
ALBANY CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

MIDDLE SCHOOL RECONFIGURATION

Districtwide Schools versus Neighborhood Schools

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I. FORCED BUSING



FORCED BUSING

- Desegregation **busing** in the United States (also known as **forced busing** or simply **busing**) is the practice of assigning and transporting students to schools in such a manner as to redress prior racial segregation of schools, or to overcome the effects of residential segregation on local school demographics.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

EDUCATION WEEK (2015); HARVARD STUDY (2010)

- The results of FORCED BUSING have been controversial
 - White flight to suburbs, private schools
 - Protests about length of bus rides
 - Racial gaps can still exist within a school that is desegregated
- Some positive results have been noted
 - In the 1970s, a 53-point gap in achievement between black and white 17 year old students narrowed to a 20-point gap in 1988 (National Assessment of Educational Progress)
 - Since forced busing ended in 1988, the achievement gap has increased to 26% as of 2012 and schools have become more segregated



2. MAGNET SCHOOLS



DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Magnet Schools provide a distinctive curriculum or instructional approach, draw students from beyond an assigned attendance zone and allow families a choice in school selection.
 - Specialized core curriculum or specialized pedagogy
 - Focus on an occupation or field of study
 - Sense of shared enterprise and a committed, enthusiastic faculty
 - Strong commitment to parent involvement
 - Committed, charismatic principal

HISTORY OF MAGNET SCHOOLS

- Developed in 1970's with the goal of preventing, eliminating or ***reducing racial isolation in schools***. Implementation began in large urban schools.
- Based on the models of Bronx School of Science, Boston Latin School and Chicago's Lane Tech, all of which were highly selective in their admission processes. However, the idea of magnet schools was to enroll students based on ***interest***, not ability level.
- The presumption of magnet schools is that they will attract a cross section of students across all racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds which will result in ***equity of access***, while also creating a student population more ***representative of the wider community***.

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING MAGNET SCHOOLS

1. All parents will be well informed
2. Representation of policy development and management will be broadly based
3. The location will be centralized, assuring access for all populations
4. The enrollment process will be equitable – lottery must follow best practices

PROPONENTS OF MAGNET SCHOOLS BELIEVE...

1. The element of choice is remarkable
2. Magnets lead to increased parental and community commitment
3. Magnets provide a better opportunity to match interests, needs and learning styles of students
4. When districts allow teachers to choose their magnet, this leads to greater professional satisfaction

EXAMPLES OF MAGNET SCHOOL THEMES

❖ Visual and Performing Arts	❖ Montessori
❖ International Studies	❖ STEM
❖ Trauma-Informed Practices and use of Quiet Time meditation (Visitacion Valley MS, San Francisco, CA)	❖ Young Women's Leadership Academy (East Harlem, NYC)
❖ English Language Learners (Francis Hammond MS in NYC, est. in 2015)	❖ Zoo School (Grand Rapids, MI for 6 th graders)

COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL MAGNET SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND INFORMATION

<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear Goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Adequate Parental Information
<input type="checkbox"/> Fair Admissions Policies	<input type="checkbox"/> Careful Theme Selection
<input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient Financial Resources – magnet schools can be expensive to run and additional funds must be secured (fundraising, grants, partnerships)	<input type="checkbox"/> Necessary Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Proper Staff Recruitment and Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative Opportunities for Teachers and Administrators

LOTTERY GUIDELINES

(CONSORTIUM OF CHICAGO SCHOOL RESEARCH, A. BRYK, 2000)

- Admission is determined on the basis of a general lottery without admission testing
- For high demand schools, only a small number of students are enrolled from the immediate neighborhood. The PROXIMITY LOTTERY (Neighborhood Set-Aside) reserves a certain percentage (between 15 and 30%) of seats for children who live in that neighborhood.
- They also use a SIBLING LOTTERY. Once a student is admitted to a magnet school, all remaining siblings of that student have an advantage in gaining admission to that school (45% of new seats are reserved for siblings)
- An additional 5% of new seats can be allocated at the principal's discretion
- The remaining percentage of new seats are opened up to city-wide applicants
- Must avoid "SKIMMING" or "CREAMING" of students during the lottery process

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

- **The evaluations of magnet schools are very mixed.**
- Some studies cite advantages in achievement, improved attendance rates, lower suspension rates and higher graduation rates (NYSED, 1985; Clevall & Joy, 1990); other studies have found that magnet schools have contributed to segregation along class lines.
- According to a qualitative study of families in the Detroit Public Schools, parents were more likely to select a school further away from their home if they had reliable transportation, flexible work hours to allow for a longer commute, and/or family or friends who could help transport the child to and from activities. This often results in a two-tier system based on socioeconomics (Willie & Fultz, 1984; Levine & Eubanks, 1990; Yancey & Saporito, 1995; Gersti-Pepin, 2002).
- Most of the literature considers magnet schools to be unsuccessful in achieving and maintaining desegregation of student populations. Many find that voluntary magnet schools actually end up re-segregating students populations (McMillan, 1980; Willie & Fultz, 1984; Asher, 1990; Levine & Eubanks, 1990; Dentler, 1990; West, 1994; Henig, 1995; Eaton, 1996; Bush, Burley and Causey-Bush, 2001; Orfield, 2001; Erkins, 2002; Archbald, 2004; Brown, 2006).



3. NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS



DEFINITION & VISION

- A neighborhood school is the school assigned to all nearby children based upon where they reside; neighborhood schools are public and free.
- Neighborhood schools are based on **GEOGRAPHY**. The physical location of the school drives its **PRACTICALITY**.
- Recommended size is between two and four classrooms per grade.
- These schools are a **REFLECTION OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**. Strengthening the community around a neighborhood will strengthen the school. This is why many neighborhood schools are now becoming **COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**.



4. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



WHAT DOES A COMMUNITY SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?

- Community schools are schools in which a community agency and a local school have partnered to engage students and family beyond the classroom, resulting in a community hub rich with programs, services and leadership development
- Open to students, families and the community before, during and after school, seven days a week, all year long
- Families, youth, principals, teachers and neighborhood residents help design and implement activities that promote high educational achievement and positive youth development
- The school encourages student learning through community service and service learning
- Additional features: before- and after-school and summer programs; family resource center; medical, dental and mental health services
- Ideally, a fulltime community school coordinator works in partnership with the principal

TYPICAL SERVICES OFFERED IN A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

- Before and after school learning
- Medical, dental and mental health services
- Community service and service learning components
- Programs for parents including GED programs, parenting classes, employment, housing, immigration
- Partnerships with local community agencies whereas both the agency and the school enter into a win-win relationship

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

(CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY (CAS) OF NEW YORK, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY)

- A three year study of two community schools in NYC (in partnership with CAS) compared with matched schools in the neighborhood found:
 - Psychosocial outcomes – students had more positive attitudes about school, children were receiving high-quality medical and dental care and had access to on-site mental health care
 - Parent involvement – The buildings were full of parents both day and night, engaged in a wide variety of activities; Parents felt a strong sense of responsibility for their children's education, particularly new immigrants
 - Academic outcomes – Initial major gains were noted in both reading and math in both schools, although the rate of improvement slowed or leveled off over the three years.
- In several community schools in Cincinnati, the achievement gap fell from 14.5% to 4% between 2003 and 2013; Graduation rates rose from 56% to over 80%.
- Challenges: logistics of managing growth such as setting up information systems, teacher buy-in to the concept, negotiating competition for space between teachers and extended day program staff; evaluation of programs is challenging, full development of the community school model takes several years

ADDRESSING RACE, SOCIOECONOMICS AND IMMIGRATION IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

- “Not all students have access to the same resources and it can be difficult when those resources are outside of the school environment. Families don’t always have the transportation to drive their kids to a program. They may not speak English or know how to fill out an application. ***When the resources can come to them, that is empowering for families.***”
- For families living in poverty, there is associated trauma and toxic stress. ***Making services more accessible to parents who are in need and may not have the resources to navigate the system, helps to significantly reduce that stress.*** In the end, the students, the families and the community all benefit.