempt at desegregation is in direct relation to its having taken place as part of a comprehensive plan with clear goals and standards and an uncompromising timetable. Having reviewed the Office of Civil Right's regulatory history, which shows that the areas in which desegregation implementation has been most successful are those in which the most precise regulations have been promulgated, Hochschild (1984, p.90) concludes: "Within schools, the message is similar. Schools that set goals, systematically diagnose obstacles to their accomplishment, and 'set time aside to evaluate the progress which has been made toward meeting their goals' have higher morale and less racial tension than schools that evade or set no goals." As Hochschild points out, attempting incremental change in order to avoid trouble only increases trouble. Little change is in many ways worse than no change at all: "Limited or partial plans create new problems for both blacks and whites without solving the old ones of a segregated system...More change solves problems that less change cannot" (Hochschild, 1984, p.70).

Recommendations of comprehensive plans, clear-cut standards, definite

timetables, and non-incremental change, are guidelines for magnets as much as for any other method of desegregation. Levine and Campbell emphasize the importance of placing magnets within a comprehensive plan; they argue that magnet schools are not likely to be successful

> unless they are part of a systematic and far-reaching program for improving instruction on a school-by-school basis throughout an entire district. The danger in concentrating too heavily on magnet schools, which are probably the most flashy and salable component of a program for instructional improvement, is that massive physical and human resources will be used for them while other components of such a program will get little attention. If this is allowed to happen, inner-city schools will continue to be undesirable places for learning, and the educational opportunities for young people in the big city will not be markedly better in the future than they are today (1977, p.262-263).

Insofar as magnets are used as a primary desegregation tool, two questions remain troublesome: how much desegregation magnets alone can accomplish; and "whether the threat of mandatory assignment is needed to make magnets magnetic" (Caldwell, 1984, p.1). As to the former question, the answer is straightforward: Magnets have only a limited effect on decreasing racial isolation, because they generally serve only a small proportion of a district's students. Royster et al. (1979a, p.130) found them to serve 30-40 percent of the district's student, in 3 cities, 12 percent in 3 more cities, and 2-8 percent in the remaining 12 cities under study, and concluded that, "magnet schools are not effective as the primary or solitary means of desegregation." Similarly, Blank et al. (1983b, p.81) found them to serve an average of 13.7 percent of enrollment in the 15 districts they studied. Willie (1984) reviews successful desegregation plans in four cities: Boston, Milwaukee, Seattle, and Atlanta. In Boston, 22 out of 208 schools are magnets; Milwaukee uses 40 magnets and specialty school programs out of 159 schools; Atlanta has 5 alternative education programs and 6 magnets out of 177 schools; and Seattle created 31 magnets

and 5 alternative schools out of a total of 123 public schools. Interestingly, of all the cities, Seattle was the only one initially to try a voluntary magnet-only plan; however, after the plan resulted in desegregating just 13 of 27 racially imbalanced schools, the city shifted to a plan which incorporates magnets in a mandatory scheme.

The question of whether a magnet must be bolstered by a mandatory plan is apparently answered nearly as easily as is the question of how much a magnet alone can do. Most studies of enrollment patterns fail to distinguish between magnet-voluntary plans, where the choice for white families is between a desegregated magnet and their own neighborhood school, and magnet-mandatory plans, where the entire school system is mandatorily desegregated and magnets are either an escape valve for white parents or a curricular alternative. However, Rossell (1985) reviews 33 studies that do make this distinction and arrives at what is by now a consensus among researchers: magnets only begin to have real desegregation power in the context of district-wide mandatory plans (Rossell, 1985; Hochschild, 1984; Royster et al., 1979a & b). This is particularly so if the district is aiming at the more complete desegregation goal of bringing nonminority students into minority schools, rather than the far easier task of bringing minority students into predominantly white schools. As Levine and Eubanks (1980, p.58) remark, "It appears that magnetization may be more successful in attracting nonminority students to a minority school when there is the threat of a court order or an executive branch requirement than when the citizens of a community feel no pressure to make a magnet plan succeed." Taking a dissenting and more positive view, Blank et al. (1983b, p.82) call magnets an "extraordinarily flexible and powerful tool for use in desegregating public school systems," particularly if they result from a "strong policy commitment and effective implementation of a

[voluntary] district wide plan." However, 11 of the 15 districts Blank et al. studied used mandatory plans; moreover, the authors do not define desegregation to include bringing whites into a magnet located in what they call a "less desirable location."

Two caveats to the consensus for mandatory desegregation plans should be made. The first is that voluntary techniques may work slightly better than mandatory plans in districts with fewer than one-third minority students (Hawley, et al., 1980; Rossell, 1979). This is because only a small number of whites are needed to desegregate the minority school or schools. If a small city has, for instance, 4 percent blacks, as did Medford, Massachusetts, simply turning the predominantly minority school into a magnet is a quick and simple way to desegregate (Varley, 1984).

The second caveat to the clear benefits of mandatory plans is that, at least initially, mandatory plans produce more white flight than do voluntary plans. White enrollment declines as much as three times more in the first years after mandatory plans than before them, while it only declines one-and-a-half times more after voluntary plans (Hochschild, 1984, p.72-73). However, white flight does level off. In fact, cities with voluntary plans actually lost proportionately more whites between 1968 and 1980 than did cities with mandatory plans. Additionally, most studies show that interracial exposure is more extensive under mandatory plans, even when white flight is taken into account (Rossell, 1985; Hochschild, 1984; Rossell and Hawley, 1983). Though white flight varies with whether the mandatory plan includes merely the central city or the entire metropolitan area, the size of the minority population, the busing distance, and the proportion of the white student population assigned outside their neighborhood, "no school district, even the worst case, is currently more

segregated in terms of racial balance and interracial contact than it would have been if no mandatory student assignment plan had been implemented" (Rossell and Hawley, 1983, p.6).

How can resegregation be prevented and good race relations be created and sustained within a desegregated magnet?

Though the evidence is largely indirect, resegregation appears to have occurred within most schools that have undergone desegregation (Eyler et al., 1983). Largely accomplished through tracking and ability groupings, which disproportionately assign minority students to the lower achievement groups and vocational tracks, this resegregation increases as the number of blacks in the school rises (Epstein, 1980). On the other hand, token desegregation, in which minority students remain a very small percentage of the total student body is not the answer:

> First, black students may cluster together in such situations and have little contact with whites. Second, even if black students are open to intergroup contact in these circumstances, they are not present in high enough proportion to give many white students an opportunity to interact with them. Third, small numbers seem likely to be conducive to a lack of power within the school (Schofield and Sagar, 1983,p.72).

Although equal status between whites and blacks increases when the student body is roughly half black and half white, a number of studies suggest that black-white hostility is highest in just such situations. Thus Schofield and Sagar (1983) recommend two different ratios as being conducive to good race relations: either 20-40 percent black, or 60 percent black.

Hawley (1981) draws on relevant research to recommend the following practices as most likely to enhance both race relations and achievement in desegregated schools:

> Assign students so that schools and classrooms are neither predominantly white nor predominantly black.
>
> Encourage substantial interaction among races both in academic

settings and in extracurricular activities.

Eschew academic competition, rigid forms of tracking, and ability groupings that draw attention to individual and group achievement differences correlated with race.

Recruit and retrain teachers who are relatively unprejudiced, supportive, and insistent on high performance and racial equality.

Involve parents at the classroom level in actual instructional or learning activities.

Initiate programs of staff development that emphasize the problems relating to successful desegregation.

Maintain a relatively stable student body over time. (p.154-156)

In the same vein, Metz (1983) recommends that good multi-racial relations between students, between students and teachers, and among teachers are created by: (1) arrangements that minimize the visibility of low achievement and peg academic rewards to individual effort; (2) a faculty culture that gives high priority to student social relations; and (3) structures that foster interracial contact by school staff and generate collective planning.

Given the available research, it is possible to be more specific in the following areas of particular concern to school administrators and planners: tracking, suspensions, compensatory education, and assessment.

Tracking. Tracking systems based on measured performance tend to create low-status tracks that are heavily black and high-status tracks that are predominantly white. Moreover, the very existence of tracks formalizes differences in students' interests and achievement into a hierarchy of more and less successful.

Complicating what might be seen as a clear directive to create heterogeneous groupings is research showing that prejudice is lowest and black and white students are most likely to become friends when they

perceive each other as more similar socioeconomically and in their achievement (Schofield and Sagar, 1983). Still, one might ask if equal status contacts between black and white students are more likely in a heterogeneous classroom of an integrated school than in a homogeneous classroom of a tracked school that is desegregated largely in name.

A number of cooperative learning techniques have recently been developed for use in heterogeneous classrooms. These techniques generate cooperation by using teams that are composed of a racial/academic mix of students who must work together to solve problems. While some studies of cooperative learning indicate that whites are more favorable toward blacks who perform their role competently than toward those who do not, most research shows that these strategies have an overall positive effect on relations between black and white, as well as Hispanic and white, students (Schofield and Sagar, 1983).

Suspensions. There is a good deal of evidence that newly desegregated districts suspend and expel a disproportionate number of black students. Moreover, it appears that postdesegregation suspension rates may be related to the change in racial composition of the school, and are particularly acute where the proportion of blacks rises above 15 percent. Schools with the greatest potential for interracial contact "are most likely to use disciplinary techniques that substantially resegregate students within the school," including pushing them out of the school entirely (Eyler et al., 1983, p.143).

In general, black students are suspended for behavior that is not violent or dangerous to persons or property. Attendance violations, such as cutting class, truancy, and tardiness are by far the most common, but violations also include smoking, nonviolent disruptive acts,

insubordination, and the like. Many of these offenses would be allowed white students, or white students would be given lighter penalties.

Most authors agree that the leadership of the school principal, as well as the orderliness of the school environment, are related to decreased suspensions. In addition, "many of the instructional strategies identified as potentially effective ways to avoid tracking and rigid ability grouping have been found to be effective in building a more positive organizational climate and reducing suspension" (Eyler et al., 1983, p.159).

Recently, a number of in-school alternatives to suspension have been proposed. These include counseling programs, time-out rooms, in-school suspension centers, and alternative schools (Eyler et al., 1983). However, though these programs keep students within the school building, there is only scanty evidence that they are less demoralizing to students (and thus less likely to push them toward dropping out), or that they in any way affect the resegregation going on within the school. (Eyler et al., 1983).

Compensatory Education. Blacks and other minorities are heavily represented in compensatory education programs. Though nearly all compensatory education has taken place as pull out programs, the research does not support this approach on achievement grounds. Those students who are taken out of their regular classes spend about a quarter of their learning time in Title I or other compensatory programs. During this time they miss the regular instruction in a variety of areas, at the same time as they are brought into largely segregated situations whose teaching is not clearly superior to that of the regular classroom (Carter, 1984). Although mainstream approaches to compensatory education are rare and have been inadequately evaluated, "the effect of pullout on achievement does not appear to offset its resegregative effects" (Eyler et al., 1983, p.134).

Assessment. One way of reducing much of the inequity and potential resegregation inside any public school is through more creative, nondiscriminatory means of assessment. Among the alternatives proposed are: (1) the psychometric model--paying attention to minority representation at all stages in test development; (2) the alternative assessment model--controlling for bias by using nontraditional assessment techniques that are potentially culture-fair; (3) the transactional model--observing the examiner and student, and perhaps even the student's family, during the testing process to take into account cultural influences on the process; (4) the ecological assessment model--controlling for bias by observing the student's competencies across a variety of settings; and (5) the interdisciplinary assessment model--controlling for bias by bringing together a variety of professionals who have worked with the child. No one of these models is sufficient, and there have been some attempts to formalize a mix of several approaches (Eyler et al., 1983).

In addition to the above in-school factors, special education, bilingual education, dropout prevention programs, extracurricular activities, and a variety of other large and small decisions must all be carefully planned to stabilize desegregation and enhance integration. Yet none of the decisions in any of these areas is simple: ability groupings, tracking, and pull out programs, which on the surface appear to make equal status relationships across races in a homogeneous classroom context more likely, also create islands of segregation, while, on the other side, the complexities of heterogeneous groupings within classrooms demand new skills both for organizing teaching and for generating cooperation among students. The point is for school staff to be aware of the liabilities, as well as benefits, of all decisions, so they can create plans that mitigate against these liabilities and optimize relationships between black and white students.

Conclusions

As we have seen, magnets are a desegregation strategy with only limited power. This is not to say that they should be ignored, but rather that any magnet school plan must be set in the context of a larger desegregation strategy. Moreover, the success of a single magnet school or of a district employing magnets for desegregation must be measured against existing research from the 30 year history of desegregation.

When using magnet schools for desegregation, as when using any other method, a variety of issues must be taken into account and few solutions will be simple. Desegregating one school may easily increase segregation in another, if care is not taken to ensure against it. Similarly, creating heterogeneous groupings within a school may initially make more difficult equal status contacts between black and white students, and so special strategies must be created to generate cooperation and friendship among students. Both at the district and the school level, all decisions are likely to involve potential liabilities which must be taken into account if desegregation is to be successful.

Finally, desegregation through magnets or any other method is not merely a planning issue. Rather, decisions must be made daily throughout every school year. These decisions, if made creatively, have the possibility of promoting integration; if made by rote, or left to slide, they are likely to re-institutionalize segregation.

APPENDIX

Guidelines for Establishing

Desegregated and Integrated Magnet Schools:

Bibliographical Sources

Blank et al. (1983a) summarize 10 steps that districts should follow when planning and implementing magnet schools programs.

Chesler et al. (1981) offer a useful and detailed guide for professionals planning desegregation. Among the guide's offerings are: goals for creating racial equality and justice in schooling; targets for organizational change; advice for educators on leadership; ways of working with teachers, school boards, parents and community groups; and crisis management.

Crowfoot and Chesler (1981) offer "attractive ideas" for those going through the desegregation process. Included are suggestions to be used in the classroom, in the local building, in the central administration, and in the community.

Hawley et al. (1983) draw on a comprehensive assimilation of the desegregation research to offer a useful format consisting of advice, evidence, and example, on a variety of desegragation steps from pupil assignment to parent and community contacts and inservice teacher training.

Forehand and Ragosta (1976) provide an elementary school questionnaire. Directed to faculty, the questionnaire is a diagnostic device for assessing the level of within-school integration.

Rossell (1979) offers both an index of dissimilarity and a measure of interracial contact as means of evaluating the desegregation effectiveness of magnet school plans.

Willie (1984) presents the outline he gave several educators for analyzing their school systems; the outline provides a guide to any administrative or planning body working toward a unitary school system.

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